

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 41, No. 13

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Dec. 18, 2021

Smelling The Roses

Buckeyes Tab Knowles As Next DC

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN RIOS/PHOTOS BY SONNY BROCKWAY

HEADING HOME — Quarterback C.J. Stroud (right) and wide receiver Chris Olave (left) will get the chance to return to their home state of California as Ohio State earned its 16th Rose Bowl bid and a matchup with the Pac-12 winning Utah Utes. Ohio State last played in Pasadena Jan. 1, 2019, against the Washington Huskies and is seeking its fourth straight Rose Bowl win.

Just days after his Oklahoma State Cowboys came up just short against Baylor in the Big 12 title game 21-16 and in turn missed out on the College Football Playoff, Ohio State announced via a statement from head coach Ryan Day that it would be hiring Pokes defensive coordinator Jim Knowles for the same role in Columbus, effective Jan. 2 after the two squads had finished out their seasons.

The Buckeye head coach centered focus on finishing out the year with Ohio State still set to play in the Rose Bowl against Utah and Oklahoma State slated for a Fiesta Bowl matchup with Notre Dame.

"I have offered a position on the Ohio State football staff to Oklahoma State University defensive coordinator Jim Knowles and he has accepted it," Day said. "Starting Jan. 2, Knowles will be the Buckeyes' new defensive coordinator. What is most important at this time is that we put our players in the best position possible to finish this season with a win in the Rose Bowl. To that end,

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OSU Focused On Granddaddy Of Them All

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State is headed to the Rose Bowl for the second time in four seasons, but only the third time since the turn of the millennium. The Buckeyes, who earned their spot as the Big Ten's highest-ranking squad without prior obligations in the postseason, will match up with Utah for only the second time in program history. The Utes, winners of the Pac-12 for the first time, are making their first ever trek to Pasadena for a bowl that head coach Kyle Whittingham described as hugely important to him and to his program.

"It's something we've been working towards for a long time," Whittingham said Dec. 5. "We've been in the league, 10 years now, 11 years? We got into the league and knew we had some things we'd need to improve.

"It's a history-making football team. We've never won the Pac-12. I'm proud of them for that."

For Utah, the game marks an arrival of sorts. Once a Mountain West stalwart and before that a member of the WAC, the Utes made the jump to the big time in joining the Pac-12 during the big realignment moves of the early 2010s, playing their first season as a Pac-12 member in 2011. The Rose Bowl was always a goal in Salt Lake City, as it is for every West Coast and Midwest team alike.

It is, after all, the Granddaddy of Them All. It's the greatest spectacle in the greatest venue, serving frequently as the arbiter for national title claims for decades as the Big Ten and various amalgamations of pacific schools – first in the Pacific Coast Conference, followed by the Athletic Associate of Western Universities, the Pac-8, Pac-10 and now Pac-12 – sent their finest champions to compete.

Although it's no longer designed to decide a national champion outside of the

Continued On Page 12

BSB's Annual Bowl Preview

Buckeye Sports Bulletin's 56-page bowl preview issue is overflowing with information about Ohio State's Rose Bowl berth as well as features, news and updates on all of OSU athletics, including:

- A preview of the matchup against Utah at the Rose Bowl, including our staff prediction, season stats for both teams, bowl notes and a look at Ohio State's history in the Rose Bowl
- A flashback to the 1996 Buckeye football season
- A feature on former Ohio State linebacker and new Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman
- Reports on the men's and women's basketball, men's hockey and wrestling programs
- Plus all of BSB's regular columns and features



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Game Is Disappointing End

First of all, I will greet you with Aloha. Thousands of people living in Hawaii are loyal fans of the Buckeyes.

We are so upset and disappointed with the outcome of The Game Nov. 27 against the Wolverines. Besides the bad calls against our players, the defense is not doing its best to tackle the opponent. It seems they are afraid to tackle any of them.

Our concern is that our QB doesn't throw the ball more to the three explosive wide receivers. We deserve to know who gave the call to give the ball to the running back every third down. How many times did they try to run in the middle but couldn't get any yards?

We hope the defense is more aggressive next year and the offense will offer more protection of our QB.

Aloha! From the Hawaiian Buckeye fans. Go Bucks!

Mila Darmofal
Mililani, Hawaii

Day Needs To Follow Woody

Some tips that Ryan Day might consider: Many years ago when I attended OSU and met Woody Hayes, he wrote his first book, "Hotline to Victory." The second book was "You Win With People." Ryan should get a copy of the latter, if he has not. Woody always had a very good defense. Why? In his book he stated that hardly anyone knows how to play defense. So he found that picking the smartest players on his team (by grade point or his given tests) to be linebackers was the key to the defense.

He stated anyone can carry the ball. Jack Tatum, New Jersey all-state running back, never carried the ball at OSU. Woody saw films and contacted his high school and noted Jack was a hard-hitting defender. He made him a cornerback, and when he hit a receiver, most times the QB would not throw his way again. He hit the player hard enough (legally) that he did not want a pass sent his way again. Woody always had good linebackers.

Maybe it will not work today, but OSU's defense needs smarter players, from what I've been seeing at linebacker. Studying film and learning which opposing players are coming in or going out can determine what play may be coming next. Woody put many linebackers into the pros.

Just some things I think may help. What a player plays in high school does not mean he can be good at the next level.

Frederick G. Wackler
Troy, Ohio

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From The Message Board

With a 10-2 season on the books and a date with Utah in the Rose Bowl set, it's as good a time as any to reflect on the program in Columbus at large. We asked readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum, as well as staff writers, for their feeling on the state of the program. Here are some of the responses:

"I can't believe this is even a question. To ask the question, itself, is overreacting to one loss after 29 consecutive wins vs B1G opponents. Transfers happen everywhere, and Ohio State has benefitted from the transfer portal, getting some excellent players. "Direction of the program is somewhere between good and excellent."

– Terrier Buck

"The Bucks are solid. They will kick up their game a few notches next year and I expect improvement on defense with the recent hire of Knowles. Things look bright."

– PeyoteBuck

"You know as Buckeye fans we are spoiled. That's what winning four consecutive B1G Championships and multiple appearances in the College Football Playoffs will do to you! This year we had the No. 1 scoring and No. 1 total offense in the county and a Heisman Finalist in C.J. Stroud. Yes, we stumbled on defense this year and lost to that team up north for the first time in a decade. I'll cut the coaches and the team a break after their historic run. However, next year will have to be different!"

– BuckeyeScott

"The program is in a very good position. Offensively, the numbers speak for themselves. We need to develop Henderson into an 'Elliott' to have a strong running game to alleviate the focus on the passing game. He can be a 2000-yard rusher.

"Defensively, they can only get better versus the run. New DC will provide an innovative strategy. He will develop DE's that pressure opposing QB's. Very positive future with a young group."

– John Lanning

"I'd guess Knowles will be given a mandate to field a defense that will be physical, aggressive and tough. More smash-mouth football. The 2022 schedule is loaded with the Big Ten's best teams, plus the opener against

non-conference Notre Dame.

"The Rose Bowl game against Utah will tell us a lot. Will the team show up to play? Will they let Utah win the battle along the line of scrimmage? No Buckeye team should get the reputation of being soft. Our RBs are too good to be stonewalled at the line of scrimmage. We need a couple of road-graders at center and guard."

– Byron McNutt

"I think you have to feel a whole lot better after the Jim Knowles hire. It shows that Ryan Day can hire outside of his circle. He still has to actually stay out of Knowles' way now, and he has more changes to make in his staff, but a creative DC is a really good start. If we're sitting here next month and the rest of the staff is the same, though? That's trouble."

– Patrick Mayhorn, BSB

"There are a lot of questions Ryan Day needs to answer this offseason, but he's already answered a big one before the Rose Bowl with the hire of Jim Knowles. There are likely more changes – namely on the offensive line and perhaps some further moves for some defensive coaches – but Day making his first big-time hire is encouraging for the most important offseason in a while for Ohio State, so things appear to be on a good track for now."

– Braden Moles, BSB

"The Jim Knowles hire excites me. I think we will see significant changes in the defensive scheme and different techniques and production for the players. I'm all in on a youth movement on defense.

"I'd like to see Denzel Burke, Tylik Williams, J.T. Tuimoloau, Jack Sawyer and Sonny Styles run this defense in 2022. I'd also like to see Cody Simon, Lathan Ransom and Kourt Williams used effectively, too. The Buckeyes are on a good track right now, but I think we will learn a lot about the team by the spring game and fall camp."

– Chase Brown, BSB

Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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Buckeye Sports Bulletin (USPS 705-690, ISSN 0883-6833.) is published 24 times a year (weekly September through November, biweekly mid-March through May and January through early March and monthly June through August and December) by:

Columbus Sports Publications
1350 W. Fifth Ave., Suite 30
P.O. Box 12453
Columbus, Ohio 43212
(614) 486-2202
bsb@buckeyesports.com

Periodical class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212. Subscription rates: \$99.95/year.

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2021-22 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 41)

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The next issue (Jan. 15 cover date) will be mailed on Jan. 11.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is a privately owned newspaper and is not affiliated directly or indirectly with The Ohio State University.



Humility Apparently Lost On Michigan

There is a meme making its way across social media containing an oversized photo of a particularly creepy insect adorned with the words, “Cicadas emerge after 17 years underground ... just like Michigan fans.”

It's the latest response to the salvo of cheering and jeering from the Ann Arbor fan base eagerly crowing about their favorite team's 42-27 victory against Ohio State on Nov. 27. It was, of course, the first victory in the series for the Wolverines in a decade – or 3,683 days, if you will – and only their third win in the past 20 meetings with the Buckeyes.

One would think that singular victory might be accompanied with a dose of humility fitting an accomplishment of such rarity. One would think incorrectly.

To be honest, I didn't care for the social media yipping and yapping of some Ohio State players and coaches during the lead-up to the game. You can be confident in your task at hand, but it's always prudent to give your opponent his due. No one ever thought the Wolverines would go winless in the series for the rest of all time, but you never want to add unnecessary fuel to their competitive fire. John Cooper learned that the hard way in 1996 when he asked former head coach Earle Bruce to speak at Senior Tackle, and Bruce's show-them-no-mercy speech found its way to the ears of Michigan players as they prepared for the game.

Still, the Buckeyes had earned the right to boast after their recent record in the series. But almost before the snow had melted from the brim of his ballcap following this year's game, Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh couldn't help himself.

“Sometimes,” the coach said through a smirk, “people who are standing on third base think they hit a triple, but they didn't.”

It was a fractured version of the old line, “Some people are born on third base and think they hit a triple,” but it was an obvious reference to Ryan Day, a first-time head coach who inherited a loaded program from predecessor Urban Meyer.

Harbaugh, and to a lesser degree his brother, John, who is head coach of the NFL's Baltimore Ravens, fashions himself as a self-made scrapper who came from humble roots to achieve greatness against odds that were stacked against him. The truth is that Harbaugh and his brother were born into the family business – their father, Jack, was a longtime assistant as well as head coach at Western Michigan (1982-86) and Western Kentucky (1989-2002) – and have known nothing but football their entire lives.

The fact that Jim Harbaugh has spent the last 40 years as a player and coach at the college and pro levels and has raised a conference championship trophy only seven times makes the “triple” comment seem tinged with just a bit of jealousy. But you consider the source and move on ... if only you were allowed to move on.

Two days after the victory, Michigan offensive coordinator Josh Gattis all but questioned the manhood of Ohio State's players.

“They're a good team,” Gattis admitted, “(but) they're a finesse team. They're not a tough team. We knew going into the game that we could out-physical them, we could out-tough them, and that was going to be the key to the game. That's what we prepared for all year long.”

The claims were not without merit. Michigan finished with 297 yards rushing on 41 carries, while quarterbacks Cade McNamara and J.J. McCarthy were afforded stress-free afternoons. The duo combined for 20 throws with no sacks. In fact, Ohio State registered no tackles for loss in a Michigan game for the first

time since at least 1965.

Meanwhile, the OSU running game generated only 64 net yards, and quarterback C.J. Stroud was sacked four times and hurried on four other occasions.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

It was a similar scenario to the way Oregon controlled the line of scrimmage in early September during its 35-28 win against the Buckeyes.

“You saw earlier this year in the game they lost to Oregon,” Gattis said. “Oregon was the more physical team on the field. That's the way (Ohio State) lost. We committed to that recipe, and it paid off.”

I actually felt no bitterness toward Michigan defensive end Aidan Hutchinson when he tearfully celebrated the victory with his parents and his teammates. I was even willing to give him a pass when he said after the game that part of his motivation came from what he believed was disrespect from the Buckeyes.

“These guys have been disrespecting us, stepping on our jerseys, talking about hanging 100 on us, doing all the rah-rah, doing all the talk,” Hutchinson said.

But then he was named a Heisman Trophy finalist, and during ESPN's overlong, over-produced telecast of the annual trophy presentation, he said that his main mission for 2021 was “to come back, beat Ohio State and win a Big Ten championship.” Never mind that he was sharing the stage at the moment with fellow finalist Stroud.

Give the young man all due respect after registering three sacks against the Buckeyes. And it was Hutchinson who was his team's leading tackler in 2019 when Ohio State rolled to a 56-27 victory in Michigan Stadium.

But after former Heisman winner Tim Tebow quipped that he was glad Pitt quarterback Kenny Pickett was standing between Hutchinson and Stroud, another former Heisman winner couldn't resist with a dig he mistakenly thought was funny.

“Better than his offensive linemen,” said Desmond Howard, a marvelously gifted football player who has inexplicably made a living as a college football analyst for the past decade and a half. Howard's analysis is about as deep as a Main Street pothole, yet he has been a darling of the ESPN higher-ups since his scripted Heisman pose during the 1991 Ohio State-Michigan game – in my humble opinion, still one of the most classless things I have ever witnessed on an athletic field.

Howard offered a half-hearted apology after his swipe during the Heisman ceremony, but expecting genuine contrition from him would be akin to expecting to squeeze orange juice out of an onion.

I get it. I really do. Michigan won this year's game, won it handily and earned the right to crow about it. But there is a line between joyful exuberance and going out of your way to rub your opponent's face in it. Ohio State's only recourse now is to wait until Nov. 26, 2022, when it can begin to teach its archrivals about the old John Wooden quote: “Win with humility, lose with grace, and do both with dignity.”

Portal Keeps Spinning

I realize the new transfer rules that allow

players to move from program to program with no interruption in their eligibility are here to stay. No one says I have to like it, though.

Counting Dallas Gant and K'Vaughan Pope, who left the team midway through the 2021 season, Ohio State has lost six scholarship players to the transfer portal in just the past 3½ months. That includes quarterbacks Jack Miller and Quinn Ewers, safety Craig Young and cornerback Ryan Watts.

On the surface, the Buckeyes' portal losses don't seem to be of any great concern. Gant and Pope had already had ample time to prove their worth at linebacker (and didn't), and the futures for the other four players to make significant contributions seemed at least a year or two away.

Still, it represents a 7-percent loss of scholarship players with probably a few more to come. It's a situation I can't imagine most coaches like. After all, you spend countless money, time and effort to entice a young prospect to sign with your program, and at the first hint of adversity, homesickness or the realization that there are players at your position that are simply better than you, they're gone and all that money, time and effort seems wasted.

As a former young person myself, I understand the impatience that comes with youth. But those eager to jump through the portal at the first sign of adversity would do well to learn from Alabama quarterback Bryce Young.

Young threw for an insane amount of yards in high school and was a five-star prospect, but at 6-0 and 194 pounds, many college scouts questioned whether he could be an elite performer at his position. After all, you can probably count the number of star quarterbacks who stand 6-0 or shorter on the fingers of one hand.

Still, Young bided his time last season as the backup to Mac Jones when the Crimson Tide won the national championship and then took over the team this season in what was supposed to be a rebuilding year at Alabama. A few months later, Young has the Heisman Trophy and the Crimson Tide are back in the College Football Playoff, ranked the No. 1 seed as they look for a seventh national championship in the last 13 seasons.

Some Final Thoughts

Someone asked me about Ewers skipping his senior year of high school to join the Buckeyes and then hitting the portal, eventually winding up committing to Texas, where he probably should have been all along.

I guess I understand the take-the-money-and-run philosophy of the Name, Image, Likeness legislation. And I guess I understand the logic of someone wagering \$1.5 million on a prospect that every single recruiting analyst in the country placed in the can't-miss category. But did Ewers honestly think he was going to come to Ohio State as a 17-year-old who should have still been in high school and be handed the starting quarterback job?

And now, does he think he's going to go to the Longhorns and get handed the starting quarterback job? Maybe he will. Texas head coach Steve Sarkisian likely knows his time is limited in terms of getting the Longhorns program back on track, and installing a Texas schoolboy legend as his quarterback might at least generate more positive headlines than his team's recent 5-7 finish.

Still, I keep coming back to the time, money and effort the Buckeyes spent to get Ewers to come to Columbus in the first place, and then whatever time and effort the coaching staff essentially wasted on a quarterback who took exactly two snaps in an OSU uniform.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Stroud Finishes 4th In Heisman

Ohio State redshirt freshman quarterback C.J. Stroud will not be the one to snap Ohio State's Heisman dry spell, at least not this season.

The Inland Empire, Calif., native finished fourth in the Heisman voting on Dec. 11 behind Alabama quarterback Bryce Young, who took home the hardware, Michigan edge rusher Aidan Hutchinson and Pitt quarterback Kenny Pickett.

Stroud hoped to be the first Buckeye to win the award since 2006 when Troy Smith took it home – especially after he met with Smith in the days before the event.

"He's super passionate," Stroud said of meeting Smith. "He loves Ohio State. He loves the game of football. He had nothing but positive things to say. I really appreciate him giving up the time to talk to me about how I feel being up here and giving me feedback on how to hone in everything that I'm doing here.

"I'm definitely blessed to have the brotherhood that we have at Ohio State and hope we continue the legacy."



SONNY BROCKWAY

RETURNING FAVORITES — C.J. Stroud (left) and Alabama's Bryce Young (right) are both slated to return to college football in 2022, meaning they could be in for another Heisman battle after Young claimed the award and Stroud finished fourth this season.

Controversially, in the days before the event, Stroud told reporters that he felt his Heisman moment was his touchdown run against Michigan in the second half that was ultimately taken off the board for a holding penalty. He said that he felt had that penalty not been called, Ohio State would have come back to beat the Wolverines – though his team

would find the end zone only a few plays later.

Stroud's Heisman Hopes In 2022

Though Stroud's fourth-place finish at the Heisman wasn't what he wanted, it could be a precursor of positive things to come for the redshirt freshman.

The Buckeyes have a storied history with the Heisman Trophy, tied for the most winners (seven) with Notre Dame and Oklahoma. Les Horvath (1944), Howard "Hopalong" Cassady (1955), Eddie George (1995) and Troy Smith (2006) each won the award in their final season with Ohio State.

Vic Janowicz (1950) won the award and returned to Ohio State the next season. Other finalists, Keith Byars (1984) and Justin Fields (2019), returned to the Buckeyes following

their finish as finalists, while Orlando Pace (1996), Dwayne Haskins (2018) and Chase Young (2019) were all named finalists in their final seasons but did not return to Ohio State.

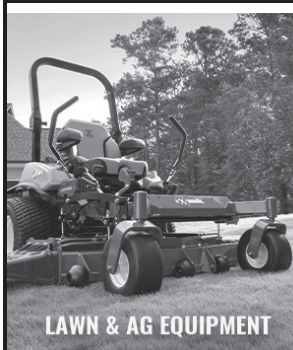
Archie Griffin is the lone outlier here, as he finished fifth in voting in 1973 then returned to win the award in 1974 before following it up with another trophy in 1975, still the only two-time winner of the Heisman, though college football players could not leave after three seasons at the time.

When looking at the follow-up seasons that these Heisman winners or finalists had, Stroud could join an elite group of Buckeyes next year.

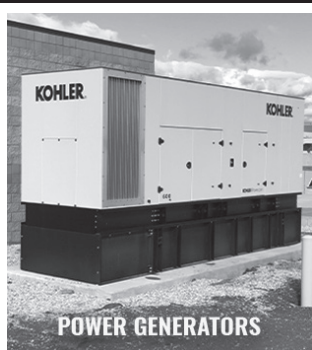
After winning the Heisman in 1950 with 114 carries for 314 yards and four touchdowns, Janowicz had a more efficient 1951, carrying 106 times for 376 yards, but finished

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2021 Ohio State Football Schedule

| Date | Opponent | Result/Time (ET) | TV | Record, Last Result |
|---|----------------|------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| Sept. 2 | at Minnesota | W, 45-31 | Fox | 8-4, 23-13 win over Wisconsin |
| Sept. 11 | OREGON | L, 35-28 | Fox | 10-2, 38-29 win over Oregon State |
| Sept. 18 | TULSA | W, 41-20 | FS1 | 6-6, 34-31 win over SMU |
| Sept. 25 | AKRON | W, 59-7 | BTN | 2-10, 49-14 loss to Toledo |
| Oct. 2 | at Rutgers | W, 52-13 | BTN | 5-7, 40-16 loss to Maryland |
| Oct. 9 | MARYLAND | W, 66-17 | Fox | 6-6, 40-16 win over Rutgers |
| Oct. 23 | at Indiana | W, 54-7 | ABC | 2-10, 44-7 loss to Purdue |
| Oct. 30 | PENN STATE | W, 33-24 | ABC | 7-5, 30-27 loss to Michigan State |
| Nov. 6 | at Nebraska | W, 26-17 | ABC | 3-9, 28-21 loss to Iowa |
| Nov. 13 | PURDUE | W, 59-31 | ABC | 8-4, 44-7 win over Indiana |
| Nov. 20 | MICHIGAN STATE | W, 56-7 | ABC | 10-2, 30-27 win over Penn State |
| Nov. 27 | at Michigan | L, 42-27 | Fox | 11-1, 42-3 win over Iowa |
| * - 2020 bowl team ** - at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium) | | | | |

with just one touchdown.

Griffin finished fifth in voting in 1973 despite handling 247 carries for 1,577 yards and seven touchdowns, in addition to one receiving touchdown. In front of him in the voting were two running backs, a quarterback and Ohio State offensive lineman John Hicks, and Griffin outpaced both running backs ahead of him in yards.

He followed that season up by winning the Heisman in 1974, finishing with 256 carries for 1,695 yards and 12 touchdowns, and won again in 1975 with 262 carries for 1,450 yards and four touchdowns.

Byars was named a finalist in 1984, finishing second to Boston College quarterback Doug Flutie, who finished 233 of 386 for 3,454 yards, 27 touchdowns and 11 interceptions. In that season, Byars had an eye-popping 336 carries for 1,764 yards and 22 touchdowns, as well as two receiving touchdowns.

Byars was limited the next season by a foot

injury.

Fields was Ohio State's latest finalist returnee. He finished third in 2019 behind Jalen Hurts and Joe Burrow, throwing for 3,273 yards, 41 touchdowns and just three interceptions. Through no fault of his own due to the shifting schedule and shortened season in 2020, Fields regressed slightly, finishing with 2,100 yards and 22 touchdowns, in addition to six interceptions, in just eight games.

Though there have been some up-and-down seasons by Heisman finalists returning to Ohio State, Stroud will have a chance to etch his own name in the record books and return to New York next season.

Day's Agent Denies Bears Rumor

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day has been in the rumor mill for the Chicago Bears head coaching position since the 2021 season began. The morning of Dec. 12 brought another

report of his connection to the NFL franchise.

According to CBS Sports' Jason La Canfora, the Bears had discussions with Trace Armstrong to join the organization in a front-office role, with Day listed to join him as a potential head coach. Armstrong was a defensive end for Chicago from 1989-94.

"I have the utmost respect for the Chicago Bears organization, the McCaskey family and Ted Phillips," Armstrong said in a tweet the same morning. "However, any assertion that I have engaged in conversations with them about joining the club in any capacity is simply not true."

Armstrong is also the agent for USC head coach Lincoln Riley, LSU head coach Brian Kelly and Bears lead-man Matt Nagy, who is considered unlikely to return to the team after this season.

USA TODAY Sports reported in its annual survey of college coaching salaries that Day was the highest-paid coach in the Big Ten this year, making \$6.61 million. He is also eligible for an additional \$250,000 in performances

bonuses due to the Buckeyes' berth in the Rose Bowl and share of the Big Ten's East Division title.

Day will make \$7.6 million next year because of incremental raises in the contract extension he signed after his first season as Ohio State's head coach.

Other coaches in the Big Ten signed lucrative, long-term extensions with their schools over the last month as both Michigan State's Mel Tucker and Penn State's James Franklin received 10-year deals worth \$95 million and \$75 million, respectively.

Day's current contract will run through 2027, but athletic director Gene Smith and the Board of Trustees can revisit the contract at any point.

Buckeyes Earn All-American Honors

Ohio State wide receiver Garrett Wilson, left tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere and kicker

Continued On Page 6



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Continued From Page 5

Noah Ruggles have each been honored as 2021 All-Americans. Wilson and Petit-Frere were named by the Football Writers Association of America, and Ruggles was named an All-American by ESPN.

Wilson hauled in 70 catches for 1,058 yards and 12 touchdowns in his junior season and was also honored with first-team All-America recognition by The Athletic.

Petit-Frere, who was also named an All-American by CBS Sports, was one of the leaders on Ohio State's offensive line who helped shape one of the top offenses in the nation. The Buckeyes are No. 1 in the nation in total offense with 551.4 yards per game and scoring offense with 45.5 points per game, as well as No. 5 in passing offense with 364.9 yards per game.

Though no official announcement has been made, both Wilson and Petit-Frere are expected to forgo their senior seasons and enter into the 2022 NFL draft.

Ruggles, a senior transfer from North Carolina who is in his first season with the Buckeyes, was named a first-team All-American by ESPN. He led the nation in kick scoring this season with 122 points, No. 3 overall. He missed just one kick all season, driving through 18 of 19 field goals and hitting on all 68 of his extra-point attempts.

Other Buckeyes have been honored so far as second-team All-Americans, including wide receiver Chris Olave (Walter Camp, CBS Sports and Pro Football Network), offensive

BSB Podcast Now Twice Weekly

With Ohio State into its 2021 season, the Buckeye Sports Bulletin podcast is back to its twice-weekly football season publishing schedule, posting preview and recap shows each week of the regular season.

The BSB podcast, hosted by Wyatt Crosher and Patrick Mayhorn covers each game from every angle, releasing a full game preview on the Friday morning before the game and an in-depth recap on each Monday morning.

The show is free for everyone. To find it, go to your favorite podcast app or website and type in "Buckeye Sports Bulletin Podcast," and click the subscribe button. You can listen on Amazon Music, Apple Podcasts, Audible, Google Podcasts, iHeart-Radio, Podbean, Spotify, Stitcher and anywhere else that podcasts are found. For those of you that are new to the podcast world, the show is also posted at 10 a.m. every Friday and Monday on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as in the BSB Fan Forum.

lineman Thayer Munford (CBS Sports) and wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba (Pro Football Network).

Day Surprised By Ewers' Transfer

Quarterback Quinn Ewers surprised Day on Dec. 3 when he informed him he planned to enter the transfer portal and leave the program.

Ewers spent only four months with the Buckeyes after graduating a year early from Southlake (Texas) Carroll Senior High School, reclassifying to the 2021 class and arriving on campus at the beginning of August.

"It caught me for sure a little bit off guard," Day said on Dec. 5.

According to 247Sports' composite rankings, Ewers was the highest-rated recruit to ever sign with Ohio State. The 6-3, 206-pound

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago – 1981

The Ohio State basketball team was playing in its third game in three days. The Buckeyes were in the losers' bracket of the Great Alaska Shootout and were paired against Georgetown, a team picked in the preseason polls as one of the 10 best teams in the country.

The Buckeyes trailed by 13 points well into the second half, but Eldon Miller's cagers fought back and eventually toppled the Hoyas, 47-46 when guard Larry Huggins canned an 18-foot jumper from the left side with three seconds left.

Huggins' game-winner came a few seconds after a loose ball had resulted in what formerly would have been a jump ball. But a new rule in college basketball in 1981 called for every jump ball situation to go to one team or the other on a rotating basis and this time, it belonged to OSU, which ran the clock before taking a timeout with 10 seconds to play, trusted Clark Kellogg to make a play out of the inbound and was rewarded when he found Huggins.

35 Years Ago – 1986

Earle Bruce, though his team was looking ahead to a Cotton Bowl matchup with Texas A&M, was doing a little reflecting on Ohio State's loss to Michigan that ended its regular season on a sour note. He told reporters that there were play calls he wanted back as he looked back on the affair.

"The draw play on second-and-10, our third-down situations, a lot of times you play things over," said Bruce of Ohio State's final drive against Michigan, which came up short after a Matt Frantz missed field goal to seal a 26-24 loss.

"On fourth down, instead of kicking a field goal, you can correct it now. You know you missed it. If you live by second-guessing, I guess you could second-guess yourself to death. It's over, but most certainly you've got to sit down and analyze what you did wrong and straighten that out.

"I've always thought that if you make some mistakes, that's OK. But you can't make the same mistakes again, repeat them, do them over again. You've got to come out and straighten them out and go from there."

30 Years Ago – 1991

In the land of swaying palm trees and sandy beaches, they were billing it as "The Missile vs. The Muscle."

Ohio State was making its second postseason trip to Tampa, Fla., in three years to take on 16th-ranked Syracuse in the Hall of Fame Bowl.

The Orangemen had the services of All-American kick returner Qadry "The Missile" Ismail, while the Buckeyes had highlighted their season with a powerful rushing attack. Hence the moniker.

Ohio State was slated to return to the game after falling to Auburn in it two years prior, following the 1989 regular season.

"I like the Hall of Fame Bowl," said Ohio State head coach John Cooper. "I thought we had a great time there two years ago, and I think it's a first class bowl. The hospitality, the way they treat the players and coaches, was all first class.

"We liked Tampa. We liked the facilities. Everything connected with the bowl game two years ago was first cabin. The only negative experience was the outcome of the game."

25 Years Ago – 1996

Its national championship hopes all but dashed after a regular season-ending loss to Michigan, the Ohio State football team was pressing ahead in preparation for its Jan. 1 Rose Bowl date with Arizona State.

The Sun Devils, meanwhile, entered the matchup ranked second in the nation with their eyes set firmly on that title crown. Ohio State was the only thing in their way.

"We're trying to forget about Michigan and just practice hard for the

Rose Bowl," said OSU junior tailback Pepe Pearson about the team's mood after its 13-9 loss to Michigan.

ASU coach Bruce Snyder was confident in his group and felt that the title was well within its grasp.

"I've not seen anybody play better than us," Snyder said. "There might be teams as talented or more talented, but this team is playing so well together, fits so well.

"I think we're playing well enough to be national champions."

But Cooper felt that with a win and a Florida upset over No. 1 Florida State, the fourth-ranked Buckeyes would have as strong a case as anyone.

"I feel like if somebody knocks off Florida State and we're fortunate enough to win the (Rose Bowl) game, we should have a share of the national championship," Cooper said. "If that happens, there's not going to be any undefeated teams."

20 Years Ago – 2001

Ohio State strong safety Mike Doss, fresh off recognition as a Walter Camp All-American that gave him back-to-back All-American seasons, was still contemplating his future at Ohio State. He was asked ahead of Ohio State's matchup in the Outback Bowl with South Carolina if it would be his last game at Ohio State.

"There's a lot more out there for me," Doss said. "To be honored with the All-American (nod) was special. Individual awards are good, but I came here two years ago to win a national championship.

"I've done everything individually you can do except maybe winning the Jim Thorpe or the Heisman.

"I feel in my heart that to play here at Ohio State is a great opportunity and I still have one more game left. Then coach (Jim) Tressel and I will go over a decision."

He played up national title hopes heavily and said that competing for one was a major draw for him.

"Three years ago we're 11-1 and No. 2 in the polls," Doss said. "(Potentially doing that again) will definitely play a big role."

15 Years Ago – 2006

A battle to keep the grass in Ohio Stadium playable during the 2006 season prompted the university's decision to return to an artificial track in 2007.

The "interdepartmental decision" to go to a synthetic surface was made the week of Nov. 27, according to Don Patko, Ohio State's assistant athletic director for facilities management. The decision ended months of speculation after the natural grass field in the Horseshoe had to be replaced twice during the football season.

"There was never not talk to go back to grass," Patko told BSB. "We could only go about 15 to 20 days a year on a grass field, so that limited what we could do on it and how much our own team could even play on it. We didn't like limiting that, so Gene (Smith) and the crew just said, 'Let's go with the synthetic and take that variable away and let them play on it as much as they want.'"

The field, which was heavily torn up by fans after the season-ending win against Michigan, would be patched for April's spring game and then the grass would be removed and replaced with a synthetic surface in time for June's spring quarter commencement ceremony. The process was expected to cost between \$400,000 and \$600,000, Patko said, and would take place after the spring game to avoid delays caused by the winter weather.

10 Years Ago – 2011

Former Ohio State quarterbacks coach and passing game coordinator Joe Daniels lost a five-year battle with cancer Dec. 4. He was 69.

"Coach Daniels loved his family and his players," former Tressel said. "He was a selfless team member who cared for everyone. These

past five years, Joe had been an extraordinary inspiration to us all. He will be missed tremendously."

Less than a month after he was hired at Ohio State, Tressel lured Daniels away from the University of Cincinnati, where he was offensive coordinator and assistant head coach on Rick Minter's staff.

He worked with, among others, Steve Bellisari and Craig Krenzel, coaching the latter to national a title in 2002.

"It's just the man he was and how blessed I am to have shared some time with him," Krenzel told BSB when asked about what he would remember of Daniels. "He was a family man, a friend, an easy guy to talk to and a guy whose sense of humor could bring a sense of levity to any situation.

"The world has lost a great man, but knowing what he valued most and knowing his faith and that of his family, I know they'll be at peace. Coach had such a positive impact on so many other people's lives – the legacy that he leaves is immeasurable."

Five Years Ago – 2016

Ohio State defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Luke Fickell accepted the head coaching job at Cincinnati on Dec. 10.

Former UC head coach Tommy Tuberville resigned Dec. 4 after going 29-22 in four seasons with the Bearcats, including a 4-8 record this season.

"It's with much pride and humility that I accept the awesome honor of becoming the head coach at the University of Cincinnati," Fickell, 43, said during his introductory press conference. "This city, this school and my family are all Ohio. It's a tough blue-collar state with hardworking, blue-collar people that respect an honest and complete effort. That's what they will get from me personally and what they should expect from this football program."

Fickell's contract was not finalized by the time BSB went to print. Pete Thamel of Sports Illustrated, however, cited a source and reported Dec. 11 that "Fickell's contract with Cincinnati averages \$2.3 million for six years. Buyout is \$3.5 million. Goes down by \$500,000 annually."

Fickell announced he would remain on Ohio State's coaching staff for the team's run in the College Football Playoff.

One Year Ago – 2020

To say Ohio State's coaches and players were disappointed to learn on Dec. 8, just four days before The Game was scheduled to take place, that it was canceled due to a coronavirus outbreak within the Michigan program would be an understatement.

"I'm tired of giving this team bad news," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said. "You just don't get that kind of news and move on. There's just been so much invested in that game throughout the entire year. All the time and every day, we honor this game."

At the same time, Day recognized the Buckeyes cannot afford to dwell on the situation because two major goals – winning a Big Ten title and a national championship – were still in front of them.

"One of the things we've just had to learn to do is move on quickly," Day said. "It's easy to spend the time worrying about what's coming next or getting frustrated on what happened in the past, but the only thing you can do, especially in 2020, is just try to do the best you can and maximize each day. Early on, that was not easy for our team, but they've gotten a lot better at it and they've really transitioned well. It wasn't a bunch of guys with their heads down.

"They were frustrated, they were angry, but these kids have really become hardened, and the response that we had from our team was really pretty amazing. They were very devastated that we weren't playing in that game. We've been really looking forward to playing these guys. All of us. I certainly have for a while. We really wanted to play them in the worst way."

2021 Big Ten Individual Award Winners

Dungy-Thompson Humanitarian Award: Malcolm Jenkins, Ohio State
Ford-Kinnick Leadership Award: Pat Richter, Wisconsin
Graham-George Offensive Player of the Year: C.J. Stroud, Ohio State
Nagurski-Woodson Defensive Player of the Year: Aidan Hutchinson, Michigan
Thompson-Randle El Freshman of the Year: C.J. Stroud, Ohio State
Hayes-Schembechler Coach of the Year (coaches vote): Mel Tucker, Michigan State
Dave McClain Coach of the Year (media vote): Mel Tucker, Michigan State
Griese-Brees Quarterback of the Year: C.J. Stroud, Ohio State
Richter-Howard Receiver of the Year: David Bell, Purdue
Ameche-Dayne Running Back of the Year: Kenneth Walker III, Michigan State
Kwalick-Clark Tight End of the Year: Austin Allen, Nebraska
Rimington-Pace Offensive Lineman of the Year: Tyler Linderbaum, Iowa
Smith-Brown Defensive Lineman of the Year: Aidan Hutchinson, Michigan
Butkus-Fitzgerald Linebacker of the Year: Leo Chenal, Wisconsin
Tatum-Woodson Defensive Back of the Year: Riley Moss, Iowa
Bakken-Andersen Kicker of the Year: Jake Moody, Michigan
Eddleman-Fields Punter of the Year: Jordan Stout, Penn State
Rodgers-Dwight Return Specialist of the Year: Charlie Jones, Iowa

quarterback was the No. 1 overall prospect for 2022 before he reclassified and was the top-ranked quarterback and player from Texas.

While not the only factor present in his decision to become a Buckeye, Ewers came to campus shortly after the NCAA adopted a rule allowing student-athletes to profit from their name, image and likeness. He would not have received the same financial opportunity in Texas, as the state does not allow high school students to profit from NIL, so Ewers positioned himself to earn money in endorsements and other partnerships in Columbus.

Ewers was the fourth-string QB on the depth chart in 2021, appearing in only one game with the Buckeyes. Last month, he came in with little more than a minute left in a 56-7 rout of Michigan State, twice lining up behind center late in the blowout and handing the ball off both times to walk-on running back Robert Cope.

He announced Dec. 12 that he'll be transferring to Texas.

"I think he was in a very unique situation for sure," Day said, "and we wish him nothing but the best of luck moving forward. But boy, there's just a lot that's going on right now in college football, whether it's early enrollees or the transfer portal and those types of things. We're just going to do the best we can to try to adapt as time moves on."

The Buckeyes only have two scholarship quarterbacks between Stroud and true freshman Kyle McCord heading into their game

with Utah in the Rose Bowl. While it is enough for Ohio State to compete in the matchup, Day said his preference is to hold three or four quarterbacks on scholarship heading into the offseason.

Devin Brown, a four-star quarterback in the 2022 recruiting class, will be the third following his verbal commitment, but he isn't joining the program until next season.

"A lot of guys want to play," Day said, "and I get it, so we'll just try to do the best we can to forecast it. We feel really good about the guys we have on our roster right now."

Knowles To Make \$1.9 Million Per Year

Ohio State's new defensive coordinator, Jim Knowles, will be one of the highest-paid college football assistants next season.

Knowles coached in his final game for Oklahoma State in its Big 12 title loss to Baylor Dec. 4 and will start in Columbus on Jan. 2, 2022. He will make a \$1.9 million base salary as part of a three-year contract, becoming the Buckeyes' highest-paid assistant.

The deal would have been the fourth most of any assistant coach in college football behind Clemson defensive coordinator Brent Venables, Clemson offensive coordinator Tony Elliott and Texas A&M defensive coordinator Mike Elko. However, all three are moving into head coaching spots with Venables at Oklahoma, Elliott at Virginia and Elko at Duke.

This season, Ohio State's highest-paid as-

Who Is The Greatest Quarterback In Ohio State History?

Options:

J.T. Barrett ____
 Justin Fields ____
 Joe Germaine ____
 Cornelius Greene ____
 Dwayne Haskins ____
 Bobby Hoying ____
 Rex Kern ____
 Craig Krenzel ____
 Braxton Miller ____
 Terrelle Pryor ____
 Art Schlichter ____
 Troy Smith ____

Instructions:

Number your picks 1-10 (feel free to write in any players we left off the list) and mail this ballot to Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212. Lists can also be emailed to bsb@buckeyesports.com or subscribers can vote on the forum at BuckeyeSports.com. Please provide your name, age and any additional comments regarding your ballot. Copies of the ballot are accepted and voters are welcome to attach additional paper if more space for comments is needed.

Comments:

sistant coaches were then-defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs and offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson, who earned \$1.4 million a year.

On top of his base salary, Knowles will be eligible for several incentive-based bonuses. The bonuses are a Big Ten East title (\$161,500); Big Ten championship title (\$80,750); College Football Playoff appearance (\$323,000); non-College Football Playoff appearance and nine wins (\$80,750); College Football Playoff semifinal appearance (\$403,750); College Football Playoff final appearance (\$484,500).

Knowles would receive only one of the playoff bonuses. He will also receive a lump-sum, one-time signing bonus of \$138,850.

Marshall Levenson of PokesReport.com reported that Oklahoma State offered him \$1.3 million per year to stay with the Cowboys. Hence, the lucrative contract – the largest ever given to an Ohio State assistant – was necessary to land Knowles. He was also a target for Clemson, Florida and Penn State.

For more on Knowles, see the cover story

on page 13 of this issue.

CB Watts Enters Portal

Ohio State redshirt freshman cornerback Ryan Watts entered the transfer portal on Dec. 10, signaling the end of his time in Columbus after two seasons with the Buckeyes.

The 6-3, 205-pounder from Little Elm, Texas, saw only 73 snaps after playing in a significant chunk of Ohio State's season-opening matchup with Minnesota, finding himself buried on the depth chart behind Denzel Burke, Cameron Brown and Sevn Banks as he battled with classmate Lejond Cavazos for snaps. Though Brown and Banks could both be in line to depart this offseason, Watts will be looking to crack into a starting lineup elsewhere next season.

Although Ohio State could have something of a cornerbacks deficiency next season if anyone else enters the portal, it decided against

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 7

pursuing LSU transfer Elias Ricks, and Day cited a desire not to rock the boat within his own locker room with new additions.

"You have to take the dynamics of your team into consideration, so we're doing that, and we're not just going to be flippant about those decisions," Day said. "I think your team and the chemistry of your team is something that we have to really be on top of. Because all it takes is a couple of guys and now you can get yourself out of whack. Because when we recruit young men, we bring them in to develop them and we talk to them about what it's going to be like when they get here and develop them into really good players. And bringing guys in can kind of upset that."

Bullet Young To Transfer

Ohio State lost another player to the transfer portal when redshirt sophomore Craig Young announced his intentions to play elsewhere on Dec. 4.

A class of 2019 signee for the Buckeyes from Fort Wayne, Ind., Young never found a consistent position within Ohio State's defense. He was recruited as a linebacker and spent his first two seasons there but moved into the new bullet role in the offseason entering the 2021 campaign and moved again to cover safety when Ohio State shifted into a more frequent two-high safety look after a week two loss to Oregon.

However, he found himself often behind super senior Marcus Williamson and classmate Bryson Shaw, splitting time with redshirt freshman Cameron Martinez. With Ronnie Hickman planted firmly in the bullet position

Don't Miss BSB's Early Signing Period Coverage

In a scheduling quirk, this issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin is being mailed on the same day as the start of football's Early Signing Period. There is no need to wait until our Post-Bowl issue, scheduled to be mailed on Jan. 11, 2022, to follow all the recruiting action. The BSB staff will be posting all the latest recruiting news as it happens at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers. The staff will also be covering the latest news in the lead-up to the Rose Bowl, including live reports from Pasadena.

In addition, we offer the latest basketball news and reports on all the other Buckeye teams.

Along with the daily posts, we offer reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays. Also, staff members man the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum, interacting with subscribers on the hot topics of the day.

Please note that recent developments with the mail service have us concerned about delivery time for BSB, especially as we get closer to the holidays. We remind you the complete print edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin is posted at BuckeyeSports.com at the time the issue is

mailed and is available to subscribers free of charge, as is all the other content provided at the site.

If you are not already taking advantage of BuckeyeSports.com, BSB's 24/7 website, simply email your name, address and preferred email address to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com, and we will send back easy instructions on how to access the site. Don't forget, subscriptions@buckeyesports.com is our email address, not the website. We will send you directions on how to access the site.

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As mentioned, readers who have been experiencing postal delivery problems can read the complete edition of each issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin online at BuckeyeSports.com immediately upon completion. Your copy of the paper will still arrive in your mailbox at the usual time.

If you have any questions about BuckeyeSports.com or your mail service, feel free to call us at the above number.

and Shaw unlikely to go anywhere, Young has decided to finish his career with a program better suited for his skill set.

He finished his 2021 season with 15 tackles and an interception, which he returned 70 yards for a touchdown.

DE Smith Going To Senior Bowl

Ohio State defensive end Tyreke Smith accepted an invitation to the Reese's Senior Bowl, scheduled for Feb. 5, 2022, on Dec. 8. He tallied three sacks in nine games for the Buckeyes in 2021.

Smith recorded seven total sacks and 11 tackles for loss this season and 54 total tackles in his Ohio State career, which will come to an end at the Rose Bowl on New Year's Day.

The Cleveland native and former No. 34 overall prospect in 2018 missed three games this year to various ailments. However, he recorded at least one sack in three straight games upon returning to the Buckeye defensive line.

Smith became the second Buckeye to accept an invite to the Senior Bowl, with tight end Jeremy Ruckert joining the roster before

Ohio State's final regular-season game against Michigan on Nov. 27.

Stroud's Flu 'Bad' Against U-M

Stroud met with the media on Dec. 8 to discuss his finish as a Heisman finalist, but as expected, there were questions about the Buckeyes' loss to Michigan that will send Ohio State to the Rose Bowl on New Year's Day.

Though Ohio State's physicality – or lack thereof – against the Wolverines has come under fire since the 42-27 final, Stroud took to the lectern to explain that the Buckeyes were dealing with some outside factors heading into the contest.

"When you take into consideration what we were going through that week preparing for the Team Up North and everybody kind of having a flu and things like that – of course, I don't make excuses, but you've got to take that into consideration," Stroud said. "It kind of does matter. I'll take Ohio State. I'll take my brothers against anybody."

Michigan pounded Ohio State in the trenches the entire game. The Wolverines' finished with nearly 300 rushing yards while holding the Buckeyes to just 64 yards, in addition to making things uncomfortable for Stroud, who was sacked four times. On the other side, Ohio State struggled to get pressure, finishing with no sacks of Cade McNamara or J.J. McCarthy.

It's unknown the degree to which the Buckeyes struggled preparing for this game due to the illness sweeping through the program, but Stroud said it had an impact.

"It was bad," the redshirt freshman said. "Throughout the week, dudes were dropping out, missing practice. It was kind of bad. It was just a feeling of the flu. I had it myself but I'm feeling a lot better now."

At the end of the day, Stroud said that while it did impact the game, Ohio State still failed in its task, falling to Michigan for the first time since 2011.

"But then you've got to go play. Nobody cares. They didn't care. We don't care," he said. "At the end of the day you've got to go do a job, but we fell short. I credit my team, even somewhat of myself, for just even going out there and still playing. We don't quit. We don't shy away. We still went out there and we battled. I would do it again. I don't care. I'll play with one leg."

The Game Gets 16 Million Viewers

As if Ohio State's 42-27 loss to Michigan weren't embarrassing enough, the Buckeyes must contend with the knowledge that it was the most-watched regular-season college football game in FOX history.

The first edition of The Game in two years brought in 15.89 million viewers, making it the most-watched and most-streamed regular-season college football game in the network's history. Additionally, this year's contest was up 27 percent over 2019, when 12.5 million people watched Ohio State defeat Michigan 56-27.

Over 10 million viewers tuned in to CBS to watch Alabama sneak past Auburn in the Iron Bowl in four overtimes. Third place in the ratings this season was Michigan State's 37-33 win over Michigan on Oct. 30, which drew over nine million viewers.

Overall, Ohio State's loss to Michigan was the most-watched regular-season college football game since No. 1 LSU hosted No. 2 Alabama in a 46-41 win on Nov. 9, 2019.

RB Coach Alford Turns Down LSU

Ohio State running backs coach Tony Al-

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|-----|------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Alabama..... | 12-1 |
| 2 | Michigan..... | 12-1 |
| 3 | Georgia..... | 12-1 |
| 4 | Cincinnati..... | 13-0 |
| 5 | Notre Dame..... | 11-1 |
| 6 | Ohio State..... | 10-2 |
| 7 | Baylor..... | 11-2 |
| 8 | Ole Miss..... | 10-2 |
| 9 | Oklahoma State..... | 11-2 |
| 10 | Michigan State..... | 10-2 |
| 11 | Utah..... | 10-3 |
| 12 | Pittsburgh..... | 11-2 |
| 13 | BYU..... | 10-2 |
| 14 | Oregon..... | 10-3 |
| 15 | Iowa..... | 10-3 |
| 16 | Oklahoma..... | 10-2 |
| 17 | Wake Forest..... | 10-3 |
| 18 | NC State..... | 9-3 |
| 19 | Clemson..... | 9-3 |
| 20 | Houston..... | 11-2 |
| 21 | Arkansas..... | 8-4 |
| 22 | Kentucky..... | 9-3 |
| 23 | Louisiana..... | 12-1 |
| 24 | San Diego State..... | 11-2 |
| 25 | Texas A&M..... | 8-4 |

ford plans to remain with the Buckeyes following a courtship by LSU and new head coach Brian Kelly.

Kelly reportedly tried to hire Alford, who was an assistant for Kelly at Notre Dame from 2010-14, as one of his first moves since being announced as head coach on Nov. 30.

"I LOVE it here," Alford said in a text to The Columbus Dispatch. "Not like it – LOVE IT!! Ryan Day is the best coach in the business. I'm working with the best head coach in all of college football, and I've got unbelievable kids," he continued. "Why would I leave?"

Alford has been with Ohio State since 2015, operating as the running backs coach in addition to being named the assistant head coach for offense. Prior to Ohio State, he spent five years at Notre Dame coaching running backs and wide receivers and was also the school's recruiting coordinator from 2012-14. He also had stops at Louisville, Iowa State, Washington and Kent State.

He played at Colorado State from 1987-90 under head coach Earle Bruce (1989-92) and with wide receivers coach Urban Meyer (1990-95). Alford's commitment to Ohio State leaves Kelly in a bind. He's had difficulty filling his staff, as most of his staff at Notre Dame elected to remain in South Bend.

Continued On Page 10



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2021 All-Big Ten Football Teams

Here is a look at the All-Big Ten football teams as selected by the coaches and media. Ohio State players are in bold, while unanimous selections are in all caps.

Coaches Team

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE:

QB – C.J. Stroud, Ohio State
RB – Hassan Haskins, Michigan
RB – Kenneth Walker III, Michigan State
WR – Chris Olave, Ohio State
WR – David Bell, Purdue
C* – Tyler Linderbaum, Iowa

OG – Thayer Munford, Ohio State
OG – Josh Seltzner, Wisconsin
OT* – Daniel Faalele, Minnesota
OT* – Nicholas Petit-Frere, Ohio State
OT* –
TE – Jake Ferguson, Wisconsin

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE:

DL – Aidan Hutchinson, Michigan
DL – Haskell Garrett, Ohio State
DL – Arnold Ebiketie, Penn State
DL – George Karlaftis, Purdue
DL* –
LB – David Ojabo, Michigan
LB – Leo Chenal, Wisconsin
LB – Jack Sanborn, Wisconsin
DB – Dane Belton, Iowa
DB – Riley Moss, Iowa
DB – Dax Hill, Michigan
DB – Jaquan Brisker, Penn State

FIRST-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

K – Jake Moody, Michigan
K* –
P – Jordan Stout, Penn State
P* – Adam Korsak, Rutgers
Returner – Charlie Jones, Iowa
Returner –

OFFENSE HONORABLE MENTION: ILLINOIS: Vederian Lowe, Alex Palczewski; INDIANA: Matthew Bedford, Peyton Hendershot; IOWA: Tyler Goodson, Mason Richman; MARYLAND: Dontay Demus, Jaelyn Duncan, Rakim Jarrett, Chig Okonkwo, Taulia Tagovailoa; MICHIGAN: Erick All, Trevor Keegan, Luke Schoonmaker, Andrew Vastardis, Zak Zinter; MICHIGAN STATE: Matt Allen, Connor Heyward, Jarrett Horst, Kevin Jarvis, Payton Thorne; MINNESOTA: Ko Kieft, Sam Schlueter; NEBRASKA: Adrian Martinez; NORTHWESTERN: Evan Hull; **OHIO STATE: Jeremy Ruckert**; PENN STATE: Sean

BIG TEN SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD HONOREES: Tony Adams, ILL; Thomas Allen, IND; Zach VanValkenburg, IOWA; Anthony

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE:

Aidan O'Connell, Purdue
TreVeyon Henderson, Ohio State
Braelon Allen, Wisconsin
Garrett Wilson, Ohio State
Jahan Dotson, Penn State
Doug Kramer, Illinois
John Michael Schmitz, Minnesota
Kyler Schott, Iowa
Paris Johnson Jr., Ohio State
Ryan Hayes, Michigan
Peter Skoronski, Northwestern
Logan Bruss, Wisconsin
Austin Allen, Nebraska

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE:

Zach VanValkenburg, Iowa
Jacub Panasiuk, Michigan State
Tyreke Smith, Ohio State
PJ Mustipher, Penn State
Keeanu Benton, Wisconsin
Micah McFadden, Indiana
JoJo Domann, Nebraska
Ellis Brooks, Penn State
Kerby Joseph, Illinois
Matt Hankins, Iowa
Cam Taylor-Britt, Nebraska
Ronnie Hickman, Ohio State

SECOND-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

Caleb Shudak, Iowa
Noah Ruggles, Ohio State
Bryce Baringer, Michigan State

Jayden Reed, Michigan State

Clifford, Juice Scruggs, Rasheed Walker, PURDUE: Payne Durham, Greg Long, Tyler Witt, Milton Wright; RUTGERS: Isaih Pacheco; WISCONSIN: Jack Nelson, Joe Tippmann. **DEFENSE HONORABLE MENTION:** ILLINOIS: Sydney Brown, Owen Carney; IOWA: Jack Koerner, Noah Shannon; MARYLAND: Jakorian Bennett, Ami Finau; MICHIGAN: Chris Hinton, Josh Ross, Mazi Smith, D.J. Turner; MICHIGAN STATE: Quavaris Crouch, Xavier Henderson, Jacob Slade; MINNESOTA: Ezezi Otomewo, Mariano Sori-Marin; NEBRASKA: Damion Daniels, Marquel Dismuke, Luke Reimer, Ben Stille, Deontai

Pecorella, MD; Andrew Vastardis, MICH; Connor Heyward, MSU; Tanner Morgan, MINN; Levi Falck, NEB; Joe Spivak, NU; Marcus Williamson, OSU;

Media Team

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE:

QB – C.J. Stroud, Ohio State
RB – Hassan Haskins, Michigan
RB – Kenneth Walker III, Michigan State
WR – Jahan Dotson, Penn State
WR – David Bell, Purdue
C – Tyler Linderbaum, Iowa
OG – Blaise Andries, Minnesota
OG – Thayer Munford, Ohio State
OT – Andrew Stueber, Michigan
OT – Peter Skoronski, Northwestern
OT* – Nicholas Petit-Frere, Ohio State
TE – Austin Allen, Nebraska

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE:

DL – Aidan Hutchinson, Michigan
DL – Haskell Garrett, Ohio State
DL – Arnold Ebiketie, Penn State
DL – George Karlaftis, Purdue
LB – Jack Campbell, Iowa
LB – David Ojabo, Michigan
LB – Leo Chenal, Wisconsin
DB – Kerby Joseph, Illinois
DB – Dane Belton, Iowa
DB – Riley Moss, Iowa
DB – Jaquan Brisker, Penn State

FIRST-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

K – Caleb Shudak, Iowa
P – Jordan Stout, Penn State
Returner – Charlie Jones, Iowa

OFFENSE HONORABLE MENTION ILLINOIS: Doug Kramer, Vederian Lowe, Alex Palczewski; INDIANA: Matthew Bedford, Ty Fryfogle; IOWA: Sam LaPorta, Mason Richman; MARYLAND: Spencer Anderson, Rakim Jarrett, Chig Okonkwo, Taulia Tagovailoa; MICHIGAN: Erick All, Blake Corum, Ryan Hayes, Trevor Keegan, Luke Schoonmaker; MICHIGAN STATE: Matt Allen, AJ Arcuri, Blake Bueter, J.D. Duplain, Connor Heyward, Jarrett Horst, Kevin Jarvis, Jalen Nailor, Payton Thorne; MINNESOTA: Chris Autman-Bell, Ko Kieft, Conner Olson, Sam Schlueter; NEBRASKA: Cam Jurgens, Samori Toure; NORTHWESTERN: Evan Hull; **OHIO STATE: Matthew Jones, Jeremy Ruckert, Luke Wypler**; PENN STATE: Sean Clifford, Mike Miranda, Juice Scruggs, Brenton Strange; PURDUE: Gus Hartwig, Tyler Witt, Milton

* - additional honorees due to ties

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE:

Aidan O'Connell, Purdue
TreVeyon Henderson, Ohio State
Braelon Allen, Wisconsin
Chris Olave, Ohio State
Garrett Wilson, Ohio State
Andrew Vastardis, Michigan
Zak Zinter, Michigan
Josh Seltzner, Wisconsin
Dawand Jones, Ohio State
Logan Bruss, Wisconsin

Jake Ferguson, Wisconsin

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE:

Zach VanValkenburg, Iowa
Jacub Panasiuk, Michigan State
Boye Mafe, Minnesota
Zach Harrison, Ohio State
Micah McFadden, Indiana
Chris Bergin, Northwestern
Jack Sanborn, Wisconsin
Matt Hankins, Iowa
Dax Hill, Michigan
Cam Taylor-Britt, Nebraska
Brandon Joseph, Northwestern

SECOND-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

Noah Ruggles, Ohio State
Bryce Baringer, Michigan State
Jayden Reed, Michigan State

Wright; RUTGERS: Isaih Pacheco; WISCONSIN: Tyler Beach, Chez Mellusi, Jack Nelson, Joe Tippmann. **DEFENSE HONORABLE MENTION** ILLINOIS: Sydney Brown, Owen Carney, Johnny Newton, Keith Randolph, Devon Witherspoon; INDIANA: Ryder Anderson, Jaylin Williams; IOWA: Seth Benson, Jack Koerner, Noah Shannon; MARYLAND: Jakorian Bennett, Nick Cross, Ami Finau, Jordan Mosley, Sam Okuyinonu; MICHIGAN: Chris Hinton, Mazi Smith, D.J. Turner; MICHIGAN STATE: Quavaris Crouch, Cal Haladay, Darius Snow; MINNESOTA: Jack Gibbens, Tyler Nubin, Ezezi Otomewo, Mariano Sori-Marin; NEBRASKA: Damion Daniels, Luke Reimer, Ben Stille, Deontai Williams; NORTHWESTERN: Adetomiwa Adebawore, A.J. Hampton; **OHIO STATE: Sevy Banks, Cam Brown, Denzel Burke, Steele**

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE:

Cade McNamara, Michigan
Chase Brown, Illinois
Blake Corum, Michigan
Jayden Reed, Michigan State
Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Ohio State
Cam Jurgens, Nebraska

Blaise Andries, Minnesota
Conner Olson, Minnesota
Andrew Stueber, Michigan
Dawand Jones, Ohio State
Tyler Beach, Wisconsin
Sam LaPorta, Iowa

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE:

Sam Okuyinonu, Maryland
Boye Mafe, Minnesota
Zach Harrison, Ohio State
Matt Henningsen, Wisconsin

Jack Campbell, Iowa
Chris Bergin, Northwestern
Brandon Smith, Penn State
Denzel Burke, Ohio State
Ji' Ayir Brown, Penn State
Joey Porter Jr., Penn State
Caesar Williams, Wisconsin

THIRD-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

James McCourt, Illinois

Blake Hayes, Illinois

AJ Henning, Michigan
Jahan Dotson, Penn State

Williams; NORTHWESTERN: Adetomiwa Adebawore, A.J. Hampton, Brandon Joseph, Cameron Mitchell; **OHIO STATE: Sevy Banks, Cam Brown, Antwuan Jackson**; PENN STATE: Tariq Castro-Fields, Jesse Luketa; PURDUE: Jaylan Alexander, Cam Allen, Branson Deen, Jalen Graham, Dedrick Mackey; RUTGERS: Olakunle Fatukasi, Julius Turner; WISCONSIN: Noah Burks, Nick Herbig, Faion Hicks, Isiah Mullens, Scott Nelson, Collin Wilder. **SPECIAL TEAMS HONORABLE MENTION:** IOWA: Tory Taylor; MICHIGAN: Brad Robbins; **OHIO STATE: Emeka Egbuka**; PURDUE: Mitchell Fineran.

Sean Clifford, PSU; Payne Durham, PUR; Noah Vedral, RU; Matt Henningsen, WIS.

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE:

Cade McNamara, Michigan
Chase Brown, Illinois
Tyler Goodson, Iowa
Jayden Reed, Michigan State
Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Ohio State
John Michael Schmitz, Minnesota
Kyler Schott, Iowa
Paris Johnson, Ohio State
Daniel Faalele, Minnesota
Rasheed Walker, Penn State

Peyton Hendershot, Indiana

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE:

Jacob Slade, Michigan State
Tyreke Smith, Ohio State
Jesse Luketa, Penn State
Matt Henningsen, Wisconsin
Josh Ross, Michigan
JoJo Domann, Nebraska
Olakunle Fatukasi, Rutgers
Vincent Gray, Michigan
Brad Hawkins, Michigan
Xavier Henderson, Michigan State
Ronnie Hickman, Ohio State

THIRD-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

Jake Moody, Michigan
Adam Korsak, Rutgers
AJ Henning, Michigan

Chambers, Tommy Eichenberg, Antwuan Jackson, Bryson Shaw, Taron Vincent, Tylik Williams; PENN STATE: Ellis Brooks, Ji' Ayir Brown, Tariq Castro-Fields, Curtis Jacobs, PJ Mustipher, Joey Porter Jr., Brandon Smith; PURDUE: Jaylan Alexander, Cam Allen, Branson Deen, Jalen Graham; RUTGERS: Christian Izien, Julius Turner; WISCONSIN: Keeanu Benton, Noah Burks, Nick Herbig, Faion Hicks, Isiah Mullens, Scott Nelson, Collin Wilder, Caesar Williams. **SPECIAL TEAMS HONORABLE MENTION** ILLINOIS: Blake Hayes, James McCourt; IOWA: Tory Taylor; MICHIGAN: Brad Robbins; MICHIGAN STATE: Matt Coglin; **OHIO STATE: Emeka Egbuka**; PENN STATE: Jahan Dotson, Jordan Stout; PURDUE: Mitchell Fineran.

Continued From Page 9

Stroud Earns B1G Sweep

Stroud, who threw for 3,862 yards, completed 70.9 percent of his passes and tossed 38 touchdowns, swept the Big Ten offensive awards in all spots that he was eligible to claim, winning the league's Offensive Player of the Year, Quarterback of the Year and Freshman of the Year honors.

Stroud is the fourth straight winner of the Offensive Player of the Year title for the Buckeyes, joining Fields (twice) and Dwayne Haskins in 2018. He's the sixth straight Buckeye winner for the Quarterback of the Year crown, along with Fields, Haskins and J.T. Barrett, who won it in 2016 and 2017.

He snaps something of a dry spell for the freshman honors though, winning it for Ohio State for the first time since 2016 when halfback Mike Weber claimed it.

After dominating the conference's weekly awards all season, Stroud was essentially unchallenged in the race for quarterback and freshman honors but managed to beat out Michigan State's halfback Kenneth Walker III for the title of best offense player in the league, thanks in part to his phenomenal showing in the matchup between the two on Nov. 20.

B1G Honors Former DB Jenkins

The Big Ten named former Ohio State defensive back Malcolm Jenkins the Dungy-Thompson Humanitarian Award honoree, the conference announced Dec. 6. The award recognizes student-athletes who achieved success in humanitarianism following their academic and athletic careers at a Big Ten university.

Jenkins was a four-year letter winner at Ohio State, starting in 45 games and totaling 196 tackles, 18 passes defended, three blocked punts and four forced fumbles in his career. He left the university with 11 interceptions, including two returned for touchdowns.

The Piscataway, N.J., native became a team captain and consensus All-America selection in his senior season and was honored with the Jim Thorpe Award after recording a career-high 57 tackles, three forced fumbles,

three interceptions, two blocked punts and a sack. The year before, Jenkins finished his junior season with second-team All-America honors after leading the secondary with 44 tackles and four interceptions.

Following his time at Ohio State, the New Orleans Saints selected him with the 14th overall pick in the 2009 NFL draft. He spent his first five years with the organization and won a Super Bowl in 2010. In his sixth year, Jenkins signed a contract with Philadelphia, where he would become a first-team All-Pro (2015), a three-time Pro-Bowler (2015, 2017, 2018) and win his second Super Bowl (LII, 2018).

Jenkins has been a pillar in the locker room and communities where he worked and played throughout his NFL career, including

New Jersey, Louisiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Jenkins launched The Malcolm Jenkins Foundation in 2010, which develops youth development programs and initiatives that provide learning opportunities, resources and experiences to help them succeed and become productive members of their community.

Jenkins won the 2017 Byron "Whizzer" White Award – the highest honor the NFLPA can bestow on a player – for his community service. The Big Brothers Big Sisters of America recognized Jenkins as the inaugural Defender of Potential Award Recipients, which honors individuals who ensure the potential of children in their community through volunteerism, financial support and advocacy.

Jenkins' foundation launched "Get Ready Fest – Feeding the 504" with the Winn-Dixie Gives Foundation, Second Harvest of South

Louisiana and the Broadmoor Improvement Association Food Pantry in September 2020. The foundation started its initiative in New Orleans by hosting an event that provided more than 25,000 pounds of food to 557 families.

In May 2021, Jenkins' foundation and College Track New Orleans awarded 12 high school seniors \$2,000 in college scholarships. College Track has been in partnership with The Malcolm Jenkins Foundation for nine years and has since awarded more than \$150,000 in scholarships to College Track students.

Jenkins joins Chris Spielman as the two Buckeyes to earn The Dungy-Thompson Humanitarian Award named after Minnesota's Tony Dungy and Indiana's Anthony Thompson. For more information on the award, visit bigten.org.

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

A VIP subscription can easily pay for itself each year with special VIP discounts.

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

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

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

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

The following are our Elite Wachsman, Elite and Scarlet VIP subscribers. Brutus level VIPs will have their names listed at a later date.

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

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Scarlet VIPs: Anthony Ananthanarayanan, Rochester, Mich.; Greg Brooks, Gahanna, Ohio; Marty Brumbaugh, Troy, Ohio; Dennis Dahm, Sandusky, Ohio; Tom Goila, Cincinnati; Doug Harris, Lima, Ohio; Ed Helal, Ashland, Ohio; Phil Helal, Strongsville, Ohio; Joseph Huber, Walpole, Mass.; Alan Lord, Reynoldsburg, Ohio; Lawrence Romanoff, Powell, Ohio; Jim Shaw, Lake Forest, Calif.; William Torok, Girard, Ohio; J.D. Wientjes, Peoria, Ill.; Anonymous, Dallas; Anonymous, Norwalk, Ohio.

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Rose Bowl Still Matters To Buckeyes

Continued From Page 1

years it enters the playoff rotation, the pair of programs involved still have plenty of excitement for the game, even if for the Buckeyes this serves as something of a consolation prize – which would have bordered on sacrilege in Columbus 30 years ago.

“The goal that we have here is to win championships, and that’s a goal that we have year in and year out, and we didn’t reach that goal,” Buckeye head coach Ryan Day said Dec. 5. “However, we have an opportunity to go play in a tradition-rich Rose Bowl. And that means a lot. It’s a New Year’s Six bowl. It’s the 16th time Ohio State’s been in the Rose Bowl. There’s a lot of tradition that’s led up to that, and I know our guys are going to want to play hard and win that game.”

Publicly, Ohio State’s focus is almost exclusively on the task at hand – even as privately it can’t help but look ahead to the future, moving quietly behind the scenes to ensure its return to the top of the sport expeditiously, like in the hire of defensive coordinator Jim Knowles from Oklahoma State.

Day declined multiple opportunities to discuss this season at large or to project beyond Jan. 1. Players have been a bit more open about looking ahead, though not by much. After losing to a Michigan team that many felt it overlooked, Ohio State doesn’t want a repeat against the physical, run-heavy Utes – winners of nine games in 10 tries under quarterback Cameron Rising.

“Our guys have a lot of pride in themselves and a lot of pride in this team, and there’s been a lot of hard work and a lot of progress that was made all year before we started this thing. We want to finish this thing the right way,” Day said Dec. 5. “And that’s really what the focus is on right now. I think there’s a lot of lessons that have been learned from the last game, and that will obviously motivate us moving forward.

“But right now, the focus is on this Rose Bowl and sending out the seniors in the right way, and I know everybody in the program wants to do that. We’re going to get right to work

here this week and start grinding toward it and move forward to the game and play really well in the game.”

And for these Buckeyes, this game does present an opportunity to rewrite their own story. Wounded by its stunning loss to Michigan, Ohio State entered something of a grieving period in the week that followed. Day spoke about a sense of ennui and a feeling of missed opportunity within the program. Players, after the loss, broke down their defeat and nearly broke down in tears.

No, two decades of dominance doesn’t dull that pain in Columbus. When the Buckeyes resolved in the early 2000s to turn the tide of the rivalry and followed through with a historic batch of success, they did so with the express goal of never feeling the way they had after countless losses in the John Cooper and Earle Bruce eras that cut seasons well short of their desired finish.

In 1996, when the Buckeyes suffered their first loss of the season to Michigan on their home turf and entered the Rose Bowl as a fallen title contender rather than the favorite to claim the crown, players and coaches spoke in hushed tones about the misery that losing to that team, of all teams, inflicted.

“It’s an awful feeling,” said OSU senior fullback Matt Calhoun at the time. “I had hoped I would never have to feel it again and here I am, feeling it again.”

Now, 25 years later, Day has for the first time in his career experienced that same feeling. And like those players, he never wants it again.

“The rivalry game is the rivalry game for a reason, and it means a lot to a lot of people,” Day said. “When you don’t win it, there’s a tremendous amount of pain, and nobody knows that more than the players and the coaches here.

“(It’s) hard to swallow. You can’t just move on after one day. It just doesn’t work that way. Like I said in the postgame press conference, it’s going to leave a mark, and we knew that. It’s going to hurt for a while.”

To add salt to the wound – which Michigan had been anxiously awaiting for 10 years – the

Buckeyes were painted after the game, both nationally and by the Wolverines, as a team that simply wasn’t capable in the trenches. With 297 Michigan yards on the ground to show for it, Ohio State is without much to offer for disagreement.

“They’re a finesse team, they’re not a tough team,” Michigan offensive coordinator Josh Gattis said on the ‘Inside Michigan Football’ radio show in the days after The Game. “And we knew that going into the game that we can out-physical them, we can out-tough them and that was going to be the key to the game, and that’s what we prepared for all year long.”

“You saw earlier this year in the game they lost to Oregon, Oregon was the most physical team on the field. That’s the way they lost, and we committed to that recipe, and it paid off.”

Day had little answer in parrying that statement, saying that he doesn’t “really think much about that at all,” but he was clear throughout his pre-bowl chatter that the way Ohio State lost to the Wolverines was unacceptable.

Now, with another physical, run-heavy and defense-led team on the docket in Pasadena, Ohio State has the opportunity, not quite to right those wrongs (that can only happen in Ohio Stadium on Nov. 26, 2022) but to change the tune around his program. Even as the Buckeyes deal with the disappointment of their rivalry loss and of missing out on the College Football playoff for the first time in Day’s tenure, the focus has shifted, and Ohio State is again looking forward.

“That’s our goal as we head into every year,” Day said of the CFP, “and so, yes, it’s been a tough week for us. But you can only feel sorry for yourself for so long. You’ve got to move on. You’ve got to get back to work, and that’s what we’re going to do.”

Beyond the team building or the conversation around Columbus, the Rose Bowl too presents the same opportunity it always does. It’s the Rose Bowl. It’s a trip to one of the sport’s finest venues to match up with the best of the Pac-12. The Buckeyes will compete in almost assuredly beautiful weather for the opportunity to call themselves the Rose Bowl champions,

which, playoff or not, is still meaningful for a program with as thick a history in Pasadena as any program in the Big Ten.

And for some Buckeyes, it even offers a chance to return home.

Redshirt freshman quarterback and Heisman runner-up C.J. Stroud never got the chance to attend a Rose Bowl when he was growing up in Inland Empire, Calif. He made the trip to Pasadena plenty to attend UCLA home games both as a fan and a recruit, but he’s never seen the Rose Bowl itself.

“I went to a whole bunch of UCLA games growing up,” Stroud said. “I was getting recruited by them a little bit coming out of high school, so I went to a couple of those games, but (this is) a little more big-time than the UCLA games. Probably a little louder, a little more people. A little bit different of an atmosphere, so I’m excited.”

Stroud is one of four players from The Golden State who have donned the Scarlet and Gray this season and will make the trip to California for one last game.

Walk-on quarterback J.P. Andrade, wideout Chris Olave, Stroud and linebacker Kourt Williams all hail from California as well, and, like Stroud, are relishing the chance to visit home – and to get a few more familiar faces in the crowd.

“Growing up back home in California and being a full-fledged Cali guy, born and raised there, so it’s definitely a blessing to be able to play in this game,” Stroud said. “I’m super excited for (it). We’re going to try to go out the right way, have fun back home and just have fun with the game.

“(My family) comes to every game. But, I’ll probably have a couple more people come like some cousins and some family or some homies from back home – definitely some other people that can’t make it all the way out to Ohio, which is really cool.”

Though Stroud is looking forward to the Rose Bowl, one of his battery mates and another son of California has yet to make a definitive statement on his availability. With the NFL draft on the horizon, receivers Olave and Garrett Wilson have been the topic of discussion around Columbus, as they could choose to opt out of the Rose Bowl to avoid injury.

Stroud told media that whatever they decide, he’ll support them – and alluded somewhat heavily to it as a possibility. If the pair does decide not to play, Ohio State would likely turn to Emeka Egbuka, Julian Fleming, and Marvin Harrison Jr. (and perhaps even walk-on Sam Wiglusz, the frequent subject of compliments in the media from his teammates) to contribute.

“I told them to do whatever is best for you,” Stroud said. “At the end of the day, whatever they decide to do I’m behind them. In this sport, you’ve got to do what’s best for you, even if it might look selfish. Those guys gave everything to Ohio State. I’ve never seen them make a selfish decision. If they don’t play, then it’s probably a benefit to them and I fully respect it, then it’s time for guys to step up for next year. Get their feet wet.

“Everybody will be fine. Even if my boy Sam Wig’s got to play. It doesn’t really matter. At the end of the day, we’ve just got to go win a game. It’s not going to be easy. Utah’s a hell of a team. They do a lot of good things, and we’re definitely not taking it lightly at all. I feel like whoever has to step up will, if that needs to be.”



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Knowles Offers Twist On Traditional 4-2-5 Defense

Continued From Page 1

we will continue our planning and preparation for the game with our current staff of 10 assistant coaches.”

With Knowles’ arrival, Ohio State will have some decisions to make about its currently full coaching staff, and it is expected that more than one Buckeye coach will be moving on as Knowles joins. And while Ohio State preaches the virtues of the Rose Bowl at every turn, it’s hard not to look into Knowles. After all, he’s fashioned himself as one of the sport’s most interesting characters and designed a defense that is one of the best in the country.

Oklahoma State fielded the nation’s eighth-best scoring defense (16.8 points per game), fifth-best rushing defense (91.2 yards per game) and third-best overall defense for yards allowed per game, sitting at just 278.4 a contest behind only Georgia and Wisconsin. It leads the nation in sacks with 55 and holds an outstanding 26.1 percent conversion rate allowed on third down, good for second nationally. Ohio State, for reference, finished the regular season with a 41.4 percent rate allowed, enough for 97th nationally.

“We’re proud of that,” Knowles said on the Gap Down Backer Podcast. “I can’t say that the stats affect me a lot, though. I’m old-school, I guess. I’m 56. I’ve been around for a bit, and the new wave of analytics – I appreciate it and we have an organization to have those numbers, so it influences me, but I’m not a guy who relies on that. It’s a process that you set up at the beginning, you work through it and then you make week-to-week adjustments based on your opponent and what your guys are doing well, and that’s where the constant change comes for me. You set your plan, you work it, and you’re open to changes when necessary. The numbers are part of it, but they aren’t that big.”

For an Ohio State program fresh off a season marred by a pair of losses that saw it beaten in the trenches, those rushing stats and the physicality that Knowles instilled in his Oklahoma State defense was enough for Day to expedite the process and secure his signature.

“I think there are some things that we’ll get into certainly down the road, but immediately, we’ve got to obviously do a better job stopping the run and running the football,” Day said. “That’s the No. 1 thing that we recognize.”

“Our goal every game is to win the line of scrimmage, is to run the football and be physical, play great defense. We’ll continue that. And I think this bowl practice, we’ll have an opportunity to get back out there and really emphasize pad level, hand placement.”

Knowles can bring with him a tremendously impressive rush defense and a system that gave just about every Big 12 foe fits, but the veteran coach will certainly preach the importance of patience when he arrives in Columbus.

He arrived at Oklahoma State by way of Duke in 2018 and pieced together an improved defense each season at the helm, but his first season wasn’t exactly a glowing success. The Cowboys ranked 112th in

total defense and 97th in scoring defense as Knowles worked to adjust to the Big 12, which he said played a major role in departing from Durham in the first place.

“I wanted to get out of my comfort zone,” Knowles told CBS Sports. “I really thought, ‘Well, (it’s) the Big 12. It’s a special form of insanity. OK, let me see how I can hold up.’”

Four seasons later, he’s toppled the wild west and has his sights set on what some might call Ohio State’s underperforming collection of talent.



Jim Knowles

In its new coach, it has something of an odd one. A Philadelphia native who graduated from Cornell and worked initially on Wall Street out of school before the allure of football drew him to coaching, Knowles has earned the reputation as something of a mad scientist among his players and colleagues.

“Jim’s interesting,” Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy told The Athletic. “He’s kind of like a mad scientist. He goes in his office on Sunday and closes his door. You don’t see him until Sunday night when we go to practice. I mean, he’s in his office right now (Monday morning) with his door closed. I really won’t see him much today until late in the afternoon. And then you don’t see him a lot Tuesday until practice. That’s really the story that’s interesting with him. He goes in and puts on that mad scientist hat and comes up with things he wants to do, and you just don’t see him much until usually Tuesday at practice.”

He left the lab, first at Duke and then at Oklahoma State, with a brand-new way to operate out of his base 4-2-5 defense, which isn’t terribly dissimilar in structure from what Ohio State has been running in the Day era. Knowles uses a hybrid safety as the Buckeyes do, though his is referred to as a “Rover” and is a bit more of a safety than a linebacker. But he deploys a cover safety and a true safety as the Buckeyes do, a pair of outside cornerbacks, two linebackers and four linemen.

His largest departure from the norm in the 4-2-5 comes on the line. Knowles is the proprietor of the “Leo” position, which Knowles defines as a spot for instinctual, creative players, working as a combination of a defensive end and a linebacker.

“The (Leo) is a fun position for the players,” Knowles said. “You don’t have to have a certain size or even a certain skill set, you just have to have a ballplayer at that position – someone who enjoys the game, has instincts, who is creative. You can find that guy anywhere.”

“This guy can play offense on defense. He can be like a tailback where you can tell him what to do specifically, and no matter what it will have an effect on the offense. You can move him around, put him wherever you want, and the offense never knows where it’s coming from. Part of playing great defense is the ability to adjust, and when you have a guy who is an adjuster like that, you can do so many different things and it allows for a lot of creativity.”

This season, 6-3, 250-pound Brock Mar-

tin and 6-2, 225-pound Collin Oliver filled the role for the Pokes, racking up a combined 66 tackles, 27 TFL and 18½ sacks.

Knowles uses the spot, as he says, as a fixer for anything ailing his defense. It functions largely as a stand-up defensive end, which can work off the edge of the line as an end traditionally would, but Knowles moves him around the defense depending on what the offense shows him. If his Leo is being chipped on the edge by a tight end, Knowles moves him into the middle of the defense and rushes him from there, forcing the offense to either leave a blocker in the backfield to answer it or to change its pass protection plans entirely. He dials up entire plays just for the Leo, like you would a running back, to free it up for easy rushes into the backfield.

Anything the offense shows, the Leo offers an answer for. When Oklahoma State was beaten by specific looks in the first half against Oklahoma and Baylor on Nov. 27 and Dec. 4, Knowles reworked his Leo’s responsibilities at the half, and in both games his defense came out and blanked its opponent. The Sooners scored nine second-half points – one on a safety, one on a fumble recovery – and the Bears scored zero.

It all ties back into an idea that Knowles formed when he was coaching at Cornell, based around his background working on both sides of the ball and on wanting to build a more aggressive way to play defense. He calls it playing offense on defense and uses that to paint every part of his scheme, from the way his players play to the way he calls games, at times dialing up specific blitzes for that Leo in the same way an offensive

coordinator would design running plays for a tailback.

“Early in my career I was fortunate enough to coach on offense at Cornell,” Knowles said. “I learned protections and things that cause offenses problems, how much scheming goes into it from an offensive perspective to predict where the defense is going to be so that you get the right matchups and blocking assignments. Once you’re exposed to that, you see that there are opportunities to play offense on defense.”

“Just the word defense itself, it gives the feeling of being back on your heels. You have to, in my opinion, make the defense aggressive to put the offense on its heels. That means taking advantage, taking some chances, playing that first-down marker like it’s a goal-line in terms of selling it to your players and taking a stand. That changes the game. In today’s game, everything goes so fast and offenses are so powerful, that when you get a third-down stop, in essence, you are stealing possessions. You need to steal possessions and you can either do it through takeaways or third-down stops, and you have to approach it like that.”

On Jan. 2, Day will hand the keys to Knowles and task him with fixing a Buckeye defense that helped hold one of the most effective offenses in school history out of the playoff. And though his approaches may be unconventional, these Buckeyes are trusting the Cornell graduate to make sure that they aren’t watching an in-state foe like Cincinnati, which claimed the No. 4 seed, or those dreaded Wolverines (No. 2 seed) in the playoffs again next season.

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Off-The-Field Adversity Led Utes To Pac-12 Crown

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Utah's path to its first Pac-12 title and Rose Bowl berth is decades long, winding through program-defining highs and devastating lows.

The Utes – once a Mountain West power that made noise first under former Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer with an unbeaten season and a Fiesta Bowl crown in 2004 and then again with another unbeaten season and a Sugar Bowl win against Alabama in 2008 – made the leap to the Pac-12 in 2011.

Led by head coach Kyle Whittingham, who coordinated Meyer's defenses and took over for him in 2005 when he jumped to Florida, the Utes navigated new terrain and became an almost instant contender in their new territory. They went 7-5 in year one, battled back from two losing seasons in 2012 and 2013 and emerged as one of the Pac-12 South division's brightest stars while traditional powers like USC slumped.

In 2015, the 10-3 Utes peaked as high as third in the AP Poll and were just a league win away from a trip to play Stanford in the conference title, ceding their spot to a USC team with three league losses of its own but the head-to-head tiebreaker. They took steps back in 2016 and 2017 but finally broke through and claimed the South in 2018, only to fall 10-3 to Washington.

A year later, everything seemed to finally click. Utah entered the final week of the season sitting at 11-1 and fifth in the College Football Playoff rankings, likely needing only a win in the conference title game to enter the field for the first time. Instead, it met a fearsome Oregon team that knocked Utah out of the running with a 37-15 defeat.

After rebuilding in 2020 during the altered pandemic season, Utah looked again positioned to compete for the league crown in 2021, even with only a 3-2 record to show for the '20 campaign.

The Utes had a strong combination of veteran and young talent on both sides of the ball, prepared to return an outstanding defense and had tabbed former four-star Texas signee Cameron Rising to lead an offense that had often held the team back – so long as his health permitted, with a season-ending shoulder injury sustained in week one of the 2020 season that forced an offseason of surgery recovery looming large. Still, things were looking up at Utah.

Nothing would prepare it for the tragedies that would follow.

On Christmas, star freshman tailback Ty Jordan accidentally shot himself in the abdomen and suffered injuries that would prove fatal. He was pronounced dead after being transported to a local hospital. He was 19.

Nine months later, on Sept. 26, 21-year-old sophomore cornerback Aaron Lowe, a high school teammate of Jordan's who had

changed his number to honor him, was shot and killed at a house party.

And though no victories will dull the pain of those losses, Utah dedicated its season to its fallen teammates, playing what Whittingham described as the most difficult season of his life.

"It's been a pleasure to coach them all year long," Whittingham said. "What we've been through this year – this has been the most difficult year of my coaching career in many respects. And our guys and our leadership – we couldn't have done it without those guys and the leaders and the seniors and the upperclassmen who did such a great job all season long of persevering.

"You know, our mantra after the tragedy was, 'We're not going to get over it, but we'll get through it.' And I believe our guys really did that. I couldn't be more proud of them. Ty and Aaron, we love those two young men and they were with us tonight (at the Pac-12 championship). I'm positive of that."

After Utah rolled Oregon for the second time in three weeks, 38-10, on Dec. 4 to secure its first Pac-12 title, linebacker Devin Lloyd told reporters that the Utes had done it for Jordan and Lowe.

"This is for Ty and Aaron," Lloyd said. "Ty, Aaron, we love you, this is for you. The adversity we faced, everyone bought in throughout the whole season. We came out on top."

Within the scope of the season, Utah faced more – albeit obviously less severe – adversity. With Rising still on the mend, Utah turned to Baylor transfer Charlie Brewer at quarterback to start the season and struggled greatly, losing to BYU and San Diego State in back-to-back weeks to open the season at just 1-2.

Inspired to change by those losses, Utah turned to a finally healthy Rising and immediately emerged as a new group. It took care of Washington State, spent an off week recovering, and then throttled USC and Arizona State to take command of the South in consecutive weeks. An eight-point loss to Oregon State is the lone blemish on Rising's résumé, as he led the Utes to a 9-1 record overall with a pair of wins over those Oregon Ducks that held Utah out of the playoff two seasons ago.

"Cam Rising – what a story that kid has been this year," Whittingham said. "He was the second-string quarterback the first three games and just persevered, prepared like he was the starter, had a great attitude. When he got his shot, he made the most of it, and the rest is history.

"It's a history-making football team at

Get To Know ... Utah

2021 Record: 10-3.

Team Information: Offensive Formation – Multiple; Defensive Formation – 4-3; Starters Returning – Offense 8, Defense 5, Specialists 0.

Head Coach: Kyle Whittingham, 18th year, 144-69.

Series History: 2nd meeting; Ohio State leads 1-0.

School Facts: Location – Salt Lake City, Utah; Enrollment – 34,424; Nickname – Utes; Color – Red, White; Conference – Pac-12 (South Division); Stadium – Rice-Eccles Stadium (Surface, FieldTurf; Capacity – 51,444).

Utah. We've never won the Pac-12, so I'm proud of them for that, in the convincing fashion that they did it. If you had told me that after three games that we'd be here right now, I would have said you were crazy. These guys buckled down, and we went 9-1 the rest of the way after those first three. I couldn't be prouder."

Rising has never been electric for Utah, completing 62.8 percent of his passes for 2,279 yards and 18 touchdowns, but he's thrown only five interceptions, and more than anything, he's kept the offense on track.

He's been the beneficiary of one of the strongest tight end rooms in the country, paired with wide receiver Britain Covey – who started his career at Utah all the way back in 2015, served his church mission for two years, returned in 2018 and still has another year of eligibility after this one.

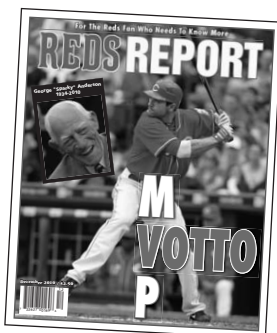
Covey leads the team with 49 receptions for 480 yards and two scores, but the tight end trio of Brant Kuithe (44 receptions, 534 yards, six touchdowns), Dalton Kincaid (33 receptions, 465 yards, seven touchdowns) and Cole Fotheringham (13 receptions, 109 yards) has been the centerpiece of the passing attack.

"It's been huge for us. Not only tonight but all season long," Whittingham said after the Pac-12 title game. "We think that's the best trio of tight ends in the country. You'll be hard-pressed to find any team that's got three guys that are as talented as those three. (They take turns being the star but) all three of those guys as a group always bring great results. It's an elite group. We might lose them all. They may all turn to the NFL. I don't want to say they were the core of the offense this year, but they were huge. We played so many two- and three-tight end sets, we probably lead the nation in two- or three-tight end sets. And that's because of their talent level."

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OHIO STATE VS. UTAH

If they weren't the core of the offense, they were certainly near it. Their ability to contribute in the passing attack allowed Utah to deploy more heavy looks than, as Whittingham said, just about every team in America. That presents a nightmare matchup for opponent secondaries – look no further than Oregon, which had no answer for the tight ends – and gives Utah a distinct advantage on the ground, helping to bolster a line that struggled to open the season.

Increased stability up front has played a role in improvements on the ground too. Utah returned three offensive line starters to this unit in right tackle Braeden Daniels, center Nick Ford and right guard Sataoa Laumea, but Daniels and Laumea are still underclassmen and left guard Keaton Bills, a redshirt freshman, made it three youngsters up front.

However, after wading through an early-season injury front, Utah has emerged with one of the nation's most powerful rushing attacks. It's fourth in the nation in carries of at least 10 yards with 101 and 14th in rushing yards per game at 216.1. Gaining 5.61 yards per carry, Utah is the second-most effective rushing team in the nation on a per run basis, behind only triple-option stalwart Coastal Carolina.

"I just think early on, and it is an excuse, there were a lot of injuries," Utes offensive line coach Jim Harding said. "Now, they've kind of gotten into a groove, they know what their role is on the offensive line, and everyone has accepted that. It's really a next-man-up mentality."

The Utes are eighth in the nation overall in plays of at least 10 yards with 226 and pair that with the eighth-best third-down conversion rate to keep things moving offensively.

Tailback Tavion Thomas – a Dayton Dunbar product and transfer from Cincinnati – has played a major role in Utah's offensive progression this year as well. He's teamed up with the smaller T.J. Pledger out of Oklahoma to create quite the one-two punch, with Thomas delivering the boom from behind his 6-2, 221-pound frame to the tune of 1,041 yards and 20 touchdowns on 186 carries. His move to the top spot was somewhat unexpected after a rough offseason, but he rounded into form in fall camp and was dominant in Pac-12 play.

"We had some things to clean up," Whittingham said. "We didn't have him in spring ball. He came in the summer. He had ball security issues early in the season that showed up a couple of times. That's been a work in progress. Pass protection and blitz pickup takes some time."

"(Running backs coach) Kiel McDonald has done an outstanding job with him. He's a big-time back. He's a load. I think you're going to see him continue to get even better. As long as he doesn't take a step backward in ball security or any of those other things, he's going to be a big part of what we're doing moving forward."

Pledger serves more as the speed back at 5-9, 196 pounds, though don't confuse his slight frame for a lack of physicality. He too takes joy in bowling through defenders, and though he's more likely to break free than his counterpart, gaining 671 yards and six scores on 97 carries, he is not at all afraid of contact.

Despite improvements on the offensive side of the ball, Utah still makes its hay as a

program with defense under Whittingham's guidance, fielding the nation's No. 24 defense in points per game allowed, letting in just under three touchdowns a contest at 20.6. Since the start of November, that number is down to just 13.2, including those two wins over Oregon in which the Ducks offense was held to seven and 10 points respectively.

Much of Utah's defensive prowess comes from its ability to create big plays, pushing offenses out of rhythm and forcing them to make plays down the field to recover. The Utes are fifth in the nation in sacks with 42 and sixth in tackles behind the line of scrimmage with 96, and the defensive line plays a big part in that.

Defensive end Mika Ta'umu is at the fore for that group. The lone returning starter on the line entering the season, he has a team-high 9½ sacks and a second-best 13 TFL on the year to go with his 48 overall tackles. With a compact 6-3, 250-pound frame, he excels in dragging offensive tackles wider than they'd like to be before darting back in for a clear shot at the quarterback. Utah isn't much for designed pressure because it knows it can lean on the junior to create much of it on his own, opting instead for lots of action up front with stunts and fakes to confuse opposing offensive lines.

Opposite Ta'umu, freshman Van Fillinger has had a solid debut season, racking up 5½ sacks of his own and 9½ TFL with 40 total tackles. He's the more powerful of the two and often teams up with the tackles, Junior Ta'umu and Aliko Vimala, to generate his pressure on the interior.

When Utah does bring extra pressure, it's safe to bet that it'll come from big No. 0, Lloyd. Now a junior who turned down a potential day-one draft spot a season ago, Lloyd is the unquestioned leader of both the defense and the team at large. His coach, who has seen quite a few strong defenders in his day, doesn't think he's seen anyone better at Utah than the Chula Vista, Calif., native.

"Devin is a special football player," Whittingham said. "I'm going to tell you (he's) the best defender that's ever come through the University of Utah, at least in the modern era. There may be someone in the '30s or '40s or whatever that I don't know about. But in the modern era, he is going to be, without a doubt, the highest-drafted defensive player that we've had. He is a guy that is self-made. He came to us as a safety and a wide receiver out of high school, and we projected him at linebacker. And now he's one of the top linebackers in the country."

"His versatility allows us to use him in an inside 'backer spot, which is where he is most comfortable. We can also bring him off the edge. He's done a lot of pass rush for us in the sub-packages. He's got the size (6-3, 235), the strength, the speed, the agility that all the big-time players have."

Wherever he lines up, Lloyd functions as the center of Utah's defense from which everything else originates. He's Whittingham's extension on the field, calling out plays and adjustments and setting alignments for his teammates around what he sees from the offense. His 106 tackles and 22 TFL easily lead the team, and his eight sacks from that linebacker spot are among the best of any true linebacker in college football. He's an almost surefire All-American and is largely projected as a first-round selection in the upcoming NFL draft if he decides that this

Rose Bowl will be his final game as a Ute.

"His impact and value cannot be overstated. I mean, he is such a leader, such a pure talent," Whittingham said of Lloyd. "He could have come out last year and been a first- or second-round draft choice. I think he's probably played his way into the top 10 or 12 in the first round now. That's what I'm hearing."

"But he came back, and he was a man on a mission. He wanted to win the championship. He wanted to be an All-American. He had these goals. We sat down and he told me all of his goals when we had the meeting just a little over a year ago when he was making that decision. He says, 'I'm coming back and here's why. Here's what I want to accomplish.' And he's checked every box so far."

Next to him, rover Nephi Sewell (the brother of Oregon linebacker Noah, former Oregon offensive tackle Penei and former Nevada linebacker Gabriel) has managed to fly under the radar because of his proximity to Lloyd, but he too has been excellent. He works largely as Utah's answer to short passing attacks and tight end threats but still has 81 tackles and 7½ TFL to his name for the year. Against run-heavy looks, Oregon flexes a third linebacker onto the field, but against the Buckeyes it will likely stick closely to a 4-2-5 base to answer the Jaxon Smith-Njigba problem in the slot.

That means Ohio State will have to contend with outside cornerbacks Clark Phillips III and Faybian Marks, as well as nickel specialist Malone Mataele who will

likely draw the Smith-Njigba assignment. Safeties Vonte Davis and Brandon McKinney rarely leave the field and serve largely in a traditional two-high safety look. Davis has excelled as one of the more veteran members of the defense, and McKinney has settled into a role after transferring from Washington, but the star of the show here is a familiar name for Buckeye fans.

Phillips, a former four-star in the class of 2020 who was committed to Ohio State but flipped to Utah after defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley accepted the head coaching position at Boston College, has been a star since day one for the Utes. He's started all but one game since his arrival, moving between the nickel and outside cornerback spots but finding more comfort on the outside, where he'll reside against the Buckeyes.

"We expect him to be one of the stalwart corners for us," Whittingham said of Phillips. "Between him and (JaTravis) Broughton (who suffered an early-season injury and isn't expected to return for the Rose Bowl) on the outside, and Malone Mataele on the inside nickel spot, we feel like we've got three really good young corners. He's really improved his game all around."

Phillips has 58 tackles on the year, second in the secondary to McKinney's 60, and though he has only one interception, he's deflected 12 passes and has helped put Utah at 24th nationally in passing yards per game at 195.3 and 13th in yards per passing attempt at 6.2.

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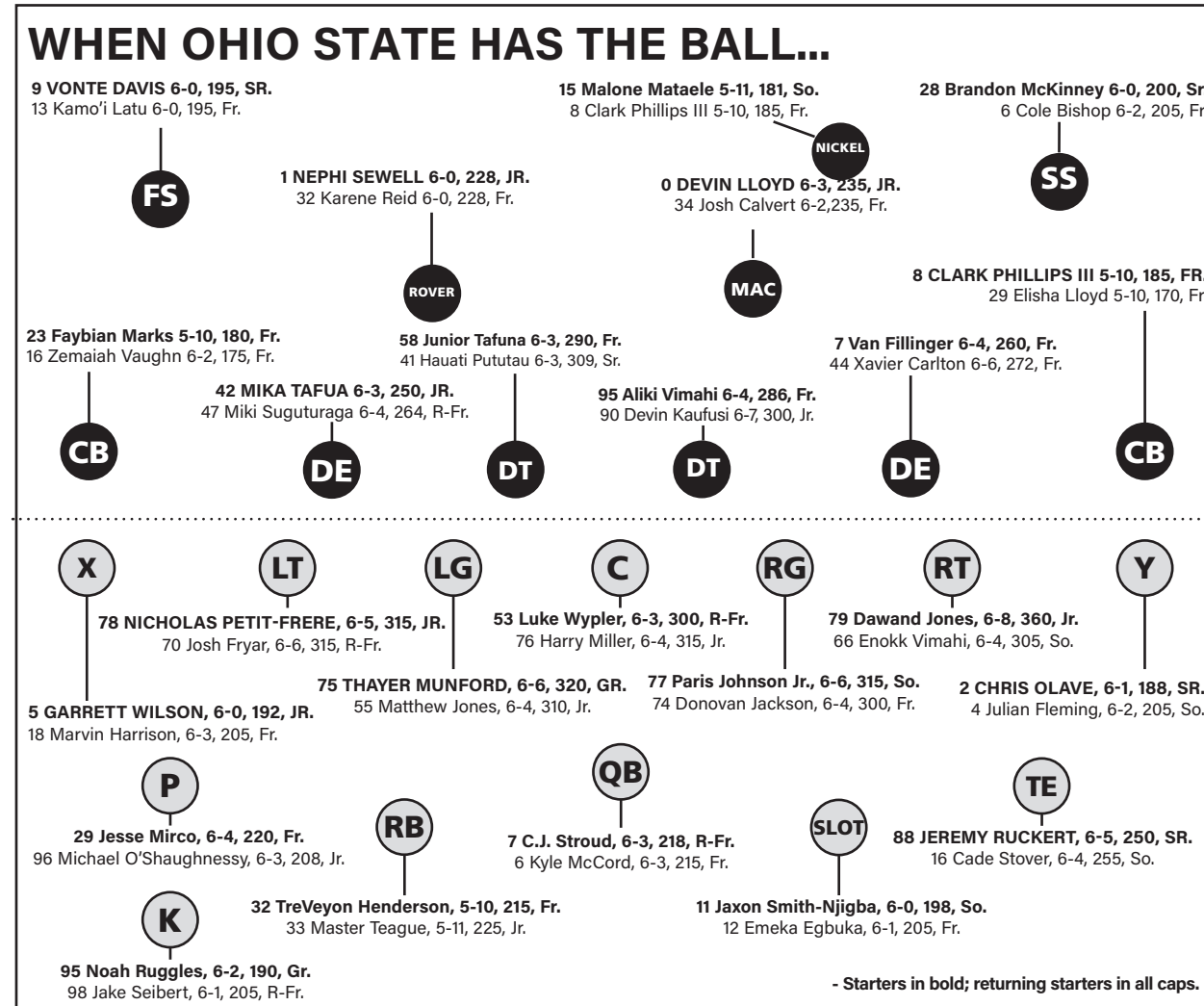


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How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. UTAH RUSH DEFENSE

Assuming all the top Buckeyes are available and not ill or sitting out the game to protect themselves for the NFL draft, this will be an interesting matchup against a team that shows some similar traits as Michigan and defeated Oregon twice this season.

Ohio State is 41st nationally with an average of 186.5 rushing yards per game and 24 touchdowns. Utah ranks 21st in rush defense (120.1 avg.). The Utes are also 12th nationally in total defense (315.4 yards per game) and 13th in fewest yards allowed per play (4.85).

Fortunately for the Buckeyes, they don't have to worry about TrevVeyon Henderson leaving school early. The freshman ran for 1,165 yards on 7.0 yards per carry and 97.1 yards a game. He ran for 15 touchdowns and caught four more to set the OSU record for freshmen TDs. Mi-yan Williams averaged more yards per tote than Henderson (7.1) and gained 491 yards with three touchdowns in nine games. Fan favorite Master Teague (355 yards, 5.3 avg., four TDs) may get one final run for the Buckeyes. **EDGE: EVEN**

UTAH RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Buckeyes will have had five weeks to figure out their defensive woes that allowed Michigan to run with embarrassing ease. The task won't get much easier as the Utes will want to grind it to keep the ball away from the potent OSU offense. Utah ranks 14th at 216.1 yards per game with 35 TDs. Michigan, which is 10th, ran for 297 yards (7.2 avg.) and scored six times on the ground against the Buckeyes. Despite those numbers, the Buckeyes still rank 18th in rush defense (118.5). Utah has Tavion Thomas, a former All-Ohio back from Dayton Dunbar. He ran for 1,041 yards (5.6 avg.) and 20 touchdowns. T.J. Pledger has 671 yards (6.9 avg.) and six touchdowns on just 97 carries. He has four 100-yard games this season. **EDGE: UTAH**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. UTAH PASS DEFENSE

If, and that's a very big if, the offensive line doesn't get manhandled again, then Heisman Trophy finalist C.J. Stroud should be able to start his campaign for the 2022 award. Stroud completed 70.9 percent of his passes for 3,862 yards with 38 scores and five interceptions. Jaxon Smith-Njigba led the team with 80 catches for 1,259 yards (15.7 yards per catch) and six touchdowns. Both Garrett Wilson (70 catches for 1,058 yards on a 15.1 avg. and 12 TDs) and Chris Olave (65, 936, 14.4, 13) may opt out of the game. If not, the Buckeyes will have enough weapons to challenge the No. 24 pass defense (195.3 yards per game). The Utes are fifth in the country with 42 sacks. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

UTAH PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Cameron Rising has thrown for 2,279 yards while completing 62.8 percent of his throws with 18 TDs against five interceptions. He distributes the ball well with six receivers having 20 or more catches but none with more than 50. OSU's pass defense is suspect, ranking 98th of 130 teams. The 246.9 yards per game allowed are the fourth-most in school history. Utah has allowed only 12 sacks while the Buckeyes' defense has 36 sacks. OSU put little pressure on Michigan, and the linebackers were not well positioned to make plays, leaving the secondary exposed. It's no wonder the Buckeyes can't wait until Jan. 2 when former Oklahoma State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles switches OSUs and takes over at the same position in Columbus. **EDGE: EVEN**

SPECIAL TEAMS

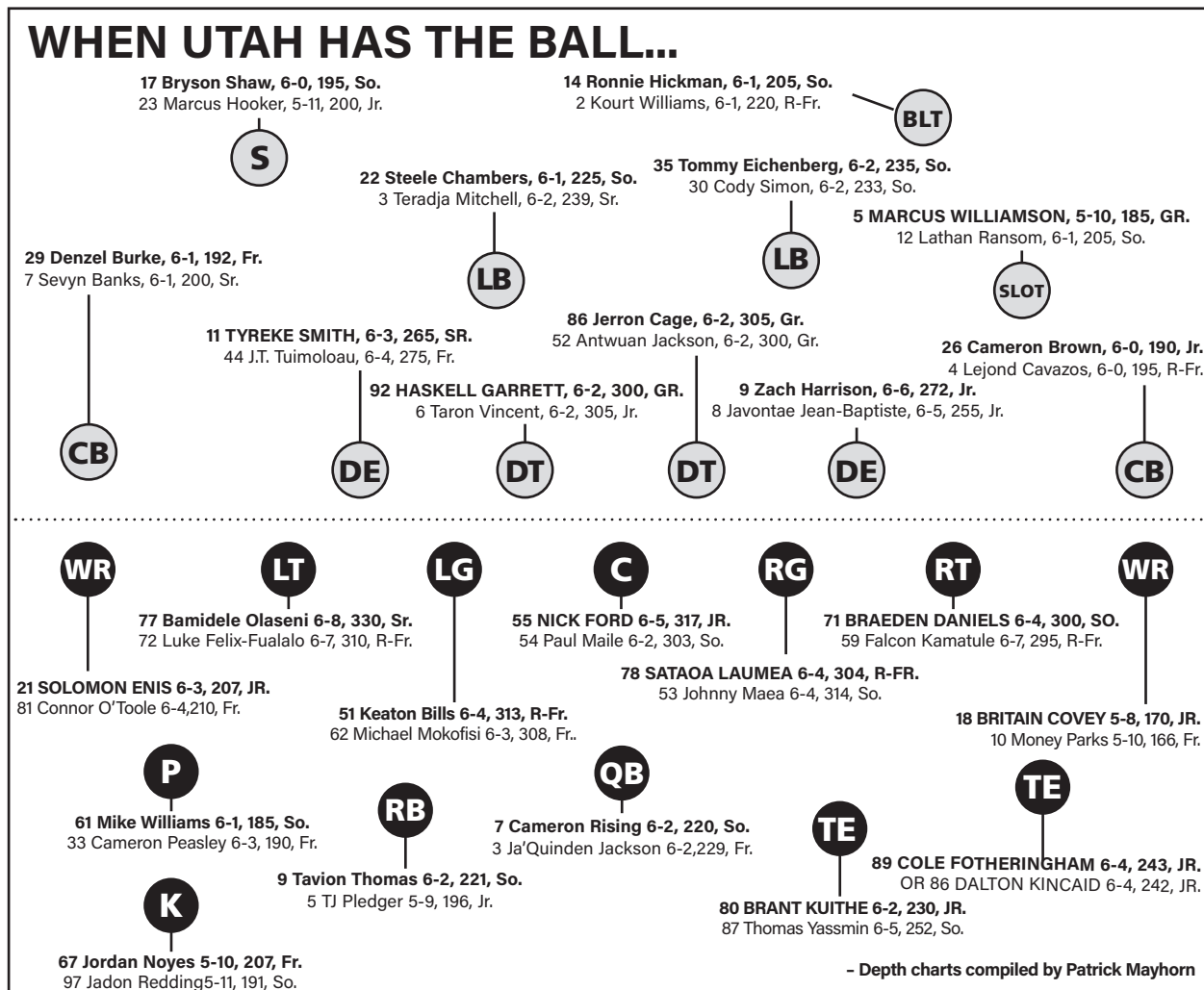
Britain Covey has two punt returns for TDs, including an 80-yarder, and averages 30.4 yards per kick return. The Buckeyes' longest punt return is 23 yards by Wilson. Emeka Egbuka has shown explosiveness on kick returns. He averages 32.1 yards with a 67-yarder to his credit. Oklahoma averages 38.9 yards per punt between three players, and a pair of kickers have made just 11 of 17 field-goal attempts with a long of 50. OSU has the edge in both categories with punter Jesse Mirco averaging 42.3 yards while Noah Ruggles has made 18 of 19 field-goal tries with a long of 46. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

INTANGIBLES

How motivated will the Buckeyes be after a 42-27 beatdown by the Wolverines that cost them a shot at a third straight College Football Playoff and allowed U-M to be heralded as the new king of the conference? Maybe a lot, maybe not. There's no question that Utah in its first Rose Bowl is poised to be the giant killer. The Utes view the game as a reward, not a consolation prize. **EDGE: UTAH**

PREDICTION

Between their toughness and pride being questioned after the Michigan game, it should be an ornery group of Buckeyes who want to start the new year right to set up a title run in the fall. As much energy and desire as the Utes will bring, the game is still Ohio State's to lose because of the talent gap. It will be entertaining, nonetheless. **OHIO STATE 48, UTAH 33**



| Ohio State Season Statistics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|---------|----------|----------|--------|------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 2021-22 Game-By-Game | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Date | Opponent | Result/Time | Crowd | | | | | | | | | |
| Sept. 2 | (4) at Minnesota | W, 45-31 | 50,805 | | | | | | | | | |
| Sept. 11 | (3) OREGON (12) | L, 35-28 | 100,482 | | | | | | | | | |
| Sept. 18 | (9) TULSA | W, 41-20 | 76,540 | | | | | | | | | |
| Sept. 25 | (10) AKRON | W, 59-7 | 95,178 | | | | | | | | | |
| Oct. 2 | (11) at Rutgers | W, 52,13 | 51,006 | | | | | | | | | |
| Oct. 9 | (7) MARYLAND | W, 66-17 | 99,277 | | | | | | | | | |
| Oct. 23 | (5) at Indiana | W, 54-7 | 52,656 | | | | | | | | | |
| Oct. 30 | (5)PENN STATE (20) | W, 33-24 | 102,951 | | | | | | | | | |
| Nov. 6 | (6) at Nebraska | W, 26-17 | 84,426 | | | | | | | | | |
| Nov. 13 | (6) PURDUE | W, 59-31 | 101,009 | | | | | | | | | |
| Nov. 20 | (5) MICHIGAN STATE (7) | W, 56-7 | 101,858 | | | | | | | | | |
| Nov. 27 | (2) at Michigan (6) | L, 42-27 | 111,156 | | | | | | | | | |
| OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Team Statistics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | OSU | | | | | Opp | | | | | | |
| First Downs | 320 | | | | | 252 | | | | | | |
| Rushing | 113 | | | | | 87 | | | | | | |
| Passing | 194 | | | | | 140 | | | | | | |
| Penalty | 13 | | | | | 25 | | | | | | |
| Average Per Game/Rush | 186.5 | | | | | 118.5 | | | | | | |
| Average Per Game/Pass | 364.9 | | | | | 246.9 | | | | | | |
| Total Offense | 6617 | | | | | 4385 | | | | | | |
| Total Plays | 850 | | | | | 841 | | | | | | |
| Average Per Game | 551.4 | | | | | 365.4 | | | | | | |
| Average Per Play | 7.8 | | | | | 5.2 | | | | | | |
| Penalties-Yards | 78-700 | | | | | 52-447 | | | | | | |
| Fumbles-Lost | 11-2 | | | | | 14-7 | | | | | | |
| Third Down Efficiency | 77-146 | | | | | 72/174 | | | | | | |
| Percentage | 53% | | | | | 41% | | | | | | |
| Fourth Down Efficiency | 9-17 | | | | | 9-18 | | | | | | |
| Percentage | 53% | | | | | 50% | | | | | | |
| Sacks-Yards | 36-240 | | | | | 17-133 | | | | | | |
| Time Of Possession Avg. | 29:41 | | | | | 30:19 | | | | | | |
| Score | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| By Quarters | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | OT | Tot. | Avg. | | | | | |
| Ohio State | 124 | 209 | 114 | 99 | 0 | 546 | 45.5 | | | | | |
| Opponents | 47 | 68 | 84 | 52 | 0 | 251 | 20.9 | | | | | |
| Individual Statistics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rushing | Att. | Net | Avg. | TD | Long | | | | | | | |
| T. Henderson | 166 | 1165 | 7.0 | 15 | 68 | | | | | | | |
| Miyan Williams | 69 | 491 | 7.1 | 3 | 71 | | | | | | | |
| Master Teague | 67 | 355 | 5.3 | 4 | 21 | | | | | | | |
| C.J. Stroud | 31 | -30 | -1.0 | 0 | 15 | | | | | | | |
| Evan Pryor | 21 | 98 | 4.7 | 1 | 16 | | | | | | | |
| Marcus Crowley | 20 | 103 | 5.2 | 0 | 22 | | | | | | | |
| TEAM | 9 | -10 | -1.1 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | |
| Kyle McCord | 9 | -16 | -1.8 | 0 | 7 | | | | | | | |
| Jack Miller III | 5 | -1 | -0.2 | 0 | 8 | | | | | | | |
| Garrett Wilson | 4 | 76 | 19.0 | 1 | 51 | | | | | | | |
| Robert Cope | 2 | 4 | 2.0 | 0 | 2 | | | | | | | |
| OSU Totals | 403 | 2238 | 5.6 | 24 | 71 | | | | | | | |
| OPP Totals | 404 | 1422 | 3.5 | 15 | 77 | | | | | | | |
| Passing | Comp. | Att. | Pct. | Yds. | TD-INT | Effic. | | | | | | |
| C.J. Stroud | 280 | 395 | 70.9 | 3862 | 38-5 | 182.2 | | | | | | |
| Kyle McCord | 25 | 38 | 65.8 | 416 | 2-2 | 164.6 | | | | | | |
| Jack Miller III | 7 | 14 | 50.0 | 101 | 0-0 | 110.6 | | | | | | |
| OSU Totals | 312 | 447 | 69.8 | 4379 | 40-7 | 178.5 | | | | | | |
| OPP Totals | 265 | 437 | 60.6 | 2963 | 18-12 | 125.7 | | | | | | |
| Receiving | Rec. | Net | Avg. | TD | Long | | | | | | | |
| Jaxon Smith-Njigba | 80 | 1259 | 15.7 | 6 | 75 | | | | | | | |
| Garrett Wilson | 70 | 1058 | 15.1 | 12 | 77 | | | | | | | |
| Chris Olave | 65 | 936 | 14.4 | 13 | 61 | | | | | | | |
| TreVeyon Henderson | 23 | 285 | 12.4 | 3 | 70 | | | | | | | |
| Jeremy Ruckert | 23 | 284 | 12.3 | 3 | 30 | | | | | | | |
| Miyan Williams | 9 | 74 | 8.2 | 0 | 17 | | | | | | | |
| Julian Fleming | 7 | 51 | 7.3 | 1 | 17 | | | | | | | |
| Emeka Egbuka | 6 | 145 | 24.2 | 0 | 85 | | | | | | | |
| Cade Stover | 5 | 76 | 15.2 | 0 | 25 | | | | | | | |
| Marvin Harrison Jr. | 5 | 68 | 13.6 | 0 | 20 | | | | | | | |
| Gee Scott Jr. | 5 | 42 | 8.4 | 0 | 16 | | | | | | | |
| Mitch Rossi | 3 | 6 | 2.0 | 0 | 5 | | | | | | | |
| Chris Booker | 2 | 27 | 13.5 | 0 | 16 | | | | | | | |
| Sam Wiglusz | 2 | 14 | 7.0 | 0 | 9 | | | | | | | |
| Master Teague | 2 | 12 | 6.0 | 0 | 7 | | | | | | | |
| Evan Pryor | 2 | 8 | 4.0 | 0 | 10 | | | | | | | |
| Marcus Crowley | 1 | 21 | 21.0 | 0 | 21 | | | | | | | |
| Joe Royer | 1 | 9 | 9.0 | 0 | 9 | | | | | | | |
| Jayden Ballard | 1 | 4 | 4.0 | 0 | 4 | | | | | | | |
| OSU Totals | 312 | 4379 | 14.0 | 40 | 85 | | | | | | | |
| OPP Totals | 265 | 2963 | 11.2 | 18 | 75 | | | | | | | |
| Scoring | TD | EPK | EPR | EPRC | FG | PTS | | | | | | |
| Noah Ruggles | -68-68 | - | - | -18-19 | 122 | | | | | | | |
| T. Henderson | 19 | - | - | - | - | 114 | | | | | | |
| Chris Olave | 13 | - | - | - | - | 78 | | | | | | |
| Garrett Wilson | 13 | - | - | - | - | 78 | | | | | | |
| Jaxon Smith-Njigba | 6 | - | - | - | - | 36 | | | | | | |
| Master Teague III | 4 | - | - | - | - | 24 | | | | | | |
| Jeremy Ruckert | 3 | - | - | - | - | 18 | | | | | | |
| Miyan Williams | 3 | - | - | - | - | 18 | | | | | | |
| Haskell Garrett | 1 | - | - | - | - | 6 | | | | | | |
| Craig Young | 1 | - | - | - | - | 6 | | | | | | |
| Ronnie Hickman | 1 | - | - | - | - | 6 | | | | | | |
| Cameron Martinez | 1 | - | - | - | - | 6 | | | | | | |
| Evan Pryor | 1 | - | - | - | - | 6 | | | | | | |
| Mitch Rossi | 1 | - | - | - | - | 6 | | | | | | |
| Denzel Burke | 1 | - | - | - | - | 6 | | | | | | |
| Jerron Cage | 1 | - | - | - | - | 6 | | | | | | |
| Julian Fleming | 1 | - | - | - | - | 6 | | | | | | |
| Marvin Harrison Jr. | 0 | - | - | - | - | 2 | | | | | | |
| Dominic DiMaccio | 0 | 2-2 | - | - | - | 2 | | | | | | |
| OSU Totals | 70 | 70-70 | - | - | 18-19 | 546 | | | | | | |
| OPP Totals | 33 | 32-33 | - | - | 7-12 | 251 | | | | | | |
| FG Distance | 0-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50+ | Total | | | | | | | |
| Noah Ruggles | 6-6 | 8-9 | 4-4 | 0-0 | 18-19 | | | | | | | |
| OSU Totals | 6-6 | 8-9 | 4-4 | 0-0 | 18-19 | | | | | | | |
| OPP Totals | 1-1 | 3-4 | 3-7 | 0-0 | 7-12 | | | | | | | |
| Punting | No. | Yds. | Avg. | Bk | Long | | | | | | | |
| Jesse Mirco | 29 | 1228 | 42.3 | 0 | 62 | | | | | | | |
| OSU Totals | 29 | 1228 | 42.3 | 0 | 62 | | | | | | | |
| OPP Totals | 64 | 2804 | 43.8 | 0 | 74 | | | | | | | |
| Interceptions | No. | Yds. | Avg. | TD | Long | | | | | | | |
| Craig Young | 2 | 88 | 44.0 | 1 | 70 | | | | | | | |
| Ronnie Hickman | 2 | 65 | 32.5 | 1 | 46 | | | | | | | |
| Cameron Martinez | 1 | 61 | 61.0 | 1 | 61 | | | | | | | |
| Cameron Brown | 1 | 25 | 25.0 | 0 | 25 | | | | | | | |
| Cody Simon | 1 | 24 | 24.0 | 0 | 24 | | | | | | | |
| Denzel Burke | 1 | 23 | 23.0 | 1 | 23 | | | | | | | |
| Bryson Shaw | 1 | 20 | 20.0 | 0 | 20 | | | | | | | |
| Tommy Eichenberg | 1 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | |
| Ryan Watts | 1 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | |
| Steele Chambers | 1 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | |
| OSU Totals | 12 | 306 | 25.5 | 4 | 70 | | | | | | | |
| OPP Totals | 7 | 58 | 8.3 | 0 | 23 | | | | | | | |
| Punt Returns | No. | Yds. | Avg. | TD | Long | | | | | | | |
| Garrett Wilson | 14 | 68 | 4.9 | 0 | 23 | | | | | | | |
| Jaxon Smith-Njigba | 8 | 60 | 7.5 | 0 | 21 | | | | | | | |
| Chris Olave | 1 | 4 | 4.0 | 0 | 4 | | | | | | | |
| OSU Totals | 23 | 132 | 5.7 | 0 | 23 | | | | | | | |
| OPP Totals | 7 | 41 | 5.9 | 0 | 17 | | | | | | | |
| Kickoff Returns | No. | Yds. | Avg. | TD | Long | | | | | | | |
| Emeka Egbuka | 13 | 417 | 32.1 | 0 | 67 | | | | | | | |
| Julian Fleming | 3 | 22 | 7.3 | 0 | 11 | | | | | | | |
| Xavier Johnson | 2 | 37 | 18.5 | 0 | 22 | | | | | | | |
| TreVeyon Henderson | 1 | 19 | 19.0 | 0 | 19 | | | | | | | |
| Steele Chambers | 1 | 13 | 13.0 | 0 | 13 | | | | | | | |
| OSU Totals | 20 | 508 | 25.4 | 0 | 67 | | | | | | | |
| OPP Totals | 32 | 491 | 15.3 | 0 | 26 | | | | | | | |
| Def. Leaders | Solo | Ast. | Tot. | TFL-Yds. | Sacks | | | | | | | |
| Ronnie Hickman | 53 | 44 | 97 | 1.0-4 | 1.0-4 | | | | | | | |
| Cody Simon | 21 | 33 | 54 | 2.0-13 | 1.0-11 | | | | | | | |
| Bryson Shaw | 28 | 22 | 50 | 0.5-1 | - | | | | | | | |
| Tommy Eichenberg | 22 | 25 | 47 | 3.5-9 | - | | | | | | | |
| Teradja Mitchell | 20 | 24 | 44 | 4.5-12 | - | | | | | | | |
| Steele Chambers | 25 | 17 | 42 | 4.0-11 | 1.0-7 | | | | | | | |
| Lathan Ransom | 21 | 17 | 38 | 2.0-8 | 1.0-7 | | | | | | | |
| Denzel Burke | 25 | 8 | 33 | - | - | | | | | | | |
| Zach Harrison | 22 | 7 | 29 | 7.0-22 | 4.0-17 | | | | | | | |
| Marcus Williamson | 18 | 9 | 27 | 0.5-3 | - | | | | | | | |
| Tyreke Smith | 12 | 13 | 25 | 5.0-24 | 3.0-19 | | | | | | | |
| Antwuan Jackson | 11 | 12 | 23 | 4.5-20 | 2.5-16 | | | | | | | |
| Haskell Garrett | 12 | 10 | 22 | 7.0-33 | 5.5-31 | | | | | | | |
| Kourt Williams | 15 | 6 | 21 | 2.0-3 | - | | | | | | | |
| Cameron Brown | 15 | 6 | 21 | - | - | | | | | | | |
| Cameron Martinez | 12 | 6 | 18 | 0.5-4 | - | | | | | | | |
| Taron Vincent | 9 | 8 | 17 | 3.5-6 | 0.5-2 | | | | | | | |
| Tyleik Williams | 9 | 6 | 15 | 5.5-44 | 5.0-43 | | | | | | | |
| Craig Young | 6 | 9 | 15 | 0.5-1 | - | | | | | | | |
| J. Jean-Baptiste | 7 | 7 | 14 | 2.5-19 | 1.5-13 | | | | | | | |
| J.T. Tuimololau | 6 | 8 | 14 | 3.5-27 | 2.5-24 | | | | | | | |
| Jack Sawyer | 9 | 3 | 12 | 3.0-24 | 3.0-24 | | | | | | | |
| OSU Totals | 451 | 374 | 825 | 70.0-314 | 36.0-240 | | | | | | | |
| OPP Totals | 486 | 284 | 770 | 43.0-179 | 17.0-133 | | | | | | | |
| Fumbles Forced: | 11 | - Harrison (2), Booker, Chambers, Hickman, McKenzie, Ransom, Sawyer, Smith, Williams, Williamson. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fumbles Recovered: | 7 | - Cage (2), Garrett (2), Eichenberg, Gaoteote IV, Hamilton. | | | | | | | | | | |

Buckeyes Pass Test By Destroying Utah

Ohio State and Utah, opponents in the upcoming Rose Bowl, have met on the gridiron only once previously, on Sept. 27, 1986. The following is a reprint of Buckeye Sports Bulletin's game story from the Oct. 4, 1986, issue. BSB will also run other reprints from our coverage of that game as part of our Reprint Thursday at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com on Dec. 22.

By DAVE WAITKUS

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The only thing that could have spoiled Ohio State's fun against Utah in Ohio Sta-

dium would have been the following disclaimer:

"This was a test. This was only a test of the Ohio State offensive football system. For the past 60 minutes, you have witnessed what could happen if the Buckeyes are angered. If this would have been an actual game, you would have been instructed to tune to another stadium. This concludes our test. We now return you to your regular season."

According to the record books, though, it was a real game. Ohio State did indeed bring out the heavy artillery. In fact, the Buckeyes completely destroyed Utah, leav-

ing the U.S.A. with only 49 states.

"I think we did an outstanding job today, both on offense and on defense," said Ohio State "commander" Earle Bruce, shortly after the smoke cleared in Ohio Stadium and the scoreboard showed Ohio State 64, Utah 6. "We capitalized on some mistakes early, and I think we got a very fine performance from our tailback position. This is going to help our confidence a lot."

Perhaps all the mismatch earned Utah – who came out of the Western Athletic Conference (WAC) at 0-1 and left an embarrassed 0-2 – was two lines in the book

of Ohio State football trivia.

The first question might be: "Who was the opponent when Ohio State won its 600th football game, joining notables Michigan, Notre Dame, Texas, Alabama, Penn State and Nebraska in Division 1-A?" The answer: "Utah, 1986."

Next: "Against what team did the Buckeyes set their current single-game offensive record, and what was that total?" The answer again: "Utah – 715 yards."

What? Are you kidding? Ohio State had scored just 30 points and had only 728 yards of total offense when it went into the game with a 1-2 record. How could that be?

Well, for starters, it might have been due to a young man from Harrisburg, Pa., known as Jim Bryant.

Making his first-ever start in a college football game, Bryant – who replaced Vince Workman at the starting tailback position – got the first call of the contest. He responded with a twisting 25-yard romp, which nearly matched OSU's longest run of the season.

On his second carry, the 6-0, 212-pound freshman took a pitch and ran 11 more yards. Carry number three produced a tackle-breaking 30-yard crowd-pleaser to the Utes' one-yard line. Then, despite the thought that OSU had entered "George Cooper Land," Bruce again called on number 41. Bryant responded by leaping over the goal for the Buckeyes' first of nine touchdowns.

"Bryant is a very hard runner," claimed Bruce, after the youngster had rolled up 145 yards on 19 carries and one TD. "He excited our football team. He also excited Vince Workman, and I think he (Workman) was better because of that today."

Before Workman was able to prove his worth, however, the Buckeye defense popped up to further disorient the pass-happy Utes. On the kickoff following Bryant's score, Utah ran a well-conceived reverse. The problem, however, was that returner Greg Holder fumbled on a well-conceived hit by Buckeye Greg Rogan, and John Sullivan recovered for OSU on the Utah 48.

Mixing the run and pass effectively, the Buckeyes charged in for their second score in less than half a quarter. This time, Cooper got the call from two yards away. The big fullback bulled into the end zone for the first of his four TDs, and a blowout was in the making.

Now, it was time for Utah to uncork its passing attack, right? Wrong again.

Following a successful kick return – by day's end Utah would be well-skilled in that department – the Utes ran two straight running plays. The second took Eddie Johnson up the right sideline, but he fumbled on a hit by Buckeye safety David Brown. Linebacker Eric Kumerow was on hand to recover, and the Bucks were back on offense at their own 33.

After a swing pass to Cooper moved OSU to midfield, Workman replaced Bryant. He found the running almost as easy, as gaping holes opened by the offensive line netted six, three and four yards.

The Buckeyes bogged down momentarily at the Utah 36, but quarterback Jim Kar-

Game Day. Beach Day.

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satos remedied the situation when he hit a streaking Nate Harris for 34 yards to the two. Then, it was “Cooper Time.”

If the crowd of 89,645 focused on number 44, they weren’t disappointed. Cooper again got the call and he dove over for the score. Shockingly, with 4:38 left and a 21-0 lead in the first period, Ohio State had nearly equaled its season scoring total.

“We’re just beginning the season, so to speak,” said Bruce, as Ohio State evened its record at 2-2 on the eve of the Buckeyes’ Big Ten opener with Illinois. “We lost two and everybody’s ready to throw in the chips. I think we proved today that we do have a good football team.”

Utah finally got untracked in the second quarter and dented the scoreboard with a 42-yard field goal by Andre Guardi. Then, it was time for Workman to go to work.

The Dublin, Ohio, sophomore, who eventually earned game rushing honors with 168 yards on 16 attempts, actually ruined his first big gainer of the day when he fumbled after a 21-yard jaunt to the Utah 28. The Utes could not muster a scoring drive, though, and OSU was off and running again at its own 39.

Karsatos, who also broke out of his early-season slump in a big way, went to the air for most of the march, which covered 61 yards in just seven plays. After connecting three times, including a 21-yard strike to Ed Taggart and a 22-yarder to Cris Carter, Karsatos found Workman at the six and he took it the rest of the way for a 13-yard score.

The Buckeye defense, which produced two pass interceptions and two fumble recoveries on the day, rose up to stop Utah’s deepest penetration of the first half – which gave OSU just enough time to score once more.

With quarterback Larry Egger on target and Johnson on the ground, the Utes moved into scoring position at the Buckeye 20. Three plays earned Utah nine yards and punishing hits by Rogan and William White. But, on fourth-and-one, the Utes broke down and suffered an eight-

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 64, Utah 6
Sept. 27, 1986 - Ohio Stadium; Columbus, Ohio

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Score by Quarters | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | F |
| UTAH | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 6 |
| OHIO STATE | 21 | 10 | 20 | 13 | 64 |

First Quarter

OSU - Bryant, 1 yard run (O'Morrow kick), 13:46.
OSU - Cooper, 2 yard run (O'Morrow kick), 8:28.
OSU - Cooper, 1 yard run (O'Morrow kick), 4:38.

Second Quarter

UTAH - Guardi, 42 yard field goal, 13:19.
OSU - Workman, 13 yard pass from Karsatos (O'Morrow kick), 6:17.
OSU - O'Morrow, 40 yard field goal, 0:39.

Third Quarter

OSU - Workman, 2 yard run (O'Morrow kick), 11:47.
UTAH - Guardi, 42 yard field goal, 9:17.
OSU - Cooper, 7 yard run (O'Morrow kick), 7:51.
OSU - Cooper, 2 yard run (kick failed), 3:02.

Fourth Quarter

OSU - Workman, 9 yard run (kick failed), 11:47.
OSU - Ross, 33 yard pass from Tupa (O'Morrow kick), 5:36.

Att. - 89,645.

Team Statistics

| | | |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|
| | UTAH | OSU |
| First Downs | 20 | 36 |
| Rushing | 6 | 17 |
| Passing | 12 | 16 |
| Penalty | 2 | 3 |
| Rushing-Yards | 20-111 | 54-394 |
| Passing Yards | 240 | 321 |
| Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.) | 48-24-2 | 32-21-0 |
| Offensive Plays | 68 | 86 |
| Total Net Yards | 351 | 715 |
| Third Down Efficiency | 4-14 | 9-13 |
| Punts-Avg. | 4-32.0 | 1-55.0 |
| Fumbles-Lost | 4-2 | 1-1 |
| Penalties | 7-44 | 5-46 |
| Time of Possession | 24:07 | 35:53 |

yard loss.

Taking over on downs, the Bucks tacked on three more points by way of Pat O'Morrow's 40-yard field goal and headed for the locker room with a whopping 31-3 advantage.

Utah, which lost its home opener 37-30 to San Diego State, came completely unglued in the third quarter as the Buckeyes tacked on three more touchdowns.

Just five plays after a weak Utah punt gave OSU the ball at the Utes' 22, Workman was in for his second score of the day. Then, after Utah closed out its scoring with another 42-yard field goal by Guardi, Workman really went to work.

Again, Bryant was the catalyst as he broke a 17-yard run to the Buckeye 45. One play later, Workman burst up the middle,

cut left and rambled 43 yards to the Utah seven. Cooper did the rest as he rolled in to make it 45-6.

“Jimmy’s running really pumped me up,” admitted Workman. “He was breaking some tackles, and I wanted to get in there and break some tackles.”

Workman also figured heavily in the Buckeyes’ last scoring drive of the third period as he ripped off runs of eight, seven, eight and 18 yards before turning it over to Cooper for yet another two-yard touchdown dive.

Workman added his third TD of the game in the final frame – this time on a nine-yard run – before he retired for the day. Overall, the two tailbacks keyed OSU’s 394-yard rushing day with 319 yards and three rushing touchdowns.

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) - **UTAH:** E. Johnson 9-72; Bero 2-16; G. Johnson 3-14; Mendonca 1-3; Egger 3-(-15); Betz 1-15; Hardy 1-6. **OSU:** Workman 16-168; Bryant 19-145; Cooper 8-33; Walker 4-27; Robinson 2-15; Ross 1-7; Harris 1-3; Tupa 1-2; Holland 14-(-1); Karsatos 1-(-5)/

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) - **UTAH:** Egger 42-22-2-215-0; Mendonca 6-2-0-25-0. **OSU:** Karsatos 22-15-0-224-1; Tupa 10-6-0-97-1.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) - **UTAH:** E. Johnson 6-51; McEwen 6-50; Holder 4-52; Harry 3-52; Bero 3-14; Hughes 1-12; C. Jones 1-9. **OSU:** Harris 3-72; Carter 3-65; Ross 3-60; Taggart 3-39; Cooper 3-33; Workman 2-19; Holland 2-17; Dawson 1-11; Bryant 1-5.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) - **UTAH:** Lieber 4-32.0-45. **OSU:** Tupa 1-55.0-55.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - **UTAH:** Hardy 1-12.0-12. **OSU:** Ross 1-17.0-17.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - **UTAH:** Hughes 9-21.4-34; Holder 1-38.0-38; Hardy 1-10.0-10 **OSU:** Holland 3-23.0-33.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES - **UTAH:** McMillian. **OSU:** Kumerow, J. Sullivan.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) - **UTAH:** None. **OSU:** Rogan, Craig.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) - **UTAH:** Wingert (2), M. Jones, Manu. **OSU:** Kumerow, Kee, Team.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) - **UTAH:** Wingert 5-7-12; Wheelwright 1-8-9; Pritchett 3-6-9; G. Smith 3-4-7; Fields 2-5-7; Kennedy 2-4-6; M. Jones 3-3-6; Peterson 3-2-5; Patterson 1-4-5; Wagner 1-4-5; Vedder 1-4-5; Jacobsen 1-3-4; B. Jenkins 1-3-4; F. Bonifacio 2-2-4; Manu 1-2-3; Harris 0-3-3; Argyle 1-2-3; Hawm 1-1-2; Baker 1-1-2; Rivers 1-1-2; Harry 1-0-1; Meredith 1-0-1; C. Jones 1-0-1; McMillian 0-1-1. **OSU:** Spielman 5-6-11; Gordon 5-4-9; Leach 3-3-6; Rogan 4-1-5; White 4-1-5; Kumerow 1-3-4; Smith 3-1-4; Smith 3-1-4; D. Brown 1-3-4; Kee 3-1-4; Osaman 0-3-3; Dumas 2-1-3; J. Sullivan 0-3-3; Showalter 2-1-3; Graves 0-2-2; Jackson 1-1-2; M. Sullivan 2-0-2; Thomas 0-1-1; Craig 0-1-1; Higdon 1-0-1; Ridder 0-1-1; H. Brown 0-1-1; Team 1-0-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME - **UTAH:** Manu, Williams, B. Jenkins, McKenna, Pearson, Rivers, McMillian, Baker, Argyle, Wagner, Hawm, Meredith, Vedder, Patterson, Wingert, Harris, F. Bonifacio, McGriff, Keennedy, Pritchett, Fields, Robertson, M. Jones, G. Smith, Wheelwright, Jacobsen, Peterson, Lieber, McEwen, Harry, Holder, J. Jenkins, Hansenb, Knierim, Poti, New, Bryant, Parson, Snyder, Kaminski, Cullity, Watson, C. Jones, Griggs, French, D. Smith, Egger, Mendonca, Hughes, E. Johnson, G. Johnson, Bero, Betze, Sigloch. Hardy, Guardi. **OHIO STATE:** Taggart, Hutchison, Hoak, Palmer, Staysniak, Moxley, Uhlenhake, Ji. Davidson, Maggs, Moore, Zackeroff, Coles, Kotterman, Shaffer, Carter, Ross, Karsatos, Tupa, Powell, Bryant, Workman, Roinson, Cooper, Matlock, Walker, Gresock, Harris, Holland, Dawson, O'Morrow, Kumerow, Graves, H. Brown, Zizakovic, Garber, Ridder, M. Sullivan, Thomas, Keenana, Lee, Showalter, Isaman, Higdon, Spielman, Leach, Craig, Kee, J. Sullivan, Gordon, Dumas, White, Jackson, Rogan, Smith, D. Brown, Frantz.

With Tom Tupa now at the controls – Karsatos went to the sidelines with a 15-of-22 afternoon for 224 yards and one TD – OSU added its final tally of the game. Moving the Bucks from their own 33 to the Utah 33, Tupa found a wide-open Everett Ross with a 33-yard strike. O'Morrow added his seventh extra-point kick, and the Buckeyes had their 64-6 victory in hand.

Overall, 10 Buckeyes rushed the ball at least once and nine more caught passes. Tupa finished six-of-10 for 97 yards and one TD, and Harris grabbed receiving honors with three catches for 72 yards.

For Utah, Egger was 22 of 42 for 215 yards, with two interceptions. Johnson paced the Ute runners with nine carries for 73 yards.

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INSIDER

Buckeyes Miss Playoff

For the first time since the 2018 season, Ohio State will not finish its season in the College Football Playoff.

The Buckeyes were left out of the top four in the final rankings, with Alabama, Cincinnati, Georgia and Michigan qualifying for this season's rendition. Instead, Ohio State will head to Pasadena for the Rose Bowl against Utah.

In the field, Alabama claimed the top spot after its blowout victory over Georgia in the SEC title game, bouncing back in full from its early-season loss to Texas A&M and a close call against Auburn.

The Crimson Tide will travel to Miami to face fourth-seeded Cincinnati, the na-

tion's only undefeated team and the first Group of Five team to be selected for the College Football Playoff since its advent in 2014. The Bearcats beat No. 21 Houston 35-20 to lock up the AAC title on Dec. 11 behind a dominant third quarter in which they scored 21 unanswered points.

Meanwhile, Michigan secured the No. 2 seed for its first playoff berth, drawing a trip to Arlington, Texas, after a similarly dominant 42-3 victory over Iowa in the Big Ten title game, exploding for 28 second-half points to lock up its first Big Ten title in 17 years.

The Wolverines will face off with No. 3 Georgia, which took its first loss of the season to Alabama after a nearly wire-to-wire run as the unbeaten, unchallenged top team in the nation.

For Ohio State, it's only the fourth time that it will end the season outside of the playoff field, joining the 2015, 2017 and 2018 seasons when they played Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl, USC in the Cotton Bowl and Washington in the Rose Bowl.

OSU To Face Utah In Rose Bowl

Ohio State will return to the Rose Bowl for the first time since 2018 to take on No. 11 Utah on New Year's Day.

The No. 6 Buckeyes will square off against the No. 10 Utes – winners of the Pac-12 Championship Game in a 38-10 beating of Oregon – on New Year's Day at 5 p.m. EST on ESPN.

Ohio State is slotted in the Rose Bowl

as the top-ranked Big Ten team outside of Michigan.

The Buckeyes will make their 16th appearance in the Rose Bowl, third most all-time behind USC (34 appearances) and Michigan (20 appearances). The Buckeyes are 8-7 in those games.

OSU Excited For 'Tradition-Rich' Bowl

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day entered the team room at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on Dec. 5 with a tired yet resilient look on his face.

The Buckeyes learned they would finish No. 6 in the College Football Playoff rankings only hours before the press conference, leaving them out of the four-team tournament for the first time in Day's tenure.

According to Day, Ohio State failed its mission of reaching the CFP and therefore squandered its hopes of winning a national title. Still, the Buckeyes' season has one game remaining – a matchup with Utah in the "Granddaddy of Them All" – and the third-year head coach would tell you the Rose Bowl carries significant weight in the football program.

"The goal that we have here is to win championships, and that's a goal that we have year in and year out, and we didn't reach that goal," Day said. "However, we have an opportunity to go play in a tradition-rich Rose Bowl, and that means a lot. It's a New Year's Six Bowl and the 16th time I believe Ohio State's been in the Rose Bowl. There's a lot of tradition that's led up to that, and I know our guys are going to want to play hard and win that game."

Ohio State was still experiencing the weight of its loss to Michigan in the final regular-season game at the time, and Day didn't expect that feeling to go away anytime soon. He said multiple times during his press conference that it had been a tough week for the Buckeyes after losing to their rival in The Game for the first time in a decade.

"The rivalry game is the rivalry game for a reason," Day said. "It means a lot to a lot of people. So when you don't win, there's a tremendous amount of pain, and nobody knows that more than the players and the coaches here. It's hard to swallow. You can't just move on after one day. It doesn't work that way. Like I said in the postgame press conference, it's going to leave a mark and we knew that, and it's going to hurt for a while."

"I don't think that any of us have experienced this before. I know I haven't experienced it, and this school hasn't experienced this in a long time. It's a hard pill to swallow. We're going to have to obviously take accountability for everything that happened and move forward. But that doesn't mean it's easy."

Day believes his team will regroup after the devastating loss. He affirmed that it is all right to become emotional about falling to Michigan but thinks his program will bounce back against Utah.

"You can only feel sorry for yourself for so long," Day said. "I think everyone's hurting from the last game. This is an opportunity to kind of change that feeling a little bit."

The Utes will be making their first-ever

Rose Bowl appearance after defeating Oregon and winning their first-ever Pac-12 championship on Friday, Dec. 3. Utah head coach Kyle Whittingham, who is in his 17th season with the program, is the longest-tenured head coach in the conference and third-longest at the same school in the FBS. He said on Dec. 4 that his team is elated to be going to Pasadena, Calif., and squaring off with Ohio State.

"We're really looking forward to it," Whittingham said. "The entire Salt Lake community, we'll travel well. It's something that the community is very fired up about. All our guys are excited about it, and it's going to be a great experience for our players."

Because the Rose Bowl isn't a playoff game, one of the biggest questions for the Buckeyes is whether all of their NFL draft-eligible players will play in the game. Numerous student-athletes will have reason to consider if playing one more Ohio State football game is worth the risk of injury less than four months before the professional teams select players.

As of Dec. 5, Day said there hadn't been any Buckeyes who indicated they wouldn't play in the game, and he expects each player to be ready for the New Year's Day bout with Utah.

"We'll deal with that on an individual basis based on how all it shakes out, but right now, we're counting on everybody to play in the game," Day said.

Ohio State might have failed in its goal to win a national championship, but Day has no less pride in his team for their performance throughout the 2021-22 season. This year's goal changed after the CFP selection day for the team and Day. Now the Buckeyes' primary objective is to beat Utah.

"I think all of our guys have a lot of pride in themselves and a lot of pride in this team, and there's been a lot of hard work and a lot of progress that was made all year before we started this thing. We want to finish this thing the right way," Day said. "And that's really what the focus is on right now. I think there's a lot of lessons that have been learned from the last game, and that will obviously motivate us moving forward. But right now, the focus is on this Rose Bowl and sending out the seniors in the right way, and I know everybody in the program wants to do that."

"I think our guys are very, very competitive, and they take a lot of pride in who they are and this team. We're going to get right to work here this week and start grinding toward it and move forward to the game and play really well in the game."

Utah Makes First Rose Bowl

The Utes started the season 4-3 with losses to BYU, San Diego State and Oregon State but rattled off six straight wins, including two wins over Oregon, one of which came in the Pac-12 Championship Game.

Utah is ranked No. 10 in the nation, and for a good reason. The Utes are one of just eight teams – joining Alabama, App State, Cincinnati, Coastal Carolina, Georgia, Michigan and Notre Dame – to be ranked among the top 25 scoring offenses (35.5 ppg) and defenses (20.6 ppg).

It presents a unique challenge for Ohio

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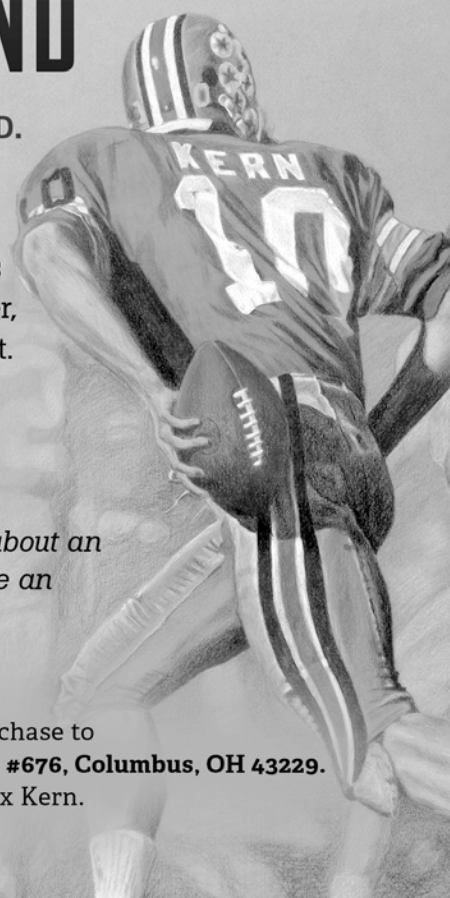
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State, and Whittingham sees a similar challenge for his Utes.

"Ohio State, what a tremendous opponent," Whittingham said. "I've been doing a little bit of homework since I found out who our opponent is going to be, and there is no weakness. I can tell you that. They throw the ball well. They run it well. They score. They defend. A thousand-yard rusher, a couple of thousand-yard receivers, and another guy on the verge of it. We have our hands full."

This is just the second time these teams have met. The other meeting was a 64-6 win in favor of the Buckeyes in 1986. The respective coaches for Ohio State and Utah were Earle Bruce in his eighth season and Jim Fassel in his second season.

"It's going to be a great challenge for our team, but all our guys are excited about it," Whittingham said. "As I said, it's going to be a great experience for our players. And as I've heard, it's second-to-none. This bowl game is second-to-none. So we're excited to be here."

The Utes are headed to their first-ever Rose Bowl in the school's 11th season in the Pac-12, all of which have been under Whittingham, who has been head coach at Utah since 2004.

"It's a great opportunity for our program, getting to the Rose Bowl because that's what (the) Pac-12 champion gets to experience," Whittingham said. "We've been to the Pac-12 Championship Game three years, and this is the first time we've been able to get over the hump and become the champion. It was the next step and our next goal as a program."

"We've only been at the Power Five (for) 11 years. It's something that we've been shooting for and had our sights set on for a number of years. We finally were able to get over that mountain, and we're very excited to have that opportunity."

Utah HC A Former Meyer Disciple

Whittingham has been a staple for the program for a long time. He's been out west his entire college playing and coaching career, even crossing paths with former Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer when he coached the Utes from 2003-04.

Meyer retained Whittingham after taking the head coaching position in Salt Lake City. He had been Utah's defensive coordinator since 1995 and worked under Meyer when he coached those two seasons, helping the Utes make it to a BCS bowl with an undefeated season.

Whittingham was elevated to head coach when Meyer took the job with Florida in 2005 and has been there ever since. He has built a solid, tough-nosed program in his 17 years with the Utes.

OSU Commit Pulling For Buckeyes

Corner Canyon (Utah) High School quarterback Devin Brown may have played his senior year of high school in the Beehive State. However, as an Ohio State commit, the Buckeyes will be the team he roots for when they take on Utah in Pasadena, Calif., on New Year's Day, choosing them over his hometown team.

"There's definitely been some trash-talking from some of the players here at Corner Canyon," Brown said in an inter-

view with ABC4.com in Utah. "It's pretty funny."

Brown transferred to Corner Canyon from Queen Creek High in Arizona for his senior year and is the latest in a multiyear run of elite quarterback prospects to come through the Draper-based school.

Former BYU star and New York Jets quarterback Zach Wilson played for the Chargers before finding success at the collegiate level. His emergence in 2020 catapulted him to the top of mock draft big boards. Jaxson Dart followed up Wilson's success, becoming Utah's first Gatorade National Player of the Year and committing to USC.

Brown was set to join Dart at South-

ern California before Ohio State heavily recruited him to play quarterback in Columbus.

"It's been a top program for many years now," Brown said, "and I really liked their coaches a lot from Coach Day and Coach (Corey) Dennis, the quarterback coach. They put everything in on getting me, and they're just very family-oriented. They just paid a lot of attention to details, and it just felt like it was right."

The 18-year-old said it was a fun coincidence that Utah is facing Ohio State in the Rose Bowl this season. He hopes to attend the game in Pasadena.

"I think, to be honest, it will probably be 35-14 (Ohio State), something like

that," he said with a laugh.

Brown has plans to graduate from Corner Canyon early to get to Ohio for spring football practices with his future teammates. He will play in the All-American Bowl in San Antonio on Jan. 8, 2022, and head straight for Columbus when classes start on Jan. 11.

He will be wearing the Ohio State colors shortly and emphatically told ABC4.com that he will be a Buckeye next fall no matter what happens in the Rose Bowl.

"They came in a little bit at the end," Brown said of Utah's coaches and their recruiting. "But I'm a Buckeye through and through."



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Ohio State Seeks Fourth Straight Rose Bowl Win

By **CHASE BROWN**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After losing to Michigan in its final regular-season game, Ohio State missed the Big Ten Championship Game for the first time in five years and checked in at No. 6 in the final College Football Playoff rankings.

The Buckeyes booked their 16th trip to Pasadena, Calif., to take on Pac-12 champion Utah in the Rose Bowl, where OSU is 8-7 overall, with its latest victory against Washington following the 2018 season being the most recent appearance.

What follows is a look back at Ohio State's first 15 trips to Pasadena, listed by season year rather than Rose Bowl date.

1920: Golden Bears Dominate

Ohio State competed in its first Rose Bowl 101 years ago. The ever-famous "Granddaddy of Them All" hadn't yet received its name and instead was called the Tournament East-West football game.

The undefeated Buckeyes traveled to Pasadena, Calif., for a showdown with undefeated California in the seventh edition of the bowl game on Jan. 1, 1921. The Golden Bears dominated the Buckeyes 28-0 in their home state. Harold Muller earned Player of the Game honors for tossing a long touchdown pass to Brodie Stephens, while Pesky Sprott carried the ball 20 times for 80 yards and two touchdowns.

Cal concluded an impressive season with that victory over Ohio State – still the program's only win against the Buckeyes. That season the Bears outscored their opponents 540-14, and they continued their dominance for the next four seasons, renaming undefeated from 1920 until 1924.

Ohio State All-American Gaylord Stinchcomb rushed for 82 yards in the loss, which marked the only Rose Bowl win for a Pacific Coast Conference (PCC) team against a Big Ten team until the 1953 edition.

1949: Bucks Win Cal Rematch

It took 29 years for the Buckeyes to make another trip to the Rose Bowl, where they received another opportunity to face the Golden Bears in their second appearance in Pasadena.

Ohio State defeated Cal 17-14 on Jan. 2, 1950 – played a day after New Year's because the holiday fell on a Sunday – behind a strong performance from fullback Fred "Curly" Morrison, who rushed for 127 yards and took home MVP honors.

The two teams played in front of 100,963 fans, marking the first college football bowl game to have at least 100,000 spectators in attendance.

1954: Woody's Rose Bowl Debut

Legendary OSU head coach Woody Hayes entered his first Rose Bowl in a dead heat for the national championship race with PCC-champion UCLA.

However, instead of facing the Bruins for the Rose Bowl title and national title, Ohio State took on Southern California because No. 2 UCLA fell victim to the "no-repeat" rule, which kept teams from competing in Pasadena in two consecutive seasons.

The 1954 Rose Bowl featured the first rainstorm to hit Pasadena during the New Year's Day game. Dark gray clouds covered the typical orange-purple sunset, with rain persisting the entire game and turning the grass field to mud.

Hayes expressed his displeasure with the school bands performing their halftime show on the field, making an already torn-up playing surface worse. Still, the Buckeyes prevailed 20-7, with quarterback Dave Leggett earning the game's MVP, completing 6 of 11 passes with a touchdown to Robert Watkins.

Howard "Hopalong" Cassady – an eventual Heisman Trophy winner – rushed for 92 yards in the game, leading an Ohio State rushing attack that totaled 304 yards on the ground. The Buckeyes outgained the Trojans 360-206 in total offense, and USC's lone score came from an Aramis Dandoy 86-yard punt return for a touchdown.

Ohio State won a shared national championship for the 1954 season, marking the first shared championship in college football. The writers selected the Buckeyes, but the coaches chose the Bruins.

1957: Sutherin FG Secures Win

Ohio State opened the 1957 season with an 18-14 home loss to TCU before rattling off eight straight wins to face Oregon in the Rose Bowl. The Webfoots – now known as the Ducks – lost their final game to Oregon State, resulting in a tie between the programs for PCC champion.

Because the Beavers won the head-to-head matchup, they usually would have gone to the Rose Bowl, but the no-repeat rule kept them out. Instead, Oregon went to Pasadena to take on the heavily favored Buckeyes.

Ohio State got on the board first when quarterback Frank Kremblas rushed for a 1-yard touchdown in the first quarter. Oregon running back Jim Shanley scored the equalizer in the second quarter, and the score remained 7-7 well into the second half.

With 5:20 remaining in the third quarter, Oregon kicker Jack Morris lined up for a 34-yard field goal but hooked it wide left. The

Ohio State In The Rose Bowl

| Date | Opponent | Result | Attendance |
|--------------|--------------------------|----------|------------|
| Jan. 1, 1921 | California Golden Bears | L, 28-0 | 42,000 |
| Jan. 2, 1950 | California Golden Bears | W, 17-14 | 100,963 |
| Jan. 1, 1955 | USC Trojans | W, 20-7 | 89,191 |
| Jan. 1, 1958 | Oregon Webfoots | W, 10-7 | 98,202 |
| Jan. 1, 1969 | USC Trojans | W, 27-16 | 102,063 |
| Jan. 1, 1971 | Stanford Indians | L, 27-17 | 103,839 |
| Jan. 1, 1973 | USC Trojans | L, 42-17 | 106,369 |
| Jan. 1, 1974 | USC Trojans | W, 42-21 | 105,267 |
| Jan. 1, 1975 | USC Trojans | L, 18-17 | 106,721 |
| Jan. 1, 1976 | UCLA Bruins | L, 23-10 | 105,464 |
| Jan. 1, 1980 | USC Trojans | L, 17-16 | 105,526 |
| Jan. 1, 1985 | USC Trojans | L, 20-17 | 102,594 |
| Jan. 1, 1997 | Arizona State Sun Devils | W, 20-17 | 100,635 |
| Jan. 1, 2010 | Oregon Ducks | W, 26-17 | 93,963 |
| Jan. 1, 2019 | Washington Huskies | W, 28-23 | 91,853 |

Buckeyes received their chance to gain the lead, and kicker Don Sutherin sent his kick through the uprights, giving his team a 10-7 advantage with 14 minutes left. Ohio State's defense concluded a solid game with a fumble recovery and turnover on downs, securing the victory.

The Webfoots outgained the Buckeyes 351 yards to 304, and they converted 21 first downs to 19 for Ohio State. Oregon's Jack Crabtree won Player of the Game, completing 10 of 17 passes for 135 yards, becoming the second and final player in Rose Bowl history to win the award outright as a losing team member.

Ohio State earned a share of the national championship – the program's third title overall – and Hayes won a Coach of the Year award from the Football Writers Association of America.

1968: Kern Leads OSU To Win

The 1968 Buckeyes went undefeated (9-0) in the regular season and finished the year as the nation's top-ranked program. Ohio State met No. 2 USC in the second showdown between college football's two best teams in the Rose Bowl.

After a scoreless first quarter, the Trojans jumped out to a 10-0 lead behind an 80-yard touchdown run by Heisman Trophy-winning tailback O.J. Simpson and a short field goal in the second frame. Ohio State answered with a Jim Otis 1-yard touchdown run with 1:45 until halftime and kicked an equalizing 26-yard field goal only three seconds before intermission.

In the third quarter, the Buckeyes went ahead 13-10 with another field goal with less than two minutes left. Then, with a national championship on the line, the Ohio State defense rose to the occasion.

The Trojans fumbled at their 21-yard line early in the fourth quarter, setting up Ohio State quarterback Rex Kern to toss a 4-yard touchdown pass to Leo Hayden. Another fumble cost Southern Cal the ball at its 16. Kern connected with Ray Gillian for another Buckeye touchdown, extending the team's lead to 27-10 with 10:05 remaining.

The Trojans scored again, but Ohio State prevailed 27-16, with Kern earning Player of the Game honors. Simpson ran for 171 yards for USC, but the Trojans' five turnovers played a significant role in the 11-point loss.

1970: Title Chance Spoiled

Ohio State ventured to the Rose Bowl to face Stanford on New Year's Day. Top-ranked Texas had fallen to Notre Dame in the Cotton Bowl earlier that day, allowing the Buckeyes an opportunity to win the program's fifth national championship.

Stanford took a 10-0 lead to start the game, but Ohio State responded with two John Brockington touchdowns. Both teams hit a field goal in the third quarter, and the Buckeyes had a 17-13 lead entering the final frame.

The Indians – Stanford's nickname until 1975, when the students changed it to Cardinal, reflecting the university's colors – scored two touchdowns within two minutes. Ohio State failed to answer and couldn't overcome the 10-point deficit, losing the Rose Bowl and its national title with the 27-17 final.

Stanford's Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Jim Plunkett earned Player of the Game honors. He would later become the New England Patriots' first-overall pick in the 1971 NFL draft and a Super Bowl MVP with the Oakland Raiders in 1980.

1972: Trounced By Trojans

Ohio State traveled to Pasadena for a heavily anticipated Rose Bowl matchup with No. 1 USC on Jan. 1, 1973. The Trojans were voted the No. 1 team unanimously in both major polls, representing the first such occurrence in college football history.

The No. 3 Buckeyes battled the Trojans in the first half but were overwhelmed after the mid-game break. The teams tied 7-7 at halftime, but Southern Cal outscored Ohio State 35-10 to close out the game, winning 42-17. USC running back Sam Cunningham was Player of the Game after his four-touchdown performance, which propelled his team to a 25-point victory.

The attendance of 106,869 set the Rose Bowl Stadium record and the NCAA bowl game record.

1973: Bucks Get Revenge

The "no-repeat" rule, which plagued the Big Ten and Pacific-8 conference for years, ended in 1968. Ohio State went undefeated with a 10-10 tie against rival Michigan in the 1973 season and met USC again. Archie Griffin – eventually college football's only two-time Heisman Trophy winner – led the



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ROSE BOWL HISTORY

way on offense while the defense held its opponents to less than 100 offensive yards per game.

The Trojans took a 14-7 lead in the second quarter, but a 1-yard touchdown run by running back Pete Johnson tied the contest 14-14 at the half. USC opened the second-half scoring with a touchdown, giving it a 21-14 advantage, but Ohio State responded with 28 unanswered points to claim the Big Ten's sole Rose Bowl win in the 1970s, 42-21.

Quarterback Cornelius Greene (now Green) earned Player of the Game honors, contributing to the high-powered Ohio State rushing attack, using his legs to score a touchdown and two-point conversion.

1974: Heartbreak In Fourth

Ohio State and USC met in the Rose Bowl for the third consecutive year, and the rubber match provided quite a spectacle for its 106,721 spectators.

The No. 3 Buckeyes led the No. 5 Trojans 7-3 entering the fourth quarter – then drama ensued. USC regained the lead on a Pat Haden 9-yard touchdown pass to wide receiver Jim Obradovich. However, the Scarlet and Gray answered with a 3-yard touchdown from Greene.

Ohio State extended the lead to 17-10 with a field goal before Haden found John McKay Jr. for a 38-yard touchdown with two minutes left, bringing USC within one point. The Trojans elected to attempt a two-point conversion with their season on the line.

Haden found Shelton Diggs to give USC an 18-17 lead and eventual Rose Bowl victory. Haden and McKay Jr. shared Player of the Game honors for the Trojans in a heartbreaking Buckeye loss.

1975: UCLA Plays Spoiler

Ohio State entered the 1976 Rose Bowl undefeated and heavily favored in a rare rematch of a regular-season game with UCLA. The No. 1 Buckeyes handed the Bruins their first loss of the season, 41-20, at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on Oct. 4. After the game, Hayes prophetically told his team they would face the California university again in the Rose Bowl.

Ohio State controlled the first half. However, it mustered only three points from a field goal. UCLA did not gain a first down until late in the second quarter, but a couple of Buckeye turnovers and a pivotal fourth-and-1 stop for the Bruins kept the score at 3-0.

Underdog UCLA opened up its offense in the second half, utilizing play-action passes and throwing on first down. The Bruins marched down the field to open the second half with a tying field goal. Then, after stopping Ohio State, UCLA went on another scoring drive for a 9-3 lead but missed the point-after attempt. After halting the Buckeyes again, the Bruins hit a big-time play, a 67-yard touchdown pass from John Sciarra to speedy flanker Wally Henry, giving them a 16-3 advantage.

In response, Ohio State ran the ball down the field, scoring early in the fourth quarter to cut the Bruins' lead to 16-10. However, after regaining possession, Greene was intercepted by Pat Schmidt, and UCLA capitalized with a backbreaking 54-yard touchdown run by Wendell Tyler. Another Greene interception was the nail in the coffin for Ohio State, which fell 23-10 in Woody Hayes' final Rose

Bowl.

Sciarra was named Player of the Game for his performance as the Bruins scored more than 14 points on the Ohio State defense for the second time that season – no other team had reached that mark against the Buckeyes in 1975.

1979: Bruce Falls To Trojans

On Jan. 1, 1980, Ohio State squared off with USC in the Rose Bowl again. The Buckeyes, now led by Earle Bruce, were undefeated and No. 1 in the Associated Press poll.

Southern California took an early 10-0 lead, but Ohio State responded with a field goal and a 67-yard touchdown pass from Art Schlichter to Calvin Murray.

After starting the third frame tied 10-10, the Buckeyes mustered two field goals and held a 16-10 lead in the fourth quarter. Heisman Trophy-winning USC tailback Charles White tied the game with a 1-yard touchdown plunge, and the following Eric Hipp extra point made it 17-16 with just more than a minute remaining.

The Trojans were victorious, and White won Rose Bowl Player of The Game for the second time. White had shared the award with Rick Leach the year before, but his 247-yard performance with the game-winning touchdown earned him the honor outright in 1980.

1984: Another Loss To USC

Another Ohio State Rose Bowl meant another matchup with USC.

The Buckeyes took their first and final lead against the Trojans in the first quarter on a Rich Spangler field goal with 12:08 left. USC kicker Steve Jordan tied the game 3-3 before a pair of Tim Green touchdown passes gave the Trojans a 17-3 advantage. Spangler hit another field goal as the first half concluded, but Ohio State still trailed 17-6.

Ohio State scored first in the second half on a Spangler's Rose Bowl-record 52-yard field goal. Jordan answered with a 51-yard kick, pushing the Trojan lead back to two scores, 20-9. OSU quarterback Mike Tomczak hit Cris Carter for an 18-yard touchdown and ran in the two-point conversion to cut the lead to three.

But Ohio State's last attempts fell short, and USC held on for a 20-17 win. Green and linebacker Jack Del Rio shared Rose Bowl MVP honors, and the Trojans won their fourth game over the Buckeyes in the Rose Bowl.

1996: Bucks Play Spoiler

Ohio State entered the Rose Bowl against Arizona State after losing to Michigan, ending its perfect season and national title aspirations.

The No. 4 Buckeyes scored first on a Stanley Jackson 9-yard touchdown pass to freshman David Boston. The No. 2 Sun Devils scored shortly before halftime on a 25-yard pass from Jake Plummer to Ricky Boyer.

Arizona State broke the 7-7 tie with a field goal on the opening drive of the second half. Ohio State answered just two plays later when quarterback Joe Germaine hit Dimitrios Stanley for a 72-yard touchdown, giving OSU a 14-10 lead.

The Buckeyes had a field-goal attempt blocked in the fourth quarter, and what had appeared to be a game-changing return for a touchdown was overturned for an illegal

forward lateral. Known for late comeback drives, Plummer, nicknamed "Jake the Snake," drove the Sun Devils down the field, connecting with Lenzie Jackson for a crucial fourth-down conversion before scrambling for an 11-yard touchdown on third-and-goal to give Arizona State a 17-14 advantage with just over a minute left.

Germaine led the Buckeyes down the field quickly, with help from two third-down receptions by Stanley and two pass interferences against Arizona State. Ohio State found itself at the 5-yard line, where Germaine hit Boston for his second touchdown. The Sun Devils blocked the point-after attempt, but OSU held on to win 20-17 in a thrilling bowl game in Pasadena.

2009: Pryor Leads OSU Vs. Ducks

Ohio State won the Big Ten for the fifth consecutive season with a 27-24 victory against Iowa and a subsequent 21-10 victory over Michigan. The team's reward was a matchup with Pac-12 champion Oregon in the Rose Bowl.

Running back Brandon Saine put the Buckeyes on the board first with a 13-yard touchdown reception from quarterback Terrelle Pryor. Devin Barclay pushed the Buckeye lead to 10-0 on a 19-yard field goal.

The Ducks responded in the second quarter with a field goal and a 3-yard touchdown run by tailback LeGarrette Blount before Barclay hit a 30-yard kick with 1:05 until half. Ohio State's other kicker, Aaron Pettrey, hit a 45-yarder as time expired, giving OSU a 16-10 halftime advantage.

Oregon quarterback Jeremiah Masoli put the Ducks up 17-16 on a 1-yard touchdown run, but Barclay put the Buckeyes back on top with a 38-yard field goal to regain a 19-17 advantage. Pryor extended the Ohio State lead by hitting DeVier Posey for a 17-yard touchdown, and the Buckeyes won 26-17.

Pryor earned the game's offensive Most Valuable Player honor with a season-high 266 passing yards and two touchdowns with 72 rushing yards as well. Oregon defensive end Kenny Rowe was the game's

Most Valuable Player on defense, tying a Rose Bowl record with three sacks

2018: Win In Meyer's Finale

Ohio State traveled to Pasadena for the 15th time to square off with Pac-12 champion Washington on Jan. 1, 2019, in what would be Urban Meyer's final game as the program's head coach.

The Buckeyes were riding high after a 62-39 blowout of then-No. 4 Michigan in Columbus and a win over Northwestern in the Big Ten Championship Game. The Huskies had finished the year with four consecutive wins, their latest victory coming over Utah in their conference title game.

Ohio State opened the scoring with quarterback Dwayne Haskins capping an 11-play drive with a 12-yard touchdown pass to wide receiver Parris Campbell. Washington responded with a 31-yard field goal from kicker Peyton Henry on its next drive.

After the Huskies scored, the Buckeyes piled on 21 unanswered points off touchdowns from wide receiver Johnnie Dixon, tight end Rashod Berry and running back J.K. Dobbins to take a 28-3 lead at the beginning of the third quarter.

However, Washington went on a run, scratching and clawing its way back into the game behind the arm and legs of Myles Gaskin. At the beginning of the fourth quarter, Gaskin tossed a 2-yard touchdown to tight end Drew Sample before rushing for two more scores in the final frame.

After Gaskin's second touchdown, Ohio State cornerback Brendon White – the eventual Rose Bowl defensive Most Valuable Player – intercepted Jake Browning on a two-point conversion attempt and returned it to midfield, leaving the Huskies down 28-23 with 42 seconds remaining.

The Huskies attempted an onside kick which Dixon recovered, giving the Buckeyes a five-point win over Washington. Haskins claimed the offensive Most Valuable Player honor, completing 25 of 37 passes for 251 yards and three touchdowns and White was honored on defense. The attendance for the game was 91,853, and approximately 17 million people watched on television.

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Buckeyes, Coop Nearly Reach Pinnacle In '96

Editor's Note: Buckeye Sports Bulletin is marking the 25th anniversary of Ohio State's 1996 football season with a two-part feature on that Big Ten and Rose Bowl championship season. This is the first in that series.

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Richard III had his winter of discontent, and so did Ohio State head coach John Cooper as he sat in his office at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center making preparations for the 1996 season.

Cooper's program had appeared to finally turn the corner in 1995, reeling off 11 consecutive victories including a 45-26 win over Notre Dame in one of the most eagerly anticipated games in many years. Later that season, the Buckeyes had risen to No. 2 in the national polls, and Eddie George was on his way to becoming Ohio State's fifth Heisman Trophy winner.

But as the team and its fans were getting ready to celebrate a Big Ten championship and make a triumphant trip to the Rose Bowl with possible national title ramifications in the offing, the season ended with an all-too-familiar thud. The Buckeyes lost a 31-23 decision to an underdog Michigan team and then topped things off with a narrow 20-14 loss to Tennessee in the Florida Citrus Bowl.

Cooper had won 65 games during his eight years at the OSU helm, but all anyone wanted to talk about was his 1-6-1 record against Michigan and his 1-6 mark in bowl games. With the 1996 season on the horizon, and the coach ready to embark upon the second year of a five-year contract extension he had signed following the 1994 campaign, to say the natives were restless would be grossly understating the situation.

In an era long before Facebook, Ins-



FILE PHOTO

JUST SHORT — The 1996 regular season ended with another heartbreaking loss to Michigan for Ohio State head coach John Cooper (center) and his previously undefeated Buckeyes. The loss was the seventh in Cooper's then-nine seasons at the helm.

tagram and Twitter, Ohio State fans still managed to let their feelings be known. Switchboards at radio call-in shows lit up as callers vented their frustrations, while letters to the editor pages in The Columbus Dispatch and Buckeye Sports Bulletin were filled with volumes of coach-bashing missives, one terming the program "the laughingstock of college football."

One rather pointed letter to BSB read, "When John Cooper first came to OSU, he said there was no talent and no speed. Now eight years later, what's his excuse? It's the

same as it's always been. He couldn't motivate a team then. He can't now. And he never will. In fact, he couldn't motivate a duck to go for a swim."

Somehow, Cooper managed to put on a brave face and soldier on. He had all but disappeared from his once-omnipresent television commercials for a local supermarket chain, and his practice sessions — once open and available to any and all who wanted to show up — suddenly became closed-door affairs, open only to so-called "friends of the program."

Still, the coach continued to exude a certain kind of Southern charm in his dealings with fans and the media, although it was obvious the criticism was beginning to take its toll.

"I have always prided myself in treating people the way I wanted to be treated," Cooper told BSB recently. "You can't control the way people treat you. That's their business. But you can control the way you treat people, and I think I always treated people the way I wanted to be treated. You're going to have good times and you're going to have some not-so-good times, but nobody else is going to control how happy you are. Only you can do that."

As for the almost nonstop criticism, the coach admitted it was sometimes difficult to take, especially when it became personal.

"But it wasn't like I didn't know where they were coming from," Cooper said. "They wanted to win, and I knew that. What I don't think they realized was the fact that they didn't want to win any more than John Cooper did."

To that end, the coach focused on recruiting and redoubled his efforts to land some of the nation's top recruits, challeng-

ing members of his staff to venture outside their comfort zones and mine talent from such previously overlooked areas as Canada and the junior college circuit. Assistants were also tasked with going into such battleground states as California and Texas and coming away with highly prized prospects.

The result was the No. 1 recruiting class in the nation, a 24-member contingent that included a pair of future All-Americans — receiver David Boston and linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer — as well as several multiyear starters.

Cooper had often questioned the grading prowess of the so-called national recruiting experts, but this time he had no problem with his roster of new signees being ranked the best in the country.

"There are a lot of happy faces over here today, including the head coach," Cooper said. "I think our coaches, starting with our recruiting coordinator Bill Conley, did a hell of a job this year."

Katzenmoyer was considered the jewel of the 1996 class after earning national defensive player of the year honors from USA Today. The 6-4, 240-pound linebacker from Westerville South helped the Buckeyes make an almost clean sweep of the top prospects in Ohio.

"The thing that is most satisfying to me is that we got most of the players in the state of Ohio this year," Cooper said. "We got out early, and the high school coaches in the state really helped us."

The Buckeyes signed eight of the state's top 10 prospects, including Katzenmoyer, Cincinnati Colerain offensive lineman Jefferson Kelley and Dublin Scioto running back Nick Goings. The coaching staff was just as aggressive outside Ohio's borders,

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going into the fertile recruiting area around Houston, Texas, and landing Boston while scoring another coup out west with the signing of prep All-America running back Michael Wiley of Spring Valley (Calif.) Monte Vista.

No stone was left unturned, as Ohio State also got a pair of prospects from Canada – defensive end Brent Johnson and linebacker Clinton Wayne – and signed offensive lineman Joe Brown and quarterback Mark Garcia out of junior colleges in Arizona and California, respectively.

When Conley was asked if there were any disappointments with the class, the recruiting coordinator replied simply, “No. We’re pretty ecstatic right now.”

Longtime national recruiting expert Tom Lemming, who had often been critical of Ohio State’s efforts and received static from Cooper about it, agreed without equivocation that the Buckeyes had won the 1995 recruiting wars.

“Ohio State was way ahead of everyone,” Lemming said. “Cooper was mad when I had them at No. 33 last year, and I might have been a little wrong on that. But they were No. 2 two years ago, and this makes two great classes in three years for them.”

The rich got even richer after signing day. Less than week later, high school All-American safety Gary Berry of Columbus DeSales signed with Ohio State, and a few days after that, highly-sought linebacker Na’il Diggs of Dorsey High School in Los Angeles became a Buckeye.

Diggs had originally committed to USC, but less than 24 hours before signing day, the Trojans fired men’s basketball coach Charlie Parker, who happened to be Diggs’ brother-in-law. As a result, Diggs refused to sign with USC, opting for Ohio State over Arizona.

Restock, Retool, Reload

As every college coach understands, recruiting is a necessary evil because of complete roster turnover every four years.

Cooper knew the importance of restocking his team even more than most since he typically had to deal with early NFL defections each year, a practice that continued when receiver Terry Glenn opted to forgo his final season of college eligibility.

Glenn was the eighth OSU player in five years to leave early for the NFL, following defensive end Alonzo Spellman (1992), running back Robert Smith and safety Roger Harper (1993), defensive tackle “Big Daddy” Dan Wilkinson (1994), and offensive tackle Korey Stringer and linebackers Lorenzo Styles and Craig Powell (1995).

“It’s the nature of the beast,” Cooper said. “If you recruit the best players, some of them are going to leave your program early. We’ve had it happen to us more often than some, and we don’t like losing our best players. But if anything, it shows we’re recruiting the right guys.”

The New England Patriots selected Glenn with the seventh overall pick of the first round of the 1996 NFL draft, and he carved out a 12-year professional career with the Patriots, Cowboys and Packers, finishing with 593 receptions for 8,823 yards and 44 TDs. He made the Pro Bowl in 1999 and won Super Bowl XXXVI with the Patriots following the 2001 season.

In addition to the loss of Glenn, Cooper was also faced with replacing his two other

biggest offensive playmakers. George had established a new single-season rushing record on the way to winning the Heisman, while quarterback Bobby Hoying had rewritten most of the school’s passing records in three years as a starter. Also gone was productive tight end Ricky Dudley, so productive that he was drafted with the No. 9 overall pick of the first round by the Oakland Raiders.

That meant the Buckeyes were losing a running back who had rushed for nearly 2,000 yards, a quarterback who had thrown from more than 3,000 yards, and two receivers who had combined for nearly 2,000 yards and more than 20 touchdowns.

In addition to roster changes, Cooper was undergoing another transformation in terms of his coaching staff.

The year before, he had retooled things on the offensive side of the ball, bringing in quarterbacks coach Walt Harris and receivers coach Chuck Stobart. This time, defense was front and center after longtime defensive coordinator Bill Young resigned in early January to take a similar post at the University of Oklahoma.

Cooper wasted no time promoting veteran linebackers coach Fred Pagac to replace Young and hiring Jim Heacock as his new defensive line coach. Heacock, an Ohio native and graduate of Muskingum College, had been head coach at Illinois State for the previous eight seasons before coming to Ohio State.

Finally, defensive backs coach Lovie Smith left the staff after only one season to become linebackers coach for Tony Dungy and the NFL’s Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Replacing Smith was Upper Arlington native Jon Tenuta, who had been in charge of defensive backs at Oklahoma the previous season.

As for Pagac, the former OSU tight end from 1971-73 provided a living and breathing link to Woody Hayes, and he espoused the same kind of in-your-face philosophy as the legendary head coach. When asked if that style would fly with the players of a new era, the new defensive coordinator replied, “Being overbearing is a part of football, isn’t it? I think the kid that comes here loves football and he expects to be driven. It’s the coaches’ job to do that.”

When the team convened for spring practice, Pagac quickly put his stamp on the OSU defense, preferring an attacking style over the read-and-react philosophy of his predecessor. It was the embryonic stage for a unit that would soon become known as the Silver Bullets.

“I think maybe the biggest change you’ll see with us defensively is our play selection in different down-and-distance situations,” Pagac said. “There’s a possibility of blitzing a little bit more or dogging a little bit more or bluffing and playing zones out of that. We’re not going to do the same thing every week. What a team does is what we’re going to try to defend.”

The new defensive boss had the luxury of one of the most talented units in recent program history beginning up front with interior linemen Luke Fickell and Winfield Garnett flanked by All-America candidates Mike Vrabel and Matt Finkes at the two defensive end positions.

At linebacker, the Buckeyes had such holdovers as Greg Bellisari, Roedell Dupree, Ryan Miller, Kevin Johnson and

Jerry Rudzinski, and they were eagerly anticipating the arrival of such incoming freshmen as Katzenmoyer and Diggs.

Meanwhile, Tenuta arrived in Columbus to the pleasant surprise of a secondary that returned all four starters – preseason All-American Shawn Springs and Ty Howard at the corners, Rob Kelly at strong safety and Anthony Gwinn at free safety. Waiting in the wings were such future stars as sophomores Antoine Winfield and Damon Moore as well as redshirt freshman Ahmed Plummer.

Offensively, the Buckeyes were looking at a host of candidates to replace their top playmakers. Stanley Jackson, a junior who had been Hoying’s backup in 1995, began the spring with a slight edge over fellow junior Garcia at quarterback. But as the practice sessions mounted, sophomore Joe Germaine had closed the gap on the two upperclassmen.

Junior Pepe Pearson had the inside track to take over at tailback, but he had plenty of competition from sophomores Jermon Jackson and Joe Montgomery, who had moved back to his more comfortable position after spending some time at fullback. Meanwhile, the battle to take over for Glenn in the receiving corps was being waged by junior Dimitrios Stanley and sophomore Dee Miller, while senior Buster Tillman was working his way back into the mix following offseason knee surgery. Dudley’s tight end spot was the domain of senior D.J. Jones, who was fully recovered after missing the 1995 season following open heart surgery.

The annual spring game did little to

solve the positional logjam at quarterback. If anything, it muddied the waters with Germaine holding a slight statistical advantage during another of Cooper’s offense-vs.-defense scrimmages, completing 13 of 17 pass attempts for 130 yards and one touchdown. Jackson was solid, connecting on 9 of 15 throws for 86 yards, but Garcia had a tough afternoon. He completed only 4 of 7 passes for 45 yards and was sacked five times.

When asked if Germaine had officially crashed the quarterback party, Harris replied, “I believe you could say that. Joe has really improved. To his credit, he has worked hard on trying to do what he is supposed to do. We really feel like right now it is a three-man race.”

Another Quick Start

While practically everyone else spotlighted the quarterback derby, Cooper preferred to talk about the other side of the ball.

“I’d rather have a better defense,” he told reporters at the annual Big Ten Kickoff Luncheon. “I think you win championships by having a great defense and a great kicking game. It’s a lot more comfortable feeling for me. I don’t know any coach who wants to get into a scoring contest.”

“I think having a strong defense allows you to take a few more chances on offense. Obviously, you’d like to have both sides, but if you’re asking me if I had to pick which one I would prefer, I’d want a strong defense.”

Continued On Page 26

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Michigan Again Foils OSU's Perfect Season

Continued From Page 25

Still, questions persisted about the Ohio State offense, especially after losing Hoying, George and Glenn. Making matters potentially worse was the springtime absence of left tackle Orlando Pace, who had undergone arthroscopic shoulder surgery, and a need to replace two-year starting left guard Jamie Sumner, who had exhausted his eligibility.

"We're going to miss those players," Cooper admitted, "but every year at Ohio State, it's the same thing. We lose Robert Smith, and Raymont Harris steps in. We lost Raymont Harris, and Eddie George steps in. We lose Eddie George, and now somebody else has to step in.

"We will have a good football team. How good we are depends on how well the newcomers step in and play."

All of that offensive attrition didn't sit well with the preseason prognosticators. Media members at the Kickoff Luncheon picked Ohio State to finish third in the Big Ten standings behind Penn State and Michigan, although the national pollsters were more kind. The Buckeyes were No. 8 in the preseason USA Today/CNN coaches' poll while The Associated Press placed them ninth.

Further compounding the Buckeyes' problems on offense were a number of injuries during fall camp. The most notable were knee injuries to Garcia and starting center Juan Porter. The prognosis for Porter was a two-week absence following arthroscopic surgery, but Garcia was going to be sidelined for the entire season after injuring his left knee during a noncontact drill.

That left Jackson as the clear-cut choice to start the season opener against Rice with Germaine as his backup, although Cooper made it clear he might not settle the issue until the third game of the season against Notre Dame.

The Buckeyes were dealt another blow

just before the season began when two-year starting fullback Nicky Sualua was ruled academically ineligible. Sualua, who had become a fan favorite with his hard-nosed blocking in front of George, was replaced in the starting lineup by senior Matt Calhoun.

When the pigskins began to fly for real, however, no one need have worried about Ohio State's offense. The Buckeyes scored on their initial possession and kept right on scoring throughout the afternoon until securing a 70-7 victory against Rice. It marked the most points OSU had scored in a season opener since a 75-0 win over Virginia in 1935, and it earned the ire of Owls head coach Ken Hatfield.

"I'm never (bleeping) coming back here again," Hatfield reportedly told Cooper during the postgame handshake. The Rice head coach was evidently miffed about the Buckeyes continuing to throw the ball with a 49-7 lead late in the third quarter, but he later refused to divulge exactly what he said, offering only, "That's personal between John and me."

As far as Cooper was concerned, what ruffled feathers the Owls had as they returned home were simply the price of admission.

"It gets out of hand when they turn the ball over a couple of times," the OSU head coach said. "Look, I can't worry about his team. I have to coach my own."

The offensive stars were plentiful with Pearson rushing for 119 yards on 17 carries, and Jackson directing six consecutive scoring drives, throwing for 151 yards and two touchdowns in the process. Germaine also got in on the act, throwing for 164 yards and three scores, including third-quarter bombs of 51 and 60 yards to Wiley, the ones that so rankled Hatfield.

It was more of the same two weeks later when the Buckeyes came off an open week for a 72-0 whupping of Pittsburgh. Whereas Rice was on its way to a 7-4 season in 1995, the Panthers were headed for a 4-7 finish in the final season of Johnny Majors'

longtime coaching career, and they put up little resistance as Ohio State outgained Pitt by a 602-120 margin in total offense.

Pearson and Montgomery each cracked the 100-yard mark in rushing and combined to score four touchdowns, while Jackson and Germaine combined to throw for 233 yards and three touchdowns. The game also featured a 66-yard punt return for a touchdown by Boston when Ohio State had only nine players on the field.

After flexing their muscles against Rice and Pittsburgh, the Buckeyes took a step up in competition the following week, returning to Notre Dame for the first time since a heartbreaking 7-2 loss in South Bend in 1936.

The pregame hype wasn't quite at the fever pitch it had been when the Fighting Irish had come to the Columbus the year before, but there was definitely electricity in the air when the nation's fourth- and fifth-ranked teams squared off against one another. That electricity was short-circuited early, however, when Ohio State raced out to a 22-7 halftime lead and never looked back before salting away a 29-16 victory.

While Pearson gashed the Notre Dame defense for 173 yards and two touchdowns, the OSU defense created three turnovers, including two interceptions of Fighting Irish quarterback Ron Powlus. The Buckeyes also sacked Powlus four times – one each by Vrabell, Fickell, Garnett and Bellisari – and the QB completed only 13 of 30 attempts for 154 yards.

"It was just a great effort by our football team," said Cooper, who celebrated the 150th victory of his coaching career. "I can't say enough about our offensive line. I think we pretty much controlled the tempo of the game. Defensively, we put a lot of pressure on Powlus. We came with a lot more blitzes and tried to keep them a little bit off-balance, but that was out of respect to Powlus as a football player. I think he is a great quarterback."

Cooper and his team had very little time for celebration, however. On the heels of vanquishing fifth-ranked Notre Dame, Penn State – undefeated and ranked No. 4 in the country – was coming to town to kick off the Big Ten campaign. Thoughts of any emotional letdown went quickly out the window, however, when the Buckeyes jumped on the Nittany Lions early and never let up, cruising to a 38-7 win.

The victory pushed Ohio State to No. 2 in the national polls, and the team remained on that lofty perch as it followed with wins over Wisconsin, Purdue, Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois and Indiana, setting up another showdown with Michigan with a perfect season hanging in the balance.

Yet Another Disappointment

The Wolverines had ruined more than their share of Ohio State seasons over the years, including the previous year when a Michigan win prevented the Buckeyes from their first Rose Bowl berth in 11 years. This time, however, OSU had already punched its ticket to Pasadena and needed only a victory over its archrival to secure the program's first undefeated regular season since 1979.

Trying to make sure he had done everything possible to secure the season-ending victory, Cooper remembered the stirring Senior Tackle pep talk made by former quarterback Rex Kern two years before that had helped spur the Buckeyes to a win against Michigan. This time, the coach invited his predecessor Earle Bruce for a motivational speech designed to fire up the team.

Cooper got his money's worth. Dressed in the same charcoal suit and fedora that had marked his days as head coach, Bruce gave a fire-and-brimstone talk that ignited the team as well as about 30,000 fans on hand inside Ohio Stadium.

At one point, the former coach reached into his pocket and said, "I've got a little thing in my hand called the gold pants." As the crowd erupted, the former coach continued, "Hey, guys, I've got eight of them. I want you to go get yours by kicking the hell out of Michigan."

It was a once-in-a-lifetime inspiration speech. Unfortunately, it backfired. Michigan went out the next day and engineered a 13-9 upset victory, a win fueled by the fact Bruce's speech was televised the night before throughout the Columbus area and watched by several Wolverines, who claimed Bruce had inspired them.

In reality, the Buckeyes made too many mistakes to secure the win. They pushed inside the Michigan 5-yard line twice during the first half but had to settle for field goals while building a 9-0 lead. Then, when Springs slipped in the middle of the field early in the third quarter, leading to a 69-yard touchdown pass by the Wolverines, the game's momentum shifted and Ohio State never got it back.

Michigan tacked on a 43-yard field goal at the end of the third period and another from 39 yards with 1:19 remaining in the game. Meanwhile, OSU's potent offense was held scoreless in the second half, leaving Cooper to face another round of questions as to why he was evidently powerless to beat Michigan.

"I don't know," he said. "You play defense like we did and hold them to 13 points, you ought to win the football game. But we didn't get it done. Give them credit and blame us – or blame me for not getting the job done."

Unfortunately, Cooper gave his critics plenty of fodder with which to lob cannonballs. Chief among them was the decision to start Germaine at quarterback for the first time all season while rotating Jackson into the lineup for a few series. The system had worked all year with Jackson starting and Germaine relieving, but then everything seemed discombobulated against the Wolverines.

Germaine missed Stanley in the end zone early, an incompleteness that led to Ohio State's first field goal, and Jackson later overthrew a wide-open Wiley, a misfire that led to the Buckeyes' second field goal. Germaine re-entered the game late in the first half and had another potential touchdown pass go off the fingertips of Pearson.

But just as the renewed cacophony of criticism reached its crescendo, Cooper went to Pasadena and confounded his detractors one more time.

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Writers, Former Players Reflect On Loss To Michigan

By BRADEN MOLES

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

More than two weeks after Ohio State's 42-27 loss to Michigan in Ann Arbor, it was still hard for some to fathom that the Buckeyes dropped their first contest to the Wolverines since 2011. Michigan and its fans and followers were experiencing the high of a rivalry win, and Buckeye Nation was suffering the agony of defeat.

While the game is not astonishing in retrospect, as the signs were there that Michigan would be able to take advantage of Ohio State in the trenches, it was a surprising result to watch in real time, especially given the narrative headed into the contest of the Buckeyes looking for their fifth consecutive Big Ten championship and third straight appearance in the College Football Playoffs.

"I was feeling good just like everybody else," former Ohio State linebacker Jim Laughlin, who played from 1977-79, told BSB. "I wasn't 100 percent convinced because I thought Purdue and Michigan State weren't that good. Michigan State was awful in the defensive backfield. It was almost like practice. Purdue was kind of the same thing. They basically gave us 14 or 21 points in the first half. We're playing great, but they're not Penn State or Michi-

gan. I wasn't 100 percent convinced, but I obviously thought we'd do better."

Ohio State hit a few snags along the way in 2021, including the team's loss to Oregon and close calls with Penn State and Nebraska in which offense and defense struggled at different points.

By the time the clock hit all zeroes in the Buckeyes' 56-7 win over Michigan State, however, it seemed clear that Ohio State was among the top teams in the country and on a fast track to Indianapolis.

"They played a perfect first half of football," Rivals.com team writer Colin Gay told BSB of the win over the Spartans. "You saw the offense clicking on all cylinders. You saw the defense step up, especially in the run game. When you're going into a game against Michigan where all they do is run the ball and you clearly know what's coming, and (before that) you shut down the Heisman candidate (Kenneth Walker III)? The obvious thought is this is going to go well for Ohio State, the streak's going to continue, Ohio State's going to go to the Big Ten championship, possibly the play-off."

Even if Ohio State's defense struggled against Michigan's rushing attack, the thought was that the Buckeyes – armed with redshirt freshman quarterback and Heisman finalist C.J.

Stroud, freshman running back TreVeyon Henderson and a trio of star receivers – would be able to score on Michigan's defense.

"Going into the Michigan game, I thought that Ohio State would be able to score on Michigan, especially with our trio of receivers," former Ohio State running back Vaughn Broadnax told BSB. "I also thought they would be able to run, not so much inside but hitting the edge and outside. But I don't think we attempted a lot of that."

All told, everything that could go wrong did go wrong for the Buckeyes. The defense was not capable of stopping Michigan – namely running back Hassan Haskins, who finished with 169 rushing yards and five touchdowns – while Ohio State's offense was held to just 64 yards on the ground.

Stroud, meanwhile, finished a commendable – if not impressive, had the result been flipped – 34 of 49 for 394 yards and two touchdowns. Like most of this season, Stroud was not the issue when Ohio State struggled.

That responsibility fell on the offensive and defensive lines, which were dominated thoroughly throughout the game, a script-flipping performance in the trenches that saw the Wolverines beat the Buckeyes at their own game.

Instead, the Silver Bullets were left looking at the back of Corum and Haskins' jerseys – including when Haskins then finished the drive off with a 13-yard run of his own, at that point just his second rushing touchdown of the game. He would finish with five, the most ever by a running back in The Game.

Out of the half, it took Ohio State just three plays to punt, while the Wolverines were able to change the course of a rivalry in just three plays.

"Some of my buddies texted me, and I said, 'We're in trouble,'" Laughlin said. "I figured they would make some adjustments to stop the run, but I said at halftime, you keep letting them get 6, 7 yards per carry, we're not going to win. We're going to lose. That's basically what happened. Basically the same thing as the Oregon game. You could see at halftime. We weren't stopping the run either against Minnesota or Oregon, and then this was a replay of the same thing."

While Michigan's performance was by far the most dominating that Ohio State experienced this season, those early-season contests against Minnesota and Oregon were potential indicators that there could be problems for Ohio State in the trenches.

The two teams combined for 472 yards on 88 carries, good for over 5 yards per carry, in addition to scoring six touchdowns on the ground. The Buckeyes seemed to have sorted things out as the season progressed, allowing no more than 4.8 yards per carry (Purdue, 91 yards on 19 carries) down the stretch until running into the Wolverines.

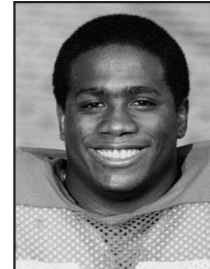
"I'd gone into the season thinking that the run defense is going to be the strength of Ohio State, like it always is with Larry Johnson's defensive line, every year, and then (Michigan) runs for over 200 yards on the ground," Eleven Warriors beat writer Griffin Strom told BSB. "You've heard a lot of people say, even Josh Gattis and whatnot, just the construction of the Ohio State team – is it headed in too much of this skill-oriented, passing game, finesse direction? Does it need to be centered now more back towards the smash-mouth, 'three yards and a cloud of dust' Big Ten football? Is that something that Ryan Day with his offensive mindedness needs to re-evaluate and get centered back into that style of play moving forward?"

Strom was referencing a comment from Michigan offensive coordinator Josh Gattis days after the game. Asked about Ohio State's physicality, he said Michigan created an identity that they were going to dominate in the trenches.

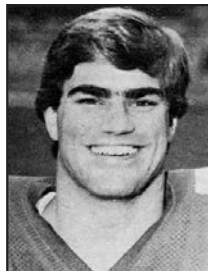
"Not just the offensive line, but the defensive line, as well, just being able to smash them however we could and really set the tone," he said. "They're a good team. They're a finesse team, they're not a tough team."

The comment from Gattis incensed Ohio State fans and those around Columbus, perhaps not because he said it, but because they saw with their own eyes that it was true.

Without question, Ohio State was man-



Vaughn Broadnax



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handled on both sides of the ball.

"It's usually been Ohio State just smashing Michigan's face in with the running game," said Ace Anbender of The Bucket Problem, a Michigan-centric newsletter and podcast. "Even in these games where they've been passing on Michigan and that's been the main defensive issue, there's still usually been a certain level of dominance that Ohio State has established on the ground. So it feels like they've gotten away from that a bit, and it did hurt them in this game. It's hard to pick nits at what was and still is the No. 1 offense in the country. I wouldn't call them soft. I would just say they have a different approach than what they used to have."

Even if you take out Stroud and his negative 30 rushing yards, you're left with just 94 yards on 24 attempts, just under 4 yards per carry. That drops by over a full yard if you don't include Henderson's long of 28 yards.

"I didn't think he was wrong," Laughlin, who helped defeat the Wolverines in 1979 with a blocked punt, said of Gattis' comment. "I thought we were soft on defense. I mean, it looked like our guys were standing up. They were underneath us every play. You know, the low man wins. Every coach will tell you that on the O-line and D-line. It just looked like our guys were standing up, getting pushed around. The holes were huge. They had plenty of room to run. We had no penetration. Did we have any tackles for loss in the backfield against the running backs? We just didn't look like a really good defensive line."

Michigan's defensive line got to Stroud four times and finished with eight tackles for loss. On the other side, Cade McNamara and J.J. McCarthy did not hit the turf once, and as Laughlin alluded to, the Buckeyes finished with zero tackles for loss for the first time since at least 1965.

Not getting caught once in the backfield set a historic precedent of domination for Michigan, one that dates to the days when physicality meant something different in football.

"Running backs were big into the '60s, '70s and the '80s, and then everybody started doing pro-style and the West Coast offense like the Niners," Laughlin said. "Everything's changed now in the running game. A lot of it changed from Alex Gibbs, our old coach at Ohio State. He started doing that zone blocking just – get guys, stretch them out, get them moving, and then the running back will find a hole. When you look back at the '60s and '70s, it was ISO plays, right at you, put a helmet on a helmet. Now they just try to get guys running, try to wash them by the hole and the running back will cut back or go outside or wherever the hole is."

Broadnax, who played from 1980-83 and is best remembered for a highlight-reel block to help win the 1981 Michigan game, agreed that today's college football is not the same game in terms of physicality.

"We have to look at this in a different light. It was a different age, different rules. It was a different game, physically, mentally, because one of the mental aspects of the game now is if you're going across the middle to catch a ball, you really don't have to worry about getting pummeled by a defensive back or even a linebacker because of the threat of targeting or getting ejected out

of the game," he said. "That's changed even on the offensive line. When I played it was not against the rules to take their knee out or engage with another lineman as a full-back, engage with him and block them low or whatever. So, it is truly a different game."

He declined to agree or disagree with Gattis' statement, simply saying the Ohio State will have a chance to turn the perception around next year.

"If that's the impression your team leaves, there's nothing you can really do to change that until the next time you play," he said. "You've got 360 days to change that perception. The next time you meet, you let Josh Gattis know, you let Jim Harbaugh know that you're not going to be perceived as a soft team. Now, you can pass the ball, you can be an elite offense by having a spread offense, but when it comes down to the nitty gritty, you have to be able to force the defensive line off the ball, because the game is still won in the trenches."

Michigan Win Sets New Tone For Rivalry

Michigan's win does not necessarily signal a changing of the guard, but it does mark a new chapter in the rivalry that dates back to 1897.

From Michigan's early dominance in the rivalry to Woody Hayes' Ten Year War with Bo Schembechler, and from the down years of John Cooper to the highs of Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer, each Ohio State coach has his own deeply personal relationship and narrative associated with the annual contests against the Wolverines.

Day now faces somewhat of a reckoning, dropping Ohio State's first game to Michigan since 2011, as on the flip side of things, Harbaugh wins his first contest against the Buckeyes since becoming the Wolverines' head coach in 2015.

There's little evidence that Day is heading anywhere soon, and Harbaugh has almost certainly earned some good will among the Michigan faithful with his upset of Ohio State, so the reset seen on the field in November sets a clean slate as the rivalry is turned on its head for the first time in a decade.

"You don't have to even say who's going to win the next edition of the rivalry," Gay said. "It's alive again. There's new life to this rivalry. I mean, what was Michigan-Ohio State (before this year)? It was a beatdown. It was Ohio State. It wasn't if Ohio State would beat Michigan, but by how much, no matter what field they were playing on. It was that dominant. It seemed like such a one-sided rivalry in terms of focus, in terms of emphasis, especially for Ohio State."

The Buckeyes will be back with a vengeance next year as they welcome the Wolverines to Ohio Stadium, but no matter how amped Ohio State gets for the game, there's going to be a newfound confidence with Michigan.

"Now the reference point is not going to be 10 years ago, the Brady Hoke game and everything like that," Strom said. "It's going to be, 'They just beat Ohio State.' I think a big part of it, too, is that even the 2011 year when Michigan won, that was the worst Ohio State year in a million years. This year, this was an Ohio State team that had just moved up to No. 2 in the country in the CFP rankings, and people thought that they were going to go to a win and win a

fifth-straight Big Ten title and get back to the playoffs for the third straight year."

Michigan will have a full year to gloat and celebrate its win over Ohio State, and while this injects some much-needed competitive energy into the rivalry, Anbender points out that the Buckeyes will still bring the more talented team to the field next season.

According to the 247Sports team talent composite, Ohio State had the third-most talented roster in the country this season, while Michigan came in at No. 15. Looking at the players who will be coming in, Ohio State has the No. 4 overall recruiting class in 2022, and Michigan slots in at No. 10.

"Ohio State is still the more talented team, and this is still the first Michigan win in a decade," Anbender said. "Michigan getting the proverbial monkey off their back is a huge thing for them. That loomed over the program. It seeped into everything. Every game was viewed through the lens of, 'OK, how does this translate to the Ohio State game?' And there will still be that in the program, I think, but it will be much less through this lens of fear, and much more through just a more sober assessment of how the team is doing, and for them to reach that point I think is huge."

While the writers believe this marks a turning point in the rivalry, Broadnax compares this game to the likes of Iowa in 2017 or Purdue in 2018, something of a cosmic fluke, rather than a seismic shift for the series.

"We respect Michigan, but it's not a turn of the tide," he said. "It's one game. How

would that game have been last year had they been willing to play us instead of tucking your tail and running away?"

Even with games to play – a Rose Bowl for the Buckeyes and the College Football Playoffs for the Wolverines – the loss by Ohio State leaves both programs in an interesting position headed into the offseason.

Dissatisfied with performance on defense, Day has already hired Jim Knowles away from Oklahoma State as the new defensive coordinator. Other potential staffing changes are on the horizon, as well. The Wolverines are likely content with this season, regardless of their results in the playoffs.

This offseason serves as a chance for Michigan to build upon what it has accomplished, while Ohio State will capitalize on the opportunity to course correct – that is, if it is up to the task.

"That's up to the coaching staff," Broadnax said. "The team has to reflect the mindset of the head coach – not just on offense – but on defense, and at key positions, like the quarterback. Your quarterback has to be willing to step up in that prime-time role and take chances, run the ball when he needs to, give up his body when he needs to. You can salve your wounds after the game, but you have to do what is necessary to win. It means playing flawless football without penalties. I know that's a rarity, but you can't make mental errors in that type of game, and you have to be prepared for whatever the opposition sends your way."



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Freeman Hire Sparks ‘Youth Movement’ at ND

By **CHASE BROWN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

With 11 national championships, over 800 all-time wins, seven Heisman Trophy winners and the most consensus All-Americans of any school, Notre Dame is a program built on tradition.

However, that doesn't exclude it from making nontraditional and unconventional choices. In the height of the postseason coaching carousel, the Fighting Irish made a significant decision that sent ripples throughout the college football landscape.

In early December, longtime head coach Brian Kelly bolted for Baton Rouge, La., and LSU, leaving a team still in College Football Playoff contention for the Southeastern Conference, and defensive coordinator Marcus Freeman, a former Ohio State linebacker, took his place. In other words, the winningest coach in Notre Dame history is being succeeded by a 35-year-old, rookie head coach.

It's a bold move, one Notre Dame's administration, athletic department and fans usually wouldn't be too comfortable accepting. However, Freeman's presence has created no such anxiety. Instead, he's been met both in South Bend, Ind., and on the national college football landscape at large as a breath of fresh air.

Tyler Horka, who covers Fighting Irish

football for Blue and Gold Illustrated, said there's a lot to like about Freeman and thinks he puts Notre Dame in a position to win championships immediately.

"I've never seen anything like it," Horka told BSB. "Notre Dame believes it can compete for titles right now. If it needed a revamp or boost to heighten its standing, it would have waited for Cincinnati's Luke Fickell to finish his College Football Playoff run this year. But (athletic director) Jack Swarbrick acted quickly, which told me he thinks this coaching staff and roster can win now."

It's not hard for Horka to see why Notre Dame fell in love with the idea of Freeman becoming the school's 32nd head football coach. The Fighting Irish needed only a quick look at his track record on the field and sidelines, Horka said.

Freeman was an All-Ohio and Parade All-American linebacker at Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne High School, compiling 152 tackles, eight quarterback sacks, 29 tackles for loss, three forced fumbles and 10 passes defended in his senior season.

His statistics and play caught the attention of multiple big-name schools, including Ohio State, Michigan and Notre Dame. He quickly shot up recruiting boards to become a top prospect nationally. Bill Kurelic of 247Sports, a longtime Ohio State recruiting expert, said Freeman's combination of size, speed and athleticism partnered with high-level productivity caused him to rise in



FILE PHOTO

ONCE A BUCKEYE — Former Ohio State linebacker Marcus Freeman (No. 1) was named the new head coach at Notre Dame after Brian Kelly's departure to LSU.

the 2004 class rankings.

Freeman ultimately committed to Ohio State — a campus only an hour away from his hometown — joining Bobby Carpenter, A.J. Hawk and Anthony Schlegel in the Buckeye linebacker room.

"Ohio State just won the national championship," Freeman said, back when he committed to the Buckeyes. "You know if you go there, you're going to be fighting for a national championship. And it's just up the road. It was a long, thought-out process with my parents and me, just sitting down and looking at the pros and cons of each school. The final decision came down to a gut feeling. I prayed about it, and Ohio State's the school for me in my heart."

Freeman would redshirt his first season in Columbus before becoming a four-year letter winner under Fickell, then the Ohio State co-defensive coordinator and linebackers coach.

Freeman earned second-team All-Big Ten honors as a senior and helped the Buckeyes to four conference titles, three BCS bowls and two trips to the national championship game.

The Chicago Bears selected Freeman in the fifth round of the 2009 NFL draft. He spent time with the Bears, Buffalo Bills and Houston Texans before a medical condition ended his playing career the following year.

After his brief stint as a professional, Freeman returned to Ohio State as a graduate assistant. He was a linebackers coach at Kent State from 2011-13 and made a four-year stop at Purdue, where he instructed the

linebackers and later became a co-defensive coordinator.

In 2017, Fickell hired Freeman to be his defensive coordinator at Cincinnati, where he molded the defense into a national powerhouse. Over the next four seasons, the Bearcats ranked in the top 20 in several defensive categories, including total defense, scoring defense, rushing defense, red-zone defense, fourth-down defense, team sacks and turnovers gained.

Freeman also stood out on the recruiting trail, bringing talented prospects such as cornerback Ahmad Gardner — a potential first-pick in the 2022 NFL draft — and safeties Darrick Forrest and James Wiggins to Cincinnati.

During his tenure, Freeman was a three-time nominee for the Broyles Award, given to college football's best assistant coach. He also was named 247Sports' 2020 Defensive Coordinator of the Year.

Freeman's plaudits put him on the radar for Power Five coaching positions. After Cincinnati's 24-21 loss to Georgia in the Peach Bowl, he received a call from Kelly, when the Notre Dame head coach asked Freeman to be his defensive coordinator.

"Kelly saw Freeman as a gem in the making," Horka said. "He could galvanize a group. The Cincinnati coaching staff and players rallied around him. He was just a prominent figure, and people gravitated toward him. He was a great leader, and he truly understood defensive football."

Freeman accepted Kelly's offer over a similar one from LSU and started as Notre

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Dame's defensive coordinator in the 2021 season. Kelly had high praise for his newest hire in the offseason, calling Freeman "the next head coach" of the school's football program, which created significant expectations for his first year leading the defense.

In his first season with the Irish, Freeman led a transformation on the defensive side of the ball, developing a top-20 defense in South Bend. Notre Dame ranked sixth nationally in defensive touchdowns (four) and sacks per game (3.33), eighth in total sacks (40), ninth in scoring defense (18.2), 10th in interceptions (15) and 14th in turnovers gained (23).

"He took the bull by the horns a little bit," Horka said. "His track record from Ohio State, Kent State, Purdue and Cincinnati brought him to Notre Dame. That's why Kelly wanted him here, and that's why it worked. He embraced everything Kelly wanted to do and made Notre Dame a different place."

When Kelly left for Baton Rouge to coach LSU, his prophecy for Freeman's future came true. Notre Dame hired Freeman to be the next leader of its football team, choosing him to carry the torch of the historic program.

"Notre Dame is a unique place," Horka said, "but Freeman is unique, too. He is an ambassador of the program. He's talked about how Notre Dame is a place that can change you. He thinks the school is special and he can take the Irish to the next level. Freeman's only been here 11 months, and he's become the voice, the face, the picture of what Notre Dame wants to be."

Horka said Freeman and offensive coordinator Tommy Rees, who stayed at Notre Dame after Kelly's departure despite an offer to follow him, will aggressively attack the recruiting trail this offseason, selling prospects on the idea that Notre Dame is a force to reckon with for years to come.

"Freeman and Rees headline a youth movement at Notre Dame," Horka said. "Tommy is almost 30 years old, and Freeman is 35 years old. It's a youth movement going throughout the program, and it's contagious. It will have a positive effect on recruiting. They can get into the living rooms of these prospective players and tell them how it wasn't long ago that they were in their shoes."

"Freeman was an All-Big Ten linebacker at Ohio State, while Tommy was a four-year letter winner and prolific quarterback at Notre Dame. They can relate to recruits because they understand what it's like to be recruited."

According to 247Sports, Notre Dame has the No. 6 recruiting class for 2022 and the second-best class for 2023. The Fighting Irish are hoping the two prominent coaches paired with that next-level recruiting will lead to elite results on the football field, especially if rumors of the College Football Playoff's expansion beyond four teams become a reality.

If the Fighting Irish keep pace with Kelly's consistent winning under Freeman, Horka thinks Notre Dame can win recruiting battles with the Buckeyes.

"Freeman is going to fight with Ohio State, Cincinnati to get Ohio recruits," Horka said. "He has the utmost respect for those schools, but he is a talented recruiter, and he will win some of those battles."

"He wants to recruit with the big boys like Ohio State, Alabama, Georgia, Clemson. I think Freeman wants Notre Dame to be right there, and that's not impossible. They can do all the things that Ohio State does, and maybe even a little bit more."

With the Buckeyes on the docket to open the 2022 season, a win for Ohio State could go a long way toward keeping the new-look Golden Domers at bay, as it successfully did in the recruitment of Pickerington (Ohio) Central safety Sonny Styles.

While Notre Dame's history with first-time head coaches is not excellent – including the failures of Bob Davie, Gerry Faust and Charlie Weis – the tradition-rich program built a foundation of success under Kelly that Freeman believes he can use to elevate beyond his predecessors.

"I think Notre Dame can win a national title in the next five years," Horka said. "But it's easier said than done. Freeman's never been on the sideline as a head coach, so it will be interesting to see how he handles that. However, the program is positioned to keep getting better, and Freeman can do all the little things to keep it on that trajectory, busting through that ceiling and taking Notre Dame to new heights."



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Strong Culture Builds Premier Club Program

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

One may not know it just from looking, but in the shadow of Ohio Stadium on the Lincoln Tower Park fields, Ohio State has grown a new football powerhouse from thin air.

Created in 2009, the Ohio State club football team has in its 12 years of existence sprouted from nothing to one of the finest programs in the National Club Football Association. On Dec. 4, it won its second straight national title, defeating George Mason, 42-27, in Waynesburg, Pa. to cap a perfect season in NCFA play.

And it's on those fields, on chilly nights like Dec. 1 – the final practice before traveling to Pennsylvania to battle George Mason for the second time in a season (the Buckeyes won their first meeting on Oct. 10, 29-28) that a title-contending stalwart has been built.

Head coach James Grega Jr. patrols the field, working primarily with the offense (which he coordinates) while his small team of assistants runs the rest of the team through drills. Players, often coming straight from class or other academic appointments, don whatever practice equipment they can get ahold of, as club players provide their own equipment.

As those mismatched jerseys fly across the hardened field, more teammates shuffle in at their own pace, arriving later for this 5:30 p.m. practice because of those academic obligations. Two players, slated for action on the lines, arrive together during the full-team session of practice and elicit quite a bit of delight both from Grega and from defensive coordinator Dylan Barron, though Grega catches them before they can join the action to ensure that they've stretched (they had not).

At one point early in the practice, these Buckeyes have to move off their original field and onto a shared field with the club rugby



PATRICK MAYHORN

UNDER THE LIGHTS — The Ohio State club football team prepares for the National Club Football Association national title game in the shadow of Ohio Stadium. The team has won the last two championships.

team to make room for intramural flag football. Later, as the team breaks for water, a player not to be named to protect his identity from the club sports authorities nabs a water bottle from the rugby team after being told not to, because he forgot to bring his own.

With about 10 minutes left in their allotted time on the fields, a rogue donut supplier appears and immediately becomes the most popular man on the field, but Grega eschews his efforts and reminds his team that they have work left to do and that they can partake so long as they finish strong.

Minutes later, his team has reached a fever pitch as a light snow picks up, executing crisp option looks and delivering plays to a satisfying enough end that Grega adjourns

practice and draws his team over for a quick speech about preparedness, playing for the guy next to you instead of against the one across from you, and about how everyone who doesn't raise a hand to signal otherwise is expected to attend a film study the next day – while riling his group up with the offering of a “wing night” for its performance on these suddenly snowy fields ahead of their most important game of the season.

It's a perfect encapsulation of the ethos that the team has built. This is a ragtag bunch, mismatched equipment and all, but it's a bunch that can really play when it locks in. This practice is full speed, and it's obvious in everything they do that this is a team that takes its coaching to heart. At one point during the team session, Barron is upset over his group's communication. One of his linebackers missed a pre-snap adjustment from the coach's mouth, which is only a problem when the rest of the defense isn't echoing those adjustments as they should. He gets on the group about yelling out the calls, and for the rest of the practice the defensive side of the field is a cacophony of adjustments.

There's lots of fun to be had, from joking on the sidelines to pining after those donuts. Wide receivers and cornerbacks jaw with each other before, during and after plays. At one point, a linebacker snares an interception and is met with chirping from the peanut gallery about “finally catching one.” Apparently, he'd been dealing with a case of the drops for weeks.

Their resources pale in comparison to the ones that the players only minutes away in Ohio Stadium have. This is a pay-for-play league, about \$200 a pop, and with equipment charges Grega estimates that a player can spend well over \$1,000 over a career with the club team. In fact, with COVID stripping away a season, the Buckeyes turned to GoFundMe this year to secure funds to travel to the national championship game. With a

few weeks to spare, they passed their goal of \$2,000, with extra money going directly into the fund for next season's team.

“The big issue was our kids have to pay to play,” Grega said. “Our coaches volunteer. We don't get a really big budget from the university. During COVID, we didn't play at all. A lot of our money relies on fund-raising, and we couldn't do any fundraisers because everything was shut down. We budgeted just enough to get us to the championship game but ended up having to spend a little more on jerseys and on our trip to Oakland (Mich.) earlier in the year, which is 4½ hours away. We needed a little extra cash to fund this trip to the national championship game.”

“We were always going to make it work. We knew we were always going to make it work and we were going to go, but to reach our goal, we're just extremely grateful. And we're extremely blessed to be in that situation where we have such great support from our family, from our friends and from our alumni. It means the world to get us there because it's not only going to set us up for the championship game, but we got enough to where it's going to help us set the starting blocks for next season as well. It means everything, especially to these kids who are paying a pay-to-play fee of about \$200 every year, plus equipment. You're talking about a kid ultimately putting up over a grand to do this over four years. It means the world.”

Beyond the financial limitations, the volunteer staff really has the time to recruit only from within the student pool at Ohio State, leaving the team with a large group of options but a fixed talent base.

“It's a combination of a lot of things,” Grega told BSB, where he worked as a staff writer for several years before moving into academic work so that he could coach more. “All of our coaches are volunteers, so we don't really have the resources to recruit full time. A lot of what we do is recruit our

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student body. Ohio State has 50- to 60,000 kids on campus. You have a pretty wide pool to choose from.

"As we've started to grow in the program, we have gotten interest from high school seniors who could probably play Division II, Division III ball, but some of those smaller schools don't offer their preferred major. So it's, 'Well, I'll go to Ohio State and I can still play club football.' It's not as demanding as a Division III school. It's not as competitive, although I think we could compete with some DIII schools in this country. But it's still full-contact football, you still get to be a part of a team and play almost a 10-game schedule."

Despite that limited recruiting outreach, this is a team filled with talent, experience and with a whole lot of guys who sacrifice a good chunk of their free time after class only for one more chance to be a part of a football team. Others have larger aspirations – putting games on tape in hopes of jumping into the higher divisions or even to earn a walk-on spot at Ohio State – but many of the 17 seniors whom the Buckeyes took into Waynesburg played their final football game as they secured that title against George Mason.

Grega references them in his speech, too. He tells his players that they owe it to those seniors to make that final game as special as they can.

For this group, it's especially true. This class of seniors that the club team has just seen off is certainly the best that Ohio State has ever seen and could very well be the greatest club football class of all time, anywhere. It worked to claim the first titles in school history and didn't lose an NCAA game in either of its final two seasons in Columbus.

Quarterback Kellyn Gerenstein is the face of the program, a three-year starter who came in with Grega when he took the job, but he's far from the only impactful senior, to whom Grega gives a big chunk of credit for Ohio State's success.

"A lot of it has been the guys we've had since I've been here," Grega said. "Kellyn has been guaranteed our starting quarterback for four years. His first day as a member of this team was my first day as a head coach. We've been attached at the hip ever since. He's an unbelievable player, but also there's been a lot of guys in his class and in the class after him who are just unbelievable athletes. They're unbelievable kids. And they have stayed committed to the program."

That commitment runs throughout the program and has helped to cement the club team not just as a force to be reckoned with on the field but as a viable option for prospective players.

In one case, star wide receiver Casey Scroggins even turned down a chance to walk on for the varsity team, sticking with the club team because of the flexibility it offered him.

"Casey Scroggins, our leading wide receiver, leads the league in receiving yards. Ohio State offered him a walk-on spot this year, and he ended up turning them down because he's a pre-med major and he just couldn't handle the responsibilities both being pre-med and a full-time football player. We've been able to keep this thing going purely because we've got really good kids. We've got really good players that have shown commitment to the program. And when that happens, it makes it a lot easier to recruit to because when they're passionate about it, that shows to potential recruits. They want to

be a part of this thing as well."

For a group with so many backgrounds, the buy-in this staff has drawn really is something to behold. Just about every player has a different reason for playing club football, but every one of them has found the kind of passion and the feeling of brotherhood that made them fall in love with the game from the start.

Some, like Gerenstein, went underrecruited in high school – in his case, an injury in his senior year kept him out of the limelight – but couldn't bear the thought of being away from football. He even does scouting on the side for Sports Illustrated, writing articles regarding the NFL draft.

"I don't think any soul walking this earth likes football more than I do," Gerenstein told BSB. "Right now, along with playing, I'm a scout. I could be a coach, a scout, whatever. Anything, as long as it's football. I could go play overseas. This is what I want to do. It's who I am."

In their years together, Grega and Gerenstein have formed a bond that the quarterback describes as the best you'll find between a coach and quarterback. The two have an innate understanding of what the other wants and have worked to build an offense that just always seems to have exactly what it needs, exactly when it needs it. Gerenstein hits his marks on time every time, and when he needs to, he's trusted to make a play with his legs – which he does frequently, and with gusto.

"I can't say it's like a father-son relationship, because we're too close in age," Gerenstein joked. "But I was telling my dad back at home that I don't think there's a better relationship between a play-caller and a quarterback in any level of football in America. It doesn't matter if it's in the NFL or college, I think me and him just, on the field, off the field, there's just so much leeway and trust. He's telling me, 'Hey, I think we should be doing this.' I'm telling him, 'Hey, let's look at this' and it's never a no. It's usually yes. And if not, it's, 'All right, we'll take a look.' There's so much understanding and respect."

Gerenstein has so much affection for his coach that in October he took to social media to say that any high school program would be lucky to have him at the helm that he's one of the best young coaches in the state. Grega, for what it's worth, told BSB that those offers haven't come in quite yet but he would like to make a career out of coaching either at the high school or college level down the road.

"He's a player's guy," Gerenstein said. "And I think that people really underestimate how much an understanding coach really means to a football team. On top of that, he just knows X's and O's, he knows how to call plays, he knows how to game-plan. I think that there's a lack of compassion in high school football and in the sport in general. If you have compassion for club football, you damn sure would have compassion for something that actually pays you."

Other players got that itch to return to football after a few years away from the game. Third-year linebacker Colby Stahl spent two years at Ohio State without playing the game after he starred in high school, but watching games in the Horseshoe was too much to handle, and he decided at the urging of a friend to join the club team.

"I played since I was in fifth grade," Stahl told BSB. "And after two years of being here and watching the Buckeyes play in the 'Shoe,

I just couldn't stand being away from it any longer. I had to get back out there. I know I still had the build for it. I've worked out all the time just in case anything came up. One of my friends on the team asked me to come out so I said, 'You know what? Let's do it.'"

Then there are some, like tailback Jalen Haley, who see the club team as a chance to build up a profile and make a leap up into a higher level with strong play. The Zanesville, Ohio, product could be well on his way after featuring heavily in Ohio State's offense, carrying the ball 113 times for 841 yards on the season. At only 5-8, 187 pounds, Haley too was overlooked in high school but can prove his talent in the club ranks.

"I just wanted another chance to play football at a high level so I can hopefully take my talents to either the varsity team or any other team with interest," Haley said.

Though he has higher aspirations, he too has found himself fully enmeshed in the brotherhood the team touts.

"It was our bus ride back from Oakland, and I was just listening to all the laughs and jokes," Haley said. "I had my earphones and then I remembered what my mom told me. She said, 'These are going to be the best moments of your life, don't just worry about your stuff. Don't worry about wins or losses.' So I took my earphones out and I just lived these moments with my brothers."

For Haley and for many members of the team, to see a former club team standout in wide receiver Chris Booker break onto Ohio State's varsity team as a walk-on (and one of the best special teamers on the roster) works as motivation to reach their own goals on the

field.

"He's definitely a big inspiration," Haley said. "I know we have some players on this team who could have played. Casey Scroggins had an opportunity. It's definitely motivation. It shows you that it can be done, gives you something to work for. Being able to say, 'He came from club football and he's now he's doing that at the biggest level,' it's pretty cool."

But the value of the team far exceeds opportunity to climb the ladder in Grega's eyes. Club football at Ohio State can be anything to anyone, be it one more chance to be a part of a team, an opportunity to grow – and in some cases to learn for the first time – or just a step in a longer journey.

"It gives you a platform and it gives you the ability to strap up again, put film together, and I think what we've done really well is put our players in positions to succeed," Grega said. "We've had players, like Chris, who are playing for national championships for Ohio State last year, and then we have guys here who've never played football before. We've got all kinds, and whatever your goals are, as long as you're realistic about them, this team will help you get there."

"There are really talented kids out here. It's full football. A lot of times when people hear club football, they think it's like flag football. It's not. It's full contact, and there are kids that can play the DI, DII, DIII levels. It is competitive. When people hear club football, I don't think they take it seriously. It's serious. It's competitive. Our team takes it very seriously. Club football at Ohio State is real, it's something that we're really building, and it's a championship program."



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OSU Looking To Close Strong In Early Signing Period

The college football recruiting early signing period was set to begin on Dec. 15, the day that Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press. The following information is the most accurate BSB had as of press time. For up-to-the minute information, go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all BSB subscribers.

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Braden Moles

Ohio State is set at a handful of positions, including quarterback, running back and wide receiver. Some help would be beneficial at linebacker and safety but isn't completely necessary, while needs still exist on the offensive and defensive lines.

With 19 verbal commits at time of press and some areas of need, the Buckeyes will need to walk a fine line between their needs and their numbers as some commits prepare to sign their letters of intent.

According to the most recent Buckeye Sports Bulletin scholarship chart, Ohio State's roster currently consists of 83 players on scholarship heading into the Rose Bowl. Six players – Demario McCall, Marcus Williamson, Antwuan Jackson, Thayer

Munford, Corey Rau and Haskell Garrett – will have exhausted their eligibility following this season.

A decision on next season also waits for a number of players, including Sezyn Banks, Cameron Brown, Chris Olave, Nicholas Pettit-Frere, Jeremy Ruckert, Tyreke Smith and Master Teague, among others, who all were honored as part of Senior Day on Nov. 20.

A number of seniors did not participate, including Jerron Cage, Tyler Friday, Palaie Gaoteote IV, Javontae Jean-Baptiste, Teradja Mitchell, Josh Proctor and Noah Ruggles, indicating they all could be looking for a return next season. Wide receiver Garrett Wilson is likely off to the NFL after three years in Columbus as well.

All this is to say that Ohio State, when factoring in the possibility of players coming and going from the transfer portal, could be looking at tight numbers for 2022, meaning the Buckeyes will likely sign a smaller class than in recent years.

Utah Four-Star QB Brown Commits To Ohio State

Ohio State picked up one of the most important commitments in the class of 2022 when Draper (Utah) Corner Canyon four-star quarterback Devin Brown (6-3, 189) issued a verbal commitment to the Buckeyes on Dec. 1.

He is the No. 52 overall recruit in 2022 and the No. 5 quarterback in addition to

| OSU Football Verbal Commitments | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|-----|-------|---|--|
| Players in the class of 2022 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State. | | | | | | |
| Player | Pos. | Ht. | Wt. | Stars | High School | |
| Kojo Antwi | WR | 6-0 | 190 | ★★★★ | Suwanee (Ga.) Lambert | |
| Terrance Brooks | CB | 5-11 | 190 | ★★★★ | Little Elm, Texas | |
| Devin Brown | QB | 6-3 | 190 | ★★★★ | Draper (Utah) Corner Canyon | |
| Jyaire Brown | CB | 6-0 | 178 | ★★★★ | West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West | |
| Kaleb Brown | WR | 5-11 | 177 | ★★★★ | Chicago St. Rita | |
| Caleb Burton | WR | 6-0 | 165 | ★★★★ | Del Valle, Texas | |
| Caden Curry | DL | 6-3 | 250 | ★★★★ | Greenwood (Ind.) Center Grove | |
| George Fitzpatrick | OT | 6-6 | 285 | ★★★★ | Englewood(Colo.) Cherry Creek | |
| Bennett Christian | TE | 6-6 | 235 | ★★★★ | Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona | |
| Kyion Grayes | WR | 6-1 | 170 | ★★★★ | Chandler, Ariz. | |
| Dallan Hayden | RB | 5-11 | 195 | ★★★★ | Memphis (Tenn.) Christian Brothers | |
| Avery Henry | OT | 6-7 | 305 | ★★★ | St Clairsville, Ohio | |
| C.J. Hicks | LB | 6-3 | 220 | ★★★★★ | Kettering (Ohio) Archbishop Alter | |
| Kenyatta Jackson | DE | 6-5 | 235 | ★★★★ | Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna | |
| Gabe Powers | LB | 6-4 | 230 | ★★★★ | Marysville, Ohio | |
| Kye Stokes | ATH | 6-2 | 185 | ★★★★ | Seffner (Fla.) Armwood | |
| Sonny Styles | S | 6-4 | 215 | ★★★★★ | Pickerington (Ohio) Central | |
| Tegra Tshabola | OT | 6-5 | 340 | ★★★★ | West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West | |
| Ryan Turner | CB | 6-0 | 180 | ★★★★ | Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep | |

being the top recruit from Utah, according to the 247Sports composite ratings. He led Queen Creek in Arizona to back-to-back playoff appearances in 2019 and 2020. After transferring to Corner Canyon, Brown helped lead them to a runner-up finish his senior year. He intends to enroll early at Ohio State, according to reports.

“With my decision, a big thing was being a competitor,” Brown told 247Sports.

“Growing up, my dad would always bring up other quarterbacks and tell me they were better than me. That just made me work harder and my whole life I've been working to be the best. I love that underdog mentality. I want to go up against the best in every moment and I want to go compete against the best in college. So I'm going to be a Buckeye.”

Brown had previously been committed

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago - 1981

Ohio State was among the 11 schools included, in addition to Clemson, LSU, Michigan, Notre Dame, Tennessee and USC, among others, when Dayton (Ohio) Roth running back Keith Byars trimmed down his list of top schools.

Byars, a four-sport athlete in football, basketball, baseball and track, was limited to just 72 yards on 24 carries in a playoff loss to rival Trotwood-Madison, and the end of his high school career signaled the next stage of his recruitment.

"I'm just starting to think real hard about where I want to visit now that the season's over," he said. "I'm not too sure I'll sign the first day, but then again, maybe I'll commit early and get it all over with. I've pretty much got time to make up my mind."

35 Years Ago - 1986

Cincinnati (Ohio) CAPE running back Carlos Snow got his first taste of running on the turf at Ohio Stadium as the 'Shoe hosted the Ohio High School Athletic Association state football finals over Thanksgiving weekend.

He ran for 105 yards as CAPE knocked off Chagrin Falls Kenston, 7-6, to win the Division III state title, though he suffered an ankle injury in the second quarter.

"I've narrowed my choice to five schools," Snow said. "I plan to visit Ohio State, Michigan, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Penn State. I haven't set up the dates, but I plan to visit all five schools before I make a decision. I'm in no hurry."

30 Years Ago - 1991

Ohio State received a commitment from Steubenville, Ohio, wide receiver Michael "Buster" Tillman, who looked forward to the opportunity to play under head coach John Cooper.

"I think he's a real good coach," Tillman said. "I'm glad that he is going to be around a lot longer because I think what he's doing is right.

"But more than football, Coach Cooper pointed out things to me that made a lot of sense. He told me that Ohio State wanted me more than anyone else to play football for them, but he also told me Ohio State wanted me to get an education. That impressed me."

Tillman had caught over 70 passes for nearly 1,400 yards and 17 touchdowns in his final two high school seasons.

25 Years Ago - 1996

Ohio State welcomed 10 prospects the weekend of Dec. 6-8, including one who verbally committed.

That was Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy offensive lineman Henry Fleming, who was joined in Columbus by offensive lineman Tam Hopkins of Winter Park, Fla.; defensive lineman Dale Roy Stewart of Vero Beach, Fla.; receiver Sam Crenshaw of Youngstown (Ohio) Rayen; defensive back Ron Israel of Haddon Heights, N.J.; and running back De'Wayne Hogan of Indianapolis Ben Davis.

Also visiting were four OSU verbal commitments from Ohio – defensive backs Greg Simpson of Dublin Scioto and David Mitchell of Westerville South, defensive end Rodney Bailey of Lakewood St. Edward and offensive lineman Ben Pulfer of Sidney.

20 Years Ago - 2001

Ohio State linebacker Robert Reynolds hosted Lancaster, Ohio, linebacker Bobby Carpenter for a visit, introducing him to a number of recruits, including Justin Zwick, Maurice Claret, Joel Penton and Doug Datish.

"I have been up there so many times," Carpenter told BSB. "This time, I wanted to get a feel for the players. Robert Reynolds is a great guy. He's a lot like myself, the type of guy he is.

"I hung around with him and Branden Joe. I played against him when he was at Westerville South. I didn't find a guy up there I didn't like. All of the so-called underclassmen and the recruits they're bringing in are great guys."

Carpenter, rated Ohio's 10th-best prospect, also visited North Carolina out of respect to former OSU assistant coach Jon Tenuta, who joined the Tar Heels' staff in 2001.

15 Years Ago - 2006

Suwannee (Ga.) Peachtree Ridge defensive tackle Cameron Heyward led his high school team to the state finals in the school's fourth year of existence with a 13-7 win over Warner Robins.

Heyward, who had already visited Ohio State, also had official visits scheduled for LSU in January, with plans to visit Florida and Oklahoma before making a final decision.

10 Years Ago - 2011

After the dismissal of longtime Penn State head coach Joe Paterno, Ohio State started picking up steam in the recruitment of Harrisburg (Pa.) Bishop McDevitt five-star defensive end Noah Spence.

Spence was the No. 1 defensive end in the class of 2012, and he was figured to be a Penn State lean before controversy enveloped the Nittany Lions. Noah's father, Greg, told BSB that new head coach Urban Meyer's work spoke for itself and they were very excited to hear from him.

"They like Noah as a rush type defensive end who can drop – I think they call it the Leo," he said. "Coach (Jim) Tressel and Coach (Luke) Fickell recruited Noah pretty hard, but at the time we just weren't as interested in them as we were some other schools. Meyer and Fickell kind of rekindled that."

Five Years Ago - 2016

Kennedale, Texas, five-star Baron Browning issued a commitment to Ohio State on Dec. 1 following a home visit from Urban Meyer on Nov. 30. He was ranked the second-best linebacker and No. 17 overall prospect in his class.

He cited the Buckeyes' career development for student-athletes as a major factor in his decision.

"Of course everybody knew my top two was Alabama and Ohio State," he told Scout. "I couldn't really say anything about the football, they're both great football programs. But what put them over the top for me over 'Bama was just the life after football, the Real Life Wednesday, setting up opportunities for their players to have at least 3-4 jobs when they're done. I don't know any other team in the country that's doing that like this."

Days later, Indianapolis Cathedral four-star Pete Werner issued a commitment to Ohio State on Dec. 11, just a couple of weeks after reneging on a longtime commitment to Notre Dame. He was ranked the No. 266 overall prospect in 2017 and the No. 21 outside linebacker in his class.

"They really liked Werner," Scout recruiting analyst Bill Greene told BSB. "They never thought they had a chance with him. They stayed in with him all year, though. He's been committed to Notre Dame for a long time, and they just stayed right there. I know they're really happy to get this kid."

One Year Ago - 2020

Ohio State's two-year recruitment of Steilacoom (Wash.) five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka ended in success as he issued a verbal commitment to the Buckeyes. He was ranked the No. 9 overall prospect in 2020.

Egbuka received an offer from Ohio State in January 2019 and visited campus twice – once for a spring practice in March and then for Ohio State's 38-7 win over Wisconsin later that fall.

Ohio State outlasted Clemson, Oklahoma and Washington in Egbuka's recruitment. While the Sooners were the final school to get Egbuka on campus on Dec. 5, the Buckeyes made enough of an impression for him to commit just six days later.

ASK AN ANALYST

With Mark Givler of Buckeye Scoop

Pickerington (Ohio) Central five-star Sonny Styles is reclassifying and will join Ohio State's class of 2022. How does this impact both 2022 and 2023, in regard to the safety and linebacker positions as well as the classes overall?

"They tried to get a linebacker late. I think Sonny's probably going to be more of a linebacker than a true safety. He's probably best made to start at that bullet position, which I assume is going to be kept in some fashion by Jim Knowles. He's a 4-2-5 guy, so I assume we're going to see some type of hybrid.

"It solves a few issues where they needed another linebacker in this class, really. They lost Bloomington (Ind.) South four-star linebacker Dasan McCullough several months ago and didn't really have a lot of good options as far as replacing him. They tried to get Chicago Marist four-star linebacker Jimmy Rolder out of Illinois and he ended up going to Michigan. They were pretty much without any targets there. From a numbers perspective, that fills the quota there.

"It also is going to help Sonny get acclimated a little bit earlier. For 2023, I don't think it's going to do too much to what their plan is going to be. They're still going to need to hit the linebacker and safety positions pretty hard in 2023 specially,

as we're seeing now, they did not get Southeast Polk (Iowa) four-star safety Xavier Nwankpa. It's not looking great right now for Las Vegas (Nev.) Bishop Gorman four-star safety Zion Branch.

"With all those factors considered, they're going to want a couple of safeties next year. Linebackers are kind of a pretty big need on this roster right now. As good as this 2022 linebacker class they've got is, I don't think one class is going to necessarily fix all of that. They're going to want to hit that pretty good again in 2023."

Big 12 commissioner Bob Bowlsby has said the NCAA's football oversight committee has looked into changes for the early signing period. Where do you stand on the early signing period and what changes would you make?

"I'm not a huge early signing period fan. But if you're going to have one, it never made sense to have one in the middle of December. It's terrible timing. It's right in the middle of all the coaching changes, bowl prep, playoff prep. A lot of these schools are wrapping up their state championships for the last couple of weeks, so you're trying to sort through that while your high school guys are in the playoffs. It's horrendous timing, and

to have an early signing period and a late signing period that are roughly six weeks apart doesn't make sense.

"It's not a wide enough gap, so I would eliminate it. You don't need an early signing period to enroll early. People were enrolling early long before we had an early signing period. They would sign their paperwork, or they would just show up on campus in January and that would be that, so it's unnecessary for kids who are enrolling early.

"Now, if they're going to have it, putting it more in the first half of July somewhere would be the best. Now you have these summer official visits in June and then that way, guys who want to get it over with before their senior season and just get things done can do that. They can take their official visits in the spring and summer and then sign in July. Guys who don't just wait until February, or if they want to enroll early they can just do it the old way.

"It's got to be early enough in July that the coaches can still have their couple of weeks off before fall camp starts and high school kids and their families can get their signings done and then go do their family vacations in July before their high school season starts."

to USC since Sept. 19, 2020, but he decommitted from the Trojans on Nov. 24 following a visit to Ohio State for its game against Michigan State on Nov. 20, saying he felt it was best for his recruitment.

While Ohio State was not on the scene for Brown's early recruitment, just recently offering the signal caller on Oct. 12, the Buckeyes beat out Texas, Ole Miss and USC, who remained in contact with Brown following his decommitment.

Brown will be Ohio State's lone quarterback commit in the class after the Buckeyes missed out on Medina (Ohio) four-star Drew Allar, who is locked in at Penn State following James Franklin's contract extension.

Transferring freshman quarterback Quinn Ewers was part of Brown's class but reclassified to 2021 earlier this year and enrolled at Ohio State. Ewers' reclassification left a potential hole at quarterback down the line for the Buckeyes and head coach Ryan Day, but Brown figures to keep things rolling with his commitment, especially after Ewers entered the transfer portal.

Though he'll step into a quarterback room this spring behind Kyle McCord, a five-star signal caller, and Heisman finalist C.J. Stroud, he isn't afraid of the competition.

"I just have a great relationship with Coach Corey Dennis and Coach Day," Brown said Dec. 1. "They were at my house this (past) weekend and everything has been great with them. Knowing they have one of the best quarterback rooms in the country, that's something super appealing. To be the best you have to beat the best, and I just want to go prove myself.

"They just have so much talent there," he continued. "All the receivers they have, all the linemen and recruits they're bringing in, we're building something special in Columbus. Being in the Big Ten and with all the tradition, it's just a special place to be."

Four-Star DL Caden Curry Commits To Ohio State

The Buckeyes picked up a huge commitment on the eve of the early signing period as Greenwood (Ind.) Center Grove four-star defensive lineman Caden Curry (6-3, 250) announced Dec. 14 that he's committing to play

for the Buckeyes.

Curry is the No. 88 overall prospect in 2022 and the 14th-best defensive lineman, as well as the No. 3 recruit out of Indiana. The Buckeyes beat out Alabama, Clemson, Indiana and Oregon, who were also in Curry's top five.

"Ohio State has always showed me the most love and made me feel at home from the beginning from the players and the coaches," Curry told On3 Sports.

Ohio State offered Curry in May 2020, and he got on campus for an official visit on Sept. 10 before visiting in an unofficial capacity on Oct. 30. Alabama got the last look at Curry during an official visit on Nov. 6, but despite Alabama head coach Nick Saban's well-known closing ability, Ohio State was able to hold on to Curry.

At Center Grove, Curry helped lead the Trojans to a perfect 28-0 record over the past two seasons, taking home back-to-back Indiana Class 6A state championships.

In his junior and senior seasons, he racked up 126 total tackles, 45½ for loss, to go with 15 sacks, eight passes deflected and a fumble recovery.

According to 247Sports national recruiting analyst Allen Trieu, Curry is a "very productive, disruptive player."

"Even when he is not the one making the play, he is consistently affecting offenses with his penetration," the analyst said. "Gets off the snap quickly and shows the agility to get skinny and get through the line or win with a spin move."

Styles Reclassification Helps Weather Losses At Safety

Ohio State received a late boost to its 2022 recruiting class when it was reported on Dec. 8 that Pickerington (Ohio) Central five-star safety Sonny Styles intends to reclassify from 2023 and join the Buckeyes' class of 2022 during the early signing period.

He will skip his senior year of high school and join the Buckeyes in June, according to reports. He's now rated the No. 13 overall prospect in 2022 and the No. 1 safety in his new class.

This gives Styles an opportunity to get to

Ohio State early and get fully integrated, as well as get an early start in training. Though some immediate parallels exist with Ewers' situation and ensuing transfer, it's unlikely that Styles will go down that same path. For one, it was widely reported that Ewers felt homesick shortly after he arrived on campus. Styles' high school, meanwhile, is just a 30-minute drive from the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

A full fall camp also allows him a good chance to see the field this season, especially if the Buckeyes are still hurting for depth at linebacker and safety.

Styles' reclassification leaves Ohio State with two recruits in 2023 – Thompson Station's (Tenn.) Independence four-star tight end Ty Lockwood and Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star offensive lineman Joshua Padilla.

While Styles' shift to 2022 is unrelated to other happenings at safety for Ohio State, it provides a boost for the Buckeyes, who missed out on several safety targets in this class.

What once seemed like a good bet for Ohio State has turned into a "what if" for the Buckeyes, as Altoona (Iowa) Southeast Polk four-star safety Xavier Nwankpa committed to Iowa on Dec. 8.

Nwankpa, rated the No. 45 overall prospect in 2022 and the No. 4 overall safety, narrowed his list of 32 offers down to Iowa, Notre Dame and Ohio State. He took official visits to Ohio State (June 4), Texas A&M (June 11) and Notre Dame (June 18), but it appears an official visit to Iowa on Oct. 9 sealed the deal for Nwankpa.

Day and Matt Barnes paid a visit to Nwankpa on Dec. 1, just one week before he was set to commit, but it wasn't enough to turn the tide. The Buckeyes seemed to be in pole position for Nwankpa, with crystal ball predictions for him to Ohio State dating back to last year, including one from 247Sports' Steve Wiltfong, but two predictions to Iowa came in following Nwankpa's October visit to the Hawkeyes, and another came in during Thanksgiving week.

Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz also took additional steps to secure Nwankpa's commitment, visiting him at home on Dec. 7.

"Coach Ferentz was like, 'We have a good group of guys making the next push,' and he understands I want to stay home and that's the next stop in my journey, and they feel like they can get me where I want to go," Nwankpa told 247Sports.

Much like Nwankpa, the Branch brothers – 2022 four-star safety Zion and 2023 five-star wide receiver Zachariah, both out of Las Vegas Bishop Gorman – at one point appeared to be Ohio State leans, but since Lincoln Riley's hiring at USC, things have taken a turn for the Trojans.

"It feels to me right now like a kid, especially with Zion, (is) a kid that always wanted to go to USC and was given a lot of reasons not to for a very long time," Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Mark Givler told BSB. "Now, he feels that he has reasons to go where he's always wanted to go but didn't have any real, rational reason to do so before Lincoln Riley was hired."

Five crystal ball predictions have come in for the elder Branch to USC since Riley's hiring, including Wiltfong, 247Sports National Recruiting Analyst Greg Biggins and Bucknuts' Bill Kurelic. Additionally, Biggins and Wiltfong both have predicted Zachariah to the Trojans.

"Whether Zion picks USC or Ohio State, the other school is going to be able to recruit (Zach) for next year anyway," Givler said. "Even if Zach commits somewhere early, which I believe he will commit somewhere early, probably this winter, but even if he does that, the other schools are still going to have a chance to sway him."

As it stands, Ohio State does not have any other commits at safety, though Seffner (Fla.) Armwood four-star athlete Kye Stokes could potentially project to safety once he's on campus.

Riley To USC, Kelly To LSU Causing CFB Chaos

No program in the country is in more turmoil right now than the Oklahoma Sooners. Fresh off a 37-33 loss to Oklahoma State in Bedlam, the first for the Sooners since 2014 and a loss that knocked them

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out of the College Football Playoffs for just the fourth time in eight years, head coach Lincoln Riley left like a thief in the night for USC on Nov. 28. The Trojans had been searching for a coach since September following Clay Helton's firing.

As if the way he left weren't insulting enough to the Oklahoma administration and fans, Riley elected to further tear down the program. He poached a decent chunk of the Sooners' coaching staff, including defensive coordinator Alex Grinch, wide receivers coach Dennis Simmons, director of football operations Clarke Stroud, and director of sports performance Bennie Wylie. Though cornerbacks coach Roy Manning hasn't been officially announced, he was found recruiting for the Trojans, signaling his likely move to USC.

Beyond the staffers who are in Southern California now, the Sooners have also seen a rash of decommits and transfers since Riley's move, including some who were set to sign this week.

Among the decommits in 2022 are Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star running back Raleek Brown, Lakeland (Fla.) five-star defensive lineman Gabriel Brownlow-Dindy, Orange (Texas) West Orange-Stark four-star offensive lineman Demetrius Hunter, Lubbock (Texas) Cooper four-star linebacker Kobie McKinzie and Baltimore (Md.) St. Frances Academy four-star defensive lineman Derrick Moore.

In 2023, the Sooners have decommits from Bixby (Okla.) four-star tight end Luke Hasz, Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage five-star wide receiver Brandon Inniss, Los Alamitos (Calif.) five-star athlete Makai Lemon, Los Alamitos (Calif.) five-star quarterback Malachi Nelson and Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy four-star running back Treyaun Webb.

Of those 10 decommits, three – Brown, Lemon and Nelson – have already committed to USC. Six other players, including quarterback Spencer Rattler and wide receivers Theo Wease and Jadon Haselwood, among others, have transferred from the program, with numerous other players reported to be mulling a decision.

Notre Dame has not been hit nearly as hard, just losing Naples (Fla.) four-star safety Devin Moore and Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star wide receiver C.J. Williams in 2022, but changes at the top with Marcus Freeman taking over for the Fighting Irish could give Ohio State a boost in battles against Notre Dame for a number of recruits, including Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star wide receiver Carnell Tate.

OSU Among Top Four For OL Greene

Ohio State still has a need on the offensive line for 2022, and there's nobody the Buckeyes would like to fill that more than Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star lineman Earnest Greene.

While he appears to be trending toward Alabama or Georgia and attended the SEC Championship Game, the Buckeyes are still in the race, included in his most recent top four with the two previously mentioned teams and Texas. Ohio State offered him on April 19, 2020, and he was in for an official visit on Oct. 30 for Ohio State's game against Penn State.

"I loved my official visit there," Greene told 247Sports. "I had a great visit in June

with all my teammates and saw a lot of the campus and the facilities so the official visit (for Penn State) was about seeing the game atmosphere and it was great. It was the 'red out' game and the place was packed with over 103,000 people. The city of Columbus shuts down for Ohio State football, and I love the college town vibe there.

"I've been following Ohio State for a long time and (former Ohio State guard) Wyatt Davis has been like a mentor to me," he continued. "The players on the team were all great with me, really down to earth and I have a great relationship with Coach Day and Coach (Greg Studrawa) too."

There's one crystal ball prediction for Greene to the Bulldogs, but he isn't expected to make an official announcement until the All-American Bowl on Jan. 8, though he told 247Sports he could announce sooner if he feels good about the school.

Dewberry Leaves OSU Off Top Three

Offensive line recruiting has been a struggle for Ohio State of late, and things got more difficult when Humble (Texas) Atascocita four-star offensive lineman Kam Dewberry (6-4, 325) left the Buckeyes off his top three of Oklahoma, Texas and Texas A&M.

Dewberry, rated the No. 74 prospect in 2022 and the No. 3 offensive lineman, was offered by Ohio State on Jan. 23, 2020, and made it to campus on June 25 for an official visit earlier this year. He took official visits to his top three schools as well as LSU and made a number of unofficial visits to Texas A&M in addition to a home visit from head coach Jimbo Fisher on Nov. 30.

Ohio State was heavily involved with Dewberry's recruitment, and at one point there was a crystal ball prediction for Dewberry to the Buckeyes,

Dewberry was expected to announce his decision on Dec. 15. Though he included three schools among his finalists, he's expected to stay in his home state, with Texas A&M the favorite as of now.

"I feel as if it's close to home and they have proven that they can dominate the SEC and are a national championship contender," he told On3 Sports.

2023 Four-Star Safety Jones Lists OSU In Top 7

One of the top 2023 safeties in Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star R.J. Jones (6-1, 185) listed Ohio State among his top seven schools on Nov. 26.

The Buckeyes were joined by Louisville, Michigan, Oregon and Oregon State, as well as in-state schools California and USC. Ohio State initially offered Jones on Sept. 27. Other than his top seven, Jones held offers from Minnesota, Ole Miss and Wake Forest.

Jones is rated the No. 209 overall prospect in his class, as well as the 20th-best safety.

"Everyone knows Ohio State is almost always a national contender, so being offered by them is like them saying I can be one of those guys competing for a national title," Jones told Eleven Warriors after receiving his offer. "It's surreal."

D-Line Target Campbell Decommits From Clemson

Following the departure of Clemson defensive coordinator Brent Venables to Oklahoma, where he was announced as the

Sooners' head coach on Dec. 5, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star defensive end Jihaad Campbell (6-3, 215) announced he has decommitted from the Tigers on Dec. 9.

"I truly appreciate everyone on the staff for believing in my talents and giving me an opportunity to play football at the next level," Campbell said on Twitter. "After thoughts and prayers, my family and I believe that it is in my best interest to reopen my recruitment. I haven't lost love for the Clemson family."

Campbell, rated the No. 78 overall prospect and No. 9 edge rusher in 2022, had a top five of Clemson, Florida, Georgia, Ohio State and Texas A&M before he committed to the Tigers on June 27. He ended up taking official visits to all his top schools except Texas A&M, while also paying Oklahoma a visit on June 11. The Buckeyes offered Campbell on Nov. 19, 2020.

OSU Among Top Schools For 2023 RB Baxter Jr.

While a top 12 does not inspire confidence that Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater four-star running back Cedric Baxter Jr. is any closer to deciding, it at least helps narrow things down from his 35 offers, Ohio State included among them.

Baxter's recent top 12 list the Buckeyes alongside Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Florida State, Georgia, Georgia Tech, Louisville, Miami (Fla.), Ole Miss, Texas A&M and UCF.

His commitment has been a roller coaster, as Baxter initially committed to Florida State on July 29, 2020, but decided to decommit earlier this year on April 15. He's since taken unofficial visits to Georgia Tech, FIU, Miami (Fla.), Florida Atlantic, UCF and Arkansas, with coaches from Florida State, Georgia Tech and Miami (Fla.) visiting at home.

Baxter indicated to 247Sports that he's had the most interaction with Georgia Tech but said he'd like to get to Ohio State at some point, though no future visits are scheduled.

OSU Offers 2023 Four-Star RB Smothers

The Buckeyes will be looking to take two running backs in 2023, and Charlotte (N.C.) Julius L. Chambers four-star Daylan Smothers (5-11, 182) might fit the bill.

Rated the No. 314 overall prospect in 2023 and the No. 19 running back, he received an offer from Ohio State on Nov. 29.

He holds additional offers from Michigan, Michigan State, NC State, Penn State and Tennessee, and he's taken unofficial visits to the Wolfpack, Nittany Lions and Volunteers.

The Buckeyes have offers out to several running backs in 2023, including Smothers, Baxter, El Campo (Texas) five-star Rueben Owens and Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic four-star Justice Haynes, among others.

OSU Offers Notre Dame Commit Keeley

Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep five-star edge rusher Keon Keeley (6-5, 230) received an offer from Ohio State on Dec. 1, with the Buckeyes jumping into the recruitment of one of the top prospects in 2023.

Rated the No. 23 overall prospect and No. 3 edge rusher, the only problem for Ohio State is that he has been committed to Notre Dame since June 28.

Ohio State's offer comes just days after

Kelly decided to take his talents to LSU, so the Buckeyes may be attempting to capitalize on the coaching change for the Fighting Irish. He holds offers from Florida, Georgia, Michigan and Ole Miss, among others.

Day, Johnson, Other Staff Hit The Road

Playing for a conference title has become commonplace for Ohio State, to the point that hotels in Indianapolis the week-end of Dec. 3 were filled with reservations by Buckeye fans who had penciled the trip in before the season even started.

Following Ohio State's loss to Michigan, however, both fans and the coaching staff found themselves with some spare time in early December for the first time since 2016, and Ohio State used that time to hit the road and see some recruits face-to-face just before the early signing period began.

Day, Barnes, Hartline and Larry Johnson all hit the West Coast on Nov. 30, with Barnes and Hartline stopping by to see the Branch brothers.

Day and Johnson, meanwhile, stopped by Santa Margarita (Calif.) Catholic to see 2022 four-star defensive lineman Hero Kanu (6-5, 293) and visited Greene later in the day.

The next day, Nwankpa hosted Day and Barnes for an early morning visit. On Dec. 2, Kerry Coombs met with Phenix City (Ala.) Central five-star cornerback AJ Harris, while Tony Alford visited with Lehigh Acres (Fla.) Lehigh Senior five-star running back Richard Young, both in the 2023 class. Day and Greg Studrawa then hit St. Clairsville, Ohio, three-star offensive line commit Avery Henry on Dec. 4.

On Dec. 5, the staff paid a visit to West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star offensive tackle commit Tegra Tshabola before Day and Al Washington stopped by to see Kettering (Ohio) Alter five-star linebacker commit C.J. Hicks.

Day and Johnson were then hosted by Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star defensive lineman prospect Christen Miller on Dec. 7 and also checked in on Suwanee (Ga.) Lambert four-star wide receiver commit Kojo Antwi.

Tate Granted Fifth Star In 247Sports Composite

The recruiting battle between Ohio State and Notre Dame for Tate has taken on an extra level of importance after Tate was granted a fifth star in a recent update of the 247Sports composite ratings.

Tate is now the sixth receiver in 2023 to earn five stars, including Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage's Brandon Inniss, Longview's (Texas) Jalen Hale, Miami (Fla.) Gulliver Prep's Jalen Brown, Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic's Shelton Sampson Jr. and Zachariah Branch.

Ohio State has been in a battle for Branch with USC, and if the Buckeyes were able to bring home both Branch and Tate, it would be the first time Hartline and company have brought in two five-star receivers since Julian Fleming and Jaxon Smith-Njigba in the 2020 class.

For complete and up-to-the minute coverage of the early signing period, be sure to watch the electronic BuckeyeSports.com

Bosas Making Life Unbearable For Quarterbacks

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Bosa brothers play in the same state for different teams, but united they have an opportunity to set an NFL record with a strong “rush” to the end of the season.

Joey, an outside linebacker for the Los Angeles Chargers, and San Francisco 49ers defensive end Nick have combined for 22½ sacks through 13 games of their schedules.

With four games each remaining (this is the first season with a 17-game schedule), the league mark for sacks by brothers in a season is within reach.

Houston's J.J. Watt (16) and T.J. Watt (13) of the Pittsburgh Steelers recorded 29 in 2018.

Second on the list with 22 in 1983 were the Martin brothers – Doug (13) for Minnesota and George (nine) for the New York Giants.

The Martins were surpassed by the Bosas on Dec. 12 when Nick had two against former Ohio State teammate Joe Burrow in a 26-23 overtime win for the 49ers. His sack of Burrow in OT forced the Bengals into a field goal when a touchdown would have won the game. San Francisco then got a TD for the victory.

Coincidentally, Bosa had to go through another former OSU teammate to get to Burrow on the critical OT sack.

“That was actually Isaiah Prince, who I went against probably a thousand times in college,” Nick said of the offensive tackle. “I kind of had an idea of what I was going to do. I think I just bull-rushed him and picked his outside hand.”

Nick has 14 sacks for the season and 23 for his career. Earlier in the day, Joey had a sack during the 37-21 win over the New York Giants. He has 8½ this season and 56 in the NFL.

The Bosas also have what is now the fourth-most combined sacks with 20½ in 2019 (Joey – 11½; Nick – 9).

“Joey Bosa is one of the premier pass-rushers of this decade,” Los Angeles edge rusher Uchenna Nwosu said. “Any way that we can take pressure off of him so that he can go do his thing and be successful is great. If that’s matching him up inside on the guards or getting an overload to one side so that he can work on the tackle, whatever it may be. Being able to send pressure or rush with four, guys getting their hands up and disrupting inside, that really frees up Joey to do his thing.”

Because they are often double- or triple-teamed, the Bosas have to be inventive and instinctive in finding ways to the backfield.

San Francisco head coach Kyle Shanahan said on a recent NBC Sports Bay Area podcast that intelligence sets Nick apart.

“I think Nick’s one of the smarter players I’ve ever been around,” he said. “He’s extremely talented. But just the detail – he looks into everything. If you ever sit and listen to him and (49ers offensive tackle) Trent Williams just have a conversation about one pass rush move, I mean, I barely can see it all and then you hear them talk about 25 different things that happened in three seconds.

“And you see the technical stuff that he’s always on, so the more he goes against guys, the more he studies tape. Not everyone’s like

that, but he soaks in a lot and he applies it to his game, which has been really impressive.”

San Francisco quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo agrees with his coach that Nick subtly displays a wealth of knowledge in going about his business.

“It’s hard to see with Bosa,” Garoppolo said. “Bosa is kind of quiet in general, but when you get him talking a little bit and he starts talking about techniques and stuff like that, there’s a lot going on up there. He really is breaking down the game inside and out – the pass rush, the coverage, all this stuff tied together. He’s very in tune with it.

“When you have a guy that can do what he does and he’s that tuned into the details at the same time, that makes for a special player.”

Family Matters

It would not be a stretch to say of the Bosas that the former Ohio State standouts were born to play in the NFL.

Their father, John, was selected 16th overall out of Boston College by the Miami Dolphins in the 1987 NFL draft. The Bosa brothers’ uncle, Eric Kumerow, played 42 games in the NFL after being an outside linebacker for Ohio State. He was named all-Big Ten in 1986 and ’87.

He was also the 16th pick by the Dolphins, in 1988. Kumerow’s son, Jake (Joey and Nick’s cousin), is a fourth-year NFL wide receiver with the Buffalo Bills. Their grandfather, Palmer Pyle, and uncle, Mike Pyle, also played in the NFL.

Nick and Joey grew up Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and it was Urban Meyer who recruited Joey (nicknamed Big Bear) to Columbus from St. Thomas Aquinas High School. Smaller Bear followed three years later.

Joey, who at age 26 is two years older than Nick, played for the Buckeyes from 2013-15 and was a member of the 2014 national championship team in the first College Football Playoff. He was a two-time All-American, first-team All-Big Ten and Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year.

In fact, his conference lineman awards started a run of four straight such honors for Ohio State players. He won it in 2014 and 15; Tyquan Lewis followed in 2016 and Nick did likewise as a sophomore in 2017.

By the way, Kumerow was the 1986 recipient.

Nick was also an All-American (2017) as a sophomore, but his OSU career came to a grinding halt three games into the 2018 season when he sustained a core muscle injury. He soon decided that he would not return for the remainder of the season and would prepare for the NFL draft.

Nick was ostracized by many fans for quitting on his teammates.

In an interview with ESPN a few months later, he said there was never a question that he could resume his college career because of the severity of the injury.

“It was the worst pain I’ve felt,” Nick said. “It was like a couple of pops in my groin. I knew right away that it was really bad.”

Honors And Obstacles

Both Nick and Joey have excelled in the NFL despite setbacks along the way.

Joey, the third overall pick of the then-San Diego Chargers in the 2016 draft, was named

the Defensive Rookie of the Year by The Associated Press despite missing the first four games of the season with a left hamstring strain after he was a training camp holdout over a contract dispute.

He is a three-time Pro Bowl selection (2017, 19 and 20), joining Hall of Fame linebacker Junior Seau (four) and linebacker Shawne Merriman (three) as the only Chargers defensive players to be named an all-star three times in their first five seasons.

Joey played in the final seven games of the 2018 season after missing the first nine due to a left foot bone bruise. He originally hurt it early in training camp then reaggravated it just prior to the season opener.

In 2020, he twice missed two games because of separate concussions, and there was concern this season when he left the Dec. 5 game vs. the Bengals with a head injury, but he was cleared to practice three days later.

That wasn’t the only time this season he was in danger of not playing. In November, Joey was placed on the reserve/COVID-19 list due to being a close contact to defensive tackle Jerry Tillery, who was on the COVID list.

Because Joey was not vaccinated, he was placed in quarantine for five days but was activated in time for the Nov. 21 game vs. the Pittsburgh Steelers in which he had a sack.

He made the best of not being able to practice.

“It was tough,” Joey said. “Obviously, I like to prepare. But going into Week 11 and having a week to rest and get my legs under me, it wasn’t the worst thing in the world. I just tried to take advantage of it.

“I had some good workouts. I made sure I stayed on top of it. I felt great coming into the game. I actually was just talking to some teammates and they said I need to take some time off more often. It was unfortunate, obviously. I felt weird not being there with my team, but it worked out.”

Nick, the second pick in the 2019 draft, followed Joey’s path and was the AP Defensive Rookie of the Year. His nine sacks were the fourth most by a rookie in 49ers’ history.

He also had four sacks in the postseason, tied with Garin Veris (New England, 1985) for the second most by a rookie since 1982, behind only the 4½ of Greg Townsend of the Los Angeles Rams in 1983.

One of those for Nick was a strip sack of Patrick Mahomes in the 31-20 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl LIV.

The 2020 season was a nightmare for Nick when he sustained a season-ending left knee injury in the second game. The knee required the reconstruction of a torn anterior cruciate ligament, torn medial collateral ligament and torn lateral meniscus.

He’s back with a vengeance and is in the running for not only the defensive player of the year but the comeback player of the year.

“Bosa is a special player and he’s just as valuable this year as he was his rookie year,” Shanahan said. “He was the difference for us in 2019 and we missed him greatly last year. And you guys can see why again this year. I think he’s getting better each week. And I think he’s playing his best ball right now.”

Part of the reason is Nick’s ability to rush from either side, a trait that 49ers defensive coordinator DeMeco Ryans said puts him at a level with one of the all-time great pass rushers.

“It is impressive to see that because you see some guys, they just get comfortable doing one side – only rush from the right or only rush from the left,” Ryans said. “So it has been impressive to see Nick move around, right or left, and it really doesn’t matter where he is. He’s effective no matter where he is on the field, wherever he lines up along the defensive line.

“The one guy I played that was similar in that way was J.J. Watt,” he continued. “He was a guy you could move around. Whatever the matchup was, he can win against anybody. So you allowed him to move around – whoever you want to go against, you take him. So that’s kind of the same approach we take with Nick.”

Nick wasn’t comfortable being mentioned with Watt.

“There’s only one J.J. Watt. You’re not really going to go out there and do what he does,” he said. “So I wouldn’t really say that my game is much like his, but he’s obviously one of the best ever.

“He would always move around, go towards the matchup. That’s just smart football – putting J.J. Watt on the worst player.”

Nick is simply happy to be playing again.

“I definitely feel like I’m moving better than I ever have, which – coming off an injury – is great to be able to get to this point,” he said. “It’s a credit to our training that we do back home and all the work that me and my brother put in the offseason, and it’s paying off.”



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U-M Routs Iowa For 1st B1G Title Game Win

Michigan dominated Iowa 42-3 to clinch its first Big Ten title in 17 years and the first CFP berth in school history.

"We defied all expectations," defensive end Aidan Hutchinson said after becoming the first defensive player to earn Big Ten title game MVP honors. "Nobody ever thought we could do this, especially this season, and we did it – in dominant fashion."

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

The Wolverines had to overcome a midseason loss to in-state rival Michigan State and end an eight-game losing streak to archrival Ohio State for a chance to end their conference title drought.

And then during championship week, the whole state was shocked by the shooting tragedy that took the lives of four high school students in Oxford, Mich., including Tate Myre, a football player and wrestler. Michigan honored the victims of the school about an hour away from its campus by wearing a patch on their right shoulder with Myre's jersey No. 42 and four hearts – one for each student who died – inside the school's traditional block "M" logo.

Myre's family also joined the Wolverines captains at midfield for the pregame coin toss, and like Myre's number, the Wolverines' final score gave them 42 points.

"It was Aidan who came to me and wanted to dedicate this game to Tate Myre and 'yes, let's do that,' that was huge," head coach Jim Harbaugh said. "Tate was a warrior. Best athlete in the school could have easily made it out of that school and been the first one out but you just know while people were running away from that fire, he was running into it. He's a hero. I'm glad our players got sold on it."

The Hawkeyes lost their second straight title game, preventing head coach Kirk Ferentz from capturing his first conference crown since 2004. Iowa lost to Michigan State in the 2015 title game, and Ferentz's group struggled in its return. Both Hawkeye quarterbacks, Spencer Petras and Alex Padilla, were challenged, completing 19 of 37 passes for 175 yards and one interception.

"One thing just leads to another sometimes," Ferentz said. "There are games like

that unfortunately. They're not much fun. I'm not sure the score is totally representative of the two teams."

Michigan tailback Blake Corum gashed the Iowa defense for a 67-yard scamper to make it 7-0. On Michigan's next offensive play, quarterback Cade McNamara lateraled to Donovan Edwards, and the freshman running back threw a 75-yard touchdown pass to a wide-open Roman Wilson for a 14-0 lead.

Iowa finally answered with a 22-yard field goal, but the Hawkeye offense could not stay on the field.

Michigan tailback Hassan Haskins broke the game open with a 4-yard scoring run midway through the third quarter to make it 21-3 and then sealed the victory with a 1-yard run to set the school's single-season record for rushing touchdowns. Haskins' 20th rushing touchdown of 2021 marked one more than Ron Johnson had in his record-setting 1968 season.

McNamara went 16 of 24 passing for 169 yards with one touchdown, while Michigan beat AP top-15 teams in consecutive weeks for the first time since 2003. The Hawkeye defense intercepted two passes, giving it 24 on the season to top the school record, which was set in 1986 and matched in 1987 and 2008.

Hutchinson added another sack to push his single-season school record to 14 and counting, while the Wolverines posted their third 12-win season in school history (1905, 1997).

The Hawkeyes beat three ranked teams in 2021, but their streak of six straight wins over top-25 opponents ended. It was the second-longest active streak in the FBS behind Alabama's ongoing 11-game streak.

U-M's Harbaugh Named AP Coach Of The Year

Harbaugh was named The Associated Press college football coach of the year.

Harbaugh became the first Michigan coach to win the AP Coach of the Year Award and the first from the Big Ten since Penn State's Joe Paterno in 2005.

"It's a tremendous reflection on the entire staff, players," Harbaugh said. "Everybody shares in it. A rising tide lifts all ships."

The seventh-year Michigan coach received 22 of 53 first-place votes and 103 points from a panel of AP top 25 voters to finish ahead of Cincinnati head coach Luke Fickell, who tallied 16 first-place votes and 88 points.

Baylor's Dave Aranda was third, and

Michigan State's Mel Tucker finished fourth.

After going 2-4 in the Big Ten's abbreviated schedule in 2020, Harbaugh entered the season on the hot seat. He took a pay cut and had his buyout reduced, putting the program in better position to make a coaching change if the 2021 campaign went like last year.

No. 2 Michigan will take on No. 3 Georgia in its first CFP appearance on Dec. 31 at the Orange Bowl.

"I love this team. I love this '21 team," Harbaugh said. "They've got a bounce in their step every day. They've got a smile on their face. They've worked incredibly hard."

MSU's Tucker Named B1G Coach Of The Year

Tucker was named Big Ten football coach of the year, sweeping the honor from both the conference's coaches and media.

By leading the Spartans to a 10-2 record in his second season, Tucker became the fastest Michigan State coach to achieve a 10-win season. With the Spartans' 30-27 victory over Penn State on Nov. 27, the Green and White secured a 6-0 home record to go unbeaten at Spartan Stadium for the first time since 2015.

After struggling through a 2-5 season in 2020, Michigan State won its first eight games and handed Big Ten East champion Michigan its only loss thus far. The Spartans debuted at No. 3 in the initial CFP rankings but then dropped Big Ten battles to Purdue and Ohio State.

Michigan State is currently No. 10 in the CFP rankings, as well as No. 10 in the USA Today/AFCA coaches poll and No. 11 in the AP rankings.

Tucker became the sixth person in Spartan history to win the award. The Big Ten media awarded Mark Dantonio with coach of the year honors twice, in 2010 and 2013. Since the award debuted in 1972, the other Spartans to win are John L. Smith (2003), Darryl Rogers (1977) and Denny Stolz (1974). The conference's coaches chose Dantonio in 2013 and George Perles in 1987.

U-M's Hutchinson Wins Silver Football Honor

Hutchinson earned the 2021 Chicago Tribune Silver Football honor as the Big Ten's most valuable player, regardless of position, as voted on by the conference's head coaches.

Hutchinson became the 18th player from Michigan to win the award and the first since quarterback Denard Robinson in 2010. Fellow defensive end Brandon Graham (2009) and cornerback Charles Woodson (1997) are the only other Wolverines to win the award from the defensive side of the ball. Three of the last four defensive players to win this honor have played at Michigan, with the other being Ohio State's Chase Young (2019).

Hutchinson already secured the Rotary Lombardi Award in addition to being honored as a finalist for the Heisman Trophy. He also was named the Woodson-Nagurski Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year and the Big Ten's Smith-Brown Big Ten Defen-

BIG

2021 Standings

East Division

| | Conf. | | All | | Pct. |
|----------------|-------|---|-----|----|------|
| | W | L | W | L | |
| x-Michigan | 8 | 1 | 12 | 1 | .923 |
| Ohio State | 8 | 1 | 10 | 2 | .833 |
| Michigan State | 7 | 2 | 10 | 2 | .833 |
| Penn State | 4 | 5 | 7 | 5 | .583 |
| Maryland | 3 | 6 | 6 | 6 | .500 |
| Rutgers | 2 | 7 | 5 | 7 | .417 |
| Indiana | 0 | 9 | 2 | 10 | .167 |

West Division

| | Conf. | | All | | Pct. |
|--------------|-------|---|-----|---|------|
| | W | L | W | L | |
| x-Iowa | 7 | 2 | 10 | 3 | .769 |
| Wisconsin | 6 | 3 | 8 | 4 | .667 |
| Minnesota | 6 | 3 | 8 | 4 | .667 |
| Purdue | 6 | 3 | 8 | 4 | .667 |
| Illinois | 4 | 5 | 5 | 7 | .417 |
| Nebraska | 1 | 8 | 3 | 9 | .250 |
| Northwestern | 1 | 8 | 3 | 9 | .250 |

x – denotes division champion

Dec. 4 Game

Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis
Michigan 42, Iowa 3.

sive Lineman of the Year.

The senior from Plymouth, Mich., is a two-time captain for the Michigan defense, which ranks fourth nationally in scoring defense. He has totaled 58 tackles (33 solo) and has set a new program sack record with 14 through 13 games, ranking third in the country.

Hutchinson posted three sacks against Ohio State in the Wolverines' win, marking more than the Buckeyes had allowed to a full team in 2021, and his 15 quarterback hurries in The Game are the most in a single game since the stat has been measured, according to Pro Football Focus College.

Making an impact off the field as well, Hutchinson is a finalist for the Walter Camp National Player of the Year Award, the Senior CLASS Award and the NFF William V. Campbell Trophy.

Maryland HC Turgeon Resigns Midseason

To the surprise of many, Mark Turgeon announced his resignation from his post as the head men's basketball coach at Maryland amid his 11th season in College Park.

Throughout his 11-year tenure at Maryland, the fiery head coach earned both supporters and critics, but the criticism increased with the Terrapins struggling to find postseason success.

Although Turgeon signed a contract extension in the spring, the new deal did not offer him much job security. His new contract included terms that would not cost the school as much if it wanted to replace him.

Multiple people close to Maryland basketball said that Turgeon's midseason resignation was his decision and not the pro-



BIG Conference Bowl Matchups

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| Guaranteed Rate Dec. 28 • 10:15 p.m. ESPN  Minnesota (8-4) vs. West Virginia (6-6) | Pinstripe Dec. 29 • 2:15 p.m. ESPN  Maryland (6-6) vs. Virginia Tech (6-6) | Music City Dec. 30 • 3 p.m. ESPN  Purdue (8-4) vs. Tennessee (7-5) | Peach Dec. 30 • 7 p.m. ESPN  Michigan State (10-2) vs. Pittsburgh (11-2) | Las Vegas Dec. 30 • 10:30 p.m. ESPN  Wisconsin (8-4) vs. Arizona State (8-4) |
| Orange (CFP Semifinal) Dec. 31 • 7:30 p.m.  Michigan (12-1) vs. Georgia (12-1) | Outback Jan. 1 • Noon ESPN2  Penn State (7-5) vs. Arkansas (8-4) | Citrus Jan. 1 • 1 p.m. ABC  Iowa (10-3) vs. Kentucky (9-3) | Rose Jan. 1 • 5 p.m. ESPN  Ohio State (10-2) vs. Utah (10-3) | |

gram pressuring him. However, he never felt as if he had a long-term future at Maryland or was supported under this administration, according to The Washington Post.

The Terrapins advanced past the NCAA Tournament's Round of 32 only once during Turgeon's tenure, a Sweet 16 run in 2015-16. The lack of postseason success wore down the fan base, leading to Turgeon's name being booed during pregame introductions. Following a Dec. 1 loss to Virginia Tech, a larger group of disgruntled Terp supporters chanted, "Fire Turgeon!" as Turgeon and his players walked off the court.

Following the "Fire Turgeon" chants, the 11-year Maryland head coach sat down with athletic director Damon Evans and discussed his future with the program that night. Two days later, he announced his resignation just eight games into the season.

Turgeon did not speak to the media, but his statement provided by the school said he "decided that the best thing for Maryland Basketball, myself and my family is to step down."

Maryland began the campaign with a 5-3 mark, including losses to George Mason, Louisville and the Hokies.

When Turgeon told the team of his decision, the players reportedly were shocked. Senior guard Eric Ayala compared the feeling inside the Maryland meeting room to the day the team found out that the 2020 postseason had been canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"We kind of knew that he went through a lot with everything going on and the fan base," Ayala said. "He wanted to put his family first. We all respect that. I've been with Coach Turgeon the longest and been able to build that relationship with him. I know how much he loves his family. I admire him as a man for making that decision."

Under Turgeon's tutelage, the Terrapins reached five of the past six NCAA Tournaments. In 2020, Turgeon led Maryland to a Big Ten regular-season title. Supporters lament how the 2020 championship squad never had its opportunity to play postseason basketball. Turgeon left College Park

with the second-highest career winning percentage in school history.

When Turgeon and the university negotiated his contract extension this past offseason, the deal included a buyout that started at \$5 million and would have decreased with time or increased with conference titles and trips to at least the Sweet 16. The deal required the school to pay the buyout if it terminated the contract in the best interest of the school, and athletic department officials said the university will honor the \$5 million buyout.

Huskers' QB Martinez Enters Transfer Portal

Nebraska record-setting quarterback Adrian Martinez, a three-time captain, entered the transfer portal.

Martinez, who is listed as a graduate transfer in the portal, made 38 starts for the Cornhuskers during his four-year career, including the first 11 games of the 2021 campaign before a shoulder injury sidelined him for the finale against Iowa. He underwent surgery Nov. 24.

"I don't think that decision will take too long," Nebraska head coach Scott Frost said Nov. 24 when asked about Martinez's future plans. "I want what's best for the program and definitely want what's best for Adrian."

Martinez served as a captain in each of the past three seasons, and he will leave Nebraska with his name etched in the record books, holding career records for total offense (10,792), completions (670) and 250-yard passing games (16). He also holds single-season records for completion percentage (71.5 in 2020) and games with 300 or more yards of total offense (seven in 2018).

"The University of Nebraska will always be a place I can call home," Martinez posted on Twitter. "It has been an honor and a privilege to represent the N for 4 years. I will always be a Nebraska Cornhusker at heart and a proud Alum."

Martinez, initially a Tennessee recruit, became the first major addition for Frost after he accepted the job at his alma mater in 2017. The dual-threat quarterback set

several freshman records in 2018 but lost his starting job for stretches in 2020.

Frost fired all but one offensive assistant last month, including quarterbacks coach Mario Verduzco, who had worked directly with Martinez. California and Kansas State reportedly lead in Martinez's recruitment.

Indiana Adds Auburn RB Through Transfer Portal

Indiana football brought in explosive Auburn tailback Shaun Shivers, a former four-star prospect and team captain, through the transfer portal.

Shivers entered the transfer portal just two days after the regular-season finale, and he announced his commitment to the Hoosiers Dec. 11. He graduated from Auburn and will use his free year of eligibility granted by the NCAA due to the coronavirus pandemic with Indiana next season.

The 5-7, 189-pound tailback spent four seasons as a complementary piece in the Tigers' backfield. Shivers finished his Auburn career with 1,020 rushing yards and eight touchdowns on 201 carries, averaging 5.1 yards per attempt, while also catching 38 passes for another 211 yards and a touchdown.

As a senior, the Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., native appeared in 10 games – missing two games early in the season – and ran for 87 yards and a touchdown on 14 carries. Shivers added 163 yards and a touchdown on 22 receptions, developing into an important third-down option out of the backfield for the Tigers.

A former four-star prospect out of Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep, Shivers was rated the No. 10 all-purpose back and No. 344 overall recruit in the 2018 class. His speed and hard-running style, which contrasted with his 5-7 stature, made the team captain a fan favorite during his time at Auburn.

Shivers will likely be remembered most for his iconic, game-winning touchdown in the 2019 Iron Bowl, when he barreled through Alabama defensive back Xavier McKinney, launching the defender's helmet skyward as the tailback plowed into

the end zone with 8:08 left in the game to put Auburn ahead, 48-45.

U-M Lands 4-Star OL Transfer From Virginia

Michigan landed a big commitment from an unlikely source heading into the early signing period.

Andrew Gentry, a former four-star offensive tackle in the 2020 class who has been serving his two-year church mission, is set to sign with the Wolverines and join the program in May.

Gentry signed with Virginia nearly two years ago but after the departure of head coach Bronco Mendenhall, Harbaugh made a push for the 6-8, 310-pound tackle.

"He met with coach Jim Harbaugh, coach Sherrone Moore and coach Shaun Nua yesterday and gave them his commitment," Andrew's father, Todd, said. "There was a lot of familiarity and that decision, when it was originally made, Michigan was, I'd say, just a tiny bit behind the top spot at No. 2. He is familiar with the campus and coaching staff. Coach Moore was the tight ends coach at the time, so when the announcement came about Coach Bronco at Virginia, we were able to send Andrew an email. Then we were able to get on the phone with him on Monday and it was clear and evident that Michigan was where he wanted to go."

Michigan was one of the four teams that the Littleton (Colo.) Columbine product officially visited during his recruitment. Gentry was the nation's No. 8 offensive tackle, No. 88 overall prospect and No. 1 recruit in Colorado for the 2020 class.

"Andrew does about 30 minutes of workouts every day, but he's not in football shape, of course, having been away from the game for two years," Todd Gentry said. "He does have to firm up to football weight and it's tough right now on the lower body without doing heavy-duty squatting, but he's been able to maintain a decent amount of weight."

Ohio State Hopes To Build On Win Over Duke

College basketball loves unlikely heroes. Be it the mid-major conference winner that breaks through in March and pulls a couple of upsets to earn the Cinderella moniker or the battle-tested walk-on who earns a shot at real playing time and flourishes into a star. The sport loves underdogs and surprises, and more than anything else, it loves madness – just as the naming of its postseason indicates.

COURT REPORT Patrick Mayhorn

Ohio State has had its fair share of unique heroes.

Look no further than the video screens spread throughout the vast concourse halls at Value City Arena. For the entire 2021-22 season, those screens have displayed a consistent loop of the arena's upcoming event schedule, scores around the country, and an ad for the university that features a nifty animation of Ohio State's matchup with Illinois in that same arena, nearly 17 years ago on March 6, 2005.

A Buckeye basketball fan would be hard-pressed to forget the result, a seminal moment for the Thad Matta tenure and for Ohio State basketball at large, as it emerged from an era enshrouded in controversy and into one that saw it often competing with the nation's best.

The clip that Ohio State shows is only a few seconds long. A loosely animated, faceless figure donning No. 40 gets the ball beyond the arc, rises above an Illinois defender and delivers a dagger, putting the Buckeyes ahead by a point, 65-64, and ultimately locking up a victory over the nation's top-ranked team after a Fighting Illini shot went begging on the possession that followed.

It's hard to imagine that in 17 years, current Ohio State senior guard Cedric Russell will get the same treatment that former forward Matt Sylvester is getting now. After all, his big shot against top-ranked Duke on Nov. 30 didn't secure Ohio State's 71-66 victory so much as it inspired it. His pair of free throws with seconds to play to extend Ohio State's lead to two scores could, but that's not quite as thrilling as a game-winning shot from downtown.

Regardless, when BSB reflects on an unranked Ohio State team toppling Mike Krzyzewski's final Duke team 17 years from now, it will be Russell who's remembered for launching the stones that downed Goliath.

In 16 minutes of game action, Russell knocked down a trio of shots from downtown and three free throws, including those two that sealed the win. His 12 points, like those 16 minutes, easily marked a season high for the Louisiana transfer, who had struggled mightily in acclimating to his new school for the first month of the season.

He hardly played in any of Ohio State's first six games, but head coach Chris Holtmann told BSB that his focus and intensity in practice and in small swaths of playing time earned him his opportunity against the No. 1 Blue Devils.

"Cedric has slowly gotten a little bit better at understanding how we want to do things offensively," Holtmann said. "He's been aggressive, and I just think there's a trust level that we have to have with him, and while he didn't play a ton down in Florida, the minutes that he played were pretty productive, so we went into this game wanting to give him a look, and I thought he answered the bell.

"The bottom line is that as players, if you aren't playing or things aren't going well and you get into your feelings about it, you're only hurting yourself. You're only stunting your own growth. If you live in your feelings, I'm not playing as much, I'm not doing this, Coach didn't play me here, I'm missing shots, you're



SONNY BROCKWAY

HEATING UP — Cedric Russell (No. 2) was critical for Ohio State in its win over Duke on Nov. 30, scoring a season-high 12 points in the Buckeyes' 71-66 victory at the Value City Arena.

only hurting yourself. Cedric has shown in the last two weeks the ability to come to work every day."

Trust developing or not, 16 minutes of

playing time – largely in the second half – against the nation's top team during an upset bid is quite the change for a player who had been contributing largely at the end of halves when Ohio State thought it could best limit his mistakes while getting starters some rest.

But Russell, who came to Ohio State as an expert scorer but who had yet to show that same aggressiveness, just had that look in his own eyes. Holtmann knew he couldn't take him off the floor. And when he heated up late, including on his three-pointer from the corner that brought the Buckeyes within two, he rewarded his coach's vote of confidence.

"Cedric had a look in his eyes," Holtmann said. "He wanted to stay aggressive. His ability to step up, and that dagger that he hit in the corner to get us back within a score, it was a really important play for us."

For the Buckeyes and their mercurial guard, a win of this magnitude could be a jumping-off point of sorts. It may not be on the same level as that upset over Illinois – especially given that was a conference game in March, not an early-season battle with a group that was No. 1 largely on the strength of one win over Gonzaga a week prior – but for a team that needed the confidence boost, it could prove critical.

Holtmann, however, wasn't ready to look that far in advance. The Buckeye head coach knows all too well what can happen when you start looking ahead.

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740-566-1009

OSU Men's Basketball Signees

Players in the class of 2022 who have signed to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

| Player | Pos. | Ht. | Wt. | Stars | High School |
|------------------|------|------|-----|-------|-----------------------------------|
| Roddy Gayle | SG | 6-4 | 195 | ★★★★ | Youngstown (N.Y.) Lewiston Porter |
| Bowen Hardman | SG | 6-3 | 160 | ★★★ | Cincinnati Princeton |
| Felix Okpara | C | 6-11 | 210 | ★★★★ | Branson (Mo.) Link Academy |
| Brice Sensabaugh | F | 6-6 | 240 | ★★★★ | Orlando (Fla.) Lake Highland Prep |
| Bruce Thornton | PG | 6-2 | 205 | ★★★★ | Alpharetta (Ga.) Milton |

"It's just Wednesday to me right now. I'm just trying to get ready for the next day, I'm going to do cleanup, get recruiting and watch the tape," Holtmann joked. "I do think it was important for us to beat a team of this caliber. I thought it was important too against Seton Hall, but the energy around this game, it's hard to minimize how important that it is for your school and your students. It validates some of the things we've been preaching to our guys."

Notes And Tidbits

- Ohio State's victory over top-ranked Duke was the program's 10th over a top-ranked team and drew it nearer to a .500 percentage mark against the nation's best. The Buckeyes are 10-11 in such games but have a whopping 8-3 record in their last 11 matchups with No. 1 teams.

- Holtmann has led the Buckeyes into only one other game against a top-ranked foe, back on Jan. 7, 2018. Ohio State welcomed Michigan State into Value City Arena and sent it home with an 80-64 beatdown behind 32 points from forward Keita Bates-Diop on 12-of-21 shooting.

- The Duke game was Ohio State's 17th against a top-10 opponent under Holtmann and just its fifth as an unranked team. With the win, it improved to 9-8 in those matchups and 2-3 when unranked.

- Ohio State re-entered the AP top 25 in the Dec. 6 poll after two weeks without a ranking, checking in at No. 21. The Buckeyes were 19th in the Nov. 15 poll, but a loss to Xavier on Nov. 18 dropped it from the next set of polls, and a loss to Florida on Nov. 24

all but nullified Ohio State's Nov. 22 win over Seton Hall and kept it out of the Nov. 29 poll as well. After wins over Penn State, Towson and Wisconsin, Ohio State checked in at No.

15 in the Dec. 13 poll.

- Sophomore wing Eugene Brown returned to play for the Buckeyes against Towson on Dec. 8 after missing Ohio State's games against Penn State, Duke, Florida and Seton Hall with concussion symptoms. He suffered the injury in the second half of Ohio State's loss to Xavier, taking a hard fall and knocking his head on the court during a scrap for the ball.

Brown didn't play against the Nittany Lions, but a program source confirmed that he was cleared to play, and the decision to keep him on the bench was cautionary but not required by the OSU medical staff.

- Senior forwards Justice Sueing and Seth Towns remain on the mend, with little

in the way of updates from the program. Sueing continues to work through a lower-body injury that has held him out of every Buckeye game since the season-opening victory over Akron. Towns is recovering from offseason back surgery and continues to eye a mid- to late-December return. Sueing has no such timeline, but Holtmann nonetheless does not expect his issues to end his season.

For all Ohio State men's basketball news in BSB's nearly a month away from publishing, be sure to check BuckeyeSports.com frequently. The site and its Fan Forum are free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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Ohio State Sweeps Critical Four-Game Stretch

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State still has one more major test before it rounds out the nonconference slate with Tennessee-Martin and New Orleans and re-enters conference play Jan. 2, but as the Buckeyes prepare for a Dec. 18 matchup with Kentucky, they have to be feeling pretty good.

Fresh off two losses in three games against Xavier and Florida, Ohio State rebounded during a crucial four-game stretch, upsetting top-ranked Duke on Nov. 30 and earning a pair of Big Ten victories over Penn State and Wisconsin, bisected by a comfortable victory against Towson, all of which combined to push the Buckeyes to an 8-2 (2-0 in the Big Ten) record with the Wildcats on deck.

OSU Upsets Top-Ranked Duke

Ohio State took the floor in Value City Arena in front of a sold-out crowd of 18,809 – although a more-than-fair share of Duke fans who made the trek to Columbus played a major role in that. With the Blue Devils in town Nov. 30, the Buckeyes earned their first shot at a truly marquee win of the season, despite a trio of major matchups against Xavier, Seton Hall and Florida, which, while solid, certainly aren't the top-ranked squad from Durham.

Perhaps spurred on by the most raucous crowd the program has seen in some time, the Buckeyes took advantage of their shot. Ohio State went blow for blow with Duke from the jump and emerged with one of the biggest victories of Chris Holtmann's tenure, 71-66, and

the first win over the nation's No. 1 team since Jan. 7, 2018, when Ohio State toppled Michigan State.

The game nearly slipped out of hand for the Buckeyes quickly. After a quick start and a leap out to a 13-7 lead, three Ohio State turnovers helped spark a quick 6-0 Duke run to knot the game. E.J. Liddell snapped the stretch with a quick bucket, but Duke (7-1) would score 12 of the next 14 points in the game to lead by eight points, capped with an impressive dunk with the foul from projected top pick Paolo Banchero, who missed the free throw but racked up 10 first-half points.

Perhaps the biggest cheer of the first half went to the trio of Archie Griffin, Jerry Lucas and Ryan Shazier, who were taking in the game together and earned a shout-out from the in-house announcer during the under-eight-minute break. The home crowd was without a whole lot else to cheer for, as Duke jumped to a 43-30 lead at the intermission.

A Justin Ahrens deep ball at the 16:33 mark of the second half cut the Duke lead down to single digits, 51-42, but Duke responded as it had all game with points of its own to answer Ohio State's miniature resurgence. The Blue Devils cashed in a pair of Mark Williams free throws to move back into an 11-point lead.

It wasn't until several minutes later that the game would pick up again. A Zed Key bucket cut the Duke lead back to nine points and snapped a dry spell for both offenses that took hold after those Williams free throws. Ahrens dropped it to six, 53-47, the lowest since the 4:57 mark of the first half, with a transition three-pointer off a fast break.

Behind the excellent offensive play of Key, Ohio State (5-2) kept hanging around. Duke heated back up from the floor and expanded the lead back to double digits at 62-51, but the Buckeye defense tightened, and Key contributed six of Ohio State's next eight points, cutting the margin again down to six, 65-59. It was a huge performance for a player whom Holtmann has been pushing to take that next step.

Key's efforts were rewarded. With the Buckeyes again within striking distance, they finally struck, cutting the deficit down to five at 66-61 before a Cedric Russell deep ball drew them as close as they'd been all half at 66-64. Russell connected on a free throw during Ohio State's next possession, and after a defensive stop that electrified the sold-out venue, Liddell connected on two more to give Ohio State its first lead since midway through the first half.

With the crowd at a fever pitch, Duke took the ball up the court and doled out responsibilities to Banchero, but he couldn't connect on a runner, and after a second-chance opportunity went begging, Ohio State took over possession again holding onto its one-point lead with 41 seconds to play.

Liddell delivered a midrange bucket to move the edge to three, Duke's desperation attempt from deep went begging, Russell bagged two more free throws to ice it, and three seconds later, Ohio State students stormed the court, putting an exclamation point on Ohio State's big win.

Key led all scorers with 20, with Liddell adding 14 and Russell 12. Liddell added 14 rebounds to help the Buckeyes to a 40-36 edge on the boards. Wendell Moore Jr. led Duke with

17 points and five assists, followed by Banchero with 14 points.

OSU Opens B1G Play At PSU

Ohio State played its first Big Ten game of the season Dec. 5 in Happy Valley against Penn State and left with an expected but still valuable win over the Nittany Lions (4-4, 0-1), avoiding any sort of letdown after the upset over top-ranked Duke, earning a 76-64 win.

For the Buckeyes, it was a valuable first league test for several reasons. First, as Holtmann is always quick to explain, every Big Ten game is going to be a challenge for his squad. Even as Illinois, Michigan and Michigan State struggle in the beginning of the season, this is still one of the top conferences in basketball, and every league win will go a long way.

Second, Ohio State (6-2, 1-0) was met with just its second truly hostile crowd of the season – perhaps even more so than the one it ran into against Xavier. The Bryce Jordan Center is already famously loud, and the 9,128 fans in attendance drew some extra motivation with the presence of point guard Jamari Wheeler, a long-time Nittany Lion who transferred to Ohio State this offseason.

Despite consistent boos from the crowd – or perhaps because of them – it was a big evening for Wheeler and the rest of the Buckeyes, who rode a blistering start to the game from the field to the win. Wheeler was credited with seven points, four assists and five rebounds in just the first half of play, in the face of that consistent barrage from that crowd.

As Liddell struggled to get going from the field, shooting only 2 of 6 for six first-half points,



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| | | 1 | 2 | F | | | |
| Duke (7-1) | | 43 | 23 | 66 | | | |
| Ohio State (5-2) | | 30 | 41 | 71 | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| Duke | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | |
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. |
| Moore Jr. | 34 | 7-15 | 3-5 | 2-6 | 5 | 4 | 17 |
| Banchero | 35 | 4-14 | 5-6 | 0-5 | 1 | 4 | 14 |
| Williams | 22 | 3-6 | 2-2 | 3-4 | 0 | 4 | 8 |
| Keels | 37 | 3-12 | 2-3 | 1-2 | 3 | 2 | 9 |
| Roach | 35 | 4-10 | 0-0 | 1-3 | 1 | 4 | 9 |
| John | 15 | 2-3 | 0-0 | 1-2 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| Baker | 20 | 2-4 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Griffin | 2 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jones | <1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 200 | 25-65 | 12-16 | 9-27 | 11 | 23 | 66 |
| Percentages: FG: 38.5%. FT: 75.0%. Three-point field goals: 4-14 (Baker 1-1, Banchero 1-3, Keels 1-4, Roach 1-4, Moore Jr. 0-2). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 2 (Williams 2). Turnovers: 7 (Banchero 3, Keels 2, Moore Jr., Williams). Steals: 6 (Keels 2, Moore Jr. 2, Baker, Banchero). | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| Ohio State | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | |
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. |
| Ahrens | 35 | 2-8 | 1-3 | 0-6 | 0 | 2 | 7 |
| Key | 27 | 8-15 | 4-6 | 1-2 | 1 | 2 | 20 |
| Liddell | 35 | 5-10 | 3-7 | 3-11 | 6 | 2 | 14 |
| Branham | 19 | 4-6 | 0-0 | 0-2 | 1 | 3 | 8 |
| Wheeler | 29 | 3-4 | 0-0 | 0-3 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Young | 20 | 1-4 | 0-1 | 1-4 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Johnson Jr. | 16 | 0-3 | 0-1 | 0-2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Brunk | 1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sotos | 2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Russell | 16 | 3-4 | 3-4 | 0-3 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| Totals | 200 | 26-54 | 11-22 | 7-33 | 13 | 14 | 71 |
| Percentages: FG: 48.1%. FT: 50.0%. Three-point field goals: 8-20 (Russell 3-3, Ahrens 2-7, Wheeler 1-2, Young 1-2, Liddell 1-3, Johnson Jr. 0-3). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 4 (Liddell 3, Ahrens). Turnovers: 12 (Wheeler 5, Liddell 4, Branham 2, Johnson Jr.). Steals: 2 (Ahrens, Wheeler). Officials: Boroski, Green, Riley. Attendance: 18,809. | | | | | | | |

the Buckeyes leaned on their guards, led by Wheeler, to build a 41-30 first-half lead. Ohio State shot 55.6 percent from the floor in the first half (15 of 27), including 43.8 from beyond the arc (7 of 16).

Penn State would not be so lucky with the star forward in the second frame. He nabbed a quick four points as part of a 13-6 run to open the second half, extending Ohio State's lead to a game-high 18 points at 54-36.

The Nittany Lions battled back, cutting the margin down to as little as six points at 67-61 with 2:39 to play, but they were unable to work beyond that. Excellent ball movement from the Buckeyes even in the face of a much colder-shooting second frame was enough to keep Penn State largely at bay, especially down the stretch as the Nittany Lions whittled down that lead.

With the game back within two scores, Ohio State turned to Ahrens in the corner, who delivered with his third deep ball of the game on eight tries, pushing the lead back to nine at 70-61. A three-point play by Jalen Pickett cut it back to 70-64, but a breakaway Liddell dunk all but sealed the win.

Penn State's Pickett led the game with 23 points, while Kyle Young led the Buckeyes with 16 points. Liddell added 14 and Malaki Branham had 11. Wheeler finished with nine points, eight assists and five rebounds.

Buckeyes Down Towson

Ohio State's second late-night tip in two tries wasn't received quite as well as the first. Just over a week removed from the stunning victory over Duke in front of a sold-out Value City Arena, the Buckeyes opened their Dec. 8 game at 9 p.m. against Towson but were met with far less fanfare. Regardless, in front of an announced crowd of 9,472, Ohio State rattled off its third straight win with an 85-74 beating of the Tigers.

The Buckeyes looked primed to run away

| Ohio State 76, Penn State 64 | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|------|----|----|------|--|
| Dec. 5, 2021 | | | | | | | | |
| Bryce Jordan Center • Columbus, Ohio. | | | | | | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | F | | | | |
| Ohio State (6-2, 1-0) | | 41 | 35 | 76 | | | | |
| Penn State (4-4, 0-1) | | 30 | 34 | 64 | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Ohio State | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | | |
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. | |
| Ahrens | 30 | 3-8 | 0-0 | 0-4 | 1 | 2 | 9 | |
| Key | 20 | 2-4 | 0-0 | 1-2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | |
| Liddell | 31 | 4-9 | 6-8 | 2-3 | 1 | 4 | 14 | |
| Branham | 28 | 5-9 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 2 | 1 | 11 | |
| Wheeler | 37 | 4-10 | 0-0 | 1-4 | 8 | 1 | 9 | |
| Johnson Jr. | 15 | 3-5 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 2 | 3 | 8 | |
| Young | 23 | 4-4 | 4-4 | 1-6 | 1 | 2 | 16 | |
| Russell | 11 | 1-3 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | |
| Brunk | 6 | 1-1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | |
| Totals | 200 | 27-53 | 10-12 | 5-23 | 17 | 17 | 76 | |
| Percentages: FG: 50.9%. FT: 83.3%. Three-point field goals: 12-27 (Young 4-4, Ahrens 3-8, Johnson Jr. 2-2, Russell 1-2, Branham 1-3, Wheeler 1-6, Liddell 0-2). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 3 (Key, Liddell, Young). Turnovers: 13 (Liddell 4, Johnson Jr. 2, Key 2, Ahrens, Branham, Wheeler, Young). Steals: 8 (Liddell 3, Wheeler 3, Ahrens, Johnson Jr.). | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Penn State | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | | |
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. | |
| Lundy | 25 | 5-12 | 2-2 | 1-4 | 0 | 2 | 13 | |
| Harrar | 26 | 6-9 | 0-2 | 3-9 | 1 | 3 | 12 | |
| Sessoms | 29 | 2-7 | 0-0 | 0-3 | 4 | 2 | 5 | |
| Cornwall | 32 | 1-5 | 4-4 | 0-0 | 3 | 0 | 6 | |
| Pickett | 40 | 8-15 | 5-5 | 1-3 | 3 | 2 | 23 | |
| White | 14 | 0-0 | 2-2 | 1-1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | |
| Dread | 21 | 1-3 | 0-0 | 0-2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | |
| Johnson | 15 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Totals | 200 | 23-51 | 13-15 | 6-23 | 12 | 16 | 64 | |
| Percentages: FG: 45.1%. FT: 86.7%. Three-point field goals: 5-17 (Pickett 2-7, Sessoms 1-2, Dread 1-3, Lundy 1-3, Cornwall 0-2). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 1 (Lundy). Turnovers: 15 (Lundy 4, Pickett 4, Sessoms 3, Dread 2, Harrar, Johnson). Steals: 6 (Cornwall 2, Lundy 2, Dread, Harrar). Officials: Scirotto, Carstensen, Cruz. Attendance: 9,128. | | | | | | | | |

with the game early after a 12-3 start, but Towson (6-4) wasn't quite so quick to go away. The Tigers answered that hot start with an 18-5 run behind a trio of triples from Jason Gibson, Antonio Rizzuto and Cameron Holden, the last of which capped nine straight points for the Tigers and forced an OSU timeout with 10:36 to play in the half and the visitors leading 21-17.

Young answered a Charles Thompson bucket with one of his own to snap the Towson scoring streak at 11 and in the process sparked the Buckeye offense back to life. Led by seven points from Key, including a midrange bucket deep into the shot clock with only seconds to play in the half, Ohio State stormed back to take a 33-32 lead into the half.

Towson kept up its fight into the second frame with nine quick points from Holden to maintain pace with the Buckeye offense, which started to open up after a brutal stretch from downtown in the first half (the Buckeyes missed five of six in the stretch), cashing in on three-point tries from Branham and Ahrens. His hand cooled, though, and three more points from Young chased a Branham layup to give Ohio State a five-point lead, 48-43, at the 14:29 mark.

After another Young basket plus a free throw and four points from Wheeler, the Buckeyes had built a snappy 12-2 run, snatched a 55-45 lead – their largest of the game to that point – and placed Towson firmly against the ropes.

Though the Tigers kept the game within reach for a few more minutes, Ahrens all but ended the fight with his third and fourth three-pointers of the game, the latter through a foul, extending Ohio State's lead to 16 at 73-57 with 6:28 to play. He would connect again two possessions later, quickly subduing a minor Towson run.

Several fouls and several video reviews later, Ohio State was able to dribble out the final moments of a physical matchup that, despite several big Towson runs, never saw the Buckeyes falter after opening up that 10-point lead at 55-45. The closest Towson would get was

| Ohio State 85, Towson 74 | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------|----|----|------|--|
| Dec. 8, 2021 Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio. | | | | | | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | F | | | | |
| Towson (6-4) | | 32 | 42 | 74 | | | | |
| Ohio State (7-2) | | 33 | 52 | 85 | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Towson | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | | |
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. | |
| Thompson | 28 | 1-3 | 0-0 | 1-3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | |
| Holden | 29 | 5-9 | 3-3 | 1-1 | 1 | 5 | 16 | |
| Rizzuto | 24 | 3-7 | 1-2 | 0-1 | 1 | 3 | 10 | |
| Nolan Jr. | 37 | 1-8 | 5-5 | 0-0 | 10 | 3 | 7 | |
| Timberlake | 32 | 4-12 | 2-2 | 1-3 | 1 | 2 | 11 | |
| Paar | 12 | 1-1 | 0-2 | 1-1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | |
| Gibson | 23 | 7-11 | 1-1 | 0-3 | 0 | 0 | 19 | |
| Gray | 15 | 2-4 | 2-2 | 0-1 | 0 | 2 | 7 | |
| Hicks | 1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Totals | 200 | 24-55 | 14-17 | 8-13 | 14 | 24 | 74 | |
| Percentages: FG: 43.6%. FT: 82.4%. Three-point field goals: 12-28 (Gibson 4-8, Holden 3-4, Rizzuto 3-5, Gray 1-1, Timberlake 1-5, Nolan Jr. 0-5). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 1 (Thompson). Turnovers: 10 (Holden 4, Timberlake 2, Gibson, Paar, Rizzuto). Steals: 9 (Nolan Jr. 3, Holden 2, Rizzuto 2, Gray, Thompson). | | | | | | | | |
| Ohio State | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | | |
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. | |
| Ahrens | 29 | 5-10 | 1-1 | 1-1 | 1 | 2 | 16 | |
| Key | 27 | 5-6 | 3-4 | 1-8 | 0 | 2 | 13 | |
| Liddell | 24 | 3-6 | 8-8 | 1-6 | 3 | 3 | 15 | |
| Branham | 27 | 3-8 | 2-2 | 3-2 | 1 | 0 | 9 | |
| Wheeler | 34 | 3-5 | 2-2 | 1-1 | 5 | 5 | 8 | |
| Young | 24 | 6-7 | 4-6 | 0-2 | 1 | 1 | 18 | |
| Johnson Jr. | 14 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 0-1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | |
| Brunk | 4 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Russell | 5 | 0-2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Brown III | 10 | 1-1 | 0-0 | 1-1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | |
| Sotos | 3 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | |
| Totals | 200 | 27-47 | 21-25 | 8-23 | 13 | 18 | 85 | |
| Percentages: FG: 57.4%. FT: 84.0%. Three-point field goals: 10-23 (Ahrens 5-10, Young 2-2, Brown III 1-1, Branham 1-2, Liddell 1-4, Johnson Jr. 0-1, Russell 0-1, Wheeler 0-2). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 4 (Key 2, Liddell, Young). Turnovers: 13 (Liddell 7, Wheeler 2, Brown III, Johnson Jr., Key, Young). Steals: 3 (Wheeler 2, Young). | | | | | | | | |
| Officials: Szelc, Dorsey, Young. Attendance: 9,472. | | | | | | | | |

eight points, immediately after Ohio State (7-2) nabbed that lead.

Gibson led all scorers with 19 points, while Young led the Buckeyes with 18. Ahrens (16), Liddell (15) and Key (13) were also in double figures for Ohio State. Key pulled down a game-high nine rebounds, and the Buckeyes held a 31-21 edge on the boards.

OSU Beats Badgers Despite TOs

Ohio State did not open its first home Big Ten matchup with the energy that Holtmann spent the week preaching. After speaking at length about the importance of matching up physically with always-tough Wisconsin and of limiting turnovers, Ohio State stumbled out of the gates before 13,856 in Value City Arena on Dec. 11. But it recovered well, leaning on a superlative performance from its stars to earn a 2-0 conference start with a 73-55 victory.

In just over the first eight minutes of play, the Buckeyes suffered six turnovers, which helped to spark a 15-2 Wisconsin (8-2, 1-1) run, and the Badgers jumped out to a 17-9 advantage after a Tyler Wahl layup with a free throw on top at 11:47.

The Buckeyes didn't linger on the slow start, though. They rattled off a 10-2 run of their own to knot the game at 19 for the under-eight-minute break, bolstered by a Wheeler three-pointer that tied the game back up and a three-point play the old-fashioned way for Liddell. After the timeout, Wheeler stole the ball from Chucky Hepburn and broke down the floor for a layup, and moments later, he connected with Key for an impressive alley-oop to put the Buckeyes up by four points, 23-19.

With 14 points from Liddell and seven from Russell, Ohio State (8-2, 2-0) would maintain that edge into the half, holding a 34-29 advantage despite 24 points from Wisconsin's back-court pairing of Brad Davison and Johnny Da-

| Ohio State 73, Wisconsin 55 | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|------|------|----|----|------|--|
| Dec. 11, 2021 | | | | | | | | |
| Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio. | | | | | | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | F | | | | |
| Wisconsin (8-2, 1-1) | | 29 | 26 | 55 | | | | |
| Ohio State (8-2, 2-0) | | 34 | 39 | 73 | | | | |
| Wisconsin | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | | |
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. | |
| Wahl | 23 | 1-7 | 1-1 | 0-1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | |
| Crowl | 23 | 0-3 | 0-0 | 1-1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | |
| Davis | 38 | 11-22 | 0-0 | 1-6 | 3 | 4 | 24 | |
| Hepburn | 33 | 2-8 | 0-0 | 0-3 | 1 | 1 | 5 | |
| Davison | 28 | 4-12 | 2-2 | 0-5 | 0 | 3 | 13 | |
| Carlson | 14 | 0-3 | 1-2 | 0-2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | |
| Vogt | 17 | 3-6 | 1-3 | 0-2 | 0 | 4 | 7 | |
| Davis | 16 | 1-2 | 0-1 | 1-1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | |
| Neath | 6 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | |
| Ilver | 3 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Totals | 200 | 22-65 | 5-9 | 5-23 | 7 | 19 | 55 | |
| Percentages: FG: 33.8%. FT: 55.6%. Three-point field goals: 6-26 (Davison 3-6, Davis 2-7, Hepburn 1-5, Ilver 0-1, Carlson 0-2, Crowl 0-2, Wahl 0-3). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 5 (Vogt 3, Davis, Wahl). Turnovers: 8 (Crowl 3, Wahl 2, Davis, Davison, Hepburn). Steals: 7 (Davis 3, Davis, Hepburn, Vogt, Wahl). | | | | | | | | |
| Ohio State | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | | |
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. | |
| Ahrens | 27 | 1-4 | 2-2 | 0-4 | 1 | 2 | 5 | |
| Key | 23 | 5-7 | 1-3 | 1-8 | 2 | 1 | 11 | |
| Liddell | 31 | 11-16 | 5-7 | 4-5 | 4 | 1 | 28 | |
| Branham | 14 | 0-2 | 0-0 | 0-2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | |
| Wheeler | 30 | 4-9 | 0-0 | 0-5 | 5 | 1 | 9 | |
| Johnson Jr. | 19 | 3-8 | 0-0 | 0-2 | 2 | 0 | 8 | |
| Young | 23 | 2-6 | 1-1 | 1-13 | 0 | 1 | 5 | |
| Brunk | 2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Russell | 19 | 3-6 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | |
| Brown III | 11 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 1-0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | |
| Sotos | 1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Hookfin | 1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | |
| Totals | 200 | 29-58 | 9-13 | 8-41 | 15 | 14 | 73 | |
| Percentages: FG: 50.0%. FT: 69.2%. Three-point field goals: 6-19 (Johnson Jr. 2-3, Liddell 1-3, Russell 1-3, Ahrens 1-4, Wheeler 1-4, Young 0-2). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 4 (Liddell 2, Johnson Jr., Key). Turnovers: 14 (Branham 4, Russell 4, Liddell 2, Wheeler 2, Johnson Jr., Young). Steals: 4 (Johnson Jr., Liddell, Wheeler, Young). Officials: Riley, Eppley, Ek. Attendance: 13,856. | | | | | | | | |

Ohio State Off To 1-1 Start In Big Ten Play

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, No. 20 Ohio State (7-2, 1-1) played four games, going 2-2 over the stretch.

The Buckeyes headed on the road for the first time this season, dropping their first game in a 97-91 loss to Syracuse in the Big Ten/ACC Challenge, but they responded days later with a 70-53 win over Purdue to get the team's first conference win of the year.

Ohio State returned home and followed that up with a dominant 94-50 win over Mount St. Mary's before falling to No. 10 Indiana, 86-66, to sit at 1-1 in conference play.

Between now and Buckeye Sports Bulletin's next issue, dated Jan. 15, the Buckeyes will take the court seven times, including a home date against Alabama State Dec. 15; a road trip at UCLA Dec. 19, San Diego State Dec. 21 and Michigan Dec. 31; home games against Penn State Jan. 3. and Illinois Jan. 6; and a road matchup at Northwestern Jan. 9.

Bucks Drop To Syracuse

Away from Value City Arena, Ohio State ran into trouble for the first time this year, dropping its first game of the season Dec. 1 to Syracuse, 97-91, before 847 at the Carrier Dome.

A close contest throughout, Syracuse began hammering the Buckeyes from beyond the arc in the third quarter, at one point connecting on four straight three-pointers to take a 63-57 lead, eventually up 65-58 at the end of the third.

The Orange continued their barrage on the offensive end, scoring 32 points in the fourth quarter. Ohio State attempted a comeback, never trailing by more than 14, but was never able to get the deficit to fewer than six points in the 97-91 loss.

The Buckeyes looked out of sorts in the first few minutes with a turnover, a pair of missed baskets and two missed free throws, and were held scoreless over two minutes into the game.

Junior forward Rebeka Mikulasikova got Ohio State on the board first and helped kick off a 13-0 run, giving the Buckeyes a 13-3 lead.

The Orange responded with a 9-0 run, forcing head coach Kevin McGuff to call a timeout, and the Buckeyes finished the first quarter up 23-17. Although Ohio State has been strong in the first half this season, outscoring opponents 244-132 through the first five games, Syracuse pushed the Buckeyes in the first 20 minutes, capitalizing on a 7-0

run to take a 29-27 lead.

"We had a chance in the beginning," McGuff said. "We started out, we played hard, we were together, we were competing. Then we quit doing those things that allowed us to get a lead. The biggest key is we gave them a lot of confidence early. We could have stolen that from them if we kept playing as hard as we did to start the game. I told them in the locker room, 'You're not going to go on the road and beat an ACC team if we're not the hardest playing team, especially on defensive rebounding.'"

Syracuse sophomore guard Teisha Hyman was the biggest reason the Orange hung with the Buckeyes, scoring 18 first-half points on 7-of-11 shooting. She led all scorers with 30 points on 12-of-18 shooting, including 4 of 6 from beyond the arc.

After the Orange took the lead, senior guard Taylor Mikesell knocked down a three-pointer to regain it for Ohio State. The teams continued trading baskets until the half, where the Buckeyes found themselves with a 39-36 lead.

Coming out of the half, Syracuse scored the first six points to take a 42-39 lead, but Ohio State responded with a layup from Mikulasikova and a Mikesell three-pointer to take a 44-42 lead. Following a timeout with under five to go in the third, the Buckeyes began playing with some juice on defense, at one point turning Syracuse over on two straight possessions and taking a 50-48 lead.

From there, however, the rims appeared to widen, as the teams scored on eight consecutive possessions, ending with a Mikesell miss as the Orange led 59-57. After the teams stayed close throughout the contest, the Orange began to pull away at the end of the third, finishing the quarter on a 6-1 run to take a 65-58 lead.

The Buckeyes struggled from beyond the arc for the first time this season, finishing 10 of 31 (32.3 percent), and 33 of 70 (47.1 percent) from the field overall, while Syracuse shot 39.1 percent (9 of 23) from three-point range. Ohio State junior guard Jacy Sheldon led the Buckeyes with 23 points, and Mikesell added 21.

"We need to be more consistent," Mikesell said. "We have stretches where we're good, and we have stretches when we're bad. That also comes with a team that hasn't played a lot together, but I think we're going to work this out. Nobody's playing their best basketball in the first part of December. Use it as a learning experience. It's only a loss if you don't learn from it."

Syracuse 97, Ohio State 91

| Dec. 1, 2021 Carrier Dome • Syracuse, New York | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | F |
| Ohio State (5-1) | 23 | 16 | 19 | 33 | 91 |
| Syracuse (4-4) | 17 | 19 | 29 | 32 | 97 |

| Ohio State | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | |
|---------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. |
| Mikulasikova | 25 | 6-13 | 3-4 | 4-3 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| Sheldon | 37 | 7-15 | 7-8 | 1-1 | 3 | 2 | 23 |
| Poole | 26 | 3-8 | 0-2 | 0-3 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Miller | 35 | 2-5 | 1-4 | 1-4 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Mikesell | 39 | 8-20 | 0-0 | 1-4 | 1 | 2 | 21 |
| Harris | 16 | 2-4 | 3-6 | 2-4 | 3 | 4 | 9 |
| Thierry | 3 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Beacham | 14 | 5-5 | 1-2 | 2-2 | 1 | 2 | 11 |
| Bristow | 1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 200 | 33-70 | 15-26 | 14-25 | 19 | 19 | 91 |

Percentages: FG: 47.1%. FT: 57.7%. **Three-point field goals:** 10-31 (Mikesell 5-13, Harris 2-3, Sheldon 2-8, Mikulasikova 1-2, Miller 0-1, Poole 0-4). **Team rebounds:** 7. **Blocked shots:** 0. **Turnovers:** 12 (Poole 4, Mikulasikova 2, Sheldon 2, Harris, Mikesell, Miller, Team). **Steals:** 10 (Poole 5, Sheldon 3, Harris Miller).

| Syracuse | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | |
|------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. |
| Styles | 28 | 3-4 | 4-4 | 3-3 | 0 | 4 | 10 |
| Hyman | 40 | 12-18 | 2-4 | 0-2 | 6 | 3 | 30 |
| Murray | 35 | 8-13 | 2-2 | 1-6 | 5 | 2 | 21 |
| Chrislyn Carr | 40 | 5-13 | 13-14 | 0-4 | 2 | 1 | 23 |
| Christianna Carr | 38 | 3-13 | 2-2 | 0-7 | 2 | 5 | 9 |
| Rice | 18 | 2-3 | 0-0 | 1-2 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Totals | 200 | 33-64 | 22-26 | 8-27 | 17 | 18 | 97 |

Percentages: FG: 51.6%. FT: 88.5%. **Three-point field goals:** 9-23 (Hyman 4-6, Murray 3-6, Christianna Carr 1-5, Chrislyn Carr 1-6). **Team rebounds:** 6. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Christianna Carr). **Turnovers:** 14 (Murray 4, Chrislyn Carr 3, Christianna Carr 2, Hyman 2, Rice 2). **Steals:** 5 (Styles 2, Christianna Carr, Hyman, Murray). **Officials:** Brooks, Forsberg, Resch. **Attendance:** 847.

Mikesell Leads OSU To B1G Win

Ohio State came out on top in a battle with host Purdue, taking home a 70-53 win in the Big Ten opener Dec. 5 thanks to a double-double by Mikesell.

She tied for the team lead with 16 points and pulled down 10 rebounds in the Buckeyes' first double-double of the season.

"It's a big win for us," Mikesell said. "Coming off the Syracuse loss, being able to bounce back and getting this win under our belt on the road, being our first Big Ten game, it's huge. I think it will be a good momentum starter for us as we start Big Ten play and as we finish out nonconference."

The Buckeyes have become accustomed to fast starts on the offensive end this season, but this was not one of those occurrences. Ohio State got off to a 6-0 lead, but eight straight from the Boilermakers, including two three-pointers, made it 8-6 with five minutes to go in the first.

Back-to-back baskets from Mikulasikova and Mikesell (a three-pointer) gave the Buckeyes the lead back, 11-8, and they would go on to finish the first frame up 17-13.

Both teams stepped up defensively in the second quarter, as Purdue outscored the Buckeyes 9-7 but still trailed 24-22 headed into the half.

Ohio State's offense finally woke up in the third, opening things up with an eight-point run to make it 32-22. Purdue battled back, capitalizing on some mistakes by the Buckeyes to close the gap to 40-33 with 5:23 left in the third.

From there, the teams combined for a scoreless streak that lasted nearly three minutes, including eight missed shots (five

Ohio State 70, Purdue 53

| Dec. 5, 2021 Mackey Arena • West Lafayette, Ind. | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | F |
| Ohio State (6-1, 1-0) | 17 | 7 | 21 | 25 | 70 |
| Purdue (6-3, 0-1) | 13 | 9 | 18 | 13 | 53 |

| Ohio State | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | |
|---------------|------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. |
| Mikulasikova | 28 | 6-9 | 1-2 | 1-7 | 0 | 1 | 13 |
| Sheldon | 37 | 4-7 | 3-5 | 0-4 | 0 | 2 | 12 |
| Pool | 21 | 2-7 | 1-3 | 0-3 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Miller | 32 | 5-10 | 4-7 | 0-5 | 2 | 1 | 16 |
| Mikesell | 37 | 5-9 | 3-4 | 1-9 | 5 | 0 | 16 |
| Harris | 26 | 3-5 | 1-2 | 1-1 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| Beacham | 11 | 0-2 | 0-0 | 1-3 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Bristow | 2 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Hutcherson | 2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 200 | 25-50 | 13-23 | 5-36 | 12 | 13 | 70 |

Percentages: FG: 50.0%. FT: 56.5%. **Three-point field goals:** 7-16 (Mikesell 3-5, Miller 2-4, Sheldon 1-1, Harris 1-3, Mikulasikova 0-1, Poole 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 4 (Harris, Mikulasikova, Poole, Sheldon). **Turnovers:** 22 (Poole 6, Mikesell 5, Mikulasikova 3, Miller 3, Beacham 2, Sheldon 2, Bristow). **Steals:** 3 (Harris, Mikesell, Sheldon).

| Purdue | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | |
|---------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. |
| Kyle | 20 | 3-8 | 0-0 | 2-1 | 0 | 4 | 6 |
| Hardin | 32 | 1-9 | 2-2 | 1-0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Terry | 29 | 3-6 | 2-4 | 4-9 | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| Ellis | 30 | 5-11 | 0-0 | 1-2 | 3 | 0 | 11 |
| Layden | 38 | 5-17 | 0-0 | 3-2 | 3 | 2 | 13 |
| Woltman | 14 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-5 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Moore | 10 | 1-8 | 1-1 | 0-0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Smith | 9 | 1-8 | 0-0 | 1-0 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Oriyomi | 4 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Doumbia | 9 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 1-1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Totals | 200 | 21-71 | 5-7 | 13-23 | 9 | 19 | 53 |

Percentages: FG: 29.6%. FT: 71.4%. **Three-point field goals:** 6-36 (Layden 3-14, Doumbia 1-2, Ellis 1-5, Hardin 1-9, Moore 0-4, Smith 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 4 (Layden 2, Terry, Woltman). **Turnovers:** 16 (Terry 4, Hardin 3, Woltman 3, Ellis 2, Kyle 2, Moore, Oriyomi). **Steals:** 7 (Ellis 2, Layden 2, Hardin, Smith, Terry). **Officials:** Enlund, Krommenhoek, Tobin. **Attendance:** 3,236.

by Ohio State, three by Purdue) and three turnovers. Mikesell finally broke the drought with under three minutes remaining, knocking down a three-pointer to give the Buckeyes a 43-33 lead.

Purdue (6-3, 0-1) refused to let up, however, making it 45-40 heading into the fourth and giving the 3,236 in attendance at Mackey Arena a reason to get on their feet.

Sophomore guard Rikki Harris and Mikulasikova got a pair of baskets to give Ohio State (6-1, 1-0) a 49-40 lead, but the Boilermakers responded with a pair of their own to make it 52-44. From there, the Buckeyes took off on a 9-0 run in which they were 4 of 4 from the field, while Purdue was 0-6 and had a turnover.

With the Buckeyes leading 61-44 with under four minutes remaining, the Boilermakers got the deficit to as few as eight points but weren't able to get close to the lead in Ohio State's 17-point win.

"We were significantly better defensively," McGuff said. "At Syracuse we didn't compete on the defensive end. Today we competed. I told them before the game that (Purdue) is deliberate and they execute well and that we would have to get them deep in the shot clock to get stops."

OSU Tunes Up In Win Over Mount St. Mary's

After the two-game road stint, No. 20 Ohio State (7-1) returned home for a dominant 94-50 win over visiting Mount St. Mary's Dec. 7.

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OHIO STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

The Buckeyes were boosted in this contest by some impeccable three-point shooting, finishing 10 of 20 from beyond the arc.

Early in the contest, Ohio State's full-court press worked wonders on the Mountaineers, forcing six turnovers in the first quarter en route to a 25-7 lead by Ohio State. Mount St. Mary's (1-7) ended the game with 23 total turnovers that yielded 31 points.

"That's part of our identity," McGuff said. "We were pretty good at it in the first half, and in the second half we wanted to work more on half court, but we got the game going fast and that allowed us to generate a couple turnovers that you can turn into points."

Mikesell, Sheldon and Mikulasikova were among the usual suspects in the box score in the first frame, but it was sophomore forward Gabby Hutcherson who made her presence known early, scoring eight points on 3 of 3 shooting, including two three-pointers. She finished with a career-high 13 points in front of 2,805 at Value City Arena.

"She's been good in practice," McGuff said. "That's why we put her in first (off the bench), and she was ready, and she delivered. That was encouraging."

Ohio State further extended its lead in the second quarter, capitalizing on an early 13-3 run, including three-pointers from Mikesell and Sheldon, to take a 38-12 lead.

Despite Ohio State's dominance on both ends, the lead could have been more had the Buckeyes capitalized on seven offensive rebounds in the first half, which resulted in five points, or connected at the free-throw line, where Ohio State was 2 of 8 in the first half.

The Buckeyes would go on to finish the

half up 51-22, taking advantage of a pair of baskets each by Hutcherson and graduate forward Tanaya Beacham, along with nine points from Sheldon, to score 26 points in the second quarter.

The teams traded baskets through most of the third quarter and the Buckeyes enjoyed a significant lead, but an 8-0 run by Ohio State pushed it to a 71-30 lead with 3:16 remaining, and the Buckeyes led 75-37 going into the fourth.

In the final frame, the Buckeyes kept things rolling with a 10-0 run to begin the quarter, propelling them to the easy victory over the Mountaineers.

Sheldon led the Buckeyes with 19 points on the evening, shooting 9 of 12 from the field. Beyond the arc, Mikesell finished 3 of 4 with 15 points. Hutcherson led with six rebounds, while Sheldon, senior guard Braxtin Miller and Harris each had four assists. Sheldon added four steals. Michaela Harrison and Aryna Taylor each had eight points to lead the Mountaineers.

Mistakes Compound In Loss To Hoosiers

No. 20 Ohio State hosted No. 10 Indiana Dec. 12 and suffered its first conference loss of the season, falling 86-66 to the Hoosiers in front of a season-high 3,606 fans at Value City Arena.

The Buckeyes kept things close in the first half despite some self-inflicted mistakes, but Indiana was able to pull away in the second half to stay undefeated in league play, taking advantage of a sloppy game by Ohio State.

Indiana (8-2, 2-0) stifled Ohio State early, taking a 10-0 lead with 5:16 remaining in the first quarter. The Buckeyes had

five turnovers to that point and committed two offensive fouls.

"I think our effort was there," Sheldon said. "It's those mental mistakes that got us there – those turnovers and some mental states defensively that we can't afford."

The Hoosiers maintained their 10-point lead, 17-7, but Ohio State knocked down three-pointers on its next two possessions, one each by Miller and Mikesell, and a successful trip to the free-throw line from Mikesell made it 19-15, making the best of a slow first-quarter start for the Buckeyes.

Indiana junior forward Mackenzie Holmes and senior guard Nicole Cardano-Hillary scored the Hoosiers' first points of the second quarter to increase the lead to 23-15. Ohio State junior guard Hevyne Bristow hit a basket to make it a six-point game, but Indiana responded with a Cardano-Hillary three-pointer and a layup from senior guard Grace Berger to increase the lead to 11 points, 28-17.

Holmes and Cardano-Hillary dominated throughout the first half, finishing with a combined 26 points on 11-of-17 shooting. The rest of Indiana's roster had 17 points on 8-of-19 shooting.

Ohio State attempted to close the gap a number of times, including a basket from Mikulasikova to make it 29-25, as well as a three-pointer from sophomore guard Kateri Poole to make it 36-28, but the Hoosiers responded every time, never letting their lead fall to fewer than four points.

While the first half was not easy for Ohio State, down 43-29 at the break, the remainder of the game was made more

difficult given some late fouls by Poole and Sheldon, who each finished the first half with three fouls.

The Buckeyes came out of the locker room with some juice, scoring five early points to make it 43-34, but a pair of turnovers and a missed shot by Poole gave momentum back to the Hoosiers. Ohio State would finish the contest with 17 turnovers, good for 26 IU points.

"I thought we had a great start on the defensive end (in the second half)," McGuff said. "We switched it up a little with zone to give them a different look, but man, it's not only turnovers, but turnovers leading to points."

From that point on, Indiana went on a 24-12 run to end the third quarter, holding the Buckeyes to 5-of-18 shooting and forcing five turnovers during that stretch. The Hoosiers, meanwhile, got nine points in the period from Berger, who finished with 21 points for the game on 9-of-13 shooting.

The Buckeyes threatened to make things interesting early in the fourth, opening the frame on a 9-2 run to make it 69-55 with 7:50 remaining, but a pair of Hoosier buckets on back-to-back possessions quashed any hopes of a comeback.

Sheldon finished as Ohio State's leading scorer with 23 points on 9-of-24 shooting, while Poole led with seven assists. Harris and Mikulasikova each had a team-high seven rebounds. Holmes led the Hoosiers with 30 points.

Ohio State 94, Mt. St. Mary's 50

Dec. 7, 2021
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | F |
|----------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Mt. St. Mary's (1-7) | 7 | 15 | 15 | 13 | 50 |
| Ohio State (7-1) | 25 | 26 | 24 | 19 | 94 |

| Mt. St. Mary's Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | | |
|----------------------|-----|-------|------|------|----|-----|----|
| Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts | |
| Hunt | 19 | 3-5 | 1-2 | 0-2 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| Bressee | 31 | 2-8 | 0-0 | 1-8 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Harrison | 29 | 3-8 | 0-0 | 0-2 | 2 | 0 | 8 |
| Taylor | 33 | 3-11 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 4 | 1 | 8 |
| Agentowicz | 23 | 3-5 | 0-0 | 0-3 | 2 | 0 | 7 |
| Borgosz | 11 | 2-4 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 5 | 4 |
| Tomasetti | 21 | 2-5 | 0-0 | 1-0 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Lindsay-Huskey | 14 | 1-3 | 0-0 | 0-4 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Lee | 14 | 2-4 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Totals | 200 | 21-53 | 1-2 | 4-22 | 15 | 14 | 50 |

Percentages: FG: 39.6%. FT: 50.0%. **Three-point field goals:** 7-24 (Harrison 2-5, Taylor 2-7, Agentowicz 1-3, Lee 1-1, Tomasetti 1-4, Bressee 0-3, Lindsay-Huskey 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Borgosz). **Turnovers:** 23 (Agentowicz 5, Bressee 5, Taylor 5, Borgosz 4, Hunt 2, Lee). **Steals:** 3 (Borgosz, Lee, Tomasetti).

| Ohio State | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | |
|--------------|-------|-------|------|-------|----|----|-----|
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts |
| Mikulasikova | 17 | 5-9 | 2-3 | 1-4 | 1 | 0 | 13 |
| Sheldon | 21 | 9-12 | 0-0 | 20-2 | 4 | 0 | 19 |
| Poole | 22 | 3-4 | 0-4 | 1-4 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| Miller | 18 | 0-3 | 0-0 | 0-2 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Mikesell | 19 | 6-9 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 2 | 0 | 15 |
| Harris | 25 | 2-9 | 0-0 | 0-3 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| Beacham | 19 | 6-12 | 1-2 | 3-2 | 1 | 3 | 13 |
| Hutcherson | 22 | 5-6 | 0-0 | 0-6 | 1 | 0 | 13 |
| Thierry | 19 | 3-3 | 0-0 | 3-2 | 3 | 2 | 6 |
| Costner | 7 | 0-2 | 0-0 | 1-1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jones | 4 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 0-1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Totals | 200 | 40-71 | 4-11 | 12-28 | 23 | 9 | 94 |

Percentages: FG: 56.3%. FT: 36.4%. **Three-point field goals:** 10-20 (Hutcherson 3-3, Mikesell 3-4, Harris 1-7, Mikulasikova 1-4, Poole 1-1, Sheldon 1-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 3 (Hutcherson 2, Miller). **Turnovers:** 11 (Poole 4, Sheldon 3, Beacham, Hutcherson, Mikesell, Miller). **Steals:** 12 (Sheldon 4, Beacham 2, Mikulasikova 2, Miller 2, Harris, Hutcherson). **Officials:** Maxey, Cruse, Enterline. **Attendance:** 2,805.

Indiana 86, Ohio State 66

Dec. 12, 2021
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | F |
|-----------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Indiana (8-2, 2-0) | 19 | 24 | 24 | 19 | 86 |
| Ohio State (7-2, 1-1) | 15 | 14 | 17 | 20 | 66 |

| Indiana | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|------|----|----|------|
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts. |
| Gulbe | 29 | 3-9 | 1-1 | 2-3 | 0 | 5 | 8 |
| Holmes | 33 | 12-19 | 3-5 | 2-5 | 0 | 1 | 30 |
| Cardano-Hillary | 37 | 6-11 | 3-4 | 1-6 | 4 | 1 | 17 |
| Patberg | 36 | 4-7 | 0-0 | 0-3 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
| Berger | 34 | 9-13 | 3-3 | 0-7 | 5 | 3 | 21 |
| Moore-McNeil | 15 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Browne | 6 | 1-2 | 0-1 | 0-2 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Waggoner | 6 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Totals | 200 | 36-62 | 10-14 | 8-27 | 17 | 17 | 86 |

Percentages: FG: 58.1%. FT: 71.4%. **Three-point field goals:** 4-9 (Cardano-Hillary 2-5, Gulbe 1-1, Holmes 1-2, Moore-McNeil 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 5 (Holmes 5). **Turnovers:** 12 (Cardano-Hillary 4, Holmes 3, Browne, Gulbe, Holmes, Patberg, Waggoner). **Steals:** 4 (Cardano-Hillary 2, Holmes, Patberg).

| Ohio State | Total | FG | FT | Reb. | | | |
|--------------|-------|-------|------|-------|----|----|-----|
| | Min | M-A | M-A | O-D | A | PF | Pts |
| Mikulasikova | 23 | 3-8 | 1-1 | 0-7 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| Sheldon | 36 | 9-24 | 1-2 | 3-1 | 2 | 4 | 23 |
| Poole | 21 | 3-7 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 7 | 3 | 9 |
| Miller | 33 | 2-6 | 2-2 | 2-2 | 0 | 3 | 7 |
| Mikesell | 37 | 5-11 | 2-2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1 | 15 |
| Harris | 22 | 0-2 | 1-2 | 5-2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Beacham | 16 | 1-5 | 0-0 | 2-3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Bristow | 3 | 1-3 | 0-0 | 2-1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Hutcherson | 1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Thierry | 2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 200 | 24-66 | 8-11 | 17-21 | 14 | 17 | 66 |

Percentages: FG: 36.4%. FT: 72.7%. **Three-point field goals:** 10-19 (Sheldon 4-7, Mikesell 3-5, Poole 2-4, Miller 1-1, Mikulasikova 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 5. **Blocked shots:** 3 (Beacham, Mikesell, Mikulasikova). **Turnovers:** 17 (Poole 5, Sheldon 4, Mikesell 3, Miller 2, Beacham, Bristow, Harris). **Steals:** 7 (Miller 2, Poole 2, Sheldon 2, Mikesell). **Officials:** Bethel, Resch, Roberts. **Attendance:** 3,606.

Buckeyes Boast One Of Nation's Top Offenses

It's still early in the women's basketball season, but the small sample size has shown that Ohio State is among elite company, at least on the offensive end.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

Through the team's ninth game of the season against Indiana, Ohio State had the No. 4 scoring offense in the nation at 85.3 points per game, ranked behind only Oklahoma (89.7), DePaul (88.8) and Utah (88.7). The team was also first in field-goal percentage, shooting at an even 50.0 percent clip from the field, according to Her Hoop Stats.

Not only are the Buckeyes scoring often, they're doing so at one of the most efficient rates in the country and are ranked the No. 2 team in effective field-goal percentage (57.1 percent), points per scoring attempt (1.18) and points per play (0.98).

"We'll see how that plays out over the course of the season, but that's certainly been an emphasis for us, playing with pace and trying to generate more offense," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said earlier this season.

Junior guard Jaci Sheldon was leading the Buckeyes in scoring through Dec. 13, averaging 19.1 points per game. Despite leading the team in scoring, she's been Ohio State's leading scorer in only five contests, including a ca-

reer-high 31 points against Bellarmine. She's also third on the team in field-goal percentage at 55.0 percent.

While Sheldon was expected to be among the Buckeyes' leading scorers, it wasn't a given that senior guard Taylor Mikesell or junior forward Rebeka Mikulasikova would be leading the pack as well.

Mikesell was averaging 16.1 ppg in her first season with Ohio State and had been a monster from beyond the arc, shooting 55.9 percent from three-point range, one of the top marks in the nation, on nearly seven attempts per game.

Mikulasikova, meanwhile, was averaging 13.7 ppg, well above her previous career high of 7.7 ppg in 2019-20, and has stepped up to add some presence in the paint this season following the losses of Dorka Juhasz and Aaliyah Patty. She also was leading the team from the field, shooting 58.6 percent.

Ohio State has its three main scorers, but potential threats still exist for opposing teams in senior guard Braxtin Miller and sophomore guard Kateri Poole,

"We're at our best when we're really spreading the ball around," McGuff said after the team's win over Cincinnati on Nov. 27, "but we had a nice combination of drives to the basket, throwing it inside, three-point shots, and that's when we're really good. We don't get stuck just doing one thing."

The one area that Ohio State has struggled in on the offensive end is free throws. The Buckeyes were shooting just 67.5 percent from the line, which ranked in the bottom half nationally. This is unfortunate for McGuff's squad, because Ohio State was one of the top teams at getting to the line.

The Buckeyes were 41st in the nation in free-throw rate at 19.9 percent, which is the percentage of two-point scoring attempts that results in a trip to the free-throw line. Given the volume of attempts, Ohio State was among the top 30 teams in free throws made and attempted per game, but the lack of success once the Buckeyes were at the line had already cost them this season.

"One of the issues – we had four or five great looks right around the basket to start the second half," McGuff said after the team's loss to Syracuse Dec. 1, in which Ohio State was 15 of 26 from the charity stripe. "Then we got fouled, and we didn't capitalize around the basket and we didn't capitalize from the free-throw (line), which we need more focus in that space. We could have had a different start to the second half had we had that."

If the Buckeyes can get things sorted out at the free-throw line, it could add an additional dimension to an offense that is already running teams out of arenas.

Freshman Thierry Getting Important Minutes For Bucks

Through Dec. 13, she was just eighth on the team in minutes per game, but freshman guard/forward Taylor Thierry was starting to pick up some significant playing time for the Buckeyes as they were approaching the conference schedule.

Thierry had appeared in eight games for Ohio State this season, the 70-53 win over Purdue the lone exception, and was averaging 12.8 minutes in those contests. She wasn't earning as many as the starters or those first off the bench such as sophomore guard Rikki Harris or graduate forward Tanaya Beacham, but it's valuable experience for the freshman looking to contribute.

"I definitely can work on that confidence a little bit, but just understanding my role on the team and just making sure I'm showing that and just working and performing up to the standards that my teammates set for me and my coach sets for me," Thierry said. "I think that's a good thing that I can work on and just making sure I'm doing that role well."

Her most significant outing thus far was in Ohio State's 110-58 win over Bellarmine, in which she played 24 minutes, scoring nine points on 3-of-5 shooting and pulling down a team-high eight rebounds.

"I thought Taylor Thierry was really good, and she gave us some really good minutes," McGuff said after that game. "You can see her athleticism and her potential."

With Ohio State's guard-heavy lineup, Thierry's 5-11 stature and the ability to play at different positions adds some versatility to the lineup.

"It's definitely been a transition, but I know my teammates have my back and they're always there to help me," she said. "With this transition, it's just playing at a different level, a higher level, playing with people older than me who have been playing longer than me, just making sure that I have confidence in myself and that some of my teammates have my back."

She credits the veteran members of the team who have helped her early in this season to acclimate to the college game and be prepared for the minutes she has played.

"It helps so much," Thierry said of the team's veteran presence. "They're so helpful. Whenever I'm confused or when they think I'm confused, they're always there to ask if I'm doing OK, if I know what I'm doing. I know if I'm ever confused, I can also ask my coaches and also ask Braxtin and Jaci, just the leaders."

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Ohio State was ranked No. 24 in the Dec. 13 AP top 25 poll, marking the 22nd consecutive week the Buckeyes had been ranked dating back to last year's preseason poll. That was tied for the 12th-longest active streak in the country, along with Michigan. During the streak, Ohio State rose to as high as No. 11 on Feb. 1, 2021 and fell to as low as No. 22 on three separate occasions near the end of the 2020-21 season.

- Junior guard Hevynne Bristow missed Ohio State's game against Mount St. Mary's, as McGuff reported she had been feeling under the weather, though she returned for the team's loss to Indiana. Despite starting in the season opener against Bucknell, Bristow was tied with freshman guard Kaitlyn Costner and sophomore guard Anyssa Jones for the fewest games among Ohio State's roster this season with just six appearances.

Mikesell Wins Plank's Honor

Ohio State got off to a 5-0 start for the first month of the season, and one of the sparks for the squad was Taylor Mikesell, who is the Plank's Lady Buck of the Month for November.

In those five games, she averaged 15.6 points and was electric from beyond the arc, knocking down 19 of 32 attempts, good for 59.4 percent, and was 54.0 percent from the field overall.

Her strong beginning to the season was even more impactful given that the news of her transfer eligibility waiver being approved came just days before the season was set to begin, and she stepped into the starting lineup and hasn't looked back.

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Taylor Mikesell
Senior Guard
Massillon, Ohio

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Kern Book Entertaining Look At Life Well-Lived

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Former Ohio State quarterback Rex Kern had long wanted to write a memoir as a gift to his children and grandchildren. Nothing fancy – just several pages chronicling the mentors, friends and family members who helped shape his life as well as some of the lessons he learned along the way.

The idea rolled around in Kern's mind for several years until 2019, when he received a writing book as a Christmas present from his son and daughter-in-law. The result of what was supposed to be just a small vanity project meant to be read only by family members eventually turned into "The Road to the Horseshoe and Beyond: How a Small-Town Athlete Benefited from Ohio State Football to Build a Life" (340 pages, Amplify Publishing). It is a wide-ranging book that incorporates family, faith, successes and setbacks as well as a healthy dose of Ohio State football memories.

It's an easy-to-read, hard-to-put-down book filled with entertaining vignettes, interesting anecdotes and stories about people you know and some you don't, all told in first-person style by Kern (and others) to writer Lee Caryer.

Kern begins with his earliest memories of growing up in "the all-American city of Lancaster, Ohio. Adults referred to it that way. As a youngster, I believed what adults said." After an interesting story of how Lancaster received its All-American designation, Kern explains how growing up in the small town with his older brother, Keith, nurtured his competitive spirit.

Interspersed with personal snapshots of elementary school basketball teams and peewee football squads, Kern devotes an entire chapter to what he calls "Influencers Growing Up." Rather than offering his own memories, however, he allows more than a dozen mentors and coaches from his youth to offer reminiscences in their own words.

Subsequent chapters are devoted to high school success in baseball, basketball and football as well as how Kern's faith helped shape his early years and how it continues to shape his life today. One early memory includes how that faith helped him curtail an almost-uncontrollable temper that led to his father warning his son that if his angry outbursts continued, he would no longer be welcome at home.

As one might imagine, a large chunk of the book is devoted to Kern's time as quarterback of the Ohio State football team from

the national championship team in 1968 through disappointing finishes to both the 1969 and 1970 seasons. There are stories about teammates, opponents, coaches and important games as well as memories about how he met his wife, Nancy, who was a member of the Tournament of Roses Queen's Court in Pasadena the same year the Buckeyes defeated defending national champion USC to win the national title.

One chapter is titled simply "Woody Stories," which Kern prefaces by writing, "Some I experienced; some I have heard many times. All are true, to the best of my knowledge, though many are contradictory. Are you enough of a psychologist to put them together?"

Included are several stories from former Ohio State players and coaches, including longtime Michigan head coach Bo Schembechler, who played for Hayes at Miami (Ohio) and was an assistant at OSU from 1958-62. There is even a quote from Woody regarding Bo: "They couldn't beat me with two Michigan coaches, so they had to come down here and take a coach that I trained."

Kern also has interesting takes on the famous Hayes temper as well as a theory on what caused the legendary coach to punch an opposing player at the end the 1978 Gator Bowl.

There is also an interesting, behind-the-scenes story about Kern and his goal of someday becoming director of athletics at Ohio State. He tells of his attempts to work his way up through the athletic department but always being mysteriously stymied along the way. He knew there was a pecking order in the department, but he was willing to get at the back of the line and wait for his turn. But then athletic director J. Edward Weaver told him there was no place for him in that line.

Undeterred, Kern went in a different direction.

"I knew not to ask Ed Weaver about my future at Ohio State, so I decided to see Hugh Hindman, then associate athletic director," Kern wrote. "(I said) 'Hugh, you are certainly in line to succeed Ed Weaver as athletic director. After you would be Jim Jones, then Dick Delaney. I understand and accept that. My question is, is there a place for me at that end of that line?'"

"No, he said. No explanation or qualification – just no."

When Kern related that conversation to Hayes, he said the coach slammed his fist on a table and "launched into a list of words Sunday school teachers do not use, and con-

cluded with 'Those guys are jealous of you.'"

Kern's name was floated at least two more times for the athletic directorship at his alma mater, and he said he seriously considered pursuing the position each time but always found the same kind of resistance from within the university. Meanwhile, he became a successful businessman – with Nautilus sports equipment as well as banking and finance – but always found time to give back to Ohio State, including setting up a number of scholarship endowments including the John F. Havens Scholarship Fund for track at Ohio State.

The fund, named for one of Kern's mentors who overcame polio to become a letter-winning discus thrower at OSU, features a stipulation that if scholarships in Olympic sports are ever phased out at the university, funding will then go to the Arthur G. James Cancer Center.

Additional chapters circle back to family life, mentoring and leadership, but there is one chapter near the end of the book titled, "Race – A Simple Approach to a Complex Issue."

In the chapter, Kern tries to address the issue with stories about integrated teams on which he played and teammates with whom he forged lifelong friendships. There are stories involving how Jan White came to be a co-captain on the 1970 Ohio State team and how Jack Tatum asked Kern and his wife to look in on his daughter while she was playing college basketball in California.

"In athletics, three strikes and you are out, Black or white," Kern writes. "Hit the ball out of the park or catch the ball or run faster than anyone, the rules do not specify color. That is a good model to follow – in every way, at every time."

Other stories sprinkled throughout the book include how the 1970 team got its national championship rings despite Woody's objection, why Hayes wouldn't allow his quarterback to accompany OSU basketball coach Fred Taylor on a goodwill trip to Vietnam, and an interesting interaction with Urban Meyer while both were on the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer.

"The Road to the Horseshoe and Beyond" takes the reader on an entertaining journey from small-town America to big-time college football through the ups and downs of building a life and raising a family through faith and life lessons learned along the way. Any fan of Ohio State football – or a life well-lived in general – will enjoy the book.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers can receive \$5 off on the purchase of "The Road to the Horseshoe and Beyond". To purchase the Kern book for just \$29.50, send your check to Lee Caryer, Kern's co-author, at 975 Atlantic Ave., #676, Columbus, Ohio, 43229, and identify yourself as a BSB subscriber. BSB VIP subscribers pay just \$24.50. Checks should be made out to Rex Kern.

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Frosh Defenseman Lohrei Is Forward Thinking

Mason Lohrei's career as a defenseman is similar to someone trying to walk across a frozen pond – tentative at first but growing in confidence with each successful step.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

Lohrei has been on the defense for only five years after growing up as a forward. That's not a lot of time to develop at the position, especially for someone selected in the second round (58th overall) by the Boston Bruins in the 2020 NHL draft.

He was already committed to the Buckeyes when that happened, and they're glad he decided to come to Columbus. Lohrei

(LORE-eye) leads the No. 17 Buckeyes (10-6, 6-4-0 Big Ten) in points (14) and assists (12) through games of Dec. 12.

It's obvious that he still has a knack for the offensive side, but his defense is solid and his plus-8 (even strength goals for vs. against) is the second best on the team to Grant Gabriele's plus-13.

"He's a guy that's got an 'it' factor," said Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik. "He's a guy that can bring you out of your seat and make a really unbelievable play. He's got great confidence yet he's just scratching the surface."

"I mean, he really hasn't played D a lot over the last few years when he got moved from forward back to D. So he's still learning the position, which is exciting, because I think at times maybe he tries to do too much but I'd rather rein somebody in then have to try to push that forward."

Rohlik said Lohrei, who turns 21 on Jan. 17, is figuring out the best times to become a de facto forward and when to pull back and

defend the goal.

"He knows that he's got that ability that maybe he pushes the limit sometimes when he just needs to make the little outlet pass and be there for a pass back," the coach said. "Instead of chasing the game, sometimes just let the game come to him."

Lohrei (6-4, 200) is from a hockey family. His father, David, was a pro coach for 17 years with several team in the minor leagues. Mason was born in Baton Rouge, La., as was his sister, Zoe, a freshman forward for the women's team at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in New York.

The Lohreis now call Madison, Wis., home.

"I owe a lot to my dad," Lohrei said. "He's someone that I talk to every day. We talk about life and stuff, but I talk about hockey every single day."

"He watches games and won't say anything to me unless I ask him, which is nice, but I ask him pretty much every game no matter how I play. Just the feedback from him and the way he thinks, it's helped me a lot."

Lohrei attended Culver Military Academy in Indiana for three seasons. It was there as a sophomore that he became a defenseman.

"Halfway through the season, I was on the fourth line or getting scratched, and we had two D break their collarbones. So I said, 'I'll jump in' at practice one day, did a 2-on-1 drill and haven't looked back since, I guess."

The lessons continue every time he's on the ice.

"When you're a defenseman, you're the last line back there so you can't always be full-go ahead," he said. "I love to be offensive, but I think every year that I've played defense I've gotten better at picking when to jump in and when to stay back."

Lohrei went from Culver to junior hockey with the Green Bay (Wis.) Gamblers of the United States Hockey League. He played nine games in 2018-19. The following season in 48 games he earned second-team all-

BIG Men's Hockey

| | Pts. | W | L | T | OTL |
|-------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Michigan | 23 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 2 |
| Minnesota | 19 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| Ohio State | 18 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Notre Dame | 16 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Michigan State | 15 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Wisconsin | 9 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 1 |
| Penn State | 8 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 0 |

league honors with 37 points (eight goals, 29 assists).

That led to the NHL draft.

The Elite Prospects draft guide said of Lohrei: "Where Lohrei stood out was as a puck-carrier. His puck skills in small area situations stuck out as a distinct positive in a few instances, particularly for someone of his stature. He's got a snappy wrist shot, with good form and an ability to generate a lot of power with very little movement, suggestive of a really strong upper-body."

The Bruins were sold on him.

"It's kind of cliché, but it's a dream come true," Lohrei said. "It's something you think about every day from the time you're little."

Last season, he was the USHL Defenseman of the Year. He had 59 points (19 goals, 40 assists) in 48 games and was a plus-24.

He's pleased with his development to a higher level of play this season.

"It's been amazing here," he said. "I'm just trying to learn something new every day to get better every day. With every game I've gotten more confident, gotten better at every practice."

As Lohrei progresses, the Buckeyes benefit not only on the ice.

"It speaks volumes about our program," Rohlik said. "You want to come here to Ohio State because you want to develop. Everybody's dream is to reach the NHL. To be a second-round pick to come here and understand that he's going to get pushed and

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Two Up, Two Down

The Buckeyes split a pair of Big Ten series in different fashions since BSB last printed.

They won the opener 4-2 at No. 8 Notre Dame on Dec. 3 before losing 5-1 the next night.

Lohrei and freshman Cam Thiesing each had two assists as 10 Buckeyes made the scoresheet during the victory. Freshman Jakub Dobeš made a career high 34 saves, including 13 in the first period.

After Notre Dame took a 1-0 lead, junior Kamil Sadlocha and sophomore Travis Treloar made it 2-1 for the Buckeyes. Georgii Merkulov scored for the third straight game at 12:16 of the second to extend the lead, and graduate Will Riedell made it 4-1 at 15:54 of the middle period.

“It was a great team win tonight,” Riedell said. “We kept our game simple and capitalized on our opportunities.”

In the second game, OSU was 0 for 5 on the power play. Senior Jaedon Leslie pulled the Buckeyes to within 2-1 in the first, but the Irish (11-4-0, 5-3-0) scored twice in the second and once in the third. Dobeš stopped 27 of 32 shots in 44 minutes before junior Ryan Snowden replaced him and made eight saves.

With Michigan visiting Value City Arena on Dec. 10 and 11, a season-high 7,324 fans saw the No. 3 Wolverines score three unanswered goals in the third period to prevail 5-2 in the first game.

OSU jumped to a 2-0 lead the next night before Michigan (14-6, 7-5-0-2) got one back, but the raucous crowd of 6,928 was rewarded when the Buckeyes staggered the Wolverines with four third-period goals for a 6-1 win in a game befitting the heated rivalry with numerous scrums, misconducts, bad blood and 99 penalty minutes between the teams.

“It’s the biggest game of the season on the calendar every year playing these guys, and obviously after last night, we had a little lapse and this night just felt really good to get on top,” said senior forward Quinn Preston.

Treloar and graduate Eric Cooley opened the scoring. In the third with the score 2-1, Preston scored at 8:21, junior Mark Cheremeta made it 4-1 nine seconds later, and junior Tate Singleton gave the Buckeyes three goals in 50 seconds at the 9:11 mark. Joe Dunlap added to the rout with 1:50 to play, and Dobeš made 25 saves in the game.

The Standings

OSU, picked for last among the seven teams in the coaches’ preseason poll, is third with 18 points, trailing Michigan (23) and Minnesota (19). Notre Dame is fourth (17), followed by Wisconsin (9) and Penn State (8).

Michigan and Minnesota each have played two more games than the rest of the conference.

Ahead

The Buckeyes host Bowling Green on Dec. 16 (7 p.m.) before playing at BG the next night. OSU is home for Long Island

VARSITY CLUB ICER OF THE MONTH For November



Mason Lohrei
*Freshman Defenseman
Madison, Wis.*

University on New Year’s Eve (5 p.m.) and New Year’s Day (3 p.m.).

After that, it’s Big Ten the rest of the season beginning at Wisconsin on Jan. 7 and 8 before home games Jan. 14 (7 p.m.) and 15 (8 p.m.) vs. Notre Dame.

Icer of the Month

Lohrei is the Varsity Club Icer of the Month for November after collecting six

points (one goal, five assists) in six games.

He scored and had an assist against Penn State on Nov. 6. He also had another multi-point game with a pair of assists vs. Mercyhurst on Nov. 26.

For full recaps of the Notre Dame and Michigan series and all upcoming games, go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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OSU Grapplers Stay Undefeated In Duals

Ohio State redshirt senior Kaleb Romero made his 2021-22 home debut on Dec. 12 when the No. 7 Buckeyes cruised to a 30-7 win over No. 22 Pittsburgh in the Covelli Center, remaining undefeated through four dual meets.

The Mechanicsburg, Ohio, native followed up a first-place finish at the Las Vegas Cliff Keen Invitational on Dec. 5 with a strong effort against the Panthers, giving his team and the Columbus crowd an energizing performance.

ON THE MAT Chase Brown

"We had a good effort today, so I think the coaches were proud all around, and I was proud of our team," Romero said. "It's a good experience at the beginning of the year. Unfortunately, I had an injury that put me out for about a month, but coming back, moving up a weight class, I felt big, strong and fast."

After earning a takedown and a stalling point, the 184-pound Romero led Pittsburgh's Gregg Harvey 3-0 after the first period. The No. 10 wrestler in his division, Romero took advantage of multiple scor-

ing opportunities to grow his lead to 6-2 after two periods. He found four more points in the third and won a 10-2 major decision.

"I performed well," Romero said. "I always have stuff to work on, and I'm always learning and improving. I'm going to sit down and watch the film with the coaches, looking to get better. We can control our effort out there, and I think – all across the board – our team gave terrific effort. The coaches put in a great game plan for us in our practices and always make sure we're putting our best performance out there."

Malik Heinselman, the No. 14 wrestler at 125 pounds, started the afternoon for Ohio State against No. 25 Cage Curry in a hard-fought top-25 matchup.

Curry scored the first point with an escape to start the second. Heinselman took the lead with a takedown before the Pittsburgh lightweight escaped to tie the bout at two-all. Heinselman chose to start down in the third period and closed out the match with an escape and takedown, winning a 5-2 decision.

Dylan Koontz struggled to contain No. 6 Micky Phillippi at 133 pounds, dropping an 14-3 major decision to the Panther wrestler. Phillippi led 4-2 after the first period and sealed the contest with an escape, takedown and back points in the third.

In the 141-pound division, No. 24 Dylan D'Emilio held No. 16 Cole Matthews of Pittsburgh scoreless through the first

three minutes. However, Matthews got on the board to start the second frame with an escape. D'Emilio did the same to start the third before recording a takedown for a 3-2 lead. Both wrestlers were called for stalling in the closing action, and D'Emilio held on for a 4-3 decision.

Sammy Sasso made quick work of Pittsburgh's Luke Kemerer at 149 pounds. The No. 2 wrestler recorded a takedown in the match's first minute and claimed another with back points to lead 8-1 after three minutes. In the final two periods, Sasso put on a takedown clinic, leading 15-3 after two frames and winning by technical fall, 22-6.

At 157 pounds, Jashon Hubbard battled former Buckeye wrestler Elijah Cleary. Cleary wrestled at Ohio State for four seasons before using graduate eligibility with Pittsburgh in 2021-22. Hubbard scored first, starting the second period with an escape. He earned a riding-time point in the third to win a 2-1 decision, giving his team a 14-4 lead heading into halftime.

After the break, No. 8 Carson Kharchla continued his dominant run at 165 pounds, defeating No. 9 Jake Wentzel in a 4-3 decision. The redshirt sophomore scored the first takedown to lead 2-1 after the first. Wentzel tied it at two with an escape to start the second before Kharchla broke the tie and won the bout with a takedown in the third.

Ethan Smith was a spark plug for Ohio State last season at 165 pounds, but with Kharchla filling in at the weight, Smith packed on some pounds to wrestle in a heavier division. He landed at 174 pounds, and he looks to be a fan of the transition through the first four duals.

The "black shirt" wrestler led 12-4 after the first period, using a series of takedowns to a two-point near fall to take the early lead. Smith continued to attack in the second, earning a four-point near fall before earning a 26-8 technical fall and giving his team five points.

After Smith's bout, Romero defeated Harvey to win that major decision, extending Ohio State's team lead to 26-4.

At 197 pounds, No. 21 Gavin Hoffman squared off with No. 2 Nino Bonaccorsi in the second-to-last match. Bonaccorsi led 2-1 after the first period and 7-2 after five minutes of action. Hoffman failed to respond in the third, letting the Pittsburgh All-American walk away with a 10-4 decision.

Tate Orndorff put a bow on Ohio State's 23-point team win, defeating No. 31 Jake Slinger in a 10-2 major decision. After a first-period takedown, Orndorff led 2-0 before increasing his lead to 5-0 with a second-period escape and takedown. He secured the bonus-point win with a takedown in the final seconds.

The Buckeyes will not have another dual competition until 2022, when they travel to American University in Washington, D.C., for a match on Jan. 3. Ohio State's conference schedule begins Jan. 8 at Michigan State and its subsequent home dual is against Michigan on Jan. 14 at the Covelli Center.

"This break will be nice," Romero said.

"The Big Ten schedule is getting close, and it's not an easy schedule. We're all excited. It's an awesome opportunity to go out and compete in front of these fans and have one of those grinder matches. We're looking forward to those. We're excited for January."

OSU Takes 2nd At Cliff Keen

Ohio State finished second at the 2021 Cliff Keen Invitational in Las Vegas on Dec. 4, ending the tournament with 104 points – 21 points behind first-place Nebraska.

The Buckeyes had three wrestlers in the finals and two others in third-place bouts, helping the program claim its ninth top-three finish and eighth top-two tournament finish in the last 13 seasons.

Romero advanced to the 184-pound final to meet No. 15 Taylor Venz of Nebraska. The match was scoreless after the first, but Venz started the second with an escape followed by a Romero takedown. Another escape from Venz and a Romero two-point score gave the Buckeye a 4-2 lead. The Ohio State redshirt senior scored three points in the third period to claim a 7-3 win and a championship in his weight class.

During the final session, Sasso battled No. 1 Yianni Diakomihalis of Cornell in the marquee matchup of the Sin City event. Diakomihalis scored the first takedown to lead 2-0 after the first period. The Cornell wrestler's lead was 4-0 heading into the third after Diakomihalis scored a reversal in the second. Sasso earned a takedown in the third but lost a 7-2 decision.

"We wanted that match to happen to get Sammy the best competition he could," Ohio State associate head coach J Jagers said. "Sammy will take what he needs from the loss and flip the script next time around."

Sasso claimed his second runner-up finish at the Cliff Keen Invitational. Last time, he lost to Minnesota wrestler Brayton Lee in the championship bout after pulling off a string of upsets in his weight class.

Smith battled No. 3 Mikey Labriola of Nebraska in the 174-pound final. The match was tied three-all heading into the second and five-all into the third. Smith, the No. 2 wrestler in his class, battled hard for a game-winning point, but he failed to get Labriola to the ground, and the match went to overtime.

In the extra period, Labriola got an early takedown and held on for a 7-5 decision, giving Smith second-place honors.

Kharchla took third place at 165 pounds with a 5-2 decision over Cornell's Julian Ramirez – his second win over Ramirez in the event after defeating him 15-7 in the quarterfinals.

Orndorff lost his third-place match to No. 13 Christian Lance of Nebraska. The No. 6 Buckeye wrestler trailed the entire match and trailed 5-2 after the second period. Lance extended his lead in the third and won the match, 9-4.

Heinselman (125 pounds), Koontz (133), D'Emilio (141), Bryce Hepner (157) and Hoffman (197) also competed for the Buckeyes but did not place.

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Ohio State Falls To Georgia Tech In Sweet 16

By **CHASE BROWN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The regional semifinals had been a thorn in the side of Ohio State women's volleyball entering the 2021 postseason.

Since 2004, the last time the Buckeyes reached the regional finals in the NCAA tournament, they have gone to seven "Sweet 16s" and lost all of them. Ohio State was the lower seed in each match, as was Jen Flynn Oldenburg's squad against No. 8 Georgia Tech on Dec. 9.

This year, the thorn cut even deeper as the ninth-seeded Buckeyes fell to the Yellow Jackets in straight sets (25-22, 26-24, 25-21) in Louisville, Ky., extending the program's streak to eight consecutive losses in the regional semifinals.

"Georgia Tech did a good job," Oldenburg said after the match. "They fight hard, and we knew that it was going to be a battle. There is the disappointment when you know that you can play a little better, but they took big swings when it mattered. It was a tough one. It is always tough to lose the last match of the season."

Ohio State junior outside hitter Gabby Gonzales opened the match's scoring with a kill. Georgia Tech pushed ahead to 6-2 and maintained a slight lead until the Buckeyes used a 4-0 run to tie the set at 12. After trading back-and-forth points, the Yellow Jackets forced Oldenburg to call two timeouts before taking the set 25-22.

Georgia Tech scored the first three points to open the second set. Still, Ohio State junior setter Mac Podraza, sophomore middle blocker Rylee Rader and Gonzales powered the Buckeyes' most consistent offensive surge of the night, leading their team on a 5-0 run to take a 10-6 lead, forcing a Yellow Jacket timeout.

After the short break, Georgia Tech regained its composure and challenged Ohio State for every point, setting the pace until OSU took a late 20-18 lead. However, the Yellow

Jackets dashed the Buckeyes' hope of tying the match, outscoring them 8-4 to take the set, 26-24.

What could have been an Ohio State set win turned into a 2-0 set advantage for Georgia Tech, creating a significant change in momentum for the Buckeyes. Still, Oldenburg thought her team responded admirably after a deflating finish to the second.

"I don't think the momentum change was that big," Oldenburg said. "They won that set, but it's a battle to the end, and we were still fighting. The ball lands on our side a bit different than on their side, and they win that set but heading into the third, even though we were down, I still felt like we were going to battle, and we did up to that last point."

"Even being down match point, we were still fighting. That's what Buckeye volleyball is about, and it's going to continue to be, and it's based on what they do every day at practice."

Ohio State opened the scoring in the third set, and the teams were tied at every point until back-to-back Georgia Tech points gave it a 5-3 lead. The Yellow Jackets extended their lead to 8-3, causing Oldenburg to burn another timeout. The Buckeyes rallied to cut the margin to 12-10 but allowed their opponent to gain a sizable lead and seal the match with a 25-21 win.

Gonzales, who had eight kills and three aces for Ohio State, claims she and her teammates battled until the match's final point, leaving everything they could on the University of Louisville court.

"I think both teams showed a lot of fight," she said. "We showed a lot of fight no matter what was going on. They were showing a lot of fight on the other side of the court as well. It was a battle to the end, and we didn't know it was over until the final point."

Podraza agreed, saying she is proud of her team's resiliency and thinks that will help Ohio State carry momentum from this season into the next.

"I think that's one thing that sets us apart is that we don't lay down and we fight to the end," Podraza said. "A lot of teams would have given

up when they saw the score and it wasn't very close. That's something that is unique about this group. We are going to carry that mind-set on for a long time. We are not going to give up no matter how many points we are down."

Ohio State super senior Hannah Grundselder played her last game in a scarlet and gray uniform. In contrast, seniors Vanja Bukilic, Mia Grunze, Camryn Moeller, Adria Powell and Josie Vondran will have a choice to graduate or return to the team using pandemic-related eligibility.

The Buckeyes, who have significantly improved since Oldenburg took over as head coach last year, will have their first normal offseason during her tenure. The team performed their 2020 season in the spring of 2021. Therefore, they had a quick turnaround before returning to action this fall.

While Oldenburg would like to be still playing in the NCAA tournament, she is looking forward to her team receiving a well-deserved break from volleyball until spring and summer workouts begin.

"I think it's exciting to have an offseason," Oldenburg said. "I haven't had one yet in our program with our staff. The training and the learning we can do – those little things that will make a difference in matches like this – I think we will be prepared."

"It's always hard to say goodbye to a senior class, and our seniors work hard in the gym, and that's going to be difficult, but that's the nature of college sports. For the group that's returning, we're going to go after it, and that's exciting as a head coach."

Rader and Podraza will headline the group of returning volleyball players. At the same time, Gonzales, outside hitter Emily Londot, middle blocker Arica Davis and defensive specialist Kylie Murr will create help a highly talented roster in Columbus for 2022.

The Big Ten named Rader and Podraza to the All-Conference first team for their performances this season. Rader, a unanimous selection for the group, led the team in hitting percentage (.433) and totaled 297 kills. She

ranked second on the team in blocks with 117 and blocks per set with 1.03.

Podraza earned three Big Ten Setter of the Week nods, led all NCAA programs with 11.76 assists per set and recorded 1,282 total assists in 2021. She moved into 11th in program history this season with 2,700 career assists through her first three years.

Londot was named to the All-Conference second team. She led the team with 3.58 kills per set and with 446 points. Londot ranked third on Ohio State in blocks per set (1.02) and averaged nearly two digs per set (1.95).

Davis, a three-time Big Ten Freshman of the Week, set the program record for single-match block assists with 12 and tied the single-match record for total blocks with 13 in her collegiate debut. Davis collected 135 block assists this year to go along with 146 total blocks.

While Gonzales did not make an All-Big Ten team, she was Ohio State's most consistent source of offense alongside Londot. She led the Buckeyes with 390 kills for an average of 3.55 kills per set.

Davis was named the American Volleyball Coaches Association Northeast Freshman of the Year, while Londot, Podraza and Rader earned spots on the All-Region team. Murr was named an honorable mention.

"We're already talking about Big Ten championships next year," Podraza said. "We're ready to go. The ball landed and there's nothing we can do about it. Now it's time to move on, do what we can do for next year to be the best team that we can be. I'm sick of Sweet 16s already. We can do more next year to get to the Elite Eight and get all the way to Omaha."

It will be challenging for Ohio State to remove the thorn, but all signs point to growth for the Buckeyes. While they will still compete in the ever-challenging Big Ten conference, the team looks poised to run it back in 2022.

"We had a great season, and we're proud of everything that we did," Gonzales said. "But we have to move on, come back in, and get to work."

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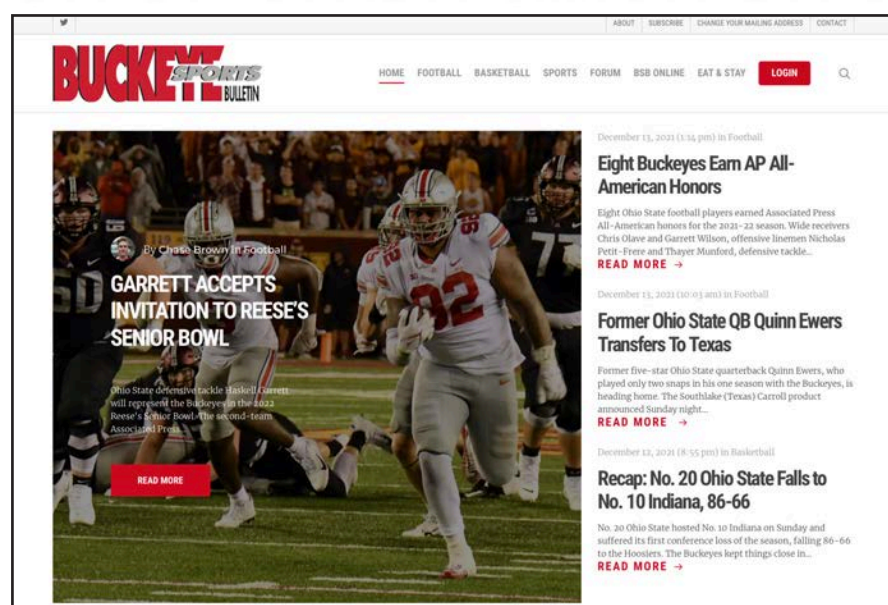
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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

2021 FOOTBALL (10-2, 8-1)

Sept. 2 at Minnesota, W 45-31; **11** OREGON, L 35-28; **18** TULSA, W 41-20; **25** AKRON, W 59-7.

Oct. 2 at Rutgers, W 52-13; **9** MARYLAND, W 66-17; **23** at Indiana, W 54-7; **30** PENN STATE, W 33-24.

Nov. 6 at Nebraska, W 26-17; **13** PURDUE, W 59-31; **20** MICHIGAN STATE, W 56-7; **27** at Michigan, L 42-27.

2022 FOOTBALL

Sept. 2 NOTRE DAME; **10** ARKANSAS STATE; **17** TOLEDO; **24** at Michigan State.

Oct. 1 at Penn State; **8** Rutgers; **15** IOWA; **29** INDIANA.

Nov. 5 at Northwestern; **12** WISCONSIN; **19** at Maryland; **26** MICHIGAN.

2023 FOOTBALL

Sept. 2 at Indiana; **9** SAN JOSE STATE; **16** WESTERN KENTUCKY; **23** at Notre Dame.

Oct. 7 MARYLAND; **14** at Purdue; **21** PENN STATE; **28** at Wisconsin.

Nov. 4 at Rutgers; **11** MICHIGAN STATE; **18** MINNESOTA; **25** at Michigan.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (8-2, 2-0)

Nov. 1 INDIANAPOLIS (EXH.), W 82-46; **9** AKRON, W 67-66; **12** NIAGARA, W 84-74; **15** BOWLING GREEN, W 89-58; **18** at Xavier, L 71-65; **22** at Seton Hall, W 79-76; **24** at Florida, L 71-68; **30** DUKE, W 71-66.

Dec. 5 at Penn State, W 76-64; **8** TOWSON, W 85-74; **11** WISCONSIN, W 73-55; **18** at Kentucky; **21** TENNESSEE MARTIN; **28** NEW ORLEANS.

Jan. 2 at Nebraska; **6** at Indiana; **9** NORTHWESTERN; **13** at Wisconsin; **16** PENN STATE; **22** NEBRASKA; **27** at Minnesota; **30** at Purdue.

Feb. 3 IOWA; **6** MARYLAND; **9** at Rutgers; **12** at Michigan; **15** MINNESOTA; **19** INDIANA; **24** at Illinois; **27** at Maryland.

March 3 MICHIGAN STATE; **6** MICHIGAN; **9-13** Big Ten Tournament at Indianapolis.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (7-2, 1-1)

Nov. 3 SLIPPERY ROCK (EXH.), W 96-48; **10** BUCKNELL, W 71-48; **14** NORFOLK STATE, W 86-48; **17** BOWLING GREEN, W 94-63; **23** BELLARMINE, W 110-58; **27** CINCINNATI, W 86-50.

Dec. 1 at Syracuse, L 97-91; **5** at Purdue, W 70-53; **7** MOUNT ST. MARY'S, W 94-50; **12** INDIANA L 86-66; **15** ALABAMA STATE; **19** at UCLA; **21** at San Diego State; **31** at Michigan.

Jan. 3 PENN STATE; **6** ILLINOIS; **9** at Northwestern; **12** MICHIGAN STATE; **15** at Minnesota; **20** MARYLAND; **23** at Rutgers; **27** MICHIGAN; **31** at Iowa.

Feb. 7 RUTGERS; **10** NEBRASKA; **14** at Illinois; **17** at Maryland; **20** WISCONSIN; **27** MICHIGAN STATE.

March 3-6 Big Ten Tournament at Indianapolis.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (10-6-0, 6-4-0)

Oct. 8 at Bentley, L 2-1; **9** at Bentley, W 7-1; **15** UCONN, W 4-3 (OT); **16** UCONN, W 3-0; **29-30** MICHIGAN STATE, L 2-1, W 5-1.

Nov. 5 PENN STATE, W 5-2; **6** PENN STATE, W 4-1; **12** at Minnesota, W 4-3; **13** at Minnesota, L 2-0; **26** Mercyhurst,

L 5-4; **27** MERCYHURST, W 3-2.

Dec. 3 at Notre Dame, W 4-2; **4** at Notre Dame, L 5-1; **10** MICHIGAN, L 5-2; **11** MICHIGAN, W 6-1; **16** BOWLING GREEN, 7 p.m.; **17** at Bowling Green, 7:07 p.m. **31-Jan. 1**, LIU, TBD.

Jan. 7-8 at Wisconsin, 8 p.m., 7 p.m.; **14-15** NOTRE DAME, 7 p.m., 8 p.m.; **21-22** at Michigan State, TBD; **28-29** at Penn State, TBD.

Feb. 4-5 WISCONSIN, 7 p.m., 8 p.m.; **11-12** MINNESOTA, 6:30 p.m., 6 p.m.; **18-19** at Michigan, 7:30 p.m.; 8:30 p.m.

March 4-6 Big Ten Quarterfinals; **12** Big Ten Semifinal; **19** Big Ten Championship.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (15-3-0, 13-3-0)

Sept. 24 ST. THOMAS, W 6-0; **25** ST. THOMAS, W 4-1

Oct. 1 at Minnesota, W 4-2; **2** at Minnesota, W 4-1 **15** BEMIDJI STATE, W 7-0, **16** BEMIDJI STATE, W 3-1; **23** at Wisconsin, L 3-1; **24** at Wisconsin, L 2-1 (OT); **29** ST. CLOUD STATE, W 5-2; **30** ST. CLOUD STATE, W 10-1.

Nov. 5 at St. Thomas, W 8-1, **6** at St. Thomas, W 6-2; **19** MINNESOTA STATE, W 6-3; **20** MINNESOTA STATE, W 9-0; **26** DC Tournament at Washington, D.C., vs. St. Lawrence, W 5-2; **27** DC Tournament at Washington, D.C., vs. Penn State, W 4-2.

Dec. 3 at Minnesota Duluth, L 5-2; **4** at Minnesota Duluth, W 6-2.

Jan. 7 LINDENWOOD, 6 p.m.; **8** LINDENWOOD, 3 p.m.; **14-15** at St. Cloud State, TBA; **21** MINNESOTA DULUTH, 6 p.m.; **22** MINNESOTA DULUTH, 3 p.m.; **28** MINNESOTA, 6 p.m.; **29** MINNESOTA, 3 p.m.

Feb. 4-5 at Minnesota State, TBA; **11-12** at Bemidji State, TBA; **18** WISCONSIN, 6 p.m.; **19** WISCONSIN, 3 p.m.; **25-27** WCHA Quarterfinals, TBA

MARCH 5-6 WCHA Championships.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (27-6, 15-5)

Aug. 27 NORTHERN KENTUCKY, W 3-0; **28** WASHINGTON, W 3-1.

Sept. 3 Red Raider Classic at Lubbock, Texas, vs. Rhode Island., W 3-0; **4** Red Raider Classic at Lubbock, Texas, vs. Texas State, W 3-1; **4** Red Raider Classic at Lubbock, Texas, vs. Texas Tech, W 3-0; **10** VCU Invitational at Richmond, Va., vs. James Madison, W 3-0; **11** VCU Invitational at Richmond, Va., vs. VCU, W 3-0; **11** VCU Invitational at Richmond, Va., vs. Virginia, W 3-0; **17** at Notre Dame, W 3-0; **19** NOTRE DAME, W, 3-2; **24** at Purdue, L 3-2; **26** at Penn State, L 3-0; **29** INDIANA, W 3-0.

Oct. 2 MARYLAND, W 3-0; **8** at Michigan State, W 3-0; **10** MICHIGAN, W 3-0.; **15** PURDUE, W 3-1. **16** Rutgers, W 3-0; **22** at Wisconsin, L 3-1; **24** at Minnesota, L 3-1.; **29** at Michigan, W 3-0; **31** MICHIGAN STATE, W, 3-1.

Nov. 4 MINNESOTA, L 3-1; **6** NEBRASKA, W 3-0; **13** at Northwestern, W 3-1; **14** at Illinois, W 3-0; **19** IOWA, W 3-1; **21** PENN STATE, W 3-0; **24** at Rutgers, W 3-0; **26** at Maryland, W 3-0.

Dec. 3 NCAA Round 1 vs. Howard, W 3-0; **4** NCAA Round 2 vs. Tennessee, W 3-1; **9** NCAA Regional Semifinal vs. Georgia Tech, L 3-0.

Expectations And Realities Clashed in 2021

The expectation for college football programs to perform at a very high level each and every season is tremendous, especially for a high-profile school like Ohio State. If you're a perennial top-10 program, like Ohio State, you are not allowed to have a rebuilding year. Football analysts, pundits and the fan base expect teams like the Buckeyes to win the league championship, make it to the final four of college football and even win the national championship several times a decade.

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

To not live up to those expectations is considered a bad season and even a failure to many. The reality is the Buckeyes ended the regular season with just two losses, a No. 6 ranking in the college playoff picture, and a trip to the Rose Bowl in Pasadena. Those are accomplishments that 95 percent of college football programs would take in a heartbeat, but those programs are not Ohio State.

The pressure and demands to win it all in Columbus are apparent to every coach and player who are part of the football program at Ohio State.

Coach Ryan Day faced some daunting tasks going into the 2021 season. First, his defensive staff, due to graduation, the NFL draft and transfers, had to open the season with a ton of first-time starters. This was especially true in the secondary and linebacker positions.

To stop big plays, a college back seven must be sound against the pass and provide the necessary run support to stop the opposing offense. The Buckeyes would have to accomplish this with players like Ronnie Hickman, Cody Simon, Bryson Shaw, Teradja Mitchell, Lathan Ransom, Tommy Eichenberg, Marcus Williamson and true freshman Denzel Burke. Most of these defenders had limited or no playing time at all prior to the opener against Minnesota.

Even though this back end of the defense would have its struggles during the season, they made some real growth and now have the foundation and potential to excel going into 2022. Hickman led the team in tackles for the season and had two interceptions, one being a touchdown, while Burke also had a pick for a touchdown and is credited with 10 broken-up passes. New defensive

coordinator Jim Knowles will inherit some talented players in the back end and up front. Now it's his job to develop the unit into a more physical and consistent unit than we saw in 2021.

Offensive success going into the 2021 season, like all other seasons, would be based on the play of the quarterback. Justin Fields was off to the Chicago Bears, and the battle for his replacement was fierce between C.J. Stroud, Kyle McCord, and Jack Miller.

Stroud ended up getting the nod a couple of weeks before the season opener, and the pick by Day was spot on. Stroud had few struggles during the season, seemed to break Ohio State passing records on a regular basis and was a Heisman Trophy finalist. Not bad for a first-year starter. It's very likely Stroud will make another trip to New York a year from now and will most likely start 2022 off as a Heisman favorite.

The entire offense was impressive throughout the season. Experienced offensive linemen and talented skilled athletes allowed the Buckeye offense to be one of the most productive in Ohio State football history in areas such as scoring and total yardage, where they ended up number one in the nation in both categories. Led by Stroud and the best trio of receivers in the nation in Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson, and Jaxon Smith-Njigba, the Buckeye passing attack was outstanding.

Even in the Michigan game where OSU got manhandled in other areas, the passing attack of the Buckeyes was more than just impressive. Offensively for 2022, we know OSU will have Stroud for at least one more season before he can go pro. We can hope the other skilled athletes who can return will do so and that next season OSU can have a running game that is just as productive and consistent as the passing attack.

Portal Pressure

The transfer portal is both a nightmare and a blessing for college coaches. Now a college player can make a one-time transfer without having to sit out a season of competition. Ohio State, like other programs, has used the portal to strengthen and bring depth to specific positions.

Fields, Trey Sermon and this year's place-kicker, Noah Ruggles, all came to Ohio State via the portal. At the same time, Alabama's top receiver in 2021, Jameson Williams, used the portal to leave Ohio State.

Highly touted but unproven quarterback Quinn Ewers joined other college quarterbacks like Oklahoma's Spencer Rattler and Auburn's Bo Nix to enter the portal with

in the past few weeks. Besides Ewers, the Buckeyes have also seen the last of Miller, cornerback Ryan Watts and linebacker Craig Young, who have all entered the portal.

Day has made it clear that he wants the portal to be the exception, not the rule for bringing players to Columbus.

Undeniably, the transfer portal has changed the face of college football for coaches and players. Coaches can meet their needs in many ways by bringing in experienced players while the athlete can try to find a school where he will see more playing time and possibly make some money due to recently enacted NIL (name image likeness) legislation.

The gamble for a top-tier program like Ohio State is the risk of not being able to bring in some top high school talent, especially in-state, due to the need to obtain more proven players from the portal. There is no doubt the portal, as good as it can be for college football programs, will have an overall negative effect on high school recruiting throughout the country.

Job Security

Besides the portal, a ton of things are different in the world of college football than just a decade ago. Take recruiting for example, especially after an early signing date was initiated by the NCAA in 2017. This ruling allows high school seniors to sign the national letter of intent in mid-December. Before that, high school athletes had to wait till the first week of February of their senior year before they could sign that letter of intent.

Even though the time difference between these two signing dates is just about six weeks, the way it has affected college football has been earth-shattering for both college coaching staffs and high school athletes. College coaches must now make early offers, not just before the athlete's senior year but often prior to their junior year of competition.

That means college staffs must make earlier evaluations and earlier offers than they have in the past in hopes of luring the best high school talent to their university. This has also meant that college staffs must bring in more recruits on official visits during the season, sometimes taking valuable preparation time away from their own players to try to provide a quality weekend for the recruits coming onto campus.

All the time, the coaches are hoping their team plays well and there is positive energy in the stands so as to impress the recruit. It is indeed a gamble but one the coaches are willing to take in order to help land the best talent.

The early signing period has had some very negative effects on the security of coaching staffs. College athletic directors are more likely to fire their head football coach before the end of the season when expectations on the field are not being met.

Directors fear not replacing a coach who is deemed on the way out soon enough will hurt the chances of attracting top recruits to the football program before the early signing date. Of course, hiring a new coach can also create chaos for another college program, the program the new coach is coming from. Athletic directors of major Division I football programs know their job security is also directly tied to the success of the football team. As the pressure mounts on coaches to perform, that pressure also is felt by the athletic administration.

Early signing can be stressful on the high school athlete. Even though they are getting a full athletic scholarship wherever they end up going, they want to make the right choice for their future. The athlete, along with his parents, wants to choose a school where he can be happy, successful and possibly get a chance to play at the next level beyond college.

Oh yes, and even get a quality education along the way. A very mature decision for a high school teenager to make, and the pressure is just beginning for the athlete.

The Good Old Days

Today's college football players, due to strength and conditioning programs along with nutrition, are bigger, faster and stronger than ever before. Collisions are more violent, justifying the needs for safety protocols and rule changes. Blocking below the waist, leading with the helmet and limiting kickoff returns are all examples of changes in the great game of college football.

Early signing, the transfer portal and NIL are all things that have their positives and negatives.

That's why for me, the Army-Navy game is something I look forward to each year. The pageantry is exceptional, and even though the athletes aren't as talented as you find in the top-tier programs in the country, the physicality and determination they play with is a flashback to days of the past.

An era when players truly played for the love of the game and for each other, not for money. Most significantly, the Navy midshipmen and the Army cadets who play their hearts out to beat their rivals that one day in December will turn in their football uniform in exchange for one that is much more important.

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How Will Ohio State View Its Rose Bowl Berth?

Part of the problem with college football in the current era is how much big-time bowl games have been minimized.

Time was, not all that long ago, that a berth in the Rose Bowl was looked at as a big deal, something worthy of Ohio State and whichever Pac-12 team was participating.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

But now, in the day and age where the College Football Playoff has become the measuring stick for a successful season, the Granddaddy Of 'Em All is now seen as just another payday, another game on a bloated postseason menu.

And that's a shame because it really is something to see.

If you've never been out to Pasadena for the Rose Bowl, you owe it to yourself to get there. The setting is wondrous, with the San Gabriel Mountains framing a postcard-like backdrop to the stadium itself. The freshly manicured and painted grass – yes, there are still a few grass fields left – is about as good as it gets aesthetically, to the point that there are pangs of, “Oh, should they really be messing up the field?” The parade is kind of cool, too, but merely a secondary reason to attend.

The first Rose Bowl game I recall watching was the 1973 contest, where John McKay's USC Trojans blasted Woody Hayes' Ohio State Buckeyes 42-17. Sam “The Bam” Cunningham went wild that year, scoring a quartet of touchdowns, beginning a long history of bowl game disappointments for yours truly. OSU got revenge the very next year as it was Pete Johnson's time to shine (three TDs), but then came a dry spell for the

Buckeyes in Pasadena.

A one-point loss to USC, a stunning upset at the hands of UCLA (which OSU had handled during the regular season), another one-point loss to the Trojans and a three-point loss to USC punctuated the bowl ledger, and it wasn't turned around until 1997, when John Cooper's squad used late heroics from Joe Germaine and David Boston to knock off Arizona State in dramatic fashion. It wasn't until 2010 that Ohio State made a return trip, beating Oregon, and the Bucks went back in 2019, holding on to beat Washington.

Now the Buckeyes are here again, facing off against first-time Rose participant Utah.

There's a tendency to dismiss anything that isn't a traditional brand, and the Utes certainly are not. They have had some time in the spotlight, notably 2004 when they went 12-0 under a still up-and-coming Urban Meyer. They played physical football, with the occasional explosive play, and that hasn't changed much under coach Kyle Whittingham.

The Utes want to line up and take it right at you, and the Buckeyes didn't fare too well the last time a team brought that mind-set into a game. Remember?

Linebacker Devin Lloyd is one of the best at his position but largely unknown outside of the West Coast. That will change on New Year's Day. Running back Tavion Thomas led the nation in rushing touchdowns (20) and thrives on breaking tackles and picking up extra yardage. Ageless wonder Britain Covey – who was a freshman in 2015 – is a standout kick returner who can flip the field in a hurry, and Brant Kuithe is the best of an armada of tight ends the Utes use liberally in their offense.

OSU fans who think this isn't a sexy matchup or that the Buckeyes will just waltz in and destroy the Utes are either ignorant of history or simply don't know how good the Utes are. Yes, they have three losses, but two were early before quarterback Cam Rising

emerged as a real force. Utah will come in playing the underdog card to the hilt and really has nothing to lose. It will be an “us against the world” mentality, while the Buckeyes could have a lingering hangover from the Michigan loss. How the teams approach the game will be a fascinating study, and we won't really know until they kick it off.

Will Ohio State fall prey to the “meh, Rose Bowl” syndrome? One can only hope not.

But when your priority every year is making the CFP and you fall short, there is a tendency toward disappointment.

In this case, disappointment will get you beat.

Tis The Season For Awards

It was nice to see yet another Ohio State quarterback as part of the Heisman Trophy festivities, even if he never had a legitimate chance to win.

The Heisman may still be prestigious in name, but many observers around the sport know that it has become little more than a glorified quarterback award. Seeing as how the sport already has one of those – the Davey O'Brien Award – you would think voters could get out of their little cocoons and maybe show a little bit of flexibility (and actually vote for the best player for a change).

C.J. Stroud had an outstanding year, to be sure, but he was never really a serious contender for the Heisman. Hell, for most of the season he wasn't even Ohio State's best offensive player – that honor was held by TreVeyon Henderson. But he played the most visible position and as such was invited to the Big Apple to soak in the pageantry.

Oh, incidentally – Bryce Young wasn't Alabama's best player, either. That honor belongs to sophomore linebacker Will Anderson Jr. But because Young led a comeback against archrival Auburn and then had a pretty easy time against a vaunted Georgia defense in the SEC title game, he was elevated to the top rung. And congratulations to him as he is an excellent player.

It's just too bad the award is more about most visible on an outstanding team rather than the truly best player in the game.

Speaking of awards, 2021 was a particularly poor year for the voters. They botched the Butkus (not even including Anderson) and placed nary a Buckeye on the semifinalist list for the Biletnikoff Award, despite there being three worthy candidates.

A Basketball School?

Lost amid the frustration of how Ohio State's football season ended is just how well the men's basketball team has started.

It was funny to read after a buzzer-beating opening win over Akron that the Buckeyes would struggle this season, that they weren't a legit contender for the Big Ten crown, all of that nonsense. And it came from people who should know better.

A first game is just that – a first game. You never know how good or bad your team is going to be, and it's impossible to make judgements on a season after that contest is over. Yet people do it, not wanting to admit that teams evolve over the course of a season.

How much has OSU evolved since that

opening nail-biter?

Does a win over top-ranked Duke answer that question?

Yes, the Coach K Farewell Tour came to Columbus, likely expecting to leave yet another fan base upset as the Blue Devils were thought to be the best in the land after a win over Gonzaga days earlier. But Ohio State clawed and fought and dug down and erased a 13-point halftime deficit to knock off Duke, signaling that it was more than ready to enter the fight for the Big Ten crown.

A road victory over Penn State and a home win against a solid (and ranked) Wisconsin squad left the Buckeyes at 8-2 and unbeaten in conference play, and they showed the look of a real live contender.

Folks know about E.J. Liddell, whose return after a flirtation with the NBA gave Ohio State instant credibility this season. But what they don't realize is that Zed Key isn't a sideshow act, but a legitimate in-the-paint dude who can do many things well. He'll never wow anyone with his athleticism, but he's tough and unfazed by adversity. Throw in a backcourt of seemingly limitless upside with Meechie Johnson Jr. and Malaki Branham, and you have a group that appears to have a very bright future – including the immediate one.

Stuff Your Stocking With \$\$\$

With Ohio State not playing in the College Football Playoff, the bowl season may seem a bit drab and anticlimactic.

Where I was raised, a Rose Bowl berth is never a bad thing, and I don't believe it is this time around.

It will be a chance for the Buckeyes to erase a little bit of the disappointment of the Michigan game and prove that they can hold up against a very physical offense and defense, which is what Utah brings to the table.

There may be some important guys not playing, and you won't see any piling on here because from this perch there isn't any real problem with it. Guys are protecting themselves for future employers (the NFL) and, outside of sheer competition, have zero reason to play in a game that doesn't have championship stakes. Folks may not like it, but they need to get used to it as it's here to stay.

A few of the Big Ten bowl games are intriguing, but all are easy money – at least if you stick with me.

Big Ten Bowl Picks

- Guaranteed Rate – Minnesota 30, West Virginia 17
- Pin Stripe – Virginia Tech 23, Maryland 20
- Music City – Tennessee 34, Purdue 24
- Las Vegas – Wisconsin 26, Arizona State 16
- Outback – Penn State 24, Arkansas 22
- Citrus – Kentucky 21, Iowa 17
- Peach – Pittsburgh 38, Michigan State 31 (if Kenny Pickett plays), Michigan State 31, Pittsburgh 28 (if he doesn't)
- Rose – **Ohio State 28**, Utah 24
- Orange (CFP Semifinal) – Georgia 27, Michigan 20

Happy Holidays to everyone, and may 2022 bring joy and happiness – and many Ohio State victories.



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Losing The Way The Buckeyes Did Is Tough To Handle

As I write this, it has now been more than two weeks since Michigan snapped an eight-game losing streak in The Game and surprised much of Buckeye Nation with a convincing 42-27 victory over what seemed like a play-off-bound Ohio State.

Others may have seen the Wolverine win coming. After the thrashing of Michigan State the week before, I did not.

I've had plenty of time to think about the loss, had a chance to speak to all sorts of people – some knowledgeable football people, some just common fans.

After all this thinking and talking I've come to realize this: I can live with the fact that the Buckeyes lost. They weren't going to win the next 30 games against their rivals. A loss was coming at some point. I wish it hadn't been this season, and it pains me to see Jim Harbaugh and his team in the playoffs in a spot that should have – or at least could have – been occupied by Ohio State.

But a loss was coming.

What bothers me, what I am struggling with, is the fact that Ohio State – and this is the word I have settled on after all this thought and conversations – was manhandled. I can live with the loss. Alabama lost this season. Georgia lost. Oregon and Clemson lost three times this season. Football teams lose. But I wouldn't want to be an Ohio State (or Michigan) team that was manhandled in The Game. You slug it out and you lose, you live with it. At least you know you left it on the field and you start preparing for next season. You get pushed around? That's not Ohio State vs. Michigan.

I think back to our Michigan Memories issues a few weeks back. Former Buckeye wide receiver Chris Sanders, who played at Ohio State in the early '90s, was talking about The Game.

"It was like Rocky vs. Apollo Creed," Sanders said. "You needed all your pads – your hip pads, your knee pads, your mouthguard. We traded punches and we landed blows. When the game was over, you were lucky to be without a few bumps and bruises. They were the toughest and most physical games. You were fighting for your life."

This time around, it seemed like the only team throwing punches and landing blows was Michigan.

I told someone who knows way more about football than I do that I was troubled by the manhandling, and I asked him what went wrong. He mentioned that the Buckeyes have become a more pass-oriented team and that pass blocking is more passive than the usual grind-it-out football in the trenches that you see from run-oriented teams in The Game.

"Fine," I said. "How do you explain the Ohio State defense?"

"You got me there," was his only response.

The way the Buckeyes were pushed around, they had to hurt not only in the way that Sanders talked of how one felt after an Ohio State-Michigan game. I would hope that the Buckeyes' pride was hurt as well.

Adding insult to injury is the fact that a couple days after the loss, Michigan offensive coordinator Josh Gattis came right out and questioned Ohio State's toughness.

"They're a finesse team," Gattis said. "They're not a tough team. And we knew that going into the game – that we can out-physical them, we can out-tough them, and that was gonna be the key to the game. And that's what we prepared for all year long."

Prepared for it and executed it.

Former Buckeye fullback Vaughn Broadnax, who was the epitome of physical in The Game when he blocked multiple Wolverines to spring Art Schlichter for the game-winning

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

touchdown in the 1981 edition of the storied rivalry, had a simple take on Gattis' comments and where the Buckeyes go from here in a story found on pages 28-29 of this issue.

"If that's the impression your team leaves, there's nothing you can really do to change that until the next time you play," Broadnax said. "You've got 360 days to change that perception. The next time you meet, you let Josh Gattis know, you let Jim Harbaugh know that you're not going to be perceived as a soft team. Now, you can pass the ball, you can be an elite offense by having a spread offense, but when it comes down to the nitty gritty, you have to be able to force the defensive line off the ball, because the game is still won in the trenches."

Many are acting as if the Michigan victory marks a seismic shift in the rivalry. It seems a little premature to me to make that assumption. I agree with Broadnax. You let the loss, the humiliation of being pushed around, sting for a year and then you came back in Ohio Stadium next year and make your rivals pay the price, just like the Buckeyes did after losses in 2003 and 2011, when they responded with winning streaks of seven and eight games, respectively. This loss becomes just a blip on the radar.

Now if the Buckeyes get pushed around again, then I will be worried.

Don't Get Ahead Of Ourselves

Before Ohio State can start thinking about next year's Michigan game – or even the season opener with former Buckeye Marcus Freeman and his Notre Dame team – there is the little matter of the Rose Bowl.

I'm not going to go overboard again on my sadness about the fact that with the rise of the playoffs, the significance of the Rose Bowl has been diminished. Any of us who grew up with the Rose Bowl – have been to the Rose Bowl – know how grand and important it used to be. Now it seems like it is just one of the dozens of bowl games out there, especially for a team like Ohio State, which contends for a playoff berth nearly every year.

And there lies a potential problem.

Not only is Ohio State dealing with the sting of losing to its archrival for the first time in a decade, but the Buckeyes are also facing the potential malaise of being left out of playoffs for the first time in three seasons. The trip to Pasadena could seem like little more than a consolation prize.

Now for Rose Bowl opponent Utah, a trip to the "Granddaddy of 'Em All" is what they have been aiming for since they joined the Pac-12 back in 2011. No consolation prize for the Utes. And look for their fans to be there en masse. This is a potential recipe for Buckeye disaster.

Getting the Buckeyes back up and out of the doldrums to face what looks like a solid Utah team will be a real challenge for OSU coach Ryan Day, whose abilities are suddenly being questioned by some in Buckeye Nation, despite his 33-4 record, with two Big Ten championships and two trips to the playoffs in three seasons.

There is quite a difference between an 11-2 season and a Rose Bowl victory and a 10-3 season with consecutive losses to Michigan and in your bowl game, especially when your bowl opponent is not necessarily considered a "glamor" program.

But don't underestimate these Utes.

They are a physical football team that easily dispatched Oregon not once, but twice this

season, 38-7 and 38-10 in the Pac-12 Championship Game. We've just talked about how the Buckeyes have done against physical teams of late, and we know what the Ducks did to the Buckeyes earlier this year.

Think about Ohio State's most recent outing in Ann Arbor and then think about these stats for Utah.

On offense, the Utes are fourth in the nation in carries of at least 10 yards with 101 and rank 14th in rushing yards per game at 216.1. On defense, they are No. 24 in points per game allowed at 20.6 per game. More importantly, the Utes are fifth in the nation in sacks with 42 and sixth in tackles behind the line of scrimmage with 96.

Are we looking at, as the immortal Yogi Berra would have said, *deja vu* all over again?

Oh Those Tight Ends

I know, I've been complaining for years about Ohio State's use – of lack thereof – of their tight ends. On the flip side of that, something in our preview of Utah in this issue caught my attention.

BSB associate editor Patrick Mayhorn says that the Utes have "one of the strongest tight end rooms in the country," with Brant Kuithe (44 receptions, 534 yards, six touchdowns), Dalton Kincaid (33 receptions, 465 yards, seven touchdowns) and Cole Fotheringham (13 receptions, 109 yards).

As any savvy Buckeye fan knows, not only do the Buckeyes underuse their tight ends as receivers at times, but the Buckeye defense frequently struggles with opposing tight ends. Penn State and Indiana have frequently exploited the Ohio State defense with their tight ends recently.

"We think that's the best trio of tight ends in the country," Utah coach Kyle Whittingham said of his TEs. "You'll be hard-pressed to find any team that's got three guys that are as talented as those three."

"I don't want to say they were the core of the offense this year," he continued, "but they were huge. We played so many two- and three-tight end sets, we probably lead the nation in two- or three-tight end sets. And that's because of their talent level."

Don't say I didn't warn you.

New Look On Defense?

We'll see what changes new Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles brings with him when he takes over after the first of the year. At first glance, I certainly like what the Cornell grad has to say.

"Just the word defense itself, it gives the feeling of being back on your heels," Knowles says. Spoken like an Ivy Leaguer.

"You have to, in my opinion, make the defense aggressive to put the offense on its heels. That means taking advantage, taking some chances, playing that first-down marker like it's a goal line in terms of selling it to your players and taking a stand. That changes the game. In today's game, everything goes so fast and offenses are so powerful that when you get a third-down stop, in essence, you are stealing possessions. You need to steal possessions, and you can either do it through takeaways or third-down stops, and you have to approach it like that."

I like it.

I'm anxious to see how Knowles plays in Columbus, both on and off the field.

The Debate Continues

As I have mentioned before, one of the ongoing debates on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum has involved whether quarterback C.J. Stroud should run the ball more. The consensus among the posters seems to be that Stroud shouldn't expose himself to the type of punishment that Braxton Miller and J.T. Barrett took before him, but if he is confronted with open space in front of him, he should take the yards.

Broadnax, in the previously referenced story in this issue, says that in a big game like The Game, a quarterback has to do what he has to do to win.

"Your quarterback has to be willing to step up in that prime-time role and take chances, run the ball when he needs to, give up his body when he needs to," the former fullback said. "You can salve your wounds after the game, but you have to do what is necessary to win. It means playing flawless football without penalties. I know that's a rarity, but you can't make mental errors in that type of game, and you have to be prepared for whatever the opposition sends your way."

To Broadnax's point about the quarterback running the ball and penalties, Stroud had an apparent 15-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter of the Michigan game negated by – you guessed it – a penalty. The Buckeyes, who had 10 penalties for 66 yards, ultimately scored, but they had to convert a fourth-and-5 to do so.

For the game, Stroud was credited with six carries for minus-30 yards after his four sacks for 27 yards were subtracted.

Early Signing Coverage Online

If you haven't been enjoying our electronic BuckeyeSports.com, now might be the time for you to jump onboard.

This edition of BSB is being mailed on the first day of football's early signing period. Full coverage of the Buckeyes' efforts will be posted at BuckeyeSports.com, with all the recruiting wins and losses.

I am not a big fan of the early signing period, at least at the time it is now scheduled, with the signing period coming while teams are preparing for bowl games and at a time when coaches and prospective recruits alike should be thinking about the holidays and their loved ones.

I was glad to see that someone, in this case recruiting expert Marc Givler of Buckeye Scoop, agrees with me.

"I'm not a huge early signing period fan," Givler says in this issue of BSB. "But if you're going to have one, it never made sense to have one in the middle of December. It's terrible timing. It's right in the middle of all the coaching changes, bowl prep, playoff prep. A lot of these schools are wrapping up their state championships for the last couple of weeks, so you're trying to sort through that while your high school guys are in the playoffs. It's horrendous timing, and to have an early signing period and a late signing period that are roughly six weeks apart doesn't make sense."

"It's not a wide enough gap, so I would eliminate it. You don't need an early signing period to enroll early. People were enrolling early long before we had an early signing period. They would sign their paperwork, or they would just show up on campus in January and that would be that, so it's unnecessary for kids who are enrolling early."

"Now, if they're going to have it, putting it more in the first half of July somewhere would be the best."

For more from Givler, see page 35 of this issue.

HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

FOR ATHLETES

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. It can happen after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that causes your brain to rapidly move inside your skull.

CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS

- Headache, nausea, vomiting,
- balance problems, dizziness,
- double or blurred vision,
- sensitivity to light or noise, feeling
- sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy,
- just not "feeling right" or
- "feeling down," memory
- problems, confusion, and
- trouble sleeping.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?



REPORT IT. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

GET CHECKED OUT. If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a healthcare provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL. A concussion can make it harder to do everyday activities, such as concentrating at school. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

WHY SHOULD I TELL MY COACH AND PARENTS ABOUT MY SYMPTOMS?

Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.

While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain and can even be fatal.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>

This work is funded either in whole or in part by a grant awarded by the Ohio Department of Health as a sub-award of a grant issued by Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant under the Injury Prevention Program by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, grant award. Number 1 NB01OT009358-01-00.

