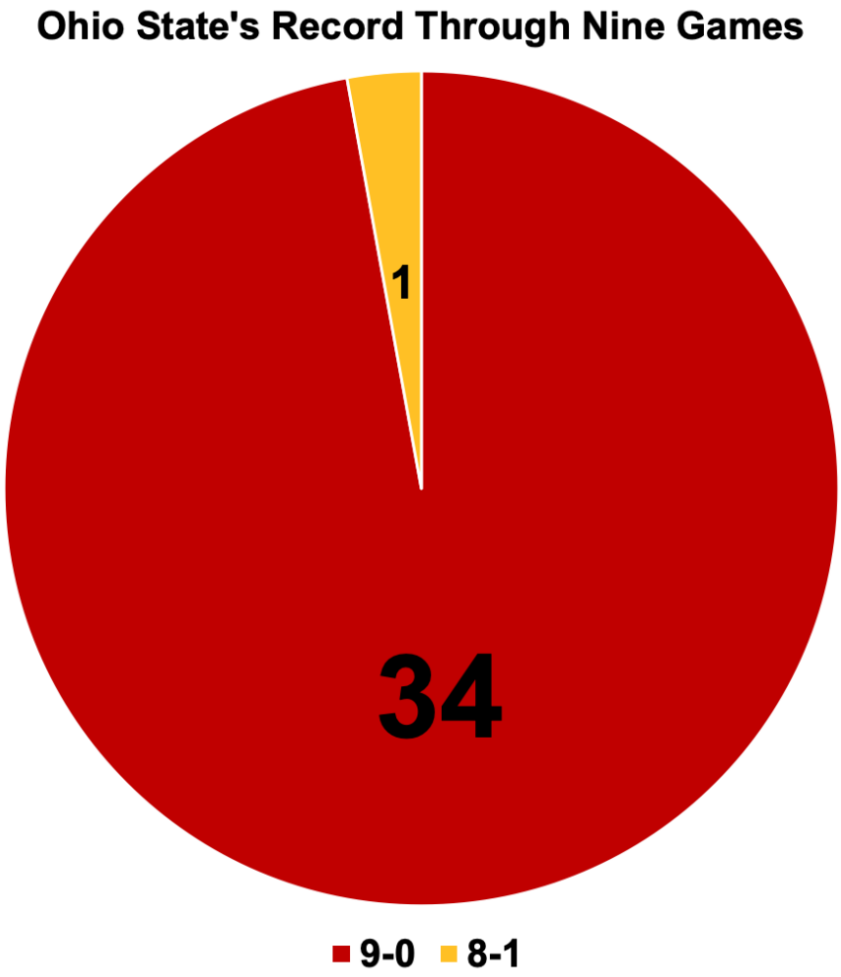
Ohio State Beat Writers Poll: Majority Expect Buckeyes To Win National Title

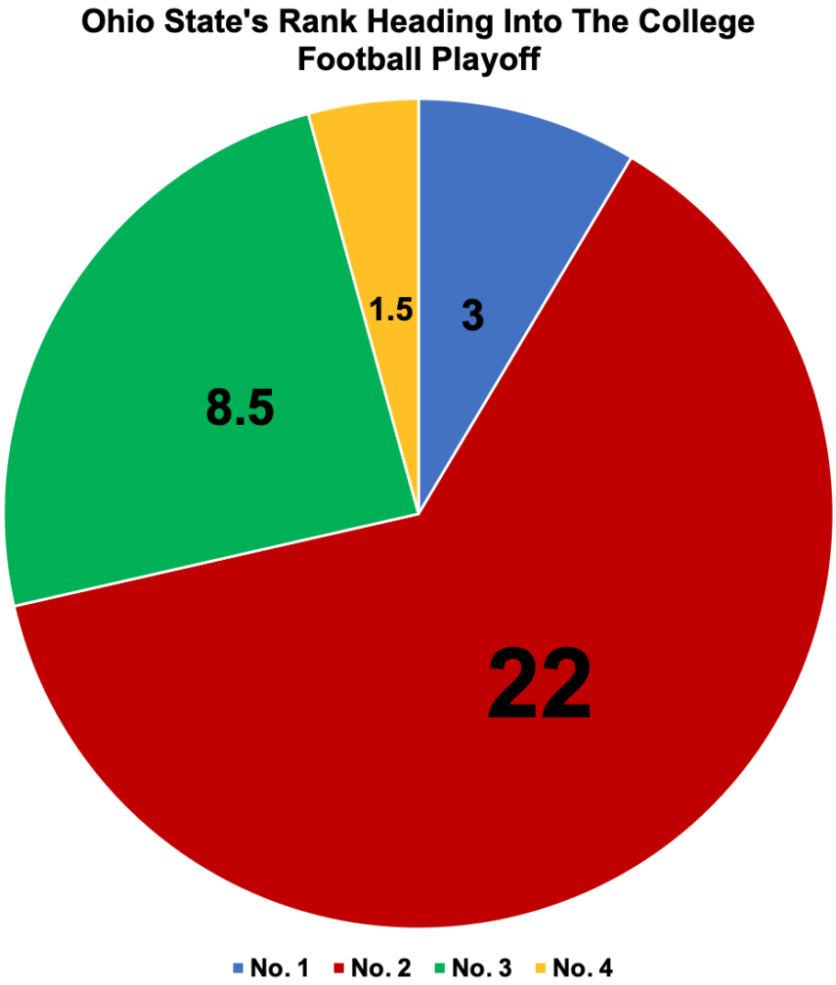
Ohio State football has an intense fan base with fans from all over the country. It also has a significant amount of people and organizations that cover the team, and, following in the footsteps of what Scott Bell did on the Michigan beat, Buckeye Sports Bulletin wanted to get the answers of what they were expecting from the team this season, as well as which players they think will step up.

BSB spoke to 31 members of the Ohio State beat across the past few weeks, and four of our writers – Wyatt Crosher, Joe Dempsey, Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn – also answered the same questions, giving the poll 35 unique answers about everything from Ohio State's title chances to which freshman will have a breakout season.



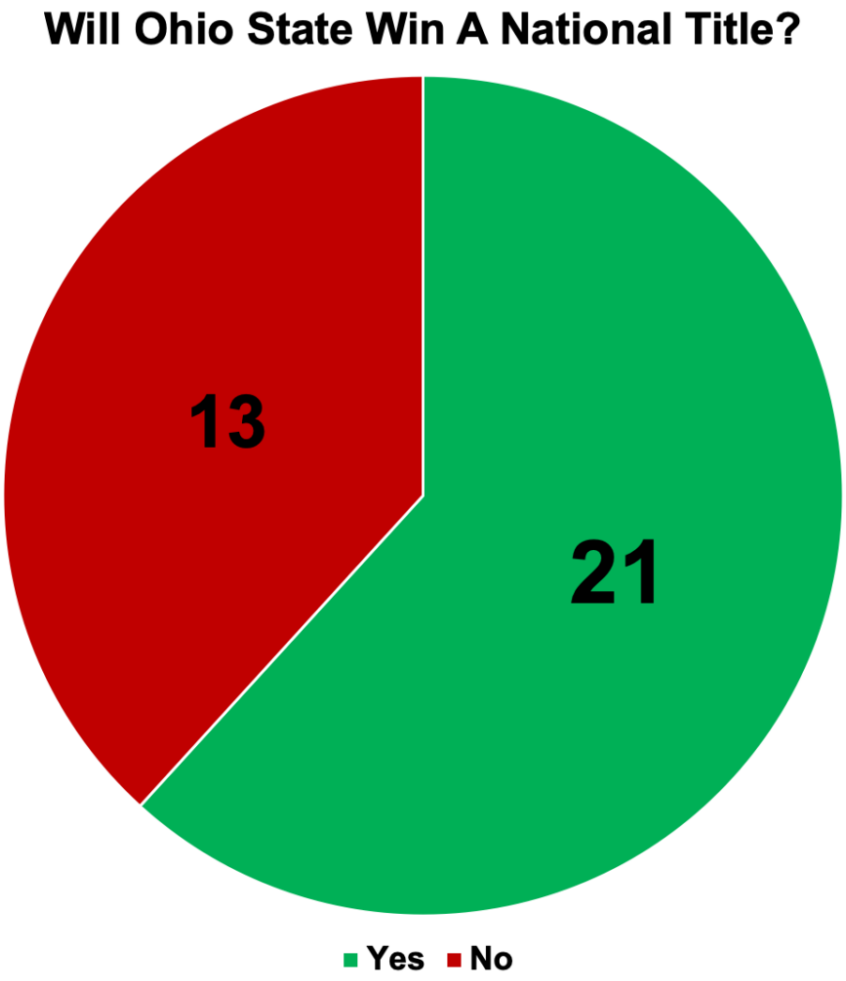
Ohio State's Record Through Nine Games: This was a near-unanimous decision from the beat, with 34 out of 35 polled saying that Ohio State would go undefeated through the regular season and the Big Ten Championship.

The lone voter for a loss, Tom Orr of Buckeye Scoop, had the Buckeyes losing in Week 2 against Penn State.



Ohio State's Playoff Ranking: Orr still had Ohio State in the College Football Playoff despite the early season loss, meaning all 35 beat members were unanimous in the Buckeyes making the top four after the championship game.

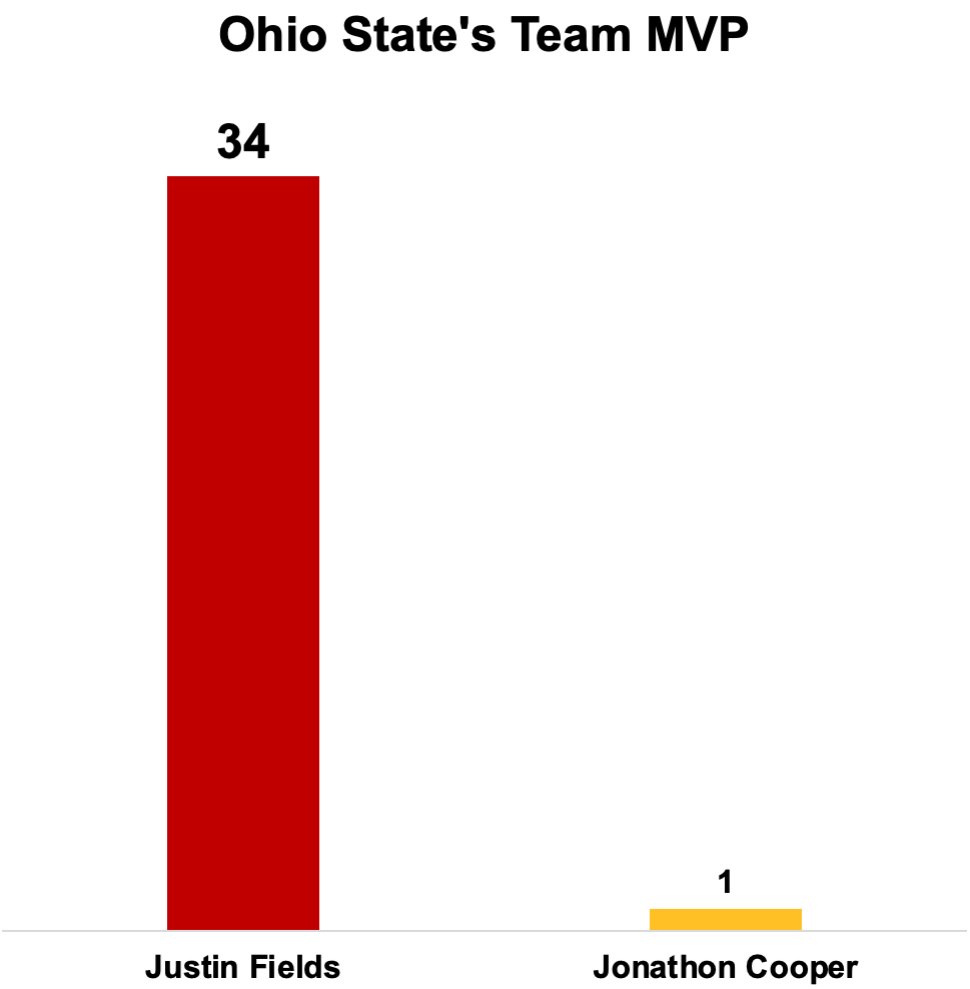
From there, 62.9 percent said Ohio State would be ranked second, while 24.3 percent said third, 8.6 percent said first and 4.3 percent said fourth. The ½ point shown is from Buckeye Grove's Griffin Strom, who said Ohio State would finish "3 or 4."



Will Ohio State Win A National Title: One of the more even splits from the group came with this question, but just over 60 percent (61.8) had Ohio State avenging last year's loss in the playoff, and this time coming home with the hardware.

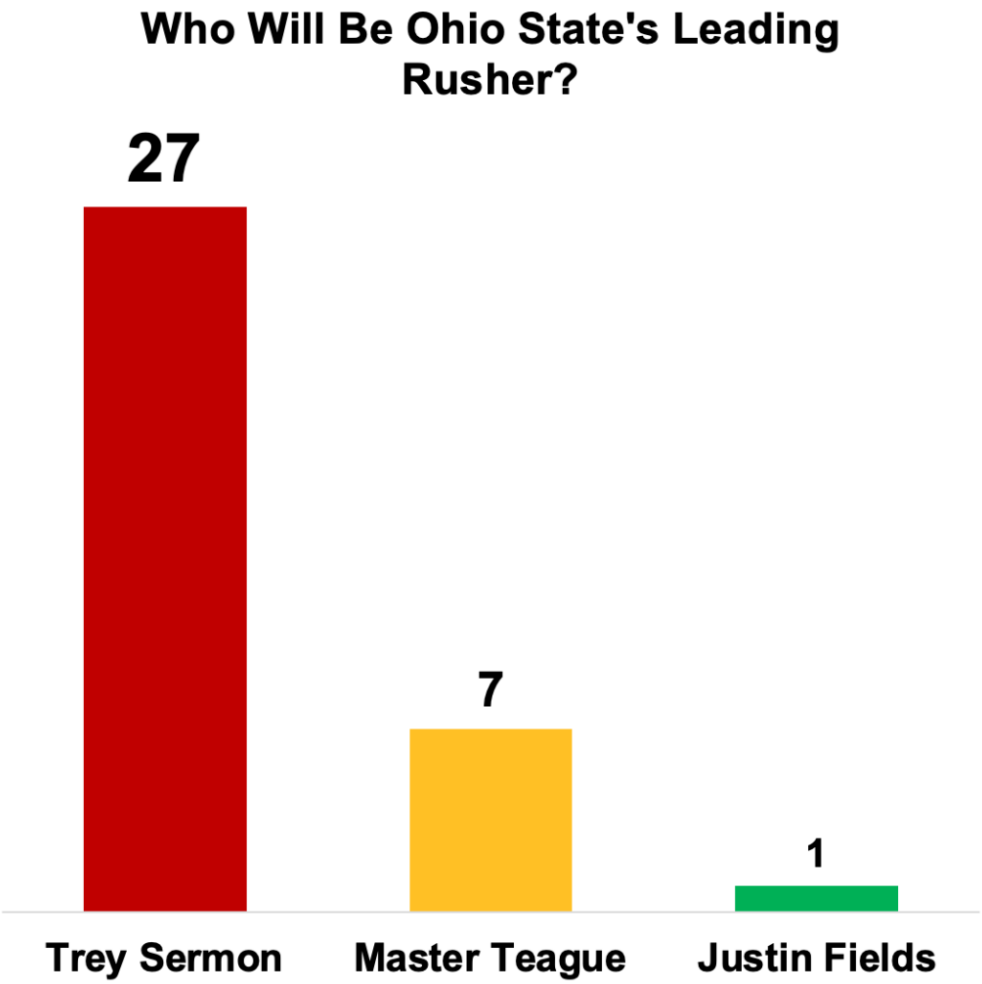
Rob Oller of The Columbus Dispatch specified "but REALLY close" when picking against the Buckeyes, while Bill Rabinowitz of the Dispatch said he likes the Buckeyes chances, but said he voted no "because I think it's incredibly difficult to win one."

Jacob Benge of Buckeye Grove elected to keep this one to be determined because "it's so hard to predict a champion for any sport."



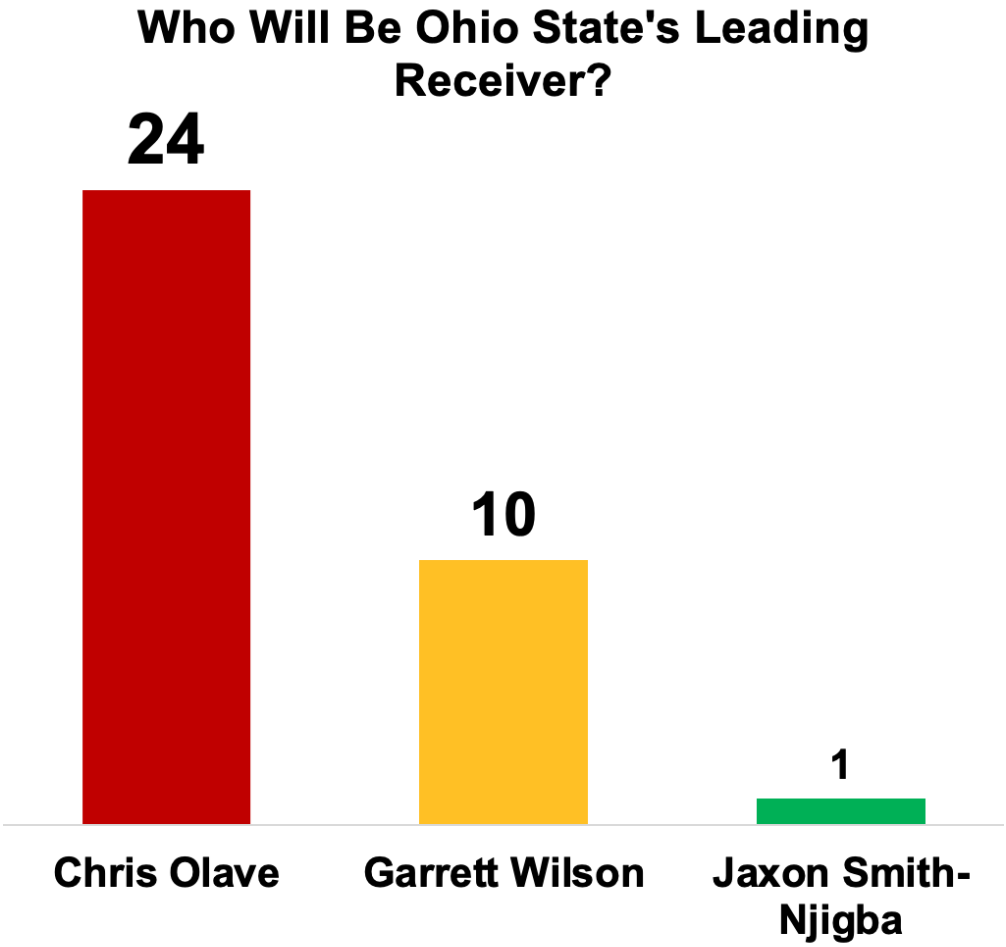
Ohio State’s Team MVP: Another on that almost had the same answer across the board, this open-ended question on Ohio State’s most valuable player almost all ended with quarterback Justin Fields, and understandably so considering his run last year as a Heisman Trophy finalist.

But Patrick Murphy of Bucknuts went with defensive end and fellow captain Jonathon Cooper, who returns following a redshirt season in 2019. “I view this award differently than most and take ‘most valuable’ literally. I think Cooper is going to impact this team in more ways than the stats indicate,” Murphy said.



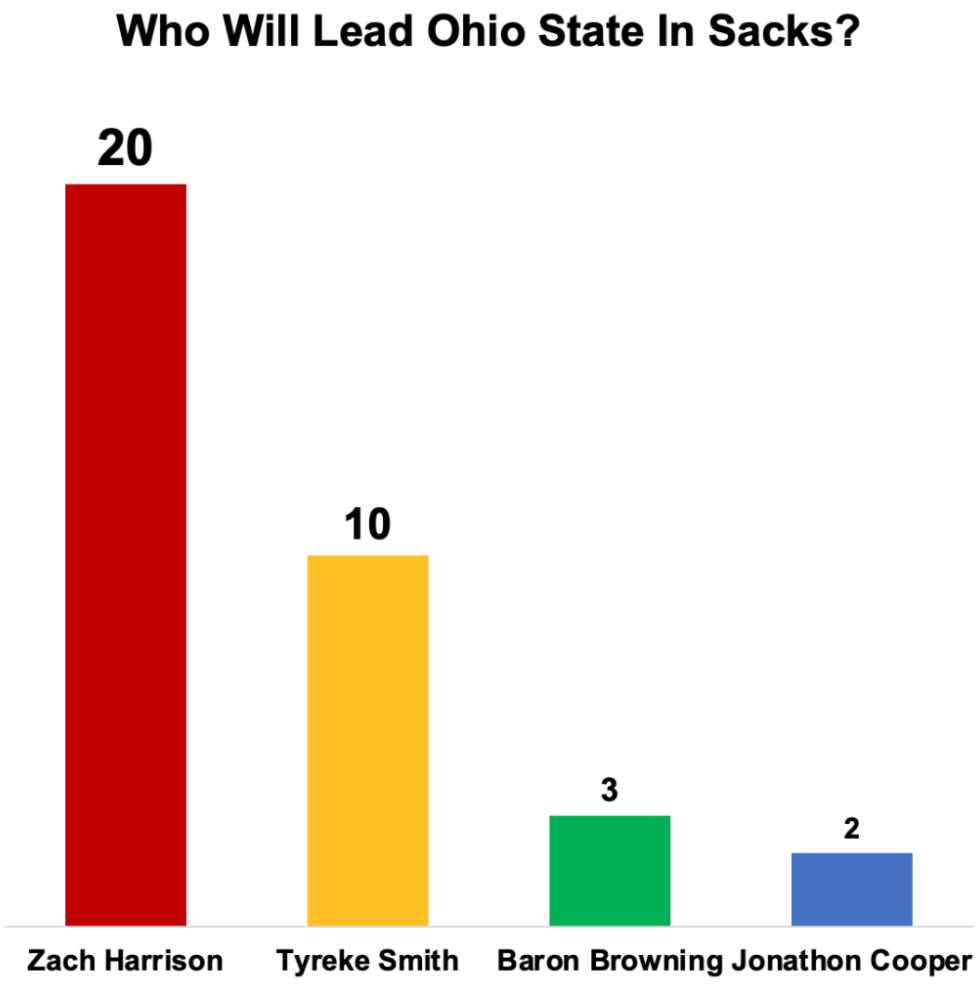
Ohio State's Leading Rusher: One of the most interesting position battles comes at running back, where Oklahoma transfer Trey Sermon and returning sophomore Master Teague are likely to be the two toward the top of the depth chart.

The poll displayed that, with 77.1 percent of voters picking Sermon to come out victorious. There was also one wild card vote, with The Athletic's Ari Wasserman going for Fields – who had 484 yards and 10 scores on the ground in 2019 – as the top rusher for the Buckeyes this season.



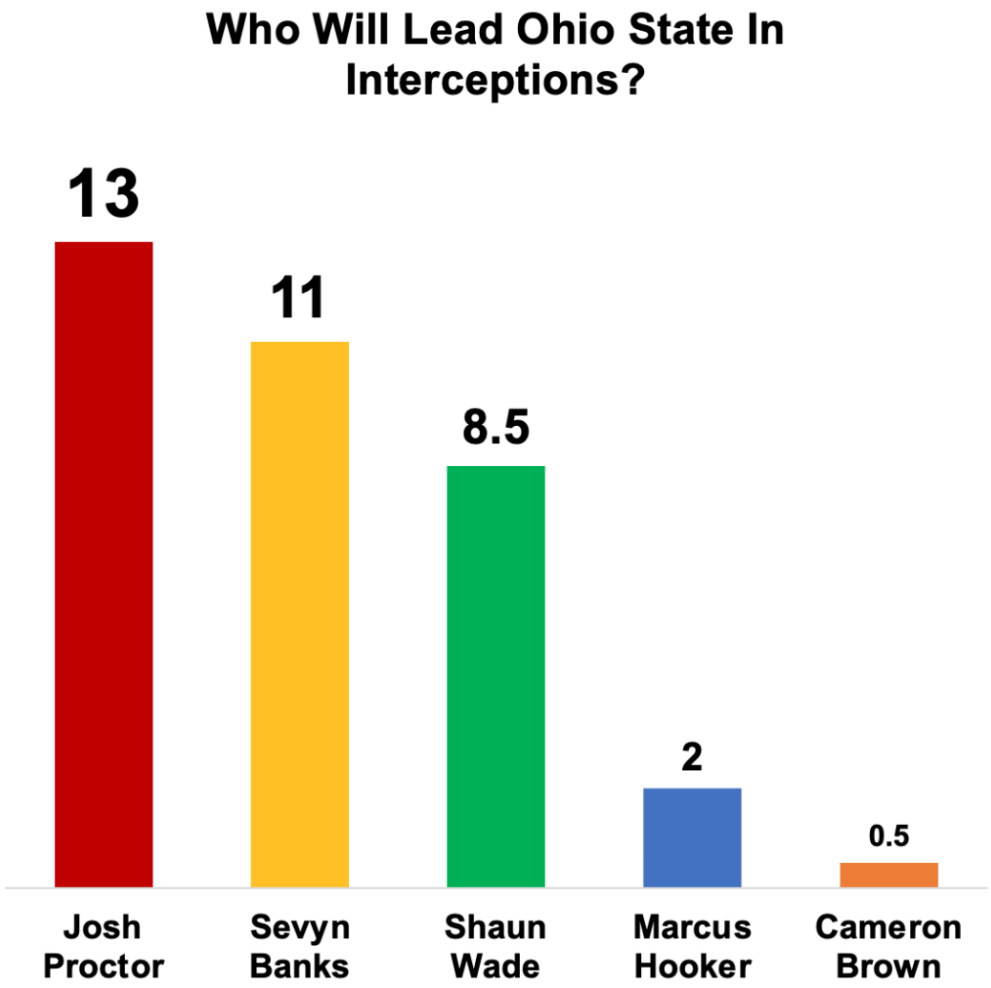
Ohio State's Leading Receiver: Ohio State loses three core wide outs from last season, but also is bringing in four top 100 prospects to fill the gaps. The two main returners – junior Chris Olave and sophomore Garrett Wilson – received almost every vote, with Olave (68.6 percent) taking a rather strong majority.

Again, there was an outlier, this time from Eleven Warriors' Zack Carpenter, who is picking true freshman Jaxon Smith-Njigba to come in and be the top vote-getter. Buckeye Grove's Kevin Noon and Buckeye Scoop's Tony Gerdeman both split the vote between Olave and Wilson, with Noon liking Olave for receptions and yards, but Wilson for touchdowns and Gerdeman picking Wilson for catches, but Olave for yards.



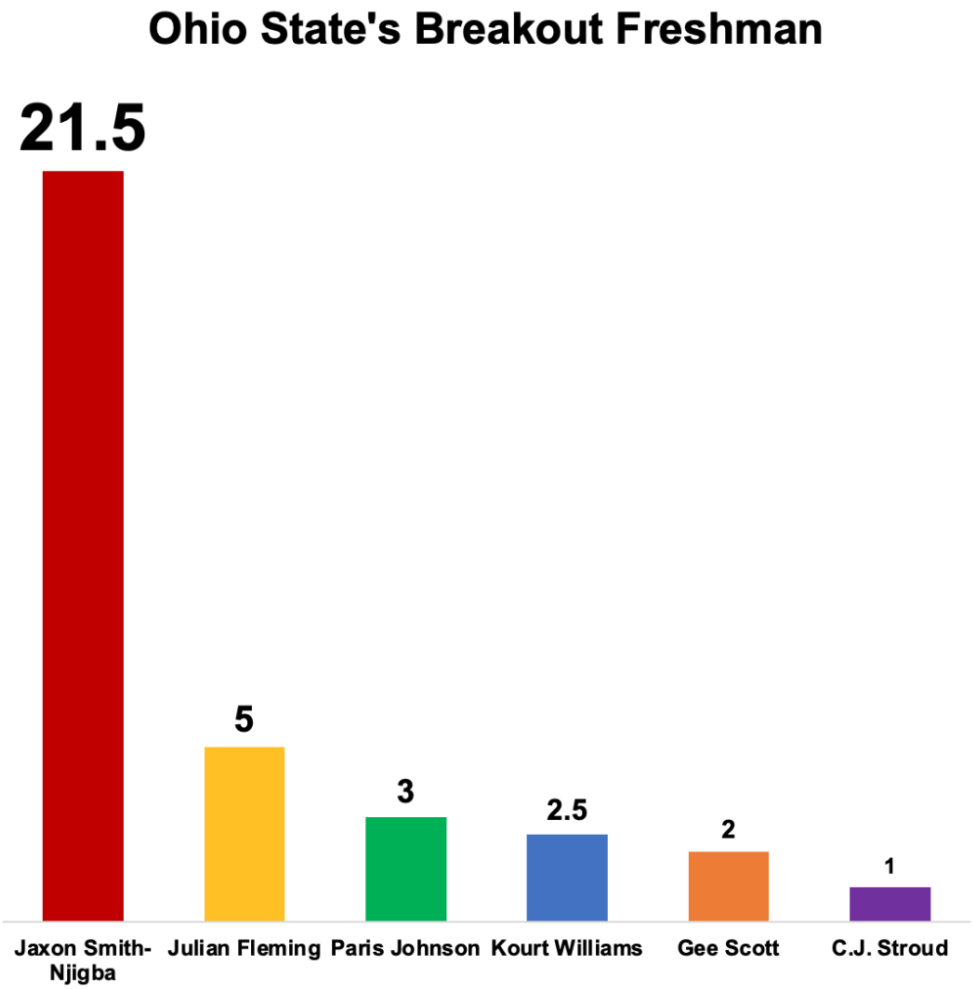
Ohio State's Sack Leader: In a closer battle than most of the other polls, the beat voted that sophomore Zach Harrison was most likely to lead Ohio State in sacks this season, earning 57.1 percent of the votes.

Not too far behind was junior Tyreke Smith (28.6 percent) with half the votes of Harrison, while a pair of seniors in Cooper and linebacker Baron Browning were seen as dark horses to finish at the top.



Ohio State's Interception Leader: The question of who would lead Ohio State in interceptions this season had by far the most debate, and for good reasoning considering Jeff Okudah's three picks led the team a season ago, and because the starters are not locked in minus preseason All-American Shaun Wade.

But Wade only got 24.3 percent of the vote, and he trailed the two lead candidates: safety Josh Proctor (37.1 percent) and cornerback Sevyn Banks (31.4 percent). Cameron Brown earned half a vote, along with Wade, from NBC4's Jerod Smalley, who had the interceptions leader as a tie.



Ohio State's Breakout Freshman: This question led to the most diversity in answers, with six different freshmen getting mentioned, but Smith-Njigba was far and away the top pick, earning 61.4 percent of the votes while fellow wide out Julian Fleming was next closest at 14.3 percent.

Safety Kourt Williams was the lone defender selected, and he also split a vote for Carpenter, who had him along with Smith-Njigba. Noon put quarterback C.J. Stroud, with his reasoning being that Ohio State "will need to rotate some when games get out of hand and to protect Fields, and that the wide receivers "will cancel each other out and Stroud (will be) left standing."

Here's a look at the full results of the poll:

Reporter	Employer	9-Game Record	Loss?	Playoff/Rank	National Champion?	Team MVP	Leading rusher	Leading receiver	Sack leader	Interception leader	Breakout freshman
Andrew Lind	BSB	9-0	None	Yes, 1	Yes	Justin Fields	Master Teague	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Shaun Wade	Kourt Williams
Andy Anders	Rivals	9-0	None	Yes, 3	Yes over Clemson	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Josh Proctor	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Ari Wasserman	The Athletic	9-0	None	Yes, 1	Yes	Justin Fields	Justin Fields	Chris Olave	Tyreke Smith	Sevyn Banks	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Austin Ward	Lettermen Row	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Josh Proctor	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Bill Landis	The Athletic	9-0	None	Yes, 4	Yes	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Garrett Wilson	Tyreke Smith	Sevyn Banks	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Bill Rabinowitz	Columbus Dispatch	9-0	None	Yes, 2	No	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Tyreke Smith	Josh Proctor	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Colin Hass-Hill	Eleven Warriors	9-0	None	Yes, 3	No	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Baron Browning	Sevyn Banks	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Dan Hope	Eleven Warriors	9-0	None	Yes, 3	No	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Josh Proctor	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Dave Biddle	Bucknuts	9-0	None	Yes, 2	No (Clemson)	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Shaun Wade	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Dave Holmes	WBNS	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Tyreke Smith	Sevyn Banks	Julian Fleming
Doug Lesmerises	Cleveland.com	9-0	None	Yes, 3	Yes	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Marcus Hooker	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Griffin Strom	Buckeye Grove	9-0	None	Yes, 3 or 4	No	Justin Fields	Master Teague	Chris Olave	Jonathon Cooper	Sevyn Banks	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Jack Emerson	The Lantern	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes over Clemson	Justin Fields	Master Teague	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Shaun Wade	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Jacob Benge	Buckeye Grove	9-0	None	Yes, 2	TBD	Justin Fields	Master Teague	Garrett Wilson	Zach Harrison	Josh Proctor	Paris Johnson
Jeremy Birmingham	Lettermen Row	9-0	None	Yes, 2	No	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Tyreke Smith	Josh Proctor	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Jerod Smalley	NBC4	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes over Clemson	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Jonathon Cooper	Wade/Brown	Julian Fleming
Joe Dempsey	BSB	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes	Justin Fields	Master Teague	Chris Olave	Tyreke Smith	Josh Proctor	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Joey Kaufman	Columbus Dispatch	9-0	None	Yes, 2	No (Clemson)	Justin Fields	Master Teague	Garrett Wilson	Zach Harrison	Shaun Wade	Julian Fleming
Keaton Maisano	The Lantern	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes over Clemson	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Josh Proctor	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Kevin Noon	Buckeye Grove	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes	Justin Fields	Master Teague	Wilson/Olave	Baron Browning	Shaun Wade	CJ Stroud
Kyle Rowland	Toledo Blade	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Sevyn Banks	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Marcus Hartman	Dayton Daily News	9-0	None	Yes, 3	No (Alabama)	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Garrett Wilson	Tyreke Smith	Sevyn Banks	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Marcus Horton	Buckeye Grove	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes over Clemson	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Tyreke Smith	Shaun Wade	Julian Fleming
Mark Kunz	BCSN	9-0	None	Yes, 3	No	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Sevyn Banks	Gee Scott
Nathan Baird	Cleveland.com	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Garrett Wilson	Tyreke Smith	Sevyn Banks	Paris Johnson
Patrick Mayhorn	BSB	9-0	None	Yes, 1	No	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Garrett Wilson	Baron Browning	Sevyn Banks	Kourt Williams
Patrick Murphy	Bucknuts	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes	Jonathon Cooper	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Shaun Wade	Gee Scott
Rob Oller	Columbus Dispatch	9-0	None	Yes, 2	No	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Josh Proctor	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Stephanie Otey	Buckeye Scoop	9-0	None	Yep, 2	Yes	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Shaun Wade	Julian Fleming
Stephen Means	Cleveland.com	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Garrett Wilson	Tyreke Smith	Josh Proctor	Paris Johnson
Steve Helwagen	Bucknuts	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Chris Olave	Zach Harrison	Sevyn Banks	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Tom Orr	Buckeye Scoop	8-1	Penn State	Yes, 3	No	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Garrett Wilson	Zach Harrison	Marcus Hooker	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Tony Gerdeman	Buckeye Scoop	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Wilson/Olave	Zach Harrison	Josh Proctor	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Wyatt Crosher	BSB	9-0	None	Yes, 2	Yes over Clemson	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Garrett Wilson	Zach Harrison	Josh Proctor	Jaxon Smith-Njigba
Zack Carpenter	Eleven Warriors	9-0	None	Yes, 3	No (Clemson)	Justin Fields	Trey Sermon	Jaxon Smith-Njigba	Zach Harrison	Josh Proctor	JSN/Kourt Williams

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