

# Second City's First Pick

## *Bears Move Up To Take OSU's Fields*

By WYATT CROSHER  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

For months, almost all the talk about Ohio State players in the 2021 NFL draft centered around quarterback Justin Fields.

That talk was on anything from Fields' arm strength, his ability or inability to read defenses, and his work ethic to his speed and pretty much everything in between. All that talk led the former Ohio State quarterback to be projected anywhere from No. 3 to No. 32 on various mock drafts leading up to the big day on April 28.

And finally, after 10 picks came and went, all that talk could be put to rest once Fields' landing spot became clear. At pick No. 11, the Chicago Bears selected Fields, a quarterback who never lost a Big Ten game at Ohio State and who threw for 5,373 yards, 63 touchdowns and just nine interceptions in 22 games as the Buckeyes' starter.

He was the fourth quarterback off the board, with Clemson's Trevor Lawrence, BYU's Zach Wilson and North

Dakota State's Trey Lance going at picks 1, 2 and 3 to the Jacksonville Jaguars, New York Jets and San Francisco 49ers, respectively. With the selection, Fields became the highest-drafted quarterback for Ohio State since Art Schlichter went No. 4 to the then-Baltimore Colts in the 1982 NFL draft.

Despite not being a top-10 pick, Fields said he wasn't as nervous about his draft spot as many around him were. Instead, he kept the faith that wherever he ended up, it would be the right spot for him.

"I've been in so many different situations in my life where I think I want something, I think I want to do this, but God has a different plan for me," Fields said. "I put my full trust in God, and he's put me in a perfect place for me. Whatever his will is is what's going to happen. I'm excited to be a part of this organization and just ready to get to work."

The landing spot was also not as big a concern for Fields' former head coach, Ryan Day. He said that the most important



PHOTO COURTESY THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

**CHI-TOWN BOUND** – Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields did not have to wait too long to hear his name called during the 2021 NFL draft. The Chicago Bears traded up to the No. 11 pick to grab Fields.

thing is what comes next for Fields now that he is locked into a team and that he's excited to see what his two-time Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year will do at the next level.

"It's what you do with the opportunity now, and Justin knows that," Day said. "Now he has to go about the business of putting in the work and building that reputation, the respect in that locker room, so he can go have a successful career. And that's the idea."

Heading into the draft, Fields ending up with Chicago would have meant that his stock fell to the lower range of projections set out for the 6-2 signal-caller. The Bears held the 20th pick entering the night but felt it was time to jump nine spots once Fields began to get passed on.

So Chicago general manager Ryan Pace pulled the trigger. The Bears traded their No. 20 pick and fifth-round pick from this year's draft, along with first- and fourth-round picks for the 2022 NFL draft, to move up and take Fields.

"We had multiple plans tonight, and the way the board was falling, we got excited when the quarterbacks came off that way and Justin continued to fall," Pace said. "For us, it was just executing our plan at the right spot in the draft and being patient with that, which sometimes can be difficult."

Fields was one of 10 Ohio State players to hear his name

called during the three draft days, tied with Alabama for the most in the country. But he was also the only pick in the first 59 for the Buckeyes, with the drought ending once linebacker Pete Werner went No. 60 overall to the New Orleans Saints in the second round.

Despite being the clear top player from the program in this year's draft, no one faced more public questions about his game than Fields, to the point that his former head coach and teammates were forced to defend him time and time again.

All the chatter about whether or not Fields was truly a quarterback worthy of a top pick led to plenty of annoyance from Day.

"Yeah, I get frustrated," Day said ahead of the draft on criticism surrounding Fields. "I feel like there's a lot of people in the draft and some guys get a pass and some guys don't. And certainly, people have taken shots at Justin. When I think about being the quarterback at Ohio State when I talk to families and their recruits, we always say it's like being the shortstop of the New York Yankees. With that comes great scrutiny. There are pluses and there are minuses to everything."

Continued On Page 8

**Your Mailing Label Goes Here  
Call (614) 486-2202  
Today To Subscribe**





## From The Message Board

***Ohio State had 10 players taken in the 2021 NFL draft, tied with Alabama for the most of any program. We asked our readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum, as well as staff members, which of those draft picks they thought was the most surprising and why. Here are some of the responses:***

“Way down the draft list but Luke Farrell to the Jaguars was a bit of a surprise. Was Urban worried another team was going to take him? He probably could have picked him up as a free agent. Heck, Shaun Wade was still available. Did Urban Meyer know something we didn’t know? Tommy Togiai in the fourth was a steal.”

– **Poster That Harley Built**

“Pete Werner was a real lightning rod on this board for where he should or shouldn’t go. I guess his high pick wasn’t a complete surprise once the scouts started putting out good words on him. But before all the positive chatter started, would you have guessed Werner going that high? The second round is the same that Chris Spielman went in. I will believe Werner is in Spielman’s league when I see it.”

– **Mcarr**

“Wade going in the fifth round surprised me. He came back for another season and did not seem to improve his draft position but rather seemed to slip a bit from a near first rounder. I do wish him well, as I always pull for the player that comes back for another season in college.”

– **Luckeeman**

“I thought Trey Sermon would be picked sooner. San Francisco grabbed a great player. The guy is a steam roller and a good human being.”

– **PeyoteBuck**

“Wyatt Davis shoulda/coulda sneaked into first round. Truly how many OL were better than him? I will say Wade will be biggest surprise for being drafted low and having a productive NFL career.”

– **Terrier Buck**

“I’ll go with Togiai, partially because it means that I get to pump up my beloved Browns. I expected him to be a day two pick easily, given his strength and production in stopping the run, but it seems that his lack of experience and his size hurt him on a lot of boards. Still, he’s a tremendously productive player, and I’m very excited to see how he fits into the Browns’ defense, especially with so many pass-stopping specialists both up front and in the secondary in Cleveland.

“I think there’s a chance that Jadeveon Clowney and Togiai can be one of the best run-stuffing duos in the league.”

– **Patrick Mayhorn, BSB**

“The Farrell pick was certainly a huge surprise to me. I was certainly

expecting he was going to be an undrafted free agent, but I guess his blocking was really well-regarded, so that’s why Meyer didn’t take any chances in getting him. I thought Wyatt Davis fell much further than he should have. He is a terrific offensive line talent that had two really strong years as a starter, and I think getting him in the middle of the third round is quite a steal.”

– **Wyatt Crosher, BSB**

“Maybe it’s just because I’m a Bengals fan who, as a result, has a healthy appreciation for good offensive line play, but I think Davis not going until the third round was a surprise. Not only the third round, but the 23rd pick of the third round! And he was the third offensive lineman taken in the third round. (Granted the other two were tackles.)

“I think the Vikings are getting a quality player who will fit their system nicely. At the other end of the spectrum, I was slightly surprised to see Farrell as Jacksonville’s first pick of the fifth round. His blocking ability is slightly ahead of his pass-catching ability (as illustrated by the fact that Jeremy Ruckert had more than twice the receptions of Farrell last year), and so I didn’t think NFL teams would value him as highly as they did. But, of course, Meyer is familiar with the tight end’s skill set, and it’s not like the former OSU coach loaded up on Buckeyes. Farrell was the only guy he plucked out of Columbus. So Meyer clearly has high hopes for Farrell, and I’d like to see him do well at the next level.”

– **Lori Schmidt, BSB**

“I was a tad surprised Justin Hilliard wasn’t drafted. There had been numerous draft analysts writing that teams loved the way he battled back from adversity and they really liked his athleticism. I thought he might sneak into the late fifth-early sixth but he went undrafted. The folks surprised by Werner’s and Davis’ draft spots weren’t paying attention this year.

“Werner is a do it all guy – not great at any one thing but good at everything. He has good instincts, is good sideline to sideline, very solid in coverage and is a fine tackler. Barring injury he will be it the NFL for 10 years.

“Davis regressed quite a bit in 2020, and his medicals were a cause for concern for the NFL teams. He didn’t have the same dominance against the run that he did in 2019, and too often he was caught lunging and reaching in pass blocking, which means he was panicking. He also had a couple of games where he appeared a bit slow in recognition of what his man was going to do, and by the time he figured it out it was too late. All that said, I think when healthy he will be a fine pro as he has a high football IQ and the needed tenacity to thrive at the next level.”

– **Mike Wachsman, BSB**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### **Kellogg Was Great On, Off The Court**

I read with interest two stories in the April 10 edition. One was the story about Damon’s restaurant as we ate at the one in Mansfield, Ohio, on many a Friday night and really enjoyed their menu. I believe they had a major fire several years ago and the building burned to the ground; probably a hot game was on at the time.

The other article was about Clark Kellogg, as I did witness the high school game where he scored 51 points. We used to attend all of the boys high school basketball finals, and at the time I thought, “WOW what a ball hog.” Several years later I was privileged to spend the day with him escorting him to three high schools in our area where he spoke to a general assembly of students at each school and at an interview with the local TV station. What a gentleman,

speaking to the kids about taking care of their lives, etc. At each school he finished with a question and answer, and at each school he was asked to dunk a basketball. Well, he was wearing a suit and dress shoes but he took off his coat and maybe his shoes and proceeded to dunk a basketball to the cheers of the students. We took him to lunch and had a great conversation. It changed my mind about him being a ball hog.

Thank you, I have been a subscriber from the beginning with my No. 586.

**Bob Shroyer**  
**Galion, Ohio**

### **Loyalty To Coombs The Wrong Move**

Kyle McCord, whose last play of competition was against

high school talent, beats the defense for a 55-yard touchdown on his first pass of the spring game and Ryan Day thinks keeping Kerry Combs is a good idea?

Loyalty to inferior coaches does not win national titles.  
**Pence Roth**  
**Bradenton, Fla.**

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

Buckeye Sports Bulletin (USPS 705-690, ISSN 0883-6833.) is published 24 times a year (weekly September through November, biweekly mid-March through May and January through early March and monthly June through August and December) by:

Columbus Sports Publications  
 1350 W. Fifth Ave., Suite 30  
 P.O. Box 12453  
 Columbus, Ohio 43212  
 (614) 486-2202  
 bsb@buckeyesports.com

Periodical class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212. Subscription rates: \$99.95/year.

**PUBLISHER**  
 Frank Moskowitz

**ASSISTANT PUBLISHER**  
 Becky Roberts

**MANAGING EDITOR EMERITUS**  
 Mark Rea

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS**  
 Wyatt Crosher Patrick Mayhorn

**ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS**  
 Karen Wachsman 1944-1999

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
 Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam  
 Kevin Dye Josh Winslow  
 Andrew Lind

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

**ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES**  
 Jan Jager Dave Tebay  
 Ron Friedman

## 2020-21 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 40)

No. 13	Jan. 23	No. 19	April 10
No. 14	Jan. 30	No. 20	April 24
No. 15	Feb. 13	No. 21	May
No. 16	Feb. 27	No. 22	June
No. 17	March 13	No. 23	July
No. 18	March 27	No. 24	August

The 2021 Buckeye Sports Bulletin schedule is subject to change.

The next issue (June cover date) will be mailed on June 8.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is a privately owned newspaper and is not affiliated directly or indirectly with The Ohio State University.

## Wachsman Elite Donor:



BSB is a charter member of the College Sports Publishers Association.

## OPINION

# Can Fields Solve QB Puzzle In Chicago?

Aside from being a former Ohio State quarterback, what does Justin Fields have in common with Craig Krenzel, Ron Maciejowski and Don Scott? It's the same commonality each shares with George Blanda, Zeke Bratkowski, "Dandy" Don Meredith, Jim Fassel, Jim Harbaugh and Kyle Orton.

Fields has joined the aforementioned group as college quarterbacks drafted by the Chicago Bears, a proud member of the National Football League since the early 1920s when George Halas and Chic Harley – yes, that Chic Harley – were fighting over control of the fledgling franchise.

The Bears have been home to some of the most iconic players in league history including Dick Butkus and Gale Sayers, selected with the Nos. 3 and 4 picks of the 1965 NFL draft, and some guy named Walter Payton, who as the fourth overall pick of the 1975 draft came out of tiny Jackson State in Mississippi to become a pretty good running back throughout the mid-1970s and 1980s.

Truth be told, however, Chicago is a graveyard as far as NFL quarterbacks are concerned. When Mitchell Trubisky played in the Pro Bowl in 2018, he became the first Bears QB to do that since Jim McMahon in 1985. If you want to find the most recent Chicago quarterback to earn first-team All-Pro honors, you have to go all the way back to Johnny Lujack in 1950.

The Bears enjoy the distinction of having more players and coaches in the Pro Football Hall of Fame than any other franchise, but only one quarterback is in that group and he played nearly 80 years ago. Sid Luckman, the master of the T-formation, led Chicago to four NFL championships in the 1940s and was enshrined in the Hall of Fame in 1965.

Not that the Bears haven't tried. During the 1974 draft, for example, they took three different quarterbacks. But if that were a winning strategy, you probably would have heard of Alan Chadwick, Joe Barnes and Craig Holland.

Since the inaugural NFL draft in 1936, Fields was the 52nd quarterback selected by Chicago, but since 1951, he is only the seventh the team has taken in the first round. Of the preceding six first-rounders over the past 70 years, only McMahon could be considered a success. He was taken out of BYU as the fifth overall pick in the 1982 draft and played seven seasons in Chicago, producing a 49-17 record as a starter while leading the Bears to four division titles and the Super Bowl XX championship.

But McMahon was surrounded by such talent as Payton and receivers Willie Gault and Dennis McKinnon as well as a defense that included future Hall of Famers Mike Singletary, Richard Dent and Dan Hampton along with the likes of Wilbur Marshall, Steve McMichael and Gary Fencik.

Obviously, that collection of talent doesn't come around very often. Unfortunately for the other five quarterbacks Chicago has drafted in the first round over the past 70 years, the talent assembled around them wasn't even close.

Bob Williams was the starting quarterback on Notre Dame's national championship team in 1949, and the Bears made him their first-round choice and the second pick overall in the 1951 draft. But Williams never found the same success in Chicago that he enjoyed in South Bend, and his NFL career lasted only 29 games spread out over three seasons.

The Bears took Harbaugh with the 26th overall selection in the 1987 draft with an eye toward making him McMahon's heir apparent. But the team that just two years before had been on the precipice of creating a dynasty was already fracturing. Harbaugh enjoyed a 14-year career as an NFL quarterback, but only seven were spent in Chicago, where he went 35-31 as a starter and threw 50 touchdowns against 56 interceptions.

At least Harbaugh won a division championship with the Bears in 1990. Cade McNown and Rex Grossman should have been so lucky.

McNown was selected with the 12th overall

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

pick of the 1999 draft after a college career at UCLA that included throwing for 10,708 yards and 68 TDs. The Bears were so confident in McNown that they waived starting QB Erik Kramer following the draft and named McNown the starter. But in just 15 starts over two seasons, McNown engineered only three victories and was traded to Miami during the 2001 preseason for a couple of mid-round draft picks.

Grossman was the No. 22 overall selection out of Florida in the 2003 draft, and while he lasted a little longer in Chicago than McNown, his tenure was no less turbulent. His first three seasons were marred by a litany of injuries before he finally got a chance in 2006 and led the Bears to a 13-3 regular-season record and a spot in Super Bowl XLI. There, Grossman was outdueled by Peyton Manning, who led Indianapolis to a 29-17 victory, but it appeared Chicago had finally found a quarterback.

Unfortunately, inconsistency and more injuries plagued Grossman, and he left the team as a free agent following the 2008 season. Over six seasons with the Bears, he was 21-14 as a starter and threw for 33 touchdowns against 35 interceptions.

Chicago went another 14 years before trading up to select Trubisky with the second overall pick of the 2017 draft. It was a somewhat questionable move since Trubisky had started only one season at North Carolina, but it had been 11 seasons since Grossman had taken the team to the Super Bowl, and the Bears were desperate to make something happen.

Trubisky embarked upon a tumultuous four-year run in Chicago that included a division championship in 2018. He was also named as an alternate to the Pro Bowl that year after going 11-3 as a starter and throwing for 3,223 yards and 24 touchdowns. But his performance slipped a bit in 2019, and by last season, the writing was on the wall. Despite posting a 6-3 record as a starter in 2020, Trubisky was allowed to walk away as a free agent, and he signed a one-year deal in March to become the backup to Josh Allen in Buffalo.

One other thing Williams, Harbaugh, McNown, Grossman and Trubisky shared in common. During those five quarterbacks' combined years in Chicago, the Bears had only four players named offensive starters for the Pro Bowl, and just one of those four was from a skill position – fullback Neal Anderson in 1992.

## OSU-Chicago Connections

Fields is the 30th former Ohio State player of all time to be drafted by the Bears, but the first since Chicago took linebacker Marcus Freeman in the fifth round of the 2009 draft. Freeman was waived just before the 2009 season began, and he never played in the NFL, officially retiring in 2010 because of a heart condition. He is currently defensive coordinator at Notre Dame.

The most recent former OSU player drafted by the Bears who actually played for the team was offensive lineman Kirk Barton, a seventh-round pick in the 2008 draft. Barton appeared in one game with Chicago in 2008, his only career appearance in the NFL.

To find a former Buckeye drafted by Chicago who had any appreciable experience in a Bears uniform, you need to go back to Krenzel. A fifth-round choice in the 2004 draft, Krenzel started five games at quarterback later that year and posted a 3-2 record before an ankle injury ended his season. He was cut by the Bears in 2005 and tried to make a comeback with the Cincinnati Bengals until suffering a career-ending elbow injury in May 2006.

Fields is the sixth former Ohio State player taken by the Bears in the first round of a draft. The others are defensive lineman Alonzo Spellman (1992), offensive tackle Rufus Mayes (1969), running back Don Clark (1959), back/end Fred "Curly" Morrison (1950) and Scott (1941).

Of that group, only Spellman and Morrison made any kind of impact in Chicago. Spellman played six of his nine NFL seasons with the Bears, compiling 32 sacks in 86 games while Morrison played four years in Chicago as a receiver, fullback and punter. He finished his career with three seasons in Cleveland where he made the Pro Bowl in 1955.

Mayes played just one season in Chicago before being traded to Cincinnati, where he spent the bulk of his 11-year pro career. Clark never played for the Bears, instead going to the Canadian Football League where he played five seasons.

Scott put his football career on hold after enlisting in the U.S. Army Air Forces to fly bombers in World War II. After completing nine successful missions, Scott was conducting a special training exercise in England on Oct. 1, 1943, when the aircraft he was piloting crashed, killing him as well as his co-pilot and mechanical engineer. Scott was only 23.

The airport at Ohio State is named Don Scott Field in his memory.

## More Draft Minutiae

- In a world where the inexact science of college recruiting collides with the glorified crapshoot that has become the NFL draft comes this nugget. Of the 32 players selected in the first round of this year's draft, Ohio State offered scholarships to only six of them while they were in high school – and signed zero. Those offered by the Buckeyes were tight end Kyle Pitts (Florida), cornerbacks Jaycee Horn (South Carolina) and Patrick Surtain II (Alabama), linebacker Micah Parsons (Penn State), running back Najee Harris (Alabama) and defensive end Jason Oweh (Penn State).

- OSU defensive back Shaun Wade was a consensus All-American in 2021, but he fell to the fifth round where the Baltimore Ravens selected him with the 160th pick overall. The most recent Buckeye drafted in the fifth round was offensive tackle Jamarco Jones by Seattle in 2018. Jones has appeared in 26 games and made five starts for the Seahawks over the past two seasons.

- No Ohio State defensive player had been taken in the fifth round since the St. Louis Rams selected Jermale Hines with the 158th overall pick in the 2011 draft. Hines never played for the Rams but appeared in 10 games (five each with Carolina and Indianapolis) during his only NFL season in 2011.

- Seven players in NFL draft history have busts in the Pro Football Hall of Fame despite being selected with pick No. 200 or higher in their respective drafts. That includes Morgan State offensive tackle Roosevelt Brown, who was selected by the New York Giants in the 27th round with the No. 321 overall pick in the 1953 draft. Brown, who went on to a career that included six first-team All-Pro selections and nine Pro Bowl appearances, is the lowest draft pick ever to earn a bust in Canton.





*Best Taco  
Al Pastor  
in the City!*



**MONDAY SPECIAL**  
Buy One Taco El Pastor  
GET ONE FREE

**WEDNESDAY SPECIAL**  
Gringas El Pastor  
Only \$2 EACH

**MULTIPLE TV'S  
TO WATCH THE GAMES**

**DUBLIN • 7370 Sawmill Rd.  
614-726-9185**

**Serving Alcohol with Full Bar**

Sun-Thurs | 11am-12am • Fri & Sat | 11am-1am

**Columbus • 5221 Godown Rd.  
614-538-0211**

Sun - Thur | 11am - 12am • Fri & Sat | 11am - 1am

**Gahanna • 1376 Cherry Bottom Rd.  
614-471-4717**

Mon-Sun | 11am - 11pm

*New  
Store!*

**Columbus • 1121 S. Hamilton Rd.  
614-852-3000**

Mon-Sun | 11am - 11pm

## INSIDER



### WR Jameson Williams Enters Transfer Portal

An Ohio State spokesman confirmed to Buckeye Sports Bulletin that junior wide receiver Jameson Williams entered the transfer portal on April 28.

On May 3, he announced that he would be transferring to Alabama. With the one-time transfer rule, Williams will be immediately eligible.

Williams, who started for the Buckeyes at wide receiver in 2020 alongside Chris Olave and slot receiver Garrett Wilson, seemed to be falling down the depth chart entering 2021. With Olave returning for his senior season and Wilson returning to the outside receiver spot, Williams would have either needed to move inside to the slot to battle with Jaxon Smith-Njigba or remain on the outside behind the top two outside players.

He had just one catch in Ohio State's spring game after he hauled in nine passes for 154 yards and two scores in 2020. His career highlight was likely a 61-yard touchdown reception from Gunnar Hoak against Miami (Ohio) in 2019, his freshman season. Williams was paired with Wilson in wide receivers coach Brian Hartline's first receiver class in the position.

Williams spoke positively at the beginning of April about his status, but it seems that the end of spring camp helped to sway his view and forced the move.

"I feel like last season was a good season," Williams said. "I just feel like it was a good season overall – made plays, had a lot of fun and I feel like I got better as the season went along."

"This offseason I felt like I got a lot better also, just working on certain things and perfecting those certain things to become a full wide receiver."

Williams was the second Buckeye to enter the portal in recent weeks, joining

offensive tackle Max Wray. His departure puts Ohio State at 87 scholarship players, though with super seniors not counting against the limit, Ohio State is under the 85-man roster limit, with 82 non-super-senior scholarship players.

### Playoff Expansion Under Consideration

Through an April 23 statement, the College Football Playoff management committee confirmed that it is considering several options for potential playoff expansion in the future and has as many as 63 scenarios to consider. Those options "included 6-, 8-, 10-, 12- and 16-team options, each with a variety of different scenarios" according to the CFP statement.

The options were presented by a four-person subgroup of the larger working committee, and while none of the options was officially offered or discussed, the group will continue "its work and anticipates making a report to the management committee about the future format at an upcoming meeting."

The group was tasked with exploring potential expansion options back in 2019, according to committee chair Bill Hancock.

"Since January 2019, when the presidents charged us with taking a careful look at all aspects of CFP, including the format, this group has diligently evaluated options for the future," Hancock said. "Its efforts were delayed as a result of the pandemic, but it met again this week in Dallas, and we look forward to hearing more when its work is complete."

"I want to remind everyone that whatever recommendations the management committee may make, all decisions about our future format – whether to remain at four teams or change to a different format – will be made by the 11 presidents and chancellors who manage the CFP."

"We are entering the eighth year of our 12-year agreement for the College Football Playoff, and the management committee is extremely satisfied with the popularity and success of the CFP. It is wise and good management to review where we stand as we discuss what the future might – 'might,' for emphasis – look like."

Included in those 63 scenarios are ideas about "automatic bids for different numbers of conference champions, designated spots for Group of Five champions, fields determined solely by rankings and playoff brackets involving byes," according to a report from The Athletic.

The report, which was released on April 27, goes on to quote a number of anonymous administrators who stress the feelings of discontent and anxiety around the current playoff model, specifically in



Jameson Williams

[www.theredbricktapandgrill.com](http://www.theredbricktapandgrill.com)

292 E. Gates St.

Columbus

(614) 444-2742

**HAPPY HOUR** 3-8pm Mon-Fri  
Half off all 30 drafts • Half off select appetizers  
Craft bottle specials all day

**100 Craft Beers!**

**New Food & Cocktail Menu**

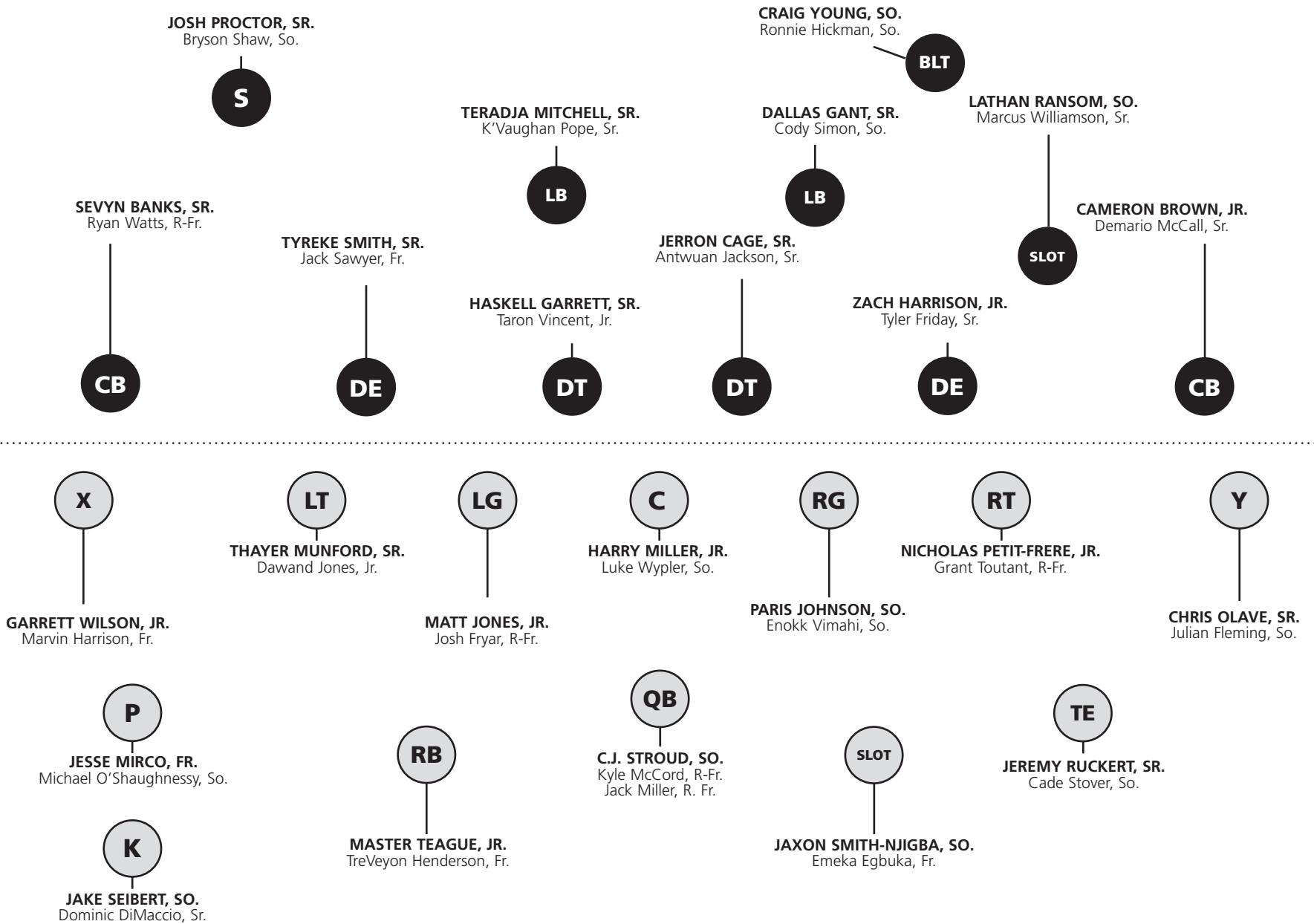
**Newly Renovated Patio with Fire Pit**

**Handmade Pizzas &  
In-House Smoked Meats**





# OHIO STATE POST SPRING TWO-DEEP DEPTH CHART



### Buckeye Sports Bulletin Projection

conferences that have seen their teams shut out – namely the Pac-12 and Group of Five conferences.

"There are two unintended consequences people didn't see when they created the Playoff," a college administrator familiar with the discussions told *The Athletic*.

“One, seeing the same teams over and over from one part of the country. It’s impairing the product, because there’s boredom. ... There’s risk to not enough (geographic) spread. Secondly, the brand damage to a conference that doesn’t get in it.”

Any expansion is not expected to happen

before the end of the 12-year CFP agreement, which began back in 2014 and will end after the 2025 season, though in theory, a unanimous vote in favor of a change by the playoff committee would enact an immediate shift. A simple majority is all that will be required for a move to expansion once the original deal comes to a close.

point after touchdown or run a two-point conversion play during the first overtime period.”

It's a change that OSU coach Ryan Day offered tepid support of, though he said that he'd prefer to spend more time deliberating on moves like this.

"I think the overtime rule makes sense when you see some of these games," Day said. "I know some of the crazy games have gone six or seven overtimes and that's not good for the players. I get it. It's not ideal, but I think it makes sense for player safety."

"The stuff that goes on in the summer, I just think we need to really talk that through, make sure we're not rushing into a decision on that. We've been doing things a certain way for a long time and I don't think we want to change just to change. But certainly I think it's worth a conversation."

The panel approved several other small rule changes, including expanding the team area to the 20-yard lines, an additional 10 yards on the sideline for players and coaches to roam. It has also made taunting, uniform violations and coaches leaving the team box to argue penalty calls points of emphasis for referees this upcoming season.

**Continued On Page 6**

## Podcast Previews Draft, Answers Questions

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

On the most recent episode released on April 30, we previewed the now complete draft, but prior to that on the April 23 episode, we fielded all sorts of questions from listeners – from defensive scheme changes to our favorite movie sequel (“Paddington 2”) and more. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin Podcast is currently on its schedule of one weekly episode, released on Friday mornings.

The BSB 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, as well as 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 like Joe Dempsey, 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.

The show is free for everyone. To find it, 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 that are new to the podcast world, the show is also posted at 10 a.m. every Friday on [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com), as well as in the BSB Fan Forum.

## NCAA Approves New Overtime Rules

The NCAA playing rules oversight panel approved a change to college football's overtime rules on April 22, marking the second straight offseason with a shift to shorter overtime periods.

The rule change requires teams to attempt a two-point conversion after a touchdown starting in the second overtime period, moving up a period after it had been originally required beginning in the third overtime period. Additionally, in shootout fashion, "if the game reaches a third overtime, teams will run alternating two-point plays, instead of starting another drive at the opponent's 25-yard line," according to an NCAA release.

"This is a change from the previous rule, which started to use two-point plays in the fifth overtime period," the release stated. "This rules change is being made to limit the number of plays from scrimmage and bring the game to a quicker conclusion. Teams can still choose whether to kick the





Continued From Page 5

### Ohio State Hires Brown As Special Teams QC Coach

Ohio State announced the hire of former NFL linebacker Ricky Brown as a special teams quality control assistant on April 26. He'll be tasked with assisting new special teams coordinator Parker Fleming and is designated as a kicking coach for his primary focus.

"Fired up to be joining Day's staff at Ohio State and helping (Parker Fleming and (special teams intern Zach Woodke) with special teams #OH #ToughLove

#Fight," Brown tweeted on April 26.

Brown spent six seasons in the NFL with the then-Oakland Raiders as an undrafted free agent, by way of Boston College, where he played from 2003-05. Interestingly, his time with the Eagles crossed with that of Ohio State linebackers coach Al Washington, who also played linebacker for Boston College. Brown returned to Boston College as a coach, serving as a quality control assistant and then a special teams coordinator from 2016-19, but he was not retained by new head coach Jeff Hailey in 2020.

He comes to Ohio State by way of Lafayette College in Pennsylvania, where he coached linebackers in 2020.

### Stroud Holds Fifth-Best Heisman Odds

Ohio State's projected starting quarterback, redshirt freshman C.J. Stroud, is drawing Heisman hype before he's even earned the starting role.



C.J. Stroud

According to the odds at betonline.ag, Stroud's 12-1 odds are the fifth best to bring home the award. He's behind several fellow quarterbacks in Oklahoma's Spencer Rattler (4-1), Alabama's Bryce Young (7-1), Clemson's D.J. Uiagalelei (7-1) and Georgia's J.T. Daniels (9-1). Stroud is also tied with North Carolina QB Sam Howell.

Stroud is the only player on that list without a single pass attempt in his college career. He does have one run

to his name, a 48-yard touchdown scamper against Michigan State.

### Field Hockey's Allesie Claims B1G Honors

Ohio State field hockey sophomore Mackenzie Allesie was named the Big Ten's Offensive Player of the Year on April

19 after she tallied a team-high 32 points on 14 goals and four assists, 19 more points than the next highest points-getter on the roster. She also easily led the team in goals, outpacing Emma Goldean by 10 goals.

Ohio State's first offensive player of the year since Linda Haussener in 2008

## From The Pages Of BSB

### 35 Years Ago – 1986

The next move on the proposed switch of the Sept. 13 Ohio State-Washington football game to a different date now rested in the hands of Husky officials.

Ohio State and CBS-TV were willing to move the game to Sept. 10 (a Wednesday) for prime-time exposure. But Washington athletic director Mike Lude said that the chances for that were "slim and none."

Ohio State athletic director Rick Bay earlier had said that he approved a date switch and would have liked the move to prime time.

"We don't know where we stand right now," said OSU sports information director Marv Homan. "I can see Washington not being too keen on moving the game. You're talking about a Wednesday at 5, 6 p.m. Thousands of people travel miles and miles to home games. It would be a burden on the fans. I know if we were the home team, we probably would have the same thoughts."

### 30 Years Ago – 1991

Sophomore running back Raymont Harris was suspended from school for academic misconduct. Harris missed the spring scrimmage game in Ohio Stadium April 27 for what OSU head coach John Cooper said were academic reasons, though he would not elaborate further.

Late in 1990, defensive end Alonzo Spellman and walk-on running back Troy Lopes had been suspended from school for the winter quarter for academic misconduct. Lopes was reportedly caught taking a test for Spellman, although team officials never confirmed or denied that.

Both returned to the Buckeyes in the spring of 1991 and were expected to play in the fall, as was Harris, who was set to return for the summer quarter.

### 25 Years Ago – 1996

Ohio State's men's gymnastics team claimed its first national title since 1985 after jumping out to an early lead and never looking back, finishing with a season-high 232.150 points.

California finished as runner-up to the Buckeyes with 231.775 points, while preseason No. 1 and event host Stanford rounded out the top three, struggling on the vault and finishing with a respectable, but not good enough, 229.925 score.

"The little things are why we won," head coach Peter Kormann said. "Doing the skills they didn't want to learn because they banged their body up learning them or wanting to take it out of their routine to make it easier. They kept them in there, kept working at them. That's why they won."

The victory was extra satisfying for the Buckeyes given the result of the previous year's NCAA championships, which were

held in OSU's St. John Arena and had Ohio State finish with a disappointing fourth-place mark.

### 20 Years Ago – 2001

With his first spring in the books, Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel was confident that his new squad was headed in the right direction.

"The biggest thing we have to do is understand the importance of the lessons we learned," Tressel said moments after Ohio State's spring-ending Scarlet and Gray Game was held April 28 at Columbus Crew Stadium. "I think our guys learned a lot of lessons from a general standpoint and also at their position."

Tressel was hoping above all else to get his message across that Ohio State expected to outwork its opponents just as much as it wanted to beat them with talent.

"The players have to understand that May, June and July is what separates the teams," Tressel said. "That's what separates the guys who end up emerging on your team and what separates the teams around the country."

"Those are the months when the coaches aren't there and it isn't mandatory. Those are the months that make a difference. Those will have to be self-initiated months."

### 15 Years Ago – 2006

Tressel was pleased with the progress of his young team as it closed out spring camp with its annual spring game. He had entered the spring period looking to shore up fundamentals and establish new contributors, primarily on the defensive side of the ball, and he felt that the Buckeyes were in a good place on both fronts.

"I think we got a lot accomplished," Tressel said. "We know more about what our team's abilities are, what our strengths are, and we know even more vividly how far we have to go as far as some positions are concerned. We lost some very good players, but we made progress."

"Going into the spring, our hope was that our younger players would step up and seize the opportunities provided by so many open spots. I think we were pleased with the fact that so many of them did exactly that."

### 10 Years Ago – 2011

Jackie Barto, who had taken over the Ohio State women's hockey program at its inception in 1999 and spent 12 seasons as the head coach of the team, announced her retirement from coaching on April 19.

Barto said that after 27 years in the profession, including 15 at Providence as an assistant and then as a head coach, it was simply time for her to call it a career.

"Coaching involves a lot of things," Barto told BSB. "It's a

## Last Issue Of Biweekly Printing Schedule

This is the final biweekly print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, as our spring publishing schedule comes to a close. The next issue of BSB, the June issue, is scheduled to be mailed on June 8. That will be followed by our traditional July Interview Issue and our 41st Football Preview Issue, set to be mailed in August.

The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff does not go into hibernation, however. We will continue to post daily reports and stories at our BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all subscribers. With the growing popularity of the transfer portal, readers will want to check in regularly to keep track of the comings and goings in all major sports.

The BSB staff also provides electronic recruiting coverage at BuckeyeSports.com, as well as presenting reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays. Additionally, staff members man the BuckeyeSports.com Forum, interacting with subscribers on the hot topics of the day.

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

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

Readers who have been experiencing postal delivery problems can also read the complete edition of each issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin online at BuckeyeSports.com immediately upon completion. Your copy of the paper will still arrive in your mailbox at the usual time.

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



## 2021 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2020 Record
Sept. 2	at Minnesota	TBA	TBA	3-4
Sept. 11	OREGON*	TBA	TBA	4-3
Sept. 18	TULSA*	TBA	TBA	6-3
Sept. 25	AKRON	TBA	TBA	1-5
Oct. 2	at Rutgers	TBA	TBA	3-6
Oct. 9	MARYLAND	TBA	TBA	2-3
Oct. 23	at Indiana*	TBA	TBA	6-2
Oct. 30	PENN STATE	TBA	TBA	4-5
Nov. 6	at Nebraska	TBA	TBA	3-5
Nov. 13	PURDUE	TBA	TBA	2-4
Nov. 20	MICHIGAN STATE	TBA	TBA	2-5
Nov. 27	at Michigan	TBA	TBA	2-4
Dec. 4	Big Ten Championship**	TBA	TBA	

\* 2020 bowl team

\*\* at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)



Mackenzie Allesie

per game.

With her leading the way, the Buckeyes bounced back from an 0-7 start to the season to finish 5-8 and roll into conference tournament play with momentum. They opened the conference tournament on April 21 with a 4-3 overtime victory over the No. 2-seeded Penn State Nittany Lions,

and the first outright winner in program history, Allesie led the conference in goals scored, goals per game (1.17), points and points per game (2.67). She ranks fifth nationally in goals per game and fourth in points

thanks to a game-winning goal from Sarah Charley on an Allesie assist.

“I had a lot of communication with my teammates,” Charley said on BTN following the game. “Thankfully (Allesie) had a perfect ball that went right to me. We saw each other before she even passed the ball. I couldn’t have done it without her.”

Ohio State advanced to the Big Ten title game after another overtime victory in the semifinals, 2-1 against Northwestern, but came up short in that title game against top-seeded Michigan, falling 4-0.

### Women’s Hockey Lands Clarkson Transfer

After coming up just short of the national title game in 2021 as the No. 3 in

the NCAA tournament, the Ohio State’s women’s hockey team is looking to reload and make another run at the title next in 2022 and took a major step toward it on April 27. Ohio State announced the addition of Clarkson defender transfer Lauren Bernard, who will be available immediately for the Buckeyes, with three years of eligibility remaining.

A Madison, Ohio, native, Bernard spent her first two seasons in college with Clarkson, one of the nation’s strongest women’s hockey programs. She played in all 37 games for the Golden Knights as a freshman in 2019, racking up 13 points (second best among defenders) and a plus-23 plus/minus, third best on the team.

In 2020, Bernard took a step back offensively with just four points, but she still played in 19 games with an even plus/minus. She found herself slipping a bit in the defensive pairings because of the rise of freshman Nicole Gosling, who led the Clarkson defenders with 14 points in 19 games.

Although the depth chart also played a role, Bernard cited a desire to return home and the opportunity to compete for

titles as the motivation behind her transfer back to her home state.

“Growing up, my family and I were diehard Ohio State fans for as long as I can remember,” said Bernard. “I knew it was a special place and everyone in the state takes great pride in their school. I’m just excited to be a part of it now.”

“The level of work ethic and competition is what attracted me to this situation. There’s a culture and accountability in everything that’s done. I know I’ll become a better player as a result of it.”

She’ll join an already strong defensive group in Columbus, which is set to return super senior Lisa Bruno; rising seniors Madison Bizal, Sophie Jacques and Eve Savander; rising junior Teghan Inglis; and rising sophomore Riley Brengman. She’ll likely slot into the top four and could look to pair with the more defense-focused Jacques, joining Bizal and Brengman as the offensive defensemen on the roster.

*Wyatt Crosher, Patrick Mayhorn and Lori Schmidt contributed to this article.*

## Getting To Know The X’s And O’s

Hi, guys,

Kudos to Patrick Mayhorn on his article “Explaining College Football’s New Terminology.” Loved it! I played football long, long ago, but I understand very little about today’s complicated formations, systems, and strategies. I would like to see many more articles like this, explaining things like Cover 2, the flex, and other technical terms.

I do have a question: Patrick says that one of the benefits of Cover 1 Free and Cover 3 Zone is that they look identical pre-snap, so the QB can’t tell which one is actually being used. I once heard Peyton Manning explain, however, a very easy way to tell the difference: Send a man in motion. If a DB follows him across the formation, then you know the defense is in man coverage. Maybe Patrick could explain this.

On another point, I have read several articles recently about Justin Fields’ falling stock in the NFL draft. Some of the critics blame this on the “very simple, one read” offense run by Ryan Day, in which Fields seldom has to go to a secondary receiver. I was surprised to see this. I thought that Day’s offense was supposed to be pretty complicated. Maybe somebody could dig into this, too.

**Terry Walrath  
Hinckley, Ohio**

Hey, Terry, glad to hear that you enjoyed the piece. We will certainly have more stories in that vein coming through the summer, as the Buckeyes take some time away from the practice field and football news slows to a crawl.

As for your questions, I think there are a couple of things worth noting on both fronts.

First, on the differences between Cover 1 and Cover 3 and the usage of motion to force the defense to show its hand, Manning is spot-on, as he so often was during his career. Motion is valuable as misdirection, but its primary goal is to tell the quarterback about the defense that he’s going up against.

Now, a defense can work around this by swapping assignments, rather than asking its man coverage players to track the player in motion. It takes some on-the-fly thinking from the players on the field and can lead to coverage busts, but swapping in the case of motion is fairly common in modern defenses and can really sell zone when done correctly, which puts the quarterback in a very tough spot. Not all defenses will do that, but it is something that offensive coaches have to look out for in game planning, and if they spot it, they’ll usually stay away from using motion as an indicator.

On the Fields question, Day’s offense is a bit tricky to pin down, because it’s changed pretty significantly every year that he’s been in Columbus. It was more complex for J.T. Barrett and Dwayne Haskins than it was for Fields because Barrett was comfortable with the more extensive reads and Haskins had four killers at wide receiver in Parris Campbell, Johnnie Dixon, K.J. Hill and Terry McLaurin.

Fields ran a simplified version of the offense in 2019 as he picked up the details, and Day kept the scope of the reads small in 2020 because the Buckeyes had two receivers whom they wanted to catch the ball on just about every play in Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson. That doesn’t mean that Fields can’t make the reads, but he wasn’t asked to look past those two very often (and he didn’t need to, because one of them was generally open).

It also doesn’t mean that Day’s offense is overly simple, just that it adapts to its personnel, which I would consider a positive. Expect to see more than two receivers involved this season as that room comes into its own and those five-stars start to develop.

– Patrick Mayhorn, BSB Associate Editor

*If you have a football question that you’d like answered in “Getting To Know The X’s And O’s,” write to Buckeye Sports Bulletin, by way of a letter sent to BSB Letters, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212, or email it to bsb@buckeyesports.com.*

## Become A Buckeye Sports Bulletin VIP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Elite Donors:** Marshall Beck, Sarasota, Fla.; B2, Reston, Va.; Phillip Blue, Prior Lake, Minn.; Fredrick Bradshaw, Columbus; In memory of Norwin Brovitz, Oakmont, Pa.; Brian Bucher, Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.; Richard Dunkelberger, Groveport, Ohio; Thomas E. Farish, Port St. Lucie, Fla.; Fred Fingerhut, Phoenix; Sander Flaum, New York; Chalk Fry DDS, Sarasota, Fla.; Laura Granich, Columbus; Paul E. Hackett, The Villages, Fla.; James Hamilton, Murrysville, Pa.; Curtis High, Beavercreek, Ohio; Freddie & Joe Huber, Walpole, Mass.; Carl R. Jeffery DDS, Van Wert, Ohio; Bill Judy, Dublin, Ohio; Frank Klaus, Pepper Pike, Ohio; Fred Krisch, Cleveland; Paul Lappert, Columbus; Larry Larson, Ladera Ranch, Calif.; Dan Laville, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Alan Lord, Reynoldsburg, Ohio; Dr. Jonathan Lucas, Portsmouth, Ohio; Col. George R. Nelson, New Albany, Ohio; OSU65Bob, Mishawaka, Ind.; Jim Reichler, Crestone, Colo.; The Russell Group United, Columbus; Charlie Shaffer, Edison, Ohio; Bill Short, Sparta, Ohio; Mark Skinner, Columbus; James Thomas, The Villages, Fla.; Chuck Underwood, Miamisburg, Ohio; Dan van Blaricom, Dublin, Ohio; Beth Wachsman, Columbus; Elliott S. Wettstein, Waverly, Ohio; David J. Young, Supply, N.C.; Anonymous, Council Bluffs, Iowa; Anonymous, Girard, Ohio; Anonymous, Lancaster, Ohio; Anonymous, Lewisburg, W.Va.

**Scarlet VIPs:** Anthony Ananthanarayanan, Rochester, Mich.; Greg Brooks, Gahanna, Ohio; Marty Brumbaugh, Troy, Ohio; Dennis Dahm, Sandusky, Ohio; Tom Goila, Cincinnati; Doug Harris, Lima, Ohio; Joseph Huber, Walpole, Mass.; Alan Lord, Reynoldsburg, Ohio; Lawrence Romanoff, Powell, Ohio; Jim Shaw, Lake Forest, Calif.; William Torok, Girard, Ohio; J.D. Wientjes, Peoria, Ill.; Anonymous, Dallas; Anonymous, Norwalk, Ohio.



# Fields Eager To Get To Work With Bears

Continued From Page 1

Fields was not as fazed by the outside noise. He said that the only noise he's interested in is feedback from coaches who will help him become a better football player.

"I know how much I want to be great," Fields said. "It just comes a point in time where you just have to cut all that criticism out. Of course, it's good to listen to the criticism you get from people that are actually there to help you, so if it was from a coach or anything like that, of course I'm going to take that criticism. But I feel like there's a lot of criticism coming from outside voices that didn't really matter. I just did my best to kind of cut all that out and really just get to work."

Those comments echo the sentiments that Day said about his former quarterback. After working with Fields for two seasons, earning 20 wins, two Big Ten titles, two College Football Playoff appearances and a national title appearance together, Day said he respects how much Fields can silence the talk of everyone around him.

"Justin has done an unbelievable job of handling that while he was here," Day said. "He kind of isolated himself. He didn't have a lot of people get to him. It was him and his dog in his apartment a lot, and he did a great job of handling what comes with being the quarterback at Ohio State. Along those lines, you're going to get different scrutiny along the way, and that's part of, I guess, America. They build you up then then try and rip you down. And there's vulnerability and there's exposure there, but the one thing about Justin is he never gets rattled at all. It just actually fuels his fire a little bit, which I think is a good thing."

All the positive talk from Day on Fields was not just to the media. He also said it to Chicago Bears head coach Matt Nagy as early as the end of the 2019 season, and it stuck with Nagy throughout this season and

into the Bears' selection on night one of the draft.

Nagy complimented Day – with whom the Bears head coach said he's had a relationship since he was playing at Delaware and Day was at New Hampshire – on all the assistance he has given him on all the Ohio State players the Bears have had interest in. But of all those players in two drafts, 20 draftees in all, it was Fields who stood out the most.

"As I was going through last year on a phone conversation, just talking with Coach Day at Ohio State, we were going through a bunch of different players just talking about different guys that he has," Nagy said. "Toward the end of it, we discussed Justin, and he mentioned that 'Man, this kid is a generational talent,' and it just stuck with me.

"When you hear that, those are strong words, but you understand the respect I have for him and what that means. Ryan told that to me last year, and so we've been keeping our eye on him."

One of the many questions surrounding Fields for the Bears, and any NFL team interested in him, was with his work ethic and desire around the game of football. Those became a major storyline when ESPN reporter and former NFL quarterback Dan Orlovsky said a source referred to Fields as a "last-guy-in, first-guy-out type of quarterback."

The comments led, again, to Day vehemently defending his quarterback anywhere he could and to Orlovsky clarifying that these were not his own opinions, just what he had heard elsewhere.

But when Pace talked about Fields after the Bears' selection, it was the signal-caller's resilience he showed against teams like Clemson and Michigan, when he battled injuries to lead his team to victories, that he mentioned first.



PHOTO COURTESY THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

**GETTING THE CALL** – Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields speaks on the phone with a representative of the Chicago Bears, who took Fields with the No. 11 overall pick in the 2021 NFL draft.

"I mean, Fields' toughness on a scale of 1-10 is an 11," Pace said. "You just love that about him. Oh, and by the way, he runs a 4.44 40-yard dash. You throw that all in together, and it just feels good (to draft him)."

Fields is joining a Bears team that finished 8-8 in 2020. They had the No. 22 passing offense, No. 22 scoring offense and No. 26 total offense in the NFL. The passing numbers were almost entirely from two quarterbacks – Mitchell Trubisky and Nick Foles – who started nine and seven games, respectively.

Foles is 32 and a former Super Bowl champion, and he remains a veteran presence on the Bears for the 2021 season as he enters his 10th year in the league. Trubisky was in his fourth season as Chicago's primary starter after being selected second overall by the team in the 2017 NFL draft.

Although he boasts a winning record (29-21) as a starter, has completed 64.0 percent of his passes over his career and had a much better quarterback rating than Foles in 2020 (93.5 to 80.8), the Bears did not pursue re-signing him. Instead, Trubisky signed with the Buffalo Bills, where he will be a backup to Josh Allen.

Trubisky was another name in a long list of Bears quarterbacks who have not panned out in the way that the organization or the fans had hoped. This history may put added pressure onto Fields, but when he was asked why he believes he can be the franchise quarterback Chicago has struggled to find, the former Buckeye was confident in his own mentality.

"Just the way I carry myself, just the way I care about the game, the grit I have, the determination I have to be great," Fields said of why he would succeed. "I think nobody has the story that I have. So just everything inside of me, just wanting to be a great quarterback, wanting to be a franchise quarterback. Just me dreaming for this moment my whole life. I just think all of those intangibles, my work ethic and all that together will be different for me."

But Foles is not Fields' only competition at quarterback as he heads into his first season in Chicago. The main name in front of him is Andy Dalton, a player similar to Foles in age (33 years old) and experience (entering his 11th season).

Dalton was signed this offseason on a

one-year, \$10 million deal after throwing for 2,170 yards, 14 touchdowns and eight interceptions in 11 appearances (nine starts) for the Dallas Cowboys. He also has proved himself as more than capable in his time with the Cincinnati Bengals, where he became a three-time Pro Bowler who amassed 31,594 yards and 204 touchdowns in nine seasons.

That level of production has led the Bears front office to proclaim Dalton as the guy heading into the season while the team allows Fields to build up at the professional level.

"Andy is our starter," Pace said. "And we're going to have a really good plan in place to develop Justin and do what's best for our organization to win games."

But Fields has been doubted before. He was doubted by many for a variety of reasons leading up to the draft, and he was doubted back before he was at Ohio State in his one season at Georgia. There, Fields did not win the starting job, with incumbent quarterback Jake Fromm holding firm atop the depth chart while head coach Kirby Smart used Fields in gadget plays, primarily as a rusher.

That may have been three years ago, but it is clearly still on Fields' mind as recently as during his post-draft press conference, when he alluded to the situation after being asked about being picked after three quarterbacks and 10 total players.

"I mean, I've gone through situations where I haven't been chosen, and I think the world has seen the outcome of that," Fields said.

The outcome was Georgia missing out on the playoffs in both 2018 and 2019 under Fromm, while Fields led Ohio State to back-to-back appearances in the playoff and finished as a top 10 vote-getter for the Heisman Trophy both seasons.

Fields may not listen much to the noise, but he does use the doubts, the criticisms, the lack of winning a starting job, all as a little bit of fuel to his fire. With the draft in the rearview mirror, it is time for Fields to leave all that talk about him behind as well.

"My goal now is not to worry about those teams (that passed on him). I mean, those teams have nothing to do with me," Fields said. "My goal is, if we play that team, to beat them. I'm not worried about the draft. The draft is over for me. For me personally, I'm ready to get to work."



PHOTO COURTESY THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

**EARLY MEETING** – Chicago Bears head coach Matt Nagy (right) watched Justin Fields work out during Ohio State Pro Day. The Bears selected the OSU quarterback with the No. 11 overall pick.



# Fans To Again Choose OSU's Top Quarterback

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

In 2018, Buckeye Sports Bulletin polled readers and media members in an effort to determine the greatest Ohio State quarterback of all time. The results of that poll were published in the August 2018 issue of BSB.

Dwayne Haskins took control of the Buckeye offense that fall, and almost immediately we realized that the poll might be obsolete. Haskins left for the NFL following that season, and Justin Fields took over as Ohio State quarterback. He promptly led the Buckeyes to two straight playoff appearances and was named Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year both seasons, rendering the poll potentially even more obsolete.

Now Buckeye Sports Bulletin is back with the "Who is the Greatest Ohio State Quarterback of All Time 2.0" poll. We have included the previous top 10 vote getters in the poll, as well as Haskins and Fields. We are not listing the previous poll results so as not to influence voting. Readers can write in a candidate if they wish to do so.

We will be presenting brief bios of the contenders in alphabetical order with comments from Buckeye football historian Jack Park. The first six players on the ballot are featured in this issue, and the second six will appear in the June issue. Final poll results will appear in the August Football Preview issue.

## J.T. Barrett (2014-17)

2016 Chicago Tribune Silver Football Award winner (best player in Big Ten) and a three-time Big Ten Quarterback of the Year (2014, 2016-17) while helping OSU to conference championships in 2014 and '17. ... Responsible for 147 touchdowns scored (school- and Big Ten-record 104 passing, plus 43 rushing). ... Set 39 records (34 Ohio State, five Big Ten). ... First three-time captain in program history. ... 4-0 vs. Michigan. ... In 2016 U-M game his 1-yard plunge on fourth down in the second overtime barely kept the game alive and allowed Curtis Samuel to score on the next play for a 30-27 win.

**Jack Park:** "His leadership and his consistency really complemented his physical ability. He really didn't have too many bad games. ... Being a three-time captain, that tells me a lot about what goes on inside the locker room. ... He'll always be remembered for that fourth-down play."

## Justin Fields (2019-20)

20-2 as a starter after transfer from Georgia. ... Led Buckeyes to consecutive College Football Playoff appearances, including 2020 season national championship game. ... Threw for 385 yards and six touchdowns in the 2020 semifinal, a 49-28 win over Clemson. ... 2019 Heisman Trophy finalist. ... Threw for 5,373 yards, 10th all-time at OSU. ... 63 touchdown passes are second at Ohio State. ... Rushed for 867 yards and 15 career touchdowns. ... MVP of 2019 Big Ten Championship Game. ... First QB in Big Ten history with 40-plus passing TDs and 10-plus rushing touchdowns in a season (2019).

**JP:** On Clemson game, in which teams scored same number of points in first, third and fourth quarters: "Ohio State outscored them 21-0 in the second quarter on three Justin Fields touchdown passes. I don't think I ever saw a quarterback at Ohio State play a

better quarter, or a quarter as good as that, as he did in that quarter."

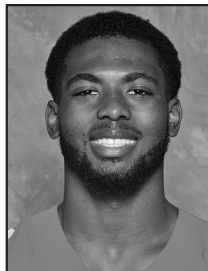
## Joe Germaine (1996-98)

Chicago Tribune Silver Football award winner (1998). ... Held nine Ohio State quarterback records. ... Team MVP (1998). ... Rose Bowl MVP in 1997 when he guided Buckeyes 65 yards in 12 plays in final 1:40, capped by a 5-yard TD pass to David Boston with 19 seconds left for a 20-17 victory over No. 2 Arizona State. ... Threw for 3,330 yards with 25 TDs against seven interceptions as a senior. ... For his career – which included only 13 starts among 37 games played in three seasons – he had 6,370 passing yards, 56 touchdowns and 20 interceptions.

**JP:** "One of the best passers we've ever had and so consistent. He was a pretty cool cucumber under pressure, a lot like Craig Krenzel was later on. If there's one drive that I remember Joe for, it's that Rose Bowl drive. He hit three passes to Dimitrious Stanley for first downs to keep that drive going. It's one of the greatest Ohio State wins of all time."

## Cornelius Greene (1972-75)

All-American and Chicago Tribune Silver Football winner in 1975. ... In 1973 became first Black quarterback to start for Ohio State. ... 31-2-1 as a starter, helping OSU to three Big Ten titles and an undefeated season in 1973. ... Played in four Rose Bowls, starting last three years. ... 1974 Rose Bowl MVP when he threw for 129 yards and ran for 45 yards and a TD in a 42-21 victory over USC. Inducted into Rose Bowl Hall of Fame in 2019. ... Completed 55.1 percent of his passes in his career for 2,348 yards and 17 touchdowns; rushed for 2,066 yards (4.9 average) with 29 touchdowns.



J.T. Barrett

**JP:** "He brought a dimension to the Ohio State offense that maybe Ohio State had never had before, the way he could run those option plays. It had been done before, but not with the type of elusiveness and excitement that Corny had. He combined running and passing probably as well as anybody we had up to that point."

## Dwayne Haskins (2016-18)

Heisman Trophy finalist and Chicago Tribune Silver Football winner in 2018, his lone season as starter when he set 28 school and seven Big Ten records. ... Threw for the most yards (4,831) and touchdowns (50) in conference history while leading the Buckeyes to a 13-1 record, including wins in the Big Ten Championship Game and Rose Bowl. ... Passed for 396 yards and six touchdowns in 62-39 win vs. Michigan and set school record with 499 yards and five TDs vs. Northwestern in title game. ... Passed for 251 yards and three TDs in 28-23 win against Washington to earn 2019 Rose Bowl MVP.

**JP:** "He's a little bit like Justin Fields in his overall ability. ... Haskins really showed himself in the second half at Michigan (2017) when J.T. got hurt and he came off the bench (Haskins was 6 of 7 for 94 yards and a had a 22-yard run to set up a score in 31-20 win). That's one of the things I'll remember most about him."

## Bobby Hoying (1992-95)

First team All-Big Ten as a senior by throwing for then school-record 3,269 yards along with 29 touchdowns. ... Was second that season nationally and set school record for passing efficiency (163.4) ... 30-7-

## Who Is The Greatest Quarterback In Ohio State History?

### Options:

J.T. Barrett \_\_\_\_\_  
Justin Fields \_\_\_\_\_  
Joe Germaine \_\_\_\_\_  
Cornelius Greene \_\_\_\_\_  
Dwayne Haskins \_\_\_\_\_  
Bobby Hoying \_\_\_\_\_  
Rex Kern \_\_\_\_\_  
Craig Krenzel \_\_\_\_\_  
Braxton Miller \_\_\_\_\_  
Terrelle Pryor \_\_\_\_\_  
Art Schlichter \_\_\_\_\_  
Troy Smith \_\_\_\_\_

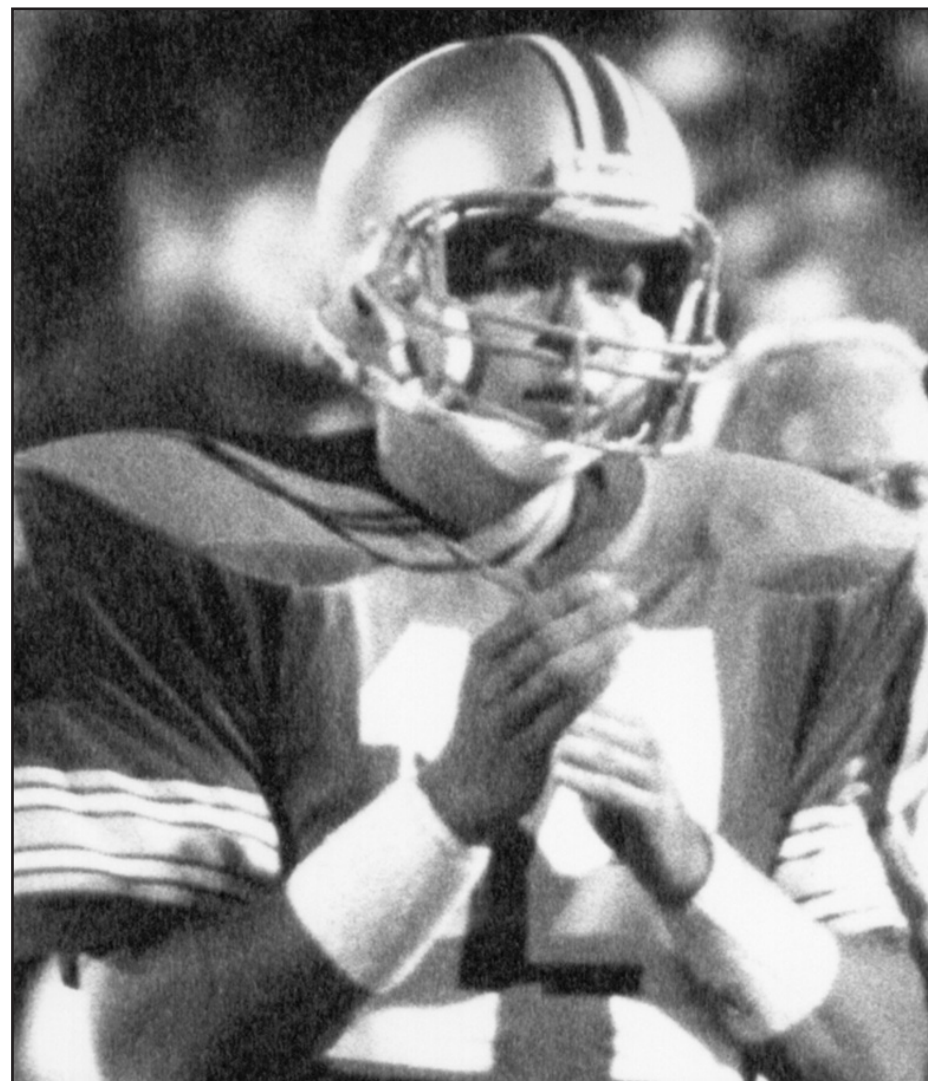
### Instructions:

Number your picks 1-10 (feel free to write in any players we left off the list) and mail this ballot to Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212. Lists can also be emailed to [bsb@buckeyesports.com](mailto:bsb@buckeyesports.com) or subscribers can vote on the forum at [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com). Please provide your name, age and any additional comments regarding your ballot. Copies of the ballot are accepted and voters are welcome to attach additional paper if more space for comments is needed.

### Comments:

1 record as a three-year starter. ... Had 16 games with more than 200 yards passing. ... Threw for 7,232 yards in his career ... 57 TD passes was a school record at the time and is still third on the OSU career list behind Barrett and Fields. ... Won National Football Foundation's Vincent dePaul Draddy Award in 1995 as the top senior student-athlete in college football.

**JP:** "He might be a little underrated in terms of the effectiveness he had. He was just so consistent, a very talented passer. He was at Ohio State at a time when we had a lot of really fine offensive players to go with him. Terry Glenn really helped Bobby Hoying be the quarterback he was and vice versa. He was one of the best receivers we ever had."



FILE PHOTO

**UNDER THE RADAR** – Bobby Hoying held the Ohio State record for touchdown passes in a career when he finished his Buckeye career, tossing 57 TD passes.



# Young, Hickman Bringing Bullet Back

By PATRICK MAYHORN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Shortly after then-new Ohio State head coach Ryan Day announced the hires of co-defensive coordinators Jeff Hafley and Greg Mattison as well as linebackers coach Al Washington in early 2019, the trio began to hint at a structural shift in the way that the Buckeyes operated on defense.

After years of working out of the 4-3 base that served as a standard in college football, Hafley, Mattison and Washington told media at every opportunity that they planned to install the bullet position into Ohio State's defense.

The bullet, as it was defined then, was essentially a linebacker/safety hybrid, similar to the viper position that Mattison and Washington had deployed at Michigan with players such as Jabrill Peppers and Khaleke Hudson. It would be part of a shift to the 4-2-5 defense that TCU head coach Gary Patterson had popularized in the Big 12, featuring just two linebackers and five defensive backs to better account for strong passing attacks, like the kind that Patterson ran into nearly every week in the Big 12.

In Ohio State's model, that 4-2-5 would feature the bullet, a single-high safety, a slot or nickel cornerback (depending on the personnel available on the roster) and then the standard two outside cornerbacks.

At the time, it appeared that the position was tailor-made for safety Brendon White, who had starred for the Buckeyes at the end of 2018 and seemed to fit the parameters for the new position to a T, as an oversized safety but an exceedingly athletic and undersized linebacker. When Washington laid out expectations for the position, it felt as though he was addressing White specifically, just without naming him.

"That guy is a guy who can sack, he can rush the passer," Washington said of the bullet. "Not every safety can do that. He's a guy that has to be able to play at the line of scrimmage and use his hands. Not every safety can do that. The guy has to be able to cover man, the slot. Not every linebacker can do that."

However, Washington added a caveat in March 2019 when he spoke to Ohio State media for the first time about the new-look Silver Bullets.

"It depends on who you're playing," Washington said. "I can just tell you, we're not going to play four linebackers vs. 10 personnel (four wide receivers, one running back, zero tight ends). That's not happening. And we're not playing two linebackers vs. 12 or 22 (two-tight end sets). It's who you're playing, and what you're asking a guy to do is the big thing."

Given that Ohio State did not line up against a slate of exclusively power-based teams in 2019 and 2020, it was odd that the bullet, as it was originally planned, never really came to fruition. Ohio State adhered closely to the traditional three-linebacker sets, flipping into four-linebacker looks with even more frequency in 2020 so that it could get Justin Hilliard onto the field alongside Tuf Borland, Baron Browning and Pete Werner.

Werner seemed to fill the bullet role in 2019 rather than White, though to call it a serious departure from a traditional linebacker role would be generous. For the most part, Werner served in Ohio State's Sam linebacker role in 2019 as a player who could drop into coverage and operate with a



FILE PHOTO

**RELOADING THE BULLET** – Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs (upper right) will be making changes to the Buckeye defense, including the return of the bullet position.

little bit more flexibility but largely remained a box linebacker, the kind that the Buckeyes had deployed for years.

Browning took over the role in 2020, shifting its definition again to an edge rusher/linebacker combination, another departure from the original design of the bullet, but not from the 4-3 linebacker handbook.

In both cases, Ohio State's explanation for the usage of more typical three-linebacker sets was that its group of linebackers was simply too strong to justify removing any of them from the field for someone who would fit closer to the bullet mold.

"We want to get our best players on the field, and we had a core of really good linebackers last year," defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs said on April 23. "Everybody would agree that group had experience and talent and that they could play. That was a strength of our defense. As you look at the totality of our personnel this year, we have a really strong front. We have guys that are interchangeable parts up front, and we're excited about them. We want to make sure we're maximizing their ability. We got caught in a situation this spring where we had fewer linebackers. That doesn't mean we're going to have fewer linebackers in the fall. Those guys come back, are healthy, and we're able to incorporate that."

As that core group of linebackers moves on to the next level, the Buckeyes seem to be shifting their approach as well, which could lead to a resurgence in bullet discourse and, perhaps, the realization of its original design on the field. In this year's spring game, Ohio State's defense took the field for 109 snaps and had a player filling that bullet position for all 109 of those snaps. Craig Young and Ronnie Hickman were both listed on Ohio State's roster as playing the bullet position, rather than their original listings at linebacker and safety, respectively.

Coombs alluded to a lack of linebacker depth as part of the reasoning behind that move, with projected starter Dallas Gant and rising sophomore Mitchell Melton both missing the spring session with injuries, but he was also quick to stress the importance of getting the best players on the field for his defensive unit. Through the spring, Young

and Hickman were significant parts of that conversation.

"I think that what we want to do is get our best 11 guys on the field," Coombs said. "We have to evaluate who's healthy and who's able to play. I think that spring allowed us to continue to develop options along those lines, and it was unfortunate that we had some injuries at linebacker, but it gave us the opportunities to put some different kids in some different spots, which lends itself to depth in the fall."

"That's not ideal all the time, some guys playing in the box that haven't played there before, but that doesn't do anything but serve us well going forward."

Coombs didn't mention it directly, but a potential move to that 4-2-5, bullet and all, seems directly tied to the struggles that the Buckeyes had against the pass in 2020. The numbers have been floating around Columbus since Alabama put the finishing touches on its romp over the Buckeye defense in the national title game, and for good reason. The expectation at Ohio State is much higher than No. 122 in the nation in passing yards allowed per game (304.0).

In bringing an extra defensive back onto the field in the form of either Young or Hickman, while removing one of those slower box linebackers, Ohio State is hoping to combat the four- and five-wide receiver sets that teams such as Alabama and Indiana used to gash Coombs' defense in his first season at the helm.

However, as Washington said back in 2019, Coombs doesn't expect the move to the 4-2-5 to completely remove the 4-3 from Ohio State's playbook, no matter what the stats in the spring scrimmage showed. It's based, instead, around what the opponent is showing Ohio State.

"You have to make decisions based on game plan of how you're going to attack the offense based on how they're going to attack you," Coombs said. "If you're playing in the spread game and you have teams that are going to spread the field, throw the ball around a lot, you have to make sure that you have a plan to handle that. If you're going to play the teams that are going to pack it in and play with two tight ends and run the ball, you have to have a plan for that."

"What the bullet affords you the oppor-

tunity to do is to try to play both sets of personnel that the offense has to offer without necessarily having to change your personnel on first- and second-down. I love the way those guys competed this spring, Craig and Ronnie, and I'm excited for their fall. I think it's going to be a piece of what we do, absolutely."

Despite both being listed as bullets, Young and Hickman have fairly different physical profiles and seem to bring two different skill sets to the table. A former linebacker, the 6-3, 228-pound Young is considered much more physical than his counterpart and projects as more of a box safety than one who excels in coverage. He still looked more than comfortable against the run and the pass in the spring game, making one of the best plays of the day when he deflected a C.J. Stroud pass down the sidelines to tight end Mitch Rossi.

Hickman, meanwhile, checks in at 6-1, 205 pounds and made the move from safety to bullet. He's considered the better coverage player of the two and slotted into the nickel cornerback spot against Michigan State in 2020 when the Buckeyes were down a significant portion of their defense.

Coombs mentioned Kourt Williams as a potential factor as well. Williams seems to be a combination of the two – he's a bit bigger than Hickman at 6-1, 215 pounds, but he came to Ohio State as a safety out of Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco – and was thought of as the ideal fit for that bullet spot by recruiting analysts when he landed with the Buckeyes.

Ohio State sees the differences among the three as a strength and as something that the defense can use to adjust for different offensive looks without needing to shake up the personnel groupings.

"I think that anytime you're putting together a personnel package, you're trying to make sure the defense is emphasizing your player's strengths and not exposing their weaknesses," Coombs said. "While those two kids are different and Kourt Williams would be the third piece of that puzzle, you're looking at different types of players. When they're on the field, you're going to want to emphasize what they're going to do best."

"There are differences in the skill sets of several of those guys, and one of the things that we want to be able to go out there and do is (to get more than just 11 guys involved). We have a lot of kids, a lot of young talent, a lot of kids that are developing, and we want them to play. We want them to play in roles where they're going to be successful and where they can help us be successful."

Regardless of who lines up for the Buckeyes at bullet this fall or how frequently that bullet finds his way onto the field, Ohio State's defense has two goals in mind for 2021 – improvement on all fronts and adaptability to what the offense is showing them.

"We have to make sure that we are structuring our defense in order to defend against the offense and attack the offense based on what they do best," Coombs said. "Based on your schedule and based on who you're playing, that's how you formulate the plan. There's not an overall answer for, 'OK, in college football they're throwing the ball more so we have to do this.' It's just (week to week). We would like to think that we have more options available to us this fall just because of depth than we had last fall, and we're excited about that."



# Former Bucks Mixed On Contact In Practice

By LORI SCHMIDT  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

"We had a really physical spring," Ohio State football coach Ryan Day said minutes after the Buckeyes wrapped up their annual scrimmage at Ohio Stadium on April 17.

"We did a fair amount of contact," concurred offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson six days later at a press conference. "I thought Coach Day was very, very smart in the back-and-forth of when it was tackle days and when it wasn't, how much was shoulder pad practice and how much was a lot of perimeter and passing and all that. I think our team did a lot of contact, and it was a physical spring, but I thought Ryan did a great job of having the balance to keep the guys fresh."

The spring game itself, however, was played at thud tempo – a speed at which players hit one another without tackling to the ground. That did not sit well with former Ohio State fullback Vaughn Broadnax (1980-83).

"One thing I have noticed recently, we have spring games that are basically seven-on-seven competitions. My concern is when I see the national champion in a full-go scrimmage vs. the runner up, who's basically in a seven-on-seven type of scrimmage," he said. "You might want to emulate what the national champion is doing, because the spring game is four to five months away from the regular season. We lost to Alabama. Alabama is king. If you want to beat the king, you have to do at least what the king does."

In fairness, Broadnax admitted that Alabama made their quarterbacks off limits, as Ohio State did, and the Crimson Tide could hardly be accused of being as aggressive as they would have been on a college football Saturday in the fall.

Beyond Broadnax's concern, though, there was seemingly little complaint about the physicality of this spring in Columbus, even from players and coaches who were at Ohio State before the NCAA passed its current regulations regarding offseason workouts.

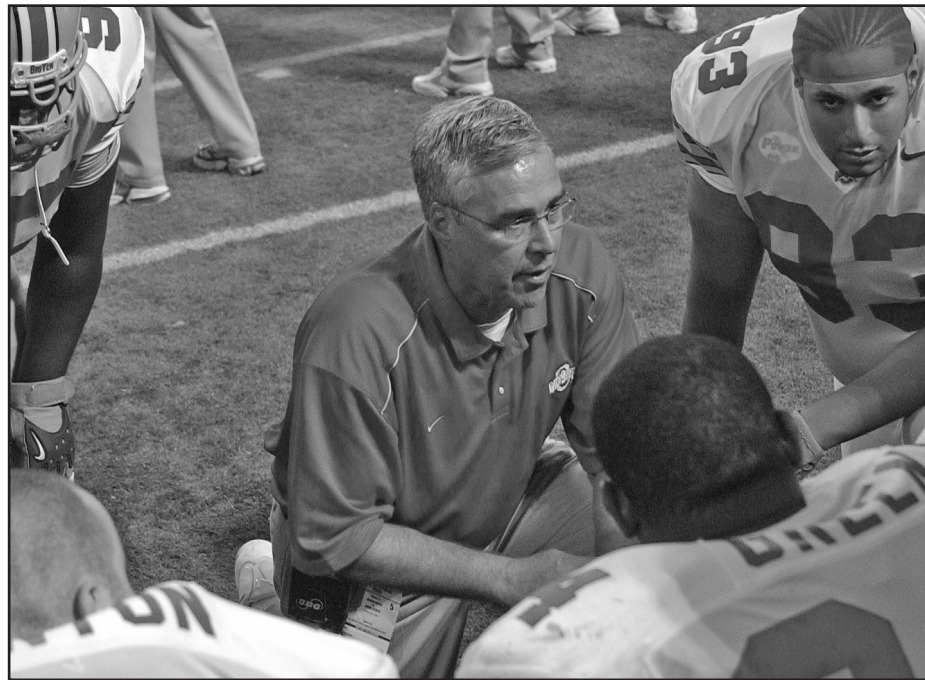
As of 2014, schools have 15 allowable spring practice sessions, eight of which may involve live contact (tackling or thud). But only three of the live contact practices may include greater than 50 percent live contact. The NCAA recommends teams limit themselves to two live contact practices a week, and those should not occur on consecutive days.

Of course, even before the NCAA stepped in, some players would self-regulate the tempo of workouts.

"My day at practice? Probably 70 percent of the time I was involved in a collision with either Marcus Marek or Pepper Johnson, those types of hard-hitting linebackers," Broadnax can laugh about it (at least he can now) and does. "It got to the point where we said, 'Hey, I'm going to win a few; I'll let you win a few. We're not going to kill each other.' You know, when you both see each other taking an aspirin after practice, we made adjustments."

Broadnax played under Earle Bruce. Someone who spent time under the famed Woody Hayes might not have gotten away with the same thing.

"The practices were so fricking hard, the games were easy. You played the games, they were easy. It was like nothing," said former Buckeye linebacker Jim Laughlin, who lettered from 1977-79. But then he



FILE PHOTO

**TIMES HAVE CHANGED – Former Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Heacock said teams no longer need to have contact during practices "every day."**

noted that he agreed with former USC coach John McKay. "Talking about hitting people, he said, 'You give Woody Hayes a week, he'll beat you. You give him two weeks, he'll beat the hell out of himself.' That's the truth."

For OSU, that's clearly a lesson learned.

"I think sometimes we've overhit," remarked Jim Heacock, Ohio State's defensive coordinator from 2005-11 and winner of the Broyles Award as college football's top assistant in 2007. "I feel like you just don't need to do it every day. If I was to go back into coaching, I would probably prefer cutting back on the amount of hits and the amount of contact and work a lot of fundamentals and those types of things. Yeah, I'm all for that. I think the more they cut back, the better."

At some point, even the need to work on fundamentals diminishes.

"I played one year where I had knee surgery, my second year (with the Atlanta Falcons)," said Laughlin. "I missed most of the preseason, but then I came in right after the preseason and I played great. Once you learn how to play the game, you know how to play the game. You don't have to bash into some guy 50 times with the same play to figure out what you need to do in the ballgame. You know you have to go 100 miles per hour and bash into a guy, but you don't have to do it 50 times in practice."

Laughlin missed the preseason, but backing off toward the tail end of a campaign is even more crucial.

"When I was coaching at Muskingum College way back in the day, I mean this was way back in the day," chuckled Heacock, "we had qualified for the championship game. We were playing Wittenberg. We were pretty big underdogs, and it snowed the whole week at Muskingum. We couldn't practice all week on the field, and we had no indoor facility, so we'd go into the gym and we did walk-throughs all week. We're thinking, 'Oh, my God. This is terrible. We haven't had any contact. We're going to get killed.' I mean, it was our best game. We ended up winning the game, winning the championship, and it was after a full week of no contact and just walk-throughs."

Not even the Michigan game provided Heacock with an exception to the need to back off late in the year. While he led the

defense, Ohio State was 6-1 against the Wolverines. (Officially, it's 5-1, due to the NCAA vacating the 2010 game.) That gives Heacock some credibility when it comes to knowing what works well for the Buckeyes as they prepare for The Game – which, as it turns out, involves less physicality than you may think.

"We would rep a lot, but we didn't do a lot of hitting. We didn't try to kill each other. I don't know that we ever, during Michigan week, took players to the ground or made it a full, live scrimmage. We did a lot of mental work, we did a lot of film work, we did a lot of walk-throughs."

During Bobby Carpenter's sophomore season in 2003, the NCAA prohibited teams from holding two-a-day practices on back-to-back days, as part of a longtime slide away from heavy contact in practices at the direction of the NCAA. In fact, it eliminated two-a-days entirely in 2017.

"As an older player I loved the way it took care of my body and kept me fresher during the season and didn't bother my back and knees as much," he said. "However, I think it is important to limit contact somewhat for players at all levels, but they do need to hit daily during training camp and need to work on fundamentals of contact to prevent head and neck injuries caused by poor technique. When you don't practice fundamentals daily as a young player, they never develop."

## Youth Will Be Served

Carpenter's point about the needs of youth football players is interesting, because changes in football tend to come from the ground up. For instance, first you'll see high schools start playing their most athletic players at quarterback, which worked its way up to the college ranks in the 2000s. After that, high schools started to air it out, so colleges begin relying more and more on the passing game. Finally, years later, NFL teams are moving to using the spread offense, because that's what the available talent knows.

However, this development of cutting back on contact is happening in the reverse. Not only have medical experts and trainers at the professional level made recommendations that have filtered down, but it was the speed and size of NFL athletes that first necessitated that player safety be prioritized.

While at the other end of the spectrum?

"Most young players can't generate the force necessary to cause serious injuries," pointed out Carpenter. "There has been a level of fear and pandering that the media has pushed that in turn has impacted participation."

Even so, some would prefer to see even less hitting at the lower levels than what currently occurs.

"If I was czar, I would eliminate tackle football until the age of 13," Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith told the Aspen Institute's Sports & Society Program, an organization that focuses on the relationship between communities and youth sports leagues. "I would be your worst enemy to the pee-wee league. I don't think anybody should be playing tackle football until they're 13-years old. You learn all the requisite athletic skills that you need to learn through flag football."

## Where The NCAA Is Off Target

One area that all of the Buckeyes BSB spoke to would like to see change in is the way the NCAA seeks to eliminate plays in which a player "takes aim at an opponent for purposes of attacking with forcible contact that goes beyond making a legal tackle or a legal block or playing the ball."

That is, of course, how the rulebook defines targeting.

"I'm a defensive coach, but sometimes I think the offensive guy could have pulled up. I would like to see that refined a little bit, that rule, and made a little bit fairer to the players," said Heacock. "I just get sick when I see a kid get kicked out of game, and out of a championship game, because of something he did that I don't even know how you would not do it."

The former players see it similarly.

"I understand keeping guys safe, OK, I really do," Laughlin said. "I mean, there were guys back in the day, you know when they would ask, 'How many fingers am I holding up?' The guy on the sideline would say, 'All of them.' But sometimes I think they throw guys out of games when they don't deserve to be thrown out of games. That's what bothers me. Even when I see guys on the other team that get thrown out against Ohio State, I'm like, 'No, that guy doesn't deserve to get thrown out. He's just making a play.'"

Targeting fouls are currently a 15-yard penalty, and if they occur in the first half, the player is disqualified for the rest of the game. If it happens in the second half, that player is out for the rest of the contest and the first half of the club's next game. Three targeting penalties in a season results in an automatic one-game suspension.

All targeting penalties are reviewed by instant replay, and Broadnax thinks that extra level of scrutiny has helped.

"You have such a black-and-white interpretation, but there are times when the targeting rule should have some gray area. I think they're coming around," Broadnax said.

Carpenter, meanwhile, believes targeting is really the only way the physicality of the sport has changed since he played.

"Targeting has changed things dramatically for how defensive players have to react. Most of the other contact near the line of scrimmage is the same."

After all, football is, in its nature, a gladiatorial sport. That makes the goal of keeping it physical, fair and safe a challenge that must continually be tackled.



# Draft, 2021 Season On Minds Of BSB Staff

The BSB staff held an in-depth discussion prior to the start of the NFL draft on April 29 and shared their thoughts on a wide range of topics. Wyatt Crosher, Joe Dempsey, Patrick Mayhorn and Lori Schmidt discussed how they expected the draft to play out as well as what they expect to see from the Ohio State football team in the 2021 season, including which signees from the recruiting class of 2021 they anticipate will make an impact this year, and how they see the 2022 recruiting cycle playing out.

**Patrick Mayhorn:** The big question that everyone has talked about for four months: Of the top quarterbacks in this year's draft, where do you all feel that Justin Fields sort of stands in your own personal rankings? Lori, it sounded like you had a strong opinion on that, so we'll start with you.

**Lori Schmidt:** Yeah, I feel very strongly that Justin Fields has proven himself at every level and that everyone who has worked directly with him feels just as strongly about that. The only people who seem to be doubting that are analysts and people who are commenting from a million miles away. I think he's a quality quarterback who is up there with every single signal caller in the draft who's not named Trevor Lawrence. And I'm not even sure I give Trevor Lawrence like that big a nod over Justin Fields.

**Wyatt Crosher:** Yeah, how I see it, it doesn't make sense kind of how far he's fallen in a lot of people's mock drafts. I don't understand how you can put him below someone like a Mac Jones or a Trey Lance. I just haven't seen it from them compared to what Justin Fields has done. Sure, he may have maybe not reached the highs of what we thought he could last year compared to what he did in 2019. But he still had a phenomenal season. I would put him slightly below Zach Wilson – I think they're close – and I would put Trevor Lawrence just a little bit above both of them. But I think he's right in that conversation more than he's in the conversation with someone like Mac Jones or Trey Lance. I think he's certainly third. And I'm curious where he's going to end up in this draft, but I don't see how he can fall out of the top 10 overall picks.

**PM:** Yeah, I'm going to echo pretty much exactly what Wyatt said, and we said as much on the most recent edition of the BSB podcast as well, like, I think both of us have ...

**LS:** Nice plug (laughter).

**PM:** Both of us have Zach Wilson at second ahead of Fields, just because he's a little bit more capable of operating outside of the structure of an offense, but Fields is very, very good at what he does. I think that he might be a little bit more centered around needing a good coach, which is not

impossible to get in the NFL. There are certainly plenty of good offensive coaches. I think he will find one, which almost makes me think that not going at the top is more beneficial for him. But for what he is, he's excellent. He's very, very good at what he does. He's very good in the structure of an offense. And I think that putting him anywhere below third is sort of just hunting for, you know, something to populate the content because there just wasn't that much going on before people started slotting him below Mac Jones and below Trey Lance.

**LS:** Do you think he had great coaching at Georgia?

**PM:** No, no.

**LS:** See, I didn't either, and I thought he looked fine there.

**PM:** He was. I mean, they used him mostly as a runner, which would be my concern is that 27-of-39 or whatever it was in reserve time, I don't know if that's necessarily reflective. Joe, what do you think?

**Joe Dempsey:** Justin Fields has got to be number one or number two. I think he's one of the best quarterback prospects ever. And if it weren't for Trevor Lawrence, I think he'd probably be a consensus number one pick. I think Mac Jones could have a solid career, unlike many Alabama quarterbacks before him. I like Kellen Mond from Texas A&M as a sleeper, but I really think Justin Fields is one of the best overall players in the draft. I think some teams might regret passing on him. We joked about this back in the fall, I think. I said, "I wonder when they're going to ask Justin to play wide receiver like they did with Lamar Jackson," because it just always tends to happen with athletic quarterbacks. But it hasn't gotten that far. But he has fallen since before last season. People were saying he's got to be like top three, but we see him all over mock drafts now. So it'll be interesting to see how it plays out.

**PM:** I'll circle back to Wyatt here for this next one. What do you expect from Justin Fields in his NFL career?

**WC:** Well, it's always really easy to project NFL careers (laughter).

**JD:** Especially at quarterback.

**WC:** Yeah, especially at quarterback. Like *obviously* I thought Dwayne Haskins was going to be where he was now. No, I thought Dwayne Haskins would succeed. I thought Washington was a tough sell. But certainly I thought Haskins would have a better career to this point. But Justin Fields, I mean, from what I've seen at Ohio State, he's obviously got a ton of talent.



FILE PHOTO

**HOT TOPIC – Justin Fields was the talk of the draft this year, and not always for the right reasons.**

He was really solid at almost everything he did.

The only concerns I think that you kind of brought up were he struggled a little bit against the blitz, he threw some bad interceptions in a couple of games. So he's certainly got things to work on. But I also think if he does get into a better setup, like, obviously, we'll know by the time this comes out, but if he goes to an Atlanta or the Patriots or something like that, where there's a lot of weapons, there's some good coaching there, I think he can really thrive under a strong system. I think if he goes to a different team that maybe doesn't have quite the amount of weapons, it might be difficult for him at first, but he's so naturally gifted that I think he will find a strong NFL career almost anywhere he goes.

**LS:** I really want to know what offensive line he's playing behind because you know I'm a Joe Burrow fan. We've seen how that's impacted his rookie season. I'm surprised you're even asking me this question after my Troy Smith to the Hall of Fame projection (laughter). But no, Troy Smith's is another situation that just shows how difficult it is to project a quarterback at the next level, because where would he be if he didn't have mono or tonsillitis or whatever ailments he had? People had thought he was going to be the starter, and they were panicked that Lamar was going to take over. But I do agree a lot with what Wyatt said about having the right coaching in the right system, I would add the right offensive line just because health is so important at that position, and we've seen that Justin is willing to take a hit, perhaps to a fault. So I think that is very important for his next stage of development.

**PM:** Joe?

**JD:** Yeah, you guys bring up some

great points. Like Wyatt said I was really high on Dwayne Haskins. I was high on Troy Smith too. It's so much of the circumstances you're put into as a quarterback – like it couldn't have been much worse than Washington for Dwayne Haskins. Lori mentioned the offensive line was horrible. And if you don't have a good offensive line, it's hard to do anything at all offensively. But, I mean, assuming he gets into a good situation, I think he'll have a great career.

And just knowing Justin, I expect him to acclimate himself quickly to the pro game and make exciting plays on a regular basis. Lori brought up a good point. For his sake, I just hope he stays healthy, because to me injuries are really the only thing that could slow him down. I mean, not only is he one of the most physically gifted prospects ever, but he has the mental fortitude to succeed at a high level. I think anyone who had high doubts about him previously, I think he might have answered a lot of those in that Clemson game. He really proved a lot to me because I didn't have a lot of doubts until that Northwestern game, and I was like, "I didn't expect that." And then the way he bounced back against Clemson and taking that hit and then coming back and like six touchdowns is just incredible. So yeah, the circumstances will affect it a lot, but I think he'll do well.

**PM:** I think we're all of a similar mind here. It's really going to – like with most quarterbacks – it's going to come down to situation. I don't think that he's someone who is situation-agnostic where he can just succeed regardless of what is around him. We saw him struggle at times behind a really good Ohio State offensive line in 2020. The Indiana game stands out to me as like he didn't look especially comfortable against the pressure behind what we consider to be a really good line. And that's not, you know, the end of the world – it's one game – but I think that having a good line, having a smartly structured

## BSB'S 2021 SPRING FOOTBALL WRAP-UP

Since 1984  
**Marsha's**  
HOMEMADE  
Premium Quality  
**BUCKEYES**

Perfecting game day gatherings  
of all sizes for over 30 years

Individually Wrapped Buckeyes  
& 50 Pack Party Tubs Available

Visit [www.MarshasBuckeyes.com](http://www.MarshasBuckeyes.com)  
to get yours today.



# GAME DAY

WITH *Danbury* COLUMBUS



EXPERIENCE THE  
*Danbury Difference!*



*Christy Friece*  
Danbury Columbus  
Executive Chef

## Danbury Game Day Bloody Mary

- 2 oz Vodka
- Bloody Mary Mix
- splash Sriracha sauce
- Tomato Juice
- splash Pickle Juice
- Worcestershire sauce
- pinch Salt, Red Pepper
- 1 Rosemary sprig and pepperoncini peppers
- 1 Tall glass with added Ice Sphere

### MIXING INSTRUCTIONS

*A few tips for this recipe: Pair your Bloody Marys' with a creative charcuterie board filled with crab legs, shrimp, bacon, roasted veggies, or even sushi. Use what you love!*

- Start with a chilled shaker. Add in a pinch of salt, red pepper with a bit of Worcestershire sauce and Sriracha sauce.
- Continue to add Vodka and Bloody Mary Mix, put your lid on your shaker and give it an excellent O-H-I-O shake.
- Pour over the Ice Sphere in your glass and top off with fresh tomato juice.
- Add your rosemary sprig and those pepperoncini's and give it a splash of pickle juice.

*Enjoy!*



**Visitation is  
Open, Easy,  
and Safe**

FOUR LOCATIONS TO SERVE SENIORS IN THE COLUMBUS AREA



**Danbury**  
SENIOR LIVING  
Columbus

2870 Snouffer Road  
Columbus, OH 43235  
**614.339.0459**



730 N. Spring Road  
Westerville, OH 43082  
**614.794.9300**

OPENING  
Spring 2022

**DANBURY ON 5TH**  
SENIOR LIVING

579 West Fifth Avenue  
Columbus, OH 43201  
**380.215.1412**

OPENING  
Summer 2021

**Danbury**  
SENIOR LIVING  
Grove City

3615 Glacial Lane  
Grove City, OH 43123  
**614.957.0029**

Villas | Independent Living | Assisted Living | Memory Care



YouTube

**DanburySeniorLiving.com**

Pet  
Friendly





# Potential Of QBs Something Worth Debate

Continued From Page 12

offense and probably at least one really good receiver is going to make a huge difference for Justin Fields where if he lands in a place like a New York, like a Detroit, like a Washington and Dwayne Haskins' situation, then he gets himself into trouble.

But if he's with someone like the Falcons, with someone like the Patriots, whoever it might be, if it's a team that has structure and knows how to win, I think that he will be perfectly fine. I think that his both ceiling and floor at a good, you know, within a good franchise is very, very good NFL starter. Maybe not quite best in the league but pretty close to it.

We're going to move on now. Which Ohio State player in this year's draft do you expect to have the best NFL career not named Justin Fields? Joe, you can start this one.

**JD:** All right, to me, I think Wyatt Davis and Tommy Togiai may be the safest picks here. But I'm going to throw a name out there that might not be on everyone's radar. I think if utilized correctly, Shaun Wade could be dynamic as a slot corner like safety hybrid. He was out of position last year, and a few super talented receivers took advantage of that. But I think when used correctly, we saw what Shaun Wade could do. I thought he was really one of the most valuable players to Ohio State in 2019. And they were pretty darn good that year. If he doesn't get ejected from that Clemson game, who knows how that season ends? So I think that Shaun Wade has the skills and the intangibles to have a good career if he gets put in the right spot.

**PM:** Joe, you are nothing if not on brand (laughter).

**WC:** But I actually really liked that pick, and this is coming from someone who was real harsh on Shaun Wade this year. I thought he played really poorly for a lot of the season. But like you said, I think it's because he was just out of position. You put him back in that slot corner or safety-ish role, I think he's a really good player. And I think he's going to fall to late in the draft this year when he could have been



PHOTO COURTESY PAUL VERNON/ASSOCIATED PRESS VIA THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS  
**BRIGHT FUTURE – Tommy Togiai was one of the players the BSB staff believes has a bright future in the NFL.**

a potential late first-, early second-round pick last year if he left. I think a team, if they use them in the right role, he could have a really good career in the NFL.

If I were to pick, I would pick one of your safer ones. I would probably go with Wyatt Davis, who I think is one of the more solid players, one of the more solid offensive linemen in the draft. I think he's just going to be a day-one starter and he's going to be there for a while. I think Tommy Togiai is also a good pick. I think he's got a ton of athleticism for how big he is; he's incredibly strong; he's really gifted in the middle. I think he'll have a good career as well. But Wyatt Davis would probably be my pick.

**LS:** Since I don't disagree with anything you guys said, I'm going to go off the board and pick the player that I'm most *interested* in seeing at the next level, who is Baron Browning, because I definitely think that he is capable of more than what we saw him do at the collegiate level. So he is a player that I'm going to keep an eye on. I agree with both of you guys so strongly about Shaun Wade. If they use him like they did, not last year, but two years ago, he can be very, very successful. It's amazing to me the "mind erase" that people are suffering from, like that season didn't occur. And if he ends up playing for Urban Meyer, who knows what to do with him, that's a possibility. I could see him being very successful. But the guy that I'm most *interested* in watching is Baron Browning.

**PM:** I'm going to go with Tommy Togiai. We mentioned him as one of the safer picks. I think I'm going to pick based on – because we're trying to determine sort of best NFL career – I'm going to pick based on highest ceiling, and I think that the highest ceiling, outside of Fields and save for maybe Baron Browning, is Tommy Togiai. He's so strong. He's so freakishly athletic for how big he is. I mean, he ran faster than an Ohio State linebacker did in a 40 time. That's not easy to do for a defensive tackle. And I think that because

he was a one-year starter, because he's someone that we didn't really get to see a ton, there's a lot that we don't yet know about him, which is intriguing, especially with someone as talented as he is.

So I think there's a good chance that he catches on somewhere and in five or six years, everyone is looking at him as like, "How was this not a top-15 kind of pick?" And I do think he'll go in like the first, probably first two days, presumably round two, but I think that he's someone who could really boom on a high level.

Moving ahead now to 2022, because we just haven't had enough of the draft, what are some of your way-too-early predictions for the 2022 draft? Doesn't have to be, you know, where is every Ohio State player in it going. Just a broad who's going in the first round, anything surprising, what do you see happening in the next draft cycle. Lori, I'll start with you.

**LS:** Well, I know you guys will be shocked to hear that I think Ohio State's wide receivers will make a lot of headlines in the 2022 draft. I think it's very easily possible that they have two first-day wide receivers. Don't you guys agree? I mean, in Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave? So I think that's probably the main headline when it comes to OSU and the 2022 draft. I feel bad picking that because that's an obvious one. So I will let someone else say something more interesting now.

**PM:** Wyatt, say something more interesting (laughter).

**WC:** Hmmm, all right, so there's certainly things I'm interested in when I think about what will be in this 2022 draft, like you have three potential linebackers who are seniors who have never really gotten a ton of time. I wonder where they'll go. I don't really have an opinion on them. I'm curious what Zach Harrison will do this year, someone who has got a ton of potential but has not yet gotten to the level that some have expected. If I'm going with a pair of players who will go in the first round at the same position, I

might go at offensive tackle. I think that Nick Petit-Frere and Thayer Munford are absolute monsters. They were arguably – I don't know if I'd say this for sure, but I'd say arguably – better than Wyatt Davis last year as far as offensive line goes. They were so good at what they did. I think Nick Petit-Frere is the safer first-round pick because he's a little younger. He's got solid experience for his age, but Thayer Munford, he comes back for another year. I think he could be a star on this offensive line, and I could see them both going in the first round.

**PM:** I think I might have the hottest take of the bunch here. I have two actually that I'm fairly committed to as it stands right now. Firstly, this is I think the probably the hotter of the two. I think the Ohio State starting quarterback is going to be better than the first quarterback taken in the 2022 draft.

**LS:** You mean next year or eventually?

**PM:** No, next year. I think Ohio State's quarterback next season will be better than Sam Howell or Spencer Rattler or whoever goes first in the 2022 draft. Obviously, none of the guys on this roster right now can be in the draft. So it's less of a draft take – it is related to the draft, though. And then 2023, obviously that will bear out. My second one, that is actually related to the question directly, I think Craig Young is going in the first round. I think Craig Young is going to absolutely shine in that bullet role. I think that he will get the kind of hype that (Clemson product and Arizona Cardinal) Isaiah Simmons got, and I think that he will go within maybe not even just the first round but within the first 20 picks. I think that he is going to be a star for Ohio State and *immediately* get out of here.

**JD:** That's a hot take. I'm interested by that. I'm very excited to see Craig Young in that bullet role. He is an exceptional athlete. As far as my way-too-early predictions, I don't know. I think Sevn Banks and Zach Harrison are two guys who might go a lot earlier than people realize or might be much bigger NFL prospects than people realize. It'll be interesting to see how Sevn does facing number-one receivers all year. Another interesting guy I'm looking at is I think that Jeremy Ruckert has a very good chance to be the first tight end taken. I'm not sure that's a hot take or anything, but I think once teams get him in front of them and see how talented he is physically and then also see how well he's developed as a blocker, I think he'll be a very attractive asset for NFL teams next year.

**PM:** Moving to the sort of opposite end of the draft – the entry into college. We're going to talk about the 2022 recruiting class a little bit here. We're going to start with the BSB recruiting expert, Wyatt. Who's the biggest get for Ohio State right now in the 2022 class, and more importantly, can you find an answer that isn't Quinn Ewers?

**WC:** I mean, look, I can dance around it and say that C.J. Hicks was a phenomenal get who's turned into a five-star. I think he's going to be a really impressive linebacker for Ohio State. Winning someone like Kyion Grayes over on the other side of the country is a decent get. Jaheim Singletary can really help this secondary, but the answer is Quinn Ewers. He's one of the greatest modern recruiting prospects in history, not even just at quarterback.



**Train to be the BEST you can be!**  
Designing fitness programs to  
meet your personal needs.

## Personal Training

\*\*\*\*\*

## Group Fitness Training

\*\*\*\*\*

## Sports Specific Training

Owned and Operated By:

**Brent Johnson**

**614-570-9918**

**B-fit.training@hotmail.com**

Located at 2378 East Main Street in Bexley, Ohio



## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL ROUNDTABLE

He has a perfect rating for a reason. This dude has an absolute cannon of an arm. He's so good. He has a blond mullet, for goodness sake (laughter). What else do you want me to say? I mean, there are some big recruits in this class. I mean, I think Jaheim Singletary, C.J. Hicks, Caleb Burton, all five-stars, all really good players. But Quinn Ewers is number one for a reason. And even if the quarterback room was already really solid before him, he's a massive get for Ohio State.

**PM:** Rather than go fully around the table here, I'll just ask: Does anyone have a non-Quinn Ewers answer that they feel passionately about? ... Folks, that's a room of silence (laughter).

**JD:** I can just make a comment on that. I don't exactly have a non-Quinn Ewers take though.

**PM:** Fair enough.

**LS:** I like Singletary's chances of playing early, which will help him.

**WC:** True, true.

**PM:** I think it's safe to say that when you get someone like Ewers, it's kind of hard to top that. Joe, did you have something?

**JD:** I was just going to say I think that not only is he the best prospect in the class, but he plays in such an important position like quarterback and so many other prospects will want to play *with* him. And we've already seen that with five-star receiver Caleb Burton. These guys are going to want to play with him. He's the best player in the class, so that's going to amplify the class even more. I was thinking that what Wyatt said about C.J. Hicks is a good call too just because I feel like people who are really in tune with Ohio State football and history, like the linebacker play hasn't necessarily been up to par in recent years. So getting a five-star guy like that who really projects to be a monster is big for Ohio State particularly.

**PM:** I'll stick with Ewers here for this next one and the quarterback room at large. How would you guys handle the quarterback situation, both this season and when Ewers enters the fray? It's been a topic of discussion obviously with this year's quarterback battle, but there's sort of the constant looming best quarterback recruit ever just sitting in the background. Joe, I'll start with you here. How do you handle this? Who's your starter this year? How do you make sure that you get Ewers on the field as soon as you can and without, you know, compromising the quarterback room?

**JD:** Yeah, it's a very interesting situation. I think it's all about competition. Like we said, Ewers is the highest-rated guy. Everyone knows that. Everyone in the country wanted him for 2022. But thankfully, starting quarterback battles are not decided by recruiting rankings. So I mean, Ewers might be the highest-rated prospect ever, but he'll still have to learn the offense and become a team leader and prove that he is better than either C.J. Stroud or Kyle McCord, who are the guys who I would be leaning toward right now. I don't know if I have seen enough to make a starting-quarterback decision. But I think it definitely has helped C.J. Stroud that he's been in the system for a full year. So I think that the more time Kyle McCord gets, we're going to see him develop even more and that arm is really going to show off. So I think I probably might lean ... it's tough to tell. I guess that I haven't seen enough from those two guys right now. But in my mind I'm not basing that decision on Ewers, if that makes sense. Not going to

pick Stroud or McCord because I think the other might leave or be more likely to stay. I'm just going to go with the best guy for this year, and then Ewers is going to have to beat them out next year.

**WC:** Yeah, I think that's probably what Ohio State is going to do, and I think that's a fair way of looking at it. You can't bank on Quinn Ewers being as good as his stars are. If you see Kyle McCord and he's your best quarterback, I think you have to play him. You can't just assume that because Kyle McCord is the starter and he'll be the starter likely for two more seasons after this that you have to worry about Quinn Ewers. I don't think you can start playing those mind games. But I certainly have to think it's at least a little bit in the back of the mind of Ryan Day. You know transfers are a huge part of college football in this time. You know that it's at least a decent chance, if you pick one guy or the other, the other one might leave. Certainly, you have to focus on winning games. That's what he's paid to do. So I think that's what it's going to come down to, but I have to imagine there's at least a little bit of like, "If I pick this guy, the other guys are going to go," but I don't think it'll play a huge factor in the decision.

**LS:** I think it might play a little bit of a role in the decision in that I think you're less likely to look at a player's ceiling next year and more likely to look at who can manage the team next season. And I think that's probably a little check in C.J. Stroud's column. So I think that it's a little bit of a factor, not a major one. But I don't think that ceiling plays as much of a role in Ryan Day's decision making. I think it's interesting that Ryan Day has certainly handled quarterback battles before. He is considered such a great coach of the position that he has had – you know, they always say it's a good problem to have – but he's been a problem child for a couple of years now with the quarterback battles that he's handled, and it might come down to a situation where you get yourself into another "Dwayne Haskins, Joe Burrow, who do we take in this situation" kind of moment for Ohio State.

**PM:** You have Dwayne Haskins, two Joe Burrows and then Jack Miller (laughter).

**JD:** Yeah, it's a win win, though.

**LS:** It's interesting that a lot of times when you get quarterback battles, you get quarterbacks who are of the athletic mold and then ones who are more of a pure passer. These guys all have a little more similar skill set than you've seen in a lot of different quarterback battles.

**PM:** Ryan Day certainly has a type when it comes to his quarterbacks (laughter). I think I probably have the strongest stance on this. Ryan Day certainly can't do this, because this is not how a head football coach who makes money would operate because this is a crazy thing to do. But I would just, I would sort of plan around Ewers if I was in charge. I think he's *that* good. Like I said, Ryan Day can't do this. This is not a way that a head coach can operate. But if I'm Ryan Day, I'm going with either Stroud or Miller this year because they will get out the fastest and then you can get Ewers in. Honestly, I would even consider starting Ewers next season as a true freshman over whoever the incumbent starter is.

I think that he is that good that you want to maximize time with him as a starter in the way that Clemson did in 2017 with Trevor Lawrence, where, you know, Kelly Bryant was very good. Kelly Bryant took them to the playoff. But they knew that he was not Trevor Lawrence, and I think that there's a decent chance that whoever Ohio State has at quarterback in 2021 is not as good as what Quinn Ewers can be and that Ryan Day recognizes that and that Quinn Ewers starts in year one and you have him as a three-year starter. That would be I think my approach, unless Ewers shows up and he's just terrible, which seems not likely to me.

**LS:** It sounds like you'd have a type too, and it's mullets ...

**PM:** Guys with mullets. Yeah.

**WC:** You're saying if you have a (Georgia's) Jake Fromm at starter, you should replace him with Justin Fields.

**PM:** Yes.

**JD:** That's interesting.

**PM:** I don't think any of the guys on this roster are Jake Fromm or Kelly Bryant, for that matter. I just think Quinn Ewers is *that* good. To continue about position battles here, one that is not quite as hotly contested but is still important for the offense in the backfield: Do you all think that Master Teague is going to hold onto the starting job at running back, or will one of those younger guys get him as it seems they're sort of nipping at his heels? Wyatt, you have strong takes on one of these freshman running backs, where do you stand here?

**WC:** I've been big in the boat of they should start TreVeyon Henderson week one – again, *should*. I don't expect that they *will*. I'm thinking that Master Teague will likely be the first running back that we see. I think it'll be a more of a tandem thing again. No offense really to Master Teague but TreVeyon Henderson is just so crazy talented compared to Master Teague. I think that Henderson, you should immediately let him be the guy and figure it out. And again, kind of what you were saying about the quarterback battle. I think him and Evan Pryor can be such an incredible duo of running backs. They both have things that they can do specifically well.

Continued On Page 16

## The Ohio State University Alumni Association

### GUIDE YOUR CAREER

**3,200+**

active employers working with Alumni Career Connection

**4,500+**

AlumniFire members ready to network

The Buckeye Network reaches **9,000+**

active members on LinkedIn

### BOND WITH FELLOW BUCKEYES

Join one of **121** Regional Clubs

Connect with one of **48** Societies supporting your interests



Attend special events—**168** hosted in FY16

### PAY FORWARD



More than **150** volunteer projects done by Buckeyes in 2016

### TRAVEL THE WORLD

Join one of **30+** trips with Alumni Tours



### GET SOCIAL

Follow along to stay up to date with The Ohio State University Alumni Association



**32,515 Likes**



**34,300 Followers**



**540,000+** alumni across the globe



**YOU'RE A BUCKEYE FOR LIFE**



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## Help BSB Grow

Loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers frequently ask us what they can do to help keep BSB vibrant in this increasingly electronic age. One of the things readers can do is introduce BSB to new readers who might find our Ohio State sports content interesting.

In order to help you do that, we are offering an opportunity to send four free trial issues to potential subscribers. We will then offer your potential subscriber a very special offer to get them to join the fold of loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers.

We are also offering a special \$19.95 subscription rate for gifts for our service men and women. It's nice to send a little bit of home to those all over the world who are protecting us. Don't forget to include an APO address when applicable and remember, any subscription includes electronic access to BSB, so our Buckeyes in uniform will be able to enjoy their BSB immediately, wherever they are.

This four free trial issue offer is not good for current subscribers. This offer is to introduce readers to BSB. You can conveniently email your names and addresses to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com or mail them to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212.



# Williams, Henderson Likely To Carry Ball

Continued From Page 15

They should just do that tandem right away and let them have it for three years. I don't think they'll do that. I think there are a lot of other guys like I think Marcus Crowley is really talented. We didn't get to see him fully healthy last year. There's a lot of guys in that room. Miyan Williams impressed. It's a lot to ask of you to do something like that. But I think it would be the most beneficial for them if they just let Henderson and Pryor on the field as much as they could early on.

**PM:** Personally, I think that Miyan Williams is going to start the year at running back. I think he's going to be the number one guy to open the season. I don't know if he will hold that like as the pure workhorse, right? I think that Henderson will see time. I think that Crowley will see time. I think that Teague will see time. I think Miyan is going to be the guy in a very, very loose definition of being the guy where he's seeing maybe five more carries than whoever number two is, if that. But I don't think it's going to be Master Teague. I think that the guys behind him are just too talented relative to, you know, kind of the limited ceiling, limited athleticism that we've seen from him. So I think it's going to be Miyan. But I think that all of the young guys are going to see time along with Master Teague.

**LS:** I think we might be underselling Master Teague just a little bit. I mean, he was rehabbing an Achilles injury during a pandemic. And yes, I know he was on Ohio State's campus for much of that time. But I can't help but think that he was a little slower to return from that than he might have otherwise been just because of the situation that we were in in 2020. So I think he may be a skosh more athletic than you said, Patrick. But that being said, I agree with him having a lower ceiling than the other guys, as Wyatt pointed out. And it would not surprise me at all if Henderson is the guy who gets the bulk of the snaps by the end of the season.

**JD:** The question is interesting to me that the phrase "starting running back" doesn't really carry as much weight as it used to. In the past, we'd see a guy get the vast majority of snaps and touches, like maybe 30 a game, but with the way offenses are today, we see a bunch of different guys play different roles. And I think that even if Teague is referred to as the starter or takes the first snap of the game, I think eventually the backfield will be led by TreVeyon Henderson when it's all said and done. It's interesting what Wyatt said about how no offense to Master Teague but TreVeyon Henderson is just more dynamic, more explosive. And it's not even just a comparison to Master Teague for me. He's

just more dynamic and more explosive than most running backs in the country. So I think that he's really just going to shine on kind of like a J.K. Dobbins-like trajectory. Because remember, Mike Weber was Freshman of the Year in the Big Ten and ran for over 1,000 yards, and everyone was excited about what he could do. And then the next year, it was really Dobbins who stole the show. So yeah, I also agree with Lori that Master Teague probably doesn't get the credit he deserves. He's a tough guy to tackle. But I think, all encompassing, if TreVeyon Henderson can become a good pass blocker, I think he's going to play a lot and he's going to make a lot of big plays.

**LS:** Bottom line is Ohio State has two pairs and a spare.

**PM:** Last one here: On the other side of the ball, on defense ...

**LS:** Yes! (laughter) Sorry. I'm a defensive gal.

**PM:** I know you're excited about the defense.

**LS:** I love defense.

**PM:** Do you expect improvement from Kerry Coombs' group after a tough 2020 season, specifically in pass defense? Lori, sounds like you're excited about this. Let's go.

**LS:** I'm excited about *defense*. I'm not so sure how excited I am about *this* defense (laughter). I will be very eager to see how they show up. To me, it's never a good sign when the coaching staff is talking about depth rather than high-end talent. And that's what we heard after the spring is "Wow, we have a lot of guys that got snaps." Um, so I am a little worried. I will be interested to see how much they learned from that Alabama game and what they did schematically in that contest and how much they tried to juggle the schemes at the end of the year. So I have worries about play and talent, and I have worries about scheme. Other than that, I think the defense is going to be great against the pass this year.

**PM:** I do think that that's a funny point that they keep talking about the depth. It's sort of, you know, you ask, "Well, how do you feel about your defense?" and, "We have 35 players that we're comfortable playing out there." It's like, "Well, are they good?" "We have 35 of them." "Are they good, though?" "There's 35 of them." And that's certainly troubling. I think that the switch to 4-2-5 if it sticks is a positive for Ohio State. I'm not convinced it will stick yet. I have seen this game from Ohio State before where they hint at the addition of the bullet in the defense. It feels more realistic this year than it has in years past because of the inexperience at linebacker.

**WC:** They actually put in that position this year too for the first time.

**PM:** They have it listed on the roster, which is beneficial.

**LS:** They didn't have Brendon White listed as the bullet?

**WC:** He may have been safety/linebacker.

**LS:** Which is a bullet!

**PM:** That's a bullet. But I think that that is helpful for the pass defense. Having someone like Craig Young out there will do wonders for the pass defense just because it's one fewer linebacker and the linebackers aren't super helpful in the passing game. In the modern sport, they're just not. So I think that that will help with improvement. But as Lori said, it doesn't seem like there's top-end talent here outside of Haskell Garrett and then a whole bunch of question marks. And it's troubling to have that many question marks entering a season with such an inexperienced defensive coordinator. Even if he's getting a full offseason for the first time, I just don't have the kind of confidence in Kerry Coombs that I did in someone like Jeff Hailey or someone like Luke Fickell, I just have not seen that juice from Kerry Coombs in anything other than his energy level and the way that he speaks. Joe?

**JD:** When you asked this question, do I expect improvement, the first thing I thought was, well, they couldn't have gotten much worse (laughter). It was pretty bad last year. And I think sometimes we might forget about some of the struggles they had in the secondary, but one thing that's positive for them is they signed six pretty talented defensive backs in the 2021 class, and I think the development of the young talent should continue. I think the 2020 class should really help improve the secondary. I've said this before, but I think Kourt Williams is one of the most impressive prospects I've seen Ohio State bring in in the past several years, and that's saying a lot given Ohio State's prestige in recruiting. I'm really excited to see what he can do now that he's healthy. But there's a lot of young guys who are kind of question marks, and like you guys said, they keep promoting the depth, but how *good* is the depth is the question.

But I think that some of those young guys could really step up into roles that are kind of up for grabs right now. I've got my eyes on guys like Lathan Ransom, Cameron Martinez and Ryan Watts back there too. But another thing to think about is how could the defensive back secondary not get better? Demario McCall is now on defense. I think they already got better by default.

**WC:** Thank goodness. I wasn't going to be the one that had to bring up Demario McCall ...

**JD:** (Laughter) He's not going to get mentioned all day? But I'm glad that Patrick brought up Craig Young again. I thought he was really one of the most underrated recruits when he was coming out of high school because he was really special in high school in Indiana. He played everywhere on defense. They would just base it on the matchups. So he would edge rush as like a defensive end or outside 'backer. And then like when they played Purdue wide receiver David Bell when he was a four-star receiver in high school, they put Young out at cornerback one on one against him. So he just has a really special athleticism, and he doesn't really have a position, but he's just a good

football player. So I think it'll be interesting to see if he can really blossom in that bullet role, because I think that's one thing they really needed more than anything.

It's not like the defensive backs last year couldn't play. I mean, we were just talking about how Shaun Wade has ability. Sevrin Banks is very good. And they have good players. But they were trying to defend receivers with linebackers far too often. And it was just, it was a mess, really. And I think adding an athlete like that, a guy like Craig Young or someone like Kourt Williams, who can play the run but also defend the speed, I think that's really helpful.

**PM:** Yeah, I remember when Craig Young was being recruited, he was the one who didn't get an offer at one Ohio State camp, came back and played every single position on the defense, and then got the offer from Ohio State. I think that that's an interesting part of his dynamic and certainly something that benefits him as a player.

**WC:** For me, when I look at this defense, obviously the secondary is the big question mark. They lose Shaun Wade, and they have a lot of young talent that's going to have to develop really quickly, it seems. I think what will help this defense if they're going to improve – not just a little bit, which, like you said, should be pretty easy after being almost at the floor – if they're going to improve and be an actual solid defense, I think you just need the defensive line to be really disruptive. I think that will help. It makes everything else less obvious when the defensive line can be so disruptive, like when you had Chase Young in the backfield every single play.

If you can get Zach Harrison to step up and be the talent that a lot of people think he can be, you still have a lot of veteran guys. Haskell Garrett comes back, which is huge. You have Tyreke Smith, and I think Jack Sawyer is going to make a huge impact in year one. Obviously I'm not going to take the spring game as gospel every time, but holy crap, he looked good – looked really, really good in the spring game. He was a five-star prospect for a reason. I think he's crazy talented.

I think if the defensive line can be a pretty sizable notch above what they were last year, which was still pretty good, I think that can help take some of the pressure off of the secondary. That's obviously the main focus. And I'm curious what these linebackers are going to do as well. There's a lot of "new" faces, I say in quotes because they've been here forever, but they've never gotten a ton of time. I'm curious what they'll do, but I think they'll be better. I'm just curious how much better they will be. And I think if they're going to make a step and be an actual strong defense, it'll be with the defensive line first.

**LS:** I'm with you on that. And as someone who is a Pickerington gal, Jack Sawyer's good performances go beyond what you saw in the spring game. He is a remarkable talent. And honestly, with Larry Johnson's coaching, it would not surprise me to have him make a Bosa-like impact in his freshman year with Ohio State.

**PM:** He would also be the best player on the basketball team (laughter). Does anyone else have anything left here as we enter May and sort of the dog days of Ohio State summer? No? I think we're good then.

You Can Count On These Services From

**THE QUICKPRINT CENTRE**

1350 W. 5th Ave., Suite 14, Columbus, OH 43212  
614-488-2683 • FAX 614-488-0059 • qpoh@aol.com

Offset-Printing	Digital Color Copies	Digital B&W Copies
Typesetting	Ship UPS	Rubber Stamps
NCR Forms	Fax Service	Business Cards
Laminating	Announcements	Binding
Brochures	Wedding Invitations	Labels



# Reds MAY 2021



APRIL 30–MAY 2



PRESENTED BY  
KROGER ZERO HUNGER ZERO WASTE

**FRIDAY // 7:10**

- Post-game Fireworks Show, presented by Woodbridge Wines

**SATURDAY // 4:10**

- Reds Tote Bag, presented by MLB Network  
Free to fans in attendance while supplies last

**SUNDAY // 1:10**

- Family Sunday, presented by Klosterman Bakery
- Shogo Akiyama Fathead® Kids Giveaway, presented by Mike's Carwash



MAY 4–5



**TUESDAY // 6:40**

**WEDNESDAY // 12:35**

- Reds Tote Bag, presented by MLB Network  
Free to fans in attendance while supplies last



MAY 17–20



**MONDAY // 6:40**

- Mike Moustakas Bobblehead, presented by PNC Bank  
Free to fans in attendance while supplies last

**TUESDAY // 6:40**

**WEDNESDAY // 6:40**

**THURSDAY // 12:35**

MAY 21–23



PRESENTED BY  
KROGER ZERO HUNGER ZERO WASTE

**FRIDAY // 7:10**

- Post-game Fireworks Show, presented by PNC Bank



**SATURDAY // 4:10**

- Mike Moustakas Bobblehead, presented by PNC Bank  
Free to fans in attendance while supplies last

**SUNDAY // 1:10**

- Family Sunday, presented by Klosterman Bakery
- Team Baseball Card Set Kids Giveaway, presented by Kahn's



MAY 31–JUNE 2



**MONDAY // 2:10**

**TUESDAY // 7:10**

**WEDNESDAY // 12:35**

(513) 381-REDS (7337)



[reds.com/TICKETS](https://www.reds.com/tickets)

\*Some restrictions apply. Schedule and promotions subject to change.



# Buckeye Offense Will Depend On Quarterbacks

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day doesn't want to force a square peg into a round hole when he ultimately picks the quarterback to lead his offense this fall. The Buckeye head man, entering his third season at the helm of the program, has seen his offense take a number of forms since he arrived as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach in 2017.

In that first season, the Buckeyes integrated the quarterback run fully and utilized a number of quick-hit passes and screens to best showcase the snappy release and running ability of J.T. Barrett. In 2018, Day veered more into air-raid tendencies, allowing Dwayne Haskins to carve up defenses with plenty of mesh looks, paired with vertical shots from four- and five-receiver sets.

Once Justin Fields took over, the offense morphed again, adopting more of those downfield looks to best showcase Fields' accuracy when launching the ball deep, probably his No. 1 trait as a passer. As Day looks at the three-man quarterback race in 2021, he knows that the offensive base will remain, but he doesn't yet know what the specifics of offense will look like for the Buckeyes this fall, and he's not going to decide until he's made his choice at quarterback.

"I think that we're still not there yet with these guys," Day said. "We're figuring out where we want to spend our time in terms of emphasizing. Our offense is our offense. It hasn't changed when J.T. (Barrett) was the quarterback, when Dwayne (Haskins) was the quarterback and when Justin (Fields) was the quarterback, but we (need to know what we) want to emphasize. The plays really haven't changed, but if you have 100 plays in a game, 80 plays in a game, what do you emphasize based on their strengths?"

"There are three different quarterbacks. Now, they are very similar, but I think all three have different strengths and weaknesses so as we go into a game, we're certainly going to do the things that they do best. I don't think I have the answer to that yet. Some of them do get the ball out of their hands quickly, and that's good. I think they do have good accuracy underneath, but I also think that they do a decent job throwing down the field as well. In a perfect world you'd like to a little bit of both, but again, the strength of college football coaching is to find out what they do really well and emphasize that."

As it stands entering the long offseason summer in which Buckeye coaches and players will spend the majority of their time apart, the focus for everyone is not on hammering out those details yet, but on getting a better grasp for the fundamentals and for the unchanging base of the offense. Once that's set, Day can start to nail down the minutiae that will best showcase his signal-caller's ability.

"They're tasked with being obsessed with learning the offense, and a lot goes with that," Day explained. "They have to get in the weight room with (strength and conditioning director Mickey Marotti). They have to get stronger, faster, quicker. We grade our guys in there, and we have a champions meeting right before preseason camp and if you're gold, that means you're one of the top performers in the weight room, and that's the first thing they have

to do.

"But then it's also off the field stuff, studying film, watching film and wearing out the XO system. That's what they have to do. The fluency in the offense, they're getting there but they have a long way to go. It was very basic. We worked on fundamentals and techniques (this spring) and we're playing catch-up here. Obviously we would love to have somebody that's in year two or three here. We don't have that luxury. We have some young guys, and they have work to do.

"It's a race to make up for time that we don't have, that's just the truth of it. We'd love to be practicing all summer. We'd love to be practicing right now. We can't do that. So the only way to do that is to watch film and have these guys do work on their own. We can try to give them some worksheets and different things to help them work on their own, but at the end of the day they have to be self-motivated."

During that process, Ohio State tries to keep things simple and looks to avoid specializing. Although the Buckeyes do have different things in their offense that they can choose to highlight, they avoided that in the spring, keeping everyone on the same plan to see who could and couldn't handle the basics of Day's system. That allowed the young passers to focus on doing their jobs, which their coaches felt they did throughout the spring.

"They make the players around them better," offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson said. "They're able to distribute the ball to the playmakers we have. I think in spring you saw they all did well. You guys saw during some of the practices and in the



FILE PHOTO

**STILL DECIDING** – Ohio State head coach Ryan Day won't know the minutiae of his offense until he picks a starting quarterback.

spring game, we mixed up the reps pretty evenly. I think we can look at the numbers from the spring game and I guess Jack didn't have as good a day as the others but he still had more passes. We play a little bit to their strengths, but they're all kind

of the same. It's not like (we have specific plays for each guy). Maybe that hurts those guys, but we didn't really get into emphasizing certain things for certain guys. We just run the offense that's in for now and see how they manage it."

## Players On The Spot

*In the April 10 Spring Football Preview, Buckeye Sports Bulletin identified several Ohio State players who were "On The Spot." Here is a look at how those players fared this spring.*

- **Sixth-year senior cornerback Demario McCall** – Switching to defense is a significant adjustment for any player, but McCall appeared to make quick strides in the spring. Though standout wide receiver Chris Olave made a catch over McCall for 40 yards in the spring game, the fact that the former H-back was close to the crafty receiver in coverage bodes well for his development. It was clear that McCall (5-9, 195) has room to grow on defense, but his position-high 57 snaps in the spring game was a good sign for his chances at cracking a spot in the rotation.

- **Senior linebacker Teradja Mitchell** – As one of the players who entered the spring with the most pressure to make an impression, Mitchell rose to the occasion. The hard-hitting inside linebacker flew around the field in the spring game, making 10 tackles, including seven solo stops. The 6-2, 235-pound linebacker flashed the ability that made him the second-ranked inside linebacker in the nation for the 2018 class, earning rave reviews from defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs.

- **Fourth-year junior cornerback Tyreke Johnson** – In the spring game, Johnson played every defensive snap in the first half for Brutus, posting one solo tackle. Not much has changed for the 6-1, 190-pound corner former five star entering the summer. He still must beat out a slew of promising young players to earn the starting spot opposite Sevn Banks, who missed the spring game due to injury. The competition remains wide open with Cameron Brown, who also missed the spring game with an injury, McCall, Ryan Watts, Denzel Burke and Lejond Cavazos, who did not play in the spring game, all vying for playing time. Cameron Martinez and Lathan Ransom handled slot corner duties in the absence of Marcus Williamson but can also add to the deep competition along with highly touted June enrollees Jakailin Johnson and Jordan Hancock. Head coach Ryan Day and Coombs spoke highly of

the Buckeyes' depth in the secondary but did not commend particular players.

- **Fifth-year senior wide receiver Jaylen Harris and senior linebacker Dallas Gant** – Harris, and Gant, a pair of seniors, were unable to display their talents due to injuries in the spring.

- **Senior linebacker K'Vaughan Pope** – Like Mitchell, Pope entered the spring on the hot seat at linebacker and ended it with Coombs saying he was playing his best ball since he has been at Ohio State. Pope did not flash much in the spring game, however, recording just two tackles (one solo) in 39 snaps. In order for Pope (6-1, 225) to earn more playing time, he will have to make more of an impact during his limited action.

- **Third-year sophomore running back Steele Chambers** – After averaging 7.9 yards per carry in limited work in 2020, Chambers did not receive substantial opportunity to display his abilities in the spring game. He carried the ball four times for 10 yards, and the 6-1, 220-pound tailback scored the game's lone rushing touchdown. Chambers saw only 14 snaps compared to 26 for Marcus Crowley, 23 for TreVeyon Henderson, 20 for Evan Pryor and 19 for Miyan Williams, with Master Teague resting on the sidelines. Though he did not particularly stand out in the spring, Chambers could carve out a role as a short-yardage back, as long as he protects the football and continues to punch it in when given the chance.

- **Third-year sophomore running back Marcus Crowley** – Finally healthy, Crowley had a productive spring and showed promise in the spring game, playing a position-high 26 snaps in Teague's absence. The third-year sophomore carried the ball six times for 29 yards, averaging 4.8 yards per attempt with a long run of 13. An important part of Crowley's performance came in the passing game, catching three passes for 28 yards, averaging 9.3 yards per reception. In order to earn significant playing time in a crowded backfield, Crowley (6-1, 213) will need to be solid as a pass catcher and as a blocker in pass protection.



# McCullough Flips Commitment To Indiana

Bloomington (Ind.) South four-star athlete Dasan McCullough will be joining three of his family members in Indiana after he flipped his commitment from Ohio State to the Hoosiers on April 25.

McCullough is joining his father, Deland McCullough, who signed on as Indiana's associate head coach and running backs coach on Feb. 8. Along with Deland Sr., Dasan will ultimately be joined by two of his brothers, Deland McCullough II and Daeh McCullough, who are both set to play for the Hoosiers.

Dasan McCullough took to Twitter with a note explaining his decision to flip to Indiana with the caption "Respect it or not. I do not care."

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Wyatt Crosher

"First off, I would like to thank Ohio State for the amazing opportunity they gave me. Being a kid from Ohio (born in Cincinnati) it was a true blessing. Special thank you to Coach (Al) Washington for believing in my abilities as a player. With that said I have decommitted from Ohio State," McCullough said in the tweet. "Indiana, I'm staying home. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity I refuse to pass up. The chance to play under the man I looked up to my whole life is truly amazing, along with the opportunity to play with my best friends."

"Daeh, who has the chance to be special and I get the opportunity to watch and play with. And my oldest brother, Deland, simply the reason I wear No. 1 on my jersey and continue to play the game. Indiana University, I'm here."

Deland II, a three-star cornerback transfer formerly from Leawood (Kan.) Blue Valley North, announced on April 24 that he will be transferring from Miami (Ohio) to Indiana. Daeh is a four-star safety recruit in the 2023 class who also committed to the Hoosiers back on April 13.

While bringing in Deland Sr. and Daeh played a factor, Lettermen Row's Jeremy Birmingham told BSB that it was the transfer of Deland II that really seemed to tip the scales in Dasan's decision to flip to the Hoosiers.

"You don't want to say it happened overnight," Birmingham said. "I think a lot of people felt that when his dad took the job as the associate head coach with the Hoosiers that he was maybe on the fence at that point, but I don't think that that was enough in itself to tip the scales. But when Daeh McCullough, his younger brother, and Deland, his older brother, both decided to head to Indiana as well, I think that it just was too much for Dasan to say no to. It wasn't an overnight thing, but it was certainly over the course of about a week when things went from one direction to the other."

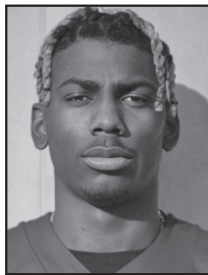
Dasan McCullough is the No. 50 overall recruit and the sixth-best athlete in the 2022 class. He is also the top recruit in the state of Indiana and is the highest-rated commit for the Hoosiers (.9784) in

the modern recruiting era, according to 247Sports.

Deland McCullough cannot talk specifically about the commitments of either of his sons due to NCAA recruiting policies, but he did say that recruiting in general at Indiana will be improved thanks to everything that head coach Tom Allen has built in his four seasons since taking over for current Ohio State offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson.

"A level of foundation was laid years ago, and Coach Allen and an impressive coaching staff have taken and expanded that," McCullough said. "Just the culture – LEO (Love Each Other) is not just a catch phrase, it's a way of life around here. It's very evident to me, and I'm just glad to be part of it, but those are some of the things, as we are out and doing things, just the impressions of the program, just the environment that's being built here. It's exciting to go out and really sell and put the program on display, and you want to hope to continue to draw the right type of players to keep everything moving forward."

Ohio State still holds five top-50 commitments for the 2022 class, including some key defensive commits in Jacksonville (Fla.) Robert E. Lee five-star cornerback Jaheim Singletary; Kettering (Ohio) Alter five-star linebacker C.J. Hicks; and Marysville, Ohio, four-star linebacker Gabe Powers.



Dasan McCullough

With two top-50 linebacker commits remaining in the class, the loss of McCullough will not cause Ohio State to panic, according to Birmingham. Although there are some names that the Buckeyes are in the mix for at linebacker – including Manvel, Texas, three-star Justin Medlock and Manassas (Va.) Unity Reed four-star Shawn Murphy – more names should come up as camps begin to open, and the Buckeyes should remain patient in finding the right prospects.

"I don't think there's a lot of names yet," Birmingham said. "Maybe that's the whole beauty of the dead period ending is that the Buckeyes and everyone else are finally going to have an opportunity to evaluate people in person or there are going to be in-person camps. I don't believe that there's any kind of hurry to rush into taking a commitment from anyone else. Even the players that we have heard and know about, guys like Shawn Murphy, guys like Justin Medlock in Texas, those are players that Ohio State really would like to get on campus and run through some drills and see them move around a little bit in person."

"Guys like Hicks and Powers, they have a lot of junior film on. They've seen them earlier in their careers. They have an idea who they are. A lot of these other kids around the country, especially in the class of 2022, they just have never seen. There is not going to be any hurry, and you will start to see a lot of new names pop up."

Medlock and Murphy are both inside linebackers and are listed at 6-1, 210 and 6-2, 215, respectively, but McCullough was seen as a linebacker/safety hybrid fit for the bullet position at 6-5, 220. Birmingham is interested to see if Ohio State tries to look for more players who fit McCullough's mold as the 2022 cycle continues.

"I think the big question is what type of linebacker they're looking for to replace

## OSU Football Verbal Commitments

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	6-0	178	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
Caleb Burton	WR	6-0	165	★★★★★	Del Valle, Texas
Bennett Christian	TE	6-6	235	★★★★	Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona
Quinn Ewers	QB	6-3	206	★★★★★	Southlake (Texas) Carroll
Benji Gosnell	TE	6-4	225	★★★★	Pilot Mountain (N.C.) East Surry
Kyion Grayes	WR	6-1	170	★★★★	Chandler, Ariz.
C.J. Hicks	LB	6-3	220	★★★★★	Kettering (Ohio) Archbishop Alter
Gabe Powers	LB	6-4	230	★★★★	Marysville, Ohio
Jaheim Singletary	CB	6-1	170	★★★★★	Jacksonville Robert E. Lee
Kye Stokes	ATH	6-2	185	★★★	Seffner (Fla.) Armwood
Tegra Tshabola	OT	6-5	340	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West

Dasan McCullough," Birmingham said. "Is it more of a traditional linebacker or is it more of a hybrid role that we're seeing Ohio State maybe push toward this football season?"

### Bucks Add Florida Athlete Stokes To '22

Seffner (Fla.) Armwood three-star athlete Kye Stokes announced on Instagram on May 2 that he will be committing to Ohio State, using the caption "Go Bucks."

Stokes is listed as the 56th best athlete and No. 675 overall prospect in the 2022 class in the 247Sports composite rankings. The 6-2, 185-pound Stokes received an offer from the Buckeyes April 26 and com-

mitted to the team just six days later. He is projected to be a defensive back at the collegiate level. Stokes spoke to Lettermen Row about his commitment and said that he appreciated the way that Ohio State running backs coach and assistant head coach Tony Alford went about his recruitment.

"When Coach Alford called me, he introduced himself and said, 'Listen, we're going to evaluate your film again,' " Stokes told Lettermen Row. " 'Based on your highlights we think you're a stellar athlete but we're going to go watch your film again and we should get back to you on Monday, all right?' "

Continued On Page 20

## It's my mission to save you money.

614-336-4240  
7370 Sawmill Road  
Columbus

**GEICO**  
Local Office®



Limitations apply. See geico.com for more details. GEICO & affiliates. Washington, DC 20076 © 2017 GEICO



# 5-Star Quarterback Solid As OSU Commit

Continued From Page 19

"That's exactly what happened. My dad, he said Coach Alford was a man of his word. I think my parents saw that and really appreciate it."

The commitment gives Ohio State 11 for the 2022 class, which ranks No. 3 in the county behind Georgia and LSU, who are in first and second, respectively.

## Ewers Selected For Elite 11 Finals

After an impressive performance on April 18 at the Elite 11 Regionals, Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star quarterback Quinn Ewers was invited to the Elite 11 Finals, the most prestigious quarterback event in recruiting.

This will be the third straight year an Ohio State commit has made it to the Elite 11 Finals, with current Buckeye quarter-

backs Jack Miller and C.J. Stroud making it to the 2019 finals and Kyle McCord doing the same in the 2020 finals.

Beyond them, former Ohio State quarterbacks Troy Smith and Justin Zwick went to the event in 2001, as did Rob Schoenholtz in 2004, Dwayne Haskins in 2015, Tate Martell in 2016 and Justin Fields in 2017.

Recently, Stroud was named MVP of the 2019 Elite 11 Finals, despite being only a three-star quarterback at the time. His performance at the event helped him ultimately become a five-star in the 247Sports Rankings and a high four-star in the composite, climbing all the way from No. 511 in the composite rankings before the competition to No. 41 at the time of his commitment to the Buckeyes.

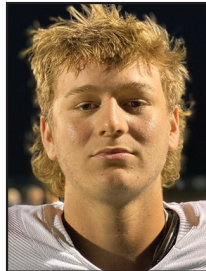
But Ewers will not need the event to climb in the rankings and will instead use

it to bolster his already impressive résumé. Ewers ranks as the top quarterback, as

well as the top overall prospect, in the 2022 class. He currently holds a perfect 1.0000 score, something that only five prospects (defensive end Jadeveon Clowney, defensive end Robert Nkemdiche, defensive tackle Rashan Gary, quarterback Vince Young and linebacker Ernie Sims) have ever earned.

Other quarterbacks who were invited to the finals from the Dallas regional with Ewers were Flower Mound, Texas, four-star Nick Evers and Austin (Texas) Westlake four-star quarterback Cade Klubnik, who are committed to Florida and Clemson, respectively.

There is not yet a confirmed date for this year's Elite 11 Finals. Last year, it took place from June 29-July 1.



Quinn Ewers

## Ewers Remains Locked Into Commitment

Along with making it to the Elite 11 Finals, Ewers also made comments since BSB last went to press to solidify his place as an Ohio State commit.

In a story from April 16, Ewers was asked by Joseph Hastings of Buckeye Grove about rumors that he has been wavering in his commitment to Ohio State. The five-star quarterback was not fazed by those rumors and quickly shut them down.

"I haven't heard a whole lot about that, but it's funny that you say that," Ewers said. "My message is that I haven't really talked to any other coaches besides, obviously, (head coach Ryan) Day, (quarterbacks coach Corey) Dennis and those guys. I'm pretty locked in with my decision."

He again confirmed those feelings when talking with Dave Campbell's Texas Football staff writer Greg Powers in a story published on April 23. There, Ewers said that his commitment is 100 percent to the Buckeyes, and that has led to fewer and fewer phone calls from other teams.

"It's all Ohio State," Ewers said. "(The other programs) kind of stopped calling."

Ewers has been committed to the Buckeyes since Nov. 19, 2020, which was 22 days after he decommitted from Texas back on Oct. 28.

At this point, there does not seem to be any reason Ewers would decommit from Ohio State, according to Birmingham. It would take something very surprising – like Day departing – to change Ewers' mind, and that's partially because of the quarterback spots filled at some of the other major competitors for the 6-3 signal-caller.

"I mean outside of Ryan Day leaving Ohio State and heading to the NFL or doing something totally unexpected, I don't think so," Birmingham said of Ewers flipping. "If you look around, the programs that really would be most out to lure someone of that stature away from a program like Ohio State (are full). Alabama has their quarterback. Texas has their guy. Clemson has their guy. Georgia has their guy. Oklahoma has their guy. There's not a lot out there."

Instead of needing to focus on keeping him with Ohio State, Birmingham said that the focus can now be on improving the relationship between Ewers and the coaching staff. Along with that, the team can also try to make Ewers more than just a guy who is set to be the top-rated commit in Ohio State's modern recruiting history.

"I think that there's an opportunity for Ohio State to really just continue to grow the relationship and hopefully get an opportunity to see Quinn develop as a class leader and not just the guy who is the highest-ranked player in the country," Birmingham said.

## Day Talks Balance Of Local-National Recruiting

Ever since Urban Meyer was selected as Ohio State's long-term head coach replacement for Jim Tressel in 2011, the Buckeyes have turned into a recruiting powerhouse on a national level.

That has continued with Day, but the current Ohio State head coach also made sure to note the importance of continuing to bring in the in-state recruits, along with building out across the country.

"We try to recruit as many guys as we

# PANEL TOWN & FLOORS

Established in 1967

## FLOORS FOR THE WAY YOU LIVE





**HARDWOOD FLOORING**

**\$1.99**

sq. ft. & up

**Free Cleaning System with Purchase of a Floor**

**1063 Dublin Rd., Columbus, OH 43215**

**614-488-0334**

**24 Month Financing**

**LVP VINYL PLANKS**

**\$1.49**

sq. ft. & up

**2021 Spring Renovation Sale • Save Up to \$1,000**

# THE RECLAIMED BARN





**SHIPLAP**

**\$2.99**

sq. ft. & up

**RECLAIMED WALLS**

**\$6.99**

sq. ft. & up

**BARN DOOR HARDWARE**

**\$99.99**

& up

**1080 Ridge St. Columbus, OH 43215 • 614-524-5934 • reclaimedbarn.com**

\*SEE STORE FOR DETAILS. LIMIT ONE DISCOUNT PER CUSTOMER. PURCHASE MUST BE MADE BY 4/3/2021\*



# ASK AN ANALYST

## With Jeremy Birmingham of Lettermen Row

**After the decision of Bloomington (Ind.) South four-star athlete Dasan McCullough to flip from Ohio State to Indiana, are there any other commits in Ohio State's 2022 class who may be a concern to decommit before National Signing Day?**

"No, I don't think so. I know there's been some discussion about West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star cornerback Jyaire Brown and the strength of his commitment, but I think that's just a byproduct of Jyaire being a pretty outward personality and someone that isn't afraid to talk to media of other teams and let them know that he's interested, and he should be interested.

"All these kids are going to be at least curious about what other schools present when you, again, haven't had an opportunity to see anyone yet. Jyaire Brown committed to Ohio State over a year ago, and he hasn't been able to talk to a coach on campus, so there's certainly going to be discussions. There certainly will be other rumors, but Ohio State's class outside of Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star quarterback Quinn Ewers; Jacksonville (Fla.) Robert E. Lee five-star cornerback Jaheim Singletary; and Kettering (Ohio) Alter five-star linebacker C.J. Hicks, I don't know that there's anyone else I would say is irreplaceable.

"The Buckeyes are going to encourage open dialogue with everyone. If they have questions, if they have doubts, then Ohio State won't try to hold them back."

**Ohio State obviously still awaits the decision of Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star**

**defensive tackle J.T. Tuimoloau to potentially finish its 2021 class. With the dead period having an end date, have there been any updates with his recruitment at this time, or when he will ultimately be making his decision?**

"No, he's still in spring sports in Washington, and so at this point there's still no set date for an official visit, but they're working toward one. I think the plan for J.T. at this point is to just take every official visit that he can within a couple of weeks stretch in June and then be on campus somewhere at the end of June, so the Buckeyes are holding on.

"They'll have a spot for him if he's going to take it, and they're certainly going to keep pushing to make sure that whenever that initial visit happens, whether it's the first week of June or the second or third or fourth, that they're going to be able to present exactly what their opportunity is compared to Alabama, Oregon, Washington and USC."

**With the end of the dead period coming on May 31, are you expecting a substantial number of commitments in June-July because of those incoming official visits?**

"I wouldn't say I'm expecting it, but I think that you have to acknowledge that a lot of these kids have been waiting for more than a year to make visits to schools that maybe they feel an inclination toward committing to. I think there will be a number of people who feel like, 'Hey, I'm ready. I've built this relationship over the last year. I'm finally able to commit.'

"But maybe they'll try to intentionally slow down because they've realized that they could be making an emotional decision. I don't think you will see people wanting to make one official visit and then commit after a year and a half of not being able to make any official visits anywhere. I think that maybe the rush of commitments comes in July as opposed to June."

**Around this time last year, Ohio State was earning its first commitments for the 2022 class, starting with Brown's commitment on April 22, 2020. When are you expecting the first commitment for the 2023 class, and who are some of the lead candidates for it?**

"They've done a nice job getting a head start on players inside the state of Ohio. There are four early offers. And I think that if you're looking at the first commitment, it's probably going to be one of those guys – Dayton Wayne four-star guard Josh Padilla; Mentor five-star defensive end Brenan Vernon; Pickerington Central five-star safety Sonny Styles; or Findlay four-star offensive tackle Luke Montgomery – but because those kids are in the same position that the '22 kids are and they haven't been able to visit anywhere yet, I don't think that there's anyone in a hurry.

"I guess I wouldn't be surprised if Padilla or maybe Styles made an early decision just because they grew up in such close proximity (to Columbus) and loving Ohio State. As far as I know, most of them intend to wait until at least after their junior season."

can in our footprint here, in the Midwest and certainly here in Ohio, and then we go from there. We're fortunate enough to be able to recruit from coast to coast, and when you look at our roster you see that," Day said in an April 23 Zoom call. "We're looking for guys who have like-minded philosophies. They want to be great, they want to compete, they want to come in here and be part of a family but also compete for a national championship. We're looking for that right culture fit."

In the 2021 class, only six of Ohio State's 21 commitments came from the state of Ohio – wide receiver Jayden Ballard, linebacker Reid Carrico, offensive tackle Ben Christman, defensive tackle Mike Hall, safety Jaylen Johnson and defensive end Jack Sawyer. The other 15 came from multiple areas across the country, including Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky and Pennsylvania. Punter Jesse Mirco came all the way from Australia.

But to Day, the approach to recruiting does not change, regardless of the location of the recruit. He said it is more about the position of the player and focusing in on those positions with the right coaches. However, as the recruiting world opens

back up, the Buckeyes will start to shift back into a bit more of an area-driven model, just for the sake of efficiency.

"In terms of philosophically in recruiting, we're very much position specific, and because of the way things have been the last year and a half, it's been a lot more efficient for us to be position specific," Day said. "When you're on the road and you go down to see a defensive back in Florida, now you need to go recruit the area a little bit. Go see the coaches, cultivate the area. When you're not traveling, it's a lot easier and more efficient to just do position recruiting because in the end, these players want to know who they're being coached by. The position coach, the strength coach and the head coach all have to be involved in that.

"That's what we've been into, as we start to get back on the road recruiting, then we'll start to focus in on recruiting areas to be more efficient with our time."

### Singleton Leaves OSU Off Visiting List

After previously stating that he would be visiting Ohio State starting on June 25, Reading (Pa.) Governor Mifflin four-star

running back Nicholas Singleton has now shared that he will be replacing that visit with one to Alabama.

Singleton was previously thought of as one of the Buckeyes' main targets at the position

for the 2022 class, but without an official visit on the schedule, it can now be assumed that he is moving on to other schools.

**Continued On Page 22**

## REDS FANS!

### Follow The Reds Year-Round In Reds Report

**R**eds Report is must reading for every Reds fan. Each information-filled issue includes player features; historical articles; extensive minor-league coverage with features on top prospects, complete statistics and farm club updates; box scores and game summaries for every Reds game; complete team and individual statistics; a Reds memorabilia section and much more.

**1 Year (12 issues) — \$44.95**



**Send to: Reds Report • P.O. Box 12453 • Columbus, Ohio 43212**

- ☐ Please send me a one-year (12 issues) subscription to **Reds Report** for \$44.95.
- ☐ My check or money order is enclosed. Check # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Charge to my: ☐ Discover ☐ MC ☐ Visa ☐ AMEX

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Card No. \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

For Faster Service On Credit Card Orders Call

**1-800-760-2862**



## Join Us!

**\$100/Year 614-326-3300**  
**buckeyeboosters.com**

**...as we support the Buckeyes on the road and more!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail check to:  
**Buckeye Boosters, 921 Chatham Ln., #301F, Columbus, OH 43221**

**Kick-Off Dinner**

**Travel to Away Football Games**

**Annual Celebrity Golf Outing**

**Meeting with Coaches, at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center**



# Ohio State Set To Roll Out Welcome Mat

Continued From Page 21

The 6-0, 210-pound Singleton is ranked as the seventh-best running back and No. 99 overall prospect in the 2022 class. He is projected as a second-to-third-round pick in a future NFL draft by 247Sports national recruiting analyst Brian Dohn.

“Good frame with ability to play at 210 pounds,” Dohn wrote. “Highly productive player with 32 touchdowns and 9.4 yards per carry as sophomore. Has burst to get through hole and speed to finish runs. Gets the edge with ease at high school level. Runs away from secondary. Shows vision and cut-back ability when running between tackles. Sticks foot in ground and decisive as one-cut runner.” Dohn also projected that Singleton would be a multi-year starter at a top-10 program.

With Singleton seemingly out of Ohio State’s plans at the running back position, the top target appears to now be Memphis (Tenn.) Christian Brothers four-star Dallan Hayden, who has two crystal ball predictions to the in-state Volunteers and one to the Buckeyes. The two predictions to Tennessee are more than a year old, while the one for Ohio State comes from 247Sports director of recruiting Steve Wiltfong on April 13.

Other prospects the Buckeyes may consider at running back for the 2022 class include Atlanta Woodward Academy four-star Damari Alston, Clayton (N.C.) Cleveland four-star Omarion Hampton and Littleton (Col.) Valor Christian four-star Gavin Sawchuk, the latter of whom seems to be gaining steam in the race for Buckeye interest.

## Bucks Make Top Schools For Pair Of Linemen

Since BSB last went to press, one lineman on either side of the field included Ohio State among his top schools.

The first was Greenwood (Ind.) Center Grove four-star defensive tackle Caden Curry, who included the Buckeyes in his

top 12 schools, along with Alabama, Arizona State, Clemson, Florida, Florida State, Indiana, Michigan, Notre Dame, Oregon, Tennessee and USC.

The 6-5, 250-pound Curry is ranked the eighth-best defensive tackle and No. 85 overall prospect in the 2022 class. He was projected as a second- to third-round pick in the NFL draft by 247Sports recruiting analyst Allen Trieu.

“Comes across as more compact than listed size,” Trieu wrote. “Very productive, disruptive player. Even when he is not the one making the play, he is consistently affecting offenses with his penetration. Gets off the snap quickly and shows the agility to get skinny and get through the line or win with a spin move. Shows violence with his hands. Is able to pursue because he can change directions but also pursues hard. At his best when penetrating, can still get stronger to be able to hold ground against the run more especially projecting him going against stronger college players. Seems extremely high floor because of the way he plays and production against good competition in high school.”

The other list comes from Norcross (Ga.) Greater Atlanta Christian School four-star offensive tackle Addison Nichols, who included Ohio State in his top five schools. The other schools he included were Florida, Georgia, Tennessee and USC.

Nichols, at 6-5, 305, is the third-best guard and No. 103 overall prospect in the 2022 class and has a great relationship with Ohio State offensive line coach Greg Studrawa.

“You could be having the worst day ever and then call him and your day gets better,” Nichols told Lettermen Row of Studrawa. “You forget about everything that was going wrong. It’s just great energy, super optimistic. Ohio State obviously sends a ton of guys to the NFL. It seems like Coach Stud is really building his guys for the future. He helps make great young men, great husbands and businessmen – stuff like that.”

The four-star offensive tackle will be taking visits to each of his top schools, including

one to the Buckeyes in June. That will help Nichols make his decision and will be an exciting time for him after seeing all of these coaches strictly through a computer screen.

“I’m just really excited to be able to meet Coach Stud and see the place because you can only get so much off of a Zoom call,” Nichols said. “Just being able to feel the environment and meet the people, that’s what I need still.”

## Buckeyes Offer 2023 WR Tate

Ohio State extended an offer to 2023 Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star wide receiver Carnell Tate on April 23. He is the No. 7 wide receiver and No. 47 overall prospect in the country.

A Chicago native, Tate (6-2, 185), who has one crystal ball prediction for Notre Dame, also holds offers from Georgia, Iowa, Iowa State, LSU, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Penn State, Tennessee and Texas, among others.

In the 2019 season, his freshman year, Tate hauled in 28 catches for 444 yards (15.9 yards per reception) and five scores.

He told Eleven Warriors that receiving an Ohio State offer was a huge accomplishment after being a fan for his whole life.

“I was shocked at the offer,” Tate said. “All my life I wanted to go to Ohio State. I grew up a Buckeye fan. It meant everything to me to get my dream school. My dreams are coming true.”

Tate will have his Ohio State visit starting on June 8, and as for what he would bring to the Buckeyes, he said it’s a little bit of everything.

“I bring everything to the table,” Tate said. “I can line up as a slot and outside. I make plays and put on a show wherever I am. I can stretch the field, and I’m a jump-ball receiver. There’s no limit to what I can do. They like me more as a slot. My entire high school career I’ve lined up outside. I make plays.”

## Visits Come To Columbus In Bulk

With the NCAA Division I Council approving – and the NCAA board of trustees confirming – the end of the dead period on June 1, Ohio State has been preparing to welcome a boatload of visits.

The names for those new visits include one current Buckeye commit for the 2022 class: Hicks, who is making his official visit on June 4.

For prospects in the 2022 class, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star defensive tackle Dominick James and Altoona (Iowa) Southeast Polk four-star safety Xavier Nwankpa will be visiting on June 4. The next week, June 11, Cheshire (Conn.) Academy four-star defensive end Wilfredo Aybar; Duncanville, Texas four-star offensive guard Jaylen Early; Denton (Texas) Ryan four-star cornerback Austin Jordan; and Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep three-star cornerback Ryan Turner will be visiting.

The following week, the 2022 class will be represented by Buford, Ga. three-star safety Jake Pope on June 18, then Chatsworth (Calif.) Sierra Canyon four-star safety Kamari Ramsey on June 21. On June 25, Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic three-star cornerback Jayden Bellamy; Humble (Texas) Atascocita four-star offensive tackle Kam Dewberry; and Owasso, Okla. four-star defensive tackle Chris McClellan will be making their visits.

For the 2023 class, Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic four-star running back Justice Haynes; Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Academy five-star athlete Treyaun Webb; and Lehigh Acres (Fla.) Senior five-star running back Richard Young will be visiting on June 7, 8 and 9, respectively.

Later in June, St. Louis De Smet four-star tight end Mac Markway will start his visit on June 20, and IMG Academy five-star defensive end Malik Bryant, as well as Orlando Dr. Phillips four-star offensive tackle Payton Kirkland, will follow suit two days later on June 22.

## A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

### 25 Years Ago – 1996

The Ohio State coaching staff welcomed a collection of recruits signed from the 1996 class, prospects for 1997 and their families to campus for the annual spring game.

Interestingly, Ohio State sponsored a pregame meal for those prospects in the French Field House but – due to NCAA regulations – had to charge each recruit and family member for their meals.

Among the Ohio prospects spotted at the game were linebacker Jason Ott from Cincinnati Elder, Massillon lineman Ben Mast, Chillicothe tight end Arthur Adams, Franklin Carlisle lineman Chad Allen, Garfield Heights lineman Aaron Dardzinski and Troy linebacker Jason Manson.

A number of Ohio State signees also appeared, including Andy Katzenmoyer, Gary Berry, Joe Brown and Jefferson Kelley.

### 20 Years Ago – 2001

Massillon Washington quarterback Justin Zwick took a visit to Ohio State for the annual spring game, and his dad, William, said that his son was narrowing down to a list of five final schools as he entered the summer.

William said that Justin was eyeing Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Ohio State, Tennessee and Texas the closest, though the Longhorns had yet to offer the Ohio signal caller. He also said that Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel’s plan for the spring game, in which the Buckeyes threw the ball nearly 65 percent of the time, may have been a message for his son.

“I think it was partly that and partly to see his quarterbacks under pressure,” William Zwick said. “It did influence Justin a little bit. But he realizes you have to have a balanced attack to succeed. You’ve got to be able to run the ball and ideally pass it 35 to 40 times a game.”

Tressel made sure to hook the Zwicks up with former Massillon and OSU great Chris Spielman, as well as former

Massillon and OSU coach Earle Bruce, during the course of the spring game festivities.

### 15 Years Ago – 2006

Piqua, Ohio, four-star tailback Brandon Saine didn’t take long to close up his recruitment, deciding against the lengthy recruiting process and announcing on May 3 that he had called up Tressel and given him his commitment. Saine was the second player to join Ohio State’s class, along with Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward safety Nate Oliver, who committed to Ohio State on Feb. 1.

“I was getting sick of all that (recruiting) stuff,” Saine told BSB. “I was tired of that, and I just felt like there was no real need to wait. I already knew where I was going to go.”

The news came as a bit of surprise to some analysts, because he had been considered a Michigan lean early on in his recruitment, though he disputed that after announcing his pledge to the Buckeyes. He did, however, acknowledge that he grew up a fan of the Wolverines.

“Yeah, I was a fan,” Saine said. “I like their jerseys and everything, but that was about it.”

### 10 Years Ago – 2011

Canton (Ohio) McKinley four-star defensive end Se’Von Pittman took a visit to Ohio State for its annual spring game but left without making a commitment to the Buckeyes, as had been rumored. He accompanied his former teammate and 2011 Buckeye signee defensive end Steve Miller to the game but ultimately came away having not learned anything new about where he’d play his college ball.

“I’ve been to Ohio State a lot, so I feel like I’ve seen everything down there,” Pittman told BSB. “I mostly watched the defensive line play and looked at different techniques they use. I was able to talk to Tressel and (defensive line coach) Jim Heacock, and it was good seeing both of them. It was

good seeing all the younger talent out there like (quarterback) Braxton Miller and (defensive lineman) J.T. Moore.

“Coach Tressel told me if I would enroll early at Ohio State that I would be playing in the (spring) game next year.”

### Five Years Ago – 2016

The quarterback list in Columbus was getting a bit cramped as the Buckeyes entered the summer recruiting stretch. With Akron Hoban four-star Danny Clark already in the fold for Ohio State’s 2017 class, the Buckeyes landed firmly within the lists of top schools for Las Vegas Bishop Gorman five-star Tate Martell; Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star Kellen Mond; and Franklin (Ga.) Heard County four-star Emory Jones.

Martell looked to be the favorite to fill out Ohio State’s quarterback class, due in large part to his willingness to compete with the already committed Clark.

“I really don’t care because I’ll compete,” Martell said of Clark’s presence. “I’ve been doing it every year. I go out there and compete against the best guys and prove that I’m the best. That’s just who I am. I’ll go out there and compete against anybody.”

### One Year Ago – 2020

Kettering (Ohio) Alter four-star athlete C.J. Hicks became the third member of Ohio State’s 2022 recruiting class when he announced his commitment on May 1, joining cornerback Jyaire Brown and offensive tackle Tegra Tshabola, who had both announced their commitments at the end of April.

The 6-4, 215-pound Hicks was considered the 15th-best athlete and No. 162 prospect in his class, with playing experience at both running back and safety for the Knights, though the Buckeyes projected him as an outside linebacker.

Hicks had been on Ohio State’s radar for roughly a year, dating back to a one-day camp in June of 2019 that drew the attention of linebackers coach Al Washington, his primary recruiter.



# Double-Digit Buckeyes Hear Names Called

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

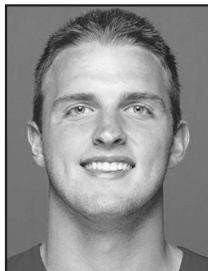
Ohio State produced double-digit draftees for the second time in as many years when 10 former Buckeyes heard their names called during the 2021 NFL draft April 29-May 1, a year removed from 10 OSU selections in 2020. Though this class was not quite as top-heavy as that one, with just one first-round pick as opposed to three in 2020 – quarterback Justin Fields in this case; defensive end Chase Young, cornerback Jeff Okudah and cornerback Damon Arnette in 2020 – it did produce quite a bit of depth, specifically on days two and three.

The Buckeyes produced five day-two picks in this draft, book-ended by linebackers at pick 60 (Pete Werner to the New Orleans Saints) and 105 (Baron Browning, Denver Broncos), surrounding Josh Myers to the Green Bay Packers at No. 62, his interior line battery mate Wyatt Davis to the Vikings 24 picks later, and running back Trey Sermon to the San Francisco 49ers at No. 88.

The final day of the draft wasn't quite as explosive, but it did see a pair of longer-than-expected weekends come to a close. Defensive tackle Tommy Togiai – considered by many during the pre-draft process to be a second- to third-round pick – stayed in state and went to the Cleveland Browns with the No. 132 pick in the fourth round, while cornerback

Shaun Wade dropped all the way to the fifth round to the Baltimore Ravens (No. 160).

Tight end Luke Farrell split those two at the first pick of the fifth round, joining his old coach, Urban Meyer, at pick No. 145. Defensive end Jonathon Cooper closed out the draft for the Buckeyes in the final round, joining Browning in Denver at the 239th pick.



Drue Chrisman

Ohio State's former players who could catch on in the NFL didn't stop with that last pick, though. Linebacker Tuf Borland, projected as an undrafted free agent, took just that path, signing with the Minnesota Vikings shortly after the end of the draft. Fellow linebacker Justin Hilliard joined Sermon in San Francisco, where he'll look to find a spot in both the linebacker rotation and on special teams.

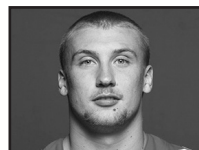
Tight end Jake Hausmann caught on with the Detroit Lions, kicker Blake Haubeil signed with former Ohio State assistant coach Mike Vrabel, now in charge of the Tennessee Titans, and punter Drue Chrisman stayed home, heading to Cincinnati to join the Bengals.

The following are Buckeye Sports Bulletin draft boxes for 12 former Buckeyes either drafted or immediately signed as undrafted free agents, complete with pre-draft measurables, the team that selected them (and that team's 2020 record), where they were selected, an expert's take and where they project in the depth chart.



FILE PHOTO

**OFF TO DENVER** – Baron Browning (in white) was one of 10 Ohio State players selected in the NFL draft and will join fellow teammate Jonathon Cooper in Denver.



## TUF BORLAND

Linebacker

6-0 • 229

Recruit Rank: Overall 324; OLB 22  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 26 LB  
Pro Day 40: 4.98 seconds



**DRAFTED:** Undrafted Free Agent

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 7-9

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "An occasional lightning rod for his play from some outside of the Ohio State program, Borland was always capable of playing in the NFL. Now he's headed there, given an opportunity by the Vikings as an undrafted free agent.

"For whatever he lacked in athleticism, the former Buckeye linebacker made up for with his innate leadership qualities. He leaves Columbus as only the second three-time captain in Ohio State history. A member of the 2016 recruiting class, many of his classmates left for the NFL while he spent five seasons in Columbus. He made up for a lack of speed with instincts and toughness. Playing at inside linebacker, he was the constant in the position room when Ohio State had turnover in its program." – Pete Nakos, Lettermen Row

**DEPTH CHART:** Danny Trevathan, Roquan Smith, Josh Woods, Joel Iyegbuniwe, **Tuf Borland**



## BARON BROWNING

Linebacker

6-3 • 245

Recruit Rank: Overall 11; OLB 1  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 7 LB  
Pro Day 40: 4.58 seconds



**DRAFTED:** Round: 3 Pick: 105

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 5-11

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Browning was a 'do whatever was asked of him' type of linebacker and it really speaks to his versatility and how quickly he can pick things up. The problem that arises with that is, there isn't a clear transition on where to play him in the NFL because he has strengths and weaknesses that are major for each linebacker position he might project at.

"There also are some issues with the mental aspect of Browning's game, far more here than physical, that coaches will have to spend time fixing in the film room. He has all the physical traits and athleticism to be great but has to put it all together to reach greatness.

"The fact he can do a little bit of everything is one reason he fits in so well with the Broncos. Vic Fangio likes players that can do a lot of different things in his defense. However, Browning's concerns with the mental aspect could be an impediment with the Broncos because a lot falls on them mentally." – Erick Trickett, Sports Illustrated

**DEPTH CHART:** Von Miller, **Baron Browning**, Derrek Tuszka, Jonathon Cooper



## JONATHON COOPER

Defensive End

6-3 • 253

Recruit Rank: Overall 33; WDE 3  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 30 DE  
Pro Day 40: 4.69 seconds



**DRAFTED:** Round: 7 Pick: 239

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 5-11

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "In the system he played in at Ohio State, he wasn't out in space very much. That's a big transition for a lot of guys, one that we do each and every year with one or two guys from college. We'll see how he does with it, but we like the makeup. You've obviously had a taste of it already, so when you have that kind of makeup, you can fight through and make the transition and not get too discouraged." – Vic Fangio, Denver Broncos head coach

"Most these players we drafted – all the players – we're looking for that type of makeup. And he's special with the makeup. I went to the Ohio State pro day and just watching the way he competed and went about his workout and took it serious and how he worked out and what type of shape he was in, and then you speak with the kid. He's everything you want in a teammate, in a player and representing the organization." – George Paton, Denver Broncos GM

**DEPTH CHART:** Von Miller, Baron Browning, Derrek Tuszka, **Jonathon Cooper**



## NFL DRAFT REVIEW



### WYATT DAVIS

Offensive Guard

6-4 • 315

Recruit Rank: Overall 24; OG 1  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 5 OG  
Pro Day 40: Did not run



**DRAFTED:** Round: 3 Pick: 86

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 7-9

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Davis played right guard for the Buckeyes, which is where Ezra Cleveland played last year as a rookie. Cleveland did spend some time at left guard in training camp, so I'd imagine he'll move there and Davis will slide into the RG spot. That gives the Vikings an offensive line, from left to right, of (Christian) Darrisaw, Cleveland, Garrett Bradbury, Davis, and Brian O'Neill.

"That unit has a chance to be the best O-line of the Mike Zimmer era right away in 2021.

"Davis was considered a potential first-round pick at one point, but didn't have the dominant 2020 season that some thought he was capable of. Still, he has an incredible combination of balance and power in pass protection, very rarely losing 1-on-1 reps. He's athletic enough to fit the Vikings' zone-blocking scheme in the running game, as well." – Will Ragatz, Sports Illustrated

**DEPTH CHART:** Wyatt Davis, Ezra Cleveland



### LUKE FARRELL

Tight End

6-6 • 251

Recruit Rank: Overall 191; TE 7  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 23 TE  
Pro Day 40: 4.79 seconds



**DRAFTED:** Round: 5 Pick: 145

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 1-15

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "I think if you talk to Ohio State staff, they'll tell you (he was) underutilized. If you look at their tight end corps as a whole last year, they have a young man that's on that team right now that's going to be one of the top tight ends in the country. His production, when you look at the stats, isn't great. I think they would say that that's one thing they're going to be working on too.

"We had a lot of collaboration obviously with Ohio State and their staff and how he was used, and you went to his pro day and you saw things in him on pro day that made you believe there's some upside as a receiver and he's not limited to just being a blocking tight end." – Trent Baalke, Jacksonville Jaguars GM

**DEPTH CHART:** Chris Mahnertz, James O'Shaughnessy, Luke Farrell



### JUSTIN FIELDS

Quarterback

6-2 • 227

Recruit Rank: Overall 2; DUAL 1  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 4 QB  
Pro Day 40: 4.45 seconds



**DRAFTED:** Round: 1 Pick: 11

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 8-8

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Perhaps the less-than-thrilled expression on Fields' face after he was drafted was just a misleading moment of television. Or perhaps it reflected how a lot of fans of Fields were feeling. The Bears' trade up to No. 11 for Fields was a wise maneuver by a general manager (Ryan Pace) and coach (Matt Nagy) whose jobs appear to be on thin ice. But that's part of why it's one of the worst possible fits for Fields.

"If Nagy can't orchestrate a winning record with Fields and Andy Dalton in 2021, the entire Bears operation could restart next season. No. 1 receiver Allen Robinson is set to play this season on the franchise tag. The offensive line and running game look average at best, and Nagy's ability to scheme guys open hasn't been apparent the last two seasons. Fields is talented enough to overcome it all, and Bears fans should absolutely be thrilled, but the Ohio State product is fighting an uphill battle." – Gregg Rosenthal, NFL.com

**DEPTH CHART:** Andy Dalton, Justin Fields, Nick Foles

🐦 @RedsMuseum
📘 REDS MUSEUM
📺 @RedsMuseum

PRESENTED BY  
**Dinsmore**

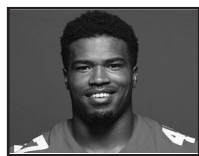
# GO BEHIND THE SCENES WITH A GREAT AMERICAN BALL PARK TOUR

Tour tickets are available through the Hall of Fame Box Office and online.  
Tours available Saturdays and Sundays, 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

For more information, call the Hall of Fame Box Office at (513) 765-7923 or visit

**REDSMUSEUM.ORG**





## JUSTIN HILLIARD

Linebacker

6-1 • 229

Recruit Rank: Overall 35; OLB 3  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 21 LB  
Pro Day 40: 4.81 seconds



**DRAFTED:** Undrafted Free Agent

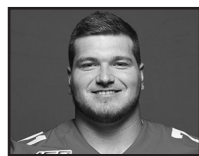
**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 6-10

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Despite never becoming a full-time starter with Ohio State, Justin Hilliard saw significant playing time in a rotational role with the program, even earning captainship as a senior. Injuries stunted his career a bit, as did the influx of talented defenders on the Buckeyes roster, but he is a violent player who is willing to play special teams, which opens a way for him to stick on an NFL roster."

"His athleticism is not up to par with NFL starters, but he may be able to see the field as a starting linebacker off the bench in an injury situation." – Bleacher Report Scouting Department

"Former five-star recruit who saw portions of his career derailed by injury. Hilliard is beloved by his teammates and is a great example of resilience and perseverance through adversity. He possesses quality football character and did a very nice job of stepping up at the end of the 2020 season when injuries struck. Unfortunately, he lacks the athletic and skill components needed as a position player on the NFL level." – Lance Zierlein, NFL.com

**DEPTH CHART:** Dre Greenlaw, Mark Nzeocha, Justin Hilliard



## JOSH MYERS

Center

6-5 • 310

Recruit Rank: Overall 53; OG 2  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 3 C  
Pro Day 40: Did not run



**DRAFTED:** Round: 2 Pick: 62

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 13-3

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Myers probably has a better chance to play right away than Packers first-round cornerback Eric Stokes. Let's say David Bakhtiari's reconstructed knee is healthy enough to start Week 1. He'd play left tackle, with Elgton Jenkins at left guard, Myers or (Jon) Runyan at center, Myers, Runyan or (Lucas) Patrick at right guard and Billy Turner at right tackle. If he doesn't start Week 1, perhaps it's a situation in which he sits behind Patrick to start and splits reps shortly into the season before taking over for good like Jenkins did early in 2019 after Lane Taylor's injury."

"The pick might also affect interior offensive lineman Simon Stepaniak, a 2020 sixth-round pick who spent the majority of last season rehabbing a torn ACL suffered in college. In terms of knocking a starter off the first-string offensive line, Patrick is my best guess. I'll say Myers starts at center and Runyan at right guard, with Patrick a backup for both spots."

– Matt Schneidman, The Athletic

**DEPTH CHART:** Josh Myers, Jake Hanson



## TREY SERMON

Running Back

6-0 • 215

Recruit Rank: Overall 191; RB 12  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 6 RB  
Pro Day 40: 4.57 seconds



**DRAFTED:** Round: 3 Pick: 88

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 6-10

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "It's hard to say how the 49ers will divvy up the workload, but it's obvious that they are trying to avoid the depth issues they experienced – almost immediately – last season. Sermon gives them three viable candidates. He's not a speedy back like (Raheem) Mostert, and he's not a powerful inside runner like Jeff Wilson. He's somewhere in the middle."

"The biggest misgiving about Sermon might be his injury history. According to (Dane) Brugler, he suffered a cracked vertebra in high school, he tore the LCL ligament in his left knee in 2019 and dislocated his left shoulder early on in the recent national title game against Alabama. Mostert has had trouble staying healthy in recent seasons, and Wilson missed four games last year as well. The 49ers could use the depth at running back, but cornerback seemed like a bigger overall need on Day 2 of the draft." – Matt Barrows, The Athletic

**DEPTH CHART:** Raheem Mostert, Trey Sermon, Jeff Wilson



## TOMMY TOGIAI

Defensive Tackle

6-2 • 296

Recruit Rank: Overall 55; DT 3  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 8 DL  
Pro Day 40: 4.97 seconds



**DRAFTED:** Round: 4 Pick: 132

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 11-5

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "We think there is upside there as a pass rusher for him as well. He is a good, powerful, explosive and quick guy to add to the room. So again, you can never have enough defensive linemen, and we are excited to get him in the mix and see what he can do competing with the rest of the crew here." – Dan Sagany, Cleveland Browns director of player personnel

"Interior defender with tight hips, good upper body power and improved tape from 2019 to 2020. He's fairly disciplined to come off the ball with proper pad level and attack blocks with a proactive demeanor, but the lack of arm length will show up if asked to stack blocker or free himself from a strong sustain block. He's more active than athletic as a pass rusher and plays with hustle and pursuit as a secondary rusher. He has rotational tackle potential but may not offer enough in the traits or rush categories to become much more than that." – Lance Zierlein, NFL.com

**DEPTH CHART:** Andrew Billings, Tommy Togiai



## SHAUN WADE

Cornerback

6-1 • 196

Recruit Rank: Overall 17; CB 2  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 23 CB  
Pro Day 40: Did not run



**DRAFTED:** Round: 5 Pick: 160

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 11-5

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "If he had come off what we saw in 2019, (he) probably is a second-round pick. (He) comes back in 2020, made the move from a nickel as an inside corner in 2019, where he played very well, to sliding outside, and just had a rough go of it." – Daniel Jeremiah, NFL Network

"Had he come out last year, he probably would have been a first-round pick, at least in the conversation for a first-round pick. He tried to do the right thing, went back to college, just a really brutal year. I talked to several scouts and evaluators about Wade. As one said, this year's film is really bad. The (Pro Day) workout is just okay. I know that the scouts on this evaluator's team just didn't really like him. There's some upset. He put on some good tape last year, but this year it wasn't good." – Ian Rapoport, NFL Network

**DEPTH CHART:** Tavon Young, Shaun Wade



## PETE WERNER

Linebacker

6-3 • 238

Recruit Rank: Overall 277; ILB 14  
The Athletic Prospect Rank: No. 9 LB  
Pro Day 40: 4.58 seconds



**DRAFTED:** Round: 2 Pick: 60

**NFL TEAM'S 2020 RECORD:** 12-4

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "It's Demario Davis and everyone else at linebacker for the Saints right now. Yes, the Saints drafted Zack Baun in Round 3 last year. But he's never truly played as a traditional linebacker. Werner is by far a more natural linebacker. Baron Browning (No. 91 overall) is rated higher on (Dane) Brugler's big board, but I pointed out earlier this week how Werner seemed more of a fit for the Saints than Browning."

"This is a need position, so this makes far more sense than defensive end Payton Turner in Round 1. Maybe the Saints considered cornerback or wide receiver with this pick. Still, linebacker ranked near the top of the wish list for New Orleans this weekend."

"Werner certainly has a chance to win a starting job as a rookie. Davis needs a stable piece next to him given how the Saints typically play with two linebackers in their 4-3 scheme. I would assume Werner would play middle linebacker leaving Davis to be more free on the weakside." – Larry Holder, The Athletic

**DEPTH CHART:** Pete Werner, Zack Baun



# Wade Enters NFL With Chip On Shoulder

By JOE DEMPSEY  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Shaun Wade was ejected from the 2019 College Football Playoff semifinal showdown with Clemson for targeting, the Buckeyes led 16-0 and appeared to be on their way to their first national title game in five years.

Wade had dropped Tiger quarterback Trevor Lawrence for an 8-yard sack, which would have set up fourth-and-13 from the Clemson 47-yard line with less than five minutes until halftime. Instead, Wade was ejected for targeting, and Lawrence and the Tigers picked up 15 yards and an automatic first down at the Ohio State 30.

Clemson capitalized by capping the drive with a touchdown, prompting 21 unanswered points on the way to a 29-23 win, ending the Buckeyes' season.

Although he was getting shots and painkillers just to make it onto the field, the chance at winning a national championship made playing through a painful microtear in his abdomen worth it to Wade. A similar injury had forced him to redshirt as a freshman in 2017 after he had arrived as the nation's No. 2 corner and No. 17 overall prospect in his class.

Following the disappointing Fiesta Bowl loss, Wade had to decide whether to move on to the NFL with backfield mates Jeff Okudah, Damon Arnette and Jordan Fuller or return for another season at Ohio State.

With his eyes set on stepping up as a leader, earning his degree and winning a national championship for the Buckeyes, Wade decided to return for the 2020 campaign as a fourth-year junior.

Shortly after Wade underwent surgery to repair his torn abdominal muscle, however, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down all sports-related activities at Ohio State and across the country.

The risks associated with the coronavirus caused the Big Ten to postpone the football season on Aug. 11. As the likelihood of football being played in the conference decreased, a frustrated Wade announced Sept. 14 that he would opt out and prepare for the 2021 NFL draft if there were no season.

Just two days later, the Big Ten announced a football season would begin in October. The announcement came on the same day that Wade had planned to sign with his NFL agent, but he said he needed a day to think following the news.

The next day, Wade announced that he would no longer be opting out of the newly planned Big Ten football season, citing his aspirations to help Ohio State win a national title. Defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs, who had recruited Wade out of high school, was thrilled when the physical defensive back announced his return.

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

With the season approaching, Wade suffered an undisclosed knee injury while still striving to return to full strength following his abdominal surgery.

Entering the season, ESPN's NFL draft expert Mel Kiper rated Wade as his seventh overall prospect for 2021, implying that the talented cornerback could have opted out and maintained first-round consideration.

The hype surrounding Wade was understandable after he had packed the stat sheet with 56 tackles (43 solo), four tackles for loss, two sacks, four interceptions, 19 passes defended, two forced fumbles and one blocked kick in his first two seasons.

At 6-1 and 196 pounds, Wade projected to be the Buckeyes' next lockdown corner in an elite lineage of first-round picks including Okudah, Arnette, Denzel Ward, Marshon Lattimore, Eli Apple, Gareon Conley and Bradley Roby.

However, moving from his inside corner spot to the outside proved to be detrimental to Wade's draft stock.

"If he had come off what we saw in 2019, he probably is a second-round pick," NFL Network draft analyst Daniel Jeremiah said. "He comes back in 2020, made the move from a nickel as an inside corner in 2019, where he played very well, to sliding outside and just had a rough go of it."

Though defense is a group effort, Wade struggled when left alone in man-to-man coverage against some of the top receivers Ohio State faced in 2020. Penn State's Jahan Dotson caught eight passes for 144 yards and three touchdowns on Oct. 31; Ty Fryfogle of Indiana snagged seven receptions for 218 yards and three scores on Nov. 21; and the campaign concluded with Alabama's DeVonta Smith corralling 12 catches for 215 yards and three touchdowns in the first half of the CFP national championship on Jan. 11.

The COVID-riddled 2020 season compounded a difficult year for Wade, who privately dealt with turf toe, which hindered his speed, explosiveness and ability to change directions quickly.

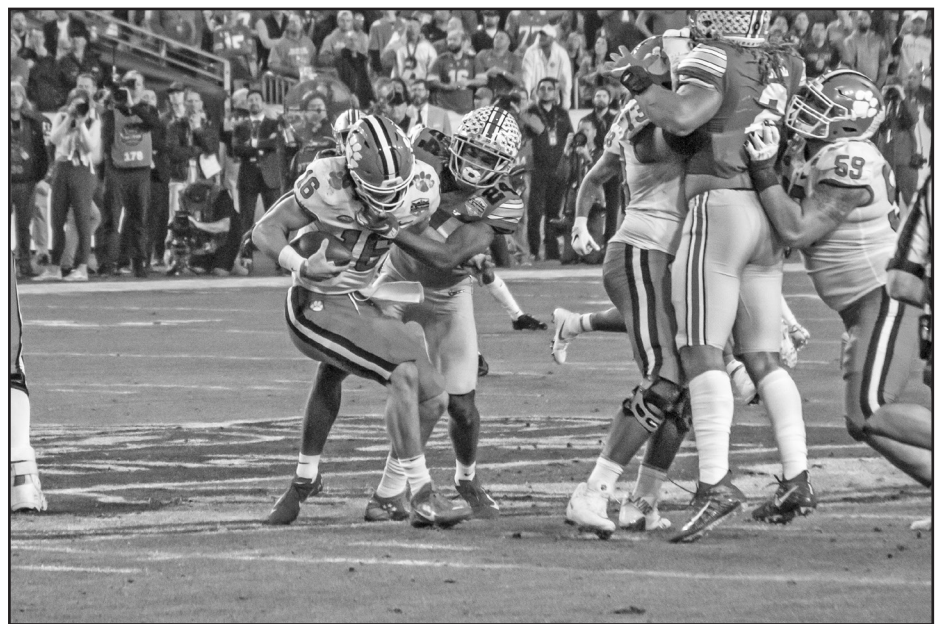
"I had a lot of things going on," Wade said. "Family situations, injuries, surgeries, turf toe, knee problem, people dying, Granny died, cousin died, cousin on my mom's side died, so there were just a lot of things going on. But at the end of the day, it's called adversity, it's called growing up and going through adversity. And that's something that I've been through, and everybody's got a different story."

Despite enduring such difficult circumstances, Wade ended the 2020 season as a consensus All-American and won the Big Ten Defensive Back of the Year honor. He also earned his degree in sport industry and represented his team as a captain. The Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy product recorded 35 tackles (24 solo), one TFL, six passes defended and two interceptions, including a 36-yard pick-six in a 42-35 win over Indiana.

Even though Wade raked in numerous postseason honors, evaluators expressed concerns about the struggles he had in one-on-one situations on the perimeter. After entering the season as Kiper's No. 7 overall prospect, Wade entered the draft as his No. 16 cornerback.

"Wade just didn't have the cover skills this year playing outside that he did when he was in the slot," Kiper said. "I think he could end up being an inside safety type or a slot corner, where he felt more comfortable rather than being out on an island. He's going to be an interesting guy. I think he would have been a first-round pick had he played up to the level you expected or certainly as he did in 2019 when he was playing in the slot."

Where Wade would wind up remained a mystery with the draft approaching, with mock drafts differing on projections from the second round to the sixth. The suspense ended when the Baltimore Ravens chose



FILE PHOTO

**SOMETHING TO PROVE —** After falling to the fifth round and pick No. 160 to the Baltimore Ravens, Shaun Wade, seen here tackling Clemson's Trevor Lawrence, is ready to bring a chip on his shoulder to the NFL.

Wade in the fifth round with the No. 160 overall pick.

Many might be bitter in Wade's position, having been discussed as a first-round pick in August and becoming a fifth-round selection less than a year later. The former Ohio State defensive back holds the opposite perspective, however, emphasizing how grateful he is for the opportunity to play in the NFL.

"It's just a blessing to be drafted," Wade said. "I'm part of the one-percenters. That's what one of my coaches texted me, saying, 'You've got to enjoy the moment that you're part of the one-percenters.' This is everybody's dream just to get drafted. There's only 32 that go in the first round, so just being able to be drafted is a blessing, and I'm just excited."

Wade was ecstatic to achieve his lifelong dream of reaching the NFL, and his passion for giving back was a big reason why. Prior to the draft, he began a program called "Cleats on the Ground" in the Jacksonville area, where he speaks to athletic programs, juvenile detention centers, military groups and more.

The former Ohio State corner said he works to inspire youth so that they realize they can also overcome an array of obstacles and achieve their dreams.

"I've been through a lot during my childhood, living in Italy, coming back to the States," he explained. "I used to live with foster kids. My grandma took care of a bunch of foster kids, so I understand that lifestyle. I understand the lifestyle of having a single mom because my dad was always gone in Afghanistan or Kuwait. It just was a learning experience for me, and it shows me that you can't take anything for granted. That's what I took out of it, and that's why I love giving back and helping other kids that are going through that everyday lifestyle."

In Baltimore, Wade will be reunited with former Ohio State tailback J.K. Dobbins and former linebacker Malik Harrison, who both last played with Wade when he was ejected from the Fiesta Bowl in 2019.

"I'm just excited to be back with my guys," Wade said. "J.K. and I have got some stories from freshman year. And Malik was somebody that brought me in when I first got there, and he's a Columbus native. So

just being around those two guys in the future is something great, and I'm very, very excited."

The Ravens already have solid veterans at outside cornerback in Marlon Humphrey and Marcus Peters, and the organization likes Wade as a slot corner or safety. In spite of his struggles last season, Wade expressed confidence in his ability to play anywhere when at 100 percent.

"It doesn't matter what position I play," Wade said. "At the end of the day, if I have to play inside, I'll play inside. If they need me at corner, they need me at corner. If they need me at safety, they need me at safety. I still have versatility and I still can do everything. My No. 1 thing is to be healthy, and when I'm healthy, you get the best Shaun Wade."

The Ravens went to the playoffs each of the past three seasons, and Wade was excited at the idea of learning from the talented players in the secondary.

"I can't wait to get around those guys," Wade said. "Marcus Peters, Marlon Humphrey, and all those guys, I watched them when I was younger, and I'm just excited to be around them. Because I know that they're GOATs (greatest of all time) and they're vets, and now it's time to learn from them. And they can teach me a couple things, and I can probably teach them a couple things because I know I'm a smart player too. I can't wait to learn from them and be around those guys, and I know the Ravens have a great secondary for sure."

After sliding from a first-round prospect to a fifth-round selection, Wade was asked if that gave him a chip on his shoulder as he entered the pros. For Wade, the chip has always been there, and it's not going away anytime soon.

"It's not even a choice," Wade said. "I have had a chip on my shoulder since the 2020 season ended and the things that I've been through," Wade said. "But I'm always going to come in with a chip on my shoulder regardless, and I know what I am going to do on the field. I know what I can do. I know my smartness, my talent, and like everybody said, they know I've got first-round talent. And I know I've got first-round talent. So right now, it's just putting it on the field and doing it every day, for sure."



# Fields Far From Alone Coping With Epilepsy

By **LORI SCHMIDT**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

“If you’re in a stadium,” Dr. Jacqueline French said, “there’s hundreds and hundreds of people sitting in that stadium, just statistically, who have epilepsy who you would never know.”

For Ohio State, it turns out one of those people was on the field.

When NFL.com reported that quarterback Justin Fields has told NFL teams he has the neurological disorder, many were surprised.

But not French.

“No, not at all,” she said. “The thing about epilepsy is if it’s well-controlled with medicine, you wouldn’t be able to tell that somebody has epilepsy by looking at them, by talking to them, by any other means.”

Fields himself didn’t know he had epilepsy until he woke up in an ambulance in ninth grade. Following his being drafted by the Chicago Bears with the No. 11 pick in the 2021 NFL draft, Fields told reporters it was that seizure in high school that led to his diagnosis. Since then, he’s been taking 3-4 pills a night, and the disorder has had zero effect on football, never costing him a game or even a practice.

“I can manage it pretty easily,” he said.

He certainly isn’t unique in that.

As the chief scientific officer for the Epilepsy Foundation and professor of neurology at NYU Langone Health, French knows that one in every 26 Americans, or approximately 3.4 million people, are affected. In fact, she pointed out that many with the disorder don’t even know they have it.

“Most people when they think about epilepsy, they think about the convulsive seizure,” said French. “And I just want to put something in your head. It’s a short, sudden, similar, strange spell. A lot of times people, that’s what their seizures feel like to them. It’s just a short, sudden, similar, strange spell. That can be a lot of different things. Often it’s a blue feeling or a feeling of anxiety that comes out of nowhere, lasting from 30 seconds to maybe two minutes, and then it’s gone. And a lot of people don’t get diagnosed until they have a convulsion, because they don’t know that those short, sudden, similar, strange spells are seizures.”

Crystal Hagans, doctor of public health administration and executive director of the Epilepsy Foundation Ohio, hopes that not only might some of those individuals be inspired to see their doctor upon learning about Fields, but they might also be inspired by how successful Fields has been.

“They can say, ‘I can see how I can have a good quality and be able to function with this disorder,’” she said.

Hagans also pointed to research that found misconceptions of the disorder abound. In a nationwide survey of 20,000 teens, almost half thought seizures might be contagious, the majority believed that epilepsy is or might be a mental illness, and many were not even sure if people with epilepsy could attend regular classes.

“People have this idea that it has something to do with the brain, or it’s psychiatric,” echoed French.

What are the facts about epilepsy? According to French:

- “Some people outgrow it. It’s about 50-50 chance you might outgrow it. You can develop it at any time in your life. In fact, there is an increase in developing seizures over the age of 50 as your brain gets older. You can get it at any age.”

- “About one-third of people with epilepsy, there is a genetic composition. About two-thirds, it’s acquired in one way or another. Either from the fact that something has happened to your brain – a knock on the head, or a bruise in the brain, or a tumor in the brain, or

something that produces disruption in the brain and therefore electrical disturbance; or about one-third of the time, we really don’t know what the cause is.”

- “Fortunately, about two out of three people who develop epilepsy can expect to take a medication that will control the seizures.”

The NFL.com report indicated Fields believes he will be in the 50 percent who do outgrow the disorder based on family history.

However, because there were rumors that NFL teams were leery of Fields’ diagnosis, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day came forward to also point out that Fields was among those successfully managing his condition.

“I think a couple of the strengths of Justin, if you ask me my favorite things about Justin, one: I would say is his work ethic, the way he comes and grinds every single day, and then two: the way he takes care of his body and his health,” said Day during an April 23 press availability.

“You know, he went to a vegan diet,” he continued. “He takes all that stuff very, very seriously, and we never had any issue with his health.

I mean, he was reliable, never missed a game. You know, the only snaps he missed were after taking a shot at his knee and then the shot he took in the Clemson game. He was always a pro about his body and his health. So we never really had to worry about that. He was durable and reliable, and we never had to worry about any of that stuff with Justin.”

Indeed, Fields handled himself well enough to win Big Ten offensive player of the year honors twice, be named a Heisman Trophy finalist after his sophomore campaign and record 63 passing touchdowns at Ohio State, despite playing only one full season in Columbus after COVID-19 shortened his junior year to eight games. That’s before even mentioning his contributions to the run game, including 15 rushing scores, and his contributions to leadership, as he served as a team captain.

That’s part of the reason that Day is upset that anyone would make an issue of Fields having epilepsy.

“I get frustrated,” he admitted. “I feel like there’s a lot of people in the draft, and some guys

get a pass and some guys don’t. And certainly, people have taken shots at Justin.”

Fields has also received support, though, from someone with epilepsy who had a successful professional career. Alan Faneca, who made the Pro Bowl nine times – six as a guard for the Pittsburgh Steelers – and who will be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame this summer, tweeted a message to Fields.

“If I did it, so can (Fields), and so can anyone else. It is part of us, but does not define us!” he wrote.

Faneca had his first seizure at age 15 but controlled it with medication.

And count Hagans as one of those hoping that NFL teams take heed. Even if as Day indicated is possible, Fields’ desire for privacy leads him to stay mostly quiet on the issue, Hagans believes he can make an impact just by making this jump to the pros.

“I am rooting for Justin,” she said.

For more information on epilepsy or to donate to the Epilepsy Foundation Ohio, you can visit their website at [www.ohioepilepsy.org](http://www.ohioepilepsy.org).

## play⇒cbus

### 53,000 SQUARE FEET OF FUN!

#### THE WORLD'S LARGEST INDOOR ROPES COURSE IS IN YOUR BACKYARD!

- FUN FOR ALL AGES!!
- TWO-STORY ROPES COURSE
- NINJA/OBSTACLES
- CLIMBING WALLS + BOULDERING WALL
- ZIP LINE
- FULL BAR + KITCHEN WITH CRAFT, LOCAL BREWS, WINE + COCKTAILS
- 4 PRIVATE PARTY ROOMS

#### PARTIES, EVENTS, AND FULL-FACILITY PRIVATE RENTALS AVAILABLE!

535 LAKEVIEW PLAZA BLVD WORTHINGTON, OHIO 43085  
(614) 505-8586  
[INFO@PLAYCOLUMBUS.COM](mailto:INFO@PLAYCOLUMBUS.COM)





# SMU Passing Attack Bites Buckeyes During '78 Tie

*Ohio State's quarterbacks threw the ball a combined 75 times in the recent spring game, not an especially out-of-the ordinary performance in today's high-flying college football world. But when legendary Buckeye coach Woody Hayes' career was winding down, that type of passing would have been anything but ordinary. Buckeye Sports Bulletin managing editor emeritus Mark Rea looks back at an Ohio State game from more than 40 years ago that proved to be a preview of what was coming in college football and that Hayes was slow in seeing that future.*

By **MARK REA**  
BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Jimmy Carter was in the White House, Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and Polish-born Karol Wojtyla became the first non-Italian pope since the 1500s, going on to reign for more than a quarter-century as John Paul II.

"Just the Way You Are" was on its way to winning Billy Joel the Grammy Award for Record of the Year, "The Deer Hunter" was in line to take home the Oscar for Best Picture, and Cincinnati Reds third baseman Pete Rose collected his 3,000th career hit.

Kobe Bryant, Manny Pacquiao, Katie Holmes and John Legend were born, George and Olivia Harrison got married, Mick and Bianca Jagger got divorced, and Hubert Humphrey, Keith Moon, Margaret Mead and Golda Meir died.

It was 1978, the year the Dallas Cowboys won Super Bowl XII in January, the Montreal Canadiens captured their record 21st Stanley Cup in May, the Washington Bullets claimed their first and only NBA championship in June, and the New York Yankees successfully defended their World Series championship in October.

The 1978 college football season would eventually crown Alabama as its national champion while Oklahoma running back Billy Sims won the Heisman Trophy.

Meanwhile, at Ohio State, it might be understating the obvious to describe the 1978 season as one of transition. It would begin with the much-anticipated debut of a hotshot freshman quarterback and end with a disastrous bowl loss that claimed in its aftermath the career of an iconic head coach.

In between, however, was a roller-coaster ride of a season that included a nonconference game featuring one of the most unusual outcomes in Ohio State program history.

The Buckeyes had opened the 1978 season with a 19-0 loss to Penn State, a game during which freshman quarterback Art Schlichter threw five interceptions in his college debut. It is a single-game record for OSU quarterbacks that stands to this day.

Legendary head coach Woody Hayes had recruited the strong-armed Schlichter with a promise to change his three-yards-and-a-cloud-of-dust offensive mentality into a streamlined attack that featured more passing. Along with Schlichter, who had thrown for nearly 4,400 yards and 46 TDs during his high school career, Hayes had previously signed such speedy receivers as Doug Donley, Tyrone Hicks and Alvin Taylor. Donley had 4.4 speed while Hicks and Taylor were each sprinters on the OSU track team.

Additionally, athletic quarterback Rod Gerald had moved to the flanker position to give Schlichter another deep threat.

"That was supposed to be the year Coach Hayes changed his offensive philosophy,"

OSU football historian Jack Park told BSB. "Woody had recruited Art Schlichter, who had broken all these passing records in high school, and Ohio State was going to start throwing the ball more. Well ... that's not exactly what happened."

Never one for throwing the ball much anyway, Hayes went back to his tried-and-true attack after Schlichter pitched five interceptions in 26 attempts during the opener against the Nittany Lions. The Buckeyes rebounded with a 27-10 road win at Minnesota before returning to Columbus for a narrow 34-28 win against Baylor.

In both games, Schlichter did much more with his legs than his arm. He attempted only seven passes against the Gophers, completing just three for 57 yards, but totaled 56 yards and two touchdowns on the ground. He then had a similar performance against the Bears when he attempted only nine passes (with three completions and two interceptions), but the freshman QB rushed for 71 yards as well as the game's first touchdown.

By the time the Buckeyes entertained SMU on the first Saturday in October, they boasted a 2-1 record and had seemingly put well behind them the problems that had plagued them during the season opener against Penn State.

But as Ohio State had quickly retreated from an upgrade in its offensive attack, opponents of the Buckeyes had begun to embrace what was coming in college football – namely more reliance on the passing game.

Minnesota quarterbacks Wendell Avery and Mark Carlson combined for 174 yards and a touchdown through the air against the Buckeyes, and Baylor QB Steve Smith had thrown for 249 yards and three TDs. Even Joe Paterno, beginning his 13th season as head coach at Penn State in 1978, had allowed his quarterback Chuck Fusina to throw the ball 22 times in the opener.

Still, it's safe to say Hayes and the Buckeyes were unprepared for what they were about to see from the upstart Mustangs of the old Southwest Conference.

## Upset-Minded Mustangs

By the late 1970s, the football program at Southern Methodist University had long been struggling for relevance in a conference dominated for years by Texas and Arkansas.

Hayden Fry, who would later spend two decades in the Big Ten as head coach at Iowa, had piloted the Mustangs program for 11 seasons beginning in 1962. Fry was a two-time SWC Coach of the Year and led the Mustangs to a conference championship in 1966, the school's first title since 1948.

While at SMU, Fry and his program earned a reputation for being willing to play any team anywhere, and that is what led to an epic battle against Ohio State in 1968. The Buckeyes scored a 35-14 victory and went on to win the national championship that year, but Mustangs quarterback Dave Hixson and receiver Jerry Levias had record-setting days against the OSU defense during their team's loss at Ohio Stadium.

Hixson attempted 69 passes and completed 37 of them for 417 yards and two touchdowns. At the time, it was the most passing yardage in a single game for an opposing quarterback against OSU, and it remains the seventh-highest total ever. The 69 attempts were also the most ever for an opposing QB

and remain tied for the top spot with Dave Wilson of Illinois, who attempted 69 passes while throwing for 621 yards in a 49-42 loss to the Buckeyes in 1980.

Meanwhile, Levias was on the receiving end of 15 of Hixson's completions for 160 yards. The yardage was the most for an OSU opponent until it was broken in 1981 by Purdue receivers Steve Bryant (195) and Cliff Benson (165) in the same game, a contest the Buckeyes still somehow won by a 45-33 margin. And while Levias' total receptions were equaled a couple of times, no OSU opponent surpassed him until Clemson receiver Sammy Watkins had 16 catches during his team's 40-35 win against the Buckeyes in the 2014 Orange Bowl.

By the 1978 season, Fry was long gone from SMU, and in his place was Ron Meyer, who had taken over the program in 1976 after a successful stint as an assistant on Tom Landry's staff with the Dallas Cowboys.

Meyer played up his cowboy persona and sometimes affected a Southern drawl, but in reality, he was born in Columbus and played his college football at Purdue. There was little doubt about his coaching ability, however. He had an undefeated regular season at UNLV in 1974, earning NCAA Division II Coach of the Year honors, and won an SWC championship with SMU in 1981 on the strength of the Pony Express backfield of Eric Dickerson and Craig James.

But Meyer also played hard and fast with recruiting rules, practices that eventually led to the SMU football program being handed the so-called death penalty in 1987, long after Meyer had moved on to the NFL.

In 1978, however, Meyer was still in a rebuilding phase with the Mustangs.

The season had begun with a 45-14 win against conference rival TCU and continued with a 35-25 upset of Florida. In week three, the Mustangs traveled to Happy Valley to take on undefeated and then-No. 3-ranked Penn State and gave the Nittany Lions all they wanted before bowing in a 26-21 final.

That set up a showdown the following week with the Buckeyes, who had climbed back to the No. 14 spot in the national rankings.

## Hayes: 'We Blew It'

Played before a crowd of 87,721 on a cool, crisp early October afternoon at Ohio Stadium, the 1978 game between Ohio State and SMU began pretty much according to plan for the Buckeyes. After the defense held the Mustangs to a three-and-out on their first possession of the game, Schlichter capped a short drive with a 23-yard touchdown scramble to give OSU a 7-0 lead just 2:34 into the contest.

But things got exceedingly wild after that. SMU scored on its next possession with sophomore quarterback Mike Ford completing 6 of 7 attempts during the drive for 53 yards, the final 17 of them to wide receiver Emanuel Tolbert down near the goal line to set up a 1-yard plunge by running back Derrek Shelton for a game-tying touchdown.

The ensuing kickoff was a comedy of errors with Mustangs kicker Eddie Garcia kicking three straight balls out of bounds. By the time Garcia – who went on to kick for the Green Bay Packers for two years in the 1980s – finally got one in the field of play, Hicks returned it 25 yards and into SMU territory.

But the Buckeyes squandered the good field position when Schlichter was intercepted by Mustangs senior cornerback David Hill, who returned the pick to midfield. From there, Ford went back to work, completing three straight passes, the last for an 11-yard touchdown that went deflected off Tolbert and into the hands of tight end Elton Garrett.

Garcia missed the extra point, but SMU still had a 13-7 lead at the 5:00 mark of the first quarter.

The Buckeyes later responded with a 10-play, 88-yard drive that culminated in fullback Paul Campbell's 1-yard touchdown plunge on the first play of the second quarter, and after OSU kicker Vlade Janakievski tacked on the PAT, Ohio State had regained the lead at 14-13.

But right back came the Mustangs, riding the arm of Ford. The SMU quarterback quickly moved his team into the red zone, but the Buckeyes had appeared to hold when OSU cornerback Todd Bell knocked down a third-down pass intended for Tolbert. However, Bell was called for interference on the play, giving the Mustangs a first-and-goal at the 1-yard line.

Two plays later, Ford sneaked in the end zone and then faked a handoff before lobbing a strike Shelton, who had sneaked out in the left flat, for a successful two-point conversion and a 21-14 lead with 10:55 to play before halftime.

Garcia missed a 45-yard field-goal attempt on the final play of the first half, leaving SMU with a 21-14 advantage heading into the locker room. Ford was already 19 of 29 for 153 yards and a touchdown, while Schlichter had attempted only three passes, completing none with one interception.

Ohio State threatened on its first possession of the third quarter, but after moving to the SMU 16-yard line, Campbell fumbled on a third-and-2 run, his team's third turnover of the game.

Ford tried to pick up where he left off in the first half, immediately completing his first two passes for gains of 9 and 23 yards to move his team close to midfield. But the 23-yard reception was negated by a holding penalty, and three plays later, another completion was nullified when the Mustangs were flagged for offensive pass interference.

That forced SMU to punt, but Ohio State sophomore John Epitropoulos got a hand on the kick and classmate Alvin Washington – father of current OSU linebackers coach Al Washington Jr. – caught the ball in midair in the end zone for a touchdown. Janakievski pushed his PAT attempt wide to the right, leaving the Buckeyes still trailing at 21-20 with 11:34 left in the third period.

Ohio State regained the lead on its next possession when tailback Ricky Johnson took an option pitch from Schlichter around right end for an 11-yard touchdown. Schlichter followed with a roll-out pass to Donley for the two-pointer, and the Buckeyes were back in front at 28-21 with 7:54 remaining in the third quarter.

OSU tacked on another score before the period was over, with Schlichter capping a short drive with his second touchdown run of the day, this one for 5 yards. After Janakievski added the extra point, the Buckeyes enjoyed a 35-21 advantage with 5:03 to go in the third quarter.

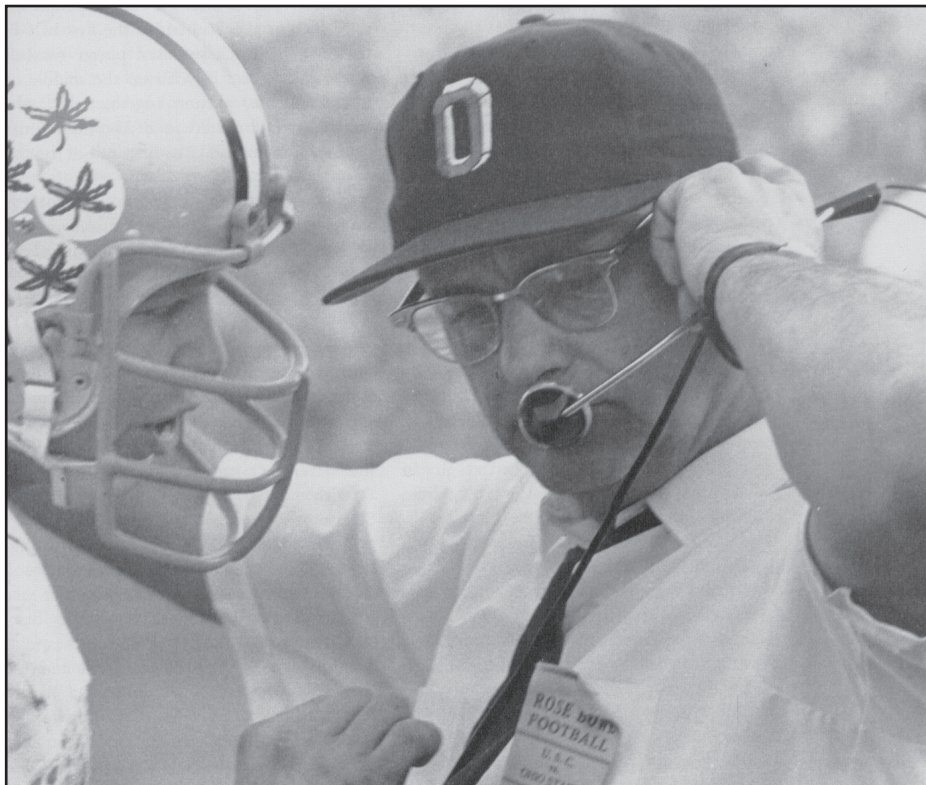
The defense appeared to put the exclamation point on a sure victory when sophomore defensive back Vince Skillings intercepted Ford on SMU's next possession and returned the pick to the OSU 35. The Buckeyes



Ron Meyer



## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL FLASHBACK



FILE PHOTO

**WRONG CALL** – Ohio State head coach Woody Hayes had freshman quarterback Art Schlichter throw the ball often late in the 1978 game vs. SMU. Schlichter had three passes intercepted in the final minutes of the game.

couldn't do anything with the good fortune, however, and when they turned the ball over on downs at the SMU 34-yard-line, Ford went back to work.

The sophomore QB completed four more passes and then sneaked into the end zone from the 1 on a third-down play. Garcia's nightmarish afternoon continued when his PAT attempt was blocked by OSU senior linebacker Paul Ross, leaving the Buckeyes with a 35-27 lead at the 10:03 mark of the fourth quarter.

But when the Mustangs got the ball back, Ford marched them 91 yards in 14 plays, capping the drive with another sneak from the 1-yard line to give him his third touchdown run of the game. On the two-point conversion try, Ford rolled right and dived into the end zone to tie the game at 35 with 3:41 to go.

For some reason, Hayes believed that was the right time to ask Schlichter to begin throwing the ball. But the freshman, who had completed only 3 of 12 attempts for 50 yards to that point, was not up to the task. Each of Ohio State's final three possessions ended with a Schlichter interception, giving him four for the game. Combined with two fumbles, the Buckeyes turned the ball over a total of six times in the contest.

Meanwhile, Ford tried to rally his team one final time, but when he was stopped by Skillings at the OSU 29 with mere seconds showing on the clock, Meyer was forced to send Garcia into the game to try a 47-yard field goal. The kick was probably the best of the game for the SMU kicker in that Garcia hit it true and it had the distance. But the ball sailed just outside the left upright, and the teams had to settle for a 35-35 tie.

"If you like a big score and didn't care who won, then I guess you could have enjoyed this game," Hayes told reporters afterward, "but I feel we blew it. I thought when we were ahead by two touchdowns and driving, that would do it. At the end, we were lucky to get out with a tie."

The outcome was of historical significance on several fronts.

It was the first game in Ohio State program history in which the Buckeyes had scored 35 or more points and didn't win.

Since then, OSU has scored at least 35 points on more than 200 other occasions, but only once during those games did the Buckeyes not emerge victorious – the aforementioned 40-35 loss to Clemson in the 2014 Orange Bowl.

Through the 2020 season, Ohio State had an all-time record of 348-1-1 when scoring at least 35 points.

OSU senior linebacker Tom Cousineau was one of six Buckeyes to record at least 10 tackles in the game. Cousineau was credited with 28 stops, just one shy of the program-record 29 tackles he had during the '78 season opener against Penn State. Cousineau also had 16 solo stops against the Mustangs, a single-game mark unequaled until 2013 when Ryan Shazier matched it with 16 solos during a 42-14 win against Indiana.

Ford finished the game with a passing line that showed 36 completions in 57 attempts for 341 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions. Garrett and Tolbert combined for 15 catches, 180 yards and a touchdown, and three other Mustangs had at least five catches in the game.

Ford was one of only three opposing quarterbacks who topped the 300-yard mark in passing during Hayes' 28 seasons with the Buckeyes, a tenure that encompassed 276 games. Hixson did for SMU during the 1968 season, and Phil Hagen of Minnesota totaled 304 yards during his team's 34-7 loss to Ohio State in 1969.

Meanwhile, Schlichter finished the 1978 tie with SMU just 3 of 16 in the passing department for 50 yards with four interceptions. The freshman quarterback did most of his damage on the ground, rushing for 77 yards and a pair of scores.

But the promise of a futuristic passing attack at Ohio State continued to fade into the shadows. After four games of the 1978 season, Schlichter had completed just 21 of 58 attempts (36.2 percent) for 386 yards with one touchdown and 13 interceptions.

It was a passing attack that sadly was never fully developed as the season continued, and that played out in disaster when Clemson middle guard Charlie Bauman intercepted Schlichter's pass near the end of the 1978 Gator Bowl.

And you know the rest of that story.

# SEE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN MISSING ON BUCKEYESPORTS.COM

Free To Print Subscribers

**BUCKEYE**  
SPORTS  
BULLETIN

HOME FOOTBALL BASKETBALL SPORTS FORUM BSB ONLINE EAT & STAY LOGIN

April 5, 2021 (11:40 am) in Football

**Practice Report: April 5, 2021**

Media was permitted to watch about 25 minutes of Ohio State's practice on Monday, featuring a few individual drills, stretching lines, a passing skeleton drill and then a brief look...

[READ MORE](#)

April 4, 2021 (6:00 pm) in Sports, Volleyball

**Women's Volleyball Claims No. 9 Seed For NCAA Tournament**

After a phenomenal 15-3 regular season campaign under first-year head coach Jen Flynn-Oldenburg, Ohio State was announced as the No. 9 national seed for the NCAA Women's Volleyball Tournament during...

[READ MORE](#)

April 4, 2021 (3:00 pm) in Football

**2021 Norwalk, Ohio, Kicker/Punter Garrison Smith To Walk On At Ohio State**

Norwalk, Ohio, kicker/punter Garrison Smith announced earlier this week that he has accepted a preferred walk-on opportunity at Ohio State.

[READ MORE](#)

By Wyatt Crosher in Football

**OHIO STATE HEAD COACH  
RYAN DAY TALKS DEFENSIVE  
ADJUSTMENTS IN MONDAY  
ZOOM**

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day spoke to the media over a Zoom call Monday to discuss the updates from...

[READ MORE](#)

**Buckeye Sports Bulletin has expanded its online presence to a full-service website to compliment the 24 annual print editions. Access to BuckeyeSports.com is free to all print subscribers and includes numerous great features like:**

- Daily features, analysis and breaking news stories
- A fan forum where readers can interact with the BSB staff and other subscribers while catching up on the latest Buckeye news
- Rosters, scholarship charts, schedules and commit lists for the football team to keep up to date with the Buckeyes
- Electronic versions of the BSB print editions
- The BSB Quickly archive

**To sign up for this free service  
send an email to  
subscriptions@buckeyesports.com  
and we will send you easy-to-follow  
instructions on how to enjoy reading  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin online**



# Young Forever Grateful For Fifth OSU Season

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

All athletes want to finish a season on their terms by winning a championship. They also want to be in control of deciding when to end their careers.

Neither of those happened for Kyle Young in 2021, so the Ohio State forward announced April 16 that he would return for a fifth season with the Buckeyes in the hope of completing some unfinished business.

Young, who will turn 24 on Jan. 5, took advantage of the one-time COVID-related rule that allows athletes a free season of eligibility. Otherwise, Young would have pursued pro basketball after a frustrating and disappointing conclusion to his senior year.

A concussion sustained against Purdue in the Big Ten quarterfinals on March 12 – his second in less than two months – prematurely put an end to his playing days.

All he could do was watch as the Buckeyes defeated the Boilermakers and Michigan only to lose in overtime to Illinois in the title game. It got worse when the No. 2-seeded Buckeyes were stunned 75-72 in overtime by No. 15 Oral Roberts in the South Regional.

The losses and Young's inability to help his teammates had a profound impact on him.

"The way everything ended, not being able to play just wasn't sitting right with me," Young said during a media session on April 23. "My thought process was kind of like, 'Do you want this to be my last year playing in an Ohio State uniform?'"

"Luckily, we were able to have an opportunity to use another year, but I was just weighing out all my options, having some conversations with some agents, discussing some options whether that be overseas or whatever it was going to be. In my heart, I love this place and I want to do another year. This team is amazing. The coaching staff's amazing."

Young (6-8, 225) averaged 8.6 points, 5.5 rebounds and 1.3 assists last season in 27 games while shooting 54.3 percent from the floor and 84.6 percent from the line. For his career, he averages 6.0 points, 4.3 rebounds and 0.8 assists.

"I am super excited about Kyle returning," Ohio State coach Chris Holtmann said April 28. "We all know how important he is to us and how much we felt his absence in those last two games, the Big Ten Championship Game and the NCAA Tournament."

As much as Young loves being a Buckeye, his return was not a given. He has a degree in sports industry, and the thought of possibly getting paid to play a sport he loves was enticing, but ultimately there was too much uncertainty as far as a pro career.

"It was tough," he said. "I was thinking about it for a while. Just the whole process of it was kind of overwhelming. But at the end of the day, I'm happy with my decision because of how much I love this place, how much I love my teammates, my coaches and I'm close to my family as well. Those are all things that definitely went into it but I'm happy with the decision."

It's been quite a ride for Young. He was headed to Butler out of Massillon (Ohio) Jackson, but when Holtmann left there to replace Thad Matta at Ohio State in June 2017, Young followed him to Columbus.

Young quickly earned a reputation as a grinder going against taller and heavier players without backing down. Along the way, he expanded his game, and this season he was 13 for 30 (43.3 percent) on three-pointers after making just four during his first three seasons.

He also, unfortunately, has become known for his injuries and illness. He's been plagued by leg problems throughout his career and also had appendicitis during his junior season.

Then there's the concussions. He slowly started feeling normal after the season ended but understands the risks involved with cumulative blows to the head.

"It's hard not to think about that because it could be dangerous," Young said. "I tried to not let that be too much of a factor in my decision. Injuries can happen anytime, anywhere."

"I'm feeling 100 percent now, back to my normal self. It was just a matter of stepping back and taking time for myself."

As an elder statesman, it's his role to counsel the younger players on and off the

court. One of his responsibilities is being a sounding board for senior guard Duane Washington and junior forward E.J. Liddell, each of whom has put his name in the NBA draft process.

Liddell and Washington are considering leaving school early but have until July 19 to withdraw their names and return for the 2021-22 season.

"I've talked to them a little bit," Young said. "Even when I was making my decision, I was trying to keep them as updated as possible. But my words to them were pretty much just that I want them to do what's best for them."

"I'm not trying to get into persuading them one way or the other too much because it's their decision and I want them to do what's best for their families and their career. Obviously, if they come back, it will be amazing, but if they decide to not come back then I wish them the best as well. I'm always going to have a lifetime bond with those guys."

Young is excited that Holtmann added

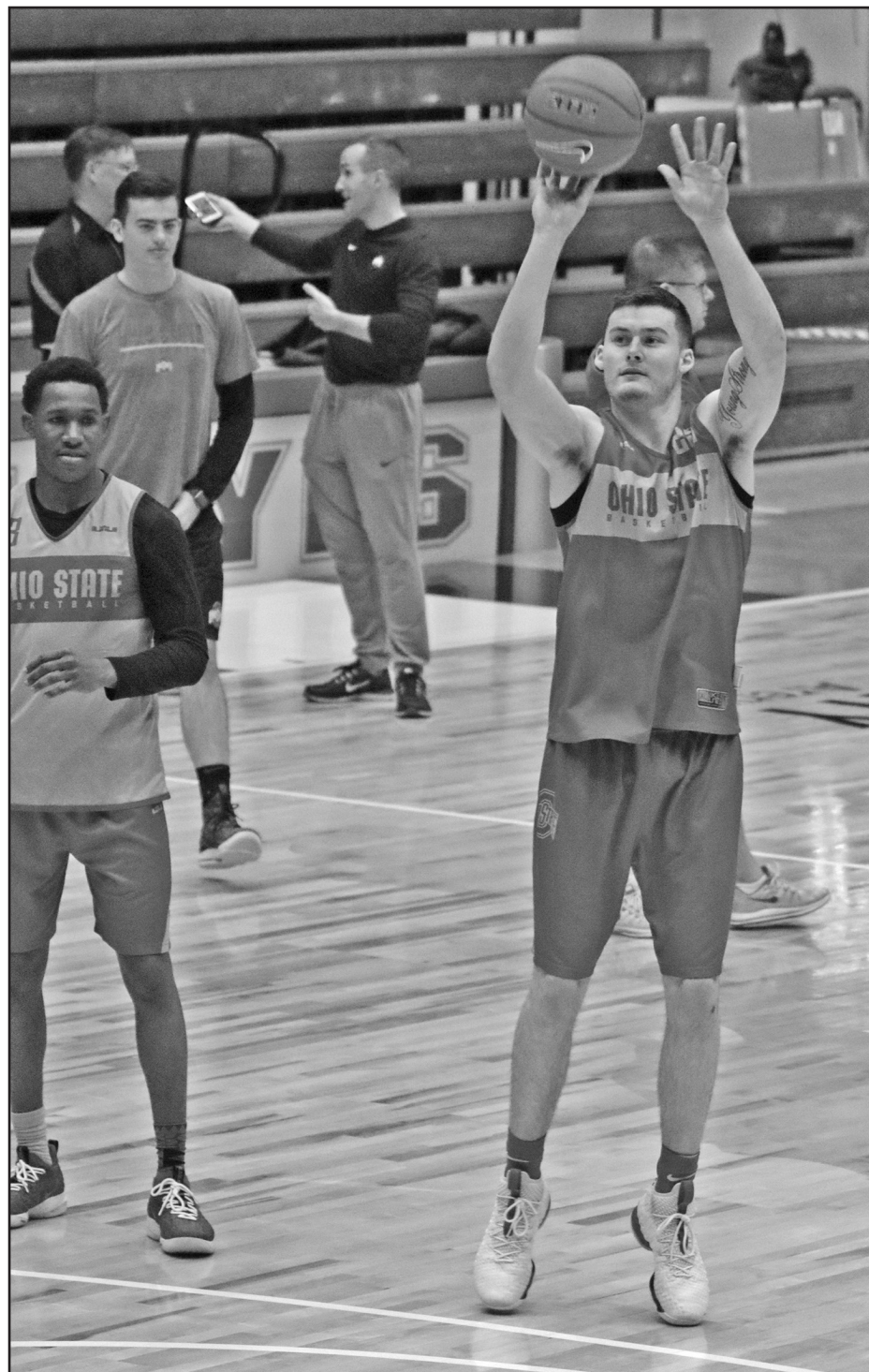
depth to the frontcourt with former Butler and Indiana center Joey Brunk (6-11, 255) via the transfer portal.

"It will be nice to have another big body in there that will be able to battle with these other big dudes," Young said.

He knows that he's been given the rare opportunity of a fifth season, and Young is ready to make the most of it and maybe, just maybe, write a better ending for what is expected to be another touted season for the Buckeyes.

"I just want to experience a full year, more normal than a COVID year," he said. "I want to be able to have a full year that feels more normal and compete in the Big Ten and NCAA Tournament at the level I'd like to. The chemistry we have with this team is special. It's about having another year to be able to play in front of Buckeye Nation and all these amazing fans and my family."

"Where our season ended, that's not how we would have liked it to end, so I think everyone has a determination to come back and just work that much harder."



FILE PHOTO

**BACK FOR MORE** – Ohio State will have the services of Kyle Young (right) after he announced in April that he would return for a fifth season.

**Press**  
Pub + on 5th  
GOOD FOOD + FINE DRINKS

**Press** good food  
fine drinks **Grill**

*Both locations open for lunch & dinner daily!*

**1505 W. 5th Ave**  
Near Grandview Ave  
614-817-1198

**Monday - Saturday:**  
11 AM - 10:30 PM

**Sunday:**

NOON - 10:30 PM

KITCHEN UNTIL 10 PM NIGHTLY

**741 N. High St**  
In the Short North  
614-298-1014

**Monday - Saturday:**  
11:30 AM - 12 AM

**Sunday:**

NOON - 12 AM

KITCHEN UNTIL 11:30 PM NIGHTLY

**presscolumbus.com**



# Stunning End Is Starting Point For Next Season

Chris Holtmann is ready to move past the abrupt finish of the 2020-21 season, one in which dreams of a national championship were shattered in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, but not without first putting it in perspective.

## COURT REPORT

Craig Merz

"It's been a few weeks since the season ended, and we've had a chance to reflect on the season in general," the Ohio State coach said. "There were a lot of very good moments and then, obviously, some ones that were really gutting."

"This really was an enjoyable team to coach and a lot of fun. We had seven wins over top-25 teams and three wins over top-10 teams. We had a couple All-Big Ten selections. We had seven straight weeks in the top 10 and another 20-win season."

Holtmann spoke to the media April 28, nearly six weeks after the Big Ten tournament runner-up and No. 2 seed in the South Regional was upset by No. 15 Oral Roberts 75-72 in overtime on March 19.

The irony was that a team picked for the middle of the Big Ten finished with a 21-10 overall record and was fifth in the conference (12-8) but is still seen as a failure because of its quick exit from the tournament.

"I think we own it and lean into it," Holtmann said. "As a coach, that's what I'm going to do. At the same time, you're not a No. 2 seed by accident. There are moments that allowed you to be a No. 2 seed. With that comes great anticipation and exception."

"I think as gutting as that final game was, the challenge for me has been making sure our guys understand they did put themselves in position with really quality play throughout the season. And yet, at the same time we recognize there's some things we have to continue to improve and grow on. As I'm prone to do, the majority of my thoughts will be on that final game and that final moment. I don't want it to diminish some of the real quality things that have been done last year, some that haven't been done in the last six, seven years here."

"I think I'm going to have to find that balance. We can't ignore it. We have to lean into the fact while we had a really good Big Ten tournament and good regular season, this was our first year we just did not perform well in the NCAA Tournament."

The Buckeyes advanced to the second round in each of his first two seasons, and the 2020 NCAA Tournament was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Holtmann said this season can be motivation for next season when the Buckeyes are projected to be a top-10 team again.

"I think the experience of playing in the (NCAA) tournament and also being a high seed in the tournament, there is value in that," he said. "You have that experience and feeling the pressure of being a high seed."

"It's so early right now. There is so much transition with rosters. Those way-too-early lists will look so different in a couple of months. I feel really good about the

health of our program and where we're at. I know we were picked middle-of-the-pack last year. But the raised expectation was a credit to our players."

While guard C.J. Walker exhausted his eligibility, forward Kyle Young is taking advantage of a one-time NCAA rule that gives players an extra year because of the pandemic and will return for a fifth season.

Ohio State lost guard Musa Jallow and reserve center Ibrahima Diallo to the transfer portal but is bringing in via transfer guard Jamari Wheeler and post Joey Brunk in addition to two freshmen – guard Malaki Branham and forward Kalen Etzler.

Holtmann said during his session with the media on April 28 that the Buckeyes' roster was complete.

"Right now, we're at the scholarship limit," Holtmann said. "If there's some type of roster movement in the next month or two, obviously that could change things."

It did when Diallo (6-10, 220) entered the portal on May 3 after two seasons with the Buckeyes. Always considered a project, the Senegal-born center played 41:12 in eight games as a freshman and was hampered by a knee injury in 2020-21 when he appeared in just five games totaling 10:25 of playing time. For his career, he scored 11 points (0.85 avg.) and had 19 rebounds (1.46).

### 'Two' Soon To Know

Diallo's departure opens a scholarship spot and there could be more because impending senior Duane Washington and junior E.J. Liddell have entered the NBA draft process to entertain thoughts of professional careers.

They have until July 19 to withdraw their names from the draft in order to return to the program. That leaves Holtmann in limbo as far as the roster and trying to replace one or both at this late stage.



Duane Washington

Under normal circumstances, the players' intentions would face an early June deadline, but the start of the NBA season was moved to later in 2020.

"The challenge right now is the timing," Holtmann said. "Being a bit delayed because of COVID and the draft moving back, it would have all naturally happened a little bit sooner. I think COVID brings some challenges. The delay of it and how it affects our team, that's real. Right now, we're at a standstill."

"You have two guys who have tough decisions in front of them. I think once we know that, we'll have a better feel for kind of where we're at."

Holtmann and all other coaches who have players considering leaving school early must tread lightly. They can't be overly aggressive in trying to persuade their players to stay but must also encourage them to pursue their dreams.

"I'm trying to give them the absolute truth from what I hear from NBA personnel," Holtmann said. "That's really what I am trying to do and separate any kind of personal feeling one way or the other. I really am. I'm really trying as much as possible to look through what is best for both of those young men right now."

"They are both great kids with great families. I am confident that while the decision is not imminent for either guy, I think they'll make a decision they feel is best for them and I'm going to support them along the way."

## OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commitments

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	SG	6-3	160	★★★	Cincinnati Princeton
Bruce Thornton	PG	6-2	195	★★★★	Alpharetta (Ga.) Milton

A good problem may be on the horizon if Washington returns. Holtmann will have to find a way to utilize him and Branham, the 2021 Ohio Mr. Basketball and the heir apparent at shooting guard. Also, Liddell's forward spot is getting crowded with Young's return, the development of sophomore Zed Key and Brunk's arrival.

"Well, if both guys stay, that would be a challenge," Holtmann said.

### Backing The Buckeyes

Holtmann early in his press conference made sure to thank the people who contacted him through various means to offer support to Liddell, who was the victim of social media racial abuse following the Oral Roberts game.

"I want to say a quick thank you to so many Buckeyes who reached out with a letter, an email after the season, in particular in support of E.J. and some of our players, as well as just kind of reflecting on the season," Holtmann said. "I think it says a lot when your fans have a chance to engage and take the time to do that, whether it's an email or a letter – and I have a stack of them. I don't want this media session to go by without them hearing me say thank you for that. And I know E.J. and his teammates appreciate that, as well."

### Driving The Lane

Key and guard Meechie Johnson earned invitations to try out for the USA Basketball U19 National Team that is scheduled to compete in the 2021 FIBA World Cup. The games will be played July 3-11 in Riga, Latvia. The team will start practice on

June 20 at TCU, where U-19 coach Jamie Dixon is also the head coach.

"'Can we room together there?' That's the first thing Meechie asked me," Holtmann said. "They're really excited about it, and I'm excited about going out there and taking a couple days to watch them during their tryouts."

Holtmann said he was offered an assistant coaching role for the U-19 team, but he had scheduling conflicts.

Assistant coach Terry Johnson, who was on Holtmann's staff at Butler as well, left the Buckeyes to become an assistant at Purdue, where he will be involved in the offense as opposed to his defensive duties at Ohio State.

"That's my guy," Young said April 23. "I wish him nothing but the best. If this is the move that's going to be best for him and his family, I'm 100 percent behind it. In his time here he really helped me a lot with my development."

Holtmann said current assistant Jake Diebler will handle the defensive workload.

"Jake will be our defensive coordinator," he said. "Some of the defensive struggles we had last year, that was on me. That's not on anybody else. I want to make sure that's clear. That will be Jake's responsibility here moving forward."

Former Buckeye guard Mike Conley (2006-07) won an Academy Award on April 25 for being the executive producer of the short film "Two Distant Strangers," which was named the Best Live-Action Short Film.

The film, streaming on Netflix, depicts a man attempting to get home to his dogs only to get trapped in a time loop that forces him to relive a deadly encounter with a police officer.



**www.Sugarbushgourmetgiftbaskets.com**

**Nationwide and local delivery**

**614-262-1240**

Local Family Business  
Since 1981






# Juhasz's Shooting Makes Her Valuable For Huskies

When Dorka Juhasz announced she would be departing from Ohio State, the hole she left in the team was clear.

Juhasz had been the team's top rebounder for all three of her seasons with the Buckeyes and was also the top scorer in her first two years before getting passed by guard Jacy Sheldon. The forward out of Pecs, Hungary, became a leader for Ohio State by her third season, starting every game she played in and helping rebuild a program back into one of the top teams in the Big Ten for much of the season.

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

But now, she heads to a team that has no clear holes to fill. Juhasz's destination of choice was UConn, which she told BSB was her choice "to take the extra step in my future just to get ready for my professional career and just looking forward to achieve my goals."

"It's just something that I felt like I have to do in order to bring the best version out of myself on the basketball court," Juhasz said. "I'm just really grateful for the opportunity."

She joins a Huskies team that has been the definition of success for the vast majority of Geno Auriemma's tenure as head coach. Taking over a team that went 9-18 in 1984-85, Auriemma led UConn to the NCAA tournament by his fourth season. By his sixth year with the program, the Huskies made the Final Four. By year 10, he led to UConn to a national title.

The NCAA tournament berth, Final Four appearance and national championship were all program firsts when Auriemma made them happen in 1989, 1991 and 1995, respectively. From there, Auriemma led UConn to another title in 2000, then three straight from 2002-04, two in a row in 2009-10 and four more consecutively in 2013-16.

In total, Auriemma boasts a 1,119-144 record (.886 winning percentage), 11 national titles – but none since ending the four-peat in the 2015-16 season – and 21 Final Four appearances. Since then, UConn has been close but keeps coming up just short, with four straight exits in the Final Four.

Most recently, the Huskies came into the NCAA tournament as the No. 1 overall seed with a 24-1 record and a Big East tournament crown following a 73-39 win over Marquette, the No. 2 seed in the conference tournament. They cruised to the Elite Eight with wins over High Point, Syracuse and Iowa before narrowly escaping with a 69-67 win over Baylor. But UConn fell to No. 3 seed Arizona 69-59, missing out on the championship game for the fourth straight tournament.

UConn returns all but two players from that Final Four run and returns six freshmen from the season prior, including National Player of the Year Paige Bueckers, who tallied 20.0 points, 4.9 rebounds, 5.8 assists and 2.3 steals per game while shooting 52.4 percent from the field and 46.4 percent from three.

As far as Juhasz's playing time is concerned, both of the key contributors at forward return – junior Olivia Nelson-Ododa and freshman Aaliyah Edwards – which is why it was unexpected to Alexa Philippou, who covers the Huskies for the Hartford Courant, that UConn looked for a forward in the portal.

"I was a little surprised, more so that they thought it was a good idea to add a frontcourt piece," Philippou told BSB. "They have a rising senior and rising sophomore, one is a starter, their starting center (Nelson-Ododa), and then the other was the Big East Sixth Woman of the Year (Edwards), and between the two of them I thought those were two pretty good pieces that they'd work with."

However, where Juhasz can separate herself from both Edwards and Nelson-Ododa is with her three-point shooting. Nelson-Ododa shot 26.7 percent from deep on 15 attempts, while Edwards did not take a single shot from behind the arc. Contrast that with Juhasz, who hit nearly 40 percent (39.6) of her 101 attempts from deep in her sophomore season.

That three-point rate did drop dramatically in 2020-21, with Juhasz hitting on just 20.3 percent of her 59 attempts from deep. Still, if she can even get to a rate somewhere in the middle of those two extremes, Philippou believes that it will be incredibly valuable for UConn on the offensive side of the ball.

"When I actually looked at what Dorka could bring, I actually think it's something that none of their current post players really can bring at this point given her three-point shooting," Philippou said. "If she shoots even somewhere in the 30s, that can only help them. I would expect that would really open things up for their offense if they can get a big who can surely stretch the floor, because they haven't had that in a couple of years."

Another factor that could play a role is how both Edwards and Nelson-Ododa fared in the NCAA tournament. They both played well through the opening two rounds, with Nelson-Ododa averaging 19.5 points and 7.5 rebounds per game and Edwards not far behind with 18.0 points and 8.5 boards per contest.

But once the matchups started to ramp up in difficulty, Edwards continued relatively solid play, while Nelson-Ododa struggled. In those final three contests, Edwards averaged 10.0 points, but Nelson-Ododa averaged just 2.7 points, shooting a poor 3 of 16 (18.8 percent), including an 0-for-7 shooting performance against the Wildcats in the Final Four.

While she is unsure if those lackluster performances led to the decision to bring in Juhasz, Philippou believes that this move will, at the least, help boost the potential offensive performances of the forward group.

"Olivia Nelson-Ododa didn't have the most confidence-instilling end to the season, particularly against really good teams down the stretch. I don't know if this is a direct result of that. I'm not trying to imply that, but I would say if the issue was that this player in particular – Olivia – couldn't really be much of an offensive factor against better teams, Dorka might be able to alleviate that," Philippou said. "She's obviously shown she can score against Big Ten competition, and that can only help. Now it just depends on if Olivia grows in the offseason, and maybe she grows in the offseason and it's not as much of a 'Oh well, Dorka can do what Olivia isn't able to.' It just depends on how they each are able to contribute. But I think whatever the situation with Olivia is, from what I've heard and what I've seen, it seems like Dorka will be able to contribute to the team in some way."

Juhasz told BSB she was not promised any role when she committed to UConn, and that she preferred to not have those specific promises about how much she would play and if she would start, stating "I think that's what I need."

Philippou is not sure what Juhasz's role will

## OSU Women's Basketball Commits

Players in the class of 2022 who have verbally committed to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the ESPN rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School
Kaia Henderson	PG	5-6	N/A	New Hartford, N.Y.
Cotie McMahon	SG	5-11	★★★★	Centerville, Ohio
Mya Perry	SG	5-10	N/A	Reynoldsburg, Ohio

be because of how much talent is returning, along with who else is coming in. That includes a 2021 class of four recruits, three of whom are five-stars and one of whom is guard Azzi Fudd, the No. 1 overall recruit of the class. But Philippou also doesn't think that the question of if Juhasz will start is all that important, considering she will almost certainly have a large role on the team regardless.

"They bring back all their starters," Philippou said. "They're bringing in another potentially generational, program-changing for most other places but maybe not for UConn sort of player (Fudd). And then Aaliyah Edwards was one of the best players for UConn by the end of the season. Personally, I don't think it really matters (whether Juhasz starts) because if she still gets 20-plus minutes a game, it would be regardless of if it's off the bench."

"It sounds like (Juhasz's) skill set would allow her to be either a complimentary player or maybe get even more involved in what they're doing, so it's really hard to tell, especially with all the new pieces they're adding, how that would all work out."

While the expectations from UConn fans are always through the roof after 13 consecutive Final Four appearances, there are still ways for the expectations to increase. After four straight tournaments of missing out on the top prize, a young roster that is returning almost all of its production and the addition of a two-time first-team All-Big Ten forward in Juhasz, those expectations are truly at championship or bust.

And even if Philippou, or Auriemma, isn't quite sure how the minutes will be spread around all this talent, that isn't stopping the Husky fan base from trying to solve the equation.

"The expectation among a lot of fans is like, 'Oh yeah, they're definitely going to win next year.' Now that's not necessarily a good thing. That's good and bad. We haven't even gotten the new recruits on campus yet. The current kids, I don't even know if they've all left campus yet. So it's going to be six months of high expectations. But I do think that Dorka, again, is only going to increase the expectation," Philippou said. "The fan base, they're already trying to figure out how the minutes are going to be distributed. I think you could ask Geno, he has no idea either."

Regardless of what the minutes look like for Juhasz, it is likely that she will be right in the thick of the conversation for the main team goal she was hoping to accomplish when she chose to transfer to the Huskies: a national title.

## Patty Chooses A&M For Transfer Spot

Former Ohio State forward Aaliyah Patty announced on Instagram on April 22 that she will be transferring to Texas A&M.

"Aggie nation y'all ready?" Patty asked in her post.

Patty started in all 18 games she played in for the Buckeyes last season, finishing the year with 11.5 points and 5.8 rebounds per game. She also had a team-high 21 blocks while shooting 45.3 percent from the field and 37.8 percent from three.

She was the second starting forward to leave the team, making her decision to enter the portal on April 8, six days after Juhasz made her decision.

"I would like to thank Coach (Kevin) McGuff and the Ohio State coaching staff for recruiting me and giving me the opportunity to play as a Buckeye," Patty wrote in her Instagram post announcing her transfer. "After much thought and consideration, I have decided to enter the transfer portal. I am very excited for my next journey and to see what the future holds for me."

The Aggies finished last season with a 25-3 record and made their way to the Sweet 16, but in unconvincing fashion. Texas A&M narrowly escaped Troy in the Round of 64, avoiding the first 2-15 upset in women's tournament history. After that, the Aggies defeated Iowa State 84-82 before ultimately falling to eventual NCAA tournament runner-up Arizona 74-59.

Ohio State has just two forwards on its roster: Gabby Hutcherson and Rebeka Mikulasikova, who just finished their sophomore and junior seasons, respectively. Tanaya Beacham, who was a fifth-year senior last year, has not announced if she will be using her free year of eligibility or not for the 2021-22 season.

## Buckeyes Add Oregon Guard Mikesell In Portal

After two big losses through the transfer portal, Ohio State earned one back, with Oregon guard Taylor Mikesell announcing she will be transferring to the Buckeyes.

Mikesell, who is a Massillon (Ohio) Jackson alum, averaged 9.3 points, 2.4 rebounds and 1.8 assists per game in her one season with the Ducks. She also led Oregon with 39 three-point makes on 117 attempts (33.3 percent).

Prior to her time with the Ducks, Mikesell earned plenty of experience playing in the Big Ten. She played two seasons at Maryland, where she averaged 13.4 points per game as a freshman and 11.2 per game as a sophomore, shooting over 40 percent from three in both seasons.

With this being Mikesell's second transfer, she will not benefit from the NCAA's one-time transfer rule and may be forced to sit out the upcoming season pending a waiver.

The transfer adds another guard to what was already a guard-heavy Ohio State team. But Mikesell also adds experience, playing in 90 total games, 86 of which have been starts.

The Buckeyes now have 12 players on their 2020-21 roster with the departures of Juhasz and Patty, with the potential to make it 13 pending Beacham's decision.



Taylor Mikesell



# Buckeyes Searching For Snowball Effect

Ohio State ended its five-game skid with an 11-6 victory over Penn State on April 23, a much-needed return to the win column after dropping two of three games against Michigan and succumbing to a sweep against Maryland in the preceding series. Those struggles in the sweep launched the Buckeyes, who had been within striking distance of the top of the conference, into a fifth-place tie with the middling Terrapins and a less-than-ideal 13-12 record just past the halfway point of the season.

## FROM THE STRETCH

Patrick Mayhorn

The series against Penn State – one of the Big Ten's worst teams – didn't mark a complete return to form for Ohio State, though it did get Ohio State its first series win since its shocking sweep of Indiana prior to the Michigan series, all the way back on April 2-4. A 7-0 win over the Nittany Lions a day later – sparked by a phenomenal day on the mound for Seth Lonsway – locked up the series win for Ohio State and helped to dull the sting of a 10-6 loss a day later to close out the matchup.

Sitting at 15-13 exiting that battle, Ohio State needed to keep up the momentum as it rolled into another winnable series from April 30-May 2 against Purdue, which entered the matchup at 10-18.

In their second straight home series, the Buckeyes again took two of three but fell in the final game of the series in explosive fashion, 16-15.

With 13 games left in the regular season, Ohio State has plenty of ground to make up in the conference as it sits at No. 7 behind Indiana, Michigan Nebraska, Iowa, Maryland and Rutgers at the time of print, but it isn't going to be without opportunities. Minnesota, Michigan State, Nebraska, Indiana and Northwestern all remain on the docket in the final stretch, leaving the Buckeyes space to do some damage late.

However, as it stands entering May, Ohio State is firmly on the outside looking in for postseason play. Unranked in any major national poll and without a Big Ten tournament to look ahead to, Ohio State will need a strong showing in the final weeks of the season to earn a shot at the postseason. The series sweep of the Hoosiers goes a long way on any résumé, but consistent success – and perhaps more wins against IU and a sweep of Nebraska in a two-game series – is a must for Greg Beals' squad at this point in the year.

### Dezenzo Developing Confidence, Consistency

Few players on the Buckeye offense have found consistent success more often in recent weeks than junior shortstop Zach Dezenzo. Through May 2, he was second on the team in batting average (.312) and on-base percentage (.390), and he was leading the team in doubles, with 10.

Success at the plate for the Alliance, Ohio, native isn't necessarily a surprise, but to see him return to form this season has been a huge benefit for the Buckeye offense. After a freshman campaign in which he immediately burst into the starting lineup, earning Big Ten all-freshman team honors and a spot as a Collegiate Baseball Freshman All-American, Dezenzo's sophomore season was disappoint-

ing, to say the least.

He took a step back in every major category, led by a fall from a .250 batting average to just .189. His confidence faltered, he was more hesitant at the plate, and the Buckeyes lost a crucial early lineup hitter. That was the bad news. The good news, of course, was that Dezenzo's nightmare season lasted just 14 games, as the season was cut short by the coronavirus pandemic.

"For me, it's always been a mental thing," Dezenzo told BSB on April 27. "If I'm ever struggling at all, I know it's mental, because I have no doubts in my abilities as a player. Last year was more so about me thinking a lot about what could go wrong. Thinking a lot about the failure side of the game, as opposed to taking the failures for what they are, learning and drawing from them. When something went wrong in some of the games, it just piled up on me."

The rapid end of the season certainly wasn't good news in the traditional sense, given the tremendously difficult circumstances of the pandemic, but it did provide an opportunity for Dezenzo to hit the restart button.

"There were only 14 games of the season, so I didn't really have much time to make a mental adjustment, but I think growing off of that and learning from those mental mistakes last year has helped me a lot to progress this year," Dezenzo said. "Being better on the mental side of the game, dealing with my failure – I'm able to have a lot more success this year just because I'm better on the mental side of the game."

He spent the extended offseason focusing on the mental part of his game. That meant building positive habits, recentering himself and getting a better idea for how to calm himself down and reel his mind in – even during rough patches. In his first two seasons with the Buckeyes, a bad game or series could have sent the shortstop spiraling at the plate, unable to refocus and move on to the next at bat.

The 2021 version of Dezenzo certainly



Zach Dezenzo

hasn't mastered the mental side of his game, but the spirals are gone. He's able to find perspective, to remind himself that in a long season, one bad at bat, one bad game, even one bad series is not something to fixate on.

"For me, it's just about recognizing, No. 1, how long the season really is and how much opportunity there is still to be had," Dezenzo said. "I think that whenever I recognize that, it takes my mind off of all the bad three or four at bats that I just had. Recognizing that I still have 100, 150 at bats, however many I have left. Recognizing that has been a huge help for me, just on the mental side of the game."

The Buckeye coaches took notice of the new Dezenzo – referred to almost exclusively as "Z" in the dugout – as soon as he arrived back on campus in the fall.

"Z had a really good offseason," Beals told BSB. "He's matured quite a bit physically and from an approach standpoint with his offense. I think everybody got off to a little bit of a slow start after not having live at bats for such a long time."

"Even though Z's numbers weren't great early, his hard-hit contact rate was pretty darn good. He had some soft groundballs early in the year, but now I think that's coming around. He's getting the hits. He's getting the timely hits. The long offseason work and the physical training is kicking in, and it's now accompanied by a high level of confidence."

To say that Dezenzo is playing with a high level of confidence may be a bit of an understatement. He's played like a man possessed since the beginning of April. He helped to spearhead the offense against Penn State and Purdue and served as a bright spot in the otherwise challenging Michigan and Maryland matchups. With each passing game, he seems to be building on the last, finding more comfort at the plate and delivering in bigger moments for the Buckeyes. For a team looking for a late surge, he's just what the doctor ordered.

"I think as the season has progressed and as I have progressed as a player here at Ohio State, you get older, you get more confident through growth and through learning and through getting the reps and the experiences that you have," Dezenzo explained. "And I've been able to confidently channel that into inner confidence for myself this year. It's been up

and down at times, certainly.

"I think it's like a snowball effect in a sense. Of course, baseball is not always going to be perfect. There are going to be good days and bad days, but I think as you have success ... I didn't have as much success as I wanted to early. But I think that once the light came on, when week four, week five came around and we started playing a little bit more at home, I started to regain that confidence."

### From The Softball Side

Softball players aren't frequently mentioned in this baseball column, but Ohio State softball catcher/utility player Sam Hackenbracht deserves some plaudits this week. She earned Big Ten Player of the Week honors for the second time in four weeks on April 27 after an electrifying performance at the plate in a four-game series against Rutgers in the previous weekend.

The sophomore from Massillon, Ohio, hit .778 for the weekend, knocking three home runs out of the park, while contributing five RBI and scoring nine runs to help lead the Buckeyes to three crucial wins against the Scarlet Knights.



Sam Hackenbracht

Thanks in part to five intentional walks over the final two games of the series, Hackenbracht reached base on 13 of her 15 trips to the plate, good for an astronomical .867 on-base percentage.

It's been a dominant season in general for Hackenbracht. Through May 1, she had a .342 batting average on the season, with a Big Ten-high 10 home runs, 21 RBI and another league-high .803 slugging percentage. She was named the Big Ten Player of the Week on April 6 as well after an excellent series against Penn State.

As a defender, she's tied for the conference lead in runners caught stealing from behind the plate, with nine. The softball team was sitting at 18-17 on the season after a 3-1 series loss to Purdue.

**Let our friendly staff take care of you before, during & after the game.**

**Enjoy your favorite team on our many HD flat-screen TVs**

**NFL Ticket**

**Friends, Fun & Great Food!**

**NFL Ticket**

**Shade on the Canal**  
19 S. High St.  
Canal Winchester  
614-837-9873

**Shade on 30th St.**  
850 S. 30th St.  
Heath  
740-788-9287

**Shade on State St.**  
994 E State St.  
Athens  
740-566-1009



# Wootton Is Natural Fit For Buckeye Midfield

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

There's a real sense of grace in Laurence Wootton's game. The Ohio State men's soccer midfielder, who just put the closing touches on his first season as a Buckeye, plays the game less like a grinder and more like an artist – a rare quality in the rough-and-tumble Big Ten. He almost floats around the pitch, roaming the Buckeye midfield and slicing through the defense once he senses the opening for an offensive attack, moving with the same decisiveness off the ball that he has on it.

He was tasked with connecting the play between Ohio State's defensive back four and its attackers, be it as a facilitator, dishing out passes to forward Devyn Etlings and the most aggressive of his midfield partners, fellow freshman Parker Grinstead, or as the point man himself. He proved comfortable with the ball at his feet throughout his opening season in the scarlet and gray, dishing out two assists and leading the team in shots (13) and shots on goal (six) despite his position.

His lone goal on the season, a strike from just outside of the box on a set piece, couldn't have been more representative of Wootton's ability as a player on the whole. Although his shot found the back of the net – or the side of it, rather, as the ball slipped past the goalkeeper to the bottom corner of the far side of the goal – it was actually originally intended as a pass, and a nearly perfect one at that.

Had the intended target, Matteo Bennati, taken the pass in stride as originally planned, it almost certainly would have yielded the same result, but Wootton's strike was tricky enough that it bounced right past the entire Michigan State defense regardless. That's just how he plays. Even when things don't go to plan, Wootton has the kind of creativity and ability to think on his feet that can make an already talented player essentially lethal in attack. When he operated confidently and with his mind on the attack, Wootton was one of the most dangerous players in the Big Ten in 2021.

The Big Ten took notice. At the end of the 2021 regular season, which had seen the Buckeyes stumble even with Wootton improving over the course of the year, he was selected as the Big Ten Freshman of the Year, an All-Big Ten first-teamer and a unanimous pick to the Big Ten All-Freshman team alongside Grinstead. A starter in all 10 of Ohio State's games, Wootton had no idea that he was in line to claim the honors. In fact, he didn't know that there were conference honors at all.

"It was a real honor and a real surprise," Wootton told BSB. "I don't know the most about how the college system works, so I didn't actually know that they give out these types of awards, that the Big Ten gives these

awards out. We were actually sitting on the bus on the way to Penn State. I had my headphones in and everyone just started clapping. I looked up. I thought someone had cracked a great joke at the front of the bus or something, so I was like, 'What's going on?' They told me, 'Oh, you got this award.' I didn't really know how to take it at first. Then having talked to more people, it was a real nice surprise to end the season. I put a lot of work in, and it's nice to see that rewarded in some way."

It may seem strange to imagine a collegiate athlete who doesn't know about conference awards, but there's some important background info to know about Wootton: His first season with the Buckeyes also happened to be his first year in America. A native of Halstead, England, Wootton came to the United States to suit up for the Buckeyes after spending his childhood across the pond. It was a year of firsts for him, and being selected for that honor was just another first.

Despite the firsts, and the fact that his first year in a brand-new country was spent under the hefty shadow of a devastating pandemic, Wootton proved to be a fast star for the Buckeyes, which caught even his coaches off guard.

His early comfort on the pitch for the Buckeyes makes sense when you move beyond the shock of a first-year player frequently looking like the most dominant player in the game for either team. Wootton grew up in and around soccer. He was scouted as an elementary school (or, in English parlance, primary school) student, joining the developmental academy for his favorite club, Stoke City, when he was just a kid.

"I actually got scouted when I was pretty young," Wootton said. "I went to the club I support, Stoke City. I got scouted when I was about 6 years old and just went from there."

Wootton had an interest in quite a few sports, including rugby, a favorite in his family, but found himself gravitating back to soccer as the one that he both enjoyed the most and felt the most comfortable playing. After all, major English clubs aren't much for developing players who lack talent. The attention that Wootton drew was well-earned.

"My family's a big rugby family, so being scouted to play football (soccer), I was seen as a bit of the outcast in the family," Wootton said. "I played quite a number of sports when I was little and then just constantly kept going back to football, until I got to the age where I had to decide, and football's the one I went for."

Wootton spent 10 years in Stoke City's academy and three in Cardiff City's, but the former didn't decide to bring him on as a full-time player, so he made the move to Columbus. Once he's done at Ohio State, he would love to return to his boyhood team, both so that he can don the colors of the club he supports and so that he can appease his



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

**GREAT START – Ohio State soccer player Laurence Wootton was named the Big Ten Freshman of the Year and an All-Big Ten first-teamer.**

competitive nature and show off what Stoke City was missing.

"That would be the dream," Wootton said of a return to Stoke City down the road. "It's not the biggest club in the world, but I think I was there for nine or 10 years when I was a youngster growing up, and of course I support them now. It would be the dream to go back there, show them what they missed out on."

It's not quite time for that, though. Wootton has three (or four, with the extra COVID year) seasons remaining as a Buckeye under head coach Brian Maisonneuve, and at this point, it's safe to say that's just getting started. There was a noticeable adjustment period early on in Ohio State's season for Wootton to the speed and competitiveness of play, but once he caught on, he looked like a natural.

Now, the hope is that he can work on development. As with everything else, Ohio State's men's soccer team was severely hampered by the pandemic and was without the traditional offseason that it would have used to bring its freshmen along and acclimate them into the program. Players such as Wootton and Grinstead had to learn on the fly and hope to only improve with time as their comfort and chemistry grows.

What wasn't an issue for Wootton, however, was the transition from the English academy system to the American collegiate one. The former is focused much more on development, which he appreciated, but as a tremendously competitive guy, the opportunity to play for trophies and with something on the line appealed immediately.

"It's been really good, actually," Wootton said of the transition. "I was speaking to Coach Maisonneuve about this the other day as well. Coming from Cardiff City and the youth system in Britain, it's all about development rather than playing for trophies and stuff like this, which is good and it helps you progress. Coming to America, it's all about winning and that's the best thing for sport. That's what everyone plays sport for, and certainly having the opportunity to play for a conference title, play in the Big Ten, although we couldn't do what we wanted, is really refreshing. I've enjoyed every second."

Wootton lights up at any opportunity he gets to talk about competition. He may play with grace and finesse, but he's nothing if not a hardened and gritty competitor, especially with hardware on the line. He couldn't help but chuckle when asked about his goals in Columbus, as if he has anything on his mind outside of helping turn the Buckeyes into not just a contender in the Big Ten, but a team that pulls in, in his words "big rings."

"I love it, I love competing. I wouldn't want to do anything else. I really want to win some tournaments," Wootton said. "I wanted to win this year. Unfortunately, the end of the season let us down a bit, but going forward with the team that we've got and the stuff that I know that we can do, I think we can definitely win some championships and hopefully get some big rings on our fingers. I look forward to it."

*For more on Ohio State's Olympic sports teams, athletes and games, visit [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com) every Monday.*

## TOPSOIL



VERY RICH PULVERIZED  
OR UNPULVERIZED  
"SOIL PLUS"

BLENDED SOIL WITH SAND and ORGANIC COMPOST  
RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL  
CRUSHED LIMESTONE, WASHED SAND & GRAVEL

ANY SIZE LOAD • IMMEDIATE DELIVERY ANYWHERE

Buy Where the Professionals Do • Delivered on Time - Every Time, It Doesn't Cost Any More!  
Columbus' Largest

## JONES FUEL COMPANY

350 Frank Road • 443-4611 • 1-800-TOPSOIL  
[www.jonestopsoil.com](http://www.jonestopsoil.com)



# Top Basketball Prospect Decommits From MSU

Ypsilanti (Mich.) Ypsi Prep Academy five-star small forward Emoni Bates, the top-ranked 2022 prospect, decommitted from Michigan State and reopened his recruitment.

"I would like to thank Tom Izzo and the coaching staff at Michigan State but I have decided to reopen my recruitment," Bates posted to Instagram. "I'm not sure what my future holds but I am keeping all of my options open, both college and pro."

Bates had become the first five-star prospect to commit to the Spartans since Jaren Jackson in 2017 and the first No. 1 prospect to choose Michigan State since the ESPN recruiting database started in 2007.

Bates committed to Izzo and Michigan

## BIG TEN NOTES

### Joe Dempsey

State in June 2020. Izzo was seen at several of Bates' games, and even though he was considered a generational talent, Michigan State was the only program consistently recruiting him as an underclassman.

Many coaches and experts have long expected Bates to prefer the G League to the NBA route over pursuing a collegiate career. The No. 1 prospect in the 2020 class, Jalen Green, chose the G League over college, as well as former five-star prospects Jonathan Kuminga, Isaiah Todd and Daishen Nix.

When Bates had committed to Michigan State, he said he was not intending on opting to go pro via the G League.

"It's good for certain players," Bates said at the time. "That's a lot of money. I don't think I'll do it. It's good for some people, but I don't think I'll head that route."

Bates switched high schools last summer, playing for Ypsi Prep, which is a prep school started by his father, Elgin.

### Former Rutgers QB Transfers To Illinois

Former Rutgers quarterback Artur Sitkowski transferred within the Big Ten to Illinois.

The former Scarlet Knight starter has three years of eligibility remaining since he preserved a redshirt by playing just three games as a sophomore, along with the COVID pandemic rule which made 2020 a free year of eligibility.

As a third-year sophomore, Sitkowski started two games and played in four for Rutgers this past season, completing 52 of 82 passes (63.4 percent) for 444 yards, three touchdowns and zero interceptions. He started two games the prior season, completing 44 of 68 passes for 429 yards and one touchdown with two interceptions, but redshirted because he played in only the three contests.

Sitkowski struggled significantly when thrust into the starting role as a true freshman, completing just 49.1 percent of his passes for 1,158 yards and four touchdowns to 18 interceptions. The New Jersey native notably struggled at Maryland as a freshman, completing 2 of 16 passes for 8 yards with four interceptions in a 34-7 loss.

The former Scarlet Knight signal caller will join an Illinois quarterback room where senior Brandon Peters is the projected starter with dual-threat redshirt freshman Isaiah Williams as the backup.

### B1G Boasts 2nd-Most Picks In 2021 NFL Draft

Trailing only the SEC's record-setting 65 selections in the 2021 NFL draft, the Big Ten had 44 players picked during the April 29-May 1 event in Cleveland.

Ohio State led the conference with 10 selections, as noted elsewhere in this issue.

Michigan ranked second in the conference with eight selections, starting with defensive end Kwity Paye, who was chosen by the Colts at No. 21 in the first round. Offensive tackle Jalen Mayfield fell to the Falcons in the third round (No. 68), while wide receiver Nico Collins (No. 89) and cornerback Ambry Thomas (No. 102) were selected by the Texans and 49ers, respectively.

Former Wolverine linebacker Cameron McGrone (No. 177) and fullback Ben Mason (No. 184) were picked by the Patriots and Ravens, respectively, in the fifth round, while running back Chris Evans (No. 202) and long snapper Camaron Cheeseman (No. 225) went to the Bengals and Washington Football Team, respectively, in the sixth round.

Penn State finished third in the league with six student-athletes selected, including two in the first round in linebacker Micah Parsons (Cowboys) and defensive end Odafe Oweh (Ravens).

The Nittany Lions saw tight end Pat Freiermuth go to the Steelers (No. 55), defensive end Shaka Toney go to the Washington Football Team (No. 246), and offensive linemen Michal Menet (No. 247) and Will Fries (No. 248) go to back-to-back to the Cardinals and Colts, respectively. Second-team All-Big Ten safety Lamont Wade signed with the Steelers as an undrafted free agent.

Iowa's four draft selections ranked fourth in the Big Ten. The Cowboys chose Hawkeye defensive end Chauncy Golston (No. 84) in the third round, and the Vikings picked speedy wide receiver Ihmir Smith-Marsette (No. 157) in the fifth round.

One pick after Smith-Marsette went to Minnesota, the Panthers poached defensive tackle Daviyon Nixon (No. 158) in the fifth round. Despite receiving first-round grades in 2020, the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year slid deep in the draft. Hawkeye linebacker Nick Niemann was chosen by the Chargers (No. 185) in the sixth round.

Northwestern and Wisconsin both had three players picked in the draft, and both made history for different reasons.

The Wildcats boasted two first-round selections for the first time in program history, with offensive tackle Rashawn Slater being picked No. 13 by the Chargers and cornerback Greg Newsome being picked No. 26 by the Browns. Earnest Brown became the first Wildcat defensive end to be drafted since 2017 when the Rams took him in the fifth round (No. 174).

For the first time in 28 years, Wisconsin did not have a player drafted in the first four rounds of the NFL draft. Defensive end Isaiahh Loudermilk was the first Badger off the board, landing with the Steelers in the fifth round (No. 156). Loudermilk expressed his excitement to play alongside former Ohio State All-American Cam Heyward, who is a three-time All-Pro defensive end in Pittsburgh.

"Cam Heyward is an incredible D-lineman," Loudermilk said. "He is definitely someone I am super excited to learn from."

Former Wisconsin cornerback Rachad

Wildgoose and offensive tackle Cole Van Lanen were selected with back-to-back picks in the sixth round, heading to the Bills (No. 213) and Packers (No. 214), respectively.

Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska and Purdue each had two selections from their programs.

Former Illini guard Kendrick Green was selected in the third round (No. 87) by the Steelers, and cornerback Nate Hobbs went to the Raiders in the fifth round (No. 167).

Minnesota standout wide receiver Rashod Bateman was chosen by Baltimore in the first round (No. 27), and defensive back Benjamin St-Juste went to Washington in the third round (No. 74).

A pair of Nebraska offensive linemen were picked on the third day of the draft, with tackle Brenden Jaimes going to the Chargers in the fifth round (No. 159) and guard Matt Farniok going to the Cowboys in the seventh round (No. 238).

Purdue standout receiver Rondale Moore was picked by the Cardinals in the second round (No. 49), and linebacker Derrick Barnes went to the Lions in the fourth round (No. 113).

Maryland and Indiana had only one player picked apiece, and neither program heard a name called until the third day. The Broncos selected Hoosier safety Jamar Johnson in the fifth round (No. 164), and the Rams picked up Terrapin tailback Jake Funk in the seventh round (No. 233).

Both Michigan State and Rutgers did not have any selections. This was the first time since 1940 that no Spartans players were drafted, ending the third-longest active streak. Michigan and USC currently have 84 consecutive years with drafted players.

### 8 More Spartans Enter Transfer Portal

Eight more Michigan State players entered the transfer portal since spring practice ended, bringing the program's total to 25 since mid-November.

Offensive lineman Justin Stevens, kicker Jack Olsen, tight end Tommy Guajardo, offensive lineman Damon Kaylor, defensive lineman DeAri Todd, long snapper Bryce Eimer, defensive tackle Chris Mayfield and defensive end Jasiyah Robinson joined the slew of Spartans on their way out of East Lansing.

Michigan State head coach Mel Tucker and his staff have been extremely active in the transfer portal to make up for the significant losses, bringing in more than a dozen players. Entering his second season, Tucker's focus is primarily on high school recruiting with an active eye on the portal.

"In terms of recruiting, there's been a lot of talk about the transfer portal, and there's a lot of activity in the portal for us and everyone in the country," Tucker said. "Our activity in the portal is going to be based upon the circumstances of our team. I just want everyone to understand that we're going to do what we have to do to build our team. I don't anticipate necessarily being in the portal as much in subsequent years. We, ideally, would like to build our team through the high school ranks, and that's really our primary focus. We will use the portal to complement and supplement the talent on our team."

### Former Iowa Standout Luka Garza Sells NFT

Former Iowa standout center Luka Garza, who won the 2021 Wooden Award, joined the NFT trend after his college career ended with a loss in the second round of the 2021 NCAA Tournament.

Since Garza became eligible to profit off his name, image and likeness, he worked with his father and a team of designers to create his own NFT – non-fungible token, a unique proof of ownership of a digital product like video clips or digital artwork.

A portion of the proceeds from Garza's auction will be donated to the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital. The NFT auction sold for \$41,141, according to OpenSea, the digital marketplace that hosted the auction.

"It's really, really cool to look at," Garza said. "I hope to do more in the future and have a whole collection. And obviously, this one is going to probably be the most exclusive."

NFTs have been blowing up in the sports world after the success of NBA Top Shot, which is an online forum for trading virtual basketball cards where fans can buy and sell videos of their favorite players and moments in recent seasons.

Continued On Page 36



FILE PHOTO

**PORTAL HEAVY** – Michigan State, led by head coach Mel Tucker, is up to 25 players transferring out since mid-November.



# Transfers Galore In Big Ten Conference

Continued From Page 35

Garza pointed to the success of NBA Top Shot and his own love for sports trading cards as his inspiration to create an NFT of himself.

Garza's NFT was a 1-of-1 virtual trading card that includes highlights of him playing throughout his standout career at Iowa, and the Naismith winner is able to profit off his time in college because he has no eligibility left.

"I mean, honestly, a lot of my teammates are still not graduated yet (and) are still under the NCAA. They told me that they really liked the idea and think it's really cool," Garza said. "Maybe I can kind of set an example and see how it goes."

Winning the auction for the "Luka Garza Consensus National Player of the Year Card" guaranteed the highest bidder more than the NFT. The winner also received an opportunity to meet Garza, compete in a game of H.O.R.S.E against him, share in Garza's meditation techniques and attend a dinner and movie with him, as well as a lifetime "VIP pass" to all future basketball camps hosted by Garza and an autographed pair of the shoes he was wearing when he broke the all-time Iowa men's basketball career scoring record.

The most important part of Garza's NFT to him is the donation to the Stead Family Children's Hospital. Since 2017, Hawkeyes fans and players in attendance at football games at Kinnick Stadium turn to wave toward the kids looking on from the windows of the hospital. The "Iowa Wave" has

become one of the most famous and heart-warming parts of college football.

## Former NW G Kopp Transfers To Indiana

Former Northwestern guard Miller Kopp transferred within the Big Ten, choosing to join Indiana.

Kopp was a three-year starter for the Wildcats, averaging 9.6 points, 2.9 rebounds, 1.2 assists and 0.6 steals per game during his career in Evanston. The Houston native will have two years of eligibility remaining for the Hoosiers, who hired Mike Woodson as their head coach March 29.

"Miller is a veteran player with three seasons of experience as a starter in the Big Ten," Woodson said of Kopp in a release. "He is a tremendous shooter from long range who will really help us become more versatile with his ability to stretch the floor. He also is an outstanding free-throw shooter who will come in and have an immediate impact."

Kopp connected on 39.8 percent of his field goals, including 36.0 percent (122 of 339) on threes, and 85.0 percent of his foul shots.

As a junior in 2020-21, he started all 24 games for Northwestern, averaging 11.3 points and 3.0 rebounds while recording a career-high 24 steals. The 6-7 guard boasted 23-point performances at home against Quincy and Ohio State and a 19-point effort at Penn State.

Kopp averaged 13.1 points and 3.5 rebounds as a sophomore in 2019-20 and shot 39.6 percent from beyond the three-

point arc in 31 starts. As a freshman, he started 19 games and averaged 4.9 points.

## DII Standout F Fox Commits To Minnesota

Parker Fox, a Division II standout transfer from Northern State in South Dakota, committed to transfer back home to Minnesota.

"This has been the craziest journey of my life," Fox said. "I spent a lot of time talking to people I love and my family and people that I trust, and I am headed home. I am going to be going to the University of Minnesota."

The 6-8, 210-pounder chose the Golden Gophers and first-year head coach Ben Johnson over programs including Creighton, Dayton, Florida State, Ohio State, San Diego State, TCU and Vanderbilt.

"I just fully believe and I just see that Coach Johnson and his journey and what he is going to do with this program is going to be everything that Minnesota deserves," Fox said. "I fully trust Coach Johnson and his staff, and I know they're going to do special things not only with the program but with the university as a whole."

Fox was a standout at Mahtomedi (Minn.) Senior and grew up as a big fan of the Gophers, so getting to play back home holds significance to him.

"It means the world to me," he said. "I grew up the biggest fan of all Minnesota sports but especially Gopher athletics. I have gone to games at Williams Arena for as long as I can remember, and the fact that I get to now strap up and lace my shoes up and go play on that court is a dream come true."

Fox is a high-energy post player who averaged 22.3 points and 9.9 rebounds while posting 74 blocks this past season.

## Rutgers Adds Arkansas Transfer Jailyn Mason

Former Arkansas guard Jailyn Mason announced her transfer to Rutgers on the same day head coach C. Vivian Stringer signed a five-year contract extension.

Mason finished her fifth year and will take advantage of the extra year of eligibility granted to all winter student-athletes by the NCAA due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 5-9 guard started 97 of 98 games in her first three seasons at Arkansas, averaging 8.8 points, 3.9 rebounds, 2.6 assists and 1.1 steals in 31.0 minutes per game. An excellent shooter, Mason made 36.9 percent from three-point distance on 312 attempts.

Mason, who hails from Mason, Ohio, red-shirted the 2019-20 season due to a foot injury requiring surgery. The 2017 SEC all-freshman team honoree returned as a fifth-year senior in 2020-21, taking on a reserve role where she averaged 3.5 points, 2.2 rebounds and 1.0 assists in 20.5 minutes per game.

The Scarlet Knights lost their top five scorers from last season's NCAA tournament team, and Stringer needed to rebuild the roster. Adding Mason gives Rutgers a proven three-point shooter with an abundance of experience.

The Arkansas transfer has an opportunity to start at Rutgers after the departures in the backcourt of Diamond Johnson and Zippy Broughton.

## Former Maryland C Marial Transfers To Oregon State

Former Maryland center Chol Marial committed to recent Cinderella program Oregon State as a transfer.

"I appreciate all the colleges and coaches who have reached out during my recruit-

ment. I'm excited for this next chapter. Let's go Beavers," Marial posted to Twitter.

Marial (7-2, 235) came to College Park with immense potential after being the top-ranked prospect early in his high school career prior to being sidelined often by leg injuries. After having surgery to insert rods in both of his legs, he struggled to return to form and ended up out of the Terrapins' rotation.

The Rumbek, South Sudan, native is joining an Oregon State program coming off a stunning postseason run. After the Beavers entered the Pac-12 tournament with a meager 14-12 overall record, they proceeded to win the conference tourney and then knocked off Tennessee, Oklahoma State and Loyola before losing to Houston in the Elite Eight in the NCAA Tournament.

"I want to thank Coach (Mark) Turgeon, the coaching staff and my teammates for two memorable years at Maryland," Marial said in a release. "I am thankful to Maryland for helping develop me into the player I am today and will always remember our Big Ten championship."

Marial originally picked Maryland over Grand Canyon and New Mexico in May 2019, but injuries prevented him from returning to top form like when he averaged 9.4 blocks per game during an extended stretch at Chandler (Ariz.) AZ Compass Prep. Overall, he averaged 14 points, 13 rebounds and eight blocks in high school.

"We enjoyed having Chol as part of our program the past two seasons," Turgeon said. "Chol has been a tremendous teammate and always brought a positive attitude. I understand his desire to seek more playing time and wish him nothing but success in the future."

## Purdue All-American RB Leroy Keyes Dies At 74

Purdue's Leroy Keyes, a College Football Hall of Fame running back, died at age 74. Keyes is the only two-time consensus All-American in Purdue history, and he finished third and second in Heisman Trophy voting in 1968 and 1969, respectively. He was voted Purdue's all-time greatest player as the program celebrated its 100-year anniversary in 1987.

The talented tailback set Boilermaker records for career touchdowns (37), points (222) and all-purpose yards (3,757) and was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1990.

Following his standout career in West Lafayette, Keyes was chosen with the No. 3 overall pick in the 1969 NFL draft by Philadelphia, where he played both running back and safety.

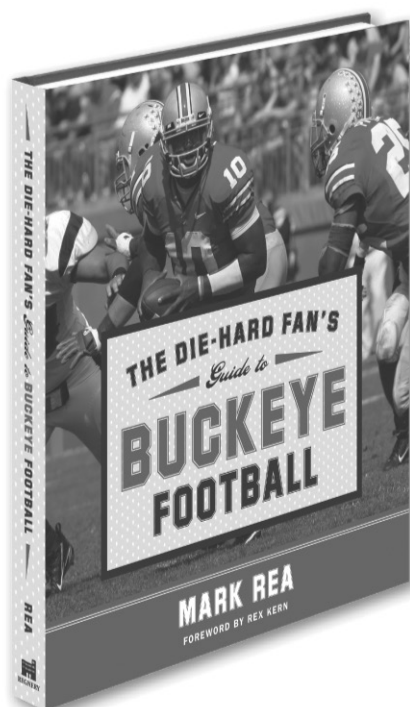
"Leroy was a two-way player in the way that matters most – a great athlete and a great person," Purdue president Mitch Daniels said in a statement. "You never saw him without a smile on his face, or left him without a smile on your own. Every Boilermaker lost a good friend today."

While playing at Purdue, Keyes corralled 1968 Big Ten MVP honors after leading the country with 114 points and setting a school record with 19 total touchdowns, which still stands. Keyes also still holds team records for single-season rushing average (6.6 yards per carry in 1967) and career average (5.88).

Following his retirement, Keyes worked in Philadelphia schools for 16 years. He coached running backs at Purdue in 1995 and 1996 and remained in the program from 1997-99.

CALLING ALL BUCKEYE FANS:

## YOUR INDISPENSABLE OSU FOOTBALL GUIDE IS HERE!



**D**o you bleed scarlet and gray year round?

If so, then *The Die-Hard Fan's Guide to Buckeye Football* by Buckeye football expert Mark Rea is for you! This must-have book works its way "Across the Field" through nearly 120 years of Buckeye football, including complete coverage of the national championship seasons and Heisman Trophy winners.

Full of color photos, amusing anecdotes, and little-known facts, *The Die-Hard Fan's Guide to Buckeye Football* is unlike any other book you've read. One minute you're reading about legendary coaches like Paul Brown and Woody Hayes and the next you're visualizing stories of the Horseshoe's greatest games and discovering who Woody Hayes referred to as his "greatest booster."

It is for you, the fans, that this book has been created—the ultimate guide for the most diehard members of the Buckeye Nation! GO BUCKS!

Available in bookstores, online, or call  
**(614) 486-2202**

Since 1947  
**REGNERY PUBLISHING, INC.**  
An Eagle Publishing Company • Washington, DC  
www.Regnery.com



# BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

## 2021 FOOTBALL

**Sept. 2** at Minnesota; **11** OREGON; **18** TULSA; **25** AKRON.

**Oct. 2** at Rutgers; **9** MARYLAND; **23** at Indiana; **30** PENN STATE.

**Nov. 6** at Nebraska; **13** PURDUE; **20** MICHIGAN STATE; **27** at Michigan.

**Dec. 4** Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis.

## BASEBALL (17-14)

**March 5** Illinois at Greenville, S.C., W 6-3 (13 innings); **6** Illinois at Greenville, S.C., W 6-5 (9 innings); **6** Illinois at Greenville, S.C., W 12-6; **7** Illinois at Greenville, S.C., L 8-0; **12** Iowa at Minneapolis, L 4-0; **12** Nebraska at Minneapolis, L 10-4; **13** Iowa at Minneapolis, W 7-4; **14** Nebraska at Minneapolis, W 6-4; **20** at Rutgers, L 6-5 (11 innings); **21** at Rutgers, L 2-0; **22** at Rutgers, W 4-1; **26** IOWA, W 8-2; **27** IOWA, L 5-1; **28** MARYLAND, W 5-4; **29** MARYLAND, L 9-3.

**April 2** INDIANA, W 3-2; **3** INDIANA, W 6-0; **3** INDIANA, W 5-2; **4** INDIANA, W 4-3; **9** at Michigan, W 7-4; **10** at Michigan, L 7-0; **11** at Michigan, L 16-7; **16** at Maryland, L 10-6; **17** at Maryland, L 5-4 (10 innings); **18** at Maryland, L 9-4; **23** PENN STATE, W 11-6; **24** PENN STATE, W 7-0; **25** PENN STATE, L 10-6.; **30** PURDUE, W 11-3.

**May 1** PURDUE, W 12-2; **2** PURDUE, L 16-15; **7** at Minnesota, 6 p.m.; **8** at Minnesota, 2 p.m.; **9** at Minnesota, 1 p.m.; **14** MICHIGAN STATE, 6:05 p.m.; **15** MICHIGAN STATE, 3:05 p.m.; **16** MICHIGAN STATE, 1:05 p.m.; **22** Nebraska at Bloomington, 1 p.m.; **23** Nebraska at Bloomington, 1 p.m.; **23** Indiana at Bloomington, 5 p.m.; **24** Indiana at Bloomington, TBA; **28** NORTHWESTERN, 6:05 p.m.; **29** NORTHWESTERN, 7:05 p.m.; **30** NORTHWESTERN, 1:05 p.m.

## WOMEN'S FIELD HOCKEY (7-9)

**Feb. 27** Michigan at Virginia Beach, Va., Postponed; **28** Rutgers at Virginia Beach, Va., L 2-1 (OT).

**March 5** Maryland at Virginia Beach, Va., L 2-0; **7** Rutgers at Virginia Beach, Va., L 1-0; **19** IOWA, L 2-1; **21** IOWA, L 2-1; **26** at Northwestern, L 4-3 (OT); **28** at Northwestern, L 3-2 (OT).

**April 2** INDIANA, W 5-0; **4** INDIANA, W 6-0; **9** MICHIGAN STATE, W 4-2; **11** MICHIGAN STATE, W 5-0; **16** at Penn State, L 2-1; **17** at Penn State, W 3-2 (OT); **21** vs. Penn State at Big Ten Quarterfinals, W 4-3 (OT); **22** vs. Northwestern at Big Ten Semifinals, W 2-1 (OT); **24** vs. Michigan at Big Ten Championship, L 4-0.

## MEN'S GOLF

**Feb. 5** Big Ten Match Play at Palm Coast, Fla., 1-1; **6** Big Ten Match Play at Palm Coast, Fla., 1-1; **14** Kiawah Invitational at Kiawah Island Resort, S.C., Postponed; **15** Kiawah Invitational at Kiawah Island Resort, S.C., 7/14; **16** Kiawah Invitational at Kiawah Island Resort, S.C., 8/14.

**March 8** Spartan Collegiate at Sea Island, Ga., 6/16; **9** Spartan Collegiate at Sea Island, Ga., 5/16; **15** Valspar Collegiate Invitational at Palm City, Fla., 4/11; **16** Valspar Collegiate Invitational at Palm City, Fla., 3/11.

**April 10** Boilermaker Invitational at West Lafayette, Ind., T10/16; **11** Boilermaker Invitational at West Lafayette, Ind., 10/16; **16** ASU Thunderbird Invitational at Phoenix, Ariz., 16/17; **17** ASU Thunderbird Invitational at Phoenix, Ariz., 13/17; **24** ROBERT KEPLER INTERCOLLEGIATE, 8/16; **25** ROBERT KEPLER INTERCOLLEGIATE, 3/16;

**April 30-May 2** Big Ten Championship at Carmel, Ind., 5/14; **17-19** NCAA Regional; **28-31** NCAA Championship at

Scottsdale, Ariz.

**June 1-2** NCAA Championship at Scottsdale, Ariz.

## MEN'S LACROSSE (4-7)

**Feb. 20** at Johns Hopkins, W 14-8; **27** RUTGERS, L 22-12.

**March 6** at Penn State, L 15-13; **14** MICHIGAN, W 13-10; **20** MARYLAND, L 16-8; **27** at Michigan, W 14-6.

**April 3** at Rutgers, L 10-9; **10** JOHNS HOPKINS, W 14-12; **18** Maryland, L 18-8; **24** PENN STATE, L 10-9.

**May 1** BIG TEN QUARTERFINALS, L 15-11.

## WOMEN'S LACROSSE (4-9)

**Feb. 14** at Northwestern, L 23-7; **21** MICHIGAN, W 15-12; **26** at Rutgers, L 12-9; **28** at Rutgers, L 10-9.

**March 5** JOHNS HOPKINS, L 12-11; **7** JOHNS HOPKINS, L 10-9; **18** at Maryland, L 14-9; **20** at Maryland, L 11-5; **26** PENN STATE, W 15-12; **28** PENN STATE, W 11-9.

**April 8** NORTHWESTERN, L 21-14; **16** at Michigan, W 12-9; **29** Big Ten Quarterfinals vs. Rutgers at Penn State, L 13-19.

## MEN'S SOCCER (3-6-1)

**Feb. 23** Indiana at Westfield, Ind., L 3-0; **27** at Maryland, W 1-0.

**March 3** at Michigan State, W 2-0; **7** NORTHWESTERN, W 4-2; **15** MICHIGAN, T 2-2; **19** at Wisconsin, L 1-0; **23** at Penn State, L 1-0; **27** RUTGERS, Postponed; **31** at Michigan, L 2-0.

**April 4** MICHIGAN STATE, L 1-0; **10** Big Ten Tournament at Penn State, L 3-1.

## WOMEN'S SOCCER (8-3-3)

**Feb. 20** MICHIGAN, T 1-1; **25** WISCONSIN, W 3-1; **28** NEBRASKA, Postponed.

**March 4** at Maryland, W 3-1; **7** at Rutgers, L 2-1; **13** PENN STATE, T 2-2; **18** L 1-0; **21** at Illinois, W 2-1; **25** INDIANA, W 2-0; **28** NORTHWESTERN, W 1-0.

**April 3** at Michigan State, W 1-0; **8** BIG TEN REGIONAL vs. MARYLAND, W 4-2 **11** BIG TEN REGIONAL vs. RUTGERS, L 1-0; **28** NCAA Tournament vs. Stony Brook at Greenville, N.C., W 5-1.

**May 1** NCAA Tournament vs. Santa Clara at Greenville, N.C., L 4-1.

## SOFTBALL (18-17)

**Feb. 26** Iowa at Leesburg, Fla., W 3-2; **26** Iowa at Leesburg, Fla., L 4-3; **27** Minnesota at Leesburg, Fla., W 2-1 (11

innings); **27** Minnesota at Leesburg, Fla., L 8-0; **28** Nebraska at Leesburg, Fla., W 4-2; **28** Nebraska at Leesburg, Fla., L 2-1.

**March 11** Wisconsin at Leesburg, Fla., W 7-5 (15 innings); **11** Wisconsin at Leesburg, Fla., L 10-1 (6 innings); **12** Wisconsin at Leesburg, Fla., W 3-2 (8 innings); **13** Northwestern at Leesburg, Fla., W 4-2; **13** Northwestern at Leesburg, Fla., L 9-0 (5 innings); **14** Northwestern at Leesburg, Fla., L 3-2; **26** MARYLAND, W 5-0; **27** MARYLAND, L 8-2; **27** MARYLAND, W 13-3 (5 innings); **28** MARYLAND, W 9-1 (5 innings).

**April 3** at Penn State, W 2-1; **3** at Penn State, W 9-3; **4** at Penn State, W 9-0 (5 innings); **4** at Penn State, Canceled; **9** MICHIGAN, L 7-0; **10** MICHIGAN, L 3-1; **10** MICHIGAN, W 3-2; **11** MICHIGAN, L 11-0; **16** at Indiana, L 4-1; **17** at Indiana, L 8-0 (5 innings); **17** at Indiana, W 10-9 (8 innings); **18** at Indiana, L 3-0; **23** RUTGERS, W 7-3; **23** RUTGERS, W 9-1 (5 innings); **24** RUTGERS, W 13-5 (6 innings); **25** RUTGERS, L 6-5; **30** at Purdue, W 5-1. **May 1** at Purdue, L 4-2; **1** at Purdue, L 7-6 (8 innings); **2** at Purdue, L 4-2 **7-9** at Illinois; **14-16** MICHIGAN STATE.

## MEN'S TENNIS (18-2, 15-1)

**Jan. 15-18** Ohio State Invitational; **22** MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE, W 4-0; **23** VIRGINIA, L 4-2.

**Feb. 13** MICHIGAN STATE, W 7-0; **13** MICHIGAN STATE, W 4-0; **19** at Northwestern, W 4-0; **21** at Illinois, W 4-1; **27** PENN STATE, W 7-0.

**March 5** PURDUE, W 7-0; **7** INDIANA, W 7-0; **12** at Michigan State, W 7-0; **14** at Michigan, L 4-3; **19** at Minnesota, W 6-1.; **21** at Wisconsin, W 6-1; **26** NEBRASKA, W 7-0; **28** IOWA, W 6-1.

**April 4** at Penn State, W 7-0; **9** at Purdue, W 7-0; **11** at Indiana, W 6-1; **16** MICHIGAN STATE, W 7-0; **18** MICHIGAN, W 4-3; **30** Big Ten Quarterfinals vs. Michigan State at Nebraska, W 4-0.

**May 1** Big Ten Semifinals vs. Northwestern at Nebraska, W 4-0. **2** Big Ten Championship vs. Illinois at Nebraska, L 4-3.

## WOMEN'S TENNIS (18-3, 15-1)

**Jan. 16-18** Michigan Invitational at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS; **23** SYRACUSE, W 4-0; **24** VIRGINIA, W 4-2.

**Feb. 5** North Carolina (ITA Championships) at Stillwater, Okla., L 4-0;

**6** Georgia Tech (ITA Championships), W 4-3; **7** Northwestern (ITA Championships), L 4-3; **13** PURDUE, W 6-1; **13** INDIANA, W 7-0; **19** at Maryland, W 5-2; **21** at Rutgers, W 7-0; **26** MICHIGAN STATE, W 6-1; **28** MICHIGAN, L 4-3.

**March 6** at Nebraska, W 5-2; **7** at Iowa, W 5-2; **14** at Penn State, W 6-1; **20** MARYLAND, W 6-1; **21** RUTGERS, W 7-0; **26** at Michigan State, W 6-1; **28** at Michigan, W 4-3.

**April 9** MINNESOTA, W 4-0; **11** WISCONSIN, W 7-0; **17** PENN STATE, W 6-0; **30** Big Ten Quarterfinals vs. Michigan State at Wisconsin, W 4-0.

**May 1** Big Ten Semifinals vs. Iowa at Wisconsin, W 4-2; **2** Big Ten Championship vs. Michigan at Wisconsin, W 4-1.

## MEN'S VOLLEYBALL (9-10, 8-6)

**Jan. 22** PENN STATE, L 3-0; **23** PENN STATE, W 3-0; **29** at Penn State, L 3-0; **30** at Penn State, L 3-0.

**Feb. 5** LEWIS, W 3-1; **6** LEWIS, L 3-0; **12** at McKendree, L 3-1; **13** at McKendree, L 3-1; **20** LOYOLA CHICAGO, W 3-2; **21** LOYOLA CHICAGO, W 3-0; **27** at Ball State, W 3-2.

**March 11** BALL STATE, L 3-2; **19** at Purdue Fort Wayne, W 3-1; **20** at Purdue Fort Wayne, L 3-1; **26** LINDENWOOD, W 3-0; **27** LINDENWOOD, W 3-0.

**April 2** at Quincy, W 3-0; **3** at Quincy, L 3-2; **10** MIVA Tournament at Ball State, L 3-1.

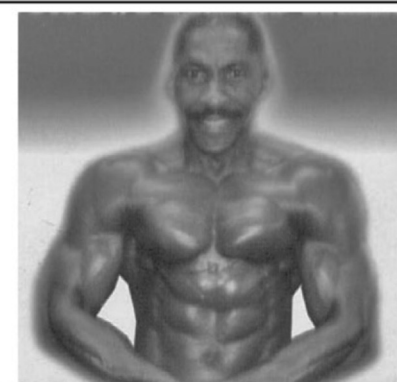
## WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (16-4, 15-3)

**Jan. 22** MARYLAND, W 3-2; **23** MARYLAND, W 3-2; **26** at Penn State, Postponed; **31** at Michigan State, W 3-0.

**Feb. 1** at Michigan State, W 3-2; **12** IOWA, W 3-0; **13** IOWA, W 3-0; **17** PENN STATE, W 3-2; **19** at Illinois, W 3-1; **20** at Illinois, W 3-2; **26** at Rutgers, W 3-0; **27** at Rutgers, W 3-2.

**March 3** at Penn State, W 3-0; **5** MINNESOTA, Postponed; **6** MINNESOTA, Postponed; **12** at Nebraska, L 3-2; **13** at Nebraska, W 3-2; **19** MICHIGAN, W 3-1; **20** MICHIGAN, W 3-0; **26** PURDUE, L 3-1; **27** PURDUE, L 3-1.

**April 2** at Indiana, Canceled; **3** at Indiana, Canceled; **15** vs. Missouri at NCAA Second Round at Omaha, Neb., W 3-0; **18** vs. Florida at NCAA Second Round at Omaha, Neb., L 3-1.



**TIM SWANSON**  
Certified Personal Trainer

**Flat Stomach • Weight Loss • Strength Training • Cardio Kick-Boxing • Boot Camp**

**614-886-9331**  
foreverfitswan@yahoo.com

## Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

*RULES AND RATES: 20 cents per word, 10 cents for more than one insertion. Minimum order of \$5. No agency discounts. Make checks payable to Buckeye Sports Bulletin. We accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express.*

*All ads are uniformly set with the first two words set in boldface capital letters at no charge. However, no other words may be set in boldface. Anyone planning a larger or more distinct ad may receive our ad rate card upon request.*

*We reserve the right to request additional information or merchandise be submitted from advertiser prior to acceptance of an ad, and we reserve the right to refuse advertisements considered objectionable.*

*Deadline is one week prior to publication date. Call (614) 486-2202 or write P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212 for info.*

**WANTED TO** buy: OSU football memorabilia and equipment, programs, pennants, glasses, books, jerseys, helmets, ticket stubs. One item or a hundred. Will travel. Call George at (614) 506-1081.

**WANTED TO** buy: OSU basketball tickets/stubs from the 1960s, '70s, '80s, '90s & 2000s. Call Mike at (704) 995-0414.

**FOR SALE!** Woody Hayes glasses frames from 1963. The real ones. Call (513) 947-0120 or (937) 402-9765.

**WANTED TO** buy: OSU football memorabilia, programs, ticket stubs, pennants, championship rings, gold pants, helmets, autographs, game-used equipment, small or large collections. Call Chris at (419) 957-6789.

**FOR SALE** — OSU-MICHIGAN Game, 1975- original RADIO broadcast on CD! Woody's last great team & Archie's last UM game as Bucks go 11-0! Three-disk set runs 3½ hours! Listen in your car! \$25 + \$3 S & H. Call 1-630-527-8890!

**BSB PUBLISHER** Frank Moskowitz and other members of the BSB staff are available to speak at your business, social or alumni group meetings. Informative and fun. Call (614) 486-2202 for details.



# Spring Game Offers Taste Of What's To Come

Spring games are rarely games anymore. Instead, they end up being a very controlled spring practice. They give the fans an opportunity to get a sneak peak at the talent that will hit the field in the upcoming fall. For Buckeye fans, all eyes seemed to focus on the three scholarship quarterbacks in hopes of determining who will replace Justin Fields as the starter. Everyone was anxious to also see if any of the 15 early-enrollee freshmen could be impactful or major contributors to the program next season.

## COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

Fans would rather see a spring game where the blocking and tackling are full go

and the number of big hits are impressive, but those days of full-contact spring games are a thing of the past. For the coaching staff, they want to get through the day with no serious injuries. They do not want to risk losing a key player for the fall. The coaches also keep the offensive and defensive schemes very basic. The spring game was televised on the Big Ten Network, and it's a certainty all Buckeye opponents were or will be watching.

The Buckeye staff will be able to use the film to study individual player techniques and how coordinated the offensive and defensive units were for the day. In reality, however, the spring scrimmage is just one of many practices the coaching staff uses to determine what the depth chart will look like when August camp begins.

### Competition Not Controversy

Ryan Day announced before the spring game that the outcome would not determine the starting quarterback going into

the fall. I am sure that came to no one's surprise, especially for the quarterbacks themselves. It is crystal clear the number one spot will not be determined until August camp. All three freshman quarterbacks, two redshirts and one true freshman, had solid performances in the game with C.J. Stroud throwing two touchdowns and 185 yards, Jack Miller throwing 17 completions for 128 yards, and that true freshman, Kyle McCord, throwing for 184 yards and two touchdowns.

Normally, to say the position is up for grabs is just coach-speak, but for the 2021 season, that seems to really be the case. Even though Stroud and Miller both played in a handful of games last season, neither one has thrown a pass in a college football game. All three quarterbacks have strong arms, are athletic and are nearly physically identical in terms of height and weight, and all three seem to fit into the Ryan Day offensive scheme. Whoever emerges as the starter vs. the Minnesota Golden Gophers on Sept. 2, unlike the spring scrimmage, will be the guy who the coaches believe can make the best decisions in the heat of battle. The crown will eventually go to the man Ryan Day feels gives his team the best chance of winning and the least chance of losing the game.

Even though Stroud seems to have the early edge, the competition for the starting spot is real for now, and the next three months are crucial in terms of the further development of these three talented signal callers.

The schedule for the upcoming season is a benefit to a young Buckeye quarterback, whoever that may be. Even though the Gophers shouldn't be taken lightly in the season opener, Ohio State shouldn't run into the tougher conference foes until late October. Hopefully, this will give the Buckeye quarterback enough games under his belt to lead his team to a run for the conference title by the end of the regular season.

### Targets Aplenty

More than any other position on the football team, wide receiver is one of abundance. Despite losing talented wideouts to the NFL each year, the Buckeye coaches through recruiting refuse to let the quality of their receiving corps be diminished. After watching the spring game, it doesn't take a top-notch football analyst to see that true freshmen Emeka Egbuka and Marvin Harrison Jr. are going to be special. They both have sure hands and can make difficult receptions look routine. The return of Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba along with the talented freshman receivers should help any of the young quarterbacks be successful throwing the football. Time will tell, but do not bet against the Buckeyes fielding the best group of wideouts in the country. The depth of the position combined with the

big-play potential of all the receivers will truly be a nightmare for opposing secondaries.

### Running Back

Skill talent for the Buckeyes encompasses more than just the receiver position. Woody Hayes would say, "You can't ever have enough running backs," and even though that was when offenses were typically 80 percent run and 20 percent pass, it still holds true today. The Buckeyes found out last season that due to injury or things like COVID, you cannot be caught short of running backs. At least starting out for the fall, the running back room is loaded with talent. With the return of Master Teague, the emergence of Miyan Williams and Marcus Crowley, and with incoming freshmen TreVeyon Henderson and Evan Pryor, the future of the depth of the running back position is bright. Henderson stood out in the spring game not just running the ball, but he caught five passes out of the backfield. This versatility could get him some playing time in the fall.

### Sawyer Shines

Jack Sawyer was one of the most highly touted football players nationally in the 2021 class. Even though he opted not to play his senior season at Pickerington (Ohio) North, it was apparent Sawyer had some special tools in his tool belt that made him different from other defensive ends around the country, and he teased all of us with those tools in the spring game. He is quick off the snap and gets into the offensive tackle instantly, either power rushing him or working the edges of the blocker like a seasoned veteran. Sawyer uses his powerful hands to control the opponent and then disengage lightning fast to get to the quarterback or pursue to the football. If he shows the ability to do those things against more experienced Big Ten offensive linemen, he will see a ton of playing time as a freshman.

It's very early to know, but it would not be shocking to hear early comparisons between Sawyer and the Bosa brothers and Chase Young. He has all the makings of a dominant impact player.

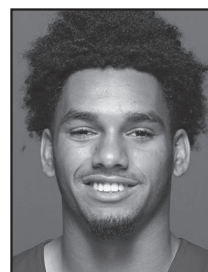
### Corners Came to Play

One area of concern on defense centers around defensive backs, especially at corner. Good, reliable corners allow the coaches to run various types of man coverages in order to be aggressive in terms of the blitz game. Everyone knows this was an issue in 2020. Shaun Wade is off to the NFL but Sevyn Banks, Marcus Williamson and Cameron Brown return.

There is always a need for corners in order to play four-, five- or even six-man secondary schemes. Two redshirt freshman corners stood out in the spring game, Ryan Watts and Cameron Martinez. Watts, from Little Elm, Texas, at 6-3 is exceptionally tall for a corner. He had a good day at the spring game by making an interception. Martinez, the former state of Michigan Mr. High School Football, played well in terms of pass coverage and run support.



C.J. Stroud



Chris Olave



Sevyn Banks

## Ohio State Fans!



**Weekly September through November**  
**Five times from January through mid-March**  
**Biweekly mid-March through mid-May**  
**Monthly December, June through August**

Some Ohio State sports fans need more information on the Buckeyes than they can find in their local newspaper. Buckeye Sports Bulletin is for those fans. By subscribing to Buckeye Sports Bulletin, they receive 24 issues a year featuring:

- In-depth coverage of all Ohio State sports
- The latest comments from coaches and players
- The latest in recruiting information
- Personality profiles
- Features on former Buckeye greats
- Rosters, schedules, statistics, photos
- Check us out on the Web at [www.BuckeyeSports.com](http://www.BuckeyeSports.com)



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Year, \$99.95   | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Year, First Class Mail, \$159.95  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Years, \$169.95 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Years, First Class Mail, \$279.95 |

I want to know more about Ohio State sports. I am enclosing \$\_\_\_\_\_

☐ Money Order ☐ Check ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Discover ☐ Amer. Express

Credit Card # and Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Credit Card Orders Accepted 24 Hours A Day**

**Call (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail To: Buckeye Sports Bulletin**  
**P.O. Box 12453**  
**Columbus, Ohio 43212**  
**[www.BuckeyeSports.com](http://www.BuckeyeSports.com)**



# This Year's NFL Draft Proved Unpredictable

Here's a quote from Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs that appears in a story this issue on Ohio State's bullet position:

"I think that anytime you're putting together a personnel package, you're trying to make sure the defense is emphasizing your players' strengths *and not exposing their weaknesses*."

I'm simply curious to know if any of you, when you read this quote (with my italics), immediately visualized the same player in the same game as I did. Think about it and I'll come back to the player and game later.

Here's another question. Do any of you recall an NFL draft where the projections for potential Buckeye draftees were so all over the map? Do you recall a year where the draft projections for some changed so radically over the course of the just played season? Granted, unless you were around in 1918, you never witnessed a season quite like this one, and I think the Spanish flu predates the NFL draft.

Let's start at the top.

At the end of the 2019 season, I think most had quarterback Justin Fields right below Clemson's Trevor Lawrence as they looked toward the 2021 draft. Some might have even had them as equals. At the least, Fields would go among the top couple of picks, the second quarterback to be taken.

But a couple of subpar games (at least by Fields' standards), whispers about his work ethic – after he played effectively with that bulky brace at the end of the 2019 season and took that shot from Clemson this past season and returned a play later to continue one of the greatest passing performances in school history to key one of the biggest wins in school history, you weren't going to hear me question his work ethic – and maybe even concerns about his having epilepsy and suddenly some of the "experts" had him barely being taken in the first round.

Pro teams sometimes start rumors about players to try to get them to drop so they become available later, or to disguise their intentions. Maybe that was the case with Fields because I have never heard a peep about his work ethic – or lack thereof. Maybe it was even the Bears who floated the rumors. After all, they kind of came out of the blue when it came time to select him and they traded up to do it. Still, Fields fell to No. 11 and was the fourth QB taken.

And let's rewind to last summer. The Big Ten postpones the 2020 football season due to the pandemic. Offensive lineman Wyatt Davis and defensive back Shaun Wade, both projected as possible first-round selections, elect to opt out of the season to prepare for the draft. When the conference decides to go ahead and play, the two decide to come back.

Davis tumbles to the third round to Minnesota.

"Davis was considered a potential first-round pick at one point but didn't have the dominant 2020 season that some thought he was capable of," said Will Ragatz of Sports Illustrated.

And then there is the case of Wade. I don't think anyone could have foreseen his draft freefall when he opted back in with the Buckeyes. But even a casual Ohio State fan could see him struggling in 2020, and most of us in our office were completely perplexed at how he was able to pick up so much postseason hardware after routinely being beaten by opposing air attacks.

However, the NFL loves measurables, and many, me included, thought he would still be drafted highly. Maybe not first round anymore, but *fifth*?

"Had he come out last year, he probably would have been a first-round pick, at least in

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

the conversation for a first-round pick," said Ian Rapoport of the NFL Network. "He tried to do the right thing, went back to college, (and had) just a really brutal year. I talked to several scouts and evaluators about Wade. As one said, this year's film is really bad. The (Pro Day) workout is just okay."

Do you think Wade wishes he hadn't come back? He seems to deny that in a story elsewhere in this issue, but you have to wonder.

And then there is the case of linebacker Pete Werner. Most of the guys in the office seem high on him. Mark Rea and I appear to be the only ones on staff who didn't get the memo. Most importantly, the scouts have been talking him up since the end of the season.

A solid, reliable player? Yes. But second round?

"Werner is a do-it all-guy – not great at any one thing but good at everything," said our own Mike Wachsmann. "He has good instincts, is good sideline to sideline, very solid in coverage and is a fine tackler. Barring injury he will be in the NFL for 10 years."

But as a poster reminded us on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum, second round is the round in which Chris Spielman was drafted. I remember Spielman altering games on defense. I don't necessarily recall Werner doing the same, though I am not sure I recall anyone on the 2020 defense altering the outcome of games – except perhaps negatively. Of course, Spielman didn't have the measurables. He was considered too small and too slow. Werner, on the other hand, is listed at 6-3, 238 and ran a 4.58 40 at his pro day.

Spielman had a 10-year NFL career with Pro Bowl and All-Pro honors. Who knows how long he might have played if not for a career-ending neck injury? We'll see if Werner also logs 10 years, as Mike predicted.

And what about Urban Meyer plucking tight end Luke Farrell, projected as an undrafted free agent, out of the fifth round, ahead of Wade and defensive end Jonathon Cooper? I don't know how many people saw that one coming.

Another question. Was Tommy Togiai a bargain for the Browns in the fourth round?

When it comes to Buckeyes in the draft, 2021 was a wild and wacky year!

### Was It Just Me?

When Coombs was talking about fielding a defense that emphasizes players' strengths and doesn't expose their weaknesses, I couldn't help but think about the last vision we will have of Tuf Borland as a Buckeye – chasing speedy Alabama pass catchers from well behind in the national championship game. Since that day in January, I have told anyone who will listen that Borland should never have been put in a position where he was left trying to cover pro-caliber speedsters with his 4.98 pro day speed.

You've got to give Borland credit for hustle and effort. He certainly tried on those plays against the Crimson Tide.

With a year under his belt as Ohio State defensive coordinator and a full spring of practice this time around, not to mention a summer of workouts followed by fall camp, hopefully Coombs will have crafted a defense that does, indeed, spotlight each of his players' strengths but just as importantly tries to shield their weaknesses.

As for Borland, he is off to the Minnesota

Vikings as an undrafted free agent. I'm rooting for him.

He has become a bit of a punching bag for Buckeye fans, who sometimes have short memories. When he was a freshman, fans were clamoring for his insertion into the lineup after a 12-tackle (nine solo) performance against Army, a run-oriented team obviously more suited to Borland's skill set. Here's what I wrote in this space following that effort back in 2017:

"I would have expected a guy named Tuf to be strong against a run-oriented attack like that of Army, and the 6-1, 230-pound Bolingbrook, Ill., native didn't disappoint in his first significant action, which came in place of an injured Chris Worley. However, amid calls from Buckeye fans after just one extended playing stint to start Borland over fifth-year senior and captain Worley, let's wait and see how the redshirt freshman does against a team that can run and pass.

"Regardless, we should be seeing plenty of Borland the rest of this season and beyond."

I was right about waiting to see how he did against teams that "can run and pass," and I was certainly right about "seeing plenty of Borland" going forward.

During the draft, one of the posters on the Forum suggested (and I assume it was meant mockingly) that Borland could end up as Mr. Irrelevant, the last person drafted. That was really singling out the three-time OSU captain, because the "honor" could have just as easily gone to Cooper, Farrell or Justin Hilliard. As it turned out, the title went to Houston linebacker Grant Stuard, who was chosen by Tampa Bay with the 259th and final pick.

It's not like Borland is the first Ohio State linebacker to have trouble in pass defense.

For our April 29 edition of Reprint Thursday at BuckeyeSports.com, we featured our coverage of the draft from 25 and 20 years ago, 1996 and 2001, respectively. As a bonus, we ran reprints of this column from the editions covering both those drafts.

In this space in the April 28, 2001, issue of BSB, I wrote of refreshing comments from junior linebacker Matt Wilhelm that spring:

"Wilhelm was talking about his problems with pass coverage last season," I wrote. "That was one of the main reasons they took me off the field last year – because I wasn't good at it," Wilhelm said of his coverage skills. "To get better at those things this spring would be great for me."

"When was the last time you heard a player acknowledge that he was taken off the field because he wasn't doing something well? The first key to getting better is to recognize that you have room for improvement and that you aren't riding the pine because the coach is picking on you."

That was 20 years ago, and frankly I can't remember if Wilhelm improved his pass defending skills or not. But I know that he helped lead the Buckeyes to a national championship as a senior, earning All-Big Ten and All-America honors along the way. And I can read a stat sheet. Not only did he lead the team with 121 tackles, but he had two interceptions and three pass breakups from his linebacker position. So I'm guessing he improved.

As for the drafts in 1996 and 2001, Ohio State had a combined five first-round draft choices.

In 1996, wide receiver Terry Glenn was the seventh pick to New England, tight end Ricky

Dudley went to Oakland in the ninth spot, and Heisman Trophy winner Eddie George was chosen 14th by the then-Houston Oilers. The man who helped all that offensive firepower light up the draft board, quarterback Bobby Hoving, was chosen in the third round by Philadelphia.

In 2001, cornerback Nate Clements joined the long list of Buckeye first-rounders, going 21st to Buffalo. I had forgotten that defensive tackle Ryan Pickett was also a first-round pick going at No. 29 to the St. Louis Rams that spring.

"Many analysts projected Pickett to be taken in the third round or later, but Rams head coach Mike Martz cited his unique ability to rush the quarterback from the middle of the line, an oddity in the NFL," BSB's Jeff Rapp wrote at the time of the draft.

Martz or someone on the Rams staff must have done their homework, because Pickett would go on to a 14-year NFL career with St. Louis, Green Bay and Houston, including 185 starts in 207 games and winning a Super Bowl with the Packers (XLV). He was also named to the St. Louis Rams' All-10th Anniversary team.

One last comment on Ohio State and the NFL draft.

The Buckeyes have had a Mr. Irrelevant. Wide receiver Everett Ross earned the distinction in 1989, going 335th in the 12th round to Minnesota, ironically the same team that signed Borland.

Ross caught 44 passes for 876 yards and seven TDs for the Buckeyes in a career that was limited to three years because of academic issues. According to BSB's Rea, writing at the time, "His athletic ability, which included a 40-yard dash time of 4.45 seconds and ability as a special teams player, made him attractive in the draft."

Ross said of the Vikings, "They talked to me and told me they wanted me as a receiver and a punt returner. I'm very happy about that."

He said he didn't mind being taken last.

"I'm going to give it 110 percent," he said, "so maybe some of the teams that passed on me will begin to wonder why they did."

Unfortunately, Ross never played in the NFL.

But don't feel completely sorry for Ross or any of the Mr. Irrelevants. Not only do they receive the Lowsman Trophy, an award that mimics the Heisman, but with a player fumbling the football, but also Mr. Irrelevant and his family are invited to spend a week in Newport Beach, Calif., for festivities that include a trip to Disneyland, a golf tournament, a regatta and a roast giving advice to the new draftee.

### Cards And Letters Please

There are plenty of topics for those of you sending letters to the editor. Everyone had an opinion on the plight of Justin Fields and the draft. What surprised you most about the draft? Did Tuf Borland get a fair shake from the fans during his career at OSU? Any more thoughts about the quarterback fight or the Ohio State defense? Please don't feel limited to topics that I suggest.

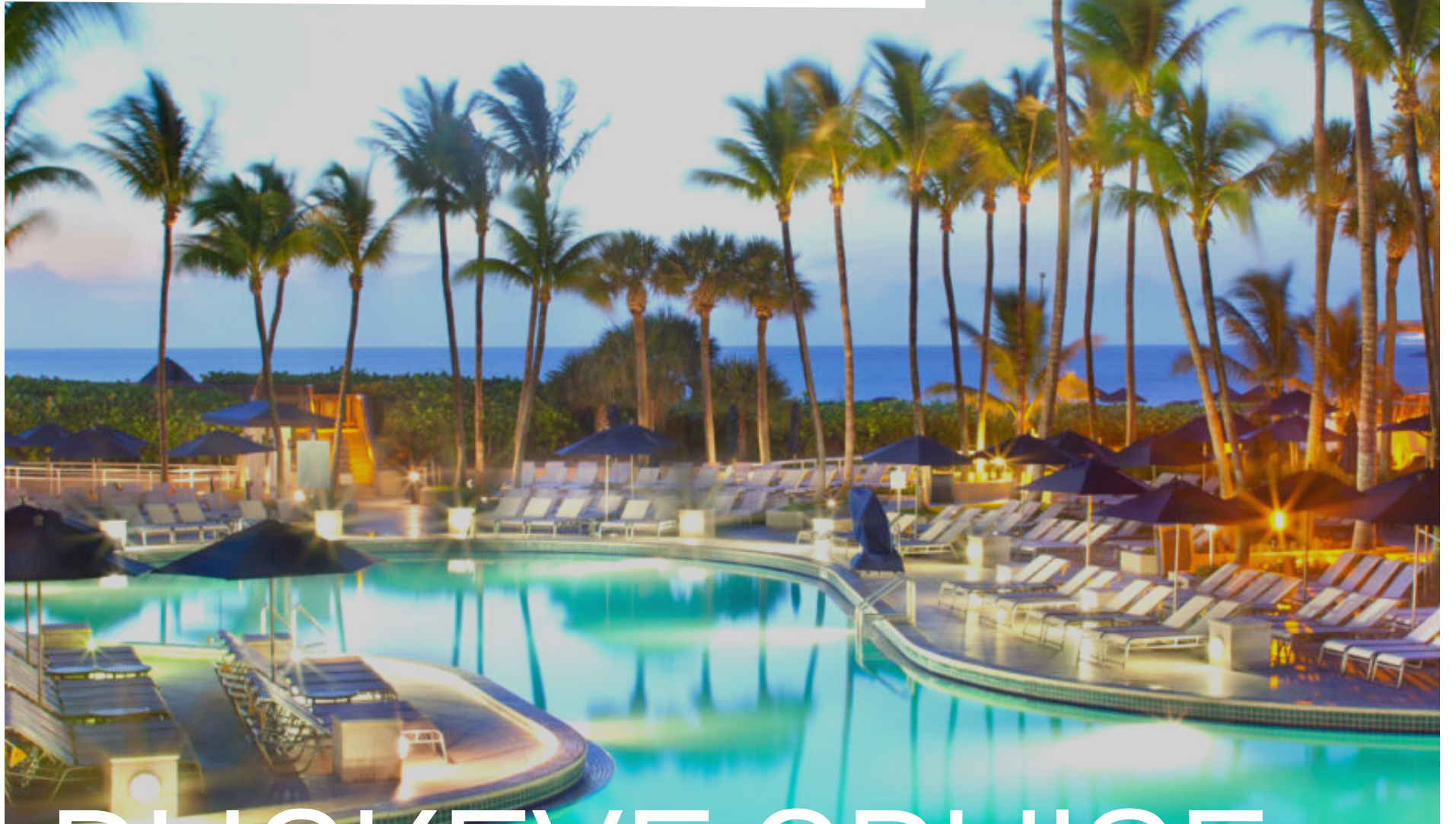
Send your letters to BSB at P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212, or email them to bsb@buckeyesports.com.

Also, don't forget to send in your ballot for our Greatest Ohio State Quarterback 2.0 poll. See page 9 of this issue for details.

And finally, please note that this is the last print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin until June 8. Be sure to follow all the Buckeye Sports news at BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers. For simple instructions on accessing the site, see page 6.



Fort Lauderdale Marriott  
Harbor Beach Resort & Spa  
June 16 - 20, 2021



# BUCKEYE CRUISE FOR CANCER



## Heads for Land in 2021!

VISIT [BUCKEYECRUISE.COM](http://BUCKEYECRUISE.COM) OR CALL 614-792-6204 FOR MORE INFORMATION!