

# Ohio NIL Bill Makes **C**ents For Buckeyes

*Legislation Would Allow College  
Athletes To Earn Compensation  
For Name, Image & Likeness*

By WYATT CROSHER  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

The state of Ohio may have not been the first on the scene when it came to a name, image and likeness bill. But on May 24, state Sen. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg) made sure that the state got on the scene at all.

Antani, joined by Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith at the university's Covelli Center, announced the introduction of a bill into the state's senate that would "legalize college athletes earning compensation from their name, image and likeness," according to a release.

Profiting off name, image and likeness would allow student-athletes to earn endorsement deals on anything from apparel to car dealerships to local pizza shops, all while maintaining their eligibility as a member of a collegiate team.

"As a graduate of The Ohio State University, I saw how hard student-athletes worked, both at their academics and their sport of choice," Antani said. "Since that time at Ohio State, I have strongly believed that students have an inherent right to their own name, image and likeness. I saw students, even who were on scholarship, struggle to get by, including some of the biggest names. It's important to remember that not every student-athlete is on a scholarship. It's also important to remember that no other student at our universities in Ohio have had these restrictions. It is only placed on student-athletes."

The bill was introduced immediately following the press conference with Antani and Smith, and if passed, it would go into effect on July 1.

Smith also spoke on his experiences helping to get this bill crafted and said he supports Antani's hopes to allow student-athletes to be able to profit off NIL.

"I'm so thankful that the senator worked with us on introducing this bill. We want to encourage all other legislators who support the bill and are hopeful that it will be implemented prior to July 1," Smith said. "I embrace the thought and the idea of our student-athletes having this opportunity, so I'm glad we're here today in the state of Ohio where this potentially will happen with this legislation."

Antani was equally thankful for Smith's cooperation in helping make this legislation come to fruition. Along with Smith, Antani noted that he spoke with former Ohio State head coach and current Youngstown State president Jim Tressel, with whom he "had very large conceptual discussions" and who "was very helpful in framing this legislation."

But Antani said he and Smith had worked on the bill for 18



LORI SCHMIDT

**TIMES ARE CHANGING – Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith spoke at a May 24 press conference throwing his support behind a state bill that would allow collegiate athletes to earn compensation from their name, image and likeness.**

months and that having Ohio State be on the front line of supporting it is substantial for the bill moving forward.

"When I approached the university a year and a half ago about this, we began having discussions. Here we stand a year and a half later not just with Ohio State having been involved in the process but working together hand in hand in crafting this legislation to now a place where we are here, where they are in support of this bill," Antani said. "I think that is an extremely high mark to show how Gene and the entire university care about their student-athletes and their students, and I want to thank Gene and the entire university for working with me on this. We really did this together."

As mentioned, Ohio is not on the cutting edge when it comes to getting an NIL bill introduced. Nearly every state has introduced some sort of bill surrounding the topic, with many of them already passed and signed into law.

Specifically, NIL laws have been passed in Alabama, Georgia, Michigan and South Carolina (Clemson), where the Buckeyes' major rivals on the recruiting trail exist. If Ohio's bill were to pass, it would join Alabama and Georgia's laws in going into effect on July 1 of this year, while Michigan and South Carolina's are slated for July 1, 2022, and Dec. 31, 2022, respectively.

Antani is aware that Ohio is showing up late to this legislation, which made him even more determined to introduce the bill sooner rather than later.

"As of today, 16 states have legalized name, image and likeness ownership for student-athletes in our country," Antani said. "Five of those go into effect in July. Ten other states have bills currently introduced into their state houses that would legalize their name, image and likeness. We are, in fact, only one in 11 states in America who have taken no legislative step towards name, image and likeness ownership for student-athletes. That changes today."

Continued On Page 8

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## From The Message Board

**Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith has said he is hopeful that there will be full attendance at Ohio Stadium for the upcoming football season. We asked readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum, as well as staff members, when they would be comfortable being in a full capacity attendance. Here are some of the responses:**

"I'd be comfortable going now."

– bstu9

"Fully vaccinated, so I'm ready now. No worries about being out with people. As in zero. Excited for the Oregon game. There is so much pent-up desire to watch in person in a full-house atmosphere."

– Announcer

"I was comfortable before the vaccine and I'm fine now that I have the vaccine."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"I will feel comfortable when someone gives me front row seats on the 50-yard line."

– PeyoteBuck

"Last year."

– R1TBDBITL

"I am fully vaccinated so I am not worried about myself. But if the numbers I am hearing are correct 40 or 50 percent of adults might not be vaccinated yet. That might mean that there are 40 or 50 thousand unvaccinated people at

Ohio Stadium. Am I going to be attending a new super-spreader event?"

– Mcarr

"I'm not going to have much of a choice for obvious reasons, but I'll say that I was comfortable at a Crew game a couple weeks ago and would feel the same this fall if my attendance wasn't assumed because of my job. My whole family is vaccinated and I'm comfortable that, with the availability of the vaccine, those that are at the most risk will be fully vaccinated at that point as well."

– Patrick Mayhorn, BSB

"Right now, I am waiting for the Reds and Clippers to ramp up to full capacity. Let me see how things go at those venues for me and for others and then I will see if I am ready to be around 100,000 of my closest friends (125,000 if you count those who just come to tailgate)."

– Frank Moskowitz, BSB

"I think I'll be at a spot where I can be comfortable at a full attendance sporting event by this fall. As Patrick said, my family members are fully vaccinated, as am I, and I wouldn't be opposed to it being a requirement to bring your vaccination card to get in or something along those lines."

– Wyatt Crosher, BSB

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Gardens Were A Special Place

I read "The View from 15th & High" (April 10, 2021) and was transported back to the Cincinnati Gardens for the OSU-Xavier game in 1984. Thanks for the great memory ... for me. I am a proud Xavier graduate and was a season ticket holder for the Musketeer games at the Gardens. However, my heart belongs to Buckeye football beginning with the 1967 team with Jim Otis. I can justify that since Xavier hasn't played football since 1971, and when they did, they were terrible. Two years after that 1984 game at the Gardens, I moved to Columbus and only watched a few more basketball games there.

Your memory of that night and the Gardens in general truly captures my recollection of that venue. I loved watching games there. They would turn the house lights down at tip-off so that the court was radiant. The old wooden chairs were incredibly comfortable and every seat had a great perspective of the floor, except for those few high ups that were behind pillars! It was perfect. In earlier years the Cincinnati Royals played there with Jerry Lucas and Oscar Robertson on the same team.

It is said that they never got along, and that undoubtedly goes back to that tournament game in the late '50s when Oscar missed that crucial free throw against the Bucks that cost Cincinnati the game. I may be wrong, but I think the refs took the shot away from Robertson and said he took too long to shoot. Either way, it was very controversial.

Thanks for the great story. It was fun to read and fun to remember.

Mark Eckhoff

Traverse City, Mich.

## My Fond Memory Of The Gardens

On March 13, 1969, several athletes and parents, all representing Bluffton High School, made the trek three hours South to CG to witness the NBA game between the Cincinnati Royals and the Boston Celtics. The Royals featured Jerry Lucas and Oscar Robertson, while the Celtics

had "Player/Coach" Bill Russell and my idol, No. 17 John Havlicek. I was a junior at the time and could not get enough of watching "Hondo" Havlicek, usually on Sunday TV. What a motor he had!

After we arrived at CG, we all spent time admiring the place and conversing with many new people. Eventually, this middle-aged guy, dressed in an impressive three-piece suit, began to talk with me. He never volunteered a name but indicated that he "attended all the Celtics games." Further, he would look into trying to get me into the Celtics' locker room after the game. Being so young and hopeful, I told my fellow attendees, risking possible ridicule, I guess. It seemed legit to me! I simply referred to him as "The Suit."

The game notes at CG are itemized below as I best recall:

- Bill Russell came into the arena slightly ahead of the other players and wore this immense black cape with a red lining.

- The NBA did not have a three-point line yet. However, the Celtics' Em Bryant and the Royals' Jerry Lucas would periodically unleash what was called at the time "howitzers," from very long range, albeit two-pointers. To make it special, an enterprising CG trombonist would start with a high note upon the balls release, then would slide his way down the scale to mimic the ball's flight. It was brilliant and unforgettable!

- One of the Celtics' big men, Bailey Howell, and the Royals' Jerry Lucas got into a major altercation and were both tossed out.

- I marveled at how high "Hondo" could place the ball on the backboard on a layup, a true craftsman! He also played "D" with high intensity and constant motion.

- The Royals beat the Celtics that day, but as I recall, the Celtics were already in the playoffs, so beyond pride, they did not need to view this game as crucial.

In the meantime, one of our parents, my good bud Steve Simon's dad, got word of my early encounter with "The Suit." His dad seemed to never get my name right,

perhaps to intimidate me, calling me "Kemmet" instead of "Kimmet." Naturally, he made it a point to approach me, following the game and ask, "Hey Kemmet, where's your buddy?"

Immediately following that, "The Suit" appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, and tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around and he stated, "I cleared it with Coach Russell, bring your friends and follow me to the Celtics' locker room." I turned back to Mr. Simon and I have to say I've never seen a jaw drop so far, before or since. He really wasn't a bad guy, but he is stuck with that moment forever!

As we entered the Celtics' locker room, future HOF Sam Jones yelled out, 'Hey, you guys can't just come in here!' Then he followed that up by recognizing "The Suit" and then said, 'Oh, they're with you!' The second guy I saw was my guy, Havlicek. He was combing his hair in the mirror and on its shelf was a Coke and a beer. Can life really be this sweet? It was that day!

So I possess an official Cincinnati Royals 1968-1969 game program signed by the following players:

Royals Fred Foster, Oscar Robertson, Adrian Smith and Walt Wesley

Celtics Em Bryant, John Havlicek, Bailey Howell, Rich Johnson, Sam Jones, and Tom "Satch" Sanders

We lost someone special when we lost John Havlicek! The number 17 has constantly appeared in my life in many ways since then. Finally, it would be really interesting to find out who "The Suit" was.

Terry Kimmet

Yorktown, Va.

## Regarding Jerry Lucas

Hey, I was only 11, 12 and 13 when Jerry Lucas played at Ohio State, but I was a fierce lover of sports and followed Ohio State football and basketball with a passion.

What I remember most about Lucas was how consis-

Continued On Page 17



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## OPINION

# Most Underrated? Let The Discussion Begin

Whenever and wherever two or more Ohio State football fans are gathered, you can usually bet on a discussion about the best-ever quarterback or the best-ever linebacker in program history.

I had one just the other day regarding the best-ever coach. I went with Woody Hayes and his 205 victories, 13 Big Ten titles and five national championships, while my brother-in-law insisted on Paul Brown, not only because of his innovative mind and leading the Buckeyes to their first-ever national championship, but for his myriad accomplishments after he left Columbus.

Everyone has an opinion regarding the best-ever conversations – except perhaps when it comes to the most underrated Ohio State player in history. Fans have their favorites, of course, but it's a difficult criterion on which to base an argument for being underrated.

For example, a post on the BuckeyeSports.com message board in the wake of the March 31 death of Mike Sensibaugh offered that the former safety was the most underrated member of the Super Sophs, the much-decorated class that won 27 of 29 games including three Big Ten championships and a national title from 1968-70. It's difficult to categorize Sensibaugh as underrated because he was twice named to the All-Big Ten first-team defense and earned first-team All-America honors as a senior.

To truly be underrated, a player cannot have won any all-conference awards (first-team anyway), and he certainly should not have been an All-American. Underrated players are those whose value to their teams often goes unnoticed by the public at large but never by their teammates and coaches. More often than not, they are overshadowed by teammates who had flashier careers or gaudier statistics.

For example, Matt Snell enjoyed an All-Pro career as a running back with the New York Jets that included winning a Super Bowl championship ring. But when Snell was at Ohio State, he played a variety of positions on both offense and defense and excelled wherever he was asked to play.

Manning the right halfback position in 1961, Snell was essentially a blocking back for All-America fullback Bob Ferguson. The following year, Hayes shuffled Snell to a defensive end position to take advantage of his leverage skills. Meanwhile, he also saw time as a tight end and recorded eight receptions for 66 yards and a touchdown. As a senior in 1963, Snell was back on offense, where he was the featured fullback. He led the Buckeyes with 491 yards and five touchdowns, good enough for the Jets to make him the third overall pick in the 1964 AFL draft.

Jim Roman started only a handful of games during his career at Ohio State, but his value as a guy who would perform whatever task was needed made him invaluable as a senior on a youth-oriented team in 1968. He was the backup center for three years but started two games in 1967 and played quite a bit in '68 because starter John Muhlback nursed a bad ankle for much of that championship season.

Also, when Hayes couldn't find a suitable kicker in '68, he turned to Roman to handle field goals and extra points. Despite not kicking since high school, Roman converted 21 of 28 PATs and connected on 5 of 7 field-goal attempts. Two of those three-pointers came during the 27-16 Rose Bowl victory against USC – a 26-yarder with three seconds remaining in the second quarter to forge a 10-10 tie at the half, and one from 25 yards late in the third period that gave the Buckeyes a lead they would never relinquish.

Roman also was good-natured. He had to be. He received his nickname "Pork" after packing some 30 pounds onto his 60 frame during the first few months of his freshman year. When Hayes took one look at the bulked-up Roman in

his gym shorts, the legendary coach cracked, "Jesus Christ, Roman, you're fatter than Porky Pig." The nickname stuck.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Roman was seemingly always a favorite punching bag for Hayes – sometimes literally.

During the 1968 game against Michigan State, Roman missed an extra point, and when he came to the sideline, he was met by Hayes with a bone-rattling shot to the sternum that briefly staggered Roman. His reaction when an assistant coach asked if he was all right: "Yeah, but I swear, one of these days, I'm gonna kill him."

Many times over the years, I have referred to Glen Cobb as the greatest Ohio State linebacker never to make the All-America team. Cobb never was recognized with first-team All-Big Ten honors, either, probably a direct result of playing his entire career alongside Marcus Marek, the program's all-time leading tackler who was a three-time all-conference defender as well as a first-team All-American in 1982.

But while Marek was something of a blunt instrument, finding where the ball was and hurling himself in that direction, Cobb was more of a tactician. He finished his career with more tackles than College Football Hall of Famer Randy Gradishar or All-American Ryan Shazier, and Cobb's total of 336 stops still ranks 10th in program history.

Additionally, Cobb was a football player's football player. Quiet but extremely well-liked in the locker room, he was voted a two-time team captain back when that honor wasn't given out like fistfuls of candy at Halloween.

I can only imagine the kind of numbers Mike Lanese might have accumulated had his career not coincided with those of Cris Carter and Keith Byars. Nevertheless, Lanese did a little bit of everything for the Buckeyes from 1982 to 1985. He returned 31 punts during his career for a 5.8-yard average, rushed 13 times for 82 yards (a 6.3-yard average) and two touchdowns, and totaled 73 receptions for 1,175 yards and six touchdowns.

Lanese had a number of clutch catches during his career, but none more so than one during the 1984 Michigan game that went for a modest 17 yards. With the Buckeyes clinging to a 7-6 lead early in the fourth quarter and faced with a third-and-12 at their own 43, Lanese made a twisting, leaping catch on a ball that was behind him, an acrobatic play that gave his team a much-needed first down. Seven plays later, Byars scored on a 2-yard run, and Ohio State went on to a 21-6 victory that clinched a Big Ten championship.

In addition to his exploits on the field, Lanese excelled in the classroom. Although he was passed over for first-team All-Big Ten or All-America honors, he was twice named a first-team Academic All-American, earned a National Football Foundation and College Football Hall of Fame Scholarship, and was named a Rhodes Scholar in 1985, the most recent Big Ten football player to be so honored.

Stars get their share of recognition and rightfully so. But for teams to truly excel toward greatness, they need underrated players the likes of Snell, Roman, Cobb and Lanese.

## Most Underrated Ever?

With all due respect to the aforementioned players, one who should be at the top of the underrated list has been largely forgotten by much of Buckeye Nation.

In the opinion of many college football his-

torians, the 1954 Ohio State team might have changed the course of history. After Hayes had compiled a nondescript record of 16-8-2 during his first three seasons in Columbus, the coach's job security was tenuous at best. OSU was, after all, known as "The Graveyard of Coaches" since only two of Hayes' 18 predecessors had been able to hold onto the job for more than five seasons.

But while the rumor mill began churning out a list of potential successors, the 1954 team marched to an undefeated season, topped off by a Rose Bowl victory against USC and a national championship.

That team featured a line anchored by All-America guards Jim Parker and Jim Reichenbach with a triple-threat backfield of quarterback Dave Leggett and halfbacks Bobby Watkins and future Heisman Trophy winner Howard "Hopalong" Cassady. Also on that team were All-America end Dean Dugger, future NFL receiver Dick Brubaker and All-Big Ten tackles Dick Hilinski and Francis "Moose" Machinsky.

But perhaps the most unheralded player in the 1954 starting lineup was fullback/linebacker Hubert Bobo, a good-looking, fun-loving teammate who was all-business on the field and just the opposite away from it.

Bobo came to Ohio State after a career at Chauncey-Dover High School during which he set the state scoring record with 123 career touchdowns from 1949-52. That record remained on the Ohio High School Athletic Association books for 65 years until it was broken in 2017 by Daniel Bangura of Canal Winchester Harvest Prep with 133 TDs.

After a year on the OSU freshman squad, Bobo worked his way into the starting lineup as a sophomore in 1954. Working behind an ultra-talented offensive line and in front of his talented backfield mates, the 6-0, 200-pounder was a devastating blocker but also a talented runner. Despite Cassady and Watkins getting most of the carries, Bobo still managed to rush for 382 yards (averaging 6.1 yards per carry) and three touchdowns.

Defensively, he was equally effective at linebacker. During the famous goal-line stand during the 1954 game against Michigan, it was Bobo who initiated the crucial fourth-down stop at the six-inch line to prevent the Wolverines from taking a 14-7 lead early in the fourth quarter. The Buckeyes took over and drove 99 yards the other way for a go-ahead touchdown in what would ultimately become a 21-7 victory.

Bobo reportedly enjoyed all the perks of being an Ohio State football player, including the Columbus nightlife and being seen on the arm of several pretty young coeds. Unfortunately, that kind of off-campus lifestyle – including a paternity suit filed against him that was later dropped – coupled with a lack of interest in academics and a litany of knee injuries, conspired to put a premature end to Bobo's college career. He was forced to sit out the entire 1955 season, and while he appeared in all nine games in 1956, he got only four carries for 4 yards.

The Philadelphia Eagles took Bobo in the 13th round of the 1957 NFL draft, but his chronic knee injuries cost him any kind of pro career. After a couple of seasons with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats of the Canadian Football League, Bobo played three games in 1960 for the San Diego Chargers in the old American Football League before moving to the New York Titans (later the Jets) where he made 26 starts at middle linebacker during the 1961 and '62 seasons. But another knee injury effectively ended Bobo's career, and he faded into obscurity.

Some say Bobo never again returned to Ohio while others claim he came back every fall unannounced to attend Ohio State games. Whichever is true, this much is known. Bobo finally settled in Las Vegas, and he died there on Sept. 1, 1999, at the age of 65.





### DeWine, Smith Want Full Capacity In Horseshoe

A spokesperson for Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine told Toledo Blade reporter Kyle Rowland that, absent restrictions from the Big Ten, Ohio Stadium should be full this upcoming season.

“Ohio has set a benchmark that we will remove COVID mitigation protocols when we drop below high case levels,” said press secretary Dan Tierney. “This will happen when our two-week case rate drops below 50 cases per 100,000 residents. We believe this is likely to happen well before the start of the football season, and the CDC has echoed that optimism in statements this week.”

Ohio State released a statement June 1 announcing that season tickets are officially on sale for the 2021 football season. Along with that, the statement also included a quote from athletic director Gene Smith, where he stated that he is hopeful that Ohio Stadium can be at 100 percent capacity for the upcoming season.

“Our hope is that we are at full capacity for our football games,” Smith said. “We will continue to work with our university partners and with Columbus Public Health on all of our safety protocols, including strongly encouraging those who are eligible to get vaccinated. You’ll continue to hear that message of support for vaccinations a lot from our department, the university and Columbus Public Health because it is a key component to having a full stadium in the fall.”

The point on the importance of vaccinations was also emphasized later in the release, where it states that the vaccines have “been proven to be safe and effective.”

Starting on June 21, students will be able to purchase season ticket packages, while single-game tickets are going to go on sale in mid-August.

The seat selection process for season ticket holders is going to take place at some point in the summer, according to the release. The safety protocols at Ohio Stadium, including what the attendance numbers will ultimately be, will be done through “partnership with health and medical officials, including Columbus Public Health.”

### Ohio State Announces Gates As Sabau Replacement

Ohio State has hired Boston College senior associate athletic director and senior woman administrator Jocelyn Gates as its new senior associate athletic director. She “will have administrative oversight with Ohio State’s football program,” according to a press release.

“I am both honored and humbled to be given the opportunity to serve one of the most storied programs in college athletics,” Gates said. “The Ohio State University has

an unwavering commitment to academic and athletic excellence. I would like to thank both Gene Smith and (senior deputy athletics director) Janine Oman for their support during this process and for the opportunity they have given me to join a wonderful team.

“Additionally, Ohio State’s tradition of excellence on the football field is second to none, and having the chance to work directly with this championship football program will be, without question, an incredible opportunity to continue serving student-athletes and coaches at the highest level. My family and I are thrilled to join the Buckeye team.”

Gates is replacing Diana Sabau, who was named the Big Ten’s deputy commissioner and chief sports officer. When speaking to the media on a June 7 Zoom call, Gates said she has had conversations with Sabau and that “she will be somebody I stay in contact with.”

Gates was at Boston College for four years, where she had direct oversight over the women’s basketball, women’s soccer and men’s and women’s golf programs. She also spent four years at South Florida and four years at Duke after starting as a postgraduate intern in the diversity and inclusion department at the NCAA headquarters in Indianapolis.

“We are all excited to welcome Jocelyn to the sports administration team at Ohio State,” Oman said. “Jocelyn is a connector who excels at building relationships and is committed to providing our student athletes’ exceptional experiences. Her varied and impressive background in intercollegiate athletics will greatly benefit our team.”

Gates said that once the opportunity arose, it was something she couldn’t pass up.

“When you get a call from Ohio State, you don’t turn it down,” Gates said. “You run to it.”

She said she has not yet met with head coach Ryan Day, though the two had conversations through texts. Gates made it a point that she did not want to interfere much with the recruiting dead period just ending and also said she has had a lot of respect for Ohio State’s program after Boston College tabbed former Buckeye co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hailey to become its head coach.

### OSU Report Finds Masseur Wrongdoing

A massage therapist not affiliated with Ohio State engaged in sexual activities with five student-athletes from the football team after “using those massages as a means to initiate sexual interactions,” according to records released by Ohio State and obtained by BSB. Those involved said the sexual activities were consensual.

Smith told media in a Zoom call May 13 that no NCAA violations were committed by Ohio State based on the results of an investigation. He also indicated that no laws seemed to be broken by either party.

Smith emphasized the character that was displayed by student-athletes within the program during the investigation and said the findings have been released because Ohio State holds itself to a higher standard and encourages complete transparency.

“I’m thankful that our student-athletes, our coaches and staff were honest, forthright and open during the investigation, and I’m really thankful that they maintained confidentiality, affording the investigation the opportunity to operate without distraction and be able to operate with integrity,” Smith said.

Of the 117 interviews with former and current Ohio State student-athletes, 34 had knowledge of the massage therapist, nine interacted with her over social media or knew about her directly from players on the team and 20 more student-athletes strictly received a massage.

The report also states that “virtually all of

## Interview Issue, Recruiting News

The next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, the annual Interview Issue, will be mailed on July 6. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff is already working to make it another great installment of this popular edition. That will be followed by our 41st Football Preview Issue, set to be mailed in August.

In the meantime, football recruiting visits are back in full swing, and we want to remind you that any football recruiting news will be posted at our BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all subscribers. With the growing popularity of the transfer portal, readers will also want to check in regularly to keep track of the comings and goings in all major sports.

The BSB staff provides daily posts on any and all Ohio State sports news 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.

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the football student athletes who were massaged by the massage therapist only received between 1-3 massages.”

One student, listed as student-athlete No. 4 (SA004), was used by the massage therapist, a 41-year-old female who lives two hours northeast of Ohio State, as a way to provide her access to other players on the team and to “legitimize herself as a massage therapist as she pursued sexual encounters with other OSU football student athletes,” according to the findings.

“During his interview, SA004 indicated he paid \$100 for each of the first three or four massages, but then the massage therapist gave him subsequent massages for free,” the report states. “SA004 estimated he received 50 to 60 massages in total. As discussed above, the massage therapist used SA004 to gain access to other football student athletes in her pursuit of sexual encounters.”

According to the investigation, the massage therapist did not have contact with any student-athletes from any other sports than the Ohio State football team. She has had her license revoked for her actions.

Ohio State employs independent massage therapists associated with the teams that are required to go through compliance and operate with a trainer in the room at all times, according to Smith.

In the findings, some student-athletes described the sexual contact from the massage therapist as “touching their genital area either accidentally or in an inappropriate way during massages.” No student-athletes reported the incidents to law enforcement or to any Ohio State staff, “particularly because the massage therapist stopped when the football student-athletes objected.”

Smith said that Ohio State began working with the NCAA as soon as it was aware of the investigation. The wrongdoing was reported to the State Medical Board of Ohio initially on March 14, 2020, though Smith said that he does not know who reported it. He also emphasized that there was no wrongdoing from the players, and the only consideration to not releasing the findings would have been to protect the safety of the student-athletes.

The conclusion section of the report – which was done by Barnes & Thornburg, an independent law firm – states that the massage therapist made these actions and carried out a plan “for what appeared to fulfill her

personal infatuation with Ohio State football student-athletes.”

“She had no connection to the Athletics Department or the University. The apparent purpose of the scheme was to engage in sexual encounters with OSU football student-athletes. No coaches or staff had any knowledge of the massage therapist or her scheme,” the conclusion reads. “No deficiencies were detected in the OSU compliance program to protect against such schemes or other threats to the physical safety of its football student-athletes.

“Although there was no determination of a criminal violation, it nevertheless would be prudent to refer the massage therapist’s activity to a prosecutor for consideration.”

Smith indicated that the massage therapist used her connections to these players to be close to and have sex with Ohio State football players but did not have an ulterior end goal.

### OSU Parents Respond To Warren Comments

An organization representing parents of Ohio State football players said that recent revelations reinforce their “lack of confidence in the Big Ten Conference leadership.”

Those revelations came as the result of a documents dump – a response to Freedom of Information Act requests from local media – regarding the Big Ten’s postponement and eventual return of its 2020 season. One of those documents was a text message from Ohio State University president Kristina M. Johnson to Smith.

The text came this past August, right as the Buckeye parents were preparing to release a letter requesting Big Ten commissioner Kevin Warren reconsider his initial decision to cancel fall football.

“Kevin is alleging that the letter is being manufactured. The upcoming letter from OSU parents – claims it is being manufactured – I am not happy pretty serious charge IMHO,” Johnson wrote.

The parents said in a statement that not only was their letter genuine, but it was written with the support of other Big Ten parent groups, as is this most current missive.

They say their appreciation for Johnson, Smith and Day has grown because of the respectful way they advocated for players this past autumn.

Meanwhile, their message to commission-



er Warren is, “Reflect, Adjust, Communicate, and Do Better.”

The rest of the document dump, shared on May 27, contained little in the way of relevant information, though Smith did mention in texts the possibility of Ohio State switching from the Big Ten to conference independence in 2020 so that it could play a season, which did not come to pass.

### Smith Nabs Extension Through 2026

Smith has signed a contract extension that keeps him with the university until June 2026, when he will be 70 years old.

Smith was named the OSU athletic director on March 5, 2005 – making him the eighth person to hold the position. He’d held the same role with Arizona State, Iowa State and Eastern Michigan before coming to Columbus.

Among Smith’s achievements are the fact that he has helped to raise more than \$130 million for the construction of the Schumaker Complex, Covelli Arena and Ty Tucker Tennis Center, as well as a renovation at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. Plus, he has introduced multiple programs to help student-athletes transition to life after college. That includes internships and career fairs that coaches have used, not only to help their

players develop, but as recruiting tools.

During this past year, Smith advocated, as mentioned, for Ohio State athletes, urging the use of stringent health protocols, rather than the cancellation of the fall football season. He has served as the chair of the Division I Men’s Basketball Committee and a member of the College Football Playoff selection committee.

Smith’s base salary under the new agreement will be \$1.58 million.

### To’o To’o Spurns Buckeyes, Picks ‘Bama

Ohio State sat on the edge of its seat for weeks, awaiting the transfer decision of Tennessee linebacker Henry To’o To’o, but when news finally broke, it wasn’t the kind that the Buckeyes wanted.

To’o To’o, after weeks of rumors that Ohio State would be his choice, announced on May 8 his decision to remain in the SEC and suit up for Alabama.

To’o To’o shone immediately for the Vols when he arrived as a freshman in 2019. A former four-star recruit from Concord (Calif.) De La Salle, To’o To’o earned freshman All-America plaudits both nationally and in the SEC after he racked up 72 tackles (second on the team), five tackles for loss and one half sack as the starter at middle linebacker.

He flashed his versatility in 2020, moving

to the weakside linebacker position and again thriving, notching a team-high 76 tackles and 10 tackles for loss, fourth most in the SEC. He was named to the 2020 All-SEC fourth team by Phil Steele after the season.

To’o To’o is also considered a strong leader and could look to contend for captaincy right away.

“It honestly comes with integrity, it comes with consistency and being able to do the right things at all times,” To’o To’o said. “I don’t have the right to yell at somebody or tell somebody that they’re doing something wrong if I’m not doing it right.”

He announced his intention to transfer from Tennessee shortly after the end of the season, when head coach Jeremy Pruitt’s job appeared to be in jeopardy. When he was fired and new head coach Josh Heupel was hired, Heupel extended an open invitation to To’o To’o to return, saying that he would be welcomed back with open arms.

However, To’o To’o had his eyes on Alabama and Ohio State and ultimately decided to make the move to don the crimson and white, where he’s immediately eligible.

### Ohio State-Oregon Will Have FOX Noon Kick

FOX announced on May 13 that the Ohio State football team will square off with the

Oregon Ducks in Ohio Stadium on its primary network on Sept. 11. Ohio State confirmed that the game is expected to serve in FOX’s “Big Noon Saturday” spot, which goes to the highest-profile FOX game each week.

If that’s the case, as expected, Ohio State will also play host to the “Big Noon Kickoff” show, featuring Reggie Bush, Matt Leinart, Rob Stone and Bob Stoops, who is set to take over for former analyst Urban Meyer.

That’s been a frequent home for the Buckeyes since FOX announced its Big Noon initiative back in 2019. Ohio State has been featured in the noon broadcast window eight times since then (it would have been nine if not for the cancellation of the 2020 game with Michigan), more than any other team. Michigan has appeared six times, followed by a tie for third between Oklahoma and Texas (five appearances each) and a three-way tie for fourth, with Kansas State, Texas Tech and West Virginia having each played three games.

The Buckeyes will take on Michigan on FOX this season as well, with its usual noon kickoff.

Ohio State announced three more kickoff times on May 27.

The Buckeyes will open the season on Sept. 2 with an 8 p.m. kickoff at TCF Bank

Continued On Page 6

## From The Pages Of BSB

### 35 Years Ago – 1986

Ohio State coaches Al Bianco and Mary Jo Ruggieri were expecting the worst as they prepared for the recommendations made by the Program Review Committee of the Ohio State Athletic Council.

Instead, the coaches of the men’s soccer and women’s synchronized swimming teams, respectively, were met with good news by the committee. It recommended the expansion of backing for non-revenue programs, including those run by Bianco and Ruggieri. The infusion of money would be crucial for both programs.

“We really need it,” Bianco said. “That’s the thing. I always felt, really, we shouldn’t have been in that review in the first place. So maybe people will hopefully realize that soccer is a growing entity and it’s part of Ohio and it needs to be supported.”

The two were expecting the worst because their teams had been part of the list compiled by athletic director Rick Bay of programs to cut, along with five others. Had Bay’s recommendations been accepted by the committee, both programs and the others on that list would have likely been on the way to being disbanded.

### 30 Years Ago – 1991

Experience and heart are valuable commodities on a championship team, and that was never more true than with the Big Ten champion Ohio State baseball team.

Although there were only six seniors on the roster, their experience from past seasons and their ability to rise to the occasion separated the Buckeyes from the rest of the league when it came time to decide a champion at the league tournament in Columbus.

It also spelled the difference from the previous year, when essentially the same roster went 32-29-1 and fell in the Big Ten title game. This one rode hard work and heart to the program’s first conference title since 1967 despite the lack of senior leadership.

Head coach Bob Todd praised his players after the game, a 3-2 victory over Minnesota, capping an impressive 53-13 slate and earning a berth in the NCAA Regionals for the first time since 1982 on May 18.

“These guys battled hard all year and never once gave up on themselves,” Todd said. “They had character, and sometimes they proved that it’s the team that wants to win more, not necessarily the team that plays the best. Each of these guys, in his own way, contributed to the season we had.”

### 25 Years Ago – 1996

Already in the midst of a major construction project for an \$85 million basketball/hockey arena, Ohio State athletic director Andy Geiger was making a proposed renovation project at Ohio Stadium – a plan that could run another \$80 million – also a top priority.

Geiger envisioned the stadium upgrade as a self-contained project, one which was long overdue.

“I think the urgency to do this was about 1980,” said Geiger. “I think we haven’t invested in that facility in a long, long time. This will be the 75th football season we have played

in that stadium, and there is very much an attitude of taking it for granted.

“I came in here and I guess I would say I was surprised about that.”

Ohio State wanted to bring its signature football stadium up to date by adding adequate bathroom facilities and increased provisions for handicapped spectators, using luxury sky boxes and increased seating capacity as the means to pay for the improvements.

“The problems that exist in that stadium are problems of building coding and needing to increase our bathroom facilities,” Geiger said. “Also, we have concerns in the South Stands with not being able to provide amenities that are up to the standard they ought to be.”

### 20 Years Ago – 2001

Dave Kennedy, a fixture with the Ohio State football program as the strength and conditioning coach for the previous 12 seasons, abruptly turned in his resignation May 12.

The 40-year-old Kennedy, credited with producing a number of NFL stars in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center weight room, walked away from a lucrative long-term contract to “pursue other career opportunities,” he said through an OSU release.

Speculation immediately turned to a possible rift between Kennedy, who had almost full autonomy with the offseason conditioning program under former head coach John Cooper, and new head coach Jim Tressel.

The head coach admitted that he was caught off guard by the move.

“I had a pretty busy schedule planned for May with alumni club meetings and recruiting responsibilities,” Tressel told BSB. “Then this happened and it suddenly became a priority as well.”

When asked about the timeline for replacing Kennedy, Tressel kept his answer short, saying that Ohio State would like to find a new strength and conditioning director as quickly as possible.

“We are subject to the regular university procedures on hiring, but we’re building a case to do this as quickly as we can,” Tressel said. “We have a solid list of people we’re looking at, and the reality is any position at Ohio State will have tremendous interest.”

### 15 Years Ago – 2006

Allan Johnson, Ohio State’s director of football strength and conditioning, announced his resignation May 12 to pursue other career opportunities.

Johnson, whose resignation would take effect Aug. 31, had been a member of the Ohio State staff since 2001, Tressel’s first year in Columbus. He succeeded Kennedy, who had been hired by John Cooper.

“I’ve really enjoyed my years here at Ohio State,” Johnson said. “I want to thank Coach Tressel for the opportunity to be part of this program the past five seasons. The 2002 national championship and three BCS games are something I will never forget. I would also like to thank all the great people in the Ohio State athletics department.

“At this point in my career, though, I would like the chance

to pursue other opportunities including getting into athletic administration, motivational speaking and consulting.”

A successor was expected to be named by early June, with former OSU assistant Mike Cochran, who had worked with Tressel at Youngstown State and was directing the strength program at Marshall, considered the front-runner.

### 10 Years Ago – 2011

Tressel sent shock waves through the college football world when he resigned May 30 in the wake of NCAA violations.

“After meeting with university officials, we agreed that it is in the best interest of Ohio State that I resign as head football coach,” Tressel said in a letter to athletic director Gene Smith. “The appreciation that (wife) Ellen and I have for the Buckeye Nation is immeasurable. We have been blessed to work with the finest group of young men in America, and we love them dearly.

“We know that God had a plan for us, and we will be fine. We will be Buckeyes forever.”

Along with Tressel’s letter of resignation, it was announced that assistant coach Luke Fickell would replace Tressel on an interim basis for the 2011 season. Among the candidates speculated as potential full-time replacements once the 2011 campaign ended were Mark Dantonio, Fickell, Jon Gruden, Darrell Hazell, Urban Meyer, Bo Pelini and Mark Stoops.

### Five Years Ago – 2016

Two of the biggest pieces in the master plan for Ohio State athletic facilities were well over budget.

The Covelli Multi-Sport Arena and the Student-Athlete Development Center were budgeted at \$30 million and \$32 million, respectively, and both were seeing significant cost overruns, according to Ohio State officials at a committee meeting June 2. Price estimates were made in 2012, and costs for labor and materials had increased significantly in the four years since.

Though only in the design phase, the two facilities were part of the planned athletic village along the Olentangy River corridor. Construction would not be authorized until the budget was under control, and the administrators at the committee meeting said they would take the rest of the summer to determine how to get the projects in line.

### One Year Ago – 2020

State University of New York chancellor Dr. Kristina M. Johnson was officially named the next president of The Ohio State University during a board of trustees meeting on June 3.

“We are pleased beyond measure to welcome Dr. Johnson to Ohio State,” board of trustees chairman Gary R. Heminger said during the meeting. “Her range of knowledge, service and accomplishments across sectors and throughout her career is nothing short of remarkable. She is uniquely positioned to make an immediate impact, building on Ohio State’s momentum and advancing our mission to uplift lives through academic excellence.”

Johnson was set to begin her tenure with Ohio State on Sept. 1, as she would take over for then-president Michael Drake, who had announced his plan to step away from the position back on Nov. 21, 2019.



Continued From Page 5

Stadium, the home of the Minnesota Golden Gophers. A Thursday game, it was widely assumed that this would draw a night kick, but it was unclear if it would be at 7:30 p.m. or 8 p.m. This will also be a FOX game, and FOX's "Big Noon Kickoff" pregame show will be on site according to an Ohio State release. The Golden Gophers went 3-4 in 2020 but return the majority of their roster. That includes three-year starting quarterback Tanner Morgan and halfback Mohamed Ibrahim, who rushed for 1,076 yards last

season.

The third game of the season, a Sept. 18 home game with Tulsa, will kick at 3:30 p.m. on Fox Sports 1. The Golden Hurricanes put up a strong 6-3 campaign in 2020, falling to a pair of Power Five opponents (Oklahoma State in the season opener, Mississippi State in the Armed Forces Bowl) and Cincinnati in the American Athletic Conference Championship. They claimed wins over a pair of then-ranked foes in UCF and SMU.

Ohio State's Oct. 9 matchup with Maryland will be a noon kickoff and is serving as Ohio State's homecoming. No TV network has been selected yet. The Terrapins went 2-3 in 2020 and are set to return quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa, wide receiver Rakim Jarrett and a good portion of their defense.

### Buckeyes Schedule New Series With Oregon For 2030s

Ohio State will make up for the lost 2020 matchup in Eugene against Oregon with yet another home-and-home against the Ducks. The Buckeyes will square off with Oregon for a home-and-home series in 2032 and 2033, more than a decade after the original home-and-home series was set to be played.

Ohio State will travel to Oregon for the opening stanza of the series, before Oregon makes a return trip the following year to complete the series.

Bill Landis of The Athletic noted that Oregon, which lost its half of the original

## 2021 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2020 Record
Sept. 2	at Minnesota	8 p.m.	FOX	3-4
Sept. 11	OREGON*	Noon	FOX	4-3
Sept. 18	TULSA*	3:30 p.m.	FS1	6-3
Sept. 25	AKRON	TBA	TBA	1-5
Oct. 2	at Rutgers	TBA	TBA	3-6
Oct. 9	MARYLAND	Noon	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	Noon	FOX	2-4
Dec. 4	Big Ten Championship**	TBA	TBA	

\* 2020 bowl team

\*\* at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

home-and-home due to the pandemic, will be paid for its trip to Ohio State this season to the tune of \$3.5 million, significantly higher than the going rate for a traditional one-off nonconference game.

The Ducks are the first team on Ohio State's schedule for both seasons and will likely serve as the marquee nonconference matchup as the follow-up for Ohio State's 2030-31 series with Georgia.

This move comes shortly after Oregon athletic director Rob Mullens said that the attempt to reschedule the lost game would likely happen much later than many may have hoped, given the nature of college football scheduling.

"It's probably not (happening) on the timeline that everybody wants, just because of the nature of the way football scheduling works," Mullens said.

### Day Slotted As No. 4 Coach In CBS Rankings

Day earned the No. 4 spot in CBS Sports' annual Power Five coach rankings list, his highest placement yet and six spots up from his No. 10 ranking last season. The Buckeye head coach is slotted behind only Alabama's Nick Saban, who has led the list every year that CBS has run it, Dabo Swinney of Clemson and Oklahoma's Lincoln Riley.

In their justification for the ranking, CBS cites Day's early success both on the field and on the recruiting trail and mentions that he's starting to move out from under the shadow of Urban Meyer, which held him back on this list in his first two seasons as the lead man for Ohio State.

"I had been one of the voters holding Day back last season because I took a more patient approach," CBS writer Tom Fornelli wrote. "I felt that Day had inherited a pretty nice program from Urban Meyer, and I wanted to see how he maintained it. Well, two playoff berths and a title-game loss later, and I'd say he's doing pretty well. Hell, you could say he's doing some things better than Meyer. Ohio State is easily one of the three best programs in the country, and Day has only made that more obvious since taking over. 2020 rank: 10 (plus-6)"

Day checks in just ahead of Notre Dame's Brian Kelly, Texas A&M's Jimbo Fisher, Georgia's Kirby Smart, Pat Fitzgerald of Northwestern, Iowa State's Matt Campbell and Dan Mullen of Florida to round out the top 10.

Fitzgerald is No. 2 among Big Ten coaches, followed by Penn State's James Franklin (No. 13); Iowa's Kirk Ferentz (No. 17); Wisconsin's Paul Chryst (No. 18); Tom Allen of Indiana (No. 20); Michigan's Jim Harbaugh (No. 23) and Minnesota's P.J. Fleck (No. 25) to round out the top 25.

Former Ohio State defensive coordinator and current Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano is next at No. 34, followed by Illinois first-year head coach Bret Bielema (No. 42); Nebraska's Scott Frost (No. 47); Purdue's Jeff Brohm (No. 53); Michigan State's Mel Tucker (No. 57) and Maryland's Mike Locksley (No.

61).

Among the other potential names of interest to the Buckeyes, former co-defensive coordinator and current Boston College head coach Jeff Hafley sits at No. 40, and Oregon head coach Mario Cristobal is No. 16, the lone non-Big Ten Power Five coach on Ohio State's schedule this season.

### Ohio State Top Five In Pair Of Preseason Polls

The preseason rankings have been friendly to Ohio State for years. Since Jim Tressell took over in 2001, Ohio State has entered the season as a top-10 team far more often than not, and that doesn't look to be changing in 2021, despite the departure of quarterback Justin Fields to the NFL. Though many of the preseason rankings have not yet dropped, Pro Football Focus and Athlon have now released their preseason projections and kept with the tradition, both slotting Ohio State inside the top five.

PFF is a bit higher on the Buckeyes than Athlon, placing them at No. 3 in the nation, behind only No. 1 Alabama and No. 2 Clemson. The analytics site also lists national-championship and conference-title probabilities and has the Buckeyes at 13 percent in the former and 48 percent in the latter. The 13 percent is tied for third with Oklahoma and trails Alabama's 23 percent and Clemson's 17 percent, while the 48 percent is easily the best in the Big Ten, followed by Iowa (17 percent), Wisconsin (11 percent), Indiana (7 percent) and Michigan (5 percent).

Ohio State will square off with four teams in the PFF top 25: No. 13 Oregon, No. 19 Penn State, No. 24 Indiana and No. 25 Michigan.

Meanwhile, Ohio State is No. 4 in Athlon's top 25, trailing Alabama, Clemson and Oklahoma.

"The Buckeyes are 23-2 and have yet to lose a regular-season game in coach Ryan Day's first two years at the helm in Columbus," Steven Lassan of Athlon wrote. "And despite the loss of quarterback Justin Fields (and some others) to the NFL, Ohio State is once again a clear favorite to win the Big Ten. A three-man battle between C.J. Stroud, Kyle McCord and Jack Miller III to replace Fields will continue into the fall, with Stroud expected to earn the starting nod. Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson are back to lead the nation's No. 1 receiving corps, and the pieces are in place for Ohio State to also possess the top offensive line in college football.

"Trey Sermon departed at running back, but Master Teague, Miyan Williams and touted freshman TreVeyon Henderson provide Day with plenty of choices. Improving the defense was priority No. 1 this offseason. The Buckeyes finished an uncharacteristic 11th in the Big Ten in pass efficiency defense, ranked near the bottom in big plays allowed and surrendered 5.9 yards per play – the highest mark in school history. The line is in good shape with the return of Zach Harrison, Tyreke Smith and (Haskell Garrett), but question marks remain at linebacker and in

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

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the secondary.

“A road trip to Minnesota and a home date against Oregon to start ‘21 provide Day with a good barometer of where this team is in early September. Road trips to Indiana and Michigan are on tap, but it’s hard to find a game where Ohio State will stumble in the regular season.”

The Ducks (No. 9), Nittany Lions (No. 19) and Hoosiers (No. 21) are all included on this list as well.

### Ohio State Hires Pair On Creative Team

Ohio State football uses social media to connect with fans and potential recruits. Heading into an era when athletes will be able to capitalize off their name, image and likeness, they also use it to help Buckeye players with their branding. And the creative team that makes all that happen is seeing some changes, with two key members leaving.

“Zach (Swartz) and Chris (Charizopoulos) were both tremendous,” director of player personnel Mark Pantoni said, thanking them for their work. “They were elite at what they did.”

Swartz had been with the team since 2016 as the program’s director of creative media and post production, but now he is a senior producer for talent agency William Morris Endeavor.

Charizopoulos left after two years at Ohio State as director of creative design & branding to be a senior manager for social and digital content design with the NBA.

Pantoni also introduced the new additions. “Addison Skaggs is replacing Zach,” he said. “She’s coming in from Baylor. She was highly recommended by (Carolina Panthers coach) Matt Rhule, and as soon as we met with her on Zoom, she blew us away and she blew Coach Day away. She’s only 24 years old. She’s very young, but she has great leadership and she has great vision.”

Skaggs graduated from Oklahoma State in 2019 and worked with the Baylor football team following that. She also interned for the NBA’s Oklahoma City Thunder and Major League Baseball.

“And then we just hired C.J. Campbell to replace Chris,” Pantoni continued.

This is actually a return to Ohio for Campbell who, in addition to serving as director of graphic design for Nebraska football, also briefly worked in graphic design for the University of Cincinnati. He graduated from Newman University in 2019 and has interned with Oregon State and South Florida.

The nearly 500,000 Ohio State football Twitter followers should be seeing their work, with both starting work in late May.

“We’re excited about what they’re going to bring,” Pantoni said. “They understand that Zach and Chris were phenomenal at their jobs, but they’re hungry, young and excited.”

### Two Former Buckeyes On CFB HOF Ballot

The National Football Foundation on June 2 released the ballot for the 2022 College Football Hall of Fame class, and two Ohio State Buckeyes were included among the 78 FBS players who are candidates.

Safety Mike Doss (1999-2002) was a three-time first-team All-American, earning unanimous honors as a senior, and the 2002 Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year. He led the Buckeyes to the 2003 BCS National Championship, earning defensive MVP honors in a 31-24 double-overtime victory over the Miami Hurricanes.

Linebacker James Laurinaitis (2005-2008) was also a three-time first-team All-American. He won Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year honors twice and led the Buckeyes in tackles for three straight seasons, and his teams won

Big Ten titles every year he played with the Scarlet and Gray.

“It’s an enormous honor to just be on the College Football Hall of Fame ballot considering more than 5.47 million people have played college football and only 1,038 players have been inducted,” said NFF President and CEO Steve Hatchell.

After the vote of the more than 12,000 NFF members is tabulated, the organization’s Honor Court, chaired by former Ohio State running back Archie Griffin, will deliberate and select the class.

The results of that process will be announced early next year. That date has yet to be specified, but the induction ceremony is already set for Dec. 6, 2022.

### Wray Lands At Colorado

Former Ohio State offensive tackle Max Wray is transferring to Colorado to finish out his college football career after announcing earlier this offseason that he would be departing from Ohio State prior to his fourth season in Columbus. The former four-star from Franklin, Tenn., started one game for the Buckeyes in his career, against Michigan State in 2020 when he filled in on a COVID-ravaged offensive line.

At Colorado, Wray will reconnect with his brother Jake, who was forced to retire from football this fall after a back injury but remains around the Buffalo program as a filmmaker. The younger Wray was also once a Buckeye commitment but flipped his pledge to Colorado prior to signing his national letter of intent.

The elder Wray left Ohio State with a bachelor’s degree in communications and was recognized at Ohio State’s graduation ceremony. For the full list of Buckeyes who earned degrees this semester, see page 31 of this issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

### Saunders Signs With Carolina Panthers

Despite not playing in a collegiate football game the past two seasons, former Ohio State wide receiver C.J. Saunders has found his way onto an NFL team, signing with the Carolina Panthers on June 1.

Saunders played in 2017 and 2018 for the Buckeyes, tallying a total of 27 catches for 294 yards and a touchdown for his career. His best year came in 2017, when he had 17 receptions for 221 yards and the lone score, which came against UNLV.

The former walk-on receiver eventually earned his scholarship with the team and became a captain, before an injury took out his entire 2019 campaign. This past season, Saunders also worked from the sideline, this time as a student coach after he was denied eligibility by the NCAA.

But Saunders attempted to prove himself



FILE PHOTO

**ON THE BALLOT – Ohio State Linebacker James Laurinaitis (33), along with safety Mike Doss, is on the 2022 ballot for the College Football Hall of Fame.**

worthy of being an NFL talent, working out at Ohio State’s pro day. He ran a 4.69-second 40-yard dash and had a 34.5-inch vertical.

On the Panthers, Saunders will be joining one former Buckeye in guard Pat Elflein, who signed a three-year deal with Carolina on March 17.

### Baugh Released By Washington Football Team

Former Ohio State tight end Marcus Baugh is looking for a new team this offseason after he was released by the Washington Football Team on May 10, ending his short tenure with the team.

Baugh played for head coach Ron Rivera with the Panthers in 2019. He originally signed with Washington last offseason but was waived on Oct. 22, 2020, before being signed back to the practice squad two days later.

He was moved to the active roster on Dec. 9. He suited up in eight games for Washington but recorded just one reception for two yards. Washington inked the contracts of three tight ends in the past month, locking up Sammis Reyes and Deon Yelder in free agency and drafting Boise State product John Yates in the fourth round of the 2021 NFL draft, leaving little space for the former Buckeye.

Rivera praised Baugh last season as potentially the most athletic tight end on the team but also said that he had a lot to learn about

playing the position.

Baugh will look to catch on elsewhere with several months to go before the start of the 2021 season. One of the better receiving tight ends in Ohio State’s history, he may look to sell his 52 receptions, 573 receiving yards and seven touchdowns in his final two seasons in Columbus as part of the pitch for signing him.

### Johnnie Dixon Catches On With Dallas Cowboys

The Dallas Cowboys, in an effort to bolster their already significant depth at the wide receiver position, signed former Ohio State Buckeye Johnnie Dixon.

Dixon worked out with the team in early May. He had also recently tried out for the Browns at Cleveland’s rookie minicamp.

He joins a wide receiver room that includes fellow former Buckeye Noah Brown, as well as Amari Cooper, Michael Gallup, CeeDee Lamb, Cedrick Wilson and Malik Turner. Dallas drafted Stanford receiver Simi Fehoko in the fifth round of the 2021 NFL draft.

Dixon went undrafted out of Ohio State in 2019 but has spent time with the Houston Texans and Arizona Cardinals, although he has never appeared in a regular-season game.

As a Buckeye, he registered 67 catches for 1,146 yards and 16 touchdowns.

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

## Podcast Assesses First 4 Seasons Of Day Era

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 May 31, we took a look at Ryan Day’s career at Ohio State (2017-present) and took a shot at building the ideal Day roster, by position room. Does the 2017 quarterback room get a nod over Justin Fields and the 2020 room? Are the 2018 veteran receivers more valuable than the 2021 young guns?

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 who are new to the podcast world, the show is also posted at 10 a.m. every Friday on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as in the BSB Forum.



# NIL Bill Would Help More Than Just Football Players

Continued From Page 1

"Important to note, Michigan has name, image and likeness for their student-athletes. I think the athletic director would agree with me, we cannot let Michigan win at anything."

There have been concerns about allowing students to earn compensation from NIL, with some saying it may lead to lessened team chemistry due to star players earning much larger incentives than members of the roster deeper in the depth chart.

But Antani made sure to emphasize that he believes this bill will help players across all sports and across all levels of stardom thanks to endorsements from a variety of different types of business and brands.

"I think we should note that not every student will get a Nike deal or a Coke deal. Many of these will get deals back home in their hometown, where they are significant, where they are proud of their student-athlete for making it at Ohio State, at the University of Cincinnati, at another major institution in Ohio," Antani said. "Their local automotive dealer may want them to appear in an advertisement. Their local bookstore may want them to do a book signing. Their local restaurant may want them to appear at an event, and as a student-athlete who has an apparent right to own their own name, image and likeness, they should be able to do that."

"Today is a big step forward for the rights of student-athletes in Ohio."

## 'Ohio State Basically Wrote This Bill'

Matt Brown, publisher of Extra Points, a newsletter covering off-the-field topics for college sports, has studied a variety of NIL bills from states and spoke to BSB on what he believes makes Ohio's version of the bill stand out.

As far as where it lands on the spectrum of how open or constraining the bill will be for student-athletes, Brown believes it lands somewhere around the halfway point.

"It's similar to many of the other bills that I've seen, with a couple of exceptions," Brown said. "I think that's worth pointing out because if you're somebody that really wants Ohio to have a name, image and likeness bill to provide a recruiting advantage, I don't think this bill provides that. It's certainly not the most restrictive bill that I've seen; it's not the least restrictive; it's kind of around the middle."

"If you're someone who's invested in this and wants Ohio State to compete nationally and have the best chance to get every athlete, there's a potential for this to be a little restrictive."

Specifically, there are two areas of the bill's wording that stood out to Brown. The first is in Section 3376.06 Part D of the bill, where it states that student-athletes "shall disclose the proposed contract" with a university official "at least 15 days before the date the student intends to enter into the proposed contract."

"That's the most restrictive, most notice required anywhere. Most places don't require you to give any," Brown said. "I think Mississippi requires you to give a week. There might be one other one that has a week, 15 is the most. Now is that necessarily a deal breaker? Probably not, but it is some extra paperwork."

But the most major restriction in the Ohio bill, according to Brown, comes in Part C of the same section, where it states a

student-athlete cannot enter a contract "that requires the student to display a sponsor's product, or otherwise advertise for a sponsor, during official team activities or any other time if that requirement is in conflict with a provision of a contract to which a state institution of higher education or private college is a party."

"As I understand it, it says that an athlete can't enter a name, image and likeness sponsorship arrangement if it conflicts with any pre-existing university sponsorship deal. And not just during official team business, but at any time," Brown said. "Here's why this is a big deal, because the common example is apparel, but like, I've talked to apparel companies, you know how many Ohio State athletes are going to be able to get a shoe deal, like across all sports? One, maybe two. The individual marketplace deals for athletic apparel, it's a small market. But Ohio State has sponsorships with literally everybody. There's an official soda pop. There's an official insurance company. There's an official grocery store."

"Ohio State doesn't have to exercise their right to block an athlete in every one of these, but if we're looking at 40 different industries, even in a place like Columbus, that can basically limit you to saying you can work with a company that already works with your school, you can work with a social media national deal, or you could do something that's like a camp. But everything else is going to conflict with Ohio State."

As for why these were included, Brown believes it likely came from Ohio State itself, which Antani had said worked "hand in hand" in the creation of the legislation.

"Here's the truth. I think Ohio State basically wrote this bill," Brown said. "This isn't me casting a shot at any particular Ohio lawmaker, but from somebody who's been watching this now for months and has followed these individual bills. These lawmakers are generally not proposing these things because they are defenders of the

cause of athlete free markets. They're doing it because they don't want their schools to be at a recruiting disadvantage."

"I think that somebody within Ohio State's legislative affairs team looked around, thought these were relatively boilerplate. They thought that they would protect Ohio State's interests, and nobody told them anything different."

Smith had discussed the possibility of the NCAA passing nationwide legislation on NIL, stating that he's hopeful it will happen at the Division I Council's meeting later in June. National legislation could also come through Congress, though that is something that Antani seemed to think was less likely when he said in his opening statement that he was "not confident in Congress' ability to get this done."

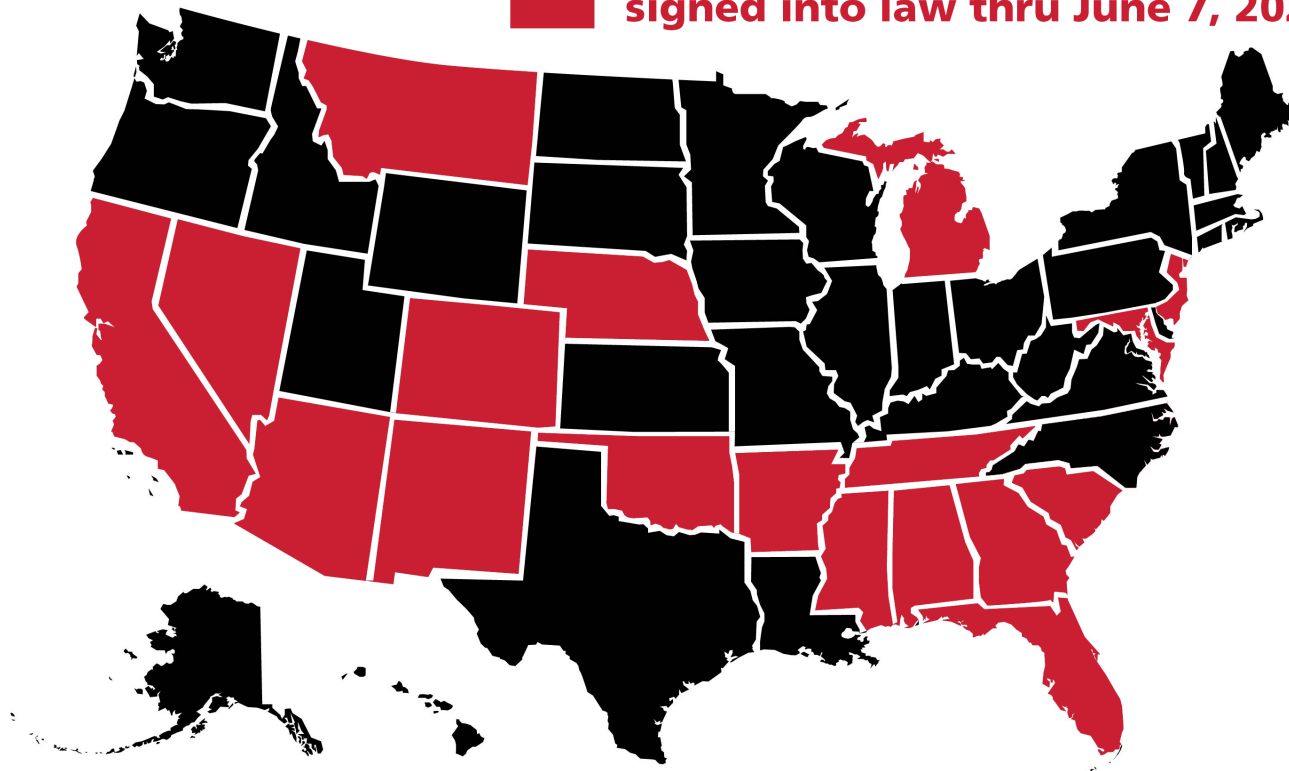
Brown thinks that there will eventually be a national NIL bill but that it won't be before Ohio's legislation is set to take effect, assuming it passes. The reasoning for that, at least for Congress, is simply that there are other important issues that are taking precedence over it.

"This is one of the only things where there's still actual bipartisan cooperation. Everybody in the Senate agrees that the NCAA sucks," Brown said. "And both Democrats and Republicans, not all of them, but enough of them want to cooperate and do this. But this is not in the top 10 most important issues facing the U.S. Senate right now, and they're struggling to find time to do it."

But Brown said he doesn't believe it will matter for Ohio State, as he said it would shock him if the legislation going through the state senate right now did not get passed and go into action on July 1.

Brown also agrees with Antani that the student-athletes who stand to be helped the most from this legislation are not the stars of the football team but instead the lesser-known athletes on a variety of smaller programs.

**States with NIL bills passed and signed into law thru June 7, 2021.**

Info courtesy of [businessofcollegesports.com](http://businessofcollegesports.com)

## States With NIL Laws & Effective Dates

State	Effective Date
Alabama	July 1, 2021
Arizona	July 23, 2021
Arkansas	Jan. 1, 2022
California	Jan. 1, 2023
Colorado	Jan. 1, 2023
Florida	July 1, 2021
Georgia	July 1, 2021
Maryland	July 1, 2023
Michigan	Dec. 31, 2022
Mississippi	July 1, 2021
Montana	June 1, 2023
Nebraska	Immediately*
Nevada	Jan. 1, 2022
New Jersey	5th academic year after passage
New Mexico	July 1, 2021
Oklahoma	Immediately*
South Carolina	July 1, 2022
Tennessee	Jan. 1, 2022

\* - No later than July 1, 2023

"The people that I think that are honest to God most likely to benefit from this, and would be most disadvantaged if this doesn't happen, would not be Ohio State's football team," Brown said. "It would be Ohio State's women's lacrosse program. It would be the baseball team. It would be Olympic athletes, because that is the pool that I think stands to benefit from this the most."

"You and I both know that in football recruiting football coaches are going to say literally anything even if it's divorced from reality. So if Ohio State has to wait seven more weeks to cash in on name, image and likeness compared to their peers, Ryan Day will spin up some bull and they're probably going to be OK. But for kids that don't have a gigantic NFL payday coming down the line and don't have this infrastructure supporting them, having to wait I think would be unfortunate."



# Part Two: Fans To Again Choose OSU's Top QB

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

In 2018, Buckeye Sports Bulletin polled readers and media members 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 are presenting brief bios of the contenders in alphabetical order with comments from Buckeye football historian Jack Park. The first six players on the ballot were featured in the May issue, and we present the second six in this issue. Final poll results will appear in the August Football Preview issue.

## Rex Kern (1968-70)

25-2 as a starter ... As a sophomore (first

year eligible) led the Buckeyes to the 1968 national championship with a 27-16 Rose Bowl win over O.J. Simpson and Southern California when he was named the game's most valuable player. ... For the 1968 season, he was 75 of 131 (57.3 percent) for 972 yards with seven touchdowns and six interceptions. ... In 29 career games, he was 188 of 364 (51.6 percent) for 2,444 yards, 19 TDs and 24 interceptions. He also ran for 1,714 yards (4.9 average) and 24 scores. ... OSU reached No. 1 ranking in each of his junior and senior seasons.

**Jack Park:** "Rex was a very good runner, a very good passer but probably his biggest asset was his leadership ability. He was a coach on the field basically. He truly was that leader on the field. He was an all-around great guy. The players looked up to him. The one thing that hurt him was that he was a little bit injury-prone."

## Craig Krenzel (2000-03)

24-3 record as a starter. ... Offensive MVP in 2003 Fiesta Bowl when OSU defeated the University of Miami 31-24 in double overtime to win the BCS national championship to complete a 14-0 season. ... Leading rusher in the game with 81 yards on 19 carries. Offensive MVP in 2004 Fiesta Bowl with 189 yards passing and four touchdowns to beat Kansas State 35-28. ... 4,493 career passing yards with 28 TDs against 21 interceptions. ... Honors graduate in molecular genetics.

**JP:** On the 14-9 win vs. U-M in 2002 to earn a spot in the Fiesta Bowl: "He was a

## 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:

guy that really managed the game. The way he managed that Michigan game in 2002, the statistic I remember most is Michigan got inside the red zone three times that day and they ended up with three field goals. Ohio State got inside the Michigan red zone only twice all day and ended up with two touchdowns."

## Braxton Miller (2011-15)

2012 and 2013 Chicago Tribune Silver Football Award (best player in the Big Ten) while playing quarterback ... Led OSU to 12-0 season in 2012. ... After missing 20 months while recovering from a shoulder injury and two surgeries, returned for the 2015 season at wide receiver. Earned honorable-mention All-Big Ten honors after catching 26 passes for 341 yards and three touchdowns plus rushing for 281 yards and another score ... 5,295 passing yards and 52 touchdowns in his career along with 3,315 rushing yards and 25 TDs.

**JP:** "It would be fair to say he's probably the most multitalented quarterback that we had, who could do so many different things. Just a very exciting player who could make a play and get a lot of extra yardage when almost no other quarterback could have done that. Like Kern, his career seemed to take off immediately. He didn't need two or three years."

## Terrelle Pryor (2008-10)

2008 Big Ten Freshman of the Year ... 2009 Big Ten honorable mention (media) ... 3-0 vs. Michigan ... 2010 Rose Bowl MVP in 26-17 win over Oregon when he completed 23 of 37 passes for 266 yards, two TDs and one interception. He also rushed 20 times for 72 yards. ... On Sept. 25, 2010, he had six touchdowns (four passing, one rushing, one receiving) vs. Eastern Michigan. ... Withdrew from school prior to the 2011 season for involvement in pay-for-memorabilia scandal known as "Tattoogate". ... Passed in his career for 6,177 yards and 57 TDs with 26 interceptions and ran for 2,164 yards and 17 scores.

**JP:** "Tremendous talent. 'Tattoogate' taints him a little bit, but if you're looking only at his on-the-field skills, he's right up there with Braxton Miller, Haskins

and Fields. He was a big kid (6-6, 233) and used his size and athleticism to his advantage."

## Art Schlichter (1978-81)

Four-year starter after a heralded career at Washington Court House (Ohio) Miami Trace. ... His freshman season was Woody Hayes' last. ... Finished fourth in Heisman Trophy voting as a sophomore, sixth as a junior and fifth as a senior. .... In 1979, led Buckeyes to 11-0 regular season in the first year for Earle Bruce. Lost 1980 Rose Bowl and chance for a national title, 17-16 to Southern California. ... Ended career with 7,547 yards passing with 50 touchdowns and 46 interceptions. He rushed for 1,303 yards and 35 TDs.

**JP:** "He came in under a lot of pressure. Rod Gerald was the starting quarterback, and he took over with a lot of eyes on him from what he did in high school. Schlichter was really talented with a strong arm and was a really good runner, too. That is probably overlooked because of his passing numbers, some that stayed in the record books for a long, long time."

## Troy Smith (2003-06)

2006 Heisman Trophy winner with the second-largest margin of victory in balloting at the time ... 25-3 as a starter, including 3-0 vs. Michigan. ... 2006 Chicago Tribune Silver Football Award winner. ... In 13 games that season completed 203 of 311 passes (65.3 percent) for 2,542 yards and 30 TDs against six interceptions when the Buckeyes went 12-0 before losing 41-14 to Florida in the BCS championship game. ... As a sophomore in 2004, he accounted for 386 total yards in a 37-21 win against Michigan. ... Career passing totals were 5,720 yards, 54 TDs and 13 interceptions.

**JP:** "Troy Smith in 2006 may have had as good a single season as any OSU quarterback in history. The only thing that tainted it a little but was his performance in the BCS title game against Florida (4 for 14, 35 yards). In the 2006 Michigan game, No. 1 vs. No. 2, he threw four touchdown passes to four different receivers (42-29 win). That was one of his best games."



FILE PHOTO

**WINNER** – Ohio State national champion quarterback Craig Krenzel had an impressive Buckeye career, posting a 24-3 record as a starter to go with the 2002 national title.



# Day's Offense Still Evolving Entering Fifth Year

By PATRICK MAYHORN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

What is Ohio State head coach Ryan Day's offense? It's a question that seems to float around the outside of the Buckeye program, be it in media circles or among fans, but it's not one that's frequently addressed, primarily because it can't be answered simply or succinctly. It requires context and a modified history lesson.

In other words, any look at this offense has to start with Day's first four years with the Buckeyes. The "Day offense" has shifted pretty wildly in each of those years, making it hard to pin down. That's by design.

Day is a personnel-based coach, not an ideologue like Urban Meyer or Chip Kelly, his primary mentors and two of the most committed "spread option" coaches in America. He has his staples and his concepts that he likes and that you can expect to see every season, but the Ohio State offense is shaped not by an ideology but by the players who make it up, starting and ending with the signal caller.

"I would say that Coach Day does a great job developing our offenses based on personnel, and our personnel will be indicative of how these guys work and how these guys execute," said wide receivers coach Brian Hartline. "To take one guy off the field and put another on, that guy better be of equal value if not more value."

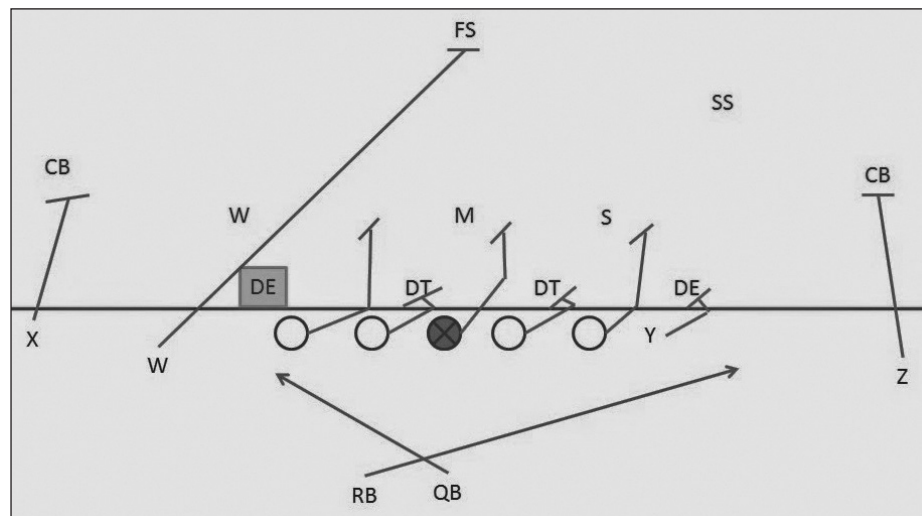
Day has even said so himself, which is especially impactful this season. With a three-man race for the starting quarterback spot, Ohio State's offense won't take its full shape until it has its starting signal caller. However, Day shrugs off the idea that Ohio State's offense is changing radically from year to year and frames changes as a shift in emphasis rather than a full-scale playbook change.

"I think that we're still not there yet with these guys," Day said of the quarterbacks. "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?"

"They're 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. Some of them do get the ball out of their hand 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 do 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."

That makes a lot more sense than creating a new playbook each season. Play installation takes time that the Buckeyes don't have, so the changes from year to year are more in identifying which part of the Day playbook best fits the players in it and leaning heavily on those looks.

With Barrett at the helm in 2017, the Buckeyes stuck with what had been working for years under Meyer, while adding in a passing attack that complemented Barrett's best traits as a passer. The focus was still on the ground game, with Barrett, J.K. Dobbins



GRAPHIC VIA BREAKDOWN SPORTS

**GETTING OUTSIDE – Ohio State has found success with the outside zone concept, a staple of the Ryan Day and Kevin Wilson offense that the Buckeyes used heavily in 2019 and 2020.**

and Mike Weber teaming up to create an electric zone-running attack that still featured plenty of the quarterback run and option. However, Day introduced quick-hit air raid concepts (plays that are designed around short throws to get the ball out of the quarterback's hand quickly), intermediate play action and RPOs, all of which have one big thing in common: Their success is often determined not by arm talent but by processing ability. Barrett had the latter in droves but was seriously lacking for the former after his ankle injury in 2014, so the Buckeyes leaned into it. Day looked to get the ball out of Barrett's hands quickly and trusted him to read the defense before and after the snap to get the ball to the best option, based on what those reads told him.

He excelled at it. Ohio State lacked a strong downfield passing game, but Barrett reapproached his freshman-year production and looked much more confident than he had in 2015 or 2016, fitting comfortably into the 15-yard range that Day generally placed him within. Anything beyond that was shaky for the senior, but he led a strong passing attack through screens, slants, drags and quick passes into the middle of the defense, often over linebackers fooled by play fakes.

With Haskins at the helm in 2018, the quarterback running game essentially vanished, as did the option at large, which caused a lot of problems for the rushing attack. But Day also emphasized more air raid concepts, riding mesh (two deep routes to the perimeter, with a pair of drag routes underneath), Y-cross (one go route on the perimeter, one deep post, two underneath routes) and deep play-action shots to a pass-first attack with a quarterback who could handle it.

Like Barrett, Haskins was able to process quickly enough to make plays underneath, but his arm talent allowed for Day to open up the playbook down the field while cutting out some of the screens and intermediate game, though not removing it entirely.

The running attack re-emerged in 2019 with the introduction of the outside zone, a staple of offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson that had seemed to leave the playbook with Barrett and Haskins at the helm. Although Fields was certainly a capable runner, that outside zone play (see graphic) provided the Buckeye rushing attack with a credible outside threat that kept the defense from packing the box – as it had against the inside zone-heavy 2018 Buckeyes – without forcing Fields into Barrett-esque running responsi-

bilities.

In the passing game, Fields had perhaps the best arm of the bunch, a rapidly improving wide receivers room after the hiring of Hartline and a strong line, so Ohio State shifted further into those longer developing attacks that Day had started to toy with in 2018, while the short passes began to vanish from the offense. That approach remained in the passing game in 2020, albeit with an increased focus on the star receiver duo – and for good reason, given the ability of Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson – while the rushing attack moved away from the outside zone again as it struggled to find a capable runner outside of the tackles.

That's all an oversimplification for the sake of translating Day's system into something legible for that average fan or analyst, but generally speaking, it's a fair summary of the "Day offense" as it stands entering 2021. It all provides the stage for the question that will determine Ohio State's season, revolving around the variation of the offense that Day throws out this fall.

Based on what is known about his playbook, his roster and the quarterbacks in the battle (admittedly, not much on that last front), it's fair to make a few educated guesses.

First, the passing attack is probably going to constrict a bit, at least to start the season. C.J. Stroud, Kyle McCord and Jack Miller can't be fairly expected to replicate the production or talent of someone like Fields in their first year as a starter, and Day doesn't sound like he has any interest in asking them to.

"When you're just starting and you're learning to play the position, you can't do anything out of the ordinary," Day said. "You can't try to do things other than make the routine plays routinely. Why? Because you have a really good offensive line, really good tight end, really good receivers, solid backs."

"In that moment, you don't need to do anything more than just make those routine plays. As coaches, it's our job to put them in a situation to be successful and to show the best version of them. But somewhere along the line, when the game is coming down to the fourth quarter, they're going to have to make plays. It comes down to not just managing the game – that's a big part of it – but if you want to go win the tough games, you're going to have to make plays in the two-minute drill, you're going to have to throw really well in the red zone and you have to convert

on third down.

"We're hoping early on that, with the talent that's around the quarterback, if he can just keep the offense moving and get the ball into the right skill players' hands and keep the chains moving, then that's a great start."

That likely means a reduction of those long-developing shots down the field and a return of the shorter stuff, be it those air raid concepts, screens, RPOs or all three. The starter will need to move beyond that eventually, but to start, expect a passing game much closer to the one the Buckeyes used in 2017 than the 2020 rendition.

For the first time in Day's tenure, that could also mean an introduction of the running back into the passing game as a serious and consistent option. Ohio State has teased that before and got Dobbins involved at a decent clip in 2019 but has rarely looked to the backfield for receiving threats. With a pair of excellent pass catchers in the room in Marcus Crowley and TreVeyon Henderson, it doesn't seem out of the realm of possibility that Ohio State makes that move to help ease its new quarterback in this season.

"We're always looking for versatility at the running back position, and when you can run the ball physically and finish runs, you can pass protect, and then the other part is that you can go run routes," Day said. "When you can do those three things, you become very valuable on offense and you become a weapon. Our guys are doing that. You can see when we throw the ball, that if the defense wants to get in zone, we can check the ball down and that's getting a really good skill player the ball in space."

"That's what we're trying to do ultimately. Whatever the scheme is, we want to create as much space as we can, and that's just another way to do it. It's not something we've done a ton of here, but with the quarterbacks that we have, that's something that we think we could look into more."

Wilson's rushing attack is a bit trickier to pin down because of the questions surrounding the starting running back position. Those questions exist at quarterback too, but all three competing there are similar, while the running backs vary dramatically.

However, the Buckeyes are a zone-running team at their core and will lean heavily on the inside zone as their No. 1 option. With someone like Henderson or Crowley, the outside zone could be in for a re-emergence, and because of the presence of a pair of strong blocking tight ends in Mitch Rossi and Cade Stover, Wilson has hinted at the addition of counter looks into the rotation.

"We've always run the counter, but the problem is, how many plays can you emphasize?" Wilson said. "In the run game, with all the formation variation, it's hard to get really good at about more than three or four plays. And the counter has usually been play No. 4, 5 or 6 on the menu when it came to practice. In spring, we thought we'd try to practice it a little more."

"With Mitch Rossi, who's a hybrid full-back, and Cade Stover, now sometimes we're doing the counter play not just with the guard and tackle, but with the guard and the second puller as a tight end hybrid. I thought it fit those two guys a little bit. We didn't do it a lot, but we did it the last couple weeks, and because we did it at the end, we ran it in the spring game a couple times."

However, as is always the case with Day, it's going to come back to personnel. As it stands in June, the answers there are about as clear as they were in February.



# Buckeye Defense Ready To Unlock Cage

By WYATT CROSHER

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

There are plenty of things about the national championship game against Alabama that Ohio State fans, coaches and players would like to forget. But for Jerron Cage, it is a game that will always represent the first major opportunity he received to contribute for the Buckeyes.

The then-fourth-year junior defensive tackle has waited in the depths of the roster for much of his time with the Buckeyes ever since coming in as a four-star prospect out of Cincinnati Winton Woods. After a redshirt year in 2017, Cage saw action in three games as a freshman and nine as a sophomore, totaling five tackles heading into the 2020 season.

Coming into 2020, there was reason for Cage to expect to become a primary contributor. Ohio State was losing plenty of talent on the interior of the defensive line in the departures of veterans Jashon Cornell, DaVon Hamilton and Robert Landers. And indeed, Cage saw an uptick in snaps and production, playing in all eight games of the year and more than doubling his career tackle total with six, including half a sack.

But it was in the game on the biggest stage that Cage was given his largest chance to shine. Against the Crimson Tide, starting nose tackle Tommy Togiai was unavailable, likely due to COVID-19 protocols. Cage was given the start, and though he did not record a tackle, he told the media over Zoom on April 9 that it was a big moment for him regardless.

"I just remember the excitement of just being able to show what I have," Cage said. "The whole situation was emotional for me, just going through everything I've been through. I had to sacrifice so much during that time frame of this pandemic."

That sacrifice came through the birth of his son, Jerron Jr., who was born on June 22, 2020. It was in the thick of the pandemic, and after just a month with him, Jerron Sr. left Cincinnati to head back to Columbus and prepare for what was at the time a season that was far from certain.

Talking with Bill Rabinowitz of The Columbus Dispatch, Cage said that he was able to see his son in person only two or three times throughout the remainder of 2020. The rest of their interactions came over FaceTime, where he saw his son on a near-daily basis. It was a difficult situation, but Cage said he made it work through the help of his teammates and by having Jerron Jr. as newfound motivation for his play.

"My son was just born, and I couldn't even see him," Cage said. "The fact that I had all my brothers around me and I did it for them, and I did it for my son, and they understood that. I felt like that helped me out tremendously."

Cage mentioned a group of players from last year's defensive line room – Jonathon Cooper, Haskell Garrett, Antwan Jackson, Tyreke Smith and Taron Vincent – as key figures in making the group of linemen into a cohesive unit.

Because of the impressive group chemistry, according to Cage, the defensive line was a highlight for a defense that, overall, struggled in many facets. But the line helped lead a rushing defense that ranked sixth in the Football Bowl Subdivision, allowing just 97.6 yards on the ground per game.

"I feel like the biggest thing was the broth-



PHOTO COURTESY THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

**HIS TIME HAS COME – Ohio State defensive tackle Jerron Cage is set to play a larger role on the OSU defense this fall.**

erhood of the D-line, just everybody getting so tight," Cage said. "Especially during this pandemic, those are the only people we are seeing. We're seeing each other, so I feel like the jell we had with Jonathon Cooper and Haskell and Antwan and Taron, Tyreke, all the people, we all just jelled together. I feel like once we all jelled together, we just played off each other."

Most of that group from the season prior will be back in 2021, with Cooper and Togiai being the only losses. Cooper was selected in the seventh round by the Denver Broncos, and Togiai went in the fourth round to the Cleveland Browns.

While those were core members from 2020, with Cooper being a captain and both being All-Big Ten honorees, defensive line and associate head coach Larry Johnson said on April 9 that he likes what he has with the group coming into next season.

"I'm really excited about this group, I really am," Johnson said. "We lost Tommy, it was a big loss, but we had guys waiting in the wings. Taron has stepped up, and then Jerron Cage is having probably the best spring he's had since he's been here, and I think that makes a difference. Those guys played a little bit last season. That gives depth on the inside."

Vincent is a former five-star prospect who has also waited for his opportunity to shine at Ohio State, though his delay has been more due to injury issues than talent development. He could compete with Cage for the vacancy at nose tackle next to Garrett, but Cage and

player with time at Auburn and Blinn Junior College, Jackson finished 2020 with just 11 tackles and one sack on the season, but the sack and five of those tackles came against the Crimson Tide.

Though Cage started the national title game, Jackson saw more time, and the two are likely to again be in competition for the starting role this upcoming season. Despite the competition, Jackson said he didn't feel pressure to be a leader this year because of how unified the room is on the whole.

"We all talk to each other after practice," Jackson said. "We're all leaders really. We all love each other. With Tommy being gone, I feel like we're still going to be the same unit, just keep rising. After somebody leaves, the other person steps up."

Cage has an opportunity to find an even larger role this next season compared to what he saw in 2020, and he believes that he has made some strong improvements in his game, both last year and this offseason.

"I feel like the biggest push was last year with my growth, just getting stronger," Cage said. "I feel like I've gotten stronger, faster and more explosive."

In his four seasons with the team, Cage has continued to find himself in a larger and larger role on this defensive line. For the first three years, the spaces in front of him were filled with players such as Cornell, Hamilton and Landers.

In year four, despite COVID limiting the time he could see his son, Cage continued to develop, finding more snaps than he has at any point in his career, ultimately starting at nose tackle in a game with the national championship on the line.

After all that time behind a variety of defensive line talent, which Cage said was definitely difficult to deal with, he now has a pathway to legitimate playing time in his fifth-year senior season.

"That's anybody in my situation," Cage said. "You figure you see all these guys leaving and you're like 'OK, it's time, it's time, it's time.' And then you just don't see it yet. But if you just wait, God always has a plan for you, so I just stuck in there and stayed strong, and now I'm reaping the benefits."

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# Sawyer Hungry For Success At Ohio State

By LORI SCHMIDT  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Jack Sawyer's mother, Michelle, always knew her son was dedicated, but the proof she saw of that this past year was bananas – like actual bananas.

"I've never seen him eat those in his life, and he choked those down. And he ate spinach," she recalled.

The incoming Buckeye freshman, in addition to working out almost daily at KSM Sports and Fitness in Powell, was improving his diet as he was getting ready to enter Ohio State.

"We hooked up with a local (nutritionist) here, and he did a body composition thing and put together a nutrition plan and checked in with Jack every week," Michelle Sawyer said. "He would eat so much, if I was making chicken or steak or whatever, I would just make three extra pounds."

Sawyer didn't get on the "future pro" diet or anything else you may want to call

it just for fun. He did it to get a head start on bulking up his 6-5 frame, something that Ohio State planned to undertake as soon as he arrived as a freshman.

"I think he knew to play early, you can't weigh 225," said Nate Hillerich, his coach at Pickerington (Ohio) North High School.

Playing early was definitely the goal. Sawyer has always been big on first impressions.

For instance?

"When I got hired here, the coach that I replaced (Tom Phillips), he went to UC as director of player personnel," Hillerich shared. "The one thing he told me, he said, 'We have an eighth-grader here. He's the best player that I've seen come through here,' and at the time you had (former Michigan tight end) Jake Butt, who had just gotten drafted. (Pat) Elflein was in the NFL. And I'm like, that's pretty serious to say an eighth-grader is that good."



Jack Sawyer

Another example, familiar to most Ohio State fans, is Sawyer's performance in the OSU spring game, in which he tallied four tackles, three sacks and a forced fumble.

"Jack's real. Jack's legit," stated fellow defensive lineman Zach Harrison.

"Jack's going to be a great player. Jack's got a great first step and great bend around the edge, and that's something you really can't teach."

Offensive lineman Thayer Munford confirmed that was what the team had been seeing in their other workouts, too.

"He's been doing it very consistently," Munford said. "He's been working. He has a motor. I'm just happy that he's on our team."

Sawyer's athleticism is no secret. He dominated the high school ranks with raw speed and power, the kind that only comes around once every few years at most in the recruiting pool.

"His athletic ability is just on a whole other level," relayed Hillerich. "When I checked with him during spring practice, he said they had him running with the linebackers to go get his times."

Of course, Sawyer has had time to improve even more since then, and at a May 21 morning weigh-in, he had worked his way up to 247 pounds (up from the 240 he was listed at on signing day in February) with his stated goal being 6-5, 260 by kickoff Sept. 2 when OSU hits the road to face Minnesota.

It is merely one of the ways the defensive lineman is seeking to maximize the 664 days between his final high school competition and, assuming he plays in the season opener, his first game with the Scarlet and Gray.

It certainly sounds like he will.

"He doesn't have to convince me," said Buckeyes defensive line coach Larry Johnson. "We're going to find a role for him. If he continues to work hard and do the things we're asking him to do, we'll find a place to play him."

Sawyer sat out his senior year, because it wasn't clear if OHSAA was going to stage a football season amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and there was a possibility that the Big Ten was going to allow freshmen to enter school early, play a spring season, and not lose a year of eligibility.

That means his last time out on the field was in a 36-17 loss at Olentangy Orange in a Division I, Region 3 first-round playoff game. He tore his MCL with about five minutes left in the half of the Nov. 8, 2019, contest while playing quarterback.

It's notable that Sawyer was hurt while leading the Panthers offense. It was a position he had only begun playing earlier that season, simply because the team needed it. Starting quarterback Dom Myers had busted up his knee. Hillerich, even though he knew Sawyer hadn't played there since rec league, thought the team could be successful running a wildcat offense with Sawyer handling the ball. Hillerich was right.

In his first start, despite having just one practice and one walk-through to prepare, Sawyer recorded 60 yards and a touchdown on 6-of-11 passing. He had an additional three scores and 134 rushing yards on 16 carries. The 38-17 victory, also against Olentangy Orange, was the Panthers' first of the season. They were 0-2 entering the contest.

"That's not good to be at Pickerington," Hillerich pointed out of the early record.

With Sawyer making an impact on both sides of the ball, the team made it to the playoffs, where Sawyer eventually suffered his injury.

The risk of that happening is why, when he had accepted the assignment, Sawyer needed Ryan Day's assurance about his place at Ohio State. He had committed to Ohio State's head man in February of that year, a full two years ahead of when he would officially sign with the Buckeyes. Michelle Sawyer said that her son would have likely committed even earlier, but she and her husband insisted Jack do due diligence and make the rounds in terms of recruiting visits.

He was a key cog in a recruiting class that Day was shoring up following the recent departure of Urban Meyer. In fact, Sawyer was one of the first recruits Day contacted after taking over, yet Day told Sawyer that he had to do whatever it took for the Panthers to win, even if it meant playing in a spot other than the one that had him as high as the No. 2 prospect in the country in the 247Sports composite rankings. Sawyer ended up No. 4.

Oh, and there was also one promise Sawyer needed from Hillerich himself.

"His thing was, I just want to still play defense. I'm not coming off the field on defense," said Hillerich. "He likes to impact the game, and he feels like there's no one who can block him. He wants to get to the quarterback."

He got to the quarterback 13½ times as a high school junior, totaling 19 tackles for loss and 37 stops overall.

Now? You could say he's hungry for more.

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# Tressel's Departure Reaches 10-Year Anniversary

By LORI SCHMIDT  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It's now been 10 years since Ohio State and football coach Jim Tressel parted ways.

On May 30, 2011, the then 58-year-old Tressel released a statement reading, "After meeting with university officials, we agreed that it is in the best interest of Ohio State that I resign as head football coach. The appreciation that (wife) Ellen and I have for the Buckeye Nation is immeasurable."

Longtime Ohio State beat reporter Tim May, now with Lettermen Row, had just finished covering Dan Wheldon's victory at the Indianapolis 500 and drove almost immediately to campus expecting a press conference.

"I did a lot of camping out in the day," May laughed.

The Memorial Day announcement had come as a surprise to many, even some with ties to the program. Former Buckeye wide receiver Devin Jordan had gone on to serve as a student coach under Tressel and was still working locally as an assistant at Otterbein then (he's now on Akron's staff).

"I specifically remember the day," he said. "I remember I was about to leave the house and go visit some gravesites, I remember turning on ESPN and seeing everything that happened. I was just like, 'Wow. This is crazy.'"

Yes, Ohio State was at the center of an NCAA investigation at the time, with an impending August meeting with the infractions committee, but Tressel had already agreed to a five-game suspension for failing to report violations of which he had been aware and then lying about that to investigators. Emails showed that he had indeed known players were selling memorabilia and autographs, receiving benefits such as discounted tattoos in return.

"The thing you have to remember," said May, discussing the severity (or lack thereof) of the underlying allegations, "back then the worth of gold pants had gone down significantly, because there were a lot in circulation. What gets you in trouble isn't the penny-ante stuff, it's the coverup."

In fact, Tressel's suspension had originally only been two games to go along with a \$250,000 fine, but because the players whose violations he had failed to report received longer suspensions from the NCAA, Tressel and the university eventually extended his punishment to equal theirs.

In March, Ohio State school president E. Gordon Gee had gone so far as to say, in a heavily pilloried response to one of May's questions, "I'm just hoping that the coach doesn't dismiss me."

Plus, Tressel still had the support of his players.

"The thing about Coach Tressel, he cared about us," said Jordan. "Coach Tressel had his players' backs. That's why he was able to maximize our talent at Ohio State. He treated us like a person."

However, the events at OSU had attracted additional media attention. The press criticized the NCAA for allowing the suspended players to participate in the 2011 Sugar Bowl before sitting out. It was a 31-26 win over Arkansas that the NCAA would perhaps ironically agree to vacate.

The Columbus Dispatch reported the NCAA was also looking into even more



FILE PHOTO

**UNUSUAL MEMORIAL DAY – On May 30, 2011, the tenure of Jim Tressel as head coach of the Ohio State football team came to an end.**

serious allegations involving quarterback Terrelle Pryor and a local car dealership. Those charges echoed claims by running back Maurice Clarett, who had told ESPN that Tressel arranged loaner cars for him when he played for the Buckeyes in 2002.

That was a point made in a Sports Illustrated story written by George Dohrmann. Rumors of its release came days before Tressel's departure, building momentum for what was to come. SI had contacted Ohio State for comment regarding the piece the Friday night prior to the holiday weekend. It was shortly after that that both sides agreed that a parting would be best.

"It was not going to paint a rosy picture of Jim Tressel and the football program," May recalled. "You got the impression that Ohio State was trying to be out ahead of that story being released by showing they were taking action."

Early in the morning on the holiday, Ohio State issued its statement. It also announced that defensive coordinator Luke Fickell would lead the team through the following season.

That Monday evening, with OSU fans still reeling, Sports Illustrated posted its story to the web. In addition to rehashing past stories like that involving Clarett, it quoted an employee of Fine Line Ink as saying there were at least 28 players who had exchanged football gear for deals on body art. That was never corroborated.

"Some of the stuff in that story was not even that true," said May.

However, due to his rule violations, Terrelle Pryor had seen his career with the Buckeyes come to an end. He decided to enter the NFL through the supplemental draft.

Linebacker Jordan Whiting received a one-game suspension for his dealings with Fine Line Ink and missed the opener against Akron. Offensive lineman Mike Adams and defensive end Solomon Thomas would serve five-game suspensions. Running back Dan Herron (six total games) and wide receiver DeVier Posey (10 games) sat out longer, after they were accused of having additionally been overpaid for summer jobs they worked for booster Robert DiGeronimo.

"These failures are individual failures: failures of individual athletes, and as you know unfortunately a previous coach, and a booster," athletic director Gene Smith argued at the time.

That defense wasn't enough to convince the NCAA, though. While the university vacated the 2010 season and returned the money it had made off their controversial Sugar Bowl appearance, the infractions committee would add a year to Ohio State's proposed term of two years probation, increase the school's scholarship reductions from five to nine over the course of a three-year period and, most notably as it turned out, hand the Buckeyes a postseason ban. Because they misread the situation, instead of anticipating the bowl ban and staying home after their 6-6 season in 2011, they played and lost to the Florida Gators 24-17 in the Taxslayer Gator Bowl. Their punishment would instead come after Urban Meyer's inaugural season as Ohio State's head coach in which the Scarlet and Gray went a perfect 12-0.

Tressel, meanwhile, ended his time at Ohio State with a record of 106-22. Combined with his 135-57-2 record in 15 years at Youngstown State, and he was 241-79-2 as a college coach.

He led OSU to the national championship game three times and won the title in 2002 with a 31-24, double-overtime shocker over the Miami Hurricanes.

When the Buckeyes celebrated the

10-year anniversary of that victory, inviting the team and its coach to the Michigan game during the 2012 season, Tressel was carried off the field at Ohio Stadium. That was despite the fact that it was only a little over a year since he'd left the program and that the undefeated 2012 squad was ending its season that day due to violations that occurred on his watch.

Though not a part of that title team specifically, Jordan knows what the players who hoisted Tressel onto their shoulders were thinking.

"What really stands out is who he is as a person," Jordan explained. "He's going to stand out all the time in the history of Ohio State football because, yeah, his success on the field is going to say what it is. Obviously, we know the accolades. But just who he was as a person, going forward he will be beloved because he touched people's lives in a positive way."

"Not only was he able to handle that situation gracefully, but I think he understood in that moment he was still looking out for the best interest of the players he had coached, because he was teaching us in that moment how to move on when things sometimes just don't go your way. You've got to move on."

For his accomplishments, Tressel was also inducted into the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame and the College Football Hall of Fame.

He is currently the university president at Youngstown State and, Jordan says, continues to have his players' backs.

Jordan runs an organization that helps teach young people networking and life skills that aren't necessarily taught in the classroom or home environment, including programs for third-graders called Guys with Ties and Girls with Pearls.

"(Tressel) showed up at a couple of events for my charity nonprofit just to help raise funds, things like that," Jordan said.

Jordan was so impressed by the lessons Tressel has shared, he has even written "Mental Manual," similar to the book Tressel authored, "The Winner's Manual."

The final chapter of Tressel's saga, of course, has its own twist. As the 10th anniversary of his departure was being marked, the state of Ohio was considering a new law that would make it possible for players to profit off their name, image and likeness – a law that would mean players could accept discounted tattoos without violating the rules.

"It was bizarre how much effort and money, especially money, was spent over the many decades protecting that rule," noted May.



Devin Jordan

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# Broncos Target Buckeyes To Bolster Defense

By WYATT CROSCHER  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Entering the 2020 season, both Baron Browning and Jonathon Cooper had something to prove. The two players entered their senior seasons at Ohio State as high-potential, former five-star recruits who had not yet put it all together for a full season.

Both also had some extra hurdles to jump over, things made even more difficult without a real offseason due to COVID-19. Browning made a move to outside linebacker after three seasons inside, while Cooper was recovering from an ankle injury that forced him to redshirt in 2019.

The defense, on the whole, struggled for the Buckeyes, but both of the veterans performed well enough to earn interest at the next level. Ultimately, Browning and Cooper were drafted to the Denver Broncos, in the third and seventh rounds, respectively.

They shared their excitement about playing with each other once again in the NFL. The four-year Ohio State linebacker complimented Cooper's leadership, while also making note of how important it is to have someone to go through his rookie season with.

"It's a great feeling," Browning said on May 15. "He was a captain for us at Ohio State. He's a brother of mine and somebody I will do anything for. It's always a great feeling to have somebody you played college ball with take that new journey with you because you can lean on one another."

Cooper agreed and said he and Browning have been close throughout their college careers. He also said he thinks the Broncos made a good call drafting two former Ohio State players in their 10 draft picks.

"Baron and I are really close," Cooper said on May 1. "That's like my dog. I can't wait to reunite with him in Denver. I'm pretty sure we are going to have a lot of conversations, and Denver did a great thing with getting two Buckeyes. They got two great players. I'm just ready to get after it with him."

Browning was taken with the Broncos' fourth selection at pick No. 105. He was the sixth Buckeye selected and just the second on the defensive side of the ball, following fellow linebacker Pete Werner, who went 60th to the New Orleans Saints.

Browning – a former five-star linebacker out of Kennedale, Texas – finished his Ohio State career with 110 tackles, 18 tackles for loss, seven sacks, two forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries. Those are solid numbers, but ones that may fall short of expectations considering Browning's recruit ranking.

But George Stoia, Broncos writer at the Denver Gazette, told Buckeye Sports Bulletin that Browning's athleticism and versatility both made him a major prospect on Denver's draft board.

"That was a guy that I believe they had a second-, early-third-round draft grade on, and then he dropped all the way to the last pick in the third round and they were lucky to get him," Stoia said. "I know he was a stud in high school. I mean one of the best players in the country coming out of high school, and I watched some of his tape and some of the things he did in high school. They would move him anywhere, wherever they needed him to play in certain games. I mean they played him at safety, they played him at inside linebacker, outside linebacker, and they even played him at



FILE PHOTO

**HEAD WEST, YOUNG MEN – Ohio State linebacker Baron Browning (5) will join Buckeye teammate Jonathon Cooper as rookies with the NFL's Denver Broncos this fall.**

corner in some games, which is absurd at his size.

"I know he went to Ohio State and maybe didn't get on the field as early as he had hoped, but I think you look at his tape, and again maybe his numbers don't pop, but the dude's a freak athlete. I think that's what the Broncos liked about him."

That "freak athlete" label was proven further at Ohio State's pro day, where Browning ran a 4.58-second 40-yard dash, a 4.23-second shuttle time, a 40-inch vertical and a 10-10 broad jump. Only C.J. Saunders' 4.15-second shuttle and the 40-yard dash times for Justin Fields (4.44) and Trey Sermon (4.57) topped Browning in any of those four results.

Those numbers, as well as Browning's play on the field, caught the eye of Broncos head coach Vic Fangio and led to the linebacker's selection.

"We like his speed, like his athleticism," Fangio said. "We think he will be a major contributor on special teams and compete for one of the linebacker spots."

Though Browning made the switch to the outside in his final year with Ohio State, Denver's plan seems to be to move the 6-3, 245-pound linebacker back to the inside. Stoia said that transition is coming because of a need at the position as well as Browning's potential as a factor in pass coverage.

"Right now, they're going to play him at inside linebacker because that's where they need the most help, and honestly I think that's where he'll fit best," Stoia said. "I know last year he played outside for Ohio State and was pretty good in coverage, and Ohio State plays a little bit of a different defense than what the Broncos do (Fangio is a 3-4 disciple), but I think that they're going to have him at inside because they really want him to be able to cover."

"They've struggled in the past two years with linebackers having to cover tight ends. When you play (Kansas City chiefs All-Pro tight end) Travis Kelce twice a year, you need somebody that can be physical in the box and be able to defend someone without having to bring up your safety or your nickel

back to cover. I think Baron really fits that role well."

Browning said he thinks the move to a single position will help him develop into a more polished player in the long run. Despite being open to whatever was needed of him at Ohio State, he believes staying at one place will be a beneficial move for his progress.

"I can focus on that one position and critique every small detail," Browning said. "When you're asked to do so many jobs – I embraced that role and I feel like I'm a very selfless player and a team player – it's hard to find all the small intangibles and critique yourself the same way you could if you're playing one position."

But Browning is not the only Ohio State draft pick going to the Broncos who is changing positions. Cooper will be joining him in the linebacker room after five years of defensive end work for the Buckeyes.

This is a move that Cooper was prepared for, as he worked out at the position at Ohio State's pro day because that is what he had been hearing would be his best fit in the NFL.

"All the teams I've been talking to, they see me as an outside linebacker, Sam-type (strongside linebacker) position, which is my body type," Cooper said following his pro day. "I just wanted to make sure I show the scouts and everybody that I can play linebacker and that I feel really comfortable in space and that I'm ready for the next level."

That position shift, along with an injury history, may have led to Cooper's falling stock in the draft, even despite a strong 2020 season with 24 tackles, a team-high 3½ sacks and a forced fumble.

The first six rounds came and went for Cooper, as did the first 10 picks of the seventh. But finally, with pick No. 239, the 6-3, 253-pound Buckeye captain was taken by Denver.

"Denver was a team that I talked to here and there," Cooper said. "They definitely showed interest in me, and I'm so happy that I was chosen by them. The feeling is surreal.

I can't wait to be a part of Denver with Baron, and I just can't wait. I know they're getting a player that is going to give them everything they got out of me. I feel blessed right now."

Stoia said, despite being the final selection by the Broncos on draft weekend, Cooper made quite the impression on him during the interview immediately after his selection.

"This is very cliché, but his smile was so contagious," Stoia said. "I mean he was just beaming. You could tell that it meant a lot to him that he got drafted and didn't have to go through the undrafted free agency process. In the interview I just thought he was so charismatic and outgoing, and it was only like a five-minute interview, but he was clearly by far, out of the Broncos' 10 draft picks, the best interview. You could just tell how much he loves football, how much he was happy to be a part of the Broncos organization, and you could tell he was really soaking in the moment."

As far as the transition, Fangio believes that in the Broncos' defense, Cooper can make an impact at linebacker with his size and ability that he wasn't quite able to do within Ohio State's system.

"The system he played in at Ohio State, he wasn't out in space very much. That is a big transition for a lot of these guys," Fangio said. "We'll see how he does with it. We like the makeup. You've obviously had a taste of it already. When you have that kind of makeup, you can fight through and not get too discouraged."

Cooper is joining an outside linebacker room that is headlined by two of Denver's biggest names on the defensive side of the ball: Bradley Chubb and Von Miller.

Chubb has quickly become a star in Denver's defense, recording 123 tackles and 20½ sacks in 34 career games with the team. Miller is even more established. He is an eight-time Pro Bowler and a three-time All-Pro talent who has had at least 10 sacks in seven of the nine seasons in his career.

While Cooper may not be competing for a starting role over those two, he said he is excited to work with them to help develop his game as he transitions over to the linebacker position.

"It's going to be amazing," Cooper said. "I plan to pick their brains completely and see how they do everything. As a rookie coming in, you have great veteran guys who have been in the league for a very long time. I definitely just want to be able to learn and apply whatever I can learn to my game and become the best player that I can be for the Broncos."

Cooper will continue to try to improve his game on the field under the tutelage of Chubb and Miller, but something he clearly brings to the table is his ability to lead off the field. The former Buckeye was a two-time captain and the first honoree for the Block O jersey as the team's representative of its culture and fight.

Cooper having these types of qualities are what make Stoia think that Cooper will not only make the 53-man roster, but that he can eventually fight for some major playing time in the next few seasons, despite being one of the final picks of this year's draft.

"He seems like a person that's going to fit in well in the locker room and one of those guys you just need to keep around," Stoia said. "He may be a seventh-round pick, a borderline undrafted guy, but I think that's a guy you keep in your organization for at least two or three years and give him a shot."



# Williams Leaves Crowded WR Room For 'Bama

By JOE DEMPSEY  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Jameson Williams came to Columbus in 2019 with sky-high expectations as the No. 13 wide receiver and No. 82 overall prospect in the nation.

The St. Louis native made his mark on special teams as a freshman, while former wideouts K.J. Hill, Austin Mack, Binjimen Victor and current standouts Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson handled the vast majority of the receiver responsibilities.

Williams caught six passes for 112 yards and one touchdown, and he flashed his elite speed on a 61-yard touchdown against Miami (Ohio) on Sept. 21, 2019. The speedy wideout, who broke Ezekiel Elliott's Missouri state record in the 300-meter dash in high school, seemed poised for a breakout season in 2020.

Hill, Mack and Victor moved on to the NFL, and Williams was set for more opportunities in the passing game as a sophomore in 2020 behind Olave and Wilson. However, the Buckeyes primarily relied only on Olave and Wilson, and Williams reeled in just nine receptions for 154 yards and two touchdowns.

Additionally, Ohio State had added four more top-100 prospects at receiver in the 2020 class in five-star recruits Julian Fleming and Jaxon Smith-Njigba and four-star talents Gee Scott and Mookie Cooper. Fleming and Smith-Njigba played small roles as freshmen, while Scott has considered a move to tight end following the season. Cooper transferred to Missouri.

Despite a lack of opportunity through two seasons as a Buckeye, Williams was widely expected to become a go-to downfield target as an upperclassman had Olave entered the 2021 NFL draft. However, Olave returned for his senior season, and wide receivers coach Brian Hartline continued to reel in top-tier recruits. The Buckeyes brought in the nation's No. 1 wideout for 2021 in Emeka Egbuka, as well as a pair of top-100 prospects in four-star receivers Marvin Harrison and Jayden Ballard.

Williams' once-promising future in scarlet and gray became murky with Olave, Wilson, Fleming, Smith-Njigba, Egbuka, Harrison and Ballard vying for the same snaps as him.

"To me, things were just unclear," Williams said. "I wasn't certain of my role in the offense. The receiver room got crowded. I just decided I needed a fresh start. I decided to enter the portal."

As a former top-100 recruit with game-breaking speed and special teams experience, Williams instantly became a highly coveted weapon as a transfer. Coming off a victory over Ohio State in the College Football Playoff national championship, Alabama head coach Nick Saban and wide receivers coach Holmon Wiggins led the charge in pursuit of Williams.

"It was crazy, my phone was going crazy," Williams said. "I couldn't text or call anyone because my phone was going off nonstop. As soon as 'Bama hit me up, I was like, 'Damn is this for real?'"

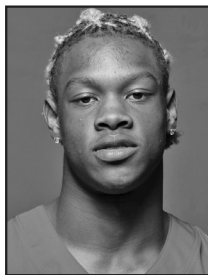
"I now had a chance to play at 'Bama. It was really the only thing on my mind when I had that chance. I let other schools recruit me. I wanted to give them a chance, but Alabama was the best place for me at the end of the day.

"I can't even say if there was a close second. I talked to Coach Saban and Coach Wiggins. It turned my mind into thinking I need to be there. I need to be there now. They hit me up very early, the very first day I entered the portal. It was within minutes.

"I felt like it was the best situation for me out of all the other schools. I had a great relationship with the coaches there from the past. Everything really just fell into line at the right time."

As a high school standout at St. Louis Cardinal Ritter College Prep, Williams was sought after by the best programs across the country, including Alabama, where he visited four times.

"It was real close," Williams said of his decision between Alabama and Ohio State. "My dad and I had full-blown out arguments about it. I was thinking different than him and went to Ohio State instead of Alabama.



Jameson Williams

"I'm ready to get down there. I think the offense should be a real fun thing. I have seen a lot of good things, and I know they have great guys down there. I've been watching practice footage, and I watched the spring game. I think we can do big things."

Williams expressed his eagerness to get to work with his new teammates and first-year offensive coordinator Bill O'Brien.

"A few of the guys in the receiver room reached out to me. I knew Jahleel Billingsley back when we were going through our recruitment. He reached out to me recently. Really a lot of those guys reached out.

"I talked to Coach O'Brien a few hours after my commitment. He told me he is really excited to get me going down there. He thinks we can do big things in the offense this year. I am just ready to get there."

In addition to the pursuit of more opportunities, the Crimson Tide drew Williams' attention by continuing their success in the NFL draft when Jaylen Waddle went No. 6 overall and Heisman Trophy winner DeVonta Smith was picked No. 10 overall on April 29.

"For sure," Williams replied when asked if Alabama's production at the position played a role into his decision. "It definitely did for sure. They said that can be me in the next year or two. They really think my speed is a nice add to the game. It just really checked all the boxes for me."

The departures of Waddle and Smith leave room to shine in the Alabama receivers room, which will be catching passes from a new signal caller after Mac Jones was drafted No. 15 overall. Sophomore Bryce Young, a former five-star recruit, has stepped into the starting role in Tuscaloosa.

"Bryce is real tough," Williams said. "I threw with him back in the day at the Rivals Five-Star Challenge. I remember talking to Garrett Wilson about him. Garrett was saying how good of a quarterback he was. I know he is really good and look forward to working with him."

Including the four freshmen who were part of the 2021 recruiting class, Williams became the fifth wide receiver to join Alabama this offseason as the team looks to replace Waddle and Smith.

"I wouldn't trade the guys that we've lost the last two years for anybody," Saban said. "All of them first-round draft picks. I don't know that anybody that's here

right now has earned the first-round draft pick. Maybe (John) Metchie, and he's not really practicing this spring, so I'm not really counting him. These guys all have to prove themselves. I think speed kills on the football field and on the highway. I love to have speed guys. We have some big guys, but we've got to get some speed guys, too."

Williams (6-2, 189) will bring the speed Saban covets to an Alabama receivers room filled with players eager to prove themselves.

In 22 games at Ohio State, Williams tallied 15 receptions for 266 yards and three touchdowns, making him the third-most experienced receiver on Alabama's roster behind Metchie and Slade Bolden.

Williams' high school coach Brandon Gregory, who has remained close with the former Buckeye, provided clarity as to what the Tide were looking for in the pursuit of his former pupil.

"They were very up-front - 'We have receivers, but we don't have a guy that can run like Jameson' - if that makes sense," Gregory said. "Jameson's a track runner. I think if he wanted to go to the Olympics and focus on that, he could. Georgia, 'Bama, everybody was saying, 'Hey, we have receivers.' Let's not get it twisted. But at the same time, with the speed that he has and some of the things that they do, they just think they can find different ways to bring his talent out and then also stretch the field to help the (receivers) out as well."

Wiggins, who was a former college teammate of Gregory at New Mexico, reached out to Williams after the speedster had entered the portal, helping Alabama beat out Georgia, Texas A&M, and others to lock him up.

"He's going to play for somebody that his high school coach knows," said Gregory, who was a college teammate of Wiggins at New Mexico. "Dad originally wanted him to go to 'Bama. And then, on top of Ohio State being No. 1, Alabama was kind of 1A, 1B. So, two years later to still have that opportunity - he was listening to some of the other schools too, but I kind of knew in my heart that it was going to be Alabama."

As someone who knows Williams well, his former high school coach sees his transfer to Alabama as an opportunity for the wideout to have more of an impact on winning football games.

"He didn't leave Ohio State just because he wants the ball all the time," Gregory said. "He's a team-first guy. But at the end of the day, he just wanted to go somewhere where he can be more productive and help a team in more ways."

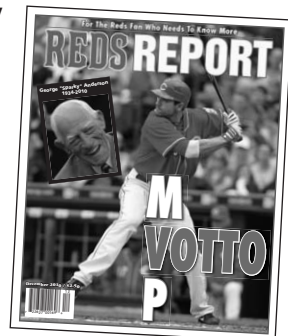
What stood out to Williams was how highly motivated he felt the Tide players were to be the best in the country.

"Those guys were hungry," Williams said. "I saw them on film and then being on the sideline whether it was offense or defense. Those guys were hungry and really wanted it. That's the mind-set I have. I feel like I will fit right in with them."

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# Former Buckeyes Want Athletes To Make Few Bucks

By LORI SCHMIDT  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Rex Kern was starting at quarterback for the Ohio State Buckeyes, he led the team to a national title in his sophomore season in 1968 and won first-team All-America honors in 1969. Whatever records or accolades he owned, however, he did not own the right to profit off them.

"I was never able to do anything with my name and likeness through Ohio State unless I paid them," Kern observed.

Then he made another observation, noting that part of the school's alma mater refers to time and change.

Times are indeed changing. This May, with an endorsement from Ohio State athletics director Gene Smith, state Sen. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg) introduced a bill in the General Assembly to allow college athletes to be paid for their name, image and likeness, or NIL, rights.

"The issue here is that these are students," Antani told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "They are not athlete-students. They are student-athletes. Each student, each person owns their name, image and likeness."

Kern is supportive of the next Buckeye signal caller being able to make some money from his talents.

"It's a whole new ballgame," he said. "I do have full confidence in Gene, in what Gene is proposing and what Gene thinks is fair."

"I feel like they've got to do something about it," agreed Dick Furry, who was

a senior on the 1959-60 OSU basketball team that won a national championship.

Again, Furry revealed ways time and change had visited college athletics since he played.

"I can't imagine that in those days, anything that we would have gotten (from NIL) would have been enough to make things that different," he said.

Some of the evidence he cited included the fact that his tuition was \$60 a quarter, while his academic scholarship was \$200 a quarter, already leaving him money for books and other essentials.

As for money from broadcast rights?

"The national championship game wasn't even supposed to be on TV in Columbus until, like, the day before," said Furry. "It wasn't on national television."

There just wasn't as much money flowing into or out of sports then. Now it's a very different story.

"There's a lot of people who just want to support Ohio State kids. There are a lot of really wealthy people that support Ohio State that just want to support the kids," said Kirk Barton.

The former Buckeye offensive tackle and first-team All-American in 2007 has the kind of hustle, drive and business sense that led him to help found the website Buckeye Scoop in 2020, so as a player he believes he might have cleaned up – even as an offensive lineman.

"I think I would have done really well,"

he said, arguing that one doesn't have to be the starting quarterback to successfully market oneself. "Like a Thayer Munford could do really well, because some companies want to be known for their dependability, and a guy like Thayer with the way he plays tackle is super dependable."

Then he gave another example pointing to former OSU punter Drue Chrisman, who is now with the Cincinnati Bengals. Chrisman famously created viral videos online which showed him doing tricks with water bottles, illustrating another way players could find endorsement deals.

"These kids, they're so slick with social media, with TikTok and Instagram, all these short-form media formats. It's like they have a highlight reel, an audition reel, showing how many impressions they can get," said Barton.

Personality, of course, is something you can find at any school and in any athlete, so

Devin Jordan, who was a wide receiver for the Buckeyes in 2004 and 2005 and who is now an assistant coach at Akron, believes even his Zips players would benefit from having NIL rights.

"There's so many different avenues," he said. "You could use the fact that you do play college sports to really engage in your community and use that leverage to build whatever you want. I just know coaching Division III, coaching Division II, now in Division I, seeing the type of athletes I've come across in the past 13 years, they've had such great creativity and great marketability in many different ways."

Jordan appreciates that more than most. Various injuries kept the Massillon, Ohio, star receiver from ever having a shot at the NFL, meaning all the money he could have made as an athlete would have had to come during his college days.

Jordan and former Buckeye linebacker Joshua Perry (2012-2015) both discussed with Buckeye Sports Bulletin the opportunity that athletes will now have to become models, with Perry going a step further

and pointing out a great irony: Because structural sexism places so much more of an emphasis on the appearance of women, this could be an avenue to help bring at least slightly greater gender equality to sports.

Jen Flynn Oldenburg was a volleyball player at Ohio State from 1996-1999, and she was the first ever Big Ten player to be named all-conference at two different positions. Now, as the coach of the team, she has volleyball players who "want to be YouTubers," she said.

As for other ways her athletes could make money? There's already an interest in hiring those players to provide private instruction.

"We have a bunch of clubs in the area that would love to have Ohio State players give them lessons," Oldenburg remarked. "Now we have the opportunity to do that."

Perry, an analyst for the Big Ten Network, naturally thought of an additional way that athletes could raise funds.

"It's probably a really good idea to at least try to figure out what level of involvement you could get (with BTN) with some of the athletes who are high profile in the conference," Perry said.

However, even the staunchest advocates who believe the time has come for change to the NIL rules understand there will be challenges.

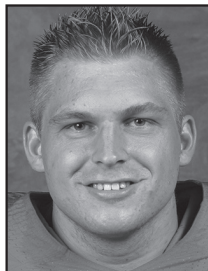
For Kern, the concern is team chemistry once the free market tells college athletes that some players are more valuable than others.

Furry worried that bigger schools might become even more powerful. Barton paraphrased boxer Marvin Hagler's axiom about the difficulty of getting up early for workouts when one is sleeping in silk pajamas. Perry talked about adding

yet more demands to athletes' time. Plus, he has considered the possibility that if boosters are allowed to pay players who attend their favorite school, it might become the practice to pay athletes to leave a certain school.

"Where it gets really complicated is that there are always going to be bad actors in the college football landscape," said Perry. "You could get into a situation where Akron now has a running back who is one of the best in America, and there could be a coach from a bigger school who would want to tamper with that player and potentially say, 'Hey, this is what your brand is like in Akron. Now imagine what it's like if you take it to X big city.' That's where I can see it going off the rails, the combination of name, image and likeness and the transfer portal."

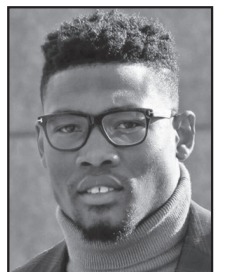
However, Perry and the rest of the former Buckeyes BSB spoke to all reached the same conclusion: "There's going to be the unintended consequences to every situation, and I just don't think that anybody should let those unintended consequences stand in the way of trying to do the right thing by the athletes," said Perry.



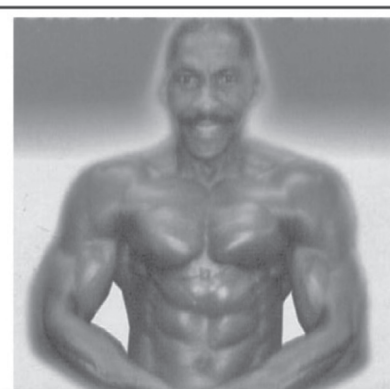
Kirk Barton



Jen Flynn Oldenburg



Joshua Perry



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Continued From Page 2

tent he was. He was often the best player on the floor and led the Buckeyes to victory in 76 of the 82 games he played. He made scoring 24-25 points and grabbing 17-18 rebounds seem normal. And he made it look so easy.

His hook shot, which I tried to copy, was amazing. He would shoot it from everywhere and never seemed to miss. He could have scored 40 points a game if he wanted, but he was so unselfish. Can you imagine a college player today having 38 straight double-digit games? Or double-doubles in all but three or four games he started?

He led the nation in shooting percentages during the three years he played at OSU and rebounds per game during his junior and senior years.

I am grateful that I was old enough to see him play. It was a thrill. As I grow older, I appreciate how truly great he was.

I was also lucky to have seen Jimmy Brown, Mickey Mantle, Willie Mays, Jack Nicklaus, Pete Rose and Johnny Bench play. And I put Jerry Lucas in the same category as those great athletes.

P.S. He is probably the best basketball player in Big Ten history and one of the top 10 in the history of college basketball.

**Rick Cunningham, OSU '71**  
Mansfield, Ohio

**Can't Forget Baschnagel**

In "Editor's Notebook" by Mark Rea in the May issue, there was a section called OSU-Chicago Connections. There was no mention of Brian Baschnagel (All-American receiver, 1974 and 1975) who was drafted by the Bears in the 3rd round of the 1976 draft. He played defensive back his first year then was moved back to receiver, which was his position at OSU. He had a very solid NFL career for nine years. He spent the 1985 season on IR. But he did travel with the team and assisted coaches from the booth. He received a Super Bowl ring for the Bears' dominant win in Super Bowl XX, 46-10 over the Patriots.

**Amelia Balale**  
Euclid, Ohio

**Ohio State-Chicago Connection**

Mark: You left out Brian Baschnagel. Brian was drafted by the Bears in 1976 in round three with the 66th pick. He was with the Bears until 1985 and retired due to injuries. Brian was one of Woody's favorite players because he played so many positions. Wing back, wide receiver, returned punts and kickoffs, held the ball for field goals and extra points. I remember Woody telling me that when he made the travel roster that he realized Brian was like having five guys. Brian was a wonderful young man and an honor student. Great article.

**Don Miljus**  
Tipp City, Ohio

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# Dead Period Ends, Visits Return In Bulk

Four hundred forty-five days. That was how long the NCAA's recruiting dead period lasted before it finally came to a close on June 1.

With that gone, Ohio State was finally able to welcome recruits into Ohio Stadium and the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for the first time since March 13, 2020. It started with a two-day camp that opened on the first day of the month, primarily suited for prospects in the 2023 class.

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Wyatt Crosher

There were plenty of big names in that opening group, including priority in-state targets such as five-star Pickerington Central safety Sonny Styles and four-star Findlay offensive lineman Luke Montgomery. Along with the large list of 2023 names, Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star defensive lineman Christen Miller and Merrillville, Ind., defensive lineman Kenneth Grant highlighted the handful of prospects from the 2022 class.

Ohio State also had a pair of linebacker commitments on campus from the start in Kettering (Ohio) Alter five-star C.J. Hicks and Marysville, Ohio, four-star Gabe Powers.

The big days of the opening week were on the weekend of June 4-6. For starters, 10 of Ohio State's 12 commitments for the 2022

class were in attendance: Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star quarterback Quinn Ewers; Austin (Texas) Lake Travis five-star wide receiver Caleb Burton; West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West teammates Jyaire Brown, a four-star cornerback, and four-star offensive lineman Tegra Tshabola; Chandler, Ariz., four-star wide receiver Kyion Grayes; Pilot Mountain (N.C.) East Surry four-star tight end Benji Gosnell; Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona four-star tight end Bennett Christian; and Seffner (Fla.) Armwood three-star defensive back Kye Stokes all joined Hicks and Powers for the weekend.

The only two commitments to not be there to start the month were Jacksonville (Fla.) Robert E. Lee five-star cornerback Jaheim Singletary and Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep three-star cornerback Ryan Turner. Singletary is slated to arrive for the June 25-27 weekend, while Turner will be up two weeks earlier on June 11-13.

But the first weekend was not strictly for the familiar faces.

Plenty of major Ohio State targets made their way to Columbus, including Lynchburg (Va.) Liberty Christian Academy five-star offensive tackle Zach Rice; Duncanville, Texas, five-star defensive lineman Omari Abor; Las Vegas Bishop Gorman four-star safety Zion Branch; Altoona (Iowa) Southeast Polk four-star safety Xavier Nwankpa; Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star offensive tackle Aamil Wagner; St. Louis Lutheran North four-star



Zach Rice

## 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
Kaleb Brown	WR	5-11	177	★★★★	Chicago St. Rita
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 (Fla.) Robert E. Lee
Kye Stokes	ATH	6-2	185	★★★	Seffner (Fla.) Armwood
Tegra Tshabola	OT	6-5	340	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
Ryan Turner	CB	6-0	180	★★★	Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep

cornerback Toriano Pride; and Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star defensive tackle Dominick James.

Ohio State director of player personnel Mark Pantoni said on May 28 that he was just happy to get things started back up again.

"It's been (more than a year) since anyone was able to visit," Pantoni said. "The kids are excited. The staff is excited to finally see these people up-front rather than on these constant Zooms. The good thing is that we're not in season, so it's all hands on deck right now in the building."

The impact that in-person recruiting had was shown almost immediately. Aside from the influx of social media

posts from prospects wearing Ohio State football equipment, the Buckeyes handed out five offers on June 2, with one 2022 prospect – Grant – and four from 2023 – St. Louis De Smet four-star cornerback Christian Gray; Zachary, La., four-star quarterback Eli Holstein; Downey (Calif.) Warren four-star quarterback Nicholaus Iamaleava; and Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star cornerback Kayin Lee – each impressing enough to earn an offer.

While no official commitments came from the first weekend, both Burton and Hicks took to Twitter on June 5 to tell Ohio State fans to prepare for some in the near future. Burton tweeted "Whole lotta BOOM!" and Hicks tweeted "Y'all ready? #BOOM," both using Ohio State's typical phrasing when it earns a new commit.

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# ASK AN ANALYST

## With Joseph Hastings of Rivals

**With camps and in-person visits coming back, what do you see as the impact this will have on the incoming recruiting classes?**

"The impact is that you're going to be able to see these prospects in person for the first time and you're going to be able to dish out offers to them that you probably wouldn't have if you're just basing it off film. You saw 2022 Merrillville, Ind., three-star defensive tackle Kenneth Grant get offered, along with four other prospects. That's what these camps are all about, and it's about getting these kids in person and seeing if their film really matches what they can actually do.

"Because with film, you can only do so much. What's the competition they're going up against? What is their true speed? That's something that they actually do at these camps. They time these kids. One prospect, 2023 St. Louis (Mo.) De Smet four-star cornerback Christian Gray, ran a 4.4-second 40-yard dash. So these camps provide a full in-depth evaluation that you just wouldn't get if you're going off game film."

**When people see visits coming back, they're probably expecting some commitments sooner rather than later. When do you expect there to be a major influx of commitments from prospects in the incoming classes?**

"I think it honestly could come after this first weekend (June 4-6), and one of the prospects that I'm looking at is 2022 Huber Heights Wayne four-star offensive tackle Aamil Wagner. He's an Ohio-based offensive lineman. He's trended toward the Buckeyes ever since he was offered in March. Altoona Southeast Polk four-star Xavier Nwankpa, big-time safety out of Iowa – he's somebody else that we're paying attention to who could really open up the floodgates.

"Not only is he one of the top players in the country, but he's also one of the best recruiters in the country as well. He talks to players all the time. He's somebody who has really good connections, so I think he could open up the floodgates. Other than that, though, I think probably after that third weekend is when I'm really expecting a 2022

prospect to commit.

"Memphis Christian Brothers four-star Dallan Hayden, running back out in Tennessee – he's been trending toward Ohio State ever since he visited in March, so honestly it could come at any time. But after that third weekend, that's when 2021 Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star defensive tackle J.T. Tuimoloau is going to be (visiting OSU) as well as Hayden, and I could definitely see some commitments after that."

**When you look specifically at the 2023 class, are there any names that stand out to you for who you think could be that first commitment? Also, should there be any concern that there hasn't been a commitment yet for the 2023 class?**

"With COVID knocking out a lot of these visits, I don't think there's really any reason to be concerned. I thought Ohio State would have liked to have guy in like a Pickerington (Ohio) Central five-star safety Alex 'Sonny' Styles in the class by now, just because at this time last year they had Kettering (Ohio) Alter five-star linebacker C.J. Hicks and West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-stars cornerback Jyaire Brown and offensive tackle Tegra Tshabola.

"I thought Styles, being an in-state kid, being the legacy prospect (son of former Ohio State linebacker Lorenzo Styles) and being one of the top rising juniors in the country, that would have really set things up for them to land more commitments. But in terms of answering your question, yes, Styles would be the one that I'm looking at right now. He was really impressed with his visit to Ohio State. I got a chance to speak with him, and he had nothing but great things to say about his interactions with staff, camping there and the development that he got, so keep an eye out for him.

"In-state offensive lineman Huber Heights Wayne four-star Josh Padilla, who attends the same school as Wagner – he's somebody else who's really high on the Buckeyes that I could see going. And then Findlay, Ohio, four-star offensive tackle Luke Montgomery too. He visited the very

first day of the month and liked everything that he had to see. And he told me that Ohio State's really up there in his recruitment, along with a couple of other schools. So if they were to land a 2023 commitment, I would place my bets on it being an Ohio-based kid, not someone from out of state."

**Ohio State clearly has a lot of talent at the quarterback position already and is adding Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star Quinn Ewers in 2022. How do you see the team handling that position moving forward? Could you see the Buckeyes targeting some lower-level prospects to secure a quarterback commitment in 2023?**

"This was an interesting question. With Los Alamitos, Calif., five-star Malachi Nelson being the only 2023 quarterback they had offered prior to this week, we did a roundtable about it just asking should Ohio State go for those lower kids to get at least one quarterback in the class every year, or should they continue to aim high? I land in the mind-set of aiming high. If these prospects want to compete, they're going to go ahead and compete.

"You see the wide receiver room as it is now, even though it's stacked they've got 2022 Chandler, Ariz., four-star Kyion Grayes and 2022 Austin (Texas) Lake Travis five-star Caleb Burton, both unafraid of the competition, ready to go in and compete. I think you need to have that mentality because that's the type of mentality that wins championships. I asked 2023 Downey (Calif.) Warren four-star Nico Iamaleava about that, and Nico, who's a recent Ohio State offer, told me that he doesn't know how much it's going to factor into it and that it honestly might.

"If you have Ewers in front of you and you're a big-time kid and you have another option, especially one that's more local since he's in California, he may opt for that instead of trying to compete with a once-in-a-generation type of quarterback. But I say aim high, and if you're getting toward the end of the cycle and you really do need a quarterback, then offer maybe a local Midwest kid or a low four-star who would jump on the opportunity of being offered by Ohio State, even if they're behind Ewers."

Who that will be and when it will happen may not be known yet. But Pantoni addressed just how important that first weekend was going to be in order to set the tone for the remainder of the summer.

"We hope to set the bar so that when these kids go to visit other schools they know what Ohio State was and we want them to think that is going to be really hard to top," Pantoni said. "Coach (Ryan) Day has been very involved with a lot of input, which is awesome, and we have an outstanding plan for the first weekend. We're going to execute it as best we can and hope for the best."

### Brown Becomes First Visit Commit Of 2021

Immediately after the first weekend of recruiting visits allowed in 2021, it took just one day for the Buckeyes to add a commit.

Chicago St. Rita four-star wide receiver Kaleb Brown, on the day of his official visit, committed to Ohio State on June 7. He is ranked the sixth-best receiver and No. 63 overall prospect of the 2022 class.

The 5-11, 177-pound Brown becomes the 13th commitment in Ohio State's class and the third receiver, joining Burton and Grayes, who were both on campus, as mentioned, on June 4-6.

This is the Buckeyes' first commitment since the recruiting dead period ended on June 1, and it also comes from a player who previously appeared to be a heavy lean toward Michigan. Brown received his offer from Ohio State just over a year ago on May 20, 2020, and his relationship with wide receivers coach Brian Hartline grew from there.

Brown's commitment, along with the decommitment of Fort Worth (Texas) Brewer five-star defensive lineman Bear Alexander from Georgia also on June 7, allowed the Buckeyes to overtake the Bulldogs for the No. 1 overall recruiting class for 2022, according to the 247Sports rankings.

### Turner Becomes 12th Commit For 2022

The previously mentioned Turner made the announcement that he was committing to Ohio State on May 5.

"First and foremost, I would like to thank God for blessing me with a talent and love for a sport that I know without Him would be impossible," Turner wrote in a tweet. "A heartfelt thank you to my parents, siblings, coaches, teammates, friends and family for believing in me and for your unwavering support. To all of the coaches who reached out to me during this recruiting process showing major love, I thank you!

"After speaking with my family, I am prepared to announce that I am committed to the Ohio State University."

Turner is ranked the No. 35 cornerback and No. 380 overall prospect in the 2022 class. He received an Ohio State offer on Feb. 2 and also had offers from programs such as Clemson, Florida, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Oregon, Penn State, Texas A&M and Wisconsin.

Turner becomes the 12th commit in the Buckeyes' class and the second in a four-day span after Stokes committed on May 2.

The commitment gives Ohio State three cornerbacks in the class, joining Brown and

Singletary. Stokes is also expected to be a defensive back at the collegiate level.

### Tuimoloau Decides On Visit Dates

On May 28, Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star defensive tackle J.T. Tuimoloau, Ohio State's long-awaited final target for the 2021 class, officially announced his visit schedule with 247Sports' Brandon Huffman.

Tuimoloau opened up his visit schedule with a June 4-6 visit to in-state Washington. After that, Tuimoloau will go on four visits in a two-week span starting with USC on June 14-16. Ohio State is next up on June 18-20, and then comes Oregon on June 20-22. The 6-5, 277-pound defensive tackle will close out his visits on June 25-27 with Alabama.

Although it is often best for teams to be the last visit on the schedule in order to have the final impression on a recruit, Rivals recruiting writer Joseph Hastings told BSB that he thinks this could be a blessing in disguise for Ohio State.

Of the weekends in June, the 18-20 is by far Ohio State's least busy, which can allow them to spend more time with a player who currently is listed as the No. 3 overall prospect in the class.

"Ohio State fans were understandably a little bit upset with the timing of his visit, just because he's going to be going to Alabama last," Hastings said. "But the thing that I'm looking at is that this is the one weekend – June 18 through the 20th – where they only have three other official visitors. So I view it as a win for the Buckeyes. They're going to be able to dedicate a lot of time to him where-

as that final weekend of the month they have double-digit official visitors."

Although momentum has been hard to gauge because Tuimoloau has been especially private about his thoughts and impending decision compared to most recruits, the belief was that Alabama, Ohio State and Oregon have become the three favorites among his top five schools. But Hastings said to also watch for his visit to the Trojans, which comes just days before Ohio State gets its opportunity.

"What I'm looking for here is I'm looking to see how the USC visit goes, which is right before the Ohio State," Hastings said. "He has a lot of family members who root for the USC Trojans. I recently spoke with one of his uncles, Kenny Aukuso, and he admitted that a lot of the family supports the Trojans, so I'm wondering if they're going to be in his ear. And then I'm also looking to see how that Alabama visit goes, because I view the Crimson Tide as the biggest threat (to Ohio State)."

The Buckeyes continue to hold all six crystal ball predictions, including one from Huffman, who speaks most frequently to Tuimoloau and his family. Huffman, who has the prediction at a "1" confidence, the lowest possible number, wrote on May 28 that he has Ohio State as the "slight leader" heading into the visits.

Hastings agrees with Huffman, both on Ohio State being the current leaders and on not being incredibly confident about it.

"I would definitely say slight edge for sure because he keeps it very quiet," Hastings

Continued On Page 20



# Visits Are Different Despite Easing Of Rules

Continued From Page 19

said. "But Larry Johnson's development, the ability to get on the field early because Johnson likes to rotate his defensive linemen in and out and get players early playing time – you'll see that with Jack Sawyer this year. And then also he has Ohio State wide receiver Gee Scott Jr., who he played high school football with. Gee has been in his ear, so I definitely think Ohio State has the advantage right now heading into the visits, but the visits are going to determine everything."

"If Alabama knocks it out the park, then they're going to get him. It all depends on that June 18-20 visit. Does he feel like he can make the move to Ohio? That's another big thing, too. He spent the past year and a half not being able to take these visits, he's been closer to family. Does he opt to stay close and go to an Oregon or USC? Or is he fine making that move out to an Ohio or Alabama? There's a lot of factors at play here."

## Pantoni, Dunston Talk Prep For Busy June

With the end of the dead period looming, Pantoni spoke to the media on May 28 about what he was expecting on the incoming visits and the chaos he was expecting in just a few short days.

At the time of his Zoom call, Ohio State had approved 51 official visits just in the month of June, roughly around the number that it takes in a full recruiting cycle, according to Pantoni. Along with those, countless more players will take advantage of what director of on campus recruiting Erin Dunston described as "kind of like an open door" policy regarding unofficial visits.

"If they come to camp and they want to unofficially visit, they can have that," Dunston said. "If they're coming to see their coaches and get a campus tour, they can do that as well. I don't want to (underestimate or overestimate the unofficial visitors total) but on my calendar right now it's about 150-200 kids."

The first players through the door, however, will be familiar faces for the Buckeyes.

Having current commits on campus early serves as both a reward for their patience and loyalty and a benefit for Ohio State, which wants to get those players on campus as soon as possible to make an impact on the uncommitted prospects.

"We discussed (spreading the visits out) as a staff and we just felt like, because they've been so loyal to us, we wanted them to get here that first weekend," Pantoni said. "They deserve it. They deserve to all be here together, get to know each other. They are our best recruiters too, them along with our current players."

"I know some of the local guys will come back other weekends and help, but it was our decision to get them all here that first weekend if they could make it."

The visits this year are going to look a little bit different than they usually do, for obvious reasons. Ohio State plans to deploy a hybrid model for the visits according to Dunston. On-campus visits are obviously the focus, and Ohio State will be providing more tours and trips around Columbus, but the innovations forced by the pandemic aren't going away, either.

The Buckeyes became very comfortable with recruiting over video messaging platforms like Zoom or Skype during the last 15 months and plan to get kids involved both online and in-person to ensure engagement with as many prospects as possible.

"With about 14 months of not having kids on campus, we're doing something a little bit different where it's almost like a hybrid," Dunston said. "We're utilizing Zoom and having the kids back on campus. That transition really helps us to ease back into it."

Those Zoom calls can be valuable, but Pantoni alluded to a saying from wide receivers coach Brian Hartline when describing the limitations of a virtual visit and of recruiting exclusively online, comparing it to the difference between seeing a fancy car and actually driving it.

"When you're constantly doing Zoom, you're kind of limited on what you can come up with," Pantoni said. "(It's like Hartline says), it's cool when you see the commercial

of the nice, flashy car, but you don't really know until you test drive it how cool it really is. That's what we're about to do. These kids are about to test drive the car, finally, after seeing the commercial for so many months."

For the kids that do make trips to campus, there are plenty of ground rules. Though COVID restrictions have loosened significantly, recruits are still being asked to distance in at least a few ways.

The 2022 players on unofficial visits "can come workout for one hour with one coach. There are no wide receivers running routes together, there are no one-on-ones, it's just a workout with a coach" according to Pantoni. Players on official visits have no allowed time for workouts, and Ohio State will be using camps "mostly for the 2023 and 2024 kids to get that early evaluation on them."

With all this in mind, June could be the most chaotic month that Pantoni has encountered during his time as a recruiting coordinator. The class of 2022 has been at a standstill for months for most schools. This time is crucial for the Buckeyes and Pantoni's staff, and he's the first to admit that his calendar is packed for the entire month.

His plans for July, after dealing with what was expected to be such a hectic June?

"My phone is going to be turned off and nobody is going to be able to track me down," Pantoni said.

## NIL Bill Set To Enhance Recruiting

On May 24, Ohio Sen. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg) spoke alongside Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith at a press conference to introduce a bill that would allow collegiate student-athletes to profit off their name, image and likeness.

While that bill has not yet been passed and would not go into effect until July 1, the idea of the bill's impact has already been discussed extensively.

"This is definitely going to be a positive for the Buckeyes," recruiting analyst Hastings said. "I really can't see it being a negative. When it comes to Ohio State, they have Real Life Wednesdays, they have a ton

of off-the-field business opportunities. The Buckeye brand carries weight from coast to coast. I've visited Texas. I've visited a bunch of other states and you always see Buckeye fans everywhere. So I think this is only a positive for the Buckeyes. It's going to allow them to recruit even better than they're doing right now."

It was also something that Pantoni discussed as a potential benefit for the Buckeyes on the recruiting trail. He also mentioned the importance in both Ohio State's current players and incoming recruits learning and understanding just what they can do with their personal brand.

"Coach Day, along with Gene Smith, has been awesome in just getting prepared (for NIL rights)," Pantoni said. "The next step is educating our staff and our players. At a place like Ohio State, the brand of that Block O nationally, the brand of Ohio State football, the city of Columbus and then our fan base, which is on another level – we feel very excited about the opportunities for our players."

"We're going to definitely discuss it with all of the recruits these next few weeks. We think it's a great selling point for them. We have to embrace it. We know it's coming down the tracks, and we're going to be well-prepared for it."

Hastings said that he has had specific recruits talk to him on just how important the ability to profit off their NIL will be. While Ohio is not remotely early to the party on getting a bill introduced, just getting a bill out there – and ultimately passed – will play a big part in helping Ohio State recruit nationally.

"(Defensive line recruit) Christen Miller recently visited, and he talked about how CEOs of companies and how Fortune 500 people go ahead and take visits to Ohio State on a weekly basis," Hastings said. "That's a major selling point to him because he's somebody who's going to pounce on name, image and likeness. I imagine that a bunch of other prospects are taking that into account, too."

## Ewers Continues To Show Potential

Of Ohio State's four five-star commits for

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the 2022 class, none grabs headlines more than Ewers. The former Texas commit, who flipped to the Buckeyes on Nov. 19, is not only the highest-rated prospect in his class but continues to hold a perfect 1.0000 rating that ties him for the top prospect in the modern recruiting era (since 2000).

At the Steve Clark Quarterback Retreat on May 29 and 30, Ewers again showed why he is one of just two quarterbacks (Vince Young) to currently hold that perfect rating. Ewers was seen throwing on-the-money passes with a sidearm release while also displaying the ability to throw 70 yards downfield after just two steps.

247Sports analyst Greg Biggins had plenty of praise for the 6-3, 206-pound quarterback, complimenting everything from his mechanics to his effort.

“The ball just comes out of his hand differently, and no one threw a tighter ball with more velocity than Ewers,” Biggins wrote. “We mentioned the environment at the camp is always pretty loose and relaxed and most of the other quarterbacks go through the drills at about 70 percent intensity. Ewers competed hard in every drill we saw, and it was refreshing to see.

“When you critique his skill set in terms of his arm talent, release, mobility and ability to throw in and out of the pocket from different arm angles, as well as change speeds and throw down the field with touch, it’s no wonder some are calling him the best quarterback prospect to come out of the (high school) ranks since Trevor Lawrence four years ago.”

Biggins wasn’t the only one who gave out compliments. College quarterbacks also at the camp emphasized just how impressive Ewers was in the two-day event.

From Alabama’s Bryce Young: “He’s got some (Kansas City Chiefs quarterback) Pat Mahomes in him the way he throws it.”

From USC’s Miller Moss: “The kid is legit. He can really spin it.”

And from Clemson’s D.J. Uiagalelei: “I can see why he’s the top No. 1 guy. He’s special.”

Longtime NFL scout and senior bowl executive director Jim Nagy also shared his praises of the Ohio State commit, while also complimenting Ewers’ future teammate in quarterback C.J. Stroud, who was also at the camp.

On Twitter, Nagy posted: “After seeing the two guys coming up at @OhioStateFB throw the ball yesterday, the Buckeyes (are) going to be just fine at QB without Justin Fields.”

### Buckeyes Add Mitchell As Preferred Walk-On

Cincinnati Wyoming 2022 wide receiver Joop Mitchell announced on Twitter on May 19 that he would be committing to Ohio State as a preferred walk-on.

“I am excited to announce that I will be accepting a preferred walk-on offer to play football at The Ohio State University,” Mitchell wrote in the tweet. “Thank you to my Wyoming Cowboy coaches, teammates and my family for everything you have done to make this possible. Go Bucks!”

Mitchell, who is listed as a cornerback on his 247Sports page, is 6-2, 175, and does not have a rating in either the composite or the 247Sports in-site rankings.

In his senior season, Mitchell hauled in 29 receptions for 598 yards and six touchdowns while also finishing with 35 tackles (26 solo) and three interceptions, according

to his Twitter.

Mitchell had offers from a variety of smaller programs, including Army, Ashland, Butler, Chicago, Davidson and Lafayette.

### Tshabola Ends Rumors Of Kentucky Visit

Tshabola has no plans to visit the University of Kentucky this summer or anytime soon, despite online rumors that indicated otherwise. The Buckeye commit shut down the rumors on May 10 with a pair of Tweets, first stating that he has no plans to take a trip out to Lexington and then declaring himself 100 percent committed to Ohio State.

Tshabola – ranked the nation’s No. 183 player, the No. 19 offensive tackle and the No. 7 player in Ohio – was rumored to be eyeing Kentucky after it secured a pledge from another Buckeye tackle target in Charlestown, Ind., product Kiyaunta Goodwin last month, but it appears that those rumblings were false.

This was part of a big week for Tshabola. He accepted an invite to play in the annual All-American Bowl on May 6. He was also invited to the Rivals Five-Star camp series after a strong showing at a regional in Indiana on May 9.

As previously mentioned, Tshabola took his official visit to the Buckeyes on June 4. He tweeted out photos of him with his family, as well as some images in Ohio State’s alternate black uniforms on June 5.

### Ohio State Makes Lists For Trio Of Targets

Nwankpa put the Buckeyes in his top seven on May 1, along with Arizona State, Clemson, Iowa, LSU, Notre Dame and Texas

A&M.

The 6-2, 190-pound Nwankpa is the top prospect from the state of Iowa while also being the fifth-best safety and No. 71 overall prospect in the 2022 class.

Nwankpa visited Ohio State on June 4. He currently has one crystal ball prediction – by Michigan Insider’s Steve Lorenz – who has the four-star safety going to the Buckeyes.

Also putting Ohio State among his top schools on May 1 was IMG Academy’s James, who had a top six schools of Florida, LSU, Ohio State, Oregon, South Carolina and Texas A&M.

The 6-2, 278-pound James is the No. 24 defensive tackle and No. 178 overall prospect in the class. As mentioned, James made his visit to Ohio State on June 4.

2022 Philadelphia Imhotep Institute four-star defensive end Enai White included Ohio State in his top schools on May 4, along with Alabama, Clemson, Florida, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Oregon and Texas A&M.

White received his offer from Ohio State back on May 13, 2020. The 6-5, 230-pound White is ranked the second-best weakside defensive end and No. 39 overall prospect in the 2022 class. He is also the top-ranked recruit in the state of Pennsylvania and is set to visit Ohio State on June 25.

There are currently no crystal ball predictions for White at the time of publishing. If he were to join the Buckeyes, he would be the first defensive line commit for 2022. Ohio State had three in the 2021 class: defensive tackle Mike Hall, defensive end Jack Sawyer and defensive tackle Tyleik Williams.

*Patrick Mayhorn and Lori Schmidt contributed to this article.*

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

### 30 Years Ago – 1991

Marlon Kerner, who was set to suit up for Ohio State in the fall as a true freshman, wanted to follow in the shoes of ex-Buckeyes Don Unverferth and John Frank, who had starred on the gridiron while pursuing medical degrees. OSU tailback Robert Smith was chasing the same dream.

Kerner, a defensive back, had his lofty goals because of the hard work that he put in at Columbus Brookhaven, where he carried a 3.50 grade-point average and scored a 23 on his ACT. “I didn’t think I did well (on the ACT),” Kerner said in a June interview with BSB. “I took it and then I didn’t hear about it for a long time. Then one day my counselor just came up and gave me my scores and I looked at her and just came back into the classroom with this stupefied look on my face.”

Kerner credited his mother, Brenda, with letting him keep his dreams of playing in the NFL alive, but only if his academics were his first priority.

### 25 Years Ago – 1996

The number – and quality – of early verbal commitments for 1997 gave rise to new debate about initiating an early signing period for football.

As it stood, basketball players were permitted to sign letters of intent prior to their season to get the recruiting furor out of the way. Many football players were seeking the same type of relief by committing early and supported the creation of an early signing period.

“The opportunity was there and it takes a lot of pressure off of me about worrying about where I have to go to college and trying to impress scouts when they come to watch me,” said Sidney, Ohio, defensive end Ben Pulfer, who joined Cincinnati Elder linebacker Jason Ott in committing to Ohio State in mid-April.

As more high-profile prospects decided to end their recruitments early, especially entering the summer of 1996, it seemed that a push for the early signing opportunity was picking up. Pittsburgh area top-25 prospects LaVar Arrington and Ron Graham had already joined Ott and Pulfer as players who pulled the trigger early (though not to Ohio State).

Ohio State head coach John Cooper shared his support of the early signing period and said that he had been in favor of it since becoming a head coach.

### 20 Years Ago – 2001

Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel secured his first major victory over Michigan, even though he wasn’t slated to square off with the Wolverines for the first time until Nov. 24. On

May 30, highly sought quarterback Justin Zwick of Massillon (Ohio) Washington picked OSU over Michigan and a host of other schools during an announcement at a restaurant near his school.

“I feel that I have found a school that is great,” Zwick said. “It fits all the things that I’ve talked about. And that school will be The Ohio State University.”

Just as he began to utter the words of his future school, Zwick casually reached below the lectern and pulled out a Buckeye jersey with his No. 12 and his name already inscribed on the back.

The 6-4, 205-pound quarterback was considered one of the nation’s top quarterback prospects, ranking third among all junior prospects in the state by The Ohio Football Recruiting News. In three seasons as a starter – two at Orrville High School and one at Massillon – Zwick was already recognized as Ohio’s high school career passing leader with 7,219 yards and 72 touchdowns to his credit.

### 15 Years Ago – 2006

Ohio State hosted the first of two planned senior advanced camps for prospective recruits on June 3, welcoming dozens of rising senior recruits for highly focused individual training.

Among the approximately 200 prospects in attendance were scores of Ohioans, along with prepsters from all neighboring states save for West Virginia and from as far away as Virginia, Illinois, Missouri, South Carolina and Florida.

As of press time, no player in attendance was known to have worked his way into an Ohio State offer with his showing at the camp, though several prospects showed well. That left offensive lineman Nick Claytor as the only player known to hold a Buckeye offer who attended the camp.

The 6-6 lineman played at Gainesville (Ga.) High School but actually made the trip to Columbus from Toledo, where he spent much of the month of May visiting his father and extended family before heading south the day after the OSU camp.

Claytor enjoyed his time in Ohio – perhaps a little too much by his own admission.

“Here, it’s harder to go and work out,” he told BSB. “I’ve been eating Grandma’s food and stuff, so I’ve been getting a little bit bigger.”

### 10 Years Ago – 2011

Just two days after Tressel resigned, three-star safety Tyvis Powell committed to Ohio State in a show of loyalty to Tressel and his home-state program.

“Here at Bedford we talk about loyalty so I’m not going to take my talents to another state,” he said. “I’m going to stay here and play under Coach (Luke) Fickell.

“It’s about dedication and dedication to Ohio. I can’t leave. I love Ohio football. I can’t see myself going to another state and playing. A lot of people feel that you have to leave your community and go to another community to go to a college that you want when you really don’t have to.”

### Five Years Ago – 2016

Although Akron Hoban four-star running back Todd Sibley was still listed as an Ohio State commitment, it was believed that the commitment from both sides was in name only until Sibley was able to find a new home after being asked by OSU to grayshirt.

The running back situation was similar to the Buckeyes’ predicament at quarterback, where they had a commitment in Sibley’s teammate, Danny Clark, but were still actively pursuing another QB.

Atop the list at running back was La Grange, Texas, four-star J.K. Dobbins; Clinton, Miss., five-star Cam Akers; and Antioch, Calif., five-star Najee Harris.

Akers was the No. 2 running back in the class and said that Buckeye running backs coach Tony Alford had made a big impression on him.

“He’s recruiting me well,” Akers said on June 1. “It could unfold to be a great situation. They’re winning. They had a great running back, Zeke Elliott, that just left. It’s a great situation, and the people there are good people.”

### One Year Ago – 2020

Ohio State went back to the Arizona high school recruiting well for the second time in as many years, securing a pledge from Scottsdale Saguaro four-star defensive back Denzel Burke on May 24. The Buckeyes had landed a pair of Arizona products in the previous class, bringing in quarterback Jack Miller and safety Lathan Ransom.

The 6-0, 189-pound Burke was considered the seventh-best athlete and No. 183 player in the class of 2021, as he lined up at both wide receiver and cornerback for his high school team.

Burke picked the Buckeyes over finalists Colorado, Oregon, USC and Washington despite never visiting Columbus. He had grown close to Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs during the recruiting process after landing an offer from OSU in January.

He had planned a trip to campus in March, but that was canceled by the COVID-19 pandemic, so he took a virtual tour of the campus with his parents that seemingly pushed Ohio State over the top for his commitment.



# Newcomer Brunk Finds Home With Buckeyes

By CRAIG MERZ  
Buckeyes Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Although Indiana graduate transfer Joey Brunk is new to the Ohio State program, he will see a couple of familiar faces surrounding him in Columbus.

While in high school in Indianapolis, Brunk (6-11, 255) was recruited by then Butler assistant coach Chris Holtmann and eventually played his freshman season there for Holtmann after he was promoted to head coach.

"I recruited Joey, dating back five or six years, so I think that familiarity, knowing Joey's motor, that was a factor," Holtmann said of Brunk's decision to transfer to Ohio State.

Holtmann left Butler in the summer of 2017 to replace Thad Matta as the Buckeyes' head coach, and soon after forward Kyle Young decommitted from Butler to attend Ohio State.

One of Young's contacts while being wooed by Butler was, you guessed it, Brunk.

"I've known Joey previously from his time when he was at Butler," Young said. "I had already developed a relationship with him there, so we talked on and off about how basketball is going and things like that.

"He's going to be a huge addition for us so we're excited."



PHOTO COURTESY OF CARER WALDROM/INDIANA ATHLETICS

**HEADING EAST – Indiana graduate transfer Joey Brunk will suit up for Chris Holtmann and Ohio State next season. Holtmann recruited Brunk when the OSU coach was an assistant coach at Butler.**

It has been a long and twisting journey for Brunk from Southport High School to landing in Columbus for one final collegiate season in 2021-22.

He will be a sixth-year senior after playing three seasons for Butler (2016-19) – including an abbreviated freshman season for which he was granted a hardship

waiver redshirt due to a family illness – and the 2019-20 season as a fourth-year junior at Indiana before sitting the 2020-21 season because of a back injury.

Brunk could have sought another hardship waiver but instead is taking advantage of the one-time NCAA provision that allows all players a free season of eligibility because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 60 games for Butler, Brunk averaged 5.0 points and 2.7 rebounds, although his first two seasons with the Bulldogs he averaged only 6.2 minutes per game which skewed his numbers.

In his lone season for the Hoosiers when he played 32 games, he averaged 6.8 points and 5.2 rebounds in 19.6 minutes.

"He never played more than 20 minutes, but he did play 20 minutes on an NCAA Tournament team," Holtmann said of the Hoosiers' 2019-20 team that would have likely played in the tourney if not for the coronavirus pandemic. "Whatever people want to say about that team, that Indiana team was an NCAA Tournament team and, I think, a quality team."

As a senior at Southport, Brunk averaged 18.3 points and 8.2 rebounds and was one of three finalists for Indiana's Mr. Basketball.

He played just seven games for Butler as a freshman on 2016-17 and was granted the waiver to deal with his father's cancer diagnosis. Joe Brunk passed away in April 2017.

It was a tragedy that Young could relate to because his father succumbed to a 30-year battle with multiple sclerosis before his junior season of high school.

"He's a super good guy," Young said of Brunk.

Brunk played 53 games for Butler over the next two seasons before transferring to Indiana. After a solid first season for the Hoosiers, he was looking forward to one final college try, but his back had other plans.

He had an issue with a disc and underwent surgery Dec. 30, 2020.

"With everything that happened with my back, it's definitely not ideal," Brunk said on March 1. "When you're watching your guys compete in practice every day, boy, you want to be out there with them. It's been frustrating, but I'm trying to make the most out of it.

"You have to be patient with everything going on and be mindful and to make sure I don't rush back anything."

Brunk did his best to provide leadership from the sidelines.

"I try to be an encouraging voice, make sure we're all on the same page," Brunk said. "I try to talk to a lot of the guys, especially going out of halftime, on some things maybe that I saw.

"Overall, I have a real appreciation for being healthy even deeper. I've never had anything more than a sprained ankle before. I've just been trying to make the most out of this and grow as a person."

He is expected to be ready when the season starts in November. By then he'll be working on his next step academically to stay eligible. He got a degree from Butler and finished his master's at Indiana this spring.

"A third degree is a pretty meaningful thing," he said in March. "It's something I'll have to talk over with my mom (Helen) and brother (Johnny) when the time comes."

Brunk turns 24 on Nov. 13, about two months before Young, who announced April 16 that he is returning for a bonus fifth season with the Buckeyes.

Although Brunk is not a flashy addition, he provides the size and depth needed for the Buckeyes to improve their interior game after relying last season on Young (6-8, 225), now junior E.J. Liddell (6-7, 240) and sophomore Zed Key (6-8, 245) in the post.

Junior Ibrahima Diallo was expected to provide a few minutes of action as he developed, but he was injured most of the season and entered the transfer portal on May 3.

Also, Liddell has entered the NBA draft process and has until July 7 to withdraw his name to retain his college eligibility.

It was left mainly for Young to handle the big men in a role he relished, although it took a toll on him physically. In Brunk he has a reinforcement.

"As I've told Coach, in no way do I mind guarding their team's biggest player, but it definitely can be weird on your body," Young said. "When you're outsized and I know the same could probably be for E.J. – I don't know how he thinks about it – but it will be nice to have another big body in there that will be able to battle with these other big dudes."

Holtmann isn't sure how playing time will work among the (potential) quartet of big men, but it should be a nice problem to have.

"Time will tell on that," he said. "You're assuming everybody comes back to full health and E.J. obviously goes through this process and feels like it's best for him to return. I'm looking at that right now, but I still think there's some unknowns and some things to be figured out.

"I do know we will not play as, quote-unquote, small as we did last year. I think that provides more opportunities for Zed and for Joey as well."

Young isn't sure what the addition of Brunk means for his game, but he's grateful that some help is on the way for the previously thin Buckeye frontcourt.

"We don't know exactly how things are going to look but I plan to continue to develop my game," Young said. "I'm still going to be doing the things I'm used to doing. I'll still probably be guarding the (center) at times, stuff like that too. So those are things that won't change."

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# Wheeler Brings Leadership, Tenacity To Bucks

By JOE DEMPSEY  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Jamari Wheeler had been on Chris Holtmann's radar long before he decided to enter the transfer portal and leave Penn State.

When Ohio State defeated the Nittany Lions 83-79 at home on Jan. 27, Wheeler – a lockdown defender – stole the ball twice and converted two fastbreak layups in the final 20 seconds of the first half to cut an eight-point lead to four.

"We've got to have better awareness of No. 5 (Wheeler), he's a tremendous weapon defensively, always has been," Holtmann said in the postgame interview. "I've got a lot of respect for Wheeler. He just causes tremendous havoc."

The exceptional defensive effort of Wheeler in Columbus came as no surprise to Holtmann, who had admired the point guard's tenacity throughout his tenure at State College.

After Wheeler announced his decision to join the Buckeyes, along with former Butler and Indiana forward Joey Brunk, Holtmann was asked if familiarity with the pair of former Big Ten opponents helped when targeting transfers.

"It's hard to get that last minute before halftime vs. Penn State out of my head with Jamari," Holtmann said. "That was a quick tone-changer in terms of the game there. Fortunately, we won it, but he created havoc on that play, so I think familiarity was certainly part of it. I knew Joey obviously – but once we dove into the kind of kid Jamari is – as our team is currently comprised, we felt like those were the right additions for this group."

Wheeler's last matchup with Ohio State as an opponent came on Feb. 18, and though the Lions fell 92-82, the veteran point guard finished with 11 points, seven rebounds, four assists and one steal in 36 minutes and left a lasting impression on Holtmann.

"They are a difficult matchup for us, and give them credit, they battled. I just love the leadership – you can just tell the way they compete with their group, in particular Wheeler and (John) Harrar, they are just warriors," said Holtmann during the post-game press conference.

Holtmann was thoroughly impressed with the resolve and fight in Wheeler as a leader of a Penn State team which saw head coach Pat Chambers resign on Oct. 21, 2020, following an internal investigation by the school into inappropriate conduct by Chambers.

"I admired the way that Penn State team played this year, given what they had gone through, I really did," Holtmann said. "I always admired the way Jamari competed, so I think knowing Jamari's competitiveness was a factor."

Once Wheeler entered the NCAA's transfer portal, Holtmann and his staff reached out immediately, hoping to secure a commitment from the tenacious point guard for his final season of eligibility granted to all players due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He considered returning to Penn State, but with only one season left, Wheeler chose to pursue championships instead of helping new head coach Micah Shrewsberry try to rebuild the program.

"I just felt like it was the best fit for me and the things that I was looking for at my

next school," Wheeler said. "They had it all and I just wanted somewhere that plays my play style and gives me a chance to go to March Madness and compete for championships."

As a former three-star prospect out of Gainesville (Fla.) The Rock School, Wheeler has come a long way since originally committing to Duquesne in 2016.

When he was growing up in Live Oak, Fla., Wheeler's parents had a strong influence on his basketball career, which began in the fourth grade. While his father coached his AAU team, he also credits his mother, who had received collegiate offers, for his development in the sport.

Prior to his final two high school seasons at The Rock, Wheeler played two seasons at Suwannee, Fla., where he wanted to play alongside former Florida standout center Kevarrus Hayes. After Hayes left, Wheeler transferred to The Rock in pursuit of an elite national schedule to better prepare him for college.

As a senior, Wheeler helped lead The Rock to a school-record 35 wins in 2016-17, helping earn him his offer from Penn State. Carrying his competitive edge with him to State College, Wheeler played in all 39 games and set a school record of 52 steals by a freshman, which ranked sixth overall in the Big Ten in 2017-18.

Wheeler took on a larger role as a sophomore, and he rose to the challenge by dishing 89 assists, while ranking third in the conference with 47 steals in 32 games.

As a junior, Wheeler once again excelled defensively with a league-leading 48 steals in 31 games, and he handed out 99 helpers to 54 turnovers.

In the COVID-shortened 2020-21 campaign, Wheeler led the Lions with 44 steals while playing a team-high 31.2 minutes per game in 25 contests. He set career highs with per-game averages of 6.8 points, 4.2 rebounds and 3.5 assists, dishing 88 assists to 44 giveaways.

Following his four-year career at Penn State, the shutdown specialist welcomed the Buckeyes' strong interest as a transfer target.

"Their message was with all the great pieces they have, the great guys and talent and with a need for the point guard position that I was the piece that could help take them to the next level," Wheeler said.

Wheeler (6-1, 170) earned a spot on the Big Ten All-Defensive Team in each of his last two seasons at Penn State, leaving with the sixth-most steals in school history (195).

"I'm really excited about Jamari and excited about what he brings in terms of a guy that can defend the ball," Holtmann said of Wheeler. "We're losing that with C.J. Walker, who was really good at defending the ball."

Even though Walker's collegiate career concluded in March, the former Buckeye point guard reached out to Wheeler to provide guidance as a former transfer. The recruitment of Wheeler was primarily led by assistant coach Jake Diebler, who has taken over defensive duties from former assistant Terry Johnson.

"I built a really good relationship with Coach Jake," Wheeler said. "When I was talking to my old coaches, they knew him, and everything I heard from different coaches were all good about him and the whole coaching staff, so it made the decision easier."

Though Wheeler's defense was what made him such an attractive transfer target, he improved drastically as a playmaker and shooter throughout his tenure at Penn State.

After shooting just 38.4 percent from the field and 16.4 percent from beyond the arc through his first two seasons, Wheeler improved his efficiency to 42.6 percent on field goals and 36.7 percent on three-pointers in his next two.

"Jamari obviously meets a need for us in terms of both his defense, his on-ball presence and his offense is improved, as we know," Holtmann said. "And he can be a real pest on the ball, that's for sure."

Wheeler joins an Ohio State backcourt featuring fifth-year senior Jimmy Sotos, sophomore Meechie Johnson and freshman Malaki Branham. It could also have senior guard Duane Washington if he decides to return after entering the NBA draft.

During his four-year career, Wheeler averaged 3.8 points, 3.0 rebounds, 2.6 assists and 1.5 steals per game in 127 outings with a 1.9 assist-to-turnover ratio. His numbers may not jump off the page, but Holtmann and Co. see Wheeler as the perfect piece to the puzzle.

"I understand immediately sometimes your fans look at points per game and say, 'We should be taking this guy or that guy.' But you're trying to assemble a team," Holtmann said. "And while we don't know anything on a couple of our players, we do understand we have some guys that have



FILE PHOTO

**LASTING IMPRESSION** – Chris Holtmann's memory of Jamari Wheeler's defensive effort made him a target in the transfer portal.

performed well that are returning, so you're trying to put a team together.

"And I just felt like with Jamari, he answered some questions in terms of our perimeter play, defense and leadership."

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# No Time To Waste As Holtmann Expects Busy Summer

From transfer portals to the NBA draft process and the reimplementation of on-campus visits, the offseason is not really that for college coaches anymore. The landscape has changed, partially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and coaches such as Ohio State's Chris Holtmann must adapt on the fly.

## COURT REPORT

Craig Merz

A week into June he, like others in his profession, is still not 100 percent sure what his roster will look like for the 2021-22 season. He has a good idea, but Holtmann may not know for certain until early July who's in and who's out.

Here are some dates to keep in mind:

**June 1:** This marked the end of the recruiting dead period that stretched back to March 2020 when the pandemic shut down the world. Prospects were unable to host recruiters or make visits to campuses because of safety concerns.

Obviously, there is a backlog of recruiting trips that Holtmann and his staff want to untangle. It's one thing to make a Zoom call with a recruit and another to meet him and his family face-to-face and show them around campus.

"It's huge," Holtmann told Columbus radio station 97.1 The Fan on May 18. "Right now, as I'm looking at my desk, I see a number of visits planned in June. I mean, every day is jam-packed with at least one and, in some cases, two visitors – some unofficial visits, some official visits. It's every day, including Sundays in most cases, so it will be a really busy June, July. We'll be gone three weekends recruiting."

"I was talking to an ACC head coach yesterday and he was kind of in his mind lamenting a little bit the fact that here we go again, right? It's in the pandemic but at least some of the restrictions are over, and the idea of recruiting, either on campus or off campus every day throughout the summer, is here."

The one exception is a dead period from July 19-22. That was done to help coaches remain on campus those days to support current athletes and encourage recruits to rest between evaluation periods before and after that abbreviated dead period.

**July 1:** The last day that an athlete in a fall/winter sport (including basketball) can enter the transfer portal.

Normally, the deadline for those athletes would be May 1, but because of the pandemic the NCAA granted a one-time waiver for a two-month extension.

While it benefits the athletes, it's a little numbing for coaches who may be hit with players leaving three months before the start of the preseason and forced to scramble for replacements.

Through transfers, Ohio State lost guard Musa Jallow and center Ibrahima Diallo but gained guard Jamari Wheeler (Penn State) and forward Joey Brunk (Indiana). Jallow has committed to UNC-Charlotte while Diallo is still searching as of publication.

Adding to the angst is the measure approved April 28 by the NCAA Division I Board of Directors to allow athletes in all sports to transfer once with immediate

eligibility.

"I was looking at the news the other day, saw a college program, a major program, who had 13 players in the transfer portal," Holtmann said April 27. "Another one had nine. And they're good programs. It can certainly test your ability to adjust as a coach and as a coaching staff."

"It's required now for your job as, quote-unquote, a general manager is as important as any job description for you right now. I'm not going to get into the arguments for or against it because they've been well-documented, and I can appreciate both sides."

"I can certainly understand people's concerns about what it was, what it could do to our game, but I think we are all in the process of needing to adjust. For us that's really been the case the last three to four or five years. I just think now, maybe more of your fans are starting to realize that you're going to have three, four or five (transfers) potentially every year. Unfortunately, or fortunately, however you look at it, that's the way it is."

**July 7:** Holtmann will know by then whether junior forward E.J. Liddell and senior guard Duane Washington Jr. will play for the Buckeyes again.

That's the deadline for withdrawing their names from the early-entry list for the NBA draft and still maintain college eligibility. The draft is July 29.

A good indicator may come by mid-June when the list of players invited to the NBA draft combine June 21-27 is revealed. Not being an invitee almost guarantees a player will not be drafted. Of course, there are other options such as the G League or Europe if a player is not drafted but wants to turn pro.

The July 7 withdrawal date is about a month later than usual, and COVID-19 can be blamed for that with the 2020-21 NBA season having a delayed start and pushing the potential last game of the playoffs to July 22.

A total of 353 players – 296 from college and 57 international players – have filed as early-entry candidates for the 60 picks over two rounds.

USA Today's mock draft of June 1 did not have either OSU player selected. Nor did NBA draft.net on June 2.

What it likely means is that the roster maybe, possibly, probably might be set with Liddell and Washington back.

"We've had a very stable roster," Holtmann said. "The average in basketball is five transfers per team. We had one young man, Musa, graduate and find a spot elsewhere. We love him and Ibrahima, both great kids. Our roster for the most part has been pretty stable, but it still has been a very busy offseason."

Of course, there is still time for somebody else to transfer out.

### New Coach

Ohio State officially announced its hiring of Seton Hall assistant coach Tony Skinn on May 27.

"The opportunity to come to a program like Ohio State is very unique, and I'm grateful that Coach Holtmann has given me this opportunity," Skinn said. "As a fan of basketball, the Ohio State brand is second to none, and I'm excited to get to work. This is a very good team and program, and I hope with the experiences that I had – as a player and now as a coach – that I can make a big impact."

## 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

"I'm not too far removed from the process of being a player. I know the culture and the mentality of the day-to-day grind, and I can put myself in their shoes and help them become a better basketball player."

Skinn coached at Seton Hall for three seasons, two of which finished in being selected for the NCAA Tournament. In 2019, the Pirates made their fourth consecutive appearance in the tournament, a program record, then won the Big East regular-season title in 2020 before COVID-19 canceled the conference and NCAA tournaments.

Prior to his time at Seton Hall, Skinn also had three years of experience at Louisiana Tech, as well as some playing experience as a collegiate player at George Mason, where his team made a miraculous run to the Final Four. Skinn, a Nigerian native, also has professional basketball experience in Croatia, France, Italy, Germany, Israel and Ukraine.

"We are really excited about the addition of Tony Skinn as an assistant coach," Holtmann said in the release. "Tony comes highly recommended from every level – NBA, college, AAU and high school. Tony was an outstanding player on a Final Four team and as a professional. He has developed a reputation in his coaching career as being a tremendous worker. He's detail-oriented, builds excellent relationships with players and is an outstanding recruiter."

"He has strong ties in the D.C. Metro area and has worked with some highly successful high school, AAU and college programs. We can't wait for him to get started. A big welcome to Tony, Weyni, Isaiah, Liam and Noelle to our program and The Ohio State University."

### Representing

Sophomores Meechie Johnson and Zed Key accepted invitations to attend the 2021 USA Basketball Men's U19 World Cup Team training camp in Fort Worth, Texas, from June 20-22.

A total of 27 players are in camp with 12 making the roster for the tournament in Riga and Daugavpils, Latvia, from July 3-11.

Key played in all 31 OSU games last season and averaged 5.2 points and 3.4 rebounds. Johnson joined the Buckeyes midseason as a reclassified 2021 recruit and appeared in 17 games, averaging 1.2 points in 5.9 minutes.

Holtmann said in April that he had been asked to be an assistant to head coach Jamie Dixon at the event but couldn't because of other commitments.

### What's In A Number

Holtmann can't wait to see incoming freshman Malaki Branham from Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary in a Buckeye uniform. The four-star recruit was the Ohio Mr. Basketball for 2020-21.

"What a special kid he is," Holtmann said. "I think he's a young man that people are really going to love watching and

getting to know. He's kind of a versatile multi-position guard."

The Akron native may be donning a number that's pretty important around the program.

"I'm going to have him write a letter or pick up the phone and call Jimmy Jackson, because he really wants to wear Jimmy's number."

Jackson wore No. 22 when he played for the Buckeyes from 1989-92. He was an All-American in 1991 and 1992 and the United Press International Player of the Year for 1992. His number was retired in 2001.

### Schedule

The dates and times aren't set, but the Buckeyes know who they will be playing in the 20-game Big Ten schedule.

Home and away: Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Penn State, Wisconsin.

Home only: Iowa, Michigan State, Northwestern.

Away only: Illinois, Purdue, Rutgers.

The season will conclude with the Big Ten tournament March 9-13 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.

### On The Trail

Four-star power forward Kyle Filipowski (6-11, 230) from Wilbraham (Mass.) Wilbraham & Monson Academy is scheduled to take an official visit to Ohio State the weekend of June 12. He is also visiting Duke, Indiana, Iowa and Syracuse this month. Filipowski is ranked 56th nationally for the class of 2022 in the 247Sports composite rankings.

Felix Okpara (6-11, 210) of Chattanooga (Tenn.) Hamilton Heights Christian Academy will visit OSU on June 15. The 2022 four-star center is 37th nationally and fifth at center.

Center Patrick Wessler (7-0, 235) announced June 3 that he had received an Ohio State offer. The Charlotte (N.C.) Combine Academy product is 23rd nationally for 2022.

The Buckeyes are working hard on center Shawn Phillips (6-10, 250), a Dayton native who transferred to Ypsilanti (Mich.) Ypsi Prep Academy last season and is a four-star prospect in 2022. He is 83rd nationally and 12th at his position. Baylor, Cincinnati, Indiana, Illinois, Maryland and Villanova are some of the schools seeking his services.

If it seems like Holtmann is concentrating on getting an elite big man, that would be a correct assumption since that has been a struggle in his recruiting since being hired in June 2017.

"We just have to keep swinging," he said on April 27. "I would love for it to be a regional, local prospect, but that run of big men that we saw come through here (and who went elsewhere) felt like, 'Man, there's another one that came from the state.' I think we're in good position with some guys moving forward."



# Brooks Brings Energy To OSU Coaching Staff

By WYATT CROSHER  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State women's basketball made its first new hire of the offseason when Wes Brooks was added to the coaching staff on May 10. Back in the early 2000s as a student at West Virginia, it seemed unlikely that Brooks would be set on a path through women's college basketball.

As an undergraduate student, Brooks had his first taste of coaching in any form when he was a student manager for the men's team. There, he worked under then-West Virginia head coach John Beilein, who ultimately went on to coach for 12 years at Michigan and is now a senior advisor for player development with the NBA's Detroit Pistons.

Brooks told Buckeye Sports Bulletin that he learned a lot about the game in his brief time under Beilein, especially in some key fundamentals on the offensive side of the ball.

"He's an offensive genius I would say," Brooks said. "I learned that shooting is very important. I learned how important skill was. I learned how important having good people with team chemistry was. Just seeing him build those teams and build them up, and the biggest thing is good people, the importance of skill and the importance of having good chemistry."

Both Beilein and Brooks stayed at West Virginia through the 2006-07 season, but by that point, Brooks had already moved onto the women's game. He moved from working under one legendary coach to another, with Mike Carey hiring Brooks as a graduate assistant in 2004.

Carey, who has been a women's basketball head coach since 1988 and has been at West Virginia since 2001, brought Brooks on because of an opening on his staff. Even though Brooks was fresh out of college as an undergrad and did not have any experience in the women's game, he took on the opportunity and never looked back.

Eventually, Brooks became West Virginia's director of operations before he left for an assistant role at Robert Morris a year later in 2008 to pursue his new coaching aspirations. Instead of backtracking into men's basketball, Brooks took the experience under Carey and turned it into what is currently a 14-year career as an assistant coach.

"I'd already built a network of people on the women's side," Brooks said. "So I said, 'Why go backwards? The women's side is great.' At that time, I knew the game was going to grow, but I didn't know it was going to explode like it has exploded. For a career trajectory, you want to just continue to build; you don't want to start over. So that's how I started on the women's side. People are like, 'What's the difference?' I say, 'Well, players are players. Players want to be coached, players want to be great.'"

Brooks spent one season at Robert Morris, then three at Texas Southern and four at North Texas before finding his way onto the coaching staff at Utah in 2015. After two seasons with the Utes, Brooks landed at Michigan, making it to the same university Beilein did, just 10 years later with four extra stops.

All those extra stops, according to Brooks, have made him a better coach, as he has been able to pick and choose the things he's liked from various experiences

to improve his craft. It has also helped him out as a recruiter to have experiences at programs in Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah and West Virginia.

"You grow with every experience, so you take something. You take what you don't like, you take what you do like and it makes you a better person. But being able to see it from a variety of perspectives makes you stronger," Brooks said. "What it has allowed me to do recruiting wise is build a national recruiting base. I can tap into California. I can tap into Texas and then build a worldwide recruiting base when you get to a school like Michigan. So now you can use all the resources, all the references, all the networks, all the people you have."

"And now you get to a place like Ohio State, and you hope that it can culminate and that's why I came here, because you want to get to a Final Four and I think you can do it at a school like Ohio State."

In his four seasons with the Wolverines, Brooks helped the team reach three NCAA tournaments, which would have been four if not for COVID-19 causing the cancellation of the event in 2020. By his last year with the team, he had helped Michigan, under head coach Kim Barnes Arico, ascend to the program's highest Associated Press top-25 ranking (No. 11).

Although football may reign supreme in the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry, Brooks said he thinks there is certainly some added animosity when the two women's basketball programs meet on the court.

"The rivalry is real," Brooks said. "I will attest that the rivalry is real. I think there's a respect, but I don't think there's any love lost between the two teams."

During his tenure at Michigan, Brooks also helped forward Naz Hillmon become the first conference player of the year and All-American in Michigan women's basketball history.

Hillmon's highlight performance was a 50-point, 16-rebound effort on the road against Ohio State on Jan. 21. Despite the heroics, the Buckeyes won 81-77. It was the second 50-point game Brooks had been on the sidelines for, with the other coming while he was at Utah.

On Feb. 25, 2017, Washington guard Kelsey Plum became the NCAA's all-time leading scorer with a 57-point downpour against the Utes. It was the fifth-highest-scoring game in women's Division I history at the time, and it was enough to take down Utah 84-77.

"I've never won a 50-point game, so I don't like them," Brooks said. "You can throw the 50-point games out because I've been a part of two now, and both times I've come out with a losing edge."

A player like Hillmon represents something bigger for Brooks now that he is at Ohio State. Hillmon was a four-star prospect out of Gates Mills (Ohio) Gilmour Academy in 2018 but chose the Wolverines over the in-state Buckeyes. Fast-forward to last year, and Hillmon is one of the top players of the country putting up historic numbers against Ohio State instead of for it.

"Naz Hillmon is one of the reasons why you want to come to a place like Ohio State," Brooks said. "That kid is from Cleveland, Ohio (Gates Mills is a Cleveland suburb). You want to keep her home and

you don't want her to go to Michigan. Now don't get me wrong, Michigan is a good school academically and athletically, but if you can keep a kid like that at home, you want to keep her at home."

That desire to improve Ohio State's recruiting, specifically within the state, is of the utmost importance to Brooks, who emphasized the level of women's basketball talent that is found within Ohio.

"For me it's the No. 1 priority," Brooks said. "Ohio is as rich with talent as Texas, California and Georgia in women's basketball. Ohio was one of the best states in the country for women's basketball, and so the ability to keep those kids in state in Ohio is very exciting."

That level of desire and excitement from Brooks to make an impact was also clear to head coach Kevin McGuff, who has experience with Brooks back to when he was a West Virginia graduate assistant and McGuff was head coach at Xavier.

"He's a really high character person with great energy," McGuff said. "He's a really energetic person, extremely hard worker. I think he'll be really good in practice and with his presence with our players because his energy level is sky high. He's a really good communicator who loves to recruit, and I think he'll certainly impact us in that area as well."

Brooks seems to fit into Ohio State's coaching staff well with his experience, both with McGuff and in the Big Ten, but he was very nearly off to the SEC instead. On April 11, Brooks accepted an assistant coaching position at Mississippi State but ultimately rescinded that commitment in favor of one to the Buckeyes.

He said that decision came down to finding the right fit for him, as well as a lack of taking time to make a move on his end.

"You have to have patience, and one of those things was McGuff and I had talked and I really wanted to come to Ohio State. And it was one of those things where I'm very impatient," Brooks said. "I think here at Ohio State, I fit Kevin, I fit the culture. We have the same traits, same philosophy. I was able to pull out. I said sorry about the time wasted. It was two weeks, which is better than six months or a year from now."

McGuff also said that it came down to the timetables not quite matching up between Ohio State's coaching search and Brooks' initial hiring.

"So much of these things are about timing," McGuff said. "When (former assistant coach) Simon (Harris) left and we're trying to get the job posted, keep it open for the right time, just have a legit process that makes sense and where we have a great process to get the right person. (Mississippi State) was a little bit ahead of us in terms

of when the job opened there, so I think he was just ready to make a different move and so he was a little bit like, 'Hey, this is open. They want me.' And then as he thought about it a little bit more, he kind of felt like this is the right spot for him."

Now Brooks is at Ohio State and ready to make an impact, both on the floor and in the recruiting world. He said the emphasis on McGuff's style of play on offense could make Ohio State "the most fun team in America to play for."

His impact has already been felt in that aspect, with the Ohio State women's basketball Twitter account posting "Fun Friday" clips of quick-moving, fast-paced offensive possessions from last season. The videos all say, "Play for the most fun offense in America," at the bottom.

Although recruiting is at the top of his priorities, Brooks also has plenty of aspirations on the court for Ohio State, and he looks to the major programs at the university for reasons the Buckeyes are more than able to shoot for the stars.

"The main goal is always to go win the Big Ten championship, get to a Final Four, win the national championship," Brooks said. "Kevin has won a Big Ten tournament title, so he's already proven he can do it. The goal is now to win another Big Ten tournament title, win another Big Ten championship. You see the success of the men's program. You see the success of football."

"Get to a Final Four, get to that national championship game, because Ohio State is very capable of doing it."

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# McGuff Speaks On Offseason Departures

It was a difficult 2020-21 season for Ohio State women's basketball due to the constant struggles with COVID-19 and the lack of postseason play after a self-imposed ban.

But the difficulties didn't stop once the season was over, with two of the team's key contributors electing to leave the Buckeyes through the transfer portal. Those two were forwards Dorka Juhasz and Aaliyah Patty, two players who spent three seasons at Ohio State before going to UConn and Texas A&M, respectively.

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff spoke to Buckeye Sports Bulletin on May 19 for the first time since both Juhasz and Patty entered the transfer portal. He said that he hopes both of his former players find success at their new destinations and that the moves were not a huge shock because of how active the transfer portal currently is.

"Nothing is ever a surprise nowadays, but they're both good kids, and they both did a lot of good things here," McGuff said. "Dorka graduated. I think that made it a lot easier for her, because that was one of her goals for coming from Hungary is to graduate from Ohio State. She did that. She's a great student, and I think she just wants something different in her last two years.

"Aaliyah kind of felt like a fresh start for her would be something good, as well. I wish them both well. That's just part of it in 2021."

McGuff said that, despite the losses, he isn't concerned because of how volatile the transfer portal currently is. He also said that adding more players will continue to come down to who is right for the team and not as much about filling for a need.

"You're going to lose some players, you're going to get some out of the portal and you just have to continue to make sure you're adding the right kids to the team in terms of how they fit and so forth," McGuff said. "I think we've done that, and you never know as it evolves through the summer. You never know if there's anything else that happens either way, out or in."

As for if there will be any more additions to the team heading into the 2021-22 season, McGuff said the searches will continue, but there is no pressure to add anyone with the current roster he possesses.

"We'll always be on the lookout for the right kids we think can continue to help us, but I like our group a lot and I think we'll have a chance to have a really great group of kids and have a great season," McGuff said.

### Beacham Officially In, Mikesell Currently Out For 2021-22

One addition from the portal that is now official for Ohio State is the transfer of former Oregon and Maryland guard Taylor Mikesell, which the team announced on its Twitter account on May 18.

Mikesell averaged 9.3 points, 2.4 rebounds and 1.8 assists per game in one season with the Ducks. Prior to that, she was a good shooter for the Terrapins, where she hit 40.0 percent from three overall with two seasons averaging over 11 points per game.

"She's an extremely talented player who totally fits our style of play with her skill set,"

McGuff said. "She has the ability to stretch the floor to the three-point line, and she's just a really naturally gifted scorer who I think could really be effective for us."

The NCAA has allowed for immediate eligibility for one-time transfers across all of its sports, but because this is Mikesell's second transfer, she is currently ineligible for the 2021-22 season.

McGuff did not rule out the possibility of pursuing a waiver for Mikesell to play this season but said that a decision has not been made yet because of uncertainties around both Mikesell and the NCAA's decision process.

"Once we get her here, we'll explore that, see if anything makes sense or not," McGuff said. "The other part of it is, with the new transfer rules, they haven't really defined what the waiver requirements will be for sure yet. That will also play into whether we think there's something there that may fit."

While Mikesell's eligibility for next season is up in the air, another question mark has been resolved since BSB last went to press. McGuff confirmed to BSB that forward Tanaya Beacham will use her free year of eligibility from the NCAA to return to the Buckeyes for her sixth-year senior season.

Beacham has been at the collegiate level for five years but has spent only one at Ohio State, transferring to the team last offseason after three years plus a redshirt year with Toledo. Last season with the Buckeyes, Beacham played in 19 games, including five starts, and finished with 4.1 points and 3.7 rebounds per game. She shot 45.6 percent from the field and 77.8 percent from the free-throw line, third best on the team.

In her time with Toledo, she played in 95 games, averaging career highs of 10.8 points and 5.5 rebounds in her final season with the program. She also led that team in field-goal percentage (58.3 percent) while also serving as a team captain.

The return of Beacham could be substantial for an Ohio State team that lost both of its starting forwards to the transfer portal this offseason. The Buckeyes now have three forwards on the roster, with Beacham joining Gabby Hutcherson and Rebeka Mikulasikova, who are entering their sophomore and junior seasons, respectively.

Beacham's return means that both seniors from last year's team are using their free years of eligibility to come back for the 2021-22 campaign. The other is guard Braxtin Miller, who started in all 19 of her appearances and tallied 11.5 points, 3.7 rebounds and 3.1 assists per game last year.

With Beacham's decision, Ohio State now has 13 players on its roster – 10 from last season, Mikesell and incoming freshman guards Kaitlyn Costner and Taylor Thierry. With 12 active players on the roster for next season, McGuff said it allows him to be patient, both with looking in the transfer portal and with deciding if it is worth filing a waiver for Mikesell's eligibility.

"Even with losing two, and we don't know what Taylor's eligibility is going to be, we have 12 right now eligible to play. If she for some reason did (play this year), that would be 13," McGuff said. "We'll always be looking. I'm a little conscious of the numbers, too, and having too many players, but we'll see what happens."

### Williams-Jeter Takes Wittenberg Position

Ohio State women's basketball is down another assistant coach this offseason, with

## 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

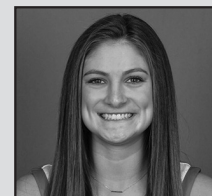
## — PROJECTED 2021-22 STARTERS —



### 0 • Madison Greene • G

**Ht.: 5-8 • Class: Jr.**

Finished third on the team with 13.4 points per game and had a team-high 4.3 assists per contest.



### 4 • Jacy Sheldon • G

**Ht.: 5-10 • Class: Jr.**

Led the team with 16.7 points per game while shooting 48.6 percent from the field in her sophomore season.



### 10 • Braxtin Miller • G

**Ht.: 5-11 • Class: Sr.**

Averaged 11.5 points, 3.7 rebounds and 3.1 assists per game in 19 appearances, all of which were starts.



### 2 • Gabby Hutcherson • F

**Ht.: 6-2 • Class: So.**

Averaged 3.1 points per game and shot a team-high 41.7 percent from three in her freshman season.



### 35 • Tanaya Beacham • F

**Ht.: 6-1 • Class: Sr.**

Tallied 4.1 points and 3.7 rebounds per game in her first season with OSU after transferring from Toledo.

Tamika Williams-Jeter being announced as head coach of Division-III Wittenberg on May 7. Along with the head coaching position, Williams-Jeter will also be an associate athletic director for the university.

"We are very excited about Tamika leading our women's basketball program," said Wittenberg vice president and athletic director Brian Agler, who coached the ABL's Columbus Quest to two championships and won two more titles in the WNBA. "I've known her for 20 years, and I'm looking forward to working with her. She is a proven winner, champion and leader. Her positive influence on our student-athletes, women's basketball program, athletic department and university will be significant. We will create an opportunity for her to make a big impact."

This is Williams-Jeter's first head coaching opportunity, but she has nearly 20 years of coaching experience. She has been with the Buckeyes the last two seasons and had previously been at Ohio State for six years from 2002-08. One of those seasons was as a graduate assistant before becoming a full-time assistant under Jim Foster. Between her two tenures at Ohio State, she had coaching stints at Kansas, Kentucky and Penn State.

Prior to her time as a coach, Williams-

Jeter had plenty of success as a player, winning a pair of national championships and becoming a Naismith Player of the Year candidate at UConn under head coach Geno Auriemma. She played seven seasons in the WNBA from 2002-08 – the same time period she coached for the Buckeyes – tallying 1,404 points, 1,166 rebounds, 221 assists and 183 steals.

"Every bit of success that I have ever experienced is because of the people who have helped drive the vision," Williams-Jeter said. "President (Mike) Frandsen and Agler painted a picture of their vision of success at Wittenberg University that I couldn't pass up. They have given me an opportunity to be a part of a vision that promotes a tradition of excellence both academically and athletically."

"I am extremely honored to continue to help young minds grow, to engage in my Dayton and Springfield community, and create a winning culture on the court."

Williams-Jeter joins Simon Harris, who left Ohio State for a head coaching job at East Tennessee State, as the two Buckeye assistants to leave the team this offseason. Ohio State has filled one of those positions with the addition of former Michigan and Mississippi State assistant Wes Brooks.



# Frustrating Season Closes For Buckeyes

The Ohio State baseball team had its season come to an end on a positive note, with a 2-1 weekend series victory over Northwestern from May 28-30, to finish the year at 22-20, good enough for No. 6 in the Big Ten. The Buckeyes finished behind champion Nebraska, Maryland, Michigan, Indiana and Iowa. Without non-conference play to bolster its résumé, no conference tournament and a weak strength of schedule, Ohio State wasn't especially close to postseason consideration.

## FROM THE STRETCH

Patrick Mayhorn

After a surprising postseason run in 2019 led by elite pitching, it's been a disappointing pair of seasons for Ohio State baseball. The 2020 season lasted just 14 games, but a 6-8 start did not bode well for a roster that was hoping to make another postseason run.

The 2021 group had similar expectations and again failed to live up to them. This wasn't a particularly senior-laden roster – recognizing just five seniors on May 30 – but this star-studded core has yet to deliver on the level that it had been planning to.

Against the Wildcats, Ohio State took games No. 1 and 2 before dropping the final matchup of the season. In the first game the Buckeyes erased a five-run first inning for the Wildcats, staging a big comeback to claim a 13-10 win. It was a rough showing for starting pitcher Seth Lonsway, who surrendered seven runs in 3 2/3 innings of work, but Will Pfennig, Patrick Murphy and T.J. Brock helped to clean up for him, with Pfennig picking up the win.



Zach Dezenzo

Also helpful were a pair of home runs and a third hit from shortstop Zach Dezenzo, who racked up 6 RBI. Archer Brookman's two-run home run in the third inning helped to spur a four-run inning for the Buckeyes.

Dezenzo starred again for the Buckeyes in a 4-1, game two victory. He walked twice and launched a solo home run in the fourth inning.

In an 8-2 senior day loss, the Buckeyes recognized bullpen pitchers Joe Gahm, Murphy and Jake Vance, as well as batters Conner Pohl and Scottie Seymour at the lettermen wall at Bill Davis Stadium. Colton Bauer, Brookman, Griffan Smith, Brent Todys and Sam Wilson weren't recognized but are seniors.

An Ohio State spokesman confirmed that the five who weren't recognized are still considering their options for returning and that they weren't part of the festivities because Ohio State didn't want to recognize them twice if they do choose to return. In contrast, the five that were recognized are completely done and have exhausted their eligibility, meaning that Ohio State will have a trio of bullpen arms

and a star first baseman to replace in Pohl.

From the sounds of it, those deliberations for the seniors who do maintain eligibility did not take long. In a conversation with BSB on June 3, Ohio State skipper Greg Beals said he expects all five to return, giving Ohio State one of its more experienced rosters in several seasons.

"We've had meetings since the season has ended, and at this point all of our seniors are going to return and take advantage of their extra year of eligibility that they received from the NCAA from the 2020 season," Beals said, though he mentioned that some Buckeyes will still be potential picks in the July MLB first-year player draft. "I think that from that point, we've got answers. We're going to have guys come back, which is exciting to see that they have the passion to play at this level, the passion to represent this university."

"I don't think a lot of people realize, they think, 'Oh why wouldn't you



Greg Beals

come back, it's easier?' In baseball, our guys are all on partial scholarships. Smaller percentage scholarships, some guys are not on scholarship. It requires a commitment from the student-athlete and his family to do that. It's not just easy, like, 'Oh I got a full scholarship to go to school and play there a year.' There are sacrifices that are made for that to happen. That requires that passion that I talked about, that desire in that they want to do this. They want to play this out."

The goal for those returning seniors, along with the rest of the roster and the staff leading them, is pretty obvious, and the Buckeye head man is open in acknowledging that Ohio State did not reach it this season. For Ohio State, the journey to reaching those goals began anew immediately following the end of the season.

"Since the season has ended, we've done a lot of the evaluation – self-evaluation, team evaluation, roster evaluation," Beals said. "Really, the common thing is just about the ability to train ourselves at an elite level, which we believe in. One of our core values is elite preparation, and there were many circumstances this year that challenged that. But regardless of those situations, we simply feel like we didn't train ourselves tough enough and at a high enough level to have the success that we want to. And while we know why some of those things didn't take place, we also know that they're very critical to our success, and we want to make sure that those things are not missed in what we're hoping to be a normal year this year."

"We had guys out for COVID protocols, we were restricted in some of our training times and locations, and how much we were able to use facilities, and those things. Some of that resulted in some injuries and just slowed the progress. But it is what it is, and we needed to work through those things better than we did."

The next step for Ohio State revolves around that July entry draft. The draft is quite a bit more daunting this season than

it was in 2020, when it was compressed to just three rounds, leaving Buckeyes such as Lonsway without a team, despite plenty of intrigue during the draft process. Lonsway will again be eligible and should draw attention, though his 2021 season still saw him struggle with control, which is what brought him back to Columbus for this season in the first place. The rising senior pitcher is the only Buckeye listed on the MLB top 200 prospects list, at No. 142, though he isn't the only eligible player who could draw interest.

Brock, Burhenn and Pohl were each named to an All-Big Ten team (third team for the pitchers alongside Lonsway, second-team for Pohl along with the draft-ineligible standout freshman Kade Kern) and could be names to watch as well, though the former two are unlikely, and Pohl is gone regardless.

That's a pretty friendly setup for the Buckeyes. They still won't likely enter the 2022 season as favorites in the Big Ten, but a starting rotation that returns every starter (barring a Lonsway pick in the draft) and a lineup that loses just one starter – albeit a big one – would make for the most experienced team of the Beals era. It may also make for a must-win situation for the Buckeye skipper, who may be starting to feel a bit of a hot seat after a pair of disappointing seasons.

## Softball Ends Season With Victory

The Ohio State softball team celebrated senior day with a series victory over Michigan State on May 16, locking up a 3-1 win in the season-ending weekend series with a 5-0 win. Allison Smith starred in the circle for the Buckeyes in that fourth game, recording six strikeouts. She combined with senior Payton Buresch for the shutout.

It wasn't a great season for the Buckeyes on the softball diamond, as they, like the baseball team, didn't qualify for postseason play with a 24-19 record – good enough for sixth place in the Big Ten, but not good enough to play more games beyond their conference-only schedule.

That doesn't mean that the bizarre 2021 season was all bad for Ohio State. This was always expected to be a bit of a rebuilding year as the Buckeyes looked to replace a good chunk of the strong 2018 and 2019 teams, with young players sprinkled throughout the roster.

A winning record and multiple contributors who can be trusted down the road were the goals in Columbus this season, and it's hard to say that OSU didn't hit those marks. That was thanks in part to the emergence of freshman pitcher Smith, the freshman phenom who looks to be the future ace in the circle for the Buckeyes.

Smith finished the season with 134 strikeouts in 132 2/3 innings pitched with a 2.95 ERA and 12-12 record. Her .235 batting average against was the best on the team. Although Buresch, along with all other seniors, has been granted the extra COVID year of eligibility, she was recognized on senior day, and it's unclear if she plans to return to Ohio State for one more season.

If she doesn't, Smith will move into the top spot for the Buckeyes in 2022 and could instantly be one of the Big Ten's top pitchers, though Ohio State will need to find a second pitcher whom it can trust in that starting spot.

Smith wasn't the only player to impress and inspire hope for Ohio State moving forward.

Sophomore infielder Mariah Rodriguez was named a first-team All-Big Ten selection after slashing .358/.377/.500 with 11 RBI. Her batting average was easily the best among Ohio State starters and put her in the upper echelon of contact hitters in the Big Ten. Though she wasn't frequently the player delivering multi-base hits or home runs, her ability to get on base was crucial for the Buckeye offense, and she'll look to contribute at the top of the lineup next season as well.

She was joined in recognition by classmate Sam Hackenbracht, Ohio State's catcher who was picked to the All-Big Ten second team. Hackenbracht hit .303/.444/.727 with 26 RBI and a team-high 12 home runs. She also led the team in walks with 21 and had only 22 strikeouts in 99 at-bats. Her 195 put-outs were second to Niki Carver, who had 215 as the team's first baseman.

Buresch, Carver, infielder Carley Gaskill, pitcher Skylar Hayward, infielder Megan McMenemy and outfielder Spencer Sansom are the lone seniors on this roster, and only Buresch, Carver, Gaskill and McMenemy played major roles for the Buckeyes, leaving them with an experienced returning roster even if all four opt against the extra year of eligibility – which seems unlikely.



Mariah Rodriguez



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# Ohio State Promotes Pair Of Former Standouts

Ohio State wrestling coach Tom Ryan is going to have a pair of familiar faces on his staff this season. The Buckeyes announced on May 6 that volunteer assistant coach Bo Jordan is being promoted to a full-time assistant role. Logan Stieber is stepping into an assistant coach position as well, though he'll maintain his status as the head of the Ohio Regional Training Center.

## ON THE MAT Patrick Mayhorn

"I couldn't be happier with the composition of our staff," Ryan said. "Adding a wrestler of Logan's caliber is obviously amazing, but it's his overall being that should excite Buckeye Nation. He is extremely knowledgeable, well respected and just an all-around great person. Promoting Bo Jordan was equally important to our program. I'm happy to be able to recognize the job he has been doing and look forward to his continued growth as a great coach."

Jordan has worked as a volunteer assistant since the end of his Buckeye career in 2018. A former middleweight himself – and a former four-time All-American at 174 pounds at that – Jordan focused primarily on the middleweights as a coach and worked directly with his younger brother Rocky, a current member of the team.

"He checks all the boxes of someone who lives an elite-level life," Ryan told BSB. "He's incredibly disciplined. He comes from a coaching family, so he understands responsibilities of a coach. He's a great example on everything that he does. He takes care of himself, lives a good, clean life. (On the coaching side,) he's very knowledgeable in the sport technically, has great people skills – he's a great communicator. He's very hardworking. Success leaves clues, and he has all of them."

Stieber was a four-time national champion for the Buckeyes and wrestled in the 141-pound range, though he went lighter, down to 61 kilograms (134.5 pounds) on the international stage and was a world champion for the United States national team in 2016. He has helped coach freestyle with the Ohio RTC since 2015. His .975 winning percentage (119-3) is the highest in Ohio State program history.

"I think he brings a sense of calm," Ryan said. "Young people want to be around someone that understands what it takes to be the best, and Logan has been the best at every level, whether it's junior high, high school, college, world level. He's a world champion."

"He brings a wealth of knowledge but also a sense of trust. I'm excited about both of them."

## Gallagher Named Best Pound-For-Pound Recruit

Ohio State's top signee for the 2021 class, Paddy Gallagher, was selected as the best pound-for-pound wrestler in the 2021 class by MatScouts and FloWrestling, the top two names in wrestling recruiting.

A product of Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward, Gallagher is set to graduate from high school and enroll at Ohio State this summer after capping a high school career during which he racked up a 111-10 record and an 82 percent bonus-point win ratio. He ended his career with his second state championship, knock-

ing off a pair of top-10 wrestlers at 160 pounds in the process. He earned his second Mark Zimmer Award for Ohio's Most Outstanding Wrestler in 2020 as well.

"The state of Ohio and the powerhouse St. Ed's program have produced many elite student-athletes," Ryan said in a school release. "Paddy Gallagher joins that elite list as the pound-for-pound No. 1 prospect in the nation. His character and relentless work ethic are the foundation to his sustained success. We are excited to assist in his development as a Buckeye. He fits in nicely with our team and will begin classes and training this summer."

Gallagher is expected to make an immediate impact at Ohio State. With Elijah Cleary – Ohio State's starter at 157 pounds in the spring – transferring to Pitt, Gallagher could be an immediate starter at 157 in Columbus.

## Projecting The Fall Lineup

Although Ohio State is losing Cleary and has plenty of questions at 133 pounds and 157 pounds, along with a bit of a traffic jam in the middle weights, the Buckeyes still have the look of a Big Ten contender entering the fall 2021 season if improvements that showed in the spring carry through. The lineup is still fluid, especially with the transfer portal, which Ryan says the Buckeyes are looking at aggressively in both problem spots at 133 and 157.

However, a fairly educated guess can be made at most positions. Seeing how this is the final edition of "On the Mat" until the preview rolls around in November, it is a good time to take a look at what the Ohio State duals lineup could look like when the next season arrives.

**125 Pounds** – Malik Heinselman was a fringe pick entering the 2021 spring season. He had filled the job primarily by default during his first two seasons as a starter but had proved very little about his ability to keep up in the Big Ten entering his junior season. That's no longer the case. This past season, the Colorado native showcased the kind of talent that made him a top recruit, rattling off a 10-3 record and a fourth-place showing at the Big Ten championships.

Now the question for the wrestler picked as co-most improved on the team by his teammates (along with Ethan Smith) is about expectations rather than competence.

**133 Pounds** – At this point, it doesn't seem like Ohio State has any clue regarding its likely 133-pound starter. The spring staple here, Jordan Decatur, can't handle the weight cut and is moving away from 133. One of the Koontz brothers (Dylan and Brady), as well as 141-pounder Anthony Echemendia, may try to make the move, but neither of the former have showcased anything more than what Decatur had last season. Echemendia was also not a small 141-pounder, making this a very difficult cut for him.

"Anthony Echemendia is watching his weight," Ryan said. "We don't know if he can make it anymore, but he's watching his weight closely. He's very disciplined. We signed a kid named Benton Court out of Pennsylvania. You got the Koontz brothers that did well in Vegas (at the Cliff Keen Invitational) a year and a half ago and showed they could compete there. Decatur right now is moving out of the weight. He's having a hard time making it."

"Obviously, we want a quick fix. We want someone in there this year, but the junior recruiting class is a high focus for us."

The attempt to move to 133 was at least partially Echemendia's call, which should

put to rest rumors that the Cuba native is considering a transfer out from the program because Dylan D'Emilio seems to be firmly entrenched at 141 pounds.

"We try to stay out of what weight they're going to go," Ryan explained. "We try to leave it up to them. And occasionally there's a situation where, like this one, you need to find someone that's willing to sacrifice a little bit more – even more than you typically want to, from a weight standpoint."

"Weight is a tricky, finicky thing. But Anthony said, 'You know, yeah, let me see. I don't know if I can make it or not. I'll keep an eye on my weight this summer. I'll come in lighter, and let's see if I can make it.' He's an option."

**141 Pounds** – Voted the team's freshman of the year, D'Emilio took advantage of the opportunity afforded to him late last season. While Echemendia was out with an injury (and dealing with some immigration issues as well, according to Ryan), D'Emilio took up the mantle and performed well, earning a major decision over Purdue's No. 28 Parker Filius and a victory against Michigan's No. 30 Drew Mattin in the matches after Echemendia's injury.

His ninth-place finish at the Big Ten championships wasn't extraordinary, but he didn't lose any matches that he shouldn't have. If he can win a potential wrestle-off with Echemendia, he'll be the guy at 141 this fall.

**149 Pounds** – It's Sammy Sasso, and anything less than a national title will be a disappointment for the All-American, who came up just short against North Carolina's Austin O'Connor in the title match last season.

**157 Pounds** – As it stands right now, it doesn't seem that the answer at 157 pounds is currently on campus. Cleary is off to Pittsburgh (and might not have started this season anyway) and neither of Smith or Carson Kharchla is able to make the cut down from 165 pounds. Gallagher is the future at 157 pounds and will take over the spot next season without question, but Ohio State doesn't want to burn his redshirt this season unless it absolutely has to, and even then, it won't make that move until January.

"We don't know yet," Ryan said of the plan at 157 pounds. "We're watching the portal closely. There are a couple of guys in the room: (Jashon) Hubbard ... This kid Hubbard is really good, but he's struggled between COVID and injuries last year. Nobody got to see him wrestle. He's thinking about trying to get down to the weight. We're watching the portal. And then, of course, we'll watch Paddy. And we'll see. Paddy will likely not come out of a redshirt. If he wants to be pulled, it won't be until January anyway, most likely. We'll keep an eye on Paddy, send him to a bunch of open tournaments and we'll see how he's progressing."

That means that the likely starter here is somewhere in the transfer portal or will rely on a big drop from someone like redshirt junior 165-pounder Hubbard or on the return of Quinn Kinner. The latter is unlikely at this point – Kinner took the spring off for personal reasons – and the former is much too broad to pin down a specific pick at this point, so the BSB pick at 157 pounds right now is a transfer yet to be named. Hubbard is an intriguing option, but as Ryan alluded, there's very little information on him right now.

**165 Pounds** – Kharchla is finally healthy after an ACL tear halted his redshirt freshman season before it could begin, and he'll be the guy at 165 pounds if he can operate on that repaired knee.

That creates a logjam at the spot with how well Smith performed (11-2 before the NCAA championships, runner-up in the Big Ten, fifth place nationally), because it's always going to be hard to move a guy like that. However, Kharchla is an immediate national title contender, and Smith's frame looks capable of adding nine pounds. That was the plan before Kharchla's preseason injury last season and will be again this season.

"He's back," Ryan said of Kharchla. "He's been back. I mean, his knee felt strong enough in March to wrestle in the Big Ten. And we discussed it. But Ethan was wrestling so well, and it just didn't make sense. We figured it was best to give him the full rest that he needs before we try to rush it back. But he's doing really well. He's training, he's full speed."

"He'll be at 165. And if Ethan decides to stay at the weight, you've got a quarterback battle. You got two studs at 165. They both could win the NCAA. Ethan was certainly capable of winning it this year. He was right in the mix. And then, you've got Carson, who has beaten Ethan. It's a good problem for us, and one of them will likely move up a weight. Neither one of them can move down to 57, unfortunately."

As for the loser of that battle jumping up to 174 pounds?

"They'll challenge (Kaleb Romero)," Ryan said. "The winner will hold the weight. And the guy that takes second will either stay at the weight and continue to wrestle them off at a later date, if it's deserved, or move up to 184 and challenge there. It creates a ripple effect in your lineup."

**174 Pounds** – Though he may look to wrestle-off with Smith or Kharchla here, a move up to 184 pounds would make sense for Romero, who also looks capable of adding some weight. He was also excellent last season before being hobbled by an injury late. However, Smith and Kharchla likely can't go up to 184, and Ohio State has to find a way to get all three of these guys into the lineup, so it makes sense to pop the loser at 165 pounds in here and move Romero up a weight.

**184 Pounds** – It doesn't sound like there will be much of a fight here. Rocky Jordan never looked especially comfortable at 184 pounds and should be able to make a move up to 197 pretty easily, especially because there really won't be any sort of battle there – Gavin Hoffman has had his shot at this point. Slot Romero in here, unless he really wants to stick at 174 pounds and plans to take Smith out for it.

**197 Pounds** – As mentioned, Jordan always looked lean at 184 pounds. He has the power and frame to move up and isn't going to face any resistance if he wants to make that move. This is a lot of uncertainty at a strength of the lineup last year because of all these weight changes, but Ohio State is in the business of maximizing its lineup, and there's no way to do that unless Kharchla, Smith, Romero and Jordan are all in there in the backend.

**Heavyweight** – No moving here, and no battle before the season for Tate Orndorff. Gary Traub is off to Oregon State after losing the spot to the Utah Valley transfer last season, and Orndorff flashed a lot of ability in his surprise All-American performance at the NCAA championships. Ohio State will need that version of the heavyweight all season if it wants to contend in the Big Ten, but there's no question that Orndorff is the starter here entering the season.



# Northwestern Names Gragg As New AD

After Northwestern's last athletic director resigned after only 10 days on the job, the university named Derrick Gragg as its new athletic director. Gragg was formerly the NCAA's senior vice president for inclusion, education and community engagement.

"I am thrilled and humbled to join the Northwestern University family at this pivotal moment in college athletics," Gragg said. "My career has been shaped by an unwavering belief in the potential of student-athletes to excel in all areas. These young people need more support than ever in the midst of challenging, changing and exciting times. I look forward to joining an incredible roster of coaches and staff in Evanston on this collaborative mission to help our Wildcats achieve at the highest level as students, as athletes and as people."

## BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

Prior to working at the NCAA, Gragg previously worked as the athletic director at Tulsa and Eastern Michigan.

"It was essential for us to find the right leader for the next chapter at Northwestern – someone who can build both academic and athletic excellence at a time of rapid change in the intercollegiate sports landscape, and also someone who can create the best possible environment for students, staff and coaches," Northwestern president Morton Schapiro said. "After talking extensively with Derrick, it was clear that he was the ideal person for the job."

Gragg will replace Mike Polisky, who was on the job for less than two weeks before resigning amid controversy surrounding his promotion from his prior post as deputy athletic director for external affairs. Detractors criticized Polisky's hiring because he was among four defendants in a sexual harassment lawsuit filed against the university in January by a former Northwestern cheerleader.

Prior to Polisky's 10-day tenure, Jim Phillips led Wildcat athletics for 13 years before leaving to become the ACC commissioner in December.

### MSU Hires Badgers' Khalif As Director Of Player Personnel

Michigan State football hired Wisconsin's Saeed Khalif as the program's new director of player personnel. Khalif spent the last four seasons as the director of player personnel for the Badgers and replaces Scott Aligo, who spent a year with the Spartans but recently joined Kansas in the same role.

According to a school release, Khalif's responsibilities include developing and implementing strategic plans for recruiting while overseeing the recruiting staff. Additionally, he will handle prospect identification and evaluation while working with assistant coaches, coordinate the evaluation of all players on the roster and run the team's NFL education program and annual pro day.

"Saeed is relentless when it comes to recruiting and has a proven track record of success in the Big Ten," Spartans coach Mel Tucker said. "He also has coaching experience and understands the importance of developing players. I'm excited he's here on campus and hitting the ground running this

month. He will have an immediate impact on our program."

### Iowa FB Coaches Did Not Take Pay Cuts

In June 2020, Iowa athletic director Gary Barta announced that he and several high-profile coaches including head football coach Kirk Ferentz would be taking voluntary pay reductions due to the COVID-19 pandemic threatening college revenues.

However, reporting from The (Cedar Rapids) Gazette revealed that Ferentz did not take a pay cut, nor did any of his football staff. In August 2020, Iowa announced it would be cutting its women's and men's swimming and diving programs along with two other sports.

As the coronavirus pandemic worsened, the college football season was in jeopardy, and the Hawkeyes were already looking at an athletics budget deficit. Barta announced that he would be taking a voluntary salary reduction of more than 30 percent, adding that four highly paid head coaches (Ferentz, men's basketball's Fran McCaffery, women's basketball's Lisa Bluder and wrestling's Tom Brands) had agreed to one-year salary reductions of 15 percent, or to "contributions back to the athletic department".

However, The Gazette reported that while McCaffery, Bluder, Brands and Barta saw their base salaries decrease, Ferentz did not. In fact, Ferentz's base salary actually increased \$100,000 as spelled out in his contract, from \$2.6 million to \$2.7 million.

Ten Hawkeye football coaches opted to forgo bonuses they earned for qualifying for a bowl game, saving the department more than \$400,000, according to The Gazette. The coaches of other sports who reduced their salaries saved the school a collective \$1.6 million. However, all 10 of those football coaches saw their base salaries rise significantly.

Ferentz elected not to forgo his bowl game bonus, so he will be paid another \$100,000 for qualifying for a bowl game that the Hawkeyes never actually played – the game was canceled when Iowa's opponent, Missouri, reported too many cases of COVID-19.

Iowa has since reinstated its women's swimming and diving program after a lawsuit alleged that the school would be in violation of Title IX by cutting the team, but head coach Marc Long stepped down after 17 seasons.

The original announcement said Ferentz and the other coaches would take the pay cut or make "contributions back to the athletic department." When The Gazette asked the university if Ferentz had made contributions, the school referenced Ferentz's previous donations to "support football letter winner initiatives" in late 2019 and late 2020.

Assistant coach Ken O'Keefe, who made a \$20,000 donation in late 2020, was the lone football coach mentioned by the school who had made a contribution, though his base salary rose from \$625,000 to \$685,000.

### U-M Co-DC Linguist Hired As Buffalo HC

Maurice Linguist's tenure as Michigan's co-defensive coordinator and cornerbacks coach lasted only 107 days, ending when he accepted the head-coaching job at Buffalo, where he had served as an assistant for two years.

The Buffalo gig opened up when six-year head coach Lance Leipold left for

Kansas to replace Michigan alum and former assistant coach Les Miles, who was dismissed after the details of an investigation at LSU revealed inappropriate conduct when Miles led the Tigers.

Linguist, 37, was hired by Michigan on Jan. 20, joining the program during a large transition after head coach Jim Harbaugh's contract was extended.

Prior to his stint in Ann Arbor, Linguist spent one season as the defensive backs coach for the Dallas Cowboys.

He will not owe any money to Michigan, according to the terms of his contract, which stipulates no buyout would be required if Linguist takes a head-coaching job at another school or a coordinator role outside the Big Ten East Division. Linguist was scheduled to make \$680,000 at Michigan in 2021.

### U-M C Dickinson Enters Draft, Hires NCAA-Certified Agent

Michigan standout center Hunter Dickinson, who was the Big Ten Freshman of the Year, declared for the 2021 NBA draft, signing with an NCAA-certified agent to maintain his college eligibility.

The 7-1 big man helped lead the Wolverines to a Big Ten regular-season title, a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament and an Elite Eight appearance. Dickinson earned Associated Press second-team All-America honors by averaging team highs with 14.1 points and 7.4 rebounds per game.

The former four-star prospect from Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic is not projected to go in the first round of any prominent mock drafts, but he has until July 19 to withdraw his name from the draft pool.

"It has always been my dream to play in the NBA," Dickinson wrote in a social media post. "So, it is important for me to gather information before making this decision. I look forward to getting feedback and I am excited for the next steps of this process."

Last year, Isaiah Livers and Franz Wagner entered the NBA draft, but both eventually returned for another season in Ann Arbor.

Livers completed his senior season but could have returned since all NCAA winter sport athletes were given an extra year of eligibility due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Livers has decided to move on, as have fellow seniors Mike Smith and Austin Davis.

Wagner, who is projected to be a lottery pick, entered the NBA draft again.

Wolverine head coach Juwan Howard, who won national Coach of the Year honors last season, locked up the No. 1 recruiting class in the country for 2021, with four-star wing Isaiah Barnes, four-star guard Kobe Bufkin, four-star point guard Frankie Collins, five-star big man Moussa Diabate, five-star forward Caleb Houston and three-star forward Will Tschetter.

### Wildcats, Huskers To Open 2022 In Ireland

Northwestern and Nebraska will kick off the 2022 season in Dublin, Ireland, on Aug. 27, 2022. The game will be held at Ireland's Aviva Stadium, which is home to both the Irish rugby and soccer national teams, and the teams will play for the Keough-Naughton trophy that bears the names of two prominent Irish-American businessmen, Don Keough and Martin Naughton.

"The past year has been a very difficult one for us all in Ireland and in the United States," Taoiseach (Irish prime minister) Micheál Martin said. "With our vaccination

rollout advancing at pace, we are beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel, and we can begin to look forward with optimism to welcoming visitors safely back to our shores. When we do, we will have a very special welcome ready for the teams and their supporters when they visit us for the Aer Lingus College Football Classic."

Northwestern was scheduled to open the 2021 campaign in Dublin with a game against Illinois. However, that game was moved to Champaign, Ill., due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Illinois athletic director Josh Whitman said the Illini will pursue a future game in Ireland.

### Mellusi, Young Moves Highlight B1G Transfers

On the football side of Big Ten transfer news, former Clemson running back Chez Mellusi transferred to Wisconsin and will have three years of eligibility remaining. While playing behind Travis Etienne at Clemson, Mellusi totaled 427 rushing yards with six touchdowns during his two years, along with one receiving touchdown.

After having announced his intent to transfer in December, former Michigan punter Will Hart found his destination six months later in San Jose State. Hart was a semifinalist for the Ray Guy Award and was named the Big Ten Punter of the Year in 2018, when he booted 19 punts of more than 50 yards that season.

"I am forever thankful for the University of Michigan and Michigan Football for providing me with such a great experience," Hart said in December.

Former Purdue defensive tackle Steven Fauchaux transferred to Marshall following two years in West Lafayette where he did not see one snap. As a three-star prospect out of West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West, Fauchaux received interest from multiple teams, including Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Penn State, Tennessee and West Virginia.

Moving to basketball, former Rutgers guard Jacob Young transferred to Oregon, following in the footsteps of his older brother Joseph, who played for the Ducks for two seasons from 2013-15 before playing professionally in the NBA and in China.

Young posted per-game marks of 14.4 points, 3.5 assists and 1.8 steals in 29.9 minutes per game in 2020-21. He helped Rutgers reach its first NCAA Tournament in 30 years and played a pivotal role in the program's first NCAA Tournament win in 38 years.

Wisconsin added Cincinnati 7-1 veteran center Chris Vogt via the transfer portal. Vogt started 50 games at Cincinnati, although his production dropped in 2020-21, averaging 5.0 points, 3.5 rebounds and 1.1 blocks in 18.6 minutes per game.

"I think that Wisconsin was the best fit for me, both on and off the court," Vogt said. "I fit very well into this program's style of play and Wisconsin is a very good school to get an MBA from."

Minnesota first-year head men's basketball coach Ben Johnson added important depth in the frontcourt in Stephen F. Austin transfer Charlie Daniels. Daniels averaged 4.6 points and 3.5 rebounds for the Lumberjacks in 2020-21.

"It was a surreal moment to get to be on the biggest stage," Daniels said. "I'm ready to be a Gopher."





## OLYMPIC SPORTS INSIDER

### Buckeyes At No. 4 In Directors' Cup

The updated Learfield IMG College Director's Cup standings were released on June 3, with Ohio State sitting at No. 4, behind Stanford, Michigan and North Carolina but ahead of Kentucky, BYU, Alabama, Minnesota, Arkansas and Florida in the top 10.

The Buckeyes have 652.50 points, significantly behind Stanford's 770.00. Michigan is closely behind with 769.50. The Buckeye score is bolstered by 11 teams advancing to NCAA championship or FBS football post-season competition.

The top five Ohio State programs in points earned are the football program, women's swimming and diving, men's swimming and diving, wrestling and women's indoor track and field. The football and wrestling scores were already calculated before the spring release. Men's basketball, women's gymnastics, men's gymnastics, women's hockey, women's soccer and women's volleyball also earned points for Ohio State.

The final standings will be released on July 2 after the end of the baseball and softball seasons.

### Maltais To Centralize With Canadian National Team

Ohio State senior forward Emma Maltais was one of 28 players who have been named to centralize with Canada's national team, all of whom are there in an effort to make the Olympic roster.

The move means that Maltais will not be on the Buckeyes' roster for the 2021-22 season and she will instead be using her extra year of eligibility for the 2022-23 campaign.

"I'm so honored and excited," Maltais said. "I'm also so thankful for my experience at Ohio State, the coaches here, and my teammates. I wouldn't be there without them."

Maltais is one of the most prolific scorers in the history of Ohio State's program. She has been a finalist for the Patty Kazmaier Award in both her junior and senior seasons, an honor that goes to the top player in college hockey, as well as a two-time USCHO All-American. She finished with 16 points, including a team-high 11 assists, last year and has 158 career points at the collegiate level, the most of any player actively in the Western Collegiate Hockey Association.

The 158 total points is also fourth in program history, with her 103 assists just 21 away from Laura McIntosh's program record set in 2012.

The Burlington, Ontario, native will relocate to Calgary at the end of July for centralization and prepare for the 2021 IIHF

Women's World Championship. It will take place from Aug. 20-31 at a yet-to-be-determined location, and from there, Olympic training will resume.

While Ohio State will be losing its star player next year from a team that made it to the Frozen Four in 2020-21, head coach Nadine Muzerall said that she is happy to see Maltais pursue national aspirations.

"We're excited for Emma to join such an elite and competitive program," Muzerall said. "Any coach would be lucky to have her because she's going to give you everything she has. She's a 200-foot hockey player who can do it all. And she'll run through a wall for you, which makes her someone that makes any team she's on instantly better."

Maltais is one of four players on the 28-player roster to be playing collegiately and one of two from the WCHA. The others are defenseman Ashton Bell (Minnesota-Duluth, WCHA), forward Sarah Fillier (Princeton, Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference) and forward Julia Gosling (St. Lawrence, ECAC). She is also joining Natalie Spooner, a former Buckeye, who won a gold in 2014 and a silver in 2018.

### Rowing Team Takes No. 6 Nationally

It was a good weekend for head coach Kate Sweeney's rowers, as the Buckeyes took sixth place at the NCAA team championships on May 30, their ninth consecutive top-six finish at the event.

The Buckeyes were led by their 2V8 (second-team varsity, eight-person boat) and 1V4 teams, which finished fourth and fifth in their respective races. The 1V8 finished first in the petite finals to take No.7 nationally.

For the 1V4 group, this marked their sixth consecutive top-five finish at the national events, clocking in at a 7:14.244 time that placed them ahead of No. 6 Michigan (7:15.716) by just a little over a second. The fourth-place finish for the 2V8 group was Ohio State's best since 2017 when it also finished fourth. The 1V8 group took the top spot in the petite final (the grand finals are reserved for the top six teams; the petite finals are for the next six) by toppling Brown by three seconds, finishing in 6:27.717.

This is a slight step back overall from the last NCAA championship that Ohio State took part in back in 2019 (the 2020 event was canceled), when the Buckeyes finished fifth.

### Women's Track And Field Wins Big Ten

Ohio State's women's track and field team won the Big Ten championship with 117 points, edging out Indiana (109) and Minnesota (106) behind a spectacular performance from Anavia Battle. Battle won the 100 meters and the 200 meters, and she ran a leg on the No. 1 4x400-meter relay team for the event.

The men's team finished fifth with 71 points after a huge 60-point Sunday on the strength of wins from Tyler Johnson in the 400, Eric Harrison in the 200 and Nick Miller in the 800 as well as a win in the 4x100 relay.

Ohio State had nine first-team All-Big Ten picks: Adelaide Aquilla, Battle, Yanique Dayle, Sierra Fletcher, Alyssa Marsh and Sade Olatoye on the women's side; and Harrison, Johnson and Miller on the men's.

There were also seven on the second team: Yanique Dayle, Emma Nwofor and Cierra Pyles for the women and Tyrese Fajardo, Frank Hayes, Donnie James and Robby Oswald on the men's side.

Ohio State had three of the four honorees for the "athletes of the championships" at the Big Ten's championship meet, with Aquilla and Battle both getting honored on the wom-

en's side and Johnson earning recognition among the men.

Aquilla had an impressive shot-put performance on Saturday, breaking the Big Ten record twice. On her final throw, which was a throw of 62-8 3/4 (19.12 meters), she broke the school record by almost three feet, a school record that already belonged to Aquilla. The throw was also the top one in the country all year and the fourth-best of all time in U.S. history.

This is the second time Battle has been named an athlete of the Big Ten championships, also winning it in 2019. She became the first Ohio State athlete, and sixth Big Ten athlete, to earn the honor twice.

Karen Dennis was also honored with Coach of the Year in the conference, leading the women's side to its second consecutive outdoor championship and eighth Big Ten title in the past 11 years.

### Olatoye, Terefenko Selected For Big Ten Medal Of Honor

Ohio State's Olatoye and Ryan Terefenko, who are on the women's track and field and men's lacrosse teams, respectively, were the university's recipients for this year's Big Ten Medal of Honor, one of the conference's highest honors.

The Big Ten Medal of Honor is awarded to two student-athletes from the graduating class of each university who have "attained the greatest proficiency in athletics and scholastic work."

Olatoye is a seven-time Big Ten Conference champion, a national champion and a five-time All-American during her time with the Buckeyes. She is also a five-time Academic All-Big Ten honoree, a six-time OSU Scholar-Athlete and a three-time Big Ten Conference Distinguished Scholar.

She was a key figure on a women's track and field program that has won four Big Ten championships during her time with the team. Ohio State had only won four conference titles ever prior to Olatoye's arrival.

"Sade is that combination of great athlete and serious student, and she is possessed with a will to succeed," Dennis said of Olatoye. "She's been the pulse of our team and has led us to heights unachievable without her."

Terefenko is Ohio State's first-ever four-time USILA All-American after 59 games and 20 goals, 20 assists, 166 ground balls, 15 caused turnovers and a .571 winning percentage on faceoffs. Academically, he was a USILA Scholar All-American, OSU Scholar-Athlete and Academic All-Big Ten honoree.

"I'll never be able to put into words what receiving the Big Ten Medal of Honor means to me," Terefenko said. "My time at Ohio State was the best years of my life, and being able to represent and compete for this athletic department and university has been the biggest honor of my life. It's incredibly humbling knowing the number of people who have had such a massive impact on my life throughout my career here."

### Tennis Teams See Seasons End In Tourney

Both the men's and women's tennis teams at Ohio State saw their seasons end in the round of 16 in the NCAA tournament, and neither group found much success in the singles or doubles tournaments.

The No. 15 women's tennis team took a 4-1 loss to No. 2 Texas, ending its year with an impressive 23-4 record and a Big Ten title, though its preseason expectations certainly exceeded even those lofty peaks. The Longhorns would go on to win the national title.

"Texas is a very good team and they played too well for us today," head coach

Melissa Schaub said. "At the same time, I couldn't be prouder of our team. We didn't play our best tennis, but we fought and competed as hard as we could out there. We accomplished a lot this season during a very difficult year."

Ohio State was in a tough spot from the beginning, dropping the doubles point with losses by Kolie Allen and Isabelle Boulais to No. 19-ranked Kylie Collins and Lulu Sun on court one and by Irina Cantos Siemers and Luna Dormet to No. 47-ranked Charlotte Chavatipon and Peyton Stearns on court three.

Sun extended the lead for Texas to 2-0 with the first individual win against Allen, 6-1, 6-1. A 6-2, 6-0 win for Cantos Siemers gave Ohio State its lone win of the day, as Chavatipon toppled Lisa Hofbauer 6-1 and 6-4. Anna Turati knocked off Boulais 6-1, 7-5.

In the individual ranks, Cantos Siemers claimed a first-round sweep over Cameron Morra of North Carolina, 6-2, 6-3, but fell in straight sets to Abigail Forbes of UCLA the following day, 6-3, 6-4. It was a great year for the Buckeye, who finished with a 22-6 record and will return for her junior year next season.

Ohio State's lone representatives in the doubles bracket, Boulais and Allen, fell in the first round to the No. 2 seed, Sara Daavetila and Morra of North Carolina, 7-5, 6-1. The duo ended the year with a 15-4 record and will look to make a deeper run next season as seniors.

On the men's side, Ohio State fell to TCU, 4-1. The Buckeyes dropped the doubles point but were able to level the score at 1-1 with a John McNally win in the singles competition, the last win the Buckeyes would claim. Tomas Jirousek toppled Justin Boulais in straight sets, Luc Fomba gave Cannon Kingsley his first loss of the season, and Tadeas Paroulek swept Kyle Seelig to lock up a Horned Frogs win.

"It was a tough year, but I'm proud of the guys," said Ty Tucker, Ohio State director of tennis. "It was nice for the guys to make the final site. We weren't even sure we were going to be playing. To get the opportunity to play and get a Big Ten regular-season title (was great)."

Ohio State's foray into the NCAA singles championships was short lived, as both McNally and Kingsley bowed out in the first round of the tournament.

McNally drew No. 1 ranked Liam Draxl of Kentucky for his opening matchup. He took the first set 6-2 but fell 6-1 in the second, forcing a deciding third set. That set would go all the way to a tiebreaker, which McNally led 4-1, but six straight points for Draxl ended his season. McNally finished at 23-6 on the year.

Meanwhile, Kingsley lost his second match of the year, this time to North Carolina's William Blumberg, 6-4, 6-4. The Big Ten Player of the Year, Kingsley finishes his sophomore campaign at 27-2. The Buckeyes weren't represented in the doubles championships.

### Men's Soccer Adds Recruit From Canada

The Ohio State men's soccer team closed out its 2021 recruiting class with the addition of defender Nathan Demian, a product of Vancouver. He's the latest in a growing list of non-American player to make their way to Columbus, joining rising sophomores Laurence Wootton (England), Thomas Gilej (Germany) and Deylen Vellios, who also came to the Buckeyes via Canada and suited up alongside Demian on various national teams.

"We are very excited to wrap up our 2021 recruiting class with the announce-



# 172 Ohio State Student-Athletes Receive Degrees

For the second straight spring, Ohio State saw 172 of its current and former student-athletes earn degrees.

However, unlike spring of 2020, the Buckeyes welcomed these graduates to an in-person commencement ceremony in Ohio Stadium on May 9, the school's first in-person graduation event since December of 2019. The 2020 class was recognized with a virtual commencement.

Almost every Ohio State sport graduated at least one student-athlete, though none saw more recognized than rowing, which graduated 16 members of its team. The Big Ten champion women's swimming team was the next highest with 12, while the football team graduated 10 current or former members.

Former All-Big Ten baseball honoree Mike Durant, women's basketball two-time first-team All-Big Ten selection Dorka Juhasz, former football first-round pick Bradley Roby, former men's hockey member Tanner Fritz, women's hockey standouts Jincy Dunne, Emma Maltais, Elizabeth Schepers and Tatum Skaggs and women's tennis standout Luna Dormet are all included among the graduates list.

Here is the complete list of 172 student-athletes graduates, as well as their majors, listed in alphabetical order by sport:

**Baseball** – Mathew Carpenter, economics; Lucas Duermit, sport industry; Michael Durant, human development and family science; Joseph Gahm, human development and family science; Patrick Murphy, kinesiology; Conner Pohl, psychology; Jacob Ruby, communications; Jacob Vance, communications.

**Men's Basketball** – Jansen Davidson, finance; Abel Porter, finance.

**Women's Basketball** – Dorka Juhasz, psychology.

**Cheerleading** – Natalie Cyberski, pharmaceutical sciences; Lauren Eusano, human nutrition; Katelin Kreinbrink, exercise science education; Ryan Willis, industrial and systems engineering.

**Men's Cross Country/Track** – Peter Hayden, economics; Thomas Sullivan, accounting; Aaron Wood, civil engineering.

**Women's Cross Country/Track** – Alexandra Buck, exercise science education; Kalee Soehnlén, exercise science education.

**Dance** – Kendall Kropp, exercise science education; Madeline Smith, finance.

**Men's Diving** – Jacob Siler, speech and hearing science.

**Women's Diving** – Alexis Barker, zoology; Lara Tarvit, human resource management.

**Men's Fencing** – Kaiden Crotchett, criminology; Ethan Edwards, political science; Matthew Hayes, psychology.

**Women's Fencing** – Nicole Fisher, psychology; Elizabeth Kirk, art; Aleksandra Kolmykova, finance; Camilla Rivano, hospitality management.

**Field Hockey** – Julianna Sweeney, animal science; Nicole Trzaska, marketing.

**Football** – Gavin Cupp, kinesiology; Elijah Gardiner, human development and family science; Zaid Hamdan, criminology; Demario McCall, sport industry; Bradley Robinson, human development and family science; Bradley Roby, communications; Mitchell Rossi, finance; Benjamin Schmiesing, finance; Trayvon Wilburn, consumer and family financial services; Maxwell Wray, communications.

**Men's Golf** – JonErik Alford, sport industry; Grant Engle, finance; Laken Hinton, sport industry; Felix Kvarnstrom, finance; Kevin Stone, finance; Mats Svaerd, finance.

**Women's Golf** – Yukie Sasaki, hospitality management; Adeena Wilcox (Shears), teaching and learning; Terry Wright, communications.

**Men's Gymnastics** – Maxim Andryushchenko, operations management; Andrew Brower, animal science; Jacob Gricar, art; Sean Neighbarger, exercise science education; Joshua Seltzer, computer science and engineering.

**Women's Gymnastics** – Brooke Chesney, information systems; Peyton Hinterberger, human nutrition; Morgan Lowe, exercise science education; Jenna Swartzentruber, exercise science education.

**Men's Hockey** – Eugene Fadyeyev, sport industry; Tanner Fritz, sport industry; Evan Moyse, marketing; Collin Peters, criminology; Austin Pooley, finance.

**Women's Hockey** – Lisa Bruno, sport industry; Jincy Dunne, speech and hearing science; Emma Maltais, health sciences program; Elizabeth Schepers, health sciences program; Tatum Skaggs, special education; Lynsey Wallace, animal science.

**Men's Lacrosse** – Hunter Barco, communications; Colby Barker, sport industry; Joseph Bugliosi, finance; Omari DeBerry, sport industry; Dayton Fisher, sport industry; Jeffrey Manning, finance; Jack Rennillo, logistics management; Robert Smith, finance; Eric Wenz, finance.

**Women's Lacrosse** – Sophia Baez, sport industry; Alexandra Beekhuizen, psychology; Hannah Brink, human resources; Regina Doty, civil engineering; Katherine Ewing, logistics management; Carli Mager, biochemistry; Caroline Tatsuoka, mathematics; Alexandra Vander Molen, accounting.

**Pistol** – John Marrinan, philosophy, politics and economy; Emily Nothnagle, psychology and music.

**Rifle** – Wynn Lekhavanija, consumer and family financial services; Megan Wilcoxson communications.

**Rowing** – Michayla Binkley, psychology; Mariah Bruns, human nutrition; Claire Cannon, textiles and clothing; Megan Cymanski, communications; Rachel DeWitte, communications; Jennifer Hallsworth, philosophy and criminology; Lena Harper, industrial and systems engineering; Leonie Heuer, human development and family science; Julia Miklasevich, sociology; Samantha Morrison, biology; Michaela Nordhaus, psychology; Alexandra Nothdurft, international studies; Jelizaveta Simaceva, speech and hearing science; Kelly Stainbrook,

biochemistry; Chih-Yun Tseng, international business administration; Willow Wahlers, communications.

**Men's Soccer** – David Abonce Rodriguez, logistics management; Theo Alexis, construction systems management; Matteo Bennati, international studies; Mitchell Bergman, industrial and systems engineering; Christian Harter, biology; Xavier Kennedy-Reed, communications; Joseph Ortiz, human development and family science; Parker Siegfried, kinesiology.

**Women's Soccer** – Alyssa Baumbick, communications; Meghan Kammerdeiner, public management, leadership and policy; Madison Lowe, sport industry; Maggie Samanich, human resources.

**Softball** – Summer Constable, physical education; Megan McMenemy, health sciences program.

**Men's Swimming** – Matthew Abeysinghe, sport industry; Carson Burt, finance; Paul DeLakis, biology; Justin Hopkins, chemical engineering; Evan McFadden, aeronautical and astronautical engineering; Evan Stapp, sport industry.

**Women's Swimming** – Laura Banks, biology; Kathrin Demler, psychology and communications; Kendyl Ferrara, communications; Nicole Fye, microbiology; Brooke Glesenkamp, health sciences program; Hanna Gresser, biology; Natalia Jaspeado Becerra, food science and technology; Marianne Kahmann, geographic information science; Grace Kowal, accounting; Molly Kowal, accounting; Taylor Petrak, marketing; Freya Rayner, world literature.

**Synchronized Swimming** – Laila Huric, biology; Rachel Jager, health sciences program; Renee Stehlik, radiologic sciences and therapy; Daria Torba, communications; Sarah Walsh, environment, economy, development and sustainability.

**Men's Tennis** – John McNally, marketing; Kyle Seelig, public management; Jacob Wareti, health sciences program.

**Women's Tennis** – Luna Dormet, political science; Lisa Hofbauer, AP economics.

**Men's Track** – Eric Harrison, communications; Frank Hayes, human development and family science; Tyler Johnson, sport industry; Amir Metts, consumer and family financial services; Robert Oswald, marketing; Ronald Russell, psychology.

**Women's Track** – Aziza Ayoub, biology; Taylor Deloach, consumer and family financial services; Emma Nwofor, kinesiology; Sarah Okefor, health sciences program; Dolapo Oladipo, accounting; Alexis Pyles, biology.

**Men's Volleyball** – Todd Herget, marketing; Martin Lallemand, industrial and systems engineering; Luke Meidel, neuroscience and African American studies; Robert Murphy, marketing.

**Women's Volleyball** – Lauren Witte, health sciences program.

**Wrestling** – Aaron Rehfeldt, computer science and engineering; Chase Singletary, consumer and family financial services; Ethan Smith, consumer and family financial services.

ment of Nathan Demian," head coach Brian Maisonneuve said. "He comes to us from a great background with Vancouver and has been a regular with Canada's youth national teams. Nathan has one of the highest soccer IQs I have seen in a player his age.

"His ability to read the game and be proactive on and off the ball makes him and everyone around him better. Having captained for both club and country, he brings a natural leadership and maturity to the field that will help him make an impact sooner than later. We couldn't be more excited to have Nathan in Columbus this fall!"

Demian suited up for the U15 (2017) and U17 (2019) Canadian national teams but spent the majority of his time on the pitch for the Vancouver Whitecaps club team, where he played as a defender from 2015-2021. He was a frequent captain pick on the former and could contend for a leadership role right away in Columbus. The Buckeye defense is fairly set, but the loss of wingback Joshua Jackson-Ketchup could create room for the offensive-capable Demian.

"I chose Ohio State because I believe it is the best fit for me to continue my athletic and academic endeavors," Demian said. "Ohio State has a long and rich history in athletics filled with numerous championships across many sports. I want to do my part in taking the men's soccer program there as well.

"My good friend Deylen Vellios also attends Ohio State and is someone who I have played with in Vancouver and for the national team for many years. He only had good things to say about the program and the school as a whole."

## Men's Volleyball Frosh Honored By AVCA

Ohio State men's volleyball freshman outside hitter Sotiris Siapanis was named an American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) All-America honorable mention on May 3 after a strong freshman season with the Buckeyes. He's the 17th Ohio State player to claim All-American honors in program history and the first since Jake Hanes in 2019.

A native of Limassol, Cyprus, Siapanis was an immediate star for his new team in Columbus. Serving as an outside hitter, he racked up 4.12 kills per set (good for eighth nationally) and 4.60 points per set (14th). He was 15th in hitting percentage at .356.

For his play, he was also selected as the MIVA Newcomer of the Year and to the All-MIVA first team, making him just the fifth Buckeye to accomplish the former and the first under head coach Kevin Burch.

Although the freshman shone brightly for the Buckeyes, the rest of the team had more struggles. Ohio State finished the season at 9-10 after a loss in the first round of the MIVA conference tournament to Ball State, 3-1.

## Buckeye Player, Assistant Slotted For Beach Play

Ohio State men's volleyball standout Luke Lentin and associate head coach Hudson Bates will represent the Buckeyes for the 2021 U.S. Collegiate Beach National Team (BCNT), the school announced June 4.

Lentin, a rising senior for the Buckeyes,

was one of 13 men's collegiate volleyball players selected to the team, alongside a 13-person women's team. He'll report, along with his teammates, to a training block in Huntington Beach, Calif., June 21-26. It will serve as a bit of a homecoming for the Buckeye setter, who came to Columbus by way of La Jolla, Calif.

He was a constant for the Buckeyes during a difficult coaching transition to new head coach Kevin Burch, who just concluded his second season at the helm. He's played in nearly 40 matches, earning captaincy and raking in honors as a Big Ten Distinguished Scholar, being picked to the academic All-Big Ten team and the MIVA Academic All-Conference team. He's also an Ohio State Scholar-Athlete.

He had 99 assists for the Buckeyes in 2021, third most on the team, though he served in more of a support role.

Bates, meanwhile, came to Ohio State with Burch and is the team's recruiting coordinator. He played on the 2010 U.S. National Beach Team.



# 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 (22-20)

**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, canceled; **8** at Minnesota, canceled; **9** at Minnesota, canceled; **11** at Purdue, W 5-1; **14** MICHIGAN STATE, L 10-7; **15** MICHIGAN STATE, L 2-0; **16** MICHIGAN STATE, W 7-3; **22** Nebraska at Bloomington, L 11-9; **23** Nebraska at Bloomington, L 9-0; **23** Indiana at Bloomington, W 3-1; **24** Indiana at Bloomington, L 2-0; **28** NORTHWESTERN, W 13-10; **29** NORTHWESTERN, W 4-1; **30** NORTHWESTERN, L 8-2.

## 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, 6/14.

## 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 VS. MICHIGAN, 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 19-13.

## 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** at Purdue, T 1-1; **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 (24-19)

**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** at Illinois, W 5-1; **7** at Illinois, W 12-0 (5 innings); **8** at Illinois, L 7-2; **9** at Illinois, W 2-1; **14** MICHIGAN STATE, W 7-1; **15** MICHIGAN STATE, L 5-2, W 1-0 (10 innings); **16** MICHIGAN STATE, W 5-0.

## MEN'S TENNIS (22-4)

**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; **7** NCAA Tournament First Round at Winston-Salem, N.C., vs. VCU, W 4-1; **8** NCAA Tournament Second Round at Winston-Salem, N.C., vs. Wake Forest, W 4-1; **17** NCAA Tournament Round of 16 at Orlando, Fla., vs. TCU, L 4-1.

## WOMEN'S TENNIS (23-4)

**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; **12** PURDUE, W 6-1; **14** 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 at Madison, Wis., vs. Michigan State, W 4-0.

**May 1** Big Ten Semifinals at Madison, Wis., vs. Iowa, W 4-2; **2** Big Ten Championship at Madison, Wis., vs. Michigan, W 4-1; **7** NCAA TOURNAMENT FIRST ROUND VS. UIC, W 4-0; **8** NCAA TOURNAMENT SECOND ROUND VS. VANDERBILT, W 4-3; **16** NCAA Tournament Round of 16 at Orlando, Fla., vs. Texas, L 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.

## Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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# 298 Buckeyes Named To Academic All-Big Ten

By WYATT CROSHER  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

The Big Ten Conference announced on May 27 that 1,130 student-athletes were honored on the spring and at-large Academic All-Big Ten team. Of those, 298 were from Ohio State, up from 250 in the spring and at-large sports from 2020.

With nearly 300 selections, Ohio State ended with a record 527 student-athletes with academic all-conference accolades, with 120 in the fall and 109 in the winter also earning the honors. To be eligible, student-athletes must be on a varsity team and carry a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.0.

The spring and at-large sports include baseball, men's and women's fencing, men's and women's golf, women's ice hockey, men's and women's lacrosse, pistol, rifle, rowing, softball, synchronized swimming, men's and women's tennis, men's and women's track and field and men's volleyball.

Of those, women's rowing easily held the lead with 52 student-athletes honored. Men's lacrosse was next with 35, while fencing had 25. There were also three student-athletes – Jillian Rizzo from women's lacrosse, Olivia Schafer from synchronized swimming and Tess Thompson from women's rowing – who were recognized for holding a cumulative GPA of 4.0.

The complete list of Ohio State's spring and at-large academic All-Big Ten honors can be found below, listed alphabetically by sport.

**Baseball** – Joseph Aden, So., sport industry; Garrett Burhenn, Jr., operations management; Nolan Clegg, Jr., air transportation; Zachary Dezenzo, Jr., sport industry; Marcus Ernst, Jr., finance; Ethan Hammerberg, So., operations management; Aaron Hughes, Sr., mechanical engineering; Caden Kaiser, So., sport industry; Nathan Karaffa, So., sport industry; Tyler Kean, So., finance; Wyatt Loncar, So., communication; Casey Maniglia, Jr., accounting; Mitchell Milheim, Jr., mechanical engineering; Patrick Murphy, Gr., kinesiology; Mitchell Okuley, So., mechanical engineering; William Pfennig, Jr., finance; Scottie Seymour, Gr., accounting; Yianni Skeriotis, So., biology; Griffian Smith, Sr., logistics management; Jacob Vance, Sr., communication; Samuel Wilson, Sr., consumer and family financial services.

**Men's Fencing** – Shanvanth Arnipalli, Jr., environmental science; Bence Bende, So., biology; Stephen Chou, So., computer science and engineering; Chris Collado, Jr., political science; Matthew Comes, Sr., mechanical engineering; Kaiden Crotchett, Sr., criminology and criminal justice; Ethan Edwards, Sr., political science; James Flanagan, So., business economics; Will Gaziano, Sr., finance; Matthew Hayes, Sr., psychology; Henry Lang, Jr., linguistics; Benjamin Levitt, So., finance; Jadon Montgomery, So., marketing; Hudson Santana, So., finance; Roscoe Swartz, Jr., neuroscience; Nathan Wriedt, Jr., materials science and engineering.

**Women's Fencing** – Evie Bustamante, So., biology; Lauryn DeLuca, Jr., early childhood education; Nicole Fisher, Sr., psychology; Ariel Gluck, Jr., materials science and engineering; Steph Miller, Jr., journalism; Emma Montgomery, Gr., pharmaceutical sciences; Camilla Rivano, Sr., hospitality management; Kristen Ruscitelli, So., evolution and ecology; Jessica Thow, Jr., psychol-

ogy; Montserrat Viveros, So., marketing.

**Men's Golf** – JonErik Alford, Sr., sport industry; Jackson Chandler, So., sport industry; Caleb Davern, So., economics; Grant Engle, Jr., finance; Laken Hinton, Sr., sport industry; Patrick Schmuecking, So., finance; Kevin Stone, Sr., finance.

**Women's Golf** – Kristin Jamieson, So., finance; Alanis Sakuma, Sr., aviation management; Yukie Sasaki, Sr., hospitality management; Sofia Seldemirova, Gr., consumer sciences; Skylar Thompson, Jr., speech and hearing science.

**Women's Ice Hockey** – Brooke Bink, So., communication; Madison Bizal, Jr., sport industry; Andrea Braendli, Jr., psychology; Lisa Bruno, Sr., sport industry; Jennifer Gardiner, So., sport industry; Teghan Inglis, So., pre-electrical and computer engineering; Sophie Jaques, Jr., civil engineering; Quinn Kuntz, So., health sciences; Paetyn Levis, Jr., health sciences; Emma Maltais, Sr., health sciences; Ramsey Parent, So., biology; Gabriella Rosenthal, Jr., speech and hearing science; Sara Saekkinen, Jr., sport industry; Eve Savander, Jr., sport industry; Elizabeth Schepers, Sr., health sciences; Tatum Skaggs, Sr., special education; Lynsey Wallace, Sr., animal sciences.

**Men's Lacrosse** – Anthony Ameo, Jr., marketing; Alec Cerasoli, Jr., psychology; James Cipolla, So., health sciences; Matthew Clibanoff, Jr., sport industry; Michael Clibanoff, Jr., sport industry; Omari DeBerry, Sr., sport industry; Sam Faber, So., health sciences; Brandon Fisher, Jr., communication; Dayton Fisher, Sr., sport industry; Gabe Galbraith, So., finance; T.J. Hendricks, Jr., marketing; Jeff Henrick, Gr., kinesiology; Carter Hilleary, So., marketing; James Hogan, So., finance; Parker Hogan, Jr., sport industry; Griffin Hughes, Sr., communication; Justin Inacio, Sr., biology; Tre LeClaire, Gr., kinesiology; Zach Ludd, Jr., finance; Connor Mitchell, So., finance; Grant Mitchell, So., finance; Jack Myers, Jr., finance; Garrett Nilsen, So., marketing; Mitchell Pehlke, So., sport industry; Carson Raney, So., finance; Jackson Reid, Sr., sport industry; Evan Riss, Sr., finance; Colby Smith, Sr., biology; Jacob Snyder, So., finance; Ryan Terefenko, Gr., kinesiology; Skylar Wahlund, Jr., accounting; George Walsh, Jr., marketing; Ben Williams, Jr., sport industry; Johnny Wiseman, Jr., consumer and family financial services; Stephen Zupicich, So., finance.

**Women's Lacrosse** – Sophie Baez, Sr., sport industry; Ali Beekhuizen, Sr., psychology; Catie Beg, Jr., fashion and retail studies; Emma Blessing, So., marketing; Hannah Brink, Sr., human resources; Janie Cowley, So., communication; Regina Doty, Sr., civil engineering; Lindsay Epstein, Gr., kinesiology; Molly Erneston, So., agribusiness and applied economics; Riley Ewing, Sr., logistics management; Nicole Ferrara, So., communication; Mary Katherine George, Jr., psychology; Liza Hernandez, Gr., kinesiology/sport management; Clare Johnston, Jr., speech and hearing science; Ava Keethler, Jr., health sciences; Cai Martin, Jr., health sciences; Maura McGregor, Jr., communication; Claire Morris, So., international business; Caly O'Brien, So., health sciences; Emily Rezabek, So., marketing; Jill Rizzo, Gr., kinesiology/sport management; Emily Skrzypczak, Sr., psychology; Caroline Tatsuoka, Sr., mathematics;

Ashley Turner, So., sport industry.

**Pistol** – Katelyn Abeln, So., public health; Amanda Ackerman, So., animal sciences; Samuel Gens, Sr., civil engineering; Cade Haiby, Jr., mechanical engineering; Bernard Melus, Sr., electrical and computer engineering; Emily Nothnagle, Sr., psychology.

**Rifle** – Ariel Hall, Jr., human nutrition; Mica Harr, Sr., neuroscience; Natalie Katsuyama, So., medical anthropology; Wynn Lekhavanija, Sr., consumer and family financial services; Joel Potts, So., finance; Annabelle Stanec, Jr., accounting; Frank Steyn, So., public health; Anna Tomb, Jr., finance; Megan Wilcoxson, Sr., communication.

**Rowing** – Katelyn Bartos, Jr., mechanical engineering; Divya Batchu, Sr., public health; Claire Bauer, So., finance; Brooke Benestad, So., political science; Michayla Binkley, Sr., psychology; Mariah Bruns, Sr., human nutrition; Erin Byrne, So., neuroscience and psychology; Claire Cannon, Sr., fashion and retail studies; Katie Castaneda, So., electrical and computer engineering; Aimee Chihuahua, So., human nutrition; Natalie Chourova, So., health promotion, nutrition and exercise science; Katie Clouse, Jr., psychology; Megan Cymanski, Sr., communication; Kristen Devolve, So., nursing; Rachel DeWitte, Sr., communication; Regan Draganic, So., accounting; Jenna Draycott, Jr., psychology; Jenni Fournery, So., computer science and engineering; Jennie Hallsworth, Jr., philosophy; Lena Harper, Sr., industrial and systems engineering; Alaina Hawthorn, So., architecture; Leonie Heuer, Jr., human development and family science; Katie Hinton, So., mathematics; Valerie Keller, So., health sciences; Bri Knight, So., natural resource management; Pau Koster, So., international business; Allison Krish, Jr., industrial design; Olivia Kwiecinski, Gr., environment and natural resources; Grace Libben, Gr., public health; Megan McNutt, Jr., biomedical engineering; Julia Miklasevich, Sr., sociology; Samantha Morrison, Sr., biology; Mia Mulhearn, So., neuroscience; Megan Murphy, So., electrical and computer engineering; Michaela Nordhaus, Sr., psychology; Lexie Nothdurft, Sr., international studies; Grace Pabst, Jr., human development and family science; Kaitlin Pang, So., economics; Elizabeth Paul, So., biology; Ida Petersen, Sr., biochemistry; Kate Reymann, Jr., marketing; Savannah Sellers, Jr., environmental science; Liza Simaceva, Gr., sports coaching; Kelly Stainbrook, Sr., biochemistry; Tess Thompson, So., sport industry; Fiona Tseng, Jr., international business; Jessy Vermeer, Jr., sport industry; Katie Visci, So., chemical engineering; Willow Wahlers, Sr., communication; Meredith Williams, So., public policy analysis; Emma Wilson, So., pre-health sciences; Morgan Zahner, So., computer science and engineering.

**Softball** – Niki Carver, Sr., special education; Avery Clark, So., health sciences; Kaitlyn Coffman, Jr., speech and hearing science; Sam Hackenbracht, So., middle childhood education; Skylar Hayward, Sr., health sciences; Megan McMenemy, Sr., health sciences; Ashley Prange, Jr., health sciences; Mariah Rodriguez, So., hospitality management; Jessica Ross, Jr., English;

Emily Tinkham, So., human development and family science.

**Synchronized Swimming** – Victoria Carlson, So., arts and sciences; Camryn Carrasco, Jr., sociology; Mackenzie Finn, So., nursing; Rose Homoele, So., biochemistry; Paige Hopper, So., finance; Laila Huric, Sr., biology; Rachel Jager, Sr., health sciences; Paula Luis, Jr., accounting; Olivia Malloy, So., studio art; Reverie Nedde, So., studio art; Cassie Neeley, Jr., psychology; Trinity Patton, Jr., health sciences; Olivia Schafer, So., psychology; Renee Stehlik, Sr., radiologic sciences and therapy; Daria Torba, Sr., communication; Sarah Walsh, Sr., environment, economy, development and sustainability; Haley Watson, Jr., psychology.

**Men's Tennis** – Justin Boulais, So., industrial design; Robert Cash, So., chemistry; Cannon Kingsley, So., sport industry; Andrew Lutschaunig, Jr., finance; John McNally, Sr., marketing; J.J. Mercer, So., finance; Tim Seibert, Jr., finance; James Trotter, Jr., sport industry.

**Women's Tennis** – Kolie Allen, Jr., speech and hearing science; Irina Cantos Siemers, So., communication; Luna Dormet, Jr., political science; Kathleen Jones, Jr., journalism; Lucia Marzal, Jr., international business.

**Men's Track and Field** – Carlos Aviles, So., psychology; Steven Bauers, Gr., business-finance; Luke Bendick, So., history; Tevin Brown, Gr., educational studies; Giovanni Copploe, So., marketing; Tyrese Fajardo, Sr., chemical engineering; Jack Good, Jr., marketing; Eric Halford, Jr., finance; Peter Hayden, Sr., economics; Evan Johnson, So., economics; Tyler Johnson, Sr., sport industry; Nicholas Miller, Jr., finance; Robby Oswald, Sr., marketing; Nick Regas, Jr., marketing; Adam Riedinger, So., zoology; Zachary Shultz, So., city and regional planning; Ivan Slyepkan, So., health sciences; Jake Wickert, Jr., mechanical engineering; Mikey Zedan, Jr., civil engineering.

**Women's Track and Field** – Aziza Ayoub, Sr., biology; Alex Buck, Sr., exercise science; Nya Bussey, So., health sciences; Gabby Dilick, Jr., nursing; Mary Figler, Sr., finance; Allie Guagenti, So., art education; Emma Hoellrich, Sr., operations management; Alexa Jankowsky, Jr., architecture; Andrea Kuhn, So., mathematics; AnneMarie Moses, So., industrial and systems engineering; Hannah Moulton, Sr., microbiology; Gia Napoleon, So., journalism; Emma Nwofor, Gr., kinesiology; Divine Oladipo, Gr., accounting; Sade Olatoye, Gr., bioethics; Devine Parker, So., psychology; Alexus Pyles, Sr., biology; Cierra Pyles, Jr., human development and family science; Kathleen Shay, So., food, agricultural and biological engineering; Kalee Soehnlen, Sr., exercise science education; Sarah Stanley, Gr., business-finance; Julia Swallows, Sr., human development and family science; Elizabeth Weber, Jr., marketing; Jaydan Wood, So., health sciences.

**Men's Volleyball** – Samuel Clark, So., mechanical engineering; Austin Gerwig, Gr., bioethics; Justin Howard, So., journalism; Martin Lallemand, Sr., industrial and systems engineering; Luke Lentin, Jr., finance; Luke Meidel, Sr., neuroscience; Parker Mikesch, Jr., sport industry; Robbie Murphy, Sr., marketing; Sean Ryan, Jr., business economics; Jack Stevens, Jr., civil engineering; Ethan Talley, Jr., finance; Matt Tompkins, So., finance; Michael Wright, So., economics.



Jillian Rizzo



# Doing A Little Bit Of (Late) Spring Cleaning

I know it's nearly summer, but I haven't gotten around to it, so this is my version of "Spring Cleaning" – a few topics that have been rolling around in my mind the last few days/weeks that I can finally clear out:

It's become a bit boring to say, once again, that Ohio State is the class of the Big Ten.

## THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

Don't get me wrong, it's great – just becoming a bit old hat. There is nothing on the horizon to indicate this is going to change anytime soon because the Buckeyes are recruiting at a level different from the rest of the league. Penn State and Michigan are putting together good, solid classes – but good and solid aren't going to be enough to catch up with Ohio State, which is putting together elite classes. There's talk that the 2022 group could be not only one of the best in school history, but maybe one of the best in recruiting history – or at least since these things have been measured.

A big reason for the praise is Ohio State's ability to lock up what looks to be a franchise quarterback.

The guys they have on campus right now are not exactly slouches. C.J. Stroud looks to have a leg up on the starting gig for 2021 and came to OSU with a truckload of credentials. By all accounts he is savvy, smart and quick to make decisions. That's great, because you need those things from your quarterback if you're going to win games. Since we have yet to truly see him in a meaningful situation, I'll hold off on any criticism but will note that none of the recruiting profiles of Stroud said that his arm talent was otherworldly. There are many out there who feel that as long as a guy can get the ball out of his hand in the general zip code of the Buckeyes receivers, they'll be OK. And that may not be far-fetched.

But it never hurts to have a guy who can put it where he wants to, when he wants to, on almost every occasion.

There haven't been many in recent years who could do that.

Justin Fields was very good at threading the needle but often had the luxury of throwing to guys who were open. He was able to make the tight window throws when needed, but it wasn't his specialty. And there were a handful of occasions when his guys saved him with ridiculous catches.

In 2022 Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star commitment Quinn Ewers, the Buckeyes are getting a guy with that generational arm talent.

Andrew Luck and Trevor Lawrence had it in college. Aaron Rodgers and Patrick Mahomes have it in the NFL. Ewers should, barring injury, be the single most gifted thrower to come into Ohio State to play quarterback. Clips of him making the rounds on the Internet show an ability to throw off-platform, to throw with different arm angles and to put the ball in the right spot just about every time. He seems dedicated to the game and appears to have a very good football IQ.

The Buckeyes look to have the quarterback position covered for the foreseeable future with Stroud and Jack Miller and freshman Kyle McCord – who has also been hailed as a big-time thrower. It's the contention from this corner that should Stroud struggle, McCord would be the next guy up. That's just me rambling; there's no inside knowledge at work here. What is known is that it's a near certainty that someone in the quarterback room is transferring at the end of the season, because being fourth in a room full of talent is not conducive to playing time.

If Ryan Day and his staff truly believe that Ewers is as good as he's made out to be – the second quarterback in the history of the 247Sports composite to gain a perfect 1.000 rating (Vince Young is the other) – then he should not only be in the mix for the starting job in 2022 but should have it outright.

I know there's a lot that goes into playing quarterback at the college level. It's not high school, where the QB is almost always the best player on the field. But Ewers looks like that rare guy who could effortlessly handle the move to college without hitting many speed bumps.

There is some funny stuff going around Twitter that says Ewers will decommit and end up someplace other than Ohio State, but it started in fan bases that have been struggling to regain their footing in the college football ecosystem. Anything can happen, and there's a long time between now and National Signing Day. But a decommitment by Ewers would be among the more shocking things in recent memory. Fortunately, it doesn't appear that Buckeye Nation has much to worry about.

### Could Tide Be Rolling In?

While many Ohio State fans like to revel in the fact that the Buckeyes have gained the upper hand over rival Michigan, others – correctly – measure success against the king of the sport: Alabama.

So dominant in league play have the Buckeyes been that it's pointless to talk about merely winning Big Ten titles anymore. The goal is and should be hoisting the national championship trophy, and as fans saw in January, that's never going to be easy as long as Alabama and Nick Saban are around.

The Buckeyes are working to close the talent gap and may even have an edge at certain positions. But Saban's specter looms large over the sport, especially in recruiting.

Which is why Alabama having the last shot at impressing the final remaining jewel of the 2021 class should worry Buckeye Nation. Nearly all of the pundits have called defensive line recruit J.T. Tuimoloau for the Buckeyes, and he would be a nice cherry on top of an already delicious recruiting class. With the recruiting dead period finally ended by the NCAA, Tuimoloau is spending much of June visiting college campuses – including Ohio State on June 18. He's said he wants to have a decision by the end of the month, so the Buckeyes being late in the process would usually bode well. But there are still two visits left the following week – first to Oregon to visit the Ducks and then to Tuscaloosa, to Saban, to the Crimson Tide.

Getting a chance to see royalty in action has to be overwhelming for a lot of prospects, and it's hard to imagine Tuimoloau being any different. You know that Saban and his crew will roll out the crimson carpet and tout the fact that every class since 2015 has had an opportunity to at least play for the national title. Ohio State is in the upper echelon of college football, but Alabama is still a tier above, and Tuimoloau knows that.

Maybe this is much ado about nothing and the big kid from Washington ends up forming a great bookend pass-rush combo with Jack Sawyer.

But as long as Saban is in the equation – and especially since he has the final crack at him – it would be unwise to feel safe about anything.

### Putting Too Much Faith In Day?

Maybe I'm looking at things through rose-colored glasses – something I try very hard not to do – but it's hard for me to figure out why there are still some people out there who say that we should "wait and see" before anointing Day as one of the top three or four coaches in college football.

He's been on the job for two full seasons and has yet to lose a Big Ten game. He's continued (and some say even exceeded) the elite-level recruiting set by predecessor Urban Meyer. And he's shown himself to be one of the more exciting play-callers in the sport.

All of that said, he will really prove himself this year should the Buckeyes once again go undefeated.

With questions at quarterback and uncertainty surrounding the defense, if OSU is going to stumble, then 2021 would be the year.

Question is, which opponent has enough in reserve to beat Ohio State?

Not Minnesota, whom OSU plays in a Thursday night opener in Minneapolis. I have yet to be sold on P.J. Fleck long term,

and the Gophers' roster is worse than it was last season. Quarterback Tanner Morgan has regressed, all-world receiver Rashod Bateman has gone to the NFL and the defense wasn't any good last year – and returns largely the same bunch.

Maybe Oregon? But the Ducks are breaking in their own new quarterback, albeit one with experience in Boston College transfer Anthony Brown. They also have highly touted recruit Ty Thompson waiting in the wings, but it doesn't seem like a good idea to throw a newbie into a situation where his first start would come against the Buckeyes in Ohio Stadium. The game will be exciting but ultimately a double-digit Ohio State victory.

Could resurgent Rutgers be where the Buckeyes slip? Greg Schiano knows Ohio State very well and has gotten fans in Piscataway to believe in his long-term vision. But short term – like 2021 – the Scarlet Knights aren't quite there.

The worry here is the Oct. 23 road trip to Bloomington, to take on an Indiana squad that is brimming with optimism and which has become more talented than the group that fought OSU to the end in 2020 before losing 42-35. Much of how well the Hoosiers do this season hinges on quarterback Michael Penix Jr. staying healthy – something he's never been able to do. But if he does, then the Buckeyes could be in for a real battle. Sure, OSU comes off of an open week, which is usually a good thing. But it also has Penn State the following week, and that's always a game with high stakes.


While it hasn't been seen to this point, it's possible the Buckeyes could be looking ahead to the Nittany Lions and thinking they can just roll into Bloomington and take care of business. But Tom Allen is building a culture of a team that believes in itself, and it's funny to think that Indiana is now more of a football school than it is a basketball one.

No other team on the schedule has the firepower to knock off the Buckeyes, and Michigan is only a worry because of the importance placed on the rivalry and how vital it will be for Jim Harbaugh to save his job. In all other aspects it's a big talent mismatch in favor of Ohio State.

Though it's never easy to go through a season unscathed, there are a handful of teams that, because of roster dominance and lack of strength of their conference, have come to expect it. Clemson is one, and Ohio State is another.

Could the Buckeyes lose this season? Sure they can. Any team can lose on any given Saturday.

But it will take a pretty big confluence of events for it happen, and given what Day and the Buckeyes accomplished in the COVID season of 2020, it's hard to envision anything of that magnitude taking place in 2021.



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# Outfield Was In The Cards For Future HOF'er

Here's a trivia question straight from the BuckeyeSports.com Forum:

The following are the top nine schools for Rose Bowl appearances: USC (34); Michigan (20); Ohio State, Stanford and Washington (15); UCLA (12); Wisconsin (10); and Oregon and California (8).

Who has the 10th most appearances in the Rose Bowl?

My only hint is that posters on the Forum struggled to get the right answer, which I will provide later.

## It's Baseball Season

Baseball has always been my favorite sport, dating back to 1960 when my father took me to my first games (a doubleheader between the old Washington Senators and the Detroit Tigers) and my grandmother bought me my first pack of baseball cards – both in the same year!

While the powers-that-be are continually trying to speed up the game, I love the pace of baseball (why tamper with extra innings, which is when things get really exciting?) and baseball season also corresponds with a slower pace here at Buckeye Sports Bulletin, which allows me to better enjoy the season.

With that in mind, I present a note that I found in this column from 36 years ago. If you recall that I already ran this item, you have a better memory than me, because I had forgotten it.

The Sporting News, which was my favorite periodical at the time, had noted the passing of Harrison Wickel, who lettered for the Ohio State baseball team in 1934 and 1935. I hadn't heard of Wickel then, and I don't think I have heard of him since writing about him in the May 13, 1989, issue of BSB.

Wickel, according to TSN, was MVP on the 1935 Buckeye team that finished second in the Big Ten under Floyd Stahl.

He went on to play both infield and outfield in the minor leagues and hit at least .300 in eight of the 10 seasons he was active as either a player or player-manager. Thousands of players have played in the minor leagues, especially in that era when minor leagues and teams were much more prevalent. So what was so significant about Wickel?

According to TSN, he was an early proponent of moving future Hall of Famer Stan Musial from pitcher to the outfield.

Wickel was Musial's manager at Williamson (W.Va.) in the Mountain State League in 1939, the St. Louis Cardinals icon's second year of professional baseball. It was then Wickel realized that Stan "The Man's" ability as a hitter and fielder far overshadowed his abilities as a pitcher.

Musial pitched for Wickel that season, but he was also used in the outfield and as a pinch hitter. Musial hit .352 in 71 at bats. According to the always reliable Wikipedia, Musial was 9-2, with a 4.30 ERA on the mound that season. Musial suffered a shoulder injury the next season at Daytona Beach, and he ultimately became a full-time outfielder before joining the Cardinals in 1941.

He went on to become a seven-time National League batting champion and a three-time NL MVP, batting .331 for his career and holding many NL batting records at the time of his retirement.

As for Wickel, he had a lengthy and varied career of his own. Again, according to The Sporting News – as any baseball fan knows, the so-called "Bible of Baseball" – he won three pennants in his nine years as a minor-league manager and had 623 RBI in 623 games in one five-year span (1937-41) as a player-manager.

After a stint in the Navy in WWII, where he rose to the rank of lieutenant, he returned to

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

the Cardinals' organization as a minor-league manager before becoming the team's senior West Coast scout.

In 1952, Wickel became farm director for the Chicago Cubs. In 1955 he became a scout for Detroit. He served one year as president of the Fort Worth team in the Texas League and then rejoined the Cubs as a scout. He returned to the Cardinals as a scout in 1965, went back to the Cubs in 1977 and scouted for the Houston Astros from 1982-85, before passing away in '89 at the age of 76.

Talk about a baseball-lifer!

The other career that struck me from this long-forgotten note was that of Wickel's coach at Ohio State – Stahl. He was Buckeye baseball coach from 1933-38 and 1947-50, posting a 129-108-1 record, placing him sixth on Ohio State's all-time win list. Nothing particularly extraordinary there.

What's unique about Stahl's career is that in addition to serving two stints as coach of the baseball team, he was also coach of the basketball team from 1950-58. He coached three All-Americans on the hardwood – Robin Freeman, Frank Howard and Paul Ebert – and was the coach when the Buckeyes moved into their brand-new home, St. John Arena, in 1956.

But there's more. When he was hired to coach the baseball team in 1933, he was also hired as an assistant coach on the football team. He left to be coach of the baseball and basketball teams at Harvard and led that school's basketball team to its first trip to the NCAA Tournament in 1946, where the Crimson were coincidentally eliminated by Ohio State.

He returned to Columbus for his second stint on the diamond while also working as an associate athletic director. He became a full-time athletic administrator in 1958, but he wasn't done yet. When longtime OSU golf coach Bob Kepler suddenly resigned in 1966 after 28 years, Stahl took over that program and led the Buckeyes to a Big Ten title while the school searched for a new coach.

Can you imagine Greg Beals taking over the Ohio State basketball program or Chris Holtmann heading up the baseball team while also serving on Ryan Day's football staff? Or Day filling in as golf coach in a pinch.

"Any assignment delegated to him, you knew the job would get done," former OSU athletic director Ed Weaver told BSB upon Stahl's death in 1996 at the age of 97. "No one exceeded him in the way he did his work and the talent he had. And the kids loved him."

One more baseball note, and it comes from an even older edition of BSB. Our Steve Siegfried caught up with the late Joe Sparma for a feature in the April 1983 issue. Sparma was a quarterback for Ohio State in the early '60s under Woody Hayes before gaining greater fame as a major-league baseball pitcher, winning 16 games for the Detroit Tigers in 1967 and clinching the American League pennant for the Tigers in '68 with a 2-1 victory over Boston.

He also famously came off the mound in his first appearance in Yankee Stadium to shake Mickey Mantle's hand on Mickey Mantle Day in 1965. There seems to be some disagreement on when and how many times Sparma struck Mantle out that game (in the BSB story, Sparma says three times) but Sparma did strike the famed slugger out. According to longtime Tiger catcher and former Michigan baseball coach Bill Freehan, Mantle turned to him and

said, "They have a day for me and your manager's got to put some hard-throwing kid out there. Couldn't he have put in some soft-tossing lefthander for me to hit off of so I could look like a hero in front of all those people?"

But that's not why I bring Siegfried's BSB story up.

Sparma is praising his Buckeye mentor Hayes.

"This may sound unrealistic, but I think Woody could win a World Series if he managed a decent major-league team," Sparma says. "I'll tell you one thing. His players wouldn't throw to the wrong base or miss a cut-off man too often."

I love that quote.

Sadly, the Massillon (Ohio) High School product passed away in 1986 at the age of 44 following a heart attack.

## Graduate List

As most of you already know, I try to monitor the list of graduates each semester, checking for football players in particular. The pickings were a little slim for the gridiron Buckeyes this time around, with Gavin Cupp, Demario McCall and Mitch Rossi probably the biggest names. Kudos to Max Wray for picking up his Ohio State sheepskin before entering the transfer portal.

And I always like to give special mention to those players who move on to bigger and better things but still come back to get their degrees. Bradley Roby, who starred for the Buckeyes from 2011-13 and has gone on to a seven-year NFL career, would certainly fall in that category after he received his diploma. On the diamond, former baseball Buckeye Mike Durant gets even greater recognition from me. He played for Ohio State from 1989-91 and ultimately rose to the major leagues, appearing in 40 games as a catcher for the Minnesota Twins in 1996. He, too, graduated.

## Park To Be Honored

Noted Ohio State football historian and good friend to Buckeye Sports Bulletin Jack Park is scheduled to be honored as the 2021 Agonis Club Person of the Year at a golf outing and banquet on July 26.

Park joins an illustrious group of Agonis honorees, with Bill Conley, John Cooper, Clark Kellogg, Jim Tressel, Thad Matta and former Columbus Blue Jackets player Jody Shelley the most recent selections.

The event will be held at the Delaware Golf Club. Individual golfers and foursomes can register, and the banquet is included in the registration fee. Those wishing to honor Jack and support the Agonis Club may also attend the banquet only.

For information, call (614) 565-4634. Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

The Agonis Club is a nonprofit organization consisting of fellow sports enthusiasts, educators and local businesspeople who love the Buckeyes and who come together to show their support for central Ohio high school student-athletes.

## BSB To A Buckeye

Now is a great time to sign up Buckeye fans you know for four free trial issues of Buckeye Sports Bulletin. Act now and the four free issues will include two of our most popular issues of the year, the July Interview Issue and the annual August Football Preview issue.

This is a great way for you to introduce fellow Buckeyes to BSB and allow us to find potential new subscribers. Just send your names and addresses to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com or mail them to us at P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212.

If you have already sent us names, there is no need to send the same names to us again. We will reach out to those Buckeyes on our own.

## Trivia Answer

The team with the 10th most appearances in the Rose Bowl is Alabama with seven. We just can't escape them, can we?

The Crimson Tide made the trip to Pasadena in 1926, 1927, 1931, 1935, 1938, 1946 and 2021 (how quickly we forget). Interestingly, the 1946 game between No. 2 Alabama and No. 11 USC was the last Rose Bowl game before the Big Ten entered into its agreement to play a representative of the predecessor to today's Pac 12. Alabama was a 34-14 victor over the Trojans in that '46 game.

The next year, No. 5 Illinois defeated No. 4 UCLA, 45-14, to start a string of traditional Rose Bowl matchups that did not end until Jan. 3, 2002, when the Rose Bowl hosted No. 1 Miami (Fla.) and No. 4 Nebraska for the 2001 BCS National Championship Game. The Hurricanes dominated, 37-14, one year before they would be upset in the Fiesta Bowl by Ohio State in the next BCS championship game.

In case you are wondering who would have been No. 10 in Rose Bowl appearances from traditional Big Ten-Pac-12 teams if Alabama hadn't crashed the party, it would have been Iowa with six.

It was traditional participants that kicked off the Rose Bowl era in 1902 before an estimated 8,000 fans. Michigan, under Fielding Yost, buried Stanford, 49-0, with Stanford throwing in the towel in the third quarter. Yost had been the coach at Stanford the year before. After that disaster, the game did not return until 1916, when Washington State beat Brown, 14-0.

The most frequent Rose Bowl matchup is USC-Michigan, occurring for the eighth time in 2007, with USC holding a 6-2 advantage. The next most frequent matchup is USC-Ohio State, occurring for the seventh time in 1985, which coincidentally was my first Rose Bowl. USC holds a 4-3 advantage.

Among Pac-12 and Big Ten schools, the record for longest drought since a team's last Rose Bowl appearance is held by California (1959), followed by Minnesota (1962), Oregon State (1965) and Indiana (1968).

Among Pac-12 and Big Ten schools that have played in at least one Rose Bowl, the record for the longest period since a win is held jointly by Indiana and Nebraska, which have never won, followed by Washington State (1916), Cal (1938), Oregon State (1942), Northwestern (1949) and Iowa (1959).

If you wonder why I even care about the Rose Bowl, aside from the fact it gave me an interesting trivia question, here's what legendary Michigan coach Bo Schembechler had to say about the Granddaddy of Them All in 1989: "If there are any Big Ten teams that shoot for a national championship, they're damn fools ... You play to win the Big Ten championship, and if you win it and go to the Rose Bowl and win it, then you've had a great season."

I know this is hard for younger Buckeye fans to believe, but that is the way most Big Ten football fans, especially those from Ohio State and Michigan, felt in 1989. As longtime readers of this column know, there is still a part of me that feels that way, and I miss the bygone days before only one college football team and its followers went home happy each season.



# Reds JUNE 2021



**JUNE 8-10**



PRESENTED BY  
HOXWORTH

**TUESDAY // 7:10**

**WEDNESDAY // 7:10**

- Shogo Akiyama Bobblehead,  
presented by Toyota  
Limited quantity, while supplies last

**THURSDAY // 12:35**



**JUNE 24-27**



PRESENTED BY  
KROGER ZERO HUNGER ZERO WASTE

**THURSDAY // 7:10**

- Queen City Sluggers  
Triple Bobblehead,  
presented by St. Elizabeth Healthcare  
Limited quantity, while supplies last

**FRIDAY // 7:10**

- Post-game Fireworks Show

**SATURDAY // 4:10**

- Queen City Sluggers  
Triple Bobblehead,  
presented by St. Elizabeth Healthcare  
First 15,000 fans

**SUNDAY // 1:10**

- Family Sunday, presented  
by Klosterman Bakery
- Bee Plush Kids Giveaway,  
presented by Honey Maid  
Kids 14 & younger



**JUNE 11-13**



**FRIDAY // 7:10**

- Post-game Fireworks Show,  
presented by Great Clips

**SATURDAY // 4:10**

- Shogo Akiyama Bobblehead,  
presented by Toyota  
First 15,000 fans

**SUNDAY // 1:10**

- Family Sunday, presented by  
Klosterman Bakery
- Jonathan India Fathead®  
Kids Giveaway, presented by  
Lee's Famous Recipe  
Chicken and Strips  
Kids 14 & younger



**JUNE 29-JULY 1**



PRESENTED BY GREAT CLIPS

**TUESDAY // 7:10**



- Zoo Ticket Package,  
presented by Ohio Lottery  
Featuring an  
EXCLUSIVE "Theo"  
Giraffe Bobblehead!  
(item only available with  
purchase of ticket package)  
Available at [reds.com/themes](https://reds.com/themes)



**WEDNESDAY // 7:10**

**THURSDAY // 7:10**

**(513) 381-REDS (7337)**



**reds.com/TICKETS**

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