

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 35, No. 21

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

May 2016



## Buckeyes On The Rise

PHOTOS BY JOSH WINSLOW; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY TIM MOODY

**FLYING HIGH** – Mike Weber (20) is part of the next generation at Ohio State while Ezekiel Elliott (15) should be a high pick in the NFL draft.

### Meyer Happy With Ohio State's Spring Progress

By **BLAKE WILLIAMS**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

When Urban Meyer approached the microphone following Ohio State's 2016 spring game to address the media, the head coach was finally happy. After the last of 15 spring practices the head coach was asked what he liked and didn't like about the spring game, and there was plenty of the former and none of the latter.

"What I didn't like?" Meyer said, pausing to contemplate the question. "I liked it all."

That's in stark contrast to the head coach's first four springs in Columbus. Following previous spring games Meyer found plenty to complain about, whether it was genuine disappointment or simply a motivational tactic. Ohio State fans are not accustomed to a happy coach at the conclusion of spring practice.

In 2012, his first spring in Columbus, Meyer called the spring game "not a very pretty scrimmage" and added that even after spring practice he still wasn't sure if his team could throw the ball successfully. The following year the passing game was again a concern as Meyer called it "an area that we have to get better in" after the spring game in 2013.

Meyer was slightly more upbeat following the 2014 spring game, but he thanked the Ohio State fans for sitting "through a spring game that sometimes I don't want to be watching." The Buckeyes, of course, went on to win a nation-

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### Buckeyes Could Benefit From NFL Draft Success

By **RYAN GINN**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State will likely have plenty of individual success stories to celebrate in the immediate aftermath of the three-day NFL draft, but the long-term benefits may just be starting for the program.

Although recruits typically value comfort and relationships above all else – even Alabama and Ohio State lose players to less accomplished programs – two things in particular can jump-start recruiting efforts and further solidify college football teams: Winning championships and getting players drafted.

A national championship in 2014 helped propel the Buckeyes to the No. 2 recruiting class in the country in 2016, and Ohio State is far and away the No. 1 class in 2017 with about nine months left in that recruiting cycle. Already a dominant recruiter, OSU head coach Urban Meyer will soon be able to reap the rewards of what will amount to a three-day infomercial for his program. If mock drafts are any indication, Ohio State could match or break the records for players taken in the first round – six by Miami (Fla.) in 2004 – and players taken over the course of all seven rounds – 14 by Ohio State in 2004.

"It's huge," said running backs coach Tony Alford. "You've got 16 guys who could potentially make the draft. You can say, 'Listen, here's testimony. This is how we develop our guys.' Listen, none of those 16 guys came in NFL-ready, and they were developed by (strength and conditioning coach Mickey

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# The Spring Answer Man Returns

Welcome to the charmed life of one Urban Frank Meyer III. Seemingly, whatever the man wants, he goes out and gets.

Three national championships at two different schools over the course of a nine-year period? Done.

Highly rated recruiting classes year in and year out consisting of star athletes from nearly every corner of the United States? Not a problem.

Pleading for a crowd in excess of 100,000 to attend a virtually meaningless scrimmage on a picture-perfect April afternoon? Mission accomplished.

With all due respect to That School Up North and the amount of manufactured off-season publicity generated by the machinations, gyrations and incantations of Jim Harbaugh; with all due respect to the on-the-field success enjoyed the past three seasons at Michigan State under the unpretentious auspices of granite-jawed Mark Dantonio; with all due respect to every other conference program and its head coach, the capital of Big Ten football right now is Columbus, Ohio.

This is Urban Meyer's world, and the rest of you just have the misfortune to be living in it.

Naturally, Harbaugh, Dantonio and their Big Ten brethren are secretly salivating for the 2016 season since the Buckeyes lost more than two-thirds of their starters from last year's talent-laden team. No more will opponents be forced to face the pass-rushing wrath of Joey Bosa, the unparalleled athleticism of Braxton Miller or the sleepless nights of trying to figure out a way to stop Ezekiel Elliott.

Of course, Meyer does have a talented player or two remaining at his disposal. The cold, hard truth – at least to the rest of their conference foes – is that the old adage is true. Ohio State is not rebuilding; it is reloading.

Meyer has no intention of resting on the impressive 50-4 record he has compiled during his first five seasons with the Buckeyes, and that was on full display for 15 spring practice sessions, the last of which produced an NCAA spring-record crowd of 100,189 that sunned itself at the Horseshoe on that picturesque April 16 afternoon.

Exactly what did Meyer and his team accomplish during those drills? You've come to the right place because the Spring Answer Man returns for his 22nd annual visit to provide some insight and information about what to expect when the Buckeyes begin the 2016 season Sept. 3 against Bowling Green.

**Q. Should we be concerned about J.T. Barrett's poor performance in the spring game?**

A. Nothing Barrett did or didn't do during the spring game is going to change the fact that he is the starting quarterback. Yes, he attempted a couple of ill-advised throws. Yes, he was intercepted twice. Yes, he was sacked three times.

But none of that really means very much in the context of the way the spring game was staged. Barrett wore a no-contact black jersey, which inhibited his ability to take off with the football when the opportunity arose, and he was playing in front of a cobbled-together offensive line that missed several blocking assignments.

Barrett is still the guy who has run and thrown for a combined 5,446 yards and 67 TDs during his career. So, if the question is should anyone be concerned about how he did during one controlled scrimmage, the answer is no.

**Q. Recent history has told us just how important a No. 2 quarterback can be. Did the Buckeyes find a suitable backup behind Barrett?**

A. While Barrett's spring-game performance

meant virtually nothing, the same does not hold true for more inexperienced players, and it seems redshirt freshman Joe Burrow cemented a hold on the backup quarterback spot by helping lead the Gray team to a 28-17 victory.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Despite experiencing fumbles on back-to-back plays midway through the first quarter, Burrow shook off his early jitters and wound up completing 14 of 23 attempts for 196 yards and three touchdowns. He added another 31 yards on the ground although he was sacked four times.

To be honest, I was never over the top about Burrow despite his illustrious high school career that included throwing for more than 11,000 yards and 150 touchdowns at Athens (Ohio) The Plains. He always seemed to have happy feet in high school, and you never really knew the level of the competition against which he played.

After his redshirt season, however, Burrow seems to have corrected his footwork, and he displayed excellent touch on several of his throws during the spring game.

**Q. How are the Buckeyes going to replace the multitalented Elliott?**

A. Fans have been wringing their hands for years about replacing star running backs. Jim Otis gave way to John Brockington. Raymont Harris was followed by Eddie George, who was followed by Pepe Pearson. Elliott burst onto the scene when Carlos Hyde departed.

Now, it appears that it is Mike Weber's turn in the spotlight. He rushed for only 38 yards in the spring game, but he also scored a pair of touchdowns and got only eight carries. Weber has the makings of becoming every bit the all-purpose back Elliott was. His blocking is a bit behind his predecessor – then again, Elliott was probably the best blocking running back at Ohio State in several decades – but Weber has a superlative skill set, plus he appears to have one intangible that separates the great running backs from the merely good ones. He makes would-be tacklers miss.

Meyer went out of his way all spring to include senior Bri'onte Dunn as a competitor for the starting position, but Dunn missed some spring practice time, including the spring game with an ankle injury. That was valuable practice time he really couldn't afford to miss if he truly expects to be the starting running back at Ohio State.

**Q. How about the offensive line? Who are the starters there?**

A. Billy Price will begin his third season as the starting left guard while team co-captain Pat Elflein moves from right guard to center. You don't have to worry about Elflein switching positions. Pro scouts believe he is better suited to center anyway.

After a couple of years as a backup, Jamarco Jones is poised to inherit the all-important left tackle position from Taylor Decker while sophomore Demetrius Knox has the edge at right guard, although a true freshman with a famous name turned some heads this spring. Stay tuned for early fall camp reports to track the progress of 6-7, 316-pound Michael Jordan.

That leaves the right tackle position vacated by Chase Farris, and sophomore Isaiah Prince appeared to have a leg up on the competition there. However, Meyer said near the end of the

spring that he wants to take a long, hard look at JUCO transfer Malcolm Pridgeon, who is due on campus in June.

**Q. The receiving corps has been decimated by injuries and graduation losses the last couple of years. What's the pecking order there? Who will be the team's go-to receiver?**

A. These are difficult questions to answer since we didn't see Noah Brown or Corey Smith all spring and they are expected to catch a lot of balls in the fall. That said, we did see quite a bit of Parris Campbell and true freshman Austin Mack, and there's a lot to like about both of them. Don't forget about Johnnie Dixon, either. He finally seems healthy.

Likewise, there's a lot to like about Torrance Gibson, who just might be the kind of hybrid player Meyer has been looking for since the coach had Percy Harvin at Florida. Gibson showed excellent concentration and soft hands during the spring game, grabbing a pair of touchdowns among his six receptions. He also can flat-out fly, giving the Buckeyes a legitimate deep threat.

As far as someone who remains a bit under the radar, sophomore Terry McLaurin had a breakout spring game. He turned four catches into 111 yards, including a 47-yard touchdown during which the 6-1, 200-pounder broke a tackle on his way to the end zone.

**Q. What about the defense? With the loss of so many star players, how long will it take for Ohio State to become the kind of attacking, lock-down defense we've become accustomed to seeing the last couple of years?**

A. Losing just one star player the caliber of Bosa would be devastating to any defensive unit. When you compound that with the losses of Darron Lee, Joshua Perry, Tyvis Powell, Vonn Bell and Eli Apple, opponents might get the impression the Buckeyes will be extremely vulnerable on that side of the ball this season.

That could be a false impression, however. Tyquan Lewis returns as one of the defensive ends while Sam Hubbard takes over for Bosa after getting a lot of experience last year. The tackles are likely to be veterans Michael Hill and Tracy Sprinkle with newcomers such as Dre'Mont Jones and Jashon Cornell pushing for their own playing time.

Rackwon McMillan will anchor the line-backer corps and should be flanked by Dante Booker and Chris Worley although Worley might not want to rest with sophomore Jerome Baker creating a boatload of buzz following his soaring, one-handed stab of an interception during the spring game.

Meanwhile, a secondary that would seem to be in flux after losing Bell, Apple and Powell looks solid enough. Marshon Lattimore and speed merchant Denzel Ward will continue their battle to join holdover Gareon Conley at cornerback while the safety position seems loaded with Cam Burrows, Damon Webb and Malik Hooker, who had a game-high 10 tackles and two picks in the spring game, including one he returned 82 yards for a touchdown. And that doesn't even count Erick Smith, who sat out the spring while he continues to rehab from knee surgery.

**Q. What are the realistic expectations for Ohio State in 2016?**

A. Teams typically can't lose 16 starters and expect to compete for a championship. Yet, that's exactly the goal Meyer has set. Realistically, the Buckeyes have enough talent to win the Big Ten. Do they have a legitimate chance to get into the College Football Playoff? Their Sept. 17 showdown at Oklahoma will go a long way toward answering that question.

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Charter Member

COVER STORY

# Spring Practice Ends On High Note For OSU

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al championship less than a year after Meyer struggled to watch the scrimmage. But even after hoisting the first ever College Football Playoff National Championship trophy, he wasn't pleased with the following spring.

"We did not improve as a team," Meyer said after the 2015 spring game. "That was not a good team out there, so we did not improve as a team."

This year, despite the fact that the Buckeyes are breaking in new players at nearly every position and that the team was unable to iron out a depth chart thanks to the injuries that plagued the program, Meyer was all positives.

Even after he was given four days to watch tape, survey assistants and zero in on specific deficiencies and problems, a favored pastime of obsessive college football coaches, he had no issues with the Buckeyes' spring.

"I can't think of any negatives off the top of my head," he said April 20. "I thought our players did a good job."

Perhaps the upbeat persona is another motivating tactic for Meyer. He and his staff are tasked with replacing all but six starters from a team that went 12-1 and won the Fiesta Bowl, and maybe positive reinforcement is the best way to get his young team to build off spring practice.

Then again, there were tangible results from the spring – and specifically from the spring game – that give Meyer good reason to be pleased. There was Malik Hooker, a favorite to step into one of the safety spots vacated by Vonn Bell and Tyvis Powell, intercepting a pair of passes and returning one 82 yards for a score in front of 100,189 fans. There was Joe Burrow shining at quarterback, providing a much-needed answer to the question of who would back up incumbent J.T. Barrett. And there was a young defensive line wreaking

havoc to the tune of eight sacks among players on the front line of the Scarlet and Gray teams.

Perhaps Meyer's happiness was genuine. Cornerbacks coach Kerry Coombs certainly thought it was.

"I think what happens is, you have a level of expectation going in, especially with a young team, about how they're going to be and where they're going to be," Coombs said. "And I think Coach was really excited to see 100,000 people there and then see how they performed in that situation. We had some kids that we needed to be able to step up and make plays in front of a big crowd that did. I think that that gives us a chance between now and August to build on those things, and he's excited about that."

"I think we're always going to find a lot of things we've got to get better at, but I think if we'd come out there and seen a lot of kids making some real egregious errors, it would have been distressing."

The happiness that the coaching staff felt after spring practice concluded should not be confused with complacency or even satisfaction. As Coombs said, there is plenty for the team to continue to work on, and just because the team is young doesn't mean the standards change.

Following the spring game Meyer went out of his way to make his expectations explicit. As part of his long-winded answer to the question of what he liked and didn't about the game, the coach outlined exactly the level of play the Buckeyes need to reach individually.

"If you play quarterback at Ohio State in this offense, you have to be a Heisman candidate, or we're going to suffer," he said. "You have to be a high draft pick to play defensive end. We're not embarrassed, we're not ashamed to say that's what has to happen. If you play receiver at Ohio State, you have to start in the National Football League."

"So we're not going to change our stan-

dards, and that was a message all week to our players. We certainly don't lower our standards just because a player moves on. That's not what this place is all about. That's what I liked best is the fact I saw some guys perform."

Reaching those standards is the challenge that faced Meyer as spring began and one that will continue through the 2016 season. The head coach may be happy with the progress that the team has made, but he knows that unless the next version of the Buckeyes reaches the lofty expectations he has established in Columbus, it will be a disappointment.

Meyer is an unprecedented 50-4 in his time in Columbus, a run that includes a national championship, an undefeated season and another major bowl victory. The standard around Ohio State is so high that last season's campaign was considered a disappointment by many despite just the one blemish in the loss column.

"The challenge was whether we are good enough to go and play," Meyer said. "We've played at a high level for two years, and now are we going to drop? I was very pleased with the way it (spring practice) ended. It was nasty the first week and a half. It was not very impressive."

"This is a special place right now. We have a lot of momentum here at Ohio State right now. We can't lose it just because we lost some great players."

The biggest reason for optimism for the Buckeyes coming out of spring, especially considering the youth of the team – 62 players will carry either freshman or sophomore eligibility into the start of the 2016 season once the incoming class arrives for fall camp – was the avoidance of a setback. Ohio State remains on the developmental track the coaches outlined after the 2015 season, and while it's a long road ahead, the progress made was pleasing to the coaching staff.

In an effort to maintain both the momentum established by a young team and the program's established level of excellence, the staff is taking no chances as the Buckeyes exit the spring. For the first time in his tenure Meyer is pulling his assistant coaches off the recruiting trail one day a week in the offseason in order to meet with their position groups, an effort to ensure that strides made during the spring are not lost.

Greg Schiano, like Meyer, was happy with the way the Buckeyes responded during spring practice. But, like the head coach, he knows that any progress can easily be lost.

"Had they not had good springs then you'd sit there and be really concerned," Schiano said of the defense he co-coordinates. "They had good springs, but that's not the season, so we'll see."

"Training camp is so much different. You're doing it every day, it's back-to-back practices, it's day after day after day. Where springtime you practice a day and then you lift and do some meetings, and then you come out and practice another day. So I think by having a good spring a lot of those guys have put themselves in position to really go have a great training camp and get ready for this season. It gives them a chance, it puts them in a position where if they have a successful training camp they can be in position to have a successful season."

"One thing that's real clear not only in our room but in every room is the way that Urban runs his program. There's not a lot of gray area. This is what we do, this is who we are and this is how we're going to do it. Either climb on board and let's go or jump off board. There's no in between."

While the explicit expectations don't change, the circumstances have. Last spring Ohio State returned so much talent that there were few unknowns. The biggest concern was avoiding injury. This time around, the

## Spring Scholarship Roster – Offense

QUARTERBACK				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
16	J.T. Barrett	6-2	225	Sr./Jr.
10	Joe Burrow	6-3	208	So./Fr.

**Other scholarship players:** Stephen Collier (Soph.)  
**Comments:** For the first time in a while the Buckeyes have had their starting quarterback for the entirety of spring as no one is questioning Barrett's perch atop the depth chart. Ohio State did, however, sort out its backup quarterback battle as Burrow appeared to emerge as the clear No. 2 in front of Collier, though that status could get challenged when Dwayne Haskins arrives this summer.

RUNNING BACK				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
25	Bri'onte Dunn	6-0	215	5th/Sr.
20	Mike Weber	5-10	215	So./Fr.
3	Antonio Williams	5-11	215	Fr./Fr.

**Comments:** The coaches have said they want Dunn, a fifth-year senior, to get the first crack to start at running back but he has received a serious push from Weber for the starting spot and the redshirt freshman led all backs with 38 yards in the spring game. Williams earned praise as an early enrollee, but the battle to start is between Dunn and Weber.

WIDE RECEIVER				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
80	Noah Brown	6-2	222	Jr./So.
84	Corey Smith	6-1	195	6th/Sr.
11	Austin Mack	6-2	210	Fr./Fr.
6	Torrance Gibson	6-4	205	So./Fr.
21	Parris Campbell	6-1	205	Jr./So.

**Other scholarship players:** Johnnie Dixon (Soph.), Terry McLaurin (Soph.), James Clark (Jr.), Alex Stump (R-Fr.)

**Comments:** Little could be done during the spring to change the depth chart at wide receiver as the top contenders to start in Brown and Smith both sat out while recovering from broken legs. In their absence Mack, Campbell and Gibson all battled for reps. The Buckeyes have a lot of bodies at the outside receiver positions but have little experience past Brown and Smith.

H-BACK				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
4	Curtis Samuel	5-11	200	Jr./Jr.
2	Dontre Wilson	5-10	195	Sr./Sr.

**Comments:** Samuel gets a slight edge thanks to better health throughout his career, but both he and Wilson should expect plenty of work as the two experienced H-backs on the roster for the Buckeyes and both could see time in the backfield as well. Depth is expected to arrive this fall with the enrollment of Demario McCall.

TIGHT END				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
85	Marcus Baugh	6-5	255	Sr./Jr.
88	A.J. Alexander	6-2	235	So./Fr.

**Comments:** As the only tight end on the spring roster with game experience, Baugh is clearly the man at tight end for the Buckeyes. Alexander exited the spring as the only other scholarship tight end, though reinforcements are coming with Notre Dame transfer Chase Hounshell and freshmen Luke Farrell, Jake Hausmann and Kierre Hawkins.

LEFT TACKLE				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
74	Jamarco Jones	6-5	310	Jr./Jr.
59	Isaiah Prince	6-7	305	So./So.

LEFT GUARD				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
54	Billy Price	6-4	315	Sr./Jr.
73	Michael Jordan	6-7	316	Fr./Fr.

CENTER				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
65	Pat Elflein	6-3	300	5th/Sr.
79	Brady Taylor	6-5	300	Jr./So.

RIGHT GUARD				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
78	Demetrius Knox	6-4	305	Jr./So.
75	Evan Lisle	6-6	305	Sr./Jr.

RIGHT TACKLE				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
59	Isaiah Prince	6-7	305	So./So.
76	Brandon Bowen	6-7	320	So./Fr.

**Other scholarship players:** Grant Schmidt (R-Fr.), Matthew Burrell (R-Fr.), Kevin Feder (R-Fr.), Kyle Trout (Soph.), Tyler Gerald (Fr.)

**Comments:** Ohio State protected its two returning starters by limiting Elflein and Price throughout the spring, a tactic that also allowed the team to develop depth along the interior with Jordan turning heads. Prince and Jones appear to have the tackle spots locked up for now but could be pushed when JUCO transfer Malcolm Pridgeon arrives on campus.

COVER STORY

Spring Scholarship Roster – Defense

DEFENSIVE END				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
59	Tyquan Lewis	6-4	260	Sr./Jr.
6	Sam Hubbard	6-5	265	Jr./So.
10	Jalyn Holmes	6-5	265	Jr./Jr.
42	Darius Slade	6-4	255	Jr./So.

**Other scholarship players:** Jonathon Cooper (Fr.), Rashod Berry (R-Fr.)

**Comments:** Though he missed the entirety of spring while recovering from shoulder surgery, Lewis is an unquestioned starter after leading the Buckeyes in sacks last season. Hubbard turned heads as a reserve and coaches believe he is ready to step into the spot vacated by Joey Bosa.

DEFENSIVE TACKLE				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
77	Michael Hill	6-3	295	Sr./Jr.
93	Tracy Sprinkle	6-3	290	Sr./Jr.
86	Dre'Mont Jones	6-3	280	So./Fr.
9	Jashon Cornell	6-3	265	So./Fr.

**Other scholarship players:** Robert Landers (R-Fr.), Davon Hamilton (R-Fr.), Dylan Thompson (Soph.), Joshua Alabi (R-Fr.), Malik Barrow (Fr.)

**Comments:** The depth took a blow after Donovan Munger's football career ended due to health issues, but the Buckeyes are comfortable with their starters, especially Sprinkle, who drew praise throughout spring. The reserves are a pair of

converted defensive ends that bring pass-rush skills to the interior.

WEAKSIDE LINEBACKER				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
33	Dante Booker	6-3	233	Jr./Jr.
47	Justin Hilliard	6-1	230	So./Fr.

MIDDLE LINEBACKER				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
5	Raekwon McMillan	6-2	240	Jr./Jr.
34	Nick Conner	6-3	230	So./Fr.

STRONGSIDE LINEBACKER				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
35	Chris Worley	6-2	225	Sr./Jr.
17	Jerome Baker	6-1	215	So./So.

**Other scholarship players:** Tuf Borland (Fr.), Craig Fada (Sr.), Joe Burger (Sr.)

**Comments:** McMillan is the lone returning starter at linebacker, but the Buckeyes have experienced players ready to step into the lineup in Booker and Worley. Hilliard was not full go in spring after a biceps injury, but Jerome Baker was able to push Worley throughout the spring. Fada and Burger are respected veterans who provide depth, but the former walk-ons were granted scholarships for spring only and will return to being walk-ons in the fall.

CORNERBACK				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
8	Gareon Conley	6-0	195	Sr./Jr.
2	Marshon Lattimore	6-0	195	Jr./So.
12	Denzel Ward	5-11	180	So./So.
3	Damon Arnette	6-0	191	So./Fr.

**Other scholarship players:** Joshua Norwood (R-Fr.)

**Comments:** Conley will anchor the cornerbacks by taking over for Eli Apple at the boundary spot, and Lattimore is the likeliest candidate to join him as the field corner. Don't underestimate Ward, however, given that he was one of four true freshmen to play last spring. When true freshman Jordan Fuller arrives on campus he'll become an immediate contender for playing time.

SAFETY				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
24	Malik Hooker	6-2	205	Jr./So.
7	Damon Webb	5-11	193	Jr./Jr.
1	Erick Smith	6-0	202	Jr./Jr.
16	Cam Burrows	6-0	208	Sr./Jr.

**Other scholarship players:** Eric Glover-Williams (Soph.)

**Comments:** Hooker was one of the breakout players of the spring and safeties coach Greg Schiano said he and Webb, a converted corner, ended spring in line to start. Smith, however, could work himself into the starting lineup once he fully recovers from an ACL injury.

Buckeyes are searching for playmakers across the board, and after a season that was supposed to end in a national championship came up short, the team is hungry.

For defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Luke Fickell, that's a great quality to have.

"I think that is one of those things as a coach that is exciting," he said. "Last spring it was a different mentality. Not that we did things different but you had a different focus for the units because of some of the guys you had returning."

"So this year it is a little bit different in the sense that you have got different young guys, guys with chips on their shoulders, sometimes even a more exciting group to coach at times. It might be a little bit more nerve-racking come the Saturdays, but the reality is that every different group has their strengths and their weaknesses and I think it was all-in-all a really good spring to see those guys given the opportunity to do what they need to do."

Despite the opportunity, few players were able to completely secure their position in the two-deep. Thanks to injuries to a multitude of players – a group that includes four of the team's top returning receivers in Noah Brown, Corey Smith, Curtis Samuel and Dontre Wilson and defensive end Tyquan Lewis, among others – and the fact that the Buckeyes are so young, it was impossible for the coaching staff to solidify a depth chart as they normally would by the end of spring practice.

Some positions are known. Barrett will start at quarterback while fellow captains Raekwon McMillan and Pat Elflein will take the field at middle linebacker and center, respectively. The other three returning starters – Lewis, left guard Billy Price and cornerback Gareon Conley – are also locked into the lineup. Past that only left tackle Jamarco Jones was formally named a starter as the staff looks for the team to remain hungry throughout the offseason.

"We have got the making of a two-deep for

sure," Fickell said. "You have an idea, but it is not set in stone because you want to create that competition. They have a chip on their shoulder, they know what the expectations are, and when you have got guys that work like that, it makes you sleep a little bit easier."

Given his comments in the aftermath of the 2016 spring game it seems safe to say that Meyer is also sleeping easy. For the first time, the Ohio State head coach is leaving spring practice happy with his team.

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

# Early Enrollees Impress In First Spring

By JAMES GREGA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

With a handful of injuries to projected starters and most of last year's starters preparing for the NFL draft, Ohio State coaches and fans got a glimpse into the future during the 2016 spring game at Ohio Stadium. A group of players who should still be in high school preparing for their senior prom all got their first action in the Horseshoe, some with the first-team offense.

Offensive lineman Michael Jordan started the spring game with the first-team offense as the left guard in part because OSU withheld two-year starter Billy Price. A few plays later, wide receiver Austin Mack trotted out with the first-team offense as well.

While Ohio State has not used much of a rotation along the offensive line since Urban Meyer arrived on campus, Jordan has earned the right to play as a true freshman according to his head coach, who compared him to a former player of his while at Florida.

"I've had one lineman come and start as a freshman," Meyer said. "His name was Maurkice Pouncey. He just came in and was different. He was so mature and so strong. He was a freshman All-American for us and a first-round draft pick after his junior year. That's a unique guy.



JOSH WINSLOW

**FAST START** - Freshman offensive lineman Michael Jordan (73) earned high praise from Urban Meyer for his performance in spring practice.

"Michael Jordan, right now, is running with the ones. The line is not set, but Michael Jordan will play for us this year. He's tough as nails, he's smart, he's serious. He comes from a really good high school program. He was coached the right way. He's just a genuine guy. He goes about his business as a pro."

Jordan's chances at playing time likely increased when Meyer named junior offensive lineman Jamarco Jones the starting left

tackle just days after the spring game. Many had speculated that Jones could move into the vacant guard spot opposite Price with the upcoming arrival of five-star JUCO signee Malcolm Pridgeon, who is set to join the team in the summer.

Now that Jones is locked in at left tackle and Pridgeon is built to play tackle, Jordan's window for playing time seems to be opening more and more each day. Those dominos ensure that the guard competition will remain open, with Jordan battling junior Evan Lisle, sophomore Demetrius Knox and redshirt freshman Matthew Burrell for the right to start.

Mack, a four-star recruit from Indiana, recorded three catches for 22 yards in the spring game but had made an impression on his coaches long before the spring scrimmage. Mack was the first player to lose his black stripe in spring practice, which came as no surprise to his position coach, Zach Smith.

"I thought he was an elite, elite recruit," Smith said. "I know he might not have been rated that. He was my 'Day One.' I've never had a freshman perform like that. No one expected that, but I expected him to become a great player. He's not yet, but he's probably a little further ahead than I would have anticipated him being for sure."

Another young player who got to show off his talents in front of the spring game-record crowd April 16 was running back Antonio Williams.

Williams, who flipped his commitment from Wisconsin to Ohio State in October, earned the start in the spring game with the second-team offense after running back Bri'onte Dunn was ruled out with a minor injury. The North Carolina native carried the ball seven times for 29 yards in the pass-heavy scrimmage and had a key block on a touchdown scored by Torrance Gibson on a jet sweep.

Ohio State running backs coach Tony Alford said that while Williams is still behind Dunn and Mike Weber in the competition to replace Ezekiel Elliott, the freshman is

ahead of the curve when it comes to his development.

"There's a long way to go," Alford said. "But he's a conscientious kid and he's a pleaser. He wants to do exceptionally well, he's very hard on himself and a perfectionist by nature. So we've got some work to get done, but he'll work at it."

Alford went so far as to say that Williams has also made the most improvement in his running back room in spring practice, even though it did come with some growing pains.

"He was running around like his head was spinning the first day," Alford said. "I told him, 'God, you're making me nervous. Slow down.' He was just running around like a chicken with his head cut off just because he was nervous."

"But he did really get better. They all improved, but you're asking about the guy who made the most monumental jump. So I would say it's him, but as it should be."

It wasn't just Jordan, Mack and Williams who saw their first action as Buckeyes in the spring game, however. Defensive end Jonathon Cooper and linebacker Tuf Borland each played on the second-team defense, with Borland collecting three tackles and Cooper not recording any stats.

The other two early enrollees, offensive lineman Tyler Gerald and defensive tackle Malik Barrow, each sat out the spring game as they recover from injuries sustained during their senior years of high school.

While it could be easy for early enrollees to be cause for concern as they get exposed to college life and big-time football, Meyer said it is just the opposite with the current group that arrived a few months earlier than the rest of their classmates.

"I love them," Meyer said. "They're over 3.0 students. I don't know if they've missed a class yet and they do everything right. Sometimes high school coaches will tell you they are the greatest people in the world and they get here and they're not so we try to change them. Those kids are doing great."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

# As Gibson's Play Rises, So Do Expectations

By RYAN GINN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State learned last fall that the hype surrounding Torrance Gibson is immune to inactivity. The Buckeyes also seem to be acutely aware of what might happen once he actually starts producing.

The freshman phenom's recruitment drew almost as much attention as that of former No. 1 overall recruit Terrelle Pryor, and he came to Columbus as the most highly regarded member of OSU's class of 2015. The waves of attention cascading down on him only amplified last fall when it was announced he would move from quarterback to wide receiver in an attempt to contribute as a true freshman.

But an ankle injury set back his progress in fall camp, and he went all four nonconference games without playing. Then came a suspension for the Penn State game because of grades, and rumors surfaced that he was contemplating a transfer. By the time he got back in the coaching staff's good graces, enough time had passed that OSU considered it impractical to pull off his redshirt.

None of this dampened the enthusiasm surrounding his tantalizing potential and otherworldly athleticism. At the Fiesta Bowl, where postgame interviews are conducted in an open locker room, roughly a dozen reporters surrounded him – with an OSU staffer stationed nearby to monitor the proceedings – before speaking to his peers who'd actually played in the game.

Between NFL departures and lingering



JOSH WINSLOW

**STRONG SHOWING – Redshirt freshman Torrance Gibson caught two touchdowns in Ohio State's spring game.**

injuries, the stage was set this spring for Gibson to show what he could do. He delivered on the big stage, catching six passes for 50 yards and two touchdowns in front of a record crowd of 100,189 at the spring game.

One appearance into his Ohio State career – and a scrimmage at that – the expectations have shifted into overdrive. Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer seemed to sense that, moving to downplay Gibson's performance before the postgame interview question had even been finished.

"He's got a long way to go," Meyer said. "He's a freak, but he's got to go get the ball. He's 6-4 and has a 35-inch vertical jump, and we've got to teach him how to use that thing. He's a very good young man, and he's trying really hard."

In post-spring interviews April 20, wide receivers coach Zach Smith was equal parts complimentary and critical of Gibson. Smith said he's still trying to refine Gibson as a receiver – he signed as a four-star quarterback but is now a full-time wideout – and make sure the south Florida native doesn't simply rely on his athleticism.

"He didn't grade a champion, he didn't play a great game overall, but he was a redshirt freshman in front of the largest crowd in the country for the first time in his life, so I didn't really expect him to come out and have a flawless performance," Smith said. "Torrance gets away with some things because of his athletic gifts that he might not get away with if he's going against a different player."

"Torrance has some freaky talents. Devin Smith got away with it a lot, too. That's not what I need him to do because there are going to be times when that's not going to work, and that's what I'm preparing him for.

He's just trying to learn the position, so he's trying to learn what I'm telling him then apply it. All of a sudden you throw in a chaotic atmosphere and you revert back to habits. What we're trying to teach has to become habit for him."

There are a number of factors governing what type of impact Gibson might make this fall. He'll have to beat out at least one of Noah Brown or Corey Smith, neither of whom was fully cleared for spring practice as they continue to recover from broken legs sustained last fall.

He'll also have to convince Smith and Meyer that he's become a more polished and technically gifted wide receiver – a weapon who utilizes his exceedingly rare level of talent but doesn't rely on it. For his part, Smith thinks it's not outside the realm of possibility that Gibson becomes a starter for the Buckeyes this fall – although it came with a customary dose of caution.

"It certainly could happen," Smith said. "He's not there yet, and I have a very detailed plan to get him there. It's just going to be a matter of if he comes along and develops to meet the criteria. There's no question it could happen, and he's got everything, and he's starting to understand. He's starting to get better, and you're starting to see him do things that I want him to do. It's a matter of how quickly he can get it done."

His coaches are confident Gibson will clear that bar one day, but they're more than fine with keeping it as low as they can for the time being.

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL ANALYSIS

# Safeties Take Big Step In Spring Practice

By TIM MOODY  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff WRiter

Heading into spring practice, Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer knew he had a young team to work with.

The Buckeyes' roster, while not depleted from a numbers standpoint, lost a slew of seniors to graduation and nine more players with eligibility remaining to the NFL draft. That meant there were plenty of question marks and position battles waged throughout Ohio State's spring camp, and Meyer admitted after practice wrapped up that it's still not quite possible to fill out an entire depth chart for the 2016 season.

Ohio State began spring with just three starters returning on offense – quarterback J.T. Barrett, guard Billy Price and center Pat Elflein – and only three more on defense – linebacker Raekwon McMillan, cornerback Gareon Conley and defensive end Tyquan Lewis. That left 16 spots to be filled, and while some were obvious – Marcus Baugh will in all likelihood be the starting tight end, for example – others were completely up in the air, and some won't be decided until fall camp.

But even if the Buckeyes finished spring with a few questions remaining, there were other questions answered on both sides of the ball, and BSB took a look at some of the top performers with this spring superlatives piece.

## Offensive Player Of The Spring: Jamarco Jones

Redshirt freshman quarterback Joe Burrow got the headlines with a standout performance in the spring game, but Jones, a junior, came away from spring having cemented his spot at a key position on the football field.

"He is the starting left tackle," Meyer said of Jones April 20. "I announced that to the team, and they clapped for him. We're going to call his mother tonight."

Jones' position as a penciled-in starter doesn't necessarily come as a surprise, but many expected he could slide inside and play guard when junior-college transfer Malcolm Pridgeon arrives in Columbus this summer. Instead, Jones did enough this spring to prove that he's the best man for the job after sitting behind combinations of Taylor Decker, Darryl Baldwin and Chase Farris for his first two years in college.

In 2014 as a true freshman, Jones played in 10 games for the Buckeyes on their road to the College Football Playoff and, eventually, a victory in the national title game. He was a reserve once again last season, but he has been tipped as a future star since arriving as a four-star recruit out of Chicago.

"It's been tough," Jones said this spring. "Everybody wants to play as much as they can, but that just wasn't my path. I had great

## Players On The Spot

*Every year, at the start of spring, BSB lists a number of players who are "on the spot" and need to make strides in order to solidify their roles on the team. Here's how this year's on-the-spot crop performed.*

**Bri'onte Dunn, Sr. RB** – In part because of a "tweak" to his ankle that kept him out of the spring game, Dunn will carry his battle against redshirt freshman Mike Weber into fall practice. Running backs coach Tony Alford said Dunn won't be hurt by the injury, but through both his play earlier in spring practice and his injury, he missed a chance to establish a gap between himself and Weber in the race to replace Ezekiel Elliott.

**Jamarco Jones, Jr. OT** – Arguably nobody had a better spring than Jones, who was named Ohio State's starting left tackle by Urban Meyer on April 20. The junior offensive lineman drew praise in each of his first two seasons at Ohio State when limited spots were available and did well when a chance for playing time finally appeared, beating out former blue-chip recruit Isaiah Prince for the left tackle job.

**Marcus Baugh, Jr. TE** – Baugh was named a captain for the spring game, which is a remarkable turn for a player who once had a foot out the door because of problems off the field. He showed in that game that he could be a receiving threat at tight end that OSU was missing at times last year, catching seven passes for 64 yards.

**Torrance Gibson, R-Fr. WR** – Gibson has generated buzz from the moment he committed to Ohio State, and his play

this spring only raised the level of excitement for what he might bring to the Buckeyes. The redshirt freshman, now fully a wide receiver, caught two touchdown passes in the spring game and left Meyer nitpicking about his play in an attempt to control the expectations for the explosive athlete.

**Michael Hill, Donovan Munger and Tracy Sprinkle, Jr. DTs** – The battle among the older defensive tackles got some clarity when Meyer announced April 20 that Munger's career is over because of a pulmonary embolism. Sprinkle drew more praise than Hill, but it was a relatively quiet spring for both of them compared to their younger counterparts.

**Jashon Cornell, Dre'Mont Jones and Robert Landers, R-Fr. DTs** – It was a great spring for the trio of young defensive tackles. Jones was seemingly complimented every day by Meyer and assistants, and Cornell drew similar comments. The pair of converted defensive ends, who were both four-star recruits, showed an ability to generate good pass rush from the interior. Landers also drew a favorable review from defensive line coach Larry Johnson Sr., and all three should play this fall.

**Dante Booker and Chris Worley, Jr. OLBs** – It was as good a spring as both outside linebackers could have asked for. Worley continued to hold off Jerome Baker as the replacement for Darron Lee, and Booker appears to have locked up his status as the starter in the spot formerly occupied by Joshua Perry.

– Ryan Ginn

players in front of me, and I just used that to learn from those guys and be prepared when I did get that chance."

With his wait finally over, Jones said the time he took to learn from players such as Decker, who is projected to be a first-round pick in the NFL draft, takes the pressure off now that he's filling their shoes.

"I don't really feel pressure, I've been training for two years," he said. "Taylor, Darryl and Chase have helped me to be able to step in when it's my time, and I feel I'm prepared to do that. I don't feel pressure, I feel like I'm prepared to do this."

## Defensive Player Of The Spring: Malik Hooker

Ohio State entered 2015 with two juniors – Vonn Bell and Tyvis Powell – starting at safety. Both of those players opted to leave a year of college ball on the table and head to the NFL, meaning the Buckeyes had to find replacements at a position that lacked depth last season.

By the end of the year the Buckeyes' two-deep at safety featured Bell, Powell, walk-on Jarrod Barnes and Hooker, then a redshirt freshman. Now getting ready for his third full year in the program, Hooker stole the show at the spring game with two interceptions, including one off Barrett that he returned 82 yards for a touchdown. That marked the first

time Ohio State fans really got to see Hooker, but he'd already impressed the coaching staff throughout the spring.

Ohio State co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach Greg Schiano described Hooker as a "football guy" who loves to study the game and noted that Hooker looked right at home on the field in front of 100,189 fans in the spring game.

"When guys love it, that makes it a lot easier," Schiano said. "What I felt (April 16 at the spring game) was a guy who was really comfortable in front of a crowd, game speed those type of things. He looked very natural out there. In no way, shape or form was anything too big for him."

Hooker, a native of New Castle, Pa., totaled 10 tackles in 13 games last season, but he looks poised for much more extensive playing time in 2016 as long as he stays on track.

"He made a lot of mistakes but also did a lot of good things," Schiano said of Hooker. "So we just have to eliminate the mistakes and keep making the good things better."

## Most Improved Player Of The Spring: Damon Webb

Along with Hooker, Schiano said Webb was a standout performer at safety this spring. On one hand, that could have been expected since Webb was a highly touted recruit who played as a true freshman in 2014. The thing is, the Detroit Cass Tech product played cornerback for his first two seasons at Ohio State, plus the first three practices this spring.

Taking into account that he went from playing cornerback to start the spring to being one of the top two safeties to finish it, Schiano said Webb's improvement stood out.

"Damon comes in after practice three and really did a tremendous job of learning the position on the fly while playing it," Schiano said. "That isn't easy. I thought that was, just by the nature of the timing of it – I had no idea how he would do and he did a very good job."

Webb missed extended time last season due to what Ohio State initially called a suspension, but he immediately found himself

back on the field – mainly as a nickel back – once he was eligible again. He was expected to compete for time at cornerback across from Gareon Conley, but Webb now looks poised to find his way into the lineup at safety after a strong performance this spring.

## Position Battle Of The Summer: Defensive Tackle

On defense, at least, the Ohio State depth chart seems to be working itself out. There were two safeties who stood out, Marshon Lattimore seems poised to start across from Conley at cornerback, and Chris Worley and Dante Booker will join McMillan at linebacker.

That leaves defensive line, with a big focus on the interior.

Last year's starters – Adolphus Washington and Tommy Schutt – as well as reserve Joel Hale have all exhausted their eligibility, leaving two holes to fill at defensive tackle for Ohio State. Out of those two spots, nose guard seems the most set in stone after Mike Hill got starts against Michigan to end the regular season and against Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl. But the battle to start next to Hill could be fierce this summer and into fall camp, though Meyer said there could be plenty of rotation.

"I think Dre'Mont Jones, Jashon (Cornell) have really come on," Meyer said after spring practice when asked about the defensive line. "Those are two that stick out. Davon (Hamilton) is doing better, Mike Hill is doing better. It might be by committee a little bit early in the year, but they're much improved."

Meyer had previously said defensive tackle was the biggest position of concern for the Buckeyes, but his tune seems to have changed from needing guys to improve to being excited for what the position has to offer.

With players such as Jones and Cornell – both converted defensive ends – along with Tracy Sprinkle fighting for a spot, defensive tackle could turn into a strong point for Ohio State by the time the 2016 season kicks off against Bowling Green on Sept. 3.



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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

# Young Playmakers Shine For Record Crowd

By **TIM MOODY**  
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

J.T. Barrett got the start, but he wasn't the one in the spotlight when Ohio State's 2016 spring game ended. He wasn't the winning quarterback, after all.

In the finale of the first spring that featured Barrett as the Buckeyes' unquestioned starting quarterback, it was backup Joe Burrow who led the Gray squad to a 28-17 victory in front of a spring game-record 100,189 spectators April 16. That unprecedented crowd provided Ohio State fans a taste of Ohio Stadium action before the sea-

son starts next fall, and it gave the Buckeye coaching staff a chance to see how young players such as Burrow, Torrance Gibson and Austin Mack responded to a game-like atmosphere.

"I'm extremely grateful to Ohio State, Buckeye Nation for doing that today," head coach Urban Meyer said in the postgame press conference. "That was awesome."

Barrett, who struggled in his half of play for the Scarlet team, noted how incredible it was to have that many fans come out to watch a practice in April.

"I appreciate our fan base," Barrett said. "It's crazy how many people come out to watch a practice, a very basic practice at that."

It just shows the love that we get from the best fans in the land, and I know as an Ohio State football player you definitely appreciate that."

The on-field competition got started with the "Circle Drill" before the game, pitting linebackers Chris Worley and Craig Fada against each other in the first matchup. After that, linebacker Jerome Baker matched up with running back Mike Weber, defensive end Rashod Berry – who switched positions from tight end this spring – took on offensive guard Matt Burrell and offensive tackle Brandon Bowen took on defensive tackle Davon Hamilton before the Buckeyes' backup quarterbacks faced off. In that final one-on-one drill, Burrow got the best of Stephen Collier, and he went on to get the best of the Scarlet quarterbacks on the field as well.

The first quarter of game action got off to a slow start, but kicker Sean Nuernberger opened the scoring with a 42-yard field goal to put Scarlet ahead, 3-0. That was still the score after the game's first 10-minute period, but Gray got rolling to start off the second quarter by way of a strong defensive play.

With Barrett leading the Scarlet offense, Gray safety Malik Hooker intercepted a deep pass over the middle and returned it 82 yards for the first touchdown of the afternoon – which was allowed to stand after a holding call against the defense was waved off.

Two plays after the touchdown Barrett threw another interception – this time to Marshon Lattimore – and Burrow took over for the Gray squad. After starting at the Gray 45-yard line, Burrow guided his squad to

the Scarlet 18 before finding Gibson with an inch-perfect over-the-shoulder pass for a touchdown, putting his side ahead, 14-3.

Barrett and the Scarlet offense stalled again on the ensuing drive – helped along by a Dre'Mont Jones sack on the possession's final play – before Burrow hit the field once again. The quarterback hit receiver Terry McLaurin for 52 yards to the Scarlet 2-yard line before finding Gibson on a pop pass for another touchdown and a 21-3 advantage in the first half.

"Joe Burrow has been coming on," Meyer said after the game. "He's a guy that last year I had my concerns. He's gotten better and better. He's a grinder."

After an incomplete pass, Barrett hit tight end Marcus Baugh for a pair of 6-yard gains to open Scarlet's response to Gray's third touchdown, moving into opposing territory in the process. Three plays later Barrett found Johnnie Dixon for 13 yards, and then he hit Baugh again for another 18 yards. Eventually a 9-yard run by Weber took Scarlet to the Gray 3-yard line, and he punched it in for a touchdown two plays later to end the half with Gray ahead, 21-10.

Weber got the call again to open the second half when he scored a touchdown from 8 yards out on the third play of the third quarter, set up by a 40-yard pass from Collier to Parris Campbell. Burrow's response for Gray was cut short in the red zone when Baker made a leaping, one-handed interception to give Scarlet the ball at its

Continued On Page 12

## Spring Game Box Score

### Gray 28, Scarlet 17

April 16, 2016 – Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
<b>GRAY</b>	0	21	7	0	- 28
<b>SCARLET</b>	3	7	7	0	- 17

#### First Quarter

**SCARLET** – Nuernberger, 42 yard field goal, 5:59.

#### Second Quarter

**GRAY** – Hooker, 82 yard interception return (Nuernberger kick), 9:06.

**GRAY** – Gibson, 18 yard pass from Burrow (Nuernberger kick), 6:51.

**GRAY** – Gibson, 2 yard pass from Burrow (Nuernberger kick), 1:51.

**SCARLET** – Weber, 2 yard run (Nuernberger kick), 0:07.

#### Third Quarter

**SCARLET** – Weber, 8 yard run (Nuernberger kick), 8:54.

**GRAY** – McLaurin, 47 yard pass from Burrow (Nuernberger kick), 1:06.

**Att.:** 100,189. **Weather:** 75 degrees, clear, sunny, **Wind:** E 3 mph.

#### Team Statistics

	GRAY	SCARLET
First Downs	16	16
Rushing	6	6
Passing	8	10
Penalty	2	0
Rushes-Yards	21-67	20-62
Passing Yards	196	256
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	14-24-1	17-33-3
Offensive Plays	45	53
Total Net Yards	263	318
Third Down Efficiency	5-10	5-10
Fourth Down Efficiency	3-3	2-3
Punts-Avg.	1-53.0	None
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	0-0
Penalties	1-5	3-29
Time of Possession	28:14	11:56

#### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)** – **GRAY:** Burrow 11-31; Williams 7-29; Huguely 3-7.

**SCARLET:** Weber 8-38; Barrett 8-16; Collier 4-8.

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)** – **GRAY:** Burrow 14-23-1-196-3; Gibson 0-1-0-0-0.

**SCARLET:** Barrett 13-22-2-102-0; Collier 4-11-1-154-0.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)** – **GRAY:** Gibson 6-50; McLaurin 4-111; Alexander 2-13; Stump 1-15; Hill 1-7.

**SCARLET:** Baugh 7-64; Campbell 3-106; Mack 3-22; Dixon 2-16; Ramstetter 1-43; Weber 1-5.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)** – **GRAY:** Johnston 1-53.0-53. **SCARLET:** None.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** – **GRAY:** None. **SCARLET:** None.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** – **GRAY:** None. **SCARLET:** None.

**FORCED FUMBLES** – **GRAY:** None. **SCARLET:** TEAM.

**FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds)** – **GRAY:** None. **SCARLET:** None.

**INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.)** – **GRAY:** Hooker 2-82; Lattimore 1-0. **SCARLET:** Baker 1-0.

**SACKS (No.-Yds.)** – **GRAY:** Hamilton 3.0-10; D. Jones 1.0-5; Ward 1.0-1. **SCARLET:** Cornell 2.0-10; TEAM 1.0-5; Thompson 1.0-4.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.)** – **GRAY:** Hamilton 3.0-10; D. Jones 1.0-5; Ward 1.0-1. **SCARLET:** Cornell 3.5-16; TEAM 1.0-5; Thompson 1.0-4; Turnure 1.0-1; Landers 0.5-2; Slade 0.5-1; Fada 0.5-0.

**TACKLES (Solo-Assst.-Tot.)** – **GRAY:** Hooker 8-2-10; Booker 4-3-7; Hamilton 5-0-5; McMillan 3-1-4; Borland 3-0-3; D. Jones 1-1-2; Hubbard 1-0-1; Ward 1-0-1; Sprinkle 1-0-1; Hill 1-0-1; Goins 0-1-1; Conley 0-1-1; Arnette 0-1-1; Lattimore 0-1-1; Worley 0-1-1.

**SCARLET:** Baker 3-4-7; Turnure 3-3-6; Cornell 3-2-5; Fada 2-2-4; Slade 1-3-4; Thompson 2-0-2; Landers 1-1-2; Norwood 1-1-2; Henry 1-0-1; Glover-Williams 1-0-1; TEAM 1-0-1; Forte 1-0-1; Haney 1-0-1; Burrows 0-1-1; Barnes 0-1-1.

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

# Weber-Led Scarlet Comeback Falls Short

Continued From Page 11

own 4-yard line on what was arguably the play of the game.

Baker noted that he's made similar plays in spring practice this year and added that he gains "a little confidence" by doing it in front of a game-size crowd.

The ensuing Scarlet comeback chance didn't last long, though, as Hooker picked off his second pass of the game after Collier attempted a deep ball on the first play of the drive. On the next snap, Burrow hit McLaurin for a 47-yard touchdown and the game's final points to cement Gray's win over Barrett, Collier and the Scarlet team.

Although his team didn't come out on top, Barrett seemed OK with how the scrimmage went. Like Meyer, he stressed the importance of seeing players make the same plays in front of a crowd that they had already made in closed practice sessions.



JOSH WINSLOW

**BIG DAY – Redshirt freshman Mike Weber (20) scored two touchdowns for the Scarlet team.**

"The main thing is that you have a closed practice and you see (players) make plays, so you know they're capable of doing it," he said. "It's just when all the fans are around and the lights are on you want to see if they still made those same plays that they did when nobody was around. I wasn't shocked, because I knew they were able to do it."

Barrett finished the game 13 of 22 for 102 yards through the air, and he threw two interceptions compared to no touchdowns. Burrow's stats jumped off the page at 14 completions on 23 attempts for 196 yards and three scores, while he also carried the ball 11 times for 31 yards – including a 31-yard scamper.

Weber led all players in rushing with 38 yards and eight attempts, and he and true freshman Antonio Williams (seven carries for 29 yards) were the only players to average more than 4 yards per carry in a pass-heavy display.

On the receiving end Baugh led Scarlet with seven receptions for 64 yards, while Gibson headed up Gray with six catches for 50 yards. McLaurin had four receptions for 111 yards to lead all players in yardage, and Campbell added three catches for 106 yards for the Scarlet squad. Mack, a true freshman, finished the game with three catches for 22 yards for Scarlet.

On defense the scrimmage featured nine total sacks, with three being made by Hamilton and two more by redshirt freshman defensive tackle Jason Cornell.

All in all Meyer wasn't overly invested in the actual display on the field – at least he didn't admit it. He noted the team has a lot of room to grow, but Meyer seemed content with the final day of spring ball.

"I'm extremely proud of where we're at as a program," he said. "They're young. We won't win a lot of games right now, but we don't have to yet. I'm very pleased with where we're at right now."

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## NFL DRAFT

## OSU Continuing NFL Tradition

Continued From Page 1

Marotti) and his staff and Coach Meyer and his staff. And then they were pushed by one another because, once again, the culture of the program that exists here. So that's a great tool."

Meyer is fond of saying that the national championship transformed his selling points from theory into testimony, and now he'll be able to say the same in regard to the NFL. Ohio State has always had a track record of placing players into the pros and that was still the case in Meyer's early years in Columbus, but this year's group is the one that will grab the headlines.

The third-year players leaving Ohio State for the professional ranks – defensive end Joey Bosa, running back Ezekiel Elliott, cornerback Eli Apple, linebacker Darron Lee, safety Vonn Bell and wide receiver Jalin Marshall – all took a chance when they came to Ohio State in the class of 2013. That won't be the case for recruits of the future, who will have seen Ohio State flex its muscle in a way few programs ever have at the draft.

The Buckeyes are willing to make sure as many people as possible see the glimmering end result. Meyer said April 20 that director of player personnel Mark Pantoni was working out a way to follow the players around at the draft and film their experience as they transform into instant millionaires.

"I think we're going to have someone there," Meyer said. "Mark was telling me we're going to have someone there. We're going to track guys, and absolutely we're going to use that for recruiting."

Bosa and Elliott are the players who appear poised for the best showing. Shortly before the draft, both were linked as possible picks for the Dallas Cowboys at No. 4 overall. Alford said more than 20 teams had contacted him about Elliott, and the OSU running backs coach voiced his support for taking Elliott with one of the first five picks.

"I think he's an every-down back," Alford said. "And that's

the thing. You have situations where I've got a guy that can run really fast and he can catch the ball but he's not as powerful. Then I've got another guy who's really powerful but he can't block.

"So you have these three-headed monsters and you try to plug them in and place them where you need them where I think Zeke possesses all of those things that you need in a back, which leads to him being an every-down guy."

Ohio State wants being drafted to be the standard at the program instead of a cause for celebration. Although the Buckeyes' passing attack wasn't among the sharpest in the country last season, there are still three wide receivers likely to be drafted – Marshall, Braxton Miller and Michael Thomas.

"At the end of the day that's the standard at receiver – you're going to go start in the NFL," wide receivers coach Zach Smith said. "If you aren't going to go start in the NFL you're not going to start here, so that's really the baseline. There's no conversation needed about can I play, should I play, am I good enough? If you're good enough to start for the Patriots, you're good enough to start here. It's fun to sell in recruiting, but it's even better to sell to my players because it's a reality."

With 51 four- or five-star players taken in the 2014-16 recruiting cycles, the Buckeyes believe they have the talent to keep it going. They also hope these results bring in the recruits who can extend the run even further.

"We've got a lot of great things going on here in Columbus," Alford said. "It was Pro Day then it was the spring game and now the draft. Leading up to all that was the national championship run. So there's a lot of momentum, and hopefully we can keep it going."

The following capsules feature Ohio State's draft candidates and include breakdowns from DallasCowboys.com draft analyst Bryan Broaddus. Broaddus previously worked as a scout for the Green Bay Packers, Philadelphia Eagles, Jacksonville Jaguars and Dallas Cowboys.



## ELI APPLE

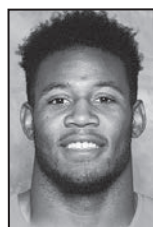
Cornerback  
6-1 • 199Scout Rank: Overall 41; CB 3  
Combine 40: 4.40 seconds

**ACCOLADES:** Apple made four interceptions in the two seasons he played at Ohio State. He was a freshman All-American in 2014 and a second-team All-Big Ten selection in 2015.

**PROJECTED ROUND:** Mid to late first  
**POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS:** Miami Dolphins, Tennessee Titans, New York Jets, Pittsburgh Steelers, Kansas City Chiefs

**APPLE SAYS:** "That's something in the NFL that's really important, to be a physical guy at the line of scrimmage and be able to take receivers off their path. And that's something I do better than anybody, in my opinion. My press technique is to me better than everybody out there. That's the main thing I do. I'm a physical guy and I get up on receivers and impact that."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "I know people that have him in the first round, but I'm a guy that has him in the second – although I might be wrong about him. You love the measurables and you love everything about his ability to play physically at the line. The thing I worry about him the most is that he's a grabber, a clutcher. If that's going to be his game in the NFL – to try to hold people up – he's going to get called for that in the NFL. I don't think that's the only way he can play, but if he has to be a handsy player then it's going to be a problem. He has the physical traits and the makeup, and when you watch him play the ball it's something he does well." – Bryan Broaddus



## VONN BELL

Safety  
5-11 • 199Scout Rank: Overall 113; S 11  
Combine 40: Did not run

**ACCOLADES:** Bell finished his Ohio State career with nine interceptions, including six in 2014. He was a first-team All-American and first-team All-Big Ten selection in 2015 and was a Thorpe Award semifinalist.

**PROJECTED ROUND:** Second

**POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS:** Los Angeles Rams, Pittsburgh Steelers, Oakland Raiders, San Diego Chargers, New York Giants

**BELL SAYS:** "You get the full package – a playmaker, a guy who can tackle in the open field, a guy who can make plays, a guy who just holds the whole team together. You're going to get a leader, another coach on the field. I've been a playmaker, I'll always be a playmaker, I guess you just have a natural knack to it. It's going to be a little harder in the NFL. You just have to have a little more film study, a little more preparation. If you always have that playmaking ability, it's always going to stick with you."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "I've got Vonn Bell right up there at the top of the second round. You're getting a very steady player. You can play him in the slot or play him back. He tackles very well. There are times where you see him miss some plays, but in this draft there are two or three guys who are big hitters and I think Vonn Bell is one of them. He's a very safe, very sound player and plays well in coverage. When he has to make a play, he'll make a play." – Bryan Broaddus



## JOEY BOSA

Defensive End  
6-5 • 269Scout Rank: Overall 2; DE 1  
Combine 40: 4.86 seconds

**ACCOLADES:** Bosa was a consensus All-American in both 2014 and 2015, finishing with a combined 18½ sacks in those two seasons. He was also the Big Ten Nagurski-Woodson Defensive Player of the Year in each of those seasons and was the Big Ten Smith-Brown Defensive Lineman of the Year in 2014.

**PROJECTED ROUND:** Early first

**POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS:** Dallas Cowboys, Jacksonville Jaguars, Baltimore Ravens, San Francisco 49ers, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

**BOSA SAYS:** "I think I bring the best pass rusher, the best defensive lineman in the country. I'm obviously coming to the team that drafts me to help them win and help them eventually make it to the Super Bowl. I do believe I'm the best player in the draft. I think as a player if you don't believe that then there's kind of something wrong."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "I see Bosa as a left defensive end, and I see him as a very disruptive player. He might not be a guy that gets you 12 to 15 sacks a year, but he'll get you six to eight sacks a year and he'll play the run very well. He's a guy that plays behind the line, and when he's on the move he can cause problems. He's maybe not a guy that can bend the edge as a rusher, but he's going to make a lot of plays in both the run and then pass. I think the consideration for him is so high because of how disruptive he is as a player." – Bryan Broaddus



## TAYLOR DECKER

Offensive Tackle  
6-7 • 310Scout Rank: Overall 25; OT 4  
Combine 40: 5.23 seconds

**ACCOLADES:** Decker started all 42 games over the final three years of his career and helped pave the way for a dominant rushing attack. As a senior in 2015 he was named a consensus All-American as well as the Big Ten's Rimington-Pace Offensive Lineman of the Year in addition to being selected as a unanimous first-team All-Big Ten pick.

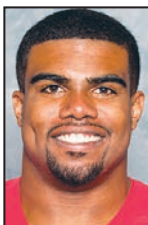
**PROJECTED ROUND:** Mid to late first

**POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS:** Tennessee Titans, Detroit Lions, Indianapolis Colts, New York Jets, Seattle Seahawks

**DECKER SAYS:** "I think the biggest challenge is going to be, though I did play some really good players in college, I'm going to see the best players I'm ever going to see every single week. There's no room for error. You can't have an off game or a couple of bad plays. As an offensive lineman, a couple of bad plays means a bad game. You have to be consistent."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Decker is very steady in the way he plays. I wouldn't say robotic, but he's very much in control. You don't see him get out of position much. He doesn't have to put his head in the block in pass blocking, and he plays with balance and extends his hands. He's gone up against some really good competition and had some success. I do think he's a technically sound football player, but he's going to have to develop a bit more strength. When you watch him play, the athletic ability definitely shows through." – Bryan Broaddus

NFL DRAFT



**EZEKIEL ELLIOTT**

Running Back  
6-0 • 225

Scout Rank: Overall 8; RB 1  
Combine 40: 4.47 seconds

**ACCOLADES:** Never an All-American, Elliott is still viewed by writers and scouts as the most complete college running back over the last two seasons. He finished with 3,961 career rushing yards, the second-highest total in Ohio State history, along with 43 touchdowns on the ground. He won the Silver Football as the Big Ten's best player in 2015.

**PROJECTED ROUND:** Early to mid first

**POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS:** Dallas Cowboys, Cleveland Browns, Chicago Bears, Miami Dolphins, Oakland Raiders

**ELLIOTT SAYS:** "I think the thing that sets me apart is my versatility. I'm a guy that can play three downs. You don't have to take me off the field. I value blocking more than anything. I obviously love to run the ball, and I think I have great hands out of the backfield. Blocking is another thing that running backs aren't really willing to do. I really made it important to me to become very good at."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "The first thing you notice about him is he never comes off the field. He's one of those guys whose game translates well into NFL circles because of his ability not only to run the ball but also as an outstanding catcher. He can run the receiver tree of routes as far as I've seen, so that gives him a huge advantage right there. He also takes pride in his run blocking. In this day and age, people talk about backs by committee but give me the guy who can stay on the field. Those are the types of guys you need." – Bryan Broaddus



**DARRON LEE**

Outside Linebacker  
6-1 • 232

Scout Rank: Overall 26; OLB 4  
Combine 40: 4.47 seconds

**ACCOLADES:** Lee finished with 12 sacks and 27½ tackles for loss in the two seasons he saw the field at Ohio State while also making three interceptions and recovering three fumbles. He was a freshman All-American in 2014 and a second-team All-American and second-team All-Big Ten in 2015.

**PROJECTED ROUND:** Mid to late first

**POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS:** New Orleans Saints, Atlanta Falcons, Indianapolis Colts, New York Jets, Green Bay Packers

**LEE SAYS:** "The game is getting faster and you need guys to cover. You're starting to see that change a lot this year in the league. I think if I can show being consistent in my technique and even showing that on the field, that will get you out of some tough situations and help you play fundamentally sound. Being a fundamentally sound football player or linebacker will carry you a long way in your career."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Darron Lee is the one guy I struggle with the most because I see him as a guy that when you watch him play, there are times where he doesn't always finish. That's where I like to believe that a guy who runs and moves as well as he does can put himself in position to finish plays. But then again, you watch him run down plays from the back side and he can do that. It'll be really interesting to see where a team places him and whether he can develop that ability to finish plays." – Bryan Broaddus



**MICHAEL THOMAS**

Wide Receiver  
6-3 • 212

Scout Rank: Overall 39; WR 4  
Combine 40: 4.57 seconds

**ACCOLADES:** Thomas caught a pass in each of the last 29 Ohio State games he played in and finished his college career with 18 touchdowns over the 2014 and 2015 seasons. He was a third-team All-Big Ten selection in 2015.

**PROJECTED ROUND:** Second

**POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS:** Houston Texans, Tennessee Titans, Washington Redskins, Minnesota Vikings, Los Angeles Rams

**THOMAS SAYS:** "Routes are routes, get out of your breaks as fast as you can and create separation. I feel like I've got that. I feel like I showed that on my routes. I learned from my uncle (former NFL receiver Keyshawn Johnson) and he set the bar real high. (OSU coach Urban) Meyer doesn't recruit guys who aren't going to come in and play and that are going to contribute. I had a plan I wanted to stick to and that's what I did."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "I love the size, and I think with Thomas you're going to get a guy who knows how to get open. His ability to catch the ball inside is nice in that regard because he's able to use his body and do those kinds of things. I think his routes can be all over the place, but once someone teaches him how to tighten up his routes he'll be even better because his size is outstanding. He catches the ball really well, but his routes can be a little herky jerky. Someone will work with him and get his routes tightened up, and they'll have a damn good football player." – Bryan Broaddus

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NFL DRAFT

# 14 Buckeyes Could Find NFL Homes

While the seven players profiled in capsules on pages 16-17 will get the majority of the attention at the NFL draft, there are several more Buckeyes who can help propel OSU to a record number of draftees.

A total of 14 Ohio State players were invited to the NFL Combine in February, indicating the program has a legitimate shot of tying or breaking its own record of players taken in a single draft with 14.

"One, you have to recruit really well," Taylor Decker said in sizing up Ohio State's large draft crop. "You have to be blessed with some ability. But that's just the start. You have to be able to develop players and develop a culture that doesn't allow mediocrity. We have a tradition of excellence and a culture of it. I think that's what all of these players getting invited is a testament to. When you have really good players who are competing against each other and want to get better, it's kind of one of the side products of what you get."

What follows is a player-by-player look at the rest of the Buckeyes who could help Ohio State tie the record for most players taken in a single draft.

## Cardale Jones

**Measurables:** 6-5, 253  
**Scout Rank:** Overall 165; QB 12  
**Projected Round:** Third to fifth



Cardale Jones

**Jones Says:** "I don't think I get a lot of credit for how cerebral I am when it comes to being the quarterback. I think I'm ready for that level. Only time will tell."

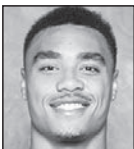
## Jalin Marshall

**Measurables:** 5-10, 200  
**Scout Rank:** Overall NR; WR NR  
**Projected Round:** Seventh

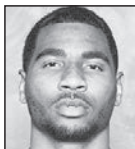
**Marshall Says:** "I don't know if it would have been any different for me, but I know in the past, the players that I've talked to that wanted to leave and had the opportunity to leave but came back, it was miserable. Not wanting to go to class, not doing the stuff that you have to do but you don't want to do because you think you already made it."

## Braxton Miller

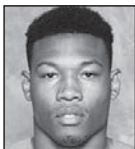
**Measurables:** 6-1, 201  
**Scout Rank:** Overall 72; WR 9  
**Projected Round:** Second to third  
**Miller Says:** "There's a lot of things you have to prepare yourself for going to the next level. It's not about who's



Jalin Marshall



Braxton Miller



Joshua Perry

the fastest or the strongest. It's about perfecting the receiver position. There's a lot that goes into it. I've been doing my homework. It's not about athleticism. It's not about speed. It's not about strength."

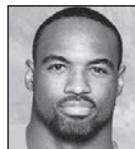
## Joshua Perry

**Measurables:** 6-4, 254  
**Scout Rank:** Overall 75; OLB 7  
**Projected Round:** Second to third

**Perry Says:** "I guess you want to get down to production because every team is looking for productive guys. We played on a fast defense with some really good athletes out there, but I think people kind of undersell my athleticism a little bit."

## Tyvis Powell

**Measurables:** 6-3, 211  
**Scout Rank:** Overall 124; S 12  
**Projected Round:** Fifth to sixth  
**Powell Says:** "Teams (at the combine) requested some MRIs and CT scans and I was in medical for like 4½ hours. Got to handle that business, though."



Tyvis Powell



Nick Vannett

There's nothing that's going to affect me. I don't even know why they made me do it because I haven't missed a game in my career here."

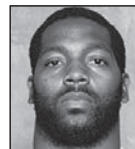
## Nick Vannett

**Measurables:** 6-6, 257  
**Scout Rank:** Overall 79; TE 3  
**Projected Round:** Third to fourth

**Vannett Says:** "When I meet with these teams, they always say, 'We feel like you're underutilized.' I always smirk when I hear that. We have so many threats at Ohio State. It's kind of hard for them to spread the ball around to every one of us."

## Adolphus Washington

**Measurables:** 6-3, 301  
**Scout Rank:** Overall 53; DT 8  
**Projected Round:** Second to third  
**Washington Says:** "There aren't many guys who can play the run and pass rush or can play multiple positions that's an interior guy. Most of these guys are just run stoppers. I think that's what sets me apart - my versatility."



A. Washington

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# Burrow Proves To Be Suitable Backup For OSU

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

The star of Ohio State's spring game – at least in the eyes of many fans – was redshirt freshman quarterback Joe Burrow. His spring game statistics were held up in comparison to incumbent QB J.T. Barrett's repeatedly in the wake of Burrow's Gray team's 28-17 victory.

Now before you go thinking that we are on the verge of yet another quarterback controversy at Ohio State – forget it. J.T. Barrett, barring injury, is the starting quarterback at Ohio State. But if there is an injury to the junior who has finally firmly secured the starting job for himself, fans and coaches alike are probably a lot more comfortable knowing that Burrow appears to be progressing in his college career.

When we last saw Barrett in a competitive football game, he was racking up 307 total yards to guide the Buckeyes to a convincing 44-28 victory over Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl. This came after he accounted for four TDs in another convincing win, a 42-13 pasting of rival Michigan in Ann Arbor. Burrow was presumably playing with the scout team at the time.

I think we know who the starting quarterback is going to be.

Sure it would have been exciting if Barrett had dazzled the 100,189 in attendance. But he was working behind a makeshift line and, wearing a black no-contact jersey, was hardly running the spread offense that features Barrett running the ball as a key weapon. Barrett accomplished the most important thing he could accomplish in the spring game. He survived it without injury.

Which brings us back to Burrow.

Ohio State has vividly proved over the last few years that you can't have too many quarterbacks, and Burrow, who had been listed as third on the depth chart behind Barrett and Cardale Jones by the end of last season, seems to have made a clear step toward securing the No. 2 spot on the depth chart for the 2016 season.

The thing that stood out most to me about Burrow was the touch he has on the long ball. Even when Jones was strong-arming the Buckeyes to their magical three-game run to the 2014 national championship, he seemed to rifle the ball up for grabs and hope that athletic Buckeye receivers, primarily Devin Smith, would go up and get the ball away from defenders.

If Burrow's performance in the spring game is any indication, he has the ability to lead a receiver if he can get a step on his defender, which could lead to long-gainers from receivers with less big-play ability than the since-departed Smith, now toiling for the NFL's New York Jets.

The other thing I liked in watching Burrow was the chemistry he seems to be developing with some of the team's young receivers. Everyone wants to talk about the heralded quarterback-turned-receiver Torrance Gibson, and the two made a pretty good pair as they connected for six receptions, 50 yards and two touchdowns. But Burrow also had a knack for finding Terry McLaurin, who pulled in four passes for 111 yards, including a 47-yard score.

Burrow and Gibson are redshirt freshmen and McLaurin is a sophomore, so the three could be playing pitch and catch for years to come.

Speaking of chemistry, I also liked the fact that Barrett connected with tight end Marcus Baugh seven times for 64 yards. That has to be encouraging to Buckeye fans who bemoaned the fact that the Buckeyes didn't pass to the tight end more last season when Nick Vannett led Ohio State players at that

position with only 19 catches for 162 yards and Baugh chipped in just another pair. By hitting Baugh seven times, Barrett showed that at the least he knows his 6-5, 255-pound junior target is out there.

In the championship year of '14, Ohio State proved that sometimes even two quarterbacks are not enough. Those of you who have completely written off Stephen Collier should note that he led the Scarlet team out of the halftime break like gangbusters.

The team needed just three plays to cover 58 yards and score its second and final touchdown. Collier rushed for the first 10 yards and then hit Parris Campbell with a 40-yard strike to the Gray 8. Mike Weber took it the rest of the way to cut the Gray lead to 21-17.

Collier, by the way, is just a sophomore.

With a boatload of available young receivers such as Gibson, McLaurin, Campbell, Austin Mack and Johnnie Dixon looking to prove their merit, and Barrett pretty much off-limits, the coaches appeared content to pass the ball at the expense of the run. The teams combined for 57 passes against just 41 runs, a total inflated by the inclusion of nine sacks.

I had hoped to get a look at Bri'onte Dunn and see if he was a genuine contender to start at running back or was just being paid the customary respect toward a senior while Weber was getting ready to seize the job. Unfortunately, Dunn sat out the game with a minor injury.

Weber looked good in his limited use, leading all rushers with 38 yards on eight carries and scoring a pair of touchdowns. Don't count out early enrollee Antonio Williams, who carried seven times for 29 yards and threw a crunching, Ezekiel Elliott-style block to spring Gibson on his second touchdown.

As I try to digest the spring game, I think the biggest thing I will take from it is how much talent the Buckeyes have stockpiled since Urban Meyer took over in late 2011. The number of young players whose names were called for making big plays during the glorified scrimmage was staggering, and when the young players weren't taking center stage, there were plays from seldom-seen juniors who had been caught behind a logjam of superior talent, a logjam now cleared as many of those players will have been tabbed in the upcoming NFL draft by the time you read this.

There are a few special things I like about the players Meyer has brought in.

First of all, they are athletic. Take a look at a couple of the interceptions that the defenders turned in. Malik Hooker's theft that he returned for an 82-yard score and the high-light-reel pick by Jerome Baker were both of the acrobatic variety. These are plays that not just any player can make. The Buckeye roster is dotted with players of similar athletic ability in all position groups.

The other thing that strikes me as I look at all that talent is that these are guys who aren't afraid to come in and compete. They have confidence in their ability, regardless of who else is on the ballclub. So many times you see recruits checking the depth charts to see if and when they have a chance to play. I want guys who don't care whom they are competing with. They are here to work and win championships.

Yes, there are only six starters returning, but I have a pretty good feeling about this team. Are they good enough to win a national championship? Maybe. Will, they? You never know.

Last year's team proved that having talent doesn't guarantee a thing.

### Moving From Quarterback

Speaking of players coming to Ohio State regardless of the competition they might face at their position, Gibson chose the Buckeyes even though there was no shortage of quarterbacks in Columbus, including classmate Burrow. Gibson's gifts are apparent and when he arrived – with Barrett and Jones firmly ahead of him – he and the coaches came up with a plan to try to get him on the field as quickly as possible by moving him to wide receiver.

That plan did not work last season, and Gibson ended up redshirting. Despite coming to Columbus with the intention of playing quarterback, he seemed invested in the receiving position this spring, and as one of the most heralded recruits from last year's class, all eyes were on him in the spring game and he didn't disappoint – well he didn't disappoint the fans, anyway. For the thoughts of the coaches, see the story on page 9 of this issue.

In high school football, the best athlete on the team is frequently the quarterback. When college coaches recruit, they will frequently take athletic QBs and figure out where to play them later. Some players – star Buckeye linebacker and soon-to-be pro Darron Lee, a quarterback at nearby New Albany, comes to mind – are never destined to play quarterback in college. Others, such as Gibson, arrive with the full intention of challenging for the quarterback job.

But once they see the competition and see the learning curve involved in taking charge at the position, they sometimes search for the quickest route to the field and, eventually, the NFL. Gibson may or may not challenge for time under center later. For now, he is a receiver.

The first Ohio State quarterback that I remember facing this dilemma was none other than the uncle of Joey and Nick Bosa – Eric Kumerow. Kumerow came to Ohio State in 1983 as a blue-chip All-America quarterback out of Oak Park High School in River Forest, Ill. He redshirted as a freshman, and he took it upon himself to suggest a move to the coaches after that season.

"Things weren't going too well at quarterback last fall," Kumerow told Buckeye Sports Bulletin in the spring of 1984. "It was my choice to switch. I just realized that high school and college were two different situations altogether. With (quarterbacks) Mike Tomczak and Jim Karsatos here, I figured I'd have a better chance of playing sooner at a different position."

So he moved to outside linebacker and had a stellar career at Ohio State that put him in position to become a first-round draft pick of the Miami Dolphins in 1988. While Kumerow had hoped to challenge at quarterback as a Buckeye, switching positions was always a possibility.

"They all recruited me as an athlete and were pretty fair about it," Kumerow, who also played defense in high school, said of his college suitors. "I figured that if I came to OSU I couldn't go wrong."

Kumerow had arrived in Columbus at 6-6 and 218 pounds but had bulked up to around 235 pounds by that spring of '84. Fred Pagac, who was Ohio State's outside linebackers coach at the time, was thrilled to have him in his position group.

"If you were to cut an outside linebacker from stone," Pagac said, "you would want Eric Kumerow. He's strong, he's a tough kid and he has a good defensive personality and temperament."

Pagac said Kumerow was handling the change well, and the longtime Ohio State coach made what I thought, 32 years later, was an interesting remark.

"He is doing very well," the coach said. "He has a lot of God-given talent. He has patience so he doesn't get frustrated. You have to remember, not a whole lot of quarterbacks are 6-6, 235 pounds."

It was Pagac's statement about the size of quarterbacks that caught my attention. Ohio State's Jones, who was listed last season at 6-5, 250, is a perfect example that today's quarterbacks can be much bigger than, say the 1984 OSU starter, Tomczak, who was listed at 6-1, 192.

And speaking of Jones, I believe that Kumerow once threw a football 70 yards, which would better Jones' toss of 64 yards in a halftime competition at the spring game.

We will run a reprint of the complete story about Kumerow that I am quoting from in the May 3 issue of the electronic BSB Quickly. I think you will find it entertaining.

It includes a note about how his sister Cheryl, Joey and Nick's mom, had just transferred to OSU from Illinois and Kumerow, who led his high school basketball conference in scoring as a senior, talks of considering joining Eldon Miller's Buckeye basketball team.

### Will Smith Reprints

In the wake of the tragic death of former Buckeye great Will Smith, we ran several reprints of Buckeye Sports Bulletin stories from throughout the defensive end's Ohio State career in the April 19 issue of BSB Quickly. There was an interesting story about Smith following the 2002 national championship game, a game from which OSU's victory became a major part of Smith's legacy.

It was noted in the story that the championship win in the Fiesta Bowl capped a difficult year for Smith. He suffered a knee injury in a nonleague game against San Jose State on Oct. 12, an injury that he played through the rest of the campaign.

But that setback was nothing compared to the one he had to deal with just over two weeks later. On Oct. 27, Mychal Harris, a high school basketball teammate of Smith's back in Utica, N.Y., was shot in the back and killed while visiting his girlfriend. Smith had to leave the team briefly to return home for his friend's funeral.

"That was pretty shocking," Smith said of Harris' death. "I didn't think something like that would happen to him. He was one of those kids who was always doing good things. You never figured something bad would happen to him."

Irony can be so cruel.

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