

Ohio State Survives Scare From Indiana

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

A win over the ninth-ranked team in the country would usually be cause for celebration. But following Ohio State's 42-35 victory against Indiana on Nov. 21 – which gave the Buckeyes sole possession of first place in the Big Ten's East Division – head coach Ryan Day seemed unsatisfied.

"I thought the start of the game was ridiculous," Day said after the game. "The energy that we came out with was as good as I've seen all year. We played really, really well in the first half. We really dominated.

"But then we gave up some big plays and let them back into the game. We have to figure out a way to close out games. This is the second game in a row now where we let a team hang around a little bit, and we have to get that fixed."

Ohio State's much-maligned defense was impressive in the first two quarters, holding Indiana to just seven points and minus-6 yards rushing.

The offense also put up 28 first-half points despite a pair of uncharacteristic first-quarter interceptions from quarterback Justin Fields, giving the Buckeyes a comfortable halftime lead.

The final two frames were a different story, however. The Hoosiers outscored the Buckeyes 28-14 and had the ball late in the fourth quarter with the chance to score the game-tying touchdown – or possibly the game-winning score, had they gone for two – in the final minute.

"I'm definitely not pleased," Day said. "A long way from pleased. We've got a long ways to go. But we've only played four games and it's almost Thanksgiving. It's bizarre. There's just so much that has gone into this season and so much these kids have been through. To the average person, they don't quite get that part of it.

"When you're in an environment like this and there's no fans and you have to bring your own energy, it's just a different dynamic. That's why you're seeing so many strange things that have gone on this year. I'm not making excuses. I'm just calling it for what it is. We have to keep growing and getting better and learn to adapt to this environment. It seems to me, whatever the reason is, we haven't been able to finish the last two games."



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

ON AND OFF AFTERNOON – Quarterback Justin Fields, left, accounted for 378 yards of total offense and three touchdowns in Ohio State's 42-35 win over Indiana but also threw three interceptions to match his previous career total.

Quarterback Michael Penix deserved a lot of credit for Indiana's second-half comeback, as he completed 27 of 51 passes for 491 yards and five touchdowns compared to just one interception.

His 491 passing yards were the fourth most in a game against Ohio State, with only Illinois' Dave Wilson (621 yards in 1980), Purdue's Scott Campbell (516 yards in 1981) and Purdue's Jim Everett (497 yards in 1985) having a better output. Interestingly, the Buckeyes are now 4-0 in those games.

"People have their opinions and didn't think we belonged on the same field with Ohio State," Indiana head coach Tom Allen said after the game. "I didn't really agree with that, but until you prove it on the field, it doesn't really matter what I think.

"We're showing that we're a good football team.

We're a really good football team. It's about continuing to show and prove on the field that we're one of the top programs in the Big Ten. We haven't been that in the past for a long time, and that's our goal. That's how we want to be, and I believe we're getting closer and closer all the time."

Hoosiers senior wide receiver Ty Fryfogle was the primary beneficiary of Penix's big day, catching seven passes for 218 yards and three touchdowns.

It was his second straight game with at least 200 yards receiving, a first in Big Ten history, and the second-most receiving yards ever surrendered in a single game by the Buckeyes, trailing only Clemson wide receiver Sammy Watkins, who caught 16 passes for 227

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FAN FORUM

Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State pounced on Indiana early, taking a 28-7 lead into halftime, but the Buckeyes let up late and allowed the Hoosiers back into the game.

Despite the second-half struggles, the Scarlet and Gray won 42-35 against Indiana, and several players stood out as worthy of Buckeye Leaves.

Wyatt Crosher, BSB: "It was a whirlwind of a game for Ohio State, and much of the concerns with this team moving forward lies with the defensive performance displayed in this matchup with Indiana.

"That being said, Baron Browning still managed to stand out as a highlight on that side of the ball for the Buckeyes, ending the game with eight tackles, tied for the team lead, seven of which were solo, and he also recovered a fumble that he helped force, despite Pete Werner getting credit.

"Browning has thrived at his transition from inside to outside linebacker for much of this season, as he has been able to use more of the explosiveness and athleticism that he clearly possesses.

"I would also like to give an honorary Buckeye leaf to Michael Penix, who put up one of the most heroic efforts I have seen from an Ohio State opponent in recent memory, throwing for 491 yards and five touchdowns in the losing effort."

Joe Dempsey, BSB: "Shaun Wade has faced criticism after his move to outside cornerback has not produced the results some have expected. Those doubts may have been

quelled when the fourth-year junior corner intercepted a Michael Penix pass and took it to the house for a pick-six.

"Indiana had cut Ohio State's lead to 35-21, and a Hoosier touchdown could have made it a one-possession game, but Wade had other plans. The standout captain made his first interception of the season and turned it into his first touchdown as a Buckeye with 49 seconds left in the third quarter.

"Along with the pick-six, Wade added one pass breakup and three tackles, including two solo stops, in the Buckeyes' 42-35 victory over Indiana. The game-changing touchdown was enough for Wade to earn a Buckeye leaf."

Andrew Lind, BSB: "Coming into the game, Ohio State's running back unit seemed to be the weakest link of a potent offensive attack. But after quarterback Justin Fields threw his second interception of the game late in the first quarter, head coach Ryan Day called upon sophomore running back Master Teague.

"Teague, who worked his way back from an Achilles injury in spring practice, finished the game with 169 yards and two touchdowns. The touchdowns came on back-to-back series in the second quarter and helped the Buckeyes turn a 7-7 ballgame into a two-score lead.

"Teague's play was underwhelming in the first three games of the season as he split time with Oklahoma transfer Trey Sermon. But provided he's healthy after twisting his ankle late in the game, he should be Ohio State's primary option moving forward."

Patrick Mayhorn, BSB: "Ohio State's passing attack ran into a few more hitches than it usually does in a 42-35

win over Indiana, but it was through no fault of Garrett Wilson's.

"Wilson was as excellent as he has been all season, hauling in seven receptions for 169 yards and finding the end zone twice while providing a consistently reliable target for Justin Fields as he dealt with heavy pressure from the Hoosiers.

"Ultimately, were it not for Wilson, Ohio State could have found itself in some real danger offensively. Chris Olave drew star cornerback Tiawan Mullen in coverage, and while Olave still contributed, Mullen put up a strong showing against the star wideout, forcing Fields to frequently look elsewhere.

"Without a third threat on the roster in the receiving game, that usually meant Wilson, and he usually delivered. It's becoming harder to believe with each passing week that Wilson is only a sophomore."

BSB Subscribers

"Julian Fleming. His heads-up play knocking the ball loose on an IU interception bailed Justin Fields out and thwarted an easy Hoosier scoring opportunity."

– **Poster That Harley Built**

"Fleming true freshman heads-up play, for sure. Olave, eight receptions with a lot of contact. Pete Werner was all over the field."

– **kybuck**

"A shoutout to Fleming and Zach Harrison, they are starting to have some breakout moments."

– **PeyoteBuck**



From The Message Board

After jumping out to a 35-7 lead following the first drive of the second half, Ohio State was outscored by 28-7 from that point in a shaky 42-35 win at home against Indiana. The Buckeyes were solid favorites against the Hoosiers, and the fact that the visitors had a chance to tie the game or take the lead on the final drive raised some eyebrows. We asked readers on the Buckeye Sports Bulletin Fan Forum, as well as staff writers, in which areas Ohio State needs to improve to be a national title contender this year. Here are some of the responses:

"Pass defense. Pass defense. Pass defense. They have got to get this secondary figured out."

– **Tiffin Buckeye**

"Pass coverage... pass defense... the secondary. Whatever you want to call it, that would be the first thing.

"And next up on the list is explaining to Justin Fields that it is OK to sometimes just get rid of the ball when feeling the pressure. A swing pass out on the flat or just chucking the pigskin five rows deep into the stands is much better than just blindly throwing the ball while getting thrown to the ground and hoping something good might happen.

"But like they say, a win is a win, and the Buckeyes are now 4-0 and onto the next one. Let's just hope it will be more relaxing to watch than this one."

– **JDub**

"Let's give Indiana credit for getting significant pressure on Fields and clearly throwing him off his game. The Bucks O-line and RBs didn't handle their blitz schemes well at all.

Fields has to make way better decisions with the ball. The third INT was a comically bad throw, and the second wasn't much better. He's getting a bit of the 'Superman' complex, thinking he can overcome any situation no matter how dire and still come out on top.

This isn't high school where you can do that because you're a much better athlete than everyone around you. If it's not there, throw the ball away and live to play another down. He's trying too hard to make Heisman-like plays on every snap. But the good news here is that these problems can be fixed.

"Not the same for the defense. Our secondary is a major problem. The assignment errors remind me of two years ago when our D was a mess. We just won't be able to compete against top teams with this group."

– **Bucks89**

"So, let's see: We shut the Indiana run game down; the Hoosiers had minus-1 yard rushing. The Buckeyes did have a few sacks, and they deflected the ball several times, however Indiana's Penix still found time to throw for 491 yards and 5 TDs. Well, that may

sort of narrow it down. Pass defense appears to be a 'little' weak!

"While we may very well score 42 points or more a game against the rest of the B1G teams on our schedule, unless our defense gets much much better overall, we will not stop the other offensive giants that are lurking in the South: Alabama, Clemson, or even that team in South Bend!"

– **BuckeyeScott**

"I don't think the Bucks were prepared mentally for this game (nobody's fault). I don't care how much you TRY to get pumped for a No. 9 Indiana, it's still Indiana. Even though the Hoosiers slayed some past perennial giants, it's still Indiana. That, coupled with the unexpected bye, upset the mental focus of the team. Tom Allen has his team on this adrenaline rush of being in new CFB territory with excitement oozing through their veins. For OSU it was just another Indiana game. Bye weeks may mend a few bruises but are momentum killers."

– **R1TBDBITL**

"Let's not underestimate Indiana... We just beat a top-10 team after not playing a game in 14 days! Of course, the pass rush and secondary can improve but we DID WIN THE GAME."

– **Luckeeman**

"Halftime adjustments or lack thereof. The Buckeyes have given up an average of 5.3 points per game in the first halves of the last three games but 23.7 points in the second halves. Need to play a full 60 minutes to be a championship contender."

– **Bstu9**

"A win is a win is a win! I think that the Hoosiers got away with several picks allowing their receivers to get free in our secondary. I was very happy to see how our running backs performed in this win. The secondary needs work. Other than that we played well against a very good Indiana team."

– **Carl F. Dietz**

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OPINION

OSU Survives And That's What Matters Most

After a day during which Justin Fields proved himself to be merely mortal and the Ohio State defense gave up the fourth-most passing yards in a single game in program history, it might also be worth noting the Buckeyes were playing the nation's No. 9-ranked team, a scrappy bunch from Indiana that played like it had everything to prove and nothing to lose.

Such a group makes for a dangerous opponent, and the fact that the third-ranked Buckeyes eventually prevailed with a 42-35 victory – despite a performance that was very much not their best – serves as just one more testament to this unpredictable, topsy-turvy, COVID-ravaged 2020 college football season.

Any win is a good win these days, and if you don't believe that, ask Tom Allen, Greg Schiano or any other head coach whose team has to count moral victories rather than real ones.

Anyone who saw the first 2½ minutes of the OSU-Indiana game probably thought they were about to witness a butt-whupping of epic proportions. Ohio State not only punched Indiana in the mouth at the outset, but the Buckeyes also seemed intent on making the Hoosiers enjoy the taste of their own blood.

After IU went nowhere with the first offensive series of the game, Fields hooked up with receiver Garrett Wilson on a catch-and-run that totaled 65 yards before the combination clicked again for a 10-yard touchdown. Two plays covering 75 yards in just 33 seconds and the Buckeyes were off and running with a 7-0 lead at the 12:32 mark of the first quarter.

Junior bone-crusher Josh Proctor followed that on the ensuing kickoff by nearly blasting Indiana return man Jacolby Hewitt into C-deck of the old Horseshoe, and then when the OSU defense dealt the Hoosiers a three-and-out that went backward by 8 yards, it looked like the rout was on.

But on the next play, Fields – who to that point this season in the first quarter was a perfect 21 for 21 for 375 yards and four touchdowns – threw perhaps his worst pass of the season, a throw that sailed behind Wilson and was intercepted by IU safety Jamar Johnson.

That touched off a wild rest of the game that saw the Buckeyes take a 28-point lead early in the third quarter only to watch as Indiana quarterback Michael Penix nearly rallied his team to a historic comeback.

Whatever defensive scheme the Buckeyes are using against the Indiana passing game, it's time to scrap it because Penix became the third Indiana QB in the last four years to throw for at least 300 yards against Ohio State. Penix barely completed 50 percent of his passes (52.9 percent to be exact), but his 27 completions averaged a whopping 18.2 yards.

And he had four completions of 50 or more yards against an OSU defense that gave up only one passing play of 50-plus yards during all of last season, and that didn't come until the third quarter of the Fiesta Bowl against Clemson.

Penix threw for 491 yards, the fourth-highest total for an Ohio State opponent in history and the most against the Buckeyes since Jim Everett of Purdue totaled 497 yards during his team's 41-27 loss on Oct. 19, 1985. Penix also connected for five touchdowns, the most for an opposing QB since Nate Stanley of Iowa threw for five scores during his team's 55-24 beatdown of the Buckeyes on Nov. 4, 2017.

Meanwhile, Fields pitched three interceptions in the game to equal his previous career total in 478 attempts. Almost as troubling was the fact that the mobile OSU quarterback was sacked five times as Indiana literally threw everything it could at him – sometimes send-

ing as many as three extra defenders on a blitz – and the Buckeyes never seemed to adjust to the oncoming assault.

Fields still managed to throw for 300 yards, his third straight game and sixth of his career with 300 or more passing yards. And he threw for two touchdowns to bring his career total to 54, tying him with Troy Smith and Dwayne Haskins for fifth on OSU's career list.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

But he made some ridiculous mental mistakes, the kind one might expect from a quarterback making his college debut.

Especially troubling was Fields' second interception, a wrong-headed, desperation throw in the middle of the field while falling to the ground that was easy picking after a tip for defensive lineman Jerome Johnson. Then there was a rushed fourth-and-1 throw late in the fourth quarter that went sailing over the head of wide-open tight end Luke Farrell.

There is no doubt that Fields operates one of the most lethal passing games in college football, but there was absolutely no reason to force the issue against Indiana. As game as the Hoosiers were, they still were no physical match for the Buckeyes on either side of the ball, and it is unfathomable why OSU chose not to exploit that advantage more often.

Ohio State ran the ball 50 times and piled up 307 yards on the ground, winding up with a nice mix that accounted for approximately a 2-to-1 ratio of running to passing plays. But the Buckeyes didn't really rely on the ground-and-pound game until Indiana had pulled within seven points at the 10:26 mark of the fourth quarter. After that, OSU effectively played the field-position and clock-management games by running the ball on 14 occasions while Fields threw only three more times.

When the Big Ten season heads into December, weather throughout the Midwest is naturally going to turn nasty, and it will be paramount for teams with championship aspirations to rely heavily on their running games. A straight-ahead banger the likes of Master Teague – who proved his workhorse capability with 26 attempts vs. the Hoosiers – and a complementary back such as Trey Sermon are going to serve the Buckeyes well down the stretch.

But Ryan Day would also do well to keep in mind that he has another weapon in his running game arsenal. Fields can be an electrifying runner and, given the chance, can give opposing defenses one more thing to worry about while trying to game-plan against the Buckeyes. Take out the lost yardage on the five sacks and Fields rushed for 101 yards on only 10 carries.

I understand the mentality of keeping your quarterback healthy by limiting his number of rushes. J.T. Barrett was often asked to shoulder more than his share of the load in the running game, and it took a heavy toll on his body. Likewise, Fields was less than 100 percent for last year's Fiesta Bowl against Clemson, and that might have been in a factor in why the Buckeyes fell just short in that game.

But I watched in 2006 when Jim Tressel turned his dual-threat quarterback into a pass-only machine, and while Troy Smith won the Heisman Trophy going away, taking away the threat of his running ability robbed Ohio

State of what could have been a valuable weapon against a savage Florida pass rush in the national championship game.

Here's hoping Day isn't traveling down that same path with Fields.

What Went Right

Lost amid all of those yards given up in the passing game was the fact that Ohio State completely shut down anything Indiana tried to do on the ground. The Hoosiers had averaged a modest 95.3 yards rushing over their four previous games but found themselves completely stymied by the Buckeyes. They wound up with a net of minus-1 yard rushing, the lowest total for a Big Ten opponent since Iowa had minus-9 during a 31-6 loss to the Buckeyes in 2005.

A side note: That rushing total must have been particularly galling to Indiana's running backs coach, a guy by the name of Mike Hart. Going back to his playing days at Michigan and counting four years in charge of the running game at IU, Hart is now 0-8 lifetime against Ohio State.

Any success the Buckeyes enjoyed stopping the run might be a double-edged sword, however, because it underscores the fact that the back seven is going to have to improve when opposing teams know how difficult it is to run the football. That would be especially true if the Buckeyes are fortunate enough to make the College Football Playoff and would have to face the likes of Alabama, Clemson or Florida, teams that rank among the top five passing offenses in the nation.

Ohio State has talented players starting in its secondary, but with the exception of Shaun Wade, none has much experience. Unfortunately, the cancellation of spring ball and the truncated way in which fall camp was conducted robbed those youngsters of invaluable practice time. Even Wade, who is adjusting to a position change on the fly, could have used the extra time.

The good news is that those young defenders are going to get better. The bad news is that the improvement might not show up this season. None of the remaining teams on Ohio State's schedule has a passing game on par with Indiana, but expect Illinois, Michigan State and Michigan to try to expose the OSU secondary and its growing pains as best they can.

Lost, too, among the defensive deficiencies were the performances of Teague and Wilson.

Teague tallied career highs with his 26 carries for 169 yards and put to rest (at least for now) the knock against him that he doesn't have breakaway speed with a 41-yard touchdown bolt midway through the second quarter.

The 5-11, 225-pound sophomore seems to enjoy contact, but he is coming off an Achilles injury and that's what makes Sermon so valuable. The Oklahoma graduate transfer added 60 yards on just nine carries, and together with Fields, the Buckeyes marked their first 300-yard rushing performance of the season.

Sermon can also be a weapon in the passing game if OSU would use him. He caught 36 passes for 391 yards and three touchdowns in three seasons with the Sooners.

Meanwhile, Wilson has emerged as one of the elite receivers in college football. He caught seven passes for 169 yards and two touchdowns against the Hoosiers, turning in his fourth straight 100-yard game. And he's still only a sophomore.

One final note about Penix and his 491 yards: Only Dave Wilson of Illinois (621 in 1980), Scott Campbell of Purdue (516 in 1981) and Everett (497 in 1985) have ever thrown for more yardage against the Buckeyes ... and Ohio State won all of those games.



Committee Says Playoff Is Staying With Plan

Rumors swirled in the lead-up to the Nov. 14 slate of college football games that the College Football Committee might consider moving its timeline around for selecting four participants and actually playing games, with cancellations spreading throughout the country at a rapid rate. The rumors were shot down at the time by CFP executive director Bill Hancock and now seem to have lost traction.

The College Football Playoff management committee announced on Nov. 18 that it has agreed to keep the playoff on its current timeline, meaning that the selections will still be announced on Dec. 20, semifinals will still be played on Jan. 1 and the national title will be held on Jan. 11, barring any unforeseen circumstances.

Also worth noting in the announcement, reported originally by ESPN writer Heather Dinich, is that the committee will not choose a replacement team if a semifinalist is unable to play because of a team outbreak, and all teams will follow their conference protocols.

"During a thorough and robust conversation, the CFP management committee today agreed not to place a replacement team in the playoff should a school not be able to field a team because of COVID after Selection Day," Hancock said.

"The management committee also made clear that the CFP games will be played on the scheduled dates," he said. "They reserve the right to discuss this again if circumstances change, but our planning is centered on holding the games on their scheduled dates."

This decision came after the committee reconvened to discuss a proposal from Pac-12 commissioner Larry Scott, who asked that they take a look at moving the playoff back to account for a late start and several postponements in the Pac-12, according to a report from Jon Wilner of The (San Jose) Mercury News.

"They're talking about anything and everything," Hancock said of the management committee prior to this decision. "Larry did suggest considering the dates of the games, which is certainly in the 'anything and everything' universe."

With the playoff seemingly locked into its plans, Ohio State now finds itself in a must-win scenario moving forward according to head coach Ryan Day. With one game already off the schedule, another cancellation would put Ohio State at the six-game minimum required to compete

Staff Predictors Underestimate Indiana's Score

Buckeye Sports Bulletin's fearless forecasters were fairly close in predicting Ohio State's output in the Buckeyes' 42-35 win over Indiana but for the most part underestimated the Hoosiers' final score. Patrick Mayhorn was almost spot on with his 45-35 prediction, but Wyatt Crosher had it 41-27, Joe Dempsey 45-24 and Andrew Lind 49-17. The BSB staff posts its predictions on BuckeyeSports.com each gameday morning.

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in the Big Ten Championship Game. Any more cancellations past that would knock the Buckeyes out of that final game and into murky water with a 5-0 record being compared to 10-game résumés from other contenders.

"Whether somebody's 4-0 or 0-4, we have to win every game here, so every game's big," Day said on Nov. 17.

With seemingly every game hanging

in the balance on a week-by-week basis, Day said that Ohio State has been forced to adapt and adjust on the fly under extraordinary circumstances. He praised his team's ability to respond to those challenges.

"We've seen the way we've responded to things," Day said. "We see the daily decisions and sacrifices that have been made over time, the way we've stuck

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2020 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2020 Record
Oct. 24	NEBRASKA	W, 52-17	FOX	1-3
Oct. 31	at Penn State*	W, 38-25	ABC	0-5
Nov. 7	RUTGERS	W, 49-27	BTN	1-4
Nov. 14	at Maryland	Canceled	N/A	2-1
Nov. 21	INDIANA*	W, 42-35	FOX	4-1
Nov. 28	at Illinois*	12 p.m.	FOX	2-3
Dec. 5	at Michigan State*	TBA	TBA	1-3
Dec. 12	MICHIGAN*	12 p.m.	FOX	2-3
Dec. 19	Big Ten Championship**	8 p.m.	FOX	

* 2019 bowl team

** at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

together. We just haven't played a lot of football. That's a crazy thing. There's no way to replace playing in games. And so we're just going to keep moving on and just take every day and every game as it comes and understand that every game is a blessing and try to get better.

"The response has been good, the pads have been clicking, and I think that's all really positive momentum. But we have to go play and put it on the field. So that's the challenge."

While he did say that the Buckeyes likely need to win out to lock up a spot in the playoff, Day explained that he's not especially concerned about the possibility of the Buckeyes missing out because of a lack of games.

"I worry about a lot of things, for sure," Day said. "That really isn't one of them. I think that if we're able to play our schedule and play in the championship game and everything like that, then we'll be right where we need to be. And I think a lot of the schools – when you look throughout the country, they've missed games, they've had people miss time. It's just been kind of crazy. So no, I don't think that part should factor in. I don't think it will."

Day Says OSU Is 'The Best Job'

Day has long been the subject of NFL coaching rumors since his arrival in Columbus as an assistant in 2017 following a two-year stint in the league under Chip Kelly.

In 2019, shortly after Day took over as the head coach of the Buckeyes, former Ohio State linebacker and then-ESPN analyst Bobby Carpenter said that Day "has that NFL connection" and would be the college coach most likely to get a call from the league behind Oklahoma's Lincoln Riley.

Similar ideas about Day making a move to the NFL are posited with seemingly every NFL opening, most notably the Washington Football Team, which fired Jay Gruden after the 2019 season and reportedly had interest in Day that he did not reciprocate.

As he has before, Day took another opportunity to minimize those rumors during his weekly press conference on Nov. 18 when asked about his NFL experience.

"I was only in the NFL for two years, and the rest of the time it was college," Day said. "It was more of a learning experience for me. I've always been in college other than those two years, so I think for the most part it's college based. Being exposed to it for two years allowed me a great opportunity to see what it's like, to learn about the pro passing game, learn about developing quarterbacks and just see what that side of it is like. It was a great experience."

"But really when you look at – I don't know how long I've been coaching now but it was really only two years (in the

NFL), I've mostly been college my whole life. So I would say I use most of the lessons I learned in college in day-to-day, schematically. Sometimes I use the things that I learned those couple years. But everywhere you go, you learn more and you learn something new."

Day went on to mention that the shift from the pros to college was tricky at first but that the mind-set of losing multiple games a year never really clicked for him.

"That's tough. That's really tough,"

Day said of the adjustment from loss expectations in the NFL vs. in college. "It's tough everywhere you go. It's tough no matter where you go, for different reasons. Certainly, that league is brutal, because no matter what, you're designed to go 8-8. And then when you go 8-8, the owner wants to know why you're 8-8. Well, everyone is supposed to go 8-8; that's the way the league is designed. Where here and other places, it's not that way."

He went on to call Ohio State the best job in America.

"Every place has its own challenges," Day said. "We're very fortunate here. We're able to recruit great young men and really talented guys and all those things. But with it comes great expectations. So, obviously, I believe this is the best place in America, the best job in America, and we get to coach the best young men. It's a blessing to be here every day."

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 9 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 9 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.

Buckeye Parents No Longer Allowed At Games

Ohio State announced in a Nov. 18 release that the family members of Ohio State players would not be allowed into Ohio Stadium when the Buckeyes took on Indiana on Nov. 21, in accordance with the Columbus Department of Health's stay at home advisory, which started on Nov. 20.

According to the release, this decision will not be revisited for any indoor events scheduled through the end of the calendar year, though it will be evaluated again prior to Ohio State's Dec. 12 matchup with Michigan.


"The decision not to allow families at football games will be re-evaluated prior to Ohio State's final home football game of the season, Dec. 12 against the University of Michigan," the release reads. "The decision not to allow families will, howev-




er, stay in place for all of the Ohio State men's and women's basketball and hockey home games that are either scheduled, or in the process of being scheduled, through the remainder of 2020."


Without families in attendance, only limited media and essential personnel were allowed in Ohio Stadium against Indiana, which was the last Buckeye home game before that Michigan matchup.






"The health and safety of student-athletes, coaches, spectators and event staff is our top priority," said athletic director Gene Smith. "We had hoped to continue to allow family members of our student-athletes and coaching staffs to be able to attend games, but circumstances around this pandemic are prompting us to adjust, just as it has throughout the past

Continued On Page 6



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Continued From Page 5

eight months. We appreciate everyone's understanding, and we will continue to do what is in the best interests of everyone involved."

Some Ohio State parents took to social media to express their opinions about the decision.

"I'm very frustrated with Franklin County," Monica Johnson, the mother of freshman offensive tackle Paris Johnson, posted. "I only see Paris on the football field waving to him from a distance. We as OSU parents have committed to keep our distance from the boys so we don't contaminate the bubble. Now Franklin County takes this away too?!?"

The leader of the Ohio State football parents group, Amanda Babb, also expressed frustration.

"Although I'm thankful for a season," Babb said, "not being in the stands, after being at the last three games is heart-breaking. The wave from the field at the end of the game was what all parents looked forward to. That was our sacrifice and now we can't even get that."

The football parents of Ohio State Twitter account released a brief statement, encouraging supporters to wear a mask to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

"Parents of OSU football players are sad to learn we cannot attend this weekend's game against Indiana," the tweet reads. "We will be cheering for our boys from our couches! Go Bucks! Stay safe. Wear a mask."

Buckeyes Draw Another Noon Kick

For the second straight week, Ohio State will be kicking off at noon, this time on the road against Illinois on Nov. 28. The game will be shown on Fox Sports 1.

The Buckeyes are 2-0 in noon starts this season, with victories coming against Nebraska in Week 1 and against Indiana on Nov. 21.

The Fighting Illini come into the game against Ohio State on a bit of a hot streak, winning their past two games against Rutgers and the Cornhuskers after starting the season 0-3.

This will be the 104th time that Ohio State and Illinois have faced off, with the Buckeyes holding a 69-30-4 record in the series. They have also won nine straight, with the Illini's last win against Ohio State coming in 2007. Ohio State is favored by 30 points in the initial betting lines.

Ohio State Remains At No. 3 In Poll

Ohio State's win over a top-10 oppo-

nent on Nov. 21 wasn't enough to impress the voters in either major poll, with the Amway coaches poll and the Associated Press top 25 both keeping the Buckeyes at the No. 3 spot in their Nov. 22 voting, trailing No. 1 Alabama and No. 2 Notre Dame.

In the coaches poll, Ohio State is slotted just ahead of Clemson, Florida, Texas A&M, Cincinnati, BYU and Miami, all of whom held their place within the top 10. The only change at the top of the polls is in the No. 10 spot, where 5-2 Georgia moved from No. 11 back into the top 10. Indiana fell two spots to No. 12.

No. 13 Northwestern and No. 20 Wisconsin also represent the Big Ten, with the Wildcats jumping seven spots after knocking off UW, while the Badgers dropped eight. Purdue received two votes, and Iowa picked up one.

In the AP poll, Ohio State is followed by Clemson, Texas A&M, Florida, Cincinnati, BYU, Oregon and Miami. Northwestern checks in at just outside the top 10 at No. 11, followed by Indiana down to No. 12, while Wisconsin rounds out the conference at No. 18. Iowa received 15 votes.

Former Defensive Coordinator George Hill Dead At 87

Former Ohio State defensive coordinator George Hill passed away on Nov. 10 at his home in Florida.

Hill was a lifelong defensive coach and worked as the coordinator at Ohio State under Woody Hayes from 1971-78, producing All-Americans in Randy Gradishar and Bob Brudzinski, as well as one of the best defenses in school history in 1973, which allowed just 41 points in the regular season.

"I think he was very instrumental," Ohio State historian Jack Park said of Hill. "(That) 1973 team only gave up 41 points during the regular season.

"I think there was about a five-week span there where they had four shutouts and Indiana scored seven points on them right at the end of the game. Woody Hayes was really upset at that. But at that time he probably had the third-team defenders on the field, but he wanted those string of shutouts and Indiana broke it."

Hill's 1973 team also produced one of the best linebacker groups in Buckeye history in Park's estimation.

"Those three linebackers on that '73 team - (Randy) Gradishar, (Vic) Koegel and (Rick) Middleton - I don't know that Ohio State ever had three better linebackers at the same time than those three guys."

Hill came to Ohio State by way of his alma mater, Denison, where he coached for five seasons from 1960-64 before spending a year at Cornell and five at Duke. He was also Denison's baseball coach from 1960-63.

He departed from Ohio State when Hayes was fired after the 1978 season, joining the Philadelphia Eagles staff as the beginning of a 21-year career in the NFL that included a stint under legendary coach Don Shula in Miami from 1996-99 and four years as the defensive coordinator for the Indianapolis Colts under Rod Dowhower and Ron Meyer from 1985-88. Hill was 87.

Former Fullback Fred "Curly" Morrison Passes Away At 94

The MVP of the 1950 Rose Bowl and former Buckeye fullback Fred "Curly" Morrison died on Nov. 16 at 94 in California.

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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."

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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."

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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.

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Morrison played for the Buckeyes from 1946-49, first under head coach Paul Bixler and then for three years under Wes Fesler. He led the 1949 Buckeyes in scoring with nine touchdowns and capped his career with that MVP-winning performance in a 17-14 Rose Bowl win against California, rushing for 127 yards and a score. It was Ohio State's first Rose Bowl victory.

"He started out as a receiver," Park said of Morrison. "I think he might've been out of school a year or so, but he ended up as a senior fullback in 1949. And that team tied Michigan for the Big Ten title. Then they were given the nod to go to the Rose Bowl and they became the first Ohio State team to win the Rose Bowl."

After his time at Ohio State, Morrison played seven years for the Chicago Bears and Cleveland Browns, qualifying for the Pro Bowl with the Browns in 1955 after he rushed for a team-high 824 yards.

Once his playing career ended, he worked as the general manager for the Los Angeles Express of the United States Football League and later served in the same role with the Southern California Sun of the World Football League. He also spent time in the entertainment industry, according to BSB's Mark Rea, who interviewed Morrison for one of his books.

"Quite a guy on the field and quite a guy after his football playing days were over," Rea said. "Here are a couple of lines from the book:

"(After his playing days were over,) Curly became a network salesman for

CBS, and in late 1959, the network moved him to New York to join the network's sales team on a full-time basis. He called on major advertising agencies and clients, with his main responsibility to see that all available advertising slots were sold for the network's signature sports programs such as The Masters, the Triple Crown and the Major League Baseball Game of the Week. Morrison later branched out past sports telecasts, selling sponsorships for many of the network's top shows.

"In 1962, a production company showed him the pilot episode of a new show it was trying to sell to CBS. Curly liked what he saw and sent a copy of the pilot to executives of the Toni hair care company, recommending they buy at least a weekly one-half interest in the show. The company's executives turned both Curly and CBS down, pronouncing the show as too silly, saying they didn't know anyone would watch such a farce. The show was 'The Beverly Hillbillies,' which was the top-rated show on television during the first two years of its eventual 10-year run. The next year, when Curly called the company pitching another unsold pilot, the company agreed to sponsor the show sight unseen. That was 'My Favorite Martian,' which finished its first season as a top-10 rated series.

"Curly was also a pioneer in videotape production and helped sponsor a golf tournament in California that raised millions of dollars for retired NFL players."

For his time with the Buckeyes, Morrison was inducted into the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame in 2010 and

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1985

Michigan coach Bo Schembechler said it one way. Ohio State quarterback Jim Karsatos said it another. John Kolesar did it his way.

But they all washed ashore in one bottle – Michigan 27, Ohio State 17.

“The catch by Kolesar was definitely a play that took the starch out of their sails,” said Schembechler, rehashing a 77-yard scoring play on a pass from Wolverine quarterback Jim Harbaugh to Kolesar, a freshman flanker out of Westlake, Ohio.

“There’s no doubt that took the air out of our sails,” said Karsatos, who completed 17 of 31 passes for 180 yards and one touchdown as the Buckeyes lost their second straight game to close out the regular season at 8-3.

30 Years Ago – 1990

Ohio State freshman Robert Smith ran his way into the record books Nov. 17, leading the Buckeyes to a 35-10 victory over Wisconsin.

Smith shattered the school’s freshman rushing record of 867 yards set nearly two decades prior by Archie Griffin and became the first Buckeye freshman to ever go over the 1,000-yard mark.

Becoming only the 26th freshman in NCAA history to crack the 1,000-yard barrier, Smith rushed for 171 yards and two touchdowns against the Badgers, putting him at 1,021 yards on the season entering Ohio State’s final matchup against Michigan. He needed 127 yards against the Wolverines to move into the top 10 among single-season totals at Ohio State, which would move him past Ron Springs, who gained 1,166 yards in 1977.

“I broke some records, and somewhere along the line, I knew there would be someone who would come along and break mine,” Griffin said. “Honestly, I didn’t think this particular record would last this long.

“But I think it’s a great honor to have the record broken by Robert. He’s a great athlete and a great young man who is just beginning to show his talents.”

25 Years Ago – 1995

Les Horvath, one of Ohio State’s Heisman Trophy winners and a member of the 1942 national championship team, died on Nov. 14 at his home in Glendale, Calif. He was 74.

Due to roster depletion during World War II, Horvath’s career at OSU spanned six seasons. Rules were changed to allow upper classmen who had previously redshirted to play an additional year. He was in dental school in 1944 when head coach Carol Widdoes convinced him to come out and play with the team.

He rushed for 924 yards that season and was named the Big Ten’s most valuable player and OSU’s first Heisman Trophy winner.

“Les was just a fantastic person,” said Griffin, a fellow Heisman Trophy winner. “He was so unassuming, despite all of the awards

and honors he had earned.

“He loved this university, and he was a great ambassador of this university. I know he always liked to get back to the Heisman banquet and see all of the guys.”

20 Years Ago – 2000

As always, OSU athletic director Andy Geiger stood off to the side as OSU coach John Cooper addressed the media following a 38-26 loss to Michigan on Nov. 18.

The defeat reduced Cooper’s record against Michigan at OSU to a dismal 2-10-1.

Although Geiger noted the importance of winning The Game, he said there were no plans in the works to make drastic changes within the OSU staff.

“It’s obvious this is disappointing and this is something we need to figure out,” Geiger said. “This game is a cornerstone game. It’s a foundation game. We need to work on it.

“We need to get ready for a bowl game and improve.”

When asked how he would respond to speculation that Cooper was on thin ice, Geiger said, “He’s got three years to go on his contract. I try not to operate like that.”

When asked if he had any issues regarding Cooper returning for a 14th season, he said, “Not right now I don’t.”

15 Years Ago – 2005

Senior linebacker Bobby Carpenter said head coach Jim Tressel had told him all he needed to hear to get into the right mind-set to face Michigan.

“He said there’s a huge difference between being 2-2 and 3-1,” said Carpenter, who played in victories against the Wolverines in 2002 and ’04 but was on the losing side in 2003. “And that’s all he had to say.”

The Buckeyes (8-2, 6-1) needed to beat the Wolverines (7-3, 5-2) to clinch at least a share of the Big Ten title, and they could become outright champs with a win and a Penn State loss at Michigan State.

Michigan also harbored far-fetched conference-title hopes. If they could beat the Buckeyes and get help from the Spartans, the Wolverines would share the championship with OSU and PSU and earn the conference’s automatic bid to a BCS bowl thanks to head-to-head victories over both.

10 Years Ago – 2010

The American Football Coaches Association awarded Ohio State co-defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Luke Fickell its Assistant Coach of the Year award for Division I-A for 2010.

The award began in 1997 “to honor assistant coaches who excel in community service, commitment to the student athlete, on-field coaching success and AFCA professional organization involvement.”

“I am extremely honored because I know there are eight other

assistant coaches at Ohio State and thousands of assistants across the country that deserve this recognition,” Fickell said. “Thanks especially to all our players because they are the ones who make us look good as coaches.”

Five Years Ago – 2015

After a run of 23 wins in a row, No. 3 Ohio State came up short in its first matchup against a ranked opponent in the 2015 season. The Buckeyes (10-1, 6-1 Big Ten) struck first and took a 14-7 lead in the third quarter, but No. 9 Michigan State (10-1, 6-1 Big Ten) rallied with 10 straight fourth-quarter points on its way to a 17-14 victory.

The loss broke a 30-game regular-season conference win streak for the Buckeyes as Ohio State managed just 132 yards of total offense on Senior Day at Ohio Stadium.

The game came down to the final play when Michigan State junior kicker Michael Geiger lined up for a 41-yard field goal and split the uprights. Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer said the game was disheartening at times and noted the Buckeyes had a lot of work to do before facing Michigan on Nov. 28 in Ann Arbor.

“We’ve got to get a couple of first downs and start finding a way to complete a pass and beat our rival (Michigan),” Meyer said after the game. “We’ve got to fix some obvious problems.”

One Year Ago – 2019

Ohio State coach Ryan Day called the 28-17 win over Penn State in the Big Ten showdown on Nov. 23 ugly, but the result was that the No. 2 Buckeyes remained firmly in line for a College Football Playoff berth.

By defeating the eighth-ranked Nittany Lions (9-2, 6-2) before 104,355 in Ohio Stadium, the Buckeyes (11-0, 8-0) clinched their third straight spot in the conference title game and could devote full attention to facing Michigan in Ann Arbor on Nov. 30.

But first, the Buckeyes would review how they had allowed Penn State to rally from a 21-0 third-quarter deficit thanks to the second and third lost fumbles in the game. The Nittany Lions scored 17 points in 3:57, including TDs 25 seconds apart, before sophomore QB Justin Fields had a 28-yard TD pass to sophomore Chris Olave for the final margin.

Fields was 16 of 22 for 188 yards and two TDs. He added 68 yards on a career-high 21 carries but lost two fumbles and suffered a knee injury late in the game. Junior J.K. Dobbins rushed for 157 yards on a career-high 36 carries and two TDs for the Buckeyes but also lost a fumble.

Ohio State junior defensive end Chase Young returned after serving a two-game suspension for accepting an improper loan. He had three sacks among his nine tackles to set the OSU single-season sack record of 16½, breaking the mark of 14 set by Vernon Gholston in 2007.

the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame in 1993.

He is survived by his son, Dave.

Elflein Signs On With New York

Just two days after he was released by the Minnesota Vikings, former Ohio State center/guard Pat Elflein was claimed off waivers by the New York Jets on Nov. 16. Elflein spent three seasons with the Vikings after being selected in the third round by the team in the 2017 NFL draft.

He showed versatility on the offensive line for Minnesota, starting as the team’s center for his rookie season, earning PFWA All-Rookie Team honors in the process. He stayed at center in 2018 but moved to left guard in 2019 and then to right guard this season, where he started one game before being moved to the injured reserve.

Elflein, who is 26, is joining a New York Jets team that will likely look to slot him into a starting role immediately as it searches for contributors up front. Head coach Adam Gase spoke of Elflein’s versatility as a plus.

“We always look at it as anytime we get guys that can snap, that can play center or guard, there’s a lot of value there,” Gase

told reporters. “We’ll just have to see how this kind of fits with who we have, where we’re at.”

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Buckeyes' Secondary, Second-Half Issues Remain

Continued From Page 1

yards and two scores in the Tigers' 2014 Orange Bowl victory.

Fryfogle also joined Watkins, Cincinnati's Chris Moore (221 yards in 2014) and Nebraska's J.D. Spielman (200 yards in 2017) as the only opposing wide receivers to reach 200 yards in a game against Ohio State.

"If we don't give up the big plays, we probably run away with this game," Day said. "The good news is, we obviously stopped the run. There was no run game at all. It was all passing. We're going to go back, watch the film and figure out where these issues are that are creating these big plays. When you stop the big plays, you'll be in pretty good shape. We have to get that changed."

"Anytime you have a problem like that, it's one of three things. You ask yourself if you have the right personnel and if the scheme is giving our guys the best opportunity to be successful. And if both of those boxes get checked, it goes to coaching. When you're trying to fix something, one of those three things needs addressed."

Fields, who entered the game as a Heisman Trophy front-runner, completed 18 of 30 passes for 300 yards and two touchdowns.

But he also threw a total of three interceptions, including one that was fumbled back to the Buckeyes in the third quarter, to double his career total.



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GIVE AND TAKE – Though junior cornerback Shaun Wade returned an interception 36-yards for a score in the third quarter, he also gave up a 56-yard touchdown reception in the fourth that helped Indiana close the gap.

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"I didn't play well at all," Fields said after the game. "I have to improve. I have to get better. That's all I really have to say."

Fields, who also added 78 yards and one score on the ground, faced constant pressure all afternoon from an Indiana defense that entered the game with a plus-eight turnover margin. In addition to his three interceptions, he was sacked five times.

"We knew going in that it was going to be a high-risk, high-reward game," Day said. "Overall, I thought he played really gutsy. He made some big-time throws. They were blitzing every snap, so there was going to be negative plays and there was going to be some big plays, and that's kind of how it played out."

"You certainly want to have those plays back and those interceptions back. But at the same time, you have to be aggressive and you have to go at them. You can't be on your heels when you play

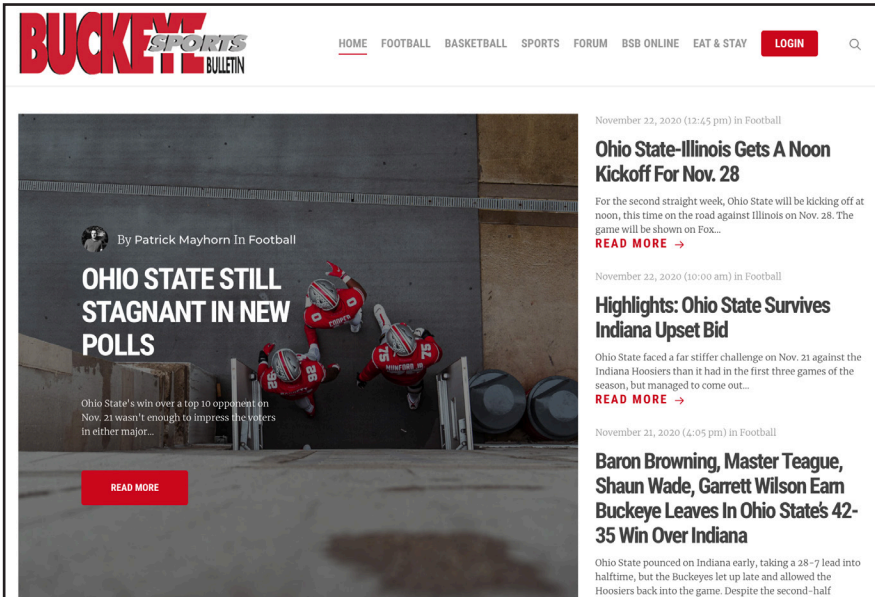
against a defense like this. So there's a lot to learn from, but overall, the production was really good. But we've got to clean up those turnovers."

In the end, the Buckeyes put up 607 yards of total offense, including 307 on the ground, and kept their undefeated season alive.

"Looking back on everything we've been through in the last few months, to be 4-0 and in first place in the Big Ten East, it's a big, big deal. I couldn't be prouder of this team," Day said. "Most people don't know what these guys have been through. They don't understand the sacrifices that have been made. They haven't seen their families in months. When they leave the facility, they're isolated in their room and not able to go anywhere because of this virus."

"This family has stuck together. We said going into the game we just have to figure out a way to win this game. All that matters is that you win."

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OSU's Run Game Comes To Life Against IU

Through the first three games of the season, all the attention had been on the success of Ohio State's pass game, with junior quarterback Justin Fields completing 86.7 percent of his passes and throwing for 908 yards and 11 touchdowns with not a single interception.

And with Fields' success came some doubts about the ability of the run game that, despite breaking the 200-yard threshold in each of the games against Nebraska, Penn State and Rutgers, did not have the same level of efficiency that the Buckeyes

touchdowns, while Fields threw for two on the afternoon.

"It's definitely, I think, improving every week," sophomore running back Master Teague said following the victory. "Shout-out to the O-line, they did a great job. Right now, overall, I feel good about it. Of course we'll go back to the film and see little nuances that we can assess and get fixed and work on, but overall, I feel good, I feel great about it."

Teague had arguably his best game in an Ohio State uniform in the game against the Hoosiers, finishing with a career-high 169 yards and two touchdowns on 26 carries, with his carry total also being the highest in his tenure with the Buckeyes.

Though he said he will do whatever is asked of him for the team, he did say that he thought he was able to gain more momentum throughout the game because of an increased workload.

"I'm here to do whatever's best for the team, and if the coaches feel that's best for the team, I'm willing to do that, go out there every time," Teague said. "If not, then whatever that looks like, I'm willing to do it and continue to make plays and help the team win."

Still, Teague said he felt like he was in much more of a rhythm this week and that he thought he had a much stronger performance against Indiana than in the weeks prior.

"I think I did get in a good groove today," Teague said. "Overall, I feel like I got in a good groove and was able to make plays and help the team win and come to a



COURTESY OF OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

MAN ON THE RUN – Sophomore running back Master Teague rushed for a career-high 169 yards and two touchdowns in Ohio State's 42-35 win over Indiana on Nov. 21.

GAME NOTEBOOK

Wyatt Crosher

were used to after a 2,003-yard, 21-touchdown campaign on 6.7 yards per carry by J.K. Dobbins a season prior.

But against Indiana, despite another 300-yard passing effort by Fields, Ohio State was not able to strictly rely on the arm talent of its former five-star prospect, with Fields throwing a trio of interceptions, doubling his career total in the process.

That left room for the rushing attack to step up, and step up it did in a big way for the Buckeyes, totaling 307 yards on 50 carries for a healthy 6.1 yards per rush in the 42-35 win over No. 9 Indiana. The ground game also accounted for three



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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Though it had surpassed 200 yards on the ground during each of the first three games of the season, Ohio State's rushing attack had never found much in terms of efficiency heading into its matchup against Indiana. That changed against the Hoosiers, with the Buckeyes breaking the 300-yard threshold with 307 yards on 50 rushes, good for a very respectable 6.1 yards per carry. Sophomore tailback Master Teague led the way with 169 yards and two touchdowns on 26 carries, while senior back Trey Sermon also impressed in limited action, carrying the ball nine times for 60 yards. Junior quarterback Justin Fields was also much more involved in the run game, finishing with 15 carries for 78 yards and a touchdown. If sacks are excluded, he broke the 100-yard barrier with 10 rushes for 101 yards.

Speaking of Fields, Ohio State's pass game was again very strong for much of the game, with the third-year signal caller completing 18 of 30 passes for 300 yards and two touchdowns, with 270 of those yards going to his two main wide receiver targets: sophomore Garrett Wilson (seven catches, 169 yards, two touchdowns) and junior Chris Olave (eight catches, 101 yards). Ohio State also excelled in stuffing Indiana's run game, allowing minus-1 yard total on 16 attempts.

What Didn't Work

Though Fields broke the 300-yard passing threshold for the third straight game, he did so by doubling his career total for interceptions. On the day, Fields threw three interceptions, two of which

came on attempts to avoid a sack and the other on a misread in coverage while trying to get the ball to Olave. But Fields' struggles were overshadowed by Ohio State's problems stopping the pass on the other side of the ball. Indiana sophomore quarterback Michael Penix completed 27 of his 51 pass attempts for 491 yards and five touchdowns with just one interception. The 491 yards through the air were the fourth most allowed in program history and the most since allowing 497 to Purdue in 1985. Nearly half of the yards went to senior wide receiver Ty Fryfogle, who finished with seven catches for 218 yards and three touchdowns.

Play Of The Game

After holding a 35-7 lead earlier in the third quarter, Ohio State started to struggle to put points on the board, and the Indiana offense got rolling. After a pair of touchdown connections from Penix to Fryfogle, the Hoosiers were trailing by just two scores with plenty of time to play. A missed 44-yard field-goal attempt by Ohio State freshman kicker Jake Seibert gave Indiana the ball with a chance to bring the game within one possession, but on second-and-10 from the Indiana 27, Penix threw to the right sideline, looking for wide receiver Miles Marshall. Cornerback Shaun Wade read it, made his first interception of the season and took it 36 yards to the end zone to give the Buckeyes a 42-21 lead. That ended up being the deciding touchdown, as the Hoosiers scored twice more through the air, and the Ohio State offense was held scoreless in the final 27:10 of the game.

— Wyatt Crosher

victory, so I feel good about that.”

Coming into the game, Teague was averaging 4.5 yards per carry on just 15.7 attempts per game, both averages he easily eclipsed during the win over Indiana. That comes in part due to some added explosiveness that the former four-star running back out of Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Blackman was lacking in prior matchups.

Against Indiana, Teague had runs of 19, 32 and 41 yards, with the latter two both being his two longest of the season. The 41-yard rush also ended in the end zone after Teague took the handoff to the left side of the field and exploded through a big gap that was created by some great blocking, specifically from junior tight end Jeremy Ruckert, and took it the distance for a score.

“It feels great,” Teague said on his lengthy touchdown run. “That’s one part of my game that I do have, and I have that capability of a home-run hitter but just hadn’t been able to do that yet. I was glad I was able to do that today and continue to do even more and just, again, shout-out to the O-line. They did a great job blocking on that play.”

Teague was not alone in improved production, though, as his typical co-starter, senior running back Trey Sermon, was much more efficient than he had been in his first three games at Ohio State following a transfer from Oklahoma. After rushing for 4.8 yards per carry heading into the Nov. 21 matchup, Sermon ran nine times for 60 yards, breaking off 16- and 15-yard runs in limited action.

Fields also got in on the rushing attack much more than he had the past two games. After 3 yards on 12 combined carries against the Nittany Lions and Scarlet Knights, the junior quarterback ran the ball 15 times for 78 net yards and a touchdown, his third score on the ground this season. Excluding sacks, Fields ran 10 times for 101 yards on the day.

After the game, Fields said that the success in the run game helped to pick up the offense while he struggled with turnovers throughout the hotly contested matchup.

“When I’m not picking up the offense, other players have to pick me up,” Fields said. “I think Master, Trey and those other running backs did a great job out there, and they were just running north and south, being physical with the other team. So they helped me out a lot, and they helped the team out a lot. I’m proud of those guys.”

Defensive Line Stifles Hoosiers’ Run Game

While Ohio State started to figure out its running attack against Indiana, the Hoosiers did not have the same level of success, continuing their season’s trend of a one-dimensional offense.

Indiana sophomore quarterback Michael Penix dominated against the Buckeyes and has been a very strong player all season, but he has never had much of any help from his running backs, with the Hoosiers averaging 2.7 yards per carry heading into the game against Ohio State, and that total only getting worse afterward.

On the game, Indiana ran the ball 16 times for minus-1 yard, and while running backs Sampson James and Stevie Scott combined for better numbers than that (10 carries for 16 yards), it was still an almost nonexistent ground game to complement Penix’s historic output.

But the focus from Ohio State defensive tackle Tommy Togiai, who finished with a tackle and a pass breakup, was on Penix, who was sacked only twice and added 491

yards and five scores.

“I think we can do a better job probably, I know we were still getting pressure on him, even though he was still throwing it up and getting completed passes, but I think we can maybe try and do a better job of just getting there faster,” Togiai said. “I think the last couple of drives, we were getting after him a little bit, so I think we need to try to replicate that and start doing more of that.”

Buckeye Receiving Duo Continues To Shine

Fields may have not had his strongest showing of the season, but his two main receiving targets continued to produce at the highest level for the fourth straight game. Junior wide receiver Chris Olave and sophomore wide receiver Garrett Wilson each hit the 100-yard receiving threshold once again, marking the third time this year that the duo has hit that benchmark together.

Olave had eight catches for 101 yards on the afternoon on nine targets, with a long of 31 yards. His only missed target was on an interception. Wilson had seven receptions for 169 yards and a pair of touchdowns and once again started out this game with a bang.

On Ohio State’s first offensive play of the day, Fields found Wilson for a 65-yard connection. He then hit him again on the next play for a 10-yard score. Wilson’s yardage total was the fourth straight game he hit the century mark, putting him just one game shy of the program record of five straight games set by Cris Carter in 1986.

The performances by Olave and Wilson through the air was difficult to deal with, according to Indiana head coach Tom Allen, and it was made even more difficult because of Ohio State’s success on the ground.

“They’ve got so much talent on the perimeter that stresses you to be able to – you want to get pressure on them and then stop the run, so it’s just kind of a catch-22 they put you in because of their talent,” Allen said.

But Olave had just two catches for 11 yards in the second half, and while Wilson still had success over the last two quarters

(five catches, 86 yards), Indiana did start to have more success on the defensive side of the ball as the game went on.

Fields, however, said after the game that he would not question the play calling of head coach Ryan Day whatsoever.

“Coach Day’s the head coach,” Fields said. “I just go out there and run the plays, to be honest. I’m not going to have an opinion on the kind of plays we run. I’m just going to run the plays to the best of my ability and try to make the best I can out of it.”

Day Stays Aggressive In Fourth-Down Miss

Ohio State had a chance to take a two-score lead with less than five minutes to play in the fourth quarter, facing a fourth-and-1 at the Indiana 7. Instead of attempting a field goal with true freshman kicker Jake Seibert, who had missed his only collegiate field-goal attempt from 44 yards out in the third quarter, Day elected to trust his offense and go for it.

Fields took the ball on a bootleg play to the right side of the ball and, while pressured, threw the ball to fifth-year senior tight end Luke Farrell, but the two could not connect, resulting in a turnover on downs.

“I think they covered it pretty well,” Fields said. “I don’t know if they were

looking for it. I don’t know if they were prepared for the naked (bootleg), but we basically ran a bootleg play and everybody was covered, and then Luke’s guy fell off on me at the last minute, so I tried to get it to him and then the pass was just off the mark.”

Ultimately, the failed conversion did not hurt the Buckeyes much, as the Ohio State defense forced a three-and-out on the following Indiana drive. But Day did not second-guess his decision after the game, saying that it was important to not get complacent during a top-10 matchup.

“Always want to be aggressive,” Day said. “Fourth-and-1, we’ve gone for it before in those situations. We’ll continue to do that. We always want to be aggressive. I felt like, at that point, they were moving the ball pretty well and I was worried that a field goal might not do it and wanted to be aggressive, wanted to go up two touchdowns. And actually I liked the call. We have to execute it better, but either way, we’re going to be aggressive in those situations.”

“Looking back, when you don’t get it, sure, go kick the field goal. But there’s been times where we’ve gone for it in those situations and got it and then pulled away from teams. So we are always going to be aggressive and then not second-guess ourselves when it doesn’t work.”



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Hoosiers Put Up Fight But Buckeyes Prevail

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Little did Ohio State know that cornerback Shaun Wade's 36-yard interception return for a touchdown and a 21-point lead in the waning seconds of the third quarter would prove to be the difference, but it was when the No. 3 Buckeyes held off ninth-ranked Indiana 42-35 at Ohio Stadium on Nov. 21.

It was that type of game in the battle for first place in the East Division because Indiana quarterback Michael Penix threw for 491 yards and five touchdowns, two coming after Wade's pick-six made it 42-21 heading into the fourth quarter.

The Buckeyes (4-0) had built the lead despite an uncharacteristically poor outing by quarterback Justin Fields, who threw his first three interceptions of the season but still tossed two TDs and got support from Master Teague's two rushing scores to help forge a 35-7 lead early in the third quarter.

Fields gave no indication early that he would struggle against the blitz-crazed Hoosiers.

After Indiana (4-1) punted on its first possession, it took 37 seconds for the Buckeyes to take a 7-0 lead. That was enough time to go 75 yards in two plays – a 65-yard catch-and-run from Fields to sophomore receiver Garrett Wilson to the 10 and a toss to Wilson on the next snap with 12:32 left in the first quarter for the six points.

On the Buckeyes' next drive, Fields threw his first INT when Jamar Johnson grabbed it at the IU 23 and returned it 33 yards to the OSU 44, but the Hoosiers turned it over on downs at the 36.

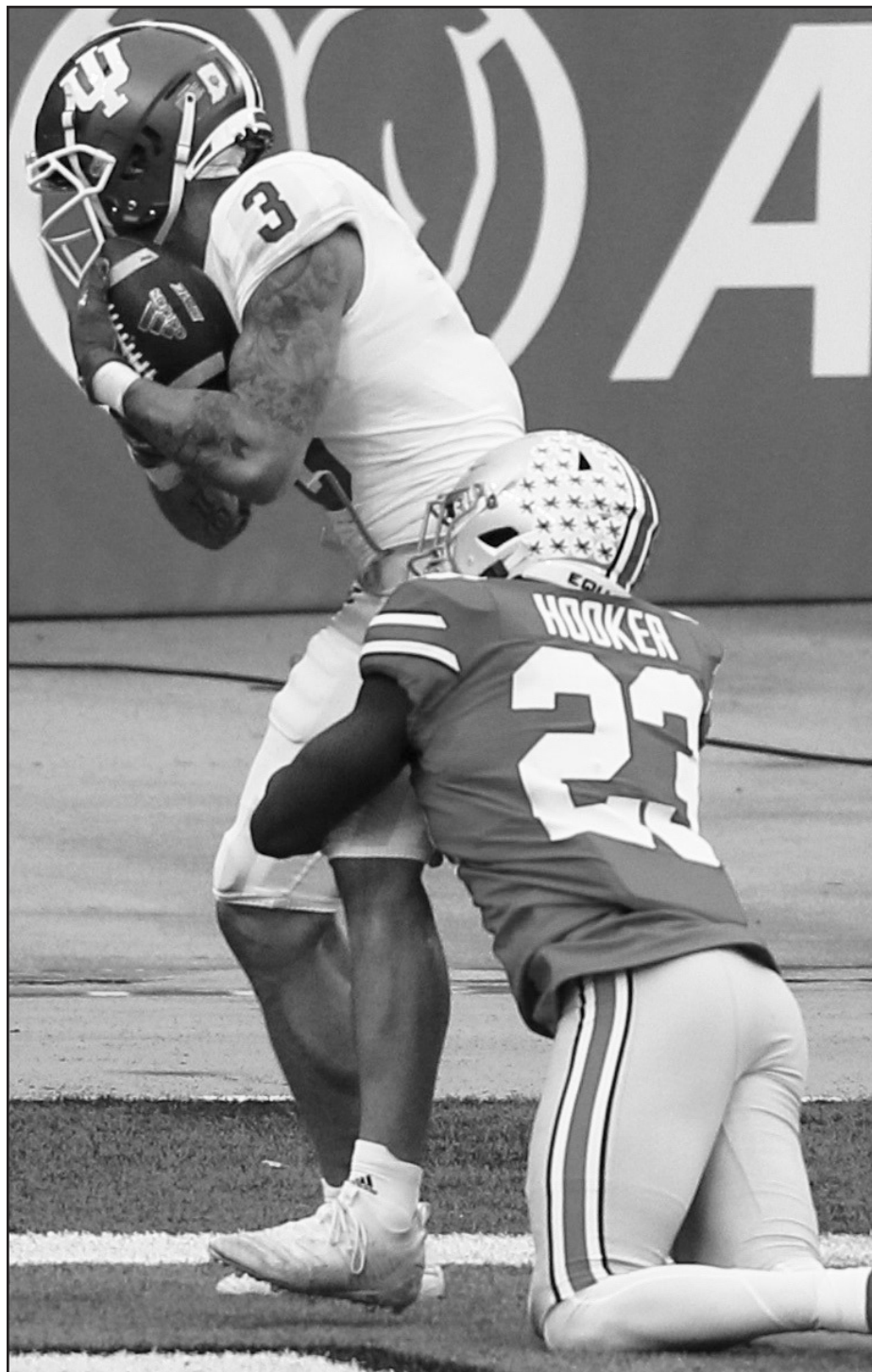
Fields threw another interception in the first quarter at the IU 43 on a tipped ball corralled by defensive tackle Jerome Johnson. The Hoosiers went three-and-out.

Indiana made it 7-7 at 11:03 of the second quarter by going 84 yards in 3:05 with the biggest of the six plays being Penix connecting for 68 yards with Miles Marshall to the 3.

Two plays later Whop Philyor, who had reeled in a 10-yard reception to convert a third-and-7 from the Indiana 19 to keep the drive alive, had a 4-yard TD catch.

It was the genesis of a big game for Penix, who was 27 of 51 but had that fateful pick by Wade.

Ohio State gained a 14-7 lead at the 8:57 mark of the second when Teague used strong blocking on the edge to run 41 yards to pay dirt. He would finish with



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

DEFENSIVE LAPSE – Indiana wide receiver Ty Fryfogle caught seven passes for 218 yards and three touchdowns against Ohio State, which marked the second-most receiving yards the Buckeyes have ever surrendered to a single player in a game.

a career-best 169 yards on 26 carries.

The seven-play, 75-yard, 2:06 drive was made possible by Chris Olave's third-down catches of 16 and 8 yards for first downs.

Ohio State extended the lead with Teague's 2-yard rush with 4:32 left in the quarter. Trey Sermon had three carries

for 28 yards, Jaxon Smith-Njigba had a key third-down catch at the IU 48 for 7 yards, and Fields scrambled for a 30-yard run to the 2 to set up the score.

The game turned even further for the Buckeyes thanks to the defense, which – after allowing a 51-yard catch by David Ellis to the 13 on blown coverage – got the ball back on the ensuing play. Ellis caught the ball at the 5, but Baron Browning loosened it with a reach around, Pete Werner smacked Ellis and Browning recovered the fumble at the 7.

OSU went 93 yards in nine plays, consuming 2:54 before Fields escaped pressure and ran for a 9-yard TD, leaping into the end zone from the 2, with 17 seconds remaining before the half for a 28-7 advantage. Olave came up big again in the series. Facing a third-and-4 from the OSU 13, he had a 31-yard catch to spark the drive and later added a 13-yard catch.

Ohio State began the second half just like the first with Fields finding Wilson

for a 9-yard score to make it 35-7 at 12:10. Wilson had a 39-yard grab earlier in the drive, and Fields added an 11-yard run to the 9 as part of the six-play, 75-yard march that used 2:50.

Penix continued to torch the OSU secondary when he hooked up with Tyler Fryfogle for a 63-yard touchdown on the next series to lower the deficit to 35-14 with 10:48 left in the third quarter.

Fryfogle had 218 yards and three TDs from seven catches for the game.

Wackiness ensued when the Buckeyes took over as Fields was in the grasp of tacklers when he wildly threw his third interception. Jamar Johnson was again the culprit. He picked it off at the OSU 40 and ran to the 16 where the intended receiver, freshman receiver Julian Fleming, ran him down and forced a fumble that left tackle Thayer Munford fell on.

Undeterred, the Hoosiers limited the Buckeyes to 5 yards on three carries and after the punt made quick work for a 35-21 score. They used five plays to go 60 yards with Marshall grabbing a 12-yard pass from Penix, Philyor adding a 15-yard catch and Fryfogle scoring with a 33-yard reception with 5:14 left in the third.

Ohio State wasted a 32-yard gain by Teague when freshman Jake Seibert, kicking for the injured Blake Haubeil, missed from 44 yards on his first career attempt.

The Hoosiers forced the long try with the aid of one of their five sacks for the game. The blitz-crazy Hoosiers caused Fields to have his worst game of the season as he was 18 of 30 for 300 yards with two TDs and the three interceptions, although he added 78 yards on the ground with another score.

Wade got some redemption for the defensive backs with his pick-six with 49 seconds remaining in the third quarter to make it 42-21.

However, Penix engineered a 75-yard, 10-play sequence that saw him complete a 16-yard TD strike to Ellis on a fourth-and-10 to make it 42-28 with 12:26 left in the game. Philyor had catches of 11 and 14, and Fryfogle contributed 37 yards on two grabs.

After an OSU punt, Penix threw a 56-yard TD to Fryfogle over Wade on the second play, and suddenly it was 42-35 with 10:26 left.

Ohio State used up 5:47 and went 68 yards but was stopped on fourth-and-1 from the 7 when Fields' pass to Luke Farrell was incomplete with 4:39 to play.

The Buckeyes forced an Indiana punt after three plays and took over at their 32 after a 55-yard punt, but after eating up another 2:32, they punted it back to the Hoosiers, who started at their 22 with 38 seconds left.

Seven plays moved the ball only to the Indiana 38 with five seconds left, and on the last play Penix passed 7 yards to Peyton Hendershot. After three laterals, Ellis fumbled, and Zach Harrison got it for the Buckeyes at the IU 34 to end the game.

Game Notes

Olave had eight catches for 101 yards. Wilson had seven for 169 yards and two TDs. ...OSU had 607 total yards (300 passing, 307 running). Indiana gained 490 yards (491 passing, minus-1 rushing).



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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 42, Indiana 35

Nov. 21, 2020 – Ohio Stadium, Columbus, OH

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
INDIANA	0	7	14	14	35
OHIO STATE	7	21	14	0	42

First Quarter

OSU – Wilson, 10-yard pass from Fields (Seibert kick), 12:32; 2 plays, 75 yards, 0:33 TOP.

Second Quarter

IU – Philyor, 4-yard pass from Penix (Campbell kick), 11:03; 6 plays, 84 yards, 3:05 TOP.

OSU – Teague, 41-yard run (Seibert kick), 8:57; 7 plays, 75 yards, 2:06 TOP.

OSU – Teague, 2-yard run (Seibert kick), 4:32; 8 plays, 76 yards, 3:02 TOP.

OSU – Fields, 9-yard run (Seibert kick), 0:17; 9 plays, 93 yards, 2:54 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU – Wilson, 9-yard pass from Fields (Seibert kick), 12:10; 6 plays, 75 yards, 2:50 TOP.

IU – Fryfogle, 63-yard pass from Penix (Campbell kick), 10:48; 3 plays, 75 yards, 1:22 TOP.

IU – Fryfogle, 33-yard pass from Penix (Campbell kick), 5:14; 5 plays, 60 yards, 1:59 TOP.

OSU – Wade, 36-yard inteception return (Seibert kick), 0:49.

Fourth Quarter

IU – Ellis, 16-yard pass from Penix (Campbell kick), 12:26; 10 plays, 75 yards, 3:23 TOP.

IU – Fryfogle, 56-yard pass from Penix (Campbell kick), 10:26; 2 plays, 56 yards, 0:14 TOP.

Att. – 635

Weather – 45 degrees, light rain; wind N 6 mph

Team Statistics		
	IU	OSU
First Downs	19	27
Rushing	2	13
Passing	17	13
Penalty	0	1
Rushes-Yards	16-(-1)	50-307
Passing Yards	491	300
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	27-51-1	18-30-3
Offensive Plays	67	80
Total Net Yards	490	607
Third Down Efficiency	4-13	6-14
Punts-Avg.	6-43.2	5-42.6
Fumbles-Lost	4-3	0-0
Penalties	2-30	3-35
Time of Possession	22:58	36:24

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – IU: James 3-10; Scott 7-6; Ellis 1-2; Penix 3-(-2); TEAM 2-(-17).

OSU: Teague 26-169; Fields 15-78; Sermon 9-60.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – IU: Penix 27-51-1-491-5. **OSU:** Fields 18-30-3-300-2.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – IU: Fryfogle 7-218; Philyor 6-56; Marshall 4-89; Ellis 4-86; Hendershot

4-32; Scott 2-23; Penix 0-(-13). **OSU:** Olave 8-101; Wilson 7-169; Sermon 1-13; Williams 1-10; Smith-Njigba 1-7.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.) – IU: Whitehead 6-43.2. **OSU:** Chrisman 5-42.6.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Avg.) – IU: Taylor 2-11.0. **OSU:** None.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Avg.) IU: Hewitt 1-11.0. **OSU:** McCall 1-18.0.

MISSED FIELD GOALS – IU: None. **OSU:** Seibert (44).

FORCED FUMBLES – IU: None. **OSU:** Werner, Fleming.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES – IU: None. **OSU:** Browning 1-0; Harrison 1-0; Munford 1-0.

INTERCEPTIONS – IU: Ja. Johnson 2-57; Je. Johnson 1-0 **OSU:** Wade 1-36.

SACKS – IU: Ja. Johnson 1.0-8; Je. Johnson 1.0-8; Williams 1.0-3; Casey 1.0-2; Jones 1.0-2.

OSU: Cooper 1.0-6; Werner 1.0-5.

TACKLES FOR LOSS – IU: Ja. Johnson 1.0-8; Je. Johnson 1.0-8; McFadden 1.0-4; Williams 1.0-3; Casey 1.0-2; Jones 1.0-2. **OSU:** Cooper 1.0-6; Werner 1.0-5; Borland 1.0-1; Garrett 1.0-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – IU: McFadden 10-0-10; Williams 6-1-7; Mullen 4-3-7; Jones 3-3-6; Ja. Johnson 5-0-5; Je. Johnson 3-1-4; Ziemba 3-1-4; Head 2-2-4; Taylor 3-0-3; Fitzgerald 2-1-3; Casey 2-1-3; Matthews 0-3-3; Bonhomme 0-3-3; Miller 2-0-2; Sanguinetti 2-0-2; Elliott 1-1-2; King 1-0-1; Smolar 1-0-1. **OSU:** Browning 7-1-8; Werner 5-3-8; Proctor 3-0-3; Wade 2-1-3; Borland 2-1-3; Garrett 2-1-3; Olave 2-0-2; Hooker 2-0-2; Cooper 1-0-1; Fleming 1-0-1; Banks 1-0-1; Hilliard 1-0-1; Mitchell 0-1-1; Vincent 0-1-1; Togiai 0-1-1.

Players In The Game

IU – Haggard, Powell, Love, Nworah, Bedford, Marshall, Philyor, Fryfogle, Penix, Scott, Hendershot, Head, Elliott, Johnson, Bonhomme, McFadden, Jones, Fitzgerald, Williams, Matthews, Johnson, Mullen, Swinton, Taylor, Hewitt, Ervin-Poindexter, James, Miller, Wracher, Whitehead, Ellis, Tracy, King, Sanguinetti, Pierre, Bonds, Lloyd, Barnes, Williams, Casey, Nofoagatoto'a, Swann, Person, Katic, Crider, Rafferty, Weaver, Beery, Cooper, Harris, Ziemba, Barner, Bjorson, Smolar, Campbell.

OSU – Fields, Olave, Wilson, Teague, Davis, Myers, Munford, Miller, Petit-Frere, Williams, Farrell, Cooper, Smith, Togiai, Garrett, Browning, Banks, Werner, Williamson, Hilliard, Wade, Borland, Watts, Hickman, Ransom, DiMaccio, McCall, Mitchell, Fleming, Robinson, Jackson, Vincent, Sermon, Harrison, Cooper, Smith-Njigba, Stover, Babb, Gant, Chambers, Hooker, Johnson, Rossi, Proctor, Kacherski, Friday, Jones, Cupp, Wray, Johnson, Jones, Cage, Ruckert, Chrisman, Seibert.

Season Statistics

2020-21 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Oct. 24	(5) NEBRASKA	W, 52-17	1,344
Oct. 31	(3) at Penn State (18)	W, 38-25	1,500
Nov. 7	(3) RUTGERS	W, 49-27	1,275
Nov. 14	(3) at Maryland	Canceled	N/A
Nov. 21	(3) INDIANA (9)	W, 42-35	635
Nov. 28	(3) at Illinois	TBA	
Dec. 5	at Michigan State	TBA	
Dec. 12	MICHIGAN	Noon	
Dec. 19	Big Ten Championship Week	TBA	

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	104	78
Rushing	44	22
Passing	50	50
Penalty	10	6
Average Per Game/Rush	233.2	98.5
Average Per Game/Pass	302.0	291.0
Total Offense	2141	1558
Total Plays	293	261
Average Per Game	535.2	389.5
Average Per Play	7.3	6.0
Penalties-Yards	24-203	24-234
Fumbles-Lost	5-2	9-7
Third Down Efficiency	31-57	18-49
Percentage	54%	37%
Fourth Down Efficiency	5-7	4-7
Percentage	71%	57%
Sacks-Yards	11-52	12-71
Time Of Possession Avg.	34:27	25:23

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	42	66	45	28	0	181	45.2	
Opponents	13	17	30	44	0	104	26.0	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Master Teague	73	380	5.2	6	41
Trey Sermon	45	232	5.2	0	36
Justin Fields	42	135	3.2	3	30
Steele Chambers	8	78	9.8	0	38
Garrett Wilson	2	67	33.5	0	62
Jack Miller	2	23	11.5	1	21
Xavier Johnson	4	17	4.2	0	7
Demario McCall	1	12	12.0	0	12
Miyan Williams	1	5	5.0	0	5
TEAM	2	-16	-8.0	0	0
OSU Totals	180	933	5.2	10	62
OPP Totals	111	394	3.5	4	66

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Justin Fields	90	113	79.6	1208	13-3	202.1
OSU Totals	90	113	79.6	1208	13-3	202.1
OPP Totals	95	150	63.3	1164	9-2	145.7

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Garrett Wilson	31	513	16.5	4	65
Chris Olave	26	389	15.0	4	49
Jeremy Ruckert	9	60	6.7	3	13
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	6	17	2.8	1	7
Jameson Williams	5	78	15.6	1	38
Trey Sermon	4	35	8.8	0	13
Master Teague	3	37	12.3	0	23
Luke Farrell	3	26	8.7	0	16
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	90	1208	13.4	13	65
OPP Totals	95	1164	12.3	9	68

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Master Teague	6	–	–	–	–	36
Chris Olave	4	–	–	–	–	24
Garrett Wilson	4	–	–	–	–	24
Jeremy Ruckert	3	–	–	–	–	18
Justin Fields	3	–	–	–	–	18
Jake Seibert	–	13-13	–	–	0-1	13
Blake Haubeil	–	9-9	–	–	1-2	12
Jameson Williams	1	–	–	–	–	6
Dominic DiMaccio	–	3-3	–	–	1-2	6
Jack Miller	1	–	–	–	–	6
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	1	–	–	–	–	6
Shaun Wade	1	–	–	–	–	6
Sevyn Banks	1	–	–	–	–	6
OSU Totals	25	25-25	–	–	2-5	181
OPP Totals	14	8-8	0-1	0-5	4-4	104

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Blake Haubeil	0-1	1-1	0-0	0-0	2-3
Dominic DiMaccio	1-2	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-2
Jake Seibert	0-0	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-1
OSU Totals	1-3	1-1	0-1	0-0	2-5
OPP Totals	1-1	2-2	0-0	1-1	4-4

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Drue Chrisman	13	546	42.0	0	52
OSU Totals	13	546	42.0	0	52
OPP Totals	20	911	45.5	0	56

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Shaun Wade	1	36	36.0	1	36
Marcus Hooker	1	31	31.0	0	31
OSU Totals	2	67	33.5	1	36
OPP Totals	3	57	19.0	0	33

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	3	80	26.7	1	58

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Demario McCall	4	60	15.0	0	29
Xavier Johnson	1	11	11.0	0	11
Garrett Wilson	1	4	4.0	0	4
OSU Totals	6	75	12.5	0	29
OPP Totals	10	166	16.6	0	26

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Pete Werner	11	13	24	2.5-10	1.0-5
Baron Browning	12	7	19	1.0-3	–
Tuf Borland	9	10	19	2.5-11	1.0-8
Tommy Togiai	6	9	15	3.0-13	3.0-13
Marcus Hooker	12	2	14	–	–
Shaun Wade	10	3	13	–	–
Jonathon Cooper	4	7	11	1.5-7	1.5-7
Josh Proctor	8	2	10	1.0-5	–
Marcus Williamson	7	2	9	–	–
Haskell Garrett	6	3	9	2.0-6	1.0-5
Dallas Gant	5	3	8	–	–
Sevyn Banks	5	2	7	–	–
Zach Harrison	4	3	7	2.5-4	1.5-2
Teradja Mitchell	4	3	7	0.5-2	–
Craig Young	5	0	5	–	–
Tyler Friday	1	4	5	–	–
Javontae Jean-Baptiste	2	3	5	2.0-12	1.0-8
Jerron Cage	1	4	5	–	–
Tyreke Johnson	2	2	4	–	–
Antwuan Jackson	1	3	4	–	–
Tyreke Smith	2	2	4	–	–
Ryan Watts	4	0	4	–	–
Taron Vincent	1	2	3	1.0-1	–
Justin Hilliard	2	1	3	–	–
Cade Stover	1	1	2	–	–
Lathan Ransom	2	0	2	–	–
TEAM	1	1	2	–	–
Ronnie Hickman	0	2	2	–	–
Chris Olave	2	0	2	–	–
Darrion Henry-Young	1	0	1	1.0-4	1.0-4
Cameron Brown	1	0	1	–	–
Cody Simon	1	0	1	–	–
Trayvon Wilburn	1	0	1	–	–
Chris Booker	1	0	1	–	–
Steele Chambers	1	0	1	–	–
Julian Fleming	1	0	1	–	–
K'Vaughan Pope	0	1	1	–	–
Bryson Shaw	0	1	1	–	–
Kamryn Babb	0	1	1	–	–
Xavier Johnson	0	1	1	–	–
OSU Totals	137	98	235	21-81	11-52
OPP Totals	180	114	294	25-103	12-71

Fumbles Forced: 4 – Gant, Werner, Hilliard, Fleming.

Fumbles Recovered: 7 – Banks, Proctor, Browning, Gant, Harrison, Hilliard, Munford.

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 42, Indiana 35

Ohio State senior linebacker Baron Browning on getting over the hurdle of beating a top-10 team in Indiana: "We knew Indiana was going to be a hard team to play. They play us hard every year. They're a great team. They've got a great quarterback. So it was definitely a big win. And I just feel like we've got to keep taking it one game at a time because we've still got Illinois, Michigan State, Michigan. It's the Big Ten, so we've just got to take it one game at a time and not try to look forward."

Ohio State junior quarterback Justin Fields when asked if he felt himself panicking into bad decisions against the Hoosiers' pressure: "I mean, of course I made bad decisions. I ended up with three picks. But we got the dub at the end of the day. That's all that matters. We got the dub. We're 4-0. Just going to go in and watch film tomorrow and continue to get better."

Indiana junior cornerback Jamar Johnson on what the Hoosiers did to force Fields to throw three interceptions: "We knew that the weeks prior that the teams that he's been playing, they've just been lining up into coverage and just showing him that same coverage that they're running, so it makes it easier on him to know where the holes are at in the defense. This week, we started showing (Cover) 2 and played (Cover) 3. Showed (Cover) 3 and played (Cover) 2, just messing up his reads. We were just trying to get to him that way because he mainly looks at one receiver really. He doesn't really go through his progressions that much. That's all we were doing. We were just disguising coverages."

Johnson on fumbling on his second interception return: "I was surprised. I didn't see him coming from behind me. I was trying to make a move, I was trying to get into the end zone. I don't know who it was, but I know they made a heck of a play when they came and popped it out. And that's on me. I've got to work on my ball security, and that will never happen again."

Indiana head coach Tom Allen on his team fumbling the ball in the red zone, which led to an Ohio State touchdown and a 28-7 halftime deficit for the Hoosiers: "I thought it was huge. We had a chance to go and score, and not only did we not score, they get the ball and then drive down the field and get all that momentum going into halftime. That was a pretty tough sequence of events there that you hate to have happen. But you've got to secure the football, got to do a better job of that offensively and punch it in when you're in the tight red zone like that. That was probably a pretty critical turning point in the game."

Indiana senior wide receiver Ty Fryfogle on the Hoosiers' message as a team at halftime that they were not going to give up: "We got in the locker room, we came together as a team and had a talk that we weren't going to lay down. And we came out fighting in the second half. We've just got to do better. We've got to play better."

Allen on the resilience his team showed in its comeback effort against a top-tier opponent such as Ohio State: "I'm so disappointed that we fell short but proud of the heart, the fight, the toughness of this team. They didn't quit, and you got a chance to see that they truly are special. We just have to play better, and you know, that's a really good football team we played. They're a substantially elevated level of play compared to the other teams we've played so far in so many different ways. For our guys to be able to put ourselves in that position, and obviously, give them credit for making plays, but we continued to battle to the very, very end."

Ohio State junior cornerback Shaun Wade on the Buckeyes' struggles in the second half: "The second half, it's not even just the secondary, it's the whole defense and the whole offense. I feel like in the second half, I don't know what it is, but we have to figure it out, especially in big games with competition just like we played right now. We can't be giving up points like that in the second half and not scoring in the second half."

Browning on his performance in pass coverage and the defense as a whole: "I've got some areas I can grow in the pass-coverage game. The one instance where they ran the little mesh route and No. 10 (David Ellis) got in the end zone – a little miscommunication between me and the safety on that. The pass game in general, we've got some things we can clean up. But I feel like each week we're getting better in that area and that's all that matters. How can we be better than we were last week in the passing game and just overall as a defense?"

Wade on how the defense prevents bad momentum when the opponent makes big plays against it: "It's a thing that Coach (Kerry) Coombs teaches us that he's got on the board. It's like, 'snap and clear.' So, whatever happens in that play, you just snap and clear, and go to the next play."

Wade on his interception he returned for a 36-yard touchdown: "The pick-six, watching film I just knew it was coming. They run out of that bunch, so I knew it was coming."

Indiana sophomore quarterback Michael Penix on his lone interception that Wade returned 36 yards for a touchdown: "Not a good throw. That's it."

Ohio State junior defensive tackle Tommy Togiai on Penix's ability to get rid of the ball and make plays against the Buckeye defense: "I think we had a good day, especially the D-line, getting to him. He was still just getting the ball off. I know he has that quick release with his throwing form, so I think it was just that quick release. He was still just getting it off, even though we were getting back there, so I think it was just that quick release he has."

Allen on the Hoosiers' missed tackles and difficulties with Fields: "The tackling was pretty apparent. It was not good. And a lot of them were on Justin Fields. He's so strong and quick and some of our best players consistently couldn't get him on the ground, which is disappointing and frustrating. That was part of it, and even wrapping up their big, strong backs."

Allen on closing the talent gap with the Buckeyes: "Well, obviously, the score is what matters. Even though we had a deficit, I thought the first half when we were getting the takeaways, if we could have gotten some momentum off of those and got some more points off of those, that would have been huge. There's no question the gap has been closed. We're not there yet. They still have a lot of elite players that make it very, very challenging, but we're working hard to continue to close that, and that's part of recruiting, it's player development."

"Since I've been here, we've never had a fourth-quarter game with these guys. We've played them well at times, even up to half-way through the third quarter my first year, but then it really got away from us in the fourth quarter quite a bit. But there's no consolation. We came here to win the game, and being close isn't good enough. We've just got to find a way to keep recruiting, keep developing and keep improving this football team so we can make those plays we've got to make to be able to win games like this."

Allen on Indiana's injury woes and how that impacted the game against the Buckeyes: "We're still not where we need to be yet, and we've got some key guys that weren't able to play today and hopefully we can get them back here in the near future."



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Indiana Halfback James Was Nearly A Buckeye

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

The last time Sampson James was in Ohio Stadium, his life changed forever. It was Oct. 6, 2018, and James was on an official visit to Columbus as the Buckeyes prepared to take on Indiana. He had been committed to Ohio State since March 19, shortly after taking an unofficial visit to meet Ohio State's coaches and players, and was set for the standard visit routine for a committed prospect: see the Buckeyes play, talk with coaches and future teammates and get a better feel for the university.

But when Ohio State took the field to square off against Indiana, James – an Indiana native who played his high school ball in Avon, about an hour away from Bloomington – felt that something was off. Ohio State sent the Hoosiers packing, winning 49-26, but James couldn't shake the feeling that he was on the wrong sideline. He saw an opportunity to represent his home state for a program on the rise.

"I saw the potential in IU," James said in 2019. "They played Ohio State very well for three quarters. I felt like me and the rest of my class, we have some good talent in my class. We can help be pushed over that hump to be where we want to be."

So on the drive home from his official visit to Columbus, James decommitted from Ohio State and flipped to Indiana's 2019 class, becoming the highest rated recruit in the group.

As Taylor Lehman, who covered James' recruitment for Rivals, remembers it, that experience of seeing Indiana from across the field really sold James on flipping, despite it coming during a visit to see Ohio State.

"It was a total surprise," Lehman told BSB. "Sampson was really good about keeping things close to the vest about that. What he told (Indiana head coach) Tom Allen was that he just felt like when he was standing on the Ohio State sideline and watching Indiana play them, that he felt a strong loyalty to Indiana and that he felt that he wanted to honor that loyalty."

That state pride and excitement to put on the Crimson and Cream wasn't always a factor for James. The Hoosiers recruited him hard throughout his career, led by Allen and running

backs coach Mike Hart, but he never expressed much interest in staying in Indiana for college.

"The thing with Indiana athletes, especially really good Indiana athletes, is they either want to play (in state) at Notre Dame or they want to leave the state," Lehman said. "So you see that happening everywhere. Even with (Iowa defensive lineman) Deontae Craig, he was really being pushed hard for a commitment from Indiana. He went to Iowa for really no reason, except just to leave the state. So there are a lot of high-talent kids that come out of Indiana that just want to go out of state. And Ohio State's one of those schools that, (if it offers), players will usually end up going to Ohio State."

"And with Sampson James, I think he liked Ohio State a lot and he was impressed by what they had to offer. He liked (running backs coach) Tony Alford as well."

That pull was especially strong for James to Ohio State, because the Buckeyes made him a focal point in the class of 2019.

"I mean, it's been tough for that program to keep guys in state, and I think Ohio State obviously has been able to kind of benefit on that at times," Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Marc Givler told BSB. "If you're a kid from the Indianapolis area, you're less than three hours away from Columbus. So it's a good compromise if kids want to get out of state but also don't want to get too far from home. I know they had a great visit, and quite frankly at the time, he was kind of the guy they had really zeroed in on. He was their top running back on the board at the time. So they really pushed hard for him to commit early."

However, Allen was relentless in recruiting James. He kept contact with the four-star halfback throughout his months of commitment to Ohio State and picked up some help from then-Indiana director of athletic performance David Ballou, who spent 14 years at Avon before accepting a position with the Hoosiers.

With that push and the visit serving as the final straw, James decided that he was simply comfortable as a Hoosier.

"Tom Allen has a really good way with relationships with some of these recruits," Lehman explained. "It seems really hokey, but it actually plays really well for some of these recruits, and his energy and his complete commitment to

what he says just really resonates with recruits. And I know it did with Sampson."

"What also really helped with Sampson's recruitment for Indiana as well was David Ballou, who worked at Avon for 14 years. So that was a huge, huge part."

The flip may have been a long time coming for James, but it came as a significant shock to Ohio State's staff and shook up the recruiting board at halfback. James hadn't indicated any interest in leaving the class prior to his visit and caught the Buckeyes off guard when he announced the decision.

"The funny thing is, it came as a huge surprise to a lot of people because he actually visited Ohio State and then the next day he committed (to Indiana)," Givler said. "Nobody that I spoke to in terms of people around the Ohio State program saw this coming. I mean, when you go back and you 'Monday morning quarterback' it, it sounded like he had been at least thinking about it, maybe for a month or two. But it was not something at the time where anyone felt that Ohio State had a problem there that they needed to cross that one off. It all seemed very secure there. So it was definitely a kind of a random left turn with him visiting just the day before he committed."

Rumors swirled after his decommitment that Ohio State had "processed" him, meaning that the Buckeyes encouraged him to re-evaluate his commitment so that they could sign someone else, but that was apparently not the case.

"They definitely wanted him in the class," Givler said. "It wasn't a thing where they recruited over him. There have been sit-downs where they'll tell the kid, 'Look, we're not going to pull your scholarship, but this might not be the best situation for you. You may want to take a look around,' and that kind of method of getting a guy out of the class. But none of that happened here. Had a very normal, standard visit as a committed prospect for a game and the next day was decommitted."

Now two years removed from his sudden flip, James is a consistent contributor for the Hoosiers, filling the No. 2 running back role behind starter Stevie Scott. He has 29 carries for 94 yards on the season and rushed three times for 10 yards in Indiana's 42-35 loss against the

Buckeyes on Nov. 21.

With Ohio State still searching for a true No. 1 back as the two members of the 2019 class – Steele Chambers and Marcus Crowley – battle for playing time with Master Teague and Trey Sermon, there may be a sense of what could have been in Columbus, according to Givler.

"You know, I think looking back, (Ohio State) probably would have preferred something else," Givler said. "It's not like Crowley and Chambers were their top two guys or anything like that. It's not one of those situations where you just kind of point and say, well, everything's worked out perfectly for Ohio State. I think they would have preferred to not have been in that situation where they then had to find another running back."

"Marcus Crowley kind of fell into their lap, had an amazing senior year. I would almost say they got lucky there just having a guy like that at a program (Trinity Christian Academy) they were so familiar with. If Marcus Crowley is playing at a different program they may have never been able to swoop in there and get him, and then they would have really been in trouble. Because again, this was so out of left field, it's not like they had a bunch of targets lined up to just go replace Samson James with."

For James, the opportunity to return to Columbus two years later is not one filled with a desire to show the Buckeyes up, nor is it a time for bad blood between the two parties. Ultimately, James decided to go to Indiana because it felt like home.

"I was just thinking about my future, what was best for me and my future," James said. "I feel like this is the place to best develop me here as a man and as a football player. It feels like home. It's definitely a brotherhood here. More of my friends and family members can come see me play, and it means a lot to me to stay home and do it for the home-state team."

"I see how close we are to being one of the top programs in the Big Ten. I definitely saw it in that (2018) game, we competed well. I see the potential, and I believe in the program 100 percent. I believe in Coach Allen, I believe in the strength staff, I believe in the players that are around me. There's a lot of young talent. I believe in the program, and I think we're going to do great things."

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Proctor Embraces Role As 'Swiss Army Knife'

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

After signing with Ohio State as a four-star prospect from Owasso, Okla., Josh Proctor had plans to start as a true freshman at the safety position opposite team captain Jordan Fuller. He didn't catch on as quickly as he or the Buckeyes had hoped, though, and instead spent the 2018 season learning the nuances of the position while playing sparingly on special teams.

The following year, new co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley and assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes installed a single-high safety scheme, which meant that Fuller was the lone safety on the field for a majority of the snaps. So, with few live game reps to improve, Proctor attempted to diversify his skill set and contribute in any way he could by practicing at both safety and cornerback.

That decision paid off late in the 2019 season, when Proctor saw the field for 35 snaps in the Big Ten championship win over Wisconsin and the Fiesta Bowl loss to Clemson, primarily as a slot corner.

With Fuller now playing in the NFL for the Los Angeles Rams, many expected Proctor to step into the starting role. But he's remained in the slot, filling the role vacated by Shaun Wade following his move to outside cornerback, while sophomore Marcus Hooker has manned the deep safety spot.

"I can describe it kind of like a Swiss Army Knife," Proctor said during a conference call with reporters on Nov. 18. "Just kind of anywhere you need me. I just want to be out there with my team, make plays and hopefully get us to where we want to be at the end of the season."

"It wasn't really the plan coming in, but (defensive coordinator Kerry) Coombs just basically sat me down and told me that he wanted me to learn every spot on the

back end. He said versatility is our biggest threat. I took that to heart, and I felt like that was my biggest chance of getting on the field."

Coombs, who returned to Columbus to be the defensive coordinator following a two-year stint with the NFL's Tennessee Titans, was immediately tasked with replacing three starters in the secondary in Fuller and first-round cornerbacks Jeff Okudah (No. 3 overall to the Detroit Lions) and Damon Arnette (No. 19 overall to the Las Vegas Raiders). But getting someone as talented as Proctor on the field in any way possible alleviated some of his concerns.

"He has played in a variety of spots on the defense because he has versatility," Coombs said on Nov. 3. "The reality is that (the defensive backs) all need to have that. It's not a year where you say, 'We've got these three or four guys who play corner and that's all they do and then we've got these three or four guys that play the post safety and these guys that play the cover safety and that's all we're going to do.' That's just not feasible this year."

"Proctor has done a great job of being able to learn and fill in in different capacities week-to-week."

In Ohio State's first four games, the 6-2 and 202-pound Proctor has played a bit of zone coverage and been matched up with wide receivers and tight ends in one-on-one situations. He's also recorded 10 tackles, one tackle for loss and one fumble recovery, nearing his output for the entire 2019 season in seven fewer appearances.

That, in itself, proves the move is paying dividends.

"I think I've played pretty well, as has the secondary as a whole," Proctor said. "I'm actually comfortable out there, really. I like being down in the box close, seeing everything fast."

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day actually compared Proctor to former Clemson and current Arizona Cardinals linebacker

Isaiah Simmons, who played numerous positions in the back seven for the Tigers last fall.

"If you can play man-to-man coverage, zone coverage, blitz and then play the run, if you can do those things, that's pretty good," Day said. "Now, at what level? That's the question."

"If you can do all of them pretty good, that's OK. If you can do all of them really good, if you can do everything great, then you're like Isaiah Simmons at Clemson. It allows flexibility, for sure, schematically for the defensive coordinator to do a lot of different things."

Simmons won the Butkus Award last year as the nation's best linebacker and was the No. 8 overall pick in April's NFL draft, so that's certainly an eye-opening comparison. But Proctor has the chance to have a similar impact for the Buckeyes, nonetheless.

Interestingly, Proctor's role looks and sounds very similar to the Bullet position that was once earmarked for former safety and Rose Bowl Defensive MVP Brendon White, who transferred to Rutgers this offseason after seeing his playing time diminish last season. The personnel simply didn't call for it then like it does now.

"He's a tremendous athlete," co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison said of Proctor. "This guy can run, can hit. He's a great young man. He's played a lot of football and he's physical. That allows us to play him in a lot of different places."

Proctor knows Ohio State's defense is not where it needs to be if it wants to compete for a national championship. The Buckeyes are allowing 291.0 yards passing per game, an increase of 135.0 yards from last season (will need updated after Indiana).

"There are some places we can improve as far as tackling and some things like that," Proctor said. "All in all, I think we're in the right direction and we're where we want to be right now. We've just got to keep working."



Josh Proctor

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Myers Dons No. 50 To Honor Grandparents

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

"Angel on your shoulder."

Once Josh Myers reads that pregame text from his grandmother "Mimi," it's game time.

"She texts me, 'Angel on your shoulder' before every game," Myers said. "That's the last thing she says in a text that she sends me before every game. And I always say it back. And I feel like for me at that moment it's like, 'OK, I'm ready to play now.'"

Myers, a second-year starter at center for Ohio State, has found inspiration from his grandma's encouragement his whole career. The team co-captain wanted to do something special for Mimi (Beverly Myers) to thank her for all the support.

The former Miamisburg, Ohio, standout decided to wear No. 50 for the Buckeyes' matchup with Indiana in honor of his late grandfather, Donnie, who was Mimi's husband and affectionately referred to as "Papaw."

"My grandfather played football for Miamisburg, which is my hometown, and he wore No. 50, and he passed away quite a few years ago due to Alzheimer's. And so I'm wearing No. 50 to honor him," Myers said. "One thing that my grandma does – before every season at the start of the season, she writes me a letter. And then cuts out a square of his jersey from when he played in high school, and I wear it in my sock for every game. And so, I just thought it would be a nice thing to wear No. 50 and honor him."

The inspiration struck Myers while he was cleaning out his room during the COVID-induced quarantine.

"When I left for college, my grandma Mimi gave me this really cool box that opens up, and that's where I put all the letters and all of the pieces of the jersey that she's given me over the years," Myers said. "And she actually, when I left for college, cut out the No. 50 in the jersey and gave me the whole number."

"There's a bunch of really cool pictures too. And on the back of the thing, there's pictures of a bunch of the guys in our family that are football pictures, so my grandpa, my dad, my brothers, my cousins, my uncles, and then me. It's a really cool collage of pictures. And I was just looking at the picture of my grandpa wearing No. 50, and then the idea just came to me."

Athleticism runs in the family, with Myers' mom, Julie, enshrined in the Dayton Hall of Fame for basketball, and his dad, Brad, playing on Kentucky's offensive line from 1984-87. Myers' brother, Zach, played for the Wildcats as well.

Josh's cousins also played football, and even with seemingly the whole family playing on the weekends, his grandparents made it a priority to support them all.

"I am extremely close to both of them," Myers said. "They're the type of grandparents that never missed a sporting event, never missed. My grandma, Mimi, she's 78 years old, and she all season the last couple of years would go and watch my cousins play in Miamisburg on Friday night and then turn around and go to my game in Columbus or sometimes even away games, wherever they may be. And she would do it every weekend. She's just the sweetest, kindest lady you could ever meet. My relationship with them has been incredible – I mean, as good of a relationship as I could have with grandparents. I love them both so much."

Myers' grandparents, Beverly and Donnie, began dating as high school sweethearts at Miamisburg High School in the late 1950s.

Donnie thrived as a three-sport athlete, playing along the offensive line in football, ranking as one of the school's all-time leading scorers in basketball and also taking the baseball diamond in the spring.

"He was a really good athlete in basketball, baseball and football," Myers said. "He was on the top-10 scoring lists for Miamisburg basketball and only played like one or two games his senior year, so from freshman-junior year, he was still on the top-10 all-time scoring record list. That was before the three-point line. I mean, he was a very good athlete in all three."

Myers has always carried Papaw with him throughout his athletic career. When Donnie and Beverly were dating in high school, Donnie took a screw off his cleat, drilled a hole in it and gave it to Beverly as a necklace, which was a symbol at the time for football players to share with their girlfriends. More than 50 years later, Mimi gifted the necklace to Myers, and he wears it on Fridays and Saturdays before Buckeye games prior to putting his pads on.

Although Myers was young when his grandfather passed away in 2009, he still holds onto special memories in addition to carrying Papaw with him on the field.

"One of my fondest ones was always just like swimming in the pool on vacation, he would throw us in the water and stuff," Myers said. "And him and my dad, my uncle would all be in there, and we'd all be playing games in the pool and stuff. That's my fondest memory."

Since Myers' grandparents mean so much to him, the fourth-year junior center was asked if he considered wearing No. 50 for the rest of the season to honor his grandfather. Myers, who typically wears No. 71 like his dad and brother, said that he wanted to wear No. 50 as a special tribute so that Mimi could always have a fond memory of the day that he donned Donnie's number.

From the preseason letters to the patches of Papaw's high school jersey to the necklace, Mimi has always shown special support of Myers. Her thoughtfulness may have rubbed off on her talented grandson.

"She just is the type of person that does so much for other people and just cares so much and does so many cool things," Myers said. "And I just wanted to be able to try and give back to her in a similar kind of way."

Family is incredibly important to Myers, so the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for the Buckeye center. Originally, Myers had hoped Mimi and his parents, who had never missed a game, would be in attendance at Ohio Stadium when he honored his grandfather. However, family and friends are no longer allowed to attend due to rising COVID-19 cases.

"This is the longest I've gone without seeing my family my whole life. And I'm not going to see them anytime soon. So it definitely just magnifies the importance of it to me," Myers said of wearing the new number. "Obviously, I miss them like crazy, so I'm excited. It will be a cool thing."

While the COVID-19 restrictions prevented Myers from sharing the special tribute with his family in person, he understands that safety is the priority as he and his teammates strive toward their goals.

"We're getting to play football games, and that's what we all love to do, so it is absolutely worth it," Myers said of the COVID-19 restrictions. "And I'm definitely not going to lie and say it's been easy because it hasn't. The only two buildings that I've been in since August have been the football facility and my house. And that's it. No grocery stores, nothing."



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

PAID HOMAGE – Ohio State junior center Josh Myers typically wears No. 71 but switched to No. 50 for the Indiana game to honor his grandparents.

"We'll keep on making the sacrifices because it's worth it."

The pandemic, which initially shut down the Big Ten football season, is also what spoiled the surprise of Myers' plan to his parents.

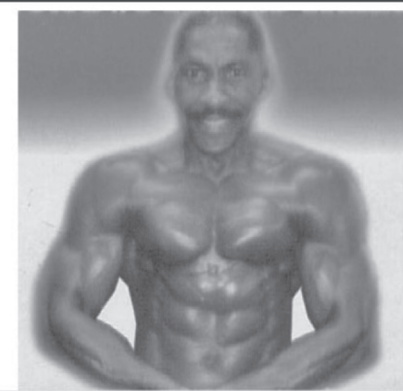
"When the season got canceled, of course, I told them, because I thought the season was canceled and I wasn't going to get to do it," Myers said. "And we were just talking, and I was telling them about how bummed I was and how that was something that I really wanted to do. And of course, the season got brought back, and so now here we are."

"I actually talked to them about it last night for the first time since then. I told them I'm

going to do it, and they were super excited, talked about how cool it was, and said she'll love it. There's no doubt in my mind she'll cry. She's a big crier. She's the sweetest."

Myers made his family proud wearing his grandpa's number, paving the way for the Ohio State offense in a 607-yard effort to beat Indiana 42-35. The big man would not have been ready to wreak havoc on the Hoosiers without his pregame text from his grandmother, though.

"They help a ton," Myers said. "It's something that I look forward to. If I were getting ready for a game and I didn't get that text, I would call her and be like, 'Text me.' It's everything to me."



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Ohio State Solidified Standing As DBU During 2010s

By **WYATT CROSHER**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

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

Ohio State has had a storied history with many positions on both the offensive and defensive sides of the ball, but the defensive backs the Buckeyes have produced may stand alone at the top, and that has been increasingly true in recent history.

According to PFF, which began tracking advanced metrics in 2006, Ohio State's secondary has produced the most NFL wins above replacement (20.6) of any college program, leading LSU and Alabama, who come in at No. 2 and No. 3, respectively.

Much of that success has come from the whopping 17 cornerbacks or safeties who were selected out of Ohio State since the 2010 NFL draft, but the story of "DBU," or defensive back university, as some call it, started earlier than 10 years ago.

"I think (Ohio State's) really always been known for defensive backs," Bill Rabinowitz, Ohio State football writer for The Columbus Dispatch, told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "I'm thinking back to Shawn Springs, Antoine Winfield, and Ohio State's always had great cornerbacks and safeties, but I would think that the last decade or so has been taking it to a different level. I mean it's been an unbroken streak, really, of first-round picks since I think Bradley Roby."

The Nominees

Christian Bryant (2010-13) was an early success story in the decade at safety for the Buckeyes, finishing his four-year career with 171 total tackles, 23 pass breakups, three forced fumbles and a pair of interceptions. Those numbers would have been even more impressive without an injury that cut his senior season short.

Bradley Roby came to Ohio State and started making a major impact at corner in 2011, all the way through his 2013 season. He ended his time with Ohio State as a second-team All-American and two-time first-team All-Big Ten member, tallying 179 tackles, 36 pass breakups and eight interceptions.

Another safety who impressed for the Buckeyes in the first half of the decade was Vonn Bell, who had a specifically impressive year in the 2014 season, when he had 92 tackles, six pass breakups and six interceptions.

Cornerback Eli Apple surprised many when he went No. 10 overall to the New York Giants in the 2016 NFL draft, but that pick did not come without some major success in college. In two seasons, Apple amassed 86 tackles, 18 pass breakups and four interceptions.

Ohio State had three players picked in the first round of the 2017 NFL draft, all of whom were defensive backs. Cornerback Marshon Lattimore (No. 11), safety Malik Hooker (No. 15) and cornerback Gareon Conley (No. 24) all had a big impact while at Ohio State, with Conley making second-team All-Big Ten, Lattimore making first-team All-Big Ten and Hooker becoming a consensus All-American in their final season.

Another cornerback who played with those three was Denzel Ward, who ended up going fourth overall to the Cleveland Browns a year later. His tackle numbers do not pop off the

page (67 total in three seasons), but he finished with 24 pass breakups over his final two years with Ohio State, as well as a pair of interceptions.

The 2019 Ohio State pass defense was the best in college football, allowing just 156.0 yards through the air per game. That was much in thanks to the three veteran pieces in the secondary, each of whom was drafted in the following offseason. Cornerbacks Damon Arnette and Jeff Okudah were each drafted in the first round and combined for 17 pass breakups and four interceptions in their final season.

The other core vet was safety Jordan Fuller, who was a consistent safety net for the Buckeyes, finishing his collegiate career with 224 total tackles, 10 pass breakups and five interceptions, and became an immediate starter for the Los Angeles Rams as a rookie, despite getting drafted in the sixth round.

The Roundtable

When asked who they believe were the four best defensive backs (two cornerbacks, two safeties) over the past decade, here is what the BSB staff had to say:

Wyatt Crosher: "If Ohio State was known for any specific position over the past 10 years, I think that has to be defensive backs, which has led to that DBU mantra. Because of that, it means there are a whole lot of options to pick here, but there are a few players who I deem as locks.

"The first of those is Hooker at safety, who simply had the best single season of any player in the secondary this decade for the program. He was a ball hawk and a consistent threat to any opposing team week in and week out. Past him, I think that Okudah is also someone I have to put on my top team, as he was as shutdown as a shutdown corner gets and was the key cog in why the pass defense was so impressive in the 2019 season.

"I think these last two spots are incredibly difficult to choose, and I might be going with some picks that are a little unorthodox. First, I will pick Roby for my second corner, though Lattimore and Ward are absolutely worthy selections. His pass breakups numbers are outstanding, and he was a difference maker early in the decade.

"Finally, I will go with Fuller as my second safety, despite Bell being another terrific option. Fuller was a three-year starter and as consistent a player as you will see on defense, and his leadership and reliability are too valuable for me to leave off."

Joe Dempsey: "With the way offenses have evolved to emphasize the passing game and how the rules work in their favor, defensive backs have become some of the most important athletes in all of sports.

"Choosing just two Buckeyes at cornerback and safety seems wrong. It is so difficult to leave off so many talented players who graced the Ohio State secondary across the past decade.

"Cornerbacks Arnette, Conley, Lattimore, Roby and Shaun Wade and safeties Bryant and Fuller are some of the best players I've seen in scarlet and gray, yet they did not make my first team. Former Buckeyes like Apple, Chimdi Chekwa, Doran Grant and Damon Webb also deserve recognition for their contributions during the past decade.

"I went with Okudah and Ward at corner with Bell and Hooker at safety for my all-decade team. Okudah and Ward did not put up the most impressive stats at the position, but that is largely because their shutdown capabilities kept opposing quarterbacks from even looking their way.

"Bell and Hooker were both game-changers

at safety. Bell thrived in the Ohio State secondary, helping lead the 2014 team to its first national championship in 12 years. Hooker was a ball hawk in the secondary, frequently picking off passes and always presenting a threat to take it to the house."

Andrew Lind: "Like I've done throughout this series, I made sure to pick two cornerbacks and two safeties rather than four defensive backs regardless of position. It meant leaving out some very talented players, specifically at cornerback.

"In choosing Okudah and Ward, I left out other first-round picks like Apple, Arnette, Conley, Lattimore and Roby, as well as a presumable first-round pick in Wade. Throw in solid players like Chekwa, Grant and Travis Howard, and you have too many players to choose from.

"What separates Okudah and Ward, though, is the fact that nobody wanted to throw their way by the time their careers ended. That led them to be the two highest Ohio State defensive backs ever selected in the NFL draft.

"At safety, the answer is a little more cut-and-dried. Hooker had arguably the best season ever for an Ohio State defensive back and was always in the right place at the right time. Not only that, when he got his hands on the ball, there was a pretty good chance he was taking it back to the house.

"While Hooker's career felt short and sweet, Bell made an impact across multiple seasons. He led the Buckeyes to a national championship in 2014 and was the best player in that secondary by far."

Patrick Mayhorn: "The positional limitations make this one a bit trickier, because if I'm being honest, I think I would pick three cornerbacks when selecting Ohio State's defensive backs of the decade if I could.

"That's not to slight the safeties, many of whom have been excellent over the past decade, but more a credit to the cornerbacks, specifically Okudah, Lattimore and Ward, all of whom I feel are deserving of this recognition with very little to split their contributions. However, with the restrictions in place, I've selected Okudah and Lattimore at cornerback, with Hooker and Bell behind them at safety.

"Corner is a tougher call because of the sheer amount of talent to go through that spot. Okudah and Lattimore stand out to me as being the most purely dominant of the group, but Ward, Conley and Arnette were all legitimately excellent, and giving the edge to any two of them is extremely difficult. Ultimately, I think that the peaks of Lattimore and the peaks of Okudah were better than the peaks that we saw of anyone else.

"That speaks especially to Okudah's ability because we really only got to see one full year of him in a competent scheme. That he was able to do so much in that 2019 season to earn his way onto this board is a testament to the job that Jeff Hailey did and to Okudah's outstanding ability. Lattimore was roughly as dominant for a little bit longer, so he was a little bit of an easier pick for me.

"At safety, I had no second thoughts. Hooker is one of the best defensive backs I've ever seen in college football, and Bell is the only other truly excellent safety of the last 10 years in Columbus. Fuller has a case for that spot, but Bell was a more consistent playmaker and a more talented player in my view, so I'll give him the nod."

The Choices

Vonn Bell, S: When Bell committed to Ohio State on 2013's National Signing Day, he was joining a Buckeye team fresh off a 12-0

season in the first year under new head coach Urban Meyer. That success, along with recruiting efforts from Meyer and then-secondary coach Kerry Coombs, was enough to get Bell to Columbus.

What made this recruitment special for Meyer was the level of talent that Bell was, as well as where he was coming from, as the five-star safety – ranked second-best at his position and No. 26 overall – was out of Rossville (Ga.) Ridgeland.

This was Meyer's first five-star commitment from a Southern state during his Ohio State tenure and, according to Rabinowitz, was a big indicator that the former Florida head coach would have similar success on the recruiting trail, even in a Northern state.

"What Vonn Bell represented most of all to Ohio State was when they got him, as a recruit out of the South, he lived on the border of Tennessee and Georgia, and when they got him in that 2013 recruiting class, that was the signal to Urban Meyer and to Ohio State that they could really go toe to toe and recruit against the SEC," Rabinowitz said. "Vonn Bell was a great player, but what he represented more than anything was the idea, the affirmation that Ohio State really could compete with the SEC on the recruiting trail."

Bell spent most of his true freshman season as a minor contributor, finishing the season with 19 total tackles, one tackle for loss and an interception, but his big break came in the Orange Bowl against Clemson, where he finished third on the team with seven tackles, all of which were solo, and also secured his first career interception early in the second quarter to stop Clemson from scoring inside the red zone.

Despite the strong performance in the 40-35 loss, Bell said after the game that he was only somewhat satisfied in his performance.

"I played all right," Bell said. "I could get better at some things. But I made plays that were there for me sometimes. I just have to get better, and I have more motivation this spring."

And get better he did in 2014, with Bell finishing second on the team with 92 tackles (57 solo) and forcing six pass breakups and reeling in six interceptions. Much like the season prior, many of Bell's best plays came at Ohio State's most crucial points of the season.

Of Bell's six picks in 2014, three of them came in consecutive games during three of the most important matchups of the season, intercepting passes against Michigan, Wisconsin and Alabama, the latter two coming in the Big Ten Championship Game and in the College Football Playoff semifinal. He also had six tackles and a sack in the national championship against Oregon.

The one against the Crimson Tide was especially important, as Bell picked off quarterback Blake Sims in the fourth quarter from the Ohio State 23-yard line with the Buckeyes up 34-28.

"He made a huge play in the Alabama game where he basically decoyed Blake Sims into throwing a pass that he intercepted at a crucial point in the game," Rabinowitz said. "He had the athleticism, and he had that confidence that was really essential."

Bell followed up that strong sophomore campaign with a first-team All-Big Ten junior season, finishing with 65 tackles (43 solo), nine pass breakups and a pair of interceptions. He was drafted in the second round, No. 61 overall by the New Orleans Saints, in the following offseason.

Malik Hooker, S: It is safe to say that not many saw what was coming with Hooker during his recruitment. A three-star recruit out of New Castle, Pa., Hooker was listed as an athlete and ranked the No. 360 overall prospect in the 2014 class.

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

After a redshirt season in 2014, there were still not that many expectations. Even after a 2015 campaign in which Hooker played all 13 games but tallied only 10 tackles and played mostly on special teams, there was not much thought that he would become one of the best safeties Ohio State had seen in recent memory.

But then 2016 happened, and Hooker went from three-star to a superstar in the college football world. It started in Ohio State's first game of that season, when Hooker hauled in two interceptions against Bowling Green. He followed that up with another pick against Tulsa, and this one he returned 26 yards for a touchdown.

Three games later, Hooker had his fourth interception of the season against Indiana, then four games later his fifth against Nebraska, which he scored from 48 yards out. Then, in the final two games of the season, Hooker got his sixth and seventh picks of the season against Michigan and Clemson, with the one against the Wolverines giving him his third pick-six of the year and the one against the Tigers, which Hooker later announced he did with a torn labrum and sports hernia, standing out in Rabinowitz's eyes as a remarkable play.

"It was the range that he had," Rabinowitz said. "He just seemed like he could go from one sideline to the other sideline in one play. I mean it was remarkable, he covered so much ground. In the 31-0 loss to Clemson, he made an interception in that game, he was playing hurt and he made an interception in that game that you just kind of went, 'Where'd he come from?' I mean the range that he had was just unbelievable, more range than I've ever seen a college safety have, no question."

All in all, Hooker finished the 2016 season with 74 tackles (43 solo), 5½ TFL, four pass breakups and seven interceptions. The seven picks were tied for third in the NCAA, and the three returned for touchdowns led all the FBS.

The result of that year was a spot on the first-team All-Big Ten team, a place as a consensus All-American and a No. 15 overall draft spot to the Indianapolis Colts in the 2017 NFL draft. And even though it was mostly just one dominant season at Ohio State for Hooker, it is enough for Rabinowitz to call him the best safety the Buckeyes had this decade.

"I think I would take Hooker, just because if you could extrapolate the one year that he was great to a full career, I can't imagine anyone better," Rabinowitz said. "The one year of Hooker was as good as I've ever seen a safety play."

Denzel Ward, CB: Unlike both Bell and Hooker, Ward was an in-state product, coming to Ohio State as a four-star out of Macedonia (Ohio) Nordon as the No. 26 corner and No. 270 prospect overall in the 2015 class.

But much like Hooker, Ward did not make all that much of an impact for Ohio State early on, registering seven tackles in his freshman season and just 23 tackles in 2016 as a sophomore, though he did tie Lattimore that season with nine pass breakups.

After year two, many were not talking about Ward, not just because of his numbers, but because of his subdued personality and lack of desire to speak to the media, according to Rabinowitz.

"He was always overlooked until suddenly he wasn't, because he was not a talker," Rabinowitz said. "He hardly ever consented to interviews, and he just was a quiet guy. Denzel was overshadowed by Lattimore and Conley that year. He was the third guy, and then he finally the next year became kind of the guy."

It did not take long for Ward to prove himself as a dominant corner in 2017, coming up with a whopping five pass breakups and an interception in Ohio State's opening victory against Indiana.

That was the start of a phenomenal campaign for the cornerback, finishing his junior year with 37 tackles (30 solo), 15 pass break-

ups, two TFL and two interceptions. The breakups were tied for eighth most in the country.

Aside from the breakups, Ward's numbers do not necessarily pop off the page despite a season on the first-team All-Big Ten list and as a consensus All-American. That is because, as Rabinowitz said, most teams were afraid to throw his way.

"People didn't really recognize just how well he was playing until toward the end of the year when people were like, 'You know, nobody is throwing on this guy, this guy is just great,'" Rabinowitz said. "What I remember most about him was just how under the radar he was for most of his career until finally his talent just became so obvious that it was like OK, this guy really is as good as we think he is."

Ward earned his numbers his final season without playing in the Cotton Bowl, skipping that game in order to prepare for the draft. His efforts were noticed at the next level, with the Cleveland Browns selecting him No. 4 overall in the 2018 NFL draft. With the Browns, he made the Pro Bowl in his rookie season and continues to be a key cog in the Cleveland defense.

Jeff Okudah, CB: Okudah came in as a five-star prospect out of Grand Prairie (Texas) South Grand Prairie. He was the top corner and eighth-best recruit in the 2017 class.

But before Okudah ever suited up for the Buckeyes, he was faced with a brutal hardship, losing his mother to lymphoma within the first month of him being on campus in Columbus. Throughout it all, though, Rabinowitz said he was always impressed with how poised and mature Okudah was in his early tenure at Ohio State.

"He always struck me from the moment he arrived as being a very mature guy," Rabinowitz said. "His mom died as he got here and he had to grow up quick, but I think he was always a mature guy. I just think he handled his business."

Though he did not start, with Ward and Arnette in front of him, Okudah did find a role as a true freshman, racking up 17 tackles (13 solo), a pass breakup and a fumble recovery. Those numbers went up in 2018 when Okudah earned a more sizable role, finishing his sophomore year with 34 tackles (26 solo), eight pass breakups and another fumble recovery.

And much as Bell had done earlier in the decade, Okudah's top showing in his second year came late in the season, tallying five tackles and a pair of pass breakups in the 28-23 win in the Rose Bowl over Washington.

He rode that momentum into his junior year, when Okudah went from solid contributor to star corner for the Buckeyes. In his third season at Ohio State, Okudah finished with 35 tackles (29 solo), nine pass breakups and three interceptions, the only three picks in his collegiate career.

Those numbers earned Okudah a nomination for the Jim Thorpe Award as one of the top defensive backs in the country and also earned him a place as a unanimous All-American, each of which helped Okudah become the third overall pick to the Detroit Lions in the 2020 NFL draft.

His numbers do not flash as much as some other defensive backs this decade, but Okudah's consistency and technical prowess were what made him one of the most talented corners Ohio State has seen in a very long time.

"I would assume he would be a coach's dream," Rabinowitz said. "You tell him something, he would do it, he was smart enough to do it, he was athletic enough to do it. He got stronger physically as they all do, and last year he was just as complete a corner as you would find. He could do everything, and he really had no fundamental weaknesses, so it wasn't a surprise to me that he went with the third pick in the draft."



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Transfer-Led Illini Set To Host Unbeaten Bucks

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

The 2020 season has been an uphill climb for Illinois and head coach Lovie Smith. After a breakthrough campaign that saw the Illini upset a ranked Wisconsin team and qualify for bowl eligibility for the first time since 2014, Illinois has taken a step backward during the COVID-affected season.

The defense, which was a strength of the 2019 group, allowing 26.2 points per game, is letting in 32.0 in 2020. Offensively Illinois scored 26.7 points per game in 2019, but that too has seen a drop to 21.8.

Much of that drop on offense can likely be attributed to issues at the quarterback position, through no real fault of Illinois. Last year's starter, Brandon Peters, struggled in Illinois' first game of the 2020 season, a 45-7 loss to Wisconsin (8 of 19 passing for 87 yards) and then tested positive for the coronavirus, knocking him out for the next three games.

In his stead, Illinois turned to three different quarterbacks in three games – Coran Taylor and Matt Robinson in a 31-24 loss to Purdue, Taylor in a 41-14 drubbing by Minnesota and Isaiah Williams in a 23-20 win over Rutgers. None found much success through the air, and with Peters back and available against Nebraska, Illinois handed him the ball once again.

He went 18 of 25 for 205 yards and a score against Nebraska in a 41-23 winning effort. Moving forward, Peters will likely remain the starter for the Illini, despite a push from Illinois fans to see the run-first Williams in the starting role.

"I would expect Illinois to stick with their guy, which is Peters," Gavin Good of the Peoria Journal Star told BSB. "Brandon Peters for sure would have started the last couple of games if he didn't get unlucky and get COVID. I think that he'll be back under center against Ohio State. Granted, things can go wrong. If Peters comes back and really struggles and Illinois can't really move the ball, maybe you could see Williams against Ohio State, but I wouldn't expect that. I don't think that Lovie Smith wants to necessarily be starting (Williams) against Ohio State."

"I think that Peters probably gives Illinois the best chance to compete against Ohio State because he just doesn't make the mistakes that Williams does and those mistakes that are typical of a young quarterback. You can tell when Williams gets out on the run he struggles to protect the ball. That's something Illinois has already learned lessons with this year. I would expect it to be Peters."

Next to Peters in the backfield will be halfbacks Mike Epstein and Chase Brown. The two split time almost equally, with

Epstein carrying as the more consistent power back and Brown serving as the lightning to his thunder.

"We think Chase gives us something a little bit more with the breakaway speed at times," said offensive coordinator Rod Smith. "We've been really excited about him. Moving forward, I think he's going to keep getting better. He hasn't had as many reps as some of the other guys because he hasn't been here that long. Obviously he's caught on pretty fast. We are really pleased with where he's at moving forward."

To keep that running game churning and on schedule, Rod Smith said that Illinois will be looking to get Peters more involved with his legs.

"I've got to let him go a little bit more because he's proven he can do some things on the perimeter with his legs," Smith said. "That makes it tough on a defense. When a quarterback can do those things, then it makes it tough and stresses a defense. That wasn't Brandon's fault. That was me taking that off his plate and not having him worrying about that. He likes to do it once in a while, and I've just got to let him play a little bit more when it comes to that. I know he can throw it. I know he can push it down the field and do all those things. Just letting him kind of run the offense a little bit more so than it was in the past in terms of the run-game part. That's something we can definitely do a little bit more."

If the running game isn't clicking for Illinois, it usually means problems for the offense. Wide receiver has not been a position of strength in 2020, with just one wide-out – Josh Imatorbhebhe (15) – recording double-digit catches (tight end Daniel Barker is also in double digits with 12) so far on the season. Miami (Fla.) transfer Brian Hightower has drawn praise from his head coach but has just seven catches on the year.

"First off, he's a pro, I'm talking about at his position," Lovie Smith said of Hightower. "He's serious about doing his job. He's a disciplined player, works extremely hard, came here with a purpose."

The strength of the offense is up front. Four starters return from the 2019 season, including center Doug Kramer and guard Kendrick Green, both of whom have NFL aspirations. However, COVID complications have made things a little tougher on this group, with Kramer missing two games on the season.

"I think for Illinois, bringing the group back that they brought back was really good," Good said. "They returned four guys who have started the most games together on any Illinois team in recent memory. You've got a couple NFL prospects down there, but to date, they haven't really performed as well as Illinois would have liked, and there are some pretty tangible excus-

Get To Know ... Illinois

About Illinois

- **2020 Record:** 2-3.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – 4-3; Starters Returning – Offense 8, Defense 9, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Lovie Smith, 5th year at Illinois, 17-37.
- **Series History:** 104th meeting; Ohio State leads 69-4-30
- **School Facts:** Location – Champaign, IL; Enrollment – 51,196; Nickname – Fighting Illini; Colors – Blue, Orange; Conference – Big Ten (West Division); Stadium – Memorial Stadium (Surface, FieldTurf; Capacity – 60,670).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Chase Brown	61	357	5.9	2
Mike Epstein	55	338	6.1	4
Isaiah Williams	35	211	6.0	1

Passing	Comp.-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Coran Taylor	23-46	50.0	379	3-2
Brandon Peters	26-44	59.1	292	1-0
Isaiah Williams	7-21	33.3	104	0-1

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Josh Imatorbhebhe	15	215	14.3	2
Daniel Barker	12	174	14.5	0
Brian Hightower	7	141	20.1	1

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 21.8
Rushing Yards Per Game – 222.4
Passing Yards Per Game – 159.4
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 381.8

2020 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Oct. 24	at Wisconsin	L, 45-7
Oct. 31	PURDUE	L, 31-24
Nov. 7	MINNESOTA	L, 41-14
Nov. 14	at Rutgers	W, 23-20
Nov. 21	at Nebraska	W, 41-23
Nov. 28	OHIO STATE	12 p.m.
Dec. 5	IOWA	TBA
Dec. 12	at Northwestern	TBA
Dec. 19	Big Ten Championship Week	TBA

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo-Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Jake Hansen	22-22	44	6.5-16	1.0-3
Tony Adams	23-18	41	–	–
Khalan Tolson	14-23	37	5.0-14	0.5-4
Sydney Brown	18-15	33	0.5-2	–
Nate Hobbs	21-6	27	2.0-3	–
Tarique Barnes	12-13	25	1.5-10	1.0-9
Devon Witherspoon	12-9	21	1.0-4	–
Owen Carney	8-8	16	5.5-40	4.5-39
Roderick Perry	4-10	14	2.5-21	2.0-20

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Jake Hansen	2	12	6.0	0
Devon Witherspoon	2	0	0.0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 32.0
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 194.6
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 253.6
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 448.2

es for those things and No. 1 is COVID. Because of this Wisconsin game, Illinois was down its starting center Doug Kramer for the next two games. He came back against Rutgers and then looked a little shaky.

"When they lost Kramer, they had to shift over Kendrick Green from guard to center, and Green did pretty well. I feel pretty good about Green on the line. They had to bring in a former walk-on Alex Pihlstrom, they gave him a scholarship and he did pretty well, but I'm not really sure that this offensive line is the strength of Illinois. They're definitely not a weakness, per se, but I don't expect them to have a lot of success against Ohio State's defensive front. I don't think Illinois is going to have a lot of offensive success."

Defensively, the steps in the wrong direction are a bit harder to quantify. Illinois returned almost all of its defense from the 2019 season but has struggled with tackling through five games, allowing quite a few big plays.

"We practice hard each week," Lovie Smith said. "Sometimes we make the tackles and sometimes we don't. Every week that we miss tackles we practice a lot the week before. Sometimes you keep going and you do better at the things you've been working on at practice. And that's what we'll try to do this week is keep setting the bar each week. Hopefully, we can take it to another level this week."

The secondary gets extra attention from Smith, who started his career as a secondary coach, but has had problems with coverage busts and one-on-one matchups. Tony Adams and Nate Hobbs have been picked on at times in coverage, and while safety Sydney Brown has flashed big-play ability – he has 33 tackles on the year – he has also found himself stuck on an island at times.

"I hate to pick on this group, but the Illinois secondary has just been torched this year so far," Good said. "I hesitate to pin it on one thing because Lovie Smith has stuck with the Cover 2. It's kind of antiquated and it's put a lot of pressure on his guys, and the front seven has not been able to get much

pressure on opposing quarterbacks. That's really giving teams a lot of opportunities to go and attack guys in coverage, and Illinois gives teams a lot of one-on-ones."

The lack of a pass rush that Good mentioned may be the biggest concern for this defensive group. Illinois has 12 sacks on the season – three of which came against Nebraska – and is without a true star on the line. Senior Owen Carney Jr. leads the team in sacks with 4½ but has been his own biggest critic, saying that he should be playing better than he has so far.

"I try not to really reflect on the good that I've done because I know I have all offseason to look at that," Carney said after Illinois' loss to Purdue. "I really spend my nights really thinking in the back of my mind, 'Hey, O, you just missed that sack. Hey, O, you just missed that TFL. Hey, O, you just missed that batted ball.' Those type of things haunt me. Saturday and Sunday, I was really thinking about that a lot. People said I had a good game, three sacks. Yeah, whatever. I also had three penalties and could've had more sacks and more TFLs to better set myself up."

It's not all bad for the defense. The linebackers room looks to be stronger than it was last season, led by 2019 Butkus Award semifinalist Jake Hansen and rising star Khalan Tolson.

Both look to be All-Big Ten contenders and serve as two of the leading tacklers on the Illini defense, with 44 and 37 respectively.

"Jake Hansen is a stud when it comes to creating takeaways," Good explained. "This man has created 10 fumbles now (on his career). He has a shot to force more fumbles than anyone else in Illinois history"

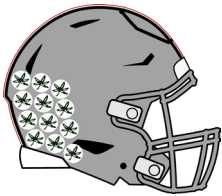
"Khalan Tolson came in too, and he's been great. I'd say that linebacker is probably the top strength for Illinois."

If all else fails, Illinois also has Mel Kiper's top-rated punter prospect in Blake Hayes, who is averaging 43.5 yards per punt and has had eight of his 22 punts downed within the 20-yard line this season.



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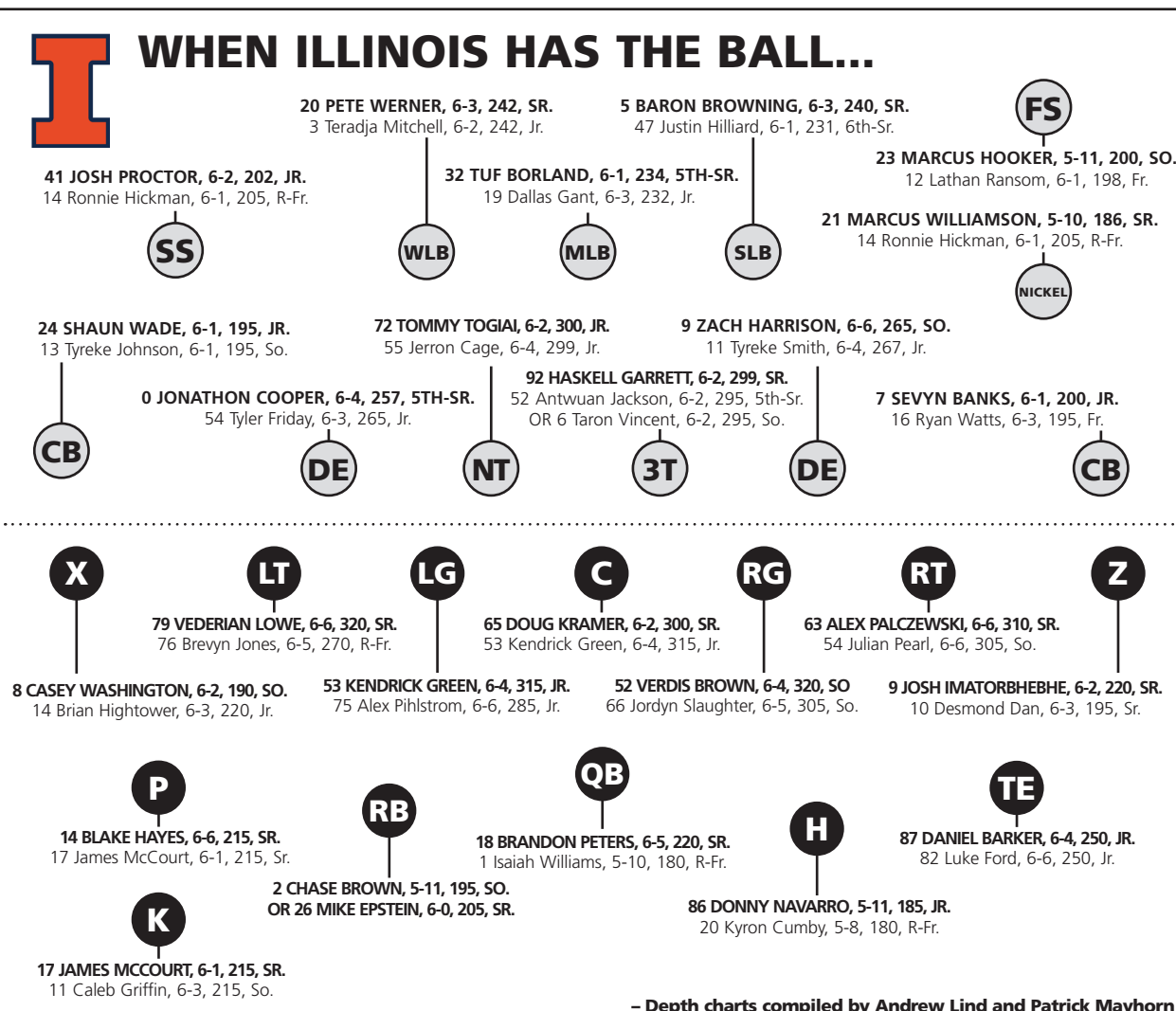
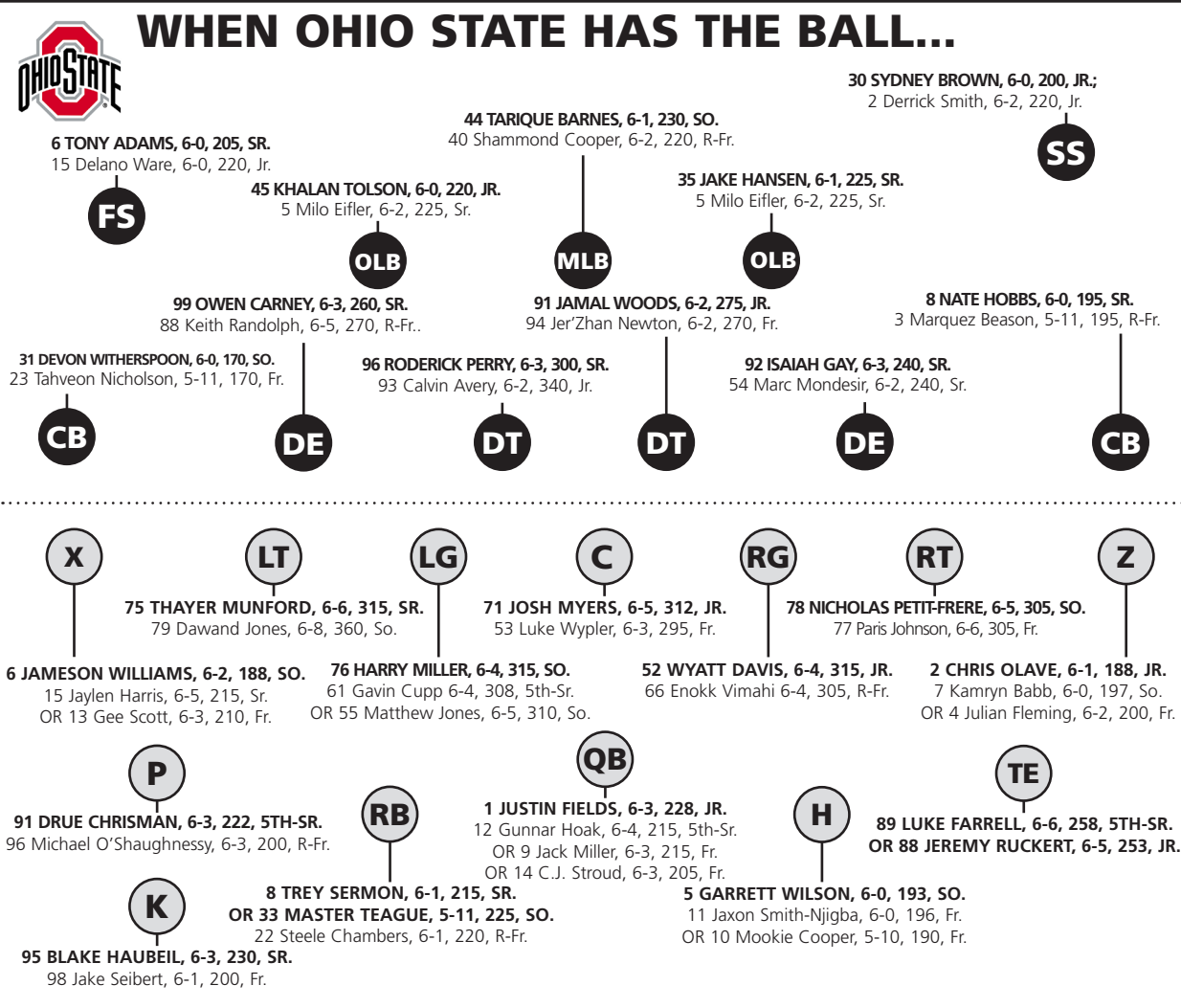


Ohio State at Illinois

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 • 12 p.m. • FOX
Memorial Stadium; Champaign, IL



Projected Depth Charts



- Depth charts compiled by Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn

How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE VS. ILLINOIS RUSH DEFENSE

Hooray for the Ohio State rushers, who for the first time this season had to bail out quarterback Justin Fields and the passing attack in the 42-35 win against Indiana. Master Teague led the way with 169 yards on 26 carries with two touchdowns, including a 41-yarder that reminded fans of J.K. Dobbins. Trey Sermon (60 yards on nine carries) is proving to be a good complement, and Fields, under enormous pressure the entire game, scrambled for 78 yards. It would be easier for the Buckeyes to close out games if they were able to chew up yards and the clock on the ground in crunch time.

Illinois entered its game against Nebraska 13th of 14 teams in the league in total defense (462.3 yards per game) and 10th in scoring defense (34.3) but found a cure in beating Nebraska 41-23. The Illini allowed 215 rushing yards and 392 total yards but forced five turnovers that led to 20 points. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

ILLINOIS RUSH OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Illini gained 285 yards on 5.5 yards per carry and had a solid one-two punch vs. the Cornhuskers. Chase Brown (26 carries for 110 yards and two touchdowns) surpassed 100 rushing yards for the second straight game, and Mike Epstein tied his career rushing high with 113 yards and a TD. Illinois scored four times via the run. It's hard to judge the OSU rush defense because Indiana's Michael Penix was so successful throwing the ball. Still, giving up minus-1 yard on 16 totes is impressive by any measure for the Buckeyes. **EDGE: EVEN**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE VS. ILLINOIS PASS DEFENSE

Fields showed he was human (18 for 300, 300 yards, two touchdowns, three interceptions) and sometimes not very good in his decision making in a performance against the Hoosiers that could cost him a shot at the Heisman Trophy. In his defense, nobody blitzes as much as Indiana, although Illinois would be wise to study IU's game plan very carefully. The Illinois secondary isn't as heralded as the Hoosiers, but it had three interceptions vs. Nebraska. Garrett Wilson (seven catches, 169 yards, two TDs) is unstoppable but only if Fields has time. He was sacked five times and constantly forced from the pocket. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

ILLINOIS PASS OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

There's a new, old QB for the Illini in Brandon Peters. The Michigan transfer returned from missing three games due to a positive COVID-19 test in late October to guide the win over the Cornhuskers. He was 18 for 25 for 205 yards and a touchdown and ran for 36 yards and a touchdown in helping the Illini to 490 total yards. Peters' favorite target was Josh Imatorbhebhe, who had four catches for 71 yards and TD. Most importantly, Peters gave his teammates confidence. The Illini was 10 of 14 on third downs and 1 for 1 on fourth down. Ohio State appears not good at all in defending the pass after Penix threw for 491 yards and five touchdowns. Cornerback Shaun Wade, despite a critical pick-six vs. the Hoosiers, is frequently beaten for a score, and Penix shredded the Buckeyes for four passing plays of 50-plus yards. He had 51 pass attempts yet was sacked just twice. **EDGE: ILLINOIS**

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Illini fumbled a kickoff return but recovered the bouncing ball and later acted like Rutgers by pulling off a trick play - a fake punt that went for 14 yards and a first down that led to a field goal. OSU freshman Jake Seibert missed a 44-yard field goal as a replacement for the injured Blake Haubeil. **EDGE: EVEN**

INTANGIBLES

Illinois has some of that Indiana swagger after two straight wins, including a first at Nebraska since 1924 when Red Grange galloped in the Illini backfield. The Illini (2-3) led for only three seconds during their first four games but never trailed Nebraska, so they are full of confidence. The Buckeyes' failure to put two good halves together has them trending toward looking like the 2018 OSU defensive nightmare. **EDGE: ILLINOIS**

STAFF PREDICTION

The Buckeyes just don't seem to have it all together. Maybe it's due to having played only four games, but they need to figure it out at a place that can present problems. That cold November wind usually means the team that can run the ball best will have the advantage. That should favor the Buckeyes, but in this less-than-stellar season they can't let the Illini hang around. Of course, that was the same advice against Rutgers and Indiana and those games were closer than they should have been. **OHIO STATE 42, ILLINOIS 17**

Ohio State Wins ‘Game Of Century’ Vs. Michigan

By MARK REA

Throughout the fall, Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be “playing” its 40th Anniversary football season with recaps of the biggest Ohio State games of each corresponding week in our publishing history. The following is coverage of top-ranked Ohio State’s 42-39 victory over No. 2 Michigan in 2006 in one of the biggest games in the storied rivalry between the two schools. The win in Ohio Stadium punched the Buckeyes’ ticket to the BCS national championship game. Additional features about the game will be reprinted at BuckeyeSports.com on Thursday, Nov. 26, Thanksgiving Day.

Troy Smith flashed a brilliant smile and said he probably would be wearing it for quite some time.

Doug Datish, who has been playing football almost as long as he could walk, said it was the most fun he had ever had on the football field. David Patterson called it the happiest moment of his life.

But in the afterglow of No. 1 Ohio State’s 42-39 victory Nov. 18 over No. 2 Michigan, no one’s happiness seemed more ebullient than Kirk Barton, who showed up to the postgame press conference sporting a victory cigar.

“Red Auerbach, baby,” the junior offensive tackle shouted, in reference to the late Boston Celtics head coach who was legendary for lighting a stogie as soon as his team had clinched a championship.

“This is about as good as it gets,” Barton said as he sat in a chair, puffing away. “T.J. Downing is one of my best friends in the whole world, and we just got through drinking some Dom Pérignon in the locker room. It was 350 bucks, and that took about all of the money I had to my name, but it was worth it. This is as good as it could be.”

As the blue smoke from the cigar circled Barton’s head, he sat back with a contented look on his face, almost as if he were remembering the big plays during the Buckeyes’ victory.

There were plenty of them to remember, from long touchdown romps by Chris Wells and Antonio Pittman to four touchdown passes from Smith, the last of which came at the 5:38 mark of the fourth quarter and provided what were the eventual winning points.

“This was a great game, a great game to be a part of,” Barton said. “You have to give credit to Michigan for the way they played because we felt like we had to score a touchdown on every drive. Michigan is a great team, but I felt like the better team won today. I really do. We took their best shot and kept coming right back at them.”

The Wolverines scored a touchdown on the game’s first possession, blowing right through the OSU defense for 80 yards in just under 2½ minutes. But the Buckeyes roared back to match that score, then tacked on two more touchdowns to take a 21-7 lead.

The rest of the game resembled a heavyweight boxing match with two old rivals pummeling one another, looking for the knockout blow, as Ohio State withstood Michigan’s late assault to preserve the three-point win.

“Well, I don’t know where to start,” OSU head coach Jim Tressel said at his postgame press conference, where he was

joined by the team’s captains. “Michigan is a great football team. Everyone saw that. They weren’t going to give up because that’s the way they’re built, and I can’t say enough about them. But these guys up front right here – Troy Smith and Quinn Pitcock and David Patterson and Doug Datish – they’re extraordinary at what they do. It’s really amazing.”

The Wolverines entered the game with the nation’s No. 3 unit in total defense but were gashed for 503 yards by the power-laden Ohio State attack. Minnesota had the previous highest total yardage figure against U-M this season, gaining 323 yards in a 28-14 losing effort. The Buckeyes had already piled up 320 by halftime.

“Everyone talked all week about their defense,” OSU offensive lineman Steve Rehring said. “That’s all we heard – how good their defensive line was and how we were going to have a tough time moving the ball against them. And I will say this: They are good. They’re very good.”

“But I like to say that we go against one of the best defensive lines in college football every day in practice. Once you go up against guys like Dave Patterson, Quinn, Vern Gholston and Jay Richardson, you’ve already seen the best. So if you’re asking if I’m surprised we got that many yards, the answer is no. Not really.”

Barton chipped in, “We knew they had a good defense, but we also knew they hadn’t gone against a team that blocked like us.”

In addition to being stingy in total yardage, the Wolverines had all but outlawed the run by their opponents this season. U-M entered the game as the nation’s top-rated defense against the rush, giving up an average of only 29.9 yards per game.

That average was shattered by the Buckeyes, who jumped on Michigan for 187 yards on the ground and an average of 6.4 yards on 29 carries. Pittman carried most of the load, totaling 139 yards and a touchdown on 18 carries, while Wells added 56 yards on just five totes.

But while Ohio State was softening up the Wolverines with the run, it was Smith who was the catalyst for the offense. He completed 29 of 41 passes – both career highs – and threw for 316 yards and four touchdowns.

“What a pleasure it is to block for a guy like Troy,” Barton said. “I don’t know if I can describe it – he just makes everybody else look good. I hope he wins the Heisman because I think he truly deserves it.”

While the Buckeyes were charging out to their 28-14 halftime lead, it was Smith leading the charge, carving up the U-M defense like a Thanksgiving turkey. By the time the teams headed to the locker rooms for halftime, the Ohio State quarterback had already completed 21 of 26 passes for 241 yards and three touchdowns.

He experienced some problems in the second half, having a deflected pass wind up as his fifth interception of the year and mishandling a couple of errant shotgun snaps from Datish – both of which the center later blamed on himself – that wound up as fumble recoveries for Michigan.

But when his team needed him most, it was Smith who moved the Buckeyes 83 yards in 11 plays to turn what was becoming a game that was too close for comfort back into an 11-point lead with 5½ minutes to play.

“We made some mistakes there in the second half and let them back in it,” the OSU quarterback said. “But the important thing was that we didn’t quit on each other. We don’t do that. After they scored there to make it 35-31 or whatever it was, we knew we needed to go right back down the field and score a touchdown.”

“When they scored, the best thing we could do was answer with a score of our own. That’s what we did at the beginning of the game and that’s what we did there in the fourth quarter. You have to give Michigan credit because they kept coming back. But so did we.”

Each of Smith’s touchdown throws was to a different receiver as eight Buckeyes caught at least one of his passes. Junior receiver Ted Ginn Jr. had a game-high eight receptions for 104 yards and a score while sophomore Brian Robiskie chipped in with seven catches for 89 yards and a touchdown.

The other two touchdown receptions went to junior flanker Anthony Gonzalez, who added four catches for 50 yards, and senior Roy Hall, who stepped up with three receptions for 38 yards.

“We’ve got some guys who can catch the ball,” Hall said. “I was just thankful I could get in there and help out.”

On the other side of the field, the Wolverines were doing their best to keep up with the Buckeyes. Junior tailback Mike Hart rushed for 142 yards and three touchdowns while quarterback Chad Henne connected on 21 of 35 passes for 267 yards and a pair of scores.

But after their initial score to go ahead 7-0, the Wolverines were constantly playing from behind.

“It’s definitely hard to swallow, but, you know, it’s never fun losing to Ohio State,” Henne said. “It’s a great rivalry and great tradition goes with it. But we fought, and Ohio State – they just made a lot more bigger plays.”

Off To The Races

The Ohio Stadium-record crowd of 105,708 was getting settled for an expected low-scoring affair when Michigan exploded out of the blocks. On the second play from scrimmage, Henne connected with split end Mario Manningham on a simple slant pattern that picked up 24 yards.

Three plays later, the same combination on the same route clicked for another 25 yards to push to the Ohio State 1-yard line.

Hart finished things off with a quick burst around right end, and when kicker Garrett Rivas added the extra point, the Wolverines had a 7-0 lead with only two minutes, 28 seconds gone from the game.

“They kind of came out and hit us right in the mouth,” OSU linebacker James Laurinaitis said. “We made a couple of adjustments after that, but I guess you could say they got our attention early.”

The seven-play, 80-yard drive sent murmurs through the stadium, but those quickly turned to cheers as Smith rallied the Buckeyes on their initial possession.

Ohio State’s first eight offensive calls were passing plays, the last of which was a 27-yard completion down the middle to Hall on a third-and-16 that pushed the ball to the Michigan 24. Three plays later, on third-and-5, Smith connected with Hall again, this time for 10 yards and another first down.

Fittingly, the capper of the drive was a 1-yard toss from Smith to Hall in the corner of the end zone. Aaron Pettrey came on to add the PAT, tying the game at 7 with 6:08 remaining in the first quarter.

The teams traded punts on their ensuing possessions. Then when Michigan failed to move the ball again as the second quarter began, the Buckeyes took advantage of a short punt and took over at their own 42-yard line.

Smith scrambled for a 6-yard gain on the first play of the drive before he handed off to Wells on the next play. The OSU freshman broke through the line of scrimmage and outraced everyone to the end zone for a 52-yard touchdown romp. Pettrey added the extra point, giving the Buckeyes a 14-7 lead at the 12:29 mark of the second quarter.

And they were just getting warmed up.

Following another Michigan punt, Ohio State went back to work, this time striking with alarming speed. Smith completed a sideline pass to Robiskie, who got loose from U-M cornerback Leon Hall and turned the play into a spectacular 39-yard gain.

Two plays later, Smith carried out a beautiful fake handoff and found Ginn, who had gotten past Hall on a post route, for a 39-yard touchdown. Pettrey’s PAT made it 21-7 and finished off the 91-yard drive that encompassed only four plays in one minute and 44 seconds.

To their credit, the Wolverines did not fold. With the clock winding under six minutes to play in the half, Henne engineered a six-play, 80-yard march that included a 30-yard burst by Hart on a well-designed draw play and a 37-yard touchdown pass to Adrian Arrington along the OSU sideline.

Rivas added the extra point, getting Michigan back within seven at 21-14 with 2:33 left until halftime. But the way Smith was playing, that was too much time to leave on the clock.

The Ohio State quarterback immediately went back to the air, and in rapid succession he connected with Gonzalez for 12 yards, Ginn for 7 and Robiskie for 17.

That took the ball back into Michigan territory, and after an incompleteness, Smith hit Gonzalez for 14 more, tight end Rory Nicol for 2 and Gonzalez again for 16.

With the ball at the U-M 12-yard line and only 40 seconds remaining, Smith went back to Robiskie for a 4-yarder along the sideline before finding Gonzalez in the end zone for an 8-yard touchdown. Smith completed 8 of 9 passes during the march for 80 yards, and once Pettrey booted the extra point, the Buckeyes had what looked to be a comfortable 28-14 lead at the half.

Things Begin To Get Tight

As precise as the Ohio State offense was in the first half, it seemed to develop a distinctive sputter in the third quarter.

The Buckeyes had the ball to open the second half, but Michigan’s defense forced a quick three-and-out. Meanwhile, the U-M offense was gathering steam. Behind Hart, it moved 60 yards in less than two minutes to pull back within seven points at 28-21. Hart rushed four times for 59 of those yards, including the 2-yard touchdown.

Then the Wolverines got the ball right back when Smith was picked off by defensive tackle Alan Branch, who snagged the pass out of the air after it bounced off a

Buckeye and a Wolverine defender.

The turnover gave U-M the ball at the Ohio State 25-yard line, but the Buckeyes' defense rose to the occasion, forcing the Wolverines to settle for a 39-yard field goal from Rivas. Still, that tightened things to 28-24 in favor of OSU with 8:41 remaining in the third quarter.

This time, it was the Buckeyes' turn to respond. The Wolverines were called for a personal foul penalty on the ensuing kickoff, giving Ohio State possession at their 35-yard line instead of the 20. After a 9-yard hookup between Smith and Ginn, Pittman broke through the left side of the Michigan line behind a block from pulling guard Steve Rehring, and outran safety Jamar Adams to the end zone for a 56-yard lightning bolt. Pettrey added the PAT and re-established Ohio State's 11-point lead at 35-24 with 8:04 left in the third period.

Disaster struck the Buckeyes again at the end of the quarter, though, as Smith fumbled Datish's snap and Branch recovered the fumble at the OSU 9-yard line. Three plays later, Hart was in the end zone again off a 1-yard burst over right tackle, and the Wolverines were back within four points at the 14:41 mark of the fourth quarter.

Ohio State couldn't seem to get out of its own way, quickly moving back into Michigan territory but turning the ball over again on another bad exchange between Smith and Datish. This time, however, the Wolverines could not convert their opportunity and were forced to punt the ball away.

Undaunted, Smith went back to work and piloted an 83-yard drive that took 11 plays and, more importantly, shaved five precious minutes off the clock.

"That was an important drive for us," the OSU quarterback said. "We'd been beating ourselves in the second half, and we knew we had to have a score right there. We knew that a touchdown in that situation would maybe help us put them away."

The march featured the Buckeyes' best blend of running and passing but was in danger of stalling on a third-and-15 at the Michigan 38 when Smith couldn't find Robiskie over the middle. But Wolverines linebacker Shawn Crable was called for a helmet-to-helmet hit on Smith as he released the ball near the sideline, and the penalty gave Ohio State a first down and new life.

Three plays later, Smith went back to Robiskie and this time the two connected with the sophomore running a stop pattern to leave U-M cornerback Morgan Trent slipping on the turf while Robiskie got a toe inbounds for a 13-yard touchdown.

Pettrey added the PAT, giving the Buckeyes what appeared to be a comfortable 42-31 advantage with just 5:38 remaining in the game.

But Michigan had one last comeback up its sleeve. Henne moved his team 81 yards in just over three minutes, completing a 16-yard touchdown pass to tight end Tyler Ecker for the touchdown. His two-point conversion pass to Steve Breaston was also good, and the Wolverines had pulled to within a field goal at 42-39 with 2:16 left.

However, with just one timeout remaining and college football's new clock rules, U-M head coach Lloyd Carr had no choice but to go for the onside kick. Ginn smothered the ball near midfield, and three Pittman runs were enough to finish things off as the crowd swarmed the field.

Defensively, the Buckeyes were led by James Laurinaitis with nine tackles.

Senior defensive back Antonio Smith was next with eight stops, including one of the four sacks on Henne. The others were credited to sophomore defensive end Lawrence Wilson, senior defensive tackle Joel Penton and Richardson.

For Michigan, linebacker David Harris had a game-high 10 tackles while defensive tackle Terrance Taylor had seven stops, including a pair behind the line of scrimmage. Senior defensive end Rondell Biggs tallied the only sack against Smith.

Game Notes

• Ohio State's win trimmed Michigan's lead in the overall series to 57-40-6 – 30-18-4 in Ann Arbor and 27-22-4 in Columbus. The Buckeyes have now won four of the last five at Ohio Stadium, and the overall series is dead even at 28-28-3 over the past 59 meetings.

• Smith became only the second Ohio State quarterback to beat Michigan three times. The only other one was William H.H. "Tippy" Dye, who played for the Buckeyes under head coach Francis A. Schmidt from 1934-36 and was in attendance at the game.

The 94-year-old Dye later was head basketball coach at Ohio State from 1947-50 and athletic director at Northwestern.

• Smith's four touchdown passes pushed him to 30 for the season to establish a new school single-season record. He surpassed former Buckeye Bobby Hoying, who threw for 29 TDs in 1995.

• The win pushed Tressel's record against Michigan to a glittering 5-1 while Carr dropped to an even 6-6 against the Buckeyes.

Tressel also became the first OSU head coach to beat U-M three straight times since Woody Hayes strung together four consecutive wins from 1960-63. Winning five times in six years hadn't been accomplished by Ohio State since 1960-65.

• With the victory, Tressel now has an 8-2 record (.800 winning percentage) against top-10 teams and is 25-7 (.781) against all ranked teams. Meanwhile, Carr's record against top-10 teams dropped to 16-7 (.696) while his mark against top-25 teams is now 39-22 (.639). Break it down even further to games in November and you have Tressel at 18-3 (.850) and Carr at 28-12 (.700).

• Despite the fact that Michigan is one of the winningest programs in college football, the Wolverines have had their problems when matched against the No. 1-ranked team. U-M fell to 3-16-1 against teams ranked No. 1 in The Associated Press poll, including its last eight in a row. The last time Michigan beat a No. 1 was in 1984 when it defeated Miami (Fla.) by a 22-14 score in Ann Arbor.

• The matchup marked the 38th meeting between the top two teams in the AP poll since its inception in 1936. The No. 1 team now has a 23-14-2 record, including Ohio State's win over Michigan and its victory at Texas on Sept. 9. You don't have to go back too far to find a No. 2 beating a No. 1, however. That occurred just last January when the second-ranked Longhorns upset defending national champion and top-ranked USC, 41-38, in the Rose Bowl.

• Ohio State's total yardage figure was the most the Wolverines had surrendered to the Buckeyes since giving up 512 during a 50-20 OSU victory in 1961.

This story originally appeared in the Nov. 25, 2006, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 42, Michigan 39

Nov. 18, 2006 – Ohio Stadium; Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
MICHIGAN	7	7	10	15	39
OHIO STATE	7	21	7	7	42

First Quarter

UM – Hart, 1-yard run (Rivas kick), 12:32; 7 plays, 80 yards, 2:28 TOP.

OSU – R. Hall, 1-yard pass from Smith (Pettrey kick), 6:03; 14 plays, 69 yards, 6:10 TOP.

Second Quarter

OSU – C. Wells, 52-yard run (Pettrey kick), 12:29; 2 plays, 58 yards, 0:57 TOP.

OSU – Ginn, 39-yard pass from Smith (Pettrey kick), 6:11; 4 plays, 91 yards, 1:44 TOP.

UM – Arrington, 37-yard pass from Henne (Rivas kick), 2:33; 6 plays, 80 yards, 3:27 TOP.

OSU – Gonzalez, 8-yard pass from Smith (Pettrey kick), 0:20; 9 plays, 80 yards, 2:08 TOP.

Third Quarter

UM – Hart, 2-yard run (Rivas kick), 12:12; 5 plays, 60 yards, 1:59 TOP.

UM – Rivas, 39-yard field goal, 8:41; 4 plays, 3 yards, 2:07 TOP.

OSU – Pittman, 56-yard run (Pettrey kick), 8:04; 2 plays, 65 yards, 0:37 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

UM – Hart, 1-yard run (Rivas kick), 14:41; 3 plays, 9 yards, 0:40 TOP.

OSU – Robiskie, 13-yard pass from Smith (Pettrey kick), 5:38; 11 plays, 83 yards, 5:00 TOP.

UM – Ecker, 16-yard pass from Henne (Breaston pass from Henne), 2:16; 11 plays, 81 yards, 3:11 TOP.

Att. – 105,708

Weather – 48 degrees, partly cloudy; wind, NE 1 mph.

Team Statistics		
	UM	OSU
First Downs	17	24
Rushing	3	7
Passing	11	16
Penalty	3	1
Rushes-Yards	30-130	29-187
Passing Yards	267	316
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	21-35-0	29-41-1
Offensive Plays	65	70
Total Net Yards	397	503
Third Down Efficiency	4-13	6-11
Punts-Avg.	5-44.4	3-38.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	2-2
Penalties	5-45	4-50
Time of Possession	30:09	29:51

Individual Statistics		
RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – UM: Hart 23-142; Manningham 2-13; Breaston 1-8; Henne 4-(-33). OSU: Pittman 18-139; C. Wells 5-56; T. Smith 4-12; TEAM 2-(-20).		
PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – UM: Henne 21-35-0-267-2. OSU: T. Smith 29-41-1-316-4.		
RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – UM: Manningham 6-86; Arrington 5-90; Breaston 3-18; Ecker 2-30; Butler 2-19; R. Hart 2-5; Massey 1-19. OSU: Ginn 8-104; Robiskie 7-89; Gonzalez 4-50; Hall 3-38; Hartline 3-21; Nicol 2-8; White 1-7; Pittman 1-(-1).		
PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – UM: Mesko 5-44.4-57. OSU: Trapasso 3-38.0-44.		
PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – UM: None. OSU: Ginn 2-0.		
KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – UM: Breaston 2-39; Oluigbo 2-18. OSU: Ginn 5-105.		
FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – UM: Woodley 1-0; Branch 1-0. OSU: None.		
INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – UM: Branch 1-0. OSU: None.		
SACKS – UM: Biggs 1.0-5. OSU: A. Smith 1.0-18; Wilson 1.0-3; Penton 1.0-10; Richardson 1.0-2.		
TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – UM: Taylor 2.0-5; Biggs 1.0-5; Harris 1.0-1. OSU: A. Smith 1.0-18; Penton 1.0-10; Wilson 1.0-3; Pitcock 1.0-2; Richardson 1.0-2.		
TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – UM: Harris 3-7-10; Taylor 2-5-7; L. Hall 6-0-6; C. Graham 4-2-6; Burgess 2-3-5; Sears 4-0-4; Woodley 0-4-4; Adams 2-1-3; Trent 2-1-3; Engleman 2-1-3; Harrison 1-2-3; Mundy 1-1-2; Biggs 1-1-2; Stewart 1-1-2; Branch 0-2-2; Brown 1-0-1; Hood 1-0-1; Campbell 1-0-1; Crable 1-0-1; Simpson 1-0-1; Richards 0-1-1. OSU: Laurinaitis 2-7-9; A. Smith 6-2-8; Jenkins 7-0-7; O'Neal 2-2-4; Mitchell 2-2-4; John Kerr 2-2-4; Gholston 1-3-4; Freeman 2-1-3; Pitcock 1-2-3; Wilson 1-2-3; Washington 2-0-2; Penton 1-1-2; Terry 0-2-2; D. Patterson 0-2-2; Gant 1-0-1; Datish 1-0-1; Coleman 1-0-1; Richardson 1-0-1; Lane 1-0-1.		
PLAYERS IN THE GAME – UM: Breaston, Riley, Kraus, Bihl, A. Mitchell, Ecker, Butler, Manningham, Henne, Hart, Rivas, Woodley, Taylor, Branch, Biggs, Crable, Harris, Burgess, L. Hall, Adams, Barringer, Trent, Mesko, Ryan, Hood, Stewart, Campbell, Matthews, Arrington, Tabb, Mundy, Jackson, Sears, Bradley, Harrison, Richards, Brown, Engleman, Opong-Owusu, Paul, B. Thompson, C. Graham, Criswell, Oluigbo, McLaurin, J. Thompson, Van Alstyne, Graham, Booth, Long, Savoy, Massey, Jamison, Germany, W. Johnson. OSU: Rehring, Schafer, Datish, Downing, Barton, Nicol, Ginn, T. Smith, Pittman, White, Gonzalez, Pettrey, Richardson, D. Patterson, Pitcock, Gholstin, Terry, Laurinaitis, John Kerr, Jenkins, A. Smith, O'Neal, B. Mitchell, Trapasso, Freeman, Grant, Coleman, Gant, R. Hall, Hartline, Amos, Robinson, Harden, Washington, N. Patterson, C. Wells, Lane, M. Wells, Spitler, D. Johnson, Homan, Norman, Person, Mitchum, Boone, Barrow, Robiskie, Ballard, Wilson, Penton.		

Texas Quarterback Ewers Commits To Ohio State

In a move that seemed like a foregone conclusion once he decommitted from Texas on Oct. 28, Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star quarterback Quinn Ewers pledged his services to Ohio State on Nov. 19.

The 6-3, 195-pound Ewers – who is considered the top-rated quarterback and No. 2 prospect overall in the class of 2022 – grew up rooting for the Longhorns and had been committed to the program since April. But upon reopening his recruitment, he said he didn't have the opportunity to explore all of his options before making his initial decision.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

Given the ongoing dead period that prevents coaches from recruiting on the road and prospects from visiting campus, one might wonder how Ewers made up his mind so quickly. But it's worth noting his relationship with Ohio State head coach Ryan Day dates back more than two years, after the Buckeyes offered him a scholarship following a strong performance at a one-day camp in June 2018.

Ewers, who had not even taken a single snap of high school ball at that point, was arguably the best signal-caller in attendance that afternoon, though the list of campers also included one-time Ohio State commit and current Georgia quarterback D'Wan Mathis.

Even after he committed to Texas this spring, the Buckeyes never gave up their pursuit of Ewers. He was in constant contact with Day and first-year quarterbacks coach Corey Dennis, who ultimately convinced him to reconsider his pledge.

Ewers, who has thrown for more than 5,200 yards and 60 touchdowns in 18 career starts, becomes the sixth five-star prospect from the state of Texas to commit to Ohio State since the 2017 recruiting cycle, joining cornerback Jeff Okudah and linebacker Baron Browning in 2017; wide receiver Garrett Wilson in 2019; wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba in 2020; and offensive guard Donovan Jackson in 2021. The home-state Longhorns have secured just four such commitments in that same time frame.

Assuming he sticks with his commitment and there's no fluctuation in his 247Sports composite ranking, Ewers will also become the third-highest rated prospect in the internet recruiting era (since 1999) to play for the Buckeyes, trailing only current starter Justin Fields and former quarterback Terrelle Pryor.

What Ewers' Pledge Means For The Buckeyes

Just a few days before Ewers backed off his pledge to Texas, several Ohio State commits – including Kettering (Ohio) Alter four-star linebacker C.J. Hicks and Overland Park (Kan.) Blue Valley North four-star athlete Dasan McCullough – hinted at a string of commitments for the class of 2022. And now that Ewers is officially the fold, attention



COURTESY OF QUINN EWERS

EYES OF TEXAS ARE ON OHIO STATE – Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star quarterback Quinn Ewers committed to Ohio State on Nov. 19, just a few weeks after he backed off his pledge from the home-state Longhorns.

should turn to Del Valle, Texas, five-star wide receiver Caleb Burton.

The 6-0 and 165-pound Burton, who is considered the second-best receiver and No. 15 prospect overall in the class, has been outspoken about his desire to play with Ewers at the next level. He's never been to campus and only recently included the Buckeyes among his top 12 schools, but there's a strong belief in the recruiting community that he'll be the next domino to fall.

If that does happen, Ohio State will only strengthen its grip on the No. 1 spot in the 247Sports team recruiting rankings.

On the other side of the coin, Ewers' pledge effectively ends the Buckeyes' pursuit of any other quarterback in his recruiting cycle.

Ohio State does have offers out to Tiger (Ga.) Rabun County five-star Gunner Stockton; Gardena (Calif.) Junipero Serra five-star Maalik Murphy; and Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic three-star Steve Angeli. But with Jack Miller and C.J. Stroud already on campus and 2021 Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep five-star Kyle McCord set to enroll in classes in January, the Buckeyes are well-equipped for the future.

Of course, there is concern that the quarterbacks who don't win the starting job upon Fields' departure could transfer out of the program, but that's something Day and Dennis will deal with if and

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
Quinn Ewers	QB	6-3	195	★★★★★	Southlake (Texas) Carroll
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

ASK AN ANALYST

With Lettermen Row's Jeremy Birmingham

With the recruiting dead period extended through at least April 15, both Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau and Steilacoom, Wash., five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka will have to make their respective college decisions without taking official visits. Do you anticipate either will make a decision in the coming weeks as a result?

"Of the two, it appears Egbuka would be the one who makes a decision before the December signing period. Tuimoloau is not – and has never been – planning to make a decision before the February signing period.

"What's going to be very interesting to see is whether or not Tuimoloau feels truly compelled to decide in February or if he'll decide to push things back beyond that. There's nothing that says a prospect has to make an announcement anytime before enrolling in June."

Many recruiting analysts have compared 2022 Chandler, Ariz., three-star wide receiver Kyion Graves to Ohio State junior wide receiver Chris Olave. Why do you think that comparison is appropriate, and what are the Buckeyes' chances of flipping the Arizona commit?

"First, the odds of a potential flip are pretty high if the Buckeyes push for it. Ohio State receivers coach Brian Hartline has spent a lot of time getting to know Graves and so, too, have the 2022 commits already locked in with the Buckeyes. The comparison to Olave is based on his size, running style – smooth and effortless – and the national ranking, I think. There's just a lot of similarities when you put on the tape."

Despite Michigan's on-field struggles, it appears the Wolverines are in a good spot with two of Ohio State's top targets at the cornerback position in 2022 Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star Domani Jackson and 2022 Grosse Pointe (Mich.) South five-star Will Johnson. What gives?

"Michigan is still one of the country's top football programs with a proud history and storied traditions. The Wolverines are not winning Big Ten titles or beating Ohio State, but they're on TV every week and win 10 games a year. For some kids, like Jackson and Johnson, there's a lifetime of wanting to suit up in the Maize and Blue to sift through.

"Johnson's father played there, and Jackson's father – who grew up in northeast Ohio – was a Michigan fan and that's trickled down to Domani.

Neither recruitment is over, and the uncertainty in Ann Arbor isn't being ignored by these two five-stars, but it's never been a case where it'd be 'easy' for Ohio State to win their commitments."

Ohio State recently made the cut for a couple of topflight defensive ends from the class of 2022 in Philadelphia Imhotep Institute Charter five-star Enai White and Alabaster (Ala.) Thompson five-star Jeremiah Alexander. What are the Buckeyes' chances in their respective recruitments?

"Defensive line recruiting is never an easy thing to follow with Ohio State because defensive line coach Larry Johnson is so particular about who he recruits and how. He also rarely prioritizes any player he's not worked with in person, and because of the pandemic, the players he's had the opportunity to evaluate in person are few and far between.

"Any defensive lineman in America is going to be interested in playing for Johnson, but he pays no attention to rankings or stars. Can the Buckeyes win the fight for White and Alexander? Sure, though it's never easy to dip into Alabama for a northern program. Both kids will need to get to campus with Ohio State and work with Johnson before a true read on their recruitment is possible though."

when the time comes.

Given the room for potential turnover, it might make sense to recruit a developmental quarterback in 2022, such as Centerville, Ohio, three-star Chase Harrison or Medina, Ohio, three-star Drew Allar. But Day has already made it clear that any quarterback coming to Columbus to be the backup simply won't succeed.

Along those same lines, a source close to McCord told Buckeye Sports Bulletin he's not reconsidering his own pledge to Ohio State following Ewers' decision. In fact, they said he's coming to compete for the starting job as a true freshman.

Recruiting Dead Period Officially Extended

The NCAA Division I Council voted on Nov. 18 to extend the current recruiting dead period through at least April 15, 2021.

"The COVID-19 numbers are not trending in the right direction for the council to allow in-person recruiting and the associated long-distance travel for coaches, prospective student-athletes and their families," council chair and Pennsylvania athletic director M. Grace Calhoun said in a statement. "We acknowledge the impact the restrictions are having on prospective student-athletes and coaches alike, and we will continue to assess how to best balance health and safety concerns with the desire to support prospects and coaches in the recruiting process."

The dead period was first implemented in March due to the coronavirus pandemic but has been extended on multiple occasions since, including through the end of the calendar year at the council's previous meeting in September.

Additionally, the council voted this month to allow all coaches, full-time school staff members and current students to conduct recruiting calls – by telephone or video – without a countable coach being present.

Only on-field coaches could make such calls before.

Five-Star Wide Receiver Down To Three Schools

With the early signing period (Dec. 16-18) fast approaching, Steilacoom, Wash., five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka has reportedly narrowed his long list of offers down to three schools.

"Ohio State, Oklahoma and Washington," Egbuka told 247Sports national recruiting editor Brandon Huffman.

The 6-1 and 190-pound Egbuka – who is considered the top-rated wide receiver and No. 8 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – originally hoped to make his college decision this summer, but the lack of official visits due to the ongoing dead period has made things difficult.

Egbuka has been to Columbus twice, most recently for the Buckeyes' 38-7 win over Wisconsin in October 2019, and he basically lives on the other side of town from the Huskies' campus. That leaves the Sooners as the only program he has yet to visit, which is apparently holding up the decision-making process.

"Seeing Oklahoma will be pretty key for me, and they continue to recruit me hard," Egbuka said. "I'm pretty sure that by the time I make a decision, I'll have taken a visit to Oklahoma. I won't have made a decision on any school without seeing them."

A trip to Norman, Okla., won't be difficult thanks to airline reward miles that Egbuka's parents have saved up. And while he won't be able to meet with the coaching staff on such a visit, the plan is for Sooners five-star quarterback commit Caleb Williams to join him on campus that weekend.

Despite his interest in Oklahoma, Ohio State remains the odds-on favorite in Egbuka's recruitment thanks to his relationship with Day, wide receivers coach Brian Hartline and offensive quality control coach Keenan Bailey, as well as freshman wide receiver and fellow Washington native Gee Scott.

"Coach Hartline and I talk at least five times a week," Egbuka says. "He calls me more than he texts. And I talk with Coach Day at least once a week."

The Buckeyes already hold two commitments at the wide receiver position for the 2021 recruiting cycle in Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star Jayden Ballard and Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep

four-star Marvin Harrison. They have long hoped Egbuka would be the finishing touch on yet another impressive haul.

Continued On Page 26

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Ballard, Carrico Come Up Short Of State Titles

Continued From Page 25

Commits Play In State Championship

Speaking of Ballard, he wrapped up his prep career on Nov. 20 with a loss to Akron Hoban in the Ohio High School Athletic Association Division II state championship game.

The 6-2, 175-pound Ballard caught two passes for 53 yards in the 35-6 defeat, which dropped the Tigers to 0-6 in state title games during the playoff era (since 1972).

Four-star linebacker pledge Reid Carrico suffered a similar fate the following day, when Ironton fell to Kirkland in the Division V state championship game

by a score of 38-0. It marked the Hornets' 41st consecutive win, third straight state title and sixth state championship in the last 10 seasons.

The 6-3, 225-pound Carrico – who also plays running back for the Fighting Tigers – finished the game with 30 yards rushing on 12 carries.

Also of note, all six state title games were moved from Fortress Obetz (just outside of Columbus) to Massillon's Paul Brown Tiger Stadium due to Franklin County's stay-at-home advisory.

Other Notes From Around The County

• Ohio State extended a handful of offers since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last

went to press, including 2022 Suwannee (Ga.) Lambert four-star wide receiver Kojo Antwi on Nov. 18 and 2022 Sicklerville (N.J.) Timber Creek three-star defensive end Jihaad Campbell on Nov. 19.

• Michigan picked up four 247Sports crystal ball predictions for Grosse Pointe (Mich.) South five-star cornerback Will Johnson following his trip to Ann Arbor for a commit-led get-together during the Wolverines' loss to Wisconsin on Nov. 14. Though he's one of Ohio State's top targets at the position for the class of 2022, Johnson is the son of former Michigan safety Deon Johnson (1991-94).

• Charlestown, Ind., four-star offensive tackle Kiyaunta Goodwin accepted

an invitation to the 2022 All-American Bowl on Nov. 16. Ohio State is widely viewed as the favorite to land Goodwin, who is considered the 24th-best offensive tackle and No. 195 prospect overall in his class.

• Ohio State four-star cornerback commit Jyaire Brown received an invitation to the 2022 Under Armour All-America Game. Brown, who chose the Buckeyes back in April, has not yet announced if he'll play in the high school showcase.

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

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1985

Ohio State was among four schools reportedly on the inside track to securing the services of Tony VanZant, a 6-2, 183-pound running back from Hazelwood (Mo.) Central High School.

VanZant had been timed at 4.3 in the 40-yard dash and rushed for over 5,000 yards with nearly 80 touchdowns in his prep career. He gained just over 100 yards and scored two touchdowns in leading his team to victory in the Class 5A state championship on Nov. 23.

30 Years Ago – 1990

Tony Knez was proving that more than just quality quarterbacks were produced at Boardman High School in Youngstown, Ohio.

Boardman was the high school alma mater of Cleveland Browns quarterback Bernie Kosar, and the starter in 1990, John Ryan, was a highly regarded prep quarterback.

But possibly the best football player at Boardman in 1990 was Knez, a 6-4, 220-pounder who played an outside linebacker/defensive end position. Knez made about 100 tackles on the season and had nine sacks. The numbers were good enough to draw interest from Ohio State, Miami (Fla.), Tennessee and Kansas.

"I had a good year this year," Knez told BSB shortly after his senior season came to a close in November. "I attained some goals I had set for myself. Plus, the team did pretty well, so that was good too."

While Knez had interest, he was still waiting on offers as his recruitment entered the final stretch.

"I really haven't had any offers yet," he said. "So we'll see how it goes."

25 Years Ago – 1995

With close to half of Ohio State's 1996 recruiting class already locked up through verbal commitments, one would have thought that the Buckeye coaches would sit back and enjoy working from a position of strength in the recruiting stretch drive.

Such was not the case, though.

Ohio State had official visits set with a number of top-rated players from Ohio and across the country.

Included in those upcoming visits was Xenia, Ohio, linebacker Mike Austin; Indianapolis Warren Central linebacker Damian Chaubet; Westwood (Mass.) Xaverian Brothers quarterback Tim Hasselbeck; Columbus DeSales running back Gary Berry;

Norristown, Pa., running back Daymon Carroll; Humble, Texas, wide receiver David Boston; Spring Valley (Calif.) Monte Vista halfback Michael Wiley and quite a few more.

20 Years Ago – 2000

Ohio State welcomed no fewer than 35 high school prospects for the traditional season finale with Michigan.

Included in that group were two players – Fort Scott, Kan., wide receiver Chris Vance and St. Louis University School linebacker Matt Sinclair – making official visits.

Another player scheduled to make an official visit, Richfield (Minn.) Holy Angels wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald, canceled his visit the night before the game because of a snag with his transcripts. He still attended the game unofficially with his father.

Additionally, two prospects from Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas, running back Dominick Anderson and wide receiver/defensive back Jomo Fagan, canceled their visits due to playoff commitments.

15 Years Ago – 2005

Perhaps the most intriguing underclassmen prospects in attendance for Ohio State's home finale with Northwestern were fullback Henry Hynoski and lineman Josh Marks of Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia. The pair left about 10:30 p.m. the night before and arrived in Columbus around 4 a.m.

"It was pretty packed in our car with six of us in the Expedition," Hynoski said, "so I couldn't get too much sleep, but I got enough rest to be able to enjoy the game. It was a wonderful experience."

Hynoski said he was getting personalized letters from Ohio State for recruiting, and he had been to Michigan, Penn State, Pittsburgh and Notre Dame on unofficial visits.

10 Years Ago – 2010

Ohio State was among the first teams to show interest in high school junior Kyle Dodson, an offensive lineman out of Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

Dodson battled injuries and his family in order to get onto the field for the final four games of his junior campaign after missing the six previous games.

"He started all nine games as a sophomore and then he got a stinger in his neck," Cleveland Heights coach Kerby Harrison said. "His grandma wouldn't let him play, so we had to go through all kinds of things to get him to play. We got him into the Cleveland

Clinic and they cleared him."

Dodson was also receiving interest from North Carolina, Oklahoma and Pitt.

Five Years Ago – 2015

As demonstrated Nov. 21, there's always a chance that the actual game experience of official visits doesn't go as planned.

With a host of top recruits on hand at Ohio Stadium to see the Buckeyes take on Michigan State, Ohio State coaches hoped for good weather and a big win. Instead, recruits were treated to cold rain and a 17-14 loss that ended the Buckeyes' 23-game winning streak.

"It's tough, but it's not the first time we've all been down that road," Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer said. "Ohio State is a wonderful place. You know, you win 23 games. You lose one and get going. The hard thing is just trying to have a good day when you're meeting. That's the hardest thing, to come in and put on the recruiting face at 9:00 the next morning. That's a challenge."

One Year Ago – 2019

Just hours after his unofficial visit for the 28-17 win over Penn State on Nov. 23 concluded, Cincinnati Winton Woods three-star running back Miyan Williams flipped his pledge from Iowa State to Ohio State.

"I would like to thank God for giving me the talent to play football," Williams wrote in a message he posted to Twitter. "I also want to thank all of the coaching staff at Iowa State, especially Coach (Matt) Campbell. I will always have respect for Iowa State, but I would like to announce that I am decommitting and will be going to The Ohio State University."

The 5-10, 210-pound Williams was considered the 43rd-best running back and No. 618 prospect overall in the class of 2020 after he rushed for 5,823 yards and 68 touchdowns in his three-year varsity career with the Warriors.

Williams had been committed to the Cyclones since July, but an offer from the Buckeyes on Sept. 21 turned the tide in his recruitment. From there, it was considered by many experts only a matter of time before he visited Ohio State and flipped his pledge.

Williams became the 25th member – but first running back – in Ohio State's 2020 recruiting class after the Buckeyes missed out on several higher-rated prospects in the summer, including Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-star Bijan Robinson and Deerfield Beach, Fla., four-star Jaylan Knighton.

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"Your Head to Toe Buckeye Source"

Maryland's Smith Taken By Suns In NBA Draft

Jalen Smith received mid-to-late first-round grades and some second-round projections, but the former Maryland standout was the first Big Ten player to hear his name during the 2020 NBA draft.

Smith, a dominant forward, was selected by the Phoenix Suns with the No. 10 overall pick, becoming the Terrapins' fourth draft pick in the last three years and the program's sixth since 2016.

"Being a lottery pick, that's what everyone aims for," Smith said. "But being drafted into the right situation is what's most important. And I feel as though this is the best situation for me, to learn from guards like Chris Paul, Devin Booker, learn from Deandre Ayton and all the other guys and just be able to find my role and just mesh with it. I'm excited, and I just can't wait to get started."

BIG TEN NOTES

Joe Dempsey

The former five-star prospect from Baltimore Mount Saint Joseph averaged 11.7 points, 6.8 rebounds and 1.2 blocks as a freshman for the Terrapins.

Smith, who was nicknamed "Stix" in high school for his slender frame, gained 30 pounds during his time in Maryland and drastically improved his bench press to a team-high 280 pounds ahead of his sophomore season.

As a sophomore in College Park, Md., Smith improved his scoring (15.5 per game), rebounding (10.5) and shot blocking (2.4), leading Maryland to its first Big Ten regular-season title. Smith earned All-America honors, recording the third-most double doubles in the country (21) and boasting the claim as the lone NCAA player to record at least 60 blocks and 30 three-pointers.

"I couldn't be happier for Jalen and his family tonight," Maryland head coach Mark Turgeon said in a statement. "Jalen entered our program with a plan and put in the work to turn his dream into a reality. To be selected in the top 10 makes it that much more special. I have no doubt Jalen is destined for great things and can't wait to see what's in store for the future."

Minnesota Standout Oturu To Clippers After Trade

Daniel Oturu, a forward/center for Minnesota, was the No. 33 overall pick of the NBA draft and ended up on the Los Angeles Clippers following a trade from the Knicks for a 2023 second-round pick.

Oturu became the 54th Golden Gopher to be chosen in the history of the NBA draft and the first since Kris Humphries went No. 14 overall in 2004.

In his two-year collegiate career, Oturu averaged 15.2 points, 9.0 rebounds and 1.8 blocks while shooting 55.8 percent from the field and 37.0 percent on three-pointers.

The Woodbury, Minn., native ranks fifth in Minnesota men's basketball history in field-goal percentage, No. 14 in blocks (122) and No. 17 in scoring average.

As a sophomore, the former four-star recruit averaged 20.1 points per game and led the Big Ten with 11.3 rebounds and 2.5 blocks per contest. Oturu ranked second in the conference in scoring and first in field-goal percentage at 56.2 percent, earning a spot on the Sporting News' All-America third team.

Spartan Standouts Tillman, Winston Selected In 2nd Round

Cassius Winston and Xavier Tillman thrived for Michigan State, taking home three straight Big Ten regular-season titles and winning the conference tournament before a Final Four run in 2019.

Tillman, a power forward/center, was selected No. 35 overall, joining the Memphis Grizzlies following a trade with the Sacramento Kings for No. 40 pick Robert Woodard and a 2022 second-round pick that reunited him with former AAU and Spartan teammate Jaren Jackson Jr.

Tillman and Jackson arrived in East Lansing together, but Jackson became the No. 4 overall pick by the Grizzlies after just one season. He was best man in Tillman's wedding in summer 2019.

"I don't know if Jaren called us or we called Jaren, but we were on the phone within like 20 seconds of me being picked," Tillman said. "Everybody was so excited."

Tillman won Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year honors in 2019-20, adding averages of 13.7 points on 55.0 percent shooting, 10.3 rebounds, 3.0 assists, 2.1 blocks and 1.2 steals per game. The second-team All-Big Ten honoree expected to be selected earlier than the fifth pick of the second round, and he will not forget how teams passed on him.

"If they didn't think I was ready now, just wait and see what I'm going to be like in the season," Tillman said. "It definitely lit a fire under me. I don't know if it will ever be burnt out until I'm done playing, because I know my worth and I know how hard I've worked to get to where I am."

Winston, a point guard, had to wait even longer than his teammate, not hearing his name until pick No. 53. The 2019 Big Ten Player of the Year was thrilled to hear he was heading to the Washington Wizards following a trade.

"The suspense is crazy," Winston said. "And then when you just hear your name, it's like a relief. You can take a deep breath. Like, 'All right, that happened. We made that happen.' Now things are back in my feel, now I've got more control over what the situation looks like from here on out."

Winston may have been overlooked in the draft after earning back-to-back second-team consensus All-American accolades. The Detroit native averaged 18.6 points, 5.9 assists, 2.5 rebounds and 1.2 steals as a senior, shooting 44.8 percent from the floor, 43.2 percent from three-point range, and 85.2 percent from the foul line for the 22-9 Spartans.

Winston said he spoke with Spartan head coach Tom Izzo, who is currently in isolation with COVID-19, shortly after being selected and the Hall of Fame coach had already spoken with Wizards coaching staff.

"He told me how excited they sounded that they could get me and that I was coming to their organization, how proud he was of me," Winston said. "I've been in a situation before (where) I've been doubted before. I've been told things that I can't do and what things will hold me back, and I know what that situation feels like. And look what I made up before. So he said he has full faith that I go out there and do it again."

Maryland Cancels Matchup With MSU Due To COVID

Maryland canceled its Nov. 21 matchup with Michigan State, citing an increase in players and staff members who had tested positive for COVID-19.

The cancellation marked the 15th game that was postponed or canceled at the Football Bowl Subdivision level in week 12 of the college football season.

The Terrapins are canceling their second straight game after missing their Nov. 14 match-up with Ohio State. Maryland announced that 15 more players and seven staff members had tested positive, including head coach Mike Locksley.

"I am gutted for our team and for our fans," Locksley said in a release. "This team is eager to play and compete and continue the growth we've seen this season. This virus is testing our players and coaches right now, but I have no doubt that we will emerge as a stronger unit for having gone through this together. As for me personally, I am feeling strong, with only minor symptoms. I will continue to lead this program virtually, and our game preparations for Indiana will begin immediately."

According to Big Ten protocols, players who tested positive for the coronavirus must sit out at least 14 days from their original tests to get screened for any cardiac impact from the virus. Once cleared, those players are required to wait another seven days so that they can practice and condition and reacclimate their bodies to playing football.

The Terrapins cannot afford to lose another game from their initial eight-game schedule if they want to qualify for the Big Ten championship game. However, if the average number of conference games played by all teams dips below six, then teams that played within two games of the average number would be considered.

All Is Fair In Love And Big Ten Rivalries

Iowa destroyed Minnesota 35-7 Nov. 13 for the Hawkeyes' sixth straight victory in the football rivalry game. The final score indicated a blowout with not much to write home about. However, a few coaching moves by Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz stirred up some drama.

First, Ferentz decided to go for a two-point conversion with a 26-0 lead in the fourth quarter. Perhaps Ferentz wanted to go up four touchdowns, which happened on the successful attempt, or maybe he was rubbing it in against Minnesota head coach P.J. Fleck.

With 19 seconds left in the game and the Golden Gophers trailing 35-0, the Floyd of Rosedale Trophy was all but locked up, but Ferentz used all three of his timeouts. At that point, it became clear some sort of feud was fueling Ferentz's decisions, including a timeout called by Fleck with Minnesota trying to avoid a shutout.

"They called a timeout, I guess to look at what we're doing and reconsider," Ferentz said. "So, we just kind of wanted to make sure we got a good look at what they were doing. Figured we'd take Floyd with us and leave the timeouts here."

UNLV Running Back Downing Joins Boilermakers Via Portal

Dylan Downing, an UNLV running back, will join Purdue in January as a walk-on in West Lafayette, Ind., where walk-ons have found success.

Downing decided to transfer from UNLV after a few unexpected deaths in his family, citing a desire to be closer to his hometown of Carmel, Ind.

As a senior at Carmel, Downing rushed for 1,092 yards and 12 touchdowns in the top level of Indiana high school football (6A).

At UNLV, he played in two games against San Diego State and Nevada, rushing for 8 yards on three attempts and gaining 8 receiving yards on two catches.

As an unexpected addition, Downing will join Purdue running backs Zander Horvath, King Doerue, Tirek Murphy and Da'Joun Hewitt.

"I've loved Purdue ever since I went to a

2020 Standings			
East Division			
	W	L	Pct.
Ohio State	4	0	1.000
Indiana	4	1	.800
Maryland	2	1	.667
Michigan	2	3	.400
Michigan State	1	3	.250
Rutgers	1	4	.200
Penn State	0	5	.000
West Division			
	W	L	Pct.
Northwestern	5	0	1.000
Wisconsin	2	1	.667
Iowa	3	2	.600
Purdue	2	2	.500
Minnesota	2	3	.400
Illinois	2	3	.400
Nebraska	1	3	.250
Nov. 20 Score			
Minnesota 34, Purdue 31			
Nov. 21 Scores			
Ohio State 42, Indiana 35			
Illinois 41, Nebraska 23			
Northwestern 17, Wisconsin 7			
Iowa 41, Penn State 21			
Michigan 48, Rutgers 42 (3OT)			
Michigan State at Maryland, Canceled			
Nov. 27 Game			
Nebraska at Iowa, 1 p.m.			
Nov. 28 Games			
Ohio State at Illinois, 12 p.m.			
Maryland at Indiana, 12 p.m.			
Penn State at Michigan, 12 p.m.			
Minnesota at Wisconsin, 2 p.m.			
Northwestern at Michigan State, 3:30 p.m.			
Rutgers at Purdue, 4 p.m.			

game there back during high school recruiting," Downing said. "West Lafayette is a beautiful campus. It has everything I want in a school."

Top Performers Across The Big Ten Conference

Indiana quarterback Michael Penix deserves top performer honors despite his Hoosiers falling 42-35 in a heroic comeback effort against Ohio State. The redshirt sophomore gunslinger threw for 491 yards and five touchdowns.

Penix's favorite target, senior wideout Ty Fryfogle snagged seven receptions for 218 yards and three touchdowns. Indiana junior defensive back Jamar Johnson also had a huge game, with five solo tackles, one sack, one pass breakup and two interceptions.

Northwestern redshirt freshman cornerback Brandon Joseph had his second two-interception game of the season in the Wildcats' 17-7 upset of Wisconsin. Joseph added seven tackles (four solo), and his two picks bring his season total to a Big Ten-high five.

Michigan backup quarterback Cade McNamara deserves credit for leading the Wolverines to a comeback 48-42 victory in triple overtime at Rutgers. The sophomore signal caller threw for 260 yards and four touchdowns on 27-for-36 passing and added a rushing score after filling in for junior starter Joe Milton.

Minnesota fourth-year junior running back Mohamed Ibrahim ran for 102 yards and three touchdowns in the Gophers' 34-31 victory over Purdue, giving him 13 rushing scores on the season to lead the Big Ten by seven.

Purdue's wide receiver duo of sophomore standouts David Bell and Rondale Moore thrived in the loss to Minnesota. Bell reeled in eight receptions for 104 yards and two touchdowns, while Moore added 15 catches for 116 yards in his first game back from injury.

Big Ten Provides Flexibility In Basketball Schedule

The Ohio State men's basketball schedule is almost complete after the long-awaited Big Ten schedule was released Nov. 18, a week before the start of the college basketball season.

With a 20-game conference schedule for the third straight season and six nonleague games slotted to date, the Buckeyes are one game shy of coach Chris Holtmann's goal of the maximum 27 allowed by the NCAA in this COVID-19 shortened season.

COURT REPORT

Craig Merz

The logical spot where a seventh nonconference game could be placed is between playing at Notre Dame in the ACC-Big Ten Challenge on Dec. 8 and the Big Ten opener Dec. 16 at Purdue.

"I don't think we're going to play 27 games, but I'm putting a 27-game schedule together," he said in a Nov. 10 Zoom call with the media.

That remark was an acknowledgement that a) scheduling in these chaotic times is tough because of COVID-19 protocols and government safety guidelines and, b) there could be games canceled because of the pandemic, and a nonconference game affected by the coronavirus would likely not be rescheduled.

At least the Big Ten's basketball schedule is more forgiving in that regard, unlike the delayed conference football slate of nine games in nine weeks with no room for adjustment as Ohio State found out when its Nov. 14 game at Maryland was canceled because of an outbreak in the Terrapins' program.

For basketball, there are what the conference described in its release as two sets of "collapsible byes" during the weeks of Jan. 18-21 and Jan. 25-28 and the weeks of Feb. 22-25 and March 1-5 to allow for more maximum flexibility.

Here's how it works for the Buckeyes if there are one or more postponements.

They play at Illinois on Jan. 16 and Wisconsin on Jan. 23, so a rescheduled game is possible in between.

It would be tougher for Ohio State to play a makeup game in the second open window (Jan. 25-28) with the Wisconsin game two days prior followed by games Jan. 27 (Purdue) and Jan. 31 (Michigan State).

The third open dates of Feb. 22-25 would be doable but not preferred because of games Feb. 21 (Michigan) and Feb. 25 (at Michigan State). However, the gap of Feb. 28 (Iowa) and the regular-season finale March 6 (Illinois) would work better for the block of March 1-5.

An argument can be made that teams play on three, sometimes, four consecutive days during the conference tournament so rescheduling for three games in five nights in the regular season should not be a big deal.

However, the difference is that the tournament games are at one site as opposed to possibly having to travel in the other scenarios. Also, the matter of COVID-19 testing and possible positive results makes cramming games into a

short window perilous.

Having four Big Ten games in December, double the number of previous seasons, while students are home for the holidays gives the conference hope that all teams will be able to play the same number of games by the end of the season despite the expected postponements.

After the Buckeyes' conference opener with Purdue, the remainder of the Big Ten games in December are the 23rd vs. Rutgers, the 26th at Northwestern and home to the Nebraska Cornhuskers on the 30th.

Of note, the Big Ten will have four games on Christmas: Wisconsin at Michigan State, Iowa at Minnesota, Michigan at Nebraska, and Maryland at Purdue.

The Big Ten tournament will be March 10-14 at the United Center in Chicago.

Ohio State opens the season hosting Illinois State at Value City Arena on Wed. Nov. 25. The Buckeyes play a single game this season at the Covelli Center against UMass-Lowell on Nov. 29.

The nonconference schedule continues with home games vs. Morehead State (Dec. 2) and Alabama A&M (Dec. 5). The final one is vs. North Carolina in the CBS Sports Classic in Cleveland on Dec. 19.

Per the athletic department policy, fans will not be allowed at Ohio State home games through at least December.

In, Not On, Bubble

If all goes as expected for Holtmann and the Buckeyes, they will earn a spot in the NCAA Tournament and not have far to travel following the Nov. 16 announcement by the men's basketball committee that the Indianapolis area is expected to host every game in response to the threat from COVID-19.

"It became apparent to the committee that conducting the championship at 13 preliminary-round sites spread throughout the country would be very difficult to execute in the current pandemic environment," an NCAA release stated. "The committee has decided the championship should be held in a single geographic area to enhance the safety and well-being of the event."

Indianapolis was already scheduled to host the men's Final Four from April 3-5 at Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts. Nearby venues include Bankers Life Fieldhouse where the Indiana Pacers play their NBA games and Butler's Hinkle Fieldhouse.

There's also the possibility of games within the state, with Indiana in Bloomington and Purdue in West Lafayette among the sites being mentioned.

"It became clear it's not feasible to manage this complex championship in so many different states with the challenges presented by the pandemic," said Dan Gavitt, NCAA senior vice president of basketball.

Moving On

Former Ohio State forward Kaleb Wesson, who left after his junior season was abruptly ended in March by the pandemic, was not selected during the two rounds of the NBA draft on Nov. 18 and is a free agent who can sign with any NBA team or look overseas to start his professional career.

Draft analysts were varied on their

OSU Men's Basketball Signees & Verbal Commits

Players in the class of 2021 who have signed a letter of intent to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Malaki Branham	SG	6-5	190	★★★★	Akron (Ohio) St. Vincent-St. Mary
Kalen Etzler	PF	6-8	200	★★★★	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
Roddy Gayle	SG	6-4	195	★★★★	Youngstown (N.Y.) Lewiston Porter
Bowen Hardman	PF	6-3	160	★★★	Cincinnati Princeton

opinions whether the Westerville (Ohio) South product would be selected. His stock rose when the 6-9 Wesson won a three-point shooting drill at the draft combine. He made 42.5 percent of his 106 treys as a Buckeye last season.

Scouts were also impressed that his weight is around 250 after being 290 following his sophomore season.

Sports Illustrated predicted he would be selected 53rd out of 60 picks. USA Today had him going 39 after forecasting him at 57 a month earlier while ESPN and The Athletic correctly saw that he would go undrafted.

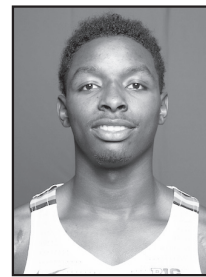
Meanwhile, older brother Andre, a senior last season for the Buckeyes, also was not chosen and is looking overseas as well.

Rocket Man

The Wessons need to look no further than former teammate Jae'Sean Tate (2014-18) for inspiration after he was overlooked in the draft but signed a three-year contract with the Houston Rockets on Nov. 22.

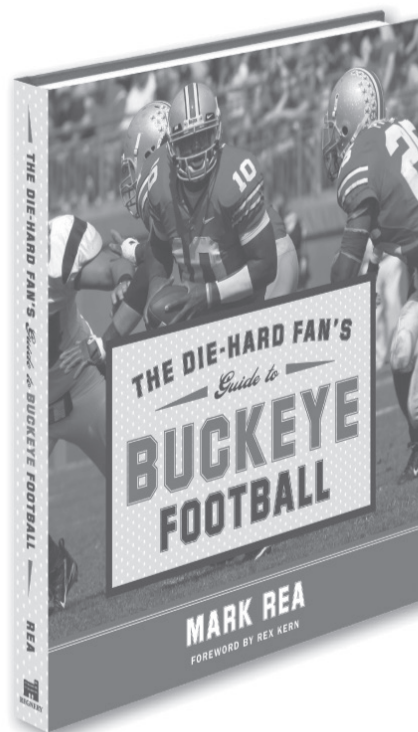
Tate, from nearby Pickerington Central, played in Belgium and Australia the past two seasons after a hand injury prevented him from getting a look by the Milwaukee Bucks after his college career ended.

He played for the Sydney Kings in Australia's National Basketball League last season and drew the attention of his coach, Will Weaver, who recently was hired by the Rockets. Weaver suggested signing Tate.



Jae'Sean Tate

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New-Look Buckeyes To Embrace New Roles

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For the first time in Chris Holtmann's tenure at Ohio State, his team will not feature a Wesson.

Andre and Kaleb Wesson were two of the biggest pieces of the men's basketball program for the past three years, but the Buckeyes have both talented returners and newcomers ready to step up in their place.

After Kaleb Wesson led the team in scoring the past two seasons, Holtmann and Co. will need someone to step into a more prominent role.

When asked who will lead the Buckeyes in scoring, Holtmann said junior guard Duane Washington is expected to take that step, adding that junior wing Justice Sueing, sophomore forward E.J. Liddell, fifth-year senior point guard C.J. Walker, and senior forward Kyle Young could all lead the team on any given night.

"Duane will be up there, for sure," Holtmann said. "He was second on our team last year, so you've got to anticipate that he will. He's playing with great confidence and aggressiveness. He's got to continue to make the right reads and the right plays and understand how teams are going to play him a little bit more. He's no longer kind of on the back end of the scouting report. I think Justice and E.J., as well as C.J., will have a chance to all kind of be up there."

"Really, I think in this group right now, you could look at any number of those five guys, including Kyle, and say that a different guy could lead us in scoring. But I think consistently, you've got to look at probably Duane. Duane's going to be up there."

Junior wings Justin Ahrens and Musa Jallow return from the 21-10 team from last year with sophomore big man Ibrahima Diallo and walk-on forward Harrison Hookfin. Senior guard Jimmy Sotos transferred in from Bucknell, and graduate forward Seth Towns came in from Harvard. The incoming freshmen are wing Eugene Brown, forward Zed Key and guard Meechie Johnson, who decided to reclassify from the 2021 class to join the team in December.

Without a traditional go-to big man in the paint such as Kaleb Wesson, Ohio State's offense will look different in 2020-21. Holtmann's squad still possesses solid size, with nine players standing 6-6 or taller.

"I think what it could allow us to do potentially is play a little bit differently offensively," Holtmann said. "I'm not saying we won't play through the post, because we will. We have guys that are really good in there. E.J.'s really good in there, Zed is really good in there. It will allow us to open the basket a little bit more offensively."

While the collective size can help offensively, Holtmann likes how the length of his new group can have an impact on the defensive end.

"My concern is being able to impact two-point field-goal percentage, which we've always done really well defensively," Holtmann said. "That's probably my biggest concern, how (their size) will affect that end."

The following is a look at the 2020-21 Buckeyes by position, in alphabetical order.

Guards

Meechie Johnson, 6-2, 185, Fr. – Johnson is perhaps the biggest question mark on Ohio State's 2020-21 roster. First, he was a top-50 recruit in the country as an underclassman before he tore his ACL as a sophomore at Cleveland Garfield Heights.

The talented combo guard transferred to Willoughby (Ohio) Andrews Osborne Academy for his junior year, but he sat out to ensure his knee fully recovered and then transferred back to Garfield Heights with state title aspirations.

Johnson, the nation's No. 22 point guard and No. 116 overall prospect, showcased his improved strength and ability in AAU during the summer. How well he performed must have caught the attention of the Ohio State coaching staff, because once Utah State transfer Abel Porter was ruled medically unable to play, Johnson reclassified with plans to join the team in December.

It is possible the jump to Big Ten basketball will be overwhelming for Johnson, who has not even played a high school game since March 2019. It is also possible that Johnson proves to be too talented to keep off the floor as a true freshman and becomes a secret weapon for the Buckeyes.

Jimmy Sotos, 6-3, 200, Sr. (11.5 points per game, 3.9 assists per game at Bucknell) – Sotos had initially planned on sitting out this season following his transfer from Bucknell, but after Porter was medically ruled unable to play, Ohio State sought immediate eligibility for the 6-3 guard and received it.

At Bucknell, Sotos led the team in scoring, assists and steals (1.6 steals per outing). He shot 40.6 percent from the floor, 37.1 percent from beyond the arc, and 80.0 percent from the charity stripe.

Sotos gives the Buckeyes much-needed guard depth behind returning starters Walker and Washington. How quickly Sotos picks up on the demands of playing in Holtmann's backcourt remains to be seen, but he gives Ohio State an extra ball handler off the bench.

C.J. Walker, 6-1, 195, 5th-Sr. (8.7 ppg, 3.5 apg) – Walker impressed in his first season as a Buckeye after transferring from Florida State and sitting out the 2018-19 season. He averaged 8.7 points, 3.5 assists and 3.1 rebounds per game in 31 games, including 29 starts.

The 6-1 playmaking guard hit 42.7 percent of his field goals and 32.1 percent of his three-pointers, and he shot 81.2 percent from the foul line. Walker stepped up his game down the stretch before Ohio State's season was abruptly ended due to COVID-19, and he finished the year as the team leader in steals (40) and assists (107).

"He's a terrific kid," Holtmann said. "He's an exceptional leader. He really does embrace how we want to do things. He's an everyday guy. It was really good to see him and Duane flourish together last year in the backcourt in our stretch

run. We're going to need him to take another step forward in every area, be a little more consistent shooting the ball, be a little more highly detailed defensively. Sometimes he's got to guard the best perimeter player. (He needs to) continue to lead at the high level he has, but I love where he's at right now."

Duane Washington, 6-3, 210, Jr. (11.5 ppg, 1.4 apg) – Washington made the biggest jump in scoring average from the 2018-19 squad, scoring 11.5 points per game after averaging 7.0 as a freshman.

The former three-star prospect from Chatsworth (Calif.) Sierra Canyon also improved his efficiency, shooting 40.3 percent from the floor and 39.3 from deep after hitting 37.0 of his field goals and just 30.6 percent of his threes.

Washington, a native of Grand Rapids, Mich., improved his all-around game as a sophomore, which helped him earn more playing time. He played 24.9 minutes per game last season after averaging 17.2 minutes per contest as a freshman, but the talented combo guard said he has much more to enhance.

"I'm trying to just round my game out," Washington said. "My freshman and sophomore year I was just kind of fixed on this scoring deal. That was my main goal. I'm wired to do that, that's what I've been doing my whole life. Finding other ways to affect the game, whether it's just my presence on the court or it's me passing the ball, or it's me being the communicator – all these things go into it, and that's what I've been working on this offseason to become a better player all around instead of just focusing on only scoring."

From watching extra film, Washington came to understand that sometimes he was forcing up shots when the best thing for the team would have been making a pass to an open teammate.

"Little stuff like that, it makes the game easier for me, makes the game easier for my teammates," Washington said. "The more I do create, now they've got to be honest. Now they've got to be fair. It's not just worrying about me just going to the basket and everybody sucking in and then I'm just still throwing up some crap. All that stuff, it's hard for me to understand during that time. Still, to this day, I don't know why. But looking at it now, I have a totally different view on it. I think that's for the better."

Now an upperclassman, Washington has taken on a bigger leadership role and is eager to display how much he has improved as a complete player.

"You've got to be mature to be the guy that takes the tough shots at the end of games," Washington said. "You've got to be mature to be a leader on a team, mentally and physically. You've got to be ready for all the challenges, all the different defenses they throw at you. All those kind of things are set in stone into my brain now. I'm just super excited for this year and taking a very serious approach."

Wings

Justin Ahrens, 6-6, 195, Jr. (2.9 ppg, 1.3 rebounds per game) – Perhaps no player on Ohio State's roster has a more defined role than Ahrens, and that role is knocking down three-pointers.

Ahrens' effectiveness from deep is essential to the Buckeyes' floor spacing, because he has proved to be lethal from long range if he gets even an inkling of space.

Despite battling through a back injury last season, Ahrens improved his efficiency from beyond the arc. After shooting a solid 38.8 percent on triples as a freshman, Ahrens connected on 40.4 of his three-point attempts last season.

Naturally, when discussing the need for consistent three-point shooting for the new-look

Buckeyes, Holtmann brought up the former three-star recruit from Versailles, Ohio.

"Justin Ahrens is going to have to provide some really valuable things in that area," Holtmann said, "and he's shot it exceptionally well."

Eugene Brown, 6-6, 195, Fr. – Brown joins the Buckeyes as a three-star prospect out of Decatur (Ga.) Southwest DeKalb. The 6-6 wing has an all-around skill-set, evidenced by his high school totals of 1,120 points, 584 rebounds, 149 steals, 139 assists and 138 blocks in 97 games.

A solid ball handler and scorer, Brown can play off-guard for the Buckeyes, and his length and defensive prowess make him able to take on small forward responsibilities as well.

The DeKalb Country Co-Player of the Year was also named the defensive player of the year by the Georgia Coaches Association, and his ability at that end has already impressed the fourth-year Buckeye coach.

"Gene has shown the ability to defensively be able to help us," Holtmann said. "He's got to continue to improve some of his offensive skills and shooting at this level."

Musa Jallow, 6-5, 210, Jr. (2.9 ppg, 2.9 rpg in 2018-19) – Jallow became an afterthought on the Buckeyes' roster when he was forced to redshirt last season after undergoing season-ending surgery on his ankle.

The statistics do not jump off the page for Jallow, who is likely the best defender on the team, but he started 10 games as a 17-year-old freshman in 2017-18.

After averaging 2.5 points per game as a freshman, Jallow averaged 2.9 points in 2018-19 and started 13 games. He is best known for how he finished his sophomore season, however.

In the final three games of the 2018-19 campaign, Jallow averaged 8.0 points, 4.7 rebounds and 1.0 steals per contest, shooting 81.8 percent from the floor and 75.0 percent from deep.

The fourth-year junior wing is questionable for the start of the season due to his recovering ankle, but he is trending in the right direction.

Justice Sueing, 6-7, 215, Jr. (14.3 ppg, 6.0 rpg in 2018-19 at California) – After sitting out last season due to NCAA transfer rules, Sueing is expected to be an important part of what Ohio State can do this year.

Sueing, a Honolulu native, led Cal with 14.3 points and 6.0 rebounds per game as a sophomore in 2018-19. He had success immediately in college, ranking second for the Golden Bears in scoring and rebounding with 13.8 points and 5.4 boards per contest as a true freshman.

The former Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei standout was able to practice with the team last season, and he is expected to be one of the best all-around players for Holtmann.

"He's tested out as our best athlete," Holtmann said. "When you see him move, for a guy that's a good 6-7, he's got good ball skills. His shooting has continued to improve. I think we've got to tighten up some areas defensively with him. He really rebounds the ball well. His ball skills and his perimeter skills really allow us to move him around."

Although Sueing does not have the typical build of a primary ball handler, Holtmann likes how he makes plays for himself and others. The coach went as far as to give him the high praise of comparing him to former Ohio State standout Jae'Sean Tate.

"We really do see Justice as a bit of a playmaker for us, even though he's 6-7 and a bigger guy," Holtmann said. "J.T., when he was here our first year, we played him a good amount at playmaking positions, even at the point spot. He's not identical to J.T., J.T. had such an incredible motor as we all know. Their games have some similarities, but they're different players."



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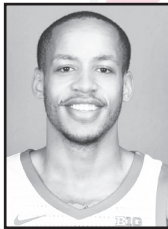
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2020-21 Ohio State Men's Basketball Projected Starting Lineup

13 • C.J. Walker • G
Ht./Wt.: 6-1, 195 • Class: 5th-Sr.



Paced Ohio State with 40 steals and posted the best assist-to-turnover on the squad at 2.0 last season.

4 • Duane Washington • G
Ht./Wt.: 6-3, 210 • Class: Jr.



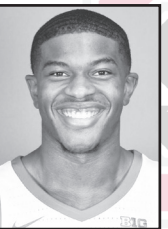
Led the Buckeyes with 55 three-pointers made and ranked second in free-throw percentage at 83.3 percent last year.

14 • Justice Sueing • F
Ht./Wt.: 6-7, 215 • Class: Jr.



Came from Cal where he led the Golden Bears with 14.3 points and 6.0 rebounds per game in 2018-19.

32 • E.J. Liddell • F
Ht./Wt.: 6-7, 240 • Class: So.



Finished second on the team in blocks with 29 and fourth in rebounding at 3.8 boards per outing in just 16.6 minutes per game.

25 • Kyle Young • F
Ht./Wt.: 6-8, 225 • Class: Sr.



Led team in field-goal percentage at 58.5 percent and finished second on the team in assist-to-turnover ratio at 1.6 in 2019-20.

2020-21 Ohio State Men's Basketball Roster/Schedule

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown/Previous School
0	Abel Porter	G	6-3	200	5th-Sr.	Farmington, Utah/Utah State
1	Jimmy Sotos	G	6-3	200	Sr.	Elk Grove Village, Ill./Bucknell
2	Musa Jallow	G	6-5	210	Jr.	Bloomington, Ind./North
3	Eugene Brown	G	6-6	195	Fr.	Conyers, Ga./Southwest DeKalb
4	Duane Washington	G	6-3	210	Jr.	Grand Rapids, Mich./Sierra Canyon
10	Justin Ahrens	F	6-6	195	Jr.	Versailles, Ohio/Versailles
13	C.J. Walker	G	6-1	195	5th-Sr.	Indianapolis, Ind./Florida State
14	Justice Sueing	F	6-7	215	Jr.	Honolulu, Hawaii/California
15	Ibrahima Diallo	C	6-10	220	So.	Saly, Senegal/Prolific Prep
23	Zed Key	F	6-8	245	Fr.	Bay Shore, N.Y./Long Island Lutheran
25	Kyle Young	F	6-8	225	Sr.	Canton, Ohio/Jackson
31	Seth Towns	F	6-8	230	Gr.	Columbus, Ohio/Harvard
32	E.J. Liddell	F	6-7	240	So.	Belleville, Ill./West
42	Harrison Hookfin	F	6-6	195	Jr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Lebanon

Head Coach – Chris Holtmann (Taylor, 1994). **Assistant Coaches** – Ryan Pedon (Wooster, 2000); Terry Johnson (Lamar, 1996); Jake Diebler (Valparaiso, 2009). **Director of Professional Development** – Terrence Dials (Ohio State). **Director of Basketball Operations** – David Egelhoff (Ohio State, 2001). **Special Assistant to the Head Coach** – Mike Netti (Syracuse, 2002). **Assistant Director of Strength and Conditioning** – Quadrian Banks (Texas, 2003). **Coordinator of Recruiting and Operations** – Kyle Davis (Ohio State, 2013). **Program Assistant** – Robbie Rucki (Ohio State, 2016).

Schedule:

Nov. 25 ILLINOIS STATE, 2 p.m.; **29** UMASS-LOWELL, 12 p.m.
Dec. 2 MOREHEAD STATE, 5 p.m.; **5** ALABAMA A&M; **8** Notre Dame; **16** Purdue; **19** North Carolina at Cleveland, 2 p.m.; **23** RUTGERS; **26** Northwestern; **30** NEBRASKA.
Jan. 3 Minnesota; **6** PENN STATE; **9** Rutgers; **13** NORTHWESTERN; **18** Illinois; **23** Wisconsin; **27** PURDUE; **31** MICHIGAN STATE.
Feb. 4 Iowa; **8** Maryland; **13** INDIANA; **18** Penn State; **21** MICHIGAN; **25** Michigan State; **28** IOWA.
March 6 ILLINOIS.

We do see him as playmaking through him. We're going to need that."

Forwards

Ibrahima Diallo, 6-10, 220, So. (1.3 ppg, 1.9 rpg) – Diallo, a former three-star prospect from Napa (Calif.) Prolific Prep, came to Columbus as a developmental player. While he is still a work in progress, Diallo possesses size and length that the Buckeyes generally lack.

As a true freshman, Diallo played just 40 minutes on the season and averaged 1.3 points and 1.9 boards primarily in mop-up duty. He displayed natural shot-blocking instincts in his limited action, however, tallying three blocks and giving a glimpse into what he could become.

This year may not be Diallo's season to break out, but the Saly, Senegal, native has been steadily improving ever since becoming a Buckeye.

"Things have slowed down for Ibrahima a little bit, and that's been a good thing," Holtmann said. "He's been able to pick up things better than last year. Now granted, we have not done a whole lot of team stuff (yet). He's in a little bit better shape than he was. I think the biggest thing is his ability to pick up things in practice and things we're asking him to do have come quicker because he's been a year in our system."

"That was the biggest impediment to his growth last year. It just took him a little while to pick up some things. Perhaps there were some language issues there. But he's a bright kid, he's doing well, and I'm excited about getting to practice with him."

Harrison Hookfin, 6-6, 195, Jr. (0.3 ppg, 0.6 rpg) – A high-energy, high-effort play-

er like Hookfin brings attitude and athleticism to the practice floor. Walk-ons such as Hookfin are the unsung heroes of high-level basketball programs, pushing their teammates to improve without much shine of their own.

Hookfin scored his first basket as a Buckeye in 2019-20, and he could fill in as a physical presence if injury issues arise.

Zed Key, 6-8, 245, Fr. – Key flew under the radar as an extremely athletic big man, and Holtmann and his staff gladly added him to help fill the void left by Kaleb Wesson.

The 6-8 forward led Long Island (N.Y.) Lutheran to a 22-3 record as a senior, averaging a team-high 18 points, 8.7 rebounds, and 2.0 blocks per outing. Key was extremely efficient in high school, shooting 68.2 percent from the floor.

A three-star recruit, Key played his best ball against elite competition. He led his team to victory over MaxPreps No. 2 Sierra Canyon, scoring 25 points and grabbing 12 rebounds. In his next game, Key dropped 37 points and snagged 16 boards in a win over No. 11 Hillside (N.J.) The Patrick School.

"Zed has been, as we expected, physical," Holtmann said. "He's 6-8 with a 7-1 wingspan, about 255 pounds, and he's used a lot of that 255 pounds in our workouts. He's a strong kid."

E.J. Liddell 6-7, 240, So. (6.7 ppg, 3.8 rpg) – One of the more highly touted and talented players at Ohio State, Liddell is projected to elevate his game to another level in his second season.

After coming to Columbus as the No. 8 power forward and No. 44 overall prospect nationally, Liddell demonstrated drastic improvement as a

true freshman. Holtmann has high expectations for the former Belleville (Ill.) West standout.

"He'll be critical for us, there's no question," Holtmann said. "I think it's a big jump to go from where he was to, say, lead you in scoring every night. That's a significant jump. What I think he's going to have to be is on a consistent basis, he's going to need to be one of our better players on both ends. That means his game is going to have to continue to grow. He's going to shoot more from the perimeter than he ever has, he's obviously going to be utilized through the post more than he ever has."

"He's got to continue to guard with more versatility than what he did last year. He's in better shape, he's more consistent in his effort than certainly what he was last year. He's going to be critical. I think we are going to have to understand he's still a sophomore, but he's certainly going to be a more featured part of what we do this year because we're going to do that."

Liddell is a projected starter for the Buckeyes after coming off the bench in all 31 of his appearances in year one. The 6-7 forward displayed his ability to score in the paint or in the midrange area. Defensively, he impressed with excellent timing as a shot blocker, tallying 29 blocks to rank second on the squad.

When he flashed, Liddell was one of the best players on the floor as a first-year forward. Developing more consistency will be key to him taking the next step. While Liddell may be the Buckeyes' most talented all-around player, Holtmann emphasized the importance of not overwhelming him as an underclassman.

"I think to expect a sophomore to be someone you're going to run 100 percent of the offense through in the best league in the country is probably too much to put on him right now," Holtmann said. "I think (E.J. is) going to have some guys in Justice and Duane and C.J. that can do some of those things in terms of playmaking and creating offense, and then Kyle can also play off those guys a little bit."

Seth Towns, 6-8, 230, Gr. (16.0 ppg, 5.7 rpg in 2017-18 at Harvard) – Towns is one of the biggest question marks for the 2019-20 Ohio State men's basketball team. The sharpshooting Harvard transfer has not played since 2017-18 due to multiple injuries, and he is expected to miss at least the first month of the season while continuing to recover from a January follow-up surgery.

"I'm obviously hungry to get back on the court," Towns said. "I'll play with tons of passion, as I always have. I can score, shoot the ball, but I'm mainly set on coming back and just trying to make all the right plays and enjoy the game as I once did. So, not too much trying to prove myself as a scorer but just enjoying the game, having fun and winning with my teammates."

Though he was a dynamic scorer in the Ivy League, Towns' focus is on "trying to make all the right plays." That selfless attitude aptly represents what the Buckeyes will be getting in the former Ivy League Player of the Year.

After averaging 12.3 points and 4.4 rebounds per game as a freshman in 2016-17, Towns improved to 16.0 points and 5.7 rebounds per game as a sophomore. Towns earned AP All-America honorable mention and was named the conference Player of the Year for his per-

formance in 2017-18, when he shot 44.1 percent from three.

With such an impressive résumé to go along with his 6-8 frame and three-point shooting ability, Towns could have gone almost anywhere in the country as a transfer. The Columbus native and Columbus Northland product ended up choosing the Buckeyes over Duke, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Syracuse and Virginia among others.

"There were so many great things about Ohio State that I couldn't overlook," Towns said. "It's home. Basketball-wise, I thought it was a perfect fit, just the game style and defensive scheme and all the tactical things. And then my trust in Coach Holtmann, which grew while I was in high school and he recruited me at Butler. And then the cherry on top is I've been a Buckeye fan all my life, so I finally get to live out that dream."

Kyle Young, 6-8, 225, Sr. (7.5 ppg, 5.8 rpg) – Young is the motor that makes the Buckeyes go. His impact is not always visible in the box score, but the 6-8 forward makes plays that are conducive to winning.

With Kaleb Wesson opting to pursue a professional career, Holtmann and his staff have a huge void at the five-spot. Though he stands at 6-8 and just 225 pounds, Young plays with a physicality that allows him to battle in the paint with bigger players, and he uses his athleticism to compensate for a lack of size.

"I cut off a lot of body fat, too, and gained more muscle," Young said. "That's something I was working on in the offseason. Playing in the post is something I've been doing and I like to do, so I'm just going to keep doing that and get used to playing against guys that have more weight on me. I just have to use my quickness and that aspect and try to use my other attributes to my advantage."

After averaging 6.0 points and 4.4 rebounds per game on a team-high 67.2 percent shooting as a sophomore, Young upped his production to 7.5 points and 5.8 boards per contest last season and still led Ohio State at 58.5-percent shooting.

Young has shot only 13.8 percent from beyond the arc during his Ohio State career, but the former Massillon (Ohio) Jackson standout has good form and has made great strides in that area during the elongated offseason.

"Kyle Young has shot the ball exceptionally well," Holtmann said Oct. 2. "Everything we've evaluated this summer, everything we've charted – and we chart every shooting drill – he has been top four on our team in three-point shooting."

With his improved shooting touch, Holtmann is excited about the potential of what Young can bring to his team. It is quite possible Young could end up being the Buckeyes' most important player with his ability to spread the floor and protect the paint as an undersized center.

"He's got to take a jump for us offensively," Holtmann said recently. "I'm not saying he's got to double his output, but it's got to be a significant number increase for us to be good. And then he's also got to provide some of his defensive physicality. Albeit he's undersized, but he's definitely going to have to provide that for this group. The defensive side, right now, is my biggest overall concern with our group. We have to continue to get better in that area."

Experienced Buckeyes Bring High Expectations

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Last season, it was hard to know what to expect from the Ohio State women's basketball team. The Buckeyes were coming off a down 2018-19 campaign and a faced a handful of departures from graduate transfers, but they brought in seven freshmen in one of the top recruiting classes in the country.

In the early parts of the season, despite a huge upset of second-ranked Louisville, it looked like Ohio State might still be a year out from making the NCAA tournament, sitting at 11-9 through the first 20 games. But then, starting with a comeback overtime win against Nebraska, the Buckeyes won seven of their last nine regular-season games and rode that momentum into the Big Ten tournament.

There, Ohio State won three straight games against Minnesota, Iowa and Michigan, made the tournament finals and ultimately fell to top-ranked Maryland to end the surprise run. But the Buckeyes proved ready to make a jump as a team ready for the NCAA tournament a season ago and are looking to improve even further in this upcoming campaign.

"We're excited," sophomore guard Jacy Sheldon told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "We think we have a great team, and we think we can do really well this year, so we definitely have high expectations for ourselves. We have a lot of new people as well this year, so we're really excited. We're playing really well together, and our expectations are high this year like they always are."

Even without losing a core member to graduation, Ohio State did lose some players through the transfer portal, with guard Kaelynn Satterfield departing to Xavier midseason and guards Kierstan Bell (Florida Gulf Coast), Janai Crooms (Michigan State) and forward Aixa Wone (Georgia Tech) also leaving through the portal.

The Buckeyes still return their entire starting five and a large piece of their production from a year ago. But this season, along with the typical hurdles that come with a new season, Ohio State will have to deal with something entirely new: the COVID-19 pandemic. When asked

about season expectations, Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff made sure to emphasize to BSB the importance of staying safe and healthy during such a tumultuous time.

"I like our team," McGuff said. "We have really good kids, the chemistry is good. They're working really hard. I just think so much is going to depend on staying healthy, hopefully staying out of COVID, and it depends on what happens with our opponents, too, and the games we can play."

"I guess as much as anything, I'm hoping our upperclassmen can give us great leadership knowing that we're going to have a lot of curveballs thrown at us this year and there's going to be a lot of things that we can't control that we have to fight through. I think a lot of that for a lot of teams, that's going to determine their season, is just how well they handle the whole environment."

The following is a position-by-position breakdown (in alphabetical order) of the 2020-21 Ohio State women's basketball team.

Forward

Tanaya Beacham, 6-1, 5th-Sr. (10.8 points per game, 5.5 rebounds per game) – Beacham is one of two Ohio State transfers to join the team for this season and will be the only one to play for the Buckeyes in 2020-21.

The 6-1 forward comes to Ohio State as a graduate transfer from Toledo, where Beacham played in 31 games last season, 20 of which were starts, and averaged over 10 points and five rebounds per game while shooting 58.3 percent from the field.

McGuff said that Beacham will bring more of an inside presence to the team compared to the other forwards already on the roster.

"She's a great kid, she plays extremely hard, and plus she's got some experience as a college player," McGuff said. "Tanaya's spent more time around the basket, and she's a tough, rugged defender, rebounder, and can really score around the basket, too."

Beacham was also a team captain in her final season with the Rockets and has 95 games of collegiate experience to offer for her new team, even if she is not the loudest player on the floor, according to senior guard Braxtin Miller.

"She's not as much vocal, but she definitely

leads by experience," Miller told BSB. "She's always willing to listen, and then from there just she's always working hard and doing her best. I think she just leads with that and helping others and showing others that this is the right thing to do."

Gabby Hutcherson, 6-2, Fr. – Ohio State dropped its recruiting class size down from seven to three but still brought in some major talent. Hutcherson is one of those players, and she is ranked a three-star by ESPN but a five-star and the No. 12 prospect in the 2020 class by Prospect Nation.

"Gabby's really long and skilled and can run like a deer," McGuff said. "I think our strength staff will really be of great benefit to her, but she has a lot of potential and she's a great kid with a great personality."

In her senior season at Westerville (Ohio) South, Hutcherson averaged 14.4 points and was named OCC-Buckeye Player of the Year while also being named to the all-district first team. Her ability gave the 6-2 forward a lot of options in her recruitment, but Hutcherson's mom – Mindy Smith, who played for the Buckeyes from 1987-90 – created a fandom from a young age, and it led to her commitment to the local Buckeyes.

"My dad and obviously my mom are huge Ohio State fans, so I just grew up being a Buckeye my whole entire life," Hutcherson told BSB. "I always thought Ohio State was going to be the place I'd go ever since I was younger."

Dorka Juhasz, 6-4, Jr. (13.2 points per game, 9.4 rebounds per game) – The expectations continue to grow for Juhasz, who comes into her junior season as a preseason All-Big Ten member and one of 50 players nationally placed on the Naismith Trophy Watch List.

The preseason honors come after her second straight season of leading Ohio State in points and rebounds and doing so with efficient numbers both overall from the field (47.6 percent) and from three (39.6 percent).

Juhasz told BSB that the honors have meant a lot to her and that she has used them to deal with the uncertainties with the season, as well as for motivation to continue to improve as a player.

"Just to see my hard work and spending the whole summer here just working on basketball just to be able to play and everything, it kind of gives an extra motivation to me that hey, this is

worth it," Juhasz said. "Obviously it gives me a little pressure this year that hey, you're one of the oldest ones, and people are watching you, so this is the time when I can show how I can play and everything, so I'm really excited about it."

The third-year forward made improvements across the board between her freshman and sophomore seasons and said she is again trying to make another step up in her game for this season.

But what does that jump look like after such an impressive sophomore year? According to McGuff, it will be displayed through continued growth in her shooting numbers, as well as an ability to defend different positions on the floor.

"I think you saw great improvement from freshman year to sophomore year, and I think this year, you'll see even more of an ability to play really efficiently on the perimeter," McGuff said. "You'll also see her be able to defend smaller, quicker players on the perimeter. I think those are two areas that she needs to take a step with, and she's worked really hard on that in the offseason."

Rebeka Mikulasikova, 6-4, So. (7.7 ppg, 2.9 rpg) – Despite being a 6-4 freshman forward, Mikulasikova was the most efficient shooter on the entire Ohio State roster last season, leading the team in field-goal percentage (50.3) and three-point percentage (46.3), connecting on 25 shots from deep on the season.

That range helped to open the offense with her on the floor, but McGuff is also looking for some improvement from Mikulasikova inside the arc so that she can truly be a matchup nightmare for the opposition.

"Unlike a lot of post players, she really shot it well from the perimeter," McGuff said. "I think this year, hopefully, can be even be a little more efficient around the basket to bring a little bit more balance to her game."

That improvement in the interior starts with post moves, something that Juhasz noted as a major development for Mikulasikova in practices and something that McGuff said has been a focus for the sophomore forward in the preseason.

"We've certainly tried to do that, just for our team in particular, because she has the ability just to give us a little more balance in what we're doing and how we're playing," McGuff said of improved play inside.

Aaliyah Patty, 6-3, Jr. (7.8 ppg, 5.4 rpg) – Patty was one of the more stable pieces of Ohio State's roster last season, finishing fifth on the team in scoring but second in rebounds, blocks (33) and field goal percentage (48.6).

As a sophomore, Patty appeared in every game and started in 31 of them but continued to struggle to add a three-point shot to her repertoire, though there were some minor improvements. After hitting only 18.8 percent of her attempts from deep as a freshman, Patty upped her success rate to 28.8 percent.

That is a number that McGuff is hoping will only go up as Patty worked in practices and during the summer to improve her three-point capabilities.

"She had a really good offseason," McGuff said. "She has worked on her perimeter skills. She's much more comfortable on the perimeter, and so I think you'll see a very balanced Aaliyah Patty where she can score around the basket or be comfortable playing around the perimeter."

Guard

Hevynne Bristow, 6-1, So. (2.7 ppg, 2.2 rpg) – Bristow comes over to the Buckeyes from Providence as a transfer, and she will have three years of eligibility.

But she will not be joining Ohio State on the court this season, taking a redshirt year due to



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OHIO STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

2020-21 Ohio State Women's Basketball Projected Starting Lineup

0 • Madison Greene • G
Ht.: 5-8 • Class: So.



Started in 21 games as a true freshman and had three 20-point games in Big Ten play against Indiana, Michigan and Minnesota.

4 • Jacy Sheldon • G
Ht.: 5-10 • Class: So.



Made 24 starts as a true freshman and finished with a team-high 12.8 points per game in the Big Ten tournament.

10 • Braxtin Miller • G
Ht.: 5-11 • Class: Sr.



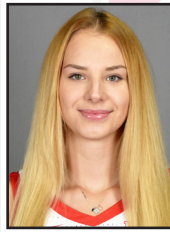
Led the team with 114 assists and 59 steals in her first season with the program after transferring from Oklahoma State.

32 • Aaliyah Patty • F
Ht.: 6-3 • Class: Jr.



Shot 48.6 percent from the field and was second on the team in rebounds (5.4 rpg) and blocks (1.0 bpg).

14 • Dorka Juhasz • F
Ht.: 6-4 • Class: Jr.



Led Ohio State in scoring (13.2 ppg) and rebounding (9.4 rpg) as a sophomore and was named to the All-Big Ten team.

2020-21 Ohio State Women's Basketball Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Yr.	Hometown/Previous School
0	Madison Greene	G	5-8	So.	Pickerington, Ohio/Central
1	Rikki Harris	G	5-10	R-Fr.	Indianapolis, Ind./North Central
2	Gabby Hutcherson	F	6-2	Fr.	Westerville, Ohio/South
3	Anyssa Jones	G	5-10	Fr.	Westerville, Ohio/South
4	Jacy Sheldon	G	5-10	So.	Dublin, Ohio/Coffman
5	Kateri Poole	G	5-8	Fr.	Bronx, N.Y./South Shore
10	Braxtin Miller	G	5-11	Sr.	Dayton, Ohio/Oklahoma State
14	Dorka Juhasz	F	6-4	Jr.	Pecs, Hungary/PTE Babits
21	Hevynne Bristow	G	6-1	So.	Brooklyn, N.Y./Providence
23	Rebeka Mikulášiková	F	6-4	So.	Nitra, Slovakia/Piaristické Gymnasium
32	Aaliyah Patty	F	6-3	Jr.	Lombard, Ill./Montini Catholic
35	Tanaya Beacham	F	6-1	Gr.	Youngstown, Ohio/Toledo

Head Coach – Kevin McGuff (St. Joseph's, 1992). **Assistant Coaches** – Simon Harris (N.C. State, 2008); Carla Morrow (Tulsa, 2002); Tamika Jeter (Connecticut, 2002). **Director of Basketball Operations** – Beth Howe (Ohio State, 2005). **Video Coordinator** – Ryan Murray (Ohio State, 2008). **Special Assistant to the Head Coach** – Reid Guzdzanski (Ohio State, 2014). **Senior Director for Sport Performance** – Heather Mason.

OSU Women's Basketball Signees

Players in the class of 2021 who have signed a letter of intent 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

No. 12 in the Big Ten, and her 2.5 assist-to-turnover ratio ranking atop the conference. She was also seventh in the Big Ten with 59 steals.

"She played really well at the end of the year last year, and she's kind of picked up right where she left off last year and been really consistent in the preseason so far," McGuff said.

Where Miller needs to improve is her shooting percentage, which at 32.6 percent was the lowest on the team from anyone with multiple attempts. She also shot just 25.0 percent from three on 104 attempts.

Miller has never been the most efficient scorer, as she shot 31.9 percent from the field and 32.7 from deep in her final season at Oklahoma State, but McGuff said that a lot of her issues in that department came from forcing up bad shots and trying to carry too much on her own back for the team.

"It's interesting because early in the year last year, there was just a lot on her shoulders because we had so many new people," McGuff said. "I think because she had to do so much, it kind of affected her game a little bit, but once the team started to get better and people started to get more experience and she could kind of settle into – obviously still continuing to lead and help younger people, but not have to shoulder so much, she shot it and just was much more efficient offensively late in the year, and that's what she looks like right now."

Kateri Poole, 5-8, Fr. – Poole is the lone five-star commit, according to ESPN, in Ohio State's 2020 class, and she has a lot of potential coming out of Bronx (N.Y.) South Shore.

"She's somebody that we saw from a young age can really play fast and really make plays going at a high rate of speed," McGuff said. "She's got a lot of talent and a lot of potential, and I think she can be really special here."

Poole was named Miss New York Basketball in her final high school season and had averages of 18 points, six rebounds and five assists. That ability has been on display early on, and Patty told BSB that she expects big things from Poole, even in year one.

"She creates a lot off the dribble, off screens," Patty said. "Handling the ball she's very strong. She controls the court, she controls what everyone does, and she makes everyone better around her. She can make an impact right away."

Jacy Sheldon, 5-10, So. (9.6 ppg, 2.8 rpg) – Much like Greene, Sheldon started out as a player coming off the bench but found her way into the starting lineup and stayed there, making 24 starts in her true freshman season.

She capitalized on that opportunity, finishing third on the team in scoring while boasting impressive field-goal percentage numbers, both overall (48.3 percent) and from three (34.6). She was not shy from behind the arc either, with her 44 three-point makes finishing second on the team to Bell. Sheldon also thrived on the fast break, leading the Big Ten in points per transition.

Sheldon's three-point shooting was solid but has the potential to be even stronger this season, and she was also a factor on defense, with her 45 steals trailing only Miller on the team last season. The second-year guard played her best basketball down the stretch and has the potential to grow into a major scorer for the Buckeyes this year.

"She could make a big jump in terms of her contributions, and she worked really hard in the offseason," McGuff said. "She's a little stronger. She was really quick and in good shape last year, but she got a little bit stronger this year and I think just a little more physical, and I think she's got a chance to have a really great year."

Sheldon says her biggest area to improve is to become more of a leader in her sophomore season as one of the returning starters from a season ago.

"I think, me being a returner, having one year under my belt, I think I'm more in a position to lead this year, which I'm excited about, especially because we have so many newcomers," Sheldon said. "Just offensively and defensively, being more vocal, being more involved. I'm excited for this whole year, whenever it comes."

NCAA transfer rules, which is something that Bristow actually wanted to have in order to allow her to develop as a player.

"That was a strong reason why I came here," Bristow told BSB. "I'm mentally prepared to just get better and work on skills that held me back from progressing last year."

When she does play for the Buckeyes in 2021-22, McGuff said that he expects her to mesh well with the fast-paced play that Ohio State is known for.

"I think she's a good fit in our system," McGuff said. "She can play in an up-tempo system. She's a really good athlete, and she's got a great motor and plays hard."

Madison Greene, 5-8, So. (7.7 ppg, 2.1 rpg) – Greene started last season as a player off the bench but went on to start 21 games in her first year with the team and became one of the main contributors on the offensive end of the floor by the end of the season.

The 5-8 guard's point totals went up to 8.6 points per game in Big Ten play, and her ability to break out for a star performance when the team needed it – including 23 points against Michigan and 22 points against Indiana, both ranked teams at the time – became a major focal point of her first season with the program.

But Greene also hit some lulls to go with the highs, following up her impressive performance against the Hoosiers with three games where she shot a combined 0 for 17 from the field.

Finding that stability will be the key for Greene to take that next step as a player, but McGuff expects for her to make that development in year two.

"I think you'll see her be very consistent," McGuff said. "She has started out the year doing really well with really understanding the offense and making other people better and making sure we execute and function at a high level."

Rikki Harris, 5-10, R-Fr. – Ohio State gets another five-star prospect for the first time this season, but it's not because she hasn't been here. Instead, Harris is ready to contribute for the Buckeyes after a redshirt season to recover from a shoulder injury.

Injuries have plagued Harris' career up to this point, with the second-year guard also dealing

with ACL tears in high school. But McGuff said that she is ready to go to start this season and should be able to make a big impact for this team.

"She's doing a really good job. She had worked hard in the offseason," McGuff said. "She's very bright. She really understands basketball, she's got a great IQ, she does a lot of little things in terms of her defense and toughness and diving on the floor and picking up loose balls, so I think she's really got a lot that she can offer to the team."

Anyssa Jones, 5-10, Fr. – Jones is another guard for Ohio State who is rehabbing an injury, with the true freshman coming in after a severe high ankle sprain in February cost her the remainder of her senior season at Westerville South.

Still, Jones averaged 12.4 points that season and was named first-team All-OCC-Buckeye Division and second-team all-district, and McGuff said back on Sept. 3 that she has been on a strong path to recovery.

"We've been working on that in the training room and in the weight room just to make sure that we continue to keep her on the path of putting that behind her," McGuff said. "She's done a good job with the rehab and all that, and it hasn't seemed to bother her on the court."

Jones is a versatile guard who comes in as a three-star prospect with a whole lot of potential, according to her head coach.

"She's got a great basketball frame, she's strong and tough and physical, and she loves the weight room," McGuff said. "I think she'll add some toughness and intensity, and she's also got good skill to go with that."

Braxtin Miller, 5-11, Sr. (8.2 ppg, 3.3 rpg) – As far as veteran players go, Miller is the one, along with Beacham, who has the most experience, and Miller is the lone senior on the team to have any time playing at Ohio State.

Last season was Miller's first with the Buckeyes after transferring in from Oklahoma State, and she was a major factor, leading the team with 31.5 minutes played per game and finishing fourth in scoring. Her largest impact came away from her points total, with her 3.5 assists per game leading the team and ranked tied for

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Buckeyes, Wildcats Appear Destined For B1GCG

The Big Ten Championship Game appears all but set – Ohio State vs. Northwestern.

Yes, it seems like the season just got started, but this is an odd year, indeed. Northwestern and Ohio State are the only undefeated teams with three weeks to go before the championship game participants are chosen.

Northwestern, at 5-0, has in effect a two-game lead over its competition in the West. The only one-loss team in the division is Wisconsin. If they ended up tied, Northwestern wins the tiebreaker because of its win over Wisconsin.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

The case is now pretty much the same for 4-0 Ohio State in the East, with one exception – Maryland. Outside of Maryland and Indiana, which both have one loss, everyone else in the East has at least three losses with three weeks to go.

Ohio State, of course, would win a tiebreaker with Indiana because of its win over the Hoosiers. So in reality, Ohio State would have to lose two out of the next three games for Indiana to overtake the Buckeyes.

As for Maryland, it gets a little tricky if the Buckeyes should lose a game.

Two Maryland games have been canceled – against OSU and Michigan State. That means the best the Terps could finish is 5-1. OSU, assuming no more cancellations, could lose a game and finish 6-1. In normal circumstance, 6-1 is better than 5-1. But not this year.

The special tie-breaking procedures the Big Ten has set up for the coronavirus season treat 6-1 the same as 5-1, looking to the number of losses as the test when there is an unbalanced schedule.

The first tiebreaker is head-to-head. The OSU-Maryland game was canceled. So that's a wash.

The second tiebreaker is division record. At

5-1 overall, and its only loss to Northwestern, Maryland would be undefeated in the East. That would give Maryland this tiebreaker if Ohio State's loss came against either Michigan or Michigan State in the upcoming weeks.

If OSU instead loses to Illinois and Maryland won out, it gets really complicated. But that's not going to happen.

So let's go back to what I said at the top. Ohio State and Northwestern will meet for the Big Ten championship.

Why?

Maryland must play six games to be considered, a dicey bet now with two cancellations already in the books. A third cancellation would eliminate the Terps.

Then Maryland must finish with consecutive wins against Indiana, Michigan and Rutgers. And to give Maryland a chance, Ohio State would have to lose one of its remaining games.

That would be one rare combination of events.

Weird Landscape

The need to address a possible tiebreaker between Ohio State and Maryland, in itself, makes this a weird season. But consider these records heading into the Thanksgiving holiday:

Penn State (0-5), Michigan (2-3), Florida State (2-6), Louisville (3-6), and defending national champion LSU (3-3).

Things are not normal.

A Different Fields

We had never seen this Justin Fields before. Three interceptions. Twelve incompleteness. Some bad decisions. All in one game.

Maybe it was bound to happen at some point, but stunning, nonetheless.

Fields had completed 74 of his first 85 passes this season before that first interception against Indiana. A lot of his 11 incomplete passes to that point were the result of drops. The others just missed by a little.

His interception on OSU's second possession against Indiana was his first really poor throw of the season. Just as unusual were his next two interceptions against Indiana – com-

ing on poor decisions to throw in desperation instead of taking sacks.

Maybe there will be an inaccurate throw or two down the stretch. But I'd be surprised if those poor decisions will be repeated.

A Different Teague

Lackluster would be one way you could describe Ohio State's running game through the first three games. Not so against Indiana, because of Master Teague III.

Through the first three games, Teague was averaging 70.3 yards a game on 4.5 yards a carry. He ran for 169 yards against Indiana, averaging 6.5 yards a carry.

Teague will never be confused with those flashy backs who dart side to side, making defenders look silly.

But against Indiana, he looked like the solid, unspectacular back I expected this season – a powerful straight forward runner, shoulders squared downfield and a good bet to get 6 or 8 yards on most plays when he has just a little running room.

Red Flags

Giving up 35 points and 491 yards passing against Indiana are giant red flags of concern for the defense. The defense certainly has to improve if this team is going to become as good as last year's and have a serious shot at a national title.

But I came away from the Indiana game with a bigger concern. Where was the pass blocking? Fields was harassed quickly and often throughout the day. Indiana ended up with five sacks and pressured Fields many more times.

This can become a serious issue if it doesn't get cleaned up. The weakness is now on film for every opponent to see and scheme to exploit.

Top-10 Indiana

Ohio State should have won the game by more than seven points. The Buckeyes played poorly and allowed Indiana to get back in the game. As noted above, OSU has work to do.

But I also have to say Indiana was better than I expected. The passing game (the 491 yards), the Hoosiers' pass rush (the five sacks) and the solid play overall were impressive.

The Hoosiers entered the game ranked ninth nationally by the AP. Their performance

left me with the impression that No. 9 is about right.

Puzzling Replays

The NCAA's handling of instant-replay reviews has always puzzled me, highlighted again with the Indiana game.

OSU's Baron Browning so clearly caused a fumble on Indiana's second possession that even the FOX broadcasters said, nonchalantly, that it would be reviewed.

The official on the field had ruled the Indiana receiver was down before losing the ball. It took about a second in watching the replay to see the receiver fumbled before ever nearing the ground. But the replay booth did not stop the game for a review. Indiana got to keep the ball, and the completion.

The NCAA rulebook on reviews states "The replay official and his crew shall review every play of a game. He may stop a game at any time before the ball is next legally put in play whenever he believes that there is reasonable evidence to believe an error was made in the initial on-field ruling."

This play was obvious. The replay booth failed. There is another puzzling thing about replays in college football. They are rarely requested by the coaches. The rulebook says a coach can call timeout and ask for a replay.

But there's a catch. A coach only gets one challenge a game (two if the first one is successful). So coaches are reluctant to burn their challenge early and usually never use it. This play was so clear and important (a turnover) that OSU should have challenged.

On another play shortly after missing the forced fumble on the reception, Zach Harrison got to Indiana quarterback Michael Penix just as Penix was preparing to throw. The ball flew out. The replay showed Penix's arm did not begin to move forward until after he lost control of the ball. This time the replay booth did review the call but blew it again – ruling the play an incomplete pass.

All the bad officiating in the first quarter, however, did not go against Ohio State.

Later there was a bad decision by the officials on the field. Indiana was flagged for a face mask on Buckeye running back Trey Sermon. The replay showed there was no face-mask infraction. But OSU benefited from a 15-yard penalty.

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Ohio State Less Than Perfect In Win Over Indiana

As Indiana headed into its top-10 showdown with Ohio State, I thought of former IU coach Lee Corso. Legend has it that when his down-trodden Hoosiers took a brief lead over Ohio State back in the '70s, he called timeout to have a picture taken with his team in front of the scoreboard to commemorate the moment.

With two weeks to build hype after the Buckeyes lost a game to COVID, all we heard was how good Indiana was. I was a nonbeliever, or at the least an honorary native of Missouri – show me! The Hoosiers were riding high based on victories over now discredited Penn State and Michigan, along with victories over Rutgers and Michigan State, downtrodden in their own right. Against Ohio State, Indiana was taking a step up in class.

Like Corso so many years before, they could bask in the moment of being talked about in the same breath as the Buckeyes. Just as the moment must have quickly faded in that long-past game with the Buckeyes (again, nobody knows if this really happened), I figured IU's moment would also fade in the near-empty Ohio Stadium as the rested Buckeyes romped to an easy victory.

I certainly wasn't dissuaded from this prediction when on the Hoosiers' opening drive they were forced to punt after five plays and the Buckeyes answered by marching 75 yards in two plays and just 33 seconds to take the early 7-0 lead.

But something funny happened on the way to the playoffs.

Even though the Buckeyes were able to take a 35-7 lead early in the third quarter, they never looked quite right, and then here came the Hoosiers, fighting and fighting right up until the final seconds of the game before falling 42-35.

While I admire their determination and their outstanding passing attack, the Hoosiers still lost. IU has played Ohio State tough any number of times in the past few years. With the program improving, however, at some point they must beat the Buckeyes.

Indiana is beyond the point of moral victories, and coach Tom Allen knows it.

"We came here to win the game, and being close isn't good enough," Allen said afterward. "We've just got to find a way to keep recruiting, keep developing, and keep improving this football team so we can make those plays we've got to make to be able to win games like this."

But we are not that concerned with Indiana here. This is an Ohio State newspaper.

And after the game we are left wondering how much credit to give IU for the close game and how much falls on the shoulders of the Buckeyes.

We learned on this Saturday that quarterback Justin Fields is human. He was only very good against the Hoosiers, as opposed to his usual brilliant. He was only 18 of 30 passing for 300 yards and two touchdowns with another 78 yards and a score on the ground. There was just that little matter of three interceptions, doubling his career total.

If there is any chink in Fields' armor, it is that he is slow to just throw the ball away or even tuck it and take a sack rather than fling the ball wildly in hopes of making a great play.

One of the posters on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum called it the Superman Complex, "thinking he can overcome any situation no matter how dire and still come out on top. This isn't high school where you can do that because you're a much better athlete than everyone around you," Bucks89 posted. "If it's not there, throw the ball away and live to play another down. He's trying too hard to make Heisman-like plays on every snap."

In reality, Indiana did nothing with the three

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

picks. The Hoosiers failed to get a first down after the first two and didn't even get a chance to run a play after the third. In one of the more important and heads-up plays of the game, freshman receiver Julian Fleming knocked the ball loose from Jamar Johnson on the INT return, and Thayer Munford fell on it at the OSU 16, negating a golden opportunity for the Hoosiers.

What Fields' interceptions did was, in the case of the first two at least, keep Ohio State from opportunities to blow the game open early and better take the starch out of the upstart Hoosiers.

But all of us know that Fields, and his interceptions, weren't the problem in this game. Despite losing the opportunities after the turnovers, he led the Buckeyes to a whopping 607 total yards – their highest output of the season – on an incredibly balanced 307 yards rushing and 300 passing. And you aren't going to lose a lot of games when you put 42 points on the scoreboard.

One way you lose while scoring 42 points, however, is to allow your opponent to pass for 491 yards and five touchdowns, including scoring tosses of 63, 33 and 56 yards, all to Ty Fryfogle. Sure, IU quarterback Michael Penix was outstanding, but he was certainly helped by the fact that his receivers were wide open much of the day. Fryfogle and Whop Philyor combined for 13 catches, 274 yards and four touchdowns and lead the nation in best names for a receiving duo.

Again, you've got to ask how much credit goes to Indiana and how much blame goes to the Ohio State secondary. You can't minimize the performance of Penix and his receivers, but you must acknowledge that they were exploiting a glaring weakness on the part of the Buckeyes.

It was a little too reminiscent of the 2018 season, when a porous defense marred an otherwise outstanding 13-1 campaign and, for all intents and purposes, kept the offensively explosive Buckeyes from making a run at the national title.

"If we don't give up the big plays, we probably run away with this game," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said after the win. "The good news is, we obviously stopped the run. There was no run game at all. It was all passing. We're going to go back, watch the film and figure out where these issues are that are creating these big plays. When you stop the big plays, you'll be in pretty good shape. We have to get that changed."

More good news is that the other area of perceived weakness for the Buckeyes, the run game, was much improved against the Hoosiers. Master Teague helped the Buckeyes rack up their 307 yards rushing with his 26 carries for 169 yards and two TDs, including a 41-yard scoring bolt.

However, as I am sure I have said in this space before, I don't understand why the coaches don't just settle on a starting back, and that would appear to be Teague, assuming his ankle is OK after rolling it against the Hoosiers. Not that Trey Sermon didn't perform well against IU. He had nine carries for 60 yards and a fine 6.7-yard average.

But I have always felt that running backs and their offensive line need to get in a rhythm, and it's hard to develop that rhythm if you keep rotating backs.

"I think I did get in a good groove today," Teague said after the game. "Overall, I feel like I

got in a good groove and was able to make plays and help the team win and come to a victory, so I feel good about that."

He was able to get in a groove because he carried the ball 26 times.

Still, after Teague scored his long touchdown, it was Sermon who came out for the Buckeyes on their next series. He did fine with 23 yards on his first two carries of the possession, but at some point you have to decide on the lead dog. It is no coincidence that the recently departed J.K. Dobbins had his least dynamic year in 2018, when he had to share the ball more evenly with Mike Weber.

Picky, picky, Frank.

Finally, on the tight end watch, there was nary a reception by that position group against IU, though Jeremy Ruckert had a key block on Teague's long touchdown run.

In summary, Ohio State proved once again in its win over IU that it is still the class of the Big Ten. Are the Buckeyes ready for a playoff run? After that defensive performance, I wonder.

About That Picture

As for Corso and that picture, which presumably would have been taken in 1976 when the Hoosiers took a 7-6 lead early in the second quarter of what would end up a 47-7 Buckeye victory, I found this note from Brad Cook, curator of photographs at the IU archives, from 2017.

"At present no photograph can be found of Lee Corso with the entire team in front of the scoreboard after IU took a 7-6 lead in the second quarter of this game. A player, who wants to remain anonymous, told me that the photograph was not taken."

Epic Anniversary Battle

For the week of Nov. 14-20, there were two games that were so big that we had to include them as part of Buckeye Sports Bulletin's 40th Anniversary Football Season.

That week, the Buckeyes not only suffered the last-second loss to Iowa in 1987 that cost Earle Bruce his job, a game which we chronicled in our last issue, but they also faced Michigan in the epic battle between the No. 1 and No. 2 teams in the nation, featured in this issue and scheduled to be featured as part of Reprint Thursdays on BuckeyeSports.com on Thanksgiving Day.

How big was that game?

Here's what former BSB editor Jeff Svoboda said in the Nov. 18, 2006, preview of the game:

"As hard as it is to believe, there is almost no way the Nov. 18 contest between Ohio State and Michigan can be overhyped.

"The rivalry, consistently ranked the best in all of sports, has always had a major impact on the national picture but rarely like this. Only thrice have both teams been undefeated heading into the showdown, and in just two of those have the teams been undefeated and untied."

In that same issue, BSB managing editor Mark Rea further set the stage:

"In a rivalry that stretches back more than a century, and one that has featured championship implications on countless occasions, Ohio State and Michigan enter into an epic battle featuring historic storylines.

"Never before have two Big Ten teams met on the field of battle sporting 11-0 records. Never before have the Buckeyes and Wolverines played one another as the nation's top two ranked teams. Only twice before (1970 and

1973) have the teams faced one another with unblemished records.

"Tickets – if you can find any – start around \$500 for the nosebleed sections in Ohio Stadium. Want to get closer to the action? Be prepared to double or triple that amount."

Even more drama was added to the battle when legendary Michigan coach Bo Schembechler passed away the day before The Game. I can remember the concern among Buckeye fans that the Wolverines would benefit from a "Win one for the Gipper" effect.

It was not in the cards for the Wolverines, however. But I did note the irony of the Buckeyes' 42-39 victory in this space.

"There's a certain irony in the fact that the Ohio State-Michigan game played upon the death of legendary coach Bo Schembechler was a 42-39 offensive outburst," I wrote in the Nov. 25, 2006, issue of BSB.

"In the storied 'Ten-Year War' between Schembechler and OSU's legendary Woody Hayes, the teams never combined to score more than 36 points – three less than the losers' total in the 2006 game – and that 36-point outburst came in the first game between the two coaching titans, Michigan's well chronicled 24-12 upset of the Buckeyes in 1969. That game in '69 helped set the tone for the Hayes-Schembechler rivalry, which helped ramp up an already intense rivalry to what it is today. While defense was the order of the day in those great games, offense took center stage in this latest, and perhaps biggest, edition of The Game.

"Not only did the two teams combine for 81 points, but they also marched up and down the field to the tune of 900 yards of total offense, with an un-Ohio State-Michigan-like 583 of those yards coming through the air."

Michigan's Chad Henne was 21 of 35 for 267 yards and two touchdowns, which at that stage of the rivalry would have been considered an outstanding passing performance.

But this was Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith's game, just as the two previous Michigan games had been.

"While Henne was brilliant at times, he was one-upped by Troy Smith, arguably the greatest quarterback in OSU-Michigan history," I wrote.

"The senior from Cleveland Glenville threw for 316 yards and four touchdowns, and in a game of relentless pass rushes, he was sacked just once to four times for Henne. Smith, who gained 328 yards, now has the three highest marks in total offense against Michigan in OSU annals."

With Smith at the helm, throwing to such talented receivers as Ted Ginn Jr., Anthony Gonzalez, Brian Robiskie and even current Buckeye receivers coach Brian Hartline, the notoriously conservative Jim Tressel had opened up the Buckeye offense in 2006.

"Let the Buckeyes loose is pretty much what Tressel and company did this season, and the result was an 11-0 record coming into the Michigan game," I noted. "There was always a chance, however, that Tressel would revert to his early Ohio State offensive shell against the Wolverines.

"Any fears of that were allayed when the Buckeyes came out firing on their first drive, calling 12 pass plays on a 14-play scoring march to knot the game at 7. The offensive fireworks were on."

The win clinched Ohio State's spot in the BCS national championship game, where it was possible that the Buckeyes' opponent might be the same Wolverines. As it turned out, the Buckeyes faced Urban Meyer's Florida team, and we all know what happened there.

But that's a story for another time. Right now, let's enjoy that great win over Michigan.

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>



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention