

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 42, No. 1

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Sept. 10, 2022

SHADES OF 'THE VEST'

OSU Throws It Back In Win Over Irish



SONNY BROCKWAY

SILVER BULLETS IN ACTION — Ohio State linebackers Tommy Eichenberg (35) and Cody Simon (30), cornerback Cameron Brown (26) and safety Ronnie Hickman (14) all celebrate after a sack of Notre Dame quarterback Tyler Buchner. The defense helped lead the Buckeyes to a season-opening 21-10 win over the fifth-ranked Irish in front of 106,594 fans at Ohio Stadium.

By BRADEN MOLES

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

As the first quarter of Ohio State's season opener against Notre Dame came to an end, time was taken for a reunion of the Buckeyes' 2002 national championship team to recognize the approaching 20th anniversary of what was Ohio State's first national championship in 34 years.

A large contingent of the team met at midfield to lift up the man of the hour: Jim Tressel, who coached the team to a 31-24 national championship win over Miami (Fla.) in the 2003 Fiesta Bowl. Despite some initial hesitancy toward leaving ground, Tressel accepted his fate, and the crowd of 106,594 at Ohio Stadium gave their props to "The Vest" as he was raised up on the shoulders of his former players and flashed a smile for those in attendance.

It only makes sense, then, that the game played on Sept. 3 at Ohio Stadium, a venue that is celebrating 100 years of operation this season, emulated that of Tressel's preferred play style — a game

dictated not by record-breaking offenses that can win in a shootout, something this current-day Ohio State squad is certainly capable of doing, but by putting a dominant defense on the field and winning the field-position battle.

Ohio State — ranked No. 2 in the nation — played those aspects of the game to perfection, grinding out a 21-10 win over the visiting, fifth-ranked Fighting Irish to open the season with a victory.

"It's been a huge emphasis to win this way," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said. "It starts with defense, and when you can play really good, strong defense like we played tonight and we can run the football — we know we'll be able to throw the ball. We know that. But if we want to go where we need to be and reach our goals, we're going to have to do those two things, and tonight we did it."

The first drive for Ohio State's offense — one believed to be among the best in the country this season, if not the best — ended with a punt after four plays. It was a stark contrast from the expectations of the offense, one that surely wouldn't

leave the field unless a touchdown or field goal had been scored.

It was a sign of things to come, though. This was the first of what would be five punts for Ohio State and eight for Notre Dame, nearly 600 yards of combined punting in a game that was projected to finish as a high-scoring affair. Of the 13 punts on the evening, seven would land inside the 20-yard line — four of those courtesy of Ohio State punter Jesse Mirco — indicating that a special teams battle was brewing.

The game's emphasis on special teams and field position, of course, was a result of underperforming offenses. Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud and company scored the Buckeyes' lone touchdown of the first half in the first quarter, capping off a 4-play, 54-yard drive with a 31-yard touchdown pass to sophomore wideout Emeka Egbuka. On the final four drives of the half, the Buckeyes totaled just 98 yards with no points to show for it after a missed 39-yard field goal by

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Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State received a boost from its defense en route to a 21-10 win over No. 5 Notre Dame at Ohio Stadium. While the Buckeyes' defense settled in just after the game's opening whistle, Ohio State's offense lagged behind at times before finding a rhythm in the second half. Here are some choices from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members and readers on the Buckeyesports.com Forum for players who were worthy of winning Buckeye Leaves.

Andy Anders, BSB: With all the talk surrounding 2021 five-star defensive ends J.T. Tuimoloau and Jack Sawyer, it was another key 2021 defensive line commit that shined brightest on defense against Notre Dame.

Consensus four-star Mike Hall, playing mostly the one-technique defensive tackle with some three-technique mixed in, made plays all over the field. He was in Notre Dame sophomore quarterback Tyler Buchner's lap all evening, recording several pressures and what could be considered the game-sealing sack. He blew up the middle on a plethora of Fighting Irish runs as well, mounting a considerable four tackles (three solo) considering he's mostly a nose guard.

Hall's emergence in this game, if he can sustain this level of play, gives Ohio State a game-changing interior presence moving forward.

Jack Emerson, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf goes to former walk-on turned scholarship wide receiver Xavier Johnson. While the Ohio State offense sputtered during the first half and for much of the

third quarter, Johnson stepped up in a huge way. After collecting the first reception of his five-year Ohio State career one play earlier, he hauled in his first career touchdown on a 24-yard strike from C.J. Stroud and gave the Buckeyes their first lead of the second half.

On the ensuing kickoff, Johnson raced past the Notre Dame kick return coverage team to make a huge tackle and force Notre Dame to start its next drive from its own 13-yard line. Johnson's back-to-back key plays not only changed the complexion of the game but also re-engaged an Ohio Stadium crowd desperate for big plays.

Braden Moles, BSB: When Ohio State's offense struggled to get into a rhythm, it wasn't quarterback C.J. Stroud, wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba or running back TreVeyon Henderson that helped get things back in motion. No, the man of the hour was the man known as none other than Pork Chop: running back Miyan Williams.

Williams' bruising rushing attack totaled 84 yards and a touchdown on 14 carries – good for 6.0 yards per rush, just trailing Henderson's 6.1 average – and few plays got a louder response from the 106,594 fans in attendance than those where Williams got a head of steam and ran through Notre Dame's defense in the second half, not to mention his impressive 12-yard snag near the sideline. He made a case against the Irish that his carries should remain consistent with Henderson's.

BSB Subscribers

BuckeyeScott: Give some to the leader of the Defense that led the team with 9 tackles and 2 sacks, Tommy Eichenberg. I'm thinking the

defensive guys are going to get their share of Buckeye Leaves this year!

AnthonyBuckeye: Mike Hall for being unstoppably disruptive. Miyan Williams for willing the winning fourth-quarter drive and his unbelievable catch. Xavier Johnson for a TD catch followed immediately by a physical tackle on the kickoff. Tommy Eichenberg for tackling and sacking all game long. Jack Sawyer for physically sealing off one edge all game long. Emeka Egbuka for a coming-out party, Lathan Ransom for keeping the ND TE (Michael Mayer) in check. The whole D (Coach Knowles) for the second-half shutout. C.J. Stroud for the great second-half effort when the passing game wasn't working. Last but not least, the beautiful Scarlet-decorated Buckeye Stadium that was full to the brim.

Poster That Harley Built: In a big win like that there are always going to be plenty of leaves to go around: Mike Hall, Jesse Mirco, Miyan Williams, Xavier Johnson. C.J. Stroud for never giving up. And about 11 Buckeye Leaves for Jim Knowles.

bstu9: I give mine to Emeka Egbuka. With JSN out, Egbuka was the best receiver on the field and looks like he may become the next great WR at Ohio State.

PeyoteBuck: Mike Hall is a different breed, he's amazing. But my number one pick is Williams who carried the Bucks through the second half. And a big shout-out to Xavier Johnson, who knew?



From The Message Board

The No. 2-ranked Ohio State Buckeyes opened their season with a 21-10 win over No. 5 Notre Dame at Ohio Stadium in a game that was defined by Ohio State's defense rather than its highly touted offense. We asked readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what their impressions were of the first game of the season. Here are some of the responses:

"Coach (Jim) Knowles' D is refreshing. The disruptive tackle play with Jack Sawyer sealing off one edge was amazing. There appeared to be much less rotation of the players on defense than in previous years and the players knew and executed their roles so well. Limiting a celebrated ND TE (Michael Mayer) to less than 35 yards was unbelievable. The toughness and physicality on both sides of the ball were impressive. The run game willing the Buckeyes to a victory and the linebacker play, I believe, makes this team unstoppable."

– Anthony Buckeye

"I think OSU fans are going to whine about the offense. I really think it's a nothing burger and they will be fine. The defense was picture perfect. I was very surprised."

–Tiffin Buckeye

"Funny how some of our fanbase forgets that Notre Dame was ranked No. 5. The defense saved the day as Ryan Day knew what he was doing pursuing Jim Knowles with a big contract as coordinator. Miyan Williams was a beast!"

– Bob Cody

"Take away a circus catch by a player lying on his back after bobbling it three times and OSU wins 21-3 and covers the spread."

– Terrier Buck

"The offense will bounce back and the defense is clearly improved. The defense is much more aggressive and much more disciplined in reading their keys. We had three sacks last year after we had games and games last year without any sacks. We just beat the No. 5 team in the country in a primetime matchup."

– BuckeyeScott

"Defense wins championships, especially when it is paired with a high-powered offense, which we will see in the weeks to come, especially when Day unleashes TreVeyon Henderson, who despite being held back, averaged 6.1 yards on 15 carries."

– Mcarr

"Other than a few scattered plays, the defense was rock solid, and let's face it, there are always going to be a few of those scattered plays in any game. The Buckeye running game wasn't particularly good early but picked up momentum as the game went on and then Miyan Williams just started steamrolling defenders. Henderson was solid, and he will have his plays where he breaks away. The biggest thing I liked was that the Buckeyes had a harder edge to them. The running game in the fourth quarter would have made Woody proud!!!"

– Michael Bauer

"Excellent improvement on defense. Great pursuit, good tackling and gaps covered. On offense, it reminds me of how we started last year...slowly and just rocketed forward. No panic, no worry, just things to work on. Great opener!"

– John Lanning

"Offense was very disappointing. Stroud didn't have his best game. The running game was great but I thought we waited way too long before utilizing it. The defense looked much better. Michael Hall was a monster."

– bstu9

"I really enjoy surprises like Xavier Johnson. Kudos to him! His will be an interesting career to follow."

– PeyoteBuck

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Buckeyes Embrace Gritty Over Glitter

The evolution of Ohio State football over the past few years has transformed the program from power to finesse, from efficient to exciting, from plodding to marauding – and it's been a successful transition. During the preceding decade, the Buckeyes took the field 130 times and won 117 of those games, a most enviable .900 winning percentage.

Yet there were times when the machine slipped its gears, and all of those victories accounted for just one national championship. Meanwhile, Alabama won four titles with its most recent coming two years ago courtesy of a decisive 52-24 stomping of Ohio State.

And somewhere along the line, I'm sure much to the chagrin of the ghost of Woody Hayes, the Buckeyes picked up a reputation for being soft. There were notable double-digit, what-the-hell-just-happened losses to Virginia Tech, Iowa and Purdue during Urban Meyer's tenure, but the three most recent defeats under Ryan Day left some believing that Ohio State had mortgaged the mortal soul of the program for the sake of a headline-grabbing offense.

There was little doubt that Alabama was the more athletic team on the field during the 2020 national championship game, but the Buckeyes lost at home early last season to an Oregon team that finished with four losses and then got manhandled by a Michigan team that then got manhandled itself in a College Football Playoff semifinal by eventual national champion Georgia.

You know all of this, of course, but it still didn't seem to sink in. The Buckeyes entered the 2022 season as a consensus No. 2 team in most preseason polls and the prohibitive favorite to run away with the Big Ten championship. All past sins were forgiven apparently in the wake of a new-look defense under new defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, who spent the better part of the summer stating matter-of-factly that the Buckeyes would indeed be much-improved on that side of the ball.

That improvement seemed a bit lacking in the early going against Notre Dame when OSU defensive back Josh Proctor whiffed on a tackle, and Fighting Irish receiver Lorenzo Styles turned a short sideline pass into a 54-yard gain on the first play from scrimmage. That blow to the ego was exacerbated when another 15 yards was tacked onto the end of the play after defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau was flagged for roughing Irish quarterback Tyler Buchner.

Goody, goody. The first play of the season for the Ohio State defense, supposedly improved in both mental and physical toughness, results in a chunk play with a personal foul penalty thrown in for good measure. I'm sure a chorus of "here we go again" was heard throughout Buckeye Nation.

Perhaps, though, that initial shot in the chops was what the Buckeyes needed. Notre Dame got next-to-nothing on its subsequent two plays, and then faced with a third-and-9, the Irish called for a quarterback draw. But as Buchner moved toward the line of scrimmage, Tuimoloau quickly closed the hole, forcing the Notre Dame QB to bounce outside, where linebacker Steele Chambers finished him off after a 1-yard gain.

UND kicked a 33-yard field goal to take a 3-0 lead at the 12:13 mark of the first quarter, but the Buckeyes had clearly righted themselves on defense. After that first play of 54 yards, a pretty good Fighting Irish offense was limited to just 199 total yards the rest of the way.

Perhaps the stat Knowles liked best, however, was that Notre Dame was only 3 for 13 on third-down conversions, a point of emphasis for the new defensive coordinator. OSU often

struggled to get opposing offenses off the field last year, ranking next to last in the Big Ten and 96th nationally in defensive third-down percentage.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

After Notre Dame drove 87 yards in 10 plays, chewing up more than five minutes in the process, to regain the lead at 10-7 with just under 12 minutes left in the second quarter, Ohio State put the hammer down. The final six possessions in the game for the Fighting Irish netted only 116 yards with each ending in punts. What's more, the Buckeyes never allowed Notre Dame to get past the OSU 35-yard line on those final six drives.

"The story of the night was the defense," Day said. "To turn around after what's been said about them in the offseason – questioning their toughness – and to play the way they did against the No. 5 team in the country, I'm proud of our guys."

His guys were proud of themselves, too.

"We were called soft all last year," said OSU safety Lathan Ransom, who finished the game with seven tackles, "and we had to sit there and just eat it. We couldn't wait to play Notre Dame and show what our defense is all about."

There were opening-game problems and more than a few missed assignments, making the Ohio State defense appear to be very much still a work in progress. After the first week, however, that progress seems evident enough.

Making A Statement

Anyone still doubtful that Day remains stubbornly wedded to a high-octane passing attack must have missed the Notre Dame game.

C.J. Stroud didn't become a Heisman Trophy candidate for nothing, and there were times early in the game when the Buckeyes appeared to favor throwing the ball even though it seemed Notre Dame was daring them to do so. But with Jaxon Smith-Njigba basically a nonfactor after taking an elbow to the back of the head and twisting his leg on the same play early in the first quarter, the OSU passing game was obviously at less than full strength.

Most observers looked at Stroud's final numbers against the Irish as pedestrian, but I would suggest that 223 yards and two touchdowns on 24-of-34 passing with no interceptions is anything but pedestrian. Those numbers will only get better as the competition eases a bit over the next couple of weeks and OSU's new crop of receivers get better at route-running, catching the less-than perfect throw, and becoming aware of where the first-down marker is located.

While the passing game was merely purring rather than percolating, Day finally decided to take his running game for a spin in the second half. After totaling only 50 yards on the ground in the first half, the Buckeyes amassed 122 on 24 second-half attempts as Miyan Williams and TreVeyon Henderson were finally unleashed.

Full disclosure. I've never been a fan of a two-back system, especially when one of the backs is a five-star talent the caliber of Henderson. But it was the 5-9, 225-pound Williams playing the role of wrecking ball during the latter stages of a 14-play, 95-yard statement drive that took more than seven minutes off the fourth-quarter clock. Williams rushed sev-

en times for 49 yards and added a 12-yard reception during the drive, capping things with a 2-yard bull rush into the end zone.

The drive accomplished two things. It turned a narrow four-point lead into a two-score game for the Buckeyes and, perhaps more importantly, established the fact that Ohio State can control the line of scrimmage in the latter stages of a game. That was an attribute seldom seen by last year's team.

Together, Williams and Henderson combined to rush for 175 yards on 29 carries with nary a one of those attempts resulting in lost yardage.

There was also one other facet of the running game that Day chose to unveil. He instructed Stroud to run not one but two conventional, under-center quarterback sneaks, and the Ohio State quarterback converted each for first downs.

An offensive line that has the ability to provide opportunities in short-yardage situations is another crucial piece to a championship puzzle, and success on 4 of 5 third-down conversions of 3 yards or fewer was more than encouraging.

"It's been a huge emphasis to win this way," Day said. "It starts with defense. If you can play really strong defense like we played tonight and we can run the football – we know we'll be able to throw the ball – we can reach our goals, and tonight we did."

Fun Facts

- Since The Associated Press began ranking college football teams in 1936, Ohio State had welcomed to Ohio Stadium seven nonconference opponents ranked among the top five – and had never won. Before beating fifth-ranked Notre Dame, the Buckeyes were 0-6-1 in such matchups with a 10-10 tie with No. 4 UCLA in 1976 the only non-loss on that ledger. The other games were losses to No. 5 Oklahoma in 2017, No. 3 USC in 2009, No. 2 Texas in 2005, No. 5 Penn State in 1978, No. 3 Oklahoma in 1977 and No. 1 Michigan State in 1951.

- Day ran his record as Ohio State head coach to 35-4, second best in program history after 39 games. Only Meyer at 36-3 had a better mark at the same juncture of his tenure. Jim Tressel, who was on hand at the OSU-Notre Dame game to help celebrate the 20th anniversary of the 2002 national championship, is third on that list at 32-7 just ahead of Earle Bruce, who was 31-8. Woody Hayes? He was 27-10-2 after his first 39 games as head coach at Ohio State.

- Marcus Freeman became the first Notre Dame head coach to lose his first two games since (believe or not) Lou Holtz in 1986. The Irish lost to Michigan and Michigan State to open that season, and then Holtz went 100-28-2 for the remainder of his 11-year stay in South Bend that included the 1988 national championship.

- Sophomore receiver Emeka Egbuka's nine receptions were the most ever for an Ohio State receiver in a game against Notre Dame. The previous high was eight by Ted Ginn Jr. during a 34-20 win against the Fighting Irish in the 2006 Fiesta Bowl. In that game, Ginn had eight catches for 167 yards and a touchdown and also added a 68-yard touchdown run.

- You all are welcome to check my math, but according to my calculations, by the time the Buckeyes and Irish meet again next September in South Bend, it will have been 31,728 days since Notre Dame's last win against Ohio State, a 7-2 victory on Oct. 31, 1936.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Smith-Njigba Exits With Leg Injury

It was a quiet night for Ohio State wideout Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who had just two receptions for 3 yards before exiting the win over Notre Dame due to a leg injury.

Smith-Njigba's left leg was rolled up in the first quarter as he was tackled on the sideline, and he then spent time working with trainers and riding an exercise bike before returning briefly, though he did not return to the game in the second half.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day indicated after the game that he hopes to have Smith-Njigba back against Arkansas State. Ohio State should hope that he returns sooner rather than later, as the offense struggled for the majority of the game with Smith-Njigba on the bench.

"It was a struggle early on," Day said. "They were a good defense. They have a lot of seniors, and when we lost Jaxon, we got a little out of rhythm, couldn't convert on third down, got a little off schedule there with a couple of things. A couple of penalties that we've got to clean up. But early games are a little bit clunky, and again, losing Jaxon threw us off a little bit and we had to respond."

Fleming, McFarquhar On Availability Report

Ohio State's availability report against Notre Dame was mostly clean, with the exception of fourth-year wide receiver Julian Fleming, who was a game-time decision but ultimately played. As with

Smith-Njigba, Day indicated that he hopes to have Fleming back against Arkansas State.

Graduate cornerback Lloyd McFarquhar was also listed as unavailable. Third-year linebacker Mitchell Melton and second-year running back Evan Pryor were also listed as unavailable and are expected to remain on the list as they nurse season-ending injuries.

NFL Scouts Descend On Columbus

All the stars were out for Ohio State's season-opening win over Notre Dame, including LeBron and Bronny James and several former Buckeyes in Joe Burrow, Justin Fields, Sam Hubbard, Jeff Okudah, Orlando Pace, Curtis Samuel and Chase Young, among others.

Also in attendance were NFL scouts representing several different organizations. According to a press box seating chart provided by Ohio State, 43 representatives from 27 different NFL teams were on-site to watch the Buckeyes' dominant defensive performance in the opener.

The Cleveland Browns, New York Giants and Green Bay Packers each had three representatives, and the San Francisco 49ers, Arizona Cardinals, Los Angeles Chargers, Indianapolis Colts, Miami Dolphins, Philadelphia Eagles, Jacksonville Jaguars, Detroit Lions, New England Patriots and Minnesota Vikings each had two representatives in attendance.

Every other team had at least one with the exception of the Kansas City Chiefs, Atlanta Falcons, New York Jets, Pittsburgh Steelers and Houston Texans.

Among those who were likely being evaluated were Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud, offensive tackles Paris Johnson Jr. and Dawand Jones or defensive end Zach Harrison, all of whom have been projected as first-round picks at one point or another. Notre Dame also had several intriguing prospects in defensive end Isaiah Foskey and tight end Michael Mayer.



SONNY BROCKWAY

BACK SOON — Wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba left in the first half of the Buckeyes' game against Notre Dame Sept. 3 after suffering a leg injury, but head coach Ryan Day expects his star wideout back soon.

Ohio Stadium Turf Renamed Safelite Field

The turf field at Ohio Stadium underwent a makeover during the offseason, with a new-look end zone and various other details changing its complexion. Ohio State announced another new addition to the field design on Aug. 26. The playing surface will now contain two sponsor logos and be named Safelite Field.

Despite the addition of a sponsored field name, Ohio Stadium will keep its name, as the Safelite Field name will only be applied to the playing surface.

The sponsored Safelite logos appear opposite the Big Ten logos that sit at the 25-yard lines.

This is the first time Ohio State will have an official field sponsor in the program's history.

Safelite is a Columbus-based glass repair and recalibration company and was the first company to have a sponsored logo on the field-goal netting at Ohio Stadium, placing its mark inside the stadium in 2014. The company's appearance on the field stems from an expanded multi-year sponsorship agreement with Ohio State.

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2022 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Sept. 3	NOTRE DAME	W, 21-10	ABC	0-1, 21-10 loss to Ohio State
Sept. 10	ARKANSAS STATE	12 p.m.	BTN	1-0, 58-3 win over Grambling State
Sept. 17	TOLEDO	7 p.m.	FOX	1-0, 37-0 win over LIU
Sept. 24	WISCONSIN	TBA	ABC	1-0, 38-0 win over Illinois State
Oct. 1	RUTGERS	3:30 p.m.	TBA	1-0, 22-21 win over Boston College
Oct. 8	at Michigan State	TBA	TBA	1-0, 35-13 win over Western Mich.
Oct. 22	IOWA	TBA	TBA	1-0, 7-3 win over South Dakota State
Oct. 29	at Penn State	TBA	TBA	1-0, 35-31 win over Purdue
Nov. 5	at Northwestern	TBA	TBA	1-0, 31-28 win over Nebraska
Nov. 12	INDIANA	TBA	TBA	1-0, 23-20 win over Illinois
Nov. 19	at Maryland	TBA	TBA	1-0, 31-10 win over Buffalo
Nov. 26	MICHIGAN	12 p.m.	FOX	1-0, 51-7 win over Colorado State

Kicker Lewis Remains Ineligible

Day said during the “Ryan Day Radio Show” on Sept. 2 that transfer kicker Parker Lewis remains ineligible to play for the Buckeyes. There’s been little update on Lewis since he transferred to Ohio State from USC in April, though he has been practicing with the team in the meantime.

If Lewis were to become eligible, it’s unclear how this would impact Ohio State’s scholarship limit. Wide receiver Xavier Johnson recently revealed that he had earned a scholarship last season, which according to Buckeye Sports Bulletin’s unofficial count, would put Ohio State at the NCAA’s 85-man scholarship limit.

Styles Sheds Black Stripe

In an alternate universe, Ohio State safety Sonny Styles would still be strolling the halls of Pickerington Central High School. Instead, Styles is making an immediate impact for the Buckeyes after reclassifying to join the program a year early.

On Aug. 30, Styles became the ninth freshman to complete the tradition of shedding his black stripe, affirming his status as a Buckeye.

Styles, originally a member of the 2023 class, ranked as the No. 2 safety and No. 3 player out of Ohio after reclassifying and joining the 2022 class, according to 247Sports’ composite score. During his final season at Pickerington Central, Styles accounted for 55 tackles, two interceptions and a forced fumble.

Despite his status as one of the youngest players on the team, Styles has flashed his potential to his coaches and teammates during fall camp.

“For somebody who was supposed to be in high school right now, he’s doing darn good,” Day said. “It’s hard when you come in during the summer and you’re supposed to be in high school, working with your high school teammates. And he’s in there at Ohio State battling at practice.”

In the secondary unit, Styles joins Oklahoma State transfer Tanner McCalister and freshmen Kye Stokes and Jyaire Brown as players to shed their black stripes. He was the first Buckeye to lose his black stripe since Aug. 20, when Dallan Hayden, Kyion Grayes, Joop Mitchell and Kenyatta Jackson completed the tradition.

Curry, Fielding Appear Against Irish

Ohio State freshman defensive end

Caden Curry and kicker Jayden Fielding were the lone freshmen to see action

against Notre Dame, according to Ohio State’s box score. Despite the preseason talk of several freshmen – including linebacker C.J. Hicks and safeties Stokes and Styles – Curry and Fielding were the only ones to take the field. Curry is believed to have seen the field only on special teams, and Fielding handled all four kickoffs for Ohio State, averaging 59.8 yards per attempt with two touchbacks.

This is in stark contrast to last season’s opener in which eight freshmen saw the field. Cornerback Denzel Burke, defensive ends Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau, running back TreVeyon Henderson, wide receivers Emeka Egbuka and Marvin Harrison Jr., offensive lineman Donovan Jackson and punter Jesse Mirco all made their debut for Ohio State.

The circumstances of the opener, though – a top-five matchup against Notre Dame – likely led to fewer freshmen seeing the field than normal. Upcoming matchups with Arkansas State and Toledo should provide plenty of opportunities for the younger players to get some time in the game.

Playoff Expanding To 12 Teams By 2026

The College Football Playoff Board of Managers voted unanimously on Sept. 2 to expand the College Football Playoff from four teams to 12 teams no later than the 2026 season, but potentially as early as the 2024 season.

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THE ROAD TO THE HORSESHOE AND BEYOND

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

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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As first reported by ESPN's Pete Thamel, the proposed format will implement a system in which the six highest-ranked conference champions and six at-large teams will round out the playoff. The four highest-ranked conference champions will obtain the top four seeds and a first-round bye.

During the first round, the higher seeds will host the lower seeds – for example, No. 5 would host No. 12 – in their home stadiums or at another site designated by the home team on either the second or third weekend of December. The four highest-ranked teams will be assigned to a New Year's Six Bowl and will await their opponents based on the results from the first round.

"I think it's exciting," Day said in an appearance on ESPN's "College GameDay." "It's going to be a little different approach to things. I think that now that there's going to be an expansion of the playoffs,

getting to the playoffs is very important and playing your best football at the end of the season will be critically important where now, you have to make sure you're on every single week."

Thamel emphasized that money drove the decision to expand as the CFP felt it was not maximizing its potential profits by operating with only four teams. The CFP's television contract with ESPN is expected to run out in 2026.

NCAA Approves Transfer Windows

The NCAA board of directors on Aug. 31 adopted new rules that provide transfer windows for athletes that allow them to maintain eligibility. The new rules differ according to what sport an athlete is participating in, with rules split up by the season they compete in – either fall, winter or spring.

For fall sports, athletes have 60 days to transfer and maintain eligibility split over two time periods, with the first being 45 days after championship selections are made and then from May 1-15, which allows for an athlete to transfer following the conclusion of their school's spring practice.

Athletes in winter sports have a 60-day window beginning the day after championship selections are made in their sport, and athletes in spring sports have Dec. 1-15 as well as a 45-day window beginning the day after championship selections are made.

Exceptions are made to these dates for



SONNY BROCKWAY

GIVING THANKS — Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman was complimentary of Ohio State, his alma mater, prior to their matchup on Sept. 3, citing former head coach Jim Tressel as an inspiration.

participants in the FBS and FCS championship games, athletes who experience a head coaching change or athletes who have athletic aid reduced, canceled or not renewed.

Along with these changes, the board opted to not approve a previously considered exception that would have allowed unlimited transfers for athletes.

Freeman Building ND Program After Tressel

As Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman prepared to set sail on his inaugural campaign as the skipper for the Fighting Irish, he dug into his experience at Ohio State for inspiration in his current role.

Freeman – who played linebacker for Ohio State from 2004-08 – pointed to several lessons that he picked up from his head coach, Jim Tressel, from his time with the Buckeyes. As Freeman was set to make his return to Columbus, for the first time as a head coach, he said he has built his program in a similar way to Tressel's.

"The best thing I observed from him is the ability to make everybody in your organization feel important but also make it

so that they are important. That's what I want to make sure we reflect here," Freeman said on Aug. 29. "Everybody in our program has to understand that their role is just as valuable as mine as the head coach. I don't care who you are. You can play on scout team, you can work in the cafeteria, you can be on the support staff, you can be the defensive or offensive coordinator, you can be a starter – everybody's role is important and they have to believe that."

"Our scout-team guys have to believe that their role is as important as mine for us to accomplish our goals," he continued. "It's a message that has to be preached every day."

Having played in a tradition-rich program like Ohio State, the importance of embracing the lore of a program is not lost on Freeman. Similarly to Ohio State, Notre Dame's history is long and storied and Freeman is hoping to tap into those traditions to get the most out of his players.

With attention to creating a culture rooted in tradition, Freeman said he learned the significance of observing the program's customs from Tressel.

"That was something that Coach

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AP Poll Releasing Late

Due to games being played on Sunday and Monday night, The Associated Press delayed the release of the AP top 25 poll until Tuesday, Sept. 6, after BSB had gone to press.

Ohio State landed at No. 2 in the preseason poll behind No. 1 Alabama, who defeated Utah State 55-0 in Week 1. It stands to reason that Ohio State would remain at No. 2 following its 21-10 win over Notre Dame, but No. 3 Georgia, which defeated No. 11 Oregon 49-3, could have a case to jump the Buckeyes.

For the latest information, stay tuned to BuckeyesSports.com.

Tressel did when we were at Ohio State,” Freeman said. “We definitely spent time understanding the history and the tradition of the place that we were playing at and the many different things that go along with being at Ohio State. To me, it’s an appreciation for what you have and an appreciation of where you get to do it. Does it correlate with winning? I think, deep down, maybe it does.

“When you love what you’re doing and where you’re doing it and you own it, I say all the time ‘We have to own it. This is our program, this is our university,’ I think you sacrifice a little bit more for it when things get hard.”

52 Buckeyes In NFL To Begin Season

NFL teams were forced to cut their rosters down to 53 players on Aug. 30, and with the season set to begin on Sept. 8, 52 former Buckeyes ultimately survived cuts and found themselves on an NFL roster.

That was no question for the likes of Nick Bosa with the 49ers or Justin Fields with the Chicago Bears, who are entering the season as clear-cut starters for their respective team. Others, such as the New Orleans Saints’ Marshon Lattimore and Michael Thomas, have been mainstays on the starting lineup for the past several seasons.

It wasn’t a given, though, for those like Trey Sermon, who was initially waived by the 49ers before getting picked up by the Eagles, or rotational pieces like the Patriots’ Shaun Wade, who had just one tackle in his first season in the NFL.

Several Buckeyes also stuck on the practice squad, with Binjamin Victor and Drue Chrisman on the Baltimore Ravens’ and Cincinnati Bengals’ squads, respectively. Jashon Cornell (Lions), Tyreke Smith (Seattle Seahawks) and Kendall Sheffield (Texans) are on the injured reserve list for their respective teams.

The Saints by far have the most Buckeyes with six, followed by the Bengals and Dallas Cowboys with four and the Denver Broncos, Washington Commanders and Lions with three each. The Buffalo Bills, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Cardinals, Chiefs, Giants and Vikings do not feature any Buckeyes.

Buckeyes who did not survive the most recent round of cuts and are not on a practice squad include Rashod Berry, Wyatt Davis, Jake Hausmann, Jalyn Holmes, Austin Mack and C.J. Saunders.

Stroud Gives \$500 Gift Cards To Teammates

Stroud is making sure his Ohio State teammates look good both on and off the field.

Stroud gave each of his teammates

a \$500 gift card to Express – a Columbus-based clothing company that is partnered with Stroud through a name, image and likeness deal – in order to buy suits for them to wear ahead of the Buckeyes’ season opener against Notre Dame.

Day said Stroud’s gesture is just another example of how he’s carried himself as more of a leader this offseason. Stroud was named a captain on Aug. 13 as a result of a team-wide vote.

“I’ve been impressed with his approach and his maturity,” Day said on Sept. 1. “That’s just an example of something he wanted to do. No one asked him to do that, and he kind of surprised me with it.”

Stroud put up gaudy numbers in his first season as the starter – throwing for over 4,400 yards and 44 touchdowns – and is primed to do so again. As the quarterback, Stroud knows the importance of exuding strong leadership qualities and said that he feels like he’s grown in that area during the offseason.

“If you ask me what a quarterback is, I would say a leader,” Stroud said at Big Ten Media Days. “Leadership is all about trust. If I have trust with my guys, they’ll do anything for me and I can do anything for them.”

As Stroud put his money where his mouth is, literally, in terms of growing as a leader, Day said his quarterback has just exuded the program’s family-like mentality through his gift-giving.

“That’s the brotherhood, that’s what it’s all about,” Day said. “You don’t typically come to Ohio State because of the guys on the team. A lot of the time, you don’t even know who the guys are on the team. But then once you’re here, the reason you play so hard, what motivates you, are your teammates. That goes to show you, in the short period of time, how close this team has become, and C.J. has really become a leader.”

Five Buckeyes Named AP Preseason All-Americans

Five Ohio State football players landed on the Associated Press Preseason All-American Teams on Aug. 22, with three Buckeyes named to the first team.

Henderson, Johnson and Smith-Njigba were placed on the AP Preseason All-American first team, while Stroud and Jones landed on the second team.

The Buckeyes contain the second-most total players to be named as AP Preseason All-Americans, trailing only Alabama, which registered 10 members named to either team – four on the first team and six on the second team. Georgia followed Alabama and Ohio State with four players on either team, with three on the first

Continued On Page 8



SONNY BROCKWAY

BEST OF THE BEST — Quarterback C.J. Stroud was one of five Buckeyes to be named an AP Preseason All-American, along with running back TreVeyon Henderson, offensive linemen Paris Johnson Jr. and Dawand Jones and wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba.



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Reynolds Travel is once again offering packages to all 2022 Ohio State Away Football Games and a Bengals vs. Browns Same Day trip and hope you can join us for another great football season. Here is a listing but full details are available on our website at www.reynoldstravel.com.

OSU vs Michigan State — Oct. 7-9: Two-night motorcoach trip to East Lansing area for the Ohio State vs. Michigan State game. The package includes a roundtrip motorcoach (you can purchase land only if desired) with two nights at the Marriott Grand in Grand Rapids including breakfast daily and city tour of Grand Rapids and Gerald Ford Museum and game tickets in the Ohio State Visitor section and roundtrip transportation to East Lansing for the game and fully escorted by Reynolds Travel.

OSU vs Penn State — Oct. 28-30: Two-night motorcoach trip to State College area (you can purchase land only package) and hotel accommodations at the Omni Bedford Springs Hotel for two nights with breakfast daily, a tour of Bedford area, and game tickets in the Ohio State Visitor section and roundtrip transportation to State College for the game and fully escorted by Reynolds Travel.

OSU vs Northwestern — Nov. 3-6: Three-

night motorcoach trip to the windy city, Chicago (you can purchase land only package) and hotel accommodations for 3 nights at the Embassy Suites Magnificent Mile with breakfast included daily and Manager’s party (except game day) with a tour of Wrigley Field and Northwestern University and game tickets in Ohio State visitor section and game day transportation to Evanston and fully escorted by Reynolds Travel.

OSU vs Maryland — Nov. 17-20: Three-night motorcoach trip to Alexandria, Virginia (land-only package available) at the Alexandria Hotel in the center of Alexandria with breakfast daily, a tour of the Naval Academy with lunch at the Academy Club, and a tour of Mount Vernon and game tickets in the Ohio State Visitor Section and roundtrip transportation to College Park, Maryland for the game.

NFL Game-Bengals vs. Browns — Dec. 11: Same day motorcoach trip to Cincinnati and game tickets in Section 334 in lower rows.

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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team and one on the second.

Smith-Njigba highlights the Buckeyes' first-teamers, entering the 2022 season off of a record-breaking sophomore campaign in which he shattered single-season program records in receptions (95) and receiving yards (1,606).

As a freshman, Henderson broke the freshman touchdown record – scoring 19 times during his first season with the program. He added 1,248 rushing yards, for an average of 6.8 yards per carry, in 2021. Johnson played a key role in opening those holes for Henderson, starting at guard for the Buckeyes in 2021. This season, Johnson slots back into his natural position at left tackle, where he rose to be the No. 1 tackle prospect in the 2020 class according to 247Sports' composite score.

Stroud slotted in as the second-team quarterback behind reigning Heisman Trophy winner Bryce Young, who earned first-team honors. Stroud threw for 4,435 yards, 44 touchdowns and six interceptions while completing 71.9 percent of his passes during his first season as the starter. He finished fourth in Heisman Trophy voting last season.

Jones started in 14 games for the Buckeyes last season, aiding the Buckeyes to No. 1 ranks in yards per game (561.5) and points per game (45.7).

Six Buckeyes On NFL Top 100

The NFL has released the league's Top 100 Players for the 2022 season, and six former Buckeyes are featured among the honorees.

San Francisco 49ers defensive end Nick Bosa is the top-ranked Buckeye, checking in at No. 25 on the list. He finished last season with 15½ sacks and four forced fumbles, and though the 49ers' season came to an end in the NFC Championship Game against the Los Angeles Rams, Bosa still finished with 1½ sacks in the loss.

The next Buckeye on the list could take issue with his ranking, as Los Angeles Chargers defensive end Joey Bosa – older brother of Nick – was No. 30 on the list. Joey finished with 10½ sacks and seven forced fumbles in 16 games for the



FILE PHOTO

BUCKEYES IN THE NFL — Former Ohio State defensive end and current San Francisco 49er Nick Bosa was ranked among the top 100 players in the NFL entering the upcoming season. He received the highest ranking of any Buckeye, checking in at No. 25.

Chargers, and he moved up from No. 32 on last year's list.

Pittsburgh Steelers defensive lineman Cam Heyward was the next Buckeye on

the list, moving up to No. 42 from No. 57 last year. Last season was Heyward's 11th in the NFL, and he turned in one of his best campaigns with 89 tackles, 10 sacks, nine pass breakups and a forced fumble in 17 games.

The only offensive player on the list was Los Angeles Chargers center Corey Linsley, who maintained his ranking of No. 60 on this year's list. Linsley was named second-team All-Pro and was selected to the Pro Bowl last season.

Cleveland Browns cornerback Denzel Ward was next up at No. 87, making his debut on the NFL Top 100. Ward finished last season – his fourth in the NFL – with 43 tackles, 10 pass breakups and three interceptions, one of which he ran back 103 yards for a touchdown.

The final Buckeye on the list was New Orleans Saints cornerback Marshon Lattimore, who fell to No. 89 from No. 86 last year. Lattimore had a career-high 68 tackles and finished with three interceptions, the most since he nabbed five picks in his rookie season in 2017.

Former Ohio State players on last year's list who did not make the cut this year are New Orleans Saints wide receiver Michael Thomas, who was No. 72, and Washington Commanders defensive end Chase Young, who was No. 61 in his first appearance on the NFL Top 100. Both missed time last season with injuries.

WBB Announces Non-Con Schedule

The Ohio State women's basketball team announced the program's full non-conference schedule for the upcoming season on Sept. 1.

Following an exhibition against Notre Dame College on Oct. 31, Ohio State will officially begin its season on Nov. 8 by hosting the Tennessee Volunteers. The Buckeyes will then play their next two games on the road against Boston College on Nov. 13 and Ohio on Nov. 17.

Ohio State will then return home to

Brutus Level VIPs To Be Recognized

If you have wanted to show your support for Buckeye Sports Bulletin through the VIP program but are unable to participate at the Scarlet, Elite or Elite-Plus level, now is the time to sign up at the Brutus level for just \$50. Brutus level VIPs are recognized in BSB twice a year, and we will be running the complete list of Brutus VIPs during football season. VIP donors help Buckeye Sports Bulletin stay alive and vibrant.

"We want to thank the many BSB readers who have stepped up and shown their support for Buckeye Sports Bulletin through the VIP program," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said. "It is a true vote of confidence in what we are doing now, what we have done the previous 41 years and what we plan to do in the future."

A VIP upgrade can easily pay for itself each year with special VIP discounts and perks.

VIP subscribers enjoy a 20 percent discount at Conrads College Gifts. 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 a card good for \$10 off your next food purchase at any Cameron Mitchell Restaurant.

As mentioned, 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.

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

The following are our Elite Wachsman, Elite-Plus, Elite and Scarlet VIP subscribers.

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Scarlet VIPs: Anthony Ananthanarayanan, Rochester, Mich.; Greg Brooks, Gahanna, Ohio; Marty Brumbaugh, Troy, Ohio; Joseph A. Cusma Sr., Massillon, Ohio; Dennis Dahm, Sandusky, Ohio; Julie Ellis, Apple Valley, Calif.; Tom Goila, Cincinnati; Richard G. Hannan Jr., Chillicothe, Ohio; 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.

face McNeese State on Nov. 20, Wright State on Nov. 23 and North Alabama on Nov. 27 before playing at Louisville as part of the ACC/Big Ten Challenge on Nov. 30.

Wrapping up the nonconference schedule, the Buckeyes will host New Hampshire on Dec. 8 and Albany on Dec. 16 before playing in the San Diego Invitational from Dec. 20-21. Ohio State will face South Florida in the first game and either Arkansas or Oregon on the second day.

Ohio State has yet to announce dates or times for any Big Ten competition, though home and away opponents have been announced. The Buckeyes will play home-and-away series with Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Northwestern; host Illinois, Iowa, Michigan State and Purdue; and go on the road to play Nebraska, Penn State, Rutgers and Wisconsin.

Jack Emerson and Braden Moles contributed to this report. For up-to-the-minute Ohio State news and discussion, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com, and the BSB Fan Forum, available to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

Staff Misses With Predictions For The Notre Dame Game

It's football season, which means the return of our popular staff predictions at the BuckeyeSports.com website. In their first week of action, BSB staff members all saw the game with Notre Dame as a shootout, rather than the 21-10 slugfest it proved to be. Newest staff member Andy Anders called it 42-27 Buckeyes, Jack Emerson had it 38-17 and Braden Moles predicted a 41-24 Ohio State victory. Predictions will continue throughout the season on the Friday before each game. BuckeyeSports.com is free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

Football season also means the return to weekly publishing of BSB print. The complete edition of each issue is posted at BuckeyeSports.com, immediately upon completion of the paper, making the site a must for readers having continuing mail problems. There is also immediate coverage after each game, and readers can discuss the game on the Fan Forum, including "The Official Game Thread" with real-time comments from BSB staff members and readers throughout the game.

There are also additional stories throughout the week, including coverage of Ryan Day's weekly press conference, as well as news from any other press availabilities leading up to the next game.

Football recruiting is a 365-day-a-year process these days, and the BSB staff has stepped up its coverage of Ohio State's quest for prep talent. We have also upped our basketball recruiting coverage, so be sure to check in regularly at BuckeyeSports.com.

Along with daily posts, we offer reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays. Also, staff members man the previously mentioned Fan Forum, interacting with subscribers on the hot topics of the day. Staffers and readers alike have also been reacting to recruiting efforts on the Forum's football and basketball recruiting threads.

Please note that recent developments with the mail service have us concerned about delivery time for BSB. We remind you again, 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. Your copy of the paper will still arrive in your mailbox at the usual time.

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

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

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago - 1982

One might have thought that Ohio State football coach Earle Bruce would have to start fall practice on one of the biggest man-hunts ever undertaken around the Buckeye grid camp. The object of Bruce's search seemed rather simple - find a replacement for Art Schlichter. But finding that replacement was not as hard as one might think.

"Sure we've lost Art Schlichter and he's a tremendous man to have to replace," Bruce said. "But I really have no concern at all over the quarterbacking position. I think that we have some very fine talent at that position - but no experience."

Then-sophomore Mike Tomczak emerged as the favorite to fill the void left by Schlichter after a freshman season in which he completed 4 of 7 pass attempts with a touchdown and interception.

35 Years Ago - 1987

When William White entered the Ohio State football scene in the summer of 1983 as a freshman out of Lima, Ohio, he brought along with him some modest expectations.

"Four years ago at this time I was in awe of everything here," White said. "All I wanted to do was make the traveling squad that first year."

"I think I've been fortunate."

White entered his senior season as a veteran of 35 games and was a starter in each game played. In his first three seasons with the program, he amassed 137 tackles and 11 interceptions.

30 Years Ago - 1992

Most people wanted to talk about Ohio State's offense when discussing the team's fortunes for the upcoming season.

Monopolizing the conversation was the usually great talent at running back, or the speed of the receivers or the enthusiasm of quarterback Kirk Herbstreit. In reality, the best running backs cannot run, the fastest receivers cannot catch and the most enthusiastic quarterback cannot lead his team to victory without benefit of a good offensive line.

"I can't say enough about our offensive line," running back Raymont Harris said. "You have to have a good line in front of you to perform, and I think I'll be able to perform real well with those guys in front of me this year."

Among those projected to start on the Buckeyes' of-

fensive line were center Paul Long, guards Dave Monnot and Len Hartman, and tackles Alan Kline and Jason Winrow.

25 Years Ago - 1997

It was supposed to be the feel-good, coming-out party for the defending Rose Bowl champions.

It turned into something of a dogfight.

Ohio State survived a rocky first half but came alive nicely in the third quarter to dispatch Wyoming 24-10 in the Eddie Robinson Football Classic on Aug. 28 at Ohio Stadium.

"I guess the best thing about tonight was we were able to win the ballgame," head coach John Cooper said. "We were up against a very scrappy football team."

20 Years Ago - 2002

OSU freshman tailback Maurice Claret made it clear five days before his team's season opener against Texas Tech in the Pigskin Classic that things weren't right with the Buckeyes.

"We are not going in confident because we have not been having a good week of practice," Claret said.

Whether his words were meant to psych him or his teammates was unclear, but Claret delivered the goods on Aug. 24, 2002, at Ohio Stadium.

The freshman rushed 21 times for 175 yards and three touchdowns, including spectacular runs of 59 and 45 yards, as the Buckeyes crushed Texas Tech 45-21.

15 Years Ago - 2007

Former Ohio State University President Karen Holbrook created a statewide stir when comments about her former employer became public the week before Ohio State's 2007 football season opener.

She reportedly said she had to deal with a "culture of rioting" at Ohio State, one where, "They think it's fun to flip cars, to really have absolute drunken orgies."

"When you win a game, you riot. When you lose a game, you riot. When spring comes, you riot."

10 Years Ago - 2012

A total of 105,309 fans showed up at Ohio Stadium and millions more at home tuned in to the Big Ten Network broadcast expecting to see the Urban Meyer era officially begin at Ohio State just after noon on Sept. 1.

The 18th-ranked Buckeyes prevailed 56-10 against overmatched Miami (Ohio). Meyer's debut as head

coach for the team he grew up cheering for in Ashtabula, Ohio, and for which he was a graduate assistant in the mid-1980s had a little bit of everything.

The Buckeyes' 56 points were their most since a 73-20 victory of Eastern Michigan on Sept. 25, 2010. Quarterback Braxton Miller set a single-game QB record with 161 yards rushing and added 207 through the air to finish with the sixth-most total yards in a game in a school history.

Ohio State gained 538 total yards and won the turnover battle 3-0. Bradley Roby also got the special teams involved as he recovered a muffed punt snap in the end zone for a touchdown.

Five Years Ago - 2017

Ohio State wrestler Kyle Snyder continued his illustrious career by claiming the gold medal at the 97-kg weight class, after winning four straight matches at the Senior World Championships in Paris from Aug. 21-26.

Snyder, a 2016 Olympic champion, won his first two matches with 10-0 technical falls over Mamed Ibragimov of Kazakhstan and then Naoya Akaguma of Japan. In the semifinals, Snyder defeated Aslanbek Alborov of Azerbaijan, 9-2.

In the final, Snyder scored a spin-behind takedown in the final 20 seconds to pull off a tight 6-5 win over Russia's Abdulrashid Sadulaev.

One Year Ago - 2021

The untested quarterback became tested as redshirt freshman quarterback C.J. Stroud overcame early jitters in his first career start to lead No. 4 Ohio State to a 45-31 win against Minnesota at Huntington Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.

Stroud, who entered the game never having thrown a pass in college, threw for 294 yards and four second-half touchdowns while the defense made a key play in the comeback win. Defensive tackle Haskell Garrett produced a 32-yard scoop-and-score off a strip-sack by defensive end Zach Harrison to lift Ohio State's lead to 31-21.

Stroud finished 13 of 22 with one interception after going 8 of 14 for 58 yards in the first half.

"In the first half, my mind wasn't right," Stroud said. "I was kind of all over the place a little bit. I talked to my teammates, prayed a lot, and tried to block that out. I don't feel like I did terribly, but I definitely didn't do as much as I could."

Offense Struggles, Defense Steps Up Vs. Irish

Continued From Page 1

Noah Ruggles and ultimately entered the half facing a 10-7 deficit.

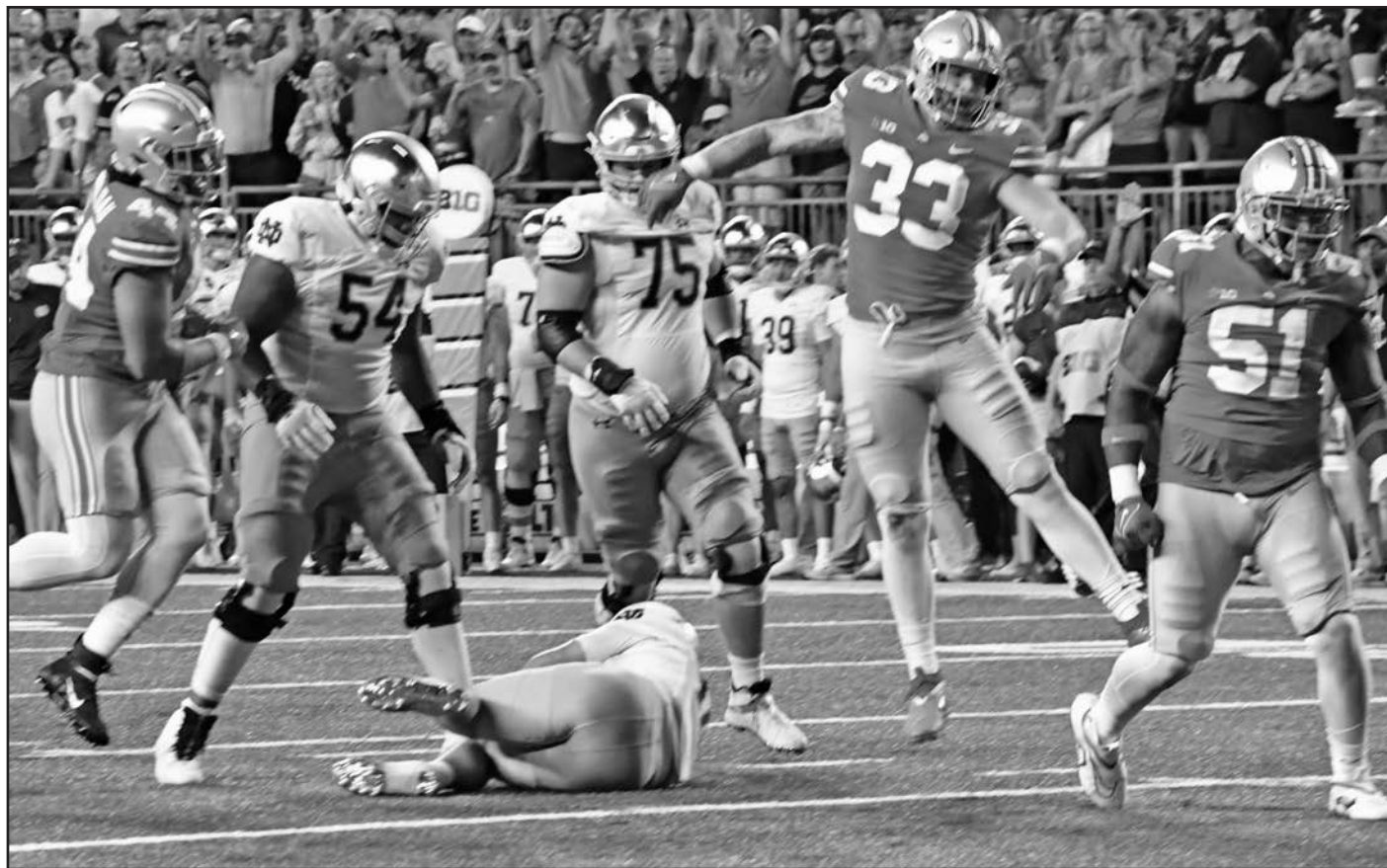
The main culprit in Ohio State's struggles was wideout Jaxon Smith-Njigba, or at least the lack of his presence. Smith-Njigba caught just one reception for 4 yards in the first quarter before leaving due to a leg injury, and though he briefly returned late in the first half, he did not see the field in the second half. Day said he hoped Smith-Njigba – as well as Julian Fleming, who was a game-time decision but ultimately did not play – would be back next week, but that didn't mitigate his loss against the Irish.

"It was a struggle early on," Day said. "They were a good defense. They have a lot of seniors, and when we lost Jaxon, we got a little out of rhythm, couldn't convert on third down, got a little off schedule there with a couple of things. And there were a couple of penalties that we've got to clean up. But early games are a little bit clunky, and again, losing Jaxon threw us off a little bit and we had to respond."

Stroud struggled at times to move the ball with Smith-Njigba on the bench, though he was able to forge a connection with Eg-buka, who led the Buckeyes with nine receptions for 90 yards and a touchdown.

"I do think in the passing game, when we really needed it, we were efficient," Stroud said. "We were struggling early on trying to get a connection, trying to build that rhythm. But toward the end, we kept going, we started to get it, and we started clicking more. We were playing the No. 5 team in the country, and first games are always kind of weird. It's kind of weird being out there again, to be honest, just seeing the fans, dealing with all the outside noise, just trying to lock in."

Notre Dame's offense saw similar struggles courtesy of Ohio State's defense, which had an impressive debut under defensive coordinator Jim Knowles. The Buckeyes allowed just 10 points to the Irish, all coming in the first half, and gave up just 253 total



SONNY BROCKWAY

JACK ATTACK — Defensive end Jack Sawyer (33) lined up at defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' Jack position against Notre Dame and was all over the field, just one piece of Ohio State's dominant defensive performance.

yards.

"I'm really happy for the players," Knowles said. "We had a play here or there that we gave up, but what I'm most pleased with is the fact that they never flinched. They bought into everything that I've been asking them to do, and there were one or two bad plays that didn't affect them at all. I saw a great focus, and that's a big deal. I think you saw guys playing fast, too."

The end result was a win for Ohio State's defense, but things didn't start out cleanly. Notre Dame's first play from scrimmage was a 54-yard connection between quarterback Tyler Buchner, who was making his first career start, and wide receiver Lorenzo Styles Jr., son of Ohio State great Lorenzo Styles and brother of current Ohio State safety Sonny Styles. It ended up being the longest play of the night for both teams.

It was all because of a missed tackle and there was concern that things might not be fixed for the defense, but those fears were quickly put to rest.

After the Buckeyes held the Irish to just a field goal on that first possession, the next two drives for the Irish ended with punts, and by the end of the night, there was little to show for Notre Dame's offense or for tight end Michael Mayer, considered one of the biggest threats for Ohio State entering the game. He finished the night with a team-high five receptions for 32 yards, with most of them coming on a 17-yard gain in the third quarter.

"It's really difficult," Knowles said of defending Mayer. "It's hard to get doubles on that guy. I thought we did decent. He's going to be in a lot of one-on-one matchups and we had our guys ready to play that, but they were aware."

The revamped defense is what kept Ohio State in the game, a drastic shift from the usual circumstance of the offense bailing out the defense recently. The strong second-half defensive effort (zero points, 72 total yards) allowed time for Ohio State's

offense to recuperate, eventually taking the lead after walk-on turned scholarship receiver Xavier Johnson snared a 24-yard pass from Stroud to give the Buckeyes a 14-10 advantage late in the third period, before the eventual 21-10 final.



SONNY BROCKWAY

SECOND ACT — Quarterback C.J. Stroud had a renewed performance in the second half against Notre Dame, throwing for 124 yards and a touchdown in the final 30 minutes.

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While the way in which Ohio State won was a matter of circumstance, the final result – a win driven by the defense in which the team did not back down from a challenge – plays exactly into what Day has preached this offseason.

“The story of the night was the defense,” Day said. “To turn around after what’s been said about them in the offseason, questioning their toughness, and playing the way they did against the No. 5 team in the country, I’m proud of our guys. If we continue to win games like that, then that’s how we’ll win games. When you can win different ways, it says a lot about your team as well. I think this game is going to pay dividends down the road.”

Most of the game was a grinder in the trenches, but that doesn’t mean it was all old-school. Stroud still finished with 223 passing yards and a pair of scores on 24-of-34 passing, with most of that coming in the second half. The opener showed that Ohio State – even if it doesn’t look pretty at times, like teams of a certain former coach who was in attendance – is built to win football games, no matter how they go about it.

“We have to find ways to win like that because there’s going to be games in the Big Ten like that,” Day said. “Notre Dame’s kind of built like some of the Big Ten teams we play. For teams that want to run the ball and eat up the clock and keep the offense off the field, we have to run the ball in those moments like we did. We had to do that. And that was something that we spent a lot of time in the offseason saying, ‘We have to be able to win ugly on offense and we have to stop the run on defense,’ and that’s what happened tonight.”

“They all count the same, and you have to figure out, based on going in, how do you want to win that game? And when you have that versatility, it’s going to pay off down the road. This is a huge start for us.”

Pork Chop Cooks Irish

Arguably the biggest part of Ohio State being able to grind out the win was running back Miyan Williams. The third-year back – who was given the nickname “Pork Chop” by former Ohio State linebacker Baron Browning when Williams arrived on campus in 2020 – was one of the few consistent aspects to the Buckeyes’ offensive attack against Notre Dame.

Williams rushed for just 20 yards on four carries in the first half, but he got his chance to shine on one of Ohio State’s final drives of the game. After the Buckeyes took the 14-10 lead over the Irish off Johnson’s touchdown reception from Stroud, they forced a punt and got the ball back with just under 12 minutes remaining in the contest.



SONNY BROCKWAY

LET CHOP COOK — Third-year running back Miyan Williams (3) was a key part of Ohio State’s offensive resurgence in the second half that led the way to a 21-10 win over Notre Dame, scoring a touchdown with just under five minutes left to put the game out of reach.

Looking to maintain the lead while letting some time trickle off, Ohio State turned to Williams. He helped move the chains early in the drive with a sliding 12-yard reception on the sideline and then proceeded to rush seven times for 49 yards on the drive, eventually finding the end zone on a 2-yard rush to ice the game for Ohio State. He finished the game with 84 yards on 14 carries (6.0 yards per rush) and the rushing score.

“Miyan had a really good preseason, so to see him run like this was great for him,” Day said. “Those were 84 hard-earned yards. He made the big catch, too. That was a huge play on a scramble. I’m happy for Miyan.”

Day emphasized that the Buckeyes were looking to display toughness in the win over Notre Dame, and Williams’ powerful rushing style was a big part of that accomplish-

ment.

“We wanted to be known as something other than just talented,” Day said. “I hope that showed tonight that we can be. We have to continue to prove it, but the way Miyan ran, the way TreVeyon (Henderson)

ran on that last drive, they were running hard. They were determined.

“They were in that huddle saying, ‘Everything we’ve worked on, we have to finish the game right now.’ Again, was it perfect? No. But I didn’t expect it to be. First game, things like this happen. You have to recalibrate a little bit and make some adjustments, but we will.”

Quality Crowd At Ohio Stadium

Ohio State announced a crowd of 106,594 fans at Ohio Stadium for the season-opening win over Notre Dame. While the announced crowd often does not reflect the true attendance, Ohio Stadium looked at full capacity for the contest.

The attendance mark is just short of cracking the top 20 largest crowds at Ohio Stadium, trailing an Oct. 18, 2014, matchup with Army in which 106,795 fans filled into Ohio Stadium. The top mark remains Ohio State’s matchup with Michigan on Nov. 26, 2016, in which 110,045 filled up the stands.

This was the fifth-largest home-opener crowd in Ohio Stadium history, slotting in ahead of 105,092 fans at a Sept. 5, 2009, contest against Navy. Home openers with more fans include Sept. 9, 2017, against Oklahoma (109,088), Sept. 6, 2014, against Virginia Tech (107,517), Sept. 3, 2016, against Bowling Green (107,193) and Sept. 12, 2015, against Hawaii (107,145).

“I’m glad we played them at home, because this crowd was awesome,” Day said. “To see the support of Buckeye Nation for this game, leading up to this game, all the former players coming back, it was tremendous to see all the people come to this game with such energy and be here early.”

“The whole ‘Shoe was packed and we were just coming out for warmups. That says so much for our kids, and we can’t thank Buckeye Nation and the fans and appreciate all the people that came to this game (enough). It meant a lot to us.”




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Defense Passes First Test Against Notre Dame

Entering the 2022 season, questions circulated regarding No. 2-ranked Ohio State's defense after an offseason defined by coaching turnover and the installation of a new scheme. But by nearly all accounts, the Jim Knowles-led defense put those questions to rest during a 21-10 victory over No. 5 Notre Dame.

Not only did Knowles' defense show its merit, but the unit actually carried the Buckeyes for much of the game, especially when the Ohio State offense went six consecutive drives without scoring. Head coach Ryan Day praised Knowles and the defense for keeping the Buckeyes alive while the offense figured its issues out.

"They played with energy, running to the ball, being decisive, playing fast," Day said. "If they gave up a big play it wasn't a panic. It wasn't like, 'Oh my god, the world's coming to an end.' They just kept fighting."

"They have something to prove, we all have something to prove, and they proved they can be tough," he continued. "Now, we've got a long way to go. We've got a lot to build on, a lot to improve on. But for a first game, there's not a lot of first games where you play a top-five team in the country right out of the gates."

The Buckeyes' evening began unceremoniously, however, as Notre Dame quarterback Tyler Buchner – who started in his first game in his college career – connected with Lorenzo Styles Jr. despite taking a devastating hit from Ohio State defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau. As Styles hauled in the pass, Buckeye safety Josh Proctor over-pursued on the tackle attempt, sliding off Styles' body as he sprang free for a 54-yard gain on Notre Dame's first play from scrimmage. On top of Styles' big gain, Tuimoloau was flagged for unnecessary roughness on his hit on Buchner, which added an extra 15 yards to the play for the Fighting Irish.

Ohio State buckled down from there, though, as the Notre Dame offense sputtered on its next three plays and could not find the end zone. The primary factor keeping the

GAME NOTEBOOK Jack Emerson

Irish from pay dirt was the interior presence of defensive tackle Mike Hall, who wrapped up Notre Dame ball carriers on first and second down.

After Ohio State responded to its trying start well, Knowles said he was proud of the composure showed by his unit.

"It built a lot of confidence," he said. "We talk about explosive plays, that was one of them. I say 'five or less' and they say 'undefeated.' I program them that, 'OK, they're going to happen. One or two here.'"

"They've been trained and they've bought in from the beginning that those can happen, but all we do is turn on more steam."

Safety Lathan Ransom, who accounted for seven tackles, echoed Knowles' sentiment and emphasized that the Buckeyes remained levelheaded despite the big gain.

"That showed a lot about the defense," Ransom said. "We never lost our cool, never freaked out or pointed fingers. We're a team. The defense is a team. We're all one and we really showed that."

While Hall was a key factor in holding the Fighting Irish out of the end zone on their opening drive, he displayed a continued presence throughout the game. The Streetsboro, Ohio, native finished the evening with four tackles – two of which came for a loss – and a sack.

With attention to his big night, Hall pointed to defensive line coach Larry Johnson's continued trust and confidence in him as a component to his breakout performance.

"I came out there and played my hardest and gave it my all," Hall said. "I heard I was starting by Coach Johnson a couple of days before the game. I just took that to heart and came out and gave it my all."



SONNY BROCKWAY

DOMINANT DEFENSE — Linebacker Tommy Eichenberg (35) and defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. (51) had standout performances for Ohio State's defense that limited Notre Dame to just 10 points, recording three sacks between them.

The Buckeyes took their first lead two drives after Notre Dame's opening scoring drive, but the Fighting Irish quickly answered. Buchner led the Golden Domers on an 87-yard drive in 10 plays, capped off by a 1-yard plunge into the end zone by running back Audric Esteime. The drive was set up by a circus catch by wideout Matt Salerno, who caught the ball while lying on his back, good for 31 yards.

From there, Notre Dame was held scoreless for the game's final 42 minutes as the Ohio State defense solidified. After giving up an average of 6.5 yards per play in the first half, the Buckeyes held Notre Dame to 4.6

yards per play in the third quarter and 1.7 in the fourth on just seven plays.

As the Fighting Irish struggled to carve out chunk plays during the game's final 30 minutes, Hall said Ohio State just stuck to the game plan.

"We just had to do exactly what we did in the first half," Hall said. "We tried to stop the run. That's what Coach (Mickey) Marotti always preaches about in the weight room. I feel like that's what we did well."

Throughout the contest, the Fighting Irish tried to establish some semblance of a run game in order to aid Buchner during his first start. However, the Buckeyes' front remained a threatening presence for Notre Dame ball carriers.

Notre Dame was held to just 76 rushing yards on 30 carries for an average of 2.5 yards per carry.

"Our run defense was stout, really controlled the line of scrimmage," Knowles said. "Our guys up front, we thought that was going to be a strength. I was really pleased with all the pull plays, shifting the formations, motions that our linebackers and safeties were able to see it all."

"Coming into our first game, they saw a lot in terms of the run-game fits. And that just gives everybody confidence. It gives the fans confidence, it gives the team confidence, no matter how the offense is doing or whatever's going on. When you see guys just showing up in the right places, everybody's like, 'OK.' It may not look exceptional, but it wins games, and I was really pleased with that."

The Fighting Irish couldn't find substantial success through the air either. While Buchner was fair in his start, completing 10 of 18 attempts for 177 yards, he was flustered by pressure from the Ohio State front for nearly the entire game. Unlike last season, the Buckeyes dialed up plenty of blitzes and stunts in order to throw Buchner off his rhythm.

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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

It's hard to imagine a stronger debut for Ohio State and defensive coordinator Jim Knowles than what happened on the field against Notre Dame. Gone were the issues of last season where players were out of position, rotated too frequently or sometimes didn't even know what was going on. With the exception of a couple of breaks in coverage, things went according to plan for Ohio State's defense that allowed just 10 points to a top-five opponent.

Stars stood out at all three levels of the defense. Mike Hall Jr. dominated on the defensive line, finishing with four tackles and one of Ohio State's three sacks, and he made a good argument that he should stay on the field moving forward. Linebacker Tommy Eichenberg, one of the most talked about Buckeyes coming out of the offseason, lived up to the hype with a team-high nine tackles (three for loss) and two sacks. Safety Lathan Ransom saw significant time at the bandit, finishing with seven tackles, most behind Eichenberg, and flashed his playmaking ability.

All of them combined to limit the Irish on the ground – Notre Dame averaged 2.5 yards per carry as a team – and through the air, with quarterback Tyler Buchner finishing 10 of 18 for 177 yards. Tight end Michael Mayer hauled in five receptions for just 32 yards, a far cry from the dominant performances tight ends have had against Ohio State in recent years.

The defense appeared more aggressive, getting after tackles and moving toward the ball, and the extensive pre-snap motion worked to confuse Notre Dame, even at points requiring Irish head coach Marcus Freeman to call a timeout. Everything – from the confidence of the defense to the actual results on the field – were a welcome change from last season.

What Didn't Work

For as well as the defense played, few expected that Ohio State's offense would be the problem child. The Buckeyes went three-and-out on their first drive, and after finding the end zone on the next drive after forcing a Notre Dame punt, Ohio State would go six consecutive drives before scoring again.

According to head coach Ryan Day, this was mostly due to the loss

of star wideout Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who left the game in the first quarter after suffering a leg injury. He appeared briefly in Ohio State's second-to-last possession of the first half, but he did not appear in the second half for the Buckeyes.

This left Ohio State scrambling to fill his role on the offense, and this task led to the offense falling out of rhythm. Quarterback C.J. Stroud was just 11 of 17 for 99 yards in the first half as the Buckeyes tried to figure things out, though he ultimately finished 24 of 34 for 223 yards and two touchdowns.

Beyond the passing attack, Ohio State had trouble establishing the run game in the game's early stages. TreVeyon Henderson, after five carries and 36 yards in the first half, did not see the ball again until late in the third quarter, a drive that would ultimately end in the go-ahead score for the Buckeyes. Once Henderson – and Miyan Williams, to a similar extent – got involved again in the second half, Ohio State's offense appeared to right the wrongs from early in the contest.

Play Of The Game

Fifth-year wide receiver Xavier Johnson's first career touchdown – a 24-yard go-ahead score from C.J. Stroud – could not have come at a more perfect time for Ohio State. In fact, not only was it Johnson's first touchdown catch, but it was only the second reception for Johnson at Ohio State, with the first coming on the previous play to get the Buckeyes in scoring position.

Little was going right with Ohio State's passing attack once Smith-Njigba left the game, but Johnson's back-to-back grabs – culminated by the touchdown reception in which Johnson streaked across the middle of the field and into the end zone – appeared to cure all ills. There was just under one minute remaining in the third quarter following Johnson's score, but from that point forward, Ohio State's offense was in business.

The next drive ate up over seven minutes of clock, going 14 plays and 95 yards and ending with a 2-yard rushing touchdown from Williams to ice the game, but it was Johnson's touchdown that helped reenergize the offense to close out the win over the Irish.

— Braden Moles

One of the more threatening presences in the Ohio State pass rush was linebacker Tommy Eichenberg, who accounted for a team-best two sacks alongside nine tackles (three for loss).

As Eichenberg picked up where he left off from his 17-tackle Rose Bowl performance, he heaped praise on the defense as a whole.

"We have a lot to prove and everyone just played well," he said. "I'm extremely confident too. So that was a big part."

Egbuka, Johnson Step Up At Receiver

Expectations were high for the Ohio State passing attack entering Saturday's contest after the Buckeyes boasted the third-best offense through the air last season, averaging 380.9 yards per game. But a slow start to the evening began to temper those expectations.

Quarterback C.J. Stroud and his favorite target Jaxon Smith-Njigba were unable to rekindle their connection after Smith-Njigba was sidelined with a leg injury early in the contest. The Buckeyes were also without third-year wideout Julian Fleming and graduate Kamryn Babb. Smith-Njigba still caught two passes for 4 yards, but Stroud quickly had to pivot his attention to the depth in the wide receivers unit, one headlined by sophomores Marvin Harrison Jr., Emeka Egbuka and Jayden Ballard along with fifth-year walk-on-turned-scholarship-player Xavier Johnson.

"Jaxon is the best receiver in the country and we've built a connection, not just on the field but off of it too and that just helps us on the field. When he was out of the game, of course it affects our team and our offense, but we got the job done," Stroud said. "Xavier stepped up huge, Jayden Ballard stepped up huge, Emeka had a heck of a game, Marv played well. At the end of the day, when you boil it down and look at the scoreboard, Coach Day always says that, 'No matter what type of game it is, we always have to stick together.' I feel like that's what we did, and no matter how I played, whatever the case may be, we got the win."

Egbuka quickly emerged as Stroud's top target of the evening, hauling in the Buckeyes' first score of the season on a 31-yard catch-and-run with 5:32 remaining in the first quarter. The Steilacoom, Wash., native finished the night with nine catches for 90 yards.

"It was just a perfect ball," Egbuka said about his touchdown. "You can't ask much more from C.J. Everyone knows how great of a quarterback he is. He was able to deliver it on my outside shoulder, and by the time I turned up, no one was there."

While Egbuka played to his potential as a former five-star recruit, it was a former walk-on who would pull the Ohio State offense from its icy stretch through the second and much of the third quarter. After snagging his first career reception to push the Buckeyes to the Notre Dame 24-yard line, Johnson streaked to the middle of the field and caught the first touchdown of his career.

The score came at a much-needed time for the Buckeyes, as it vaulted Ohio State into the lead with just 17 seconds to go in the third quarter. The Scarlet and Gray would not relinquish that lead. Johnson, who has also spent time at running back and defensive back, was touted by his teammates and coaches prior to the start of the season due to his work ethic and determination to find the field. That determination paid off against Notre Dame and led Ohio State to its first win in

the young season.

"I would just start with the fact that I'm a man of God," Johnson said. "That's literally my strength. Even going into the situation, I knew that it was a big situation. You're coming in to fill the best receiver in the country's

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shoes and I knew that in myself and in my flesh, I didn't have enough in me. It was a prayer, honestly, I was just talking with the Lord and I told him, 'I'm not good enough. I can't do this. I need your strength.' And the Lord gave me strength."

Harrison added 56 yards on five recep-

tions while Ballard snagged two receptions for 14 yards. Stroud even got the tight end involved with the absence of Smith-Njigba, finding Cade Stover three times for 14 yards. Stroud finished the evening with 223 yards and two touchdowns while completing 70.6 percent of his passes.




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Defense Leads The Way In Opening Win

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Second-ranked Ohio State proved physically and mentally that it was tough enough to grind out a 21-10 comeback victory over No. 5 Notre Dame in the season opener for both storied programs at Ohio Stadium on Sept. 3.

Third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud struggled without his favorite receiver, Jaxon Smith-Njigba, but engineered two second-half drives to overcome a 10-7 halftime deficit before a fervent crowd of 106,594.

Xavier Johnson, a former walk-on receiver who earned a scholarship, caught a 24-yard touchdown pass from Stroud with 17 seconds left in the third quarter for the go-ahead score, 14-10, and backup running back Miyan Williams plowed in from the 2 with 4:51 remaining in the game to seal the victory, the fifth straight for OSU over the Fighting Irish.

But it was the defense under new defensive coordinator Jim Knowles that provided the route to the Buckeyes' 23rd straight season-opening win back to 1999.

After the Buckeyes were burned for 54 yards on the first play from scrimmage, Notre Dame totaled just 199 yards on the next 47 plays (4.2 average) the rest of the game. The Irish did not score on their last six possessions, being shut out the final 41:56.

"I'm really happy for the players," Knowles said. "We had a play here or there

that we gave up, but what I'm most pleased with is the fact that they never flinched. I saw a great focus, and that's a big deal."

Stroud, a Heisman Trophy hopeful, was 24 of 34 for 223 yards and two touchdowns. He was hampered by the absence of Smith-Njigba for most of the first half after the receiver was injured on the Buckeyes' second drive. He did not play the second half and finished with two catches for 3 yards.

TreVeyon Henderson had 91 yards on 15 carries, Williams rushed 14 times for 84 yards and Emeka Egbuka made a career-high nine catches for 90 yards and a score.

Notre Dame quarterback Tyler Buchner was 10 of 18 for 177 yards.

How It Happened

Notre Dame returned the opening kickoff to its 15-yard line, and on the first play, Lorenzo Styles Jr. caught a pass from Buchner and raced 54 yards to the OSU 31. A personal foul (hit to head) on J.T. Tuimoloau on the play moved the ball to the 16. Three runs netted 2 yards, and Blake Grupe made a 33-yard field goal at the 12:13 mark.

Stroud's touchdown toss on OSU's second series put the Buckeyes ahead 7-3 with 5:32 left in the first quarter after a 31-yard catch by Egbuka to complete a four-play, 54-yard drive in 1:34.

A pass interference on a throw to Egbuka gave OSU a first down at the Notre Dame 35 on the play after Smith-Njigba's 4-yard



SONNY BROCKWAY

ALL SMILES — Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles impressed everyone from the fans and media to former players and coaches in his debut for the Buckeyes. Ohio State's defense allowed just 253 yards to fifth-ranked Notre Dame.

catch at the 50 resulted in an injury after being tackled at the left sideline.

Following an incompletion and a 4-yard pass to Egbuka, Stroud found Egbuka on the left at the 24-yard line, and he raced into the end zone for his first Ohio State TD catch.

The Irish regained the lead, 10-7, at 11:56 of the second, using 5:10 off the clock to go 87 yards in 10 plays when Audric Estime ran in from the OSU 1.

On the first play of the second quarter, Notre Dame had faced a third-and-2 from its

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35 when Matt Salerno made a grab for 31 yards to the OSU 34. With the next snap, Kevin Bauman had a catch for 22 yards to the 12. On third-and-2 from the 4, Buchner connected with Michael Mayer for 3 yards to the 1 before Estime's score.

Ohio State responded by punting on fourth-and-3 from the Notre Dame 40, with Jesse Mirco burying the Irish at their 5.

The Buckeyes had a good drive result in nothing just before the half and went into the locker room down 10-7. OSU had reached the Notre Dame 21 on the strength of an Egbuka 12-yard catch on third down to keep the drive alive and a Henderson 16-yard rush to the 25, but on third down, Stroud threw behind an open Egbuka at the 10, and Noah Ruggles, who made 20 of 21 field goals last season, missed from 39 yards.

Stroud was 11 for 17 for 99 yards in the first half as the Buckeyes were outgained 181 to 149.

After an OSU punt to start the second half, ND got to the Buckeye 35 with the aid of two personal fouls – one on the punt and the other on a third-down play – but the Irish were forced to punt after losing a yard on three plays and facing a fourth-and-11.

Ohio State finally went ahead with 17 seconds left in the third quarter on the third-down, 24-yard Stroud strike to Johnson to make it 14-10 at the end of a drive covering 10 plays and 70 yards over a 4:43 span.

Egbuka had a catch for 16 early in the possession, and Jayden Ballard added 10 more on a catch, but the Buckeyes faced a dire situation after a chop-block penalty made it second-and-21 from the Irish 34.



SONNY BROCKWAY

NEXT MAN UP — With Jaxon Smith-Njigba nursing a leg injury, wide receiver Emeka Egbuka (2) stepped up and led the Buckeyes with 90 yards on nine receptions, including a touchdown catch.

Johnson then made a 10-yard catch and completed the drive with a reception over the middle for the graduate's first career TD.

Williams scored from the 2 with 4:51 to play to make it 21-10 as the Buckeyes held the ball for 14 plays to go 95 yards in 7:06.

He had a key 12-yard catch along the left sideline on a third-and-3 from the OSU 24 as Stroud scrambled. Later Williams reeled off runs of 11, 15 and 12 yards.

"I think we didn't get our rhythm until the very end," Stroud said. "I've got to play better. I'm still excited. I'm still happy. We're 1-0 after winning against the No. 5 team in the country."

Notre Dame was stuffed on its last chance to get back into the game. Buchner had two incompletions before Mike Hall Jr. sacked him for an 11-yard loss at the Irish 14, forcing their eighth punt.

The Buckeyes ran out the clock using six plays – 21 yards on three rushes by Henderson, a Stroud keeper for 3 and his two kneel-downs, the last at the OSU 32.

Notes

Notre Dame gained just 72 yards in the second half. ... The Irish averaged 2.5 yards

per carry, including three sacks for 19 yards. ... Buchner was 2 of 10 after completing his first eight passes. Hall, who had two tackles last season, had four tackles (three solo) and a sack among his two tackles for loss. ... Linebacker Tommy Eichenberg led the Buckeyes with nine tackles (six solo). ... OSU had 395 total yards (223 passing, 172 rushing). ... Neither team had a turnover. ... The Buckeyes were called for seven penalties for 75 yards; the Irish were whistled five times for 61 yards.

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SONNY BROCKWAY

SHAKE IT OFF — Kicker Noah Ruggles (95) missed just one field goal last season, ultimately finishing 20 of 21, but he missed his only attempt of the day against the Irish from 39 yards out.

Media, Former Bucks Laud Defensive Strides

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It wasn't the type of win that many thought Ohio State would record against Notre Dame Saturday, but it was revealing nonetheless.

Beating the fifth-ranked Fighting Irish 21-10, the Buckeyes allowed less than 100 yards of total offense in the second half as Notre Dame failed to score in the final 42 minutes of action. After some offensive sputtering, Ohio State's ground game found some rhythm and manufactured two long scoring drives to salt the game away.

That tough running game late and a physical defensive effort are what stood out most to both the media covering Ohio State and some of its former players and coaches.

"The two things that everyone talked about most this offseason were, 'Can Ohio State run the ball when they need to, and can they stop the run?' And not everything looked pretty in that game," Rivals.com's Bill Landis said. "But the fact that they can do those two things and still win a game in a different fashion than they typically have to win under Ryan Day was pretty encouraging."

The biggest part of that defensive effort may have come from Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, who made a strong first impression in his debut. Jim Heacock, himself a former defensive coordinator for the Buckeyes from 2005-2011 and



FILE PHOTO

HIGH PRAISE — Former Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Heacock offered praise for current defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, saying that he enjoyed watching the defense against Notre Dame.

a Broyles Award winner in 2007, enjoyed what he saw from Ohio State's players on that side of the ball.

Heacock was honored as part of the 2002 national championship team during the game, although he filled the role of defensive line coach at that time. He made

note of the raucous environment in Ohio Stadium on top of his comments about the game.

"I think Ohio State did a good job running the football, and I think they did a great job stopping the run," Heacock said. "That's something we always talked about as something you have to do if you're going to be successful. I had a great time, enjoyed it and thought the team looked really good."

Heacock noted that he couldn't break down much of Knowles' scheme and what stood out in terms of structure as he isn't familiar with the ins and outs, but two units shone in his eyes – the defensive line and the secondary.

He liked how the front stopped running plays and contained Notre Dame sophomore quarterback Tyler Buchner when he tried to scramble, and with the secondary,

Heacock felt all of Notre Dame's catches were contested.

"The receptions that Notre Dame had, they were really close in coverage and (Ohio State) had a chance to make a play," Heacock said. "Everything I saw was really positive defensively."

That's a sentiment echoed by former Ohio State linebacker Jim Laughlin, who noted the defensive backs were "right on 'em." Laughlin walked away from the contest pleased with how Ohio State played, securing a double-digit win against a top-five Notre Dame team.

"They're going to get some plays because they're Notre Dame, for gosh sake," Laughlin said. "But when the defense had to, they made the plays. I think I saw it was 3 for 13 on third downs, Notre Dame was. That's fantastic. You've got to win on third down. Any defensive coordinator will tell you that."

From that defensive effort though, the biggest individual standout from the three above sources was unanimously sophomore defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. The word "disruptive" came up in two separate conversations when describing his four-tackle, one-sack performance.

"Just really violent with his hands, and pretty disruptive, I thought, for the majority of the game," Landis said.

Landis also pointed to the nine-tackle night of fourth-year linebacker Tommy Eichenberg, saying it's one of the better games he's seen from an Ohio State linebacker in a long time.

Buckeye Huddle's Kevin Noon noted Hall's and Eichenberg's performances as well but wanted to make sure folks weren't sleeping on the linebacker's running mate at the position.

"Tommy Eichenberg and Mike Hall will get all of the notice, but after watching the game on the broadcast, I also want to point out that Steele Chambers made several key plays as the Buckeyes were trying to sort things out," Noon said.

Even safeties Ronnie Hickman and

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OHIO STATE VS. NOTRE DAME



SONNY BROCKWAY

HARD-HITTING — Safety Lathan Ransom was one of Ohio State's top tacklers in the win over the Irish, finishing with seven total tackles, including six solos.

Lathan Ransom got some mention.

"It was nice to see safeties diagnosing things from depth and flying up and making a play," Landis said. "It's simple stuff, but it's stuff they didn't always accomplish last year."

Noon's thoughts on the Ohio State offense underscored the thoughts of many others; the running game found success, even early in the game when it may have been under-utilized. He called the Buckeyes' final scoring drive, in which they went 95 yards in 14 plays, "a throwback to the Ohio State offense of old."

With much debate raging before the game about what the split of carries should be between sophomore running back TreVeyon Henderson and third-year Miyan Williams, the two were separated by one attempt and averaged 6.1 and 6.0 yards per rush, respectively.

"Splitting carries is always a matter of riding the hot hand," Noon said. "People get too caught up after the game comparing the number of carries and then arguing that there has been a shift in confidence by the coaches. Both backs were big in their own way, but it was obvious that Williams was not going to be denied on Saturday night."

Landis felt the offensive line in front of them started slow but finished strong, starting to gain the knock-back Ohio State has been looking for since it struggled to run the ball in key definite running situations in losses to Oregon and Michigan last year.

Of course it wasn't all sunshine and rainbows on the offensive side of the ball.

Landis was critical of Day's decision to punt on fourth-and-3 at the Notre Dame 40-yard-line in the second quarter.

"I think that's a bit of a shortcoming of his. If he wants to be known as an aggressive coach, you should live that life all the time, and he doesn't," Landis said. "So I guess at that juncture of the game – it wasn't fourth-and-1, it was fourth-and-3 – I guess that's up for some debate, but I think Ohio State should go for it there. I think Ryan Day should show confidence in his offense and his players and go for it there."

As for the passing side of things, third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud finished a rare half under 100 yards after receivers Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Julian Fleming were sidelined for the game. He responded with a more accurate second half that included several key precision first-down throws, though.

"I thought he kind of took a step forward in his ability to extend some plays, and I thought he was better at making throws on the perimeter," Landis said. "That's where he got himself into trouble a lot last year. Some of those throws, with guys in his face, tight space on the sideline, two receivers that he's not worked with a ton – I thought that was a pretty good job by him."

Landis isn't concerned about Ohio State's passing game moving forward – so long as Smith-Njigba's injury is short-term, as Day indicated – and believes it's a positive that the Buckeyes showed they can run the football.

"If they're able to kind of bottle what they did with the run game and executing better in situational football, and be the passing team that they were last year on top of that, they'll be the kind of offense you want to see," he said.



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BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 21, Notre Dame 10

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on winning ugly: "I couldn't be any prouder of our team and the way our team played, especially in the fourth quarter. A lot of people questioned our toughness going into the offseason. Well, you have to watch the film and you make your decision if you thought that team was tough tonight. For us to win the way we did, I couldn't be any prouder."

Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman on his team's fourth-quarter struggles: "They battled the entire game. I want to make sure I said that. We didn't execute late in the game when we had to. We didn't execute when we needed to. We had the challenge to win the fourth quarter; we didn't win the fourth quarter."

Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles on his unit's performance: "They've bought into everything that I've been asking them to do. There were one or two bad plays or missed plays, but that didn't affect them at all. I saw a great focus, and that's a big deal. I think you saw guys playing really fast too."

Day on the defense bouncing back after allowing a 54-yard completion on the first play from scrimmage: "The first play, we brought a corner blitz and missed a tackle. We hung in there and then forced them into a field goal. There was no panic there. I don't know, maybe last year we would have put our heads down. But we didn't. I thought we played tough. I thought the energy was off the charts on defense tonight. I'm proud of our guys. Jim called a great game, the whole defensive staff, but it was our players."

Ohio State wide receiver Emeka Egbuka on the message at halftime: "Going into halftime, I had absolutely no worries. I knew we were going to win the game. That's just the type of team we are. We're calm and collected. We knew we had some mistakes in the first half that we needed to get corrected. It ended up being a dogfight, and we were able to capitalize in the second half and especially the fourth quarter."

Ohio State wide receiver Xavier Johnson on sticking with the process despite multiple position changes: "There were countless nights where I was thinking about throwing in the towel. There were nights when I felt like I had a foot out the door. But I always relied on my faith and prayer to see where exactly I was supposed to be. I had never felt the Lord lead me to leave, so just seeing how it came full circle is



SONNY BROCKWAY

BIG PLAYS — Walk-on-turned-scholarship wide receiver Xavier Johnson helped kick-start Ohio State's offense with a 24-yard touchdown, the first of his career, in the third quarter against Notre Dame.

just to his faithfulness. In that moment, all I could think about was just how great the Lord really is. That's literally it. I was overcome with emotion, but it was emotion from the standpoint of, 'I'm glorifying the Lord right now and I'm in the right position.' "

Johnson on his touchdown followed by a tackle that pinned Notre Dame deep in its own territory on kick coverage: "I'm not going to lie, it was crazy. I would just say, the team, and I love these guys, so with my legs empty, with all of that, none of that matters, I'm throwing that to the side. It's all for the team and for the glory of God. It's a testament to Coach Day. It's a testament to Coach (Brian) Hartline and Coach (Mickey) Marotti. They just put us in the positions to succeed so that's all I was doing. I was in my position doing what I was supposed to do."

Day on building toughness entering this season: "It's been a huge emphasis to win this way. It starts with defense, and when you can play really good, strong defense like we played tonight and we can run the football – we know we'll be able to throw the ball. We know that. But if we want to go where we need to be and reach

our goals, we're going to have to do those two things, and tonight we did it."

Ohio State safety Lathan Ransom on the shaking the softness label: "All summer that was one thing we worked on a lot. We were called soft all of last year, and we had to just sit there and eat it. We couldn't wait to play against Notre Dame and show what our defense is really about."

Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud on losing wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba early in the game: "Jaxon is the best receiver in the country and we've built a connection, not just on the field but off of it too and that just helps us on the field. When he was out of the game, of course, it affects our team and our offense, but we got the job done. Xavier stepped up huge, Jayden Ballard stepped up huge, Emeka had a heck of a game, Marvin (Harrison Jr.) played well. At the end of the day, when you boil it down and look at the scoreboard, Coach Day always says that 'No matter what type of game it is, we always have to stick together.' I feel like that's what we did and no matter how I played, whatever the case may be, we got the win."



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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 21, Notre Dame 10

Sept. 3, 2022 - Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
NOTRE DAME	3	7	0	0	10
OHIO STATE	7	0	7	7	21

First Quarter

ND - Grupe, 33-yard field goal, 12:13

OSU - Egbuka, 31-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 5:32.

Second Quarter

ND - Estime, 1-yard run (Grupe kick), 11:56.

Third Quarter

OSU - Johnson, 24-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 0:17.

Fourth Quarter

OSU - Williams, 2-yard run (Ruggles kick), 4:51.

Att. - 106,594

Weather - Cloudy.

Team Statistics

	ND	OSU
First Downs	12	22
Rushing	3	11
Passing	6	9
Penalty	3	2
Rushes-Yards	30-76	35-172
Passing Yards	177	223
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	10-18-0	24-34-0
Offensive Plays	48	69
Total Net Yards	253	395
Third Down Efficiency	3-13	7-13
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	0-0
Punts-Avg.	8-46.2	5-45.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	0-0
Penalties	5-61	7-75
Time of Possession	27:01	32:59

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) - **ND:** Tyree 6-28; Estime 9-21; Buchner 11-18; Diggs 4-9. **OSU:** Henderson 15-91; Williams 14-84; Stroud 3-1; Team 3-(-4).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) - **ND:** Buchner 10-18-0-177-0. **OSU:** Stroud 24-34-0-223-2.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) - **ND:** Mayer 5-32; Styles 1-54; Lenzy 1-32; Salerno 1-31; Bauman 1-22; Tyree 1-6. **OSU:** Egbuka 9-90; Harrison Jr. 5-56; Stover 3-14; Johnson 2-34; Ballard 2-14; Smith-Njigba 2-3; Williams 1-12.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) - **ND:** Sot 8-46.2-75. **OSU:** Mirco 5-45.0-50.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - **ND:** None. **OSU:** Egbuka 1-4.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - **ND:** Tyree 2-22. **OSU:** Egbuka 1-25.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) - **ND:** None. **OSU:** None.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) - **ND:** None. **OSU:** None.

SACKS - **ND:** Cross III. **OSU:** Eichenberg (2), Hall Jr.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) - **ND:** Cross III 1-5; Bracy 1-1. **OSU:** Eichenberg 3-9; Hall Jr. 2-13; Tuimoloau 1-2.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) - **ND:** Lewis 6-1-7; Kiser 4-2-6; Liufau 1-4-5; Bauer 4-0-4; Bracy 3-1-4; Foskey 2-2-4; Joseph 1-3-4; Griffith 1-3-4; Justin Ademilola 0-4-4; Cross III 2-1-3; Hart 2-1-3; Morrison 2-1-3; Mills 1-2-3; Bertrand 1-2-3; Smith 1-2-3; Brown 2-0-2; Osafo-Mensah 1-0-1; Mickey 1-0-1; Jayson Ademilola 1-0-1; Henderson 0-1-1. **OSU:** Eichenberg 6-3-9; Ransom 6-1-7; Chambers 2-3-5; Hall Jr. 3-1-4; Hickman 2-2-4; Harrison 2-0-2; Vincent 1-1-2; Simon 0-2-2; Trayanum 1-0-1; Tuimoloau 1-0-1; Friday 1-0-1 Jean-Baptiste 1-0-1; Hamilton 1-0-1; Johnson 1-0-1; Burke 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME - **ND:** Lenzy, Buchner, Styles, Correll, Fisher, Estime, Kristofic, Lugg, Alt, Bauman, Mayer, Joseph, Brown, Bertrand, Bracy, Hart, Cross III, Jayson Ademilola, Lewis, Foskey, Liufau, Mills, Kollie, Henderson, Botelho, Morrison, Mickey, Kiser, Tyree, Watts, Salerno, Griffith, Diggs, Velotta, Osafo-Mensah, Sherwood, Sot, Liebentritt, Tuihalamaka, Wilkins, Bauer, Lacey, Vinson, Smith, Baker, Thomas, Justin Ademilola, Yoakam, Grupe. **OSU:** Smith-Njigba, Harrison Jr., Egbuka, Henderson, Wypler, M. Jones, Stroud, Jackson, Johnson Jr., D. Jones, Stover, Hickman, McCalister, Chambers, Brown, Eichenberg, Proctor, Tuimoloau, Burke, Hall Jr., Vincent, Harrison, X. Johnson, Ransom, Martinez, Trayanum, K. Williams, Gaoteote IV, Dunn, Mirco, M. Williams, Mitchell, Simon, Sawyer, Rossi, Fielding, J. Johnson, Robinson, Wilson, Friday, Hamilton, Michalski, Vimahi, Fryar, Jean-Baptiste, Royer, Cage, Scott Jr., Ballard, McKenzie, t. Williams, Curry, Ruggles.

Season Statistics

2022 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Sept. 3	(2) NOTRE DAME (6)	W, 21-10	106,549
Sept. 10	(2) ARKANSAS STATE	Noon	
Sept. 17	TOLEDO	7 p.m.	
Sept. 24	WISCONSIN (18)	TBA	
Oct. 1	RUTGERS	3:30 p.m.	
Oct. 8	at Michigan State (15)	TBA	
Oct. 22	IOWA	TBA	
Oct. 29	at Penn State	TBA	
Nov. 5	at Northwestern	TBA	
Nov. 12	INDIANA	TBA	
Nov. 19	at Maryland	TBA	
Nov. 26	MICHIGAN (8)	Noon	
Dec. 3	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.	

OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	22	12
Rushing	11	3
Passing	9	6
Penalty	2	3
Average Per Game/Rush	172.0	176.0
Average Per Game/Pass	223.0	268.8
Total Offense	2662	177.0
Total Plays	69	48
Average Per Game	395.0	363.8
Average Per Play	7.3	253.0
Penalties-Yards	7-75	5-61
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-1
Third Down Efficiency	7-13	3-12
Percentage	54%	23%
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	0-0
Percentage	0%	0%
Sacks-Yards	3-19	1-5
Time Of Possession Avg.	32:59	27:01

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	7	0	7	7	0	21	21.0
Opponents	3	7	0	0	0	10	10.0

Individual Statistics				
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD Long
T. Henderson	15	91	6.1	0 16
Miyan Williams	14	84	6.0	1 15
C.J. Stroud	3	1	0.3	0 3
OSU Totals	35	172	4.9	1 16
OPP Totals	30	76	2.5	1 14

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
C.J. Stroud	24	34	70.6	223	2-0	145.1
OSU Totals	24	34	70.6	223	2-0	145.1
OPP Totals	10	18	55.6	177	0-0	138.2

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	9	90	10.0	1	31
Marvin Harrison Jr.	5	56	11.2	0	21
Cade Stover	3	14	4.7	0	7
Xavier Johnson	2	34	17.0	1	24
Jayden Ballard	2	14	7.0	0	10
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	2	3	1.5	0	4
Miyan Williams	1	12	12.0	0	12
OSU Totals	34	223	6.6	2	31
OPP Totals	18	177	9.8	0	54

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Emeka Egbuka	1	-	-	-	-	6
Xavier Johnson	1	-	-	-	-	6
Miyan Williams	1	-	-	-	-	6
Noah Ruggles	-	3-3	-	-	0-1	3

OSU Totals	3	3-3	-	-	0-1	21
OPP Totals	0	1-1	0-0	0-0	1-1	10

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
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Noah Ruggles	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-0	0-1
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OSU Totals	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-0	0-1
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OPP Totals	0-0	1-1	0-0	0-0	1-1
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Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
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Jesse Mirco	5	225	45.0	0	50
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OSU Totals	5	225	45.0	0	50
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OPP Totals	8	370	46.2	0	75
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Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
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OSU Totals	0	0	0	0	0
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OPP Totals	0	0	0	0	0
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Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
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Emeka Egbuka	1	4	4.0	0	4
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OSU Totals	1	4	4.0	0	4
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OPP Totals	0	0	0	0	0
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Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
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Emeka Egbuka	1	25	25.0	0	25
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OSU Totals	1	25	25.0	0	25
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OPP Totals	2	22	11.0	0	22
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Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
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T. Eichenberg	6	3	9	3.0-9	2.0-8
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Lathan Ransom	6	1	7	0-0	0-0
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Steele Chambers	2	3	5	0-0	0-0
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Mike Hall Jr.	3	1	4	2.0-13	1.0-11
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Ronnie Hickman	2	2	4	0-0	0-0
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Zach Harrison	2	0	2	0-0	0-0
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Taron Vincent	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
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Cody Simon	0	2	2	0-0	0-0
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Chip Trayanum	1	0	1	0-0	0-0
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J.T. Tuimoloau	1	0	1	1.0-2	0-0
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Tyler Friday	1	0	1	0-0	0-0
--------------	---	---	---	-----	-----

Tanner McCalister	1	0	1	0-0	0-0
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J. Jean-Baptiste	1	0	1	0-0	0-0
------------------	---	---	---	-----	-----

Ty Hamilton	1	0	1	0-0	0-0
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Xavier Johnson	1	0	1	0-0	0-0
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Denzel Burke	0	1	1	0-0	0-0
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OSU Totals	29	14	43	3.0-9	6.0-24
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OPP Totals	36	30	66	1.0-5	2.0-6
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Fumbles Forced: 0.

Fumbles Recovered: 0.

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Veteran Babb's Resolve Earns Block "O" Jersey

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Nobody would have blamed Ohio State wide receiver Kamryn Babb for hanging up his cleats. Since his senior year of high school, the former four-star and top-100 prospect has torn his ACL four times, resulting in four missed seasons in high school and college.

Babb's lone respite from injury came in the pandemic-shortened 2020 season, when he appeared in just seven of Ohio State's nine games, though he did not have a reception – and still does not despite entering his fifth season in the program.

When during last year's fall camp Babb suffered yet another torn ACL, he admitted that the thought of quitting football had crossed his mind.

"I couldn't really believe it when it happened, just because I felt so good," he said at the time. "Nobody's really been able to see what I know I can do and what I feel like I was coming into."

But he trudged on. Babb did the rehab – it's not as though he wasn't used to it at that point – and eventually got back to the practice field, working with Ohio State during the team's most recent spring practice.

"Jesus Christ, my lord, my savior, my father, he's my everything," Babb said at the time. "It's his story, and as long as he's behind me, it doesn't really matter who else is. But this team, I can tell you, is behind me, and my family and the people close to me.



FILE PHOTO

FIGHT ON — Wide receiver Kamryn Babb (1) — shown here prior to the 2021 game against Rutgers with (left to right) Zach Harrison, Thayer Munford and Chris Olave — is working his way back from yet another injury setback, but the recipient of Ohio State's Block "O" jersey isn't giving up entering his fifth season in the program.

I'm just grateful for them and all the fans that are. I'm grateful for them as well. And just hope I can show them what I've got to bring to the table."

A good spring turned into a good summer – Babb was named an Iron Buckeye, recognized as having one of the best summers on the roster – and fall camp rolled

around with Babb looking as healthy as ever. He took part in preseason practice, and to the untrained eye, he moved as though he hadn't suffered three season-ending injuries since arriving at Ohio State.

It's that perseverance that led to Babb being voted a two-time team captain and earning Ohio State's Block "O" jersey, one that honors a player with the toughness, accountability and the highest of character that emulates that of Ohio State legend Bill Willis, an All-American defensive end who played for the Buckeyes from 1942-44.

"It's definitely a great honor," Babb said. "I'm only the third person to get that honor so far. With guys like (Jonathon) Cooper and Thayer (Munford), just being honored with them, it's a blessing. It's all for these guys. They're the reason I'm still standing. I want to do everything I can to represent that number well."

Cooper and Munford were starters in the seasons they wore the Block "O" jersey, so it's notable that Babb received the distinction – as well as his second consecutive captaincy – despite a lack of time on the field. Many captains display their leadership on the field, but Babb has been a consistent presence in Ohio State's locker room, and one who has been revered by his teammates and coaches.

"Kam is probably one of the most mentally tough people that I've ever encountered, so I know he's going to battle through any injuries, any setbacks, as he continues to deal with throughout his career," said wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. "He comes in with a smile on his face every day, always uplifting his teammates. I mean, he's a captain for a reason."

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day has always been an advocate for Babb and took the opportunity in the spring to talk about his impact on the team.

"I can talk for hours about Kam Babb and what he's done," Day said. "Being a captain, everything he's been through. And so we're Kam Babb fans around here. Everybody loves Kam, and if he can stay healthy,

he's going to have an impact on this offense for sure."

Babb's position coach, Brian Hartline, also spoke of what Babb has brought to Ohio State's program.

"He's a guy that rubs off on others," he said. "What do they say, surround yourself with people you want to become? Those that are maybe on the fence from a faith perspective or a positivity perspective or a guidance perspective, Kam's there to kind of push you over the edge. Being around guys like that with great energy, it's really hard to bring bad energy.

"It would take more effort to fight the type of energy he brings than it would just to go along with it. Kam does a great job rubbing off on guys and really making our room a better room because of who he is."

Now it's a matter of whether Babb can get back on the field. He practiced throughout fall camp – and by all accounts looked healthy and capable of producing for Ohio State – before he suffered another setback, one that Day said on Aug. 22 would not be season-ending but would hold him out for a couple of weeks.

"Just a little nick, nothing crazy," Babb said. "We've just been through a lot, so I just nicked it up a little bit a few days ago. I'm just taking precautions and trying to take it slow – make sure I'm full-go and able to get out there."

Babb did not appear in Ohio State's 21-10 win against Notre Dame, but there's optimism he could be back sooner rather than later. Even if he doesn't get on the field, though, he'll still find ways to make an impact.

"It is bigger than me, and that is one of the reasons that I'm still going and still striving," Babb said. "I know this life is hard and it's just a game. This is a game and this game is hard, and we love it. But at the same time, I know so many people are going through so many different things, and if my story can touch somebody else, that's more than I could ever ask."

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Versatile Trayanum Will Chip In Where Needed

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Chip Trayanum could be coming full circle in more ways than one when he takes the field for Ohio State.

The former Akron Hoban two-way standout was toting the ball for Arizona State the past two seasons before entering the transfer portal and committing to OSU on Dec. 25 with a shot at being a linebacker.

However, a season-ending knee injury to Evan Pryor in the already thin running backs room leaves open the possibility that Trayanum could be a reinforcement for TreVeyon Henderson, Miyan Williams and Dallan Hayden.

"We had one day full where Chip came over and did some running back, and boy, he's natural," coach Ryan Day said on Aug. 22. "And he's doing a great job at linebacker as well, so he'll be a guy that we can use as rain insurance if we needed him to. Just seeing him live and in color, he's a talented running back. I've been very impressed with the way he's playing at linebacker as well. But we can also use him in a dual role if needed."

If Trayanum needs pointers on how to make the switch from offense to defense, he can turn to linebacker and former running back Steele Chambers.

"You want really good athletes at the linebacker position, so most really good linebackers in high school play running back for their high school team, and those are two guys that did that," Day said. "You can see that Steele had an impact last year. I still kind of had to do it because we were a little light at linebacker, and it was kind of a need. I think this one with Chip, I mean he certainly has all the skills, works really hard. Guys on the team respect him, he plays hard. He's tough, he has all the skills. It's just getting more and more reps and playing. As soon as we feel like he's ready, he'll play."

Trayanum (5-11, 229) gained 692 rushing yards and scored 10 touchdowns in two seasons with the Sun Devils. He was a four-star recruit ranked the fifth-best prospect in Ohio by 247Sports.com. In his junior season at Hoban he was named to the Division II All-Ohio first team as a linebacker. Despite the accolades, when he chose Arizona State over Ohio State, he did so with the intent of carrying the ball.

"Coming out of high school I wasn't ready to give it up yet," he said. "Scoring touchdowns is definitely a feeling you'll never experience again."

While he was far from home, he was never far from family. About six months after he enrolled at Arizona State, his mother, sister, great grandmother and uncle moved to Tempe to support him.

The irony is they are still there for now, so they will have some traveling to do to see him play in person. He has three years of eligibility remaining.

Once he entered the transfer portal, Day, running backs coach Tony Alford and then-linebackers coach Al Washington quickly contacted him.

"They laid it out for me," Trayanum said. "Defense was the opportunity on the

table."

His relationship with Alford during the high school recruiting period helped in his decision to join the Buckeyes.

"It's never really a transition when you come back home," Trayanum said. "Just open arms. I've just been loving it every day since I've been here."

Trayanum's given first name, is Dea-Monte but he explained that his nickname came when he was 8 years old and was called a blue chip for his athletic prowess. Blue chip eventually became Chip.

"As I got older, I just carried it over with me, just create a chip on my shoulder," he said.

Though Trayanum played only his first game for the Buckeyes against Notre Dame, his work ethic is becoming legendary among his teammates.

"He's a grinder," linebacker Tommy Eichenberg said. "He works hard every single day. His first year back at linebacker and he's doing a phenomenal job. He's a dependable dude, accountable, and he's going to make the play when his number is called."

"Man, Chip is a beast. I don't know if you guys know this, but Chip is a beast," said linebacker Palaie Gaoteote IV, a Southern Cal transfer. "He's strong, fast, smart. I mean, he could play running back if he wanted to. I've been real close to him ever since he came, especially from him coming from the Pac-12."

Trayanum said Ohio State's history in producing linebackers for the NFL was a factor in his transfer decision.

"It crossed my mind and it definitely is a reason why I made the switch," he said. "Just to see that lineage of linebackers being productive in the NFL and just to see that they were developed here definitely motivated me, and I'm ready to work every day just so I can get to that level hopefully."

He has taken some reps with the second-team linebackers but knows there's a fight for playing time, especially with the Buckeyes' defense needing to improve from last season.

"Everybody on the defense knows what needs to be done coming off the last year," he said. "Everybody is just pushing each other to work hard and just be the best that they can be for the overall team success."

He had some thoughts on what he can do as a linebacker.

"I can be a linebacker that revolutionizes the game," he said. "I feel that what I could bring from the offensive side of the ball and just from my speed and my physicality will be something different that a lot of people haven't seen. Playing linebacker here, the staff will help me develop into the player I want to be. We're definitely making strides."

Having now been a part of two college programs, Trayanum has a unique perspective. For instance, he had to defend the quality of high school football in Ohio when he was playing out west.

"A lot of times in the locker rooms they argue Texas, California, Florida are the best," he said. "But I always revert back to Ohio because it's just a different type of toughness. Just really in the trenches, really the old game. You know, a lot of



SONNY BROCKWAY

WARM WELCOME — Linebacker Chip Trayanum (left) made his debut for Ohio State against Notre Dame, finishing with a tackle that occurred on the opening kickoff.

schools in the West, down South, it's more likely the spread, West Coast-style offense in high school, but I feel like in Ohio you can experience a little bit of all of it. Being in Ohio and playing football here in high school, it definitely readies you."

It's hard to get the Buckeyes out of him. He kept tabs on them last season and understands that an 11-2 record with a Rose Bowl win last season is viewed as a disappointment.

"It definitely rubs off on me," he said. "Even when I was at Arizona State, I always say I'm an Ohio guy so I know the expectations of playing football here at The Ohio State University."

That's what drew him to Columbus.

"For me personally, I always like to have

high goals," Trayanum said. "Being at Arizona State it was always high goals there, but not reaching those goals, it's kind of heartbreaking. So, just coming here and feeling like I can pursue those goals and really meet those goals and win a national championship was the selling point."

While he wasn't in the program at the time, he still felt the sting of the Buckeyes losing to Michigan last season.

"It was so crazy because I was watching that game probably about a week before I entered the portal," he said. "It was definitely in my head. Growing up here in Ohio and just knowing the rivalry, knowing the meaning of the game, you know the significance, and now that I get to be a part of it, I'm looking forward to it."

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Red Wolves Rebuilding From Sun Belt Cellar

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After a stretch of unprecedented success at Arkansas State, the past two years have not been kind to the Red Wolves.

The program had just 39 winning seasons from 1911 up until 2010, a combined record of 406-452-38. Things changed in 2011 with head coach Hugh Freeze, who began a run for Arkansas State that featured nine straight winning seasons and four bowl wins for the historically downtrodden Red Wolves.

Freeze would leave for Ole Miss following that season and was replaced by Gus Malzahn, who in turn stayed for one season before heading to Auburn, and his spot was then filled by Bryan Harsin. Of course, Harsin stayed for just one season before leaving for Boise State, but the Red Wolves finally found stability with Blake Anderson. A disciple of former Southern Miss and North Carolina coach Larry Fedora, Anderson would go on to coach Arkansas State to a 51-37 record and two Sun Belt titles in seven seasons.

Following the 2020 season in which the Red Wolves finished with a 4-7 record, the first time Arkansas State missed a bowl game since 2010, Anderson left to become the head coach at Utah State. After previous athletic directors went with relative youth at head coach – Freeze, Malzahn, Harsin and Anderson were all age 46 or under at the time of their hiring, and it was their first respective Division I head-coaching job – then-athletic director Terry Mohajir opted for experience, hiring then-52-year-old Butch Jones, a former head coach at Central Michigan, Cincinnati and Tennessee, to take over the Arkansas State program.

Jones' first season in Jonesboro did not go according to plan, as the Red Wolves trudged to a 2-10 record and a 1-7 mark in conference play in 2021. The lone wins came against FCS-level Central Arkansas and Sun Belt opponent Louisiana-Monroe,

and it was the worst record for Arkansas State since a 1-10 finish in 1994 under John Bobo.

The problems mostly stemmed from a porous defense under defensive coordinator Rob Harley, a former safety at Ohio State from 2001-05, that allowed 38.6 points per game (124th) and 505.9 yards per game (129th), with most of those yards allowed – 261.1 per game – coming on the ground.

"Sometimes we'll go out there and, and Coach (Jones) will tell you, it just felt like we weren't mentally prepared," linebacker Kivon Bennett said. "We started off super sluggish and it felt like we were just not ready to play out there. It's not that we couldn't play with people, it's just that we weren't ready to play with them."

"I think the difference this year will be as long as we come out and we don't have to flip a switch and we're just all on the same accord, I think that will help the overall physicality and strength of the defense."

The offense was not absolved from blame, though, for the team's struggles. Despite the effectiveness of Jones and offensive coordinator Keith Heckendorf's two-quarterback system – the passing offense ranked 11th in the nation at 313.9 passing yards per game with both Layne Hatcher and James Blackman receiving significant snaps – the rushing attack suffered at 81.8 yards per game (128th), one of just eight teams last season that averaged under 100 yards per game.

Hatcher transferred to Texas State this offseason, but the Red Wolves welcomed back fifth-year signal-caller Blackman, who is expected to be the lone starter for Arkansas State this year. He completed 59.6 percent of his passes (109 of 183) last season for 1,344 yards, eight touchdowns and four interceptions.

Blackman will have plenty of options to throw to with two of the Red Wolves' top receiving options from last season returning in TeVailance Hunt (51 catches, 740 yards) and Jeff Foreman (31 catches, 556 yards).

Get To Know ... Arkansas State

• **2020 Record:** 2-10.

• **Team Information:** Offensive Formation - Spread; Defensive Formation - 4-3; Starters Returning - Offense 5, Defense 5, Specialists 1.

• **Head Coach:** Butch Jones, 2nd year at Arkansas, 3-10.

• **Series History:** 1st meeting.

• **School Facts:** Location - Jonesboro, Ark.; Enrollment - 9,350; Nickname - Red Wolves; Colors - Scarlet, Black; Conference - Sun Belt (West Division); Stadium - Centennial Bank Stadium (Surface, GEO Surfaces Field Turf; Capacity - 30,964).

2022 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 3	GRAMBLING STATE	W, 58-3
Sept. 10	at Ohio State	12 p.m.
Sept. 17	at Memphis	7 p.m.
Sept. 24	at Old Dominion	TBA
Oct. 1	LOUISIANA-MONROE	TBA
Oct. 8	JAMES MADISON	TBA
Oct. 15	at Southern Miss	TBA
Oct. 22	at Louisiana	TBA
Oct. 29	SOUTH ALABAMA	TBA
Nov. 12	MASSACHUSETTS	TBA
Nov. 19	at Texas State	5 p.m.
Nov. 26	TROY	TBA
Dec. 3	Sun Belt Championship	3:30

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Johnnie Lang	13	124	9.5	1
AJ Mayer	7	74	10.6	1
Brian Snead	12	57	4.8	1

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
J. Blackman	15-20	75.0	210	2-0

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Champ Flemings	7	122	17.4	1
Khyheem Waleed	3	25	8.3	0
Johnnie Lang	1	23	23.0	0

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game - 58.0
Rushing Yards Per Game - 339.0
Passing Yards Per Game - 233.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game - 572.0

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
K. Crawford	5	-	5	3.0-10	1.0-6
Jaden Harris	4	1	5	0.5-4	0.5-4
Trevian Thomas	4	-	4	0-0	0-0
Jordan Camouche	3	1	4	2.0-5	0-0
TW Ayers	3	1	4	1.5-7	1.0-7
Thurman Geathers	3	-	3	3.0-23	1.0-15
Melique Straker	3	-	3	0-0	0-0
John Mincey	2	-	2	2.0-21	0-0

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Eddie Smith	1	0	0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed - 3.0
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed - 50.0
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed - 52.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed - 102.0

Arkansas State also brought in transfer receiver Champ Flemings, a 5-6, 155-pound senior from Oregon State who has 61 receptions, 902 receiving yards and four touchdowns to his name.

At running back, the Red Wolves brought in a familiar face to Ohio State fans: Brian Snead. After Snead was dismissed from the Buckeyes prior to the 2019 season, he bided his time at Iowa Western, a community college in Council Bluffs, Iowa, and FCS-level Austin Peay for the last few seasons before transferring to Arkansas State this offseason.

Along with sixth-year running back Johnnie Lang and fifth-year back Marcel Murray, there's hope in the program that the Red Wolves' rushing attack can be turned around.

"It's staying the course," Jones said. "We knew we had to get bigger, stronger, more explosive up front. I'm excited about our running back position. I think it's one of the most complete positions we have on our football team right now. I think Johnnie Lang, who's a returner, has had one of the best off-seasons we've had of anyone on our football program, so I'm excited about the running backs."

This all will be happening within the context of a mostly new offensive line for the Red Wolves, with fourth-year center Ethan Miner as the only returning starter.

The defense will remain a work in progress after the Red Wolves lost four of their top five tacklers last season who combined for 271 tackles (22½ for loss) and 10 sacks. The top returning player on the defense is Bennett, who finished with 16½ tackles for loss, and he will transition from defensive end to linebacker this season. Alongside Bennett, the Red Wolves will see Houston transfer Jordan Carmouche, returning starter Jaden Harris and Melique Straker all involved at linebacker.

Bennett's shift from the defensive line to linebacker leaves questions in the trenches for the Red Wolves. Defensive tackle John Mincey is the only returning starter on the line that will sort out a rotation with defensive ends Dennard Flowers and Thurman Geathers as well as tackles Tim Hardiman and Ethan Hassler.

Transfer safety Eddie Smith – who has spent time at Alabama and Illinois as he enters his fifth year of college football – is the key to the Red Wolves' secondary along with cornerbacks Samy Johnson, Kenneth Harris and Leon Jones, as well as safeties Trevian Thomas and Taylon Doss.

The position was not one of strength for Arkansas State last season, but with another year under the belt of several returning contributors, improvement could be on the horizon.

"We know the defensive backfield is a position on every team at every level (that) has no help behind them, and that group's got to be at their best," Harley told the Arkansas Democrat Gazette. "Anybody in conflict positions and anybody out in space has to be at their best, and that's what we're building."

And while the Red Wolves face a continued rebuild, it won't help things to have the road opener at Ohio Stadium. It may be a shock to the system for a majority of the roster who are either freshmen or sophomores, but Blackman – a former Florida State transfer who has played at the likes of Clemson, Florida, Miami (Fla.) and Notre Dame – offered some advice to his younger teammates.

"Don't be too overwhelmed," he said of the environment at Ohio Stadium. "They put their pads on just like us. The ball still has to be kicked off. We put in the work. They put in the work. Just don't get too overwhelmed by the crowd, the environment you're in – embrace it. You should want to be in that type of environment."



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History Paints Picture Of Defensive Expectations

By JACK EMERSON

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

At one time or another, football fans have been exposed to the saying “defense wins championships.”

Several national championship-winning teams have followed that mantra to glory, even as recently as last season. The Georgia Bulldogs rode their top-ranked defense, stocked with the top overall pick in linebacker Travon Walker, fellow first-round pick and run-stuffing defensive tackle Jordan Davis and dynamic linebacker Nakobe Dean, to their first national title in over 40 years.

Offenses have come a long way since the early days of the Wing-T and I-Formation, forcing defenses to change their tactics. In today's pass-heavy, spread-oriented era of offense, defenses have resorted to sacrificing bodies in the box in order to fill their back end with able pass defenders.

Of the eight national champions in the College Football Playoff era, five have benefited from a top-10 defense, while there has never been a champion with a defense that ranks beyond No. 31 in terms of points allowed per game. This notion that a topflight defense is necessary to generate postseason success is not lost on the Ohio State football program, which has trotted out several menacing defenses in pursuit of championships.

However, some of those defenses have been held without a ring and have faded

into obscurity as a result of failing to reach the height of the college football mountaintop. In the College Football Playoff era alone, the Buckeyes have had three top-five scoring defenses, but each of those years – 2015, 2016 and 2019 – Ohio State was held without even an appearance in the national championship game.

Throughout its illustrious 132-year history, the Buckeyes have claimed eight national championships. Of those eight title-winning teams, seven have ranked in the top 30 in points allowed per game.

The 2002 defense stands in a league of its own out of the Buckeyes' eight national championship-winning teams, as it is the only unit to land in the top five in scoring defenses, ranking second while allowing 13.1 points per game.

“I think the best preseason ranking going into the season was No. 13, and so the team really grew, you talk about defensively, as the season went on especially,” said longtime Ohio State assistant coach Bill Conley, who was on the 2002 staff. “We had guys, for example like Cie Grant, we had moved him to some different spots. He'd play some defensive back for a while and then linebacker, and he had a great season. He played a great game (in the national championship), of course. He made the last play when he rushed Ken Dorsey and forced the incomplete pass for the win.

“You saw guys really mature throughout the year. Matt Wilhelm played great



FILE PHOTO

TOUGHNESS UP FRONT — Former Ohio State linebacker A.J. Hawk was an important member of the Buckeye defense that brought home a national championship for the program in 2002.

at the middle backer spot. Our defensive front, above all, as a group was the most improved. They really came on with Will Smith playing there, Darrion Scott, Timmy Anderson, Kenny Peterson, and guys like that. They played their best football in the second half of that season and really kept us in ballgames.”

Headlined by a cast of superstars in linebacker A.J. Hawk, safety Mike Doss and defensive end Will Smith, Ohio State made life difficult for most opposing offenses. Ohio State allowed 20 or more points in only two games during the season – the season opener against Kliff Kingsbury and Texas Tech and the national championship game against Miami (Fla.), which averaged 40.5 points during the 2002 season. The Buckeyes held opponents to single-digit scoring outputs in six games, including a 14-9 win in The Game to punch their ticket to the national championship game.

Conley, who also served as recruiting coordinator during the eras of John Cooper and Jim Tressel, emphasized the importance of building complementary defenses in the form of an aggressive front seven and an athletic back end.

“Up-front toughness is what you always look for,” Conley said. “Those guys that were up front were physical football players. Will Smith, who ended up having a great pro career, was a physical and tough guy. We could stand him up or play him at a down stance. He was great at rushing the passer, getting off blocks, and he could run like a deer.

“Timmy Anderson was a guy who wasn't that heavily recruited from Clyde, Ohio. He ended up having a great season, played a great game, and ended up getting drafted by the Buffalo Bills. Nobody talked about him very much, but he was a really good player.

Kenny Peterson had a great season also.

“We had guys play their best football because toughness is what we look for up front. Then in the back end, with guys like Mike Doss, those guys were very athletic. So you have to recruit the combination of toughness up front and athleticism on the back end.”

While the 2002 defense stands out, the Tressel era was littered with top-tier defenses. In the Buckeyes' back-to-back appearances to the national championship in 2006 and 2007, Ohio State trotted out the No. 5 and No. 1 scoring defenses respectively, allowing 12.8 points per game in both seasons.

Prior to Tressel's run of success, the Buckeyes saw a 34-year drought between consensus national championships. Under legendary head coach Woody Hayes, the Buckeyes won five national titles from various organizations while showing a level of consistency on defense. All five of Hayes' national championship-winning defenses ranked within the top 20 in terms of scoring, topping out at No. 7 in 1954.

While it is nearly impossible to compare the defenses of the Hayes era to the modern day, his units were still among the best of the time. His first three national-title team defenses did not allow more than 10 points, holding opponents to 7.5 points per game in 1954 and 9.2 in 1957 and 1961.

Hayes' defenses benefited from playing in one of the lowest-scoring eras in college football. Fast-forward to Ohio State's most recent national title in 2014, and it is clear that there was a major shift in the way the game is played. The Buckeyes allowed 22.0 points per game in 2014, which ranked 26th in the nation.

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

of the ways offenses operate, Conley noted an important development in recruiting on both the offensive and defensive side of the ball as a reactionary piece of the shifting landscape.

"By the late 2000s, so many people run the spread offense and recruit, offensively, a large number of wide receivers and skilled athletes. Defenses did the same," Conley said. "Defenses went really from five-man front defenses to four-man front defenses. And instead of three linebackers, like we ran back in 2002, you ran into more 4-2-5 types of defenses, which are really common today, where you have just two linebackers and five defensive backs on the field in order to cover your talented wide receivers in the spread offense."

While the Buckeyes scored 44.8 points per game in 2014, Ohio State just needed its defense to make plays in key moments. Several defensive moments stand out from that season: Defensive lineman Steve Miller's pick-six of Alabama's Blake Sims in the Sugar Bowl, which gave the Buckeyes a 34-21 lead over the Crimson Tide, stands chief among them.

The most noteworthy performance from Ohio State's championship-winning defense in 2014 came in the Big Ten title game, as the unit pitched a shutout en route to a 59-0 win over then-No. 11 Wisconsin.

As that defense stepped up in big moments, the Buckeyes as a whole set the standard of the College Football Playoff era. Similarly to seven of the eight College Football Playoff national champions, Ohio State boasted a top-30 offense and a top-30 defense. The lone exception to this trend was

LSU in 2019, which trotted out the nation's best offense but the 31st best defense.

Conley said that teams need to play complementary football in order to elevate themselves to the peak of the sport.

"The key is teams have a better chance to win the national championship if you have a balanced attack," he said.

In recent seasons, the Buckeyes have lost their way in terms of boasting a balanced attack between the offense and defense. In Urban Meyer's final season at the helm of the Ohio State football program, the Scarlet and Gray produced one of the best offenses in the nation, primarily thanks to the arm of quarterback Dwayne Haskins. While Haskins led the Buckeyes to an average of 42.4 points per game, Ohio State's defense sputtered under then-defensive coordinator Greg Schiano, allowing 25.5 points per game.

When Meyer placed the coach's whistle around current head coach Ryan Day's neck at the conclusion of a 28-23 Rose Bowl win over Washington, Day made wholesale changes to the Buckeyes' defensive coaching staff. While defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley returned Ohio State's defense to prominence in 2019, holding opponents to 13.7 points per game, it was only a one-year deal as Hafley was elevated to a head coaching role at Boston College at year's end.

After Hafley's departure, the Buckeyes'

defense regressed under Kerry Coombs. Cracks started to show in 2020, especially in the College Football Playoff national championship against Alabama. The Buckeyes allowed Alabama quarterback Mac Jones and wide receiver DeVonta Smith to dice up their secondary, as Jones tossed four first-half touchdowns, three of which were to Smith.

The wheels came off against Oregon last season. The Buckeyes allowed the Ducks to run free en route to a 35-28 OSU loss, the second consecutive 30-plus point scoring output allowed by Ohio State. After Coombs ceded play-calling duties to Matt Barnes, the Buckeyes saw reasonable improvement during the middle of the season. But Ohio State's defensive front was blown off the ball by Michigan's offensive line in the final game in of the regular season, resulting in five rushing touchdowns for Wolverines running back Hassan Haskins and a 42-27 loss for the Buckeyes.

"There were so many areas that we were weak last year," Conley said. "We're 38th in scoring defense, 59th in total defense, and we were 97th in pass defense. There's so much area for improvement."

Now tasked with fostering that improvement is current defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, who turned around Oklahoma State's defense during his four seasons with the Cowboys.

The Buckeyes are once again expected to have one of the more high-powered offenses in 2022, and Knowles' defense will need the situational prominence that was displayed by the Buckeyes in 2014 to aid Ohio State back to the College Football Playoff. When

it comes to Knowles' defense, Conley is impressed with the scheme – especially with how it handles the run.

"The key with the scheme that Jim Knowles runs is to get the safeties involved more with the run game," Conley said. "What that does, by having five defensive backs on the field at all times, sometimes six – you have to stop the run first and then force the offense into second-and-long or third-and-long. The thing I really like about this defense, though, is that it really lets your linebackers be more of run-stoppers, less deep pass coverage. They still have to be involved in the short passing-game, in the hooks and sometimes the curls."

While Knowles brings a new-look defense to Columbus, Conley emphasized the importance of the "Jack" position – a hybrid edge rusher/linebacker – as well as the need for a solid pass rush from the Buckeyes this season.

"I like that Jack position, especially with (Jack) Sawyer because he's a very athletic guy in that position," Conley said. "You can play him in a down stance, he's kind of like Will Smith back in 2002. You can play him down, you can play him up. You can get him involved in the pass rush, you involve him in line stunts. You can even drop him in short zones. That has to be a real athletic player."

As the Buckeyes have embarked on another journey with their eyes on the College Football Playoff national championship trophy, history has laid out the path for where they need to be defensively to accomplish those goals.

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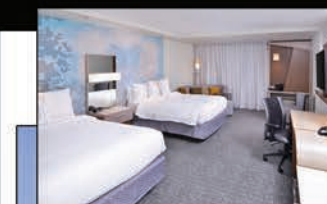
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Oregon, Washington Included In Expansion Talks

USC and UCLA shocked the college football world on June 30 when the programs announced their intention to join the Big Ten. Now, it appears a pair of their competitors from the Pac-12 may be looking to make a similar jump to the Big Ten.

BIG TEN NOTES Jack Emerson

According to Action Network's Brett McMurphy, representatives from the University of Oregon and the University of Washington met with officials from the Big Ten to determine their compatibility with the conference. Oregon met with the conference during the week of Aug. 22 while Washington initiated talks a week later. McMurphy noted that Big Ten commissioner Kevin Warren and the university presidents and athletic directors were not present at either meeting.

The conversations come on the heels of the Big Ten's massive new TV deal, which could approach \$10 billion in revenue if the conference adds teams.

Warren said that he could envision the conference expanding to 20 teams during an appearance on HBO's "Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel" but declared at Big Ten

Media Days that the conference would be strategic in its expansion.

While Oregon and Washington appear to be top candidates to join the Big Ten, it was also reported that the conference has an interest in adding Notre Dame, Stanford and California.

Although the Big Ten reportedly has its sights set on several Pac-12 universities, the West Coast-based conference is looking to secure a media rights deal as its current agreement runs out in 2024.

U-M Softball Coach Hutchins Retires

Michigan softball coach Carol Hutchins – the winningest coach in college softball history – announced her retirement on Aug. 24 after 38 seasons at the helm of the Wolverines program. Throughout her 38-year career, Hutchins led the Wolverines to 1,707 wins and a .755 winning percentage.

"I want to begin by expressing that today I am filled with pride, love, humility and gratitude," Hutchins said in a press release. "I have served as the head coach of Michigan softball for 38 years, and I am incredibly grateful to the university for this opportunity of a lifetime. I will forever bleed blue."

Hutchins saw immense postseason success in maize and blue, collecting the 2005



Carol Hutchins

NCAA national championship along with 12 Women's College World Series appearances. She added 22 Big Ten regular-season titles – including a stretch of nine in a row from 2008-16 – and 10 conference tournament championships.

The Wolverines never endured a losing season during her long reign over the Michigan softball program.

Michigan decided to stay in-house to fill the void left by Hutchins, hiring 29-year assistant coach Bonnie Tholl to take over the program.

Michigan Unable To Select Starting QB

Tasked with choosing between quarterbacks Cade McNamara and J.J. McCarthy for the second consecutive season, Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh decided to allow the quarterback competition to continue into the season.

Harbaugh announced on Aug. 28 that McNamara would start the Wolverines' first game against Colorado State, while McCarthy will get the nod against Hawaii the following week. Michigan will then decide on the starter before its third game against Connecticut on Sept. 17.

"It's a process," Harbaugh said. "No person knows what the future holds, and it's a process that will be based on performance. Both have been tremendous quarterbacks. We think that both are capable of leading our team to a championship. That's good. We're going to keep cultivating that."

"Some people have asked, 'How did you come to that decision? Was it based on some kind of NFL model?' No, it's based biblically," Harbaugh added.

Competition between McNamara and McCarthy is not new to the Wolverines. The quarterbacks battled for the starting spot a year ago. McNamara won that competition last season and took a majority of the snaps at quarterback while McCarthy still saw a significant amount of playing time as the backup, helming the Michigan offense in specific formations and situations.

McNamara completed 64.2 percent of his 327 pass attempts while accounting for 2,576 yards, 15 touchdowns and six interceptions through the air last season. In his reserve role, McCarthy completed 34 of 59 attempts for 516 yards, five touchdowns

BIG 2022 Standings

East Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Indiana	1	0	1.000	1	0	1.000
Penn State	1	0	1.000	1	0	1.000
Ohio State	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Michigan State	0	0	1.000	1	0	1.000
Rutgers	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Michigan	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Maryland	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000

West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Northwestern	1	0	1.000	1	0	1.000
Iowa	1	0	1.000	1	0	1.000
Minnesota	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Wisconsin	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Illinois	0	1	0.000	1	1	.500
Nebraska	0	1	0.000	1	1	.500
Purdue	0	1	0.000	0	1	0.000

Aug. 27 Games

Northwestern 31, Nebraska 28
Illinois 38, Wyoming 6

Sept. 1 Games

Penn State 35, Purdue 31
Minnesota 38, New Mexico State 0

Sept. 2 Games

Michigan State 35, Western Michigan 13
Indiana 23, Illinois 20

Sept. 3 Games

Ohio State 21, Notre Dame 10
Michigan 51, Colorado State 7
Wisconsin 38, Illinois State 0
Iowa 7, South Dakota State 3
Maryland 31, Buffalo 10
Rutgers 22, Boston College 21
Nebraska 38, North Dakota 17

Sept. 10 Games

Arkansas State at **Ohio State**, noon
Duke at Northwestern, noon
Ohio at Penn State, noon
Western Illinois at Minnesota, noon
Maryland at Charlotte, 3:30 p.m.
Washington State at Wisconsin, 3:30 p.m.
Wagner at Rutgers, 4 p.m.
Akron at Michigan State, 4 p.m.
Indiana State at Purdue, 4 p.m.
Iowa State at Iowa, 4 p.m.
Virginia at Illinois, 4 p.m.
Georgia Southern at Nebraska, 7:30 p.m.
Hawaii at Michigan, 8 p.m.
Idaho at Illinois, 8 p.m.

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BIG TEN NOTES

and two interceptions while adding 124 yards and two touchdowns with his legs.

Illinois Lands Top Basketball Recruit

Illinois landed the first piece of its 2023 class on Aug. 28 when Baltimore Mount Saint Joseph four-star power forward Amani Hansberry (6-8, 225) made his commitment to the Fighting Illini.

Hansberry is the No. 1 player from Maryland in the class and ranks as the No. 14 power forward, according to 247Sports' composite score. The Baltimore native selected Illinois over the likes of Penn State, Auburn, Miami and Virginia Tech.

"I chose Illinois because of the culture there and the fact I felt needed as a piece to their puzzle," Hansberry told On3's Joe Tipton. "Every time I talked to Coach (Brad) Underwood and Coach (Chester) Frazier, they always mentioned working hard, winning and doing it together. I feel like that's the key to success, and with the resources the program has in tech, strength and conditioning, we will be successful."

Hansberry is known for his post presence on the offensive end of the court, while also being an adept rebounder for Mount Saint Joseph and his AAU team, Team Durant.

Underwood garnered the commitments of a pair of 2024 targets before the addition of Hansberry. Illinois has forged pacts with Chicago St. Rita four-star power forward Morez Johnson and point guard ZZ Clark, who played for Windermere (Fla.) Prep and now plays for Atlanta (Ga.) Overtime Elite.

Former Four-Star WR Transfers Out Of Maryland



Marcus Fleming

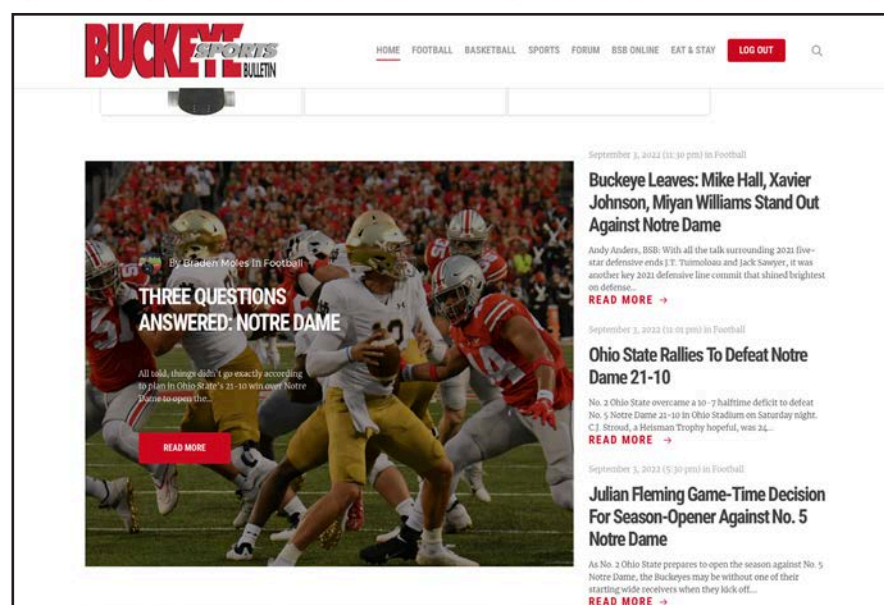
While the Maryland receiving corps has garnered plenty of hype ahead of the 2022 season, the Terrapins saw a piece of their depth at the position enter the transfer portal with under a week until their season opener.

Former Miami (Fla.) Northwestern four-star wide receiver Marcus Fleming entered the transfer portal amidst legal troubles that stem from multiple assault charges during his time with the Terrapins. Fleming appeared in court on Aug. 25, facing charges for first- and second-degree assault, which originate from an alleged domestic violence incident on June 3. He entered the transfer portal just one day after his court appearance.

Fleming began his college career at Nebraska and played in just one game for the Cornhuskers during the 2020 season before transferring to Maryland.

As a Terrapin, Fleming saw an increased role in head coach Mike Locksley's offense. He appeared in six games last season and collected 18 receptions for 197 yards and a touchdown. He was slated to play behind Maryland's star receiver Rakim Jarrett this season.

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Decker In Line To Lead Lions Resurgence

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The longest tenured Detroit Lions player is eager for the NFL season opener even as left tackle Taylor Decker has endured four consecutive losing years.

He's enthusiastic about the direction second-year coach Dan Campbell is taking the team despite a 3-13-1 record in 2021, one which saw Decker, 29, miss the first eight games because of a finger injury. He also sustained a foot injury in the season finale against Green Bay that in part led him to limit his offseason training.

"I would say this is the most talented line I've been a part of, 100 percent," he said in June. "I'm not necessarily a talent evaluator, but we've just got a bunch of guys that are smart, confident, athletic. I think our room is a very confident room, talented room, and we all just get along very well. Our camaraderie and cohesiveness as a group is off the charts. It's incredible."

Decker was the Lions' first-round pick (16th overall) in 2016, and the Lions enjoyed the first of back-to-back 9-7 seasons followed by 6-10, 3-12-1 and 5-11 seasons before Campbell's arrival in yet another rebuild.

"I think as far as the offensive line is concerned, this has been something that I feel like this organization has been building since my draft class," he said on the "Twentyman in the Huddle" podcast. "Like every year, every other year, we're trying to add another piece and another piece of trying to take our line to the next level."

"And then big picture-wise, I mean, we've added a lot of talent. We've got playmakers on both sides of the ball. We've got guys that are fast that can fly around, and that's just exciting to see."

Decker faced a crisis of sorts last season when the Lions selected left tackle Penei Sewell seventh overall in the 2021 draft from Oregon and many projected him to take over that spot. The Detroit coaches, however, had other plans and moved Sewell to right tackle until Decker sustained his injury.

Sewell, who struggled on the right side, felt at home in his old position and played well until Decker's return. Sewell went back to right tackle and excelled while Decker regained his usual starting role.

Still, the Lions were unable to field the full offensive line, which includes for-



FILE PHOTO

THIS LION'S NO COWARD — Taylor Decker, a former Ohio State offensive lineman and current Detroit Lion, is working his way back from a foot injury that cost him part of his offseason after missing the first eight games last season because of a finger injury.

mer Buckeye Jonah Jackson at left guard. Decker said everything seemed to click in the first preseason game this season when all five were available.

"We are really good friends on the field and off the field, so we have a good rapport," Decker said. "So, to be able to go out there and play and execute together and see all the work that we're putting in together as a group, it looked pretty good."

"It's a small sample size – 10 plays. It's good that we were able to go out there and play how we want to play in those 10 plays."

"We were able to run the ball, get some passes going and move the chains, which was nice. I thought the energy was really, really good as a whole team. I've been here for a little while now. There was like a little swagger about us out there. That was good to feel and good to see."

Let It Roar

While Decker was rehabbing last season, he got into a spat with the media who he felt questioned his finger injury and

championed his being traded.

"Frankly I feel like the narrative of negativity surrounding my name, all year pretty much, has been (BS). I don't feel like it's been deserved," he said. "I do feel like people within the building, and I do feel like a lot of fans, appreciate me and what I can do for this team. But the media pretty much all year has been pretty negative around me. I'm not going to act like I like that. I think it was (BS). I've played a lot of football here, and I think I've played well."

He even explained the severity of the injury to prove his point.

"I had a full-spiral fracture that rotated and shortened. I had to get five screws and a plate put into my hand," Decker said. "They told me three months, and I'm playing at two months. I did everything I could to get back out on the field, and frankly, it was insulting people acted like I just didn't want to play and wanted to be out for the entire season."

He took another shot at the media.

"I shouldn't have to talk to my parents about whether the team and the city that has become my home is going to trade me or get rid of me," Decker said. "I shouldn't have to talk about that. I just think it's kind of ridiculous. I think people in this building and a lot of the fan base appreciate me, and I do think they know what I can bring to the table."

"But for some reason – and I'm not saying it was 100 percent of the media – but a lot of the media was hammering this narrative of basically to get rid of me when I want to be here and I want to help turn this organization into a winning organization. I've said that from day one and I've never faltered on that, and

I'll never understand why. Nobody will be able to explain to me why, and it's just frustrating."

This wasn't the first time he's had to deal with an injury. A shoulder injury in 2017 cost him eight games, and he later told The Detroit News that he did not handle it well.

"I think it was detrimental, because I made myself mentally exhausted on top of not feeling physically ready to go out there," he explained. "I came back way too early, and I was watching so much film that I was psyching myself out. I wasn't going out there confident. A part of that was the mental side, knowing I probably shouldn't be out here but I'm going to do it anyway."

That's not to say his career has been derailed by injuries. His pass-blocking grade by Pro Football Focus last season was the sixth highest among all tackles in the NFL. Also, the Lions in 2021 topped 1,800 rushing yards, had 12 rushing touchdowns and maintained a rushing average of at least a 4.4 yards per carry in a season for the first time since 1998.

It could be a sign that the losing ways are over for someone who had a successful – and winning – career at Ohio State. The Vandalia, Ohio, native was a three-year starter for the Buckeyes, starting 42 times. In four seasons, the Buckeyes were 50-4 and won the inaugural College Football Playoff for the 2014 season.

In his first NFL season, he became the third Lions rookie offensive lineman since 2016 to start all 16 regular-season games.

He is also the only offensive lineman in franchise history to catch two TD passes (Dec. 2, 2018, vs. the Los Angeles Rams and Jan. 2, 2022, at Seattle).

After the first one he threw the ball into the stands (and was fined by the NFL) and later had to go on Twitter to find the fan who caught it. They connected and Decker got the ball back.

He recently said he wants to talk to the coaches to plan another play for him. He was half joking, but it also represented the good vibes he has about the Lions heading toward the Sept. 11 opener against Philadelphia.

"There's just an atmosphere established for open communication for growth as a player, whether that's player to player, player to coach, coach to coach, player to front-office personnel," Decker said. "There's just that open communication where, man, this guy wants the best for me. I can ask this question and not be worried that I'm going to get in trouble because I don't know the answer. Because we're here to try to get better, and if you're a player and you don't know, you're supposed to ask the question to get the answer so you can do your job out there."

"I think that's been a huge thing – it kind of sounds like a weird thing – but just the atmosphere for open communication between everybody, I think that's been huge for guys' growth, guys' confidence and for everybody to mesh together because you feel like everybody cares about you."



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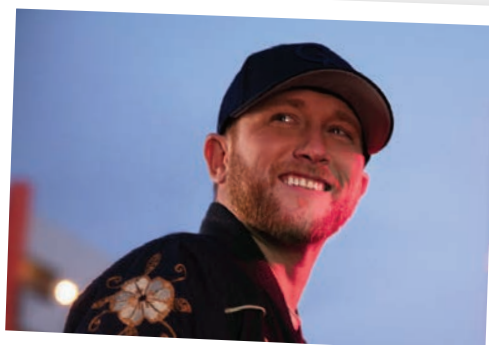
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FRIDAY // 6:40

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SATURDAY // 6:40

- Reds Team Photo, presented by Thomas More University (while supplies last)

SUNDAY // 1:40

- Fan Appreciation Day
- Kids Nick Senzel Wall Decal, presented by Laura's Lean Beef (Kids 14 & younger in attendance, while supplies last)



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Top Prospects Hosted For Notre Dame Game

Ohio State couldn't have picked a better game to roll out the red carpet. Upwards of 60 recruits in the 2023 class and beyond were in attendance on Sept. 3 to watch the Buckeyes pull out a 21-10 victory over visiting Notre Dame in front of 106,594 raucous fans at Ohio Stadium.

The atmosphere was one of the better ones in recent memory on Ohio State's home turf, and that was apparent to those watching on the sidelines.

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Braden Moles

"The environment was electric," Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage five-star wide receiver and commit Brandon Inniss told 247Sports. "Every third down I felt like my eardrums popped. The highlights of the game was the environment and how everyone treats me like family even though I'm not there yet."

Several other Ohio State commitments were there for the game, including a trio of offensive linemen in Findlay, Ohio, four-star Luke Montgomery (6-5, 280); Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star Joshua Padilla (6-4, 265); and Middletown (Ohio)

Lakota East four-star Austin Siereveld (6-5, 320), who all had the opportunity to meet NBA superstar LeBron James.

"The environment was insane," Padilla said. "The highlight for me was meeting LeBron James and seeing the team pick up a big win."

Putting on a show for the committed prospects is obviously important, but more noteworthy was the reaction of uncommitted recruits in attendance.

That includes the likes of Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep five-star defensive end Keon Keeley (6-6, 242); Venice, Fla., five-star defensive end Damon Wilson (6-4, 230); and Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco five-star defensive end Matayo Uiagalelei in 2023 as well as five-star athlete KJ Bolden (6-1, 185) and four-star tight end King Joseph Edwards, both of Buford, Ga.; New Palestine, Ind., four-star offensive lineman Ian Moore (6-5, 295); and Cleveland Glenville five-star cornerback Bryce West (5-11, 177) in 2024.

The prospects in 2023 are keeping things close to their vest as their recruitments begin to wind down, but it's believed that Ohio State is a serious contender for each of the top-ranked defensive ends. The 2024 prospects, though, had nothing but positive things to say about the experience.

"The atmosphere was crazy, probably one of the best games I've attended hands down," Bolden told 247Sports. "The en-



SONNY BROCKWAY

STARS IN THE 'SHOE — Ohio Stadium was the place to be on Sept. 3 when Ohio State hosted Notre Dame. LeBron James and his son, Bronny, were among the celebrities in attendance.

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
Jayden Bonsu	S	6-1	210	★★★★	Hillside (N.J.) St. Peter's Prep
Mark Fletcher	RB	6-1	225	★★★★	Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage
Brock Glenn	QB	6-2	195	★★★★	Memphis (Tenn.) Lausanne Collegiate
Malik Hartford	SAF	6-3	175	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
Cedrick Hawkins	SAF	6-0	165	★★★★	Titusville (Fla.) Cocoa
Brandon Inniss	WR	6-0	190	★★★★★	Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage
Kayin Lee	CB	5-11	185	★★★★	Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove
Jermaine Mathews	CB	6-0	175	★★★★	Cincinnati Winton Woods
Luke Montgomery	OT	6-5	270	★★★★	Findlay, Ohio
Jason Moore	DE	6-6	255	★★★★	Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic
Joshua Padilla	OG	6-4	265	★★★★	Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne
Arvell Reese	LB	6-4	212	★★★★	Cleveland Glenville
Bryson Rodgers	WR	6-2	170	★★★★	Zephyrhills (Fla.) Wiregrass Ranch
Noah Rogers	WR	6-2	180	★★★★	Rolesville, N.C.
Austin Siereveld	OL	6-5	315	★★★★	Middletown (Ohio) Lakota East
Calvin Simpson-Hunt	CB	6-0	175	★★★★	Waxahachie, Texas
Will Smith Jr.	DL	6-3	260	★★★	Dublin (Ohio) Coffman
Carnell Tate	WR	6-2	185	★★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Jelani Thurman	TE	6-5	230	★★★★	Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes
Miles Walker	OT	6-6	285	★★★	Greenwich (Conn.) Brunswick School

vironment was everything. You had to be there to understand it. The fans and supporters made the game fun. My highlight was seeing (106,594) people in the stadium for the game and meeting LeBron James, Zeke Elliott, Jayson Tatum, Chase Young, Justin Fields, Joe Burrow and so many other NFL players."

"It was crazy. I actually called one of the touchdowns when C.J. Stroud threw to (Xavier) Johnson," West said. "But it was an amazing game. Both teams played so hard and fought. I definitely want to get back down for a game soon. But Ohio State definitely has everything you're looking for in a school."

"Epic. Lots of celebrities in the building showing love," Edwards said. "Fans yelling and screaming. Lights everywhere. I had a really good time. The highlight for me was how effective the defense was the entire game. They are very fast and physical offense that came back in the second half with a point to prove. It was an impressive win for the Buckeyes."

This was an important showing for Ohio State not just in terms of the atmosphere, but the defensive performance. Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' debut for the Buckeyes could not have turned out better, allowing just 10 points and 253 yards to a top-five Irish squad.

Given the offseason rhetoric surrounding the program – with much aimed at the defense – it was a jarring shift to see Ohio State's defense come out and dominate like it did, but that's the type of performance Ohio State head coach Ryan Day was banking on as part of the Buckeyes' recruiting pitch.

"I think when you change a defense as drastically as we have, a lot of people want to see what it's going to look like," Day said at Big Ten Media Days. "I think it's pretty easy for recruits to see how we're going to run it based on Jim's past and some of the guys in that room in Perry (Eliano), Tim (Walton) and Larry (Johnson)."

"I think our recruiting class is strong. Our goal is still always to be top 10 or top five in the country, and I think we will be this year. We'll see how it plays out. But I

think our defensive guys have done a really good job recruiting. They're hustling like crazy, and they're really working on it. I'm sure (recruits) do want to see (success with the scheme), but I also think they understand that we've got some really good guys about development."

The opener against Notre Dame was a first step, but it could be a positive sign of things to come for not only Ohio State's defense moving forward, but for the Buckeyes' recruiting on the defensive side of the ball.

Jones Hopes Pipeline To Glenville Reopens

When you think of Ohio State football factories, few locations come to mind faster than Cleveland's Glenville High School. Several Buckeye greats called the school home, including quarterbacks Cardale Jones and Troy Smith, safety Donte Whitner and wide receiver Ted Ginn Jr., and the pipeline to Ohio State has been well-chronicled over the years.

The problem with pipelines, though, is that they will sometimes run dry. The Buckeyes had not received a commitment from a Glenville prospect since cornerback Marshon Lattimore, a then-four-star prospect in the 2014 recruiting class. That changed when Glenville four-star linebacker Arvell Reese announced his commitment to the Buckeyes on Aug. 6.

Along with West, a 2024 prospect whom Ohio State is heavily involved with, it could be an indication that the connection is reopening between Glenville and the Buckeyes. Jones, who played at Glenville before committing to Ohio State's 2011 recruiting class, told Eleven Warriors that his high school is invaluable to the Glenville community.

"It's extremely important," he said. "Not just important to me, but our community. It's one of the rare things our community can all agree on and come together for, to support other Glenville athletes. Being at this game, I've seen so many people I haven't seen since I was playing here. We all have that same common goal, whatever we can do to support these guys."



FILE PHOTO

12 GAUGE — Former Ohio State quarterback and Cleveland Glenville product Cardale Jones is hopeful that his high school alma mater will start sending talent to Ohio State again.

Reese and West could be a sign of things to come, and Jones would welcome a renewed pipeline from Glenville to Ohio State.

“I think it’s great because Glenville always has some great athletes,” Jones said. “They’re known for players that have come to Ohio State and have done some big things for the program.”

Ohio State In Mix For Stover

Ohio State tight end Cade Stover has become a leader for the Buckeyes over the past few seasons, elevated from a rotational defensive end to a starting tight end, and one who was named one of Ohio State’s six captains for this upcoming season, at that.

Once Cade eventually departs, though, there could be another Stover on the way. Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut four-star athlete Garrett Stover (6-2, 195) is Cade’s cousin, and Ohio State offered him this past summer after a camping session with the Buckeyes.

Garrett is the No. 231 overall prospect and No. 28 athlete in 2024, according to 247Sports. He holds additional offers from Cincinnati, Kentucky, Michigan State, Notre Dame and Pittsburgh, among others, with the Bearcats and Fighting Irish seen as the most likely competition for Ohio State.

“I’d say they’re definitely a top school,” Stover told Eleven Warriors. “Ohio State

is such a special place, and obviously my background with Cade being there and everything, really it’ll play a huge role in my decision to see if it is really the right fit. But I’m going to keep an open mind.”

Stover has lined up at defensive end,

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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.

linebacker and safety this season for Big Walnut, hence the athlete distinction, but he likely projects as a safety at the next level.

“They haven’t talked about (the position I’d play) too much, but they have talked to me about playing the bandit,” Stover said. “That’s kind of like a hybrid deal, you know at linebacker and safety. It will be interesting to see who’s in that spot this year to see how it works and everything.”

Walton Talks CB Recruiting

There were some understandable questions when Tim Walton was hired as secondary/cornerbacks coach for Ohio State given that he hasn’t worked in the college game since 2008, but his first few months of recruiting for the Buckeyes have resulted

in a strong trio of cornerbacks committed.

Ohio State obviously took a blow with the decommitment of Tampa (Fla.) Wharton four-star Dijon Johnson (6-1, 190), but the Buckeyes still have Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star Kayin Lee (5-11, 185), Cincinnati Winton Woods four-star Jermaine Mathews (6-0, 175) and Waxahachie, Texas, four-star Calvin Simpson-Hunt (6-0, 175), all committed since Walton joined the staff earlier this year.

Even though he’d been away from the college game for over 13 years, he still came to Columbus with a clear idea of how he wanted to recruit and who he wanted to recruit, telling the media that mentality was the top attribute he looks for in a prospect.

Continued On Page 32

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Herbstreit Takes Issue With NIL Collectives

Continued From Page 31

"You look for a certain competitive nature," he said. "Guys that love to compete, guys that love to play the game. Passion to play. Toughness, you know those things, and the technical part and all those things, you can refine that, but they've got to love to compete and have good toughness. You can mold guys. And a passion for the game."

It didn't take long for Walton to identify those guys, either, once he arrived at Ohio State. He was hot on the recruiting trail for the three aforementioned commitments, not to mention the commitment of Atlanta Douglass cornerback Jontae Gilbert (6-1, 175) in 2025, and has already been in touch with several 2024 prospects since contact was allowed on Sept. 1.

"You can find out early," Walton said. "That jumps out at guys. You know, they don't take long to find out who loves to play the game of football."

Some of the cornerbacks he'll have an eye on in 2024 includes Sarasota (Fla.) Riverview five-star Charles Lester III (6-1, 171), Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star Ellis Robinson IV (6-0, 175) and Holland (Ohio) Springfield four-star cornerback Aaron Scott (6-1, 160)

Herbstreit Sounds Off On NIL, Recruiting

Former Ohio State quarterback and current ABC/ESPN broadcaster Kirk Herbstreit, never one to shy away from speaking



FILE PHOTO

'TERRIBLE FOR THE SPORT' — Former Ohio State quarterback Kirk Herbstreit said in a recent interview that NIL collectives are not being used properly in regard to recruiting.

his mind, took issue with the usage of Name, Image and Likeness in recruiting pitches in a recent interview with The Los Angeles Times.

Asked about NIL collectives and the inducement of high school prospects, Herbstreit said that is not what NIL is — or was supposed to be — about.

"It was about Bryce Young or C.J. Stroud or a guy who was established on the field creating marketing opportunities," he said. "It's not about trying to outbid another booster to try to get a recruit. That's just not a healthy model."

"It's terrible for the sport. It puts these coaches in weird spots. What I'm about is the next wave — the ESPN money, the FOX money, it's going into the Big Ten from FOX and the SEC from ESPN. I'm all about the players saying, 'Forget NIL. Let's negotiate and get a share of those dollars. Oh, we're going to a 16-team playoff? How many billions of dollars? OK, we need a share of that.'"

"But I don't like how it's started out with the recruiting. 'I went to this school and got offered this. Next week I'm going to go to that school and get offered this.' That is a bunch of (BS)."

Herbstreit took specific issue with Downey (Calif.) Warren five-star quarterback Nicholaus Iamaleava (6-5, 195), a Tennessee commitment who reportedly earned an \$8 million NIL deal for joining the Volunteers' class.

"How can an adult with a good conscience say this is awesome for the sport?" Herbstreit said. "What's going to happen with the kid from (Warren), as an example? Hopefully he's a great player. But with the reports about (him receiving) three years, \$8 million, what if he isn't? What if he struggles? What happens then? I mean, that's going to happen eventually. How are

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago - 1982

Keith Byars was in the middle of making a big change in the way he did things on a football field.

Byars, Ohio State's much-heralded freshman recruit from Dayton Roth High School, started his college football days at a new position. After an illustrious prep career as a ball-carrying running back, Byars switched to the fullback slot for the Buckeyes.

"One of the main things I'm going to have to work on is blocking," said Byars, one of the most sought-after running backs in the country during the annual recruiting war. "Last year I didn't have to do too much blocking in the tailback spot. But going to fullback, I know I'll be blocking 75 to 80 percent of the time. So that's one of the things I know I'll have to work on — my blocking."

35 Years Ago - 1987

Some start fast and some start slow, but the one thing about freshman is, you never know.

Jeff Ellis was off to a fast start.

"For a freshman, he's as fine a prospect as I've ever been associated with," said OSU quarterbacks and receivers coach Tom Lichtenberg, who recruited Ellis. "The only other tight end with his type of ability as a freshman was Mark Bavaro when I was (an assistant) at Notre Dame, and now he's an All-Pro with the New York Giants. Jeff might be even more advanced than Bavaro."

30 Years Ago - 1992

Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit's Mike Vrabel (6-5, 240, 4.75) was considered the top defensive line prospect in the state. He played defensive end and linebacker and could have remained at one of those spots during his college career, or he could have moved to a tackle spot.

He had suffered a stress fracture in his back the previous season, which limited him to just seven games of action. In those games, though, he still managed 70 tackles and four sacks. Vrabel was an excellent all-around athlete, starting on the basketball team and throwing the discus in track.

He carried a 3.10 grade-point average and scored 950 on his SAT. He already had narrowed his prospective choices to three schools — Ohio State, UCLA and Michigan.

25 Years Ago - 1997

On the opening weekend of Ohio high school football, Ohio State's two verbal commitments — Kenny Peterson and Jamar

Martin — helped lead their Canton McKinley team to a 45-0 win over Akron Garfield. Martin scored two touchdowns for the Bulldogs, the nation's top-ranked prep squad.

Elsewhere in northeast Ohio, DeJuan Groce and Lakewood St. Edward beat Nate Clements and Shaker Heights, 32-19, in a matchup of the state's top two defensive back prospects. Clements posted a 62-yard touchdown run that Groce trumped with a 90-yard scoring jaunt.

Clements told BSB his college choices were down to OSU or Michigan State.

20 Years Ago - 2002

St. Henry, Ohio, quarterback Todd Boeckman became OSU's fifth verbal commitment for 2003 when he picked the Buckeyes over Maryland and Pittsburgh on Aug. 17.

Boeckman's verbal came just five days after Dublin (Ohio) Coffman quarterback Brady Quinn announced his intention to play at Notre Dame. Quinn also had been offered by OSU and Michigan.

Boeckman joined fellow Ohioans Cleveland St. Ignatius defensive back Tony Gonzalez, Youngstown Ursuline tight end Louis Irizarry, Massillon Washington wide receiver Devin Jordan and North Canton Hoover defensive back Curt Lukens in the OSU class.

"I have grown up a Buckeye fan my whole life," Boeckman said. "I had always planned on going there, but I wanted to take my time and see if there were any other better choices out there."

15 Years Ago - 2007

His team came away with a season-opening victory, and to hear Cincinnati LaSalle wide receiver DeVier Posey tell it, the win was partly the result of an intangible skill he had been developing all summer — his leadership.

After initially turning down the role of team captain, Posey changed his mind and asked head coach Tom Grippa to allow him to serve in that role. Grippa agreed, and the 6-3, 195-pound athlete — who added 10 pounds of muscle during the offseason — said he was growing into the role.

"I really wanted to be a leader on this team," he said.

10 Years Ago - 2012

It wasn't a particularly big visit day for Ohio State, but the coaching staff under first-year coach Urban Meyer hosted a handful of prospects during the staff's first game overseeing the pro-

gram — a 56-10 blowout victory against Miami (Ohio) on Sept. 1.

Among those in attendance were a trio of verbals from the 2013 class — Cameron Burrows, a four-star cornerback from Trotwood (Ohio) Madison; Darron Lee, a three-star athlete from New Albany, Ohio; Tim Gardiner of Indianapolis Lawrence Central; and Jalin Marshall, a five-star quarterback out of Middletown, Ohio. Also attending from the 2013 class was Christopher Worley, a three-star linebacker from Cleveland Glenville.

Players from the 2014 class who were in attendance included quarterback Drew Barker of Hebron, Ky.; offensive lineman Marcellys Jones and linebacker Marshon Lattimore of Glenville; and athlete Montae Nicholson of Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway.

Five Years Ago - 2017

Ohio State bolstered its top-ranked 2018 recruiting class when Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star athlete L'Christian "Blue" Smith committed to the Buckeyes prior to his team's game against Gibsonia (Pa.) Pine-Richland, which was nationally televised by ESPN on Aug. 27.

Smith, the No. 142 overall prospect in the country who was being recruited as a wide receiver, received an offer from OSU in March of 2016 and had been to campus a number of times for unofficial visits and camps before issuing his pledge. After building a relationship with Ohio State and seeing what the university had to offer, Smith told Scout.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene he simply couldn't pass up the chance to attend the in-state school.

"I just woke up one morning thinking, 'I'm missing an opportunity here. This is an opportunity that not many people get. This is not setting me up just for football and my future, but just a man making good money after I play, after I graduate,'" Smith said. "It sets you up for better opportunities at Ohio State."

One Year Ago - 2021

Despite being the first commitment of Ohio State's 2022 class, West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star cornerback Jyaire Brown was always a player who seemed less secure in ultimately signing with the Buckeyes.

Brown's signing became even more important once five-star cornerback Jaheim Singletary of Jacksonville (Fla.) Riverside announced Aug. 1 that he was decommitting from Ohio State. But almost exactly one month after the Singletary decision, Brown decided enough was enough and shut down his recruitment, cutting off contact with other schools and locking into Ohio State.

ASK AN ANALYST

With Garrick Hodge of Eleven Warriors

High school football has kicked off within the last couple of weeks. Who are some of Ohio State's current commitments that you're looking at who are in for a big season?

"Starting with 2023 commits, Findlay, Ohio, four-star offensive tackle Luke Montgomery (6-5, 280) has continued to bulk up and made several impressive strides over the offseason. He's really kind of developed into the role of being a class leader both on the field and through peer recruiting. He's the guy that reaches out to other uncommitted prospects out of state and kind of leads that peer recruiting, if you will, on social media. C.J. Hicks got the term 'Captain Buckeye,' and unofficially Luke Montgomery has kind of taken on that role for the 2023 class.

"The most recent in-state commit is Cleveland Glenville four-star linebacker Arvell Reese (6-4, 212), and every time I watch that guy, I think he just gets better and better. He has had two really strong first games for Glenville. I saw him his first game and he's only played seven games at the linebacker position, and yet he just looks like a natural there. I think in college, he's going to go from anywhere to playing that famous Jack position in Jim Knowles' defense. He can line him up on the edge, he can put him in the middle. He has the versatility to make plays all over the field.

"Moving to 2024, Cleveland Glenville four-star cornerback Bryce West (5-11, 177) is obviously probably your top in-state target. He's been very high on Ohio State ever since he got offered in December. Ohio State's in a good position for him. But Glenville is a program that traditionally has their players play out their recruitment until the very end, do what's best for their teammates and do what's best for them and weigh all their options. It would be nice if Ohio State got the Glenville pipeline back going. A lot of Glenville alums would sure love to see that, and obviously they had a lot of success with players from Glenville from 2002 to 2017, when they had about 21 players, kind of lead the way for the Buckeyes.

"Other guys include Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut safety Gar-

rett Stover (6-2, 195) and Springfield, Ohio, four-star cornerback Aaron Scott (6-1, 160). Those guys are other defensive players in the 2024 class that they're really high on. I'm sure that 2024 is probably one of the most talent-rich classes that maybe Ohio sees in quite some time. We may not be done seeing offers go out to prospects yet, but we may be a ways away from seeing who exactly gets the other offers that play out from Ohio. They're doing really well recruiting Ohio. Seven of the top eight players in the 247Sports state rankings have already committed in the 2023 class. So I would say Ohio State has done very well there."

What is Ohio State's relationship like with West, and how do you view their odds to land him?

"Every time you ask West about Ohio State, he just has a big smile on his face and kind of lights up at the mention of them. Maybe I'm reading too much into that because he's just a happy-go-lucky kid, no matter what you ask him about. But I do think it's pretty telling that the first game he came out for Glenville, this year, he was decked in Ohio State gloves. He tried to kind of play that off that was just him looking good with the uniform and thinking the gloves match.

"But the multiple times that I've talked with him, he's always consistently said that Ohio State's the No. 1 school on his list, and he's backed off a little bit of that recently because I think he's trying to do his due diligence. But if you were asking me the chances, I would say there's a very good chance that Bryce West ends up in this class before his recruitment is all said and done."

Are Reese and West a sign of things to come for Glenville in terms of producing talent like they used to?

"They could. They have another prospect that I think Ohio State is looking at in four-star athlete Damarion Witten (6-4, 215). His primary position of what he'll play in college is tight end. He's listed as an athlete, but I'd say he's more of a tight end. There could be potentially two other guys that they take a look at, but the primary one in my opinion is Witten. He's camped at Ohio

end in 2023.

- Purdue earned a commitment on Aug. 28 from Indianapolis Cathedral four-star defensive lineman Kendrick Gilbert (6-5, 250). Rated the No. 276 overall prospect and No. 41 defensive lineman, Gilbert is the highest-rated recruit in the Boilermakers' class that ranks 35th in the country.

- Sept. 1 ushered in the official contact period for the class of 2024, with coaches able to officially contact recruits through

State's recruiting camps in June. He's a four-star recruit, and he's gotten plenty of other Power Five offers to this point.

"He's certainly a candidate that could be another guy from Glenville that merits a look from Ohio State to where it's not just the Arvell Reese and Bryce West show. We'll have to kind of see how that plays out."

Ohio State's 2023 class currently sits at 20 commitments. How big do you think this class will end up, and what positions do you still view as ones of need?

"I think they may be OK just taking Arvell Reese and maybe looking at the portal for another linebacker, unless someone else plays out. There's no clear-cut linebacker that just jumps out to where they might go after them. I still think that they're going to do their damndest to try to flip Many, La., four-star linebacker Tackett Curtis (6-2, 218), depending on how Ohio State's defense performs this year and how USC's defense, or the lack thereof, performs, but I wouldn't get my hopes up on that. But they're content taking Arvell unless they can add another premier linebacker.

"They would love to take another premier offensive tackle, if they can get one. Right now I'm not entirely sure if they can. Brockton (Mass.) Thayer Academy four-star offensive tackle Samson Okunlola (6-5, 305) is a guy that they would love to have, but they need to get him on campus first, before they're considered a player in that recruitment.

"Defensive line, they'll definitely add a prospect or two there, especially with the upcoming visits this weekend. You have two five stars (defensive ends Keon Keeley of Berk ley Prep in Tampa, Fla., and Matayo Uiagalelei of St. John Bosco in Bellflower, Calif.) and one close to five star (defensive end Damon Wilson of Venice, Fla.) coming on campus. They'll definitely add one, maybe two more players there if they can get on. Right now the class is at 20, I'd say it ends up anywhere between 22 to 25 players at this point."

those guys in Knoxville going to feel about that? How's it going to go over in a locker room?"

247Sports Releases Top 100 For 2025

Work is yet to be done in the 2023 and 2024 recruiting classes, but why not take a look ahead to 2025? 247Sports released its list of the top 100 prospects in the class of 2025, and Ohio State is already involved with several names on the list.

Of the top 100 prospects in 2025, Ohio State has already issued offers to 18, including Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day School four-star offensive tackle David Sanders (6-6, 255, No. 1); Savannah (Ga.) Christian Prep four-star defensive lineman Elijah Griffin (6-4, 270, No. 2); Duncanville, Texas, wide receiver Dakorien Moore (5-10, 175, No. 8); Ellaville (Ga.) Schley County linebacker Zayden Walker (6-3, 220, No. 11); Lynchburg (Va.) Liberty Christian Academy running back Gideon Davidson (6-0, 193, No. 19); and Allen, Texas, tight end Davon Mitchell (6-4, 230, No. 29). All are the top-ranked recruits at their position.

Other notable offers include Buford, Ga., linebacker Jadon Perlotte (6-3, 200); Evans, Ga., offensive tackle Mason Short (6-7, 280); Tampa (Fla.) Zephyrhills four-star safety DJ Pickett (6-2, 170); Jacksonville (Fla.) Mandarin wide receiver Jaime Ffrench (6-1, 175); and Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy quarterback Colin Hurley (6-0, 213). Gilbert, Ohio State's lone commitment in 2025, was not among the top-100 prospects.

Of those top-100 prospects, only two reside in the Buckeye State. One is Cleveland

Villa Angela-St. Joseph athlete Bo Jackson (5-11, 188), who is rated the No. 81 overall prospect and the No. 8 athlete in the class and has been offered by the Buckeyes. The other is Clayton Northmont four-star wide receiver Dorian Brew (6-2, 175), the No. 63 overall prospect and No. 15 wide receiver in the class, and he has not been offered by Ohio State.

"It's kind of hard to say with early targets," Eleven Warriors' Garrick Hodge told BSB. "Ohio State's coaching staff was shocked and blown away that Gilbert wanted to commit that early. Don't get me wrong, they were thrilled that he wanted to do it, but I think they asked him a couple times, 'Are you sure? Are you sure you know what that means, right?'"

Many of those prospects offered by Ohio State – including Ffrench, Gilbert and Pickett, among others – were in attendance for the Buckeyes' win over Notre Dame.

"This weekend is more about just impressing those 2025 recruits with the atmosphere, the stadium and starting to build those relationships," Hodge said. "But I'd be surprised if we're in for another Jontae Gilbert situation, where a kid just pulls the trigger early. Especially considering that 2024 still only has one commit so I think we're a ways away from the next 2025."

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Upper Marlboro (Md.) Charles Herbert Flowers four-star defensive end Desmond Umeozulu (6-6, 239) committed to South Carolina on Aug. 29 over North Carolina and Ohio State. Umeozulu is the No. 167 overall prospect and No. 21 defensive

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text, email, social media and phone calls. Prior to Sept. 1, contact between coaches and recruits could only be initiated by recruits, their parents or their coaches.

- At time of press, Ohio State is out of the top five in the 2023 team composite rankings. With a team score of 284.57, the Buckeyes rank sixth behind Oklahoma (284.84), Notre Dame (285.58), Georgia (286.04), Texas (286.53) and Alabama (298.26).

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Details Emerge Regarding Holtmann's Contract

After his first five seasons at Ohio State, men's basketball head coach Chris Holtmann reaffirmed his commitment to the university on May 18, inking a three-year contract extension that would keep him in his position as the Buckeyes' skipper until the end of the 2027-28 season.

The extension will raise Holtmann's base salary from \$850,000 to \$1 million per

love being the head coach at Ohio State."

Towns Stepping Away After Injury Setback

Ohio State forward Seth Towns announced on Sept. 4 that he was stepping away from the Buckeyes and basketball will not play this season after dealing with injury setbacks this offseason.

"Buckeye Nation, it has been a great honor to represent you and the Ohio State University for two years," Towns said in a statement. "After a few setbacks this summer and some tough conversations with my coaches and medical personnel, it has become clear that my body is not in a position to endure a full Big Ten season. I share with many of you the frustration of not having been able to compete at the level I am capable of, or at least something close to it."

"Yet, it is the immense gratitude I feel for having the chance to play at all that has carried me through for so long," he added. "I have been remarkably blessed and would be living in vain to let anything overshadow that."

Towns returned to his hometown of Columbus and joined the Buckeyes ahead of the 2020-21 season after four years at Harvard, the last two of which he was sidelined due to a serious knee injury sustained during his sophomore season. He was Ivy League Player of the Year during the 2017-18 season after averaging 16.0 points, 5.7 rebounds and 1.8 assists per game for the Crimson.

Towns did not see much action during his time at Ohio State, appearing in 25 games in two seasons for the Buckeyes, all coming in his first season. He averaged 3.8 points while knocking down 42.1 percent of his field-goal attempts. He missed all of last



Seth Towns

OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2023 who have issued verbal commitments to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Scotty Middleton	SF	6-6	180	★★★★	Wichita (Kan.) Sunrise Christian
George Washington III	SG	6-2	165	★★★★	Dayton (Ohio) Chaminade Julianne
Austin Parks	C	6-9	240	★★★★	Saint Mary's (Ohio) Memorial
Devin Royal	SF	6-7	210	★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) Central

season after undergoing back surgery.

"To my teammates, thank you for giving me the chance to fight alongside you. Whether I was playing or sidelined by injury, our success mattered to me all the same because I was bought in to you all and the culture we built together," Towns said.

"As for my immediate future, I'll be taking some time to figure out what my next chapter looks like. But I am excited to find what is next for me and rest in my faith that I will be placed – as I always have been – exactly where I am intended to be."

Sueing Cleared For Return To Court

After missing much of last season with an abdominal injury, Ohio State forward Justice Sueing is reportedly cleared to return to all basketball activities.

As first reported by CBS Sports' Jon Rothstein, Sueing will be full-go in practices as the season draws near. Sueing appeared in Ohio State's first two games last season before he was sidelined for the rest of the campaign while nursing his injury. He did not appear in either of Ohio State's exhibition games during the program's international trip to the Bahamas in August.

Upon the team's return from the Bahamas, Holtmann said Sueing was progressing through his injury rehabilitation.

Sueing was a key member of the 2020-21 Ohio State team, which secured a second seed in the NCAA Tournament after making an appearance in the Big Ten tournament championship game. The Honolulu native averaged 10.7 points and 5.5 re-

bounds on 49.1 percent shooting. He also was a key ball-handler and facilitator for that team, stepping into a point guard role while injuries decimated the backcourt late in the season.

Prior to joining the Buckeyes, Sueing played two years at California, where he led the Golden Bears in scoring in each of his seasons in the program.

Swain Commits To Xavier Over OSU

Ohio State was unable to land its third small forward prospect of the summer as Columbus Africentric Early College four-star small forward Dailyn Swain (6-6, 170) committed to Xavier on Sept. 2.

Swain is ranked the No. 22 small forward and No. 4 recruit out of Ohio in the 2023 class, according to 247Sports' composite score. The Columbus native selected Xavier over Ohio State, Arizona State, Clemson and Arkansas.

Swain was initially set to visit Ohio State on Sept. 3 but decided to cancel the trip and give his commitment to the Musketeers.

Swain played alongside Buckeye commits Dayton Chaminade Julianne four-star shooting guard George Washington III (6-2, 165) and Pickerington (Ohio) Central four-star small forward Devin Royal (6-7, 210) for the Nike EYBL team All-Ohio Red during the summer. On the EYBL circuit, Swain produced 9.6 points, 4.8 rebounds and 3.8 assists per game while knocking down 51.2 percent of his shots from the field. He also showed his knack for on-ball defense, swiping 2.3 steals per game as well.

Swain is known for his well-rounded play, as evidenced by his EYBL statistics. Although listed as a small forward, Swain fashions himself as more of a combo guard despite his 6-6 frame.

"I'm a positionless, super versatile guard," Swain said.

In addition to Swain, the Buckeyes also missed out on Indianapolis Cathedral five-star center Xavier Booker, who committed to Michigan State.

Although the Buckeyes were unable to land Swain or Booker, they still hold the fifth-best 2023 recruiting class, according to 247Sports' composite score. Washington, Royal, Wichita (Kan.) Sunrise Christian four-star small forward Scotty Middleton (6-6, 180) and St. Marys (Ohio) Memorial three-star center Austin Parks (6-9, 240) round out the Buckeyes' class to this point.

Ohio State now turns its attention toward the combo guard market, where it is in talks with several prospects, including Dayton Wayne three-star Lawrent Rice (6-3, 170), Minneapolis Totino-Grace four-star Taison Chatman (6-4, 170) and Los Angeles Sierra Canyon four-star Bronny James (6-3, 190).

COURT REPORT Jack Emerson

season, according to a copy of the contract obtained by Buckeye Sports Bulletin. Holtmann will also earn \$1,365,000 in media payments from this season – which rises from \$1,315,000 – until June 30, 2025, at which point his media payments will rise to \$1,665,000 from July 1, 2025, until the contract ends in 2028.

Holtmann is still slated to make \$10,000 annually from a beverage-sponsorship clause in his contract, as well as \$825,000 from an equipment sponsorship clause. Both payments remain the same from his pre-extension agreement.

Since taking over the Buckeyes in 2017, Holtmann has amassed a record of 107-56 and has not won fewer than 20 games in a season. Ohio State has made the NCAA Tournament in four of his five seasons, with the lone absence coming in 2020 when the tournament was canceled due to the pandemic. The Buckeyes were 21-10 at the time of the season's cancellation.

During a press conference in July, Holtmann expressed gratitude to Ohio State for giving him the opportunity to continue coaching at the university.

"I'm really excited about the future," he said. "I'm grateful for the trust of the administration. I have great love for Ohio State. I



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Breaking Down OSU Roster For 2022-23

Coming off a Big Ten regular-season championship and an upset-minded run to the Sweet 16, expectations are high for the Ohio State women's basketball team this upcoming season.

The Buckeyes will look to defend their conference title and will get the opportunity to do so with the majority of last year's nucleus intact, and with one notable addition – redshirt junior guard Madison Greene, who missed all of last season with a knee injury. She was last on the court for Ohio State in 2020-21, when she averaged 13.4 points per game on 42.7 percent shooting and was named an honorable-mention All-Big Ten selection by the coaches and media.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

In addition to Greene, head coach Kevin McGuff returns his three leading scorers from last season in senior guards Jacy Sheldon (19.7 ppg) and Taylor Mikesell (18.6 ppg) and senior forward Rebeka Mikulasikova (9.4 ppg). Gone are guard Braxtin Miller and forward Tanaya Beacham, who both exhausted their eligibility last season, as well as guards Anyssa Jones and Kateri Poole and forward Gabby Hutcherson, who all transferred out of the program this off-season.

Redshirt junior guard Rikki Harris is the other returning starter for the Buckeyes. Though sophomore guard/forward Taylor Thierry did not start last season, she saw her usage increase as she became more comfortable with the game, playing at least 10 minutes in 14 of Ohio State's final 15 games, including two Big Ten Tournament games and three NCAA tournament games. Other returners include a pair of guards in sophomore Kaitlyn Costner and senior Hevynne Bristow.

New additions to the team include freshmen guards Kaia Henderson and Mya Perry and forward Cotie McMahon, as well as West Virginia transfer guard Emma Shumate, who was with the team last season but was not eligible to play. Ohio State also gained a pair of senior transfer forwards this off-season in Karla Vreš and Eboni Walker, who transferred from American University and Syracuse, respectively.

With the team mostly set for next season – just one scholarship spot remains unaccounted for, but McGuff rarely utilizes all 15 scholarships – Buckeye Sports Bulletin is breaking down the roster for McGuff's squad that features several talented guards and a potential influx of talent at the forward spot, with player features to come in the following weeks.

Point Guard

Sheldon had an admirable tryout at point guard last season, filling in after Poole – the initial starter at point guard following Greene's preseason injury – was injured in January. Despite Sheldon's success at ball handling, Greene (5-8) will

return to her rightful position where she excelled in her first two seasons with the Buckeyes.

Her impact was undeniable on Ohio State's 2020-21 squad that was 12-3 when she played but just 1-4 when she missed the final five games of the season. She is noted for her defensive prowess, and the Buckeyes gave up just 65.6 points per game when she played, but that ballooned to 77.4 points per game when she was out.

It also bears mentioning that Greene is rejoining a very different lineup from the one she last played in. Gone are the days of passing it inside to Dorka Juhasz or Aaliyah Patty. Now the focus is on the perimeter and the electric shots of Mikesell and Sheldon.

There's no reason, though, to think that Greene won't easily work back into Ohio State's small ball, run-and-gun style. She was set to start last year until a knee injury sidelined her just days before the season began, meaning she went through the same offseason preparation everyone else did to prepare for an increased playing speed.

Beyond Greene, there is little experience at the college level for Costner (5-8), who played just 59 minutes last season, or incoming freshman Henderson (5-6), who was an early enrollee, meaning she did not play her senior season.

Shooting Guard

Greene will regain her ball-handling responsibilities, but the shot of Mikesell (5-11) and Sheldon (5-10) is where Ohio State will make its money next season. The duo was one of the country's best last season, combining to shoot 49.3 percent from the field, and Mikesell finished second in the nation in three-point field-goal percentage at 47.5 percent.

Neither Mikesell nor Sheldon is a player you can take off the court – Mikesell averaged 34.5 minutes per game while Sheldon played 33.9 minutes per game – and with Greene, it creates a devastating backcourt for opposing teams with three capable scorers who can all attack at the basket, in the midrange and from the perimeter.

Mikesell, who elected to return for a fifth season granted by the NCAA, will look to build on her record-breaking season, while Sheldon – whose numbers have improved in every successive season at Ohio State – will remain one of the team's leading scorers.

Harris (5-10) also saw significant action last season, thrust into a starting role midway through the year and seeing more time on the court. She averaged 7.1 points per game and was one of the Buckeyes' best defenders, second on the team in steals (1.6 per game) behind only Sheldon, who averaged 1.9 per game.

Even so, a four-guard lineup with Harris could perhaps become a situation of too many cooks spoiling the broth. Though she might not start next season, Harris should be first off the bench and will help complement the guard rotation for McGuff, allowing brief respites for Mikesell and Sheldon that were rarely granted last season.

Outside of the top four guards, Ohio State will also have Shumate (6-1), who has yet to play college ball after transferring to

OSU Women's Basketball Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2023 who have verbally committed to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the ESPN rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School
Faith Carson	C	6-4	NA	Buchanan, Mich.

the Buckeyes prior to her freshman season at WVU, and incoming freshman Perry (5-11), who is a highly touted local prospect out of Reynoldsburg High School in suburban Columbus.

Small Forward

Thierry (5-11) became more integrated into the lineup as last season progressed, eventually turning into a consistent playmaker for Ohio State. She was pivotal in Ohio State's NCAA tournament wins over Missouri State and LSU, pulling down big defensive rebounds and knocking down several free throws to help lead the Buckeyes to the Sweet 16.

With significant time on the court in her freshman year and another offseason under her belt, look for Thierry to take a step forward on the defensive end as she gains more confidence and consistency around the basket.

Thierry could be pushed, though, by incoming transfer Walker (6-0), who joined Ohio State this offseason and is set to play for her third team in four seasons. Walker has played in 59 career games, averaging 6.6 points and 4.8 rebounds per game on 46.3 percent shooting from the field.

Though Walker was not considered a dominant scorer at either Arizona State or Syracuse, she has been noted – much like Thierry – for her hustle on both ends of the court and, entering her fourth season of college basketball, could provide stronger returns on the defensive end than a relatively green Thierry.

Regardless of who starts between Thierry, Walker or even Harris, if Ohio State

opts for a four-guard lineup, expect to see a fair amount of these small forwards rotating in for McGuff. Bristow (6-1), who appeared in just 11 games last season, could be another factor here given the logjam at guard.

Power Forward/Center

Mikulasikova (6-4) enters her senior season as the resident big for Ohio State, the tallest player on the team by an inch over Vreš (6-3). However, despite a desperate need for height last season following the off-season transfers of Juhasz and Patty, Mikulasikova ultimately played just over 20 minutes per game, at times struggling to both keep up with McGuff's up-tempo offense and stay out of foul trouble.

Still, she averaged 5.0 rebounds per game – most on the team – and shot 45.9 percent from the field. Her focus for this season will be on improving her defense around the basket and ensuring that she can stay on the court for longer stretches.

When Mikulasikova does have to exit the game, Vreš will likely be first off the bench. She brings a similar stature around the basket, and if she can return to her sophomore form at American in which she averaged 8.6 points per game on 60.3 percent shooting, including a 61.9 percent clip from beyond the arc, she could become a consistent factor for the Buckeyes.

In the cleanup spot, look for McMahon (6-0) to potentially play some minutes at the four or five. Her scouting reports from her time as a recruit noted her physicality around the basket, both as a defensive presence and on the boards.

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

Nov. 5 at Northwestern; **12** INDIANA; **19** at Maryland; **26** MICHIGAN.

WOMEN'S FIELD HOCKEY (3-0)

Aug. 26 Northeastern, W 4-0; **28** Albany W 3-0.

Sept. 4 LEHIGH, W 4-0; **11** Miami (Ohio), 1 p.m.; **16** MARYLAND, 3 p.m.; **18** WAKE FOREST, 1 p.m.; **23** Rutgers, 3 p.m.; **25** Penn State, noon; **30** MICHIGAN STATE, 4 p.m.

Oct. 2 KENT STATE 1 p.m.; **7**

CENTRAL MICHIGAN, 3 p.m.; **9** Ohio, 1 p.m., **14** IOWA, 3 p.m.; **16** NORTHWESTERN, noon; **21** Indiana, 3 p.m.; **23** Bellarmine, 1 p.m.; **28** Michigan, 6 p.m.; **30** BALL STATE, 1 p.m.

Nov. 3 Big Ten Tournament; **4** Big Ten Tournament; **6** Big Ten Tournament.

MEN'S SOCCER (2-0-1)

Aug. 25 SOUTH CAROLINA, T 1-1; **28** CAL POLY, W 3-0.

Sept. 1 Bowling Green, W 1-0. **5** WRIGHT STATE, 7 p.m.; **9** BUTLER, 7 p.m.; **13** Akron, 7 p.m.; **18** INDIANA, 2 p.m.; **21** Cleveland State, 7 p.m.; **25** Maryland, 2 p.m.; **30** RUTGERS, 7 p.m.

Oct. 5 NORTHERN KENTUCKY 7 p.m.; **11** Michigan, 7 p.m.; **16** NORTHWESTERN, 2 p.m.; **21** Penn State, 7 p.m.; **25** MICHIGAN STATE 6 p.m.; **30** Wisconsin, 2 p.m.

WOMEN'S SOCCER (3-1-1)

Aug. 18 Kansas, W 1-0; **21** Missouri, W 2-1; **26** BYU, L 2-0.

Sept. 1 Dayton, W 4-0; **4** TEXAS A&M, T 0-0; **8** Brown, 7 p.m.; **11** KENT STATE, 6 p.m.; **18** Rutgers, 1 p.m.; **22** Michigan, 7 p.m.; **25** IOWA, noon; **29** Indiana, 7 p.m.

Oct. 2 PENN STATE, noon; **8** Nebraska, 2:05 p.m.; **13** MARYLAND, 7 p.m.; **16** Illinois, 2 p.m.; **20** MICHIGAN STATE, 7 p.m.; **23** NORTHWESTERN, noon.

WOMEN'S FIELD HOCKEY (3-0)

Aug. 26 Northeastern, W 4-0; **28** Albany W 3-0.

Sept. 4 LEHIGH, W 4-0; **11** Miami (Ohio), 1 p.m.; **16** MARYLAND, 3 p.m.; **18** WAKE FOREST, 1 p.m.; **23** Rutgers, 3 p.m.; **25** Penn State, noon; **30** MICHIGAN STATE, 4 p.m.

Oct. 2 KENT STATE 1 p.m.; **7** CENTRAL MICHIGAN, 3 p.m.; **9** Ohio, 1 p.m., **14** IOWA, 3 p.m.; **16** NORTHWESTERN, noon; **21** Indiana, 3 p.m.; **23** Bellarmine, 1 p.m.; **28** Michigan, 6 p.m.; **30** BALL STATE, 1 p.m.

Nov. 3 Big Ten Tournament; **4** Big Ten Tournament; **6** Big Ten Tournament.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (1-3)

Aug. 26 TEXAS, L 3-0; **27** L 3-1.

Sept. 3 San Diego, L 3-0; **4** Louisville, W 3-1; **9**, BYU, 7 p.m.; **11** Georgia Tech, 1 p.m.; **17** Tennessee 5 p.m.; **18** Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.; **23** Iowa; **24** Nebraska; **28** Michigan, 7 p.m.

Oct. 1 Indiana; **7** PENN STATE, 6:30 p.m.; **9** NORTHWESTERN, 1 p.m.; **12** Minnesota, 8 p.m.; **15** RUTGERS, 5 p.m.; **19** ILLINOIS, 6 p.m.; **21** IOWA, 7 p.m.; **26** MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; **29** Penn State.

Nov. 4 Northwestern; **5** Michigan State; **11** Purdue, 7 p.m.; **13** NEBRASKA, 4:30 p.m.; **18** Maryland; **20** INDIANA, 1 p.m.; **25** MINNESOTA, 6 p.m.; **26** WISCONSIN, 7 p.m.

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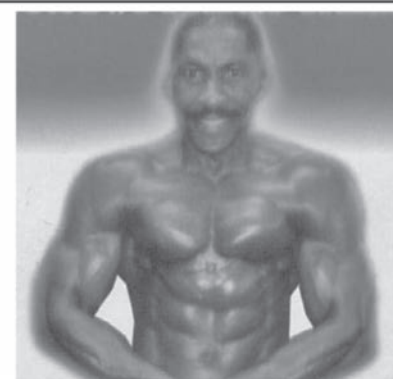
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Aggressive Defense, Steady Offense Ice Irish

The Buckeyes took a huge step in terms of national recognition and respect with the victory over Notre Dame on Sept. 3. The excitement, electricity and energy in Ohio Stadium was as high as it ever has been. Professional athletes and former Buckeye greats roamed the sideline and many players and coaches from the 2002 national championship team were honored early in the game. It was the atmosphere of a lifetime with a touch of the old and the new when the two legendary football programs took the field.

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

What many people anticipated was going to be a high-scoring affair with big play after big play was not, at all, what happened. It ended up being more of a chess match in strategy between a proven, yet young coach in Ryan Day and even younger and new kid on the head coaching block, Marcus Freeman. Day earned the victory while Freeman proved he has what it takes to be successful as a head coach in Division I football.

Time will tell if the 2022 version of the Ohio State football team is what was wit-

nessed in the victory over Notre Dame, but one thing is for certain — it goes to prove you can win football games with an aggressive and hard-hitting defense and a methodical, ball-control offense. It was not a flashy victory but one in which physicality and balance carried the day.

Defense Passes the Test

The 2021 Ohio State defense fell short in a lot of areas like scoring defense, pass defense and total defense. Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles was paid handsomely to come to Columbus and fix things on that side of the football. Knowles passed his first test with flying colors.

His defense held the No. 5 team in the nation to just 10 points. Last season, the Buckeyes held only three teams to under that number — Akron, Indiana and Michigan State. The Knowles' 4-2-5 defense seemed to frustrate Freeman as well as his quarterback, Tyler Buchner. Even though Buchner completed a respectable 10 of 18 passes, he didn't throw a single touchdown pass, and his team was a dismal 3 of 13 on third-down attempts.

Adding to a long opening night for Buchner was the fact he rushed for only 18 total yards. The Buckeye defense knew they had to keep the Notre Dame quarterback from keeping drives alive with his feet, and the "Silver Bullets" of 2022 accomplished that goal. Buchner showed he has the makings of a very solid signal caller, but to be initiat-

ed under fire in a hostile environment like Ohio Stadium was just too much to ask of a first-year starting quarterback. The stubborn Ohio State defense forced the Irish to punt the ball eight times.

Freeman knew his offense had to sustain drives in order to keep the normally explosive Ohio State offense on the sideline, but his Fighting Irish had only one drive of 10 plays for the game. Notre Dame ended up with just 253 yards for the night and only four total offensive possessions in the second half.

The entire defense played at a high level for four quarters, and a marked improvement from the Ohio State defense from a year ago was the play of the men up front. It was like watching a tag-team wrestling match as Larry Johnson rotated defensive linemen in throughout the game. The fresh bodies along with ever-changing alignments confused the Irish offensive line both in the run game and in terms of pass protection. The aggressive, athletic and skillful Buckeye defense recorded three sacks and six tackles for loss.

Nobody on the front stood out more than second-year defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr., who tallied four total tackles, two tackles for loss, a sack and a hurry. Hall's strength and quickness off the ball was too much for the Notre Dame offensive line to handle as he made penetration into the backfield disrupting running plays along with putting constant pressure on Buchner when he went back to pass.

Other defenders who arguably had their best day as a Buckeye were Tommy Eichenberg, Lathan Ransom and Steele Chambers with nine, seven and five tackles respectively. With the exception of a handful of missed tackles in the open field, the Jim Knowles scheme seemed to be effective and well suited for the talent he has on the defensive side of the football.

Old-School Offense

While Buckeye fans were expected to see some new looks defensively for the Buckeyes, the last thing they expected was the type of run-to-pass balance on the offensive side of the ball. Ryan Day put his six-shooters on the shelf for a more conservative plan of attack. Who would have ever thought the gunslinger would call 35 running plays to 34 pass attempts? He didn't throw caution to the wind as in the past but took a much more measured plan of action, playing it closer to the vest, seeking a good mix of plays and realizing long drives can also be an effective way of taking it to the enemy.

Day was wise in playing field-position football, not taking unnecessary gambles and even understanding that punting the football isn't always a negative. Day wanted his offensive line to be more physical than last season, establish a running attack and keep the clock moving. Ohio State won the time of possession battle by six minutes while owning the fourth quarter of the game.

As on defense, there were players on the offensive side who stepped up their quality of play. The entire offensive line showed a physicality not seen a year ago. They drove the Notre Dame defensive line off the ball

and wore the Irish down in the second half.

Miyan Williams proved he can be just as productive as TreVeyon Henderson as they shared running back duties. In the passing game, Emeka Egbuka led the way with nine receptions, but seven different receivers caught the football for the Buckeyes. This "performance by committee" was critical to the passing game when Jaxon Smith-Njigba got injured.

One of the most electrifying plays was the touchdown reception by Xavier Johnson. A former walk-on who paid his dues on special teams, Johnson hauled in a pass from C.J. Stroud at the end of the third quarter to put the Buckeyes ahead for good. Day's game management was spot on, and it led the Buckeyes to their fifth victory in a row over the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame.

Honoring 2002

It doesn't seem like 20 years since we defeated the Miami Hurricanes in the Fiesta Bowl to win the national championship. Us coaches are a little older and the players not as fit as they were back in 2002, but one thing is for certain, everyone remembers the special season it was and the game in Sun Devil Stadium that proved the Buckeyes were the class of college football.

It seemed to be a team of destiny as it pulled out victories over schools like Cincinnati, Purdue, Illinois and Michigan. It was a group of athletes who got tired of hearing they didn't have a chance to beat the Hurricanes then took the challenge head on. Led by head coach Jim Tressel, the 2002 Buckeyes grew as the season progressed both in terms of performance and in confidence. We were ranked no higher than 13th in the preseason rankings. Much like Paul Brown's Buckeye squad 60 years prior, the 2002 team surprised the college football world by winning the national title.

It was a team of various personalities and talents that emerged as the best in college football that year, players like Chris Gamble, who played over 100 snaps in almost every game the second half of the season as a wide receiver, defensive back and return specialist; quarterback Craig Krenzel, who was as steady and competitive as they come; and tight end Ben Hartsock, who came from one of the smallest high schools in the state and ended up being one of the best blockers in the country at his position. Ben would go on to have the longest professional career of any on that team.

Controversial but competitive Maurice Claret made perhaps the biggest play of the game by wrestling the football away from Hurricane defensive back Sean Taylor, who had intercepted the football. No one stole the show more than linebacker Cie Grant. Grant, who had earned his starting position just prior to the season opener, capped his career off by forcing Miami quarterback Ken Dorsey to throw a wounded duck on the last play of the game.

It was a team that accomplished so much that season. As time goes by, all of us that were a part of it understand how fortunate we are and how difficult it is to win a national championship in college football.

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Defense Was Jim Dandy Against The Irish

I wait nearly nine months to see Jim Knowles' defense with great anticipation, and on the first play from scrimmage his Buckeyes give up a 54-yard pass (with a 15-yard penalty tacked on for good measure) to the OSU 16. What a way to kick off the new era of Ohio State defense, I'm thinking.

But the stop troops buckled down and held the Irish to a field goal, and it was awfully impressive from there in a 21-10 victory over No. 5 Notre Dame in Ohio Stadium (or should I say on Safelite Field?). Not only did the Irish score only one more time, including being shut out in the second half, they were held to only 199 yards by the resurgent Buckeye defense after that game-opening play. Notre Dame gained just 72 yards in the final 30 minutes, 12 in the fourth quarter.

In the process, a star may have been born in Mike Hall, who gave some oomph to a defensive line that had not lived up to traditional Buckeye standards in the last couple of seasons. The 6-2, 290-pound redshirt freshman was credited with four tackles, including two for losses with a pivotal 11-yard sack of Irish quarterback Tyler Buchner in the fourth quarter that essentially sealed the victory.

But Hall was just one cog in a stellar unit that stole the show from the highly-touted offense that struggled at times but ended up doing what it had to do to complement the defense and help secure the marquee victory before 106,594 frenzied fans.

The game had a little bit of everything for Buckeye fans.

With Jim Tressel in the house to help celebrate the 20th anniversary of Ohio State's 2002 national championship (has it really been that long?), Jesse Mirco was one of the most consistent Buckeyes in the game, averaging 45.0 on five punts, dropping four well inside the 20, helping Ohio State win the field-position battle and underscoring Tressel's belief in the importance of the punt. Notre Dame's average starting position was their own 16, while the Buckeyes started at their 23 on average, despite twice being buried inside their 10.

Those who like Woody Hayes-style smash-mouth football would have loved the Buckeyes' 14-play, 95-yard, 7:06-consuming game-clinching touchdown drive that featured Miyan Williams doing his best Jim Otis imitation with seven bruising carries for 49 yards. He also had a tough reception for 12 yards on the drive, and TreVeyon Henderson added three carries of his own for 15 yards.

Both Tressel and Hayes, of course, would have taken great delight in the play of the Ohio State defense.

And those who like to see Heisman candidate C.J. Stroud do his thing – as well as enjoy a feel-good story – were rewarded with Stroud's 24-yard touchdown strike to former walk-on Xavier Johnson that gave Ohio State a 14-10 lead in the third quarter after the Buckeyes had trailed at halftime, 10-7.

Stroud clearly struggled in the first half, as his receiver rotation was disrupted, especially with the limited availability of Jaxon Smith-Njigba, and he completed 11 of 17 passes for just 99 yards before intermission. However, Ohio State showed the depth of its receivers room, dipping down to Johnson and Jayden Ballard, while Emeka Egbuka led the team with nine catches for 90 yards and Marvin Harrison Jr. added five catches for 56 yards.

"Jaxon is the best receiver in the country and we've built a connection, not just on the field but off of it too, and that just helps us on the field," Stroud said. "When he was out of the game, of course, it affects our team and our offense but we got the job done. Xavier

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

stepped up huge, Jayden Ballard stepped up huge, Emeka had a heck of a game, Marvin (Harrison Jr.) played well. At the end of the day, when you boil it down and look at the scoreboard, Coach Day always says that "No matter what type of game it is, we always have to stick together." I feel like that's what we did, and no matter how I played, whatever the case may be, we got the win."

Stroud finished the game with a solid though not spectacular line of 24 completions on 34 attempts for 223 yards and two touchdowns without an interception. In fact, the Buckeyes were not guilty of any turnovers (nor were the Irish). I was especially impressed with the quarterback's mobility. He extended several plays with his feet and was sacked only once. Buchner, on the other hand, went down three times for 19 yards in losses.

While the offense might not have been prolific, with 395 total yards including 172 yards on the ground, about the only complaint I had on that side of the ball was that Day didn't call Henderson's number more often. With the passing game having trouble getting into high gear, Henderson is a threat to break open the game at any time and might have loosened things up if given the chance. He carried the ball only five times in the first half (just once for 4 yards in the first quarter) for 36 yards. Still, he gained 91 yards on 15 carries, three of those carries for 21 yards coming as the Buckeyes ran out the clock in the fourth quarter. Williams added 84 yards on 14 carries, and neither of the backs was charged with negative yardage.

Meanwhile, Notre Dame was held to just 76 yards on 30 carries for a 2.5-yard average, another indicator of how tough the Buckeye defense was.

For a point of comparison, last season, Ohio State's defense was already showing cracks in the opener against Minnesota (I don't know that we realized the depth of the problem at the time), giving up 124 rushing yards in the first half alone and 408 total yards for the game on a balanced 203 yards on the ground and 205 through the air in a 45-31 OSU victory against a Gopher team that wasn't up to Notre Dame's standards.

While I don't want to take anything away from the Buckeye defense, I don't think novice coach and former Buckeye player Marcus Freeman and his offensive staff aided his team's offensive cause. I thought Freeman had the Notre Dame offense playing not to lose. By Freeman's own admission, it was his intention to "control the clock and limit (Ohio State's) possessions."

The Irish had some success through the air, with the game-opening long play, along with completions of 31 and 22 yards on their lone touchdown drive. Star tight end Michael Mayer also had a 17-yard reception among his five catches for 32 yards. And yet Notre Dame was content to continue to try to pound the ball, even though it was having little success doing it.

After the Buckeyes went ahead on Johnson's touchdown and he buried them with a tackle at the Irish 13 on the ensuing kickoff, Buchner immediately gave his team breathing room with a 32-yard pass to Braden Lenzy. He threw again on the next play, but Notre Dame was called for offensive pass interference, setting up a first-and-25. The Irish ran three straight times before punting, and Ohio State marched 95 yards for a touchdown that

put the game out of reach.

At some point you have to go out and try to win the game, rather than try not to lose it. The Irish offense was ineffective after it scored its lone touchdown, punting six straight times with no drive longer than six plays or 40 yards. To think your team was going to hold the Ohio State offense in check for the entire game wasn't just wishful thinking. It was foolish.

While the stated intention for the Irish was to keep the ball away from the Buckeyes, it was actually the Buckeyes who kept the ball away from Notre Dame for 19:34 of the final 30 minutes.

Freeman said there were no moral victories, and he was right. There weren't any moral victories, unless you consider leading at the half a moral victory. Whether the score indicated it or not, when the game was on the line, Freeman's Irish were completely outplayed on both sides of the ball.

I'm rooting for Freeman because he is a former Buckeye, but he has been the Irish head coach for two games now – both big ones – and lost both of them after leading at halftime. Against Oklahoma State in the Fiesta Bowl last season, his Irish gave up 24 straight points before falling 37-35.

Pardon the boxing analogy, but maybe it is time for Freeman to start trying to throw a knockout punch rather than hanging on the ropes and hoping to win on points.

As for the Buckeyes, with Arkansas State and Toledo coming up on the schedule, they have time to get Smith-Njigba and Julian Fleming healthy while Stroud develops greater chemistry with the outstanding receivers down the depth chart.

And Knowles has a couple of games to tinker with things that may not have worked to perfection against the Irish and a chance to look at other players in game action as he tries to develop greater depth on his side of the ball.

I admit that I thought the score would be a little greater for both teams, but I enjoyed the Ohio State-Notre Dame game immensely and thought it was a huge and impressive win for the Buckeyes.

Look out, college football world.

Tight Ends And Tidbits

- Is this the year Ohio State finally uses the tight end in the passing game? Against Notre Dame, Stroud targeted tight end Cade Stover four times, connecting on three completions. Stover's catches only went for only 14 yards, with a long of 7. But by comparison, in last year's opener future NFL player Jeremy Ruckert was targeted just once, with a 15-yard reception. Ruckert finished the season with 26 catches for 309 yards and three scores.

Just the hint that the tight end might be involved in the passing game could help open up the other aspects of the offense, and it might even help in recruiting more high-caliber tight ends such as Ruckert.

- It's a new season, but penalties continue to plague Ohio State. The Buckeyes were flagged seven times for 75 yards against Notre Dame. Last season Ohio State was the 91st team in the country with an average of 59.2 penalty yards per game on an average of 6.5 penalties per game.

- On the positive side, one of the reasons Ohio State was able to win the game going away was the fact that the Buckeyes

converted on better than 50 percent of their third-down situations – seven times on 13 attempts. Notre Dame also faced 13 third downs but converted only three. Neither team attempted a fourth-down conversion.

- When Noah Ruggles missed his only field-goal attempt of the game against Notre Dame from 39 yards out, equaling his total number of misses for all of last season, did anyone besides me say to themselves, "See, if you had been at spring practice that wouldn't have happened." I know that is unfair, because Ruggles apparently had some personal problems, but that's what I was thinking.

After the display he put on last season, connecting on 20 of 21 attempts including the game winner against Utah in the Rose Bowl, I am confident Ruggles will turn in another fine season in 2022.

I Can't Resist

I just had to reprint the quote from former OSU president Karen Holbrook that appears in this issue's From The Pages Of BSB feature found on page 9.

Departed from Columbus, she reportedly said she had to deal with a "culture of rioting" at Ohio State, one where, "They think it's fun to flip cars, to really have absolute drunken orgies.

"When you win a game, you riot. When you lose a game, you riot. When spring comes, you riot."

Do any of you recall anything like that happening during her tenure?

This from the president who famously banned alcohol from Ohio State tailgate events. That certainly did not last long. Who can forget all those Buckeye fans drinking unknown beverages from paper cups, ever looking over their shoulders for the tailgate police.

It was Ohio State's version of prohibition, minus Al Capone.

Do You Need First Class?

In more than 40 years of mailing Buckeye Sports Bulletin, I found the mail service for the recently published Football Preview issue among the most bizarre of any. Buckeyes in faraway outposts like Florida and California reported receiving their BSBs in record time, while many readers in the Columbus area and other select spots around the state, including the Toledo area, still haven't received their paper.

Such is the mailing world we live in these days.

If you did not receive your Football Preview issue in a timely fashion, or have experienced inconsistent delivery in the past, we suggest you consider upgrading to first-class mail in an envelope for football season. The upgrade to your existing subscription is \$29 through football season or \$39 through recruiting season in February.

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