

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 41, No. 12

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Dec. 4, 2021

## STREAK SNAPPED

*Michigan Finally Exacts Measure Of Revenge Against Buckeyes*



SONNY BROCKWAY

**MULTITUDE OF MISCUES** — OSU quarterback C.J. Stroud (7) prepares to fall on an errant snap, one of several self-inflicted errors the Buckeyes made Nov. 27 during their 42-27 loss to Michigan. Ohio State totaled 458 yards of offense but fumbled twice and committed 10 penalties while losing to the Wolverines for the first time since a 40-34 defeat at Michigan Stadium in 2011.

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

There's a feeling that evades description that sets in on game day when Ohio State and Michigan are paired on the marquee. It happens in Ann Arbor just as it does in Columbus, and there's nothing in the air — be it the winter breeze that turns a light frost into a deep freeze or the battling smells from burgers and brats to French toast and hotcakes — that can cut it.

It wafts and settles, a sense of anxiety and excitement that can accompany only a game with more than 100 years of importance weighing on the psyche of every player, coach and fan preparing to take in what has been described more than once as the greatest rivalry in sports.

Look no further than the last three decades of play. Ohio State, so severely impacted by the desolate John Cooper years, vowed when it hired Jim Tressel that it would flip the script and earn its revenge.

It obsessed over beating Michigan and in-

tegrated it into every piece of the program, from culture and practice habits even down to signage inside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. Beating Michigan became the primary focus, and beat Michigan the Buckeyes did, first under Tressel, then with Urban Meyer as head coach and, in his first season, under Ryan Day. For the Buckeyes, the importance of The Game is inherent, even for players who really don't have context for what made it that way.

Junior defensive end Zach Harrison had no real answer in the week entering the matchup for why Michigan was so important. He just knew that it was.

"The second you walk into the building, you know how big this game is," Harrison said. "We train for it every single day of the offseason, every single day of the year. We've got this game in the back of our minds, and now that it's finally here, those guys who haven't played in The Game are excited to have the chance to go play 'The Team Up North.'"

Harrison, who is just 20 years old, had seen only two Michigan victories against Ohio State.

Realistically, he'd watched only one of them — the Wolverines' 40-34 win in 2011 — but even on that he remained noncommittal. There's a decent chance, though he wouldn't admit it, that Harrison had never seen Michigan beat Ohio State.

Day hadn't seen a loss to Michigan since his arrival at Ohio State back in 2017, either. He had faced the Wolverines as a head coach only once — a 56-27 blowout in 2019 — but he had picked up in attitude right where his predecessors left off. Even if he hadn't seen a Buckeye loss in this game of such great importance, he knew just as well as any of his predecessors that he could not take it lightly.

"This is our No. 1 goal here at Ohio State is to beat 'The Team Up North' — period," Day said at his Nov. 23 press conference. "I think the guys understand that. They understand what a huge week this is for so many reasons. First off, just the rivalry itself, and secondly there's everything on the table here — certainly an opportunity to go to Indianapolis.

"I don't know what else to tell you other than

Continued On Page 10

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Total Domination

Never have I seen Ohio State's offensive and defensive lines so thoroughly dominated as in the Michigan game. Aidan Hutchinson made mincemeat of our tackles and Michigan's front just blew us backwards.

We looked like a team from Florida trying to play up north on a cold winter day. Oh, well. There is always next year.

**Bob O'Brien**  
Cincinnati

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# FAN FORUM

## Buckeye Leaves

*Ohio State isn't likely to hand out any Buckeye leaves after its first loss to Michigan since 2011, but the BSB staff and posters on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum message board figured there were a few players who deserved plaudits – and a few who maybe deserved to lose a sticker or two.*

**Chase Brown, BSB:** While I'm not too sure Buckeye leaves are appropriate after an Ohio State loss, I think Jaxon Smith-Njigba deserves the white and green sticker for his performance against the Wolverines.

He is like a warm blanket on a cold day. Smith-Njigba's rapport with C.J. Stroud is undoubtedly the best among Ohio State's receivers, which is not to say Stroud's connection with Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson is weak, but Smith-Njigba always finds a way to get open and make plays for his quarterback.

Against the Wolverines, Smith-Njigba caught 11 passes for 127 yards, effectively serving as an extension of the Ohio State rushing offense that struggled to build steam against a talented Michigan front seven.

Smith-Njigba made a crucial catch when Ohio State faced third-and-19 at the end of the third quarter when Stroud threw a prayer in the sophomore receiver's direction. Smith-Njigba maneuvered around his defender and made an off-balance catch on the right sideline, extending an Ohio State drive that ended with a 1-yard touchdown run for TreVeyon Henderson.

**Patrick Mayhorn, BSB:** As my compatriots have noted, this isn't the easiest task in the world here, but stickers have to flow all the same, even after a regular season-ending loss to Michigan. And though his performance wasn't enough to lead the Buckeyes to victory, Garrett Wilson does deserve props for another tremendous performance to end a tremendous regular season.

He nabbed 10 passes for 119 yards and an impressive grab over a U-M defender in the end zone in the first half. He was open consistently when C.J. Stroud needed him to be, but Ohio State just wasn't able to get him the football enough to make it count. He's a Sunday player and should be earning quite a bit more national attention than he is.

**Braden Moles, BSB:** It's hard to find many players who had good performances. I'm not entirely convinced that TreVeyon Henderson played well, but he at least provided a couple of sparks for Ohio State, including his touchdown on fourth-and-5 to keep the Buckeyes in the game. Just 4.4 yards per carry and 74 rushing yards certainly aren't the numbers you're looking for from Henderson, but at points, he was the only one playing with some juice on offense.

Also of note, Henderson surpassed Maurice Clarett for the most touchdowns by a freshman in Ohio State history, scoring two against Michigan to bring his total for the year to 19. I can't imagine he'll be feeling good about that anytime soon, but it's another notch in his belt nonetheless.

**Mark Rea, BSB:** I really don't like giving out Buckeye leaves after a loss, especially after a loss to Michigan. To be brutally honest, I would take back some leaves from the offensive and defensive linemen because they had no answer for a spirited Michigan team on either side of the ball.

But if I have to hand out some leaves, it would be to C.J. Stroud, who came back from an extremely shaky start to throw for 394 yards and a pair of touchdowns. Stroud's never-quit attitude, along with his star trio of receivers, kept the game from being a blowout.

**BuckeyeScott:** Nobody gets Buckeye leaves in a loss to Michigan! I'm taking back leaves from anybody who was receiving on kickoff coverage. I'm also taking back Buckeye leaves from anybody who committed bonehead penalties for false starts on the offensive line. I'm taking back Buckeye leaves for the center and his (bleep) poor snaps back to Stroud in shotgun formation.

**Michael Bauer:** Noah Ruggles was the only player who did everything asked of him. He gets my one and only Buckeye leaf this week. Some other players did some good things, but no one else can say they didn't make a mistake that contributed to the loss.

**Terrier Buck:** Buckeye leaves seem irrelevant after this outcome. Stroud had a decent game in inclement weather, passing for almost 400 yards with 2 TDs and no INT. Ten penalties for 66 yards vs two penalties for Michigan probably determined the outcome.

**Poster That Harley Built:** The three amigos were great, even in a loss, with 28 receptions, several of the impossible variety, for 334 yards.

**bstu9:** Steele Chambers gets my Buckeye leaves. Even though our D was porous, Chambers seemed to be the only Buckeye making plays.

**AnthonyBuckeye:** Bryson Shaw for the interception and change of initial momentum in favor of the Buckeyes, Jaxon Smith-Njigba for a monster game including the one-handed catch and for so many first downs. C.J. Stroud for a manly effort when the running game did not work especially to start the second half, Garrett Wilson for a great effort and the spectacular TD catch and Ronnie Hickman for making so many tackles all over the place even when the Buckeyes could not stop the TTUN run game. Good individual efforts in the midst of a losing defensive team performance.

**PeyoteBuck:** The Bucks battled hard, so I'm not taking away any leaves. Smith-Njigba made some great catches as did Olave. Stroud threw some great passes. They didn't give up. I'm proud of them.

# BUCKEYE SPORTS .COM

## From The Message Board

**Following Ohio State's 42-27 loss to Michigan, we asked readers of the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum to post their single most disappointing aspect of the game. Here are some of the responses:**

"Inability to stop the run."

– Terrier Buck

"Defense! Mostly the defensive line and mostly the defensive ends. And mostly the defensive tackles. And whoever else was on the defensive line."

– BuckeyeScott

"The Buckeyes seemed to play at about 80 percent. That was not going to get the job done. Give Michigan credit for its 100-percent effort. They just wanted it more. Twenty years of frustration came out today."

– Byron McNutt

"The offense wasn't good, but the defense, at all three levels, was our kryptonite today. When Day didn't try the onside kick with 4½ minutes to go, I knew it was over."

– Michael Bauer

"At the end of the day, this was a very easy game to analyze. On both sides of the ball, the big boys on the line from Michigan played better than Ohio State's big boys."

– JDub

"Run defense."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"Defensive line play. Couldn't stop the run, no sacks. Larry Johnson must be sick to his stomach. If he isn't, I am."

– Poster That Harley Built

"I'm back to tackling. Very poor today. They ran at will with no one stopping their momentum. It was a long day and difficult to watch."

– John Lanning

"The second-half defense was the worst I've seen the Bucks play in 20 years. Time for a new defensive coaching staff."

– Bucks89

"To me the worst thing even more than the lack of adjustments or lack of passion on defense. The worst thing was our defensive staff watched U-M all year and came out with a 4-2-5 and tried to stop a running team. AWFUL."

– gold\_pants

"For me, it was the defense – specifically the run defense. I really thought they had that thing figured out, especially after limiting MSU's Walker to just 25 yards. Credit Michigan, I guess. They had a game plan and stuck to it for the most part, seeing if Ohio State could ever stop it. They didn't."

– Mark Rea, BSB

"The lack of adjustments against the TTUN run game in the second half was the most disappointing to me. Aren't we capable of making adjustments in the fourth quarter?"

– AnthonyBuckeye

"Stopping Haskins."

– PeyoteBuck

## Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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# OSU Loss Conjures Up Bit Of Déjà Vu

I spent a decent-sized chunk of my professional life covering the Ohio State football team during the John Cooper era. Coop had some great teams and some not-so-great teams, but he was generally fun to cover because he was congenial (more so after a win), quick with a quip (more so after a loss) and generally down-to-earth (win or lose).

It was no fun, however, covering those teams whenever they played Michigan. For those of the current generation who believe this year's loss to the Wolverines is merely an aberration, there was a time when Ohio State simply could not beat Michigan. During Cooper's tenure, the team was 2-10-1, futility that reached such a nadir the university president termed that tie as one of the program's greatest victories.

Four times during that 13-year stretch, the Buckeyes lost despite entering the game as the higher ranked team. Four losses came when Ohio State was ranked in the top five, including a 28-0 loss in 1993 when the No. 5 Buckeyes lost to the unranked Wolverines.

The knock on Cooper always was that he was an outsider. Having grown up in rural Tennessee, attended Iowa State and then made coaching stops everywhere from Oregon State, UCLA and Kansas to Kentucky, Tulsa and Arizona State, Cooper had no connection to the Ohio State football program and therefore couldn't fully grasp the true meaning of the OSU-Michigan rivalry.

By the time the reality of the situation finally did sink in, Cooper perhaps placed too much emphasis on The Game. As a result, no matter the relative talent level of either team, the Buckeyes typically entered the game tighter than a new shoe. Somehow, the more Cooper and his team wanted to beat Michigan, the harder it became to realize that goal.

More than once after a tough loss to the Wolverines, I heard a player say something like, "I don't know what happened. We had a good game plan and a good week of practice, but we just came out flat."

I have written many times in the past that college football is largely a game of emotion played by young men in their late teens and early 20s. In other words, anything could happen. Still, I always wondered how you could get to the most important game of the year and "come out flat." I finally decided that if you spent all of your emotional capital gearing up for just that one game, you'd have nothing left when the footballs begin to fly on Saturday afternoon.

That was a sentiment that pretty much evaporated during the coaching regimes of Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer. Each Ohio-born and bred, and each former Ohio State assistant coaches under Earle Bruce, Tressel and Meyer embraced the OSU-Michigan game with a healthy respect.

It was Tressel who installed the countdown clock to The Game in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, and it was Meyer who continued the banning of the color blue as well as the practice of X-ing out every "M" on every piece of signage in and around the WHAC. In other words, they "got it."

Still, you never got the idea either coach was consumed by the rivalry. They talked about it, joked about it and told stories about it. You knew they burned to win that game, but never indicated that burn was all that much hotter than it was to beat any opponent. Maybe because of that approach, Tressel and Meyer combined for a 16-1 record against Michigan.

Enter Ryan Day, who – before the 2017 season when he joined Meyer's staff in Columbus – had no connection whatsoever with Ohio State or the OSU-Michigan game. He might have watched it while growing up, but it's highly doubtful The Game was the topic of conversation among his Manchester, N.H., friends.

Still, Day had success in his first game as head coach vs. Michigan, scoring a 56-27 win in 2019 against a team that was on its way to a four-loss season. This year, with no College Football Playoff margin for error after an early-season loss to Oregon, one might have thought he was

at the 1, and then somehow kicked the end-zone pylon with the same foot as Gray fell with his full weight on top of Wilson.

It was a spectacular catch that provided the Buckeyes with a 10-7 lead – unfortunately their only lead of the game. But it was also the kind of catch I would imagine NFL owners witnessed immediately before checking their bank accounts.

## Random Thoughts

Circling back to the opinion that Day perhaps let the emotion of The Game get the better of him were red-zone decisions to go for field goals rather than touchdowns.

Michigan had seized the early momentum by driving 75 yards for the game's first touchdown and then forcing a three-and-out against the Ohio State offense. But when safety Bryson Shaw stepped in front of a Cade McNamara pass at the OSU 2-yard line and returned it 20 yards, the pendulum definitely began to swing the other way.

The Buckeyes systematically moved the ball down the field, mostly with the running game, and got a first-and-goal at the Michigan 5. From there, Miyan Williams bulled ahead for a 2-yard gain – the sixth straight running play for Ohio State – before Day suddenly went back to the passing game. Stroud couldn't connect with Olave, setting up third-and-goal from the 3.

A false-start penalty on right tackle Dawand Jones – one of three he committed during the game – pushed the Buckeyes back to the 8, and then Stroud was sacked for a 6-yard loss.

I have no problem with the decision to bring in Noah Ruggles for a 31-yard field goal on fourth-and-goal from the 14. My problem was with the second-down call that went away from a running attack that was just beginning to gain some traction.

At the end of the first half, the Buckeyes were in the red zone again, this time facing a second-and-10 at the Michigan 20-yard line with the clock winding under one minute to play. Stroud, who had completed 6 of 8 passes for 57 yards on the drive, was asked to hand the ball to freshman running back TreVeyon Henderson, who was stopped after a modest 3-yard gain.

That was one of a handful of head-scratching calls by Day on second-and-long during the game. Sixteen times during the game, the Buckeyes faced second-and-7 or longer, and five of those 15 times a running play was called. None of them gained more than 4 yards. Conversely, five of the passes in those situations went for first downs.

Getting back to the end of the first half, the Buckeyes were faced with third-and-7 at the Michigan 17 when Stroud completed a short pass to Smith-Njigba that advanced the ball only 4 yards. Armed with the knowledge his team would be getting the ball to start the second half, Day decided to send Ruggles into the game, and his 30-yard field goal narrowed Ohio State's deficit to a single point at 14-13 going into halftime.

But knowing your team was going to receive the second-half kickoff, I'm wondering why Day didn't keep his foot on the gas pedal and instruct his quarterback to throw into the end zone on third down and then again on fourth down if need be. Is there really that much of a difference going to the locker room trailing by one or by four when you know you're getting the ball to start the second half?

Maybe. Maybe not. But it seemed like the type of risk-reward situation tailor-made for Day to bank on his offense and try for the go-ahead touchdown.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

### Mark Rea



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#### 2021-22 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 41)

No. 1	Sept. 11	No. 13	Dec. 18
No. 2	Sept. 18	No. 14	Jan. 15
No. 3	Sept. 25	No. 15	Jan. 29
No. 4	Oct. 2	No. 16	Feb. 12
No. 5	Oct. 9	No. 17	March 5
No. 6	Oct. 23	No. 18	March 19
No. 7	Oct. 30	No. 19	April 2
No. 8	Nov. 6	No. 20	April 16
No. 9	Nov. 13	No. 21	May
No. 10	Nov. 20	No. 22	June
No. 11	Nov. 27	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 4	No. 24	August

The next issue (Dec. 18 cover date) will be mailed on Dec. 15.

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# OHIO STATE INSIDER

## QB Miller To Enter Transfer Portal

Ohio State redshirt freshman quarterback Jack Miller announced Nov. 28 on Twitter that he has made the decision to enter the transfer portal.

In his statement, Miller thanked his teammates, coaches, family and fans for accepting him since he joined the OSU program.

"I have decided to leave Ohio State and look at opportunities available to me to play the game I love," Miller wrote. "I will always love my brothers and my coaches and wish them great success, but for me it is time to get on the field. The coaches have prepared me to face the future head on and with confidence. I will always be thankful for the time they spent with me. Thank you all and God bless The Ohio State Buckeyes."

Miller appeared in six games for Ohio State in two seasons, completing 7 of 14 passing attempts for 101 yards. He also rushed for a 23-yard touchdown against Nebraska in 2020.

The Arizona native came to Ohio State

in the recruiting class of 2020 along with C.J. Stroud. Both were on the bench during the 2020 season behind Justin Fields, but Stroud won the starting job this season over Miller and freshman Kyle McCord.

This season, Miller appeared in four games as the team's third-string quarterback before receiving a short-term suspension following his arrest for operating a vehicle under the influence. He later pleaded guilty to a reduced charge of reckless operation and was reinstated to the football team. By the time he was reinstated, though, freshman Quinn Ewers was the third quarterback behind Stroud and McCord for Ohio State in the team's blow-out win over Michigan State. Miller was listed as unavailable against Michigan.

Miller was ranked the No. 13 pro-style quarterback in 2020 and the ninth-best prospect in Arizona coming out of high school. He was Ohio State's second commitment in 2020, verbally pledging to the Buckeyes on July 1, 2018.

Miller's departure leaves Ohio State with Stroud, McCord and Ewers for bowl game preparation as well as spring ball, although the Buckeyes will likely attempt to bring in another quarterback in their 2022 class due to Ewers' reclassification.

## OC Wilson Reported Top Candidate At Akron

Reporting by The Athletic's Zac Jackson and Bruce Feldman indicates that Akron is homing in on Ohio State offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson to fill its open head coaching job.

The Zips fired third-year head coach Tom

Arth on Nov. 2, ending his tenure with a 3-24 record.

Wilson, 60, has operated as an offensive coach at a number of schools over the years, including Miami (Ohio) from 1990-98, Northwestern from 1999-2001 and Oklahoma from 2002-10. Following his stint at Oklahoma, he took the head coaching job at Indiana after the Hoosiers fired Bill Lynch.

In six seasons with Indiana, Wilson finished with a 26-47 record. The Hoosiers' best year under Wilson was in 2015 when they finished 6-7 with a 44-41 loss to Duke in the Pinstripe Bowl. It was Indiana's first bowl appearance since 2007. The Hoosiers earned bowl eligibility the following season, but Wilson did not coach in the bowl game, having already parted ways with IU amid questions about his treatment of injured players.

Wilson was announced as Ohio State's offensive coordinator and tight ends coach later that same offseason and has remained in that role, overseeing some of the most prolific offenses in Ohio State history.

He was nominated this season for the Frank Broyles Award, which is given annually to the top assistant in college football. He has led an Ohio State offense deserving of recognition, and it ranks No. 1 in the country with 551.4 yards and 45.5 points per game. Wilson previously won the award at Oklahoma in 2008.

The other Broyles Award semifinalists are Cody Kennedy of Arkansas, Jeff Grimes of Baylor, Mike Denbrock of Cincinnati, Doug Belk of Houston, Jim Knowles of Oklahoma State, Jeff Leiby of Ole Miss, Mark



SONNY BROCKWAY

**MILLER ON THE MOVE** — OSU backup quarterback Jack Miller (9) announced one day after being ruled unavailable for the Michigan game that he was entering the transfer portal. The redshirt freshman from Chaparral High School in Scottsdale, Ariz., appeared in six games over two seasons for the Buckeyes.



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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, 42-27 win over Ohio State

\* - 2020 bowl team \*\* - at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

Whipple of Pittsburgh, Mike Elko of Texas A&M, Dan Lenning of Georgia, Phil Parker of Iowa, Josh Gattis of Michigan, Jess Leopp of UTSA, Warren Ruggiero of Wake Forest and Jim Leonhard of Wisconsin.

### 13 Buckeyes Can Claim Redshirt Year

The Ohio State coaching staff can redshirt up to 13 eligible scholarship players at the conclusion of the 2021-22 regular season.

In June 2018, the NCAA Division I Council approved a four-game redshirt rule which allowed FBS and FCS players to compete in a maximum of four games while remaining eligible for a redshirt at the end of the season.

According to that rule, Ohio State has 13 players who can redshirt after the Buckeyes play in their bowl game, including 10 freshmen and three veterans who played in four games or fewer due to injury.

The 10 eligible freshmen are Ewers, wide receiver Jaylen Ballard, offensive tackles Ben Christman and Donovan Jackson, defensive tackle Mike Hall, safety Jantzen Dunn, defensive backs Jakailin Johnson and Jaylen Johnson, tight end Sam Hart and defensive back Andre Turrentine.

Two other freshmen – McCord and cornerback Jordan Hancock – lost their redshirts in the final two weeks of the season. McCord played in his fifth game against Michigan State, while Hancock burned his redshirt during Ohio State's matchup with Michigan.

Senior defensive end Tyler Friday, senior safety Josh Proctor and junior center Harry Miller were injured and are also eligible for a redshirt season if they choose.

Additionally, linebacker Mitchell Melton and running back Marcus Crowley appeared in fewer than four games, but they each have already had a redshirt season. They could petition the NCAA in the future for an additional year of eligibility based upon a medical hardship.

### TE Ruckert Accepts Senior Bowl Invitation

Hours before his final regular-season game, the Senior Bowl announced that Ohio State tight end Jeremy Ruckert had accepted an invitation to play in its game, scheduled for Feb. 5, 2022, in Mobile, Ala.

Ruckert has caught 23 passes for 284 yards and three touchdowns this season and is one touchdown shy of Ohio State's career record for most scores by a tight end. He is expected to be among the top tight ends selected in the 2022 NFL draft and a likely middle-round pick according to initial mock drafts.

While Ruckert could return to Ohio State for one more season because of COVID eligibility, the Lindenhurst, N.Y., native has repeatedly indicated this would be his final year with the program.

The most recent Buckeyes to play in the Senior Bowl were defensive end Jonathon Cooper and linebackers Tuf Borland, Baron Browning and Justin Hilliard, who appeared in the 2021 contest.

### Stroud Earns Pair Of Big Ten Awards

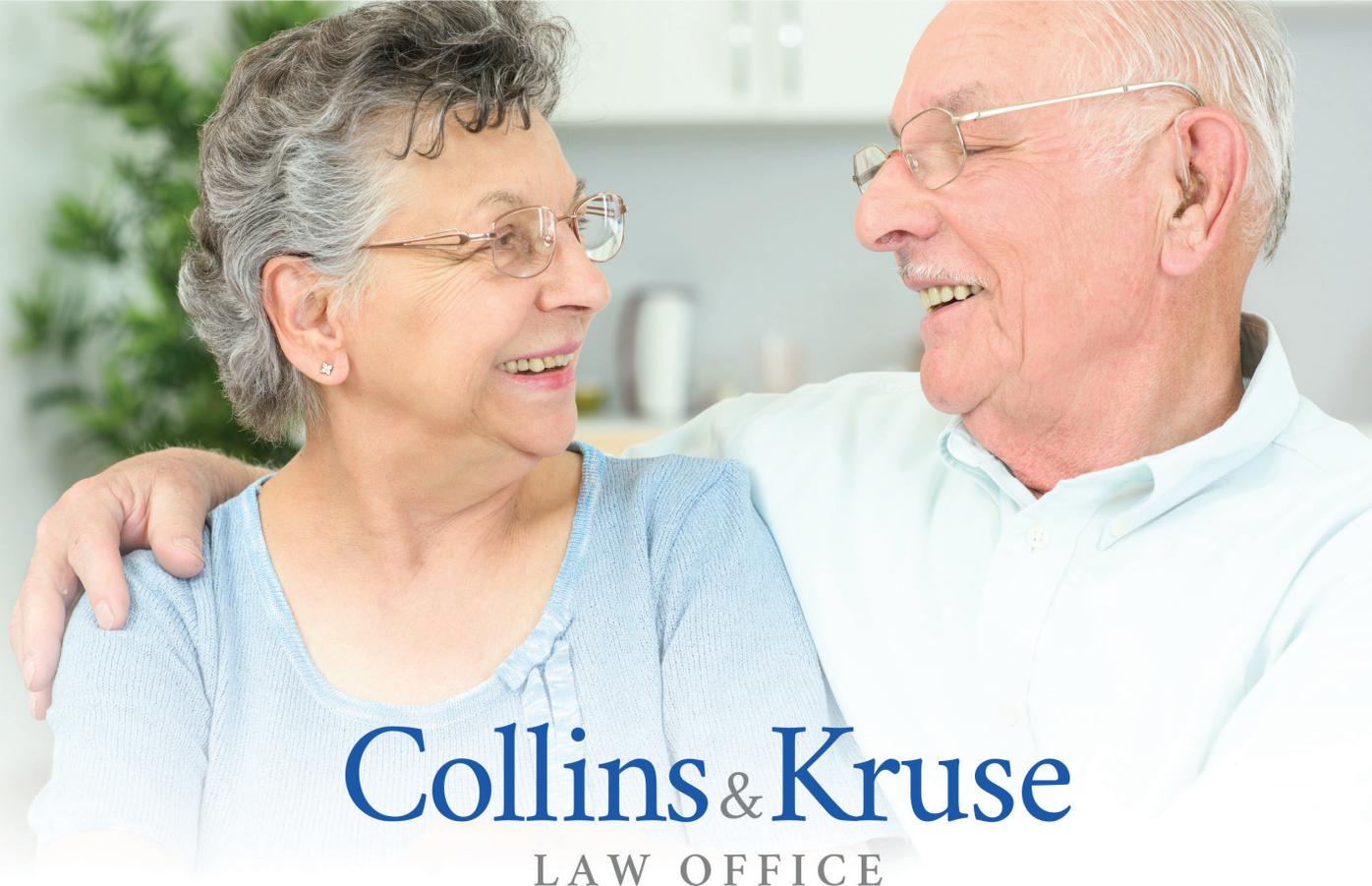
For the seventh time this season, Stroud earned the nod for Big Ten Freshman of the Week honors. The conference announced the redshirt freshman signal-caller had won

the award on Nov. 22 after his 32-of-35 passing performance for 432 yards and six scores during Ohio State's 56-7 blowout victory against then-No. 7 Michigan State.

Along with the freshman distinction, Stroud was named the league's Offensive Player of the Week, his second such award of the season and the second straight for the Buckeyes. Receiver Garrett Wilson won the honor the previous week.

Stroud was joined on the weekly list of honorees by Defensive Player of the Week Isaiah Gay, a linebacker from Illinois. During a losing effort against Iowa, Gay had 10 tackles, 5½ of which went for a loss, and one

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# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

sack.

Penn State kicker and punter Jordan Stout won his second consecutive Specialist of the Week title with an eight-punt performance that had the Nittany Lions down four of his kicks inside the 10-yard-line and six inside the 20. Stout also hit touchbacks on all of his kickoff attempts.

## Walk-On LB Out With 'Long-Term' Injury

Ohio State's linebackers room, already depleted after a preseason injury to Melton

and a pair of in-season transfers from Dallas Gant and K'Vaughan Pope, will be down another man for its bowl game.

On Nov. 23, OSU head coach Ryan Day confirmed that walk-on linebacker Cade Kacherski, contributing as a reserve and on

special teams, would miss significant time with an injury he suffered Nov. 20 against Michigan State.

## Next BSB Print Issue Mails Dec. 15

The next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, our big Pre-Bowl issue, is scheduled to be mailed on Dec. 15. There is no need to wait until then to receive the latest news on the Buckeyes, especially with football recruiting's early signing day rapidly approaching.

The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff posts news daily at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com website. You will get any breaking recruiting news, as well as information on Ohio State's bowl destination and opponent. You'll also get the latest from head coach Ryan Day and his Buckeyes, basketball news and reports on all the other Buckeye teams.

In addition to 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.

## From The Pages Of BSB

### 40 Years Ago - 1981

Ohio State showed, with one superb drive in the fourth quarter, how a team could be beaten badly in the statistics department but still win a game.

Senior quarterback Art Schlichter, making his final regular-season appearance for the Scarlet and Gray, engineered a 13-play, 80-yard scoring drive that enabled the Buckeyes to rally for a 14-9 victory against Michigan in Ann Arbor. OSU scratched out the five-point win despite the Wolverines outgaining and outplaying their foes from Columbus in every measurable facet of the game, short of the only one that ultimately mattered.

With the win came a share of the Big Ten championship for Ohio State. The Buckeyes wound up with a 6-2 league mark - the same as Iowa, a 36-7 winner against Michigan State on the same day - while recording an overall 8-3 campaign.

It was the Buckeye signal-caller who saved the day for Earle Bruce's squad in the final moments, leading that lengthy drive and capping it with one of the finest plays of his career. Facing a third-and-goal from the 6, Schlichter took the ball to the right on an option and appeared to be stopped at the 10. But he faked a cut inside and stepped back to the right to slip into the end zone, aided by a Vaughn Broadnax block.

### 35 Years Ago - 1986

Ohio State watched as its Rose Bowl hopes faded away in front of an all-time record crowd of 90,674 in Ohio Stadium at the hands of Michigan, surrendering the outright Big Ten title in the process of a 26-24 loss. With the loss, the Buckeyes would instead settle for a co-championship and a trip Jan. 1 to the Cotton Bowl.

As Bruce would put it after the game, his team did not play with the same degree of toughness from start to finish.

"The game is 60 minutes long," the OSU head coach said. "That's the thing about football. You've got to be as strong at the end of the game as you are at the beginning."

A ray of sunshine did appear on the horizon in the final period. A Jim Karsatos pass found its way into the hands of Cris Carter for a touchdown which left the Buckeyes two points short with 9:42 still to play.

A chance for victory, however, went astray later in the quarter. Facing a fourth-and-2 from the Michigan 28, OSU kicker Matt Frantz was wide left on what would have been a 45-yard game-winning field goal.

### 30 Years Ago - 1991

Less than 24 hours before Ohio State lost for the fourth straight season to Michigan, OSU athletic director Jim Jones determined the fate of his head football coach.

Jones said he had recommended to university president Dr. E. Gordon Gee that head coach John Cooper be given a three-year extension on his contract, which still had one year remaining.

Ohio State announced the move in a press release given out to reporters 30 minutes before the Buckeyes and Wolverines kicked off in Ann Arbor - and it was just about the only positive news OSU could generate all afternoon.

Michigan rolled to a 31-3 romp over the Buckeyes, a victory capped by eventual Heisman Trophy winner Desmond Howard, who broke through the Ohio State punt defense for a 93-yard score. Howard then put an exclamation point on the return by flashing a Heisman pose in the end zone.

### 25 Years Ago - 1996

The 21st-ranked Wolverines upset No. 2 Ohio State, 13-9, in the regular-season finale for both teams Nov. 23. The win marked the third time in four years that Michigan had spoiled an unbeaten season for the Buckeyes.

"It's an awful feeling," OSU senior fullback Matt Calhoun said. "I had hoped I would never have to feel it again, and here I am, feeling it again."

Ohio State, which fell to 10-1 overall and claimed a share of the Big Ten championship with Northwestern at 7-1, had visions of the national championship. But in the end, that might have been the problem.

"It is obvious they were focused on the national championship when they should have been focused on us," Michigan center Rod Payne said.

The Buckeyes saw an early 9-0 lead close when Tai Streets broke past Shawn Springs, who had slipped on the play, to score Michigan's lone touchdown of the day early in the third quarter. After two field goals and nothing offensively for the Buckeyes, Michigan had once again claimed victory.

"Our seniors have had a great career, but guys, you have to beat Michigan," Cooper said.

### 20 Years Ago - 2001

In Value City Arena, 310 days prior, Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel had called his shot for his first trip to Ann Arbor to take on Michigan. The newly appointed Buckeye head coach told a thrilled crowd, "I can assure you that you will be proud of our young people in the classroom, in the community, and most especially in 310 days in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on the football field."

Shortly after his young people had proven him prescient with a 26-20 victory against the Wolverines, Tressel took the opportunity to set the record straight when a reporter asked him about the "promise" he made in January.

"No, we didn't promise any win," Tressel said. "We promised they would be proud of us, whether we won the game or not. By the way our kids played, you would have been proud of the way they did."

The Buckeyes pulled off the feat without starting quarterback Steve Bellisari, still suspended after a DUI charge a week earlier. In his place, backup Craig Krenzel led the Buckeyes to a 23-0 halftime lead.

### 15 Years Ago - 2006

The only thing outshining the bright neon lights of Broadway on a chilly December night in New York City was the high-wattage smile of Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith, who walked away with the 2006 Heisman Trophy, symbolic of college football's most outstanding player.

Smith became the sixth Buckeye to win the prestigious award and, thanks to Archie Griffin's back-to-back wins in 1974 and '75, allowed OSU to tie Notre Dame and USC with the most awards won - seven - in the 72-year history of the award.

When asked if winning the Heisman was a dream come true, Smith smiled and replied, "Honestly, I haven't spent that much time dreaming about it, but now that it's here, I'll dream about it tonight."

### 10 Years Ago - 2011

Urban Meyer was announced Nov. 28 as Ohio State's 24th head football coach, ending a search that never really spanned beyond the former Bowling Green, Florida and Utah head coach. An Ohio native who coached under Bruce in Columbus as a graduate assistant, Meyer was happy to be back in town, and the Buckeyes were thrilled to have him.

## 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.

had a great attitude all year, and I think because of that, he's playing late in the season for us. He's an important part of our defense. He's worked hard, and his attitude has been great, and here we are with him in some of our biggest games."

Young was credited with one assisted tackle against Michigan.

### Stroud, Ruggles Named Finalists For Awards

Following his nearly perfect passing performance against Michigan State, Stroud was named a finalist for the Davey O'Brien Award, given annually to the top quarterback in college football.

Stroud joined Pittsburgh's Kenny Pickett

and Alabama's Bryce Young as finalists. The Ohio State QB has thrown for 3,862 passing yards and 38 touchdowns against only five interceptions while completing 70.9 percent of his passes.

Stroud would be just the second O'Brien winner from Ohio State. Troy Smith won the award in 2006, the same year he claimed the university's seventh Heisman Trophy when he finished with 2,542 yards, 30 touchdowns and six interceptions.

Meanwhile, OSU kicker Noah Ruggles has been named one of three finalists for the Lou Groza Collegiate Place-Kicker Award alongside Oklahoma's Gabe Brkic and Mich-

Continued On Page 8

"It looks like it's probably more of a long-term deal," Day said when asked about Kacherski's injury.

It is Ohio State's policy not to comment on the specifics of injuries, but it appeared medial trainers were attending to Kacherski's knee before he was helped off the field.

With Kacherski's injury, Ohio State's linebacker position sits with only a handful of tested contributors, with Palaie Gaoteote IV on and off the availability list throughout the season.

Leading the way is converted running back Steele Chambers, who has developed into a star as the season has gone on. Chambers had six tackles, including a team-high five solos, against Michigan. Alongside him as a starter against the Wolverines was Cody Simon, who was banged up the week before against Michigan State. Simon returned to register seven tackles vs. Michigan.

Sophomore Tommy Eichenberg, who played in Simon's place against the Spartans, has been the third man in the pecking order with senior Teradja Mitchell seeing his late-season contribution limited mostly to special teams despite starting the season as one of Ohio State's top linebackers. Gaoteote and senior walk-on Ryan Batsch contribute in spot roles as needed.

Ohio State supplements the linebacker position with its bullet and cover safety roles, taking the third linebacker off the field to make room for such players as Ronnie Hickman, Kourt Williams and Craig Young.



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"Craig is a little bit bigger and gives us more in the run game based on some of the personnel we were getting," Day said. "He's

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# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 7

igan's Jake Moody.

Ruggles has converted 18 of 19 field-goal attempts this season and is perfect on 68 extra-point tries. Mike Nugent in 2004 is Ohio State's only winner of the Groza Award.

The winners of the O'Brien and Groza awards will be announced on ESPN as part of the College Football Awards Show, set for Dec. 9 at 7 p.m.

After being named a semifinalist for the Biletnikoff Award as college football's top receiver, Chris Olave did not make the finalist list. Likewise, Stroud was not named one of the finalists for the Maxwell Award (best player), and running back TreVeyon Henderson was not among the top three finalists for the Doak Walker Award (best running back).

## OSU Falls To No. 7 In AP, Coaches' Polls

After its 42-27 loss to Michigan in Ann Arbor on Nov. 27, Ohio State dropped to No. 7 in both The Associated Press writers' and the AFCA coaches' polls. The Buckeyes had been No. 2 in the AP rankings and No. 3 in the coaches' poll.

Georgia continued to hold the top spot unanimously in both polls. Michigan moved up to No. 2 in the AP rankings followed by Cincinnati, Alabama and Oklahoma State. Notre Dame, Ohio State, Ole Miss, Baylor and Oregon round out the writers' top 10.

The coaches have Alabama in the No. 2 spot followed by Michigan. Cincinnati is fourth followed by Oklahoma State. Spots six through 10 mirror that of the writers' poll.

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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.

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

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Michigan State is No. 11 in the AP poll and No. 13 according to the coaches, while Big Ten West champion Iowa sits at No. 12 in the coaches' poll and No. 15 in the AP rankings.

## Corso Opines Day Is 'NFL-Ready'

Before the Ohio State and Michigan game on Nov. 27, ESPN's Lee Corso offered a theory that others, including Pro Football Hall of Famer Keyshawn Johnson, have voiced this season – that Day won't stay in Columbus much longer.

"Speaking of Ohio State, fans better get happy with him," Corso said during the "College GameDay" telecast, "because he's not going to be with them long. He's going to the NFL whenever he's ready. He's NFL-ready. Ohio State fans better get used to it because he's going. I'm telling you."

Meanwhile, fellow GameDay analyst Desmond Howard jokingly pushed a theory that Johnson mentioned during a radio show claiming that the Chicago Bears will replace head coach Matt Nagy with Day to continue to groom former Ohio State and current Bears quarterback Justin Fields.

The GameDay crew continued its discussion with Howard saying the move would make perfect sense for the Bears organization and Day, who has been rumored for NFL head-coaching positions since he began his tenure with the Buckeyes.

"You're trying to chase Ryan Day off," longtime analyst Kirk Herbstreit said before the pregame show cut to a commercial. "He ain't going nowhere."

## George Named Semifinalist For Pro Hall Of Fame

Former Ohio State running back Eddie

George was named Nov. 23 one of 26 modern-era semifinalists for the Pro Football Hall of Fame class of 2022.

"It's such an honor to be considered for the Pro Football Hall of Fame," George said during an appearance on NFL Network minutes after being named a semifinalist. "It's something that is completely out of your control. You try not to think about it, but to be considered for this – a semifinalist – is tremendous.

"I'm truly, truly floored and honored. This is not an easy fraternity to get into. Just to be considered for it is an accomplishment unto itself."

George rushed for 10,441 yards and 68 touchdowns during his nine-year NFL career with the Houston Oilers, Tennessee Titans and Dallas Cowboys. He was the 1996 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year and a four-time Pro Bowler, and he had his No. 27 jersey re-

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tired by the Oilers/Titans franchise.

Before his time in the pros, George was a Heisman Trophy-winning running back for the Buckeyes. In his four seasons at Ohio State, George rushed for 3,768 yards and 44 touchdowns while catching 63 passes for 534 yards and a score. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2012.

After he officially retired from football in 2006, George returned to Ohio State to get his bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and later earned his master's degree from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern. In 2021, he accepted a head-coaching position at Tennessee State, where he finished with a 5-6 record in his first season.

Other first-time semifinalists include wide receivers Anquan Boldin, Andre Johnson and Steve Smith, defensive lineman Vince Wilfork, linebackers DeMarcus Ware and Robert Mathis, and kick returner Devin Hester.

The 2022 class of nominees will be reduced to 15 finalists in January before the selection committee chooses the honorees, who will be enshrined in Canton in August 2022.

**OSU O-Line Named Award Semifinalist**

The Ohio State offensive line is in contention to be recognized as the nation's best after being named one of 13 semifinalists for this year's Joe Moore Award, given to the nation's most outstanding offensive line unit.

Nicholas Petit-Frere, Thayer Munford, Luke Wypler, Paris Johnson Jr. and Dawand Jones create the offensive line that has allowed only 43 tackles for loss and 17 sacks during the 12-game regular season.

"In an offense that thrives on deep developing play-action passes, this unit does an outstanding job of making pass protection physical and sustaining blocks for the dura-

tion," the award's selection committee said in a release. "In addition to athleticism, this unit's best trait is the way they see and read defenses through one set of eyes. It feels like they can step up when it matters. It is very clear this staff believes in and expects this unit to perform in the 'Gotta Have It' situations."

The Joe Moore Award finalists will be

named Dec. 7, and the eventual winner will be recognized during the ensuing weeks during a surprise on-campus visit to the winning unit's school.

The award is named for longtime Pittsburgh and Notre Dame offensive line coach Joe Moore, who developed a number of All-Americans and future Pro Football Hall of Famers during his 20-year career.

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# OSU Outmanned On Both Sides Of Ball

Continued From Page 1

there is a lot of pressure. And that's the way you want it. You want this game with everything riding on it at their place. It's going to be a wild environment, and again, that's why you come to Ohio State."

That same suffering that haunted Cooper's tenure and inspired the feeling of immense, almost desperate intensity in Columbus had for years befallen the Wolverines. Look no further than head coach Jim Harbaugh's diatribe about how Michigan will beat Ohio State "or die trying" or his introduction of Buckeye-specific drills to finish every practice session of the 2021 season, including the "Beat Ohio" drill, a physical red-zone test.

"It's a run drill," Harbaugh explained. "Run drill and a run-stopping drill. All runs are between the tackles. (It's designed around) physicality and emphasis on Ohio State and keeping them on our minds every day of practice. Like I explained a couple of times, this is a game where you've got to channel Bo (Schembechler), you've got to channel the blocking and the tackling, sustaining blocks, getting off blocks and making tackles."

On Nov. 27, with perfect Big Ten weather and as clear a shot as ever at the No. 2 Buckeyes with a College Football Playoff spot on the line, Harbaugh and his No. 5 Wolverines won a 42-27 decision and exorcised the demons that two decades of losing had created in emphatic, destructive fashion.

In front of a packed Michigan Stadium, 111,156-strong, with light snow festooning the Big House all afternoon, the Wolverines did what seemed for so long impossible and knocked Ohio State from atop the Big Ten and out of the College Football Playoff race. It sparked a celebration that spilled onto the field for a storming years in the making and even sprawled through the press box as a pack of Michigan coaches spilled out of their booth and fired off some choice words during their trek to the elevators, in-

cluding, but not limited to, "Let's (freaking) go!"

In so doing, the Wolverines snapped an eight-game Ohio State winning streak and a four-year streak of Big Ten titles in Columbus. For the first time since the 2011 advent of the Big Ten Championship Game, Michigan will fill one of two spots in the Dec. 4 title game in Indianapolis opposite West Division champion Iowa for a chance at the spot in the four-team CFP field that Ohio State surrendered with its loss.

Michigan also secured what Harbaugh described after the game as his best win in Ann Arbor, which, given the importance of the game previously stated, is difficult to argue.

"It feels like the best win," Harbaugh said. "It sure does. This is one that will go long into the night. There's a lot of joy in Ann Arbor, and we're going to let them enjoy this one. Tomorrow we'll get on to the Big Ten championship."

Michigan beat Ohio State, ironically enough, in just about the same way the Buckeyes had beaten the Wolverines so many times since Tressel's arrival. U-M pounded the football at every opportunity, grinding Ohio State's once- and now again-maligned defense into a fine paste across four quarters, driving down the field for scores on four separate occasions in the second half.

When the Buckeyes needed stops, trailing 28-20 at the 14:05 mark of the fourth quarter and then 35-27 with only 4:45 remaining, the defense couldn't provide them, allowing touchdown drives of 66 and 63 yards. Hassan Haskins' 28 carries for 169 yards was impressive enough, but it seemed like he was able to pick up yardage every time Michigan needed him to, and he found the end zone five times – an OSU-Michigan game record.

"You feel like they control the game when that happens," Day said. "They just stayed on schedule the whole time, and that was the recipe I'm sure they had to win the game. We weren't able to stop that, and



SONNY BROCKWAY

**CONTESTED CATCH** – OSU receiver Garrett Wilson (5) takes the ball away from Michigan cornerback Vincent Gray (4) during Big Ten action Nov. 27 at Michigan Stadium. Wilson's acrobatic catch went for a 25-yard touchdown and gave the Buckeyes a brief 10-7 lead early in the second quarter of an eventual 42-27 loss.

that's very, very disappointing, especially when you know they're going to do it. We've got to take a hard look and figure out why that was."

Meanwhile the Buckeye offense was faced time and time again with lengthy passing downs for C.J. Stroud and his trio of star wideouts to overcome.

To their credit, they usually did. Stroud was 34 of 49 passing for 349 yards and two scores without a large mistake to his name, though airmailed passes to Chris Olave and Jeremy Ruckert in the end zone did serve as slight blemishes. Generally speaking, though, Stroud did what Ohio State asked of him.

The Buckeyes converted on 8 of 18 third-down tries, including six via the pass. When Ohio State needed a big conversion, Stroud and a pairing with one of Olave, Garrett Wilson or Jaxon Smith-Njigba was reliably on the table. He even ran the ball when faced with heavy pressure and open space, breaking through the Michigan defense for a 15-yard touchdown keeper only to have it called back for holding.

Those situations came about far too often for an offense that had so often preached the importance of staying ahead of schedule. The previously dominant offensive line allowed three sacks to Michigan's star end Aidan Hutchinson and eight tackles behind the line of scrimmage on the day. Another 10 penalties for 66 yards did little to help Ohio State's case, frequently suffering false starts in spots that it could ill afford to.

Just as Day had said all season, the Buckeyes had to handle their business situationally – on third down, in the red zone, and on their own side of the field – and largely, Michigan did it better in Ann Arbor.

## Defensive Woes Doom OSU

The real pain for the Buckeyes in the loss, outside of the standard fare that this rivalry draws, came from the revamped defense. Behind the difficulty of getting Michigan's offense off the field was one of the core fundamentals of football, the same that has defined so many renditions of The Game before this one and will continue to for years to come. Ohio State was beaten badly by Michigan in the trenches, especially on defense.

The Buckeyes didn't register a single sack all game and hardly flustered quarterback Cade McNamara, who did exactly what Michigan asked of him in comfortably and competently managing the game. He made one critical miscue in launching a bad

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first-period interception, but he was largely the quarterback Harbaugh needed him to be. He completed 13 of his 19 passes for 159 yards and provided a few spark plays including a beautiful pass over Sainristill's back shoulder on the Wolverines' second scoring drive of the third quarter, but he was largely just a cog in a power-heavy offensive game plan put together by offensive coordinator Josh Gattis.

Gattis dialed up counters, fakes off those counters and play-actions at the perfect time seemingly all game. He set McNamara up for easy swing passes, kept tight ends and halfbacks involved in the passing game, and recognized where his bread was buttered, hitting the Buckeyes with that hefty dosage of the ground game throughout the afternoon.

Harbaugh said his team was confident in its running attack from the start, noting that few had really tried to grind the Buckeyes down on the ground.

"It was dominant," the U-M head coach said. "It was dominant in the offensive line, no question about it. There was continual movement up front by the guys and Hassan Haskins — they thought they saw a ghost, but they didn't. It was No. 25. He ran with great purpose and great ability. Five touchdowns.

"Back in spring ball, that was something we thought we could do. In preparing for the game as we have been all season, it didn't seem like anybody had tried (running on them). We felt confident that our offensive line could move them, our receivers could block and our backs could be incredible as they have been all season."

For Ohio State, it looked at times like a return to those early-season issues that it thought it had left behind. The Buckeyes were beaten badly off the ball by Oregon in week two but had seemingly turned a corner, specifically against the run. After shutting down then-Heisman front-runner Kenneth Walker III against Michigan State the week before, the Buckeye defense was able to confidently tout itself as one of the nation's most improved, but Michigan sent it crashing back to Earth.

"You make progress and you keep growing, but any week if you don't show up and do it, this is what happens," Day said. "This six-game run was a real run for us, week in and week out, and there was a lot of good play in there. But especially this game, if you don't bring it in all areas, you can get exposed. Just like you see week in and week out, this is what can happen if you don't play your best games. We did not play our best game today, so this is what you get."

### Moving Forward

With Ohio State out of the Big Ten title race and — barring a multitude of miracles — the CFP hunt, the attention can now likely shift into a critical offseason for Day and his program.

The Buckeyes have a major bowl game left to play, perhaps the Rose Bowl if Michigan wins the league title game and represents the Big Ten in the CFP, or another major at-large bowl such as the Sugar Bowl. But with the College Football Playoff spotlight pushing every other postseason game into the shadows, much of the next

month will be spent seeking out answers.

"There's not much to say because you don't plan for this type of thing," the OSU head coach said when asked what he says to the team now and moving forward. "We'll have to get on the bus, head back to Columbus and figure out what's next. We haven't really had time to process all of that, but I know for the younger guys who have had to play a lot this year, there's a lot to be learned from this. We're not there right now. This thing is still fresh and it hurts, so we'll get back on the bus, head to Columbus and figure out what's next."

Day is now 1-1 against Michigan in two tries and has seemingly in the process drawn the full attention of the Wolverines, many of whom spoke at length about feeling disrespected by Ohio State's approach to The Game during the last two years. Hutchinson alluded to a video that freshman defensive tackle Tyleik Williams posted of him stepping on a blue U-M No. 9 jersey in the days before kickoff.

Harbaugh spoke more generally about Ohio State's posture toward the game, saying that it spurred extra fire for the Wolverines. He didn't mention specifically a video that leaked in 2020 of Day telling his locker room that he wanted to "hang 100 points" on Michigan, but he certainly motioned toward it.

When asked about the meaning of beating the Buckeyes after some of that trash talk, Harbaugh said, "The things you're thinking are the same I'm thinking, but we're going to move on with humble hearts and take the high road despite what people have said that spurred us on even more."

Shortly thereafter, he reversed his decision to take the high road, ending his press conference with a shot at Day that could be heard all the way to Columbus — one that might find its way onto the walls of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center sooner rather than later.

"Sometimes people are born on third base, thinking they hit a triple," Harbaugh concluded. "Maybe they didn't."

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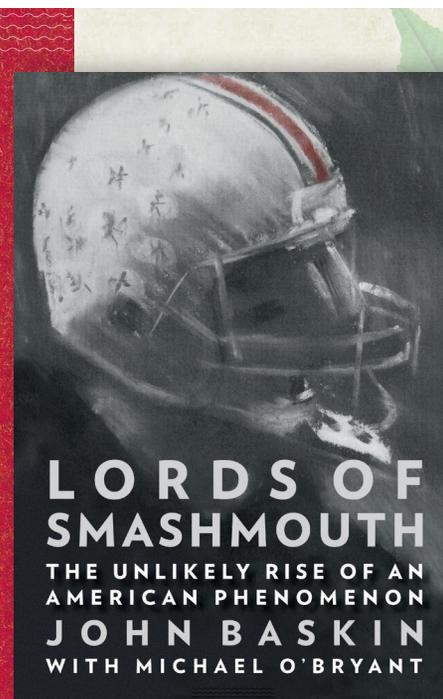
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# Passing Attack Remains Bright Spot Despite Loss

Lost amid the despair of the first loss to archrival Michigan in a decade was the fact that the Ohio State passing game continued to put up record numbers.

Redshirt freshman C.J. Stroud finished the game with a 34-for-49 performance, good for 394 yards and two touchdowns. With a bowl game remaining in the season, Stroud has completed 280 of 395 attempts for 3,862 yards and 38 touchdowns.

The completions, attempts and yardage rank second all-time in program history while the touchdown total is third. Dwayne Haskins set each of those records in 2018 with 373 completions, 533 attempts, 4,831 yards and 50 touchdowns. Justin Fields is second on the single-season TD list with 41 in 2019.

Meanwhile, Stroud's trio of receiving stars continued their impressive play. Sophomore slot receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba was targeted 12 times and caught 11 passes for 127 yards. Junior wideout Garrett Wilson gathered in 10 receptions for 119 yards and a touchdown, and senior Chris Olave added seven catches for 88 yards.

Smith-Njigba and Wilson became only the second OSU receiving tandem to crack the century mark in yardage against the Wolverines. Ironically, the first time it happened, it also came during an OSU loss in Ann Arbor. Michael Jenkins had 132 yards while Santonio Holmes had 121 during a 35-21 defeat to Michigan in 2003.

Meanwhile, Smith-Njigba's 11 receptions were just one shy of the Ohio State record vs. Michigan. Brian Stablein caught 12 balls for 111 yards during the 13-13 tie in 1992.

Smith-Njigba upped his season total to 80 receptions for 1,259 yards. The catch total is third behind Parris Campbell (90 in 2018) and David Boston (85 in 1998), and the yardage figure also ranks third, trailing only Boston (1,435 in 1998) and Terry Glenn (1,411 in 1995).

Wilson upped his season total to 1,058 yards, making him only the seventh OSU player with a 1,000-yard receiving season

and allowing him to join Smith-Njigba as the only duo in program history with at least 1,000 yards in the same season.

## GAME NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Additionally, Wilson caught a pass for the 32nd consecutive game in which he has played. That ties him with Boston for the fourth-longest such streak in OSU history. Gary Williams (1979-82) established the school mark when he went 48 straight games with a catch, a record matched by K.J. Hill (2016-19). Jenkins (2001-03) has the program's third-longest streak at 39 games.

With his performance against the Wolverines, Olave now has 176 career catches for 2,711 yards. He is third all-time in receptions behind Hill (201) and Boston (191) and fifth on the career yardage list trailing Jenkins (2,898), Boston (2,855), Williams (2,792) and Cris Carter (2,725, 1984-86).

### Too Many Flags

Another bugaboo that returned to plague the Buckeyes against Michigan was penalties. Ohio State committed 10 penalties vs. the Wolverines, worth 66 yards, and finished the regular season as the third-most penalized team in the Big Ten. OSU was flagged 78 times for 700 lost yards, an average of 58.3 – more than half a football field – per game.

It marked the second time this season the Buckeyes had reached double digits in penalties. They had 10 during the 33-24 win against Penn State on Oct. 30. But that was a problem that seemed to have gone away in recent weeks. The team was flagged only five times against Purdue and then just once vs. Michigan State, and that was a false start on the first play of the game.

Seven of the 10 penalties against Michigan were committed by the offensive line. There were five false starts, including three against right tackle Dawand Jones as he struggled with the speed of Michigan's pass-rushers, most notably defensive end Aidan Hutchinson, who had three of his team's four sacks. There were also a pair of holding infractions, each against left tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere.

After the game, Stroud said he blamed himself for the false-start penalties because he couldn't make himself heard over the partisan crowd of 111,156 at Michigan Stadium.

"I'm not using this as an excuse, but I lost my voice earlier in the week, so I was trying my hardest to yell," a hoarse Stroud told reporters, saying he had been feeling the effects of an undisclosed illness for most of the week leading up to the game. "So I don't blame it on my line. I blame it on me for getting sick. I tried my hardest to be as loud as I possibly could. But when you get yourself out of whack like that, it's hard to bounce back."

Petit-Frere was having none of the blame game.

"First of all, it's never any individual's fault," the fourth-year junior said. "It's a team effort, a team game. It's one of the last real team games in all of sports, so I would like to say, first of all, that this is not C.J.'s fault. It's our fault as a team and as a unit."

"We talk about this every single week, every single day. When we go out on the field, the only team that can beat us is ourselves."

### Record Vs. Ranked

With its loss to No. 5 Michigan, Ohio State's all-time record dropped to 86-58-8 against opponents ranked in the top 10. That is a pretty good .592 winning percentage, but that number pales in comparison to the Buckeyes' record against top-10 teams since the beginning of the 2014 season.

During the last eight seasons, OSU has an 18-6 record against top-10 opponents, and that is a .750 winning percentage. Counting only regular-season games during that span,

the Buckeyes are 11-3 (.786) against top-10 competition.

Not only is Ohio State successful in top-10 matchups, the Buckeyes typically have no trouble lighting up the scoreboard in those games. Beginning with a 49-37 win against No. 8 Michigan State in 2014, OSU has averaged 34.8 points per game in 24 games against top 10 teams.

Against top-five competition, the sledding has been a little rougher. The loss to Michigan dropped the Buckeyes to 6-5 since 2014 against teams ranked among the top five in one of the two major polls or the College Football Playoff rankings. Unfortunately, that record now includes losses in five of the last eight games in which OSU has faced a top-five opponent.

Ohio State scored a pair of top-five victories during the 2014 national championship run with a 42-35 win against No. 1 Alabama in the playoff semifinals and a 42-20 win against No. 2 Oregon in the title game.

The Buckeyes didn't play another top-five team until 2016 when they took a 30-27 win in double overtime against No. 3 Michigan. That season also included a 31-0 loss to No. 2 Clemson in a CFP semifinal game played in Glendale, Ariz. It was the first shutout loss suffered by Ohio State in 23 seasons.

OSU suffered a 31-16 loss to No. 5 Oklahoma in 2017 but later that season defeated No. 2 Penn State in a 39-38 thriller. The following season, the Buckeyes took a 62-39 win against fourth-ranked Michigan, their largest point total in program history against a top-five opponent.

In 2019, the Buckeyes absorbed another top-five loss against Clemson when the No. 3 Tigers won a 29-23 decision in another CFP semifinal game played in Glendale. But Ohio State finally got its revenge last season, rolling to a 49-28 win against No. 2 Clemson in a playoff semifinal in New Orleans. That was followed by a 52-24 loss to top-ranked Alabama in the national championship game played in Miami.

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# Game Analysis

## What Worked Well

Ohio State managed to stay on track with its offensive attack for much of the game, thanks mostly to a never-quit attitude from quarterback C.J. Stroud.

Hoarse from fighting an undisclosed illness during the days leading up to the game, Stroud rebounded from a shaky first-quarter performance to pretty much have his way with the U-M secondary. Despite a slippery ball caused by a blustery snow that swirled around Michigan Stadium all afternoon, Stroud still managed to complete 34 of 49 attempts for 394 yards and two touchdowns.

That performance is all the more impressive with the realization that the redshirt freshman was just 2 of 5 for 19 yards in the first quarter, and he was the target of an ears-pinned-back Michigan pass rush for most of the second half when the Buckeyes all but abandoned their running game.

## What Didn't Work

From Michigan's opening statement, a 10-play march that ended on a perfectly-executed misdirection handoff from QB Cade McNamara to receiver A.J. Henning for a 14-yard touchdown, the Ohio State defense never seemed to get a stop when it needed it most.

The Wolverines mauled the OSU front, allowing for attacks up the middle as well as on the boundaries that led to 297 yards on the ground for Michigan. Most of the heavy lifting was done by Hassan Haskins, who carried 28 times for 169 yards and a program record-tying five touchdowns. No Michigan player had

ever scored more than three TDs in a game against Ohio State.

OSU made very little penetration into the Michigan line and got only token pressure on McNamara, who was asked to throw just 19 times. He completed 13 of those attempts for 159 yards, an average of 12.2 yards per completion. Backup J.J. McCarthy completed his only attempt for 31 yards, boosting Michigan's average per completion to 13.6 yards for the game.

Mix that in with an average of 7.2 yards on 41 rushing attempts, and you begin to tell the story of a long afternoon in Ann Arbor for the Ohio State defense.

## Play Of The Game

Ryan Day played things conservatively at the end of the first half, electing to kick a 30-yard field goal rather than rolling the dice on a fourth-and-3 at the Michigan 13. The coach's strategy was sound in that a field goal made it a one-point game, and the Buckeyes were getting the ball to begin the second half.

Unfortunately, that strategy blew up in Day's face when the Wolverines forced a three-and-out series on that first second-half possession by the Buckeyes. The third-and-2 play was especially excruciating when OSU center Luke Wypler was late coming over to pick off U-M linebacker Josh Ross coming through the hole, and Ross stuffed TreVeyon Henderson for a 2-yard loss.

The Wolverines converted each of their next two possessions into touchdowns, leaving the Buckeyes playing a losing game of catch-up the rest of the way.

– Mark Rea

## 'GameDay' Experience

Ohio State now has an all-time record of 36-16 when playing at a site that hosts ESPN's "College GameDay." With 52 appearances in front of ESPN's long-running kickoff show, Ohio State has appeared more than any other program. Alabama is second with 50 appearances, and Florida is a distant third with 41.

Michigan has now appeared 34 times, including 12 times as host, and has a "College GameDay" record of 17-17.

The most frequent matchups are Alabama vs. LSU and Ohio State vs. Penn State, each of which has been featured 11 times. This year marked the seventh appearance for the OSU-Michigan game, and the Buckeyes now have a 5-2 record in those matchups.

"College GameDay" first aired on ESPN in 1987 as a studio pregame show with Tim Brando as host and Beano Cook and Lee Corso as commentators. The show underwent a radical transformation in 1993 and began incorporating live broadcasts from outside college stadiums. The first show to air from a college campus took place Nov. 13, 1993, at South Bend for a game between top-ranked Florida State and No. 2 Notre Dame.

The show has always featured predictions from its commentators and selected celebrity guests, but Corso didn't begin donning mascot headgear to accompany his picks until 1996. His first headgear pick was Brutus Buckeye on Oct. 5, 1996, when he predicted No. 3 Ohio State would defeat No. 4 Penn State. The Buckeyes later rolled to a 38-7 win.

Corso again donned the Brutus headgear before this year's OSU-Michigan game and now has a record of 249-130 with his headgear picks.

With relation to celebrity picks, Heisman Trophy winner Eddie George is tied for second with three appearances all-time. Basketball Hall of Famer Charles Barkley holds the record with six celebrity appearances.

Other celebrity pickers with Ohio State ties include Archie Griffin, Santonio Holmes, Jack Nicklaus and Orlando Pace.

## Game Notes

- The game marked the 117th meeting be-

tween Ohio State and Michigan, and the Wolverines enjoy a 59-52-6 advantage. The Buckeyes are now 24-32-4 against the Wolverines in Ann Arbor – 22-23-3 at Michigan Stadium since 1927, 2-5 at Ferry Field (1906-26) and 0-4-1 at Regents Field (1897-1905).

- Ohio State had won eight straight games in the rivalry and was trying to match the longest streak in the series. Michigan won nine in a row between 1901 and 1909.

- It marked the 24th time the rivals have met as top-10 teams in The Associated Press writers' poll. OSU has a 12-10-2 edge in those games.

- Ohio State head coach Ryan Day is now 1-1 against Michigan while Wolverines head coach Jim Harbaugh finally got his first win

in six tries against Ohio State. Harbaugh had been one of only two Michigan head coaches winless in The Game. The other is Rich Rodriguez, who lost all three of his meetings with the Buckeyes from 2008-10.

- Harbaugh was also 3-2 against the Buckeyes as a quarterback at Michigan from 1982 to 1986. He was redshirting when Michigan lost a 24-14 decision in Columbus in 1982, was a backup when the teams split decisions in 1983 and '84, and then was the starting QB for the Wolverines during wins against the Buckeyes in 1985 and '86. In two games against Ohio State as a starter, Harbaugh combined to throw for 491 yards, three touchdowns and two interceptions.

- The loss dropped Day's career record to 9-1 in November games. Meanwhile, Harbaugh is now 33-18 during his college coaching career during the month. He is 18-10 in November games at Michigan after going 8-7 during the month at Stanford (2007-10) and 7-1 at the University of San Diego (2000-06).

- Day is now 13-4 against ranked opponents (both major polls as well as the College Football Playoff rankings) during his three-plus years at Ohio State. That includes a 5-3 mark vs. top-10 teams. In seven seasons at Michigan, Harbaugh is now 12-17 against ranked teams and 3-11 against top-10 opponents.

- Ohio State's all-time record is now 1-2-1 in games played on Nov. 27. The first game in program history played on that date was an 18-10 loss to Kenyon College on Thanksgiving Day in 1890.

- Michigan's all-time record is now 3-1 in games played on Nov. 27. The first game the Wolverines played on that date was a 17-5 win at Stevens College in 1883.

- Before this year, the Buckeyes and Wolverines had played one another only once before on Nov. 27. That was a 37-7 victory by OSU in Columbus in 2010.

- For the 20th consecutive time in the se-

ries, the team that rushed for the most yardage won the game. Michigan held a decisive 297-64 advantage on the ground. The last time a team lost the rushing battle but won the game was in 2000 when the Buckeyes outrushed the Wolverines by a 149-88 margin but lost a 38-26 decision.

- Michigan led by a 14-13 margin at halftime. The last time the winner of the OSU-Michigan game was behind at halftime was 2016. That year, the Wolverines led 10-7 at the break, but the Buckeyes won a 30-27 decision in double overtime.

- The loss snapped Ohio State's winning streak of 26 consecutive regular-season conference games. The Buckeyes also saw their streak of 22 straight wins against ranked Big Ten opponents come to an end.

- Running back Hassan Haskins became the first Michigan player to rush for 100 or more yards against the Buckeyes since QB Denard Robinson had 122 yards during a 26-21 OSU victory in 2012.

- Haskins' total of 169 yards was the most for an Ohio State opponent since Maryland running back Anthony McFarland had 298 during his team's 52-51 loss to the Buckeyes in 2018.

- With 394 yards, Stroud became the third straight Ohio State quarterback to top the 300-yard mark in a game against Michigan. Fields threw for 302 yards during his team's 56-27 win in 2019, and Dwayne Haskins had 396 yards during a 62-39 win by the Buckeyes in 2018.

- Running back TreVeyon Henderson broke the OSU freshman record for touchdowns scored. His two TDs vs. the Wolverines gave him 19 for the season, pushing him one past Maurice Claret, who scored 18 times in 2002. He also moved into third place in rushing among freshmen. Henderson now has 1,165 yards and trails only J.K. Dobbins (1,403 in 2017) and Claret (1,237 in 2002).

## 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](mailto:bsb@buckeyesports.com) or subscribers can vote on the forum at [BuckeyeSports.com](http://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:

# Wolverines End Losing Streak With 42-27 Victory

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Michigan used a powerful ground attack, led by five rushing touchdowns from Hassan Haskins, to defeat No. 2 Ohio State 42-27 in Ann Arbor, Mich., on Nov. 27 to end an eight-game losing streak to the Buckeyes since 2011.

The win puts the No. 5 Wolverines (11-1, 8-1 Big Ten) in the conference championship game for the first time and likely crushed the hopes of the Buckeyes (10-2, 8-1) of playing in the College Football Playoff for a third straight year.

U-M led 14-13 at the half on a snowy 30-degree afternoon before Haskins scored from the 13 and the 1 for a 28-13 advantage that the Buckeyes could not overcome before a crowd of 111,156 in Michigan Stadium.

After a TreVeyon Henderson 1-yard TD run made it 28-20, Haskins scored from the 2 with 9:14 left to make it 35-20.

Henderson caught a 10-yard scoring pass from C.J. Stroud to pull the Buckeyes to within 35-27, but Haskins carried five times for all 63 yards, the last a 4-yard TD with 2:17 to play for the final margin.

Haskins gained 169 yards on 28 attempts as part of Michigan's 297 rushing yards.

"When you work this game 365 days a year and come up short, it's a failure. It hurts," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said.

## Ominous Start

Michigan took the ball at the 25 after a touchback on the opening kickoff and methodically marched 75 yards in 10 plays and 4:48 for the 7-0 lead on a 14-yard reverse by A.J. Henning.

The Wolverines converted three third downs, the first being 16-yard run to the U-M 49 by Haskins when U-M needed 2 yards. Then on a third-and-1 from the Ohio State 31, Haskins rushed for 17 yards to the 14, and Henning scored on the next play.

Ohio State started at its 4 after Julian Fleming fielded the kickoff there. The Buckeyes went three-and-out after gaining a yard on first down after Stroud fumbled the snap and followed with a pair of incompletions. A 51-yard punt by Jesse Mirco and a 17-yard return by Henning set the Wolverines up to strike again at the OSU 39.

Their chances improved when Cade McNamara found Roman Wilson for 24 yards on the first snap to the 15, but on the next play, Bryson Shaw stepped in front of the throw at the 2 and returned the interception 20 yards.

From there, Ohio State marched down the field and had a first-and-goal from the 5, but the Buckeyes got only a 31-yard field goal from Noah Ruggles at the 3:36 mark to make it 7-3 on the last of 12 plays.

Jaxon Smith-Njigba had a catch for 10 and Chris Olave followed with a 9-yard reception to the OSU 43. Henderson had three successive carries, the last a 28-yarder to the



SONNY BROCKWAY

**MOMENTUM CHANGER** — Ohio State safety Bryson Shaw (17) stemmed some early Michigan momentum with a first-quarter interception of U-M quarterback Cade McNamara at the OSU 2-yard line. Unfortunately, the best the Buckeyes could do with the turnover was a field goal.

21. Miyan Williams relieved him and rushed for 9 and 7 to the 5.

On first down, Williams gained 2. Stroud then had an incompletoion to Olave. A false start on Dawand Jones pushed the ball back to the 8, and Stroud was sacked by Aidan Hutchinson for a 6-yard loss on third down.

Michigan moved the chains again when it got the ball back at its 25. Haskins ran for 8, Blake Corum gained 5 and backup quarterback J.J. McCarthy came in to rush for 6 yards to the OSU 48.

The defense stiffened to start the second quarter, and after a punt, the Buckeyes took

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## OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN



SONNY BROCKWAY

**FINALLY A WINNER — Jim Harbaugh got his first victory in six tries against Ohio State as Michigan head coach with his team's 42-27 win. Harbaugh went into the game as one of only two U-M head coaches winless against the Buckeyes. The other was Rich Rodriguez, who lost all three of his games against OSU from 2008-10.**

over at their 18. They wasted a third-down, 25-yard swing pass to Henderson to the OSU 49 when Smith-Njigba dropped a pass, Williams gained a yard and Mike Morris tipped a Stroud pass, forcing the Buckeyes to punt.

Following a Michigan punt and 5-yard return by Smith-Njigba, the Buckeyes started at their 44 and needed only four plays to go the 56 yards in 1:39 to take a 10-7 lead on a brilliant 25-yard catch by Wilson with 9:12 left in the second quarter.

Stroud had opened the series with a 10-yarder to Wilson. After Henderson was dropped for a 2-yard loss, Smith-Njigba had a 23-yard grab to the 25. Wilson then made a twisting catch at the pylon over cornerback Vincent Gray for his 12th touchdown of the season.

The Wolverines then chewed up 82 yards on 13 plays using 5:15 to take a 14-10 lead with 3:51 left on a 1-yard plunge by Haskins.

U-M had faced a fourth-and-1 from the OSU 43. After a Wolverines timeout, Haskins pushed his way for 2 yards. Corum rushed for 2 before McNamara hit Cornelius Johnson for 37 yards to the 2. Haskins gained a yard then scored on the next play.

Ohio State made it 14-13 on Ruggles' 30-yard field goal with nine seconds left in the half after the Buckeyes went from their own 25 to the 13 in 12 plays over a 3:42 stretch.

Henderson started with a 14-yard catch, and Smith-Njigba continued the drive with a third-down reception of 8 yards followed by Garrett's 9-yard catch to the U-M 39.

Stroud overcame a third false start (Thayer Munford) of the half with a 9-yard completion to Olave at the U-M 35 on a third-and-6. Smith-Njigba added 15 more yards to the 20 on a catch. After an incompleteness to Wilson, Henderson ran for 3 and Smith-Njigba had a

catch for 4, but it was not enough for a first down and Ruggles was called upon again.

In the first half, Stroud was 14 for 21 for 171 yards; Smith-Njigba had 68 yards on six catches and Henderson rushed eight times for 45 yards. OSU led in total yards 230-222.

### Second-Half Blues

The Buckeyes ran Henderson three times for 6 yards and punted to start the second half, and Michigan shredded the defense for an 81-yard drive, all on the ground, in 1:15 for 21-13 lead at 11:50. Corum ran for 13 and 55 yards to the 13, and Haskins powered his way in from there on the next play.

The Buckeyes were tarnished by another false start and had to punt when they got the ball back. On a second-and-5 from the OSU 47, the penalty on the line put the Buckeyes in a precarious spot. Henderson gained just a yard and Stroud was sacked for a 3-yard loss by Hutchinson again.

Michigan went for the jugular and succeeded for a 28-13 lead at 5:49 of the third quarter.

McCarthy came on and tossed a 31-yarder to an open Wilson to the OSU 41. McNamara returned and off a flea-flicker spotted Mike Sainristil for 34 yards to the 7. McCarthy kept the ball and gained 6. On the play, OSU cornerback Cameron Brown received an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for ripping a Michigan player's helmet off. Haskins then scored from the 1.

With the season on the line, the Buckeyes got back in the game with a 1-yard run by Henderson with 14:05 left in fourth quarter to make it 28-20. It took 17 plays to go 82 yards in 6:41 as the Buckeyes overcame another false start by Jones and the third sack by Hutchinson.

Olave's catch gained 12 to start the drive. Smith-Njigba had an 11-yard catch on third-and-3 from the OSU 37, and Wilson's 9-yard catch on third down put the ball at the U-M 38.

The first of two key plays was Stroud scrambling to find Smith-Njigba for 26 yards to the 21 on a third-and-19. Then, needing 4 yards on fourth down from the 15, Smith-Njigba pulled in a 10-yarder to the 5 on the first play of the final quarter. After an incomplete pass to Jeremy Ruckert, Henderson ran for 4 then scored on the following play from the 1.

Michigan responded with another time-consuming drive, starting from its 34. An off-sides penalty helped move the Wolverines near midfield, and Haskins carries of 8 and 6 yards moved the ball to the Buckeye 37. Later a pass interference penalty on Denzel Burke placed the ball on the 14. Corum ran for 9 and Haskins added 3 yards before scoring from the 2 for a 35-20 lead with 9:14 to play. The drive was nine plays, 66 yards and 4:46 of the clock.

Ohio State closed the gap again but used a lot of time to make it 35-27 with 4:45 to play when Henderson caught a 10-yard pass from Stroud at the end of a 13-play, 75-yard, 4:29 drive that was on the brink of collapsing several times.

Olave had a 39-yard catch to the U-M 38, and later on fourth-and-7 from the 24, Wilson made a 9-yard catch. Stroud two plays later ran for a 15-yard TD, but Nicholas Petit-Frere was called for holding, pushing the ball back to the 25.

On third down, the Buckeyes needed 20 yards for a first down. Wilson's grab got 15 of it, and on fourth-and-5 from the 10, Stroud

found Henderson for the score.

Any hopes of a comeback were dashed by Haskins. He had carries of 15, 6, 11, 27 and the final 4-yard TD, and the Buckeyes were set to lose to the Wolverines for the first time since 2011.

The Buckeyes had one more possession with 2:17 to go, and Stroud completed passes of 16 and 5 yards to Wilson to the 46. After an incompleteness to Olave, David Ojabo sacked Stroud for 13 yards. On fourth-and-18 from the OSU 33, Olave caught a ball for 12 yards, but the Buckeyes came up short at their 45 and Michigan took two knees for the long-awaited victory.

Stroud was 34 of 49 for 394 yards and two TDs but was sacked four times, three by Hutchinson for 14 yards. Smith-Njigba had 11 catches for 127 yards, and Garrett Wilson caught 10 passes for 119 yards and a score. Henderson totaled 128 yards (74 rush, 54 receiving) with two TDs (one run, one catch).

The loss also ended a 26-game conference winning streak for the Buckeyes since losing at Purdue in 2018.

### Notes

In addition to the 297 rushing yards, the Wolverines passed for 190 yards to outgain OSU 487 to 458 (394 passing, 64 rushing). ... Olave had seven catches for 88 yards. ... McNamara was 13 of 19 for 190 yards and an interception. McCarthy was 1 for 1 for 31 yards. ... Corum had six carries for 87 yards. ... The Wolverines averaged 7.2 yards per rush; OSU 2.1 ... Ohio State did not have a sack. ... The Wolverines led at the half for the first time in the series since 2016 (10-7).

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# The Numbers Game

## Michigan 42, Ohio State 27

Nov. 27, 2021 – Michigan Stadium, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	3	10	0	14	27
MICHIGAN	7	7	14	14	42

### First Quarter

**U-M** – Henning, 14-yard rush (Moody kick), 10:12; 10 plays, 75 yards, 4:48 TOP.

**OSU** – Ruggles, 31-yard field goal, 3:36; 11 plays, 64 yards, 5:08 TOP.

### Second Quarter

**OSU** – Wilson, 25-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 9:12; 4 plays, 56 yards, 1:39 TOP.

**U-M** – Haskins, 1-yard rush (Moody kick), 3:51; 13 plays, 82 yards, 5:15 TOP.

**OSU** – Ruggles, 30-yard field goal, 0:09; 12 plays, 62 yards, 3:42 TOP.

### Third Quarter

**U-M** – Haskins, 13-yard rush (Moody kick), 11:50; 3 plays, 81 yards, 1:15 TOP.

**U-M** – Haskins, 1-yard rush (Moody kick), 5:49; 5 plays, 78 yards, 2:30 TOP.

### Fourth Quarter

**OSU** – Henderson, 1-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 14:05; 17 plays, 82 yards, 6:41 TOP.

**U-M** – Haskins, 1-yard rush (Moody kick), 9:14; 9 plays, 66 yards, 4:46 TOP.

**OSU** – Henderson, 10-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 4:45; 13 plays, 66 yards, 4:29 TOP.

**U-M** – Haskins, 4-yard rush (Moody kick), 2:17; 5 plays, 63 yards, 2:22 TOP.

**Att.** – 111,156

**Weather** – 30 degrees, snow, wind SE 5mph

### Team Statistics

	OSU	U-M
<b>First Downs</b>	23	24
<b>Rushing</b>	4	16
<b>Passing</b>	19	5
<b>Penalty</b>	0	3
<b>Rushes-Yards</b>	30-64	41-297
<b>Passing Yards</b>	394	190
<b>Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)</b>	34-49-0	14-20-1
<b>Offensive Plays</b>	79	61
<b>Total Net Yards</b>	458	487
<b>Third Down Efficiency</b>	8-18	5-8
<b>Punts-Avg.</b>	4-44.8	2-45.0
<b>Fumbles-Lost</b>	2-0	1-0
<b>Penalties</b>	10-66	2-20
<b>Time of Possession</b>	31:48	28:12

### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)** – **OSU:** Henderson 17-74; Williams 7-20; Stroud 6-(-30). **U-M:** Haskins 28-169; Corum 6-87; Henning 1-14; McCarthy 2-12; McNamara 1-9; Edwards 1-8; TEAM 2-(-2).

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)** – **OSU:** Stroud 34-49-0-394-2. **U-M:** McNamara 13-19-1-159-0; McCarthy 1-1-0-31-0.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)** – **OSU:** Smith-Njigba 11-127; Wilson 10-119; Olave 7-88; Henderson 5-54; Williams 1-6. **U-M:** Wilson 2-55; Johnson 2-48; Schoonmaker 2-15; Edwards 2-12; Haskins 2-5; Sainristill 1-34; Henning 1-9; All 1-7; Anthony 1-5.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.)** – **OSU:** Mirco 4-44.8. **U-M:** Robbins 2-45.0.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** – **OSU:** Smith-Njigba 1-5. **U-M:** Henning 2-17.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** **OSU:** Fleming 2-11. **U-M:** Henning 4-67.

**MISSED FIELD GOALS** – **OSU:** None. **U-M:** None.

**FORCED FUMBLES** – **OSU:** None. **U-M:** None.

**FUMBLE RECOVERIES** – **OSU:** None. **U-M:** None.

**INTERCEPTIONS** – **OSU:** Shaw 1-20. **U-M:** None.

**SACKS** – **OSU:** None. **U-M:** Hutchinson 3.0-14; Ojabo 1.0-13.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS** – **OSU:** None. **U-M:** Hutchinson 3.0-14; Ojabo 1.0-13; Jeter 1.0-4; Harrell 1.0-2; Ross 1.0-2; Smith 1.0-2.

**TACKLES (Solo-Asst-Tot.)** – **OSU:** Hickman 4-8-12; Simon 2-5-7; Chambers 5-1-6; Shaw 4-2-6; Eichenberg 2-3-5; Ransom 2-3-5; Burke 3-1-4; Smith 2-1-3; Williamson 2-0-2; Tuimolou 1-1-2; Vincent 1-0-1; Jean-Baptiste 1-0-1; Harrison 1-0-1; Martinez 1-0-1; Cage 0-1-1; Young 0-1-1; Jackson 0-1-1; Williams 0-1-1; Garrett 0-1-1; Brown 0-1-1; Ruggles 0-1-1; Hancock 0-1-1; Hamilton 0-1-1. **U-M:** Hawkins 7-2-9; Moore 5-4-9; Turner 7-1-8; Hutchinson 5-2-7; Hill 4-3-7; Gray 5-1-6; Ross 4-2-6; Barrett 2-2-4; Ojabo 3-0-3; Colson 2-0-2; Jeter 1-1-2; Moten 1-1-2; Hinton 0-2-2; Harrell 1-0-1; Morant 1-0-1; Smith 1-0-1; Morris 0-1-1.

### Players In The Game

**OSU** – Olave, Wilson, Stroud, Smith-Njigba, Henderson, Wypler, Munford, Johnson Jr., Petit-Frere, Jones, Ruckert, Williamson, Vincent, Harrison, Smith, Hickman, Shaw, Chambers, Brown, Burke, Simon, Cage, Williams, Mitchell, Fleming, Cavazos, Jean-Baptiste, Martinez, Ransom, Hancock, Young, Watts, Harrison Jr., Stover, Johnson, Williams, Mirco, Sawyer, Rossi, Eichenberg, Robinson, Batsch, Tuimolou, Jackson, Jones, Cox, Hamilton, James, Fryar, Jackson, Royer, Kutscher, Booker, Williams, Garrett, Ruggles.

**U-M** – Sainristill, Johnson, McNamara, Wilson, Haskins, Zinter, Vastardis, Stueber, Hayes, Keegan, Schoonmaker, Hawkins, Gray, Turner, Ross, Hinton, Moore, Colson, Hill, Ojabo, Smith, Hutchinson, Anthony, Corum, Henning, Moten, Edwards, McCarthy, Solomon, Moody, Mullings, Green, Barrett, Johnson, Morant, Harrell, Green, Kolesar, Torey, Hill-Green, Wagner, Jones, George, Filiaga, Speight, Atteberry, All, Honigford, Baldwin, Selzer, Morris, Upshaw, Robbins, Jenkins, Jeter, Welschof.

## 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
<b>First Downs</b>	320	252
<b>Rushing</b>	113	87
<b>Passing</b>	194	140
<b>Penalty</b>	13	25
<b>Average Per Game/Rush</b>	186.5	118.5
<b>Average Per Game/Pass</b>	364.9	246.9
<b>Total Offense</b>	6617	4385
<b>Total Plays</b>	850	841
<b>Average Per Game</b>	551.4	365.4
<b>Average Per Play</b>	7.8	5.2
<b>Penalties-Yards</b>	78-700	52-447
<b>Fumbles-Lost</b>	11-2	14-7
<b>Third Down Efficiency</b>	77-146	72-174
<b>Percentage</b>	53%	41%
<b>Fourth Down Efficiency</b>	9-17	9-18
<b>Percentage</b>	53%	50%
<b>Sacks-Yards</b>	36-240	17-133
<b>Time Of Possession Avg.</b>	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
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>2238</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>1422</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>77</b>

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Eff.
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
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>69.8</b>	<b>4379</b>	<b>40-7</b>	<b>178.5</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>60.6</b>	<b>2963</b>	<b>18-12</b>	<b>125.7</b>

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
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>4379</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>2963</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>75</b>

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	
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70-70</b>	-	-	<b>18-19</b>	<b>546</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32-33</b>	-	-	<b>7-12</b>	<b>251</b>

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Noah Ruggles	6-6	8-9	4-4	0-0	18-19
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>6-6</b>	<b>8-9</b>	<b>4-4</b>	<b>0-0</b>	<b>18-19</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>1-1</b>	<b>3-4</b>	<b>3-7</b>	<b>0-0</b>	<b>7-12</b>

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	29	1228	42.3	0	62
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1228</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>2804</b>	<b>43.8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>74</b>

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
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>

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
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.
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# BSB Quotebook: Michigan 42, Ohio State 27

**OSU head coach Ryan Day on his feelings immediately after the game:** "We work for this game 365 days out of the year, and you come up short, it's a failure and it hurts. We didn't run the ball very well on offense and we hurt ourselves with some penalties, and we didn't stop the run on the other side of the ball."

**OSU safety Bryson Shaw on failing to stop Michigan's rushing attack:** "It's disappointing. We have to stop the run. That's the goal, especially on the road in the Big Ten. We've got to stop the run. For them to run the ball on us like that, it's embarrassing. It's embarrassing."

**Shaw on his touchdown-saving interception in the first quarter:** "On the interception, I read the quarterback's eyes and just made the play, but it didn't matter. At the end of the day, we just didn't execute. We spent 365 days preparing for this game, and for people from Ohio, this is everything. This is really going to leave a bad taste in our mouth. We just have to learn from it. It's going to motivate me. I know it's going to motivate this team that much more - I mean a thousand times more in the offseason. The team's down right now. No one is harder on ourselves than us. We just have to learn from this."

**OSU quarterback C.J. Stroud on the team's three-and-out series to begin the second half:** "When we came out of halftime and went three-and-out, it wasn't like, 'Damn, the game is lost.' It wasn't anything like that. We knew we had to regroup and keep fighting, and I felt like we did that."

**Stroud on Michigan's front seven creating issues for the offense:** "Their defensive ends did a good job of rushing up-field and getting good pressure, but I tried my best just to step up in the pocket and try to get the ball out on time. Some things just don't work out, but I'm still proud of my O-line for battling. We played for four quarters, and I'm proud of them. I always have faith in my guys regardless of what's going on. I try to have a one-play mentality. But like I said, my guys battled. At the end of the day, we came up short, and I'm kicking myself. I'm super bummed, but I think we battled to the end."

**Michigan defensive end Aiden Hutchinson on his team's motivation:** "They were disrespecting us, stepping on our jerseys, saying they were going to hang 100 on us. A lot of talking about it. We were about it today. We were so dominant. Offensively, defensively - the way the offense was moving the ball, I don't know



SONNY BROCKWAY

**'IT HURTS' — Ohio State head coach Ryan Day addresses the media after his team lost a 42-27 decision to archrival Michigan and dropped from contention for a College Football Playoff berth. Day, whose record in The Game dropped to 1-1, admitted "when you come up short, it's a failure and it hurts."**

how many yards they had, but they were moving that thing up and down the field. Defensively, we let up a couple of big plays, which we knew we were going to let up, but we got big in the red zone on some of those drives, and I thought we really played good complementary football."

**OSU left tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere on the offensive line's struggles:** "I wouldn't necessarily say it was their defensive line. It was the environment. It was loud. And we were not executing. We talked about that before the game. We knew it would be a loud environment and we needed to execute, and that was on us. Hutchinson has a great get-off. He's a great pass-rusher. They were just a talented front overall."

**OSU linebacker Cody Simon on what led to the result against Michigan:** "We just didn't execute like we were supposed to. We put in the work to try and stop their offense, but it just didn't come out like we wanted it to. Like Bryson said, we just have to get back in the lab and keep going. I don't really think we had too many matchup problems. It just came down to us not executing to our standard. The outcome is

what happens when you don't execute like you're supposed to."

**Shaw on what Ohio State can take away from the loss:** "We have to go back and watch the film to really know where we messed up. It's just disappointing. I think the biggest thing to take away from this is how motivated I know I'll be this offseason. I'm already ready to get on this tape and see where we went wrong."

**Petit-Frere on what Ohio State can learn from the loss:** "We talk about this all the time with Coach Day and the rest of the coaches. We prepare, we play and then we learn. Although (a loss to Michigan) is new and something that we haven't experienced in a while, it has to be something that we can learn from, something that we can overcome, and something that we can look forward to and be better prepared so that we make sure this doesn't happen again."

**Stroud on the offense racking up penalties against Michigan:** "Whenever you get yourself off-schedule like that, it's not a good feeling. Sometimes we bounced back and gained the yardage back, but the majority of the time we just put ourselves in a hole. We beat ourselves."

**Day on Stroud throwing 49 times in the game:** "When you throw it 49 times - and there were more attempts than that because we had some scrambles and sacks - that's too much. That's putting a lot of stress on our guys, especially with the D-line that those guys have."

**Stroud discussing his feelings after the game:** "People probably hate me for it, but at the end of the day, deep down in my heart, I know that I put everything out there today. I put my body on the line. I did everything I possibly could to win this game. I don't care whatever happens. Just know that I love this team, I love Ohio State, I love Buckeye Nation, and I know every single day I'm going to keep grinding just to get this win back."

**Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh on where the win stacks up in his career:** "It feels like the best one. It really does. Maybe next week's will be the best. That's why it feels like the beginning (of something special). We'll continue to do what we do. We'll move on with humble hearts, and greatness doesn't fear consequences. Fearless, but not careless. Onward. That's how it feels."

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# OSU's Olave Following Trail Blazed By Boston

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Chris Olave still has one game left to play for Ohio State, but he's already etched his name into the program's record books.

With two touchdown receptions Nov. 20 during Ohio State's 56-7 win against Michigan State, Olave passed former OSU wide receiver David Boston for the most career receiving touchdowns in school history with 35, surpassing Boston's previous mark of 34.

The record-breaker came late in the first quarter on a 43-yard strike from quarterback C.J. Stroud who found Olave in the back of the end zone after the senior wideout had sneaked past two Michigan State defenders. Olave said after the game he forgot to keep the record-breaking ball, but an Ohio State staffer held onto it for him.

Olave came into the 2021 season with 22 career touchdowns and has found a strong connection with Stroud, hauling in 13 scores this year through Nov. 27, which tied him for second in the nation alongside Wake Forest's A.T. Perry and former OSU teammate Jameson Williams, now with Alabama, and trailing Pittsburgh receiver Jordan Addison, who had 17 scores.

"That was kind of a crazy number (for Boston) because to do that, you've got to have more than 10 for three straight years," longtime Bucknuts.com writer Steve Helwag told BSB. "You just wonder with guys leaving to go to the NFL who would ever stick around long enough to (approach Boston's record). Olave got a little bit of a taste as a freshman but then has dominated (in his) sophomore, junior and senior years.

"You figured it would take a four-year guy to do it, and in this case, a 3½-year guy because he only got to play half the number of games last year. It seemed (Boston) put it out of reach, but it took a special guy to beat it."

And what a special guy Olave is. Following Ohio State's Nov. 27 loss to Michigan, he has 2,623 career receiving yards, fifth most all-time for the school, to go along with his record number of receiving touchdowns.

"You could tell Olave was going to be a star from his freshman year," Helwag said. "People put tags on these guys coming out of high school – he's a three-star, he's a four-star. Well, sometimes the tags are wrong, but this guy, from about the middle of his freshman year on, he was a star. He had the veterans around him that really brought him along – guys like (Parris) Campbell, (Terry) McLaurin, K.J. Hill and all those guys. He was on a team with three NFL receivers, and you could tell that he was the next guy in the progression."

It became apparent Olave was on the track to success during his first season. After just five receptions through five games in 2018, he hauled in two touchdown receptions during Ohio State's 62-39 thrashing of Michigan, giving everyone a taste of what he might become on the national stage.

"He gets two touchdowns against Michigan and you're like, 'Oh my, what is this guy going to do over the next two years?' That's because you figured he'd be three-and-done," Helwag said. "Then, for whatever reason, he decided to stay for his senior year to really put more polish on his game.



SONNY BROCKWAY

**UP AND OVER — OSU receiver Chris Olave (2), shown here going up and over Michigan defender DJ Turner (5), continued to move up the program's all-time receiving charts with seven catches for 88 yards against the Wolverines. Olave is already the Buckeyes' career leader in touchdown receptions with 35.**

"Now, he does everything. He runs routes, he blocks, he catches the intermediate ball and can turn it into big yards. He can beat you deep, and we saw that twice (against Michigan State)."

Not to be forgotten, however, is that Boston's record of 34 receiving touchdowns had stood for 23 years dating to the end of his Ohio State career in 1998.

Boston had seven touchdown receptions during his freshman season before exploding for 14 scores during his sophomore year and 13 more as a junior before declaring early for the 1999 NFL draft, where he was picked eighth overall by the Arizona Cardinals.

Boston was known for his physicality as a receiver, standing at 6-2 and weighing 228 pounds. Former Ohio State assistant coach Bill Conley, who was on staff during Boston's time as a Buckeye, said the physical aspect of Boston's game allowed him to be such a dominant receiver.

"Even though he was big, he was also quick, agile, athletic and was a good route runner," Conley told BSB. "The one thing that I remember the most about him, though, is that he was one of the most physical receivers we ever had at Ohio State in terms of getting off coverage and in terms of blocking."

Helwag said Boston started for the Buckeyes from day one because he was significantly bigger than the average freshman.

"He was huge and over the time just kind of made his reputation on being the biggest and strongest wide receiver out there," he said. "He worked so hard at his strength and his fitness and all that. That's how he dominated people. He was just bigger and stronger than the defensive backs."

Both Conley and Helwag cited the same play as one they most associate with Boston. The Buckeyes were already leading Pitt by a 65-0 score during the 1996 season when the freshman was sent out with the second-team punt-return unit in the fourth quarter.

"We put him in and he ran the punt back 66 yards for a touchdown," Conley said. "Well, we ended up counting the players, (and) there's only nine players on the field. Not everybody got in, and he still brought it back all the way. Other guys would have just gotten in his way, I guess."

Boston eventually broke Cris Carter's OSU career record of 27 receiving touchdowns, which had stood since 1986, during a 36-10 win against Northwestern on Oct. 24, 1998, a game in which he finished with eight receptions for 171 yards and two touchdowns. He hauled in a 38-yard score from quarterback Joe Germaine in the third quarter and broke the record in the fourth quarter on a 31-yard touchdown pass from Germaine.

"I just go out there, play and have fun, and I guess the records will come," Bos-

ton said in the Oct. 31, 1998, issue of BSB. "I don't worry about the records. But it's a great feeling. Cris Carter is a great athlete and a great player. He's made plays all his life. It feels good to be associated with him."

After breaking the record, Boston went on to pad it with six more touchdowns in the final five games of the season. He finished his career with a 24-14 win against Texas A&M in the Sugar Bowl, hauling in 11 catches for 105 yards. Boston finished that year with OSU single-season records for catches (85) and yards (1,435) as well as career marks for catches (191), yards (2,855) and touchdowns (34).

Unfortunately for Boston, most of his program-leading records have since been broken. In addition to Olave eclipsing his touchdown record, Campbell had 90 catches to set a new single-season mark for receptions in 2018, Hill totaled 201 career receptions before his career ended in 2019, and Michael Jenkins finished with 2,898 career receiving yards in 2003. While Boston still holds the record for receiving yards in a season, sophomore Jaxon Smith-Njigba and his 1,132 yards this season through Nov. 27 could very well challenge Boston with one game remaining.

Smith-Njigba also bested another of Boston's records, grabbing 15 passes during a 26-17 win against Nebraska on Nov. 16. Boston had held the single-game mark with 14 receptions since a 31-27 loss at Penn State in 1997.

## Making History

Olave now stands among an elite group of wideouts for the school, and Conley said he sees similarities between the senior and other historic receivers for Ohio State.

"Chris is a lot like David and Cris Carter and guys like that," Conley said. "He's an exceptional route-runner, and he reads coverages really well. He knows when to break out of his route and how to convert routes, meaning that depending upon how the coverage changed from the pre-snap. Then his ability, of course, to go up and get the football. He's very similar to Cris Carter in that way. I think those separation skills from defensive backs are special for Olave."

Given that Boston's record stood for nearly a quarter-century, Conley does not think Olave's will get broken, at least for a while.

"But the game has opened up so much," the former OSU assistant said. "You get an outstanding coach like Ryan Day who was a quarterback himself, one who really understands that type of offense, and you never know. It became pretty apparent that, sooner or later, all kinds of receiving and passing records were going to be broken because Ohio State suddenly throws the ball so much more."

The passing offense has been prolific this season, and with a bowl game left to play, Helwag said there's no telling where Olave could set the benchmark for receiving touchdowns at Ohio State.

"Olave's had an amazing career, and if he finishes it off," Helwag said prior to the Buckeyes' loss to Michigan, "he could really push this up toward 40. Then you really have to wonder if anybody will ever touch that."

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# Iowa To Join Michigan In Big Ten Title Contest

Iowa's come-from-behind victory Nov. 26 against Nebraska, coupled with Minnesota's upset win against Wisconsin the following day, gave the Hawkeyes the Big Ten West crown and sent them into the Dec. 4 conference championship game against Michigan. The Wolverines punched their ticket to Indianapolis with a 42-27 win Nov. 27 against Ohio State.

first eight offensive possessions, settling for four Caleb Shudak field goals through the first 53 minutes of the contest.

Special teams turned the game around for the Hawkeyes, who were trailing 21-9 when they blocked a Nebraska punt and returned it 14 yards for a touchdown just 44 seconds into the fourth quarter.

After the teams traded three-and-out possessions, Iowa cut the deficit to three with a safety on the ensuing drive with 9:56 on the clock and then tied the score at 21-21 on Shudak's fourth field goal of the game. The Hawkeyes then scored the game-winner when Petras capped a six-play, 76-yard drive with a 2-yard touchdown run with 2:58 left.

Freshman quarterback Logan Smothers led Nebraska inside the Hawkeyes 30-yard-line before Iowa's Jermari Harris made a diving interception at the 2-yard line with 43 seconds left to clinch the win. Smothers completed 16 of 22 passes for 198 yards with one pick in his first career start, adding 64 yards and two scores on the ground.

Nebraska finished the season with a 3-9 record with each of its nine losses by nine or fewer points. It marked the first time in college football history a team had lost that many games in a season with no double-digit defeats.

Meanwhile at Minnesota, the Golden Gophers overcame a first-half pick-six to upset Wisconsin by a 23-13 final and knock the Badgers out of the title game. Wisconsin had held the West tiebreaker by virtue of its

27-7 win against Iowa on Oct. 30.

The Minnesota defense stifled the Badgers, who entered the game with one of the nation's best rushing attacks. The Gophers held standout tailback Braelon Allen to just 47 yards on 17 carries after he had entered the contest with seven straight 100-yard performances.

On the other side, Ky Thomas rushed for 55 yards and a score for Minnesota, while Mar'Keise Irving added 39 yards and a score. Minnesota quarterback Tanner Morgan threw for 199 yards and a score on 11-of-16 passing in the 10-point rivalry win.

Wisconsin quarterback Graham Mertz finished with 171 passing yards and one pick on 21-of-38 passing.

Elsewhere, Michigan State rode their standout tailback Kenneth Walker III to a 30-27 victory against Penn State. Walker posted his eighth 100-yard rushing game of the season with 138 yards and a score on 30 carries.

Spartan quarterback Payton Thorne completed 19 of 30 passes for 268 yards and two touchdowns including a 15-yard score to Jayden Reed to push the MSU lead to 30-20 with 5:10 left. Reed recorded six receptions for 89 yards and a touchdown.

For Penn State, quarterback Sean Clifford completed 23 of 34 passes for 313 yards and three touchdowns. Standout wide receiver Jahan Dotson had eight catches for 138 yards and two touchdowns to mark the fifth time in his career he had reached 100 yards and two scores in the same game.

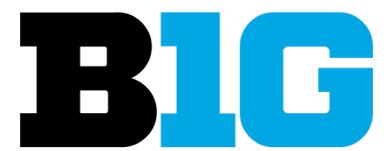
The Old Oaken Bucket returned to Purdue after the Boilermakers scored a 44-7 domination of rival Indiana in front of a sell-out crowd at Ross-Ade Stadium.

The Boilermakers improved to 8-4 on the season and 6-3 in the Big Ten, marking the first time they won eight games in a season since 2006. They also had their most conference victories since 2003.

Purdue quarterback Aidan O'Connell continued his stellar season by tossing a career-high four touchdowns along with 278 yards on 26-of-31 passing with no picks. Biletnikoff Award finalist David Bell stood out as O'Connell's top target, reeling in six passes for a team-high 79 yards and one touchdown.

The Boilermakers defense held Indiana to just 205 yards of total offense and recorded 10 tackles for loss, including a career-high three TFL by defensive tackle Branson Deen. IU quarterback Grant Gremel, who began the season as the fourth-string signal-caller, completed 18 of 30 passes for 147 yards with one interception.

Maryland became bowl-eligible for the



## 2021 Standings

East Division	Conf.		All		Pct.
	W	L	W	L	
x-Michigan	8	1	11	1	.917
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	2	.833
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

### Nov. 26 Game

Iowa 28, Nebraska 21

### Nov. 27 Scores

Maryland 40, Rutgers 16  
Michigan 42, Ohio State 27  
Purdue 44, Indiana 7  
Michigan State 30, Penn State 27  
Illinois 47, Northwestern 14  
Minnesota 23, Wisconsin 13

### Dec. 4 Game

Iowa vs. Michigan  
Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis

first time since 2016 after a 40-16 win against Rutgers.

Terrapins QB Taulia Tagovailoa broke the school's single-season passing yardage record in the contest, throwing for 312 yards and three touchdowns on 21-of-30 passing and adding 16 rushing yards and a score. Tagovailoa now has 3,528 yards, surpassing the old mark of 3,499 set by Scott Milanovich in 1993.

Maryland tailback Tayon Fleet-Davis ran for a career-best 152 yards on 18 carries, including two fourth-quarter scores to ice the game after Rutgers had made it a two-score game.

Finally, Illinois rolled to a 47-14 win against Northwestern behind a dominant ground game.

**BIG TEN NOTES**  
**Joe Dempsey**

Iowa is making its second trip to the title game after a 16-13 loss to Michigan State in 2015. Michigan will be appearing in its first Big Ten Championship Game.

The Hawkeyes were in danger of losing to Nebraska for the first time since 2014, trailing 21-6 with 5:54 left in the third quarter, but they scored 22 straight points to win a 28-21 decision and retain the Heroes Trophy.

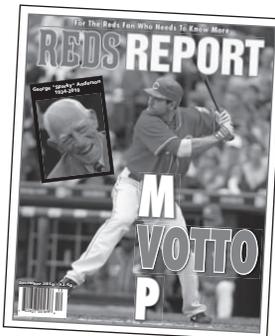
Iowa tailback Tyler Goodson ran for a career-high 156 yards on 23 carries, and the quarterback duo of Alex Padilla and Spencer Petras combined for 178 yards on 13-of-27 passing.

The Hawkeyes were able to move the ball but failed to find the end zone on their

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Illinois rushed for 217 yards and four touchdowns, including a game-high 112 yards and a touchdown from Chase Brown. Meanwhile, receiver Isaiah Williams caught seven passes for a game-high 113 yards and a touchdown, and he added a 21-yard rushing touchdown.

Northwestern QB Ryan Hilinski was limited to 123 yards through the air with one interception, although he did run for a touchdown. Tailback Evan Hull added 101 yards rushing and scored his team's other touchdown.

**Franklin, Penn State Agree On 10-Year Extension**

Penn State head coach James Franklin has agreed to a 10-year contract extension to stay at the school through the 2031 season. The extension, worth at least \$75 million, was announced Nov. 23.

"We are excited to have James Franklin lead our football program for a long time," Penn State athletic director Sandy Barbour said in a statement. "We will continue our collective efforts to constantly improve in all aspects of our program. We have made, and will need to continue to make, significant investment in our football program because we believe we have a very bright future under James. With this contract, we are signaling our sustained commitment to being one of the premier programs in the history of college football."

Under the new contract, Franklin will make \$7.5 million through base salary, supplemental pay and an annual retention bonus. He will also receive an annual loan of \$1 million for a life insurance policy through the entire contract.

The contract also contains built-in incentives, including \$350,000 for winning the Big Ten Championship Game, \$400,000 for making the College Football Playoff and \$800,000 for winning a national championship.

The deal also contains a structured buy-out starting at \$12 million prior to April 1, 2022. It will be reduced to \$8 million through Dec. 31, 2022, \$6 million in 2023, \$2 million in 2024 and 2025, and \$1 million

from the calendar years 2026 to 2030.

"Penn State's future is bright, and I'm honored to continue to serve as your head football coach," Franklin said. "Nine weeks ago, the administration approached me about making a long-term investment in our football program. This prompted numerous conversations outlining the resources needed to be competitive at a level that matches the expectations and history of Penn State. What's most evident from those conversations is the importance of our student-athletes' success both on and off the field."

Franklin is 67-33 in eight seasons as Penn State's head coach with one Big Ten championship. That came in 2016 when the team defeated Wisconsin in the conference title game and went on to a 52-49 loss to USC in the Rose Bowl. The Nittany Lions finished No. 7 in the national rankings that year, one of three times the team has finished in the top 10 under Franklin.

**MSU Announces Historic Extension For Tucker**

One day after Penn State extended Franklin's contract, Michigan State announced it had agreed to a historic contract extension with head football coach Mel Tucker. The 10-year deal worth \$95 million makes Tucker the highest-paid coach in the Big Ten as well as the highest-paid Black coach in American sports.

According to the university, Tucker's contract is valued at \$9.5 million per year, including a \$5.9 million base salary, \$3.2 million in supplemental compensation for media and personal appearances, and a \$400,000 contingent annual bonus. The contract runs through Jan. 15, 2032.

"Every day I wake up feeling humbled to be the head football coach at Michigan State," Tucker said in a statement. "It is my privilege to work alongside our student-athletes, coaches and staff who embody our culture of hard work, discipline and excellence – on and off the field."

The new contract makes the 49-year-old Tucker the highest-paid Black coach in American sports, surpassing Stanford head coach David Shaw, who is making just more

than \$8.9 million per year. Mike Tomlin of the Pittsburgh Steelers is the highest-paid Black coach in the NFL at \$8 million a year, while Doc Rivers of the Philadelphia 76ers earns the same in the NBA.

The new deal makes Tucker the second-highest paid college coach in the country behind Nick Saban of Alabama. The seven-time national championship coach makes a reported \$9.753 million with the Crimson Tide.

"The decision to extend Mel Tucker's contract is not based on one year of results, but rather it's an investment in a promising future for Spartan football," MSU athletic director Alan Haller said in a statement. "Since his hire in February 2020, the program has experienced high levels of success in three key areas: student-athlete development on and off the field, recruiting momentum, and donor and alumni base engagement and support. Mel has brought an energy to this program which has benefitted not only our athletic department, but also the university and the surrounding community."

Tucker is 12-7 in two seasons at Michigan State. The Spartans finished a 10-2 regular season this year after posting a 2-5 record last year.

**Hoosiers Part Ways With Coordinator**

Indiana head coach Tom Allen announced Nov. 28 that offensive coordinator Nick Sheridan would not return in 2022. The Hoosiers finished the season with a 2-10 overall record and were 0-9 in the Big Ten.

"I want to thank Nick for his work and commitment to our football program," Allen said. "He is a good football coach and a man of tremendous character, but we are in need of a reset on the offensive side of the ball. We will begin our search for Nick's replacement immediately."

The school released a statement about Sheridan on Sunday morning. The statement comes a day after Indiana suffered an embarrassing 44-7 loss to Purdue to close out the year.

Indiana's offense struggled all season, as

evidenced by the 37-point loss to Purdue to finish the season. In nine conference games, the Hoosiers scored only 94 points, making them the only Power Five team in the nation to fall short of 100 points in conference play in 2021.

The 33-year-old Sheridan, who played quarterback at Michigan, had been at Indiana since 2017 in several different capacities. He has also been an assistant at Western Kentucky, South Florida and Tennessee.

"We did not meet the standard that I expect from our football program, and that starts with me," Allen said. "This season was not acceptable, and we will work to address it."

**Standout RB Ibrahim To Return To Minnesota**

Minnesota running back Mohamed Ibrahim announced Nov. 24 that he will return to the Golden Gophers for the 2022 football season after he recovers from an Achilles injury.

Ibrahim suffered a ruptured Achilles tendon in his team's season-opening 45-31 loss to Ohio State. He had rushed for 163 yards and two touchdowns on 30 carries before sustaining the injury late in the third quarter.

"I can't wait to be back with my brothers, my teammates, this culture, the University of Minnesota and the state," Ibrahim posted on Twitter.

Despite appearing in only 29 games, Ibrahim is tied for fourth in Minnesota program history in rushing touchdowns (33) and ranks eighth in rushing yards (3,003). His outing against the Buckeyes marked his program-record ninth consecutive 100-yard rushing performance.

A first-team All-Big Ten honoree in 2020, Ibrahim earned Big Ten Running Back of the Year honors when he set a school record for season rushing average with 153.7 yards per game.

He was listed as the No. 7 running back for the 2022 NFL draft by ESPN draft analyst Mel Kiper Jr.

Ibrahim called his rehab from the injury "the toughest thing I've ever done, physically, mentally and emotionally."



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# Trio Of Seasons Helped Define Football Program

Throughout the 2021 football season, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is publishing historical stories from seasons ending in the numeral "1." This is the final installment of the series as BSB looks back at the 1891, 1901 and 1911 seasons when the Ohio State football program was still in its infancy.

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

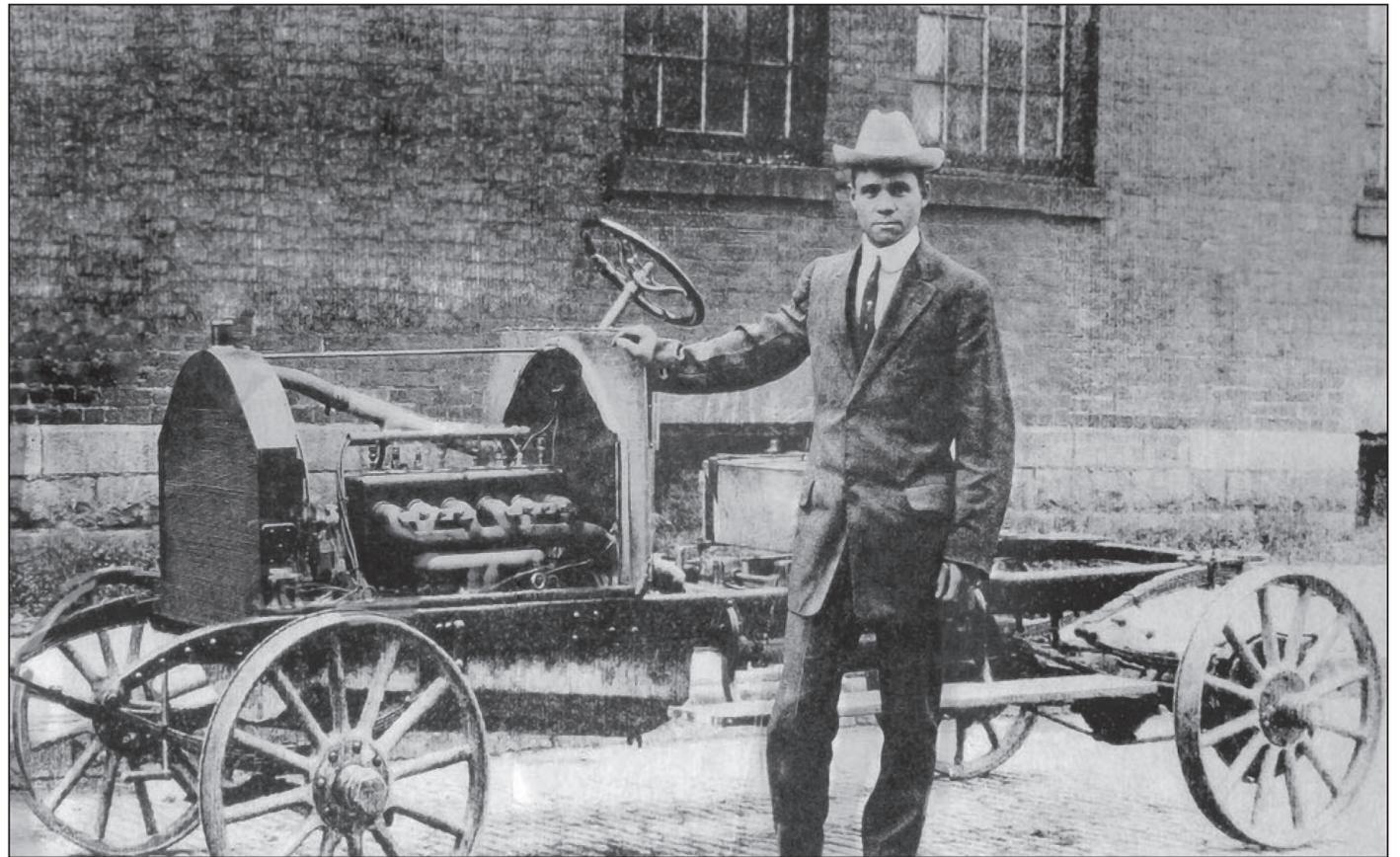
The roots of the Ohio State football program as we know it today began to take hold when Woody Hayes was hired as head coach in 1951. But those roots began as seedlings when the Buckeyes played their inaugural season in 1890.

By that time, most Ivy League schools as well as several Midwestern schools had already been playing intercollegiate football for more than a decade, leaving the Buckeyes often engaged in a losing game of catch-up in their desire to become one of the game's marquee programs.

There were three seasons that helped define Ohio State football perhaps more than any during the first 30 years of its existence – the first full season that featured an African-American player on the roster, a tragedy on the field that threatened the program's very existence, and a transitional season during which the university finally made the bold leap to stop considering its football team a small-time enterprise.

Ohio State fielded its first football team in 1890, a ragtag group of students who gathered to take on Ohio Wesleyan in a May contest that ended with the Buckeyes earning a 20-14 victory. That stands as the first official game as well as the first win in program history, but apparently the participants didn't think much of it at the time. The "team" disbanded, and not until the following November did a different collection of players get together to lose three straight games and "complete" the 1890 season.

The following year, the Buckeyes resem-



FILE PHOTO

**EARLY PIONEER** — Fredrick D. Patterson became the first African-American to play football at Ohio State when he was asked to join the 1891 team. Patterson later became a successful businessman and entrepreneur, and he is shown here with the Patterson-Greenfield Automobile he designed and manufactured.

bled much more of a real team. Most history books indicate that Alexander Lilley returned for a second season as head coach in 1891, but recent research projects claim Lilley – a former quarterback at Princeton – did nothing more than stop by practice a time or two to offer advice. Regardless of who was or wasn't coaching the team, the roster was an eclectic mix of farm boys, prelaw and premed students, and those just curious about the relatively new sport of football.

One of those was Frederick Douglas Patterson, a light-skinned African-American who

was born the son of a former slave-turned-blacksmith from Greenfield, Ohio, a bucolic village that was once an important hub along the Underground Railroad. Each day, his father sent Fred to school in Greenfield, and each day the youngster was turned away because of the color of his skin. Not until former Ohio state senator Mills Gardner successfully sued the Greenfield School Board was the young Patterson permitted to attend classes.

In 1889, he became the first African-American to graduate from Greenfield High School, and then he enrolled at Ohio State, where he found the atmosphere much more welcoming. Patterson participated in a variety of campus activities and held membership in a number of clubs, including the prestigious Horton Literary Society. He also participated in athletics, answering a call in 1890 for students to form a "scrub team" that would scrimmage against the varsity squad.

The Buckeyes were scheduled to play Kenyon College on Thanksgiving Day in 1890, but starting halfback Hobart Beatty had stopped showing up for practice and second-stringer Walter Landacre had left the team following the sudden death of his mother. OSU captain Paul Lincoln – likely the real head coach of the team – asked Patterson if he wanted to play on the varsity team against

the Lords. Not only did Patterson play, he scooped up a fumble late in the game and ran it into the end zone to become the first African-American to score a touchdown for the Buckeyes.

By the time the 1891 season began, Patterson was asked to become a full-fledged member of the varsity team, and he became the first African-American football player to earn his letterman's jacket.

The Buckeyes played four times that year, including twice within a four-day span. The season began on a Wednesday with a 56-0 loss at home to Western Reserve and continued the following Saturday with a 26-0 defeat at Kenyon. According to reports of the day, the team was unhappy with the trip to Kenyon, claiming the playing field was in poor condition and the official assigned to the game clearly favored the home team.

After two weeks of practice, the season resumed Nov. 28 with an 8-4 win against Denison and concluded with a 6-0 shutout of Akron on Dec. 5. It was the first regular-season December game in program history, and there wouldn't be another for more than a century. The Buckeyes took a 52-12 win against Michigan State on Dec. 5, 2020, as part of a schedule jumbled by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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FILE PHOTO

**TRAGIC FIGURE** — Ohio State lineman John Sigrist was one of the anchors for the Buckeyes during the early 1900s. But his death due to a broken neck in a 1901 game against Western Reserve threatened cancellation of the football program until his brother came forward to urge the university to keep the sport going.

Patterson was invited back to play another season with the Buckeyes in 1892, but he accepted a teaching job in Kentucky and did not return to school. He went back to his hometown in 1897 and joined the family buggy manufacturing business. C.R. Patterson & Sons eventually grew into an automobile manufacturing firm with Fred building and designing a vehicle he called the Patterson-Greenfield Automobile.

Unfortunately, the company could not compete with larger manufacturers, but in the 1920s, Patterson began building school bus and truck bodies on chassis purchased from other manufacturers. He changed the name of the company to the Greenfield Bus Body Co., and it continued to flourish until Patterson's death in 1932.

Patterson might have been an African-American trailblazer as far as the Ohio State football team was concerned, but that trail grew decidedly cold after he left school. Julius B. Tyler, the son of a prominent Columbus businessman, played for the Buckeyes in

1896, but he left the team after only one season, and it wasn't until 1929 when Ohio State would have another Black player on its roster.

#### Tragedy Threatens Program

Ten years after Patterson left Ohio State, a tragedy nearly ended the game of the football on campus.

John Sigrist was the son of Swiss immigrants, Christian and Madeline Sigrist, who lived on a farm just outside Congress, Ohio, a tiny town in the northwestern corner of Wayne County located a few miles from Wooster. John got his first taste of football at Oberlin Academy before enrolling in the school of agriculture at Ohio State at the age of 22.

Sigrist sat out the first three games of the 1897 season because of a faculty policy forbidding first-year students from competing in varsity athletics. But when that policy was suddenly rescinded and Sigrist was permitted to play, he started in the center of both the offensive and defensive lines and became

what many historians describe as the cornerstone for Ohio State's first successful teams. His leadership qualities were so impressive that his teammates elected him team captain for the 1898 season.

Success didn't come quickly, however. The Buckeyes were a program-worst 1-7-1 in 1897 and followed that with a 3-5 record in 1898, but their fortunes began to turn when the university hired John B.C. Eckstorm as head coach prior to the 1899 season. Eckstorm, a graduate of Dartmouth College, guided the team to its first-ever unbeaten season, a 9-0-1 finish in 1899 during which the only blemish was a 5-5 tie at Case.

With the turn of the century, the Ohio State football program seemed to get even stronger. The Buckeyes began the 1900 season with six consecutive shutouts before an 11-6 loss to Ohio Medical and an 0-0 tie with Michigan in what was described in the student newspaper, *The Lantern*, as "the best game ever played by an Ohio State eleven."

The team finished the season with an 8-1-1 record, thanks in no small part to Sigrist, who was described in *The Lantern* as "perhaps without exception the finest specimen of strength and physical competence" the Buckeyes had ever had.

Under today's eligibility rules, Sigrist's collegiate career would have ended after the 1900 season. But because the rules of that era were based more on academic standing, if a student-athlete was still enrolled at the university as a student, he could continue to participate in athletics.

Even so, the 1901 season began without Sigrist in the lineup because he had not yet returned to Ohio from a summer job at a logging camp in Washington. Perhaps his absence was a reason behind a 0-0 tie with Otterbein in the season opener. But after his return, the Buckeyes rolled to shutout wins against Wittenberg, Ohio University and Marietta to set up a battle with old foe Western Reserve.

A sellout crowd of 1,500 paid 50 cents apiece to jam into University Field on Oct. 26, 1901, to watch a nip-and-tuck game. Ohio State scored midway through the first half on a 75-yard punt return by fullback Elwood

"Laffy" Bulen and held a 6-0 lead at halftime.

Early in the second half, though, tragedy struck. On a simple pileup in the middle of the field, Siegrist locked up with the player opposite him, and as *The Lantern* reported, "He was bent backward and went to the bottom of the pile with all the other players on top." Sigrist was carried from the field and taken to the nearby Armory where he waited nearly an hour for a doctor to examine him. Meanwhile, his teammates eventually hung on for a 6-5 victory against Western Reserve.

When medical help finally arrived, Sigrist was determined to have sustained a serious neck injury. He was quickly transferred to Grant Hospital, where X-rays revealed a fracture and dislocation of the cervical vertebrae at the base of his neck. The dislocation had crushed his spinal cord and produced paralysis from the neck down.

Doctors prepared for delicate spinal surgery, but Sigrist's condition deteriorated quickly and he died at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, approximately 24 hours after he had been carried off the field by his Ohio State teammates.

A memorial service was held the following Tuesday in the University Chapel with more than 1,500 mourners gathering to pay their respects. A day later, Sigrist was laid to rest on the family farm near Congress.

But as condolences and eulogies were being offered, critics almost immediately began to call for the discontinuation of football at Ohio State. The game the following week against Ohio Wesleyan was canceled, and there was talk of suspending the season out of respect for Sigrist.

The OSU Faculty Council set up a committee to examine the risks of continuing the football program, and it might well have ruled for abolition of the sport until Sigrist's brother, Charles, who had played for the Buckeyes with his older brother, came forward to say that it was his wish as well as his family's wish that the game go on. Shortly after that, the committee voted 18-8 to continue the football program at Ohio State.

The 1901 season resumed, but to say the players' hearts weren't in it would be an un-

Continued On Page 24

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# Several Program Firsts Occurred In 1911 Season

Continued From Page 23

derstatement. The Buckeyes lost their next three games, salvaging a 5-3-1 record with a Thanksgiving Day win against Kenyon in the season finale. Eckstorm left Ohio State after the season, and the program drifted for the next 11 years under six different head coaches.

Meanwhile, there were two attempts to establish a memorial to Sigrist. In 1908, members of the Alumni Association requested a bronze memorial be placed at Ohio Field during the official dedication of the Buckeyes' new home stadium. The same request was put forward some 12 years later when the campaign was under way to raise funds for construction of Ohio Stadium.

In neither case did a memorial ever materialize, leaving generations of fans never

knowing about John Sigrist or his legacy with regard to Ohio State football. And in perhaps one final affront, Sigrist's name is misspelled "Segrist" in most university record books, including the official Ohio State Media Guide. That apparently stems from the fact Sigrist never bothered to correct the mistakes, something one former teammate traced to his humble nature.

"We once asked him why he didn't tell someone," fellow OSU lineman Josephus Tilton said. "He said it didn't matter. He said getting written up was OK with him no matter how they spelled his name."

## Season Of Transition

The Ohio State football program remained in a sort of limbo following the death of Sigrist. Coaches came and went on a reg-

ular basis, including three between 1910 and 1912 who lasted only one season. The middle of that trio was Harry Vaughan, a former player from Yale who was recommended for the job by predecessor Howard Jones.

Vaughan had no previous coaching experience, but he had been a second-team All-America end at Yale in 1909 when the Bulldogs won the national championship following a 10-0 season during which they outscored their opponents by a 209-0 margin.

The 1911 Buckeyes were a far cry from the 1909 Yale team, however. Jones had led Ohio State to a 6-1-3 record the year before, but the Buckeyes had to rely on younger players in 1911, and that relative lack of experience resulted in a 5-3-2 finish.

The season marked the 200th game in program history, but there was little reason for celebration when the contest ended in a 19-0 loss at Michigan. Another program milestone was recorded Nov. 18 on a trip to Oberlin. One of the team's cheerleaders, Herbert "Hub" Atkinson, accompanied the Buckeyes for their 0-0 tie with the Yeoman, marking the first time the OSU Athletic Board had paid for a cheerleader's expenses to attend an away game.

Atkinson, who was also a member of the Ohio State basketball team during his days as a student, later served as secretary of the Ohio Highway Department as well as three terms in the Ohio House of Representatives. Atkinson was also on the university's board of trustees from 1925 to 1948 and was a trustee emeritus from 1948 until his death in 1952.

The Buckeyes finished their 1911 season with an 11-6 win at Cincinnati on Thanksgiving Day, but shortly thereafter, Vaughan resigned as head coach and returned to Yale to resume his law studies. He briefly dabbled in coaching again in 1915, leading Fordham to a 4-4 record. But he left coaching for good after that one season and enlisted in the U.S. Army, seeing action in World War I as a second lieutenant in the infantry.

After the war, Vaughan eventually settled in Martinsburg, W.Va., to practice law. He died there in 1951 and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

In the wake of Vaughan's resignation following the 1911 season, Ohio State began to explore the possibility of beefing up its schedule in order to attract a coach who might want to stay longer than a year or two. At the same time, the university began proceedings to join the Western Conference. The school's formal request was accepted by league officials on April 6, 1912, with the Buckeyes scheduled to begin conference play in 1913.

That same year, Ohio State hired Wisconsin assistant John W. Wilce as its head football coach, the seventh man hired for the job over a 12-year period. But armed with a stronger schedule and membership in a prestigious league, Wilce was able to attract better players – including future three-time All-American Chic Harley – and remained head coach of the Buckeyes for 16 years, a tenure surpassed only by Hayes' 28-year reign.



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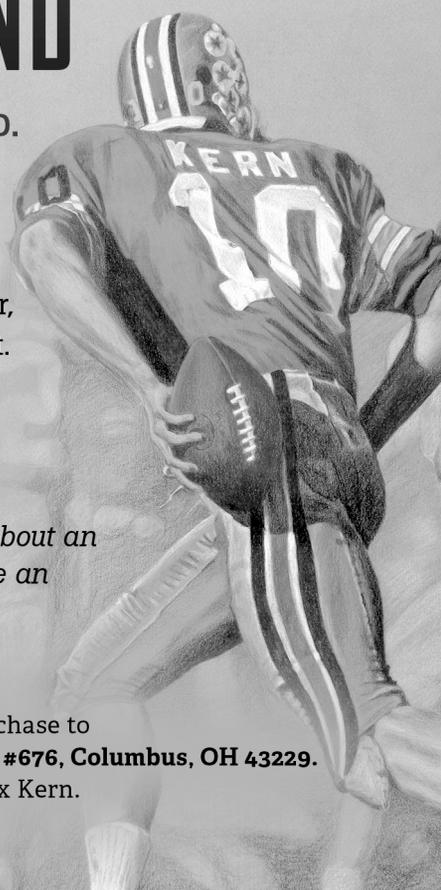
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# Impact Of 'The Game' On Recruiting Highlighted

The Game between Ohio State and Michigan is played on the field, but the impact extends off the field of play, including into recruiting.

Even if a prospect knows nothing about Ohio State other than its head coach and where they play, they're aware of the annual

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

rivalry game that can make or break either team's season, and Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said that is something of which recruits become quickly aware.

"We work (The Game into the conversation) in the offseason," Day said. "We work on it on Fridays there in the weight room. We have so many different things that we talk to our guys about. We have our sessions in the preseason and spring. We have meetings about it. We just constantly talk about it in recruiting. Our No. 1 goal here at Ohio State is to beat The Team Up North. Period. I think the guys understand that."

Players getting recruited by both schools such as senior receiver Chris Olave and junior defensive end Zach Harrison were made aware of the importance of The Game from both ends of the spectrum.

Olave, who said the rivalry was discussed with him while being recruited, said each school made him a priority.

"At the end of the day, it was a decision I had to make for my future, and (the rivalry) didn't make an impact," Olave said. "But I have respect for that program, and it's a great team that I'm looking forward to playing."

Super senior defensive tackle Haskell Garrett, who hails from Las Vegas, said the importance of the rivalry was immediately made clear to him when he stepped into the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for the first time.

"When I first walked in the building, there were no blue pens. You couldn't wear blue," Garrett said. "Coming from Bishop Gorman, our colors were orange and blue, and so when I walked in, I had a blue sweatshirt on and immediately it was taken off. Coach (Urban) Meyer, the head coach at the time, really emphasized how much this rivalry means to not only us in the university, but the fans as well."

Garrett, who tallied four career wins against the Wolverines, said playing in The Game has lived up to how it was sold to him as a recruit.

"It's what you love about Ohio State," he said. "It's why you're recruited here. It's why you commit here, to be in moments like this. You have back-to-back weekends with (ES-PN's) 'College GameDay.' Who doesn't want

## 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
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
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
Tegra Tshabola	OT	6-5	340	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
Ryan Turner	CB	6-0	180	★★★★	Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep

that as a top recruit?"

### Four-Star D-Lineman Kanu Projected To OSU

Four-star edge rusher Kenyatta Jackson of Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep has been lonely among Ohio State's 2022 commits as the only verbal pledge from a defensive lineman.

Jackson may make a new friend, however, if recent crystal ball projections on 247Sports come to fruition.

Four-star defensive lineman Hero Kanu

of Rancho Santa Margarita (Calif.) Catholic, originally from Germany, received three projections to Ohio State on Nov. 22 from 247Sports national recruiting analyst Steve Wiltfong as well as regional analysts Bill Kurelic (Bucknuts) and Brandon Drumm (OUInsider).

Ranked the No. 92 recruit in 2022 and the 15th-best defensive lineman in his class, Kanu (6-5, 293) holds offers from Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, Michigan, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State and Texas A&M, among others, but his re-

## A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

### 35 Years Ago - 1986

With National Signing Day about two months away, college recruiters were eyeing the nation's best defensive linemen, and David Rocker of Fulton High School in Atlanta was at the top of the charts for many college recruiters. The 6-4, 245-pounder was a three-sport standout.

Charles Collins from Mendel Catholic in Chicago was in the same category as Rocker. At 6-4, 270, Collins did not have any weaknesses, according to an anonymous Big Ten coach. He was lauded for his ability to play from sideline to sideline.

Collins nearly didn't play football as a freshman in high school, though. He quit the team multiple times but realized that if he put in the time and work, he could be a top player. He assuredly did that as he was able to bench press 350 pounds and squat 500 as a senior.

### 30 Years Ago - 1991

Ohio State head coach John Cooper made it a point of emphasis to keep all of Ohio's top high-school talent from going elsewhere.

On the weekend of Dec. 6-7, tight end Luke Fickell of Columbus DeSales, linebacker Jayson Gwinn of Columbus Brookhaven, defensive lineman Chris Holbrook of St. Paris Graham, running back/defensive back Rob Kelly of Newark Catholic, defensive lineman Mike Mezgec of Eastlake North, wide receiver Michael "Buster" Tillman of Steubenville and offensive lineman Juan Porter of Cleveland St. Ignatius all visited Columbus.

Holbrook, Mezgec and Tillman each issued verbal commitments shortly thereafter.

Fickell told BSB he had five more visits scheduled but that his choice would ultimately be between Ohio State and Michigan.

### 25 Years Ago - 1996

Willingboro, N.J., offensive lineman Kareem McKenzie, the nation's top lineman according to The National Recruiting Advisor, had an official visit set up with Ohio State for Dec. 13, a week removed from a scheduled trip to Wisconsin.

"I'm pretty open right now," McKenzie said. "I'm just gathering information on the business and political science schools."

McKenzie was also considering Penn State and Tennessee. For the Buckeyes, success up front worked as a significant pitch to the New Jersey product.

"Their offensive line just beats teams up," he said. "I think I could play tackle (at that level), maybe picking up where Orlando Pace leaves off."

### 20 Years Ago - 2001

Warren Harding running back Maurice Clarett bested quarterback Justin Zwick from Massillon Washington for Ohio's Mr. Football award in the statewide voting done by a panel of media members.

"I was kind of surprised," Clarett said. "I thought it might be split between me and Justin Zwick. But it was neat to win this award."

At the time, the standout tailback hadn't had a chance to talk with Zwick about the award.

"I talked to him earlier this year," Clarett said. "I really wanted this trophy, I can tell you that. I'm sure we'll talk about it at some point."

The 6-0, 230-pound Clarett had already been committed to Ohio State for nearly a year at the time he was given the honor. Zwick was verbally committed to the Buckeyes as well.

### 15 Years Ago - 2006

Shortly before BSB went to press Dec. 12, Ohio State received its 11th commitment for the class of 2007 when linebacker Brian Rolle of Immokalee, Fla., issued a verbal to the Buckeyes after hosting head coach Jim Tressel, linebackers coach Luke Fickell and cornerbacks coach Tim Beckman at his house.

Rolle, who had narrowed his list to Florida and OSU, listed the Buckeye coaching staff as one of the primary reasons for his decision.

When he committed, he did something few players ever seem to do. He cut off Tressel in mid-sentence as the coach was talking to his mother.

"I was like, 'Coach.' I just put my hand up for a second and my mom, she dropped her head and was like, 'I know what you're going to say,'" Rolle told BSB. "I was like, 'Coach, I'm a Buckeye.'"

### 10 Years Ago - 2011

Ohio State finally reeled in five-star defensive end Adolphus Washington of Cincinnati Taft.

"From the beginning of the recruitment process, I had Ohio State," the 6-6, 240-pound Washington told BSB shortly after publicly announcing his decision. "But then I kind of felt that maybe Ohio State wasn't the best place for me. Then after I took my visits and stuff, I found out it is."

"When I went to my visits, all the coaches told me to go with my gut decision and do what is best for me. I think Ohio State is the best place for me."

Washington was looking at Alabama, Michigan and Cincinnati in addition to OSU before choosing the Buckeyes.

Lakeland, Fla., wide receiver Ricquan Southward joined Wash-

ington in the Buckeyes' 2012 recruiting class. He was previously committed to Miami (Fla.) but switched to Ohio State after visiting the campus in mid-November.

### Five Years Ago - 2016

Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star offensive tackle Thayer Munford was among the visitors for Ohio State's win over Michigan, though the 2017 prospect was there in an unofficial capacity.

Munford (6-6, 325) didn't have an offer from the Buckeyes yet, but he said that he was keeping in touch with offensive line coach Greg Studrawa.

"I talk to Coach Stud, the offensive line coach," Munford said. "He still keeps in touch with me saying that I've still got a chance to be with them."

While Munford said he would love to have an Ohio State offer, he noted he was still open in the recruiting process and that he had recently visited Iowa State for an official.

Scout.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene said the recent decommitment from OSU by Jake Moretti likely resulted in Munford's visit for The Game.

"They like (Munford)," Greene said. "They saw him this summer in camp. I know Studrawa really likes him. I think there is a good chance he could get offered, and there is a good chance he would take it, too. I don't think they are going to rush on that. I think they want to see where their numbers are."

### One Year Ago - 2020

Five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka of Steilacoom, Wash., made his first trip to Norman for Oklahoma's game against Baylor on Dec. 5. Oklahoma was considered the biggest threat to Ohio State's chances with Egbuka.

Interestingly, the 6-1 and 190-pound Egbuka - who was considered the top-rated wide receiver and No. 9 prospect overall in the class of 2021 - was actually able to attend the game despite the dead period after the Big 12 allowed its member institutions to host fans at a reduced capacity. And though the ongoing recruiting dead period prevented Egbuka from meeting with Oklahoma's coaching staff, the Sooners used that attendance loophole to their advantage and provided Egbuka and his father with tickets to the game.

The same went for 2021 Oklahoma five-star quarterback commit Caleb Williams, who had already moved to Norman, Okla., and served as Egbuka's host for the weekend.

Egbuka, who was still on the OU campus when Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press, was not expected to make his college decision until the Dec. 16-18 early signing period.

# ASK AN ANALYST

With Zack Carpenter of Lettermen Row

**Ohio State hosted a number of visitors for the Michigan State game, including Bradenton (Fla.) four-star wide receiver Carnell Tate and four-star offensive tackle Payton Kirkland of Orlando (Fla.) Dr. Phillips, both in the 2023 class. What was the overall impression on some of these recruits?**

"Tate was the most important uncommitted visitor. The most important visitor was 2023 five-star safety Sonny Styles of Pickerington (Ohio) Central. Tate, Payton Kirkland and 2022 four-star quarterback Devin Brown of Draper (Utah) Corner Canyon were the top three guys on campus. Brown was important since they're still searching for that quarterback.

"As far as the near-term goes, Tate's now been to Ohio State four times, and that was his second game visit. That's massively important when they're in a war for Tate with Notre Dame. He saw Ohio State on (Nov. 20) then he was at Notre Dame (the next day). To see a game atmosphere like that and for a receiver to see what that Ohio State offense does with Ryan Day, and knowing that you have a five-star quarterback waiting in the wings, and knowing (receivers coach) Brian Hartline is not going anywhere – at least not anytime soon –

that was massively important as far as seeing up close how he would be used in that system.

"There's the practical developmental signs that Tate's gotten from his two times camping at Ohio State this summer and seeing them up close. There's the intangibles of the relationship he's built with Hartline. He camped a second time at Ohio State when he didn't need to. He came back, he came twice during the summer on his own dime, he's come twice for gameday visits on his own dime. That tells you a lot about their positioning with him.

"Then there's Kirkland. He's listed as an offensive tackle, and the fact that Ohio State is using four offensive tackles on their line right now and two of them are playing guard, that's something that he sort of wants. At least he is very open to the idea if he comes to Ohio State. He could slot in as a guard and learn multiple positions. A lot of this with offensive linemen, it's getting reps and experience at multiple positions on the offensive line because they can increase their draft value.

"So, the fact that Ohio State's offense looked that dominant (against Michigan State) and to have those three guys on campus for that, that was a huge momentum boost for them."

**Dan Mullen is out as head coach at Florida. Is there anyone in Florida that Ohio State might have a chance at getting because of Mullen's ouster?**

"Mac Markway is a 2023 tight end from DeSmet in St. Louis, which is where Jakalin Johnson went. It's where four-star cornerback Christian Gray goes, and he's a top corner target in the 2023 class. In the 2020 class, Ohio State's goal was to sign two tight ends, and then they didn't. They pushed that back to 2021. Then they pushed it to 2022 and they had two tight end commits, but then Pilot Mountain (N.C.) Carroll County four-star Benji Gosnell decommitted. Now the plan seems like it's going to be pushed back to 2023.

"They already have a tight end with four-star Ty Lockwood of Thompson Station's (Tenn.) Independence committed, but Markway is one of the best tight ends in the country, and if Markway wants to reopen his recruitment and reassess things, that's a guy they can possibly target. The caveat with that is he's in the 2023 class, so he has plenty of time to see who Florida brings in as its new head coach and how he would fit in that system."

recruitment appears to have come down to Georgia, Notre Dame, Ohio State and Oklahoma.

"Hero's a guy that I saw this summer work with (Ohio State defensive line coach) Larry Johnson," said Letterman Row recruiting analyst Zack Carpenter. "Larry Johnson was pretty much like, 'How's this kid not a five-star?' That was their first meeting, and it could not have gone better. Hero just seems like a Larry Johnson type of kid through and through.

"After that camp, he was supposed to go down with a bunch of his teammates and their group to another school. He decided to stay back and not go with those guys. He wanted to stay at Ohio State for a second day, and that second day he was around the Ohio State staff quite a bit, just learning the culture. I think that was a huge early sign in his recruitment that the Buckeyes were a favorite."

Kanu has taken official visits to Oklahoma (Oct. 16), Notre Dame (Oct. 23), Ohio State (Oct. 30) and Georgia (Nov. 6), and Carpenter said Ohio State is among the leaders.

"His mom made all four official visits with him, and I think she and Larry Johnson really hit it off," Carpenter said. "I think she trusts to have Hero developed by (Johnson). It seemed like he might want more of like a college town environment like they have in Athens or Norman instead of a college city like Columbus, but I think he would be willing to bypass that for a chance to get developed by Larry Johnson. I think he would like to be the only pure defensive tackle they really prioritize.

Other Ohio State targets on the defensive line for this cycle include four-star edge rusher Enai White (6-5, 230) of Philadelphia Imhotep Institute, four-star Caden Curry (6-3, 250) of Greenwood (Ind.) Center Grove, four-star Christen Miller (6-4, 285) of Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove and four-star Dominick James (6-2, 278) of Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy.

Greg Biggins of 247Sports, who compared Kanu to former Ohio State and current Pittsburgh Steelers defensive end Cameron Heyward, said Kanu is a big interior lineman with plus-quickness and athleticism.

"He's naturally strong, shows a great get-off and has a rare combination of size, power and twitch with the kind of motor you love to see in an interior lineman," Biggins said. "He has only played two years of football and is still learning the sport but has a soccer background that has helped him with his overall quickness and coordination.

"He plays with a motor and is able to run down plays from behind as well as make plays down the field. He can take on a double-team and still get a push and shows some natural pass-rush skill that should really develop with more game reps and experience."

Kanu is set to formally announce his commitment Jan. 8 at the All-American Bowl but is expected to sign during the early period.

## Four-Star QB Brown Decommits From USC

Ohio State quarterback Quinn Ewers was a coveted commitment for head coach

Ryan Day, but Ewers' reclassification from 2022 in 2021 threw a wrench into plans for the Buckeyes at quarterback, and they are suddenly looking for a signal caller in their 2022 class.

James Franklin's 10-year contract extension and sudden stability at Penn State ended any talk of Medina, Ohio, four-star Drew Allar flipping to Ohio State, but focus from Allar switched with the recent decommitment from USC by Draper (Utah) Corner Canyon four-star Devin Brown.

"I would like to thank (the USC coaches) for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to play at the next level," Brown posted in a statement on Twitter. "They believed in me very early when many others didn't. I will forever be grateful for the opportunity they gave me. At this time I believe it's best for me to open my recruitment. I will be decommitting from the University of Southern California."

It seemed likely that Brown would not stick around at USC following Clay Helton's

firing early this season, but Brown renegeing on his verbal pledge, originally issued Sept. 19, 2020, reaffirms that Ohio State, along with Ole Miss and Texas, are all still in on the fifth-ranked quarterback in 2022. Brown took an official visit for Ohio State's game against Michigan State, and he was hosted by Ole Miss on Oct. 8 and Texas on Nov. 13.

Recruitment for Brown picked up immediately after Helton's firing on Sept. 13. He picked up a number of offers in the following week, including Ohio State on Oct. 12.

"I think it takes a little pressure off USC wondering why I'm taking visits and what else I'm doing, so it's the respectful thing to do at this point," Brown told 247Sports of his decommitment. "I'm not going to have that weight on my back and waiting on USC (to make a new hire)."

Brown's official visit for the OSU-Michigan State game couldn't have come at a better time as he was on-site to watch Ohio

Continued On Page 30

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## Continued From Page 29

State's takedown of the Spartans, spurred by a Heisman Trophy-worthy performance by C.J. Stroud.

"Ryan Day and Kevin Wilson have to do a good job of convincing him that, despite coming to a place that has three five-star quarterbacks and a four-star quarterback all in the same room, he can still accomplish what he wants to accomplish at a place like Ohio State," Carpenter said. "C.J. Stroud is only going to be around another year before he likely goes to the NFL, assuming his trajectory continues. You kind of assume that at least one of those four guys won't be there next year – possibly two, but at least one."

"I wasn't in the room for any of the conversations they had or the pitches they made, but I think Devin Brown's seen that up close. Being able to see Stroud throw for six touchdown passes and become a Heisman Trophy favorite, I think it's crucial in that recruitment."

Carpenter said coaches and players don't talk publicly about individual awards, but it's an important factor in recruiting, showing that a school can develop players to the level where they're in contention for national awards.

"They don't even need a Heisman Trophy winner to prove that they can develop quarterbacks," the recruiting analyst said. "They brought in Kyle McCord, Quinn Ewers and C.J. Stroud without having a Heisman Trophy winner, but that would just be a massive cherry on top if they can do that."

"I've said a couple of times that if they got Devin Brown on campus for an official visit, there's just this gut feeling for me that hasn't gone away that he's going to wind up in Ohio State's class. But if you look at it practically, does he want to go into a room that loaded with competition? If he does, I think that completely resets the quarterback dominoes."

### Five-Star CB Jackson Joins Brown As USC Decommits

While Ohio State appears to be in a good position with Brown, the same cannot be

said for Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star cornerback Domani Jackson, who decommitted from USC on Nov. 14.

Before Jackson's previous commitment to USC on Jan. 23, Ohio State appeared to be in a good position for the defensive back ranked the No. 6 overall prospect in 2022 and the No. 2 overall cornerback. However, the Trojans made a late push to secure the in-state product.

Following Jackson's decommitment, he told 247Sports that he's focusing on Alabama, Michigan and USC and planning trips to each school before his commitment date of Dec. 15.

"With USC, it's hard because they don't have a head coach and likely won't until early December," Jackson said. "I'm going to be signing during the early signing period, so I'll still have a couple of weeks to get to know the new coach and then figure out the best place for me."

Despite Jackson saying Michigan and USC are still in the running, following an official visit to Alabama on Nov. 6, a number of crystal ball projections have come in for Jackson to the Crimson Tide.

### Former OSU Target Ricks Enters Transfer Portal

LSU has been dealt another blow as a result of its coaching situation with sophomore defensive back Eli Ricks entering his name into the transfer portal.

Ricks cited his relationships with outgoing head coach Ed Orgeron as well as current Baylor head coach Dave Aranda, who was the Tigers' defensive coordinator and recruited Ricks, as reasons that he came to LSU.

A native of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., who played his high school ball at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Fla., Ricks came into college as a five-star recruit and was ranked the No. 14 overall prospect in 2020 as well as No. 2 at cornerback. He committed to LSU on Christmas Day 2018 but continued communication with other schools, including Ohio State, though he eventually signed with the Tigers and enrolled early in the 2020 spring semester.

Ricks told 247Sports that the schools he's focusing on now are Alabama, Georgia, Ohio State and USC.

"Ohio State was my No. 2 choice out of high school," he said Nov. 24. "At the time, Urban Meyer was my lead recruiter and we talked all the time and I loved Ohio State. I've been texting with Coach (Kerry) Coombs. They're another school that has great defensive back play and a great tradition for getting guys drafted, and that's obviously the goal for me."

"They're a winning program, and that's important to me, too. I like Coach Day, and he was one of the guys I talked with back in high school. He's a great coach, and there's a lot of things about Ohio State that stand out. I'm very close with C.J. Stroud, and I've talked with him along with Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson. Me and C.J. played on the same Pop Warner team when we were 7 years old, and we've been close ever since."

Ricks said he plans to make a decision in mid-December and expects to enroll in the school of his choice in January.

"I don't have any visits set yet, but I would like to take a few if I can," he said. "The biggest factors for me are finding a comfortable fit with the coaching staff, a place that I can win, and a place where they know what my goals and aspirations are. I want to be one-and-done, so I'm looking to make an immediate impact wherever I go."

In two seasons at LSU, Ricks appeared in 16 games and totaled 31 tackles, 11 passes defended and five interceptions, two of which were returned for touchdowns.

### DL McClellan Offers Commitment To Florida

Dan Mullen's firing as head coach at Florida did not deter Owasso (Okla.) four-star defensive lineman Chris McClellan (6-3, 295) from issuing a Nov. 23 verbal commitment to play for the Gators.

McClellan, the No. 101 overall recruit in 2022 and No. 18 defensive lineman, committed to Florida over offers from Alabama, LSU, Ohio State, Oklahoma and USC, who were all in his top six with the Gators.

"No other school was really close in giv-

ing that feeling and sense of knowing I belong there," McClellan told 247Sports. "It's just the environment there is like no other. It's undefeated."

After offering McClellan on April 1, Ohio State got him on campus June 25 for an official visit, but it apparently wasn't enough to close things out for the Buckeyes.

### 2023 DL Hoffer Puts OSU On Top

Another visitor Ohio State had for the Michigan State game was Atlanta Woodward Academy four-star defensive lineman AJ Hoffer (6-5, 245), who said he received a dream offer from the Buckeyes during his visit.

"I talked to my dad before the visit," Hoffer told Eleven Warriors. "Before the visit, I thought if Ohio State offered me, I'd commit right when I got the offer. But he told me not to do that and keep my recruitment and my options open."

Hoffer, ranked No. 256 overall in 2023 and No. 40 among defensive linemen, holds offers from Auburn, Michigan, Michigan State, Ole Miss and Tennessee, among others, but it doesn't appear schools other than Ohio State have achieved much traction in his recruitment.

"It was great. It was my best visit yet in my opinion," Hoffer said. "I loved it. The hospitality they showed – everyone was acting like they wanted me to be there. This was before they offered me. They treated me like I was a five-star."

Hoffer said he's considering committing on his birthday – Aug. 9, 2022 – but might move up that timeline following an expected official visit to Ohio State in either February or March.

"Depending on how it goes, I may commit then," Hoffer said. "I'm not too sure, but as of now they're my No. 1 school. I can't wait to get to know the coaches more and learn about the school."

### Robinson, Bryant List Buckeyes Among Top 10

Ohio State has gained some momentum with a pair of 2023 edge rushers, earning a spot among their top schools.

Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star edge rusher Malik Bryant (6-2, 235) and Pittsburgh Brashear four-star linebacker Ta'Mere Robinson (6-4, 210) each listed Ohio State in recently released top 10 lists.

Bryant, the No. 17 overall prospect in his class and the No. 2 overall edge rusher, listed the Buckeyes along with Alabama, Arizona State, Clemson, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Miami (Fla.), Oklahoma and Oregon.

He's taken unofficial visits to Georgia (June 1), Florida (June 10), Ohio State (June 22) and Miami (Sept. 18-19), with the Bulldogs appearing to have an early lead for the five-star prospect.

Robinson, whose junior season was cut short following a knee injury, is No. 108 in 2023 and listed Ohio State in addition to Cincinnati, Michigan, Notre Dame, Ole Miss, Penn State, Pitt, South Carolina, Texas and West Virginia.

Robinson has yet to take any official visits, but he's taken a number of unofficial trips to Ohio State and Penn State, and Franklin visited Robinson at home on Oct. 14.



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# Healthy Ward Impactful In Browns Secondary

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

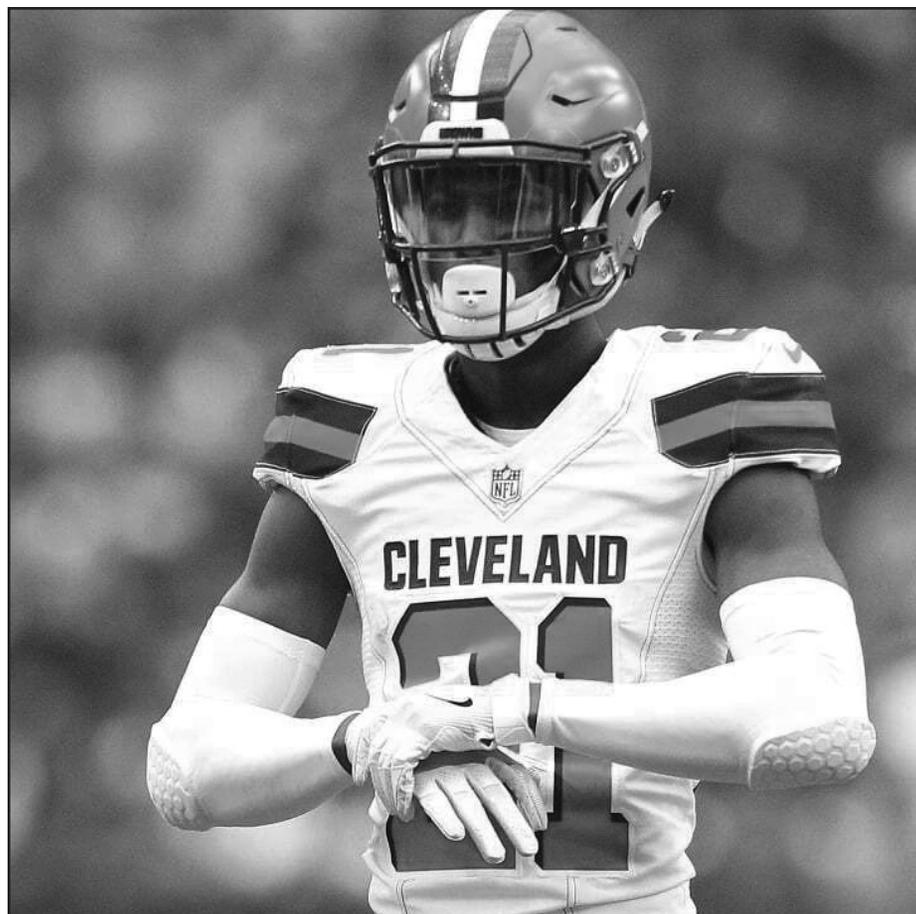


PHOTO COURTESY OF CLEVELANDBROWNS.COM

**COMING INTO HIS OWN — Former Ohio State cornerback Denzel Ward (21) is having perhaps his finest season in 2021 with the Cleveland Browns. The fourth overall pick of the 2018 NFL draft was ranked by Pro Football Focus as the No. 5 cornerback in the league through week 10.**

It was fitting that Denzel Ward's best play of the season came against the in-state rival.

The fourth-year cornerback for the Cleveland Browns is all about Ohio, having grown up in the northeast part of the state in Macedonia, graduating from Nordonia High School and becoming an All-American at Ohio State.

Being selected with the fourth overall pick in the 2018 NFL draft by his hometown team was a dream come true, so picking off a pass from former OSU teammate Joe Burrow and returning it 99 yards for a touchdown to give his team an early lead against the Cincinnati Bengals on Nov. 14 was a special – and breathtaking – moment during the Browns' 41-16 win.

"Oh man, I was tired," Ward said. "On the sideline, I needed the oxygen tank. It's a conference game. It was a big game."

It was important for another reason. Ward returned after missing the previous game against Pittsburgh because of a hamstring injury.

Since entering the NFL, Ward has yet to play more than 13 games, and his durability will be factor as to whether the Browns will look to sign him to a long-term deal.

On April 23, the team picked up the fifth-year options for 2022 for Ward, at a rate of nearly \$13.9 million per year, as well as quarterback Baker Mayfield, the top pick in 2018, for more than \$18.8 million.

Ward has missed a total of 12 games in his career due to injuries and COVID-19, although he played nine of the first 10 games this season.

"He is highly regarded, but the biggest issue is he's always hurt," Akron Beacon Journal reporter Marla Ridenour told BSB. "I don't think there's a question of his ability. I mean, he had an incredible game at Cincy. The question is are you going to heavily invest in a guy when the injuries keep popping up? I would be surprised if they let him go, but are you going to pay a guy who's never played a full season?"

Obviously, Mayfield's future draws all the attention, but the Browns will have to also decide if the 24-year-old Ward is worth the investment.

Prior to the start of the season, Spotrac.com placed Ward's market value on a four-year deal at \$74.255 million for an average of \$18.563 million per season.

Pro Football Focus had Ward ranked as the No. 5 overall corner in the NFL through week 10, and Pro Football Rumors estimates his worth comparable to the \$19 million per year the New Orleans Saints are paying to former Ohio State cornerback Marshon Lattimore.

"Ward's a really good player," said Los Angeles Chargers offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi. "They put him into the boundary, which is a corner that often gets a little more action, so you can tell what they think about him. He's a really good cover corner."

Ridenour said the Browns will take their time deciding whether to extend Ward's contract beyond the 2022 season. They gave defensive end Myles Garrett a five-year deal in July, and on Nov. 9, they signed guard Wyatt

Teller to a four-year extension worth \$56.9 million.

"If you're going to be a running team like the Browns are, then you want to keep your pulling guard," Ridenour said. "I did feel that was some of the money they could give to Ward, though."

Ward knows the business side of football but would love to stay with the Browns as they continue to progress from the forlorn franchise he knew as a kid to a playoff contender.

He is involved in numerous charities and community activities as well.

"I've been enjoying this time in Cleveland and changing this organization, bringing winning back to the organization," Ward said in September. "It's been cool just being from Cleveland and getting the love that I do get here."

"We have the best fans in the league, and I was looking forward to the opportunity I got once I got drafted."

Ridenour feels Ward might be amenable to a so-called "hometown discount" to help his team achieve its goals.

"He seems more like a guy that would do that more than some, especially since a lot of DBs have egos," she said. "He doesn't have that at all. He's a very, very down-to-earth kid. I'd say that's possible."

Ward is accustomed to winning. As a senior in 2014, he helped Nordonia to a 14-1 record and the state championship game, where it lost a 55-20 decision to Cincinnati La Salle.

From there, he played three seasons for the Buckeyes. In 38 games, he had 57 tackles, 26 passes defended and two interceptions. As junior in 2017, he was named an All-Ameri-

can and showed his versatility with a blocked punt against Penn State with OSU down 15 in the fourth quarter that keyed a 39-38 comeback win.

Adding to his stature, he had an interception in the Big Ten Championship Game win against Wisconsin.

However, Ward irked many Ohio State fans when just prior to the Cotton Bowl matchup against USC, he opted not to play to maintain his health for the draft.

Ward became just the sixth Browns rookie to be named to the Pro Bowl after he finished second among all first-year players in the NFL with three interceptions while playing 13 of 16 games (12 starts) in 2018.

He played 12 games in each of his next two seasons, and his first NFL touchdown came in 2019 with a 61-yard pick-six against the Bengals. Of his eight career interceptions, six have been against AFC North opponents.

"Every year, I'm trying to find stuff to get better," he said. "You're never just going to be at the point where you're the best or there's nothing else to work on, so I'll try to better myself every game, every chance I get."

"I'm very confident I could do my job at the highest level here. I feel I can stack up with the other top corners in the league. I think I've shown that on the field, and my play speaks for itself."

It spoke volumes against the Bengals.

Ward was matched against standout rookie receiver Ja'Marr Chase, a teammate with Burrow at LSU after the QB transferred from Ohio State. Chase caught six passes for 49 yards (8.2-yard average) after coming into the game averaging 20.7 yards per catch with seven touchdowns.

Burrow instantly regretted his slightly off-target throw that led to Ward's pick.

"If you do that to Denzel, he's going to make you pay," the Bengals quarterback said.

Ward praised his teammates afterward, saying, "It was great team defense. Guys got pressure on the quarterback, and I was able to step in front of it. As soon as I caught it, there's just one receiver out with me – I was covering Chase – and I knew I had the rest of the field to go by myself. They ended up getting an angle, but my guys did a great job getting a block."

It was the second-longest interception return in Browns history, trailing only Brodney Pool's 100-yard return at Baltimore on Nov. 18, 2007.

"That 99-yard touchdown was the play of the season so far," Ridenour said. "That's because, No. 1, they've been stressing takeaways for weeks, and No. 2, he hadn't gotten many in his career (just nine through his first 47 games). He needed that for his future and for the game that day."

"My biggest issue with him – and this is just my unvarnished opinion – is that he doesn't get enough takeaways," she added. "He's great at breaking up passes, but for the fourth pick in the draft, don't you think he should be lighting it up with some interceptions?"

Ward also broke up a pass late in the first half that forced the Bengals to kick a field goal, and he tipped a pass in the third quarter that led to an interception by safety John Johnson III.

"I always say I think he plays stuck to guys," Johnson said. "He's like Velcro. He's always on the body of a guy. He challenges people at the line, challenges people at the catch point and gives a big-time overall performance from a big-time player."

Ward for the game against Cincinnati had three passes defended, notched two tackles and featured a 0.0 passer rating when targeted, according to Pro Football Focus.

"I like Denzel Ward," said Patriots wide receiver Kendrick Bourne. "I respect his game, and he's been playing really well. It's just about respecting all of them and treating them as good opponents, but Denzel is the guy that stands out most to me. He's one of the ones where if I go against him, I want to showcase what I can do."

Ward welcomes the challenge, as he told ClevelandBrowns.com.

"I invite the action," he said. "When a ball is thrown my way, I get the opportunity to make plays on the ball and help the team win. I invite that type of competition and look forward to it."

The bottom line is the Browns revamped their porous pass defense after the 2020 season.

"The secondary had to be blown up, and the only constant was Ward," Ridenour said. "So, if you let your cornerback walk, when are you going to be drafting high enough to get another one?"

"That's a lot of it. I mean, his future has a lot of questions, but I don't think you can afford to let him go."

# New Signees Bring With Them New Skill Sets

Barring a repeat of last season's situation with Meechie Johnson Jr. that had the Cleveland native jump ahead a recruiting cycle to bolster backcourt depth, Ohio State isn't going to see the fruits of its recruiting labor for the 2022 recruiting class for nearly another year.

## COURT REPORT Patrick Mayhorn

That doesn't make it any less sweet for Chris Holtmann and his staff, though. The fifth-year head coach inked the finest class of his career, at least according to 247Sports, which ranked OSU's five-man group of Bowen Hardman, Roddy Gayle Jr., Felix Okpara, Brice Sensabaugh and Bruce Thornton at No. 7 nationally. With the future in mind, Holtmann's designs were focused upon replacing the veteran core the Buckeyes are expected to lose this coming offseason.

"It's certainly a class that, moving forward, we'll be able to look back on and feel like it was instrumental in a lot of success," Holtmann said. "I don't want to put too much on young guys right now, but we have a combination of some really talented guys who have addressed some needs. We have four guys ranked in the 35-80 range (nationally), which is a tremendous class.



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIOSTATEBUCKEYES.COM

**NEW CLASS OF BUCKS** — Joining 6-11 prospect Felix Okpara (far left) in Ohio State's freshly-minted class of signees are (left to right) guards Roddy Gayle Jr., Bruce Thornton and Bowen Hardman, and forward Brice Sensabaugh. The five-player class is ranked among the top 10 by every major recruiting outlet.

"It's as talented a class as we've had, and it's going to be a building block moving forward. We can continue to have classes like this — maybe not always in numbers because you're not always going to bring

in five freshmen, but there's no question that we can continue to have this quality."

The potential departures, which Ohio State has on its mind even with a nearly full season left to play, had a major impact on the makeup of the recruiting class, even beyond just its roster size. The Buckeyes wanted to take players with skill sets that could either match the talent expected to depart or who could add a new dimension to the group moving forward, perhaps marking a shift in approach at several key spots.

"We're going to be losing a lot, but it gives us a lot of excitement moving for-

ward to have the combination of guys who have won at a high level and are really competitive," Holtmann said. "We have some multi-positional versatility guys, and then you have a point guard in Bruce and a center who we really haven't had in Felix who can really address some needs. It's an exciting class, and I'm looking forward to following them in their senior years.

"I do think it was important (to get guys who can play early), and in their minds, that was an attractive thing. We're going to have some good young players returning, but we also need some guys who can come in and play right away as freshmen.

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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

There's no question about that with some of the needs we have. I think we have some (among the new signees) who are capable of that – some more so than others – but that was attractive for them looking at us. And for us, we were able to address some immediate needs.”

Leading the charge on that front is Okpara, the four-star center from Branson (Mo.) Link Academy. The 6-11, 210-pound Nigerian is, more than any of his classmates, a new kind of player for Holtmann and the Buckeyes. After relying heavily on such big men as E.J. Liddell, Jae'Sean Tate, Kaleb Wesson and Kyle Young – shorter, stouter players with an ability to bang down low but with a greater focus on refinement and technique than pure athletic and physical ability – Okpara is a departure, and he'll arrive shortly after Holtmann and the Buckeyes were hit with a barrage of questions about their dearth of big bodies as Liddell and Young struggled to defend in Big Ten play.

Okpara does not offer a whole lot in the way of refined offensive technique. He started his basketball career only a few years ago after moving from Nigeria to the United States, and the majority of his profile as a recruit comes from his size and comfort in using that size. Okpara is a fluid athlete in that 6-11 frame and uses that to lock down the basket, blocking 2.6 shots per game at Hamilton Heights Christian Academy in Chattanooga, Tenn., as a junior. He nabbed nearly eight rebounds per game as well.

Holtmann is hoping that Okpara's athleticism and defensive prowess will make him an immediate contributor and a perfect fit in the frontcourt with the bulkier, more offensively gifted forward Zed Key, who wears his 245 pounds strongly at 6-8 but isn't much of a presence above the rim defensively.

“Did our fan base feel like we needed a big guy? I was unaware of that,” Holtmann said with a laugh. “Felix is different than the bigs we've had, and he's even different from someone like Zed. I could see them playing together some. He's really unique in his shot-blocking ability. At 6-11 with a 7-3 wingspan, he provides a dimension that's exciting for us. He's quick off his feet. He doesn't have Zed's low-post scoring or that physicality right now, but that's why those guys could end up playing together as long as we could manage that defensively. I'm excited about that moving forward.

“We were looking for someone who can bring something different than Zed, and Felix has that in length.”

Although no one else in the class can boast measurables that jump off the page quite like Okpara, he's not alone in bringing a distinctly new set of skills to Co-

lumbus. For the first time in his tenure, Holtmann has secured a true distributing point guard from the high school ranks rather than the transfer portal.

Thornton, a four-star prospect from Alpharetta (Ga.) Milton, is considered one of 2022's top true point guards after he led his team to a 7A state title as a junior and a No. 2 ranking in this preseason's MaxPreps rankings. Off-the-court legal issues for a pair of Thornton's teammates will make a repeat trickier this season, but the Buckeye signee has flashed the ability to run an offense that Ohio State hasn't seen in some time.

Like Okpara with regard to big men, it's a change of pace for a program that has found itself focusing more on scoring-capable combo guards over true point guards, taking its distributors from the college ranks. And with Jamari Wheeler and Jimmy Sotos both out of eligibility following this season, there might be playing time to be had for Thornton behind Malaki Branham and Johnson – each combo guards themselves – in 2022.

“Bruce is your prototypical pass-first point guard,” Holtmann said. “We identified Bruce early, and he became really important because of his pedigree, his competitiveness and how's he won. It's a little too early to create backcourt pairings because we have some young talent already that have a chance to really be better in a year, like Meechie and Malaki.

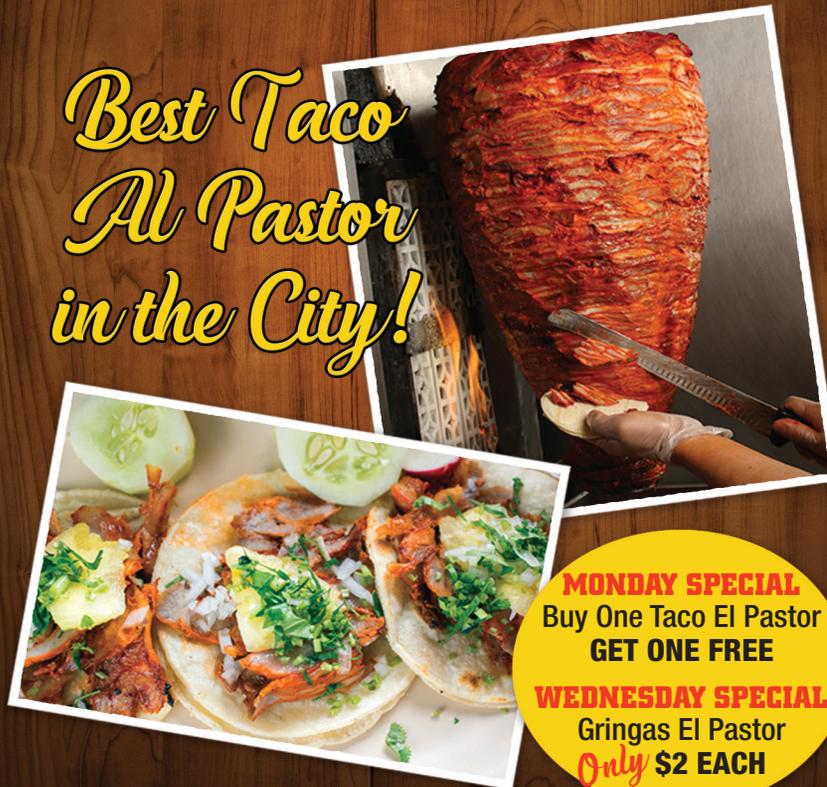
“Bruce understands that he has an opportunity but that it has to be earned. Most programs like to carry three point guards, and Bruce saw that chance, so he's going to be ready. He's been extremely well-coached, comes from great success, and (assistant coach) Jake (Diebler) did a tremendous job building a relationship with him.”

For Ohio State, the ability to play early was a crucial trait to identify in this class as well. Joey Brunk, Cedric Russell, Sotos, Wheeler and Young are each out of eligibility after this season, Seth Towns has one more year but is already in his sixth season of college basketball, and Justin Ahrens and Justice Sueing could choose to decline the extra season afforded to them by COVID rules. Even Liddell, a true junior, seems a likely departure candidate given his flirtation with the NBA a season ago. The Buckeyes won't lose that entire group, but six or seven departures doesn't look at all unrealistic, meaning that several of the new faces in this year's recruiting class, as well as a few potential transfer pickups, could be needed from the jump.

“It's the perfect time to have an outstanding class,” Holtmann said. “Our staff knew that the pressure was on us and that we needed to deliver. We're thrilled with the quality of this class.”



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# Buzzer-Beaters Punctuate OSU's Florida Trip

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Like many so-called snowbirds, the Ohio State men's basketball team took a late November trip to Florida to escape the cold. The Buckeyes joined California, Florida and Seton Hall for the three-day Fort Myers Tip-Off and came back home with a 4-2 record after a pair of games decided by buzzer-beaters.

During a 79-76 victory for the Buckeyes, Ohio State and Seton Hall literally shot the lights out in the Nov. 22 game. Shortly after a Myles Cale steal and layup to push Seton Hall's lead to five points at 24-19 with 9:04 to play in the first half, the Buckeyes (4-1) took the ball up the court and set up a Meechie Johnson Jr. shot from downtown, only for the arena's main lights to go out, sending the game into an unexpected extended pause.

The game wouldn't resume for five minutes or so before the lights came back on, offering a needed break for the Buckeyes, who opened the game shooting well but struggling to get any stops against the Pirates.

Right out of the stoppage, forward E.J. Liddell extended what had already been a strong start to the game, drilling a midrange jumper, blocking a pair of Seton Hall tries on the other end of the floor and then knocking down a three-pointer to knot the game at 24, giving him his fifth make and 12th point of the half.

Those buckets began a 21-7 run in favor of the Buckeyes over the next 6:24, which saw the Pirates stumble into foul trouble on the inside as they dealt with Liddell and Kyle Young, creating plenty of free-throw opportunities and lots of space on the outside.

Seton Hall cut the Buckeye lead back down to five at 40-35 entering the break, but the Buckeyes stayed hot to open the second half, jumping out to their largest lead of the game to that point at 52-41 before the first timeout of the frame at 15:07, a run bookended by triples from Justin Ahrens and Young.

The two sides would keep roughly that

distance for the next seven minutes of play, trading baskets until six straight Seton Hall points, capped by a three-point play for Bryce Aiken, cut the Buckeye lead down to 63-59 at the 8:19 mark.

OSU head coach Chris Holtmann had some qualms, first with the Aiken three-point play on a drive that likely could have drawn a charge, followed by an Ohio State possession that had Liddell roughed up on a missed shot. Holtmann made his concerns heard and was given a technical foul for it, giving Seton Hall two more points and the ball with a 63-61 deficit with 7:52 remaining.

That triggered a back-and-forth game the rest of the way, leading to a frenzied finish. It was still a two-point game with the Buckeyes holding a 76-74 lead when Johnson threw the ball away to Pirates guard Jamir Harris, who broke down the court for a layup to tie the game at 76 with 14 seconds remaining. Ohio State decided to forgo a timeout, and Johnson took the ball down the court, stared down his opposition and, from a country mile beyond the arc, drained the game-winning dagger with two seconds remaining.

"We knew exactly what we were going to run if we had the last shot down one or tied," Holtmann said. "It took us a little while to get into it – which was a concern for me – but I just wanted it in a couple of guys' hands, Meechie being one of them. We knew exactly what we were going to run. I did not want to call timeout."

Johnson finished the game with eight points off the bench, while Liddell and Ahrens led the scoring for the Buckeyes with 28 and 17 points, respectively. Ahrens was 5 of 8 from beyond the arc, and the Buckeyes were 11 of 22. Jared Rhoden for the Pirates led all scorers with 29 points.

## Gators Turn Tables

Featuring frenetic press defense and tickytacky fouls, the matchup between the Buckeyes and Gators on Nov. 24 felt very much like an early-season warmup. In the end, how-

## Ohio State 79, Seton Hall 76

		Nov. 22, 2021			Suncoast Credit Union Arena • Fort Myers, Fla.		
		1	2	F			
Seton Hall (3-1, 0-0)		35	41	76			
Ohio State (4-1, 0-0)		40	39	79			
Seton Hall	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Yetna	21	1-2	0-0	1-2	0	2	2
Rhoden	34	8-15	11-13	0-5	0	2	29
Obiagu	26	2-4	0-0	1-3	0	3	4
Richmond	17	1-7	0-0	1-2	3	4	2
Cale	10	1-3	0-0	2-2	0	0	2
Samuel	14	3-7	0-0	2-0	0	1	7
Aiken	30	5-10	5-6	1-3	0	2	16
Jackson	19	1-5	3-4	2-2	0	1	5
Harris	29	2-10	4-4	1-5	1	2	9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>24-63</b>	<b>27-14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>76</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 38.1%. FT: 85.2%. **Three-point field goals:** 5-23 (Rhoden 2-5, Samuel 1-3, Aiken 1-4, Harris 1-5, Cale 0-1, Richmond 0-1, Yetna 0-1, Jackson 0-3). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 4 (Obiagu 3, Rhoden). **Turnovers:** 8 (Aiken 2, Harris, Jackson, Rhoden, Richmond, Samuel, Yetna). **Steals:** 6 (Aiken 2, Cale 2, Harris, Rhoden).

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Ahrens	28	5-8	2-3	0-4	0	3	17
Liddell	29	8-17	10-10	1-5	1	2	28
Brunk	7	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	2	0
Branham	18	1-4	0-0	0-3	2	2	2
Wheeler	24	0-0	0-0	0-2	3	4	0
Key	21	3-6	0-0	0-2	1	2	6
Johnson Jr.	26	2-5	2-2	0-1	2	1	8
Young	24	2-5	7-8	3-5	3	2	12
Sotos	19	2-2	1-2	0-2	1	0	6
Russell	5	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>23-48</b>	<b>22-25</b>	<b>4-27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>79</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 47.9%. FT: 88.0%. **Three-point field goals:** 11-22 (Ahrens 5-8, Johnson Jr. 2-4, Liddell 2-5, Sotos 1-1, Young 1-2, Branham 0-1, Russell 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 1. **Blocked shots:** 5 (Liddell 3, Sotos, Young). **Turnovers:** 10 (Key 3, Branham 2, Johnson Jr. 2, Liddell, Sotos, Wheeler). **Steals:** 5 (Ahrens 2, Branham, Wheeler, Young). **Officials:** Wymer, Rutecki, Cassell. Attendance: 3,500.

## Florida 71, Ohio State 68

		Nov. 24, 2021			Suncoast Credit Union Arena • Fort Myers, Fla.		
		1	2	F			
Florida (5-0, 0-0)		26	45	71			
Ohio State (4-2, 0-0)		30	38	68			
Florida	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Duruji	24	3-9	1-2	3-0	0	3	8
Castleton	33	4-9	3-8	5-8	3	3	11
Jones	37	2-7	2-2	0-3	0	1	7
Appleby	29	2-10	3-4	0-1	2	2	8
McKissic	20	2-8	1-2	2-3	1	4	6
Fleming Jr.	33	5-11	9-10	2-0	1	4	19
Felder	19	3-4	4-5	3-2	1	3	10
Kennedy	4	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	2
Jotoboh	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>22-60</b>	<b>23-33</b>	<b>16-19</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>71</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 36.7%. FT: 69.7%. **Three-point field goals:** 4-14 (Duruji 1-1, Appleby 1-3, Jones 1-3, McKissic 1-5, Felder 0-1, Fleming Jr. 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 2 (Castleton, Fleming Jr.). **Turnovers:** 11 (Jones 4, Fleming Jr. 3, Castleton 2, Appleby, Duruji). **Steals:** 13 (Fleming Jr. 4, Felder 3, Jones 2, McKissic 2, Appleby, Duruji).

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Ahrens	34	2-6	0-0	0-2	3	1	6
Liddell	33	7-11	8-12	1-4	1	3	23
Brunk	6	2-2	0-0	0-2	0	2	4
Branham	22	1-4	2-2	0-3	2	2	4
Wheeler	24	3-4	1-2	0-2	2	2	7
Johnson Jr.	22	1-7	0-0	1-0	2	1	2
Sotos	20	0-1	1-2	1-3	1	4	1
Key	19	3-4	1-3	0-5	0	4	7
Russell	6	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	3
Young	14	5-7	1-1	1-5	0	5	11
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>25-47</b>	<b>13-20</b>	<b>7-26</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>68</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 53.2%. FT: 65.0%. **Three-point field goals:** 5-19 (Ahrens 2-6, Liddell 1-1, Russell 1-1, Wheeler 1-2, Branham 0-2, Young 0-2, Johnson Jr. 0-5). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 7 (Liddell 5, Brunk, Key). **Turnovers:** 18 (Liddell 5, Branham 3, Johnson Jr. 3, Sotos 3, Young 2, Ahrens, Brunk). **Steals:** 5 (Branham 3, Wheeler 2). **Officials:** Wymer, Oglesby, Evans. Attendance: 3,500.

ever, it was Ohio State on the losing end of a last-second shot as it fell to unbeaten Florida by a 71-68 final.

The two traded blows through a back-and-forth first half, with Ohio State landing the first major strike on an Ahrens three-pointer, thanks to a Jamari Wheeler pass that broke Florida's full-court press to give the Buckeyes an early 11-4 lead at the 15:26 mark of the first half.

That was all the senior winger was able to contribute in the first half, though, with much of the scoring workload falling again to Liddell, fresh off his 28-point showing against Seton Hall two nights earlier.

Liddell had 13 first-half points on 5-of-7 shooting while holding Florida big man Colin Castleton to only five points, but his teammates didn't offer much in the way of offensive assistance, and Ohio State's edge had been whittled to four points, 30-26, at the break.

Out of the half, Liddell finally got some help. Young opened the scoring for the Buckeyes with a pair of baskets, Wheeler added a pair of his own, Johnson hit a bucket, Ahrens hit his second triple of the game and Zed Key picked up his first points of the game with an impressive sequence that saw him hit a jumper, prevent an Anthony Duruji dunk and then slam one home himself to extend Ohio State's lead to 10 points at 47-37 at the 13:06 mark.

That advantage was not built to last, however. Florida answered with a run of its own – during which Young committed his fifth foul – and the Gators cut the deficit to just two points at 51-49 with 9:03 remaining.

The teams would trade blows for the rest of the evening. From the 3:34 mark, the Buckeyes took two separate two-point leads, only to have the Gators come back and tie the game each time. After a Key free throw gave his team a 68-66 lead with 47 seconds left, Florida answered with a slam from Duruji to tie the game again.

Facing a slight difference between the shot and game clocks, the Buckeyes traveled down the court and found a good shot for Liddell, but it caromed off the rim. Myreon Jones got the rebound and shuffled to Tyree Appleby, and the Florida guard rushed down to the court and drained a three-pointer at the buzzer to give his team the 71-68 win.

"I thought their pressure really bothered us," Holtmann said. "I thought they were really physical, physical on the ball, physical on drives. Defensively we were able to bother them when we could get our defense set, but giving them open-floor opportunities or offensive rebound opportunities was the difference, really, in the game."

Liddell led all scorers with 23 points on 7-for-11 shooting. Young added 11 points and a team-high six rebounds in just 14 minutes before fouling out. Guard Phlandrous Fleming Jr. came off the bench to lead Florida with 19 points. Castleton had a double-double with 11 points and 13 rebounds.

Ohio State shot 53.2 percent from the floor (25 of 47) but was just 5 of 19 (26.3 percent) from beyond the arc and 13 of 20 (65.0 percent) from the line.

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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 (4-2)

**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.

**Dec. 5** at Penn State; **8** TOWSON; **11** WISCONSIN; **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 (5-0)

**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** BELLARMIINE, W 110-58; **27** CINCINNATI, W 86-50.

**Dec. 1** at Syracuse; **5** at Purdue; **7** MOUNT ST. MARY'S; **12** INDIANA; **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.

## CROSS COUNTRY

**Sept. 3** Evansville Opener at Indiana, Men: 1/6; Women: 1/7; **10** Spiked Shoe Invitational at Penn State, Men: 6/6; Women: 5/6; **23** Bill Dellinger Invite (Women Only) at Eugene, Ore., 9/17.

**Oct. 1** Joe Plane Invitational at Notre Dame, Men: 6/21; Women: 9/24; **15** FSU Invite/Pre-Nationals at Tallahassee, Fla., Men: 33/40; Women: 14/33; **29** Big Ten Championships at University Park, Pa., Men: 10/12; Women: 8/14.

**Nov. 12** NCAA Regional Championships at Evansville, Ind., Men: 12/30; Women: 6/31; **20** NCAA Championships at Tallahassee, Fla., NTS.

## MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (8-4-0, 4-2-0)

**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. 3-4** at Notre Dame, 7:30 p.m.; 6 p.m.; **10-11** MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; 8 p.m.; **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 (14-2-0, 12-2-0)

**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. 3-4** at Minnesota Duluth, TBA.

**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 (25-5, 15-5)

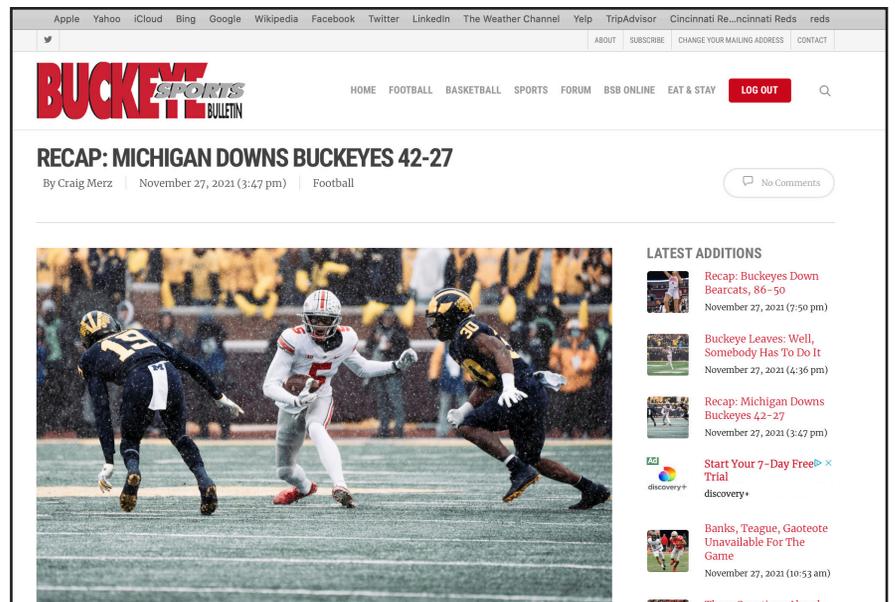
**Aug. 27** NORTHERN KENTUCKY, W 3-0; **28** WASHINGTON, W 3-1.

**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.

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# Mikulasikova Becoming Game-Changer For OSU

Coming off a sophomore season during which she played in 15 games and averaged just 12.7 minutes and 4.0 points per game, it was a question of where and how now-junior forward Rebeka Mikulasikova would fit into Ohio State's lineup this year.

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

Following the transfer of the team's top two forwards during the offseason, as well as a season-ending knee injury to junior guard Madison Greene that forced head coach Kevin McGuff to shuffle his starting lineup just one day before the season began, the Slovakia native has been forced into action, and the early returns have been positive.

Mikulasikova started all five games for Ohio State's 5-0 squad and was averaging 14.8 points per game through Nov. 27, third most on the team behind junior guard Jacy Sheldon (19.0) and senior guard Taylor Mikesell (15.6). She was also playing 18.5 minutes per game, which was just sixth most on the team but well above her averages during her first two seasons with the Buckeyes.

The improvement for Mikulasikova can be attributed to better conditioning, which McGuff said was a big part of her offseason.

"It allows her to play more minutes if she stays out of foul trouble, and play harder and do the things that we're asking her to do," McGuff said. "She can do it for longer stretches."

Mikulasikova knew the team would be relying on her with the transfers of Dorka Juhasz and Aaliyah Patty, and Greene's injury reinforced that she would need to step up this season.

"I feel much better compared to the past two years," she said. "I worked hard on my conditioning and just believing in myself. I knew that (with) Aaliyah and Dorka leaving, it put me in a different position, and I just really took the responsibility."

Mikulasikova's conditioning has allowed her to keep up with Ohio State's athletic lineup this year that often employs four guards, but the improvement in her game can be shown when things slow down near the basket.

"Rebeka attracts a lot of attention," Mikesell said of the 6-4 Mikulasikova. "She's big and she's been finishing, playing really well. She attracts a lot of attention, which opens up the outside for everybody else."

Mikulasikova was leading the team in two-point shooting percentage, connecting on 71.8 percent of her baskets inside the arc, and was taking a team-high 7.8 two-point attempts per game. After averaging fewer than three rebounds per game during her freshman and sophomore seasons, Mikulasikova was tied for third on the team with 4.0 rebounds per game.

"We need (her in the paint) because we

play a little smaller around her," McGuff said. "We can really space the floor because everyone can shoot it, so she needs to give us some presence there, and she's been doing it."

Another improved aspect of her game is avoiding fouls. A player of Mikulasikova's stature draws attention in the paint, and after picking up four fouls in the season opener against Bucknell, she picked up just five in the four games that followed.

"I had to really focus during practice on defense and just not making mistakes like easy fouls," she said. "If I want to play, I have to really make sure that I do not get into foul trouble. That's the biggest emphasis."

Being in the starting lineup for all five games this season, Mikulasikova has also been able to build trust with her teammates while playing extended minutes.

"I'm more confident," she said. "I feel like my teammates trust me more, so they will pass the ball more often."

Playing without Juhasz, Patty or Greene isn't the ideal scenario for Ohio State, but according to her teammates, Mikulasikova has added some juice to the starting lineup this year.

"She's an old soul," Mikesell said. "She's a little more mature. Her vocal presence in practice carries over into the games, and that's something that we need from the five position."

## Poole Embracing Point Guard Spot

Every member of Ohio State's team was dealt a blow when it was announced that Greene was out for the season, but perhaps no one more than sophomore guard Kateri Poole, who was tasked with stepping into the lineup for her teammate.

"It's a big change, but coming from high school and being a starter, changing into the role in a collegiate, D-I aspect is a lot," Poole said. "I'm just buying into what my coach has to say day in and day out. It comes easy after a while."

Poole appears to be telling the truth, as she has fit gracefully into Ohio State's lineup in her four starts. Through Nov. 27, she had the fourth-most minutes among the starting four-guard lineup, and in that time she had the second-most assists for the Buckeyes, averaging 3.4 per game, barely behind senior guard Braxtin Miller.

Although her turnovers are more than McGuff would like to see (2.4 per game, most on the team), she's also one of the Buckeyes' top scoring threats, averaging an even 10.0 points

per game on 48.4-percent shooting.

Poole started games in Greene's absence last season, so this year isn't her first go-round in the starting lineup. But going from an expected bench role to starting point guard has taken some adjustment on her part.

"I don't think you're ever prepared," she said. "You just always have to deal with what's happening in the moment. You know, I wouldn't wish anything on anyone and I'm sad that happened to my teammate, but I told her that this year's for her so we're going to stick by that."

Beyond the coaching she receives from McGuff and his staff, Poole has leaned on Greene, who started at point guard the previous two seasons, for advice.

"I've asked Madison, 'How have you played for Coach McGuff?' I always ask for pointers," Poole said. "She's always helped me. I think we built that relationship, and she's helped me become the point guard that I am."

## Team Embraces Game, Fans At Covelli Center

Ohio State's Covelli Center, which hosts contests in wrestling and women's basketball as well as men's and women's volleyball and gymnastics, has been in operation since the 2019-20 athletic season. The women's basketball team hosted two games there during the 2020-21 season, but those were played without fans in the stands.

During the Buckeyes' 80-56 win against Cincinnati on Nov. 27, fans got their first taste of women's basketball inside the Covelli Center, and the team itself got to hear the 2,315 faithful in the smaller venue.

"I thought it was great," McGuff said of the atmosphere. "This is a great building. The fans were awesome tonight, and I think that really had a big impact on our ability to get off to a great start."

While the total capacity of 3,700 in the Covelli Center pales in comparison to 18,809 at Value City Arena, the smaller and more intimate experience offered at the Covelli Center creates a louder and more energetic environment, with the farthest-away seats no more than a stone's throw from the court.

No more games are scheduled at the Covelli Center for this season, but the team will likely return at some point in the future, as women's basketball plays there when there is a conflict with men's hockey.

"We love playing here," Sheldon said. "It's a great atmosphere. The gym is awesome."

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# Buckeyes Stay Perfect With Pair Of Big Wins

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State continued rolling during the last full week of November, picking up wins against nonconference foes Bellarmine and Cincinnati to move to a perfect 5-0 to start the season.

The Buckeyes began the week with a record-breaking performance on the offensive end, led by junior guard Jacy Sheldon and her career-high 31 points that paved the way to a 110-58 rout of Bellarmine on Nov. 23 before 2,766 in Value City Arena.

Things got off to a fast start as Sheldon knocked down a three on Ohio State's first possession just 12 seconds in and then forced a turnover and scored in transition. Just a minute later, another basket for Sheldon gave Ohio State a 7-0 lead.

Junior forward Rebecka Mikulasikova then scored nine straight Buckeye points to give Ohio State a 16-4 lead at the 6:26 mark of the first period.

The Buckeyes finished the quarter up 31-21, but the Knights (0-4) scored seven early points in the second quarter to make it 33-28 with 8:36 left until the half. Ohio State quashed the short-lived rebellion, however, taking advantage of two turnovers to make it 39-28.

With 6:08 remaining in the second quarter and Ohio State protecting a 41-33 lead, a three-pointer by Sheldon kicked off a game-breaking run of 33 straight points scored by the Buckeyes. It was a streak that lasted until the 8:04 mark of the third period and ended with OSU enjoying a 74-33 advantage.

Sheldon scored 13 points during the run, joined by senior guard Taylor Mikesell with 11 points (including three three-pointers), sophomore guard Kateri Poole with five and graduate senior forward Tanaya Beacham with four points.

"Them starting off in a zone opened up some shooting opportunities for us," Sheldon said. "We moved the ball really well, got going a little bit there in the second quarter with our press, and that helped us get the lead there. We were sharing the ball and making open shots."

Ohio State continued domination at both ends of the floor, and the Buckeyes led by as many as 54 and never less than 38 the rest of the way.

The 110 points scored by Ohio State was its most since a 113-54 win against LIU Brooklyn on Nov. 19, 2016. In addition to scoring a program-record 39 points in the second quarter, the 70-point first half also broke a number of conference records, including points in any half and most points in the first half.

"I thought we started out really well, but then in the latter part of the first quarter, we had a letdown and let them get back in it," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "I wasn't really pleased with that. I didn't think we sustained our intensity or focus well enough. But we had a good conversation at the break (between the first and second quarters), and the kids responded really well."

Sheldon led all scorers with 31 points on 12-of-15 shooting, surpassing her previous career high of 29 points. Mikesell (18), Mikulasikova (13), Beacham (12) and Poole (12) also finished in double figures. Jaela Johnson led the Knights with 24 points.

"I thought Jacy did a great job kind of being

## Ohio State 86, Cincinnati 50

		Nov. 27, 2021 Covelli Center • Columbus, Ohio				
		1	2	3	4	F
Cincinnati (3-3)		12	15	12	11	50
Ohio State (5-0)		33	14	22	17	86

Cincinnati	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Wilson	6	0-3	0-0	1-1	0	0	0
Levy	34	3-11	4-6	0-2	2	4	11
Jada Scott	6	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	0
Milton	30	3-6	2-4	0-3	1	3	9
Jadyn Scott	23	2-3	0-0	0-0	1	1	4
Jenks	7	1-2	0-0	2-0	2	2	2
Mashaire	7	0-3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Niang	14	1-2	0-0	1-4	0	4	2
Hayes	30	6-13	4-6	2-3	0	4	16
Williams	10	1-4	0-0	3-0	0	1	2
Dean	1	0-0	0-0	1-0	0	0	0
Gritzali	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Craig	19	2-2	0-0	0-5	1	4	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>19-54</b>	<b>10-16</b>	<b>11-20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>50</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 35.2%. FT: 62.5%. **Three-point field goals:** 2-15 (Levy 1-4, Milton 1-2, Elfatairy 0-3, Mashaire 0-2, Williams 0-1, Wilson 0-3). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Hayes). **Turnovers:** 22 (Levy 11, Hayes 3, Team 2, Craig, Jenks, Milton, Niang, Jadyn Scott, Wilson). **Steals:** 5 (Craig 2, Milton 2, Hayes)

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Mikulasikova	19	7-8	3-5	0-1	0	1	19
Sheldon	27	5-11	6-7	0-5	6	3	17
Miller	32	3-6	2-2	1-2	0	2	9
Mikesell	27	6-9	0-0	0-0	3	0	15
Poole	23	3-5	5-9	1-4	6	3	12
Thierry	12	0-1	2-4	1-5	0	3	2
Beacham	21	2-3	0-0	0-3	1	1	4
Harris	25	1-3	1-2	0-2	2	2	3
Hutcherson	7	2-4	0-0	0-0	0	1	5
Costner	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Jones	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Jones	8	0-0	0-0	0-0	2	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>29-50</b>	<b>19-29</b>	<b>5-27</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>86</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 58.0%. FT: 65.5%. **Three-point field goals:** 9-18 (Mikesell 3-5, Mikulasikova 2-2, Hutcherson 1-2, Miller 1-2, Poole 1-3, Sheldon 1-2, Harris 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 7. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Miller). **Turnovers:** 15 (Mikulasikova 3, Poole 3, Mikesell 2, Miller 2, Beacham, Costner, Harris, Sheldon, Thierry). **Steals:** 6 (Poole 2, Beacham, Harris, Mikulasikova, Miller). **Officials:** Dickerson, Grinter, Maxey. **Attendance:** 2,315.

really balanced and shooting from three," McGuff said. "She was good in the midrange, and she also got to the middle."

Ohio State shot 66.7 percent from the field in the second quarter (16 of 24), including 71.4 from three (5 of 7).

### Keeping Things Rolling

Ohio State continued its high-scoring start to the season with an 86-50 win Nov. 27 against Cincinnati in front of 2,315 fans at the Covelli Center.

Mikesell scored a layup on the Buckeyes' first possession and again just seconds later following a turnover. On Ohio State's next possession, Mikesell connected on a three-pointer to give the Buckeyes a 7-0 lead, forcing Cincinnati to call a timeout just 59 seconds into the game.

OSU (5-0) shot lights-out during the first 10 minutes, finishing 12 of 17 (70.6 percent) from the floor and taking a 33-12 lead. Despite the Bearcats (3-3) shooting 46.2 percent (6 of 13) and outrebounding the Buckeyes by an 8-4 margin in the first quarter, they were limited to just 13 shots due to 11 turnovers, giving an already explosive Ohio State offense extra possessions.

"We imposed our will in the game from the start, didn't let them get comfortable, and I thought that was important because they have

## Ohio State 110, Bellarmine 58

		Nov. 23, 2021 Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio				
		1	2	3	4	F
Bucknell (0-4)		21	12	13	12	58
Ohio State (4-0)		31	39	25	15	110

Bellarmine	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Deel	20	0-4	0-0	3-1	1	1	0
Johnson	36	9-19	0-0	0-2	3	3	24
Knies	8	0-2	0-0	0-1	0	0	0
Scott	28	3-6	0-0	1-1	2	3	6
Keelin	10	1-2	0-0	0-2	0	1	2
Stoklosa	19	3-4	0-0	2-3	1	2	7
Brown	13	0-3	0-0	0-2	1	0	0
Robertson	26	1-2	2-2	0-3	2	1	4
Harney	27	6-17	0-0	0-1	1	1	15
Adwell	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Coatney	4	0-2	0-0	1-1	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>23-61</b>	<b>2-2</b>	<b>9-20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>58</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 34.6%. FT: 83.3%. **Three-point field goals:** 2-11 (O'Brien 1-1, Sisselman 1-2, Collins 0-2, Dingle 0-1, Johnson 0-2, King 0-1, Kulesza 0-1, Walls 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 2 (Krsul, Shaffer). **Turnovers:** 20 (Walls 5, O'Brien 4, Sisselman 3, Collins 2, Shaffer 2, Johnson, Krsul, Reinbeau). **Steals:** 2 (Johnson, O'Brien).

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Mikulasikova	17	6-9	0-0	1-5	1	0	13
Sheldon	22	12-15	4-4	2-1	2	1	31
Poole	19	4-9	3-4	1-1	2	1	12
Miller	17	2-3	0-0	1-1	5	4	4
Mikesell	22	6-9	2-2	1-1	2	2	18
Harris	13	2-6	0-0	2-2	2	3	5
Beacham	22	5-8	2-3	1-3	1	2	12
Thierry	24	3-5	3-4	3-5	0	1	9
Hutcherson	15	2-6	0-0	0-3	1	0	4
Costner	14	1-3	0-0	0-2	1	2	2
Jones	10	0-3	0-0	0-2	0	1	0
Jones	1	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>43-76</b>	<b>14-17</b>	<b>13-29</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>110</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 56.6%. FT: 82.4%. **Three-point field goals:** 10-21 (Mikesell 4-6, Sheldon 3-5, Harris 1-3, Mikulasikova 1-2, Poole 1-3, Beacham 0-1, Hutcherson 0-1, Miller 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 8 (Hutcherson 3, Thierry 2, Harris, Mikesell, Poole). **Turnovers:** 12 (Beacham 3, Harris 3, Costner, Hutcherson, Miller, Mikesell, Mikulasikova, Poole). **Steals:** 10 (Sheldon 3, Beacham 2, Poole 2, Hutcherson, Miller, Thierry). **Officials:** Cruse, Enlund, Roberts. **Attendance:** 2,766.

a talented team," McGuff said. "If we let them come in and feel good about themselves early, we'd be in for a real struggle."

The Bearcats opened the second frame

with a 10-5 run to close their deficit to 38-22, but Mikulasikova scored the next two baskets for the Buckeyes to push it to 42-22, and Ohio went into the half with a 47-27 lead.

In the third, Mikulasikova continued to make her presence felt, leading the team with seven points on 3-of-3 shooting. The Bearcats were further held at bay on their offensive end, scoring just 12 points on 4 of 15 shooting (26.7 percent) as Ohio State pushed its lead to 30 points at 69-39.

Ohio State would go on to score 17 points in the fourth period and cruise to the 86-50 final.

Mikulasikova led the Buckeyes with 19 points on 7-of-8 shooting, tying her career-high point total for the third time this season. Sheldon and Poole tied for the lead with six assists each, while freshman forward Taylor Thierry led the Bearcats with 16 points.

"We moved the ball well," Sheldon said. "We got each other open shots, and we found the open person. We have a lot of guards, but our bigs are really good, too. We have a lot of people who can make plays on any given night, so it's fun."

Ohio State enjoyed a 32-31 edge in rebounding, another positive aspect since Cincinnati had been one of the better rebounding teams early this season. Despite playing at a height disadvantage vs. the Bearcats, Sheldon said the team's preparation helped win that part of the game.

"We just made it clear, even our guards are going to have to hit, go find somebody and then go get the ball," she said. "There were some long rebounds that got away from us, and we couldn't maintain possession, but that was our main focus and we definitely did well."

Cincinnati was guilty of 22 turnovers, including 11 by Akira Levy, and Ohio State turned those miscues into 23 points

The Buckeyes take to the road for the first time this season with an 8 p.m. game Dec. 1 at Syracuse. Then they begin Big Ten play Dec. 5 at Purdue with a 2 p.m. tipoff.

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# OSU Frosh Goalie Making Smooth Transition

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

While taping an interview to discuss the Nov. 26-27 series for No. 17 Ohio State against Mercyhurst, Jakub Dobeš couldn't come up with the word he wanted.

After a pause, he asked if could start over and immediately looked at the translation app on his smartphone to confirm what he was thinking. Satisfied, the questioning began anew.

For the freshman goaltender from Ostrava, Czech Republic, it's been one of the few times he's struggled this season.

Through Nov. 27, Dobeš ranked ninth nationally in goals-against average (1.83) and save percentage (.931) and was sporting an 8-3-0 record.

The fifth-round pick by the Montreal Canadiens in the 2020 NHL draft had his poorest outing of the season Nov. 26, when he allowed five goals on 28 shots before being replaced with 13 minutes left in a 5-4 loss to Mercyhurst.

The following night he rebounded to make 21 saves in a 3-2 victory over the Lakers.

Dobeš, for the record, speaks English very well. He should since his mother, Viera Dobešova, teaches the language at a school back home, but let's just say he wasn't the best of students.

"My mom is an English teacher, so I had some clue," Dobeš said. "But I wasn't really paying much attention in school, especially

English because I never knew I was going to be here one day. I wish I put more time into it in the past. When I was in middle school, I pretty much had some basics, but I learned most of it when I came here.

"Sometimes I miss a word or past tense gives me trouble," he added. "I understand everything, and I can talk to everybody I want, but I wish I read more and find new words. But I'm not a reader, so, I'm happy with my English, but there is also a lot of room for improvement always by just talking. That's when I pick up the slang and just remembering what people say."

It's fortunate he knows English because it allows his personality to come through.

For instance, he has thoughts on the American tradition of Thanksgiving.

"I like Christmas more than other holidays, but it's OK," Dobeš said. "It's good people get together and kind of just chill out and talk."

He's not into turkey, though.

"I don't like it," he said two days prior to Thanksgiving. "I need to go to the shopping center and get some groceries so I don't get too hungry. I might have a little bit, not too special."

He will indulge in some turkey with a smidgen of mashed potatoes, but please, hold the gravy.

Dobeš finds it amusing how often Americans hold celebrations.

"We have Christmas and we have Halloween, but I feel like Americans celebrate holidays like nobody else," he said. "I kind of

like it. I think American culture is very good at just appreciating what they have and get together.

"I like it here and I like the holidays, and I think it's a great thing that you guys celebrate pretty hard and more than anybody else."

Dobeš' observations come from living in the United States for nearly five years.

The decision to leave home wasn't difficult because he had already been away to play for several youth hockey teams with the blessings of his mother, a former figure skater who competed in world and European championships. His father, Zdenek, played in the Czech pro hockey leagues.

"When I was 14 or 15, I moved four hours or five hours away, so that helped me prepare for the big jump," Dobeš said. "But to be honest, for a month or two when I came here, it was really hard."

Through a connection in the Czech Republic, he got a tryout with the St. Louis Triple-A Blues for the 2017-18 season and earned a spot that kept him with the junior team for two seasons.

In 2019-20, he played for Topeka, Kan., in the North American Hockey League, and then he moved up to the Omaha (Neb.) Lancers of the United States Hockey League last season and was second team all-league.

Ohio State had been eyeing Dobeš even before he was selected by the Canadiens, and head coach Steve Rohlik credits assistants JB Bittner and Steve Miller for their recruiting efforts.

"They saw a lot of potential in this kid and really dove in," Rohlik said. "Then when we had him in on a visit, we knew we had a chance to get him on board. We knew we had a heck of a talent, and it was just a matter of how was he going to progress because he certainly did that in the junior ranks."

The Buckeyes already had a built-in advantage over some programs in wooing Dobeš.

"I wanted to always to go to a Big Ten school, and Ohio State was the first school to talk to me," he said. "I was really excited. I mean, Ohio State – I can't even describe. It's just a great school, and I'm so happy to be here because it's like a dream. Everything here is awesome."

Dobeš (6-4, 198) is part of a trend toward taller goalies who theoretically cover more of the goal. But that strategy only works if the goalie is athletic and nimble.

"It's kind of the new norm, and he has that size everyone's looking for," said Ohio State volunteer goalie coach Dustin Carlson. "When I played, I was considered big (6-2, 190). Now I'd be considered small. The disadvantages would be when you're going down or moving side to side, the holes you're going to create are bigger than in a smaller, com-

pact goalie.

"Fortunately for Jakub, he's not what I would say a lanky, tall guy. He's not like a stick figure. He's thick. He's got very good control of his body already. So, he's actually pretty good at staying compact but also maintaining that massive size that he has."

As Dobeš plays more, opponents will have a fuller volume of videos on him to look for his weaknesses.

One thing Carlson noticed that Minnesota did during its series vs. the Buckeyes on Nov. 12-13 was actually a tribute to a strength of Dobeš.

It's common for teams to dump the puck deep and chase after it in the offensive zone to create scoring chances off the forecheck. But Dobeš is so good with the puck he can neutralize that option.

"His puck-clearing ability is off the chart," Carlson said. "Guys will say it's like having a third defenseman. He literally can stick-handle like some of our defenseman. He's that good with the puck."

"Minnesota did a pretty good job. Usually when I pull clips of him playing the puck, there's upwards of 40 over the weekend. That weekend, there were only eight. So they took note of that."

The result is that if teams try to carry the puck into the zone, the Buckeyes have more chances to create turnovers in the neutral zone and start the transition.

## One of Two

The Buckeyes needed a third-period goal by junior Kamil Sadlocha to break a 2-2 deadlock to split with Mercyhurst (4-6-4) in the nonconference series at Value City Arena.

In the opener, junior Tate Singleton gave the Buckeyes a 1-0 lead after one period before the Lakers built a 5-2 lead early in the third. Freshman Georgii Merkulov and sophomore Travis Treloar scored for OSU, but it wasn't enough in the 5-4 loss.

Junior defenseman James Marooney's first career goal in his 32nd game staked OSU to a 1-0 lead in the rematch. After Mercyhurst tied it, Merkulov put the Buckeyes (8-4-0) ahead only to have the Lakers tie it 2-2 midway through the third. Sadlocha scored the winner with 8:38 left in regulation.

## Next On Tap

The Buckeye return to Big Ten action Dec. 3 and 4 at Notre Dame before hosting Michigan on Dec. 10 and 11. The last games before Christmas are home against Bowling Green on Dec. 16 before playing at BG the following night.

For a recap of the Mercyhurst series go to the [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com) website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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# Wrestlers Keep Momentum With Shutout Win

By **CHASE BROWN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's wrestling team continued its hot start to the regular season, rolling to a 51-0 shutout win against Notre Dame College on Nov. 24.

The No. 8 Buckeyes (3-0) left no doubt in their win against the Falcons by reaching the 50-point mark for the first time since Nov. 22, 2016, when they beat Cleveland State, 52-0, at the Thanksgiving Showdown in Kent, Ohio.

Malik Heinselman, the No. 9 wrestler at 125 pounds, started the night for the Buckeyes with a quick pin of Notre Dame's Jake Arnold. Heinselman got on the board early with a takedown, which eventually turned into a four-point near-fall. He continued to rack up riding time before the referees awarded him a fall at 1:35.

Dylan Koontz had been struggling to find consistency at 133 pounds, scoring only five points against North Carolina and Virginia Tech. However, the fifth-year senior bounced back in Ohio State's third dual meet, defeating Dylan Burnoski, 18-7, in a major decision.

Dylan D'Emilio had climbed to No. 20 at 141 pounds following his 4-0 decision against Virginia Tech's Collin Gerardi. He sat at 9-1 after a third-place finish at the Michigan State Open, a title at the Ohio Intercollegiate Open and a dual victory in Blacksburg, Va., against Virginia Tech. D'Emilio claimed his 10th win of the season, handing Matthew Kaufmann a 19-3 defeat in a second-period tech fall.

Sammy Sasso toyed with Notre Dame College's Justin Crawford before recording a pin at 1:10 of the opening period. The second-ranked 149-pound wrestler registered a quick takedown before pushing Crawford out of bounds. Sasso allowed Crawford to escape untouched, giving the Falcons wrestler a point. Then, with both wrestlers on their feet, Sasso abruptly took down his opponent, bringing him into a cradle and earning the Buckeyes' second fall.

Bryce Hepner had begun the season unattached from the program, but the sophomore put together two impressive performances

during Ohio State's tournaments and quickly became the starter at 157 pounds. He followed a narrow 3-2 decision against No. 29 Connor Brady of Virginia Tech with a 15-0, second-period tech fall against NDC's Sandro Ramirez.

Ohio State's first five matches ended with bonus points, and the team entered the break with a 26-0 lead.

Carson Kharchla, the No. 9 wrestler at 165 pounds, kicked off the second half with a 24-9 tech fall against Notre Dame College's Cale Hoskinson. The Powell, Ohio, native continued his excellent start by putting on a takedown clinic, recording 11 two-point scores along with an escape point and riding time point in the seven-minute match.

Kharchla missed last year's competitions as he recovered from a torn ACL, but he is looking more comfortable with each match. The redshirt sophomore improved to 7-0 with the win on Nov. 24, including a 3-0 mark in duals. He also won four matches at the Ohio Intercollegiate Open and claimed a title in the Gold Division.

After dropping a 6-4 decision to No. 4 Me-khi Lewis of Virginia Tech, No. 6 Ethan Smith earned his third career pin at 174 pounds when he took down Thomas Schmitt of NDC at 2:24. The fifth-year senior gave the Buckeyes their third pin of the night, adding six points to the team score and giving his team a 37-0 lead.

Rocky Jordan entered Ohio State's dual with Notre Dame College a loser in four of his last five matches. He competed in four bouts at the OIO, falling to Luke McGonigal of Mercyhurst, pinning Adam Medeiros of Heidelberg and forfeiting two matches due to injury. Jordan then lost a 7-1 decision to No. 9 Hunter Bolen when the Buckeyes went to Blacksburg.

The St. Paris, Ohio, native returned to his winning ways with a 17-3 major decision against Logan Hall of the Falcons. Jordan recorded eight takedowns and earned a riding-time point to secure the 14-point win, extending the OSU winning streak to eight straight matches.

Tyler Stein made it nine in a row with an impressive debut at 197 pounds, pinning Joey

King at 4:51. The Canfield, Ohio, native wrestled unattached from the program during the 2019-20 season and did not compete for the Buckeyes last year. Stein holds a 5-4 record in nine matches this season, including four tournament wins and the dual victory against the Falcons.

Tate Orndorff, the sixth-ranked heavy-weight, closed out the dual with a 12-3 major decision against Mike Viramontes to give the Buckeyes their 51-0 victory.

Ohio State had faced Notre Dame College four times before Nov. 24, with each dual taking place in Columbus. The Buckeyes won all four duals, with the first meeting taking place in November 2007 and the most recent match in November 2013.

The Buckeyes will travel to Las Vegas on Dec. 3-4 for the Cliff Keen Invitational, a tournament including such teams as Michigan, Minnesota, Purdue, Nebraska and Oklahoma. OSU returns home to host ACC-opponent Pittsburgh on Dec. 12.

## Wrestler Claims Award

Heinselman was named the Big Ten Wrestler of the Week on Nov. 24 after knocking off No. 12 Sam Latona of Virginia Tech in Blacksburg.

In the opening bout against the Hokies, Heinselman scored the first points with an escape at the start of the second period. Latona, a 2021 All-American in the 125-pound weight class, tied it at 1-all with an escape to start the third. Heinselman earned the match's first takedown with 40 seconds left and add-

ed another after a Latona escape to win a 5-2 decision.

Heinselman is a three-time NCAA qualifier for the Buckeyes, a two-time Academic All-Big Ten honoree and a three-time Ohio State Scholar-Athlete. He started the 2021 season ranked No. 16 in the InterMat polls and ascended seven spots to No. 9 after earning three dual victories and a title at the Ohio Intercollegiate Open.

## Team Honors Fire Victim

The Ohio State wrestling program posthumously added Broderick Harris to its 2021 recruiting class. Harris, who had an incredible love for wrestling, died in a house fire Dec. 26, 2014, when he was just 11 years old. He ranked second in the state wrestling championship and was on a travel wrestling team that placed fourth and seventh at the United States Junior Wrestling Championships.

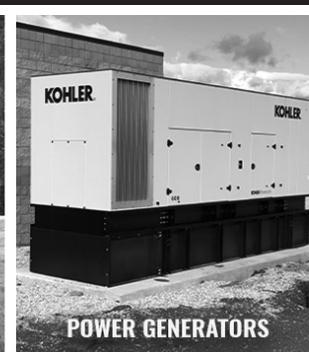
When he died, Harris was in the sixth grade at Washington C.H. (Ohio) Middle School.

Ohio State head coach Tom Ryan said he was honored to have Harris join the historic recruiting class and hopes Buckeye fans will remember his impact on the program for years to come.

"Broderick was a rising star, not only as a competitive wrestler but as a young man as well," Ryan said. "He attended our camps and from early on we knew he was a special human being. We are thrilled to have Broderick and the Harris family join our program in such an inspirational manner."

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# Values Form Foundation For Women's Lacrosse

By **CHASE BROWN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State women's lacrosse team believes in five core values – love, growth, courage, pride and elite. All 48 players and staff understand the significance of each word, realizing they guide every practice, workout and game.

The five values started when Amy Bokker came to Columbus in June 2019 as only the third head coach in program history. Her first objective – one that is still coming to fruition – was to rebuild the program from the ground up. She knew she couldn't do it herself, so she sat down with her assistant coaches and players to learn the best approach to changing Ohio State's culture.

Along with the five values came a process for how to maximize each piece. After throwing out ideas for some time, the team settled on the pillar-like approach. Bokker and her staff place the cornerstones, the captains build a foundation and the team puts together the structure. Therefore, everyone plays a part in helping the team realize its potential.

"We are really proud of where we are as a program so far," Bokker said. "The expectation is to continue to grow and build. We're trying to create this foundation that gives us a solid future. The expectation is to continue to build on what we're starting to create, but I know it's not going to happen overnight. We know we have the right building blocks to keep moving forward.

"I think we want to continue to recruit great talent on top of having leaders that believe in what we're doing – those that are able to demonstrate our core values, and come out and work together as a team. We want to be able to count on everyone. We want everyone on the field to be reliable by contributing and adding value to what we're doing."

While each player plays a pivotal role in creating and changing the team's culture, Bokker and the players believe five student-athletes stand out as distinguished leaders in the program. On Oct. 18, Ohio State named graduates

Lindsay Epstein and Sophie Baez, seniors Cai Martin and Maura McGregor, and junior Nicole Ferrara as team captains.

"Our team leadership is something our staff and team really value," Bokker said. "These five athletes have earned that respect, and each brings strengths that make this an amazing group and representation of our program. They are competitive, disciplined and demonstrate an elite work ethic. We are very proud of these Buckeyes and look forward to them guiding us this season."

Epstein, now a three-time captain, is a veteran on the Ohio State roster. She has played in 45 games for the Buckeyes and collected 39 goals, 12 assists, 51 points, 48 ground balls, 25 draw controls – a statistic awarded for gaining possession after a draw – and 26 caused turnovers. She also earned second-team All-Big Ten and Big Ten All-Tournament awards after last season.

The Marietta, Ga., native also stands out in the classroom. Epstein completed her undergraduate degree in communications last fall and is now pursuing a master's degree in sports management. Throughout her career at Ohio State, she has earned Academic All-Big Ten awards along with a Big Ten Distinguished Scholar, Ohio State Scholar-Athlete and Intercollegiate Women's Lacrosse Coaches Association honor roll accolades.

"Being a captain means a lot," Epstein said. "It's something I take to heart because it's something our team votes on along with our coaches. They believe in me, but also I believe in them. I think we've established a great culture here where we're all each other's best friends, but when we get out on the field and we compete, we're playing like it's the Big Ten tournament.

"It's a huge responsibility (to be a captain) and I absolutely love it. Being able to represent this team is awesome."

Bokker thinks highly of Epstein, rarely holding back from offering praise to the midfielder. The coach is quick to recognize the significant impact Epstein is making on the program.

"Lindsay is our veteran leader and someone the staff relies on heavily," Bokker said. "She is

passionate and committed to leading our team at the highest level. She is a vocal presence and a tough competitor. We love the confidence Lindsay brings to our team. She believes in herself, her teammates and her coaches."

Like Epstein, Baez returned to Ohio State this year to use an extra season of eligibility. After graduating with a degree in sport industry in the spring, the Milton, Ga., native will pursue a master's degree in sport management this year. Baez represented the university at the NCAA Career in Sports Forum – a convention that brings together student-athletes and sport industry leaders to explore career opportunities – in May 2020.

In 40 games for the Buckeyes, Baez has scored 50 goals with 24 assists, picking up 35 ground balls and causing 13 turnovers. This year, the fifth-year attacker will need to take a step forward as a scorer, and Bokker thinks she will answer that call.

"Sophie has become a leader of our offense," the OSU head coach said. "She understands the concepts and has done a phenomenal job leading our younger players. She communicates well and is very approachable. I can see how much fun Sophie is having on the field this year. She has gained confidence and we are excited to have that confidence translate to our team's offense."

Baez said her confidence continues to grow because of her teammates. She feels comfortable with the ball on her stick, which allows her to lead the offense with a smooth, free-flowing approach.

"It makes you feel good that each and every one of your teammates believes and trusts in you," Baez said. "They chose me to be a captain, and that means a lot. At Ohio State, being a captain is such a huge thing. You look at the football team and all the other teams. It's such a great culture to see everyone abide in someone and trust all of your teammates."

Martin is a health science major who plans to attend nursing school. She's made the IWLCA honor roll, earned an Academic All-Big Ten award and was a Big Ten Distinguished Scholar.

Bokker said Martin brings an analytical approach to the lacrosse field and attributes that to her academic studies. Through her first three years, the senior defender played in 39 games and collected 39 ground balls, 10 draw controls and 19 caused turnovers.

"Cai is poised and thoughtful," Bokker said. "She has worked very hard on understanding the game, and this fall she has demonstrated how well she communicates with the defensive unit. She is strong and someone we will rely on to make stops in our defensive end. Cai holds herself and her teammates to a very high standard on and off the field."

A senior from Colleyville, Texas, McGregor is a midfielder at Ohio State. She's played in 35 games and posted 14 goals and six assists along with 25 ground balls, 44 draw controls and 10 caused turnovers.

McGregor walks in lockstep with her fellow captains academically, being named a Big Ten Distinguished Scholar and Academic All-Big Ten and receiving scholar-athlete recognition. The strategic communications major represented Ohio State in the summer as the Go Pro 2.0 intern while working at TEKsystems in account management and recruiting. When McGregor graduates from the university, she will work for the company full time.

Last season, McGregor played in all 13

games for the Buckeyes, logging a significant amount of minutes for the team. Her conditioning and endurance separate her from her teammates, allowing her to stay on the field and make a consistent impact.

"Maura is a total workhorse," Bokker said. "She dedicated herself this summer to strength and conditioning and fine-tuning her skill set. She is a team leader in fitness and in the weight room and has the utmost respect of her coaches and teammates for her commitment. Every time Maura steps on the field, she leaves it all out there. She brings high energy and positivity to our team."

McGregor thinks Ohio State is one of the best programs in the nation, and the Big Ten is the most talented conference in women's college lacrosse, so working hard is the minimum expectation.

"Ohio State is the biggest stage in the country," she said. "To represent my team and compete and lead my team is something in which I take a lot of pride. I know we've always been working toward it since freshman year and things like that. It's a really great, exciting opportunity."

Ferrara, a junior from Morristown, N.J., plays attack for Ohio State. Through her first 21 games with the Buckeyes, she scored 38 goals with 14 assists along with 11 ground balls and five caused turnovers.

Like the other four captains, Ferrara holds herself to a high standard in the classroom. The communication major with a minor in design has earned Big Ten Distinguished Scholar and Academic All-Big Ten awards.

Ferrara carved a leadership role early in her playing career. In her third year in the program, she holds a title that honors and respects her charismatic and passionate personality.

"It's really an honor to be a captain, and to do it as a junior, too," Ferrara said. "It means a lot to be here with my older teammates. They trust and believe in me. It's an honor to lead our team and build the girls up – to build a future of leaders and keep this program going."

Bokker will rely on all five captains to put the foundation in place. She trusts that they will live above reproach, creating a standard for what it means to be a Buckeye in the classroom, on the field and in public. Now in her 25th year of coaching, Bokker is intrigued with her team's physical ability. However, she understands that coach-led teams win games, while player-led teams win championships.

Bokker will need each of her 48 players to compete at the highest level to turn around a program that had a 29-42 record in the last five years, with its only winning season (5-4) coming in the pandemic-shortened 2020 spring competition. Still, she believes each player can contribute to Ohio State's overall success and will play a vital role in creating a firm foundation upon which future teams can build.

"I'm always impressed with their character and the type of people they are and the love they show for one another," the OSU head coach said. "I think they need to work harder to hold each other accountable in tough situations, but they compete hard."

"Each time we take the field, we need to get better. We want to play for one another and continue to see progress. We hope to maintain consistency as we continue to build the foundation of the program. If we can do that, then we will be successful."

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# Wolverines Earn Their Victory Against Ohio State

What started out as a dark, cold, windy and gloomy day in Ann Arbor wound up even darker and gloomier for Ohio State as its march to the College Football Playoff came to an abrupt end at the hands of a dominating performance by Michigan.

## COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

The Buckeyes would lead only for a little more than five minutes in the second quarter, and then by a score of 10-7. The trouble is the game lasts 60 minutes, and Michigan owned the other 50-plus as Ohio State struggled to keep pace.

The home crowd was truly magnificent in making the environment as hostile as possible for the visiting team. It was loud enough to make it nearly impossible for the Buckeye offense to make pre-snap checks and adjustments. A hoarse C.J. Stroud could barely be heard by his offensive linemen, resulting in several false starts for the unit. The crowd was into the game for four quarters, a frenzy fed by a Michigan team that was out to get revenge on its archrivals.

For the first time against the Buckeyes, head coach Jim Harbaugh didn't have the Michigan fan base get quiet or even turn on him. There would be no visiting chant of "O-H! I-O!" echoing through the Big House this November day. The Wolverines owned the day, they owned their opponent, and as a result, they will play for the Big Ten championship in Indianapolis for the very first time. With a victory there against Iowa, they also have an excellent chance to make it to the final four of the playoff. As much as it hurts Buckeye Nation to say it, they earned the opportunity.

### Michigan More Physical

As a football player and coach, it is tough to admit the other team was more physical than you. Michigan came into the game with an excellent game plan, on both sides of the ball, and executed that plan to near-perfection. The Maize and Blue went back to what characterized the games during the "Ten-Year War" era, the days of Bo and Woody when the team that owned the trenches owned the day.

Nowhere was it more evident that the Wolverines were out for revenge than up front, especially on the offensive line. A veteran unit that had been embarrassed by their lack of moving the ball on the ground against the Buckeyes in recent years was determined to out-muscle the Ohio State defensive front four and inside linebackers in establishing a running game.

The Michigan offensive line knocked the Buckeyes off the line of scrimmage drive after drive resulting in 297 rushing yards for the game. The Wolverines ran the football on 41 of their 61 offensive plays – in other words, nearly 70 percent of the time. That enabled The Team Up North to sustain long drives, keep the ball away from a normally explosive Buckeye offense, and build up an insurmountable lead midway through the fourth quarter.

Michigan went 5 of 8 on third-down conversions, with most of those being third-and-short situations.

It was a replay of the Oregon game for the Buckeye defense. Ohio State was unable to maintain leverage on outside runs by not setting

an edge and turning the ball back to the inside. Slow support from the secondary, coupled with an inability for linebackers to provide inside-out run support, meant U-M running backs like Hassan Haskins and Blake Corum could get downhill quickly. Michigan running backs averaged more than 7.5 yards per carry for the day, a number a top-tier defense should never allow.

As bad as the Ohio State defense was at stopping the outside run, it was just as guilty of being gashed between the tackles. The powerful Michigan offensive line often stalemated the surge of Buckeye defensive linemen and at times drove them into the second level and into the laps of the slow-filling linebackers.

Fielding Yost, former Michigan head football coach, then athletic director, envisioned the construction of a stadium in Ann Arbor in the 1920s that would be larger than any other, complete with unobstructed views of the field for the fans. He wanted it to be similar to the Colosseum of Rome – tall and intimidating, with only one way in and one way out.

Yost completed his dream in 1927 when the first game was played in Michigan Stadium. On Nov. 27, as in Roman days, the Wolverines were the gladiators, and the Buckeyes were their prey.

### U-M Difference-Maker

The most commanding player on the field was 6-6, 265-pound senior defensive end Aidan Hutchinson. With his performance against Ohio State, he assured himself of legendary status in the eyes of Michigan fans as well as a first-round NFL draft pick next spring.

Hutchinson entered the game with 10 sacks for the season and left the field with three more. His quickness off the ball and use of his hands in controlling and getting past Buckeye offensive tackles was a coaching clinic of defensive end play.

The merciless pressure he and fellow edge rusher David Ojabo put on Stroud resulted in 27 yards in losses on four sacks of the OSU quarterback. Stroud stood tall and delivered many a strike anyway, but the heat put on by those two outstanding defensive players made it uncomfortable to say the least.

As productive as the Michigan offense was at running the football, the Ohio State offense was much less efficient. The Buckeyes didn't get the needed push up front to establish a running game all afternoon. Even though TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams flashed at times, the Buckeyes netted only 64 yards on the ground.

Ohio State wound up behind the same eight-ball that Michigan State was the week before, having to come from behind and play one-dimensional due to the inability to run the football. The Michigan defensive line didn't dominate the OSU offensive line as much as their offensive front dominated the Buckeyes' defensive front, but it was close.

The passing attack led by Stroud and his trio of outstanding receivers kept the Buckeyes within striking distance, but not close enough to affect the outcome of the game. The play of Hutchinson and company was just too disruptive to overcome.

### Successful Season In Spite

As bad as the sting is from the devastating loss to The Team Up North, the 2021 season was a success in many ways. First of all, a ton of young Buckeyes achieved at a high level on the big stage of Power Five football. Their experience is a foundation to build on, and the 2022 squad should be a more complete team as a result.

Secondly, Stroud proved to be for real and potentially one of the very best quarterbacks to ever put on scarlet and gray. He is destined to win the Heisman Trophy, if not this year, then in the near future.

Third, the trio of Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba is the most productive group of receivers in Ohio State football history. They consistently made acrobatic catches the norm. Their ability to turn a reception into a big play amazed and entertained Buckeye fans. To have any of the three on one team would be a huge asset – to have all three is truly special.

Fourth, Noah Ruggles was a diamond-in-the-rough find for the Buckeyes. He missed just one field goal all season and converted on every extra point. The North Carolina transfer was not only reliable but led all Buckeyes in points scored for the 2021 regular season.

Finally, there is enough talent returning for the Buckeyes to make a run for all the marbles next season. In the game of college football, where the worth of a team is ultimately judged on its ability to make it into the College Football

Playoff, Ohio State will have the opportunity to accomplish that goal.

Despite not making it to the playoff in 2021, it has been a very successful season. Coach Ryan Day, once more, put a team on the field that was exciting to watch.

### Renewed Rivalry

Ohio State players will not get a pair of gold pants this year, but they did get a Big Ten East co-championship plus a guaranteed appearance in a quality bowl.

The sting of the Michigan loss will hang on for 365 days, and it will hurt every day, just like it did for Michigan players and coaches the past few years. The greatest rivalry in sports goes on, and the countdown clock in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center is reset to the number of hours, minutes and seconds until Nov. 26, 2022, when the Buckeyes get their shot at revenge on the Wolverines, this time at Ohio Stadium.

Young players who really didn't understand the tradition, the intensity and the importance of the rivalry certainly understand it now.

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# OSU Performance Against Spartans Was A Fooler

The Michigan State game fooled us.

All season long, a lot of followers of the Ohio State football team – including me – wondered whether it was of championship quality.

Yes, the offense was spectacular, especially so because of the greatest receiver group in the history of the program.

**EXNER  
POINT  
Rich Exner**

But the run game sputtered at times despite having a big-time back. The other big concern always was the defense. There were the 35 points allowed against Oregon, the 31 against Minnesota and, more recently, 31 against Purdue.

But then came the Michigan State game and the running back considered the best in the country, at least at the time – Kenneth Walker III – was held to 25 yards rushing against the Buckeyes. The Spartans were scoreless through three quarters, ending the day with just seven points.

After that 56-7 win, the Buckeyes vaulted to No. 2 in the country behind only undefeated Georgia.

All those flaws were forgotten. But then

reality set in at Ann Arbor.

The Wolverines won because Ohio State couldn't stop the Michigan running game – 297 yards to Ohio State's paltry 64. Worse yet, Michigan averaged 7.2 yards per run while OSU averaged just 2.1.

That was the difference in the game.

Yes, a lot went against OSU in Ann Arbor. The botched first kickoff return followed by a botched snap put the Buckeyes in a hole out of the gate. Ten penalties vs. just two for U-M didn't help. If they played again, Ohio State might even win.

But what was exposed, with little doubt, is that Buckeye fans who had their questions about this team were right to be concerned. What we learned in Ann Arbor was that this year's team was not good enough to beat Georgia and win a national championship without a lot of good fortune falling its way.

As it turns out, Ohio State was not a championship team. One of the five or eight best teams in the country? Yes, and that's pretty good. But it was not a team that could steamroll its way to the title.

What was forgotten about the 2021 Buckeyes is that 2022 or 2023 was really considered by many to be the next best shot at a championship-level season. To win a title this year would have been a bonus.

That says a lot about where the program stands in the pecking order of college football. Ohio State did not collapse like Clemson. Ohio State is still loaded with players on

the roster in the pipeline.

Talent-wise, Alabama, Ohio State and probably Georgia stand out from the rest by a wide gap. But even with that gap, all the pieces won't fall into place every year.

What's perhaps tough to take, however, is that this was the year when it didn't look like it would take a premium team to have a shot at the title. Save for Georgia, every contender has some questions, and even the Bulldogs are sometimes challenged offensively.

Alabama was ranked third heading into the final weekend of the regular season, appearing to have more flaws than OSU even before surviving for a four-overtime win against a five-loss Auburn team.

Cincinnati? Good for the Bearcats and their undefeated season, but UC does not have the talent that could hang with the great teams in a normal playoff year. Think about Cincinnati a couple of years ago when LSU, Clemson, Ohio State and Oklahoma filled the bracket. UC is not in that league.

Notre Dame with its only loss to Cincinnati? The Fighting Irish have not impressed.

Maybe Oklahoma State could emerge from the Big 12 with just one loss. But they're a step down, too, from the likes of Georgia.

And Clemson, with three losses, makes the ACC a nonfactor.

with three sacks as it was. But the runs weren't working. The passes generally were.

## Penalty Woes

The 10-2 penalty deficit for Ohio State was even worse than that stat would indicate.

Michigan got three first downs by penalty, Ohio State none.

Plus, a false start on a third-and-3 turned it into a third-and-8, and OSU wound up having to punt. Another false start on a second-and-5 turned it into a second-and-10; and the Buckeyes wound up again having to punt.

A holding flag on a Stroud touchdown run nullified the score, though Ohio State did score later on the drive.

## Looming Oregon Loss

The early-season loss to Oregon now looms big. Had the Buckeyes entered the Michigan game undefeated, they would be hanging on to serious playoff hopes.

Imagine. An 11-1 record with the only loss to a potential 12-1 Michigan team bound for the playoff.

The playoff might very well have been Georgia, Michigan, Ohio State and Cincinnati.

## Age Reality Check

It was mentioned during the TV broadcast that Garrett Wilson said his first memory (presumably of OSU football) was of Terrelle Pryor.

Pryor? That wasn't long ago was it? But how time flies, at least for the graybeards among us. It was 2008 when Pryor broke onto the scene as a freshman. Wilson, now 21, would have just turned 8 years old just before Pryor's debut.

## Top 10 Jumble

Here's my top 10 as we head into championship game week:

1. Georgia (12-0) – An obvious, clear choice as the top-rated team in the country so far.
2. Michigan (11-1) – Best win among the one-loss teams belongs to Michigan.
3. Oklahoma State (11-1) – Just knocked off one-loss Oklahoma en route to a Big 12 title game against Baylor.
4. Alabama (11-1) – I think Ohio State is better, but I defer to the one loss instead of two
5. Ohio State (10-2) – I'm not making the argument that a two-loss Ohio State team should be in the playoffs if one of the top four teams above falls. But I believe the Buckeyes are better than all the teams rated below at this point.
6. Cincinnati (12-0) – Winning all your games, even with just one premium opponent (Notre Dame), counts for something.
7. Notre Dame (11-1) – Give the Irish credit for only slipping up once, even if the schedule was weak and void of a conference championship game test.
8. Oregon (10-2) – This is a tough call, but looking at the OSU games, I have to place Oregon above Michigan State.
9. Michigan State (10-2) – Blown out at Ohio State but handed Michigan its only defeat.
10. Baylor (10-2) – Losses to Oklahoma State and TCU, but a win against Oklahoma.

## Running Woes

With Ohio State having so much difficulty running the football (the aforementioned 2.1 yards a carry) and so much ease passing the football (8.0 yards per pass play), it was puzzling how often Ryan Day called run plays on second-and-long and third-and-long situations, especially in the second half.

Those run plays rarely worked. In fact, 19 of Ohio State's 23 first downs came on pass plays. That was a stark contrast to U-M, which had 16 first downs by run and five by air.

The only thing I can figure is that Day feared being able to protect the quarterback if he overloaded things to the passing game in the second half.

Aidan Hutchinson, after all, wound up

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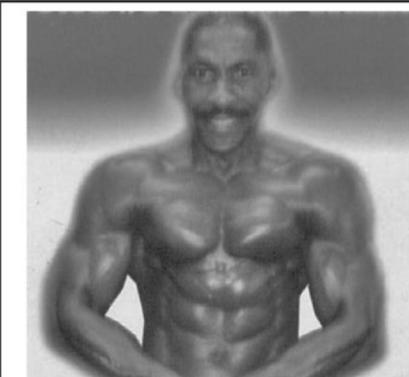
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# Random Thoughts Regarding A Disappointing Defeat

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

I'm supposed to be an unbiased journalist. But I'll admit it. I'm a proud Ohio State alum. I've covered Ohio State football for over 40 years. You follow a program long enough and you become attached to it. It's hard for me not to be a fan. I even try to write this column from a fan's perspective as much as a journalist's perspective.

I hurt as much as you do right now, so allow me to ramble a little.

Right off the bat, let me remind all of you that I don't like Jim Harbaugh. It dates back to 1986 when he guaranteed a Michigan victory. You just didn't do that back then. I've never really gotten over that or the fact that Ohio State allowed him to carry out that promise. I've immensely enjoyed the Buckeyes knocking him off five straight times and seeing that befuddled look on his face.

I knew, like all of us knew, that Ohio State's archrivals would ultimately win a game. I just wasn't quite ready for it to happen this year, and I probably would have preferred it to happen against another coach.

Leading up to this year's version of The Game, I think I got a little caught up in Ohio State's total domination of Michigan State. How could a team that lost to those same Spartans have a chance against a team that played so flawlessly against MSU and was peaking at the right time? Maybe the Buckeyes, at least in the back of their minds, were thinking the same thing.

On the other hand, it kept gnawing at me that this was indeed The Game. Strange things happen. The better team doesn't always win. Just ask John Cooper, who took the better team to battle any number of times and lost to the hated Wolverines. I guess I just thought that Michigan had been so beaten down in the rivalry that, after watching the Buckeyes dominate the Spartans, the Wolverines would be on their way to defeat the moment they took the field.

It might have been that way had Ohio State gotten off to a faster start, a start similar to the one against the Spartans.

Instead, the Buckeyes allowed Michigan to march 75 yards on the opening drive, during which the Wolverines converted three third downs – two of them on runs of 16 and 17 yards – and draw first blood with a 14-yard touchdown run on a reverse by A.J. Henning.

The Buckeyes immediately felt the absence of Emeka Egbuka on kickoff returns, with Julian Fleming looking embarrassingly uncomfortable in his place and leaving the Buckeyes at their own 4-yard line on the ensuing kickoff. Ohio State gained all of 1 yard on that first possession, and although Jesse Mirco was able to get off a 51-yard punt, Henning returned the kick 17 yards and Michigan was in business at the OSU 39. The writing was probably already on the wall, but two plays later, Bryson Shaw – who has taken his share of criticism this season – picked off a Cade McNamara pass.

At that point, I honestly thought that was going to quell any Michigan momentum, the team that demolished the Spartans was going to take over and Shaw would go down as one of the many Buckeyes throughout the years who made his mark with a big play in The Game.

I was feeling pretty good when the Buckeyes drove 75 yards to the Wolverine 3. But a false start – the first of many – and a 6-yard sack on C.J. Stroud by Aidan Hutchinson – the first of three – forced the Buckeyes to settle for a field goal.

Again, I should have seen the writing on the wall, but I still was confident when the Buckeyes went into halftime trailing only by one point at 14-13 – after settling for another field goal right before the gun – and were set to get

the ball back to start the second half.

There were many pivotal points in the game, but it might have really been lost right there. Instead of the vaunted Ohio State offense scoring on the first possession of the second half, which I'm sure you were expecting as well as I was, they tried to run freshman phenom TreVeyon Henderson three times – not particularly creative play-calling, but OK if it worked. Henderson gained 5 yards on first down and 3 on second down but lost 2 yards on third-and-2, and that forced a three-and-out punt.

Mirco pushed the Wolverines back to their 19, but consecutive runs of 13 and 55 yards by Blake Corum followed by a 13-yard scoring run from Hassan Haskins gave Michigan a 21-13 lead, and the Buckeyes were forced to play catch-up the rest of the way.

The Ohio State offense fought valiantly, though it was frequently its own worst enemy while guilty of four of Ohio State's seven second-half penalties, but the defense could never come up with a stop when it needed one. The Buckeyes scored two touchdowns in the fourth quarter to pull within 28-20 at the 14:05 mark and 35-27 with 4:45 to go, but the Wolverines answered each of those scores with TDs of their own on the following possession.

Buckeye fans are going to look at what they believe Ohio State did wrong in this game, but I have to quote Cooper here: "Guys, sometimes we don't give enough credit to the other team. Their players are on scholarship, too."

And give those Wolverines on scholarship credit. They completely dominated both sides of the line of scrimmage. Also look past the players on scholarship. Coop might also have pointed out that "their coaches are on salary, too." It would be very hard for anyone associated with Ohio State, from Gene Smith down to the fan on the street, to say that Harbaugh and his crew didn't out-prepare and outcoach Day and his staff.

And that brings us back to the fact that this was The Game. The team that controls the line of scrimmage traditionally wins, and there was absolutely no question who controlled the trench warfare.

Michigan racked up a Woody- and Bo-like 297 yards on the ground. If time hadn't run out, the Wolverines would still be running the football and gaining huge chunks of yards. The Buckeyes simply had no answer. Ohio State, on the other hand, gained just 64 yards on the ground, gaining just 13 yards on 21 carries in the final three quarters after picking up 51 on nine tries in the opening stanza. Some of those low ground numbers can be attributed to Stroud being sacked four times for 27 yards, but certainly not all. Michigan, meanwhile, did not allow a sack.

Total dominance in the trenches.

Another telling stat for Michigan on its march to victory was that the Wolverines faced only eight third downs in the entire game and converted five of them. More telling is the fact that even on those third-down situations, the distances to gain were 2, 1, 1, 2, 7, 7, 3 and 1 yards, meaning Michigan was generally moving the ball at will and even the third-down situations were usually easily manageable.

During their dominant second half, the Wolverines did not face a single third down.

Ohio State moved the ball also, to the tune of 458 total yards, but it always seemed a struggle. The Buckeye converted 8 of 18 first

downs and were forced to go for it four times on fourth down, converting three of those.

Not to forget my traditional tight end watch, I thought this might be a game where Day unleashed Jeremy Ruckert. Instead, Ruckert was targeted just once and was left without a catch.

As for the defense, was the improvement we all thought we saw since the Oregon game a mirage? Maybe this wasn't the year for the Buckeyes to go to the playoffs and possibly be embarrassed like they were by the Wolverines, only on an even bigger stage.

It all adds up to a pretty bitter pill for me to swallow. I still don't like Jim Harbaugh, but I think he and his team caught Ohio State's attention. That will hopefully make next year's Buckeye victory that much sweeter.

Michigan finally beat Ohio State, but has the pendulum swung or was it just a blip in a bigger Ohio State streak, like the U-M wins in 2003 and 2011?

### Forgotten Wolverine Win

Most Buckeye fans easily recall Michigan's victory in the Big House in 2011, with Braxton Miller almost pulling that one out with a pass to DeVier Posey late in the game.

But the other loss in the streak that started when Tressel went to Ann Arbor 310 days after his hiring and scored the first OSU win on the road in The Game in 14 years seems to have pretty much been forgotten. The Buckeyes hit the road one year after winning the national championship and came home with a 35-21 loss on their ledger in 2003.

The game was remarkably similar to this year's fiasco as the Wolverines manhandled the Buckeyes. Chris Perry carried the load 31 times for 154 yards, and Michigan outgained the Buckeyes on the ground by a 170-54 margin. Quarterback John Navarre complemented Perry with 278 yards passing.

"The striking difference between the two offenses in the Michigan game was the play of the offensive lines," I wrote in this space 18 years ago. "The Wolverine big guys opened holes for tailback Chris Perry and kept quarterback John Navarre from being sacked the entire game. If Ohio State was going to win the game, the Buckeyes needed to put pressure on Navarre and force him into his traditional big-game mistakes. That pressure never developed."

Mark Rea was much more succinct in his column: "There was little question in the OSU-Michigan game as to which offensive line dominated its opponent and which did not."

While the Buckeyes did not have a sack in the game, the Wolverines racked up four.

Meanwhile, Ohio State had big days from a pair of receivers, with Michael Jenkins catching nine passes for 132 yards and Santonio Homes grabbing eight for 121.

"The biggest thing for us was that we couldn't run the ball," said OSU quarterback Craig Krenzel. "Once we went to the air, we got some things going. But by that time, we were already down by three touchdowns."

Does this scenario sound the least bit familiar?

On the bright side, after that loss in Ann Arbor, the Buckeyes reeled off seven more victories against their rivals before the loss in 2011. Let's see if history repeats itself.

### Who Backed Up Guarantee?

While Harbaugh made the guarantee back

in 1986, he wasn't necessarily the prime force in backing it up. That honor would probably go to Jamie Morris, who gained 210 yards rushing on 29 carries with two touchdowns and added three receptions for another 22 yards.

Harbaugh's afternoon was a mixed bag. He completed 19 of 29 passes for 261 yards but did not throw a touchdown and was guilty of two interceptions, both thrown while in Ohio State territory. In fact, one of them came at the Buckeye 8, quelling a scoring drive.

Points there might have left Ohio State without the opportunity to win the game in the final 1:06. Had Matt Frantz's field-goal try been just a few feet more to the right, Harbaugh would have had to slink back to Ann Arbor with his tail between his legs rather than going home with a 26-24 victory.

OSU linebacker Chris Spielman had 29 tackles in that game – still a school record – but it still irks me that Harbaugh, even after his bulletin board material, was not sacked once during the game. Sound familiar?

Harbaugh was actually much more effective in Ann Arbor the year before when he was 16 of 19 for 230 yards and three touchdowns without an interception. His 77-yard scoring strike to John Kolesar in the fourth quarter was the game-clincher in a 27-17 Wolverines victory.

I discovered an interesting note while researching that 1986 Ohio State-Michigan game.

Frantz was interviewed by ESPN.com back in 2015 concerning that game. A timeout was called right before he was set to attempt to win the game from 45 yards out, and he was forced to wait.

"I looked around and saw a hundred thousand people and realized they were focused on me," Frantz recalled. "Just before the timeout was over, I looked over and saw (Michigan head coach) Bo Schembechler about three-quarters of the way out on the field. He was screaming, 'Frantz, you little (expletive), you're going to miss this kick!' He was going nuts, and his coaches were trying to hold him back. People ask me all the time if icing the kicker works. I tell them, 'Well, in my case it did.' It was a perfect snap and a perfect hold, but I hooked it a couple of feet left. There's no explanation and no excuse."

Frantz would have the last laugh, however. A year later, he connected on a 26-yarder in Ann Arbor with 5:18 remaining, the game-winner in the deposed Earle Bruce's final game as Buckeyes head coach. It would not be until Tressel came on board in 2001 that the Buckeyes would win again in Ann Arbor.

### Publishing Schedule

This issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin is the last print issue of BSB until our Pre-Bowl Issue scheduled to be mailed Dec. 15. That will be the final print issue of 2021. We will return with our Post-Bowl Issue, set to be mailed Jan. 11, 2022.

In the meantime, we encourage you to follow all the Buckeye sports news at our BuckeyeSports.com website. The BSB staff updates the site daily, and with the early signing day approaching, you'll want to keep up on the latest recruiting news as well as news of the Buckeyes' bowl destination and opponent. You can also interact with the BSB staff and other BSB subscribers on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum.

Access is free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers. If you are not already enjoying this service, look for simple instructions on page 6 of this issue or call us at (614) 486-2202 if you need assistance or have any questions.

# FOR ATHLETES

## HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

### 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>

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