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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

August 2019



**BSB'S 2019
FOOTBALL
PREVIEW**

ANDREW LIND

MAN IN CHARGE - First-year head coach Ryan Day hopes to put his own stamp on the Ohio State football program while following the blueprint laid out by former head coach Urban Meyer, who retired at the end of the 2018 season.

Expectations Remain High For Ohio State And First-Year Head Coach Ryan Day

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It goes without saying that first-year Ohio State head coach Ryan Day has some rather large shoes to fill.

His predecessor, Urban Meyer, went 83-9 overall and 54-4 in Big Ten play during his seven seasons in Columbus. He also won the inaugural College Football Playoff national championship, led the Buckeyes to three conference titles and ended his career with the third-highest winning percentage in college football history.

But when reminded of those lofty numbers and the expectations that come with being the head man at a prestigious program such as Ohio State during Big Ten Media Days in July, the 40-year-old Day simply grinned and took a sip of his iced coffee.

"I know exactly what you're saying, trust me," Day said. "When you start to think of it that way, you get overwhelmed in a hurry and you start to focus on things that really don't matter.

"The expectations are so high here that if you don't win them all, the minute you lose a game, you can't just come crumbling and fall apart. It's

one of those things you have to think about and have a plan for."

That's easier said than done, though. And Day - who filled in admirably for Meyer last season while he served a three-game suspension for his mismanagement of former wide receivers coach Zach Smith - understands that all too well.

"There will be adversity along the way," Day said. "I don't know what it's going to be, but if you think back on the last few years at Ohio State or any program, there's adversity that hits and there's a journey that starts that you never thought would happen. There are obstacles and challenges and things that come in the way, but building the relationships and building some of the expectations on the front end helps you deal with them so it doesn't all just come caving in."

Day's first order of business when he took over the program in January was to revamp the coaching staff responsible for the worst defensive output in school history. He cleared out everyone on that side of the ball outside of defensive line coach Larry Johnson and replaced them with Greg Mattison, Al Washington, Jeff Hafley and Matt Barnes.

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OPINION

Focus Should Be Ohio State's First Priority



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Charter Member

Upon the establishment of the U.S. Constitution in 1789, Benjamin Franklin was said to have uttered these words: "In this world, nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes."

While he might have been an expert on such things as diplomacy, almanacs and flying kites in electrical storms, Old Ben didn't know anything about college football. Because if we have learned anything about the sport since the College Football Playoff system began in 2014, it is the certainty that Alabama and Clemson will make up half of the four-team tournament come December.

The Crimson Tide have been part of the playoff in each of the five seasons it has been staged, and with Heisman Trophy runner-up Tua Tagovailoa returning at quarterback as well as a favorable 2019 schedule that includes getting SEC rival and preseason No. 6-ranked LSU at home in early November, Alabama should have little trouble making it six playoff appearances in a row.

Likewise, Clemson seems a lock to march into the postseason with a loaded roster and a schedule that features teams that combined for a 79-71 record last year – and that is propped up by defending Southern Conference co-champion Wofford, a Football Championship Subdivision team that went 9-4 in 2018. Since 2015, when the Tigers last beat up on Wofford by a 49-10 final, Clemson has played an FCS opponent each season and has won by an average score of 54-5.

Another certainty – albeit an unfortunate one – that has accompanied the College Football Playoff in recent years is that Ohio State will stub its own toe so severely during the regular season that the Buckeyes will be left out of the playoff picture despite being one of the most talent-laden teams in the country.

And therein lies the single-most ardent task for first-year head coach Ryan Day: learning on the fly how to run your own program, managing your time in terms of job vs. family, and figuring out which hands of prominent boosters need immediate shaking and which ones can wait while grooming a new starting quarterback, agonizing over how to revamp a defense that could have at times been described last season as downright embarrassing, and following a coach who is a shoo-in for election to the College Football Hall of Fame. As if all of that were not enough, Day has to figure some way to keep his team laser-focused on each and every Saturday (or Friday night, as the case may be) during the regular season.

It was perhaps the only on-the-field failure of his predecessor. For all of the success enjoyed during the seven years of the Urban Meyer era, the one thing Meyer seemingly could not accomplish was keeping his team's mind on the business at hand.

Meyer enjoyed almost unprecedented success with the Buckeyes. His official record of 83-9 produced a .902 winning percentage that is the best among all permanent head coaches in the 129-year history of the program. His accomplishments included an undefeated season in 2012, a national championship in 2014, a division title in each of his seven seasons, and an unblemished 7-0 record against Michigan.

Yet with all of those victories and championships, there remain the head-scratching, mind-numbing, borderline-unbelievable performances that stick out like stinkweed in a rose garden. I'm not talking about mere disappointments that occurred because the breaks just didn't go the way of the Buckeyes. I'm talking about failures. Colossal blunders. Unfathomable catastrophes.

What Might Have Been

Remember the 10-point loss to Michigan State in the 2013 Big Ten Championship Game and subsequent 40-35 defeat at the hands of Clemson in the 2014 Orange Bowl?

Meyer and then-offensive coordinator Tom Herman virtually eliminated running back Carlos Hyde from their late-game strategies in those two games. Hyde finished the 2013 regular season by rushing for 226 yards at

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Michigan, the most by any opposing running back in Michigan Stadium history, and then with the Big Ten championship and a trip to the national title game on the line, Hyde got only two carries in the fourth quarter against the Spartans. In the Orange Bowl, again with the outcome very much in doubt, Hyde's number was called once in the final period.

All that year, the safest bet for the Ohio State offense was handing the ball to Hyde, yet when it came to crunch time in the two most important games of the season, Meyer and Herman somehow decided they had better options.

There was the 35-21 loss to Virginia Tech early in the 2014 season, the first time the Buckeyes had lost a home opener in 36 years. There was the 17-14 loss to Michigan State in the 2015 home finale, a game in which the Spartans were without starting quarterback Connor Cook and won anyway because the supposedly unstoppable OSU offense accounted for just 132 total yards, the fewest in a game since gaining only 82 during the 41-14 loss to Florida in the 2006 BCS National Championship Game.

And let's not forget the 24-21 loss at Penn State in 2016, a game during which the Buckeyes blew a 21-7 lead early in the fourth quarter to a team that was a three-touchdown underdog.

Then came the string of inexplicable blowouts. Ohio State lost a 31-0 decision to Clemson in the 2016 Fiesta Bowl, the program's first shutout loss since a 28-0 loss to Michigan on Nov. 20, 1993, a span of more than 23 years and 295 games. It was also the most lopsided shutout defeat for the Buckeyes since a 32-0 loss to USC on Oct. 11, 1947, a stretch spanning more than 59 years and 782 games. The only other time the Buckeyes have been shut out in a bowl game came 95 years earlier in a 28-0 loss to California in the 1921 Rose Bowl.

There was the 31-16 defeat against flag-planting Baker Mayfield and Oklahoma in 2017, making Meyer only the third Ohio State head coach ever to lose as many as two home openers during his career. The other two were Woody Hayes, who lost three home openers spread out over 28 seasons, and Alexander Lilley, the first head coach in program history who lost both of his home openers in 1890 and 1891.

And those were followed by the most epic of epic failures – the 55-24 defeat at unranked Iowa in 2017 and last year's 49-20 loss at unranked Purdue, a team that finished with a 6-7 record.

Meyer wasn't the first Ohio State head coach to preside during an era of nearly unbridled success punctuated by stinging losses that prevented the Buckeyes from propelling themselves into the stratosphere of college football.

Hayes could have and probably should have won undisputed national championships

in 1969, 1970, 1973 and 1975, while Earle Bruce came within one point of winning the title in 1979. John Cooper saw his best title chances evaporate with home losses to lesser-talented teams – No. 21 Michigan in 1996 and unranked Michigan State in 1998 – and Jim Tressel had two more shots at glory, but his No. 1-ranked teams couldn't get it done in back-to-back national championship game appearances against Florida in 2006 and LSU in 2007.

Woody, Earle, Coop, Tress and Meyer combined to win a boatload of games at Ohio State – 586 of them to be exact. Name another program whose most recent five head coaches are already or soon-to-be members of the College Football Hall of Fame. Don't strain your brain because there isn't one.

The bottom line is this. Ohio State can bestow a captainship on every player on the roster if it so chooses. It matters not to me how long it took to officially name Justin Fields the starting quarterback. I don't give a whit about a 40-year-old, first-year head coach hiring a 69-year-old assistant who has spent a large chunk of the last three decades trying his level best to figure out a way to beat Ohio State.

The only thing I care about is how Ryan Day is going to channel his seemingly boundless energy and get his players to focus on every single opponent.

I have not coached a single football game in my life, but I would contend that I have watched more college football games during the past 40-some years than many coaches, so I feel I can offer Day at least a small piece of advice.

Former head coach Lou Holtz, who built a lot of his reputation on the 1968 season he spent as an assistant on Hayes' staff at Ohio State, once said, "To win a national championship, you don't have to be the best team in the country every Saturday. To win a national championship, you just have to be the best team in the stadium every Saturday."

If Day can somehow follow that advice, he should have no problems whatsoever in Columbus.

Opening With Success

The nonstop pressure of being head coach of the Buckeyes notwithstanding, Day has a little added incentive in the Aug. 31 opener against Florida Atlantic. No one has lost his first game as Ohio State head coach since 1892 – and even that is up for debate.

Oberlin spoiled Jack Ryder's debut as Ohio State head coach with a 40-0 victory against the Buckeyes in the 1892 season opener. The Yeomen (known in those days as the "O" Men) were also breaking in a new head coach that season – a 23-year-old Cleveland native by the name of John Heisman.

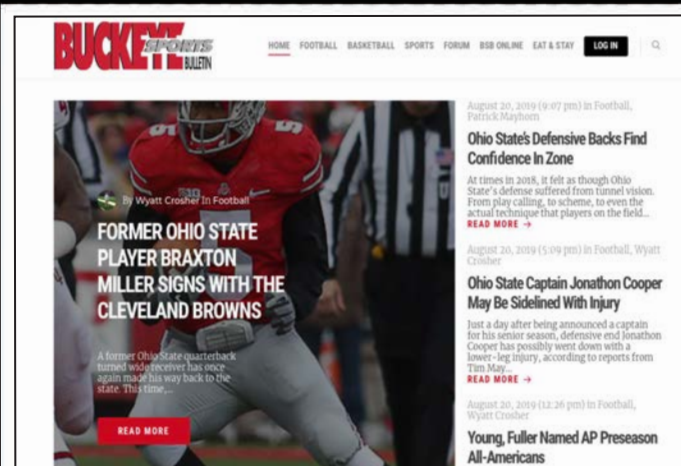
Technically, that game was not Ryder's first taste of coaching the Buckeyes. He had led the team for the final three games (all losses) of the program's inaugural season in 1890 but was not considered the team's head coach.

That was a distinction afforded to Lilley, who was instrumental during the latter part of the 19th century in getting the Ohio State administration to officially sanction a university football team.

The Buckeyes played their first game of intercollegiate football on May 3, 1890, traveling the short distance north to Ohio Wesleyan to win a 20-14 decision in front of a crowd of about 700.

And even then, there was some conjecture whether Lilley was in charge of things that morning – kickoff was at 9:30 a.m. – or whether the actual "coaching" of the team was left to co-captains Jesse Jones and Paul Lincoln.

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COVER STORY

Day Took Charge Of Staff

Continued From Page 1

Day had little room for error in building his first staff, but it appears he struck a good balance of veteran coaches with intricate knowledge of the Big Ten and college football as a whole, and young, up-and-coming coaches eager to prove their worth.

At the end of the day, though, this group will be judged on results – not intentions.

“A lot of people come up and they say, ‘a lot of pressure,’ or they start talking about the expectations,” Day said. “It’s been the same (response) from me all along, because you can’t worry about that.”

“People ask me, ‘What if you don’t beat the Team Up North? What if you don’t win the Big Ten championship or a national championship?’ I always come

back with, ‘Well, what if I do?’ That’s the mentality I’ve always had.

“Let’s go play and let’s go maximize the day the best we can. We’re not going to be hesitant about anything, we’re not going to be apprehensive. We’re going to go after people and be aggressive. To start getting anxiety or worry about losing is not going to happen.”

One of the biggest reasons Meyer felt comfortable with stepping away from coaching is because of culture and core values that have already been established at Ohio State.

All Day conceivably has to do is follow that blueprint to be successful.

“I think the easy thing to do is to ask, ‘How are you different from Urban Meyer?’ And that’s not something I really like to answer because, first off, you don’t replace a legend,” Day said. “The more changes you make, the more ener-



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COVER STORY

gy you can take away from something else. If they're worried about learning a new core value, it takes away from their ability to get on the field."

Though he still maintains an office at the Fawcett Center — directly across the street from the Woody Hayes Athletic Center — the image of Meyer as the head coach of the Buckeyes' football program will eventually fade. But even with Day at the helm, things won't look all that different moving forward.

"We were very careful not to change things just to change them," he said. "Slowly, over time, you'll see there will be more and more things that probably fit me more, but the infrastructure that is there is not going to change."

The same thing can be said about Ohio State's recruiting efforts under Day.

While Meyer had championship rings and first-round draft picks to his name, Day doesn't carry the same cachet. He's been able to keep the train rolling, though, thanks to Dwayne Haskins' record-breaking season last fall — for which Day was the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach — and his ability to connect with prospects on a personal level.

"I think the plan is working," Day said. "When someone walks in the building, it's the environment. If we say we're going to be a family, we have to be a family. If you send your son to Ohio State, he's going to be taken care of on the field and developed at the highest level. He's going to be taken care of in the classroom and off the field in all the

things we provide.

"This program is going to be motivated through love, and that's part of being a family. What I say to our guys all the time, and what I say to the recruits is, 'Who do you love the most in your life?' And they all say their family. 'What would you do for them?' And they say anything. Well, why can't we have that same relationship with our players and our coaches? That's really what we talk about with our guys."

It's difficult to follow a legend.

If only we could ask Earle Bruce what it was like to have his predecessor Woody Hayes — winner of three wire service national championships and 13 conference titles — cooped up in an office inside the ROTC building across the street from Ohio Stadium.

Or, rather, talk to Ray Perkins, who had the equally unenviable task of following Paul "Bear" Bryant at Alabama, then we'd better understand the difficult position in which Day finds himself as he begins his full-time head coaching career.

"Every once in a while, you catch yourself and you realize you're the head coach at Ohio State. But it doesn't last long, because you've got to go out there and you've got to work," Day said. "I always thought I'd be in a situation to be a head coach. The idea wasn't just to be a head coach, though. It was to be a head coach for a long time at a great place."

And if all goes as planned, whoever follows Day will have replace a legend, too.



ANDREW LIND

OVERSEEING THE ENTIRE TEAM — Rather than work directly with the quarterbacks in practice, Day now roams the field and watches every position.

2019 Ohio State Football Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Year	Hometown/Previous School	No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Year	Hometown/Previous School
1	Jeff Okudah	CB	6-1	200	Jr.	Grand Prairie, Texas/South Grand Prairie	42	Bradley Robinson	LS	6-1	230	Jr.	Troy, Mich./Athens
1	Justin Fields	QB	6-3	223	So.	Kennesaw, Ga./Georgia	43	Ryan Batsch	SAF	6-2	205	R-Fr.	Loveland, Ohio/Loveland
2	Chase Young	DE	6-5	265	Jr.	Upper Malboro, Md./DeMatha Catholic	43	Robert Cope	RB	5-9	200	R-Fr.	Dublin, Ohio/Jerome
2	J.K. Dobbins	RB	5-10	217	Jr.	La Grange, Texas/La Grange	44	Ben Schmiesing	LB	6-1	225	R-Fr.	Piqua, Ohio/Piqua
3	Damon Arnette	CB	6-0	195	5th	Fort Lauderdale, Fla./St. Thomas Aquinas	46	Cade Kacherski	LB	6-2	212	R-Fr.	Dublin, Ohio/Jerome
4	Jordan Fuller	SAF	6-2	205	Sr.	Old Tappan, N.J./Old Tappan	47	Justin Hilliard	LB	6-1	235	5th	Cincinnati, Ohio/St. Xavier
4	Chris Chugunov	QB	6-1	208	5th	Skilman, N.J./Montgomery	48	Logan Hittle	LB	5-11	210	Sr.	Nashport, Ohio/Tri-Valley
5	Baron Browning	LB	6-3	248	Jr.	Fort Worth, Texas/Kennedee	49	Darryl Sinclair	CB	5-9	185	Jr.	Solon, Ohio/Solon
5	Garrett Wilson	WR	6-0	188	Fr.	Austin, Texas/Lake Travis	49	Liam McCullough	LS	6-2	237	5th	Columbus, Ohio/Worthington Kilbourne
6	Taron Vincent	DT	6-2	293	So.	Baltimore, Md./IMG Academy	50	Nathan Brock	OL	6-4	290	Sr.	Powell, Ohio/Olentangy Liberty
6	Jameson Williams	WR	6-2	170	Fr.	St. Louis, Mo./Cardinal Ritter College Prep	51	Brett Novick	DT	6-1	275	Fr.	Katonah, N.Y./John Jay
7	Kamryn Babb	WR	6-0	195	R-Fr.	St. Louis, Mo./Christian Brothers College	52	Wyatt Davis	OL	6-4	313	So.	Bellflower, Calif./St. John Bosco
7	Teradja Mitchell	LB	6-2	242	So.	Virginia Beach, Va./Bishop Sullivan	52	Antwan Jackson	DT	6-2	299	5th	Ellenwood, Ga./Blinn Jr. College
8	Javontae Jean-Baptiste	DE	6-5	245	R-Fr.	Oradell, N.J./Bergen Catholic	53	Davon Hamilton	DT	6-4	310	5th	Pickerington, Ohio/Pickerington Central
9	Binjamin Victor	WR	6-4	199	Sr.	Pompano Beach, Fla./Coconut Creek	54	Tyler Friday	DE	6-3	260	So.	Ramsey, N.J./Don Bosco Prep
9	Jashon Cornell	DT	6-3	285	5th	St. Paul, Minn./Cretin-Derham Hall	55	Trayvon Wilburn	LB	5-11	220	R-Fr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Mount Healthy
10	Danny Vanatsky	QB	6-1	205	R-Fr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Christian Academy	55	Matthew Jones	OL	6-4	305	R-Fr.	Brooklyn, N.Y./Erasmus Hall
10	Amir Riep	CB	6-0	195	Jr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Colerain	56	Aaron Cox	DL	6-3	255	Sr.	Mantua, Ohio/Crestwood
11	Austin Mack	WR	6-2	215	Sr.	Fort Wayne, Ind./Bishop Luers	57	Zaid Hamdan	DT	5-11	260	R-Fr.	Mason, Ohio/Mason
11	Tyreke Smith	DE	6-4	267	So.	Cleveland, Ohio/Cleveland Heights	58	Joshua Alabi	OL	6-5	305	5th	Detroit, Mich./Cass Tech
12	Gunnar Hoak	QB	6-4	212	Jr.	Dublin, Ohio/Kentucky	59	Zach Stevenson	OL	6-3	275	Fr.	Lewis Center, Ohio/Olentangy Orange
12	Sevyn Banks	CB	6-1	200	So.	Orlando, Fla./Jones	60	Ryan Smith	OL	6-3	270	Fr.	Valley City, Ohio/Buckeye
13	Tyreke Johnson	CB	6-1	195	Fr.	Jacksonville, Fla./Trinity Christian Academy	61	Gavin Cupp	OL	6-4	308	Jr.	Leipsic, Ohio/Leipsic
13	Rashod Berry	TE	6-4	255	5th	Lorain, Ohio/Lorain	62	Brandon Pahl	OL	6-2	299	5th	Cutler, Ohio/Warren
14	K.J. Hill	WR	6-0	195	5th	Little Rock, Ark./North Little Rock	63	Kevin Woidke	OL	6-6	305	5th	Cleveland, Ohio/St. Ignatius
14	Isaiah Pryor	SAF	6-2	200	Jr.	Lawrenceville, Ga./IMG Academy	64	Jack Jamieson	OL	6-1	285	R-Fr.	Lakewood, Ohio/St. Ignatius
15	Josh Proctor	SAF	6-2	205	So.	Owasso, Okla./Owasso	65	Phillip Thomas	LS	6-0	230	Jr.	Louisville, Ohio/Louisville
15	Jaylen Harris	WR	6-5	215	Jr.	Cleveland/Cleveland Heights	66	Enokk Vimah	OL	6-4	270	Fr.	Kahuku, Hawaii/Kahuku
16	Jagger LaRoe	QB	6-3	216	Fr.	Colleyville, Texas/Texas A&M	67	Robert Landers	DL	6-1	285	5th	Huber Heights, Ohio/Wayne
16	Cade Stover	LB	6-4	225	Fr.	Mansfield, Ohio/Lexington	68	Ryan Jacoby	OL	6-5	290	Fr.	Mentor, Ohio/Mentor
17	Alex Williams	DL	6-6	270	R-Fr.	Pickerington, Ohio/North	69	Chris Kuhn	OL	6-5	270	R-Fr.	Sandusky, Ohio/St. Mary Central Catholic
17	Chris Olave	WR	6-1	185	So.	San Marcos, Calif./Mission Hills	70	Noah Donald	DL	6-1	265	Sr.	Uniontown, Ohio/Walsh Jesuit
18	J.P. Andrade	QB	6-3	205	Fr.	La Verne, Calif./Bonita	71	Josh Myers	OC	6-5	310	So.	Miamisburg, Ohio/Miamisburg
18	Jonathon Cooper	DE	6-4	257	Sr.	Gahanna, Ohio/Lincoln	72	Tommy Togia	DT	6-2	300	So.	Pocatello, Idaho/Highland
19	Dallas Gant	LB	6-3	232	So.	Toledo, Ohio/St. John's Jesuit	73	Jonah Jackson	OL	6-4	305	5th	Media, Pa./Rutgers
20	Pete Werner	LB	6-3	239	Jr.	Indianapolis, Ind./Cathedral	74	Max Wray	OL	6-6	300	R-Fr.	Franklin, Tenn./Franklin
21	Marcus Williamson	CB	5-10	180	Jr.	Westerville, Ohio/IMG Academy	75	Thayer Munford	OL	6-6	310	Jr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Massillon Washington
22	Steele Chambers	RB	6-2	215	Fr.	Roswell, Ga./Blessed Trinity Catholic	76	Branden Bowen	OL	6-7	315	5th	Draper, Utah/Corner Canyon
23	Jahsen Wint	SAF	5-10	200	Jr.	Brooklyn, N.Y./Erasmus Hall	77	Harry Miller	OL	6-4	310	Fr.	Buford, Ga./Buford
23	Marcus Crowley	RB	6-1	205	Fr.	Jacksonville, Fla./Trinity Christian Academy	78	Nicholas Petit-Frere	OT	6-5	295	R-Fr.	Tampa, Fla./Berkeley Prep
24	Shaun Wade	CB	6-1	194	So.	Jacksonville, Fla./Trinity Christian Academy	79	Dawand Jones	OL	6-8	360	Fr.	Indianapolis, Ind./Ben Davis
25	Xavier Johnson	RB	6-2	212	R-Fr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Summit Country Day	80	C.J. Saunders	WR	5-10	190	5th	Dublin, Ohio/Coffman
25	Brendon White	SAF	6-2	215	Jr.	Powell, Ohio/Olentangy Liberty	81	Jake Hausmann	TE	6-4	245	Jr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Archbishop Moeller
26	Cameron Brown	CB	6-0	188	So.	St. Louis, Mo./Christian Brothers College	82	Sam Wiglusz	WR	5-11	185	R-Fr.	Brecksville, Ohio/Brecksville-Broadview Heights
26	Jaelen Gill	WR	6-0	195	R-Fr.	Westerville, Ohio/South	83	Cormontae Hamilton	TE	6-2	263	Fr.	Memphis, Tenn./Whitehaven
28	Amari McMahon	RB	6-0	205	Jr.	Dublin, Ohio/Scioto	84	Brock Davin	TE	6-3	240	Sr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/St. Xavier
28	Dominic DiMaccio	K	5-8	190	So.	Powell, Ohio/DeSales	85	Austin Kutscher	WR	6-0	200	R-Fr.	Massillon, Ohio/Washington
28	Ronnie Hickman	SAF	6-1	200	Fr.	Wayne, N.J./DePaul Catholic	86	Chris Booker	WR	6-0	185	Jr.	St. Louis, Mo./Dayton
29	Marcus Hooker	SAF	5-11	200	R-Fr.	New Castle, Pa./New Castle	87	Elijah Gardiner	WR	6-4	205	So.	Kemp, Texas/Kemp
29	Zach Hoover	P	6-2	190	Jr.	Toledo, Ohio/Central Catholic	88	Jeremy Ruckert	TE	6-5	250	So.	Lindenhurst, N.Y./Lindenhurst
30	Kevin Dever	SAF	6-0	195	So.	Cleveland, Ohio/St. Edward's	89	Luke Farrell	TE	6-6	250	Jr.	Perry, Ohio/Perry
30	Demario McCall	RB	5-9	195	Jr.	North Ridgeville, Ohio/North Ridgeville	90	Jaden McKenzie	DT	6-3	285	Fr.	Wake Forest, N.C./Wake Forest
32	Tuf Borland	LB	6-1	232	Jr.	Bolingbrook, Ill./Bolingbrook	90	Jack Deneher	K	6-4	200	Fr.	Dover, Ohio/Dover
33	Master Teague III	RB	5-11	220	R-Fr.	Murfreesboro, Tenn./Blackman	91	Drue Chrisman	P	6-3	220	Jr.	Lawrenceburg, Ind./Cincinnati LaSalle
33	Zach Harrison	DE	6-6	255	Fr.	Lewis Center, Ohio/Olentangy Orange	92	Haskell Garrett	DT	6-2	295	Jr.	Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman
34	Owen Fankhauser	SAF	5-11	195	Jr.	Stow, Ohio/Stow-Munroe Falls	93	Jake Metzger	P	6-2	225	Jr.	Doylestown, Pa./Central Bucks West
34	Mitch Rossi	RB	6-0	240	Jr.	Franklin, Tenn./Franklin	94	Roem McCullough	LS	6-1	230	R-Fr.	Columbus, Ohio/Worthington Kilbourne
36	K.Vaughan Pope	LB	6-1	231	So.	Dinwiddie, Va./Dinwiddie	95	Blake Haubeil	K	6-4	225	Jr.	Bufalo, N.Y./Canisius
37	Craig Young	LB	6-4	200	Fr.	Fort Wayne, Ind./Wayne	96	Michael O'Shaughnessy	P	6-4	200	Fr.	New Albany, Ohio/New Albany
37	Derrick Malone	TE	6-5	245	5th	Dayton, Ohio/Thurgood Marshall	97	Noah Potter	DE	6-6	252	Fr.	Mentor, Ohio/Mentor
38	Bryson Shaw	SAF	6-2	185	Fr.	Eldersburg, Md./Bullis School	98	Jerron Cage	DT	6-2	295	So.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Winton Woods
39	Malik Harrison	LB	6-3	240	Sr.	Columbus, Ohio/Walnut Ridge	COACHING STAFF: Ryan Day, head coach; Larry Johnson, associate head coach/defensive line coach; Greg Mattison, co-defensive coordinator; Jeff Hafley, co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach; Al Washington, linebackers coach; Tony Alford, running backs coach; Brian Hartline, wide receivers coach; Greg Studrawa, offensive line coach; Kevin Wilson, offensive coordinator/tight ends coach; Mike Yuroch, passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach; special teams coordinator/assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes.						
41	Tommy Eichenberg	LB	6-3	225	Fr.	Cleveland, Ohio/St. Ignatius							
42	Lloyd McFarquhar	CB	5-9	170	R-Fr.	Cleveland, Ohio/Brush							

2019 Big Ten Schedule

	West Division							East Division						
	ILLINOIS	IOWA	MINNESOTA	NEBRASKA	N'WESTERN	PURDUE	WISCONSIN	INDIANA	MARYLAND	MICHIGAN	MICHIGAN STATE	OHIO STATE	PENN STATE	RUTGERS
Aug. 31	AKRON	MIAMI (OHIO)	S.D. STATE (Aug. 29)	SOUTH ALABAMA	at Stanford	at Nevada	at USF (Aug. 30)	BALL STATE (Indianapolis)	HOWARD	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	TULSA (Aug. 30)	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	IDAHO	UMASS
Sept. 7	at UCONN	RUTGERS	at Fresno State	at Colorado		VANDERBILT	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	EASTERN ILLINOIS	SYRACUSE	ARMY	WESTERN MICHIGAN	CINCINNATI	BUFFALO	at Iowa
Sept. 14	EASTERN MICHIGAN	at Iowa State	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	UNLV	TCU		OHIO STATE	at Temple		ARIZONA STATE	at Indiana	PITT	
Sept. 21	NEBRASKA			at Illinois	MICHIGAN STATE		MICHIGAN	UCONN		at Wisconsin	at N'western	MIAMI (OHIO)	BOSTON COLLEGE	
Sept. 28		MIDDLE TENNESSEE	at Purdue	OHIO STATE	at Wisconsin	MINNESOTA	N'WESTERN	at Michigan State	PENN STATE	RUTGERS	INDIANA	at Nebraska	at Maryland (Sept. 27)	at Michigan
Oct. 5	at Minnesota	at Michigan	ILLINOIS	N'WESTERN	at Nebraska	at Penn State	KENT STATE		at Rutgers	IOWA	at Ohio State	MICHIGAN STATE	PURDUE	MARYLAND
Oct. 12	MICHIGAN	PENN STATE	NEBRASKA	at Minnesota		MARYLAND	MICHIGAN STATE	RUTGERS	at Purdue	at Illinois	at Wisconsin		at Iowa	at Indiana
Oct. 19	WISCONSIN	PURDUE	at Rutgers		OHIO STATE (Oct. 18)	at Iowa	at Illinois	at Maryland	INDIANA	at Penn State		at N'western	MICHIGAN	MINNESOTA
Oct. 26	at Purdue	at N'western	MARYLAND	INDIANA	IOWA	ILLINOIS	at Ohio State	at Nebraska	at Minnesota	NOTRE DAME	PENN STATE	WISCONSIN	at Michigan State	LIBERTY
Nov. 2	RUTGERS			at Purdue	at Indiana	NEBRASKA		N'WESTERN	MICHIGAN	at Maryland				at Illinois
Nov. 9	at Michigan State	at Wisconsin	PENN STATE		PURDUE	at N'western	IOWA		OHIO STATE		ILLINOIS	MARYLAND	at Minnesota	
Nov. 16		MINNESOTA	at Iowa	WISCONSIN	UMASS		at Nebraska	at Penn State		MICHIGAN STATE	at Michigan	at Rutgers	INDIANA	OHIO STATE
Nov. 23	at Iowa	ILLINOIS	at N'western	at Maryland	MINNESOTA	at Wisconsin	PURDUE	MICHIGAN	NEBRASKA	at Indiana	at Rutgers	PENN STATE	at Ohio State	MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 30	N'WESTERN	at Nebraska (Nov. 29)	WISCONSIN	IOWA (Nov. 29)	at Illinois	INDIANA	at Minnesota	at Purdue	at Michigan State	OHIO STATE	Maryland	at Michigan	RUTGERS	at Penn State

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Ohio State Names Captains For 2019 Season

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Just like with the 2018 team, Ohio State's players voted on seven players to lead as team captains heading into this season.

Also like last season, multiple wide receivers were chosen to lead the offense. Additionally, two leaders of the defense were selected as captains for the second year in a row.

The seven named captains were junior running back J.K. Dobbins, fifth-year senior H-backs K.J. Hill and C.J. Saunders, a pair of defensive ends in junior Chase Young and senior Jonathon Cooper, and two-time captains in junior linebacker Tuf Borland and senior safety Jordan Fuller.

Here is a look at the 2019 captains.

J.K. Dobbins

Dobbins heads into the season as one of the most likely to improve statistically after a season when he finished with 1,053 yards on 4.6 yards per carry, well below his numbers from his freshman year.

With Mike Weber gone, Dobbins is the guy in the backfield, and he has proved to be the guy in the locker room as well with the selection as captain.

"I'm excited, I'm honored, because it's a big thing here," Dobbins said. "It's great that my teammates see me as somebody that can lead this team and represent this team in a good way."

As for Dobbins' individual expectations, they are pretty simple.

"I feel like I need to prove to people that I am the best running back in the nation," he said.

K.J. Hill

Hill is a fifth-year senior who comes into this season with the strongest receiving statistics of anyone in his group. He is joined by Saunders as well as seniors Austin Mack and Binjimen Victor to form a veteran unit for a new OSU quarterback to throw to.

After seeing how Parris Campbell, Terry McLaurin and Johnnie Dixon transformed the room, Hill knows he will have to fill some big shoes and step up in some areas as a leader.

"I didn't have to be vocal because of the guys previously," Hill said. "I am the guy now. With them being gone, I know what to expect. I feel like I have to be more vocal."

C.J. Saunders

Saunders is a former walk on who head coach Ryan Day has said will find time situationally in the offense. For the fifth-year senior, this recognition is something that did not shock him but instead feels like something he has earned from his consistent effort both on and off the field.

"The way that my career has progressed and how I have gotten to build relationships with my teammates, it's something that I've strived for. It was never the biggest goal for me," Saunders said of being captain. "I wasn't exactly surprised, but I'm very honored."

Saunders has 27 receptions for 294 yards in his collegiate career, and he will be searching for a more productive place in the offense.



OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

TEAM LEADERS – From left to right, Ohio State defensive end Chase Young, running back J.K. Dobbins, H-back K.J. Hill, defensive end Jonathon Cooper, H-back C.J. Saunders, safety Jordan Fuller and linebacker Tuf Borland were named captains by their teammates.

Tuf Borland

On the defensive side of the ball, for the second straight season, Borland has been the leader for the linebackers group and continues to progress toward becoming the second player in program history to become a three-time captain. The other was quarterback J.T. Barrett.

"It's a tremendous honor," Borland said. "You take a walk down the hallway and you see some of the names that are on there on that captain board. It's truly a blessing."

Borland's 67 tackles last year ranked third on the team, while he also registered nine tackles for loss and forced two fumbles in a season when he struggled to fully recover from an Achilles injury.

This time around, Borland said the time in the offseason to recover has made plenty of difference.

"I feel great," he said. "I'm feeling completely ready, completely healthy and just excited for the season to start."

Jonathon Cooper

Cooper has a chance to live up to the lofty expectations with which he came into the program.

While Cooper's stats don't necessarily pop off the page, he has impressed his teammates enough to earn the captain's honor.

Fellow captain and defensive end Chase Young said it is crucial to have a player like Cooper on your team to help lead the group.

"You need it. You need a dude who's right there with you every step of the way, feeding off each other," Young said. "It's definitely good to have him."

Jordan Fuller

Another two-time captain is Fuller, whose consistency in the Buckeyes' secondary has earned him a spot on the AP Preseason All-America Second Team.

Fuller may not ever be the most vocal leader Ohio State has, but his play has talked plenty in the past, as he has his 81 tackles in 2018, which tied for the team lead.

For Fuller, he understands what being a captain for this program means, and he is ready to take on all the pressures that he faced from a season ago.

"Just being voted a captain by your teammates, it just says a lot, and I'm just blessed to be in this position," he said. "I'm just going to give them everything I have."

Chase Young

Young comes in after a strong 2018 campaign that had him sack the quarterback

10½ times, enough to earn a spot on the first-team AP Preseason All-America team.

Young now isn't strictly filling up the box score, as he has proved to be a leader on the team, one that most of the other captains described as the most vocal on the team.

Young said that becoming a captain for the Buckeyes was something that was "on his list."

"I feel like when I got more into the program, I got the meaning of what being a Buckeye was. I was like, 'Man, I want to be a part of that group of people who can lead a team,'" he said. "The opportunity was there, and I really took it."



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Right Tackle Among OSU's Key Position Battles

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Under Urban Meyer, there were often plenty of position battles on both sides of the ball that were left undecided until the very last moment heading into week one. New head coach Ryan Day seems to be fine with doing the exact same thing.

Though many of these positions appear to have heavy front-runners as to who will be starting against Florida Atlantic on Aug. 31, Day has not rushed to make these decisions final, waiting to see as much as he can of fall camp before pulling the trigger.

With nine players gone via the NFL draft and another four picked up by teams immediately afterward, there are plenty of positions ready for new faces to come in and take over.

This is a look at each of the position groups and how they look as far as who is expected to start, who is expected to come off the bench, and just how much of a battle each position still has.

Quarterback

This is one of the few positions that has been given a concrete answer. On Aug. 19, Day officially named Georgia transfer Justin Fields the week one starter over Kentucky transfer Gunnar Hoak and fifth-year senior Chris Chugunov.

But Day made it clear that Fields has not guaranteed himself a safe spot at the top just yet.

"I think all quarterbacks have done a good job this camp," Day said. "The stories of the national championship team, three quarterbacks playing, everybody has to be ready to go. All guys had good camps, but Justin kind of separated himself the last week. He'll be the starter."

Day also made no definite decision on whether Hoak or Chugunov is the clear No. 2 behind Fields at this point in time, with Hoak still needing to learn the



ANDREW LIND

BACK TO FULL STRENGTH – After missing all of last season as he rehabbed a leg injury suffered during the sixth game of the 2017 campaign, Ohio State offensive lineman Branden Bowen hopes to secure a starting spot at right tackle. He's battled redshirt freshman Nicholas Petit-Frere throughout camp.

system after having the benefit of only a limited number of practices since his transfer.

"I think Gunnar and Chris both bring good skill packages to the table," Day said. "They both are accurate throwing the ball, have a good feel for anticipation and touch. They are a little bit more athletic than you think they are."

"We'll let these guys keep learning the offense. With Gunnar, we've practiced 14 or 15 –only been in the offense really 15 practices. So, really, he's at where Justin

was coming out of the spring. So he'll keep growing day in and day out. They'll keep working. As we get closer to the game, we'll decide if Justin were to come out of the game, who would go in next."

Behind those three, redshirt freshman Danny Vanatsky had his black stripe removed the same day as Fields was named the starter and could be the No. 4 in case of dire circumstances.

Running Back

This one has been assumed for quite a while. With Mike Weber gone in the draft, this is once again junior J.K. Dobbins' backfield to dominate. While Weber was injured in 2017, Dobbins, then a true freshman, stepped in and exploded for 1,403 rushing yards on 7.2 yards per carry.

Both of those totals dropped pretty substantially while Dobbins split time with Weber a season ago, but with no major competitors expected to take a lot of reps away from him, Dobbins could be due for yet another major-impact season.

As with the quarterback, the backup running back spot has been hotly contested in fall camp, with many thinking redshirt freshman Master Teague would be able to take the spot. But injury problems still persist for the second-year back.

It now appears that Demario McCall will start the season as the No. 2 back behind Dobbins.

"Demario has had a good camp," Day said. "He's done some really good things. I think he can really be a weapon for us. I think there's a chance you could see them all play right now. I'd say maybe Demario has the leg up on those other guys right now."

Among the other possibilities behind McCall and Teague are a pair of freshmen in Steele Chambers and Marcus Crowley, both of whom lost their black stripes during fall camp.

Wide Receiver

The wide receiver room lost three fifth-year receivers, all of whom played major roles in the offense, so one would think the door is open for some new faces in 2019.

That is only somewhat true, as three current seniors expect to immediately take over as the starters this season. K.J. Hill, Binjimen Victor and Austin Mack should be starting as Fields' primary targets, while the underclassmen begin to sneak into the offense and make some key contributions.

Among those is five-star freshman Garrett Wilson as well as sophomore Chris Olave, who really came into his own in the second half of 2018.

Also, don't sleep on fifth-year senior C.J. Saunders to get a significantly higher snap count in his final season, especially after the former walk-on was selected as a captain for the team this year. Day and the players alike must be seeing something with Saunders this year, both on the field and off it, and he may be able to find a place in some short-throw areas.

Redshirt freshman Jaelen Gill, junior Jaylen Harris and potentially freshman Jameson Williams could see the field in limited roles at points in the season, especially if there are any injuries to the starters as there were to Mack and Victor in 2018.

Tight End

All three of the tight ends who saw meaningful time in 2018 are back for this season, and it can be expected that there will be times for all three to get on the field in various situations.

Junior Luke Farrell is likely the tight end who will find the most time on the field, but senior Rashod Berry has shown glimpses of greatness and could contend for that spot if he can find ways to stand out in the offense, as he did in the

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW: POSITION BATTLES

Maryland game last season.

Sophomore Jeremy Ruckert is still the tight end who should be expected in more of a passing role than either Farrell or Berry, and maybe with a full collegiate season under his belt, there will be a larger opportunity to see him work with Fields.

This trio combined for only 30 receptions in 2018, 29 of those coming from both Berry and Farrell, the two who are supposed to be more of the blockers vs. Ruckert. With some new faces coaching the offense, only time will tell if the Buckeyes find ways to use the tight ends in the offense as more than just blockers for the upcoming season.

Offensive Line

Four out of the five spots on the offensive line seem quite secure. From left to right, junior Thayer Munford is a clear lock at left tackle, being the only returning starter from 2018. At left guard, Rutgers transfer Jonah Jackson should be the guy.

In the middle, it's looking like sophomore Josh Myers has the job pretty secure, and to the right of him, sophomore Wyatt Davis impressed as a starter in the Rose Bowl and will be the guy at right guard.

It's that right tackle position that seems like a near coin flip between senior Branden Bowen and redshirt freshman Nicholas Petit-Frere. Bowen has the clear edge in experience, but he missed all of 2018 with a leg injury. Petit-Frere is one of the highest-rated commits Ohio State has ever had and is already impressing in camp as he continues to put on the necessary weight.

When Day was asked about who had an edge, he didn't really have a solid answer.

"Those guys are still battling it out," he said. "They're doing a great job. I anticipate both will play. Branden Bowen has probably had the best camp. He's at a certain level, playing really well. Nick has done a really good job as well. Right now they both deserve to play."

Other backups who are next in line for playing time should be senior Joshua Alabi, junior Gavin Cupp and freshman Harry Miller, who lost his black stripe during fall camp.

Defensive End

Ohio State's defensive end corps is immensely talented, as evidenced by both starters being selected as team captains.

Junior Chase Young could be one of the best defensive players in the country, and that will only make senior Jonathon Cooper's job on the other side of the line easier and give him more opportunity to make big plays.

The talent isn't too shabby behind these two either, as sophomores Tyreke Smith and Tyler Friday will certainly see time this year, and don't forget about Zach Harrison, Ohio State's top prospect in the 2019 class, who may be a year away from major time but could surely impress in spurts.

Redshirt freshman Javonte Jean-Baptiste and freshman Noah Potter, whose black stripe is gone, also have shown plenty of potential.

If there is one position Ohio State is absolutely stacked at, this is it.

Defensive Tackle

Seniors Robert Landers, Jashon



ANDREW LIND

NEXT IN LINE – With 53 tackles and nine passes deflected in just 27 games over two seasons, Ohio State junior Jeff Okudah is primed to be the Buckeyes' next first-round cornerback.

Cornell and Davon Hamilton lead a group that also appears to hold some solid depth, specifically enough to have four members at defensive tackle who will also get extended snap counts.

Cornell is likely to be a starter, as is Hamilton, but Hamilton will be splitting time with Landers to start the season.

Aside from Landers, Cornell and Hamilton, sophomore Taron Vincent will likely find his way into plenty of game action, even as a new face between these major veteran presences.

While those four seem to have separated themselves from the rest of the pack, there should be moments when sophomore Tommy Togiai gets an opportunity as well as junior Haskell Garrett.

Much like the defensive ends, this is a position that has not seen much "battle" to it. That's not to say there's not a chance for some new faces to make an impact, but with the three seniors ready to go and Vincent looking like the clear choice at No. 4, the debate is not quite as riveting as other positions.

Middle Linebacker

Almost certainly the most highly contested position on the defense, the middle linebacker position seems to be neck and neck between junior Tuf Borland and junior Baron Browning as well as sophomore Teradja Mitchell.

Borland was the starter for most of 2018 and has been named captain for the second straight season, so there's plenty of reason to think he is the front-runner here. There are also some very nice comments from co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison to help his case.

"I like everything about Tuf Borland's game," Mattison said. "Borland is another one that comes out to practice every day, extremely intelligent."

But Browning is the unproven, high-potential guy who, at the very least,

should expect to be seen as an easy sub whenever Borland needs a rest. Mitchell could be found in a similar position, but as just a sophomore, it is likely his time will be stretched thinner than the other two duking it out in the middle.

Outside Linebacker

Senior Malik Harrison and junior Pete Werner seem very much secure in these spots as starters, while sophomore Dallas Gant should find snaps as a clear No. 2.

Mattison has also had plenty of positives to say about Werner, calling him "a top guy at his position." While this hasn't been said, the words may be short on Harrison because he proved what he

can do on the field in 2018 more than Werner did and should be expected to be a strong force once again in his final season with the Buckeyes.

A pair of freshmen – Cade Stover and Craig Young – both lost their black stripes in the fall, and sophomore K'Vaughan Pope could be in line for some time on the field as well, giving the linebackers some much-needed depth after this same corps struggled for much of the previous season with stopping big plays down the field.

Cornerback

Junior Jeff Okudah and fifth-year senior Damon Arnette are as locked as they seemingly can be, with Okudah especially having incredibly high expectations as a lockdown corner. Arnette has impressed with his energy through much of spring and fall camp and could be due for an impressive final season, one he almost didn't have as he contemplated leaving for the NFL.

Secondary coach Jeff Hafley's duo is backed up by redshirt sophomore Shaun Wade, who looked solid in plenty of playing time last season, as well as sophomore Sevnyn Banks, who has been lauded for his potential.

Safety/Bullet

The safety position has some switch-ups due to the creation of the "Bullet" position, which is a linebacker-safety hybrid spot. That position should go to junior Brendon White, with junior Jashen Wint as the clear-cut backup.

As for the regular safety spot, senior Jordan Fuller has been one of the most consistent players of Ohio State's defense and should continue to be that heading into his final year.

Junior Isaiah Pryor had some rough stretches a season ago, often being out of position on some huge plays, but he has a chance to get some major reps, as does sophomore Josh Proctor, who has been highly regarded by many in camp, including Chase Young, as a breakout defensive player to look for this season.

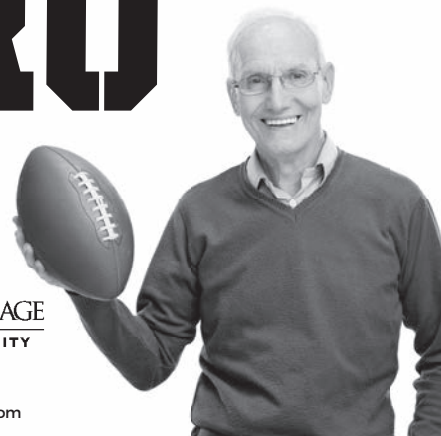
"He just looks ready to me," Young said. "He's making plays. He's got the body. I feel like he's getting the feel a little bit more, I feel like he'll be ready."

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW: OFFENSIVE OVERVIEW

QB Justin Fields Will Lead New-Look Offense

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The tension was palpable. Fingers were poised to tweet to the awaiting world outside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. All that was missing was a white plume of smoke to announce the new pope, uh, quarterback for the Ohio State University.

OK, it wasn't dramatic at all. More of a foregone conclusion that head coach Ryan Day confirmed midday Aug. 19 when he announced that sophomore Justin Fields would start the Aug. 31 opener against Florida Atlantic.

Fields is the "four seasons" guy. He transferred after one season as a backup at Georgia in time for the winter quarter at Ohio State, participated in the spring

game, stuck around for summer conditioning and earned the starting nod in the preseason fall camp.

"I feel like I've improved a lot overall, every part of my game," Fields said Aug. 19. "I feel way more comfortable than in the spring, and I think all my teammates see that. Coach Day definitely sees it. It's a great honor being the starting quarterback at such a prestigious university, so I'm definitely excited."

It was a given, barring injury or a meltdown, that Fields was not coming to Ohio State to sit on the bench again.

While Day waited until the third week of camp to make it the quarterback choice official, the offense overall had more uncertainty heading into the season than the defense despite much less turnover of staff.

There was only one change (aside

from wide receivers coach Brian Hartline having the interim tag removed) when Euclid, Ohio, native Mike Yurcich left Oklahoma State after six seasons to replace Day as the passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach.

There were four new faces on the defensive staff, but they had nine returning starters to work with compared to four on offense: senior receiver Austin Mack, fourth-year junior tight end Luke Farrell, junior left tackle Thayer Munford and junior running back J.K. Dobbins.

Yurcich during his time with the other OSU was twice nominated for the Broyles Award as the nation's outstanding assistant coach. His teams averaged

38.0 points per game and 478.3 yards per game.

His offenses have been ranked in the top 10 in PASSING?? efficiency in each of the past three seasons, and they've been ranked in the top 20 in passing yards per attempt in his time in Stillwater.



Mike Yurcich

That's good news for Buckeye fans, who got spoiled by Dwayne Haskins when in his one year as a starter he threw for school records of 4,831 yards and 50 touchdowns in leading Ohio State to a 13-1 record last season.

Fields must prove himself as a passer, but he's a more dynamic runner. Nonetheless Day said the goal is to not change too much of the offense just because Fields will take the snaps.

"It's going to be very, very similar," Day said. "His skill set, he has a lot of different things than Dwayne had. He's a little bit more athletic and faster and stronger. He can run. But it will be very similar. We'll see the same type of plays. We're not all of a sudden going to go drastically different.

"We'll probably emphasize some different packages with him. For the most part it will still be the Ohio State offense."

Whether the Buckeyes can duplicate the success Haskins and his teammates had is another question. The offensive line will be revamped, and the receiving corps lost its first-, third- and fourth-leading receivers in Parris Campbell, Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin.

K.J. Hill is the leading returnee. He had 70 catches for 885 yards (12.6 average) and six touchdowns. It appears he will play the Parris Campbell role at H-back.

"I think K.J. is pretty complete in terms of his skill set," Day said. "He can do just about everything, and I think in the end it's just going to come down to how durable will he be late in the season and can his stamina sustain throughout a game."

The cupboard is far from bare with the likes of senior Binjimen Victor, sophomore Chris Olave, redshirt freshman Jaelen Gill, true freshman Garrett Wilson and others.

The offensive line is a work in progress beginning with Munford, who is working his way back from an injury. He saw his practice time limited early in fall camp, but he will have the No. 1 left tackle spot.

Third-year sophomore Josh Myers has nailed the starting spot at center after backing All-American Michael Jordan last season.

Jonah Jackson, a graduate transfer from Rutgers, will be at left guard while sophomore Wyatt Davis starts at right guard.

The only spot open is right tackle, where fifth-year senior Branden Bowen is battling second-year freshman Nicholas Petit-Frere.

"I anticipate both will play," Day said on Aug. 19. "Branden Bowen has probably had the best camp. He's at a certain level, playing really well. Nick has done a really good job as well. Right now, they both deserve to play."

There's no contest to see who will be

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW: OFFENSIVE OVERVIEW

carrying the ball the most. Dobbins, after two years of sharing the load with Mike Weber (now trying to make the Dallas Cowboys) is a man possessed after calling last season for him “a failure” and “terrible” despite leading the Buckeyes in rushing with 1,053 yards on a 4.6 average with 10 touchdowns.

He felt sluggish and uninspired at times but has dropped weight and gained quickness, and he is ready for a big season, especially if the Buckeyes, as expected, don't pass as much.

“I want that responsibility of the team relying on me in times of need,” Dobbins said.

Day has harped all preseason camp that he needs backup for Dobbins. Junior Demario McCall was named the backup, but freshmen Marcus Crowley and Steele Chambers have been getting reps in the absence of injured second-year freshman Master Teague.

The tight end position is deep and talented, although their primary job is blocking. Junior Luke Farrell led the group with 20 catches for 205 yards and a TD last season.

He'll be pushed for playing time by senior Rashod Berry, junior Jake Hausmann and sophomore Jeremy Ruckert. Because there is quantity and quality, there may be some packages with two tight ends or maybe even more.

Justin Time

Fields, from Kennesaw, Ga., already had college game experience, having played 12 of 14 games for Georgia in 2018. The five-star recruit completed 27 of 39 passes for 328 yards and four touchdowns and had four rushing scores along with 266 yards on 42 carries (6.3-yard average).

It takes more than good stats to be the starting quarterback at Ohio State, though.

“You have to prove to your teammates and coaches that you're worthy of being a starter,” Day said. “A lot comes with that – leadership, ability to control the offense, making checks up front, protection checks, making good reads in the run game, locating the football, taking care of the football. It's not just going out there and playing, it's moving the football down the field.”

Fields was picked over graduate transfer Gunnar Hoak, who arrived from Kentucky to participate in spring ball, and Chris Chugonov, the graduate transfer from West Virginia in his second season with the Buckeyes. His only game last year was against Rutgers.

Hoak, from Dublin Coffman High School in suburban Columbus, played in five games for Kentucky last season.

“You've got to come in and compete,”

Hoak said. “You can't come in here with the attitude of just you're going to sit back and let somebody else take it. You have to come in with a good attitude and a good mind-set.”

Ready To Rumble

Dobbins said he dropped to 8 percent body fat from 12, part of his total makeover physically and mentally.

“I have a chip on my shoulder because I know I can do better,” he said. “I feel like everything is coming together at the right time.”

As much as Dobbins wants to be the workhorse, Day wants to make sure he's fresh come November when the weather potentially gets nastier and running becomes essential.

“I think all three guys, four guys with Master when he gets healthy, want that spot, but they have got to learn to take care of the ball and we have to learn to be able to trust them,” Day said.

Making The Catch

Hill and the gang will get help when senior Austin Mack (26 receptions for 12.7 yards a catch and a TD last season) gets healthy so Fields, or whoever is tossing the ball, will have options.

Olave burst onto the scene late in the season, highlighted by two 24-yard TD catches against Michigan as well as blocking a punt that led to another score.

“We think he's an every-down receiver,” Day said.

With the tight ends itching to be more involved in the passing game by actually catching passes, the wide receivers corps is on notice that they have to be at their best every game.

Line Them Up

Offensive line coach Greg Studrawa looks at four-star true freshman Harry Miller from Buford, Ga., and can't help but get excited about his possibilities, such as being the No. 2 center behind Myers – rather quickly.

“I'm hoping by that first game Harry's the backup unless something happens here,” Studrawa said. “I believe the kid can do it.”

Miller's part of an offensive line that Studrawa feels will allow for a rotation without a drop in performance.

“The competition is unbelievable,” he said. “I think there's four tackles that can start anywhere in this league, in a lot of places,” he said. “Sometimes maybe it's a guy that's banged up as the year goes on, you limit his plays. You get him out and let the other guy play.”

“So it could be singular (one sub) or what Coach Day likes to do is getting the second unit in and see how they do. That's awesome.”



ANDREW LIND

HOMETOWN KID – Former Dublin (Ohio) Coffman quarterback Gunnar Hoak transferred to Ohio State after he graduated from Kentucky this spring to compete with Justin Fields for the starting quarterback spot.

Defense Has Plenty To Prove To New Coaches

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Greg Mattison wasn't in Columbus last season, save for a forgettable afternoon in November for him, so he didn't hear all the local talk about how historically bad the Ohio State defense was in 2018.

However, he became aware of the chatter the moment he switched from maize and blue to scarlet and gray in January when he became the Buckeyes' co-defensive coordinator after eight seasons with Michigan, the past four as the defensive line coach.

The Buckeyes allowed a school-record 357 points, and their 25.5 points allowed per game was tied for 51st in the country. They were tied for 71st nationally in total defense (403.4 yards per game), 86th in pass defense (245.2) and 56th in rush defense (158.2).

Purdue racked up 539 total yards and 49 points, and Maryland posted 535 yards and 51 points. Even Michigan scored big in a 62-39 loss to the Buckeyes.

With Ryan Day taking over as head coach for Urban Meyer on Jan. 2, he set about cleaning house, and within a month co-defensive coordinator Alex Grinch was replaced by Jeff Hafley (also the secondary coach), Greg Schiano left and Mattison took his spot, Al Washington replaced linebackers coach Bill Davis, and Matt Barnes became special teams coordinator and assistant secondary coach with the departure of Taver Johnson.

The only holdover on the defense was line coach Larry Johnson, who was promoted to associate head coach.

Even with the changes, the defensive personnel must be, well, defensive when asked about the 2018 season.

"Let's face it, stats are stats," Mattison said Aug. 14. "You know, the only stat that I really, really bought – that I ever really look, really, really closely at – are points, you know, giving up points. That's



TIM MOODY

NEW MAN IN CHARGE – Co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley came to Columbus following a seven-year stint in the NFL coaching defensive backs for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Cleveland Browns and San Francisco 49ers.

the bottom line. I didn't even look at what it was last year. It doesn't matter to me.

"The thing that I know what we are going to do is we are going to be an aggressive defense that runs to the football, and everybody on our defense believes in that, and that's why I'm so proud of these kids right now."

He also reminded critics that the Buckeyes had a pretty good record last season.

"Somebody said something to me one time," Mattison said, "and I said, 'Guys, they are 13-1.' 13-1. There's a lot of places in the country that would like to give

their hand and say, 'We are 13-1.'"

Graduate defensive tackle Jashon Cornell was one of the long line of players to be asked if the defense had something to prove in 2019.

"You're Ohio State," he said. "You always have something to prove."

Fair point, but the criticism was warranted considering OSU allowed a staggering 23 plays of 40 or more yards last season.

To that end, the new staff has made some changes starting with reducing the number of schemes as well as emphasizing getting after the ball.

"We're playing aggressive. We're playing really aggressive," senior defensive end and co-captain Jonathon Cooper said. "We have something to prove. We have a chip on our shoulder every single day. We come out with a tremendous effort and get after it. That just goes to show the difference from this year to last year."

Or as senior linebacker Malik Harrison put it, "I like it because it's more simple. It's just having us play hard, play fast. It's more just click on, see ball, get ball. The thing that excites me is it allows us to play, not too many complicated things going on."

While Mattison said the base defense remains a 4-3 (four linemen, three linebackers) a wrinkle is the "Bullet" position, which is a hybrid of an outside linebacker and defensive back. The Bullet, most likely junior safety Brendon White, can interchange with the strongside (Sam) linebacker, probably junior Pete Werner.

"The bullet position is a position (for) when teams want to try to spread you out and use a very, very athletic tight end to get a mismatch on what for most people would be a big, strong Sam linebacker," Mattison said.

Day liked what he had seen of the

defense through two scrimmages and more than a dozen practices.

"We are running to the ball, we're creating turnovers," he said on Aug. 19. "The secondary is playing with energy. The defensive line is penetrating. I can feel that. They're playing with great energy."

For all its shortcomings last season, the defense should be a strength considering there are nine returning starters with defensive ends Cooper and junior Chase Young; fifth-year senior defensive tackle Robert Landers; linebackers Harrison, Werner and junior Tuf Borland; safeties White and senior Jordan Fuller; and fifth-year senior cornerback Damon Arnette.

"We are very, very talented," Mattison said. "Sometimes when you have a very, very talented team, you, as a coach, say, 'Go.' You don't try to invent things. You don't try to make it too complicated. What you try to do is say, let you guys go play. I happen to think this defense has that."

First Line Of Defense

Defensive end Nick Bosa is gone, having been taken second overall by the San Francisco 49ers in the 2019 NFL draft. But again, he wasn't around after a season-ending injury in the third game vs. TCU last season.

The Buckeyes had to fill the gap, so to speak, and Young figures to be the next great DE following Bosa and his brother, Joey (No. 4 pick to the Chargers in 2016).

Young showed flashes of brilliance but was hampered by ankle injuries throughout last season. He had 34 total tackles (25 solo), 15½ tackles for loss – including 10½ sacks – for minus-86 yards and two forced fumbles.

"He's a leader," Day said. "He's the voice of our defense right now. That's what I feel. That's what I see."

Young understands he is not a fin-

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ished product.

"I'm just looking to improve my game," he said. "That's what the whole D line is doing right now. We're on the verge of trying to be the best in the country."

Mattison hasn't known Young long but likes what he sees.

"Chase Young is an outstanding person, athlete and football player," he said.

Cooper, as a co-captain, provides experience and leadership. He had 14 unassisted tackles among his 25 last season and had 2½ sacks.

The backups are young but talented, of course, and include sophomores Tyreke Smith and Tyler Friday, second-year freshman Javontae Jean-Baptiste and true freshman Zach Harrison.

"Tyreke Smith is going to be a wicked guy coming off the edge," Young said. "A lot of people don't know about him."

Landers and Cornell hold the defensive tackle spots, but it won't be easy replacing Dre'Mont Jones, who as a senior last season was named a first-team All-American by College Football News for his 43 total tackles, including 13½ TFLs and 8½ sacks.

Cornell will give it a go after being on the edge last season.

"When I was at defensive end, I didn't feel as comfortable in the pass because I was switching back and forth from positions," he said. "When I'm at three-technique I feel at home."

The Buckeyes are deep at the tackles starting with senior Davon Hamilton, who split starts with Landers last season. Graduate transfer Antwan Jackson played at Blinn Junior College after originally attending Auburn in 2016 but redshirting his freshman season.

He is expected to spell Hamilton and sophomore Tommy Togiai.

"Right now, my job is to come in after Davon or Tommy at nose guard or 3-technique, just come in play as hard as I can and do what I can to help the team," Jackson said.

Day said that he expects to use rotation for his defensive interior because of the progress made by junior Haskell Garrett, redshirt sophomore Jerron Cage and sophomore Taron Vincent.

Backing The 'Backers

The linebacker corps of Borland, Harrison and Werner came under intense criticism for not being up to standards last season, although it should be noted all were in their first year as full-time starters.

They played like it at times with eagerness that left gaps, poor reads and what seemed like less pure skills than previous linebackers.

Yet Mattison believes in the trio, and it's likely they'll be trotting out with the

ones when the Buckeyes open the season Aug. 31 vs. Florida Atlantic. Harrison has 39 games under his belt and should be secure at his position.

"We don't really talk about last year," he said. "Most of the time we're just telling everybody to go hard. We have a lot to prove. We want to be the No. 1 defense in the country."

Mattison has gone to bat for Borland, who was not at 100 percent last season after an Achilles tendon injury.

"I like everything about Tuf Borland's game," he said. "Borland is another one that comes out to practice every day, extremely intelligent. He takes great pride in getting the front lined up."

Werner was praised as well.

"I really believe he is a top guy at his position," Mattison said. "I've had the opportunity to see a lot of pretty good football players, and I am really impressed with him. He plays extremely hard. He's very physical. He's got great size and strength, and he can run, and he's got unbelievable character."

Everyone who has earned playing time has a chance to get it, Mattison said.

"With the tempo we're going to see, with the way teams are going to try to attack us, we'd better have a first starter or a second starter and a third starter," he said.

Players such as junior Baron Browning; sophomores Dallas Gant, Teradja Mitchell and K'Vaughan Pope; and true freshmen Cade Stover and Craig Young are in the running.

Backs To The Wall

Even the maligned linebackers got off easy compared to the scorn thrown the way of cornerbacks and safeties. Naturally, the scorn was wide open. That's how it went for the secondary that was not looking for the ball and always a step behind.

Enter Hafley, who spent the past three of his seven years in the NFL with the 49ers.

"His expertise in the back end, he's as good a secondary coach as I've ever seen, and I know the players would say that," Mattison said.

Junior cornerback Jeff Okudah said Hafley's knowledge and enthusiasm are contagious.

"Things the offense does and things that would pass through last year, guys are stepping up and identifying like splits or formations and everyone's player condition is just flying through the roof so we're playing faster," he said.

Arnette, who had 40 tackles, an interception and six pass breakups last season, could have turned pro but he agreed with the staff's assessment that he wasn't ready.

"I see someone who's fired up, ready to go," Okudah, who could start at the opposite corner, said of Arnette.

Sophomores Sevn Banks and Marcus Williamson are among the corners vying for playing time.

Fuller will get the nod at one safety spot. He tied Malik Harrison for the team lead with 81 tackles last season. Third-year sophomore Shaun Wade, who had a

team-high three interceptions, is expected to be the other starter, although White as the Bullet is also part of the group and will be on the field a lot. Junior Jahsen Wint is also a Bullet candidate.

Hafley added more zone coverage to the mix in order create turnovers. OSU tied for 59th last season with 11 picks.

"Zone gives you a lot of chances to make plays on the ball," Okudah said.



ANDREW LIND

SOON-TO-BE FIRST-ROUND DRAFT PICK – Defensive end Chase Young enters his junior season with high expectations after being named to the AP Preseason All-American team and numerous watch lists.



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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

July Full Of Recruiting Fireworks For Ohio State

The month of July was significant for Ohio State on the recruiting trail, as the staff landed commitments from seven of the nation's top prospects to bring the total number of pledges from the 2020 recruiting class to 22 players.

The Buckeyes climbed all the way to No. 2 in the 247Sports composite team rankings but now sit fourth in the standings behind Clemson, Alabama and LSU. That's still tops in the Big Ten with a considerable lead over second-place Michigan (No. 10 overall).

offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson with his size, speed and blocking ability, among other things.

Royer quickly listed Ohio State among his top schools and set up an official visit, which he took the weekend of June 21. The Buckeyes also hosted four-star tight ends Cam Large and Jalin Conyers that weekend, but it was then that Royer emerged as the staff's top target.

Maryland LB Picks Bucks Over Michigan, Notre Dame

Less than 24 hours later, Olney (Md.) Good Counsel three-star linebacker Mitchell Melton pledged his services to Ohio State.

The 6-3, 235-pound Melton was considered the 43rd-best outside linebacker and No. 659 prospect overall in the 2020 recruiting class but showed his overall athleticism at The Opening this spring, registering a 4.87-second 40-yard dash, 4.27-second 20-yard shuttle and 32-inch vertical jump. He chose the Buckeyes over offers from programs such as Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Pittsburgh, Texas A&M, Virginia Tech and Wisconsin, among others.

Melton received an offer from Ohio State's previous staff following an unofficial visit during the win against Michigan last fall, and a second unofficial visit in March allowed him to build a relationship with co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison and linebackers coach Al Washington.

After narrowing down his options, Melton set official visits with the Buckeyes, Fighting Irish and Wolverines on consecutive weekends in late June. A discussion with his parents – who are originally from Ohio and grew up rooting for Ohio State – ultimately led to his commitment.

Ohio State Raids Michigan For ATH

Ohio State continued its summer commitment wave on July 4 with a pair of commitments, the first coming that morning from Muskegon, Mich., three-star athlete Cameron Martinez.

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2020 who have issued verbal commitments to play football at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Paris Johnson Jr.	OT	6-8	295	★★★★★	Cincinnati Princeton
Jack Miller	QB	6-4	210	★★★★	Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral
Luke Wypler	OC	6-4	285	★★★★	Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	WR	6-1	188	★★★★	Rockwall, Texas
Gee Scott Jr.	WR	6-3	207	★★★★	Sammamish (Wa.) Eastside Catholic
Jakob James	OG	6-5	275	★★★	Cincinnati Elder
Trey Leroux	OT	6-8	355	★★★	Norwalk, Ohio
Lejond Cavazos	CB	6-1	190	★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Julian Fleming	WR	6-2	199	★★★★	Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia
Jake Seibert	K	6-1	190	★★★	Cincinnati La Salle
Grant Toutant	OT	6-7	320	★★★	Warren (Mich.) De La Salle
Ty Hamilton	DE	6-3	250	★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) Central
Clark Phillips	CB	5-11	178	★★★★	La Habra, Calif.
Cody Simon	OLB	6-1	218	★★★★	Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter's Prep
Darrion Henry	DT	6-5	279	★★★★	Cincinnati Princeton
Joe Royer	TE	6-5	225	★★★	Cincinnati Elder
Mitchell Melton	OLB	6-3	235	★★★	Olney (Md.) Good Counsel
Cameron Martinez	ATH	6-0	183	★★★	Muskegon, Mich.
Josh Fryar	OL	6-6	305	★★★	Beech Grove, Ind.
Mookie Cooper	WR	5-9	193	★★★★	St. Louis Trinity Catholic
Lathan Ransom	S	6-1	193	★★★★	Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic
Kourt Williams	ATH	6-1	216	★★★★	Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco

Players in the class of 2021 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jack Sawyer	DE	6-6	220	★★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) North
Kyle McCord	QB	6-3	204	★★★★	Philadelphina St. Joseph's
Jayden Ballard	WR	6-2	175	★★★★	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Ben Christman	OT	6-6	299	★★★★	Richfield (Ohio) Revere

The 5-11, 183-pound Martinez was considered the 14th-best athlete and No. 368 prospect overall, as he rushed for 2,526 yards and 38 touchdowns and threw for 649 yards and 12 more scores to lead the Big Reds to the state championship game last fall. His position at the college level very much remains up in the air, though it will either be at slot receiver or hybrid linebacker/safety – otherwise known as the "Bullet" position.

Ohio State has been keeping tabs on Martinez for quite some time, dating back to early interest from former cornerbacks

coach Kerry Coombs and transitioning through Taver Johnson's tenure, and the Buckeyes finally offered him a scholarship in February. He took several unofficial visits this spring, which allowed him to bond with head coach Ryan Day, wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley, assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes and director of player personnel Mark Pantoni.

His official visit to Ohio State the weekend of June 21 was the third and last official visit for Martinez, who also visited Northwestern in May and Minnesota in early June.

Buckeyes Land Top Indiana OL

Just a few hours after Martinez pledged his services to Ohio State, Beech Grove, Ind., three-star offensive lineman Josh Fryar did the same.

The 6-6, 305-pound Fryar was considered the 23rd-best offensive guard and No. 417 prospect overall in the class of 2020 but was recruited because of his ability to play multiple positions along the offensive line.

Fryar showed up on Ohio State's radar last fall, attending the win over Minnesota in October. The Buckeyes then extended a scholarship offer in December, but he was not discussed as an option until recently because the staff was focused on addressing other needs along the offensive line.

Fryar lined up several official visits for the spring with hopes of making a decision this summer, with schools such as Indiana, Oregon and Penn State each seemingly taking control of his recruitment with each visit. But then his official visit with Ohio State the weekend of June 21 ultimately separated the Buckeyes from the Hoosiers, Ducks and Nittany Lions.

Fryar is likely the final piece of the Buckeyes' offensive line haul, joining

RECRUITING OUTLOOK

Andrew Lind

A lot has happened since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press. The following is a full breakdown of Ohio State's recruiting efforts.

Cincinnati TE Commits To OSU

Cincinnati Elder three-star tight end Joe Royer got the fireworks started when he committed to Ohio State the evening of July 2.

The 6-5, 225-pound Royer was considered the 14th-best tight end and No. 451 prospect overall in the class of 2020, hauling in 31 catches for 612 yards and five touchdowns for the Panthers last season. He picked Ohio State over finalists Arizona State, LSU, Michigan, Penn State and Wisconsin.

Royer landed an offer from the staff during a one-day camp in early June where he outperformed program legacy Luke Lachey – the son of former Buckeye offensive lineman Jim Lachey – and other tight ends in attendance. He impressed

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

Cincinnati Princeton five-star tackle Paris Johnson Jr.; Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional four-star Luke Wypler, the nation's top-rated center; Warren (Mich.) De La Salle four-star tackle Grant Toutant; Cincinnati Elder three-star tackle Jakob James; and Norwalk, Ohio, three-star tackle Trey Leroux already in the fold.

Ohio State Adds Another St. Louis WR

Ohio State added yet another one of the nation's top-rated wide receivers on July 7 when St. Louis Trinity Catholic four-star Mookie Cooper announced his commitment to the Buckeyes.

The 5-9, 193-pound Cooper was considered the 14th-best wide receiver and No. 75 prospect overall in the class of 2020. He racked up 1,153 all-purpose yards and scored 18 touchdowns to lead the Titans to the state championship last season – where they defeated incoming freshman wide receiver Jameson Williams and Cardinal Ritter Prep, 45-19. He picked Ohio State over finalists Illinois, Miami (Fla.), Texas and USC.

The Buckeyes extended an offer to Cooper back in October 2017 but didn't become a player for his services until this spring when he reopened his recruitment following a three-week commitment to the Longhorns. The Illini were the perceived favorite to land Cooper's pledge in the weeks thereafter thanks to his relationship with tight ends coach Cory Patterson (his former head coach at Trinity Catholic), but his first and only trip to Columbus in mid-May changed that.

With his decision, Cooper joins three other top-100 wide receivers in Ohio State's recruiting class: Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia five-star Julian Fleming (No. 3 overall); Rockwall, Texas, four-star Jaxon Smith-Njigba (No. 62); and Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star Gee Scott Jr. (No. 63).

Cooper also became the third wide receiver from St. Louis to commit to the Buckeyes in as many years, including Christian Brothers College four-star Kamryn Babb in 2018 and Williams, a Cardinal Ritter Prep four-star in 2019.

Arizona S Chooses Buckeyes On Birthday

Ohio State landed a commitment from one of the nation's top-rated defensive backs on July 16 when Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic four-star safety Lathan Ransom pledged his services to the Buckeyes on his 17th birthday.

The 6-1, 193-pound Ransom was considered the fourth-best safety and No. 77 prospect overall in the class of 2020. He recorded 82 total tackles, eight pass breakups and six interceptions to lead the Lancers to the state championship game last fall. He picked Ohio State over LSU, Notre Dame, Oklahoma and Texas.

Hafley extended a scholarship offer to Ransom in January, and the prospect made his first trip to Columbus for an unofficial visit just a few weeks later. The Buckeyes clearly made an impression that weekend, too, as he subsequently listed the program among his top five schools.

Both the Fighting Irish and Longhorns were considered the favorites in Ransom's recruitment at various points in time, as the former shares a number of similarities with his Catholic high school and the latter ultimately landed his teammate, five-star running back Bijan Robinson. That all

30 Years Ago – 1989

Several Buckeye football recruits showcased their talents for the final time as high school players in the 44th annual Ohio North-South All-Star Game, played in Massillon.

Wide receiver Roger Harper of Columbus Independence grabbed two touchdown passes to help lead the South to a 23-0 victory.

Despite the fact his team lost, Elyria West linebacker Steve Tovar was named the North's most valuable player in the game.

Starting the game for the victorious South squad were OSU recruits Dante Lee of Dayton Meadowdale at running back, Jack Thrush of Cincinnati Moeller at offensive guard, Tim Williams of Waynesville at placekicker and Harper. Also playing for the South was Chillicothe defensive tackle Chuck Jones, an OSU recruit who failed to graduate from high school on time.

Starting for the North team were running back Raymont Harris of Lorain Admiral King, offensive guard Alan Kline of Tiffin Columbian, defensive tackle Dave Monnot of Canton Central Catholic and Tovar.

25 Years Ago – 1994

Of the top defensive backs in Ohio, Charles Woodson (6-2, 185, 4.5) of Fremont Ross was considered the best. In fact, he was the early preseason favorite for the best high school prospect in the state regardless of position.

He hoped to play defensive back in college and had accounted for 49 tackles, three interceptions and nine passes broken up the previous season. But scouts also looked at him as a bona fide tailback prospect, especially after he rushed for more than 1,600 yards and 27 touchdowns in just nine games as a junior. He won All-Ohio honors in football and all-district honors in basketball and had already qualified to play as a college freshman.

Unfortunately for Ohio State, Woodson did not list the Buckeyes among his early-season favorites. Woodson's list included Michigan as the favorite with Tennessee, Alabama, Notre Dame and Georgia.

20 Years Ago – 1999

Free safety Willie Allen (6-2, 175, 4.33) of Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne was not among Ohio's top-rated prospects, but the OSU coaches had a good book on him, having seen him in camp the previous three years.

"They offered me after the camp," Allen said. "In May when they called me about coming to the camp, they mentioned they might want to offer me there. They didn't offer me until later. I called last week to see where I stood, whether they were offering me or not, and they did."

OSU assistant coach Shawn Simms confirmed that the Buckeyes were interested.

"He offered me and I said I had to talk it over with my parents," Allen said. "The next day, I called them and committed."

15 Years Ago – 2004

Ted Ginn Jr. made sure that his last football as a high schooler was a memorable one.

He was the Under Armour All-America Game's leading receiver, gathering in five passes for 142 yards including an 82-yard touchdown from quarterback Grant Gregory, who was headed to Indiana to play college ball. On the play, Ginn ran a fade pattern in the middle of the field, used his speed to get spacing on defender Steffan Brinson (Pittsburgh) and then raced the distance untouched once Gregory delivered the ball.

Ginn also threw for a score in the fourth quarter. Quarterback Brian Hoyer (Michigan State) flipped the ball out to Ginn in the flat, who then pitched a strike to Dustin Woods (Miami, Ohio) for a 36-yard touchdown. The TD came with 4:57 remaining in the fourth quarter.

"We had practiced it earlier in the week," Ginn said. "We knew that was the play, and we knew it was going to work. We were just waiting for the right time to throw it in. I guess that was the right time."

10 Years Ago – 2009

In an interview with the Post and Courier in Charleston, S.C., former OSU recruit and current Clemson quarterback Tajh Boyd spoke about why he selected the Tigers over the Buckeyes.

"Terrelle Pryor, he is Ohio State," Boyd told the newspaper. "(Clemson) hasn't really established anybody. I've got an opportunity to come in with a new coach (Dabo Swinney), who is going to play the best player."

After undergoing surgery to repair a torn ACL, Boyd said he expected to be fully healthy. He would likely receive a red-shirt for the upcoming season, however.

Five Years Ago – 2014

Jerome Baker, committed to Florida out of Cleveland Benedictine on the same day that Lebron James announced his return to Cleveland. The 6-1, 205-pound linebacker selected the Gators over Ohio State and Tennessee.

"They were a little different, a little farther away from home," Baker said. "It's just a feel and in the SEC, so I'm definitely going to be playing with the best."

One Year Ago – 2018

In the midst of the Ohio State independent board's two-week investigation into how head coach Urban Meyer had handled allegations of past domestic violence by former wide receivers coach Zach Smith, Austin (Texas) Lake Travis five-star wide-out Garrett Wilson shared his thoughts on the matter and said 2018 would be rousing success for the Buckeyes.

"Talking to my mom (on Aug. 12), I'm like, 'I don't know why stuff like this has got to happen,'" Wilson told CBS Austin. "She's like, 'Welcome to life.' So, some things go wrong, not everything's going to go right."

"At the end of the day, I feel like those kids are going to come back stronger after this, Coach Meyer's going to come back stronger and they're going to win a (national championship) this year."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Buckeyes Miss Out On Three Top-Ranked RBs

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changed when Ransom took an official visit to Ohio State in mid-June, however, and a flood of 247Sports Crystal Ball predictions were placed in favor of the Buckeyes.

Ohio State Goes Back To California For LB/S

Already an important date on the calendar with college football's recruiting dead period coming to an end, July 24 became even more significant for Ohio State when Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star Kourt Williams announced his commitment to the Buckeyes.

The 6-1, 216-pound Williams was considered the 12th-best outside linebacker and No. 161 prospect overall in the class of 2020, recording 74 tackles, two sacks and two pass breakups to lead the Braves to the state semifinals last season, but Hafley believes he's a perfect fit for the aforementioned "Bullet" position.

Williams picked Ohio State over finalists Penn State, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas A&M.

The Buckeyes extended an offer to Williams — who attends the high school that produced current offensive guard Wyatt Davis and one-time safety commit Jaiden Woodbey — during his unofficial visit in March. His relationship with Hafley blossomed from there and ultimately allowed Ohio State to stay in the picture while Williams took official visits to other schools throughout the spring.

Williams took only four of his five allotted official visits, the last to Columbus the weekend of June 21-23. That trip alongside his parents solidified the Buckeyes' spot at the forefront of his recruitment.

Buckeyes Fail To Land Top-Ranked RBs

Ohio State hosted three of the nation's top-rated running backs for official visits during the

month of June, including Clovis (Calif.) Buchanan five-star Kendall Milton, Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-star Bijan Robinson and Deerfield Beach, Fla., four-star Jaylan Knighton. And though the Buckeyes felt good about their chances coming out of each visit, all three ended up committing elsewhere in late July or early August.

Ohio State was the first of four official visits for the 6-2, 229-pound Milton, who quickly trended toward Georgia following his trip to Athens a few weeks later. He committed to the Bulldogs on July 29.

The Buckeyes shifted their focus to Knighton and Robinson as a result and were the perceived favorites to land a commitment from both, but things changed drastically when the dead period came to an end. Knighton took an unexpected unofficial visit to Florida State for the Seminoles' Saturday Night Live recruiting event and committed just a few days later on July 30.

Robinson also seemed like a lock for Ohio

State until the staff was alerted roughly one week before his announcement date that the Buckeyes would not be his choice. It appears distance played a significant role in his recruitment, which ended on Aug. 2 with a commitment to Texas.

Ohio State will still look to add two running backs in the current recruiting cycle, which leaves Dallas Jesuit four-star E.J. Smith — the son of NFL Hall of Famer Emmitt Smith — Dublin (Ohio) Coffman four-star Michael Drennen and Lancaster, Texas, four-star Kevontre Bradford among the staff's top remaining targets.

Top CB Target Transfers To IMG

On July 10, LSU five-star cornerback commit Elias Ricks announced that he will be transferring to Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy where he'll play his senior year alongside his friend and Ohio State four-star cornerback pledge Lejond Cavazos.

The 6-2, 192-pound Ricks — who is considered the second-best cornerback and No. 15 prospect overall in the 2020 recruiting class — was previously at Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei but was notified by the school he could not graduate early and decided to transfer.

Cavazos and Ricks have not been shy about stating their desire to play together in college, though their current commitments would obviously prevent that from happening. The latter is set to take an official visit to Ohio State for the Penn State game on Nov. 22, which will give the Buckeyes an opportunity to flip his pledge.

Ricks was close to committing to Ohio State until former head coach Urban Meyer announced his retirement in early December. He picked LSU just a few weeks later, so it will be up to Day to rekindle those feelings during his official visit.

Tennessee DE Includes Ohio State Among Top 5

Ohio State continues to search for an additional defensive lineman to fill out its 2020 recruiting class, and Knoxville (Tenn.) Catholic four-star Tyler Baron is at the top of the list. It appears the feeling is mutual, too, as the 6-5, 252-pound Baron listed the Buckeyes in his top five on Aug. 9 alongside Kentucky, Oklahoma, Oregon and Tennessee.

The home-state Volunteers are the heavy favorite in Baron's recruitment, but he speaks with Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson, running backs coach/area recruiter Tony Alford and Day several times each week.

Baron visited Columbus for the first and only time for the spring game back in April but is planning to return to campus for an official visit for the game against Michigan State on Oct. 5. He's expected to make a college decision in the weeks thereafter.

Buckeyes Hand Out Several New Offers

The month of July was relatively slow in terms of offers, with the dead period preventing recruits from visiting campus and coaches from contacting them. But once contact was allowed to resume on July 24, the Ohio State staff was quick to reach out to some of the nation's top prospects.

The Buckeyes have extended offers in the last few weeks to the above-mentioned Bradford; 2021 Katy, Texas, four-star cornerback Hunter Washington (5-11, 178); 2021 Powder Springs (Ga.) McEachern four-star athlete Chief Borders; and 2022 Denison, Texas, four-star running back Jadarian Price.

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Ohio State had a stellar month of July on the recruiting trail, landing commitments from seven prospects: Cincinnati Elder three-star tight end Joe Royer on July 2; Olney (Md.) Good Counsel three-star linebacker Mitchell Melton on July 3; Muskegon, Mich., three-star athlete Cameron Martinez and Beech Grove, Ind., three-star offensive guard Josh Fryar on July 4; St. Louis Trinity Catholic four-star wide receiver Mookie Cooper on July 8; Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic four-star safety Lathan Ransom on July 16; and Bellflower, Calif., four-star linebacker Kourt Williams on July 24.

When it comes to players like Cooper, Ransom and Williams, specifically, how did their spring/early summer official visits allow Ohio State to wrap up their respective recruitments?

"Getting the early unofficial visit is so important. If you look historically at national type recruits that Ohio State has been able to land, the overwhelming majority of those players first took an early unofficial visit before their official visits.

"The unofficial sets the table. It gives guys an in-depth look at what Ohio State is all about in terms of the environment, the athletics and the academics. In all three of these situations, Ohio State was able to get them on campus for an unofficial visit during the winter/spring to help pique the interest and get them back on campus later on.

"With Williams and Ransom specifically, the official visits each presented a different challenge.

"Ohio State emerged from Williams' March unofficial visit as the team to beat, so it was simply a matter of getting a few more questions answered about the day-to-day life within the program and getting him around other guys on the team and just making sure on his end that this was the type of place and culture he wanted to be a part of.

"With Ransom, the Buckeyes were playing from behind a little bit after a pretty short unofficial visit from

him back in March. I think a big thing with Ransom was that he was in on that huge June 21 weekend where the Buckeyes hosted more than a dozen visitors. Many of them ended up committing to Ohio State. It was a momentum thing where they were able to not only impress him individually, but he saw the wave of other guys that were ready to make the jump as well and they just sort of carried that momentum into July.

"Cooper was again a product of a great unofficial visit in May. The Buckeyes really prioritized him during the spring evaluation period, quickly built a relationship with him and then had that great May unofficial visit which carried them to his July commitment."

Ohio State was widely expected to land commitments from both Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-star running back Bijan Robinson and Deerfield Beach, Fla., four-star all-purpose back Jaylan Knighton, but that changed the weekend of July 27-28.

Knighton committed to Florida State just days after he took an unofficial visit for the Seminoles' summer recruiting spectacular, and details are seemingly hard to come by when it comes to Robinson, who - despite being Ransom's high school teammate - pledged his services to Texas on Aug. 2.

What happened in their respective recruitments that led them elsewhere, and where do the Buckeyes go from here at the running back position?

"Ohio State was definitely caught off guard by both of these developments - particularly the Robinson development. As July wore on, cold feet set in as he contemplated going across the country and it was eventually relayed to the Ohio State staff that this was going to be something they might not be able to overcome. Knighton's situation was a bit different where he made the late July visit to Florida State and the Seminoles were able to overtake Ohio State on that visit and land his commitment.

"The board is pretty much getting a total reset at this

point, and I think you'll see more than a dozen names talked about over the next few months. I don't see this as a quick fix and think Ohio State will take a broad and methodical approach this time around, evaluate some senior film and start piecing the board back together."

Ohio State's 2020 recruiting class sits at 22 players as of Aug. 16. And though it's been said Cincinnati La Salle three-star kicker Jake Seibert will grayshirt and not count toward the scholarship numbers his first year on campus, there's no denying numbers are getting tight with four months until the early signing period in December.

Let's just assume the Buckeyes are still looking to add a pair of running backs this cycle; have a spot or two reserved for potential flips from LSU five-star cornerback commit Elias Ricks and/or Oklahoma four-star cornerback pledge Ryan Watts; are looking to add another defensive lineman; and may consider pursuing a second quarterback this cycle. That pushes the class into the range of 27 or so signees.

Do you think Ohio State would sign that many players, or do you think the staff would be forced to have some difficult conversations with lower-ranked commitments in order to bring more talented prospects on board? And, along those same lines, do you think the Buckeyes should fear any potential decommitments in the coming months (particularly from some of the aforementioned West Coast kids)?

"I do think this class ends up at about 27 pledges. Decommitments are just a reality now in college football recruiting, but there isn't a specific kid right now that I feel is wavering on his pledge. For the most part this group looks really solid to Ohio State, though the odds probably tell you that - with several months to go - it wouldn't be out of the ordinary for one or two guys to have a change of heart. But again, there isn't really a guy out there right now that has expressed this sentiment, so everything looks pretty solid as we sit here today."

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