



Hoping For Health

Ohio State Awaits Return Of Key Pieces As Big Ten Play Heats Up



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN RIOS

INJURIES GALORE — Ohio State winger Justice Sueing (14), forward Seth Towns (31) and forward Kyle Young (25) have all dealt with injuries this season, led by 14 missed games for Sueing and an entire season of absences for Towns. The Buckeyes are hoping to have both back by the end of the season.

By PATRICK MAYHORN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State has played just about 16 minutes of full-strength – or nearly full-strength, sans forward Seth Towns – basketball in the 2021-22 season. Projected starting winger Justice Sueing was on the court for 15:52 against Niagara in Ohio State's second game of the season. He scored 10 points on 4-of-6 shooting, grabbed four rebounds and a steal, and promptly disappeared from Ohio State's list of available players for more than two months after aggravating a nagging lower-body injury.

Sueing has played in only two games for the Buckeyes this season, struggling to a 1-of-7 shooting night against Akron in game one and bouncing back in that second game before Ohio State was forced to shut him down. Even though he played in the season opener, veteran forward Kyle Young didn't, leaving Ohio State with only those 16 minutes to rely on when projecting a potential ceiling for this edition of Chris

Holtmann's program.

Now, more than two months later, Ohio State is set to enter the toughest stretch of its season, drawing road trips to play top-half of the league squads in Purdue (Jan. 30), Rutgers (Feb. 9) and Illinois (Feb. 24) and home bouts against Indiana (Feb. 19) and Michigan State (Mar. 3).

And that's to say nothing of the other half of the league – which ranks either first or second nationally in just about every conference power ranking – with battles in always tricky environments at Minnesota (Jan. 27), Michigan (Feb. 12) and Maryland (Feb. 27), as well as home games against that trio and Iowa (which touts a top-10 scoring offense).

That's 12 more games between the Buckeyes and post-season play – not including a potential makeup with Nebraska – without a single surefire win. The closest thing to that Ohio State could expect in league play left the schedule on Jan. 20, when Nebraska announced that the Jan. 22 matchup between the two in Columbus would need to be postponed because of COVID issues within the Cornhusker program. And even Nebraska, with its 6-13 record (0-8 in the Big Ten) took Ohio State to overtime Jan. 2 and played Illinois, Indiana and Michigan State competitively well into the second half of each game.

KenPom lists Nebraska as its No. 150 team, easily the worst in the league. Every other team checks in within the top 100, and seven of them within the top 30. The next best league in that category – the SEC – boasts five top-30 teams.

That's why when the Buckeyes win sloppy, as they did on Jan. 16 against Penn State or Jan. 9 against Northwestern, they try to appreciate it all the same.

Frye Expected to Bring Variety To Bucks' Run Game

By PATRICK MAYHORN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

When Chip Kelly returned to college football in 2018, he did so as a changed man. After three seasons as the head coach of the Philadelphia Eagles, one ill-fated season in the same role with the San Francisco 49ers and a gap year in 2017, Kelly was ready to return to the sidelines, accepting the head coaching position at UCLA.

Los Angeles wasn't quite his old stomping grounds with Oregon, which had since moved on to a new coach and style, but Kelly wasn't quite the same coach. The NFL had shifted the way that one of the game's most innovative minds called and designed his offense. He hired Justin Frye, with whom he had never worked, to coordinate his offense.

On Jan. 11, Ryan Day nabbed Frye from UCLA to coach Ohio State's offensive line, potentially in hopes that he can do with Ohio State what he did with Kelly's offense. However, to understand what Frye brings to Columbus, it is important to first understand what he did under Kelly.

With the Ducks, where Kelly cut his teeth for two seasons as an offensive coordinator (2007-08) and four as the head coach (2009-12), the name of the game was simplicity and speed, and Oregon did it better than anyone else. Kelly designed the "blur" offense, aptly named for its focus on killing defenses with more speed than any other offense in the sport.

Kelly's Ducks didn't huddle – they didn't stop for much of anything really – and rarely dialed up plays outside of their core ideology. Kelly leaned heavily on zone running with occasional counters and draws, pulling strength from Oregon's ability to execute just a few core concepts well enough that no defense could stop it, especially with the option influence that so often required just one or two reads to make defenses look silly regardless of their preparedness.

He pulled that directly from the option offenses of old, where the theory has always been – and remains, with the schools that still run the option – quality over quantity, and execution over scheme diversity. In 2018, Kelly even said that in an ideal world, his teams would run the wishbone.

"I would love to run the wishbone," Kelly said. "I would love to run the ball every play and never have to throw the football."

And like those option programs of past and present, Kelly stuck to it at Oregon. The Ducks would work a few more looks in for more experienced signal callers, but the core four concepts remained the same.

"This offense fits for us," Kelly said after the 2008 season. "This past season, we finished second in the country in rushing the football. We average 6.2 yards per carry. We have four running plays. We run the inside zone, outside zone, counter and draw.

Your Mailing Label Goes Here
Call (614) 486-2202
Today To Subscribe

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Penalties Still A Problem

For several years, with some exceptions, OSU commits more penalties than its opponents. The last three years provide an example: 2019: 81 vs. 76; 2020: 49 vs. 45; 2021: 85 vs. 57. Last year proves no improvement has been made.

The most glaring statistic was the Michigan game. 10 vs. 2. C.J. Stroud threw for 394 yards. How much could he have accomplished if it weren't for drives halted by stupid penalties? We'll never know. I see this dreadful penalty record as one of three possibilities:

1. The coaches aren't aware of the problem.
2. The coaches are aware of the problem but don't consider it a high priority or
3. They are incapable of teaching them to play good, hard, smart

football without the consistent high number of penalties.

On defense, Jim Knowles is a welcome addition. In 2019, OSU was first in the country in total defense. In the last two years, OSU was 59th each year. Good luck, Mr. Knowles, help is needed.

Jim Chesney
Bluffton, S.C.

If you would like to express an opinion concerning Ohio State University sports, please send your letter to BSB Letters, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212, or email it to bsb@buckeyesports.com. Letters must be signed and include the writer's hometown and a daytime telephone number for verification. Publication priority will be given to those letters that are brief, and we reserve the right to edit letters for publication.

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN.COM

From The Message Board

Ohio State sports provide plenty of memories throughout a calendar year. From beating Clemson in the CFP semifinal to C.J. Stroud's ascension, Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked the readers of BuckeyeSports.com and staff members what moment of 2021 was their favorite and why it is significant to them.

Here are some responses:

"I can't believe this is even a question. It has to be the win over Clemson. Nothing else comes close in that time frame.

"What made the Clemson game special for me? A bunch of things: I saw on TV the Gator Bowl when Woody Hayes got fired; I sat in the Orange Bowl when Clemson gave Ohio State its first loss in history when scoring 35 (and Braxton Miller played the second half with a severely injured shoulder); I saw on TV the playoff loss 31-0. The ridiculous fact that Ohio State had never beaten Clemson. Dabo has often seemed arrogant and insincere."

– **Terrier Buck**

"I'm going to go with a particular one: talking to Ty Tucker for the annual interview issue. It's been a very special couple of years for him with the completion of the Ty Tucker Tennis Facility, and talking to him about that and the program he has built as a whole was a delight. He was one of my favorite coaches on campus and offered up a detail that still sticks with me.

"Despite all his accomplishments, he refuses to say the official name of the facility. He just calls it 'the tennis facilities' because he's still not yet comfortable with it being named after him."

– **Patrick Mayhorn, BSB**

"Has to be the Clemson game for me! Nothing else came close. It was the revenge factor largely. I have always felt that the Buckeyes were handed a raw deal the year before, and that bad taste needed to be removed. Justin Fields' personal courage in coming back on the field and playing in pain was inspirational. I did not really expect to beat Alabama last year, so the Clemson game had outsized importance."

– **Michael Bauer**

"I'll think somewhat outside the box here and go with C.J. Stroud's rise throughout the season. He took

a lot of criticism early in the season – deservedly so, in some cases – but responded with a Heisman-worthy season passing the ball. He was instrumental in Ohio State's comeback win over Utah, capping off one of the best quarterbacked seasons in team history. It may have been that one-week break against Akron, but it evidently did the trick as he looked like a new and improved quarterback after getting some rest for his shoulder injury, and he was dynamic once he was back on the field for the rest of the season.

"Mentally, I thought it was really impressive how he was able to overcome some of the stuff thrown at him. I don't remember the last time I heard such a loud chorus for an Ohio State quarterback to get benched, but he soldiered on through and came out like diamonds on the other side. All that being said, I think he still has room to grow next year, but I'd go ahead and book his hotel in New York."

– **Braden Moles, BSB**

"I think I'll go Patrick's route and talk about something personal for me. Working at Buckeye Sports Bulletin for the past seven months has been a fantastic experience and has entirely changed how I view Ohio State sports. I sat with Patrick at the Minnesota game on Sept. 2, and it felt like I officially started my professional journalism career.

"It was an entertaining football season – the Oregon loss, the Michigan State win, the Michigan loss and the Rose Bowl win. I also enjoyed covering Olympic sports this year, covering men's and women's golf, women's lacrosse, women's volleyball, etc. Those athletes and coaches are the best, and I love telling their stories. I am looking forward to another year of covering Ohio State sports for you all. Keep coming to BSB for all your Buckeye news!"

– **Chase Brown, BSB**

THE ROAD TO THE HORSESHOE AND BEYOND

Dr. Rex Kern, PH.D.
with Lee Caryer

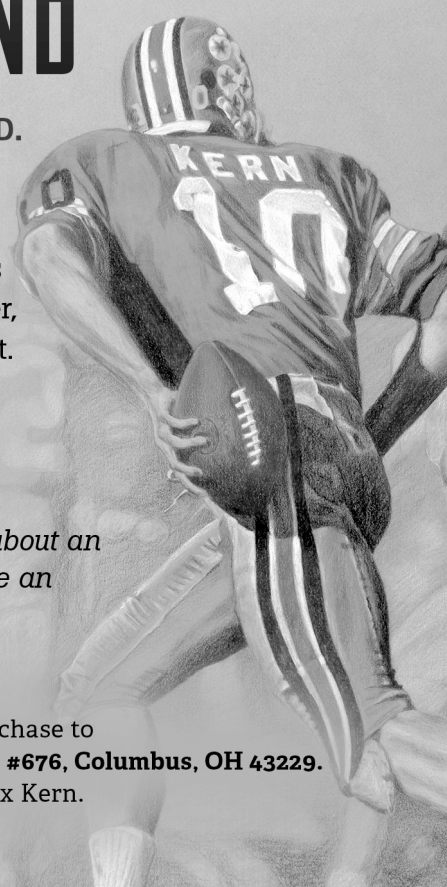
Order your copy today! And as a *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* reader, you'll receive a special discount.

Only **\$29.50** for subscribers
or **\$24.50** for VIPs

"Enjoy an inspirational story about an All-American kid who became an All-American example ..."

Jerry Lucas

Please mail a check for your purchase to
Lee Caryer at 975 Atlantic Ave., #676, Columbus, OH 43229.
Please make all checks out to Rex Kern.





Vol. 41, No. 15

Jan. 29, 2022

www.BuckeyeSports.com

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

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

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

PUBLISHER
Frank Moskowitz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER
Becky Roberts

MANAGING EDITOR EMERITUS
Mark Rea

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Patrick Mayhorn

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Karen Wachsman 1944-1999

PHOTOGRAPHY
Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam
Kevin Dye Josh Winslow

CONTRIBUTORS
David Breithaupt Braden Moles
Chase Brown Bob Roehm
Bill Conley Mark Schmetzer
Wyatt Crosher Steve Siegfried
Joe Dempsey Jeff Svoboda
Rich Exner Mike Wachsman
Craig Merz Ryan Rios

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES
Jan Jager Ron Friedman

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 (Feb 12 cover date) will be mailed on Feb 8.

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



Looking Back With Fond Remembrance

In the last issue of BSB, we revisited members of the Ohio State athletic family who passed away in 2021. In that spirit of remembrance, here are some others from the world of college sports who crossed paths with the Buckeyes and who also passed last year.

Jon Arnett was a first-team All-American at running back as a senior in 1956 at USC, and the Los Angeles Rams made him the second overall pick in the 1957 NFL draft. Two years before that, Arnett rushed for 123 yards on just nine carries during his team's 20-7 loss to Ohio State in the Rose Bowl, a victory that punctuated the 1954 national championship for the Buckeyes.

Arnett, who earned five Pro Bowl nominations during his 10 seasons in the NFL and was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 2001, died Jan. 16 from heart failure. He was 85.

Other opponents were more successful against Ohio State in Pasadena, and topping the list was Sam "Bam" Cunningham, who rushed for only 38 yards but scored four touchdowns against the Buckeyes as USC ran away with a 42-17 win in the 1973 Rose Bowl. Cunningham, the older brother of former NFL quarterback Randall Cunningham, later had a nine-year pro career with the New England Patriots.

Cunningham, who was elected to the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame in 1992 and the College Football Hall of Fame in 2010, died Sept. 7 at the age of 71.

Terry Donahue was one of the up-and-comers in college coaching when at the age of 32 he was in charge of the offensive line on the UCLA team that scored a 23-10 upset victory against Ohio State in the 1976 Rose Bowl. What made the upset all the more excruciating for the Buckeyes was that they had handed the Bruins a 41-20 loss during the 1975 regular season.

The following season, Donahue was named head coach at UCLA, and over the next 20 seasons he compiled a 151-74-8 record that included five Pac-10 championships and eight consecutive bowl wins at one juncture. He was also 1-1-1 against the Buckeyes – a 17-0 win in Columbus in 1980, a 17-13 home loss in 1979 and a 10-10 tie in the Horseshoe in 1976.

Donahue died July 4 at his home in Newport Beach, Calif., following a two-year fight with cancer. He was 77.

Other coaches who did battle with Ohio State over the years included the legendary Bobby Bowden, who counted three victories against the Buckeyes among his 389 career wins. Bowden took his Florida State team into Columbus in back-to-back years and went home with a 36-27 win in 1981 and a 34-17 victory in 1982.

Nearly two decades later, Bowden was still at the helm when the Seminoles dismantled the Buckeyes during a 31-14 win in the 1998 Sugar Bowl. Bowden, who continued to coach at Florida State through the 2009 season, succumbed to pancreatic cancer Aug. 8 at the age of 91.

Howard Schnellenberger derives most of his coaching fame from the five seasons he spent at the University of Miami during which he led the Hurricanes to the 1983 national championship. But the flamboyant head coach spent more time as head coach at Louisville than he did almost anywhere else during his 40-plus years patrolling college and NFL sidelines.

Schnellenberger and his Louisville teams threw big-time scares into Ohio State in successive years, dropping a 23-15 decision in Columbus in 1991 and coming back the following year to come within a whisker of a major upset before losing a 20-19 heartbreaker. Schnellenberger, who first made a name for himself when

he successfully recruited Joe Namath to play for Alabama in 1961, died March 27 at the age of 87.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Jim Fassel had a seven-year run as head coach of the New York Giants, earning NFL Coach of the Year honors in 1997 and leading his team to Super Bowl XXXV following the 2000 season. Before Fassel got to the pro ranks, though, he spent five seasons as head coach at the University of Utah, where, in 1986, his Utes suffered a 64-6 blowout loss to Ohio State. The Buckeyes rolled up 715 total yards in the game, at that time the second-highest total in program history behind 718 against Mount Union in 1930.

Fassel was the very definition of a coaching vagabond, making 13 different stops during a 39-year career in junior college, college, the NFL, USFL and UFL. He was 71 when he died June 7 of a heart attack.

Leon Burnnett crossed paths 10 times with the Buckeyes during his 48-year coaching career without much success. He was 1-4 against OSU as head coach at Purdue from 1982-86, but that lone victory was a big one. The Boilermakers engineered a 28-23 upset of second-ranked Ohio State in West Lafayette, a win that helped Burnnett win 1984 Big Ten Coach of the Year honors.

In addition to his record as a head coach against the Buckeyes, he was linebackers coach at Michigan State when Ohio State handed the Spartans a 49-21 loss in the 1976 season opener, 1-2 as defensive coordinator for the Boilermakers from 1977-81, and defensive coordinator at Fresno State when the Buckeyes won a 34-10 decision against the Bulldogs at the 1994 Pigskin Classic in Anaheim, Calif. Burnnett died June 1, just two days after his 78th birthday.

When former Iowa head coach Jerry Burns died May 12 at the age of 94, he held the distinction of being the oldest living Big Ten coach to have claimed a victory against Ohio State, a 28-14 win at Kinnick Stadium during the 1962 season. It was the only win Burns enjoyed vs. the Buckeyes during his five seasons as head coach of the Hawkeyes, losing his other four outings by a combined score of 95-35.

Burns' record of 1-4 against Ohio State as a head coach came after going 3-4 as an assistant on Forest Evashevski's staff at Iowa from 1954-60 and 1-3 as a quarterback at Michigan from 1947-50. After leaving Iowa following the 1965 season, Burns was a successful NFL assistant, helping the Green Bay Packers to victories in Super Bowls I and II and serving as offensive coordinator for the Minnesota Vikings when they made four trips to the Super Bowl between 1969 and 1976.

Leroy Keyes was a two-time consensus All-America running back at Purdue, but Ohio State always seemed to have his number. Despite a 41-6 blowout win by the Boilermakers in 1967, Keyes was held to just 39 yards on six carries. The following season when the Buckeyes got their revenge with a 13-0 shutout win, the OSU defense limited Keyes to only 19 yards on seven carries.

Keyes went on to become the third overall pick in the 1969 NFL draft and was one of the league's last two-way players when he manned a running back and safety position for the Phil-

adelphia Eagles. He was 74 when he died April 15 in West Lafayette due to complications from congestive heart disease and cancer.

Not long after Keyes left Purdue, the Boilermakers welcomed Otis Armstrong, who earned All-America honors while becoming the school's all-time leading rusher. Armstrong faced Ohio State only once during his college career, rushing for 98 yards during his team's narrow 10-7 loss at Ross-Ade Stadium in 1970.

Armstrong went on to an All-Pro career with the Denver Broncos that included leading the NFL in rushing in 1974. A 2012 inductee into the College Football Hall of Fame, Armstrong died Oct. 13 at the age of 70.

Mike Davis was an All-America safety at Colorado and was a member of Bill Mallory's Buffaloes squad that took on Ohio State in the 1977 Orange Bowl. Davis didn't get much of a chance to show off his coverage skills – OSU attempted only seven passes in the game – but he was credited with seven tackles during the 27-10 win by the Buckeyes, the final bowl victory in the coaching career of Woody Hayes.

Davis went on to a decade-long career in the NFL, mostly with the Raiders, punctuated by his interception near the end of the 1980 AFC playoff game against the Cleveland Browns that preserved a 14-12 win for the Raiders and sent them to Super Bowl XV. Davis was 65 when he died April 25.

Before he became a pioneer in sports broadcasting, Irv Cross was a wide receiver, running back and defensive back for Ara Parseghian at Northwestern from 1958-60. His only brush with Ohio State was as a backup receiver for the Wildcats in 1958 when they scored a 21-0 upset of the Buckeyes in Evanston.

Cross went on to a nine-year NFL career, mostly with the Eagles, before becoming the first African-American sports analyst on national television. From 1975 through 1989, he was co-host of the "The NFL Today" pregame show on CBS, and in 2009 he was awarded the Pete Rozelle Radio-Television Award given annually by the Pro Football Hall of Fame for exceptional contributions to professional football broadcasts. Cross was the first African-American to win the award.

Cross, who also served as director of athletics at the University of Idaho (1996-98) and Macalester College in Minnesota (1999-2005), was diagnosed with a mild form of dementia in 2018 and suspected the condition was caused by concussions he had sustained during his playing career. He arranged to have his brain donated to the Boston University CTE Center after his death. Under hospice care, Cross died Feb. 28 at the age of 81.

One Final Passing

Although former pro wrestler Paul Orndorff never played against Ohio State during his college football career, he played for Earle Bruce when Bruce was head coach at the University of Tampa in 1972. Orndorff had been a fullback during his first three seasons with the Spartans but was moved by Bruce to tight end and helped the team to a 10-2 finish and Tangerine Bowl victory against Kent State, a team coached by Ohio native and future Washington head coach Don James.

Orndorff gave up football after a brief NFL career and began a successful career with most of the major pro wrestling circuits, namely the WCW and WWF (now WWE). Nicknamed "Mr. Wonderful" by fellow wrestler "Rowdy" Roddy Piper, Orndorff retired from active wrestling in 2000 and became a trainer.

Orndorff died July 12 at the age of 71 due to dementia likely caused by chronic traumatic encephalopathy.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Ohio State Hires Walton, Eliano

Cincinnati cornerbacks coach Perry Eliano is headed to Columbus to serve as safeties coach. Eliano spent two seasons with Luke Fickell at Cincinnati and produced a pair of award-winning cornerbacks in Ahmad "Sauce" Gardner and Coby Bryant, both of whom are former three stars who developed largely under Eliano's guidance. The former has been projected as one of the first cornerbacks to come off the board in the upcoming NFL draft after a career that had him play three years without surrendering a touch-down. The latter claimed the Jim Thorpe award this season, given to the nation's best defensive back.

A Texas native who played defensive back at Stephen F. Austin from 1996-99, Eliano began his career as a graduate assistant at his alma mater before jumping to a full-time role at Central Arkansas from 2003-04. He left for a season to coach safeties at Sam Houston State be-

fore returning to Central Arkansas from 2006-10. He made his leap up to the FBS level with UTSA, joining the program in its first season of existence in 2011 to work as a special teams coordinator and safeties coach under Larry Coker, and he remained there until 2015.

He bounced to Bowling Green in 2016-17 to work under Mike Jinks in his first defensive coordinator role but returned to the Southwest in 2018 after Jinks was fired, taking over as the special teams coordinator and cornerbacks coach at New Mexico under Bob Davie for two seasons before Fickell plucked him for his current role.

He helped to direct one of the nation's best passing defenses this season, with the Bearcats finishing No. 1 in the country in pass efficiency defense (103.4), No. 2 in passing yards allowed (169.2), No. 3 in interceptions (19) and No. 4 in opponent completion percentage (54.0).

Shortly after the hiring of Eliano the Buckeyes announced the hiring of Tim Walton to work in tandem with Eliano as cornerbacks coach.

A former defensive back with the Buckeyes, Walton suited up for Ohio State early in the John Cooper era and served as a co-captain on the 1993 team, which went 10-1-1 and won a share of the Big Ten. His playing career ended after his time at Ohio State. He joined Bowling Green's staff first as a graduate assistant in 1995 and eventually as a full-time staffer from 1996-99, working under former Buckeye assistant Gary Blackney, who helped re-

2022 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2021 Record
Sept. 3	NOTRE DAME	TBA	TBA	11-2
Sept. 10	ARKANSAS STATE	TBA	TBA	2-10
Sept. 17	TOLEDO	TBA	TBA	7-6
Sept. 24	WISCONSIN	TBA	TBA	9-4
Oct. 1	RUTGERS	TBA	TBA	5-8
Oct. 8	at Michigan State	TBA	TBA	11-2
Oct. 22	IOWA	TBA	TBA	10-4
Oct. 29	at Penn State	TBA	TBA	7-6
Nov. 5	at Northwestern	TBA	TBA	3-9
Nov. 12	INDIANA	TBA	TBA	2-10
Nov. 19	at Maryland	TBA	TBA	7-6
Nov. 26	MICHIGAN	TBA	TBA	12-2

crut Walton to Columbus.

He departed in 2000 to serve for two seasons on Tommy West's staff at Memphis, first under West the defensive coordinator as a defensive backs coach and then under West the head coach in 2001. He spent the 2002 season at Syracuse in the same role, coached Nick Saban's defensive backs at LSU in its 2003 national title season and then jumped to Miami under another former Buckeye assistant in Larry Coker from 2004-07. He jumped up to defensive coordinator briefly in 2007 before departing for the same role at Memphis in 2008.

That was his final stint in college football, at least until now. He joined the Detroit Lions as the defensive backs coach in 2009 and remained until 2012; spent one season with the Los Angeles Rams as defensive coordinator in 2013; took a season off; and returned to football in 2015 with the New York Giants, back in the defensive backs room, where he would remain until 2017.

He again sat out the 2018 season, jumping back into coaching in 2019 as the cornerbacks coach for the Jacksonville Jaguars, where he remained until this off-season - working under both Doug Marrone and former Ohio State coach Urban Meyer.

Coombs And Washington Find New Homes

Meanwhile, former Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs and linebackers coach Al Washington will wear different colors in 2022.

Coombs will join Fickell's staff at Cincinnati as the cornerbacks coach and special teams coordinator, while Washington will be Notre Dame's defensive line coach under former Buckeye Marcus Freeman.

Coombs and Ohio State parted ways after this past season following a tumultuous run as defensive coordinator. He was demoted in-season as Matt Barnes took over play-calling.

Coombs returns to the Cincinnati area, where he coached high school football. His first collegiate job was with the Bearcats, where he operated as the defensive backs coach and associate head coach from 2007-11.

He then joined Ohio State from 2012-17 and, following a two-year stint with the Tennessee Titans, returned to the Buckeyes for three seasons.

Washington and Freeman worked together at Cincinnati in 2017 when Freeman was in his first season as defensive coordinator/linebackers coach and Wash-

ington coached the defensive line for one year.

Washington got his first assistant coaching job at Boston College in 2012. He remained for five seasons before stopping at Cincinnati and Michigan, eventually ending up at Ohio State for three years.

Alford Promoted To Run Game Coordinator

Ohio State running backs coach Tony Alford, who is set to enter his eighth season in Columbus, is getting a promotion. Alford is now Ohio State's run game coordinator on top of his responsibilities as running backs coach and as the assistant head coach for offense.

"Tony has continually mentored and produced tough, reliable and productive running backs for the Buckeyes," head coach Ryan Day said. "He has a terrific understanding of how to get his student-athletes to perform at a high rate of competitiveness, and I'm really pleased to promote him to run game coordinator."

A former player at Colorado State under Earle Bruce and assistant at Notre Dame under Brian Kelly, Alford surprised some by staying put at Ohio State this off-season despite an opening in the head coaching spot at his alma mater and interest from his former boss to join him at LSU.

Alford's promotion was one of several changes on the offensive side of the ball.

Wide receivers coach Brian Hartline was promoted to passing game coordinator in early January, and UCLA offensive coordinator and offensive line coach Justin Frye joined the Ohio State staff as its offensive line coach and associate head coach for offense, which is different from the assistant head coach for offense. Tight ends coach Kevin Wilson remains in his role as offensive coordinator, while Day retains play-calling duties.

Alford has produced six 1,000-yard rushers during his time at Ohio State, including Ezekiel Elliott (2015), Mike Weber (2016), J.K. Dobbins (2017, 2018 and 2019) and TreVeyon Henderson (2021). The shortened 2020 season is his only year without a 1,000-yard rusher.

New OSU Assistants Sign Deals

Salary figures for Ohio State's three most recent assistant coaching hires have been made public.

Ohio State's new offensive line coach Frye leads the trio and is set to make

Continued On Page 6

TICKETS!

We have your seats to the area's hottest events!

OSU • Indians • Reds • Browns • Bengals • Cavs • Blue Jackets • Clippers
Schottenstein Center • Ohio & Palace Theatre • Nationwide Arena • Express Live!
Final Four • Super Bowl • World Series • And Much More...

Ohio State Basketball

For Your Ticket Connection Call:
DREAM SEATS
YOUR TOTAL TICKET SOURCE
1611 W. FIFTH AVE. COLUMBUS, OH 43212
(614) 340-8989
www.dreamseats.com

Home & Away! All Games in Stock!

VISA MasterCard American Express DISCOVER NOVUS

all events ★ all cities ★ all the time ★ all events ★ all cities ★ all the time ★ all events ★ all cities ★ all the time ★ all events

Trading Places

Ohio State saw plenty of coaching movement this offseason, and it all can be a little difficult to keep track of. The BSB coaching tracker has collected every move in one place, with new hires and their brief backgrounds, the new landing spots for those who have departed from the staff, and the projected final staff makeup for the Buckeyes entering the 2022 season.

NEW FACES



Perry Eliano

Safeties

Former team: Cincinnati

A Texas native who played cornerback at Stephen F. Austin from 1996-99, Eliano comes to Ohio State after two seasons as Luke Fickell's cornerbacks coach at Cincinnati. He produced Thorpe award winner Coby Bryant, projected first-round pick Ahmad Gardner and the nation's No. 1 defense in pass-efficiency defense in 2021.



Justin Frye

Offensive Line

Former team: UCLA

Frye, who set the record for consecutive starts by an offensive lineman (45) at Indiana from 2002-06, reunites with Ohio State head coach Ryan Day after working with him at Temple and Boston College. He worked with UCLA head coach Chip Kelly to produce a top-15 rushing attack in 2020 and 2021.



Jim Knowles

Defensive Coordinator

Former team: Oklahoma State

The gem of the offseason, Knowles was a finalist for the Broyles Award (given to the best assistant coach) in 2021 for his transformation of the Oklahoma State defense into one of the nation's best groups. He played defensive end at Cornell from 1983-86 and spent the first eight years of his coaching career with the Big Red.



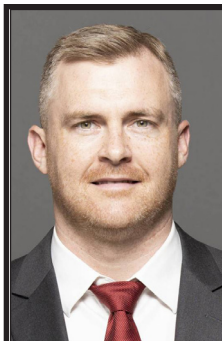
Tim Walton

Cornerbacks

Former team: Jacksonville Jaguars

The second former Buckeye player on Ohio State's staff, joining wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, Walton played cornerback in Columbus from 1990-93. He comes to Ohio State by way of the Jacksonville Jaguars, where he worked as cornerbacks coach from 2019-2021. The move marks his first foray into the college game since 2008, when he served as Memphis' defensive coordinator before jumping to the Detroit Lions in 2009.

SAYING GOODBYE

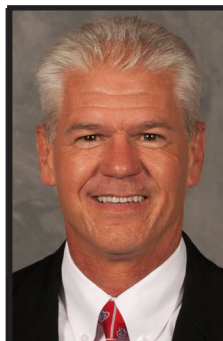


Matt Barnes

Secondary

New team: Memphis

Barnes was hired to coach Ohio State's safeties and special teams in 2019 and served in that role for two seasons before being promoted to secondary coach for the 2021 season. After a week-two loss to Oregon, he took over defensive play-calling duties for Kerry Coombs. He's replacing Mike MacIntyre on Ryan Silverfield's staff at Memphis, which went 6-6 in 2021.

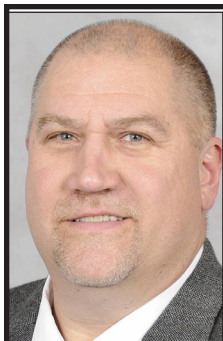


Kerry Coombs

Defensive Coordinator

New team: Cincinnati

Coombs had two stints with the Buckeyes, separated by two years with the Tennessee Titans in 2018-19. He worked originally as Urban Meyer's cornerbacks coach from 2012-17 and returned under Ryan Day as defensive coordinator in 2020-21. He's taking over for Perry Eliano with Cincinnati, his hometown.



Greg Strudrawa

Offensive Line

New team: N/A

One of the holdovers from the Urban Meyer era on Day's staff entering 2021, Strudrawa came to Ohio State by way of Maryland in 2016. A September back surgery has put into question his future job prospects, as Strudrawa is considered a candidate for retirement or a move into an off-field role elsewhere.



Al

Washington Linebackers

New team: Notre Dame

Washington is another piece of Ryan Day's initial hiring wave in 2019, and his father, Al Sr., played for the Buckeyes from 1977-80 and inspired the younger Washington to return home, jumping from Michigan's staff for the same role of linebackers coach at Ohio State. He's slated to join former Buckeye linebacker Marcus Freeman's first staff at Notre Dame as defensive line coach.

2022-23 Ohio State Staff

Name	Title	Year At Ohio State
Ryan Day	Head Coach	6th Year (4th as head coach)
Kevin Wilson	Offensive Coordinator, Tight ends	6th Year
Jim Knowles	Defensive Coordinator, Linebackers	1st Year
Corey Dennis	Quarterbacks	7th Year (3rd as QB coach)
Tony Alford	Running backs	8th Year
Brian Hartline	Wide receivers	6th Year (5th as WR coach)
Justin Frye	Offensive line	1st Year
Larry Johnson	Defensive line	9th Year
Tim Walton	Cornerbacks	1st Year
Perry Eliano	Safeties	1st Year
Parker Fleming	Special Teams Coordinator	5th Year (2nd as STC)

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 4

\$800,000 next season – a \$100,000 increase from former offensive line coach Greg Studrawa's salary in 2021 and Frye's salary with UCLA. His contract is for two years, with the same ample performance bonuses that Ohio State usually attaches to contracts: Big Ten East title (8.5 percent of base salary), Big Ten championship (4.25 percent), New Year's Six berths (17 percent), non-CFP bowl game with at least nine wins (4.25 percent), College Football Playoff semifinal berth (21.25 percent) and national championship berth (25.5 percent).

Walton and Eliano will receive the exact same bonus figures, with Walton making a base salary of \$700,000 and Eliano at \$450,000. The latter is double what Eliano was making last season at Cincinnati, though it decreases the \$600,000 that Barnes made for a similar role last season. Walton's salary with the Jacksonville Jaguars is not public information. Both contracts extend through Jan. 31, 2024.

Ohio State has yet to release salaries for returning staffers. However, several coaches will likely see pay raises in conjunction with title changes – namely Alford and Hartline.

The four new coaches counting defensive coordinator Jim Knowles are set to make slightly more than their predecessors. Eliano, Frye, Knowles and Walton will make \$3.85 million in 2022, while Barnes, Coombs, Studrawa and Washing-

ton combined for \$3.3 million a season ago.

Harrison, Jones, Rossi, Ruggles Returning In 2022

Ohio State has a starting defensive end, its right tackle and a fullback/tight end returning, as well as its kicker. Junior end Zach Harrison and junior right tackle Dawand Jones will be returning to Columbus. Harrison announced his return on

Jan. 15, Jones on Jan. 17. Fullback/tight end Mitch Rossi made his return official on Jan. 22, as did kicker Noah Ruggles Jan. 18.

Harrison could be eying a slide over to the new Leo position, but he will be re-assuming a starting role on Ohio State's defensive line regardless, with vacancies in the other end spot which was previously occupied by Tyreke Smith, as well as Haskell Garrett's defensive tackle spot.

Jones gives Ohio State three full-time offensive line starters set to return for the 2022 season, alongside rising junior and projected left tackle Paris Johnson Jr. and rising sophomore center Luke Wypler. Spot contributor Matthew Jones is expected to fill one of the vacant guard spots as well, meaning that the Buckeye offensive line will have only one open space this offseason despite the departures of left guard Thayer Munford and left tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere to the NFL.

Rossi announced that he would use his extra year of eligibility to return for one final season in 2022. Tom Rossi revealed his son's plans to play another year of football in Columbus.

"Coach Day was very persuasive and believes Mitch can add a component the team needs on offense, on special teams, and as a leader," the elder Rossi said. "We've been told that there are NFL teams interested in Mitch and another year to showcase himself would benefit him in that pursuit."

The younger Rossi later confirmed the news on Twitter, saying he needed one more season in the Scarlet and Gray before taking his shot at the pros.

Become A Buckeye Sports Bulletin VIP

Now is the time for loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers to show their support through our VIP subscription program.

As most of you know, the newspaper business is challenging in the best of times and is especially so these days. BSB is now facing more challenges with recent events that have tested the economy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Elite Donors: Marshall Beck, Sarasota, Fla.; B2, Reston, Va.; Phillip Blue, Prior Lake, Minn.; Fredrick Bradshaw, Columbus; In memory of Norwin Brovitz, Oakmont, Pa.; Brian Bucher, Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.; Iris Cremean, Walbridge, Ohio; Richard Dunkelberger, Groveport, Ohio; Thomas E. Farish, Port St. Lucie, Fla.; Fred Fingerhut, Phoenix; Sander Flaum, New York; Chalk Fry DDS, Sarasota, Fla.; Laura Granich, Columbus; Paul E. Hackett, The Villages, Fla.; James Hamilton, Murrysville, Pa.; Mike Heimann, Ashland, Ohio; Curtis High, Beavercreek, Ohio; Freddie and Joe Huber, Walpole, Mass.; Carl R. Jeffery DDS, Van Wert, Ohio; Bill Judy, Dublin, Ohio; Frank Klaus, Pepper Pike, Ohio; Fred Krisch, Cleveland; Paul Lappert, Columbus; Larry Larson, Ladera Ranch, Calif.; Dan Laville, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Alan Lord, Reynoldsburg, Ohio; Dr. Jonathan Lucas, Portsmouth, Ohio; Allen McMillin Jr., Logan, Ohio; Mike from Marietta, Ga.; Col. George R. Nelson, New Albany, Ohio; OSU-65Bob, Mishawaka, Ind.; Jim Reichler, Crestone, Colo.; The Russell Group United, Columbus; Charlie Shaffer, Edison, Ohio; Bill Short, Sparta, Ohio; Mark Skinner, Columbus; James Thomas, The Villages, Fla.; Chuck Underwood, Miamisburg, Ohio; Dan van Blaricom, Dublin, Ohio; Beth Wachsman, Columbus; Elliott S. Wettstein, Waverly, Ohio; J.D. Wientjes, Peoria, Ill.; David J. Young, Supply, N.C.; Anonymous, Council Bluffs, Iowa; Anonymous, Girard, Ohio; Anonymous, Lancaster, Ohio; Anonymous, Lewisburg, WVa.

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

With Jeremy Ruckert heading to the NFL draft, Rossi will be the most experienced tight end on the Ohio State roster next season. He played 143 snaps behind Ruckert and Cade Stover, who is expected to return to the defense in 2022 to play linebacker or Jim Knowles' "Leo" position.

Ruggles made Columbus his new home in 2021 after transferring to Ohio State from North Carolina, where he connected on 19 of 27 field goals and all 48 extra points in four seasons with the Tar Heels.

At Ohio State, Ruggles won the starting job over redshirt freshman Jake Seibert and senior Dominic DiMaccio and went on to have an impressive season for the Buckeyes. He finished the year 20 of 21 on field goals and hit all 74 extra-point attempts. He had a pair of games with four field goals against Nebraska and Penn State and hit the game-winner in the Rose Bowl, lifting his team over Utah, 48-45.

Ruggles gives Ohio State some continuity at special teams. Long snapper Bradley Robinson will also return, and punter Jesse Mirco will be back for Ohio State next year.

Ohio State Adds Defensive Staffers

Ohio State has added a trio of defensive assistants to its support staff, including a pair from Oklahoma State who previously worked under Knowles. Leading the way, Duke co-DC and safeties coach Matt Guerrieri will work in an advisory role in Columbus under Knowles, whom he worked with for several years at Duke.

A longtime Duke assistant who joined the staff first as a graduate assistant in



We're Hiring!
Component Assembly

1ST & 3RD Shift Rates Starting at \$18/hr
Located in Canal Winchester, OH
Great Benefits!

Please call 614-707-5934
or email hiring@straitandlamp.com

2012, Guerrieri worked under Knowles from 2012-17. He was promoted to a full-time staffer role in 2015 and moved into the co-DC role after Knowles' departure to Oklahoma State, also serving as the defensive recruiting coordinator from 2017-20.

Guerrieri is credited with the development of three-time All-America safety Jeremy Cash – an Ohio State transfer – and two-time all-ACC safety DeVon Edwards, as well as many others. The Blue Devils have produced a pair of drafted defensive backs during his time as well in Ross Cockrell and Michael Carter II.

An American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) FBS Assistant Coach of the Year finalist in 2020, Guerrieri helped to create some of the greatest defenses in program history with Knowles, including a 2017 group that allowed just 20.2 points per game, Duke's lowest since 1977.

Oklahoma State pair Michael Hunter and Koy McFarland are expected to join Ohio State's staff in unspecified off-the-field roles as well.

Hunter played collegiately at Indiana and Oklahoma State and served in key roles for both programs. McFarland is the son of longtime college assistant coach Robert McFarland and played at Arkansas-Monticello before joining the Cowboys' staff as a graduate assistant.

McFarland took over the Oklahoma State linebacker room after Knowles departed for Ohio State before Oklahoma State's Fiesta Bowl appearance against Notre Dame, earning praise from head coach Mike Gundy for his exceptional coaching performance.

Big Ten Releases New 2022 Schedule

The Big Ten announced a revised 2022 conference schedule Jan. 12, impacting seven of Ohio State's nine conference games this upcoming season.

To begin conference play, the Buckeyes will host Wisconsin on Sept. 24 and Rutgers on Oct. 1, meaning Ohio State will stay home for the first five weeks of the season. The Buckeyes were originally set to travel to Michigan State and Penn State back-to-back in weeks four and five.

Ohio State will then hit the road to face Michigan State on Oct. 8 before an off week Oct. 15. The Buckeyes will return home to face Iowa on Oct. 22 then take the road for Penn State on Oct. 29 and Northwestern on Nov. 5.

The Buckeyes will return home to play Indiana on Nov. 12, travel to Maryland on Nov. 19 and close the regular season at home against Michigan on Nov. 26. The Big Ten Championship Game is scheduled for Dec. 3.

There are no changes in the first three

Podcast Back To Weekly Schedule

The BSB podcast, hosted by associate editors Wyatt Crosher and Patrick Mayhorn, with occasional guest spots from Chase Brown and Braden Moles, publishes every Friday morning, covering the stories of the week in Ohio State athletics.

The show is free for everyone. To find it, go to your favorite podcast app or website and type in "Buckeye Sports

Recruiting Wrap-Up Coming Feb. 8

Buckeye Sports Bulletin's traditional Recruiting Wrap-Up is scheduled to be mailed on Feb. 8, as we continue on our winter biweekly publishing schedule. Will there be any recruiting intrigue as we approach the traditional National Signing Day? There is no need to wait until the next print issue to find out. The BSB staff will be posting all the latest recruiting news, as well as news of the men's and women's basketball teams, the hockey and wrestling teams and any other news of the day as it happens at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers.

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

Please note that recent developments with the mail service have us concerned about delivery time for BSB. 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.

If you are a current subscriber and have been unable to access all features on the site, please give us a call at (614) 486-2202 and we will help you gain access.

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.

weeks of the season with Ohio State set to host Notre Dame (Sept. 3), Arkansas State (Sept. 10) and Toledo (Sept. 17).

Former K/DB Don Sutherin Dies At 85

Former Ohio State kicker and defensive back Don Sutherin, who made a game-winning 34-yard field goal for the Buckeyes in the 1958 Rose Bowl win over Oregon, passed away at Mercy Hospital in Canton, Ohio on Jan. 11. He was 85-years old.

It's not stretching the truth to say that Sutherin did it all for Ohio State from 1955-57. He was a standout cornerback while also taking over halfback, punter and placekicker duties. For good measure, he also returned punts. Sutherin played in all 60 minutes of the Buckeyes' 17-0 win over Michigan in 1955.

Sutherin's most memorable moment as a Buckeye was his game-winning kick in Ohio State's 10-7 win over the Ducks in Pasadena, Calif., which led to a national championship for the Scarlet and Gray. The Buckeyes finished that season with a 9-1 record and ended the year ranked No. 1 in the UPI coaches poll.

The New York Giants selected him in the eighth round of the 1958 NFL draft, but he abruptly left America to play football in Canada. Sutherin won four Grey Cups with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and Ottawa Rough Riders. He was a three-time CFL All-Star and six-time CFL East All-Star. Sutherin played 12 seasons in the Canadian league and became a coach for more than two decades, winning three more Grey Cups as an assistant. He was

inducted into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame in 1992.

Heyward, Linsley Named NFL All-Pros

Former Ohio State defensive lineman Cameron Heyward and former center Corey Linsley earned Associated Press NFL All-Pro selections for the 2021-22 season. Heyward was named to the first team while Linsley claimed second-team honors.

Heyward earned his third first-team All-Pro selection in the last five years. His previous first-team awards came in 2017 and 2019, with a second-team placement after last season. The Steelers defensive lineman recorded a career-high 89 tackles with 10 sacks, 15 tackles for loss, nine pass deflections, one interception, one forced fumble and a fumble recovery in 2021.

Linsley earned second-team honors on the heels of becoming a first-team All-

Pro in 2020. He started all 16 games for the Los Angeles Chargers this season. According to Pro Football Focus, Linsley is the second-best center behind Creed Humphrey of the Kansas City Chiefs.

Heyward and Linsley were the only former Buckeyes to make an All-Pro team. Defensive end Nick Bosa received five votes while edge rusher Joey Bosa, cornerback Marshon Lattimore and punter Cameron Johnston received one vote.

Ohio State had several former players in the NFL playoffs this season: Heyward and Dwayne Haskins (Steelers); Nick Bosa and Trey Sermon (49ers); Sam Hubbard, Eli Apple, Vonn Bell, Joe Burrow, Michael Jordan, Isaiah Prince and Billy Price (Bengals); Elliott, Noah Brown and Malik Hooker (Cowboys); Jordan Fuller (Rams); Shaun Wade (Patriots); and Josh Myers (Packers).



Hank's
TEXAS BBQ
EST. 2020

*Clintonville's
Smokin' New Spot*

**Slow-Smoked
Southern Goodness!**

Texas style BBQ.

- full menu
- full bar and service
- late night happy hour
- catering & events

2941 N. High Street
(614) 972-6020
hankstexasstylebbq.com

Mon: Closed
Tues - Thurs: 11:30 am - 10 pm
Fri - Sat: 11:30 am - 11 pm
Sun: 11:30 am - 9 pm



BUZZER TRIVIA
Wednesdays 8PM
FREE TO PLAY! WIN PRIZES

OSU Not Ready To Consider Season Lost For Sueing

Continued From Page 1

"We don't take winning for granted, because we know how hard it is to get it in the Big Ten," senior point guard Jamari Wheeler said after Ohio State toppled his former team, those Nittany Lions. "The Big Ten is the best league, so every win is huge. Ugly wins, hard wins, pretty wins, we just have to do whatever it takes to get the win because, at the end of the day, that's all we care about. If we get the win, we're satisfied."

It's why Holtmann, who tries the best he can to stay levelheaded and low-stress for the sake of his own health, is more than happy with close wins.

"Look at my hair," Holtmann joked Jan. 16. "We've had a lot of close games, but we've pulled out a lot of close games. And I think our guys have played with necessary poise. I'm really pleased with how we closed regulation – gave ourselves a chance, didn't do foolish things, gave ourselves a chance. But this business will wear you out, that's for sure. But we got a great group of guys."

But it's also why Ohio State's coaching staff seems entirely keen on getting Sueing back before the homestretch. The Buckeyes may hold a 12-4 record overall (5-2 in Big Ten play), but every statement a coach or player makes about the team's potential is couched still in the importance of getting fully healthy. For all its good – and bad, in blow-out losses to Indiana and Wisconsin – Ohio State doesn't feel that it has yet showcased

exactly what kind of team it can be, or even what it was supposed to be with a healthy Sueing in tow.

The timeline for a return shrinks with each passing game, but Holtmann does believe that Sueing and the lesser-used Towns will be able to return to play for Ohio State this season sooner than later. And though both players have the option to return for the 2022-23 season if they so choose, Ohio State isn't ready to punt on this season – even as another previously set goal return date (late January) rapidly approaches for Sueing without significant movement on that front.

"I would expect both of those guys back this season," Holtmann said. "They're both older college players so would they want to stay another year in college I think is the question. Both guys might consider going into their professional life."

"Justice is eligible for the additional COVID year, and that will be a conversation that he and I have. He's taking it one step at a time, evaluating how he feels. He's getting closer, close to returning to practice. This is probably the most I've been disappointed for a kid in maybe 20 years of coaching. Justice is such a good player. I think he's not yet reached his ceiling as a player, and he's so important for our team. I'm optimistic, but I think he's focused on taking it one step at a time right now. We'll check back in with him after the season (about his plans moving forward) and if it's best for him, we'd love to have



SONNY BROCKWAY

FILLING IN — Jimmy Sotos (1) has stepped up in place of Meechie Johnson Jr., who has been injured and unavailable for the Buckeyes since suffering a facial injury in practice prior to Ohio State's Jan. 16 matchup with Penn State.

him back, but he has to feel like it's right.

"Both guys want to try to play if they can this year. If we get closer to the end of the year and it looks like one of them can't return, doesn't feel like themselves and we need to shut it down, then we'll have that conversation. But given COVID and all that, if guys want to play, I'm certainly going to be open to that. We're already down considerable numbers right now with Meechie (Johnson Jr.) being out, and those are three important guys for us."

That last point about the absence of sophomore point guard Johnson is a much newer development than other injury issues Ohio State has faced this season. He suffered a facial injury in a practice collision prior to Ohio State's matchup with Penn State on Jan. 16 and is considered day-to-day until he can par-

ticipate in a full practice.

Defense The Focus For Streaky Buckeyes

Injuries or not, Ohio State is still working to develop its identity as a team, and that starts and ends with defense for Holtmann and his staff. The Buckeyes have not lacked for offense in either of the last two seasons – Ohio State is 16th in adjusted offensive efficiency and checked in at No. 4 a year ago – but have found frequent struggles defensively, where they check in at No. 62 in that same category.

Holtmann's concern on that front has taken hold primarily since the team's return to play on Jan. 2. The Buckeyes allowed 67.5 points per game in their 10 contests before that layoff and are up to 73.4 points allowed

The Ohio State University Alumni Association

GUIDE YOUR CAREER

3,200+

active employers working with Alumni Career Connection

4,500+

AlumniFire members ready to network

The Buckeye Network reaches **9,000+** active members on LinkedIn

BOND WITH FELLOW BUCKEYES

Join one of **121** Regional Clubs

Connect with one of **48** Societies supporting your interests



Attend special events—**168** hosted in FY16

PAY FORWARD



More than **150** volunteer projects done by Buckeyes in 2016

TRAVEL THE WORLD

Join one of **30+** trips with Alumni Tours



GET SOCIAL

Follow along to stay up to date with The Ohio State University Alumni Association



32,515 Likes



34,300 Followers

540,000+ alumni across the globe



YOU'RE A BUCKEYE FOR LIFE



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Join Us!

\$100/Year 614 326-3300
buckeyeboosters.com

...as we support the Buckeyes on the road and more!

Name

Address

City State Zip

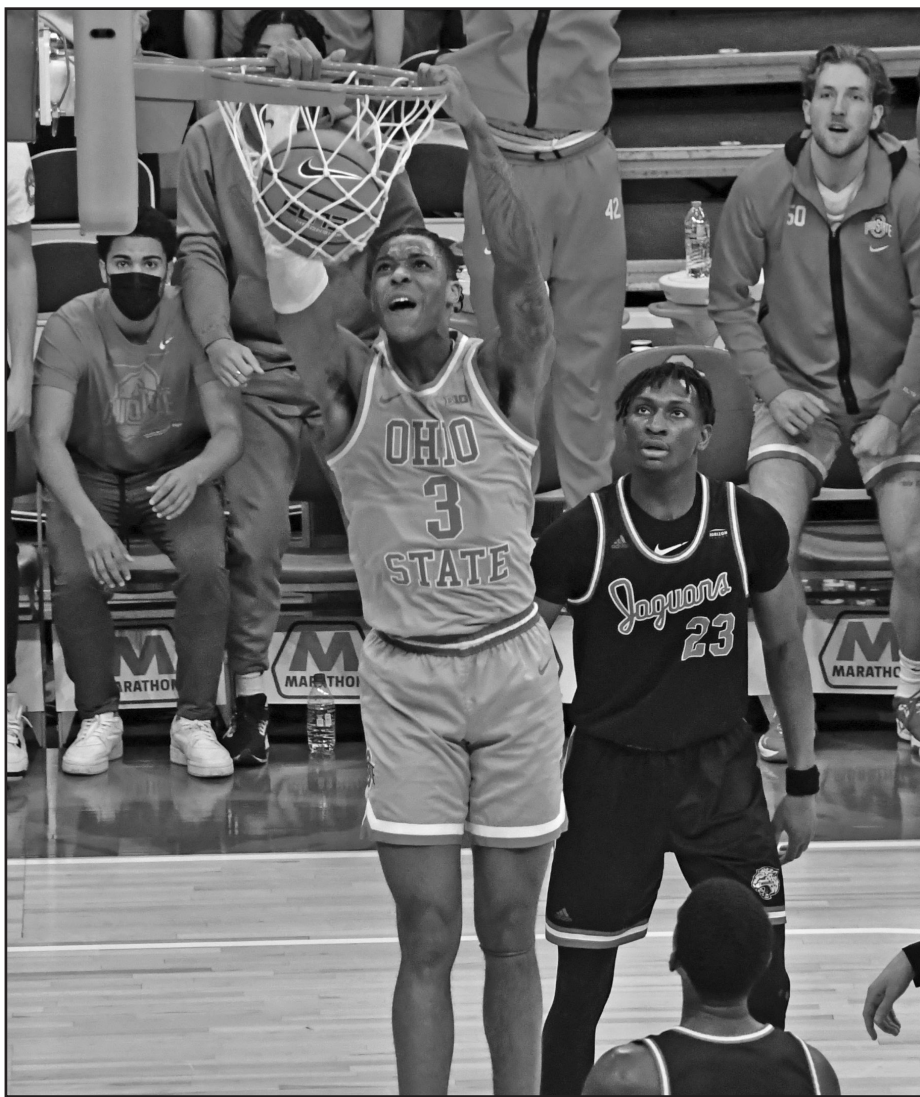
Mail check to:
Buckeye Boosters, 921 Chatham Ln., #301F, Columbus, OH 43221

Kick-Off Dinner

Travel to Away Football Games

Annual Celebrity Golf Outing

Meeting with Coaches, at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center



SONNY BROCKWAY

DEFENSIVE SPARK — Sophomore winger Eugene Brown III (3) was critical in Ohio State's win over Penn State, contributing big minutes in the second half to help slow the Nittany Lions' guards. He scored a career-high 14 points against IUPUI a game later and earned praise from his teammates for his energy.

in January, excluding a blowout of IUPUI – which ranks as the worst teams in Division I in KenPom at No. 358.

“We lost a little momentum,” Holtmann said. “This group has to continue to recommit on that end because we can't overwhelm you with defensive ability across the board. At times our offense can be really, really good, but we can't overwhelm you.”

“We've had some really poor (defensive games). (I'm not worried about offense). The biggest thing we've got to be able to do is to grow in our defensive effort.”

The players have picked up on it too. After a 78-68 loss to Wisconsin on Jan. 13 that was not as close as the final score indicates, junior forward E.J. Liddell said that the team's effort has to be better, which center Zed Key echoed a day later.

“Talking with the coaches, we watched film on (the loss to) Wisconsin and overall, just the effort, we just need to pick it up,” Key said. “Especially on the road. It's hard to win big games on the road because you're not home. Home-court advantage is a real thing. Fans backing you, you go on a run, fans screaming. I think we've just got to find ourselves on the road and just be able to play harder because that's what it takes to win on the road.”

Individual efforts have offered Ohio State reasons for optimism, as did a lockdown performance against Penn State. Sophomore guard Eugene Brown III's insertion

to the rotation has yielded plenty of praise and could earn him a more significant role down the stretch. He played only 18 minutes against the Nittany Lions but helped to slow down guard Jalen Pickett, and his effort and versatility against IUPUI helped to spark the Buckeyes in the second half. He scored a career-high 14 points against the Jaguars.

“Gene's very versatile,” graduate guard Jimmy Sotos said of the 6-6 Brown. “He can guard positions one through five. He's very active on offense, cutting, rebounding, keeping possessions alive. He just makes stuff happen out there. Whenever Gene's in, he's always bringing energy, giving his full effort, and he just makes stuff happen out there.”

Other players are still working on proving their defensive chops, though. Senior guard Cedric Russell, despite a 51.9 percent hit rate from three-point range through Jan. 24, has seen his playing time dwindle in Big Ten play because of questions about his defensive ability.

“Cedric has to continue to be really committed defensively to how we play,” Holtmann said. “He has to really commit himself on that end. He has to be ready when his number is called, and I thought he had good aggressiveness against IUPUI, a good pop to him. He's played well in stretches of important weeks. In our win against Wisconsin, he was critical and obviously, everyone knows about the Duke game. Those two games he was really important for us.”

Shooting Out Of A Slump

Holtmann may not yet be concerned about his team's offensive production or shooting – the Buckeyes are averaging 75.1 points per game and shooting 38.0 percent from deep as a team – but a Russell spark of scoring could prove more valuable if sharpshooter Justin Ahrens can't find his way out of a recent shooting slump.

Since Dec. 11, Ahrens is shooting just 21.2 percent from deep on 4.7 attempts per contest, good for 3.9 points in 24.9 minutes per game. He's made more than one shot from deep in just one of Ohio State's last seven games, when he went 2 for 6 against Indiana. He hasn't seen the free-throw line since the Nebraska game and has more fouls (1.9) per game than made shots (1.1).

Despite his struggles, Holtmann has affirmed his confidence in Ahrens' ability to pull out of the slump and provide a valuable threat from outside for the Buckeyes.

“Justin has to just cut loose and play, play with a little more juice and confidence,” Holtmann said. “He's overthinking it a little bit because he's a tremendous shooter. Tremendous. I really don't worry about him at all. I think he's going to hit his stride. The least of my concerns is Justin Ahrens' shooting.”

“He's shot it well in practice. Now, in practice, it's like league play. They don't leave him a whole lot, but he's still shot it really well.”

“We've maybe got to find some ways to free him up. I do still think he was getting his legs back these first couple of games. I don't worry about him, though. He'll bounce back. He'll find openings and find opportunities.”

For Ahrens, a Big Ten shooting slump is nothing new. The senior from Versailles, Ohio, shot 22.7 percent from deep in the last nine games of the season last year and made only two attempts in nine tries in the final

seven games of his sophomore season after shooting nearly 44 percent on 2.5 attempts per game in his first 19 games.

But Ahrens never really emerged from his previous two cold stretches. In hopes of keeping him away from a similar fate this season, Ohio State is sticking to him as a member of the starting lineup and preaching the importance of staying confident.

“I said, ‘Think back on your career and when you've been your best or you've shot great or played well. How many of those times were you in a frustrated state? Were you upset? Were you hanging your head?’ ” assistant coach Ryan Pedon said of Ahrens. “Hopefully giving him some perspective.”

“Great shooters have short memories. He's got a proven track record. We've got a lot of confidence in Justin and how he'll respond to a couple of games where he's maybe not shooting as well as he's accustomed to.”

Teammates are rallying around him too. Against IUPUI, after four shots went begging, he finally knocked down his fifth try. Afterward, when asked if they have any hesitation in passing him the ball, Russell and Sotos insisted there are no such concerns.

“It's the same as it always has been,” Russell said. “The best way out of a slump is to keep shooting. The whole world knows he can shoot the ball. He just needs to keep shooting.”

“I have no hesitation to pass him the ball. I've seen him make it. He just needs to keep shooting.”

And as for that shot itself against the Jaguars, though it came with just 6:23 left in a blowout, the Buckeyes are hoping that shot could be the one to guide him back into form.

“All it takes is one,” Sotos said, flashing a big grin afterward when asked if he felt that shot could be the one. “Just needs one.”



SONNY BROCKWAY

NOT HIS MONTH — Senior guard Justin Ahrens (10) has shot only 21.2 percent from deep since Dec. 11 and is scoring only 3.9 points per contest in that span. His teammates and coaches have reinforced their belief in him and encouraged him to continue shooting.

Frye's Role Under Kelly Could Be Blueprint

Continued From Page 1

"If you give your players something to hang their hats on, they will perform. If they can run the offense with any scenario they may face, you will be successful in running the ball. If they have all the answers to the problems the defense may give them, they will be good.

"With our inside zone play, we get so much practice time and so many reps that we can handle all the other scenarios that come about. Instead of trying to out-scheme your opponent, put your players in an environment where they can be successful because they understand exactly what they have to do."

Kelly's wager on simplicity paid off. He coordinated one of the nation's best offenses in 2007 and 2008 before taking over the head job in 2009, and he helped to launch Oregon into the national conversation, leading it to a 46-7 record, two Rose Bowl berths (one win), a Fiesta Bowl win and within just inches between Michael Dyer's knee and the luscious Glendale turf from a national title in 2010.

Oregon fielded the No. 8, 1, 3 and 2 offenses in points per game, and No. 6, 4, 5 and 3 rushing attacks in yards per contest – only ever trailing two non-triple option offenses in 2009/2010 Nevada and 2009 TCU. The Ducks were flashy, they were fast, and they won a whole lot of games.

"Our offensive line leads the country in yards per carry and rushing touchdowns, and we only run four plays in the running game," Kelly said back in 2009. "The offensive line plays with conviction. If you can keep it simple for the players in the offensive line so they have confidence going into a game, you have an opportunity to win the game. The five offensive linemen are the key to your football team.

"The system we run helps our linemen. The key is to make sure they know what they're doing."

In so doing, they inspired an entire new generation of offensive scheme. The best of football will always be adopted elsewhere, and for Kelly's blur offense, it didn't take long for the powers that be, and for every other program, to pick up what was happening in Eugene.

But when Kelly returned to the sport, it had changed. So he changed too. UCLA got bigger, added pull blocks and new concepts to its rushing attack and went away from the speed that he deployed at Oregon. He fired back in 2019 when asked why UCLA's offense looked so different in his first season than those Oregon units had.

"Oregon was a long time ago," Kelly said. "It's totally two different operations. Again, another weird view that (at UCLA) we're going to run what we did at Oregon. That was 2012.

"I don't look back at our Oregon offense and study that tape and say, 'Hey, we should do that here.' I think we're always trying to figure out what our guys here do well and try to accentuate that, and again, it's consistency, because we have done it well. It's a consistency thing, not a, 'Hey, let's go find another offense.'"

What UCLA could do well and what the

Gap Blocking vs. Zone Blocking

As background information for this article, it bears defining the differences between gap blocking and zone running, as they will be referred to throughout by their name, and not by any further explanation. Via YouthFootballOnline:

"A zone scheme is based around the idea that the line will be responsible for the gap to the side the play is going. They are not blocking a man but an area. This means that they will run their path and deal with any defender that shows up. The idea with this scheme is for the offensive linemen to stay attached to the defender that is in their zone. They do not need a physically dominant block, instead they need to ensure that they cover the defender up and create a clean read for the running back.

"The other type of blocking scheme is a gap blocking scheme. A gap scheme

uses leverage to give the offensive linemen an advantage over physically superior defensive linemen. In a gap scheme the offensive linemen on the play side will block down, or away from the gap where the runner is going. This will leave one defender unaccounted for outside of the gap where the ball is going. The offense will pull a lineman from the back side of the play to block this defender out. The result is a hole that develops between the pulling offensive lineman and the down blocks that should combine to form a wall."

Zone plays almost always have "zone" in the name, while gap can be referred to colloquially as "pin and pull" or just with the existence of pulling linemen. For a reference point, Ohio State has been almost exclusively a zone blocking team for years, but Jim Tressel and Jim Bollman combined for more of a gap-based scheme.

rest of the nation was doing well differed from Kelly's background as an option- and zone-heavy coach. The Bruins were without mashing offensive linemen who could dominate those simple zone blocks consistently, and his system was without the run-game diversity to keep opponents from locking in on his core concepts and overwhelming those struggling linemen.

To solve both problems in one swoop, Kelly looked to a Boston College program that had dominated on the ground with unique power-running schemes in recent seasons and a program that he had plenty of connections with, from a friendship with then-head coach Steve Addazio to several assistants on Addazio's staff from the Kelly tree – Day being chief among them.

Kelly tabbed Frye, then the BC offensive line coach and run game coordinator, for essentially the same role in Westwood. He was tasked with installing the gap running scheme that Boston College had leaned on since 2013, when Frye facilitated a 2,177-yard rushing season for tailback Andre Williams. He wanted to bulk up his rushing attack and make it more capable of bullying defenses that had moved to lighter personnel in response to those lightning-fast offenses that Kelly created, and he wanted a coach who believed fully in that.

Frye certainly fit the bill and cuts the profile not quite as an old-school technician, but as a coach who truly believes in power, hard-nosed football as a way to win games.

"If you really have presence, then Zoe Rose Frye, my 9-year-old daughter, needs to be sitting up in her seat saying, 'They're going to run the ball right there,'" Frye said before the 2021 season of the importance for a line to establish itself physically. "And we don't care, we just do it. We get the job done.

"It's about blocking and tackling. Whatever plays we call, we have to be able to execute them and block them, and then those guys behind us can run. That's not going to

change. That's in Chip Kelly's DNA. We're running the ball."

The shift came as a surprise to both UCLA and the college football world at large, but it didn't come about slowly. From the start, UCLA has offered a far more powerful, far more diverse rushing attack than the one that Kelly used in Oregon. The Bruins pull blockers, they run from the pistol and under center with confidence, and they earn yardage by winning blocks up front just as much as they misdirect defenses.

"That's been kind of the fan neurosis for the last four years in the UCLA community because going in, back in 2018, they thought that we'd be getting the 'blur,'" Chris Osgood of Bruin Report Online told BSB. "And really, from day one at UCLA, it's been this very different approach. It's been tight end-heavy and always amorphous.

"The theory is that when Kelly came back to college, he said things like, 'When I was at Oregon, we were spread and had shiny helmets and now everybody's spread and has shiny helmets.' He's going contrarian. All the defenses are geared for spread. Everybody's got a full-time nickel these days. So Kelly is going with two tight ends. He's saying, 'Let's create run gaps, more run gaps than spread defenses are used to and make cornerbacks tackle.' It's a pendulum swing with him."

As his bet on simplicity paid off, Kelly's lean away from the beast that he had created worked in building a dominant rushing attack. Under Frye's guidance, UCLA ranked 86th in rushing yards per game in 2018, 81st in 2019, 12th in 2020 and 14th in 2021, making a huge jump in production as Frye and Kelly worked their recruits into the system.

Frye's new ideas meshed brilliantly with Kelly's zone looks, and they reworked the blur into something much more versatile, while returning some of those core looks to Kelly's original plans, like the implementation of inside zone as a physical staple run, rather than one hunting big gains.

"The inside zone play is a great equalizer," Kelly said. "We are double-teaming a defensive lineman with a mathematical idea behind it. We have four legs and he has two legs, so we win. The zone play can be run against multiple looks by the defense. You can draw this play up and run it against five different defenses.

"The inside zone play is our 'go to work' play. It has become our signature play. We want to get off the ball and be a physical, downhill-running football team. This is not a finesse play. We teach our offensive linemen a block we call the bust block. The idea is to bust their sternums up against their spines on every play. We want to come off the ball, create a double-team, knock the crap out of the defenders and deposit him in the linebacker's lap.

"This is physical football. The offensive linemen play with confidence because they know they have help from their teammates in their blocking scheme."

Now, the Buckeyes are ready to make the same move. Though Day and his new assistant have yet to speak publicly on the move, the intentions for a team that leaned almost entirely on inside and outside zone in 2021 and suffered for it against the best rushing defenses on its schedule are clear.

In Frye, the Buckeyes get a palate cleanser. He's one of the finest gap scheme minds in the sport, as evidenced by the trust that both Kelly and Day put in him, but he's also spent four seasons under the Godfather of modern zone running. At UCLA, though Kelly called the plays, Frye played a critical role in the design and deployment of the Bruin rushing attack and will likely serve a similar role under Day in Columbus.

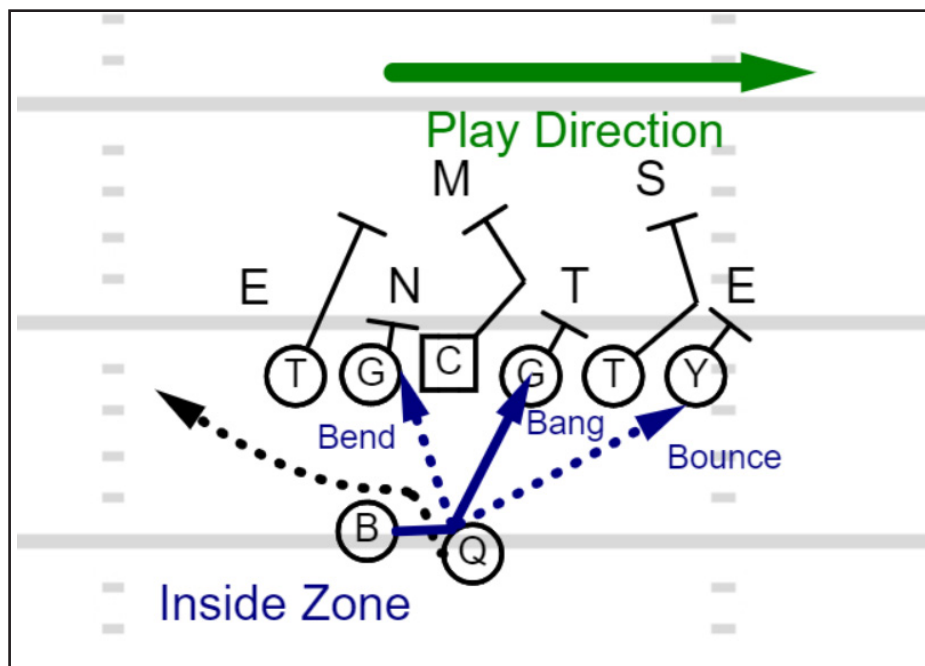
"I think (Frye) was very involved," Osgood explained of the situation at UCLA. "Kelly is definitely the offensive coordinator in reality and Frye was the offensive coordinator in title as well as the O-line coach, but there are plenty of things that we could trace through from Frye's Boston College time that came into the UCLA offense. And the other thing that Kelly does is he's extremely collaborative with his coaches.

"He basically calls the game during the week in how he builds out his play-call sheet. He doesn't script by series. There isn't an opening-game script, and he doesn't organize his playbook by play types. He organizes his play-calling sheet by situation. He has got a first-and-10 bucket, he has drive openers, sudden change plays, third-and-short, all your different down-and-distance buckets, red zone, all of it. And when Chip is calling a game, he's just using a look-up table for each circumstance, and the whole staff builds that during the week. Frye has been involved in that quite a bit."

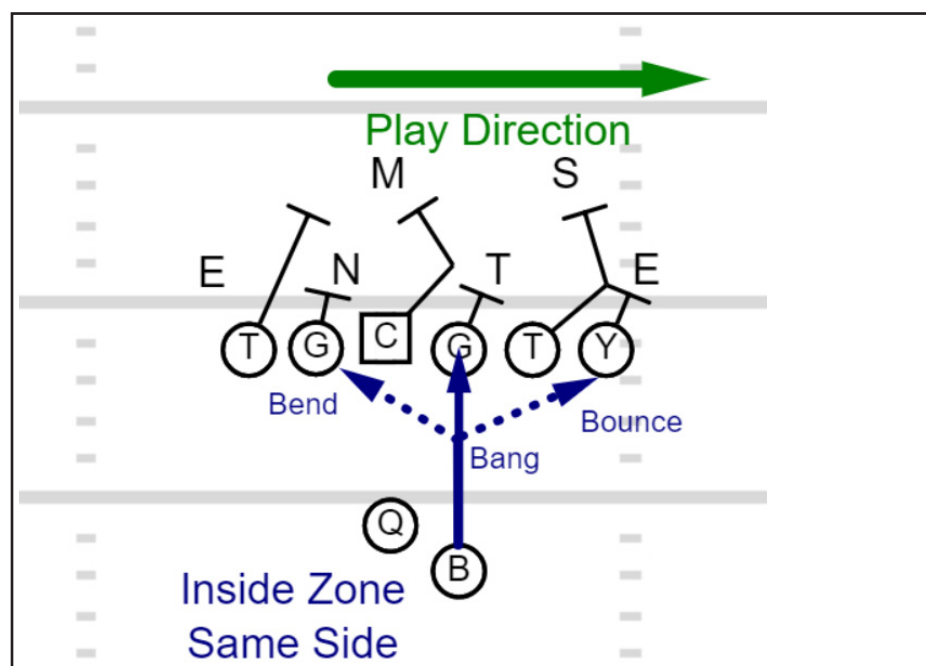
If Frye succeeds in his new task, Ohio State's rushing attack could look quite a bit like that which UCLA trotted out in the last two seasons. What does that entail?

UCLA's Essentials

Frye might be a change of pace, but he's not going to usher in a wholesale change in what Ohio State does in the rushing game. UCLA still used inside zone as its base play and zone looks as a large chunk



Via BruinsReportOnline



Via BruinsReportOnline

of its offense under Frye's guidance. The Bruins relied on midline zone (under center or pistol's answer to inside zone) and wide zone (under center or pistol's answer to outside zone) as staples as well, using that quartet as the primary looks in both 2020 and 2021.

That's not different from what Ohio State has been doing under Kevin Wilson's guidance for years. Like Kelly, he's a zone disciple and he's quite comfortable leaning on it for base looks.

But UCLA did spice up those looks a bit and added some similar looking counters to misdirection defenses. The most important two to know are called "same side inside zone" and "belly" concepts.

The former is very simple. It's blocked the same way as standard inside zone, but rather than following the direction of the offensive line's blocking, the running back cuts against it, running to the same side of the formation that he lined up on prior to the snap.

"Same-side refers to the running back aiming for the same side of the formation as his pre-snap position (still behind an offensive guard), as opposed to the conventional inside zone where he crosses the formation to get the ball," Osgood wrote in 2020. "This altered straight line RB path hits a tad quicker. The back takes an initial step backward to plant for hand-off, while the quarterback receives the snap and stretches to make the ball available quickly.

"The offensive line doesn't really care a whole lot where the running back is coming from, they just need to know the play direction. This remix of core UCLA competencies is basically free or very cheap (where practice time is the currency) for the offense, while looking like something completely new and practice-time expensive to opposing defenses."

Belly works similarly but comes from the gap blocking family. UCLA plucked it from the Coastal Carolina playbook, though it's been around within offenses

for decades, going back even to the days of Woody Hayes, who deployed "outside belly" concepts under the "26 Power" moniker.

Like on inside zone, belly leaves the defensive end on the side of the running back unblocked to start the play, but rather than blocking him with a tight end or pulling him away from the play with a quarterback option keeper threat, belly pulls an interior player – either the center or play-side guard – out to take care of him, while the halfback aims for the gap that puller vacates.

What's Headed To OSU?

It's the golden question, and one that won't really have an answer until the Buckeyes take the field. Ohio State's personnel is very different from UCLA's and could struggle with some of these new looks that require elite agility up front. A move away from the four-tackle set could help with that, but it is a new way of doing things for the Buckeyes, and it could take time to add in full. According to Osgood, when UCLA was without the blockers for gap schemes in 2019, it just didn't use them.

"There was one time that the offense, in a previous season, had kind of gone totally away from pin and pull and had been just purely zone. I think that was 2019. And we asked Kelly in a press conference, 'What happened? Where did the gap scheme go?' and he basically said, 'Oh, well these linemen I have right now, they're really good zone blockers.' And I think that was code for 'They can't pull. They're too slow.' He was trying to put a positive spin on it because I don't know what a good zone blocker is," Osgood joked.

A repeat of that in 2022 is unlikely, but full-scale implementation of Frye's gap looks may be a similarly long shot in year one. He's a staunch believer in training linemen fully to fit the mold of the offense, and that build does require patience and commitment from the strength and conditioning department.

"I have four kids, so it's like my fourth kid – he says some sayings sometimes, and me and my wife look at each other like, 'Where the heck did that come from? Has he seen the three older ones do it?' " Frye said. "You put that money in the bank, and

then at some point the dividends are going to come back because you're investing in the right stuff."

The good news for the Buckeyes is that that's just about the only hurdle. There may have been immediate shudders at the prospect of a Kelly disciple directing the Buckeye rushing attack given his propensity for quarterback keepers at Oregon and Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud's aversion to that aspect of the game, but Kelly has never actually been a fan of quarterbacks keeping the ball and vastly prefers them as a decoy above anything else.

"This may sound like a contradiction, but we do not read anything," Kelly said of his offense. "When you read, you become uncertain. We want the ball in the running backs' hands. We do not want the quarterback carrying the ball. The option can put the ball in his hands, but the defense can force it out of his hands. We want the quarterback to give the ball unless he cannot."

Frye took that a step further, as the vast majority of UCLA's plays that looked like options were actually predetermined.

"My theory with (UCLA starting quarterback) Dorian Thompson-Robinson in the UCLA offense is that there's really not a whole lot of reading going on," Osgood explained. "It looks really locked in most of the time. I think that's more of a personnel thing than an offensive philosophy thing, but there's a lot of head-scratchers where DTR has kept or given that made no sense, and the issue is that it was just locked in. DTR does a lot of his running damage on scrambles and a lot of those locked-in obvious keeper calls."

When the line is best optimized to what Frye wants, though, the Buckeye rushing attack could look quite similar to what UCLA has been doing since Kelly's return to the sport – confident in its core plays, but more than willing to branch out and dress up the offense to keep opponents from keying in on those core plays. For Day, who too often saw his inside and outside zone looks swallowed up by defenders who looked as though they had seen the play coming, that would be a major victory.

Frye Offers Gap Scheme Diversity

Justin Frye brings with him several unique gap looks that Ohio State fans should familiarize themselves with ahead of the season, namely buck sweep, duo, power and wide dart, all of which are explained in short below.

Buck sweep is a familiar friend to Buckeye fans and requires no explanation beyond a reference to Ezekiel Elliott's 85-yard touchdown run against Alabama in the 2015 Sugar Bowl. Take that play and add a second guard pulling in the play direction – that's buck sweep. Urban Meyer used it constantly.

Duo is the gap blocking answer to inside zone. Blockers look to double-team defenders, remove them from the play and move onto the next level as quickly as possible, while the running back trails them hard.

"Duo is a gap scheme run and is often called 'power without a puller,'" former Oregon lineman Geoff Schwartz wrote in 2020. "It's a downhill run with offensive linemen moving vertical up the field, attempting to build in as many dou-

ble teams as possible. The running back is downhill in the frontside A gap. Duo is run exclusively to the tight end so you can start building your double teams with him."

Power is another classic, which just sees the back aim for the outside hip of the play-side tackle, while the back-side guard pulls into that space to lead the way. Ohio State famously deployed this for years under the direction of Jim Bollman, using the "Dave" play call moniker. Frye almost always runs it to the side of the field with the tight end, tucking the running back and pulling guard inside of that tight end while he works to kick out the defensive end.

Lastly, **wide dart** works almost identically to Kelly's old zone read looks, with the quarterback reading the backside defensive end to hold him in place while the running back aims for the space between the guard and tackle on the other side of the play, but it pulls that back-side tackle into that space, making it a gap look, while the offensive line blocks away from the running back's direction rather than with him.

Ohio State's Loss To Michigan Leads 2021 Stories

By CHASE BROWN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After the COVID-riddled 2020, the Ohio State sports scene returned somewhat to normal in 2021, though the biggest story of the year was anything but normal. As it turned out, one of the other big stories happened on the very first day of the year.

The following are the top 10 Ohio State sports stories of 2021, as voted on by the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff.

1. Ohio State Takes First Loss To U-M Since 2011

The Ohio State-Michigan rivalry is often referred to as the greatest in sports. It doesn't have a name like the "Iron Bowl" or the "Red River Rivalry." Instead, the Big Ten rivals call their matchup "The Game."

The Wolverines led the all-time series 58-51-6 entering the 2021 season, dominating most of the early 1900s. The century culminated with countless gut-wrenching wins over John Cooper's talented rosters in the '90s.

When Jim Tressel was hired in 2001, Ohio State began to obsess over beating Michigan and integrated it into every piece of the program, from culture and practice habits to signs in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center (WHAC). It's safe to say the obsession worked, as the Buckeyes would go on to win 17 of the next 19 games in the ri-

valry, including eight straight victories from 2012-19.

But that all came to a halt on Nov. 27, in Ann Arbor. Much maligned for his lack of success against the Buckeyes, Wolverine coach Jim Harbaugh finally captured his first win in his sixth attempt, denying the Scarlet and Gray a fourth-consecutive Big Ten title and a potential third-consecutive trip to the College Football Playoff.

Michigan beat Ohio State in the same way the Buckeyes defeated the Wolverines many times since Tressel's arrival. U-M pounded the ball at every opportunity, grinding down OSU's defense across four quarters and driving down the field for scores on four separate occasions in the second half.

When the Buckeyes needed a stop, trailing 28-20 at the 14:05 mark of the fourth quarter and then 35-27 with only 4:45 remaining, the defense allowed touchdown drives of 66 and 63 yards. Michigan running back Hassan Haskins ran 28 times for 169 yards and a rivalry game-record five touchdowns, closing the door on Ohio State's comeback efforts.

"They stayed on schedule the whole time, and that was the recipe I'm sure they had to win the game," said head coach Ryan Day. "We weren't able to stop that, and that's very, very disappointing, especially when you know they're going to do it. We've



FILE PHOTO

STUNNER — Ohio State's first loss to Michigan since 2011 leads the way for Ohio State's biggest stories from 2021. Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh (left) made waves after the game with a shot across the bow at OSU's Ryan Day.

got to take a hard look and figure out why that was."

Michigan's dominant performance encapsulated by its rushing attack came on the heels of Day's comments from a video leaked in 2020 of the head coach telling his locker room he wanted to "hang 100 points" on the Wolverines.

Harbaugh didn't specifically mention the video or Day's comments in his postgame press conference, but he did say the win over Ohio State meant a lot for him and his program.

"The things you're thinking are the same I'm thinking," Harbaugh said. "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 after that, he reversed his decision to take the high road, ending his availability with a shot at Day.

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

2. Buckeyes Beat Clemson, Fall To Alabama In CFP Final

Since quarterback Justin Fields' potential game-winning touchdown pass was intercepted in the end zone of the 2019 College Football Playoff semifinal against Clemson, Ohio State had revenge on its mind.

The Buckeyes immediately put a sign

Let our family help your family.

GEICO®

LOCAL OFFICE



614-934-3131
105 N. Hamilton Road
Kyle Haskins
Gahanna Office



614-689-8140
1730 Stringtown Road
Joshua Haskins
Grove City Office

Some discounts, coverages, payment plans and features are not available in all states, in all GEICO companies, or in all situations. GEICO is a registered service mark of Government Employees Insurance Company, Washington, D.C. 20076; a Berkshire Hathaway Inc. subsidiary. 2018 GEICO

www.theredbricktapandgrill.com

292 E. Gates St.
Columbus
(614) 444-2742

HAPPY HOUR 3-8pm Mon-Fri
Half off all 30 drafts • Half off select appetizers
Craft bottle specials all day

100 Craft Beers!

New Food & Cocktail Menu

Newly Renovated Patio with Fire Pit

Handmade Pizzas & In-House Smoked Meats





in the weight room with a score from that game – a 29-23 win by the Tigers – as motivation to avenge the heartbreaking loss. On Jan. 1, they got their chance with a berth in the four-team tournament.

“Coming off that game, we just didn’t get over it,” Day said before the game. “It took time. The goal was to get back here. How we got back here is just amazing. The journey we have gone on as a program to get back here, to have a chance to play Clemson in this game, is amazing. You couldn’t make it up. Some of the best storytellers couldn’t have come up with this story, but here we are.”

The Buckeyes dealt with plenty of adversity in 2020, from the Big Ten initially postponing the season to their game against Illinois being canceled for positive COVID-19 tests within the program. They also had their games against Maryland and Michigan wiped out when those teams endured outbreaks.

“To me, our story is simply amazing,” Day said. “We weren’t even playing the season for a month, and then here we are right now. I think we have an opportunity to write one of the greatest stories on college football.”

Ohio State’s story continued with a monumental 49-28 victory against Clemson in the 2021 Sugar Bowl – the first win over the Tigers in program history. The Buckeyes slew their boogeyman, dominating their opponent in nearly every statistical category.

Fields threw for 385 yards and six touchdowns in a gutsy performance that involved him taking a brutal hit to the ribs from Clemson linebacker James Skalski. Running back Trey Sermon followed up his record-breaking performance against Northwestern in the Big Ten Championship Game with 31 carries, 193 yards and a score against the Tigers.

After defeating Dabo Swinney and company, the Buckeyes earned a national title matchup with Alabama, which beat Notre Dame 31-14 in the Rose Bowl semifinal.

The Crimson Tide were undefeated at 12-0 and led by four future first-round picks: quarterback Mac Jones, running back Najee Harris and wide receivers DeVonta Smith and Jaylen Waddle. Smith was the 2021 Heisman Trophy winner after recording 98 receptions, 1,511 yards and 17 touchdowns in Alabama’s 11 regular-season games.

When the national championship occurred on Jan. 11, Alabama’s talent proved too much for Ohio State to handle, and the Tide claimed a 52-24 win in Miami.

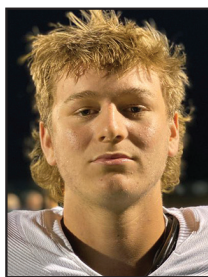
Smith confirmed his Heisman status in the CFP final, torching the Buckeyes with 12 catches for 215 yards and three touchdowns. Jones threw for 464 yards and five scores while Harris ran for 79 yards and made two trips to the end zone.

Fields tried to keep pace with the Tide’s scoring onslaught. However, Alabama held the Buckeye signal-caller at bay. Fields was 17 of 33 for 194 yards and just one TD pass. Sermon exited the game after his first rushing attempt because of a dislocated shoulder, leaving Master Teague and Marcus Crowley to pick up the pieces.

Wide receivers Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson made an impact, combining for 11 catches for 119 yards and a touchdown.

Still, the Buckeye defense couldn’t make the stops necessary to win the game, constantly looking outmanned and outmatched against the bigger, stronger and faster Alabama offense. The Crimson Tide racked up 621 yards of total offense.

“I’m proud of our team,” Day said after the game. “I’m proud of our seniors. I’m proud of the year we had. But it was a tough night. There’s a lot to unravel there. But



Quinn Ewers

you’ve got to give credit to Alabama. They are certainly a very good team, and they played really well tonight.”

3. Ewers Reclassifies, Transfers In Four-Month Span

On Nov. 20, 2020, quarterback Quinn Ewers, the No. 1-ranked prospect in the 2022 class, committed to Ohio State, giving the Buckeyes their highest-rated recruit ever according to 247Sports’ composite rankings.

Ewers had previously committed to Texas but announced that he would decommit from the university and explore other options, which eventually led him to Colum-

bus. The 6-3, 205-pound prospect from Carroll High School in Southlake, Texas, had offers from several Power Five schools across the country.

His recruitment went quiet after he made his intentions to play for Day and the Buckeyes clear. However, he made headlines again in 2021 after the NCAA adopted new rules allowing student-athletes to profit from their name, image and likeness, positioning him to make seven figures in endorsements and other partnerships.

Such money-making opportunities were prohibited for high schoolers in Texas,

Continued On Page 14

BUCKEYE
Cruise for Cancer

FEBRUARY 17 - 22, 2022

Celebrating 15 Years!

JOIN US FOR THE ULTIMATE BUCKEYE FAN EXPERIENCE ON ROYAL CARIBBEAN'S MARINER OF THE SEAS AS WE SAIL TO ROYAL CARIBBEAN'S PRIVATE ISLANDS COCOCAY & LABADEE!

VISIT BUCKEYECRUISE.COM TO BOOK TODAY!

Stroud Proved Himself After Early Struggles

Continued From Page 13

which ultimately led Ewers to reclassify to the 2021 class. He arrived on campus after Ohio State had already started fall camp, leaving him behind other quarterbacks such as C.J. Stroud, Kyle McCord and Jack Miller.

Situated as the fourth-string quarterback on the depth chart, Ewers appeared in only one game with the Buckeyes, coming in with a little over one minute left in Ohio State's 56-7 rout of Michigan State. He took only two snaps, handing the ball off twice to walk-on running back Robert Cope.

On Dec. 3, Ewers apparently surprised Day when he informed him he was entering the NCAA transfer portal and leaving the program. He spent only four months with the Buckeyes.

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

Nine days later, Ewers announced on Twitter that he would use his free transfer to jump to Texas, joining head coach Steve Sarkisian likely as an immediate starter in Austin. According to Yahoo's Pete Thamel, the opportunity to work with Sarkisian played a significant role in Ewers' decision, as did the opportunity to play closer to home.

Ohio State is all set with Stroud at quarterback heading into next season. McCord will return as the primary backup with 2022 Draper (Utah) Corner Canyon four-star Devin Brown as the third-string QB after Miller transferred to Florida in the offseason.

4. Stroud Named Starting QB for 2021

Before he became a household name for



SONNY BROCKWAY

NO MORE QUESTIONS — Redshirt freshman quarterback C.J. Stroud (7) was doubted in his first three games as a starter for the Buckeyes but broke through after taking a week to recover from a shoulder injury, finishing the season with 4,435 yards and 44 touchdowns and earning an invite to the Heisman Trophy ceremony. He finished fourth in voting for the prestigious award.

Ohio State fans, Stroud was in a three-man position battle to become the Buckeyes' starting quarterback in 2021. After Fields announced he would forgo his senior season and enter the NFL draft, Stroud, McCord and Miller competed to be the lead signal-caller.

Throughout fall camp, Stroud took the

lead in team drills and was a consistent member of the first-team offense. Still, Day intimated that any of the three quarterbacks could win the job during the four weeks of practice. On Aug. 21, his facade came to an end, and the third-year head coach named Stroud his starting quarterback for the Buckeyes season-opening game with Minnesota.

Stroud looked shaky at times during his first start, lacking accuracy and touch in the first two quarters against the Gophers. However, the redshirt sophomore controlled his nerves after halftime and finished the contest 13 of 22 passing for 294 yards, four touchdowns and an interception.

The following week, Stroud completed 35 of 54 passes against then-No. 12 Oregon in the home opener, resulting in 484 yards, three touchdowns and an interception. However, Ohio State lost the game 35-28, leaving some fans to question Stroud's ability to lead the offense.

His public perception didn't improve when the Buckeyes looked sluggish in their closer-than-expected 41-20 win over Tulsa in week three. Stroud had his worst statistical outing of the year against the Golden Hurricanes, completing 15 of 25 passes for 185 yards, one touchdown and one interception.

Stroud admitted after the game that he hadn't been practicing or playing at 100 percent since fall camp, claiming he had dealt with a shoulder injury since the middle of fall camp. In the week leading up to the Akron game, the Ohio State coaching staff

decided to rest Stroud for the team's game against the Zips. The week of rest was exactly what the doctor ordered, and Stroud returned to his starting role as a new and improved quarterback.

In Ohio State's remaining nine games, Stroud became a Heisman finalist — eventually finishing fourth behind Alabama quarterback Bryce Young, Michigan defensive end Aidan Hutchinson and Pittsburgh quarterback Kenny Pickett — and a record-breaking quarterback in a Buckeye uniform.

Stroud finished the 2021 season completing 317 of 441 passes for 4,435 yards and 44 touchdowns to only six interceptions. He will head into 2022 as Ohio State's unquestioned leader and a with plethora of weapons surrounding him including wideouts like juniors Julian Fleming and Jaxon Smith-Njigba and sophomores Marvin Harrison Jr. and Emeka Egbuka.

5. Ohio State Upset In NCAA Tournament

Ohio State likely wasn't expecting a small evangelical university in Tulsa, Okla., to end its 2021 national title hopes, but that's what happened when Oral Roberts claimed a 75-72 overtime win in the NCAA Tournament, the first major upset of March Madness last year.

The Buckeyes entered the tournament as the No. 2 seed in the East Region, but they quickly found themselves in a tight battle with the Golden Eagles. Oral Roberts held a 36-33 lead at the half, and even with



Press
Pub + on 5th
GOOD FOOD + FINE DRINKS

good food



fine drinks **Grill**

Both locations open for lunch & dinner daily!

<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">1505 W. 5th Ave</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Near Grandview Ave 614-817-1198</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Monday - Saturday: 11 AM - 10 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sunday: NOON - 10 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">KITCHEN UNTIL 10 PM NIGHTLY</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">741 N. High St</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In the Short North 614-298-1014</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Monday - Saturday: 11:30 AM - 12:30 AM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sunday: NOON - 12:30 AM</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">KITCHEN UNTIL MIDNIGHT DAILY</p>
---	--

presscolumbus.com



FILE PHOTO

HOPES DASHED — C.J. Walker (13), E.J. Liddell (32) and Duane Washington were among the Buckeyes stunned by a 75-72 overtime loss on March 19 by two-seed Ohio State to No. 15 Oral Roberts in the first round of the 2021 NCAA Tournament.

Ohio State up 64-60 in the final minutes, it fought back to tie the game at 64 at the end of regulation.

Oral Roberts guard and the NCAA's leading scorer Max Abmas tallied 29 points while Kevin Obanor turned in a 30-point, 11-rebound effort. Ohio State shot just 5 of 23 from three, committing 16 turnovers in the contest. They were also just 9 of 18 on free throws.

The Buckeyes had a chance to send the game to double overtime in the final seconds, but guard Duane Washington Jr. missed a pair of three-point attempts, including a wide-open look from the top of the arc, within two of the final three possessions, bookending an E.J. Liddell make.

Oral Roberts became the first No. 15 seed to win since Middle Tennessee defeated Michigan State in 2016, three years after Florida Gulf Coast beat Georgetown and four years after Duke lost to Lehigh as the No. 2 seed in 2012.

6. Olave Breaks Career Receiving TD Record

With a 43-yard touchdown in the first quarter against then-No. 7 Michigan State on Nov. 20, Olave broke David Boston's all-time receiving touchdown record of 34, setting a new mark of 35.

Boston previously held the record from his playing days that spanned from 1996-98. Olave had tied the 23-year-old record with a 23-yard touchdown catch earlier in the opening frame. He claimed the No. 1 spot when Stroud connected with him on a post route over the middle where Olave broke free into the back of the end zone for a score.

After the game, Olave conducted his

postgame press conference with the record-breaking ball in his hand.

"I had to get the ball," a smiling Olave said. "I broke the record, which was a huge blessing, but I forgot to keep the ball. Somebody had to go get it for me, and they gave it to me after the game."

Olave finished the 2021 season with 65 receptions, 936 yards and 13 touchdowns. He chose to opt out of the 2022 Rose Bowl to prepare for the NFL draft but decided to travel with the team to Pasadena, Calif., standing on the sidelines for the Buckeyes' 48-45 win over Utah.

7. Ohio State Signs No. 2 Recruiting Class For 2021

According to 247Sports, Ohio State signed the No. 2 overall recruiting class in 2021. The Buckeyes trailed defending national champion Alabama in the final rankings and finished ahead of LSU, Georgia and Clemson.

Day and his coaching staff signed 23 total commits in the class, with four top-10 recruits including Ewers (No. 1), defensive linemen J.T. Tuimoloau (No. 4) and Jack Sawyer (No. 5) and Egbuka (No. 10).

The Buckeyes also signed 10 other prospects in the top 100 of 247Sports' composite rankings, with offensive lineman Donovan Jackson, running back TreVeyon Henderson and quarterback Kyle McCord leading the bunch. There were also hidden gems such as cornerback Denzel Burke and punter Jesse Mirco in the mix.

"I think this is the closest group I've seen," Day said on the 2021 signing day. "I saw a couple of guys having lunch together, laughing and cracking on each other and making fun of each other. They just met

each other four or five days ago when they got on campus. But because of Zoom, because of (2020), they felt like they'd known each other for a year."

Henderson, Tuimoloau, Egbuka and Burke made an immediate impact in their first season in Columbus. Henderson fin-

ished as the team's leading rusher, Tuimoloau became a consistent part of the defensive line's rotation and Egbuka revitalized the Buckeyes' kick-return game. Burke started in all 13 games, establishing himself as the No. 1 corner heading into 2022.

8. Wrestling Signs No. 1 Recruiting Class In History

Ohio State accomplished something on Nov. 10 no other wrestling program had ever done when it signed the nation's top three prospects in a recruiting class.

Seven new Buckeyes signed their letters of intent, including No. 1-ranked Jesse Mendez of Crown Point, Ind.; No. 2 Nic Bouszakis of Kingston (Pa.) Wyoming Seminary High School; and No. 3 Nick Felman of Malvern (Pa.). According to FloWrestling's rankings, no program has swept the top three recruits in a class during the modern recruiting era.

"Our staff is excited to add this special group of student-athletes to Buckeye Nation," said OSU head coach Tom Ryan. "In my 30 years of collegiate coaching, this is one of the finest recruiting classes. We have addressed future needs at several weight classes with very high-level competitors. Each of them wrestles at a high-tempo style of wrestling."

Mendez, a 138-pound prospect, announced on Nov. 3 during an appearance with FloWrestling Radio Live that he would wrestle for Ohio State, giving the program the three top-ranked prospects for the 2022 class. He chose the Buckeyes over Iowa, Penn State, Indiana and Michigan.

"They're building something special, and they're building a dynasty," Mendez told FloWrestling. "It was a close decision, but it was Ohio State for the most part. I sat down with my family three nights ago and hashed it out. This might be the best recruiting

Continued On Page 16



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

SNYDER'S SILVER — Former Ohio State wrestler Kyle Snyder was one of 26 Buckeyes who participated in the Tokyo Olympics, representing the United States of America at 97kg. He claimed a silver medal.

Current, Former Olympic Athletes Earn Honors

Continued From Page 15

class ever, and I want to be a part of it.”

9. Twenty-Six Buckeyes Compete In Olympics

A record 26 Buckeyes competed at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. The games were postponed to July 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the competitions taking place a year after they were originally scheduled.

The former, current and future Ohio

State athletes who competed are organized alphabetically and by country:

United States: Adelaide Aquilla (track and field), Hunter Armstrong (swimming), Anavia Battle (track and field), Christine Clemons (track and field), Henry and Jackson Leverett (shooting), Ruby Remati (synchronized swimming), Kyle Snyder (wrestling) and Alec Yoder (gymnastics).

Canada: Marc-Antoine Blais Belanger (fencing), Emily Armstrong (synchronized swimming), Ruslan Gaziev (swimming), Alanna Goldie (fencing), Eleanor Harvey

(fencing) and Nichelle Prince (soccer).

France: Elodie Ravera (rowing).

Greece: Anneta and Maria Kyridou (rowing).

Italy: Alesandra Montesano (rowing).

Mexico: Diego Cervantes (fencing).

Netherlands: Ilse Paulis (rowing).

New Zealand: Misha Koudinov (gymnastics).

Sierra Leone: Maggie Barrie (track and field).

Spain: Aina Cid Centelles (rowing).

Sri Lanka: Matthew Abeysinghe (swim-

ming).

Trinidad and Tobago: Eric Harrison (track and field).

Four Buckeyes earned medals, including Armstrong (gold), Prince (gold), Snyder (silver) and Ilse Paulis (bronze). The contingent of Buckeyes at the summer games included 12 current student-athletes representing the rowing, fencing, swimming, synchronized swimming, pistol and track and field teams. Overall, Ohio State was represented in 12 different countries and in nine different sports.

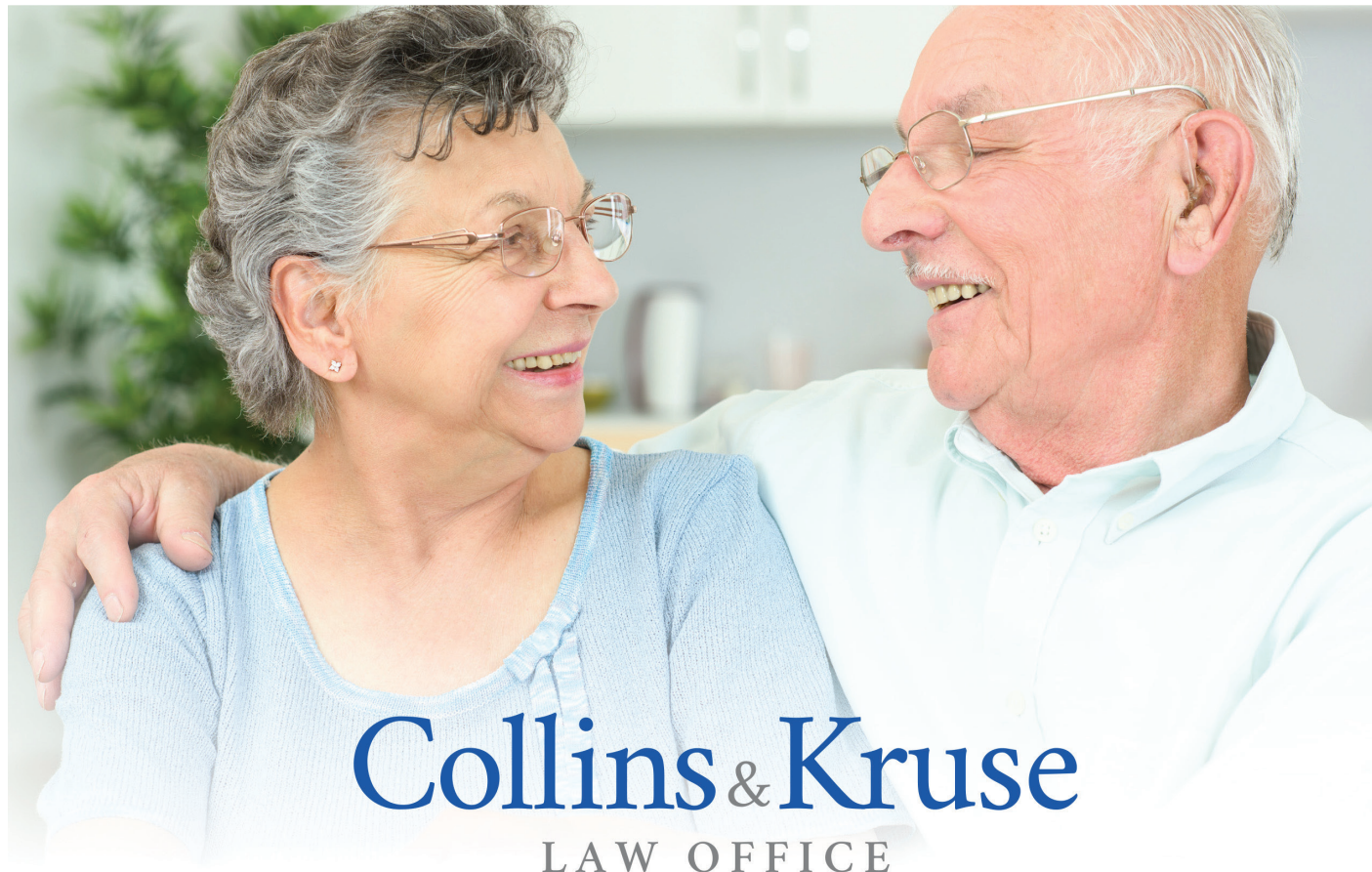
10. Aquila Sweeps Big Ten And NCAA Championships

On June 10, Aquila won the NCAA title in the shot put, matching her indoor championship and giving her a clean sweep of four titles (indoors and outdoors) in the shot put at the Big Ten and NCAA championships.

Aquila launched a tournament-best 18.98m (62-3 1/4) throw to secure first place over Josie Schaefer from Wisconsin, giving the Rocky River, Ohio, native her first national title in the outdoor shot put.

After the season ended, Aquila claimed multiple awards from Ohio State and the Big Ten. The university named Aquila the Ohio State Female Athlete of the Year for her dominant seasons with the Scarlet and Gray. Shortly after that, she won the Big Ten's Field Athlete of the Year award for both the indoor and outdoor seasons.

Aquila went on to compete at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo and represent the United States. She threw a 17.68m toss to finish ninth in her qualifying field and 20th overall in the games. Aquila returned to Ohio State in 2021-22 and already has claimed a Big Ten Indoor Athlete of the Week award only a few competitions into the season.



Collins & Kruse
LAW OFFICE

**Your Elder Law,
Estate Planning
& VA Benefits
Attorneys**

Collins Law Office is headquartered in Hilliard, but we proudly serves clients all throughout Ohio, including Dayton, Findlay, Cincinnati, Columbus, Lancaster & Marion!

You need a legal advocate that is willing to put in the necessary work to ensure you get the benefits you're entitled to and the assurance you rightfully deserve. This is where Collins & Kruse Law Office thrives.

Medicaid Crisis Planning/Applications | VA Benefit Applications and Planning
Asset Preservation | Probate | Estate Planning | Mesothelioma Claims

Columbus Office

4010 Main St., Hilliard, Ohio 43026
614-369-8634

Findlay Office

610 N. Tiffin Ave., Findlay, Ohio 45840
419-365-6900

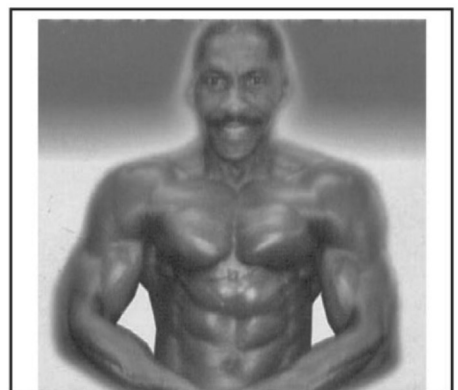
If you or a loved one has already entered or is expected to enter a nursing home, please call us immediately for a free consultation! For all other inquiries please call or email Jackie@CKElderlaw.com to reserve your seat in one of our workshops or to set up a free consultation.



Jackie Collins
Attorney/Army Veteran



Wren Kruse
Attorney



TIM SWANSON
Certified Personal Trainer

**Flat Stomach • Weight
Loss • Strength Training
• Cardio Kick-Boxing •
Boot Camp**

614-886-9331
foreverfitswan@yahoo.com

www.CKElderlaw.com

A Proud Member of **ELDERCOUNSEL**
Your Success, Our Commitment.
Excellence in Elder Law and Special Needs
MEMBER

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

2021 FOOTBALL (11-2, 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.

Jan. 1 vs. Utah in Rose Bowl, W 48-45.

2022 FOOTBALL

Sept. 3 NOTRE DAME; 10 ARKANSAS STATE; 17 TOLEDO; 24 WISCONSIN.

Oct. 1 RUTGERS; 8 at Michigan State; 22 IOWA; 29 at Penn State.

Nov. 5 at Northwestern; 12 INDIANA; 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 (12-4, 5-2)

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, W 71-66.

Dec. 5 at Penn State, W 76-64; 8 TOWSON, W 85-74; 11 WISCONSIN, W 73-55; 18 at Kentucky, Canceled; 21 TENNESSEE MARTIN, Canceled; 28 NEW ORLEANS, Canceled.

Jan. 2 at Nebraska, W 87-79 (OT); 6 at Indiana, L 67-51; 9 NORTHWESTERN, W 95-87; 13 at Wisconsin, L 78-68; 16 PENN STATE, W 61-56; 18 IUPUI, W 83-37; 22 NEBRASKA, Postponed; 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 (15-3, 7-2)

Nov. 3 SLIPPERY ROCK (EXH.), W 96-48; 10 BUCKNELL, W 71-48; 14 NORFOLK STATE, W 86-48; 17 BOWLING GREEN, W 94-63; 23 BELLARMINE, W 110-58; 27 CINCINNATI, W 86-50.

Dec. 1 at Syracuse, L 97-91; 5 at Purdue, W 70-53; 7 MOUNT ST. MARY'S, W 94-50; 12 INDIANA L 86-66; 15 ALABAMA STATE, W 97-51; 19 at UCLA, Canceled; 21 at San Diego State, W 66-54; 31 at Michigan, L 90-71.

Jan. 3 PENN STATE, Postponed; 6 ILLINOIS, W 90-69; 9 at Northwestern,

W 74-61; 12 MICHIGAN STATE, W 89-83; 15 at Minnesota, W 83-75; 20 MARYLAND, W 95-89; 23 at Rutgers W 80-71; 27 MICHIGAN; 31 at Iowa.

Feb. 7 RUTGERS; 10 NEBRASKA; 14 at Illinois; 17 at Maryland; 20 WISCONSIN; 24 PENN STATE; 27 at Michigan State.

March 3-6 Big Ten Tournament at Indianapolis.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (18-7-1, 10-5-1)

Oct. 8 at Bentley, L 2-1; 9 at Bentley, W 7-1; 15 UCONN, W 4-3 (OT); 16 UCONN, W 3-0; 29-30 MICHIGAN STATE, L 2-1, W 5-1.

Nov. 5 PENN STATE, W 5-2; 6 PENN STATE, W 4-1; 12 at Minnesota, W 4-3; 13 at Minnesota, L 2-0; 26 Mercyhurst, L 5-4; 27 MERCYHURST, W 3-2.

Dec. 3 at Notre Dame, W 4-2; 4 at Notre Dame, L 5-1; 10 MICHIGAN, L 5-2; 11 MICHIGAN, W 6-1; 16 BOWLING GREEN, W 4-3 (OT); 17 at Bowling Green, W 3-2; 31 LIU, W 6-0

Jan. 1, LIU, W 7-2. 8 at Wisconsin, W 5-3; 9 at Wisconsin, T 2-2 OT (SW); 14 NOTRE DAME, L 3-2 (OT); 15 NOTRE DAME, W 4-1; 21 at Michigan State, W 4-1; 22 at Michigan State, W 3-2; 28-29 at Penn State, 7 p.m., 7 p.m.

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 (18-4-0, 14-4-0)

Sept. 24 ST. THOMAS, W 6-0; 25 ST. THOMAS, W 4-1

Oct. 1 at Minnesota, W 4-2; 2 at Minnesota, W 4-1 15 BEMIDJI STATE, W 7-0, 16 BEMIDJI STATE, W 3-1; 23 at Wisconsin, L 3-1; 24 at Wisconsin, L 2-1 (OT); 29 ST. CLOUD STATE, W 5-2; 30 ST. CLOUD STATE, W 10-1.

Nov. 5 at St. Thomas, W 8-1, 6 at St. Thomas, W 6-2; 19 MINNESOTA STATE, W 6-3; 20 MINNESOTA STATE, W 9-0; 26 DC Tournament at Washington, D.C., vs. St. Lawrence, W 5-2; 27 DC Tournament at Washington, D.C., vs. Penn State, W 4-2.

Dec. 3 at Minnesota Duluth, L 5-2; 4 at Minnesota Duluth, W 6-2.

Jan. 7 LINDENWOOD, W 8-2; 8 LINDENWOOD, W 10-0; 14-15 at St. Cloud State, canceled; 21 MINNESOTA DULUTH, L 1-0.; 22 MINNESOTA DULUTH, W 3-1; 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.

SEE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN MISSING ON BUCKEYESPORTS.COM Free To Print Subscribers

The screenshot shows the Buckeye Sports Bulletin website interface. At the top, there's a navigation menu with links for HOME, FOOTBALL, BASKETBALL, SPORTS, FORUM, BSB ONLINE, EAT & STAY, and a LOG OUT button. Below the menu, there are several article teasers. One prominent article is titled 'SHOOTING SLUMP NOTHING NEW FOR AHRENS' by Patrick Mayhorn in Basketball, featuring a photo of a player. Other articles include 'Mitch Rossi Returning To Ohio State For Sixth Season' and 'Recruiting Outlook: Ohio State Issues Flurry Of Offers In 2023 And Beyond'. Each article has a 'READ MORE' link.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin has expanded its online presence to a full-service website to complement the 24 annual print editions. Access to BuckeyeSports.com is free to all print subscribers and includes numerous great features like:

- Daily features, analysis and breaking news stories
- A fan forum where readers can interact with the BSB staff and other subscribers while catching up on the latest Buckeye news
- Rosters, scholarship charts, schedules and commit lists for the football team to keep up to date with the Buckeyes
- Electronic versions of the BSB print editions
- The BSB Quickly archive

To sign up for this free service send an email to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com and we will send you easy-to-follow instructions on how to enjoy reading Buckeye Sports Bulletin online

OSU's Top-Down Approach To Athletic Success

By **BRI ALLENSTEIN** and
CHASE BROWN

Special to Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Thousands of Buckeye fans covered head-to-toe in scarlet and gray clothing filter through the gates to watch their favorite athletes compete on one of the sport's biggest stages.

Ohio State is a top team in the nationally respected Big Ten conference. The Buckeyes' goal is to win a national championship every season. With the world's best coaches and athletes setting the pace, the expectation is excellence.

While you might be thinking this is the Ohio State football team, it's another one of the university's distinguished programs – the women's volleyball team.

Like any other sport at Ohio State, women's volleyball stands equivalent to football in care from the athletic department. When Ohio State hosts its competition, its facilities, athletic gear and equipment are unrivaled.

The women's volleyball team can compete on TeraFlex flooring on any given night. TeraFlex is globally renowned for its superior long-term safety features that provide protection for athletes and enhanced grip and slide for the best playability that ensures diving, sliding and jumping are easier on the players' bodies.

Meanwhile, for football – Ohio State's primary revenue maker and attention grabber – coaches, players and staff have complained about the current state of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center (WHAC) – its indoor practice field to be exact.

Even more interesting, the turf inside Ohio Stadium and the WHAC is below athletic department standards. The artificial grass' green, red and white paint appears faded to the 105,000 fans who fill the stands and millions more who watch from home.

But the fading isn't the only issue. Players noticeably slip and slide on the rubber surfaces, taking tumbles when they accelerate in and out of their breaks. The field's condition caused football head coach Ryan Day to speak with his equipment staff about managing the deteriorating artificial grass.

"We've looked at our cleats to make sure we have the right footwear," Day said. "We have had some guys go down."

Finding the right cleats seemed like a last resort for the football team, which would have to endure the withering turf until the season's end.

Day explained the different variations of cleats football players could wear for practice and games, mentioning that Nike – Ohio State's exclusive equipment and uniform partner – offers position-specific styles to help them overcome the poor field conditions.

"They have different styles," Day said. "For the linemen, they have the mids. They have the speed cleats. The players can choose from that. They have the molded ones and the screw-ins. And then, based on the surface, the guys can decide which is best for them."

Ohio State athletic communications director Jerry Emig said the athletic department would replace the playing surface after

the 2021-22 season – both at the stadium and the WHAC.

Emig said there wasn't enough time to replace the turf midseason, as the Buckeyes played teams weekly in the fall, including seven home games at the Horseshoe. Day claimed there was no discussion of changing the surface last year when asked if the renovation may have been cut from the team's budget during the pandemic.

While Ohio State could have replaced the turf earlier, Emig said the athletic department decided to allow the rubber surface to reach its suggested eight-year life span, which ended in 2021.

In 2007, Ohio Stadium received FieldTurf, a patented rubber infill mix, in place of natural grass. Seven years later, in May 2014, the athletic department installed "FieldTurf Resolution," which utilized an advanced recycling technology to remove the infill from the existing field and reuse it as part of the new playing surface.

"Since we started on FieldTurf in 2007 at the stadium, our surface has consistently provided excellent footing for our players throughout the season," then-athletic director for facilities Don Patko said of the turf.

In 2021, another seven years had passed since Ohio Stadium received the second round of FieldTurf, but it will not be recycling this time. Emig confirmed that Ohio State plans a full-scale replacement of the turf, and it even announced a program for fans to submit design ideas that the school could pick from before installing that new field.

Though the state of the turf is in bad shape and presents a risk for players, a BSB analysis of Ohio State's construction plans details the addition of a multitude of new athletic facilities that are not related to the football program.

In a separate analysis of the athletic department's budget, Buckeye Sports Bulletin found that though the football team brings in the most revenue for the University, nearly all other sports are receiving an increase in funding for their operations or new facilities, such as the volleyball and wrestling, tennis and lacrosse teams.

It may seem strange. Why would the Ohio State department of athletics allow its primary source of revenue to play on a sub-optimal surface in one of the most recognizable stadiums in college football?

Ohio State sports administrator T.J. Shelton explains that it's because the football program doesn't get to cut to the front of the line.

"The biggest emphasis in our athletic department is that we talk about 'the people, the tradition and the excellence,'" Shelton said. "But that's not only the people, tradition and excellence of the football and basketball teams. It applies to all the sports and ensures each program can succeed at the highest level."

Shelton said it is suitable for Ohio State to excel in one sport but better to have a collection of programs compete at a high level. The athletic department makes this possible by recognizing the value of all 36 varsity programs, not only those that make money.

BSB's investigation found that the football program lost nearly \$8 million in its



FILE PHOTO

'NO PLACE BETTER' – Ohio State head wrestling coach Tom Ryan says the Covelli Center – which opened in 2019 and hosts wrestling as well as volleyball, gymnastics and fencing – is a special place.

operational budget from 2019 to 2020 – an 18 percent decrease in one year, primarily due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Football wasn't the only program to suffer from the pandemic. In September 2020, Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith reported the department was projecting a \$107 million deficit for fiscal year 2021. He later updated the projection to around \$50 million in February 2021.

Although other programs took a hit, the football program's loss was arguably the most significant. Of the 36 varsity teams, only dance lost a larger percentage of its operational budget, dropping 53 percent from 2019 to 2020.

When the department started its recovery from pandemic-related fallout, each program increased the operational budget. Football's allotted money grew from nearly \$35 million to over \$54 million – a 55 percent spike. It was the fourth-largest budget increase behind dance (66 percent), women's cross country (269 percent) and men's lacrosse (289 percent).

While Ohio State's football and basketball teams are prominent, Shelton and his colleagues cater beyond the school's well-known sports, ensuring that the Buckeyes are a highly respected athletic institution from top to bottom.

As a result of the pandemic, many Division I colleges cut athletic programs to save money, citing high operating costs as cause for their removal. The college sports hit the hardest include rowing, swimming, diving,

tennis, track and field, and volleyball.

At the end of 2020 and beginning of spring 2021, 26 colleges and universities, from Stanford University to Dartmouth College, had cut more than 90 sports programs amid the pandemic.

Although many universities cut volleyball

during the pandemic, Ohio State maintained its program and even received an increase in operational budget after the pandemic. Head coach Jen Flynn Oldenburg said she feels like the OSU volleyball program

is similar in equivalence to football, and that is proven by the athletic department's fund-raising and spending.

"It just seemed like if they got some kind of perk that it was offered to us as well," Oldenburg said.

Oldenburg noticed that in the athletic department's short-term and long-term decisions, everyone from Smith to Shelton made her team feel important and understood.

"Ohio State expects to be elite, and we're going to put the resources in to make sure that happens for all 36 sports," Oldenburg said. "I think that's the coolest part. I heard Gene Smith talk about how much he wants every student-athlete to feel like an Ohio State student-athlete."



Jen Flynn Oldenburg

Framework 2.0

Ohio State offers 36 varsity programs at the university, with 30 NCAA championship titles won and 48 other national team titles, including 32 from the synchronized swimming team. The Buckeyes are widely recognized as one of the best football programs for Division I.

The Buckeye football program consistently competes in front of a national audience, creating most of the athletic department's publicity as it continues to add benchmarks to its already storied history, yet that isn't the only source of revenue for the athletic department.

For Smith, fund-raising is the best way to support the 36 sports outside of football. Together with his development team, Smith raised more than \$120 million for new facilities on the northwest campus, supporting over a dozen athletic programs in the process.

The financial support Smith gathered further develops the university's Framework 2.0 plan, which aims to update the school's Academic Core, St. John Arena Site, Art's District, Mirror Lake District, Wexner Medical Center, Athletics District, Mid-West Campus, Waterman Lab, West Campus and Olentangy Riverfront Gateway.

Mike Penner, Ohio State's associate athletic director for internal operations, said the money Smith and the athletic department raised have revitalized the Athletics District, creating a specific region of campus dedicated to Buckeye athletes.

"The new multi-sport facilities have replaced aging, outdated facilities," Penner said. "The new facilities bring together more student-athletes and intellectual property and allow us to provide needed services to our student-athletes."

Ohio State's Framework 2.0 plan started on Jan. 6, 2017. Almost three months later, in April 2017, the university tore down the Ernie Biggs Athletic Training Facility – a building approaching 40 years old at the time – with a \$32 million state-of-the-art Schumaker Student-Athlete Development Center.

In September 2017, Ohio State began construction on the Covelli Center, a 3,700-seat multi-sport arena that hosts men's and women's volleyball, men's and women's gymnastics, fencing and wrestling. The facility cost nearly \$49 million, with construction taking 21 months. The Covelli Center and its connecting building, the Jennings Wrestling Facility, opened on June 4, 2019.

"There's no place like the Covelli Center," said Ohio State wrestling head coach Tom Ryan. "Our first year in the Covelli was remarkable. Our first dual three years ago when Luke Pletcher scored late. Then 'Gas Tank' Gary Traub found a way to rally the crowds later that year. It was like, 'Wow, this place is really special.' We're excited for our guys and for the fans with each opportunity they have to compete here."

Ryan said he and his staff try to compete in as many home matches as possible at the Covelli Center. While most collegiate wrestling programs schedule four or five duals, Ohio State strives for seven or eight throughout the regular season.

"I've been here for a while," Ryan said, "There's no place better. When that magical moment happens and the place erupts, I think it's a special place. To compete on this stage – the intimacy, the seats on the floor

– I can't imagine being a young person that loves the sport and loves to compete, watching a match here and seeing this place."

It's the kind of environment Ohio State wanted to create for its non-revenue sports. Oldenburg and Ryan attribute the atmosphere to the athletic department's concentrated effort to treat all varsity programs as equal, even though the revenue generated fails to reach the exact value of the football team.

The athletic department used the same approach when breaking ground on the Ty Tucker Tennis Center, named after the long-time men's and women's tennis director, who is also the winningest coach in Big Ten men's tennis history.

Ohio State's tennis programs competed indoors at the Varsity Tennis Center, a facility 10 minutes north of campus, for 11 years before the new \$23 million facility brought the teams to the Athletic District in November 2020.

The Ty Tucker Tennis Center sits next to the Auer Complex – the university's outdoor tennis facility. It is a 75,000 square-foot building that features six indoor courts and theater-style seating for spectators. It also has locker rooms and training facilities for both the men's and women's tennis programs and offices and large-group spaces.

"This facility is going to be one of the best tennis facilities in the country," Tucker said at the ground-breaking ceremony on Aug. 30, 2020. "With it located in the Athletic District, it will provide the best student-athlete experience for countless Buckeyes in the years to come."

The Framework 2.0 plan took a brief pause during the pandemic as Ohio State re-evaluated its finances. However, Shelton said the conversation about improving the university's athletic programs never halted.

"Gene Smith has a vision of 'What's next?' and always discusses how things will play out," Shelton said. "It's all about reaching our goals, and it's a process. There's an ebb and flow. We put an emphasis on our vision of creating 36 athletic programs that compete at a high level. That's how the conversation takes place. What's important? How do we make that happen?"

"It starts with current student-athletes and coaches but also helps us in the future," Shelton continued. "We want to build facilities that put our players in the best position, but it impacts recruiting, too. It ensures that prospective student-athletes and families can see our investment into each program and their experience here at Ohio State."

"We focus on giving them great academic spaces, look at athletic training, performance, nutrition and finally sports psychology. All of those areas impact our student-athletes. Those are the things people want to see. We want future Buckeyes to see that we will care about them no matter what sport they play."

Spotlight On Lacrosse

The athletic department's latest investment is in the university's lacrosse programs. In August, the Ohio State board of trustees approved a new stadium explicitly dedicated to housing men's and women's lacrosse. The project will cost \$21.5 million and finish in the winter or spring of 2023.

For years, the men's and women's teams split time competing with rival programs at the 10,000-seat Jesse Owens Memorial Sta-

dium and the 105,000-seat Ohio Stadium in the fall and spring seasons. The programs would also practice at a third location, the WHAC, using indoor and outdoor turf surfaces.

Ohio State senior deputy athletic director and women's administrator Janine Oman said she is excited to build a facility dedicated exclusively to lacrosse. The new facility can provide the Buckeyes with a significant advantage in performance and training.

"The stadium will provide them with year-round training and shows the commitment Ohio State has to provide our student-athletes everything necessary for an exceptional experience," Oman said. "We'll also have the chance to tell the unique story of our two programs through their history, tradition and brand."

In addition to a lighted and heated surface, the lacrosse-specific stadium will also include home and visiting locker rooms, a 6,700 square-foot concourse level grandstand, a press box and a 4,600-square-foot building on the north end of the grounds featuring a shooting room and event space.

"We are so grateful for all the people that have believed and committed to supporting this project," said men's lacrosse head coach Nick Myers. "The leadership of our administration through this process, especially Gene Smith and Janine Oman, has been remarkable and inspiring. We can't thank them enough. The stadium is going to be like no other in college lacrosse. We are really looking forward to seeing our new home come to life."

The facility will also become a central location for camps, clinics and lacrosse-specific events throughout the year, making it a centerpiece for the sport in the state of Ohio. Women's lacrosse head coach Amy Bokker said the idea of young boys and girls coming to Ohio State to deepen their love for the sport fills her locker room with overwhelming excitement.

"Our team is fired-up and full of so much pride surrounding the opportunity to represent Buckeye Nation in this new, state-of-the-art facility," Bokker said. "This will make such a positive impact for our student-athletes and the future of our program."

Recipe For Success

The athletic department uses the phrase "positive impact" as a factor to guide its decision-making. Penner described it as a way for the athletic department to prepare student-athletes for life after sport. While

student-athletes can perform at Ohio State for four, five or sometimes six years, most of their lives will be spent beyond the Columbus campus.

Ohio State looks for the best ways to support a student-athlete's performance in the classroom, on the playing field and in the community.

"We want all our 36 sports programs to succeed, on and off the competition fields," Penner said. "The student-athlete experience has been significantly enhanced over the years. We place great emphasis on 'life after sport' through the Eugene D. Smith Leadership Institute, which provides leadership, character and career development opportunities to all student-athletes to best prepare them for life after graduation."

Penner also pointed to the Student-Athlete Support Services Office (SASSO), which supports the university and athletic department missions by providing programs and services that promote degree attainment and comprehensive personal development.

SASSO serves over 1,000 student-athletes across the 36 varsity sports, providing them with academic, athletic, personal and professional development through advising, tutoring and study tables.

The athletic department believes that helping each program and its student-athletes remember the importance of integrity and academic success will leave a positive impact, which in turn will lead to prosperity in competition.

"It might seem like these things don't correlate," Shelton said, "but all of those things are positive and help provide opportunities for student-athletes to be champions across the board. They're all measured differently, obviously, but we want to provide an experience for all of them. The way they achieve that is by becoming great ambassadors for the university."

Ohio State athletes are coached through high-level competition, and the athletic department strives to prepare them beyond their performance at a game or match.

"This is a remarkable institution that will provide opportunities beyond their four years at Ohio State," Shelton said. "We want to enhance their leadership and life skills, teaching them to be great teammates and disciplined leaders. We want them to compete for championships. That's why you come to Ohio State. Our coaching, training and facilities will help you be the best you can be."

While the athletic department might delay the renovation of Ohio Stadium and the construction of a new indoor practice facility, the smaller sports can rest assured knowing they're supported in more ways than one.



Amy Bokker

You Can Count On These Services From		
THE QUICKPRINT CENTRE		
1350 W. 5th Ave., Suite 14, Columbus, OH 43212 614-488-2683 • FAX 614-488-0059 • qpoh@aol.com		
Offset-Printing	Digital Color Copies	Digital B&W Copies
Typesetting	Ship UPS	Rubber Stamps
NCR Forms	Fax Service	Business Cards
Laminating	Announcements	Binding
Brochures	Wedding Invitations	Labels

Buckeyes Appear Set For Quiet National Signing Day

College football's National Signing Day is set for Wednesday, Feb. 2, just days after Buckeye Sports Bulletin will have last gone to press. For up-to-the-minute information, go to BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers. Our next issue with a Feb. 12 cover date will feature our 2022 Recruiting Wrap-Up with stories, analysis and bios on Ohio State's newest signees.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

Since the NCAA instituted the early signing period in 2017, National Signing Day has felt like somewhat of a formality considering the majority of the 2022 class has already signed their national letters of intent.

Though it's largely procedural at this point, Feb. 2 still holds some intrigue for Ohio State with two unsigned commits and a top target set to announce their schools of choice, with the Buckeyes right in the mix.

The Buckeyes currently have 21 commits in the 2022 class with 19 of them signed, leaving Hammond, Wisc., four-star offensive lineman Carson Hinzman

and Duncanville, Texas, four-star defensive end Omari Abor as Ohio State's two unsigned prospects.

There's been no indication that Hinzman won't put pen to paper, but there is intrigue with Abor, who has been surprisingly noncommittal to Ohio State despite his commitment to the school on Jan. 2. Abor was not shy about his intention to continue visiting other schools up until National Signing Day, but at time of press, he had yet to actually visit other schools.

Furthermore, Abor cited his connection with defensive line coach Larry Johnson as one of the main reasons he committed to Ohio State, and after the dust has settled, it appears Johnson will be staying with the Buckeyes for at least one more season.

"I feel like I fit their defense very, very well," Abor told 247Sports. "They can have me stand up. They can get me in a three-point stance. Johnson lets them play ball and lets them go after the quarterback."

Nothing will be confirmed until Abor signs his national letter of intent, but as things stand, Ohio State appears to be in a solid position to hold on to the No. 38 overall prospect in the class.

The other unknown on National Signing Day is Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star defensive tackle Christen Miller, who will decide between Georgia and Ohio State.

OSU Football 2022 Commitments

Players in the class of 2022 who have signed or issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Omari Abor	DE	6-4	240	★★★★	Duncanville, Texas
Kojo Antwi	WR	6-0	190	★★★★	Suwanee (Ga.) Lambert
Devin Brown	QB	6-3	190	★★★★	Draper (Utah) Corner Canyon
Jyaire Brown	CB	6-0	178	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
Kaleb Brown	WR	5-11	177	★★★★	Chicago St. Rita
Caleb Burton	WR	6-0	165	★★★★	Del Valle, Texas
Bennett Christian	TE	6-6	235	★★★	Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona
Caden Curry	DL	6-3	250	★★★★	Greenwood (Ind.) Center Grove
George Fitzpatrick	OT	6-6	285	★★★★	Englewood (Colo.) Cherry Creek
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
Carson Hinzman	OL	6-4	280	★★★★	Saint Croix Central, Wis.
Kenyatta Jackson	DE	6-5	235	★★★★	Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna
Hero Kanu	DL	6-5	293	★★★★	Santa Margarita Catholic, Calif.
Gabe Powers	LB	6-4	230	★★★★	Marysville, Ohio
Kye Stokes	ATH	6-2	185	★★★★	Seffner (Fla.) Armwood
Sonny Styles	S	6-4	215	★★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) Central
Tegra Tshabola	OT	6-5	340	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
Ryan Turner	CB	6-0	180	★★★★	Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep

Miller, rated the No. 107 overall prospect in 2022 and the No. 19 defensive lineman, was supposed to announce his school during the All-American Bowl on Jan. 8 but pushed his commitment back, citing his desire to take all of his official visits.

He's visited both Georgia and Ohio State a number of times and plans to take official visits to Florida A&M, Miami (Fla.) and Oregon. Like Abor, Miller said Johnson is a big factor in his recruitment.

"Coach J, that's like my uncle, man," Miller told Eleven Warriors. "Coach J was a big factor in my recruitment because of the guy he is, a good Christian man and a good coach. We don't even have to talk about the people that he produced. We know those guys. It's the love he's got for me and my family and the love he's got for his job."

Despite the social media flirtation between Miller and the Buckeyes over the past couple of months, Georgia is the front-runner to keep him home, as all six crystal ball predictions on 247Sports have the Bulldogs winning Miller's services.

If Abor and Hinzman sign as expected and Miller ends up at Georgia, Ohio State will finish with a 21-man class that ranks fourth in the nation behind Georgia, Alabama and Texas A&M. It's the third-straight top-five class for head coach Ryan Day.

Signees, Recruits Optimistic About New Hires

Ohio State has confirmed a number of new hires since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, including associate head coach for offense and offensive line coach Justin Frye, cornerbacks coach Tim Walton and safeties coach Perry Eliano.

Along with these announcements came news that defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs, as well as linebackers coach Al Washington, would not be retained by Ohio State, in addition to the previous announcement of offensive line coach Greg Studrawa parting ways with the Buckeyes.

This leaves a number of position groups

and as many as 10 class members who will be learning from a new coach. This includes linebackers C.J. Hicks and Gabe Powers; cornerbacks Jyaire Brown and Ryan Turner; offensive linemen George Fitzpatrick, Avery Henry, Hinzman and Tegra Tshabola; safety Kye Stokes; and safety/linebacker hybrid Sonny Styles.

Though most assistants have been on the job for only a few days, they've made sure to make a good impression.

"I had a talk with (Frye) on (Jan. 11)," Hinzman told 247Sports. "(It went) good. He seems like a really great coach. I think he's coming over to visit soon, so I'm excited to get to meet him in person."

Fitzpatrick also indicated he's looking forward to working with the staff, tweeting "Let's work coach!" in response to Frye updating his Twitter profile to reflect his employment with the Buckeyes.

The new staff has already been in contact with a number of recruits as well. Windsor (Conn.) Loomis Chaffee School four-star offensive tackle Olaus Alinen told 247Sports that he had a good conversation with Frye.

"I liked him," Alinen said. "He seems like a straightforward, honest guy who is all about building relationships and developing players."

"He was talking about how he's excited to be at Ohio State and start building a relationship with me," he continued. "He was also talking about his recruiting philosophy, and then we chatted a bit about my background."

Legacy Recruit Smith Commits To Ohio State

Ohio State earned its fourth commitment of 2023, as Dublin (Ohio) Coffman three-star defensive lineman Will Smith Jr. (6-3, 260), the son of the late Ohio State and NFL defensive end Will Smith, committed to the Buckeyes Jan. 23, just nine days after receiving an offer.

The elder Smith played for Ohio State from 2000-03, helping lead the Buckeyes to the 2002 BCS national championship. In 2003, he was named first-team All-Big

We are committed to your health and safety 



FAIRFIELD INN & SUITES COLUMBUS/DUBLIN
7150 Sawmill Road, Columbus, Ohio 43235 • 614-389-3036





TOWNEPLACE SUITES COLUMBUS/HILLIARD
4079 Lyman Drive, Hilliard Ohio 43026 • 614-541-9309





BEST WESTERN HILLIARD INN & SUITES
3831 Park Mill Run Drive, Hilliard, Ohio 43026 • 614-529-8118



ASK AN ANALYST

With Zack Carpenter of Lettermen Row

Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star defensive lineman Christen Miller is set to announce his college decision on National Signing Day. Where does Ohio State stand with the Georgia product, and what's the final verdict?

"Miller's recruitment has been one of the most back-and-forth of the entire 2022 cycle. He's one of those players who absolutely loves the recruiting game and loves to make fans believe one thing one day and another the next. But I also think he was genuinely torn about whether he wanted to choose Ohio State or stay home with the Bulldogs. This one has always felt like Georgia to me, and that's where my official prediction is going to stay heading to the Feb. 2 signing day."

Ohio State welcomed 11 early enrollees in the last couple of weeks. Among those, who do you feel will have the biggest impact for the Buckeyes?

"The obvious answers are Kettering (Ohio) Alter five-star linebacker C.J. Hicks, Pickerington (Ohio) Central five-star linebacker/safety Sonny Styles and Draper (Utah) Corner Canyon

four-star quarterback Devin Brown. Styles and Hicks both have All-American potential, and I think they will help Jim Knowles bring back a nastiness and swagger to that defense that has been lacking. It just won't be right away.

"Styles reclassified from the 2023 class to 2022, and there should be zero expectations put on him to do anything but develop and grow in his first year.

"Hicks, to me, is a no-doubt prospect whose five-star ranking will shine starting in year two. Linebacker is just such a hard position to really come in right away and make an impact as a freshman. But his time will come.

"Brown is the real deal. He wasn't just some throw-in late in the cycle at quarterback. He is going to give Kyle McCord a real run for his money in two seasons for the starting spot.

"Non-obvious answers are Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona three-star tight end Bennett Christian and Chandler (Ariz.) four-star wide receiver Kyion Grayes. Christian is going to be a stalwart in a Ryan Day system that loves to use two tight ends, and Grayes

is going to be a two-year starter and fan favorite for the Buckeyes at receiver. He's not a 4.4 burner, but he's just such a smooth tactician. He knows how to get open and consistently proves himself as a pass catcher. He's going to be his quarterback's favorite target."

Former Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs had a great relationship with Phenix City (Ala.) Central five-star cornerback AJ Harris. With Coombs out, where does Ohio State stand with one of 2023's top defenders?

"Ohio State is still in the upper echelon of Harris' recruitment. But there is a lot of work to be done – and done relatively quickly. Harris is in no rush to make a decision, but the new Buckeyes defensive coaches (more specifically Tim Walton and Perry Eliano) will need to establish a rapport and comfort level with Harris and his family. Otherwise, I won't be surprised to see the Buckeyes lose out on Harris even after they were in the catbird seat for a long time."

Ten, Big Ten Defensive Lineman and Player of the Year, and a first-team All-American.

The younger Smith held additional offers from Boston College, Duke, Illinois, Northwestern and West Virginia, among others. He's rated the No. 540 overall prospect in 2023 and the No. 71 defensive lineman, and he visited for a pair of games this past season against Maryland and Purdue.

"I've been a Buckeye fan my whole life," Smith told 247Sports when asked about why he committed to Ohio State. "To get the opportunity to play for the best football program at the highest level is unreal. It really came down to getting to spend more time with the coaches and in the facility (on Jan. 22). It felt like home. I really want to play for these coaches and learn from them."

Before committing, he told On3 Sports that Johnson views him as a defensive tackle for the Buckeyes.

"He likes the improvement and growth over the last year and my motor," Smith said. He also said that he has spoken with Knowles and is "looking forward to getting to know him more."

Given the familial ties, Ohio State was expected to be the leader for Smith, and that came to fruition given his short timeline between being offered and committing.

"I definitely want to continue to work hard and strive to be the best like he was," Smith said of his late father. "I wouldn't say I feel pressure to live up to his legacy. I feel like football is something that keeps me connected to him."

OSU Starting Over With 2023 CB Harris

Coombs' second stint with the Buckeyes was fraught with questions concerning his ability to coordinate the defense, but what was never in question was his recruiting ability.

One of the best relationships he formed was with Phenix City (Ala.) Central five-star cornerback AJ Harris, one of the top defenders in 2023. Harris was originally set to decide between Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, LSU, North Carolina, Notre Dame and Ohio State on Jan. 11, his

birthday, and it was thought the Buckeyes might be the pick.

However, possibly related to uncertainty with Coombs' job at Ohio State, Harris has pushed his commitment back indefinitely, and the Buckeyes now have to make up some ground in his recruitment.

It was initially reported by Eleven Warriors that new Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles had yet to reach out to Harris more than 10 days after his hiring, and AJ's father Dan said it would have a big impact on his son's recruitment.

Ohio State has since reached out to Harris, and though things seemed tense at first, the troubled waters seem to have calmed.

"I was a little disappointed that Coach Knowles didn't touch base with us," Dan Harris told 247Sports. "But now I understand completely. The question about Coach Coombs was going to come up, and he wouldn't be able to answer it. But now we know coach Perry Eliano and Coach Walton are taking Coach Coombs' place. I talked to both of them.

"It was good. Neither one of them had to sell me on Ohio State," he continued. "And neither one had to sell me on themselves. I had already done my homework on them."

Dan said Eliano and Walton were expecting to visit AJ's school and that the new assistants would have to foster a relationship with his son.

Coombs, meanwhile, has been hired as Cincinnati's new cornerbacks coach and special teams coordinator. Just minutes after Coombs' hiring was reported, Harris tweeted that Cincinnati was now one of his top schools, indicating that Ohio State will have to go up against Coombs for the top prospect.

Eleven Early Enrollees Arrive On Campus

Ohio State welcomed 11 early enrollees to campus over the last few weeks, allowing them to get an early start on preparation for their freshman seasons.

The list of early enrollees includes defensive backs Brown, Stokes, Turner, de-

fensive lineman Caden Curry, linebackers Hicks and Powers, offensive lineman Fitzpatrick, quarterback Devin Brown, tight end Bennett Christian, and wide receivers Caleb Burton and Kyion Grayes.

Recent classes have featured early enrollees who earned some playing time in their freshman seasons – namely defensive end Jack Sawyer, running back TreVeyon Henderson and cornerback Denzel Burke in 2021, as well as wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba in 2020 – and there are a few early enrollees in 2022 who could fight for early snaps.

Hicks and Curry could see snaps at their respective rotations, similar to the roles Sawyer and defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau operated in this season – not starting, but one of the first ones off the bench.

Christian, meanwhile, could be one of the few 2022 signees with a chance to start this season. Even with super senior Mitch Rossi returning, Jeremy Ruckert is off to the NFL and Cade Stover is likely switching back to linebacker, and along

Continued On Page 22



9762 Sawmill Parkway
POWELL

5637 Woerner Temple Road
DUBLIN

3140 Kingsdale Center
UPPER ARLINGTON

\$10 OFF
PURCHASE OF \$50 OR MORE
Does not include alcoholic beverages. Dine in only. Not valid with other offers. Tax not included. Expires 12/31/22



MEXICAN SEAFOOD & TAQUERIA
6211 Cleveland Ave • **COLUMBUS**



\$6 OFF
PURCHASE OF \$30 OR MORE
Does not include alcoholic beverages. Dine in only. Not valid with other offers. Tax not included. Expires 12/31/22





Continued From Page 21

with the departure of super senior Corey Rau, this means the Buckeyes are losing over 80 percent of their snaps at tight end from last season.

Christian is known not necessarily as an electric pass catcher but for his blocking ability, which remains the focus for tight ends in Ohio State's offense. Rossi will be penciled in as the starter for now, but with the chance for Christian to get involved with spring practice, he'll enter the season with as good a chance as any other tight end to get the starting nod.

Five-Star '23 Receiver Inniss Prepares For Spring Visit

Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star wide receiver Carnell Tate (6-2, 185) has been the focus for Ohio State in 2023, but a new fighter has entered the arena with Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage five-star receiver Brandon Inniss (6-0, 190), who is set to visit the Buckeyes this spring.

Inniss decommitted from Oklahoma in November following the Sooners' coaching change, and Ohio State is considered among his top schools for the second round of his recruitment along with Alabama, Miami (Fla.) and USC, where former Sooners coach Lincoln Riley is now coaching.

It will be a fight to the finish for Inniss, ranked the No. 9 overall prospect and the top receiver in 2023, but Ohio State will be able to make a strong impression if it can lock in an upcoming trip to campus.

"I think I'm going to get back out there

in the spring," Inniss told Eleven Warriors. "Around that time, I'll be back."

Inniss had positive words about all four of his top schools, but it appears wide receivers coach and newly minted passing game coordinator Brian Hartline has left a strong impression on him.

"Coach Hartline is like no other coach," Inniss said. "He breaks down the game to you in a way that no other coach will. It's amazing to see what their receivers do in and out every single year."

Sampson Lists Bucks In Top Five

Ohio State is in on New Bern, N.C., four-star defensive lineman Keith Sampson Jr. (6-3, 285), one of the top linemen in 2023, who listed the Buckeyes in his top five released Jan. 15.

"Since Ohio State offered, we have built a strong relationship," he told On3 Sports. "I talked to Coach Day a lot, and he's made a big impression on me. Coach Johnson is a great coach too, and we talk a good bit. Defensive assistant Nick Sebastian is like a big brother to me too. We talk every day."

Sampson is rated the No. 206 overall prospect and No. 30 defensive lineman in his class, and he included the Buckeyes alongside Clemson, Florida State, N.C. State and South Carolina.

The Buckeyes offered Sampson on April 8, 2021, and he has taken visits to Ohio State, N.C. State and South Carolina. His commitment timeline goes into the next fall football season, as he plans to take all of his official visits during the season and then make a decision.

"I want to focus on my team and getting healthy first," he said. "Recruiting stressed me out a little last season, so I am looking at things a little differently now."

OSU Likely Out On OU Decommit Webb

Inniss is not the only Oklahoma decommit whom Ohio State is keyed in on right now. Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy running back Treyaun Webb (6-0, 188) decommitted from the Sooners in November, but while he was initially in contact with the Buckeyes, they appear to have fallen off the map for the four-star running back.

Webb told 247Sports' Steve Wiltfong that Georgia, Michigan, Oregon, Penn State and USC are among the schools he's had the most contact with.

He's publicly indicated that Georgia is the leader right now. Before committing to Oklahoma, he was committed to the Bulldogs, pledging verbally back in November 2019 and later decommitting in January 2021.

Ohio State is looking to take a pair of running backs in 2023, with the focus right now on Lehigh Acres (Fla.) Senior five-star Richard Young (5-11, 200) and Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic four-star Justice Haynes (5-10, 200).

Offers at running back are also out to El Campo, Texas, five-star Rueben Owens (5-11, 190), Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater four-star Cedric Baxter Jr. (6-1, 215), Waco (Texas) Connally four-star Tre Wisner (5-11, 180) and Charlotte (N.C.) Julius L. Chambers four-star Daylan Smothers (5-11, 182).

Hoffler Makes Second Visit To Columbus

Ohio State welcomed Atlanta Woodward Academy four-star defensive lineman AJ Hoffler (6-5, 245) for his second visit to the school over the weekend of Jan. 20.

Hoffler, rated the No. 262 overall prospect in 2023 and the No. 41 defensive lineman, previously visited on Nov. 20,

2021, and received his "dream offer" at that time.

"They're the school leading my recruitment right now," Hoffler told On3 Sports. "To know they want me back really means a lot. I've been talking to Larry Johnson once or twice a week."

He holds additional offers from Auburn, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Michigan State, Penn State and Texas, but it doesn't appear that any other schools have made a significant impression on Hoffler.

Even the staffing changes at Ohio State, which have cost the Buckeyes with some recruits such as Harris, haven't impacted Hoffler.

"I haven't been too concerned with the new hires," Hoffler said. "Especially because I know they're all great coaches. They still lead over everyone else. I don't see that changing soon unless something happens with Coach Johnson."

Hoffler has not set a timeline for his commitment, but if he were to pull the trigger soon, it appears Ohio State would be the pick. Wiltfong issued a crystal ball prediction for Hoffler to the Buckeyes following his offer.

Day, Frye, Dennis Visit Montgomery Brothers

Ohio State brought the cavalry to an Ohio high school Friday night basketball game Jan. 14 between Findlay and Lima Senior, with Day, Frye and quarterbacks coach Corey Dennis stopping in to see 2023 four-star offensive lineman Luke Montgomery (6-5, 260) and 2025 quarterback Ryan Montgomery (6-3, 180).

Luke is rated the No. 63 overall prospect in the class and the No. 6 offensive tackle, and he holds offers from Alabama, Clemson, Michigan, Notre Dame, Oklahoma and Penn State, among others.

"That means a lot for Ryan and me," Luke told 247Sports. "Them and Michigan came, so it meant a lot. It was great to see all of them here."

Long viewed as a battle between Ohio State and Notre Dame, Luke indicated he plans to take "three or four" official visits

Get Back in the Game with Columbus Mens Clinic!



Specializing in erectile dysfunction, premature issues, acoustic wave therapy, and testosterone replacement.

Get your first office visit, testosterone level, and PSA check for free! That's a \$300 value.

Don't wait! Call today!
614.300.7400

Walk-ins Welcome
1507 Chambers Rd, Ste 201
Columbus, OH 43212

**COLUMBUS
MEN'S CLINIC**

www.ColumbusMensClinic.com

www.HatemAutomotive.com
service@hatemautomotive.com

1407 West Fifth Avenue
Columbus, OH 43212
614-486-5277

Tom Hatem Automotive

*Serving all of Columbus' automotive repair needs
for over 23 years.*

BMW • MERCEDES • MINI COOPER • PORSCHE

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago - 1987

Perhaps gaining the most attention among the elite of Ohio high school senior football players was Cincinnati's CAPE running back Carlos Snow. The 5-10, 200-pound Snow was the Ohio Class AA back of the year the previous two seasons and had gained 7,856 yards in his four-year prep career.

However, contrary to rumors, he had not yet decided on his future school.

"That is not true," said CAPE coach Steve Sheehan when asked about a rumor that Snow and teammate Vincent Clark, an outstanding defensive back, had made a commitment to Ohio State before departing Columbus after their visit the weekend of Jan. 16-18. "I did speak to them when they came back. Vinny was more vocal about it than Carlos. But they both liked it and I'm sure OSU is still in the picture. Vinny was just more vocal about it than Carlos was."

Sheehan, who had guided the CAPE Crusaders to a Division III state championship, said the lack of emotion from Snow was his nature.

"Although when he came back from Georgia, he was singing its praises," Sheehan said. "He really liked it. He really did. I don't know if that's because he had never seen Georgia and he's been to Ohio State a couple of times. You just don't know."

30 Years Ago - 1992

The latest players to come on board the Ohio State recruiting juggernaut included two of the most highly recruited in-state players - defensive lineman Luke Fickell of Columbus DeSales and tight end D.J. Jones of Lebanon.

Fickell had been expected to wait until after a Jan. 24-25 visit to Notre Dame to make a public announcement of his decision, but the recruiting grind had started to affect his performance in wrestling and he moved up his announcement.

"This is a big relief," Fickell told BSB. "It was beginning to wear on me a little bit, so I'm glad to get the announcement behind me. I'm from right here in Columbus, and I've followed the Buckeyes as long as I can remember. I just wanted to be a part of it all."

25 Years Ago - 1997

Ohio State welcomed just one player - Long Beach (Calif.) Poly wide receiver Ken-Yon Rambo - for an official visit over the weekend of Jan. 17.

Rambo (6-1, 190), who was hosted by fellow Californian wide receiver Michael Wiley, had Ohio State leading over nearby USC.

"It was cool. It was a real nice visit," Rambo said. "It opened up my eyes about some things. I didn't know the city and the area was so big."

Rambo told BSB there were two big reasons that he favored the Buckeyes.

"There's two things - the receivers they have there now and how many they've developed recently," Rambo said in reference to the likes of Terry Glenn, Chris Sanders and Joey Galloway starring in the NFL.

20 Years Ago - 2002

Quarterback Justin Zwick was already committed to Ohio State's class of 2002, but with the transfer of redshirt freshman quarterback Rick McFadden to Akron, the Buckeyes were much more interested in Cleveland Glenville's Troy Smith.

Smith (6-1, 205) was making an official visit to Iowa Jan. 21-22 then was due to visit OSU Jan. 26. He had seen West Virginia, Michigan State and Toledo previously.

OSU was recruiting him as an athlete, but Smith told BSB the staff had softened its stance and said it would consider him as a quarterback. He was ranked Ohio's 13th-best prospect by The Ohio Football Recruiting News.

15 Years Ago - 2007

Immokalee, Fla., linebacker Brian Rolle verbally committed to the Buckeyes, but whether he ended up in Columbus remained to be seen.

Rolle verbally committed to the Buckeyes Dec. 12, 2006, after being torn between OSU and the Florida Gators, and while a self-imposed deadline of Jan. 12 for the Gators to offer him an official visit came and went without a phone call, that did not mean the Gators were backing off him. It also did not mean that other schools had stopped calling him.

"The Florida coaches visited me (Jan. 17)," Rolle told BSB. "(Offensive line/tight ends) coach Steve Addazio was here. Florida State dropped in the picture. Actually, (Jan. 16) I got a call and they want me to visit and I'm thinking to myself, 'It's a bit too late for that,' and then my coach told me that Miami might offer me now."

"Honestly, I just look at my chances. I know I'm going to Ohio State, true enough, but if Florida State, Florida and Miami (Fla.) were to offer, I would probably just weigh out my options."

10 Years Ago - 2012

Urban Meyer received a rare dose of bad news when he learned five-star quarterback Jameis Winston of Hueytown,

Ala., would not make his scheduled trip to Ohio State the weekend of Jan. 21.

"Jameis will not be taking that official visit to Ohio State," Hueytown head coach Matt Scott told then-Scout.com's Bill Greene. "I spoke to (quarterbacks coach and offensive coordinator) Tom Herman and told him he wouldn't be coming. I have to say Tom did a great job getting Jameis back interested in Ohio State."

Winston, a 6-4, 200-pound dual-threat signal-caller rated No. 2 at his position in the nation, was committed to Florida State but continued to check out other schools to make sure he made the right decision in his pledge to the Seminoles.

Five Years Ago - 2017

Lexington, Ohio, defense end Cade Stover, a class of 2019 prospect, held just two offers early in the process, but he got interest from some top schools, including Ohio State.

Stover held offers from Kentucky and Miami (Ohio), but schools such as Ohio State and Notre Dame were on his radar as well.

"I'm also hearing from Ohio State, and Coach Meyer was in my school last week," he told Greene. "I visited there last year for the Northwestern game. Having Coach Meyer at the school was pretty amazing, and he only said hello to me. I have a lot of interest in Ohio State, and Coach Meyer wants me to come to a junior day in a few weeks."

One Year Ago - 2021

Ohio State's record 15 early enrollees were welcomed to campus Jan. 22-24, though they did not receive the usual welcome that a Buckeye would due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In-person classes were pushed back, meaning enrollees arrived on campus later than normal, and they were also required to quarantine for one week prior to gaining entry to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

"It's a very unique situation for them to be here with no students and to have to quarantine," head coach Ryan Day said during a conference call on Jan. 22. "It's not ideal. I told Jesse (Mirco) it only gets better from here. He's going from Australia to here. It was 28 degrees the other day, no students on campus and they were quarantined for a week. It can't get any worse. He's excited to be here."

around April, as he said he wants to enter his senior year having already committed to a school.

Ryan has yet to be ranked by any recruiting services, but his offer list still includes Georgia Tech, Michigan, Notre Dame, Penn State, Tennessee and Toledo.

"It's awesome for the opportunity for them to come and watch us play," he said. "It's definitely a big deal."

"I love (Ohio State) from an offensive standpoint," he continued. "Who wouldn't want to pass the ball (there) as a quarterback? (C.J. Stroud)'s numbers he put up are awesome. I love their offense, the tempo they have, and looking forward to keeping building a relationship with them."

Ryan said he does not have a definitive timeline, though one possibility is committing before his junior year.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Milton (Mass.) Academy four-star tight end Andrew Rappleyea (6-4, 215) committed to Michigan on Jan. 16 over his other top schools that consisted of Boston College, North Carolina, Ohio State, Penn State, Wake Forest and Wisconsin. The Wolverines were late to the party, offering Rappleyea just weeks ago on Dec. 24, but Rappleyea told 247Sports he had developed strong relationships with the staff and looked forward to the way he'd be used in the offense.

- Ohio State offered Fayetteville (Ga.) Whitewater four-star linebacker Raul Aguirre (6-2, 220) on Jan. 20. He's rated the No. 120 overall prospect in 2023 and the

No. 8 linebacker. He holds additional offers from Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Michigan State, Oregon and Tennessee, among others.

- The Buckeyes offered Many, La., four-star linebacker Tackett Curtis (6-2, 218) on Jan. 18. He's rated the No. 64 overall prospect and the fifth-best linebacker in 2023. He holds offers from Clemson, Florida, Georgia, LSU, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Penn State and Texas A&M, among others.

- Ohio State offered Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star athlete Samuel M'Pemba (6-4, 230) on Jan. 19. He's rated the No. 15 overall prospect in 2023 and the No. 1 athlete, though M'Pemba has played at wide receiver and defensive end for IMG Academy. He holds additional offers from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State, Texas and Texas A&M, among others.

- Hartline is again looking to bring in top wide receiver talent, as Ohio State offered Houston Langham Creek four-star wide receiver Jaquize Pettaway (5-11, 170) on Jan. 20. He's rated the No. 42 overall prospect in 2023 and the No. 8 wide receiver. He holds additional offers from Alabama, Florida, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Penn State, Texas and Texas A&M, among others.

- Ohio State offered Columbus (Ga.) Carver four-star defensive lineman Darron Reed (6-5, 260) on Jan. 21. He's rated the No. 286 overall prospect in 2023 and the No. 45 defensive lineman. He holds

additional offers from Clemson, Georgia, Kentucky, Miami (Fla.), Michigan State, Tennessee and USC, among others.

- Dipping back into the receivers, Ohio State offered Rolesville, N.C., four-star wide receiver Noah Rogers (6-1, 180) on Jan. 12. He's rated the No. 55 overall prospect and No. 10 wide receiver in 2023. He holds offers from Clemson, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oregon, Penn State and N.C. State, of which there is one crystal ball prediction for Rogers to the Wolfpack.

- Ohio State offered Houston Dekaney four-star wide receiver Jonah Wilson (6-1, 195) on Jan. 20. He's rated the No. 228 overall prospect in 2023 and the No. 28 wide receiver. He holds additional offers from Baylor, Pittsburgh, Purdue and Texas A&M, among others.

- Ohio State offered Upper Marlboro (Md.) Charles Herbert Flowers four-star defensive end Desmond Umeozulu (6-5, 220) on Jan. 19. He's rated the No. 307 overall prospect in 2023 and the No. 25 defensive end. He holds additional offers from Kentucky, Michigan State, Oklahoma and Ole Miss, among others.

- One of Frye's first offers with Ohio State was Roswell (Ga.) Centennial four-star offensive tackle Daniel Calhoun on Jan. 20. He is rated by 247Sports as the No. 74 overall prospect in 2024 and the No. 2 tackle. He has additional offers from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Michigan State, Oklahoma, Ole Miss and Tennessee.

- Another 2024 prospect Ohio State

offered is Atlanta Woodward Academy linebacker Myles Graham on Jan. 20. He has not been assigned a rating yet from 247Sports, but he holds offers from Alabama, Georgia, Ole Miss and Texas, among others.

- Ohio State offered Temple (Texas) Lake Belton wide receiver Micah Hudson (6-0, 186) on Jan. 18. 247Sports rates him the No. 63 overall prospect in 2024 and the No. 13 wide receiver in his class, though he does not yet hold a composite rating. He holds additional offers from Baylor, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh and Texas, among others.

- The Buckeyes offered Washington (D.C.) Friendship Collegiate Academy defensive lineman Dylan Stewart (6-4, 220) on Jan. 20. He has not been assigned a rating from 247Sports, but he holds offers from Boston College, Maryland, N.C. State and Penn State, among others.

- Ohio State offered Moultrie (Ga.) Colquitt County four-star tight end Landen Thomas (6-4, 210), one of the top tight ends in 2024, on Jan. 13. 247Sports rates him the No. 1 tight end and the No. 18 overall prospect in his class. He holds offers from Florida, Florida State, Georgia, LSU, Penn State, Tennessee and Texas A&M, among others.

- Issuing its third offer in 2025, Ohio State offered Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Dillard defensive lineman Armondo Blount (6-3, 230) on Jan. 19. Blount holds offers from Florida State, Iowa State and Miami (Fla.).

Frye Takes On Big Ten Recruiting Challenge

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State will have a new leader on the offensive line this upcoming season, as longtime coach Greg Studrawa was let go after six seasons in Columbus.

Studrawa was hired by former coach Urban Meyer in 2016 and kept on by current head coach Ryan Day when he took over for the 2019 season, and it's been an up-and-down tenure for the Fostoria, Ohio, native.

Once he got to Ohio State after previous stops at Maryland, LSU and Bowling Green, Studrawa helped develop a number of linemen to the NFL, including Wyatt Davis, Jonah Jackson, Jamarco Jones, Michael Jordan, Josh Myers, Billy Price and Isaiah Prince.

"Studrawa's offensive line development was really good, especially on the interior," Lettermen Row's Zack Carpenter told BSB. "He was able to show recruits that he has proven himself as a hands-on coach, and he connected well with his players once they were in the program."

But play on the offensive line had dipped in recent years due to a combination of development issues and personnel decisions, including this past season when the Buckeyes opted to start four true tackles on the offensive line, kicking Thayer Munford and Paris Johnson Jr. inside in an attempt to get the five best linemen on the field.

At best, results were mixed. Pass protection took a step forward as the line allowed just 17 sacks, tied for 15th fewest in the country, though six combined sacks were given up in losses to Oregon and Michigan.

The rushing attack looked strong to begin the season with open lanes for running backs TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams, but as the season progressed, the lanes got smaller and the team's yards per carry dipped, especially against top-tier opponents faced down the stretch.

All the while, recruiting on the offensive line has taken a similar hit. After Ohio State signed five top-100 linemen in Studrawa's first three classes from 2017-19, just two were signed from 2020-22.

Numbers have also been down of late, with just seven offensive linemen signed in the last two classes, assuming Hammond (Wisc.) Saint Croix Central four-star Carson Hinzman indeed signs on National Signing Day.

"I don't think he's ever loved recruiting, just from things I've heard," Buckeye Scoop's Alex Gleitman told BSB. "This is not firsthand, so take it for what it's worth, but I just think he didn't have that self-starting motivation as a recruiter. I don't think he was crazy on top of things, and I just don't think he enjoyed that part of the job that much. He did what he had to do."

Taking Studrawa's place at Ohio State will be former UCLA offensive coordinator and offensive line coach Justin Frye, whose hiring was announced Jan. 11. Frye will operate as the associate head coach for offense and coach the offensive line.

He spent four seasons with the Bruins under head coach Chip Kelly and had previous stops at Boston College, Temple,



PHOTO COURTESY OF UCLA ATHLETICS

NEW TO THIS — Ohio State offensive line coach Justin Frye hasn't recruited at a blue-blood program before, but his experience on both coasts and in the Midwest is a major positive among recruiting analysts. He's already hit the ground running, speaking to several key Ohio State line targets since his arrival.

Florida and Indiana. Day and Frye worked together for a season at Temple (2012) and for two years at Boston College (2013-14).

"I think it's a really good hire," Gleitman said. "I spoke to a bunch of people who knew Justin while he was at Boston College, and they spoke really highly of him. They think he's a guy who could be a future head coach one day, and not everyone can do that. When you talk about him as an offensive line coach and being able to develop talent and understand the game and help them understand the game, that's going to be big."

In Frye's four full recruiting cycles at UCLA, including the classes of 2019-22, the Bruins brought in 11 total prospects on the offensive line, highlighted by four-star guard Sean Rhyhan, rated the No. 74 overall prospect in 2019 and the second-best guard in his class.

Dating back to his days with the Eagles, which began when he was hired in December of 2012, Frye has recruited 31 offensive linemen in nine classes, all but two of whom were at least three stars, in addition to transfer Paul Grattan, who started games for the Bruins the past two seasons.

"When you talk about what he brings on the recruiting trail, the results aren't crazy," Gleitman said. "It's not like he's been bringing five stars into UCLA or Boston College — that's OK, though. He now has the Ohio State brand, so that should immediately help him get in with the quality recruits that he's talking to. I've talked to a number of different recruits already that have spoken to him in the 2023 class, and they're really excited. They can feel the energy."

Though Frye has spent the better part of

the last decade recruiting on the coasts, he has extensive experience and roots within the Midwest. He grew up in Indiana and played for the Hoosiers from 2002-06 and was later a graduate assistant for his alma mater from 2007-08. He later became a graduate assistant at Florida under then-head coach Meyer from 2009-10.

Despite his experience in the Midwest, taking on offensive line recruiting with the Buckeyes, and the Big Ten as a whole, still marks a shift for Frye in that expectations will be higher than ever.

"He's recruited the area at various stops he's been at. He's a Midwest guy through and through his whole life, so that will project and that's authentic, and so I don't think there's really a concern about his ability to recruit the Midwest," Gleitman said. "But I'll tell you this — while there's definitely going to be plenty of targets inside the Midwest region that he'll be going after, his experience at Boston College on the East Coast and UCLA on the West Coast, and at Temple in Philadelphia and New Jersey, that's certainly going to be valuable for him because Ohio State is a national brand."

"The expectation (at Ohio State) is you get the high four-stars, the five-star type guys, you bring them in, and you develop them into what they're supposed to be," he continued. "Here or there you take some middle-ranked Ohio guys or regional guys or high upside guys, but the level of expectation of the type of recruit you bring in at Ohio State — if he signs the guys he got at UCLA and Boston College, it's going to be a massive disappointment at Ohio State."

Frye has already jumped in headfirst, reaching out to a number of 2023 offen-

sive line recruits, according to Carpenter, the chief-most being Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star commit Josh Padilla, who helps to give Frye an early start in his first class with the Buckeyes.

He's also been in contact with a number of prospects, including Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep four-star Chase Bisontis; Orlando (Fla.) Dr. Phillips four-star Payton Kirkland; Findlay, Ohio, four-star Luke Montgomery; Brockton (Mass.) Thayer Academy four-star Samson Okunlola; and Des Moines (Iowa) Southeast Polk five-star Kadyn Proctor.

"He's already hit the phones and the road in earnest, reaching out to and/or visiting pretty much every top 2023 target at offensive line," Carpenter said. "Recruits thus far have liked the fact that he's young and enthusiastic — but not over the top — and that he comes off as a genuinely good dude who backs it up with in-depth knowledge of the position."

Moving to a national brand, Frye will certainly run into new challenges recruiting against some of the top schools in the country, but it marks a potential shift for Ohio State when recruiting on the offensive line had become stagnant in recent years.

"They've obviously gotten talent because they're Ohio State, and the guys who played for (Studrawa) do like him — there's nothing wrong with him — but I just think that there are some guys like Justin Frye who are a little bit younger and understand that part of the game is extremely important in college football," Gleitman said. "They just might have a little bit more success when it comes to recruiting (with Frye)."

Vrabel Makes Jump From Player To Coach

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The NFL is dotted with former Ohio State players who are standouts such as Joey and Nick Bosa and potential stars like Justin Fields. But only one ex-Buckeye currently has transitioned from playing for the Scarlet and Gray to being an NFL head coach as Mike Vrabel of the Tennessee Titans has done.

Between those two successful careers he was a decorated NFL player with three Super Bowl rings for the New England Patriots (2001, '03 and '04).

Vrabel, 46, is 41-24 (.631) in four regular seasons coaching the Titans, finishing atop the AFC South the past two seasons and earning the No. 1 conference seed this season with a 12-5 record despite using an NFL-record 91 players due to injuries and COVID-19 issues.

He owns a 2-3 playoff record. The Titans in his second season lost to the Kansas City Chiefs in the 2019 AFC championship game. This season, Tennessee lost to the Cincinnati Bengals and former OSU quarterback Joe Burrow on Jan. 22 in a divisional playoff game.

"I think we are always looking for more," Vrabel said prior to the game with the Bengals. "Our goal is to win championships."

Although the Ohio State media guide states that Vrabel is the only former Buckeye player to be a head coach in the NFL, that's inaccurate.

Sid Gillman, who played for OSU from 1931-33 and was an assistant from 1938-40, was elected to the College Football and Pro Football halls of fame as a head coach. He compiled an 81-19-2 record at Miami (Ohio) University and Cincinnati, and his pro mark in the NFL and AFL was 123-104-7.

He's considered one of the NFL's greatest offensive innovators of the last century, and his coaching tree extends to Bruce Arrians, head coach of the 2021 Super Bowl champion Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Of course, one of the greatest coaches has ties to Ohio State, although not as a player. Paul Brown was a winner at every level in the state and was a Pro Football Hall of Fame inductee in 1967.

He coached the Buckeyes from 1941-43, including the 1942 national championship. He also founded the Cleveland Browns and the Cincinnati Bengals and was dubbed the "father of the modern offense."

There have been less successful moves for Buckeye coaches to the pro ranks from college. Notably, Lou Holtz and Urban Meyer each lasted just 13 games as head coaches in the NFL.

Holtz was an assistant for Woody Hayes in 1968 when the Buckeyes won the national championship. Holtz was 3-10 as the New York Jets boss in 1976 before returning to the college sidelines for a long and storied career.

Meyer led the Buckeyes to the first College Football Playoff title for the 2014 season, his third year in charge. He retired after the 2018 season but came back for a



FILE PHOTO

LEADING THE PACK — No Buckeye has had more success as an NFL coach than Mike Vrabel, who led the Tennessee Titans to the No. 1 AFC seed in 2021.

disastrous 2-11 mark for the Jacksonville Jaguars in 2021 before being fired.

That brings it back to Vrabel. The outside linebacker retired from Kansas City after the 2010 season following 14 years with the Pittsburgh Steelers, Patriots and Chiefs.

He was coaxed to Columbus to be the linebackers coach by his friend and former OSU teammate Luke Fickell, who was named head coach for the 2011 season following the firing of Jim Tressel.

While Vrabel had considered playing in the NFL in the 2011 season, he just couldn't say no to Fickell, who had been his host when he came to Ohio State on a recruiting visit and was the best man at Vrabel's wedding.

Vrabel, a defensive end, played for the Buckeyes from 1993-96, and in each of his final two seasons he was an All-American and Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year.

Fickell's tenure lasted one season before Meyer was hired. Meyer decided to keep Vrabel on staff for the next two seasons, but in 2014 Vrabel departed to become linebackers coach for Houston Texans' head coach Bill O'Brien.

Vrabel was elevated to defensive coordinator in 2017 and named head coach of the Titans on Jan. 20, 2018.

His reputation is one of being hard on the players but always keeping the line of communication open.

"He truly is genuinely caring about each individual player on this team whatever their role might be, whatever situation they're going through," said Titans defensive coordinator Shane Bowen. "I think when you care about guys, that's when you start to earn their trust and their respect."

Vrabel stressed during this season that with so much roster upheaval every player had a defined role.

"You try to make sure that everybody is prepared and ready to go when they come in at the beginning of the week," he said. "You come in and you show up Monday. You

tell the guys who come into this meeting, 'You better be prepared as you work your way through the next couple days to play in the game, because anything can happen.'"

The Patriot Way

Vrabel coaches the way he played. New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick said this upon trading him to the Chiefs in February 2009:

"Mike Vrabel epitomizes everything a coach could seek in a professional football player: toughness, intelligence, playmaking, leadership, versatility and consistency at the highest level."

Vrabel, by the way, is 2-0 vs. his former coach, including a 20-13 wild-card round victory in 2019 in Tom Brady's final game with the Patriots.

Of the seven head coaches hired in 2018, only Vrabel and Frank Reich of the Indianapolis Colts are still on the job.

"He's done a great job since he's been there, and I'm not surprised at all with it," former Houston Texans coach David Culley said of Vrabel. "His football team emulates who he is and what he is as a person and as a coach."

Vrabel is not afraid to make changes. He went with his gut feeling and replaced former Heisman Trophy winner Marcus Mariota at quarterback with Ryan Tannehill midway through the 2019 season, and he's been the starter since.

"(Vrabel) paints a great picture for us of what it's going to take to win games and then holds us to that standard," Tennessee offensive coordinator Todd Downing said. "That's all you could ever ask for out of a head coach, tell me what you need from me to help this team win and then hold me accountable to doing it."

This season Vrabel had to adjust on the fly, especially with the loss of star running back Derrick Henry for much of the season.

Vrabel is the front-runner for the AP Coach of the Year which will be announced Feb. 10 as part of the NFL Honors show.

No coach in franchise history, which goes back to more than 60 years with the Houston Oilers of the AFL, has won the award.

"That may be interesting, but it is not important," Vrabel said after the regular season ended. "We have to focus on things that are important. That is trying to play better and prepare, just because any mistakes are magnified in the playoffs against good teams."

As he tries to deflect attention away from himself, others won't let that happen.

"We've talked about the record of having so many different guys play for our team and still be able to string together wins against playoff quality teams," Titans safety Kevin Byard said. "I think that résumé deserves huge consideration for coach of the year."

Pro Football Talk has already anointed Vrabel its top coach for 2021:

"Titans coach Mike Vrabel, employing the 'no excuses' mind-set he surely learned during his time as a player on the Patriots, did not miss a beat when his team lost running back Derrick Henry, news that came a day after the Titans seemingly wrapped up the AFC South by completing a sweep of the Colts on Halloween.

"Along the way, the Titans utilized more players than any team in NFL history, a record that was broken way back in Week 12. ... So, yes, Vrabel earned it."

His ascension as one of the top coaches was predicted 11 years ago by Chiefs general manager Scott Pioli upon Vrabel's retirement.

"His genuine love for the game, his preparation, his work ethic, leadership and dependability are qualities you want from every player," Pioli said. "He is a champion in every sense of the word and I'm confident all of these qualities will make him a great coach. I cannot overstate my respect for him as a person and a football player."

SUMMIT
PERFORMANCE INSTITUTE

Train to be the BEST you can be!
Designing fitness programs to meet your personal needs.

Personal Training

Group Fitness Training

Sports Specific Training

Owned and Operated By:
Brent Johnson
614-570-9918
B-fit.training@hotmail.com

Located at 2378 East Main Street in Bexley, Ohio

Wisconsin Eyes Ravens Assistant Engram As OC

Wisconsin head football coach Paul Chryst is reportedly looking to bring in someone he is quite familiar with as the Badgers' next offensive coordinator. Three days after Wisconsin posted a job opening for offensive coordinator, ESPN reported that Chryst hoped to hire Baltimore Ravens tight end coach Bobby Engram.

After coaching wide receivers for his first five seasons (2014-18), Engram worked with the tight ends for his last three years with the Ravens.

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

Engram, who is the father of current Badger defensive back Dean Engram, coached wide receivers under Chryst at Pittsburgh in 2012 and 2013. He lacks experience as a coordinator, but Chryst plans to remain heavily involved in the offensive game plan, according to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Additionally, inside linebackers coach Bob Bostad will shift to offensive line coach to replace Joe Rudolph, who left after the Las Vegas Bowl to coach the offensive line at Virginia Tech. Bostad previously held that role from 2008-11.

Minnesota Picks Up DT Transfer

Minnesota picked up the commitment of Harvard defensive tackle Chris Smith, who was a first-team All-Ivy League honoree in 2021.

The 6-3, 300-pound interior lineman totaled 40 tackles (13 solo), five tackles for loss, 3½ sacks, three quarterback hurries and two forced fumbles in his final year with the Crimson. The Detroit native concluded his Harvard career with 72 tackles, 7½ TFL, and 5½ sacks in 29 games.

As a graduate transfer, Smith will have one year of eligibility remaining with the Golden Gophers. He became the third defensive lineman that head coach P.J. Fleck and his staff have added through the transfer portal this offseason, joining former Clemson DL Darnell Jeffries and former Vanderbilt DL Lorenza Surgers.

"I decided to commit to Minnesota last night because of the culture of the football program foremost," Smith said. "And I wanted to be able to play in a top-level defense in the Big Ten. I also had head coach P.J. Fleck, defensive coordinator Joe Rossi and defensive line coach Brick Haley by the house today. They had a great talk with me and my mom. They just said that next year is a big year and to come back in the best shape and condition possible this summer when I arrive at Minnesota."

Former Gophers RB Commits To Kansas

Former Minnesota running back Ky Thomas announced his decision to transfer to Kansas following an impressive 2021 campaign.

Thomas led the Golden Gophers in rushing with 824 yards and scored six touchdowns, adding six receptions for 44 yards. In Minnesota's 18-6 bowl victory over West Virginia, Thomas earned Guaranteed Rate Bowl MVP with 144 rushing yards and one touchdown.

The redshirt freshman from Topeka, Kan., emerged as a playmaker for Minnesota following injuries to fellow tailbacks Mohamed Ibrahim and Trey Potts. Thomas' 91.6 rushing yards per game ranked sixth in the Big Ten, while his season total of 824 rushing yards ranked ninth.

Thomas, who was rated a four-star recruit by 247Sports, ranked as the No. 28 running back nationally and the third-ranked prospect in his home state for the 2020 class, according to the composite rankings.

As a high school recruit, Thomas originally chose the Gophers over offers from Iowa, Kansas, Kansas State and Louisiana Tech. Since he entered the transfer portal on Jan. 3, Thomas reported offers from Colorado, Kansas and Purdue before picking the Jayhawks.

UW Fan Ejected From NW Game

A Wisconsin fan was ejected from a men's basketball game in Evanston Jan. 18 after making anti-Asian gestures toward Northwestern fans, according to school officials.

In a video posted to social media, a Badgers fan is seen sitting close to the court, making racist gestures in the direction of the Northwestern student section.

"He was taunting students, flipping them off and, to top it off, did the racist slant-eye Asian gesture and continued pretty much the entire first half of the game," said Deborah Lee, an alumna who took the video from two rows over.

The man was escorted out of Welsh-Ryan Arena by a Northwestern official and police officer, for which Wisconsin praised its Big Ten foe.

"Our events should be a place for everyone to enjoy the excitement of college sports," Wisconsin Chancellor Rebecca Blank said in a statement. "The University of Wisconsin, Northwestern University and the Big Ten Conference promote good sportsmanship, appropriate fan behavior and a welcoming atmosphere for all fans at all athletic events. Racist behavior at our venues is unacceptable, and we will take action promptly to address it."

"We appreciate Northwestern events staff promptly removing the man from the game," Blank continued. "The ticket-holder has been identified by the Northwestern and Wisconsin athletic departments."

Blank added that the fan is not a current student or employee at Wisconsin, and he is no longer permitted to attend future Wisconsin athletics events and is unable to buy tickets through the school's platform.

"He did not seem to have any remorse at all," Lee said. "He was doing gestures throughout the first half. I think I personally saw it at least a dozen times. He was proud even as he was leaving to keep making gestures."



FILE PHOTO

STAFF SHAKEUP — Wisconsin head coach Paul Chryst (above) is looking to hire Baltimore Ravens assistant Bobby Engram as UW's new offensive coordinator. He's also moved LBs coach Bob Bostad to the OL coaching role.

Iowa's Clark Makes History

Iowa women's standout guard Caitlin Clark became the first Division I men's or women's player to record back-to-back triple-doubles while scoring 30 or more points in both games.

She also became the first player in Big Ten women's basketball history to post consecutive triple-doubles. Clark scored 35 points with 13 rebounds and 11 assists in a 105-49 drubbing of Minnesota after posting 31 points, 10 boards and 10 assists in a 93-83 victory over Nebraska.

In the Hawkeyes' 56-point beatdown of the Golden Gophers, Clark's 35 points marked the fourth most in D-I women's basketball history for a player who recorded a triple-double. LSU's Cornelia Gayden scored 43 points in a triple-double outing, and Long Beach State's Cindy Brown and Alabama's Daisha Simmons each had 37 in their respective triple-double performances, while Rider's Stella Johnson scored 35 points like Clark.

Clark scored her 35 points with great efficiency, connecting on 14 of her 21 shots. The sophomore standout also scored or assisted on 60 of the Hawkeyes' points and tied a career high in rebounds.

With her back-to-back triple-doubles, Clark now has four on the season and five for her career. Penn State's Suzie McConnell holds the conference record with seven career triple-doubles, while Iowa's Samantha Logic and Maryland's Alyssa Thomas (formerly ACC) both had six.

IU's Holmes Undergoes Surgery

Mackenzie Holmes — a standout forward for the Indiana women's basketball team — underwent successful surgery on her left knee Jan. 20.

"I want to thank you for the outpour of thoughts and prayers," Holmes posted on Twitter. "Your support means everything to me. I'm going to be back and better in no time thanks to a great medical team we have here at IU. In the meantime, I'll be the loudest one on the bench, continuing to support my team in the pursuit of the goals we have set for this season."

Prior to news of the surgery, Hoosier head coach Teri Moren said she believed Holmes might be back by late February or early March, which would be in time for the postseason.

Holmes, who was an honorable-mention All-American as a sophomore, had been enjoying a dominant junior season before her injury, averaging 17.9 points and 8.2 rebounds per game.

The Hoosiers won two tight contests without their standout forward to improve to 14-2 on the season, which includes a program-best 6-0 start in Big Ten action.

UW WVB's Rettke Earns Honor

Dana Rettke, a standout middle blocker from Wisconsin, was named the Honda Sport Award winner for volleyball, becoming the first Badger volleyball player to earn the prestigious national award.

The Honda Sport Award has been presented annually by the Collegiate Women Sports Awards for the past 46 years to the top women athletes in 12 NCAA-sanctioned sports and signifies "the best of the best in collegiate athletics." The winner of the sport award becomes a finalist for the Collegiate Woman Athlete of the Year and the prestigious 2022 Honda Cup, which will be presented on a live telecast on CBS Sports on June 27 at 9 p.m. EST.

Rettke was chosen by a vote of administrators from more than 1,000 NCAA mem-

ber schools. Finalists included Louisville's Tori Dilfer, Texas' Logan Eggleston and Minnesota's Stephanie Samedy.

"It is such an honor to be recognized alongside so many amazing and influential women in our sport," Rettke said. "While this award has my name on it, it speaks volumes to my team and how great it is. Being surrounded by inspiring women every day is a blessing. Thank you to everyone at Wisconsin for helping me get to where I am today, because without them nothing could be possible. Thank you to Honda for supporting female athletes and recognizing excellence. It really is an honor."

Rettke capped an outstanding career as the 2021 American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) National Player of the Year, becoming the first-ever five-time AVCA first-team All-American in the organization's history. Most recently, she led the Badgers to their first NCAA national championship and was named to

the 2021 NCAA all-tournament team for her efforts.

The 6-8 fifth-year senior middle blocker led the Big Ten with a .430 hitting percentage, which ranked sixth in the country, in addition to ranking fifth nationally with 1.43 blocks per set.

"What a tremendous honor for Dana to join the list of great players in our sport who have won this award over the years," Wisconsin head coach Kelly Sheffield said. "This is a tribute to all of the hard work and sacrifice that Dana has put in over the years and how she conducts herself and leads, both on and off the court – not to mention the huge part her teammates have played in her success along the way."

UW Hires Jones For Soccer Program

Wisconsin decided to hand the keys to the men's soccer program to Neil Jones, who spent the past nine seasons directing

the Loyola University Chicago men's soccer program.

"We are thrilled to welcome Neil Jones as our next men's soccer head coach," Wisconsin athletic director Chris McIntosh said. "He has a proven track record of elevating the lives of the student-athletes he works with as individuals and collectively turning that into team success on and off the playing field. We look forward to him building on that record of accomplishment here at Wisconsin."

At Loyola, Jones won a pair of Missouri Valley Conference championships, making multiple NCAA tournament appearances, including the first NCAA win in program history. He finished 81-54-24 (.585) in his nine years at the helm of the Ramblers, with his teams also maintaining at least a 3.0 grade-point average in each campaign.

"Thank you to Chris McIntosh, (associate athletic director) Marija Pientka and the

search committee for entrusting me as the next Wisconsin head men's soccer coach," Jones said. "It was evident throughout my time on campus that along with the world-class education, excellent facilities, beautiful campus and the thriving city of Madison, the people are truly Wisconsin's greatest asset."

"I am eager to meet the team and get to work on the pitch with them. The opportunity to work with the group for the entire spring season will help build the foundation for our first season together this fall. I'm also excited to connect with our Badger men's soccer alumni, who have their fingerprints all over the rich tradition and championship history of this program."

Prior to Loyola, Jones served as associate head coach at Northwestern for three seasons, helping the Wildcats win 2011 and 2012 Big Ten regular-season titles and the 2011 Big Ten tournament championship.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago - 1982

Earle Bruce and Randy Hart were a team again. Hart, an offensive guard on Woody Hayes-coached Ohio State teams from 1967-69, was hired by Bruce to fill one of the three coaching vacancies created when Bruce fired three of his assistants shortly after the Liberty Bowl.

Bruce had been a Hayes assistant while Hart was playing for the Buckeyes, and the two had worked together before. After playing at OSU, Hart remained at the school for two years as a graduate assistant. He then went to Tampa in 1972 when Bruce was named head coach there and traveled with Bruce to Iowa State a year later when he claimed that head coaching job.

Hart had been working as an assistant at Purdue under Jim Young for five seasons before Bruce grabbed him for his staff in Columbus.

35 Years Ago - 1987

Kip Lomax, dressed in his Sunday best suit and tie, watched most of Ohio State's first 13 basketball games from the far end of the bench. Academically ineligible, Lomax had to sit and agonize while his teammates raced up and down the court in the new style of Buckeye coach Gary Williams.

"It hurt really bad because I felt I could contribute as much as anybody else out there," said Lomax, a 6-0 junior out of Columbus Mifflin High School. "But due to negligence in the classroom, I forced myself to sit there in that coat and tie."

Lomax, who also had been ineligible during his freshman year, was allowed to practice with the team. A starter in 27 games for the Buckeyes in 1986, he became eligible with the start of the winter quarter on Jan. 5.

"I'm very pleased about returning to this ballclub," said Lomax. "I'm just trying to contribute any way possible."

"The main thing is I want to let them know although I did let them down, I give them 100 percent each and every ballgame that I'm here and available to play. We can win those games."

Despite his newfound eligibility, Lomax was still working his way back into the lineup as the Buckeyes sat at 11-6 in late January.

30 Years Ago - 1992

Former Ohio State assistant coach Jim Tressel, the head coach at Youngstown State, was named the Ohio College Coach of the Year for the third consecutive year.

Tressel, who was an OSU assistant from 1983-85 on Bruce's staff, won the award for leading the Penguins to the Division I-AA national championship.

He beat out another former OSU assistant, Bowling Green head coach Gary Blackney, for the award. Tressel wound up with 56 votes in a poll of the state's college coaches while Blackney finished with 54 after leading the Falcons to an 11-1 record in his first year.

Ohio State head coach John Cooper was one of 10 coaches to receive votes but did not come close to either of the former assistants.

25 Years Ago - 1997

The 91st NCAA Convention, held Jan. 13-15 in Nashville, Tenn., would be known as one of the most athlete-friendly rules meetings in the governing body's history.

NCAA members narrowly passed a measure to allow student-athletes to hold jobs during the school year, a privilege revoked years prior to prevent abuses by schools and their boosters.

OSU athletic director Andy Geiger was among the delegates

at the convention. He heard both sides of the argument, including pleas from members of the athlete advisory committee.

"I think there was a feeling that we have restricted athletes too much," Geiger said. "I don't think there should be any illusions that we're going to start paying student-athletes."

"But we have given them more freedom and latitude to do things. At the same time, the penalties for abusing those privileges will be huge. There won't be any more overnight eligibility hearings."

The measure passed 169-150 but it was a loser among Division I-A schools, who voted it down 61-51. Those opposing the measure said it would put too much of an onus on schools to police their athletes.

"There is an affidavit involved where the student and the employer must attest that it is a real job and they are working for reasonable amounts of money – the going rate," Geiger said.

20 Years Ago - 2002

Early on in Michael Doss' press conference at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center Jan. 9, it appeared as if he would do what almost everyone had expected and declare his intention to enter the NFL draft a year early.

"I've been playing football since I was 8 years old," Doss said. "My dream has been to play in the National Football League, and now that that opportunity has arrived I had to ask myself, 'Is this the best thing for Michael Doss?'"

But several minutes later, after a couple of breakdowns and many tears, he announced his true intention – to return to Ohio State for his senior season.

"My mother told me, living in a two-bedroom apartment with nothing to survive on but her son, she told me to get my education, and I will be returning to Ohio State," Doss said.

Even as he approached the lectern with his Bible and car keys preparing for his press conference, he wasn't totally sure of his decision.

"I am positive I did not know what I was going to say (when I got to the lectern)," Doss said. "You could say you just watched me decide."

15 Years Ago - 2007

In the aftermath of Ohio State's 41-14 loss to Florida in the Jan. 8 BCS National Championship Game, many members of Ohio State's fan base were left looking for answers – and wanted them straight from the top.

That wasn't happening though, considering the top was Tressel, who was not exactly known for his media availability or his straight answers. Still, some fans were left wondering what went so wrong in the desert and wanted Tressel to at least give some sort of explanation or make himself available.

On Jan. 17, he did, speaking for the first time since the aftermath of that game in a radio spot on WBNS-AM. He acknowledged that his Ohio State team might not have been as into the game as their Florida counterparts.

"I think the fine line and edge in games is always the mental part," Tressel said.

Later in the interview, Tressel added, "I'm not so sure – and again, that's why you start with yourself – if we had our team as mentally prepared as we could have had it"

10 Years Ago - 2012

Less than three days after Ohio State announced the final additions to Urban Meyer's first coaching staff, the group lost a member.

Taver Johnson was to be one of four assistants Meyer retained

from the 2011 coaching staff, but Arkansas announced Jan. 15 that the five-year OSU assistant had accepted the positions of linebackers coach and assistant head coach.

Johnson, who mentored cornerbacks at Ohio State, joined new defensive coordinator Paul Haynes in Fayetteville after the two had worked together in Columbus for the previous five seasons.

"Taver is an extremely enthusiastic and devoted coach," Arkansas head coach Bobby Petrino said in announcing the hire. "He has a strong work ethic, is a great teacher of the game and is skillful at relating to his players."

During Johnson's five seasons in Columbus, Ohio State produced a trio of NFL cornerbacks in Chimdi Chekwa (a 2011 fourth-round pick), Malcolm Jenkins (a 2009 first-round pick) and Donald Washington (a 2009 fourth-round pick).

Five Years Ago - 2017

The man Meyer pegged to fill the void after Tim Beck and Ed Warinner left Ohio State was Kevin Wilson, who had most recently been the head coach at Indiana, where he had helped the Hoosiers give the Buckeyes fits for several years.

Known as a great offensive mind, Wilson helped Indiana become one of the most prolific offenses in the Big Ten after leading the Oklahoma Sooners to some of the best offensive performances in NCAA history as the offensive coordinator under Bob Stoops.

With his time as a Big Ten head coach up – at least for the time being – Wilson was set to take over Meyer's offense after the Buckeyes struggled on that side of the ball at times in 2016.

Questions around Wilson's treatment of players had led to his ouster in Bloomington, but Ohio State was hoping that pairing him with co-offensive coordinator Ryan Day and keeping them under Meyer's guidance would quell any such issues.

One Year Ago - 2021

During his first call with the media since Ohio State's loss to Alabama in the national title game, Day fielded a number of questions, several of which hinged around the upcoming quarterback battle in Columbus.

That battle would be between Jack Miller and C.J. Stroud, who were true freshmen in 2020, and Kyle McCord, the five-star signal caller in the 2021 class who Day had previously said would compete for the starting job in his first season.

"That is going to happen," Day said of McCord when he signed with OSU. "He will compete for the job. We're going to have to figure out, if Justin (Fields) decides to go to the NFL, who the next quarterback is at Ohio State. And that's a big, big deal. I know he's looking forward to getting in here and getting to work right away."

Although Miller and Stroud did get a year under their belts within Ohio State's system and playbook, both received minimal game time and neither threw a single pass in a game for the Buckeyes, though each did notch a rushing touchdown.

"We're going to have to find ways this spring between C.J., Jack and Kyle to give them as many game-like situations to figure out exactly what we have," Day said. "We can't go into that first game without knowing, or at least having an idea. I guess we'll never know until we're in a game. But we have to try to simulate the games the best we can in practice, which may be a unique way of doing the spring."

"Those guys are going to roll, and they're going to get as many reps as they can. And if one guy starts to separate early on, then he goes and runs with it."

OSU Signees Starring In Senior Seasons

Ohio State has big plans for its class of 2022 signees, and for good reason. Ranked the No. 7 class in the country by 247Sports, the five-man group rates higher than any that head coach Chris Holtmann has ever signed across any of his three head coaching tenures at Gardner-Webb, Butler or Ohio State, and it's slated to arrive at a critical time for the Buckeyes.

COURT REPORT Patrick Mayhorn

With super seniors Joey Brunk, Jimmy Sotos, Cedric Russell, Jamari Wheeler and Kyle Young all exhausting their eligibility this season and potential departures from as many as four other players (Justin Ahrens, E.J. Liddell, Justice Sueing and Seth Towns), infusing new talent who can play from the start was a critical directive for the 2022 class.

And through nearly three months of their senior season, the members of that 2022 Buckeye class are largely rising to the occasion and offering plenty of reasons for their future coaches to be optimistic about the direction Ohio State is headed.

"They've all had really good years," Holtmann said. "Bruce (Thornton), I just saw him at the City of Palms Tournament. He's had a really good year. Brice (Sensabaugh) has had a phenomenal year in Florida. Roddy (Gayle)'s really been playing well. Felix (Okpara) has really played well. Obviously, it's a special class. Bowen (Hardman)'s been a little injured. They've been able to play the bulk of their seasons so far."

None of the soon-to-be Buckeyes have impressed more than Alpharetta (Ga.) Milton four-star point guard Thornton. Leading a Milton team missing two of its best players after Jonathan Murray and Cameron Walker were arrested on suspicion of robbery and murder just prior to the season, Thornton has helped carry his team to an 13-7 start and a third-place finish at the Tournament of Champions – which plays host to some of the nation's best teams – in mid-January.

With backcourt battery mate Kanaan Carlyle dealing with a stomach bug, Milton lit Chicago Whitney Young High School up to the tune of 34 points on 12-of-17 shooting in a 61-37 win Jan. 15 to claim that third-place crown.

He was electric for the entire event. To open the tournament on Jan. 13, he drained a buzzer-beater from the midcourt logo to knock off Nixa (Mo.) High School and nearly did it again a night later against Chantilly (Va.) St. Paul VI High School, rattling a last-second attempt off the back iron in a 55-54 loss. He finished the three-game event with 74 points.

"Either of us can get hot at any time," Thornton said. "I knew (Carlyle) was down, so I had to pick up the load. I'm perfectly fine and capable of doing it. He'll do it for me too."

He was proud to put on a show on one of the biggest stages he's faced to this point in his career, just as he did a year ago, leading Milton to a state title.

"I was told there was going to be a big crowd, and I was like 'all right,'" Thornton said. "Then I looked at it and I was like, 'Whoa.' This experience and the whole weekend was great, one of the best tournaments I've ever been to."

He hasn't had quite the coming-out party that Thornton did, but Orlando (Fla.) Lake Highland Prep small forward Sensabaugh is producing scoring figures that place him among the nation's best. Sensabaugh was averaging 27.5 points per game on 46 percent shooting from three-point range as of Jan. 13, earning himself a spot as a McDonald's All-American nominee alongside classmates Gayle, Okpara and Thornton, while leading his team to a 13-1 record.

The McDonald's All-American nominees from around the country will be whittled down to a group of 24 selections on Jan. 25. Gayle has played a similar role for Mount Pleasant (Utah) Wasatch Academy, where the four-star shooting guard is still finding his footing in a loaded lineup but has flashed his immense scoring ability that earned him Ohio State's interest. His squad, facing off against the nation's best teams, sits at 11-8 through Jan. 24.

Okpara has worked as more of a role player for Branson (Mo.) Link Academy and actually came off the bench at the Flyin' To The Hoop invitational in Kettering, Ohio, Jan. 14-17, but whatever he's doing seems to be working. His team is 26-0 on the season and ranks as the No. 1 team in Missouri.

The only signee without much to report on is Cincinnati Princeton three-star guard Hardman, who sprained his ankle in November and has been sidelined since. He's targeting a late-January return.

Hookfin Earns Scholarship Spot

Ohio State's roster of scholarship players has grown by one, and the Buckeyes didn't even have to hit the recruiting trail or the transfer portal.

Holtmann took the opportunity after Ohio State's 61-56 victory over Penn State on Jan. 16 to welcome a new scholarship Buckeye into the fold, announcing to his team that senior forward Harrison Hookfin had shed



SONNY BROCKWAY

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF — Senior forward Harrison Hookfin was informed after the Buckeyes' Jan. 16 win over Penn State that he had been awarded a scholarship. The former walk-on has appeared in 15 games in four seasons.

his walk-on status and was officially a scholarship player.

"This is one of the things that we've been excited about doing for a good bit now," Holtmann said in the locker room after the game. "We love to be able to reward and honor those guys that have played an important role in our program. You guys know that everybody is treated the same in this family. We coach our best player as hard as we coach the guy who just got here. That's what we do."

"Everybody has the same responsibilities. You have to bring your best every day, whether you're on scholarship or you aren't. But there's a guy who's important to us in this locker room that hadn't yet been on scholarship, but he is right now."

A Cincinnati native, Hookfin has spent his career in Columbus largely as a practice

player, earning minutes in only 15 games in four seasons, but he's emerged as a veteran leader within the program all the same.

He even earned the nod to lead the Buckeyes in their traditional postgame locker room chant of "our honor defend," but only after he managed to escape the swarm of teammates who flocked to him to celebrate.

Former Buckeyes Lighting Up NBA

Keita Bates-Diop, Jae'Sean Tate and Duane Washington didn't exactly enter the professional basketball ranks as highly touted prospects – Bates-Diop is the only one of the three who was drafted – but all three are finding success in the NBA this season as rising contributors on struggling teams.

In his second season with the San Anto-

I will wait for YOU

I'll be your Home Concierge whenever you have a furniture or appliance delivery, service call, or other important event that requires someone to be in your home.

Pet Friendly. Insured.

Nancy Magargal • 614.208.5702 • illwaitforyou5nancy@gmail.com



nio Spurs (17-30 through Jan. 24), Bates-Diop has carved out a role as a capable wing stopper and midrange scoring threat, and he has even worked his way into the starting lineup on 12 occasions as the Spurs deal with roster attrition and search for wingers they can trust. He was averaging a career



Keita Bates-Diop

high for minutes per game (17.3) and was already nearing a new best for games played in a single season, sitting at 39. His previous best came in 2019-20, when he suited up 44 times for two teams, first for the Minnesota Timberwolves and then briefly for the Denver Nuggets, before finding his way to San Antonio in the 2020-21 season.

In fact, since returning from a stinger in early December that held him out of two games and severely limited him in a third, Bates-Diop has blossomed into a full-on contributor. Through Jan. 24, he had played in 18 of San Antonio's last 19 games, started seven times and was averaging 7.7 points per contest, which would be a career best. He was shooting better than 50 percent from the field (51.9) and had nabbed 5.1 rebounds per contest since Dec. 19.

"He is just trying to find a place in the NBA, find a home and have a career," coach Gregg Popovich said. "He has been given some minutes and opportunities and has taken advantage of it and tried to show he can be a good player at both ends of the court."

He found a breakout of sorts on Dec. 23 against the Los Angeles Lakers, rolling up 30 points in 27 minutes on a perfect 11-of-11 shooting from the field. Holtmann is hoping that the efforts of his former player this season may earn him a second contract with the Spurs.

"I talked to their general manager and their former general manager," Holtmann said. "They talked about it was an important year for Keita. He had to potentially get another contract. They talked about his progress. The one thing he's got to continue to grow in is his shooting. They made an investment in him in the offseason. I believe that Keita's going to continue to grow and make that investment the Spurs made in him pay off."

Bates-Diop's secret to his success this season is on-brand for the famously even-keeled player, too. He's picked up stoicism to help cope with the chaos of professional basketball.

"You never know what's going to happen," Bates-Diop told the San Antonio Express-News. "It's, 'Will I start? Will I come off the bench?' It's been that way my whole career. I've played, didn't play, been traded away - whatever it is."

"I've tried to be even-keeled throughout it all, just trusting the work without getting too emotional, too high or too low. It's all about acceptance. Accepting the things that happen, the things you can and can't control. That was a big thing for me, separating the two.

2021-22 Ohio State Men's Basketball Statistics

12-4 Overall (5-2 Big Ten)
Statistics through games of Jan. 24

Player	G-GS	Min.-Avg.	FG-FGA	Pct.	3P-3PA	Pct.	FT-FTA	Pct.	Rebounds		PF-FO	A	TO	BS	ST	Pts.-Avg.
									O-D	T-Avg.						
E.J. Liddel	16-16	491-30.7	103-201	.512	23-58	.397	82-112	.732	36-81	117-7.3	40-2	43	47	45	7	311-19.4
Malaki Branham	16-15	410-25.6	58-130	.446	15-39	.385	29-35	.829	10-44	54-3.4	24-0	30	24	3	13	160-10.0
Zed Key	16-13	356-22.3	64-108	.593	0-0	.000	22-37	.595	28-62	90-5.6	35-0	11	16	16	2	150-9.4
Kyle Young	14-1	305-21.8	40-72	.556	11-30	.367	31-37	.838	12-65	77-5.5	21-1	17	16	7	8	122-8.7
Jamari Wheeler	16-16	477-29.8	40-83	.482	16-47	.340	17-19	.895	11-43	54-3.4	36-1	60	30	1	26	113-7.1
Justin Ahrens	16-16	426-26.6	32-90	.356	31-87	.356	14-19	.737	3-49	52-3.3	29-1	19	15	1	7	109-6.8
Meechie Johnson Jr.	13-1	256-19.7	28-76	.368	20-50	.400	10-14	.714	4-17	21-1.6	24-0	18	23	1	12	86-6.6
Justice Sueing	2-0	31-15.5	5-13	.385	0-4	.000	2-2	1.000	1-6	7-3.5	3-0	0	2	0	1	12-6.0
Cedric Russell	14-0	147-10.5	17-38	.447	14-27	.519	3-4	.750	0-6	6-0.4	8-0	7	6	0	1	51-3.6
Eugene Brown III	12-0	134-11.2	14-28	.500	4-14	.286	7-10	.700	11-12	23-1.9	16-0	5	5	2	1	39-3.3
Jimmy Sotos	11-0	100-9.1	8-13	.615	4-7	.571	4-6	.667	1-9	10-0.9	13-0	20	5	2	1	24-2.2
Joey Brunk	14-2	84-6.0	9-13	.692	0-0	.000	5-6	.833	1-15	16-1.1	12-0	4	4	3	1	23-1.6
Harrison Hookfin	3-0	8-2.7	1-2	.500	0-0	.000	0-0	.000	1-0	1-0.3	1-0	1	0	0	1	2-0.7
Team									16-20	36						
Total	16	3225	419-867	.483	138-363	.380	226-301	.751	135-429	564-35.3	262-5	235	198	81	81	1202-75.1
Opponents	16	3225	384-944	.407	105-330	.318	206-278	.741	165-349	514-32.1	295-7	172	181	40	108	1079-67.4

"It's a lifelong process. I don't think anyone ever finishes. Some days are easier than others. But you keep trying."

He's finding a sense of security in San Antonio, too.

"I feel comfortable here," Bates-Diop said. "It's the longest I've been in one place (since logging 67 games with Minnesota over 1½ seasons), so it's starting to feel like home. That's half the battle in the NBA, finding a place where you are comfortable."

Tate has found a home of his own on the other side of the Lone Star State with the Houston Rockets (14-33). Through Jan. 24, he had started all but one of 45 games in his second season with the Rockets and has emerged as one of the better players on the roster as it sorts through the post-James Harden era following the superstar's trade a season ago.

He was averaging 12.5 points and 5.7 rebounds per game and enjoying every minute of it, after spending the first two seasons of his professional basketball career in Australia before advancing to the NBA last year.

"I have (wow) moments every day," Tate told The Columbus Dispatch. "Every day is a blessing and every day is a surreal mo-



Jae'Sean Tate

ment for me that I get to wake up and put on clothes with the NBA logo on them and play for the Houston Rockets and travel from city to city and people know who you are. It's just awesome."

He hasn't lost that fire he brought to Ohio State, though.

"You've still got to have a chip on your shoulder because as hard as it was to get here, it's easier to get out of here," Tate said. "Once you're out of here, it's very hard to get back in. It's almost impossible to get in, but to come back is almost impossible. That's what I just remind myself is that I want to be here for a long time."

Washington has seen his minutes wane

for the Indiana Pacers (17-30) after his six-game stretch as a starter from Dec. 31 through Jan 10, but he's hoping to stay ready for whenever the Pacers need him, as the league continues to deal with COVID-related issues knocking starters out of games for several days.

"Obviously, I definitely think I can help the team out," Washington told The Indianapolis Star. "Just with my shooting ability, being able to space the floor, being able to move and just being an active guy and having a lot of energy is something that I try to bring every time I step on the floor and just make the right play. When my day comes to play 20-30 minutes, I'll be ready."

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

Help BSB Grow

Loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers frequently ask us what they can do to help keep BSB vibrant in this increasingly electronic age. One of the things readers can do is introduce BSB to new readers who might find our Ohio State sports content interesting.

In order to help you do that, we are offering an opportunity to send four free trial issues to potential subscribers. We will then offer your potential subscriber a very special offer to get them to join the fold of loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers.

We are also offering a special \$19.95 subscription rate for gifts for our service men and women. It's nice to send a little bit of home to those all over the world who are protecting us. Don't forget to include an APO address when applicable and remember, any subscription includes electronic access to BSB, so our Buckeyes in uniform will be able to enjoy their BSB immediately, wherever they are.

This four free trial issue offer is not good for current subscribers. This offer is to introduce readers to BSB. You can conveniently email your names and addresses to subscriptions@buckeye-sports.com or mail them to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212.

Tickets To Events Anywhere
Concerts • Theatre • Sporting Events

MAIN EVENT

TICKET SERVICE

"Your Ticket Solution"

OSU Football & Basketball
Cleveland Browns
Blue Jackets
Nationwide Arena
Schottenstein Arena
NFL • NBA • NHL

AMERICAN EXPRESS Card MasterCard VISA DISCOVER

(614) 488-9957 • 888-842-5877
www.ticketsohio.com
1350 W. Fifth Ave., Ste. 24

We Buy OSU Football Tickets!

Ohio State Rebounds From Loss In Madison

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State had two games left in January, at Minnesota on Jan. 27 and home against Purdue on Jan. 30, but the Buckeyes had all but avoided the January woes that beset them in 2018 and 2019, holding a 4-2 record with a trio of Big Ten wins to remain firmly planted in the top half of the league entering the halfway point of conference play.

Since BSB last went to press, Ohio State had the chance to play in only three games, after a Jan. 22 matchup with Nebraska was postponed, and it emerged with a pair of wins to follow a tough loss to Wisconsin in Madison on Jan. 13, completing the season sweep of Penn State and picking apart an IUPUI team that joined the schedule in early January to make up for lost games earlier in the season.

Bucks Fall Down Early In Madison

Ohio State entered its Jan. 13 matchup with Wisconsin before 15,571 in the Kohl Center knowing that it could not afford a cold shooting night, a poor performance on the boards or a slow start against the Badgers, who entered the game as winners of five straight since a Dec. 11 loss in Columbus. Those had been the factors that doomed the Buckeyes in each of their three prior losses – especially against Indiana, when all three reared their heads to send Ohio State to an eventual blowout defeat.

And entering its first return matchup of the season against a Big Ten foe, which proved to

be a 78-68 loss to the Badgers, the Buckeyes knew that avoiding all of that would only come from an increased attention to detail.

“What changes is the attention to detail,” forward Kyle Young said before the game. “You’re going to know more about the team the second time you play them, especially as you’ve seen them play a few more times. Their prep for us is going to be more detailed, they’re going to have a better plan against us just like we are, and they’re playing really well right now. We’re excited for this game, they’re a really good team, and we’re going to do our best to be ready.”

The Buckeyes also knew that they could not let All-American hopeful guard Johnny Davis, who entered the game averaging 22.3 points per contest, generate points like he had the last time the two played, when he scored 24 points.

“We did not defend (Davis) well early, and it’s going to be a big challenge for Malaki (Branham),” Buckeye head coach Chris Holtmann said before the game. “Malaki has to be better in this game and it’s a lot to ask of a freshman. He’s going to be guarding an All-American, and then hopefully he can continue to play at the really high level he’s been at. It’s a big challenge.

“With a guy like Davis, though, it is a collective, team thing. He’s so good at getting to his spots, he has such burst and athleticism, and he can make shots at all three levels. You just have to make it difficult for him, and then you have to eliminate some of the impact that the other guys have.”

On that front, OSU and Branham could consider themselves successful. Davis ended the game with only 14 points, and he did so on just 4-of-18 shooting, one of his worst outings of the season. The effort did pull Branham away from scoring at the level he had been on the other side of the ball – he kicked in just 10 points.

Unfortunately for the Buckeyes, that was just about the only focal point entering the game that did break their way.

Wisconsin jumped out to a 40-27 halftime lead behind a solid shooting start (14 of 29 from the field, 7 of 13 from downtown), a 19-12 edge on the boards and poor shooting from their opponent, as Ohio State didn’t knock down its first three-pointer of the game until the 13:23-mark of the second half after 12 previously unsuccessful tries.

Despite an improved performance in the second half, which saw E.J. Liddell come alive after a quiet start to pitch in 18 points (14 in the final 20 minutes), Ohio State couldn’t overcome that slow start, falling to 4-2 in league play and 10-4 on the season, while Wisconsin improved to 14-2 overall and 5-1 in the Big Ten.

“It really came down to, as much as anything, we just didn’t have consistent enough defensive effort to win on the road,” Holtmann said. “Offensively, we were much better in the second half, much better rhythm but too many turnovers early and not a good enough collective defensive effort.”

Liddell echoed his coach.

“Away games, we’ve got to be more connected and more locked in,” Liddell said. “We’re our own energy. At home, it’s different because we have fans cheering us on. Here, we have fans cheering against us, so I feel like everybody has to be locked in and be more connected than what we were.”

The Buckeyes, who trailed by 17 points with 13:35 to play, drew as close as seven points after Liddell turned a Davis turnover into a jump-



SONNY BROCKWAY

DRIVING TO THE BASKET — Jamari Wheeler (55) drives around Penn State’s Sam Sessoms in a 61-56 Ohio State victory Jan. 16. Wheeler put up nine points and four rebounds in the win.

er and cut the deficit to 56-49 with 8:51 to play, capping a 14-4 Ohio State run, but Wisconsin responded with a barrage of its own to all but shut down the game. Point guard Brad Davison quieted the Buckeyes with a three-pointer to extend the lead back to 10 points on the next possession, Tyler Wahl tossed down a breakaway, and-one jam at the 4:15 mark to put the Badgers up 13, and after a Young basket, Davison knocked down another three-pointer to put Wisconsin in command, up 72-57 with 3:33 to play.

Davison drew the fifth foul of the game on Liddell a possession later, and Wisconsin equaled its largest lead of the night at 74-57 after a pair of free throws.

That seemed to spark the Buckeyes, and they rattled off a quick 11-0 run to cut the deficit all the way back down to six points at 74-68 with just under a minute to play, but two more Davison free throws after a Justin Ahrens foul that disqualified him and a Davis dunk a possession later cut short any hopes of a comeback.

Davison led all scorers with 25 points, including 16 in the second half, while Wahl added 20 and seven rebounds. Liddell’s 18 points paced the Buckeyes, as did a pair of blocks. Jamari Wheeler added 11 points, and Branham, Young and Zed Key chipped in 10 each. Key led the team in rebounds with eight.

Ohio State Sweeps Penn State Series

A sleepy noon tip for Ohio State’s Jan. 16 matchup with Penn State extended beyond media row, home to several cups of coffee – which had been expertly smuggled in under Ohio State’s new no-concessions rule. Down on the

floor, the Buckeyes didn’t seem to get the memo that there was a game to be played until they convened with Holtmann for a spirited conversation at the under-16 timeout of the first half of Ohio State 61-56 victory.

Prior to that break, the Buckeyes generated just four points on eight shots and fell into a quick deficit, with Penn State jumping out to a 10-4 lead. Holtmann plucked Ahrens and Key from the game and replaced them with Eugene Brown III and Young, hoping to infuse some energy to his somnolent bunch.

It worked, as Ohio State rode its newfound spark to a dominant stretch of more than 10 minutes, outscoring their neighbors from the East 19-4 out of the timeout until a Jalen Pickett jumper finally cracked a cold spell that had lasted nearly four minutes, cutting into an Ohio State lead that had grown as large as nine points at 23-14.

“This group has to continue to commit at (the defensive end),” Holtmann said. “Against (Penn State), you’re going to have to play 28 seconds of defense or they’re probably going to beat you. The last 35 or 36 minutes, we were able to do that.”

Although the Nittany Lions would rally back from that paltry stretch, they would never reclaim the lead, and Ohio State completed its two-game sweep of the season series with a 61-56 victory that moved it to 11-4 on the season and 5-2 in the Big Ten, while dropping Penn State to 8-7 overall and 3-4 in conference play.

The run proved critical for the Buckeyes even just in the final minutes of the first frame. Despite going the final 5:52 of the first half without a field goal, they still entered the locker room with a 27-22 lead.

Perhaps the biggest moment of the first half

Wisconsin 78, Ohio State 68

Jan. 13, 2022
Kohl Center • Madison, Wis.

	1	2	F
Ohio State (10-4, 4-2)	27	41	68
Wisconsin (14-2, 5-1)	40	38	78

	Ohio State	Total	FG	M-A	FT	M-A	O-D	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
Ahrens	24	2-5	0-0	0-3	1	5	5				
Key	20	5-8	0-3	2-6	0	1	10				
Liddell	31	6-12	4-5	1-5	1	5	18				
Branham	31	5-9	0-1	0-5	1	2	10				
Wheeler	29	5-12	1-1	1-0	3	3	11				
Young	28	5-10	0-0	1-4	0	0	10				
Sotos	9	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	2				
Russell	15	1-1	0-0	0-1	1	0	2				
Brown III	13	0-1	0-0	1-0	0	4	0				
Totals	200	30-60	5-10	7-26	7	20	68				

Percentages: FG: 50.0%. FT: 50.0%. **Three-point field goals:** 3-19 (Liddell 2-3, Ahrens 1-4, Brown III 0-1, Sotos 0-1, Branham 0-2, Young 0-3, Wheeler 0-5). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 3 (Liddell 2, Key). **Turnovers:** 11 (Liddell 3, Wheeler 2, Ahrens, Brown III, Key, Russell, Sotos, Wheeler, Young). **Steals:** 2 (Ahrens, Branham).

	Wisconsin	Total	FG	M-A	FT	M-A	O-D	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
Wahl	33	8-10	2-3	2-5	6	2	20				
Crowl	25	4-6	0-1	2-5	3	1	9				
Davis	34	4-18	5-6	2-7	2	2	14				
Hepburn	28	0-3	0-0	0-2	1	2	0				
Davison	37	7-12	7-8	0-3	1	2	25				
Bowman II	12	1-1	0-2	0-0	0	2	3				
Vogt	14	2-3	0-0	0-1	2	3	4				
Davis	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0				
Gilmore	7	0-2	0-0	0-0	1	0	0				
Neath	5	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	3				
Higginbottom	<1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0				
Carlson	<1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0				
Totals	200	27-58	14-20	7-26	16	14	78				

Percentages: FG: 46.6%. FT: 70.0%. **Three-point field goals:** 10-23 (Davison 4-6, Wahl 2-4, Bowman II 1-1, Neath 1-1, Crowl 1-2, Davis 1-5, Hepburn 0-2, Gilmore 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 0. **Turnovers:** 9 (Davis 4, Hepburn 3, Davison, Wahl). **Steals:** 6 (Wahl 3, Crowl, Davis, Vogt). **Officials:** Kimble, Beaver, Dorsey. Attendance: 15,571.

OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Ohio State 61, Penn State 56

Jan. 16, 2022
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio.

	1	2	F			
Penn State (8-7, 3-4)	22	34	56			
Ohio State (11-4, 5-2)	27	34	61			

Penn State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
Lee	32	4-9	0-0	2-6	1	2	9
Harrar	30	1-3	5-8	2-6	0	3	7
Dread	28	1-4	0-0	0-0	1	5	3
Sessoms	34	6-12	1-2	0-4	1	2	15
Pickett	40	4-11	2-4	1-2	5	4	11
White	9	1-6	0-0	0-2	0	5	2
Johnson	19	2-6	0-0	0-0	0	3	5
Scott	8	2-2	0-0	0-2	0	1	4
Totals	200	21-53	8-14	7-23	8	25	56

Percentages: FG: 39.6%. FT: 57.1%. **Three-point field goals:** 6-22 (Sessoms 2-4, Dread 1-3, Pickett 1-3, Johnson 1-5, Lee 1-5, White 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 4 (Pickett 3, Scott). **Turnovers:** 10 (Sessoms 3, Team 3, Lee 2, Harrar, Pickett). **Steals:** 5 (Pickett 2, Harrar, Lee, White).

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
Ahrens	28	1-4	0-0	1-6	0	2	3
Key	21	4-11	2-2	3-1	1	4	10
Liddell	33	6-11	6-12	1-7	3	0	19
Branham	33	1-7	5-8	1-3	2	0	8
Wheeler	34	2-3	5-6	1-3	1	3	9
Brown III	18	2-4	2-2	0-0	0	2	6
Young	24	0-2	4-6	1-6	2	1	4
Russell	7	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Brunk	2	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	2
Sotos	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Totals	200	17-44	24-36	9-28	9	13	61

Percentages: FG: 38.6%. FT: 66.7%. **Three-point field goals:** 3-12 (Branham 1-2, Liddell 1-2, Ahrens 1-4, Wheeler 0-1, Young 0-1, Brown III 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 5 (Key 2, Liddell 2, Wheeler). **Turnovers:** 9 (Key 2, Liddell 2, Wheeler 2, Young 2, Ahrens). **Steals:** 5 (Wheeler 2, Young 2, Branham).

Officials: Carstensen, Curry, McNutt. Attendance: 13,565.

came with just under two minutes to play, when Key – who had suffered a lower-leg injury earlier in the first half and took a trip to the locker room – returned to the floor to a barrage of cheers from the 13,565 fans in attendance. For an Ohio State team already down three contributors in Meechie Johnson Jr., Justice Sueing and Seth Towns, another injury to a key player could have proved problematic, but the sophomore from New York appeared to have suffered only a stinger.

After a first half that had the Buckeyes and Nittany Lions combine for just 17-of-54 shooting (31.5 percent), the second half offered a whole lot more of the same, at least for the latter. Penn State failed to score on its first four possessions out of the break while the Buckeyes, led by four points from Key, jumped out to a game-high 10-point lead, 32-22.

Ohio State's quick start would not last. After scoring five points in the first 2:15 of the half, it found only six more and led just 38-33 at the 11:12 mark. Brown and Liddell combined to snap the cold spell, knocking in buckets on three straight possessions to push the lead back to double digits, though that again would not last.

Dallion Johnson and Pickett knocked down back-to-back triples, split by a Liddell free throw, to bring the game back within five, 45-40 with 7:47 to play, but the Lions struggled to get closer, closing to four twice before a free throw by Branham and two more by Liddell pushed the lead back up to 54-47 with 2:28 to play.

It wasn't until Young knocked down a pair of free throws and Wheeler added four more for a 60-51 lead with 25 seconds to play that Ohio State put the game completely out of reach.

"I'm proud of the effort of our group," Holtmann said. "I thought we did some really good things, particularly on the defensive end. That

Ohio State 83, IUPUI 37

Jan. 18, 2022
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio.

	1	2	F			
IUPUI (1-15, 0-6)	24	13	37			
Ohio State (12-4, 5-2)	37	46	83			

IUPUI	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
Carrasco	13	0-0	1-2	1-0	0	3	1
Maxwell	27	1-8	2-2	0-1	0	4	4
McClure	31	1-2	0-0	0-2	0	2	3
DePersia	35	3-8	1-1	1-5	2	4	9
Stanton III	22	0-4	0-0	0-0	2	3	0
LaStrap	30	4-8	4-4	0-1	1	1	12
Seay	10	0-4	0-0	0-1	1	0	0
Isitua	22	4-5	0-3	1-3	0	3	8
Pandev	10	0-1	0-0	1-0	2	1	0
Totals	200	13-40	8-12	6-13	8	21	37

Percentages: FG: 32.5%. FT: 66.7%. **Three-point field goals:** 3-13 (DePersia 2-4, McClure 1-2, LaStrap 0-1, Pandev 0-1, Seay 0-1, Maxwell 0-4). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 0. **Turnovers:** 21 (TEAM 6, Isitua 3, DePersia 2, LaStrap 2, Maxwell 2, Seay 2, Stanton III 2, McClure, Pandev). **Steals:** 3 (Isitua 2, DePersia).

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
Ahrens	23	1-5	0-0	1-2	1	1	3
Key	19	3-5	3-4	2-2	0	2	9
Liddell	25	4-7	4-5	4-6	3	1	13
Branham	18	3-7	0-0	0-0	2	2	7
Wheeler	20	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	1	3
Young	18	4-5	0-0	1-2	1	1	9
Brunk	13	1-2	2-2	0-3	0	1	4
Russell	22	4-7	0-0	0-0	1	0	12
Sotos	20	2-2	2-2	0-2	9	4	7
Brown III	17	4-6	5-6	1-3	0	0	14
Hookfin	4	1-1	0-0	0-0	1	0	2
Totals	200	28-49	16-19	8-20	19	13	83

Percentages: FG: 57.1%. FT: 84.2%. **Three-point field goals:** 11-23 (Russell 4-5, Sotos 1-1, Brown III 1-2, Liddell 1-2, Wheeler 1-2, Young 1-2, Branham 1-4, Ahrens 1-5). **Team rebounds:** 1. **Blocked shots:** 5 (Key 3, Brunk, Sotos). **Turnovers:** 8 (Ahrens 2, Liddell 2, Branham, Brunk, Wheeler, TEAM). **Steals:** 6 (Wheeler 2, Branham, Hookfin, Russell, Young).

Officials: Kueneman, Young, Kitts Jr. Attendance: 10,666.

is a Penn State team that has been playing well. They had won three out of four, and they took Purdue right to the edge.

"They are really difficult to play because of how they play. You can't speed them up. It's going to be a low-possession game. You've got to make them miss. I'm proud of a lot of things here today. It was our best defensive effort since Christmas. We've had some really poor ones. I think we'll get back to making shots."

The Buckeye defense held Penn State to

39.6 percent shooting (21 of 53), and the Nittany Lions were just 6 of 22 from beyond the arc (27.3 percent).

Liddell led all scorers with 19 points, adding eight rebounds – most among all Buckeyes and tied with John Harrar and Greg Lee for the game high. Liddell also had a team-high three assists. Key added 10 points of his own, while Sam Sessoms led Penn State with 15.

Ohio State Dismantles IUPUI

The Value City Arena crowd in attendance for Ohio State's Jan. 18 nonconference matchup with IUPUI, scheduled only two weeks prior, never offered up more noise than it did with just under 16 minutes to play in the first half. The announced crowd of 10,666 reached a frenzy (of sorts) in its attempt to disrupt IUPUI's Jonah Carrasco on a pair of free throws to maintain what was previously a shutout bid for the Buckeyes.

Carrasco missed the first but knocked down the second, cutting Ohio State's 9-0 lead down to 9-1 and bitterly disappointing the OSU fans who had made the trek through snowy Columbus in hopes of seeing a hardwood shutout. They had to settle instead for a mere 83-37 annihilation of the Jaguars, who entered the game as KenPom's No. 356 Division I team (out of 358 teams) and left having thoroughly proved that point.

It bears mentioning that the second-loudest cheer went to Daniel, who knocked down a half-court shot while donning a Troy Smith jersey at the under-12-minute timeout in the second half to earn himself a Raising Canes gift card.

Ohio State didn't quite earn a gift card, but it did improve to 12-4 on the season in its brief sashay away from Big Ten play, while knocking the lowly Jaguars to 1-15.

The game itself did not offer much in the way of traditional entertainment for those in attendance – Ohio State led 37-24 at the half and IUPUI shot only 13 of 40 from the field (32.5 percent) on the game – but it did present a look at the Buckeyes who have seen their playing time dwindle in league play.

Every healthy scholarship player donning the scarlet and gray earned at least one minute of playing time. The usual suspects led the way – Liddell scored 13 points in 25 minutes, Key

added nine in 19, Branham had seven in 18 – but some lesser-used contributors found their way into the spotlight too.

Building on what has been a strong month already, Brown put up a career-high 14 points in 17 minutes of play and impressed Holtmann in the process.

"I thought his play was good," Holtmann said of Brown. "It's something he can continue to build upon. He's got to embrace the idea of being a guy who can guard multiple positions and play with great effort, rebound the ball and make open shots."

Joey Brunk notched 13 minutes and used his time to contribute four points and three rebounds; Jimmy Sotos found his way onto the court for 20 minutes and tallied seven points with nine assists; Cedric Russell knocked down a pretty three-pointer in the first half and finished with 12 points in 22 minutes. Even newly minted scholarship forward Harrison Hookfin saw time in his first game without the walk-on distinction, playing the final 4:23 of the game and converting a layup off a nasty drive with a hop step flourish.

For an Ohio State team with some of its toughest battles still left on the schedule in league play, the Jaguars offered a welcome reprieve. The Buckeyes took advantage of their chance to rest some stars and to try out some new looks.

The offense wasn't always pretty, stumbling a couple of times in the first half and nearly looking for a moment as though it would be in for a real competition. But it rounded into form, even with another difficult game from downtown for Ahrens before he finally knocked one down with 6:23 to play. He continued his post-COVID break cold spell with a 1-of-5 showing from the field, all from long range.

Despite going to the bench, the Buckeyes outscored IUPUI 46-13 in the second half, holding the Jags to 19.0 percent shooting (4 of 21) in the final 20 minutes, including 1 of 8 from downtown.

For the game, Ohio State shot 57.1 percent from the floor (28 of 49) and 47.8 percent on threes (11 of 23), led by Russell who connected on 4 of 5 from deep.

Let our friendly staff take care of you before, during & after the game.

Enjoy your favorite team on our many HD flat-screen TVs

Shade RESTAURANTS

Friends, Fun & Great Food!

NFL Ticket

Shade on the Canal
19 S. High St.
Canal Winchester
614-837-9873

Shade on 30th St.
850 S. 30th St.
Heath
740-788-9287

Shade on State St.
994 E State St.
Athens
740-566-1009

Mikesell Impressing On And Off The Court

Heading into the season, it was evident that Ohio State's success would hinge on a handful of returning starters.

Junior guard Jacy Sheldon and senior guard Braxtin Miller, as well as junior guard Madison Greene – before her season-ending knee surgery – were all on that short list of those who would help decide if the Buckeyes would make a return to the NCAA tournament this season after its cancellation in 2020 and the school's self-imposed postseason ban in 2021.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

Though 18 games, Sheldon and Miller have mostly lived up to expectations – Sheldon is the team's leading scorer with 21.3 points per game, and while Miller isn't as impactful on the box score, she's the team's top defender – but it's been senior guard Taylor Mikesell who has arguably had the biggest impact on this Ohio State team.

"I made a comment to Jacy like, 'We're definitely starting to get used to playing with each other,'" Mikesell said Nov. 17 following the team's win over Bowling Green. "We had two really good days of practice these past

two days and a really good shootaround today. I think we're just growing together, and I think you can see it out there on the court."

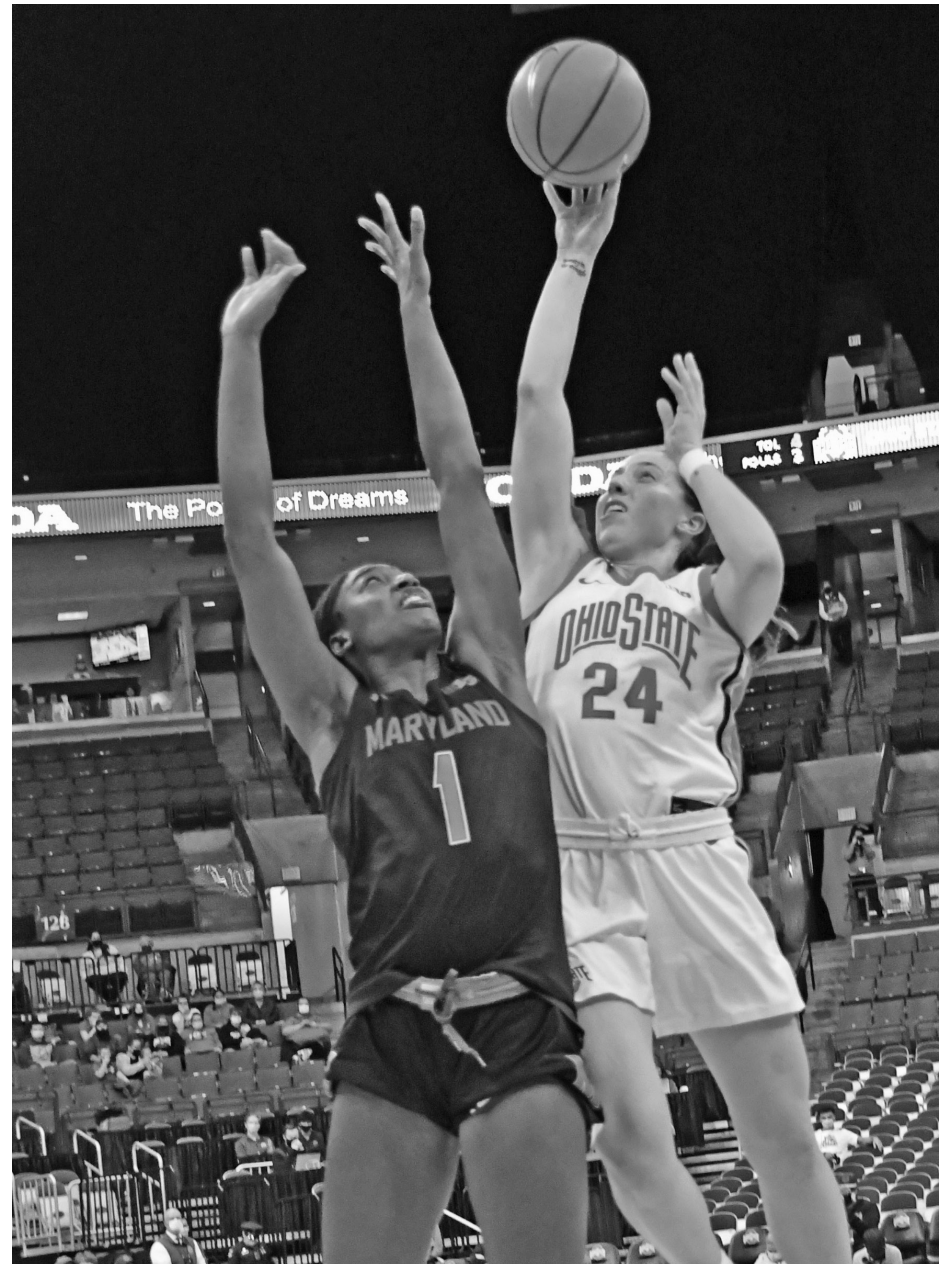
Just three games into the season, she felt the Buckeyes were beginning to play together as a team with lineups that were constructed just a day before the season began.

Now, with over half a season's worth of evidence, it's clear Mikesell knew the Buckeyes were building something special on offense, and she's been as big a part of it as any member of the team, regardless of tenure.

Ohio State is averaging 84.1 points per game, good for No. 3 in the nation, with Mikesell contributing 19.6 of those per game. She can score from two-point range and does so at a 50.5 percent clip, but where she makes her money is from beyond the arc.

Mikesell is No. 1 in the nation in three-point field-goal percentage among those with at least 100 attempts, knocking down deep shots at 49.6 percent, which would be second all-time for Ohio State in a single season. Brittany Johnson knocked down 48.1 percent of her attempts (77/160) in the 2009 season.

She has 69 made three-pointers this season on 139 attempts, and is on pace for over 500 points, which would make her just the 18th (or 19th, with Sheldon also on pace to hit 500 points) player to surpass that mark for Ohio State in a single season.



SONNY BROCKWAY

HIGH PRAISE – Senior guard Taylor Mikesell (24) scores over Maryland's Diamond Miller. Mikesell has impressed her coaches and teammates in her first season since transferring from Oregon, knocking down 69 of 139 three-pointers and helping to lead the Buckeyes to a 15-3 start.

With all that being said, for as good as she's been to Ohio State, her decision to transfer to Columbus from Oregon was about making sure Ohio State would be good for her as well, and the partnership seems to be paying off.

"She just really wanted to be in a situation she felt fit her, especially from a basketball standpoint," said head coach Kevin McGuff. "When you come out of high school, there's a lot of factors, a lot of things to think about, but she was at a point in her career where the biggest thing was the basketball, style of play and the ability to kind of highlight her strengths."

And for all that's been written about her impact for Ohio State on the court, she's been just as important off the court for these Buckeyes.

"She brings a huge impact," Sheldon said of Mikesell. "She's jelling with us amazingly on and off the floor. She definitely is fitting in and should be here. Off the floor she's a great person, and then on the floor she's an amazing player and amazing shooter. She really opens up lanes for us because

people stick to her, and she's smart. She can pass, she's getting better defensively every day, so she's really helped us a lot."

Greene's status as a leader for Ohio State has been well-noted, and while Mikesell can't replace the role of a three-year starter for the Buckeyes in terms of leadership, she's done her best to bring a level of maturity to the team.

"She's got a lot of experience at a couple of different programs where they were at a high level," McGuff said. "Every day, her work ethic and just knowing what it takes to be successful at this level has been really good for our young players."

Harris Making Strides In Relief

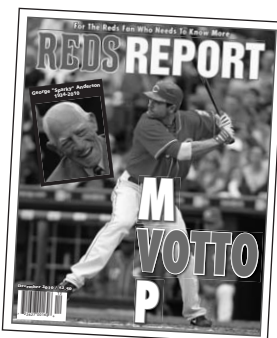
Ohio State redshirt sophomore guard Rikki Harris was first off the bench for the Buckeyes in a number of games this season, and she was the first one they called on to start when sophomore guard Kateri Poole was sidelined with a shoulder injury.

With Poole's injury – as well as starting senior guard Braxtin Miller missing a game

REDS FANS!

Follow The Reds Year-Round In Reds Report

Reds Report is must reading for every Reds fan. Each information-filled issue includes player features; historical articles; extensive minor-league coverage with features on top prospects, complete statistics and farm club updates; box scores and game summaries for every Reds game; complete team and individual statistics; a Reds memorabilia section and much more.



1 Year (12 issues) — \$44.95

Send to: Reds Report • P.O. Box 12453 • Columbus, Ohio 43212

- Please send me a one-year (12 issues) subscription to **Reds Report** for \$44.95.
- My check or money order is enclosed. Check # _____
- Charge to my: Discover MC Visa AMEX

Exp. Date _____

Card No. _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

For Faster Service On Credit Card Orders Call

1-800-760-2862

2021-22 Ohio State Women's Basketball Statistics

15-3 Overall (7-2 Big Ten)
Statistics through games of Jan. 23

Player	G-GS	Min.-Avg.	FG-FGA	Pct.	3P-3PA	Pct.	FT-FTA	Pct.	Rebounds		PF-FO	A	TO	BS	ST	Pts.-Avg.
									O-D	T-Avg.						
Jacy Sheldon	18-18	581-32.3	136-254	.535	30-67	.448	81-95	.853	21-42	63-3.5	36-0	68	53	2	37	383-21.3
Taylor Mikesell	18-18	591-32.8	123-248	.496	72-147	.490	35-38	.921	8-54	62-3.4	16-0	32	31	2	15	353-19.6
Rebeka Mikulasikova	18-18	385-21.4	78-161	.484	7-33	.212	26-33	.788	22-90	112-6.2	33-1	14	34	5	8	189-10.5
Kateri Poole	14-13	296-21.1	33-80	.413	12-36	.333	23-44	.523	6-40	46-3.3	32-1	50	48	2	18	101-7.2
Rikki Harris	18-5	432-24.0	41-96	.427	19-48	.396	23-45	.511	24-47	71-3.9	42-1	44	19	13	31	124-6.9
Tanaya Beacham	17-0	289-17.0	47-84	.560	2-6	.333	17-21	.810	26-40	66-3.9	48-1	13	23	5	13	113-6.6
Braxtin Miller	17-17	495-29.1	35-91	.385	13-35	.371	28-43	.651	19-45	64-3.8	37-0	55	24	4	18	111-6.5
Gabby Hutcherson	14-0	154-11.0	21-47	.447	8-23	.348	4-6	.667	3-27	30-2.1	9-0	4	6	12	4	54-3.9
Heyvonne Bristow	8-1	86-10.8	9-25	.360	1-3	.333	11-14	.786	10-12	22-2.8	8-0	3	10	6	3	30-3.8
Taylor Thierry	16-0	198-12.4	18-30	.600	1-3	.333	7-13	.538	24-21	45-2.8	22-0	13	4	13	13	44-2.8
Anyssa Jones	7-0	37-5.3	2-7	.286	0-0	.000	1-2	.500	1-4	5-0.7	3-0	2	0	0	0	5-0.7
Kaitlyn Costner	9-0	55-6.1	3-11	.273	0-4	.000	0-0	.000	1-9	10-1.1	6-0	5	4	0	2	6-0.7
Team									23-52	75						
Total	18	3600	546-1134	.481	165-405	.407	256-354	.723	188-483	671-37.3	292-4	303	261	64	162	1513-84.1
Opponents	18	3600	446-1087	.410	101-349	.289	203-276	.736	190-437	627-34.8	321-6	238	348	43	99	1196-66.4

due to COVID – Harris has started five games for the Buckeyes this season, averaging 8.2 points, 4.2 rebounds and 3.6 assists, as well as blocking five shots in those games despite her 5-10 frame.

“She plays really hard,” McGuff said after the team’s win over Michigan State on Jan. 12. “She competes on every possession. She was really gritty out there tonight, especially on the defensive end.”

After redshirting her freshman season due to a shoulder injury, Harris appeared in 18 games last season for the Buckeyes, averaging just over 10 minutes per game to go along with 3.4 points per game. This season, she’s appeared in all 18 contests at 24.0 minutes per game, averaging 6.9 points per game as well as nearly four rebounds and over two assists.



Rikki Harris

“She’s continued to get better,” McGuff said after the team’s win over Illinois Jan. 6. “She really has practiced well. The thing I like is in the beginning of the year it was more of a defensive and rebounding role, and she’s just gotten a little more comfortable and confident on the offensive end, which is great to see.”

Though Harris does not jump out on the stat sheet quite like Sheldon and Mikesell, she’s one of the Buckeyes’ key defenders and has been one of the reasons they’ve been able to withstand the loss of Greene.

Greene and Miller were considered the team’s top defenders heading into the season, and though Harris has not been without fault, she’s stepped up in a season when Ohio State is searching for contributions from everyone.

“She’s amazing,” Sheldon said. “She makes the hustle plays. I think people see, but I don’t know if they realize how valuable she is. She gets her hands on everything. She can score, she can pass. The most unselfish player ever and she’s an amazing teammate, so she’s huge for us.”

Poole, meanwhile, remains day-to-day with her shoulder injury as of Ohio State’s win against Rutgers Jan. 23.

Smith Named Associate HC For Minnesota Lynx

The Minnesota Lynx promoted former Ohio State women’s basketball player Katie

Smith to associate head coach on Jan.12.

“It was an easy decision to promote Katie into the role of associate head coach,” said Lynx head coach Cheryl Reeve. “She is an extremely talented coach who has garnered the trust and admiration of players and staff alike. Katie has played an important part in our success over the last two seasons, and we look forward to the years ahead in her new role.”

Smith will continue working with assistant coaches Plenette Pierson and Rebekkah Brunson under Reeve, who also serves as the organization’s general manager. Since Smith’s arrival in 2020, the Lynx have an overall record of 36-18 and have made two consecutive playoff appearances.

As associate head coach, Smith will expand her role into scouting and talent evaluation. She will also influence in-game analysis and decision-making as well as player development.

“It is an honor to be promoted within the Lynx organization,” Smith said. “I am grateful for the opportunity to continue working with an unbelievable staff and organization as well as the best players and people. I look forward to this upcoming season and am excited for us to be back.”

Smith will enter her ninth season of coaching this year. After retiring from the WNBA in 2013, Smith spent four years as an assistant for the New York Liberty before becoming the organization’s head coach in 2018 and 2019. She left the franchise to become an assistant for the Lynx in 2020.

The former Buckeye was a two-time WNBA champion with Detroit, where she played under then-Shock-assistant Reeve. Smith played in 482 regular-season games with five different teams including Minnesota, Detroit, Washington, Seattle and New York. When she retired, the 15-year veteran ranked second on the WNBA all-time points leaderboard with 6,452 career points, and she now has the eighth-highest total.

Smith was a seven-time All-Star and earned finals MVP honors in 2008. She was also a decorated member of the United States Women’s National Team, earning gold at three straight Olympics (2000, 2004, 2008) and gold at the 1998 and 2002 FIBA World Championships.

At Ohio State, Smith rewrote the record books, leaving as the school’s all-time scoring leader with 2,578 career points, though she’s since been passed up by Jantel Lavender (2,818) and Kelsey Mitchell (3,402).

She’s 16th all-time in games played with

124 and is fourth with 826 made field goals and 218 made three-pointers. She also leads in both free throws made (708) and attempted (845). For her career, she averaged 20.8 points on 46.9 percent shooting, 5.7 rebounds and 3.6 assists per game.

From 1992-96, she helped lead the Buckeyes to a Big Ten championship and two appearances in the NCAA women’s tournament, including Ohio State’s only trip to the Final Four.

Sheldon Named BIG Co-Player Of The Week

Sheldon was named Co-Big Ten Player of the Week on Jan. 17 following back-to-back 30-point games.

She scored a career-high 33 points on

12-of-15 shooting in an 89-83 win over Michigan State on Jan. 12, issuing six assists and pulling down six rebounds. Just days later, she tallied 32 points on 10-of-17 shooting in an 83-75 win over Minnesota. She had a career-high seven assists to go with five rebounds in the win.

Sheldon is Ohio State’s first Big Ten Player of the Week since Dorka Juhasz captured the honor on Dec. 23, 2019. This was Sheldon’s first Big Ten Player of the Week honor.

Sheldon was named Co-Big Ten Player of the Week along with Iowa sophomore guard Caitlin Clark, who averaged 27.5 points, 9.5 assists and 9.0 rebounds in two games.

Postponed Penn State Contest Set For Feb. 24

A home game with Penn State has been rescheduled for Thursday, Feb. 24, with tip set for 6 p.m.

The game was originally scheduled for Jan. 3 but was postponed following positive tests within the Penn State program. It was the second cancellation or postponement Ohio State has suffered this season, the first being its canceled game with UCLA in December.

The matchup with Penn State is now Ohio State’s penultimate game of the regular season. The Buckeyes close things out at Michigan State on Feb. 27.

The Big Ten women’s basketball tournament then begins on March 2 in Indianapolis, lasting until March 6.



year, every day at practice. Every game, obviously, we go out there and fight. This team, it's been fun to be around, fun to play with. I think we're getting better every day. We're really going out there playing, so I'm proud of everybody."

Mikesell, Sheldon Make History In Win Over Terps

Beginning with Ohio State's win over Michigan State Jan. 12, the coaching staff introduced the "Dub Chain," given to the team's most valuable player following a win.

Harris received the inaugural honor, and Sheldon became a recipient following their win over Minnesota Jan. 15.

The chain is meant to be a lasting tradition within the program, but no matter how many times this award is given out in the future, it's hard to imagine the coaching staff will face a tougher decision as to who should receive the chain than they did following Ohio State's huge 95-89 win over Maryland Jan. 20.

Perhaps Sheldon, who notched 24 points and 10 assists for her second career double-double and who also became the program's 34th player to eclipse 1,000 career points, was a clear favorite for the chain. Given what she's meant to the program, not just in her career but in the win over the Terrapins, nobody would question her receiving the honor.

However, the most impressive performance on the court was by Mikesell, who had not just the most impressive shooting performance in her career but potentially one of the greatest in Ohio State history.

She finished 11 of 13 from the field while connecting on all five attempts from beyond the arc, finishing with a career-high 33 points and joining an elite group of 11 Buckeyes - including such greats as Kelsey Mitchell and Samantha Prahalis - to finish perfect from deep on at least four attempts. Mikesell was also perfect on all six of her free-throw attempts.

Doing so against her former team from 2018-19, it's no wonder Mikesell received the chain following the win in front of a season-high 3,319 fans at Value City Arena.

"That was incredibly special, and obviously with her having been in their program, and be sure she has great respect for them, as do I and everybody in our program, but it certainly adds a little bit to it when you've been there and you transfer from there," McGuff said. "She wanted to play well and she had a great game, and we needed every bit of it."

A close contest throughout, Ohio State (14-3, 6-2) led Maryland (12-6, 4-3) late, 75-70 with under five minutes remaining, but it was the duo of Mikesell and Sheldon that allowed the Buckeyes to hang on for their biggest win of the season.

It took just a 33-second span for the Buckeyes, who got a three-pointer and layup from Sheldon followed by a steal and a basket from Mikesell, to push the lead to 12 points, 82-70 with 3:54 remaining, as Ohio State went on to win its fifth straight game.

Both of the high-scoring teams showed press early in the contest, but it was the Buckeyes who broke through with three first-quarter triples from Mikesell - all in the first six minutes of the game - to give Ohio State a 13-8 lead at 4:26.

After missing two of her first three attempts from the field, Mikulasikova connected on her next two baskets to increase the lead to 17-10. Later in the frame, a transition layup from Mikesell and a bucket from Miller pushed the lead to 13 points, 25-12, though the Terrapins knocked down a three-pointer at the buzzer to make it 25-15 at the end of the first.

In the first quarter, Ohio State finished with eight assists, six of which were dished out by Sheldon.

"We miss Kateri out there and hopefully she gets better really soon, but taking it back to my high school days, I played point guard in high school, so it's not a stranger to me," Sheldon said. "I had an opportunity and I need to step up, and I'll do that until she's back."

Another three from Miller made it 30-17 early in the second, but the Terps began stifling the Buckeyes defensively, forcing misses on six of Ohio State's next seven shots as Maryland took off on a 13-3 run to make it 33-30.

The Terrapins trailed just 39-35 with 1:49 to go in the half, but as usual, it was Mikesell and Sheldon who lifted the Buckeyes. Sheldon hit a layup, and after a miss by Maryland on the other end, Mikesell knocked down her fourth three-pointer of the game to make it 44-35 before finishing the half up 45-37.

Maryland continued pressuring the Buckeyes in the third quarter, opening it up with a 10-4 run to make it a two-point game, 49-47, as Ohio State struggled to contain the Terrapins' quintet of scorers who all average double figures (Katie Benzan, Chloe Bibby, Diamond Miller, Ashley Owusu and Angel Reese), four of whom finished with points in the third quarter, led by Reese with eight and Miller with six.

The Terps trailed only 53-49 at the 5:00 mark, but Mikesell and Sheldon once again came through, each knocking down a three-pointer over the course of three possessions to make it 59-49.

Looking to close out their biggest win of the season, the Buckeyes led 65-57 heading into the fourth. It appeared Ohio State was pushing the game out of reach when Sheldon connected on a pair of free throws with 7:18 remaining to make it 71-60, but a 10-4 run in favor of the Terrapins made it 75-70. Despite that late run from Maryland, the Buckeyes were able to close out the 95-89 win.

In addition to Mikesell and Sheldon, Mikulasikova finished in double figures with 10 points. Reese led the Terrapins with 22 points and had a game high 11 rebounds. Harris finished with a team-high six rebounds, and Sheldon led all players with those 10 assists.

"(Sheldon) was always an incredibly important piece of the program, and then especially with what's happened this year, with Madison (Greene) going down before we play a game, and now Kateri's hurt and I'm moving her around," McGuff said. "Quite frankly, I was a little bit nervous to do that because I didn't want to take away from what makes her special, what she adds to our program on the court. But she has adjusted and found a way to run the team and continue to do that."

Sheldon and Mikesell each played all 40 minutes, as the Buckeyes used only seven players.

Ohio State 95, Maryland 89

Jan. 20, 2022
Value City Arena, Columbus, Ohio
Maryland (12-6, 4-3) 15 22 20 32 89
Ohio State (14-3, 6-2) 25 20 20 30 95

Maryland Total FT Reb.
Reese 27 7-12 8-8 6-5 1 3 22
Bibby 35 8-12 0-0 2-5 1 2 20
Miller 25 6-11 0-0 0-5 4 4 12
Benzan 40 6-9 0-0 0-3 2 5 16
Owusu 36 3-15 6-6 3-2 5 3 12
Sellers 10 1-4 0-0 1-0 0 3 2
Collins 27 2-7 0-0 0-2 2 4 5
Chardon 1 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Percentages: FG: 47.1%. FT: 100.0%. Three-point field goals: 9-20 (Bibby 4-6, Benzan 4-7, Collins 1-3, Miller 0-1, Owes 0-1, Sellers 0-2). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 2 (Reese 2). Turnovers: 18 (Miller 5, Owusu 5, Benzan 3, Reese 2, Bibby, Chardon). Steals: 7 (Benzan 3, Owusu 2, Reese, Sellers, Team).

Ohio State Total FT Reb.
Mikulasikova 20 5-9 0-0 1-4 2 3 10
Harris 39 2-6 5-9 1-5 4 2 9
Sheldon 40 8-17 6-7 1-3 10 2 24
Miller 37 2-4 3-6 0-2 4 2 8
Mikesell 40 11-13 6-6 1-4 0 3 33
Beacham 17 4-9 0-0 3-1 1 3 8
Thierry 7 1-2 1-1 0-0 1 0 3

Totals 200 33-60 21-29 9-22 22 15 95
Percentages: FG: 55.0%. FT: 72.4%. Three-point field goals: 8-14 (Mikesell 5-5, Sheldon 2-4, Miller 1-2, Harris 0-2, Thierry 0-1). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 1 (Harris). Turnovers: 15 (Sheldon 6, Miller 3, Harris 2, Mikulasikova 2, Mikesell, Team). Steals: 7 (Harris 2, Mikesell 2, Miller, Sheldon, Thierry). Officials: Morris, Roberts, Thompson. Attendance: 3,319.

Bucks Go On Road For Sixth Straight Win

Ohio State (15-3, 7-2 Big Ten) extended its win streak to six games, handling Rutgers (7-13, 0-8) on the road, 80-71.

The Buckeyes got off to a sleepy start as the Scarlet Knights started out with an 11-10 lead with 3:23 remaining in the first quarter as Ohio State was 3 of 9 from the field to begin the game.

A three-pointer from Harris helped kick the Buckeyes into gear, and Mikesell's second triple of the game gave Ohio State a 22-19 lead at the end of the first.

A free throw from Rutgers forward Osh Brown tied things up at 22 early in the second, but it began a scoreless stretch of nearly four minutes for the Scarlet Knights and the Buckeyes improved to a 32-22 lead with under 5:38 minutes remaining in the quarter.

Rutgers stayed in the contest, however, by virtue of the free-throw line, to which the Scarlet Knights made four trips in the second quarter, resulting in seven of their 13 points in the frame. For the game, Rutgers finished 17 of 24 from the charity stripe, compared to 15 of 17 (88.2 percent) for the Buckeyes.

Ohio State later led by just six points, 34-28, but increased the lead to 38-28 with four points in a little over a minute of action, all of which came from Sheldon. The Buckeyes were held scoreless over the remaining 2:35, however, taking a 38-32 lead into the break.

Rutgers scored on its first two possessions of the third to make it 38-36, but it was Sheldon's steady shot that helped keep Ohio State ahead, as she embarked on a solo 8-2 run - including two triples - to make it 46-38 with 6:41 on the clock.

"Jacy Sheldon obviously was terrific and Taylor Mikesell is really good, but I was really pleased with some play off the bench from

Ohio State 80, Rutgers 71

Jan. 23, 2022
Jersey Mike's Arena, Piscataway, N.J.
Ohio State (15-3, 7-2) 22 16 21 21 80
Rutgers (7-12, 0-8) 19 13 16 23 71

Ohio State Total FT Reb.
Mikulasikova 28 2-10 0-0 2-3 2 2 4
Harris 23 3-7 1-2 0-2 5 2 10
Sheldon 40 10-23 8-9 2-2 3 4 32
Miller 32 0-4 0-0 2-7 3 4 0
Mikesell 40 7-13 4-4 0-1 1 2 21
Beacham 12 3-4 2-2 2-2 1 4 8
Thierry 25 2-4 0-0 5-1 2 2 5

Totals 200 27-65 15-17 14-19 17 20 80
Percentages: FG: 41.5%. FT: 88.2%. Three-point field goals: 11-27 (Sheldon 4-9, Harris 3-5, Mikesell 3-8, Thierry 1-1, Mikulasikova 0-1, Miller 0-3). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 3 (Harris, Miller, Thierry). Turnovers: 11 (Mikulasikova 5, Sheldon 3, Beacham, Mikesell, Miller). Steals: 8 (Sheldon 4, Thierry 2, Mikesell, Miller).

Rutgers Total FT Reb.
Singleton 29 4-6 3-4 1-9 1 5 11
Brown 38 10-16 4-5 4-4 2 4 24
Petree 32 5-13 7-9 1-2 2 1 18
Dickson 28 3-7 0-0 0-2 5 1 6
Mason 24 2-3 0-0 0-1 3 1 4
Morris 19 0-2 2-2 0-4 1 1 2
Sidibe 11 0-2 0-0 1-1 0 0 0
Lassiter 18 2-2 1-4 1-1 3 3 6
Cornwell 1 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Totals 200 26-51 17-24 9-24 17 16 71
Percentages: FG: 51.0%. FT: 70.8%. Three-point field goals: 2-8 (Lassiter 1-1, Petree 1-4, Dickson 0-1, Morris 0-1, Sidibe 0-1). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 3 (Singleton 2, Sidibe). Turnovers: 19 (Dickson 7, Petree 4, Brown 3, Morris 2, Team 2, Singleton). Steals: 6 (Mason 2, Singleton 2, Brown, Dickson). Officials: Beverley, Enlund, Inouye. Attendance: 1,219.

Tanaya Beacham and (freshman forward/guard) Taylor Thierry," McGuff said.

Beacham would finish with eight points and four rebounds in 13 minutes of action, while Thierry totaled five points and six rebounds in 25 minutes.

The Scarlet Knights fought back to make it 50-46, but Ohio State continued dominating on the offensive end, going on a 9-2 run, five of which came from Sheldon and four from Beacham, to make it 59-48 going into the fourth.

Ohio State looked comfortably ahead early in the fourth, leading 64-50 with 8:45 left in the game, but an 8-2 run by Rutgers forced McGuff to call a timeout up 66-58 with 6:27 remaining, and Thierry hit a layup out of the break to increase the lead back to 10.

Rutgers again made things close, closing the gap to four points, 71-67 with just under two minutes remaining, but it was Sheldon who once again came through, connecting on an old-fashioned three-point play put Ohio State up 74-67, and they would go on to secure the nine-point victory.

"I thought we were a little choppy at times and didn't play our best, but our intensity in the second half and our leadership from the upperclassmen allowed us to pull away and get the win," McGuff said.

Sheldon led the Buckeyes in scoring with 32 points on 10-of-23 shooting. Mikesell finished with 21 points on 7-of-13 shooting, while Harris was 3 of 5 from beyond the arc - helping her to 10 points - and she led the team with five assists. Brown led Rutgers with 24 points on 10-of-16 shooting.

The women's team will play just two games before Buckeye Sports Bulletin goes to press again. They will host Michigan on Jan. 27 with a 7 p.m. tip and travel to face Iowa on Jan. 31 at 9 p.m.

Kharchla Takes Down No. 1 Marinelli Of Iowa

After program-rival Michigan visited Columbus and left with eight wins in 10 bouts on Jan. 17, there was some uncertainty about how Ohio State might perform against second-ranked Iowa a week later.

ON THE MAT Chase Brown

Even without 125-pound All-American Spencer Lee, Iowa had continued business as usual this season. The Hawkeyes returned seven wrestlers from last year's championship roster, allowing them to remain in Big Ten and NCAA title contention.

But the Buckeyes didn't fear their opponent's reputation, contributing their best performance of the season despite losing the dual,

21-12. Two wrestlers claimed impressive upsets, providing life to a sell-out Covelli Center crowd and sending a message to the Division I landscape that Ohio State is here to stay.

Carson Kharchla offered the match of the night at 165 pounds, defeating No. 1 Alex Marinelli in the most significant victory of his collegiate career. It was a battle from the opening whistle, with Marinelli holding riding time late into the third period. Kharchla needed a takedown to win – and he delivered.

"The match isn't over until the whistle blows at the last second," Kharchla said. "Knowing that, continuing to wrestle, knowing where you are and what positions you need to be in and trusting in your wrestling – it can be a little daunting if you think about, 'Well, I didn't score here. I didn't score now. Maybe I'm not going to score again.' But you have to block that out and go through it."

With the wrestlers deadlocked at the mat's center, Kharchla swept underneath Marinelli's waist and used his upward momentum to top-

ple the top-ranked wrestler to the floor. The official shot his arm into the air with two fingers pointing upward, and the 4,400 Buckeye fans erupted.

Kharchla, who entered the match ranked No. 7, said he had a short thought run through his mind before he made a move to secure a match-winning takedown.

"Just go for it," he said. "If you miss, you miss, but at least you can say you went for it. You have to continue wrestling and wrestle through the whole match."

"I'm getting more comfortable out there. There are some matches where things don't go your way. The first period doesn't go your way. The second period doesn't go your way. The third period doesn't go your way until the last 30 seconds. I'm getting more comfortable in those situations and getting my mind right. Keep wrestling. Don't give up – stay in it."

Malik Heinselman claimed the night's other surprising victory at 125 pounds, beating No. 10 Drake Ayala in sudden victory. The Castle Rock, Colo., native used an impressive combination of strength, speed and agility to win the bout over an opponent ranked seven spots in front of him in the Intermat top 25.

Heinselman worked tirelessly to improve those abilities in the offseason, spending countless hours with assistant coaches J Jagers and Bo Jordan to become a well-rounded wrestler.

"Last season, I didn't finish matches well," Heinselman told BSB before the season. "I would get tired too easily and become fatigued. Coach Jagers and Coach Jordan helped me take the steps I needed to take in my conditioning, which I think will lead to better matches from me this season."

Heinselman was noticeably frustrated after losing to Michigan's top-ranked Nick Suriano, who transferred from Rutgers in the offseason. That frustration couldn't be seen after his victory against the Hawkeyes. Instead, Heinselman displayed a focused demeanor before flashing a smile to his coaches and teammates on the sideline.

After Heinselman's win, the Buckeyes lost back-to-back matches at 133 and 141 pounds. Dylan Koontz was outmatched by No. 3 Austin DeSanto, trailing 10-1 after the first period before losing a 19-4 technical fall.

Dylan D'Emilio's match went in a different direction. He held No. 2 Jayden Eierman scoreless through the first period. Eierman put the first points on the board with a takedown in the second and finished the match with a 4-0 decision. While D'Emilio failed to register a point, the No. 23 141-pound wrestler was in striking distance until late in the third and barely missed multiple takedown attempts.

Sammy Sasso, the No. 2 wrestler at 149 pounds, earned his fifth win against a ranked opponent this season when he defeated No. 10 Max Murin. He also recorded his 27th consecutive victory in dual competitions and 20th straight Big Ten dual win.

The two competitors were scoreless after the first period. Sasso took the lead with an escape to start the second before Murin earned a reversal in the third. However, the Buckeye wrestler made the points right back with a turnaround and won a 3-2 decision.

Ohio State head coach Tom Ryan said Sasso received a significant boost from the Covelli Center crowd. He noted Kharchla's win but

claimed the fans might have been most helpful when Sasso went down 2-1 with a little under a minute remaining.

"To the cheerleaders, the dance team, the facility staff, to all the people that are the best here. To the crew that set up the stage and break down the stage – this place is special," Ryan said. "Everybody here, no matter what field they're in, loves the place. And shout-out to the fans. They helped us a lot tonight. We won some critical matches, and there's no question the energy in the place made a difference. That's a tough team."

Iowa's toughness proved too much for Ohio State in four of the Buckeyes' other five matches. At 157 pounds, Jashon Hubbard lost a 4-0 decision to No. 12 Kaleb Young, and Ethan Smith lost a hard-fought battle to No. 2 Michael Kemerer – a three-time All-American – at 174 pounds.

Kaleb Romero, the No. 7 wrestler at 184 pounds, defeated No. 18 Abe Assad in a 3-2 decision. The redshirt senior earned the bout's first points early in the second period with an escape. An Iowa escape in the third tied the match at one-all heading into sudden victory, where Romero recorded a takedown to secure the win.

After Romero's win, Iowa led 14-12 heading into the 197-pound division, giving No. 20 Gavin Hoffman an opportunity to put Ohio State in front before the heavyweights competed. Hoffman offered all he could against No. 4 Jacob Werner, but the veteran Buckeye fell behind early and couldn't dig himself out of the hole. He lost a 6-5 decision.

Tate Orndorff still had the potential to bring home a win for Ohio State – he just needed a pin. Falls are an unlikely occurrence in the heavyweight division and are even rarer against an opponent the caliber of No. 5 Tony Cassiopi. With everything riding on one match, Orndorff failed to produce points, dropping a 13-4 decision to the Iowa wrestler.

The Buckeyes lost the dual by nine points, but Ryan said he doesn't pay much attention to wins and losses at this point in the season. For now, he said his wrestlers need to focus on improving each time they step on the mat.

"Wrestling is not like football," Ryan said. "You can have a loss and still win the nationals. This season is all about learning and figuring out what kind of team we might have heading into the Big Ten competition and at the NCAAs. I like where we are."

Ohio State followed up the Friday night loss with a Sunday afternoon win over Maryland, defeating the Terrapins 39-4 in Columbus. The Buckeyes won 9 of 10 matches, with the only loss coming at 133 pounds from Koontz.

Up Next

The team will return to the mat on Feb. 4 when it faces No. 1 Penn State in State College, Pa. Last season, the Nittany Lions visited the Covelli Center and walked away with a 28-12 win. Only three Buckeyes won matches that night: Sasso and Romero secured decisions, and Smith pinned then-No. 13 Joe Lee at 2:33.

"We're looking forward to continuing Big Ten play against a ton of quality opponents," Kharchla said. "This conference has the best wrestling in the country, so you have to make sure you stay on top of your nutrition, conditioning and rest. We will be ready for whoever stands in front of us."

Ohio State Fans!

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

**Weekly September through November
Five times from January through mid-March
Biweekly mid-March through mid-May
Monthly December, June through August**

Some Ohio State sports fans need more information on the Buckeyes than they can find in their local newspaper. Buckeye Sports Bulletin is for those fans. By subscribing to Buckeye Sports Bulletin, they receive 24 issues a year featuring:

- In-depth coverage of all Ohio State sports
- The latest comments from coaches and players
- The latest in recruiting information
- Personality profiles
- Features on former Buckeye greats
- Rosters, schedules, statistics, photos
- Check us out on the Web at www.BuckeyeSports.com



1 Year, \$99.95

1 Year, First Class Mail, \$159.95

2 Years, \$169.95

2 Years, First Class Mail, \$279.95

I want to know more about Ohio State sports. I am enclosing \$ _____

Money Order Check MasterCard Visa Discover Amer. Express

Credit Card # and Exp. Date _____

Credit Card Orders Accepted 24 Hours A Day

Call (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

Mail To: **Buckeye Sports Bulletin**
P.O. Box 12453
Columbus, Ohio 43212
www.BuckeyeSports.com

Russian Freshman Worth The Wait For Bucks

Russian-born Georgii Merkulov decided at an early age that he wanted to play hockey in the United States, and he has made the sacrifices necessary to fulfill his dream. The Ohio State forward is one of the top freshmen in the country and a big reason the No. 15 Buckeyes have surprised many with their rebound after a lackluster 2020-21 season.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

Through Jan. 22, Merkulov led the Buckeyes in goals with 14, including four game-winners, and points with 27 while playing in 25 of 26 games. He was first nationally in goals for freshmen.

"I see a guy that wants the puck," Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik said. "I see a guy that's got a ton of skill. He's got great vision."

Merkulov (5-11, 180) was mesmerized by this country a decade ago as an 11-year-old when his Russian team was invited to a tournament in Chicago.

"It was like probably the coolest week in my life, and since then I was always thinking to come over and live in the United States and play here," he told BSB.

It took some time, but he finally reached his goal in 2019 when he earned a tryout with the Youngstown (Ohio) Phantoms of the junior United States Hockey League. He was there two seasons. In the second, he had 40 points (14 goals, 26 assists) in 38 games to attract the attention of OSU assistant coach JB Bittner.

But getting Merkulov to continue his career a few hours from Youngstown took a circuitous route on several fronts.

First, his athletic eligibility had to be determined. He had played in a professional league in Russia prior to going to Youngstown but had not been paid. He was declared eligible on April 1.

"I started talking to schools before that because I was hoping that I will be eligible to play and I got a couple offers," Merkulov said. "I think it was only one offer from a Big Ten school. It was Ohio State, and I always wanted to play for a big-time school."

The next step was making sure he was academically eligible.

"Once we heard that he was making the decision to go to college, we had to look at his Russian grades, Russian transcripts," Rohlik said.

He credited the athletic department and academic advisors for making sure Merkulov met the criteria to be accepted into school.

"That's what separates this place," Rohlik said. "It's the resources. It's the people. It's student-athletes like this that you want to take a chance on. I give our department kudos for that."

Then came the even harder part as it turned out – getting to Columbus. Merkulov had returned home last summer and set about getting a student visa, but relations

between the United States and Russia are strained so it was not possible to get one through the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

"You have to go somewhere else in Europe or other countries, but COVID makes it complicated too," he said. "So it was only a couple countries, Kazakhstan and the Dominican Republic, that I could go to."

"The wait line in Kazakhstan was October, so I couldn't get a visa before October and that was too late to come here," he continued. "The only other one was the Dominican Republic. And it's also closer to the United States. Kazakhstan is about 15 hours."

So in August he again said goodbye to his family in Russia and set off to secure passage to the U.S. He endured a 16-hour airport layover in Europe before reaching the Dominican Republic.

Luck was on his side, however. He was in the lobby of his hotel one day when he heard some familiar Russian speech. It turns out they were two MMA fighters in a similar predicament as him.

"I came up to them and said, 'Can you help me out? I'm stuck here by myself. I don't know what to do.'

"They kind of took care of me for about 10 days, and they were doing basically the same thing. They were waiting for their visas to come over to the United States. I'm still in touch with them and friends. I'm so thankful that I met them."

Merkulov eventually got off the island with the proper documents in hand, but without a direct flight to Ohio, he had to go through Dallas. Naturally, there was a summer storm and his flight was canceled, forcing him to sleep at the airport during his 16-hour stay.

"He does all that to have a chance to go to school here for the first time other than in Russia," Rohlik said. "He learned the English language here the last two years in Youngstown all on his own, then to come here and jump into school and play Division I hockey, it's all pretty amazing."

"He's made of a lot of sacrifices. He's a great kid. He's embraced the language. He wants to learn the language. He's embraced school. He wants to do well in school, and obviously you've seen the results on the ice as well."

Merkulov knew only a few English words when he arrived in Ohio for the first time three years ago, but his free moments in Youngstown were spent watching YouTube, especially a course that promised conversational English by taking 16 hour-long lessons.

"You've got to put in the work. There's a lot of words to memorize, like 7,000 words over 16 hours," he said. "That helped a lot."

"It's getting easier every day, especially here in school. You pick up some words from teammates and obviously during stuff at school."

Communication is not a problem in the locker room, and he even speaks in his native tongue with junior forward Mark Cheremeta, who is from Belarus and has a command of Russian. Also, Polish-born junior forward Kamil Sadlocha can dabble in Russian.

Merkulov is comfortable on the ice as

well.

He has seven games with two-plus points and was runner-up for the Hockey Commissioners Association's national player of the month for December when he had nine points (three goals, six assists) in seven games.

His output continued into the new year. He scored the third-period game-winner at Wisconsin on Jan. 8 and the next night had the game-tying goal against the Badgers.

"He's like a joystick," Rohlik said. "I mean in practice at times, he does some things that you've just got to laugh at, and it's fun."

In The Hunt

The Buckeyes (18-7-1, 10-5-1-0-1 Big Ten) earned points in all four games since BSB last printed with the lone blemish an overtime loss to Notre Dame worth one point. OSU is 9-1-1 in the past 11 games to move into a first-place tie with Michigan at 33 points.

Ohio State took four of six points the hard way from No. 13 Notre Dame on Jan. 14 and 15.

The Fighting Irish took the opener 3-2 in overtime. Most notably, a season-high crowd of 8,350 at Value City Arena included a school-record number of students (4,205) for a hockey game.

OSU got revenge the next night with a 4-1 win fueled by the first career hat trick

BIG		Men's Hockey				
	Pts.	W	L	T	OTL	
Michigan	33	10	6	0	3	
Ohio State	33	10	5	1	1	
Minnesota	27	9	5	0	1	
Notre Dame	24	9	5	0	0	
Wisconsin	16	5	10	1	1	
Michigan State	15	5	11	0	0	
Penn State	14	5	11	0	0	

for senior captain Quinn Preston. He gave the Buckeyes a 2-1 lead after two periods.

Merkulov extended the advantage to 3-1 early in the third before Preston capped the scoring to back the 38 saves by freshman Jakub Dobeš.

Ohio State had a road sweep of Michigan State on Jan. 21 and 22, winning 4-1 and 3-2. Merkulov had three points on the weekend with an assist in the opener and two goals the next night.

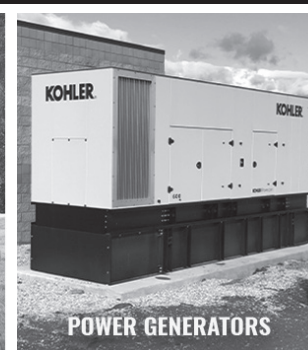
Up Next

The Buckeyes play at Penn State on Jan. 28 and 29 before they wrap up the regular-season home schedule with series against Wisconsin (Feb. 4 and 5) and Minnesota (Feb. 11 and 12).

For full recaps of the Notre Dame and Michigan State series, go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

SALES | SERVICE | PARTS | RENTAL

BPS



If it generates watts, powers your business, backs up your facility, requires powergen expertise, whacks weeds, moves dirt, pushes snow or hauls debris - **we've got it, we service it, and we know it better than anyone else.**

BPS **Buckeye Power Sales**
Quality Equipment Solutions Since 1947

11 LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE MIDWEST

COLUMBUS | DAYTON | MIDDLETOWN | CINCINNATI | CLEVELAND | TOLEDO | INDIANAPOLIS | FT. WAYNE | CHICAGO

www.buckeyepowersales.com

Coaching Hires Change Direction Of Football Program

Ohio State's Rose Bowl win over Utah was not all that long ago – just a touch over three weeks as of this writing. But given the changes within the Buckeyes football program, it seems like much, much longer.

**THE FACTS
MAN
Mike Wachsman**

The Buckeye blueprint going forward looks different from the one it has followed for the past few seasons. OSU has been a one of the best offenses in college football from the moment Ryan Day took over as head coach. That was expected as Day is steeped in knowledge on that side of the football, playing quarterback in college for Chip Kelly at the University of New Hampshire and serving time as an NFL assistant in charge of quarterbacks, with Philadelphia and San Francisco.

Offense has been a staple for Ohio State in Day's three seasons at the helm. Defense? Not so much.

If you take away the mammoth 2019 campaign when the Buckeyes had the nation's best stop unit based on yards per play allowed, OSU has been average-to-bad on the other side of the line of scrimmage. That weakness was a huge reason the Buckeyes dropped two games for the first time in Day's tenure as head man. Ohio State was unable to stop Oregon's ground attack early in the season and had no answer for Michigan's physical play in the regular-season finale. There were other anxious moments during the season when the defense looked as leaky as a wooden rowboat, but the offense was able to bail it out and get the victory.

While 11-2 would be a stellar record for 95 percent of the programs in college

football, Ohio State expects more. Day took the Buckeyes to the College Football Playoff in each of his first two seasons, and that has become the yearly expectation. For OSU to fall short, in the manner that it did, leaves a bad taste in the mouth of all involved – Day especially.

Football coaches are, by nature, a stubborn lot. They cling to their beliefs and systems, and though many can see the cracks beginning early, it isn't until there is catastrophic failure that those same coaches decide to do something about it.

Such is the case for Day and Ohio State, which left the 2021 season at a bit of a crossroads. It was the first season when a majority of the players on the roster were Day's instead of Urban Meyer's, and it was the first time that there was a noticeable difference between the two coaches' mindsets.

Meyer preferred physical play, beating opponents into submission with power. Day is much more finesse, and while that works on offense, it is not so good on defense. Ohio State's read-and-react system often had players out of alignment, taking bad angles and just schematically not fitting well against opposing offenses.

The pieces are certainly in place on offense for Ohio State to once again be formidable. But to take that extra step, Day knew the Buckeyes needed to look different on defense – in scheme and approach – even though it would have been easy to stick to the status quo and not be afraid to win shootouts.

And that's why he hired Jim Knowles.

The former Oklahoma State defensive coordinator did wonders in Stillwater as the Cowboys finished first in sacks per game (4.1), second in tackles for loss per game (8.1), third in opponents' third-down conversions (28.8 percent), fifth in yards per play allowed (4.6) and ninth in scoring defense (18.1). Knowles likes aggression and pressure and should have Ohio State

looking radically different than the passive units that have taken the field the last few seasons.

Oklahoma State allowed 32.1 ppg in Knowles' first year as coordinator in 2018 and got better each season under his leadership. But it wasn't only at Oklahoma State where Knowles shone. He had Duke as a top-25 scoring defense unit in 2014 and 2017 and top 40 in yards per play allowed in 2017, with athletes a notch below those he will coach at Ohio State – and Oklahoma State, for that matter.

Ohio State will change a bit schematically under Knowles, though it will still play predominantly the same 4-2-5 that it employed last season. Where it differs from the scheme run by OSU in 2021 is that Knowles likes to employ three safeties, walking two up from deep to closer to the line of scrimmage to help in run defense yet still having one assisting in coverage. He also has a hybrid defensive end/linebacker position in the Leo, which will move around in the formation, sometimes with his hand on the ground and sometimes as a stand-up player who can rush the passer or chase down ball carriers.

The system gets opponents behind the chains as much as anyone in America, but it can be susceptible to big plays over the top if the quarterback isn't affected. So the challenge for Knowles will be to find out which players can handle his system, which calls for quick reaction and instincts. He doesn't like putting too much on anyone's plate and expects players to simply play their role and not worry about others.

Maybe easier said than done given the Buckeyes' defensive woes of the past two seasons, but it should be fascinating to watch the evolution of Knowles' group. Don't be surprised if there are some early hiccups as guys learn the ins and outs and get comfortable with things. By season's end it won't be any kind of shock if Ohio State has one of the better defenses in college football. If the Buckeyes can ascend merely into the top 30, they will be right there in the hunt for the national championship as the offense should be close to unstoppable.

Knowles isn't the only shiny new addition to the coaching staff, though.

Former UCLA assistant Justin Frye is the new offensive line coach, replacing Greg Studrawa. The Buckeyes had their issues in run blocking last season, finishing 52nd in power success rate, which Football Outsiders describes as percentage of plays on third or fourth down of two yards or less that achieved a first down.

Part of it was likely due to OSU employing four natural tackles along the offensive front, as the interior guys lacked the quickness to fend off inside rushers. Frye should help the Buckeyes transition back to a more traditional set next year, with players in their natural positions. UCLA was among the top 30 in that same stat in 2021 and a top-20 group in most offensive line categories. Frye should bring new energy to the program and will almost certainly be a better recruiter than Studrawa.

Perry Eliano makes the trek north to Columbus from Cincinnati, where he oversaw the Bearcats' secondary, which included the dazzling duo of Thorpe Award winner Coby Bryant and likely top-15 NFL draft pick Sauce Gardner.

Cincinnati's secondary was one of the best in the country, largely due to the tutelage of Eliano and his reliance on discipline on the back end. He will oversee safeties at Ohio State, because the final piece of the coaching puzzle will handle the cornerbacks – a position with which he is very familiar.

Tim Walton comes back to Columbus after over 25 seasons in the coaching ranks, and he was known as a fierce hitter in his time as a player for the Buckeyes. A Florida native, Walton has been part of a national championship at LSU in 2003 under Nick Saban and has been an assistant coach in the NFL since 2009 – most recently with the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Walton received high praise from former Jags cornerback Jalen Ramsey, who is considered one of the best at his position in the league.

"Coach Walton, he's probably one of the best DB coaches – if not the best DB coach – I've ever had in my life," the five-time Pro Bowler said in a 2019 interview with ESPN. "He was really good. He was not only a good coach, coached us super hard, made sure we were on our technique, but he was a good person too."

"He cared about us off the field. He cared about battles we may have been fighting off the field, and he was always there for us. I felt that it was important, and it meant a lot that he was always trying to understand. A lot of times you get in situations and people in authority or people in a position, they don't even care to try and understand you as a person, you as a player, anything. But he was really thorough in everything, trying to make sure he knew us individually, as a player and a person."

The Buckeyes should start the 2022 campaign squarely in the top five nationally, and maybe even in the top three. The schedule is a bit tougher, with home games against Notre Dame and Wisconsin in September, road trips to East Lansing and Happy Valley in October and what could be a tester at home in mid-October against Iowa. The rivalry game with Michigan is in Columbus, and you can bet that the Buckeyes will have all of their attention on that one this time around.

The offense will be a nightmare for any defense it faces, so the only real unknown is how much the defense progresses. If it turns out that Knowles' system is too difficult to master in year one, there could be a couple of setbacks. But if Ohio State is playing free and easy and picking up the nuances of the scheme faster than expected, then a trip to the CFP is almost guaranteed. What it does once it gets there is anyone's guess.

About the only thing missing from Day's Ohio State résumé is a national title.

If these coaching hires work as well as Buckeye Nation hopes and expects, that could be checked off shortly after the Jan. 9 championship game ends.

Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

RULES AND RATES: 20 cents per word, 10 cents for more than one insertion. Minimum order of \$5. No agency discounts. Make checks payable to Buckeye Sports Bulletin. We accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express.

All ads are uniformly set with the first two words set in boldface capital letters at no charge. However, no other words may be set in boldface. Anyone planning a larger or more distinct ad may receive our ad rate card upon request.

We reserve the right to request additional information or merchandise be submitted from advertiser prior to acceptance of an ad, and we reserve the right to refuse advertisements considered objectionable.

Deadline is one week prior to publication date. Call (614) 486-2202 or write P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212 for info.

FOR SALE — OSU-MICHIGAN Game, 1975- original RADIO broadcast on CD! Woody's last great team & Archie's last UM game as Bucks go 11-0! Three-disk set runs 3½ hours! Listen

in your car! \$25 + \$3 S & H. Call 1-630-527-8890!

WANTED TO buy: OSU football memorabilia and equipment, programs, pennants, glasses, books, jerseys, helmets, ticket stubs. One item or a hundred. Will travel. Call George at (614) 506-1081.

WANTED TO buy: OSU basketball tickets/stubs from the 1960s, '70s, '80s, '90s & 2000s. Call Mike at (704) 995-0414.

WANTED TO buy: OSU football memorabilia, programs, ticket stubs, pennants, championship rings, gold pants, helmets, autographs, game-used equipment, small or large collections. Call Chris at (419) 957-6789.

BSB PUBLISHER Frank Moskowitz and other members of the BSB staff are available to speak at your business, social or alumni group meetings. Informative and fun. Call (614) 486-2202 for details.

A New Day For OSU Defense With Coaching Changes

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

Trivia time. This should be an easy one, though I wouldn't have gotten it.

Who was the coach of the defensive secondary when the Ohio State football team won the 2002 national championship?

Ryan Day pretty much cleaned house when it came to assistant coaches on the defensive side of the ball, following a season when the Buckeye stop troops tended to struggle against better competition. Gone are Matt Barnes, Kerry Coombs and Al Washington. Taking over the headsets are Jim Knowles (defensive coordinator), former Buckeye Tim Walton (cornerbacks) and Perry Eliano (safeties). As has been documented previously, Knowles is the crown jewel of the incoming bunch, and we will see if he brings as much success to Columbus as he had at his previous stop at Oklahoma State.

With the offense that Ohio State is bringing back, headlined by C.J. Stroud and his merry band of receivers, even modest improvement on defense would put the Buckeyes right in the thick of the national title chase.

Regardless of the ultimate outcome, I admire Day for his willingness to take action, basically acknowledging that while the exciting win over Utah was a wonderful and feel-good denouement to the season, 2021 was not up to Ohio State standards. Similarly, I had been impressed with his aggressive action in making changes after the Oregon loss and the fact that he was – for the most part – able to pull it off. Things could have gone completely in the tank, but they didn't.

Still, 11-2 with a Rose Bowl victory is a little ho-hum around Columbus.

The good news is that Ohio State had had great success when it has reshuffled the defensive coaching deck in recent years.

When Urban Meyer took over the team in 2012, it struggled on defense during his first two seasons. In 2012, the Buckeyes allowed 243.5 yards passing to rank 78th in the country, and things got worse in 2013, when Ohio State ranked 112nd while giving up 268.0 yards through the air.

Out went safeties coach and co-defensive coordinator Everett Withers and defensive line coach Mike Vrabel, and in came two key hires in new safeties coach and co-defensive coordinator Chris Ash and defensive line coach Larry Johnson, who remains with the team today.

The result was an improvement to 29th in the country in passing defense with 201.1 yards allowed. The Buckeyes were also 19th in total defense with 342.4 yards and, more importantly, Ohio State won the 2014 national championship.

I think everyone remembers the 2018 Ohio State defense. The Buckeyes were 50th in scoring defense (25.5 points), 71st in total defense (403.4 yards) and 86th in passing defense (245.2).

Despite an explosive offense led by Dwayne Haskins, the Buckeyes lost at Purdue while giving up 49 points and almost lost a shoot-out against lowly Maryland before barely prevailing in overtime, 52-51.

This time it was Day's turn to take out the defensive broom. Gone were linebackers coach Billy Davis, safeties coach and co-defensive coordinator Alex Grinch, cornerbacks coach and special teams coordinator Taver Johnson, and defensive coordinator and associate head coach Greg Schiano. In their place came Barnes as special teams coordinator and assistant secondary coach, co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison, Washington as the linebackers coach and, most importantly, co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley.

What followed was one of the most stunning defensive turnarounds in Ohio State – and maybe even college – football history. The

Buckeyes jumped to No. 1 in total defense, allowing 259.7 yards per game, No. 4 in scoring defense (13.7 points) and – here's the stunner – No. 1 in pass defense, yielding just 156.0 air yards per game. This from a team that, as you can see, has had a penchant for porous pass defense.

One can only hope that the current staff changes have something even close to the success that these other recent staff adjustments have had.

In thinking about these staff cleansings, I could not help but think of perhaps – at least now with 41 years of hindsight – the most famous mass firing in Ohio State football history.

Following the 1981 season, Earle Bruce did some defensive house cleaning of his own. Gone were defensive coordinator Dennis Fryzel, tackles and middle guards coach Steve Szabo, and a young defensive secondary coach named Nick Saban. Yes, that Nick Saban.

In their place came defensive backfield coach Dom Capers, tackles and middle guards coach Randy Hart and outside linebackers coach Fred Pagac. I couldn't help but look and see if this new guard was able to improve on the defense that featured the budding – or in Bruce's eyes apparently not budding – Saban.

As you can guess under Bruce, both teams finished 9-3, so there was little improvement there.

I couldn't find NCAA rankings, but in 1981, Ohio State gave up 21.1 points per game, 367.8 total yards and 273.2 yards passing per game. By comparison, Ohio State, with Art Schlichter at the controls, passed for only 224.9 yards per game.

In 1982, the Buckeyes gave up 17.3 points per game, 364.2 total yards and 236.8 yards passing, so there was modest improvement, including a 36.4-yard improvement per game in passing yards given up. Hardly Jeff Hafley-like improvement, but sorry Nick, the pass defense did improve.

Good-Bye, Kerry

One of the sad things about the staff shake-up, at least for me, is the departure of Coombs. I'll admit it. His enthusiasm was infectious and even got me excited. Obviously, his choice as defensive coordinator was a disaster. What would have happened the rest of the way in 2021 if Day had left Coombs as the coordinator – to my knowledge they never officially took the title away from him – we'll never know. I do know that he handled an extreme case of public humiliation with grace and professionalism. As the days went by after the Rose Bowl, I actually thought the fiery coach might end up staying, but instead he is off to his old stomping grounds at the University of Cincinnati.

I have been trying to figure out for weeks now how Coombs went from one of the most beloved Ohio State assistant coaches ever in his first stint as a Buckeye coach, joining Urban Meyer's first staff in 2012 and staying through the 2017 season, to the demon he became upon his return after two years with Vrabel's Tennessee Titans in 2020.

Obviously, the answer is his ill-fated selection by Day as defensive coordinator and defensive disasters in the 2020 national championship game against Alabama and the loss to Oregon early in the 2021 season. Buckeye fans can have very short memories.

His departure sparked a lively debate on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum as to whether

Coombs was a good coach or just an enthusiastic coach who happened to also be a good recruiter. I fell on the side of he was a good coach, and I found myself at odds with BSB managing editor emeritus Mark Rea.

"Coombs' ability as a recruiter and a rah-rah guy on the sideline and in the locker room seems unquestionable," Mark posted on the Forum. "But you can count me as one who believes his prowess as a DBs coach is overrated. Quote to me all day the first-rounders he recruited or produced, but how many of those first-rounders turned out to be All-Pros?"

He proceeds to tick off the names of Bradley Roby, Eli Apple, Marshon Lattimore, Malik Hooker, Gareon Conley, Denzel Ward, Jeff Okudah and Damon Arnette as guys who have not yet attained All-Pro status.

"Nice guy? Yes. Good recruiter? Probably. Great DBs coach? Sorry, I'm not convinced," Mark concludes.

Regular poster "mcarr" had this to say in response to Mark: "Your guys mentioned have a combined 35 years in the NFL according to Pro-Football-Reference.com. As best I can tell, Conley is the only one who was not active last season (injury reserve). That's an average of 4.4 years in the league and counting. Google says the average NFL career is 3.3 years. Somebody must be doing something right.

"Lattimore is a four-time pro-bowler and was a rookie of the year. Denzel Ward is a two-time pro-bowler and made the all-rookie team."

Chimed in "Poster That Harley Built": "If these guys were rookie of the year or on the all-rookie team, let's see. Who would have prepared them to be that ready?"

Well, I would say Kerry Coombs. But Mark had a response to that too.

"There is a huge difference between the Pro Bowl and All-Pro. Champ Bailey made 12 Pro Bowls but was All-Pro only three times."

I have to ask. At what point does Coombs hand the ball off to the pro coaches for his players' development?

Here is my personal defense of Coombs. When Meyer cleaned house in early 2014, as mentioned above, why did he retain Coombs? Meyer, of course, is obsessed with recruiting, so he might have kept him for that reason. And after Hafley left to take the head job at Boston College, why did Day lure Coombs back to Columbus? I suppose in Day's case you could also say recruiting.

But what about Vrabel hiring Coombs at Tennessee? There is no recruiting in the NFL. And pros would laugh Coombs right out of the locker room if he tried that rah-rah stuff (which I'm sure he did to a degree. You can't take that completely out of the man).

And it seems like Coombs was successful in the NFL.

According to the always reliable Wikipedia, with Coombs as defensive secondary coach, "the 2018 Titans ranked sixth in the NFL in passing defense (216.9 yards per game), ranked eighth in the league with an opponent passer rating of 88.4, and finished ninth in the league with a 63.2 opponent completion percentage. Titans defensive backs accounted for 10 total interceptions and an NFL-high nine sacks. In 2019, the Titans defensive backfield was again a top-10 unit in passing yards and interceptions."

Going back to the first tenure at Ohio State, Coombs was part of the challenged defensive backfields in Urban's first two seasons so that's

a strike against him, but he was also part of the 2014 pass defense that helped Ohio State to the national championship. How did Coombs and the Buckeyes do after that? In 2015 Ohio State was 16th in the country, allowing 184.5 passing yards. In 2016, the Buckeyes moved up to seventh in the country with 172.2 passing yards given up. The secondary dipped in 2017, giving up 195.9 yards for a still respectable 30th in the nation.

Coombs heads off to Nashville, and here comes the 2018 disaster. Coincidence? I rest my case.

Regardless of which side of the Kerry Coombs argument you fall, I'll say it again. I'll miss him and I wish him the best on Luke Fickell's Bearcat staff. By the way, if Coombs is a stiff, why did Fickell hire him? Must be the recruiting.

Bruce Not So Wonderful

Speaking of Mark Rea, in his interesting column on non-Buckeyes who passed away in 2021 who crossed paths with Ohio State, in an addendum, he mentions professional wrestler Paul "Mr. Wonderful" Orndorff, who passed away on July 12. Orndorff had played football under Bruce when Earle had a brief, but successful, stint at Tampa, after leaving Woody Hayes' staff in Columbus.

As some of you know, in one of the more colorful chapters of my career, I was involved in professional wrestling, working primarily for the old NWA and the now defunct WCW. I worked with many of the great stars of the day, most notably "The Nature Boy" Ric Flair and also the father of Buckeye great James Laurinaitis when he was with the rough and tumble Road Warriors.

Somewhere near the end of my wrestling career, and apparently Orndorff's, I was working as a ring announcer on the independent circuit somewhere in Ohio. Orndorff was one of the featured wrestlers on the card. I had never worked with him before, as he had been with the rival WWE. I was well entrenched at BSB at the time and knew Earle, and I thought bringing up the wrestler's old college football coach might break the ice.

I expected to exchange pleasantries about Earle, because how could you not like Earle? I don't remember the particulars, but Mr. Wonderful did not like Earle Bruce. I truly don't remember why, but I have a feeling Orndorff was a bit of a free spirit and Earle was a Woody disciple. Could have been a combustible mix.

Trivia Answer

The defensive secondary coach for the 2002 national championship Buckeyes was none other than current Michigan State head coach Mel Tucker. Tucker was with the Buckeyes under Jim Tressel from 2001-2004. From there he took a winding path to East Lansing.

He left the Buckeyes for the NFL, serving as an assistant with Cleveland, Jacksonville and Chicago before returning to the college ranks with Saban – whom he had previously coached with at Michigan State and LSU – at Alabama in 2015. He left for Georgia the next year and became head coach at Colorado for one season in 2019 before taking over the Spartans.

Michigan State fans should be excited because Tucker has a championship pedigree. Not only did he win it all with the Buckeyes in 2002, but he also won a ring with the Crimson Tide in 2015.

By the way, my guess would have been that defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio handled the Buckeye DBs in 2002. As a completely irrelevant aside, Tucker and Dantonio would have worked together under Saban in 1997.



FOR ATHLETES

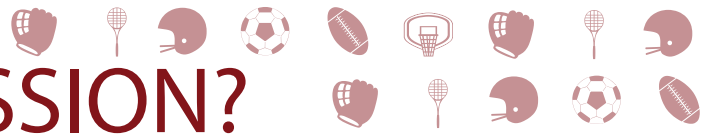
HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

- 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 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.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?



REPORT IT. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

GET CHECKED OUT. If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a healthcare provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL. A concussion can make it harder to do everyday activities, such as concentrating at school. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

WHY SHOULD I TELL MY COACH AND PARENTS ABOUT MY SYMPTOMS?

Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.

While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain and can even be fatal.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>



This work is funded either in whole or in part by a grant awarded by the Ohio Department of Health as a sub-award of a grant issued by Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant under the Injury Prevention Program by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, grant award. Number 1 NB01OT009358-01-00.

