

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 40, No. 6

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 14, 2020



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

TALE OF TWO HALVES – Quarterback Justin Fields was his usual self in Ohio State's 49-27 win over Rutgers on Nov. 7, throwing for 314 yards and five touchdowns. He played much longer than even he expected, though, as the Buckeyes made several second-half mistakes on defense.

Ohio State Starts Strong, Struggles In Second Half Of Win Over Rutgers

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

The first 30 minutes of Ohio State's Nov. 7 game against Rutgers played out in typical fashion.

The Buckeyes jumped out to a 35-3 halftime lead thanks in large part to another Heisman Trophy-worthy performance from junior quarterback Justin Fields, who started the game 15 of 17 passing for 232 yards and three touchdowns.

It figured to be just a matter of time before he gave way to one of the highly touted freshmen who will likely battle to be his successor next season. But that didn't happen until C.J. Stroud took one snap on the final play of the game.

The Scarlet Knights, who gained just 83 yards in the first half, racked up 290 yards and scored touchdowns on four consecutive second-half possessions

to make things a little too close for comfort late. And though his team ultimately won the game, 49-27, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day attributed the second-half struggles to missed tackles and penalties.

"It was a tale of two halves," Day said after the game. "It was a really dominant first half and the guys played well, but then the second half, we didn't play great. We had some penalties and allowed some big plays. We didn't close them out. We should have really dominated in the first five or six minutes of the second half and allow some of our other guys to get in the game. That didn't happen."

"Not to make excuses for our guys, but one of the things that's real is you go up 35-3 and it's 8:30 or 9 o'clock on a Saturday night. The stadium's empty and there's no juice in the stadium. We have to bring our own energy. That's a challenge for us. It's something we're going to really address this week. We did it in the first game (vs. Nebraska) and I thought we

did a decent job (against Penn State), but this week, we weren't very good."

Fields finished the game with 314 yards and five touchdowns passes, finding Chris Olave twice and Jameson Williams, Garrett Wilson and Jeremy Ruckert once each. He also scored on a 7-yard run, but he still believes the Buckeyes have room to improve.

"I don't think we're at our peak right now," Fields said, noting he didn't expect to play all the way until the final drive of the game. "I don't think we've reached our full potential. I think we let up too many points in the second half. We need to focus on playing the second half better and finishing (the game)."

Linebacker Tuf Borland, a three-time team captain, shouldered much of the blame for Ohio State's second-half troubles.

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Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State jumped out to a 35-3 halftime lead against Rutgers before stumbling to a 49-27 victory at Ohio Stadium. Despite the lackluster second half, many Buckeyes stood out and proved worthy of earning Buckeye Leaves from our BSB staff and readers.

Wyatt Crosher, BSB: "There were certainly some areas that Ohio State will be looking to improve heading into next week's game against Maryland, but the pass game stayed as strong as it has all season.

"A lot of that has to do with how impressive the top receiving duo of Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson has been, with Olave specifically impressing me as a continued threat to find his way into the end zone.

"Olave finished the game with five catches on five targets for 64 yards, a strong outing, but what made it stand out was that quarterback Justin Fields found him twice for touchdowns.

"The junior receiver is now up to four touchdowns on the year and continues to be a problem for opposing defenses both in the red zone and as a deep threat."

Joe Dempsey, BSB: "One of the brightest spots of Ohio State's ugly 49-27 victory over Rutgers was the play of Garrett Wilson. The standout sophomore became the fourth player in Ohio State history to reach the 100-yard receiving mark for three consecutive games.

"Wilson reeled in six of his seven targets for 104 yards and one touchdown, adding 5 yards on one carry. The former five-star recruit continued to provide Justin Fields with a reliable target to move the chains, converting four first downs for the Buckeyes.

"Averaging 17.3 yards per catch, Wilson gave the Scarlet Knights issues regardless of which route he was running. The well-

rounded receiver also returned one punt for 9 yards in a game that was out of reach in the first half.

"If needed, Wilson could have torched the Scarlet Knight secondary all night long, but a 35-3 halftime lead led to conservative calls for Ohio State."

Andrew Lind, BSB: "While it would be easy to single out one of Ohio State's many offensive weapons for this exercise, I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to single out former Buckeyes safety Brendon White, who transferred to Rutgers this offseason and was the Scarlet Knights' lone captain for the coin toss before the game.

"White recorded a modest four tackles and was involved in a forced fumble in the fourth quarter, but his leadership in the secondary was very apparent, nevertheless. Rutgers is much improved in head coach Greg Schiano's return, and he's getting the most out of his players, including White, who came out of nowhere in 2018 to become the defensive MVP of the Rose Bowl under Schiano's guidance.

"I do believe White could have played a significant role in Ohio State's young and inexperienced secondary this fall, but I also think he's finally found a home where his talent will shine through."

Patrick Mayhorn, BSB: "Well, that was certainly a college football game! With Ohio State looking as sloppy as it did in its 49-27 victory over Rutgers, it's hard to find a ton to compliment in the performance, but quarterback Justin Fields certainly deserves a nod – as he does in seemingly every single game. Even without any kind of consistent running game to lean on, Fields has maintained his excellence in all facets of the game and kept that trend up against the Scarlet Knights.

"He was just about perfect. He completed 24 of his 28 attempts for 314 yards and five scores, adding one more touchdown on the

ground with a quarterback keeper. His connection with Garrett Wilson looks to be one of the best quarterback-wide receiver ties in college football, and he's looking more confident in the pocket with each passing week.

"Additionally, while it isn't a traditional positive, carrying the ball just six times (four without counting sacks) is crucial to Fields' long-term health. He appears to have a better understanding of the importance of that this season and is tucking the ball only when it is absolutely necessary."

BSB Subscribers

"Justin Fields and the WRs – only ones worthy."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"The trio of Justin Fields, Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson are amazingly consistent in being the best in their positions. Olave and Wilson make us wonder, 'Ginn and Gonzalez, who?' LB Justin Hilliard for his strength in creating the fumble and his athleticism is recovering it, LBs Dallas Gant and Baron Browning for a very good game, TE Jeremy Ruckert for another excellent game."

– AnthonyBuckeye

"It was such a weird game that it's difficult to award leaves. Master Teague seemed to be running with more authority? Nice hits by Proctor and Shaw (half a leaf?)"

– Terrier Buck

"The chemistry Fields has with his receivers is amazing. Big talent on both ends with Wilson and Olave. It's the kind of magic that reminded me of Smith and Ginn Jr., the Lennon and McCartney of CFB! Leaves to those three."

– PeyoteBuck

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From The Message Board

After leading 35-3 at halftime, Ohio State was outscored by 10 in the second half and stumbled to a 49-27 win over Rutgers. The Buckeyes were 39-point favorites against the Scarlet Knights, so the 22-point win came as a disappointment to many. We asked readers on the Buckeye Sports Bulletin Fan Forum, as well as staff writers, in which area do they think Ohio State must improve the most and why? Here are some of the responses:

"Everything besides Fields and WRs need to improve. Pass rush. Rushing offense. Less penalties."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"You know as Buckeye fans we are spoiled and our memories are selective. We always expect complete domination of the opposing team and why not! We have the best coaches, superior athletes, and the most excellent facilities in the country. We have a history and traditions that are in total, unmatched by any other college football program. So as a fan and a graduate of The Ohio State University do I expect perfection, d-a-m-n right I do!

"So with the above in mind, special teams have room for improvement. We all saw last week what missing a kicker can do and this week we gave up big plays, albeit due to some trickery, but nevertheless we failed to defend on those plays. In addition, our kick returns lack punch regardless of how many yards in total we show. The defense is suspect to the big play, both running and passing. I'm not sold on the D backfield and I sweat going up against a good throwing QB.

"The running game, while adequate so far due to a highly effective passing game, is also a concern. We just don't appear to have a running back that can break off a long run and take it to the house."

– Scott

"The inconsistency of such an experienced offense line bothers me. Sometimes Master Teague ran for 10 yards down the middle. Some other times, there was quick penetration into the Buckeye backfield it made the running back get tackled for a loss. The Buckeyes had first-and-20 a few times too through penalties. The Buckeyes will probably get through to the playoffs without improving these aspects but will need a consistent OL performance like against Penn State to generate a powerful running game as well to win the playoffs. With all the stars on the OL that are expected to win a whole lot of postseason awards, Saturday's OL performance against Rutgers was disappointing."

– AnthonyBuckeye

"Many areas can improve at least in consistency. OL consistency is probably my main concern, but also the area I'm most confident in improvement. The talent on OL should be fairly dominant. Related concern for me is lack of breakaway running game. Maybe we will see some carries for McCall during the remainder of the season?"

– Terrier Buck

"I would like to see some consistency not just through the season but within a single game. Nothing has me worried though – I don't see anything that can't be tweaked. I think the next few games will run a bit smoother."

– PeyoteBuck

"The tackling in the secondary is truly a cause for concern for me. I understand they're a bit thin with Cameron Brown out for the season and inexperienced with Shaun Wade, Sevyn Banks, Marcus Williamson and Josh Proctor the only ones with any real playing time before this season, but I don't really think that's any excuse. Kerry Coombs said they haven't really changed anything in his first season as defensive coordinator, and while that may be true from a coverage perspective, it's clear he's not preaching the fundamentals the way his predecessor, Jeff Hafley, did."

– Andrew Lind, BSB

"I agree with Andrew that tackling in the secondary is a concern moving forward, especially because the team is not deep there and will need to use anyone they can back there, but I think the run game is a problem. I do not think Master Teague or Trey Sermon are going to be able to produce the type of numbers Ohio State wants from its run game, and Steele Chambers, who flashed in moments, fumbled, so that can't put him in good graces with Ryan Day.

"I think the solution is simply to become a pass-first team, especially when your quarterback is Justin Fields and is completing throws at a historic rate. But if Ohio State still feels the need to run more than it throws, I think this will continue to be a problem moving forward."

– Wyatt Crosher, BSB

OSU Needs To Get Defense, Discipline In Gear

involving misdirection – or perhaps more accurately described as now-you-see-it, now-you-don't stuff one might find contained in a late-night magic act on the Las Vegas Strip.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Particularly galling was a play during which the quarterback fakes a shotgun snap going over his head with the ball actually going to a running back, who tries to sneak unseen through the mass of bodies at the point of attack. That play rarely works against any defense above the high school level, yet Rutgers running back Isaih Pacheco turned it into a 66-yard romp down the sideline that set up his team's first touchdown of the game – and that was another trick play.

This time, Scarlet Knights QB Noah Vedral sprinted to his right before throwing a back-war pass across the field to offensive tackle Raiqwon O'Neal, and the 296-pounder rumbled untouched into the end zone.

The only question was why Schiano waited so long to reach into his bag of tricks. While running up its 35-3 halftime lead, Ohio State held an equally lopsided 353-83 edge in total yardage, and the result of the game was anything but in doubt.

Still, you got the distinct feeling the Buckeyes were uninterested during the final 30 minutes, and that disinterest led to Rutgers getting the better of them on numerous occasions.

And don't get me started on nine more penalties, of which four were holding calls on the offensive line, each of those wiping positive gains, including three completed passes that would have been worth another 31 yards for Fields. For those of you keeping score at home, OSU has now been flagged 21 times in three games, including four personal foul penalties. Did I mention something about discipline?

There is little doubt that Ohio State holds a distinctive talent advantage over every other team in the Big Ten. Maryland with its suddenly resurgent passing attack and an overachieving Indiana will give OSU all they've got, and no matter how wounded Michigan appears to be, that rivalry game must always receive the players' and coaches' full attention.

But when/if the Buckeyes are fortunate enough to make the College Football Playoff, the kind of performance they put on against Rutgers simply won't do.

If Ohio State truly is a national championship contender, it's time the team started acting like it.

You've Gotta Be Kidding

Jim Harbaugh's fall from grace (if he truly ever had any) at Michigan and Luke Fickell's remarkable resurrection of the program at the University of Cincinnati has provided social media with more than a few hallucinations of late – namely Fickell as the favorite to replace Harbaugh.

Harbaugh's team lost a 38-21 decision to Indiana on Nov. 7, marking the first win for the Hoosiers in the series since 1987 and the Wolverines' worst loss to IU since a 26-7 defeat in 1959. The loss dropped Michigan to 1-2 for the season, the first time that has happened since 2008, the initial year of the disastrous Rich Rodriguez experiment.

Meanwhile, Fickell presided over his team's 38-10 win against Houston, a victory

that moved the Bearcats' record to a perfect 6-0 for the second time in the past three seasons. It marked a program-record 18th consecutive home victory for Cincinnati, one of only four teams to remain undefeated at home the past two seasons. The other three are Ohio State, Notre Dame and Clemson.

It only stands to reason that Fickell, still only 47, is going to be on the short list for a host of schools seeking to make a coaching change before 2021.

One of those schools might or might not be Michigan. Harbaugh has one more year to go on a contract that pays him approximately \$8 million per year (he took a cut from that amount this year because of the shortened season), and there is little doubt opposing coaches are using his perceived lame-duck status against him on the recruiting trail.

Whether Harbaugh stays or goes is a discussion for another time. Whether Fickell would entertain the head coaching job at the University of Michigan is another matter entirely.

According to people who are close to the situation, Fickell (as well as his wife and six kids) find Cincinnati living much to their liking. They already had a bite of the big-time coaching apple and it left a lingering, bitter taste. The UC job has typically been viewed as a steppingstone to bigger things (see Mike Gottfried, Watson Brown, Mark Dantonio, Brian Kelly and Butch Jones), but Fickell is building a program and he seems to be thoroughly enjoying that.

The Bearcats don't play in a Power Five conference, but with the ever-changing landscape of college football, who can say they won't be switching leagues in the very near future?

Will Fickell remain at Cincinnati for the remainder of his coaching career? Things inevitably change, and forever is a mighty long time. But would he leave the Queen City for Ann Arbor? You'd have to do a lot of convincing for me to ever believe that.

You'd also have to do a lot of convincing for me to believe Michigan would fire Harbaugh before the end of the season. The Wolverines haven't made an in-season coaching change since 1891.

On This Date

Nov. 7 hasn't always been kind to Ohio State. The 49-27 win against Rutgers pushed the Buckeyes' all-time record to just 11-8-1 on that date.

During the early years of the program, playing on Nov. 7 produced some anomalies, including the first game played on that date. Oberlin College made the 120-mile trip to Columbus and returned home with a 50-0 victory on Nov. 7, 1892, a game that was played on a Monday afternoon. The Yeomen were coached that year by John W. Heisman.

The first time the Buckeyes played a Big Ten opponent on Nov. 7 came in 1914 when the team traveled to Bloomington and scored a 13-3 victory against Indiana. Ohio State lost at Michigan by a 36-0 final on Nov. 7, 1903, but the Buckeyes wouldn't join the Western Conference for another decade.

The only tie on the Nov. 7 ledger came in 1959 when the Buckeyes played the Hoosiers to a 0-0 tie in Ohio Stadium. That is one of 16 scoreless ties in program history.

And the last time OSU lost a Nov. 7 game came in 1998 when Nick Saban brought his unranked Michigan State team into Ohio Stadium and scored a 28-24 upset of the top-ranked Buckeyes. The loss ultimately cost Ohio State the national championship that season as the team finished second to Tennessee in the final polling.

There are precious few certainties in life, among them death and taxes, of course. Another is the fact that despite the point-a-minute offenses that populate college football these days, the old adage remains true that defense still wins championships.

How can I make such a claim after the first weekend in November featured nearly two dozen teams from the Football Bowl Subdivision topping the 40-point mark and seven of those cracking 50? Because when the game is on the line, the defense usually does the heavy lifting.

Case in point. The thrilling double-overtime match between top-ranked Clemson and No. 4 Notre Dame was one of those games that featured plenty of offense – 87 points and 992 total yards to be exact. But during the second overtime, when it looked like the teams might play well into Sunday morning, the Fighting Irish dialed up a withering pass rush that resulted in a 47-40 victory to give Notre Dame its first win against a No. 1-ranked team since 1993.

I mention that game only because of the sharp contrast to a contest played about the same time, some 250 miles to the southeast in Ohio Stadium where third-ranked Ohio State jumped out to a 35-3 halftime lead against Rutgers before allowing an absurd number of trick plays to provide for a largely unsatisfying 49-27 final score.

Fan reaction was predictably split between those who felt the Buckeyes should have flexed more muscle against the Scarlet Knights and those who believe criticizing any 22-point victory reveals more than a little bit of spoilage among the faithful. Still, it seems that after three games in what will be a shortened season, the kind of shenanigans OSU fell for against Rutgers ought to set off alarm bells throughout the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

There is no doubt Ohio State has one of the nation's best offenses with Justin Fields operating at a level never before seen from an OSU quarterback. He has thrown for 908 yards in his first three games, the most at that juncture in program history. He has 11 touchdown passes and only 11 incompletions through three games, and his 86.7 completion percentage (72 for 83) leads the nation by a mile for anyone with more than 25 attempts.

Receivers Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson form one of the most lethal one-two punches in college football, and if the Buckeyes ever get untracked in the running game, Ohio State can continue to match almost any other team point for point on the scoreboard.

The problem is that Fields and company might have to do just that if their defensive counterparts don't stop acting like they're still a bunch of undisciplined high-schoolers trying to make spectacular plays for their recruiting videos. One week after proving it can, indeed, play assignment football when it has to, the Ohio State defense reverted to something out of an old Keystone Kops movie. (You kiddos can look that up on YouTube.)

Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano – the same stone-faced Greg Schiano who directed the Ohio State defense for three seasons under Urban Meyer – threw everything at the Buckeyes except the kitchen sink. Truth be told, Schiano threw everything including the kitchen sink, an old refrigerator and a couple of snow tires at the Buckeyes, and they didn't handle the chicanery very well.

Many of Schiano's tricks were reserved for special teams. There were cross-field passes on kick returns, including one that resulted in a 58-yard touchdown, as well as a couple of onside kicks, one of which was initially ruled as recovered by the Knights before replay overturned the call.

But especially disheartening were the ruses



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PUBLISHER
Frank Moskowitz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER
Becky Roberts

MANAGING EDITOR EMERITUS
Mark Rea

PRINT PRODUCT COORDINATOR
Andrew Lind

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Karen Wachsman 1944-1999

PHOTOGRAPHY
Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam
Kevin Dye Josh Winslow
Andrew Lind

CONTRIBUTORS
Wyatt Crosher Patrick Mayhorn
Bob Roehm David Breithaupt
Bill Conley Mark Schmetzer
Joe Dempsey Steve Siegfried
Rich Exner Jeff Svoboda
Mike Wachsman Craig Merz

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES
Jan Jager Dave Tebay
Ron Friedman

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No. 6	Nov. 14	No. 12	Dec. 26

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

The next issue (Nov. 21 cover date) will be mailed on Nov. 17.

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Brown Sidelined For Season, Haubeil Day-To-Day

Ohio State is going to be without one of its top contributors off the bench at cornerback for the remainder of the season. As feared when he was carted off the field after suffering a noncontact leg injury in Ohio State's Oct. 31 win against Penn State, junior cornerback Cameron Brown's season is over.

Brown tore his Achilles and had surgery for it on Nov. 3, marking the beginning of a recovery process expected to take several months, as it did for Buckeye linebacker Tuf Borland in 2018 and halfback Master Teague in 2019. In both those cases, the injury was suffered in spring practice and the player was able to return for fall camp, roughly five months later.

Head coach Ryan Day confirmed the injury on Nov. 3, saying that the loss is very costly for the Buckeyes.

"Cam came with experience this season in a position where we couldn't afford to lose anyone. So, to lose Cam, that's a significant hit. Obviously we wish for him to get a healthy procedure and healthy recovery, and we really feel bad for him and his family."

Day was quick to mention that without Brown in the lineup, Ohio State will need players who were behind him on the depth chart to step up. Former five-star Tyreke Johnson, now in his third season in the program, appears to be the favorite to take over Brown's vacated spot.

"I think Tyreke Johnson has to step up," Day said. "I think Ryan Watts has to step up. We're hoping to get Lejond (Cavazos) back here and get him on the field. Marcus Williamson may have to do a little cross (training) work and just be ready to go. Those guys are going to have to step up in a big way. We're going to have to get guys ready to play with some depth."

Defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs – who helped to recruit Brown to Columbus during his first stint with the Buckeyes – echoed that "next man up" mantra.

"I think anytime you lose good players, it's going to affect you," Coombs said. "Other players are going to have to step up. You know, the whole 'next man up' thing is no joke – especially this year. I think we've been training our guys from June for the possibility of having to be able to play in a game suddenly. I think that's really important to try to prepare them for that."

"In the secondary room right now, it's all hands on deck. Everybody has to understand that their role may change slightly this week's game. It may change

for the next five weeks. You had better be prepared to play more than one position in the back end, because there are going to be moving parts as we go through a season like this."

While Brown's injury is the most significant and long-term, he's not the only Buckeye who missed Ohio State's Nov. 7 matchup with Rutgers due to health issues. Kicker Blake Haubeil was listed as day-to-day throughout the week leading up to the game as he dealt with a groin injury that led to his early departure against Penn State. He was downgraded to "out" on Ohio State's weekly injury report.

"I don't know exactly how long it's going to be with Blake, if he'll be ready tomorrow or it's kind of a day-to-day thing," Day said on Nov. 3.

With Haubeil out, Ohio State turned to true freshman Jake Seibert, who was perfect on his seven extra-point attempts against the Scarlet Knights.

"Jake's definitely an option," Day said. "He came here for a reason. Especially now with the rule where this year really doesn't count (for eligibility purposes), he's definitely an option."

Lastly, of the notable players out on that injury report, senior tight end Jake Hausmann did not play against Rutgers for an undisclosed reason. He played 15 snaps against Penn State and was graded out as a champion by Ohio State's coaching staff.

Buckeyes Jump Clemson, Fall Behind Irish In Polls

Ohio State may have jumped Clemson in both the Amway coaches poll and the Associated Press top 25 poll, but it remained at No. 3 following a 49-27 win over Rutgers on Nov. 7.

The Buckeyes did not move up following their win, despite a loss that dropped Clemson from the top spot to No. 4, because of whom the Tigers went up against. Notre Dame, who was ranked fourth in both polls the week prior, jumped the Buckeyes to move to No. 2 after its 47-40 double-overtime victory.

Both Ohio State and the Fighting Irish trailed No. 1 Alabama by a large margin in the polls, with the Crimson Tide earning 55 and 59 first-place votes in the AP and coaches polls, respectively. Ohio State had a combined five first-place votes (one in AP, four in coaches).

Indiana, which is now 3-0 after a dominant 38-21 win over Michigan, moved up to No. 10 in both polls. Also from the Big Ten, Wisconsin ranked No. 13 and 14 in the AP and coaches polls, respectively, while Northwestern made its way into both polls at No. 23.

Maryland and Purdue each received votes in both polls but did not crack the top 25, while Michigan received votes only in the coaches poll.

OSU-Maryland Kick Scheduled For 3:30

After two straight prime-time kicks against Penn State and Rutgers, Ohio State is returning to the middle of the day for at least one game. The Buckeyes' Nov. 14 matchup with Maryland is scheduled to kick off at 3:30 p.m. on the Big Ten Network. It's the first 3:30 kick of the season and Ohio State's second straight appearance on BTN.

The Buckeyes were 3-0 when playing on the network last season – beating Miami (Ohio), Northwestern and Rutgers – and 2-0 in games that kicked off at 3:30

BSB Staff Caught Off Guard By Schiano's Trickery

After two weeks of amazingly accurate prognostication by the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff, our predictors were snookered by former Buckeye defense coordinator Greg Schiano and his trickery. None of the staff was close in the projections for the Rutgers game. Wyatt Crosher had it 63-14, Joe Dempsey 59-14, Andrew Lind 70-10 and Patrick Mayhorn 56-7 in analysis posted on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com.

Staff predictions are posted each gameday morning. The guys will be back at it on Nov. 14, with their thoughts on the interesting matchup with Maryland.

The BSB staff also provides electronic recruiting coverage, daily stories and updates, as well as presenting reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives on BuckeyeSports.com. We will be featuring reprints covering games from our 40th Anniversary Football Season as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays this fall.

Additionally, staff members man the BuckeyeSports.com Forum, interacting with subscribers on the hot topics of the day. Don't forget the live Official Game Thread. If something interesting, troubling or exciting happens in the game, share your thoughts in real time.

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

Become A Buckeye Sports Bulletin VIP

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

As most of you know, the newspaper business these days is challenging in the best of times. BSB is now facing more challenges with recent events that have slowed the economy.

"We want to thank the many BSB readers who have stepped up and shown their support for Buckeye Sports Bulletin through the VIP program," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said. "It is a true vote of confidence in what we are doing now and what we have done the previous 39 years."

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

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

With the \$50 Brutus VIP upgrade, Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers will have their names and cities listed in two different issues annually as supporters of BSB.

Those who add \$100 to their subscription will have their names and cities listed in all 24 issues each year as BSB Scarlet patrons. Those who donate \$125 or more will be designated as Elite patrons in each issue.

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

The following are our Elite Wachsman, Elite and Scarlet VIP subscribers. Brutus level VIPs will have their names listed at a later date.

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p.m. (Miami of Ohio and Rutgers).

Against Maryland, Ohio State is 6-0 all-time, though the Buckeyes had quite the time of it when they last traveled to College Park, edging out the Terrapins in overtime in a wild 52-51 thriller in 2018.

Empty Stadiums Louder Than They Look

The Big Ten has a wildly different look to it this season with empty stadiums across the conference due to COVID-19 restrictions, but according to Day, those

2020 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2020 Record
Oct. 24	NEBRASKA	W, 52-17	FOX	0-2
Oct. 31	at Penn State*	W, 38-25	ABC	0-3
Nov. 7	RUTGERS	W, 49-27	BTN	1-2
Nov. 14	at Maryland	3:30 p.m.	BTN	2-1
Nov. 21	INDIANA*	TBA	TBA	3-0
Nov. 28	at Illinois*	TBA	TBA	0-3
Dec. 5	at Michigan State*	TBA	TBA	1-2
Dec. 12	MICHIGAN*	12 p.m.	FOX	1-2
Dec. 19	Big Ten Championship**	8 p.m.	FOX	

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

stadiums can still generate some serious noise for coaches and players to work around. With teams allowed to play a consistent 70 decibel “crowd murmur” noise track provided by the Big Ten that can increase to 90 decibels in big moments, the idea of home-field advantage has apparently not completely left the sport this season.

“The games I see on TV, you don’t feel that,” Day said. “But there are 90 decibels going on in the game. Sometimes it’s louder than being in a stadium. It’s very, very difficult to communicate. And I don’t know if that really shows during the game when you’re watching it on TV. Turn it up to 90 decibels in your house and try to communicate with somebody with a mask on. It’s virtually impossible. I mean, it’s really hard. And then it’s banging around in the stadium because there’s no fans to absorb the sound. So, it’s still not easy, but it’s very different than having 105,000-107,000 people in the stands.”

The change in decibels makes for a difficult adjustment as well, and it’s been a challenge for the Buckeyes to appropriately prepare for.

“I think it’s very hard,” Day said. “They limit the amount of people that are actually on headsets to graduate assistants and full-time coaches. So if you’re trying to communicate with anybody other than that and they have the crowd noise up to 90 ... The only time the rule is it’s at 70 when the center’s over the ball. So, any other time, they can crank it up to 90, which is very, very hard to communicate. It is what it is. That’s what was agreed upon. But it’s a major challenge.”

Despite the potential obstacles for communication, Day did note that the empty stadium does make for a very different experience.

“Being on the field and playing in the game without a crowd is very, very different, for sure,” Day said. “I don’t think it’s the same.”

While Ohio State and other conference members continue to adjust, the Big Ten may be eyeing a change to its policy in the coming weeks. Jeff Potrykus of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported on Nov. 3 that the conference plans to revisit its decision to not allow any fans into stadiums this season.

“Received a heads-up (on Nov. 2 that) the (Big Ten) plans to revisit having limited fans in the stands,” Potrykus posted to his Twitter account. The Big Ten has released no official statement on the matter as of press time.

Ohio State Drawing Large TV Ratings

Though Buckeye fans can’t pack Ohio Stadium to watch Ohio State play this season, network ratings through the early stages of the Big Ten season indicate that there are still plenty of eyes on OSU this fall.

In its first two games of the season,

Ohio State drew 6.18 million and 6.53 million viewers respectively in its wins against Nebraska and Penn State, good for the second- and third-most watched games of the season to that point, trailing only Alabama-Georgia, which aired on Oct. 17 and drew 9.61 million viewers.

While certainly eye-popping for network executives, those numbers have also drawn the attention of the national college football media, including The Athletic’s Stewart Mandel, who called Ohio State a “TV ratings juggernaut.”

Two Buckeyes Lose Black Stripes

There are only a few players left on Ohio State’s roster with black stripes remaining on their helmets, after two more players officially joined the team since BSB last published by shedding their stripes. Seibert – who started for the Buckeyes at kicker in place of Haubeil against Rutgers – lost his stripe on Nov. 4, as did walk-on wide receiver Marvin Davies. They’re the 25th and 26th players to lose their stripes this season.

Seibert came to Ohio State as a three-star prospect and the No. 2 kicker in the 2020 class out of Cincinnati La Salle. He is grayshirting this season, meaning he is not under scholarship but is still eligible to play.

“I just want to thank you all for giving me the opportunity. I always want to thank the strength staff and coaches,” Seibert said in a video posted to Twitter of his speech to the team. “Go Bucks!”

Davies is a first-year walk-on for the Buckeyes and the second walk-on to shed his black stripe this season, along with SMU graduate transfer tight end Corey Rau. He comes from Orange High School in Cleveland and is listed at 5-11 and 200 pounds.

“Hey, I just want to say, give all glory and honor to God for giving me this opportunity,” Davies said. “Thank you (wide receivers coach Brian Hartline) and Zone 6 for welcoming me in, all you guys (in the wide receivers room) mean a lot to me. Coach Quinn (Tempel, director of football operations) for helping me in the summer get my weight up. Go Bucks!”

Schiano Had A ‘Great’ Experience At OSU

Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano departed from Ohio State following the 2018 season and Day’s promotion to head coach, but he told media in the lead-up to the OSU-Rutgers game that he has no hard feelings toward the Buckeyes or toward Day, despite the rocky end to his tenure in Columbus.

“There’s a lot of really good people that I had the chance to work with at Ohio State that they’ll be lifelong friends, so I look at it as a great experience,”

BSB Podcast Enhances Online Coverage

Buckeye Sports Bulletin now has a podcast to work in tandem with BuckeyeSports.com to keep BSB subscribers informed of all of the latest around Ohio State football, basketball, recruiting and everything else.

The Buckeye Sports Bulletin podcast covers Ohio State from all angles, with input from beat writers who cover everything from football and recruiting to men’s volleyball and women’s hockey, and everything in-between. With BSB’s deep Rolodex of former Buckeye players, coaches and college sports analysts around the country, as well as in-house experts Joe Dempsey and Andrew Lind, the BSB podcast has you covered on all things Buckeye, all the time. Staffers Patrick Mayhorn and Wyatt Crosher host with a constantly rotating guest list to get insight and analysis on the latest in Ohio State news.

With Ohio State’s 2020 season under way, the BSB podcast has moved to two shows a week: a preview show released at 10 a.m. on the Friday before each game and a recap show released on the following Monday, reacting to all of the action in the latest Buckeye game. Those preview shows feature an in-depth interview with a beat writer who covers Ohio State’s upcoming opponent, to provide the best possible insight on the matchup for the Buckeyes.

The show is free for all listeners. To find the show, go to your favorite podcast app or website and type in “Buckeye Sports Bulletin podcast,” and click the subscribe button. You can listen on Amazon Music, Apple Podcasts, Audible, Google Podcasts, iHeartRadio, Podbean, Spotify, Stitcher and anywhere else that podcasts are found.

For those of you who are new to the podcast world, the show is also posted at 10 a.m. every Friday on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as in the BSB Fan Forum. The recap shows will be posted every Monday morning, at the same time as the Friday previews.

Schiano said.

Additionally, Schiano mentioned Day, Coombs, athletic director Gene Smith, strength and conditioning coordinator Mickey Marotti and former co-defensive coordinator Luke Fickell as OSU staffers whom he relished working with.

On Day specifically, Schiano called him an excellent coach and said that he knew he had a bright future when he first arrived at Ohio State as co-offensive coordinator in 2017.

“When Urban told me he was going to hire him, I said, ‘Man, that’s going to be a great hire,’” Schiano said. “And sure enough, you could tell the day he got there, he’s a rising star. And he’s doing a tremendous job with the program, taking it over from Urban and putting his own stamp on it, but keeping – I know a lot of the people

there – he kept a lot of things and he put his own stamp on it, and that’s really, I think, what good coaches do.

“We’re close. He’s an excellent football coach. He and his family are great people. And when we go to compete, we compete. Otherwise, we’re friends.”

Schiano was also quick to compliment the Ohio State football program at large, citing it as an example that he would like Rutgers to follow and aspire to be.

“I think that that’s what we aspire to,” Schiano said. “So it will be a little different, because it won’t be 108,000 people, it won’t be the traditional gala of college football that happens in our conference, but it’s still a tremendous opponent. And it’s in prime time, and talking to the people here, we haven’t had a ton of those. So that makes it special for our kids.”

While Day ultimately made the call to move on from Schiano as DC when he took over as head coach, he returned Schiano’s compliments in his press conference on Nov. 3.

“First off, when we first got here, just a lot of respect for the way he went about his business every day, and then when everything went down that summer, leading into taking over for those first three games, in the preseason, he was a huge help to me – just a great resource,” Day said of Schiano. “He really helped me, just in terms of navigating through the preseason and the first three games. So I’m forever in debt to him for that. And

then just watching the way he really just coached the coaches, he does a great job.

“He’s a relentless recruiter, really good communicator. Again, he can see the issues that are coming down the road. He can get out in front of things really well. And so, when you combine all those things, there’s a lot to learn from there. And it’s no surprise – you can already see how well things are going at Rutgers, how that team looks, and I think he’s going to build something really good there.”

Buckeyes Tied Atop Championship Odds

Ohio State picked up a slight boost in the BetOnline.ag sportsbook after its 13-point win over Penn State, moving from +225 odds to win the national championship – behind Alabama and Clemson – up to +200, jumping the Tigers and moving into a dead heat with the Crimson Tide atop the book. After it struggled to put away Boston College, Clemson fell from +175 to +225, just behind the top two.

Quarterback Justin Fields also moved up in the Heisman odds, though his odds did not change. Instead, those of Clemson’s Trevor Lawrence fell from -120 to +250, while Fields remains at +150, tied with Alabama quarterback Mac Jones, who jumped all the way from +600 after a dominant showing against Mississippi State.

Through three games, Fields has already tallied 908 yards passing while completing 86.7 percent of his passes, finding the end zone through the air 11 times.

Togiai, Fields, Olave, Stover Earn Honors

Fields, wide receiver Chris Olave, tight end Cade Stover and defensive tackle Tommy Togiai earned intra-team and Big Ten honors for their performances against Penn State.

Fields and Togiai led the way. Fields was named Big Ten co-offensive player of the week after completing 28 of 34 passing attempts for 318 yards and four touchdowns against the Nittany Lions, while Togiai took sole honors for conference defensive player of the week after his seven tackles and three sacks. This

Continued On Page 6



Continued From Page 5

is the first time that either player has won Big Ten player of the week honors, despite Fields claiming the conference offensive player of the year title in 2019.

Within the Ohio State program, Togiai was named a champion and the defensive player of the game following the win over the Nittany Lions, while Olave took the crown on offense and Stover claimed it on special teams.

The Buckeyes named 24 champions in total, including the entire starting offense – Fields, Master Teague, Olave, Garrett Wilson, Jameson Williams, Luke Farrell, Jeremy Ruckert, Thayer Munford, Harry Miller, Josh Myers, Wyatt Davis and Nicholas Petit-Frere – and reserves Hausmann and Trey Sermon and the entire starting defense – Togiai, Haskell Garrett, Zach Harrison, Jonathon Cooper, Tuf Borland, Baron Browning, Pete Werner, Marcus Hooker and Josh Proctor – save for the cornerbacks, Shaun Wade, Sevnyn Banks and Marcus Williamson. Tyreke Smith got the nod as well off the bench.

McLaurin Earns Captaincy Role

Former Ohio State wide receiver Terry McLaurin couldn't have asked for a much better start to his professional career. Since being selected in the third round of the 2019 NFL draft by the Washington Redskins – now referred to as the Washington Football Team – McLaurin has served as one of the lone bright spots for the downtrodden franchise.

During a 3-13 season in his rookie campaign, McLaurin led the Football Team in targets (93), receptions (58),

receiving yards (919) and touchdowns (seven), earning All-Rookie honors for his efforts.

Now in year two, McLaurin is adding to his list of accomplishments. After seven games and another strong start for him on the field, Washington announced on Nov. 4 that the former Buckeye is now a captain after a unanimous vote by his teammates.

"While it's a great honor," McLaurin said, "I feel like the thing that helped me get this honor was coming to work every day, being the guy that works hard and walks the walk and doesn't talk the talk."

McLaurin's ability as a leader drew attention on Oct. 25 after Washington's 25-3 win over Dallas.

"I know I'm still a young guy, not a captain or anything, but the way we came out this week, it was better than last week," McLaurin said in a now viral locker room video posted to Twitter after the game. "I thought we deserved to win last week the way we came out in practice. That was complementary football from the offense to the defense to the special team."

"Feel this, enjoy this (stuff) right now because that's what we could build on. Now we're right in the thick of it. So we're going to take this week off,

take care of yourself, take care of each, take care of your bodies man, because we're right in the middle of everything we want," McLaurin said. "So I just had to say that, man, let's come back even stronger after this bye week."

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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. In these unique times, we are recommending the upgrade even more vigorously. With the pandemic, the post office is more shorthanded than ever.

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From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1985

Jim Karsatos didn't let a cold and rainy day right off Lake Michigan slow him down when he went up against Northwestern on Nov. 9.

It was a record-equaling day for the junior Buckeye quarterback despite the harsh conditions, when he threw for 275 yards and three touchdowns and the Buckeyes, ranked third or fourth depending on the national poll you were looking at, played pitch and catch all day against the Wildcats.

A 35-17 win was all in a day's work for Karsatos. The three TD tosses gave him 17 on the season, tying an OSU single-season record set by Art Schlichter in 1981.

"As long as they kept the ball dry, we didn't have any trouble," Karsatos said of his success throwing in poor weather. "Once the ball gets wet, it's kind of tough."

30 Years Ago – 1990

With the offensive machine running smoothly for a third consecutive week, Ohio State blasted a 48-7 hole in Northwestern Nov. 3 and set up a confrontation between the Buckeyes and Iowa the following week.

While OSU was busy thumping the Wildcats, the Hawkeyes jumped all over Illinois, 54-28, and took over sole possession of first place in the Big Ten standings.

The Buckeyes were still alive in the race for the league championship and Rose Bowl berth despite the fact that they remained in fourth place with a 3-1-1 conference mark.

If Ohio State was to earn a trip to Pasadena, it needed to win all of its remaining games. Then, the Buckeyes would need to hope that Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota would all lose at least one more game before the end of the regular season.

"We've done what we've needed to do these last three weeks," said Ohio State head coach John Cooper. "Now we have to build on the confidence we've gained during those games and use it to our advantage down the stretch."

25 Years Ago – 1995

The race to the Rose Bowl was down to two teams: Ohio State and Northwestern.

The Buckeyes shrugged off a slow start and dominated Minnesota 49-21 on Nov. 4, while the Wildcats were legitimizing themselves once again with an impressive 21-10 win over Penn State.

The Buckeyes (9-0, 5-0) and Wildcats (8-1, 6-0) held a two-game advantage over their nearest pursuer, Michigan (7-2, 3-2), in the loss column. The Wolverines, shocking 28-25 losers at Michigan State, needed nothing short of a miracle – Northwestern and OSU would each need to lose twice – to make the Rose Bowl.

"We figure we've got to win out," said Cooper after his Buckeyes downed the Gophers. "That's the way we're approaching it. It would be nice to get some help from somebody else."

"But we're 9-0, happy to be there and we have three tough ballgames left in our conference. We have to take care of our own business. Northwestern is right there, so we have to keep winning."

20 Years Ago – 2000

A week after a heartbreaking 31-27 loss to Purdue took Ohio State all but out of the Rose Bowl race, OSU fell behind again early against a struggling Michigan State squad, 13-3.

But a big play by defensive end Brent Johnson and steady running by tailback Derek Combs saved the day. The 16th-ranked Buckeyes rallied for a 27-13 win over the Spartans before an Ohio Stadium-record crowd of 98,406.

"We got our running game going again, especially in the second half," said Cooper, whose team improved to 7-2 overall and 4-2 in Big Ten play. "But the credit today goes to our defense."

The defense allowed the Spartans to score on their first two possessions. But the Buckeyes buckled down on 252-pound MSU tailback T.J. Duckett and bottled up freshman quarterback Jeff Smoker. MSU finished with just 211 yards total offense and committed three turnovers that led directly to 17 OSU points.

15 Years Ago – 2005

Forced to dissect why Ohio State could do no better than a 6-0 lead for much of the first half before cruising to a 40-2 victory over Illinois on Nov. 5, perhaps Illini punter Steve Weatherford summed it up best.

"We played our hearts out today, but we were outmatched," Weatherford said.

After hanging with the Buckeyes for the better part of those first 30 minutes, that started to show. Ohio State erupted for a trio of third-quarter touchdowns during a 7:14 spurt and eventually ran away with the 38-point victory. The only thing that prevented the game from being the Buckeyes' first shut-out since a 20-0 win over Northwestern in 2003 was a muffed extra-point attempt that was returned 75 yards to the end zone.

10 Years Ago – 2010

Ohio State seemed to be caught Nov. 13 basking in an unusually warm late autumn afternoon at Ohio Stadium and fell behind visiting Penn State by a 14-3 score at halftime.

But when the sun went down, the eighth-ranked Buckeyes suddenly woke up.

Fueled by a huge fourth-down defensive stop of the Nittany Lions just before halftime, OSU tallied five unanswered touchdowns – including two on interception returns – and wound up cruising to a 38-14 victory that kept them on pace for a sixth consecutive Big Ten championship.

"The turning point in the game was when we stopped them on fourth down in the second quarter," head coach Jim Tressell said. "Our guys went out there in the second half and took over, but I think it was fueled by how hard that defense fought to stop them (before halftime)."

"We weren't a great first-half team (and) those are the facts. I guess we do a bad job after open weeks or something. I don't know. But they played their fannies off in the second half and I'm awfully proud of them."

Five Years Ago – 2015

Two weeks after delivering a knockout blow against Rutgers in its most lopsided win of the season, Ohio State left its game against Minnesota bruised and battered.

Without the quarterback who had finally seized the starting job in a 49-7 demolition of the Scarlet Knights, the Buckeyes looked flat in a 28-14 win over the Golden Gophers. In what had become a recurring observation for the 2015 season, Ohio State didn't play its best. The team that entered the season with historic expectations looked pedestrian at times under the bright lights of Ohio Stadium on Nov. 7.

Cardale Jones, starting for the suspended J.T. Barrett at quarterback, was sacked four times on the night. Running back Ezekiel Elliott cleared the century mark on the ground once again, but nothing came easy for the junior as his long run of the night was just 15 yards and his average of 4.4 yards per carry was his second lowest of the season.

One Year Ago – 2019

Defensive end Chase Young did not play in Ohio State's 73-14 win over Maryland on Nov. 9 and looked as though he could be sidelined longer due to what the program described as "a possible NCAA issue from 2018 that the department of athletics is looking into."

In a statement released that afternoon, Young said he "made a mistake last year by accepting a loan from a family friend" whom he had known since the summer before his freshman year at Ohio State, but he had repaid the loan in full and was working with the university and the NCAA to "get back on the field as soon as possible."

Young – a junior who was just one sack shy of breaking the school single-season record – was coming off arguably the best game of his career, a four-sack performance in a 38-7 win over Wisconsin on Oct. 26.

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Schiano Gets Creative In Second Half Against OSU

Continued From Page 1

"It's not an excuse, but you're up big at half, you come out and you just kind of take your foot off the gas," Borland said. "That starts with me, and that can't happen."

Day noted the Buckeyes had to adjust their practice schedule during the week after the NCAA gave student-athletes Nov. 3 off to vote in the presidential election. But Borland said they can't use that as an excuse, either.

"We pride ourselves on being professional no matter what the circumstances are," Borland said. "Working on your craft, improving on the things you need to work on, that's just really what we're focused on no matter what day we're practicing."

Ohio State was never in jeopardy of losing to Rutgers, but Day's demeanor after the game speaks to his desire to play at a championship level for a full four quarters.

After all, the Buckeyes won't be able to sleepwalk through a potential College Football Playoff game like they can a lesser Big Ten opponent.

"We have to practice better," Day said. "If we want to be where we need to be, if we want to be a great team, then it has to happen – especially on Tuesday and Wednesday. That's going to be a focus this week."

"We're 3-0. We're playing good football. We've got a lot of good players on the team. We came out and played really, really well in the first half. But we're critical, and that's a good thing. We want perfection, and we're looking for greatness."



COURTESY OF OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

BACK WHERE HE BELONGS – Ohio State's 49-27 win over Rutgers marked the return of Greg Schiano, who served as the Buckeyes' defensive coordinator from 2016-18 and is now in his second stint with the Scarlet Knights.

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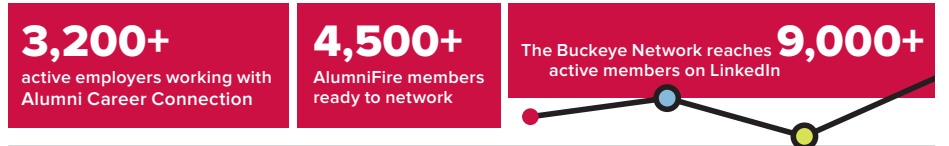
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COVER STORY

Trick Plays Make It Interesting

Trailing 35-3 early in the second half of his return to Ohio Stadium, Rutgers head coach and former Ohio State defensive coordinator Greg Schiano dug deep into his bag of tricks.

Facing a third-and-1 from the Scarlet Knights' 30-yard line, running back Isaih Pacheco took a direct snap while quarterback Noah Vedral faked like the ball went over his head, which allowed Pacheco to race 66 yards down the sideline to the Buckeyes' 4-yard line.

Then, on the very next play left tackle Raiqwon O'Neal caught a pass from Vedral and ran it into the end zone for a touchdown to cut the deficit to 26 points.

The two teams exchanged touchdown drives before Schiano conjured up more magic in the fourth quarter.

Down 42-15, cornerback Avery Young fielded a punt from Drue Chrisman and lateraled the ball across the field to wide receiver Bo Melton, who took it 58 yards for a score.

"That's what they pay us for, to dream something up," Schiano said after the game. "It's a good play that you get to use once in a

while. People will be on it now, though."

Day had a trick up his sleeve, as well.

Facing a fourth-and-8 from their own 36-yard line midway through the second quarter, the Buckeyes lined up to punt the ball. But rather than let Chrisman flip the field, long snapper Bradley Robinson snapped the ball to running back Steele Chambers, who rushed up the middle for 38 yards.

Ohio State subsequently capped a nine-play, 66-yard drive with a 6-yard touchdown pass from Fields to Olave that extended the Buckeyes' lead to 21-3.

"You have to be aggressive," Day said. "We kind of expected (Rutgers to run trick plays), which is why we did the fake punt early on. We know Greg is creative, that he was going to do a few things, though we didn't know it was going to be all of those things.

"For the most part, I thought we did a good job. On the inside kicks, they were running all over the place. The throw back on the punt, we had a chance to get him down, but we missed a few tackles. We'll just get on the film and keep working."

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November 8, 2020 (10:22 am) in Football, Patrick Mayhorn
Highlights: Ohio State Grinds Out Another One
It certainly wasn't the prettiest win of the season for the Buckeyes, but Ohio State improved to 3-0 Saturday night with a 49-27 win over Rutgers. It also wasn't a...
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November 7, 2020 (11:43 pm) in Football
Buckeye Leaves: Justin Fields, Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson Lead Ohio State Offense, Brendon White Stands Out In Return
Ohio State jumped out to a 35-3 halftime lead against Rutgers before stumbling to a 49-27 victory at Ohio Stadium. Despite the lackluster second half, many Buckeyes stood out and...
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November 7, 2020 (11:13 pm) in Football
Fields Throws 5 TDs, Runs For One As No. 3 Ohio State defeats Rutgers 49-27
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Passing Attack Continues Hot Start To Season

In an uneven 49-27 win by Ohio State that started with a resounding 35-3 lead that slowly got chipped down by Rutgers as the second half carried on, one thing remained consistent.

Once again, junior quarterback Justin Fields came through in a big way on the offensive side of the ball, completing more than 80 percent of his passes and surpassing 300 total yards of offense for the third straight week.

GAME NOTEBOOK Wyatt Crosher

Against the Scarlet Knights, Fields finished the evening with 24 of 28 passing for 314 yards and five touchdowns while also adding another score on the ground. The passing yardage comes just short of the 318 yards Fields put up against Penn State a week prior.

Fields said that he believes that he has improved in every part of his game from his first season at Ohio State to now.

"All aspects, to be honest with you," he said after the game. "I can't really point out a few. I'm just trying to play the best I can. I feel like I'm just trying to go out there and do my best, but I'm not sure what specific things I'm doing better. I'm just trying to improve in all aspects of the game."

Fields' strong performance started on Ohio State's opening drive, where the third-

year quarterback found sophomore wideout Jameson Williams wide open in the corner of the end zone on a 38-yard deep ball for the touchdown. The score was Williams' first of the season and the second of his collegiate career, with the other coming on a 61-yard touchdown against Miami (Ohio).

Ohio State's next score also came from Fields, this time with his legs. After hitting with another sophomore wide receiver on a long pass play, this time with the recipient being Garrett Wilson for 34 yards, Fields decided to keep it on an option and waltzed into the end zone from 7 yards out to extend the lead to 14-3.

Wilson had yet another strong showing to start his second season with the Buckeyes, finishing the game with six catches for 104 yards. This was his third straight game with 100 yards receiving or more, joining Cris Carter, David Boston and Terry Glenn as the only Ohio State wide receivers to achieve that feat.

"He's doing what he's always done, and that's just ball out," Fields said of Wilson. "I mean from the second he got here at Ohio State he's been balling out. The first spring he came in, I remember he was making crazy plays, so the coaches saw his potential. I know the players saw what he can do on the field. I mean he does it all the time in practice, so you all are seeing what he does all the time."

The Fields-Wilson combo would connect again later in the second quarter, this time in the end zone from 8 yards out to increase Ohio State's lead to 25 points. But Williams and Wilson accounted for only a pair of the five touchdowns that Fields threw on the night, and



COURTESY OF OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

BACK IN THE END ZONE – Sophomore wide receiver Jameson Williams caught his second career touchdown pass, a 38-yarder, on the opening drive of Ohio State's 49-27 win over Rutgers.



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Game Analysis

two more came from the hands of junior wide receiver Chris Olave.

Olave did not have the same flashy numbers that Wilson possessed on the stat sheet, finishing with five catches for 64 yards, but he brought in a pair of touchdowns, one from 6 yards out in the second quarter and the other from 33 yards with 11:15 to go in the fourth quarter.

On the first touchdown, Fields hit Olave through a tight window on a ball that appeared to be thrown late. But Fields managed to sneak it past the Rutgers defender into the sure hands of Olave, and the two had their first connection of the night to end in six points.

"That's the connection we have," Olave said on his trust of Fields to get him the ball. "If I get open, Justin will put the ball where it's going to be."

Fields said that play was not a scripted one, but that it worked out because of the connection that he has with his wide receiver.

"That was just a naked play, it worked out kind of like a scramble drill," Fields said. "I mean we just work on it in practice and it just happened like that in the game. We try to practice how we play, and that's how it turned out."

The second touchdown to the third-year receiver was between a pair of Scarlet Knight defenders and truly impressed Ohio State head coach Ryan Day.

"I thought the last throw to Chris, I mean he made that look like it was a 12-yard out," Day said of Fields' throw. "I have to look back on film to see where it was, but that thing had gas and it was in the hole and it was one heck of a throw."

Despite another impressive showing, this marked the first game all season where both Olave and Wilson did not both register 100 yards receiving. But this is the third straight game that the duo led the team in receiving yards, and they both continued to impress on the stat sheet, as well as in the mind of their starting quarterback, despite Fields thinking there is still plenty of room to improve as an offense.

"Those guys are both great receivers, but I don't think we're at our peak right now," Fields said. "I don't think we've reached our full potential, so of course we're going to continue to get better each and every week. I just hope we do that and hopefully that will be enough."

The other touchdown that came at the hands of Fields was a 7-yard toss to junior tight end Jeremy Ruckert, who now has three touchdown catches on the season, only one fewer than he had throughout all of the 2019 season.

Olave said that having a tight end like Ruckert or fifth-year senior Luke Farrell as a receiving weapon can open up the offense in a lot of ways, including as a way to give some extra space to the wide receivers if the defense has another threat to worry about.

"We've got great tight ends in Luke and Jeremy Ruckert," Olave said. "We've been getting the ball to them a little bit more. I feel like they're good in the passing game and they open up a lot of things for us on the outside."

On the ground, the Buckeyes had some

What Worked Well

Once again, junior quarterback Justin Fields showed exactly why he is near the front of the Heisman Trophy race, even with the Big Ten lagging behind in games played compared to other conferences. Fields was remarkably efficient for the third straight game, completing 24 of 28 passes for 314 yards and five touchdowns, while also adding a score on the ground. And, once again, sophomore wide receiver Garrett Wilson proved to be a more-than-reliable target. Wilson finished the game with six receptions for 104 yards and a touchdown. This was Wilson's third straight game with more than 100 yards receiving, making him the fourth Ohio State wide receiver to reach that accomplishment, with the others being Cris Carter (five games), David Boston (three games twice) and Terry Glenn (three games).

Ohio State also did well with sealing the game up before halftime. After a slim 7-3 lead for the Buckeyes to end the first quarter, the Buckeyes piled it on in the second, putting up 28 points and shutting out the Scarlet Knights to take a 35-3 lead into the break. Ohio State outgained Rutgers 194-11 in the second quarter.

What Didn't Work

After a very strong start, allowing just a field goal in the opening two quarters, Ohio State's defense really started to crumble in the second half, allowing 24 points and 290 yards to Rutgers in the final 30 minutes of the game. Most of Rutgers' success came through a variety of trick plays. In the third quarter, the Scarlet Knights

sneaked running back Isaih Pacheco on the snap, and Pacheco took the ball 66 yards down to the Ohio State 4-yard line. On the next play, junior offensive lineman Raiqwon O'Neal took a backward pass the rest of the way for a touchdown. Then, in the fourth quarter, Rutgers threw a lateral on a punt return to wide receiver Bo Melton, who took the return 58 yards to the house to cut the Ohio State lead to 21 points. Another issue came with penalties, as the Buckeyes ended up with nine of them for 74 yards. Three of those penalties were on sophomore guard Harry Miller, who had a trio of holding calls against him in the first half alone.

Play Of The Game

While the game was never in much doubt, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day did make a debatable decision in the first quarter, calling a run play on a third-and-8 from the Rutgers 40-yard line that went for only 1 yard. Then, on a fourth-and-7, Day elected to punt the ball back to the Scarlet Knights up only 7-3. But, with 12:29 to go in the second quarter, Day did not show the same level of passiveness when the punting crew went out there on fourth-and-8 from the Ohio State 36-yard line. On the play, the ball was directly snapped to redshirt freshman running back Steele Chambers instead of fifth-year senior punter Drue Chrisman, and Chambers took the ball up the middle and found a large portion of open grass. Chambers finished the play with a 38-yard gain, extending the Ohio State drive until Fields found Olave for a 6-yard touchdown, bringing the Buckeyes' lead to 21-3.

— Wyatt Crosher

modest success, with graduate transfer running back Trey Sermon offering the most success with 12 carries for 68 yards, most of which came on a 36-yard run that left Sermon shaken up after he fell awkwardly to the turf. Sophomore running back Master Teague once again started the game but ended with the same amount of rushes as Sermon, finishing the evening with 12 carries for 60 yards and a touchdown with a long of 25.

The best run of the night came from red-shirt freshman back Steele Chambers, who took a fake punt attempt 38 yards to the Rutgers 26-yard line. Fields, for the second straight game, did not do much damage on the ground, rushing six times for 7 net yards and the one score.

Hilliard Makes Splash In Season Debut

Ohio State sixth-year senior linebacker Justin Hilliard has been healthy for the past two weeks but only made his 2020 debut for the Buckeyes in the matchup against the Scarlet Knights due to something that was out of his control.

After missing the season opener against Nebraska due to what he said was a minor injury that gave him a small setback, Hilliard was healthy and ready to go in week two before he was forced to miss the game against Penn State due to a false positive COVID test that Hilliard said came the morning ahead of the Oct. 31 matchup.

"I was ready to go until the morning of the game," Hilliard said following the win over Rutgers. "Saturday morning we have the kind of easy 15-minute test. That came back positive.

I went straight to the hospital, did the more in-depth PCR test and that came back negative, so it was a tough process. Obviously, that was my last time being able to play Penn State. It sucks, but we're moving on."

Hilliard, who was able to be on the sidelines but could not dress for the game against the Nittany Lions, said that he was upset when he found out he was not suiting up in Happy Valley but that he was just glad that the team came out of there with a victory.

"Obviously I was frustrated," Hilliard said. "I wanted to be part of that big game, playing Penn State with my brothers for the last time. There was frustration there, a little bit of anger, but that was set aside quickly because obviously we had a goal to win that game and we did, so we're moving forward from that."

On Nov. 7, Hilliard finally did make his debut, finishing the game with a pair of tackles, one of which was a solo effort. But Hilliard also made one of the more crucial defensive plays of the game for the Buckeyes, forcing

and recovering a fumble with 9:11 to go in the second quarter to give Ohio State the ball at the Rutgers 32-yard line.

Six plays later, Fields found Wilson to make it 28-3 with less than six minutes to go in the first half.

"That's something we practice on," Hilliard said of the forced fumble. "The coaches do a great job of preparing us each week of different things offenses are going to try and get us with. I was glad I was able to make that play."

Fifth-year senior linebacker and three-time captain Tuf Borland said that Hilliard's absence was felt when Ohio State took on the Nittany Lions, and that his return to the field against Rutgers was a major spark plug for the defense.

"Obviously last week, it's just not fair," Borland said. "We were all heartbroken for him, a guy that's given so much to this program. You just feel for him. Just the energy he brings on a daily basis, those are the types of guys that mean the most to your program, and he brings it every single day so credit to him."

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Fields, Wilson Help OSU Hold Off Tricky Rutgers

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Justin Fields threw three of his five touchdowns and added a rushing TD in the first half when No. 3 Ohio State built a big lead to defeat Rutgers 49-27 at Ohio Stadium on Nov. 7.

Ohio State forced a Rutgers punt to the 11 on the first series of the game, and the Buckeyes went 89 yards in 2:51 with the seventh play a 38-yard touchdown pass to an open Jameson Williams for the 7-0 lead at 10:05. Master Teague had a 25-yard run on the first play, and Fields was 3 for 3 for 58 yards.

Rutgers, which used a lateral pass on the opening kickoff to start from its 36, used more trickery to put three points on the board at the 6:11 mark of the first. Wide receiver Aron Cruickshank gained 22 yards to the OSU 23 on a reverse then caught a 20-yarder to the 3. After an Ohio State offside made it first-and-goal from the 1, the Scarlet Knights imploded.

After a run for no gain, a holding call moved the ball back to the 11. A 1-yard loss on a run by Cruickshank and an incompleteness by Noah Vedral led to a 30-yard field goal by Guy Fava.

The Buckeyes went up 14-3 six seconds into the second quarter to complete a 61-yard, five-play, 1:38 possession. The key was a 34-yard catch at the right sideline by Garrett Wilson at the 7 on the last play of a first period that saw Fields complete all seven passes for 122 yards. Fields then did the honors, taking it in on a 7-yard run.

Ohio State coach Ryan Day had some deception as well that led to a 21-3 lead with 9:30 to go in the second quarter. On fourth-and-8 from the OSU 36, running back Steele Chambers took a direct snap when the Buckeyes lined up to punt and raced 38 yards to the Rutgers 26. Fields later rolled right and threw a 6-yard TD strike to Chris Olave.

The Fields-Wilson connection made



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

GO-TO RECEIVER – Ohio State sophomore wide receiver Garrett Wilson caught six passes for a team-high 104 yards and one touchdown, topping the 100-yard mark for the third straight game to begin the season.

it 28-3 with 5:42 left in the half following sixth-year linebacker Justin Hilliard's strip and recovery at the Rutgers 32. First, after two holding calls on left guard Harry Miller to give him a hat trick for the game, Wilson caught a ball for 22 yards to the 23 on a second-and-23.

Fields had a sneak for 2, and a personal foul tacked on 10 more to the 11. On third down, Fields found Wilson for an 8-yard score.

Teague ran for a 9-yard TD with 1:22 remaining in the second quarter to extend

the lead to 35-3. Demario McCall had a 27-yard catch-and-run to the Scarlet Knights 40 before Teague had receptions of 8 and 23 yards to the 9 to set up the score.

Second Half: Tricks And Treats

In his first return since being defensive coordinator for Urban Meyer from 2016-18, Rutgers coach Greg Schiano had more deception plays to make it 35-9 at 8:08 of the third quarter.

Tailback Isaih Pacheco took the direct snap and ripped off a 66-yard run to the 4. On the next play, left tackle Raiqwon O'Neal took a lateral and ran in from there to be credited with a rushing TD. Rutgers missed the two-point try and then failed to recover an onside kick.

From there the Buckeyes needed to go only 44 yards, and they did with the aid of a 15-yard pass interference call. The drive culminated in a TD to tight end Jeremy Ruckert across the middle to make it 42-9 with 4:49 left in the third quarter.

Ohio State's propensity for penalties (nine for 74 yards) reared its ugly head

again to help Rutgers score its next touchdown. Scarlet Knights backup QB Johnny Langan was stopped 3-yards short on a fourth-down run to the OSU 10, but Taron Vincent was guilty of a face mask infraction to move the ball to the 6.

Five seconds into the fourth quarter, Langan threw a 6-yard TD to Jovani Haskins, and with the failed two-pointer it was 42-15.

The Buckeyes then botched the kickoff. Expecting another onside kick, they weren't ready for the long boot, and McCall had a 3-yard return to the 6. OSU went three-and-out, and Drue Chrisman had a 52-yard punt that was fielded by Avery Young. He threw across the field to Bo Melton, who slipped several would-be tacklers and ran 58 yards for the touchdown to make it 42-21 after the unsuccessful two-pointer with 12:46 left in the game.

Fields responded after OSU got the onside kick and went 44 yards in four plays with Olave taking a 33-yard TD from Fields for a 49-21 lead with 11:15 left.

Rutgers wasn't through, though, and Melton's 31-yard reception to the 1 allowed Langan to run it in to make it 49-27.

Ohio State blew a chance to increase the lead after Trey Sermon ran for 36 yards to the 10. He was injured on the play, and Chambers fumbled the ball away on the next play with 4:38 left.

On the Scarlet Knights' final drive, they ran 21 plays and went 82 yards in 4:24 to reach the 2, but third-string QB Artur Sitkowski coughed up the ball and it was recovered by Dallas Gant at the 10 with 14 seconds left.

C.J. Stroud entered as quarterback, and Miyan Williams ran for 5 yards on the final play for the first OSU career snaps for each player.

Numbers

Fields was 24 of 28 for 314 yards and was sacked twice. ... Wilson had six catches for 104 yards. Olave got 64 yards out of five catches. ... Sermon led the way on the ground for OSU with 68 yards on 12 carries, and Teague had 60 yards while rushing 12 times. ... Tuf Borland led the Buckeyes with six tackles (three solo) and had the lone sack. ... Vedral was 22 of 33 for 168 yards. ... Ohio State had 517 total yards (314 passing, 203 rushing); Rutgers gained 373 yards (232-141). ... The 27 points was the most by Rutgers in seven games against Ohio State. It was also the most all-time for the Scarlet Knights on the road against a top-three opponent in six games.

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 49, Rutgers 27

Nov. 7, 2020 – Ohio Stadium, Columbus, OH

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
RUTGERS	3	0	6	18	27
OHIO STATE	7	28	7	7	49

First Quarter

OSU – Williams, 38-yard pass from Fields (Seibert kick), 10:05; 7 plays, 89 yards, 2:51 TOP.

RU – Fava, 30-yard field goal, 6:11; 9 plays, 63 yards, 3:54 TOP.

Second Quarter

OSU – Fields, 7-yard run (Seibert kick), 14:54; 5 plays, 61 yards, 1:38 TOP.

OSU – Olave, 6-yard pass from Fields (Seibert kick), 9:30; 9 plays, 66 yards, 4:16 TOP.

OSU – Wilson, 8-yard pass from Fields (Seibert kick), 5:42; 6 plays, 32 yards, 3:29 TOP.

OSU – Teague, 9-yard run (Seibert kick), 1:22; 6 plays, 74 yards, 2:44 TOP.

Third Quarter

RU – O'Neal, 4-yard run (Melton pass failed), 8:08; 6 plays, 91 yards, 2:23 TOP.

OSU – Ruckert, 7-yard pass from Fields (Seibert kick), 4:49; 7 plays, 44 yards, 3:18 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

RU – Haskins, 6-yard pass from Langan (Vedral pass failed), 14:55; 13 plays, 65 yards, 4:54 TOP.

RU – Melton, 58-yard punt return (Langan pass intercepted), 12:46.

OSU – Olave, 33-yard pass from Fields (Seibert kick), 11:15; 4 plays, 44 yards, 1:31 TOP.

RU – Langan, 1-yard run (Vedral pass failed), 7:17; 9 plays, 64 yards, 3:52 TOP.

Att. – 1,275

Weather – 58 degrees, partly cloudy; Wind E 4 mph

Team Statistics

	RU	OSU
First Downs	22	25
Rushing	5	8
Passing	14	13
Penalty	3	4
Rushes-Yards	32-141	37-203
Passing Yards	232	314
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	34-49-0	24-28-0
Offensive Plays	81	65
Total Net Yards	373	517
Third Down Efficiency	7-17	7-12
Punts-Avg.	5-46.6	4-39.5
Fumbles-Lost	2-2	1-1
Penalties	9-83	9-74
Time of Possession	28:51	31:09

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – **RU**: Pacheco 7-68; Cruickshank 2-21; Vedral 7-15; Langan 5-15; Young 3-7; Adams 4-6; Sitkowski 3-5; O'Neal 1-4. **OSU**: Sermon 12-68; Teague 12-60; Chambers 4-46; McCall 1-12; Fields 6-7; Williams 1-5; Wilson 1-5.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – **RU**: Vedral 22-33-0-168-0; Sitkowski 9-13-0-62-0; Langan 3-3-0-2-1. **OSU**: Fields 24-28-0-314-5.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – **RU**: Melton 7-86; Cruickshank 7-50; Jones 4-30; Washington 4-16; Woods 3-25; Young 3-6; Pacheco 3-6; Alaimo 2-7; Haskins 1-6. **OSU**: Wilson 6-104; Olave 5-64; Ruckert 4-29; Teague 3-37; Smith-Njigba 2-(-1); Williams 1-38; McCall 1-27; Sermon 1-11; Farrell 1-5.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.) – **RU**: Korsak 5-46.6. **OSU**: Chrisman 4-39.5.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Avg.) – **RU**: Melton 0-58.0; Young 1-0.0. **OSU**: Smith-Njigba 2-2.0; Wilson 1-9.0.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Avg.) **RU**: Cruickshank 4-14.0; Melton 0-26.0; Young 1-3.0. **OSU**: McCall 2-16.0; Johnson 1-11.0.

MISSED FIELD GOALS – **RU**: None. **OSU**: None.

FORCED FUMBLES – **RU**: TEAM. **OSU**: Hilliard.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES – **RU**: Tverdov 1-0. **OSU**: Hilliard 1-0.

INTERCEPTIONS – **RU**: None. **OSU**: None.

SACKS – **RU**: Jutwreten 1.0-6; Onyechi 1.0-5. **OSU**: Borland 1.0-8.

TACKLES FOR LOSS – **RU**: Turner 3.0-7; Fatukasi 2.0-6; Jutwreten 1.0-6; Onyechi 1.0-5; Young 1.0-1. **OSU**: Borland 1.0-8; Jean-Baptiste 1.0-4; Browning 1.0-3; Vincent 1.0-1; Pope 0.5-3; Mitchell 0.5-2.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **RU**: Fatukasi 7-6-13; Young 5-4-9; Izien 6-0-6; Jennings 3-3-6; Fogg 4-1-5; Melton 4-0-4; Turner 4-0-4; Onyechi 2-2-4; White 1-3-4; Stevens 2-0-2; Maddox-Williams 2-0-2; Tverdov 1-1-2; Dwumfour 1-1-2; Jutwreten 1-1-2; TEAM 1-0-1; Igwenagu 1-0-1; Toure 0-1-1; Kessawn 0-1-1. **OSU**: Borland 3-3-6; Wade 4-1-5; Gant 2-3-5; Browning 2-3-5; Young 4-0-4; Johnson 2-2-4; Togiai 1-3-4; Watts 3-0-3; Cooper 2-1-3; Williamson 2-1-3; Werner 1-2-3; Mitchell 1-2-3; Cage 1-2-3; Proctor 2-0-2; Garrett 2-0-2; Hooker 1-1-2; Vincent 1-1-2; Jean-Baptiste 1-1-2; Hilliard 1-1-2; Hickman 0-2-2; Jackson 0-2-2; Banks 1-0-1; Chambers 1-0-1; Simon 1-0-1; Harrison 1-0-1; TEAM 0-1-1; Babb 0-1-1; Johnson 0-1-1; Pope 0-1-1; Shaw 0-1-1; Friday 0-1-1; Stover 0-1-1.

Players In The Game

RU – Lewis, Paillant, Krimin, Vretman, Sutton, Haskins, Vedral, Pacheco, Cruickshank, Melton, Jones, Tverdov, Turner, Dwumfour, Onyechi, Fatukasi, Fogg, Melton, Avery, Izien, White, Young, Lewis, Alaimo, Snyder, Adams, Monangai, Langan, Young, Myers, Abraham, Woods, O'Neal, Sitkowski, Maddox-Williams, Korsak, Igwenagu, Singleton, Long, Jennings, Jones, Pugh, Stevens, Wright-Collins, Abdulaziz, Taylor, Barrow, Toure, Felter, Bordner, Dremel, Washington, Mason, Ahanotu, Davidovicz, Fava, Jutwreten.

OSU – Fields, Olave, Wilson, Teague, Davis, Myers, Munford, Miller, Petit-Frere, Williams, Farrell, Cooper, Jean-Baptiste, Togiai, Garrett, Browning, Banks, Werner, Williamson, Hooker, Wade, Borland, Smith, Johnson, Ransom, Watts, Hickman, DiMaccio, McCall, Mitchell, Robinson, Fleming, Jackson, Vincent, Booker, Sermon, Harrison, Smith-Njigba, Scott, Stroud, Young, Stover, Shaw, Babb, Gant, Chambers, Johnson, Williams, Rossi, Pope, Simon, Proctor, Kacherski, Hilliard, Friday, Jones, Hamdan, Hamilton, Henry-Young, Vimahi, Wray, Johnson, Jones, Hamilton, Kutscher, Cage, Ruckert, Chrisman, Potter, Seibert.

Season Statistics

2020-21 Game-By-Game

Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd	FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Oct. 24	(5) NEBRASKA	W, 52-17	1,344	Blake Haubeil	0-1	1-1	0-0	0-0	2-3
Oct. 31	(3) at Penn State (18)	W, 38-25	1,500	Dominic DiMaccio	1-2	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-2
Nov. 7	(3) RUTGERS	W, 49-27	1,275	OSU Totals	1-3	1-1	0-0	0-0	2-4
Nov. 14	(3) at Maryland	TBA		OPP Totals	1-1	2-2	0-0	1-1	4-4
Nov. 21	INDIANA	TBA		Punting					
Nov. 28	at Illinois	TBA		No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long	
Dec. 5	at Michigan State	TBA		Drue Chrisman	8	333	41.6	0	52
Dec. 12	MICHIGAN	Noon		OSU Totals	8	333	41.6	0	52
Dec. 19	Big Ten Championship Week	TBA		OPP Totals	14	652	46.6	0	56

OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	77	59
Rushing	31	20
Passing	37	33
Penalty	9	6
Average Per Game/Rush	208.7	131.7
Average Per Game/Pass	302.7	224.3
Total Offense	1534	1068
Total Plays	213	194
Average Per Game	511.3	356.0
Average Per Play	7.2	5.5
Penalties-Yards	21-168	22-204
Fumbles-Lost	5-2	5-4
Third Down Efficiency	25-43	14-36
Percentage	58%	39%
Fourth Down Efficiency	5-6	3-4
Percentage	83%	75%
Sacks-Yards	9-41	7-48
Time Of Possession Avg.	33:48	26:12

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	35	45	31	28	0	139	46.3
Opponents	13	10	16	30	0	69	23.0

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Master Teague	47	211	4.5	4
Trey Sermon	36	172	4.8	0
Steele Chambers	8	78	9.8	0
Garrett Wilson	2	67	33.5	0
Justin Fields	27	57	2.1	2
Jack Miller	2	23	11.5	1
Xavier Johnson	4	17	4.2	0
Demario McCall	1	12	12.0	0
Miyon Williams	1	5	5.0	0
TEAM	2	-16	-8.0	0
OSU Totals	130	626	4.8	7
OPP Totals	95	395	4.2	4

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Justin Fields	72	83	86.7	908	11-0	222.4
OSU Totals	72	83	86.7	908	11-0	222.4
OPP Totals	68	99	68.7	673	4-1	137.1

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Garrett Wilson	24	344	14.3	2	42
Chris Olave	18	288	16.0	4	49
Jeremy Ruckert	9	60	6.7	3	13
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	5	10	2.0	1	6
Jameson Williams	4	68	17.0	1	38
Master Teague	3	37	12.3	0	23
Luke Farrell	3	26	8.7	0	16
Trey Sermon	3	22	7.3	0	11
Demario McCall	1	27	27.0	0	27
Julian Fleming	1	13	13.0	0	13
Jake Hausmann	1	13	13.0	0	13
OSU Totals	72	908	12.6	11	49
OPP Totals	68	673	9.9	4	37

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Master Teague	4	-	-	-	-	24
Chris Olave	4	-	-	-	-	24
Jeremy Ruckert	3	-	-	-	-	18
Garrett Wilson	2	-	-	-	-	12
Justin Fields	2	-	-	-	-	12
Blake Haubeil	-	9-9	-	-	1-2	12
Jake Seibert	-	7-7	-	-	-	7
Jameson Williams	1	-	-	-	-	6
Dominic DiMaccio	-	3-3	-	-	1-2	6
Jack Miller	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	1	-	-	-	-	6
Sevyn Banks	1	-	-	-	-	6
OSU Totals	19	19-19	-	-	2-4	139
OPP Totals	9	3-3	0-1	0-5	4-4	69

Interceptions

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Marcus Hooker	1	31	31.0	0	31
OSU Totals	1	31	31.0	0	31
OPP Totals	0	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Garrett Wilson	3	32	10.7	0	22
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	2	4	2.0	0	4
OSU Totals	5	36	7.2	0	22
OPP Totals	1	58	58.0	1	58

Kickoff Returns

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Demario McCall	3	42	14.0	0	29
Xavier Johnson	1	11	11.0	0	11
Garrett Wilson	1	4	4.0	0	4
OSU Totals	5	57	11.4	0	29
OPP Totals	9	155	17.2	0	26

Def. Leaders

	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Tuf Borland	7	9	16	1.5-10	1.0-8
Pete Werner	6	10	16	1.5-5	-
Tommy Togiai	6	8	14	3.0-13	3.0-13
Marcus Hooker	10	2	12	-	-
Baron Browning	5	6	11	1.0-3	-
Shaun Wade	8	2	10	-	-
Jonathon Cooper	3	7	10	0.5-1	0.5-1
Marcus Williamson	7	2	9	-	-
Dallas Gant	5	3	8	-	-
Josh Proctor	5	2	7	1.0-5	-
Zach Harrison	4	3	7	2.5-4	1.5-2
Haskell Garrett	4	2	6	1.0-5	1.0-5
Teradja Mitchell	4	2	6	0.5-2	-
Sevyn Banks	4	2	6	-	-
Craig Young	5	0	5	-	-
Javontae Jean-Baptiste	2	3	5	2.0-12	1.0-8
Tyler Friday	1	4	5	-	-
Jerron Cage	1	4	5	-	-
Ryan Watts	4	0	4	-	-
Tyrece Johnson	2	2	4	-	-
Tyrece Smith	2	2	4	-	-
Antwuan Jackson	1	3	4	-	-
Lathan					

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 49, Rutgers 27

Ohio State sixth-year senior linebacker Justin Hilliard on returning from a one-game absence due to a false positive on a COVID-19 test: "This whole offseason that's been the focus is just keep getting better because I know this is my last shot at playing, so being out there today means so much just because I know the last couple of weeks haven't gone exactly how I want it to go. But I mean overall we have a lot to work on, but it was great to be back out there."

Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano on the fight his team showed after going down 35-3 in the first half to a top-tier opponent such as Ohio State: "We played the measuring stick in our league, in the Big Ten conference, and we didn't quite measure up. But I felt we did some good things. Unfortunately, in the first half we made some mistakes that are hard to overcome against a team like that. But I felt our kids continued to chop the whole game. I thought our coaches didn't perform or coach very well in the first half. In the second half, they continued to chop and didn't get discouraged and kept playing, and some things went our way. We know we've got a lot of work to do, but they fought, and they continued to chop the whole game. And that's a good place to be building from, so we've just got to go."

Schiano on defending against a quarterback of the caliber of Heisman Trophy finalist Justin Fields: "It's hard. I thought we did a good job putting pressure on him at times. Quite honestly, I don't even know that. I just know that we got a couple sacks. I'm watching the back end, so I don't even see the pressure part of it. He's really good. I think he will probably win the Heisman, he's that good. And when he starts to run around, he's so dangerous."

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on the ability and potential of Fields: "Pretty early on I knew he had the potential to be, I still think he has the potential to be special. I still don't think he's there, but he's getting better every week and he puts the work in and he puts the time in to understand what we're trying to get done, and he practices well. That's something that we're really going to strive for is trying to become an even better practice team in all three phases."

Ohio State junior wide receiver Chris Olave on his connection with Fields: "There's just so

much chemistry among us. I mean we worked all offseason, we got that long break. We just kept connecting over the summer and over the fall, and it's showing up in the first three games."

Schiano on how dynamic Ohio State's offense is with Olave and sophomore Garrett Wilson at wide receiver, along with the other receivers: "Let's remember who's catching the ball. Those are two elite receivers – elite elite. And Chris (Olave), I knew, I got to coach him, and I knew how good a player he is, and he's just gotten better and better. He's a legitimate big-time pro player. Their tight ends are good. They have a lot of weapons."

Schiano on his team's mistakes: "We made some mistakes as well. Sometimes the quality of your opponent can force you to make some mistakes. That may have happened, too. It's not good enough. We came here to win, and we didn't win. But we'll grow from it and keep getting better."

Schiano on Rutgers allowing only one sack against a formidable Ohio State defensive front: "It's a huge number, very important. I think that was a combination of the O-line did a good job and (quarterback) Noah (Vedral) knew, 'I've got to get rid of this thing,' because that's a high-caliber defensive front."

Rutgers third-year sophomore offensive lineman Raiqwon O'Neal on holding Ohio State's defense to only one sack: "I'm going to give credit to Ohio State, they have the best D-line in the country and it proved that it just builds our confidence up and showed what we can really do and do our jobs in and out on a daily basis. Take one day at a time and chop the moment."

O'Neal on his touchdown off a trick play: "It's the first time I ever scored. It's just what we did all week, execution. We knew what to do, and we executed it perfectly. Without my guys that blocked for me, I wouldn't have been able to score."

Schiano on the Scarlet Knights' trick play on a punt return that turned into a 58-yard touchdown return for senior receiver/returner Bo Melton: "We were very fortunate, the punter hit a great punt, which you need to run that play. It gives you time to get a few steps and

then throw it. We were fortunate there. But they practiced it all week and then they executed it, so good for our guys."

Rutgers junior wide receiver Aron Cruickshank on Melton's punt return touchdown: "We expected it because we practiced that play all week. We were just waiting for that moment to get that call off, and I was excited for my bro, my teammate, so he could make that play for us."

Rutgers fifth-year senior quarterback Noah Vedral on gaining confidence from a solid second half against Ohio State: "We feel some confidence from just the fight. I'm proud of my guys for not laying down. They showed a lot of grit and ability to chop even in tough circumstances. But we've got a lot to learn. We did not execute well in areas of our game plan, and we're going to need to get those fixed going forward, because every week in the Big Ten is a big week."

Fields on how the Buckeyes' offense compares to the offense in 2019 schematically: "I think we have some new concepts, but I wouldn't say it's more advanced. I think our coaches do a great job teaching it to us so we understand it clearly and we're able to run it like we've been running it for a long time, so I wouldn't necessarily call it more advanced or less advanced."

Fields on what fifth-year running back Demario McCall brings to the table: "Demario, he's a great player, he's a dynamic player. He can play in the slot, he can play running back, so I mean he's just a great all-around player and the thing about him is he's a huge leader for our team. I think he does a great job leading the guys in the receiver room. He's a big help and he's very dynamic, so I feel like we can use him in a multitude of ways."

Day on No. 1 Clemson losing 47-40 to No. 4 Notre Dame: "It's a strange season. Like I said before, it was a strange week. There are so many things at play. And we've talked about this before. You spend an inordinate amount of time talking about the testing and avoiding exposing yourself to other people and the virus, and it's just a different year. We're just going to try to do everything we can to stay healthy again this week and then go beat Maryland."

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Former OSU Safety White Finds Home At RU

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Brendon White played his final game in Ohio Stadium on Nov. 9, though the circumstances were far different from what he envisioned when he signed with Ohio State out of high school.

A former four-star prospect from nearby Powell (Ohio) Orlentangy Liberty, White had a breakout season for the Buckeyes as a sophomore in 2018. He finished that season with 46 tackles, four tackles for loss, two pass breakups and an interception that he returned for 49 yards against Michigan. He also had an interception on a two-point conversion attempt against Washington in the Rose Bowl, which preserved the win and earned him the game's defensive MVP honors.

White figured to take on an even larger role in the Ohio State defense in 2019, when co-coordinators Jeff Hafley and Greg Mattison implemented a hybrid linebacker/safety position called the "Bullet." It never materialized, though, as linebacker Pete Werner took a majority of the snaps at the position and the Buckeyes deployed just one high safety in senior Jordan Fuller.

So White – who played in 10 games in 2019, with a majority of his 176 snaps coming in the second half of blowouts – did not make the trip to the Big Ten Championship Game and entered his name into the transfer portal in mid-December.

Later that month, White joined a cavalcade of players who transferred to Rutgers to play for head coach Greg Schiano, who began his second stint with the program on Dec. 1. White believed Schiano, who had served as Ohio State's defensive coordinator from 2016-18, got the most out of him as a player.

"The biggest thing with me and Coach Schiano was, yes, we butted heads a lot, but he got me out of my comfort zone," White said during a teleconference on Nov. 4. "He allowed me and showed me and taught me how to be comfortable being uncomfortable."

"Ever since then, I feel like our relationship has grown even more, and now I look at him more than as a coach. He's kind of like a father figure to me now. He's someone I can talk to outside of football and stuff like that. So when you have a person who not only is a phenomenal coach but he's someone you know you can talk to besides football, that's someone I definitely want to follow."

Schiano was highly complimentary of White, as well, during his weekly press conference on Nov. 2.

"I certainly had a great relationship with him at Ohio State," Schiano said. "At the beginning, it was a lot of tough love, and then he really came on the latter part of 2018. When things didn't work out there for him, I certainly was really pleased that he chose to come join us. He's such an integral part of our program."

Through three games with the Scarlet Knights, the 6-2 and 220-pound White has recorded 21 tackles, one fumble recovery and one interception, surpassing his output for the Buckeyes in 2019 in seven fewer games.

"I think Brendon's doing a tremendous job," Schiano said. "From the day he got here, he was a leader on our football team. He works extremely hard, he's extremely focused on being the best player he can be and helping others around him be that, and then I think he's played well on the field the last few weeks."

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day shared a similar sentiment when asked about White's departure during a press conference on Nov. 5.

"It was on good terms," Day said. "It was one of those things where he felt like he needed a fresh start. I'm happy for him there. Greg's done a great job of putting him in good spots. I think what they're asking him to do fits his skill set really well. He's going to have a good career there."

"We always really loved Brendon and wish him nothing but the best."

White's father, William, played for Ohio State from 1984-87 and was a team captain his senior year before enjoying a lengthy NFL career. And since he grew up roughly 15 miles northwest of the Buckeyes' campus, there was always the expectation the younger White would follow in those footsteps.

Things obviously didn't work out for White the way he had hoped, but he has no regrets about choosing Ohio State in the first place.

"I learned a lot about the game of football, I learned what it means to win," White said of his time with the Buckeyes, which included three conference titles and three wins over Michigan. "I was blessed to be a part of that rivalry, so there's a bunch of things that I took from Ohio State that I'll definitely nurture and keep with me and stuff like that, but I'm glad I'm a Scarlet Knight now."

In transferring to Rutgers, White took on a significant challenge. The Scarlet Knights did not win a single conference game over the last two seasons, though that streak ended with a season-opening win over Michigan State on Oct. 24.

"Transferring to Rutgers has been a great experience," White said. "Something new. I grew up in Ohio, so being able to get away from there and explore a new state has been great. New Jersey was a great choice. When I first got on campus I was kind of nervous because I had never been away from home, but then getting to know guys, I got the sense this is home. This is definitely a very strong family team, and I'm glad I'm a part of this team."

"I think the biggest thing with the game of football is it allows you to connect with new people and meet new friends. I was hoping to come to a team who had open arms, and that's exactly what they had. They let me come right in like I was family."

This wasn't the first time a player who transferred from Ohio State returned for a game in Ohio Stadium, and former linebacker Keandre Jones (2016-18) is the most recent example after he recorded eight tackles, one tackle for loss and one sack for Maryland in a 73-14 loss last season.

White wasn't the only former Buckeye suiting up for the Scarlet Knights, either, as defensive lineman Malik Barrow – who was medically disqualified in 2018 after suffering three ACL tears – also transferred to Rutgers this offseason by way of UCF. But like Jones before him, White was just thankful for the opportunity to play against familiar faces and in a venue where he made several memories.

"I'm excited to go back home," White said. "There's a lot of familiar faces there that I miss, and I'm glad to be able to compete against them. There are people there that will be lifelong friends and a few coaches that will be lifelong friends, as well."

"I was born and raised there, so I'm definitely excited to get back and play in the Horseshoe one more time."



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FAMILIAR FACE – Former Ohio State and current Rutgers safety Brendon White (7) recorded four tackles in his return to Ohio Stadium on Nov. 7.

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Togiai Takes On Big Role Along Defensive Line

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Tommy Togiai committed to Ohio State in December of 2017, becoming the first player ever from Idaho to join the Buckeyes.

Not only is Togiai the only Idahoan to play for Ohio State, but he is the highest rated recruit to ever come from his state. The four-star prospect was the No. 3 defensive tackle and No. 55 overall player in the country for the 2018 class out of Pocatello (Idaho) Highland.

Togiai, a U.S. Army All-American, was named the Gatorade Idaho Player of the Year with 93 tackles, 11 sacks, two forced fumbles and one interception as a senior to lead his team to the 5A state championship.

As a freshman for the 2018 Buckeyes, Togiai made an impact while playing behind DaVon Hamilton and Robert Landers at nose tackle (one-technique). The powerful interior lineman tallied 10 tackles (seven solo) and two tackles for loss, showing promise of a bright future in 114 snaps of game action.

Even though he was young and inexperienced, Togiai showed that a lack of effort would not be an issue for the nose tackle.

"I just bring a high motor, high energy to the defense," Togiai told BSB when asked what he brings to the defense. "I try to make plays when I can and try to bring that energy, so everyone's energies spread

throughout the defense when someone on the D-line can make a play or something like that, especially sacks. I just try to bring energy, bring that motor, try to really drive the defense and try the best I can."

A soft-spoken and humble young man, Togiai may have been underselling his importance to the Ohio State defensive front. Head coach Ryan Day expressed how pleased he had been with Togiai's performance after the Buckeyes' first two games of 2020.

"He's a very strong guy," Day said of Togiai. "His weight room numbers are off the charts, and he's worked really hard. He's a really great young man, really high character. His ability and his technique and all that has really improved since he first got here.

"We thought he had a chance to be good this season, and in the first two games, he's really shown out in an area that we weren't sure what that was going to be like, losing DaVon. And that's been a strength for us the first two games."

Coming out of his first year in Columbus, Togiai strived to become a better all-around athlete to help him make plays all over the field. The hardworking Idahoan worked with Mickey Marotti, the assistant athletic director for football sports performance, and his staff to become more explosive.

"My speed is something I've been working on since after my freshman year," Togiai said. "I talked to Coach Mick, talked to our strength staff about trying to really up my speed, try to get faster, and I think

it's paying dividends from them in the training room."

Still backing up Hamilton and Landers, Togiai took on a bigger role as a sophomore. He finished the 2019 campaign with 16 tackles (eight solo), two TFL and one pass breakup, playing 255 snaps.

He was effective as a sophomore, but limited playing time hindered Togiai from putting his full talents on display. Hamilton was difficult to take off the field, recording 10½ TFL and six sacks in a career year.

Nationally renowned defensive line coach Larry Johnson pointed to Togiai's lack of snaps for why he had not recorded a sack in two seasons, suggesting that quarterback takedowns would come for the improving defensive tackle.

"(Hamilton) got six sacks from the nose guard position," Johnson said. "That's tough to do when you get double-teamed. Tommy is powerful, he's strong, he's athletic. He'll have a chance to rush the passer going forward. With limited plays, he didn't really get a chance. Now playing 40-45 plays a game, he'll have some opportunity to rush the passer. I'm very confident he has the ability to do that."

With more reps expected to come with the start of his junior season, Togiai was eager to take what he learned from Hamilton and Landers to the field.

"I've improved a lot from last year," Togiai said after his sophomore season. "I gained a lot of maturity, too, throughout this year. A lot of my technique has improved.

"With the (veterans) just teaching me my steps and all that, helping me out, giving me pointers on how to play nose guard, that helps. Giving me tips on how to get off blocks and get better with my hands, that really helps."

In the second game of Togiai's junior season, the former four-star recruit used what he had learned against Penn State in Happy Valley. Togiai tallied seven tackles (four solo) and the first three sacks of his career, helping the Buckeye defense hold the Nittany Lions to just 75 first-half yards and two completions while the visitors built a 21-6 halftime lead.

"He's given us a lot already," Day said. "A lot of play, a lot of disruption, a lot of tackling. He had seven tackles in the game, three sacks, a lot of production."

The team-first Togiai had not even realized he tallied three sacks in the game, instead focusing on how he and his teammates helped keep Penn State quarterback Sean Clifford in check en route to a 38-25 win.

"I was surprised at the end of the game," Togiai said, "but everyone on the whole D-line was getting after the quarterback that whole night, so it was good."

The breakout performance from Togiai was not just noticed inside the Scarlet and Gray locker room. He earned Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week honors for his three-sack effort.

Togiai possesses excellent size in the middle at 6-2 and 300 pounds, and his continual work with the strength staff has made him especially explosive out of his stance.

"It starts with the get-off," Togiai said. "You just always have to have a great get-off to get into your pass rush, and then it just goes from there. Just take what the O-line gives you and go from there. Try to always have a motor. You never know when it's going to be pass or run, so you always have

to have that get-off and just rely on that."

In addition to displaying his improvements as a pass rusher, Togiai's prowess as a run stopper persists. He has helped the Buckeyes to hold opponents to 131.7 rushing yards per game through three games.

Like any defensive lineman, Togiai enjoys chasing down quarterbacks and making highlight-reel plays for his team. Before getting an opportunity to take down passers in the backfield, the defense must stop an opponent's rushing attack.

"Coach J always talks about each week, we've always got to stop the run first to be able to rush the passer," Togiai said. "So if you want to rush the passer, you've got to be able to stop the run. And that's just what we always say going into each week. We want to be able to stop the run and then be able to rush the passer after that."

The Buckeyes did not just lose Hamilton and Landers from the shutdown 2019 defensive front. Chase Young and Jashon Cornell were also both selected in the NFL draft.

But Ohio State's defensive line continues to produce and has combined for 11 of the defense's 17 TFL and eight of its nine sacks through three games.

Togiai and fellow defensive tackle Haskell Garrett, who plays the three-technique spot as a fifth-year senior, have particularly answered the bell for the Buckeyes. Togiai said that his friendship with Garrett, who miraculously recovered from a gunshot wound to the face in less than two months, helps the duo perform better on the field.

"With me and Haskell, we've always been really close, both being Polynesian," Togiai said of Garrett. "When I first got to campus, my freshman year, he was one of the guys I spent a lot of time with just hanging out and stuff like that, so we really created a good close bond over the years.

"The closer you are to your teammates, the better you'll play with your teammates. I think that plays a big role, so just that camaraderie and stuff like that will really bode well for us."

Garrett has made six tackles through three games, including four solo stops, one TFL and one sack. Two-time captain Jonathon Cooper, a fifth-year senior defensive end, came away from the Penn State game thoroughly impressed with the play of the interior tandem.

"I think they have been playing the best football of their careers, honestly," Cooper said of Togiai and Garrett, who combined for 139 of Ohio State's 221 defensive tackle snaps through the first two games.

Since arriving in Columbus, Togiai has made a name for himself as the strongest player on the team and a force inside. On his career, Togiai has tallied 40 tackles (21 solo), seven TFL, three sacks, and one pass breakup. His classmate, third-year sophomore tailback Master Teague, raved about the big man following his breakout at Penn State.

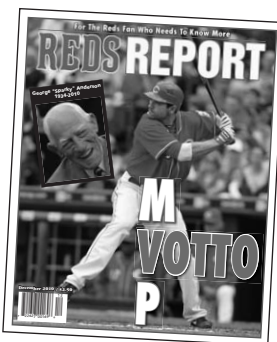
"Oh man, this dude is probably the strongest person I've ever seen," Teague told BSB of Togiai. "Ever since freshman year, I knew he was special. He's real special. His work ethic and he doesn't say much, but he grinds out and he works hard. It's not a surprise to see that (success) happen because you see it in how he works in practice and everything he does."

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Bailey Looks Back On Deep 2018 WR Room

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Keenan Bailey started out heading to college with the intention of simply writing about football, not participating in it either on the field or on the sidelines. But while at Missouri, Bailey worked with the football team as a student coach.

That Tigers team went 12-2 and won the 2014 Cotton Bowl 41-31 against Oklahoma State, and the rest was history for Bailey's career aspirations.

"I went to Mizzou and worked with the team my first year as a student coach, and we just so happened to win the SEC East," Bailey told BSB. "It was just one of those special teams that you hear about and like three months in, I'm like, 'This is what I want to do forever.' So I didn't really last long as a journalist and went right into coaching."

Bailey eventually found himself at Notre Dame, both as a student and as a recruiting analyst for the football team. He spent two seasons with the Fighting Irish before he followed Tony Alford, then-Notre Dame running backs coach, to Ohio State, where both Alford and Bailey would coach the same position, with Bailey taking an offensive intern position.

He then moved over to coach wide receivers, first under wide receivers coach Zach Smith and, in 2018, under Brian Hartline. In that 2018 room, with a trio of fifth-year seniors in Parris Campbell, Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin, Bailey said there were some special players, and not just because of their talent.

"It was neat, and I don't want to say I took it for granted, but you almost appreciate it more now after they left," Bailey said. "As a coach, what those guys allowed you to do was coach at the highest level, and when I say that, I mean that I was never telling them what route they had, or 'Hey, you have to have your ankles taped,' or 'Hey, you have to be here on time.' That was always a given. Those dudes were pros."

"It was really like 3000 level course stuff, whereas at a lot of places, even your senior captains you're still, 'Hey remember you need to get your depth on this route, I need you to get to 15 yards.' There was never any of that. So it really allowed myself and Coach Hartline to coach them like pros, because that's exactly what they were."

In Hartline's first season fully at the helm, all three of those redshirt seniors made more of an impact than ever before. With the help of Ryan Day coaching the offensive side of

the ball and Dwayne Haskins at quarterback, Campbell, Dixon and McLaurin finished the 2018 season with 167 receptions for 2,433 yards and 31 touchdowns. In all their previous seasons combined, that trio had a total of 118 catches for 1,732 yards and 19 scores.

Bailey said that Hartline's influence was clear in every practice that the wide receivers coach was in, and that the energy became infectious, both for the players and for the other coaches.

"Anyone who came to any of our practices saw the impact," Bailey said. "And even when he was quality control coach, he was in a position I was in, (and) his impact was even felt then when Zach was still around. Just his energy he brings on the field, he kind of challenged me, and he and I are always running around. We don't stand still when coaching. That's just the standard set. I think it starts with energy, but then expertise. I mean, he did it in the league for a decade. We all want to get there, so to be able to share that expertise is pretty special."

Even with the coaching to help, Bailey said there was much more that went into the success of those three receivers in 2018, and that was the work ethic and talent that each of them possessed, especially Campbell and McLaurin, both of whom would be selected in the NFL draft the following season.

"Parris was, I mean, God touched him. He was explosive in the sense that he could score wherever he was, so it was just up to us as coaches to get him into space," Bailey said. "But what he did, he turned himself from a slot, kind of H-back, into a route-running receiver, and all the credit goes to Hartline there. He was just dedicated to getting his feet right and turned into a route runner."

"Terry, kind of similar," Bailey continued. "Terry was always physically gifted, in the sense that he could run fast and hit hard, and he was built like an ox. But just his dedication in the offseason, when it was time to make a decision to come back, I don't know if you remember, Terry almost left. He came back for his last year, and he was still just kind of like a special teams guy like a third receiver, and he homed in on being a route runner. He spent every day in the offseason with Hart with routes and with me with ball receptions. I mean that story is well-documented. Every single day we'd come in and catch I think it was like 250 balls every day in the offseason. So for him, it was really just ball reception and route running."



Keenan Bailey

"And then there were some injuries, he moved positions and just really took advantage of the opportunity."

McLaurin specifically went from 550 receiving yards and eight touchdowns through his first three seasons at Ohio State to 701 yards and 11 scores in 2018, and the major boost helped him to get selected in the third round, No. 76 overall by a team that is now known as the Washington Football Team.

Getting picked in the first three rounds was a success story enough for McLaurin, but he has made his impact felt early in the NFL with 58 catches for 919 yards and seven touchdowns as a rookie. He is following that up with 43 receptions for 577 yards and two scores through seven games of the 2020 season and was even named unanimously as a team captain on Nov. 4.

All of this success would be surprising to many for someone selected in the middle of the third round just over a year ago, but not to Bailey, who said that all of this was earned by McLaurin back at Ohio State.

"It's just fulfilling because a lot of times in life, there's theory and testimony," Bailey explained. "Theory being how it should be, and testimony is how it is, and you know, you tell a kid, 'Hey, if you do everything right, things are going to work out.' Well that sounds good, that's just theory, with Terry now it's testimony. He's just getting what he deserves. With a guy like Terry, everything that's happened to him, none of it's a surprise. This is all stuff that you mix two colors, you get a third, right? You put water on top of fire, it's going to boil. Well, with Terry, you get an incredibly gifted guy, an elite kid, like a special kid, and the hard work? It was inevitable. So, it's just fulfilling to see."

There was another key member of that 2018 room, K.J. Hill, who returned for his own fifth-year senior season in 2019 to break Ohio State's reception record with 201, while also tying Gary Williams' record of 48 straight games with a catch. Still, Hill went in

the seventh round of the 2020 NFL draft and was not always the most talked about player on the field.

"I'm thinking how is it possible to quietly shatter a reception record? And that's just kind of who K.J. was," Bailey said. "I think it's attributed to a couple of things. He wasn't the guy until his final year. You had Curtis Samuel, you had Parris Campbell, you had Terry, you had J.D., so you always had guys around."

"And then even other positions, K.J. was never the most outspoken. That just wasn't his personality. You had other names like Chase Young, Jeff Okudah, Dwayne, Justin Fields that would get the publicity, and K.J. just showed up and was consistent and did his job. And the result is he walks out with a pretty nice record."

Bailey, who was listed by 247Sports as one of the top coaches under the age of 30 in college football, said he joked with his fiancée that he appreciates the honor but that, after working with such talented coaches in his time at Ohio State, "if I wasn't mentioned in some kind of list like that, then shame on me."

Still, Bailey's accomplishments with the program have not gone unnoticed, with the quality control coach being promoted to Corey Dennis' former spot, with Dennis moving up to quarterbacks coach and Bailey becoming an assistant for the quarterbacks. He said he aspires to become a head coach one day, but for now is learning under the likes of Day, Dennis and Hartline.

Bailey said, when asked what stands out from his time with that 2018 wide receiver room, that he has a lot to learn from those veteran players who were able to bring so much to the program on and off the field.

"What stands out is that the leaders drive the culture," he said. "I know it sounds like B.S. coach-speak, but again, Coach Hart and I just kind of had to harness what was already there, and really those guys demanded that the receivers blocked, those guys and even Chris Olave now – it's still going. So really going forward, when I get my own unit, if my leaders can set the culture and drive the culture, we're going to be in a good spot."

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Fickell Finding His Voice With The Cincinnati Bearcats

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Luke Fickell is nine years removed from his lone season as the interim head coach at Ohio State, a tumultuous and miserable season for the former Buckeye nose tackle that saw him thrust into a dream job that he was not yet prepared for. Fickell was sent out into the ocean without a life raft, told to swim or sink, and he did what just about any coach in the same position would have done: He sank.

Fresh off a 12-1 campaign in 2010 that saw Jim Tressel's Buckeyes come up just short of a national title berth, Fickell's Buckeyes were down their longtime head coach, without star quarterback Terrelle Pryor and facing an intense amount of NCAA scrutiny. They fell to 6-6 on the regular season and dropped a meaningless bowl game against Florida shortly after announcing that Fickell would be replaced by Urban Meyer, a decision that had seemingly been made months prior. To say that Fickell was placed in a challenging situation in replacing his embattled mentor would be a slight understatement.

"I wouldn't wish that on anyone being put through what he was put through, just because, obviously, this was his dream job at his dream school and he got it in the worst possible scenario, as far as Tressel being fired and then all the players that they lost," said Jeff Svoboda, who covered the Fickell era for BSB.

"I mean, the freaking quarterback was Joe Bauserman for half the season, for God's sake. They just weren't going to win many games. And so, as they started losing games, you almost felt bad for him that he had to get up and deal with all the pressure and all the questions mounting, because really, it just wasn't a fair situation for him."

Fickell entered the job in a nearly impossible spot, but he was not without his own issues. As a first-time head coach who had spent his career to that point as a true coach rather than a program manager or figurehead, he never seemed comfortable serving in the public-facing parts of the job.

"I will be honest with you. It was very much

an unnatural thing for him to be the guy in front of the microphones," Svoboda said. "He was someone who I think a lot of people felt was much more comfortable behind the scenes than he was as the face of the program. And certainly, he wanted the job, but the media part of it was something that I don't think he was ever really tremendously comfortable with. He had done media as a player, he had done media as a coach, as an assistant. But just being the face of a program at that point in his career, I think, was a little bit overwhelming for him. And he tried his best, certainly, but it was almost like a fish-out-of-water thing at times. It just was not the most comfortable thing in the world for him to do.

"And I think it might have been the hardest part of the job for him, actually. All things considered, when he was in the facility, at the end of the day, you're coaching football. But I think that having to be mostly the face of the program and do media every week, not just every week, but multiple times every week and have to answer the questions, especially as things started to go south, as far as the whole win-loss record goes, it was definitely not something I think he was at that point yet tremendously comfortable with. And he tried and he wasn't a jerk to us or anything along those lines. It was just more of someone who just was not fully comfortable having to ever do that part of the job yet."

By the time his tenure came to a close, a little over eight months after it began, Fickell seemed more than ready to return to his old role, taking over as co-defensive coordinator and linebackers coach under Meyer. However, Fickell was clear when he returned to the staff that he had eyes on serving as a head coach again down the road when the right opportunity presented itself. Following the 2016 season, after the firing of Tommy Tuberville, Fickell got his wish with an opening at Cincinnati.

"I think that I certainly thought that Luke was going to be (an assistant under Meyer) for a while," Svoboda said.

"Why is that, though? It's hard to say, because I think he'd also shown that he wanted to be a head coach. I think that he knew that he was not going to just take any job that came

along. But at some point in his life, he wanted to be a head coach. And when the right opportunity came, I think we all knew he would take it at some point. And he obviously ended up doing it the right way. I think that his career path, it's worked out pretty well for him. He didn't take a job until he was ready. And then the job he took was a place he could win at."

According to his former employer, the coach who brought him back to Ohio State after he spent two seasons at Akron, Fickell could not have found a better fit than the Queen City.

"He had talked to a number of different schools over the years about their head coaching jobs," Tressel said of Fickell in a phone interview with BSB. "And what was great about him was that there are certain things that are important to him. He wants to really love the place he is. Family's very important to him. Being here in the Midwest is very important to him. So it was such a natural for him to look at Cincinnati, just kind of the same way I felt when Mark Dantonio moved from our staff to Cincinnati. It's a great program. It's a great city. They have a proud tradition, and whoever coaches there better do a great job recruiting Ohio."

Now in his fourth season with the Bearcats, Fickell's patience in searching for the right fit has been rewarded. After a 4-8 season to open his tenure at Cincinnati, Fickell found a groove in year two, rattling off an 11-2 record with a young team and following it up with an 11-3 campaign in 2019. Entering year four, pollsters placed UC at No. 20 in preseason rankings, and ESPN analyst Bill Connelly called for another strong season while saying that Fickell had turned Cincinnati into the "Group of 5 team most acting like a P5 team on the recruiting trail" after landing top-50 classes in 2018 and 2020 and eight top-500 recruits nationally (according to 247Sports).

"Despite the iffy passing game, this still should be another dynamite year," Connelly wrote of UC prior to the start of the 2020 campaign. "Fickell's building job isn't done, but the progress has been blatantly obvious."

Through six games, the Bearcats have blown even those lofty expectations out of the water. After a 38-10 win over Houston on Nov. 7, Cincinnati sat at 6-0 with wins over two ranked (at the time) teams in No. 22 Army (24-10) and No. 16 SMU (42-13) along with dominant showings against conference foes Memphis and South Florida.

This is a program winning with style and with a very defined ethos, too. Always a defensive-minded coach, Fickell has baked his propensity for smothering defense into the team thanks to some help from former Buckeye linebacker Marcus Freeman, now the defensive coordinator with the Bearcats. Through six games, Cincinnati was allowing just 11.7 points per game, including those dominant performances against SMU, Memphis and Houston.

That defense paired with a consistent rushing attack and a surging senior quarterback in Desmond Ridder – who has played the best football of his career over the past month – has the eyes of the college football nation on Cincinnati. After bludgeoning the Cougars, the AP voters rewarded Cincinnati with the No. [X] spot in the Nov. 8 polls, only 3 spots below the highest ranking in school history, delivered by Brian Kelly in week 15 of the 2009 season.

Fickell's success in building Cincinnati in his hardworking, defense-first image comes as no surprise to Tressel, who told BSB that he hasn't had the chance to watch a ton of Cincinnati football this season but has seen glimpses of the job his former defensive coordinator has done.

"Well, I knew he was very, very talented and stood for the right things," Tressel said

of Fickell. "I also know that Cincinnati is a great place, and he feels very strongly about the University of Cincinnati and the city of Cincinnati and the state of Ohio. And so it's not surprising, not that it's easy, and like anything else. I don't know what they are now, 6-0 or something like that. That doesn't make that seventh game any easier. And sometimes it makes it harder, but I'm not surprised at all that they're doing well. Luke will do a good job of keeping things focused on the moment. And it's going to be fun to watch how he can come down the stretch.

"They know what they're doing; they've had good continuity; they've grown their program. That first year they got to know one another and, really, they've been good ever since. Marcus has done a great job for them there on the defensive side, and they're tough, they're physical. Everything's important, special teams, the way they carry themselves, running the ball, throwing the ball. They put a lot of pressure on defense, and it's not a surprise that they're good. Luke really felt going into the year that this could be a good year."

The fact that Fickell's performance at Cincinnati has caught Tressel's eye is an achievement in itself. The former Ohio State coach, now serving as Youngstown State's president, explained to BSB that he often feels more nervous watching his former assistants than he did coaching his own games.

"I'm probably more nervous when I'm watching Luke or P.J. Fleck or Mark Dantonio or Mel Tucker," Tressel said. "I'm probably more nervous watching how they're doing than I was when I was coaching because I know them. I feel like I was a part of their lives. I'm awfully proud of them. And you also know that no matter how well it's going or how difficult it's going, they've still got to get ready for the next day. And whether it's Luke and Marcus rolling along or Mel had that tough first loss and then the big win the next week, or P.J.'s had a couple of tough ones recently – you want them to be able to continue to progress and you're awfully, awfully proud of them."

However, in the way that Cincinnati plays, it's hard to find anything to pick at, especially for someone like Tressel, who always had much more interest in consistency and doing the little things right, which shows up in game after game for the Bearcats with Fickell at the helm.

He's no Tressel-clone, though. That era of Fickell, defined by the 2011 season in which he tried and failed to mimic Tressel, is gone. While that season provided plenty of lessons to the former Buckeye nose guard, none was more important than the value in finding his own voice, his own leadership style.

"I could write a book about the mistakes we made or I made," Fickell said of the 2011 season and his early years as a coach in a 2017 interview with BSB. "But I think the No. 1 mistake was trying to be somebody (I wasn't) and that's hard as a leader. In the midst of it I thought I had to be like Jim Tressel, and in reality, you can't be like Jim Tressel. Nobody can. But I thought that was what was best to give us an opportunity to be successful and not have a bunch of different changes on people, whether they were the players or the coaches. That was just the conscious decision that I made, and it was probably the one that is detrimental because you can't be consistent being somebody that you're not."

Now, that's not to say that Fickell has any interest in separating himself from his mentors. He openly cites Tressel, Meyer and his former head coach John Cooper as big inspirations to his coaching style. In fact, he says that all three

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will always be a part of his coaching style.

"That's who you are," Fickell said. "The environments that you've been in, the situations that you've grown from help shape who you are and who you will be as a leader, and every single one of those guys has a part that I've learned from."

Above all else, that's the value of that failed 2011 campaign for Fickell, both in his eyes and in the eyes of Tressel. It was a painful, challenging year for him, but it was a year that showed him what he needed to change to be successful when he filled a similar role in the future. Realizing that he couldn't just be Tressel, or Meyer, or even Cooper was the key to Fickell finding himself as a coach.

"Again, we've got a book of things, of mistakes that we made, that I made," Fickell said. "I've got them saved and I'm just making sure that we learn from those experiences. If something comes up, I try to look back to say, 'OK now hold on, did we ever have one like that? Because if we did I'm sure I made the wrong choice in that situation.'

"But you always reflect back on the things that for me weren't successful and try to figure out why, and that's an eight-month process that hopefully will last me 10 years as a head coach that I can't get all the things that happened in that eight months."

"That was a tough year for him in 2011 with all the transition and all the heartache and whatnot that was there," Tressel said. "I think it was a great learning experience for him, probably a painful one, but most of our good learning experiences are painful. I think he was ready to venture out on his own. And he had a great opportunity to work with Urban for a couple years there. And I think he had a lot of different looks at how you can do things, but he had to come up with how he was going to do things. And I think he's done

a great job with that."

The new Fickell is much more comfortable. He's built a program in his image around recruiting the state of Ohio and building out a devastating defense and capable offense, but he's also built a public persona for himself that matches the personality of his team. He's also shed that media-anxiety that he had in Columbus, according to Cincinnati Enquirer writer Charlie Goldsmith, who covers the team and heaped praise on Fickell's media presence.

"He's great," Goldsmith said. "I mean, he's the head coach and the voice of the program and he's just great at it. He has good interactions with the media and is very well-respected."

That hardworking, Cincinnati pride is working for Fickell too. In a year with full attendance allowed, Nippert Stadium would likely be at capacity for every home game, as Fickell has leaned hard into embracing the community and getting both students and fans involved.

"I think they all take a lot of pride in the fact that they're in Cincinnati," Goldsmith said of the ethos that Fickell has instilled in the program. "They recruit a lot of local kids. They have really tried, more than previous coaches, to connect with the fan base. That, and taking pride in where they're from, I think is the biggest difference."

That's Fickell as a head coach. The calamitous interim season will always be there, but it's a chapter that he's learned from and moved past. In Tressel's words, he's learned how to be himself.

"I think the biggest thing Luke and I would talk about is, Luke can't be John Cooper. He can't be Jim Tressel. He can't be Urban Meyer. He had to be Luke Fickell. I think he learned that."

Right now, it's hard to imagine that there's anyone he'd rather be.





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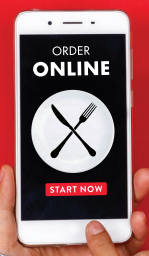
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OSU Linebackers Continue Historic Success In 2010s

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

BSB is featuring 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 five is on the best linebackers in the 2010s.

When thinking about the top position groups in Ohio State history, linebacker has to be one of the very first that comes to mind. For nearly as long as the Buckeyes have been playing college football, the program has consistently produced top-end talent in the middle of its defense, and it has led to some of the most prominent defensive names, not only in program history, but in the history of the sport.

"There's no doubt. I mean, it's Linebacker U," Steve Helwigen, former Buckeye Sports Bulletin editor and current Ohio State writer for Bucknuts, told BSB. "They had a guy Ike Kelley who was great in the '60s. You come up through the '70s, you have Randy Gradishar, one of the biggest names in college and pro football, had a great career with the Denver Broncos. Tom Cousineau. I believe he was the No. 1 overall pick in the NFL draft, All-American in the late '70s. I mean Chris Spielman, the name is synonymous with the sport, all these years later still, and in the university. And it just kept on going into the '90s.

"It just perpetuates itself decade after decade. It's been a great linebacker university. I don't think there's any doubt about that."

That level of success at the position continued into this past decade, when more than a handful of Ohio State linebackers had enough success to find themselves a place at the NFL level.

The Nominees

The decade started off with a bang at linebacker when Ryan Shazier came to the program in 2011. In three seasons, Shazier put up big numbers, totaling 258 tackles in his final two seasons on his way to becoming

a first-round pick in the 2014 NFL draft.

Joshua Perry came to the Buckeyes just one season after Shazier but stayed all the way through 2015, becoming a three-year starter in the process. His long run with the program helped him put up big numbers, including 298 total tackles (167 solo), 18 tackles for loss and 7½ sacks.

Unlike Perry, Darron Lee did not have a lengthy run at Ohio State, playing in just two seasons. But Lee made his impact felt in those two years, putting up fewer tackles than his counterparts but making them count with 27½ tackles for loss and 12 sacks between the 2014 and 2015 campaigns.

One of the strongest interior linebackers of the decade was Raekwon McMillan, who found time both on the inside and outside but tallied up the numbers immediately as a true freshman and continued to do so on his way to 275 total tackles and 17½ TFL.

On the outside as a teammate of McMillan's in 2015 and 2016 was Jerome Baker, who also ended up joining him on the Miami Dolphins when the Dolphins selected both players in consecutive drafts. Baker finished his Ohio State career with 158 tackles (90 solo), 17½ TFL and a pair of interceptions.

Closing out the decade was Malik Harrison, a four-year contributor who held or shared a team lead in tackles in both of his final two seasons. But Harrison really shone in 2019, when he had 75 tackles (49 solo) and 16½ TFL, a number that was bettered only by defensive end Chase Young.

The Discussion

When asked who they believe were the three best linebackers at Ohio State over the past 10 years, here is what the BSB staff had to say:

Wyatt Croser: "For me, two of the answers for the best Ohio State linebackers were relatively straightforward, but that third spot was incredibly up for grabs.

"To start out with the total lock, it has to be Shazier, a phenomenal athlete who was, simply put, one of the best linebackers in the country this decade, let alone just for Ohio State, and his ability was crucial to the success of those early-decade teams.

"My next pick was also relatively easy, though maybe a notch down from Shazier, and that is Lee. A really exciting story as a former three-star quarterback prospect turned linebacker, Lee had all the athletic ability, and thanks to some tremendous coaching by then-linebackers coach Luke Fickell, he became one of the key pieces to Ohio State's national title run in 2014.

"Finally, I will go with Harrison for my third pick, but other nominees like Perry, Baker and McMillan were right there as potential other choices. Maybe it's recency bias, but what Harrison became for Ohio State's 2019 defense was something I truly did not expect after what was a down 2018 season for the entire linebacker room. But Harrison took that season and flipped it on its head, becoming one of the most stable defensive players on a defense full of star talent, and I'm not sure that defense remains one of the best in the country without his consistency for each contest."

Joe Dempsey: "Deciding the top linebackers of the past decade at Ohio State was a much more difficult endeavor than I had predicted. First of all, Shazier is an obvious decision due to his unmatched production and impact. Shazier is straight up one of the best linebackers to ever play in Columbus, and that puts him among some of the best to ever play the position.

"Part of what made choosing just three Buckeye 'backers difficult is my research made me realize just how many talented players thrived in the 2010s. Ross Homan and Brian Rolle deserve mentioning, but since they played only one year in the decade, those well-rounded 'backers did not make my cut.

"Perry cannot go without mention because of how important he was to the Buckeyes' national championship run, and his 298 career tackles trailed only Shazier in the decade. Tuf Borland and Pete Werner were also quite productive from 2017-19, and Chris Worley made an impact before being limited by injuries.

"The toughest players to leave off my all-decade team at linebacker were Baker and Harrison. Baker did everything for the Buckeyes, making plays as a pass rusher or in coverage in his two standout seasons as a starter. His highlight-filled career is best remembered by his tone-setting 68-yard interception return for a touchdown at Oklahoma in 2016, and he also scooped a fumble forced by Nick Bosa and ran it back 20 yards for a score against Maryland in 2017.

"Like Baker, Harrison is hard to leave out because of how excellent he was as an all-around player. After tying Jordan Fuller for the team lead in tackles in 2018, Harrison led the Buckeyes' stifling defense in 2019. His 16½ tackles for loss as a senior tied Lee for the most by an Ohio State 'backer not named Shazier in the decade. Harrison was also solid in pass coverage, breaking up nine passes with one career interception.

"Joining Shazier in my all-decade linebacker

group are two important pieces of the program's lone national championship in the past 17 seasons in Lee and McMillan.

"Lee might not have been the most technically sound or consistent linebacker of the past decade, but he was one of the most electrifying, and the 2014 championship defense would not have been the same without him. In two seasons as a starter, Lee wrecked backfields with 27½ TFL and 12 sacks. He also forced three fumbles and grabbed three interceptions, turning one into a pick-six along with two fumble returns for scores.

"McMillan might not have had the most flash of all the Buckeye 'backers, but he brought a high level of play whenever he took the field. Despite being behind senior Curtis Grant at middle linebacker in 2014, McMillan played his way onto the field as a true freshman. By the end of the season, McMillan was a leader of a talented defense with a national title in his first season. McMillan tallied 275 tackles in three seasons, ranking third in the decade for Ohio State, and his impact went well beyond the box score, constantly making an impact in the middle."

Andrew Lind: "Simply put, Shazier was a tackling machine. He finished his career with 315 total tackles, 44½ tackles for loss and 14 sacks in just three seasons at Ohio State. Though he didn't have much team success aside from the 2012 undefeated season, he set the standard for other Buckeyes this decade.

"Lee, meanwhile, came to Ohio State as an unheralded athlete and immediately found success at outside linebacker. He recorded 147 tackles, 27½ tackles for a loss and 12 sacks, though none were more important than his seven tackles, three tackles for loss and two sacks in the 2015 Sugar Bowl win over Alabama, as he garnered defensive MVP honors.

"Last but not least is McMillan, a former five-star prospect who some might argue underperformed during his college career based on how highly touted he was coming out of high school. He led the Buckeyes in tackles in 2015-16, and ultimately wrapped up his college career with 275 tackles, 17½ tackles for loss and six sacks."

Patrick Mayhorn: "My picks for linebackers of the decade are Lee, Shazier and Perry.

"Shazier, at least in my calculation, seems to be the easiest pick of the bunch. He's easily one of the best linebackers in program history, put up impressive stats for essentially his entire career as a two-year starter and was a stable contributor in 2011 as a freshman. He may not get the attention he deserves because he played for some lackluster Buckeye defenses, specifically in 2013, but those units would have been quite a bit worse were it not for his efforts.

"Lee gets the nod from me less for production (though he had plenty of it in his two years as a starter) but more for his sheer level of dominance and talent when he was at his best.



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He was a little less consistent than the other two players on my list, but he always seemed to show up when Ohio State needed him, and he was an absolutely devastating force off the edge on his best days. He often saved those performances for the biggest games, like Ohio State's Big Ten championship and subsequent playoff run in 2014, in which he put forth one of the best three-game runs we've seen from a Buckeye defender this decade.

"Perry is the most sentimental of the three picks, because while he was never the best player on a defense, he was quite often the most important, serving as a steadying force for the Buckeyes during that title run and through the entire 2015 season. Raekwon McMillan comes close to earning this spot in a similar role, but Perry's ability as a leader and his knack for tracking ball carriers gives him the edge in my mind, just barely."

The Choices

Ryan Shazier: Shazier came to Ohio State as a four-star prospect out of Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Plantation and was ranked as the No. 7 outside linebacker and No. 106 prospect overall in the 2011 class.

Helwage said Shazier looked at the in-state Florida Gators during his recruitment but ultimately chose to head north to the Buckeyes, where he still ended up with one of the other coaches who recruited him.

"What was crazy was I think he was going to go to Florida or was really considering Florida and ended up picking Ohio State instead," Helwage said. "Then you had the coaching change, and it ended up that he ends up playing for Urban Meyer at Ohio State."

Even before Meyer became head coach for the 2012 season, Shazier made an impact with Fickell and the 2011 team, despite the Buckeyes' lackluster 6-7 record. During that campaign, Shazier finished sixth on the team with 57 tackles (37 solo), while also adding five TFL, three sacks and a pair of forced fumbles as a true freshman.

He especially picked it up in the final stretch of the season, with 33 total tackles in his final three games, including a 15-tackle effort against Penn State.

Then, Shazier exploded onto the scene in his sophomore season, Meyer's first with the team, leading Ohio State with 115 tackles (70 solo) and 17 TFL. He also had five sacks and an interception that he returned 17 yards for a touchdown against Penn State.

"He was a really intelligent guy, in addition to being a great athlete, so he knew football and he knew what to expect when the plays were coming," Helwage said. "And he was rarely out of place, and if he was, he used his athleticism to get back into place and make plays."

Another key play Shazier made in the 2012 season came on one of his three forced fumbles. With the Buckeyes holding a slim 14-7 lead against Wisconsin with less than three minutes to play, the Badgers had a fourth-and-1 inside the Ohio State 2-yard line. Wisconsin running back Montee Ball went for a leap over the crowd of players in order to gain the first

down, but Shazier popped the ball out and the Buckeyes recovered.

Wisconsin would score to tie the game with eight seconds to play, but Ohio State held on to win in overtime, continuing the path toward an undefeated season.

"He was an athlete at linebacker, who people remember he stuffed the run at Wisconsin on the goal line, but he was also agile enough to make a pick-six against Penn State and just impact the game in a lot of different ways," Helwage said. "People just remember that in the big games, like Wisconsin and Penn State, he's the guy making those big plays, kind of like James Laurinaitis did in the previous decade just a few years before that. It seemed like he was always around to make a game-changing type play, and I think that's what people will remember about Shazier."

Shazier only continued to make plays in 2013. In what would end up being his final season at Ohio State, he again led the team in tackles, this time with 143 (101 solo) and 22½ TFL, both numbers that were not close to being touched by any other linebacker this decade. He also forced a team-high four fumbles.

He left for the NFL the next season and went as the No. 15 overall pick to the Pittsburgh Steelers, eventually becoming a two-time Pro Bowler before his career was tragically derailed due to a spinal injury. But in his time at Ohio State, Helwage said Shazier was one of the best at the linebacker position that the program has seen.

"He is probably from the past decade, I would say, one of the best linebackers that they've had," Helwage said. "Fickell's had his fingerprints all over this stuff at the linebacker position from the early 2000s up until when he left a few years ago. That was usually his position group a lot of times, and so he really grew and developed a number of very good linebackers at Ohio State, with Shazier certainly at or near the top of that list."

Darron Lee: Lee shared a roster spot with Shazier for one season but never shared the field with the first-team All-American, instead taking a redshirt in 2013 as he adapted to a new position.

Lee was listed on 247Sports as a three-star dual-threat quarterback, ranking as the No. 636 prospect in the country and the 36th-best recruit in the state of Ohio out of New Albany. He did also play on the defensive side of the ball in high school, but primarily in the secondary.

Ohio State nearly passed on Lee altogether in the 2013 class, but Fickell saw something in the do-it-all athlete that he thought could work after some development.

"That's one of those crazy stories that Urban Meyer and Luke Fickell always talked about," Helwage said on Lee. "Darron Lee was from New Albany, and he would come to Ohio State's camp, and Meyer just kind of viewed him as an athlete and didn't really see the potential in him, and Luke Fickell made Urban Meyer take a second look at him, and they ultimately offered him a scholarship."

"I think it surprised a lot of people because he had not played – his main focus was prob-

ably quarterback although he did play maybe half the time or more on defense, and not a lot at linebacker. But I think Fickell saw the body type, the athleticism and saw what he could get out of Darron Lee."

When Lee did take the field in 2014, he became a starter and finished with 81 tackles (54 solo), third on the team, while also ending in second with 16½ TFL and 7½ sacks behind only defensive end Joey Bosa. He also forced a fumble and had a pair of interceptions.

But even with Lee posting some gaudy numbers in his first year on the field, Helwage said it did not come without some early struggles, for both him and Perry, a fellow starting linebacker on that 2014 team.

"Darron Lee was not a finished product when he got to Ohio State," Helwage said. "There were some growing pains, some tackling issues early in the 2014 season. But he became a tremendous player in his two years as a starter and jumped off early to the NFL. I mean, they had the game against Virginia Tech early in the season. They had the game against Navy to start the season where there were a lot of questions about the linebackers and playing assignment football and tackling and different things like that. And somehow, by midseason, they had shored that up."

That 2014 team that Lee became a key player on ultimately won the national title in the first season of the College Football Playoff, taking down Michigan, Wisconsin, Alabama and Oregon in its final four games.

Lee was a key player in all four of those games, recording seven or more tackles in each of the matchups, and had a pair of TFL against the Wolverines and three TFL against the Crimson Tide. He was named defensive MVP for his performance in the 42-35 Sugar Bowl win over Alabama.

His numbers went down slightly in 2015, finishing his final season at Ohio State with 66 tackles (36 solo), 11 TFL and 4½ sacks before getting selected No. 20 overall in the 2016 NFL draft. Regardless, Lee was a difference maker for the Buckeyes, despite finding playing time with the team for only two years.

"Darron was a bright kid, just a really bright kid," Helwage said. "He was a great athlete and eventually became a very-good-to-great linebacker, no doubt about it."

Raekwon McMillan: Unlike Lee, McMillan came into Ohio State with lofty outside expectations. He was listed as a five-star prospect out

of Hinesville (Ga.) Liberty County, ranking as the top inside linebacker and No. 22 prospect overall in the 2014 class.

"He was a national top-50 type prospect, I don't know the exact ranking, but he was a guy everybody wanted," Helwage said, "and for Ohio State to go down and get him was huge, a major coup for them."

McMillan quickly found time to make an impact, finishing his 2014 season with 54 tackles (30 solo), 6½ TFL and 2½ sacks, as well as an interception against Maryland that he returned 24 yards for a touchdown.

But McMillan did not become a full-time starter in year one, something that Helwage said he believed ultimately helped the highly touted prospect as he developed in Columbus.

"I think that it was good that he was around those veterans early because they taught him the proper work ethic," Helwage said. "A lot of kids who are recruited that heavily expect to come in and play right away, and he didn't necessarily get that because they had Curtis Grant, who played about half the snaps in 2014. And so McMillan sat and learned, and when he got his chance, he made plays."

McMillan found his way to steadier playing time in 2015, and his numbers made a big leap. The true sophomore led the Buckeyes with 119 tackles (57 solo) and added four TFL. Those numbers stayed mostly steady in McMillan's junior season, when he had 102 tackles (49 solo) and seven TFL, while also forcing a pair of fumbles.

After three seasons and a first-team All-Big Ten placement, McMillan gave up his final season of eligibility to enter the 2017 NFL draft, where he was selected in the second round, No. 54 overall by the Miami Dolphins.

He may not have been as flashy as a Shazier or a Lee, but Helwage said there were not many linebackers at Ohio State more solid than McMillan.

"He was very good, and '15 and '16, he was a big part of the success of those two seasons. And, you know, they were right there in the hunt for the national championship in the Big Ten both years, and he was a big part of that," Helwage said. "Was he an All-American at Ohio State? I don't think he necessarily played all the way up to that level, but he was very, very good. And not everybody's going to be an All-American at the college level either, but he came in with a lot of hype and he largely played up to it."



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Terrapins Beginning To Find Consistency

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Mike Locksley's tenure at Maryland has seen more than its fair share of ups and downs in the 23 months since he was hired to replace interim head coach Matt Canada on Dec. 4, 2018. Just two games into that tenure, Locksley had two blowout wins under his belt against Howard and Syracuse and rode that early wave to a No. 21 spot in the AP poll. Maryland would lose nine of its final 10 games.

In 2020, the roller coaster continued. The Terrapins were blown out of the water by Northwestern to open the season, 43-3, in a game that saw a dreadful three-interception performance from new quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa that inspired both calls for his starting job as well as murmurs about Locksley's job security.

Of course, Maryland followed that loss with a stunner, a 45-44 defeat of Minnesota, which entered the season as a favorite to win the Big Ten West. Tagovailoa put up a 394-yard, five-touchdown performance, and running back Jake Funk, fresh off of back-to-back seasons ended by ACL tears, rushed for 221 yards on 21 carries. It was a complete rebuke of the response to that first game, the perfect continuation of the Locksley roller coaster.

A stunning 35-19 upset of Penn State on Nov. 7 kept that positive momentum flowing, and Locksley appears to be very comfortable with the state his program is in. He spoke at length in 2019 about his first season being a "Year Zero" situation, a term coined by ESPN writer Bill Connelly to describe first-year coaches in a serious rebuilding situation, which essentially means that those first seasons should not be considered in any meaningful way when judging a coach. Now in year one, Locksley is seeing the growth of his team, even without a massive reflection of it on the scoreboards.

"I think the biggest thing I learned is, like a parent you can preach until you're blue in the face to your kids, and you never know if they're hearing you or listening to you," Locksley said after Maryland's win over Minnesota on Oct. 31. "And one of the things we've talked about from the day I got hired here, we weren't going to be a scoreboard-watching team, we're not going to be a front-running team. We're going to play to a standard, and that standard is to give great effort on every play, and then when that play is over, erase it and play the next play. That's the way we live day to day, and that's how we dealt with COVID, and I think you saw that today out of this team."

Much of the responsibility for the continuation of that growth appears to lie on the shoulders of Tagovailoa, a former four-star

transfer from Alabama, taking his first serious snaps as a college football player this fall. His ups and downs have matched those of the team at large, but for Maryland's offense to find any consistency, it will likely need the young quarterback to lead on that front. Locksley thinks that he is headed in that direction but still has plenty of room to grow.

"For us and those that have been in this building and have seen the way he's practiced since he's been here, we're not surprised," Locksley said after Tagovailoa's big showing against Minnesota. "That's what we saw on film. I think last week (against Northwestern) was more of a surprise for us than what we saw this week, because these are the same type of plays and throws and the energy that he has brought to the table, which is why he earned the position. So it was great to see him bounce back.

"I don't think he did anything differently in his preparation because he's a guy that's always around the building. He's a guy that's always putting the extra time in. But I think what you guys saw is what we saw out of him all camp long, and it's great for him to be able to bounce back and do that here at home in the shell and play at a really high level when we needed him to do it most."

Tagovailoa is not without help on the Maryland offense. Funk has grown into a steady force out of the backfield whom Maryland can trust to pick up yardage at a decent clip, though he's running behind one of the most inexperienced lines in the conference, which certainly seems to present an issue with Ohio State on the docket.

"We had some great contributions from Jake Funk," Locksley said. "He did a great job in the run game. He's a guy that's been around here and been through a lot obviously. Jake is a guy that, he's been around here a long time and it's great to be able to get this type of contribution from him. As I've said before, I've always been a big Jake Funk fan. Here's a guy that is the all-time leading (high school) rusher in the state of Maryland, a local guy right here from the crib, and he's healthy. His leadership, he brings it every day in practice, and it's great to have that ability, to have a guy like him here with a young team.

"He's one of the few older guys that we have in our program. He's doing a tremendous job with leadership. It was great to see the type of contribution he made today in the running game."

The strength of the offense lies in the wide receiver room. Dontay Demus is back after leading the team in receptions (41), yards (625) and receiving touchdowns (six) in 2019, but he's joined this season by Jeshawn Jones, who missed the 2019 season with a torn ACL after a promising freshman campaign in 2018. Five-star true freshman

Get To Know ... Maryland

About Maryland

- **2020 record:** 2-1
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – 4-3; Starters Returning – Offense 5, Defense 4, Specialists 2.
- **Head Coach:** Mike Locksley, 3rd year at Maryland, 2nd as full-time head coach, 6-15. Sixth year overall, 8-41.
- **Series History:** 7th meeting; Ohio State leads 6-0-0.
- **School Facts:** Location – College Park, MD.; Enrollment – 40,521; Nickname – Terrapins; Colors – Red, Yellow; Conference – Big Ten (East Division); Stadium – Maryland Stadium (Surface, FieldTurf; Capacity – 51,802).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Jake Funk	43	336	7.8	2
Taulia Tagovailoa	18	56	3.1	2
Peny Boone	10	51	5.1	0

Passing	Comp.-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Taulia Tagovailoa	58-86	67.4	770	6-4

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Dontay Demus	17	228	13.4	2
Rakim Jarrett	12	213	17.8	2
Jeshawn Jones	9	152	16.9	1

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 27.7
Rushing Yards Per Game – 156.0
Passing Yards Per Game – 273.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 429.0

2020 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Oct. 24	at Northwestern	L, 43-3
Oct. 30	MINNESOTA	W, 45-44 (OT)
Nov. 7	at Penn State	W, 35-19
Nov. 14	OHIO STATE	3:30 p.m.
Nov. 21	MICHIGAN STATE	TBA
Nov. 28	at Indiana	TBA
Dec. 5	at Michigan	TBA
Dec. 12	RUTGERS	TBA
Dec. 19	Big Ten Championship Week	TBA

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo-Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Chance Campbell	17-17	34	4.5-21	1.5-16
Jordan Mosley	11-12	23	1.0-2	1.0-2
Nick Cross	10-9	19	1.0-10	1.0-10
Ayinde Eley	7-12	19	1.0-2	-
Tarheeb Still	12-1	13	-	-
Fa'Najae Gotay	3-9	12	-	-
Ruben Hyppolite	6-5	11	2.0-23	2.0-23
Sam Okuayinonu	4-7	11	1.0-7	0.5-6
Ami Finau	1-8	9	0.5-0	-

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Nick Cross	1	0	0.0	0
Kenny Bennett	1	0	0.0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 35.3
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 227.0
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 247.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 474.0

Rakim Jarrett has also made an impact working out of the slot, splitting time with Brian Cobbs.

"They are one of the strengths of our team," Locksley said of the wide receivers. "I've seen the development that you like to see (from the returning guys), but also in some of the young faces we've been able to add."

While the talent is there, all of this is largely contingent on that offensive line, which struggled greatly with sacks in 2019 and has allowed six so far on the season, an improvement certainly but still a place of concern. Left tackle Jaelyn Duncan, a true sophomore, was the only member of the starting 2020 line who played 12 games in 2019.

"One of the areas we put a big onus on is we have got to improve our pass protection," Locksley said entering the season. "We gave up way too many sacks last year, and most of them weren't by scheme. Some of it was breakdown in fundamentals and techniques. And so we really put a big onus on developing and creating the skill set from a pass protection standpoint to effectively be able to take care of our quarterbacks – that's critical."

Defensively, Maryland has quite a bit less to be optimistic about. The Terrapins have allowed 106 points through three games (35.3 points per game), have little in the way of a pass rush and are fielding a defensive backfield filled almost entirely with underclassmen, including true freshman cornerback Tarheeb Still.

The pass rush struggles may be the most pressing issue for the defense. Through those first two games, Maryland registered one sack and generated essentially zero consistent pressure from the actual defensive line, relying heavily on linebacker blitzes for any sort of pressure and often leaving cornerbacks on an island because of it. The pass rushing cause was not helped at all when outside linebacker/edge rusher Durell Nchami suffered a leg injury against Northwestern that knocked him out of the game and sidelined him against Minnesota and Penn State.

Nchami tore his ACL last season and the immediate fear around his injury against Northwestern was a repeat, but an MRI revealed no tear. He's been day-to-day on Maryland's injury report for several weeks.

It is worth noting that after those early pass-rushing issues, Maryland got to Penn State's Sean Clifford seven times in its win.

One of the lone bright spots for the defense is junior linebacker Chance Campbell, who has seemingly been just about everywhere for the Terrapin defense so far this season. He's racked up 34 tackles out of the middle linebacker spot and constitutes a significant portion of the Maryland run defense.

"Chance has played a lot of football during his time here, and he's really grown into the leadership role for our team, not just on defense," Locksley said. "He's one of our hardest workers. He puts the time into understanding what we want to do, and he's playing at a high level and then bringing people along with him. So it's great to see that type of contribution from Chance. And he's consistent. I mean last week (against Northwestern) it was one of the few bright spots we had on defense, and then this week (against Minnesota) following it up making plays especially when we needed them most late in the game."

The secondary – led by safety Nick Cross, who has 19 tackles on the year – has been far from perfect as well, allowing 247.0 passing yards per game. However, the pass rush and run defense (227.0 rushing yards allowed per game) seem to be deeper concerns for Locksley, especially with Ohio State on deck. The Buckeyes have run the ball their fair share through three weeks and will presumably look to continue that trend against Maryland.

"Defensively, some things we've still got to get corrected," Locksley said. "When you show that you can't hit the curveball, you guarantee you're going to keep seeing the curveball. And the run game, the last two weeks, we haven't been really good against stopping the run. And it's something we've got to get corrected and get corrected fast."

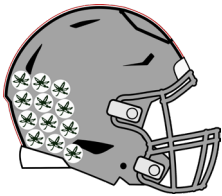


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Projected Depth Charts

How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE VS. MARYLAND RUSH DEFENSE

The Buckeyes were hit or miss. They netted 203 yards on 37 carries in the 49-27 win against Rutgers on Nov. 7 for 5.5 yards per carry. It seems impressive, but 38 came from Steele Chambers off a fake punt. Of Trey Sermon's 68 yards on 12 carries, 36 were on one run. Master Teague gashed for a 25-yard gain, but his other 11 carries netted 35 yards. When Maryland defeated Penn State 35-19 last week, the Nittany Lions gained 94 yards on a 2.6 average. Those net yards came after Maryland forced 65 yards in losses. Obviously, the Terrapins are good at getting in the backfield, be it defending the run or pass. By the way, Rutgers had eight tackles for loss vs. the Buckeyes. **EDGE: EVEN**

MARYLAND RUSH OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Jake Funk is the dependable back for the Terrapins. After gaining 80 yards vs. Penn State, he ranks third in the conference with 336 yards on a 7.8 yards per carry average with two touchdowns. He has 125 more yards in four fewer carries than OSU's top runner, Teague. Maryland is rushing for 156.0 yards per game to rank eighth in the Big Ten. Ohio State is allowing 131.7 yards, seventh in the conference. Rutgers ran for 141 yards (4.4 average) vs. the Buckeyes, but 66 were posted from a direct snap to running back Isaih Pacheco. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE VS. MARYLAND PASS DEFENSE

Justin Fields has been incredible (72 of 83 for 908 yards, 11 touchdowns and zero interceptions with a completion rate of 86.7 percent) so this should be a no-brainer. But there are serious questions about his protection and whether the offensive line is improving after four holding infractions against Rutgers, three on Harry Miller. Maryland had seven sacks against Penn State. Fields needs time because no one has been able to stop receivers Garrett Wilson or Chris Olave, and he's done an outstanding job with his distribution, including key passes to the tight ends. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

MARYLAND PASS OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Let's see. An SEC quarterback leaves for the Big Ten looking for a chance to play and in his first season opens eyes with his passing ability and leadership. Hmm, Georgia transplant Fields from the 2019 season? Not in this case. Taulia Tagovailoa (the younger brother of former Alabama star and current Miami Dolphins quarterback Tua) is the player in question after transferring from 'Bama. In the past two games he has thrown for 676 yards (394 vs. Minnesota, 282 against Penn State), and the Terrapins have scored at least 21 points in the first half in consecutive conference games for the first time since joining the Big Ten in 2014. OSU had just one sack against Rutgers, and pressure on Tagovailoa is vital since the secondary is suspect to say the least. **EDGE: MARYLAND**

SPECIAL TEAMS

OSU got scorched for 29 yards on a kickoff return and a 58-yard TD on a punt return, but each involved a lateral that befuddled the Buckeyes. On the latter, they had it contained, but it appeared the flag football unit was out there for the coverage. The Buckeyes also had to start from their 3 after a kickoff, but the good news is Rutgers provided plenty of onside kick practice. Might Maryland try some wizardry as well? **EDGE: EVEN**

INTANGIBLES

Don't think perennial fellow doormat Maryland didn't watch how Rutgers went after the Buckeyes with a nothing-to-lose attitude and a toolbox of trick plays that not only worked but fueled the Scarlet Knights to an energy level that Ohio State could not match in the second half. Maryland was a 27½-point underdog to Penn State, and the result was not as close as the final score. Rule No. 1 for the Buckeyes is don't let an inferior opponent hang around long enough to think it can win the game. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

STAFF PREDICTION

You thought you'd never hear the words "Maryland" and "trap game" in the same sentence, but this is 2020 and nothing is normal, not with Indiana appearing to be the second-best team in the Big Ten and headed for a showdown with Ohio State on Nov. 21. The fans view Maryland as another cupcake (crab cake?). The Buckeyes know better, and this one could be interesting. Remember 2018 when OSU escaped with 52-51 overtime win when the deeply flawed Terrapins failed on a two-point conversion? **OHIO STATE, 48, MARYLAND 34**

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...

QB 18 JORDAN MOSLEY, 6-1, 210, JR. OR 20 ANTWAINE RICHARDSON, 6-0, 195, SR.
SS 3 NICK CROSS, 6-1, 210, SO.
 20 Antwaine Richardson, 6-0, 195, Sr.
OLB 9 JOSEPH BOLETEPELI, 6-4, 260, SO.
 39 Deshawn Holt, 6-4, 240, R-Fr.
ILB 44 CHANCE CAMPBELL, 6-3, 235, JR.
 11 Ruben Hyppolite II, 6-1, 225, Fr.
ILB 16 AYINDE ELEY, 6-3, 240, JR. OR 23 FA'NAJAE GOTAY, 5-10, 222, SO.
OLB 19 AHMAD MCCULLOUGH, 6-1, 216, SO.
 99 Frankie Burgess, 6-2, 225, Fr.
CB 12 TARHEEB STILL, 6-1, 182, FR.
 24 Kenny Bennett, 6-2, 200, Jr.
DE 95 LAWTEZ ROGE, 6-4, 275, JR.
 9 Joseph Boletepeli, 6-4, 260, So.
DT 55 AMI FINAU, 6-2, 330, JR.
 91 Almosse Titi, 6-2, 305, So.
DE 97 SAM OKUYAYINONU, 6-1, 290, SR.
 34 Mosiah Nasili-Kite, 6-2, 305, So.
CB 33 DEONTE BANKS, 6-1, 200, SO.
 2 Jakorian Bennett, 5-11, 200, Jr.
X 75 THAYER MUNFORD, 6-6, 315, SR.
 79 Dawand Jones, 6-8, 360, So.
LT 71 JOSH MYERS, 6-5, 312, JR.
 53 Luke Wypler, 6-3, 295, Fr.
LG 78 NICHOLAS PETIT-FRERE, 6-5, 305, SO.
 77 Paris Johnson, 6-6, 305, Fr.
C 6 JAMESON WILLIAMS, 6-2, 188, SO.
 15 Jaylen Harris, 6-5, 215, Sr. OR 13 Gee Scott, 6-3, 210, Fr.
RG 76 HARRY MILLER, 6-4, 315, SO.
 61 Gavin Cupp 6-4, 308, 5th-Sr. OR 55 Matthew Jones, 6-5, 310, So.
RT 52 WYATT DAVIS, 6-4, 315, JR.
 66 Enokk Vimahi 6-4, 305, R-Fr.
Z 2 CHRIS OLAVE, 6-1, 188, JR.
 7 Kamryn Babb, 6-0, 197, So. OR 4 Julian Fleming, 6-2, 200, Fr.
P 91 DRUE CHRISMAN, 6-3, 222, 5TH-SR.
 96 Michael O'Shaughnessy, 6-3, 200, R-Fr.
QB 1 JUSTIN FIELDS, 6-3, 228, JR.
 12 Gunnar Hoak, 6-4, 215, 5th-Sr. OR 9 Jack Miller, 6-3, 215, Fr. OR 7 C.J. Stroud, 6-3, 205, Fr.
H 89 LUKE FARRELL, 6-6, 258, 5TH-SR.
 11 Jaxon Smith-Njigba, 6-0, 196, Fr. OR 10 Mookie Cooper, 5-10, 190, Fr.
K 8 TREY SERMON, 6-1, 215, SR. OR 33 MASTER TEAGUE, 5-11, 225, SO.
 22 Steele Chambers, 6-1, 220, R-Fr.
 95 BLAKE HAUBEIL, 6-3, 230, SR.
 98 Jake Seibert, 6-1, 200, Fr.

WHEN MARYLAND HAS THE BALL...

QB 20 PETE WERNER, 6-3, 242, SR.
 3 Teradja Mitchell, 6-2, 242, Jr.
SS 41 JOSH PROCTOR, 6-2, 202, JR.
 14 Ronnie Hickman, 6-1, 205, R-Fr.
WLB 32 TUF BORLAND, 6-1, 234, 5TH-SR.
 19 Dallas Gant, 6-3, 232, Jr.
MLB 5 BARON BROWNING, 6-3, 240, SR.
 47 Justin Hilliard, 6-1, 231, 6th-Sr.
SLB 23 MARCUS HOOKER, 5-11, 200, SO.
 12 Lathan Ransom, 6-1, 198, Fr.
NICKEL 21 MARCUS WILLIAMSON, 5-10, 186, SR.
 14 Ronnie Hickman, 6-1, 205, R-Fr.
CB 24 SHAUN WADE, 6-1, 195, JR.
 13 Tyreke Johnson, 6-1, 195, So.
DE 72 TOMMY TOGIAL, 6-2, 300, JR.
 55 Jerron Cage, 6-4, 299, Jr.
NT 9 ZACH HARRISON, 6-6, 265, SO.
 11 Tyreke Smith, 6-4, 267, Jr.
3T 0 JONATHON COOPER, 6-4, 257, 5TH-SR.
 54 Tyler Friday, 6-3, 265, Jr.
DE 92 HASKELL GARRETT, 6-2, 299, SR.
 52 Antwuan Jackson, 6-2, 295, 5th-Sr.
DE 7 SEVYN BANKS, 6-1, 200, JR.
 16 Ryan Watts, 6-3, 195, Fr.
X 71 JAELYN DUNCAN, 6-6, 315, SO.
 57 T.J. Bradley, 6-8, 325, Sr.
LT 6 JESHAUN JONES, 6-1, 185, SO.
 21 Darryl Jones, 6-2, 200, Jr.
LG 65 JOHARI BRANCH, 6-3, 330, JR.
 78 Mason Lunsford, 6-6, 310, R-Fr.
C 72 JOHNNY JORDAN, 6-1, 305, SR.
 72 Marcus Minor, 6-4, 310, Jr.
RG 54 SPENCER ANDERSON, 6-5, 330, SO.
 70 Amelio Moran, 6-6, 330, So.
RT 7 DONTAY DEMUS, 6-3, 217, JR.
 83 Carlos Carriere, 6-5, 195, Jr.
Z 98 ANTHONY PECORELLA, 6-3, 206, SO.
 99 Colton Spangler, 6-1, 175, So.
P 34 JAKE FUNK, 5-10, 205, 5TH-SR.
 8 Tayon Fleet-Davis, 6-0, 220, Sr.
QB 3 TAULIA TAGOVAILOA, 5-11, 205, SO.
 12 Lance LeGendre, 6-1, 215, R-Fr.
H 15 BRIAN COBBS, 6-2, 210, JR.
 5 Rakim Jarrett, 6-0, 200 Fr.
K 27 JOSEPH PETRINO 5-11 192 JR.

- Depth charts compiled by Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn

Spartans Crush Buckeyes' National Title Aspirations

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. This week we have chosen two games, because they were equally important in Ohio State football history. The following is coverage of Ohio State's stunning loss to Nick Saban's Michigan State team in 1998, a loss that knocked the Buckeyes out of the national championship picture. Additional features about the game will be posted at BuckeyeSports.com on Thursday, Nov. 12.

Michigan State, despite a handful of enigmatic performances this season, came into Ohio Stadium Nov. 7 as a dangerous, talented team.

"We came in here with the attitude that we were the squirts in the neighborhood who had to go up and pick a fight with the bully – not that we wanted to pick one," said Michigan State coach Nick Saban.

"It was on the schedule, so we had to do it." Saban's Spartans did it, all right.

Michigan State, a four-touchdown underdog, registered one of the all-time upsets in the history of the Horseshoe as it toppled top-ranked Ohio State 28-24 before 93,595 fans.

"They outcoached us, they outplayed us, the defense was better than ours, their offense was better than ours and, of course, they came away with the victory," OSU coach John Cooper said in assessing the loss that likely will kill any national championship hopes for his Buckeyes (8-1, 5-1).

MSU (5-4, 3-2) twice trailed by margins of two touchdowns. But the Spartans rallied and more than held their own on both sides of the ball. MSU scored the upset by capitalizing on four key OSU fumbles and stopping an OSU scoring threat at the 15-yard line with a little over a minute to play to score the win.

"It was obviously a great win for Michigan State University," Saban said. "I'm very proud of the way our players competed today. Ohio State's got a great football team. Our players competed. We got behind in the game, and I

think it showed a lot of character and maturity on their part to play their way back into the game after the first quarter. They played at the end of the game to win it."

All season, quarterback Joe Germaine had been one of the key cogs in the OSU machine. But his string of 300-yard passing performances was stopped at four. His two fumbles led to important MSU field goals, and his interception to Spartans cornerback Renaldo Hill with 1:12 left killed OSU's comeback bid.

"We had some opportunities," said Germaine, who finished 16-of-34 passing for 239 yards. "We came very close. But we didn't take advantage of our opportunities and, in a game like this, that will beat you."

The Spartans pressured Germaine throughout the day, sacking him five times and hitting him on a number of other occasions. When he did have time, MSU's secondary was equal to the task.

"They had a great scheme," he said. "They challenged us with some bump-and-run coverage and they blitzed us. Overall, they outplayed us."

Cooper said, "Sometimes we didn't make the right adjustments, sometimes we didn't throw the right pass. You know, give them credit."

On the other side of the ball, Saban's devil-may-care attitude was more than apparent. While the Buckeyes limited MSU standout Sedrick Irvin to 52 yards on 26 carries, largely untested quarterback Bill Burke made plays when he needed to.

Burke completed 18 of 46 passes, but those passes went for 323 yards and a touchdown.

"We threw a bunch of passes and they defended a bunch of them, but we made a few plays," Saban said. "We made enough to win."

The Spartans averaged nearly 18 yards per catch, hitting eight plays for 20 or more yards against one of the nation's stingiest defenses. Burke did most of his damage with lanky receivers Plaxico Burress (four catches, 125 yards) and Gari Scott (six for 88).

"They made some big plays," said OSU cornerback Ahmed Plummer, who had a busy night covering the large receivers. "I give them credit for it. We found ourselves in some positions we didn't want to be in. They took advantage of it."

As The Ball Bounces

Ohio State held comfortable leads of 17-3 after one quarter and 24-9 early in the third. But things began to unravel when an MSU punt hit OSU's Nate Clements while he was trying to block for punt returner David Boston. After a mad scramble, MSU's Scott Ehrnsberger recovered the loose ball at the Spartans' 49.

With new life, the Spartans moved 51 yards in five plays to their first touchdown. Burke hit Scott for a 28-yard gain before hooking up with Lavaile Richardson on the 23-yard TD pass over Plummer. Paul Edinger's PAT kick was wide, but the Spartans had cut the lead to 24-15 with 6:02 left in the third quarter.

Ohio State then held the ball for just two plays before tailback Michael Wiley, who finished with 100 yards on 22 carries, was hit by MSU's T.J. Turner. Pete Govens recovered Wiley's fumble for the Spartans, who were in business at the OSU 34.

Although MSU failed to pick up a first down, Edinger's 49-yard field goal, which barely cleared the crossbar, trimmed OSU's lead to 24-18 with 4:55 left in the third.

As the third quarter wore into the fourth, the Spartans earned their next touchdown. MSU put together the longest scoring drive against the Buckeyes of the season, going 92 yards in

eight plays. Burke was the main culprit again, going to Scott for a 12-yard gain, Burress for 37 yards, and tight end Chris Baker for 23 more down to the OSU 12.

Three plays later, Irvin went over left tackle, taking OSU linemen Joe Brown and Mike Collins with him on a 3-yard touchdown run that gave MSU its first lead at 25-24 with 14:20 left.

Just over three minutes later, things went from bad to worse for Ohio State. On third-and-3 at the MSU 47, Germaine was hit by Spartan end Julian Peterson and fumbled. MSU's Josh Shaw picked up the loose ball and returned it 22 yards to the OSU 18.

"I was trying to do too much on that play, Germaine said. "That's the play that really shot us in the foot. That gave them the momentum. It's my fault. Next time I just have to throw it out of bounds. All I can do is just learn from it and go from there."

Again, MSU failed to pick up a first down. But Edinger's 42-yard field goal attempt was true and the Spartans now had a 28-24 cushion with 9:26 left.

"Julian stripping that ball from Joe was the difference in the game because that gave us the field goal that gave us a four-point lead and made them have to score a touchdown and beat us," Saban said.

Ironically, Peterson was playing in place of starter Robaire Smith, who suffered a broken fibula in the first half. He ended up with two sacks and three tackles for loss.

"Peterson made some great plays today," Saban said. "He had to play almost the entire game when Robaire got hurt."

Ohio State had two possessions after that point but could not put the ball in the end zone to reclaim the lead.

On the first one, OSU kept the ball exclusively on the ground, mixing Wiley and backup Joe Montgomery. The strategy worked to a point as OSU picked up 55 yards in 12 plays. But on fourth-and-1 at the MSU 26, Montgomery slammed into the middle of the line and Turner, Courtney Ledyard and Sorie Kanu turned him back for no gain.

"When I saw the free safety (Kanu) come up, I knew it was going to be hard," Montgomery said of the play that gave MSU possession with 3:33 left. "Mike (Wiley) said nobody came off on the Mike (middle) linebacker. I'm already six yards deep, so it's going to be kind of hard."

MSU picked up a first down on the ensuing possession, but the Buckeyes eventually forced a punt with 1:39 left. Boston returned the kick 26 yards and the Buckeyes were in business at their own 49-yard line.

Ohio Stadium was rocking as visions of Germaine's Rose Bowl heroics from two years prior danced in the heads of the OSU faithful. He drilled passes of 16 yards to Boston and 20 more to John Lumpkin, giving the Buckeyes a first down at the OSU 15.

Although Ohio State had exhausted all of its timeouts on defense, Saban stopped the clock himself with 1:29 left.

"When we were playing zone, they went through us like Grant took Richmond," Saban said. "When they got it to the 15, we knew we had to stiffen up and put the pressure on them. Our corners came through with flying colors."

Germaine tried to pick on MSU's Cedric Henry first, going to Boston in the end zone on first down. Henry batted that pass away. On second down, Germaine threw behind Boston incomplete. Now it was Hill's turn. He batted down a crossing pass to Dee Miller at the goal line. Finally, on fourth down he stepped in front of Miller and intercepted Germaine's floater at the MSU 2 to end the OSU threat.

"I had to throw it earlier than I wanted to, so

I had to put some air under it and let him try and run under it," Germaine said. "He made a good play on it. That's just how the game goes."

Miller added, "It was a post corner route. He had been getting some pressure all day and the timing wasn't there today. That showed on that last play.

"The ball was underthrown. That was basically it."

Nobody was happier than Saban to see his corners stand up to the test against OSU's vaunted passing attack.

"They went at the two corners four times in a row," Saban said. "We full blitzed on every one of those plays. We played bump-and-run. Cedric knocked down two and Renaldo had the next two. Those two guys did a great job to save the game at the end."

MSU took over at its own 2 and needed to simply run two plays to kill the remaining 1:12.

Fast Start For Naught

The Buckeyes felt that if they could get MSU down, the Spartans would fold. After all, that's what happened in MSU's previous losses to Oregon and Michigan. But despite OSU grabbing a 17-3 lead, the Spartans never gave in.

"When you're backed into a foxhole and nobody expects you to win, you can play loose and make some plays," Burke said.

OSU opened the scoring on Dan Stultz's 20-yard field goal with 12:26 left in the first quarter. That play was set up by Germaine's 35-yard sideline pass to Wiley. MSU answered with Edinger booting a 33-yard field goal to make it 3-3 with 8:12 left in the first.

Ohio State then jumped ahead 10-3 as Germaine hit a wide-open Lumpkin down the middle of the field on a 41-yard TD with 6:25 left in the first.

The Buckeyes capitalized on an MSU turnover when cornerback Antoine Winfield blitzed Burke, forced a fumble and recovered it at the MSU 12-yard line. Four plays later, Wiley vaulted over the top for the score from one yard out, making it 17-3 with 39 seconds left in the first.

Edinger's 43-yard field goal with 13:31 to play in the half and 22-yard field goal with 11:22 left led to a 17-9 OSU advantage at halftime.

The Buckeyes extended their lead to 24-9 after safety Damon Moore intercepted a Burke pass and returned it 73 yards for a touchdown with 9:51 left in the third.

Game Notes

- The loss snapped OSU's 11-game home winning streak dating to the 1996 Michigan game.

- MSU improved to 3-12-1 in games against the nation's No. 1-ranked team. One of the other wins came against the Buckeyes, a 16-13 decision in East Lansing that dropped OSU from No. 1 to No. 4 in November 1974. The Spartans' other win over a No. 1 ranked team was also notable. Prior to this game, MSU was the last unranked team to defeat a No. 1, disposing of Michigan in 1990.

- OSU's record as the No. 1-ranked team dropped to 51-8-1 (.858). The loss ended OSU's nine-week stint as the No. 1 team – the second-longest tenure in the top spot in OSU history.

- OSU faced a fourth-and-39 predicament late in the first half. The Buckeyes dug that hole as a Germaine screen pass to fullback Matt Keller lost eight yards. OSU was then penalized five yards for having an ineligible receiver downfield. After a second down incompleteness, Germaine was sacked for a 16-yard loss.

This story originally appeared in the Nov. 14, 1998, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.



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Michigan State Scored 19 Unanswered In Second Half

By STEVE HELWAGEN

The sentiment and the statement were familiar, and the meaning was not lost.

"We shocked the world," Michigan State tailback Sedrick Irvin exclaimed as his teammates tore up pieces of sod from Ohio Stadium's south end zone moments after the Spartans did the unthinkable, upsetting heavily favored and No. 1-ranked Ohio State 28-24.

On a day when Ohio Sen. John Glenn returned to earth after nine days aboard the space shuttle and news trickled out that House Speaker Newt Gingrich announced his resignation, the upstart Spartans – and certainly, less willingly, the Buckeyes – found themselves as legitimate front-page news.

The defeat all but kills any hopes that Ohio State, the front-runner in both major college football polls since the preseason, will earn its first national championship in 30 years.

The reality of the situation was hard for the Buckeyes to accept moments after a golden scoring chance was denied: The Buckeyes failed to score on four pass plays after earning a first down at the Spartans' 15-yard line with 1:29 left.

"Every day since last summer, ever time we've broken it down, we say, 'National champs,'" OSU flanker Dee Miller said. "Today all we could say was 'Hard work.'"

"That hurt a lot. We've worked hard year in and year out. There was just a missing element today that we didn't have, and we took an 'L.'"

Tough November defeats of this magnitude have become the rule rather than the exception for the Buckeyes in recent years. Four times in five years it has been a team from the state up north, namely archrival Michigan, that has done the honors. Losses to U-M since 1993 have cost highly ranked Ohio State teams two Big Ten championships, three Rose Bowl bids and three shots at a national championship.

But this time it was the Spartans' – Michigan's other Big Ten entry – to register the knockout blow. OSU coach John Cooper was left to try to pick up the pieces.

"I just got through telling our football team we'll find out what we're made of now," Cooper said. "We'll try to regroup this week, go to Iowa and try to win that game."

Then we'll come back here and play Michigan, and obviously Michigan will be the best football team we'll play this year."

Ohio State committed five turnovers in the loss, paving the way for MSU's upset. Quarterback Joe Germaine, a Buckeye hero coming off an unprecedented four straight 300-yard passing games, found himself as the unlikely goat after his two fumbles led to key MSU field goals and his interception with 1:12 left sapped OSU's last gasp.

"We're very disappointed, and we have a reason to be," said Germaine, who was sacked a season-high five times. "We felt we had a great team this year, and I still feel that we do."

"But right now we can do one of two things. We can learn from this, go on and finish the season strong, or tuck our tail, put everything in the bag and do that."

"We're going to find out what we're made of."

The Buckeyes (8-1, 5-1) fell from first to seventh in both the ESPN/USA Today coaches poll and the Associated Press media poll. More important, the Buckeyes were expected to tumble at least that far when the Bowl Championship Series rankings – the formula used to pick the top two teams for the Fiesta Bowl – were released at midday Nov. 9.

"I don't know if we have a chance to win the national championship," Cooper said. "I mean a lot of things have to happen for us to get back

in the Fiesta Bowl picture. There's no question about that. Tennessee's got to lose, Kansas State's got to lose, UCLA's got to lose."

"I don't know how far we'll drop this week."

Anatomy Of A Defeat

A sellout crowd of 93,595 watched and gasped as the Buckeyes essentially self-destructed before their eyes.

Ohio State twice held two-touchdown leads, at 17-3 in the first quarter and at 24-9 after safety Damon Moore returned an interception 73 yards for a touchdown in the third.

But besides Germaine's three turnovers, OSU cornerback Nate Clements was struck with an MSU punt while trying to block for return man David Boston. The Spartans recovered the loose ball and drove for a touchdown. Then, moments later, tailback Michael Wiley fumbled. That set up a 49-yard Paul Edinger field goal, one of his five on the day, which allowed Michigan State to keep the pressure on.

"When we started making some plays in the second quarter, the players started thinking they could win," said MSU coach Nick Saban, whose team was a 28-point underdog. "We pretty much dominated play after that except for the interception they returned for a touchdown."

Aside from his team's miscues, Cooper noted how Michigan State had enough talent – namely quarterback Bill Burke, who victimized OSU's stellar pass defense for 323 yards – to pull off the upset.

"This week I thought Michigan State was a good football team," he said. "I thought we'd have to take their best shot, and I think we took their best shot today. It was good enough for them to win the game. I don't have any clue how far we'll drop."

Dealing With The Pain

After so many close calls over the past five seasons, this was supposed to be the year Cooper and the Buckeyes finally ascended to the top spot and stayed there for the duration.

But this 60-minute dose of reality will likely leave OSU on the outside looking in. The Buckeyes even need help – either Michigan or Penn State must knock off unbeaten Wisconsin – to get a piece of a Big Ten title.

"All losses hurt, but I think this one especially hurt us," Germaine said. "It was quiet after the game, and it should be. We had great feelings and aspirations for this team."

Offensive tackle Tyson Walter summed up the disaster.

"It's a shock, and it hurts more than any fan will ever know," he said. "It happens. It's part of the game. It's what makes winning so enjoyable."

For OSU's 15 seniors, it was hard to mask the disappointment.

"We all dream of winning the national championship," said tight end John Lumpkin, who hauled in a 41-yard touchdown pass. "All dreams don't come true. Hopefully the young guys will learn something from this."

"I'm a senior and this was my last shot at it. If anyone should be real sad, it should be me. This is three times since I've been here that we've been in position to win it all and then we lose a game. One day Ohio State is going to pull through."

Back To The Future

To a man, the Buckeyes say they must regroup from this calamity and focus on winning their final two games, Nov. 14 at Iowa and at home with Michigan on Nov. 21.

"We have to come back from this," senior Dee Miller said. "We have a lot of seniors here. We have two more games left to play. We

The Numbers Game

Michigan State 28, Ohio State 24

Nov. 7, 1998 – Ohio Stadium; Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
MICHIGAN STATE	3	6	9	10	28
OHIO STATE	17	0	7	0	24

First Quarter

OSU – Stultz, 20-yard field goal, 12:26; 8 plays, 72 yards, 2:34 TOP.

MSU – Edinger, 33-yard field goal, 8:12; 11 plays, 60 yards, 4:14 TOP.

OSU – Lumpkin, 41-yard pass from Germaine (Stultz kick), 6:25; 5 plays, 80 yards, 1:47 TOP.

OSU – Wiley, 1-yard run (Stultz kick), 0:39; 4 plays, 12 yards, 1:36 TOP.

Second Quarter

MSU – Edinger, 43-yard field goal, 13:31; 7 plays, 33 yards, 2:08 TOP.

MSU – Edinger, 22-yard field goal, 11:02; 7 plays, 23 yards, 1:37 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU – Moore, 73-yard interception return (Stultz kick), 9:51.

MSU – Richardson, 23-yard pass from Burke (kick failed), 6:02; 5 plays, 51 yards, 3:38 TOP.

MSU – Edinger, 49-yard field goal, 4:55; 4 plays, 2 yards, 0:50 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

MSU – Irvin, 3-yard run (Edinger kick), 14:20; 8 plays, 92 yards, 2:53 TOP.

MSU – Edinger, 42-yard field goal, 9:26; 4 plays, -7 yards, 2:40 TOP.

Att. – 93,595

Weather – Clear, 48 degrees. Wind 5-10 mph from W

Team Statistics

	MSU	OSU
First Downs	16	21
Rushing	2	11
Passing	13	10
Penalty	1	0
Rushes-Yards	34-48	48-108
Passing Yards	329	245
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	19-47-1	15-33-1
Offensive Plays	81	81
Total Net Yards	377	353
Third Down Efficiency	6-20	2-15
Punts-Avg.	6-38.0	7-38.6
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	4-4
Penalties	2-14	5-64
Time of Possession	29:23	30:37

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – MSU: Irvin 26-52; Clemons 2-3; Burke 6-(-7). OSU: Wiley 22-100; Montgomery 11-41; Keller 4-7; Boston 2-1; Germaine 9-(-41).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – MSU: Burke 18-46-1-323-1; Irvin 1-1-0-6-0. OSU: Germaine 15-33-1-245-1.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – MSU: Scott 6-88; Burress 4-125; Baker 4-59; Richardson 1-23; Haygood 1-18; Irvin 1-8; Burke 1-6; Clemons 1-2. OSU: Miller 5-74; Boston 4-49; Lumpkin 2-61; Wiley 2-43; Keller 2-18.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – MSU: Jarrett 5-39.8-50; TEAM 1-29.0-29. OSU: Bartholomew 7-38.6-47.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – MSU: Scott 3-38. OSU: Boston 4-51.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – MSU: Haygood 3-62. OSU: Rambo 5-97; Keller 1-11.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – MSU: Shaw (2), Ernsberger, Govens. OSU: Winfield.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – MSU: Hill 1-2. OSU: Moore 1-73.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – MSU: Peterson 5-39; Ledyard 1-16; Turner 1-8; Morris 1-6; Hill 1-6; Thornhill 1-2; Saylor 1-2; Govens 1-2. OSU: Bailer 3-7; Diggs 2-10; Winfield 1-8; Rudzinski 1-7; Brown 1-3; Pickett 1-2; Wayne 1-2; Collins 1-2.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – MSU: Thornhill 2-12-14; Morris 9-4-13; Turner 7-5-12; Peterson 9-0-9; Kanu 6-2-8; Hill 6-2-8; Marshall 4-2-6; Ledyard 3-3-6; Saylor 2-3-5; Truitt 1-2-3; Newsome 2-0-2; Henry 2-0-2; Ernsberger 2-0-2; Haygood 1-1-2; Shaw 1-0-1; Wright 1-0-1; Neal 0-1-1; Newkirk 0-1-1; Govens 0-1-1; Baker 0-1-1. OSU: Moore 9-2-11; Diggs 6-2-8; Plummer 6-0-6; Winfield 3-3-6; Brown 3-2-5; Bailey 3-2-5; Katzenmoyer 4-0-4; Berry 3-1-4; Rudzinski 3-0-3; Pickett 3-0-3; Clements 3-0-3; Bellisari 2-0-2; Johnson 1-1-2; Cotton 1-1-2; Wayne 1-1-2; Collins 0-2-2; Bartholomew 1-0-1; LaVrar 1-0-1; Simpson 0-1-1.

still have a Big Ten championship to play for. Hopefully something will happen to Wisconsin down the road and everything will be all right.

"Realistically, we are probably out of the national title scene. You want to leave a little bit of hope," senior tailback Joe Montgomery said. "That's probably out of the picture. This is no time for the Buckeyes to back away from the challenge."

"We're going to have to play aggressive and play physical," he said. "We need to play with a big-time attitude."

"There is a lot to still accomplish. What are we going to do, kick ourselves in the butt and go home and cry about it? We have two ball games left."

"This will test the character of our football team. We'll see what happens Saturday."

Cooper was asked whether this loss added more pressure to defeat Michigan, a school his

OSU teams have beaten just once in 10 tries.

"Well, it's always important, obviously, and it makes it even more important now, I imagine, because if we don't beat Michigan, we've ruined what could be a great season," Cooper said.

"It could have been a fabulous season. We had a chance, as you know, to play for the national championship, and we probably now don't have that opportunity. But we can play for the Big Ten championship. We can play for a great year. But we've got to play better than we played today."

"I'm not exactly sure of what all can happen, but all we can do now, guys, is try to regroup and beat Iowa next week and then come back here and do something we haven't done in quite a while – that's beat Michigan."

This story originally appeared in the Nov. 14, 1998, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

Ohio State Remains Unbeaten With Win Over Purdue

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. This week we have chosen two games, because they were equally important in Ohio State football history. The following is coverage of Ohio State's dramatic 2002 victory over Purdue on one of the most famous passes in Buckeye history. It was a key win on Ohio State's march to the 2002 national championship. Additional features about the game will be posted at BuckeyeSports.com on Friday, Nov. 13.

Prior to Ohio State's Nov. 9 road trip to West Lafayette, Purdue's 4-5 record sure didn't look that imposing compared to powerful OSU's gaudy 10-0 mark.

But a look inside the numbers showed that the Boilermakers had endured five tough defeats by a total of 22 points.

Ohio State rallied late to deal Purdue tough loss No. 6, winning a 10-6 defensive battle before 65,250 at Ross-Ade Stadium.

"This is a tough place to play and Purdue is a good football team," said OSU coach Jim Tressel, whose team improved to 11-0 overall and 6-0 in Big Ten play. "Now they've had six losses by seven points or less. They're a tough football team and they played hard. Our kids played hard. Our defense kept fighting."

The third-ranked Buckeyes were outgained 341-267 in total yardage by the upset-minded Boilermakers (4-6, 2-4).

But OSU pulled out the win with a nearly miraculous fourth-down pass from Craig Krenzel to Michael Jenkins with just 1:36 left. Then two-way starter Chris Gamble intercepted a deep Purdue pass with 45 seconds left to preserve the win.

"This game was and could have been a disaster," said OSU tight end Ben Hartsock. "We came out flat, but we were able to eke out a win."

"Today was just a consequence of two good football teams going at it," added Krenzel, who hit on 13 of 20 passes for 173 yards with one touchdown and one interception.

Each team lost its starting tailback during the game as OSU's Maurice Clarett and Purdue's Joey Harris both went to the sidelines with injuries. Plus OSU flanker Chris Vance missed the game while attending his brother's funeral in Florida.

The game was tied 3-3 at halftime after each team made a field goal set up by an interception. Purdue nudged ahead 6-3 on a Berin Lacevic field goal with 7:50 left in the game, setting the stage for OSU's late-game heroics.

With the OSU offense struggling again – the Buckeyes netted a season-low 94 yards rushing on 39 attempts – the defense had to come up big.

"We like the game to be on our shoulders," said OSU linebacker Matt Wilhelm.

"To hold them to six points in the game, that was a huge turnaround for our team," added defensive end Simon Fraser. "That kept us in the game."

Purdue, which used both Kyle Orton and Brandon Kirsch at quarterback, employed a high-percentage passing game out of its spread offense to keep the ball for extended periods. But Orton threw three interceptions that limited Purdue's scoring chances.

"They basically did everything we expected them to do," said OSU defensive end Darrion Scott, who notched his team's only sack. "They were running the spread offense with short routes and short drops. They weren't giving the

D-line a chance to get any pressure."

Except for the outcome, Purdue coach Joe Tiller had to search to find fault with his team's effort.

"The game played out the way we wanted it to play out," he said. "We wanted to hold them to under 100 yards rushing. We thought with a great effort from our people we would be able to do that."

"We wanted to be in a position to win the game in the fourth quarter. But we couldn't execute our four-minute offense and we couldn't stop them on fourth down. We had our chances and we had our opportunities, but we couldn't take advantage of it."

With Kirsch nursing a broken finger, Orton returned to the starting lineup. He ended up completing 18 of 28 passes for 169 yards. He threw two of his interceptions before halftime, leading Tiller to go with the more mobile Kirsch to start the second half.

"We felt like we weren't particularly pleased with the two interceptions," Tiller said. "In this type of ball game, we knew turnovers would be critical."

Kirsch hit on 9 of 11 passes for 116 yards before Orton returned for Purdue's final possession after the Buckeyes took the lead. Orton understood the importance of making good decisions.

"You just can't turn the ball over," Orton said. "The defense played great. I had three picks, and a quarterback has to make good decisions when you play against the No. 3 team in the nation. Your margin of error decreases when you play a team the caliber of an Ohio State."

As It Happened

Purdue had the ball to open the game and held it for 11 plays. Orton hit on 6 of 9 passes for 55 yards. The Boilers benefited as well from a 15-yard personal foul penalty on Mike Doss for a late hit.

But on third-and-7 at the OSU 15, Orton threw a fade to John Standeford, who was under double coverage. Doss locked up Standeford, while Dustin Fox made the interception in the back of the end zone for a touchback with 10:24 left in the first quarter.

OSU had some early success on offense, picking up a first down on its first possession and two on its second. But the second one ended disastrously as Krenzel's third-down pass to Bam Childress was tipped in the air by Purdue corner Antwaun Rogers and intercepted by linebacker Niko Koutouvides. His 21-yard return put the Boilers in business at the OSU 23.

Purdue got a first down on Orton's 11-yard pass to Taylor Stubblefield. But a pair of incompletions stalled the drive, and the Boilers had to settle for Lacevic's 21-yard field goal and a 3-0 lead with 42 seconds left in the first quarter.

Purdue threatened on its next possession as Orton hit Joey Harris down the right sideline for a 30-yard gain. The Boilers got all the way down to the OSU 19. But on fourth-and-1 there, Lacevic's 36-yard field goal sailed wide left with 9:50 left in the first half.

The Buckeyes got a big break right before halftime. Orton, under pressure, tried to find Stubblefield over the middle. But Wilhelm made a sliding interception at the PU 41 with 3:15 left.

Clarett converted a first down on a 2-yard run to the 30. Two plays later, Krenzel scrambled for 15 yards down to the Purdue 13, but OSU had to call its second timeout with 38 seconds left.

Krenzel threw the ball away on first down before Clarett got one yard on an inside give on second. Facing third-and-9 at the 12, OSU called its last timeout with 19 seconds left.

Other Big 40th Anniversary Games

While it's hard to top the two BSB 40th anniversary games we chose for the week of Nov. 7-13, there were some other big games at this time through the years, including several with Michigan State. They include the following:

2003: Michigan State invaded Ohio Stadium with a 7-2, 4-1 record and a No. 14 ranking, but Mike Nugent nailed all four of his field-goal attempts and Lydell Ross carried 24 times for 125 yards as No. 6 Ohio State sent the Spartans packing, 33-23. Tyler Everett set up a Buckeye TD with a 66-yard interception return.

2014: No. 14 Ohio State faced a big obstacle as it tried to move into playoff contention when the Buckeyes traveled to East Lansing to face No. 8 MSU (7-1, 4-0). It was an offensive slugfest, with the Buckeyes outgaining the Spartans 568-536 and taking the 49-37 win. Freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett carried the day with 14 carries for 86 net yards and a pair of TDs and another three scores on 16-of-26 passing for 300 yards without an interception.

2017: The Spartans (7-2, 5-1) came to Columbus with a No. 12 ranking but left with their tails between their legs after a 48-3 beatdown. Mike Weber had touchdown runs of 47 and 82 yards against his home-state team while totaling 162 yards on just nine carries. J.K. Dobbins added 124 yards on 18 carries, and the No. 13 Buckeyes racked up 335 yards on the ground.

Clarett left the backfield empty when he lined up wide right. Krenzel took the shotgun snap and ran a quarterback draw seven yards down to the 5, where Purdue's Shaun Phillips dragged him down.

"We knew going into the play we didn't have a timeout," Krenzel said. "If I didn't have anything, I was supposed to throw it away and let the field goal team get the three points. I saw the middle was wide open and I thought I would get it."

He was tackled with 12 seconds left and the clock was rolling. But OSU successfully got its field goal unit on the field. The Buckeyes were set for a second before snapping the ball with a scant one second left. Mike Nugent's 22-yard field goal went through the uprights, tying the game at 3 at halftime.

Tiller charged toward the officials, complaining that the kick should have been nullified. But the TV replays clearly showed the field goal unit was set and the ball was snapped before time elapsed.

"That is something we work on a lot," Tressel said. "It came in handy today."

Late in the third quarter, the Buckeyes blocked a punt but could not capitalize on it. OSU's Jenkins came unblocked off the right edge and blocked Brent Slaton's punt at the Purdue 37 with 2:53 left in the third quarter.

Ross gained two yards on first down before Krenzel fumbled the snap for a 1-yard loss. The play knocked OSU out of field goal range, and the Buckeyes had to punt the ball away with 58 seconds left in the third.

Early in the fourth, Purdue broke the tie. Kirsch, opening a drive on his own 20-yard line, dropped and had all day to throw deep left for Ray Williams. Doss released Williams, who lined up wide right, at the line of scrimmage and no one was around when he hauled in the pass. He rolled for 58 yards down to the OSU 22.

The Boilers picked up a first down and got as close as the OSU 4. But on third-and-3 there, Kirsch tried a bootleg. Wilhelm snuffed it out and tackled him for a loss back at the 15. A Purdue false start penalty backed the Boilers back to the 20. But Lacevic's 37-yard field goal was good to put Purdue up 6-3 with 7:50 left in the game.

Krenzel completed passes of 11 and 12 yards to Jenkins to open the ensuing OSU possession. He then found Bam Childress for a 7-yard gain. But Maurice Hall got only one yard on second down and Krenzel was hit and fumbled on third down. Hall recovered it, but OSU had to punt the ball away with 4:50 left.

It was then on the OSU defense to get the ball back. OSU forced a three-and-out as Kirsch's third-down pass to Standeford was

seven yards short of the first-down-marker.

Purdue's Slaton uncorked a 57-yard punt, but Gamble returned it 22 yards to the Purdue 46 with 3:10 left.

Krenzel was sacked for a four-yard loss on first down. His second-down pass to Hartsock was incomplete. On third down, he stepped up and drilled a pass to Hartsock, who got 13 yards down to the Purdue 37.

The play ended with 2:10 left and the clock rolling. But instead of calling timeout, facing fourth-and-1, OSU went through its usual preplay routine. Krenzel dropped back and looked underneath for Hartsock, but he was covered. So Krenzel stepped up and threw deep down the left side to Jenkins, who got behind Purdue's Rogers.

Jenkins hauled in the pass in the end zone for the 37-yard touchdown.

"I know Craig was looking underneath to Ben, but he got mangled," Jenkins said. "Craig just stepped up and made a great throw."

Nugent's PAT kick put the Buckeyes up 10-6 with 1:36 left.

Purdue took possession on its own 20 after a touchback on the ensuing kickoff. Tiller sent Orton back into the game at quarterback.

"We went back to Orton at the end of the game because he has a stronger arm than Brandon does," Tiller said. "We thought Orton's opportunity to cash in would be better than Kirsch's."

Orton converted one first down with a 13-yard pass to Standeford. But facing third-and-4 at the Purdue 39, he threw deep down the middle for Stubblefield. Gamble swooped in at the last second and intercepted the pass at the OSU 11 with 45 seconds left.

OSU ran the remaining time out to escape with the win.

Game Notes

- OSU was tied at halftime for the first time this season. But the Buckeyes needed a second-half score to win a game for the fifth time this year.

- The Buckeyes extended their string of second-half dominance. OSU has now outscored its opponents 182-38 in the second half, including 110-14 in the third quarter.

The last OSU opponent to score a second-half touchdown was Northwestern six games ago. Indiana was the last team to score a fourth-quarter touchdown against the Buckeyes. That was in week five.

- OSU is 34-11-2 all-time against Purdue, including 11-5 in West Lafayette.

This story originally appeared in the Nov. 16, 2002, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

4th-Down Score Difference In Win Over Boilermakers

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Twice in the final two minutes of Ohio State's Nov. 16 game at Purdue, the ball was in the air for a deep pass.

Both times, an OSU player came down with the ball, and that was, in essence, the game as the third-ranked Buckeyes preserved their undefeated record with a 10-6 win over the Boilermakers.

OSU appeared headed toward its first defeat in 11 games this season as it trailed Purdue 6-3 with the clock rolling inside two minutes. Even worse, the Buckeyes were facing a fourth-and-1 at the Purdue 37.

With the Boilers expecting a run, OSU quarterback Craig Krenzel exploited a mismatch by hurling a 37-yard touchdown pass to Michael Jenkins with just 1:36 left.

Then, as the OSU defense held on for dear life, two-way starter Chris Gamble broke back and intercepted a bomb from Purdue quarterback Kyle Orton with just 45 seconds left.

"Championship teams make those kind of plays," lamented Purdue coach Joe Tiller, whose team suffered its sixth loss of the season by a touchdown or less.

The sudden change of fortune – which kept Ohio State (11-0, 6-0) firmly in the national championship hunt – was another chapter of what makes college football special, OSU coach Jim Tressel said.

"That was another example of a great Big Ten football game," Tressel said. "No matter what stadium you go to in this league it will be a battle until the end. Both teams fought extremely hard, and Purdue prepared extremely hard and fought like crazy."

"We said all week they could be sitting there with eight or nine wins."

The Buckeyes were caught between a rock and a hard place when they got the ball back after a punt at the Purdue 46 with 3:10 left. They needed at least a field goal to force overtime. Anything less would have been disastrous.

"It was make it or break it on that drive," said tight end Ben Hartsock, whose 13-yard grab helped set up the touchdown. "Our entire year of preparation and everything came down to that moment."

A Fourth Down To Remember

Just before the touchdown, Krenzel had to step up under heavy pressure and fire the pass to Hartsock near the sideline.

The tight end bulled his way down to the Purdue 37 but was still a yard shy. The clock had hit two minutes and was still rolling. OSU had two timeouts left, but Tressel decided to save them and go ahead and call the fourth-down play.

"I don't think anyone was thinking the season hinged on that one play," Krenzel said. "But all of our mental focus was on that one play."

The play – "King-Right, 64 Wide-Shadow Swat" – gave Krenzel several options to try to get the first down.

"It depended on what they were in," Tressel said. "It was only fourth-and-1 and part of the route would have gotten the first down. They happened to be manned up on the receivers."

The word was passed quickly to the offense, which did not huddle. Meanwhile, the Purdue defense was stacked to try to stop the run, leaving the corners alone on Jenkins and Gamble.

OSU lined up with tailback Lydell Ross in an offset-I behind Krenzel. As it turned out, he was just a decoy – and a key pass protector.

The Boilermakers brought seven men on

the rush.

"Coach sent that play in," Krenzel said. "They were getting up to try and stop the run. They were playing Cover 0 with nobody deep and man-to-man coverage. They brought a blitz and our offensive line did a good job and picked it up great."

Krenzel recalled his various options.

"I think we caught them off-guard by not huddling in such a critical situation," he said. "We called it at the line of scrimmage."

"I was passing it with the thought I might be able to step up and get the 1 yard we needed for the first down. My first read was Ben underneath. I was supposed to try and deliver him the ball first. Chris Gamble was running a dig route to the right and Mike was running the post to the left."

Krenzel and Jenkins were on the same page as Purdue cornerback Antwaun Rogers ventured up into bump-and-run coverage.

"I saw the safeties down by the line of scrimmage," Jenkins said. "They were expecting the run. They pressed us up man. I knew then that Craig was just going to have to throw it up there and try and give us a chance."

Krenzel gave Hartsock, who was shadowed by a linebacker, only a cursory glance before looking long.

"They closed Ben off and when people man on you you can throw over the top," Tressel said. "Craig did a great job stepping up in the pocket and threw it to Mike Jenkins and gave him that little extra time to get separation."

Jenkins and Rogers had been jostling all the way down the sideline. Rogers clearly grabbed Jenkins before the receiver used his right arm to brush the defender out of the way.

"That's what receivers here have to do," said Jenkins, who hauled in his team-high fifth touchdown. "I gave him a little nudge at the end to create some space and catch the ball. We were grabbing each other. That's just part of football. That's what happens."

"You have to get separation when the ball is in the air. Craig made a great throw. I just ran under it and made a play."

Added Krenzel, "They gave me time to hang in there. I just stepped up and delivered it. Mike ran a good route and made a great catch."

Jenkins caught the ball in stride at the 1-yard line and scored easily, touching off a massive OSU celebration.

"I can't even tell you," Krenzel said when asked to describe his reaction to the play. "I can't explain it. I just wish everyone in the world could feel that kind of excitement and a natural high. It was an unbelievable feeling."

But Tiller understood completely.

"The corner is on an island," the coach said. "What the heck? They know that when it is called. It was a great throw into the wind and a great catch by their guy."

Purdue safety Stuart Schweigert added, "It's hard. As a DB in (single) coverage, it's just you. You can't hide from anyone. It takes a lot of (guts) to play out there."

Certainly, the OSU side hopes that touchdown and this win spur them toward at least a conference crown. Regardless, the last-ditch play figures to go down as one of the school's most memorable scores.

"I knew the guys wanted it and that was our season right there," Jenkins said. "They wanted to spoil it, but we got in. It's a great feeling."

Gamble Pays Off Huge

Of course, there was still matter of the remaining 1:36.

Purdue had jockeyed Orton and Brandon Kirsch but decided to go with Orton, the stron-

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 10, Purdue 6

Nov. 9, 2002 – Ross-Ade Stadium; West Lafayette, Ind.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	0	3	0	7	10
PURDUE	3	0	0	3	6

First Quarter

PUR – Lacevic, 21-yard field goal, 0:42; 6 plays, 19 yards, 1:57 TOP.

Second Quarter

OSU – Nugent, 22-yard field goal, 0:00; 9 plays, 36 yards, 3:15 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

PUR – Lacevic, 32-yard field goal, 7:50; 8 plays, 65 yards, 4:18 TOP.

OSU – Jenkins, 37-yard pass from Krenzel (Nugent kick), 1:36; 4 plays, 46 yards, 1:34 TOP.

Att. – 65,250

Weather – Mostly cloudy, 63 degrees; wind 17 mph from S/SW

Team Statistics

	OSU	PUR
First Downs	13	17
Rushing	4	4
Passing	9	12
Penalty	0	1
Rushes-Yards	39-94	29-56
Passing Yards	173	285
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	13-20-1	27-39-3
Offensive Plays	59	68
Total Net Yards	267	341
Third Down Efficiency	4-15	4-16
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-1	1-1
Punts-Avg.	8-41.9	5-35.0
Fumbles-Lost	3-0	0-0
Penalties	3-25	5-30
Time of Possession	28:20	31:40

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – OSU: Claret 14-52; Ross 11-24; Krenzel 12-19; M. Hall 1-1; TEAM 1-(-2).

PUR: B. Jones 12-28; J. Harris 11-25; Void 1-2; Kirsch 5-1.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – OSU: Krenzel 13-20-1-173-1. **PUR:** Orton 18-28-3-169-0; Kirsch 9-11-0-116-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – OSU: Jenkins 5-87; Gamble 3-51; Hartsock 2-21; Ross 1-8; Childress 1-7; Claret 1-(-1). **PUR:** Standeford 8-57; Stubblefield 7-63; Chambers 7-44; J. Harris 2-45; R. Williams 1-58; B. Jones 1-9; Rhinehart 1-9.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – OSU: Groom 8-41.9-58. **PUR:** Slaton 4-43.8-57; TEAM 1-0-0.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Avg.) – OSU: Gamble 2-35; Jenkins 1-11. **PUR:** Chambers 1-20; Morales 1-2.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Avg.) – OSU: Joe 2-10. **PUR:** None.

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

INTERCEPTIONS – OSU: Wilhelm 1-0; Fox 1-0; Gamble 1-0. **PUR:** Koutouvides 1-20.

TACKLES FOR LOSS – OSU: Wilhelm 1-6; Scott 1-4; Reynolds 1-2; Peterson 1-1. **PUR:** Phillips 2-7; L. Johnson 2-6; Schweigert 1-2; Villarreal 1-2; Dzolic 1-2; Koutouvides 1-1; Ra. Turner 1-1; Grover 1-1; Nesfield 1-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – OSU: Doss 7-2-9; Wilhelm 3-5-8; Smith 5-2-7; Fox 4-3-7; Nickey 4-2-6; Gamble 5-0-5; Reynolds 4-1-5; Anderson 1-4-5; Thompson 1-2-3; Grant 2-1-3; Allen 2-1-3; Peterson 1-2-3; Scott 1-2-3; Krenzel 1-0-1; Fraser 0-1-1; Mangold 0-1-1. **PUR:** L. Johnson 5-6-11; Schweigert 5-5-10; Koutouvides 4-5-9; Ra. Turner 3-3-6; Phillips 5-0-5; Villarreal 1-4-5; Rogers 3-1-4; Odom 3-0-3; Grover 1-1-2; TEAM 1-0-1; Gardner 1-0-1; Goldsberry 1-0-1; Nesfield 1-0-1; Reeves 1-0-1; Dzolic 0-1-1.

ger passer, for the final drive, which began at the Purdue 20.

The Boilermakers got as far as their own 39-yard line, but Orton, who threw a pair of first-half interceptions, got a little greedy.

OSU was playing a soft three-deep zone, intent on keeping the PU receivers in front of them. With all kinds of time to throw against a three-man rush, Orton saw Taylor Stubblefield come open deep down the middle of the field.

Orton heaved the ball for Stubblefield. Gamble turned and sprinted from as far as 30 yards away. It was no contest as Gamble got to the pass and easily intercepted it at the OSU 11.

"I saw the quarterback rolling and I saw the receiver going deep," said Gamble, who made his team-high fourth interception. "I just waited for the quarterback to throw it up in the air."

"I treated it like I was the receiver on a post pattern. I just went and brought it down."

Gamble was pressed into extra duty, starting on both sides of the ball for the third straight game. His interceptions against Cincinnati, Wisconsin and Penn State earlier this year helped lock up wins. They also led the coaches to make him a full-time player

on defense.

But the matter was complicated for this game as backup flanker Chris Vance was absent from the team while attending his brother's funeral in Florida. That meant that Gamble, who also returns punts and kicks, hardly left the field at Purdue.

"I wasn't tired today," he said. "This was a big game we had to have. I had to stay in there and help the team."

"I want to keep playing the whole game. I never give up. I just try to keep playing 100 percent. I want to be out there to help the team. I want to play four quarters. I just want to play as hard as I can."

Against Purdue, Gamble had three catches for 51 yards on offense. He had five tackles and an interception on defense. And, for good measure, he returned two punts for 35 yards.

"No doubt about it, he did it on both sides of the ball," Tressel said. "We talked over the headphone about giving Chris a little rest, but in games like we've been playing there's no time for him to rest. He's the best available guy."

This story originally appeared in the Nov. 16, 2002, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

North Carolina Tight End Commits To OSU

Pilot Mountain (N.C.) East Surry four-star tight end Benji Gosnell committed to Ohio State on Nov. 4, choosing the Buckeyes over finalists Florida and North Carolina.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

The 6-4, 225-pound Gosnell is considered the 11th-best tight end and No. 265 prospect overall in the class of 2022. He caught 25 passes for 422 yards and five touchdowns to lead the Cardinals to their first state championship last season. He also added 14 tackles for loss, six sacks, two forced fumbles, one fumble recovery and an interception as a linebacker, where he garnered first-team all-state honors.

Ohio State extended an offer to Gosnell in July, and though he's never been to campus, he's been able to build a strong relationship with head coach Ryan Day and offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kevin Wilson through virtual visits and Zoom calls.

Gosnell trimmed his list of scholarship offers to the Buckeyes, Gators and Tar Heels on Aug. 23, with most prognosticators expecting him to follow his older brother, Stephen, a former four-star wide receiver in the class of 2020, to North Carolina.

Ohio State made a significant push in recent weeks, though, thanks to Wilson's track record for developing tight ends and their increased usage within the offense this year.

"We take a lot of pride in the way that group has developed," Wilson said during a teleconference on Nov. 3. "My background shows that we get tight ends to the NFL. The best thing is that

when you put the tape on and look at our tight ends compared to other tight ends, you see guys who actually block people. They're really good at the point of attack. They're good on the back side. They're excellent in pass protection. And then (against Penn State), the ball came our way. We had six catches."

Although he cannot talk about specific recruits due to NCAA rules, Wilson noted he recently showed a prospect 39 different video clips of how the Buckeyes use their tight ends.

In the win over the Nittany Lions, specifically, there were two tight ends on the field on 37 percent of the offensive snaps where one was used as an extra blocker along the line and the other ran routes downfield, with junior Jeremy Ruckert catching a pair of touchdown passes.

That made quite the impression on Gosnell, who announced his commitment date the following day.

Gosnell becomes the seventh member of the Buckeyes' 2022 recruiting class, joining Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona three-star Bennett Christian at the tight end position. His pledge also moved Ohio State ahead of LSU for the top spot in the 247Sports team recruiting rankings.

Safety Target Commits To LSU

Although Ohio State and Penn State courted him for nearly three years, Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway four-star safety Derrick Davis committed to LSU on Nov. 7.

The 6-1, 194-pound Davis – who is considered the second-best safety and No. 53 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – pledged his services to the Tigers after taking just one visit to Baton Rouge, La., over Halloween weekend. He wasn't able to meet with coaches due to the ongoing recruiting dead period but built a strong bond with LSU safeties coach Bill Busch from afar.

"I just feel like that is the perfect place for me," Davis told 247Sports recruiting analyst Brian Dohn. "It reminded me of

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.) Saguaro
Reid Carrico	LB	6-3	225	★★★★	Ironton, Ohio
Ben Christman	OG	6-6	299	★★★★	Richfield (Ohio) Revere
Jantzen Dunn	S	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
Zen Michalski	OT	6-7	288	★★★	Floyds Knobs (Ind.) Floyd Central
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
Benji Gosnell	TE	6-4	225	★★★★	Pilot Mountain (N.C.) East Surry
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

home. The staff really showed a lot of love toward me and my family. They see me doing a lot of big things for their team and for their program."

Davis made more than a half-dozen trips to Ohio State after then co-defensive coordinator Alex Grinch extended an offer in February 2018. And while he kept things rather close to the vest throughout the process, his most recent trip to Columbus for the commit-led Buckeye Bash on Oct. 24 seemingly put the Buckeyes at the forefront of his recruitment.

That lead, if there ever was one, evaporated quickly with the visit to LSU the following weekend. Now, he'll team up with Lafayette (La.) Christian Academy five-star Sage Ryan, the nation's top-rated safety who committed to the Tigers while Davis was on campus.

Ohio State, meanwhile, holds six commitments in the defensive backfield in Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett four-star cornerback Jordan Hancock; St. Louis De Smet four-star Jakailin Johnson; Nashville Ensworth four-star Andre Turrentine; Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguaro

ASK AN ANALYST With Buckeye Scoop's Marc Givler

Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway four-star safety Derrick Davis committed to LSU over finalists Ohio State and Penn State on Nov. 7. How did the Tigers pull this one out after just one visit?

"With Davis and LSU, most people, including myself, thought the lack of visit opportunities due to COVID-19 was going to make it nearly impossible to pick the Tigers. But Derrick was able to finally get down there and take a look a week before his announcement. LSU had been on him pretty big since the spring, so while a surprise publicly, it didn't come completely out of left field.

"He always was interested in LSU and respected the legacy of defensive backs at that program. It was surprising to see it turn on just that one visit, but the Tigers' staff worked this one hard over the past 6-8 months and was rewarded for that."

Although he's been in contact with Ohio State wide receivers coach Brian Hartline in recent weeks, Clayton (Ohio) Northmont three-star wide receiver Markus Allen committed to Wisconsin on Nov. 6. Is it safe to assume the Buckeyes were waiting to see what happened with Steilacoom,

Wash., five-star Emeka Egbuka before extending an offer?

"I tend to think if Egbuka commits to Ohio State that there won't be room for Allen. That being said, Ohio State has really liked this kid since even before he committed to Michigan, but a lack of in-person evaluation opportunities led to never pulling the trigger. If Egbuka surprises and commits to Oklahoma, I think OSU would pounce on Allen at that point."

How would a potential commitment from 2022 Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star quarterback Quinn Ewers impact Ohio State's recruiting efforts at the position, specifically when it comes to the pledge of 2021 Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep five-star Kyle McCord?

"McCord is graduating early with the mind-set that he will be competing for a starting job in Columbus next year. I have received no indication from the McCord camp that there is any concern or thought put into what Ohio State brings in behind him so I feel that is solid no matter what. Where it could impact things is that I have thought 2022 could be a two-QB class, my guess is it would just be Ewers if he commits to the Buckeyes and

they'll either worry about a multiple QB class in 2023 or go find a Chris Chugunov or Gunnar Hoak in the portal if they need another body down the road."

Several of the top-rated players in the 2022 recruiting class have posted pro-Ohio State tweets in recent weeks, including Del Valle, Texas, five-star wide receiver Caleb Burton; Lynchburg (Va.) Liberty Christian Academy five-star offensive tackle Zach Rice; Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star cornerback Domani Jackson; Grosse Pointe (Mich.) South five-star cornerback Will Johnson; Des Moines (Iowa) Southeast Polk four-star safety Xavier Nwankpa; Atlanta Woodward Academy four-star running back Damari Alston; and Katy, Texas, four-star cornerback Bobby Taylor. How many of those players have legitimate interest in the Buckeyes and vice versa?

"I think most of those guys have legitimate interest and at least have the Buckeyes in the top two or three. That being said, there is definitely a component of having fun on social media here, and I think some of these guys are further away from actually making a decision than they are letting on publicly."

four-star Denzel Burke; Bowling Green (Ky.) South Warren four-star Jantzen Dunn; and Cincinnati La Salle three-star Jaylen Johnson. It goes without saying that logjam didn't help the Buckeyes' chances with Davis.

Davis' decision is especially crushing for Penn State, which has seen nine of the top 10 prospects in the state of Pennsylvania commit elsewhere. That includes a pair of Ohio State commits in Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep five-star quarterback Kyle McCord and four-star wide receiver Marvin Harrison.

The 10th player, Philadelphia Northeast four-star defensive end Elijah Jeudy, is widely expected to end up at Texas A&M.

Another Bash In The Works

As mentioned above, several of Ohio State's commitments and top targets from the class of 2021 held an unofficial gathering at Pickerington (Ohio) North five-star defensive end Jack Sawyer's house on Oct. 24. It apparently went so well that Kettering (Ohio) Archbishop Alter four-star linebacker C.J. Hicks is in the process of planning a similar get-together for the Buckeyes' 2022 recruiting class.

Sources have indicated Buckeye Bash

2.0 won't happen until early next year, as Ohio State looks to add to its top-rated haul in the coming months. But notable uncommitted prospects who could be on the guest list include Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star quarterback Quinn Ewers; Del Valle, Texas, five-star wide receiver Caleb Burton; Grosse Pointe (Mich.) South five-star cornerback Will Johnson; Memphis Christian Brothers four-star running back Dallan Hayden; Greenwood (Ind.) Center Grove four-star defensive end Caden Curry; and Des Moines (Iowa) Southeast Polk four-star safety Xavier Nwankpa, among others.

Four-Star Defensive Tackle Decommits From Maryland

Gaithersburg (Md.) Quince Orchard four-star defensive tackle Marcus Bradley decommitted from Maryland on Nov. 2, raising the question of whether Ohio State would get involved in his recruitment once again.

The 6-3, 270-pound Bradley – who is considered the 12th-best defensive tackle and No. 175 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – had some early interest in and took two unofficial visits with the Buckeyes before he committed to the Terrapins on May 1. But sources within the Ohio State football program have told Buckeye Sports Bulletin they won't be

pursuing him this time around.

The Buckeyes already hold commitments on the interior of the defensive line from Streetsboro, Ohio, four-star tackle Mike Hall and Manassas (Va.) Unity Reed four-star tackle Tyleik Williams. They are also the odds-on favorite to land Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star end J.T. Tuimoloau, who has the versatility to play multiple spots along the line.

As for Bradley, he's reportedly hearing from schools such as Northwestern, Penn State and Virginia Tech.

Five-Star Offensive Tackle Down To Six

Daleville (Va.) Lord Botetourt five-star offensive tackle Gunner Givens trimmed his list of nearly 30 scholarship offers to Alabama, Clemson, North Carolina, Ohio State, Penn State and Virginia Tech on Nov. 4.

The 6-6, 275-pound Givens is considered the top-ranked offensive tackle and No. 20 prospect overall in the class of 2022, though he's relatively new to the position after transitioning from tight end this offseason. Even so, the Buckeyes have been in contact with him since April and extended a scholarship offer on Aug. 10.

Givens – who has family in Miamisburg,

Ohio – has never been to Columbus, but he talks almost daily with offensive line coach Greg Studrawa and offensive graduate assistant Kennedy Cook, which is a big reason he holds Ohio State in such high regard.

While the Buckeyes already hold a commitment from West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star Tegra Tshabola, offensive tackle will undoubtedly be the staff's top priority in 2022 after missing out on several high-profile targets this cycle, including Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star J.C. Latham, who picked Alabama in June. In addition to Givens, other names to keep in mind at the position include Lynchburg (Va.) Liberty Christian Academy five-star Zach Rice; Fond Du Lac (Wis.) St. Mary's Springs four-star Billy Schrauth; Charlestown, Ind., four-star Kiyunta Goodwin; and Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star Aamil Wagner.

Carolina Linebacker Interested In Buckeyes

Salisbury, N.C., four-star linebacker Jalon Walker included Ohio State in his top six on Nov. 6 alongside Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Georgia and North Carolina.

Continued On Page 30

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1985

The Ohio State coaching staff didn't have to drive very far to find top talent for the class of 1986, with many of Ohio's best players in the class hailing from within the central Ohio footprint.

"Normally there aren't a great number of top players to look at in this area," said Bill Andrews, assistant to Ohio State recruiting coordinator Bob McNea. "This year there are an unusual number of top athletes.

"David Key, Jeff Davidson and Tony Cupe are probably the top three around here," continued Andrews. "Those three are definitely big-time players. After that, there are a few that we are still evaluating that may be big-time players. It's a pretty sure thing that two or three of them are going to be Division I recruits"

Davidson, a 6-6, 265-pound offensive tackle at Westerville North, was probably the cream of the crop. Every national scouting service had Davidson, the son of former Ohio State griddler Jim Davidson and the brother of then-OSU redshirt freshman Jim Davidson, near the top of their lists.

30 Years Ago – 1990

Youngstown (Ohio) Rayen defensive end Craig Powell could line up just about anywhere on the field if he put his mind to it.

Powell, a SuperPrep magazine All-American coming into his senior year, was considering several schools including Ohio State, Michigan, Pittsburgh, Syracuse and Penn State.

Any of those schools would have been glad to take him, as he possessed excellent speed, versatility and all the tools a team could want from a defender.

"I would say he would play an outside linebacker in college," Rayen coach John Turco told BSB in November following the end of the high school football season. "He runs a 4.5 40-yard dash, which is defensive back speed."

That athletic ability drew interest in Powell on both sides of the football. While he made his name at defensive end, SuperPrep named him the fourth-best prep tight end in the country going into the 1990 season.

"Not only will Craig have the usual decision of which college to attend, but he will also have another choice to make: which side of the ball to play," SuperPrep said.

25 Years Ago – 1995

An Ohio State recruiting effort that had a strong Ohio foundation did some expanding nationally, and even internationally.

The Buckeyes upped their list of verbal commitments to 12 with the commitments of Tucson (Ariz.) Catalina Foothills offensive tackle/defensive end Joe Brown and Brampton (Ontario) Centennial defensive end Clinton Wayne.

Brown (6-7, 250, 5.1) had ties to the Columbus area with his

mother living in Sunbury, just north of the city. He and his father had flown in to see Ohio State's game against Purdue on Oct. 21. He also attended a camp at OSU in the summer.

"I went to the camp this summer and that gave me a chance to meet (defensive coordinator Bill) Young," Brown told BSB. "Then, when I came in for the game I was very impressed. I just knew that was where I wanted to play."

He committed to the Buckeyes in the week leading up to their Nov. 4 win over Minnesota, as did Wayne, who also visited on Oct. 21.

"I fell in love with it when I visited down there," Wayne told BSB. "I just said that this was the place for me."

20 Years Ago – 2000

Ohio State welcomed a group of about 25 football prospects for its Nov. 4 home game with Michigan State.

Among those in attendance were verbal commitments Redgie Arden, Rodney Carter, Ryan Cook, Adam Olds, Brandon Schnittker, Jacob Stewart and Andree Tyree.

Perhaps the key prospect in attendance was Columbus Brookhaven running back Maurice Hall, ranked Ohio's fourth-best prospect by The Ohio Football Recruiting News.

Along with Hall, top in-state prospects at the game included Dayton Dunbar defensive end NaShan Goddard; Centerville kicker Mike Nugent; Avon defensive lineman Jamie Wimmer and Dublin Scioto wide receiver Brian Pickard, along with top junior halfback Maurice Claret from Warren Harding, who was reportedly favoring Notre Dame.

15 Years Ago – 2005

A diverse group of high school prospects assembled in Ohio Stadium Nov. 5 to take in Ohio State's rout of Illinois. Those in attendance ranged from Buckeye verbal commitments and several out-of-state seniors to some of the state's top prospects in the class of 2007.

Even without some of Ohio's top talent, too busy in the Ohio Division I football playoffs taking place over the same weekend, plenty of intriguing talent descended upon the Horseshoe.

Included in that group was Columbia (S.C.) Irmo fullback Aram Olson; Spartanburg, S.C. quarterback Nick Prochak; Bay City (Mich.) John Glenn offensive lineman Bryant Nowicki; West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West wide receiver Josh Chinchester and Salem, Ohio, kicker Brian Wright.

10 Years Ago – 2010

Given a chance to follow tradition or stand out from the crowd, Conner Crowell chose the latter.

The senior middle linebacker from Waldorf (Md.) North Point had narrowed his list to local favorite Penn State and Ohio State, and as he tried to choose between the two schools, the 6-1, 219-pounder

reflected upon something OSU linebackers coach Luke Fickell had told him.

"I just wanted to be one of the first from Maryland to go to Ohio State," he told BSB. "I was trying to start a new pipeline for Ohio State. Coach Fickell said they needed somebody to be the first to help them start recruiting this area more so they can start getting better players. This is a Penn State-dominated area."

With that, the Buckeyes had their first 2011 verbal commitment in more than four months. A three-star prospect, Crowell announced his pick of the Buckeyes on Nov. 5.

Five Years Ago – 2015

Gahanna (Ohio) Lincoln's Jonathon Cooper, a commit in Ohio State's 2016 class, earned praise from national recruiting analysts after a strong summer circuit showing and an even stronger senior season, moving slightly from No. 35 to No. 33 in the Rivals November rankings update.

"The Buckeye commit has backed up his summer with a good fall," analyst Allen Trieu wrote. "He's an explosive edge rusher who has played in a two-point and has even moved down inside in some situations this year. Expect him to be a weakside edge rusher at the next level. He doesn't have the size of a Sam Hubbard or Joey Bosa, but he's going to be able to get to the quarterback. Continuing to improve at dropping into coverage will only raise his value because he fits best as a hybrid guy."

One Year Ago – 2019

Ohio State landed a commitment on Oct. 31 from Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star wide receiver Marvin Harrison, the son of the NFL Hall of Famer of the same name and teammate of four-star quarterback pledge Kyle McCord.

The 6-4, 184-pound Harrison was considered the eighth-best wide receiver and No. 54 prospect overall in the class of 2021, hauling in 36 passes for 832 yards and 12 touchdowns in 2019 as a junior. That included six receptions for 222 yards and four touchdowns in the Hawks' 52-7 win over Wyndmoor La Salle in the Catholic League Class 6A championship on Nov. 9.

Harrison – who first visited Columbus with McCord in February and then returned to campus for the Buckeyes' spring game in April – picked Ohio State over nearly two dozen scholarship offers from programs such as Florida, LSU, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Rutgers and his father's alma mater, Syracuse, among others.

Harrison became the sixth member of Ohio State's 2021 recruiting class, joining McCord; Pickerington (Ohio) North five-star defensive end Jack Sawyer; Richfield (Ohio) Revere four-star offensive tackle Ben Christman; Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star Jayden Ballard; and Ironton, Ohio, four-star linebacker Reid Carrico.

Under Armour Game Canceled Due To COVID

Continued From Page 29

The 6-2, 220-pound Walker is considered the second-best outside linebacker and No. 41 prospect overall in the class of 2022 after he recorded 121 tackles, eight tackles for loss, six pass breakups, three forced fumbles, two sacks and two interceptions – one of which he returned for a touchdown – to lead the Hornets to the state championship game last fall.

Walker has not been to campus, which is a common occurrence given the ongoing pandemic, but he has been in contact with Buckeyes linebacker coach Al Washington. The Tigers are the perceived favorite in his recruitment thanks to his relationship with Clemson sophomore defensive end K.J. Henry, a childhood friend whose father coached them when they were younger.

Ohio State is already stacked at the linebacker position, holding commitments

from the aforementioned Hicks, as well as Marysville, Ohio, five-star Gabe Powers and Overland Park (Kan.) Blue Valley North four-star Dasan McCullough. The staff could take as many as five linebackers in 2022, however, with Walker; Manassas (Va.) Unity Reed five-star Shawn Murphy; Shelby, N.C., four-star Malaki Hamrick; and Manvel, Texas, three-star Justin Medlock among those under consideration early in the cycle.

Under Armour Game Canceled

The Under Armour All-America Game announced on Nov. 6 that it has canceled its annual high school showcase – as well as its Future 50 Camp and UA Next Game, which feature the nation's top underclassmen and eighth-grade standouts – due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“The safety of participants, coaches, staff and everyone associated with the Under Armour All-America Game is of the utmost importance, as is the well-being of the families, friends, classmates and others connected to this year's class of All-Americans,” the game's organizers said in a statement posted to Twitter. “While we are disappointed for this year's class that will miss the physical experience of being in Orlando and participating in the Game, we're working together with ESPN and Under Armour to celebrate these incredible athletes and honor them for their achievements as they prepare for the next steps of their football careers.”

Two Ohio State commits were slated to play in the game, which would have taken place at Camping World Stadium in Orlando on Jan. 9, including Hopewell, Va., five-star running back TreVeyon Henderson and Richfield (Ohio) Revere four-star offensive guard Ben Christman. Henderson notably announced he had accepted an invitation to the game after the All-American Bowl was canceled.

With the Under Armour All-America Game's announcement, the only national high school all-star game still attempting to play is the Polynesian Bowl in Honolulu. It is scheduled for Jan. 23 at 6 p.m. on CBS Sports Network.

Ohio State targets set to play in that game include Tuimoloau; Steilacoom, Wash., five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka; and Fairfax (Va.) Robinson Secondary five-star offensive tackle Tristan Leigh.

Other Notes From Around The Country

- Pleasant Grove, Utah, four-star wide receiver Darrius Clemons, the 16th-best wide receiver in the class of 2022, announced on Nov. 3 that he plans to share his top schools in the coming days. He does not yet hold an offer from Ohio State, but he took an unofficial visit for last year's win over Penn State and has maintained contact with wide receivers coach Brian Hartline and offensive quality control coach Keenan Bailey ever since.

- Clayton (Ohio) Northmont three-star wide receiver Markus Allen committed to Wisconsin on Nov. 6. He's the third Ohioan to commit to the Badgers in the 2021 recruiting cycle, joining Hilliard (Ohio) Bradley four-star tight end Jack Pugh and Akron Hoban three-star linebacker Darryl Peterson.

- Ohio State handed out a pair of offers since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to publication, including 2022 Duncanville, Texas, four-star defensive end Omari Abor on Nov. 3 and Jacksonville (Fla.) Robert E. Lee five-star cornerback Jaheim Singletary on Nov. 5.

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



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Wisconsin Reports 27 Active Coronavirus Cases

The Badgers missed their second straight game due to COVID-19 after reporting that there were 27 active cases within the program since Oct. 24, with 15 student-athletes and 12 staff members testing positive.

Wisconsin did not take the field against Nebraska Oct. 31 after 12 positive COVID-19 cases were reported, and an increase in cases kept the team out of competition against Purdue on Nov. 7.

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

"I share in the disappointment of our student-athletes and staff," Wisconsin athletic director Barry Alvarez said. "We have seen a level of improvement in our testing numbers, but not enough to give us confidence to resume normal activities and play our game (against Purdue). We will continue to test regularly, take the proper health-related precautions and look forward to getting our team back on the field as soon as possible."

The statement said that Wisconsin initially paused team activities on Oct. 28 and that they have remained paused.

Before the Badgers' matchup with the Huskers was canceled, there were reports that starting quarterback Graham Mertz and his backup Chase Wolf had tested positive, along with Wisconsin head coach Paul Chryst.

With cancellations against Nebraska and Purdue, Wisconsin is left with only six games on the regular-season schedule, which is the minimum threshold required to compete for a division title without other stipulations from in-division opponents.

Since the players who tested positive must sit out 21 days following the test, the Badgers' next game against Michigan on Nov. 14 could also be in jeopardy.

Iowa WR Ihmir Smith-Marsette Arrested For DWI

Iowa wide receiver Ihmir Smith-Marsette was arrested for operating while intoxicated in Iowa City just a few hours after the Hawkeyes' 21-20 loss to Northwestern.

Smith-Marsette, 21, was pulled over at an intersection by Iowa City Police at 1:27 a.m. Nov. 1 and was later jailed. He was clocked going 74 mph in a 30-mph zone and blew a 0.13 on a blood-alcohol test, well above the legal limit of 0.08 percent.

In the police report, the arresting officer said he stopped Smith-Marsette for excessive speeding.

"The defendant had bloodshot, watery eyes, impaired speech, and smelled of alcohol," the police report said.

The incident marked Smith-Marsette's first OWI offense, according to the police report, and he was taken to Johnson County jail.

Head coach Kirk Ferentz suspended Smith-Marsette for the Hawkeyes' upcoming matchup with Michigan State.

Smith-Marsette's arrest came after he caught a career-high seven passes for 84 yards against the Wildcats. Despite his efforts, the Hawkeyes dropped to 0-2 on the season after blowing a 17-0 lead.

In Iowa's Holiday Bowl victory over USC last season, Smith-Marsette was the offensive MVP after scoring three total touchdowns.

The senior wide receiver from Newark, N.J., has played in 39 games in his Hawkeye career, totaling 92 receptions for 1,354 yards with 15 total touchdowns.

PSU WR John Dunmore Enters Transfer Portal

Penn State wide receiver John Dunmore entered the transfer portal, likely signaling the end of his time in Happy Valley.

"My time at the prestigious Pennsylvania State University has been a wonderful experience," Dunmore said on Twitter. "Especially the fans, much love for you guys and the atmosphere."

Earlier in October, a Penn State spokesperson said Dunmore was withdrawing from the school for "personal reasons."

As a four-star recruit, Dunmore was the No. 20 wide receiver and No. 120 overall prospect in the 2019 recruiting class.

Though he was highly touted coming out of high school, Dunmore played in only one game and did not record any statistics as a true freshman last season.

Three Hawkeyes Enter The Transfer Portal

Iowa redshirt freshman linebacker Yahweh Jeudy and redshirt freshman running back Shadrick Byrd entered the transfer portal on Oct. 29.

Jeudy and Byrd both joined Iowa's 2019 recruiting class late, but they had received positive reviews from the coaching staff despite not appearing on the two-deep depth chart to start the season.

A few days later, Iowa third-year sophomore wide receiver Calvin Lockett joined the pair of redshirt freshmen in the portal. As a three-star prospect, Lockett received plenty of solid offers, including Boston College, Indiana, Kentucky, Purdue, UCF, Virginia Tech, and Wisconsin.

"You have three guys that have decided to transfer," Ferentz said. "Me personally, not totally shocked. I'm disappointed. I was hoping all three would stay with the team."

Lockett and Jeudy are both Florida natives while Byrd is from Alabama, and Ferentz cited distance from home as a factor as well as their lack of playing time.

"There are two commonalities with all three of the players," Ferentz explained. "They are all from distance, far from home. I guess maybe another commonality, they are all fairly young players. Lock's a little bit older than the other two, but they are a distance from home, so that's part of it."

"The other similarity is all three weren't in the two-deep either of the first two weeks. But all that being said, it's disappointing because all three of them were doing well. All three are good people and good players. They had good potential. Shadrick Byrd played on our kickoff team in the first game. So that came as a little bit of a surprise, but not totally."

Since Iowa shifted to a 4-2-5 defense, there is one fewer linebacker on the field and subsequently not much opportunity for Jeudy. Byrd impressed during fall camp, but Tyler Goodson has been the Hawkeyes' featured back, which is expected to continue. Iowa receivers Desmond Hutson and Charlie Jones have impressed the staff more than Lockett.

"If you look around the room, he has some other guys that are pretty good, too," Ferentz said. "I think a lot of times this type of action happens more so after spring practice when you go through 15 days and it becomes a little more apparent what the roster looks like, who is in the two-deep, who isn't. So I'm not

so sure this is a real unnatural thing. It's just the timing. I would attribute it to just what's happened over the last seven-plus months, not having spring practice.

"Nonetheless, we don't want any player in good standing and good guys to leave the football team, but that's their choice, too, and you don't want them here if they are not totally invested."

Former SEAL Among 3 Huskers To Earn Scholarship As Walk-On

Nebraska had three former walk-on players earn scholarships for this season, and one of them had never played football before in his life.

Former Navy SEAL Damian Jackson was among the trio of walk-ons who head coach Scott Frost announced had earned scholarships, along with wide receiver Kade Warner and middle linebacker Luke Reimer.

"We have one more that we're probably going to award before the fall is over," Frost said. "But those three have definitely earned it. All three have been good leaders and good teammates for us. Luke has done some great things on the field. Damian has turned himself into a player that could help us on the field, as well as off, and worked his butt off to get there."

Not only was Warner awarded with a scholarship, but he was one of five players voted to represent the team as captains in 2020.

"A bunch of emotions rushed through my head," said a surprised Warner when named captain.

Impressing the coaches as soon as he joined the team, Reimer did not redshirt in his first year out of Lincoln (Neb.) North Star. Despite missing the Huskers' first game against Ohio State due to injury, the 6-1, 220-pounder is in the mix for playing time at middle linebacker, an important part of Nebraska's defense.

"He's a guy who was impressive from day one, and he's continued to build on that," linebackers coach Barrett Ruud said in the spring. "He may be the most explosive guy we've got at linebacker right now as far as an athlete."

While Warner and Reimer were under-recruited high school standouts, Jackson had never even strapped up a chinstrap.

The former Navy SEAL arrived in Lincoln in 2017 with no football experience, and he started at defensive line and has transitioned to outside linebacker while contributing on special teams.

In the Husker locker room, Jackson is regarded as a main leader in strength and conditioning training and in providing a serious presence.

On the Huskers' first day of spring practice prior to COVID-19 shutting it down, outside linebackers coach Mike Dawson called on Jackson to demonstrate some of his old drills to the newer players. The linebacker, who scored in the top 10 percent on his training before signing a contract to become a SEAL, flawlessly demonstrated how to do the drill just as his coach requested.

"I said, 'All right, Damian, you know this drill, let's show these guys how to do it, and then, 'Bang, away we go,'" Dawson said in March.

Although he arrived at Nebraska as a 24-year-old freshman who had never even attended a football game prior to his first spring practice, Jackson still made an immediate impact on the team.

Defensive line coach Tony Tuioti saw how

BIG 2020 Standings

East Division			
	W	L	Pct.
Indiana	3	0	1.000
Ohio State	3	0	1.000
Maryland	2	1	.667
Michigan	1	2	.333
Michigan State	1	2	.333
Rutgers	1	2	.333
Penn State	0	3	.000

West Division			
	W	L	Pct.
Northwestern	3	0	1.000
Purdue	2	0	1.000
Wisconsin	1	0	1.000
Iowa	1	2	.333
Minnesota	1	2	.333
Nebraska	0	2	.000
Illinois	0	3	.000

Nov. 7 Scores

Indiana 38, Michigan 21
Iowa 49, Michigan State 7
Northwestern 21, Nebraska 13
Maryland 35, Penn State 19
Minnesota 41, Illinois 14

Ohio State 49, Rutgers 27
Purdue at Wisconsin, Canceled

Nov. 13 Game

Iowa at Minnesota, 7 p.m.

Nov. 14 Games

Penn State at Nebraska, 12 p.m.
Indiana at Michigan State, 12 p.m.
Illinois at Rutgers, 12 p.m.
Ohio State at Maryland, 3:30 p.m.
Wisconsin at Michigan, 7 p.m.
Northwestern at Purdue, 7:30 p.m.

much Jackson's teammates respected him and his background from the beginning of his football career.

"He's got a unique situation," Dawson said in the spring. "If he had spent six years backpacking Europe and then came back, I don't know that he would command that, but I think we all know what he's done and what he's been about. That's where he's going to command that kind of respect immediately."

Performers Of The Week Across The Conference

The top performer in the Big Ten outside of Ohio State this week was Maryland quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa for the second straight week. The Alabama transfer completed 18 of 26 passes for 282 yards and three touchdowns, along with 13 rushing yards, in a major 35-19 upset of Penn State.

In a close second place, Indiana quarterback Michael Penix connected on 30 of his 50 pass attempts for 342 yards and three scores. The sophomore signal caller added four rushing yards while leading the Hoosiers to a 38-21 victory against Michigan.

Minnesota's Mohamed Ibrahim continued his torrid pace with his second straight 200-yard game, gaining 224 yards and four touchdowns on 30 carries for 7.5 yards per carry. The fourth-year junior tailback added 31 yards on two receptions and 27 yards on one kick return in the Gophers' 41-14 win at Illinois.

Reimer, one of the Nebraska walk-ons featured in this edition of Big Ten Notes, excelled in the Huskers' narrow loss to Northwestern. Reimer led the team with 10 tackles (seven solo), 1½ TFL, one sack, and one forced fumble in his season debut, a 21-13 loss to the Wildcats.

Bucks See Wins And Losses Before Season Starts

The Ohio State men's basketball team had a busy news week with disappointment, jubilation and a major cancellation thrown in for good measure. As the dust settled, the Buckeyes canceled three games on the schedule, gained eligibility for two players and lost the services of another.

COURT REPORT

Craig Merz

It began over the afternoons of Nov. 4 and 5 when Utah State transfer Abel Porter's OSU career ended before it started because of a medical condition, Bucknell transfer Jimmy Sotos' denial for immediate eligibility was appealed and overturned, and the Buckeyes withdrew from their season-opening tournament in South Dakota because of COVID-19 protocols.

Finally, on Nov. 8 Meechie Johnson said he would reclassify from the 2021 recruiting class to the 2020 class. He will enroll in December and be eligible this season.

In the case of Porter, he was forced to retire because of a "non-COVID related medical condition," Ohio State said in a release.

Porter posted a statement on Twitter that he was diagnosed with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), a genetic heart condition that makes it difficult to pump blood: "While scary, people with HCM generally lead healthy and normal lives but unfortunately this will end my basketball career. I'm thankful for the amazing doctors and great medical care I've received here at Ohio State. This diagnosis has turned my life upside down but having a long-term perspective has been so important as I've tried to accept this."

He told The Columbus Dispatch he was tested after passing out at a conditioning session two months ago but had also experienced the same symptoms in the past. What was interesting was his belief that Ohio State likely was the only place that had the resources to immediately get him to the hospital for an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging).

"I've had issues at other schools," he told the paper.

It brings to light how medical standards for participation may vary from school to school. The Ohio State men's hockey team had a high-profile recruit a few years back who could not get cleared to play for the Buckeyes as a freshman. He transferred to his home-state school and was medically cleared. Fortunately, he completed his eligibility without incident, but his story is not an outlier.

Porter had a long journey to Ohio State. He was a walk-on at Utah State who,

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

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

after a two-year Mormon church mission to Russia, earned a scholarship and in 94 career games averaged 4.3 points, 2.4 assists and 1.9 rebounds.

"This has been a difficult past few weeks for Abel and his family," said Ohio State coach Chris Holtmann. "He is a tremendous person, and I know he is very appreciative for the opportunity to be a Buckeye. Abel has expressed how thankful he is for the fantastic medical care he has received. He will remain a part of our program."

Porter is expected to be a graduate assistant. He was brought in as a backup for C.J. Walker and Duane Washington Jr., and the Buckeyes were looking perilously thin at point guard before Sotos was granted his final year of eligibility. Coincidence or not, the action by the NCAA came a day after the Porter news.

That was followed by Johnson's declaration – not a coincidence – that he will be joining the Buckeyes a year earlier than expected. Holtmann and his staff knew of Porter's retirement for some time before it became public and likely reached out to Johnson and his family about an opening on the roster and the possibility of significant minutes this season.

Johnson, a Cleveland Garfield Heights prospect, was the No. 76 overall prospect nationally and the No. 2 prospect in Ohio, behind only fellow commit Malaki Branham. He was the No. 14 point guard in the country for 2021, and his presence is expected to take the Buckeye backcourt to another level.

Sotos will add experience, although for several weeks it appeared he would have to wait until next season to make his OSU debut.

It's hard to understand why Sotos was denied eligibility the first time around, particularly during this time of a pandemic when athletes across the spectrum have been given an extra year and with transfer rules being relaxed universally.

Of note, Kentucky had transfers Olivier Sarr (from Wake Forest) and Jacob Toppin (Rhode Island) approved to play this season at the same time Sotos was turned down. Over the next 10 days Michigan's Chaundee Brown (Wake Forest) and Penn State's Sam Sessoms (Binghamton) also received waivers from the NCAA to play in 2020-21.

The initial eligibility requests are handled by NCAA staffers with appeals usually heard by representatives from various universities.

"We got word on that this morning," Holtmann posted in a Twitter video after receiving the good news on Sotos. "We appreciate the work of our compliance office and the NCAA's consideration."

Sotos averaged 8.1 points, 3.9 assists

and 3.4 rebounds in 100 games over three seasons for Bucknell.

Sioux, What's Next?

Scratch the first three games of the season and start over with the Buckeyes' schedule after the Nov. 5 news that they had pulled out of the Bad Boy Mowers Crossover Classic in Sioux Falls, S.D., from Nov. 25-27.

Stadium's Jeff Goodman was the first to report it.

It wasn't because of the bad name for the tourney, which was created from the ashes of the Battle 4 Atlantis that was scheduled for The Bahamas before the coronavirus caused a change in plans. The decision was made in respect to the Ohio Department of Health's recommendation for a 14-day quarantine for those returning from seven states, including South Dakota, which have high positivity rates for COVID-19.

Ohio State was scheduled to open against Memphis.

When initially agreeing to play in the Crossover Classic, Holtmann said he was impressed by the safeguards in place for the teams.

As it stands, the Buckeyes will start the season Dec. 2 against Morehead State and follow three days later vs. Alabama A&M. Both games are at Value City Arena.

However, it is likely there will be a game or games before then if agreeable opponents can be found. At this point Ohio State would prefer not to travel, but with the state's positive COVID-19 numbers at record levels, some out-of-state schools might hesitate to enter a hot zone.

This brings up that word consistency again. We know the Big Ten has stringent coronavirus measures. They're on display with the football programs, and other big schools can afford the expensive protocols, but can the Morehead States and Alabama A&Ms of the world financially safeguard their athletes and opponents?

The Big Ten did not yet have a basketball schedule as BSB was going to print, but the release of the conference hockey slate Nov. 5 may be an indicator.

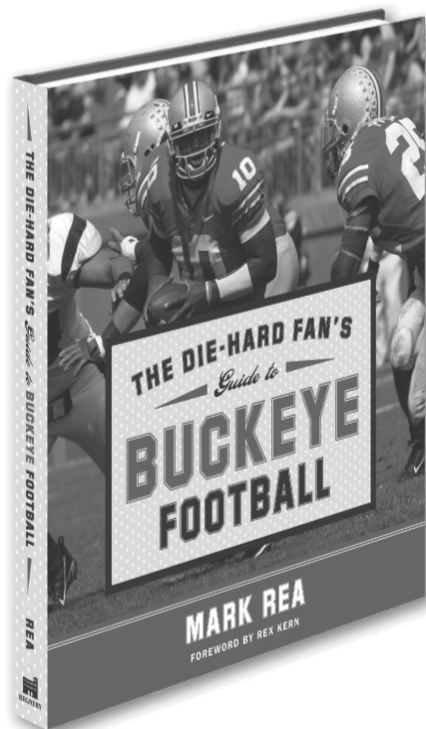
The skating Buckeyes will play a 24-game conference-only schedule with four additional games per school hosting nonleague Arizona State, which has agreed to follow the Big Ten's COVID-19 protocols.

Only the first 10 hockey games through December were announced. It wouldn't be a surprise if a limited basketball schedule of maybe four games through the end of the calendar year is unveiled shortly.

That would buy about a month to see how the pandemic is progressing before committing to the remainder of the schedule.

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Darsch Remembered For Her Tenacity, Success

The women's basketball world lost one of its pioneer coaches on Nov. 2 when it was announced that Nancy Darsch had died at the age of 68 after a battle with Parkinson's disease.

In one of the many stops during her career, Darsch was Ohio State's head coach from 1985-97, compiling a record of 234-125 in her 12 seasons with the program, leading the Buckeyes to their only Final Four appearance in school history.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

"Certainly an amazing coach who had such an impact on this program here at Ohio State with all the success that she had," current Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "I did not get an opportunity to know her real well, but when I started as an assistant at Miami of Ohio, she was here and having great success and I always looked up to her as one of the best coaches in the country. Her teams executed and just played so well together. I always knew her as one of the best X and O coaches in the country."

Darsch initially started her head coaching career at Longmeadow High School in Massachusetts, coaching not only women's basketball but also field hockey and softball. Her success in the former of the three sports helped Darsch find her way onto the coaching staff at Tennessee, where she was an assistant under legendary head coach Pat Summitt.

While with the Lady Volunteers, Darsch helped Tennessee reach a combined 138-49 record in seven seasons, making the NCAA tournament in each season and reaching the Final Four in five of the years.

"She was really instrumental in Tennessee's early success," Mike Wachsmann, who covered Ohio State women's basketball for BSB during much of Darsch's tenure, told BSB. "She was kind of the recruiting coordinator when Tennessee was becoming a power. Nancy was an assistant but was also kind of the chief recruiter, so a lot of the early talent that Tennessee amassed was because of her."

Her success in the assistant position earned her the head coaching position at Ohio State for the 1985-86 season, when another historically great coach, Tara VanDerveer, decided to leave the Buckeyes for Stanford following a 28-3 season and run to the Elite Eight for Ohio State in 1984-85.

In her first season at the helm, Darsch continued the success that VanDerveer left, taking Ohio State to a 23-7 record, with a 16-2 conference record that was good enough to win the Big Ten. The Buckeyes made the Sweet 16 that season but fell to LSU 81-80.

The next season brought more of the same level of play. Ohio State improved to 26-5 and 17-1 in Big Ten play, again winning the conference, and made it all the way to the Elite Eight before losing to Long Beach.

Wachsmann said that, early on in his career as a young writer, Darsch's fierce presence gave him some nerves, but that he ultimately grew to respect what she brought to the team and how she handled the coaching position.

"Well she certainly was intense, I know that initially," Wachsmann said. "About two or three weeks into the beat, I understood how

important she was. I mean she had been at Tennessee, and she worked with Pat Summitt, who's probably the greatest coach of all time.

"I was a little bit afraid of her in the beginning, because she kind of had that East Coast mentality being from Massachusetts, like, you know how New Yorkers aren't afraid to say what they're thinking, and it may hurt your feelings. And, I would have been like, in 86-87, I would have been 21-22 years old. So it was my first real substantial beat of any kind.

"So I see a couple of practices, she'd stop a practice, she wouldn't browbeat a player, but she would be intense to the point that they knew you're not making that mistake again. So really intensity I guess was the first thing I noticed about her."

After those first two seasons, Darsch picked up only one Big Ten title and made the NCAA tournament three times over the next five years, but that minor cold spell was ended entirely in 1992-93 after she brought in the most successful recruiting class of her tenure.

Three of the four freshmen brought in – Kelly Fergus, Gigi Jackson and Adrienne Johnson – each played a role during their first seasons, but the top prospect in that class made all the difference.

Katie Smith came to Ohio State in that 1992-93 season and, as a freshman, led the team with 18.1 points per game while adding 5.8 rebounds and 3.3 assists. Smith led the Buckeyes to a 28-4 record and a 16-2 record in the conference, giving Darsch her fourth Big Ten title.

Wachsmann said that Darsch was a major factor on that team in keeping the group – specifically, the veteran talents – together and focused on the goal of winning a national championship.

"The role that she played was she had some veterans on that team, and they could have been really jealous," Wachsmann said. "The freshmen got a lot of playing time, and there were seniors on that team who could have had their egos bruised by that. And I think Nancy pretty much nipped that in the bud early by saying, 'Look, these kids can play, they're going to play, and everyone needs to just accept that we're all going to play as a unit.'"

Ohio State went into the NCAA tournament with momentum, winning its previous 10 games, and took that momentum into a pair of double-digit victories against Rutgers and Western Kentucky in the first two rounds. In the Elite Eight, the Buckeyes held on to beat Virginia 75-73. Then OSU won another nail-biter, 73-72 over rival Iowa, to make it to the national championship for the first and only time in program history.

In the final, despite a 28-point, 11-rebound effort from Smith, Ohio State fell to Texas Tech 84-82 behind an NCAA finals-record 47 points from Red Raiders star Sheryl Swoopes.

"They really just ran into a buzz saw in the finals, but there's not a whole lot you can do about that," Wachsmann said. "I mean, even in that game, Katie had 28, and usually when a freshman scores 28, there's the story of the game. But Sheryl Swoopes had 47, setting an NCAA record in the final."

Darsch's four seasons after that finals run did not lead to as much success, with Ohio State making just one NCAA tournament and not advancing to another Sweet 16, despite Smith having three more seasons and earning Big Ten Player of the Year in 1995-96.

Smith, who also partnered with Darsch on the WNBA's Minnesota Lynx, where Darsch was an assistant from 2003-05, said in a release that she respected what Darsch brought to the



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN – Former Ohio State women's basketball coach Nancy Darsch passed away on Nov. 2 following a battle with Parkinson's disease. She was 68.

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

team as a coach and that she also did more than just help her as a player.

"Her knowledge of the game and experience were top notch," Smith said. "The respect her peers had for Nancy spoke volumes as she coached alongside Pat Summitt and was part of those Olympic teams. I had many 'come to my office' moments, and they weren't all about basketball but how to handle yourself as a young person. She was always teaching and supporting. Nancy loved the game and loved the people. That rubbed off on us and has helped shape the person and coach I am today."

As Smith said, Darsch was part of two Olympic teams, one before she arrived at Ohio State in 1984, and another in 1996 before her final season in the program before she was terminated by athletic director Andy Geiger. As an assistant, she helped both of those teams win gold medals, with the first coming in Los Angeles and the second in Atlanta.

Darsch moved to the WNBA after a 12-16 season for the Buckeyes in 1996-97, becoming head coach of the New York Liberty in the professional league's inaugural season. Not only was Darsch part of the WNBA's first season, but she coached in the first game the league ever played, with her Liberty team taking down the Los Angeles Sparks 67-57.

"When she went to the WNBA, that kind of rejuvenated her a little bit," Wachsmann said. "She'll always be a footnote, she was the coach of the winning team in the first ever WNBA game, so that's kind of cool. I just don't think that I really understood while I was covering her what her importance to the game was, but

then when I was able to step away, and she had moved on and then went through a couple of coaches after that, it was like, OK, she was sort of a big deal."

Along with Smith, Darsch coached a total of six players who would eventually make their way into the OSU Athletics Hall of Fame, with Yvette Angel, Lisa Cline, Tracey Hall, Nikita Lowry and Averill Roberts being the others. In 2014, Darsch herself became a member of the Hall of Fame after finishing her Ohio State career with 234 wins, the most by a coach in program history until Jim Foster broke her record with 279.

"Her time at Ohio State was special, and I can say that she was always a Buckeye, even after she left," Smith said. "Coach Darsch was a kind and authentic person who was always there for us. She respected her role as a pioneer and created a program that we were proud of. Nancy also truly enjoyed getting to know the fans as well as all of the athletic department. She was all in."

Darsch's legacy in women's basketball spans multiple decades and goes through both the college and professional games, and she will always be remembered as one of the first coaches to make that jump to the WNBA level. At Ohio State, she is remembered as the only coach to lead a team all the way to the national championship game, the feat all Buckeyes since have tried to equal.

"As a program, certainly that's what we aspire to do, and she's the only one to have ever done it," McGuff said. "Basically, everyone's chasing the success that she had, so that's a heck of a feat she accomplished."

Fields Tops Burrow, Mayfield For Best Ohio QB

Who is the best quarterback in Ohio, college or pro? Joe Burrow, Baker Mayfield or Justin Fields?

A pretty good argument could be put in for the one of the three who hasn't yet won a Heisman Trophy, though the Heisman exception could change in a few weeks the way things are going.

My pick is Fields.

third year out of high school whereas Burrow and Mayfield each developed over five years into their Heisman-level of play.

Yes, the season is early. The competition hasn't been great. But based on what we saw last year, this jump in play by Fields in 2020 is perfectly logical.

Fields is No. 1 in the country for passer rating (excluding a couple of QBs who have played in just one game), first by a wide margin for completion percentage and hasn't thrown an interception through 83 attempts.

Burrow, as big as his yardage numbers have been as a rookie for the Cincinnati Bengals, entered play on Nov. 8 ranked 25th in the 32-team NFL for passer rating. Mayfield was 26th as the Cleveland Browns' quarterback.

Of course, Fields has been playing college football; Burrow and Mayfield go up against the world's best on Sunday. But Fields' accuracy and elusiveness in the pocket when needed translate to any level. He makes good decisions. He's accurate on short throws. Accurate on long throws. Always seems to apply the right touch. And most of his 11 incomplete passes

through three games actually have been drops. (Emphasis here: You read that correctly. Just 11 incomplete passes in three games.)

Consider the college numbers for all three.

- Fields in 2020: 222.4 QB rating, 86.7 percent completion percentage, 302.7 yards per game, 3.7 TDs per game, no interceptions.

- Burrow in his third college year: 11 attempts all season at Ohio State, a year before transferring to LSU.

- Mayfield in his third college year (second season after sitting out for a transfer): 173.3 QB rating, 68.1 percent completion percentage, 284.6 yards per game, 2.8 TDs per game, 0.5 interceptions per game (just seven interceptions all season).

- Burrow in his fifth college year, his Heisman season: 202.0 QB rating, 76.3 percent completion percentage, 378.1 yards per game, 4.0 TDs per game, 0.4 interceptions per game (just six all season).

- Mayfield in his fifth college year, his Heisman season: 198.9 QB rating, 70.5 percent completion percentage, 330.5 yards per game, 3.1 TDs per game, 0.4 interceptions per game (six for the season).

I don't know where Fields will go on the draft board if he decides to enter the NFL draft after this season. Perhaps Trevor Lawrence will measure out better in all those fancy NFL pre-draft tests. Perhaps Lawrence and/or someone else really do have better NFL potential than Fields.

But in looking at the quarterbacks on the field in Ohio today – college or pro – I'm liking what I see of Fields the most.

Day Has Me Convinced

It's good to be cautious in drawing conclusions about a new coach, no matter how good the record. There's a certain energy that comes with a coaching change. (Remember Earle Bruce's 11-0 start at OSU?) And there's always the question about who was more responsible for putting the team together – the new coach or the former coach?

But Day has me pretty convinced now, more than just because of his 19-1 record.

Preparing for this season was a test of focus, a test he has passed.

It's clear that Day took things seriously and

had the buy-in from his team, during the period of limbo. Ohio State has played with a focus. No complaining about the circumstances. No talk of distractions. Yes, there are kinks that need to be worked out. The defense and the running game are both in need of improvement. But my thinking is that these issues have far less to do with coronavirus disruptions than they are the results of things that would have needed work even in the most normal of seasons.

We shouldn't be surprised by Day. Think back at the way Ohio State performed in Day's first three wins as coach, filling in on an interim basis during Urban Meyer's suspension in 2018. In case you forgot, Day's direction of Meyer's team resulted in wins of 77-31 over Oregon State, 52-3 over Rutgers and finally 40-28 over TCU. I don't think it's an accident that some things seem out of whack in college football this year. By that I mean coronavirus disruptions likely do factor into why Penn State sits at the bottom of the division at 0-3 after losing to Maryland this past weekend while Indiana is tied with Ohio State at the top after wins over both Penn State and Michigan.

Meanwhile, credit goes to Day for keeping business as normal in Columbus.

Indiana And Michigan

Things are trending the wrong way in Michigan, again. U-M didn't just lose to Indiana; the separation between the two teams appeared far wider than the 17-point final margin. Indiana pretty much controlled the game throughout

Michigan is now 1-4 over its last five games, losing to Ohio State (56-27), Alabama (35-16), Michigan State (27-24) and Indiana (38-21). U-M's lone win during this stretch was a 49-34 opening day victory over Minnesota.

One win in five games shouldn't cut it in Michigan. But the time since Michigan was elite is growing longer and longer. U-M has had at least three losses (usually more) in every season since Brady Hoke's first team in 2011 went 11-2.

The seasons since: 8-5 in 2012, then 7-6, 5-7, 10-3, 10-3, 8-5, 10-3, 9-4 and now 1-2 to date in 2020. Every time Michigan seems primed to make a step up, things seem to go wrong, such as these back-to-back losses this season to Michigan State and Indiana.

EXNER POINT

Rich Exner

And this is coming from a guy who was always, and still am, high on Burrow and who thinks Mayfield could still be a solid quarterback on a winning NFL team.

But what Fields is doing is downright insane, especially considering that he is doing this in his

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Ohio State's Flawed Victory Is Still A Victory

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH

Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

If football were like bowling or golf, where players receive handicap strokes or points, Rutgers would have defeated Ohio State in what was, in reality, a 49-27 win for the Buckeyes. Greg Schiano's Scarlet Knights offered an entertaining evening in what could have been just another 58-0 romp for the hosts, and his team showed a tremendous amount of spunk in shaking off a 35-3 first half and battling Ohio State tooth-and-nail the rest of the way, outscoring the undefeated Buckeyes 24-14 in the final 30 minutes.

The Rutgers powers-that-be who opened up the vault in pursuit of their former coach and former Ohio State assistant had to have felt like they were getting an early return on their investment as they watched the Knights let it all hang out in a prime-time game, following a string of lopsided losses to OSU since the school entered the Big Ten back in 2014.

Schiano was one of the most popular and successful coaches in Rutgers history during his first stay at the school and was brought in to reverse the Knights' sagging fortunes. Obviously, you can't build permanent success around trickery and razzle dazzle, though future opponents are now on notice that Rutgers might try darn near anything and they will have to prepare as such. But lifting a program from the depths to which Rutgers had sunk is all about changing the culture.

Any fan or football observer could see that this was a different Scarlet Knights squad that came to Ohio Stadium than other Rutgers teams that looked whipped at the coin toss. And the game with the Buckeyes, while a loss, was an outstanding recruiting tape for Schiano and his staff, as prospective recruits, especially in the fertile grounds of New Jersey, saw players both competing and having fun.

The result left the usual split among Buckeye fans that comes after games like this, games where Ohio State is expected to play flawlessly and run up the score against a Big Ten bottom-feeder.

On the one hand, you have the fans who point out that, despite all of Rutgers' flash, it was still a 22-point victory for the Buckeyes. On the other hand, you have the fans who are fretting over flaws that were evident against the Knights, flaws that these fans fear will be offset by better teams down the road.

Put me in the middle.

I will take a 22-point conference victory any day of the week. I will also take remaining undefeated. As is now a common saying among Buckeye Nation, "The best thing about being 3-0 is that it gives you a chance to be 4-0."

But I would also suggest that this victory was not the type good enough to win a Big Ten championship. If the Buckeyes are serious about going all the way this year, they need to clean up the sloppy tackling, be more consistent in the running game, not take the foot off the gas after running up a 35-3 halftime score and, oh, those penalties. Not championship-caliber by any means and not the type of performance that Buckeye fans were used to seeing under Ryan Day last year.

I think we knew, coming into the season, that the offense would be farther along than the defense, which suffered critical losses to the NFL. The offense, meanwhile, returned the core of its offensive line, an outstanding receivers room and, of course, Justin Fields. The glaring hole was going to be at running back, where J.K. Dobbins took his 2,003 yards to Baltimore.

Master Teague and Trey Sermon have had mixed success replacing Dobbins, including against Rutgers, causing plenty of hand-wring-

ing among nervous Buckeye fans.

With Fields at the helm, tossing to Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave among others, I think the Buckeyes can survive with a modest, though competent, rushing attack, especially if the defense tightens. If the Buckeyes get in a pinch, they can always turn to Fields to help carry the mail. I would just prefer that not be the primary rushing option, especially with the inexperienced quarterback room behind him.

Which brings up my ongoing beef, one of the very few I have with Day. I wish they would get Fields out of the game much earlier than the staff has been doing. Fields seems to be at midseason form and has amazing chemistry with the bulk of the receivers. How much more work does he need? Get him out of there and get the other guys some work. Against Rutgers, Ohio State was never really threatened, despite all the Rutgers pizzazz. Did the franchise QB need to be in there until virtually the bitter end?

Going back to the running backs, I also wish the staff would settle on Teague or Sermon. Tailback by committee is about as effective as quarterback by committee.

And in the weekly tight end watch, Jeremy Ruckert and Luke Farrell combined for five catches, 34 yards and a score.

Two For The Price Of One

As self-proclaimed commissioner of BSB's 40th Anniversary football season, I made the bold move of choosing two games for the week on Nov. 7-13. Not only did your humble commissioner deem both the 1998 loss to Michigan State and the 2002 win at Purdue among the most significant games of our first 39 years, let alone a single week in November, but I also found the juxtaposition of an upset loss that probably cost a championship-caliber team the national crown against a stunning victory that led to an improbable national championship, the first for Ohio State in 34 years, compelling and fascinating.

Of course, any of us old enough to remember these games – and even younger readers who enjoy Buckeye football history – recall them vividly.

But it's always interesting, and revealing, to go back and look at the games in detail, which I hope readers will do, as I did. You certainly forget stuff, but you also relive the shock, in the case of the loss to the Spartans, or the exhilaration in the case of the win over the Boilermakers.

With 22 years having passed, while we correctly equate the upset with MSU's coach, Nick Saban, we equate it with the Saban of today. This was a game that was a stepping-stone for the multi-championship coach, but he did not lead a powerhouse into Columbus to face the Buckeyes, who had been ranked No. 1 since the preseason. The Spartans were 4-4, 2-2 in the Big Ten, and would go on to finish the season with a modest 6-6 record.

"After so many close calls over the past five seasons, this was supposed to be the year (John) Cooper and the Buckeyes finally ascended to the top spot and stayed there for the duration," former BSB editor Steve Helwagen wrote in the Nov. 14, 1998, issue of BSB.

The game pretty much started on script, with the Buckeyes taking leads of 17-3 and 24-9, spurred by big plays – a 41-yard TD

pass from Joe Germaine to John Lumpkin (that's right, a tight end) and a 73-yard pick-six by Damon Moore to open the third-quarter scoring.

But when things began to unravel for the Buckeyes, who were haunted by four lost fumbles and an interception that foiled a potential dramatic comeback, they unraveled quickly. After Moore's interception return, the Spartans scored the game's final 19 points.

Still, with Germaine, who was in the midst of an outstanding season, at the controls, Ohio State was in position to win the game. David Boston returned a punt 26 yards to set the Buckeyes up on their 49 with 1:39 to play.

Again, Helwagen: "Ohio Stadium was rocking as visions of Germaine's Rose Bowl heroics from two years prior danced in the heads of the OSU faithful."

Germaine quickly passed the Buckeyes down to the MSU 15. But from there he failed to connect on three passes, and on fourth-and-10, he was intercepted by Renaldo Hill with 1:12 remaining and Ohio State's championship dreams were history.

"Every day since last summer, every time we've broken it down, we say, 'National champs,' " OSU flanker Dee Miller said. "Today all we could say was 'Hard work.'"

"That hurt a lot. We've worked hard year in and year out. There was just a missing element today that we didn't have, and we took an 'L.'"

Cooper didn't mince words after the game. "They outcoached us, they outplayed us, their defense was better than ours, their offense was better than ours, their kicking game was better than ours and, of course, they came away with the victory," he said.

Added Lumpkin: "I'm a senior and this was my last shot at it. If anyone should be sad, it should be me. This is three times since I've been here that we've been in position to win it all and then we lose a game. One day Ohio State is going to pull through."

"One day" proved to be 2002, and on Nov. 9, in West Lafayette, Ind., quarterback Craig Krenzel succeeded in the final two minutes, where Germaine had failed.

Both teams struggled offensively for much of the game (the Boilermakers outgained the Buckeyes 341-267 but threw three interceptions). Early in the fourth quarter, however, Purdue quarterback Brandon Kirsch hit Ray Williams for 58 yards to the OSU 22. The Boilermakers got as far as the 4 before Matt Wilhelm tackled Kirsch for a 6-yard loss and a false-start penalty backed the Boilers up another 5 yards. Berin Lacevic then connected on a 32-yard field goal to put the Boilers up 6-3.

Ohio State would ultimately get the ball back at the Purdue 46 with 3:10 left after a 22-yard punt return by Chris Gamble, a situation quite like the final sequence against the Spartans in 1998.

A sack of Krenzel pushed the ball back to midfield, but on third down the quarterback hit Ben Hartsock for 13 yards (there's that tight end again), leaving the Buckeyes facing a fourth-and-1 with the clock rolling inside two minutes. With the Boilermakers loaded up to stop the run, Krenzel surprised almost everyone when he went deep to Michael Jenkins for a 37-yard score and one of the most famous pass plays in Ohio State history.

"Championship teams make those kind of plays," lamented Purdue coach Joe Tiller.

And Ohio State, which held off a furious last-minute rally (similar to Germaine's efforts against Michigan State) with an interception by Gamble, would indeed go on to win the BCS crown.

Like most Buckeye fans, I can remember the bitter disappointment after the loss to the Spartans and the exhilaration and excitement when Krenzel and Jenkins helped save the march to the championship. But it is interesting to hear those emotions from a player's perspective, a perspective fans may not appreciate.

Offensive tackle Tyson Walter summed up the disaster.

"It's a shock, and it hurts more than any fan will ever know," Walter said after the upset by the Spartans. "It happens. It's part of the game. It's what makes winning so enjoyable."

Krenzel got to enjoy the winning feeling Walter mentioned.

"I can't even tell you," Krenzel said when asked to describe his reaction to the winning touchdown pass. "I can't explain it. I just wish everyone in the world could feel that kind of excitement and a natural high. It was an unbelievable feeling."

Attention To Special Teams

While Krenzel's miracle pass and Gamble's game-sealing interception are the plays that we all remember from that magical Purdue game in that magical season, I had forgotten that without another amazing play to close the first half, Krenzel, Jenkins and Gamble would not have been in position to pull out the victory.

To set the scene, you must remember that Tressel was obsessed with special teams play, so much so that he would have competitive scrimmages that involved only special teams.

With 19 seconds before intermission, the Buckeyes, out of timeouts, faced a third-and-9 at the Boiler 12. Krenzel ran a quarterback draw but gained only 7 yards to the 5.

"We knew going into the play we didn't have a timeout," Krenzel said. "If I didn't have anything, I was supposed to throw it away and let the field-goal team get the three points. I saw the middle was wide open, and I thought I could get it."

Here's Helwagen's account of what happened next:

"He was tackled with 12 seconds left and the clock was rolling. But OSU successfully got its field-goal unit on the field. The Buckeyes were set for a second before snapping the ball with a scant one second left. Mike Nugent's 22-yard field goal went through the uprights, tying the game at 3 at halftime.

"Tiller charged toward the officials, complaining that the kick should have been nullified. But the TV replays clearly showed the field goal unit was set and the ball was snapped before time elapsed."

When asked about the play after the game, Tressel answered matter-of-factly, "That is something we work on a lot. It came in handy today."

I also thought of Tressel when reading the recap of the Michigan State upset. With OSU holding its seemingly comfortable 24-9 lead with just under 10 minutes to play in the third quarter, an MSU punt hit OSU's Nate Clements while he was trying to block for Boston on the return. After a mad scramble, the Spartans recovered the loose ball on the MSU 49. They drove the 51 yards for the touchdown, the first of their 19 straight points to win the ballgame.

One more piece of proof that, as Tressel famously claimed, "The punt is the most important play in football."

FOR ATHLETES

HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. It can happen when your brain gets bounced around in your skull after a fall or hit to the head.

CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS

Headache, nausea vomiting, balance problems, dizziness double or blurred vision, sensitivity to light or noise, feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy, memory problems, confusion, just not "feeling right" or "feeling down".

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?



REPORT IT. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

GET CHECKED OUT. If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a health care provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL. A concussion can make everyday activities, such as going to school, harder. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

WHY SHOULD I TELL MY COACH & PARENTS ABOUT MY SYMPTOMS?

Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.

While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>



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