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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 20, 2021



PLENTY OF WAYS ... — Ohio State junior receiver Garrett Wilson (5) dives into the end zone to score one of his four touchdowns during a 59-31 victory against Purdue. Wilson scored on receptions of 21, 12 and 24 yards and also on a 51-yard run.

SONNY BROCKWAY



SONNY BROCKWAY

... TO BEAT YOU — Wilson offers an unusual blend of speed, hands and precision route-running. He was targeted 11 times and finished with 10 catches for 126 yards and three TDs.

Wilson's Career Day Leads Buckeyes

OSU Leans On Star WR For Four TDs In Offensive Explosion

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

No matter how impressive Garrett Wilson's stats are from Ohio State's 59-31 thumping of Purdue on Nov. 13, they do not tell the full story of the impact the junior wideout had on the Buckeyes offensively. And that's saying something, given that the stat sheet reads as strongly in Wilson's favor as it has for nearly any Buckeye this season — 10 receptions on 11 targets for 126 yards and three scores, adding a fourth TD and 51 more yards on his lone rush of the game.

Those numbers don't account for the impact Wilson has on the field, drawing defenders, often two or three at a time, and clearing up space everywhere else for his teammates to make plays. With Wilson's big-play ability to worry about, the Boilermakers defense was stretched as thin as it had been all season, allowing a season-high 59 points and 624 yards to the Buckeyes, and they need look no further than the guy teammates call "G-5" in their film study to identify the root of their struggles.

With the concussion symptoms that held him out of the 26-17 victory against Nebraska on Nov. 6 in Lincoln out of the way, Wilson was free to reintro-

duce himself as a budding superstar. For him, though, this was no act of superstardom. It's just what he does when he gets onto a football field.

"Honestly, I just came out here today and did what I love doing," Wilson said. "I missed it so much last week — I don't ever want that to happen again. To have a game like today, I just feel good.

"I feel very confident with the ball in my hands. I have always felt very confident with the ball in my hands, and I've always been someone who wants the ball in my hands. I'll say it again: I just did today what I love to do. I love doing this."

During OSU's first possession of the game, on which the Buckeyes took over in Purdue territory after Boilermakers punter Jack Ansell shanked a 16-yard kick, Wilson made his impact felt immediately. He snared a bubble screen from C.J. Stroud on Ohio State's first play from scrimmage and took it 6 yards. Three plays later, he lined up again as a screener and flashed another bubble, drawing the attention of a pair of cornerbacks and a safety, setting up a presnap give-read to halfback TreVeyon Henderson on the RPO called for Stroud.

A play later, his offense facing a third-and-6, Wilson set up shop in the slot to the wide side of the field alongside Jaxon Smith-Njigba and ran a quick out against off coverage. Stroud took full advantage of that as soon as Wilson slipped outside the outermost cornerback, who was preoccupied with Smith-Njigba. Wilson pulled in

the toss, turned upfield and showed off the kind of speed that has dazzled NFL scouts in the Ohio State press box all season, capping his 21-yard dash with a dive for the pylon.

For those scouts — many of whom would love to hear Wilson's name called with their team on the clock at next April's draft — and for the 101,009 in attendance, it was a reminder both of what the Austin, Texas, native can do and of what the Buckeyes were without a week previously when he was unavailable for the first time in his Ohio State career.

A drive later, Wilson hauled in another short pass from Stroud for 8 more yards, setting up a second-and-short that the Buckeyes would take full advantage of, dialing up a pop pass for Smith-Njigba that he would take well into Purdue territory, gashing the normally stout Purdue defense for 49 yards. Two plays later, Wilson led the way for a screen pass to Olave that, with the help of a face-mask penalty so egregious that every referee on the field felt it necessary to toss his flag, set the Buckeyes up for a short TreVeyon Henderson touchdown run.

When the Boilermakers fumbled near midfield on the possession that followed, Ohio State again turned to Wilson as an RPO decoy with Stroud handing to Henderson when Wilson drew a pair of Purdue defenders.

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FAN FORUM

Buckeye Leaves

Following Ohio State's best offensive performance of the season in a victory over Purdue, the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff and members of the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum assigned their Buckeye leaves to the top players from the game.

Chase Brown, BSB: Before the season started, Chris Olave seemed to be a lock as the best wide receiver in the country. However, Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba outshone him through the first nine games, causing the senior wideout to take a back seat in the Ohio State offense.

It's not that Olave played poorly in those contests. That's not the claim I am trying to make. It's just that the other wide receivers got open, C.J. Stroud connected with them, and they collected impressive statistics.

Wilson took the lead in the game against Purdue with 10 catches, 126 yards and three touchdowns. Smith-Njigba made his mark with nine receptions, 139 yards and a score, while Olave caught nine passes for 85 yards and a touchdown.

It was encouraging progress from Olave, who looked displeased with his lack of involvement in the offense in recent weeks. He moved within one score of tying David Boston for the most career receiving touchdowns in Ohio State history. With two regular-season games remaining, Olave is a lock for at least tying and probably breaking the record Boston set in 1998.

Patrick Mayhorn, BSB: Ohio State's offense desperately missed Garrett Wilson a week ago, and in case the two touchdowns that it was able to account for without him weren't enough proof, Wilson's return to the field against Purdue had to have been. The junior wideout was unguardable for the Buckeyes, cashing in on a career-high four touchdowns including three through the air and another on a lengthy jet sweep scamper through the Boilermakers defense.

This offense just flows differently when Wilson is on the field. He opens up the underneath routes for Jaxon Smith-Njigba and pulls the top cornerback away from Chris Olave, while still finding separation against that top competition and reeling in highlight-worthy catches. He gets yet another sticker to add to his collection.

Mark Rea, BSB: Lots of Buckeye leaves to go around on the offense, but I'll give mine to quarterback C.J. Stroud. The redshirt freshman continues to operate Ryan Day's offense like a veteran and was much more receptive to taking what Purdue gave him rather than forcing the issue as he did several times the previous week

against Nebraska. Stroud led the Buckeyes to eight touchdowns and, in the process, topped the 300-yard mark (again) and threw five touchdown passes (again).

bstu9: The offensive line for a great day rushing the ball and Miyan Williams for running hard and totaling over 100 yards rushing. If I could take Buckeye leaves away, I would do so from the defensive line. I don't think they knocked the Purdue QB down one time all day.

AnthonyBuckeye: C.J. Stroud for an excellent outing with more than 80 percent completions, Garret Wilson for a memorable day with so much positive energy, especially for the stiff-arm TD against Purdue DE George Karlaftis, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Chris Olave for another fabulous outing, Can't-Stop-Miyan Williams for bulldozing the Boilermakers, TreVeyon Henderson for showing his speed again. The entire OL for an excellent outing, lightning-fast fumble grabber Jerron Cage (second time), Denzel Burke for limiting Bell to around 100 yards, Zach Harrison for speedy tackles, the special teams for the turnover and the whole team for a very enjoyable and dominating win.

Michael Bauer: They scored 59 points against a really good Purdue defense, so I'm giving Buckeye leaves to the entire offense. We ran well, passed well, and kept penalties to a minimum. It was a great team performance. The defense? Cage and Chambers, I guess, but that's about it.

PeyoteBuck: The Buckeyes step up when called and Miyan Williams is a great example. I have to agree that the offensive line was in harmony. Take a bow, guys.

R1TBDBITL: Garrett Wilson proclaiming HE'S BACK! Also, the O-line.

BuckeyeScott: Buckeye leaves go to some of the usual suspects on offense, players C.J. Stroud, Garrett Wilson, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Chris Olave. Give the combo of Chris Booker and Palaie Gaoteote some Buckeye leaves for the recovered fumble on the kickoff as well as the underrated Miyan Williams for a fine running performance.

Poster That Harley Built: Well, C.J. Stroud and Garrett Wilson for certain, along with just about anyone on the offense. How about Miyan Williams for solidly establishing himself as the change-up back-up to superstar TreVeyon Henderson. Not much to choose from on the defense.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Matte Was A Special Player

As a young man in the mid-1960s, I was a big Buckeye and Baltimore Colts fan. Shortly after the 1965 season, I visited the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton. After telling the curator how I loved the Buckeyes and the Colts (boo the Packers!), he took me upstairs to view Tom Matte's wristband from the championship game which had not yet been displayed to the general public.

Make no mistake, Tom Matte was a treasure to Buckeye Nation!

Dan LaVille
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Problems Aplenty

The last two games (Penn State, Nebraska) have provided plenty of causes for concern and frustration with regard to this Ohio State team.

Is C.J. Stroud the best quarterback they have? Yes, he feasts on the bad teams, but against good defenses he gets flustered, chokes and makes poor decisions and bad throws. What will happen when he goes up against Michigan State and Michigan? God forbid that we should have to play Georgia. I have no confidence in his ability to get the job done against really good teams.

This team supposedly has the best offensive line in the country and one of the best running backs, but they can't run the ball. It is obvious that Ryan Day knows this, too. His lack of faith in the run game brings into question his reputation as a great play-caller. The run game problem is exacerbated by the fact that in running situations the defense knows that it has to defend only the running back, because Stroud is afraid to run the ball. Gone are the days of J.T. Barrett and Justin Fields.

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN.COM

From The Message Board

There were lots of takeaways from a 59-31 win against a Purdue team that was supposed to give Ohio State all it wanted. We asked readers of the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what they enjoyed most about the win and what gave them the most indigestion. Here are some of the responses:

"Defensive game plan was very puzzling ... dropping eight and not a single blitz. They were just getting picked apart with no adjustment. Happy they got the win though."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"Confirmed my long-standing view that there's no team on the schedule that Ohio State cannot beat. There are teams they could lose to, but only if they play subpar football. In short, only Ohio State can beat Ohio State."

– Terrier Buck

"Coach Day clearly believed his offense could score more points than the Purdue offense could score. He just needed the defense to make two or three stops during the game, which they did. However, the defense really didn't stop Purdue from running the ball. The defensive back seven just tried to contain the Purdue receivers. It's hard to believe they couldn't intercept even one pass. Maybe that's a credit to the Purdue passing offense? Hard to believe the defensive line couldn't record a sack. This team apparently is what it is. If it continues to execute and avoid unforced mistakes, it can accomplish its mission. It also needs to stay healthy. The one player it can't afford to lose is QB C.J. Stroud."

– Byron McNutt

"What I enjoyed most was that the entire offense was spectacular again, especially bulldozer Miyan Williams. C.J. Stroud, the wide receiver trio, TreVeyon Henderson and the OL provided Buckeye fans an incredibly enjoyable game to watch. Nothing gave me any indigestion. I think the coaches are trying out several things and getting ready for the stretch run. The team is also apparently getting more healthy."

– AnthonyBuckeye

"My main takeaway is that while the offense is capable of near-perfection, the defense will limit how far this team will go. No pressure whatsoever from the D-line, which is a concern going forward."

– bstu9

"It's impossible not to love the offense, which is averaging 45.4 points per game against Power Five opponents (compare to MSU's 32.0 and UM's 29.6). Ryan Day has built a machine. The defense drives me nuts with all the missed tackles, lack of pressure, and suspect coverage in the secondary. I was wringing my hands about this, but when I crunched the numbers against Power Five opponents, you know what I found? The defense is only giving up six points more per game than Michigan's defense and is actually 0.6 better than Sparty. Still, I look at the talent the Buckeyes roll out on defense and scratch my head at how much they get gashed. But today's game showed what the Buckeyes can do when they are

Other problems include the pathetic red-zone offense and the total lack of discipline, as evidenced by the high number of penalties, especially for personal fouls and holding.

Right now, the MVP of this team is Noah Rugles.

Terry Walrath
Hinckley, Ohio

fully engaged, and that gives me confidence going into these final two weeks of the regular season. Well done!"

– Michael Bauer

"The offense is back to juggernaut status. Score could have been much higher if we weren't jobbed on two calls both involving pass interference that benefitted Purdue. Plus we took a knee in the red zone on the final drive. The defense gave up a bunch, but give (Purdue QB) Aidan O'Connell his due with the dinks and the dunks passing."

– Bob Cody

"I feel like we have seen the real OSU team at last. When healthy and the roster is almost complete, they cannot be denied."

– PeyoteBuck

"I've been hard on the defense all season and rightly so if the team is to win the Big Ten and play for the national championship. Against Purdue, it took some pinpoint passes for scores, but the coverage was there. Overall, the defense is coming along at the right time for the 'drive' to the playoffs."

– John Lanning

"With Garrett Wilson in the lineup, the Buckeyes are hard to beat! The defense remains a concern, but the strategy seemed to be to make Purdue work for everything it got and I guess that worked. But can Ohio State outscore Georgia?"

– Poster That Harley Built

"Our O-line was awesome. Blocking was exceptional. Giving up 31 points always bothers me, but give Purdue credit. This is a very good offense. Passing is what they do. I feel we 'contained' first-round pick David Bell, as it took 11 receptions to hit his 103 yards (no TDs, although he dropped one in the end zone) as opposed to a couple of 75-yard, blown-coverage TD's. Also, Purdue wouldn't quit. After getting behind by 28 points, they kept fighting."

– R1TBDBITL

"I'll give you two stats. Going into the Purdue game, the Buckeyes were averaging scoring one point for every 12 yards of offense. Against Purdue, a top-20 scoring defense before the game, the Buckeyes scored one point for every 10.6 yards of offense. Second stat: At the 10:48 mark on the clock in the third quarter, the Buckeyes had scored 52 points. That's 52 points in 34:12 minutes, or 1.5 points for every minute of the game clock to that point. I'm not sure which stat is more impressive, but take your pick. Yes, I am concerned about the defense somewhat, but note Purdue did not score a single point in the fourth quarter."

– BuckeyeScott

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A Little Listening Can Go A Long Way

It was difficult to fathom just how much Buckeye Nation lost its collective mind when redshirt freshman C.J. Stroud made a simple reply to why he doesn't run the ball more.

"If my job was to run the ball," Stroud said, "I'd be a running back or something. I throw the ball for a living."

In this day and age of packaged responses to often inane questions, I thought Stroud's response was rather refreshing. It was also a 20-year-old's clapback to his detractors who believe they know what's good for the Buckeyes better than head coach Ryan Day and his entire coaching staff put together.

Of course, second-guessing – or what they used to call Monday morning quarterbacking – is almost as much a part of the game as Script Ohio or Brutus. I've been guilty myself of questioning the reasons why Stroud remains reluctant to run. After all, he scored his only career rushing touchdown against Michigan State last year on a 48-yard run off a simple run-pass option. Of course, if you never select the R in an RPO, it really isn't much of an option.

Armchair coaches I've talked with over the last couple of weeks either say Stroud is too timid (as if playing quarterback in the Big Ten was for the faint of heart) or that Day is simply waiting for the right time in the right game to unleash his quarterback's wheels. Those are some of the same people who swore Urban Meyer was keeping Braxton Miller as a secret weapon in 2015, waiting for an opportune time to use Miller on some kind of option pass. They apparently didn't realize Miller's right shoulder was spaghetti after two major surgeries.

The days of Meyer using his quarterback as a weapon – or, more accurately, a cudgel – against opposing defenses are over. Miller was a running quarterback, and he was often injured. It was the same way with J.T. Barrett, and apparently Day learned from those situations. When Stroud injured the AC joint in his shoulder during the season opener against Minnesota, it appears the head coach told his quarterback to favor the P in those RPOs.

Day said as much recently when he talked to reporters about his recruiting philosophy.

"It's clear we don't run (the quarterback) as much as some other places," he said. "I tell people that in recruiting. We're not going to bring you here and just run you into the ground and get you hurt. It's a really long season, and we've got really good players on offense, so when the time is right and we have to do it, we'll do it. But at the same time, putting our guys at risk for a long season is not something we do here. I believe strongly in that. The quarterback position is a very important position."

Day deals in coach-speak as much as the next guy, but pay enough attention and listen closely, and you can pick up a nugget or two to help understand why he does things a certain way.

After several weeks of trying to stretch the field vertically, the Buckeyes were content to nickel-and-dime Purdue with a short passing attack. Why the change in philosophy?

"One of the things we saw early on is that we were getting the ball into the perimeter on the quicker throws because they were bringing a lot of zero pressure," Day said, meaning the Boilermakers were showing man coverage across the board with no high safety. "They were doing some different things that made us really want to push the ball out there and see if we could make some guys miss in space."

After leading the universe in sacks over the past few weeks, Purdue quarterback Aidan

O'Connell operated out of a clean pocket for most of the afternoon against the Buckeyes. Ohio State recorded no sacks – not even any quarterback hurries – against a guy who threw the ball 52 times. What happened to the pass rush?

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

"We dropped eight men a lot with a three-man rush, so you're not always going to get as many sacks," Day explained. "That's the decision that was made, and we'll learn from it – find out if it was efficient or not. Certainly, you don't like to give up 31 points in a game."

After averaging nine penalties the previous two weeks, the Buckeyes cut the number almost in half. But five penalties for 50 yards is still too much, especially when one of them – a holding call on tight end Jeremy Ruckert – wiped out a 49-yard touchdown pass in the third quarter from Stroud to Chris Olave. It certainly wasn't the kind of play expected from a graduate senior. Yet Day was the one who took full responsibility.

"We definitely did some different things to deal with (preseason All-America defensive end George) Karlaftis," the coach said. "He's a good player. He got a holding call (on the touchdown pass from Stroud to Olave), and we shouldn't have put Jeremy Ruckert on him there. That was on me. It was a long-developing play, and we should have (double-teamed) him."

Finally, why in the world, with a four-touchdown lead in the waning minutes of a contest already won, was Stroud still in the game?

"I wanted to make sure that we finished the game the right way," Day said. "I just felt that was the right thing to do at the time."

OK. So, no one's perfect.

Fun With Numbers

Several Ohio State players are on pace for historical seasons, and their performances against Purdue simply underscored that fact.

Through 10 games (really only nine because he sat out the Akron blowout), Stroud has 214 completions in 311 attempts for 3,036 yards and 30 touchdowns. The completions total already ranks sixth in OSU single-season history, while the attempts are tied for ninth, the yardage ranks sixth and the touchdown total is tied for fifth.

With two regular-season games, a presumed appearance in the Big Ten Championship Game and at least one playoff game remaining, Stroud is on pace for 309 completions in 449 attempts for 4,385 yards and 43 TDs. Each of those numbers would place second all-time to Dwayne Haskins and his amazing 2018 season.

The receiving trio of Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba remains one of the most lethal weapons in college football. Each has already topped 50 catches and 700 yards, and they have combined for 25 touchdowns. Add four more games to their already amazing averages and each would finish with more than 70 catches, making them the first trio in program history with that many catches apiece in a season.

Olave would finish with 15 touchdowns, second only to Terry Glenn, who caught 17 in 1995, while Wilson and Smith-Njigba would

each crack the 1,000-yard mark. Olave is close behind, on pace to finish with 991 yards. Not only has Ohio State never had more than one 1,000-yard receiver in the same season, only five players in program history have ever scaled that mountain – David Boston (1,435 in 1998), Glenn (1,411 in 1995), Cris Carter (1,127 in 1986), Michael Jenkins (1,076 in 2002) and Parris Campbell (1,063 in 2018).

Smith-Njigba is on pace to finish with 1,438 yards, and that would edge him just past Boston's single-season record.

Running back TreVeyon Henderson has already become only the fourth freshman to compile a 1,000-yard rushing season, following in the footsteps of Robert Smith (1990), Maurice Claret (2002) and J.K. Dobbins (2017). With 1,028 yards through 10 games, Henderson is on pace for 1,439 yards, which would eclipse Dobbins' rookie record of 1,403.

Henderson is also tracking the all-time scoring leaders with 17 touchdowns, just one off the freshman record of 18 held by Claret. At his present average, Henderson would finish with 24 TDs, a number that would tie him for third best in program history. Pete Johnson scored 26 touchdowns in 1975, Eddie George crossed the goal line 25 times during his Heisman-winning season in 1995, and Keith Byars tallied 24 touchdowns in what should have been his Heisman-winning season in 1984.

Henderson is also averaging 7.3 yards per carry for the year. That currently ranks as the second-best average in the country and would establish another OSU single-season record. There have been only two previous players with at least 150 carries who have averaged better than 7.0 yards per carry over the course of an entire season – Carlos Hyde (7.3 in 2013) and Dobbins (7.2 in 2017).

Noah Ruggles is on track to score 147 points, and that would set an all-time season record for Ohio State kickers. Only Johnson (156 in 1975) and George (152 in 1995) would be ahead of him on the single-season scoring list.

Finally, safety Ronnie Hickman is on track for 115 tackles. No OSU defender has topped the century mark in tackles since linebacker Raekwon McMillan had 102 in 2016.

Times Have Changed

Doing some research on another topic, I ran across some old box scores from Ohio State-Michigan games in the mid-1970s. Obviously, the coaching philosophies of Woody Hayes and Ryan Day are about as similar as a bulldozer and a Porsche, but that three-yards-and-a-cloud-of-dust thing won an awful lot of games for the Buckeyes.

Between a three-year stretch from 1972 to 1974, Ohio State was 2-0-1 against Michigan with the teams combining in those three games to score – get this – a total of 67 points. What's more is the Buckeyes achieved two victories and a tie when their quarterbacks combined to complete 4 of 13 passes for 75 yards with no touchdowns and two interceptions.

Greg Hare was 1 for 3 for 17 yards and one interception in 1972, but the Buckeyes found a way to win a 14-11 decision. The following year, Hare was 0 for 4 with an interception in the famous 10-10 tie at Michigan Stadium. In 1974, Cornelius Greene took over and completed 3 of 6 passes for 58 yards, helping lead the Buckeyes to a 12-10 victory.

In the second half alone against Purdue, Stroud was 12 of 13 for 149 yards and two touchdowns.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Stroud To Use Legs Only When Necessary

C.J. Stroud is constantly under a microscope as Ohio State's quarterback. He is the leader of a historically dominant college football program and is the primary player tasked with continuing the program's long-lasting success.

Through his first nine starts, Stroud mostly met the expectations set by coaches and fans, especially in the passing game. He was an above-average thrower, completing 68.8 percent of his passes for 3,036 yards, 30 touchdowns and five interceptions.

Stroud ranked fourth nationally with .434 Expected Points Added (EPA), according to CFBGraphs. EPA is a metric derived using a model that breaks plays into down, distance and yard line bins, estimating the actual points a player adds to their respective team from each stat.

The metric shows that each time Stroud throws the football, the Ohio State offense had a high probability of reaching the end zone.

He trails only Coastal Carolina's Grayson McCall (.538), Army's Christian Anderson (.469) and UTEP's Gavin Hardison (.445).

Despite playing one fewer game than his counterparts, Stroud's passing ability and statistical accumulations helped him create a strong résumé among college football's best quarterbacks.

His success would indicate a positive response from media members and fans. While that is mostly the case, there's been a question Stroud has faced more than any other this season. Why doesn't he run the ball more?

With the exclusion of sacks, Stroud had 15 carries for 69 yards through Nov. 13, and he'd never run the ball more than three times in a single game. He looked apprehensive about using his legs out of the backfield – something Ohio State quarterbacks were known for in the days of Braxton Miller, J.T. Barrett and Justin Fields – and has seemingly decided to force throws downfield to make a play.

When asked why he doesn't run the ball more often, Stroud said that he would run under the right circumstances and mentioned that he is trying to run the plays head coach Ryan Day and offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson call for him.

"I mean, if it's there, I'm going to run," Stroud said in late October. "I feel like I do a good job running. But the plays that we call, I'm going to run them to the best ability. I'm not going to go and do my own thing. That's how you lose games."

According to Wilson, Ohio State doesn't call many designed runs for its quarterback, primarily to maintain Stroud's long-term health. The redshirt freshman signal-caller



SONNY BROCKWAY

BACK TO PASS — While there has been plenty of discussion about his lack of running, OSU quarterback C.J. Stroud (7) continues to assault opposing defenses through the air. Against Purdue, he completed 31 of 38 attempts for 361 yards and five touchdowns during a 59-31 victory.

separated the AC joint in his shoulder during the season opener against Minnesota and appeared to suffer the injury after he landed awkwardly during a scramble early in the game.

"Quite honestly, there's always the run option for him in some games, but with the shoulder the way he had it, we were trying to minimize some hits," Wilson said Nov. 9. "He's a very capable runner. I just think coming off the shoulder that he had early, we just try to

be smart."

Even if Stroud hadn't injured his shoulder, Day said an Ohio State quarterback's primary focus is to throw the football. While he understands the significance of having Stroud be a dual-threat player, he wants the redshirt freshman to utilize his passing ability more than his running ability.

"Guys have run here before, and when it's appropriate, we do," Day said. "But also, it's clear that we don't run it as much as some of

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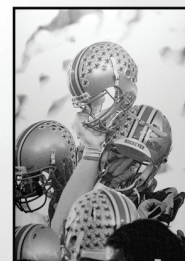
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Who Is The Greatest Quarterback In Ohio State History?

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 or subscribers can vote on the forum at 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:

the other places. And I tell people that in recruiting. We're not going to come here and just run you into the ground. It's a long season and we've got really good players on offense.

"So, when the time is right and we need to do it, we've got to do it. But at the same time, putting our guys at risk for a long season is not something we do here. I believe strongly in that. That quarterback position is a very important position."

On Ohio State's first second-half drive against Purdue, the Buckeyes ran a read-pass option for Stroud and running back TreVeyon Henderson. Stroud pulled the handoff from Henderson and ran to the right side of the offensive line but was forced to bounce outside toward the OSU sideline. He stepped out of bounds for a 1-yard loss.

The run didn't strike any particular confidence that Stroud is ready to run the ball consistently. However, it looks like he is getting more comfortable with the idea of using his legs as a weapon in the Ohio State offense.

"As these games get a little bit tighter down the stretch, there's going to be some great competition every week and games are close," Wilson said. "Those critical scoring-zone situations, third-down situations, we've got to incorporate every player."

OSU Moves Up One Spot In Latest Polls

Ohio State moved up one spot in both The Associated Press writers' and AFCA coaches' polls following its 59-31 win against Purdue on Nov. 13. The Buckeyes are No. 5 in the AP poll and No. 4 according to the coaches.

Michigan State, which comes to Columbus on Nov. 20 for a showdown with the Buckeyes, also moved up a spot in both rankings. The Spartans are No. 7 in the writers' poll and No. 8 in the coaches' poll, setting up another top-10 matchup at Ohio Stadium.

The Buckeyes finish the regular season Nov. 27 at Michigan, ranked seventh by the coaches and eighth by the writers.

2021 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Sept. 2	at Minnesota	W, 45-31	Fox	6-4, 27-22 loss to Iowa
Sept. 11	OREGON*	L, 35-28	Fox	9-1, 38-24 win over Wash. State
Sept. 18	TULSA*	W, 41-20	FS1	4-6, 20-13 win over Tulane
Sept. 25	AKRON	W, 59-7	BTN	2-8, 45-40 loss to Western Mich.
Oct. 2	at Rutgers	W, 52-13	BTN	5-5, 38-3 win over Indiana
Oct. 9	MARYLAND	W, 66-17	Fox	5-5, 40-21 loss to Mich. State
Oct. 23	at Indiana*	W, 54-7	ABC	2-8, 38-3 loss to Rutgers
Oct. 30	PENN STATE	W, 33-24	ABC	6-4, 21-17 loss to Michigan
Nov. 6	at Nebraska	W, 26-17	ABC	3-7, 26-17 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 13	PURDUE	W, 59-31	ABC	6-4, 59-31 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 20	MICHIGAN STATE	Noon	ABC	9-1, 40-21 win over Maryland
Nov. 27	at Michigan	Noon	Fox	9-1, 21-17 win over Penn State
Dec. 4	Big Ten Championship**	8 p.m.	Fox	

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

Georgia was the unanimous No. 1 team in both polls once again, but the writers and coaches both jumped one-loss Alabama from No. 3 to No. 2 ahead of unbeaten Cincinnati. Oregon is fourth according to the writers while Ohio State is fifth. The Buckeyes and Ducks flip positions in the coaches' poll.

Both rankings have Notre Dame at No. 6. The Spartans and Wolverines swap spots in the coaches' poll, and then both rankings round out their top 10s with Oklahoma State and Ole Miss.

The Big Ten has five teams ranked in both polls. Iowa is No. 14 in the coaches' poll and No. 18 in the AP poll while West Division co-leader Wisconsin is 19th in the AP and 20th among the coaches.

The Buckeyes are a top-five team in both polls for the first time since week two when

they were No. 3 ahead of their home loss to Oregon.

Buckeye QB Named O'Brien Semifinalist

Stroud was recently named one of 20 semifinalists for the Davey O'Brien Award, given annually to the top quarterback in college football.

Stroud's numbers this season all rank among the best in the country despite missing Ohio State's game against Akron in Week 4. He is 11th in the country in passing yards with 3,036, fourth in yards per attempt (9.8), fourth in passer rating (179.4) and fifth in passing touchdowns (30).

Fans can make their voices heard by vot-

Continued On Page 6

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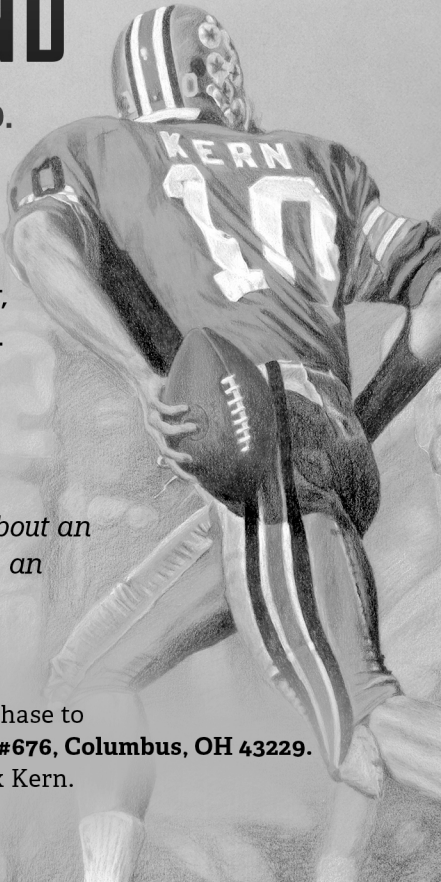
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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

ing on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to help determine the three finalists. The top five vote-getters on each platform will receive bonus committee member ballots, which will then be added to the votes cast by a national selection committee.

Other semifinalists include Brennan Armstrong of Virginia, Stetson Bennett of Georgia, Anthony Brown of Oregon, Matt Corral of Ole Miss, Jake Haener of Fresno State, Frank Harris of UTSA, Sam Hartman of Wake Forest, Hendon Hooker of Tennessee, Sam Howell of North Carolina, Grayson McCall of Coastal Carolina, Tanner Mordecai of SMU, Kenny Pickett of Pittsburgh, Desmond Ridder of Cincinnati, Will Rogers of Mississippi State, Carson Strong of Nevada, Caleb Williams of Oklahoma, Malik Willis of Liberty, Bryce Young of Alabama and Bailey Zappe of Western Kentucky.

Finalists will be announced Nov. 23 following the fan and committee vote, and the winner will be announced Dec. 9.

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This is just another way that a VIP subscription can easily pay for itself each year with special VIP discounts.

VIP subscribers enjoy a 20-percent discount at Conrads College Gifts at Easton. VIP subscribers also enjoy a 5-percent discount on any Ohio State football trip booked through Reynolds Travel. And VIP subscribers receive a certificate good for \$10 off at Roosters restaurants, the "Fun, Casual Joint," as well as either a gift card good for \$10 off your next food purchase at Rusty Bucket, the popular neighborhood hangout, or any Cameron Mitchell Restaurant, based on availability at the time of upgrade.

"We want to thank the many BSB readers who have stepped up and shown their support for Buckeye Sports Bulletin through the VIP program," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said. "It is a true vote of confidence in what we are doing now and what we have done the previous 40 years."

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

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

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

The following are our Elite Wachsman, Elite and Scarlet VIP subscrib-

ers. Brutus level VIPs will have their names listed at a later date.

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

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Ruggles Locked In For Final Stretch

It's been a whirlwind couple of weeks for Ohio State transfer placekicker Noah Ruggles, who had back-to-back, four-field-goal

performances in wins against Penn State and Nebraska.

He came to the Buckeyes as an unknown from North Carolina, where he was just 19-of-27 on his field-goal attempts in 2019. Through

10 games this season, he has been one of the most important factors for this Ohio State team this season.

"I didn't have many expectations," Ruggles said about his thoughts coming into the year.

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Final Two Regular-Season Challenges Remain

The Ohio State football team is down to the final two challenges in its quest to earn a trip to the Big Ten Championship Game and a potential berth in the CFP playoffs.

You do not need to wait a full week between papers to get news of the Buckeyes. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff posts news daily at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com website. You'll get the latest from head coach Ryan Day and the Buckeyes throughout the week, along with any breaking recruiting news.

Watch for staff predictions before each game. The staff predictors underestimated the offensive firepower of both Ohio State and Purdue in the most recent game. Chase Brown predicted a 34-21 Buckeye victory, Patrick Mayhorn 30-24, Braden Moles had it 30-17, and Mark Rea predicted a 31-21 Buckeye win.

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, especially as we get closer to the holidays. 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.

In addition to daily posts, we also offer reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives as part

of our popular Reprint Thursdays. Also, 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 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 \$12 and through the traditional recruiting season for \$22. 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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"I just wanted to come in and make an impact. With all this happening, obviously, there's a lot more attention now, but it doesn't make too much of a difference to me as a person. I just take it one day at a time."

And an impact he has made. Ruggles is perfect on all 57 extra points, and he is 16 for 16 on field goals this season and is on track to surpass Drew Basil's single-season field-goal percentage record in 2013 when he made 90.0 percent of his field goals (9 for 10).

Ruggles has already surpassed Vlade Janakievski (15, 1979-80) for the second-longest streak of consecutive made field goals by making his 16th straight field goal on Nov. 13 against Purdue. And he trails only Mike Nugent's streak of 24 consecutive kicks from 2001-02.

"I stay away from him," Day said with a laugh when asked if he had any advice for Ruggles during games. "He came in and from the jump, he's been nothing but professional, and that's what you really appreciate about those guys."

Day added that punter Jesse Mirco and long snapper Brad Robinson are the same way.

"They're really low-maintenance," the

coach said. "If you're having to deal with the specialists and having to coach those guys up, that's usually not a good thing."

Ruggles showed similar confidence, saying that while he gets nervous leading up to games, it goes away once he's on the field. The native of Odessa, Fla., also said he's prepared to kick in the cold as Ohio State approaches the last part of the season.

"I've played in some cold games," he said. "I'm not too nervous about it. Just got to stay warm on the sideline."

Miller Stays Suspended, Ewers Coming On Strong

Ohio State quarterback Jack Miller remained suspended following an OVI citation on Nov. 4, but the Buckeyes might have found a replacement.

True freshman Quinn Ewers, who enrolled a year early at Ohio State to get a head start on his development, has apparently been impressive enough in practice that the Buckeyes are becoming more comfortable with the idea of Ewers potentially seeing real game snaps.

Continued On Page 8




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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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"He's making progress," Day said. "Off of

the off-week, he's been working hard and getting better. He's starting to look more comfortable walking around the facility, he's starting to pick up the offense. It's taken him some time to pick up the offense, but that's because he just got thrown into it – didn't have spring ball or a preseason.

"There's a lot to it and it's hard when you don't get a ton of reps, but he's getting more reps now and I think you're starting to see him more comfortable around the team."

As for Miller, who had been serving in the third-string role behind Stroud and Kyle McCord, he could be away from the team for a while longer.

"Until we get more information about how things are being handled, yeah, (his suspen-

sion is indefinite)," Day said. "We're just making sure that we have all of the information before we make any decisions moving forward."

WFT Fears Young Has Torn ACL

The Washington Football Team said Nov. 14 it believes defensive end Chase Young suffered a torn ACL in his right knee during the team's 29-19 win against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Young, the former All-America defensive end from Ohio State, was scheduled to undergo more testing on the injury.

Young suffered the injury with 7:49 remaining in the second quarter when he rushed Bucs quarterback Tom Brady on a

third-and-2. Young went to the ground without much contact and writhed in pain.

When the cart came onto the field, Young waved it off and opted to limp more than 30 yards to the tunnel, with the help of teammates for part of the walk and then with trainers.

Young returned to the sideline in the second half on crutches.

Washington was already down one starting defensive end. Montez Sweat suffered a broken jaw Oct. 31 at Denver and was to miss four to six weeks.

Young has not had the season he or Washington hoped. He had just 1½ sacks a year after being named NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year with 7½ sacks. He was WFT's first-round draft choice in 2020, taken with the second pick overall.

Former Buckeye Arnette Released By Raiders

Former Ohio State cornerback and 2020 first-round pick Damon Arnette was released Nov. 8 by the Las Vegas Raiders. The release came after a video posted on social media reportedly showed Arnette waving multiple guns around and claiming that he would kill someone.

Arnette is also facing unrelated lawsuits surrounding a hit-and-run last year and an interaction with a valet worker in Las Vegas in which Arnette allegedly spat on the man and poked him in the chest.

A three-year starter at Ohio State, Arnette played in 47 games for the Buckeyes, amassing 140 total tackles and four tackles for loss in addition to five interceptions, one of which was returned for a touchdown.

Arnette did not find the same success in the NFL, playing in just 13 games (seven starts) across two seasons due to injuries. With the Raiders, he made 29 total tackles and had three pass breakups.

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BSB Podcast Now Twice Weekly

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, iHeart-Radio, 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.

a day at (614) 486-2202. We must have your upgrade request by 5 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 21.

Chase Brown, Patrick Mayhorn, Braden Moles 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.

A Message From BSB Publisher Frank Moskowitz

As most of you know by now, after the postal rate increase implemented Aug. 29, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is in the process of raising its subscription rates. This is not a decision we made lightly. Postage remains our largest expense, far and away outpacing labor or printing. Postal rates used most frequently by BSB have gone up as much as 11.1 percent.

The base cost for each issue mailed to your home or business will still only be \$4.37.

You have many options as to where to spend your entertainment dollar, and I respectfully ask that you compare the price of BSB to some of these options: a ticket to the Ohio State-Michigan State game, \$144; a New York strip steak at Urban Chophouse, a la carte, \$59; a round of golf with cart at Raymond Memorial Golf Course, \$47; a glass of Oberon Napa Valley Cabernet at Cameron's American Bistro, \$15; a 14-inch pepperoni pizza at Donato's, \$14.59; 10 wings at Rooster's, \$12.99; a movie ticket at the Gateway Film

Center, \$12; one line of bowling at Columbus Square Bowling Palace, \$7; a craft beer at Urban Meyer's Pint House, \$7; a McDonald's Big Mac, \$4.49; an issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, \$4.37.

Readers will have to place their own value on each issue of BSB. For those who are especially price sensitive, two-year subscriptions bring the rate down and we will offer specials throughout the year, as we have always done. However, we ask that those of you who can do so try to pay full rate to help offset the cost for our many readers who are on fixed incomes. Becoming a VIP subscriber is another way to help keep BSB vibrant while holding the subscription price line.

Subscribers who have concerns or questions about Buckeye Sports Bulletin pricing should feel free to call me at (614) 486-2202. I look forward to hearing from you.

– Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago – 1981

It was another in a series of frustrating games for Ohio State quarterback Art Schlichter. The signal-caller had just helped his team put 31 points on the board at Minnesota, only to lose by a 35-31 final score as the OSU pass defense once again collapsed.

“It's disappointing,” Schlichter said of the loss. “I don't know where it rates (among his most disappointing games). But we'll be back next week. I don't know where we stand (in the standings), but we'll be back.”

Schlichter was leading the Buckeyes to an average of better than 30 points per game on the season, but the defense had often given up points as fast as the offense could score them.

“We know we've got to score, but you always hope your defense is going to stop them,” Schlichter said. “They (the OSU defense) got a couple of bad breaks and Minnesota ended up putting a few more points on the board than we did.

“We had some opportunities to score and didn't. You can't put all the blame on the defense.”

35 Years Ago – 1986

Northwestern had its eyes on an upset, but Ohio State turned it away without much trouble, keeping dreams alive of a confrontation with Michigan for a chance at a Rose Bowl berth.

“They had good schemes, good thoughts about the offense,” OSU head coach Earle Bruce said. “They kept the ball away from us and moved it between the 20s, but our defense did a good job keeping them out of the end zone. And we came up with some big plays.”

Playing a much-improved Wildcats squad in front of 89,808 fans in Ohio Stadium, the Buckeyes moved one step closer to that annual matchup with Michigan by way of a 30-9 victory. Northwestern – which failed to dent the Ohio Stadium end zone – became the eighth straight victim of a constantly-improving Ohio State team. After two consecutive losses to begin the season, the Buckeyes had moved to 8-2 on the season.

More importantly, the Big Ten win pushed Ohio State to 6-0 in the conference, which kept it tied at the top with the 6-0 Wolverines. Each team had to play one more game within the Big Ten – Ohio State was at Wisconsin Nov. 15 while Michigan drew a home bout with Minnesota.

30 Years Ago – 1991

During a season in which inopportune mistakes had meant the difference between Ohio State being undefeated and highly ranked nationally and having two losses and being dispatched to the lower regions of the top 25, it was probably refreshing for Buckeye fans to watch the other guys shoot themselves in the foot for a change.

While the Buckeyes took their sweet time getting all cylinders firing Nov. 9 against Minnesota, the Golden Gophers provided more than enough hospitality in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome.

OSU finally won a 35-6 decision behind another powerful display of running offense. But the Buckeyes' road to victory was paved with numerous Minnesota mishaps.

Drive-killing sacks, fumbles, stalling drives and missed assignments sealed the fate of the Gophers, and perhaps the fate of head coach John Gutekunst, who was the target of several local columnists ready to see a change at the helm.

25 Years Ago – 1996

After close to nine years of struggles within the realm of Big Ten football, Ohio State coach John Cooper was beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Moments after his Buckeyes shellacked Illinois, 48-0, in Cham-paign, Cooper was apprised that Michigan, OSU's main rival for the Rose Bowl berth, had been upset 9-3 by Purdue.

“Michigan lost, huh? Boy, I hate to hear that, I tell you,” Cooper said, chuckling about his team's sudden good fortune.

The second-ranked Buckeyes, 9-0 overall and 6-0 in Big Ten play, would play for their first Rose Bowl berth in 12 years at Indiana on Nov. 16 in Bloomington. With a win against IU, Michigan would be powerless to do any harm to Ohio State's Rose Bowl hopes, thanks to the Wolverines' pair of league losses.

“I'm not worried about Michigan,” Cooper said. “I'm worried about our football team. We've got Indiana next, and obviously we love to know that if we beat Indiana, we at least have a share of the Big Ten championship and we're playing in the Rose Bowl. That's what it's all about.”

20 Years Ago – 2001

Ohio State legend Eddie George, the 1995 Heisman Trophy winner and one of the greatest tailbacks in program history, was honored at the half of Ohio State's Nov. 10 matchup with Purdue with a stirring jersey retirement.

Athletic director Andy Geiger handed George an encased No. 27, signifying that no Buckeye would wear it again, and tears welled in George's eyes after highlights of his career were shown on the main scoreboard and fans roared the familiar “Ed-die! Ed-die!” chant.

The ceremony concluded with the unveiling of George's name and number on the north facade next to the previous four players so honored – fellow Heisman Trophy winners Archie Griffin, Howard “Hopalong” Cassady, Vic Janowicz and Les Horvath.

“The rush of emotions came over me watching the highlights and watching the old experiences,” George said. “Then to hear the chant again, it made me feel happy and just blessed to be in this situation.

“You never get sick of the Eddie chant. They always make me feel welcome. It's like I'm a Buckeye forever.”

15 Years Ago – 2006

As hard as it was to believe, there was almost no way the Nov. 18 contest between Ohio State and Michigan could be overhyped.

The rivalry, consistently ranked the best in all of sports, had always had a major impact on the national picture but rarely like it would in 2006. Only three times before had both teams entered the affair unbeaten, and in just two of those games had both squads been unbeaten and untied.

That was the situation after No. 1 Ohio State moved to 11-0 with a 54-10 thrashing of Northwestern Nov. 11 in Evanston, Ill. At the same time, No. 2 Michigan was easily dispatching Indiana by a 34-3 count to match OSU's lofty record. In essence, the regular season was over and the “one-game season” would begin, and never before had the moniker been more apt.

“We think that's the way it should be in the Ohio State-Michigan game,” OSU head coach Jim Tressel said. “And we're excited.”

10 Years Ago – 2011

As Braxton Miller slowly but surely led the Ohio State football team toward the south end zone of Ross-Ade Stadium on Nov. 12, he unknowingly was channeling some of the most memorable recent moments of Buckeye football history.

With his team trailing upset-minded Purdue by a 20-14 score, Miller was piloting the Buckeyes toward the same end zone in which Craig Krenzel hit Michael Jenkins for the famed “Holy Buckeye” play, a miracle 37-yard touchdown pass that gave Ohio State a 10-6 win

on the way to the 2002 national championship.

Miller was hoping to lead the Buckeyes to a similarly improbable Big Ten title, but he was also dealing with the ghosts of 2009. The last time Ohio State had traveled to West Lafayette, the No. 7 Buckeyes were expected to roll but instead got off to a slow start and fell 26-18 after four turnovers from sophomore quarterback Terrelle Pryor.

As fate would have it, Miller managed to channel a little bit of both in capping that drive and finishing the game. He led the Scarlet and Gray on a frantic 66-yard, 10-play drive that culminated in an amazing 13-yard heave across his body to Jordan Hall that tied the game at 20 with 55 seconds to play. Moments later, kicker Drew Basil's point-after attempt was blocked and Purdue's overtime touchdown gave it the 26-23 win that dashed Ohio State's Big Ten dreams and upstaged Miller's heroics.

Five Years Ago – 2016

After Ohio State posted a second straight 62-3 win, it might have seemed like the Buckeyes were a different team. After all, they had lost to Penn State less than a month earlier.

But the Buckeyes haven't changed – not in the grand scheme of things – at least not according to junior defensive end Tyquan Lewis.

“I think we approach every game the same,” Lewis said Nov. 12 after Ohio State toppled Maryland. “We have one goal and that's to win. Dominate. That's our objective. Win and dominate. Win the game up front.”

For a stretch during the 2016 season, Ohio State wasn't dominating. The Buckeyes had a workmanlike win against Indiana, an overtime win vs. Wisconsin, that loss to the Nittany Lions and a close call against Northwestern during a four-week stretch. A week before traveling to College Park, the fifth-ranked Buckeyes saw the rust fall off all at once with a 62-3 win against Nebraska, matched only by the same score against the Terrapins.

So if the approach was the same and the goals were all the same, how did the Buckeyes go from questions about whether or not this was their year to a likely top-three ranking in the next College Football Playoff standings, which were set to be released Nov. 15?

“We just come out and do the small things better,” Lewis said. “That's all that really matters.”

One Year Ago – 2020

Just 15 minutes before he was set to address the team during a weekly meeting on Nov. 11, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day found out the Buckeyes would not be playing Maryland the following weekend due to a coronavirus outbreak within the Terrapins' program.

“I'm just surprised that it happened so quickly,” Day said during a Nov. 12 teleconference. “We were getting ready for practice on Wednesday, and it's like, ‘We're not playing. How did that just happen?’ I guess that's on me. I shouldn't be surprised about anything that happens now.”

Three days of preparation for a trip to Maryland went out the window in an instant, so Ohio State quickly shifted focus to its Nov. 21 game against undefeated Indiana.

“Literally, at that moment, I just told everybody, ‘We're done with Maryland,’” Day said. “The other coaches were kind of looking at me like, ‘OK, so what are we doing, Coach?’

“We just went out there, had a good practice working on fundamentals, base plays against base defenses. All of our attention went to Indiana.”

Wilson's Talents Help OSU Teammates Excel

Continued From Page 1

Nine seconds and 57 yards later, Henderson had completed his best run since the Penn State game and pushed the Buckeyes ahead to a 21-7 lead.

A drive later, Wilson grabbed three more quick hitters from Stroud, including one on third-and-6 that kept the offense alive for another set of downs, and set the key block on what was perhaps head coach Ryan Day's best call of the day – a fake screen to Olave, with Wilson serving as the decoy blocker, drawing the Purdue secondary in and creating room

for Smith-Njigba to run a delayed wheel route into unaccounted-for space, making for likely the easiest 20-yard touchdown pass of Stroud's young career.

Four drives, four scores for the Buckeyes, each of which Wilson had a direct hand in creating. The stat sheet, though, to that point credited him with only six receptions, 55 yards and a score. Perhaps in an effort to reward his hard work that might have gone otherwise unseen, Ohio State turned to him on its next two drives, setting him up with a jump ball that he won in the corner of the end zone from 12 yards out and then again on a 51-yard jet sweep handoff,

his second and third touchdowns of the afternoon.

"Garrett did it a couple of different ways tonight," Day said. "The first touchdown, he took a short route and went the distance. He caught the ball in the red zone where he jumped over the defender – and that was an amazing catch – he took a handoff, and then he beat a guy off the slant for a touchdown. He's versatile – can do a lot of different things. He's very powerful and strong, he has tremendous ball skills and he played really well tonight.

"Garrett's overall route running and understanding of how he fits into the concepts of

plays, how he runs routes with precision, the body language for the quarterback – he has all of it. His ability is off the charts. But it's the football IQ, the techniques, fundamentals, route running – that's what has really improved."

Wilson capped his brilliant return to the gridiron with a 24-yard catch-and-run on a slant to open the second half that had him make a Purdue defender look foolish with a quick cut that would have sliced through metal. But just as it was all night, the impact Wilson had on the offense and on its return to form was so much larger than that score, or any of his scores. He brought Ohio State's group, which found itself in something of a slump after back-to-back troubled performances against intrepid defenses, back to its high-flying, record-setting self. And not a moment too soon.

"It was great (to have Garrett) back out there again," Smith-Njigba said. "It is very important for us to be out there in what we call full force. I feel it's really scary for a defense when they try to cover all of us. Someone is usually open, and when they are, we know what to do with the ball. That's what we work on every week. That's what we try to do every game."

With Wilson on the field, and with a renewed sense of focus and emphasis on execution ahead of the final stretch that will define Ohio State's season, the offense again looked capable of taking on any comers even while the defense – which had been so strong against Penn State and Nebraska – took a step back and surrendered 31 points.

Stretch Run Looms

The offensive struggles against Penn State and Nebraska apparently served as a wake-up call for the Buckeyes, who have a pair of top-10 opponents left on the schedule for the final two weeks of the season. OSU hosts Michigan State on Nov. 20 and then heads to Ann Arbor a week later for the annual grudge match with Michigan.

Penalties had been coming in bunches while the once-lethal running attack had lost some of its early-season punch. Those problems were addressed, according to Day.

"We had to grab everyone's attention the last few weeks," he said. "We talked about the penalties. That was what was getting us off-schedule, and today we stayed on schedule and kept the ball rolling.

"And we ran the ball efficiently. The big runs will happen, but it's those hard 4- and 5-yard rushes. It doesn't look like much, but it means everything. So we just kept pounding the ball in there. That happened a few times. The first time we got down into the red zone, the offensive line got a good surge and we just finished it into the end zone. That's what we talk about. We did a much better job of not having negative plays and in staying on schedule."

Against the Boilermakers, Ohio State committed five penalties for 50 yards, but just three came on offense – one illegal motion (5 yards), one false start (5 yards) and one holding (10 yards), albeit the hold was a pretty crucial one that washed away a 49-yard touchdown pass to Olave.

Meanwhile, the rushing attack bounced back into form as well, thanks in part to the Buckeyes remaining on schedule without those costly penalties to worry about. Miyan Williams led the way with 117 yards on 14 carries, Henderson added another 98 and two scores on 13 carries while Wilson's 51-yard bolt provided both a huge play and a constant threat for Purdue to worry about.

In that, for the first time all season, the Buck-

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eyes could offer a legitimate second option for the defense to defend on its rushes. Isolated and unblocked defensive ends, usually designed to be held in place with the threat of a running quarterback that Ohio State is apparently without this season, were forced to pay respect to presnap receiver motion, with both Wilson and Smith-Njigba gashing them for big yardage from the backfield when the defense collapsed on the running back.

Pair that with improved execution up front and from the running backs, and Ohio State put on tape perhaps its best offensive game of the season, impressing even Day, who has often been one of his offense's biggest critics this season, especially in the execution department.

"It was a little bit of everything," the OSU head coach said. "We refocused in all areas. We had a better plan, a clean plan of coming off the ball. The pad level was better, the running backs were running harder. C.J. made some really good decisions, especially when it was an overloaded box and he got the ball to the perimeter. We'll have to look at the film and point out the issues – there are still some things to look at and that we want to fix, things that weren't clean – but that's what we're striving for. We want to make sure every drive that we're scoring touchdowns."

It was the kind of crisp performance, as Day put it following the game, that is exactly what Ohio State needs at this point in the season. With those discouraging results in the rearview mirror but still a popular talking point in and around the program, a day of fully operational football will go a long way for this squad.

With the Spartans and Wolverines on deck, and the College Football Playoff deadline drawing ever closer, Ohio State knows that the time is now for it to hit its stride and round into its

best form of the season.

"We have to play a couple of teams up there in the next couple of weeks, it's going to be a challenge," Day said. "Those are both very good teams. We have to get back to playing consistent football. That's what it is in November. This was a typical November game today in the Big Ten. Some wind, cold, and that's what we must face. The best teams play well in November."

As for the Buckeyes' final two opponents, it was a similarly successful late-autumn Saturday. The Spartans (9-1 overall, 6-1 in Big Ten play) rebounded from their first loss of the season to Purdue with a 40-21 victory over Maryland (5-5, 2-5) behind a four-touchdown performance from quarterback Payton Thorne and 143 rushing yards and two scores from Heisman hopeful Kenneth Walker III.

After that win, MSU safety Xavier Henderson dug into the same copy of the coach-speak handbook that Day read from about three hours later.

"November is championship football and I'm blessed to be a part of that and a part of something that we're chasing," Henderson said. "We put ourselves in good position to have an opportunity, but we've got that big one next week in a crazy environment."

With the Spartans only a game out of Ohio State's Big Ten East lead, the Nov. 20 matchup serves as what could be the first of two consecutive de facto division title games for the Buckeyes – if they can topple the Spartans while Michigan avoids an upset bid from the Terrapins.

"I've played in big games before, and a lot of the dudes have," Henderson said. "But I don't think I've played in a game with so much on the line."

For the Wolverines (9-1, 6-1), their weekend was a bit more stressful than those of their coun-

terparts. Trailing Penn State 21-17 with only minutes to play, quarterback Cade McNamara found tight end Erick All, who galloped 47 yards through the heart of Happy Valley to push his group back in front for good. The highlight belonged to McNamara and the Michigan offense, but seven sacks and 12 tackles behind the line of scrimmage ruled the day for the Wolverines – which will be a major point of emphasis for the Buckeyes on Nov. 27.

Head coach Jim Harbaugh, always eager to eschew the platitudes that his cohorts so often offer, delivered a final statement that put a nice bow on the win.

"How about those Wolverines!?" Harbaugh shouted. "If that's not grit, what is?"

When the third batch of College Football Playoff rankings are released Nov. 16, all three of the East Division contenders will be present well within the top 10, potentially in the same spots as a week before when the Buckeyes checked in at No. 4 and the Wolverines and Spartans were respectively at Nos. 6 and 7.

The Buckeyes and Spartans seemingly have

a crystal-clear path to that final group of four. Two more regular-season wins and a third in the Big Ten Championship Game against the likely West representative, Wisconsin (7-3, 5-2), would almost certainly be enough to secure a playoff spot.

The path is a bit murkier for the Wolverines, who would need both to win out and for Michigan State to fall once more, as an 11-1 MSU team would have the head-to-head advantage over an 11-1 Michigan outfit and would earn the East's ticket to the conference title and in turn a likely spot at football's big dance with a victory.

For a league that has been locked in a constant battle with its Southeastern Conference rivals for the better half of 20 years, it might not be the most comfortable spot – no such thing exists in the big-money game that is college football – but it offers a whole lot more breathing room than the past two seasons did, with Ohio State serving as the Big Ten's lone standard-bearer.

Three teams can carry that weight this year – at least for another week.

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Quarterback Makes Day's Prediction Come True

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said he had an inkling his quarterback was going to have a good game. And then C.J. Stroud went out and made Day look like Nostradamus with his precision performance Nov. 13 during a 59-31 romp against Purdue.

The redshirt freshman got a couple of weeks' head start on Thanksgiving, expertly carving up the Boilermakers to the tune of 361 yards and five touchdowns. The 300-yard performance was Stroud's fifth this season, the third-highest single-season total in program history and enough to place him fifth on the OSU career list of 300-yard games.

GAME NOTEBOOK MARK REA

The five touchdowns marked the third time he has done that this season, and that's already the third-highest total for a career, trailing only Dwayne Haskins (five) and J.T. Barrett (four).

Perhaps best of all was watching Stroud take exactly what Purdue gave him. When the Boilermakers covered deep, he dinked them. When they came up to take that away, he threw over their heads to receivers who were constantly finding open space. The performance was in sharp contrast to the week before against Nebraska when Stroud seemed bent on forcing the issue and wound up misfiring on several occasions and getting picked off twice.

"I thought C.J. had his best preparation of the season this week," Day said. "He was on his game. They brought some different things that made it challenging, but he really put a lot of work in and it was great to see that pay off."

"We talked about how it may be a higher completion percentage game with fewer yards based on how we were putting the game plan together. A successful passing game just de-



SONNY BROCKWAY

I GOT IT — Ohio State linebacker Palaie Gaoteote (21) clutches the football after recovering a Purdue fumble on a kickoff. Two plays after Gaoteote's recovery, the Buckeyes scored on a 12-yard pass from C.J. Stroud to Garrett Wilson to take a commanding 35-7 lead early in the second quarter.

pends on the style of defense that you're playing, so the (completion) numbers got a little higher."

Those 361 yards and five touchdowns came courtesy of a 31-for-38 afternoon, a heady completion percentage of 81.6 percent that represents the best for any Ohio State quarterback with more than 30 attempts in a game.

Of course, Stroud's job is made a little easier by the company he keeps. Garrett Wilson, Chris Olave and Jaxon Smith-Njigba each caught at least nine passes and combined to

catch all five of Stroud's touchdown passes. Wilson and Smith-Njigba each cracked the century mark in receiving yardage, while 102 of Smith-Njigba's 139 yards came after the catch.

"I feel like everybody did well," Stroud said. "The O-line, the tight ends, the running backs, the receivers — when we're going good, nobody can stop us. I feel like maybe this was my best game, but my job is just to sit back there and deliver the ball. When everybody is on the same page like we were today, I feel like we can roll as an offense."

Red-Zone Efficiency

If Day was delighted by the play of his quarterback, the OSU head coach must have been absolutely overjoyed about the efficiency of his offense.

After accounting for only two touchdowns on nine combined trips inside the red zone against Penn State and Nebraska, the Buckeyes cashed in with touchdowns on four of their six trips inside the Purdue red zone. That is especially noteworthy since the Boilermakers entered the game ranked second in the Big Ten in red-zone defense.

"Finishing drives in the red zone, that's stuff we talked about a lot," Day said, "but the last couple of weeks, it has been a point of emphasis."

Stroud claimed discussion regarding the team's recent struggles inside the opponent's 20 didn't come up just when formulating the Purdue game plan.

"We didn't put any kind of special emphasis on our red-zone offense this week because every game our emphasis is scoring in the red zone," the QB said. "The last two games against Penn State and Nebraska, we were just messing up. That was on us. But today, no, I wouldn't say we put any special emphasis on the red zone. It's always an emphasis."

The Buckeyes' first touchdown, a 21-yard pass from Stroud to Wilson, came just outside the red zone, but on their next possession, they began to put their red-zone miseries to rest. Freshman running back TreVeyon Henderson bulled his way across the goal line on a second-and-goal from the 3 to give Ohio State a 14-7 lead at the time.

OSU also cashed in on a pair of red-zone trips during a 24-point outburst in the second quarter with a 20-yard scoring pass from Stroud to Smith-Njigba and a 12-yard reception by Wilson. The team's final red-zone touchdown also provided their final points and came in the fourth quarter when Stroud and Olave hooked up for a 5-yard score.

The only two times the Buckeyes entered the red zone against the Boilermakers and didn't come away with a touchdown was when they settled for a 30-yard field from Noah Rugles near the end of the first half and when the game ended on a pair of kneel-downs inside the Purdue 10-yard line.

"It's going to build a lot of confidence to have that success in the red zone," Day said. "Not that our guys are lacking confidence. I just think after the last two weeks, we were a little on edge this week. We wanted to get back into this game, score in the red zone, get our nose dirty a little bit. I think we did that."

Rejuvenated Run Game

For all of the passing stats accumulated by Stroud and his stable of receivers, the Buckeyes got more from their running game than they have in nearly two months. Aided by a 57-yard touchdown bolt by Henderson and a 51-yarder by Wilson, Ohio State rushed for 263 yards and three touchdowns. It was the highest ground total since a season-best 323 yards against Tulsa way back in week three.

"In the run game, we moved the line of scrimmage," Day said. "That's something we've spent some time talking about as an offense. And then in finishing drives in the red zone, that's stuff we talk about a lot."

The long runs by Henderson and Wilson

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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

After a couple of weeks when it never looked fully in sync, the Ohio State offense was up to its old tricks with 59 points and 624 yards against a Purdue team that entered the game ranked 16th in the country in scoring defense and 27th in total defense. The Boilermakers hadn't given up that many points since a 63-14 loss to Auburn in the 2018 Music City Bowl.

OSU head coach Ryan Day said that he thought C.J. Stroud had one of his best practice weeks, and it showed. Stroud showed none of the poor decision-making that had plagued him the week before against Nebraska, and he completed 81.6 percent of his pass attempts (31 of 38) for 361 yards and five touchdowns.

Of course, it doesn't hurt to have a three-headed monster to work with in the passing game. Garrett Wilson scored four touchdowns – three receiving and one rushing – in his first game back after sitting out a week with a reported concussion, and he combined with Chris Olave and Jaxon Smith-Njigba for 28 receptions, 350 yards and five TDs.

Complementing the passing game was a resurgent run attack, good for 263 yards and three touchdowns a week after producing a season-low 90 yards. Redshirt freshman Miyan Williams got a second-half workout and responded with a career-high 117 yards, while true freshman TreVeyon Henderson added 98 yards and a pair of scores.

What likely pleased Day the most, however, was red-zone efficiency. After a couple of weeks of settling for field goals, the Buckeyes were 5 of 6 in the red zone against the Boilermakers, who came into the game ranked second in the Big Ten and 14th in the country in red-zone defense.

What Didn't Work

It's a good thing the Buckeyes were clicking on offense because the defense allowed 31 points and 481 total yards to the

Boilermakers. That was the second-highest point total of the season (only Oregon scored more with 35) as well as a return to the early part of the season when Ohio State surrendered more than 400 yards to each of its first three opponents.

Purdue QB Aidan O'Connell was able to sit in the pocket and match his personal single-game high with 40 completions in 52 attempts for 390 yards and a career-best four touchdowns with no interceptions, no sacks and no hurries.

Maybe the Buckeyes lost interest early after their offense staked them to a 28-point lead in the second quarter. After all, they forced a three-and-out on Purdue's first possession of the game. But uninterested or not, giving up that many points and that much yardage is more than ample reason for alarm.

Play Of The Game

Coaches often talk about turnovers as "sudden-change" plays that can shift momentum of a game or alter their outcomes altogether. When those sudden changes come on kickoffs and quickly lead to points, it can be especially uplifting. Ohio State enjoyed one of those moments early in the second quarter when veteran walk-on Chris Booker dislodged the football from Purdue return man Jackson Anthrop and OSU linebacker Palaie Gaoteote recovered the fumble at the Purdue 12-yard line. Two plays later, Stroud connected with Wilson for a 12-yard score to give the Buckeyes their second touchdown inside the space of 14 seconds. In addition to landing a double haymaker to the chin of Boilermakers, it also pushed Ohio State's lead at the time to 35-7. Purdue never drew closer than 21 points again.

– Mark Rea

contributed to a healthy average of 8.5 yards per carry for the Buckeyes, but take out those two plays and the attack was still efficient at 5.3 yards per attempt.

"Everyone knows Ohio State has a ton of talent," Purdue head coach Jeff Brohm said after the game. "Their line is sensational, their quarterback is really good, and they've got skill guys all across the board – running backs as well.

"If they want to pass every play they can, and if they want to run every play, they can and still go down and score."

Henderson just missed cracking the century mark with 98 yards on 13 carries. But the effort pushed the freshman past the 1,000-yard mark for the season, giving him 1,028 yards and making him only the fourth true freshman in Ohio State history with a 1,000-yard season. The others are J.K. Dobbins (1,403 yards in 2017), Maurice Clarett (1,237 in 2002) and Robert Smith (1,126 in 1990).

Henderson also scored a pair of touchdowns, giving him 17 for the season – 14 on the ground and three receiving – and putting him just one shy of the program record for freshmen in that category. Clarett tallied 18 TDs in 2002.

Henderson was relieved by redshirt freshman Miyan Williams, who topped the century mark with 117 yards on 14 carries – by far his best showing since opening the season with 125 yards at Minnesota. Williams did most of his heavy lifting on the final possession of the game, carrying eight times for 66 yards on the drive.

Although the Buckeyes and Boilermakers have played one another sporadically over the last several years, Williams rushed for the highest total by an OSU player since Pepe Pearson ran for 152 yards during a 42-14 win against the Boilermakers in 1996. The only other Ohio State running back to eclipse the 100-yard mark against Purdue since Pearson was Carlos Hyde, who rushed for 111 yards during a 56-0 win in 2013.

Game Notes

- The game marked the 58th overall meeting between Ohio State and Purdue, and the Buckeyes now enjoy a 41-15-2 advantage. That includes a 27-5-2 record against the Boilermakers in Columbus – 24-5-2 at Ohio Stadium and 3-0 at Ohio Field.

- Purdue has lost each of the last 10 times it has played at Ohio Stadium and is without a victory in Columbus since a 31-26 decision in 1988.

- Day is now 1-0 against Purdue. Brohm fell to 1-1 all-time against Ohio State. His team rolled to a 49-20 upset of the No. 2 Buckeyes in West Lafayette in 2018.

- Brohm was also 0-2 against the Buckeyes as a quarterback at Louisville when the Cardinals played Ohio State in back-to-back seasons during the early 1990s. Brohm was sidelined with a broken ankle when Louisville lost a 23-15 decision to OSU in 1991, but he threw for 230 yards and one touchdown during a narrow 20-19 loss to the Buckeyes in 1992. Brohm nearly rallied his team to victory in '92, but after the Cardinals scored a touchdown with 35 seconds left in the game, his two-point conversion pass sailed over the head of his intended receiver and Ohio State escaped with the win.

- Day upped his career record to 8-0 in November games. Meanwhile, Brohm fell to 18-10 lifetime during the month. He is now 8-9 in November games at Purdue after going 10-1

during the month in three seasons at Western Kentucky from 2014-16.

- Day is now 21-0 against unranked opponents during his three-plus years at Ohio State. In five seasons at Purdue, Brohm is now 5-10 against ranked teams and 3-3 against top-10 opponents.

- Ohio State ran its all-time record to 12-5 in games played on Nov. 13. The first game in program history played on that date was a 24-0 loss to Cincinnati in a game played in the Queen City in 1897.

- Purdue's all-time record dropped to 6-9-1 in games played on Nov. 13. The first game the Boilermakers played on that date was a 30-12 win against Missouri in 1897.

- The Buckeyes and Boilermakers had played twice previously on Nov. 13 – a 28-6 win for OSU in 1954 and a 24-17 victory for Purdue in 2004. Both games were played in West Lafayette.

- Purdue was looking for its fourth road victory of the season. The Boilermakers haven't won four away games since the 1943 team posted a 9-0 record. Five of the Big Ten co-champion's nine wins that season came on the road.

- Ohio State has now won 25 consecutive regular-season conference games. That includes 12 games at Ohio Stadium and 13 on the road. The last time the Buckeyes lost a conference game was that 49-20 defeat at Purdue in 2018.

- OSU and Purdue are not scheduled to play one another again until Oct. 14, 2023, in West Lafayette.

- Olave's 5-yard touchdown catch in the fourth quarter gave him 33 career TDs, and he pulled within one of the program record set at 34 by David Boston (1996-98).

- Olave's nine receptions gave him 162 for

his career and vaulted him past Gary Williams (154, 1979-82) into fifth place all-time at Ohio State.

- Stroud became only the fourth Ohio State quarterback ever to top the 300-yard mark in a game against Purdue. Haskins threw for 470 in the 2018 game, Art Schlichter totaled 336 during a 45-33 win in 1981 and Bobby Hoying had 304 yards during a 48-14 win in 1994.

- Ruggles has now converted 18 consecutive field-goal attempts, the longest current streak in the nation. That includes his final two attempts at North Carolina before transferring to Ohio State, where he is now a perfect 16 for 16.

- Purdue receiver David Bell caught 11 balls for 103 yards, upping his own school record to 16 career games with at least 100 yards receiving. His 11 receptions also jumped him from sixth to fourth all-time for the Boilermakers with 212 catches. He has a way to go to catch the top three receivers in Purdue history – Taylor Stubblefield (325, 2001-04), Dorien Bryant (292, 2004-07) and John Standeford (266, 2000-03).

- The Buckeyes scored 59 points for the

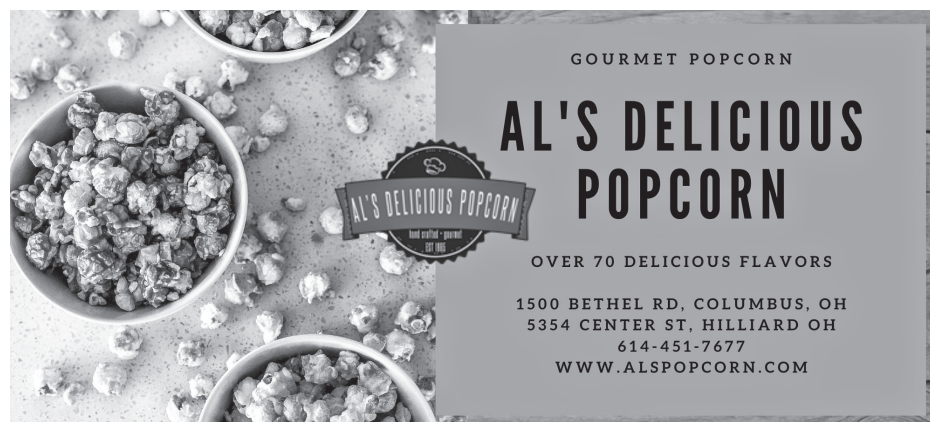
second time this season, first totaling that number during a 59-7 win against Akron. OSU had totaled 59 points in the previous two games combined against Nebraska and Penn State.

- OSU and Purdue combined for 1,103 yards of total offense. That marks the third game this season the Buckeyes and an opponent have combined for more than 1,000 total yards. The others were Oregon (1,117) and Tulsa (1,009).

- Ohio State is now a perfect 113-0 all-time when scoring 50 or more points.

- Neither team recorded a sack, which was unusual. The Buckeyes entered the game having accumulated 19 sacks in their previous four games, while the Boilermakers had recorded at least one sack in 21 of their previous 22 games against OSU.

- In honor of Veterans Day, Ohio State designated the contest against Purdue as its "Military Appreciation Game." On-field recognitions included a large flag presentation during the national anthem, a flyover and acknowledgment of student-veterans as well as paralyzed Veterans of America.



Wilson's Return Highlights Blowout Of Boilermakers

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State wanted to re-establish the running game after throwing on 54 of 84 plays the previous game at Nebraska.

The Buckeyes, who had managed only 90 yards rushing vs. the Cornhuskers (3.0 yards per carry), did that in their matchup against Purdue in Ohio Stadium on Nov. 13 as they ran for 263 yards and three touchdowns with a robust 8.5 average.

The even better news for No. 4 Ohio State was that all those yards on the ground did not come at the expense of the aerial attack.

Garrett Wilson combined the best of both worlds in helping the Buckeyes pound the No. 19 Boilermakers, 59-31, before a crowd of 101,009 on a blustery 37-degree afternoon. Wilson became the first OSU player to catch

three TDs and run for a score in a game as part of his performance that included 10 catches for 126 yards.

The junior receiver, who had missed the Nebraska game for a reported concussion, had scoring receptions of 21 and 12 yards and a TD run of 51 yards as the Buckeyes (9-1, 7-0) rolled to a 45-17 halftime lead.

He added a 24-yard TD catch in the third quarter.

"You want a guy like Garrett out there," quarterback C.J. Stroud said. "He's a great player to have. His routes speak for himself. He gets open time in and time out."

The Buckeyes were up 52-17, but Aidan O'Connell threw two TDs to make it interesting for the Boilermakers (6-4, 4-3) before Stroud passed 5 yards to Chris Olave to increase the lead to the final margin early in the fourth.

Stroud was 31 of 38 for 361 yards and five touchdowns with Jaxon Smith-Njigba getting 139 receiving yards and a TD on 10 catches and Olave making nine catches for 85 yards and a score.

The Buckeyes' point total matched the 59 they scored in the previous two games combined vs. Penn State and Nebraska.

"They were hitting on all cylinders today," Purdue coach Jeff Brohm said. "They're a play-off-caliber team."

Taking Charge

The Buckeyes welcomed the return of Wilson with a scoring drive on their first possession, capped by his 21-yard catch after starting with excellent field position.

Purdue's Jack Ansell shanked a 16-yard punt to the Boilermakers' 39 and Stroud engineered a five-play sequence in 2:10. It began with a 6-yard toss to Wilson. Olave had a catch for 8 yards, and TreVeyon Henderson ran twice for 4 yards before Wilson's TD at 11:45.

The Boilermakers responded with a 75-yard drive that took seven plays and 2:49.

David Bell's 23-yard reception to the Purdue 48 got the Boilermakers rolling. Four plays later, O'Connell found Milton Wright for 10 yards to the 25. After an incompletion, Jackson Anthrop made a touchdown catch to tie it at 7 with 8:56 left in the quarter.

Henderson scored two quick touchdowns for a 21-7 lead by the 5:14 mark.

He rushed for a 3-yard TD at 7:04 to finish off a 78-yard, six-play, 1:47 series. Stroud's

pop pass to Smith-Njigba went for 49 yards to the 21. Olave had a catch for 9 yards, and a face-mask infraction on the play put the ball at the 6. Henderson then had consecutive 3-yard runs to reach the end zone.

After the kickoff, Purdue was on the move, reaching the OSU 38 when backup QB Jack Plummer replaced O'Connell. On his first snap, he muffed the handoff to King Doerue, and Jerron Cage recovered it at the OSU 43.

On the first play, Henderson raced to a 57-yard TD at 5:14 for the 21-7 advantage.

Smith-Njigba, who had set a school record with 15 receptions against Nebraska, scored on a 20-yard catch to extend the lead to 28-7 at 13:42 of the second quarter.

Miyan Williams spelled Henderson and had a 3-yard reception to open the drive. He then had back-to-back 8-yard runs. He would end up leading all rushers with 117 yards on 14 attempts for an 8.4 average.

Smith-Njigba would later score on a second-and-5 to complete an 11-play possession covering 75 yards in 3:38.

On the ensuing kickoff, the Boilermakers gifted the Buckeyes another scoring opportunity, and they took advantage to go ahead 35-7 at 13:28.

Anthrop was indecisive in fielding the ball and was hit by Chris Booker at the 14. Palaie Gaoteote IV recovered the fumble at the 12. Stroud was off target to Olave, but on second down, Wilson made an acrobatic catch for the six points.

O'Connell was 8 for 8 for 69 yards when

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OHIO STATE VS. PURDUE

the Boilermakers went 80 yards in 10 plays and 4:21 to make it 35-14 at 9:01 on a 12-yard catch by Broc Thompson. The biggest chunk was a 24-yard pass to Wright to the 26.

Ohio State made it six TDs on six possessions when Wilson took the handoff on a sweep to the left and blew by everybody for 51 yards and a 42-14 score at 7:22. OSU needed only 1:39 and four plays to go 75 yards.

Purdue closed to within 42-17 at 4:12 on a 32-yard field goal by Mitchell Fineran. A pass-interference call on freshman Denzel Burke placed the ball at the 14, but O'Connell had three incomplete passes, the last was almost intercepted by Cam Brown.

Ohio State failed to break the goal line on its last drive of the first half but did get a 30-yard field goal from Noah Ruggles with 18 seconds left to carry a 45-17 lead into halftime.

Williams had two carries for 34 yards on the drive that began at the OSU 26. Olave had a 9-yard grab and Smith-Njigba added another 7 to the 13 before the drive stalled with two incompletions.

The Buckeyes had 386 total yards in the first half. Stroud was 19 of 25 for 212 yards, and Henderson rushed six times for 72 yards.

Finishing It Off

Ohio State took the second-half kickoff and marched 75 yards in eight plays, capped by a 24-yard TD from Stroud to Wilson at 10:48 as the lead grew to 52-17.

Earlier, Stroud had a 49-yard TD to Olave nullified by a holding penalty on tight end Jeremy Ruckert. Prior to that, a Wilson grab gained 19 yards.

Purdue made it 52-24 with 7:53 left in the

third on O'Connell's 29-yard strike to Wright. The drive consumed 2:55 over seven plays and 75 yards. On a third-and-10 from the Purdue 46, TJ Sheffield had a catch for 25 yards to set up the score.

O'Connell kept slinging, and the Boilermakers on their next drive got a 9-yard TD catch from Anthrop with 2:02 remaining in the third quarter to make it 52-31.

Purdue went 87 yards, using 10 plays over 4:09. Sheffield had an 18-yard catch and Zander Horvath caught a 20-yarder to the 20.

Ohio State stopped the mini-rally by driving 75 yards, taking 4:11 off the clock on nine plays, the last being a 5-yard catch by Olave at 12:51 of the fourth quarter to make it 59-31.

Wilson made a catch for 16 on the first play of the series, and Stroud went to Olave for 13 on the next-to-last snap of the third quarter. After Henderson snagged a 4-yard pass on first down, Olave then had two straight 11-yard gains and Henderson gained 11 yards on two runs before the final scoring play of the game.

Purdue held the ball for 13 plays and 5:11 but came up with nothing after driving from their 25 to the OSU 24. O'Connell had three straight incomplete throws to end the Boilermakers' final possession.

The Buckeyes ran out the last 7:40 with 11 plays that included eight Williams' rushes for 66 yards, a Stroud pass to Julian Fleming for 4 yards and two kneel-downs.

Notes

Ohio State had 624 total yards (361 pass, 263 run) and 30 first downs. ... Henderson carried 13 times for 98 yards and the two TDs. His 17 touchdowns scored are one behind

Maurice Claret's OSU record for a freshman ... Olave needs two TD catches to break David Boston's school record of 34. ... O'Connell was 40 for 52 for 390 yards and four TDs. ... The Boilermakers had 481 total yards. They gained 91 yards on the ground with a 4.8 average. ... Bell was targeted 17 times and had 11 catches

for 103 yards. ... On a combined 90 pass attempts, neither team had a sack. ... OSU had four TDs and a field goal in six trips to the red zone. ... Defensive end Zach Harrison led OSU with two tackles for loss (3 yards) and had a career-high six total tackles (four solo) ... Burke had a career-high 11 tackles (10 solo).



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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 59, Purdue 31

Nov. 13, 2021 – Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
PURDUE	7	10	14	0	31
OHIO STATE	21	24	7	7	59

First Quarter

- OSU** – Wilson, 21-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 11:45; 5 plays, 39 yards, 2:10 TOP.
- PUR** – Anthrop, 25-yard pass from O’Connell (Fineran kick), 6:41; 7 plays, 75 yards, 2:49 TOP.
- OSU** – Henderson, 3-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 7:04; 6 plays, 78 yards, 1:47 TOP.
- OSU** – Henderson, 57-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 5:14; 1 plays, 57 yards, 0:09 TOP.

Second Quarter

- OSU** – Smith-Njigba, 20-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 13:42; 11 plays, 75 yards, 3:38 TOP.
- OSU** – Wilson, 12-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 13:28; 2 plays, 12 yards, 0:11 TOP.
- PUR** – Thompson, 12-yard pass from O’Connell (Fineran kick), 9:01; 12 plays, 80 yards, 4:21 TOP.
- OSU** – Wilson, 51-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 7:22; 4 plays, 75 yards, 1:39 TOP.
- PUR** – Fineran, 32-yard field goal, 4:12; 10 plays, 61 yards, 3:10 TOP.
- OSU** – Ruggles, 30-yard field goal, 0:18; 10 plays, 66 yards, 3:48 TOP.

Third Quarter

- OSU** – Wilson, 24-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 10:48; 8 plays, 75 yards, 4:12 TOP.
- PUR** – Wright, 29-yard pass from O’Connell (Fineran kick), 7:53; 7 plays, 75 yards, 2:55 TOP.
- PUR** – Anthrop, 9-yard pass from O’Connell (Fineran kick), 2:02; 10 plays, 87 yards, 4:09 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

- OSU** – Olave, 5-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 12:51; 9 plays, 75 yards, 4:11 TOP.
- Att.** – 101,009

Weather – 37 degrees, cloudy, wind SW 15 mph

Team Statistics		
	PUR	OSU
First Downs	28	30
Rushing	5	11
Passing	22	17
Penalty	1	2
Rushes-Yards	19-91	31-263
Passing Yards	390	361
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	40-52-0	31-38-0
Offensive Plays	71	69
Total Net Yards	481	624
Third Down Efficiency	5-10	4-7
Punts-Avg.	2-24.5	1-40.0
Fumbles-Lost	2-2	0-0
Penalties	4-31	5-50
Time of Possession	28:42	31:18

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – PUR: Horvath 5-36; Doerue 10-26; Anthrop 3-22; Bell 1-7. **OSU:** Williams 14-117; Henderson 13-98; Wilson 1-51; Stroud 1-(-1); TEAM 2-(-2).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – PUR: O’Connell 40-52-0-390-4. **OSU:** Stroud 31-38-0-361-5.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – PUR: Bell 11-103; Wright 7-98; Anthrop 7-66; Sheffield 4-54; Horvath 3-24; Thompson 3-22; Doerue 2-11; Durham 2-5; Miller 1-7. **OSU:** Wilson 10-126; Smith-Njigba 9-139; Olave 9-85; Henderson 1-4; Fleming 1-4; Williams 1-3.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.) – PUR: Ansell 2-24.5. **OSU:** Mirco 1-40.0.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – PUR: None. **OSU:** None.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – PUR: Anthrop 2-11; Sheffield 1-7. **OSU:** Egbuka 3-76.

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

FORCED FUMBLES – PUR: None. **OSU:** Booker.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES – PUR: None. **OSU:** Cage 1-0, Gaoteote IV 1-0.

INTERCEPTIONS – PUR: None. **OSU:** None.

SACKS – PUR: None. **OSU:** None.

TACKLES FOR LOSS – PUR: Karlaftis 1.0-2; Allen 1.0-1; Alexander 0.5-1; Mitchell 0.5-0. **OSU:** Harrison 2.0-3; Chambers 1.5-3; Eichenberg 0-5-1; Shaw 0.5-1; Ransom 0.5-0.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – PUR: Alexander 4-6-10; Allen 8-1-9; Grant 5-4-9; Jefferson 5-2-7; Mackey 6-0-6; Graham 2-3-5; Brown 3-1-4; Karlaftis 3-0-3; Douglas 1-2-3; Mitchell 0-3-3; Jenkins 2-0-2; Johnson 1-0-1; Lewis 0-1-1; Brothers 0-1-1. **OSU:** Burke 10-1-11; Shaw 3-5-8; Hickman 5-2-7; Harrison 4-2-6; Ransom 3-3-6; Eichenberg 3-3-6; Brown 3-1-4; Chambers 2-2-4; Williamson 1-1-2; Simon 0-2-2; Jackson 0-2-2; Cage 1-0-1; Banks 1-0-1; Booker 1-0-1; Williams 1-0-1; Hamilton 1-0-1; Mitchell 1-0-1; Jean-Baptiste 1-0-1; Vincent 0-1-1; Smith 0-1-1; Young 0-1-1; Tuimoloau 0-1-1.

Players In The Game

PUR – Sheffield, Albers, Plummer, Mitchell, Jefferson, Brothers, Kane, Fineran, Calloway, Romphf, Thompson, Ansell, Zecchino, Lewis, Downing, Freehill, Chapman, Horvath, Washington, Furtney, Greene, Kreul, Craig, Bycznski, Sullivan, Maxwell, Miller, Austin, Sullivan, Maxwell, Miller, Austin, Sullivan.

OSU – Olave, Wilson, Stroud, Smith-Njigba, Henderson, Rossi, Wypler, Jones, Munford, Johnson Jr., Petit-Frere, Williamson, Vincent, Banks, Harrison, Smith, Hickman, Shaw, Chambers, Burke, Simon, Jackson, McCall, Williams, Mitchell, Fleming, Cavazos, Stover, Jean-Baptiste, Martinez, Ransom, Egbuka, Young, Watts, Harrison Jr., DiMaccio, Gaoteote IV, Hooker, Johnson, Brown, Williams, Mirco, Sawyer, Eichenberg, Robinson, Batsch, Tuimoloau, Kacherski, Jones, Hamilton, James, Fryar, Jackson, Cage, Booker, Ruckert, Williams, Garrett, Ruggles.

Season Statistics

2021-22 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Spt. 2	(4) at Minnesota	W, 45-31	50,805
Spt. 11	(3) OREGON (12)	L, 35-28	100,482
Sept. 18	(9) TULSA	W, 41-20	76,540
Spt. 25	(10) AKRON	W, 59-7	95,178
Oct. 2	(11) at Rutgers	W, 52,13	51,006
Oct. 9	(7) MARYLAND	W, 66-17	99,277
Oct. 23	(5) at Indiana	W, 54-7	52,656
Oct. 30	(5)PENN STATE (20)	W, 33-24	102,951
Nov. 6	(6) at Nebraska	W, 26-17	84,426
Nov. 13	(6) PURDUE	W, 59-31	101,009
Nov. 20	(5) MICHIGAN STATE (7)	Noon	
Nov. 27	at Michigan (8)	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	261	216
Rushing	96	66
Passing	154	128
Penalty	11	22
Average Per Game/Rush	196.8	105.9
Average Per Game/Pass	353.6	261.5
Total Offense	5504	3674
Total Plays	685	721
Average Per Game	550.4	367.4
Average Per Play	8.0	5.1
Penalties-Yards	67-629	47-397
Fumbles-Lost	7-2	13-6
Third Down Efficiency	63-118	62-150
Percentage	53%	41%
Fourth Down Efficiency	6-13	7-16
Percentage	46%	44%
Sacks-Yards	34-229	11-95
Time Of Possession Avg.	28:39	31:21

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	100	171	114	78	0	463	46.3	
Opponents	40	61	70	31	0	202	20.2	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	
	Long				
T. Henderson	140	1028	7.3	14	68
Miyan Williams	58	436	7.5	2	71
Master Teague	46	261	5.7	3	17
Marcus Crowley	20	103	5.2	0	22
Evan Pryor	21	98	4.7	1	16
Garrett Wilson	3	71	23.7	1	51
C.J. Stroud	22	4	0.2	0	15
Jack Miller III	5	-1	-0.2	0	8
Kyle McCord	7	-25	-3.6	0	7
OSU Totals	330	1968	6.0	21	71
OPP Totals	342	1059	3.1	9	77

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
C.J. Stroud	214	311	68.8	3036	30-5	179.4
Kyle McCord	21	30	70.0	399	2-1	197.1
Jack Miller III	7	14	50.0	101	0-0	110.6
OSU Totals	242	355	68.2	3536	32-6	178.2
OPP Totals	235	379	62.0	2615	17-11	129.0

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	59	1027	17.4	5	75
Garrett Wilson	53	813	15.3	9	57
Chris Olave	51	708	13.9	11	61
Jeremy Ruckert	22	256	11.6	3	30
TreVeyon Henderson	16	223	13.9	3	70
Emeka Egbuka	6	145	24.2	0	85
Cade Stover	5	76	15.2	0	25
Marvin Harrison Jr.	5	68	13.6	0	20
Miyan Williams	5	52	10.4	0	17
Julian Fleming	5	43	8.6	0	17
Gee Scott Jr.	4	43	10.8	0	16
Chris Booker	2	27	13.5	0	16
Master Teague	2	12	6.0	0	7
Evan Pryor	2	8	4.0	0	10
Mitch Rossi	2	1	0.5	0	1
Marcus Crowley	1	21	21.0	0	21
Joe Royer	1	9	9.0	0	9
Jayden Ballard	1	4	4.0	0	4
OSU Totals	242	3536	14.6	32	85
OPP Totals	235	2615	11.1	17	75

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Noah Ruggles	–	57-57	–	–	16-16	105
T. Henderson	17	–	–	–	–	102
Chris Olave	11	–	–	–	–	66
Garrett Wilson	10	–	–	–	–	60

Jaxon Smith-Njigba	5	–	–	–	–	30
Jeremy Ruckert	3	–	–	–	–	18
Master Teague III	3	–	–	–	–	18
Miyan Williams	2	–	–	–	–	12
Haskell Garrett	1	–	–	–	–	6
Craig Young	1	–	–	–	–	–6
Ronnie Hickman	1	–	–	–	–	6
Cameron Martinez	1	–	–	–	–	6
Evan Pryor	1	–	–	–	–	6
Mitch Rossi	1	–	–	–	–	6
Denzel Burke	1	–	–	–	–	6
Jerron Cage	1	–	–	–	–	6
Marvin Harrison Jr.	0	–	–	–	–	2
Dominic DiMaccio	0	2-2	–	–	–	2
OSU Totals	59	59-59	–	–	16-16	463
OPP Totals	26	25-26	–	–	7-11	202

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Noah Ruggles	6-6	6-6	4-4	0-0	16-16
OSU Totals	6-6	6-6	4-4	0-0	16-16
OPP Totals	1-1	3-4	3-6	0-0	7-11

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	24	999	41.6	0	62
OSU Totals	24	999	41.6	0	62
OPP Totals	53	2267	42.8	0	67

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Craig Young	2	88	44.0	1	70
Ronnie Hickman	2	65	32.5	1	46
Cameron Martinez	1	61	61.0	1	61
Cameron Brown	1	25	25.0	0	25
Cody Simon	1	24	24.0	0	24
Denzel Burke	1	23	23.0	1	23
Tommy Eichenberg	1	0	0.0	0	0
Ryan Watts	1	0	0.0	0	0
Steele Chambers	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	11	286	26.0	4	70
OPP Totals	6	48	8.0	0	23

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Garrett Wilson	14	68	4.9	0	23
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	3	28	9.3	0	21
Chris Olave	1	4	4.0	0	4
OSU Totals	18	100	5.6	0	23
OPP Totals	5	24	4.8	0	9
Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	13	417	32.1	0	67
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	17	486	28.6	0	67
OPP Totals	22	313	14.2	0	23

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Ronnie Hickman	47	35	82	1.0-4	1.0-4
Cody Simon	18	28	46	2.0-13	1.0-11
Teradja Mitchell	19	24	43	4.5-12	–
Bryson Shaw	22	19	41	0.5-1	–
Tommy Eichenberg	18	17	35	3.0-8	–
Steele Chambers	19	14	33	3.5-11	1.0-7
Lathan Ransom	18	13	31	1.5-7	1.0-7
Denzel Burke	21	7	28	–	–
Zach Harrison	20	7	27	7.0-22	4.0-17
Marcus Williamson	15	9	24	0.5-3	–
Antwuan Jackson	11	11	22	4.5-20	2.5-16
Tyreke Smith	9	11	20	4.0-19	3.0-18
Haskell Garrett	11	8	19	6.0-25	4.5-23
Cameron Brown	15	4	19	–	–
Kourt Williams	10	4	14	–	–
Taron Vincent	6	8	14	2.5-6	0.5-2
Tyleik Williams	8	5	13	4.5-42	4.0-41
Cameron Martinez	8	5	13	0.5-4	–
J.T. Tuimoloau	5	7	12	3.5-27	2.5-24
J. Jean-Baptiste	6	6	12	2.0-18	1.5-13
Jack Sawyer	9	2	11	3.0-24	3.0-24
Cade Kacherski	7	4	11	–	–
Craig Young	5	6	11	–	–
OSU Totals	390	316	706	61.0-29134.0-229	
OPP Totals	380	232	612	29.0-124	11.0-95

Fumbles Forced: 10 – Harrison (2), Booker, Chambers, McKenzie, Ransom, Sawyer, Smith, Williams, Williamson.

Fumbles Recovered: 6 – Cage (2), Garrett (2), Eichenberg, Gaoteote IV.

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 59, Purdue 31

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on his team's win over Purdue: "That was the first time that we've played against that style of offense with heavy throwing, so we'll get on the film and learn some things from that. It was a good win in November against a team that was dangerous. We came out early, played well and created some turnovers, made plays on the perimeter."

Purdue head coach Jeff Brohm on what it takes to beat the Buckeyes: "In order to beat them, you have to match up with them. You've got to challenge them, get up and guard them and try to create some turnovers. The other side of the ball plays well, too. I give them a ton of credit. They came ready to play and executed it at a high level and got it to their playmakers. It seemed like they got whatever they wanted. We were lucky to hold them to 59."

Day on the offense's rapid-fire scoring in the first half: "One of the things we saw early on is that we were getting the ball into the perimeter on the quicker throws because they were bringing a lot of zero pressure (cover zero, meaning no high safety and man coverage across the board). They were doing some different things that made us really want to push the ball out there and see if we could make some guys miss in space. We did and that was really good."

Day on trying to stop Purdue's passing attack: "We dropped eight men a lot with a three-man rush, so you're not always going to get as many sacks. That's the decision that was made and we'll learn from it – find out if it was efficient or not. Certainly, you don't like to give up 31 points in a game. When you look at the last couple of weeks, when the offense hasn't been exactly stellar, the defense played well. And then here we score 59 points, and the defense gives up 31. The good news is that we're helping each other out, but we're still looking for that complete game – although we've had some complete games. But that's part of winning football in November and

bringing it every week. You have to help each other out. There were still a lot of good plays on defense."

Day on containing Purdue defensive end George Karlaftis: "We definitely did some different things to deal with Karlaftis, but we didn't overdo it, either. The tackles did a good job against him. He's a good player. He got a holding call (on a 49-yard touchdown pass from C.J. Stroud to Chris Olave) and we shouldn't have put (tight end) Jeremy Ruckert on him there. That was on me. It was a long-developing play, and we should have (double-teamed) him. He's a very good player."

Stroud on the offensive line's play against Purdue: "Kudos to the offensive line. The tackles did a great job on (Karlaftis). He was really a big emphasis on what we wanted to do. We wanted to stop his game. I think I only got hit one time, so when you have the confidence to stand there and throw, it really helps."

Day on Stroud's preparation the week before the game: "During Wednesday, Thursday practice, C.J. just seemed on it, and right off the bat he made a couple of good calls and checks early on, and it was apparent quickly in those first drives that he was just seeing it. When he can come over and verbalize what's going on in the moment, and it's really good information, that's when you know he's seeing it properly. So much of that has to do with the preparation that you put in so that you're anticipating what's going on instead of reacting to it. That's the key to quarterback play."

Stroud on why he tries to prepare well in practice: "I feel like as the leader of this offense, and one of the leaders of this team, it's up to me to see something on film and then share that. I feel like that's a plus if I can go out there and give them a nugget that maybe they didn't see."

Stroud on having wide receiver Garrett Wilson back for Purdue: "Of course we want to

have a guy like Garrett out there. The young guys did a good job last week, but you're always going to miss someone like Garrett. The routes he runs speak for themselves and then he knows what to do when he gets the ball. You always want 'G-5' out there."

Wilson on what it was like to miss the Nebraska game: "It was definitely hard. As far as how last Saturday went, there were times when I just couldn't watch the game. I was just stressing myself out. I hope that never happens again."

Ohio State wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba on getting yards after the catch: "I feel like that's just what we do. Chris has done it for a long time, Garrett has done it for a long time, and it's what I want to do. Every time we get the ball, we try to do something with it. That's an emphasis for us every week."

Smith-Njigba on the Buckeyes' struggle to score touchdowns in recent weeks: "We had some challenges (scoring) the last couple of weeks, and we wanted to do more of that today. We always want to do more, no matter how many points we score. We always think we can do better."

Day on having Stroud play the entire game: "I wanted to make sure that we finished the game the right way, and I just felt that was the right thing to do at the time."

Day on running back Miyan Williams' carries in the second half: "He got into a rhythm there at the end where he was just running vertical. There were a couple of plays he bounced (where he shouldn't have) and he started to make up his mind that he was going to start getting up the field. The tight ends and the offensive line were really rocking off the ball there when he started getting vertical and that was good to see."

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MSU Renovation Traces To Transfer Portal

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

To say that Mel Tucker's second team in East Lansing is a result of his first would be correct, though not in the traditional sense. This is no case of a team making a leap in the second season of a new system, jelling with its coaching staff and developing significantly in a full offseason – though Tucker's late arrival into a pandemic offseason certainly didn't help his cause in 2020.

No, this Michigan State team is less a product of 2020 and more an answer to it. Tucker saw his team challenged all season at the skill positions and in the trenches as it struggled to keep up athletically with such teams as Ohio State, Penn State and Indiana.

An upset victory over Michigan helped to make that opening campaign a success in the eyes of some, but for the most part, Tucker's Spartans looked a lot like a team that had atrophied in the late years of Mark Dantonio's tenure, lacking the top-end talent and physical ability to compete in the Big Ten in the way it once had under Jim Tressel's former defensive coordinator.

In response, Tucker, the former Colorado head coach and longtime defensive assistant with experience at Georgia and Ohio State as well as in the NFL, did what he felt was necessary to patch the holes in his roster, nabbing 20 players from the transfer portal (15 from other FBS programs) for spots all over the two-deep, from quarterback to the defensive secondary and everywhere in between. It wasn't a full-scale rebuilding of the program, but to call it a renovation may not be far off.

To call it NFL-like would be even more accurate, though. In fact, Tucker compared it directly to the free agency process in the league.

"You go to free agency for need, specific need," he said. "You're not just randomly picking up guys. We were targeting areas where we knew we needed immediate help and/or depth. When we were recruiting those guys in the portal, we were able to tell them specifically why we wanted them to come here."

"The portal is here, and it's not going away. We're going to embrace it. I've gotten players out of the portal, and I've seen guys go into the portal. That's part of college football now. I try to take the judgment out of it – good, bad, right, wrong – really just look at what is the truth. It's here. What is it all about? How do you navigate it? Figure it out and that determines what we need to do next. How do we need to structure our recruiting department? How do we adapt? And then how do we maximize our opportunities for our program? That's the way I approach it."

In some cases, the need was star power. Michigan State was in desperate need of offensive playmakers to pair with the electric receiver duo of Jalen Nailor and Jayden Reed, so it grabbed halfback Kenneth Walker III from Wake Forest after his tape with the Demon Deacons caught running backs coach William Peagler's eye.

"I was looking for a guy who could hit a home run, a guy that could change the game," Peagler said. "When I watched the tape of Ken, I realized this guy could be different. I kind of was drooling, like, 'This guy's a perfect fit for what we want to do.'"

Peagler was right. Walker has developed from a strong contributor at Wake Forest,

rushing for 579 yards and 13 scores in 2020, to a Heisman Trophy favorite and one of the most unstoppable tailbacks in college football. He was leading the nation with 1,473 rushing yards through Nov. 13 and has led Michigan State every time it needed him most. Against Miami (Fla.) in September, Walker rushed 27 times for 172 yards. He carried 29 times for 233 yards and a score in a tighter-than-expected win over Rutgers in October and then willed MSU to the Paul Bunyan Trophy against Michigan on Oct. 30, toting the rock 23 times for 197 yards and five scores, including a pair of fourth-quarter scampers from 58 and 23 yards for the game-tying and game-winning touchdowns.

"The whole world was watching and got to see the type of player he is," Tucker said after that game. "Everyone wants to know, OK, if he's considered for the Heisman, in games like this, you have to be able to produce. He was able to do that."

There was a need for star power on the other side of the ball, too, so Tucker and staff added a trio of former SEC warriors – line-backer Quavaris Crouch from Tennessee, cornerback Chester Kimbrough from Florida and Ronald Williams Jr. from Alabama.

"Seeing Quavaris Crouch walk down the hall and into the weight room, you're like, 'That guy's different. That's an SEC linebacker,'" MSU recruiting assistant Andrew Rodgers told The Athletic.

That athletic difference has shone through on the field as well. Michigan State's defense doesn't grade out statistically as one of the nation's best, allowing 22.5 points and 444.2 yards per game through 10 games, but when it comes to havoc and flying to the football, few teams are better. In some cases, that results in dominance. In others, the Spartans have found themselves a bit too aggressive, flocking to the ball but failing to make the play, which led directly to their first loss of the season against Purdue, an uncharacteristic 40-29 meltdown Nov. 6 in West Lafayette.

"We have to do a better job of tackling," Tucker said. "Obviously, we were in position to make some plays and didn't make them. In coverage, we have to make sure that we stay on top and don't give up big plays in the passing game. We're going to have communication on our defense. We are going to give calls and get calls, and we will make checks. We'll do things. As long as guys are lined up when the ball is snapped and they know what their assignment is, then we should be OK. It is going to be more about the execution when the ball is snapped."

Some of the players who will be crucial for that execution down the stretch are, as one might expect, new faces to the program. MSU didn't just turn to the portal for star power, adding several players designed to add more consistency than anything else. Wide receiver Christian Fitzpatrick from Louisville, offensive tackle Jarrett Horst from Arkansas State, defensive end Drew Jordan from Duke, cornerback Marqui Lowery from Louisville and linebacker Ben VanSumeran from Michigan might be lesser-known names around the nation, but each plays a significant role for the Spartans.

Even backups such as former Temple quarterback Anthony Russo have helped to push their in-house counterparts. Russo's competition in fall camp sparked improvement from starter Payton Thorne, who has had his best collegiate season thus far, com-

Get To Know ... Michigan State

2021 Record: 9-1.

Team Information: Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – 4-2-5; Starters Returning – Offense 6, Defense 6, Specialists.

Head Coach: Mel Tucker, 2nd year at Michigan State, 11-6.

Series History: 50th meeting; Ohio State leads 34-15-0

School Facts: Location – East Lansing, Mich.; Enrollment – 50,344; Nickname – Spartans; Colors – Green, White; Conference – Big Ten (East Division); Stadium – Spartan Stadium (Surface, Grass; Capacity – 74,866)

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
K. Walker III	227	1473	6.5	17
Jordan Simmons	47	232	4.9	0
Payton Thorne	60	147	2.5	3

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Payton Thorne	173-273	63.4	2460	21-8

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Jayden Reed	45	829	18.4	7
Jalen Nailor	31	587	18.9	6
Tre Mosley	28	417	14.9	2

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 34.6
Rushing Yards Per Game – 197.8
Passing Yards Per Game – 251.8
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 449.6

2021 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 3	at Northwestern	W, 38-21
Sept. 11	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 42-14
Sept. 18	at Miami (Fla.)	W, 38-17
Sept. 25	NEBRASKA	W, 23-20
Oct. 2	WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 48-31
Oct. 9	at Rutgers	W, 31-13
Oct. 16	at Indiana	W, 20-15
Oct. 30	MICHIGAN	W, 37-33
Nov. 6	at Purdue	L, 40-29
Nov. 13	MARYLAND	W, 40-21
Nov. 20	at Ohio State	Noon
Nov. 27	PENN STATE	TBA
Dec. 4	Big Ten Championship	TBA

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds	Sacks
Xavier Henderson	52	30	82	10.0-44	3.0-33
Quavaris Crouch	36	36	72	2.0-10	2.0-10
Cal Haladay	27	44	71	2.5-6	–
Angelo Grose	45	20	65	1.5-1	–
Darius Snow	43	20	63	4.0-10	–
Michael Dowell	24	11	35	2.0-5	–
C. Kimbrough	23	10	33	3.0-9	1.0-5
R. Williams Jr.	24	8	32	2.0-3	1.0-2
Jacob Slade	12	17	29	2.0-6	1.0-5

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg TD
C. Kimbrough	1	62	62.0 0
Noah Harvey	1	35	35.0 0
Dedrick Mackey	1	30	30.0 1

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 22.5
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 115.2
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 329.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 444.2

pleting 63.4 percent of his passes for 2,460 yards and 21 TDs against only eight interceptions.

"At a position like quarterback where only one guy plays, it's good to have other guys around you who are pushing you," Thorne said. "That brings out the best in you, and at the end (of the day), that's good for the team. I think competition is good, and working together to get to where we want to go is something that's important."

Out wide, Nailor (31 receptions, 587 yards and six TDs) and Reed (45 catches, 829 yards, seven TDs) remain in the starring roles, with sophomore Tre Mosley (28 catches, 417 yards, two TDs) serving as a valuable option off the bench, especially as Nailor has dealt with some nagging injuries.

On the other side of the ball, Jordan (15 tackles, 1½ sacks) has served as a nice complement to the true star of the defensive line, fifth-year senior Jacob Panasiuk (28 tackles, 8½ tackles for loss, 5½ sacks). Inside is the defensive tackle pairing of Jacob Slade and Simeon Barrow.

Behind them, Crouch is leading an almost entirely new-look linebacker group. Former starter Noah Harvey has moved into a reserve role with Crouch's arrival, ceding the starting job to the Tennessee transfer, who has accumulated 72 tackles on the year next to redshirt freshman Cal Haladay and nickel back Darius Snow, who earned his job over incumbent Michael Dowell only a few weeks into the season.

In the back end of the defense, Michigan State has mixed the new and the old, working in the CB transfer pair of Kimbrough and Williams with two of the team's best veteran leaders in safeties Xavier Henderson and Angelo Grose, selling the returning contributors at safety on the move to bring in new talent during the offseason to great success.

"We needed some players," said Henderson, a Pickerington (Ohio) Central product.

"We didn't care where you were from as long as you were willing to work, and all the (transfers) were. That's just kind of what college football and college sports are now. The transfer portal is a prominent thing. Whatever can help make our team better."

The transfers established not just a higher talent baseline and a significantly raised ceiling, but a culture much closer to the ones that Tucker saw in Athens and Columbus – one of competition, fighting for every second of playing time, and players battling it out in practice to prove they belong.

"When you evaluate your current team, ultimately you're deciding who's a good fit on this team," Tucker said. "Who has the traits and the characteristics – talent, mental and physical toughness, attention to detail, sense of urgency, love of the game – who has those traits, those characteristics that you need to have on your team to be successful."

"Ultimately, there's transition – not only acquiring guys to the team, but also guys who may transition out. There's a certain type of culture and a certain type of player that we need to have here. That's really nonnegotiable. Nothing's set in stone. This is compete to play, compete to stay."

That culture shift has paid dividends for the Spartans all season. They'll head to Columbus for their Nov. 20 matchup with the Buckeyes as a 9-1 squad – their lone blemish coming to the pesky Boilermakers – and in all likelihood, a top-10 team in the College Football Playoff rankings.

The winner will have a direct track to the Big Ten Championship Game and, in turn, the playoff. A loss for the Buckeyes would all but end any playoff hopes and would put Ryan Day's squad in need of a Penn State upset of the Spartans on Nov. 27 to return to the conference title game for a fifth consecutive appearance.

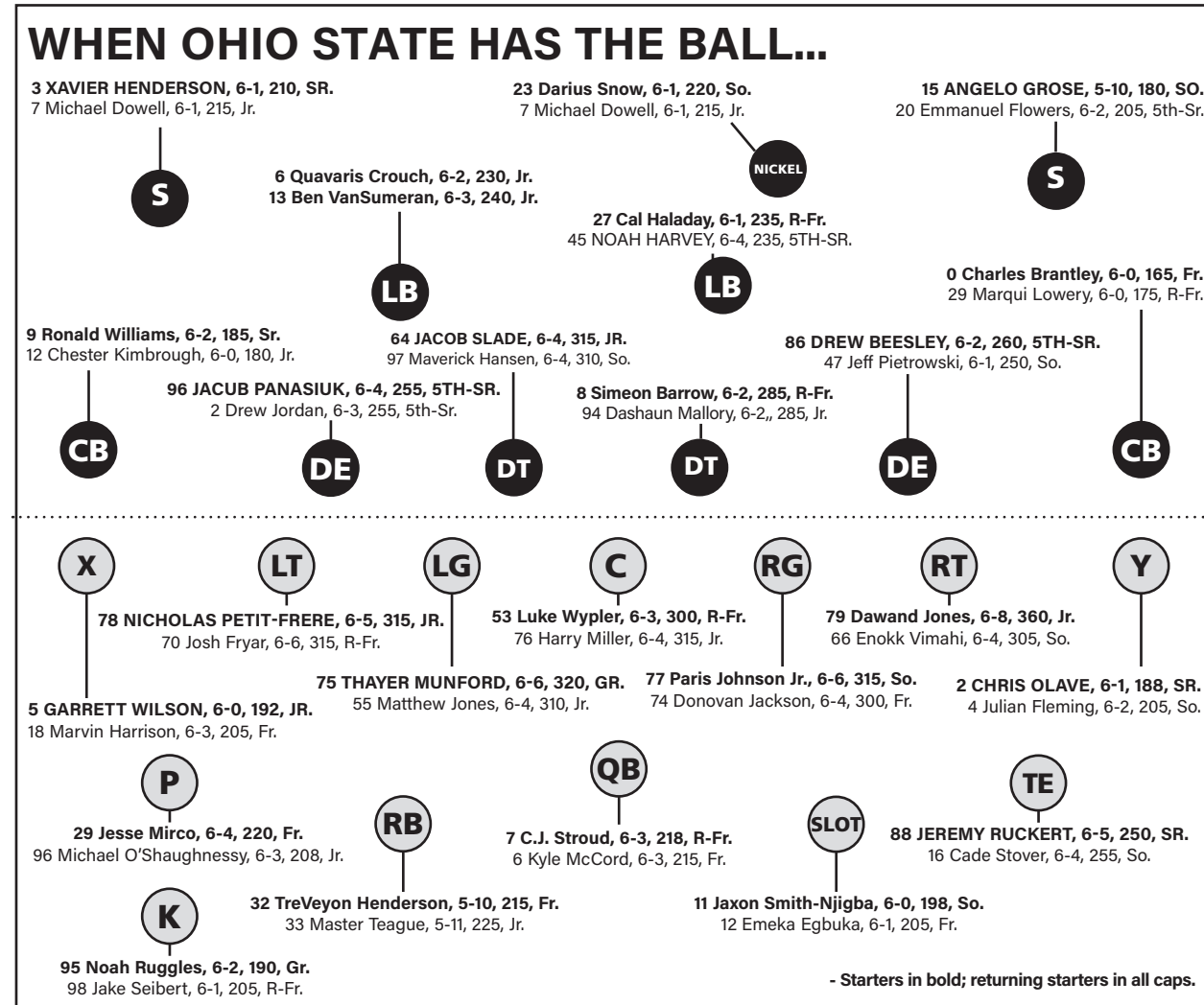


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Projected Depth Charts



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. MICHIGAN STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Buckeyes regained their running punch with an impressive performance against Purdue. After picking up just 90 yards against Nebraska, Miyan Williams (117 yards, 14 carries, 8.4 yards per carry) and TreVeyon Henderson (98, 13, 7.5) did the heavy lifting en route to 263 yards and an 8.5-yard average for the team. Of course, those totals included the 51-yard scamper and score by wide receiver Garrett Wilson. Henderson is still the main threat with almost half of Williams' yardage (66) coming on the final drive of the game. Ohio State is averaging 196.8 yards per game but faces a stout rushing defense that is top-20 nationally with less than 116 yards allowed per game. The Spartans held Maryland to just 97 during a 40-21 win on Nov. 13. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

MICHIGAN STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Heisman Trophy candidate Kenneth Walker III will have the opportunity to make his claim even stronger if he can continue to do what he's done to defenses all season. He rushed for 143 yards on 30 carries and scored two touchdowns vs. Maryland. He has seven 100-yard games and 17 rushing TDs this season. His 1,473 yards through 10 games lead the nation and are eighth most in an MSU season. The Spartans gained 194 yards vs. the Terrapins, which was around their season average of 198.2 entering the game. The Buckeyes allow 105.9 yards a game to also rank in the top 20, but some of that is because of a vulnerable pass defense. Purdue ran only 19 times against the Buckeyes but netted 91 yards for a 4.8-yard average. **EDGE: MICHIGAN STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. MICHIGAN STATE PASS DEFENSE

The return of Wilson after a one-game absence only amplified how deep and talented the Buckeyes are at receiver. A week after Jaxon Smith-Njigba set a school record with 15 catches in a game, Wilson not only had the long TD run but added 10 catches for 126 yards and three TDs. Smith-Njigba merely caught nine throws for 139 yards – with an impressive 102 coming after the catch. Oh, and by the way, Chris Olave had nine catches for 85 yards and a six-pointer. C.J. Stroud racked up 361 yards on a 31-for-38 effort with no interceptions or sacks. Michigan State was lit up again as Maryland QB Taulia Tagovailoa threw for 350 yards and two TDs a week after Purdue's Adrian O'Connell torched the Spartans for 536 yards and three touchdowns. MSU ranks dead last of 130 FBS teams in pass defense (329.0). **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

MICHIGAN STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

The Spartans showed against Maryland they are not one-dimensional. Payton Thorne was an efficient 22 of 31 for 287 yards and four TDs, including a 52-yarder to Montorie Foster to open the scoring off a flea-flicker, the fourth time this season they've scored on that trick play. Thorne has 21 TD passes, tied for sixth most in a season in program history. Jayden Reed had eight catches for 114 yards and two scores vs. the Terps, and Walker out of the backfield had two catches for 29 yards. The Buckeyes remain suspect defending the pass as evidenced by O'Connell going 40 for 52 for 390 yards and four TDs without being sacked. OSU is allowing 261.5 yards per game, and that ranks a lowly 108th in the nation. **EDGE: EVEN**

SPECIAL TEAMS

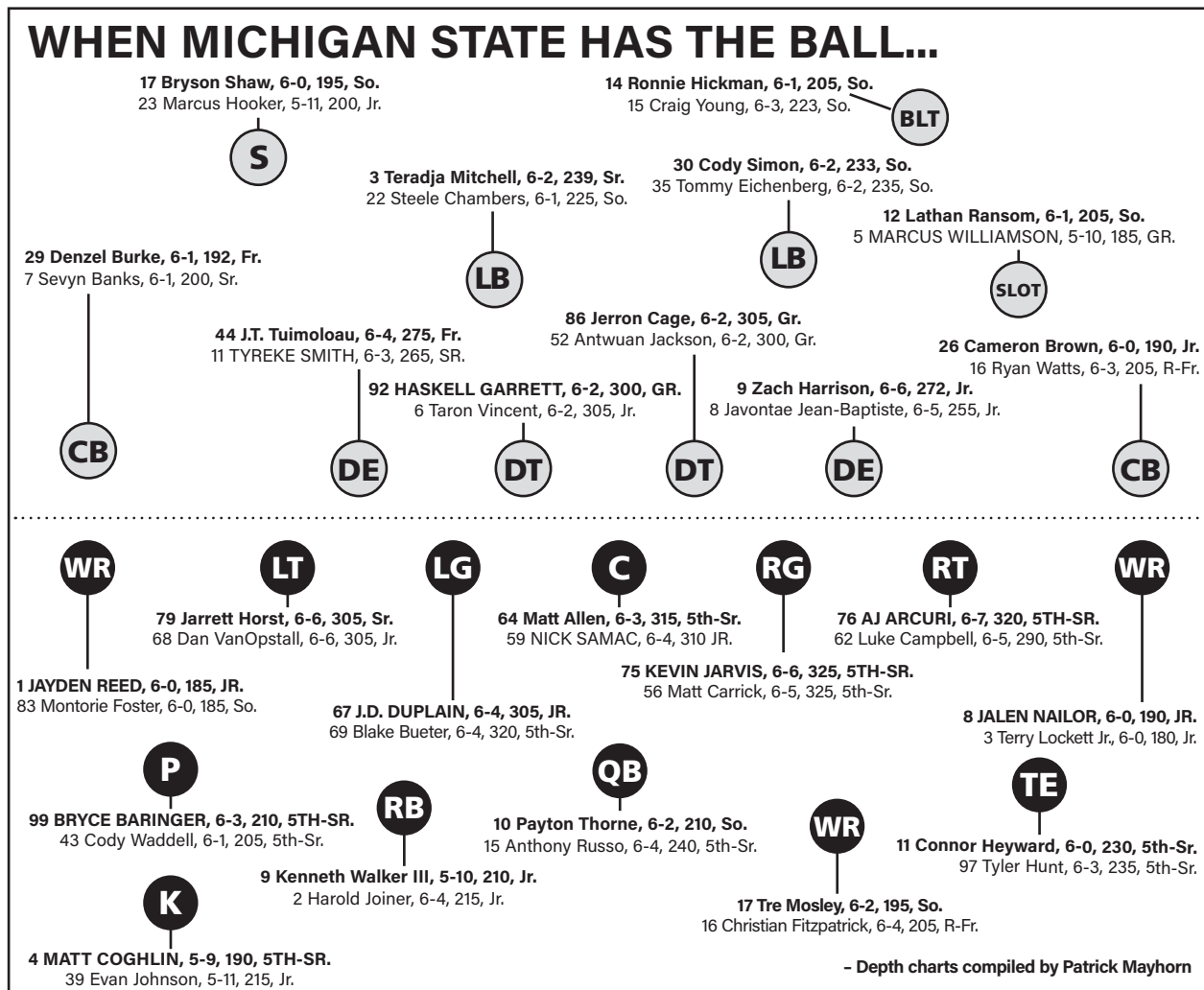
Noah Ruggles has made all 16 field goals for OSU, and punter Jesse Mirco is reliable the few times he is called upon. MSU's Matt Coghlin returned from injury for limited duty against Maryland and kicked only three extra points. He is 36 of 36 this season on PATS and 143 of 143 in his career. Bryce Baringer had a 69-yard punt vs. the Terrapins and has four games this season when he's averaged more than 50 yards. Reed had four punt returns totaling 96 yards for the Spartans. **EDGE: EVEN**

INTANGIBLES

Michigan State has a history of spoiling OSU's season, but so did Purdue, although the Spartans, unlike the Boilermakers, have shown they aren't afraid to go toe to toe in Ohio Stadium. The Buckeyes' offense got the confidence boost it needed against Purdue, but the defense is still suspect. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

PREDICTION

On the one hand, Michigan State will want to use Walker to milk the clock and keep the ball away from the Buckeyes. On the other hand, the Spartans love their gadget plays for quick-strike scores. OSU has to like its chances if it turns into a shootout but hopes the defense plays well enough to avoid that. The last home game for the seniors and whoever plans to leave early for the NFL will be emotional, and the Buckeyes will likely need the crowd support to make a difference. **OHIO STATE 45, MICHIGAN STATE 31**



Saban's MSU Tenure Crucial To Legendary Career

By **CHASE BROWN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Nick Saban is one of college football's greatest coaches. If the Alabama lead man were a school, his seven national title rings would place him among the top 10 programs in history.

He has banners, trophies, hardware and accolades to go along with those seven championships – one more than another Alabama head coaching legend, Bear Bryant. Saban sits alone at the top of the list for coaches with the most titles and joins former Florida and Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer as the only coaches during the poll era to win national championships at two different schools.

Before Saban became the legend he is today, he was head coach at Michigan State

from 1995 to 1999, and he dragged the program out from the depths of its mediocrity in the early 1990s. However, his time with the Spartans abruptly ended when he traveled south to become head coach at LSU at the turn of the 21st century.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin conducted an exclusive interview with current Atlanta Falcons defensive coordinator Dean Pees, who served on Saban's staff at Michigan State from 1995-97, to learn what made Saban a successful leader in East Lansing. He also helped answer a fascinating question: Would Saban be the same legendary coach if he had never left the Spartans?

A Brief History Lesson

Saban won his first national title in 2003 with LSU, and he's won six championships at Alabama since 2009, the year Heisman Tro-

phy-winning running back Mark Ingram led the Crimson Tide to a 14-0 record and a 37-21 win over Texas at the Rose Bowl.

He's at the top of his game today, but more than a quarter-century ago, Saban was on his second stint at Michigan State, this time as an up-and-coming head coach. He was a secondary coach and defensive coordinator from 1983-87 under George Perles and returned to lead the program in 1995.

Between his extended stays in East Lansing came a one-year gig with the University of Toledo in 1990. He led the Rockets to a 9-2 record and a Mid-American Conference co-championship. Toledo lost those two games by narrow margins – a one-point defeat to Central Michigan and a four-point loss to Navy.

After turning around the Toledo program, Saban joined the Cleveland Browns organi-

zation to become a defensive coordinator under Bill Belichick. He remained in the position from 1991-94, and he later termed those four years the "worst of my life."

The following year, Saban replaced Perles, who had not had a winning season since 1990, after the NCAA sanctioned the Spartans for recruiting violations committed by the program during Perles' final years coaching the team.

That put the new head coach a few steps behind the starting block. Still, he found moderate success in his first few seasons, creating the foundation necessary for a successful program.

After playing in only one bowl game in the previous four years, Michigan State made four postseason appearances during Saban's five years at the helm. He led the Spartans to a 34-24-1 record as head coach, including a 9-2 record in 1999 – the team's best finish in 34 years – with wins that year against Notre Dame, Ohio State, Michigan and Penn State.

Ohio State fans might recall Nov. 7, 1998, when Saban took his upset-minded Spartans into Ohio Stadium and beat the top-ranked Buckeyes, 28-24. Michigan State scored 19 unanswered points in the second half, handing Ohio State its only regular-season loss and likely costing the Buckeyes a national championship. Additionally, the Spartans claimed their first win against a No. 1-ranked team since 1990.

It was a much-needed signature win, the most significant piece of evidence that Saban would lead the program from the depths of NCAA sanctions to Big Ten contention. After the upset win at Ohio State, Saban danced in the locker room with his team and for good reason. It felt like a sign of things to come in East Lansing.

But fortunes awaited Saban elsewhere after the team improved to 9-2 in the '99 regular season. He abruptly bolted to LSU before Michigan State's appearance in the Citrus Bowl against Steve Spurrier-coached Florida.

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Coach Nearly Stays

A remorseful Saban considered reversing his decision to leave Michigan State for LSU, according to a 2016 book titled "Saban: The Making of a Coach" by Monte Burke.

Burke quotes Michigan State trustee Joel Ferguson, a friend of Saban, who issued a statement claiming the head coach regretted leaving friends in East Lansing and had second thoughts about going to LSU. Ferguson painted a picture of a call from Saban, who was in Baton Rouge a few days after agreeing to the move.

"He was down there by himself in a hotel room," Ferguson said. "He was lonely without (his wife) Terry there and seemed fragile. He told me that he didn't like it there, and he didn't think he wanted the LSU job, and he wanted to come back."

Burke wrote that Ferguson alerted then-MSU president Peter McPherson, who said he was willing to accept Saban's return to the program. The following day, Saban called Clarence Underwood, Michigan State's athletic director at the time, to seek advice.

"It was 5:30 in the morning," Underwood said. "He just said, 'I made a mistake and I want to come back.' He said he was lonely. He was crying."

Ferguson tried to call Saban again to ask him if he would come back to Michigan State, but he couldn't reach him. When he finally did, Saban had changed his mind again and was going to stick with his decision to coach at LSU.

"He told me, 'Joe, this won't work,'" Ferguson said. "The first time I have a mediocre season up there, they'll remember this."

Burke claims in his book that some LSU officials knew about Saban's mixed feelings. According to Charlie Weems, a member of the school's search committee, the program wasn't comfortable that Saban would remain in the position until they officially announced him as head coach.

"To this day, I believe that had the Michigan State president called Nick at any time, up until the moment he stepped up to the press conference, he could have had Nick back," Weems said. "Nick makes those decisions reluctantly."

Pees didn't wish to speculate on Saban's

thought process throughout his transition from Michigan State to LSU. Still, he believes the decision to leave the Spartans would have been difficult for Saban.

"I'm sure it was hard for him," Pees told BSB. "I would say it was hard for him to leave because of his staff. He is very loyal to his staff – incredibly loyal to his staff. It always felt like he cared about you and put you in front of himself."

Still, Saban decided to become the 31st head football coach in LSU program history the following season.

During his first year, the Tigers went 8-4 and won the Peach Bowl. Over the next four seasons, Saban amassed a 40-12 record with two bowl wins and a national championship, a 21-14 win against Oklahoma in the 2003 BCS Championship Game.

"He found success early there," Pees said. "He took a lot of what he learned at Michigan State and used it to build something down south. The game is a lot different from up north and down south. But no matter where Nick went or where he coached, he was going to be successful."

What If He Had Stayed?

Pees admitted the allure of southern programs such as LSU and Alabama is more significant than that for Michigan State. Still, he believes Saban would have been just as successful had he continued to lead the Spartans.

"The fact that he went to Toledo for one year and led them to a winning season is proof that he could go anywhere and be a successful coach, especially in college football," Pees said.

Saban's success came from his relentless work ethic and drive to win games. It doesn't matter the environment, Pees said.

"He was such a meticulous coach," Pees said. "He works hard and he's incredibly demanding, but he had a fair and loving culture. I loved working for him because he has an incredible knowledge of the defense and the game overall."

"Because of that, he became a successful coach. He's been incredible at Alabama. He was great at LSU, but he could have done the same thing at Michigan State. While each en-

vironment and program is different, he had a way of making his team attractive. I think recruits would have been drawn to Michigan State as much as they have been to Alabama."

Pees wondered how Saban was able to cultivate that image because it's not something he often sees from football coaches. He says that's what makes Saban the unique coaching talent he's been around in his more than 40-year career in the profession.

To prove his point further, Pees suggested looking at Saban's coaching tree.

At Michigan State, Saban mentored future program leaders Bobby Williams and Mark Dantonio. In his five years at LSU, he had Texas A&M head coach Jimbo Fisher, Georgia defensive coordinator Will Muschamp and New York Giants tight ends coach Derek Dooley on staff. At Alabama, he's had Central Michigan head coach Jim McElwain, Ole Miss head coach Lane Kiffin, Giants senior defensive assistant Jeremy Pruitt and Georgia head coach Kirby Smart.

"He's taught a lot of coaches to go on and lead their own programs," Pees said. "But he remains the only one who's stayed consistent at each place. He's taught all of them to be good football coaches, but he's the only one that is great. That's what separates him from the rest of the bunch."

Pees said Saban's consistency would have helped him build a perennial Big Ten title contender. Wherever he goes, he becomes a program-changer. What started at Toledo continued at Michigan State and beyond.

"He's not complacent," Pees said. "Everywhere he coaches, he never quits, and I think his players notice that. Michigan State had its good seasons with Dantonio, but he took

much of what he coached from Saban. Saban made an impact well beyond the time he left the team. That's why I think he would have been successful if he stayed."

Continued Success

Saban, who is now in his 15th season with the Crimson Tide, has come a long way since 1990. He was undoubtedly molded by his time at Toledo and Michigan State, learning what it means to be a head coach, build a program and find success.

"He took everything he learned from his past experiences, especially those at Michigan State – working with players, play-calling, scheme – and he brought it with him to Alabama," Pees said.

What followed was an unprecedented amount of success as Alabama's lead man. After the legendary Bryant retired in 1982, the Crimson Tide had eight head coaches in 24 years. When Saban arrived, he righted the ship and took the program to new levels in every facet of the game in just a few seasons.

Saban has won six of his seven national championships in Tuscaloosa, rivaling Bryant as the best coach in program history and college football history. After Alabama's 59-3 win against New Mexico State on Nov. 13, Saban's record with the Crimson Tide stood at 179-24 (an .882 win percentage), and he has created one of the most respected teams in college football.

"He's never satisfied with all the national titles," Pees said. "He looks to do it every year. He is always looking to improve. It's the winner in him. Alabama wins a lot, and he was always hard on (his staff) during wins. When he wins, he expects better and better results."




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Michigan overcame a Penn State comeback with one of its own, getting a 47-yard catch-and-run touchdown from tight end Erick All with 3:29 left in the game to squeeze out a 21-17 victory Nov. 13 against the Nittany Lions in Happy Valley.

Cade McNamara completed 19 of 29 passes for 217 yards and three touchdowns for Michigan, which led 14-6 midway through the fourth quarter. Roman Wilson caught a pair of touchdowns for the Wolverines, and tailback Hassan Haskins added 156 yards on 31 carries.

Penn State signal-caller Sean Clifford completed 23 of 43 passes for 205 yards and one touchdown, a 2-yard pass to tight end Tyler Warren with 7:35 left. Clifford then tied the game at 14 when he connected with receiver Jahan Dotson on a two-point conversion.

On the ensuing possession, the Nittany Lions got the ball back with a strip-sack of McNamara by defensive end Arnold Ebiketie deep in Michigan territory. Penn State settled for a 31-yard field goal from Jordan Stout to give the home team a 17-14 lead with 5:55 on the clock.

The Wolverines' game-winning drive started with five straight runs by Haskins for 28 yards, pushing the ball to the Penn State 48. Then on second-and-9 from the 47, McNamara hit All in the flat, and the

athletic tight end outran the Nittany Lions defense for the deciding score.

Aidan Hutchinson and David Ojabo stood out for the Maize and Blue defense, which totaled seven sacks, 12 tackles for

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

loss and three forced fumbles in the victory. Hutchinson tallied three sacks and a forced fumble as part of his seven-tackle effort, while Ojabo recorded four tackles, two sacks, and a forced fumble.

Ellis Brooks led the Penn State defense with 16 tackles (six solo), while Ebiketie posted both PSU sacks along with his forced fumble and seven tackles.

Elsewhere in the Big Ten on Nov. 13, Wisconsin and Iowa remained tied for the lead in the West while Minnesota fell off the pace.

Wisconsin freshman tailback Braelon Allen rushed for 173 yards and three touchdowns and added a 16-yard reception, and the Badgers rolled to a 35-7 win against Northwestern.

Badgers quarterback Graham Mertz completed 18 of 23 passes for 216 yards

and two touchdowns with two picks, while Wisconsin's defense recorded four interceptions on the other side. Northwestern signal-caller Andrew Marty tossed three interceptions for the second straight week.

Meanwhile, Iowa held on for a 27-22 win against Minnesota to retain the Floyd of Rosedale trophy for the seventh straight season.

The Golden Gophers scored a touchdown on a pass from Tanner Morgan to Chris Autman-Bell with 5:28 left to cut their deficit to 24-22, but the Iowa defense got the stop on a two-point conversion attempt when Dane Belton knocked down Morgan's pass at the line of scrimmage.

The Hawkeye defense stopped Minnesota twice in the final three minutes to seal the victory. Zach VanValkenburg recorded a sack to force a turnover on downs with 2:18 left, and Joe Evans notched a strip-sack and forced fumble in the waning seconds to secure the win.

QB Alex Padilla led Iowa to the narrow victory in his first career start, passing for 206 yards and two touchdowns while completing 11 of 24 passes. He also added the first rushing score of his career. Wide receiver Charlie Jones totaled 106 yards on two catches, including a 72-yard touchdown.

Michigan State rebounded from its upset loss to Purdue with a well-balanced, 40-21 victory against Maryland. Payton Thorne threw for 287 yards and four touchdowns, and Kenneth Walker III added 172 yards from scrimmage and two scores in the Big Ten East battle.

Walker's 143 rushing yards put him over 100 yards on the ground for the seventh time this season, and his 29 receiving yards gave him more than 150 yards from scrimmage for the sixth time. Jayden Reed boasted eight receptions for 114 yards and two touchdowns to go with 96 yards on four kick returns.

Michigan State began the game with a 52-yard touchdown pass to Montorie Foster from Thorne via a flea-flicker, marking the fourth time the Spartans have scored on the trick play this season.

Maryland quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa threw for 350 yards and two touchdowns in the loss.

Finally, Rutgers cruised to its largest conference win since joining the Big Ten, crushing Indiana, 38-3, behind dominant defense and opportunistic offense.

Indiana quarterback Donovan McCulley botched a handoff on the first play, and Rutgers defensive end Mohamed Toure recovered at the Hoosiers 21. Four plays later, Isaih Pacheco scored on an 8-yard touchdown run, and the rout was on.

Pacheco finished with 79 yards and two touchdowns.

Hand Surgery Puts End To LB's Nebraska Career

Linebacker Jojo Domann, one of the top tacklers in Nebraska history, announced Nov. 11 that his career with the

BIG

2021 Standings

East Division

	Conf.		All		
	W	L	W	L	Pct.
Ohio State	7	0	9	1	.900
Michigan State	6	1	9	1	.900
Michigan	6	1	9	1	.900
Penn State	3	4	6	4	.600
Maryland	2	5	5	5	.500
Rutgers	2	5	5	5	.500
Indiana	0	7	2	8	.200

West Division

	Conf.		All		
	W	L	W	L	Pct.
Wisconsin	5	2	7	3	.700
Iowa	5	2	8	2	.800
Minnesota	4	2	6	3	.667
Purdue	4	3	6	3	.667
Illinois	3	4	4	6	.400
Nebraska	1	6	3	7	.300
Northwestern	1	6	3	7	.300

Nov. 13 Scores

Michigan 21, Penn State 17
Rutgers 38, Indiana 3
Wisconsin 35, Northwestern 7
Iowa 27, Minnesota 22
Ohio State 59, Purdue 31
Michigan State 40, Maryland 21

Nov. 20 Games

Michigan State at **Ohio State**, Noon
Purdue at Northwestern, Noon
Rutgers at Penn State, Noon
Illinois at Iowa, 2:00 p.m.
Michigan at Maryland, 3:30 p.m.
Nebraska at Wisconsin, 3:30 p.m.
Minnesota at Indiana, 3:30 p.m.

Nov. 26 Game

Iowa at Nebraska, 1:30 p.m.

Nov. 27 Games

Ohio State at Michigan, Noon
Indiana at Purdue, TBD
Penn State at Michigan State, TBD
Maryland at Rutgers, TBD
Northwestern at Illinois, TBD
Wisconsin at Minnesota, TBD

Cornhuskers is over following surgery on his left hand.

Domann, who made the announcement on his podcast, said he injured a finger early during the Oct. 30 game against Purdue.

The sixth-year senior from Colorado Springs, Colo., played one of his best games Nov. 4 against Ohio State when he made nine tackles, intercepted a pass and broke up two others.

Domann played in 51 games and finished his career with 209 tackles. His 133 solo tackles rank 11th on the school's all-time list.

Badgers Running Back Out For Season With Leg Injury

Wisconsin starting running back Chez Mellusi will miss the rest of the season because of a leg injury, Badgers head coach Paul Chryst said Nov. 11.

Mellusi, who leads Wisconsin with 815 rush yards on 173 carries, left the team's Nov. 6 win against Rutgers with the inju-

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ry to his left leg. He initially was listed as questionable for the Nov. 13 game against Northwestern, although Chryst said doctors were still "waiting to find out exactly what it is."

Chryst did not specify Mellusi's injury but said the junior, who transferred to Wisconsin from Clemson, is not expected to return for spring practice. Mellusi started the first nine games for Wisconsin.

Mellusi's injury means Allen will see an even bigger role after blossoming during Wisconsin's recent winning streak. Allen now has six consecutive 100-yard rushing performances, becoming the first Wisconsin freshman to do that since Anthony Davis in 2001. Allen averages 7.1 yards per carry, which ranks fifth nationally among players with at least 100 carries.

Wisconsin's running back room was already thin after a season-ending foot injury to Isaac Guerendo and the October dismissal of Jalen Berger.

Writer: Tucker Favorite To Take Over At LSU

Longtime CBSSports.com college football writer Dennis Dodd posted his predictions Nov. 10 regarding several coaching vacancies around college football, including his opinion that LSU not only should hire Michigan State head coach Mel Tucker to replace outgoing coach Ed Orgeron, but that the school will ultimately hire Tucker.

"It's simple math for a coach who has yet to complete a second season in the big chair: Michigan State was a better job than Colorado, and LSU is a better job than Michigan State," Dodd wrote with regard to Tucker. "In fact, LSU is one of the best in the country. Tucker might not be the home run hire some expect from athletic director Scott Woodward, but think of Tucker as a lot like Steve Sarkisian last year when he was hired by Texas. He's the best name left on the board that LSU can get."

Dodd acknowledged that Penn State head coach James Franklin might be the current front-runner with LSU fans and boosters, but wrote that Franklin "probably won't pass muster as Penn State's season is trending toward 7-5."

"Cincinnati head coach Luke Fickell is not a fit considering his Ohio-based background. That leaves Tucker, an SEC veteran who coached defensive backs for Nick Saban for one year at LSU in 2000. Word on the street is that Tucker will accept an interview if contacted. Tucker is a studious, fast-rising talent who could quickly get LSU back on top."

Michigan Boasts Top Cage Class For 2022

For the third year in a row, Michigan head coach Juwan Howard signed the best recruiting class in the Big Ten.

The four-star foursome of Gregg Glenn, Jett Howard, Dug McDaniel and Tarris Reed Jr. officially signed Nov. 10 with Michigan, giving Howard the No. 6 class in the nation for 2022.

"We have continued to talk about family, character, culture and what it takes to play Michigan basketball," Howard said. "Today, we feel blessed to bring in four young men who not only buy into what we are doing, but bring a positivity and energy that will no doubt be an influence on and off the court, in the community and especially in the classroom."

"They each have strong work ethics and bring something unique to the table – size skill, vision, etc. However, it's their willingness to learn and become great that will make them great Michigan men."

Jett Howard is Juwan Howard's young-

est son and the highest-ranked member of the Wolverines' 2022 class, ranking as the No. 11 small forward and No. 36 overall prospect. The 6-7, 220-pound wing is a senior at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Fla., where he was a teammate of Michigan freshman Moussa Diabaté last season.

Reed is the eighth-ranked center in the nation and No. 38 overall recruit for 2022. The 6-9 St. Louis native transferred from St. Louis Chaminade to Link Academy in Branson, Mo., for his senior season. Glenn, a 6-7 power forward from Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Calvary Christian Academy, is ranked No. 19 at his position and No. 103 overall. McDaniel is a 5-11 point guard out of Fairfax, Va., who prepped at Chantilly (Va.) St. Paul VI Catholic and was rated No. 71 nationally, according to 247.

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Bucks, Fickell Somehow Survived Trial By Fire

Throughout the 2021 football season, *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* is publishing historical stories from seasons ending in the numeral "1." This week, BSB looks back at the 2011 season that began with the dismissal of a longtime coach, featured the first seven-loss season in more than a century and set the stage for a new era of Ohio State football.

By MARK REA

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

It would be difficult to describe the six months from May 30, 2011, to Jan. 2, 2012, as anything but chaotic for the Ohio State football program.

The turbulence of those 218 days included the forced resignation of head coach Jim Tressel due to the ongoing NCAA investigation surrounding the so-called Tattogate scandal, the installation of 38-year-old defensive coordinator Luke Fickell as head coach, a starting quarterback controversy, an ill-advised and ill-fated bowl trip that resulted in the first seven-loss season in more than a century, and the introduction of new head coach Urban Meyer.

"There was no doubt the Ohio State football program was at a crossroads," veteran national sportswriter Stewart Mandel told BSB. "You had an extremely successful coach who was for all intents and purposes fired because he violated NCAA rules, and you install a guy who has never been a head coach before. Then you give him a team with his starting quarterback, top running back and best receiver all suspended for the first half of the season and expect him to just keep the engine running."

"You can look around college football today and find once-great programs who are struggling now and have struggled for the last several years because they faced some kind of self-inflicted adversity. You usually don't recover from that too easily."

At the time, even as Tattogate was on nearly everyone's mind, nearly everyone connected with the program figured the suspension of Tressel as well as six players including quarterback Terrelle Pryor, All-Big Ten running back Dan "Boom" Herron and leading receiver DeVier Posey would be a short-lived bump in the road.

"Initially, we were thinking two or three games (for the suspensions)," Fickell told BSB in 2017. "And then, Memorial Day when it all kind of came down, it was a shock. Everybody was in shock. The program was in shock. The players were in shock. The coaches were in every bit of shock as anybody. It was just a unique situation. There was nothing I could say that was exciting or fun about it just because of the turmoil and the situation and how it all went about."

"Nonetheless, it turned out to be the greatest



FILE PHOTO

LEARNING EXPERIENCE — Interim head coach Luke Fickell (left) and quarterback Braxton Miller (5) experienced plenty of highs and lows during Ohio State's 2011 season. The Buckeyes finished with a 6-7 record amid an NCAA investigation into the so-called Tattogate scandal.

learning experience of my life."

Tressel, after winning six Big Ten titles and one national championship in 10 years as head coach of the Buckeyes, submitted his letter of resignation to athletic director Gene Smith on May 30, the same day Fickell was announced as head coach. A week later, Pryor announced that he would not return for his senior season in 2011, instead entering his name in the NFL supplemental draft. That decision came as Pryor's name was linked to a number of investigations into the OSU football program with the quarterback already facing a five-game suspension to open the season.

Pryor's departure paved the way for a quarterback battle between fifth-year senior Joe Bauserman and true freshman Braxton Miller, who had graduated from high school early and participated in the final spring camp conducted by Tressel.

"Honestly, there were so many things going through my mind that I really couldn't process much more," Miller told BSB. "I had graduated (from high school) early, was trying to keep up with everything they were throwing at me, and then Coach Tressel is gone. Just like that. I mean, that was just a blur of everything happening all at once."

While Miller was a much-decorated prep quarterback seen as the future star of the program, Bauserman was a former two-star prospect who had spent three years playing minor-league baseball. He joined the Buckeyes in 2007 but spent all of that time as a backup first to Todd Boeckman and then to Pryor. By the time the 2011 season opener rolled around, Bauserman had played in 24 games, but his career numbers read a modest 25 completions in 47 attempts (53.2 percent) for 320 yards, two touchdowns and one interception.

Still, he entered fall camp with a renewed vitality.

"It's a different perspective when you come to camp and you know it's an open spot and you have a chance to win it," Bauserman told reporters at the time. "You definitely come out here with more of an attitude."

Bauserman and Miller quickly distanced themselves from a competition with sophomore Kenny Guiton and redshirt freshman Taylor Graham, the son of former OSU quarterback Kent Graham. But either they couldn't distance themselves from one another, or no one on the revamped coaching staff wanted to make a decision.

"I still see it as a competition," Fickell said two weeks before the 2011 season was scheduled to get under way. "I think we're going to have that competition for a very long time."

Miller said if the coaches knew which quarterback they preferred, they weren't sharing that information.

"They wouldn't tell us, so we didn't know," he remembered. "I guess they just wanted to keep both of us sharp – like telling one of us they were starting was going to make the other guy go into a funk or something. I was just trying to learn every day. Go in after practice, see what I did wrong and try to correct it the next day."

As the days counted down until the season opener, there was a feeling that perhaps the black clouds hanging over the Woody Hayes

Athletic Center since news broke of the Tattogate scandal were beginning to part. The Buckeyes were starting the season with a new head coach and a new quarterback and without offensive stars Herron and Posey, but there was still optimism.

Veteran starting center Michael Brewster went so far as to tell reporters it was "going to be a beautiful challenge."

Challenge? For sure. Beautiful? Not so much.

High Highs, Low Lows

The challenge of the 2011 season began beautifully as things couldn't have gone much better in the opener.

Due to a scheduling quirk, Fickell kicked off his coaching career against Akron, the same team that had provided the opposition for Tressel's first game as head coach of the Buckeyes. But while Tressel's team had struggled a bit in 2001 before securing a 28-14 win against the Zips, Fickell had no such problems as the Buckeyes rolled to a 42-0 victory.

OSU enjoyed a 517-90 advantage in total yardage and amassed 27 first downs to only five for Akron. Bauserman staked the Buckeyes to a 7-0 lead in the first quarter on a 15-yard scramble and then fired three touchdown passes of 28, 11 and 2 yards to Jake Stoneburner, the most for an Ohio State tight end since at least 1952.

Bauserman wound up an efficient 12 of 16 in the opener, good for 163 yards and the three scores before calling it an afternoon in the third quarter. Miller took over and connected on 8 of 12 attempts for 130 yards as well as his first career touchdown pass, a 14-yard strike to Devin Smith on the second play of the fourth quarter.

Bauserman and Miller also combined to rush for 62 yards and a score while tailback Carlos Hyde had a game-high 93 yards on the ground and Rod Smith added another 74 and a touchdown.

"I thought they (both) did a good job," Fickell said of his dueling quarterbacks. "When you talk about Joe and how he did, you've got to look at the whole offense. The offense did a great job with balance giving him the ability to settle in and have some confidence. It was really good for Joe to show that leadership and that confidence."

As for Miller's demeanor, Fickell said, "I was impressed. I think he did a really good job of handling himself, and he'll continue to grow in that area."

The Buckeyes discovered the following week that not all Mid-American Conference opponents were created equal when Toledo visited Ohio Stadium. The Rockets, on their way to a 9-4 finish in 2011, enjoyed a 15-7 lead late in the first quarter and held a 22-21 advantage in the latter stages of the third quarter before Ohio State finally squeaked out a 27-22 victory.

Toledo successfully stunted OSU's running attack, limiting the Buckeyes to only 112 yards on the ground, so Bauserman was asked to throw the ball more. That resulted in 189 yards, one touchdown and no interceptions, but he struggled with his accuracy, completing only 16 of 30 attempts.

That was a problem that manifested itself the following week on the road at Miami (Fla.) when Bauserman completed only 2 of 14 passes for 13 yards. Miller didn't do much better, going 2 for 4 for 22 yards with an interception.

Meanwhile, the Hurricanes got 184 rushing yards from tailback Lamar Miller while quarterback Jacory Harris threw for 123 yards and



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a pair of touchdowns to run away with a 24-6 victory.

Miller got his first starting assignment the following week against Colorado, a game that began ominously when the freshman QB was stopped for a 1-yard loss on second-and-8 and then had to pounce on his own third-down fumble. He settled down after that, though, and accounted for 166 total yards and two touchdowns as the Buckeyes rebounded with a 37-17 win against the Buffaloes.

Ohio State, which had been ranked No. 17 before the loss to Miami, was now at 3-1 and poised to make a return to the national rankings. But an ugly 10-7 home loss to Michigan State – a game in which the Buckeyes managed only 35 rushing yards – was followed by perhaps the nadir of the entire 2011 season.

Two days after the loss to the Spartans, the NCAA announced further suspensions for Posey (five additional games) and Herron (one more). Five days after that, the Buckeyes squandered a three-touchdown lead in the third quarter and watched Nebraska snatch away a 34-27 victory at rain-soaked Memorial Stadium.

It marked the largest comeback in Nebraska football history and left most of the Ohio State sideline not only shell-shocked but desperate for answers as to how the game got away.

"I don't know that I've ever been involved in one like that," Fickell said quietly after the game. "I'm sure there are a lot of lessons out there. We just have to figure out what they are and learn to grow from them."

The Buckeyes stormed their way to a 27-6 lead early in the third quarter with Miller running the offense to perfection. But when Miller went to the sideline with an ankle injury, it completely changed the complexion of the game. Bauserman checked in and sailed his first pass attempt over Stoneburner's head, the beginning of a 1-for-10 performance worth only 13 yards.

Meanwhile, the Cornhuskers scored two touchdowns in the third period to close to within 27-20 and then tallied two more fourth-quarter scores to complete the 34-27 comeback victory.

Nebraska QB Taylor Martinez threw for 191 yards and two scores and ran for 102 yards and one touchdown. I-back Rex Burkhead rushed for 119 yards and a touchdown and caught five passes for 59 yards and a score. It marked the first time in 23 years an Ohio State opponent had two players crack the century mark in rushing.

At the time the Buckeyes took their 27-6 lead in the third quarter, they had outgained the Cornhuskers by a 293-125 advantage. After that, Nebraska enjoyed a 298-58 margin in total offense.

For Ohio State and its young head coach, it was a soul-crushing loss that threatened to derail the entire season.

"I ran to the locker room afterward and I couldn't talk, couldn't speak, barely could stand up," Fickell said. "I just remember my best friend (and first-year linebackers coach) Mike Vrabel just kind of grabbing me at the coach's locker and saying, 'Hey, this is when (the players) need you the most. You've got to be at your best.' I couldn't tell you what was really said or whatever, but that's one of those memories that you'll never forget – one of those things I could never thank him enough for grabbing me, picking me up."

Fickell remembered the loss to Nebraska as an epic collapse from which the Buckeyes would never recover. And while it is true most teams would have crashed into the ditch following such a gut-wrenching defeat, Ohio State somehow managed to go back on the road the next week and come home with a 17-7 win against Illinois. The defense created three turnovers, two of which came deep in Illini territory

to set up both of the Buckeyes' touchdowns.

Somehow, OSU got the win despite only 228 total yards and a 1-for-4 passing performance from Miller. That one completion was a 17-yard touchdown to Stoneburner and marked the first time since 1976 that Ohio State had completed only one pass in a game.

The narrow victory was followed by two more – a thrilling 33-29 upset of No. 10 Wisconsin and a 34-20 win against Indiana.

Beating the Badgers was no easy task, and for a time the game took on an eerily similar personality to the Nebraska loss. After Miller scored on a 44-yard touchdown run to give his team a 26-14 lead with 4:39 to go in the game, Wisconsin quarterback Russell Wilson hooked up with receiver Jared Abbrederis for touchdown passes of 17 and 49 yards within a 2½-minute stretch to give the Badgers a 27-26 lead at the 1:18 mark of the fourth quarter. Then, when Wilson connected with tailback Montee Ball on a two-point conversion pass, Wisconsin had a three-point lead at 29-26.

But the Buckeyes quickly proved they had some life left. Jordan Hall returned the ensuing kickoff 42 yards to near midfield, and then Miller provided perhaps the highlight of the season. On the fourth play of the possession, the freshman QB took the shotgun snap and dropped straight back. As he began to drift to his right, he was suddenly met by a Wisconsin defender. Miller eluded that potential threat and then another as he appeared to be ready to tuck the ball and run down the sideline.

But he suddenly stopped just short of the line of scrimmage, jumped in the air and heaved a pass across his body downfield to a wide-open Smith for a 40-yard touchdown strike to give Ohio State an improbable 33-29 victory.

"That was just a crazy, crazy game," Fickell said. "We had it won, then we had it lost, then we had it won again. That's when you just realize it's about players. When you've got guys like that, you've always got an opportunity to win no matter what the situation is. It's a funny game."

Miller said he didn't have much time to think about strategy.

"I guess looking back, I probably should have been nervous, but I wasn't," he said. "I mean, the other team's got Russell Wilson. Of course, he wasn't the Russell Wilson with all the Pro Bowls and the Super Bowl ring just yet, but I was just confident we could figure out something. I was probably too young to know any better."

Fickell said he had enough butterflies in his stomach for the both of them until Miller did something just short of amazing for a true freshman.

"As he walked out there, he looked at me and winked," the coach said. "It was amazing to see that from a young guy like that."

Miller said he'd worked on similar scenarios several times in the past.

"We had a drill to do that when I was playing in high school," he said. "When you get outside the pocket, you know to keep your eyes downfield. We did the same thing at Ohio State when we practiced our two-minute offense. You just try to keep the play alive for as long as you can."

The following week while hosting Indiana, Herron, who had returned from his suspension to run for 160 yards against Wisconsin, rushed for 141 yards and a touchdown and joined Miller (105 yards, two TDs) and Hyde (105 yards, one TD) as the first trio of Buckeyes to rush for 100 yards or more in the same game since 1989.

Once again, Fickell appeared to have righted his ship just in time for a stretch run. Unfortunately, the team's 6-3 mark would be as good as it got. Back-to-back narrow defeats to Purdue

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Continued From Page 25

(26-23 in overtime) and Penn State (20-14) were followed by old-fashioned shootout with No. 12 Michigan.

The game featured five lead changes with the Buckeyes closing within three points at 37-34 with 7:09 remaining in the game. Michigan ate away more than five minutes with its next possession before taking a field goal to make it 40-34, but Ohio State still had 1:59 with which to make a comeback.

Miller converted a fourth-and-6 with a twisting dive just past the first-down marker, but when faced with another fourth down, the freshman QB misfired on a pass to Posey, a throw that bounced off the receiver's fingertips and into the arms of Wolverines cornerback Courtney Avery for the game-clinching interception.

The INT marred an otherwise stellar performance from Miller, who rushed for 100 yards and one touchdown while throwing for 235 yards and two scores. But in addition to his interception, the freshman was also sacked four times.

Meanwhile, the OSU defense couldn't hold up against a Michigan attack led by QB Denard Robinson, who threw for 167 yards and three TDs while adding 170 yards rushing and two more scores on the ground.

The loss snapped the Buckeyes' seven-game winning streak in the series and still represents Michigan's most recent victory against its archrivals.

Two days after the outcome, on Nov. 28, 2011, Meyer was introduced as the 24th head coach of the Ohio State football program.

Aftermath Of 2011 Season

With the specter of the NCAA investigation

still hanging over the program, OSU athletic director Gene Smith repeatedly claimed he was confident any additional sanctions would not include a bowl ban. Therefore, he accepted an invitation for the Buckeyes to play Meyer's former team, Florida, in the Gator Bowl.

With Meyer watching from some distant location, Ohio State played well in their final game with Fickell as interim head coach, but not well enough. The Gators broke open a 7-7 tie early in the second quarter with a 99-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and eventually went on to post a 24-17 victory.

The loss dropped the team's record to 6-7, the first losing season for the program since 1988. It was also the first seven-loss season in more than a century. The 1897 team finished with a 1-7-1 record.

Additionally, Smith read the NCAA's tea leaves incorrectly with regard to additional sanctions. Two weeks before the team took on Florida at the Gator Bowl, the NCAA imposed a one-year postseason ban on the Buckeyes for the 2012 season, announced a reduction of scholarships and placed the university on probation for three years after it was cited for failure to monitor its football program.

Tressel was also found to have engaged in unethical conduct for not reporting NCAA rule violations and received a five-year, show-cause order for failing to report that some players improperly sold memorabilia and allowing ineligible players to compete throughout the 2010 season. It meant that Tressel was effectively barred from coaching at the collegiate level until 2017.

Additional penalties included requiring Ohio State to disassociate itself from Pryor, forfeit nearly \$340,000 (the amount the university received through Big Ten revenue-sharing for its

appearance in the bowl game), and vacate the 2010-11 football season.

"At the time, I don't think there were very many people who thought the punishment fit the crime," OSU football historian Jack Park told BSB. "In my opinion, that is even more true now when looking back at all that has happened in college athletics since then."

Meyer took over the program and led his first team to an improbable undefeated 12-0 season in 2012. He coached the Buckeyes for seven seasons, winning division titles in each of those seven seasons as well as three Big Ten championships and the 2014 national championship. He was suspended for the first three games of the 2018 season for failing to report spousal abuse claims against one of his assistant coaches and then retired followed the 2019 Rose Bowl, citing health reasons. Meyer returned to coaching earlier this year as head coach of the NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars.

Tressel spent the 2011 season as a consultant on Jim Caldwell's staff for the Indianapolis Colts, mostly handling video replay duties from the press box. Even then, he could not assume those duties until the seventh game of the season, serving a six-game suspension from the NFL — one game longer than the NCAA suspension he would have had to serve had he remained head coach of the Buckeyes in 2011. He left the NFL for a non-athletic-department position at the University of Akron, and in May 2014, Tressel became president of Youngstown State University, a position he continues to hold to this day.

Pryor was selected by the Oakland Raiders in the third round of the 2011 supplemental draft and embarked upon a star-crossed NFL career that included 51 games over seven seasons with five different teams. His best season came in 2016 with the Cleveland Browns after he switched to receiver and caught 77 balls for 1,007 yards and four touchdowns. The following year, he signed as a free agent with Washington, and he spent the next three seasons bouncing from team to team until the Jaguars cut him just before the beginning of the 2019 season.

Posey was a third-round pick by the Houston Texans in the 2012 draft, and he played three seasons in Houston primarily as a backup. After being waived by three other NFL teams, Posey went to the Canadian Football League and has played for four different teams there. He won a Grey Cup with the Toronto Argonauts in 2017, earning title-game honors after catching seven passes for 175 yards. One of his receptions was a Grey Cup-record 100-yard touchdown catch.

Miller went on to a decorated career with the Buckeyes. He was named Big Ten Freshman of the Year following the 2011 season and was a two-time Big Ten MVP. In three seasons, he threw for 5,292 and 52 touchdowns and became the most prolific running quarterback in program history with 3,054 yards and 32 TDs on the ground. Unfortunately, he suffered a shoulder injury in the team's 40-35 loss to Clemson in the Orange Bowl following the 2013 season and then suffered a torn labrum during a practice session right before the 2014 season

began.

The shoulder injuries effectively ended Miller's days as a quarterback, but he returned to the Buckeyes in 2015 as a receiver and finished with 26 receptions for 341 yards and three touchdowns. The Texans selected him in the third round of the 2016 draft, and he played in 26 games over two seasons in Houston, totaling 34 catches for 261 yards and two touchdowns. Miller later spent time on the practice squads of the Philadelphia Eagles, Cleveland Browns and Carolina Panthers.

Fickell remained on Meyer's staff at Ohio State as linebackers coach and co-defensive coordinator through the 2016 season, after which he was hired as head coach at Cincinnati. The once-proud Bearcats program had grown fallow during the last two seasons under predecessor Tommy Tuberville, and Fickell managed only a 4-8 finish during the 2017 campaign.

Since the beginning of the 2018 season, however, the Bearcats have experienced a rebirth, posting at least nine wins in each of the last four seasons, including this one which has the undefeated team reaching a program-best ranking of No. 2 in The Associated Press writers' poll. Cincinnati is poised to leave the American Athletic Conference no later than July 2024 for membership in the Big 12, and Fickell is grist for every rumor mill concerning coaching vacancies at big-name schools.

Yet he seems safe and secure (armed with an annual salary of an estimated \$3.4 million) and shoots down every intimation that he might be looking to coach elsewhere. Additionally, he continually refers to the trials and tribulations of that 2011 season at Ohio State as the foundation for the coach he is today.

When asked by BSB in 2017 if he ever looked back at that trial by fire, Fickell replied, "All the time. We've got a book of things of mistakes that we made, that I made. I've got them saved, and we're just making sure that we learn from those experiences. If something comes up, I try to look back and say, 'OK now hold on. Did we ever have one like that? Because if we did I'm sure I made the wrong choice in that situation.' You always reflect back on the things that weren't successful and try to figure out why. That was an eight-month process that hopefully will last me 10 years as a head coach."

Fickell said the major lesson he learned was to simply be himself.

"I could write a book about the mistakes we made or I made," he said, "but I think the No. 1 mistake was trying to be somebody you weren't, and that's hard as a leader. In the midst of how you go about it, I thought I had to be like Jim Tressel, and in reality you can't be like Jim Tressel. Nobody can. But I thought that was what was best to give us an opportunity to be successful and not have a bunch of different changes on people, whether they were the players or the coaches.

"That was just the conscious decision that I made, and it was probably the one that is detrimental because you can't be consistent being somebody that you're not."



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2023 Five-Star Athlete Styles Commits To OSU

Ohio State picked up a big commitment for 2023 when Pickerington (Ohio) Central five-star athlete Sonny Styles (6-4, 215) pledged to the Buckeyes on Nov. 13.

Ranked the eighth-best prospect in 2023 as well as the top safety and top recruit from Ohio, Styles joins Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star offensive lineman Joshua Padilla and Thompson's Station (Tenn.) Independence four-star tight end Ty Lockwood as Ohio State commits for 2023.

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Braden Moles

Styles was a top target for Ohio State during the 2023 cycle, and his decision at this point was a bit of a surprise with Pickerington Central still competing in the state playoffs.

Though Styles held offers from such heavyweights as Alabama, Clemson, Florida, Michigan, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State and Texas, the battle came down to Ohio State and Notre Dame.

While Styles is the son of former Ohio State linebacker Lorenzo Styles, Sonny's older brother, Lorenzo Styles Jr., is a freshman wide receiver for the Fighting Irish.

Ohio State was Styles' second offer, issued on Aug. 30, 2020, just two days before Notre Dame offered him. He visited for a number of games this season, including Ohio State's matchups with Oregon, Penn State and Purdue, which kicked off just two hours after Styles announced his commitment to the Buckeyes.

"Ohio State is just a special place," Styles told On3 Sports recruiting analyst Jeremy Birmingham. "They offered me pretty early, like right after my first game, and I can't forget that. They were ready to call me before I even got home."

"Relationships have always been a big thing for me, and that relationship has been going on for such a long time. I just kind of started to have a really great feel for the place and seeing all the opportunities that Ohio State offers for me, especially me being a Columbus kid, I think there's a lot of great things I can do here."

Styles is listed as a safety, but he could fill any number of roles on Ohio State's defense. 247Sports national recruiting analyst Allen Trieu said Styles is a "physical prototype with height, length and already well (into) his physical development" as a junior.

Trieu added, "He is strong in his lower body. Changes directions and runs straight line very well for a player of his size. He is smooth in his transitions and is capable of playing in space and even covering man to man at 210 pounds. Shows good ball skills and hands. The question is, long term, will he grow into an outside linebacker even though he has the athletic skills to play safety, or will he be some kind of hybrid?"

"If he is to move into the box, he will have to show he can take on blocks and be physical with offensive linemen and lead blockers. Likelihood is he continues to grow toward being in the front seven, but he will be a unique athlete at that spot who can still move around and play different roles. The possibilities for him are numerous because of a rare skill-set and measurables."

OSU Loses Out On Four-Star OT

Ohio State suffered an in-state recruiting loss when Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star offensive tackle Aamil Wagner (6-6, 265) issued a verbal commitment to Notre Dame on Nov. 11.

Wagner, ranked the No. 134 overall and No. 12 offensive tackle in 2022, committed to Notre Dame over offers from Kentucky, Maryland, Penn State and Ohio State, all listed in his most recent top five in late October.

Ohio State was able to get Wagner on

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
George Fitzpatrick	OT	6-6	285	★★★★	Englewood (Colo.) Cherry Creek
Bennett Christian	TE	6-6	235	★★★★	Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona
Kyion Grayes	WR	6-1	170	★★★★	Chandler, Ariz.
Dallan Hayden	RB	5-11	195	★★★★	Memphis (Tenn.) Christian Brothers
Avery Henry	OT	6-7	305	★★★	St Clairsville, Ohio
C.J. Hicks	LB	6-3	220	★★★★★	Kettering (Ohio) Archbishop Alter
Kenyatta Jackson	DE	6-5	235	★★★★	Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna
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

campus for an official visit during its "Buckeye Bash" in June alongside a number of 2022 commits and prospects, in addition to having him in attendance for the game against Oregon.

Wagner's commitment to the Fighting Irish came as a surprise to some. Wagner's brother, Ahmad, played for Kentucky from 2018-20 and is a graduate offensive assistant with the Wildcats. Kentucky previously had Wagner in for an official visit on June 11, and following an unofficial visit on Sept. 4, two crystal ball projections were put in for the Wildcats, one by Ohio State recruiting analyst Bill Kurelic.

Wagner's Notre Dame verbal leaves Ohio State with three offensive line commits in 2022 – West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star Tegra Tshabola (6-6, 350), Englewood (Colo.) Cherry Creek four-star George Fitzpatrick (6-6, 285) and St. Clairsville, Ohio, three-star Avery Henry (6-6, 305).

The Buckeyes are still pursuing Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star Earnest Greene (6-5, 330) and Humble (Texas) Atascocita four-star Kam Dewberry as well as a pair of four-star Wisconsin linemen in Hammond Saint Croix Central's Carson Hinzman (6-4, 280) and Billy Schrauth (6-5, 285) of Fond Du Lac St. Mary's Spring.

Greene and Dewberry are each considered toss-ups at this point, with Greene, the No. 47 recruit, deciding between the Buckeyes and Georgia, while Dewberry, No. 76 in 2022, is considering Ohio State and Texas A&M.

Hinzman's decision appears to be coming down to Ohio State and Wisconsin, with one crystal ball projection in for the Badgers. He visited Wisconsin on June 4 and Ohio State on June 11, receiving an offer from the Buckeyes on June 12. He's the No. 7 interior lineman in the class of 2022 and the second-ranked player from Wisconsin.

Schrauth appears to be favoring Notre Dame, with four expert predictions coming in for the Fighting Irish in late October. Schrauth has taken official visits with Wisconsin, Ohio State and Notre Dame, but none since mid-June.

McClain Lists OSU In Top Five

Ohio State was among the five teams listed when Lakeland (Fla.) Lake Gibson five-star cornerback Cormani McClain (6-2, 165) released his new top five schools Nov.

7. The Buckeyes were joined by Alabama, Florida, Miami, and BYU, while Florida State was dropped from his previous top five.

According to the 247Sports composite rankings, McClain is the No. 10 overall player and No. 1 overall cornerback in the class of 2023. He holds 25 offers, including those from Georgia, LSU, Oklahoma and Michigan, among others.

Though BYU seems to have gained some momentum following an unofficial visit on Nov. 6, Florida has been McClain's projected destination.

"Florida is on top for me right now," McClain told 247Sports following a trip to Florida in September. "It really feels like home when I come here and seems like a great fit for me to come in and play early."

Two expert crystal ball projections are in for McClain, one each for Florida and Florida State.

Buckeyes Included In 2023 DL's Top 11

The Buckeyes were among the teams listed in the top 11 for 2023 five-star defensive lineman David Hicks Jr. (6-4, 250) on Nov. 7, joining Alabama, Clemson, Florida, Grambling, LSU, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas and Texas A&M.

The Allen, Texas, product, ranked the third-best prospect and second-best defensive lineman in his class, attended an Ohio State camp on June 15 and received an offer the same day.


Hicks told Cleveland.com that his recruitment is open and that Ohio State offensive lineman Donovan Jackson, also from Texas, has been attempting to recruit him.

"I love Coach (Larry) Johnson and Coach (Ryan) Day. They always text me and reach out to me – (defensive line assistant Nick) Sebastian, too," Hicks said. "Coach Day always used to text me, and they just always tell me they can develop me into where I want to be. Coach Johnson built up Chase Young and Joey Bosa."

Hicks took unofficial visits to Texas A&M on Sept. 18 and Nov. 6 and was scheduled to visit Texas on Nov. 13.

OSU Offers 2023 Four-Star Receiver

Ohio State wide receivers coach Brian Hartline is back on the recruiting trail, this time offering Gilbert (Ariz.) Williams Field



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ASK AN ANALYST

With Alex Gleitman of Buckeye Scoop

With Joshua Padilla of Huber Heights Wayne and Sonny Styles of Pickerington Central joining the 2023 fold, who might be the next in-state 2023 prospect for Ohio State that commits?

"I'm going to say either four-star OL Luke Montgomery of Findlay or 2023 OL Austin Siereveld of Middletown Lakota East. I just think Luke might wait a little bit longer, and I think Austin's parents might make him take some visits just to make sure Ohio State's the place for him. But I think that's where he wants to go."

Along the lines of C.J. Hicks or Paris Johnson Jr. in some recent classes, do you see Padilla and/or Styles as potential leaders of the class in terms of helping to recruit other prospects to Ohio State?

"I don't see Padilla as a leader in that aspect. I'm not saying he doesn't have leadership qualities or anything along those lines – just not in that aspect. Styles, though, I see him as a recruiter. If Montgomery commits, I see him as a little bit more of a recruiter personality, like C.J. Hicks or Paris Johnson. I think Josh is a little bit

more quiet and laid-back, but I think he has really good relationships with these guys, so I think he's willing and open to doing that. I think he's probably talked about his decision with a variety of players, especially other linemen and other players in his area. He'll definitely recruit for Ohio State, but I don't see him being that C.J. Hicks type of leader from a recruiting standpoint."

Who are some 2023 prospects who might not be especially well-known right now that you think will be household names for Buckeye fans this time next year?

"If you go off who they've offered, obviously a lot of the guys are really, really highly rated, so it's always hard to pick. If you're talking about the average fan, I don't know how familiar everyone is with four-star receiver Carnell Tate of Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy. He's one of the best receivers in America, but he's definitely someone who I think will commit to Ohio State and absolutely is someone that everyone will know for sure and be excited about. I would say Chase Bisontis out of Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, N.J. I think he'll be visiting

Ohio State. I think they'll be in it until the end as long as they want him, and I think they've got a really good shot there.

"A kid who's ranked highly, a five star, but again the average fan might not be that aware of, is A.J. Harris from down in Phenix City, Ala. He should be committing probably in December sometime, and I think Ohio State's in a good spot for him. Christian Gray out of the St. Louis area, DeSmet High School where Jakailin Johnson came from, I think he could be a possibility.

"Whoever the quarterback is, we've got to figure that out because I'm not really sure that anyone knows for sure yet who is going to be in the 2023 class. But whoever that is, I think is going to be a name that people are certainly going to be talking about. One other name I'll just add is Troy Bowles, a four-star linebacker out of Tampa Jesuit, the younger son of Tampa Bay defensive coordinator Todd Bowles. He was just up for the Penn State game, he visited in the summer. I think Ohio State's in a really good spot for him, too."

four-star wide receiver Kyler Kasper (6-5, 195) on Nov. 4.

Kasper, rated the No. 139 prospect and No. 21 wide receiver in 2023, has an offer list that includes Arizona, Iowa, Michigan State, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Oregon and USC, among others.

"After an awesome conversation with (Hartline) I am extremely excited to have received an offer from The Ohio State University," Kasper posted on Twitter.

Ohio State currently has offers out to six wide receivers in 2023, including Kasper, Del Valle (Texas) four-star Braylon James, DeSoto (Texas) four-star Johntay Cook II, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star Carnell Tate, Longview (Texas) five-star Jalen Hale and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage five-star Brandon Inniss, who is committed to Oklahoma.

While Hartline would love to get all of those prospects, Tate appears to be the focus for Ohio State. He took an unofficial visit to Ohio State for the Penn State game, and the most recent crystal ball projection from 247Sports analyst Steve Wilfong has Tate as a Buckeye.

Three-Star DL Orange Lists OSU In Top Four

Ohio State was listed among the top four schools for Kansas City (Mo.) North Kansas City three-star defensive lineman Dominique Orange (6-4, 300) on Nov. 12, alongside Iowa State, Oregon and Texas A&M.

Orange, ranked No. 394 overall and No. 54 among defensive lineman in 2022, received an offer from Ohio State on March 31. In addition to the schools on his top four, he holds offers from Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Texas and Wisconsin, among others.

According to 247Sports, while he has not taken any official visits yet, he is expected to do so soon with his senior season recently ending.

Day Hopes Culture Speaks For Itself in Recruiting

A school's traditions, accolades and development path to the NFL all have a major impact on recruiting, but Day said above all else, a school's culture and continuity determine whether a player will commit.

"We've been very fortunate that we've

had stability here for a long time and coaches who have done a great job and who have been here for a while. I think that's great. That's a huge selling point," the OSU head coach said Nov. 9 during his weekly press conference. "But at the end of the day, it comes down to, in my opinion, the head coach and the culture that's being cultivated here.

"Hopefully, we want all of our guys to stay for the next 15 or 20 years, but when (guys are being recruited, they want to know) who's the head coach and what's the culture going to be. That's the thing that's going to stay consistent, and I think that's what's important in recruiting."

At the end of the day, the decision comes down to the individual, Day said, adding that the idea of "closing guys out" doesn't really exist anymore.

"Certainly you have to make a decision, and you have to make a great sell for your university and your program, but if they don't like it, then they turn around and go somewhere else," Day said. "They have to want it. They have to want to be here, they have to want to work through tough times and own it. They have to have ownership of their university, and so I think that recruiting nuance has changed in the last few years."

Coach Loves Recruiting Multisport Athletes

When asked at his Nov. 9 press conference about recruiting multisport athletes, Day shared a personal story.

"My son was in fifth grade when a coach told him, 'You need to decide which sport you want to play,' and I almost jumped through the phone at him," Day said. "I think the more sports you play, the healthier it is."

Look no further than Ohio State's roster to find numerous multisport athletes. Tyreke Smith, Nicholas Petit-Frere, Dawand Jones and J.T. Tuimolou each played basketball in high school and are important contributors to the Buckeyes.

Day appreciates the chance to watch football prospects playing high school basketball, as it gives a different perspective on the player.

"When we were on the road before COVID, we would go out in December and January – mostly in January when we would

go to see some of the underclassmen that we couldn't have contact with," he said. "I loved going to basketball games. One of my favorite things to do on Tuesday night across the country was go see how a guy competes.

"You're learning how to compete, you're learning how to lose, you're learning how to get better, you're learning about discipline, you're learning so much different things. And you're learning different skill sets. Spatial awareness, hand-to-eye coordination, foot quickness – all those things in basket-

ball are tremendous."

Beyond seeing how they are on the court, Day said it also gives a look into how youngsters process adversity.

"He lost by 20, now what's his attitude? Is he kicking stuff and yelling at his coach or is he encouraging his teammates and running back and trying to take a charge late in the fourth quarter? You just learn so much about people in those environments," the OSU head coach said. "You

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get to see them in their own setting – how their teammates treat them, how do they compete, how they move. I love seeing that. I think you learn a lot about people. Not that it's 100 percent, but you get a good snapshot into who they are."

OHSAA Playoff Round-Up

Here are the results from the third round of the Ohio High School Athletic Association football playoffs with notable prospects competing.

No. 2 Medina vs. No. 6 Cleveland St. Ignatius – Four costly turnovers by St. Ignatius and the quarterback play of Penn State commit Drew Allar (386 yards and three touchdowns) helped move Medina on to the regional finals with a 27-14 win on Nov. 12.

Allar also stepped in to help as long snapper when injuries piled up for Medina.

"I told them I could snap it and it kind of stuck," Allar told Cleveland.com. "I was kind of nervous. I'm not going to lie. (Brennen) Schramm did a great job of catching the snap and getting it down for Nick (West) to put in through the up-rights. It was really Schramm bailing me

out twice."

Medina will go on to face No. 1-ranked Lakewood St. Edward in Division I, Region I.

No. 1 Marysville vs. No. 4 Toledo Whitmer – Marysville dominated Whitmer, 49-14, as Ohio State linebacker commit Gabe Powers and his brother, Colton, combined for five touchdowns.

Gabe Powers rushed for 117 yards and two touchdowns in the first half, while his brother added 148 yards and two touchdowns.

No. 2 Springfield vs. No. 6 Findlay – The season for Ohio State targets Luke and Ryan Montgomery came to an end as Findlay suffered a 13-0 loss to Springfield in the regional semifinals.

The first points of the game came after a muffed punt by Findlay gave Springfield good field position, and the Wildcats scored just two plays later. It would be the only points scored until the third quarter.

"Our defense is really good," Findlay head coach Stefan Adams told The (Toledo) Blade. "Our team is really good. I'm still confident in our guys. We just had a couple of mistakes that were hard to overcome. I'd take this team any day of the week. It was a tough one."

Ryan Montgomery finished 8 of 26 for 139 yards and one interception.

No. 2 Pickerington Central vs. No. 6 Pickerington North – Newly-minted Ohio State commit Styles helped lead Pickerington Central to a 27-7 win against Pickerington North in a regional semifinal.

Central led 7-0 at the half but exploded for 20 points in the third for the 27-7 final. Neither offense generated much in the way of yardage – 275 for Central and 125 for North.

North won the regular-season matchup between the two rivals for the first time since 2013.

"I think it fuels you, makes you play a little harder, play a little meaner, so it's not really something you forget," Styles said after the loss on Sept. 10.

No. 2 Cincinnati St. Xavier vs. No. 3 West Chester Lakota West – Ohio State

commit Jyaire Brown had two receptions for 12 yards, five tackles and an interception in Lakota West's 12-2 win against St. Xavier to move on to the regional finals.

The Firebirds got on the board with a field goal in each of the second and third quarters before taking a 12-0 lead on a 4-yard touchdown run by senior Cameron Goode. St. Xavier's lone points of the contest came on a blocked punt that went out the back of the end zone for a safety.

No. 2 St. Clairsville vs. No. 6 Byesville Meadowbrook – Henry and his St. Clairsville team dominated in the regional semifinal matchup against Meadowbrook during a 35-0 win. They will go on to face undefeated Bloom-Carroll, the No. 1 ranked team in Division IV, Region 15.

OHSAA Matchups To Watch, Round Four

- No. 1 Lakewood St. Edward (12-1) vs. No. 2 Medina (13-0)
- No. 1 Upper Arlington (13-0) vs. No. 2 Pickerington Central (12-1)
- No. 1 Marysville (12-0) vs. No. 2 Springfield (11-1)
- No. 1 Cincinnati Moeller (10-3) vs. No. 3 Lakota West (11-1)
- No. 1 Bloom-Carroll (13-0) vs. No. 2 St. Clairsville (13-1)

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago - 1986

For an Ohio State program on the hunt for the next Chris Spielman at linebacker – or at least talent that could hope to someday compare – the 1987 recruiting class offered plenty of good news. It was a strong year for linebackers across the country, but no region was more packed with talent than the Midwest, starting with Massillon (Ohio) Washington prospect Jerrod Vance, who had the impressive combine numbers to match his production. He checked in at 6-3 and 228 pounds, running a 4.75 40-yard dash, bench pressing 360 pounds and squatting 540 pounds.

Elsewhere in the region, Galion (Ohio) High School linebacker Bill Price was standing out as another top prospect from within the Buckeye State, but many of the top-tier talent was in Michigan. Ricky Williams of Detroit Henry Ford and Scott Kowalkowski of Orchard Park St. Mary's were two of the top names, and the latter was the son of former Detroit Lions guard Bob Kowalkowski.

To the West, Erick Anderson of Glenbrook South and Doug Amaya of Oak Park River Forest both stood out in Illinois. Amaya was a product of the same program that produced Buckeye linebacker Eric Kumerow and had an increased interest in OSU because of it.

30 Years Ago - 1991

Juan Porter of Cleveland St. Ignatius was regarded as one of the top offensive linemen in the state. OSU quarterbacks coach Ron Hudson was the man trying to reel in the 6-4, 315-pound offensive tackle.

Hudson was responsible for bringing quarterback Joe Pickens, also a product of St. Ignatius, to Ohio State two years before. National recruiting expert Tom Lemming said Porter was "one of several big, quick and tough offensive line prospects in Ohio this season. He can be a dominant drive blocker at times with quick feet and great leverage."

In addition to Ohio State, Porter was interested in Michigan, Penn State and Tennessee.

25 Years Ago - 1996

Youngstown (Ohio) Ursuline tailback Sean Penny finished his high school career with 2,078 yards and 23 touchdowns after his team lost a 14-13 decision to Akron Manchester in the Division IV playoffs.

Against Manchester, he rushed for 258 yards on 40 carries and two touchdowns, including an 18-yarder that set up the game-tying extra point. The try failed, though. After the postseason defeat, Penny began looking toward recruiting. His top two schools were Ohio State and Penn State.

"I'm still in the process of arranging my visits," the 6-2, 215-pounder said. "I will definitely be visiting Ohio State. My coach (Richard Angle) also wants me to try and visit Penn State. I may also visit West Virginia, but I'm not sure."

20 Years Ago - 2001

Cincinnati St. Xavier offensive lineman Kyle Ralph told BSB

that Ohio State was among a list of schools he would consider after the Nov. 8 resignation of Vanderbilt head coach Woody Widenhofer.

Ralph had committed to Vanderbilt over an offer from OSU in June.

"I've been hearing the rumors going around about (Widenhofer's job status) for a while, and I've been expecting it," Ralph told BSB. "I sat down and talked about it with my parents. I will probably decommit from Vanderbilt in the next few days."

When asked about what other programs he would consider, he replied, "I'm pretty open. A few schools have already been contacting me the last few days. A few of them had not been calling at all until this happened. Now they want to offer me and recruit me."

"I know I am really interested in Ohio State as well as Boston College, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina, Ole Miss and South Carolina."

15 Years Ago - 2006

Dane Sanzenbacher of Toledo Central Catholic and Brandon Saine of Piqua, Ohio, were set to become teammates at Ohio State in the upcoming summer. Before the two arrived in Columbus, however, they had to settle the score on the high school gridiron as opponents.

Central Catholic and Piqua met in the opening round of the Ohio Division II high school playoffs. Sanzenbacher caught 12 passes for 195 yards, ran for a 1-yard touchdown while playing at quarterback, returned an interception 32 yards and blocked a Piqua point-after attempt.

His extraordinary efforts were not enough, as his Fighting Irish went down to a 33-14 defeat.

Saine ran for 101 yards on 25 carries and a 2-yard touchdown for the Indians. The two stars met up after the game, and Sanzenbacher had a few words of encouragement for his future college teammate.

"He just said, 'Go on and win state and I'll see you next year,'" Saine said.

10 Years Ago - 2011

Ohio State was roughly three months from inking its 2012 class, but the coaching staff was doing what it could to keep Richmond (Va.) Hermitage junior running back Derrick Green enthusiastic about the Buckeyes.

Green, a former teammate of OSU linebacker Curtis Grant, was one of the most coveted prospects in the 2013 class. With 12 offers to his name, including his most recent coming Nov. 11 from Oklahoma, Green's recruitment had taken off.

"This specific offer means so much to me," Green said of the Sooners. "Oklahoma will definitely be near the top for me. I'm really happy about this offer."

The 5-11, 225-pound running back, however, was considered an early Ohio State lean, and his visit to Columbus for Ohio State's win against Wisconsin on Oct. 29 was one he admitted he would remember for a while.

"I was at Ohio State two weeks ago and it was great," Green said. "Of all the schools I've seen so far, that was the best one. The fans were loud and everything about the game was great. I was there with my mom and dad, and they both loved it, too."

Five Years Ago - 2016

If not common, it's at least not unheard of for committed high school prospects to take visits to other schools. What's less common? A prospect taking an official visit to another school without telling the coaching staff to which he committed.

But that's exactly what four-star linebacker commit Antjuan Simmons of Ann Arbor (Mich.) Pioneer did the weekend of Nov. 12. Simmons (6-1, 205), who had committed to Ohio State in March, took an official visit to Michigan State beginning Nov. 11 while the Buckeyes were on the road to take on Maryland. Before taking that visit, he didn't tell head coach Urban Meyer and his staff, and the Buckeyes weren't happy.

"He did not clear it with them," Scout.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene said. "They were shocked and not happy."

Had he tried to check with the Buckeyes first?

"I think they would have told him no," Greene said. "Michigan State or Michigan, I don't think they're going to allow that. There's no reason for it. If he wants to take a fun trip to Florida State or go to UCLA, I think they'd probably roll with that. But not Michigan State the week before they play them and not Michigan. I don't see that."

One Year Ago - 2020

Four-star wide receiver commit Marvin Harrison Jr. became the Philadelphia Catholic League's all-time leader in career receiving yards during St. Joseph's Prep's 42-0 win against Philadelphia Roman Catholic on Nov. 7.

The 6-3, 190-pound Harrison – who was considered the 21st-best receiver and No. 115 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – caught seven passes for 97 yards and two touchdowns during the victory, bringing his career total to 2,467 yards. The previous record-holder was former Notre Dame and current Houston Texans receiver Will Fuller.

"I had no idea until I came off the sideline and one of my coaches told me," Harrison told Eastern PA Football's Joseph Santoliquito after the game. "I didn't even hear the announcement, either. The goal is the same, too – winning a third straight state championship. This season was a little scary. We didn't think we were going to have a season."

"If I look back on this year, I'll remember the obstacles we overcame. We didn't even have a place to practice because of the (pandemic protocols). We want to do something no other prep school has done, and that's win three straight state titles."

Harrison also tied Philadelphia La Salle's Jimmy Herron for the league record with 33 career receiving touchdowns.

Pair Of Verbals Jump-Starts 2023 In-State Push

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State is beginning to pick up steam for its 2023 recruiting class, securing in-state commitments from five-star safety Sonny Styles of Pickerington Central on Nov. 13 and Huber Heights Wayne four-star offensive lineman Joshua Padilla on Nov. 4.

Styles is rated the No. 8 player in the nation, in addition to being the top safety and Ohio prospect in his class. He also held offers from Alabama, Clemson, Florida, LSU, Miami, Michigan, Michigan State, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State and Texas, among others.

The 6-4, 265-pound Padilla, who plays guard and tackle for the Warriors, is ranked 183rd in the class of 2023, ninth at his position and fourth in Ohio, and committed shortly after visiting the Buckeyes for their 33-24 win against Penn State on Oct. 30.

Padilla also held offers from Cincinnati, Miami, Michigan, Michigan State, Penn State and Oregon, among others. While he camped at Ohio State in June and took unofficial visits to OSU, Miami and Penn State, it never appeared the other teams got any traction in his recruitment. The lone crystal ball projection for Padilla to the Buckeyes was by 247Sports recruiting analyst Bill Kurelic on March 23, just one day after Padilla was offered by Ohio State.

Styles and Padilla are joined in the class of 2023 by four-star tight end Ty Lockwood (6-5, 225) of Thompson's Station (Tenn.) Independence, who committed to Ohio State in August.

With Padilla being the first in-state commit, history shows the first pledge from the Buckeye State can often set the tone for a recruiting class. Recent classes have featured Jyaire Brown (2022), Jack Sawyer (2021) and Paris Johnson Jr. (2020) as the first in-state commitments, and Padilla's commitment could jump-start Ohio State's in-state recruitment for 2023.

With the potential for recruiting to blow up in Ohio in the near future, BSB spoke with Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Alex Gleitman on what recruiting will look like in the state for 2023.

"It's obviously been a challenge given everything going on with the pandemic," Gleitman said of programs assessing the class of 2023. "There were limitations and things of that nature over the past couple of years where maybe you would have gotten a look at some of these kids in the summer of 2020. But you never had the opportunity to do that, and that's really when you build out your base a couple of years in advance."

While there have been difficulties for both

schools and recruiting services analyzing talent in the 2023 cycle, early returns show it will likely be in line with previous classes in Ohio.

According to 247Sports' composite rankings, Ohio has three top-100 recruits, five in the top 300 and 14 in the top 500 in the 2023 cycle. That compares to four top-100, eight top-300 and 15 top-500 recruits in 2022 with similar numbers in 2021. All are an improvement, however, over the 2020 class, in which Ohio had just one top-100 recruit – offensive lineman Paris Johnson Jr. – and five top-300 prospects.

"This summer, they obviously have the opportunity to see a lot of these guys on campus," Gleitman said. "But if you use the 2024 class as an example, Ohio State got to host a number of those kids and see them and start to build up their board and their database based on who they like, what they see, who they're going to watch moving forward, things like that."

"Schools really didn't get the opportunity to do that across the board in 2020, and neither did a lot of the ranking services and things of that nature. So I think everyone is playing a little bit of catch-up this year."

Gleitman said players' film, junior-day visits and upcoming summer camps will be important for schools in terms of evaluating and offering 2023 prospects.

"That's going to be certainly key for them, especially the guys not like Sonny Styles and Luke Montgomery, who have offers from pretty much everyone," he said. "A lot of those guys ranked in the back end of the top 10 and then beyond in Ohio, they're going to be playing a little bit of catch-up."

Even with the potential challenges associated with assessing the class of 2023, Gleitman said Padilla's commitment helps to jump-start the class.

"I think it's huge," the recruiting analyst said. "With most schools, the in-state players, that's your lowest-hanging fruit. Certainly with Ohio State, most kids that grew up in Ohio grew up rooting for Ohio State and dreaming of playing for Ohio State. Ohio State obviously spread their wings and recruited coast to coast and they have the ability to do that, but an Iowa or Nebraska or Minnesota may not always have that luxury. So, it's really important for any program to get an in-state recruit on the board."

Gleitman said it can be embarrassing for schools – especially an in-state powerhouse such as Ohio State – to offer a recruit and then get rebuffed, citing such recent examples as former Clemson offensive lineman Jackson Carman, so it can take longer for the Buckeyes to offer some in-state prospects.

"They want to make sure that they're go-

ing to get that kid," he said. "If there's a kid for whatever reason that's just dead-set on leaving the state, why are they wasting their time and pursuing that kid and giving him an opportunity to play at Ohio State if it's never going to happen?"

Padilla was an early in-state target for Ohio State, according to Gleitman, who said it was big for Ohio State to get him on board.

"They don't offer a ton of in-state kids – certainly far less than they did when Jim Tressel was head coach," Gleitman said. "There's various reasons for that, but I think to get Josh when they've missed on some in-state offensive lineman they've offered over the past few years is definitely a big get for them and helped jump-start the class a little bit, too."

Where Buckeyes Stand

Ohio State is currently in on Montgomery (6-5, 260), a four-star defensive lineman from Findlay. Montgomery's brother, Ryan, is the quarterback at Findlay and has been offered by Ohio State as part of the class of 2025.

Montgomery is listed as the 59th-ranked player in 2023, the 13th overall defensive lineman and the fourth-best prospect in Ohio. He appears to be a strong Ohio State lean, with a crystal ball projection by Kurelic coming in on Feb. 18, the same day Montgomery was offered by the Buckeyes. He holds offers from Alabama, Clemson, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oregon and Penn State, among others.

"I think he's been really, really diligent," Gleitman said. "He's gone to probably over 20 schools and visited them and spent time with them in the offseason, and then he's been to a number of different games, including Ohio State multiple times this season."

"I don't think Luke's going to drag it on too long. I think maybe sometime in late January or February I could see him committing. I feel like Ohio State's in a pretty good position with him."

Other Ohio offers in the class include Mentor five-star defensive lineman Brenan Vernon (6-5, 245), who committed to Notre Dame on June 29, and Middletown Lakota

East three-star offensive lineman Austin Siereveld (6-5, 315). He holds other offers from Cincinnati, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Ohio, Toledo, West Virginia and Louisville.

"The next guy up I'd say is Austin Siereveld," Gleitman said. "He just got offered a couple of weeks ago when he visited for the Penn State game. An offensive tackle potentially – I guess he could probably play either OL position – but he's 6-5, 315, so he's got the size and the length to play offensive tackle. Either way, he's an offensive lineman they're clearly sold on. For me, I think that that is someone to watch for sure."

While Gleitman doesn't view Vernon as a potential flip for the Buckeyes, he is paying close attention to a number of committed prospects, including Ironton linebacker Trevor Carter (6-2, 205), who is committed to Cincinnati and ranked the fifth-best prospect in Ohio, and Springfield wide receiver Anthony Brown (5-10, 170), who is committed to Minnesota.

"I don't think they're going to move on (Carter), but they did just get (linebacker) Reid Carrico from (Ironton) last cycle, so I think that's someone they'll probably keep an eye on," Gleitman said. "The other guy I really like that I think they're definitely keeping the seat warm on is Anthony Brown. He's committed to Minnesota, where his brother is on the team, but I think Ohio State is the offer he really wants. He was there for the Penn State game a couple of weeks ago as a committed Minnesota prospect, so he's someone I would absolutely watch."

Other 2023 players to keep an eye on in-state include Massillon Washington running back Willtrell Hartson (5-9, 200), Dublin Coffman defensive lineman Will Smith (6-3, 250), Miamisburg offensive tackle A.J. Salley (6-5, 260), Lagrange Keystone wide receiver Ryne Shackelford (6-0, 175) and West Chester Lakota West athlete Malik Hartford (6-3, 175).



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Eager Buckeyes Ready To 'Let Dogs Loose' On Court

It's been a tremendously long offseason for Chris Holtmann's squad in Columbus, but it comes with the territory. Any team that suffered the fate that Ohio State did to conclude a season has no choice but to let that wound fester for a while since the nature of the college basketball calendar is such that a squad is unable to begin addressing what ails it until preseason camp, roughly seven months removed.

COURT REPORT Patrick Mayhorn

Of course, Ohio State spent those seven months reeling from and then dealing with one of the more crushing losses in program history, a first-round NCAA Tournament defeat against 15th-seeded Oral Roberts in overtime that ended the Buckeyes' season well ahead of schedule and all but erased the goodwill Holtmann's group had built in the 30 games that had preceded it.

Three wins in the Big Ten tournament, a pair of road victories against Wisconsin and Iowa teams that were at the time ranked in the top 10, and even a nonconference win against eventual Final Four squad UCLA mean quite a bit less when you end a season with a whimper as one of the tournament's top teams entering play.

For much of the offseason, that's what the Buckeyes, entering the fifth season of Holtmann's tenure with a team now filled exclusively with his recruits, had to learn to cope with and take lessons from as they built a new roster, one directly influenced by what happened March 19 on that Mackey Arena court.

The Buckeyes were flummoxed all game by star guard Max Abmas, so they added ace perimeter defender Jamari Wheeler in the transfer portal. They were crushed down low by Kevin Obanor, so they nabbed a true big man in Joey Brunk and put plenty of focus this offseason on getting sophomore Zed Key up to speed so that he and his 6-8, 245-pound frame can factor into the frontcourt rotation. They couldn't hit a shot late in the game when they needed it most, so they picked up Cedric Russell from Louisiana, who pretty much only hit shots in 2020.

The 2021-22 Buckeyes might be molded by that season-ending result, but the nonconference schedule they're set to face isn't. Holtmann told the media Nov. 8 that while he understands the appeal of playing an easier schedule after such a devastating result to build confidence, he wanted instead to put challenges in front of his team and to grow through that adversity.

"You don't ever want to play scared or schedule scared," Holtmann said. "It's a valid question because maybe you start the season and give your guys some confidence, but I just think it's a

Buckeyes Ink Five On National Signing Day

As expected, Ohio State nabbed five signatures Nov. 10 from future Buckeyes on National Signing Day, wrapping up a class ranked seventh nationally according to the 247Sports rankings. OSU trailed only Duke, Arkansas, Alabama, Kansas, USC and Michigan while sliding in just ahead of Kentucky, North Carolina and UCLA.

Leading the way for the Buckeyes are four-star guards Roddy Gayle Jr. and Bruce Thornton, with three-star guard Bowen Hardman, four-star center Felix Okpara and late addition four-star forward Brice Sensabaugh rounding out the group for head coach Chris Holtmann.

"We are excited to officially welcome Roddy, Bruce, Bowen, Felix and Brice to our basketball family," Holtmann said. "Not only will this group have a big impact on the court, but the collective character of these five fit our program and the university community perfectly. The future is bright for this class, and it will serve as a foundational piece for the coming years of our program."

Here is a quick introduction to each player.

Roddy Gayle Jr., Mt. Pleasant (Utah) Wasatch Academy - No. 63 Overall, No. 6 SG

Gayle (6-4, 195), a native of the Niagara Falls area in New York, was a two-time first-team All-Western New York honoree for Lewiston-Porter before transferring to Wasatch Academy in Utah for his junior season. He averaged just over 10 points per game, helping to lead Wasatch

to a No. 5 seed in the GEICO National Tournament.

Bowen Hardman, Cincinnati Princeton - No. 303 Overall, No. 48 SG

An All-Ohio honorable mention in 2021, Hardman (6-3, 175) averaged 15.1 points per game on 40.5 percent shooting (37.4 percent from three-point range) as Princeton finished as the No. 4 team in the Greater Miami Conference with an 8-6 record.

Felix Okpara, Branson (Mo.) Link Academy - No. 50 Overall, No. 11 C

A native of Lagos, Nigeria, who moved to the United States to pick up basketball in 2018, Okpara (6-11, 215) averaged 11 points, nearly eight rebounds and more than two blocks per game as a junior for Hamilton Heights Christian Academy in Tennessee. He'll suit up for Link Academy in Missouri - ranked seventh nationally by MaxPreps - as a senior.

Brice Sensabaugh, Orlando (Fla.) Lake Highland Prep - No. 101 Overall, No. 27 SF

Sensabaugh (6-6, 235) saw his recruitment skyrocket after he averaged 17.9 points at the Nike Elite Youth Basketball League over the summer, fresh off an injury that kept him off the court as a junior. His play moved him from No. 254 in the 247Sports composite to No. 101 in the span of five months.

Bruce Thornton, Alpharetta (Ga.) Milton - No. 41 Overall, No. 6 PG

new year and you want to put some challenges in front of your guys. We're playing (teams) that could challenge us and (teams) that could beat us. I think that scheduling is about preparing your team for what's coming."

That nonconference schedule included a pair of mid-major matchups during the opening week of the season against Akron and Niagara. Another MAC game is headed down the pike for the Buckeyes with Bowling Green on the slate for Nov. 15, at which point the light portion of the season is over.

A road trip to Xavier, a neutral-site matchup with Seton Hall and then either California or Florida in the Fort Myers Tip-Off followed by a home bout with Duke jump the Buckeyes right into the thick of it before a brief conference play break against Penn State and Wisconsin (with Towson between them). Out of the Wisconsin matchup on Dec. 11, the Buckeyes have one more tricky game in a neutral-site game with Kentucky before a pair of hopefully easier ones against Tennessee-Martin and New Orleans to end the nonconference slate.

For a team that will be depending on several young players growing up fast and meshing with their more veteran teammates, there's both excitement and anxiety around such a tough slate to start the year.

"They're anxious, and we do have a heavy schedule here," Holtmann said. "The young guys are anxious to play and I'm sure they'll be excited. They're going to play important roles on this team. They're going to be nervous, and they've admitted that. They just need to focus in on being who they are as players.

"I think there will be some mistakes that they make. We'll need to play through some

jitters, and we'll be challenged in a lot of areas. The alternative is to play a lesser-quality team, but hopefully this will help us as we continue to grow as a team."

As for the players, though, the start of the season is less about nerves and more about excitement to get back on the floor. Coaches can worry about results, lineups and preparedness all the way, but for the most part, Ohio State's players just want to play.

"We're champing at the bit and ready to go," Key said on Nov. 8. "We're definitely ready to go. I don't know what to expect, to be honest. With the exhibition, there were some fans and it took some time to get used to because last year we had no fans in the arena, but I'm excited to play in front of Buckeye Nation."

Wheeler described the beginning of the season as the time for Ohio State to hit the ground running, or as he says, to let the dogs loose.

"We've got that chip on our shoulder," he said. "We're ready to go out there and as Coach says, 'Let the dogs loose.'"

Translation?

"It means to just go out there and play," Wheeler explained. "We've been competing against each other since the summer. We're just ready to play against somebody new. We're all putting the same jersey on and going against someone else, instead of being in the practice jerseys going against each other."

For what it's worth, though he may agree with the message, Holtmann let the record show that he has never, under any circumstances, advocated for "letting the dogs loose." In fact, there's no record of any of Wheeler's coaches ever saying that, at least not in BSB's research.

"I have no idea (what that means)," Holtmann said. "I've never uttered the term, 'Let the dogs out.' Not that I wouldn't, but I've never uttered that term in a basketball setting. That's (Jamari's) terminology. I'm glad you brought it up, though. It's good to know. Maybe I'll ask him in practice exactly what that means."

Either way, the Buckeyes are going with what they've got early and often during their nonconference slate, whether they're doing it as loose dogs or just standard-issue basketball players. For now, it seems as though Holtmann would prefer the latter.

Status Remains Quo

Ohio State is still working through injury

and health problems with forwards Justice Sueing, Seth Towns and Kyle Young, but that doesn't mean much for the status of freshman forward Kalen Etzler, a four-star prospect from Crestview, Ohio.

Holtmann said during the offseason that Etzler would take the year to develop his body and play, redshirting and focusing primarily on the weight room, rather than seeing spot minutes as many freshmen did last season.

Despite the shakeups in the lineup, with Sueing still bouncing back from a nagging leg injury, Towns out until at least December and Young on a day-to-day watch, that status is not changing for Etzler.

"I think it's best for Kalen that he redshirts," Holtmann said. "I wouldn't want to make a decision in the short term that wouldn't be best for Kalen in the long term. He's not physically ready right now, anyway, and this redshirt year is best for Kalen long-term."

That doesn't mean, however, that the Buckeyes have been without changes at the wing position as it looks to cover up for those injury issues.

Justin Ahrens has moved from shooting guard to small forward and is expected to contribute there exclusively this season, while such tweeners as Eugene Brown III and Malaki Branham will likely be counted on to do a little bit of both. The Buckeyes could even look to deploy something of a three-guard lineup if needed, though that's really only for desperate circumstances.

"It's unique to have a couple of wing/forward guys, along with Seth being the third guy, injured in the one spot," Holtmann said. "Normally, it's spread out, but this is all kind of in a similar position. We've had to move some guys around."

As for the players still on the mend, even when the Buckeyes have Sueing on the court in the early season - as they did against Akron and Niagara - he's expected to be somewhat limited in his ability after a shaky offseason.

"We're not going to see the real Justice right away, and it's probably unfair to expect that from him," Holtmann said. "It's been too much time where he hasn't been able to practice like he needs to. He'll get there eventually, but he needs to see some game action and we'll need him to be ready."



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Buckeyes Kick Off Season With Pair Of Wins

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

In its haste to return to regular-season play, Ohio State must have forgotten to take the lids off the Value City Arena hoops before it tipped off Nov. 9 in a season-opening matchup against Akron. It wasn't until the first television break that the Buckeyes' shots began to fall, save for those of forward Zed Key, who scored his team's first six points of the game, which proved to be a last-second 67-66 Buckeye victory before 11,947.

It was that kind of night for Key. Nicknamed "The Big Fella" by his fans, Key looked every bit the biggest fella on the floor as he bullied the Zips in the post repeatedly, scoring 14 points on 7-of-11 shooting for the game.

His partner down low, E.J. Liddell, joined him in buoying the otherwise stagnant Buckeye offense, leading the team with game-high totals of 25 points and 11 rebounds, and the pairing carried Ohio State (1-0) to the win.

Though Liddell dominated on the stat sheet, it was his younger counterpart whom the Buckeyes leaned on late. Down the stretch, they just kept going back to Key, who scored three of Ohio State's final four baskets, capped by a game-winning layup with the clock showing just 0:00.3 to play.

"I couldn't breathe," Key said afterward. "When I was on the court, I couldn't breathe. When we got to the huddle, I was hyperventilating, I didn't breathe through the whole thing. It was, obviously, really exciting. I'm thankful and excited. But I still can't breathe."

Key's game-winner was euphoric for Ohio State, which spent the evening sputtering on offense as it dealt with a combination of rust, youth and injuries against a veteran Akron squad that took every punch the Buckeyes could throw.

That rust seemed to apply to every Buckeye but Key and Liddell, both in form and function. The rest of the team shot only 9 of 30 from the field.

The four-man guard group of Malaki Branham, Eugene Brown III, Meechie Johnson and Jamari Wheeler combined for 15 points on just

4-of-17 shooting, led in all aspects by the true freshman Branham. He stepped up late in the game and delivered both tough shots and the game-winning assist.

"I just think the guards are a work in progress right now," OSU head coach Chris Holtmann said. "Meechie had some really good moments, I thought he was able to get to the rim a few times, and he made four free throws. If he just commits to getting better, he's going to be a different player in January. I really believe that with him. He just has to stay with it because there are going to be games like this."

"I was searching for lineups and for offense. I think I'm going to be searching more, especially early in the season."

Ohio State led 36-28 at the break paced by Liddell's 13 points. The Zips quickly tied the game at 36 on an 8-0 run coming out of the locker room, and neither team led by more than five points the rest of the way.

Ali Ali, who led Akron (0-1) with 17 points, hit a three-pointer and an ensuring free throw with six seconds left to set up Key's buzzer beating heroics.

Niagara Falls In Columbus

Ohio State's 84-74 victory against Niagara on Nov. 12 in a sparsely populated Value City Arena wasn't always pretty, but the Buckeyes did more than enough to avoid a repeat performance. The win required no last-second heroics from Key or any other Buckeyes, though it was no cakewalk against former OSU assistant Greg Paulus and his Niagara squad.

Liddell and Niagara forward Marcus Hammond provided most of the early highlights. Liddell had 18 points on 6-of-9 shooting, including 3 of 4 behind the arc, to lead the Buckeyes to a 42-41 halftime lead. Meanwhile, Hammond was keeping the Purple Eagles close, scoring 12 of his team's first 14 points and finishing the first half with 16 points.

But the loudest cheers during the opening 20 minutes were reserved for co-captain Kyle Young when he entered a game for the first time

this season after missing the opener with a malady known as vestibular dysfunction. A few seconds later, when Wheeler found a backdoor-cutting Young for an alley-oop slam accompanied by a foul, the announced crowd of 9,749 sounded like twice that many.

The second half opened just about the same as the first. Liddell kept the Buckeyes afloat while a parade of strong shooting from Niagara kept it in the game, even as the Eagles struggled to find an answer defensively for Liddell. Ohio State equaled its largest lead of the evening to that point entering the first break of the half after Branham took a Justin Ahrens pass and knocked down a three-pointer from the corner, putting OSU in front 53-46.

Although Ohio State's lead would never grow larger than 12, the Buckeyes would not relinquish their hold on the game, trading baskets for the next 15 minutes of play, seeing the Purple Eagles draw as close as six points at 64-58 before a Wheeler three-pointer with 7:27 left – his first points of the young season – bolstered that lead back up to nine points. Two possessions later, the Penn State transfer would connect again from downtown to give Ohio State a comfortable

70-58 advantage.

"It was great to see because our team needs that from him," Holtmann said after the game. "He may not be a guy that's going to create – he can create some – but what he can do is shoot the ball. And I loved seeing that. I was really happy for him because we've been on him about doing that."

Niagara cut the Buckeye lead to just six points at 77-71 with 1:42 to play and had a chance to slice into it even further, but Ohio State's defense held firm. A pair of Liddell free throws out of a timeout put the Buckeyes back in front by eight points, and with a Niagara miss on the ensuing possession, Ohio State was finally able to wrap up its hard-earned win led by a career-high 29 points from Liddell. Key added 11, Young had five in his debut, and Wheeler contributed a game-high six assists. Justice Sueing was also in double figures with 10 points.

"I thought our guys had some really good responses and some really good moments," Holtmann said. "I was proud of some of the growth with some of those guys. I thought our backcourt – with Jamari and Meechie and Malaki – had some really good moments."

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Ohio State 67, Akron 66

Nov. 9, 2021 Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio.										
Akron (0-1, 0-0)										
Ohio State (1-0, 0-0)										
Akron	Min.	M-A	FT	Reb.	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Ali	33	6-11	3-3	1-2	2	3	17			
Freeman	29	4-6	0-0	4-5	0	2	8			
Walton	31	6-9	4-6	2-1	0	1	16			
Trimble Jr.	30	2-8	0-0	0-1	0	2	5			
Castaneda	27	4-8	0-0	1-4	2	4	11			
Bandaogo	11	0-2	0-0	0-1	0	2	0			
Tribble	14	1-4	0-0	1-1	1	3	2			
Clarke	16	1-5	2-2	0-3	0	0	5			
Dawson	10	1-5	0-1	1-1	0	2	2			
Totals	200	25-58	9-12	14-20	5	19	66			
Percentages: FG: 43.1%. FT: 75.0%. Three-point field goals: 7-22 (Castaneda 3-7, Ali 2-4, Clarke 1-2, Trimble Jr. 1-6, Dawson 0-3). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 2 (Bandaogo, Freeman). Turnovers: 11 (Walton 3, Ali 2, Castaneda 2, Dawson 2, Clarke, Tribble). Steals: 4 (Walton 2, Ali, Trimble Jr.).										

Ohio State										
	Min.	M-A	FT	Reb.	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Ahrens	34	2-4	1-2	0-1	3	1	7			
Key	26	7-11	0-0	4-1	0	1	14			
Liddell	30	10-19	4-8	7-4	3	5	25			
Johnson Jr.	23	0-3	4-4	1-4	0	2	4			
Wheeler	29	0-3	2-2	0-2	1	1	2			
Sueing	15	1-7	0-0	1-2	0	1	2			
Branham	24	3-9	0-0	2-4	3	1	7			
Brown III	9	1-2	0-0	1-0	1	0	2			
Russell	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	2	0			
Brunk	7	2-2	0-0	0-1	0	1	4			
Totals	200	26-60	11-17	17-21	11	15	67			
Percentages: FG: 43.3%. FT: 68.8%. Three-point field goals: 4-14 (Ahrens 2-3, Branham 1-1, Liddell 1-4, Brown III 0-1, Sueing 0-2, Johnson Jr. 0-3). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 5 (Key 2, Liddell 2, Branham). Turnovers: 11 (Ahrens 2, Key 2, Johnson Jr. 2, TEAM 2, Branham, Liddell, Sueing). Steals: 5 (Johnson Jr. 2, Branham, Liddell, Wheeler). Officials: Boroski, Beaver, McNutt. Attendance: 11,947.										

Ohio State 84, Niagara 74

Nov. 12, 2021 Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio.										
Niagara (0-2, 0-0)										
Ohio State (2-0, 0-0)										
Niagara	Min.	M-A	FT	Reb.	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Cintron	33	5-8	4-6	2-4	2	3	17			
Iorio	25	6-11	3-3	1-5	1	2	18			
Brown	16	1-4	0-0	0-2	0	0	2			
Hammond	38	7-14	4-7	2-4	3	2	22			
Thomasson	30	1-12	2-2	0-1	4	2	4			
Kuakumensah	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	2	0			
Roberts	20	2-5	0-0	1-1	1	0	5			
Traore	9	1-1	2-2	1-1	0	2	4			
Levaic	8	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	1	0			
Brown	7	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	2	0			
Kratholm	8	1-1	0-0	0-4	0	3	2			
Totals	200	24-56	15-20	8-23	12	19	74			
Percentages: FG: 42.9%. FT: 75.0%. Three-point field goals: 11-21 (Hammond 4-9, Cintron 3-3, Iorio 3-6, Roberts 1-2, Brown 0-1). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 1 (Cintron). Turnovers: 13 (Hammond 3, Thomasson 2, Brown, Cintron, Iorio, Kratholm, Roberts). Steals: 6 (Cintron 3, Iorio, Kratholm, Roberts).										

Ohio State										
	Min.	M-A	FT	Reb.	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Ahrens	29	2-6	0-0	0-3	3	3	6			
Key	26	3-4	5-7	2-5	1	2	11			
Liddell	28	9-15	8-12	1-4	3	3	29			
Branham	19	3-6	0-0	0-2	1	4	7			
Wheeler	33	2-3	3-4	0-2	6	1	9			
Johnson Jr.	20	2-5	1-2	1-0	0	3	7			
Young	22	2-4	1-1	0-7	1	0	5			
Sueing	16	4-6	2-2	0-4	0	2	10			
Brown III	4	0-0	0-2	0-1	0	1	0			
Sotos	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	2	0	0			
Brunk	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Totals	200	27-50	20-30	6-28	17	19	84			
Percentages: FG: 54.0%. FT: 66.7%. Three-point field goals: 10-26 (Liddell 3-6, Wheeler 2-3, Johnson Jr. 2-5, Ahrens 2-6, Branham 1-1, Sotos 0-1, Sueing 0-2, Young 0-2). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 8 (Liddell 4, Key 3, Branham). Turnovers: 10 (Liddell 5, Ahrens, Branham, Johnson Jr., Sueing, Young). Steals: 5 (Wheeler 2, Branham, Liddell, Sueing). Officials: Ek, McLunkins, Floyd. Attendance: 9,749.										

Buckeyes Contending With Loss Of Point Guard

Ohio State was issued a major blow just one day before the 2021-22 season was set to begin when it was announced that junior guard Madison Greene is out for the season following a knee injury that will require surgery.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

Greene was Ohio State's starting point guard the last two seasons, averaging 13.4 points, 4.3 assists and 1.7 steals per game last year in 15 games. She was also the team's leader at the free-throw line, connecting on 85.7 percent of her foul shots.

She missed the last five games of the 2020-21 season, and the Buckeyes were 1-4 over that stretch, limping to a 13-7 finish after a 12-2 start to the year.

In addition to being the team's commander on the court, Greene was a leader for the Buckeyes off the court.

"I think it puts a little bit on everybody," senior guard Taylor Mikesell said of stepping up in Greene's absence. "You can't fill Madison's role. She's awesome on the court. You need that leadership, that point guard that she's been these past few years. You can't fill that with one person, so I think everybody just takes a little bit of step forward."

Junior guard Jacy Sheldon, who played alongside Greene in the backcourt the last two seasons, said Green has a huge presence on both ends of the court.

"She's a great, great defender, and our main focus as a team right now is getting better defensively," Sheldon said. "Then obviously she's our primary ball-handler. We have people that need to step up there – myself included – and she does help those assists also. I think the more we get familiar with each other,

and the more we start playing with each other, the better that will be."

Greene's absence was noticeable during Ohio State's season-opening 71-48 win against Bucknell on Nov. 10. While the final score was a blowout in favor of the Buckeyes, the Bison kept things close early on, at one point taking a 22-20 lead following a 15-0 run.

Though Ohio State eventually figured things out, there were some early growing pains with Greene out of the lineup.

"No question, we get consistent pace with her," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "She understands the game. She's an incredible defender, and we wouldn't have gotten beat off the dribble as much if she was in the game. She is also just a feisty rebounder. There are a lot of tangles with her, but also a lot of intangibles."

With Greene sidelined, Ohio State opted to start Sheldon, Mikesell, senior guard Braxtin Miller, junior forward Rebeka Mikulasikova and junior guard Hevynne Bristow in the opener. By the end of the game, however, sophomore guard Kateri Poole and graduate forward Tanaya Beacham came off the bench to outpace Bristow and Mikulasikova in minutes.

Poole, who finished with a team-high four assists and started the second half in relief of Bristow, identified herself as an early candidate to help fill minutes for Greene. She scored eight points and had a plus/minus of 33 in a little more than 24 minutes of play, by far the highest on the team. She displayed good vision on the court, feeding a couple of her assists inside on impressive passes.

Options exist in establishing Sheldon or any number of guards on the roster as the primary ball-handler, but as of now, McGuff said he views it as a "by-committee" approach.

"We'll kind of see how we settle into it," the OSU coach said. "Jacy can handle the ball and do all that, but we're really good when she's just out running because somebody else has it. That's what we're kind of trying to reconcile here, and that's why the more Kat-

Ohio State Signs Three On Signing Day

The Ohio State women's basketball team secured three signatures Nov. 10 on National Signing Day, inking the potential backcourt of the future as well as one of the top-rated players in the nation. Four-star wing Cotie McMahon – ranked the No. 23 recruit in the nation, according to ESPN – highlights the class for Ohio State. McMahon is joined by guards Kaia Henderson and Mya Perry to round out head coach Kevin McGuff's class of 2022. Here is a quick introduction to each player.

PG Kaia Henderson, Utica (N.Y.) New Hartford

The 5-6 Henderson is New Hartford's all-time leading scorer, amassing 2,092 career points heading into her senior season. As a junior, she averaged 33 points per game through her team's first six games, and as a sophomore, she averaged nearly 25 points per game. She will be enrolling early for the spring semester.

SG/SF Cotie McMahon, Centerville, Ohio - No. 23 Overall, No. 4 Wing

McMahon (6-0) joins Ohio State as one of the top-rated recruits in the class of 2022, according to ESPN. She averaged 20.2 points per game as a junior, increasing her production from 18.9 points per game as a sophomore and 15.8 points per game as a freshman. She was named Division I first-team All-Ohio in 2020 and will enroll early at Ohio State.

SG Mya Perry, Reynoldsburg, Ohio

The 5-11 Perry earned All-Ohio special mention following her junior season during which she averaged 15 points per game. In her sophomore season, she averaged 14 points per game and was named first-team All-Ohio Capital Conference in addition to being named an all-district honorable

eri continues to come along, I think that will really help us.

"That's why we switched the lineup at half-time just to make sure we got the pace and could let them get out and run. I think we saw what that can do, so that was important to us."

OSU Welcomes Transfer

Ohio State reached into the transfer portal again, this time picking up 6-1 freshman guard Emma Shumate of Newark, Ohio, who is transferring to the Buckeyes after a few months at West Virginia.

Shumate has not yet formally signed her scholarship papers, according to an Ohio State spokesperson, and her potential eligibility for this season hinges on her release from her previous letter of intent with the Mountaineers. She continues to await a decision on that.

Shumate, who played at Newark High School, was graded as a four-star recruit by ESPN in the class of 2021. Additionally, she was rated the 23rd overall guard and 59th overall player in her class and was named a first-team All-Ohioan in 2020.

At Newark, Shumate helped lead the Wildcats to a runner-up finish in the 2021 Division I championships during her senior season. Newark made it to the state semifinals during her junior season before the remainder of the playoffs were canceled due to COVID-19.

She announced her transfer via her Instagram account with the caption, "No place like home."

Shumate, who is listed as a shooting guard on her Hudl profile, joins an Ohio State lineup that will likely employ a guard-heavy rotation this season.

Her sister, Katie, is a junior guard at Kent State and was second on the team in scoring the last two seasons. Their father, J.R., had been head coach of the girls basketball team at Newark High School until he stepped down this past summer following 18 years at the helm.

Looking To Play Faster

Following the transfer over the summer of starting forwards Dorka Juhász and Aaliyah

Patty, height became an immediate concern for the Buckeyes heading into this season.

McGuff and his players stressed during a preseason media day that rebounding had been an intense focus this offseason to offset some probable height disadvantages, but one way Ohio State will look to gain traction is in its pace of play.

Last season, OSU ranked 15th in the nation with 76.3 possession per 40 minutes, according to Her Hoop Stats, and the Buckeyes could look to get even faster this year.

"That's always been an emphasis for this program," Miller said, "but coming into this year, knowing that we're not as tall as we have been, that was even a bigger emphasis – moving fast and getting the ball up the court and getting it together quickly. So I think that we have been fast, and there's a bigger emphasis to be even faster."

This begins with the depth Ohio State has at guard, including Miller, Sheldon, Mikesell and Poole, but Miller expects that everyone on the team is comfortable playing with increased tempo.

"We have a lot of potential, a lot of people that can contribute and do contribute," the senior guard said. "It's been super fun to watch us compete and go at it, and I think we have a lot of people to be able to play, and we just play so fast. I think it's going to be really exciting."

McGuff said that playing with the increased tempo begins in practice.

"They get in the habit of just jogging if I let them," he said, "so we're really emphasizing running the floor and really trying to put pressure on defenses with our pace up the court and then our aggressive dribble penetration and then our spacing."

Though Ohio State has a clear goal in mind for its pace of play, McGuff cautioned that playing too fast can come with drawbacks.

"Sometimes we do get going too fast," he said. "I usually let them get going too fast early on, and then it's easier to pull the reins back and slow them down and make them execute and kind of keep the turnovers down."



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OSU Begins Season On Pair Of Positive Notes

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State women's basketball team got off to a rocking start to its 2021-22 season, running away with respective 23- and 38-point victories against nonconference foes Bucknell and Norfolk State at Value City Arena.

Junior guard Jacy Sheldon and senior guard Taylor Mikesell, in her Ohio State debut, led the Buckeyes to a 71-48 win against Bucknell on Nov. 10 to kick off the regular season before 2,748.

With junior guard Madison Greene out for the season due to a knee injury, the Buckeyes employed a four-guard lineup along with junior forward Rebeka Mikulasikova to help offset the loss.

The lineup looked promising early as Ohio State (1-0) jumped out to a 20-7 lead with 1:30 remaining in the first quarter, boosted by five early points from Mikesell.

The Buckeyes then hit a wall on both ends of the court, giving up easy points in transition and struggling to score themselves as the first quarter ended.

Energized by the positive finish to the first quarter, the Bison kept the pressure on Ohio State, utilizing a 15-point run that stretched into the second quarter to take a 22-20 lead at the 5:51 mark. During the run, Bucknell (0-1) was 5 of 7 from the

field and had three trips to the free-throw line.

On the other end, the Buckeyes were held scoreless for nearly seven minutes, during which they were 0 for 12 from the field with three turnovers. A break was mercifully provided to Ohio State via a timeout with 4:49 remaining, and out of that, Sheldon broke Bucknell's scoring streak with a jumper to tie things at 22.

"It was kind of a typical opening game and a mixed bag for us," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "We had some stretches where we were really good and then some stretches where we just weren't."

Sophomore guard Kateri Poole, who was first off the bench for Ohio State, added another basket on the Buckeyes' next possession to regain the lead, and the Buckeyes ended the first half with a 28-24 lead. While Poole won't be able to fully emulate what Greene brought to the floor, she did a good enough impression against the Bison, creating multiple opportunities for her teammates with a team-high four assists in addition to being a scoring threat herself with eight points for the contest.

Mikesell began the third quarter for Ohio State with a three-pointer to make it 31-24, and Sheldon scored the next seven points for the Buckeyes, who maintained

a 38-30 lead. In the fourth, Mikesell led the Buckeyes with six points as Ohio State increased its lead to as many as 25 before securing the 23-point win.

"It felt great," Mikesell said. "I didn't get a chance to play in the exhibition game because I wasn't cleared yet, so it was just nice seeing that first one go through."

Despite a poor shooting start, Ohio State finished 23 of 56 from the field, good for 41.1 percent, while holding Bucknell to 34.6 percent (18 of 52). The Buckeyes were led in scoring by Sheldon, who finished with 20 points on 6-of-13 shooting. Mikesell was second with 14 points.

Defensively, the Buckeyes scored 18 points off turnovers, with 14 points coming on the fast break, something which McGuff and his players said would be a focal point this season.

Dominating Victory

After a shaky defensive performance during the season-opening win against Bucknell, the Ohio State defense made important strides and dominated Norfolk State during an 86-48 win on Nov. 14 in front of 2,980 in Value City Arena.

Alongside Sheldon, Mikulasikova, Mikesell and senior guard Braxtin Miller, Poole started for the first time this season after a strong tryout at point guard in the opener. The new lineup got off to a quick start, giving Ohio State (2-0) a 9-0 lead as Norfolk State (2-1) missed its first five shots.

After a three-pointer by the Spartans, the Buckeyes embarked on another long run, this time a 12-0 spurt, to make it 21-3 with less than three minutes remaining in the first quarter. Ohio State would finish the period with a 25-7 lead.

The Buckeyes' defense continued to clamp down in the second quarter, limiting Norfolk State to just eight points on 3-of-17 shooting. On the other end, Ohio State was 6 of 13 during the period as sev-

en different players scored, led by Sheldon with six.

"I felt like we started out pretty well," McGuff said. "I told them in the locker room afterward that we made some progress from the last game to this one, but the themes are still the same – guarding the ball, being in the gaps, making sure we move the ball on offense. We got a little better, but there's still a long, long way to go until we get anywhere near where we're capable of going."

Poole capped off the impressive first half for Ohio State with a buzzer-beating three-pointer to give the Buckeyes a 47-15 lead going into the locker room.

The second half was much of the same as the Spartans struggled to score and Ohio State kept its foot on the pedal offensively, scoring 39 points in the second half and getting a chance to clear the bench.

In the end, Ohio State shut down Norfolk State to the tune of 18 of 62 shooting, just 29.0 percent from the field and 21.7 percent (5 of 23) from beyond the arc. The Buckeyes also won the battle on the boards, outrebounding the Spartans by a 47-30 margin.

"We blocked out a little better today, pursued the ball, and even with that we had a couple of tipped balls we could have grabbed," McGuff said. "We still have to be better at rebounding."

Mikulasikova led the Buckeyes with 19 points, while Miller, Sheldon and freshman guard Kaitlyn Costner tied for the team lead with three assists each. In total, Ohio State shot 28 of 59 from the field, good for 47.5 percent. Mikesell paved the way at the three-point line, finishing 4 of 7 from beyond the arc to give her 12 points in her second outing as a Buckeye.

"I'm trying to focus on everything I can to help this team – rebounding, playing inside, playing hard," Mikulasikova said. "I feel like my team is relying on me, so I'm just trying to do my job."

Ohio State 71, Bucknell 48										
Nov. 10, 2021										
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio										
		1	2	3	4	F				
Bucknell (0-1, 0-0)		14	10	14	10	48				
Ohio State (1-0, 0-0)		20	8	23	20	71				
Bucknell	Total	FG	FT	Reb.						
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Shaffer	17	1-4	1-2	1-6	0	1	3			
Collins	22	4-7	0-0	1-3	0	3	8			
O'Brien	30	6-13	4-4	0-4	2	4	17			
Walls	29	2-8	1-1	1-3	0	1	5			
Johnson	28	1-4	1-1	0-3	2	1	3			
Sisselman	22	1-2	0-0	0-5	2	0	3			
Krsul	19	1-6	3-4	1-3	1	4	5			
Dingler	11	1-4	0-0	0-1	0	3	2			
King	10	0-2	0-0	0-2	0	1	0			
Kulesza	3	1-0	0-0	0-0	1	1	0			
Reinbeau	2	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	2			
Totals	200	18-52	10-12	6-30	8	19	48			
Percentages: FG: 34.6%. FT: 83.3%. Three-point field goals: 2-11 (O'Brien 1-1, Sisselman 1-2, Collins 0-2, Dingler 0-1, Johnson 0-2, King 0-1, Kulesza 0-1,Walls 0-1). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 2 (Krsul, Shaffer). Turnovers: 20 (Walls 5, O'Brien 4, Sisselman 3, Collins 2, Shaffer 2, Johnson, Krsul, Reinbeau). Steals: 2 (Johnson, O'Brien).										
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.						
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Mikulasikova	14	2-5	0-0	0-2	0	4	4			
Sheldon	31	6-13	7-8	0-4	2	3	20			
Miller	28	0-4	5-6	1-1	3	0	5			
Bristow	15	2-5	2-2	3-2	0	1	6			
Mikesell	29	5-13	0-0	0-4	1	0	14			
Poole	24	3-7	0-2	0-4	4	1	8			
Thierry	13	1-1	0-0	0	2	0	2			
Beacham	22	2-3	4-4	2-5	0	4	8			
Harris	8	2-2	0-1	1-0	0	0	4			
Hutcherson	7	0-2	0-0	0-3	0	0	0			
Costner	2	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Jones	1	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0			
Totals	200	23-56	18-23	7-29	10	15	71			
Percentages: FG: 41.1%. FT: 78.3%. Three-point field goals: 7-22 (Mikesell 4-8, Poole 2-4, Sheldon 1-3, Bristow 0-1, Costner 0-1, Hutcherson 0-1, Mikulasikova 0-2, Miller 0-2). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 5 (Beacham 2, Thierry 2, Harris). Turnovers: 10 (Bristow 3, Beacham, Mikesell, Mikulasikova, Poole, Sheldon, Thierry, Team). Steals: 6 (Mikesell 2, Beacham, Miller, Poole, Sheldon). Officials: Broderick, Cruse, Hall. Attendance: 2,748.										

Ohio State 86, Norfolk State 48									
Nov. 14, 2021 Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio									
		1	2	3	4	F			
Norfolk State (2-1, 0-0)		7	8	14	19	48			
Ohio State (2-0, 0-0)		25	22	23	16	86			
Norfolk State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
M. Williams	16	1-7	0-0	0-1	0	2	2		
Jones	30	5-12	0-0	0-7	1	3	11		
Francis	19	2-6	2-2	0-1	1	4	6		
Fields	37	2-8	0-0	2-4	5	2	5		
Franklin	24	3-4	3-4	0-2	1	3	9		
Savage	15	0-2	0-0	2-0	0	4	0		
Downs	8	0-7	0-0	0-2	0	2	0		
Turner	18	4-10	0-0	0-1	0	1	11		
D. Williams	14	1-3	2-2	2-3	0	2	4		
White	10	0-2	0-0	0-1	0	0	0		
Diawara	5	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Totals	200	18-62	7-8	8-22	8	23	48		
Percentages: FG: 29.0%. FT: 87.5%. Three-point field goals: 5-23 (Turner 3-9, Fields 1-7, Jones 1-2, Diawara 0-1, Downs 0-1, Franklin 0-1, M. Williams 0-1, White 0-1). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 0. Turnovers: 15 (Francis 4, Fields 3, White 2, M. Williams 2, Downs, Jones, D. Williams). Steals: 7 (Fields 2, Jones 2, Downs, Franklin, D. Williams).									
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Mikulasikova	21	8-13	3-3	1-5	0	2	19		
Sheldon	21	0-1	10-10	0-3	3	0	10		
Poole	16	2-5	2-5	0-3	2	1	7		
Miller	17	2-6	0-0	1-1	3	0	5		
Mikesell	22	4-9	0-0	0-3	0	1	12		
Beacham	14	2-3	1-2	1-2	0	0	5		
Bristow	19	2-4	4-5	1-3	2	1	9		
Harris	12	2-6	2-3	1-3	2	1	7		
Thierry	18	2-2	0-0	3-1	0	3	4		
Hutcherson	15	2-6	0-0	1-5	0	2	4		
Costner	12	2-4	0-0	0-2	3	1	4		
Jones	8	0-0	0-0	0-0	2	0	0		
Totals	200	28-59	22-31	13-36	17	12	86		
Percentages: FG: 47.5%. FT: 78.6%. Three-point field goals: 8-30 (Mikesell 4-7, Bristow 1-1, Harris 1-4, Miller 1-4, Poole 1-4, Costner 0-2, Hutcherson 0-4, Mikulasikova 0-3, Sheldon 0-1). Team rebounds: 7. Blocked shots: 5 (Bristow 3, Hutcherson, Sheldon). Turnovers: 14 (Poole 3, Sheldon 3, Bristow 2, Beacham, Costner, Hutcherson, Mikesell, Mikulasikova, Miller). Steals: 6 (Bristow, Costner, Hutcherson, Miller, Sheldon, Thierry). Officials: Harris, Howell, Resch. Attendance: 2,980.									



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Cheremeta Follows Winding Path To Buckeyes

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Mark Cheremeta's path to Ohio State is typical of many players who play junior hockey in the United States to attract the interest of recruiters.

However, the junior forward's route has also had several twists and turns before he became one of the Buckeyes' top offensive threats. He was born in Belarus, grew up in South Florida and is one of three OSU players who started their careers at Boston University before eventually landing in Columbus.

Cheremeta left BU after a freshman season in 2018-19 during which he had three assists in 29 games. He then spent the 2019-20 season playing at the junior level for Dubuque (Iowa) in the United States Hockey League.

His play there earned him a scholarship offer from Ohio State, which he accepted for the

2020-21 season.

"I'm actually pretty grateful for my path," Cheremeta said. "Going to Dubuque was great. I had a great time. They're great people in that city. I got better and developed as a player, and that made me ready to come in here last year.

"It would have been nice to just go to a different college straight from BU, but who knows what would have happened if I just jumped to a different NCAA team? I would have had to prove myself double whereas going back to juniors I just focused on my game and kind of reset."

Defenseman Dominic Vidoli, a freshman teammate at Boston University, had already committed to transferring to Ohio State for the 2020-21 season but was also playing in the USHL at the time Cheremeta was in the league.

"Ohio State was one of the first teams to

reach out to me," Cheremeta said. "I called Dom because he committed there awfully quick and I was like, 'What's up with OSU?'"

"He's like, 'Dude, it's sick. You've got to check it out.'"

"Dom was one of my best buddies, even though he was there at BU for only a short period of time, but I got really close with Dom, so I trusted him."

Cheremeta played in all 27 games for the Buckeyes last season and was first on the team with 14 assists and second with 19 points. Included was a four-point game (one goal, three assists) against Arizona State on March 4.

Through Nov. 13 of this season, he had seven points (three goals, four assists) in eight games for the No. 18 Buckeyes.

Ohio State head coach Steve Rohlik likes what Cheremeta brings to the team but expects more.

"That's exactly what we've been talking to him about," the coach said. "The one thing about him is he thinks (about) the game, he loves the game. He wants to be a complete player, and I think he's the first one to understand that if you want to get to the next level, you've got to develop a 200-foot game."

That last phrase is hockey coach-speak for being a two-way player who excels at defense as well as offense – in other words, playing the entire rink and not just around the attacking end.

"He's got offensive skills as much as anybody, but learning how to defend and learning how to play without the puck and doing all that, I think you're starting to see that come," Rohlik said. "His points will come. He's involved in the power play, and he's good offensively."

Rohlik said he might show Cheremeta (5-11, 185) video of former Buckeye All-American forward Tanner Laczynski, who made his NHL debut for the Philadelphia Flyers earlier this year.

"They might be a little bit different players where Tanner's just more of that power forward and tough and hard-nosed," Rohlik said. "Still, they're both very good, and Philly came back to me and said, 'We're just so impressed at how prepared he was when he got there.'"

"Certainly, I think that's the thing Mark can take from that. Here's a kid (Laczynski) that could have signed after two years, but he stayed four years. He was that much more prepared to play in Philly. Unfortunately, he's been hurt now, but that's a good one for a guy like Mark to look at."

Cheremeta and Vidoli settled in at Ohio State last season and reunited this summer when forward Jake Wise decided to leave Boston University after three seasons and was immediately eligible this season.

Enter Cheremeta with a little friendly recruiting.

"I sold Jake on the playing part," he said. "He's a player. That's all he cares about, so I told him that they let you play here and do what you want. You've got to play within the system, but other than that, you could be the player you want to be, so he liked that. Obviously, the facilities and all that stuff are great, but playing is No. 1."

His pitch worked, and all three are making contributions for the Buckeyes. Wise had six points (two goals, four assists) and Vidoli had two goals through Nov. 13.

But Cheremeta has helped in another area.

When Rohlik and his staff were recruiting freshman Russian forward Georgii Merkulov, they relied on Cheremeta's knowledge of the

Russian language to help bridge some interpretation issues.

Cheremeta lived his first year in Belarus before his parents won a green card lottery and immigrated to America.

"The first couple of months, they just stayed in a hotel in Miami," he said. "Then they moved to Aventura, near Miami, then moved closer to Coral Springs. We lived there a while and then finally in Parkland."

If the city sounds familiar, it's probably in a bad way. Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland was the site of a mass shooting on Feb. 14, 2018, when a former student killed 17 and injured 17 others.

Cheremeta is a 2017 graduate of the high school.

"I knew a few people, but I wasn't there during the shooting, but my sister was, so that obviously affects our family through her," he said. "It's a terrible thing to happen, but you deal with it day by day. It doesn't really affect me too much, but I still stand for Parkland. That's my hometown."

"After the shooting, I didn't really say I was from Parkland. I kind of just said south Florida, but more and more as time goes by, I say I'm from Parkland. I'm proud of that."

In hockey circles, south Florida is gaining a reputation for developing NHL talent. The Florida Panthers have made a major investment in facilities and programs in the region.

Cheremeta's father, Vlad, coached Shayne Gostisbehere and Jakob Chychrun while they were growing up. Both are now defensemen for the Arizona Coyotes.

The younger Cheremeta was a teammate years ago with Parkland native Andrew Peeke, now a defenseman for the Columbus Blue Jackets.

"We skated with each other over the summer, so it was cool having a connection with him being in Columbus," Peeke said. "I've seen him around a couple of times. We keep in touch."

Peeke is proud to be part of the hockey movement in what is considered a non-traditional market where the only ice is supposed to be in drinking glasses.

"I think there's eight or more Florida-born players in the NHL right now, and then from south Florida, I think there's four or five now, which is really remarkable," Peeke said. "It's nice for guys like me, Chychrun and Gostisbehere to show that it's possible to make the NHL from south Florida where it's not necessarily a hockey market."

Minnesota Recap

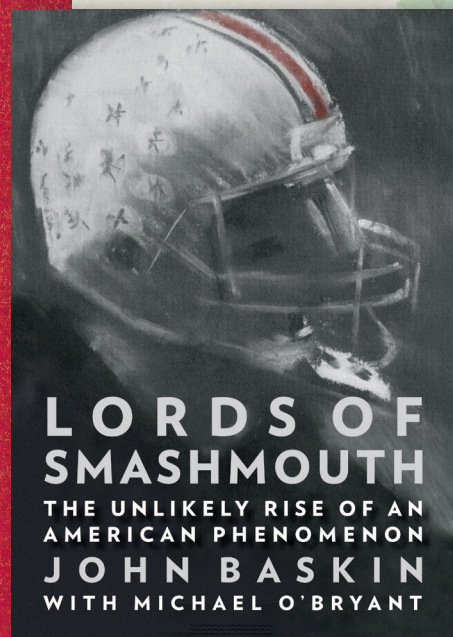
The Buckeyes (7-3-0, 4-2-0 Big Ten) split at No. 6 Minnesota following a comeback 4-3 win on Nov. 12 and a 2-0 loss the next night to end a four-game winning streak.

Joe Dunlap scored the winner in the third period of the opener after the Golden Gophers (7-5-0, 4-2-1) led 3-0 after the first period. In the rematch, the Buckeyes were limited to 13 shots and were 0 for 4 on the power play.

What's On Tap

The Buckeyes have their second open weekend of the season Nov. 19 and 20 before hosting Mercyhurst in nonconference games Nov. 26 and 27 at 5 p.m.

For a full recap of the Minnesota series, visit the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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Wrestlers Sign Historic Recruiting Class For '22

By **CHASE BROWN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State accomplished something Nov. 10 no other wrestling program has ever done when it signed the nation's top three prospects in a recruiting class.

Seven new Buckeyes signed their national letters of intent, including No. 1-ranked Jesse Mendez of Crown Point, Ind., No. 2 Nic Bouzakis of Kingston (Pa.) Wyoming Seminary High School and No. 3 Nick Feldman of Malvern (Pa.) Prep. According to FloWrestling's rankings, no program has swept the top three recruits in a class during the modern recruiting era.

"Our staff is excited to add this special group of student-athletes to Buckeye Nation," said OSU head coach Tom Ryan. "In my 30 years of collegiate coaching, this is one of the finest recruiting classes. We have addressed future needs at several weight classes with very high-level competitors. Each of them wrestles a high-tempo style of wrestling."

It all started when No. 19 Seth Shumate of Dublin (Ohio) Coffman announced in August 2019 that he would wrestle for the Buckeyes. He was the only recruiting class member for more than a year before Gavin Brown of Xenia (Ohio) Legacy Christian Academy joined him in October 2020.

Feldman and Bouzakis joined the group the following spring to create one of the top classes in collegiate wrestling for 2022 – but it didn't stop there for the Buckeyes.

Mendez, a 138-pound prospect, announced Nov. 3 during an appearance on FloWrestling Radio Live that he would wrestle for Ohio State, giving the program the three top-ranked prospects for next year's class. He chose the Buckeyes over Iowa, Penn State, Indiana and Michigan.

"They're building something special, and they're building a dynasty," Mendez told FloWrestling. "It was a close decision, but it was Ohio State for the most part. I sat down with my family three nights ago and hashed it out. This might be the best recruiting class ever, and I want to be a part of it."

Ohio State added one more commitment as signing day drew closer – No. 45 Luke Geog of Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward, who announced Nov. 9 that he would be a Buckeye. Along with Brendan McCrone of Mentor (Ohio) Lake Catholic, the class has four recruits from Ohio, two from Pennsylvania and Mendez from Indiana.

OSU Cruises Past Tar Heels In Opener

The No. 10-ranked Buckeyes welcomed fans back into the Covelli Center when the team opened its regular season Nov. 7 against North Carolina, and won seven of 10 matches

to defeat the No. 12 Tar Heels, 23-12.

Redshirt sophomore Carson Kharchla, the No. 10 wrestler at 165 pounds, started the afternoon for the Buckeyes, and fans received their first real taste of having him in the starting lineup.

The top recruit from Olentangy Liberty High School in Powell, Ohio, missed last year after he suffered a torn ACL in preseason training. Still, when the opening whistle blew, he showed why Ryan and his staff felt an urgency to get the local star in the lineup.

Kharchla secured a takedown in the first 15 seconds of the match and never looked back. He followed the two-point score with three more while also locking up a riding-time bonus, and his first dual-meet match ended with a 10-2 major decision.

"I thought I did well controlling myself in the atmosphere and being able to zone out and focus on my wrestling," Kharchla said after the match. "My biggest thing is I just want to wrestle. I don't want people to be bored watching my matches."

Ethan Smith made his debut at 174 pounds in the next bout and cruised to a 17-10 win against No. 22 Gavin Kane in the dual's highest-scoring match. The redshirt senior lived up to his No. 10 ranking, trading back-and-forth blows with Kane before extending his lead late in the third period.

Redshirt junior Rocky Jordan, the No. 17 wrestler at 197 pounds, competed at his former weight of 184 as redshirt senior Kaleb Romero works to return from an undisclosed injury he had sustained the week before wrestling-offs. Jordan bested No. 17 Clay Lutt in a 4-1 decision, giving the Buckeyes a 10-point advantage on the Tar Heels through the first three matches.

Gavin Hoffman, a redshirt junior from Montoursville, Pa., stepped in at 197 pounds. He isn't unfamiliar with the weight class, though. Hoffman wrestled in 12 matches for the Buckeyes last season, amassing a 5-7 record with a 2-5 mark in duals.

The Ohio State coaching staff named Hoffman the outstanding wrestler of the match after his 14-3 thumping of North Carolina's Mark Chaid. Ryan said he respects Hoffman's work ethic, resolve and desire to win.

"His opponent was a counterattack person," Ryan said. "He was looking to cut corners and slide behind our shots. So I like that Gavin created his own. He figured out ways to finish."

Redshirt senior Tate Orndorff wrapped up the first half for Ohio State with a 2-0 win over No. 33 Brandon Whitman. Both wrestlers struggled to score points during the match, but Orndorff rode his opponent for the entire third period, securing the No. 7 heavyweight his two-point victory.

Ohio State went into the locker room with a 17-0 lead. However, the Tar Heels had some

of their best wrestlers still to compete in the second half.

Malik Heinselman, at 125 pounds, was the first Buckeye to compete after the break. After being the leadoff man for Ohio State last season, the senior from Castle Rock, Colo., offered a calculated and calm approach in a 6-2 decision against Spencer Moore, whom Ryan referred to as a "tough little stud."

The Buckeyes suffered their first match loss when 133-pound Dylan Koontz dropped a 5-3 decision to No. 13 Jamie Hernandez, giving the Tar Heels their first three points of the afternoon. North Carolina kept things rolling when No. 14 Kizhan Clark defeated Jordan Decatur in a 3-1 sudden victory at 141 pounds.

Redshirt junior Sammy Sasso, the No. 1 wrestler at 149 pounds, put Ohio State back on track with a 4-3 decision against No. 5 Zach Sherman. In the biggest match of the meet, Sherman gave Sasso all he could handle, although all three of his points came from technical violations instead of his offense.

The officials penalized Sasso for an illegal cutback when he blocked Sherman's knees to secure riding time. He also gave away points when he locked hands with his opponent late in the match. Still, Sasso steadied the ship and walked away with the one-point win.

Redshirt junior Jashon Hubbard wrestled in the afternoon's final match, squaring off with former 149-pound NCAA champion Austin O'Connor. Hubbard came out shooting, winning the first point and bringing the Covelli Center crowd to its feet. He carried the momentum into the second period, but things went sideways when O'Connor hit him with a quick reversal, eventually earning a pin at 3:43.

"We got a glimpse out of Hubbard," Ryan said. "That first shot was beautifully well-timed. He's big at 157 pounds, so he has to get more comfortable wrestling at that weight."

Echemendia Charged With Felonious Assault

Ohio State sophomore Anthony Echemendia was arrested Nov. 9 and charged with felonious assault after an alleged altercation with his wife.

According to a copy of the arrest warrant, Echemendia knowingly caused harm to his spouse "by means of grabbing her neck with both hands, depleting her of air, rendering her unconscious."

Local authorities issued a warrant for his arrest Nov. 8 and took him into custody the following day. Echemendia was taken to the Franklin County Correction Center at Jackson Pike, arraigned Nov. 12 and released on a \$50,000 bond. He has been ordered to stay away from the alleged victim as a condition of his bond.

According to NBC4-TV in Columbus, the alleged victim testified in the arraignment and asked the judge to grant leniency toward Echemendia. If convicted of assault, a second-degree felony, he could face up to eight years in prison. The case has been bound over to the grand jury in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas. A hearing date has not been scheduled.

Ohio State released the following statement Nov. 12: "Ohio State wrestler Anthony Echemendia has been suspended by the athletics department following his arraignment on felonious assault charges. Echemendia will not participate in athletics-related activities and will not have access to Ohio State athletics facilities."

During his recruitment, the Cuban immigrant became a powerful story because of his defection from the Caribbean Island through Mexico and into the United States. Echemendia wrestled in Arizona and quickly became a high school sensation. He won a Fargo title at the U.S Marine Corps Junior and 16U Nationals in both freestyle and Greco-Roman, putting his name on the radar of top schools around the country.

Echemendia committed to Ohio State in 2019 and joined the Buckeyes the following year. Last season, he lost the starting role at 141 pounds to then-redshirt freshman Dylan D'Emilio and was in contention for matches in 2021-22 along with D'Emilio and junior Jordan Decatur.



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Dining Options Aplenty For Buckeye Fans

Whether you're hosting the big game-watch party, joining up with friends to watch on a big screen or looking for good eats before or after the game, *Columbus has something for everyone. Buckeye Sports Bulletin once again offers its suggestions as to where fans can eat on game day or any day.*

- An all-occasion steak tavern that glows with sizzle and warmth, **The Avenue** serves fine steaks and tavern fare in Grandview's historic Bank Block neighborhood and in Historic Dublin. The Avenue – a Cameron Mitchell restaurant –

features incomparable appetizers such as shrimp dejonghe and oysters Rockefeller followed by mouth-watering entrées including veal Milanese with mozzarella, arugula and linguine; Atlantic salmon with spinach, fennel and chardonnay butter sauce; or a selection of USDA prime steaks and chops. The Avenue also features a wide array of beverages, including local favorites such as classically inspired cocktails and a carefully selected collection of Old and New World wines.

Visit the Grandview location at 1307 Grandview Ave. (614-485-9447) or The Avenue in Dublin at 94 N. High St. (614-591-9000). For reserva-

tions, call or go online at theavenuesteaktaavern.com.

- **Cap City Fine Diner & Bar**, created by Cameron Mitchell Restaurants, offers a dining experience you won't soon forget. You can expect a menu that will satisfy the most discriminating palate. Try the weekend brunch from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. for classic eggs Benedict, French toast, torta, eggs on hash, spinach quiche, smoked salmon and bagel, four-egg omelet, breakfast burrito or the "diner" steak and eggs special with your favorite drink. Or meet up with friends for Happy Hour Monday through Friday from 4-6 p.m. for

specialty priced appetizers and drink specials in the bar. Choose from a variety of fresh salads and selections such as balsamic chicken or pecan-crusted pork chops, or try one of the delicious diner sandwiches or desserts. There are three locations, at 1299 Olentangy River Road (614-291-3663), minutes from Ohio Stadium; 1301 Stoneridge Drive in Gahanna (614-478-9999); or 6644 Riverside Drive in Dublin (614-889-7865). For reservations, call or visit <https://capcityfinediner.com>.

- **The Chocolate Café** at 1855 Northwest Blvd. has the cure for your cravings with a delicious menu of treats. Their lobster bisque is served daily along with an amazing array of specialty sandwiches including their BMT flatbreads, Greek pitas and Cajun chicken paninis. Grilled cheeses are a specialty, and be sure to order a soup and salad too. Choose from an extensive dessert menu including real hot chocolate, chocolate dipped strawberries, hand-dipped Buckeyes, assorted ice cream flavors, fondue and over 50 assorted candies. Visit them online for details at www.chocolatacafecolumbus.com or call (614) 485-2233. Don't forget Chocolate Café's newest location at 730 S. High St. (614-499-0226).

- Hometown favorite **City Barbeque** has been feeding Buckeye fans since 1999. Load up your tailgate party with their award-winning brisket, competition-quality St. Louis-cut ribs, Texas smoked sausage and classic pulled pork. There's a full roster of made-from-scratch classic sides, from collards and corn pudding to mac & cheese and potato salad. City Barbeque makes game day simple for groups of all sizes – just pick the Party Pack that fits your crowd. Check out citybbq.com or download the city bbq app for \$5 off your first order.

Of the nine City Barbeque joints in Columbus, the original Upper Arlington location is closest to Ohio Stadium: 2111 W. Henderson Road, (614) 538-8890. Visit their website for other convenient locations.

- Cancel those airline tickets to Mexico and head for **Cuco's Taqueria** at 2162 W. Henderson Road instead. If you are in the mood for some authentic Mexican cuisine, you will love their extensive menu, from starters such as fresh ceviche or queso fundido with melted Chihuahua cheese and chorizo to main entrées like carnitas and steak ranchero. Try their signature tacos, and choose from a variety of soups and salads. Don't miss the fajitas platter, the enchiladas or tamales either. Stop by for breakfast too.

Cuco's Taqueria has a full bar with an extensive selection of margaritas, so stop by for Happy Hour from 4-7 p.m. Monday-Friday. Visit them online at www.cucostaqueria.com or call (614) 538-8701.

- Part of Cameron Mitchell Restaurants' Short North Collection, **Del Mar** offers the best of Southern California-inspired dishes and cocktails. The restaurant team is fanatical about freshness and uses only the best fare from the farm, garden and sea.

Del Mar is open Sunday-Thursday from 4-9 p.m. and Friday from 4-11 p.m. The restaurant is also open for Saturday brunch from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and dinner from 3-11 p.m., as well as Sunday for brunch from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and dinner from 3-9 p.m. Del Mar is located at 705 N. High St. in the Short North Arts District (614-300-9500). For reservations, call or visit <https://delmarcolumbus.com>.

- Treat yourself to authentic Mexican fare at **Don Tequila Mexican Grill and Cantina**. Try the chimichangas – stuffed with your choice of beef, pork, lobster, shrimp or chicken – or the El Potosino – a combination of grilled chicken fillet

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WHERE TO EAT ON GAME DAY

and grilled shrimp with pico de gallo, steamed vegetables and shredded cheese. Or why not try the flaming cheese fajitas, with grilled strips of chicken, steak, onions, zucchini, mushrooms, poblano peppers and tomatoes, served on a skillet covered with flaming melted cheese and garnished with fajita salad. Don Tequila serves all of your traditional favorites, from tacos to burritos to enchiladas.

Don Tequila has four locations: 9762 Sawmill Parkway in Powell (614-932-9100); 6211 Cleveland Ave. on the North Side (614-523-2604); 3140 Kingsdale Center in Upper Arlington (614-273-1305); or 5637 Woerner Temple Road in Dublin (614-761-2200).

- **El Segundo** is a Mexican Street food-inspired restaurant, where the chefs offer fresh, responsibly sourced and local ingredients. At El Segundo, they make their own tortillas, sauces and signature ingredients from scratch. The food is all about sharing life and good times with family and friends.

El Segundo is open for dinner nightly, with Happy Hour Monday-Friday from 4-6 p.m. and Sunday from 8 p.m.-close. El Segundo is located in the Short North Arts District, just a short distance from campus at 698 N. High St. (614) 965-6660. For reservations, call or visit <https://elsegundocolumbus.com>.

- Stop in and try the tasty Mexican menu items at **El Vaquero**, within walking distance of Ohio Stadium and the hotels on Olentangy River Road north of OSU. Choose from a variety of fresh, authentic cuisine selections such as the queso fundido with grilled shrimp, onions, mushrooms and melted cheese. Try one of the many salads or order a bowl of Sopa Azteca and have a frosty, crafted margarita from the bar. El Vaquero offers Happy Hour from 4-8 p.m. daily. Sample the fresh guacamole and bring the family for a great time. A kids menu is available too. No game tickets, no problem. Watch on the big-screen projector. Come celebrate another Buckeye victory at 3230 Olentangy River Road or call (614) 261-0900 for information.

- **Grandad's Pizza** is a family-owned and -operated pizzeria with two locations, in Grandview Heights and Hilliard. They offer pizzas, old-school subs, sandwiches and more at affordable prices. Whether you're in the mood for a traditional pizza with fresh toppings or a specialty pizza like the chicken bacon ranch pizza, you're sure to find something to please everyone. Complete your meal with a fresh Italian or Caesar salad or boneless or traditional wings with your choice of 10 different sauces. Grandad's also offers discounts to businesses with advance ordering and features daily lunch specials. Call the Grandview location, located at 1254 West 3rd Ave., at (614) 488-9700 or visit www.grandadspizza.com. Stop by their other location at 4093 Trueman Blvd. in Hilliard (614-767-3020).

- **The Guild House** is an artisan eatery featuring creative American cuisine available for breakfast and dinner daily. The chefs at The Guild House collaborate to create seasonal offerings that are regionally and globally inspired, all with artistic technique in an energetic and inviting space. Located in the Short North Arts District (624 North High St., 614-280-9780), The Guild House offers Happy Hour Monday thru Friday from 4-6 p.m. in the bar with half-price featured wines, cocktails and selected items from their chef-inspired menu. For reservations, call or visit <https://theguildhousecolumbus.com>.

- **Hank's Texas BBQ** is Clintonville's smoking new place for delicious barbecue. Hank's specializes in real Texas-style barbecue, cooked low and slow over a wood fire, and is easy to find at 2941 North High Street in Columbus. Starters include fried green tomatoes, poutine, pickle chips or mouthwatering candied bacon. Then move on to the main courses, including USDA prime brisket, ribs, pulled pork, smoked chicken and smoked sausage. Or try one of the delectable sandwiches such as smoked portobello or Hank's

Way with smoked brisket topped with pickled vegetables and Hank's white barbecue sauce. Sides include vinegar slaw, house-cut fries, collard greens and corn spoon bread. Still hungry? Ask for the banana cream pie. Bring the whole crowd for barbecue and trivia at 8 p.m. every Wednesday. Hank's is available for catering and has a kid's menu too. Open Tuesday-Thursday, 11:30 a.m.-10 p.m., Friday and Sat 11:30 a.m.-11 p.m. and Sunday 11:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Call (614) 972-6020 for details or visit online at www.hankstexasstylebbq.com.

- The menu at **Hudson 29** is nothing short of an expansion and redefinition of American cuisine, taking it to new heights through simple preparations that allow the flavors of the expertly sourced ingredients to shine through. You'll savor this simplicity throughout the menu, a familiar and hearty collection of starters, prime steaks, roasted chicken and knife-and-fork sandwiches.

The bar has been raised in similar fashion. The focus is on wine, with an artfully composed list of 100 bottles. Cocktails crafted with house-made mixers and fresh-squeezed juices and an ever-changing list of craft beers round out the selection. Hudson 29 serves lunch and dinner daily with weekend brunch. Enjoy Happy Hour at Hudson 29 Monday through Sunday featuring special prices on appetizers, handcrafted cocktails, wines by the glass, draft beers and ales. There are two locations, at 1600 W. Lane Ave. (614-487-0622) minutes from Ohio Stadium, and 260 Market St. in New Albany (614-859-2900). For reservations, call or visit <https://hudson29.com>.

- For a simply incomparable total dining experience, head to **Jeff Ruby's Steakhouse** at 89 East Nationwide Blvd. Located in the downtown Arena District, one block south of the Convention Center, Ruby's entered the Columbus culinary scene in 2017 and was quickly recognized by readers' polls and critical acclaim as not just one of the best steakhouses in Columbus, but in the entire country. One stop will tell you why. Try the USDA prime steaks, including an extraordinary selection of premium Japanese A5 Wagyu, seafood and raw bar specialties, and an extensive sushi menu. The impeccable service, precise attention to detail, and a wine list Wine Spectator has recognized as among the best in the state are just some of the reasons your visit will be a memorable one. Be sure to take advantage of their limited-time gift card promotions on Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

Jeff Ruby's Steakhouse serves dinner Monday-Thursday 4:30 - 9 p.m., Friday-Saturday 4:30-10pm, and Sunday 4:30-8:30pm. Reservations are recommended but not required. Call (614) 686-7800 or visit www.JeffRuby.com/Columbus.

- With a retractable roof and a fire pit, **Lincoln Social** is a cool rooftop oasis and the ideal spot for guests to sip, savor and surround themselves with the cityscape. Enjoy the sweeping city views with a cocktail in hand at Lincoln Social, part of Cameron Mitchell Restaurants' Short North Collection. Located on the ninth floor above Del Mar SoCal Kitchen, Lincoln Social is an energetic gathering place complete with a flower wall to grab the perfect Instagram picture. Guests are invited to elevate their evening Tuesday-Thursday from 4-11 p.m., Friday from 4 p.m.-12 a.m., Saturday from 2 p.m.-12 a.m., and Sunday from 2-9 p.m. Lincoln Social is located at 711 N. High St. in the Short North Arts District (614-300-9494).

- **Los Guachos** is the place to head when in the mood for authentic Mexican food. And they just opened their fourth brick-and-mortar restaurant in Whitehall, located at 1121 S. Hamilton Road, in addition to their other three locations: 7370 Sawmill Road, 5221 Godown Road and 1376 Cherry Bottom Road. Los Guachos has been named one of America's best taco spots by Yahoo and voted one of the best taco spots by the Food Network. Also, it was recognized by Every Day with Rachel Ray and Maxim Magazine as having some of the best tacos in the country,

among other mentions within the Columbus press.

Visit them for tasty Mexican dishes including their famous Gringas, Juanas and original Tacos al Pastor. Open Sunday-Thursday 11 a.m.-midnight and Friday and Saturday 11 a.m.-1 a.m. at their Columbus and Dublin locations and every day from 11a.m.-11 p.m. in Gahanna and Whitehall. Call ahead for carry-out at (614) 538-0211 (Godown Road), (614) 471-4717 (Gahanna), (614) 852-3000 (Whitehall) or (614) 726-9185 (Sawmill Road). Stop by online at los-guachos.com.

- **Mi Mexico** is located at 4775 East Main Street in Columbus, which is as far as you need to go for authentic Mexican Cuisine. They offer an array of traditional favorites such as enchiladas, burritos and tacos, served American style with lettuce, tomato and sour cream or Mexican style with cilantro, onions and hot sauce. Or try one of their mouth-watering specialties including Pollo a la Mexicana – a delicious combination of shredded chicken, tomatoes, onions and jalapeños – or the Fajitas Zarape with chicken, steak, shrimp and Mexican chorizo served with fresh, sautéed vegetables. Match with a tasty margarita or any of a cold, bottled beer – both are half-price on football Saturdays. Thursday is half off for margaritas and beer from 3-9pm. Call them today at (614) 577-0143 or visit www.MiMexicoColumbusOhio.com.

- Try a longtime Buckeye fan favorite at **Minelli's Pizza and Next Door Tavern** at 1189 N. Wilson Road. Enjoy Minelli's thin-crust pizza, Italian specialties from manicotti to chicken parmesan, subs, sandwiches and salads while catching the Buckeye action on one of 14 large-screen TVs at the Next Door Tavern. Test your Buckeye knowledge with the collection of Ohio State photos, and don't miss any of the game with the Big Ten Network and NFL Sunday Ticket.

Take the family to dine at the old-fashioned pizzeria or meet your friends next door at the Tavern and enjoy your favorite beverages with great food from Minelli's. Quench your Buckeye fever at the Tavern's seven-hour Happy Hour. Too good to be true? Call them at (614) 279-3344 and find out.

- You're sure to find something for everyone at **Paul's Fifth Avenue**, a Grandview tradition for over 50 years. Open for breakfast and lunch seven days a week, Paul's features an eclectic mix of cuisine. Enjoy all your favorites at breakfast, including eggs made-to-order, omelets, waffles, pancakes and home fries. Be sure to try Paul's

famous Callahans, your choice of toppings on a bed of home fries.

At lunch, try one of the traditional sandwiches such as the Reuben or a burger made from fresh-ground short rib and beef round paired with Paul's famous Italian wedding soup. Or treat yourself to one of the traditional Italian favorites including Mama Panzera's lasagna and chicken or veal parmesan. With ample parking and located at 1565 W. Fifth Ave. in Grandview just five minutes from campus, Paul's is a convenient option for dining before the game. Phone (614) 481-8848 or visit www.paulsonline.com.

- **The Pearl** is a cozy tavern that showcases made-from-scratch food, classically inspired cocktails and an exclusive selection of ales, lagers and stouts. Start off with the creamy clam chowder with chorizo dust. For raw bar aficionados, The Pearl offers oysters and clams on the half shell, or try the N'Awlins baked oysters or the Shellfish Tower featuring oysters, clams, peel 'n' eat shrimp and Louie dressed colossal crab. Entrées include classics such as Southern fried chicken with a cinnamon sticky bun and cider-braised greens, Great Lakes fish 'n' chips or the braised short rib with horseradish mashed potatoes.

The Pearl's brunch stands out from the bunch and is served every Saturday and Sunday beginning at 10 a.m. Or hook up with friends for Happy Hour weekdays from 4-6 p.m. The Pearl is located at 641 N. High St. in the Short North Arts District, just a short distance from campus, (614) 227-0151 and in Dublin at 88 N. High St. (614) 695-6255. For reservations, call or visit <https://thepearlcolumbus.com>.

- Buckeye fans have been enjoying **Plank's Cafe and Pizzeria** at 743 Parsons Ave. since 1939. Plank's is known for its pizza, subs, daily specials and more. The pizza is half price every Monday from 5 p.m.-10 p.m. There are multiple TVs to watch your favorite game, and members of the Plank family are there to make sure you enjoy your experience. Plank's features private party rooms for groups of 40-80 people and also offers delivery. There is plenty of free parking and free WiFi is available. For delivery, to order ahead or for more information, call (614) 443-6251.

- One great option for affordable family dining in Grove City, just south of Columbus, is **Plank's On Broadway**, which features a wide variety of sandwiches and entrées in addition to the ever-popular pizza. Favorites include burgers,

Continued On Page 40

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Dining Delights From Breakfast To Nightcaps

Continued From Page 39

grilled chicken salad and, of course, good cold beer. Patrons can enjoy a large works pizza for four for about \$20 or a burger, fries and a beer for about \$10.

Plank's is located at 4022 Broadway, off I-270 west of I-71. For more information, call (614) 875-7800.

- For great food and atmosphere, try **Press Grill** at 741 N. High St. in the Short North (614-298-1014) and **Press Pub on 5th** (614-817-1198) in Grandview at 1505 W. 5th Ave. Their large menu includes the shrimp Po Boy, the pesto chicken sandwich and the famous Press Burger with fried egg. Choose a craft beer from the well-stocked bar and sample the daily specials: Mondays, Nathan's all-beef hot dogs, two for \$5; Tuesdays, crispy Buffalo chicken sandwich; Wednesdays, \$2 beef tacos. And don't miss Thanksgiving dinner every Thursday night for only \$12.99. Visit www.presscolumbus.com to find out more.

- Bring your appetite to **The Red Brick Tap and Grill** located at 292 East Gates St. in Columbus. Whatever your mood they have it with a variety of burgers, dogs, gyros, pizza, calzones and salads. Start off with the saganaki, a tableside flambe of Greek goat cheese, or the fried calamari with jalapeno jelly. Then treat yourself to the pan-seared salmon or spanakopita. Peruse the amazing list of bottled and draft beers (more than two dozen rotating taps) and wine selections. Ask about the daily specials, and visit their site for special events at www.theredbricktapandgrill.com.

com. Call today at (614) 444-2742.

- Road Hog Willy's Real Pit Bar-B-Q** is your pit stop for barbecue. Stop by their fun, casual restaurant at 504-B Harcourt Road in Mount Vernon for the cure for your deep down barbecue craving. Pit master Bill Wheeler has developed his own recipes for smoking premium meats for up to 20 hours using local cherry and hickory wood and offers mouthwatering favorites ranging from beef brisket to pulled pork, ribs, chicken and smoked sausage. Road Hog Willy's also caters buffets for groups of 25 or more, or pick up a party pack for groups from 4 to 18. Customize your order to fit your needs. Don't forget the delicious side dishes such as baked potatoes, mac 'n' cheese, baked beans, green beans, creamy slaw or collard greens. They're open Tuesday-Friday 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (740) 326-1408 or visit them online at www.roadhogwillysbbq.com.

- Make **Roosters** your headquarters to watch the Buckeyes while enjoying great wings and good times – before, during and after the games. Locally owned and operated, Roosters is open seven days a week with multiple area locations. Voted best wait staff and best wings by 614 Magazine, Roosters invites you to come watch the game in a casual atmosphere while enjoying the selection of wings, burgers, pizza, salads and a ton of appetizers. If you're watching the game at home, call Roosters for catering or carryout.

Look for the Roosters Food Truck at Ohio State home games in the Fanfest area between St. John Arena and the Ice Rink. Roosters is the

Official Wing Sponsor of Ohio State Athletics. Visit www.roosterswings.com for locations and hours.

- Rusty Bucket** is a casual American restaurant and tavern, a gathering place where people come to share laughter, smiles and great conversation over food that makes everyone happy. Satisfying and familiar, the menu is classic American fare, thoughtfully prepared from scratch by their executive chef. Cocktails are considered a craft, made-to-order by highly-skilled bartenders. From barrel to glass, no shortcuts are taken with the carefully selected beer list. The perfect draft is guaranteed. Stop by for lunch, meet family and friends for dinner, or stop in before or after the game. Great food, great drinks, great people – the Bucket Life.

Online reservations, private dining, carry-out and delivery are available. Visit one of the 10 Columbus locations or view menus at www.MyRustyBucket.com.

- A longtime central Ohio destination restaurant remains the anchor of historic downtown Canal Winchester as **Shade on the Canal** (19 S. High St.) continues to be a gathering place for locals and visitors alike. And now the Shade brand has expanded with Shade on State Street in Athens (994 E. State St.) and Shade on 30th Street (850 S. 30th St.) in Heath.

Shade's, as it is popularly known, offers the best in casual dining and sports pub atmosphere with a friendly staff, flat-screen TVs, upbeat music and walls lined with local black and white photos. You'll find great food including award-winning pizza, great wings, fresh cut salads, sandwiches, tasty appetizers, homemade soups and more. Are you planning a special event? Check out Shade's historic Pine Room at the Canal Winchester location. For information or carry-out orders call the Canal Winchester location at (614) 837-9873, the Athens location at (740) 566-1009 or the Heath location at (740) 788-9287.

- Visit **Spaghetti Warehouse Columbus**

when the desire for delicious Italian food strikes. Located at 397 West Broad Street, Spaghetti Warehouse has been a Columbus staple for great food and celebrating life since 1972. The menu includes a variety of classic pasta dishes such as fettucine Alfredo, manicotti, and spaghetti and meatballs made with hand-rolled beef and pork. Spaghetti Warehouse is also known for its famous 15-Layer Lasagna, that includes layers of Italian sausage, ground beef and three cheeses made by hand daily. Choose from a variety of sandwiches and appetizers, and don't ignore their amazing soups and salads. Spaghetti Warehouse is a celebration destination for large banquets and catering and is always accepting reservations. Open Monday-Thursday 11 a.m.-8 p.m., Friday-Saturday 11 a.m.-9 p.m., and Sunday 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Call today at (614) 464-0143 or visit them online at www.meatballs.com.

- Come celebrate 90 years of Italian dining tradition with **TAT Ristorante di Famiglia**, located at 1210 South James Road. Family-owned and -operated since 1929, TAT brings you four generations of cooking experience, available for dining in, takeout or catering, with homemade pasta and sauces. Stop in before or after the game. They can fill all your tailgating needs. Choose from an array of appetizers, salads, soups and entrées including deep-fried calamari, chef salads and special lasagna with homemade noodles. Specialty cocktails, beer, wine and champagne are also available. Whether in the mood for freshly made gnocchi, chicken piccata or breaded veal, you will find menu items to satisfy your cravings. And don't forget to leave room for dessert! TAT Ristorante is open Tuesday-Friday 11 a.m.-8 p.m. and Saturday-Sunday 3 p.m.-8 p.m. Call today at (614) 236-1392 or visit them at www.tatitalian-restaurantcolumbus.com.

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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

2021 FOOTBALL (9-1)

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, W 52-13; **9** MARYLAND, W 66-17; **23** at Indiana, W 54-7; **30** PENN STATE, W 33-24.

Nov. 6 at Nebraska, W 26-17; **13** PURDUE, W 59-31; **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.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (2-0)

Nov. 1 INDIANAPOLIS (EXH.), W 82-46; **9** AKRON, W 67-66; **12** NIAGARA, W 84-74; **15** BOWLING GREEN; **18** at Xavier; **22** at Seton Hall; **24** at Florida/Cal; **30** DUKE.

Dec. 5 at Penn State; **8** TOWSON; **11** WISCONSIN; **18** at Kentucky; **21** TENNESSEE MARTIN; **28** NEW ORLEANS.

Jan. 2 at Nebraska; **6** at Indiana; **9** NORTHWESTERN; **13** at Wisconsin; **16** PENN STATE; **22** NEBRASKA; **27** at Minnesota; **30** at Purdue.

Feb. 3 IOWA; **6** MARYLAND; **9** at Rutgers; **12** at Michigan; **15** MINNESOTA; **19** INDIANA; **24** at Illinois; **27** at Maryland.

March 3 MICHIGAN STATE; **6** MICHIGAN; **9-13** Big Ten Tournament at Indianapolis.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (2-0)

Nov. 3 SLIPPERY ROCK (EXH.), W 96-48; **10** BUCKNELL, W 71-48; **14** NORFOLK STATE, W 86-48; **17** BOWLING GREEN; **23** BELLARMINE; **27** CINCINNATI.

Dec. 1 at Syracuse; **5** at Purdue; **7** MOUNT ST. MARY'S; **12** INDIANA; **15** ALABAMA STATE; **19** at UCLA; **21** at San Diego State; **31** at Michigan.

Jan. 3 PENN STATE; **6** ILLINOIS; **9** at Northwestern; **12** MICHIGAN STATE; **15** at Minnesota; **20** MARYLAND; **23** at Rutgers; **27** MICHIGAN; **31** at Iowa.

Feb. 7 RUTGERS; **10** NEBRASKA; **14** at Illinois; **17** at Maryland; **20** WISCONSIN; **27** MICHIGAN STATE.

March 3-6 Big Ten Tournament at Indianapolis.

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 Plane Invitational at Notre Dame, Men: 6/21; Women: 9/24; **15** FSU Invite/Pre-Nationals at Tallahassee, Fla., Men: 33/40; Women: 14/33; **29** Big Ten Championships at University Park, Pa., Men: 10/12; Women: 8/14.

Nov. 12 NCAA Regional Championships at Evansville, Ind., Men: 12/30; Women: 6/31; **20** NCAA Championships at Tallahassee, Fla.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (7-3-0, 4-2-0)

Oct. 8 at Bentley, L 2-1; **9** at Bentley, W 7-1; **15** UCONN, W 4-3 (OT); **16** UCONN, W 3-0; **29-30** MICHIGAN STATE, L 2-1, W 5-1.

Nov. 5 PENN STATE, W 5-2; **6** PENN STATE, W 4-1; **12** at Minnesota, W 4-3; **13** at Minnesota, L 2-0; **26-27** MERCYHURST, 5 p.m.; 5 p.m.

Dec. 3-4 at Notre Dame, 7:30 p.m.; 6 p.m.; **10-11** MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; 8 p.m.; **16** BOWLING GREEN, 7 p.m.; **17** at Bowling Green, 7:07 p.m. **31-Jan. 1**, LIU, TBD.

Jan. 7-8 at Wisconsin, 8 p.m., 7 p.m.; **14-15** NOTRE DAME, 7 p.m., 8 p.m.; **21-22** at Michigan State, TBD; **28-29** at Penn State, TBD.

Feb. 4-5 WISCONSIN, 7 p.m., 8 p.m.; **11-12** MINNESOTA, 6:30 p.m., 6 p.m.; **18-19** at Michigan, 7:30 p.m.; 8:30 p.m.

March 4-6 Big Ten Quarterfinals; **12** Big Ten Semifinal; **19** Big Ten Championship.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (10-2)

Sept. 24 ST. THOMAS, W 6-0; **25** ST. THOMAS, W 4-1

Oct. 1 at Minnesota, W 4-2; **2** at Minnesota, W 4-1 **15** BEMIDJI STATE, W 7-0, **16** BEMIDJI STATE, W 3-1; **23** at Wisconsin, L 3-1; **24** at Wisconsin, L 2-1 (OT); **29** ST. CLOUD STATE, W 5-2; **30** ST. CLOUD STATE, W 10-1.

Nov. 5 at St. Thomas, W 8-1, **6** at St. Thomas, W 6-2; **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 VOLLEYBALL (21-5, 11-5)

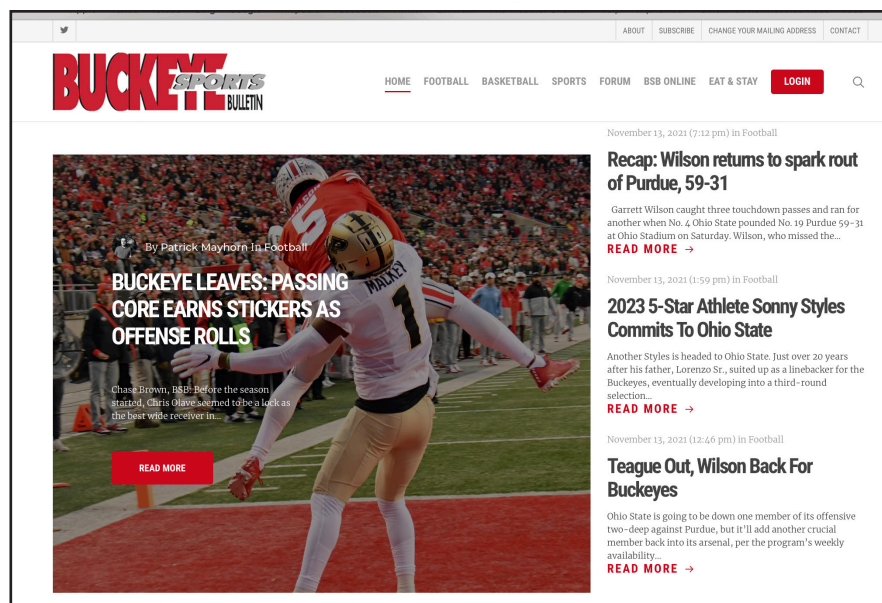
Aug. 27 NORTHERN KENTUCKY, W 3-0; **28** WASHINGTON, W 3-1.

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, L 3-0; **29** INDIANA, W 3-0.

Oct. 2 MARYLAND, W 3-0; **8** at Michigan State, W 3-0; **10** MICHIGAN, W 3-0.; **15** PURDUE, W 3-1. **16** Rutgers, W 3-0; **22** at Wisconsin, L 3-1; **24** at Minnesota, L 3-1.; **29** at Michigan, W 3-0; **31** MICHIGAN STATE, W, 3-1.

Nov. 4 MINNESOTA, L 3-1; **6** NEBRASKA, W 3-0; **13** at Northwestern, W 3-1; **14** at Illinois, W 3-0; **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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Buckeyes Still Have Questions Remaining To Answer

Holy Moly! Ohio State rolls to 9-1 on the season with its 27th consecutive win against Big Ten competition. That includes 25 regular-season victories and wins in the 2019 and 2020 Big Ten Championships Games.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Like so often this year, the latest win wasn't even close, coming by four touchdowns against a Purdue team that had already upset then-No. 2 Iowa and then-No. 5 Michigan State.

The Buckeyes' receiving group is more than living up to expectations as the best set of receivers in the country and the best receiver group ever at Ohio State.

With another 361 yards, C.J. Stroud now has 3,036 yards passing for the season, already the fourth-biggest total for a season in school history. He most certainly will move into the second spot behind only Dwayne Haskins' 2018 record of 4,831 yards by the end of the regular season.

TreVeyon Henderson already is the fourth true freshman in OSU history to top 1,000 yards rushing, joining Robert Smith, Maurice Clarett and J.K. Dobbins in that grouping.

And the Buckeyes control their own destiny as far as the playoffs are concerned. Win out and they're in.

But not so quick.

There is plenty of concern to go around. Call Buckeye fans spoiled if you wish, but plenty of fans have plenty of legitimate concerns about the 2021 team.

Will they win out? Maybe. Are they good enough to win out? Maybe.

Are they really one of the top four teams in the country? Again, the answer most certainly is maybe.

These next two weeks are going to be so interesting with one-loss and highly-ranked opponents Michigan State and Michigan remaining on the schedule.

Clearly, OSU would benefit if it can rediscover its once-potent run game that seems to

have sputtered the last few weeks. Henderson did run for 98 yards against Purdue. But outside of the explosive run of 57 yards, he was held to 41 yards on 12 carries, just 3.4 yards per try.

And the defense continues its befuddling ways. Purdue quarterback Aidan O'Connell completed 40 of 52 passes for 390 yards and four touchdowns because receivers were open and the passes were easy.

Purdue was forced to punt just twice. That's one indicator that OSU had trouble stopping the Boilermakers.

But a better indicator is this. When is the last time you can remember Ohio State scoring so many points and having to keep its first-team offense on the field the entire game to preserve the victory?

On The Bright Side

Ohio State will be the betting-line favorite for each of its remaining games through a potential Big Ten title game. Better to be the favorite than the underdog when the league title and a playoff berth are on the line.

The offense, as heavy as it is on the passing side of things, appears nearly unstoppable, averaging a best-in-the-nation 46.3 points and 550.4 yards through the first 10 games.

The receiving corps is better than imagined, thanks to the emergence of Jaxon Smith-Njigba. He is now the team's leading receiver in both catches (59) and yards (1,027), and a fine addition to go along with Garrett Wilson (53 catches, 813 yards, nine TDs) and Chris Olave (51 catches, 708 yards, 11 TDs).

Smith-Njigba's 1,027 yards already ranks sixth all-time at Ohio State, and he might break David Boston's record of 1,435 yards, set in 1998.

But get this. OSU very likely will have three receivers with 1,000-plus yards by the end of the season – a mark achieved by just five players in all the years of Ohio State football before 2021.

Playoff Seeding

Expect the Big Ten champion, assuming it is from the East, to be the No. 2 seed in this year's playoff, behind either undefeated Georgia or one-loss Alabama, should the Crimson Tide win out, which would include an SEC title victory against the Bulldogs.

Oklahoma helped clear the deck with its Nov. 13 loss to Baylor. OU was ranked just eighth before that loss, but had the Sooners won out, they very likely would have passed enough teams to be invited to the playoffs. The committee would not have excluded an undefeated power conference champion and might have eventually moved Oklahoma ahead of all the one-loss teams.

Somehow, I still have the feeling Oregon will either lose or slip behind the Big Ten champion based on overall résumé at the end.

Call Your Shot

At this point, Georgia is the solid No. 1 team in the country.

Conventional thinking would be that any team would want to avoid the Bulldogs in the semifinals. But here's another way to look at it.

Would you rather have 27 days to prep for Georgia and devise just the right game plan? Or would 10 days suffice?

I vote for 27 days, the span between Selection Sunday on Dec. 5 and the semifinals scheduled for New Year's Eve. The championship game comes just 10 days after the semis.

I attribute the underdog's success in the old BCS title games to a pair of factors – (1) the favorite becoming complacent and (2) why would the nation's best team shake things up at the end of the season, gambling to get better, as opposed to the willingness of an underdog trying something different to score an upset?

The lower-ranked team won six of eight BCS title games from 2005 through 2012. Overall in the 16 BCS games, the results were split – eight wins for the favorite, eight wins for the underdog.

Remember from the BCS days, Ohio State won as the underdog in 2002 but lost as the favorite in 2006 and 2007.

So, if it's going to take upsetting Georgia to win the title, I like Ohio State's chances better in the semifinals.

An NFL-OSU First

More than a century after the founding of the National Football League, a first appears to have occurred in Chicago during week two of the season. On Sept. 19, two former Ohio State quarterbacks faced each other.

I spent some time researching this, and I cannot find another instance when opposing quarterbacks guiding their teams were both from Ohio State.

Joe Burrow, the Ohio State graduate who spent three years at OSU before going on to win the Heisman Trophy at LSU, was the Cincinnati Bengals starter while Justin Fields came off the bench in the second quarter to replace the injured Andy Dalton and finished the game for the Bears.

Fields helped lead Chicago to a 20-17 win against the Bengals, completing 6 of 13 passes for 60 yards with no TDs and an interception. For the Bengals, Burrow completed 19 of 30 passes for 207 yards and two touchdowns but was intercepted three times.

The biggest reason for the rare event, quite simply, is that there haven't been many Ohio State quarterbacks in the NFL – no more than 17, according to Pro-Football-Reference.com. And that number includes punter/quarterback Tom Tupa, running back/quarterback Tom Matte and defensive back/quarterback Dave Leggett.

The first time two OSU quarterbacks were in the league at the same time was 1985, with Mike Tomczak with the Bears and Art Schlichter with the Colts. That pairing didn't

last long. Schlichter was cut after week five, gone from the NFL for good amid rumors that he was gambling again after being reinstated to the league after his 1983 season-long gambling suspension.

So Schlichter was long gone before the Colts faced Tomczak's Bears in week 14. Tomczak didn't play in that game.

During Tomczak's long pro career (1985-99), also spending time in the league were such former Buckeyes as Scott Woolf (1987), Tupa (1988-2004, mostly as a punter), Kent Graham (1992-2001), Bobby Hoying (1996-2000) and Joe Germaine (1999).

But at no time, according to game logs on the football reference website, did those players face each other as quarterbacks. I checked to see if there were any games in which more than one of these players attempted at least one pass. I didn't count games when they didn't play or, in Tupa's case, play quarterback.

(Side note: Woolf and Tomczak were part of the competition to replace Schlichter in 1982, with Tomczak winning the battle and Woolf going on to play at Mount Union.)

More recently, Dwayne Haskins' Washington Football Club played against Burrow's Bengals on Nov. 22, 2020. But by that point of the season, Haskins was on the bench, with Alex Smith leading Washington to victory. Haskins was cut by Washington on Dec. 29 a year ago.

The way Burrow and Fields are playing this season, it's a good bet they will face each other again in the coming years, though not on a regular basis as long as they remain in different conferences.

This Week's Top Ten

1. Georgia (10-0) – No doubt, best team in the country to date.

2. Oregon (9-1) – You can question Oregon if you like, but its win over Ohio State is the best to date among any of the national championship contenders.

3. Ohio State (9-1) – Ohio State keeps rolling along, but tests loom the next two weeks vs. Michigan State and Michigan.

4. Alabama (9-1) – I'm not as impressed as the College Football Playoff committee with what Alabama has done this season, but fourth is a fair slot at this time.

5. Michigan State (9-1) – Head-to-head, I still place value in the Spartans' victory over Michigan.

6. Michigan (9-1) – Michigan is very, very close to being undefeated so far, and it's also been close to more losses, the latest being a 21-17 escape at Penn State.

7. Oklahoma State (9-1) – Coming off a 63-17 win against TCU, we're going to find out soon if the Cowboys are for real. Oklahoma awaits Nov. 27 and then a potential Big 12 title game and possible rematch with the Sooners.

8. Cincinnati (10-0) – Less than impressive of late against very week opponents, yet UC does have a win over Notre Dame on its ledger.

9. Notre Dame (9-1) – The Irish posted early-season wins over Purdue and Wisconsin.

10. Baylor (8-2) – Give the Bears credit for ending Oklahoma's undefeated season.

Don't completely count out Oklahoma, now 9-1. A lot of things have to happen to put the Sooners back in playoff contention, but it's possible. There may be fewer than five one-loss or better teams by the end.

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Buckeyes Spoil ‘Spoilermakers’ Hopes Of Upset

Any thoughts of a patented Purdue upset against Ohio State were pretty quickly doused Nov. 13, but the early-season notion that the Buckeyes were going to have to rely on their offense to outscore quality opponents rather than rely on their defense to stop them seemed to come back into play during a 59-31 win over the so-called Spoilermakers.

The visitors gained 481 yards to go along with their 31 points but were no match for the hosts, who saw the big play return to their arsenal. The Buckeyes racked up 624 yards, and they scored on nine of 11 possessions and could have scored on a 10th had Ryan Day not elected to run out the clock with his team at the Boilermakers 6-yard line at the end of the game. Quarterback C.J. Stroud, a frequent target of hypercritical Buckeye fans, was nearly flawless while completing 31 of 38 passes for 361 yards and five TDs without an interception or a sack.

After much hand-wringing following the hard-fought win over Nebraska the week before, during which the vaunted Buckeye offense could generate only 26 points, one was left wondering if Garrett Wilson, who missed the game with the Cornhuskers, makes that big a difference for the Buckeyes. After all, Jaxon Smith-Njigba helped make up for some of Wilson's absence vs. Nebraska with 15 catches for 240 yards.

But with Wilson back in action, there were just too many high-quality receivers on the field for the well-rated Purdue defense to account for, and Stroud ably spread the wealth. Wilson led the way with 10 receptions for 126 yards and three receiving scores while Smith-Njigba and Chris Olave added nine catches each, good for 139 and 85 yards, respectively, and one score each.

Stroud loosened up the Purdue defense on the first two OSU possessions with 6-of-7 passing for 101 yards and a score that had to help the rushing attack – held to just 90 yards against Nebraska – rebound for 263 against the Boilermakers. On Ohio State's third possession, TreVeyon Henderson ripped off a 57-yard touchdown run on the first play of the drive. The longest run the explosive Henderson posted against the Huskers was just 22 yards.

But what really helped Ohio State get out to a quick 35-7 lead that Purdue, despite its ability to move the football, was never able to overcome was the opportunistic nature of the Buckeyes in the early going.

The Boilermakers were held to a three-and-out on their first possession and followed with a 16-yard punt, giving the Buckeyes the ball on the Purdue 39. It took Ohio State just five plays to score the game's first points on a 21-yard Wilson reception. Two Boilermaker possessions later, they fumbled the ball away at the OSU 43. Henderson needed only the one big play to make it 21-7 on a nine-second drive. And early in the second quarter, after Smith-Njigba had made it 28-7 with a 20-yard scoring reception, Purdue's Jackson Anthrop completely mishandled the ensuing kickoff, giving the Buckeyes the ball back at the Boilermakers 12. It took just two plays and 11 seconds for Wilson to score on a 12-yard pass from Stroud, making it 35-7.

Former OSU head coach Jim Tressel, the well-known proponent of the importance of the punt, would have been proud. Ohio State scored its first touchdown against Purdue after a short punt, after scoring its first touchdown against Nebraska following a 13-yard punt.

Give Purdue credit. The Boilermakers showed spunk and never folded. Quarterback Aidan O'Connell was every bit as effective as Stroud, completing 40 of 52 passes for 390 yards and four scores without an interception or

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

a sack, thus raising red flags about the Buckeye defense.

Ohio State seldom was able to generate pressure on O'Connell and was not credited with a sack or a QB hurry. But some of that appeared to be by design.

“We dropped eight men a lot with a three-man rush, so you're not always going to get as many sacks,” Day explained. “That's the decision that was made and we'll learn from it – find out if it was efficient or not.”

The defense was able to keep the barrage of pass plays in front of them. Star receiver David Bell had 11 receptions for 103 yards but never seemed to be a huge factor in the game. His longest catch was just 23 yards and he did not score, though he dropped a pass for a sure six late in the game.

In fact, a glass half-full kind of Buckeye fan might note that the OSU defense forced Purdue to work for every point it got. Of the Boilermakers' five scoring drives, three took 10 plays and the other two were seven plays long. Purdue also held the ball for 13 plays and 5:11 on their last possession before coming up empty-handed. Once the visitors found themselves behind, 35-7, they probably needed to score more quickly than those prolonged marches – or stop the Buckeyes on offense, something they proved unable to do.

While the Boilers threw 52 passes to just 19 runs, they actually had some success on the ground. They gained 91 yards for a workmanlike 4.8-yard average. If they hadn't fallen behind so quickly, they might have been able to mount a more balanced attack.

Yes, the Purdue production was troubling, but the Buckeyes still wound up with a 28-point victory over a well-coached team that showed why it was able to upset highly-ranked Iowa and Michigan State. The Spartans are next on the docket.

Do they have enough to slow the Buckeye offensive juggernaut?

Odds And Ends

- While the Purdue game was a big one for almost everyone on the offense, not so much for Jeremy Ruckert and the tight ends. Ruckert did not have a catch against the Boilermakers, and his biggest impact on the stat sheet was a holding call, which cost the Buckeyes a 49-yard touchdown pass from Stroud to Olave.

Not to worry. Stroud hit Smith-Njigba for 26 yards on the next play, and Ohio State ultimately scored on the 24-yard pass to Wilson.

On the upside, the Buckeyes were flagged only five times for 50 yards (including an illegal motion call on that very same drive), down from eight penalties for 65 yards the week before against Nebraska.

OSU now ranks 81st in number of penalties with 6.7 per game and 98th in penalty yards with 62.9 on average. Interestingly, upcoming opponent Michigan State ranks even worse than the Buckeyes. The Spartans are 109th in penalties with 7.4 per game and 119th out of 130 FBS teams with 71.6 penalty yards per contest.

- Purdue did not score in the fourth quarter, marking the fifth game in a row that the Buckeye defense has not yielded a point in the final frame. That dates back to the Oct. 2 game with Rutgers when the Scarlet Knights scored a TD in the fourth quarter. Ohio State has given up 31 points total in the fourth quarter, the least of any period. Opponents have scored the most points

(70) against the Buckeyes in the third quarter.

Follow The Thread

It's funny how I wound up doing research in the issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin covering the famed “Holy Buckeye” game with Purdue, a key and improbable victory in Ohio State's march to the 2002 national championship.

Posters on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum were discussing Day's aggressive offensive play-calling following the Nebraska game, and not necessarily in a positive light. Of particular concern were a failed fourth-and-1 pass to Ruckert on the game's first drive and a nearly disastrous pass call late in the game when Ohio State might have just run out the clock. The play resulted in a Stroud fumble that, fortunately for the Buckeyes, center Luke Wypler pounced on.

While this discussion was going on, a poster coincidentally was watching a replay of that 2002 game between Ohio State and the Boilermakers and wondered if “it was aggressive for Tressel to throw for all the marbles on fourth-and-1?” Another poster tried to remember if Maurice Clarett had been knocked out of that game, which if true, certainly might have affected the strategy of the generally conservative head coach.

That sent me to the Nov. 16, 2002, issue of BSB.

Clarett had indeed been knocked out of the game with a shoulder injury with 13:40 left in the third quarter after gaining 52 yards on 14 carries. According to BSB, Lydell Ross was in the backfield with quarterback Craig Krenzel on the famous play that resulted in a 37-yard touchdown pass to Michael Jenkins and a 10-6 victory.

One has to wonder if Clarett had been available, would Tressel have gone for the first down with nearly two minutes left to play? That would have been a play call that could have altered the course of Ohio State football. At the least, it could have eliminated one of the most famous plays in program history.

As for the famous play that was called, Tressel seemed satisfied with the decision, made without calling a timeout to discuss options.

“Sometimes when you give us coaches a chance to think, we foul things up,” Tressel said after the game. “I'm not sure we would have called anything different. It was a route that had all the components we needed – the quick throw for the first, it had a dump-off and it also had the long pass. I don't know if we would have done anything differently.”

While perusing that nearly 20-year-old BSB, what really caught my eye was a note about the firing of then-Michigan State head coach Bobby Williams days before the game with Purdue. Maybe it caught my attention because of the story I knew we were doing in this issue about what might have happened had Nick Saban stayed on as head coach at MSU rather than leaving for LSU after the 1999 season.

Williams, who had been on Saban's Michigan State staff along with Ohio State national championship defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio, had replaced Saban at the helm.

With the MSU position suddenly open, Dantonio, who left East Lansing to join Tressel's first staff at OSU, was asked if he was interested in the Spartans job.

“I am disappointed,” said Dantonio, who had spent six seasons alongside Williams at MSU. “I am disappointed that happened. I don't want to say anything more than that.”

When pressed about the vacancy, the Buckeye DC responded, “No, I'm not interested in that job.”

According to BSB, “the conviction in his voice drove the point home, although few could understand how Dantonio wouldn't even be interested in looking at a head coaching position at a Big Ten school, where the salary range would start at \$700,000.”

The irony here is that Dantonio would ultimately wind up at Michigan State in 2007 after a three-year stint at Cincinnati, becoming Urban Meyer's primary nemesis in the Big Ten.

The other irony is that what was considered an attractive salary at Michigan State in 2002 was about \$700,000. Current Spartans head coach Mel Tucker turned a 5-7 record at Colorado into a \$5.5 million salary in East Lansing.

Embracing The Portal

Speaking of Tucker, elsewhere in this issue, he explains why he has embraced the transfer portal and how he used it to put his Spartans in contention for a Big Ten East title or even a place in the College Football Playoff. I found his discussion on the portal as eloquent as I have seen on a subject that all of us are still trying to fully embrace and understand.

Tucker likened the portal to free agency in the NFL.

“You go to free agency for need, specific need,” said Tucker, who was an assistant on Tressel's staff at Ohio State from 2001-04. “You're not just randomly picking up guys. We were targeting areas where we knew we needed immediate help and/or depth. When we were recruiting those guys in the portal, we were able to tell them specifically why we wanted them to come here.

“The portal is here and it's not going away. We're going to embrace it. I've gotten players out of the portal, and I've seen guys go into the portal. That's part of college football now. I try to take the judgment out of it – good, bad, right, wrong – really just look at what is the truth. It's here. What is it all about? How do you navigate it? Figure it out and that determines what we need to do next. How do we need to structure our recruiting department? How do we adapt? And then how do we maximize our opportunities for our program? That's the way I approach it.”

I am sure other programs will study how Tucker and the Spartans used the portal and how they were able to make such a radical turnaround from a 2-5 record during the COVID-shortened 2020 season to their 9-1 season entering their game against Ohio State.

Thanksgiving Mail Problems

Given the problems many BSB subscribers reported with mail delivery the week of the Thursday postal holiday on Veterans Day as well as the delivery problems in general this season, we are offering a chance to upgrade your mail service for the Michigan Preview issue to first-class mail for just \$3. While there is still no guarantee you will get the paper before the game, we think it may help, especially for those out of state.

Send your check or credit card information to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212, or credit card orders are accepted 24 hours a day at (614) 486-2202. We must have your upgrade order by 5 p.m. on Nov. 21.

HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

FOR ATHLETES

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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