

## MICHIGAN MEMORIES

## Schafrath's Stop Saved Ohio State In 1958

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Dick Schafrath has seen plenty of football in his time. As a member of both an Ohio State team that captured a national championship and a Cleveland Browns squad that earned the city's last championship of any major sport, he has played in some of the biggest games in the history of the state of Ohio.

Adding to those experiences is the fact that Schafrath crossed paths with some of the game's legends as friends, teammates or mentors. During his OSU career from 1956-58, he lined up alongside Jim Parker on the offensive line and opened holes for Galen Cisco while playing under the direction of Woody Hayes. In the NFL, he called Otto Graham, Jim Brown, Paul Warfield and Lou Groza teammates. Paul Brown was his head coach.

But there was one game in his 15-year career that saw him play with more purpose, more drive and more sheer dedication than any other.

The year was 1958, and Ohio State was hosting rival Michigan in the last game of the season. One year removed from a national championship, the Buckeyes boasted a 5-1-2 record heading into the annual showdown with the Wolverines. Michigan, on the other hand, was just 2-5-1 in what was the final season for head coach Bennie Oosterbaan.

Having entered the game with a career 1-1 record against the Wolverines, Schafrath was determined to see that number improve to 2-1 – and it was his play that secured a 20-14 OSU victory.

After overcoming a 14-12 halftime deficit, the Buckeyes took the lead with a third-quarter drive. Schafrath, who played on both the offensive and defensive lines during his career but played tight end in '58, lined up at his defensive end spot for what would prove to be the crucial moment of the game.

On fourth-and-1 from the OSU 4-yard line, Michigan quarterback Bob Ptacek handed the ball off to halfback Brad Myers.

Fifty years later, Schafrath could remember the play vividly.

"It was probably one of the most exciting things I can think of," he told BSB. "I couldn't believe the guy was coming at me, and I had slipped my block so I was one on one. He didn't try to outrun me, he tried to cut back inside. I can still remember it.

"As he did, all my power was off of my left foot and I just really got a good hit on him and the ball. I saw it flying out and that was it. I was just upset I couldn't get on the ball, too, but we had two guys on the ball as soon as it came out. We did it together."

Jerry Fields recovered for Ohio State, and the Buckeyes held on for the victory. To this day, Schafrath says Dick LeBeau – who played cornerback and halfback for OSU before going on to both play and coach in the NFL – still remarks about Schafrath's focus in that game.

"Dick LeBeau and I talk about it a lot," Schafrath said. "He said, 'I've never seen anybody as obsessed as you were. You were on my butt the whole game.' I said, 'Dick, I never wanted to win a game more than that.'"

The game saw Michigan outgain the Buckeyes by a 375-252 total, a figure buoyed by Ptacek's 24 completions for



FILE PHOTO

**IMPORTANT WIN – Dick Schafrath won a national championship with Ohio State in 1957 and an NFL championship with the Cleveland Browns in 1964 but counts a defensive stop during the Buckeyes' 20-14 victory over Michigan during his senior season in 1958 as one of his most exciting football memories.**

241 yards. Schafrath had a friend on the Michigan team who tipped him off about the team's game plan prior to the game.

"They were throwing that whole game," Schafrath said. "I can remember the guy, a guy from Ohio by the name of Gary Prahst, he was an end. He had a lot of nice catches in that game. Gary and I were pretty good friends. He told me before the game they were going to beat us passing so I was ready for it."

However, all that passing success was stymied by Schafrath's jarring hit on the final defensive play of the day for the Buckeyes. After the game, Schafrath said Hayes was so excited about the win that he kissed him for making the play.

The Buckeyes finished the season third in the Big Ten, but the win against Michigan gave Hayes five wins in eight years against the Wolverines.

It was also his team's second win in a row against Michigan. One year prior,

OSU overcame a 14-10 halftime deficit to run away with the 1957 installment of the rivalry by a 31-14 score. Again, Michigan put up big numbers on the stat sheet but was unable to come away with the win.

The Buckeyes wound up with their highest point total against the Wolverines since the team's 38-0 victory in 1935, and they did it without starting halfback Don Clark. In his place stepped fullback Bob White, who pounded out 163 yards on 30 carries, and LeBeau, who added two touchdowns.

"It just meant that we didn't have a breakout runner, but we were still able to control the ball and move the ball pretty well up and down the field," Schafrath said.

The focus of that 1957 game was simple, however – win and go to the Rose Bowl.

"The only thing that stuck in my mind was we had to beat them to get to the Rose Bowl," Schafrath said. "It was really exciting to play in a game where it really meant something and the whole team was really committed."

The game was marred by violence in the crowd at Michigan Stadium as fights broke out in the stands, and Schafrath kept a watchful eye on where his parents were seated.

"My mom and dad, that was the only time they ever went to an away game," he said. "I know some of the fighting was around their area. I was trying every once in a while to peek over there and see. Dad was just protecting Mom. He wasn't the aggressive type.

"I do remember there was a lot of drinking, a lot of cheering, a lot of yelling. I imagine since we were going to get to go to the Rose Bowl everybody got pretty excited."

That game also allowed Schafrath to gain a little insight into Hayes. Clad in his customary short-sleeved shirt for a chilly game, Hayes spent about 15 extra minutes in the shower thawing out after the game, Schafrath said.

The Buckeyes finished the season 9-1 and Big Ten champions, but only the UPI poll awarded them the national championship.

The win helped wash away the sour taste

left by the 19-0 home loss the Buckeyes suffered at the hands of Michigan in 1956. It marked the second consecutive shutout loss OSU endured to end the season at 6-3 and tied for fourth in the conference.

A win against the Wolverines would have given the Buckeyes a share of the Big Ten crown, but Michigan made Hayes pay for his stubborn ways.

Facing a Wolverine defense begging Hayes to throw the ball, the Buckeyes took to the air just five times, completing one pass for 10 yards. Loading up against the run, the Wolverines played with 11 men near the line of scrimmage.

As a team, OSU mustered just 192 yards of total offense.

"I would imagine if they put 11 men up Woody would have accepted that as a challenge and we would have been trying to run against their 11," Schafrath said. "He wasn't trying to be anything fancy. I think in '57 we averaged three passes a game. We didn't pass very much."

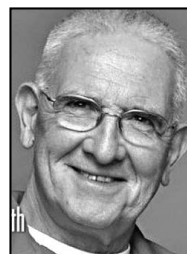
The team's leading passer in 1956 was Clark, who completed 3 of 7 halfback option passes for 88 yards. The team's starting quarterback, Frank Elwood, finished the year 7 of 20 for 86 yards.

The experience of that game was frustrating for Schafrath, who said he doesn't remember much about it because he tries to forget about losses as quickly as possible.

"I do remember playing beside somebody that was probably the best offensive lineman in Ohio State's history in Jim Parker," he said. "I loved playing alongside Jim but we couldn't establish a good running game in that game and I don't know why. I just know that they kicked our butts and I couldn't wait to play them the next year."

When Schafrath and his teammates got the chance to play them the next two years, they came away with victories and two pairs of golden pants. That in itself is something to be proud of, Schafrath said.

"Getting two gold pants, that's better than most people do," he said. "The average fan doesn't have any of those gold pants, right?"



Dick Schafrath

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