

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Oct. 2, 2021

## McCord's Debut At QB Helps Power OSU To Blowout Victory Vs. Akron

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day saw an opportunity to get his dinged-up starting quarterback a week of rest with one of the nation's weakest foes on the schedule and took it.

Hampered by a nagging shoulder injury through each of the first three games of the season, redshirt freshman C.J. Stroud was announced Sept. 23 as available only in an emergency, two days after Day said at his weekly press conference that the Buckeyes were looking into Stroud's health but hadn't made any final personnel decisions.

"We'll see how he's feeling right now, see how he's feeling today coming in, but there was still kind of this feeling that he had that he really couldn't shake, and so maybe rest is something that would go a long way for him," Day said during his weekly radio show Sept. 23 before the Akron game. "And then we can allow some of these other guys to practice and move forward here.

"If he's ready to roll, let's go. But I think rest here is probably going to be the best option over the weekend."

Two days later, Stroud had no plans to roll. He patrolled the sidelines in uniform but spent the game without a helmet or any real reason to enter as Ohio State hoped to heal the right shoulder ailment the QB cited as causing several missed throws through three weeks of play.

In his place, the Buckeyes turned to one of their two blue-chip, five-star true freshman quarterbacks, handing the ball to Philadelphia native Kyle McCord for both his first career start and his first career snaps for the Scarlet and Gray.

And short of one drive to open the game, McCord delivered just about everything the Buckeyes could have asked of him. Bolstered by an explosive – albeit simplified – passing attack and a 24-point burst in the second quarter, Ohio State rolled to its third victory of the season, demolishing an overpowered Akron team by a 59-7 final score.

McCord played only two drives into the second half, passing the torch to redshirt freshman Jack Miller after the Buckeyes raced out to a 45-7 lead in the third quarter, but racked up the second-highest single-game passing total of the young season in his limited snaps. McCord completed 13 of his 18 attempts – after starting the game with two incompletions on a short first drive – and finished with 319 yards and two



SONNY BROCKWAY

**DAZZLING DEBUT** – Ohio State freshman quarterback Kyle McCord (6) threw for 319 yards and two touchdowns, making his first collegiate start a successful one as he helped lead the Buckeyes to a 59-7 win against Akron. McCord was subbing for injured starter C.J. Stroud, who sat out the game with an ailing throwing shoulder.

scores. Day was pleased, generally, with the performance of his young starter, though he didn't need a trip to the film room to identify some early jitters for the freshman signal-caller.

"I'll watch the film and see," Day said when asked about McCord's play. "You see certain things out there. Some things were OK, some things we certainly need to clean up. I need to find out where (his) eyes are. Kyle puts a lot of work into this thing, but this was the first time he's ever played, and I think the game was moving fast for him. He was almost at hyper-speed. I think once he found the speed of the game, he settled down and did much better."

McCord missed badly on his first three passes of the game, one of which technically counted as a carry with a fumble when he threw well behind a wide receiver screen and out of bounds 6 yards behind the line of scrimmage. They were far from the only early troubles that a Buckeye quarterback has

faced this season – Stroud has already developed a propensity for the slow starts – so Day reached into the same bag of tricks as he has before, working to settle his spooked quarterback.

"I told him, 'Take a deep breath and find the speed of the game. Trust your eyes, trust your reads. You've done a lot of preparation to get here.' " Day said. "Then I thought he settled down. We were trying to get him in the rhythm of the game. That's the big thing. I know when I was a quarterback, you tend to overthink things, and I think that's what Kyle was doing. All three of these quarterbacks, they're very smart and they do a lot of thinking. But sometimes you can overthink things, too."

His teammates were there to help McCord settle in, too, from a short pep talk from Stroud to an impromptu meeting with the wide receivers. The receivers, at least as Jaxon

Continued On Page 10



# FAN FORUM

## Buckeye Leaves

*With plenty of players to talk about following a 59-7 blowout of Akron on Sept. 25, the BSB staff and members of the BuckeyeSports.com Forum doled out Buckeye leaves to several new faces.*

**Chase Brown, BSB:** Haskell Garrett made sure Akron quarterback DJ Irons felt comfortable lying on the worn and faded Ohio State turf on Saturday night. He collected five tackles, including four solo tackles and three sacks.

Garrett applied pressure in a variety of ways against the Zips. He worked from the nose tackle and from three-technique to create constant issues for the Akron offensive line. In recent weeks, he's come close to sacking the opposing team's quarterback on multiple occasions but has come up just short. This week, Garrett finished the job with some menacing touchdowns.

Ohio State finished with nine sacks against Akron. Interestingly enough, eight of the nine sacks came from defensive tackles with Garrett as the headliner. The fifth-year defensive tackle led Ohio State with three, Tyleik Williams had two, and Antwuan Jackson, Jerron Cage and Ty Hamilton each had one.

**Patrick Mayhorn, BSB:** Let's get the necessary disclaimers out of the way early here. Yes, it was Akron – a really bad, really overpowered Akron team, especially on defense. The Buckeyes could have tossed just about any quarterback out onto the field and found success against that group of Zips. Akron has won once this season and probably won't do it again.

And, yes, Ohio State's offense was rudimentary, especially early in the game. Ryan Day stripped the system down to the studs to make things easier for Kyle McCord, dialing up a healthy dose of screens and handoffs to TreVeyon Henderson, who was excellent once again.

But, for his first career start, McCord put forth about as good a performance as he could have hoped. As anyone could have hoped. He was 13 of 18 passing for 319 yards and two touchdowns. He had a bad interception, sure, and underthrew one of his two touchdown passes, but against a bad defense, McCord excelled, just as he was supposed to.

Will he depose C.J. Stroud with that performance? Almost certainly not – nor should he. But when he needed to step up and fill in, McCord more than did his job. Slap a sticker on that helmet.

**Mark Rea, BSB:** It was admittedly easier to find those deserving of Buckeye leaves following the Akron thumping. Kyle McCord would be a natural choice for turning his first collegiate start into victory, but I'll go with the guys who made McCord's evening a more comfortable one – Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

Wilson caught four passes for 124 yards (a tidy 31.0-yard average) while Smith-Njigba was targeted six times and had five receptions good for 93 yards and a touchdown. JSN really bailed out McCord early in the second quarter, committing a holding penalty on an Akron defender who might have had an interception and then three plays later making a smooth route adjustment that resulted in a 34-yard touchdown.

I'll pass out one more leaf to Master Teague for keeping his head on straight while TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams have apparently passed him on the depth chart. We unfortunately saw how at least one player dealt with what he believed was not enough playing time, but Teague keeps plugging away despite the fact his carries continue to dwindle. He had another 71 yards and two touchdowns on just eight attempts vs. Akron.

**Tiffin Buckeye:** He didn't play long but TreVeyon Henderson picked up right where he left off and he is so good in the open field.

**BuckeyeScott:** "Rocket" Ronnie Hickman! He gets the Buckeye leaves not only for his pick-six but also for having the coolest nickname.

**AnthonyBuckeye:** The DL led by Haskell Garrett and Tyleik Williams for bulldozing the Akron QB all game, Jack Sawyer for his sack and athletic tackles at the line of scrimmage, Kyle McCord for settling down and showing his upside potential, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Garrett Wilson for another excellent game, Emeka Egbuka for an electrifying run after catch, Ronnie Hickman for such speedy and sure tackles and the pick-six, Teradja Mitchell for his tackles for loss, TreVeyon Henderson for another excellent outing and Master Teague for spirited and energetic power running, the entire OL for another excellent outing and the defensive coaches for a good game plan.

**PeyoteBuck:** K'Vaughan Pope, for his most dramatic exit!



## From The Message Board

***After falling behind by a touchdown in the first quarter, Ohio State bounced back to build a comfortable lead heading into halftime. When the Buckeyes left the locker room and took the field for the final 30 minutes, many starters left their helmets on the sidelines, leaving an opportunity for young and inexperienced players to earn much-needed reps. Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked staff members and subscribers on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum about which youthful players impressed them against Akron and what stood out about their performances.***

***Here are some of the responses:***

"Kyle McCord's upside excites me. He certainly flashes championship potential. TreVeyon Henderson and Denzel Burke are now well-known future stars. Emeka Egbuka's speed was amazing. One cannot mention young players that are impressive without leaving out some. Donavan Jackson, Ronnie Hickman, Teradja Mitchell, J.T. Tuimoloau and Jack Sawyer will all bring a Natty home to the Buckeyes."

**– AnthonyBuckeye**

"I think many of the younger players are very impressive right now. The first name I'd mention, besides the obvious ones, is Tyleik Williams. I think he is going to be special!"

**– TerrierBuck**

"On rewatch, Tyleik Williams is just special. Top 10 special. He's already so smooth for such a big dude. Not a body type and skill-set that you see a lot in the Big Ten, even at Ohio State. That kid is a problem."

**– Patrick Mayhorn**

"Jack Sawyer showed some great athleticism on his takedown of the Akron quarterback. He is earning that new Silverado!"

**– BuckeyeScott**

"Jack Miller committed awhile back, so I started watching his clips. He looked good. I was happy to see him toss the ball around, especially after all this time."

**– PeyoteBuck**

"We may not have seen a freshmen class like this for quite some time. Let's hope Ryan Day can keep them together

and motivated for the next three years. Many of them will turn pro after three years. There is elite talent at QB, RB, DB, WR and DL. I think help is on the way at LB. And then there is always the possibility of adding help through the portal. What we're seeing this season is the fact the players that have been around for three to four years are being passed over by the freshmen. The future is bright for the Buckeyes if they can survive the transition. Donovan Jackson will take one of the OL openings, maybe Harry Miller will return? Jakailin Johnson showed he can bring the lumber once he gets an opportunity if he can control his emotions. I think Steele Chambers looks like a linebacker that can play as he gains confidence.

"It's too bad these young Bucks had to play Oregon when they did. Had they played Tulsa or Akron the second game, then Oregon, I think they would have handled the Ducks. Getting McCord and Miller real game-playing time against Akron makes the team better. I expect Stroud to be the starter at Rutgers. Day should feel better about letting Stroud run the ball a few times on scrambles and called runs knowing McCord and Miller are more game-ready. Rutgers and Maryland can assume Stroud won't run. Stroud has to be smart about when he runs."

**– Byron McNutt**

"Denzel Burke is maturing before our very eyes as are several other of the back-line defenders. Maybe there is hope after all. With Barnes essentially taking over as defensive coordinator, I wonder if Coombs is back working with the defensive backs where he belongs."

**– Mcarr**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Pure Aggravation

I haven't seen football this bad in Columbus since JT resigned and Luke took one for the team!

Here's an idea. Since we have players that don't want to play, and coaches that don't want to coach, let's just cancel the rest of the season and refund every sea-

son ticket-holder their money. This way, on Saturdays, I can save two tanks of gas, three hours to Columbus, three hours back home, and four hours of pure aggravation in between. Plus I can stay home in my easy chair and watch players and coaches that are putting forth effort to play football, something sorely lacking in

Columbus.

We have no chance of winning our division if this is what we have to look forward to each Saturday. I hope I'm wrong, but in all honesty, I have seen nothing that gives me even a shred of hope for this season.

**Peter M. Carusone**  
**West Middlesex Pa.**

### Woeful Buckeyes

Ohio State doesn't pressure the quarterback, can't stop the run, makes penalties galore – all by a poor team with a coaching staff which is just as bad. Buck-

eyes continue to struggle.

**Don Spronk**  
**Miami, Fla.**

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



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No. 1	Sept. 11	No. 13	Dec. 18
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No. 9	Nov. 13	No. 21	May
No. 10	Nov. 20	No. 22	June
No. 11	Nov. 27	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 4	No. 24	August

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## OPINION

# Sometimes We Forget Who's Playing This Game

Sometimes we forget that the multibillion-dollar enterprise we know as college football is played mostly by young men in their late teens and early 20s, young men with big egos that have been stroked since they could first buckle a chinstrap and even bigger dreams of the fame and fortune that awaits them in the National Football League.

When the realization begins to settle in that those dreams might never come to fruition, the result sometimes leads to bizarre behavior the type of which was displayed by now former Ohio State linebacker K'Vaughan Pope during the second quarter of his team's blowout victory against Akron.

No one really knows – or may ever know – what caused Pope to snap after he tried to enter the game as part of a substitution package only to be waved off the field by fellow linebacker and team co-captain Teradja Mitchell. What we do know is that Pope had a public meltdown that included a heated sideline exchange with position coach Al Washington and a profanity-laced Tweet after being escorted to the locker room.

I had already been thinking about the hubbub surrounding Kyle McCord being only the fourth true freshman in program history to start at quarterback for the Buckeyes when Pope apparently quit the team in the middle of a game. What I had been turning over in my mind were thoughts about the first freshman to start at quarterback for OSU, how his first game turned out, and how that outcome might have affected the rest of his life.

Forty-three years ago, Woody Hayes decided it was time for a change. He wanted to breathe some life into what had become a stagnant offensive attack and decided upon the bold stroke of playing freshman Art Schlichter ahead of two-year starter Rod Gerald at quarterback.

The move was so bold, in fact, that no Ohio State freshman had ever been handed the regular starting quarterback position before Schlichter and none was entrusted with it until Terrelle Pryor came along some 30 years later.

The summer leading up to the 1978 college football season had been a tumultuous one in Columbus. Hayes was getting ready to begin his 28th season as head coach of the Buckeyes, and he was beginning to feel a need to change with the times. No longer was a three-yards-and-a-cloud-of-dust approach dependable enough to win on a regular basis. Innovative, young coaches were devising intricate passing attacks and recruiting strong-armed prospects to implement them.

Hayes already had such a coach on staff. George Chaump, who had been at OSU for more than a decade, was quarterbacks coach for the Buckeyes and in charge of recruiting Schlichter, who had enjoyed a superlative prep career that saw him complete 264 of 478 passes (55.2 percent) for 4,397 yards and 64 TDs. He also rushed for 1,660 yards and scored 29 more times on the ground.

When Chaump saw Schlichter play, he knew he had seen the future of Ohio State football.

"Art was the best high school quarterback I've ever seen, and I've seen a lot of them," Chaump told me in 2008. "Everybody would just shake their heads when they saw what that kid could do. There was no question in my mind that he was going to be a star."

Once Hayes got to see Schlichter for himself, he knew everything Chaump was saying was true. At that point, Ohio State football was about to change. Hayes moved Gerald to a wide position and installed Schlichter as the first true freshman starting quarterback for the Buckeyes.

Unfortunately, the transition from Gerald to Schlichter was doomed almost from the start.

Schlichter had his wisdom teeth out during the first week of practice, remembering, "I was sick as a dog on picture day."

By the second week of camp, the young QB had recovered and was working exclusively with the first-team offense. That didn't exactly sit well with some of his teammates, though.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

"Some of the older guys let it be known that they weren't too crazy about me coming in and taking Rod's job," Schlichter said. "They weren't very excited about that, and looking back I don't blame them. Older guys don't want to see a younger guy playing because it's their time. They want to be the focus."

"It was a bold move on Woody's part to try and change things, but it was coming at the expense of a senior and a pretty popular one."

However, while several of the upperclassmen spurned the rookie quarterback, Schlichter found an unlikely ally in Gerald.

"No one would have blamed him for being upset, but that wasn't Rod," Schlichter said. "He treated me better than anyone else on the team did, and I have the utmost respect for him for that. He was a team guy. Rod was all about the team. He saw that I had a lot of potential and that they were going to play me. If he ever had any animosity toward me, he never showed it."

"When some of the other guys were shunning me, he treated me with a lot of respect. He helped me when he could, and I wanted to see him succeed. He helped me get better, and I think one of the reasons I had a better year as a sophomore was because of Rod."

Despite the brewing controversy in the locker room, Chaump said he was sure of Schlichter's ability.

"There was never any question in my mind that starting Art was the correct decision," he said. "Everybody in the world tried to sign that kid. I just wish we had been a little more prepared to help him succeed. Probably playing the team we played didn't help, either."

## Disastrous Debut

Penn State was already battle-tested as they took the field in the Horseshoe on Sept. 16, 1978. In fact, the veteran Nittany Lions team already had two games under its belt – a 10-7 victory against Temple and a 26-10 win vs. Rutgers.

Schlichter completed his first collegiate pass with a short toss to sophomore flanker Doug Donley, good for a 6-yard gain. It was to be the first of more than 100 times over the next three seasons the Schlichter-Donley tandem would hook up.

The freshman QB's second pass was equally successful, this one picking up 13 yards to Gerald. But that was as good as it got. The opening possession eventually fizzled, and Penn State quickly solved Ohio State's simplistic passing offense. Schlichter's third pass fell incomplete, and his fourth was intercepted.

"As I'm sure you know, Woody wasn't that enamored with the passing game," Chaump said. "As a result, we had a talented quarterback but never devised the type of offense to allow him to perform well. Our passing game that day consisted of keeping both backs and the tight end in for protection. That only left two guys in the patterns. In short, we didn't give Art what he

needed to be successful. We sent him into battle unarmed."

As the Nittany Lions began to recognize the Buckeyes' offensive formations, they ratcheted up the pressure on defense. They blitzed nearly every down and harassed Schlichter relentlessly. Led by defensive tackles Bruce Clark and Matt Millen, the Nittany Lions pressured Schlichter into two first-half interceptions and then teed off on him in the second half as the Buckeyes struggled to come from behind.

Penn State picked off the OSU freshman three more times after halftime before Hayes finally hoisted the white flag and went to senior backup Greg Castignola for mop-up duty in the fourth quarter.

For the contest, Schlichter managed to complete only 12 of 26 passes for 182 yards to go along with the five interceptions, a single-game school record that still stands. He was also sacked twice and hurried on countless other occasions. Gerald was his leading receiver with four catches for 91 yards.

Making matters worse, the Buckeyes also fumbled the ball away three times – including one by Schlichter – to give Penn State eight turnovers for the game. But the Lions weren't much better on offense, getting only one touchdown to go along with four field goals from kicker Matt Bahr for the 19-0 victory.

"We just weren't ready to be a passing team," Schlichter said. "It was nobody's fault and it was everybody's fault. We didn't protect very well, and I was probably guilty of holding the ball too long. But you have to have some time to throw when there are only two or three guys going out."

"And we were playing against some great players. Matt Millen had a great pro career and Bruce Clark was a fantastic defensive lineman, and they had great games. We had guys who were great linemen, but they were used to just coming off the ball and making holes for the running game. They weren't ready to pass protect yet. Nothing against them – we just weren't ready to be a passing team."

The Buckeyes recovered the following week as Schlichter led them to a 27-10 road victory against Minnesota, a game in which he attempted a grand total of just seven passes. The week after that, the team returned home for a 34-28 nonconference win against Baylor, a victory that featured only nine passing attempts.

It wasn't the same team that began the season, and it wasn't the same Schlichter, either.

"I don't think I've ever seen anyone so psychologically defeated as I saw Art after that first game," Chaump said. "After that, I think we threw the ball maybe five or six times a game."

"To say the least, it was very frustrating. I have always wondered if what happened to Art that day had anything to do with the difficulties he has had in life. That continues to bother me to this day."

Schlichter has spent the better part of the last 30 years in prison due to crimes related to a gambling addiction. About a year before Chaump died in 2019, I asked him if he still felt the same way about that 1978 game and its ramifications.

"I've always loved coaching," Chaump, who was then 83, said. "It's all I ever wanted to do. I guess what attracts me the most is that it's a game that teaches life lessons. Every once in awhile, though, those lessons don't turn out the way you might have hoped."

"You ask me if I feel the same about Art's first game. There's no doubt about it. I guess you could say it haunts me. I guess it always will."

Sometimes we forget who's playing this game and the toll it takes on them.



# OHIO STATE INSIDER

## Day, Saban Agree On Winning Mind-Set

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day might be getting a little tired of fielding questions regarding the relative youth on his football team and how it has led to a less-than spectacular start to the 2021 season. Yet he knows how far his players have come and how much farther they need to go to achieve the lofty goals set for them.

"First off, there are no excuses," Day said. "We have to play at a high level, we have to execute in all three phases and play clean games, play hard and do all those things. But I think, if you're looking at our team, you're looking at a team that, coming off last year, a lot of experience walked out of the building. Typically, those guys who would be stepping into the roles that they're stepping into would have had a bunch of reps under their belt.

"Those four linebackers that left, they played almost every snap last year. Justin Fields played almost every snap last

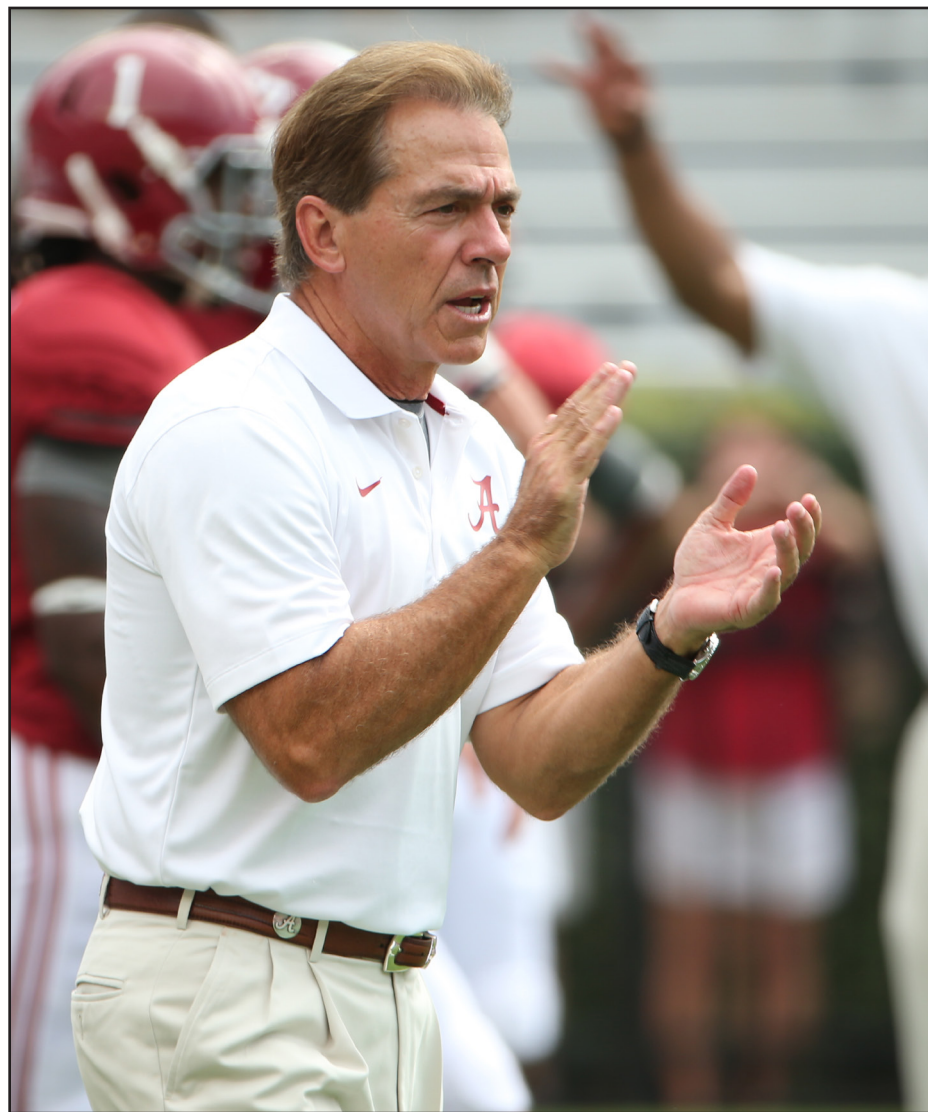
year (at quarterback). A lot of those guys got a bunch of those reps last year, and those guys who are stepping into those roles (this year) didn't. Some of those guys didn't play their senior year of high school, some of those guys are in year two or three of the program, but they're still inexperienced.

"You know, if you had Josh Myers and Wyatt Davis and Justin Fields and Tuf Borland and Pete Werner and those guys coming back into this year, it would probably be a little different," the coach continued. "But they're gone, and because there was a gap there, we have to fill that gap. We have to catch up, and it's not going to happen overnight.

"We have to do a great job as coaches to make sure that we're on our game to help close that gap faster. The snaps that guys get under their belt, the snaps they get, the more confidence they're going to get in what they're doing."

The old saying that "Ohio State doesn't rebuild, it reloads" is a well-worn phrase that fans enjoy unpacking during each off-season. Day just wishes the task at hand were that easy.

"I think one thing we all have to recognize is that you don't just walk out with an Ohio State uniform and think you're going to go win. It doesn't work that way," he said. "It's really hard. We have to continue to prepare at a really high level so that we can compete at a high level. That's just the facts, and I think the more our guys are getting those reps and performing at a high level, the better we're going to compete."



FILE PHOTO

**SAME GOALS IN MIND** - Alabama head coach Nick Saban heard and agreed with comments made by Ohio State counterpart Ryan Day regarding the difficulty of maintaining the excellence in a college football program year after year. Saban has won seven national titles - one at LSU and six with the Crimson Tide.

More than 600 miles to the southwest, Day's message was heard loud and clear by Alabama head coach Nick Saban, whose team headed into a game against Southern Miss as 45-point favorites.

"I'm not trying to be negative with anybody, but we cannot take for granted that we're always just going to have a good team," the seven-time national championship head coach said during his weekly radio show. "Ohio State's coach said it this week about his team. Just because you put on an Ohio State uniform doesn't mean you're going to go beat the other team. There's certain things that you have to do as a competitor and as a player to be a good player and to be able to dominate the competition."

Day, whose team was favored by 48

points against Akron, agreed, saying the competition on the other side of the ball wasn't nearly as important as the competition within your own program.

"I don't ever think it's about anyone we're playing," he said. "I always think it's about us. I think (since I've been here) maybe there's been just once when we were beaten. Every time we've lost a game around here, I've always felt it was us. It's always a standard about who we are, and it's been about us and being the best version of ourselves.

"You know, our culture is built on one term: fight. Fight to become the best version of yourself. That has to be the focus. Simply be the best version of you, the best version of this team that we can be, and if we do that, we take the next step forward. How do

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## 2021 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Sept. 2	at Minnesota	W, 45-31	Fox	2-2, 14-10 loss to Bowling Green
Sept. 11	OREGON*	L, 35-28	Fox	4-0, 41-19 win over Arizona
Sept. 18	TULSA*	W, 41-20	FS1	1-3, 41-34 win over Arkansas State
Sept. 25	AKRON	W, 59-7	BTN	1-4, 59-7 loss to Ohio State
Oct. 2	at Rutgers	3:30	BTN	3-1, 20-13 loss to Michigan
Oct. 9	MARYLAND	Noon	TBA	4-0, 37-16 win over Kent State
Oct. 23	at Indiana*	TBA	TBA	2-2, 33-31 win over Western Ky.
Oct. 30	PENN STATE	TBA	TBA	4-0, 38-17 win over Villanova
Nov. 6	at Nebraska	TBA	TBA	2-3, 23-20 loss to Michigan State
Nov. 13	PURDUE	TBA	TBA	3-1, 13-9 win over Illinois
Nov. 20	MICHIGAN STATE	TBA	TBA	4-0, 23-20 win over Nebraska
Nov. 27	at Michigan	Noon	Fox	4-0, 20-13 win over Rutgers
Dec. 4	Big Ten Championship**	8 p.m.	Fox	

\* - 2020 bowl team \*\* - at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

we do that? It's a fight and it's not easy."

Both the Buckeyes and Crimson Tide covered their bloated spreads. While OSU was tallying a 59-7 rout of Akron, Alabama was rolling to a 63-14 win against Southern Miss. During that win, former OSU wide receiver Jameson Williams became the first Football Bowl Subdivision player in at least 15 years to record three touchdowns of 80 yards or more in the same game. Williams scored on kickoff returns of 100 and 83 yards as well as a reception that covered 81 yards.

### Despite Blowout Win, OSU Drops In AP Poll

For the second consecutive week, Ohio State fell in The Associated Press writers' poll after a win, moving from No. 10 to No. 11 following a 59-7 blowout of Akron

on Sept. 25.

The Buckeyes had dropped to No. 10 from No. 9 the week before after a closer-than-expected, 41-20 win against Tulsa.

The American Football Coaches Association, meanwhile, was apparently more impressed by OSU's blowout of the Zips. The Buckeyes jumped two spots to No. 10 in the coaches' poll.

Both rankings received plenty of adjustment following a week during which a pair of top-10 teams (Texas A&M and Clemson) suffered upsets while several others were involved in squeakers.

Alabama and Georgia remain cemented in the top two spots of both polls with Oregon remaining No. 3 in the AP rankings. The Ducks are now No. 3 in the coaches' poll as well, moving up a spot to

exchange places with Oklahoma.

Penn State moved up two spots to take over No. 4 in the writers' poll with Iowa remaining at No. 5. Oklahoma and Iowa are four-five in the coaches' poll.

Rounding the AP top 10 are Oklahoma (down from No. 4), Cincinnati (up from No. 8), Arkansas (up from No. 16), Notre Dame (up from No. 12) and Florida (up from No. 11).

The largest drop of the week was Clemson free-falling from No. 9 to No. 25 after an overtime loss against N.C. State dropped the Tigers to 2-2 on the year. Arkansas made the biggest leap after a win over previously seventh-ranked Texas A&M.

In the coaches' poll, Penn State moved up two spots to sixth, Notre Dame was up three spots to No. 7, Cincinnati moved up one to No. 8, Florida was up one to No. 9 and the Buckeyes moved up two to No. 10.

Michigan and Michigan State are the other ranked Big Ten teams. The Wolverines are at No. 14 in both polls while the Spartans are No. 16 according to the coaches and No. 17 in the AP rankings.

Wisconsin fell out of both polls after a 41-17 loss to Notre Dame. The Badgers had been No. 15 in the coaches' poll and No. 17 in the AP rankings.

### McCord Sets New Debut Yardage Mark

It was a historic night in more ways than one for Kyle McCord against Akron during a 59-7 win for Ohio State on Sept. 25. The freshman signal-caller from Phil-

adelphia threw his first passes, earned his first start and claimed his first victory as a Buckeye, totaling 319 yards and two touchdowns on 13-of-18 passing.

Although his status as a true freshman starter – just the fourth in program history after Art Schlichter (1978), Terrelle Pryor (2008) and Braxton Miller (2011) – is perhaps more significant, McCord set a landmark with his performance. The 319 passing yards are the most by an Ohio State quarterback in a starting debut in program history. Dwayne Haskins set the previous record, throwing for 313 yards against Oregon State in 2018.

McCord's record came on his final pass of the day, an 85-yard catch-and-run by freshman wideout Emeka Egbuka. It was Egbuka's first career catch and became the third-longest passing play in program history.

Additionally, in the record books, McCord was joined in the starting lineup by running back TreVeyon Henderson, cornerback Denzel Burke and defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau, giving Ohio State four true freshman starters. According to Eleven Warriors writer Mutt Guttridge, that was a first since 1944 when Robert Brugge, Ollie Cline, Richard Flannagan and Thomas Snyder started for the Buckeyes during a 54-0 win against Missouri.

### Ewers Not Currently In Quarterback Mix

While McCord and Jack Miller shared

**Continued On Page 6**



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# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

61 offensive snaps against Akron, and normal starter C.J. Stroud rested his sore throwing shoulder, some fans might have wondered about another true freshman quarterback. But earlier in the week, Day said that anyone eager to see Quinn Ewers on the field anytime soon will be in for a long wait.

During his weekly news conference Sept. 21, the head coach was answering a question about Ewers and seemed to indicate it would be a stretch to believe the freshman who skipped his senior year of high school would be any kind of factor at the quarterback position in the foreseeable future.

"I think he would tell you it's been hard for him," Day said Ewers. "He jumped into this thing in the preseason, and then he was out for a bit of a stretch. We're trying to get him as much information as we can, but there's a lot of catching up to be



FILE PHOTO

**ADDITIONAL DUTIES** – OSU defensive line coach Larry Johnson now has more input into the defensive game plan as part of a reshuffling of Ryan Day's coaching staff. Additionally, Johnson continues to look for ways to improve the performance of his own particular position group.

done there. He's trying. He's working at it.

"But once we get into the season, it's very, very difficult for guys to catch up and

get them the reps because we need to give reps to the guys who are going to play in the game."

When asked if Ewers gets to throw in practice, Day said he gets reps here and there.

"But I can't tell you he gets enough reps to be able to play in a game right now," the OSU head coach said. "It's hard to get enough reps to be able to play in a game right now. It's really impossible. It's hard to give somebody enough reps – these young quarterbacks need all the reps they can get just to get ready to play in the game."

"We'll try to figure out ways to give (Ewers) a few things after practice and get him some work there as well as individually."

Two days later, after announcing Stroud would rest his ailing shoulder against Akron, Day was more succinct about Ewers when asked if would be ready to play.

"Right now, he'd be unavailable," Day said.

## Pass Rush Better But Johnson Wants More

Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson must have been pleased with the production of his players against Akron. The Buckeyes recorded nine sacks, the most in a game since 2007, more than doubling the team total from the preceding three games.

It was a lack of production to open the season for a coach who is used to running guys into the game with such names as Bosa, Young, Hubbard and Cooper.

"No excuse. We have to get to the quarterback," Johnson said Sept. 21. "Our guys know that, my room knows that, I know that. I don't sleep well when we can't get pressure on the quarterback be-

cause that's what we have to do. If we do that, we'll change the game. We'll change the game immediately, and that's what we're going to do going forward – look to find ways to get to the quarterback.

"Everything starts up front. I say it every time in my room. It's not behind us, it's what's in front of us, and we have to find a way to generate that. For the quarterback to hold the ball 3.4 seconds – not a good deal. We have to get to the quarterback, we have to affect his throw."

That message apparently got through. Akron quarterback DJ Irons completed only 14 of 29 attempts for 115 yards. In addition to being sacked seven times, Irons was also intercepted twice.

Throughout the early stages of the season, Johnson had not been shy about trying out new faces. True freshmen J.T. Tuimoloau and Tyleik Williams were among the top snap-getters against Tulsa, and they received even more playing time vs. Akron. Another freshman, Jack Sawyer, had been suspiciously quiet. He got in on the act against the Zips with his first career sack.

Even with the improved performance against Akron, Johnson made it clear he expects far more from his group.

"I think that there's room for improvement, and that starts with the guy standing in front of you," he said. "We have to find a way to improve their skill set and get them going, and that's what we're going to work on. We'll spend all day and night figuring out why, but we'll get it fixed and find a way to get those guys going forward."

"They've got a lot of pride in that room. They're not sitting around smiling every day. They know that we have some work to do, and we've got to go to work. That's how you fix it."

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## Coombs' Duties Remain Undefined

Kerry Coombs remains very much a part of the Ohio State defensive coaching staff. Just in what capacity, however, remains open for conjecture.

In the wake of a disappointing performance by his defense Sept. 18 against vs. Oregon, Coombs was relieved of his play-calling duties the following week against Tulsa. And according to Johnson, Coombs is now getting more input from other assistants in terms of putting together a defensive game plan.

So, exactly what capacity is Coombs serving on the Ohio State staff? Day was evasive when confronted with that question during his weekly news conference.

"He's a professional," Day began. "He's an Ohio guy, he's got a lot of pride. He's a tremendous coach and has an unbelievable record in terms of being a head coach when he was in high school and then he came here. The guys he's developed and the things he's done – he's been a part of national championships. He's a proud Buckeye."

When asked how Coombs is handling the situation, Day was a bit more forthcoming.

"He's done an unbelievable job in the last week of just pushing forward," the OSU head coach said. "I have a lot of respect for him. He loves this place and loves to win. He's still a big part of this defense and still has a lot to do with it. He still sees everything through the eyes of a coordinator."

Then came perhaps the most pointed answer to the repeated questions.

"We're readjusting his role," Day said, "but he's done an unbelievable job at being a pro."

Because of that readjustment, other members of the defensive staff also have new duties.

"(I'm helping) to put the game plan together – just having more input," Johnson told reporters. "That's especially true in the run game. We want to make sure we're solid against the run game. But really, I'm just another voice in the room. We've got a great coaching staff."

"Coach Day made a change, asked me to become more involved in the daily operation of our defense, and that's basically what I'm doing. Matt's done a great job, Kerry's done a great job up top. The whole staff has done a great job. But that's my job – just to be another voice as we continue to move forward."

The Matt to whom Johnson referred is, of course, secondary coach Matt Barnes, who came out of the press box to take over defensive play-calling responsibilities against Tulsa and remained in that capacity vs. Akron. Meanwhile, Coombs took Barnes' seat in the press box.

Day said the new duties, as well as the new vantage points during the game for the respective assistants, would help with adjustments he wants to make with his defense as the season goes on.

"It's twofold," he said. "(When you're on the sideline), it's just having interaction with the players, and two, it's making sideline adjustments. When you are in the box, you see things that you can't see on

the field, especially on the far side of the field. So it's kind of that give and take.

"Some guys like to be up in the box to see the whole picture, some guys like to be down on the field. When you're down on the field, you also get a feel for the players, the look in their eye and those type of things."

Day insisted that Coombs was still very much a part of the defensive picture for the Buckeyes – and that he remains involved in putting together the game plan on that side of the ball.

"For our defense, there's a lot of guys involved still," he said. "It's not like Matt's doing it on his own in there. Larry has a big part of it, Kerry's still involved, (linebackers coach) Al Washington's there. They all come up with the game plan. Once the game plan's set, then you go about calling it."

"I think we are heading in the right direction in terms of gameday operations."

## Henderson Keeps B1G Award Streak Going

For the third consecutive week, Ohio State claimed the Big Ten Freshman of the Week award, but this time, the Buckeyes earned a nod for Offensive Player of the Week as well.

Running back TreVeyon Henderson snapped quarterback C.J. Stroud's streak as the conference's freshman of the week and also nabbed his first career top offensive player honors after rushing 24 times for 277 yards against Tulsa and setting a new Ohio State single-game rushing record for freshmen. The first-year running back also scored three times.

Henderson shared Offensive Player of the Week honors with Michigan State quarterback Payton Thorne, who completed 18 of 31 passes for 261 yards and four touchdowns during a 38-17 upset against then-No. 24 Miami (Fla.).

Penn State linebacker Brandon Smith



SONNY BROCKWAY

**DECORATED FROSH - Ohio State running back TreVeyon Henderson (32) earned Big Ten Freshman of the Week honors for his week-three performance against Tulsa. Henderson broke the single-game program rushing record for freshmen with 277 yards against the Golden Hurricane.**

earned the player of the week nod on the other side of the ball, racking up 10 tackles, including one for loss, one deflection and one quarterback hurry in his team's

28-20 win against Auburn. It was the Nit-tany Lions' first win vs. an SEC foe since

**Continued On Page 8**

## Online Predictors Face Tougher Task With Big Ten Opponents

With the end of the nonconference schedule, the task of Buckeye Sports Bulletin's fearless predictors on our BuckeyeSports.com website will become that much more difficult now that Big Ten competition has returned. For the second week in a row, Chase Brown had the closest prediction with his 60-10 call for the Akron game, just four net points off the actual 59-7 score.

Watch for the staff predictions before each game, and don't forget the immediate coverage after each game posted at BuckeyeSports.com as well as discussion of the game at our Fan Forum, including the "Official Game Thread," with real-time comments from BSB staff members and readers throughout the game.

Please note that recent developments with the mail service have us concerned about delivery time for BSB this football season. We remind you the complete print edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin is posted at BuckeyeSports.com at the time the issue is mailed and is available to subscribers free of charge, as is all the other content provided at the site.

The BSB staff provides daily posts on any and all Ohio State sports news, including the latest in football recruiting, 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 Fan Forum, interacting with subscribers on the hot topics of the day.

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

Readers with delivery problems might also consider upgrading their existing subscriptions to first-class mail in an envelope. Subscribers can upgrade to first class through the end of the football regular season for \$20 and through the traditional recruiting season for \$30. Call (614) 486-2202 to order immediately by credit card or send your check or credit card information to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212.

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# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 7

a 9-0 win at Alabama in 1990.

Rutgers receiver Aron Cruickshank and Maryland kicker Joseph Petrino shared Specialist of the Week honors. Cruickshank recorded his first punt return for a touchdown (62 yards) and fifth career special teams touchdown, while Petrino hit a 32-yard field goal to give Maryland a 20-17 victory against Illinois as time expired.

## Gant Enters Transfer Portal

Once a projected starter at linebacker, Ohio State senior Dallas Gant announced Sept. 22 that he had entered the transfer portal.

Gant, a four-star product of Toledo St. John's Jesuit, found himself buried on the depth chart through three games. A spring foot injury lingered throughout the offseason and dropped him behind such younger players as sophomores Cody Simon and Tommy Eichenberg.

"Injuries happen, you just have to find a different way," Gant said in the spring. "It means watching more film, (doing) different types of lifting and focusing on things that I can focus on. It means developing ways that I can (keep up) even though I can't practice with my teammates and all that.

"It's tough not being able to practice, but being back by summer, I'll be able to develop myself pretty well. It will just be

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## Ohio State Names Champions Vs. Tulsa

After every game, Ohio State awards some of its players with the coveted champion grade. It is the highest grade the coaching staff bestows upon players based on their performance in practice and the most recent game.

After the Tulsa game, the coaching staff chose to honor only 10 players after analyzing the film. Only five players on offense and three on defense made the distinguished grade, with two special teams players also getting the nod.

The Buckeyes recognized tight end Mitch Rossi, offensive guard Matthew Jones and wide receivers Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Garrett Wilson as champions on the offense, and defensive tackle Tyleik Williams and Ronnie Hickman were selected for the defense.

Henderson and Cam Martinez were Ohio State's Players of the Game, and Xavier Johnson joined linebacker Cade

Kacherski as the special teams Players of the Game.

## Judge Dismisses Suits In Strauss Abuse Case

A federal court judge on Sept. 29 dismissed the cases of hundreds of former students against the Ohio State University tied to the sexual abuse they say suffered at the hand of Dr. Richard Strauss, a former university doctor.

Judge Michael H. Watson of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio announced the dismissal on the grounds that the statute of limitations had expired.

In Watson's ruling on the dismissal of one of two cases, Brian Garrett, et. al., vs. The Ohio State University, the judge wrote, "At all times since the filing of these cases, the Ohio legislature had the power, but not the will, to change the statute of limitations for these Plaintiffs."

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With Ohio State into its 2021 season, the Buckeye Sports Bulletin podcast is back to its twice-weekly football season publishing schedule, posting preview and recap shows each week of the regular season.

The BSB podcast, hosted by associate editors Wyatt Crosher and Patrick Mayhorn covers each game from every angle, releasing a full game preview on the Friday morning before the game and an in-depth recap on each Monday morning.

The show is free for everyone. To find it, go

to your favorite podcast app or website and type in "Buckeye Sports Bulletin Podcast," and click the subscribe button. You can listen on Amazon Music, Apple Podcasts, Audible, Google Podcasts, iHeartRadio, Podbean, Spotify, Stitcher and anywhere else that podcasts are found. For those of you that are new to the podcast world, the show is also posted at 10 a.m. every Friday and Monday on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as in the BSB Fan Forum.

Nevertheless, court documents also signed by Watson stated, "It is also true that many Plaintiffs and other students complained of Strauss's abuse over the years and yet medical doctors, athletic directors, head and assistant coaches, athletic trainers, and program directors failed to protect these victims from Strauss's predation."

Over the last few weeks, Watson had been asked to recuse himself from the case due to a conflict of interest regarding the fact that he and his wife each have financial ties to the university. Watson teaches law at Ohio State, and his wife is a licensee and sells merchandise to the school.

More than 300 men have filed cases against Ohio State, alleging the school ignored complaints of sexual abuse over a 20-year period, from 1979 through 1998. The plaintiffs were OSU

students from 1974 through 2000.

The first case against the school was filed July 16, 2018.

The university released the following statement on the dismissal: "Beginning in 2018, Ohio State sought to uncover and acknowledge the truth about Richard Strauss' abuse and the university's failure at the time to prevent it. We are forever grateful to the survivors who participated in the independent Perkins Coie investigation, which could not have been completed without their strength and courage, and we offer our deepest regrets and apologies to all who experienced Strauss' abuse.

"The university has reached settlement agreements with more than 230 survivors and will continue to cover the cost of professionally certified counseling services and treatment for anyone affected by Strauss."

One of the plaintiffs told a Columbus television station he was disgusted by the university's behavior as the case played itself out in the judicial system, calling it "all a lie."

"They let this happen to us," Steven Snyder-Hill, one of 93 plaintiffs on one of the two lawsuits dismissed by Watson, told NBC4 TV. "They covered it up, they hid it, and now they fought us in court. They told the public the whole time – all the time – that we were brave and they were going to do the right thing and it was all a lie.

"I couldn't be more disgusted by OSU and the way that they conducted themselves, the way that they lied to the public. They came out right away and said he was clean with the personnel file. They never explained why they put that out, to make us look like liars. At

the same time, they were fighting not to give me information that I knew had happened. So they are just liars and I don't know how they can recover from this because they were the one that told the public that we were brave and they were going to lift us up. Go look at the archives. They wanted to lift the survivors up to throw us in the garbage can, which is what they just did in court."

*Chase Brown, Wyatt Crosher, Patrick Mayhorn and Mark Rea contributed to this report. For up-to-the-minute Ohio State coverage, be sure to check out BSB online at BuckeyeSports.com and on Twitter @Buckeye\_Sports.*



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# Young Defense Also Shines Against Akron

Continued From Page 1

Smith-Njigba claimed, were never worried – perhaps easier to say in retrospect.

“The first drive is always hectic, especially being in the position that Kyle was in, but I knew that things would slow down,” Smith-Njigba said. “That’s what happened and we took off from there.”

The Buckeyes did more to work McCord into the game than pepper him with encouragement, though. His success beyond that first drive likely had quite a bit more to do with play-calling than it did anything he heard from his head coach or teammates. After Ohio State dialed up a pair of downfield passes, one screen and one run on the opening series, Day simplified his game plan until McCord found his comfort zone.

From the 7:27 mark of the first quarter to the 10:23 mark of the second frame – right before McCord found Smith-Njigba down the field for a 34-yard touchdown – Ohio State ran the ball 10 times, and called three screens, two pop passes and just four throws down the field. During that stretch, the Buckeyes gained 184 yards, with just 15 coming from four downfield attempts. McCord was 2 of 4 on those throws.

In fact, 127 of those yards came from just one pop pass (22 yards to Smith-Njigba), one screen (57 yards to Garrett Wilson) and runs of 35 and 13 yards from freshman running back TreVeyon Henderson. Those kinds of plays were available all night long for the Buckeyes, who notched 20 chunk plays (passes of 15-plus yards, rushes of 10-plus yards), just edging out the 19 against Oregon on Sept. 11 for a new season high and annoying Akron head coach Tom Arth in the process.

“Unfortunately, we just gave up too many explosive plays on the other side of the ball,” Arth said after the game. “That is something we really talked about going into the game. Make them earn it every play. We gave up too many big plays to survive.”

## Miller Strong In Relief

McCord wasn’t the only Buckeye to toss his first passes in scarlet and gray against the



SONNY BROCKWAY

**MILLER TIME – OSU redshirt freshman quarterback Jack Miller (9) enjoyed the first meaningful snaps of his career and made the most of them. Miller completed 5 of 8 passes for 66 yards during the second half of the Buckeyes’ 59-7 romp over Akron and even threw in an 8-yard run for good measure.**

Zips. Miller also fired out his first throws after playing briefly in 2020 but never being called upon to throw. As with his counterpart, Ohio State kept the offense standard for Miller, but he also delivered a solid stat line, completing 5 of 8 attempts for 66 yards.

He found a pair of backup tight ends, Cade Stover and Gee Scott Jr., for 25 and 12 yards, respectively, on his first two passes and closed out the day with a 16-yard completion to walk-on Chris Booker. He nearly found the former

club team standout again later in the drive, only to see the pass bounce off his hands.

For Ohio State, which was never in any real danger of a challenge against the struggling Zips, the chance to see some new faces at quarterback offered plenty of value. Day has often preached the importance of preparation among his backups at every position, especially behind center – and even more so as Stroud struggles with his injury.

“From the beginning, we’ve said we’re going to need all three of those quarterbacks,” Day said. “What does that mean? Well, if we have one guy that we feel like can play, or if we have two guys that we feel like can play, or we feel like we have three guys that can play and win a championship with, then we’re in good shape. We’re still working toward that, but we can get some evaluation on that now and that will help them. It’s different when you play. Things are coming live at you and when you get hit, it hurts. But this was a huge learning experience tonight, and I was excited about that for them.

“Do I think everything went perfectly? No, absolutely not. But both got some series under their belt, and that was good.”

## Youth Is Served

Ohio State hasn’t shown any trepidation in working its younger players into the rotation so far this season. Freshman cornerback Denzel Burke, defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau, defensive tackle Tyleik Williams and Henderson each played major roles against Tulsa on Sept. 18, as did such redshirt freshmen and sophomores as linebacker Tommy Eichenberg, offensive tackle Paris Johnson Jr., cor-

nerback Cameron Martinez, linebacker Cody Simon, cornerback Lathan Ransom, running back Miyan Williams, center Luke Wypler, Smith-Njigba and Stroud.

Against Akron, Ohio State worked even more youngsters into the game and found plenty in the way of potential contributors.

Leading the way, obviously, was McCord, but Williams was a force for the defense again after recording his first career sack the week before against the Golden Hurricane. He had a team-high six tackles and nabbed two more sacks for 17 yards, and he made quite an impact on his position mate, super senior captain Haskell Garrett.

“Tyleik is great,” Garrett said after the game. “I’m really excited about what he has to bring to the table for the defensive line and his future. It’s just about uplifting those guys, building their confidence, getting their confidence up and getting them comfortable. They’re not (able to be) freshmen. They have to grow up and they have to play ball. I feel like Tyleik wants to be a relentless player. He wants to be the best of the best and that’s why he came to Ohio State.

“I have confidence in the young guys. It was one of those games where you see what they’ve got and how they can home in going forward toward the season. This is a start. Now we are going into conference play, and I’m confident in our young guys stepping up to the plate.”

Another freshman, Pickerington (Ohio) North product Jack Sawyer, recorded his first career sack as well, collapsing the pocket and getting to Zips quarterback DJ Irons in the fourth quarter.

Elsewhere, redshirt freshman bullet Kourt Williams made his Ohio State debut and recorded three tackles, while freshmen defenders Reid Carrico (2), Mike Hall Jr. and Jakailin Johnson each recorded their first career tackles as well.

Offensively, freshmen receivers Jayden Ballard, Emeka Egbuka and Marvin Harrison Jr. snared one pass each, though Egbuka did the most with his, darting through the Akron defense for 85 yards, coming up just short of his first career touchdown. Freshman running back Evan Pryor logged his first carries, toting the ball five times for 35 yards, and he capped the scoring with a 12-yard touchdown jaunt late in the fourth quarter.

## Freshman QBs Uncommon

McCord made a little bit of history for the Buckeyes just by stepping onto the field as Ohio State’s starting quarterback. He didn’t shatter a 49-year-old record, as his backfield cohort Henderson had done against Tulsa by breaking Archie Griffin’s single-game rushing record for freshmen, but McCord was just the fourth true freshman quarterback in school history to register a start. He joined Art Schlichter in 1978, Terrelle Pryor in 2008 and Braxton Miller, who did it under interim head coach Luke Fickell in 2011.

In doing so, McCord also put forth what could certainly be the greatest freshman quarterback debut in school history, although when taking a deeper dive into that small group, it’s not a terribly high bar to surpass.

Schlichter is the only member of the group to get the nod to open a season. He was named the starting quarterback for the Buckeyes in 1978 ahead of two-year incumbent

## 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:



Rod Gerald, who had been dealing with a leg injury in fall camp. On top of that, Ohio State was hoping to work in a more efficient passing attack, and Schlichter brought with him to Columbus quite a bit more passing pedigree than his predecessor.

That first game did little to show it, though. Schlichter was pounded by a relentless Penn State defense, completing just 12 of his 26 passing attempts for 182 yards, with zero touchdowns and a whopping five interceptions – still the most in a single game in school history.

He wasn't alone in his struggles, though. The entire offense sputtered during a 19-0 shutout loss, shutouts being so rare that it has happened only three times since – against UCLA in 1980, Wisconsin in 1982 and Michigan in 1993. Despite the loss, head coach Woody Hayes reaffirmed support for his freshman quarterback, with the caveat that Gerald might find space to contribute moving forward.

"This was about as bad an opener as we have ever played," Hayes said. "There were just too many turnovers. Penn State's defense had a lot to do with that, but some of our trouble was of our own making. We will stay with Schlichter, but we will also use Rod."

Perhaps even more disastrous for the longtime coach was that his rushing attack had faltered severely, hanging the young signal-caller out to dry. Captain halfback Ron Springs rushed 20 times and gained just 58 yards, leading the team in both categories.

"We thought we could throw on them because they lost most of their secondary from last year," Hayes said. "But they were much better in that area than we expected. What we have to do now is go back and establish a running game to go along with our passing. I never thought I'd be saying that."

Year one never got a whole lot better for Schlichter. He completed 87 of 175 passes (49.7 percent) for 1,250 yards and four touchdowns, with another record that he'd likely prefer to wipe from the record books – 21 interceptions.

Pryor had quite a bit more luck in his first game as Ohio State's starting QB. After a disastrous 35-3 bludgeoning at the hands of USC in week three, head coach Jim Tressel made the move that had been seemingly in the works all season, naming Pryor the starter over incumbent Todd Boeckman. The two rotated against the Trojans, and though neither found much in the way of success, Pryor had established himself in the eyes of Tressel.

A week later, the Jeannette, Pa., native earned the start against Troy and put up the only real competition for McCord in the race for the most impressive debut. During a 28-10 victory, Pryor completed 10 of 16 passes for 139 yards and four touchdowns with one interception, while also rushing for another 66 yards.

After the game, Tressel was not subtle when asked if Pryor would remain in the starting role moving forward.

"Weren't you at the game?" the OSU head coach said. "As long as we progress, (he's the quarterback). But you have to keep on doing the things you need to do. The thing about Todd is he works like crazy and he's going to be there leading the football team as well, so I don't know that you ever say ever or forever."

As expected, Pryor stuck around in the top job and completed 60.6 percent of his passes (100 for 165) on the season for 1,311 yards

and 12 touchdowns to four interceptions.

Just like Pryor, Miller was summoned from the bullpen to relieve a limited veteran in week four following an embarrassing loss to a Power Five foe. In 2011, that loss was a 24-6 decision against an average Miami (Fla.) squad, and the preamble to the freshman starter came from Joe Bauserman. Miller was called upon to start against Colorado as Ohio State searched for answers to its offensive woes, and he delivered a performance that would become pretty familiar throughout his 2011 season.

During a 37-17 win against the Buffaloes, Miller ran more than he threw, carrying the ball 17 times for 83 yards with a 5-of-13 passing day for another 83 yards and two scores serving as more of a side dish than the main course.

"The guys kept talking to me to be out there, be comfortable, do what I do and I was excited to play," Miller said. "I know we had to get a 'W,' so I just did what I had to do – just run."

Like Hayes in 1978 and Tressel in 2008, Fickell affirmed his freshman's starting status after the performance.

"Braxton's our quarterback," the head coach said. "He gave us a lift, gave us some things we needed offensively as well as keeping plays alive. But we're not going to throw everything at him right off the bat and say anything more than just it's still about the team."

McCord earned no such coronation after his performance against the Zips, but short of a record-setting day of his own, he was likely never going to. Day was clear that Stroud

was simply an injured starter – not someone in danger of losing his job – during the week leading up to the game. He was a bit less steadfast after the matchup, leaving some room for interpretation and saying that Ohio State needed to assess Stroud's health further, but he stopped short of anything beyond that.

"I think we got the game experience and that was good," Day said after the game. "Both these guys (McCord and Miller) got some reps. As far as C.J. is concerned, we'll see more tomorrow. Today, he was feeling better, feeling stronger. We'll sit down tomorrow and see what the plan for the week is."

That didn't make the moment any less special for McCord, though, who can now count himself among one of the most exclusive groups in program history.



# OSU Defense Takes Big Leap Forward Against Zips

Haskell Garrett might have coined a new nickname for the Silver Bullet defense. After Ohio State harassed, harangued and hounded Akron into submission, the fifth-year senior defensive tackle suggested “The Undeniables” as a new moniker for the re-born defense.

The Buckeyes spotted Mid-American Conference opponent Akron an early 7-0 lead, but they soon flexed some defensive muscle like never before (at least since the 2021 season began), registering nine sacks and limiting the Zips to just 229 total yards – and only 144 in the final three quarters – on their way to a 59-7 ransacking of their in-state rivals.

The nine sacks tied for the fourth most in a single game in program history and showed marked improvement for a unit that had gotten to the quarterback only four times in the previous three games. Six different Buckeyes recorded at least one sack, including Garrett, who had a career-best three. But it was an individual performance he didn't particularly want to talk about, preferring to highlight the team aspect of the effort.

“The sacks don't even matter,” Garrett told reporters after the game. “It's just the matter that we played undeniable defense tonight. Our game plan was just to play relentless, put pressure on them, play our own game and get better within our own technique.”

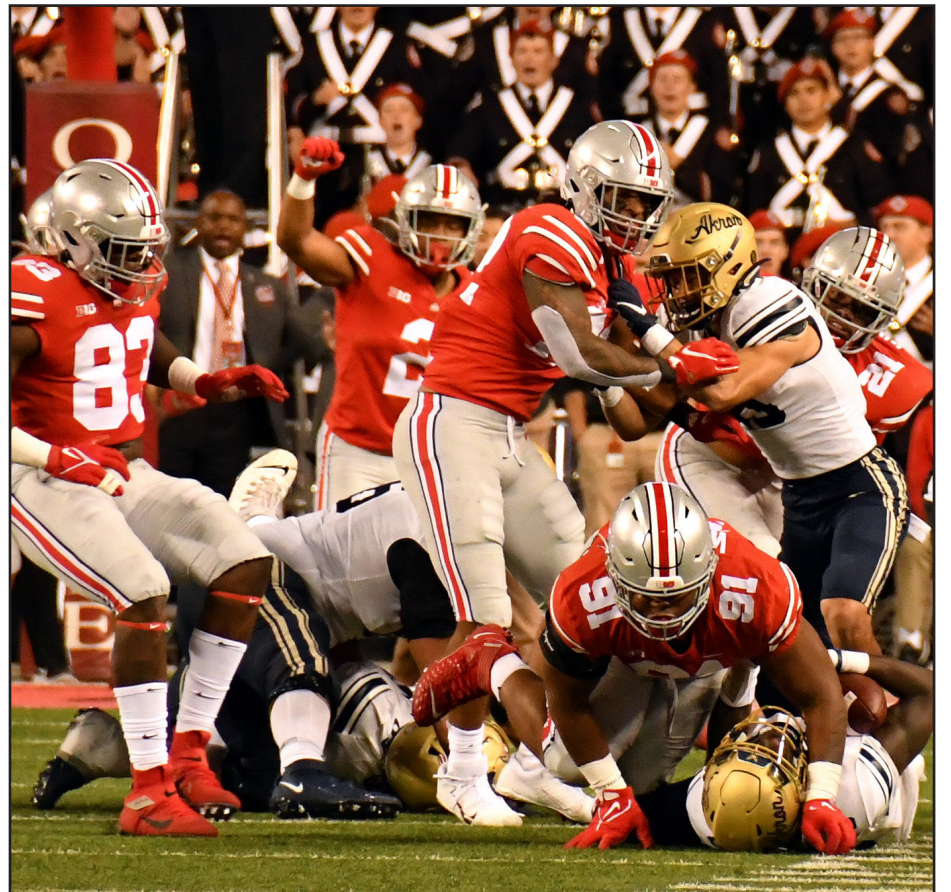
That the end result was much better

## GAME NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

for the OSU defensive unit is indisputable – even though it took just a little time for things to get going. Even though Akron was forced to punt away the opening possession of the game, the Zips began the evening's festivities with a 13-yard pass from quarterback DJ Irons to receiver Michael Mathison, who was running wide open in a seam of the OSU zone.

When Akron got the ball back, it put together a nine-play, 55-yard touchdown drive that featured a host of missed tackles on the part of the Ohio State defense and a pair of third-down conversions. A 4-yard scoring toss from Irons to freshman receiver Kona-ta Mumpfield on a play strangely reminiscent of the one Oregon burned the Buckeyes with for three different touchdowns gave the Zips a 7-0 lead at the 7:27 mark of the first quarter.

To OSU's credit, it made whatever adjustments it needed to make after giving up that touchdown. Akron didn't convert another third down, other than by penalty, until midway through the third quarter, going 0 for 7 during that stretch, and Irons went just 8 for 21 in the passing department for 62



SONNY BROCKWAY

**TY-ING ONE ON** – Ohio State freshman defensive tackle Tyleik Williams (91) makes sure Akron quarterback DJ Irons isn't going anywhere during Sept. 25 action at Ohio Stadium. Williams had a team-high six tackles and collected two of the defensive unit's nine sacks in the game.

yards and a pair of interceptions the rest of the way.

“I thought our confidence just built up series over series,” OSU head coach Ryan Day said. “Part of that was some of those guys who don't have a lot of experience in the game – and it's the same thing we've been talking about with the quarterbacks – you have to find the rhythm of the game.”

“The first series, I thought we were just kind of feeling our way around, and then we kick-started it and played with confidence for the rest of the game. That's what it's about – feeling confident in your game and feeding off that.”

True freshman defensive tackle Tyleik Williams had notched his first career sack the week before against Tulsa, and he recorded two more vs. the Zips. Meanwhile, fellow interior linemen Antwan Jackson and Jerron Cage, redshirt freshman Ty Hamilton and true freshman defensive end Jack Sawyer each recorded a sack.

No fewer than 28 different players were credited with at least one tackle for the Buckeyes, led by Williams with six. What's more, sophomore safety Ronnie Hickman provided another defensive highlight when he picked off Irons late in the second quarter and took the interception 46 yards for his first career touchdown.

“It's exciting to start hearing those names,” Day said. “Going in, you want to know who would be the guys we were really going to count on. You're starting to see Ronnie make plays. You see Cam Martinez get a PBU, you see Denzel Burke making plays. I think that's going to go a long way heading into the meat of the schedule because now

they know they can do it because they've done it.

“Everything they're doing is for the first time, so I think that part is exciting. We're just trying to figure out the best plays to put our guys in position to be successful because that's our job as coaches – to put your guys in the best position to be successful.”

Martinez was credited with only one tackle against Akron, but that came after a performance vs. Tulsa when he broke up three passes and returned his first interception 61 yards.

“Cam is a guy that was a quarterback in high school, and he wasn't sure about making that move to defense,” Day said. “We actually considered him at wide receiver when he first came in, and he had to go back and forth for a while. But we felt like his skill set was really special and he could be a really high-end DB. We knew there would be some transition period there because he hadn't played the position before.”

“But he is an example of someone who has really done a good job with the amount of reps he's had in practice and visualizing things and getting mental reps so that he was at competitive excellence when he was called upon. This is just a start. He's made a play or two, and that's good. But now the consistency moving forward is going to be critical.”

## Junior Linebacker Pope Quits Team In Midgame

Obviously disgruntled when he tried to enter the game in the second quarter as part of a substitution package and was waved off the field, junior linebacker K'Vaughan Pope

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# Game Analysis

## What Worked Well

For an offense breaking in a pair of quarterbacks who were as green as the outfield grass at Yankee Stadium, Ohio State could hardly squawk about an attack that produced 622 total yards.

The Buckeyes have been playing collegiate football since 1890, and yet Kyle McCord became only the fourth true freshman to start a game at quarterback. After a frenetic start described by his head coach Ryan Day as “hyper-speed,” McCord settled into an easy rhythm that allowed him to throw for 319 yards and two touchdowns.

Redshirt freshman Jack Miller had to wait until the second half to get his turn at the controls, but he added another 66 yards to the team’s passing ledger. In all, the duo who entered the game without a single pass attempt at the collegiate level between them accounted for an 18-for-26 performance worth 385 yards.

Perhaps best of all was the fact that Day got a little closer to the offensive balance he has sought (and heretofore not found) this season. TreVeyon Henderson and Master Teague combined for 164 yards and four touchdowns, and the Buckeyes rushed for 237 yards and five scores as a team.

Even the defense did its part for the first time this season. OK, Akron wasn’t exactly an offensive juggernaut. But neither was Tulsa, and the Golden Hurricane totaled 501 yards of offense against the Buckeyes.

OSU was much more active and productive against the Zips, holding them to 229 total yards while registering nine sacks. Not bad for a unit that entered the game with only four in the previous three games.

The Buckeyes remain very much a work in progress, but the confidence they took from the big victory should be a very important steppingstone as they move into the thick of Big Ten play.

## What Didn’t Work

It’s pretty hard to nitpick a 52-point victory no matter who the opponent was. Still, there were enough mistakes the Buckeyes committed that would have been much more costly had they been made against stronger opposition.

By Day’s own assertion, McCord’s eyes were not always where they needed to be, and he made a couple of egregious errors – even for a guy starting his first game. He absolutely airmailed two of his first three attempts and missed an open receiver on a sideline pattern so badly that the ball went behind the intended target and wound up as a fumble. Luckily for the young QB, the ball skipped out of bounds and went down in the books as a 6-yard loss.

McCord’s only interception of the game was also a misguided attempt to make something out of nothing early in the second half.

Additionally, Ohio State continues to commit penalties at an alarming rate, getting flagged another eight times against Akron for 95 yards. Among those were such late-game infractions as taunting (including giving the long-ago banned throat-slashing sign) by over-exuberant youngsters.

With 29 penalties for 295 yards in four games, the Buckeyes are one of the most penalized teams in college football. They’re averaging better than seven penalties a game and losing nearly 75 yards because of them. That simply has to stop.

## Play Of The Game

When a team scores eight touchdowns and piles up more than 600 yards in a game, it’s difficult to single out just one play. But if we must, we’ll go with a play that set up Ohio State’s second touchdown of the game.

Starting at his own 27, McCord threw what seemed to be a harmless little toss to Garrett Wilson in the boundary, but then Wilson blew through the Akron defense, stiff-arming Akron linebacker Bubba Arslanian onto his keister in the process, and winding up with a 57-yard gain.

Two plays later, Henderson bulled his way into the end zone from 3 yards out.

Honorable mention to Ronnie Hickman’s zigzagging interception return of 46 yards for a second-quarter touchdown.

— Mark Rea

quit the team.

Pope, a fourth-year junior who has been used sparingly the last two seasons, ran onto the field as part of a sub package but was waved off by fellow linebacker and team co-captain Teradja Mitchell. That triggered an outburst from Pope, who stormed down the sideline and began walking toward the team locker room.

Chased and coaxed back toward the sideline, Pope took off his gloves and threw them into the stands. Then, as he attempted to take off his jersey, he got into a heated exchange with linebackers coach Al Washington Jr. The exchange continued until former Buckeye safety and current team director of player development C.J. Barnett escorted Pope to the locker room.

There, Pope took to Twitter, first posting, “Good lucc (sic) to my teammates,” and then firing off another Tweet that read, “(bleep) ohio state.” That Tweet was quickly deleted.

After the game, Day was reluctant to comment on the bizarre chain of events.

“Someone just kind of told me about it, and I need to get the details of everything before I say anything,” the head coach said.

Then, perhaps in referral to linebacker Dallas Gant, who had announced three days before the game against Akron that he was entering the transfer portal, Day said, “You know, in today’s day and age, guys can leave before four games, and if they want to go into the portal, that’s their prerogative. I have a tough time with that, though, because I think you made a commitment to your team, to the Ohio State Buckeyes, and that’s what you do.”

Gant, a fourth-year senior and former four-star prospect from St. John Jesuit High School in Toledo, played only 47 defensive snaps this season, including only six combined against Oregon and Tulsa. He was expected to contend for a starting spot this season, but a foot injury held him back in the spring and preseason.

Meanwhile, Pope, also a former four-star prospect out of Dinwiddie, Va., was credited with only three tackles – all assists – this season.

Asked if he thought the actions of Gant and Pope were evidence of some underlying problem, either in the linebacker room specifically or the locker room in general, Day answered in the negative.

“I think what it really comes down to is that guys want to play,” he said. “But you can’t play everybody, and then frustration kicks in. I don’t want to comment any more on that particular situation. But I think it’s isolated.”

Earlier in the week, Day addressed the tenor of his locker room and how he thought the team was coming together in the wake of a tough start to the season. He also seemed to allude to decisions being made regarding younger players moving ahead of their older counterparts on the depth chart.

“Being a good teammate is something that is very important,” Day said. “Being a Buckeye and being proud to be part of the team is so important. Whether it’s an older guy or a younger guy making plays, the better teammate you are really does matter. We’ve been talking about that a lot.

“You know, you come to Ohio State sometimes because of the goals personally that you have, but then once you’re here, you’re

part of the brotherhood, a part of Buckeye Nation, a part of what is bigger than just you, and that’s why you play so hard. It’s for the guy next to you. That’s the message.

“There’s a lot of pressure on these guys.



K'Vaughan Pope

They have parents and family, they have media and different people who have certain expectations, and maybe if they’re not meeting some of those expectations, it’s hard for them. There’s a lot of things coming at them right now. With Name Image Likeness, with the one-time transfer – there’s just a lot going on, a lot of what you would call noise, but they have to filter that out. That’s why when you’re in this building – we call it ‘The Sanctuary’ – you’re safe from all that stuff that’s outside. We’re all in this together, and that’s why you play so hard for one another.”

The day after the game, Day had apparently assessed enough of the situation to announce that Pope had been officially dismissed from the team.

## Rolling Around Some Numbers

Ohio State is 190-51-5 all-time against in-state rivals. The Buckeyes haven’t lost a game against an Ohio school since a 7-6 defeat against Oberlin on Oct. 8, 1921, in front of a crowd of 9,000 at Ohio Field. A 7-7 tie with Wooster in 1924 remains the last time Ohio State failed to win in an all-Ohio matchup. Since then, the Buckeyes have won 45 games in a row against Ohio

competition.

OSU improved to 37-1 all-time against current members of the Mid-American Conference. The only blemish on that record against the MAC remains a 12-6 loss to Akron in a game played Sept. 15, 1894, at the Ohio State Fairgrounds. Akron was known as Buchtel College in those days, and the victory against the Buckeyes in 1894 was the only intercollegiate game they played that season under the guidance of second-year head coach John Heisman.

The Zips fell to 1-8 lifetime against the Buckeyes. The 59 points they surrendered was the most in the series since a 62-0 loss to OSU in 1892.

Akron is now 2-31 all-time against current members of the Big Ten. In addition to their 1-8 mark against OSU, the Zips are 1-0 against Northwestern; 0-6 vs. Penn State; 0-3 against Indiana and Wisconsin; 0-2 vs. Illinois, Michigan State and Purdue; and 0-1 against Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Ne-

braska and Rutgers. Akron has never played Minnesota.

The Zips aren’t any better against ranked teams. Akron is now 1-29 all-time vs. ranked opponents with the lone win a 34-20 defeat of No. 25 Marshall in November 2002.

The game marked only the fifth night contest hosted by Ohio Stadium over the last six seasons. All-time in night games (determined by contests that begin at 5 p.m. or later local time), OSU is now 17-5 at home and 66-28 overall.

Chris Olave’s 5-yard touchdown reception on a first-quarter pop pass was the first career scoring pass for freshman QB Kyle McCord. It was the 25th career TD reception for Olave, more than any other current player in the Football Bowl Subdivision. He also tied Santonio Holmes (2003-05) for the fourth-most touchdown catches in Ohio State history. Only David Boston (34, 1996-98), Devin Smith (30, 2011-14) and Cris Carter (27, 1984-86) have more.

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# New QB McCord Lets It Rip in 59-7 Rout of Zips

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Kyle McCord didn't start well in his first career game, but the freshman rebounded nicely as did his Ohio State teammates for a resounding 59-7 win against Akron before a nighttime crowd of 95,178 at Ohio Stadium on Sept. 25.

McCord threw for 319 yards and two touchdowns and TreVeyon Henderson and Master Teague each rushed for two more for the No. 10 Buckeyes, who moved their record to 3-1.

Ohio State spotted the Zips a 7-0 lead midway through the first quarter before storming to a 38-7 halftime score thanks in part to a defense that produced a touchdown while constantly pressuring Akron quarterback DJ Irons.

McCord replaced redshirt freshman C.J. Stroud, who was rested with a sore shoulder after his first three career starts. McCord was a five-star prospect in 2021 out of St. Joseph's Prep in Philadelphia.

Sophomore safety Ronnie Hickman had a pick-six in the first half, and the OSU defense registered nine sacks for the game after having just four through the first three games.

After an Akron punt ended the game's first drive, McCord took his first snap and handed to Henderson, who rambled for 12 yards to the OSU 21. McCord then missed Garrett Wilson to the right sideline, threw

a back pass that counted as a fumble and minus-6 on a rush and misfired to Jaxon Smith-Njigba to necessitate a punt.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day took the next several moments to have a conversation with his young quarterback.

Asked if he was trying to calm McCord's nerves, the coach replied, "I tried to. I told him, 'Take a deep breath and find the speed of the game. Trust your eyes, trust your reads. You've done a lot of preparation to get here.' Then I thought he settled down."

Meanwhile, the Zips promptly went 55 yards on nine plays while taking 4:40 off the clock to assume a 7-0 lead when Irons threw a 4-yard pass to receiver Konata Mumpfield on an almost-botched play. The snap from center was high, but Irons recovered and found Mumpfield open to the left.

Mumpfield on the prior play had a 17-yard catch to convert a third-and-3 from the 21. Earlier, Irons had a 16-yard run and tight end Tristian Brank had an 8-yard catch on a third-down conversion to the Ohio State 28.

McCord returned to the field and moved the Buckeyes 75 yards in just six plays to tie it 7-7 at the 5:27 mark of the first quarter. The series began with a 22-yard completion to Smith-Njigba after which Henderson ran for 8. Following an incompletion, Henderson raced 35 yards to the 10. He carried for 5 more yards before a pop pass to Chris Olave resulted in a 5-yard touchdown, the first of McCord's career.

Ohio State needed only three plays to



SONNY BROCKWAY

**OFF TO THE RACES - OSU freshman receiver Emeka Egbuka (12) took his first career reception and turned it into an 85-yard pass play against Akron. The play was the third-longest reception in Ohio State program history and the longest play from scrimmage of any kind since 2014.**

travel 73 yards to make it 14-7 with 11 seconds left in the first quarter. Wilson caught a pass behind the line and weaved his way 57 yards to the Akron 16. Henderson pushed his way 13 yards and then scored from the 3. The freshman finished the opening quarter with 76 yards on six carries.

McCord tossed his second TD at the 10:23 mark of the second period, capping a 70-yard, 10-play possession with a 34-yard strike to Smith-Njigba for a 21-7 lead. Miyan Williams had four runs for 19 yards to aid the drive.

It soon became 28-7 after OSU linebacker Cody Simon's interception near midfield.

He returned it to the 15-yard line, but an illegal block on the return pushed the Buckeyes back to the Akron 40. However, it took Ohio State only three plays from there. Henderson gained 3, Smith-Njigba followed with a 23-yard grab, and Henderson used his blocking to go 14 yards untouched on the right side to the end zone.

Hickman's 46-yard pick-six at the 4:43 mark, his second interception in as many games, upped the Buckeyes' lead to 35-7. The pass went off the hands of Brank and bounced straight to Hickman, who weaved his way to the end zone.

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Ohio State got the ball at its own 47 with 14 seconds left in the half, and McCord quickly connected on a 39-yarder to Wilson with seven seconds remaining to set up a 32-yard field goal by Noah Ruggles with two ticks left for the 38-7 lead at the break.

McCord at the half was 11 of 15 for 229 yards and the two TDs. Henderson rushed for 93 yards on eight attempts with a pair of scores and did not play after the half. The defense had already matched its season total with four sacks and two picks.

"Our game plan was to play relentlessly," said defensive tackle Haskell Garrett, who totaled a career-high three sacks. "Coach J (defensive line coach Larry Johnson) said our goal was to play fast, play relentless and have fun."

### More Of The Same

McCord threw into traffic and it cost him his first interception on the Buckeyes' opening drive after halftime. Zips safety Charles Amankwaa picked him off at the Akron 43 and returned it 11 yards to the OSU 46. But the defense forced a three-and-out, and then McCord made up for his pick in a big way.

His short throw to fellow freshman Eme-ka Egbuka turned into an 85-yard gain to the 2. It was Egbuka's first career catch and tied for the third-longest pass play in Ohio State history. Teague, who finished with 71 yards on eight carries, finished things off from there for the 45-7 lead with 10:56 remaining in the third quarter.

McCord gave way to redshirt freshman Jack Miller on the next series, and although the quarterbacks had changed, the results did not. Miller guided the Buckeyes 85

yards in eight plays over the next 2:47 to pad Ohio State's lead.

Teague had five carries for 48 yards, the last a 15-yarder for the score to make it 52-7 with 4:14 left in the third. Miller had passes totaling 37 yards to tight ends during the drive – 25 to Cade Stover and 12 to Gee Scott Jr.

True freshman Evan Pryor made his debut a memorable run when he scored on a 12-yard run with 2:47 left in the game. He had five rushes for 35 yards and Williams added a 15-yard run during the drive to make it 59-7.

Akron got the ball last and drove to the Ohio State 14, but the game ended on back-to-back sacks by the Buckeyes.

### Game Notes

Wilson had four catches for 124 yards, and Smith-Njigba had 93 yards on five receptions. ... McCord became the fourth true freshman QB to start for the Buckeyes after Art Schlichter (1978), Terrelle Pryor (2008) and Braxton Miller (2011). ... Along with Henderson, it was the first time Ohio State started two true freshmen in the backfield. ... The 319 yards for McCord were the most for an OSU quarterback in his first start. Dwayne Haskins threw for 313 against Oregon State in 2018. ... Akron's 229 total yards (153 passing, 76 rushing) were the fewest allowed by the Buckeyes since giving up 139 to Maryland on Nov. 9, 2019. ... Irons was 14 of 29 for 115 yards with two picks, and he was sacked seven times. ... The nine team sacks were the most in a game since recording 10 vs. Wisconsin in 2007 and tied for the fourth most ever for the Buckeyes.

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# The Numbers Game

## Ohio State 59, Akron 7

Sept. 25, 2021 – Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
AKRON	7	0	0	0	7
OHIO STATE	14	24	14	7	59

**First Quarter**  
**AKR** – Mumpfield, 4-yard pass from Irons (Smigel kick), 7:27; 9 plays, 55 yards, 4:40 TOP.  
**OSU** – Olave, 5-yard pass from McCord (Ruggles kick), 5:27; 6 plays, 75 yards, 2:00 TOP.  
**OSU** – Henderson, 3-yard run (Ruggles kick), 0:11; 3 plays, 73 yards, 0:57 TOP.

**Second Quarter**  
**OSU** – Smith-Njigba, 34-yard pass from McCord (Ruggles kick), 10:23; 10 plays, 70 yards, 4:22 TOP.  
**OSU** – Henderson, 14-yard run (Ruggles kick), 7:16; 3 plays, 40 yards, 1:01 TOP.  
**OSU** – Hickman, 46-yard interception (Ruggles kick), 4:43.  
**OSU** – Ruggles, 32-yard kick, 0:02; 2 plays, 39 yards, 0:12 TOP..

**Third Quarter**  
**OSU** – Teague, 2-yard run (Ruggles kick), 10:56; 2 plays, 87 yards, 0:37 TOP.  
**OSU** – Teague, 15-yard run (Ruggles kick), 4:14; 8 plays, 85 yards, 2:47 TOP.

**Fourth Quarter**  
**OSU** – Pryor, 12-yard run (Ruggles kick), 2:47; 10 plays, 75 yards, 4:12 TOP.  
**Att.** – 95,178

**Weather** – Cloudy, 64 degrees, wind 10 mph west

Team Statistics		
	AKR	OSU
First Downs	17	26
Rushing	5	16
Passing	8	10
Penalty	4	0
Rushes-Yards	40-76	35-237
Passing Yards	153	385
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	18-34-2	18-26-1
Offensive Plays	74	61
Total Net Yards	229	622
Thirld Down Efficiency	5-17	8-11
Punts-Avg.	8-38.9	3-46.3
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	1-0
Penalties	4-18	8-95
Time of Possession	36:40	23:20

**Individual Statistics**

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – AKR:** Hester 12-47; Irons 15-17; Norrils 9-15; Gibson 3-0. **OSU:** Henderson 8-93; Teague 8-71; Williams 9-47; Pryor 5-35; Miller 1-8; McCord 4-(-17).

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – AKR:** Irons 14-29-2-115-1; Gibson 4-5-0-38-0. **OSU:** McCord 13-18-1-319-2; Miller 5-8-0-66-0.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – AKR:** Mumpfield 7-67; Hester 3-22; Mathison 3-17; Brank 2-23; Grimes Jr. 2-23; Norrils 1-2. **OSU:** Smith-Njigba 5-93; Wilson 4-124; Olave 2-12; Egbuka 1-85; Stover, 1-25; Booker 1-16; Scott Jr. 1-12; Harrison Jr. 1-9; Teague 1-5; Ballard 1-4.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.) – AKR:** Slike 8-38.9. **OSU:** Mirco 3-46.3.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Avg.) – AKR:** Mumpfield 1-9. **OSU:** Wilson 2-(-1).

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Avg.) – AKR:** None. **OSU:** None.

**MISSED FIELD GOALS – AKR:** Smigel (42). **OSU:** None.

**FORCED FUMBLES – AKR:** None. **OSU:** None.

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

**INTERCEPTIONS – AKR:** Amankwaa 1-11. **OSU:** Hickman 1-46; Simon 1-24.

**SACKS – AKR:** Kelly-Powell 1.0-8; Johnson 1.0-7. **OSU:** Garrett 3.0-15; Williams 2.0-17; Cage 1.0-6; Jackson 1.0-5; Sawyer 1.0-3; Hamilton 1.0-1.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS – AKR:** Kelly-Powell 1.0-8; Johnson 1.0-7. **OSU:** Garrett 3.0-15; Williams 2.0-17; Mitchell 2.0-4; Cage 1.0-6; Jackson 1.0-5; Sawyer 1.0-3; Chambers 1.0-1; Hamilton 1.0-1.

**TACKLES (Solo-Asst-Tot.) – AKR:** Arslanian 3-3-6; Bischof 1-5-6; Kelly-Powell 4-1-5; Johnson 2-2-4; Corner Jr. 1-3-4; Amankwaa 3-0-3; Watts 3-0-3; Boateng 2-1-3; Jackson Jr. 2-1-3; Durant 1-2-3; Sy 0-3-3; Cochran Jr. 2-0-2; Morton 2-0-2; Johnson 1-0-1; Daranijo 1-0-1; Hence 1-0-1; Richardson 0-1-1; McClain 0-1-1; Adler 0-1-1; Ogbonna 0-1-1; Behm 0-1-1. **OSU:** Williams 4-2-6; Garrett 4-1-5; Chambers 4-1-5; Mitchell 3-1-4; McCall 1-3-4; Hickman 2-1-3; Sawyer 2-1-3; Williamson 2-1-3; Ransom 1-2-3; Williams 1-2-3; Shaw 2-0-2; Cavazos 2-0-2; Jackson 1-1-2; Burke 1-1-2; Kacherski 1-1-2; Young 1-1-2; Harrison 0-2-2; Tuimolouau 0-2-2; Carrico 0-2-2; Martinez 1-0-1; Cage 1-0-1; Egbuka 1-0-1; McKenzie 1-0-1; Hall Jr. 1-0-1; Johnson 1-0-1; Stover 1-0-1; Hooker 1-0-1; Hamilton 1-0-1; Simon 0-1-1; Eichenberg 0-1-1; Gaoteote 0-1-1.

**Players In The Game**

**AKR** – Irons, Mathison, Qualls Jr., Mumpfield, Grimes Jr., Brank, Robarge, Georges, Beckman, Williams, Gray, Wilson, Cochran Jr., Morton, Scott, Kelly-Powell, Boateng, Amankwaa, Watts, Jackson Jr., Arslanian, McClain, Thomas Jr., Johnson, Gibson, Norills, Richardson, Profitt, Sy, Ognenovic, Smigel, Ogbonna, Williams, Jarrett, Hester, Snowden, Corner Jr., Daranijo, Bischof, Dever, Durant, Bryant, Hence, Johnson, Romenick, Conroy, Slike, Fitschen, Bauman, DiLauro, Behm, Herring, Murphy, Chambers, Daniels, Naim, Yarmo, Howze, Sumersett, Adler, Wade, Hawkins.

**OSU** – Olave, Wilson, McCord, Smith-Njigba, Henderson, Wypler, Jones, Johnson Jr., Petit-Frere, Jones, Ruckert, Mitchell, Banks, Harrison, Martinez, Hickman, Shaw, Brown, Burke, Simon, Tuimolouau, Jackson, Garrett McCall, Williams, Cavazos, Williamson, Miller III, Ballard, Ransom, Egbuka, Scott Jr., Hancock, Young, Stover, Harrison Jr., DiMaccio, Pryor, Gaoteote IV, Chambers, Hooker, Dunn, Johnson, Williams, Carrico, Mirco, Johnson, Teague, Sawyer, Turrentine, Rossi, Eichenberg, Kittle, Robinson, McFarquhar, Batsch, Kacherski, Gurd, Hall Jr., Wilson, Cox, Hamilton, Henry-Young, Prater, Vimahi, Fryar, Christman, Jackson, Wiglusz, Hamilton, Cage, Booker, McKenzie, Williams, Cowan, Ruggles.

## Season Statistics

2021-22 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Spt. 2	(4) at Minnesota	W, 45-31	50,805
Spet. 11	(3) OREGON (12)	L, 35-28	100,482
Sept. 18	(9) TULSA	W, 41-20	76,540
Spet. 25	(10) AKRON	W, 59-7	95,178
Oct. 2	(11) at Rutgers	3:30 p.m.	
Oct. 9	MARYLAND	Noon	
Oct. 23	at Indiana	TBA	
Oct. 30	PENN STATE (4)	TBA	
Nov. 6	at Nebraska	TBA	
Nov. 13	PURDUE	TBA	
Nov. 20	MICHIGAN STATE (17)	TBA	
Nov. 27	at Michigan (14)	Noon	
Dec. 4	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.	

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

Team Statistics		
	OSU	Opp
First Downs	99	93
Rushing	45	31
Passing	52	50
Penalty	2	12
Average Per Game/Rush	22.3	155.3
Average Per Game/Pass	337.0	255.5
Total Offense	2237	1643
Total Plays	260	304
Average Per Game	559.3	410.8
Average Per Play	8.6	5.4
Penalties-Yards	29-295	24-203
Fumbles-Lost	4-1	2-2
Third Down Efficiency	24-45	30-65
Percentage	53%	46%
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-5	2-2
Percentage	40%	100%
Sacks-Yards	14-92	6-49
Time Of Possession Avg.	25:50	34:10

Score By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	24	44	56	49	0	173	43.3
Opponents	10	31	28	24	0	93	23.3

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
T. Henderson	46	439	9.5	6	54
Miyan Williams	32	249	7.8	1	71
Master Teague	28	162	5.8	2	17
Evan Pryor	5	35	7.0	1	12
Marcus Crowley	6	19	3.2	0	7
Jack Miller III	1	8	8.0	0	8
C.J. Stroud	10	-4	-0.4	0	15
Kyle McCord	4	-17	-4.3	0	4
TEAM	1	-2	-2.0	0	-2
OSU Totals	133	889	6.7	10	71
OPP Totals	156	621	4.0	6	77

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
C.J. Stroud	63	101	62.4	963	8-3	162.7
Kyle McCord	13	18	72.2	319	2-1	246.6
Jack Miller III	5	8	62.5	66	0-0	131.8
OSU Totals	81	127	63.8	1348	10-4	172.6
OPP Totals	80	148	54.1	1022	6-4	120.0

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Garrett Wilson	23	391	17.0	3	57
Chris Olave	18	255	14.2	3	61
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	16	283	17.7	3	34
Jeremy Ruckert	6	81	13.5	0	21
Miyan Williams	3	38	12.7	0	17
TreVeyon Henderson	3	87	29.0	1	70
Cade Stover	2	42	21.0	0	25
Gee Scott Jr.	2	28	14.0	0	16
Master Teague	2	12	6.0	0	7
Julian Fleming	2	17	8.5	0	10
Emeka Egbuka	1	85	85.0	0	85
Chris Booker	1	16	16.0	0	16
Marvin Harrison Jr.	1	9	9.0	0	9
Jayden Ballard	1	4	4.0	0	4
OSU Totals	81	1348	16.6	10	85
OPP Totals	80	1022	12.8	6	38

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
T. Henderson	7	–	–	–	–	42
Noah Ruggles	–22-22	–	–	–	4-4	34
Garrett Wilson	3	–	–	–	–	18
Chris Olave	3	–	–	–	–	18
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	3	–	–	–	–	18
Master Teague III	2	–	–	–	–	12
Haskell Garrett	1	–	–	–	–	6
Ronnie Hickman	1	–	–	–	–	6

Miyan Williams	1	–	–	–	–	6
Cameron Martinez	1	–	–	–	–	6
Evan Pryor	1	–	–	–	–	6
Dominic DiMaccio	0	1-1	–	–	–	1
OSU Totals	23	23-23	–	–	4-4	173
OPP Totals	12	12-12	–	–	3-4	93

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Noah Ruggles	0-0	2-2	2-2	0-0	4-4
OSU Totals	0-0	2-2	2-2	0-0	4-4
OPP Totals	1-1	1-1	1-2	0-0	3-4

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	11	488	44.4	0	62
OSU Totals	11	488	44.4	0	62
OPP Totals	24	985	41.0	0	67

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Ronnie Hickman	2	65	32.5	1	46
Cameron Martinez	1	61	61.0	1	61
Cody Simon	1	24	24.0	0	24
OSU Totals	4	150	37.5	2	61
OPP Totals	4	34	8.5	0	23

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Garrett Wilson	7	12	1.7	0	20
OSU Totals	7	12	1.7	0	20
OPP Totals	2	18	9.0	0	9

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	4	109	27.3	0	29
Xavier Johnson	2	37	18.5	0	22
TreVeyon Henderson	1	19	19.0	0	19
Steele Chambers	1	13	13.0	0	13
OSU Totals	8	178	22.3	0	29
OPP Totals	6	92	15.3	0	23

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Ronnie Hickman	20	13	33	–	–
Teradja Mitchell	11	14	25	3.0-7	–
Cody Simon	6	11	17	2.0-13	1.0-11
Haskell Garrett	9	7	16	4.5-2	3.0-15
Lathan Ransom	9	6	15	–	–
Bryson Shaw	8	5	13	–	–
Denzel Burke	8	4	12	–	–
Antwuan Jackson	6	5	11	3.0-16	2.0-15
Tyleik Williams	5	5	10	3.5-35	3.0-34
Tommy Eichenberg	3	7	10	–	–
Dallas Gant	4	6	10	–	–
Josh Proctor	3	7	10	–	–
Zach Harrison	8	2	10	2.0-7	2.0-7
Steele Chambers	5	5	10	1.0-1	–
Cameron Brown	7	2	9	–	–
Tyreke Smith	4	4	8	1.0-1	–
Taron Vincent	3	3	6	0.5-1	–
Marcus Williamson	4	2	6	–	–
Lejond Cavazos	6	0	6	–	–
J.T. Tuimolouau	1	4	5	–	–
Demario McCall	1	3	4	–	–
Cade Kacherski	1	2	3	–	–
Ryan Watts	3	0	3	–	–
J. Jean-Baptiste	1	2	3	–	–
K'Vaughan Pope	0	3	3	–	–
Craig Young	1	2	3	–	–
Xavier Johnson	0	3	3	–	–
Marcus Hooker	1	2	3	–	–
Cameron Martinez	2	1	3	–	–
Jack Sawyer	2	1	3	1.0-3	1.0-3
Ty Hamilton	1	1	2	1.0-1	1.0-1
Palaie Gaoteote IV	1	1	2	–	–
Reid Carrico	0	2	2	–	–
Kourt Williams	1	1	2	–	–
Jerron Cage	1	1	2	1.5-7	1.0-6
C.J. Stroud	1	0	1	–	–
Cade Stover	1	0	1	–	–
Jakailin Johnson	1	0	1	–	–
Emeka Ehbuka	1	0	1	–	–
Jaden McKenzie	1	0	1	–	–
Mike Hall Jr.	1	0	1	–	–
Cormontae Hamilton	1	0	1	–	–
Chris Booker	0	1	1	–	–
OSU Totals	153	138	291	24.0-109	14.0-92
OPP Totals	143	92	235	9.0-55	6.0-49
Fumbles Forced:	2 –Harrison, Ransom.				
Fumbles Recovered:	2 – Garrett, Eichenberg.				



# BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 59, Akron 7

**Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on his team's performance against Akron:** "Overall, I thought we did some good things and there are still some things we need to build on. There were guys out there that desperately needed these snaps to keep building to where we want to be at the end of the season."

**Day on the progress of bullet Ronnie Hickman and linebacker Cody Simon:** "Ronnie Hickman has now played a few games and he's building a little bit of a reputation. He's a guy who is beginning to play pretty good football right now. I thought Cody Simon made some plays. Overall, I saw strides in the right direction."

**Day on which players stood out defensively against the Zips:** "I thought Cody played hard, I saw Tyleik (Williams) in the backfield a bunch. It was good to see Mike Hall in there although he had that penalty. It looked like Lathan (Ransom) was playing hard. Overall, we kind of brought it pretty good there at a couple of points."

**Akron head coach Tom Arth on his team's growth through four games:** "I appreciate the effort. Our guys went out there and they fought hard and battled. They got banged up a little bit, but they just kept fighting and kept playing. They played very hard, competitive football. Unfortunately, we didn't play as well as we would have liked to, but I do think there were a lot of really great things, and we definitely showed some growth from week one against an SEC opponent in Auburn to where we are right now playing against Ohio State."

**Arth on the challenge of playing two Power Five teams during the nonconference schedule:** "It's hard to go out there and get beat up like we did and lose like we did tonight. You have to be able to understand what we're doing and why we're doing it. Every step is an opportunity for us to improve, and that's all that matters. Are we getting better? Are we growing? Are we learning? Playing two of the most historic programs in college football is awesome. It's a great opportunity for our program and players. Playing against that type of speed and physicality is going to prepare us for battle in-conference. I truly believe our guys are going to benefit from playing in these games."

**Ohio State's Steele Chambers on settling in at linebacker after moving from running back:** "I feel at home right now. We



SONNY BROCKWAY

**FIRST CAREER PICK - Ohio State sophomore linebacker Cody Simon (30) runs away from Akron receiver Andre Williams (17) after making the first interception of his career during a 59-7 win against the Zips. Simon returned the second-quarter pick 39 yards, but 10 of that was wiped out by a block-in-the-back penalty.**

have a great group in the Silver Bullets. It's a squad where everyone likes to do their job. That's what I'm doing. I'm just doing my job. If I make plays, then I make plays. But I mean, I can't do it without the rest of the guys."

**Chambers on his opportunity as Ohio State moves forward without Dallas Gant and K'Vaughan Pope:** "As the season goes on, I'm always going to have to continue to grow and get better. We have a tight-knit group. We will feed off each other. Whatever happened (with Gant and Pope), I don't know, but we are going to do what we set out to do at the beginning of the season."

**Ohio State defensive tackle Haskell Garrett on controlling the line of scrimmage:** "It was very important – the game plan we put together. It was really guys executing. We had a lot of experienced guys out on our defensive line. I feel that the defense, as a whole, got started. Now it's time to roll."

**Garrett on the fact the Buckeyes entered the game as 48-point favorites:** "We didn't really focus in on our opponent. We focused on looking in the mirror and looking at how we can get better – as a unit, as an individual and

as a whole team. It was focusing on ourselves and making the best (version) of ourselves."

**Garrett on how practicing against Ohio State's offensive line prepares them for the games:**

"We go against guys like Matt (Jones), Paris Johnson, Thayer Munford. Our O-line is the best of the best, in my opinion. They get us better every day – Tuesdays, Wednesdays – and we go against them every week of the year. Iron sharpens iron."

**Ohio State defensive tackle Antwan Jackson on creating pressure for Akron quarterback DJ Irons:** "If I'm being honest, it was a simple plan this week. We wanted to cage the pocket. DJ Irons is dual-threat guy. He can run as you all can see. The plan was to cage him and for the interior to eat up the crumbs and get the sacks, and that's what we did."

**Jackson on the veteran presence up front:** "Coach (Larry) Johnson really got on us this week just to get a pass rush out of the whole defensive line room and that's what we did. It was a whole group effort. Coach J is one of the best, and he really got on us this week."

**Ohio State offensive guard Matthew Jones on his first start as a Buckeye:** "I'm trying to improve with every step I can take. I'm trying to work hard and improve. I feel like today was another step of improvement. I'm going to keep giving it my all."

**Ohio State offensive guard Paris Johnson on blocking for a first-time starting quarterback:** "We take a lot of pride in that because we feel that, as the offensive line, it really all starts with us. With two first-time starting quarterbacks, it's really important to keep them clean, keep their minds good and just focused on the receivers and the running back, not worried about what's going on in front of them. That's been a big thing for us – just keeping them clean."

**Johnson on Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord's performance against Akron:** "I would say that he did not get flustered. He showed his confidence. I was never worried about him. Nobody up front was worried about him."

**Ohio State slot receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba on McCord:** "I thought he stepped up in a big way. He was very confident. He had a slow first drive, but everything came to him and I thought he responded well."

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# Paris Johnson Using NIL To Benefit Community

By **JOE DEMPSEY**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Many student-athletes have taken advantage of the implementation of the NCAA's new Name Image Likeness legislation, which has allowed them to earn compensation for autographs, jersey sales, endorsements and more.

Paris Johnson Jr. saw the legislation as an opportunity to further use his platform to make a difference off the field. The sophomore offensive lineman has been actively giving back since his time as a highly touted prospect out of St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati.

"As Ohio State has taught us, it's about a platform," said Johnson's mother, Monica Daniels, during an interview with NBC4 TV in Columbus, "It's about how can you use a platform to expand who you are outside of football?"

The Paris Johnson Jr. Foundation was founded when the offensive lineman was still in high school.

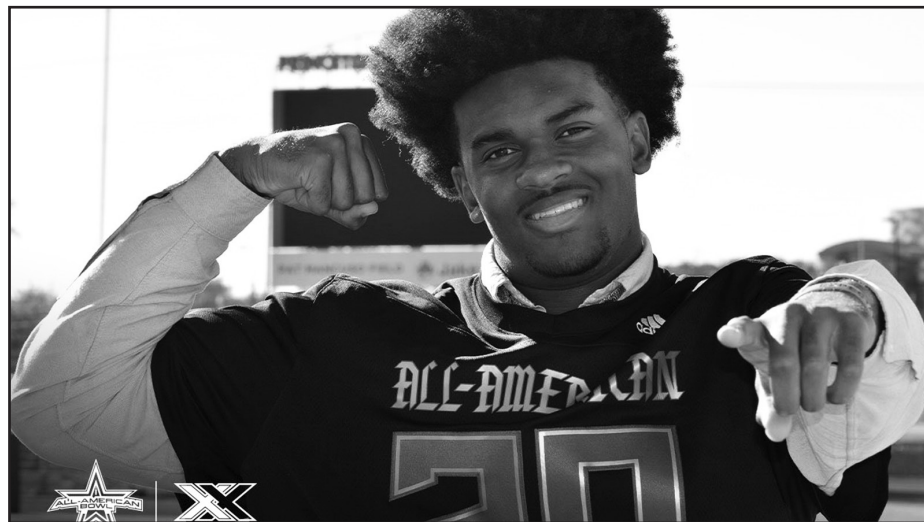
"This started for me in high school when I attended a special Olympics event for disabled veterans," Johnson said. "It was an amazing experience where I got to just have conversations and talk about their life experiences and their experiences when they served. And there were conversations where I'm learning that there are disabled veterans who are homeless, and there are disabled veterans who don't have all the care and they're not financially stable to be able to provide for themselves. I personally felt like, when you serve in general, let alone if you're a disabled veteran, there are certain things you shouldn't have to worry about."

"When I was at St. Xavier, we had a scrimmage against a team, and on the sideline they were sharing shoulder pads and outdated helmets, and I'm thinking, 'I play at a school where you don't have to think about those certain types of things.' So for me, it just changed my perspective at a young age, and that's why I wanted to get (the foundation) started."

Johnson's foundation, which "exists for the purpose of letting individuals know that their past does not define them," focuses on providing services and meals to homeless veterans as well as helping underprivileged children gain access to camps and athletic equipment to enjoy the same opportunities he did.

"I'm very passionate about the sacrifice that they've made for us without even knowing us," Johnson said.

During his first year at Ohio State, Johnson helped distribute 71 turkeys to families



FILE PHOTO

**GIVING BACK - While many student-athletes across the country are using the NCAA's new Name Image Likeness legislation for personal use, OSU offensive lineman Paris Johnson Jr. is putting the new policy to use in the community through his namesake the Paris Johnson Jr. Foundation.**

in need for Thanksgiving and organized a toy drive during the holiday season amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last November, Johnson was asked about the possibility of the NCAA legislation to allow a student-athlete to profit off their name, image and likeness.

"Hopefully, down the road, I want to use the platform that I want to build here at Ohio State," he said. "People talk about the name, image and likeness as far as using it for a monetary value down the road, but I'm just excited about using it for different ways with my foundation."

"I feel like it's a thing that a lot of people can relate to because I feel like every one of us, we all have a passion for veterans. And there are a lot of Buckeye fans, so I want to talk about these experiences with young student-athletes that want to aspire to play at a university like Ohio State."

"It costs a lot of money to attend all these camps and whatnot," Johnson continued. "So like for my mom, she had to sacrifice a lot, and there are not a lot of parents who can afford to do that. I feel like, once the name, image, and likeness stuff comes out, I can be able to spread the word even more on that, so we can help a lot more families out. I'm excited about doing that."

Like his tenacity on a point-of-attack block, Johnson's fervor for giving back has remained relentless in year two. Amid his first season as a starter at right guard, Johnson took time out of his busy schedule in early September to help volunteers dis-

tribute food, clothing, groceries and other supplies to central Ohioans at Thompson Recreation Center in Columbus.

"I just wanted to have it in what I feel is the heart of Columbus, with people who don't live far from where I stay," Johnson said.

The pop-up support event was the first time the foundation had been able to use sponsors under the new NIL rules, meaning Johnson's dream came true.

"When that first came into effect, the first thing I thought about was now I can use opportunities to work with major businesses to help them partner with our foundation just to make things a lot easier, just so we have more access to get people things they need every day," Johnson said.

Growing his platform is important to Johnson, but not because he wants to make more money off autographs. The No. 1-rated offensive tackle prospect in the 2020 recruiting class has big aspirations for the foundation in his name, and he understands the Buckeye brand can help him make a positive impact.

"I've talked to Ohio State a lot, and their brand development is very successful, and they have the resources and connections to guide me in the right direction as far as where I should take my foundation and how I can raise more money," Johnson said. "At Ohio State, I feel like I can get the support for my foundation."

The Paris Johnson Jr. Foundation plans to make an even bigger difference with

the help of corporate sponsors. Within five years, Johnson hopes to help create sustainable housing for homeless veterans.

Even though Johnson has been thoroughly involved in the community since arriving in Columbus, the 6-6, 315-pound lineman has remained diligent on the football field as well. After coming to Ohio State as a top-ranked tackle, he has transitioned to right guard to fill the void left by the departure of former All-American Wyatt Davis.

In the age of the transfer portal, a five-star prospect of Johnson's caliber might be quick to the exit when asked to change positions. But for the 2020 All-American Bowl's Man of the Year, it was a seamless switch.

"To be honest, I just go with what fits the team, really," Johnson said. "I never really worried about where the shuffle would happen or how it would go, so if they needed me to be somewhere, I trusted it."

During the offseason, Johnson received rave reviews for his ability to make the transition to guard and play at a high level as an underclassman. Fellow lineman Luke Wampler, a redshirt freshman, described why the soft-spoken Johnson has excelled as an interior lineman in college after playing tackle in high school.

"He's a great athlete, he understands football, and he's just a violent player," Wampler said in April. "Honestly, he comes to every play trying to bring violence to the field. And I feel like when you have that mind-set, you can play any position. It doesn't really matter if it's linebacker, guard or safety."

Johnson has a warm heart and spreads love off the field, but he plays like a ferocious beast when between the white lines. Through his generosity and selflessness, he has made a huge impact on the Ohio State program both on and off the field already.

"He's very, very impressive," OSU head coach Ryan Day said of Johnson in July. "His mom, Monica, has been excellent, and his sister, Sydney, has, too. They were a pleasure to recruit. And even now that he's here, he's even better than we thought he would be as a young man. He's moved from tackle to guard, which was really an unselfish move."

"He does work with his foundation and has an impact on people. He's already shown leadership. We're very blessed to have him as a part of the program, and his best football is certainly ahead."



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# Mirco Could Become Next Great Aussie For OSU

By **WYATT CROSER**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State's 2013 recruiting class ranked No. 2 overall in the country behind only Alabama, but one of the team's most impactful player was not even listed in the 247Sports page for that class.

Cameron Johnston did not come to the Buckeyes with any sort of composite ranking, but he made a difference almost immediately. Johnston was Ohio State's starting punter right away as a freshman, and he was as solid a punter as the Buckeyes have had in recent memory from the beginning of his career to the finish.

During his four seasons at OSU, Johnston punted 211 times for 9,483 yards (good for a 44.9-yard average), was named to the All-Big Ten first team, earned conference punter of the year honors, and won a national championship ring. He has since gone on to the NFL, where he had three successful seasons with the Philadelphia Eagles and is starting his fourth in the league with a new team, the Houston Texans.

Johnston came to the Buckeyes out of Newtown St. Joseph's College in the Australian state of Victoria. After skipping a generation in the middle with Drue Chrisman out of Cincinnati La Salle, Ohio State again has gone to Australia to get its new punter, this time with Jesse Mirco who, like Johnston, comes via ProKick Australia.

While coming to Ohio State from Australia already made linking Johnston and Mirco easy, the freshman punter said that the connection between the two goes further.

When asked if Johnston's success had any impact on Mirco's decision to come to Ohio State, his answer was easy.

"A lot," Mirco said. "Cam has had a very successful career and still is having a good career, and the opportunity that comes with playing here, the exposure and whatnot comes into play. He did a lot here and had a great career here as well, so if I can get anywhere near Cam's career, I will be pretty happy."

But Johnston hasn't just been an inspiration to Mirco. He is also someone Mirco has talked to, and worked out with, on multiple occasions.

"I speak to Cam pretty regularly," Mirco said. "I sent him film and he sends me back some tips, and whenever he's back in town, we punt together and work on it together. He's been very good for me."

And while it might be too soon to say if Mirco will be the next Johnston, he has already shown flashes of brilliance early in his collegiate career. Through four games, he had averaged 44.4 yards on 11 punts, dropping seven of those inside the opponents' 20-yard line.

But Mirco's best performance came on the largest of stages. During Ohio State's 35-28 loss to Oregon, the first-year punter was one of the major bright spots on the team with two of his three punts getting downed on the 1-yard line.

That type of performance came from a player who, as he describes it, probably still doesn't know all the specifics when it comes to the rules of American football.

"I know most of the rules," Mirco said.

"There are obviously a couple of things here and there where I'm not exactly sure or I have to question it, but not too bad."

Mirco's performance in the Oregon game was one of the few positive things OSU head coach Ryan Day had to say about the defeat during his weekly radio show.

"So far, he has stepped in and done a good job. He made a couple of great punts for us," Day said. "He does a great job. You can tell he's been doing it his whole life. He's good at it."

Mirco might be new to American football, but he does have experience with Australian football, a version of the sport that is much more consistent with the name, as it relies on plays with your feet instead of your arms or hands.

But the 24-year-old freshman has adjusted fine to the new rules of the game, saying that the most surprising parts of his time with the Buckeyes have been the size of the crowds and the number of players on a college football team.

Mirco said he had never been in front of a crowd of more than 10,000 while playing in Australia and that those teams usually consisted of 30 to 40 on one roster. But the change in scale, in the size of both the roster as well as the stadium, has not made an impact on him in the moment.

"When you're out there, and you're punting or you're holding, you don't think twice about it," Mirco said. "It's one of those things where you're not sitting there nervous to go on the field because of all the fans. You don't take notice of it, but when you're not on the field and you're looking around and hearing the fans after some of the big third downs we had, the student section was going crazy, which was pretty cool to see."

As he mentioned, Mirco is also the holder on field goals for North Carolina transfer kicker Noah Ruggles, who is perfect on four field-goal attempts and 22 PAT tries through four games.

Holding for kicks is not something completely new for Mirco, but it was another thing that he had to work on when adjusting to the American game. He also got help from Ohio State players, both new and old, in the process.

"I held a little bit back home before I got here, and when I first got over here, I did some work with Drue and some holding work with Cam and Liam (McCullough), the old long snapper here as well," Mirco said. "It's obviously difficult. It's not as natural, but we put a lot of work into it – myself, (long snapper Bradley Robinson), Jake (Seibert) and Noah, the kickers – so I feel like we are getting it done and we keep working on it as well."

While Australian players in American football are not quite yet commonplace, it is also not a freak occurrence, either. Mirco was ranked the third-best player coming from his native country in the 2021 class, and a total of 11 players from Australia in that class committed to Division I schools. Ten of those were punters, while the other, defensive lineman Jack Loew, signed with Kent State.

Even in the first two games, Mirco said he knew a player from each team – Minnesota punter Mark Crawford and Oregon



SONNY BROCKWAY

**G'DAY, MATE - Ohio State freshman Jesse Mirco (29) has followed in the footsteps of fellow Australian Cameron Johnston to become the Buckeyes' punter. Mirco had another steady performance against Akron and through four games was averaging 44.4 yards on 11 attempts.**

punter Tom Snee, each of whom are also ProKick Australia alums.

"It's pretty big," Mirco said. "College football is growing as well, and there's obviously a lot of other Aussie guys over here. I have a lot of friends. The first two games have had Aussie ProKick friends of mine, which has been good, and there were always a lot of NFL games on back at home as well. It's definitely bigger than people probably think."

Another difference between Australian and American football is, of course, time. Any live telecast of an NFL game would be on either in the middle of the night or early in the morning.

For Mirco's best performance as a Buckeye so far, his friends and family back home had to stay up late into the night to see it. But they did, and they got to see a true showcase in the freshman punter's second game.

"They actually stayed up – it was on at midnight for them – so, a bunch of them went over to my place and watched it, which was good," Mirco said. "It's tough for them, but they've found a way so far."

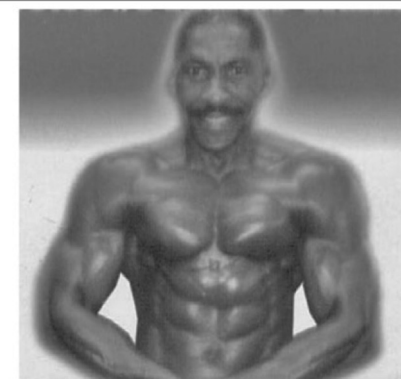
As he stated, Mirco hopes to follow in Johnston's footsteps all the way to where he is currently in the NFL. He could also try to reach the goals of another Australian punter who made an impact on him – Max Duffy, who won the Ray Guy Award as the best punter in college football at Kentucky in 2019.

Duffy, who is also Mirco's friend, was the punter who inspired him to make a trip to the United States, which Mirco ultimately did in December 2019 to come watch Duffy play. That experience showed Mirco that what Duffy was doing looked like "good fun," and it inspired him to eventually move overseas to play college football.

Now that he is here, Mirco has plenty of

time to try to reach all of those accolades as Ohio State's punter. But to this point, he is just content with his new surroundings and happy with his decision to leave home and come to Columbus.

"It definitely has lived up to my expectations," Mirco said. "It was a pretty easy decision to come and play football here. Ohio State has the best fans in the country, one of the biggest stadiums in the country and one of the best teams in the country, so it was a pretty easy choice. And it has lived up to what I have expected."



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# Predicting OSU's Biggest Threat In The Big Ten

By **CHASE BROWN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

As Ohio State fell to Oregon in week two, the Buckeyes revealed they have a long way to go until they become a complete football team.

Head coach Ryan Day lost his first regular-season game since taking the job in 2019, and for the first time in his tenure, the Buckeyes looked vulnerable. Glaring defensive issues – both in scheme and performance – as well as the occasional struggle to move the ball down the field caused Ohio State to reassess its approach to the 2021 season.

The preseason consensus No. 4 Buckeyes sat at No. 11 in The Associated Press writers' poll and No. 10 in the coaches poll after week four of the season and were looking up at Big Ten rivals Iowa and Penn State with Michigan and Michigan State close behind.

Before Ohio State entered conference play, Buckeye Sports Bulletin spoke with ESPN senior writer Adam Rittenberg and Yahoo! Sports senior writer Dan Wetzel to gauge their thoughts on the Big Ten through the first quarter of the regular season. They also considered which teams are capable of keeping the Buckeyes from winning their fifth consecutive conference title this season.

## Defense Carrying Iowa

There exists an argument for Iowa as the nation's best college football team based on their early schedule. The Hawkeyes looked dominant during their victories against Indiana, Iowa State and Kent State, in large part due to an elite defense led by edge rusher Zach VanValkenburg and defensive back Riley Moss.

"Iowa's defense is finding an identity," Wetzel told BSB. "They have talent and experience, which is taking them a long way. They are firing on all cylinders."

In their season opener, the Hawkeyes held the Hoosiers to 233 offensive yards, pressured quarterback Michael Penix Jr. – a preseason first-team All-Big Ten selection – into throwing three interceptions, and scored two defensive touchdowns.

Against the Cyclones, Iowa collected three interceptions again, pressuring four-year starter Brock Purdy to make errant throws leading to turnovers. The Hawkeyes scored their third defensive touchdown after linebacker Jestin Jacobs forced Iowa State running back Bryce Hall to fumble deep inside his own territory. Defensive lineman Jack Campbell scooped and scored, extending Iowa's lead and giving the game its 27-17 final score.

"The Hawkeyes cause a lot of problems on defense," Rittenberg said. "They take the ball away, and they're really skilled in the back. However, they don't have an explosive offense, and that showed through the first three games."

Iowa's offensive deficiencies were most glaring against the Golden Flashes. The Hawkeyes needed all 60 minutes to cover a 22½-point spread. Third-year quarterback Spencer Petras, who had looked shaky against Indiana and Iowa State, struggled again to advance the ball down the field. Petras was bailed out by running back Tyler Goodson, who broke free for 153 yards and three touchdowns.

"We know what the defense can be," Rittenberg told BSB, "but if Iowa can figure out its offense, then I think they could become a legitimate threat to Ohio State in the Big Ten this season. If they can get past Wisconsin in their division, then I think they have a really good chance."

If the Buckeyes and Hawkeyes each win their remaining games, Ohio State would face Iowa in the Big Ten Championship Game in Indianapolis. Rittenberg thinks eight remaining conference games offer OSU enough time to fix its shortcomings. He also believes Ohio State holds an edge if it gets to the title game.

"Ohio State knows how to win a Big Ten title," Rittenberg said. "Since the game is indoors (at Lucas Oil Stadium), that always favors the faster, more athletic team, which Ohio State would be against Iowa. The Buckeyes could use the same formula against Wisconsin two years ago and Northwestern last year – ride a running back. TreVeyon Henderson looks good, and he can be the kind of player that wins them that kind of game."

## Offense Key For Lions

After finishing below .500 with a 4-5 record last season, Penn State has emerged as Ohio State's biggest challenger in the Big Ten East this year. While many romanticized the idea of Indiana continuing its success under head coach Tom Allen to become a leading candidate to knock off the Buckeyes, the Nittany Lions quietly reloaded a talented roster.

Penn State returned three playmakers on offense. Sean Clifford enters his redshirt senior season at quarterback, wide receiver Jahan Dotson returned for his fourth year and running back Noah Cain has taken a lead role in the Nittany Lions backfield.

"The Sean Clifford we see this year looks a lot closer to the quarterback we saw in 2019 rather than the one we saw in 2020," Rittenberg said. "Clifford hasn't turned the ball over. He had a high completion percentage against Auburn. Penn State has maybe the best wide receiver in the Big Ten outside of Columbus in Jahan Dotson. You could argue (that point) between Dotson and (Purdue wide receiver) David Bell. They have an interesting offense with a lot of weapons, including Noah Cain, who has looked good through three games."

Penn State traveled to Wisconsin for its first game of the season and came home with a 16-10 win, but it was not a thing of beauty by any stretch of the imagination. The Badgers possessed the ball for 25 minutes more than Penn State, outgained the Nittany Lions by 62 yards and collected 18 more first downs.

Still, Penn State squeaked past Wisconsin, relying heavily on the Clifford-Dotson connection. The pair teamed up five times for 105 yards and a score. Cain also added eight carries for 58 yards and a touchdown.

In its second game, Penn State cruised past Ball State, 44-13, although it could have fallen prey to a trap game looking ahead to a tough week-three matchup with Auburn.

The Nittany Lions hosted the Tigers in a top-25 game in Happy Valley in the annual White Out Game at Beaver Stadium, with every ticket sold to create one of the most feared environments in college football.

Penn State looked efficient on both sides of the ball against the Tigers. Clifford completed 28 of 32 passes for 280 yards and two touchdowns, while Dotson caught 10 passes for 78 yards and a score. The Nittany Lions limited Auburn quarterback Bo Nix to 185 passing yards and gave up only 182 yards on the ground.

Rittenberg thinks Penn State's offense will need to continue to make timely plays for the team to succeed this season. He also likes what he's seen from the defense through three games.

"I think it's a good Penn State defense, but I don't think it's an elite group," Rittenberg said. "Maybe not as good as Iowa, but it's a sound defense. They're veterans. They've added some transfers who are helping them on the defensive side."

The transfers to which Rittenberg referred are Arnold Ebiketie, Eric Wilson and Derrick Tangelo.

Ebiketie was a standout defensive end at Temple but sought a chance to make an impact at a Power Five program. Wilson wanted to find a place to play football after the Ivy League canceled Harvard's 2020 season, and Tangelo felt he had more in the tank after four seasons at Duke.

If Penn State can smooth its rougher edges on each side of the ball, it will be a significant challenge for Ohio State come Oct. 30 in Columbus. Rittenberg and Wetzel agreed the Buckeyes will benefit from having the game at home, allowing them to have a more relaxed approach leading into a matchup with major Big Ten East implications.

"If you're Ohio State, you certainly want to have that game at home," Wetzel said. "The Buckeyes have to get better on the fly, but I think they have a good chance of beating Penn State because of their superior talent. It will be a good game, but Ohio State has the edge at quarterback, running back and wide receiver."

"If they figure out the defense, Penn State will have a hard time beating them."

## Jury Still Out On Badgers

Despite entering the game as 5½-point favorites, Wisconsin dropped its home opener to Penn State, mostly because the Badgers couldn't build any consistency during the game and struggled to move the football down the field. The Jack Sanborn-led defense looked promising but couldn't generate enough stops to support the middling offense.

The Badgers felt confident that quarterback Graham Mertz would take a step forward after beating out Jack Coan – now the starter at Notre Dame – for the starting job, but Mertz struggled against the Nittany Lions. The second-year quarterback completed 22 of 37 passes for 185 yards and threw two interceptions. Wisconsin's running game showed flashes, though, as Chez Mellusi rushed 31 times for 121 yards and a score.

"Wisconsin experienced a little bit of an identity crisis against Penn State," Wetzel said. "They thought Mertz would be a little bit better than he was, but he struggled. Penn State is a difficult first opponent for the Badgers, so I didn't expect them to look great, but I had some concerns about Wisconsin moving forward."



FILE PHOTO

**BACK IN BLUE? - Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh has experienced a couple of subpar seasons, but he seems to have his Wolverines headed back in the right direction with a 4-0 start to the 2021 season. Michigan hasn't been 4-0 since 2017, but that season fell apart and the Wolverines finished 8-5.**

The Badgers bounced back against Eastern Michigan in week two, defeating the Eagles by a 37-7 final. Like the running backs who came before him, Mellusi stepped into a workhorse role for the Badgers, carrying the football 20 times for 144 yards and a touchdown.

Wisconsin tight end Jake Ferguson thinks Mellusi is headed in the right direction and compared him to some former Badgers running backs.

"Chez is just that new edition," Ferguson said. "He runs hard and reminds me of Garrett Groshek and Jonathan Taylor at the same time – kind of shaking off a couple of tackles and getting some extra yards."

Isaac Guerendo and Jalen Berger also carried the ball for the Badgers, who piled up 352 rushing yards against Eastern Michigan. Wisconsin also dominated on defense against the Eagles, who managed only 92 total yards on offense and just three first downs.

Wisconsin had an early open week on Sept. 18 and faces a remaining schedule that includes games against Michigan and Iowa after a 41-13 loss to Notre Dame on Sept. 25.

"We will learn a lot about Wisconsin from who they play this season," Rittenberg said. "Their toughest game might be out of the way with Penn State."

"I think Wisconsin is always going to be a factor because of the way they run the ball and defend. I wouldn't pick them over Ohio State, but I think they are a team that is capable of upsetting the Buckeyes if they can control the game."

## U-M Questions Remain

Jim Harbaugh agreed to a four-year extension.



sion in January that could keep him in Ann Arbor through 2025 – albeit at a reduced salary. Once one of the highest-paid head coaches in college football, Harbaugh dropped into the bottom half of the Big Ten in annual base salary.

Like Harbaugh and his salary, Michigan entered this season with projections to finish in the bottom half of the conference. However, the Wolverines handled Western Michigan in their first game, beat Washington in week two, blew out a talented Northern Illinois squad in week three and slipped by Rutgers, 20-13, in week four.

Rittenberg isn't quite ready to declare Michigan a contender in the Big Ten East, but he thinks the Wolverines have enough talent to compete in every game.

"Michigan has looked more impressive, even dominant at times," Rittenberg said. "They're encouraging on both sides of the ball. Blake Corum has been a huge enhancement to their rushing attack. Aiden Hutchinson returned, and he makes a huge difference on that defensive line."

Through four games, Corum was Michigan's most prolific offensive player. The second-year running back had rushed the ball 69 times for 475 yards (a 6.9-yard average) and seven touchdowns. He also is a threat as a receiver, catching six passes for 46 yards and a score.

Hutchinson returned to Michigan for his senior season, a decision that has already paid dividends for the edge rusher. His first three games produced 15 tackles, 5½ sacks and a forced fumble.

"But we've seen this with Michigan before," Rittenberg said. "They look very good at home and players flash at the beginning of the season. They're a team that is different when they leave Michigan Stadium, so I am curious to see how they look the rest of this season."

Wetzel agreed, saying he will hold his opinion of Michigan until later in the year. He wants to see the Wolverines show up in "prove-it games" against Wisconsin, Michigan State, Penn State and Ohio State. For now, he said he wouldn't pick the Wolverines to win any of those matchups. He also thinks the Buckeyes would cruise to a victory against their rivals from the north.

"Michigan hasn't beaten Ohio State for a long time," Wetzel said. "I'd pick Ohio State to win that game this season. Michigan is intriguing if they get a passing attack by the end of the season. That will tell me how serious I can take Michigan. There are some really good, really high-end players on defense. I think there's a drop-off after Hutchinson and a couple of those guys, but they've worked hard and they've looked really good."

### Sparty Hits Portal Hard

While Michigan's return to the national landscape is somewhat surprising, Michigan State's quick ascension into the top 25 is even more shocking. Through three games, the Spartans were 4-0 with victories against Northwestern, Youngstown State, then-No. 24 Miami (Fla.) and Nebraska.

"Michigan State is fascinating because no one expected them to be a factor this year," Rittenberg said. "They are doing something a handful of teams in college football can do and are trying to do in the transfer portal era. They've basically flipped their roster in one year (and) took all these transfers."

"They basically decided we don't have

enough good players on this team, and we're going to bring in all these other guys from different places and we're going to see if it works. So far, it seems to be working."

The Spartans' most notable transfer addition is running back Kenneth Walker. The 5-10, 210-pound junior, who transferred from Wake Forest in January, was averaging 138.5 yards per game through Michigan State's first four contests. That included a 172-yard performance against the Hurricanes. According to Pro Football Focus, Walker generated 114 of his yards after contact and forced 20 missed tackles vs. Miami.

Michigan State also added offensive tackle Jarrett Horst to its roster this season. The 6-6, 305-pound transfer from Arkansas State has provided instant size and aggressiveness to second-year head coach Mel Tucker's offensive line. Horst was a third-team All-Sun Belt player in 2019 and played in 20 games for the Red Wolves over two seasons.

With transfers making an immediate

impact at Michigan State, Tucker is proving that, with the right culture, the Spartans can once again become a threat in the Big Ten. Still, it might take some time before they start contending for a conference title.

"I don't know what Michigan State's ceiling is right now," Rittenberg said. "I think they can be competitive, but I don't see them matching up with the bigger programs in the Big Ten East like Ohio State and Penn State this year. But watch out for them in the future."

### Still The Team To Beat

Wetzel and Rittenberg agree that Ohio State remains the team to beat in the Big Ten. With a roster filled with four- and five-star players, the Buckeyes are the most talented team in the conference. Starting quarterback C.J. Stroud has many options in the passing game, including wide receivers Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba. And the running game is equally exciting with the emergence of TreVeyon Henderson and the

powerful running style of Miyan Williams.

"I still have Ohio State winning the conference," Wetzel said. "I understand they have not looked good. They haven't looked their best, but I still think they can be the best. They have a lot of time to turn it around. They have the best roster, and I don't think it's all that close."

Rittenberg added that he, too, thinks Ohio State has all the pieces it needs to win the Big Ten this season. While other teams are making their case for being the best team, he wants to see another team take down the Buckeyes before he declares a new king of the conference.

"I've covered the league long enough to know that you don't ever bet against Ohio State," Rittenberg said. "They have the best players, and I think they are going to be a tough team for anyone to beat this season. I have confidence in saying Ohio State is the team to beat."

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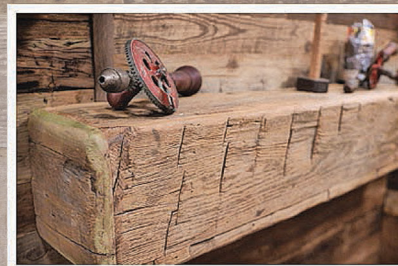


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# OSU Set To Joust With Rejuvenated Knights

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Not all situations for new college football coaches are created equally. Walking into the head coaching gig at Ohio State fresh off the Urban Meyer tenure is a very different experience from taking over at a school that's found itself down in the dumps, like, say, Greg Schiano did at Rutgers in 2020.

Ryan Day took over the reins of an OSU program that had won a national title just four seasons before, was fresh off a Rose Bowl victory, and was welcoming an incredible infusion of talent at quarterback about to hit in the form of Georgia transfer Justin Fields.

Schiano, meanwhile, arrived in Piscataway to take over a program that had won only 13 games over its previous five seasons, hadn't been to a bowl game since 2014 and was generally having a difficult time staying above water in a new conference after leaving the Big East and joining the Big Ten following the 2013 season.

Schiano's 2020 group was, according to the 247Sports Team Talent composite rankings, the least talented in the entire conference. Granted, the Knights hit the transfer portal hard in hopes of shoring up that roster, landing such big-time transfers as Wisconsin receiver Aron Cruickshank, Michigan defensive tackle Michael Dwumfour, West Virginia tight end Jovani Haskins, Nebraska quarterback Noah Vedral and Ohio State safety Brendon White.

But for all intents and purposes, Schiano found himself in what could be defined as a "Year Zero" situation at Rutgers in 2020.

Coined by sportswriters Steven Godfrey and Bill Connelly, "Year Zero" is essentially shorthand for a difficult first season under a new head coach. It's an easy way to explain early struggles and growing pains, while establishing that the new man in charge will likely need more patience than some of his counterparts because he's essentially starting a year behind them.

"Year Zero was born out of the accepted idea that not all first seasons are remotely equal," Godfrey wrote in 2020 for Banner Society. "Yet it's hard to tack down a single metric that explains why. Maybe your new staff faces a ridiculous schedule in a particularly deep conference or division. Maybe your program has been historically underfunded and had no recruiting success. Maybe your roster was decimated via NCAA probation.

"The qualifiers for Year Zero vary, but there's one consensus requirement: You have to be able to survive a Year Zero, weathering all-fronts anguish from your fan base, your media coverage and your booster network. This consideration is either permanent or contextual. Programs like Notre Dame or Alabama or Michigan would never stomach a 3-9 campaign under any auspices, whereas an exhausted former national brand like Nebraska is willing to show patience – at least right now."

Despite the circumstances surrounding his team in 2020, in the bizarre and difficult year to be a new head coach that college football hadn't seen in more than a century, the Scarlet Knights flashed exactly the kind of potential and energy – signs of life, essentially – that Schiano and the world around Rutgers needed to see. They won three games in nine tries, beating similarly-challenged Michigan State, Purdue and Maryland (all on the road), and nearly pulled off upsets of both Michigan and Nebraska.

Even in more defined losses, such as the 49-27 defeat sustained against Ohio State,

the Scarlet Knights looked competent for the first time in years. They dialed up creative play calls, gashing the Buckeyes on a number of trick plays, and made up for a lack of talent with strong game-planning, which Day was sure to compliment.

"When you look at the team, that first game, they beat Michigan State pretty soundly," Day said. "So that's significant right off the bat. And then when you watch them on both sides of the ball, they're playing hard. He's brought in some different talent in there, and they're playing with some energy. They're playing tough. They're playing smart. You can already see the impact that he and his staff are having."

The vast majority of that Scarlet Knight lineup that gave Ohio State trouble in 2020 is back for the 2021 season, and despite a Sept. 25 loss to Michigan, Rutgers' 3-1 record is the program's best through four games since 2014. Prior to a 20-13 loss to the Wolverines, Rutgers was 3-0 for the first time since 2012, when former head coach Kyle Flood took over for Schiano after his first stint with the program.

Leading the way, as it did during Schiano's first tenure, is a stingy and opportunistic defense, which leans heavily on man coverage and pressure look. Rutgers has allowed 13.5 points per game through its first four contests, forcing eight turnovers while allowing just 262.8 yards per contest, with the Wolverines serving as the first team to break 20 points against its defense this season. The Scarlet Knights have again built their defensive identity around flying to the ball, in hopes of generating those big plays, just as they did in 2020, benefiting from creating two turnovers a game.

"That's the No. 1 key on defense – just take the ball away," said middle linebacker Olakunle Fatukasi. "Every day we work on trying to take the ball. That's why we produce the way we produce."

The back seven is where most of the defensive playmakers set up shop. The Scarlet Knights returned eight players at linebacker and in the secondary with starting experience – none more battle-tested than Fatukasi. The super senior led the Big Ten in tackles last season, was selected to the conference's first-team defense and was among the semifinalists for the Butkus Award, given to the nation's best linebacker.

"He led the Big Ten in tackles, but more than that he's a student of the game," Schiano said. "He's going to be a really, really fine professional football player because he loves it, he studies it, he lives the game, and takes care of himself the way that a pro football player takes care of himself. He's a great example, not only his production on the field, but he's a great example for our younger players and for our newcomers that are just starting with us.

"We have a saying around here: 'You anticipate, you don't guess.' When you guess you're either all right or all wrong. When you anticipate, you're a half a click ahead. And I think the amount of study that he does allows him to really anticipate a lot of things."

Fatukasi is flanked at linebacker by senior outside linebackers Tyshon Fogg – a 2020 conference honorable mention with 43 games of experience under his belt – and Drew Singleton, who rotates frequently with fellow senior Tyreek Maddox-Williams. Singleton generally gets the nod for rushing downs, while Maddox-Williams serves as an ace blitzing off the edge in passing situations.

Beyond those linebackers, cornerback Tre Avery (once an Ohio State signee) earns the nod once again in the No. 1 spot, with 17 ca-

## Get To Know ... Rutgers

**2021 Record:** 3-1.

**Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – 4-3; Starters Returning – Offense 11, Defense 8, Specialists 2.

**Head Coach:** Greg Schiano, 13th year at Rutgers, 74-74.

**Series History:** 8th meeting; Ohio State leads 7-0-0.

**School Facts:** Location – Piscataway, NJ; Enrollment – 67,556; Nickname – Scarlet Knights; Colors – Scarlet, White; Conference – Big Ten (East Division); Stadium – SHI Stadium (Surface – FieldTurf; Capacity – 52,454).

### Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Isaih Pacheco	65	259	4.0	3
Noah Vedral	33	117	3.5	0
Kyle Monangai	24	78	3.3	3

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Noah Vedral	76-112	67.9	762	5-0

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Bo Melton	24	253	10.5	2
Aron Cruickshank	14	104	7.4	0
Shameen Jones	9	68	7.6	0

### Team Offensive Stats

**Points Per Game** – 34.0

**Rushing Yards Per Game** – 157.3

**Passing Yards Per Game** – 194.0

**Total Offense Avg. Per Game** – 351.3

### 2021 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 4	TEMPLE	W, 61-14
Sept. 11	at Syracuse	W, 17-7
Sept. 18	DELAWARE	W, 45-13
Sept. 25	at Michigan	L, 20-13
Oct. 2	OHIO STATE	3:30 p.m.
Oct. 9	MICHIGAN STATE	Noon
Oct. 16	at Northwestern	Noon
Oct. 30	at Illinois	TBA
Nov. 6	WISCONSIN	TBA
Nov. 13	at Indiana	TBA
Nov. 20	at Penn State	TBA
Nov. 27	MARYLAND	TBA

### Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Olakunle Fatukasi	22	14	36	6.5-23	3.5-18
Avery Young	16	9	25	1.0-5	1.0-5
Christian Izien	11	6	17	2.5-3	–
T. Maddox-Williams	10	5	15	–	–
Tyshon Fogg	5	9	14	1.0-7	1.0-7
Tre Avery	8	4	12	–	–
CJ Onyechi	6	6	12	1.0-8	1.0-8
Mohamed Toure	6	6	12	2.5-7	1.0-4

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Max Melton	2	46	23.0	1
Tre Avery	1	21	21.0	0

### Team Defensive Stats

**Points Per Game Allowed** – 13.5

**Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed** – 112.8

**Passing Yards Per Game Allowed** – 150.0

**Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed** – 262.8

reer starts entering the game. He was a third-team All-Big Ten selection in 2020. Opposite him is Max Melton – the younger brother of top receiver Bo Melton – who burst onto the scene in 2020, starting six games as a true freshman.

"Max is, I think, playing at a high level right now," Schiano said. "He's doing a good job."

Rounding out the secondary, Avery Young has moved from cornerback into the starting free safety role vacated by White, the former Ohio State safety who graduated in 2020. Christian Izien returns at strong safety after starting all nine games in that role last season.

Although the turnovers are a major focus for the group, Schiano has also made it a focus to limit big plays – one of Ohio State's biggest offensive strengths thus far.

"I think overall we've played well," Schiano said of his secondary. "We've given up (a few big) shots, (a few) big plays. Our goal is to give up none. But I think we've played aggressively. We've matched up pretty well in man-to-man coverage so far, and a couple of zone opportunities, I thought we had opportunities to take the ball out of the air and we didn't. Hopefully, we get improved at that. But overall, I'd say they're playing well."

The only question marks on the defense are up front with two new starters on the line. Starting tackle Michael Dwumfour is gone, as is defensive end Elorm Lumor. Senior defensive end Mike Tverdov and senior nose tackle Julius Turner provide starting experience, but CJ Onyechi and Mayan Ahanotu are new at the other end and tackle spots, sparking some early struggles for the Scarlet Knights.

The defensive line has generated 13 havoc plays (TFL and sacks) through four games, though Schiano has not been pleased with its progress in stopping the run. It allowed 162 yards against Delaware, including 121 on 15 carries to Dejon Lee, one of which broke for 72 yards after a missed tackle on the edge near the line of scrimmage. Ohio State has already had 29 chunk plays on the ground through four games.

"Well, it's not a big mystery," Schiano said. "We lost the edge on the long run and we missed the tackle. When you lose the edge and then you miss a tackle, now you have a long run."

Offensive coordinator Sean Gleeson is still working primarily with smoke and mirrors. Quarterback Vedral is limited as a deep-ball passer, though the elder Melton and Cruickshank provide consistent short-game targets. The senior quarterback serves primarily as a game manager for the Rutgers offense, looking to get the ball out quickly while limiting mistakes, which Schiano thought he did perfectly during a 17-7 win against Syracuse in week two.

"I thought he did a heck of a job," Schiano said. "He was 22 for 28 (passing), took care of the football, (and) made plays when he had the chance. I actually thought Noah did exactly what he needed to do. He needed to come here and play a clean game, and he really did do that. He got us in and out of the right calls. I was pleased with his performance."

Four-star quarterback Gavin Wimsatt – who followed OSU freshman Quinn Ewers' lead and departed from high school a year early – could see playing time against Ohio State as well, though Schiano has indicated Vedral will remain the starter.

At running back, returning starter Isaih Pacheco continues to get the nod, though Rutgers is not afraid to get backups Aaron Young or Kyle Monangai involved.

The offensive line returns all five of its 2020 starters but was a weakness then and continues to cause issues for the Rutgers offense. The Knights have allowed five sacks and 33 TFL through four games.

The Scarlet Knights special teams group bears mentioning after it scored a touchdown against Ohio State in 2020. Punter Adam Korsak is among the nation's best, and Cruickshank has scored five career touchdowns as a returner, including a punt against Delaware in week three.





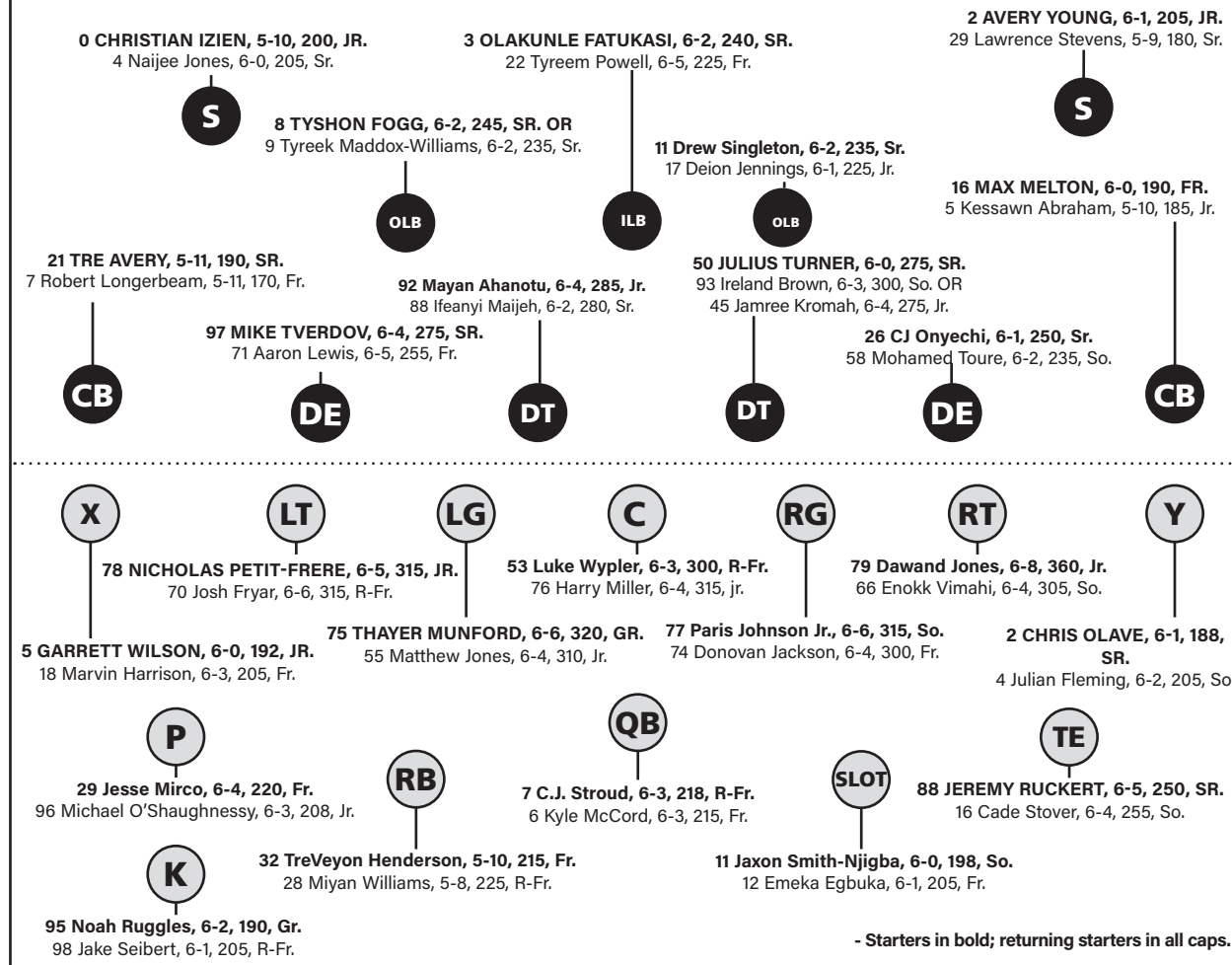
# Ohio State at Rutgers

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## Projected Depth Charts

### WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



### How We See It

#### OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. RUTGERS RUSH DEFENSE

It's hard to judge how well Ohio State played because its opponent in the 59-7 win against Akron was not very good, but the end result was that the Buckeyes were finally able to display their full arsenal of weapons at the running backs position. Against Oregon, it was Miyan Williams and TreVeyon Henderson. Then it was Henderson and Master Teague vs. Tulsa. All three played against Akron, and freshman Evan Pryor even made his debut late in the game. Henderson had 93 yards on eight carries, Teague carried eight times for 71 yards, Williams popped for 47 yards on nine rushes, and Pryor gained 35 on five tries. Including the QB totals, the Buckeyes had 237 yards on the ground. For the season, Henderson leads the way with 439 yards on a 9.5-yard average and six touchdowns. OSU is rushing for 222.2 yards per game, and that ranks 18th in the country. Rutgers is 40th against the run (112.8), and during a 20-13 loss to Michigan, the Scarlet Knights were right on that number, allowed 112 yards on 38 carries. The Wolverines entered the game averaging 350.3 yards on the ground. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

#### RUTGERS RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Scarlet Knights are 76th with 157.2 rushing yards a game. The Buckeyes conceded only 76 yards to Akron (and an average of just 1.9 per carry) to improve to 82nd (155.5 yards per game). Isaih Pacheco had his first 100-yard game of the season vs. the Wolverines and leads Rutgers with 259 yards and three TDs. He now has seven career games with more than 100 yards. QB Noah Vedral is second on the team with 117 yards. The Buckeyes are improving, but Rutgers should be a better test than Akron, and the Scarlet Knights under former Buckeye assistant coach Greg Schiano befuddled OSU last season with several trick plays. **EDGE: EVEN**

#### OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. RUTGERS PASS DEFENSE

Kyle McCord (319 yards, two TDs) had an impressive college debut subbing for sore-armed C.J. Stroud, and backup Jack Miller also did well (5 of 8, 66 yards). The Buckeyes are 11th in the nation at 337.0 yards per game and 10 TDs, but they have allowed six sacks in four games. Rutgers is 15th against the pass (150.0 per game) and has allowed just one TD with three picks. The Knights also rank 11th with 14 sacks, 11th in total defense (262.8) and seventh in scoring defense (13.5). Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba have emerged as the go-to guys for the OSU quarterbacks. Chris Olave had only two catches on three targets against Akron after no receptions in the Tulsa game. Interesting. **EDGE: EVEN**

#### RUTGERS PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

The Buckeyes' once-ferocious pass rush returned, albeit against Akron, with nine sacks – tied for fourth most in school history – after just four in the first three games. How well they pressure Vedral could decide the game. Rutgers is 99th in pass offense (194.0) despite throwing just 10 fewer balls than Ohio State. The Scarlet Knights have also allowed five sacks. The Buckeyes moved up to 102nd in pass defense (255.5) after allowing Akron only 115 yards. But OSU has four interceptions, two that have been returned all the way. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

#### SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Noah Ruggles and punter Jesse Mirco have been solid during their first seasons with the Buckeyes, and freshman Emeka Egbuka looks ready to break a big return as evidenced by his speed on an 85-yard catch-and-run vs. Akron. Rutgers punter Adam Korsak is averaging 50.1 yards on 16 kicks with a long of 69. Valentino Ambrosia has made 5 of 7 field goals but shanked an important 29-yarder vs. Michigan in the fourth quarter. **EDGE: EVEN**

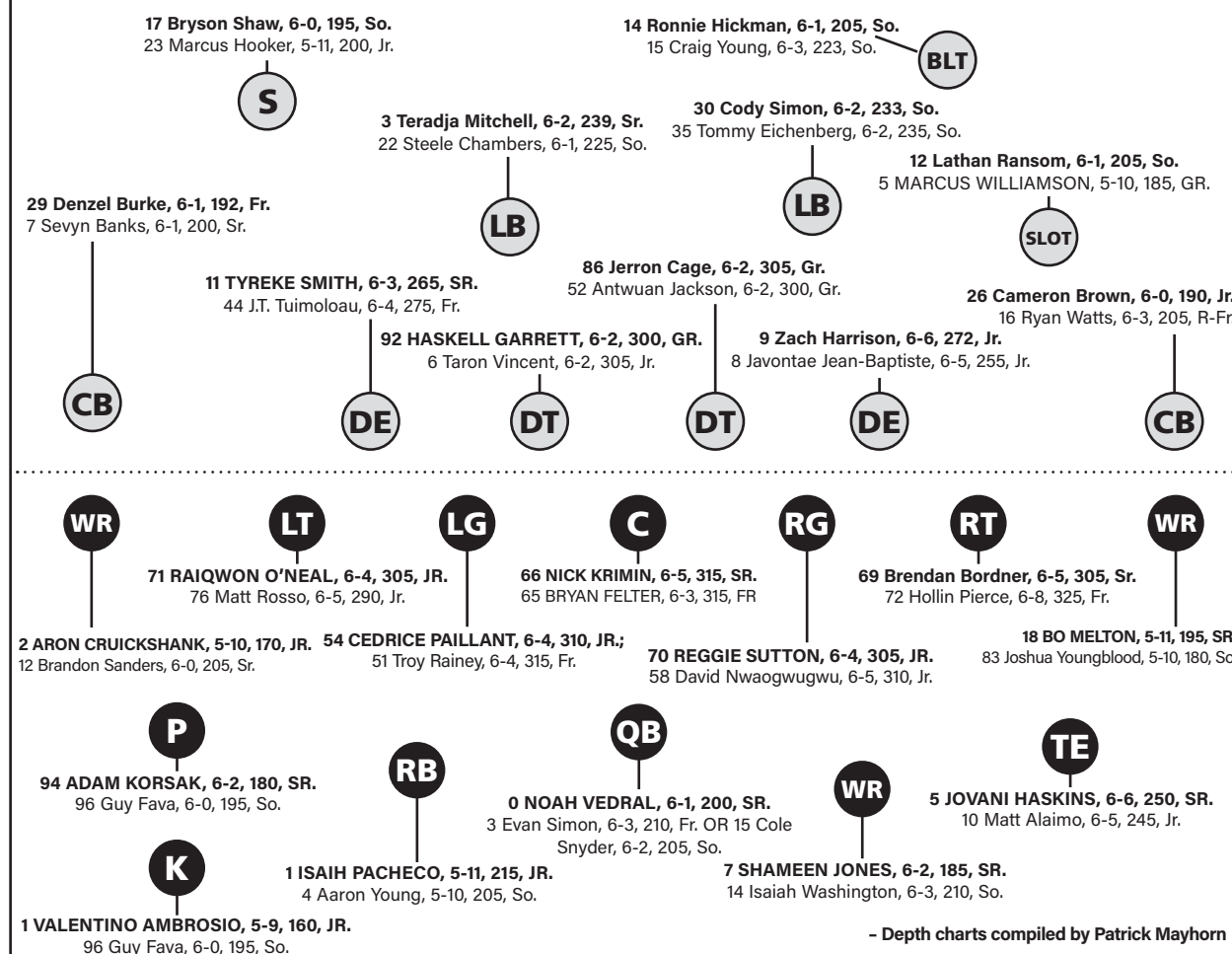
#### INTANGIBLES

This isn't the Rutgers that Buckeye fans were accustomed to before Schiano returned for a second stint as head coach. Based upon their game at Michigan, the Scarlet Knights have a better loss than OSU losing at home to Oregon – for whatever that's worth. Schiano, who was fired over his failures in coordinating the OSU defense after the 2018 season, would love nothing more than to shut down the Buckeyes. **EDGE: RUTGERS**

#### STAFF PREDICTION

Both teams, despite differing outcomes, gained confidence from their last outings. The Buckeyes still appear to have some internal discord that must be addressed. And here's a fact worth noting: Rutgers has not allowed a point in the fourth quarter this season. The game may come down to the Buckeyes' ability to end that streak. It might be hard for some to fathom, but this could be a nail-biter. **OHIO STATE 34, RUTGERS 24**

### WHEN RUTGERS HAS THE BALL...





# PSU, Coach Dismissed From Harassment Lawsuit

Penn State and head football coach James Franklin are no longer defendants in a sexual harassment and hazing suit brought by former player Isaiah Humphries.

U.S. Middle District Judge Matthew W. Brann on Sept. 24 granted their motions to dismiss, noting he had allowed Humphries to amend his original complaint three times.

## BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

"Humphries' latest complaint must be his last complaint," Brann wrote in his decision. "He's had four tries. If he could have alleged facts to support his various claims, he would have done so by now. I therefore find that further amendment would be futile and that it would be improper to require Penn State and Franklin to defend against these claims yet again."

Former Nittany Lions defensive tackle Damion Barber, whom Humphries accused of hazing and harassing him between November 2017 and November 2018, is the only remaining defendant in the case. Barber, who transferred to Austin Peay last year, has filed a separate motion to dismiss the suit.

Humphries also accused former Penn State players Micah Parsons, Yetur Gross-Matos and Jesse Luketa of hazing and harassment, but they were not sued.

Humphries transferred to the University of California after the 2018 season.

"For whatever (Humphries') complaint possessed in attention-grabbing details, it lacked in substance," Brann wrote.

The judge rejected claims that Penn State and Franklin had a duty to protect Humphries who was recruited out of Sachse, Texas. He wrote further that Pennsylvania law does not recognize a special relationship between colleges and student-athletes that would impose a duty of care.

Humphries claimed that while being recruited, Franklin and his staff told him becoming a Lion would allow him to maximize his athletic and academic potential and that the football coaches would "protect him, keep him safe and treat him like a son."

Claims under Pennsylvania's Piazza Anti-Hazing Law also fail because that law limits behavior done "for the purpose of initiating, admitting or affiliating," Brann wrote. That law is named after Timothy Piazza, who died after falling down a flight of stairs during a Beta Theta Pi Fraternity pledging event at Penn State.

Brann also rejected claims under Title IX, finding Humphries was not harassed because of his sex.

In his suit against his former teammates,

Humphries alleged that they told him, "I am going to Sandusky you," in reference to the sexual abuse committed by former Penn State assistant coach Jerry Sandusky.

Humphries also alleged he and other players would be sexually harassed while restrained after being wrestled to the ground and that the four would take players' clothing and not return them.

Brann wrote that although Humphries described these acts in graphic detail, his descriptions are wanting in other key aspects.

The complaint does detail an incident in which Humphries pulled a knife in an altercation that followed Parsons throwing a pail of water on him while he was napping in an academic building.

Humphries claimed by August 2018, he had become anxious, sleepless, and depressed to the point that an assistant coach called his father regarding concerns that he was suicidal. He announced plans to transfer in November 2018.

## Purdue Suspends Sophomore Forward

Purdue forward Mason Gillis has been suspended for the Boilermakers' first four games of the 2021-22 season.

In June, the sophomore was arrested for operating a vehicle while intoxicated. After pleading guilty in August, Gillis was sentenced to 365 days of unsupervised probation.

As a freshman in 2020-21, Gillis appeared in 28 games for Purdue, including 23 starts. The versatile forward averaged 5.2 points, 4.1 rebounds and 1.3 assists per game while shooting 46.5 percent from the field.

## Izzo Adds 4-Star PF To 2022 Class

Michigan State men's basketball coach Tom Izzo recently picked up a commitment from Southern California Academy four-star power forward Jaxon Kohler.

Kohler, who is originally from American Ford, Utah, is the No. 67-ranked player in the country for 2022 and the No. 11 power forward. He chose the Spartans over Iowa, Nebraska, USC and Oklahoma, among others.

At 6-9 and 250 pounds, Kohler is a "very skilled and productive post prospect," according to 247Sports analyst Brandon Jenkins, with "good hands, outstanding footwork, a soft touch," and he can score at every level.

With his commitment, Kohler joined St. Paul (Minn.) Cretin-Derham Hall four-star guard Tre Holloman in Michigan State's 2022 class, which ranks No. 6 in the Big Ten and No. 20 nationally.

## U-M LB Ross Exits With Injury

Michigan fifth-year linebacker Josh Ross was excelling in the Wolverines' 20-13 win over Rutgers with six tackles and two tackles for loss, but he suffered an injury that ended his day early.

Head coach Jim Harbaugh, who lost wide receiver Ronnie Bell to a season-ending injury in week one, said he does not expect Ross to miss much playing time.

"He's going to be OK," Harbaugh said. "He had – he was working through something and just didn't quite get the strength back to be cleared to go back into the game."

# BIG

## 2021 Standings

### East Division

	Conf.		All		
	W	L	W	L	Pct.
Michigan State	2	0	4	0	1.000
Maryland	1	0	4	0	1.000
Michigan	1	0	4	0	1.000
Penn State	1	0	4	0	1.000
Ohio State	1	0	3	1	.750
Rutgers	0	1	3	1	.750
Indiana	0	1	2	2	.500

### West Division

	Conf.		All		
	W	L	W	L	Pct.
Iowa	1	0	4	0	1.000
Purdue	1	0	3	1	.750
Illinois	1	2	1	4	.200
Minnesota	0	1	2	2	.500
Northwestern	0	1	2	2	.500
Wisconsin	0	1	1	2	.333
Nebraska	0	2	2	3	.400

### Sept. 25 Games

Bowling Green 14, Minnesota 10  
Northwestern 35, Ohio 6  
Notre Dame 41, Wisconsin 13  
Purdue 13, Illinois 9  
Michigan 20, Rutgers 13  
Michigan State 23, Nebraska 20 (OT)  
Indiana 33, Western Kentucky 31  
Iowa 24, Colorado State 14  
Maryland, 37, Kent State 16  
**Ohio State 59**, Akron 7  
Penn State 38, Villanova 17

### Oct. 1 Game

Iowa at Maryland, 8 p.m.

### Oct. 2 Games

Minnesota at Purdue, Noon  
Michigan at Wisconsin, Noon  
Charlotte at Illinois, Noon  
**Ohio State** at Rutgers, 3:30 p.m.  
Indiana at Penn State, 7:30 p.m.  
Western Ky. at Michigan State, 7:30 p.m.  
Northwestern at Nebraska, 7:30 p.m.

### Oct. 9 Games

Maryland at **Ohio State**, Noon  
Michigan State at Rutgers, Noon  
Wisconsin at Illinois, 3:30 p.m.  
Michigan at Nebraska, TBD  
Penn State at Iowa, TBD

### Oct. 16 Games

Rutgers at Northwestern, Noon  
Michigan State at Indiana, Noon  
Army at Wisconsin, 8:00 p.m.  
Nebraska at Minnesota, TBD  
Purdue at Iowa, TBD

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The Maize and Blue defense struggled in Ross' absence against Rutgers, especially against the run.

Michigan will take on Wisconsin for its next game, looking for its first win in Camp Randall since 2001.

## Schiano Suspends 2 For Paintball Incident

Rutgers cornerbacks Max Melton and Chris Long were suspended after being taken into police custody because of a paintball gun incident, according to head coach Greg Schiano.

The two players have been charged with aggravated assault and possession of a weapon for unlawful purpose, stemming from an incident the night of Sept. 20.

Melton, a starter, has had a productive season, posting two interceptions, a blocked punt, a fumble recovery and eight tackles through three games. His interception return for a touchdown Sept. 4 against Temple marked Rutgers' first pick-six since 2017.

Melton, who is the younger brother of

Rutgers wide receiver Bo Melton, had been listed as a starter on the depth chart for the Scarlet Knights' Big Ten opener at Michigan. He started six of the team's nine contests as a true freshman in 2020.

Long had appeared as a reserve in Rutgers' first three games but had not recorded any statistics.

## Spartans Defender Enters Transfer Portal

Michigan State freshman defensive end Alex Okelo entered his name in the transfer portal, seeking a new opportunity in his first season.

A three-star prospect from Nashville Pearl-Cohn, Okelo signed with head coach Mel Tucker's 2021 recruiting class as the No. 57 edge player and No. 922 overall recruit nationally.

The 6-5, 215-pounder was not in uniform for the Spartans' open practice on Aug. 23, and he did not dress for the first three games of the 2021 campaign.

Okelo joined a long list of Michigan State

players to enter the portal, but he was the first to do so since the end of spring practice. The program had 27 players enter the transfer portal between November and May, and there were 10 who left via transfer after spring practice ended.

The Spartans continued their hot start with a 23-20 overtime win against Nebraska to improve to 4-0 on the season. Michigan State hasn't begun a season with four wins since 2015 when the team began that season 8-0 on the way to a 12-2 finish that included a Big Ten championship.

## Top Performers Around Conference

Michigan State wide receiver Jayden Reed was one of the top performers in the Big Ten outside of the Ohio State game. Although the fourth-year junior caught just four passes for 59 yards, he caught the Spartans' first touchdown during their 23-20 overtime win against Nebraska.

Reed also made the play of the week with his team facing a 20-13 deficit. With only

3:47 left in the fourth quarter, Reed returned a punt 62 yards for a game-tying touchdown, and the Green and White prevailed in overtime.

Penn State quarterback Sean Clifford stood out during the Nittany Lions' 38-17 victory against Villanova, throwing for 401 yards and four touchdowns. Clifford's stand-out target was sophomore wide receiver Parker Washington, who hauled in five receptions for 148 yards and two touchdowns.

Northwestern tailback Evan Hull helped lead the Wildcats to a 35-6 win against Ohio. The standout running back gained 216 yards on 22 carries and scored two touchdowns, including a 90-yard scamper for a score.

Indiana running back Stephen Carr stepped up to help the Hoosiers hold off Western Kentucky during their 33-31 win. The USC transfer tallied 109 yards and two touchdowns on 25 carries.

## From The Pages Of BSB

### 40 Years Ago – 1981

Ohio State withstood the best shot that Stanford quarterback John Elway could dish out, watching a 24-6 lead dwindle to just 24-19 late, but the visiting Buckeyes still managed to hold off the Cardinal and their star quarterback for a five-point victory.

On what ultimately proved to be Stanford's final drive, Elway found receiver Vincent White for what would have been a large gain. But Ohio State defensive back Jeff Cisco was there to make a big play for the second consecutive game, rattling the ball loose with a jarring hit. Linebacker Marcus Marek fell on White's fumble at the OSU 46-yard-line with just 44 ticks left on the clock.

Ohio State signal-caller Art Schlichter, despite nursing a sore ankle, went blow for blow with Elway, completing 16 of his 32 passing attempts for 240 yards and two scores. That compared favorably to Elway's 28-of-42 passing performance for 248 yards and two scores, both of which came during a frantic fourth quarter that had Stanford score 13 of its 19 points.

### 35 Years Ago – 1986

Ohio State steamrolled Utah on Sept. 27 by a 64-6 final to improve to 2-2 after an 0-2 start to the season. The Buckeyes fired on all cylinders against the Utes, putting up the kind of offensive production that fans had been yearning for after three slow starts to open the year. OSU piled up 715 total yards, a new school record.

"I think we did an outstanding job today, both on offense and on defense," head coach Earle Bruce said. "We capitalized on some mistakes early, and I think we got a very fine performance from our tailback position. This is going to help our confidence a lot."

It was an especially big day for those tailbacks. Freshman Jim Bryant earned his first start and flashed a Keith Byars-like performance while wearing Byars' old No. 41 uniform. Bryant toted the rock 19 times for 145 yards, helping to spark former starter Vince Workman in the process, who ran for 168 yards on 16 attempts.

"I was hoping to start at the end of the season, but I didn't expect it this soon," Bryant said. "When Coach (Lenny) Willis told me in practice Monday that I was starting, I thought he was messing with me. I thought he just wanted me to take some hits from the first-team defense."

### 30 Years Ago – 1991

Backup quarterback Kirk Herbstreit, suddenly thrown into a starting role on Sept. 21 against Washington State, was ready to go when called upon. The signal-caller led the Buckeyes to a 33-19 win over the Cougars.

Herbstreit was tapped as starter Kent Graham continued to deal with lingering effects of a concussion and a slight shoulder separation suffered the week before against Louisville. It didn't matter to Herbstreit how he got the call, nor that he was expected to lose the job the following week when Graham returned. He was just grateful for his chance.

"I don't really care about those things," Herbstreit said. "I'm confident in my ability to lead this team, and I think now maybe some other people have some confidence in me, too."

"People were probably wondering what I was going to do out there today, whether I could lead the team. I hope I get the chance to do it again."

Herbstreit finished the game 8 of 13 passing for 158 yards, one

touchdown and one interception.

### 25 Years Ago – 1996

It took Ohio State nearly 60 years to do it, but the Buckeyes finally got even with Notre Dame.

The 1996 edition of the Buckeyes went into South Bend, Ind., and emerged with a resounding 29-16 win over the Fighting Irish.

The win, coupled with a 45-26 win over the Irish a year before in Columbus, evened the all-time series between the two tradition-rich powers at 2-2. It also served to fully redeem the 1935 and '36 Ohio State teams, which lost a pair of heartbreakers to the Irish.

"This was huge," said OSU junior cornerback Shawn Springs, a key component of the defense that confounded Notre Dame. "You don't get wins like this every day. This was exciting. Notre Dame is Notre Dame."

OSU head coach John Cooper basked in the glow of perhaps his biggest win with the Buckeyes as well as his 150th career win as a college coach.

"It doesn't get any better than this," said Cooper after his fourth-ranked Buckeyes derailed the fifth-ranked Irish.

### 20 Years Ago – 2001

It was not exactly the 239-yard performance then-freshman Archie Griffin had turned in against North Carolina in his second career game in 1972, but Lydell Ross' performance at Indiana on Sept. 29 was historic nonetheless.

Ross, a freshman tailback, carried 25 times for 124 yards and scored two touchdowns as the Buckeyes cruised to a 27-14 win over the Hoosiers in the Big Ten opener for both teams.

It was the first 100-yard game for an Ohio State freshman ball-carrier in 11 years, after Robert Smith accomplished the feat in 1990.

"It is almost like a dream come true to come out here as a freshman and for us to win like that," Ross said.

After struggling offensively in a loss to UCLA the week before, OSU head coach Jim Tressel opted to go back to power football, turning away from starting tailback Jonathan Wells and toward the freshman Ross.

"I think in a tailback-oriented offense, you always need to come with double-barrels," Tressel said. "Going into next week, Jonathan and Lydell would be that first double-barrel."

### 15 Years Ago – 2006

When the going got tough, Ohio State put its faith and trust in just one number.

The number was 25, and it was worn by junior tailback Antonio Pittman, whose 110 hard-fought yards on 20 carries proved to be the difference in the second consecutive game during which the high-powered Ohio State offense failed to fire on all cylinders.

After proving to be the lone bright spot on an OSU offense that racked up only 99 yards in the first half, Pittman almost single-handedly willed his team to its first touchdown and eventually to a 28-6 victory against visiting Penn State.

"(The offensive line) put a lot of pressure on (Penn State) early in the first half, and by the second half, those guys were worn out," Pittman said. "That's what football's all about – who can grind it out the longest."

### 10 Years Ago – 2011

If Ohio State was leaning solely on Braxton Miller to lead it out of

one of the darkest weeks it had experienced in quite some time, the freshman quarterback didn't feel any of the ill effects when lying in bed the night before.

"I slept pretty well," Miller said. "I really didn't have any jitters at all."

With the Buckeyes only a week removed from one of their most stale offensive performances in years – ultimately resulting in a lopsided 24-6 loss at Miami (Fla.) – the coaching staff turned to the freshman to help rejuvenate the dormant Ohio State offense.

He was given that tall task against Colorado in his first career start Sept. 24 as the staff hoped the dual-threat freshman could help spark the OSU offense.

Through one game, it had its answer – yes. Overcoming a slow start, Miller kept Ohio State's offense consistently moving throughout the game while leading the Buckeyes to a much-needed 37-16 win against the Buffaloes. Miller rushed for 83 yards and passed for another 83 to open his starting career.

"The guys kept talking to me to be out there, be comfortable, do what I do and I was excited to play," Miller said. "I know we had to get a 'W,' so I just had to do what I had to do – just run."

### Five Years Ago – 2016

Ohio State quarterback J.T. Barrett connected with tight end Marcus Baugh for a 16-yard touchdown to give the Buckeyes a 23-0 lead with just under 2½ minutes to play before halftime against Rutgers on Oct. 1, but the throw had far more importance beyond the six points it created.

The touchdown pass was the 58th of Barrett's Ohio State career, breaking the program record of 57 shared by Bobby Hoying and Terrelle Pryor.

"It's a crazy thing," Barrett said of the record. "I'm just a young cat from Wichita Falls, Texas. I didn't know a lot about Ohio State, honestly, before Coach (Urban) Meyer got here. So with that, I'm learning on the fly about all the history and the great things that are a part of Ohio State."

Barrett found the end zone once more during the 58-0 win over the Scarlet Knights, finishing the day 21 of 29 passing for 238 yards and four scores, each of which came in the first half.

### One Year Ago – 2020

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

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

Although Ohio State wouldn't be cutting any programs, it was still set to make drastic cuts elsewhere to lower the deficit, including in salary cuts. Football coach Ryan Day and men's basketball coach Chris Holtmann were each asked to take a 5 percent pay cut.



# Commitment Time Nearing For DL Jackson

Four-star defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. (6-5, 231) of Hollywood (Fla.) Cham-inade-Madonna Prep is nearing a commitment, though he wants to take a pair of final visits to his top two schools – Ohio State and Oklahoma – before deciding.

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Patrick Mayhorn

Trips to Ohio State and Oklahoma are yet to be solidified, though he was in Norman for the second time this year on Sept. 25 for Oklahoma's matchup with West Virginia. His visit to Columbus will be his third after he took an unofficial trip for the football team's late-June barbecue and again for an official visit in late July.

His father, Kenyatta Jackson Sr., told Gar-rick Hodge of Eleven Warriors that he's consistently impressed by Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson, OSU's primary recruiter for Jackson.

"Every time we get around him, it's something about Coach Larry Johnson," the elder Jackson said. "He has heavy wisdom (and) we love everything about him. He's a great mentor and authentic model for recruits. I can trust my son with Coach Larry Johnson from afar if my son decides to go to Ohio State."

With the OSU visit remaining as the final step for Jackson before making an official commitment, Bucknuts recruiting analyst Bill Kurelic expects a commitment to come shortly afterward.

"It could be anytime between now and late October," Kurelic told BSB. "It's not out of the question that he does something relatively soon, but he may wait until sometime in October. I don't think it goes past late October, though."

## 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
Kojo Antwi	WR	6-0	190	★★★★	Suwanee (Ga.) Lambert
Terrance Brooks	CB	5-11	190	★★★★	Little Elm, Texas
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
Benji Gosnell	TE	6-4	225	★★★★	Pilot Mountain (N.C.) East Surry
Kyion Grayes	WR	6-1	170	★★★★	Chandler, Ariz.
Dallan Hayden	RB	5-11	195	★★★★	Memphis (Tenn.) Christian Brothers
C.J. Hicks	LB	6-3	220	★★★★★	Kettering (Ohio) Archbishop Alter
Gabe Powers	LB	6-4	230	★★★★	Marysville, Ohio
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

As for where Kurelic sees Jackson landing?

"I like Ohio State right now in that one," the longtime analyst said. "It's Ohio State or Oklahoma, and at this point, I like Ohio State to win that one."

Rivals national analyst Adam Gorney is less sure of the Buckeyes, however, and sees the battle as essentially a 50-50 coin flip entering the final stretch.

"I've been told that (Jackson) has Oklahoma and Ohio State highest on his list and that those are the two programs that he's really focused on at this time," Gorney said in early September. "I know the Sooners are doing a good job recruiting him. But the Buckeyes are as well, and having a teammate going there (OSU cornerback commit Ryan Turner) could be a major selling point. The defensive line history and the coaching from Larry Johnson are two pieces to consider, so I'd say Ohio State has a solid chance in landing Kenyatta, although Oklahoma is right there as well."

Jackson, the 78th-ranked prospect overall and No. 7 edge rusher, is off to an outstanding start to his senior season. He racked up four sacks in a week-one win over Western and was named a top performer by the South Florida Sun Sentinel. His team is off to a 3-1 start to open the season, led in large part by its defense, with Jackson up front and the 6-0, 180-pound Turner in the secondary. The Lions are ranked 37th nationally by MaxPreps.

## WR Commit Antwi Takes Visit to UGA

Suwanee (Ga.) Lambert four-star wide receiver Kojo Antwi (6-0, 190) has been committed to Ohio State since July 5 and has no immediate plans to change that, but that didn't stop the wideout from taking in Georgia's 40-13 victory against South Carolina on Sept. 18 as part of an unofficial visit.

It was a huge recruiting weekend for the Bulldogs with several names that Buckeye fans might know in attendance, including a chunk of 2022 targets such as four-star guard Earnest Greene (6-4, 330) of Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco; Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star defensive tackle Christen Miller (6-4, 285) and four-star defensive end Enai White (6-5, 230) of Philadelphia Imhotep Institute.

Future classes were well-represented in Athens as well, including 2024 target Fort Mill (S.C.) Catawba Ridge five-star QB Jadyn Davis (6-0, 185) along with a host of 2023 prospects – four-star RB Justice Haynes (5-10, 185) of Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic; Ellen-

wood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star CB Kayin Lee (6-0, 160); New Orleans Isidore Newman five-star QB Arch Manning (6-4, 215); and five-star RB Rueben Owens (5-11, 187) of El Campo, Texas.

Owens, considered to be Ohio State's top running back target for 2023, complimented Georgia running backs coach Dell McGee on DawgNation.com.

"Georgia is very good with its running back coaching," Owens said. "They are successful in getting their running backs to the (NFL). They rotate them really well. They get them all equal carries. They don't just sit them down and give all their carries to one back."

Antwi has not commented on his trip, though Kurelic does not expect that Ohio State should be seriously concerned about his commitment. It's the first visit Antwi has taken since his pledge, he's exhausted all but one of his official visit slots, and it seemed to be more about spending time around other prospects at a nearby campus than anything else.

"I think there's always a little bit of a concern when a kid visits another school," Kurelic said. "But I think the odds are certainly in Ohio State's favor that he stays with Ohio State. Ohio State is going to continue to recruit him (but) they knew they would have to through the process – and they'll do that. They've got Brian Hartline recruiting him, and it doesn't get any better than that."

Ranked the No. 127 player nationally and the No. 18 receiver, Antwi is one of four Ohio State receiver commitments, along with four-star prospects Caleb Burton (6-0, 165) of Austin (Texas) Lake Travis, Kaleb Brown (5-11, 177) of Chicago St. Rita and Kyion Grayes (6-1, 170) of Chandler, Ariz.

## Goodwin Still Open To Official Visits

Four-star offensive tackle Kiyaunta Goodwin (6-7, 300) of Charlestown, Ind., remains firm in his commitment to Kentucky, but he plans to take official visits to several schools that rounded out his top five prior to his pledge to the Wildcats, and Ohio State may find itself among that list.

Goodwin has yet to set any solid dates for visits, though Alabama, Michigan State and OSU each figure to be a factor if he does decide to take a few looks around. Even if the Buckeyes get him on campus, though, it's unlikely that the No. 49 overall player and No. 6-rated offensive tackle would consider flipping from Kentucky.

"I think anytime (Ohio State) gets a guy on

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# ASK AN ANALYST

With Bucknuts' Bill Kurelic

*This is a special edition of Ask An Analyst that is based solely on Ohio State's recruiting within the state of Ohio.*

**With Kentucky now listed as the favorite, the recruitment of four-star offensive tackle Aamil Wagner from Huber Heights Wayne seems to be struck trending in the wrong direction for the Buckeyes. What happened there, and do you think there's any chance Ohio State can change the momentum back in its favor?**

"I think in that case, Ohio State has other guys higher on their board than him that they could land, and they really only need to have one more offensive lineman in the 2022 class. They could go for two more, but they only really need to have one. I think there's, for instance, four-star lineman Earnest Greene of Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco, who is higher on the board. Humble (Texas) Atascocita four-star tackle Kam Dewberry is higher on the board, and those guys are certainly a real possibility still."

**What is the latest in Ohio State's efforts to try to flip 2022 Medina four-star quarterback Drew Allar, who is committed to Penn State? Do you think there is a realistic chance of a flip there at this point?**

"I think he'll stay with Penn State. I would be shocked if he didn't. I think he committed to Penn State, he likes it there, and I just think he's really comfortable and happy with his decision."

**Are there any other Ohio recruits Ohio State could look at in the 2022 class?**

"There's not anybody at the top of the board, guys that they would take right now. You never know because as things move forward, they're watching guys like Wagner in his senior year and seeing how he does, for instance. But really, that's about it right now unless somebody comes out of nowhere."

**When you look at 2023, obviously the big name in Ohio is five-star safety Sonny Styles of Pickerington Central. What makes him such a big-name prospect from what you have seen of his play?**

"He's special. He has great physical talent, which is displayed by

him being a Division I prospect in football and basketball. He'll go football, but he's 6-4, 215 pounds, and could play linebacker. That's where Ohio State is recruiting him. But he is a (former Clemson and current Arizona Cardinals linebacker) Isaiah Simmons-type guy that can be used at kind of all levels of the defense. There aren't many of those guys out there."

**Do you think Ohio State is in a good spot currently with Styles' recruitment?**

"I think, like most people, he's going to either end up at Ohio State or Notre Dame even though he is still looking at other schools. And right now, I think Ohio State is in the best position between the two schools at this point."

**The Buckeyes seem to be the big favorites for both four-star defensive tackle Luke Montgomery of Findlay and four-star offensive lineman Joshua Padilla of Huber Heights Wayne. Do those recruits seem like more of a "when will they commit" to Ohio State instead of "if they will?"**

"I like Ohio State to land both of them, but I don't know if I would go as far as to say it's a matter of when rather than if. But I do like Ohio State for both of them."

**How important would those two be for the class, especially considering the fact that Ohio State currently has only prospect - Thompson's Station (Tenn.) Independence four-star tight end Ty Lockwood - committed so far for 2023?**

"I think they're very important because they're Ohio kids and Ryan Day always wants to keep the top Ohio kids at home. And they are both offensive linemen and that's always something that Ohio State is looking to land. (Montgomery is being recruited to Ohio State by offensive line coach Greg Studrawa but is listed on 247Sports as a defensive lineman.) They're also two very good offensive linemen. One of them is an interior guy (Padilla), one of them is a tackle (Montgomery) and they would fill two big needs for the 2023 class."

**Are there any under-the-radar prospects in Ohio who have impressed you for the 2023 class but might not be receiving as high of a ranking?**

campus, you can't count it out," Kurelic said. "Now, having said that, I think he's pretty solid right now to Kentucky, even considering he's taking visits. I don't rule out a flip, but I don't, at this point, anticipate one."

Goodwin has cited his desire to be a part of a growing program in Lexington as well as his relationships with UK head coach Mark Stoops and tight ends coach Vince Marrow, one of the nation's best Midwestern recruiters.

"(Stoops is) building a program that players want to believe in, and that's something I want to be a part of," Goodwin told Chad Simmons of On3.com. "I want to be a part of building the program, changing the program, being that missing piece to help change a program. And that's what I feel like can do. I can help make the 'Big Blue Wall' even better."

"Since day one, it's always been the same. It's been constant recruitment. We don't even talk about football anymore. We stopped talking about football years ago. Of course, we talk about the game and watch film and stuff like that. Obviously, we talk football, but that's not the most important thing. Developing the player, the man, the mind – that's what I really care for because one day football is going to end and you'd rather have other options. I feel like they're going to do their best at developing the man more than just the betterment of the player."

Goodwin was on campus for Kentucky's week-one victory against Louisiana-Monroe as was another Buckeye tackle target – Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star Aamil Wagner (6-6, 265).

Wagner has been trending away from the Buckeyes for several months, picking up

247Sports crystal ball picks for the Wildcats from Kurelic and Kentucky analyst Josh Edwards in early September. He plans to take a trip to Ohio State for its matchup with Penn State on Oct. 30, but he really enjoyed his trip to Lexington.

"I thought the game visit was great," Wagner told Kentucky Sports Radio. "I've been to a lot of Kentucky games. I've been going there over the years. I've gotten to experience a lot of home crowds big and small. I think the biggest surprise for me was how often they threw the ball. I remember last time at a Kentucky game, Lynn (Bowden) was at quarterback and they pretty much ran every play. To see just how they changed in the offense and seeing them throw 30 passes in a game was just remarkable. I was excited to be down there and just get to experience that."

"As a tackle especially, I need to be able to display my pass-blocking abilities and run-blocking abilities. Seeing that Kentucky is not just one-dimensional as they might have been in the past and (is) able to actually (throw) 30 passes was really a good sight to see."

Wagner plans to announce his commitment at the annual All-American Bowl, set for Jan. 8 in San Antonio.

## Ohio State Hoping To See Bowles Soon

Four-star linebacker Troy Bowles, a 2023 prospect from Tampa (Fla.) Jesuit, was scheduled to take a quick visit to Ohio State for its Sept. 18 matchup with Tulsa, but an ankle sprain suffered the night prior during his team's win against Hillsborough delayed that

visit by at least a bit – though he does plan to take a trip to Ohio State for a game this fall.

"They're going to get him on campus," Kurelic said. "It's just a matter of which game now. It's just something that happens. High school kids get hurt, sometimes on Friday night. It wasn't a real bad sprain. He is not going to miss much time and will likely be back up playing this weekend."

"But even so, when you go on visits, you

"There's a guy that I've liked for quite some time that's not really highly regarded, but Ohio State is looking at him and definitely has an interest. That's Willtrell Hartson, the running back from Massillon Washington. I definitely like him – maybe more so than a lot of people. When I saw him last year several times, I came away very impressed, and he's having another really good season this year. I think he's one guy to keep in mind that is not as highly rated as some but I think has a chance to be an Ohio State guy."

**Ohio State has just four in-state commitments right now for the 2022 class. Do you think that lower number is a trend, or do you think the Buckeyes are going to bounce back in upcoming classes and increase that number?**

"It mostly depends on the talent level. If there are enough good players, they're going to go after them and get them. There's a couple of kids in Ohio in the 2022 class that they certainly would have liked to have had from the state of Ohio. Most notably, Strongsville four-star offensive tackle Blake Miller, who ended up going to Clemson. And then now, of course, you have Allar. But I think, generally speaking, there's going to be five to eight or nine Ohio kids in Ohio State's class each year."

**Do you think Day balances the in-state vs. out-of-state recruiting about the same as Urban Meyer did at his time at Ohio State, or are there some differences between the two?**

"I think they're pretty similar. The first thing Day did when he got the job was say that he was going to prioritize Ohio, and then he went out and kind of showed that. The first visits he made when he got the job were to Ohio kids and Ohio schools. I think they are somewhat similar because the days of Ohio State taking 10 to 15 kids in a class from Ohio are gone."

"If Ohio State is going to battle for the national championship every year, they're going to have to recruit very well out of state, too, and that's not a knock on Ohio. There are still good football players in Ohio. It's just that, with the population shift and everything, if you're going to beat Alabama, Clemson and those types of schools, you're going to have to get your share of great players from out of state, too."

Continued On Page 28

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

### 40 Years Ago – 1981

Gerry Faust moved on from Cincinnati Moeller to the head coaching job at Notre Dame, but the major college football prospects he left behind at his old school were still plentiful.

Four Moeller gridders were among the top college prospects in another strong class of Cincinnati area prepsters. The Queen City had graduated six Parade magazine All-American selections in 1980, and although that number would not be matched in 1981, there was a prevailing thought that the overall crop could have been even better.

Leading the way at Moeller was quarterback Mike Willging, offensive tackle John Askin, defensive end Ron Davis and defensive back Rob Brown. Elsewhere in Cincinnati, Woodward had two major offensive tackle prospects in Craig Johnson and John Thomas, though the former would wind up missing the 1981 season with a knee injury. Princeton's Arnold Franklin, a linebacker and tight end, was also rated among the best prep players in the nation.

### 35 Years Ago – 1986

Cincinnati Academy of Physical Education tailback Carlos Snow said he had not even thought about where he might attend college despite the fact recruiters had been contacting him since he was a sophomore.

"I'll have plenty of time to make up my mind when the football season is over," he said.

His father, Ralph, said he would like to see his son go to Penn State.

"I want Carlos to go to a school where they consider an education important," the elder Snow said, "and Penn State has that philosophy."

The CAPE halfback would likely have his pick of any school in the nation if he kept up his play, though. He had rushed for 488 yards and seven touchdowns in the first three games of the season.

### 30 Years Ago – 1991

Dayton Meadowdale quarterback Eric Boykin told BSB he liked the pressure playing his position provided.

"The more people are watching me, the bigger the situation, I think I can get the job done," he said.

The 6-4, 205-pounder had no college visits scheduled but admitted he was interested in Ohio State, Michigan, Illinois, UCLA and Florida, among others.

### 25 Years Ago – 1996

Warrensville Heights, Ohio, standout Darnell Sanders was still being recruited by the Buckeyes. He attended Ohio State's opener against Rice on Sept. 7, but as September came to a close, he wanted to keep all of his options open, both in schools and as far as his

position was concerned.

"I'm playing quarterback now and I'd like to play that in college, but it really doesn't matter," Sanders said. "They'll probably want me to move to tight end or somewhere."

He said that Ohio State was his favorite school but that Miami (Fla.) and Michigan State both deserved a full look.

"I would like to come back down for the Michigan game, but I have to talk to (OSU assistant Mike) Jacobs," Sanders said. "Ohio State is my first choice, but Miami is also right in there. I liked Michigan State, too, but they went on probation."

### 20 Years Ago – 2001

Daytona Beach (Fla.) Mainland linebacker Buster Davis had a serious interest in Ohio State, and the nation's fifth-ranked linebacker was considering a commitment to the Buckeyes, depending on how a few other visits went.

"It could be in the works," Davis said when asked if he was ready to commit to the Buckeyes. "I want to see one or two schools just to make sure. Ohio State and Nebraska are my top two."

Davis said he had a visit set to OSU for Dec. 14. He said he also would likely see Southern Cal in late January.

"I like Coach (Jim) Tressel and the rest of the coaching staff at Ohio State," Davis said. "It sounds like Coach Tressel is going to make things happen there. (OSU assistant Joe) Daniels is supposed to come down in a couple of weeks and see me play."

"I want to play both football and baseball in college, and Coach Tress and (baseball coach Bob) Todd said I could do both."

### 15 Years Ago – 2006

Ohio State secured an official visit from Creekside, Ga., five-star defensive back Eric Berry, who listed the Buckeyes among his top four schools alongside Georgia, Tennessee and USC.

"I think I already told (cornerbacks coach Tim) Beckman I am coming," Berry told BSB. "I'm not sure when, but I know it'll be after the season."

Berry played both ways for Creekside, at quarterback and cornerback, and Ohio State wanted him to suit up on both sides of the ball at the next level as well – as a receiver and defensive back.

"On the field I just go hard every play," he said. "I don't get complacent with my athleticism or my accomplishments. I keep trying to get better and lead by my example."

### 10 Years Ago – 2011

Columbus DeSales running back Warren Ball was focused on his senior season but told BSB he had been watching OSU's current backs to pick up a few tips.

"Their tailbacks have been pretty impressive so far, and even though the loss we had against Miami (Fla.) was disappointing, it

son's Station (Tenn.) Independence but is seeking a second.

Two days after Howard pared his list to 12, Phenix City (Ala.) Glenwood School five-star cornerback AJ Harris (6-2, 180) included Ohio State in his final seven schools and announced a Jan. 11 commitment date, although that could jump up to Dec. 13, his mom's birthday, if he feels comfortable with his choice. The Buckeyes cracked the final grouping as one of just two Northern schools along with Notre Dame. The others are Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, LSU and North Carolina.

Ranked the No. 13 player and No. 3 cornerback in his class, Harris took a visit to Columbus in June and is planning another one for Ohio State's Oct. 9 matchup with Maryland. The Harris family was originally planning to visit for the Oregon game, but the noon kickoff limited their ability to fly in for the contest – as it did for several national recruits.

Harris is considered a Georgia lean, but Alabama, Clemson, Notre Dame and Ohio State are each pushing hard and are scheduled to host the cornerback prospect before he announces his pledge. He went to Alabama's Sept. 25 matchup with Southern Mississippi and is scheduled to be at Georgia vs. Kentucky on Oct. 16, at Notre Dame vs. USC on Oct. 23, and at Clemson vs. Florida State on Oct. 30.

### Recruiting Notes

\* Four-star offensive tackle commitment George Fitzpatrick (6-6, 285) of Englewood

was great to see some solid tailback play from Carlos Hyde and Jordan Hall," Ball said. "They have been doing a great job so far."

Ball also told BSB that he was more than excited to eventually don the scarlet and gray.

"I really like the program," he said. "I can't wait to get down there and compete and just be a Buckeye."

During his own season, Ball was finding plenty of success as DeSales moved from the wing-T to the I-formation to better focus on its star back.

"When you have a senior tailback, you want to use the weapons you have," Ball said. "This year we are just trying to get the ball in my hands and trying to win games."

### Five Years Ago – 2016

It was a long time coming, but on Sept. 27, Ohio State quarterback commit Danny Clark announced via his Twitter account that he would be reopening his recruitment and decommitted from the Buckeyes.

"I truly felt I was born to play for the Buckeyes," Clark wrote. "I never for one second pictured a scenario where I wasn't wearing the Scarlet and Gray. In the past few months, I have been forced to accept the fact that as a pro-style QB, maybe my style of play would be a good fit elsewhere."

"At first I couldn't accept it. I spent a lot of nights crying and praying for an answer that I thought I already knew. But sometimes the writing is on the wall and you just have to see through the tears to read what it says. It is with a very heavy heart and with a clear conscience that I am officially decommitting from OSU and will now open my recruitment."

The Akron Archbishop Hoban signal-caller was the second player from his high school and his class to decommit from Ohio State. His offensive backfield mate, running back Todd Sibley, had flipped his commitment to Pitt just a few months before.

### One Year Ago – 2020

Grosse Point (Mich.) South five-star cornerback Will Johnson trimmed his long list of scholarship offers, but Ohio State made his top 10 along with Alabama, Arizona State, Georgia, Michigan, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Penn State, Stanford and USC.

The 6-3, 190-pounder was considered the third-best cornerback and No. 8 prospect overall in the 2022 recruiting.

Head coach Ryan Day and defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs extended an offer to Johnson during a virtual tour of the OSU campus in April, and the Buckeyes looked to be very much in the thick of his recruitment despite Johnson being the son of former Wolverines cornerback Deon Johnson (1991-94).

### Continued From Page 27

4 linebacker. He is 6-1 and 206 pounds, and Ohio State sees him as an outside linebacker in the same mold as Cody Simon, who came to Columbus with almost identical measurables.

Bowles is considered an Ohio State lean, though his brother, Todd Bowles Jr., is a walk-on at Rutgers, and their father is originally from New Jersey and played his college ball at Temple.

### Curry Through Two Major Visits

There are two down and three to go for four-star defensive tackle Caden Curry (6-5, 250) of Greenwood (Ind.) Cedar Grove when it comes to fall visits.

The nation's No. 69 player and No. 12 defensive lineman took in Ohio State's Sept. 11 matchup with Oregon and came away impressed by both squads. He followed that with a Sept. 18 visit to his home-state Hoosiers as they battled with Cincinnati.

Curry told 247Sports analyst Steve Wiltfong that he wants to take official trips to the three other schools in his top five – Alabama, Clemson and Oregon – as well as another trip to Columbus for its matchup with Penn State, before making any final decisions.

"I'm going to take a one-week break and see if we can get something else scheduled," Curry said. "Oregon sent me the game schedule to look at that, and I'm going to see if I can get over to Alabama and Clemson."

Curry plans to enroll early at the school of his choice, shortly after playing in the All-American Bowl.

### Howard, Harris Include Buckeyes On Top Lists

Ohio State cracked the top lists for a pair of 2023 prospects since BSB last went to press and now has a commitment date to look ahead to for one of them.

The first came Sept. 19 from four-star tight end Jaxon Howard (6-4, 245) of Minneapolis Robbinsdale Cooper, who included Ohio State in his top 12 schools along with Alabama, Arizona State, Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oregon, Stanford and USC.

"I know my final decision will not be an easy one with so many great schools to choose from," Howard posted on Twitter. "This list will help me focus in more, so that I can make the best decision for me."

"I look forward to building a strong relationship (with these top schools) so that when a final decision is to be made, my parents and I will feel fully comfortable knowing that I will be attending a university that has my best interest as a priority."

Howard is a Stanford legacy – his father, Willie, played defensive lineman for the Cardinal in the late 1990s – and is considered a lean to head out west. He's ranked the No. 64 player and No. 8 athlete, though he is expected to suit up as a tight end at the next level. Ohio State already holds one pledge from a 2023 tight end in four-star Ty Lockwood of Thomp-

(Colo.) Cherry Creek announced Sept. 19 that he'll be playing in the All-American Bowl, giving Ohio State six pledges at the event.

Fitzpatrick will be joining Antwi, Burton, Brown, Grayes and West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West teammates cornerback Jyaire Brown (6-0, 178) and offensive tackle Tegra Tshabola (6-5, 340).

Among top Buckeye prospects, Curry; Greene; Goodwin; four-star defensive tackle Hero Kanu (6-5, 293) of Rancho Santa Margarita (Calif.) Catholic; four-star defensive tackle Chris McClellan (6-3, 295) of Owasso, Okla.; four-star safety Xavier Nwankpa (6-2, 190) of Altoona (Iowa) Southeast Polk; Miller; Wagner; and White are each scheduled to play in the game as well.

Fitzpatrick is the No. 319 overall player and No. 28 offensive tackle in the 2022 class.

\* Tallahassee (Fla.) Lincoln 2023 four-star linebacker Raylen Wilson (6-2, 213) picked up an offer from Ohio State on Sept. 20 and plans to take a visit to Columbus this fall.

The No. 74 player and No. 6 linebacker in his class, Wilson recently released a top five of Auburn, Georgia, Michigan, Oregon and Penn State, but he could be reconsidering after picking up an offer from the Buckeyes and Texas A&M on the same day.

Wilson's father, Robert, played for Florida A&M as well as the Seattle Seahawks (1998-99) and New Orleans Saints (2000-01) as a wide receiver.



# McLaurin, Young Prove Worth To Washington

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Even though their expectations were at different levels upon being drafted by the Washington Football Team, former Ohio State players Terry McLaurin and Chase Young have exceeded them in their brief NFL careers.

At least that's the opinion of Zach Selby, staff writer for the WFT official website, who told BSB that not only are McLaurin, a third-year receiver, and Young, a second-season defensive edge, excelling in their individual roles with the team formerly called the Redskins, they are once again among the eight captains for the 2021 season.

"He's a very, very humble person," Selby said of McLaurin. "Whenever he gives an answer, he's really putting a lot of thought and effort into the responses and that's not something that you always get from players. Sometimes they'll give you an answer, but it's not at the level of depth that you get from Terry, and I think that speaks to how intelligent that he is.

"It's really impressive," Selby continued. "You can always count on whenever Terry is up at the podium he's going to give you a good interview and a good press conference because he's going to put a lot of thought and time and effort into however he answers."

McLaurin was voted a captain last season when strong safety Landon Collins was placed on injured reserve, and Young later in the season became a captain after former OSU quarterback Dwayne Haskins was released.

"He gets his teammates hyped up," Washington head coach Ron Rivera said when Young assumed a captaincy. "He really does. He's not just a good, young player that's going to get better, but there's an emotional energy that he brings. I think his teammates feed off that as well."

It is exceedingly rare in a veteran-driven league for a player to assume a leadership role at such an early part of his career.

"It's been really fun to see Chase evolve as a leader," Selby said. "That's actually something that the team was pleasantly surprised by. Not that they didn't think he'd be leader, but the way he was able to ensure this early in his career – to be this kind of leader – is not very common.

"(Former Washington QB) Alex Smith, arguably one of the most respected people not only in football but sports, said it's really crazy unusual to have a guy who is this vocal at this young age."

McLaurin was taken in the third round (76th overall) in the 2019 draft after a very good but not spectacular career at Ohio State. In 44 games as a Buckeye, he had 75 catches for 1,251 yards, good for a 16.7-yard average, and 19 touchdowns.

But it was on special teams that he excelled, and that reputation carried into his first camp with Washington.

"When he was being evaluated, a lot of people saw him as a special teams guy," Selby said. "He was seen as a guy who would maybe give you a little bit of offense once in a while, but something like a gunner on

the punt. That's really not what he ended up becoming."

That was evident in McLaurin's pro debut on Sept. 8, 2019, when he used his speed to get behind the defense for a 69-yard touchdown pass from Case Keenum in the second quarter against the Philadelphia Eagles.

"At that point you're thinking, 'Wow. OK, you have our attention. Now let's see what else you can do,'" Selby said. McLaurin had more than 100 yards receiving in the first half and finished with five catches for 125 yards during the team's eventual 32-27 loss to the Eagles.

"After that first game, it was like we can see what this guy can do. He has a chance to be really special," Selby said.

McLaurin was named to the Professional Football Writers of America All-Rookie team after finishing the 2019 season with 58 catches for 919 yards (a 15.8-yard average) and seven TDs. Last season, he totaled 87 receptions for 1,118 yards (a 12.9-yard average) with four scores.

So far in 2021, he had 19 catches for 231 yards and one touchdown through Sept. 26. That included 11 catches for 107 yards and a TD during Washington's wild 30-29 win against the New York Giants in front of a Thursday night nationwide audience on Sept. 16.

He's done all that despite being thrown to by 10 different quarterbacks over his first 32 games. Obviously, it's hard to get into a rhythm with a revolving door at QB, but McLaurin doesn't complain.

"It doesn't matter who it is, he finds a way to make things work, and he's a very friendly target to a lot of quarterbacks," Selby said. "That goes back to his work ethic and how he is able to put himself

in the best position to make plays. You can always count on Terry to be open somewhere, or if you need to put up a really tough catch, there's a good chance he's going to come down with it."

Not bad for a guy originally pegged to be a special teams mainstay.

"He wants to be one of the best No. 1 wideouts in the entire league, so he's working constantly at little bitty things," Selby said. "You would think they're just not very important, but he puts emphasis on them. That's why he's just been so good after two seasons."

Others have taken notice as well.

"I've got a lot of respect for Terry McLaurin," Los Angeles Chargers head coach Brandon Staley told the media on Sept. 6. "I think he is one of the top up-and-coming receivers in the NFL. He's proven himself in the NFL as an explosive playmaker. He's only going to get better, and I'm a huge fan of his game."

Young was much more heralded coming into the league than McLaurin, having been a unanimous All-American as well as a Heisman Trophy finalist in 2019 as a junior when he set the Ohio State single-season record with 16½ sacks. He parlayed that success into being the second overall selection in the 2020 draft.

Leaving school early turned out to be a

wise move. Young was named The Associated Press and PFWA Defensive Rookie of the Year, following in the footsteps of fellow former Buckeye defensive ends Joey Bosa, who won both awards with the Chargers in 2016, and Nick Bosa, who was so honored in 2019 while playing for San Francisco.



Chase Young

Young had 42 tackles, including 30 solos, 7½ sacks, four forced fumbles and three recoveries, including one he returned 47 yards for a TD against the 49ers last season.

Selby noted some might see his relatively low sack number and wonder if Young's style translates to the NFL.

"I think a lot of people, when they see the premier edge rushers in the league or any coming out of college, the first thing you want to think of their success is dedicated on how many sacks they get," Selby said. "Sacks are very important, but they're not a true indicator of how good a player is. Chase is not trying to be a one-trick guy. He's not just trying to be a pass-rush specialist. He wants to be a complete player, and you saw how it was going the latter half of 2020.

"You saw him fully start to get it because while he wasn't getting the sacks, the pressures were there, which is a far better indicator of how well you're able to annoy quarterbacks and get in their face," Selby added.

"He had a lot of tackles, forced fumbles and recoveries last season. You name it, he was doing it. He wants to be an all-around guy. He's not going to be someone who is just going to rest his laurels on trying to get the quarterback on the ground."

Young is now beginning to experience the double teams, or chipping, that college teams employed.

"The problem is that if you're going to double- and triple-team guys, that leaves other players – and we have three first-round picks on the defensive line – to come in and make plays," Selby said. "As other guys get more attention, that's going to lead attention away from Chase and he's going to get those one-on-one matchups that will allow him to succeed."

From a defensive force to being a leader, Selby said Young is the real deal.

"He's outperformed his expectations," the writer said, "which were already very high."

Another former Buckeye on the Washington Football Team is receiver Curtis Samuel, who signed a three-year, \$34.5 million deal during the offseason. He has missed the first three weeks of the season with a groin injury.

Samuel spent his first four NFL seasons with Carolina, where he appeared in 53 games (including 32 starts) and totaled 185 receptions for 2,087 yards and 14 touchdowns. He also rushed for 478 yards and five TDs, and he averaged 21.5 yards on 40 kickoff returns.

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# Woody's First Season Fraught With Dissonance

*Throughout the 2021 football season, Buckeye Sports Bulletin will publish historical stories from seasons ending in the numeral "1." This week, BSB looks back at the 1951 season, the first in the 28-year tenure of head coach Woody Hayes.*

**By MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Woody Hayes didn't much care for many of the players on his first team at Ohio State. That was OK, though. The feeling was mutual.

Most of the Buckeyes who made up the roster for the 1951 season had been recruited by Wes Fesler, the good-looking, mild-mannered coach who was the antithesis of his successor.

Fesler had been a consensus All-American in football and basketball at Ohio State in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and he had gone on to a coaching career in both sports on the collegiate level. In 1947, he returned to Columbus as head coach of the football Buckeyes, the fifth man to occupy the position in just seven years.

While most fans hailed his return as that of a favorite son and conquering hero, Fesler soon discovered the intrinsic problems of trying to rebuild a once-proud program that had grown fallow during the post-World War II years. When his first season ended with a 2-6-1 record – the worst for the Buckeyes since a 1-7-1 finish in 1897 – the pressure only got worse.

The team's record improved in subsequent seasons, including a 7-1-2 season in 1949 that included the program's first-ever Rose Bowl victory. But even back then, an Ohio State head coach's success was measured by his record against Michigan, and Fesler's three-year record was 0-2-1 against the Wolverines.

The coach admitted he didn't have the stomach for the constant criticism leveled by the media, alumni and fans, and he went to athletic director Richard Larkins asking to be let out of the final year of his contract. Larkins said he would consider Fesler's request, but after meeting with several of his players, the coach went back to the AD and agreed to return for the 1950 season.

Fesler would later regret that decision, the breaking point coming after the 1950 Michigan game, now known as "The Snow Bowl." The coach called for a controversial third-down punt late in the first half, and when Michigan blocked the kick and recovered it in the end zone, it provided the winning points for a 9-3 victory.

Fesler was roundly criticized for the decision to punt, and a few weeks later, he'd had enough. He submitted an abruptly written letter of resignation to Larkins, citing health and family problems. Less than two months later, Fesler was hired as head coach at Minnesota, where he coached (presumably under less pressure) from 1951-53.

Meanwhile, several prominent candidates were mentioned for the Ohio State opening, most notably longtime Missouri head coach Don Faurot. He had been a finalist for the position in 1941 when the job went to Paul Brown, but this time Faurot was the favorite among university officials

and alumni. He accepted the job in Columbus on a Friday and went home to clean out his office. Less than 48 hours later, however, Faurot changed his mind and remained at Missouri.

With spring football only a few weeks away, Ohio State officials quickly reorganized and settled on a field of seven candidates – one professional coach, four coaches from the college ranks and two Ohio high school coaches.

The pro coach was Brown, who had produced the school's first national championship in 1942. He had already flirted with returning to Ohio State following World War II but instead took a job as head coach of the Cleveland Browns. The coach had led the Browns to championships in each of his first five seasons in Cleveland – four in the All-America Football Conference and the 1950 crown in the NFL.

Brown was the hands-down favorite of Ohio State fans and students to replace Fesler. Approximately 1,500 fans cheered his arrival in Columbus for a meeting with the search committee in late January, but there were a number of influential alumni and Columbus businessmen who did not want Brown to return. They felt he had reneged on a deal to return to Ohio State after the war and that he signed with Cleveland without notifying the university.

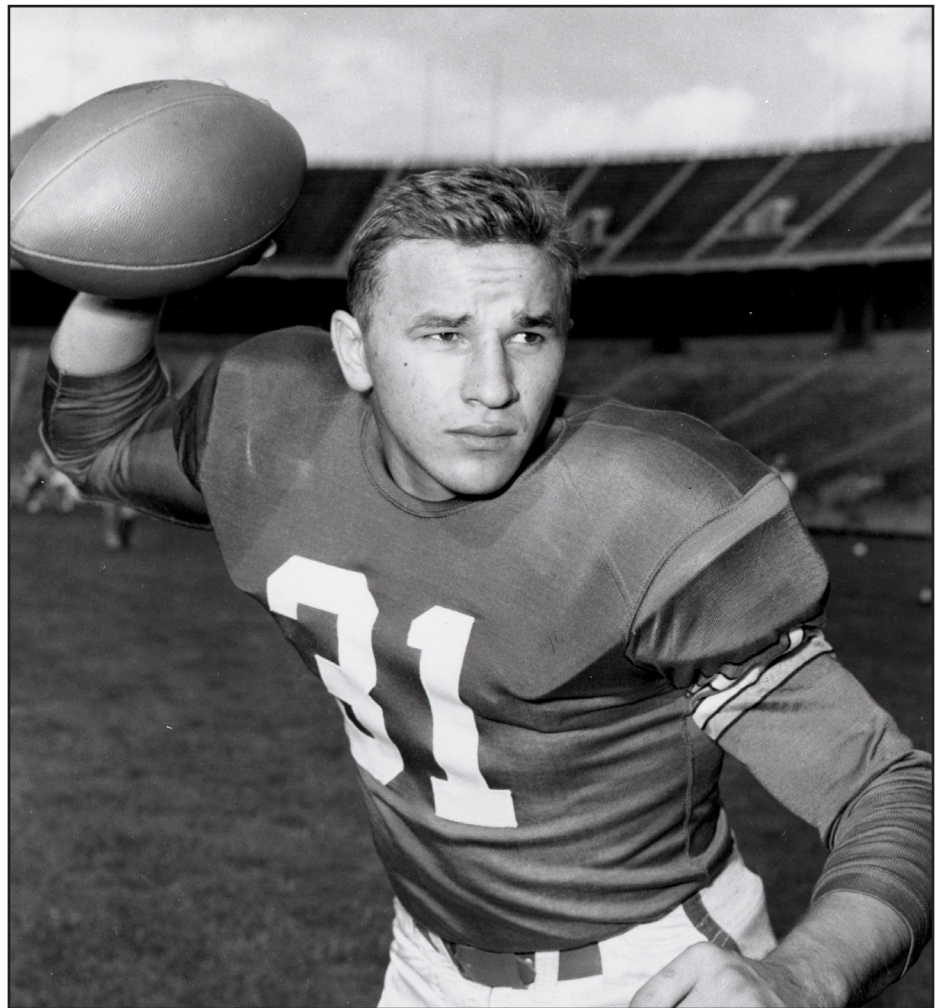
Nevertheless, newspaper reports continued to trumpet Brown as the front-runner for the vacancy. Also receiving formal interviews were OSU freshman coach Harry Strobel, former OSU All-American and assistant coach and current University of Cincinnati head coach Sid Gillman, Warren Gaer of Drake and Hayes at Miami (Ohio), as well as high school coaches Chuck Mather of Massillon and Jim McDonald of Springfield.

In early February, the field had reportedly been pared to three – Brown, Mather and Hayes with Strobel still in the running as a dark horse. Brown was the choice of the fans, and Mather was backed by the Ohio High School Coaches Association. Meanwhile, Strobel was the original choice of the athletic department, but Hayes had supplanted him after a stellar interview.

An announcement was to be made around Feb. 14 – Hayes' 38th birthday – but all seven members of the Ohio State board of trustees had to agree on the new coach and the university couldn't seem to get the entire panel together at the same time. In the meantime, the six-man search committee and 12-member athletic board had settled on Hayes.

The official decision was postponed for another few days as speculation ran rampant. What if Hayes was rejected by the trustees? Would the athletic board then throw its support behind Strobel, or would some back-room maneuvering pave the way for Brown to return to Columbus after all?

The OSU board of trustees finally got together to end the speculation on Feb. 18, a Sunday afternoon. Thanks to an impassioned speech from former Ohio Gov. and then U.S. Sen. John W. Bricker, the board formally hired Hayes as the university's 19th head football coach. Whereas Fesler had been given a five-year deal when he was hired in 1947, Hayes received a one-year,



FILE PHOTO

**VIC THE QUICK** – Fresh off winning the 1950 Heisman Trophy as a junior, Ohio State star Vic Janowicz was ready to try for a then-unprecedented second trophy in 1951. But new head coach Woody Hayes and members of the 1951 Buckeyes never got on the same page, leading to a disappointing season.

\$12,500 contract in accordance with university policy but also got a five-year "gentleman's agreement" from university president Howard L. Bevis.

Before its Sunday meeting, the board had reportedly remained split between Hayes and Brown. That was until Bricker made a 10-minute speech to his fellow trustees opposing Brown and boosting Hayes.

After the days and weeks of wrangling before being offered the job, Hayes didn't seem to mind the delay, telling reporters, "I have wanted this job very much. It's the greatest coaching opportunity in the country."

Privately, though, the new coach seethed, bitter about being left to twist in the wind while the university allowed a Brown-vs.-Hayes debate to be waged through the sports pages of city newspapers. That bitterness spilled over when spring practice began, and the players were the ones who suffered.

## Changing Philosophies

Hayes inherited a talented team that had averaged more than 31 points per game in 1950, and everyone naturally assumed a potent offense would be the Buckeyes' calling card again in 1951. Returning from the previous season was a core of senior leadership, including center and team captain Bob Heid, halfback Ray Hamilton and do-everything Vic Janowicz, who had won the Heisman Trophy as a junior.

Janowicz had been a high school baseball and football star in his hometown of Elyria,

Ohio, and the target of many of the most high-profile college programs in the country. Although recruiting was not the specialized industry it is today, his exploits in high school made Janowicz one of the most highly sought-after prospects in the nation, and more than 60 colleges and universities offered full scholarships, many of them promising to build their entire programs around him.

However, the Buckeyes had a little something extra going for them as they pursued the services of the prospect now known as "Vic the Quick."

The year before Janowicz became a high school senior, an organization known as the Frontliners was formed to help recruit top talent for the Ohio State football program. Alumni Association field secretary J. Edward Weaver – who would later serve as the school's director of athletics from 1970-77 – formed the group composed of prominent alumni, top businessmen and well-heeled program supporters. The group's main purpose was to help steer top high school talent to Columbus.

One of the group's founding members was property developer, thoroughbred horse breeder and Pittsburgh Pirates owner John W. Galbreath, an influential man who took an immediate liking to Janowicz. The feeling was evidently mutual, and the Buckeyes were able to land one of the most prized high school recruits in the nation.

Janowicz arrived at Ohio State in the fall



of 1948 and immediately made a name for himself on the freshman squad. The following season, he was one of several talented sophomores who helped the Buckeyes win a share of the Western Conference championship as well as a 17-14 Rose Bowl victory against California. It marked OSU's first-ever Rose Bowl win, and Janowicz helped the cause with a 45-yard interception return early in the third quarter.

The following year, Fesler tapped Janowicz to lead his offense, and a star was born.

During his junior season in 1950, Janowicz rushed for 314 yards and five touchdowns, threw for 557 yards and 12 TDs and added countless other big plays on defense and special teams. He then won the Heisman Trophy in a landslide vote in December.

Janowicz was ready to try for what was then an unprecedented second Heisman as a senior in 1951, but his campaign was derailed before it ever got started. And it was Hayes who effectively derailed it, scrapping the single-wing formation in which Janowicz had flourished in favor of a Wing-T alignment that relegated the star player to an outside wingback position.

"When Woody went to the T-formation, Janowicz was used as more of a flanker and a decoy," OSU football historian Jack Park told BSB. "A lot of people thought Woody didn't fully utilize his talents."

Janowicz was one of them.

"I didn't like his technique of coaching," he said years later. "He was a believer in three yards and a cloud of dust, but I felt you had to have a little finesse with that."

### Season Of Discontent

The 1951 season opened with 80,735 on hand at Ohio Stadium – the largest crowd in Ohio Stadium history for a season opener – and it was "treated" to a rather boring 7-0 victory against SMU. The new T-formation sputtered for much of the afternoon with ironically the only touchdown coming in the third quarter on a 21-yard pass from quarterback Tony Curcillo to receiver Bob Joslin.

That rather bland victory dropped the Buckeyes four spots in the national polls, and they were ranked No. 7 when top-ranked Michigan State invaded Columbus in week two. Thanks to a pair of touchdown receptions by Hamilton – one off a 19-yard pass from Janowicz, the other worth 25 yards delivered by Curcillo – the Buckeyes had a 20-17 lead late in the fourth quarter.

The Spartans were attempting a late comeback when they faced a fourth-and-6 situation at the OSU 28. Michigan State head coach Clarence "Biggie" Munn then unveiled what at the time was described as a "transcontinental pass." Now known simply as a throwback pass, MSU quarterback Al Dorrow took the snap from center and lateraled to halfback Tom Yewsic, who began to run to his right. Yewsic abruptly stopped, turned and then threw back across the field to Dorrow, who eluded a pair of Ohio State defenders before diving into the end zone to give the Spartans a 24-20 victory.

"Munn drew up the play in the sideline dirt just seconds before it was executed," Park said. "It was also the first pass of Yewsic's college career."

The following week, the T-formation failed to produce much of anything against Wisconsin, and the Buckeyes finished the game with only 106 yards of total offense to 346 for the Badgers. But Wisconsin turned

the ball over four times, and Ohio State managed a 4-yard touchdown pass in the fourth quarter from Janowicz to end Ralph Armstrong to forge a 6-6 tie.

Janowicz kicked what would have been the game-winning PAT, but the Buckeyes were penalized for having only 10 men on the field. On the second try, a bad snap wiped out Ohio State's chance to win the game.

The low point of the season followed Oct. 20 when the Buckeyes, now sitting at No. 17 in the rankings, lost a 32-10 decision to Indiana. Ohio State entered the game as a 17-point favorite but committed five turnovers that led to three IU touchdowns.

With the team's record at 1-2-1 and many of its players ready for a full-scale revolt against Hayes and his military-style practices and leadership style, the first-year head coach threw an impromptu Sunday afternoon party for them. The good feeling produced by the event was short-lived, however, when the coach announced position changes the next day. Curcillo was shifted from quarterback to fullback while junior Bill Wilkes was promoted to starting quarterback.

That strategy quickly went out the window the following Saturday when Wilkes was injured during the first quarter against Iowa. Curcillo, who hadn't taken a single snap at quarterback during the week, returned to his old position and threw for a program-record 292 yards and four touchdowns to lead the Buckeyes to a 47-21 victory. Curcillo also ran for two scores as Ohio State more than doubled its previous high-scoring effort of the season.

The offensive fireworks disappeared the following week, however, as the Buckeyes managed only a fourth-quarter field goal of 26 yards from Janowicz. It was enough, though, because the OSU defense stopped Northwestern on downs three times inside the 15-yard line to allow for a 3-0 victory against the Wildcats.

It was more of the same the following week at Pittsburgh. This time, the Buckeyes held the Panthers three times inside their own 10-yard line, and a 20-yard field goal from Janowicz provided the winning points in a 16-14 win. It marked the first road victory for Hayes at Ohio State.

But bruised egos and frayed nerves within the Ohio State locker room had taken their toll. Just before the homecoming game against third-ranked Illinois, which was also the final home game of the 1951 season, the seniors engineered something of a coup.

Led by Heid, Hamilton and Janowicz, the Buckeyes locked Hayes and his assistants out of the locker room before the game and held a players-only meeting.

"It was nothing against Woody," Heid said in 2011. "We just wanted to meet by ourselves (to refocus) on Illinois. I don't know if he waited just outside the door or where he was. I remember we really didn't care, though."

The meeting mostly had its desired effect when Ohio State forged a 0-0 tie with the Illini, the only blemish on an Illinois season that included a Rose Bowl win against Stanford and a No. 2 finish in the national rankings. Hamilton saved the game with an open-field tackle late in the fourth quarter, stopping an Illinois runner just short of the goal line.

Unfortunately, the Buckeyes were made to suffer one more indignity at the behest of tradition and their coaching staff.

Under instructions from longtime assistant coach Ernie Godfrey, Heid had to carry a bouquet of roses onto the Illinois bus after the game to present to Illini head coach Ray Eliot. It was a bygone tradition for the opposing team's captain to honor the Big Ten team that had just clinched the conference's Rose Bowl berth in the spirit of sportsmanship. But Heid admitted he didn't feel very sporting at the time.

"I hated doing it," he said.

By the time the traditional finale against Michigan was played on Nov. 24, coaches and players were exhausted and just ready for the season to be over. It showed in their performance, too, as the Buckeyes turned the ball over eight times, never advanced beyond the Michigan 24-yard line, and wound up losing a 7-0 decision.

The following year, Hayes scrapped the T-formation in favor of the Split-T, which positioned linemen farther apart to provide for better blocking angles. The change led to a more potent offense for the Buckeyes, one in which quarterback John Borton threw for 1,555 yards, a single-season program record that stood until 1979.

That must have been a bitter pill for Heid, Hamilton, Janowicz and the rest of the seniors on the 1951 team. But only Janowicz let the effects of that season linger.

### Life After Football

Heid graduated from OSU with a degree in petroleum engineering and later served in the U.S. Air Force. While in the Air Force, he played football at Bolling Air Force Base near Washington, D.C.

He married his wife, Sally, in 1954 – their first date had been the night of the Snow Bowl in 1950 – and worked at Columbia Gas in Columbus and attended Franklin University Law School (now the Capital University Law School) at night to obtain his law degree.

Heid moved back to his hometown of Fremont, Ohio, helped raise four children and practiced law for more than 40 years until his retirement in 2009. He remained a fixture in Fremont until his death in 2017 at the age of 87.

After graduation, Hamilton stayed at Ohio State as an academic counselor in the university's College of Arts and Sciences until his retirement. He also had a brief stint in the U.S. Army and served as head coach of the Columbus Colts, a professional minor-league team in the United Football League.

A lover of card games, horse racing and summer cookouts, Hamilton also died in 2017 at the age of 87.

Meanwhile, Janowicz became so soured on football that he spurned a chance to play in the NFL for the Washington Redskins

and accepted an offer from Galbreath to play major-league baseball with the Pirates. Unfortunately, Pittsburgh wasn't very good in those days, and manager Fred Haney didn't much care for an owner-selected bonus baby rammed down his throat. As a result, Janowicz appeared in only 83 games over two seasons, hitting .214 with two homers and 10 RBI.

Following the 1954 baseball season, Janowicz decided to return to football and signed a contract with the Redskins. After easing his way back into the game in '54 primarily as the team's kicker, he appeared to be back in form the following year when he rushed for 397 yards and four touchdowns, caught 11 passes for 149 yards and two more TDs, and booted six field goals and 28 PATs.

The following summer, Janowicz was primed for a breakout season and was eager to get to training camp. He caught a ride with a teammate, but while he was asleep in the backseat, the car went off the road and struck a bridge abutment. Janowicz suffered severe head injuries and was in a coma for nearly a month. He wound up spending six weeks in the hospital and wound up partially paralyzed, ending his athletic career.

Around the same time, Janowicz's daughter Diana was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. She died in 1965 at the age of 9, leaving the family buried beneath an avalanche of medical bills.

Janowicz refused to give up. After years of rehabilitation, he overcame the paralysis and through therapy learned how to deal with the death of his daughter.

"It's pretty easy to feel sorry for yourself," he told BSB in 1990. "The hard part is to get your head on straight. It took me a long time to figure things out, but boy when I did, man, what a life I've had."

Janowicz spent the next several years as administrative assistant in the Ohio state auditor's office and experienced a rebirth of sorts at his alma mater. Admittedly bitter for many years about what had happened during his senior year, he returned to Ohio State in the mid-1970s and was welcomed with open arms. He even mended fences with Hayes, and the two remained friends until the coach's death in 1987.

Janowicz was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 1976, spent time as a radio analyst on Ohio State football broadcasts, and was a member of the inaugural class of inductees into the university's athletics hall of fame.

Much in demand as a public speaker, especially at schools where he would cheerfully display his Heisman Trophy for youngsters to see and touch, Janowicz continued to tour the state as a goodwill ambassador for the university until his February 1996 death at the age of 66 from prostate cancer.



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# Holtmann Uses Football To Enhance Own Program

While Ohio State men's basketball coach Chris Holtmann already has four commitments for the class of 2022, it doesn't mean there is a down period in recruiting. In fact, this is the busy period as Holtmann and his staff work in as many visits and calls as possible before the 2021-22 season gets under way.

There could still be an additional recruit for the next cycle, and there are spots to fill for the ensuing two years and beyond.

## COURT REPORT Craig Merz

Holtmann knows all about the power and pull of the football program and doesn't shy away from bringing prospective Buckeyes on campus for a football weekend, such as he did for the Sept. 25 game against Akron when class of 2023 four-star combo guard George Washington III (6-2, 165) from Christian Academy of Louisville (Ky.) made an unofficial visit. He is rated 42nd nationally in the 247Sports composite rankings.

Washington has already visited Cincinnati, Louisville and Tennessee and also has trips to Memphis and Liberty planned. He gave 247Sports his assessment of Ohio State prior to coming to Columbus.

"I have been in contact with Chris Holtmann and (assistant coach) Ryan Pedon," Washington said. "They have a beautiful campus. Everything there is top-notch. They are a school that pursues excellence in every sport. I can't wait to feel the energy there during my next visit. I feel it is going to be a great experience."

While a home football game is a lure, the basketball program is showcased as well with the visitors allowed access to workouts.



FILE PHOTO

**CHASING RECRUITS** - Ohio State men's basketball coach Chris Holtmann pulls out all the stops when pursuing recruits, including using football weekends as campus draws for potential prospects. Several highly rated players have already visited Holtmann during the Buckeyes' three home football games this season.

For the OSU-Tulsa game on Sept. 18, Orlando (Fla.) Lake Highland Prep four-star forward Brice Sensabaugh (6-4, 240) and his family visited the campus.

"Late thanks to the incredible staff at @OhioStateHoops for hosting me on a great official. Had a great time #gobucks," posted

Sensabaugh on Twitter two days later.

Whether the Buckeyes did enough to land him will be decided after BSB goes to press because Sensabaugh said via Twitter that he will reveal his choice on Sept. 28. Check BuckeyeSports.com for that announcement.

Alabama, Florida, Georgia Tech and Ohio State are the front-runners to land Sensabaugh's services, according to 247Sports.

There were a number of other basketball recruits at the Tulsa football game as well, including 2023 St. Marys (Ohio) Memorial forward Austin Parks (6-9, 240), who has an OSU offer among a list that includes Cincinnati, Dayton, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan State.

Parks was on an unofficial visit as were Chicago St. Rita teammates James Brown and Morez Johnson, each 2024 targets. Brown (6-8, 210) is a power forward who was offered Sept. 18. Florida, Illinois and Iowa are among schools also interested in him. Johnson is another forward almost equal in size (6-8, 205). Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska are among the schools that have offered. 247 Sports has not rated the class of 2024 yet.

Others attending the game included Pickerington (Ohio) Central small forward Devin Royal (6-6, 210) and Dailyn Swain (6-6, 170) from Columbus Africentric. They are unranked juniors.

## Other Recruiting News

• With 2022 four-star point guard Bruce Thornton from Alpharetta, (Ga.) Milton on board, the Buckeyes headed back to the Peach State on Sept. 20 to see 2023 top-50 players London Johnson and Stephon Castle.

London (6-4, 165) is a four-star point guard from Norcross, Ga., ranked 35th. Offers include Cincinnati, Georgetown, North Carolina and Xavier.

Castle (6-6, 185), a four-star from Covington (Ga.) Newton, is ranked 49th overall and 10th among shooting guards. He received an OSU offer Sept. 22 to join offers from the likes of Auburn, Georgia, Florida and Wake Forest.

• The Buckeyes recently visited Roselle (N.J.) Catholic five-star combo guard Simeon Wilcher (6-4, 185). He is 11th nationally

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## 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 Cincinnati
Felix Okpara	C	6-11	210	★★★★	Chattanooga(Tn.) Hamilton Hts. Christian
Bruce Thornton	PG	6-2	205	★★★★	Alpharetta (Ga.) Milton

and No. 2 at his position.

Wilcher has an OSU offer as well as others from such big-time programs as Auburn, Connecticut, Iowa, Kansas, Miami, North Carolina, St. John's and Xavier.

- The Buckeyes are expected to host point guard Damon King of Louisville (Ky.) Dupont Manual and power forward Ayden Evans from Radcliff (Ky.) North Hardin for unofficial visits on Oct. 30. They are unranked for 2024, but Louisville has shown interest in each.

- Looking well down the road, Ohio State has offered 2025 point guard Jerry Easter II, who is a freshman at Springfield (Ohio) Emmanuel Christian. Easter also has been offered by Arizona while Bowling Green submitted an offer after sixth grade, according to The (Toledo) Blade.

Also in that 2025 cycle, Darryn Patterson, a 6-5 point guard who will play at Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy, was offered in late August.

## It's A Small World

When the Buckeyes landed Louisiana transfer guard Cedric Russell this summer, it wasn't just happenstance that his name came up after guard Duane Washington opted to enter the NBA draft after three sea-

sons at Ohio State.

Holtmann had an inside track because he hired Tony Skinn as an assistant coach on May 27 to replace Terry Johnson, who went to Purdue. Skinn had spent the previous three seasons at Seton Hall, but prior to that he was an assistant for Louisiana Tech

from 2015-18.

"It helped that Tony had recruited him and knew him," Holtmann said. "I think that was a part of this. There were a couple other guys, honestly, that we were recruiting, but we felt like Cedric would be a better fit maybe because he wouldn't be as ball-dominant potentially.

"You're always having those conversations. I think there was a lot of discussion on that once we realized Duane was going to move on."

Holtmann said the Buckeyes needed to add some experienced depth at the position after going through a 2020-21 season of attrition. First, Utah State transfer Abel Porter had to retire before the season because

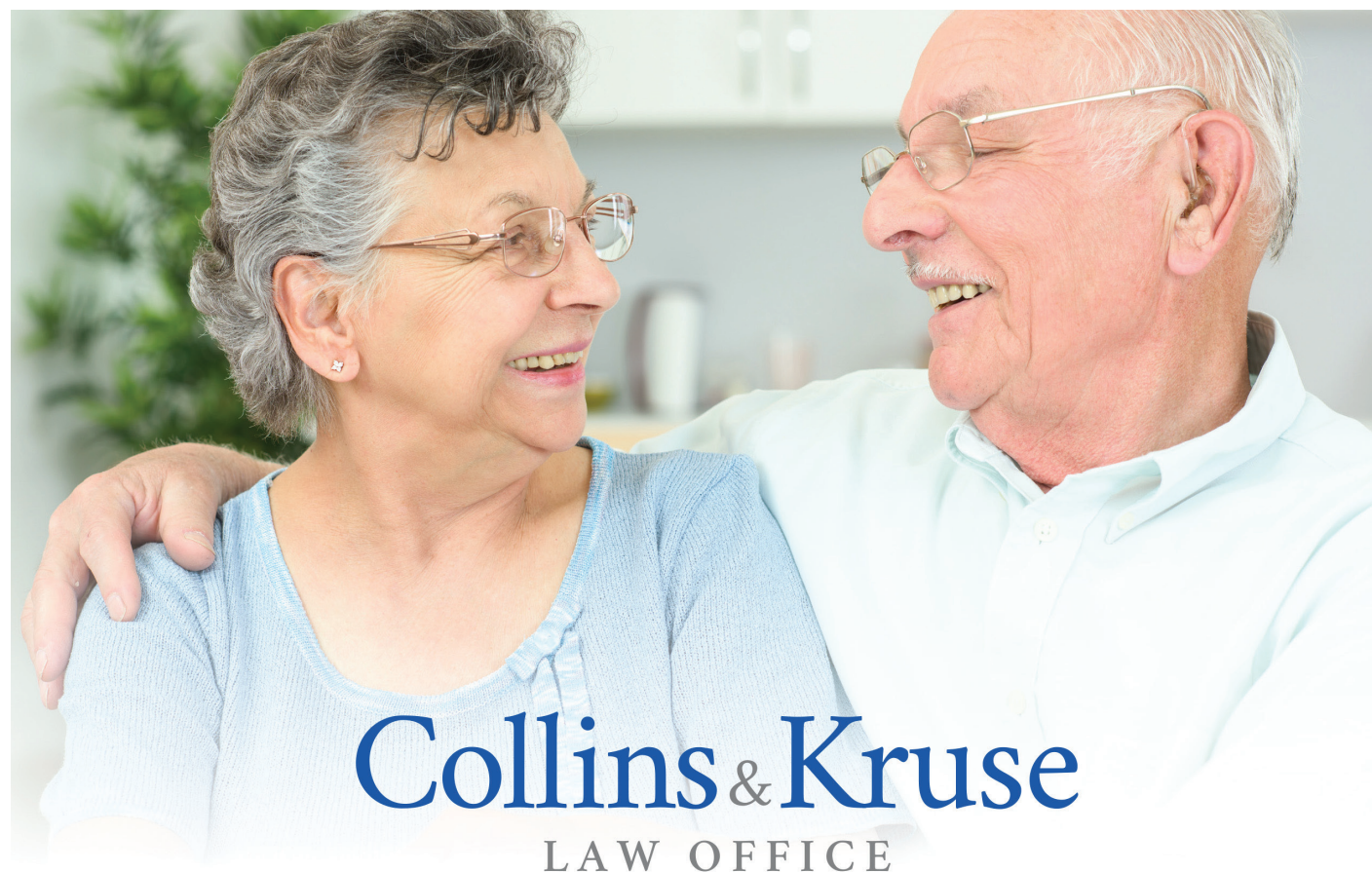
of a heart condition, then

Bucknell transfer Jimmy Sotos underwent season-ending shoulder surgery on Feb. 4.

"I think I'd be honest in saying that was a factor," Holtmann said of bringing in Russell. "I just felt like we were a little bit thinner than we needed to be. And some of that was some really unique circumstances with Abel going down at the start of the season and other injuries that happened."

## Big Ten Media Day

The Big Ten will host its annual basketball media day for all conference men's and women's teams on Oct. 7 and 8 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.



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**Jackie Collins**  
Attorney/Army Veteran



**Wren Kruse**  
Attorney

## 2021-22 OSU Men's Basketball Schedule

Date	Opponent
Nov. 1	Indianapolis (Exh.)
Nov. 9	Akron
Nov. 12	Niagara
Nov. 15	Bowling Green ^
Nov. 18	at Xavier #
Nov. 22	vs. Seton Hall ^
Nov. 24	vs. Florida/Cal ^
Nov. 30	Duke*
Dec. 5	at Penn State
Dec. 8	Towson
Dec. 11	Wisconsin
Dec. 18	vs. Kentucky \$
Dec. 21	Tennessee Martin
Dec. 28	New Orleans
Jan. 2	at Nebraska
Jan. 6	at Indiana
Jan. 9	Northwestern
Jan. 13	at Wisconsin
Jan. 16	Penn State
Jan. 22	Nebraska
Jan. 27	at Minnesota
Jan. 30	at Purdue
Feb. 3	Iowa
Feb. 6	Maryland
Feb. 9	at Rutgers
Feb. 12	at Michigan
Feb. 15	Minnesota
Feb. 19	Indiana
Feb. 24	at Illinois
Feb. 27	at Maryland
March 3	Michigan State
March 6	Michigan

^ - Fort Myers Tip-Off

# - Gavitt Tipoff Games

\* - Big Ten/ACC Challenge

\$ - CBSSports Classic at Las Vegas

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# Powell Makes Big Leap From Rattlers To OSU

By **WYATT CROSHER**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

The Ohio State women's basketball program suffered a pair of losses, both in the transfer portal with forwards Dorka Juhasz and Aaliyah Patty, and in its coaching staff with Simon Harris and Tamika Williams-Jeter.

With Harris and Williams-Jeter taking head coaching jobs at East Tennessee State and Wittenberg, respectively, OSU head coach Kevin McGuff was tasked with finding a pair of new assistants for his staff heading into the season.

On May 17, he announced the first hire – Wes Brooks, who has more than a decade of assistant coaching experience in such places as North Texas, Robert Morris, Texas Southern and Utah as well as Big Ten rival Michigan.

The next hire wasn't announced until more than three months later when, on Aug. 31, McGuff brought on board former Florida A&M assistant coach Jalen Powell, who had only graduate assistant experience prior to working with the Lady Rattlers for one season.

Powell does not have as much experience as the other assistants on McGuff's staff, and she is aware of that. But she didn't expect to be here – at least not yet – telling BSB she was very much taken by surprise when she received a call from Ohio State about the position.

"I didn't apply," Powell said. "I didn't do any of that. Coach McGuff reached out to me. I knew that there was a job opening, but I was at Florida A&M and it's not normal to go from Florida A&M – a prestigious HBCU (historically Black college or university) – and jump right to the Big Ten. There are a whole bunch of levels in between that. Obviously, I knew it was open, but I wasn't thinking anything of it. I was focused on recruiting for my kids at that time and focused on growing Florida A&M.

"It was just so random on how it happened, but it was kind of crazy. It was just so surreal."

McGuff was aware there would be a bit of an experience gap between what Powell has done compared to the rest of the core staff. But

he told BSB that Powell's experience both at Florida A&M and as a graduate assistant at Arkansas impressed him, and when he heard good things, he made the call.

"She's young, but she's already got a great reputation," the OSU head coach said. "She worked for my former assistant and close friend Mike Neighbors at Arkansas, and he really vouched for her character and work ethic. And then secondly, she has real passion for young people and helping them grow and develop on and off the court. I just thought that would be something that would be beneficial for us as we continue to be at the forefront of college teams that do a great job helping their kids develop and grow."

Powell joins Brooks and Carla Morrow, who was promoted to associate head coach on the same day as Powell's hiring. The women's basketball staff also features director of operations Beth Howe, video coordinator Ryan Murphy and Reid Guzdanski as special assistant to the head coach.

All of that makes for a complete unit, according to McGuff, and one that will benefit from the jolt that Powell provides.

"I really liked the staff we had before we hired her, and I thought she fit in really well with that," McGuff said. "That was a big part of it – just creating staff chemistry and I thought she could really help with that."

Before her time at Florida A&M, Powell was not always in the coaching game. The 2017-18 and 2018-19 seasons were the ones she spent in Arkansas, with the latter watching the Razorbacks make a run to the SEC championship game and winning a pair of matchups in the WNIT.

After that, Powell worked as a trainer at Basketball Results, which is run by her father, Jerry. He has worked with a variety of NBA players, including Charlotte Hornets forward Miles Bridges, Los Angeles Clippers forward Paul George, and Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James and guard Rajon Rondo.



Jalen Powell

## OSU Women's Basketball Verbal Commitments

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

Though it was a departure from coaching, Powell said that she learned a lot of things in that gap year that will help make her a better coach down the line.

"I just learned a lot of different things that I could do with players to not only enhance their skill, but what people don't realize is basketball is a lot of skill, but it has to do a lot with your confidence," Powell said. "A lot of these times we see these great players like Kobe Bryant, LeBron, Kevin Durant and so on, but not only do they have great skill, they have great confidence. It kind of goes hand in hand because when you work on your skills, and you see that your skills are developing, your confidence goes up. You know you may go through a drought, but then if you remain confident, your skills will always be a part of you."

"Skills are something we'll always have as people, but confidence is the main thing that will really separate you from other athletes."

From Basketball Results, Powell moved on to the Lady Rattlers but was not fully able to show what she had learned. After coming off a difficult 2019-20 season, posting a 6-21 record, Florida A&M opted out of the 2020-21 season due to concerns of COVID-19.

Powell said she still learned plenty under head coach Sharon Pillow, once again following in her Basketball Results path and discovering ways to help players both on and off the court.

"It was great. Coach Pillow was awesome," Powell said. "She's a great coach, but she's also one of the greatest people I've ever met in my life. When I was there, I learned a lot about what it's like to not only invest in your player because you're good at basketball, but to also invest in your player as a person because eventually basketball stops."

"I learned a lot on how to build relationships and connections with these players that will probably last beyond their playing days."

That investment Powell has been able to have with players in all facets is one of the key qualities McGuff said he was excited about when bringing her in to fill out the staff.

"I think she'll do a really good job of kind of connecting with our players, and really being able to help relay my messages and help them grow and develop," he said. "That was one of the biggest things – she's really good at connecting with young people."

Ohio State's roster is specifically guard-heavy coming into the season after losing Juhasz and Patty, and that has led to McGuff talking up an increase in speed the Buckeyes expect to utilize this season.

When asked what about the OSU roster excites her most, Powell seemed to be all in on what McGuff is going for.

"The pace," Powell said. "Everything's so fast. All in all, everyone works really hard. Everyone is really in tune with what Coach McGuff is trying to do."

"I think a major part of having a successful team is when your players are buying into the culture of what your head coach is trying to create. Everyone seems to be completely bought into him and what he's trying to do here – the offense we're trying to run, the defense we're going to do and all that stuff. It has been really exciting to be a part of."

Powell has not been at Ohio State long, but her goals for what she hopes to accomplish in her time with the Buckeyes are clear.

For starters, after she gets acclimated to the "faster, bigger and better" Big Ten play, as she describes it, she will be hoping that Ohio State can do what it always wants to do – win a national title.

But for what she is hoping to accomplish in Columbus from a coaching standpoint, Powell wants to do what she did at the training facility and in her time at Florida A&M – build relationships with her players that go past basketball.

"A personal goal for me is always developing relationships," Powell said. "I'm a really big relationship person. When these kids graduate, I want them to be like 'Hey, let me call Coach J.P.' and be like, 'Can you write me a letter of recommendation?' I want to be able to be that person for them."

"Obviously, for team purposes, I would love to win a national championship. But that's a process just like everything else in life. Not even just sports, but in life. I'm just really excited to see what this team will do this year and how far we'll go."

## 2021-22 OSU Women's Basketball Schedule

Date	Opponent
Nov. 3	Slippery Rock (Exh.)
Nov. 10	Bucknell
Nov. 14	Norfolk State
Nov. 17	Bowling Green
Nov. 23	Bellarmine
Nov. 27	Cincinnati
Dec. 1	at Syracuse
Dec. 5	at Purdue
Dec. 7	Mount St. Mary's
Dec. 12	Indiana
Dec. 15	Alabama State
Dec. 19	at UCLA
Dec. 21	at San Diego State
Dec. 31	at Michigan
Jan. 3	Penn State
Jan. 6	Illinois
Jan. 9	at Northwestern
Jan. 12	Michigan State
Jan. 15	at Minnesota
Jan. 20	Maryland
Jan. 23	at Rutgers
Jan. 27	Michigan
Jan. 31	at Iowa
Feb. 7	Rutgers
Feb. 10	Nebraska
Feb. 14	at Illinois
Feb. 17	at Maryland
Feb. 20	Wisconsin
Feb. 27	Michigan State

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## 2021 FOOTBALL (3-1)

**Sept. 2** at Minnesota, W 45-31; **11** OREGON, L 35-28; **18** TULSA, W 41-20; **25** AKRON, W 59-7.

**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.

## 2022 FOOTBALL

**Sept. 2** NOTRE DAME; **10** ARKANSAS STATE; **17** TOLEDO; **24** at Michigan State.

**Oct. 1** at Penn State; **8** RUTGERS; **15** IOWA; **29** INDIANA.

**Nov. 5** at Northwestern; **12** WISCONSIN; **19** at Maryland; **26** MICHIGAN.

## 2023 FOOTBALL

**Sept. 2** at Indiana; **9** SAN JOSE STATE; **16** WESTERN KENTUCKY; **23** at Notre Dame.

**Oct. 7** MARYLAND; **14** at Purdue; **21** PENN STATE; **28** at Wisconsin.

**Nov. 4** at Rutgers; **11** MICHIGAN STATE; **18** MINNESOTA; **25** at Michigan.

## CROSS COUNTRY

**Sept. 3** Evansville Opener at Indiana, Men: 1/6; Women: 1/7; **10** Spiked Shoe Invitational at Penn State, Men: 6/6; Women: 5/6; **23** Bill Dellinger Invite (Women Only) at Eugene, Ore., 9/17.

**Oct. 1** Joe Piane Invitational at Notre Dame; **15** FSU Invite/Pre-Nationals at Tallahassee, Fla.; **29** Big Ten Championships at University Park, Pa.

**Nov. 12** NCAA Regional Championships at Evansville, Ind.; **20** NCAA Championships at Tallahassee, Fla.

## FIELD HOCKEY (6-2)

**Aug. 27** at Ball State, W 1-0; **31** at Kent State, L 3-1.

**Sept. 3** BUCKEYE INVITATIONAL vs. LAFAYETTE, W 4-3 (2OT); **6** BUCKEYE INVITATIONAL vs. MIAMI, W 1-0; **10** at Wake Forest, W 2-1; **12** at Appalachian State, W 2-0; **17** at Michigan State, W 4-3; **19** Virginia, L, 2-1; **27** LOUISVILLE, 4 p.m.

**Oct. 3** MICHIGAN, Noon; **8** INDIANA, 3 p.m.; **10** OHIO, 1 p.m.; **15** at Northwestern, 4 p.m.; **17** at Iowa, 1 p.m.; **22** PENN STATE, 3 p.m.; **24** RUTGERS, Noon; **29** at Maryland, 7 p.m.; **31** at St. Joseph's, 1 p.m.

## MEN'S GOLF

**Sept. 5-7** Erin Hill Collegiate at Erin, Wisc., 12/17; **13-15** Maridoe Invitational at Dallas, 7/15; **27-28** Windon Memorial at Glencoe, Ill.

**Oct. 4-5** Barbara Nicklaus Cup at Dublin, Ohio.

## WOMEN'S GOLF

**Sept. 13-14** Michigan Invitational at Ann Arbor, Mich., 9/16; **24-26** Mason Rudolph at Nashville, Tenn.

**Oct. 4-5** Barbara Nicklaus Cup at Dublin, Ohio; **15-17** Tar Heel Invitational at Chapel Hill, N.C.

## MEN'S ICE HOCKEY

**Oct. 8-9** at Bentley; **15-16** UCONN; **29-30** MICHIGAN STATE.

**Nov. 5-6** PENN STATE; **12-13** at Minnesota; **26-27** MERCYHURST.

**Dec. 3-4** at Notre Dame; **10-11** MICHIGAN; **16-17** BOWLING GREEN; **31-Jan. 1**, LIU.

**Jan. 7-8** at Wisconsin; **14-15** NOTRE DAME; **21-22** at Michigan State; **28-29** at Penn State.

**Feb. 4-5** WISCONSIN; **11-12** MINNESOTA; **18-19** at Michigan.

## WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (2-0-0)

**Sept. 24** ST. THOMAS, W 6-0; **25** ST. THOMAS, W 4-1

**Oct. 1-2** at Minnesota, TBA; **15** BEMIDJI STATE, 6 P.M.; **16** BEMIDJI STATE, 3 P.M.; **23** at Wisconsin, 3 p.m.; **24** at Wisconsin, 4 p.m.; **29** ST. CLOUD STATE, 6 p.m.; **30** ST. CLOUD STATE, 3 p.m.

**Nov. 5-6** at St. Thomas, TBA; **19** MINNESOTA STATE, 6 p.m.; **20** MINNESOTA STATE, 1 p.m.; **26** DC Tournament at Washington, D.C., vs. St. Lawrence, 1 p.m.; **27** DC Tournament at Washington, D.C., vs. Penn State, 4 p.m.

**Dec. 3-4** at Minnesota Duluth, TBA.

**Jan. 7** LINDENWOOD, 6 p.m.; **8** LINDENWOOD, 3 p.m.; **14-15** at St. Cloud State, TBA; **21** MINNESOTA DULUTH, 6 p.m.; **22** MINNESOTA DULUTH, 3 p.m.; **28** MINNESOTA, 6 p.m.; **29** MINNESOTA, 3 p.m.

**Feb. 4-5** at Minnesota State, TBA; **11-12** at Bemidji State, TBA; **18** WISCONSIN, 6 p.m.; **19** WISCONSIN, 3 p.m.; **25-27** WCHA Quarterfinals, TBA

**MARCH 5-6** WCHA Championships.

## WOMEN'S LACROSSE

**Oct. 9-10** Power 5 Fall Fest at Notre Dame, TBA; **16** Navy Play Day at Annapolis, Md., TBA; **17** UVA Scrimmage at Charlottesville, Va, TBA; **23** BUCKEYE PLAY DAY, TBA.

## MEN'S SOCCER (3-4-1)

**Aug. 27** WOLSTEIN CLASSIC vs. MEMPHIS, W 3-2; **29** WOLSTEIN CLASSIC vs. UAB, L 2-1 (OT).

**Sept. 3** IU Classic vs. Xavier at Bloomington, Ind., L 2-1; **6** IU Classic vs. Creighton at Bloomington, Ind., T 1-1 (2OT); **10** at West Virginia, L 1-0; **15** AKRON, W 1-0; **21** CLEVELAND STATE, W 2-0.; **24** MARYLAND, L 1-2; **29** BOWLING GREEN, 7 p.m.

**Oct. 3** at Northwestern, 4 p.m.; **8** WISCONSIN, 7 p.m.; **12** at Indiana, 7 p.m.; **17** at Michigan State, TBA; **22** PENN STATE, 7 p.m.; **26** MICHIGAN, 6 p.m.; **31** at Rutgers, 1 p.m.

## WOMEN'S SOCCER (6-4)

**Aug. 10** at Notre Dame (Exh.), L 3-2; **13** PITTSBURGH (Exh.), L 2-0; **19** at BYU, L 3-0; **22** AKRON, W 4-1; **26** BOWLING GREEN, W 3-1; **29** NORTH CAROLINA, L 2-0.

**Sept. 2** CENTRAL FLORIDA W 4-2; **5** NAVY, W 2-1; **9** Dayton, W 2-0; **12** TCU, L 4-1; **19** at Maryland, W, 2-1; **23** MINNESOTA, L 4-2; **26** at Penn State, TBA; **30** INDIANA, 7 P.M.

**Oct. 3** RUTGERS, Noon; **10** at Michigan State, 1 p.m.; **14** PURDUE, 7 p.m.; **17** MICHIGAN, Noon; **20** at Wisconsin, 6 p.m.; **24** at Northwestern, 2 p.m.

## SOFTBALL (1-0)

**Sept. 24** OHIO DOMINICAN, W 16-0; **26** KENTUCKY (DH), 1 p.m.

**Oct. 2** BOWLING GREEN, 12:30 p.m.; **2** OHIO UNIVERSITY, 3 p.m.; **3** PITTSBURGH (DH), 1 p.m.; **10** at Akron, 3 p.m.

## WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (10-1)

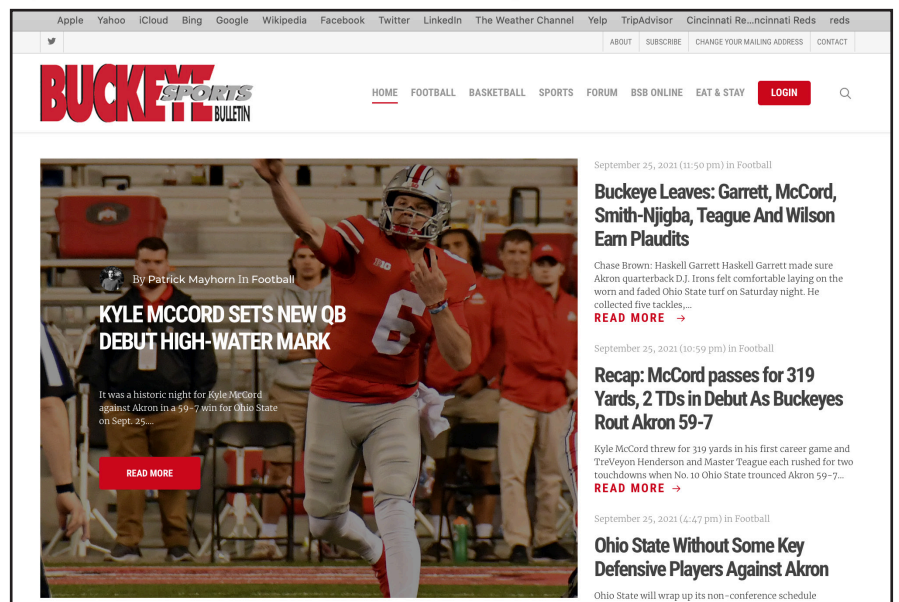
**Aug. 27** NORTHERN KENTUCKY, W 3-0; **28** WASHINGTON, W 3-1.

**Sept. 3** Red Raider Classic at Lubbock, Texas, vs. Rhode Island., W 3-0; **4** Red Raider Classic at Lubbock, Texas, vs. Texas State, W 3-1; **4** Red Raider Classic at Lubbock, Texas, vs. Texas Tech, W 3-0; **10** VCU Invitational at Richmond, Va., vs. James Madison, W 3-0; **11** VCU Invitational at Richmond, Va., vs. VCU, W 3-0; **11** VCU Invitational at Richmond, Va., vs. Virginia, W 3-0; **17** at Notre Dame, W 3-0; **19** NOTRE DAME, W, 3-2; **24** at Purdue, L 3-2; **26** at Penn State, 4 p.m.; **29** INDIANA, 6 p.m.

**Oct. 2** MARYLAND, 7 p.m.; **8** at Michigan State, 7 p.m.; **10** MICHIGAN, 1 p.m.; **15** PURDUE, 6 p.m. **15** RUTGERS, 7 p.m.; **22** at Wisconsin, 9 p.m.; **24** at Minnesota, 5 p.m.; **29** at Michigan, 7 p.m.; **31** MICHIGAN STATE, 1 p.m.

**Nov. 4** MINNESOTA, 7 p.m.; **6** NEBRASKA, TBA; **13** at Northwestern, 2 p.m.; **14** at Illinois, TBA; **19** IOWA, 7 p.m.; **21** PENN STATE, 3 P.M.; **24** at Rutgers, 7 p.m.; **26** at Maryland, 7 p.m.

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# Women's Ice Hockey Reloading For Title Chase

By **CHASE BROWN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After losing to Wisconsin in the Frozen Four last season, the Ohio State women's ice hockey team returns this year with its eyes on a championship.

Ohio State is the third-ranked team in the U.S. College Hockey Online and USA Today preseason top-10 polls behind last year's champion Badgers and runner-up Northeastern.

Nadine Muzerall enters her sixth season as head coach of the Buckeyes. A two-time Western Collegiate Hockey Association Coach of the Year, she has accumulated a .612 win percentage (95-57-17) and a .546 win percentage in conference play (57-43-16).

Muzerall said Ohio State will rely on depth to be a significant reason the program can succeed this season. With 15 returning players, and 10 new ones, the Buckeyes will look a lot different, but their head coach believes that's a good thing.

"We are looking for a lot of depth this season and the ability to find success from that," Muzerall said. "In my sixth year, this is the most depth that we've had in the program. I'm excited to find the right balance that will lead to this program reaching its goals."

Ohio State will be without two of its top five point producers from last season – Tatum Skaggs and Emma Maltais. Still, graduate captain Liz Schepers, sophomore Jenna Buglioni and junior Jennifer Gardiner remain with the Buckeyes and lead a high-powered offensive attack from the first two lines.

Skaggs led all Buckeyes with 19 points last season. She tied Buglioni and Gardiner with a team-high eight goals and matched Maltais' team-leading 11 assists. After Skaggs graduated in the spring, the Toronto Six selected her as the No. 4 overall pick in the 2021 National Women's Hockey League draft.

"One of the best things Tatum did for us was score in big games," Muzerall said. "She brought a lot of speed to our program."

"Emma was the strongest player on our team and the strongest player in the country," the coach added. "She is one of four players or collegiate players that are centralized for Team Canada. That tells you how good she is. Not having Emma will require others to step up. Her talent is evident. She is an excellent two-way player. We will miss Emma this year, but I think we have players capable of filling



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

**EYES ON THE PRIZE** – Fresh off an appearance at the NCAA Frozen Four last season, the Ohio State women's ice hockey team is hoping for a return trip with better results. The Buckeyes enter the 2021-22 season ranked third in the nation behind only defending national champ Wisconsin and runner-up Northeastern.

the void."

Schepers is a prime candidate to take Maltais' place as the Buckeyes' best and strongest player. Once an unrecruited high school senior, Schepers' talent and determination has allowed her to become one of the most respected players in the Ohio State locker room.

The Mound, Minn., native has improved in each season for the Buckeyes. Her best year came as a junior when she appeared in all 38 games, finishing with 43 points from a team-high and career-high 22 goals. During the COVID-shortened 2020-21 season, Schepers scored six goals and added nine assists.

"Liz finds value in the little things, and she does them right all the time," Muzerall said. "She doesn't have the flashiest stuff, but she is intentional and smart in the pocket. She is what I like to call 'a five-foot hockey player,'

which means she is solid in the corner and in front of the net. She is also very sound defensively. She rarely gets beat off the wall, and she makes heads-up plays."

Schepers is looking forward to an increased role this season. She said she wants to contribute in whatever way she can to help the team be successful and reach its goals.

"With this being like my fifth year, it feels kind of like a bonus year," Schepers said. "I'm just looking to really make the most of it and not leave any regrets out there. I know we have a special opportunity, and we have looked good in practice so far. I think my focus right now is that we haven't earned anything yet. I think that kind of mind-set will take this team a long way."

Buglioni and Gardiner will look to contribute more offense this year. The two snipers – a term used to describe players scoring at a prolific pace – each finished with eight goals and seven assists last season and return to Ohio State as the leading scorers from a year ago.

Although Buglioni and Gardiner are similar players, Muzerall plans to play them at the same time. Having more than one goal scorer on the ice never hurts, she said.

"They work well together," the OSU coach said. "They grew up together, and they are good friends. Jennifer Gardiner's speed is one of the fastest I've seen in a long time. She is somebody who was committed to going to school in Canada before we found her. A lot of colleges missed out. We got her on campus and changed her mind, and we are grateful that we did."

"Buglioni is a crafty girl. She's agile. She's fierce, and she has a high compete factor – a

chip on her shoulder. Maybe it's because of her size (5-3), but she just moves. They complement each other well."

Andrea Braendli returns for her senior season as one of the more decorated Buckeyes, including being the program's all-time winningest goaltender with 47 victories. She appeared in 18 games in 2021, finishing with an 11-7 record and receiving second-team All-WCHA honors.

Muzerall expressed confidence in Braendli's ability in the net and mentioned that her success results from her hard work behind the scenes. She expects the senior goaltender to take a step forward after finishing last season as a finalist for the WCHA Goalie of the Year award.

"She's one of the older players on our team," Muzerall said. "When she came over to us, she was 20 years old. She had a very mature outlook and a settled mind. She's relaxed in the net, which you want with your goaltender. She doesn't get rattled too much, and I think that is what makes her good."

Braendli competed for Team Switzerland in the 2021 International Ice Hockey Federation Women's World Championships in Calgary this past summer, where she recorded a tournament-high 181 saves. Still, with three talented players such as sophomore Amanda Thiele and juniors Raygan Kirk and Quinn Kuntz behind her, the senior goaltender will need to compete for the starting position in the net.

"She has confidence, which I think is great," Muzerall said. "That will challenge the other goalies that are elite as well. And they will push Andrea not to be settled. She will have to work for it. I think that's going to benefit our team. We will have a lot of depth in goal this year."

Defensively, Ohio State keeps a large rotation to involve as many of its strong contributors as possible. Senior Sophie Jacques leads the way, both as one of the team's top defenders and as a longtime leader for Muzerall's squad. She was a third-team All-WCHA selection as a sophomore and as a junior, and she is expected to slide into an even larger role this season. Her fellow seniors, Madison Bizal and Eve Savander, aren't quite as prolific, though the former is a tremendous distributor from the point and was second on the team in assists with 10 in 2021.

Much of the rest of the experience on the back end for the Buckeyes comes from the transfer portal. Robert Morris transfer Emily Curlett is the lone super senior in the group and serves as likely the top offensive-defensesman for Ohio State – she had 91 points in 130 games for the Colonials. Lauren Bernard from Clarkson, Teagan Grant from Wisconsin and Hadley Hartmetz from Boston College are all juniors from the portal, with the latter likely to serve as the biggest impact player of the bunch, recording 29 points in 52 games for the Golden Eagles.

All three are expected to contribute, though, as is sophomore Riley Brengman, who was fantastic for Ohio State as a freshman, tallying 11 points and appearing in all 20 games on the way to a WCHA all-rookie team selection.

## Portal Provides Depth

Ohio State will also feature depth at its other positions this year. With only the 15

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## OHIO STATE WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

**STRONG IN GOAL - OSU goaltender Andrea Braendli returns for her senior season as the program's all-time winningest netminder with 47 victories. She earned second-team all-conference honors last year and was a finalist for WCHA Goalie of the Year honors.**

players remaining on the roster from last season, Muzerall and her staff went to the transfer portal to fill spots. In recent years, the Buckeyes dressed only around 17 players for a season, a considerably low number compared to the NCAA-allowed 23 players. Then, because of the coronavirus pandemic, the program was allowed to add extra skaters to the roster.

While other teams around the conference featured more than 30 student-athletes on their team, Ohio State settled with a comfortable roster of 21 skaters and four goaltenders. Since last season, the team has added 10 new players to their roster – eight transfers and two freshmen.

The transfers are Grant from Wisconsin, Hartmetz from Boston College, Kenzie Hauswirth from Quinnipiac, Clair DeGeorge from Bemidji State, Bernard from Clarkson, and Lexi Templeman, Curlett and Kirk from Robert Morris. The two freshmen hail from British Columbia – Madisyn Wiebe from North Vancouver and Jamie Grinder from Richmond.

“Welcoming these girls into our family is a big part of who we are,” Schepers said. “I think people look at our roster on paper as a lot deeper, a lot more threatening than it’s been in the past. But a big thing for us is we don’t want to lose that underdog mentality and that chip on our shoulder. Many people counted us out for all the years that we still had success, and maybe we didn’t feel like we got the respect we deserved.”

“Now that we’re kind of in that position, we’ll be higher in the rankings. We still want to be the hardest-working team on the ice. We have something to prove, and even if we’re just proving to ourselves, we can take our game up another notch.”

Senior captain Paetyn Levis agreed, saying it would take everyone getting on the same page to find success this season. With such significant changes in the roster, she said the players need to build trust and seek accountability.

“We haven’t had anything like this before, and we need to rely on our culture to take us through the long run, focusing on each game,” Levis said. “I think that’s going to be the underlying factor of why we are successful. With how many new girls we have this year, as captains and leaders, we have to remember to

rely on our culture and put culture into everything we do every day and in every practice. That’s going to be extremely important to get those new girls feeling comfortable here and putting all the pieces together.”

Levis also spoke to how the new players have competed with returning players for their spots on the team, similar to how Muzerall viewed the goaltending position. As a fourth-year forward, Levis’ role has changed over time, and this season she is welcoming the challenge from her teammates.

“It’s a competition every day,” she said. “It takes place at any time, which makes it more competitive and special for the people who are playing. But also, the competition makes it attainable for the people who aren’t playing. What is so special about our culture is that on the ice, we battle and compete. We do all that, but once we step off the ice, we’re all family and we’re all friends. You can get after it on the ice, which makes our team better, and I think that’s special.”

It’s that kind of culture Ohio State needs to compete in a talented conference that features three other top-five teams – No. 1 Wisconsin, No. 4 Minnesota and No. 5 Minnesota Duluth. And although they aren’t ranked in the preseason polls, Bemidji State, Minnesota State Mankato, St. Cloud State and St. Thomas are also talented programs, each with a storied history of winning.

“Our conference has seen a ton of growth over the years,” Muzerall said. “We have four of the top teams in the country. We play the other three opponents four times. That’s 12 games right there for us. You could be 0-12 and still be a very good hockey team because you’re playing really good opponents so frequently. It’s back-to-back – you’re going to turn around and do it again within 20 hours. That’s why I think we’re always so successful in the postseason because we’re prepared for it.”

Ohio State wants to hoist a trophy this season. Still, Muzerall reminds her team that there are no guarantees in college hockey. Whether they win a championship or not, she wants her players to leave something behind for those who come after them.

“I stand strong and say that culture is the biggest thing that makes a girl want to go to the rink,” Muzerall said. “That’s what makes

### 2021-22 Ohio State Women's Hockey Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Yr.	Hometown	Last Team
1	Raygan Kirk	Goaltender	5-8	Jr.	Ste. Anne, Manitoba	Robert Morris
4	Ramsey Parent	Forward	5-6	Jr.	Blaine, Minn.	Blaine Bengals
5	Teagan Grant	Defenseman	5-6	Jr.	New Liskeard, Ontario	Wisconsin
6	Hadley Hartmetz	Defenseman	5-5	Jr.	Phoenixville, Pa.	Boston College
7	Eve Savander	Defenseman	5-6	Sr.	Joensuu, Finland	Team Kuortane
8	Brooke Bink	Forward	5-5	Jr.	Escanaba, Mich.	Shattuck Saint Mary's
9	Madison Bizal	Defenseman	5-4	Sr.	Elk River, Minn.	Elk River HS
10	Jenna Buglioni	Forward	5-3	So.	Port Moody, B.C.	Gr. Vancouver Comets
11	Kenzie Hauswirth	Forward	5-5	Jr.	Farmington, Minn.	Quinnipiac
12	Jennifer Gardiner	Forward	5-6	Jr.	Surrey, B.C.	Greater Vancouver Comets
13	Riley Brengman	Defenseman	5-5	So.	China, Mich.	Belle Tire
14	Clair DeGeorge	Forward	5-10	Gr.	Anchorage, Alaska	Bemidji State
15	Gabby Rosenthal	Forward	5-7	Sr.	Blaine, Minn.	Blaine HS
16	Madisyn Wiebe	Forward	5-7	Fr.	North Vancouver, B.C.	Delta Hockey Academy
18	Sophie Jaques	Defenseman	5-8	Sr.	Toronto, Ont.	Toronto Aeros
19	Lauren Bernard	Defenseman	5-7	Jr.	Madison, Ohio	Clarkson
20	Andrea Braendli	Goaltender	5-6	Sr.	Zurich, Switzerland	EHC Schaffhausen
21	Liz Schepers	Forward	5-7	Gr.	Mound, Minn.	Mound Westonka
22	Lexi Templeman	Forward	5-2	Gr.	Staffa, Ontario	Robert Morris
24	Jamie Grinder	Defenseman	5-10	Fr.	Richmond, B.C.	Delta Hockey Academy
25	Sara Saekkinen	Forward	5-4	Sr.	Pirkkala, Finland	Team Kuortane
26	Emily Curlett	Defenseman	5-5	Gr.	Columbiaville, Mich.	Robert Morris
27	Paetyn Levis	Forward	5-5	Sr.	Rogers, Minn.	Rogers HS
30	Amanda Thiele	Goaltender	5-10	So.e	Milford, Mich.	Belle Tire
35	Quinn Kuntz	Goaltender	5-7	Jr.	Warroad, Minn.	Warroad Warriors

**Head Coach** — Nadine Muzerall.

**Assistant Coach** — Emily West. **Assistant Coach** — Zoe Hickel. **Director of Operations** — Kelsey Cline. **Strength & Conditioning Coach** — Chris Friend. **Athletic Trainer** — Kevin Lennon. **Academic Counselor and Student-Athlete Engagement Coordinator** — Alex Sommer. **Equipment Manager** — Heath Haddix

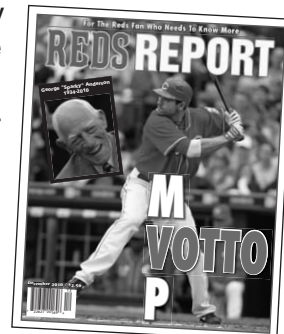
you want to play for the girl beside you. Our big thing is leaving a legacy. I would say at the end of the year, when we walk out of here, ‘Have we left a legacy individually, as a team, and in our academics?’ I want them to walk away with one

thing – leaving that legacy. Ohio State women’s ice hockey is relentless on the ice, great human beings in the community and one of the most academically talented teams as well. We take pride in everything.”

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# Did QB's Performance Earn Him Another Start?

I wasn't sure after the spring game who Ohio State's quarterback should be.

Four games into the season, I still feel that way.

My inkling in the spring was that among the three competitors at the time, Kyle McCord had the most upside. That's my same thought after seeing McCord get his first chance against Akron.

## EXNER POINT Rich Exner

But the feeling is not so strong that I'm ready to commit. I'd really like to see McCord get another start against Rutgers. Why not play McCord again and then commit to a quarterback – McCord or C.J. Stroud – for the rest of the season?

After Rutgers is Maryland. If the Buckeyes can't get through those games without wins, they have far more problems ahead than just making the right choice at quarterback.

After Maryland is an off week, then Indiana, and then the meat of the schedule starts with Penn State on Oct. 30.

McCord was far from perfect against Akron. He was shaky to start, and then an unwise decision early in the third quarter ended in an interception. But in between, McCord showed

a lot, first with short, safe throws and then, more importantly, with the best downfield accuracy Ohio State has seen this year.

The final numbers read 13 completions on 18 attempts for 318 yards, two touchdowns and the interception. Arguably, that's the best QB line of the season for Ohio State. But Akron also was the weakest opponent to date. And a couple of those completions, it must be noted, were short pitches technically scored as passes.

McCord's quarterback rating for the game was 246.2.

Stroud's rating for the season is 162.7, having completed 63 of 101 passes for 963 yards and eight touchdowns with three interceptions.

McCord misfired on five passes (four incompletions and an interception). Stroud has misfired on 38 passes, an average of nearly 13 a game.

Stroud was 13 of 22 for 294 yards against Minnesota, 35 of 54 for 484 yards against Oregon, and 15 of 25 for 185 yards against Tulsa.

But set aside the stats. Once settled, McCord threw downfield with confidence and more consistency.

There are a couple caveats here, in addition to the weakness of the opponent McCord faced in Akron. Stroud has been hurt to some degree. We don't know how much that has impacted his throwing.

And we don't know what goes on in practice and what's spotted in the film room, where head coach Ryan Day, offensive coordinator

Kevin Wilson, quarterbacks coach Corey Dennis and offensive analyst Todd Fitch have seen way, way more than any fan or media member.

But on game day, when it counts, we're starting to get a sample size. And, right now, I like most what I've seen of McCord.

### Door Remains Open

The most highly touted of the Ohio State quarterbacks, true freshman Quinn Ewers, has not been in the mix this season. That's no surprise. It wasn't until summer that he decided to skip his senior year of high school football, and he didn't join OSU until well into August camp.

But the door remains open for him next season.

No one so far has looked so good that Ewers couldn't have a shot at the starting quarterback position, especially if he's anything close to the reputation he brought to Ohio State.

That might not have been the case if someone were performing this year like Justin Fields did in his first year as a starter (3,273 yards and 41 touchdown passes) or Dwayne Haskins did in his only year as OSU's quarterback (4,831 yards and 50 touchdown passes).

Fields and Haskins set a very high bar, but nonetheless, it's now the OSU standard. Short of that standard leaves an opening for Ewers, if he's as advertised.

### Miller Was Solid

By the time Jack Miller got his chance at quarterback midway through the third quarter, OSU pulled back things to go more conservative with more handoffs to a collection of reserve running backs.

Miller was solid passing, though, completing 5 of 8 attempts for 66 yards. But that offered just a snapshot. Miller looks capable like Stroud, McCord and Ewers, all freshmen by eligibility standards.

Again, as with McCord, it would be nice to see more. But it appears that Day now considers him third behind Stroud and McCord with it being too early to give Ewers serious consideration.

### A Sure Bet

There's a lot we don't know yet about this year's Ohio State football team, but we do know TreVeyon Henderson is the real deal at running back, capable of carrying on the OSU running back tradition.

Barring something unforeseen, Henderson will undoubtedly become just the fourth true freshman in Ohio State history to rush for more than 1,000 yards – joining Robert Smith (1,126 yards in 1990), Maurice Clarett (1,237 yards in 2002) and J.K. Dobbins (1,403 yards in 2017).

Henderson already has 439 yards through four games despite limited opportunities. He's averaging 9.5 yards a carry.

Against Akron, he picked up his 93 yards on just eight chances, an 11.6-yard average. His OSU freshman record of 277 yards against Tulsa came on 24 carries, giving him an 11.5-yard average against the Golden Hurricane.

Henderson has the quick bursts and moves, plus enough power to shake off tackles. And unlike any of the great Ohio State running backs of past, he's been pictured showing off a car, courtesy of a deal with a Columbus-area

dealership.

That's legal now by revised NCAA standards. Welcome to the new world of college football where players finally are allowed to benefit from their stardom without fear of being penalized.

Wouldn't Smith and Clarett have liked that opportunity – a couple of players who had a thing or two to say during their time at Ohio State about the "student-athlete" setup of college football, leading to them not playing at all as sophomores?

### Defensive Quick Study

Speaking of OSU backs, how about the guy who has a career average of 7.9 yards a carry at Ohio State but is no longer part of the offense?

We're talking about Steele Chambers, who despite showing a lot of talent, got stuck buried behind a loaded running back depth chart. So he switched to linebacker this year, in what is his sophomore season eligibility-wise. (He did play some in both 2019 and 2020.)

Chambers is getting playing time at linebacker and making some nice plays. On one in particular, late in the first half against Akron, he showed great (running-back like) closing speed to break up a pass.

I wondered how quickly and effectively a running back could switch to linebacker in Big Ten football. But it's worked out with more playing time for Chambers.

### Young Studs

While the Ohio State defense has struggled this season, one bright spot has been the number of young players who are showing plenty of promise. It seems as if nearly every time I check the roster after a good play, next to the player's name is the freshman or sophomore designation.

Sophomores Ronnie Hickman and Cody Simon have been near the top of the tackle charts through the early part of the season. On the line, freshman J.T. Tuimolalo, who just committed to the Buckeyes in the summer, is getting a lot of time. His tackle totals are not high, but from his defensive end position, he's creating a lot of havoc and drawing a lot of attention from opposing blockers.

And we're getting to see a lot of many other young players.

### Clemson Loses Again

Be honest, Buckeye fans. You took delight in seeing Clemson lose its second game of the season.

Now 2-2 after losses to Georgia and North Carolina State, and a close-call win against Georgia Tech, it's going to take a lot – an awful lot – for the Tigers to get back into the playoff discussion.

Besides offering some enjoyment for Ohio State fans, the Clemson loss to N.C. State carries some real meaning in the College Football Playoff race. It means the ACC likely is out of the picture since the only undefeated team remaining is Wake Forest.

That would leave the eventual champions of the SEC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12, plus Notre Dame, and perhaps a second-place SEC team as the most likely contenders.

That's six schools from which to pick four, rather than having to slot in a spot for Clemson after its normal cakewalk through the ACC.

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# Another Good-News, Bad-News Game For Buckeyes

As was the case in this space last issue, there is good news and there is bad news. I'll break with my personal tradition and give the good news first. It goes against my grain, but we are all so desperate for a little good news when it comes to the Ohio State football team.

Fans and observers have been waiting for a breakout game from the Ohio State defense, and in game four, they finally got it. The stop troops filled up the stat sheet with all sorts of positive numbers while holding Akron to just 229 total yards after yielding an average of 471.3 yards in the first three games of the season.

The defensive line, maligned for its lack of pressure, more than doubled its season sack total in one game with its whopping nine sacks. Veteran Haskell Garrett, who had been expected to help lead the charge but had been relatively quiet other than his defensive touchdown against Minnesota, led the way with three sacks alone. Freshman and budding star Tyleik Williams added two sacks while leading the team with six tackles. The highly-touted freshman duo of J.T. Tuimolou and Jack Sawyer also saw plenty of action, with Sawyer recording three tackles and a sack and Tuimolou adding two stops of his own.

The maligned linebackers looked much more organized against the Zips. Teradja Mitchell recorded four stops and two tackles for loss, Cody Simon picked off a pass, and converted running back Steele Chambers recorded five stops, a tackle for loss and a pass breakup. For good measure, bullet Ronnie Hickman added three tackles and an interception return for a touchdown. It is important that members of the linebacker group start to solidify their positions, now that their corps has suddenly become depleted.

The equally-maligned secondary helped hold Zips quarterback DJ Irons to sub-50 percent passing at 14 of 29 and just 115 yards, and even with a merry-go-round rotation in the second half, the Buckeyes, aided by that newfound pass rush, yielded just 153 yards through the air after allowing 289.7 on average in the first three games.

So, what's the bad news after all that?

Well, obviously all these numbers came against Akron. While the Zips under head coach Tom Arth proved a spunky bunch, they were every bit as weak an opponent as advertised. It's really hard to accurately evaluate Ohio State's improvement given the obvious talent differential between the two teams.

Still, a game like this gives the defense confidence moving forward, and things did look much less chaotic on that side of the ball.

But that's not to say things weren't chaotic.

How often do you see a player, on the heels of a fellow linebacker leaving the team only a few days previously, quit his team in the middle of a game, giving his school the finger (in words) on his way out? I've been doing this for over 40 years, and I don't recall that ever happening. And that on top of a coach – a coordinator, no less – apparently being demoted in the middle of the season, something I also don't recall.

Something is very wrong with the Ohio State defense – and I'm not talking about what we see on the field – and Ryan Day needs to get that under control. The Buckeyes have enough tools on offense to win most games, but there is going to come a time this season when the defense is going to have to help win a game, and the coach needs to make sure his defense is moving forward every week. It is not easy to do that with so many distractions.

After seeing the game with Akron, I am more confident the tools are there. What is needed is more stability.

## Then There's The Offense

With Kerry Coombs taking the brunt of

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

the criticism among coaches for the first three weeks of the season, let me Monday morning quarterback the Day/Kevin Wilson tandem for a change of pace.

Given the way things had gone for the Buckeyes during the first three games, including finding themselves still in a dogfight with Tulsa midway through the fourth quarter, and given the fact they were starting a true freshman quarterback who had never seen the field in a college game, it was imperative to get off to a fast start against the Zips. And it was also imperative to help Kyle McCord – the aforementioned freshman quarterback – settle in at the helm.

After just three games, we had already learned that Ohio State featured a dynamic running back in TreVeyon Henderson. There was no way the Zips were going to stop him. Why not give Akron a steady taste of Henderson to get things rolling, post an early score or two, and allow McCord to ease into the action?

Things started off well enough with Henderson carrying on Ohio State's first play from scrimmage for a quick 12 yards. But that was the last we saw of Henderson on that drive. McCord tallied two incompletions and a fumble that was actually another errant pass attempt, and Ohio State was forced to punt. Akron responded with a touchdown, and Buckeye fans everywhere were thinking, "Not again!"

When OSU got the ball back, Day/Wilson mixed Henderson – three carries for 48 yards – in with some more simplified passing plays, and the Buckeyes and McCord were off and running.

McCord acquitted himself well, completing 13 of 18 passes for 319 yards, the yardage figure padded a bit by the blazing speed and skill of his receivers. Jack Miller also looked competent (5 of 8 for 66 yards), though he found himself in more of a caretaker role after taking over in the third quarter with a 45-7 lead.

Many fans seemed to find the resting of C.J. Stroud and his bum shoulder a bloodless coup to overthrow the incumbent QB. Given the token resistance put up by Akron, I'm not sure McCord showed enough to supplant Stroud, and I am not sure why Day – or so many unhappy Buckeye fans – would want to. Clearly Stroud's play in three games as the starter, especially given his sore shoulder, bothered others more than it did me.

Day, whose job is to win football games, had apparently determined that Stroud, sore shoulder and all, still gave the Buckeyes the best chance to win. He and his staff see practice, where the quarterback presumably faces stiffer competition than Akron, so I have to defer to them, particularly given the fact that Stroud's line for the previous three games was a solid 63 of 101 for 963 yards and eight scores against three interceptions.

It reminded me of the 2014 Orange Bowl, when in an absolute dogfight against Clemson, OSU elected to stick with a banged-up Braxton Miller rather than going to the bullpen for super-sub Kenny Guiton. Urban Meyer and Tom Herman believed that Miller, with his own sore shoulder, still gave the Buckeyes the best chance to win.

Miller and the Buckeyes led 35-34 as late as the fourth quarter before falling to a 40-35 decision. In another similarity to this season, just as the 2021 Buckeyes never solved that scoring play that Oregon successfully ran

three times, the defense never was able to account for Sammy Watkins in that Orange Bowl, allowing him to catch 16 passes for 227 yards. If the final gun hadn't sounded, Watkins would probably still be catching passes today, just as Oregon would probably still be running that same scoring play to the left.

Speaking of Braxton Miller and his sore shoulder, that injury ultimately led to J.T. Barrett taking over at quarterback to start the following season (like Stroud) as a redshirt freshman. One of the posters on our BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum wondered how Stroud's line through his first three games compared to Barrett's. Quite favorably as it turns out.

According to the Sept. 27, 2014, issue of BSB, Barrett was 44 of 74 passing (59.5 percent) for 757 yards, nine TDs and five picks over his first three games, including a loss to Virginia Tech. That would give Stroud the edge in passing yardage and percentage with fewer interceptions. Barrett had more touchdown passes, though. And you can guess where Barrett makes up ground. He had 41 carries for 126 yards, a 3.1-yard average and a TD. Stroud is credited with 10 carries for minus-4 yards and no touchdowns.

If you go by the traditional but virtually obsolete figure of total offense, Stroud has 959 yards and J.T. had 883.

Still, Buckeye fans – and more importantly the coaches – have to now feel a lot more comfortable with McCord and Jack Miller should Stroud remain sidelined or go down later in the season. And one thing that the game with Akron reinforced is that whoever the quarterback is, he will benefit from the fact that both the Ohio State running backs and receivers positions are loaded.

Among receivers, Jaxon Smith-Njigba is rising to the level of superstars Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson, and against the Zips, it was Emeka Egbuka's turn to shine with an 85-yard bolt that very nearly became a touchdown. And there are more receivers where Egbuka came from, waiting for their similar moment.

Among running backs, Henderson is the budding superstar, but Miyan Williams and Master Teague continue to get their yards when they get their chances. We even finally got a glimpse of Evan Pryor, who didn't disappoint with 35 yards on five carries and a touchdown.

Here's an interesting and positive note on Henderson. He has not had a negative rushing yard all season. While I don't see him maintaining his 9.5-yard-per carry average as the competition level rises in the weeks to come, I am not worried about Henderson or any of the other skill position players, regardless of who is under center.

Send out even a competent defense moving forward and the Buckeyes might be onto something.

## Quick Hitters

In my traditional tight end watch, Cade Stover and Gee Scott Jr. helped make Jack Miller's day a successful one with catches of 25 and 12 yards, respectively, on Miller's first possession. That also proved to be the QB's first scoring drive, making it 52-7 in favor of the Buckeyes.

I am, however, a little surprised that Jeremy Ruckert was not even targeted against the Zips. It's hard to believe that through four games, Ruckert has just six catches, though he has cashed them in for a 13.5-yard average. That would project to 21 catches over a 14-game season.

Ruckert could easily have departed for the NFL after last season. But he came back. I say use him.

- And, oh, those penalties. The Buckeyes continued to be plagued by yellow flags with eight more for 95 yards against Akron, giving them an average of 7.3 per game for an average of 73.8 yards.

Against the Zips, several of the penalties erased or altered big plays, and the two youthful exuberant taunting fouls by Mike Hall and Jakailin Johnson in the fourth quarter were completely unacceptable. After Hall did his throat slash and was berated on the sidelines, it's hard to believe Johnson followed with a taunting penalty of his own.

You can generally get away with those antics against a team like Akron, though it's hardly classy. But how would you like to be the player that costs the Buckeyes a game with an unnecessary penalty?

Championships are lost that way.

## 2021 Football Attendance

I remain stunned at the fact that Ohio State drew only 76,540 to the Tulsa game. With COVID rearing its ugly head again, I was curious to see if other schools were having attendance issues as well.

I have to qualify this as a totally unscientific study mostly due to the fact that different schools count attendance different ways. Some schools count tickets sold, some count actual fans in the stadium, and some count fans plus staff people, media, band members and anyone else in the building. There are also such factors as opposition, weather, etc.

I chose schools both inside and outside the Big Ten to study. I think you will approve of my sample. These are schools that traditionally sell out every game. I offer listed capacity, averaged announced crowd so far this season, and percentage of capacity.

Penn State: 106,572 capacity, 107,024 average attendance, 100.4 percent of capacity. Michigan: 107,601, 107,712, 100.1 percent. Clemson: 81,500, 80,055, 98.2 percent. Alabama: 100,077, 97,737, 97.6 percent. Wisconsin: 80,321, 73,900, 92.0 percent. Ohio State: 102,780, 90,733, 88.2 percent.

Attendance seems to be down across the board, but it is far and away down more for Ohio State. I attribute this to an Oregon hangover as well as the controversy on the defensive side of the ball and the turmoil in the defensive coaching staff, not to mention problems with the gameday experience. If the Buckeyes keep winning, I think things will inch up at the turnstiles with the Big Ten season upon us. If things continue to be chaotic, however, with the higher-priced games coming up and the unstable nature of the ongoing pandemic, we might continue to see sluggish attendance.

## In-House Notes

While I haven't pushed it lately, I continue in my quest to revitalize the tradition of Letters to the Editor. Coombs and the defense have driven letter-writing for me in the interim, and I encourage you to check in with your thoughts on the upcoming Big Ten season and anything else on your mind. Write to us at P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212 or save the stamp and email us at [bsb@buckeye-sports.com](mailto:bsb@buckeye-sports.com).

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# FOR ATHLETES

## HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

### WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. It can happen after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that causes your brain to rapidly move inside your skull.

#### CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS

Headache, nausea, vomiting, balance problems, dizziness, double or blurred vision, sensitivity to light or noise, feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy, just not "feeling right" or "feeling down," memory problems, confusion, and trouble sleeping.

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

**REPORT IT.** Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

**GET CHECKED OUT.** If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a healthcare provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

**GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL.** A concussion can make it harder to do everyday activities, such as concentrating at school. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

### WHY SHOULD I TELL MY COACH AND PARENTS ABOUT MY SYMPTOMS?

Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.

While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain and can even be fatal.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>

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