



Setting The Standard Olave, Wilson Snap First- Round Receiver Drought



Ohio State Of Mind

Day's Recruiting Efforts Still Focused On Buckeye State

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Ohio State head coach Ryan Day was announced as the program's 25th lead man on Dec. 4, 2018, he gave thanks before discussing his offensive philosophy, his assistant coaching hires or his expectations for the Buckeyes.

He thanked his family for their support and was also grateful for the support of Urban Meyer and his family, the team and those who decided to promote him, including then-university president Michael V. Drake and athletic director Gene Smith. He also shouted out Buckeye Nation for their continued support.

Then Day, with perhaps as many thoughts going through his head as there were dollars in his new \$4.5 million contract, also recognized the high school coaches throughout Ohio who dedicate their time to establishing the next generation of stars at Ohio State and throughout the nation.

"We have the best coaches and some of the best high school programs in all of America here in Ohio," he said during his introductory press conference. "And it will continue to be our first priority to recruit Ohio football players. Every young football player in the state of Ohio should dream about one day becoming a Buckeye. And it's our staff's responsibility to make sure we recruit them at the highest level."

Day, of course, is not the first and certainly will not be the last to emphasize in-state recruiting at his introductory press conference. Meyer, when asked on Nov. 28, 2011, about recruiting the Cleveland area and Ohio as a whole, said he loves the coaches in Ohio.

"Football is really, really important in the state of Ohio. Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, this is as good of football as there is in America," Meyer said. "It's certainly as well-coached as any in America."

"So to say that I'm excited to go recruit Cleveland is not a strong enough statement. I'll be on the

BACK TO BUSINESS — Ohio State wide receivers Garrett Wilson (5) and Chris Olave broke a 15-year stretch of no Buckeye receivers selected in the first round of the NFL draft. Wilson was taken by the New York Jets with the No. 10 pick, and Olave went to the New Orleans Saints with the No. 11 selection.

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Brian Hartline can stake his claim to one of the most unique situations in the Ohio State football program's rich history. With the April 27 selections of Buckeye wide receivers Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson in the first round of the 2022 NFL draft, Hartline became the only person to serve as both a player and coach in the Ohio State wide receivers room when it produced two first-round draft picks in the same class.

Back in 2006, Hartline played his role as a contributing freshman. He caught 17 passes for 256 yards and two scores, working behind Ted Ginn Jr. and Anthony Gonzalez. A few months after the end of that campaign, Ginn was picked ninth overall by the Miami Dolphins, while the Indianapolis Colts ended the first round by selecting Gonzalez.

Nearly two decades later, Hartline remains in the Buckeye receiver room — now as its director.

And after three seasons at the helm, he snapped a dry spell for Buckeye receivers in the first round that had spanned the 16 years since Ginn and Gonzalez came off the board, and he did it in emphatic fashion.

It was Wilson, the Austin (Texas) Lake Travis native and Hartline's first major coup on the recruiting trail back in the class of 2019, who came off the board first. Ohio State's first five-star receiver signee since Jalin Marshall in 2013, Wilson was selected by the New York Jets with the No. 10 overall pick.

He was the second wideout to hear his name called, trailing only USC's Drake London (who went two picks prior to the Atlanta Falcons) and emerged from the evening thrilled with his new home.

"You kind of go through the process and it's a lot of the same vibe from different teams, so it's hard to tell," Wilson said on draft night. "I came into tonight not knowing where I was going to end up. I was so nervous. When I got that call, it was just a feeling of

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Always A Buckeye

I thought: "Once a Buckeye, always a Buckeye." Yet you refer to players turning pro or graduated as "former Buckeyes." That just doesn't sound right. Isn't there a better term? How about "pro-Buckeye(s)" or "graduated Buckeye(s)." Or

"Buckeye/Pro Garrett Wilson" or "Buckeye/Pro Player Chris Olave." Or make something up. You guys are the wordsmiths. Put it up for debate or ask your subscribers for suggestions. The only people I think of as "former Buckeyes" are those who quit the team to play for TTUN.

**Daryl "Butch" Rada-
baugh**
Ottawa, Ohio

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.



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From The Message Board

With fewer than 100 days until the Buckeyes start their 2022 football season against Notre Dame at Ohio Stadium, we asked readers and staff members on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what they are looking forward to most for Ohio State this fall. Here are some of the responses:

"Getting revenge on That Team Up North, sending Marcus Freeman home after a spanking, or watching the rookies play. There's a lot to look forward to this season and there are only 100 days until we play Notre Dame. For me, all the interesting things about this season are eclipsed by beating Hairball. But until then, plenty of fun games to watch."

– **PeyoteBuck**

"The rematch with Michigan!"

– **Mcarr**

"I'm hoping the defense is decent. After days of further thought, I am looking forward to some surprise player(s) to excel far beyond what we expect now. With so much experience coming back, I am wondering if someone relatively unknown will burst onto the scene as a star this year. Caden Curry or Kye Stokes are the kind of guys I'm thinking of. Also possible that a more experienced player emerges as a big-time star. Maybe someone like Tyleik Williams?"

– **Terrier Buck**

"A breakout star would surely be on defense, where with a new coach and system, someone new has the best chance to excel. How is this for an off-the-wall break-out player on defense? Zach Harrison. We've been waiting Zach."

– **Poster That Harley Built**

"I'm really interested to see how Jaxon Smith-Njigba follows up last season as he approaches some national records. The single-season receiving yards record is 2,060 yards, achieved by Nevada receiver

Trevor Insley in 1999. Smith-Njigba finished with 1,655 yards last season, just 405 yards short. I don't think it's out of the question that there could be two more games (Big Ten Championship plus an extra bowl game if they make the championship game) on Ohio State's schedule as he pursues that.

"When considering all of this, keep in mind that he had three games last year – Minnesota, Tulsa and Rutgers – where he only had two receptions. I would put some decent money down that he finishes with at least five in each game this year."

– **Braden Moles, BSB**

"The rematch with Michigan!"

– **Frank Moskowitz, BSB**

"In his second season as the starting quarterback, I want to see what becomes of C.J. Stroud. He is a potential No. 1 overall pick in the 2023 NFL Draft. That possibility is something Ohio State fans have never really experienced outside of Justin Fields a few years back. Still, Fields would never have passed Trevor Lawrence as 'the guy' in the 2021 class, so he really didn't have that much chance of being the first player taken.

"On the other hand, Stroud has a legitimate shot of being the best player in this year's draft class, and he can show that on a week-to-week basis this season. With Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Julian Fleming, Marvin Harrison Jr. and Emeka Egbuka at his disposal, it should be a fun year for Buckeye fans to watch Stroud sling the rock."

– **Chase Brown, BSB**

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OPINION

A Look Ahead To 2022 Season For OSU

By the time you read this, there will be fewer than 90 days until Ohio State kicks off its 2022 season, a campaign many observers believe could (and should) result in a national championship.

Before entertaining those lofty notions, however, the Buckeyes must navigate a 12-game regular season that features a marquee nonconference matchup right out of the gate. Here are thumbnail previews of Ohio State's opponents for the upcoming season.

Sept. 3 vs. Notre Dame – Former Ohio State linebacker Marcus Freeman takes over as head coach of the Fighting Irish from Brian Kelly, who was working on a five-year streak of double-digit wins when he bolted to LSU.

Freeman begins his tenure with a quarterback dilemma. Neither dual-threat Tyler Buchner nor pure passer Drew Pyne could distance himself from the other this spring, and the sophomores will resume their position battle in the fall.

The season opener features only the seventh meeting ever between the two college football titans with Ohio State winning each of the last four. Notre Dame last tasted victory in the series with a 7-2 win in South Bend in 1936.

Sept. 10 vs. Arkansas State – To say head coach Butch Jones' first season with the Red Wolves didn't go according to plan would be understating things a bit. Picked in the preseason to finish second in the Sun Belt West, Arkansas State posted a 2-10 record.

Jones – who had compiled an 84-54 record as head coach at Central Michigan, Cincinnati and Tennessee – put together a staff that includes former Ohio State linebacker Rob Harley as his defensive coordinator. Harley clearly has some work to do. The Wolves allowed an average of 38.6 points per game last year and faced no offense near the caliber of what the Buckeyes will bring to bear against them.

This is the first-ever meeting between the two programs. Current members of the Sun Belt are a collective 0-3 against Ohio State. That includes Troy, a 28-10 victim in Columbus in 2008 that still went on to win the Sun Belt championship that season.

Sept. 17 vs. Toledo – The Rockets had the MAC's top scoring offense in 2021, averaging 33.4 points per game, and quarterback Dequan Finn returns to lead that attack. After taking over the position midway through the season, Finn threw for 2,067 yards and 18 TDs against only two interceptions.

Toledo also has some excellent defenders, including linebackers Jamal Hines and Dyon-tae Johnson, who combined last year for 174 tackles, 23.0 for loss. Safety Maxen Hook also returns after finishing second on the team in 2021 with 95 tackles.

This marks the fourth meeting between the two teams with OSU winning the previous three by a combined score of 114-22.

Sept. 24 vs. Wisconsin – The season opener against Notre Dame notwithstanding, most pundits believe this game will be the toughest of Ohio State's early schedule. After a poor start to last season, the Badgers won eight of their last nine games, including a 20-13 win against Arizona State in the Las Vegas Bowl.

Former Penn State star receiver Bobby Engram was hired during the offseason as offensive coordinator, and he will try to breathe some life into a Wisconsin passing game that ranked 13th in the 14-team conference last season.

The Badgers haven't had much success against Ohio State in recent years. Since a 31-18 upset win at Camp Randall Stadium in 2010, Wisconsin has lost eight in a row to the Buckeyes, and the Badgers haven't won in Columbus since 2001.

Oct. 1 vs. Rutgers – The Scarlet Knights showed some improvement last year in the second year of Greg Schiano's return as head coach. They still had a sub-.500 record at 5-7, extending the program's streak to seven straight losing seasons, but they made a bowl game for the first time since 2014.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Still, the talent gap is pretty wide for Rutgers in a loaded Big Ten East, and the schedule-makers didn't make things any easier. The Knights draw Iowa and Ohio State on back-to-back Saturdays to open Big Ten play and face a three-game stretch against Michigan, Michigan State and Penn State to kick off November.

Against those five teams, Rutgers is 2-32 since joining the conference in 2014. That includes losses in each of the eight meetings with Ohio State and getting outscored by a 428-88 margin.

Oct. 8 at Michigan State – After a string of mediocre seasons, the Spartans rebounded for an 11-2 campaign last year, a season that included wins against three ranked opponents. The successful season made second-year head coach Mel Tucker a very rich man. He agreed to a 10-year, \$95 million contract extension, meaning the university hierarchy in East Lansing expect nothing less than a repeat performance.

For that to happen, Tucker will have to find a suitable replacement for consensus All-American running back Kenneth Walker III, and the pass defense will have to improve. It gave up an average of 324.8 yards per game last year, ranking dead last in the country.

Michigan State has enjoyed some notable victories against Ohio State in recent years, but the Spartans have still lost 15 of their last 18 meetings with the Buckeyes, and they haven't beaten OSU in East Lansing since 1999.

Oct. 22 vs. Iowa – It's been five long years the Buckeyes have had to wait to seek revenge for the 55-24 beating they took in 2017 at Iowa City, a crushing loss that effectively knocked them out of the College Football Playoff chase.

The Hawkeyes rose as high as No. 2 in the polls last season before leveling off, and an otherwise successful year ended with back-to-back defeats – a 39-point blowout at the hands of Michigan in the Big Ten Championship Game and a 20-17 upset loss to Kentucky in the Citrus Bowl.

Kirk Ferentz is the dean of Big Ten head coaches, set to begin his 24th season with the Hawkeyes. His 110 conference victories rank fourth all-time behind guys named Hayes, Schembechler and Stagg, but Ferentz has never had much success against Ohio State. That big win five years ago was only his second win vs. OSU in 10 tries.

Oct. 29 at Penn State – The Nittany Lions have become the Jekyll and Hyde of the Big Ten. Two seasons ago, the team got off to a program-worst 0-5 record before winning its final four games. Last year featured an about-face as Penn State won its first five games and then lost six of its last eight.

The sad truth in Happy Valley is that after a four-year stretch that produced a 42-11 record and a couple of wins in high-profile bowl games, head coach James Franklin and his team are a decidedly pedestrian 11-11 over the past two seasons.

One problem from a year ago was that Penn

State wasn't able to run the ball with authority the way it has in the past. That should change in 2022 with the addition of all-everything freshman Nicholas Singleton, who ran for 2,059 yards and 44 touchdowns last year as a prep senior.

Nov. 5 at Northwestern – The Wildcats won the West Division crown in 2018 and 2020, but for them to repeat their success in even-numbered years would mean an improvement from last year's anemic offense.

Northwestern averaged only 16.6 points per game, a figure that ranked 125th out of 130 teams playing at the Football Bowl Subdivision level.

The Buckeyes have won 33 of the last 34 meetings with the lone blemish a 33-27 overtime loss at Ryan Field in 2004. Before that, you have to go back to a 21-0 loss in 1958 to find the Buckeyes losing at Northwestern.

Nov. 12 vs. Indiana – Last year's Hoosiers became a prime example of just how narrow the margin for error is at most college football programs. After coming within a whisker of making it to the Big Ten title game in 2020, Indiana suffered an alarming number of injuries and spiraled to a 2-10 finish that included its first winless conference mark in a decade.

Head coach Tom Allen, now in his sixth season, will try to rebuild around freshman running back Jaylin Lucas, a do-everything player recruited out of Louisiana, as well as some highly-regarded transfer players such as receiver Emery Simmons from North Carolina.

All the offensive help in the world isn't going to help, however, if Allen doesn't find a way to shore up a defense that ranked 10th in the conference in yardage allowed and 14th in points allowed.

Nov. 19 at Maryland – By most measuring sticks, the Terrapins enjoyed a successful season last year. They finished with a 7-6 record, the first winning mark in seven years, and their 54-10 pummeling of Virginia Tech in the Pin-stripe Bowl marked a first postseason victory since 2010.

Offensively, Maryland was one of the few Big Ten teams who could keep up with Ohio State statistically last year, thanks mostly to quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa, whose 3,860 yards were second in the league only to C.J. Stroud (4,435). Tagovailoa returns along with favorite receiver Rakim Jerrett (843 yards, five TDs).

If head coach Michael Locksley's program is to take another step forward, however, the defense will have to improve. The Terps surrendered an average of 404.3 yards per game last year, including 249.5 through the air to rank 13th in the conference in pass defense.

Nov. 26 vs. Michigan – The Wolverines went from an unranked team to begin the 2021 season to their first Big Ten championship in 18 years and the program's first-ever spot in the College Football Playoff. They also got pretty proficient at running their mouths, personifying the old saw about waking up on third base and thinking they'd hit a triple.

Lost amid the bluff and bluster is the fact Jim Harbaugh took a massive pay cut before last season to remain at Michigan. Has his program truly turned the corner? Or was it a one-year aberration fueled by a slew of veteran performers, most of whom have moved on to the NFL?

The first four opponents on the schedule combined for a 17-33 record last season, while a more meaty October slate features road games at Iowa and Indiana followed by home contests (separated by an off week) with Penn State and Michigan State. The Wolverines finish the regular season in Columbus, where they haven't won since 2000.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Day Receives Two-Year Extension Through 2028

The Ohio State University board of trustees has approved a two-year contract extension for football head coach Ryan Day that ties him to Ohio State through 2028 and increases his annual compensation to \$9.5 million.

Day's new compensation ties him for the highest-paid coach in the Big Ten alongside Michigan State's Mel Tucker and puts him among the most well-compensated coaches in the nation, tying LSU's Brian Kelly and trailing only Alabama's Nick Saban (\$9.9 million) and USC's Lincoln Riley (\$10 million).

Day has led Ohio State to a 34-4 record in his three seasons as head coach (and three games in 2018), winning two Big Ten championships and making two appearances in the College Football Playoff.

In his first comments since receiving the extension, Day said he is blessed and thankful for the opportunity to stay at Ohio State.

"First off, there's just so many people to thank when something like this happens. This is obviously a wonderful place," Day said May 25 on 97.1 The Fan. "And like I said before, I want to be here as long as I possibly can, and our family loves Columbus. So we are just very blessed and thankful for so many that have made something like this possible."

Day has said in the past that he has no interest in leaving Ohio State. Though reports have swirled during recent NFL offseasons regarding interest from the league's brass, he has denied those reports at every step.

"There's nothing to that," Day said in December about interest from the Chicago Bears. "There's no truth to it. I love Ohio State, and I love being the coach at Ohio State."

Day's extension would keep him at Ohio State through 2028, which would be his 10th season coaching the Buckeyes. He would be just the fourth coach in Ohio State history to reach at least 10 seasons at the helm, joining Woody Hayes (28 seasons), John Cooper (13 seasons) and Jim Tressel (10 seasons).

Day was one of several Ohio State coaches to receive an updated contract in May, joining men's basketball's Chris Holtmann (more on Page 28), women's basketball's Kevin McGuff (more on Page 31), men's lacrosse coach Nick Myers and men's hockey coach Steve Rohlik.

Crowley To Medically Retire From Football

Day confirmed during a May 6 media availability that junior running back Marcus Crowley is medically retiring from football after what running backs coach Tony Alford called a serious injury.

Crowley was looking to return this season after injuries sidelined him for most of the past three seasons. He suffered an ACL tear in 2019 that forced him out for the rest of the year and limited him to just five games in 2020, and then he suffered another knee injury last October, capping his ultimately final season with the Buckeyes after just four games.

"We met with his family last night," Day said. "We're going to be doing a medical redshirt for Marcus. He has a long-term injury there. He really wants to finish his degree and still be a part of the program, which he will, but he suffered a significant injury and so he's going to medical redshirt."

A four-star prospect in 2019 out of Trinity Christian Academy in Jacksonville, Fla., his injuries – as well as a loaded running backs room during his time with the Buckeyes, including J.K. Dobbins, Master Teague III, Trey Sermon and TreVeyon Henderson – led to him seeing the field in just 16 games

2022 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2021 Record
Sept. 3	NOTRE DAME	7:30 p.m.	ABC	11-2
Sept. 10	ARKANSAS STATE	12 p.m.	BTN	2-10
Sept. 17	TOLEDO	7 p.m.	FOX	7-6
Sept. 24	WISCONSIN	TBA	ABC	9-4
Oct. 1	RUTGERS	3:30 p.m.	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	12 p.m.	FOX	12-2

in four seasons. In total, he rushed for 354 yards and one touchdown, averaging 6.9 yards on his 51 attempts.

His medical retirement leaves Alford with four scholarship running backs in 2022: Henderson, Miyan Williams, Evan Pryor and Dallan Hayden, who arrived on campus this summer.

Melton Likely Out For Season

During the same availability, defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said a return this season for sophomore defensive end Mitchell Melton is "going to be tough" following a torn ACL in the spring game.

Melton was in line to receive significant snaps at defensive end this season after switching from linebacker this past spring. Likely a candidate to play at Knowles' new Jack position, the third-year Buckeye suffered a torn ACL in the second quarter of the spring game, going down to the turf without contact.

"We saw him earlier today with his family," Day said. "It's hard when you embrace these injuries because it's going to be a long road back and that's why it's so important to have (physical therapist and athletic trainer) Adam Stewart still be a part of the program because he's a big part of their lives and their recovery and their rehab. He's the best in the business."

"So the good news is we have great resources, and these guys are in good hands."

The negative is it's a long road to recovery."

A four-star prospect in the 2020 class, Melton will have to wait to make an impact on the team after suffering a season-ending injury in last year's spring practice and playing in just one game as a true freshman.

His injury leaves the Buckeyes with eight scholarship defensive ends for this upcoming season, including Javontae Jean-Baptiste, Caden Curry, Tyler Friday, Zach Harrison, Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau, as well as freshmen Omari Abor and Kenyatta Jackson Jr., who will arrive this summer.

Day Puts \$13 Million Price Tag On OSU Roster

Ohio State held a name, image and likeness panel discussion on June 2, and according to a report from Cleveland.com, Day told those in attendance that it will take \$13 million per season in NIL money to keep the Buckeyes' roster together.

These comments were featured as part of a discussion that included Day, athletic director Gene Smith and senior associate athletic director Carey Hoyt, who oversees Ohio State's NIL efforts. They spoke in front of local business leaders from Columbus who have a vested interest in Ohio State and NIL.

Though not clarified in the initial report, it is assumed that this money would be used for both incoming players and those already on the roster who could explore transfer options.

Rule changes throughout the last year, including NIL and the transfer portal, have raised several issues, including allegations of "pay-for-play" with recruits through NIL money and tampering with or contacting players before entering the transfer portal.

None of these are new problems within the college football landscape, but the allegations have recently reached a fever pitch.

"Unscrupulous characters are good at what they do, and it's always been that way," Smith reportedly said.

The most notable case thus far is Pitt-turned-USC receiver Jordan Addison, the reigning Biletnikoff Award winner who made waves with his transfer to the Trojans this offseason.

Though little evidence currently exists – and likely never will given the difficulty of proving tampering – his former Panther coach Pat Narduzzi had alleged that new USC coach Riley reached out to Addison before he entered the portal.

It isn't known yet if Ohio State's players have been approached in a similar fashion, but Day seemed to imply that players are already dealing with overtures from other schools.

"One phone call and they're out the



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door,” Day reportedly said. “We cannot let that happen at Ohio State. I’m not trying to sound the alarm. I’m just trying to be transparent about what we’re dealing with.”

And if Ohio State’s players are being contacted, Day’s price tag makes sense for maintaining the Buckeyes’ roster. Combined with the rising cost of a recruiting class – the market will eventually settle, but for now, top recruits are earning top-dollar amounts – it won’t be cheap to keep a solid 85-man roster together for the foreseeable future.

Day has said before that Ohio State embraced these changes to college football. However, the university is still balancing between putting itself at risk by getting too far ahead or potentially falling behind by not taking advantage.

“If the speed limit’s 45 miles per hour, and you drive 45 miles per hour, a lot of people are going to pass you by,” Day reportedly said on the panel. “If you go too fast, you’re going to get pulled over.”

OSU Adds Transfer Kicker In USC’s Lewis

Former USC kicker Parker Lewis announced April 29 that he will be transferring to Ohio State.

The three-star prospect and No. 7 kicker in the 2020 class out of Saguaro High School in Scottsdale, Ariz., entered the transfer portal in December after two seasons with the Trojans with three seasons of eligibility remaining.

Since entering the portal, Lewis made visits to Miami (Fla.) and Ohio State for the Buckeyes’ spring game.

Lewis started at placekicker the past two seasons for USC, going 26 of 35 (74.3 percent) on his field-goal attempts and connecting on all but one of his 24 extra-point attempts. He also handled kickoff duties for the Trojans, getting touchbacks on 22 of his 38 kickoffs, and could be in line to do so at Ohio State.

Ohio State already has a starting kicker in graduate Noah Ruggles, who was 20 of 21 on field goals and made all 74 extra-point attempts last season, though Ruggles took the spring semester off before returning to the team in recent weeks.

“It wasn’t a big deal,” special teams coach Parker Fleming said on May 6 of Ruggles’ absence. “It was nothing bad. It was just kind of a situation the head coach and I had, and that’s the direction we went.”

Lewis and Ruggles, along with sophomore Jake Seibert, give Ohio State three kickers on scholarship heading into next season.

Day Calls ND Big Challenge For OSU In Home Opener

Since Day became head coach at Ohio State in 2019, he has frequently acknowledged that the expectation is perfection. His teams can’t play poorly or lose games because that’s not the standard in Columbus.

According to ESPN, Fox Sports and The Athletic, Ohio State is the second-best team in the FBS behind Alabama in summer polls. OSU sits in front of Georgia, Clemson, Notre Dame, Texas, Michigan and others.

Day said he and his coaching staff look at the early polls, but they don’t put too much weight into them. He wants his team to keep an underdog mentality to remain focused

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

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 will be designated as Elite patrons in each issue. And those who donate more than \$125 will have their names listed as Elite-Plus VIPs.

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

and keep a week-to-week approach during the 12-game season.

“You look at them, but the last thing we want to see is ourselves on the top of anything (in the preseason) because you have to come in and want to prove yourself every day,” Day said May 25 on 97.1 The Fan. “We don’t have the ability to trip up at all. We have to start right from the get-go, build as the season goes on, and then play our best football at the end of the season.”

Ohio State’s first regular-season contest will be against Notre Dame in Ohio Stadium on Sept. 3, set for a 7:30 p.m. kickoff on ABC with ESPN’s “College GameDay” in attendance.

First-year Irish head coach Marcus Freeman is familiar with the Buckeyes, having played linebacker for the program in the mid-2000s and later becoming a graduate assistant under then-defensive coordinator Luke Fickell in the 2010s. The Irish rank in the top five in several preseason top-25 polls.

Day understands Notre Dame’s strength and claims the Ohio State coaching staff has been preparing for this matchup since the Buckeyes flew home from Pasadena, Calif., after the team’s Rose Bowl win over Utah.

“At Ohio State, we have to win every game,” Day said. “You can’t all of a sudden put so much into one game and then lay an egg the next week. We’re talking about a top-10 matchup, a night game at home. It’s going to be an unbelievable atmosphere, a lot of emotion. We’re going to be all over this.”

“It’s a very good team, a great program. They have a very good coaching staff. They’ll

be a big challenge, so we’re going to work all summer to make sure we’re prepared to play our best football in that game.”

Additional Kickoff Times Released

On May 26, Ohio State announced several new kickoff times for this upcoming season, adding an additional prime-time matchup to the Buckeyes’ schedule.

The Buckeyes play their first five games at home. After the under-the-lights kickoff against Notre Dame on Sept. 3, Ohio State will face Arkansas State on Sept. 10 at noon, with the game being broadcast on the Big Ten Network.

The Buckeyes will host Toledo on Sept. 17 under the lights the following week, set for a 7 p.m. kickoff on FOX. After Sept. 24’s home matchup with Wisconsin, which can be seen on ABC with an undetermined kickoff time, Ohio State will host Rutgers on Oct. 1 at 3:30 p.m. on an undisclosed network. The contest with the Scarlet Knights will serve as Ohio State’s homecoming and celebrate the 100th anniversary of Ohio Stadium.

OSU Updates Future Schedules

Ohio State announced several scheduling updates in May, including a home contest with Kent State in 2026 and a rescheduled home-and-home series with Boston College for the 2035 and 2036 seasons.

The Buckeyes will play host to the Golden Flashes on Sept. 19, 2026, just the fourth time these teams have faced each other. The Buckeyes won each of the previ-

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Scarlet VIPs: Anthony Ananthanarayanan, Rochester, Mich.; Greg Brooks, Gahanna, Ohio; Marty Brumbaugh, Troy, Ohio; Dennis Dahm, Sandusky, Ohio; Tom Goila, Cincinnati; Doug Harris, Lima, Ohio; Ed Helal, Ashland, Ohio; Phil Helal, Strongsville, Ohio; Dave Palmer, Washington, Mich.; Lawrence Romanoff, Powell, Ohio; Jim Shaw, Lake Forest, Calif.; William Torok, Girard, Ohio; Anonymous, Dallas; Anonymous, Norwalk, Ohio.

ous matchups, all at Ohio Stadium: 51-17 on Sept. 2, 2002; 48-3 on Oct. 13, 2007; and 66-0 on Sept. 13, 2014. This replaces the since-moved matchup with Boston College.

Ohio State is now scheduled to host Boston College on Sept. 15, 2035, and travel to Chestnut Hill, Mass., on Sept. 13, 2036. Originally agreed to in 2012 and set for 2020 and 2021, the series has been moved several times, at other points set for 2023 and 2024 and then 2026 and 2027.

Ohio State and Boston College have not played since 1995 when the Buckeyes won 38-6 in East Rutherford, N.J. The Buckeyes also won the previous two matchups, including a 31-10 decision in 1990 at Alumni Stadium in Chestnut Hill and a 34-29 win over the Eagles at Ohio Stadium in 1989.

Other upcoming home-and-home schedules include Notre Dame (2022-23), Washington (2024-25), Texas (2025-26), Alabama (2027-28) and Georgia (2030-31). A previously announced home-and-home series with Oregon for 2032 and 2033 has not been referenced in recent communications by Ohio State.

Draftees Ink Rookie Deals

Ohio State’s six draftees in the 2022 NFL draft have put pen to paper and signed rookie deals with their respective teams.

The biggest contracts were inked by first-round receivers Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave, who were selected at No. 10 by the New York Jets and No. 11 by the New Orleans Saints, respectively.

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

Wilson led the way with a four-year, \$20.55 million deal, while Olave followed closely behind with a four-year deal worth over \$19.2 million. Wilson's new teammate in New York, tight end Jeremy Ruckert, also signed his four-year deal with the Jets, earning a contract worth \$5 million that comes with an \$849,000 signing bonus. Ruckert was taken with the No. 101 pick in the third round.

Offensive lineman Nicholas Petit-Frère went off the board earlier in the draft, going to the Tennessee Titans with the No. 69 overall pick. The Titans confirmed his deal, and while they did not release financial details, Spotrac reported a four-year, \$5.45 million contract for the former Buckeye with a \$1.15 million signing bonus.

Later in the draft, defensive tackle Tyreke Smith was selected by the Seattle Seahawks with the No. 158 pick in the fifth round, and offensive lineman Thayer Munford was taken in the draft's final round, going No. 238 to the Las Vegas Raiders. Smith signed for four years and \$3.9 million, while Munford signed a four-year deal worth \$3.7 million.

OSU Early Favorite To Win B1G

Despite not winning the Big Ten for the first time since 2016, Ohio State opens as the heavy favorite to return to the top of the mountain in the upcoming campaign.

According to BetOnline.ag, Ohio State has the best odds to win the Big Ten this season. Wisconsin is predicted to be the West Division winner and has the second-best odds, while Michigan, Penn State, and Nebraska round out the top five favorites to win the conference. Rutgers holds the worst odds to win the conference, while the odds for Illinois, Maryland and Northwestern are 100/1 or lower to win the Big Ten.

In 2022, Ohio State has home matchups with Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Rutgers and Wisconsin and will travel to face Maryland,

Next BSB Print Issue Set To Mail July 5

The next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin (July cover date) is scheduled to be mailed on July 5, followed by our big Football Preview issue scheduled to be mailed in late August. The Ohio State sports action moves on, and there is no need to miss any of that action. The BSB staff covers the Buckeye scene daily on our website at BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers.

As any self-respecting Buckeye fan knows, June is football camp season. We will be covering all the latest football recruiting news at BuckeyeSports.com, along with any other news concerning Ohio State sports. Follow all the news of the day as it happens.

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.

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

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

Michigan State, Northwestern and Penn State. The Buckeyes do not play Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska or Purdue.

Elsewhere around college football, Clemson is the heavy favorite to win the ACC. Oklahoma (+170) edges out Texas (+200) to win the Big 12, and oddsmakers also expect close battles in the PAC-12 (Oregon at +210, USC at +215) and SEC (Alabama at +100, Georgia at +135). Of all Power Five teams, Duke and Vanderbilt have the lowest odds of winning their respective conferences at 500/1.

Harrison, Hickman Candidates For Lott IMPACT Trophy

While there are still a few more months until preseason watch lists become more popular, The Pacific Club IMPACT Foundation announced 42 candidates for the Lott IMPACT Trophy on May 19. Ohio State is one of six schools with at least two players named.

Harrison and safety Ronnie Hickman Jr. are candidates for the award, named after former NFL Hall of Fame defensive back Ronnie Lott. The Lott Trophy goes to the Defensive IMPACT Player of the Year – someone who impacted their program on and off the field.

The word "IMPACT" is an acronym for Integrity, Maturity, Performance, Academics, Community and Tenacity, all characteristics that Lott exhibited during his decorated football career.

Harrison was on the Lott IMPACT watch list before last season after a second-team All-Big Ten performance in 2020. The Lew-

is Center, Ohio, native failed to follow up his second-year success in his third season, collecting only 34 tackles, eight tackles for loss, two forced fumbles and four sacks in 2021. However, with his athleticism and size, the Buckeyes are hopeful there's still untapped potential to be found this fall.

Last season, Hickman was a stat-sheet stuffer, leading Ohio State with 99 tackles and one tackle for loss, one forced fumble, and a sack. He also added two interceptions and a touchdown. Hickman has appeared in 33 games with 15 starts in his Buckeye career, and he looks poised to take over one of the three safety spots in defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' new scheme.

There are 15 linebackers, 14 defensive backs and 13 defensive linemen on the 2022 Lott IMPACT Trophy watch list. Alabama has three candidates, including Will Anderson Jr., Henry To'oTo'o and Jordan Battle, while Ohio State, Clemson, Georgia, Iowa and Notre Dame each have two players named.

The annual winner will be selected by a national voter panel consisting of former winners, media members, coaches, and the IMPACT Foundation Board of Directors. The winner will be announced at a black-tie event at The Pacific Club in Newport Beach, Calif., on Dec. 11.

Report Shows Haskins Was Legally Drunk When Killed

Former Ohio State quarterback Dwayne Haskins was heavily intoxicated when he was struck and killed by a truck on a Florida highway in April, according to a toxicology examination released by the Broward County (Fla.) medical examiner's office on May 23.

Haskins, 24, had a blood-alcohol concentration of .20 percent and .24 percent at the time of his autopsy – more than 2½ times the Florida legal limit of .08 percent. Ketamine, a sedative taken as a recreational hallucinogenic, and norketamine were also present in Haskins' system, according to the report.

Representatives from the medical's examiner's office did not respond to several requests for comments from reputable news outlets, including USA Today and The New York Times. Haskins' agent, Cedric Saunders, also declined to comment.

Haskins' wife, Kalabrya, released a statement through an attorney on May 23, asking the public for patience and privacy during an uncertain time for her family.

"On behalf of Dwayne's wife, his family

and his memory, and on behalf of the truth, we respectfully request and pray for privacy, for patience and for the public to withhold any judgment during this period while law enforcement authorities continue to investigate and conduct their important work," the statement reads.

Another report released on May 23 provided clarity for what led to the collision, which occurred around 6:37 a.m. on April 9. Haskins attempted to cross a busy stretch of Interstate 595 in Fort Lauderdale on foot. He had been drinking "heavily" at a nightclub the night before his death, according to the report.

A Pittsburgh Steelers official told the Broward County medical examiner's office that Haskins had gone to dinner and the nightclub with a friend or cousin. The two later separated after an altercation. The official also told the examiner's office that Haskins had been in South Florida training with teammates that week.

Kalabrya Haskins called a 911 dispatcher the morning after Dwayne Haskins had been drinking, telling the dispatcher that her husband's car had run out of fuel and he had left the vehicle to search for gasoline. She called the authorities several times that morning, and the recordings were released to the public in April.

That morning, Haskins died of blunt force trauma when he was hit by a dump truck and another vehicle while he attempted to cross the interstate, the Broward County sheriff's office reported.

According to the report, a woman who had been traveling with Haskins was found by authorities inside the car after his death. It is unclear how she and Haskins knew each other.

Haskins threw for 4,831 yards and 50 touchdowns in his one season as a starter at Ohio State. He was later drafted by the Washington Redskins (now Commanders) with the No. 15 overall pick in the 2019 NFL draft. Haskins started in 13 games for the franchise before he was released.

The Steelers signed Haskins in January 2021 as a backup, but he did not play in the regular season. Haskins was set to compete with Mason Rudolph and Mitchell Trubisky in training camp for the starting job before his untimely death.

NCAA Makes Rules Changes For Division I Football

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nounced several changes on May 18, including relaxing restrictions for conference championship games and the removal of 25-man signing limits for recruiting classes.

Under the new rules, conferences will be allowed to determine their participants for championship games, which paves the way to eliminate conference divisions. The NCAA had previously mandated that conferences either play a round-robin schedule or have divisions determine conference championship game participants.

In February, Gene Smith indicated that he'd feel indifferent if the Big Ten got rid of football divisions.

"We've talked about divisions, so now we're going to look at some models," he said. "Again, in May, our hope is to conclude our thoughts around that. A little of that is tied to the CFP and what might emerge around that process. So I personally don't have a preference. I'm OK with losing the divisions."

In conjunction with the NCAA's announcement, the Pac-12 also announced that while it will retain its two divisions for the 2022 season, the upcoming conference championship game will be held with the two teams with the highest conference winning percentage instead of the two divisional leaders. According to the conference's release, this would have resulted in a differ-

ent championship game in five of the last 11 seasons.

With the NCAA relaxing restrictions, the Big Ten will now have several decisions to make regarding the future of their divisions and scheduling. Smith said a focus could be on ensuring that student-athletes get a chance to see all Big Ten venues.

"One of the issues that has been challenging for a number of our schools is a student-athlete can go through four years and never play at a certain place," he said. "So I want to see if there's a way to fix that."

The NCAA also announced the elimination of the 25-man signing limit for recruiting classes, though schools will still be allowed to hand out only 85 scholarships. In addition to schools taking as much talent as they want in a recruiting cycle, the change will also help schools that have been hit hard by the transfer portal to replenish their rosters.

"Some schools hadn't given out all their scholarships and felt constrained by the annual limit," said Shane Lyons, the athletic director at West Virginia and Council chair. "This temporary change provides schools more flexibility and adds opportunities for incoming and current student-athletes to receive aid."

This change will be in effect for two years while the Football Oversight Committee collects and reviews data.

Jags Sued For Hostile Work Environment Under Meyer

A lawsuit was filed on May 10 against the Jacksonville Jaguars by former kicker Josh Lambo, who alleged that former head coach Urban Meyer created a hostile work environment during the coach's lone NFL season.

According to a report by ESPN, the lawsuit alleges that the Jaguars violated the Florida Private Sector Whistleblower Act and that Meyer "violated Florida civil, criminal, and employment law concerning assault, battery, and workplace violence in furtherance of an employer's interests."

The Jaguars fired Meyer on Dec. 16 following a 2-11 start to the season and several controversies during his short tenure, including reports that he kicked Lambo in the leg during a preseason practice.

"Hey (expletive), make your (expletive) kicks," Meyer reportedly told Lambo before kicking him, to which Lambo responded, "Don't you ever (expletive) kick me again." Meyer then allegedly claimed, "I'm the head ball coach. I'll kick you whenever the (expletive) I want."

Following the incident, Lambo's ability to sleep, practice and perform his duties at a high level were all impacted, according to the lawsuit. He also suffered "extreme emotional and mental distress."

Lambo eventually lost his starting job

after missing his first three field-goal attempts of the season and was released by the Jaguars on Oct. 19. The lawsuit claimed that Meyer had threatened to release Lambo after he defended himself following the kicking incident.

"If you ever speak to me like that again, you'll be out of here," Meyer allegedly told Lambo. "You're the first player I've ever let speak to me that way in my career, and if you do it again, you're gone."

Lambo was released last season with one year remaining on his contract and is seeking any back pay owed, damages and other legal fees. As part of the lawsuit, the Jaguars are being asked to provide any documentation regarding team investigations into Meyer's workplace behavior and any instances of "objectionable, abusive, violent, or hostile actions by Urban Meyer concerning other employees, coaches, and players."

The former Ohio State head coach accepted the head coaching position in Jacksonville after previously retiring from coaching due to health issues. Between his time coaching the Buckeyes and with the Jaguars, he appeared for two seasons on FOX's "Big Noon Kickoff," and Meyer "indicated in April that he intends to return to the network."

Chase Brown and Braden Moles contributed to this article. For the latest Ohio State news, visit BuckeyeSports.com

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago - 1982

Clark Kellogg's announcement that he would be forgoing his final season at Ohio State and entering the NBA draft was spoiled by local media in the weeks prior to his May 14 press conference date, but Kellogg made his declaration all the same when the time came. "As you all know, I've decided to forgo my senior year of eligibility," Kellogg opened, confirming the reports, "and I am going to enter my name in the NBA draft."

"I have come to a decision after trying to weigh all the pros and cons that I could possibly weigh," Kellogg said. "I tried to weigh everything that was in favor of staying; I tried to weigh everything that was in favor of leaving. And in doing so, I feel it's in my best interests to enter into the NBA draft this year."

"I've tried to approach this in a businesslike manner, because by turning professional, basketball is going to become my livelihood. It's going to become a job for me. And ever since I realized I had a little extra potential in the game, it's been one of my dreams to try to play professional basketball and to try to excel in the NBA. I'm just choosing to leave school a year early to pursue my livelihood."

35 Years Ago - 1987

Cris Carter, the all-time leading receiver in Ohio State football history, was reinstated to the team shortly after the conclusion of spring practice.

Carter had been suspended for the previous two weeks by Buckeye coach Earle Bruce.

"(The suspension) cost him a captaincy on this football team," said Bruce. "That's very important for any player. It's the highest honor you can receive from our team."

Bruce said Carter also would not be allowed to attend the annual Playboy magazine preseason All-American confab.

Carter's troubles had not yet been explained, although it was said that he broke team rules, earning the suspension and exclusion from captaincy voting. Instead, linebackers Chris Spielman and Eric Kumerow, defensive back William White and quarterback Tom Tupa claimed the title.

30 Years Ago - 1992

All-America basketball player Jim Jackson bid Ohio State a tearful farewell May 6, announcing that he would leave school a year early to make himself eligible for the National Basketball Association draft.

"I have mixed emotions," Jackson told reporters during a news conference at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. "Here at Ohio State, we have been like a family. (Head) coach Randy Ayers has been like a father figure. My teammates have been very great and understanding. The coaching staff has really helped me out a lot."

"I had a lot of mixed emotions, but it was really time for me to move on, get a better feel of myself and a better appreciation for the game of basketball."

25 Years Ago - 1997

The Big Ten Council of Presidents/Chancellors, meeting June 1 in Chicago, affirmed its support of the conference's integration into the football bowl alliance beginning with the 1998 season.

The alliance agreement allowed a No. 1- or No. 2-ranked Big Ten or Pac-10 team to play for the national championship in the bowl selected that season to host the title game. Otherwise, the

Big Ten/Pac-10 rivalry would continue except for years like 2002, when the Rose Bowl would host the title game. In that instance, the conferences would renew their rivalry in the alliance's most western bowl.

It had no interest, however, in any sort of college football playoff system.

"Big Ten presidents and chancellors are resolute in their opposition to an NFL-type playoff," said OSU president E. Gordon Gee, then-incoming chair for the Big Ten council. "We sought to maintain the Rose Bowl tradition while providing our football teams with the opportunity to play for the national championship in a No. 1 vs. No. 2 game."

20 Years Ago - 2002

Four young candidates were battling hard for the right to replace Jonathan Wells, Ohio State's starter at tailback in 2001 and the school's 13th starting halfback to be selected in the NFL draft since 1972 after he was taken in the fourth round by the expansion Houston Texans.

Sophomores Lydell Ross and Maurice Hall, redshirt freshman Jala Riley and early-enrolling freshman Maurice Claret competed for the open job through spring. But when the dust settled after the spring game on April 27, nobody really had taken a clear lead. Ross and Hall were bracketed in the top spot on Ohio State's post-spring depth chart, with Claret and Riley bracketed in the No. 2 spot.

However, according to running backs coach Tim Spencer, they were placed in that arrangement because it was impossible to fit four names into the first slot.

"There's no pecking order yet," Spencer said. "They're still kind of grouped. We switched them so everybody got an equal shot."

15 Years Ago - 2007

It was scarlet, green and white and it was causing the most discussion and controversy by an inanimate object around the Ohio State football program since head coach Jim Tressel held up a new scarlet jersey at his 2006 spring preview.

It was the FieldTurf playing surface installed in Ohio Stadium and finished in late May. Once the center of debate around the Buckeye program simply because of its existence after replacing the Horseshoe's natural grass surface, the new surface also drew catcalls from some Ohio State fans because of the lack of gray included in its design.

One place to not expect to hear criticism was from the man in charge, Tressel, who seemed receptive to making the switch after constant grass issues plagued Ohio Stadium during the 2006 season, with that surface being replaced twice during the '06 season.

"Our guys seem to like it," he said. "There are some teams in the Big Ten that have it. We've played on FieldTurf quite a bit, and I think there are a few teams in the NFL that play on it."

Ohio State joined Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin as Big Ten teams with new-generation artificial playing surfaces.

10 Years Ago - 2012

A pair of Ohio State football players found themselves suspended indefinitely after getting into trouble early on June 2.

Senior tight end Jake Stoneburner and junior offensive lineman Jack Mewhort, along with a third man not affiliated with the foot-

ball program, were charged with misdemeanors for obstructing official business, an incident stemming from their fleeing from police who observed them urinating in public in the Columbus suburb of Shawnee Hills near the Bogey Inn, a popular gathering spot during golf's Memorial Tournament.

Stoneburner and Austin Barnard, a 21-year-old Dublin resident, surrendered after police found them hiding between two parked cars in a parking lot. Mewhort was apprehended after emerging from a wooded area in which he had been hiding.

For their actions, head coach Urban Meyer suspended them from all football activities with no timeline on a potential return.

Five Years Ago - 2017

When the Ohio State men's basketball team opened the 2017-18 season, Thad Matta would not be the head coach. Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith announced the decision to make a coaching change during a press conference June 5, just a matter of months after giving Matta a vote of confidence before the 2016-17 season ended.

"While this may be a surprise to many, I think it is the right thing for our program, at the right time and we will go about the business of going through a national search immediately," Smith said.

Smith explained that he and Matta came to a "mutual understanding" that the program needed to go in a different direction. Matta, who coached the Buckeyes for 13 seasons, was visibly emotional during the press conference, but he stressed that he was thankful for his time at Ohio State.

"Obviously, this has been probably the greatest 13 years of my life," Matta said. "Just looking around here and seeing all these things, it's been awesome."

"My wife, my two daughters, they have been with me at the top and at the bottom. I think from Gene to (president Michael) Drake to (former president E. Gordon) Gee to (former AD) Andy Geiger, Buckeye Nation, it has been an incredible run. Most importantly I want to thank the players. We have had some good ones. Those are the guys that get the job done for you, and I am grateful to them. Thank you."

One Year Ago - 2021

A massage therapist not affiliated with Ohio State engaged in sexual activities with five student-athletes from the football team after "using those massages as a means to initiate sexual interactions," according to records released by Ohio State and obtained by BSB.

Those involved said the sexual activities were consensual. Athletic director Smith told media in a Zoom call May 13 that no NCAA violations were committed by Ohio State based on the results of an investigation. He also indicated that no laws seemed to be broken by either party.

Smith emphasized the character that was displayed by student-athletes within the program during the investigation and said the findings had been released because Ohio State held itself to a higher standard and encouraged complete transparency.

"I'm thankful that our student-athletes, our coaches and staff were honest, forthright and open during the investigation, and I'm really thankful that they maintained confidentiality, affording the investigation the opportunity to operate without distraction and be able to operate with integrity," Smith said.

Hartline Sees Several Pupils Go In First Round

Continued From Page 1

relief and excitement. I'm just so blessed. I was just really excited, but I can't say I knew it was going to go like this."

Wilson seemingly opened the floodgates at receiver. Not wanting to miss out on their top target in what was considered a strong receiver class, the New Orleans Saints traded the No. 16, 98 and 120 picks to the Washington Commanders in exchange for the No. 11 pick and fired off their selection, making Olave the third receiver off the board and giving Ohio State back-to-back first-round picks (and its only first-rounders of the draft).

Olave was just as excited about his landing spot as Wilson, mentioning another former Buckeye, Saints wideout Michael Thomas.

"Garrett was right next to my little area (in the green room), so right when Garrett got drafted, I'm over there with him trying to congratulate him, and then I got a call right away from New Orleans right after he got drafted," Olave said during an interview with Saints reporters.

"I can't wait to go out there and compete with (Michael Thomas). I've heard he's a huge competitor. Me too. We're going to get the best out of each other, and we're just going to get better each and every day."

Although he didn't leave college as a Buckeye, Jameson Williams began his career in Columbus before transferring to Alabama ahead of the 2021 season, and his former teammates were delighted to see the Detroit Lions keep alive the run on receivers to don the scarlet and gray with the No. 12 pick.

"To hear my name and have such a great moment and right after hearing Chris and know his dream's coming true and then (Jameson), it was super awesome," Wilson said in his post-draft press conference. "Those are two of my best friends."

"We never thought this would happen," Olave concurred.



File photo

FAIR SHAKE — Wide Receiver Chris Olave (2) is excited about the opportunity he will have after being the 11th overall pick in the 2022 NFL draft by the New Orleans Saints. He will be competing alongside another Buckeye in wideout Michael Thomas.

Perhaps no one derived more joy from the Buckeye barrage than Hartline, though. Olave and Williams signed with the Buckeyes when Hartline was still working as a quality control staffer, but Wilson is the first Ohio State wide receiver to undertake an entire career under Hartline's tutelage and emerge a draftee. Olave and Williams spent three and two years working with him, respectively. The first round was as much an acknowledgement of Hartline's achievements as it was of his pupils' achievements.

"It was incredible," Hartline said. "I mean, to be around right there, and then to have my wife there with us too. She invests so much time with the guys, and she really brings them in like family. We already feel a

certain type of way as a coach and the emotional conversations we've had and there's just so much that comes back, but to see guys accomplish their dream in that fashion was definitely something I'll take with me for the rest of my life. It was pretty cool."

The 35-year-old was quick to note, however, that Ohio State's focus is on the process rather than the destination — while slipping in a not-so-subtle recruiting pitch in the process.

"It's always a part of the conversation. And I'm definitely not one to shy away from that conversation. I mean, these guys have a small window to try to accomplish a goal that not many guys can accomplish," Hartline said. "If you go through every year — it's always fun, I kind of did it with the 2018 class and the 2019 class — there are the first five to 10 to 15, 20 receivers. And all of those guys probably thought going into college like, 'Hey, I'm going to be a first-round pick.' Two or three of those guys actually were. A lot of people can talk about it and say, 'Here's what we can do with a player like you.' We just do it. If that's something you're looking for, you can be the next man up. But if you want to be the first one somewhere, I mean, that's OK, too."

"But we just really pride ourselves on, we know the path, we know the recipe, we know what it takes. And if we tell you that you can be one of those guys, you can be one of those guys. It's a proven course. It's not like we don't know what it takes. It's a common goal, and it's a common path that many guys have taken with us."

More To Come?

Ohio State isn't in the business of divulging every part of that recipe, but a theme emerged from the newly anointed members of the NFL and from their now former coach: competition.

Olave and Wilson both found playing

time in their first seasons as Buckeyes, but they did so by working their way up a ladder crowded with talent. When Olave found his way onto the field in Ohio State's 2018 regular-season finale against Michigan, he did so by snatching playing time from wideouts such as Johnnie Dixon, Austin Mack, Terry McLaurin and Binjimen Victor.

Dixon was the No. 9 receiver in his recruiting class and has been one of the best receivers in the USFL this season, suiting up for the New Orleans Breakers. Mack was also ninth among receivers in his class and signed a new reserve contract with the San Francisco 49ers in February. McLaurin is one of the NFL's top young receivers and was a Pro Bowl alternate in 2021. Victor was the No. 12 receiver in 2016 and has a reserve contract with the Baltimore Ravens.

Wilson did the same in 2019, splitting time with Victor and K.J. Hill, who was drafted in the seventh round of the 2020 NFL draft by the Los Angeles Chargers. The next generation of standout receivers, they say, have taken the same route and faced the same — if not higher — level of competition to reach that standard.

"It's a competitive environment, especially in that receiver room," Olave said. "We've got so many guys. We've got Jaxon (Smith-Njigba) next year and Marvin Harrison Jr. in the room, and we've got so many younger guys that are going to make that jump. At the end of the day, we just make each other better and we wish the best for each other, so that's all you can hope for."

To project any player with two or even three years of college remaining as a draft prospect is quite the task, but Hartline was not shy about his feelings regarding the future in his room. The Buckeyes return Smith-Njigba for his junior season — potentially the most-hyped receiver campaign in school history, as the Texas native draws Heisman projections — plus classmate Julian

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Fleming, the former No. 3 overall prospect in America, along with sophomores Emeka Egbuka and Harrison, redshirt freshman Jayden Ballard and even a few veteran faces in oft-injured Kamryn Babb and Xavier Johnson, along with another star-studded freshman class.

"I think the list is pretty extensive," Hartline said of receivers he's confident in. "Julian Fleming is doing a great job. Emeka is doing a great job. Marvin is doing a great job. Jayden Ballard is doing a great job. Kam (Babb) had a good spring, got dinged up towards the end. Xavier Johnson has done a great job.

"It's an extended list of guys that I feel very comfortable being on the field. And obviously we'll have offseason training, we'll have fall camp and whatnot, but we have a great, solid group of guys. I know we lost two great ones, but I think that we have a lot of guys in our room that can fill that void, plus some."

Like their predecessors, many of those players first made noise in their first seasons on campus. Playing time out wide at Ohio State was tremendously difficult to come by in 2020, given that the starting room just filled three consecutive first-round slots, but Smith-Njigba made one of the most impressive plays of the season in game one. Running even with quarterback Justin Fields at the back of the end zone, Smith-Njigba snared a nearly impossible-to-catch pass and completed the play with some extremely nifty footwork for his first career touchdown.

In his sophomore season, it was

Smith-Njigba who handily led the Buckeyes in receptions and yards, not either of his now-professional counterparts. Working out of the slot, he hauled in a program-best 95 receptions for 1,606 yards (another program record) and capped his season with one of the finest wide receiver performances that Ohio State has seen in the Rose Bowl. Barring a truly shocking development, he's widely expected to give Ohio State its third first-round receiver in two years when the 2023 NFL draft rolls around.

The players behind him on the pecking order seem to have caught just as much of Hartline's attention, though. Finally healthy, Fleming drew praise all spring. Babb and Johnson have been lauded for their leadership, and Ballard was mentioned by both of his former position-mates as the fastest player on the team. Egbuka and Harrison, though, are the closest adherents to the now established wideout pipeline, and Hartline has taken notice.

"They're great players. Very cerebral players," Hartline said of his sophomores. "I think that they're everything you want in a young man to be in your room. We have a really great four, five, six guys in that room, and those are two of the guys that are a part of that group. You really can't ask for any better individuals, and they've just continued to get better and better week to week and year to year."

Neither was able to make quite the impact that Wilson did when he was a freshman, but both experienced something reminiscent of Olave's first year with the Buckeyes. Egbuka pitched in throughout

the season on special teams but didn't break into the top rotation until the last game of the season, which Olave and Wilson sat out. After Fleming suffered an early-game injury, Egbuka took over on the outside and contributed 46 yards on a trio of receptions. And more importantly, in his estimation, he spent the year learning behind two (and potentially three) of the best receivers in program history.

"Last year was a great year for me," Egbuka said. "I got to sit behind guys like Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson, Jaxon and really just learn from them. I know how great of careers they're going to have in the NFL, and just to have those guys as my big brothers guiding me along the way was the best thing I took out of last year.

"Developing those slot skill sets helped me launch into this year, so I'll be able to come into this year playing all three positions. I feel really confident at all three positions. There were no missed assignments during practice. I'm just constantly learning, constantly growing with the help of guys like Marvin and the help of guys like Jaxon and Julian. Everybody in the wide receiver room is a wide receiver No. 1 and that's what a lot of people don't get. That's why Zone 6 is so great."

Harrison, who started in the Rose Bowl and recorded three touchdowns on six receptions, has drawn similarly raised expectations entering the season and is projected by many as a starter in one of the vacant outside receiver spots.

"Those guys are driven," strength and conditioning director Mickey Marotti said of

the wideouts. "They're in here at five o'clock in the morning on their own, running routes, catching (from the throwing machine). They do so much, you have to give them a plan, 'You can't come back and run routes after practice. You can't. You're not going to hold up. You've got to do this, this, this and this.' But that's fun. That's fun to be around those guys because they're always looking to get better. 'How can I do more? What can I do extra?'"

In all, Ohio State's wide receiver room after the departure of two first-round picks is home to three former five-star prospects (one of whom was ranked the top college football wide receiver for 2022 by both Pro Football Focus and Sports Illustrated) and six former four-stars. It's rare territory, especially for a program losing two players talented enough to earn first-round pick status. It's the kind of glut of talent that has earned Hartline's room the "wide receiver U" moniker in some circles, although he pushes back on that phrase.

"I think that tag is weird, and I don't know why people always talk about it like that," Hartline said at an interview session in April. "You guys can talk about it like that, but that's not something we talk about."

His star pupil feels differently.

"I (won't) fake it. We are wide receiver U," Wilson said, flashing the kind of grin that only a man suddenly worth millions of dollars could generate.

And taking the path he helped to blaze, Egbuka, Fleming, Harrison, Smith-Njigba and the rest of the Buckeye wideouts are hoping to soon prove that right.



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Day Continues Locking Down Ohio For Bucks

Continued From Page 1

phone tonight with a couple of guys. I can't wait to get back involved in that."

Before Meyer, Jim Tressel's attitude was reflected in his actions, not his words. Within days of being announced as Ohio State's 22nd football coach on Jan. 18, 2001, Tressel had made his rounds, welcoming in central Ohio prospects from Brookhaven, Dublin Coffman and Upper Arlington. He also traveled northeast to visit GlenOak in Canton and headed west to Dayton's Cham-inade-Julienne.

And John Cooper, introduced as the school's head coach on Dec. 31, 1987, took a more humorous approach, noting that his wife, Helen, was evidence of his recruiting ability. He made sure to mention the talent that existed in Ohio, too.

"Recruiting is the name of the game," he said. "You win with talent. We will start right here with primarily Ohio players and then go wherever else we need to go. We'll get the 25 best student-athletes we can to compete in the Big Ten Conference."

Cooper specifically mentioned that he felt there was a better chance of winning a national championship at Ohio State than Arizona State, his previous stop, due to the talent within the state.

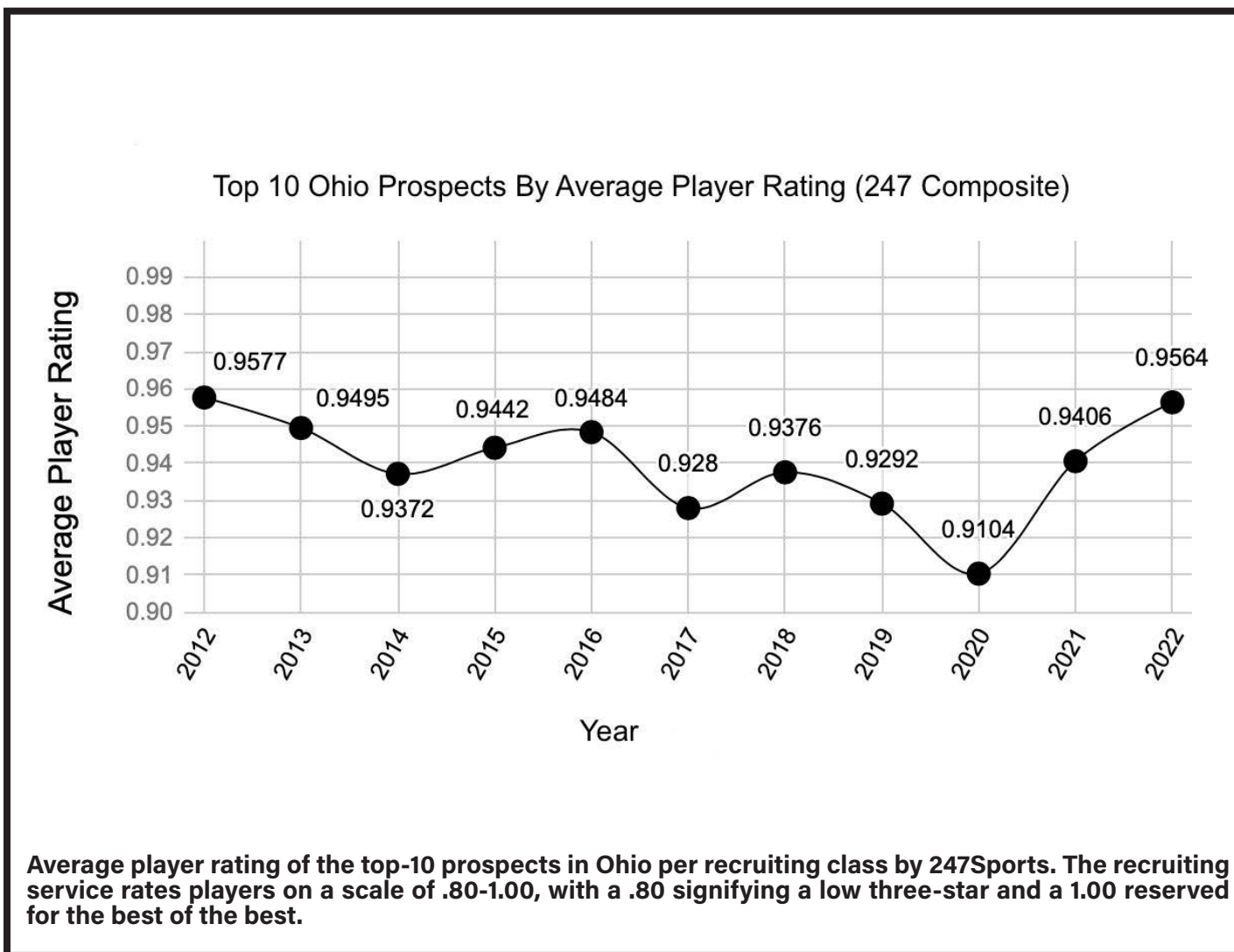
All three coaches would become renowned for their recruiting abilities, with Cooper opening up Ohio State's national brand, Tressel closing the Ohio border and Meyer emulating the best parts of the former coaches to take the Buckeyes' recruiting to the next level.

"John Cooper was highly successful as a national recruiter, which was pretty unusual back then," Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Bill Greene told BSB. "Texas recruited Texas, Oklahoma recruited their area, and John Cooper was pretty amazing with the talent he could collect out of state. But I think a lot of people felt like he went too far that way and passed over guys in Ohio that could play."

"When Tressel got the job, his mission was going to be to put that fence back around Ohio. Cooper lost a lot of guys to Michigan that he tried to get for Ohio State. I don't know if that affected his psyche so that he felt, 'Well, I'd better go national then.' I don't know. But Tressel thought, 'To heck with this. I'm not going to concede the state of Ohio to Michigan and go national. I'm not doing it. I want to build that fence around Ohio, and (then-Michigan head coach) Lloyd Carr's not getting in.' And that's what he did."

"Then Urban came, and I think it was a combination of Urban being a national guy and about that time Ohio was starting to slip, and he could see it. What worked for Tressel was not going to work anymore. It wouldn't work today, and it wouldn't have worked for Urban. He did what he had to do to keep Ohio State as a playoff contender, but it was just different."

With Day taking over, Meyer's recruiting structure had already been implemented to dominate the landscape. Ohio State existed as both the premier in-state school and a national brand, led by director of player personnel Mark Pantoni, whom Meyer hired after working with him at Florida and who was kept on during Day's transition.



Day made clear his mission was to keep Ohio a priority on the recruiting trail, and he quickly lived up to expectations after his coronation as head coach.

"I thought he would do much of the same thing," Bucknuts recruiting analyst Bill Kurelic told BSB. "He made recruiting Ohio a priority. When he became head coach, the first thing he did was to go around the schools in Ohio in January when the coaches were allowed out on the road to hit all the schools in Ohio hard. That's the first place they went as a staff, and he's been doing that every year in January. Then they branched out from there."

Day's appearances at the in-state schools and lauding of Ohio prospects made him an instant hit, and some considered him to be more down-to-earth than Meyer and more capable of connecting with recruits.

Several top recruits have stayed home, including four five-star prospects in offensive tackle Paris Johnson Jr., defensive end Jack Sawyer, linebacker C.J. Hicks and safety Sonny Styles, all set to be either current or future stars for Ohio State.

"He's done a great job," Kurelic said. "He's got just about all the guys in the state each year that he's wanted to get. Nobody's ever going to get every single guy every year, but he's really, for the most part, dominated in Ohio. There haven't been many he's missed on, that's for sure."

Day continued expanding Ohio State's national brand, pulling five-star prospects such as Julian Fleming of Pennsylvania and Jaxon Smith-Njigba of Texas in his first class. He won the services of quarterback

C.J. Stroud, not to mention securing former Georgia quarterback Justin Fields out of the transfer portal in what would become a strong line of succession at quarterback.

He has signed 12 five-star prospects, and his three recruiting cycles – with all classes ranked in the top five nationally – have resulted in one of the best three-year recruiting runs in Ohio State history.

"I think he's put his own stamp on this," Greene said. "I see a lot of Tressel in him, but I see a lot of Urban in him. I think he's kind of a hybrid of both, and I think he's kind of taken the best of both. To me, and I don't think people see it this way or realize, I think Ryan Day took the product he was handed, and he's made it better."

Though Day has emphasized Ohio – and appears to be true to his word, considering the focus afforded to Ohio by his staff – his classes show that the foundation of Ohio State's recruiting classes may not have the same Ohio flair as those of his predecessors.

Meyer and Day's classes at Ohio State have been mostly similar in size, averaging around 23 commitments per cycle. Meyer took an average of 8.8 Ohio kids per class, while Day has taken just 6.7 per class, meaning that Day is taking around two fewer Ohio prospects per class. The juxtaposition is even more substantial with Tressel's classes, which averaged 11.6 prospects from Ohio per cycle.

Ohio will remain the critical state for the Buckeyes moving forward – Day already has five commitments from Ohio kids in 2023, with more potentially on the way – but num-

bers show that the state is not producing talent the way it used to.

Using the 247Sports average player rating of the top-10 prospects in Ohio per recruiting class, the data shows a sharp decline in the quality of recruits in the state. The 247Sports system rates three-, four- and five-star players on a scale of .80-1.00, with five-stars falling in the .98-1.00 range. As an example, former Ohio State quarterback Quinn Ewers is one of only six players to be awarded a perfect 1.00 composite rating dating back to 2000.

Meyer's first recruiting class in 2012 had an average player rating of .9577 for Ohio prospects. He ended up taking 14 recruits from Ohio in that 25-man class.

By 2014, the average had dipped down to .9372 before rising to .9484 by 2016. Things took a sharp dive in 2017 to .9280 when Meyer took just six recruits from Ohio. At the time, it was his fewest in a single class. The following year, Meyer's average briefly rose to .9376 before completely cratering to .9104 in 2020 under Day. The ratings have since climbed to .9564 in the 2022 class.

Ohio recruits in Meyer's classes from 2012-19 had an average player rating of .9415, while Ohio recruits in Day's three cycles averaged just .9358. Though the separation seems minuscule, the value can be seen in star ratings and the lack thereof in recent classes. In 2012, Ohio had one five-star prospect in Cincinnati Taft's Adolphus Washington and 21 four-star prospects. In 2020's class – the worst on record for Ohio in the modern recruiting era – there exist-

ed just one five-star in Johnson and only five four-star prospects.

However, this data could be considered subjective, with recruiting rankings determined by a group of individual evaluators. Anecdotally, several experts have noticed that shift in talent in Ohio.

Greene said his previous recruiting travels would take him to McKinley in Canton, Glenville and St. Ignatius in Cleveland and St. Xavier in Cincinnati. Those schools have produced immense talent for Ohio State and see upward of 50 Division I football prospects between them each year. Years ago, Greene would see the talented players at those schools weekly, but he has a different picture of those institutions today.

"I won't see five Power Five kids. There's no way," he said. "Most of the Division I kids I'd see would be MAC kids, where in the old days, St. Ignatius would have eight Power Five kids. It's changed. I think that the Columbus talent is still really, really good, maybe a little better than what it was back in the day. Cincinnati is still really solid. The change has come in the north, from (north) Columbus up to Cleveland.

"I don't know if it's job loss, population shift – those kids just aren't there anymore. And when I tell people that there used to be 50 Division I kids between Canton and Cleveland, they can't believe it. But it's true."

According to recent census data, Ohio's population has risen by over 400,000 residents from 2000 to 2020. On the flip side, cities with football powerhouses such as Akron, Cincinnati and Cleveland have seen their population drop, including a jaw-dropping 22 percent decline in Cleveland's population (105,779 residents) in the last 22 years.

Ohio State has taken recruits from Cincinnati as recently as safety Jaylen Johnson from La Salle in 2021. Still, one would need to go back to 2019 for a prospect from Cleveland (linebacker Tommy Eichenberg out of St. Ignatius) and to 2014 for an Akron recruit, when linebacker Dante Booker out of St. Vincent-St. Mary committed to the Buckeyes.

While Kurelic contends that Ohio has more than 100 prospects with Division I potential, he also acknowledges the population shift resulting in less talent coming out of Ohio.

"It's good, but it's not what it used to be," he said. "The population shift has moved south. Fifteen years ago, Ohio would produce about 150 Division I players every year. Now, when COVID hit, it was down under 100.

"You contrast that to Georgia, for instance. Georgia is producing over 300 Division I kids every year. That's a huge differ-

ence. Georgia, per capita, is the number one state for producing high school football talent now. Florida is right there, too, with Texas and California. Ohio is after that. There is a big difference now."

Even if the talent in Ohio is not what it once was, there's still a reason that Day and Ohio State are focusing on the in-state prospects and why Ohio recruits make up, on average, nearly a third of his classes.

Beyond the five-star prospects like Hicks and Styles, the Buckeyes' upcoming class already has three commitments from in-state offensive linemen – Findlay four-star Luke Montgomery (6-5, 280), Huber Heights Wayne four-star Josh Padilla (6-4, 265) and Middletown Lakota East four-star Austin Siereveld (6-5, 315) – who have established a base for new offensive line coach Justin Frye.

Ohio will continue functioning as the foundation for Ohio State's classes – especially so with the occasional five-star target in the state – but gone are the days of Tressel when Ohio State fills a class with Ohio kids and is allowed to be selective with out-of-state prospects. Tressel took in-state recruiting to new heights, and Meyer provided the blueprint for expanding Ohio State's reach, and the job is now up to Day to strike a balance.

"I think it makes it a lot harder, because when Tressel was going to fill 15 of his 25 with Ohio guys, it was a lot easier to recruit an Ohio guy to Ohio State than it is to recruit that California kid to Ohio State or to go into Florida and bang heads with LSU, Florida, Florida State, Miami and Alabama for that type of kid," Greene said. "It's harder now, but yet they're making it look easier.

"I think if Ryan Day had his druthers, I think he would rather see Ohio be the top talent-producing state. It used to be where he could just take 10 or 15 in Ohio and have them all locked up by Memorial Day or Fourth of July. Then you could just focus on 10 spots to fill your class up. That would be a lot easier than what it is now."

Other Schools Taking Advantage

If not Ohio State, then where are the remaining in-state prospects going? With the Buckeyes' recent classes trending more heavily out of state with each passing year, plenty of talent – perhaps not Ohio State-level talent, but talent all the same – from Ohio is left to the rest of the nation.

An analysis by BSB of recruiting classes from 2012 through 2022 – a sample size of 11 classes and 220 prospects when accounting for the top 20 in-state recruits per cycle, according to the 247Sports composite rankings – showed that several schools are benefiting from Ohio State's national

shift.

Three schools that stand head and shoulders above the rest are Michigan, Kentucky and Michigan State. Out of 220 prospects, the Buckeyes were still the clear leaders by hauling in 69 of those recruits, but Michigan was second with 19, Kentucky was third with 18 and Michigan State was fourth with 17.

Some of those notable prospects include Lakewood St. Edward offensive lineman Kyle Kalis ('12), Pickerington Central linebacker Taco Charlton ('13) and tight ends Jake Butt ('13, Pickerington North) and Erick All ('19, Fairfield) to Michigan; running back LJ Scott ('15, Hubbard) to Michigan State; and wide receiver Lynn Bowden Jr. ('17) to Kentucky out of Youngstown Warren G. Harding. Of those prospects, Ohio State offered only Kalis and Scott.

"Mark Dantonio did a great job at Michigan State before he retired. (Kentucky coach) Mark Stoops, he has Vince Marrow, who is his ace recruiter. Vince is an Ohio guy," Greene said. "They built that Kentucky program from a 2-10 program to now they're a perennial bowl team. They are a seven- or eight-win team every year now and have been under Stoops the past five or six years, and that's all on the backs of these Ohio kids."

Other double-digit takers from Ohio include Notre Dame with 14 commitments and Cincinnati and Pitt, each with 11 top-20 commitments from Ohio in the last 11 classes. The Fighting Irish pulled in offensive tackle Tommy Kraemer ('16) out of Cincinnati Elder and wide receiver Lorenzo Styles ('21) out of Pickerington Central, while the Bearcats secured the services of running back Tavion Thomas ('18) out of Dayton Dunbar. Ohio State offered all.

After two seasons at Cincinnati and a stint in the junior college ranks, Thomas transferred to Utah, where he and the Utes nearly defeated Ohio State in last season's Rose Bowl. Though he did not pan out with the Bearcats, it speaks to the work being done by Cincinnati to keep high-level prospects in the state.

"You look at what Luke Fickell is doing at Cincinnati now – nobody wanted to go to Cincinnati," Greene said. "I mean, before Fickell went there, they had a hard time out-recruiting Miami (Ohio) or Ohio University. Well, it isn't that way now. Luke is getting Power Five-type kids. Look at the draft that we just saw a few weeks ago, all those Cincinnati kids getting drafted. Tommy Tuberville was not getting those kids. It wasn't going to happen."

That's not to say that Ohio State is being beat out for most of these commitments. As it stands, there have been 11 five-star prospects from Ohio in the last 11 recruiting classes. All but three – Kraemer to Notre Dame, offensive lineman Jackson Carman ('18, Fairfield) to Clemson and quarterback Drew Allar ('22, Medina) to Penn State – have ended up at Ohio State, speaking to the work still being done to bring in top prospects.

As the Buckeyes' focus shifts nationally, opportunities will arise for other schools to get involved in Ohio. Schools in 25 different states have pulled a prospect from Ohio in the last 11 recruiting cycles, and that number could increase as the Buckeyes continue reaching out west and down south.

Don't get it twisted, though. If Ohio State sees someone it wants from Ohio, it will be a battle to the bitter end, and all odds point to the Buckeyes keeping that recruit home.

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WRs Olave, Wilson Lead Buckeye Draftees

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State had six of its players selected in the 2022 NFL draft, the school's fewest since the class of 2015, when only five Buckeyes – defensive tackle Michael Bennett, cornerback Doran Grant, tight end Jeff Heuerman and wide receivers Devin Smith and Evan Spencer – were drafted.

Ohio State had at least seven players drafted in the previous six drafts, and while this class snaps that streak, it does maintain a now nine-year run of at least five Buckeyes coming off the board and a 24-year run of at least one OSU product hearing his name called back to the draft of 1998.

The finest day of the draft for the Buckeyes was the first.

As expected, Ohio State snapped its first-round wideout dry spell of 15 years in style, matching the efforts of Ted Ginn Jr. and Anthony Gonzalez in 2007 by landing Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave in the first 32 picks. The dynamic duo came off the board consecutively, with the New York Jets grabbing Wilson at pick No. 10 and the New Orleans Saints trading up into the No. 11 pick to select Olave. Though he made his hay with Alabama, former Buckeye Jameson Williams came off the board at No. 12 to the Detroit Lions.

The Jets weren't done picking OSU pass-catchers, taking tight end Jeremy Ruckert off the board just before the end of day two with the No. 101 overall pick, one of the last selections of the third round. For the Lindenhurst, N.Y., native who grew up a fan of the Jets, it was a dream come true.

"I dreamed of this as a little kid," Ruckert said. "I grew up a Jets fan. My whole family grew up as Jets fans. This means just as much to them as it does for me, and that means a lot to me because of all the support that they've given me throughout my life, doing everything they could to help me be where I am today."

"The story is still being written, and I can't wait to get to work. But in this moment right now, I'm super excited. My family's super excited, and I'm excited for them. I can't wait to get to work and be part of it."

Offensive tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere joined Ruckert as a third-round selection, coming off the board as the No. 69 overall pick for the Tennessee Titans. He'll join former Buckeye tackle Jamarco Jones – who signed with the Titans this offseason – and though this is no homecoming, Petit-Frere is just as excited as Ruckert about his landing spot because of All-Pro Titans halfback Derrick Henry.

"Oh my god, are you kidding me?" Petit-Frere said of his feelings on the landing spot. "I mean, there's only a few people that you can say, 'Hey, I got a chance to block for' that would make you be able to have stories about. To be able to block for someone like Derrick Henry, one of the best running backs in the league and one of the best running backs ever to play college football? It's such a blessing."

"I hope I get a chance to meet him. I hope me and him become great friends. Who knows, maybe we become best friends. And I just want to be able to block for him as best as I can. I want to support him. I want to make sure that he's the best player he can be."

The final day of the draft had only two more Buckeyes picked



SONNY BROCKWAY

WE'RE GOING TO THE LEAGUE — Among Ohio State's six selections in the 2022 NFL draft were wide receiver Garrett Wilson (5) and offensive tackle Thayer Munford, (75), shown here in action against Rutgers during the 2021 season. Wilson was selected with the 10th overall pick by the New York Jets, while Munford went to the Raiders in the seventh round.

– defensive end Tyreke Smith in the fifth round to Seattle and offensive tackle Thayer Munford in the seventh round to Las Vegas. Ohio State was hoping to hear as many as eight names called, but defensive tackle Haskell Garrett and halfback Master Teague III, the borderline prospects, went undrafted and were two of several players to catch on as post-draft free agents.

Garrett will join Petit-Frere in Tennessee, while Teague briefly reunited with his former quarterback Justin Fields in Chicago as an undrafted free agent before being released. Wideout Chris Booker earned an invite to Arizona's rookie camp, defensive tackle Antwan Jackson participated in the New York Giants' rookie camp and defensive back Demario McCall did the same with the Bears, though these camps did not result in contracts for the Buckeye hopefuls.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin has compiled draft boxes for seven former Buckeyes, all of whom were previewed prior to the draft in the April 16 issue of BSB – including their pre-draft measurables, the team that selected them (and that team's 2021 record), where they were selected, an expert's take and where they project in the depth chart.



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DRAFTED: Undrafted Free Agent

2021 RECORD: 12-5

EXPERT'S TAKE: "The Tennessee Titans currently roster a strong group of interior defensive linemen that includes Denico Autry, Naquan Jones, Jeffery Simmons and Teair Tart. General manager Jon Robinson previously identified Jones and Tart as UDFA's and has built a strong reputation for his ability to identify underappreciated talent at defensive tackle. Garrett could soon add to that reputation."

"Garrett will now work alongside a strong defensive line coach in Terrell Williams. Carving out a role for himself on Tennessee's stacked defense won't be an easy task for Garrett, but he possesses the skill set, mind-set, and work ethic necessary to battle for a final roster spot." – Justin Melo, The Draft Network

DEPTH CHART: Jeffrey Simmons, Teair Tart, Larrell Murchison, Naquan Jones, **Haskell Garrett**

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THAYER MUNFORD

Offensive Line
6-5 • 328

Recruit Rank: Overall 285; OT 28 • Pro Day 40: 5.33 seconds

DRAFTED: Round: 7 Pick: 238

2021 RECORD: 10-7

EXPERT'S TAKE: "The offensive tackle position in itself is a position that, the supply and demand at that position is tough. You look at it in free agency. It's a tough position to play and there's not a lot of human beings that size, length, athletic skill set to play tackle and to have a tackle like Thayer that was there that played in the Big Ten for Ohio State and played against a lot of talent and did a solid job in those matchups.

"To have a tackle with that résumé was an attractive thing. Obviously, he'll have to come in and show what he can do at the professional level. His college career is over. To have a tackle that we both evaluated and thought was obviously a good player (still there in the seventh round) was good to see." –

Dave Ziegler, Raiders GM

DEPTH CHART: Kolton Miller, **Thayer Munford**



CHRIS OLAVE

Wide Receiver
6-0 • 187

Recruit Rank: Overall 399; WR 68 • NFL Combine 40: 4.39 secs

DRAFTED: Round: 1 Pick: 11

2021 RECORD: 9-8

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Chris was a guy that we coveted from the very beginning of this draft process. Firstly, because we do feel like he's our type of guy: tough, smart, competitive, highly productive at Ohio State. He's a Power Five conference player – we've had a lot of success with Ohio State players – and so he was a guy we had our eye on certainly as the draft progressed. We felt like there would be a run on these receivers pretty soon. We felt like rather than sit around and wait and see if a guy comes to us, we go get the guy we want.

"I thought there were some good receivers in this draft, but he's the one guy who I felt like, 'I know exactly what I'm getting in this player.' Like I said before, he's our type of guy. Tough, smart, competitive. Highly polished. I thought one of the better route runners. Highly productive, really good hands. I just felt like he was the best, most well-rounded receiver in the draft." – Dennis Allen, Saints head coach

DEPTH CHART: Michael Thomas, **Chris Olave**, Marquez Callaway, Deonte Harris



NICHOLAS PETIT-FRERE

Offensive Tackle
6-5 • 316

Recruit Rank: Overall 7; OT 1
NFL Combine 40: 5.14 seconds

DRAFTED: Round: 3 Pick: 69

2021 RECORD: 12-5

EXPERT'S TAKE: "The former All-Big Ten line-man is an explosive and athletic tackle who has the potential to excel in a zone scheme like Tennessee's with proper patience and grooming. Petit-Frere must improve his overall play strength before he will be able to consistently survive on the NFL level, but there is a lot to be intrigued by with the Ohio State product.

"He will likely join the starting competition for the right tackle spot. However, he may be more inclined to the swing tackle role and will likely be a legitimate starting candidate by 2023, if not sooner." – Shaun Calderon, Sports Illustrated

DEPTH CHART: Dillon Radunz, **Nicholas Petit-Frere**



JEREMY RUCKERT

Tight End
6-5 • 252

Recruit Rank: Overall 37; TE 2 • Pro Day 40: Did not run (foot injury)

DRAFTED: Round: 3 Pick: 101

2021 RECORD: 4-13

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Tight end wasn't a pressing need for the Jets after signing Tyler Conklin and C.J. Uzomah in free agency, but Ruckert can still add value to a tight end room that stands to benefit from some depth.

"Ruckert was one of the tight ends who caught New York's eye at this year's Senior Bowl. His versatility was on full display throughout practice sessions, which always plays in (offensive coordinator) Mike LaFleur's offense.

"New York's tight end room was a disaster last season and has not been productive for a while. Ruckert isn't going to light it up in the pass-catching department, but his presence, in addition to Conklin and Uzomah, results in a complete 180 at the position. (Tight ends coach) Ron Middleton has to be happy with the current state of his unit." – Tyler Calvaruso, JetsWire

DEPTH CHART: C.J. Uzomah, Tyler Conklin, **Jeremy Ruckert**



TYREKE SMITH

Defensive End
6-3 • 254

Recruit Rank: Overall 34; WDE 4
NFL Combine 40: 4.86 seconds

DRAFTED: Round: 5 Pick: 158

2021 RECORD: 7-10

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Though Smith didn't emerge as a finisher in college and left plenty of sacks on the field, he consistently disrupted the pocket and sped up the clock for quarterbacks. Playing with a scorching hot motor down to down, he battles to the whistle and often creates hustle pressures that don't show up in the box score. This trait can also be seen in the run game as he regularly hunted down ball carriers in back-side pursuit.

"Looking at his fit in Seattle, Smith told reporters he will be playing outside linebacker in the team's 3-4 scheme. While he lacks the top-tier athletic traits of Boye Mafe, who the team drafted in the second round, playing out wide in a two-point stance should give him the best chance for success as a rusher and run defender." – Corbin K. Smith, Sports Illustrated

DEPTH CHART: Uchenna Nwosu, Darrell Taylor, Alton Robinson, Boye Mafe, **Tyreke Smith**



GARRETT WILSON

Wide Receiver
5-11 • 183

Recruit Rank: Overall 20; WR 2
NFL Combine 40: 4.38 seconds

DRAFTED: Round: 1 Pick: 10

2021 RECORD: 4-13

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Wilson significantly improved his draft stock during his final season in Columbus. A two-time All-Big Ten performer, he scored seven touchdowns during his final three games at Ohio State that included four touchdowns in the Buckeyes' late-season win over Purdue.

"An incredibly consistent player at Ohio State, Wilson tallied 10 100-yard receiving games. He caught at least five passes in nine games last season while going over the century mark in receiving five times. During the 2020 season, Wilson became the first player in school history to post four straight games with at least 100 receiving yards.

"Wilson will look to improve a Jets offense that was 28th in the NFL in scoring last season. His quarterback in New York, Zach Wilson, started 13 games during his rookie season. Along with Wilson, the Jets' receiving corps includes Corey Davis, Braxton Berrios, Elijah Moore, Denzel Mims, and former Bengals tight end C.J. Uzomah." – Bryan DeArdo, CBS

DEPTH CHART: Corey Davis, Elijah Moore, **Garrett Wilson**, Braxton Berrios, Denzel Mims



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Ruckert Excited To Be Drafted By Hometown Jets

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Bill Ruckert started a chant among his friends with “J-E” which would be normal because his son, Jeremy, had just inked his first NFL contract.

But the next two letters may have revealed where Ruckert’s true passion is. That “J-E” was quickly followed by “T-S” and the screaming of “Jets, Jets, Jets.”

But who could blame the lifelong New York Jets fans for erupting in the team’s famous cheer now that his son, the former Ohio State tight end, was officially a member of the hometown team?

Yes, Jeremy Ruckert from Lindenhurst, N.Y., selected 101st overall in the third round by the Jets in April, signed a four-year, \$5 million rookie contract on May 23.

By the way, the elder Ruckert had a viral video of him cheering wildly for the Jets on April 29 moments after his son was drafted.

“It’s hard to put into words not only how I feel, but how my family feels about it,” Jeremy Ruckert said during rookie minicamp May 5. “But I grew up a Jets fan, me and my family, my brothers. And just to be here putting on the helmet and the jersey for the first time, it feels great, and I can’t wait to get to work.”

He grew up a Jets fan – like father, like son – and often was decked out in their green and white while watching favorite players such as Darrelle Revis, Leon Washington and D’Brickashaw Ferguson.

“This is the team I grew up rooting for,” Ruckert said. “So they’re going to get everything I’ve got.”

Ohio State offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson told SportsNet New York (SNY) that he could see Ruckert’s love for the Jets is deep-rooted.

“I asked the parents to send me different pictures of their kids just so I could have some fun with them – I was just trying to crack some jokes with guys,” Wilson recalled. “About three or four of Jeremy’s, he was in that Jet uniform, the same (pictures) that came out post-draft. I actually had those shots already. I actually fired it to Jeremy as soon as he got drafted and said, ‘Dreams do come true.’”

You could lure Ruckert away from New York as the Buckeyes did, but his heart was elsewhere.

“He came away to Ohio State, but every time he had a chance to go home and be around his family, his brothers, his friends, his girlfriend, he took advantage of that time,” Wilson said.

Ruckert (6-5, 250), who wore a green and white suit the night he was drafted, had an inkling the Jets were interested in him because he worked under Jets head coach Robert Saleh and tight ends coach Ron Middleton at the Senior Bowl in February.

“When he was given opportunities to make plays on the ball, he made plays,” Middleton said. “Don’t know the extent of his route tree, how many routes he’s run, but he had no issue catching the ball when it was thrown to him. He did not pass up a chance to knock the hell out of somebody.”

“He likes contact, and once he gets the ball in his hands, he still likes contact. He moves well, he has a burst after the catch. There’s a lot of positive about that kid.”

Middleton didn’t have to do much selling of Ruckert to the Jets staff.

“He is one of those all-around tight ends,” Saleh said of Ruckert. “He’s got ability in the pass game, which wasn’t featured as much at Ohio State. Obviously, they have superstars all over the place. He will strain his tail off to do his job, and that’s what makes him pretty good in the run game. It’s a mentality when you get down in there, and I think he’s got that.”

Ruckert had only 54 catches for 615 yards and 12 TDs in four seasons at Ohio State, but that wasn’t a concern of Saleh, noting that San Francisco’s George Kittle and Detroit’s T.J. Hockenson (each from Iowa) didn’t post big numbers in college but have excelled in the NFL. Saleh sees potential like that in Ruckert.

“Is it a projection? Maybe,” Saleh said. “But you also have faith in what you see and the plays that you do get that you can project them into more than what he was able to do at Ohio State. Not because they didn’t use him properly. Like I said, they’ve got a bunch of people.”

One of them was wide receiver Garrett Wilson, the Jets’ first-round pick (10th overall) in the 2022 draft from Ohio State.

Ruckert as a senior last season nearly doubled his career totals when he caught 26 passes for 309 yards and three touchdowns to earn All-Big Ten honorable mention.

His dozen career touchdowns are second all-time among OSU tight ends, trailing only Jake Stoneburner’s 13 between 2009-12. Also, Ruckert ranks 11th in career catches for tight ends at OSU.

His best reception was a spectacular one-handed grab on the Buckeyes’ first possession of the second half that ignited a rally for a 34-21 victory against Wisconsin in the 2019 Big Ten Championship Game.

“He’s made big-time plays vs. big-time opponents,” Saleh said. “Dynamic athletic movement. This guy can do it. On the O-line, he likes sticking his face mask into a (defensive end) and grinding, trying to help his teammates. This guy is made of the right stuff. He’s an absolute bulldog in the run game. Awesome.”

Ruckert’s forte, in fact, is his blocking. It had to be for him to see the field for the Buckeyes.

Mostly used as a wide receiver in high school, he quickly needed to make the transition as over his career at OSU he was tested in practice by the likes of future NFL standouts Nick Bosa and Chase Young on the other side of the ball.

“I was getting killed,” Ruckert said. “I couldn’t touch those guys.”

“My first time blocking was when I stepped on campus in the summer at Ohio State. I was super raw and that’s what I wanted. I wanted to be able to be developed to be that complete guy. I hated the idea of not being able to do a job the coach wanted me to do.”

Eventually the blocking aspect of his game became second nature.

“I fell in love with that, and I fell in love with the idea of being where I am today,” Ruckert said. “I continue to grow because I’ve got a long way to go.”

The hard work paid off, especially with elements of the Jets’ offensive scheme by

offensive coordinator Mike LaFleur similar to what Ruckert was used to at Ohio State.

“I take pride in anything I do and anything I do, I do with full speed,” Ruckert said. “Our strength coach at Ohio State told us some slowed down and some sped up into contact and that really hit home to me. So ever since that moment, I wanted to be that dominant player in the run game. I’ve got a long way to go, but as far as effort, as far as mentality, you’re going to get my best every single play no matter what my job asks for.”

Ruckert appears to have landed in a good spot, hometown connection notwithstanding. While the Jets in the offseason signed veteran tight ends C.J. Uzomah and Tyler Conklin, Ruckert will be given an opportunity to justify the team’s belief in him.

“He would probably transition to the NFL quicker than most tight ends at the draft because we taught him to get in the three-point stance and block people,” Wilson said in his SNY interview. “Half the time, we’re playing left tackle at tight end and half the time we’re playing flex receiver. We do both.”

“My exact words to almost every scout was he walks in your building day one, he’s your third tight end. As the year moves along, he’s probably your second tight end, and a year or two from now, you can figure out if he’s your bell-cow guy.”

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OSU Set For Several Top Picks In 2023 NFL Draft

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State has become synonymous with the NFL draft. Former Buckeyes traditionally appear throughout the three-day event and seven rounds, helping determine the next generation of talent in the professional league.

This most recent draft, however, was not a banner one for Ohio State. Just six former Buckeyes heard their names called, the fewest since a five-man class in 2015 that included defensive tackle Michael Bennett, cornerback Doran Grant, tight end Jeff Heurman and wide receivers Devin Smith and Evan Spencer.

Additionally, defensive end Tyreke Smith was selected at No. 158 by the Seattle Seahawks and was the first Ohio State defender off the board. That was the latest that the first defender for the Buckeyes has been taken since safety Nate Ebner was selected with the No. 197 overall pick in 2012.

Ohio State had a saving grace with two first-round wide receivers in Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave – drafted No. 10 to the New York Jets and No. 11 to the New Orleans Saints, respectively.

The Buckeyes' 2023 draft class could be a return to form for the program, with the potential for double-digit selections out of Columbus. Here is a look at next spring's potential Buckeye picks based on how early they might go.

Quarterback C.J. Stroud

C.J. Stroud has as good a shot as any – including Alabama quarterback Bryce Young and defensive end Will Anderson, as well as Georgia defensive lineman Jalen Carter – to be the first pick off the board in next year's draft.

The Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., native posted incredible numbers in his first year as a starter, throwing for 4,435 yards and 44 touchdowns in 12 games. He will look to



SONNY BROCKWAY

A STAR IS BORN — Wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba (11), shown here scoring a touchdown against Utah in the Rose Bowl on Jan. 1, is likely to be a top pick in the 2023 NFL draft if he has another season like the last. He totaled 95 receptions for 1,606 yards and nine touchdowns during his sophomore campaign.

build upon that during his junior season with expected improvement on the offensive line.

If drafted No. 1 overall, Stroud would be just the fourth Buckeye to hear his name called with the first pick, joining linebacker Tom Cousineau (1979), defensive tackle Dan Wilkinson (1994) and offensive tackle Orlando Pace (1997). He would also become the fifth Ohio State quarterback taken in the first round and the third in just five years along with Justin Fields (No. 11, 2021) and Dwayne Haskins (No. 15, 2019). Other Ohio State quarterbacks taken in the first round were Don Scott (No. 8, 1941) and Art Schlichter (No. 4, 1982).

WR Jaxon Smith-Njigba

Jaxon Smith-Njigba will likely be the next Buckeye off the board. Many believed him to be the third option behind Wilson and Olave last season, but Smith-Njigba led the room and established himself to the tune of 1,606 yards and nine touchdowns in his sophomore season.

With Olave and Wilson out the door, that opens things up for Smith-Njigba to dominate as Ohio State's No. 1 receiving option. Other Buckeyes such as Marvin Harrison Jr., Julian Fleming and Emeka Egbuka will receive their due, but it will be Smith-Njigba's show in 2022-23.

If he reaches last year's heights – let alone surpasses them, as many expect him to do – he could be not only one of the draft's top picks but the first receiver off the board.

OT Paris Johnson Jr.

It may come off as premature that Paris

Johnson Jr. is already being mocked as a potential first-round selection at offensive tackle – a position he has yet to play consistently in college – but that's how much faith those at the next level have in his ability to develop into a star.

Johnson started 13 games at right guard last season, and the former five-star prospect and top 2020 offensive tackle recruit will finally receive his chance to play his natural position at left tackle. Ohio State figures to be one of the top offenses in college football next season, but it will require a jump from Johnson to help anchor the offensive line and take the Buckeyes to the next level.

If he successfully makes that jump, Ohio State could be looking at its first opening-round offensive line selection since Billy Price in 2018.

Defensive End Zach Harrison

Expectations have been high for Zach Harrison ever since he stepped on campus as a five-star prospect out of Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy Orange, but if he wants to become one of the draft's top picks, it's time for him to live up to his pedigree.

Harrison heavily considered entering the draft after last season, and he would have been drafted, but probably not where he would have liked. With just 7½ sacks and 16 tackles for loss to his name after three seasons, there was still work left for him to do in Columbus.

Though he's been somewhat eclipsed by up-and-coming defensive ends such as J.T. Tuimoloau and Jack Sawyer who have en-

tered the program in recent years, he will still be an important fixture of defensive line coach Larry Johnson's rotation. A solid season could significantly boost Harrison's stock, perhaps even into the first round.

Offensive Tackle Dawand Jones

What was said for Johnson is mostly true for Dawand Jones, with the caveat that Jones – a former three-star prospect – is less of a polished product. What he lacks in grace and speed, he more than makes up for with his hulking stature, standing at 6-8 and tipping the scales at 360 pounds. Jones also has an inherent understanding of the game.

He'll start for the second consecutive season at right tackle and, along with Johnson, should be in the conversation as one of the better tackle duos in the country. If he can keep using his frame to dominate physically and continues improving his footwork, he could play himself into the first round, where several mock drafts already have the big man.

Safeties Ronnie Hickman, Josh Proctor, Tanner McCalister

Three safeties will be on the field under defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' new-look defense, but it's anyone's guess which one might shine for Ohio State this season. Regardless, it seems likely that at least one of the three projected starters – Ronnie Hickman, Tanner McCalister or Josh Proctor – could work himself into a position to hear his name called in the draft.

For Proctor, it's a matter of staying healthy. He's impressed in limited action and based on rumblings from the coaching staff this spring, they believe he will be a game-changer if he can stay on the field.

Hickman and McCalister, expected to start at "adjuster" and nickel safety, respectively, will have the chance to put plenty of positive tape out there for NFL scouts. This will be the last chance for McCalister, who transferred to Ohio State after playing for Knowles at Oklahoma State and whose eligibility will be exhausted following the upcoming season.

Other Potential Draftees

Depending on how this upcoming season goes, several other Buckeyes could hear their names called in the later rounds of the draft.

This includes defensive tackle Jerron Cage, who will have exhausted his eligibility, and some draft-eligible prospects who could come out early such as cornerback Cameron Brown, linebacker Steele Chambers, wide receiver Julian Fleming, defensive tackle Taron Vincent and offensive linemen Matthew Jones and Luke Wypler.

Though none are guaranteed selections at this point, any one of them could play themselves into a solid draft position with a successful season, and these fringe selections could push Ohio State back into the upper echelon of schools at the NFL draft after a down year.

These Buckeyes – except for Cage and McCalister – could also come back for an additional year to boost their stock.

Regardless, it's a safe bet that Ohio State will be well represented at next year's event.



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Petit-Frere, Garrett Want To Make Impact With Titans

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Tennessee Titans have a connection to Ohio State which includes Heisman Trophy running back Eddie George, current head coach Mike Vrabel and former assistant coach Kerry Coombs.

Now, a pair of more recent Buckeyes hope to leave their own marks on the franchise.

Offensive tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere was selected in the third round (69th overall) of the 2022 NFL draft on April 29, and defensive lineman Haskell Garrett was one of 17 undrafted free-agent signings announced by the Titans on May 13.

Whether either will make an impact this season is up for debate, but during interviews over the following weeks, each expressed the same confidence that made them successful at Ohio State.

"My goal is for me to help the team win," Petit-Frere said soon after being drafted. "If I'm starting there, that's great. That means I'm doing some amazing things. If not, I just want to make sure that I'm competing every single day, I'm pushing the guys next to me, I'm pushing my teammates – whatever I can do to help the team win."

Petit-Frere (6-5, 315) was a two-year starter for the Buckeyes. He played 35 games from 2018-21 with 20 starts and earned first-team All-American honors last season by the Football Writers Association of America and CBS Sports while also being named first-team all-Big Ten in 2021 by both the coaches and media.

"I just want to be the best teammate that I can, and that says a lot," Petit-Frere said June 1. "It's a small sentence. Like when saying you're a great teammate, what that means to me is making sure you know what you need to know, so the older guys know what you know, or that the younger guys also know what you're doing on the field so they can trust you and believe in you."

"And then also being a great teammate, off the field, making sure that I'm doing the things right for the team. I'm not going to put the team in jeopardy. Also, I'm going to do things that make myself more part of the culture and a part of the team and be a part of Nashville in general."

Garrett (6-2, 300), a 2021 captain, played five seasons for the Buckeyes – totaling 53 games and 14 starts – that included a "super" senior season due to the COVID-19 year. In his final season, he led OSU in sacks in 2021 with 5½ and ranked second in tackles for loss with seven. For his career, he had 62 career tackles including 13½ TFLs totaling 52 yards and 7½ quarterback sacks.

This success for Garrett came after sustaining a gunshot wound to his face in the summer of 2020. He would make a quick recovery, playing in all eight games in Ohio State's pandemic-shortened season.

Now off to Nashville, Garrett was like a sponge at the Titans' organized team activities in early June.

"I'm learning what they're all about," he said June 1. "It's similar to where I was at before. I'm just trying to earn a role on this team. For the most part it's just getting my playbook, understanding it's a new playbook and a new system, being on top of everything whether it's in the veterans' ears or our coaches' ears."

He said he had to deal with the "southern heat," as he put it, and had to withstand gibes from fellow rookie, Michigan running back Hassan Haskins, after a rare Wolverines victory in the rivalry last season.

"That's in college," Garrett said. "This is the pros now. We're all working toward the same thing – one heartbeat now."

Some draft predictions had Garrett as a mid-round pick, but all seven rounds of the draft passed without his name being called. Given the surprise of Garrett not being drafted, he figured to be one of the top undrafted free agents available to NFL

teams, and after he was signed by Tennessee, Mike Moraitis of Titans Wire had Garrett among three UDFA's who could make the 53-man roster.

"Over the past few years, general manager Jon Robinson has been great at finding diamonds in the rough along the defensive line," he wrote. "Garrett, who some analysts projected would be drafted as high as the fourth round, feels like he could be the next one. The Ohio State product played against tough competition in college at Ohio State, so he's a bit more NFL-ready than most. Adding to that, Garrett is capable of playing multiple spots upfront, further helping his cause."

"As things stand now, the Titans have four roster locks upfront in Jeffery Simmons, Denico Autry, Naquan Jones and Teair Tart. Larrell Murchison is another possibility to make the roster, but he's not a lock after a quiet start to his career."

"The Titans carried five defensive linemen on their initial 53-man roster in 2021, but carried six in the two years prior, so Garrett could have a pair of avenues to make the cut."

Petit-Frere is in a less tenuous spot. You don't get drafted that high if a team is unsure of your chances of contributing.

"I want people to see someone who plays every single play like it's their last play," he said. "I want them to see effort on the first play of the game, on the last play of the game. That's the one thing I know I can control every single time. If I am on the field, I want to give all the effort I can. That is the one thing I want people to say is: 'That guy plays hard.'"

John Glennon of The Athletic writes that he is unsure of how much playing time Petit-Frere will get in 2022:

"I go back and forth on this guesstimate of Petit-Frere's impact. One school of thought has him as a plug-and-play starter at right tackle, and if that's the case, Petit-Frere would be a huge difference maker in his rookie season. But the Titans haven't had a Week 1 rookie starter on the offensive line since 2016, when Jack Conklin – the eighth overall pick that year – stepped in right away at right tackle

"Petit-Frere doesn't appear to be as much of

a known quantity as Conklin, as just about every scouting report indicates there is a fair amount of work needed in Petit-Frere's game before he reaches his full potential. Maybe it ends up in a situation similar to that of guard Nate Davis, who didn't play at all in his first three games as a 2018 rookie, saw some action in Week 4, and then became the starter in Week 5."

The Titans and Coach Vrabel have indicated to Petit-Frere that he will have the chance to compete at several positions, and Petit-Frere is excited for the opportunity.

"I got picked to a great organization," he said. "Mr. Robinson was a great man when I met him on my visit, and I had a great visit when I went there. I got to see Coach Vrabel, (offensive line coach) Keith Carter. All I remember from that visit and what I caught from that was be ready to work. If we do pick you, if you do get the opportunity to become a Tennessee Titan, be ready to work and be ready to compete because that's what they do every single day, and that's my mantra."



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Curry Shining In First Spring At OSU

By **CHASE BROWN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

At Center Grove High School in Greenwood, Ind., Caden Curry was a one-person wrecking ball, creating nightmare matchups for opposing offensive lines. He finished his senior season with 65 tackles, including 24 tackles for loss, seven sacks and seven passes deflected on the interior defensive line.

Throughout Curry's recruitment, Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson envisioned him at defensive end or defensive tackle in college. Curry agreed, claiming he was never set on playing one position when he made it to the next level.

However, when Curry arrived in Columbus as an early enrollee, he started to see a clearer picture of where he might end up at Ohio State. The 6-3, 250-pound lineman hit the weights as his body took form. He started working with the Buckeye coaching staff, learning more about the defensive scheme from new coordinator Jim Knowles. It became known that his natural position might be at Leo, a hybrid role that combines defensive end and linebacker.

"We haven't really worked into the football mechanics yet," Curry said in February, "but once we get there, I feel like I could play the Leo or the defensive end. I see myself as more of an athletic build where I can have more speed, so I can see myself playing as a bigger end but a more athletically skilled type of player."

Knowles developed the Leo while still the coordinator at Oklahoma State, and the role could offer great versatility for the Ohio State defense. The Leo may stand and line up over an offensive tackle's outside shoulder on one play. The same player can line up as a Will or Mike linebacker roaming free on the second level with the next play.

The coaching staff will also call the Leo position the "Jack" until Ohio State's players set themselves apart from teammates at the position. A defensive end or linebacker would need to strip themselves of the Jack tag in the same way first-year players need to earn the removal of the black stripe. Still, both names refer to the

same position on the Buckeye defense.

"I told them we're not going to call it a Leo and we'll call it the Jack because the Leo is the king of the jungle," Knowles said. "When you become a Leo, that's a big deal."

The position requires size and strength to combine with speed – three qualities that Curry possesses as a first-year Buckeye.

"I feel like I was a big body in high school, so I'm going to try and use my speed a lot more in college," Curry said.

Curry had already gained five pounds in the Ohio State strength and conditioning program, indicating he weighed 245 pounds before coming to campus. He said his ideal playing weight for this fall would be near 265 pounds while keeping his lean muscle and athletic frame, though his primary focus this offseason will be on his speed.

In high school, Curry played 0-technique, 3-technique and 5-technique at defensive tackle. He also took snaps at middle linebacker and even had a stretch as his team's long snapper.

"I've done all the positions I need to get ready for it," Curry said. "I love moving around. I don't like staying in one spot, but I'll do whatever (the team needs). I could go wherever they need me. I could go inside or outside. I could play the Leo. Whatever they need."

Curry understands that his path to playing time will be difficult as a true freshman. Any playing time that he receives will come from hard work and determination equal to or greater than upperclassmen already established in the program. Still, an almost entirely new defensive coaching staff outside of Johnson means everyone gets a fresh start with the Buckeyes.

Knowles said that several defensive early enrollees – including Curry, linebackers C.J. Hicks and Gabe Powers, and safety Kye Stokes – all stood out in spring camp, noting that Curry and Stokes were chief among them. Those two freshmen were the only ones to lose their black stripes in the practice period, meaning they've impressed the Ohio State coaching staff on and off the field.

"Kye stood out and really made progress



SONNY BROCKWAY

BRIGHT FUTURE — Freshman defensive lineman Caden Curry (92) is expected to become a valuable contributor at Ohio State. The four-star from Greenwood, Ind., hopes to eventually step into a Leo/Jack or defensive end role.

at the end there and in the spring game, but they all stood out in some way," Knowles said. "I push on them, and I think they've handled it well. They were all able to take coaching. Caden is someone who stood out and had a lot of great pass rushes. They were able to take coaching, and when you have a young guy who can take coaching, you have a chance in your room."

When asked what made Curry stand out among the other freshmen, Knowles had an immediate response for gathered reporters.

"His first step," he said. "I think it's his first step because some of the things I saw him do in the pass rush with turning the corner, that was really impressive. He's kind of surly – a little bit like that. He's a lot like Jack (Sawyer). Those guys seem to be surly, and I like that kind of personality. Caden has a quick step, and he's a little surly. That equals potential greatness."

A defensive lineman's first step is also called a quick "twitch" by coaches and scouts. Collegiate programs constantly look for a lineman with good twitch because that often leads to dominant performances at the line of scrimmage from leveraging athleticism with careful footwork and technique.

Ohio State signed two edge rushers in the class of 2021 who displayed superior twitch in high school – Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau. They came to Ohio State with higher expectations, with the former being the No. 5 player nationally and No. 3 defensive end while the latter was the fourth-best player nationally and second-best edge rusher.

Curry comes to Columbus ranked No. 123 overall and the No. 13 defensive lineman in the class of 2022, indicating he won't be measured with the same scales as Sawyer and Tuimoloau as a true freshman. Still, Knowles sees the same potential for greatness in Curry as he does the other underclassmen.

He likely won't draw comparisons to former Buckeye greats such as Joey Bosa, Nick Bosa and Chase Young from national pundits – those projections will likely remain for Sawyer

and Tuimoloau – but that doesn't mean Curry can't conjure them up himself.

"I kind of look at myself like Nick Bosa," Curry said. "That's how I want to build myself and be like – everything he does, watching how athletic he gets on the outside with all the speed rushes and using his power to have all the tools he needs to succeed."

Should Curry be a Bosa-level player at Ohio State, the coaching staff wouldn't complain. With four games as a sample size before Curry would burn his redshirt, head coach Ryan Day, Knowles and Johnson might use him frequently to see if his self-created comparisons are accurate.

If the coaches like what they see, Curry could significantly contribute the entire year. That impact could come at the Leo position – where he would likely be a primary backup for Sawyer after Mitchell Melton suffered a torn ACL in spring camp – or on the defensive line behind Tuimoloau, Zach Harrison, Javontae Jean-Baptiste and others.

Regardless of where Curry ends up, Day said he is excited to see what he can do in a scarlet and gray uniform, revealing that he believes Curry can be a three-year player at Ohio State before heading to the NFL draft.

"He's very, very talented," Day said in December. "I spoke with somebody not far back who actually went to his game, he's an NFL personnel guy, and he texted me right away, 'Who is this Caden Curry?' And he said, 'This guy is going to be an NFL player here in about three years.' And he goes, 'It doesn't take long to figure that one out.'"

"When you watch him play, you just see him jump off the screen. And in a day and age where it's a lot about the stars and about going to these camps and getting certain ratings, I don't think Caden was concerned about that. I think all he cared about was his teammates playing at a high level, winning a state championship and now coming to Ohio State and being the best football player he can be."

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SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2						1 @IOW 7:08	2 @IOW 7:08
3	4	5 @LHV 7:05	6 @LHV 7:05	7 @LHV 7:05	8 @LHV 7:05	9 @LHV 6:35	3 @IOW 6:08	4 NAS 6:05	5	6 NAS 7:05	7 NAS 7:05	8 NAS 7:05	9 NAS 7:05
10 @LHV 1:35	11	12 SYR 6:15	13 SYR 6:15	14 SYR 6:15	15 SYR 6:15	16 SYR 4:05	10 NAS 4:05	11	12 IND 7:05	13 IND 7:05	14 IND 12:05	15 IND 7:05	16 IND 7:05
17 SYR 1:05	18	19 @IND 6:35	20 @IND 1: 5	21 @IND 12:05	22 @IND 7:05	23 @IND 6:35	17 IND 4:05	18	19	20	21	22 @TOL 7:05	23 @TOL 7:05
24 @IND 1:35	25	26 LOU 6:15	27 LOU 6:35	28 LOU 6:15	29 LOU 6:15	30 LOU 4:05	24 @TOL 4:05	25	26 @LOU 7:05	27 @LOU 7:05	28 @LOU 7:05	29 @LOU 7:05	30 @LOU 7:05
							31 @LOU 1:05						

MAY							AUGUST						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 LOU 1:05	2	3 @OMA 11:05AM	4 @OMA 6:35	5 @OMA 6:35	6 @OMA 6:35	7 @OMA 6:35		1	2 ROC 7:05	3 ROC 7:05	4 ROC 12:05	5 ROC 7:05	6 ROC 7:05
8 @OMA 2:05	9	10 STP 7:05	11 STP 7:05	12 STP 12:05	13 STP 7:05	14 STP 7:05	7 ROC 4:05	8	9 @STP 7:07	10 @STP 1:07	11 @STP 7:07	12 @STP 7:07	13 @STP 7:07
15 STP 1:05	16	17 @IOW 6:38	18 @IOW 12:08	19 @IOW 12:08	20 @IOW 7:08	21 @IOW 6:08	14 @STP 2:07	15	16 TOL 7:05	17 TOL 7:05	18 TOL 7:05	19 TOL 7:05	20 TOL 7:05
22 @IOW 1:08	23	24 BUF 7:05	25 BUF 7:05	26 BUF 7:05	27 BUF 7:05	28 BUF 7:05	21 TOL 4:05	22	23 @BUF 7:05	24 @BUF 7:05	25 @BUF 1:05	26 @BUF 7:05	27 @BUF 6:05
29 BUF 1:05	30 TOL 6:05	31					28 @BUF 1:05	29	30 IOW 6:15	31 IOW 6:15			

JUNE							SEPTEMBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 TOL 7:05	2 TOL 7:05	3 TOL 7:05	4 TOL 7:05					1 IOW 6:15	2 IOW 7:05	3 IOW 7:05
5 TOL 1:05	6	7 @IND 7:05	8 @IND 1:35	9 @IND 7:05	10 @IND 7:05	11 @IND 7:05	4 IOW 1:05	5	6 @LOU 6:35	7 @LOU 6:35	8 @LOU 6:35	9 @LOU 7:05	10 @LOU 7:05
12 @IND 1:35	13	14 STP 7:05	15 STP 7:05	16 STP 12:05	17 STP 7:05	18 STP 7:05	11 @LOU 1:05	12	13 OMA 6:15	14 OMA 6:35	15 OMA 6:15	16 OMA 7:05	17 OMA 7:05
19 STP 1:05	20	21 @OMA 12:05	22 @OMA 7:05	23 @OMA 7:05	24 @OMA 7:05	25 @OMA 7:05	18 OMA 1:05	19	20 @TOL 6:35	21 @TOL 12:05	22 @TOL 6:35	23 @TOL 7:05	24 @TOL 5:05
26 @OMA 2:05	27	28 @IOW 6:38	29 @IOW 12:08	30 @IOW 6:38			25 @TOL 1:05	26 IND 6:15	27 IND 6:15	28 IND 6:15	29	30	

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OSU Recognizes 194 Student-Athlete Graduates

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio Stadium played host to Ohio State's spring commencement ceremony on May 8, and 194 current and former student-athletes received their degrees.

The football team led all programs with 14 graduates, including former safety Jordan Fuller and running back Carlos Snow, both of whom returned to Columbus to earn their degrees after departing from school without graduating during their playing days. Fuller earned his degree in marketing, while Snow earned a sociology degree.

Among the 194 graduates, Ohio State can claim a Super Bowl champion in Fuller as well as Olympians, All-Americans and national and conference champions, including Adelaide Aquilla. A 2020 Olympian and 2021 NCAA and Big Ten Indoor and Outdoor shot-put champion, Aquilla was named Big Ten Indoor (2021-22) and Outdoor (2021) Field Athlete of the Championships and Field Athlete of the Year. She is also a five-time All-American in the shot-put. She earned a split degree in communications and hospital-ity management.

The school's most recent national title teams, women's hockey and synchronized swimming, produced seven and five graduates, respectively. Three-time pistol national champion Samuel Gens earned a degree in civil engineering.

The complete list of graduates is included below.

BASEBALL: Colton Bauer, human development and family studies; Archer Brookman, communications; Marcus Ernst, finance; Tre Gantt, sport industry; Aaron Hughes, mechanical engineering; Mitchell Milheim, mechanical engineering; William Pfennig, finance; Griffan Smith, logistics management; Brent Todys, human development and family studies/communications.

MEN'S BASKETBALL: Joseph Brunk

II, criminal justice administration; Harrison Hookfin, biology; Justice Sueing, psychology; Seth Towns, kinesiology; Kyle Young, kinesiology.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: Rebeka Mikulasikova, textiles and clothing; Jacy Sheldon, psychology.

CHEERLEADING: Michael Carnahan, exercise science; Bryden Penhorwood, operations management; Keyli Smith, communications; Alexander Tadda, environment, economy, development and sustainability; Ashley Thomason, chemistry.

MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY/TRACK: Tyrese Fajardo, chemical engineering; Eric Halford, finance; Nicholas Leahy, biomedical engineering; Nicholas Miller, accounting; Nicholas Regas, marketing; Jakob Wickert, mechanical engineering; Michael Zedan, civil engineering.

WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY/TRACK: Gabrielle Dilick, nursing; Mary Figler, finance/economics and business; Alexa Jankowsky, architecture; Hannah Moulton, microbiology; Suzanne Stein, dietetics and nutrition; Elizabeth Weber, marketing.

DANCE: Kamryn McConnell, communications; Sierra Nelson, communications; Brooke Peterson, exercise science; Emily Placita, exercise science; Olivia Placita, health promotion, nutrition and education science; Abigail Takahashi, psychology; Hailley Willis, human development and family studies.

MEN'S DIVING: Joseph Canova, data analytics.

MEN'S FENCING: Christopher Collado, political science; Matthew Comes, mechanical engineering; William Gaziano, finance/accounting; Jacob Gordon, aviation; Henry Lange, linguistics; Jadon Montgomery, marketing; Roscoe Swartz, neuroscience; Nathan Wriedt, materials science and engineering.

WOMEN'S FENCING: Laurn DeLuca, child and youth studies; Stephanie Miller, journalism; Camilla Rivano, consumer sciences.

FIELD HOCKEY: Julia Dickinson, com-

munications; Kennedy Fertitta, finance; Aaliyah Hernandez, biology; Jessica Hourihane, marketing; Rachel Levan, psychology; Kaitlyn Pyle, human development and family studies; Sina Schwinn, psychology; Delaney Versprille, English.

FOOTBALL: Ryan Batsch, finance; Cameron Brown, human development and family studies; Robert Cope, hospitality management; Aaron Cox, food, agricultural and biomedical engineering; Dominic DiMaccio, consumer and family financial services; Jordan Fuller, marketing; Dallas Gant, finance; Marcus Hooker, human development and family studies; John Jamieson, logistics management; Javontae Jean-Baptiste, human development and family studies; Cade Kacherski, finance; Lloyd McFarquhar, communications; Carlos Snow, sociology; Taron Vincent, sport industry.

MEN'S GOLF: Grant Engle, specialized master's in business and finance; Marco Steyn, specialized master's in business and finance.

WOMEN'S GOLF: Kristin Jamieson, finance; Skylar Thompson, speech and hearing science.

MEN'S GYMNASTICS: Paul Burney, human development and family studies; Curtis Chang, finance; Dexter Roettker, finance; Domenico Sciuilli, criminology and criminal justice studies; Jesse Tyndall, criminology and criminal justice studies.

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS: Claire Gagliardi, psychology; Kali Schierl, human nutrition.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY: Grant Gabriele, sport industry; Quinn Preston, sport industry.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY: Madison Bizal, sport industry; Andrea Braendli, psychology/criminology and criminal justice studies; Sophie Jaques, civil engineering; Paetyn Levis, health sciences program; Gabriella Rosenthal, speech and hearing science; Sara Saekinen, sport industry; Eve Savander, sport industry.

MEN'S LACROSSE: Anthony Ameo III, marketing; Alec Cerasoli, psychology; Brandon Fisher, communications; Thomas Hendricks, marketing; Griffin Hughes, communications; Justin Inacio, biology; Zachary Ludd, finance; Jackson Reid, sport industry; Evan Riss, finance/accounting; Colby Smith, biology; George Walsh, marketing; Jonathan Wiseman, consumer and family financial services.

WOMEN'S LACROSSE: Catharine Beg, textiles and clothing; Hannah Corwin, sociology; Lindsay Epstein, kinesiology; Katherine Ewing, applied economics; Clare Johnston, speech and hearing science; Ava Keethler, health sciences program; Jamie Level, psychology; Cai Martin, health sciences program; Maura McGregor, communications.

MASCOT: Maxwell Congrove, logistics management; Brennan Redslob, world politics; Jack Sampson, exercise science; Jacob Stack, neuroscience/finance.

PISTOL: Samuel Gens, civil engineering; Cade Haiby, mechanical engineering; Emily Nothnagle, anthropology.

RIFLE: Ariel Anne Hall, human nutrition; Mica Harr, neuroscience; Jared Minor, civil engineering; Annabelle Stanec, accounting; Anna Tomb, finance.

ROWING: Divya Batchu, public health; Kaitlyn Clouse, psychology; Jenna Draycott,

psychology; Allison Krish, industrial design; Margaret Livingston, English; Alexandra Nothdurft, world politics; Grace Pabst, human development and family studies; Katherine Reymann, marketing; Savannah Sellers, environmental science; Jessy Vermeer, sport industry; Emma Walker, psychology.

MEN'S SOCCER: Luke Kiley, criminology and criminal justice studies; Noah Lawrence, sport industry; Thomas Marusic, finance.

WOMEN'S SOCCER: Kayla Fischer, biology.

SOFTBALL: Nicole Carver, special education/human development and family studies; Avery Clark, health sciences program; Jessica Ross, English.

MEN'S SWIMMING: Connor Isings, mechanical engineering; Robert Kondalski, biology; Colin McDermott, finance; Colin Roy, mechanical engineering.

WOMEN'S SWIMMING: Alissa Cook, economics; Emily Crane, speech and hearing technology; Amanda Palutis, biomedical engineering; Kristen Romano, anthropology/political science; Veronica Tafuto, mathematics; Katherine Trace, kinesiology; Brynna Wolfe, speech and hearing science.

SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING: Camryn Carrasco, sociology; Erin Fanning, composition; Paula Luis, accounting; Cassandra Neeley, psychology; Haley Watson, psychology.

MEN'S TENNIS: Tim Seibert, finance.

WOMEN'S TENNIS: Emma DeCoste, human development and family studies; Lucia Marzal Martinez, international business.

MEN'S TRACK AND FIELD: Cameron Cooper, consumer and family financial services; Tyrese Fajardo, chemical engineering; Tavonte Mott, air transportation; David Palmer, speech and hearing technology.

WOMEN'S TRACK AND FIELD: Adelaide Aquilla, communications/hospitality management; Britten Bowen, communications; Yanique Dayle, communications; Morgan Lewis, psychology; Cierra Pyles, human development and family studies; Julia Swallows, human development and family studies.

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL: Martin Lallemand, specialized master's in business and finance; Luke Lentin, economics/finance; Parker Mikesch, sport industry/psychology; Sean Ryan, economics and business; Ethan Talley, finance.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL: Vanja Bukilic, civil engineering; Camryn Moeller, accounting; Machaela Podraza, communications; Luisa Schirmer, mechanical engineering; Josephine Vondran, exercise science.

WRESTLING: Dylan D'Emilio, psychology; Malik Heinselman, finance; Gavin Hoffman, operations management; Jaimen Hood, civil engineering; David Orndorff, mathematics; Klay Reeves, exercise science; Kaleb Romero, human resource management; Frederick Schierl, speech and hearing technology; John Stickley, agribusiness and applied economics.



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THURSDAY // 6:40

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FRIDAY // 6:40

- Post-Game Fireworks Show, presented by St. Elizabeth Healthcare

SATURDAY // 4:10

- Jonathan India Replica Jersey, presented by PNC Bank (while supplies last)



SUNDAY // 1:40

- Family Sundays, presented by Klosterman Bakery
- Hunter Greene Poster, presented by Kroger #1 in a series of three collectible posters. (while supplies last)



JUNE 6-9



presented by Hoxworth

MONDAY // 6:40

TUESDAY // 6:40

- 3-2-1 Tuesdays*, presented by Budweiser and Bud Light \$3 12oz Beer, \$2 Hot Dog and \$1 Ice Cream Cup available at select concession stands!
*Limit 2 per person per transaction

WEDNESDAY // 6:40

- Bark in the Park, presented by Kroger, NutriChomps and Good 'N' Fun
Ticket packages available for dogs and their owners with pet activities in the First Star Fan Zone
Reds.com/Bark

THURSDAY // 12:35

- Business Day Specials, presented by UnitedHealthcare
Enjoy afternoon baseball and \$10 in concession credits for only \$20

JUNE 17-19



FRIDAY // 6:40

- Post-Game Fireworks Show, presented by Coca-Cola

SATURDAY // 4:10

- Reds Floppy Hat, presented by Bally Sports Ohio (while supplies last)

SUNDAY // 1:40

- Father's Day Belt, presented by Skyline Chili (while supplies last)
- Eric Davis Baseball Card, presented by St. Elizabeth Healthcare (In honor of National Cancer Survivor Month.)



JUNE 21-23



presented by Kroger

TUESDAY // 6:40

- Zoo Ticket Package, presented by Skyline Chili Featuring an EXCLUSIVE "Mai Thai" Elephant Bobblehead! (item only available with purchase of a ticket package)
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WEDNESDAY // 6:40

- Pink Party, presented by St. Elizabeth Healthcare
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Portion of the proceeds will benefit the Karen Wellington Foundation



THURSDAY // 12:35

- Business Day Specials, presented by UnitedHealthcare
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Ohio State Recognizes 788 Scholar-Athletes

By PATRICK MAYHORN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State recognized nearly 800 of its active student-athletes with Scholar-Athlete awards at the Ohio State Scholar-Athlete Awards on April 12 in the Covelli Center. In total, 788 Buckeye earned the honors, which go to students who maintained a 3.0 or higher grade-point average for the 2021-22 academic year. Ohio State recognized 799 such athletes in 2021.

Also announced at the ceremony were the winners of the Big Ten Medal of Honor – Izzy Rodriguez of the women's soccer program and Tyler Johnson of the men's track and field program. That honor is awarded to a male and female student-athlete from each Big Ten school who has “attained the greatest proficiency in athletics and scholastic work,” according to a school release. “Finalists are selected based on their outstanding accomplishments in the classroom, on the field, and as a leader and role model within their program.”

Ohio State had 10 such finalists this year: Matthew Comes (fencing), Samuel Gens (pistol), Johnson, Robby Oswald (track) and Griffan Smith (baseball) on the men's side; Aziza Ayoub (track and field), Hannah Gruensfelder (volleyball), Laila Huric (synchronized swimming), Emily Nothnagle (pistol) and Rodriguez on the women's side.

Elsewhere in the event, Varsity O recognized full teams for academic achievement, including the women's fencing team, which won “most improved large team grade-point average” and pistol, which had “the most improved grade-point average among the teams with smaller rosters.” women's hockey and women's gymnastics were honored for posting the top team grade-point averages among all teams in the large and small divisions, respectively.

The rowing team, with its 82-person roster, led all teams in placing 73 athletes on the scholar-athlete list. Football was next with 51, trailed by 46 men's lacrosse players, 37 members of the women's lacrosse program and 36 representatives from the dance team. The complete list is included below.

Baseball – Joseph Aden, sport industry; Andrew Bachman, exercise science education; Tim Baird, finance; Gavin Bruni, sport industry; Nolan Clegg, air transportation; Zachary Dezenzo, kinesiology; Marcus Ernst, finance; Jacob Gehring, psychology; Caden Kaiser, sport industry; Nathan Karaffa, operations management; Tyler Kean, finance; Kade Kern, sport industry; Wyatt Loncar, communication; Casey Maniglia, accounting; Jace Middleton, special education; Mitchell Milheim, mechanical engineering; Mitchell Okuley, mechanical engineering; Ty Pancake, construction systems management; Garrett Peters, sport industry; Tyler Pettorini, business; Will Pfennig, finance; Drew Reckart, human development & family science; Blayne Robinson, finance; Griffan Smith, logistics management.

Men's Basketball – Justin Ahrens, sport industry; Malaki Branham, sport industry; Joey Brunk, criminal justice administration; Kalen Etzler, management & industry exploring; Harrison Hookfin, biology; Eugene Brown III, sport industry; Meechie Johnson, marketing; Jimmy Sotos, kinesiology; Justice Sueing, psychology; Seth Towns, kinesiology; Jamari Wheeler, sports coaching; Kyle Young, kinesiology.

Women's Basketball – Tanaya Beacham, sports coaching; Hevynne Bristow, economics; Madison Greene, sport industry; Rikki Harris, human development & family science; Gabrielle Hutcherson, sport industry; Anyssa Jones, health Professions exploration; Rebeka Mikulasikova, fashion and retail studies; Jacy Sheldon, psychology; Taylor Thierry, exercise science education.

Cheer – Julia Aepli, logistics management; William Bertsch, human development & family science; Michael Carnahan, exercise science education; Maxwell Congrove, logistics management; Triston Conway, undergraduate non-degree; Tristan Cruz, neuroscience; Braden DeLullo, health sciences; Garrett Fogel, industrial and systems engineering MS; Brendan Gass, computer science & engineering; Emily



COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

HITTING THE BOOKS — Ohio State women's soccer's Izzy Rodriguez (above) was one of 788 scholar-athletes honored on April 12. She was also named one of Ohio State's two Big Ten Medal of Honor winners, along with Tyler Johnson of men's track and field.

Gramza, health sciences; Marley Hosier, visual communication design; Ian Lattea, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Maria Law, health sciences; Duncan Mackenzie, biomedical engineering; Alexis Markley, sport industry; Edward Parsley, finance and marketing; Bryden Penhorwood, operations management; Garrett Raney, construction systems management; Karsyn Readler, neuroscience; Brennan Redslob, world politics; Kyle Rodriguez, construction systems management; Jack Sampson, exercise science education; Brooke Shields, political science; Keyli Smith, communication; Mikayla Smith, marketing; Rachel Sorge, exercise science education; Jacob Stack, neuroscience; Patrick Steyn, communication; Alexander Tadda, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Lauren Taylor, psychology; Ashley Thomason, chemistry; Allissa Thornton, middle childhood education; Ella Vysoky, exploration; Alexander Ward, finance; Will Young, management & industry exploring; Madison Yuzwa, pharmaceutical sciences.

Men's Cross Country – Kevin Agnew, electrical & computer engineering; Sean Carney management & industry exploring; Giovanni Coploe, marketing; John Cuozzo, mechanical engineering; Alex Dedi, marketing; John Good, accounting; Zubin Jha, computer science & engineering; Kaleb Martin, mechanical engineering; Nick Miller, accounting; Sergio Negroe, chemical engineering; Zachary Plotkin, computer science & engineering; Nick Regas, marketing; Zachary Shultz, city and regional planning; Ivan Slyepkan, health sciences; Jakob Wickert, mechanical engineering; Mikey Zedan, civil engineering.

Women's Cross Country – Ann Allen, business; Emma Bucher, early childhood education; Chloe Dawson, microbiology; Gabby Dilick, nursing; Addie Engel, health sciences; Erica Francesconi, animal sciences; Dinah Gigandet, health sciences; Allie Guagenti, art education; Alexa Jankowsky, architecture; Andrea Kuhn, mathematics; Juliana Metz, health sciences; Mia Mlynek, health sciences; Hannah Moulton, microbiology; Suzie Muller, exercise science education; Mallory Mulzer, assistive & rehabilitative tech; Carina Napoleon, exploration; Gia Napoleon, women's, gender & sexuality studies; Daniella Santos, social work; Akemi Von Scherr, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Kathleen Shay, biomedical engineering; Suzanne Stein, dietetics and nutrition; Ava Tenaglia, biology; Ellie Weber, marketing.

Dance – Nina Andrianos, exploration; Macie Blacklidge, exercise science education; Makenna Blacklidge, exercise science education; Marley Blanchard, biology; Brenna Bock, exercise science education; Nicole Boudos, finance; Josie Cahall, psychology; Danielle Gelin, pharmaceutical sciences; Sophia MacKinnon, sport industry; Kamryn McConnell, communication; Diana Natalicchio, psychology; Sierra Nelson, communication; Jesslene O'Loughlin, neuroscience; Julia Paslawski, exploration; Brooke Peterson, exercise science education; Emily Placita, exercise science education; Olivia Placita, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Natalie Quinn, neuroscience; Alina Serafin, health sciences; Abigail Summers, communication; Abigail Takahashi, psychology; Brooke Thayer, finance; Elizabeth Wagner, health professions exploration; Hailey Willis, human development & family science.

Men's Diving – Joseph Canova, data analytics; Clayton Chaplin, psychology; Mohamed Noaman, economics; Michael Parker, exercise science education; Jacob Siler, kinesiology; Lyle Yost, Spanish.

Women's Diving – Jacqueline Brenn, health sciences; Mackenzie Crawford, biomedical engineering; Ciara McGing, health sciences; Amanda Ling, teaching and learning.

Men's Fencing – Shanvanth Arripalli, environmental science; Bence Bende, biology; Stephen Chou, computer science & engineering; Christopher Collado, political science; Matthew Comes, mechanical engineering; Gabriel Feinberg, arts and sciences-BA-undecided; James Flanagan, economics-business; William Gaziano, finance; Jacob Gordon, aviation; Vincent Frederick Haney, neuroscience; Clark Kokenge, political science; Anitya Kumar, computer science & engineering; Henry Lange, linguistics; Wesley Lee, marketing; Jadon

Montgomery, marketing; Edriss Ndiaye, business; David Ouellette, marketing; Jack Price, information systems; Maxwell Rodney, journalism; Roscoe Swartz, neuroscience; Paul Veltrup, psychology; Justin Vogler, aerospace engineering; Miles Weiss, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Nolan Williams, psychology; Nathan Wriedt, materials science and engineering.

Women's Fencing – Julieta Toledo Ames, film studies; Chandini Antal, accounting; Evelin Bustamante, marketing; Lauryn DeLuca, early childhood education; Karina Dyner, political science; Kelly Feng, international studies; Miranda Freedman, international studies; Claire Teresa Galavotti, psychology; Ariel Gluck, materials science and engineering; Mikaela Guillen, finance; Katherine Larimer, exercise science education; Alina Lee, business; Yeva Mazur, psychology; Gabriela Viveros Mendoza, marketing; Stephanie Miller, journalism; Emma Montgomery, pharmaceutical sciences; Eleonore Perrier, biology; Camilla Rivano, consumer sciences; Kristen Ruscitelli, evolution and ecology; Maria Vasconcelos Scanavini, neuroscience; Zoe Shay-Tannas, industrial design; Jewelia Smith, materials science and engineering; Talia Weiss, marketing; Lucy Whittemore, exploration.

Field Hockey – Leanne Bough, accounting; Hallie Brost, exploration; Sarah Charley, psychology; Abby Danson, construction systems management; Julia Dickinson, communication; Kennedy Fertitta, finance; Emma Goldean, biology; Ali Gordon, exploration; Aaliyah Hernandez, biology; Jessica Hourihane, marketing; Hanna Killeen, journalism; Beatrice Maloney, finance; Megan McKenna, health sciences; Kaitlyn Pyle, human development & family science; Sarah Richards, health sciences; Sina Schwinn, psychology; Claudia Thomas, marketing; Olivia Zettervall, exploration; Jenna Zunic, exploration.

Football – Mason Arnold, finance; Kamryn Babb, kinesiology; Jayden Ballard, sport coaching, rec and physical ed; Ryan Batsch, finance; Christopher Booker, psychology; Quinton Edison Burke, zoology; Reid Carrico, construction systems management; Lejond Cavazos, communication; Jacob Cowan, sport industry; Dominic DiMaccio, consumer and family financial services; Emeka Egbuka, marketing; Jack Forsman, accounting; Patrick Gurd, health sciences; Ty Hamilton, consumer and family financial services; Jordan Hancock, human development & family science; Marvin Harrison, finance; Samuel Hart, exploration; Donovan Jackson, sport industry; Paris Johnson, journalism; Cade Kacherski, finance; Cameron Kittle, construction systems management; Jagger LaRoe, economics; Trey Leroux, finance; Maxwell Lomonico, human development & family science; Cameron Martinez, psychology; Kyle McCord, communication; Jaden McKenzie, human development & family science; Zenuae Michalski, sport industry; Harrison Miller, mechanical engineering; Jesse Mirco, sport industry; Teradja Mitchell, sport industry; William Mitchell, finance; Andrew Moore, consumer and family financial services; Jalen Pace, exploration; Nicholas Petit-Frere, marketing; Bryce Prater, construction systems management; Zachary Prater, construction systems management; Corey Rau, sport coaching MS; Bradley Robinson, kinesiology MS; Cayden Saunders, mechanical engineering; Jacob Seibert, finance; Cody Simon, finance; Garrison Smith, sport industry; Ryan Smith, sport industry; Tyreke Smith, sport industry; Reis Stocksdales, business; Taron Vincent, sport industry; Samuel Wigiłusz, communication; Miyan Williams, human development & family science; Toby Wilson, sport industry; Luke Wypler, sport industry.

Men's Golf – JonErik Alford, kinesiology; Jackson Chandler, sport industry; Grant Engle, specialized master bus-fin; Tyler Groomes, finance; Maxwell Moldovan, finance; Andrew Mulcahy, business; Patrick Schmuckling, finance; Marco Steyn, specialized master bus-fin; Jacob Tarkany, business; Adam Wallin, economics.

Women's Golf – Jillian Bourdage, aviation management; Faith Choi, journalism; Emily Hummer, business; Kristin Jamieson, finance; Lauren Peter, sport coaching, rec and physical ed; Shotika Phadungmartvorakul, kinesiology; Skylar

Thompson, speech and hearing science; Kailie Vongsaga, sport industry.

Men's Gymnastics – Harrison Andary, biomedical engineering; Arthur Ashton, biochemistry; Andrew Brower, veterinary medicine; Curtis Chang, finance; Donovan Hewitt, political science; Tomo Kawada, air transportation; Logan McGlynn, marketing; Jakob Murray, electrical and computer engineering; Kameron Nelson, communication; Jadon Roberson, marketing; Tyler Rockwood, finance; Dexter Roettker, finance; Luke Smigliani, hospitality management; Jesse Tyn-dall, criminology & criminal justice.

Women's Gymnastics – Stephanie Berger, operations management; Alexis Edwards, psychology; Claire Gagliardi, psychology; Kaitlyn Grimes, management & industry exploring; Alexis Hankins, exercise science education; Jenna Hlavach, early childhood education; Ella Hodges, accounting; Sydney Jennings, health sciences; Raina Malas, political science; Colby Miller, accounting; Hannah Oliveros, communication; Miriam Perez, communication; Madeline Pike, early childhood education; Emma Pritchard, arts and sciences-BA-undecided; Nicole Riccardi, economics-business; Sarah Rowland, health sciences; Zoe Schweitzer, sport industry; Tory Vetter, health sciences; Joselyn Warga, fashion and retail studies.

Men's Ice Hockey – Matthew Cassidy, business economics; Mark Cheremeta, marketing; Eric Cooley, public management; Jakub Dobes, international business; Joseph Dunlap, operations management; Grant Gabriele, sport industry; Michael Gildon, sport industry; Patrick Guzzo, business; Reilly Herbst, exploration; Jaedon Leslie, finance; James Marooney, logistics management; Evan McIntyre, logistics management; Cole McVard, exploration; Georgii Merkulov, sport industry; Dalton Messina, sport industry; Quinn Preston, sport industry; CJ Regula, finance; Will Riedell, public management; Tate Singleton, finance; Ryan Snowden, operations management; Cam Thiesing, exploration; Travis Treloar, sport industry; Dominic Vidoli, neuroscience; Gustaf Westlund, economics; Jakob Wise, sport industry.

Women's Ice Hockey – Lauren Bernard, civil engineering; Brooke Bink, communication; Madison Bizal, sport industry; Andrea Braendli, psychology & criminology & criminal justice; Riley Brengman, sport industry; Jenna Buglioni, sport industry; Emily Curlett, public management; Clair DeGeorge, bioethics; Jennifer Gardiner, sport industry; Teagan Grant, consumer and family financial services; Jamie Grinder, economics; Hadley Hartmetz, communication; McKenzie Hauswirth, biology; Sophie Jaques, civil engineering; Raygan Kirk, environmental science; Quinn Kuntz, health sciences & psychology; Paetyn Levis, health sciences; Ramsey Parent, biology & psychology; Gabriella Rosenthal, speech and hearing science; Sara Saekinen, sport industry; Eve Savander, sport industry; Elizabeth Schepers, bioethics; Alexan Templeman, sport management, Master of science in kinesiology; Amanda Thiele, criminology & criminal justice.

Men's Lacrosse – Ari Allen, marketing; Henry Blake, business; Drew Blanchard, kinesiology; Dante Bowen, finance; Bobby Van Buren, exercise science education; James Cipolla, health sciences; Connor Chmiel, finance; Jack DeSantis, marketing; Trent Diccico, mechanical engineering; Sam Faber, health sciences; Brandon Fisher, communication; Taji Flynn, business; Matt Fritz, business; Tyler Gallagher, bioethics; Daniel Garone, operations management; Jack Graffagnino, consumer and family financial services; James Gurr, real estate and urban analysis; Owen Heinecke, chemical engineering; TJ Hendricks, marketing; Carter Hilleary, communication; James Hogan, communication; Griffin Hughes, communication; Justin Inacio, biology; Caton Johnson, political science; Aidan Kenley, welding engineering; Jason Knox, history; Greg Langermeier, finance; Zach Ludd, finance; Alex Marinier, finance; Noah Mendoza, economics; Matt Mercer, finance; Connor Mitchell, finance; Jack Myers, finance; Garrett Nilsen, communication; Mitchell Pehlke, sport industry; Carson Raney, finance; Jackson Reid, sport industry; Evan Riss, finance; Mitchell Sandberg, health sciences; Ed Shean, marketing; Colby Smith, biology; Jake Snyder, finance; Skylar Wahlund, accounting; George Walsh, marketing; Jonny Wiseman, consumer and family financial services; Stephen Zupcich, finance.

Women's Lacrosse – Regan Alexander, finance; Riley Alexander, marketing; Brynn Ammerman, health professions exploration; Sophia Baez, kinesiology; Maddie Barhorst, business; Ali Beekhuizen, kinesiology; Catie Beg, fashion and retail studies; Ashley Chisholm, finance; Katie Chisholm, exploration; Jane Cowley, communication; Lindsay Epstein, kinesiology; Molly Erneston, agriscience and applied econ; Riley Ewing, applied economics; Nicole Ferrara, communication; Mackenzie Fitzgerald, political science; Bryn Fitzkee, international studies; MK George, psychology; Annie Hargraves, health professions exploration; Sarah Johnson, political science; Clare Johnston, speech and hearing science; Ava Keethler, health sciences; Jamie Lasda, international studies; Margaret Lawler, exploration; Jamie Level, psychology; Cai Martin, health sciences; Maura McGregor, communication; Claire Morris, international business; Caly O'Brien, health sciences; Erin O'Neil, finance; Brooke Papenfuss, human resources; Kiana Perez, pharmaceutical sciences; Emily Rezaabek, marketing; Whitney Robinson, exploration; Leah Sax, health sciences; Lilli Sherman, communication; Annika Spoor, finance; Ashley Turner, sport industry.

Pistol – Katelyn Abeln, public health; Amanda Ackerman, animal sciences; Samuel Gens, civil engineering; Cade Haiby, mechanical engineering; Jack Leverett, computer & information science; Emily Nothnagle, anthropology; Maria Tsarik, marketing.

Rifle – Philip Becker, aerospace engineering; Chandler Deaton, microbiology; Ariel Hall, human nutrition; Eva Horgan, philosophy, politics, and econ; Natalie Katsuyama, medical anthropology; Derek Keiser, logistics management; Viktor Kiss, philosophy, politics, and econ; Joel Potts, finance; Annabelle Stanec, accounting; Frank Steyn, public health-STEM; Anna Tomb, finance; Nathan Wehrlein, nursing.

Rowing – Katelyn Bartos, mechanical engineering; Divya Batchu, public health-STEM; Claire Bauer, finance; Taylor Benedict, psychology; Maria Bowman, industrial design; Eliana Bujwalo-Nowak, mechanical engineering; Katherine Castaneda, electrical and computer engineering; Natalie Chourova, human nutrition; Olivia Clotten, biology; Kaitlyn Clouse, psychology; Kristen Devolve, nursing; Rachel DeWitte, communications; Noah Fletcher, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Ava Fortney, health professions exploration; Jennifer Fournery, computer science & engineering; Alexandra Gluntz, mechanical engineering; Emma Hall, finance; Kristen Hammond, health sciences; Alaina Hawthorn, architecture; Molly Hillman, health sciences; Kathryn Hinton, mathematics; Leandra Hogrefe, physics; Claire Holtyn, human development & family science; Linnie Hughes, computer science & engineering; Alexa Isaac, history of art; Jillian Johnson, exploration; Kira Katterle, biomedical engineering; Valerie Keller, health sciences; Chloe Kin, exercise science education; Grace Klein, psychology; Pau Koster, international business; Allison Krish, industrial design; Alexandra Kushnir, environmental science; Annetta Kyridou, sport industry; Maria Kyridou, criminology & criminal justice; Erika Linton, civil engineering; Margaret Livingston, English; Magdaly Materni, health sciences; Danielle Mathews, economics; Regan McElwee, biology; Megan McNutt, biomedical engineering; Morgan Miller, performance; Alessandra Montesano, communication; Mia Mulhearn, neuroscience; Audrey Murphy, health sciences; Megan Murphy, electrical and computer engineering; Alexandra Nothdurft, world politics; Megan O'Connor, political science; Grace Pabst, human development & family science; Kaitlin Pang, economics; Elizabeth Patrice Paul, biology; Darby Pethrick, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Svea Pichner, international business; Madison Reents, aerospace engineering; Katherine Reymann, marketing; Gabrielle Nicole Schmidt, psychology; Savannah Sellers, environmental science; Amelie Sens, early childhood education; Mattie Steiner, marketing; Lydia Stute, health sciences; Tess Thompson, human development & family science; Gea Torres, industrial & systems engineering; Charli Ulmer, art; Jenna Unkefer, health professions exploration; Kathryn Visci, chemical engineering; Emma Walker, psychology; Grace Wallace, speech and hearing science; Oliver Williams, public policy analysis; Emma Wilson, health sciences; Lotta Wolff, fashion and retail studies; Morgan Zahner, computer science & engineering; Alyssa Zehner, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science.

Men's Soccer – Samuel Buzzas, kinesiology; Channing Chasten, communications; Blake Collins, real estate and urban analysis; Nathan Demian, finance; Connor DesRoches, finance; Chris Dowling, economics; Braden Durbin, sport industry; Devyn Etling, kinesiology; Peter Van Euwen, finance; Thomas Gilej, economics; Xavier Green, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Luis Hernandez, economics; Nick Isaac, health professions exploration; Luke Kiley, criminology & criminal justice; Noah Lawrence, sport industry; Tommy Marusic, finance; Keagan McLaughlin, statistics; Sean Ryan, economics; Anthony Samways, marketing; Owen Sullivan, accounting; Max Trejo, sport industry; Deylen Vellios, exercise science education; Tommaso Villa, health professions exploration; Laurence Wootton, environment, economy, development & sustainability.

Women's Soccer – Tatum Adamson, biology; Christin Baumbick, health sciences; Marissa Birzon, marketing; Sydney Browning, health sciences; Chloe Delyser, marketing; Kailyn Dudukovich, mathematics; Brittany Duncan, biology; Kayla Fischer, biology; Kine Myhrer Floetre, physical education, sport & physical activity; Caitlin Foley, communication; Sydney Jones, marketing; Bailey Kolinski, logistics management; Nina LeFlore, pharmaceutical sciences; Madison Lowe, kinesiology; Peyton McNamara, international business; Ariella Pitty, animal sciences; Haley Roberts, health sciences; Izzy Rodriguez, finance; Emma Sears, human nutrition; Emaly Vatne, kinesiology.

Softball – Hannah Bryan, health sciences; McKenzie Bump, marketing; Nicole Carver, special education; Avery Clark, health sciences; Tegan Cortelletti, criminology & criminal justice; Kirsten Eppele, health sciences; Kaitlyn Farley, exercise science education; Samantha Hackenbracht, middle childhood education; Alexis Handley, sports coaching; Taylor Heckman, early childhood education; Kennedy Kay, health sciences; Kamryn Kortokrax, communication; Reagan Milliken, exercise science education; Destinee Noury, psychology; Mariah Rodriguez, hospitality management; Jessica Ross, English; Jaycee Ruberti, criminology & criminal justice; Allison Smith, biomedical engineering; Melina Wilkison, marketing.

Men's Swimming – Sem Andreis, computer & information science; Hunter Armstrong, sport industry; Daniel Baltes, physics; William Bansberg, health professions exploration; Jack Burroughs, sport industry; Michael Cooper, statistics; Fabio Dalu, economics; Brandon Day, exercise science education; Chachi Gustafson, computer & information science; North Hansen, marketing; Karl Helmuth, mathematics; Jay Johnson, philosophy, politics, and econ; Timothy Kalin, psychology; R.J. Kondalski, biology; Pete Krusinski, finance; Matthew Magness, mechanical engineering; Mario McDonald, exercise science education; Ian Mikesell, mechanical engineering; Luke Paxton, aerospace engineering; Billy Regan, sport coaching, rec and physical ed; Shaw Satterfield, finance; Ryan Trichler, fashion and retail studies; Thomas Watkins, computer & information science.

Women's Swimming – Hannah Bach, public health; Leah Baker, biology; Emily Crane, sports coaching; Reese Dehen, exploration; Mackenzie DeWitt, exploration; Allison Fenska, management & industry exploring; Amy Fulmer, biology; Maya Geringer, environmental policy & decision marketing; Liberty Gilbert, political science; Alyssa Graves, communication; Paige Hall, zoology; Tristan Harrison, exploration; Teresa Ivan, health sciences; Mia Lachey, economics-business; Meredith Moellering, health sciences; Mairin O'Brien, marketing; Amanda Palutis, biomedical engineering; Josephine Panitz, marketing; Mia Rankin, exploration; Kristen Romano, anthropology; Catherine Russo, neuroscience; Kyra Sommerstad, health sciences; Veronica Tafuto, mathematics; Katherine Trace, kinesiology; Sarah Turchanik, sport coaching, rec and physical ed; Aislinn Walsh, communication; Brynna Wolfe, speech and hearing science; Gwyneth Woodbury, biochemistry; Katherine Zenick, neuroscience.

Synchronized Swimming – Emily Armstrong, psychology; Victoria Carlson, landscape architecture; Camryn Carrasco, sociology; Marian Cattanah, health sciences; Nikki Dzurko, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Hannah Heffernan, computer & info science; Rose Homoele, biochemistry; Paige Hopper, accounting; Laila Huric, translational pharmacology; Rachel Jager, usability and user experience in healthcare; Paula Luis, accounting; Olivia Malloy, studio art; Reverie Nedde, studio art; Cassie Neeley, psychology; Trinity Patton, health sciences; Ruby Remati, exploration; Olivia Schafer, psychology & political science; Caroline Walsh, sport industry; Haley Watson, psychology; Megan Wong, pharmaceutical sciences.

Men's Tennis – Justin Boulais, sport industry; Robert Cash, chemistry; Cannon Kingsley, sport industry; Andrew Lutschaunig, finance; James Tracy, finance; Matej Vocel, sport industry; Reece Yakubov, finance.

Women's Tennis – Lina Ali, psychology; Kolie Allen, speech and hearing science; Madeline Atway, finance; Shelly Bereznyak, international business; Irina Cantos Siemers, communication; Luna Dormet, public policy and management; Kathleen Jones, journalism; Lucia Marzal Martinez, international business; Sydney Ratliff, sport industry; Danielle Schoenly, exploration.

Men's Track & Field – Carlos Aviles, psychology; Luke Bendick, history; Sean Carney, management & industry ex-

ploring; Daniel Drellishak, finance; Ty Fajardo, chemical engineering; Evan Johnson, real estate and urban analysis; Tyler Johnson, kinesiology; Shacquille Lowe, science & technology exploration; Evan Matthews, air transportation; Amir Metts, public management graduate certificate; Joshua Miller, public policy and management; Armani Modeste, economics; Praise Olatoke, sport industry; Robby Oswald, human resource management; Paul Page, arts, innovation & design exploring; David Palmer, sports coaching; Nathaniel Tamminga, physics; Leo Uusimaeki, electrical and computer engineering.

Women's Track & Field – Aziza Ayoub, public health (MPH); Nya Bussey, health sciences; Makalah Clark, studio art; Catherine Dorsey, finance; Amelia Figler, history; Mary Figler, finance; Morgan Fijalkowski, nursing; Emma Hoellrich, business; Abigail Kuhn, marketing; Amelia McCloy, philosophy, politics, and econ; Anne Moses, industrial and systems engineering; Devine Parker, communication; Alexus Pyles, assistive & rehabilitative tech; Cierra Pyles, human development & family science; Chanler Robinson, animal sciences; Jaimie Robinson, sociology; Julia Swallows, human development & family science; Kambi Walker, criminology & criminal justice; Jaydan Wood, health sciences.

Men's Volleyball – Samuel Clark, mechanical engineering; Justin Howard, journalism; Jason Kozak, mechanical engineering; Martin Lallemand, specialized master in business finance; Luke Lentin, finance & economics; Parker Mikesch,

sport industry & psychology; Jacob Pasteur, marketing; Noah Platfoot, finance; Tommy Poole, mechanical engineering; Sean Ryan, economics-business; Sotiris Siapanis, economics; Jack Stevens, civil engineering; Grant Strong, finance; Ethan Talley, finance; Kyle Teune, finance; James Webb, finance; Michael Wright, finance; Cole Young, sport industry.

Women's Volleyball – Vanja Bukilic, civil engineering; Gabby Gonzales, sport industry; Hannah Gruensfelder, biomedical engineering; Mia Grunze, kinesiology; Emily Landon, sport industry; Reilly MacNeill, sport industry; Camryn Moeller, accounting; Jenaisya Moore, sport industry; Sarah Morbitzer, exercise science education; Kylie Murr, sport industry; Mac Podraza, communication; Adria Powell, biology; Sydney Taylor, business; Josie Vondran, exercise science education; Sarah White, business.

Wrestling – William Betancourt, sport industry; Aja-bu Crews, economics-business; Dylan D'Emilio, psychology; Padraic Gallagher, sport industry; Malik Heinselman, finance; Cade Hepner, consumer and family financial services; Gavin Hoffman, operations management; Jashon Hubbard, sport industry; Rocky Jordan, sport industry; Carson Kharchla, sport industry; David Orndorff, mathematics; Klay Reeves, exercise science education; Kaleb Romero, human resource management; Frederick Schierl, sports coaching; Ethan Smith, human resource management; Tyler Stein, health sciences; Hogan Swenski, exploration; Isaac Wilcox, exploration.



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Jackie Collins
Attorney/Army Veteran



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Five-Star QB Dylan Raiola Commits To OSU

Ohio State has found its quarterback of the future. Chandler, Ariz., five-star quarterback Dylan Raiola (6-3, 225), one of 2024's top prospects, committed to Ohio State on May 9 – also his birthday – wrapping up a fast and furious recruitment that will add another high-profile signal-caller to the Buckeyes' quarterback room.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

Raiola had been quiet in recent weeks leading up to his commitment, last on campus for Ohio State's spring game on April 16. That was his second visit in as many weeks, also visiting Columbus the weekend prior. He's the No. 8 overall prospect in his class and the No. 3 quarterback, according to the 247Sports composite rankings, but several recruiting services have him as the top quarterback in the class.

He committed during a ceremony at Impact Church in Scottsdale, Ariz., where his college decision became immediately clear given the Ohio State decorations hanging off the stage in the sanctuary. Following a prayer and a brief speech from Raiola thanking his family, friends, coaches and administrators, he played a video for those in attendance announcing his commitment

to the Buckeyes.

"Coach (Corey) Dennis, Coach (Ryan) Day, I'm ready," he said in the video. "Buckeye Nation, let's go!"

He holds over 25 offers from Power Five schools, electing to commit to Ohio State over the likes of Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, Oregon and USC, as well as Nebraska where his father, Dominic, is a former All-America center who played from 1998 to 2000 and had a 14-year career in the NFL with the Detroit Lions.

"Start with the head man, Coach Day," Raiola told 247Sports. "I think what he does with quarterbacks is special. The way he molds a young man going into this world, I think that's a huge factor. Just the personal relationship I have with them and built with them, it's very personable and you can ask them any question, you can go to him whenever you want. His office is next to the locker room, and he says he has an open-door policy and that means a lot."

Raiola's return visit for Ohio State's spring game was not just to take in Ohio Stadium but to inform the staff that he intended to commit to the Buckeyes.

"We got the itinerary and I saw I had a meeting with Coach Day that Saturday at noon," Raiola said. "I couldn't sleep on the plane. We had a red-eye (flight). When we got there, we went out to practice, I went and got my hair cut, and we had a meeting with Coach Day. I told him thank you for having us back and I'm ready to be a Buckeye. He



COURTESY OF DYLAN RAIOLA

PRESENT AND FUTURE — Ohio State quarterback commit Dylan Raiola (left) won't share the locker room with current OSU quarterback C.J. Stroud (right), but the two got to know each other at a recent quarterback retreat.

reacted with a loud scream of 'let's go!' He's super excited for me and my family."

In his sophomore season, he passed for 3,341 yards and 32 touchdowns (and rushed for nine), leading Burleson High School in Texas to an 8-4 record and earning Texas District 5-5A-II Offensive MVP honors. He completed 228 of 350 passes while throwing just five interceptions, but he will be transferring to Chandler for the remainder of his high school career.

Raiola's commitment provides some immediate clarity for Ohio State at quarterback for the next several seasons. This season will almost certainly be the last for Heisman-finalist C.J. Stroud in Columbus, setting the stage for either sophomore Kyle

McCord or freshman Devin Brown to play in 2023 and 2024, with Raiola as a potential option beyond that.

"Raiola is a player who has very few holes in his game even though he has two more years of high school left," 247Sports recruiting analyst Chris Singletary said in April. "He is ahead of the curve with his mechanics and has the arm strength that puts him in elite company. Because of his ability, physical talent and positive traits, his talent positions him to play in any offensive scheme with high-level results. The more that he plays and has reps, his decision-making and feel will only get faster and become second nature. Being a Power Five starter for multiple years and possibly an



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OSU Football 2023 Commitments

Players in the class of 2023 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.					
Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Mark Fletcher	RB	6-1	225	★★★★	Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage
Malik Hartford	SAF	6-3	175	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
Cedrick Hawkins	SAF	6-0	165	★★★★	Titusville (Fla.) Cocoa
Dijon Johnson	CB	6-1	190	★★★★	Tampa (Fla.) Wharton
Ty Lockwood	TE	6-5	225	★★★★	Thompson's Stn. (Tenn.) Independence
Luke Montgomery	OT	6-5	270	★★★★	Findlay, Ohio
Joshua Padilla	OG	6-4	265	★★★★	Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne
Bryson Rodgers	WR	6-2	170	★★★★	Zephyrhills (Fla.) Wiregrass Ranch
Austin Siereveld	OL	6-5	315	★★★★	Middletown (Ohio) Lakota East
Will Smith Jr.	DL	6-3	260	★★★	Dublin (Ohio) Coffman

all-conference selection seem destined for his future.”

Raiola’s commitment puts less pressure on Ohio State to find a home run in a 2023 quarterback. As it stands, the Buckeyes’ targets in the upcoming class include Snellville (Ga.) Brookwood four-star Dylan Lonerган (6-2, 215), though there has been little movement on that front of late. At this point, it appears likely that Ohio State’s options at quarterback in 2023 rest on finding someone within the camp circuit or a potential transfer into the program.

One potential option is Dripping Springs, Texas, four-star Austin Novosad (6-3, 185). He has been committed to Baylor since December but camped with Ohio State on June 1, earning an offer in the process.

Raiola is the first commitment – and arguably the most important – for Ohio State’s 2024 class, which is seventh in the 247Sports team composite rankings despite having just one verbal.

OL Siereveld Joins Fold In 2023

Ohio State’s new offensive line coach Justin Frye has been on the job for a only few months, but he’s already secured his second commitment for 2023. Middletown (Ohio) Lakota East four-star offensive lineman Austin Siereveld (6-5, 315) announced May 4 that he is committing to the Buckeyes.

Siereveld is the No. 262 overall prospect in his class and the No. 13 interior lineman, and he is also the No. 5 prospect in Ohio. He chose Ohio State over Alabama and Notre

Dame, his other top schools.

He made several visits to Ohio State last season and was offered while attending the Buckeyes’ matchup with Penn State on Oct. 30. He then returned twice in the spring, visiting on March 21 and attending Ohio State’s spring game on April 16.

“It was home for me from the beginning,” Siereveld said during his commitment ceremony. “I just want to compete and hopefully play as soon as possible and make the guys better in front of me and behind me, and hopefully we win a natty.”

In addition to football, Siereveld plays basketball at Lakota East. Those skills noticeably transfer to the gridiron, where he is quick on his feet despite his size. He helped anchor an offensive line for the Thunderhawks last season that helped its running backs average 5.7 yards per carry and score 30 combined touchdowns.

“(He’s a) high school offensive tackle who is going to move inside at the next level,” 247Sports recruiting analyst Allen Trieu said on CBS Sports. “He gives you versatility at all three positions.”

On3 Sports said Siereveld is a “light-footed mauler who excels as a drive blocker” and moves well for his size.

“He fires off the ball and plays with very good pad level. He gets underneath the pads of defensive linemen and generates a considerable push,” the report said. “He often finishes blocks with emphasis. He doubles as a basketball player and shows off his footwork in moving to the second level but does not have high-end length. He will need

OSU Football 2024 Commitments

Player(s) in the class of 2024 who has/have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.					
Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Dylan Raiola	QB	6-3	220	★★★★★	Chandler, Ariz.

to continue watching his weight, as he’s already at or around an ideal playing weight. He’s a well-rounded interior offensive line prospect who projects as an offensive guard at the college level.”

His commitment is the third on the offensive line for Ohio State in 2023. He joins Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star Josh Padilla (6-4, 265) and Findlay, Ohio, four-star Luke Montgomery (6-5, 270). This also gives Ohio State four of the top seven prospects in Ohio, along with West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star safety Malik Hartford (6-3, 175), who committed to the Buckeyes in March.

While Montgomery, Padilla and Siereveld give Ohio State a good base for its offensive line class in 2023, the Buckeyes are still pursuing several true tackles in the class. This includes Windsor (Conn.) Loomis Chaffee four-star offensive tackle Olaus Alinen (6-6, 315), Brockton (Mass.) Thayer Academy five-star Samson Okunlola (6-6, 295) and Austin (Texas) Vandegrift four-star Ian Reed (6-6, 290).

OSU Hosting Top-Level Prospects In June

Columbus will soon be bursting at the seams due to the influx of talent set to visit Ohio State in June. The Buckeyes will play host to nearly three dozen recruits from the 2023, 2024 and 2025 recruiting classes, with several prospects in the upcoming class being hosted on official visits. Names and dates for these visits have been compiled through several sources, including the prospects themselves as well as various recruiting services, but as always, they are subject to change.

Beginning the weekend of June 10, the Buckeyes will welcome in Marlin, Texas, four-star linebacker Derion Gullette (6-2, 220), Miami (Fla.) Gulliver Prep four-star cornerback Daniel Harris (6-2, 175), Portland (Ore.) Central Catholic four-star tight

end Riley Williams (6-6, 230) and Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco five-star defensive end Matayo Uiagalelei (6-4, 255).

Ohio State will then host several prospects for official visits for the weekend of June 17. This includes a pair of high-profile receivers in Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage five-star Brandon Inniss (6-0, 190) and Rolesville, N.C., four-star Noah Rogers (6-2, 180), as well as three-star safety Jayden Bonsu (6-2, 205) out of St. Peter’s Prep in Jersey City, N.J. Four-star defensive lineman Stephiylan Green (6-4, 267) of Rome, Ga., will also be in attendance.

Another notable official visit will be that of Waxahachie, Texas, four-star cornerback Calvin Simpson-Hunt (6-0, 175), who is committed to Texas Tech. He has been committed to the Red Raiders since November but received an offer from the Buckeyes on May 4 in addition to recent offers from Notre Dame and Texas.

Ohio State will also see a group of current commitments that weekend, including Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) four-star running back Mark Fletcher (6-1, 225), Tampa (Fla.) Wharton four-star cornerback Dijon Johnson (6-1, 190), Thompson’s Station (Tenn.) Independence four-star tight end Ty Lockwood (6-5, 225), Zephyrhills (Fla.) Wiregrass Ranch four-star wide receiver Bryson Rodgers (6-2, 170) and Siereveld. All will certainly be courted during their visit by Raiola, who is making an unofficial visit that weekend.

The following weekend of June 24 will feature just as much – if not more – talent arriving on campus, with several high-priority targets in attendance for Ohio State. The most notable position group will be on the defensive line, with Warner Robins, Ga., five-star Vic Burley (6-5, 276); Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic four-star Jason Moore (6-6, 255); Columbus (Ga.) Carver

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ASK AN ANALYST
With Bill Greene of Buckeye Scoop

Ohio State received a commitment from Dylan Raiola, a five-star quarterback in 2024 from Chandler, Ariz. As he enters his junior season this upcoming fall, what do you have on him in terms of a scouting report?

“I’ve not seen him in person. I’m a lot better when I see him in person than if I watched film. But when I watched that film, he was a big, strong, tough kid. I mean, big arm, big body – you hate to compare him to NFL guys because the kid’s freaking 15 years old, probably doesn’t have his driver’s license yet. But, if you want to do that kind of comparison, I would say Josh Allen. Just a big, physical, strong-armed kid. When someone wants to say that Dylan Raiola is the No. 1 prospect in 2024, I’m not arguing with them. I get it.”

What impact might he have as a leader of the 2024 class and his potential for recruiting some 2023 prospects as well?

“I’m the last guy that is big on kids recruiting kids. I think the assistant coaches have to do their part. Everybody has to do their part. If Dylan Raiola is your No. 1 recruiter, then what are Corey Dennis, Brian Hartline – what are those guys doing? So, I’m not big on (someone being) a leader of the class, kids recruiting kids.

“The one exception to that is when it’s a big-time quarter-

back. That guy’s got coattails. I love Findlay, Ohio, four-star offensive lineman Luke Montgomery (6-5, 280), I love the family, (but) he is not going to attract a bunch of kids to Ohio State as an offensive lineman. It just isn’t going to work that way. These receivers from Florida are not going to commit to Ohio State so they can watch Luke Montgomery block in practice. It isn’t going to happen. But Dylan Raiola? Will he have that big of a deal in 2023? I don’t think kids really look backwards, so I don’t know about 2023, but I guarantee you people like Opa Locka (Fla.) Chaminade Madonna Prep four-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 185) and Miami Central four-star wide receiver Joshisa Trader (6-2, 170), those guys are paying attention. You know, those receivers want to know that there’s going to be somebody there throwing the ball, and when you see you’ve got the No. 1 quarterback in the country, that opens eyes.

“Then, when you look at offensive linemen, they’re going to want to play behind a stud quarterback. So, I do see coattails if your so-called leader in the class is a quarterback. But if it’s a linebacker or safety or an offensive lineman, I think it’s so overblown. I followed that ‘Brew Crew’ recruiting with Michael Brewster, and nobody came to Ohio State for Michael Brewster. He’s a great guy, friends to everybody, but the only way

you’re going to get that is when it’s a big-time quarterback, which Dylan Raiola is, so I think it does help.”

The Buckeyes have north of 30 visitors set for visits in June. Which ones are you keeping an eye on?

“I’ve had Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star wide receiver Carnell Tate (6-2, 185) and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage five-star wide receiver Brandon Inniss (6-0, 190) in this class for so long, I think it goes back to late February or early March. I just had these guys in. I’ve always felt they were in. I know the crystal balls don’t show that, but those will be the two I’m going to watch. I’ve had them in the class for so long that I want to validate that maybe my sources are good on these two. Those are the two I’m really watching, for sure.

“They really need to land offensive tackles in this class. I liked the three Ohio kids they’ve got on the O-line, but for something to really pay attention to, the offensive tackles would be more important. Hartline’s always going to get wide receivers. I mean, that’s not a position any Ohio State fan should concern themselves with in terms of talent, but they need offensive tackles. They’ve got to get two. You get a class of five here with two national offensive tackles? Boy, it sure looks really good.”

Big Recruiting Weekend On Tap For June 24

Continued From Page 25

four-star Darron Reed (6-5, 260); Kissimmee (Fla.) Osceola four-star John Walker (6-3, 310); and Upper Marlboro (Md.) Charles Herbert Flowers four-star defensive end Desmond Umeozulu (6-5, 220) all expected.

Elsewhere on defense, a trio of linebackers will be in for official visits, including Fayetteville (Ga.) Whitewater four-star Raul Aguirre (6-2, 220); Tampa (Fla.) Jesuit four-star Troy Bowles (6-1, 205); and Many, La., four-star Tackett Curtis (6-2, 218). A trio of defensive backs will visit as well, including Hoschton (Ga.) Mill Creek five-star safety Caleb Downs (6-0, 185), St. Louis DeSmet four-star cornerback Christian Gray (6-0, 175) and Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star cornerback Kayin Lee (5-11, 185).

Moving to offense, the list is smaller but equally important. In attendance will be Alinen; Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic four-star running back Justice Haynes (5-10, 200); and Folsom, Calif., four-star wide receiver Rico Flores Jr. (6-1, 190).

A trio of commitments will also be in attendance with Hartford, Montgomery and Padilla.

One notable name who won't be making the trip this summer is Lehigh Acres (Fla.) Senior five-star running back Richard Young (5-11, 200). Young was originally set for a visit on June 24, but he announced on May 23 that he will not be visiting Ohio State. Despite that, he said the Buckeyes are still among his top schools, though the odds appear to be slim of Ohio State having a legitimate chance at Young at this point.

Ohio State will still look around in the class – keep an eye on Haynes – but it's possible that running backs coach Tony Alford and company could be content with a one-man class headlined by Fletcher.

Ohio State On Short List For Several Recruits

Recruits are continuing to whittle down their list of top schools, and Ohio State found itself among the finalists for several 2023 prospects, including that of Georgia quarterback Lonergan.

Ohio State remains in limbo at quarterback in 2023, and though Lonergan is an option, the Buckeyes are viewed as behind South Carolina in his potential commitment. Regardless of whom Ohio State

brings in, they could have plenty of options to throw to down the line as a trio of receivers had the Buckeyes in their top schools, including Flores; Longview, Texas, four-star Jalen Hale (6-2, 175); and Rogers.

Also on offense, a trio of offensive tackles in Mount Pleasant (S.C.) Oceanside Collegiate Academy four-star Monroe Freeling (6-7, 283), Okunlola and Reed had the Buckeyes among their top schools.

On defense, Ohio State was a finalist for several defensive linemen, including Green, Moore, Reed and Montgomery (Ala.) Carver four-star Jaquavious Russaw (6-2, 230). The Buckeyes were also listed as finalists for Bowles; Jacksonville (Fla.) Bartram Trail four-star cornerback Sharif Denson (6-0, 170); Gullette; and Roswell, Ga., four-star cornerback Ethan Nation (5-10, 165).

While there was plenty of good news since BSB last went to press, some recruits also released lists that left off Ohio State. This includes Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater four-star running back Cedric Baxter Jr. (6-1, 215); Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep four-star offensive tackle Chase Bisontis (6-5, 290); Orlando (Fla.) Jones four-star linebacker Malik Bryant (6-2, 235); and DeSoto, Texas, four-

star wide receiver Johntay Cook II (6-0, 170).

NCAA Issues New NIL Guidelines

The NCAA Division I board of directors issued new guidance to schools on May 9 regarding recruiting and name, image and likeness (NIL).

This guidance, which was developed “by a task force of national leaders with student-athlete opportunity at the forefront of discussions,” defines a booster as any third-party entity that promotes an athletic program or assists with recruiting or providing benefits to recruits, enrolled student-athletes or their family members.

The board specifically notes that this definition could include collectives, which are booster-led groups that were created to help facilitate NIL deals between student-athletes and prospective businesses.

According to a copy of the guidance obtained by Sports Illustrated, boosters may not communicate with a prospective student-athlete for a recruiting purpose or to encourage their attendance to a specific university. Additionally, coaches and university staff cannot organize or facilitate meetings

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago – 1982

The Woolridge brothers of Akron played their own mini-version of the Ohio State-Michigan football game, and it could have had a lengthy had John, the central figure in the matter, not made a decision.

Ohio State was the winner in this case because Central-Hower High School's John Woolridge, an All-Ohio running back, chose to cast his lot with the Buckeyes.

“I made up my mind while I was visiting the Ohio State campus on a Sunday,” recalled Woolridge, who had led his school to its first Akron City Series playoff title the previous fall, while scoring 22 touchdowns and rushing for more than 1,500 yards on the season.

Two older brothers were involved in a verbal tug-of-war over John's choice of schools. Brother David, who helped out on the Central-Hower football staff, urged John to attend OSU. His brother Richard was just as adamant for Michigan to acquire the services of his talented younger brother.

“I thought John would get to start sooner at Michigan,” Richard pointed out. “Butch Woolfolk and Stan Edwards were seniors last fall, and only Barberton's Larry Ricks will be back.”

35 Years Ago – 1987

Future OSU athletes performed well at the state high school track and field meet held in Ohio Stadium.

Incoming freshman football players and prep teammates Carlos Snow and Vincent Clark battled each other in the state meet as they had done throughout the track season.

Clark, a defensive back candidate, won the 200 meter and finished second in the 100 meter, while Snow, a topflight running back, was fourth in the 100 meter as Cincinnati CAPE placed second to Dayton Jefferson in the AA team standings. Clark and Snow also ran legs of CAPE's second-place 400-meter relay.

25 Years Ago – 1997

Cleveland St. Ignatius offensive lineman Jim Massey was happy to be a Buckeye. He had verbally committed at one point to Wisconsin. UW had offered a scholarship to the 6-6, 270-pound offensive lineman early in the season, and he decided to become a Badger upon returning home from his visit to the campus.

“But that same day that I had committed and the day I got back, Ohio State had called that morning and offered,” Massey said. “I had always wanted to go to Ohio State, but they hadn't offered me and I wasn't sure what they were going to, so I just wanted to get it over with.”

As it turned out, it was Wisconsin that actually made the decision between the two schools an easy one for him. According to Massey, after the school put his grades in front of the review board at the university, they told him that they didn't think he could meet the NCAA eligibility requirements, and they wanted to recommend him to a junior college.

“It worked out perfect for me because I always wanted to go to Ohio State anyway, and it gave me a great out not to go to Wis-

consin,” Massey said.

20 Years Ago – 2002

BSB had a chance to ask Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany about the conference's rules on national letters of intent.

As it stood, Big Ten schools were permitted to send out only as many letters of intent as they had available scholarships.

On some levels, this policy put Big Ten schools at a disadvantage when they recruited against other schools, particularly the SEC, which allowed its members to send out an unlimited number of letters of intent. By doing that, those schools accounted for academic casualties and last-minute “decommitments.”

Before the start of school in August, they were able to pare their signing list so it conformed to the NCAA's 25/85 rules (no more than 25 players in a class, no more than 85 players on scholarship).

“I think it puts us at a little bit of a disadvantage, but we think ours is the right rule,” Delaney told BSB. “I've talked to other conferences, and we've talked about trying to find some middle ground on it. But we think our rule is the right thing to do.”

15 Years Ago – 2007

Standing on the playing field where he made a name for himself as one of the Midwest's top prospects, Andrew Sweat surveyed a table with seven hats placed upon it.

His top seven schools were represented from left to right: Ohio State, Notre Dame, LSU, Penn State, Florida, Michigan and Wisconsin, although it had been well-publicized that Sweat had narrowed his final decision down to the Buckeyes and the Fighting Irish.

After opening remarks from Washington (Pa.) Trinity head coach Ed Dalton, Sweat addressed a crowd of more than 100 onlookers. Then, the four-star linebacker prospect donned the OSU hat while behind him the field's scoreboard flashed two consecutive messages.

The first said, “ANDREW SWEAT.” The second read, “IS A BUCKEYE!!”

And with that, the Buckeyes had secured their ninth verbal commitment for their class of 2008.

10 Years Ago – 2012

The Ohio State football program took a hit May 4 when Wyoming, Pa., linebacker Alex Anzalone decommitted from its 2013 class.

Among other reasons, Anzalone reopened his recruitment after finding out he and other OSU recruits had posed with a registered sex offender named Charles Waugh in a photograph while visiting campus.

Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas defensive end Joey Bosa was also in the photograph along with Mike Heuerman, a tight end prospect out of Naples (Fla.) Barron Collier who had recently issued a verbal commitment to Notre Dame.

Bosa, a five-star defensive end rated by Scout.com as the No. 2 player at his position, reaffirmed that he was still completely committed to Ohio State.

“I wouldn't say (the recruiting process) is out of the way because I still have people talking to me every day, but I am super excited, and I am 100 percent solid to Ohio State,” Bosa told Scout.com Florida recruiting reporter Amy Campbell. “If anyone thinks I decommitted or anything because of (Waugh), I am still with them all the way.”

Five Years Ago – 2017

Cleveland Heights, Ohio, four-star defensive end Tyreke Smith was an Ohio State target but was also garnering a lot of attention from Michigan. He expressed his interest in the Wolverines by attending their satellite camp at John Carroll University in Cleveland on June 2.

“Being in Ohio, being this close, I had to come see (the Michigan coaches),” Smith told Scout recruiting analyst Bill Greene. “I definitely had to come stop up here and talk to the coaches. They're on my list, they're on my radar so it definitely meant a lot.”

He noted that he spent some time with Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh.

“He was happy to see me,” Smith said. “It was great seeing him. We just asked how each other were doing and stuff like that. It was just good seeing him.”

In addition to meeting with Harbaugh, Smith talked to former Michigan defensive lineman and Ohio native Pierre Woods.

“(He was) just telling me to just go with my heart and that Michigan is a great school,” Smith said of Woods. “He wouldn't be mad if I didn't choose (Michigan). He was just telling me they've got a great staff, great program and they'll get me to where I want to be.”

One Year Ago – 2021

Four hundred forty-five days. That was how long the NCAA's recruiting dead period lasted before it finally came to a close on June 1.

With that gone, Ohio State was finally able to welcome recruits into Ohio Stadium and the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for the first time since March 13, 2020. It started with a two-day camp that opened on the first day of the month, primarily suited for prospects in the 2023 class.

There were plenty of big names in that opening group, including priority in-state targets such as five-star Pickerington Central safety Sonny Styles and four-star Findlay offensive lineman Luke Montgomery. Along with the large list of 2023 names, Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star defensive lineman Christen Miller and Merrillville, Ind., defensive lineman Kenneth Grant highlighted the handful of prospects from the 2022 class.

Ohio State also had a pair of linebacker commitments on campus from the start in Kettering (Ohio) Alter five-star C.J. Hicks and Marysville, Ohio, four-star Gabe Powers

between recruits and boosters, and they cannot communicate with a recruit on behalf of a booster.

The new guidance also notes that NIL agreements must be based on a “case-by-case” analysis of the value a student-athlete can bring to an NIL agreement, rather than a deal providing compensation for enrollment decisions, athletic performance, achievements or membership on a team. The latter point brings into question several deals that have been brokered, such as a deal by an NIL collective for Texas that provides each scholarship offensive lineman with \$50,000.

The guidance notes that NCAA recruiting rules do not allow for boosters to recruit and/or provide benefits to prospective student-athletes, but several reports have indicated that collectives across the country are working with recruits and already have deals in place with some, including a speculated \$8 million deal for a five-star prospect in 2023.

Ohio State has two notable collectives in operation, including The Foundation – launched in February by Ohio State booster Brian Schottenstein and former Buckeye quarterback Cardale Jones as a registered nonprofit – and the Cohesion Foundation, which was founded by former Ohio State walk-on receiver Gary Marcinick and has the support of several Ohio State legends, including Archie Griffin and Jack Nicklaus.

The new guidance is effective immediately, and for violations that occurred prior to May 9, the board is directing the enforcement staff to review the facts of individual cases for those that “clearly are contrary to the published interim policy, including the most severe violations of recruiting rules or payment for athletics performance.”

Board chair and University of Georgia president Jere Morehead said the board took a significant first step on Monday to address the “challenges and improper behaviors” that have existed in the NIL space since last year.

“While the NCAA may pursue the most outrageous violations that were clearly contrary to the interim policy adopted last summer, our focus is on the future,” he said. “The new guidance establishes a common set of expectations for the Division I institutions moving forward, and the board expects all Division I institutions to follow our recruiting rules and operate within these reasonable expectations.”

In the release, the board emphasized continued support for student-athletes benefiting from their name, image and likeness and added that NIL is rapidly evolving. Additionally, the board stated that the emphasis of the new guidance is for boosters in the recruiting process and is not meant to put the eligibility of student-athletes in question with the exception of “the most serious actions that clearly violate the previously published interim policy (and) would have eligibility implications.”

OHSAA Shoots Down High School NIL

The Ohio High School Athletic Association member schools voted overwhelmingly against a referendum that would have allowed high school athletes to profit off their name, image and likeness. The referendum – which needed just a simple majority of 409 votes from 817 member schools

– failed with 538 schools voting no and just 254 voting yes.

The proposed referendum would have mirrored NIL changes made at the collegiate level, allowing high school athletes to sign endorsement deals that they would have to disclose to their school. Athletes would not have been allowed to use the OHSAA or their school’s logo, and deals would not have been allowed with companies that do not “support the mission of education-based athletics,” including the industries of alcohol, casinos, drugs, gambling or tobacco.

With the referendum’s failure, Ohio high school athletes remain unable to sign endorsement deals without losing amateur status, though the OHSAA indicated in a statement that it will continue holding discussions about the proposal.

“Every year, the referendum voting process shows that our member schools have a voice in this democratic process,” OHSAA Executive Director Doug Ute said in a statement. “Our office was very pleased with the discussion and insights our schools expressed this spring as we met with them about each of the 14 proposals.

“If NIL is going to enter the Ohio inter-scholastic landscape, we want the schools to be the ones to make that determination. Whatever we do moving forward, it will include discussion on this issue with our school administrators, board of directors, staff and leaders of other state high school athletic associations.”

If passed, Ohio would have joined nine other states that have permitted high school NIL deals, including Alaska, California, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York and Utah.

Frye Recruiting Bigger Fish At OSU

One of the first things Frye realized when he joined the Buckeyes was the impact of the Block O on his attire. When you walk through the front door of a school, he said, it’s something that people notice.

Now, with several months on the recruiting trail for Ohio State and a pair of 2023 offensive line commitments under his belt in Montgomery and Siereveld, he’s noticed not just the pedigree of his new school, but the quality of recruits that he is pursuing.

“The crossover from where I came from to here, we weren’t recruiting a lot of the same guys, so just get on the road and get running,” he said on May 6. “Talk to the coaches, talk to the kids, try to get as many guys on campus as you can. I mean, recruiting is recruiting. It’s just going after bigger, better fish here. The adjustment for that was guys that you see on the Internet and watch their tape and you’re like, ‘Wow, it’d be really good to coach those guys.’ Now you get to go after those guys a little bit.”

Though Frye is involved with more four- and five-star prospects at Ohio State than he was at UCLA or Boston College – namely Okunlola and Alinen, among others – the recruiting process has not changed.

It begins and ends with explaining how a recruit would be developed at Ohio State, and the pitch writes itself for the Buckeyes, who have seen eight offensive linemen taken in the last five NFL drafts, with Nicholas Petit-Frere and Thayer Munford hearing their names called in the most recent draft.

“You’ve just got to tell these guys how

you’re going to develop them,” Frye said. “Tell them about this place. And you really don’t sell kids in recruiting – it’s information. You give it to them. So if you’re a high-caliber kid that wants to play at the top level, compete for national championships and conference championships, that’s what this place is. And then how can we get you there based off how we feed them, how we train and how we coach them.

“So you just kind of try to pepper him with all the different information that they can have, so that they feel good about it. And then along the way, you build a really good relationship with their likes or dislikes, buttons to push for the kid, what drives them, those types of things.”

Right now, Frye said the focus is on finishing the 2023 class, looking at guys in 2024 and beginning to evaluate the 2025 crop, as well as filling up spots for Ohio State’s upcoming June camps.

“You’re trying to go out and see kids again. The biggest thing, especially (with) linemen, is you can see a kid in the fall that maybe he was 240 and now you go back and see him in a spring and he’s 280, and that’s natural maturation,” he said. “All of a sudden that guy becomes a guy, he gets on the radar. You can never stop recruiting.”

Part of the process is ensuring that he’s seeing as many schools as he can and covering his area. He said earlier in May that he had spent the last couple of weeks hitting every high school in his area because that’s a focus for both himself and head coach Ryan Day.

“It never stops,” he said. “Recruiting’s

like brushing your teeth – you’ve got to get up in the morning and do it every day.”


Other Notes And Tidbits

- Zachary, La., four-star quarterback Eli Holstein (6-4, 222) committed to Alabama on May 24, taking another name off Ohio State’s big board for 2023. This also likely takes the Crimson Tide out of contention for New Orleans (La.) Isidore Newman five-star quarterback Arch Manning (6-4, 215), who is reportedly down to either Georgia or Texas.


- Ohio State issued an offer on May 11 to Loganville (Ga.) Grayson defensive end Tyler Atkinson (6-3, 190), who became the first member of the 2026 recruiting class to receive an offer from the Buckeyes. He holds additional offers from Akron, Auburn, Georgia, Georgia Tech, Ole Miss and Texas A&M, and camped with the Buckeyes on June 1.

- Ohio State will hold several recruiting camps in June, including one-day camps on June 1, 6-7, 14-15 and 21, as well as a youth camp on June 8-9, a high school 7-on-7 competition on June 16 and a middle school 7-on-7 competition on June 22. For more information, visit <https://www.ohiostatebuckeyes.com/camps>.

June will be a busy month for visits, top school lists and some potential commitments for Ohio State. This information is the most up-to-date at time of press, but for the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers.



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Buckeyes Complete Roster With PG Likekele

Chris Holtmann has a full roster once again, and barring any more transfers out of the program, Ohio State has its 2022-23 roster.

COURT REPORT Patrick Mayhorn

A week removed from the official departure of freshman guard Malaki Branham to the NBA, the Buckeyes landed a commitment from Oklahoma State graduate transfer guard Isaac Likekele on May 4, which – along with the additions of five freshmen plus Wright State transfer Tanner Holden and West Virginia transfer Sean McNeil as well as the returns of Eugene Brown III, Kalen Etzler, Zed Key, Justice Sueing and Seth Towns – gives Ohio State a 13-man roster.

A former three-star in the class of 2018, Likekele is a graduate transfer and will have one season of eligibility for the Buckeyes.

He started in 110 of his 114 games at Oklahoma State over four seasons, leading the Cowboys through a time of tumult as the NCAA investigated rules violations and serving as the only member of his class to

spend a full four seasons in Stillwater. He averaged 8.9 points, 5.5 rebounds and 3.9 assists per game for his career, seeing a slight decline in 2021-22 with 7.1 points, 5.5 rebounds, 3.4 assists and 1.2 steals per game in 30 contests.

At 6-5 and 215 pounds, Likekele helps the Buckeyes fill a pair of gaps. He has plenty of experience as a point guard and will likely assume the starting role in the wake of the departures of Branham, Meechie Johnson Jr., Jimmy Sotos and Jamarri Wheeler, but he has the frame to handle interior defending assignments too and did so frequently in Stillwater.

He was twice named a Big 12 honorable mention, recognized largely for his ability as a defender. He recorded a 3.0 defensive box plus-minus in 2021, according to Barttorvik.com, which would have been the best among Ohio State's contributors by 0.5, beating out E.J. Liddell's 2.5. Ohio State's last player with a DBPM that strong was C.J. Walker, who had a 3.4 in 2020-21.

What he won't likely bring to Columbus, however, is shooting.

He's a 46.0 percent shooter from the field for his career but shot just 43.7 percent in 2021-22. He never attempted more than 0.8 three-pointers per game in a season and is a career 27.9 percent deep range shooter.

It's likely those duties among the guards will fall to freshmen Roddy Gayle and Bruce Thornton and the transfer duo

of Holden and McNeil. With Justin Ahrens departing for Loyola Marymount, McNeil is the best three-point shooter on Ohio State's roster by a large margin, hitting 36.8 percent of his tries from deep last season.

Holtmann Given Contract Extension

Ohio State announced on May 18 that Holtmann had received a three-year contract extension through the 2027-28 season. He was previously under contract through the 2024-25 season on a deal that paid him \$3 million a year since 2017. This new deal included a \$500,000 increase in yearly compensation, which brings his annual total to \$3.5 million per year.

Ohio State is 107-56 with four (five were it not for the COVID-19 canceled 2020 postseason) NCAA Tournament appearances in five seasons under Holtmann. The Buckeyes struggled down the stretch in 2021-22 with four losses in their final five games before NCAA play, but they knocked off Loyola Chicago in the opening round and played No. 2-seeded Villanova close into the final minutes of the game before falling 71-61.

In a February media availability, Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said he was pleased with Holtmann's performance as head coach of the men's basketball program, stating that Ohio State's expectation is championship competition and that he feels Holtmann is on that path.

"I'm really happy with where we are," Smith said. "We strive for championships, there's no question about that, and we need to get there, and we will. But you look at his recruiting and it's off the chain. I just love the teaching he does. I feel really good about what he's doing, feel really good about his recruiting."

That recruiting took a serious upturn for the class of 2022. Holtmann has the No. 6 recruiting class in the nation arriving this fall, his best collection of talent since taking over as head coach. With so many new faces, the Buckeyes will likely be leaning heavily on that bunch this season.

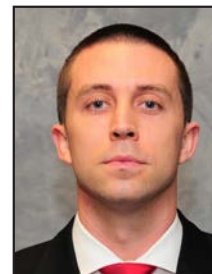
Several Assistants Earn Promotions

Holtmann has filled out the rest of his staff, as the program announced May 5 that special assistant to the head coach Mike Netti has been promoted to assistant coach and assistant coach Jake Diebler has been promoted to associate head coach.

Diebler has been on staff for the last three seasons and also spent three years

as video coordinator for the Buckeyes in a previous stint (2014-16).

"Jake has a very bright future in this profession, and I'm excited about his well-earned promotion," Holtmann said. "He has done excellent work for us since coming here from Vanderbilt three years ago. He has a strong work ethic, great player relationships, reinforces our culture and he has recruited exceptionally well."



Jake Diebler

Diebler said he is blessed to serve on Holtmann's staff as he enters his 14th season of coaching.

"This is a great opportunity for me to continue to learn from and grow alongside one of the very best in college basketball," he said. "My family and I love Ohio State, the city of Columbus, and are looking forward to working with this year's team. Exciting things are ahead for the Buckeyes, and I can't wait to get started with Team 124 this summer."

Netti is entering his sixth season at Ohio State and had previously worked under Holtmann at Gardner-Webb, where he was an assistant from 2011-13. They also worked together as assistant coaches from 2003-06 under Rick Scruggs at Gardner-Webb.

"Mike has earned this promotion with his outstanding work here for the past five seasons as the assistant to the head coach," Holtmann said. "Mike is a coaching veteran who has been a junior college head coach, a high-major assistant as well as working in nearly every aspect of a college basketball staff. Mike has great contacts across the country and is terrific at skill and player development. We are excited about this new role for him."

Netti said he and Holtmann have worked together for close to 20 years to build programs and invest in players.

"He has made me a better coach, and I've benefited from his leadership," Netti said. "I was fortunate to have worked with outstanding coaches and staff in my time here, and they have been so instrumental in this process as well. I'm excited and motivated to continue building on this rich tradition, and I'm thrilled for the future we have in Columbus."

Additionally, former video coordinator Kyle Davis will serve as director of recruiting and program assistant Robbie Rucki will take over video coordinating duties.

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Holtmann had two slots to fill this off-season following the departure of assistants Ryan Pedon to Illinois State and Tony Skinn to Maryland. Diebler took over Pedon's responsibilities in addition to being named associate head coach, and Holtmann hired former Miami (Ohio) head coach Jack Owens to fill one of the assistant slots earlier this offseason.

Buckeyes Will Play UNC In December

Ohio State will once again take part in the CBS Sports Classic at Madison Square Garden, taking on North Carolina on Dec. 17.

The other half of the doubleheader will include Kentucky facing UCLA. The showcase, with the same participants, was scheduled for last year with Ohio State set to face Kentucky and North Carolina playing UCLA, but Ohio State and UCLA dropped out due to COVID-19 issues and Kentucky ultimately defeated North Carolina.

North Carolina fell in last season's national championship to Kansas, 72-69, blowing a 16-point lead to the Jayhawks. The Buckeyes and Tar Heels last faced off in 2019, when Ohio State blew out North Carolina by a 74-49 margin at the Dean Smith Center. It broke a seven-game winning streak for the Tar Heels, who hadn't lost to the Buckeyes since March 27, 1992. The Tar Heels have an all-time 11-2 series lead against Ohio State.

Much of Ohio State's nonconference schedule remains unknown, but the Buckeyes will take part in the Maui Invitational on Nov. 21-23 and the annual ACC-Big Ten Challenge.

Young Retires From Basketball

Former Ohio State men's basketball forward Kyle Young announced May 13 that he will be retiring from the sport.

In a video posted on Twitter, Young said the game will hold a special place in his heart and that he will be forever grateful for the opportunities it provided for him.

"It's a bittersweet feeling knowing that I won't be playing basketball anymore, but I can find some peace in knowing that I was able to leave everything I had out there and give everything 110 percent to Ohio State and all of Buckeye Nation," he said.

Young's retirement from the game comes after five seasons played with the Buckeyes under Holtmann. He appeared in 135 games, averaging 6.5 points and 4.5 rebounds per game on 55.9 percent shooting.

He had three career double-doubles and posted a career high of 18 points four times, including in a conference tournament win over Purdue in 2021.

Often the heart of recent Ohio State teams, Young was known for his fire, especially on the defensive end. His presence was sorely missed when he was out of the game, which unfortunately happened too often due to several injuries sustained during his playing career.

He suffered several concussions – including three in the last two seasons – an ankle injury, a stress fracture in his right leg and even vestibular dysfunction, which causes dizziness and vertigo, along with

the general wear and tear brought about by college basketball.

A former four-star prospect out of Massillon (Ohio) Jackson, Young had been committed to Butler for close to a year but followed Holtmann when he jumped to Ohio State.

Though he could have pursued professional options – several of Young's former teammates are in the professional ranks, including Jae'Sean Tate and Duane Washington Jr. in the NBA and Walker and Kaleb Wesson, who are currently playing overseas – he is content calling it a career on the court. A three-time Academic All-Big Ten honoree, Young received a bachelor's degree in sports industry from Ohio State in 2020 and was one of 194 student-athletes to walk at graduation May 8, earning his master's in kinesiology.



Kyle Young

Ahrens Headed To Loyola Marymount

Former Ohio State winger Ahrens will play his final season of college basketball on the West Coast, announcing May 13 that he'll be heading to Los Angeles to suit up for Loyola Marymount.

Ahrens was recognized at Ohio State's senior day in March after four seasons in Columbus, signing on originally as one of Holtmann's first OSU recruits back in the class of 2018 when he was a three-star prospect out of Versailles, Ohio. He contributed in every one of his seasons as a Buckeye, playing in 114 games and starting in 41 for his career.

He never quite developed into the long-range scorer Ohio State had hoped he would be out of high school, averaging only 1.2 made three-pointers per game on 39.2 percent shooting from deep for his career. But he served as an important veteran voice in the back half of his career and was lauded by Holtmann for his effort and energy in practice.

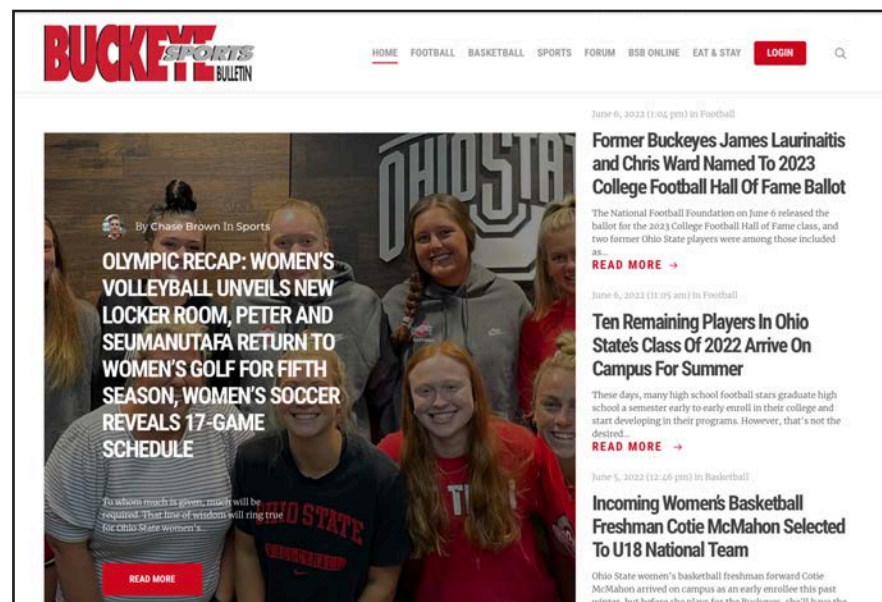


Justin Ahrens

His 2021-22 season was marred by streakiness. He started the season very well, knocking down 25 of 58 three-pointers (43.1 percent) while averaging 8.7 points and 3.1 rebounds per game in November and December, but Ohio State's lengthy COVID pause at the end of 2021 seemed to damage his shooting stroke. He shot just 8 of 38 from deep in January (21.1 percent) and 20 of 69 (28.9 percent) overall after the calendar turned to the new year while averaging 3.1 points and 2.0 rebounds per contest.

With the Lions, he'll hope for a bit of a fresh start on a team in need of an offensive spark. In head coach Stan Johnson's second season at the helm in 2021-22, Loyola Marymount went 11-18 and averaged 69.3 points per game, good for 225th nationally. They were 224th in three-point attempts per game with 21.0.

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Branham Provided Plenty Of Memories For Fans

By PATRICK MAYHORN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State guard Malaki Branham, who starred for the Buckeyes in 2021-22 as a true freshman, has signed with an agent and will remain in the 2022 NBA draft as expected. The former four-star prospect told ESPN when he entered the draft originally on April 1 that he planned to stay in the process if he received a first-round grade, and Branham's stock has only risen, with some experts dubbing him a potential lottery pick.

Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann has encouraged his star freshman throughout the process, telling him to enter the draft to receive that feedback, as all college basketball underclassmen are now allowed to do without shedding their eligibility so long as they return by June 1. Ultimately, the decision for Branham wasn't terribly complicated.

"After the season, I talked to Coach Holtmann and my family about it, and testing the waters was the best thing for me, getting feedback on what I need to do to be an NBA player. With that being said, I'm going to be hiring an agent and officially putting my name into the NBA draft.

"I didn't know what to expect this season, coming in as a freshman. I didn't know how many minutes I was going to play. I just wanted to put in work. As we started playing games, my confidence grew, and by the end of the season, I knew that being a one-and-done player was a possibility. I want to give special thanks to Coach Holtmann for trusting me and believing in me.

"To all the coaching staff, we spent countless hours in the gym and the weight room, and I want to give a special thanks to them for pushing me. A special thanks to my teammates for pushing me every day, me coming in as a freshman around four- and five-year guys, having the leadership like that helped me throughout the season. And of course my family, for sacrificing everything they did for me. I can't thank them enough."

Branham averaged 13.7 points, 3.6 rebounds and 2.0 assists per game as a freshman for the Buckeyes, earning Big Ten Freshman of the Year honors.

"The feedback has been increasingly positive by the weeks," Holtmann said. "Having all of that information at hand for Malaki and for our coaching staff to help guide him was super helpful in making this decision. I know he felt like this was the best decision. I'm really excited for what he is now, and we're excited for what he can be as an NBA player. It's been a remarkable journey here in the last year. I don't think anyone anticipated that it would come this quick, but it's a great day for him, his family and for our program."

Since Branham announced his intention to enter the draft, Ohio State has returned Justice Sueing and Seth Towns and added Tanner Holden, Isaac Likekele and Sean McNeil in the transfer portal. The transfers of Justin Ahrens and Meechie Johnson Jr., as well as the departures of six seniors and forward E.J. Liddell, puts Ohio State at the scholarship limit.

For the Buckeyes, the reality that Branham could be a one-and-done prospect began to set in around late February and was cemented on Feb. 21 when the Akron product exploded for 27 points against Indiana, carrying Ohio State to overtime and ultimately to a victory. After ear-

ly-season struggles that the Buckeyes encouraged him to work through, Branham paid back that trust in full.

"There were a number of different moments," Holtmann said. "Keep in mind now, and Malaki remembers this, he didn't score against Wisconsin the first time we played them. That was a really frustrating moment for him. He texted me after the game, he sent me a really long text at probably 7 a.m., after his workout and said, 'I just want to thank you because you promised in recruiting me that you'd allow me to play through mistakes. I made a lot of them last night, and I just want to thank you for letting me play through them.'

"We felt like ultimately that could pay dividends, but after the Indiana game I texted a few close friends and my boss, Gene Smith, and said that we needed to plan on Malaki not being here next year."

Although the departure is bittersweet and leaves Ohio State without an established star for the 2022-23 season, there's significant bright side for the Scarlet and Gray: Branham will be Holtmann's first career first-round pick, and if Liddell's stock breaks the right way, the Buckeyes will have two in the same year.

"This is obviously a big day for Malaki and his family," Holtmann said after Branham announced his intentions. "It will be an even bigger day on June 23. It's a great day for him, his family, it's a great day for our program. It will be a great day for Ohio State when he hears his name called.

"Malaki knows this, his great trainer (Jason Dawson) knows it, his family knows it: He was not on any draft boards coming into the season. But what I think people saw is how good he really is. I always felt like he was undervalued as a player, to be honest with you. I think he's an elite player. And what people have seen is his age combined with his length and his really special touch. When you combine his physical tools with who he is as a person and as a player, I think you have a really, really special NBA player. I'm 100 percent convinced of that. He's just scratching the surface on the kind of player he's going to be."

Branham leaves Columbus having provided plenty of moments to remember, but these five stood above the rest.

No. 5: Spartan Spectacle

Only days removed from a pair of brutal losses, first to Maryland on the road and then at home at the hands of Big Ten bottom-feeder Nebraska, Ohio State was set to host Michigan State in its penultimate game of the regular season on March 3 and was in need of some positive momentum.

With both Zed Key and Kyle Young unavailable, the Buckeyes entered the game short-handed against a Spartan squad that, despite late-season struggles of their own, had beaten fourth-ranked Purdue just a week prior.

Although it was reserve center Joey Brunk who ruled the evening, scoring a season-high 18 points as the Buckeyes rolled over Michigan State 80-69, Branham looked like the best player in the game in his 36 minutes on the court.

He pitched in 22 points – 15 of which came in the second half to keep the Buckeyes in control – on 9-of-16 shooting and added four assists, four rebounds and two steals for a complete performance, outplaying fellow Big Ten all-freshman pick Max Christie in the process.

For the exclamation point, Branham all but put the game out of reach with just over four minutes to play. With his Buckeyes ahead 72-60, Branham took the ball just inside the half-court line and stared down Christie, dribbled to his left and took the Spartan guard to the hoop, finishing his drive with a vicious left-handed dunk over both Christie and forward Marcus Bingham Jr.

"I'm running out of things to say about him," Holtmann said of Branham. "He's really good. He struggled the last two games honestly with their physicality. He forced things a little bit, but that's what happens sometimes when you're a young player.

"I told him he doesn't need to get 22 every night. Sometimes, he will get 12 of 13. But if he is defending at a high level and rebounding, that's good. He's just got to continue to grow as a player."

No. 4: Supernova Vs. Nova

Ohio State's second-round matchup with Villanova didn't end the way the Buckeyes would have liked, with the Wildcats ultimately claiming the matchup 71-61. But in what is now known to be Branham's curtain call, the freshman delivered a gem.

Facing one of the nation's best veteran guards in Collin Gillespie, Branham kept OSU in the fight for all 40 minutes and nearly spearheaded a second-half comeback effort. Another injury to Young ended that push with only minutes to play, but Branham's star shone as bright as ever despite the loss.

He held Gillespie to 5-of-14 shooting while knocking down 10 of his 19 tries for a game-high 23 points with a team-best four assists. When the Buckeyes fell behind by 15 points with 16:12 to play, Branham responded with a pair of jumpers – the first four points of the 11 he'd chip in in the next eight minutes, leading the charge as OSU cut the deficit down to as few as two points.

After the game, when asked about his young guard, Holtmann alluded to what was then considered the strong likelihood of an impending departure.

"I think he will have a decision to make, too," Holtmann said. "I'll sit down with him and his family, and we will talk about it. I'm sure he will want to go through the process."

No. 3: Shuckers Shocked

If there's one game to single out as the flipping of the switch for Branham, it would be Ohio State's 87-79 overtime victory over Nebraska in Lincoln on Jan. 2. He had averaged just 6.3 points per game in his first nine appearances as a Buckeye before Ohio State's lengthy December COVID pause, and the Cornhuskers served as the first opponent out of that break.

With many of his teammates struggling to find their footing out of the time away – chief among them Liddell, who shot 2 of 14 – Branham timed his breakthrough perfectly. He torched the Huskers from deep, knocking down six three-pointers and 13 of his 19 shots from the field on the way to a season-high 35-point outing along with six rebounds.

Playing 42 of the game's 45 minutes, Branham set a new high-water mark for a Buckeye freshman's scoring in a league game and nearly matched Jared Sullinger's 40-point effort during his freshman season back in 2010 (the school record for a first-year player).

"That is a phenomenal effort by Malaki," Holtmann said. "We thought there would be opportunities for other guys because of how they were going to collapse on Zed (Key) and E.J. (Liddell). That created some opportunities for Malaki, and he took full advantage of it."

That outburst included, Branham averaged 17.0 points per game in his final 22 appearances in scarlet and gray.

No. 2: Guess Who, Hoosiers

Holtmann singled out Branham's performance against Indiana on Feb. 21 as the moment he knew that the freshman was not long for Columbus, and for good reason. In the 80-69 overtime victory, Branham led all scorers with 27 points, but it was his ability as a distributor that ultimately saved the game for the Buckeyes.

Trailing by two points with the shot clock turned off and 25 seconds on the game clock in regulation, Branham took the ball atop the key and led OSU into its offensive set. He drew the attention of the defense and fired off a pass to Liddell, who was wide-open for a game-tying dunk with just five seconds to play.

"Our playmakers have to make the right read, and 22 was a fantastic playmaker tonight for himself and for others," Holtmann said of Branham. "I give Malaki a lot of credit. (That last play) was really simple. I thought we executed exceptionally well in those last two minutes."

Those late-game heroics carried the Buckeyes into an overtime period they would dominate, snapping out of a brutal dry spell that had ailed them for much of the second half and exploding for 17 points in five minutes to claim the victory. Branham finished 9 of 13 from the floor and a perfect 8 of 8 from the line.

No. 1: Spraying In Champaign

Ohio State's home victory over then-No. 1 Duke early in the season was likely the most impressive win for the Buckeyes in the 2021-22 season, but its road upset of 15th-ranked Illinois on Feb. 25 was a close second, and no one played a larger role in the win than Branham.

His Buckeyes trailed by as many as 13 points in the opening half, but they were able to close the deficit to just one point by the half with a late run that carried over to the second half and culminated in a 16-point lead with 12:18 to play.

That edge didn't hold, but Branham found 21 points in the second frame and contributed 31 for the evening, which proved just enough to hold off a late push from the Fighting Illini as Ohio State claimed a memorable 86-83 win in hostile territory.

Branham's performance even caught the eye of Illini head man Brad Underwood, who was kicked out of the game late in the second half but still saw the Buckeye frosh sink his team from the locker room. Branham finished the day 10 of 14 with a pair of rebounds, an assist, a steal and a block to go with his game-high scoring outburst.

"It was a challenging matchup," Underwood said. "In my opinion, they've got the best player in our league, and his name is not (E.J.) Liddell. That's no offense because he is terrific. Malaki Branham is terrific. Big, strong, physical. They got in a nice routine where they were ball screening and popping."

Ohio State Picks Up Pair Of Transfer Forwards

Ohio State's guard-heavy women's basketball roster has gained some talent at the forward spot, as former American University forward Karla Vreš and former Syracuse forward Eboni Walker announced their transfers to the Buckeyes in recent weeks.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

Vreš – a native of Zagreb, Croatia – announced her transfer to Ohio State in an Instagram post on May 10. She was a three-time silver medalist and three-time gold medalist while playing in her home country. She moved to Sweden at 15 years old and has played for Swedish First League, Visby Basket, Brahe Basket, AIK Basket and Alvik Basket, according to her American University bio.

After three seasons with American – a member of the Patriot League, which includes teams such as Army, Boston, Bucknell and Navy – she announced her entry into the transfer portal in March.

The 6-3 forward appeared sparingly in her first season, playing in 24 games and averaging just 7.6 minutes, according to Her Hoop Stats. She took a jump in her sophomore season, starting seven games in American's pandemic-shortened schedule and playing 18.8 minutes per game. She averaged 8.6 points, 2.4 rebounds and 1.4 blocks in those contests.

Vreš saw her playing time dwindle this past season, averaging just 11.4 minutes per game and starting in just two contests. The highlight of her season came in one of those starts, where she played nearly 30 minutes and scored 13 points on 5-of-12 shooting while pulling down four rebounds in an overtime loss at Army.

American won the Patriot League this past season and made an appearance in the NCAA tournament for the third time in program history. The No. 14-seeded Eagles fell to No. 3-seeded Michigan in the first round.

Vreš' arrival is a pivotal one for an Ohio State roster looking for some additional height. The Buckeyes – who return guards Taylor Mikesell, Jacy Sheldon and Madison Greene – will mostly focus on the production of their back-court, but they struggled at times last season with a lack of presence around the basket. Vreš immediately becomes the second-tallest player on the roster behind rising senior forward Rebeka Mikulášiková, who stands 6-4.

Ohio State's talented guard group will likely call for Vreš to play near the basket. If called upon, she has also shown an impressive shooting ability from midrange and three-point land. In her sophomore season, she led the Eagles in shooting from the field (60.3 percent) and beyond the arc (61.9 percent on 13-of-21 shooting).

Vreš shooting declined last year to 37.0 percent from the field, and she missed on all five of her three-point attempts. Still, there is hope from Ohio State that she can provide depth at forward behind Mikulášiková while returning to her sophomore form and becoming an additional shooting threat for the Buck-

eyes.

Listed as a junior on last season's American roster, Vreš likely has two seasons of eligibility remaining for the Buckeyes.

Walker, meanwhile, announced her transfer to Ohio State on June 2. A former five-star prospect out of Centennial High School in Las Vegas in the 2019 recruiting class, the 6-0 forward committed to Arizona State out of high school before transferring to Syracuse following two seasons with the Sun Devils.

She appeared in just six games last season for the Orange, averaging 4.2 points and 3.2 rebounds per game before suffering a season-ending injury, and she entered her name into the portal in May. She had a season-high 12 points on 5-of-9 shooting in a loss to Buffalo on Nov. 22.

During her two seasons at Arizona State, she appeared in 53 games, averaging 6.9 points and 5.0 rebounds per contest on 47.2 percent shooting. In her freshman season, she led the Sun Devils from the field, shooting 51.9 percent.

Listed as a junior on Syracuse's roster, Walker would have two seasons of eligibility remaining. Much of what was said about Vreš is true for Walker in that she provides additional depth at the forward spot for Ohio State, but based on her time with the Sun Devils – and partly with the Orange, at least before her injury – she could figure to be more of a scoring threat with the Buckeyes.

Walker is the second transfer into Ohio State's program this offseason, joining Vreš. Along with the three incoming freshmen – guard Kaia Henderson and forward Cotie McMahon enrolled early, and guard Mya Perry will arrive this summer – Walker's transfer results in 14 scholarships accounted for heading into next season, one shy of the NCAA's limit.

McGuff Receives New Contract

Ohio State head football coach Ryan Day and men's basketball coach Chris Holtmann weren't the only coaches to cash in on May 18.

The university also approved a new contract for women's basketball head coach Kevin McGuff, who earned a four-year contract with a base salary of \$675,000, up from \$590,860.08, and an annual compensation rate of \$1,050,000. His new contract begins on July 1 and will run through the 2025-26 season, which would be his 13th at Ohio State.

His extension follows a Big Ten regular-season title for the women's basketball team that finished the season with a 25-7 record and made an appearance in the Sweet 16 for the first time since the 2016-17 season. Though Ohio State's recently vacated games muddle his career statistics with the Buckeyes, McGuff's record after this past season was 193-91 (.680), and he has led Ohio State to three regular-season conference titles and a conference tournament win in 2018, in addition to five NCAA tournament appearances.

Assuming no other contracts are updated, the women's basketball coaching staff accounts for \$1,365,262.68 in base salary, with his three assistants – Carla Morrow, Wes Brooks and Jalen Powell – making \$175,065, \$175,000 and \$145,000, respectively.

Hutcherson, Poole Find Transfer Destinations

Ohio State had three players transfer following the season's conclusion, and all three have now found their new homes.

Hutcherson entered the transfer portal on April 12 and announced on April 26 that she would be transferring to Pittsburgh, where she will have three years of eligibility remaining.

"I'm extremely excited to add Gabby to our team," Pittsburgh head coach Lance White said. "She has a tireless work ethic and loves to compete. Gabby is a natural leader and will have an immediate impact on our team."

"Gabby's length and versatility on both ends of the floor will really complement the players we already have in place. She's a winner, and I am so excited she chose to be a Panther."

Poole announced her transfer from Ohio State on March 28 and spent some time in the portal before electing to transfer to LSU on May 2.

"I believe in Coach (Kim) Mulkey, and what we want together as a program," Poole said.

"With her passion and love for the game, I can only work harder."

Poole already had the opportunity to play on the Tigers' home court when No. 6-seeded Ohio State took down No. 3 LSU in the NCAA tournament this past March. Poole scored a point and pulled down four rebounds in 10 minutes of action against the Tigers in the 79-64 Buckeye victory.

"I'm excited to welcome Kateri to the LSU family," Mulkey said. "She is a tough, physical guard that brings energy and excitement every time she steps on the court. Having played in the (Pete Maravich Assembly Center) during March Madness for Ohio State, I know Kateri is looking forward to returning and playing in front of our amazing fans."

Jones had previously announced her transfer to Dayton, joining former Ohio State assistant coach Tamika Williams-Jeter, who was announced as the Flyers' head coach in March.

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Warren Keeping Open Mind Toward Media Deals

Big Ten commissioner Kevin Warren is keeping an open mind about the conference's media rights agreement, a deal that is expected to be groundbreaking in its monetary value.

BIG TEN NOTES Chase Brown

Warren spoke with reporters before the second day of the Big Ten's joint-group meetings on May 24 and declined to commit to a timeline for the new television deal. Warren also did not rule out the possibility of the conference broadcasting its games exclusively on streaming platforms as part of the future package.

"I think for where we sit, it's important for the Big Ten to stay on the cutting edge from a media landscape standpoint," he said. "We have so many passionate alumni who live all across the country, who literally live all across the world. That's what makes this interesting now – and that's why it's been important for us – we have met with every major player in the media landscape business."

Warren said there are still contractual issues to be sorted out, but he hopes to have all the details in print soon, putting the

conference in place to make the appropriate announcement.

The Big Ten's current deal with ESPN and FOX runs through 2022-23. Former commissioner Jim Delany signed the television deals with those companies six years ago, expecting that the market would peak around this time.

Early reports indicated the conference could net nearly double the current annual distribution of \$54 million per school. However, Iowa athletic director Gary Barta said that figure might be wishful thinking.

"There's talk of that doubling. I wish that were true," Barta said. "There's nowhere even near that possibility, but there could be some potential upside, though there's nothing near that kind of money."

"I wish that (media rights revenue doubling) were true, but it won't even be a sniff of that. It will be maybe a few million more for each school, which would be great, but it won't double."

According to reports, the Big Ten had FOX help consult on its behalf during the current round of media rights negotiations. Still, several different networks will vie for the conference's television ownership.

"We have FOX and a great relationship with ESPN, ABC, CBS (for basketball) – that's our current group," Barta said. "What I'm excited about as I watch and hear updates from our commissioner is you've got NBC interested. You've got maybe Amazon

or some sort of streaming service interested and there's TNT. As good as it has been, it looks like the interest is still there to make it even better. We'll see, but I feel really good about it."

The Big Ten is the first of the three Power Five conferences with looming media rights deals that are set to expire. The Pac-12's current agreements with ESPN and FOX run through 2023-24, and the Big 12's agreement with the same two networks expires after the 2024-25 academic year.

"I think the biggest thing is for us is to continually be really thoughtful as we finalize our deals and come up with our thought process," Warren said. "The media landscape has changed, and you think of the interplay between linear television and streaming. We just have to really think through what fits what the Big Ten stands for, what's in the best interest of our fans, what's in the best interests of our student-athletes, and what's in the best interest of our member institutions."

"So on all of these complex deals that you're working on, as you start kind of really honing in, this is the time to be thoughtful, to ask a lot of questions, to determine what makes the most sense, and really to take the time that you need."

The Big Ten's council of presidents and chancellors was scheduled to meet at the league's headquarters on June 5. That group would have to approve any deal that is proposed between the conference and a televi-

sion partner.

"I want to make sure we take the appropriate time to get this wrapped up, but we're making really good progress – that's the good thing about it," Warren said. "It's a great time to be in this space. And there are so many really talented people in this area. But we have a good team. We have a great conference, and so I just really look forward to making sure that these are done in a very thoughtful manner and keep our fans and our student-athletes at the center of our decisions."

Former MSU Star Payne Killed

Former NBA and Michigan State forward Adreian Payne was shot and killed in Orlando on May 10, according to the Orange County Sheriff's Office. He was 31 years old.

Deputies responded to a phone call at 1:37 a.m. on May 10 and found Payne had been shot. He was transported to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead. Authorities say the suspected shooter, 29-year-old Lawrence Dority, remained at the scene and was interviewed by the department's homicide detectives.

Dority was later arrested on a warrant for first-degree murder and sent to Orange County Jail. The police did not release a motive for his actions or give any other details relating to Dority's detainment.

Payne was a standout basketball player

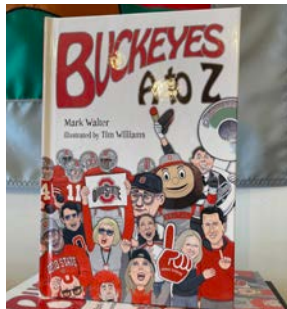
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at Michigan State under head coach Tom Izzo. He left the university in 2014 as the Spartans' all-time leader in blocked shots with 141. He also scored 1,232 career points and added 735 career rebounds at the collegiate level.

The Los Angeles Athletic Club awarded Payne its first-ever Outreach Award in 2014 for the bond he formed with then 8-year-old Lacey Holsworth, who had become sick with neuroblastoma – cancer that develops from immature nerve cells found in several areas of the body – and died in 2014.

Izzo said that he was shocked to learn of Payne's death and mourned for his former player.

"Adreian was loved by his teammates and coaches, who respected his development as a player and a person," Izzo said. "He came to Michigan State with a ton of raw talent and put in the work to reach his goal of becoming an NBA player.

"Beyond that, he will long be remembered by Spartan fans for his kind heart, as his friendship and genuine bond with Lacey Holsworth touched the nation."

The Atlanta Hawks selected Payne with the No. 15 overall pick in the 2014 NBA draft, and he also played for the Minnesota Timberwolves and the Orlando Magic. Payne also played basketball abroad in China, France, Greece, Lithuania and Turkey.

Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green paid homage to Payne – his former college teammate – during his play-off game on May 10 by wearing the message "Long Live 5" on his sneakers, referring to Payne's number at Michigan State. Green and his wife, Hazel, also donated \$100,000 to a fund in Payne's name.

Legendary Rutgers Coach Stringer Retires

Rutgers women's basketball coach C. Vivian Stringer announced the end of her storied career on April 30, revealing that she would retire from coaching basketball after a 50-year career with Cheyney State, Iowa and Rutgers. She had been the Scarlet Knights' program leader since 1995.

Stringer had amassed 1,055 wins, four Final Four appearances and 28 NCAA tournament berths in her decorated career. Her retirement will become effective on Sept. 1, and she will be given a one-time payment of \$872,988 as part of her retirement package.

In honor of her quarter-century of service to Rutgers women's basketball, all games at the Jersey Mike's Arena will be played on the C. Vivian Stringer Court. A formal dedication will take place during the upcoming women's basketball season.

"My life has been defined by coaching, and I've been on this journey for over five decades," Stringer said. "It is rare that someone gets to do what they love for this long, and I have been fortunate to do that. I love Rutgers University for the incredible opportunity they offered me and the tremendous victories we achieved together.

"After recently celebrating the first women's Final Four team at Cheyney State University, where it all started, it sat with me that I have been at this for a long time. It is important to step aside and challenge others to step up and take this game forward."

Stringer said that she is forever indebted to the coaches and players she worked with during her 50 years of coaching.

"This was the hardest decision of my life, but I thank God he has allowed me to do the thing I love most," Stringer said. "I am ready to start my new journey and spend more time with my family, children, and grandchildren. I am truly blessed to have had so many wonderful people in my life."

Stringer's replacement was picked just weeks later, as the Scarlet Knights announced on May 23 that Coquese Washington would become the third full-time head coach in Scarlet Knights women's basketball history. She arrives in Piscataway, N.J., with 22 years of coaching experience. A three-time Big Ten Coach of the Year during her 12-year tenure at Penn State, Washington most recently served as the associate head coach at Notre Dame for two seasons.

"We are excited to welcome Coquese and her family to Rutgers," athletic director Pat Hobbs said. "It was important that the next leader of our women's basketball program be someone with a proven track record of winning, exemplary leadership and great character. Coquese is the perfect fit for all those criteria. She is someone who is hardworking, passionate and dedicated to building a championship program, and that commitment extends equally to the success our student-athletes will have off the court."

Washington said she is honored to follow in Stringer's footsteps and hopes to build upon the foundation the former head coach created while at Rutgers. A student of the game, Washington played collegiately at Notre Dame and spent six seasons in the WNBA, becoming a WNBA champion with the Houston Comets in 2000. She was also a key contributor in helping create the WNBA Players Association as the founding president, and she served as the executive vice president until her retirement in 2003.

"I am beyond thrilled with the opportunity to be here at Rutgers, a university that excels both academically and athletically," Washington said. "Following in the footsteps of Hall of Fame coaches Theresa Grentz and C. Vivian Stringer is a tremendous honor. They exemplify achieving high levels of excellence with grace, class, integrity and dignity."

Maryland Lax Wins NCAA Title

Maryland men's lacrosse had not lost a game since Memorial Day 2021. That team lost to Virginia, 17-16, in the national championship game, and the returning players vowed they wouldn't let another season be spoiled in their final game.

On Memorial Day 2022, the top-seeded Terrapins completed an undefeated season when they beat No. 7-seeded Cornell, 9-7, to secure the program's fourth NCAA title a year after their perfect record was ended in the championship game on the same Rent-schler Field in Hartford, Conn.

"I've never felt like this before," senior defenseman Brett Maker said after the game. "This kind of feeling is really indescribable. I'm getting teared up just thinking about how much it took to get back there."

Maryland goalie Logan McNaney made 17 saves to cap a brilliant postseason and

was named the NCAA tournament's most outstanding player. Anthony DeMaio – the only member of the 2017 championship team still on the roster – had four goals and an assist.

The Terps (18-0) claimed their second championship in seven title-game appearances under head coach John Tilman and became the first undefeated champion since Virginia accomplished that feat in 2006. Maryland's 18 wins are the most for an undefeated team in NCAA history.

Attacker Logan Wisnauskas secured Maryland's single-season points record with two goals and two assists against Cornell. He finished the year with 103 points, passing former Terrapin attacker Jared Bernhardt's mark of 99 set last year.

Cornell attacker CJ Kirst scored twice for the Big Red (14-5), which became the first team to keep Maryland from scoring fewer than 10 goals since Johns Hopkins in the 2019 Big Ten tournament. The two-goal margin of victory also matched the Terps' smallest of the season.

"It was by far the hardest game we had all year," Tillman said.

Cornell head coach Conner Buczek was complimentary of Maryland, claiming his players put themselves in the best position to win the game and did all they could to stop the Terrapins.

"They do a lot of things great on tape, but we thought we had the ability to beat that team," Buczek said. "With that being said, they were awesome. They managed our offense really well. I thought our defense played as well as they possibly could."

Maryland plowed through most of its season without any challenges, causing many to ask if this year's team is the best in program history. The Terps won championships in 1973, 1975 and 2017, making the 2022 team the latest in a long line of historic coaching staffs and players.

"Whether people want to say we're the best team ever, we're the national champions," DeMaio said. "And that's all that matters."

NU Softball Cruises To College World Series

With a sold-out crowd behind them, the Northwestern softball team cruised to an NCAA Regional championship title with its 10-2 win over McNeese in Evanston, Ill.

The No. 9-seeded Wildcats made quick work of their opponent, but they made sure to make time slow down when they celebrated their eight-run victory, which sent them to Tempe, Ariz., to face No. 8-seeded Arizona State in the NCAA Super Regional.

"It's awesome – and I'm feeling a little emotional about it – because our team deserves it," Northwestern head coach Kate Drohan said of the win. "Our team works really hard and they're fun to watch, and I'm so, so excited about the way our community has supported this group of women."

According to Northwestern's athletic department website, Sharon J. Drysdale Field has a capacity of 1,000 spectators. However, the Wildcats packed 1,120 fans into the facility with standing-room-only attendance.

"It was awesome to have that kind of support behind us," graduate infielder Rachel

Lewis said. "It just makes the big moments feel even bigger. It's a really cool feeling. You get the chills. It's awesome to have that kind of support at 'The J.'"

The Wildcats took an early 1-0 advantage in the first inning. From there, Northwestern never looked back, scoring 10 runs on 12 hits behind strong hitting performances from outfielder Skyler Shellmyer and catcher Jordyn Rudd.

Left-handed pitcher Danielle Williams earned her 300th strikeout of the season in the first inning, and she ended her outing having retired five total McNeese batters. The victory also brought her win total to 29 this season.

"This win is a great step for us, but I think this team feels very, very hungry," Drohan said. "I think already, right now, we're looking ahead. You celebrate this for an hour, you enjoy it at dinner and before you go to bed you're on to the next. I think our team really understands that, and their maturity will shine. We will stay ready through this and get ready for the next opportunity."

Northwestern and Arizona State split the first two games of their Super Regional, with the Wildcats taking the first game in 11 innings, 4-3, and the Sun Devils claiming the second in eight innings, 7-4.

When the Wildcats faced the Sun Devils in a winner-take-all Game 3, they were propelled by Rudd, Shellmyer and infielder Maeve Nelson. Rudd contributed four hits in five at-bats with three RBI to lead the offense, while Shellmyer tallied two hits and two runs scored and Nelson notched three hits.

Williams once again proved why she earned a unanimous Big Ten Pitcher of the Year award by battling a potent Arizona State offense that had scored nearly seven runs per game in the regular season. She allowed five runs in the first three innings but dominated in the final four frames, allowing just one run and one hit while striking out four.

The Wildcats advanced to the College World Series in Oklahoma City and earned a matchup with top-seeded Oklahoma in a field that also included Texas and UCLA in the first bracket. Oregon State, Oklahoma State, Florida and Arizona made up the second bracket.

There wasn't much the Wildcats could do against the unstoppable force of Oklahoma – a team that had lost only three games before the NCAA postseason. Northwestern fell to the Sooners, 13-2, in five innings and was sent to face No. 5-seeded UCLA in an elimination game.

Against the Bruins, the Wildcats' magical season came to an end as they lost to UCLA, 6-1. They trailed by one run in the fifth inning and had a chance to grab the lead by loading the bases, but they failed to bring any of the runners home. Northwestern finished its season 45-13, appeared in the program's sixth WCWS and captured the Big Ten regular-season title.

"This team, they were so authentic and vulnerable to the process," Drohan said. "I will remember how grateful I have felt every single day that I have taken the field with them."

Meyer Joins Ranks Of Former Buckeyes In NHL

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Carson Meyer was the highlight for an Ohio State men's hockey program that had seven former players appear in at least one NHL game during the 2021-22 NHL season.

Foremost, he was the only NHL debutant among them this season. Also, the suburban Columbus resident from Powell is the first local player to have skated for Ohio State and the Columbus Blue Jackets.

He developed his game in the Ohio AAA Blue Jackets youth programs, and after a two-year stint at Miami (Ohio), he finished his college career with a pair of seasons for the Buckeyes (2018-20).

After finishing his eligibility, he turned pro and played for the Blue Jackets' top affiliate, the Cleveland Monsters of the American Hockey League, before making his NHL debut April 4 against the Boston Bruins in Nationwide Arena, a venue with which he was very familiar.

"You're going to be happy no matter where your first game is, but it's that much more special," he said before the game. "It's the rink I grew up coming to and cheering on the Blue Jackets, coming to so many games with my dad here. Now my dad is going to be in the stands along with I don't even know how many family members that are going to try to come in, but they're all

going to get to watch me tonight. It's hard to put into words."

Meyer is the fifth former player OSU to play for the Blue Jackets, joining RJ Umberger, Nate Guenin, Zac Dalpe and Ryan Dzingel.

There have been 30 Buckeyes who have made it to the NHL, according to Ohio State's record book, including Meyer's former teammates Dakota Joshua (St. Louis) and Tanner Laczynski (Philadelphia).

"It's great for the program, not only for the guys who are playing now but those that came before them," Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik said. "Certainly, we've had some success in recent years, and those guys (Joshua, Laczynski and Meyer) are a reflection of that."

In addition to that trio, Dalpe, Dzingel, Anthony Greco and Max McCormick also saw NHL action this season.

Dalpe, 32, played one game for the Florida Panthers on Oct. 30 but spent the rest of the season with the Charlotte Checkers of the AHL, scoring 39 points (30 goals, nine assists) in 68 games.

In 25 games for the Blue Jackets from 2017-21 he had two goals and two assists. In 154 NHL career games since debuting with the Carolina Hurricanes in the 2010-11 season, he has 28 points (14 goals, 14 assists). The 45th pick in the 2008 NHL draft by Carolina also played in the NHL for Buffalo, Minnesota and Vancouver.

He had a stellar two-season Buckeye career with 70 points in 76 games. In his final season of 2009-10, he scored 45 points (21 goals, 24 assists) in 39 games.

Dzingel put up big numbers for the Buckeyes as well. In three seasons (2011-14) he posted 108 points (45-63) in 110 games, capped by 46 points (22-24) in 37 games his final season.

He scored 23 and 22 goals in back-to-back seasons for the Ottawa Senators in 2017-18 and 2018-19 but has become a journeyman. He has since played for the Blue Jackets, Carolina and Ottawa again. Last season he combined for five goals and three assists in 32 games with the Arizona Coyotes and San Jose Sharks.

Greco has played two NHL games, one of which was Jan. 13 for the New York Rangers against the Sharks when he got 9:44 of ice time. The other came Dec. 13, 2018, with Florida vs. Minnesota. He did not get a point in either game.

In 125 OSU games over four seasons from 2012-16, he scored 72 points (37-35) in 125 games.

Joshua played his first game for St. Louis on March 1, 2021, and over two seasons has seen action in 42 regular-season games. He has seven goals and five assists. He played 30 games this season with three goals and five helpers.

As a junior, he helped the Buckeyes reach the 2018 Frozen Four. He had 34 points that season, scoring 15 goals and assisting on 11 others. He hit 100 points right on the nose (41-59) in 128 career games.

McCormick had no points for the expansion Seattle Kraken in 10 games but resigned with them on May 9. It's a two-way contract that pays him \$762,500 annually at the NHL level and a different amount for AHL play. He had 13 goals and 16 assists in 46 games with the Charlotte affiliate that Seattle shared with Florida.

"Max is a valuable part of the leadership group in Charlotte," Kraken general manager Ron Francis said. "He impressed us with his play in Seattle. We are excited that he is returning to our organization for the next two years."

McCormick has appeared in 93 games with Ottawa, Carolina and the Kraken, scoring eight goals and five assists. During

a three-year tenure with the Buckeyes, he produced 88 points (36-52) in 111 games.

Laczynski played only one game in the NHL this season for the Philadelphia Flyers, but it was an accomplishment nonetheless after he was expected to miss this season after undergoing surgery on his left hip in September during training camp. He recovered to play 28 games for the Flyers' AHL affiliate this season.

Just prior to the injury, he was cleared to resume training after surgery to repair a torn labrum in his right hip in April 2021 following his first five games of his NHL career. Going further back, he had core muscle surgery that caused him to miss the Flyers' training camp in September 2020. He has yet to record a point in six NHL games.

Laczynski scored 143 points (48-95) in 148 games and would have led the Buckeyes to four straight NCAA appearances if the COVID-19 pandemic hadn't ended his senior season in March 2020.

Rohlik said Meyer and Laczynski have similar traits in that they are two-way players willing to do whatever it takes to be successful. In Meyer's case, it was evolving from a scorer in college to a fourth-line checker.

"That tells you a lot about Carson," Rohlik said. "He has the ability to score. He's proven that. Versatility is what enables you to play a long time. You've got to find your niche. And again, you don't want to be just a one-way player. Carson has a game where he can be a 200-foot player and when he gets the opportunity, he can score goals as well. I think that puts him in a good spot where they can put him anywhere in the lineup."

"That's how it was with Tanner," the coach continued. "I got a text from Philly when Tanner finally signed and went there. They were just blown away at how NHL-ready he was. That's because he practiced like a pro, trained like a pro."

"If you can be an all-around player like Tanner was and have offensive ability like he does yet excel at all other parts of the game, it just gives you more and more opportunities."

Meyer in his second NHL game at Philadelphia on April 5 scored his first NHL goal and added an assist. In the following 11 games, he had one assist but displayed in limited ice time a willingness to play physical and he earned penalty-killing minutes by the end of the season.

He is a restricted free agent and will likely secure a one- or two-year deal with the Blue Jackets.



Carson Meyer

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Moldovan, Wallin Led Successful Season For OSU

By CHASE BROWN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It's unusual for two sophomores to lead a collegiate golf program, but that's what Ohio State had in Max Moldovan and Adam Wallin.

The former hails from Uniontown, Ohio, a small community of just 3,309 inhabitants, while the latter calls Timmele, Sweden, a locality with 847 residents, his home. Without much else to do in their small towns, they both started playing golf at a young age. They worked at their games, becoming the best players in their region by their mid- to late-teens.

Moldovan was ranked as high as No. 33 in the World Amateur Golf Rankings. His career included two Ohio high school state titles, an Ohio amateur championship and a U.S. Junior Presidents Cup win. In 2019, he became the first Midwestern male to win the American Junior Golf Association Player of the Year award and earned Rolex Junior All-American honors.



Max Moldovan

Wallin was ranked in the top 10 of the 18-under European Golf Rankings. He had six top-10 finishes on the European tour, with runner-up finishes at the 2019 Junior Masters Invitational and the Swedish Teen Elite Tour No. 6.

"Max stepped in and was immediately the best player on our roster as a freshman," Ohio State head coach Jay Moseley said. "That doesn't happen very often where a first-year guy comes in and is the most talented player. He had a lot of eyes on him and a lot of expectations."

"Adam has been with us for three semesters. He had complications with a Visa during COVID-19 with his embassy closing and couldn't be here in the fall of his freshman year. Adam has made a massive impact on our team. His work ethic and how he goes about his business make him a fierce competitor."

Moldovan had a strong freshman season, leading the Buckeyes with a 71.50 scoring average. He also led Ohio State with 16 rounds at par or better and had eight outings in the 60s. Still, Moldovan wanted more than he had produced in his first year in Columbus. Above all else, he wanted to win a collegiate tournament, and he craved seeing his name at the top of the leaderboard after 56 holes.

"He wanted to win in college, especially that first season," Moseley said. "I mean, he desperately wanted a win. The summer after his freshman year, he had a big-time performance and won the Southern Amateur. That was awesome for his development, and he carried that with him."

Wallin played in all nine events as a freshman and finished fourth on the team with a 73.17 scoring average. He was second behind Moldovan with four rounds in the 60s and had a pair of top-20 finishes. Wallin returned to Europe last summer to compete in the European Amateur tour,

playing in England, Ireland and Spain, among others.

Last August, Moldovan and Wallin returned to Columbus with hopes of leading their team to a berth in the NCAA championship. Eventually, they would meet that goal, but it took time to develop themselves and their team into a squad ready for the postseason.

During the fall season, the Buckeyes competed in the Marquette Invitational, Maridoe Invitational, Windon Memorial and the Barbara Nicklaus Cup, steadily improving with each tournament.

"We played in some pretty big events, but we kept getting better each time out," Moldovan said. "In all those tournaments, we'd finish in the middle of the pack, but we still weren't on the top of our game. That gave us confidence that – with a few tweaks – we could be even better in the spring."

Moldovan's prediction was spot on, as Ohio State came out firing in its first spring tournament at the NEXUS Collegiate in Nassau, Bahamas. Not only did the Buckeyes finish second behind Auburn in a nine-team field, but Moldovan finally accomplished his dream of winning a tournament, beating the field by two strokes to finish at 6-over par.

"Max didn't have to wait long to get that first collegiate win," Moseley said. "He won right away in the Bahamas, where some of the best players in the world play on the PGA Tour. He built upon that. Max had a hunger and a fire that continued to build within him during the season."

Two weeks later, Wallin matched Moldovan by claiming his first collegiate title at the Colleton River Collegiate in Bluffton, S.C. He shot 14-under par to win the tournament by one stroke over Albin Bergstrom of South Florida. Moldovan and JonErik Alford were the nearest Buckeyes on the scorecard with even-par performances.

Moseley said Wallin handled his breakthrough event with humility and grace, and as always, Wallin was about his business. He didn't take much time to bask in his victory, choosing to look forward to the next outing for another chance to improve. The veteran head coach said it was about that time of the season that he confirmed a nickname for Wallin.

"I call him 'The Silent Assassin' because he's not a man of many words," Moseley said. "He's very soft-spoken. He's a lot of fun once he opens up, and he has a great sense of humor. It's entertaining for the team to be around him, but he's not much of a vocal leader. He just works his tail off and always makes progress."

The weekend after the Colleton River Collegiate, Moldovan won his second spring season tournament, taking the Southern Invitational in Palm Beach, Fla., by six strokes at 15-under par. Ohio State also won the team competition at 30-under par, beating runner-up finisher Florida Atlantic by 18 strokes.

One month later, Moldovan returned to the top of the leaderboard for a third time when he won the Robert Kepler Intercollegiate at Columbus Country Club – a venue 15 miles from Ohio State's home course – by two strokes at 11-under par. Wallin was

the second-best Buckeye at 4-under.

"Max kept pushing, and he was rewarded for his hard work," Wallin said. "I tried to stay right with him, but he was hard to keep up with week-to-week. His approach to the game set the pace for every golfer on our team, and we are happy to have him."

Despite the individual trophies and awards – including three Big Ten Golfer of the Week recognitions – Moldovan said he couldn't take all the credit for his success. Without Moseley, Wallin and his other teammates supporting him, he wouldn't have had the success he found in those tournaments.

"They offer me the confidence to play freely and put myself in good positions," Moldovan said. "I learned a lot from them. I had a lot of confidence late in tournaments when the pressure was on, and I think I gained a lot in those moments that I can take with me."

Ohio State struggled at the Big Ten championship, placing 12th in a 14-team field. Still, the team earned an at-large bid to the national tournament and was selected to host an NCAA Regional in Columbus.

A mantra for any NCAA tournament team is to survive and advance. The Buckeyes did that when they finished third behind Oklahoma State and Georgia Tech on their home course, OSU Scarlet, moving on to the NCAA championship.

"In college golf, you can see such big momentum swings," Moseley said. "When guys are golfing one way or another, it can move or shift pretty quickly. There was never a doubt that these guys could show resiliency and handle things when it matters."

Ohio State dealt with its most significant momentum swing at the championship tournament at Grayhawk Country Club in Scottsdale, Ariz. The Buckeyes were handed three afternoon rounds in the desert, which meant 54 holes on solid fairways, firm greens and windy conditions. The team shot 300-300-293 and missed

the cut, finishing in 23rd place.

Wallin was the low Buckeye at 10-over, ending his tournament in a tie for 55th. Moldovan was a shot behind Wallin at 11-over for the tourney. He was even-par through 14 holes in the third round but bogeyed his final four to finish tied for 62nd.



Adam Wallin

After the season, Moldovan was unanimously named an All-Big Ten first-team member and Wallin garnered a second-team nod. The duo also earned PING All-Midwest Region honors as announced by the Golf Coaches Association of America.

Moldovan will play on a United States amateur tour this summer, traveling across the country to play against America's best collegiate golfers. Wallin will head home to Europe and return to the European Amateur where his competition will look different, but it will still be world-class.

Both golfers hope to improve their chipping and putting around the green in the offseason. Moseley believes Ohio State is the best driving team in Division I golf – a claim with which Moldovan and Wallin agree. However, the game's most critical points come with the shorter clubs in hand.

One year from now, with that improvement in mind, Moldovan hopes Ohio State will be celebrating an NCAA championship victory. He knows there's a long journey required to get there, but he thinks the Buckeyes are up for the task.

"I want our team to be viewed as contenders," Moldovan said. "We made it to nationals this year, but we weren't considered contenders. We will be there next year, and people will say we can win the whole thing. We will compete."



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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.

MEN'S GYMNASTICS

Jan. 15 Windy City Invite, Chicago, Ill.; 2nd/7th (387.7.500); **22** New York Alliance, W 399.150-280.300.

Feb. 5 at (6) Illinois, L 400.750-394.500; **12** (4) Michigan, W 403.600-398.100 **19** (10) Army, W 393.950-374.850 **19** (12) William & Mary, W 393.950-364.550.

March 5 at Penn State, W 397.200-393.900; **12** at Oklahoma, L 408.400-399.050; **20** NEBRASKA, W 407.350-406.650.

April 1-2 Big Ten Championships at State College, PA; 3rd/5 **15** NCAA Qualifier at Norman, Okla.; 2nd/6 **16** NCAA Championships at Norman, Okla.; 5th/6.

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS

Jan. 7 at Arkansas, L 195.450-195.025; **15** Denver, L 196.600-195.750; **22** Penn State, W 196.450-196.425; **30** Rutgers, W 196.025-195.750.

Feb. 7 NEBRASKA, W 196.675-196.350; **12** at Minnesota, L 197.575-195.775; **18** Big Five Meet at Toledo, Ohio, 2nd/5; **26** MICHIGAN ST., W 197.075-196.850.

March 4 All-Ohio Meet, 1st/3; **6** at Kent State, W 197.525-196.550; Eastern Michigan at Kent State, W 197.525-194.575 **11** CAL/ PITT, 1st/3; **19** Big Ten Championships at Ohio State, 5th/10. **31** NCAA Auburn

Regional, 3rd.

SWIMMING & DIVING

Oct. 30 Indiana, Men: L 230-123; Women: L 209-142; Virginia Tech, Men: W 207-146; Women: W 225-128; vs. Penn State Men: W 250-100.50; 30 Indiana Women: W 225-163.

Nov. 11 Akron, Women: W 228-91 **Nov. 12** DENISON, Men: W 184-104; Women: W 183.5-104.5; **18-20** OHIO STATE INVITATIONAL, Men: 2nd/10; Women: 1st/10.

Jan. 21-22 Shamrock Invitational at Notre Dame, Ind., Men: 1st/2; Women: 3rd/3. **28** MICHIGAN, Men: W 189-111; Women: W 152.5-147.5 **29** Cleveland State, Men: W 159-78.

Feb. 11-13 WINTER INVITAIONAL; **16-19** Women's Big Ten Championships at Madison, Wisc.; 1st/8. **23-26** Men's Big Ten Championships at West Lafayette, Ind., 2nd/8.

March 6 LAST CHANCE MEET (men and women); **7-9** Zone Championships at Ann Arbor, Mich.; **10-12** CSCAA National Invitational at Cleveland, Men: 2nd/30; Women: 1st/43; NCAA Zone Diving at West Lafayette, Ind.; **16-19** Women's NCAA Championships at Austin, Texas, 9th/37; **23-26** Men's NCAA Championships at Atlanta, Georgia, 9th/34.

MEN'S TENNIS (28-4)

Jan. 19 TOLEDO, W 7-0; **19** XAVIER, W 6-1, W 4-0; **22** Illinois, W 4-0; **29** Arizona State, W 4-0 **30** (17) North Carolina W 4-0.

Feb. 4 (1) TENNESSEE, W 4-0; **6** (6) Virginia, W 4-0; **11** (10) KENTUCKY, W 4-0; **13** (6) WAKE FOREST, W 7-0; **18** ITA National Indoor Team Championships at Chicago; Washington, W 4-1; **19** (6) Wake Forest, W 4-0; **20** (4) TCU, L 4-3; **25** UCF, W 4-0; **27** Notre Dame, W 4-0.

March 12 at Texas, W, 4-3.; **15** at Texas A&M, W 4-3; **18** at Michigan, L 4-0; **25** ILLINOIS, W 4-0; **27** NORTHWESTERN, W 4-0.

April 1 at Indiana, W 4-0; **3** at Purdue, W 4-0; **9** at Penn State, 4-0; **15** MICHIGAN, W 4-1; **17** MICHIGAN STATE, W 7-0; **29-1** Big Ten Tournament at Madison, Wisc.; Michigan State, W 4-0; Northwestern, W

4-0; Michigan, L 2-4.

May 6-7 NCAA First & Second Round; Youngstown State, W 4-0; Columbia, W 4-0; **14** NCAA Regional; USC, W 4-2 **19-21** NCAA Championships; Michigan, W 4-2; Kentucky, L 1-4.

WOMEN'S TENNIS (21-6)

Jan. 21 Duke, L 4-3; **23** NC State, L 4-3; **29** ITA Kickoff vs. OKLAHOMA STATE, W 4-1; **30** ITA Kickoff vs. TENNESSEE, W 4-0.

Feb. 11 North Carolina, L 4-1; **12** Florida, W 4-3; **13** Auburn, W 4-3; **18** Kentucky, W 5-2 **27** PEPPERDINE, W 5-2.

March 4 Penn State, W 7-0; **13** XAVIER, W 6-1; **18** Iowa, W 6-1; **20** at Nebraska, W 4-3; **27** Arizona State, Canceled.

April 1 MICHIGAN, W 4-3; **3** MICHIGAN STATE, W 4-0; **8** NORTHWESTERN, W 5-2; **10** at Purdue, W 4-0; **15** at Minnesota, W 4-0; **17** at Wisconsin, W 5-2 **22** MARYLAND, W 5-2; **24** RUTGERS, W 4-0; **29-May 1** Big Ten Tournament at Iowa; Minnesota, W 4-0; Wisconsin, W 4-0; Michigan, L 0-4.

May 7-8 NCAA First & Second Round; Illinois State, W 4-0; Vanderbilt, L 2-4.

BASEBALL (20-30)

Feb. 18 Marshall, W 15-4; **19-20** Indiana State, W 9-3, W 9-8; **21** BYU, L 9-6; **25-27** at Texas State, L 9-1, L 8-5, L 6-4.

March 2 at Cincinnati, L 5-4; **4-6** at Armed Forces Invitational, Campbell, L 7-2; Pitt, L 6-5; Army, W 12-7; **11** West Virginia, W 10-4, L 6-7 **14** MARSHALL, W 14-2; **17-20** at UNC Wilmington, L 12-4, W 9-7, L 2-0, L 7-2; **22** WRIGHT STATE, W 7-5 **25** at Purdue, L 7-5; **30** TOLEDO, L 7-6.

April 1-3 NEBRASKA, L 5-3, L 10-5, L 17-5; **5** YOUNGSTOWN STATE, W 5-4; **9-10** MICHIGAN STATE, W 13-5, L 10-8, W 8-7; **12** at Dayton, L 0-6; **15-17** at Maryland, L 6-8, L 5-6, L 1-16; **19** MARSHALL, W 7-6; **22-24** at Michigan, L 8-9, L 13-16, W 6-5; **29-30** RUTGERS, L 4-6; L 3-13.

May 1 RUTGERS, L 8-11; **4** at Kent State, W 8-6; **7-8** at Northwestern, W 14-6; W 25-9; W 6-5; **10-11** CAMPBELL, L 1-11, L 1-10; **13-15** PENN STATE, L 7-13, W 11-0, W 12-3; **17** CINCINNATI, W, 5-3; **19-21** USC UPSTATE, L 5-6, W 13-10.

SOFTBALL (36-17)

Feb. 11 Northern Illinois, W 8-1; **12** Louisville, W 8-5; Bethune Cookman, W 7-2; **18** Butler, W 1-0; South Alabama, W 4-2; **19** Liberty, L 3-2; Stetson, W 10-2; 20 North Carolina, W 5-2; **25** Virginia Tech, L 1-0; **26** South Carolina, W 6-2; Troy, L 4-0; **27** Miami (Ohio), W 5-4.

March 11 Stony Brook, W 6-3; **12** Army, 14-0; **13** UMass, W 8-0; South Florida, W 5-0; **15** Central Florida, L 11-3; **17** Lehigh, W 9-1; South Florida, L 5-0; **18** Canisus, W 3-0; St. Thomas, W 5-2; **19** South Florida, W 9-0; **22** at Ohio, W 6-1; **25** INDIANA, W 6-2, L 17-5; **26** INDIANA, W 6-4; **29** at Kentucky, W 3-0.

April 1-3 at Michigan State, W 3-0, L 2-1, W 2-1; **8-10** NORTHWESTERN, L 12-3, L 9-8, L 7-1; **12** TOLEDO, W 5-4; **15-17** at Iowa, W 7-3, W 6-4, W 10-5; **19** PENN STATE, Postponed; **22-24** at Michigan, W 6-2, L 3-4, L 4-5 **26** PENN STATE, W 4-2; L 2-4 **29-30** NEBRASKA, W 6-2; W 5-4.

May 1 NEBRASKA, L 9-1 **8** at Maryland, W 6-0; W 8-5 **11-14** Big Ten Tournament, Purdue, W 8-0; Illinois, W 5-1; Nebraska, L 1-2 **20-21** NCAA Tournament, Oregon State, L 3-4; Campbell, W 10-0; Oregon State, L 1-5.

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL (13-14)

Jan 7-8 CENTRAL STATE, W 3-0, W 3-0; **12** ST. FRANCIS UNIVERSITY, W 3-0; **21** at UCLA, L 2-3; at USC. W 3-1; **28** at Long Beach State, L 1-3; **29** at UC Santa Barbara, L 3-1.

Feb 10 at McKendree, L 3-1 **12** at Lewis, L 3-1; **17** LOYOLA CHICAGO, L 3-2; **20** PURDUE FORT WAYNE, W 3-0; **24** QUINCY, W 3-0; **25** LINDENWOOD, W 3-0.

March 5-6 LINCOLN MEMORIAL, W 3-0, W 3-0; **8** PENN STATE, L 3-0; **12** at St. Francis University, L 3-1; **13** at Penn State, L 3-1; **16** BALL STATE, L 3-2; **19** at Ball State, L 3-1; **25** at Lindenwood, L 3-2; **26** at Quincy, W 3-0; **31** LEWIS, L 3-1.

April 2 MCKENDREE, W 3-2; **7** at Purdue Fort Wayne, W 3-2; **9** at Loyola Chicago, W 3-0; **16** at Lewis, MIVA Quarterfinals, L 2-3.

MEN'S LACROSSE (10-6)

Feb 5 DETROIT, W 18-7; **12** CLEVELAND STATE, W 17-9; **19** at North Carolina, W 20-8; **26** Harvard, W 17-12.

March 5 at Cornell, L 14-11; **12** NOTRE DAME, W 14-11; **20** DENVER, L 14-12; 22 DARTMOUTH, W 12-6; **27** at Rutgers, L 17-8.

April 1 PENN STATE, W 18-9; **9** JOHNS HOPKINS, W 12-10; **16** at Maryland, L 19-12; **24** MICHIGAN, W 14-12; **30** MICHIGAN (Big Ten Quarterfinals), W 16-10.

May 5 Rutgers (Big Ten Semifinals), L 12-10 **15** Cornell (NCAA Tournament), L 15-8.

WOMEN'S LACROSSE (9-7)

Feb 12 ROBERT MORRIS, W 17-5; **16** CINCINNATI, W 18-9; **20** MARQUETTE, W 18-11 **25** at Denver, L 12-5; **27** at Colorado, L 13-10.

March 4 JAMES MADISON, L 15-4; **10** at Duquesne, W 18-8; **12** MOUNT SAINT MARY'S, W 13-9; **15** MARIST, W 16-5; **19** at Northwestern, L 22-14 **26** PENN STATE, W 12-11; **31** at Louisville, W 13-12 OT.

April 8 at Michigan, W 9-7; **17** MARYLAND, L 8-14; **23** at Johns Hopkins, L 14-17 **28** RUTGERS, L 8-10.

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OSU Moves On From Beals After 12 Years

On the morning of May 23, the only sounds heard outside Bill Davis Stadium were spikes pounding the Jesse Owens' track. Birds were chirping, and an aluminum cord hit a nearby flagpole as it swayed in the wind.

Several Ohio State baseball players walked through the stadium's gates toward the locker room. They didn't speak to each other, deciding to share solemn eye contact and offer affirmative head nods. It was close to noon when athletic director Gene Smith, wearing a full suit, followed them into the facility.

FROM THE STRETCH Chase Brown

Smith left Bill Davis Stadium just 15 minutes later. He and head coach Greg Beals told the players that Beals would not return after a 21-30 season as the program's skipper. As Smith walked back to his vehicle, he told reporters that he had no comment.

Within the hour, Ohio State spokesperson Jerry Emig released a statement. It read, "Greg Beals will not be returning as coach of the team for the 2023 campaign," and revealed the athletic department is "making a change in baseball leadership."

Ohio State shied away from using the word "fired" with Beals, who had been the Buckeyes' head coach for 12 seasons. He was the longest-tenured program leader outside of Lori Walker-Hock of women's soccer, Ty Tucker of men's tennis and Tom Ryan of wrestling.

In those 12 seasons, Beals collected a 366-317 (.536) record with two Big Ten tournament championships and three NCAA tournament appearances. He also produced plenty of MLB talent during his tenure, including outfielder Ronnie Dawson (sixth-round pick, 2016), catcher Dillon Dingler (second-round pick, 2020) and left-handed pitcher Seth Lonsway (sixth-round pick, 2021), among others.

However, the team's struggles became more evident in recent seasons.

With his time at Ohio State at an end, Beals reflected on his experience, recognizing that his teams didn't produce the results necessary to keep him in Columbus for another season.

"There comes a time when you have to produce in all walks of life," Beals said. "I have zero regrets about my time at Ohio State. I just wish we had won more baseball games."

In his last act as head coach, Beals went to the Bill Davis Stadium clubhouse and encouraged his players to continue playing the game they love with the same desire and passion they developed at a young age and carried with them through their time at Ohio State. He ultimately broke the news that he wouldn't be wearing scarlet and gray next season.

"I am grateful to Gene that he offered me an opportunity to talk with the team," Beals said. "It was important to me that I deliver the message. I'm always trying to coach and lead. I told them there are life lessons with this. I had five minutes with them, and I prepared them for what was coming. I told them to

make sure they were prepared for fall ball and that the new coach wouldn't know them (like I do), so they would have to win him over."

Beals turned the floor to Smith and walked down the hallway toward the home dugout. He stood where he typically would be during games – right near the first set of steps that lead to the on-deck circle. He even took in the view from the third-base coach's box, where he would stand and deliver signals as the Buckeyes went up to bat.

It was Beals' dream to coach at Ohio State. A Springfield, Ohio, native, Beals was a star catcher at Kenton Ridge High School. He played college baseball at Kent State and became a three-year letter winner, batting .306 for his career and earning All-Mid-American Conference honors. The New York Mets selected him in the 21st round of the 1991 MLB draft, and he spent three years at the professional level, reaching high Class-A and playing for three division-winning teams.

After his playing career ended, Beals became an assistant coach at Kent State, working primarily on recruiting. In nine seasons with the Golden Flashes, Beals saw 21 recruits sign professional contracts, 36 earn All-MAC honors and 17 claim Academic All-MAC awards. Beals' work caught the attention of Ball State, who hired him to be the baseball program's head coach in 2003.

Beals led Ball State for eight seasons, winning three MAC West titles and the school's first MAC tournament title, which sent them to an NCAA Regional. During his tenure, Beals produced five All-Americans, 18 All-MAC players, and 15 Academic All-MAC. He also sent 20 players to the MLB draft. The Cardinals failed to reach the MAC tournament just once under Beals – that being the season after the program had six starting players graduate, with four of them drafted to the MLB.

In 2010, former Ohio State assistant athletic director Pat Chun, now the athletic director at Washington State, was tasked with replacing Buckeye legend Bob Todd, who had retired after 23 years in Columbus. The next hire would need to be someone who could carry the torch, and Chun decided that Beals was ready to shoulder the weight.

Chun confirmed that Beals beat out then-Kent State head coach Scott Stricklin for the position, citing Beals' recruiting ability as what made him the standout candidate. Stricklin went on to take the Golden Flashes to the 2012 College World Series, setting himself up with a head coaching position at Georgia.

Beals, on the other hand, rebuilt the Ohio State program from scratch. The roster left behind by Todd was young and inexperienced and would require some fine-tuning if the Buckeyes were going to reclaim their title as the premier program in the state.

Beals' teams went 26-37, 33-27, 35-23 and 30-28 in his first four seasons. While the records don't indicate transformational success, it's important to note that several of his initial recruits signed with MLB teams directly out of high school and never put on a scarlet and gray uniform.

In 2015, the Buckeyes posted a 35-20 record and 13-11 mark in the Big Ten. They failed to make the postseason, but it was a promising sign of what was to come in Colum-

bus. One year later, Ohio State finished 44-20 and won the Big Ten tournament championship, sending them to the NCAA Louisville Regional. Dawson was an All-American and earned Big Ten tournament MVP honors for leading the Buckeyes to four consecutive wins in elimination games in Omaha, Neb.

The 2016 team had six MLB draft selections, including Dawson, Jacob Bosio (19th round, Colorado Rockies), Michael Horejsei (21st round, Chicago White Sox), Nick Sergakis (23rd round, New York Mets) and Tanner Tully (26th round, Cleveland Indians). The six picks tied the 1998 team record for the second-most draft picks in school history.

Ohio State took a step back in 2017, finishing 22-34 in a rebuilding season. The following year, the Buckeyes bounced back with a 36-24 record and earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Greenville Regional.

In 2019, Beals' team caught fire at the right time, winning a Big Ten tournament title behind a starting rotation of Lonsway, Garrett Burhenn and Griffan Smith. Left-handed reliever Andrew Magno became a dominant pitcher in the back of the bullpen, eventually winning the Big Ten tournament MVP for his efforts in the conference postseason.

Hard-hitting players such as Brady Cherry, Dominic Canzone and Dingler filled the batting order, and young stars Conner Pohl and Zach Dezenzo helped the Buckeyes reach the NCAA Nashville Regional.

It's fair to call Beals' final two seasons at Ohio State disappointing. The 2020 season ended after 14 games (with a 6-8 record) because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Buckeyes chugged to a 22-20 finish in 2021 before ending with a 21-30 record in 2022, failing to qualify for the Big Ten Baseball Tournament's eight-team field. The problems were many, notably poor defensive play and an inconsistent bullpen.

Beals, 52, is frustrated that his time at Ohio State ended on a downturn, but he looks forward to new beginnings.

"Coaching is who I am," Beals said. "It's what I am supposed to do. It's teaching about life and the game. I'll look around. I would like to stay in college."

Beals wishes Ohio State the best in its coaching search. He hopes the athletic department finds a person willing to instruct and teach with character and integrity. Beals knows his players will display those qualities. But now it's time for a fresh start.

"In my 12 years at Ohio State, we had so many resources that helped me do my job," Beals said. "I know that I am a better coach now than I was before coming to Ohio State."

Beals had one year remaining on his contract, which calls for a base salary of \$352,900.65 before incentives. The athletic department began searching for a new coach immediately.

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THE EXNER POINT Rich Exner

At this point it doesn't matter whether you prefer the old bowl days – ahead of playoffs. Those days are in the past. Nothing will return that slate of games to its once glory.

What needs done is this: (A) expand the playoffs, obviously, and (B) eliminate the old bowl system.

Part B is more controversial, perhaps even radical. To do it outright, a solution needs to be at hand. We'll explain the logical fix in a bit. First, a little context to explain how this idea could solve the problem.

Call me cynical, but I think one of the reasons we still have the bowls is that school presidents, administrators, state politicians and others like traveling (often at little or no personal cost) to warm places over the holidays, where in some cases they can wine and dine donors.

But football players more often have been opting out of these games, and the fans have spoken with lagging interest.

School presidents and athletic directors get to make these decisions, not the players and fans. Here's the concession to them. Let them keep their trips.

Make the full slate of bowl games an end-of-the summer launch to the football season, replacing the postseason games with a more extensive, meaningful and fair playoff system in December.

The answer is so obvious, though I never heard it being suggested until visiting an old

friend after this past Christmas. The conversation took place on Dec. 28, well before the 10:15 p.m. kickoff for the Guaranteed Rate Bowl between 6-6 West Virginia and 8-4 Minnesota. You read that right, a 10:15 p.m. kickoff for a Tuesday game. (Bet you can't tell me where that game was played or the result, unless you're tied to one of those teams.)

Credit Dan Angalich, about as big of a West Virginia University fan that you'll ever come across, for the solution:

- Move all the bowls to an extended Labor Day Weekend, which is a week ahead of the start of the NFL season.
- Call it College Football Extravaganza Weekend, or something like that.
- Fans and bigwigs could prepare for the trips just like a winter bowl trips; the end of the summer is a good time to travel.
- No problem expanding the map of host cities to places in the North, largely left out now because of weather considerations.
- Keep all the flavor of the bowl games with several days of activities, though, of course, no New Year's Day parade.
- Anticipation would be at a fever pitch for the season, as everyone is 0-0 at that point.
- No worries about opt-outs from players trying to avoid injuries ahead of the NFL draft.
- And on, and on and on...

The bowls get to stay with a higher profile than they have now. The anticipation for the season would be greater than ever with dozens of marquee matches.

And if combined with expanding the playoffs to at least eight teams – providing automatic spots for champions of all the major conferences – the schools would not be in a win-or-be-left-out scenario for the playoffs as is the feeling with some early-season regular-season games now.

Yes, this year, Ohio State has a highly anticipated game slotted for the opener – Notre Dame. But that's not always the case and is certainly far from the norm across college football.

These 35-40 opening-weekend bowl games would create frenzy across the college football world. There would be talks all spring and summer as fans plan their trips and players gear up for the season. Imagine a Bowl Selection Saturday night at the start of summer or after spring football, or maybe the weekend after the basketball Final Four.

Too many games for the players? If that's a roadblock, return the regular season to 11 games.

If all the schools need the extra game to pay their bills, then let the schools not involved in the preseason bowls schedule a 12th game. This setup would be more than fun. The overall TV ratings would exceed what happens now for the bowls. Attendance would be better.

After College Football Extravaganza weekend, focus would turn to conference play and championship runs.

Then when the regular season is over, like with every other sport, it's over as scheduled for most teams and ongoing for the deserving in a win-or-out playoff scenario.

No more 6-6 teams getting ready to play a 10:15 p.m. bowl game on a Tuesday night in late December.

When this happens, thank Dan for the idea.

Where Are The Fans?

Here's another reason to shake things up in college football. Attendance even for the regular season has been on the decline.

The average last season for all games (regular season and bowls) was 39,848, the lowest average since before dozens of smaller schools were moved out of the top division with the start of Division I-AA in 1982.

The averaged topped out at 54,844 in 2007. It slipped to 48,898 in 2013, the last year before the current playoff setup, and then dropped more.

By league, last year, the Southeastern Conference led for average attendance at 72,195 a game, followed by the Big Ten (65,252), Big 12 (55,017), Pac-12 (43,865)

and ACC (42,599).

But digging a little deeper, thanks to a nice chart published by CBSSports.com, it seems all is not swell at the top of the college football world. Though down just slightly from 2019, 2021 marked the lowest average attendance for the SEC since 1999. The Big Ten was essentially flat.

But average attendance in the Big 12 was down 4.3 percent from 2019 to its lowest since 2000. Pac-12 attendance dipped 4.8 percent to its lowest average on record. And the ACC was down 11.7 percent to its lowest level since 1990.

Lingering fallout from COVID-19? Perhaps to some extent in 2021, yet dropping attendance was the trend before the pandemic.

The national average was down to 41,477 in 2019, a drop of 24.0 percent from the high in 2007. That's roughly 1 in 4 fans no longer in the seats. And it's getting worse.

TV Viewers

ESPN says that 22.6 million people watched the latest national championship game in January. That sounds like a big figure for the Alabama-Georgia clash. But consider this: When the same two teams played for the title following the 2017 season, viewership was estimated at 28.8 million.

In the first playoff of the CFP era, the semifinal between Alabama and Ohio State following the 2014 season drew 33.9 million viewers.

Going back longer, the 2005 BCS title game (the 2006 Rose Bowl) drew a record 35.6 million viewers to watch Texas and USC. The game was on ABC, before college football chased bigger dollars (and smaller audiences) by switching to cable not available to everyone.

That's 58.0 percent more viewers for the 2005 title game than this past season's championship game, though the nation's population has grown from 295.5 million to 332.9 million during the same span. There should be more viewers, not fewer.

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Attention Reds Fans

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QB Missing Spring Ball Is Quite The Kicker

Ohio State kicker Noah Ruggles opting out of spring practice got me thinking. A kicker missing the spring is not that big a deal. Kickers frequently practice away from the bulk of the team, so it's not like his absence disrupted practice or stunted the spring growth of the team.

But what would happen if the starting quarterback opted out of the spring?

It has happened at Ohio State. Senior quarterback Greg Frey elected to skip spring practice in 1990 and play for the Ohio State baseball team instead, and as you can imagine, his decision was not without controversy.

Frey had started all 23 games in the first two seasons of the John Cooper era, leading the Big Ten in passing efficiency in 1989 and earning second-team all-conference honors. The '90 season was shaping up to be a pivotal one for Cooper and the Buckeyes. They had finished 4-6-1 in the coach's inaugural campaign and improved to 8-4 in year two but had come up empty-handed against rival Michigan in both seasons, as well as losing to Auburn in the Hall of Fame Bowl in year two.

Frey had been an all-state first baseman as a senior at Cincinnati St. Xavier, and when he was recruited to Ohio State by then-football coach Earle Bruce, he had been promised the opportunity to play baseball.

"I wasn't really sure that I'd be able to follow through with my baseball plans," Frey said in that spring of 1990. "It was something I had in mind, but I wanted to go to football first and see how that went. Now the opportunity has presented itself, and I decided to take advantage of it."

Cooper was none too pleased but allowed Frey the opportunity.

"I certainly was not going to go back on a promise that was made to him," the coach said. "But at the same time, we let Greg know that we felt he was making a mistake by letting those other quarterbacks get 20 more days of practice on him."

Those "other quarterbacks" included junior Kent Graham, who had sat out a year after transferring from Notre Dame, and Kirk Herbstreit, one of Cooper's first recruits, who had played sparingly the previous season after redshirting in 1988.

Cooper's assistants tried to put the best possible spin on the situation.

"Greg has done things a lot of times and we're not doing anything different than what he's used to," offensive coordinator Jim Colletto said. "It shouldn't take him too long to get back into the swing of things."

Quarterbacks coach Ron Hudson seemed to concur.

"Whenever you miss a chance to practice it doesn't help," Hudson said in early April. "But most of what we're doing is mental stuff, and he has already had most of this."

"He is hitting .330 for the baseball team so he is certainly contributing there. And to start saying that we're hurting without having Greg here is not entirely true."

That Frey got off to a fast start with the diamond Buckeyes helped his cause with baseball coach Bob Todd, who had discussed the situation with Cooper before adding Frey to his team. Todd provided some additional insight into the football coach's state of mind.

"We did go to John when Greg told us he wanted to play," Todd said. "At that point in time, John kind of made a comment that he would love to have Greg at spring ball. Greg had his blessing, provided he was going to be competitive and help us. Since then, I have told John that Greg has done a good job. For selfish and obvious reasons, John would like to have Greg there, because it

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

would give him the continuity.

"There was no way to predict whether he would be successful (with baseball), especially early. Greg realized that if he was going to stay with baseball, he would need to make an impact rather quickly. When we first saw Greg, our reaction was that he showed good athletic ability and that he has been competing from a mental standpoint. He also showed us that he was away from baseball for a long time. We're pleased with the way he has played to this point in the season."

A story in the April 14, 1990, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin had Frey hitting .328 through games of April 4, and statistics in the April 28 issue had him third on the team with a .319 average in 91 at bats.

"There's always the possibility that doing this could hurt my football season," Frey acknowledged. "From my standpoint, I knew the risks that were involved by doing this. It's 20 practices, but I feel I can make that up. I have three years of game experience, and when the baseball season is over, the big thing for me is to get back in shape and get ready for football."

Frey, who played left field for the Buckeyes, would finish the season batting .293, seventh on the team, with two home runs and 11 RBI. Ohio State finished 32-29-1 and was fourth in the Big Ten.

Meanwhile, back on the gridiron, Graham and Herbstreit – both of whom would ultimately start for the Buckeyes – tried to take advantage of the veteran quarterback's absence.

"It gave Herbstreit and Graham the opportunity to get repetitions," Hudson said. "If Greg had been here, they probably would not have gotten the amount of work they did with him gone."

"They are obviously not yet where we want them to be right now because of the mental part. Physically, they are fine, but they're struggling with the mental part. But it's tough to recognize blitzes, make line checks, make protection changes and things like that."

"That's where Greg, with his experience, is ahead of the other two. But they are definitely knocking on the door. If Greg doesn't come in here next fall in the kind of condition he should and doesn't pick up where he left off, we're going to have a real interesting fall."

"That's not to say Grey Frey is not our starting quarterback," Hudson added. "That wouldn't be fair. But the other two kids got a lot of repetitions and we got a lot accomplished with them."

The two quarterbacks both felt they improved in Frey's absence.

"I don't know what will happen," said Graham, who would end up starting most of the 1991 season. "The coaches told me the best quarterback will play. I'm doing well, improving daily and trying to get the little things right."

Added Herbstreit, who would start for the Buckeyes as a senior in 1992, "Before I was better running than passing, but now my passing is catching up with my running. In a year or two I think I'll be capable of starting at Ohio State."

Still, Hudson talked like Frey would be the starter. But he made clear what the challenge was ahead.

"Greg has to step to the next level of making those big plays against the Michigans and the USCs and the Auburns," Hudson said. "We believe that is where he would have benefited had he been here this spring."

As expected, Frey would reclaim his starting position when he returned for fall camp. The

Buckeyes would take a slight step back, finishing the season 7-4-1. They had a particularly rough stretch early in the season when they faced three straight ranked teams and lost to No. 18 USC, were downed by No. 13 Illinois and tied with No. 22 Indiana, dropping the Buckeyes to a 2-2-1 record to start the season.

Would the Buckeyes have gotten off to a faster start if Frey had been there for spring practice? We'll never know.

He finished the season completing 139 of 276 passes, good for 2,062 yards, his third straight season passing for over 2,000 yards (he is still the only Buckeye to accomplish that feat). He had 16 touchdowns and 16 interceptions.

As for Ruggles and the current Buckeyes, I only worry that his absence may set a precedent for passing on spring practice, just like the first players to opt out of bowl games established that precedent. Reports that he was in Hawaii while his teammates were grinding it out at practice caught my attention, though in fairness to Ruggles, one of the unsung heroes of last Buckeye season, I don't know the particulars.

Ohio State special teams coordinator Parker Fleming seemed a little surprised at Ruggles' action.

"It was something I hadn't experienced in the past before, but really, it was kind of a personal thing. It wasn't a big deal," Fleming said. "It was just kind of a situation Noah and the head coach and I had a conversation and that's the direction that we went."

It's an ever-changing college football world, isn't it?

The Path To The Booth

While Herbstreit ended up starting for the Buckeyes in 1992 and led Ohio State to its first non-loss to Michigan under Cooper that season – the infamous 13-13 tie that president Gordon Gee dubbed one of OSU's greatest victories – I think he figured out fairly quickly that his future was in the broadcast booth, not down on the field.

Some of the comments from his coaches back in that spring of 1990 may have given an early indication that his future was not on the gridiron.

Colletto complimented Herbstreit on his progress in Frey's absence, though in a kind of backhanded way.

"It's particularly gratifying with Herbstreit because a year ago we were not sure that he could play quarterback," Colletto said. "But he has improved dramatically."

And Hudson had this to say about Herbstreit, who was listed at 6-2, 212, in the 1990 Ohio State media guide: "Kirk's main problem is the fact that he can't see sometimes because he isn't as tall. You get those big guys up in front of you and sometimes you can't execute like you might like to. But he has improved a lot over the last year."

Spring Grad List Unique

In my traditional look at football graduates, the list for the recent spring commencement may not have been overwhelming, with 14 graduates from the grid squad. But this was one of the more unique graduate lists.

Dallas Gant and Marcus Hooker, each of whom entered the transfer portal (Gant during the season), graduated. And Jordan Fuller and Carlos Snow both received their diplomas through the school's degree completion program, though they traveled different routes to

receiving their sheepskin.

Fuller was drafted by the Los Angeles Rams in 2020 and last season led the team with 113 tackles from his safety spot before suffering a season-ending ankle injury. The Rams would go on to win the Super Bowl. Snow, on the other hand, last played for the Buckeyes in 1991 and at one point found himself homeless before turning his life around and earning his degree some 31 years later.

Other notable players graduating include current Buckeyes Cameron Brown, Javontae Jean-Baptiste and Taron Vincent.

The men's basketball team, which is sometimes underrepresented at graduation, also had its share of players receiving diplomas. Among those graduating were Joey Brunk, Harrison Hookfin, Justice Sueing, Seth Towns and Kyle Young.

For a complete list of Ohio State's 194 graduating athletes, see page 20 of this issue.

West Michigan Alums

I recently had a chance to speak to Ohio State's Alumni Club of West Michigan in Grand Rapids. I have spoken to this club several times through the years, and it is one of the stronger clubs from around the country.

Host Dan LaVillie, a great supporter of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, was kind enough to seat me next to former Ohio State hockey coach Jerry Welsh, who recently retired after owning a bed and breakfast with his wife Paula in Union Pier, near Lake Michigan.

Jerry coached – and played – at Ohio State in the days before the Schottenstein Center, and he and I got to talking about the cramped OSU Ice Rink, home to the Buckeyes before the Schott was built. Welsh said that when he had recruits on campus, he didn't try to hide the antiquated facility.

"I found out pretty quickly that our opponents had already told the recruits about our rink anyway," he said with a smile.

Welsh was a member of Ohio State's first CCHA championship team in 1972 as a player, and his 1983-84 team, which opened the season 13-0-0 and reached the No. 1 spot in the nation, proved one of the greatest squads in Buckeye hockey history. He was named to the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame in 2018.

Thanks again to the club for having me, and best of luck to new president and vice president Ryan Julian and Richard Sachwitz, respectively. Buckeyes in the area might want to play in or support the Barry and Donna Waters Scholarship Golf Outing on June 25. Contact Julian at rtjosu@gmail.com for info on the outing or the club.

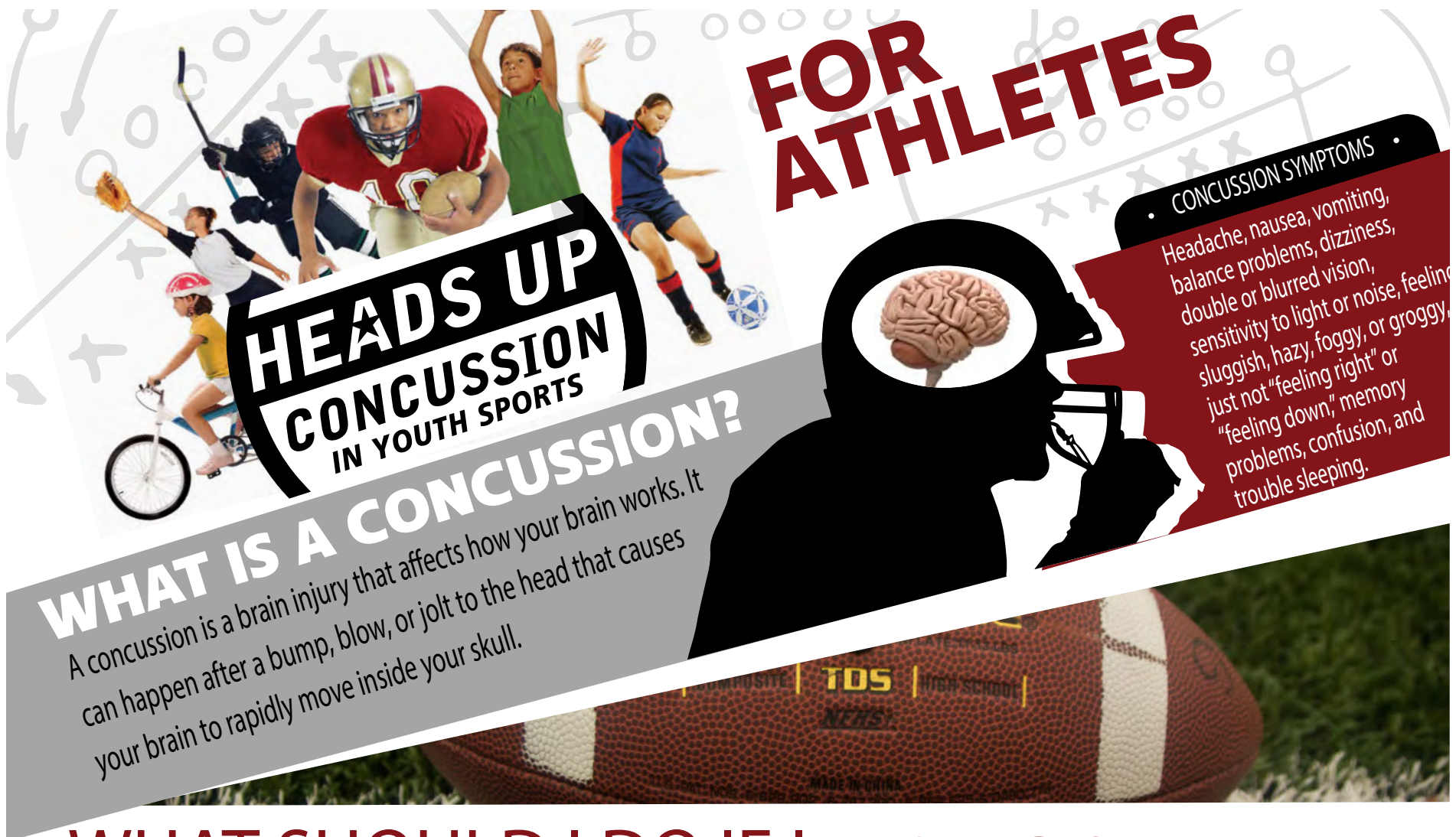
Don't Forget The Letters

It's been a while since I've called out for Letters to the Editor. When I do research in old BSBs such as I did on the Greg Frey baseball spring, I am always struck by the fact that we would have full pages of letters "in the day." Many of you who wrote those letters are still subscribers but have put the pen down.

Butch Radabaugh of Ottawa, Ohio, writes an interesting letter in this issue (see page 2). He suggests that Buckeyes who graduate should not be referred to as "former" Buckeyes.

Butch, the one that bothers me is that our writers have taken to referring to current players as "former four-star" or "former five-star" recruits. I maintain that once you get on campus you don't suddenly lose your stars. I have taken to editing the "former" out.

What do the readers think? Send your letter on this or any topic to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212, or save the stamp and email us at bsb@buckeyesports.com.



FOR
ATHLETES

HEADS UP
CONCUSSION
IN YOUTH SPORTS

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. It can happen after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that causes your brain to rapidly move inside your skull.

CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS •
Headache, nausea, vomiting,
balance problems, dizziness,
double or blurred vision,
sensitivity to light or noise, feeling
sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy,
just not "feeling right" or
"feeling down," memory
problems, confusion, and
trouble sleeping.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I
THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?



REPORT IT. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

GET CHECKED OUT. If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a healthcare provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL. A concussion can make it harder to do everyday activities, such as concentrating at school. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

WHY SHOULD I TELL
MY COACH AND
PARENTS ABOUT MY
SYMPTOMS?

Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.

While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain and can even be fatal.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON



<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>

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