

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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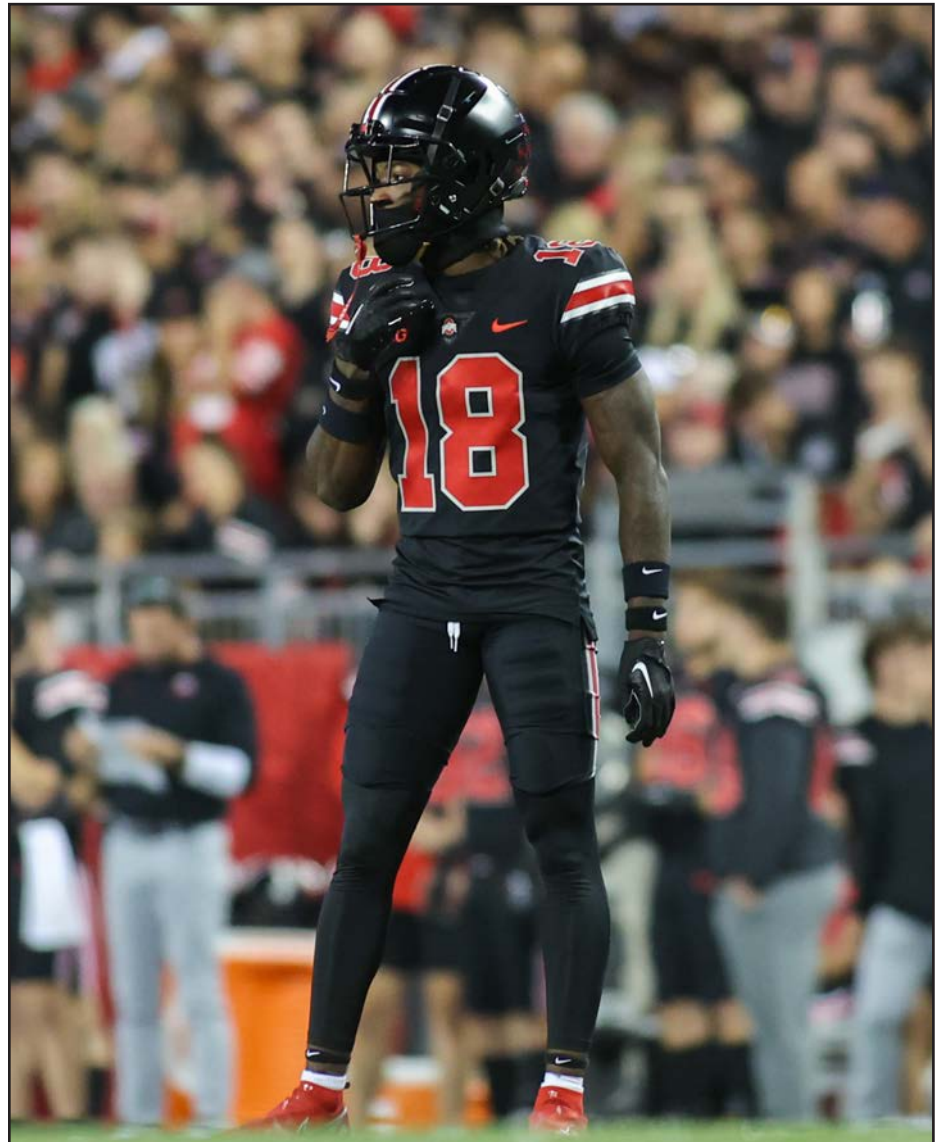
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Vol. 42, No. 4

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Oct. 1, 2022



JOSH WINSLOW

DOUBLE TROUBLE — Two of Ohio State's youngest cornerbacks — sophomore JK Johnson (left) and freshman Jyaire Brown (right) — made their first career starts in Ohio State's 52-21 win over Wisconsin, helping hold the Badgers to just 104 passing yards in the Buckeyes' Big Ten opener.

BACK IN BLACK

Secondary Steps Up In Blowout Against Wisconsin

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Leading up to Ohio State's Big Ten opener against Wisconsin on Sept. 24, there was some concern as to whether Ohio State fifth-year cornerback Cameron Brown would take the field against Wisconsin. He did not appear in the second half of the Buckeyes' win over Toledo after suffering an apparent injury, and head coach Ryan Day never updated Brown's status in the week leading up to the Wisconsin game, so little information was available in determining whether Brown would see the field.

That question was quickly answered in Ohio State's availability report, as Brown was listed as one of 10 unavailable Buckeyes against the Badgers. Also on the list was second-year cornerback

Jordan Hancock, who has yet to play this season, leaving the Buckeyes short on cornerback depth.

The hits kept coming, though, when starting sophomore cornerback Denzel Burke appeared in street clothes during Ohio State's warmups, indicating that he, too, would not be available for the Buckeyes. This left Ohio State with just three healthy scholarship cornerbacks in sophomore JK Johnson and true freshmen Jyaire Brown and Ryan Turner.

Outside of those options, the Buckeyes were left with safeties Cameron Martinez and Jantzen Dunn, who cross-trained at cornerback during fall camp due to low numbers in the cornerbacks room. A nuclear option also existed in kicker/cornerback Jake Seibert, who earned his second positional designation during fall camp, though this is likely a scenario that nobody — Seibert included — wants to come to fruition.

Jyaire Brown and Johnson ultimately answered the call and started their first career games for Ohio State, but it was hard to tell in the 52-21 win over Wisconsin that the

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FAN FORUM



From The Message Board

Ohio State earned a comfortable 52-21 win over Wisconsin to kick off Big Ten play this season with another dominant offensive performance, though the defense appeared to show some cracks in the second half with several members of the secondary missing, tying a season high with 21 points allowed. We asked readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what their impressions were from the Big Ten opener. Here are some of the responses:

"I have no qualms with the performance, it was lights out, I was highly impressed and happy with how they played. They were ready to go from the first whistle."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"Great performance overall by the Buckeyes. The game was over before Wisconsin knew what hit them. The offense is a thing of beauty when it is humming like it was in the first quarter."

– bstu9

"Total dominance from the start. Our depth really shined against the Badgers."

– BOB CODY

"The QB, the OL, the RBs, the TE, the WRs and the play calling mixed in with trickery is a combination not seen by me in several decades, and I don't know who can stop it. The spectacular D in the first half, limiting the Badgers to a TD, shows that Coach Knowles' D has arrived. The play of the two young corners in the absence of both starters bodes very well for the future. Both the offensive and defensive staff clearly outcoached their Badger counterparts by far. Another heartwarming Buckeye victory!"

– AnthonyBuck

"Everyone gets A grades. Maybe B+ for kickoff going out of bounds? Three penalties in the game, including that kickoff. Don't forget, Wisconsin may emerge as the best team in West Division."

– Terrier Buck

"Kudos to the defense, especially the backfield. Being short-staffed did not seem to faze these Buckeyes. Those who were there simply made up for the absence of others. Meaningless points and yardage, especially the long run by Braelon Allen in the fourth quarter, will make the defensive numbers look worse than they really were. Allen was a non-factor in the game,

regardless of his totals. Reminds me of how the Buckeyes stopped Melvin Gordon in the 2014 Big Ten championship game."

– Poster That Harley Built

"I was at The Shoe this week. I noticed that during the time outs, and there were a lot of time outs, the Buckeyes appeared to have more sideline staff, coaches and assistants huddling with all the players. I would say at least 1/2 dozen more individuals meeting in the group. To me, this means Ryan Day is 'not leaving any stone unturned.' He is making sure everyone is on the same page and inter-communications between the team and staff are at a very high level!"

– BuckeyeScott

"A very good game. The offense continues to develop weapons with the tight end. Kudos to the offensive line for controlling the line of scrimmage. The defense continues to develop its identity. Good swarming to the ball and also pass coverage. We must stay healthy. Great effort by everyone."

– John Lanning

"The offense is really clicking this year. I have to give the O-line lots of credit to allow plays to develop and also superior blocking."

– R1TBDBITL

"The offense is scary good! In spite of the out-of-bounds kickoff, special teams seem more consistent this season and are getting better. The O-line was really dominant against a traditionally good defense. The defense showed me a lot more, but there are still breakdowns. The best thing about the defense was that they did a much better job keeping runners in front of them until help could arrive, and the pursuit was really, really good. If the D can keep improving, and I think they will, they could be a force by the late season."

– Michael Bauer

Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State kicked off Big Ten play with a dominant 52-21 win over Wisconsin at Ohio Stadium. There were several contributors who helped the Buckeyes to victory and we asked the Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writers and readers from BuckeyeSports.com which players were worthy of Buckeye Leaves.

Andy Anders, BSB: On a night when Ohio State was forced to start its fourth and fifth cornerbacks on the depth chart, safety play became essential. And none had a larger impact from that position than graduate Tanner McCalister.

The Buckeyes' nickelback collected four tackles but added two key plays in coverage that helped secure Ohio State's blowout.

Wisconsin junior quarterback Graham Mertz threw his first pass of the night well behind his intended target, and McCalister capitalized on the mistake with his second career interception, first in a Buckeye uniform. It not only took the Badgers off the field on their first possession, it set Ohio State's offense up for a quick 13-yard touchdown.

On fourth-and-2 for Wisconsin with five seconds remaining in the first half, Mertz lofted a ball up the right sideline that looked like a surefire deep completion to second-year receiver Skyler Bell. McCalister raced over from his deep zone and separated Bell from the ball at the last second, forcing an incompleteness and turnover on downs.

McCalister remains an essential piece of the Buckeye secondary moving forward.

Jack Emerson, BSB: Sparked by his first two career touchdowns, tight end Cade Stover is my recipient of a Buckeye Leaf this week. Stover was, once again, utilized as a dynamic receiving threat for the Buckeyes in Ohio State's blowout win over Wisconsin.

Dubbed "Little Gronk" by quarterback C.J. Stroud, Stover looked every bit the part of his lofty comparison, finishing with four receptions and 51 yards and two scores. Not only was Stover a dynamic threat in the passing game, but he also showcased his trademark toughness by overcoming a pair of devastating hits. Although Stover was battered, he went the distance with the rest of the first-team offense.

Braden Moles, BSB: Thrown into the game as first-time starters, it was a solid outing for the cornerback duo of Jyaire Brown and JK Johnson. Alas, I can give out just one Buckeye Leaf, and I'll give it to Brown for having this type of performance as a true freshman.

He was solid in coverage, finishing with a tackle and a pass breakup, and helped Ohio State's passing defense limit Wisconsin to just 104 passing yards on the night. It's no easy task filling in for either Cameron Brown

or Denzel Burke, who were both out against the Badgers and have been consistent players for Ohio State's defense.

Even with all that in mind, Jyaire Brown – along with Johnson – answered the call for Ohio State, and if Cameron Brown and Burke – as well as cornerback Jordan Hancock, the No. 3 corner on the roster – continue to miss time, the Buckeyes know they have a reliable option in Jyaire Brown.

BSB Subscribers

Tiffin Buckeye: Cade Stover, what a beast and he got beat up good.

Bstu9: Jyaire Brown and JK Johnson get my Buckeye leaves. Pressed into service due to injuries, both young men played admirably and didn't give up any big plays. Also gotta give a Buckeye leaf to Tommy Eichenberg. The guy was literally everywhere.

BOB CODY: C.J. Stroud and Julian Fleming, who's really contributing after a series of injuries in his career.

AnthonyBuck: Tommy Eichenberg for speedy and ferociously effective LB play not seen in Ohio Stadium in the last several years. Tanner McCalister for the interception, speedy recovery and explosive pass breakup and leading the young corners. JK Johnson and Jyaire Brown for spectacular starts and performances. Steele Chambers, Javontae Jean-Baptiste and Jack Sawyer for disruptive plays in the backfield all game long. Cade Stover for weaponizing the TE position for the Buckeyes. The OL for being the Best in America. The RBs, TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams, for being the best RBs in the B1G (BIA?). WRs Julian Fleming, Emeka Egbuka and Marvin Harrison for making this a blessed time to be a Buckeye. And last but not the least, QB C.J. Stroud for another memorable performance against a Jim Leonhard D.

BuckeyeScott: With a butt-kicking like that it's hard not to find someone that should be awarded Buckeye Leaves. But I'll go with the Offensive Line that provided huge running lanes for Henderson and Williams, while at the same time giving Stroud plenty of time to throw for 5 TDs.

Terrier Buck: Just give them all A grades.

John Lanning: This team just raised the bar on themselves. Outstanding effort on both sides of the ball. How do you choose when everyone is doing their job?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NIL, Transfer Portal Could Combine For Disaster

There has been much, in my opinion, justifiable concern surrounding NIL (name, image and likeness). In my opinion, it is not such a problem standing

alone, but paired with the transfer portal, it could very well prove disastrous for college sports in the long haul.

One or the other, standing alone, could be relatively harmless, but linked, there is the likelihood of a major disruption of

college football and basketball as we've known them.

**Peter Lively
Chaumont, N.Y.**

If you would like to express an opinion concerning Ohio State University sports, please send your letter to BSB Letters, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212,

or email it to bsb@buckeyesports.com.

Letters must be signed and include the writer's hometown and a daytime telephone number for verification. Publication priority will be given to those letters that are brief, and we reserve the right to edit letters for publication.

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No. 11	Nov. 26	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 3	No. 24	August

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Blowout Of Badgers Underscores Talent Gap

What's the new saying about playing chess while everyone else is playing checkers? That's the way it seems for Ryan Day and the Ohio State football team, who seem to be playing on another level than just about every other team in the Big Ten.

The latest victim was Wisconsin, a team whose proud tradition is steeped in the power run game and a stout defense, a philosophy for a conference that didn't change very much from its founding in 1896 until about 10 years ago. That's when Urban Meyer rolled into Columbus with his penchant for point-a-minute offenses and a take-no-prisoners approach to recruiting.

Meyer won a division championship in each of his seven years with the Buckeyes and added three Big Ten titles and the 2014 national championship. After he handed the full-time reins to Day in 2019, the transition has been seamless enough for the program to capture a division title or co-title every year as well as two more Big Ten championships.

Meanwhile, most of the rest of the conference has been a form of roadkill. Since 2012, Ohio State has a conference record of 77-5, a ridiculous .939 winning percentage. Critics say part of that lofty record is because the Big Ten has been fairly weak over the past decade, and maybe there's an argument to be made along those lines. But it's also possible that the Buckeyes are so good that they're making every other team in the conference look weak in comparison.

The ABC/ESPN telecast underscored the difference in the programs at Ohio State and Wisconsin with a simple graphic showing the Buckeyes with 66 players on their roster who came to college with four- or five-star recruiting rankings. The Badgers had 20 such players. That is a talent chasm that goes a long way toward explaining a 31-point loss for a team that had lost by that kind of margin only twice in its previous 180 games – and both times to the Buckeyes.

Seemingly bottomless depth in the Ohio State talent pool allowed the Buckeyes to play the game without the services of top receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba as well as starting cornerbacks Cameron Brown and Denzel Burke, and they still hung 52 on a team that entered the game ranked eighth nationally in scoring defense while limiting a fairly prolific Wisconsin offense to only 11 first downs and 104 yards through the air.

It continues to be obvious (painfully so at times) that the Ohio State defense still has some work to do. The words “elite” and “Wisconsin's passing attack” would never be used in the same sentence, so some pumping of the brakes seems appropriate before anointing redshirt freshman JK Johnson and true freshman Jyaire Brown as the program's next great cornerbacks.

Meanwhile, the Badgers managed to rack up 192 yards on the ground, although most of that came late in the proceedings after the OSU starters had begun taking the rest of the night off. A good portion of that rushing total came on a 75-yard touchdown run by Wisconsin tailback Braelon Allen midway through the fourth quarter, the seventh play of 30 yards or more surrendered by the Ohio State defense this season.

Still, the Buckeyes have played four games now, and the improvement on the defensive side of the ball is beginning to show. Ohio State has held three of its four opponents to fewer than 300 total yards of offense, and that is something that happened only three times all of last season. Additionally, the Buckeyes en-

tered the game ranked tied for 13th nationally in fewest first downs allowed. Following the game, they were tied for sixth in that category.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Anyone who has read this column over the last few years knows I have targeted the inconsistency of Ohio State linebackers so many times that I was beginning to sound like the proverbial broken record. But the Buckeyes seem to have finally found a linebacker who not only plays solid assignment football, but also likes to initiate contact rather than waiting for the ball-carrier to come to him. Tommy Eichenberg registered a game-high 14 tackles against the Badgers, upping his season total to 33 and putting him on track to become the first Ohio State linebacker with 100 tackles in a season since Raekwon McMillan had 102 in 2016.

Then there was the aggressive play of safety Tanner McCalister, who came back after sitting out the Toledo game and registered four tackles, as well as his first interception in scarlet and gray. (Technically, the pick and subsequent 30-yard return came in garish red and black, but I digress.) I had been waiting for McCalister to do something/anything since coming to Columbus from Oklahoma State with defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, and now I'm eager to see more.

McCalister told reporters after the game that he sees an improving defensive unit to go along with a lethal offense that can slice and dice opponents through the air or pound them into submission with a devastating ground game.

“I feel like offense is what sells tickets,” McCalister said. “It doesn't matter where you are, the offense is going to get a lot of love. But as the season goes on, and if we keep playing like we're playing, they're going to recognize us as a top defense in the country. We're going to get the accolades and attention we deserve.”

That's wishing for a lot since the Ohio State offense is always going to grab the headlines. C.J. Stroud connected on “only” 63.0 percent of his attempts, pitched his first interception of the season, nearly had a couple more picked off, and failed to reach the 300-yard mark for just the second time in his last 10 games. That is what passes as an off-night for Stroud, and he still threw five touchdown passes.

The Ohio State QB was judicious with his scoring passes, doling out two each to Emeka Egbuka and Cade Stover, while Julian Fleming got the other. Marvin Harrison Jr. had a relatively pedestrian night (three catches, 45 yards) if you don't count his attention-grabbing fashion statements of wearing an Apple watch and designer Louis Vuitton cleats during the game.

Then there was the latest version of the old “Boom and Zoom” running game with Mijan Williams booming for 101 yards and two scores while averaging 9.2 yards on each of his 11 carries, and TreVeyon Henderson zooming for 121 yards on 21 attempts, the most carries he's had since last year's Nebraska game in early November.

Ohio State came out swinging, and Wisconsin fell behind so quickly that the game was essentially over at halftime. If the Buckeyes can maintain that kind of focus, the bulk of the rest of the schedule might feature a lot more of the same.

Fun With Numbers

- Wisconsin gave up 50 or more points to an opponent for the first time in the tenure of head coach Paul Chryst, now in its eighth season. The Badgers have surrendered 50 or more points only twice in the last 17 seasons, and both have been against the Buckeyes. The other was the 59-0 shutout in the 2014 Big Ten Championship Game that helped propel Ohio State into the inaugural College Football Playoff.

- Henderson and Williams became the first OSU duo to rush for more than 100 yards each in the same game since Trey Sermon (112) and Justin Fields (104) did it during a 52-10 win at Michigan State in 2020. The last time that happened in a game against Wisconsin was in 1974 when Cornelius Greene (146) and Archie Griffin (112) each cracked the century mark during a 52-7 rout by the Buckeyes.

- Stroud's five touchdown passes gave him 60 for his career, and he shot past Bobby Hoyer (57, 1992-95), Terrelle Pryor (57, 2008-10) and Joe Germaine (56, 1996-98) into third place on OSU's all-time list. Next up is Justin Fields (2019-20), who threw for 63 touchdowns during his career. J.T. Barrett (2014-17) is out of reach in first place with a program- and Big Ten-record 104 touchdown passes.

- Stroud is also moving up the career passing yardage list. He now has 5,657 yards, which is eighth all-time at Ohio State. Immediately in front of him are Troy Smith (5,720, 2003-06) and Steve Bellisari (5,878, 1998-2001). Barrett is the OSU career passing leader with 9,424 yards.

- It might seem strange, but the Buckeyes had won only one other game in history by a 52-21 final. That came in the 1971 season opener against Iowa, a game in which Ohio State also had a pair of 100-yard rushers. You might be able to win a bit of money in a trivia contest if you know the duo in that game consisted of fullback John Bledsoe (151) and quarterback Don Lamka (100). Lamka also rushed for four touchdowns in that game, a modern-day single-game record for OSU quarterbacks.

My Latest Book

I have teamed once again with the fine folks at Orange Frazer Publishing for my new book “The Legends Volume II – Ohio State Buckeyes: The Men, The Deeds, The Consequences.”

The book is a continuation of “The Legends” book I wrote in 2014 and contains 50 more biographies of some of the greatest players and coaches in Ohio State football history. Included are the stories of such luminaries as Frederick Patterson, the first African-American player in program history, longtime assistant coach Ernie Godfrey, Dick LeBeau, Tom Matte, Paul Warfield, Randy Gradishar, Tom Cousineau, “Big Daddy” Dan Wilkinson, Luke Fickell, Mike Vrabel, Andy Katzenmoyer, Ryan Shazier, the Bosa brothers, J.T. Barrett and Chase Young.

In addition to revealing little-known facts and stories about the players and coaches – for example, did you know Pete Johnson was born Willie James Hammock in rural central Georgia? – the book is filled with historic Ohio State football photos.

“The Legends Volume II” would make the perfect gift for any hard-to-buy-for Buckeye fan, and although the official launch date is Oct. 3, you can purchase a signed copy right now through BSB by calling (614) 486-2202. The cost is \$32, and that includes tax, shipping and any personal inscription you would like.

You may also order a copy through the publisher's website at OrangeFrazer.com or by visiting Amazon.com. I hope you enjoy it.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

OSU Remains At No. 3 In AP Poll

Ohio State remained at No. 3 in the most recent AP poll on Sept. 25 after opening Big Ten play with a dominant 52-21 win over Wisconsin.

The Buckeyes picked up three additional first-place votes from last week, tallying four total, but remain behind No. 1 Georgia and No. 2 Alabama. Michigan and Clemson remained at No. 4 and No. 5, respectively, while USC and Kentucky each rose one spot to populate the No. 6 and No. 7 spots. Tennessee, Oklahoma State and North Carolina State round out the top 10.

Penn State rose three spots to No. 11 after a 33-14 win over Central Michigan, while Minnesota jumped into the top 25 at No. 21 following a 34-7 blowout win over Michigan State in East Lansing. Both the Nittany Lions and Golden Gophers are off to 4-0 starts to the season.

Oklahoma and Arkansas each dropped double-digit spots after enduring upset losses. The Sooners dropped 12 spots to No. 18 after their 41-34 loss against now-No. 25 Kansas State, while the Razorbacks fell 10 spots to No. 20 after a tight 23-21 letdown against now-No. 17 Texas A&M.

Smith-Njigba, Cam Brown Out Against Wisconsin

Ohio State was without 10 players against Wisconsin. Cornerback Cameron Brown and wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba were among the most notable unavailable Buckeyes.

Smith-Njigba returned against To-



SONNY BROCKWAY

DUAL-THREAT PROBLEMS — Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles spoke before the Wisconsin game about the difficulty in defending against a dual-threat quarterback, specifically in reference to Toledo quarterback Dequan Finn. Finn gave the Buckeyes fits in their 77-21 win over the Rockets.

do but played only in the first half, and so far he has just four receptions on the year for 36 yards. Brown had been healthy so far this season but exited in the first half against the Rockets and did not return.

In addition to Brown and Smith-Njigba, the Buckeyes were without defensive end Omari Abor, cornerback Jordan Hancock, wide receiver Kamryn Babb, tight end Joe Royer and linebacker Teradja Mitchell. Hancock has yet to play this season, further hampering Ohio State's depth at cornerback.

Defensive tackle Zach Prater was also out, and running back Evan Pryor and line-

backer Mitchell Melton remain out after suffering season-ending injuries. No Buckeyes were game-time decisions.

Burke, Ransom Held Out Against Badgers

Despite not appearing on Ohio State's status report, second-year cornerback Denzel Burke did not play against Wisconsin.

With Burke and Brown sidelined, the Buckeyes turned to second-year JK Johnson and true freshman Jyaire Brown to man the defensive backend. Burke appeared in initial warmups with a club on his right hand but emerged from the locker room without pads on during the team's final warmups. Cameron Brown played in all three of Ohio State's nonconference games prior to being held out against the Badgers.

Emerging safety Lathan Ransom also did not play against the Badgers due to unspecified reasons. Ransom's absence was softened by the return of safeties Tanner McCalister and Josh Proctor, who missed Ohio State's 77-21 win over Toledo. Like Burke, Ransom did not appear on Ohio State's status report prior to the Buckeyes' win over the Badgers.

Johnson and Jyaire Brown — alongside backups freshman Ryan Turner and safety Cameron Martinez — aided an Ohio State defense that held Wisconsin to 104 passing yards. Wisconsin quarterback Graham Mertz completed just 55 percent of his 20 passes and tossed an interception to safety McCalister.

Though Ohio State was dealing with some poor injury luck, the Buckeyes did receive a boost with the return of running back TreVeyon Henderson and defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. Henderson rushed for a team-high 121 yards on 21 carries, while Hall finished with two tackles.

No Freshmen Debut Against Wisconsin

Given the circumstances of Ohio State's first Big Ten opponent for this season, it's understandable that no freshmen for the Buckeyes made their season debuts. That doesn't mean, though, that freshmen didn't see the field.

The highlight was Jyaire Brown, who made his first career start and finished with a tackle and a pass breakup. So far this season, he is the only true freshman to earn a start for Ohio State, though it did come by way of injury to the top three cornerbacks on the roster.

Running back Dallan Hayden saw some late action, rushing eight times for 31 yards, and stats were recorded by defensive end Caden Curry, linebacker C.J. Hicks and safety Kye Stokes, who each finished with one tackle. Kicker Jayden Fielding also handled all nine kickoffs for an average of 55.0 yards with four touchbacks and one kickoff that went out of bounds.

Also reported as entering the game were wide receiver Kaleb Brown, linebacker Gabe Powers, safety Sonny Styles and offensive lineman Tegra Tshabola. The only remaining scholarship freshmen to not play this season are wide receiver Caleb Burton and offensive linemen George Fitzpatrick, Avery Henry and Carson Hinzman.

Knowles Laments Defensive Performance Against Finn

Toledo quarterback Dequan Finn introduced himself to a national audience on Sept. 17, showcasing his dual-threat ability against an emerging Ohio State defense.

The Buckeyes struggled to contain Finn for much of the evening, and Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said his unit did not live up to the standard that they set during the season's first two weeks.

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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	2-2, 45-32 win over North Carolina
Sept. 10	ARKANSAS STATE	W, 45-12	BTN	1-3, 29-26 loss to Old Dominion
Sept. 17	TOLEDO	W, 77-21	FOX	2-2, 17-14 loss to San Diego State
Sept. 24	WISCONSIN	W, 52-21	ABC	2-2, 52-21 loss to Ohio State
Oct. 1	RUTGERS	3:30 p.m.	BTN	3-1, 27-10 loss to Iowa
Oct. 8	at Michigan State	TBA	TBA	2-2, 34-7 loss to Minnesota
Oct. 22	IOWA	TBA	TBA	3-1, 27-10 win over Rutgers
Oct. 29	at Penn State	TBA	TBA	4-0, 33-14 win over Central Mich.
Nov. 5	at Northwestern	TBA	TBA	1-3, 17-14 loss to Miami (Ohio)
Nov. 12	INDIANA	TBA	TBA	3-1, 45-24 loss to Cincinnati
Nov. 19	at Maryland	TBA	TBA	3-1, 34-27 loss to Michigan
Nov. 26	MICHIGAN	12 p.m.	FOX	4-0, 34-27 win over Maryland

"I don't think we did a great job (against him)," Knowles said. "That starts with me. I think it was not at the level that we want our defense to be – Silver-Bullet caliber, it wasn't there."

Finn's 223 total yards nearly surpassed the total yardage outputs by Notre Dame and Arkansas State, as the Irish produced 253 yards while the Red Wolves churned out 276 yards.

While Finn's statistics popped off of the page, it was what he showed on the field that was most notable. On numerous occasions against the Buckeyes, Finn was able to escape from what appeared to be sure-fire sacks and extend plays. Knowles said it was nearly impossible to simulate Finn in practice.

"It's always great when you have a win and can learn from that," Knowles said. "I think that starts with me. I feel like I didn't do a good enough job preparing them. He was really talented. I learned a lot personally, too. It's like when you go against an option team, how do you simulate that in practice? It's difficult. How do you simulate a scrambling quarterback? It's near impossible, it really is. You're not tackling in practice and able to get that sense of speed."

"I thought we had some schemes and some ideas, but we didn't execute them very well," Knowles added. "When you don't execute, that's not the players' fault. That's my fault because you have to continue to be creative to find ways to do it. We learned a lot from the experience and will

get better."

Finn also further exposed Ohio State's struggles against big plays, tossing touchdown passes of 50 and 40 yards while notching a 23-yard touchdown run against the Buckeyes.

As the Buckeyes allowed at least one passing play of more than 50 yards in each of their first three games – though they did avoid doing so against Wisconsin – Knowles noted that he's still not overly worried about those explosive plays because of how his defense has responded to them.

"I've talked before about how I built those into the system because they do happen," Knowles explained. "Now, you don't want to give up any of them, so you never condone that, and it's always a concern. You have to look at it and say, 'Why did it happen?' Every single explosive play is concerning. It's not the end of the world because we've shown that we can recover from them. That's important, that your guys know they can recover."

The Buckeyes played a more traditional quarterback in Wisconsin's Mertz on Sept. 24 and provided vastly different results. Mertz was held to just 94 passing yards and threw an interception on his first attempt of the game.

However, Mertz did give the Buckeyes some issues with his legs at times, scampering for a run as long as 11 yards while finishing the evening with 15 yards and a 1-yard touchdown during the game's second

quarter.

OSU Names Players Of The Game Vs. Toledo

When the dust settled on Sept. 17, third-ranked Ohio State had displayed why it is worthy of its high standing after dispatching in-state foe Toledo 77-21.

The Buckeyes were led by their Offensive Player of the Game in quarterback C.J. Stroud, who turned in his best performance of the young season. The Inland Empire, Calif., native completed 22 of 27 passes for 367 yards and five touchdowns. It marked the sixth time he had thrown for five or more touchdowns in his then-15 career starts at Ohio State, though he matched the mark the following week against Wisconsin.

Stroud connected with six different receivers, including three completions to tight end Cade Stover.

Kickoff specialist Jayden Fielding earned Special Teams Player of the Game honors. As the Ohio State offense scored 11 total touchdowns, Fielding was called on for 12 kickoffs, 10 of which resulted in touchbacks. His 12 kicks went for a total of 776 yards and netted an average of 64.7 yards per kick.

Ohio State did not name a Defensive Player of the Game for the win over the Rockets. The Buckeyes allowed Toledo to score on three touchdowns of more than 20 yards, while Rockets quarterback Finn compiled 223 all-purpose yards and three

touchdowns – two passing and one rushing.

For his efforts, Stroud was also named the Big Ten offensive player of the week.

This was Stroud's third time earning the honor, as he garnered recognition for his play during Ohio State's 66-17 win over Maryland and 56-7 win over Michigan State last season.

After the win over Wisconsin, Stroud led the nation with 16 passing touchdowns and was 13th in passing yards per game, tossing an average of 305.5 yards per contest.

OSU-Rutgers To Be Televised on BTN

Ohio State's fifth game of the season, a 3:30 p.m. contest against Rutgers on Oct. 1, will be televised on Big Ten Network, the university announced on Sept. 19.

This marks the first time Ohio State will compete on Big Ten Network this season and the end of a five-game homestand to open the season.

Ohio State's annual matchup with Rutgers will also serve as the university's homecoming as well as a celebration of the 100th-year anniversary of Ohio Stadium.

The Buckeyes enter the contest against Rutgers with a 4-0 record, while the Scarlet Knights are coming off of a 27-10 loss to Iowa and boast a 3-1 record entering their bout with Buckeyes.

Continued On Page 6

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BSB PUBLISHER Frank Moskowitz and other members of the BSB staff are available to speak at your business, social or alumni group meetings. Informative and fun. Call (614) 486-2202 for details.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

Turner, Kanu Shed Black Stripes

Two members of Ohio State's freshman class became official members of the team on Sept. 22. Freshman cornerback Ryan Turner, a four-star prospect out of Chaminade-Madonna Prep in Hollywood, Fla., became the 13th freshman to shed his black stripe, and defensive end Hero Kanu joined him later in the day.

Turner did not play in the first two games of the season but made his Ohio State debut against Toledo, playing for six snaps on defense and one snap on special teams. He is one of two freshman cornerbacks in the most recent recruiting class along with Jyaire Brown out of Lakota West in West Chester, Ohio. Brown lost his black stripe early in fall camp and saw action against Arkansas State and Toledo and started against Wisconsin.

Turner was the first Buckeye to lose his black stripe since freshman wide receiver

Many readers continue to report struggling to get their Buckeye Sports Bulletin in a timely fashion.

BSB subscribers can upgrade their existing subscriptions to first-class mail in an envelope through football season for just \$21 and through recruiting season for \$31. Just give us a call at (614) 486-2202 for credit card orders or send your check or money order to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Mention the "football" or "recruiting" upgrade.

For those unable to pay for the upgrade, 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.

"We know that reading the paper online is not optimum, but it does allow you to read time-sensitive stories, including recruiting coverage, while waiting for your paper," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said.

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 cover-

Koji Antwi and a pair of walk-ons – running back TC Caffey and quarterback Mason Maggs – lost theirs the week on Sept. 15.

Kanu did not appear in Ohio State's season opener against Notre Dame but played a combined 14 defensive snaps against Arkansas State and Toledo. Kanu joined the Buckeyes as a four-star recruit out of Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., and ranked as

the No. 129 overall player and No. 19 defensive lineman in the 2022 class, according to 247Sports' composite score.

Kanu is the second defensive lineman to shed his black stripe since the spring. First-year defensive end Kenyatta Jackson lost his on Aug. 20. Neither Kanu nor Turner appeared in the win over Wisconsin.

Are You Having Postal Service Delivery Problems?

age, 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.

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

Former OSU Lineman Miller Speaks At Wellness Event

On March 10, former Ohio State offensive lineman Harry Miller announced his retirement from football citing mental health reasons. In his retirement announcement, Miller wrote candidly about mental health strains that he dealt with

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during his football career and noted that he contemplated suicide at times.

Since his retirement, Miller has grown into an outspoken advocate of mental wellness and mental health awareness. On Sept. 20, Miller spoke at Ohio State's Faces of Resilience banquet, sharing the story of his mental health journey.

Miller received a standing ovation for more than a minute at the conclusion of the speech.

"I'm grateful that there were many times when things didn't make sense, and now in hindsight, things like this make those things make sense," Miller told reporters at the event. "I'm very appreciative, very grateful and it was a really great night."

Miller's speech was introduced by a pre-recorded video of Ohio State head coach Ryan Day, who was unable to attend the event because it coincided with practice. Day noted that he knew Miller was someone who was going to have a profound impact on those around him.

Despite his retirement, Miller has remained a regular presence around the Ohio State football program as he has been at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for practices and on the sidelines for games. Miller emphasized that being around the team "makes (him) a better version of (himself)."

Former OSU Receiver Wilson Earns Rookie Honors

He's only spent two weeks in the NFL, but former Ohio State wide receiver Garrett Wilson is already picking up hardware at the next level.

Wilson, now a New York Jet, was voted the NFL's Rookie of the Week after hauling in eight receptions for 102 yards and two

touchdowns against the Cleveland Browns on Sept. 18. Wilson's efforts were instrumental in the Jets' come-from-behind 31-30 victory, in which they trailed 30-17 with 1:55 remaining in the fourth quarter. He caught the game-winning touchdown with 0:22 seconds remaining.

Wilson's first score came on a 2-yard fade route, after which he threw up an "O-H" with his arms. It was his first game back in the state of Ohio since his time with the Buckeyes.

"We were the only ones that thought we could do this," Wilson told Jets team reporter Caroline Hendershot. "Especially when we were down, 30-17. That is a great team we just beat. We pulled through, and I am just excited."

He followed it up with six receptions for 60 yards in a 27-12 loss to the Cincinnati Bengals on Sept. 25.

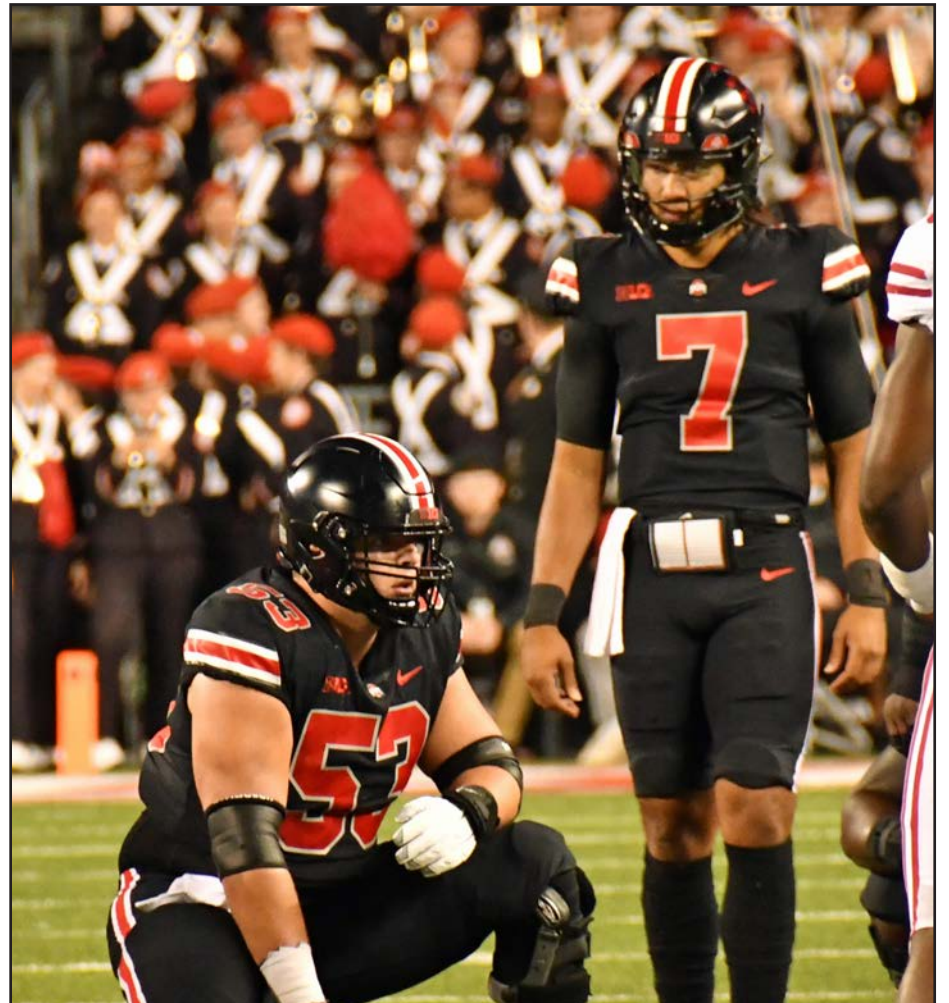
Stroud Discusses Preparation, Recall

There are a number of statistical and semantic arguments as to why Stroud is one of the best signal-callers in the country.

He posted just the second 4,000-yard passing season in Ohio State history in 2021, completing 71.9 percent of his throws on his way to becoming a Heisman Trophy finalist. Many draft experts have him going in the top five of the 2023 NFL draft, and some even have him No. 1.

Watching him throw the ball, his touch, accuracy and ability to throw off-platform stand out. But there's another factor that Stroud touched on Sept. 20 that contributes to his game – his preparation and

Continued On Page 8



SONNY BROCKWAY

GREAT MINDS — Third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud (7) broke down his game preparation in a recent press conference, displaying an impressive recall of the opposing teams' defenses when diagnosing plays from the Buckeyes' recent win over Toledo.

Brutus Level VIPs To Be Recognized In Coming Weeks

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

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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recall. He broke down some of his film studies prior to the Buckeyes' win over Wisconsin.

"I definitely think you can find tendencies in all defenses and previous years that other teams have played them," Stroud said. "I'll probably go deep into that and just see what I can find, the system of defense and how they run their defense and why they run their defense, so I can have a better understanding of the plays we're going to put in and why they might work and why they might not work."

There are a couple of tells when it comes to quarterback preparation, namely the avoidance of mistakes. To this point in his Ohio State career, Stroud boasts 60 touchdown passes against a mere seven interceptions.

Stroud shows an excellent memory in describing a lot of those key throws as well. He broke down one of his touchdown tosses to Fleming against Toledo in a press conference on Sept. 20.

"I thought they were going zero (coverage), they ended up going cover two," Stroud said. "My eyes went to the field, I

thought they were going to do nickel rifle (blitz), or the Sam (linebacker) was going to come. He didn't come, so I went back to my read and Cade (Stover) actually did a good job slipping the Mike (linebacker) and piping it up.

"I thought it was too late, and the safety started to creep back from the right side. That's why I went to Julian. He ran a good route but a flat defender took that away, then a man defender ran with Miyan (Williams). I tried to do my best just to extend the play and just roll to the right, try to see where my options are at, make people miss if I had to. Then I see Miyan trying to box out his defender, like it's basketball, which is funny.

"Then Julian is running his route, his guy slips and goes back out like he's running a corner, then out of the side of my eye I see Marvin (Harrison) just hollering, because he was on the other side on a slant, and he just kept hollering. He was hollering, hollering. So I saw Marvin, I saw Julian, and I was like, 'Man, I don't know.' Then by the time I threw it, Julian got it."

Catch all that? It all occurred in Stroud's mind in a six-second window from him catching the snap, scrambling and throwing the 5-yard touchdown pass.

His ability to see the field, process and make plays based on preparation is the key to his play behind center, Stroud said. He was asked if he could recall the exact circumstances surrounding touchdown passes from previous seasons.

"I probably could," Stroud said. "(Los Angeles Rams head coach) Sean McVay is really good at that.

"You put so much work in for third down, for a certain situation that you have to remember it. You put so much work in with routes, going to scout work, then you

go into film study, then you come back and do it the next day, then clean it up on Thursday. Then you walk through it on Friday, then you walk through it on Saturday. It's so much work that you put in, you want to cherish it so much."

OSU Basketball TV Assignments Announced

With the 2022-23 season fast approaching, the Ohio State men's basketball team found out its television schedule on Sept. 22.

The Buckeyes will play 16 games on FOX Networks, including the Big Ten Network, while appearing nine times on ESPN and five times on CBS.

Outside of Ohio State's season opener against Robert Morris on Nov. 7, which will appear on BTN+, all of the Buckeyes' regular-season games will be televised nationally. The Buckeyes will compete in the Maui Invitational and Big Ten/ACC Challenge, which will be televised on ESPN networks. Besides the early-season tournaments and events, Ohio State will appear on ESPN against Rutgers on Dec. 8, Maryland on Jan. 8, Illinois on Jan. 24, Iowa on Feb. 16 and Michigan State on March 4.

A majority of Ohio State's conference games will appear on FOX networks, while only eight conference games will appear on other networks. In February, the Buckeyes will play each of their four Sunday conference bouts on CBS – in addition to their Dec. 17 matchup against North Carolina in the CBS Sports Classic.

The Big Ten tournament will be split between Big Ten Network and CBS, with BTN hosting the first 10 games of the tournament while CBS will be home to the semifinal and championship games.

The Ohio State women's basketball

team will be televised a considerable amount following its Big Ten regular-season title and Sweet 16 appearance last season.

Head coach Kevin McGuff's squad will be televised 13 times this season, 11 of which will be played on FOX networks. Ohio State opens the season with a marquee matchup against Tennessee on Big Ten Network on Nov. 8. The Buckeyes will also appear on Big Ten Network against Rutgers on Dec. 4, Michigan State on Dec.



Kevin McGuff

11, Northwestern on Dec. 28, Michigan on Dec. 31, Nebraska on Jan. 14, Northwestern on Jan. 19, Indiana on Jan. 26 and Feb. 13 and Maryland on Feb. 24. Ohio State will also play Michigan on FS1 on Feb. 20.

Ohio State will play a pair of games on ESPN2 during the season, as well. The Buckeyes will host Iowa on Jan. 23 at 7 p.m. and travel to Maryland on Feb. 5 at 4 p.m.

Ohio State has yet to announce if the non-televised games will be streamed and which platform those games would potentially appear on. The Buckeyes have previously appeared on BTN+ during non-televised games.

Andy Anders, 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.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1982

Ohio State football coach Earle Bruce was almost livid following the Buckeyes' 23-20 home loss to Stanford on Sept. 25.

"That's a very disappointing loss for our football team," said Bruce after Stanford's John Elway had tossed a 17-yard touchdown pass with 17 seconds left in the game to pin defeat on the Bucks' chests. "No doubt about it. That's one of the ones that when you get beat in the last few seconds of a football game, it takes a lot out of you."

Elway, probably one of the premier passers in the country, completed 35 of 63 passes for 407 yards and two touchdowns.

35 Years Ago — 1987

The Ohio State offense improved. The defense improved. The net result didn't.

"I can't say we won, and I can't say we lost," said cornerback Greg Rogan. "It's hard to explain how we feel because we have never been in a tie before. We're all down. We're kind of taking it as a loss right now because it might hurt our chances to be national champions. That was one of our goals this year."

That seemed to be the feeling of every Buckeye after Ohio State and LSU played to a 13-13 stalemate at Tiger Stadium.

"Who likes a 13-13 tie? No one on our team likes that," Bruce said. "I wouldn't want them celebrating a tie."

30 Years Ago — 1992

No one gave Ohio State much of a chance against Syracuse – except maybe Ohio State itself.

Installed as a 10-point underdog against the eighth-ranked team in the country, a team that had defeated them 9½ months previous in the Hall of Fame Bowl, the Buckeyes pulled off a stunning 35-12 victory over the Orangemen.

It was the first victory over a top-10 team for Ohio State since the equally stunning 27-26 victory at Iowa in 1990 over the then-sixth-ranked Hawkeyes, and it was the worst defeat for the Orangemen in the Carrier Dome since Florida State hung a 41-10 shiner on them in 1989.

25 Years Ago — 1997

Nobody said turning around a sagging men's soccer program at Ohio State would be easy, or that it could be done right away, or

that it could be done without any hard decisions.

In just over a month in Columbus, head coach John Bluem had taken on that task head-on.

"This program has not been successful in the past," said Bluem, whose team was off to a 4-4-1 start. "We have to find the players who are committed to raising the standard of practicing and playing at this university. There are guys on the team this year who will not be on the team next year, which is OK. That means the program is moving forward and raising the standards."

20 Years Ago — 2002

In opening the 2002 season with double-digit wins over Texas Tech, Kent State and Washington State, Ohio State had built up quite a bit of momentum.

But none of that mattered in the late stages of OSU's Sept. 21 trek to Cincinnati, where the Bearcats were hosting the sixth-ranked Buckeyes inside palatial Paul Brown Stadium.

For almost 60 minutes, UC took everything Ohio State had to offer and gave it back in kind.

In the end, however, Ohio State capitalized on three fourth-quarter turnovers and rallied for a 23-19 win.

"I am awfully proud of the way our kids came back and won the game," said OSU coach Jim Tressel, whose team improved to 4-0. "We feel good about the win against a good team in a tough environment."

15 Years Ago — 2007

Although many things changed in the 498 games played in Ohio Stadium between No. 1 and No. 500, at least two remained the same – the Buckeyes won and the defense did not allow a point.

On Oct. 7, 1922, Ohio State beat Ohio Wesleyan by a 5-0 score in the first game in what would become known as the Horseshoe.

With a more effective offense, the Buckeyes made quick work of Northwestern in contest No. 500 on Sept. 22. Ohio State blew out the Wildcats 58-7, with Northwestern's only points coming on a 99-yard kickoff return for a touchdown.

"Those don't come up very often," said Ohio State right tackle Kirk Barton. "It takes a while to get to 500. So to say you were part of it and you got a decisive victory is an exciting thing."

10 Years Ago — 2012

The Ohio State women's golf team opened the fall slate with a second-place finish among 17 teams at the Branch Law Firm/Dick McGuire Invitational, a standing boosted by runner-up placing by senior Rachel Rohanna.

Rohanna, who had reached the second stage of LPGA qualifying, shot rounds of 71, 72 and 73 to finish with a score of 3-under 216 at the three-round tournament.

Five Years Ago — 2017

Ryan Brewer, a professor of finance at Indiana University-Purdue University in Columbus, Ind., undertook a study that claimed Ohio State's football program was worth just over \$15 billion, according to the Wall Street Journal. According to the study, that made Ohio State the most valuable program in college football.

Ohio State sophomore quarterback Joe Burrow saw the report and took to Twitter to express his opinion on some of the NCAA's rules regarding college football.

"Our team is worth 1.5 BILLION dollars but it wouldn't be fair to other students if we get a free hamburger," Burrow wrote on the social media platform.

One Year Ago — 2021

Obviously disgruntled when he tried to enter the game in the second quarter as part of a substitution package and was waved off the field, junior linebacker K'Vaughan Pope quit the team.

Pope, a fourth-year junior who had been used sparingly the last two seasons, ran onto the Ohio Stadium field as part of a substitute package but was waved off by fellow linebacker and team co-captain Teradja Mitchell. That triggered an outburst from Pope, who stormed down the sideline and began walking toward the team locker room.

Chased and coaxed back toward the sideline, Pope took off his gloves and threw them into the stands. Then, as he attempted to take off his jersey, he got into a heated exchange with linebackers coach Al Washington. The exchange continued until former Buckeye safety and team director of player development C.J. Barnett escorted Pope to the locker room.



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Buckeye Pass Defense Turns The Corner

Continued From Page 1

Buckeyes were missing their top three cornerbacks.

"Jyaire and JK have been practicing," Day said. "They practiced really hard all spring, they practiced all preseason, they've been out there. We told them right before the game that everybody on the team believes in them, and we do. They have no fear, and they went out there and played, and they did a really good job."

"I don't know what the film is going to show, but I know they competed, and I thought (cornerbacks coach) Tim Walton did a really good job getting them ready. I'm proud of those guys to be able to win a conference game with those guys in there."

Johnson had been first off the bench this season when Cameron Brown or Burke was forced out, so he was a known quantity for Ohio State's coaching staff. After playing on special teams in the season opener against Notre Dame, he played 50 snaps in the win over Arkansas State – second most on the team behind safety Ronnie Hickman's 57 defensive snaps – and earned 33 snaps against Toledo, most coming in the second half after Brown's injury.

He continued his strong sophomore campaign with four tackles against Wisconsin, including a combined tackle with linebacker Tommy Eichenberg of Wisconsin running back Braelon Allen for just 6 yards in the first quarter that later led to quarterback Graham Mertz' interception on the

Badgers' first drive of the game.

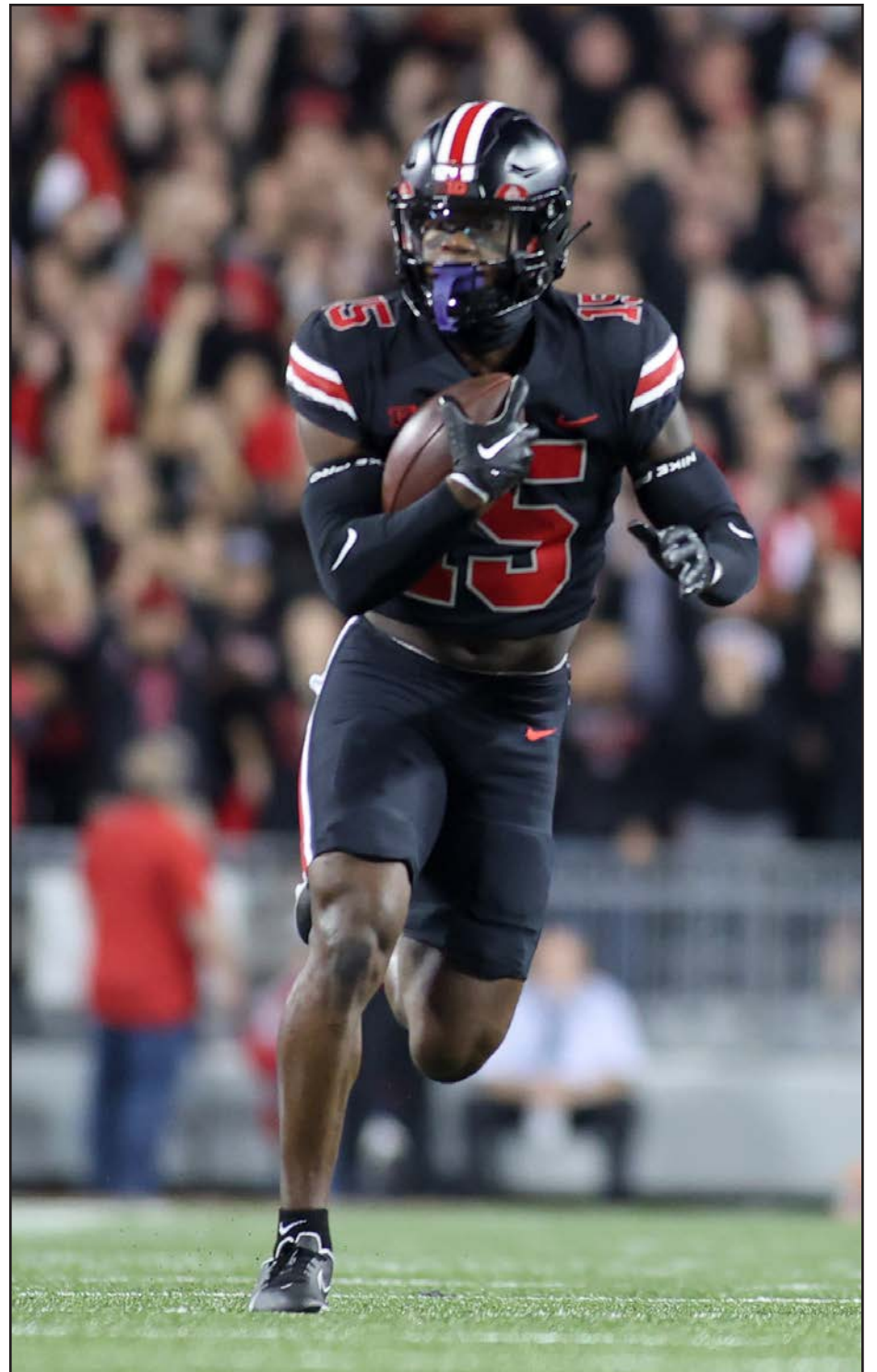
"We trust the corners," Eichenberg said. "Jyaire and JK did a great job. We've still just got to do our job, no matter who's out."

Equally impressive but perhaps more impactful was the performance of Jyaire Brown, who earned the start in just the third game of his collegiate career. After not playing against the Irish, Brown had just 27 defensive snaps over the next two games before locking things down for the majority of the contest against the Badgers.

Of course, there's now no question as to why Jyaire Brown was the first Buckeye to lose his black stripe in fall camp. Defensive end Caden Curry, safety Tanner McCalister and safety Kye Stokes all lost theirs in the spring, but Jyaire Brown was the first to become a true member of Ohio State's team once the squad regrouped in August.

He finished his first career start with just one tackle but contributed one of Ohio State's four pass breakups on the evening. It certainly wasn't perfect, as he was called for pass interference and allowed a 9-yard completion on back-to-back plays in the second quarter on a drive that ended in a Wisconsin touchdown, but Ohio State was happy with how he performed in his first significant action.

"He's a cornerback that's not afraid to go against the best," McCalister said of Brown. "You see it in practice (against) Marvin Harrison and Jaxon (Smith-Njigba), (Emeka Egbuka), we've got a really good group of receivers and he's not afraid to step out there



JOSH WINSLOW

GAME CHANGER — Graduate safety Tanner McCalister's interception of Wisconsin quarterback Graham Mertz on the Badgers' first possession of the game set an early tone for the contest, which the Buckeyes would go on to win 52-21.

even though he's a freshman. He's like, 'I want Marvin.' You see things like that early on. He's very confident.

"I think that's why the coaches like him. That's why we like him. He's confident. He's also poised. For a freshman, he's willing to listen. I'm on the field like, 'Hey, Jyaire, you got this, this and that.' He's like, 'I got you.' There's no panic. He's very poised and very technically sound in his assignments. That's why we like him."

As a whole, Brown and Johnson played an important role for Ohio State's passing defense that dominated Wisconsin. The Badgers had just 49 passing yards in the first half, though the game itself was decided early in the second quarter.

Running back Miyan Williams scored on

a 3-yard rush to give Ohio State a 28-0 lead with 13:33 remaining in the second frame, and the Buckeyes' next drive was the back-breaker, lasting 13 plays and taking over six minutes off the clock and ending in a Noah Ruggles 25-yard field goal for a 31-7 lead. Of course, some might argue that the interception thrown by Mertz on Wisconsin's first possession – one hauled in by McCalister – signaled that the game could be headed toward an early close, but the back-to-back scores in the second quarter left little doubt of the final result.

With Mertz and the Wisconsin passing attack mostly neutralized, the brunt of the offense fell on Allen, the star sophomore who has dominated ever since stepping on the scene last year. While Wisconsin head





JOSH WINSLOW

BLACK PARADE — A “Black Out” dominated Ohio Stadium on Sept. 24 against Wisconsin, with the Ohio State players wearing alternate black uniforms and fans — who clearly answered the call — encouraged to wear black.

coach Paul Chryst and Allen were hoping to emulate some of the strong performances of past Badgers running backs, they instead found a similar performance to that of Michigan State’s Kenneth Walker III, who crumbled at Ohio Stadium last season.

Walker — who entered the game on Nov. 20, 2021, as a potential Heisman candidate — finished with just six carries and 25 yards, stifled by an early Ohio State scoring run that forced the Spartans into a one-dimensional passing offense to simply stay in the game. With Ohio State holding a 31-7 lead entering the half, Allen met largely the same fate, with just eight rushing attempts for 36 yards in the first 30 minutes.

“I felt like our guys did a great job of gang tackling,” Day said of stopping Allen. “There were a couple of things that maybe could have squared out, but we had extra guys come to the party and get them down. I’ll have to look to see how many yards after contact he made, but I felt like we did a decent job of getting him on the ground. He’s a big, strong, physical back, and you can even feel late in the game where if you get into a close game, they’re going to wear you down.”

Allen’s final numbers of 23 carries for 165 yards and a rushing touchdown — a 75-yarder with the game well out of hand — tell a slightly different story, but Allen’s impact ultimately amounted to very little with the game still on the line, which put

the game back in the hands of Mertz. He finished just 11 of 20 for 94 yards, only the second time that Mertz has finished with under 100 passing yards in his three years as a starter for Wisconsin.

His longest play of the day was a 26-yard throw to wideout Skyler Bell, another notch in the cap of the secondary. In addition to Brown and Johnson earning their first starts, the secondary returned safeties McCalister and Josh Proctor after they missed the win over Toledo, and Hickman started his fourth game of the year, the lone member of the secondary to start every contest through the young season.

“We’ve definitely got depth back there,” McCalister said. “I mean, we’re trying to all get healthy. That’s the goal. We’re trying to get healthy so everyone can have a little piece of the fun. That’s what we’re kind of working on right now. I think we’re doing a really good job at that. It goes to show that everybody back there can step in and really make plays. And I think that showed in the past couple weeks, that all of us can be interchangeable, go out there and fly around, make plays.”

McCalister had the highlight with his interception, but the stars of the day were the relievers in Brown and Johnson. As Day stated, the coaches — as well as Brown and Johnson’s teammates — all felt confident in their ability to step in, and they received some advice from McCalister as they took

the field against Wisconsin.

“I remember how it was when I had my first start my sophomore year at Oklahoma State, so I kind of knew the thoughts that were going through their head,” he said. “I went up to them and told them, ‘You don’t have to do anything special, you just have to do your job.’ Sometimes when you’re young, you think, ‘Oh, it’s all on me.’ But you’ve got 10 other guys on the field that we’ve got your back.”

“You’ve just got to go out there and do your one job, so I told them that exactly. Just, ‘Man, you don’t have to do anything special, just go out there and do your job.’ Both of them shook their heads and they were ready to go.”

Second-Half Defense Falters

Ohio State’s defense dominated Wisconsin in the first half, allowing just seven points and 96 total yards as the offense ran away with the contest. While there was a sense of urgency for the defense that was making plays all over the field in the first two quarters, that same urgency did not appear relevant in the second half.

The Buckeyes’ starters on defense stayed in to begin the second half, allowing just 11 total yards through the first three Wisconsin drives. On the Badgers’ fourth drive, though, they traveled 80 yards in 14 plays, taking up over 7:32 of clock on a drive that ended

on a 2-yard touchdown pass from Mertz to fullback Jackson Acker early in the fourth quarter. Mertz completed four passes on the drive, the longest of which went for 19 yards, while Allen rushed nine times for 40 yards.

At that point Day pulled Ohio State’s defensive starters. The next defensive drive featured the Buckeyes’ backups, but it was a short drive that took just one play for Allen to waltz, untouched, 75 yards to the end zone.

“We decided to take out some of our starters in that moment, and then he hit that long run, so we’ve got to figure out why that happened,” Day said. “But that was on me. I know (defensive coordinator Jim Knowles) would rather have had his starters in there and stop them right there, but I made that call. I wanted to keep our guys out of the game. We have a couple guys who have been banged up so I made that call, and it is what it is.”

Overall, the Buckeyes allowed 14 of Wisconsin’s 21 points and 200 of the Badgers’ 296 yards in the second half. Whether it’s an indictment of Ohio State’s starters taking their foot off the gas or the backups not living up to the standard of the starters, McCalister said the defense is continuing to work to fulfill Knowles’ vision of a complete game.

“That’s a big challenge because Coach Knowles, he’s a genius, so his version of a perfect game may never happen,” he said. “Just because it’s football, things happen. That’s definitely a huge challenge for us. But each week, when it’s time to play the game, Coach Knowles tells us, ‘Today, your mistakes are on me. You just go out there and play ball.’ That’s what we do every Saturday. It may not be up to his expectations or up to par with what he wants every single play, but the majority, he enjoys what he sees at the end of the game.”

Paint It Black

Ohio State announced an attendance of 105,473 for the Buckeyes’ win over Wisconsin, and most seemed to get the memo that it was a “Black Out” against the Badgers. Ohio Stadium — with the Buckeyes wearing their black uniforms and fans emboldened in dark shades — was still as loud as ever, and it was another notch in the belt of Ohio State’s themed games that have become more common over the years.

With the win over the Badgers, the Buckeyes moved to 4-0 when wearing black uniforms and encouraging fans to participate in the “Black Out.” The other instances were a 38-10 win over Penn State on Oct. 17, 2015, a 36-31 win over Nebraska on Nov. 3, 2018, and a 34-10 win over Michigan State on Nov. 30, 2019.

The 31-point win over Wisconsin — the largest in a “Black Out” — gives Ohio State an average margin of victory of 22.0 points in the four wins, though the competition has not necessarily been elite, with the Spartans the only ranked team (No. 25) at the time of the respective games.

In total, Ohio State moves to 26-7 in games where the Buckeyes wore an alternate uniform. The first alternate uniform worn by Ohio State was in a 21-10 win at Michigan on Nov. 21, 2009, in which the Buckeyes wore uniforms honoring the 1954 national championship team.

Stover Continues Strong Run In Prime Time

It is quickly becoming the year of the tight end within the walls of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

After a three-catch, 83-yard performance against Toledo on Sept. 17, Ohio State tight end Cade Stover produced the best outing of his career in the Buckeyes' Big Ten opener vs. Wisconsin. Stover snagged the first two touchdowns of his tenure on four catches for 51 yards.

The Mansfield, Ohio, native – affectionately dubbed “Little Gronk” by his quarterback C.J. Stroud – showcased his receiving ability right from the beginning of Ohio State's offensive onslaught, catching a pass on the first possession of the game. While Stover was used in a variety of ways, most notably splitting out wide on a multitude of plays, head coach Ryan Day said the tight end's versatility allows him to play all over the field.

“I'm proud of what Cade is becoming for this offense,” Day said. “He deserves everything he's getting. He's earning it all. He's a weapon for us in the pass game as you can see. He's strong, he's powerful, but he's also getting after people in the run game. He does a good job in protection, and he can do that.”

“You can see that he can split out, he can come back into the backfield, he can line up as a tight end. He gets big in some of the bigger personnel, and anytime you have somebody that can do that, that's what the NFL is looking for. It's what we're all looking for. Those versatile players that can do multiple things, and he's showing he can do that. He's become a weapon for us.”

On the third play of the Buckeyes' opening drive, Stroud found Stover for a 22-yard gain that played a key role in Ohio State's first scoring possession. While Stover's catch on Ohio State's opening drive helped set up a 2-yard touchdown plunge by running back Miyan Williams, he went on to find pay dirt on his very next reception.

Sparked by an interception from safety Tanner McCalister, Ohio State started its second drive from the Wisconsin 16-yard line. Just two plays into the possession,

GAME NOTEBOOK Jack Emerson

Stroud rolled left before flipping his hips and firing to the right side of the field, where Stover found himself virtually uncovered. From there, Stover raced to the end zone before flipping over Wisconsin cornerback Jay Shaw and through the goal line for the first touchdown of his career.

Stover was, once again, impactful on the Buckeyes' next drive. His 14-yard reception on second-and-6 pushed Ohio State to the Wisconsin 28-yard line, and just three plays later, Stover found himself the beneficiary of a 2-yard touchdown strike from Stroud on a bootleg in which he drew in a pair of members from the Wisconsin secondary to free up his tight end.

“It's been like that all week,” Stover said. “That's exactly what it's been. Credit to Coach Day and Coach (Kevin) Wilson. That's the exact look that practice went into. That was the exact way we thought the play out. When you've done it four or five times during the week, you feel pretty comfortable doing it on Saturday.”

Although that proved to be the end of Stover's night as a receiver, he also put his toughness on display for the Ohio State faithful.

Stover took a pair of devastating hits during the second quarter, and while he needed to come off the field after falling headfirst to the turf, he quickly returned and went the distance alongside the rest of Ohio State's first-team offense.

As Stover displayed his versatility during Ohio State's victory over the Badgers, Stroud recognized all the factors that make Stover a weapon.

“Cade is definitely a Swiss Army knife,” Stroud said. “He can run, he can block, he can do really anything. It's just amazing to



SONNY BROCKWAY

YEAR OF THE TIGHT END — The strong start to the season for Cade Stover continued in Ohio State's 52-21 win over Wisconsin. The fourth-year tight end had four receptions for 51 yards and two touchdowns, the first scores of his career.

see his work pay off. He's a better person than he is a football player, so I'm really proud of him. And I owed him for last week. I missed him on one today, kind of irritating, but he got two.

“I think Cade is going to continue to be great. I'm super excited for him, super happy for him.”

Disparity In QB Play Microcosm Of Win

It was a tale of two quarterbacks during Ohio State's win over the Badgers.

Although Stroud was hit-or-miss for some of the contest, his 281 yards and five touchdown passes stood in stark contrast to the troubles experienced by Wisconsin quarterback Graham Mertz.

Stroud was without star wideout Jaxon Smith-Njigba and completed passes to just four different receivers, but he utilized his limited targets well, tossing a pair of touchdowns to Stover and Emeka Egbuka and another score to Julian Fleming.

“I think in the first half, we distributed with the ball pretty well,” Stroud said. “We had some good momentum coming out quick. That's something that we definitely wanted to do, and I think we built that chemistry with Cade, Emeka and Marvin (Harrison Jr.), and really everybody who touched the ball did a great job. We built that chemistry in the offseason.”

While Stroud continued his Heisman Trophy candidacy, Mertz succumbed to the pressure put on him by the Ohio State defense and the raucous Ohio Stadium crowd. The third-year starting quarterback completed just 55.0 percent of his 20 passes for 94 yards, a touchdown and an interception.

Mertz's first attempt of the evening wound up in the arms of McCalister after a clear miscommunication between him and wideout Chimere Dike, who never saw the ball coming. The offense followed up McCalister's interception with a touchdown,



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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Three words describe the main item that worked well for Ohio State against Wisconsin: everything on offense – perhaps outside some overthrows from third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud.

After Ohio State got the ball at Wisconsin's 16-yard line following an interception by safety Tanner McCalister, tight end Cade Stover faked a block to the right flat before leaking out to the boundary as Stroud rolled left with the rest of the Buckeyes' receiving targets. Stroud planted his feet, turned back and fired the ball over to a wide-open Stover, who took the toss and somersaulted over a Badgers defender for a touchdown that extended Ohio State's lead to 14-0.

The Buckeyes would later go up 28-0 with less than two minutes gone by in the second quarter. Ohio State averaged 10.5 yards per play on its first four possessions, and play design helped open up many of the looks.

An old-school strong-I formation with graduate tight end Mitch Rossi at fullback led to a third-and-1 conversion for the Buckeyes as the second quarter ticked down, with Rossi taking a sneaky handoff and falling forward to move the chains.

There was plenty of production to go around. Stover added a second touchdown reception and finished the day with four catches for 51 yards. Third-year running back Miyan Williams posted 101 yards on 11 carries, and sophomore TreVeyon Henderson added 121 on 21. Williams also collected two touchdowns.

Sophomore wide receiver Emeka Egbuka had the biggest day of the team's pass catchers, collecting six receptions for 118 yards and two touchdowns, and third-year wide receiver Julian Fleming hauled in four receptions for 67 yards, plowing over a pair of Wisconsin defenders after one of his catches for a touchdown.

What Didn't Work

There are few gripes to be had when one dominates a legitimate conference foe 52-21 in a game that was never particularly close, but there were some small improvements to be had.

Wisconsin found success running the ball out of wildcat looks. The

and linebacker Tommy Eichenberg emphasized the importance of forcing a turnover at that early juncture of the game.

"When you're up 14-0, their game plan changes," Eichenberg said. "They can't just go off what they planned to do. They've got to start passing more. The D-line were starting to get after them, too, so that kind of helped us out."

That interception proved to be the tone-setter for Mertz's night, and he played it relatively safe after that moment. Mertz had only three completions of more than 10 yards, while Stroud had 14, including his first seven connections.

Henderson, Williams Lead Rushing Attack

For the first time since Justin Fields and Trey Sermon each eclipsed 100 rushing yards against Michigan State in 2020, Ohio State registered a pair of 100-yard rushers against Wisconsin.

The one-two punch of second-year TreVeyon Henderson and third-year Miyan Williams continued their early-season tear. Henderson led the way with 121 yards on 21 carries, while Williams added 101 yards and two touchdowns on 11 carries.

"We know how long of a season this is going to be, and when you have two guys that you can go back and forth, who are unselfish, who understand what it means to be a team, that's the key," Day said. "If it starts to become, 'What are my carries? What are my touchdowns? What are my runs?' then it doesn't work."

"TreVeyon and Miyan both have been excellent. TreVeyon's energy before the game was off the charts. You could feel it. I felt it in warmups. I felt it in the locker room. I felt it coming out of the locker room. And then he ran that way. He ran hard, he ran physical, he ran with energy, and so did Miyan. Miyan ran hard."

"I think we've got something good going in that room. When you saw Dallan (Hayden) run at the end, I thought he was running well. Hats off to the offensive line and the tight ends. I thought they really moved the line of scrimmage today against a good defense."

Henderson and Williams' production helped the Buckeyes reach their usual goal of producing at least 250 passing and 250 rushing yards. Ohio State churned out 258 rushing yards on an average of 6.0 yards per carry and received 281 passing yards courtesy of Stroud.

Acknowledging an increased focus on physicality against the typically aggressive Badgers, Williams emphasized that he and Henderson boast differing running styles that keep opponents on their toes.

"He's more breakout, and I would be the bruiser," Williams said. "It just comes hand-in-hand with each other."

McCalister Adds Strong Play To His Teaching

Entering his first and only season at Ohio State, a key part of McCalister's role was already defined: be an on-the-field teacher of defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' scheme.

But McCalister showcased his play-making ability in his Big Ten debut against Wisconsin. While the aforementioned interception was his most notable play of the evening, his presence created a steadiness in a secondary unit without its top two cornerbacks. McCalister finished the contest with four tackles and a pass breakup, in addition

to his interception. Badgers utilized it on only a handful of plays, and what would have been their biggest gain from the formation got called back via holding, but it still presented problems.

Junior Wisconsin running back Braelon Allen set up the Badgers' first touchdown taking direct snaps out of the look, plunging down to Ohio State's 1-yard line in the second quarter. Allen also converted a third-and-1 later in the game out of the wildcat via a pass.

Wisconsin started to break off more chunk gains on the ground starting in the fourth quarter, though the contest had been out of hand for some time. Allen reeled off a 75-yard touchdown run with 7:11 to play, but it only served to cut Ohio State's lead to 31 points, ahead 52-21 at that point, and it came while the Badgers were still playing their offensive starters against the Buckeyes' defensive backups.

Play Of The Game

For all the offensive fireworks, a fantastic defensive play robbed Wisconsin of potential momentum entering halftime and helped to seal the Buckeyes' dominant win.

The Badgers faced a fourth-and-3 in Ohio State territory with 11 seconds left before intermission, and despite those circumstances, Wisconsin second-year wide receiver Skyler Bell managed to slip behind the Buckeye defense up the right sideline.

Wisconsin junior quarterback Graham Mertz lofted a pass up toward the streaking target, and just as Bell looked to reel in a pass that at least would have set up a goal-to-go situation and could have easily been a touchdown, McCalister flew over to the receiver and jarred the ball from his grasp for an incompleteness.

With injuries at cornerback, safety play became an even bigger premium for Ohio State against Wisconsin, even with its defense already described as "safety driven." McCalister's continued reliable play at nickel is needed in the secondary.

— Andy Anders

to his interception.

McCalister said that his breakout performance against the Badgers will serve as a building block moving forward this season.

"It definitely builds confidence," he said. "I feel like, obviously I wasn't at Ohio State last year, but I made plays in college football against some good teams. So I knew I could do it. It was just fun to actually be able to present it to the Ohio State fans and just really excel in front of my teammates as well. Just fly around with a new team and really be comfortable with those guys. I think we're all jelling together, and there's no limit to what our defense can do."

McCalister aided an Ohio State pass defense that held Mertz and company to just 104 yards through the air.

Overall, McCalister said the defense played solid as a unit despite a few chunk plays, including a 75-yard touchdown run by Wisconsin running back Braelon Allen against the Buckeyes' second-string defense in the game's waning minutes.

"Obviously there's some mistakes in there somewhere, but we had a really good defensive outing," McCalister said. "Our plan was to come in and stop the run. We knew they wanted to run. I feel like we did that for the most part. I feel like they had one explosive there at the end, but for the most part we stopped the run. That was our goal."

Physical Practices Translate To Game

The Buckeyes have placed an increased attention to physicality since the spring and

they've also put that plan into action.

Day, as well as several players, noted during the lead-up to Ohio State's win over Wisconsin that the team used its Tuesday and Wednesday full-padded practices to build up an edge preparing for the contest. Stover emphasized that the practices have grown to be physical in nature.

"You could feel it on Tuesday and Wednesday," Stover said. "Last week's and then this week's Tuesday and Wednesday practices, when we have our pads on, if you're blind you would know that people are getting after it. That carries over to how we're playing here, and that's exciting. It's just a step in the right direction."

Offensively, the Buckeyes benefited from aggressive play from their offensive line, which generated a serious push against the Wisconsin defensive line in the running game while keeping Stroud's pocket clean for much of the evening. Ohio State did not allow a sack against the Badgers, while five different ball carriers racked up a total of 258 yards.

On defense, Ohio State's physicality was mostly on display through its pass rush and rushing defense. Although Allen finished the game with 165 yards and a touchdown, his statistics were inflated by his 75-yard score in garbage time. Mertz felt pressure from Ohio State's pass rush for much of the game, greatly affecting his comfort in the pocket, but he was sacked only once. Defensive end Jack Sawyer – who has manned the Jack position for the Buckeyes through four weeks – tallied the lone sack

of the game.

"Tuesday and Wednesday, you've just got to put in those hard days, really," Eichenberg said. "They don't have to be perfect. You've just got to put in the hard days and hopefully they pay out on the weekend."

While plenty of attention was placed on Ohio State's prowess in the trenches against the Badgers, Day noted that the entire team has built up an edge through the season's first four weeks.

"I think we've shown what we can do," Day said. "Now whether we do it every week, now that's on us. But I think you can see what this team is made of. I think we've shown that in our first four games what we can do. The big challenges we all know in college football is you have to bring it every week, and that's the competitive stamina we've been talking about. Every single week you've got to bring it. So as good as this feels and as much as we want to celebrate this, we can't spend too much time patting ourselves on the back after this thing, which is hard because it's one heck of a win for us."

"To play like we did tonight, that was a lot of work, and I'm very, very proud of our team. I'm proud of our players. Proud of the way the defense came in, some of the way the guys stepped up. There's a lot of good to go around in this game, but the tough thing is you don't have too much time to talk about that. You've got to be on to the next team. But we'll try to enjoy this the best we can tonight and a little bit tomorrow."

Fast Start Overwhelms Badgers In Big Ten Opener

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The passer passed, the rushers ran and the defense defended when it needed. Throw in a few early haymakers, and the ingredients were there for a blowout when third-ranked Ohio State defeated Wisconsin 52-21 at Ohio Stadium on Sept. 24.

C.J. Stroud threw for five touchdowns, two apiece to tight end Cade Stover and Emeka Egbuka, and the Buckeyes used a big first quarter to dominate the Badgers in the Big Ten opener for each school before a crowd of 105,473 on hand for the third home night game of the season.

The Buckeyes (4-0, 1-0) got four touchdowns and a field goal in their first five possessions to take a 31-7 halftime lead, and led 21-0 barely 11 minutes into the game on a 2-yard run by Miyan Williams and the first two career touchdowns for Stover, a converted linebacker.

Badgers Battered

The Buckeyes rectified an ominous start to drive 88 yards in six plays, using 2:41 to take a 7-0 lead on Williams' 2-yard run up the gut.

Running back-turned-linebacker-turned kick returner Chip Trayanum mishandled the opening kickoff and was able to gain 5 yards before being tackled at the 12-yard line. TreVeyon Henderson ran for 3 yards, and Marvin Harrison Jr. broke free for an 18-yard catch. Stover followed with a 22-yard grab to the Wisconsin 45-yard line.

Henderson rushed for 10 yards, and Egbuka moved the ball to the 2-yard line with a 33-yard reception to set up Williams on the next play.

The defense stepped up on the Badgers' first possession when Oklahoma State transfer Tanner McCalister intercepted Graham Mertz at the Wisconsin 46-yard line and made a return of 30 yards to the 16-yard line.

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Henderson ran for 3 yards and with the next snap. Then Stroud rolled left and threw back to an open Stover who powered his way into the end zone to extend the lead to 14-0 at 8:54 for his first career touchdown.

"If we can put the offense in position to score, we like to say (there is) blood in the water," McCalister said. "There was definitely blood in the water."

The Buckeyes chunked their way to another score to pad the margin to 21-0 at the 3:55 mark with Stover once again the recipient of a TD pass from Stroud. This time he was open for a 2-yarder because Stroud faked a handoff and bootlegged right.

"Cade is definitely a Swiss Army knife. He can run, he can block as well," Stroud said. "He can really do anything. It's amazing to see his work pay off."

OSU went 70 yards in 3:24 and seven plays. Stroud had completions of 13 and 11 to Egbuka and Harrison, respectively. Stover caught a 14-yard pass to the Wisconsin 28-yard line, and Henderson had gains of 16 and 10 yards prior to the touchdown.

The Buckeyes had 210 total yards to just 23 for the Badgers in the first quarter while accumulating 12 first downs, compared to just one for Wisconsin.

Williams capped a hard-driving series with a 3-yard rush to make it 28-0 at 13:33 of the second quarter. The Buckeyes marched 67 yards on eight plays, taking 3:21 off the clock. The key play was a third-and-4 from the OSU 39-yard line when Harrison had a 16-yard catch to the Wisconsin 45-yard line.

At that point, Williams took over with a run of 14 yards to end the quarter and then runs of 7 and 21 yards to the Wisconsin 3-yard line before scoring on the next play.

Wisconsin stemmed the onslaught with a time-consuming (4:55) series to go 72 yards in 10 plays, capped by a 1-yard plunge by Mertz for a 28-7 score at 8:31.

A defensive pass interference on cornerback Jyaire Brown put the ball on the Badgers' 37-yard line. Mertz later ran for 11 yards, and on a third-and-9 from the OSU 40-yard line, he found Skyler Bell for 26 yards to the 14-yard line. From there, star running back Braelon Allen gained 13 yards on two carries, and Mertz took it in from there.

Ohio State controlled the ball when it got it back and held it for 6:11, using 13 plays only to settle for a 25-yard field goal by Noah Ruggles with 2:20 left in the half to put the lead at 31-7.

The drive started well with a 25-yard gallop by Williams to the Wisconsin 45-yard line on the second snap. Williams later on fourth-and-1 ripped off 9 yards to the 27-yard line. The Buckeyes continued to ground out the yards, and needing one on third down, fullback/tight end Mitch Rossi pushed his way for 3 yards to the 15-yard line, but the drive would stall at the 7-yard line.

With 38 seconds to go before the half, Stroud was intercepted at the OSU 48-yard line by John Torchio, the first turnover of the season by Stroud, but the Badgers came away with nothing. On fourth down, McCalister broke up a pass intended for Bell at the OSU 4-yard line along the right sideline to end the threat, and the Buckeyes took over



SONNY BROCKWAY

FLYIN' MIYAN — Third-year running back Miyan Williams has been an integral part of Ohio State's two-pronged rushing attack, carrying the ball 43 times for 308 yards and three touchdowns on 7.2 yards per carry, best among the Buckeyes' backs with more than 10 carries.

for a kneel-down with five ticks left.

More Of The Same

After Wisconsin punted on its initial series of the third quarter, Stroud's third touchdown pass went to Julian Fleming for 12 yards and a 38-7 lead at 9:35. During the eight-play, 72-yard, 3:38 drive, Egbuka snagged a pass for 18 yards, but it was Fleming's catch of 31 yards to the Wisconsin 17-yard line on third-and-4 from the UW 48 that was the key. Henderson carried twice to the 12-yard line before Stroud found Fleming, who took several defenders with him across the goal line.

After an Egbuka 10-yard punt return with 4:24 remaining in the third, the Buckeyes needed four plays to go 38 yards for a 45-7 advantage in a drive that took 2:02. Henderson rushed for gains of 4 and 7 yards, Fleming made a 19-yard catch to the Wisconsin 8-yard line, and Egbuka finished it on a slant pattern on a ball from Stroud that was drilled between two Wisconsin players with 2:22 left in the third quarter.

The Badgers responded with a 14-play drive to go 80 yards in 7:32. A 2-yard pass to Jackson Acker made it 45-14 at 9:46 of the fourth quarter. A 19-yard catch by Isaac Guerendo on third down to the OSU 6-yard line aided the drive.

However, the Buckeyes weren't done. Egbuka made a 32-yard catch-and-run to put the score at 52-14 with 7:21 left. He caught the ball across the middle at the Wisconsin 18-yard line, and no one could catch him.

It took five plays to go 75 yards in 2:25 with a third-down pass interference moving the chains to the Wisconsin 32-yard line on the play previous to the score.

On the Badgers' first play of the next drive, with most of the OSU starting de-

fense on the bench, Allen burst through for a 75-yard touchdown run with 7:11 left in the game to complete the scoring.

Kyle McCord replaced Stroud on the Buckeyes' next drive. He didn't attempt a pass and had a carry for 3 yards as the Buckeye ran off all but the final 53 seconds. His run was augmented by eight rushes for 31 yards by Dallan Hayden before Jesse Mirco's second punt. Wisconsin had two rushes from its 20 for 9 yards to end the game.

Stroud was 17 of 27 for 281 yards, five touchdowns and an interception. Egbuka made six catches for 118 yards, and Stover's four receptions gained 51 yards on a pleasant 66-degree evening.

The Buckeyes got 121 rushing yards on 21 carries from Henderson and another 101 and two scores by Williams on 11 rushes.

For the Badgers (2-2, 0-1), Allen ran for 165 yards. Mertz passed for 94 yards, finishing 11 of 20 with a touchdown and an interception.

Notes

Henderson and Williams became the first pair of Buckeyes to rush for more than 100 yards in the same game since Trey Sermon (112) and Justin Fields (104) against Michigan State in 2020. ... Ohio State had 539 total yards (281 passing, 258 rushing) and 28 first downs. The Badgers had 192 rushing yards and 104 passing for a total of 296. They had 11 first downs. ... OSU linebacker Tommy Eichenberg had a game-best 14 tackles, including seven solo and two tackles for loss. ... Ohio State was without injured starting cornerbacks Cam Brown and Denzel Burke and receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba. The Badgers have lost nine straight in the series, and their last win in Columbus was 24-13 in 2004.

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 52, Wisconsin 21

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on his offense's performance: "I thought the balance was solid. We're a no-huddle team and Wisconsin huddles a lot, so for us to control the time of possession the way we did – I think we were up 21 points at one point and we had a six- or seven-minute drive where we kicked a field goal, but it turned into a four-possession game and we ate up a lot of clock on that drive. I felt like that was a really good drive for us, even though over the years we expect to score touchdowns at a faster clip, but when you're in these types of games, you have to think that through."

Ohio State third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud on offensive balance: "I think it goes back to the offseason of dealing with Coach Mick (Marotti) of being very balanced, being able to run the ball and throw the ball. I think we were over like 250 (yards) in both aspects, so when you can do that, it's amazing. It makes my job easier as well. Last year we relied on (the) dropback pass so much and we did a great job at it, but now, this year, it just makes it more comfortable."

Wisconsin head coach Paul Chryst on Ohio State's success through the air: "Their rhythm – they were on. There were a couple times we got some pressure and (Stroud) actually made some good plays on it, but I think that they did a good job of getting the ball out and there was really not a ton of time for the rush to get there."

Day on when he argued a pass-interference call against freshman cornerback Jyaire Brown: "I obviously didn't like what I saw. I felt like that was a big play, but I also wanted Jyaire to know that I did have his back. If it was egregious, OK, move on, but I wanted to defend him in that moment. This is a young kid out there in a big stage for the first time, and I hope he felt like his head coach was backing him up in that moment."

Ohio State third-year running back Miyan Williams on staying in rhythm while splitting carries: "The key is, when you're not in, just get mental reps. That's what our coach is big on, mental reps. Just run the play from the sideline. You get in, you probably get the same play. You already

went through it in your head, so you won't miss a beat when you get in there."

Ohio State fourth-year tight end Cade Stover on the emotion after catching his first career touchdown: "A lot of things went into that. A lot of long nights went into something so small and so special like that for me. I'm just really happy to help the team in any way that I could."

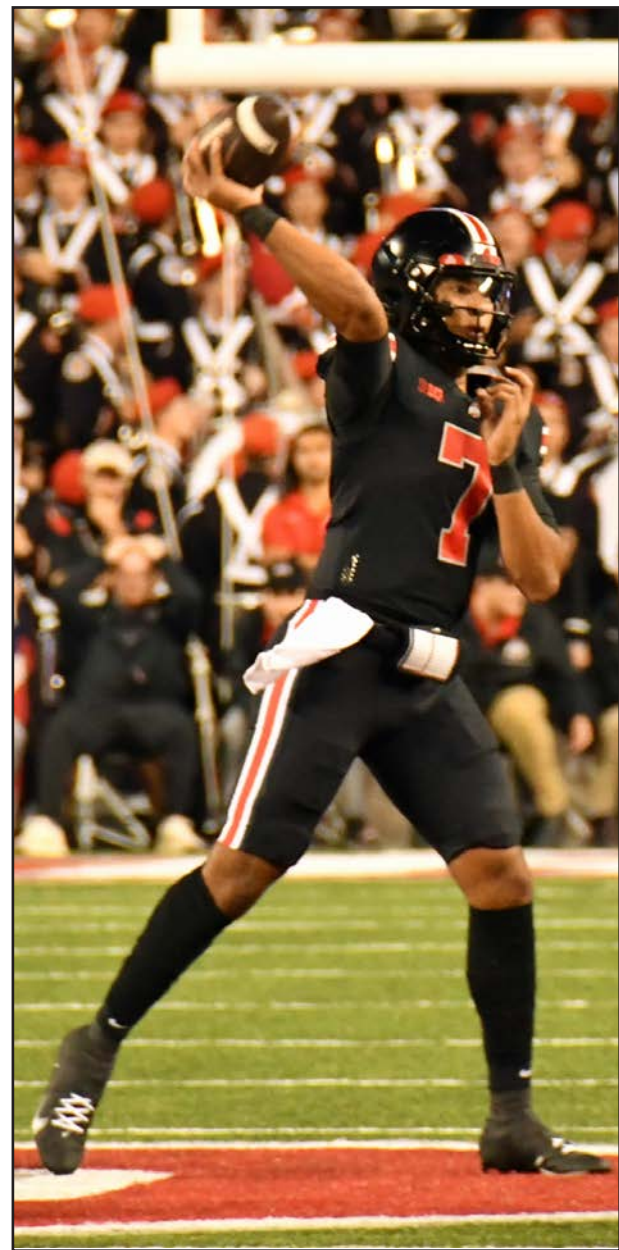
Ohio State graduate safety Tanner McCalister on the play of young cornerbacks Jyaire Brown and JK Johnson: "They stepped up big time. Obviously, when you've got Cam Brown and Denzel (Burke) down, going into preparation it's kind of scary a little bit just because those guys haven't played much. But they came in comfortable, willing to listen. I'm talking to them on the field and they're trying to get (advice)."

McCalister on his interception on Wisconsin's first drive of the game: "That was a tough play. Not to get into coverage details, but basically my job was to protect anything deep from hash to sideline. There were multiple guys running, so I'm trying to protect multiple guys, and I saw the throw late, speed turned, and luckily I got that ball out. But that was a tough play to make. I'm glad I was able to make it for sure."

Ohio State sophomore guard Donovan Jackson on establishing the run: "During the week of preparation we had to think about how tough we wanted to be. As an offensive line, you've got to be tough, you've got to be strong. So coming into the game, we knew we had some looks, we had some matchups that we could take advantage of. And so all five guys, or rather all 11 guys on the offense, were clicking on all cylinders in the run game."

Ohio State fourth-year linebacker Tommy Eichenberg on defending Wisconsin sophomore running back Braelon Allen: "We had a lot of missed tackles. But he runs hard. He's behind a great O-line, too. We did a great job. We were trying to get him down the first time. There's some times where it's third down and he's just a strong back."

Wisconsin defensive tackle Keanu



SONNY BROCKWAY

KEEP IT ROLLING — Against Wisconsin, third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud had his second consecutive game with five passing touchdowns. He finished 17 of 27 passing for 281 yards against the Badgers, with all of his completions going to just four receivers.

Benton on Ohio State's fast start: "I wouldn't say I'm shocked. We came out to fight, and that's what we were doing. It just so happened the score looked like it did. I wouldn't want to go to war with any other group of guys. This is my team and this is what we do, so we're going to have to keep fighting."

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 52, Wisconsin 21

Sept. 24, 2022 - Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
WISCONSIN	0	7	0	14	21
OHIO STATE	21	10	14	7	52

First Quarter

- OSU** – Williams, 2-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 12:13.
- OSU** – Stover, 13-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 8:54.
- OSU** – Stover, 2-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 3:55.

Second Quarter

- OSU** – Williams, 3-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 13:33.
- WIS** – Mertz, 1-yard rush (Van Zelst kick), 8:31.
- OSU** – Ruggles, 25-yard field goal, 2:20.

Third Quarter

- OSU** – Fleming, 12-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 9:35.
- OSU** – Egbuka, 8-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 2:22.

Fourth Quarter

- WIS** – Acker, 2-yard pass from Mertz (Van Zelst kick), 9:46.
- OSU** – Egbuka, 32-yard pass from McCord (Ruggles kick), 7:21.
- WIS** – Allen, 75-yard rush (Van Zelst kick), 7:11.
- Att.** – 105,473
- Weather** – Clear

Team Statistics		
	WIS	OSU
First Downs	11	28
Rushing	7	13
Passing	3	14
Penalty	1	1
Rushes-Yards	35-192	43-258
Passing Yards	104	281
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	12-21-1	17-27-1
Offensive Plays	56	70
Total Net Yards	296	539
Third Down Efficiency	6-13	7-11
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-1	1-1
Punts-Avg.	6-38.0	2-44.5
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties	5-57	3-27
Time of Possession	26:58	33:02

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – **WIS:** Allen 23-165; Mertz 5-15; Mellusi 4-13; Dike 1-4; Guerendo 2-(-5).
OSU: Henderson 21-121; M. Williams 11-101; Hayden 8-31; Rossi 1-3; McCord 1-(-3).
PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – **WIS:** Mertz 11-20-1-94-1; Allen 1-1-0-10-0. **OSU:** Stroud 17-27-1-281-5.
RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – **WIS:** Bell 4-55; Allen 3-6; Guerendo 1-19; Eschenbach 1-10; Dike 1-9; Cundiff 1-3; Acker 1-2. **OSU:** Egbuka 6-118; Fleming 4-67; Stover 4-51; Harrison Jr. 3-45.
PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – **WIS:** Vujnovich 6-38.0-57. **OSU:** Mirco 2-44.5-48.
PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **WIS:** None. **OSU:** Egbuka 1-10.
KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **WIS:** Guerendo 3-82. **OSU:** Trayanum 1-5.
FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – **WIS:** None. **OSU:** None.
INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – **WIS:** Torchio 1-0. **OSU:** McCalister 1-30.
SACKS – **WIS:** None. **OSU:** Sawyer 1-3.
TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – **WIS:** None. **OSU:** Eichenberg 2-6; Sawyer 1-3.
TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **WIS:** Njongmeta 4-5-9; Torchio 5-2-7; Latu 5-1-6; Benton 3-2-5; Shaw 2-3-5; Goetz 1-4-5; Chaney 2-2-4; Turner 2-2-4; Clark 1-3-4; Zachman 2-1-3; Herbig 2-1-3; R. Johnson 0-3-3; Dort Jr. 2-0-2; K. Johnson 2-0-2; Peterson 1-1-2; Thompson Jr. 0-2-2; Lewis 1-0-1; Paez 0-1-1; Mullens 0-1-1. **OSU:** Eichenberg 7-7-14; Proctor 5-1-6; Chambers 2-4-6; J. Johnson 3-1-4; McCalister 3-1-4; Hickman 0-3-3; Jean-Baptiste 2-0-2; Simon 0-2-2; Hall Jr. 0-2-2; Sawyer 1-0-1; Gaoteote IV 1-0-1; J. Brown 1-0-1; Tuimolouau 1-0-1; McKenzie 1-0-1; Curry 1-0-1; Stokes 1-0-1; Hicks 0-1-1; Ballard 0-1-1; Martinez 0-1-1; X. Johnson 0-1-1; Trayanum 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – **WIS:** B. Allen, Bell, Dike, Mertz, L. Brown, Bortolini, Beach, Tippmann, Wedig, Cundiff, Rucci, Shaw, Latu, Torchio, Herbig, Hallman, Dort Jr., Turner, Njongmeta, Benton, Goetz, Mullens, Mellusi, Lofy, Zachman, Peterson, Arnett, Guerendo, Clark, Van Dyke, Anderson, Meyers, Van Zelst, Schipper, Lewis, Bollers, Ashford, A. Williams, Acker, Chaney, Nowakowski, Vujnovich, Grass, M. Allen, Bowden, Dakovich, K. Johnson, Gengler, R. Johnson, Brunner, Engram, Rucci, Furtney, Franklin, Eschenbach, Anthony, A. Brown, Thompson Jr., Paez, McDonald. **OSU:** Harrison Jr., Egbuka, Henderson, Fleming, Wypler, M. Jones, Stroud, Jackson, Johnson Jr., D. Jones, Stover, Hickman, McCalister, J. Brown, Chambers, Sawyer, Eichenberg, J. Johnson, Proctor, Hall Jr., Vincent, Harrison, X. Johnson, Hicks, Martinez, K. Brown, Trayanum, K. Williams, Styles, Gaoteote IV, Dunn, Carrico, Mirco, M. Williams, Simon, Rossi, Powers, Stokes, Fielding, Robinson, Tuimolouau, Gurd, Hayden, Friday, Hamilton, McCord, Michalski, Vimahi, Tshabola, Fryar, James, Jean-Baptiste, Hart, Cage, Stocksdales, Scott Jr., Herbstreit, Ballard, McKenzie, T. Williams, Curry, Ruggles.

Season Statistics

2022 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Sept. 3	(2) NOTRE DAME (5)	W, 21-10	106,549
Sept. 10	(3) ARKANSAS STATE	W, 45-12	100,067
Sept. 17	(3) TOLEDO	W, 77-21	105,398
Sept. 24	(3) WISCONSIN	W, 52-21	105,473
Oct. 1	(3) RUTGERS	3:30 p.m.	
Oct. 8	at Michigan State	TBA	
Oct. 22	IOWA	TBA	
Oct. 29	at Penn State (11)	TBA	
Nov. 5	at Northwestern	TBA	
Nov. 12	INDIANA	TBA	
Nov. 19	at Maryland	TBA	
Nov. 26	MICHIGAN (4)	Noon	
Dec. 3	Big Ten Cha4pionship	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	106	51
Rushing	41	20
Passing	57	25
Penalty	8	6
Average Per Game/Rush	219.8	111.3
Average Per Game/Pass	339.0	171.8
Total Offense	2235	1132
Total Plays	271	236
Average Per Game	558.8	283.0
Average Per Play	8.2	4.8
Penalties-Yards	20-192	20-204
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	3-1
Third Down Efficiency	30-48	18-59
Percentage	63%	31%
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-2	2-6
Percentage	100%	33%
Sacks-Yards	9-54	2-7
Time Of Possession Avg.	30:55	29:05

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	70	34	56	35	0	195	48.8	
Opponents	13	27	10	14	0	64	14.0	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
T. Henderson	50	318	6.4	3	41
Miyan Williams	43	308	7.2	3	25
Dallan Hayden	29	152	5.2	1	45
C.J. Stroud	7	9	1.3	0	5
TC Caffey	6	57	9.5	1	49
Mitch Rossi	2	4	2.0	1	3
Emeka Egbuka	2	30	15.0	1	27
Cayden Saunders	2	6	3.0	0	5
Kyle McCord	1	3	3.0	0	3
Devin Brown	1	1	1.0	0	1
OSU Totals	148	915	5.9	10	49
OPP Totals	132	542	3.4	4	75

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
C.J. Stroud	79	112	70.5	1222	16-1 305.5
Kyle McCord	8	11	72.7	134	1-0 44.7
OSU Totals	87	123	70.7	1356	17-1 339.0
OPP Totals	59	104	56.7	687	3-2 171.8

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	26	442	17.0	5	51
Marvin Harrison Jr.	21	387	18.4	5	45
Cade Stover	12	188	15.7	2	38
Julian Fleming	7	90	12.9	3	31
Jayden Ballard	6	127	21.2	1	72
Xavier Johnson	5	48	9.6	1	24
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	4	36	8.0	0	21
Miyan Williams	3	23	7.7	0	12
Dallan Hayden	2	13	6.5	0	10
Kyion Grayes	1	2	2.0	0	2
OSU Totals	87	1356	15.6	17	72
OPP Totals	59	687	11.6	3	58

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Emeka Egbuka	6	-	-	-	-	36
Marvin Harrison Jr.	5	-	-	-	-	30
Noah Ruggles	-	27-27	-	-	2-3	30
T. Henderson	3	-	-	-	-	18
Julian Fleming	3	-	-	-	-	18
Miyan Williams	3	-	-	-	-	18
Cade Stover	2	-	-	-	-	12
Dallan Hayden	1	-	-	-	-	6
TC Caffey	1	-	-	-	-	6
Mitch Rossi	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jayden Ballard	1	-	-	-	-	6
Xavier Johnson	1	-	-	-	-	6

OSU Totals	27	27-27	-	-	2-3	195
OPP Totals	7	7-7	0-0	0-0	5-5	64

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Noah Ruggles	2-2	0-1	0-0	0-0	2-3
OSU Totals	2-2	0-1	0-0	0-0	2-3
OPP Totals	1-1	3-3	1-1	0-0	5-5

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	13	570	43.8	0	52
OSU Totals	13	570	43.8	0	52
OPP Totals	27	1213	44.9	0	75

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Tanner McCalister	1	30	30.0	0	30
Ronnie Hickman	1	8	8.0	0	8
OSU Totals	2	38	19.0	0	30
OPP Totals	1	0	0	0	0

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	4	37	9.3	0	13
Jayden Ballard	1	14	14.0	0	14
JK Johnson	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	6	51	8.5	0	14
OPP Totals	0	0	0	0	0

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Chip Trayanum	2	22	11.0	0	17
Emeka Egbuka	1	25	25.0	0	25
OSU Totals	3	47	15.7	0	25
OPP Totals	9	192	21.3	0	38

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
T. Eichenberg	20	13	33	5.0-15	2.0-8
Steele Chambers	10	9	19	2.0-10	1.0-7
Lathan Ransom	10	7	17	1.0-3	0-0
Cody Simon	6	8	14	2.0-2	0-0
Ronnie Hickman	4	8	12	0-0	0-0
Cameron Martinez	6	3	9	0-0	0-0
Mike Hall Jr.	6	3	9	5.0-26	2.0-19
Josh Proctor	8	1	9	0-0	0-0
Jack Sawyer	4	4	8	3.5-10	2.0-7
JK Johnson	7	1	8	0-0	0-0
J. Jean-Baptiste	5	2	7	2.0-13	2.0-13
Caden Curry	6	1	7	1.0-6	0-0
Tanner McCalister	5	1	6	0-0	0-0
Cameron Brown	4	1	5	0-0	0-0
Denzel Burke	3	2	5	1.0-1	0-0
Tyleik Williams	3	2	5	1.5-5	0-0
J.T. Tuimolouau	4	1	5	3.0-7	0-0
Zach Harrison	3	2	5	0-0	0-0
Palaie Gaoteote IV	3	1	4	0-0	0-0
Jaden McKenzie	2	2	4	1.0-1	0-0
Chip Trayanum	3	1	4	0-0	0-0
Taron Vincent	1	2	3	0-0	0-0
Sonny Styles	2	1	3	1.0-2	0-0
Kye Stokes	3	-	3	0-0	0-0
Xavier Johnson	1	2	3	0-0	0-0
Tyler Friday	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Ty Hamilton	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Kenyatta Jackson	2	-	2	1.0-1	0-0
OSU Totals	136	84	220	30.0-102	9.0-54
OPP Totals	142	120	1262	10.0-28	2.0-7
Fumbles Forced:	Jean-Baptiste.				
Fumbles Recovered:	Gaoteote IV.				

Fleming Exemplifies 'Iron Buckeye' In Return

By JACK EMERSON

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Julian Fleming's journey since arriving at Ohio State has not gone according to plan.

The third-year wide receiver has spent much of his college career nursing injuries and battling to find the field amid an overwhelmingly competitive wide receivers room. In moments of health, Fleming has flashed his five-star potential but has been unable to remain consistently active due to a nagging shoulder injury – and recently, a new undisclosed ailment.

After missing the first two games of the 2022 season, Fleming had an unforgettable outing against in-state foe Toledo. Although he played in limited snaps, he still hauled in all of his three targets for 23 yards and two touchdowns. He followed up his game against the Rockets with four receptions for 67 yards and a score vs. conference rival Wisconsin on Sept. 24.

Although he followed a winding path to get to those moments, he emphasized that he wouldn't have traded that journey for anything.

"I don't think it's the restart of my career," Fleming said following Ohio State's 77-21 win over Toledo. "It's a building block. I've been through a lot of adversity. I've been through a lot of things that a lot of people haven't been, a lot of things that I didn't expect to go through. Without those things, I wouldn't be in the position I am right now. I wouldn't be the player I am right now."

"I just think those past two years, they're years to build on, they're years to add on and years to look back on. I kind of look back on what built me into what I am right now."

Prior to his scoring outburst against the Rockets, Fleming had accounted for just one touchdown during his first two seasons with the Buckeyes.

Joining the program as a consensus five-star prospect and the No. 3 overall player in the 2020 class, according to 247Sports' composite score, Fleming carried plenty of hype into his freshman season as a Buckeye. However, it was a freshman year that no one could have possibly imagined.

As COVID-19 continued to sweep across the nation, the Ohio State football season was ultimately impacted by the pandemic. Big Ten commissioner Kevin Warren opted to push the beginning of the season back until late October, while COVID issues persisted on several teams, including Ohio State.

The Buckeyes played in just five regular-season games, greatly impacting the number of snaps Fleming would receive as a freshman. Fleming appeared in each of Ohio State's five regular-season games in 2020, amassing three receptions for 21 yards. It wasn't until the Big Ten Championship Game that Fleming would truly get his moment to shine.

With Chris Olave and Jaxon Smith-Njigba sidelined, Fleming stepped into a much larger role for the Buckeyes but did not flinch. The Catawissa, Pa., native led the Buckeyes with 53 receiving yards on four catches.

But Fleming played the majority of his freshman season with a shoulder brace that limited his upper-body mobility. His shoulder has long since plagued him, as he noted



SONNY BROCKWAY

ON A ROLL — Since returning from injury, third-year wide receiver Julian Fleming has hauled in seven receptions for 90 yards and three touchdowns, already surpassing his previous single-season high of 86 receiving yards last season in just two games played.

that issues began in eighth grade and he battled them during his entire high school career. Entering his sophomore season, Fleming made the declaration that he had returned to full health.

"(My body) is allowing me to do a lot of things, like even lifting my shoulder over my head, which obviously wasn't available before because I was kind of restricted with the brace," Fleming said before the 2021 season. "I'm just excited to be fully healthy and to showcase my skill set."

However, Fleming's second season was, once again, impacted by uncontrollable factors. He appeared in Ohio State's first three games against Minnesota, Oregon and Tulsa, but his injured shoulder reared its ugly head again, forcing him to miss the next five games. Upon his return, Fleming produced modestly in a reserve role until the Rose Bowl.

Similar to the Big Ten Championship Game in 2020, Fleming was thrust into a much larger role against Utah in last season's finale. With Olave and Garrett Wilson deciding not to play in the game to protect their health for the NFL draft, Fleming was elevated up the depth chart. He did not disappoint against the Utes, snagging a career-high five receptions for 35 yards, though his contributions were overshadowed by the record-breaking performances of Marvin Harrison Jr. and Smith-Njigba.

Fleming finished the season with 12 catches for 86 yards and a touchdown, and with Olave and Wilson heading to the NFL, it was finally Fleming's time to be a primary producer for the Ohio State passing attack entering this season. Slotting in alongside Smith-Njigba and sophomores Harrison and Emeka Egbuka, Fleming entered the spring with rejuvenated optimism.

"This is my actual, first real spring ball, especially coming through everything," Fleming said on March 10. "It's been a

steady grind. I've changed a lot of my habits inside and outside of the Woody (Hayes Athletic Center), just trying to constantly make sure my body is right and maintain and avoid those little injuries that I've had. It's been good though. I feel better than I ever have."

Now back to reasonable health, Fleming hit the ground running during the offseason. Head coach Ryan Day noted that Fleming had "his best offseason to this point" in his Ohio State career, while Fleming was honored with the "Iron Buckeye" distinction, granted to a few players for going above and beyond with their summer training.

Day added that Fleming was Ohio State's most improved player entering fall camp, and at Big Ten Media Days in July, Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud expressed excitement for the fans and media to see the strides Fleming had made over the offseason.

"Trust me, you're going to see it," Stroud said. "At the end of the day, everybody has their own path. Julian would tell you that too. I know it's probably not what he wanted, but that's what God called his path to be. He's probably learned more."

"Julian has definitely been through it, with injuries and different things and sitting behind Chris (Olave). But he's learned so

much. This is the most motivated and most mature I've ever seen Julian in my life. It's just so good to see a brother, not even just turn it up on the football field, but as a human and as a man."

The offseason was a time for Fleming to rework his process both on and off of the field. He noted that he took strides in terms of his maturity and buy-in to the program during the summer months.

While Fleming placed attention on strengthening his mind prior to his third season with the Buckeyes, he also emphasized that he's blocked out the noise surrounding his return to action.

"I like to cut out expectations, to be honest with you," Fleming said in August. "I really dwelled on expectations for the past two years, and sometimes your expectations, I don't want to say get you killed, but sometimes your work ethic doesn't meet your expectations. Mine didn't at that time, so right now my work ethic is matching my expectations."

But Fleming's relative health through the offseason proved to be fleeting. Before Ohio State's season opener against then-No. 5 Notre Dame, Fleming was listed as a game-time decision on the Buckeyes' status report. Although he went through pregame workouts with the objective of playing in the marquee matchup, he was held out of action, and the process repeated against Arkansas State.

Fleming revealed after the Toledo game that his new injury was unrelated to his shoulder issues.

"It really ripped me apart a little bit at first," Fleming said. "But just being able to talk to some of my teammates, thinking about some of my teammates that have been through so many things and have been able to come back, kind of kept me in a positive headspace. Just to think that there's so many other things in the world that could really be happening, I'm complaining about a little tweak. So I just had to take it on the chest and come in with a positive attitude."

Day noted that despite the twists and turns, Fleming's work ethic and attitude throughout the offseason paid off in a big way.

"He's had a few nagging injuries here and there," Day said. "He's really made great progress, earned the 'Iron Buckeye' and had a ton of momentum and then he had this little tweak. The easiest thing to do is get really frustrated. He didn't do that. He stayed positive, took care of his business, did a great job in rehab and then to go see him make some plays (against Toledo) and be rewarded for that was great."

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Safety Ransom An Unlikely Star After Injury

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Not many defenders in college football can stop Notre Dame tight end Michael Mayer from falling forward.

But as the 265-pound pass catcher reeled in a throw 5 yards downfield on a third-and-7 in the first quarter against Ohio State on Sept. 3, that's the exact task that 205-pound Lathan Ransom faced.

The third-year OSU safety drove his shoulder straight into Mayer's stomach and drove him backward, holding him a yard short of a first down and forcing a Fighting Irish punt. The Buckeyes scored a touchdown the following drive.

"My dad has instilled in me since I was younger, be fearless," Ransom said. "No matter how big they are, whenever I go to hit, I'm being fearless, full speed. You get there before he gets going, you should win most of those."

Originally thought to be a depth piece for Ohio State, Ransom has worked his way back from a serious injury in the Rose Bowl to become a sweeping, physical force from the boundary safety or "bandit" position for his team.

"We've been bullish on Lathan from the time he first showed up in practice, because he was hurt," said Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles. "He just gets better every week. He can now play multiple positions. He's just helping the defense more and more as he continues to learn, but I love the way he plays."

Last season for Ransom ended on a medical cart, when the former four-star prospect fractured his left leg during Ohio State's 48-45 Rose Bowl win over Utah.

"That's definitely the most traumatizing and worst thing that's ever happened to me," Ransom said. "I knew it was broken immediately. I looked down and saw it broke. Everyone's thinking the worst at the moment, and I definitely was."

It was especially disappointing considering Ransom's strong performance leading up



SONNY BROCKWAY

BIDING HIS TIME — After recovering from a broken leg suffered in the Rose Bowl back in January, third-year safety Lathan Ransom (rear) is not only back on the field for the Buckeyes, but has been an important part of defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' defense at the "Bandit" position.

to the Rose Bowl. Against Purdue, Michigan State and Michigan — Ohio State's final regular-season contests — he totaled 13 tackles (one for loss) and two pass breakups, and he looked ready to become a significant part of Ohio State's defense.

Following the injury, though, a long rehab process awaited. His return for even fall camp was questionable, and it seemed like a guaranteed detour on Ransom's path to realizing his full potential.

It generated impatience.

"The toughest thing for me was I wanted to be back," Ransom said. "I wanted to be back. I wanted to move. I wanted to run. I had to understand, I had to be happy with the little wins."

Through his rehab, though, Ransom took whatever steps possible to ensure he'd be an even better player upon his return.

"I understood that I couldn't practice in the spring, so I tried to sharpen different parts of my game," Ransom said. "Watching the film, understanding the defense, having a grasp of all the different positions when things are moving, that's definitely helped me improve my game a lot."

Soon, his teammates and coaches were noticing the progress in preseason practices.

"I feel like a lot of people have maybe forgotten about him," fourth-year safety Ronnie Hickman said in August. "Lathan's had one of the best camps I've seen since I've been in this program. He came back and fought back

from his injury. He's been balling out now."

Ransom wasn't initially listed as a starter for the contest against Notre Dame, but a missed tackle from fifth-year safety Josh Proctor placed Ransom in the game, and after his stop of Mayer, Ohio State's coaching staff left Ransom in based on his production.

"We have a lot of good players," Knowles said. "Lathan seemed hot. That's kind of how I do it. We like to have guys game-ready. We felt he was game-ready. When a guy is game-ready and he gets a shot, he gets in there, then you just start playing the hot hand."

His stonewalling of Mayer wasn't the only third-down stop Ransom posted against the Fighting Irish.

With 23 seconds remaining in the first half on a third-and-9, Notre Dame handed the ball to junior running back Chris Tyree. Tyree split a group of converging defenders, leaving Ransom the only thing standing between the ball carrier and a huge gain, perhaps even a touchdown, and Ransom swept up Tyree by the legs to set up a fourth-and-4.

In all, the Tucson, Ariz., native collected seven tackles in the Buckeyes' season opener, six of them solo, good for second on the team.

"It didn't surprise me," Ohio State safeties coach Perry Eliano said. "Lathan's had a great fall camp, he practices well, he loves what he does, he prepares well. So what you saw (against Notre Dame) did not surprise me."

Ohio State's win over Toledo, in which Ransom got the start in place of the held-out Proctor, served as further evidence to Ransom's capabilities as he posted a team-high six tackles against the Rockets. Having such a safety with the strength to play in the box and collect tackles will be a needed chess piece come Big Ten play, Knowles said.

"When you have safeties who can cover and attack the line of scrimmage," he said, "it just makes your defense better."

Proctor earned the start against Wisconsin, indicating he has earned the starting role moving forward, but Ransom — who did not appear in Ohio State's win over Wisconsin — isn't concerning himself with the picture of his playing time right now, however. He'll simply stay ready for whenever and wherever he lines up.

"If I took too much time thinking about who's going to start, who's not going to start, this and that, then that doesn't matter," Ransom said. "I just know whenever I go in, whatever part of the game, whatever time, just make the best plays I can make and do what's best for the team."

Regardless, Ransom's skill set is one that Ohio State's defense plans to continue utilizing.

"We saw that in him all camp," Knowles said. "I like to say he's one of those guys that can see the forest through the trees, and then he's able to read the play and react with speed. When you have a safety who can do that, it fixes a lot of problems. What you guys don't see, all the shifts, the motions or the pulls, when you play in this system as a safety, you're the guy that's fitting that."

"I think it's just really worked out well with Lathan and because that's his talent. I mean, his talent is seeing a play, diagnosing and reacting. He's not afraid to get after it and take the shot, and that's a big deal."

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Archie Legend Began With Fumble, Or Did It?

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Fifty years ago this month, an Ohio State football legend began.

On Sept. 30, 1972, during a nonconference win against North Carolina, freshman running back Archie Griffin broke the program's single-game rushing record, lighting the torch on an illustrious career that would eventually include three All-America first-team honors, a Football Bowl Subdivision record streak of 100-yard rushing performances, and the prestige of becoming college football's first and still only two-time winner of the Heisman Trophy.

By the time Griffin played his final game for the Buckeyes in the 1976 Rose Bowl, he had amassed a host of records, several of which have never been broken. His 5,589 career rushing yards remain the program standard as do his 924 carries, career average of 121.5 yards per game, and 31 consecutive games with at least 100 yards rushing. That last mark also remains an NCAA record at the FBS (Division I-A) level.

There was little to hint what kind of career lay ahead for Griffin before his breakout game in 1972 against North Carolina. Listed at a generous 5-10 and 185 pounds, the diminutive freshman from Eastmoor High School on the east side of Columbus not only wasn't in the starting lineup for the contest against the Tar Heels, but he was listed as a third-teamer at right halfback.

But when the Buckeyes went three-and-out on their first two offensive possessions, the second of which ended in a blocked punt that North Carolina turned into a touchdown and an early 7-0 lead, OSU head coach Woody Hayes decided his team needed some kind of kick in the pants. He inserted Griffin into the game to begin his team's third series, and the rest is history.

The 18-year-old freshman, who just three days before had attended his first class at Ohio State, took a pitch from quarterback Greg Hare and sprinted around left end for a gain of 6 yards. It was the first carry of an afternoon during which Griffin finished with 239 yards and a touchdown on 27 carries while leading the Buckeyes to a 29-14 victory in front of 86,180 screaming fans at Ohio Stadium.

It was a performance that broke the OSU single-game rushing record of 229 yards, set by Ollie Cline against Pittsburgh in 1945, and laid the foundation on which to build legendary status. That was especially so in light of the fact Griffin had fumbled away the first carry of his college career during the Buckeyes' season opener two weeks earlier.

Or did he?

Ohio State began the 1972 season against Big Ten opponent Iowa, a team on its way to a 3-7-1 record under second-year head coach Frank Lauterbur. Meanwhile, the Buckeyes were eager to distance themselves from an uncharacteristic third-place finish in the conference standings in 1971 and featured a roster that included such future All-Americans as offensive tackle John Hicks, defensive tackle Pete Cusick, linebacker Randy Gradishar, defensive end Van Ness DeCree and cornerback Neal Colzie.

The offensive backfield also featured a

deep talent pool with the likes of senior Rick Galbos and juniors Morris Bradshaw and Elmer Lippert at the halfback positions and such bulldogs as junior Randy Keith and sophomore Harold "Champ" Henson at fullback. Griffin was relegated to somewhere near the bottom of the depth chart at halfback.

"I didn't know if I was going to play at all that season," Griffin said. "I was on the scout team, and I did pretty well during our first scrimmages, but I had no idea of where I stood as far as playing in an actual game. When the varsity went to the hotel before that first game against Iowa, we stayed in the dorm. So that first game, I never thought I would play."

With Keith and Henson combining for 160 yards and three touchdowns, the Buckeyes were cruising toward a 21-0 win when Hayes decided to empty his bench in the fourth quarter. With the clock winding under the three-minute mark, Griffin heard his name called, grabbed his helmet and sprinted onto the Ohio Stadium field for the first time.

"I was really excited, knowing this was my shot to show them what I could do," he remembered. "I was thinking about breaking a long run and scoring a touchdown. They called a sweep to the right side, and I began wondering if the holes would be there for me the way they had been all day. Then, as the play developed, I was shocked because there was this gaping hole in front of me. But in my shock, I did something fundamentally wrong. I kept my eyes on that big hole and never looked back at the football."

Backup quarterback Dave Purdy, a sophomore who had led the Ohio State freshman team to an undefeated season in 1971, was almost in disbelief when he got the play call from the sideline.

The play – remembered as "18 sweep" by Griffin and "28 sweep" by Purdy – was nothing but a simple option with the quarterback attempting to draw the Iowa defense to him before pitching out to the halfback on the perimeter.

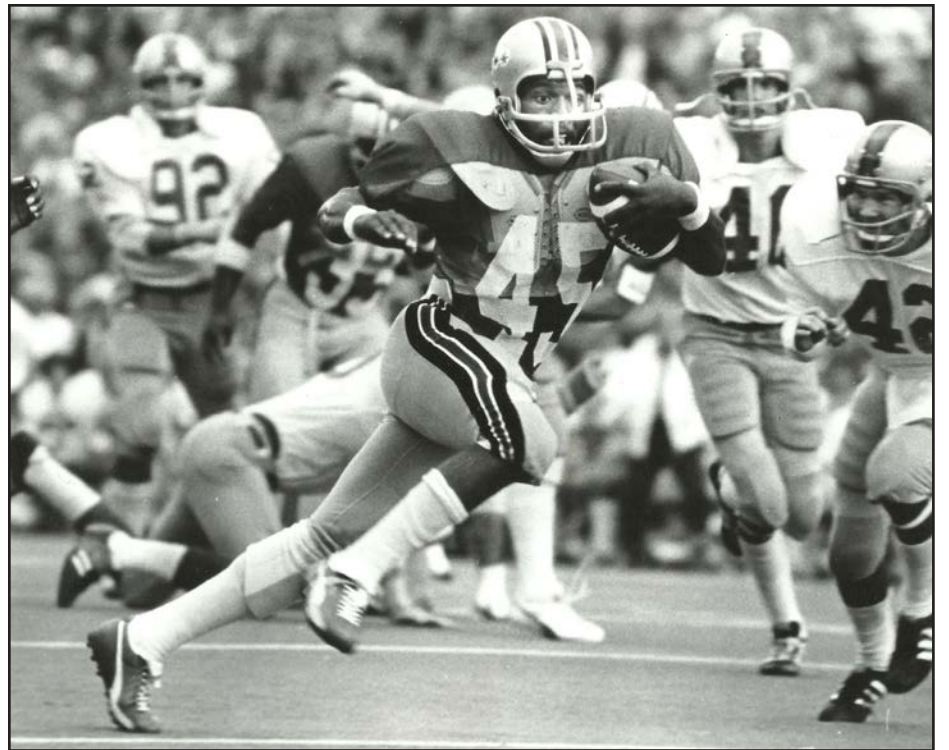
"I'm wondering why in the world Woody would call that particular play," Purdy told BSB. "It was the same play we ran during a scrimmage, and I got my nose broken by Van DeCree. I didn't mind running the ball, but I always preferred to throw it. Let's just say that sweep wasn't my favorite play in the playbook."

Purdy took the snap, rolled to his right, and as an Iowa defender attempted to take his legs out from under him, the Ohio State quarterback pitched to Griffin. The pitch was slightly low and a little behind the running back but still catchable.

"It hit me right in the hands and bounced off," Griffin said. "Just like that, I had fumbled on my first play. And that was it for me for that day. I got taken out and didn't get another carry. I really felt like I'd had my chance and I blew it."

That was the beginning of the Archie Griffin legend – from fumbling on his first career carry to two-time Heisman winner. It's a story Griffin himself has told countless times over the past 50 years. Except that the fumble was officially credited to Purdy, something the quarterback never realized.

"Really? I guess I didn't know that," he said when told by BSB. "I don't think I've ever seen film of the actual play, but I've always maintained the pitch wasn't perfect. But the fumble



FILE PHOTO

ONE FOR THE BOOKS — Legendary running back Archie Griffin's first carry for Ohio State in 1972 is remembered by most as a fumble, but in the game's recorded history, it was marked down as a fumble by quarterback Dave Purdy.

was credited to me, huh? I never knew that."

As the ball bounced away from Griffin and onto the spongy Ohio Stadium artificial turf, it squirted away from a pair of scrambling Iowa defenders before Purdy managed to smother it at his own 24-yard line. The result of the play was a 5-yard loss, with the fumble and lost yardage officially credited to Purdy, not Griffin.

Purdy went on to earn three varsity letters as a backup quarterback at Ohio State, threw for a couple of touchdowns during his career and won three Big Ten championship rings. He was also a member of the 1973 team that

rolled to a 42-21 win against USC in the Rose Bowl. He later spent more than 30 years as an Ohio State football analyst for WTVN Radio in Columbus and recently retired after 45 years as owner of an eponymous landscaping business.

As for being charged with a fumble in a game so long ago? A half-century after the fact, Purdy took the news good-naturedly.

"Well, sometimes you have to take the bad with the good," he said with a laugh. "And with Archie and those teams, we had an awful lot of good."

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Crowds Dip, Then Grow In Stadium's 2nd Decade

Throughout the 2022 football season, *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* is publishing stories commemorating the 100th anniversary of Ohio Stadium. This week, BSB looks at memorable games through the second decade (1932-41) at the Horseshoe.

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

As Ohio Stadium entered its second decade of existence, university officials were still waiting for the Horseshoe to be filled to its 66,210-seat capacity on a regular basis. But the seemingly never-ending financial disaster of the Great Depression negated any extra income the public might have spent on attending a football game, and the average attendance hovered around 32,000.

Nevertheless, the stadium hosted five games each season throughout its second decade – somewhat remarkable in that Ohio State played eight-game schedules in those days. Other programs typically divided their schedules evenly between home and away games, but since the Buckeyes had a larger stadium than most, opposing schools didn't seem to mind traveling to Columbus for the possibility of a greater share of the gate receipts than they could get at home.

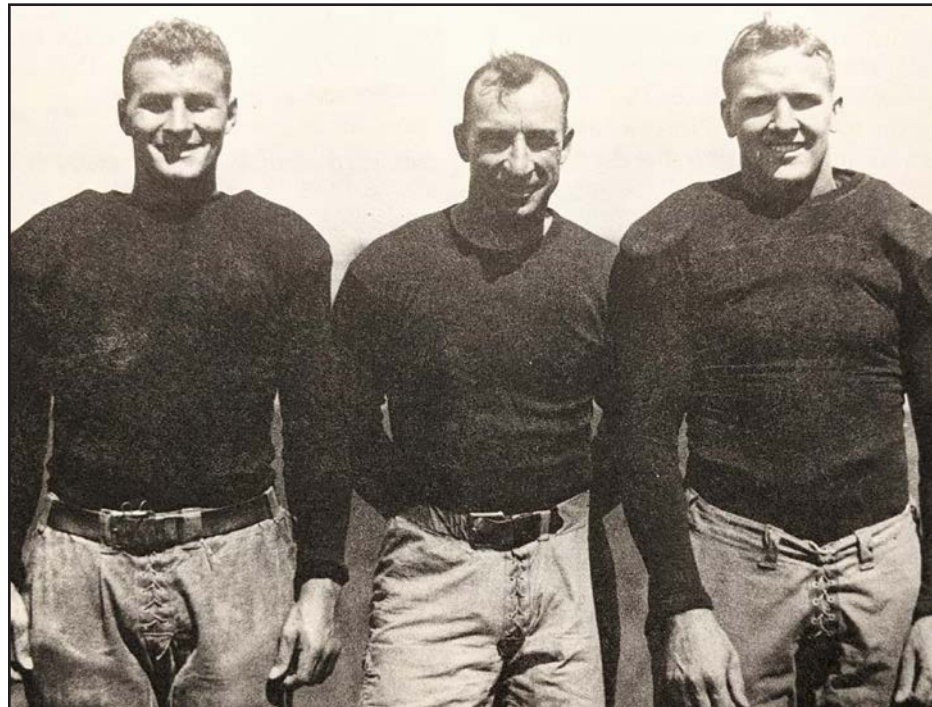
The stadium hosted 50 games during the period between 1932 and 1941, including games against such marquee nonconference opponents as Vanderbilt, Colgate, Pittsburgh, Cornell, USC and Notre Dame.

The Buckeyes posted a 37-11-2 home record during that 10-year period, including 14 wins in a row at one point, and won a pair of Big Ten championships.

But the history of the second decade of Ohio Stadium is more about the tragic case of two coaches than about the facility itself. It's the story of two men – one a program insider, the other most definitely an outsider – who poured their blood, sweat and tears into the university's football program only to be jilted by a fickle fan base and a waffling board of trustees and eventually forced out as bitter and broken souls.

Sam Willaman and Francis Schmidt couldn't have possessed more disparate personalities, both in their everyday lives and their coaching philosophies. While the low-key Willaman preferred the old-fashioned power game, the excitable Schmidt was a shoot-from-the-hip innovator willing to try almost anything to get an edge on the opponent. Still, each shared the commonality of seeking success as head coach of the Buckeyes.

Willaman was an Ohio State graduate who had played a starring role at a variety of positions for three different head coaches from 1911-13. He had a brief pro career with the Akron Indians and Canton Bulldogs, where he was backup halfback to the legendary Jim Thorpe, and then went into coaching. Following a seven-year stint as head coach at East Technical High School in Cleveland, Willaman took over at Iowa State



FILE PHOTO

PLAYER TO COACH — Sam Willaman (center) played at Ohio State from 1911-13 before coaching the Buckeyes from 1929-33. He is pictured alongside All-Americans Sid Gillman (left) and Joe Gailus (right).

in 1922 and spent four seasons with the Cyclones, compiling a 14-15-3 record.

At the same time, Dr. John W. Wilce was in the middle of a 16-year tenure as head coach at Ohio State, an era during which he oversaw the transformation of the Buckeyes from small-time regional program to fledgling national power. During the first season of the Wilce era, Ohio State joined the Western Conference and soon after captured three league championships over a five-year span.

But Wilce had grown increasingly disillusioned with big-time football as it began to emphasize winning over academics, and he started making plans for his retirement from the game. He asked Willaman, who had played for Wilce as a senior during the 1913

season, if he would like to become an assistant at Ohio State and then take over the program as head coach when Wilce stepped down. It was an offer Willaman, then just 35, could not refuse.

With Willaman on staff beginning in 1926, the Buckeyes finished with a 7-1 record, their best showing in six years. The only loss that season came Nov. 13 and was a 17-16 defeat at home against Michigan, a game that drew a new Ohio Stadium-record crowd of 90,411.

Two years later, on Oct. 20, 1928, in front of a crowd of 72,439, the Buckeyes got their revenge with a 19-7 win against the Wolverines, marking the first win over their archrivals in the new stadium. Two weeks later, a season-high 72,496 looked on

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100 YEARS OF OHIO STADIUM

as Ohio State played a powerful Princeton team to a 6-6 tie.

However, just two weeks later, following a 14-7 road loss at Iowa, only 10,029 showed up to watch a 39-0 rout of Muskingum College at the final home game of the 1928 season. It was the smallest crowd for a game at Ohio Stadium until the COVID-19 pandemic prevented fans from attending games during the 2020 season.

It was also an ignominious final home game for Wilce, who officially resigned after the season.

Willaman was eager to overhaul the program and install his own system, and the 1929 season began with home victories against Wittenberg and Iowa and then a 7-0 win at Michigan. But the successful start fizzled, and the Buckeyes stumbled to a 4-3-1 record and a tie for fifth place in the conference standings.

The following season threatened to go the same way. Despite star end Wesley Fesler on his way to a third straight first-team All-America honor, the Buckeyes were just 2-2-1 before winning each of their final three games to salvage the season. The program continued to make incremental improvements over the next two seasons and seemed poised to make a run at the conference championship in 1933.

That season began with a 75-0 blowout of Virginia, the most points scored by the Buckeyes in the Horseshoe to that time, and followed with a 20-0 shutout of a solid Vanderbilt team. But in week three, OSU went to Ann Arbor and fell flat, losing a 13-0 decision to the Wolverines. It was to be the only loss in 1933, but it was the third loss



FILE PHOTO

INNOVATIVE MINDSET — Following Sam Willaman's resignation, Francis Schmidt (right) took over the Ohio State football program with the intent of playing an innovative brand of football to keep the Buckeyes' opponents on their toes. Schmidt coached Ohio State from 1934 through 1940 and amassed a record of 39-16-1.

in five tries for Willaman against archrival Michigan.

The Dunkel College Football Index, one of a myriad of sources bestowing national titles in those days, named the Ohio State team as the best in the country in 1933. But that was of little solace to the members of Buckeye Nation, who had grown weary of the lack of conference championships under Willaman despite the talents of such All-Americans as Fesler, halfback Lew

Hinchman and lineman Joe Gailus as well as quarterback Carl Cramer, tackle Ted Rosequist and end Sid Gillman.

OSU's student newspaper, The Lantern, published an editorial in December 1933 calling for a new coach, and there was similar discontent among influential alumni and booster groups. Willaman appeared to have the continued backing of university officials — publicly at least. Behind the scenes, however, well-heeled boosters had begun

exerting pressure on Ohio State president George W. Rightmire, calling for a coaching change, and athletic director Lynn St. John privately expressed concern that the average home attendance for the 1933 season had dipped to 27,813.

Meanwhile, Willaman's stomach literally churned. He had developed intestinal problems during his last few years as head coach of the Buckeyes — no doubt due to the stress of the position — and the problem had turned chronic. No longer did popping antacid tablets alleviate the pain, and the coach was briefly hospitalized on at least two occasions.

Just before the OSU athletic board was scheduled to meet in late January 1934, Willaman announced his resignation after five seasons as Ohio State head coach with a record of 26-10-4. Those close to the coach said he was not only at peace with the decision, but that he appeared to be happy for the first time in recent memory.

As a replacement, Ohio State went about as far afield (both in personality and coaching philosophy) from Willaman as the school could get.

Relentless Pursuit Of Success

Equal parts innovator, absent-minded professor and paranoid monomaniac, Schmidt was one of the most unusual personalities in the history of the Ohio State football program.

Schmidt earned a law degree but never practiced law. He dressed like a captain of industry, yet peppered his speech with enough

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Schmidt Finds Early Success Vs. Michigan

Continued From Page 21

profanity to make a longshoreman blush. He laughed and partied with his players and was apt to be seen strumming his banjo in a fraternity house late on a Saturday night. Still, the man who coached the Buckeyes for seven seasons from 1934 through 1940 was so consumed with a relentless pursuit of success that it often hamstrung his ability to attain it.

He won a varsity letter at Nebraska during the only season he played college football and then fully intended to pursue a career as an attorney. But he changed course and went into coaching, first at a tiny high school in his native Kansas and later as an assistant at Henry Kendall College (now the University of Tulsa). He left to join the U.S. Army during World War I, quickly rising to the rank of captain, and then after the war, he returned to Kendall as head coach and won a pair of conference championships in three seasons.

Schmidt parlayed that success into the head coaching job at Arkansas, and after seven seasons there, he moved on to TCU, where he compiled a 46-6-5 record and won two Southwest Conference championships in five seasons.

That caught the attention of Ohio State officials, who were looking for a change from Willaman's orthodox philosophy to something new and exciting. Schmidt was all that and more, rolling into Columbus armed with a distinctive Southern drawl and the swagger to match a three-year contract worth \$7,500 per year.

The day the coach was formally hired by the university, he sat through a battery of questions from Columbus newspapermen until the inevitable was asked.

"Michigan is pretty tough," a reporter offered. "How concerned are you about them?"

"How concerned should I be?" Schmidt replied slowly, flashing a wry smile. "Don't forget they put their trousers on one leg at a time just the same as anyone else."

'Script Ohio' Formation Makes Stadium Debut During '36 Season

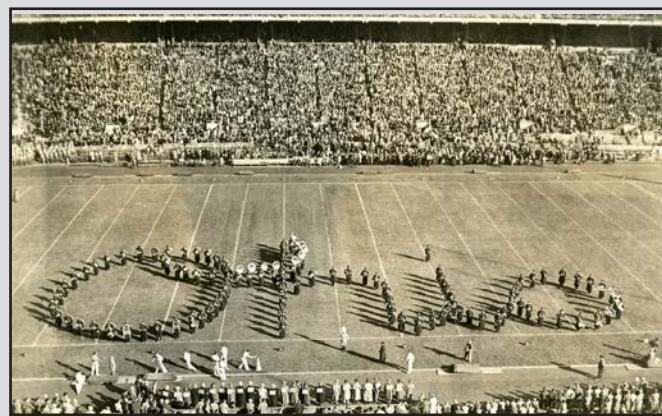
A crowd of 71,711 was on hand inside Ohio Stadium to witness history Oct. 10, 1936, but it had little to do with the inter-sectional matchup between Pittsburgh and Ohio State.

During its halftime show, the Ohio State marching band unveiled a new formation that spelled out the word "Ohio" in cursive letters. The new "Script Ohio" was devised by band director Eugene J. Weigel, who designed the looped script after the marquee sign that adorned the Loew's Ohio Theater in downtown Columbus.

The formation has evolved over time but remains largely the same as when Weigel designed it more than 80 years ago. The band first forms a triple Block "O" formation, and then slowly unwinds to form the famous letters while playing "Le Régiment de Sambre et Meuse," written in 1870 by French composer Robert Planquette.

The drum major leads the outside "O" into a peel-off movement around the curvatures of the script with every musician in continuous motion. Slowly the three blocks unfold into a long singular line which loops around, creating the word "Ohio" in cursive letters.

For most of the history of the formation, different fourth- or fifth-year sousaphone players have had the privilege of dotting the "i," but because "Script Ohio" was just one of many new formations introduced by Weigel in 1936, no extra emphasis was placed on which band member would do the dotting. E-flat cornet player John Brungart became the first person to dot the "i," and he did it two more times during the 1936 season in performances during Ohio Stadium halftime shows against Indiana and Chicago.



During a practice session during the fall of 1937, Weigel supposedly turned to sousaphone player Glen Johnson and shouted, "Hey, you! Switch places with the trumpet player in the dot." Johnson served as official "dotter" for the remainder of that season. Then, the following year, when the drum major arrived at the top of the "i" three or four measures too early, Johnson turned and slowly bowed to the crowd to use up the rest of the music. The crowd roared, and the ceremonial bow has been part of the formation ever since.

In recent years, there have been a number of famous non-band members who have been honorary "i-dotterers." They include heavyweight boxing champion James "Buster" Douglas, Hall of Fame golfer Jack Nicklaus, comedian Bob Hope, marching band director Jon Woods, and former Ohio State football coaches Woody Hayes and Earle Bruce.

— Mark Rea

No one knew it at the time, especially since the coach was simply repeating an old Texas saying. But somewhere along the line "trousers" were substituted with "pants," and the genesis of one of Ohio State's oldest and most cherished traditions – the Gold Pants Club – was born.

Not only did the new coach lead his team to victory over archrival Michigan later that fall in front of an Ohio Stadium crowd of 68,678 – the largest home crowd in six years – but Ohio State defeated its hated archrivals in each of Schmidt's first four

seasons in Columbus. That feat remained unmatched by any other head coach in program history until Urban Meyer went undefeated in seven games against the Wolverines from 2012-18.

Better still, at least to university officials, Schmidt's teams were popular at the box office. His first season produced an average home crowd of 41,109, at the time the second highest in the 13-year history of Ohio Stadium.

While victories against the Wolverines seemed to come easily, each of Schmidt's first two seasons with the Buckeyes was marred by a single defeat, costing the team a chance to win its first national championship. The 18-13 loss at Notre Dame in 1935 – dubbed "The Game of the Century" between two undefeated powerhouses – was particularly disheartening after Ohio State held a seemingly safe 13-0 lead heading into the fourth quarter.

Schmidt was roundly criticized following the game because he had taken out several of his best defensive players at the beginning of the final period, and substitution rules in those days prevented those players from re-entering the game in the same quarter. As a result, Notre Dame scored three touchdowns, including the eventual game-winner with only 50 seconds remaining.

It was an excruciating loss for Ohio State in more ways than one.

The 1935 season had begun with such promise when 56,686 fans filed into Ohio Stadium to watch the Buckeyes kick off the campaign with a 19-6 win against Kentucky. At the time, it was the largest season-opening crowd in stadium history. The following week, in front of a more meager attendance of 28,927, the team set a stadium scoring record that has never been equaled, rolling to an 85-7 victory against Drake. Wins against Northwestern and Indiana followed, with

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anticipation for the Notre Dame game at a fever pitch.

Ticket demand to see the two unbeaten teams was unprecedented, and St. John estimated 200,000 tickets could have been sold. The official attendance was announced at 81,018 with reserved tickets showing a face value of \$3.30 being resold in excess of \$50 despite the height of the Depression.

Schmidt was so disappointed about the outcome against Notre Dame that he redoubled his efforts to shape Ohio State into the most potent offensive team in college football. Unfortunately, that effort became a 24-7 obsession, and he began to blur the line between colorful eccentric and compulsive neurotic.

Finally, Schmidt's fanaticism about offense caught up with him. The Buckeyes compiled only a 4-3-1 record in 1938 and suffered their first defeat against Michigan after four straight victories. Losses to the Wolverines would follow during the next two seasons, including a 40-0 loss to Michigan in front of a rain-soaked Horseshoe crowd of 73,648 that completed a four-loss campaign in 1940.

The Buckeyes had fallen victim to a rebuilding season, a number of injuries to crucial players and a brutal schedule that included three of the top eight ranked teams in the nation. But influential boosters had grown increasingly tired of Schmidt's antics. Following the 1940 season, Ohio State Journal editor Robert E. Hooley quoted an "unimpeachable source" as saying the coach's contract would not be renewed because "on frequent occasions and especially during the last three seasons, Schmidt has been the storm center of numerous arguments throughout the coaching and player ranks."

The university immediately debunked the report, and Schmidt continued to enjoy the support of key allies within Ohio State's athletic department, most notably St. John. Attendance at Ohio Stadium had climbed steadily throughout Schmidt's tenure, more than doubling from Willaman's final season in 1933.

St. John counseled his head coach throughout the Thanksgiving holiday season to allow things to blow over, but Schmidt's nature wouldn't allow it. He offered a hastily written letter of resignation to the university athletic board, hoping the board would reject it.

On Dec. 16, however, the board unanimously voted to accept Schmidt's resignation despite an overall seven-year record of 39-16-1.

For all intents and purposes, Schmidt's demise in Columbus signified the beginning of the end of what had been a superlative career. He resurfaced at the University of Idaho during the spring of 1941 but posted two losing seasons before the Vandals suspended their football program for the duration of World War II.

Years of neglecting his health in favor of his coaching career finally began to take their toll, and Schmidt was hospitalized in Spokane, Wash., in early September 1944. Without football, it seemed he had nothing left to live for, and less than three weeks later, he was dead of a brain tumor at the age of 58.

As sad as the final chapter in Schmidt's life seemed to be, he actually outlived his predecessor by nine years.

After leaving Ohio State following the

1933 season, Willaman resurfaced at Western Reserve, where he led the Red Cats to a 7-1-1 record and the 1934 Big Four conference championship.

A year later, as he was preparing his team to defend that championship, Willaman underwent two emergency surgeries connected to his chronic intestinal problems. Despite doctors reassuring the coach that the procedures were minor in nature, Willaman never recovered and died Aug. 18, 1935, at the age of 45.

Both men were buried near their tiny hometowns – Willaman in Salem, Ohio, and Schmidt in Arkansas City, Kansas – with small markers mentioning nothing about their connection to Ohio State football.

A New Era Dawns

Five weeks after the university accepted Schmidt's resignation, it announced the hiring of Paul Brown, the 33-year-old coach at Massillon (Ohio) High School. Whereas Schmidt ran his program with the tendencies of a mad scientist, Brown was a perfectionist intent upon impressing upon his players the importance of intensity, precision and power.

In time, Brown would become known as much or more as an innovator as Schmidt was in his day, but the new coach's philosophy was more rooted in tactics and practicality. Brown's playbook contained fewer than 50 plays (Schmidt's had more than 300), but he tutored his players during intense practice sessions so that they knew each play backward and forward.

The young coach also had the good fortune to inherit a talented roster for 1941 that included such future All-Americans as Bob Shaw, Chuck Csuri and Lindell Houston, and Big Ten MVP Jack Graf. The team got off to good start with a 12-7 win in the season opener against Missouri before an official Ohio Stadium crowd of 49,671. Attendance was likely much larger since all men and women wearing uniforms of any branch of the United States military were admitted free and in those days not counted as part of the paid attendance figure.

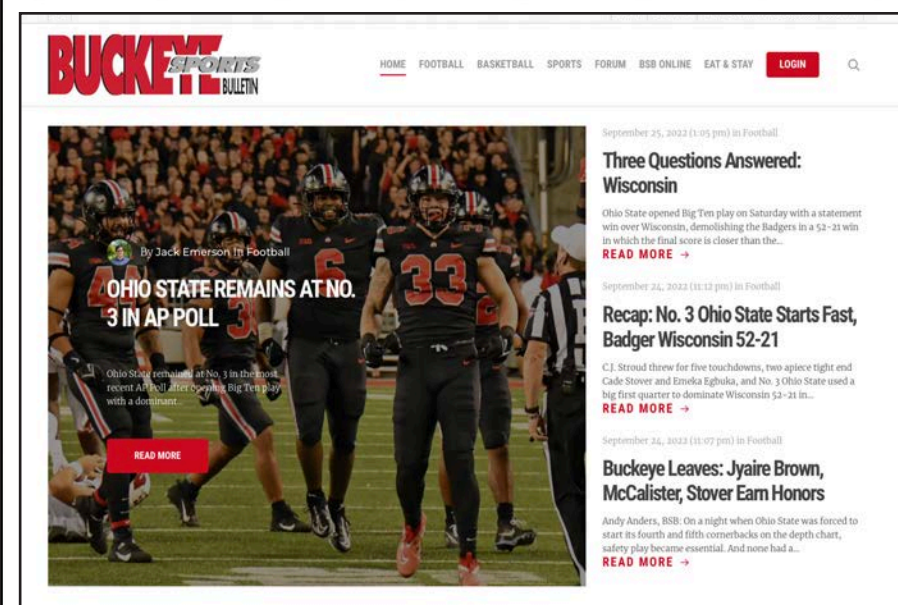
Two weeks later, after a stirring 33-0 upset on the West Coast at USC, the Buckeyes returned home to take on Purdue. In front of 66,074 fans who sat through a mid-October rainstorm, Ohio State raced out to a 16-0 halftime lead and then barely hung on for a 16-14 victory.

The crowd swelled to 71,896 the following week as once-beaten No. 13 Northwestern came to town, and with All-America tailback Otto Graham throwing two touchdown passes, the Wildcats handed the Buckeyes a 14-7 loss.

Brown's first season resulted in a 6-1-1 finish with the only blemishes the loss to Northwestern and a 20-20 tie in the season finale at Michigan. But any worries the university might have harbored regarding the popularity of Ohio State football during a coaching change proved groundless. The Buckeyes averaged 57,541 per home game during Brown's first season, the third highest in Ohio Stadium history.

Unfortunately, the world in general and college football in particular were about to be radically changed. Just 15 days after Ohio State and Michigan battled to their season-ending tie, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and thrust the United States into World War II.

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Schiano's Second Act Building At Rutgers

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Rutgers was a program in flux entering the 2001 season. Coming off a stretch of just 11 wins in five seasons, the Scarlet Knights had ousted head coach Terry Shea and replaced him with a fast-rising defensive coordinator from Miami (Fla.) who had been in coaching for only 10 years: Greg Schiano.

Schiano, a native of Wyckoff, N.J., played linebacker for Ramapo High School, and after playing college ball at Bucknell, he returned to his alma mater as an assistant coach for just one season in 1988 before being snatched up as a graduate assistant by Rutgers.

His path would later take him through Penn State and even the Chicago Bears before returning to rebuild the Scarlet Knights, a program that hadn't been to a bowl game since 1978 and experienced just seven winning seasons from that point up until Schiano's appointment as head coach.

It wasn't an easy path starting out for Schiano, who went 3-20 in his first two seasons and did not win a conference game within the Big East until his 31st contest coaching for Rutgers. The Scarlet Knight faithful stayed behind Schiano, though, and he rewarded them over the next nine seasons with a 65-47 record, including an 11-2 mark in 2006, and five bowl wins in six appearances.

"That was a tough stretch," Schiano said. "The good thing, when you're young, you don't know what you don't know. Because if I knew what I knew, I don't know if I would have stuck it out. You don't know what you don't know, and you just go as hard as you can. That's what we did as a staff and as a program, and fortunately we were able to get over the hump. But that was some tough sledding back then, real tough."

Schiano left following his 11th season at Rutgers to become the head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, an ultimately ill-fated tenure that lasted just two seasons with an 11-21 record, and he wound up at Ohio State as a defensive coordinator under Urban Meyer. Following three years in Columbus, a brief flirtation with the Tennessee Volunteers and a pit stop with the New England Patriots, Schiano agreed to come home to Piscataway, N.J., and help return the Scarlet Knights to their former glory.

"I arrived here in 2000 with the goal to build a program that would be a source of pride for the state of New Jersey and develop great young men," Schiano said in 2019. "I look forward to embracing that challenge once again. This is a great opportunity for all of Rutgers to pull together to get us back to where we all know we belong."

Luckily for Schiano, though, the second

time around with the Scarlet Knights has led to a much quicker ascension – not to one yet capable of competing for a Big Ten title, but to one capable of simply competing, something that has not come easily to Rutgers since joining the Big Ten in 2014.

Rutgers finished 3-6 in Schiano's first season back at the helm, putting positives on film with a 38-27 win over Michigan State and a 48-42 loss to Michigan that required triple overtime for the Wolverines to put the Scarlet Knights away. Last year, he improved his squad to a 5-8 record, the best since 2014, and made an appearance in the Gator Bowl, though this was only because Texas A&M – Wake Forest's original opponent – was forced to drop out due to having just 39 scholarship players available.

Even so, the past two seasons have shown clear improvement for the Scarlet Knights under Schiano, and that success has continued into this current season in which Rutgers got off to a 3-0 start before falling to Iowa, 27-10, though it's still the first back-to-back 3-0 starts for the Scarlet Knights since the 2006-07 seasons.

The bulk of Rutgers' strength this season has come from the defense, which is allowing just 17.3 points per game through four contests. The passing defense has allowed a passable 193.0 yards per game, but the rushing defense ranks among the nation's best, allowing just 56.5 yards per game, good for third in the country.

The defensive line is led by defensive ends Wesley Bailey and Aaron Lewis, who have combined for 27 tackles (eight for loss) and 2½ sacks, with tackles Mayan Ahanotu and Kyonte Hamilton on the inside.

"I've seen it," Schiano said of Lewis, a former Michigan transfer. "I think he's made kind of a steady climb. Aaron is a very, very good football player. He's explosive. He can make plays. So we need him to do that, and he's doing what we need him to do."

The Scarlet Knights, led by defensive coordinator Joe Harasymiak, run a 4-2-5 with senior Deion Jennings and returning starter Tyreem Powell manning the middle of the field. The front six for Rutgers has helped limit opposing offenses on the ground, and the secondary – with four returning starters in cornerbacks Max Melton and Kessawn Abraham, safety Avery Young and nickelback Christian Izien and newcomer safety Desmond Igbinosun – has held opposing quarterbacks to just a 57.5 completion rate.

"It's a big group of corners who can all play," cornerback Robert Longerbeam said. "And they all have played. Everybody wants to do their part, and when your number is called, you just have to be prepared and ready to do your job."

Admittedly, though, none of the Scarlet Knights' opponents thus far – Boston Col-

Get To Know ... Rutgers

- **2022 Record:** 3-1.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation - Spread; Defensive Formation - 4-3; Starters Returning - Offense 6, Defense 6, Specialists 2.
- **Head Coach:** Greg Schiano, 14th year at Rutgers, 79-82.
- **Series History:** 9th meeting; Ohio State leads 8-0-0.
- **School Facts:** Location – Piscataway, NJ.; Enrollment – 67,556; Nickname – Scarlet Knights; Colors – Scarlet, White; Conference – Big Ten (East Division); Stadium – SHI Stadium (Surface – FieldTurf; Capacity – 52,454).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Kyle Monangai	42	157	3.7	2
Samuel Brown V	27	131	4.9	2
Al-Shadee Salaam	25	145	5.8	2

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Evan Simon	55-89	61.8	566	3-2
Gavin Wimsatt	10-23	43.5	117	1-2

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Aron Cruickshank	18	156	8.7	2
Shameen Jones	8	101	12.6	0
Johnny Langan	8	86	10.8	1

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 28.5
Rushing Yards Per Game – 185.8
Passing Yards Per Game – 181.5
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 367.3

2022 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 3	at Boston College	W, 22-21
Sept. 10	WAGNER	W, 66-7
Sept. 17	at Temple	W, 16-14
Sept. 24	IOWA	L, 27-10
Oct. 1	at Ohio State	3:30 p.m.
Oct. 7	NEBRASKA	7 p.m.
Oct. 22	INDIANA	12 p.m.
Oct. 29	at Minnesota	TBA
Nov. 5	MICHIGAN	TBA
Nov. 12	at Michigan State	TBA
Nov. 19	PENN STATE	TBA
Nov. 26	at Maryland	TBA
Dec. 3	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.TFL	Yards	Sacks
Christian Izien	17	17	34	2.5-17	1.5-13
Deion Jennings	15	14	29	4.0-9	0-0
Tyreem Powell	10	12	22	3.0-7	2.0-5
Aaron Lewis	6	11	17	3.0-17	0-0

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Robert Longerbeam	2	5	2.5	0
Shaquan Loyal	1	43	43.0	1
Christian Braswell	1	0	0	0
Max Melton	1	0	0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 17.3
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 56.5
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 193.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 249.5

lege, Wagner, Temple and Iowa – presents a particularly stout passing attack, meaning the unit could be in for a rude awakening against Ohio State. With much of the same secondary in place last season, quarterback C.J. Stroud finished 17 of 23 passing for 330 yards and five touchdowns with a passer rating of 266.2, his best of the season.

Rutgers' defense may be up to the task of trying to stop Ohio State, but the game will come down to whether the Scarlet Knights can put any points on the board. Excluding the 66-7 win over FCS-level Wagner, Rutgers' offense has averaged just 16.0 points per game against FBS competition, and their yards per game – 367.2, even with the win over Seahawks – rank 98th in the country out of 131 teams.

Part of the difficulty has been due to the lack of rhythm at the most important position on the field. A different quarterback started each of Rutgers' first three games, with quarterback-turned-tight end Johnny Langan, Gavin Wimsatt and Evan Simon each getting a crack at the job, while the expected starter entering the season, Noah Vedral, had yet to play this year while recovering from an ankle injury.

"Unfortunately, our veteran quarterback was injured," Schiano said. "Those are all things that factor in. I know this: That we are getting better. Temple (a 16-14 Scarlet Knight victory) was a tough, tough outing (for our quarterbacks), but we are getting better. I see it every day, and I'm confident that the path we are going on is going to get us where we need to be."

With just 726 total passing yards this season, the Scarlet Knights have struggled to get the ball to their receivers with any consistency, though the trio of Aron Cruickshank, Chris Long and Joshua Youngblood should be able to answer the call if the quarterback situation is resolved at some point.

Making things worse for the offense is a relatively green offensive line, with just two

returning starters – left tackle Willie Tyler III and right tackle Hollin Pierce – back from last season. So far this year, the unit has allowed eight sacks.

"I wish it was one thing," Schiano said of fixing the offensive line. "You know, that would be an easier fix ... there's a lot to get down for a group of guys that have not played together. But we're going to be OK. I'm confident on that."

Even with a shaky offensive line through the season's early stages, the rushing attack – a committee approach with Samuel Brown V, Kyle Monangai and Al-Shadee Salaam taking the majority of carries – is averaging 185.8 yards per game and 4.6 yards per carry and is mostly the reason the offense has been able to move the ball, and that's with the loss of running back Isiah Pacheco, who left for the NFL last season after rushing for 2,442 yards and 18 touchdowns in his four-year career at Rutgers.

"We came into the (season) knowing the bulk of the workload could fall on us, and we were fine with that," Monangai said. "We were proud to take on the burden. I'm happy we were able to play off each other. We all have a different running style, and we all bring different things to the table. When we work together, it's kind of hard to stop."

Rutgers is still searching for its first win over Ohio State, so far winless in eight tries since joining the conference with an average margin of defeat of 42.5 points, but progress for the Scarlet Knights can come in all shapes and sizes, and when they enter Ohio Stadium on Oct. 1, that could be as simple as making the Buckeyes sweat.

"These kids love to play together," Schiano said before the season began. "The staff loves to coach together. We're not going to play scared. We're just going to let it fly. If it's good enough this week, it will be. If it isn't, we'll keep getting better. We'll be a much better team in November than we are today."

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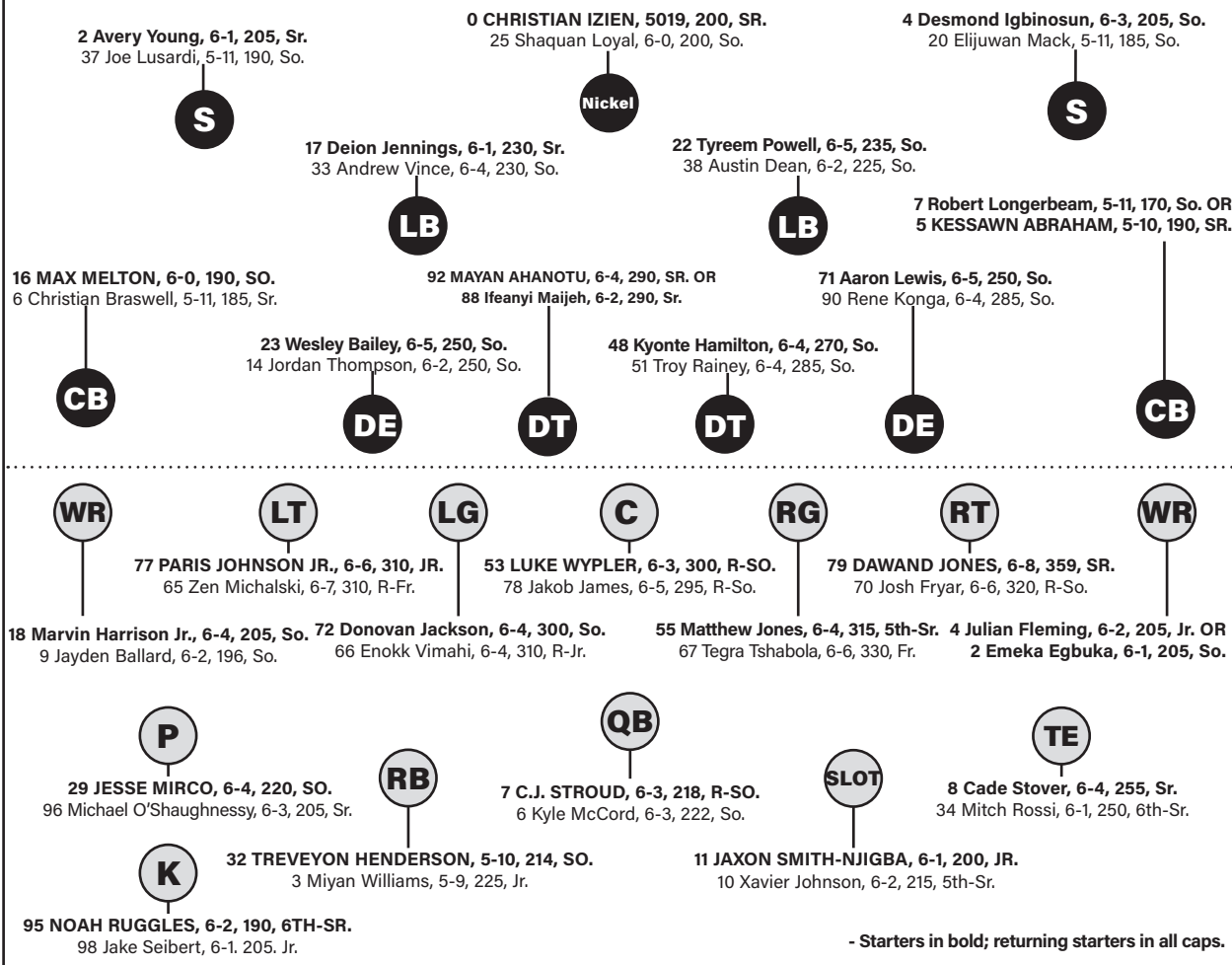
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Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs.
RUTGERS RUSH DEFENSE

Despite a 27-10 loss to Iowa in the Big Ten opener on Sept. 24, Rutgers has a solid defense that allowed the Hawkeyes only one offensive touchdown. The Scarlet Knights are an impressive third nationally in rush defense, allowing 56.5 yards per game and a stingy 1.8 yards per carry while allowing just two rushing touchdowns. Speaking of two, Rutgers will have to contend with the two-man attack for the Buckeyes that ripped through Wisconsin in the 52-21 victory on Sept. 24. The Buckeyes got 121 rushing yards on 21 carries from TreVeyon Henderson and 101 yards and two scores by Miyan Williams on 11 totes. They became the first pair of Buckeyes to rush for more than 100 yards in the same game since Trey Sermon (112) and Justin Fields (104) against Michigan State in 2020. OSU ranks 18th in rushing offense (219.8). The Scarlet Knights may be able to stop one back – maybe – but they won't be able contain both. Then there's the element of having fullback Mitch Rossi for short-yardage situations.

EDGE: OHIO STATE

RUTGERS RUSH OFFENSE vs.
OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Rutgers went against Iowa, which is now the top scoring defense in the nation (5.8 points per game) and the sixth-best rushing defense (73.0 per game), and came up short against the Hawkeyes. Way short. The Scarlet Knights ran for 61 yards on 24 carries (2.5 per carry), and Samuel Brown V led the way with 34 yards on six carries. He had a long of 18, meaning his other five totes produced 16 yards. Rutgers is tied for 43rd in rushing (185.8) while the Buckeyes are tied for 39th in rush defense (111.2), giving up 3.4 yards a carry. Wisconsin gained 192 yards on 35 attempts (5.5 per carry) vs. OSU, but 75 of those yards came on a touchdown run by Braelon Allen late in the game against the backups.

EDGE: OHIO STATE

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs.
RUTGERS PASS DEFENSE

All C.J. Stroud does is throw touchdown passes. He had five against Wisconsin and spread the wealth with two apiece to budding superstar tight end Cade Stover (what in the holy Ben Hartsock is going on here?) and Emeka Egbuka and another to Julian Fleming. Meanwhile, Marvin Harrison Jr. had a quiet game with three catches for 45 yards, and the supposed top receiver, Jaxon Smith-Njigba, did not play because of an injury, though Ohio State hopes to have him back against the Scarlet Knights. The Buckeyes have the No. 12 passing attack (339.0) mainly because they don't have to throw with such a potent ground game. OSU has 17 touchdown passes (Stroud 16, Kyle McCord one) and only one pick, that coming by Stroud against the Badgers. Rutgers is a respectable 35th in pass defense (193.0 per game) with five touchdowns allowed and five interceptions. In total defense, the Scarlet Knights are ninth (249.5 per game). Defensive back Christian Izen had 16 tackles and a sack and linebacker Tyreem Powell also recorded a sack against Iowa.

EDGE: OHIO STATE

RUTGERS PASS OFFENSE vs.
OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

With Noah Vedral and Gavin Wimsatt injured, third-stringer Evan Simon has taken over. While he did well against Iowa – 28 for 49 for 300 yards and one touchdown – he threw two interceptions. One was a 45-yard pick-six that gave Iowa a 7-3 lead. His favorite target was Aron Cruickshank – who has given the Buckeyes fits in the past – with seven catches for 55 yards and a score. Converted quarterback Johnny Langan was targeted a team-high 10 times and hauled in four throws for 48 yards, including a 31-yarder, and Shameen Jones added a 33-yard reception. Still, Rutgers is 111th out of 131 schools with 181.5 yards per game with five TDs and four interceptions. The Buckeyes' pass defense is 22nd (171.8). They were without starting cornerbacks Cam Brown and Denzel Burke but limited Wisconsin to 104 passing yards, and safety Tanner McCalister had a pick.

EDGE: OHIO STATE

SPECIAL TEAMS

Ohio State had a kickoff go out of bounds and another returned for 38 yards, but Jesse Mirco (two punts for 44.5 average) was reliable again. Rutgers' Adam Korsak averaged 42.0 on his four punts against Iowa, and Cruickshank had a 17-yard kickoff return. Rutgers placekicker Jude McAtamney has made 6 of 8 field goals this season with a long of 49.

EDGE: EVEN

INTANGIBLES

Looking for something positive for Rutgers? They are playing on the road. OK, coming to Ohio Stadium isn't ideal, but the Scarlet Knights – after the Iowa outcome – have 20 straight Big Ten home losses since a Nov. 4, 2017, victory over Maryland.

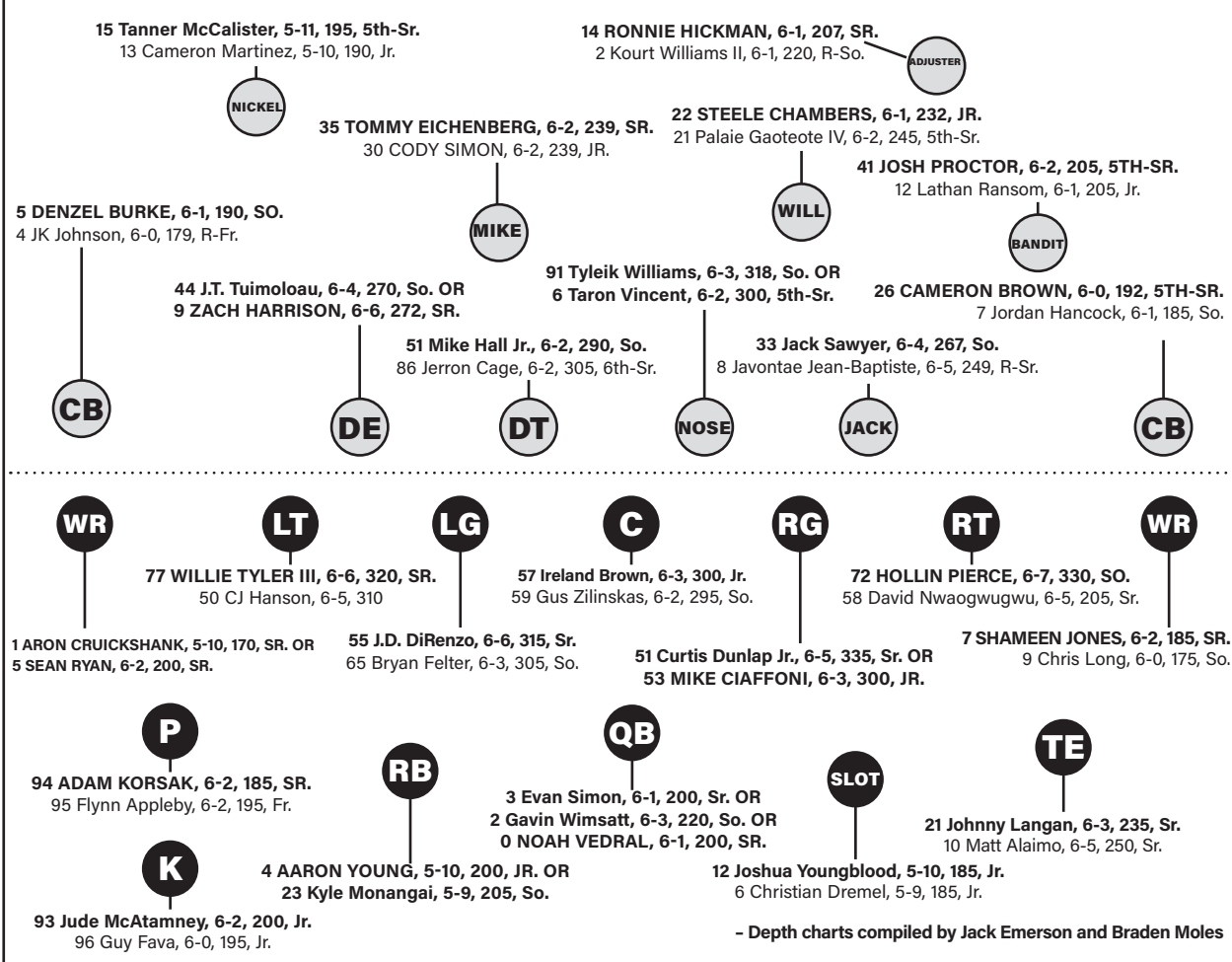
EDGE: OHIO STATE

STAFF PREDICTION

Rutgers has been repeatedly thrashed by the Buckeyes since entering the conference. The Scarlet Knights will rely on their defense and hope that the Buckeyes will have a letdown after pounding Wisconsin. That rarely happens on coach Ryan Day's watch.

OHIO STATE 59, RUTGERS 17

WHEN RUTGERS HAS THE BALL...



Uiagalelei Leaning Toward December Decision

One of Ohio State's top remaining targets in the 2023 class could be nearing the end of his recruitment. According to a report from On3 Sports, Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco five-star defensive end Matayo Uiagalelei (6-5, 265) could be committing to a school in December, if not sooner.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

"I'll probably make a decision in December, but I could also do it at some point during the season," Uiagalelei said. "I've definitely got to pray about it and hope God puts me in the best position. It's about what's the right place for me and the place that's going to make me the best person and best player overall."

Uiagalelei is the No. 28 overall prospect and No. 4 defensive end in the class, and along with Ohio State, Oregon and USC are considered his other top schools. Alabama and Clemson were also in the mix, though Uiagalelei has yet to take an official visit to either school and said he may be done taking official visits.

As for his interest in Ohio State, Uiagalelei visited the Buckeyes back in the spring and was in attendance for Ohio State's sea-

son opener against Notre Dame. As is the case with most defensive linemen being recruited by the Buckeyes, Uiagalelei cited defensive line coach Larry Johnson as one of the biggest factors in his recruitment.

"Larry Johnson, he's definitely been one of the top defensive line and defensive ends guys in college football for like the last decade," Uiagalelei said. "You can just see how many guys he has put in the league. And it makes me think, 'Man, I might want to go there if I see that.' Ryan Day is a great coach, too. And we have a great relationship. Their consistency is big, too, and their ability to always be a top program."

Through the first four games of his high school football season, Uiagalelei had 12 tackles (5½ for loss) and 2½ sacks for St. John Bosco, a defense that also features several other Ohio State targets in five-star safety Peyton Woodyard (6-2, 188) and four-star linebacker Kyngstonn Viliamu-Asa (6-3, 225), both 2024 prospects.

Uiagalelei – who displays impressive physicality considering that he played both defensive end and tight end for St. John Bosco – is noted for his arm length and wingspan that has helped him develop into one of the top edge rushers in the class.

"This top-notch edge has unique athleticism for someone his size," said 247Sports recruiting expert Chris Singletary. "Possessing excellent agility, change of direction, bend and power makes him one of the best players in the country. He is light

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	SAF	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	175	★★★★	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	280	★★★★	Findlay, Ohio
Jason Moore	DE	6-6	255	★★★★	Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic
Joshua Padilla	OG	6-4	280	★★★★	Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne
Arvell Reese	LB	6-4	212	★★★★	Cleveland Glenville
Bryson Rodgers	WR	6-1	175	★★★★	Zephyrhills (Fla.) Wiregrass Ranch
Noah Rogers	WR	6-2	195	★★★★	Rolesville, N.C.
Austin Sierreveld	OL	6-5	320	★★★★	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

on his feet and plays with very good power and technique on the edge and in the run game with room to continue to develop and improve. As a pass rusher, he does a good job using speed to power as well as having a good dip and rip move and always using active hands to prevent linemen from latching on to him."

Ohio State is viewed by many as the favorite for Uiagalelei, with the biggest

competition for his services coming from Oregon.

"I just really like (Oregon's) coaching staff," Uiagalelei said. "I really like Coach (Tosh) Lupoi, Coach (Tony) Tuioti and Coach (Dan) Lanning. Coach Lanning was the defensive coordinator at Georgia and the outside linebackers coach. Coach Lupoi is the defensive coordinator and outside linebacker coach at Oregon. Both



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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.

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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.	

coaches would be specific to my position. It was disappointing how badly they got beat by Georgia, but it's hard for a new staff to come in (and win)."

Uiagalelei is one of Ohio State's top remaining targets along with Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep five-star defensive end Keon Keeley (6-6, 242) and Venice, Fla., five-star defensive end Damon Wilson (6-4, 230).

Recruitment Heating Up Between Keeley, OSU

Speaking of Keeley, the five-star defensive end made his second trip in four weeks to Ohio State for the Buckeyes' 52-21 win over Wisconsin. His visit against Notre Dame was his official visit, which means his trip against the Badgers – all the way from Florida – was on his own dime.

Ohio State appeared to be a long shot to land Keeley's services following his decommitment from Notre Dame, with Alabama viewed as the leader, but it now appears that the Buckeyes could be in the lead.

He has yet to take an official visit to Tuscaloosa – which, it should be noted, is a much more manageable trip than Columbus – but has one scheduled for Oct. 8, though at this point it's a question of whether his commitment lasts until that date.

"It's a little surprising," Buckeye Huddle recruiting analyst Marc Givler told BSB of Keeley's return trip. "But that was Ohio State's goal. It wasn't totally out of left field. They had been trying to get them back. They knew they wanted to get him back again, because he does have this Alabama visit scheduled for October. I think that will be the interesting thing coming out of the visit this weekend, is if that Alabama visit still happens. But that's going to be the goal, to kind of get him off of that Alabama visit, but, as of now, that visit is still scheduled, so we will see what he does coming out of the weekend.

"You get another opportunity to get him back. You weren't sure a couple of weeks ago if that would be your last opportunity. So now you have this extra chance. I think it shows how serious he is about Ohio State because this one's on his dime. It's definitely a positive trend right now with a couple of these guys, these defensive linemen. We'll see how they close it, but they're in on three of the best, and so it would be amazing if they can even get two of them but they're right there for all three."

He is the highest-ranked prospect left on Ohio State's board, checking in at No. 8 in the country and the top edge rusher in the 2023 class. With a composite rating of .9955, he would be one of the top prospects ever brought in by Ohio State, just cracking the top 15.

Through three games for Berkley Prep, Keeley accounted for 11 total tackles (eight for loss) and a team-high 6½ sacks, as well as a forced fumble.

"Is he going to be as good as Chase Young? I have no idea, that's an awfully high bar," Givler said. "But that's the body type. He's 6-5½, he's 235 pounds right now. He's going to play at 270, probably, by the time

he hits a college strength and conditioning program. Chase was a 235, 240-pounder coming out of high school. That's the type of frame that they see there.

"He's an explosive edge rusher. I think he had 16.5 sacks as a junior. He's a tremendous pass rusher. At Berkeley Prep, they produce a lot of great humans like Nick Petit-Frere, and those guys are all very well-rounded kids. They see a guy who would love to be part of the culture. There's a lot to like there and with the way he can move at that size. Now that they're doing that Jack position, they can move him around and he's a little more flexible, even more than a Damon Wilson, who's kind of pure speed rusher whereas Keon can put a hand in the dirt and play. When he maxes out his weight, he's going to be able to play a strongside end if they need him to. He's also got the athleticism to stand him up. So he's just so versatile up front.

"He's a guy that if you want to get your three or four best pass rushers on the field on a third-and-long, he can kind of move and slot in a couple of different spots. He's a great talent. I think most of the sites have him as the No. 1 defensive end. He's a great fit, I think, all around if they can get him."

Top 2024 CB Visits For Wisconsin Game

Keeley's return was the most notable recruiting storyline from Ohio State's win over the Badgers, but another important visit was that of Sarasota (Fla.) Riverview five-star cornerback Charles Lester III (6-1, 171), one of the top defensive backs in 2024.

This was the first trip for Lester, the No. 22 overall prospect and No. 3 cornerback in the class, and his main focus going in was experiencing the environment.

"I want to feel what the environment is like," Lester told On3 Sports. "I know Ohio State is a great school and how it has some history, so it will be great to see it in person. This is an opportunity I have been waiting for, so I can't wait to get up there."

Lester made recent trips to Florida and Georgia, and in addition to the Buckeyes, the other programs making up his top schools include Alabama, Florida, Florida State, Michigan State, Oklahoma, Oregon and USC.

"Ohio State is a program that stays in the top 3-5 each year," Lester said. "Going there, I feel I can put myself around great players. They win, they develop great defensive backs, and I love what I hear from the coaches about the school.

"Now I get to see it and feel it in person. I love coach Tim Walton and coach Tony Alford. I want to see the fans and just learn more about Columbus on this visit."

Schools such as Alabama, Florida and Florida State with a geographic advantage have an edge with Lester, but Ohio State will have plenty of time to try to close the distance, as Lester does not plan to make a college choice until next summer.

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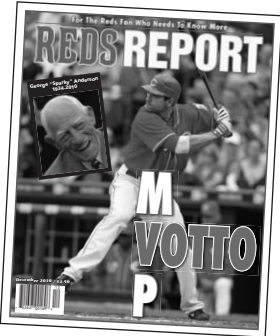


JOSH WINSLOW
MAKING THE ROUNDS — Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep five-star defensive end Keon Keeley (6-6, 242) visited Ohio Stadium for the Buckeyes' 52-21 win over Wisconsin on Sept. 24, and he took time to fraternize with the crowd of 105,473 in attendance.

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Recruits Take In Ohio State During Homestand

Continued From Page 27

Wisconsin QB Mertz Talks OSU Recruitment

Wisconsin quarterback Graham Mertz had a poor outing for the Badgers in Ohio State's 52-21 win on Sept. 24, but how might things have been different if Mertz had been on Ohio State's sideline?

That seemed a possibility at one point. Mertz was being recruited by both Ohio State and Wisconsin out of high school. A former four-star prospect in 2019 out of Blue Valley North High School in Mission, Kan., Mertz committed to the Badgers on Oct. 8, 2017, but it didn't stop other schools – including Ohio State – from trying to get involved.

"They reached out to me a lot," Mertz said of Ohio State. "There was a lot."

Mertz said that both current Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and former head coach Urban Meyer contacted him, but that he was never truly tempted by the Buckeyes.

"I love (Wisconsin)," he said. "No, it was not tempting at all. I love Wisconsin. I was sold on Wisconsin. I was always sold on Wisconsin, so that was – it was them trying to deter me from that (other options like Ohio State). It wasn't anything in particular, but there's no other place I'd rather be. I said that during the recruitment and I'll say that until the day I die. This is my home, and nothing can pull me away from it."

While Mertz ultimately felt more at home in Madison, he said that the recruitment strategies by Ohio State and Wisconsin

were not that different.

"Recruitment is recruitment," he said. "Everybody does the same stuff. You've got to sort through it and just find what speaks to you. I found what spoke to me."

OSU Impresses 2024 LB Brown

Jefferson, Ga., five-star linebacker Sammy Brown (6-3, 225) was one of the first 2024 prospects offered by Ohio State dating back to last fall, and the Buckeyes continue to try to put themselves in a solid position for one of the top recruits in the 2024 cycle.

Brown was in attendance for Ohio State's season opener against Notre Dame and said that a "family feel" was the biggest thing he took away from the visit.

"You could just tell that by looking at the alumni that were there," he told Eleven Warriors' Garrick Hodge. "Joe Burrow was there, and he didn't even finish his college career at Ohio State. I think that shows how much of a family Ohio State is. All those people were there at some point and still feel a family connection."

Brown is the No. 9 overall prospect and the top-ranked linebacker in 2024, and his inclusion in Ohio State's class could be a coup for defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, who requires the type of athleticism and physical tools at his linebacker spots that Brown possesses.

In addition to playing linebacker for Jefferson – he finished with 51 tackles (five for loss) and three sacks last season – he is also the team's leading running back and

finished last year with 753 rushing yards and 11 touchdowns while rushing for nearly 13 yards per carry. Through four games this season, Brown has rushed for 544 yards and nine touchdowns on just 65 carries, averaging 8.4 yards per attempt, and he leads the team on defense with 25 tackles and an interception to his name.

During his visit, Brown got the chance to watch Ohio State linebackers Tommy Eichenberg and Steele Chambers, another former running back who was able to translate his skills to the defense.

"I was able to focus on those two 'backers," Brown said. "The seats are semi-high up, so you're able to see the play develop. I just visualized where I would be (if I came to Ohio State)."

Brown said that Knowles – whom he talks to weekly – is an "old-time coach" who is easy to connect with, and as for Ohio State, he enjoys everything happening with the program.

"I really like what Ohio State's doing," Brown said. "They have a great culture and a great family feel, which is kind of what I'm looking for in a school. Coach Knowles is a good guy. He's going to really get on your butt, and that's something I can really appreciate. That's the kind of coaching I need."

"It's a really prestigious program. They've got great coaches and a great atmosphere. Columbus is a great college town, so it really checks all the boxes for a good college career."

Brown holds additional offers from Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, LSU, Miami

(Fla.), Michigan, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Texas A&M and USC, among others, and he has taken recent trips to Clemson and Tennessee.

Day Talks Recruiting Rankings, Evaluations

Where prospects are ranked would appear to matter little to college coaching staffs, who are able to form their own evaluations based on films and talking with recruits, but Day said Sept. 20 that the team will occasionally check in on the rankings to see what's going on.

"We're definitely aware of it," Day said. "We have our own evaluations, as you know, and we kind of rank our guys and go through. And then every once in a while, we'll say, 'What are they ranked nationally on some of the publications?' just to get an idea."

Day said that a higher national ranking generally correlates with a higher-level player, but that isn't the be-all and end-all for the coaching staff when considering which prospects to target in a class.

"Typically, the higher-rated guys are a little bit harder to get. And that's just the way it is," Day said. "It doesn't mean that maybe they're the right fit for us or our evaluation is in line with what maybe that ranking is. And so we try to find the right fit for us. And it's pretty close."

"The guys who are ranked higher are usually really good football players. And maybe there's a couple that aren't. When there's somebody out there that we evaluate very highly that's high on our list that

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago — 1992

Most rational people don't believe in superstitions unless something happens to make them change their minds.

Westlake, Ohio, football star Bob Houser may not have been superstitious, but one had to wonder if he was avoiding walking under ladders and being extra careful during the season.

After earning a starting position as a sophomore and excelling, he was primed to have a great junior season in 1991. But during the third game of the year, Houser broke a bone in his ankle.

The game in which Houser was injured was played on Friday the 13th.

Houser, who was also a standout on the Westlake basketball and track teams, was told he certainly would not make it back for basketball season and that his football playing days might be over as well. But he had something else in mind.

"Everyone told me I couldn't play basketball last season and would possibly miss football all this year," said Houser, who was being recruited by Ohio State. "But I wasn't going to just sit back and take my injury lying down. I worked hard rehabbing it, and I made it back halfway through basketball season."

25 Years Ago — 1997

Although the Buckeyes had a full stable of running backs, there was always a need to increase the depth of talent at that spot.

Christian Morgan, a 6-4, 225-pound tailback from Massillon, Ohio, with 4.4 speed, could have been one of the candidates Ohio State was looking for.

The only thing hindering Morgan's rise to prominence at the college level was his academic situation. He admitted that he had just a 2.0 GPA and had only a 14 on the ACT. He needed to improve mightily on both marks to qualify as a freshman. A sojourn to a prep school – like his idol, Eddie George – may not have been out of the question for Morgan.

"I want to be able to play," he said. "I don't want to have to wait until my senior year to be able to play. Right now my top choices are Ohio State, Indiana and West Virginia."

20 Years Ago — 2002

In the days leading up to a game against Cincinnati, OSU coach Jim Tressel discussed the importance of recruiting the tri-state area.

"We would like to get all of the good players out of there every year," Tressel said. "We have a lot of competition in recruiting Cincinnati. There are a number of great high schools down there, and they have a history of sending players all over the country to play college football."

In recent years, SEC teams such as Alabama, Florida and Tennessee had made strong inroads into Cincinnati.

Over the seven years leading up to 2002, the Cincinnati area had produced 16 top-20 Ohio prospects, and OSU signed six of them.

15 Years Ago — 2007

It was an impressive weekend in Columbus for Fort Washington (Md.) Friendly running back/wide receiver Lamar Thomas, but whether it was enough to close the deal for Ohio State remained to be seen.

After listing the Buckeyes as his top team since an appearance at an OSU camp in June, Thomas denied having an overall leader as he tried to decide if he wanted to play wide receiver or running back in college.

With three official visits planned to his final schools, the Buckeyes got the second crack at Thomas one week after Maryland and one week before Illinois.

"Both visits were great," he told BSB. "The only thing different from Ohio State was the atmosphere of the game. With 105,000 people yelling, it was crazy. Being able to chill with (OSU verbals Michael) Brewster, (DeVier) Posey, and Jake (Stoneburner) and those guys, it was really great because at Maryland there were no 2008 commits there for me to hang out with and get to know."

10 Years Ago — 2012

One of the top remaining players on Ohio State's recruiting board was moved into the verbal commitment column Sept. 20 when linebacker/defensive end Tyquan Lewis of Tarboro, N.C., pledged to the Buckeyes.

Lewis, a three-star prospect rated the No. 34 defensive end by Scout.com, chose Ohio State over LSU and North Carolina. Lewis had settled upon the Buckeyes weeks before but held off on a public announcement until a ceremony could be arranged at his high school.

"My mom approved. That's the main thing," Lewis said. "When

she went there, she was just blown away. They provided her with the things that she wanted to know. (Head coach Urban) Meyer was really down to earth with her and didn't hide anything."

Five Years Ago — 2017

A defensive lineman from New Jersey whom Ohio State was keeping an eye on was four-star defensive tackle Tyler Friday out of Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, N.J. Friday had yet to trim down a lengthy offer list, but the 62nd-ranked overall prospect for 2018 told recruiting analyst Brian Dohn in mid-September that he was hearing the most from Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Ohio State, Penn State and nearby Rutgers.

The 6-3, 263-pound standout had a unique connection to Ohio State, as his high school coach, Mike Teel, played quarterback at Rutgers from 2005-08 under Greg Schiano, who was in his second year as defensive coordinator at Ohio State. Friday received an offer from the Buckeyes in December 2015 and took an unofficial visit to Columbus in March of 2017.

As for what appealed to Friday regarding Ohio State, the No. 2 defensive tackle in the nation said he admired the culture head coach Urban Meyer had instilled.

"I would say just their message and their playing style as well," Friday told Dohn. "Urban Meyer, he makes sure everything is a certain way. I really like the way he runs the program. It's very competitive, and everything is up-tempo. And they just know how to win, which is very important to me."

One Year Ago — 2021

Four-star defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. (6-5, 231) of Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep was nearing a commitment, though he wanted to take a pair of final visits to his top two schools – Ohio State and Oklahoma – before deciding.

His father, Kenyatta Jackson Sr., told Garrick Hodge of Eleven Warriors that he was consistently impressed by Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson, OSU's primary recruiter for Jackson.

"Every time we get around him, it's something about Coach Johnson," the elder Jackson said. "He has heavy wisdom (and) we love everything about him. He's a great mentor and authentic model for recruits. I can trust my son with Coach Larry Johnson from afar if he decides to go to Ohio State."

ASK AN ANALYST

With Marc Givler of Buckeye Huddle

You were in Florida for a few days prior to Ohio State's game against Toledo for a recruiting trip. Who did you see that stood out to you?

"I saw Venice (Fla.) five-star defensive end Damon Wilson (6-4, 230). He's a tremendous speed rusher with an incredible first step as a pass rusher. He's one of those guys who is not as big as maybe some of the other defensive ends they've recruited recently but has a different skill set than what they've recruited. I think they're trying to recruit him for that Jack position, that kind of stand-up edge rusher, and he'll fit that perfectly if they're able to land him. But he's just a guy who – yeah, he's going to have some responsibilities, but you just kind of tell him, 'Hey, go get the quarterback.' He's one of those guys. I was really impressed with him on (Sept. 15).

"(Sept. 16), oh my gosh, there were so many players at that American Heritage (and) Chaminade-Madonna game. Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage four-star running back Mark Fletcher (6-1, 225) had a big night. He had about 200 total yards of offense and a couple of touchdowns. He just runs really hard. He runs upright, and I think that makes people nervous. I don't really know why. We've seen Hall of Famers who run upright. People are overly concerned with that. He does a great job of getting his pads down on contact, which is all that really matters. He's a violent runner. No one got him down on the first try. He's just a really impressive guy.

"He also ran away on a 40-yard touchdown run where he got a burst in the secondary and was able to run away from people. I think people knock his speed too, and he's fast enough that once he gets into the open he's going to be tough to catch. He's really good out of the backfield, which is another dimension I think will be good for him at Ohio State with the way they've started to use the backs more in the passing game under Ryan Day. He was, obviously, a standout.

"There are a lot of guys so I'm going to miss a couple here. It's easy to see why Opa Locka (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 185) is the No. 1-rated junior receiver in the country. I think he's probably the best receiver prospect in the country right now, regardless of class. I would probably take him over another prospect or any senior receiver. Just a special blend of size, athleticism, speed,

smarts and route running. He's a really great kid on top of that. It's a very unique blend for a guy that's 6-3, 200 pounds. He had an 87-yard touchdown catch, and it was 90 percent run-after-catch, running away from one of the fastest secondaries in the country. It's easy to see why he's at the top of Ohio State's wish-list right now for that class."

Dorchester (S.C.) Woodland four-star offensive tackle Kam Pringle (6-7, 330) recently included Ohio State in his top 10, and Waukesha, Wis., four-star offensive tackle Donovan Harbour (6-5, 310) was expected at the Wisconsin game. How important are they as offensive line targets in 2024, and who else might Ohio State be looking at?

"When Justin Frye took over, it was very much an Ohio-centric focus. They had already kind of pushed for some of these guys and, obviously, Frye came into their evaluations, but it was kind of set up already in terms of these are the probable targets (in 2023). So 2024 becomes a little bit interesting because it's going to be the first class that is really all on Frye. It's all on him to do the evaluations; it's all on him to build the relationships. No one's going to have done any groundwork for him. So this is going to be his opportunity to kind of put his stamp on this.

"The guy I think they're in great shape with right now is New Palestine (Ind.) four-star offensive lineman Ian Moore (6-5, 295). He was on campus for the Notre Dame game. That's a guy they've got a great chance at right now.

"They've got some other guys they are certainly trying with, the Washington (D.C.) St. Johns four-star offensive lineman Jordan Seatons (6-6, 295) of the world. It's an interesting board right now because they haven't offered a ton of guys. I think they've offered like nine or 10 offensive linemen, which may sound like a lot, but it's really not when you're taking four or five a year. The net has not been cast very wide yet. These guys that have offers right now are prime targets. It's not like they spring 30 offers out. You see what these guys think coming out of these visits.

"The two that you mentioned, I think they definitely have a shot at both of them, obviously. Any kid that's making these trips on their own dime you generally have a shot at. Looking at the Harbour situation, it's never easy to pull out of Wisconsin, but they were able to do that recently in the last class (with

Carson Hinzman), so they've got the foot in the ground a little bit there. We're looking at South Carolina here with Pringle, so that's not a guy who the SEC programs are just going to let come out here. I think there are some challenges there in terms of geography with those guys. But the early interest is definitely there on both ends. I think it would be interesting to see post-visit what they're saying, what kind of impression this makes, and go from there.

"Right now, if you had to tie me down to a guy they're going to get in '24, I do like the chances for Ian Moore."

Michigan currently has the No. 28 class and does not have a top-100 commitment in the 2023 class. Coming off a Big Ten championship and playoff appearance, is it surprising they haven't been able to build any momentum in the class?

"It is a little bit. But the thing with recruiting is it generally takes a full year to see the benefits of something like that. The 2023 class, a lot of those guys already had an idea of who they're looking at. It's difficult to get guys off of that early list. If you're not an early top five, top 10, it's really hard, even with a great season, to push forward. Relationships have been built and opinions have been formed.

"The most impactful thing here is if you look at Jim Harbaugh, he had all sorts of contract disputes. I believe on February's signing day he was interviewing for an NFL job. He was certainly looking, listening to NFL teams, all the way through the late signing period last year. When you are going into the stretch run, which is the point for the 2023 class once you hit (the 2022) signing day, now you're up on deck and it's now the stretch run for the next six, seven months because you're taking officials in the spring and summer now. You're seeing this, you're like, 'OK, who's going to be the head coach there?'

"There was assistant coach turnover and all this coaching turmoil going on, I think that really hurt Michigan this cycle. I really do. I think it hurt them very badly. Now it becomes a thing of, 'Is that stabilized?' I think it's important for Michigan going forward if they want to recruit at a top-five, top-10 level that there isn't a circus this winter with the coaching carousel. I think that, more than anything, has really hurt their recruiting efforts in 2023."

is highly recruited, we're competitive, we want to go get him."

OSU Offers OL Baker

Ohio State has issued just one offer since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, with the honor going to Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star offensive lineman Brandon Baker (6-5, 285) in 2024.

Baker is the No. 80 overall prospect and No. 6 offensive tackle in the class and holds offers from Florida, Miami (Fla.) Michigan, Michigan State, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State, Texas and Texas A&M, among others.

"I'm very excited about the offer from Ohio State," Baker told 247Sports. "I definitely have interest and would love to get down there for a visit. (Offensive line coach Justin) Frye just recently reached out, and I'm looking forward to building a relationship with him."

Baker attends the same school as a pair of 2025 prospects also offered by Ohio State: five-star running back Jordon Davison (5-11, 210) and five-star linebacker Nasir Wyatt (6-2, 210).

The Buckeyes now have reported offers out to eight offensive linemen in 2024, with Baker; Waukesha (Wis.) Catholic Memorial four-star offensive tackle Donovan Harbour (6-5, 310); New Palestine, Ind., four-star

Ian Moore (6-5, 295); and Dorchester (S.C.) Woodland four-star Kam Pringle (6-7, 330) as the top targets.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Harbour made his second trip to Ohio State this season against Wisconsin. Harbour is the No. 54 overall prospect and No. 2 interior lineman in 2024, and he was also in attendance for the Notre Dame game.

- Longview, Texas, four-star wide receiver Jalen Hale (6-1, 185) committed to Alabama on Sept. 21. Hale is the No. 51 overall prospect and No. 9 wide receiver in the 2023 class, and he included Ohio State among his top six schools back in May but did not include the Buckeyes among his top three schools (Alabama, Georgia, Texas) in July.

- Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Stranahan five-star wide receiver Hykeem Williams (6-3, 200), another 2023 prospect whom Ohio State was involved with earlier in the cycle, committed to Florida State on Sept. 23. He is the No. 22 overall prospect and No. 4 wide receiver in the class and the top-rated recruit in the Seminoles' class that now ranks 15th in the country.

- At time of press, Ohio State's class ranked No. 4 in the country with a team score of 284.63 behind No. 3 Georgia

(285.56), No. 2 Texas (286.90) and No. 1

Alabama (309.14), according to 247Sports' team composite rankings. The Buckeyes have a slim lead over No. 5 Notre Dame

(284.62) and No. 6 Oklahoma (284.29).

For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers.

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Wilson Making OH-So Good Impression For Jets

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Garrett Wilson didn't forget his college roots now that he's a rookie receiver for the New York Jets.

Playing in his second NFL game on Sept. 18 at Cleveland, he scored his first touchdown and promptly threw up his arms and gave an "O-H" to the fans in what some perceived as a taunt, others a salute to those who followed his career with the Buckeyes.

After the game, one in which he scored the game-winning touchdown on a 15-yard slant from Joe Flacco with 22 seconds left that, with the extra point, made it a 31-30 victory, he explained what he was thinking.

"That's just for all of the fans there," Wilson told Pro Football Focus. "I know a lot of them were watching for the previous three to four years at Ohio State, and I kind of felt the love in warmups. I kind of made my mind up if I scored that I wanted to do the 'O-H.' That's all that was."

"I mean, this is special – the moment I'll never forget for sure, being back in Ohio, and something I'll definitely tell my kids about. To get a win anywhere in this league is huge but definitely adds some flare to it being back where I played college ball."

Garrett, the 10th pick in the 2022 NFL draft, had eight catches for 102 yards (12.8 per catch) and two scores with a long of



FILE PHOTO

SEAMLESS TRANSITION — Former OSU wide receiver Garrett Wilson (5) has gotten off to a quick start for the New York Jets, garnering NFL Rookie of the Week honors for his role in their come-from-behind 31-30 win over the Cleveland Browns on Sept. 18.

31 yards vs. the Browns after grabbing four passes for 52 yards (13.0) in his debut against the Baltimore Ravens on Sept. 11.

But it was a non-catch that had former Jets and Ravens linebacker Bart Scott ex-tolling him after the Cleveland game. With 7:54 left in the fourth quarter and the Jets

facing a third-and-4 while trailing by seven, Wilson dropped a pass that would have been for a first down. After the Jets punted, the Browns scored to make it 30-17 with 1:54 remaining.

"I went absolutely crazy on the sideline," Wilson said. "I didn't want my drop to be the reason we lost the game."

The Jets rallied to within six and got the ball back on an onside kick, and Flacco showed faith in his young receiver by going to him for a 12-yard gain three plays before the winning score.

"Most guys would drop their head, but he relished the moment," Scott said on "Jets Game Plan," a postgame show. "In the opportunity to make up for it, he did it in a big way."

The footballs Wilson caught on his two touchdowns were put on a temporary shelf at the home he is still trying to get in order.

"I kept both balls," Wilson said. "Right now, nothing has been done. I haven't even been able to put a shower curtain up yet."

Jets cornerback D.J. Reed said Wilson reminds him of young star receivers Justin Jefferson of the Minnesota Vikings and Ja'Marr Chase of the Cincinnati Bengals, whom the Jets played Sept. 25. Wilson had six catches for 60 yards against the Bengals.

"As soon as they got in the league, they made their impact," Wilson said. "You saw how far the Bengals went last year (the Super Bowl) when they got on the right page with the quarterback. Watching (Jefferson and Chase) last year while I was in college, I knew that's what I wanted to do. That was my goal. That's what I planned on doing. But I was just seeing how things played out, waiting my turn and waiting for the opportunity to take advantage of it."

Jefferson was the first rookie to reach 1,400 receiving yards in 2020, and Chase upped the record to 1,455 last season. Wilson said he admires the way Chase, who played at LSU with Bengals and former Ohio State quarterback Joe Burrow, has so quickly made an impact in the NFL.

"He's great at getting position and mak-

ing a play on the ball," Wilson said. "I'm excited to pick up on some things from the sideline. When I'm watching DBs play, a lot of times those are the receivers that you see making plays on them. You want to take something from their game and see what they are using to get open. A lot of us run the same system, so you can get a better idea of how to run the route vs. this look. It's a copycat league."

Wilson, from Austin, Texas, teamed with Chris Olave in 2020 to become the first set of Ohio State receivers to be named first-team All-American (American Football Coaches Association) in the same season. Olave was the 11th pick by the New Orleans Saints in April.

As a junior last season, Wilson had 1,058 yards in 11 games. In 33 career games (19 starts) he made 143 catches for 2,213 yards and 23 touchdowns.

When targeting Wilson last season at Ohio State, his quarterbacks did not throw an interception, and his 141.7 QB rating when targeted was third among Power Five receivers, trailing only Alabama's Jameson Williams – a former Buckeye teammate – at 143.0 and OSU's Jaxon Smith-Njigba at 141.8.

Wilson is happy to contribute any way he can for the Jets.

"The coaches have a great plan for me," Wilson said. "If it involves zero catches or 100 catches, I'm ready to do either one."

"Just keep on proving to them that I am on that level and I want to be great. I'm nowhere near that yet. I have to keep pushing, but it's good to have the confidence of your teammates."

The coach has confidence as well.

"He's got grit," Jets head coach Robert Saleh said after the Cleveland game. "He is a dynamic football player. We all know that. He is still trying to find his footing. I thought he did a really nice job. Obviously, he has a couple things that he needs to clean up, especially there in the fourth quarter, but again he showed resolve. He got that big touchdown at the end. He's going to be a stud for a long time."

Wilson knows there will be highs and lows. The Jets are starving for a winner, so the scrutiny on him will increase as the season progresses.

"You can never be satisfied," he said. "For me, that's what I want to do, that's what I expect to do. When I'm out on the field, I want to make plays, I want to be involved, and I want to help the team. That's always the goal, and that won't change week to week. I'm not even close to being satisfied."

Scott has seen enough to think Wilson can have a special career.

"In the big moment he has superior confidence but he's not cocky now that he's being compared to Ja'Marr Chase and Justin Jefferson," Scott said. "That's high praise, but it shouldn't be that far off because last year Chase around this time was being compared to Justin Jefferson and he exceeded the expectations."

"Now let's see if he can take the next step. Next up is, can he perform when he becomes the center of attention for opposing defenses, where they make their game plan to take away what he does well?"

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Injuries Mounting Throughout Conference

With conference play now in full swing, a number of Big Ten teams picked up some concerning injuries with the increase in physicality.

Minnesota took perhaps the biggest hit, losing sixth-year wide receiver Chris Aut-

BIG TEN NOTES Andy Anders

man-Bell – who ranks ninth in school history for receiving yards – for the season after suffering a right leg injury in the Gophers' 49-7 win over Colorado on Sept. 17.

"He's a big member of this football team," Minnesota head coach P.J. Fleck said. "I'd be lying to you if I said he wasn't. He's one of the most integral parts of what we do and how we do it on and off the field, and one of the best people. But no matter what, we're trained to Row the Boat. He's trained to Row the Boat. I've known him for eight years, and no matter what, he'll put his oar back in the water."

Through three games, Autman-Bell had 11 receptions for 214 yards and a touchdown, and his average of 19.5 yards per catch was by far the highest on the team. Minnesota will look to wideouts Mike Brown-Stephens (12 catches, 180 yards) and Brevyn Spann-Ford (11 catches, 167 yards) to help pick up the slack.

Michigan is also dealing with several injuries. Sophomore running back Donovan Edwards, who had been used in tandem with junior Blake Corum, is dealing with an ankle injury and remains questionable for the Wolverines' game at Iowa on Oct. 1. Quarterback Cade McNamara, who lost his starting job to J.J. McCarthy, is also out for the foreseeable future, having suffered a lower-body injury, according to head coach Jim Harbaugh, in the Wolverines' 59-0 win over Connecticut on Sept. 17.

Michigan State, for its part, remains without star fifth-year safety Xavier Henderson and took another hit to its defense when redshirt senior defensive tackle Jacob Slade missed the Spartans' loss to Minnesota on Sept. 24. Slade's status is unknown for Oct. 1 at Maryland.

Purdue star quarterback Aidan O'Connell missed action on Sept. 24 against Florida Atlantic after suffering an undisclosed injury the previous week in a loss to Syracuse. Fourth-year player Austin Burton started in O'Connell's stead, finishing 21 of 29 passing for 166 yards, three touchdowns and an interception.

"It could be next week (at Minnesota on Oct. 1)," Purdue head coach Jeff Brohm said in regard to O'Connell's status. "It could be a couple of weeks. So we'll just play it by ear."

As if Nebraska's season weren't already in enough turmoil, having lost to an FCS opponent and firing its head coach, the Cornhuskers' second-leading rusher is now out for the season. Freshman Ajay Allen is done with an undisclosed ailment.

Those tuning in to Ohio State's 52-21 win over Wisconsin likely saw the play

where Badger tight end Clay Cundiff was upended and carted off the field, and it was reported after the game that Cundiff suffered a left leg fracture that will leave him out for the season.

Huskers Fire DC Chinander

Following Nebraska's 49-14 loss to Oklahoma on Sept. 17, the Cornhuskers announced the firing of defensive coordinator Erik Chinander, so far the second casualty of this season for Nebraska's coaching staff along with former head coach Scott Frost.

Chinander was brought to Lincoln as part of Frost's defensive staff in 2018, though Nebraska's defenses never showed much promise under Chinander's tutelage. They allowed 31.2 points per game in his first season as defensive coordinator, brought the mark down to 27.9 points per game in 2019, and then saw it jump back to 29.4 points per game allowed in 2020.

The Huskers allowed just 22.7 points per game last season, but the season was ultimately a wash as Nebraska finished just 3-9 on the year, further warming up Frost's seat before his eventual firing earlier in September.

"We appreciate Erik and the work and dedication he has given to our football program," interim head coach Mickey Joseph said. "At this time, I feel it is in the best interest of the Nebraska football program to take the leadership of the defense in another direction and decided Bill Busch will take over as defensive coordinator."

Joseph named Busch, who was special teams coordinator, as Nebraska's new defensive play caller, though the Huskers were off the weekend of Sept. 24, so his first chance at play-calling responsibilities will be Oct. 1 against Indiana.

Wildcats Suffer Historic Loss To Miami (Ohio)

In perhaps one of the worst losses in the 17-year coaching stint of Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald, the Wildcats dropped a 17-14 game to visiting Miami (Ohio) on Sept. 24.

The RedHawks – who were just 1-2 entering the game with a win over FCS-level Robert Morris and blowout losses to Kentucky and Cincinnati – kicked a go-ahead, 36-yard field goal with just 21 seconds remaining to lift Miami over the Wildcats on their own turf.

Northwestern quarterback Ryan Hilinski finished 24 of 42 passing for 232 yards without a score, while Miami starting quarterback Aveon Smith was just 7 of 19 for 62 yards and a touchdown. The star for the RedHawks was running back Keyon Mozee, who went for 171 yards on 21 carries, while the Wildcats got nothing from their rushing attack, going for just 107 rushing yards on 31 carries (3.5 per carry).

"We continue to beat ourselves," Fitzgerald said. "It looked like we had a couple drops, it looked like we turned the ball over, looked like we missed some targets. We had some one-on-one opportunities, and it didn't look like we made anybody miss."

This was the first win for the Mid-American Conference's RedHawks over a Big Ten team since a 44-14 win in 2003 over

Northwestern, three years before Fitzgerald would arrive in Evanston. To provide some further context, the quarterback for the RedHawks was Ben Roethlisberger, who recently completed an 18-year NFL career with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

This was the second consecutive loss for Northwestern after dropping a 31-24 game to Southern Illinois – an FCS team – the previous week. The Wildcats play at Penn State on Oct. 1.

Amazon Interest Could Impact Conference Realignment

With USC and UCLA set to join the Big Ten in 2024 and Oklahoma and Texas lining up with the SEC in 2025, there's no doubt conference realignment is a major topic of discussion in college football. There's also no doubt that media rights dollars are playing a huge factor in those discussions.

The Big Ten recently announced a seven-year, \$7 billion media rights deal for FOX, CBS and NBC to broadcast the conference's games over television, a deal which will begin July 1, 2023. Now, another player has entered to shake up the college football media rights landscape even more.

According to CBS Sports, Amazon has emerged as a player for broadcast rights as well, even though it could be a more difficult proposition for its streaming service.

"Streaming is going to continue to grow," an industry source told CBS Sports, "but there is a reason why the NFL is still (largely) on network television."

All of the Big Ten's marquee games over the next seven years have already been distributed among the three networks in the deal it announced in August, though lower-profile options could still be available to Amazon, according to CBS Sports' Dennis Dodd, especially if the Big Ten adds more teams.

Top-tier games from the Big 12 and Pac-12 conferences are also still on the table and may be the direction Amazon moves.

BIG 2022 Standings

East Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan	1	0	1.000	4	0	1.000
Ohio State	1	0	1.000	4	0	1.000
Penn State	1	0	1.000	4	0	1.000
Indiana	1	0	1.000	3	1	0.750
Maryland	0	1	0.000	3	1	0.750
Rutgers	0	1	0.000	3	1	0.750
Michigan State	0	1	0.000	2	2	0.500

West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Northwestern	1	0	1.000	1	3	.250
Minnesota	1	0	1.000	4	0	1.000
Iowa	1	0	1.000	3	1	.750
Illinois	0	1	0.000	3	1	.750
Purdue	0	1	0.000	2	2	.500
Wisconsin	0	1	0.000	2	2	.500
Nebraska	0	1	0.000	1	3	.250

Sept. 22 Game

Illinois 31, Chattanooga 0

Sept. 24 Games

Michigan 34, Maryland 27
Penn State 33, Central Michigan 14
Cincinnati 45, Indiana 24
Minnesota 34, Michigan State 7
Iowa 27, Rutgers 10
Miami (Ohio) 17, Northwestern 14
Ohio State 52, Wisconsin 21
Purdue 28, Florida Atlantic 26

Oct. 1 Games

Rutgers **at Ohio State, 3:30 p.m.**
Michigan at Iowa, noon
Illinois at Wisconsin, noon
Indiana at Nebraska, 7:30 p.m.
Purdue at Minnesota, noon
Northwestern at Penn State, 3:30 p.m.
Michigan State at Maryland, 3:30 p.m.



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OSU Picks Up Commit From Guard Chatman

Just 15 days removed from the decommitment of Dayton Chaminade Julianne four-star combo guard George Washington III (6-2, 165), Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann had already filled his void in the class.

COURT REPORT Jack Emerson

Minneapolis Totino-Grace four-star combo guard Taison Chatman (6-4, 170) announced his commitment to Ohio State on Sept. 20. Chatman is the No. 44 overall player, the No. 11 combo guard and the top-ranked player from Minnesota according to 247Sports' composite ranking. Chatman selected the Buckeyes over Xavier, Kansas, Minnesota and Virginia.

Chatman is known for his offensive game, and he has picked up the reputation of a sharpshooter. He can play both guard positions but leans toward the two more than the one.

"Taison Chatman has a basketball frame with good size and nice length," On3 national recruiting analyst Jamie Shaw said. "What stands out the most in his game is his ability to play in the pick and roll. He can make all the reads and does so with a never rushed pace. The motor can get hot and cold and there are times when he looks disengaged. Chatman has deep range, and he is comfortable off the bounce or off the catch. He is an intriguing 2/1 combo guard who can play off the ball or initiate in certain offensive sets."

Chatman led the Adidas Three Stripes Select Basketball circuit in scoring this spring, averaging 24.1 points while shooting 56.0 percent from the field and 38.7 percent from three-point range in eight games played. He added averages of 6.5

rebounds, 3.0 assists and 1.4 steals while aiding D1 Minnesota 17U to a 4-4 record in circuit play.

Chatman joined fellow commits in Pickerington (Ohio) Central four-star small forward Devin Royal, Wichita (Kan.) Sunrise Christian four-star small forward Scotty Middleton and St. Marys (Ohio) three-star center Austin Parks, as well as Washington, on an official visit to Ohio State on the weekend of Sept. 3, and Chatman was present at the Ohio State-Notre Dame football game. Chatman also took official visits to Xavier and Kansas during his recruitment.

"A huge factor that played into it was my relationship with the coaching staff," Chatman said. "When I went on the visit, it just felt right, it felt like home. I bonded with the players and the coaching staff, so it just felt right."

With Chatman in the fold, Ohio State's 2023 class ranks as the No. 5 group in the country, slotting in behind Duke, Michigan State, Connecticut and Kentucky, according to 247Sports.

Chatman pointed to his work ethic and attitude as attributes he'll bring to the Ohio State program.

"I feel (I'll bring) my competitive nature," Chatman said. "I'm a competitor. I love to win. I'll do whatever it takes to win."

Key, Sueing Lead Young Frontcourt

With several departures and new additions to the roster for the Ohio State men's basketball team, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is taking stock of the Buckeyes' roster entering this season. In this issue, the focus shifts to the program's frontcourt.

The Buckeyes have a healthy mix of returners and youth manning their frontcourt.

Zed Key, Justice Sueing and Kalen Etzler make up the returners, with Key being the only one of three to play signif-

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
Taison Chatman	G	6-4	170	★★★★	Minneapolis Totino-Grace
Scotty Middleton	SF	6-6	180	★★★★	Wichita (Kan.) Sunrise Christian
Austin Parks	C	6-9	240	★★★★	Saint Mary's (Ohio) Memorial
Devin Royal	SF	6-7	210	★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) Central

icant minutes last season. Key grew into an everyday starter and fan favorite during his sophomore campaign, dazzling Ohio State fans with his eccentric "finger guns" and "raising the roof" celebrations.

Not only did Key light a fire in the Nuthouse crowd on a nightly basis, but he also became a reliable scorer in the low-post, using his 6-8, 255-pound frame to bully opposing defenders in the paint. As a sophomore, Key produced averages of 7.8 points and 5.6 rebounds per game. Although Key is adept in the paint, head coach Chris Holtmann said he had worked to improve his perimeter scoring during the summer months, and while Key will almost certainly see his on-the-court role increase, Holtmann emphasized that he will also be counted on for his leadership qualities this season.

"Zed is one of the most likable kids you'll ever be around or coach," Holtmann said in an interview with Big Ten Network's Andy Katz. "He spent his first two years kind of being this young kid who's a little bit gregarious and has a lot of fun. Now, he's moving into a role where he's going to have to bring a mature approach every day in order to lead effectively."

"He had a good summer, a really good summer. But the consistency of effort, impact in terms of play and then in his leadership is something that he has to answer."

Sueing was cleared to return from an abdominal injury in early September after missing all but two games for the Buckeyes last season. Although he could not help his team on the floor, he remained a valuable leader for Ohio State, serving as one of the team's four captains.

While he was held out most of last season, he was able to leave an impression on the Ohio State fan base during the 2020-21 campaign. During his first season with the Buckeyes, after spending two seasons at California and sitting out the 2019-20 season due to transfer rules, Sueing was counted on in a variety of roles. He started in all 31 games for Ohio State during the season, producing 10.7 points and 5.5 rebounds per game. He also added a team-best 29 steals.

With Sueing set to return to the floor, Holtmann said it has been a long road to get back to health but the Honolulu native attacked it with everything he had.

"He's been disappointed at times, but he's as optimistic as he's ever been because he's been able to actually practice and do some things," Holtmann said. "Once you get that under your belt, you're a little more confident. I think he feels really good about where he's at now."

Etzler redshirted last season but will provide the Buckeyes with a low-post player who can stretch the floor. Standing at

6-8, 190-pounds, Etzler has a slight frame but can use his length and speed to shoot over defenders or drive past them.

Joining the Buckeyes as a three-star recruit, Etzler ranked as the No. 26 power forward in the 2021 class after leading Van Wert (Ohio) Crestview with 18.0 points and 10.0 rebounds per game as a senior.

Flipping over to the newcomers, Orlando (Fla.) Lake Highland Prep four-star forward Brice Sensabaugh has already generated plenty of buzz ahead of his Ohio State career.

At the Kingdom Summer League, a pro-am event held on the Ohio Dominican University campus during the summer, Sensabaugh produced a 51-point outing on July 3 while showcasing his three-level scoring ability and athletic burst with multiple highlight-reel dunks.

Prior to his memorable run at the Kingdom Summer League, Sensabaugh dominated the Florida high school basketball scene, earning Gatorade Player of the Year and Mr. Basketball honors during his senior season. He aided Lake Highland Prep to a 25-4 record and run to the state semifinals with 25.1 points, 7.2 rebounds and 1.5 assists per game.

"Brice can score the ball right away, as a freshman," Holtmann said. "He has to continue to grow in other areas, but he is a really talented scorer."

Much to the excitement of Ohio State fans, Holtmann also found his first true big man since Kaleb Wesson in 6-11, 220-pound Felix Okpara.

Okpara, a native of Lagos, Nigeria, did not begin playing basketball until 2018 after spending much of his childhood playing soccer. Upon his move to the United States, Okpara grew into a four-star recruit and the No. 14 center in the 2022 class, according to 247Sports' composite score. Okpara aided Branson (Mo.) Link Academy to the Geico National Tournament finals, primarily thanks to his rim-protecting prowess.

Holtmann pointed to a transition process that the young big man may have to go through during the early stages of his collegiate career.

"There's going to have to be a patience level with any big guy that's a freshman, that has a lot of room for growth," Holtmann said. "He's done some really good things. He still gets the ball slapped away from him at times, so there's a lot of things we have to work on with him. But, he's a legit 6-11, he can almost reach the top of the backboard. He's a really good athlete and terrific mover at that size."



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Ohio State Adds PG Collins In 2023 Class

Ohio State has added a second member to its 2023 recruiting class with Snellville (Ga.) Brookwood four-star point guard Diana Collins (5-9), who announced her commitment to OSU on Sept. 16.

Collins was previously committed to Georgia, pledging to the Bulldogs on Dec. 31, 2021, but she reopened her recruitment on March 23, the same day that Georgia head coach Joni Taylor left for the same job at Texas A&M.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

Following her decommitment, Collins then took an official visit to Georgia Tech and Ohio State the weekend of Sept. 9 before her commitment to the Buckeyes a week later. In a statement released on Twitter, Collins thanked her family, coaches and mentors.

"With that being said, I will be attending THE Ohio State University to further my athletic and academic career," she wrote. "I want to thank the Ohio State family for making me feel at home. Can't wait to make history with all of you!"

According to ESPN, Collins is the No. 67 overall prospect in the class, with a scout rating of 93, as well as the No. 12 point guard and the third-best player out of Georgia. In addition to Ohio State, Collins had offers from Alabama, Auburn, Georgia, Miami (Fla.) and West Virginia, among others.

Collins helped lead Brookwood to a 23-5 record last season and a run in the Georgia high school playoffs before dropping a 77-60 decision to Norcross in the quarterfinals. She averaged 21.5 points, 5.3 rebounds and 2.7 steals per game last season while shooting 45.0 percent from the field.

A dual citizen of the United States and Sweden, Collins was also a member of the Sweden U20 Women's National Team that

finished 11th at the FIBA U20 Women's European Championships over the summer.

Sweden went 2-1 in group play before dropping the opening playoff game against France, 73-57. Sweden then defeated Bulgaria, 94-71, in the ninth-place bracket before falling to Latvia, 78-58. They earned an 11th-place finish with a 71-44 win over Lithuania.

In those seven games, Collins averaged 11.6 points, 3.3 rebounds, 2.9 assists and 2.9 steals in 28.8 minutes per contest and shot 37.5 percent from the field. She tallied 20 points, six rebounds, five assists and six steals in the win over Bulgaria and finished with 13 points and eight steals in the win over Lithuania.

Ohio State currently has three point guards on the roster in junior Madison Greene, sophomore Kaitlyn Costner and freshman Kaia Henderson. Collins is the second commitment in Ohio State's 2023 class, joining Faith Carson, a 6-4 center out of Buchanan, Mich.

McGuff Talks Offseason, Contract Extension

Buckeye Sports Bulletin had the chance to catch up with head coach Kevin McGuff on Sept. 16, and he said the offseason has gone well for the Buckeyes.

"Our kids are in a good place," he said. "We have enough people coming back that I feel like we kind of hit the ground running this fall, so they're doing a good job. They're working hard and are motivated so it's been really good so far."

McGuff also spoke about the new contract he received over the offseason that will tie him to Ohio State through the 2025-26 season.

"This is where I want to be and I love Ohio State, so I'm really appreciative of the opportunity to continue to be here and the support that we're getting from the administration," he said. "I think stability, in this day and age, really helps with recruiting and things like that."

McGuff received a four-year contract with a base salary of \$675,000, up from

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.
Diana Collins	PG	5-9	★★★★	Snellville (Ga.) Brookwood

\$590,860.08 in his last contract, and an annual compensation of \$1,050,000. His new contract began July 1 and will run through the conclusion of the 2025-26 season, which would be his 13th at Ohio State.

If he were to stay at Ohio State through the life of his contract, he would become the longest tenured coach in program history, surpassing Nancy Darsch (12 seasons, 1985-97) and Jim Foster (11 seasons, 2002-13).

McGuff's assistant coaches – Wes Brooks, Carla Morrow and Jalen Powell – combine to make \$1,365,262.68 in base salary.

Players Take In Games At Ohio Stadium

There are plenty of perks that come with being a student-athlete, but at Ohio State, that can sometimes mean getting to meet LeBron James.

"It was crazy," transfer forward Eboni Walker said. "I'm walking around wearing his logo and his shoes, and then he just was right in front of me. I shook his hand and said hi to him and everything and that was it, but he was a really nice person as well. It's been so surreal since I've been here."

Walker transferred to Ohio State this off-

season from Syracuse, and attending Ohio State's football season opener against Notre Dame left a strong impression.

"I think the biggest (reaction) for me, even though it was because there were a lot of celebrities, but the first game – they cut off all the roads, people are walking miles just to get to the game, they're tailgating hours before," she said. "It's raining and people are still outside going to concerts and partying, having fun. Kids are out, older people are out, it was just like – and they sold out the game. All these different celebrities came back. The guys that got drafted came back to watch the game."

"It just shows you that the support is unmatched," she continued. "You don't see that at any other (school). I'm still scrolling through stuff and still seeing Ohio State and Notre Dame (photos and videos) pop up on my social media. I love it. It's really a culture of togetherness. If you say you're from Ohio State or you're wearing those colors, they're going to support you."

Several women's basketball players were on hand for the win over the Irish, and the whole team was on hand for Ohio State's win the following week against Arkansas State.



COURTESY OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

SATURDAY IN THE 'SHOE – The Ohio State women's basketball team was in attendance for Ohio State football's 21-10 win over Notre Dame on Sept. 3 and the Buckeyes' 45-12 triumph over Arkansas State on Sept. 10. Several players got the opportunity to meet celebrities at the Ohio State-Notre Dame game such as Los Angeles Lakers star forward LeBron James.

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Icers Look For Good Start, Better Finish

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When OSU coach Steve Rohlik tells his team every goal matters, he is not just spouting coach-speak after the perils of last season. The Buckeyes were rolling toward a possible first-place finish in the Big Ten, ranked in the top 10 of the USCHO.com poll and, most importantly, comfortably within the parameters of the PairWise ratings that parallel the selection committee's choices for the 16-team NCAA tourney.

In other words, they were sitting pretty. Then it all fell apart.

Standout freshman defenseman Mason Lohrei sustained a season-ending knee injury in the first period of the Minnesota series on Feb. 11. That would start the Buckeyes on a spiral that saw them lose the final four regular-season games and then be eliminated by Penn State in the Big Ten tournament quarterfinals. The Buckeyes won the opener of the best-of-three series but suffered consecutive one-goal losses.

That put OSU in the unenviable position of relying on others to qualify with an at-large bid for the NCAAs. Remarkably, results over the next two weekends from the various conference tournaments fell Ohio State's way until Harvard upset Quinnipiac in overtime in the ECAC final, knocking the Buckeyes out of the last spot by a slim margin.

What did Bentley have to do with it? The Buckeyes lost 2-1 to the Falcons in the season opener, and that one-goal defeat to a team that would finish 14-20-2 would come back to haunt OSU when the PairWise numbers were calculated at the end of the season.

Was it the sole factor in not qualifying? No, but as the Ohio State men's hockey team opens the season at Mercyhurst on Oct. 1 and 2, it knows that what happens in the first weekend of fall could affect what the Buckeyes are doing in the spring of 2023.

"You look back on last season and you see that game one at Bentley and maybe we didn't bring our best and we lose and that's it right there," Lohrei told BSB on Sept. 20. "That could be the reason we didn't make the tournament. So I think this year we're coming in with that mentality that from the start we're going to be hard to play against and we're going to win every game because right there, game one, that could be the difference between punching that ticket and playing in the tournament, having a shot at taking it all the way and winning the national championship vs. going home."

The Buckeyes return 22 of 27 players from last season's team that was 22-13-2 overall and 13-9-2 (fourth) in the Big Ten. And yes, this veteran group wants to move on from their collapse, but it still lingers.

Forward Gustaf Westlund cited the desire to make amends as a major reason for coming back for a fifth season.

"I want to give it another shot," he said. "We have some unfinished business, and I want to shoot for the Frozen Four."

Ohio State hasn't officially been to the NCAA tournament since the 2018-19 season in which it reached the Frozen Four. The 2019-20 team had done enough to qualify (10th in the PairWise) but was denied a school-record fourth straight appearance when the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically cut the season short on March 12, 2020, before the semifinals of the Big Ten tournament could be played.

Rohlik, entering his 10th season as head coach, is trying to find the balance of acknowledging what happened last season and putting the attention on the upcoming season for the 16th-ranked Buckeyes.

"Everybody was obviously disappointed where we thought we could have been at the end of the year, there's no question," he said. "I mean, we felt we were good enough to make it. You put yourself in a position to get there. We did that for the most part, and then when it came down to it, it got out of our hands and you're not in the tournament."

"It's something you've got to learn from as a coaching staff and as a group, but as I've said before, every group is different. Every team's got a different personality, and you don't want to dwell on things, but internally as coaches, you want to continue to get better. It's back to the adage of one day at a time — let's see where we're at. That's kind of where we're at right now in building with this group."

Fortunately for the Buckeyes, most of the pieces are still there except for forward Georgii Merkulov. All he did as a freshman last season was lead the Buckeyes with 20 goals and 34 points, parlaying that into a contract with the Boston Bruins after the OSU season ended. NHL.com rates him the fifth-best prospect in the Boston system.

Two spots ahead of him on that list is Lohrei (6-4, 210), the Bruins' 58th pick in the 2020 NHL draft. The Madison, Wis., native was selected to this preseason's All-Big Ten second team in voting by the coaches.

He is joined in the preseason honors by Czech goaltender Jakub Dobeš after the pair were named to the conference all-freshman



FILE PHOTO

ROHLIKING GOOD TIME — Entering his 10th season at the helm of the Ohio State men's hockey program, coach Steve Rohlik looks to bring the Buckeyes back to the NCAA tournament after his program hasn't been there since 2019.

team in 2020-21. Dobeš, the 136th selection in the 2020 draft by the Montreal Canadiens, was the Big Ten Goaltender of the Year and co-Big Ten Freshman of the Year.

"I want to use my experience from last year and try to put it to this season," Dobeš said. "Just play with more confidence and use more experience to make me a better player to help the team."

Fresh Faces

Unlike last season when Rohlik brought in six freshmen, two graduate transfers and a senior transfer, there are four freshmen and one transfer for this season.

Associate head coach Steve Miller also left to take the same position with the Minnesota Golden Gophers, and Luke Strand joins Rohlik's staff as an assistant coach. He has an extensive background at the junior, collegiate, professional and international levels and most recently was with Sioux City (Iowa) in the junior United States Hockey League.

Ohio State begins the home schedule — and the Big Ten slate — on Oct. 7 and 8 against Wisconsin. For the second straight season, the upper level of Value City Arena will be closed to limit capacity to about 9,000, with one "home game" exception: The Buckeyes will "host" Michigan at FirstEnergy Stadium, home of the Cleveland Browns, on Feb. 18 for OSU's fourth

outdoor game and first since playing Michigan at the Cleveland Guardians' Progressive Field in January 2012.

"I'm pumped," senior forward Tate Singleton said. "I texted my dad right away. I was, 'Hey, you've got to come out for this.' I don't really have words for it. It's going to be surreal."

By the way, the Buckeyes are home to play Bentley on Oct. 20 and 21.

Net Results

Dobeš (6-4, 198) was 21-12-2 with a 2.26 goals-against average and .934 save percentage while playing in 35 (34 starts) of 37 games. He ranked in the top seven in the NCAA in save percentage, saves and wins. His .934 save percentage is tied for second in school history, and his 21 wins are tied for fifth all-time in a season. His 1,086 saves were the second most for a Buckeye in a single season.

Rohlik said his star goalie still needs to get better but can't be overwhelmed by the process.

"I look at it as just trying to keep improving and work on things, but if somebody sets himself up to be perfect, you're going to fail," Rohlik said. "Jakub had a heck of a year. As a freshman goaltender to step in and do what he did is outstanding. I think we approach it as, just keep trying to make yourself better and then see what happens because if



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OHIO STATE MEN'S HOCKEY PREVIEW

he tries to go off and be perfect, then it becomes a struggle.”

Having Dobeš in net allows for more freedom on offense.

“He’s incredible,” Singleton said. “We can make that extra pass or hold onto the puck a little more knowing that we have such a great goalie. He gives us a chance to make a play, and if something happens, we’ve got him back there.”

Senior Ryan Snowden (6-3, 205) and sophomore Reilly Herbst (6-0, 185) are the backups. Snowden started the season opener before Dobeš took over the next night and beat Bentley 7-1. Snowden was 1-1-0 with a 2.31 goals-against average and a .918 save percentage in six games (three starts) last season. Herbst did not play in a game.

Getting Defensive

Lohrei (6-4, 210) is returning to form after his knee surgery and will look to increase his offensive production while improving his defense.

He scored 29 points (four goals, 25 assists) in 31 games. His assist total ranks 10th in Ohio State history for a single season by a defenseman and tied him for eighth by a Buckeye freshman skater, while his 0.81 assists per game are tied for the second best by a Buckeye since 2000. Lohrei was plus-16 and blocked 41 shots.

“He’s worked extremely hard to put himself in a spot right now,” Rohlik said. “Is he 100 percent? I think he’d be the first one to say he’s not, but I think he’s pushed himself to where you know it’s nice to see him on the ice and getting some results for how hard he’s worked.”

Lohrei is eager for the season.

“It’s the first real big injury I’ve ever had,” he said. “It was definitely tough to watch last year, especially how it ended for us earlier than we had hoped. I thought we deserved to be in (the NCAA tournament). That sucked, so I’m excited to be back and ready to go.”

Senior C.J. Regula (6-3, 205) knows about injuries. He was injured last preseason and missed the first 25 games, ending the year with one assist in seven games. He also was out 12 games as a freshman and enters his fourth season having played just 53 games.

The other returning seniors are James Marooney (5-9, 175) and Dominic Vidoli (6-0, 190). After playing in a combined 23 games his first two seasons, Marooney had a goal and eight assists in 31 games as a junior, including his first career goal vs. Mercyhurst on Nov. 27, 2021.

Vidoli spent part of his freshman year in 2018-19 playing for Boston University. He has played 29 games for the Buckeyes over the past two seasons, earning seven points (two goals, five assists).

Evan McIntyre (5-10, 174) is the lone junior defenseman. In 24 career games he has four assists.

Cole McWard joins Lohrei as a second-year blue liner. While Lohrei deservedly drew a lot of attention, McWard (6-1, 205) quietly had a productive season with 16 points (four goals, 12 assists) in 36 games. He was plus-13 for the season and registered at least a point (four goals, nine assists) in 10 of his final 16 games.

There are three newcomers on defense in freshmen Tyler Duke and John Larkin and senior transfer Scooter Brickey, who played 59 games over three seasons for

Western Michigan. Brickey (6-4, 215) had an assist while playing only 10 games last season.

“Scooter brings experience,” Rohlik said. “He’s (a) right-handed shot, which we need. He’s played at a high level, so we’re excited about that. I think he brings a lot of elements to the table. He can handle the puck. He can skate and can be physical.”

Duke (5-9, 180) is from Strongsville, Ohio, via the prestigious U.S. National Team Development Program, and he attended this summer’s prospects camp of the Toronto Maple Leafs. His father and uncle played at Western Michigan and his brother, Dylan, plays for Michigan.

“Tyler’s competitiveness is off the charts,” Rohlik said. “He brings a lot to the table, has a great energy about him.”

Larkin (6-2, 190) spent the 2021-22 season with the Austin (Texas) Bats of the North American Hockey League, where he had two goals and 25 assists in 49 games. He is familiar with Columbus since his sister, Veronica, graduated from Ohio State and is in law school at nearby Capital University.

“Lark’s played a lot of junior hockey,” Rohlik said, “so he’s coming in with a lot of experience.

“I like our depth on the D corps. We’ve got good balance. We bring back some veterans from last year. Then you throw in our newcomers. It’s a really good mix.”

Going On The Offensive

In addition to Merkulov leaving, the Buckeyes lost to graduation their fifth- and sixth-leading scorers in defenseman Grant Gabriele (five goals, 15 assists, 20 points) and forward Quinn Preston (7-12-19).

“Georgii was a standout, but everywhere below, we had a pretty good spread with every line scoring,” said fifth-year forward Jake Wise. “I feel like most games we had everyone contributing, and that’s what you need in college hockey.”

The prize addition is freshman Stephen Halliday (6-4, 210), who was chosen in the fourth round (104th overall) by the Ottawa Senators in the 2022 draft after playing the past three seasons for Dubuque (Iowa) of the United States Hockey League.

He finished his four-year career in the league fifth all-time for regular-season points (215) and third all-time in USHL regular-season career assists (147). His points (95) and assists (65) last season both rank third all-time in USHL history for a season and were team records.

“He proved himself at that level,” Rohlik said. “If you have almost 100 points in a season in the USHL, you’ve done something right.

“But he’s coming into a whole other level, and he’s got a learning curve here. I think he’s going through that right now, but he has a great skill set.”

Wise (5-10, 185) transferred to Ohio State last season after three at Boston University and was third on the Buckeye scoring list behind Merkulov and Lohrei with 28 points (10 goals, 18 assists) in 35 games. In his previous three seasons, he totaled 17 points (three goals, 14 assists) in 50 games.

“Last year was a huge step for me,” said Wise, a third-round pick (69th) by the Chicago Blackhawks in 2018. “I’m looking for the same this year. I want to keep growing as a player. I haven’t really played a ton of

2022-23 Ohio State Men’s Hockey Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Yr.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown
2	James Marooney	Defenseman	Senior	5-9	175	Chaska, Minn.
3	Cole McWard	Defenseman	Sophomore	6-1	205	Fenton, Mo.
4	John Larkin	Defenseman	Freshman	6-2	190	Northville, Mich.
5	Tyler Duke	Defenseman	Freshman	5-9	180	Strongsville, Ohio
6	Mason Lohrei	Defenseman	Sophomore	6-4	210	Madison, Wis.
7	Evan McIntyre	Defenseman	Junior	5-10	174	Oakville, Ontario
8	Scooter Brickey	Defenseman	Senior	6-4	215	Burtchville, Mich.
9	Dominic Vidoli	Defenseman	Senior	6-0	190	Wake Forest, N.C.
11	Kamil Sadlocha	Forward	Senior	5-11	185	Carpentersville, Ill.
13	Tate Singleton	Forward	Senior	5-9	177	West Lebanon, N.H.
14	Dalton Messina	Forward	Senior	5-11	195	Macomb, Mich.
15	Cam Thiesing	Forward	Sophomore	6-0	184	Nashville, Tenn.
17	Mark Cheremeta	Forward	Senior	5-11	185	Parkland, Fla.
18	Michael Gildon	Forward	Junior	6-2	196	Plano, Texas
19	Stephen Halliday	Forward	Freshman	6-4	210	Glenwood, Md.
20	Matt Cassidy	Forward	Senior	6-0	187	Medford, N.J.
21	Joe Dunlap	Forward	Junior	6-0	185	Windham, N.H.
23	Davis Burnside	Forward	Freshman	6-0	176	Scottsdale, Ariz.
26	Jaedon Leslie	Forward	Senior	6-1	187	St. Albert, Alberta
28	Jake Wise	Forward	5th-Year	5-10	185	Reading, Mass.
29	Gustaf Westlund	Forward	5th-Year	6-0	185	Stockholm, Sweden
30	Ryan Snowden	Goalie	Senior	6-3	205	Lincoln University, Pa.
34	Reilly Herbst	Goalie	Sophomore	6-0	185	Niwot, Colo.
44	Jakub Dobeš	Goalie	Sophomore	6-4	198	Ostrava, Czech Republic
65	CJ Regula	Defenseman	Senior	6-3	205	Bloomfield Hills, Mich.
71	Patrick Guzzo	Forward	Junior	6-3	198	Marysville, Mich.
94	Travis Treloar	Forward	Junior	5-11	177	Kalmar, Sweden

Head Coach — Steve Rohlik

Assistant Coach — JB Bittner, **Assistant Coach** — Luke Strand, **Volunteer Assistant Coach** — Dustin Carlson, **Director of Hockey Operations** — Layne LeBel, **Equipment Manager** — Tim Adams, **Athletic Trainer** — Jason Rule

college hockey (85 games) even though I’ve been around a while. I haven’t got to 100 games yet.”

Westlund (6-0, 185), from Stockholm, Sweden, was captain last season when he was seventh on the team with 16 points (eight goals, eight assists) while playing in 37 games. He scored the overtime winner vs. Bowling Green on Dec. 16, 2021.

He wants to use his experience to help younger teammates.

“I hope I’m someone to look up to being that I’ve had a fair share of college games,” said Westlund, who has 70 career points (31 goals, 39 assists) in 119 games.

Kamil Sadlocha (5-11, 185) leads the six returning fourth-year seniors, having scored 16 points (seven goals, nine assists). Singleton (5-9, 177) was right behind with 10 goals and five assists while playing a pesky game.

“I think you use the end of last year to fire you up a little bit,” Singleton said. “We had a really, really solid team, and you let games at the end get away from you. I think it kind of just fuels the fire to finally get started this year.”

Matt Cassidy (6-0, 187) played 12 games with four assists in his second season with the Buckeyes after previously playing a season at Quinnipiac in 2018-19, and Mark Cheremeta (5-11, 185) scored five goals and added eight assists last season. He scored the winner against Michigan State on Oct. 30.

Jaedon Leslie (6-1, 187) scored five points (three goals, two assists) in 28 games last season while serving as an alternate captain, and Dalton Messina (5-11, 195) heads into his senior season with two assists in 23 career games.

There are four juniors returning with Travis Treloar (5-11, 177) the top scorer in the class from last season. He had 14 points (seven goals, seven assists) in 36 games,

and he was the team’s rookie of the year for 2020-21 when he led the Buckeyes in scoring with 20 points (eight goals, 12 assists) in 25 games.

Joe Dunlap (6-0, 185) was awarded the 2021-22 Most Improved Player award for Ohio State. He had seven goals and six assists for 13 points while playing in 32 games last season after one goal in 17 games as a freshman.

Michael Gildon (6-2, 196) played in 16 games last season, recording eight points (three goals, five assists). He had a four-game point streak (two goals, four assists) in games he played from Jan. 8 to Feb. 5.

Patrick Guzzo (6-3, 198) posted six goals and six assists last season, including scoring three goals in the two-game series against Long Island University, and lone sophomore forward Cam Thiesing (6-0, 184) finished fourth in OSU scoring as a freshman with 25 points (eight goals, 17 assists) in 37 games to win the team’s Unsung Player award. He had 15 points (six goals, nine assists) over the final 20 games.

Besides Halliday, David Burnside (6-0, 176) is the other frosh forward. He played in the USHL last season for Des Moines (Iowa) and Dubuque and had a combined 43 points (18 goals, 25 assists) in 60 games.

Rohlik thinks the Buckeyes will score by committee.

“I’d love to see a bunch of guys get seven, eight goals each, and I think that’s what we’re capable of,” he said. “I think that’s the way we’re built. The scoring is going to be a little bit spread out.

“That being said, we didn’t expect to get what we got out of Georgii last year. We knew he was a good player, but all of a sudden, he ends up with 20 goals. I wouldn’t be shocked if we had a couple of those guys this year all of a sudden pop.”

Selma Trip Inspires OSU Student-Athletes

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

As Lynda Blackmon Lowery spoke, Ohio State senior gymnast Donovan Hewitt watched in astonished silence from the pew-laden main sanctuary of Brown Chapel AME Church, his dark brown eyes misting over with stark reverence.

Lowery was there for Bloody Sunday on March 7, 1965, when state and local law enforcement attacked a group of civil rights activists beginning the first of three 54-mile marches from Selma, Ala., to Montgomery, Ala.

They were protesting the denial of their voting rights and the murder of 26-year-old activist Jimmie Lee Jackson. Police met them on horseback on Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, demanding they turn back before crossing. When the protesters didn't, they were assaulted with whips, tear gas and billy clubs – one of which left a serious head wound on Lowery, just 15 years old at the time. The youngest person on the march, it took her years to piece together exactly what occurred.

"She didn't actually know what happened to her," Hewitt said. "She didn't know that she got attacked. She just was bleeding and had a concussion and passed out."

Hewitt heard Lowery speak in July as part of a trip to Selma that the Big Ten hosted for 100 student-athletes, coaches and administrators. Those in attendance spent three days learning about the history of civil rights activism in the area and how they can take the lessons of the past and apply them to their future.

Hewitt was one of five Black student-athletes sent on the trip by Ohio State, joining third-year women's soccer defender Nina LeFlore, junior basketball center Zed Key, fourth-year cheerleader Brooke Shields and women's track and field senior sprinter Jaydan Wood.

According to Hewitt, Wood and LeFlore, it's an experience that will stick with them the rest of their lives.

"It made me angry, just to think that that's what people of my race and color had to go through just to get basic things like the right to vote," Wood said. "Just to be treated that way because of our darker skin complexion. But then it brought me joy to know that what they did wasn't in vain, to see the change that we have in today's society."

The Big Ten trip to Selma was originally scheduled to happen in the summer of 2021, but after a resurgence in COVID cases, the conference pushed the event back a year.

Those selected to go had to be not only standout student-athletes, but standouts in their community and as leaders as well, Hewitt said. The gymnast himself is a member of Redefining Athletic Standards, a Black male student-athlete club at Ohio State, and the school's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, or SAAC.

Wood is also a member of SAAC, not just at the OSU level but for the Big Ten's committee as well, and LeFlore is involved in SAAC as well.

"SAAC is a leadership group," LeFlore said. "One athlete from each team is cho-

sen. We just discuss student-athlete resources, what needs to be changed, what is good, what's working. We just represent the team and the student-athlete body in general."

Activism is something that LeFlore holds dear, and her faith is a big part of that. She discussed her desire to lead a God-centered life, something that helped her through personal struggles within her family in the past, and her values are apparent to the coaches around her.

"Nina is a wonderful human being," said Ohio State women's soccer coach Lori Walker-Hock. "She is constantly working on deepening her core and what she believes in, and she operates from a place where everything is washed through her core."

Lessons LeFlore learned from the history of activism she got to witness on the Selma trip aligned with the core Walker-Hock mentioned.

"Serving others and loving others and being available for others is a principle that I live by and pretty much my purpose in everything I do," LeFlore said. "That's what I find purpose in in sport, in school, as a family member, as a friend. How can I help others and make their day?"

Wood jumped at the chance to go when it was offered. Reading about what civil rights activists did is one thing, she noted, but walking where they walked and observing the sights of Selma firsthand proved much more eye-opening.

"My initial thought when it came was, 'Why not take advantage of this opportunity?' I know I had not gotten a chance to learn much about Selma through my history classes, and I felt like I could gain knowledge by taking this trip. Honestly, it's one of the best experiences that I've had."

During the trip, Wood felt outrage for the past and happiness for progress, but there's also a fear of what's to come that resides, and she pondered what she can do to keep making positive change.

"It made me nervous just to see that history is kind of beginning to repeat itself," Wood said. "The incidents that we have nowadays with the police, shootings and killings with Black individuals and just police brutality as a whole – so a bit of anger, a bit of joy, a bit of nervous cautiousness."

Nothing sticks with her more though than the time she and other student-athletes spent at The Legacy Museum in Montgomery.

The long, narrow building had its exhibits laid out in an order that "felt like a timeline" and displayed the history of slavery and subsequent racism in America from the first slaves to present day. Paid actors and holograms discussed issues of mass incarceration from prison cells, and jars of dirt from the sites of lynchings were displayed. One visual stood out most to Wood, however.

"It just gave me goose bumps and chills – you walk in, and it's floating (clay) slave heads in the ocean," Wood said. "It's very realistic. And you look up, and it's these video boards of the number of people that were enslaved, and you see it going into the high millions."

"Everybody came out of (the museum)



FILE PHOTO

MORE THAN A GAME — Ohio State student-athletes Brooke Shields (left), Jaydan Wood (center-left), Zed Key (center), Donovan Hewitt (center-right) and Nina LeFlore (right) participated in the Big Ten's Big Life Series in Alabama, where they underwent an educational experience focused on the fight for civil rights in the United States in the 1960s.

crying," Hewitt added. "It was insane."

Hewitt grew up in a diverse area of Washington, D.C., and credits that with showing him different views and perspectives on the world that others may not have seen. He has a respect for other peoples' life stories and feels it is good for society as a whole when others share their experiences, and as for his experience in Selma, his mind first went to the impact of the weather.

"It was hot," Hewitt said. "It was like, hot and humid. I remember starting to complain a little bit, but as we were complaining, they were showing us videos of (the civil rights activists) walking miles and miles on end from literally Selma, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama, which we drove, and it took us an hour to drive. That's like a day trip, and it was hot back then, too. They were doing it in dress shoes and dress pants."

Following their tour of The Legacy Museum, its founder, Bryan Stevenson, spoke to the group, a speech LeFlore noted to be her most lasting memory from the trip. It echoed much of what the athletes in attendance felt they could take from the expedition and apply to their lives.

"He talked a lot about the idea of proximity and availability, and he gave that as an action item or an action step into combating current issues we face, specifically minorities," LeFlore said. "I'm a student-athlete getting a great education, surrounded by love. I'm very privileged. I just took it as a very practical step I can take to make the

world a better place."

Wood added that the Big Ten and its athletes have discussed taking another trip to Selma next summer, this time with the goal of learning how to give back to both the city and their own communities. That could involve the construction of playgrounds and other facilities.

"Something that I had thought of (to inspire change) was to make it a requirement for all student-athletes to take an African-American course or a minorities course," Wood said. "Just to gain knowledge of things of this nature. Even me being an African-American woman, I did not have a clue about all of this. I had a very small glimpse of what had happened, but I didn't know it went to this extent."

For the athletes who got the chance to go, there's gratitude for those who went before.

"We are so fortunate to live in the 21st century, 2022," Hewitt said. "Things aren't, obviously, 100 percent perfect, but the fact that I can at least walk down the street and have my life, and vote – things that are basic necessities in 2022 were not 50, 60 years ago."

"But at the same time, don't take injustice as, like, OK. Because if Martin Luther King took injustice as OK, right now we wouldn't be able to vote. My biggest takeaway is understanding what they went through, have it not be in vain, but at the same time push to get more of what we deserve."

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

2022 FOOTBALL

Sept. 3 NOTRE DAME, W 21-10; **10** ARKANSAS STATE, W 45-12; **17** TOLEDO, W, 77-21.; **24** WISCONSIN, W 52-21.

Oct. 1 RUTGERS, 3:30 p.m.; **8** at Michigan State; **22** IOWA; **29** at Penn State.

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

2023 FOOTBALL

Sept. 9 SAN JOSE STATE; **16** WESTERN KENTUCKY; **23** at Notre Dame.

CROSS COUNTRY

Sept. 2 Mike Baumer Cross Country Classic at Dayton, OH Men: 1/15; Women: 1/13; **9** Big Ten Preview at Michigan, Men 5/6; Women 2/6; **23** Roy Griak Invitational at Minneapolis, Minn. **30** Lakefront Invitational at Chicago, Ill.

Oct. 15 Arturo Barrios Invitational at College Station, Texas; **28** Big Ten Championships at Ann Arbor, Mich.

Nov. 11 NCAA Regional Championships at Terre Haute, Ind.; **18** NCAA Championships at Stillwater, Okla.

WOMEN'S FIELD HOCKEY (3-5)

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

Sept. 4 LEHIGH, W 4-0; **11** Miami (Ohio), L 1-0; **16** MARYLAND, L 4-2; **18** WAKE FOREST, L 1-0; **23** Rutgers, L 2-0; **25** Penn State, L 2-0; **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 GOLF

Sept. 7 Frederica Cup at St. Simons Island, Ga., 6/8; **8** Frederica Cup at St. Simons Island, Ga., 7/8; **26-27** Inverness Intercollegiate at Toledo, Ohio.

Oct. 3-4 Hamptons Invitational at East Hamptons, N.Y.; **31** Cal Poly Collegiate at Carmel-by-the-Sea, Calif.

Nov. 1 Cal Poly Collegiate at Carmel-by-the-Sea, Calif.

WOMEN'S GOLF

Sept. 12-13 Dick McGuire/Branch Law Firm at Albuquerque, N.M., 1/17; **23-24** Mason Rudolph at Nashville, Tenn.

Oct. 3-4 Barbara Nicklaus Cup at Dublin, Ohio; **23-24** Jim West Challenge at San Marcos, Texas.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY

Oct. 1-2 at Mercyhurst; **7-8** WISCONSIN; **14-15** at UConn; **20-21** BENTLEY; **28-29** MINNESOTA.

Nov. 10-11 at Michigan State; **18-19** NOTRE DAME; **25-26** at Long Island University.

Dec. 2-3 at Penn State; **16-17** at Bowling Green.

Jan. 6-7 MICHIGAN STATE; **13-14** at Michigan; **20-21** at Wisconsin.

Feb. 3-4 PENN STATE; **10-11** at Notre Dame; **16** MICHIGAN **18** at FirstEnergy Stadium, Cleveland, vs. Michigan; **24-25** at Minnesota.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY

Sept. 30 at Minnesota State.

Oct. 1 at Minnesota State; **7-8** ST. CLOUD STATE; **15-16** at Bemidji State; **21-22** MINNESOTA DULUTH; **28-29** MINNESOTA.

Nov. 5-6 at St. Thomas; **18-19** BEMIDJI STATE; **22-23** COLGATE.

Dec. 2-3 at Minnesota Duluth; **17-18** at Cornell; **30-31** at Lindenwood.

Jan. 13-14 WISCONSIN; **20-21** at St. Cloud State; **27-28** MINNESOTA STATE.

Feb. 3-4 at Minnesota; **10-11** ST. THOMAS; **17-18** at Wisconsin.

MEN'S SOCCER (5-1-3)

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

Sept. 1 Bowling Green, W 1-0. **5** WRIGHT STATE, W 2-0; **9** BUTLER, W 2-0; **13** Akron, T 3-3.; **18** INDIANA, W 2-1; **21** Cleveland State, T 0-0; **25** Maryland, L 1-0; **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 (6-2-2)

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, W 3-2; **11** KENT STATE, W 2-1; **18** Rutgers, L 2-0; **22** Michigan, T 0-0; **25** IOWA, W 2-0; **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.

MEN'S TENNIS

Sept. 19 Columbus Challenger at Columbus, Ohio.

Oct. 1 ITA All-American Championship at Tulsa, Okla.; **20** ITA Midwest Regional Championship at Champaign, Ill.; **24** Las Vegas Challenger at Las Vegas, Nev.; **31** Ithaca Challenger at Ithaca, N.Y.; **31** Charlottesville Challenger at Charlottesville, Va.

Nov. 2 Big Ten Singles & Doubles Championship; **2** ITA Fall Championship at San Diego, Calif.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Sept. 16 Debbie Southern Furman Fall

Classic at Greenville, S.C., NTS; **22** Fall Spotlight at Raleigh, N.C.

Oct. 1 ITA All-Americans at Cary, N.C.; **14** Buckeye Invite at Columbus, Ohio; **20** ITA Midwest Regionals at Ann Arbor, Mich.

Nov. 2 ITA Fall Championships at San Diego, Calif.; **4** ASU Thunderbolt Invitational at San Diego, Calif.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (5-5)

Aug. 26 TEXAS, L 3-0; **27** L 3-1.

Sept. 3 San Diego, L 3-0; **4** Louisville, W 3-1; **9**, BYU, W 3-0; **11** Georgia Tech, W 3-1; **17** Tennessee, W 3-0; **18** Pittsburgh, L 3-0; **23** Iowa, W 3-0; **24** Nebraska, L 3-2; **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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Wideouts Standing Out For Ohio State

Emeka Egbuka is better than I expected. Julian Fleming is better than I expected. Marvin Harrison Jr. is better than I expected. And so is Cade Stover.

Yes, these receivers were recruited with great expectations. And, yes, what little we saw of them before this year was enticing.

But, wow, the talent they've shown this season while the leader of the receiving group, Jaxon Smith-Njigba, has been sidelined by a reported hamstring injury has been awing.

THE EXNER POINT Rich Exner

There's Egbuka. Coming out of high school, they talked about his pretty quick 4.42 speed in the 40-yard dash. But the way he runs in straight lines and accelerates so fast from zero to top speed, he's reminiscent in a way of Ted Ginn Jr. You just feel in watching Egbuka that given just a little bit of open field, he's a threat for a huge gain or scores at any moment.

The ball was thrown his way eight times against Wisconsin. He caught six of those throws, covered 118 yards and scored two touchdowns. Egbuka leads Buckeye receivers in catches (26) and yards (442), is tied for the lead in touchdowns (five), and is averaging 17.0 yards per catch.

But here's what is notable about 17.0 yards per catch on this team – that's only third best, speaking to the quality around him.

Among the regular group, the big guy with the biggest name, Marvin Harrison Jr., has been better than advertised. The 6-4 son of a Hall-of-Famer is right behind



SONNY BROCKWAY

RUNAWAY RECEIVERS — Despite injury to star third-year wideout Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who has missed considerable time this season, Ohio State's receiving corps — featuring Emeka Egbuka (2) and Julian Fleming (4) — continues to be one of the most feared pass-catching units in the nation.

Egbuka in catches (21) and yards (387), is tied with Egubka for TDs (5) and is ahead on yards per catch (18.4). Jayden Ballard, in a limited sample, leads the category with a 21.2-yard average on six catches.

Egbuka and Harrison would be a great tandem for any other team in the country, but toss in Fleming, plagued by injuries since arriving at OSU in 2020 with the billing as the nation's top receiver in his class, who is finally getting the chance to show his skills.

Fleming's numbers are not as big as those posted by Egbuka and Harrison. But he has shown with his seven catches for 90 yards and three touchdowns that he has big-time skills. Sure hands. Big body. Nice routes.

There you have it. A solid group of three receivers while the top receiver from 2022 nurses an injury. But, as was driven home so very clearly during the win over Wisconsin, there's more.

Stover is a tight end but often lined up outside, far from the tackles. And he looked every bit the part of a wideout on some plays (though a very big one at 6-4, 255). Once open for C.J. Stroud's passes, he caught with sure hands and then looked more like the big tight end that he is in barreling downfield, scoring twice on his four catches.

Stover now has 12 catches for 188 yards on the season, plus the two TDs. Projected out through just the 12-game regular season, that would be 36 catches for 564 yards and six touchdowns.

No Ohio State tight end has topped even 30 catches since Ben Hartssock grabbed 33 passes for 290 yards and two touchdowns in 2003, Jim Tressel's third season at Ohio State.

To appreciate Stover's start to the 2022 season, consider these stat lines for tight ends since the hiring of Urban Meyer in 2012:

- 2012 – Nick Vannett, nine catches, 123 yards, zero TDs.
- 2013 – Jeff Heuerman, 26 catches, 466 yards, four TDs.
- 2014 – Vannett, 19 catches, 220 yards, five TDs.
- 2015 – Vannett, 19 catches, 162 yards, zero TDs.
- 2016 – Marcus Baugh, 24 catches, 269 yards, two TDs.
- 2017 – Baugh, 28 catches, 304 yards, five TDs.
- 2018 – Luke Farrell, 20 catches, 205 yards, one TD.
- 2019 – Jeremy Ruckert, 14 catches, 142 yards, four TDs.
- 2020 (shortened by COVID-19) – Ruckert, 13 catches, 151 yards, five TDs.
- 2021 – Ruckert, 26 catches, 309 yards, three TDs.

And, by the way, have you noticed the depth at running back as well this season? That discussion is for another day.

Badgers Not What They Once Were

Remember when Wisconsin used to be Ohio State's nemesis?

When I was in school, Ohio State lost three out of four seasons to Wisconsin, while at the same time beat Michigan three of four. That was way back from 1981 to 1984 – in fact, the first four years Buckeye Sports Bulletin was publishing.

Then stretching 11 meetings over 13 seasons, beginning in 1992, the Buckeyes and Badgers deadlocked, 5-5-1.

Well, not so much anymore. Ohio State's 52-21 win was its ninth straight over the Badgers, improving the Buckeyes' all-time record in the series to 62-18-5.

I stumbled across some interesting reading ahead of the latest game with Wisconsin, on a website called BadgerExtra.com. Writer Jim Polzin chronicled the series from a Badger point of view.

Of that 13-year run when the teams were deadlocked, starting in 1993, Polzin wrote, "It wasn't Ohio State-Michigan, but the Badgers-Buckeyes definitely was a thing."

"It's not that UW has gone backward since the end of the (Barry) Alvarez era. ... One problem: Ohio State put its foot on the gas and left UW – and pretty much every other program in the Big Ten – in its dust. The Badgers still can see the Buckeyes if they squint, but that gap keeps getting wider and this is where it gets really demoralizing if you're a UW fan: There's little reason to believe Ohio State can be reeled in anytime soon; in fact, changes in the college football landscape may only lead to it pulling away even more."

Polzin went on to note the recruiting gap. "The Buckeyes' average national finish in the Rivals recruiting rankings from 2012-22 was 5.2, including nine finishes in the top five during that stretch of 11 classes. ... Compare that to UW, which had an average finish of 37.2 from 2012-22 in the Rivals rankings with a high-water mark of 14 in 2021."

Something Different For Playoffs?

Could this be the year that only two conferences are represented in the playoffs – the SEC and the Big Ten, with two teams each?

It's way too early to make any solid predictions. But the way the Big Ten and the SEC are shaping up, there is a legitimate scenario where the only losses for Alabama, Georgia, Ohio State and Michigan (or maybe Penn State) come in head-to-head play.

That would leave two undefeated conference champions guaranteed playoff spots and two others in very, very serious contention.

Clemson has looked shaky out of the ACC, sneaking by in overtime last week against Wake Forest. Oklahoma has already lost in the Big 12, leaving Kansas as the only undefeated team in that league. And I'm waiting to see if USC is for real in the Pac-12, but going undefeated is a lot to ask in the Trojans' first year "back."

For now, however, it is Alabama, Georgia and Ohio State at the top, in some order. But we're just now heading into October.

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Badgers Should Have Taken The Ball And Run

I am hardly the person to question the decisions of a successful Big Ten football coach. And when I do question a coach's decision, it's usually the Ohio State coach. That's what columnists at Buckeye Sports Bulletin do.

But I am going to go ahead and say that the first decision that Wisconsin coach Paul Chryst made in his team's 52-21 loss to Ohio State on Sept. 24 may have been his worst of the game. Chryst's Badgers won the toss and elected to defer to the second half, despite the fact that Ohio State had scored 11 touchdowns in its previous game and entered the contest averaging better than 563 yards of offense an outing.

What the Buckeyes did next was predictable. After Chip Trayanum struggled with the opening kick for the second game in a row, the Buckeyes marched 88 yards in six plays, four of which were 10 yards or more including a 33-yard C.J. Stroud pass to Emeka Egbuka, to help take a quick 7-0 lead.

What came next was perhaps less predictable.

On Wisconsin's first series, Tanner McCalister picked off a Graham Mertz pass and returned it to the Badgers 16, setting up a quick touchdown from Stroud to tight end Cade Stover with just 6:06 gone in the contest.

By the time the dust had settled, Ohio State held a 28-0 lead early in the second quarter and took a 31-7 lead into the locker room at the half. The Badgers barely knew what hit them. Might the trajectory of the game have been different if Wisconsin had elected to take the ball to start the game?

That the OSU offense tallied 328 yards in the first half might not have been a surprise. That the shorthanded Buckeye defense held the Wisconsin offense to 96 total yards in the first half and star Badger running back Braelon Allen to just 36 yards on eight carries was less anticipated. It was statistically – and probably artistically – Ohio State's best first-half defensive performance of the season.

Wisconsin showed some spunk in the second half by not rolling over, and the Badgers were outscored only 21-14 in the final 30 minutes, but after the Buckeyes got out of the blocks so quickly, the game was never really in doubt. The stat book will show that Allen gained 165 yards on 23 carries, but nearly half of that came on a meaningless 75-yard TD run midway through the fourth quarter. He was not a factor in the game.

By the way, on the possession to start the second half that Wisconsin deferred to, the Badgers were unable to make a first down and punted. The Buckeyes promptly marched 72 yards in eight plays to make it 38-7 on a 12-yard pass from Stroud to Julian Fleming.

Some strategy to start the game.

Tight Ends, Chapter Four

You saw the game. You knew I was going to talk about the tight ends.

It looks like passing the ball to Cade Stover is here to stay. He was targeted six times in the game and caught four of the passes for 51 yards and two touchdowns. He might have caught all six.

You have to ask yourself, "What took so long," as far as adding the tight end to the arsenal. It is a huge and unexpected reason that the offense has been so prolific this season. Great wide receivers, great running backs and now the tight end coupled with what is looking like a great offensive line and with a quarterback who knows how to conduct the entire orchestra makes for an average of 48.8 points and 558.8 yards per game. You

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

have to wonder what might have happened in past years if Buckeye coaches had elected to throw to the tight end more often.

The question was posed on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum, "If used to their potential, who is the better tight end – Cade Stover or Jeremy Ruckert?" Interestingly, Ruckert seemed to get the slight nod and it was nearly unanimous that he was under-used. But Stover has to be gaining on Ruckert in the eyes of Buckeye fans if his performance in the first four games is any indication.

Other Players

I have been an advocate of using TreVeyon Henderson more than he has been used both this season and last. His 21 carries against the Badgers were his most since 28 and 21 against Penn State and Nebraska, respectively, in games eight and nine of last season. Henderson responded with 121 yards and a 5.8-yard average, and he always seems just a step away from breaking a long one.

But I must admit that it is hard to ignore Miyan Williams, who gained 101 yards on 11 carries for a 9.2-yard average, and his long gain was 25 yards to Henderson's 16. On the season, Williams has 308 yards rushing, just 10 behind Henderson, but is averaging 7.2 yards on 43 carries compared to Henderson's 6.4 on 50 tries. Henderson has a long of 41, to 25 for Williams.

One interesting thing to note. Henderson and Williams have combined for just 11 negative yards in the first four games.

Running backs coach Tony Alford is learning what it must feel like to be wide receivers coach Brian Hartline as far as having a wealth of talent in his room.

You can't talk about Stover, or Henderson and Williams, or even Stroud if you don't talk about the offensive line.

The big guys have given up only two sacks all season, none in the last two games, for just 7 yards total in losses. More importantly, they have given Stroud the time to see all his receivers and find the one who is open, frequently in full stride. Would Stover be the budding star he is if Stroud didn't have the time to find him or if the big tight end was forced to stay back and help shore up the blocking?

And Henderson and Williams are averaging a combined 6.7 yards per carry. Even the best of running backs could not post an average like that without some help from the guys up front. With the holes opening, it's only a matter of time before Henderson – or even Williams – rips off the big one.

Hats off to the offensive linemen and their new coach, Justin Frye.

And hats off to the entire team. In the past two games the Buckeyes have been flagged for only a combined four penalties for 32 yards. What a vast improvement over the first two games and most of last season.

Archie's Debut

There has always been a popular misconception that two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin burst onto the scene with an Ohio State record-setting 239-yard rushing game against North Carolina in his 1972 freshman debut. Griffin has been very quick to point out the game against North Carolina was not his debut, that in fact he had made a very brief appearance in the season opener against Iowa.

The brief appearance against the

Hawkeyes involved one of Woody Hayes' least favorite plays (no, not the forward pass), a fumble. In doing some research awhile back about Griffin's debut, I discovered a quirk about that fumble and I have been after managing editor Mark Rea to delve into the circumstances, and he did so for the story that appears on page 19 of this issue. I'll let Mark and former Buckeye quarterback Dave Purdy tell the story about Archie's real debut.

Griffin, himself, has told the story many times, minus the quirk, a quirk that I would be willing to wager even the Heisman winner himself did not know about. I heard the story the first time at the inaugural Meet the Buckeyes Night in Toledo in the spring of 1988 (we miss that event, don't we, Toledo-area Buckeye fans?). Mark and Purdy do a fine job recapping the Iowa game, so I will give Archie's version of what happened next, as told at the 1988 event.

The North Carolina game was a home game, and Hayes let everyone, including Griffin dress. Midway through the first quarter, with the Buckeyes trailing 7-0, Hayes called for Griffin.

"I knew Coach Hayes couldn't be talking to me," Griffin recalled. "Because all week long I was playing on the scout team. I had fumbled the week before, and I was a freshman and this was the first year that freshmen were eligible.

"I got up next to Coach Hayes and he told me to go into the game. I took a couple of steps on the field and another player called me back because in all the excitement I had forgotten to take my helmet with me."

The rest, as they say, is history with Griffin breaking Ohio State's single-game rushing record that had stood for nearly 30 years – 229 by Ollie Cline against Pittsburgh in 1945 – in a 29-14 Buckeye victory.

"All I can really remember is that when I came out of the game at the start of the fourth quarter, the fans at Ohio Stadium stood up and gave me an ovation," Griffin said. "It was a great feeling, and to any of you people who were there, I want you to know how much I appreciate that.

"I've talked to nearly everyone here tonight, and everyone I talked to said they were at that game.

"They thought that was my first game. I just wanted to set the record straight and let you know that in my first game, I didn't do as well as you thought I did. It was the Iowa game, and I fell flat on my face."

Trivia time. In Griffin's record-setting game in 1972, the Buckeyes racked up a whopping 430 net yards rushing on the way to 526 yards of total offense. Who was the other Buckeye beside Griffin to gain over 100 yards rushing in the game? Answer to come.

Of Parents And Selma

Over the years I have gotten to be pretty good friends with Jim Laughlin, the former Ohio State linebacker most remembered for his blocked punt against Michigan in 1979 that helped propel the Buckeyes to victory over the Wolverines and to the Rose Bowl, where they came within two points of winning the national championship.

A few years ago, Jim moved back to Ohio from Atlanta, where he played for the Falcons, to help take care of his father, Kirby, who I also got to be pretty good friends with. Jim and Kirby went everywhere together including, of course, Ohio State football games.

"Every day, he's like 'What are we going to do?' " Jim said of living with his father. "He always wants to be doing something."

When Jim showed up to a dinner for the Atlanta area alumni in Columbus the night before the Notre Dame game and Kirby wasn't there, I knew right away something was wrong. It turns out that Kirby Laughlin passed away on Aug. 23 at the age of 96.

I really didn't know that much about Kirby. It turns out he was a veteran of World War II and a graduate of Mount Union College, and he had a successful banking career at Society National Bank of Cleveland. He was also extremely active in the community, serving as president or on the board of directors of such organizations as the YMCA, the Brush High School Booster Club (Jim's alma mater), the Rotary Club and the Northeast Ohio Chapter of the Boy Scouts, among other organizations of which he was a member.

To me he was just Kirby. A really nice guy. Jim's dad.

But the thing that will stick with me most about Jim and Kirby Laughlin is watching them together, especially as Kirby slowly went downhill. I found it so endearing to watch the rough-and-tumble linebacker relate to his father with such love and dedication (and maybe an occasional bit of good-natured frustration).

It reminded me that whether we are linebackers, newspaper publishers, doctors, lawyers, truck drivers or teachers, we are all the children of our parents. And we all must ultimately deal with the aging or loss of our parents, something I have had to do twice in the last two years. No one can teach us how to deal with this natural progression of life, though some can set good examples. Thank you for setting a good example, Jim, and I am so sorry for your loss.

Which brings me to the story in this issue about Ohio State athletes going to Selma, Ala., to learn about the significance of events in that city in the '60s concerning the fight for racial equality. This was a very personal story for me because my recently departed mother, Faye Moskowitz, and my older sister, Shoshanna, rode what was dubbed the Freedom Train from Washington, D.C., to Montgomery, Ala., where they marched the final few miles with the other activists.

Accordingly, the Selma protests have been a part of my family's lore and culture for as long as I can remember, and the story of the Buckeye athletes who made the trek reminds of my mother and sister's trek some 50 years ago, my mother's values, and how far we have come in this country in terms of race relations and how far we have yet to go. Hopefully the student-athletes who made the trip in 2022 will share their experience with other students, just as the experiences from my mother and sister's trip so many years ago were shared with me.

Trivia Answer

If you knew this one, you are a regular Jack Park. Elmer Lippert, a 5-7, 183-pound junior, gained 116 yards on 10 carries against North Carolina, including a 68-yard bolt. The 1972 OSU media guide described Lippert as "compactly built and hard to bring down," as well as having "fine speed and hits with surprising power for his size" and "a fine pass receiver even though handicapped by his size."

We get it. Lippert was short.

The Sandusky, Ohio, product gained 244 yards on 36 carries for a 6.8-yard average that '72 season and finished his Ohio State career with 688 yards on 135 carries (5.1 average) with four touchdowns, according to sports-reference.com.

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