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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Oct. 8, 2022

Williams' Five TDs Lift OSU Over Scarlet Knights

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Late in the first half of Ohio State's 49-10 win over Rutgers, a goal-line stand was emblematic of how strange a contest was being played.

The Buckeyes worked into Scarlet Knight territory holding a 21-7 lead, getting to Rutgers' 20-yard line after a 5-yard completion to wide receiver Julian Fleming from quarterback C.J. Stroud. It took Ohio State just two more plays to get inside the 5-yard line, setting up what should have been an easy score for the Buckeyes to take a comfortable lead into the half.

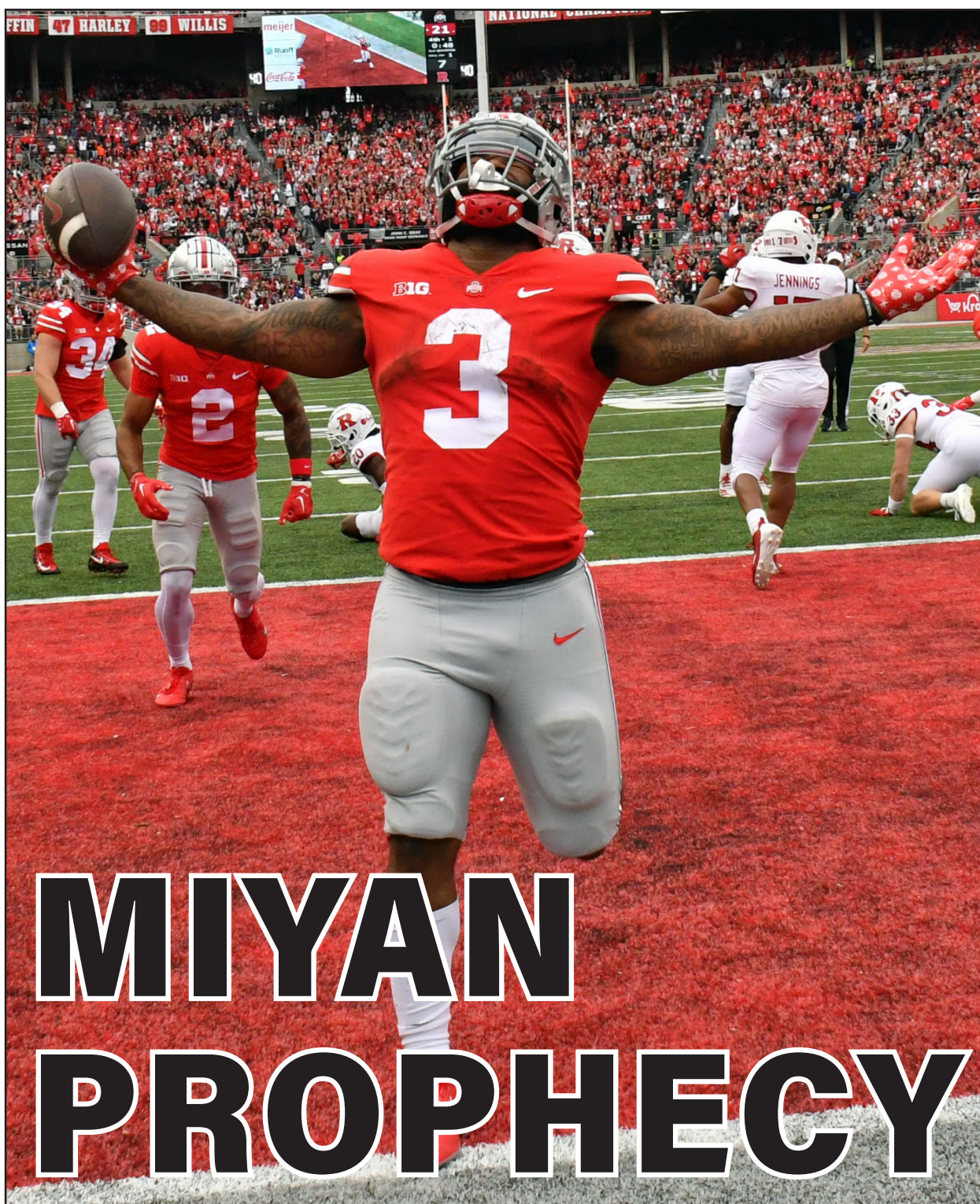
Instead, Ohio State would run six more plays – aided by a defensive holding call against Rutgers – stretched across three called timeouts and over 15 minutes of real time since entering the red zone. Facing a fourth-and-1, running back Miyan Williams finally allowed a reprieve for the anxious and burned-out crowd of 104,245 at Ohio Stadium on Oct. 1, with a 1-yard score that put an end to a 39-yard drive that featured a little bit of everything – even the I-formation.

The box score reflected just 4:48 coming off the clock during the 10-play scoring drive to give Ohio State a 28-7 lead, a seemingly normal looking sequence in an otherwise run-of-the-mill contest. But it was just one of several moments in a surreal contest for the Buckeyes, one that Ohio State mostly sleepwalked through to move to 5-0 on the season with a 2-0 mark in the Big Ten.

"It's hard to get style points when you're playing in that style of a game," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "I think the one thing about our team is they're good with that. You talk to the guys on defense, they love it. The guys on offense, it's not always the best, but they understand that winning is the most important thing."

"If you start to get selfish or undisciplined, you can put yourself at risk in a hurry," he continued. "Our guys know that it's important to make sure that we win, and we have to win in different ways."

Keeping with the theme of a strange afternoon in Columbus, the game started with a quick three-and-out by Rutgers – not unusual given the history between these teams – but things took a turn when Ohio State sophomore wide receiver Emeke Egbuka attempted to catch it over his shoulder, but it instead bounced off him and was recovered by a Scarlet Knight defender. Just three plays later, quarterback Evan Simon found wide



SONNY BROCKWAY

RECORD BREAKER — Ohio State running back Miyan Williams carried the ball 21 times for 189 yards and five touchdowns in the Buckeyes' 49-10 win over Rutgers, tying a program record for rushing touchdowns in a game. The mark tied him with Pete Johnson (vs. North Carolina, 1975) and Keith Byars (vs. Illinois, 1984), the only other Buckeyes to accomplish the feat.

receiver Sean Ryan for the 14-yard score for a 7-0 lead.

Ohio State celebrated the 100th anniversary of Ohio Stadium during the win over Rutgers, so the game couldn't have come and gone without some history being made. The 7-0 score accomplished a first in the history of the Ohio State-Rutgers series, as it was the first lead ever held by the Scarlet Knights against the Buckeyes, taking until the ninth game of the series for Rutgers to finally accomplish this goal.

Rutgers head coach and former Ohio State defensive co-

ordinator Greg Schiano hit big early in the game and tried to keep his good luck rolling, opting for a surprise onside kick after the Scarlet Knights' score. That decision did not catch the Buckeyes or special teams coordinator Parker Fleming off guard, though, and wide receiver Jayden Ballard gracefully pulled down the kick to avoid succumbing to any trickery by Rutgers, and the Scarlet Knights scored just

Continued On Page 10

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From The Message Board

Ohio State picked up a sleepy 49-10 win over Rutgers in a game that featured a little bit of everything – five touchdowns from Miyan Williams, the I-formation and even a near brawl, among them. We asked readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what their impressions were from the Buckeyes’ fifth consecutive win. Here are some of the responses:

“A win is a win is a win! I just hope the injury situation begins to clear up as the Buckeyes head out onto the road for the first time next week.”

– Luckeeman

“A very pedestrian performance. A little sloppy. I’d guess a few players lacked focus. Maybe the red zone play-calling was a little vanilla. Why show MSU, Iowa or Penn State your best red zone plays against Rutgers? Obviously, Miyan Williams stepped up and showed he is ready for the spotlight. Maybe Dallan Hayden could have been used a little more earlier in the game? Let’s hope Denzel Burke finds a path out of the sophomore season funk. Maybe Buckeye Nation is a little spoiled. There is nothing wrong with a 49-10 win. Win and advance. The favored teams don’t always win, or they don’t win easily. We have a very special team. Enjoy the ride.”

– BYRON MCNUTT

“I think there are about 130 other teams who would like to win a conference game, with a very uninspired performance, by a score of 49-10. Should have been 49-3 except for a mishandled, wind-blown punt inside the 10-yard line.”

– Terrier Buck

“How do you criticize a win like that? And yet, certain phases were sloppy. Williams had a great game. Wow. Steele Chambers really stepped up. As coach said, they have things to work on going forward. All in all, a great win. On to Michigan State.”

– John Lanning

“The running game and the linebacker play were heart-warming and as good as any I remember at Ohio Stadium. These combined with the two lines, the passing game, the play calling and the

new defensive schemes make this team unstoppable. How good is a team that can win 49-10 even after a few sloppy plays? And the two celebrated offensive stars Jaxon Smith-Njigba and TreVeyon Henderson did not even play!”

– AnthonyBuck

“I love this type of game. An old-fashioned successful running attack with ‘The Big Uglies’ controlling the game from the start to the finish. Both the offensive and defensive lines pushed and shoved their way around the field. Plenty of proof in their successful efforts by the resulting great game for both Miyan ‘Pork Chop’ Williams and Steele Chambers!”

– BuckeyeScott

“In reading these other posts it reminds me that Ohio State is winning the old-fashioned way – controlling the trenches on both sides of the ball. Some things never go out of style. As for the Rutgers game, it seems like Ohio State played down to the level of competition. I don’t understand why Buckeye fans dislike Greg Schiano. He DOES make things interesting and entertaining. He’ll never get the Knights to the top of the Big Ten East but I bet he makes them competitive. If he were in the west it would be a whole different ball game. Of course who knows what the Big Ten will look like in a couple of years.”

– Poster That Harley Built

“A very uninspired performance and the passing game was ineffective ... and Ohio State still won by 39. It’s a great time to be a Buckeye fan.”

– bstu9

“It was certainly a lively fourth quarter. See what you miss when you leave early?”

– PeyoteBuck

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FAN FORUM

Buckeye Leaves

Several contributors stepped up during No. 3 Ohio State’s 49-10 win over Rutgers at Ohio Stadium on Oct. 1. A pair of names dominated the discussion on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum after the win. While those two players took much of the spotlight, there were several other players rewarded with Buckeye Leaves by BSB staff and readers.

Andy Anders, BSB: Zach Harrison has earned my Buckeye Leaf this week. The senior defensive end showed an ability to make plays from different spots along Ohio State’s defensive line.

Harrison tallied just two tackles but created both turnovers the Buckeye defense generated against Rutgers. Late in the first quarter, as Scarlet Knights quarterback Evan Simon stepped up in the pocket to scramble, Harrison tracked him down from the side and knocked the ball free. Defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. jumped on the loose rock for a fumble recovery.

With time winding down in the third quarter, Harrison again got to Simon, this time as the signal caller released a pass. Harrison batted the ball as it left Simon’s hand, and it tumbled in the air and landed softly in the arms of linebacker Steele Chambers for an interception. Harrison made the play from the three-technique defensive tackle position, where Ohio State made use of him in a special pass rush package in addition to his usual defensive end work.

Jack Emerson, BSB: Steele Chambers gets my Buckeye Leaf this week, largely thanks to his play recognition and the speed he ran with to the ball.

Chambers gave the Rutgers offense fits all afternoon, as he near-constantly blew up plays thanks to the aforementioned traits he showcased.

He finished the afternoon with a team-high 11 tackles, two of which resulted in a loss. But Chambers’ impact wasn’t just felt in the running game. He tallied the second interception of his career during the game’s third quarter. He also added a quarterback hurry showing off his pass-rushing prowess as well.

Chambers was at the center of an Ohio State defense that held Rutgers to just 107 rushing yards, an average of 3.0 per carry.

Braden Moles, BSB: There wasn’t a player on the field against Rutgers more impactful than third-year running back Miyan Williams.

His presence was important early for Ohio State, as he got the Buckeyes on the board with a 2-yard score after a surprising start to the game in which the Scarlet Knights took a 7-0 lead. His contributions also came as running back TreVeyon Henderson was a late scratch for Ohio State and did not appear in the game.

But that wasn’t it for Williams. He went on to score four more times on the afternoon, finishing tied for an Ohio State

record with five rushing touchdowns on the afternoon. This mark tied Pete Johnson and Keith Byars, the only other Buckeye backs to find the end zone five times in one game.

He finished the game with 189 rushing yards on 21 attempts, good for 9.0 yards per attempt, and the aforementioned five touchdowns, highlighted by a 70-yard tote in the third quarter. It was one of the more impressive rushing performances in recent history by a Buckeye, and Williams will go down in the record books for his outstanding game.

BSB Subscribers

Bstu9: My Buckeye leaf goes to Steele Chambers. I’m not sure how many tackles he had but he was making plays all over the field. And he added an interception for good measure. Outstanding game.

BYRON MCNUTT: Last week against Wisconsin it was the Tommy Eichenberg show. This week, Steele Chambers got to be the featured linebacker. The defense is operating as a unit. Each player has a job to do. Denzel Burke needs to get with the program. Opponents are targeting him.

Tiffin Buckeye: Miyan Williams. What an amazing performance and now he’s up there with the great Ohio State running backs of the past in terms of single-game rushing performance.

AnthonyBuck: Steele Chambers and Tommy Eichenberg for lights-out linebacker play. Zach Harrison for playing like we expect him to, including the tipped interception. Miyan Williams for playing like all the best Buckeye running backs of the last several decades. Julian Fleming for a heart-warming play close to his potential. The O-Line for being BIA again and the whole defense for restricting Rutgers to a field goal after the initial punt and fumble-related TD.

BuckeyeScott: During the game, it was quite apparent that Steele Chambers and Miyan Williams were having a heck of a lot of fun. But as good as those two young men can play football, neither would have been as successful in the game without our Big O- and Big D-Lines excelling at what they do. My Buckeye Leaves go to the Big Dudes in the Trenches this week!

R1TBDBITL: A big leaf for punter Jesse Mirco, recognizing the lack of defensive coverage and running for the first down.

Mcarr: Obviously you have to go Miyan Williams and Steele Chambers, but I also give a special achievement leaf to Jesse Mirco for showing he can “take a lickin’ and keep on tickin’.” Punters don’t usually take shots like that.

PeyoteBuck: Mirco’s the man for going rogue and zooming up the field, taking a few years off of Schiano’s life with him.

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No. 1	Sept. 10	No. 13	Dec. 17
No. 2	Sept. 17	No. 14	Jan. 14
No. 3	Sept. 24	No. 15	Jan. 28
No. 4	Oct. 1	No. 16	Feb. 11
No. 5	Oct. 8	No. 17	March 4
No. 6	Oct. 22	No. 18	March 18
No. 7	Oct. 29	No. 19	April 1
No. 8	Nov. 5	No. 20	April 15
No. 9	Nov. 12	No. 21	May
No. 10	Nov. 19	No. 22	June
No. 11	Nov. 26	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 3	No. 24	August

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OPINION

How Good Is Ohio State? Questions Abound

How good is the Ohio State football team in 2022?

The offense has yet to fire on all cylinders in five games, and the Buckeyes are still averaging 48.8 points (tops nationally) and 529.6 yards per game, good for third best in the nation. The defense seems to be much, much, much improved from last season, and the kicking game appears to be solid with Jesse Mirco averaging 43.4 yards per punt and kicker Noah Ruggles working on streaks of 107 straight PATs and 22 of his last 24 field-goal attempts.

Still, so far all we know is that Ohio State can wipe the field with opponents that now have a combined record of 12-12. And to be brutally honest, the competition on the other sideline doesn't appear to be that strong until we get to November.

So, what we currently have seems to be a situation in which the Buckeyes are looking in the mirror and staring at their most difficult opponent – themselves. These next several games are going to be as much about individual improvement as they are going up against players wearing a different color jersey.

Through the first five games of this season, Ohio State has looked every bit the part of a team loaded with future NFL stars. However, some players seem to lose their focus when the score begins to get out of hand. Their latest win against a Big Ten East Division rival was a perfect demonstration of good and not so good.

Good: Ohio State and Rutgers have now played nine times since the Scarlet Knights joined the Big Ten in 2014, and the Buckeyes have scored at least 49 points in each of those eight games.

Not so good: C.J. Stroud might be throwing away his Heisman Trophy candidacy after a second straight outing during which he appeared to scuttle proper mechanics in favor of just winging the ball. We all know Stroud can make every throw necessary to become an NFL quarterback. But there is a difference between becoming an NFL quarterback and achieving elite status in the league, and some of the throws Stroud has been attempting seem ill-advised at best and lazy at worst.

Good: Miyan Williams more than made up for some depleted running back depth when he ran for 189 yards and five touchdowns against the Scarlet Knights. The career-high rushing yardage was the most ever for an OSU player against Rutgers, and the touchdowns tied a program single-game record not equaled in 38 years. Pete Johnson originally set the mark during a 32-7 win against North Carolina in 1975, and it was tied when Keith Byars scored five TDs – including the famous one when he lost his shoe – during a 45-38 victory against Illinois in 1984.

Not so good: The Buckeyes seemed to struggle with ball control against Rutgers. Normally sure-handed Emeka Egbuka muffed a punt early in the first quarter while trying an over-the-shoulder catch in a swirling wind and later dropped a catchable pass. I've already discussed Stroud's performance, a pedestrian 13 of 22 for a career-low 154 yards as a starter.

Good: Rutgers was held to just 80 yards through the air, only the second time in the last 31 games the Ohio State defense had limited an opponent to fewer than 100 yards passing. The Buckeyes held Indiana to only 80 yards through the air during last year's 54-7 win.

No so good: After sitting out the game against Wisconsin, cornerback Denzel

Burke changed jersey numbers but some bad habits remain. Burke somehow lost Rutgers WR Sean Ryan on a simple out route in the end zone to give the Scarlet Knights an early 7-0 lead. And the OSU pass rush registered just one sack against a pretty puny Rutgers passing game, and that didn't come until late in the game when freshman Ryan Turner came loose on a corner blitz.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

I guess I'm not blaming the Ohio State players for giving less than their full attention to such an outmanned opponent as Rutgers. Even after Egbuka's muffed punt led to a 7-0 lead at the 11:00 mark of the first quarter, did anyone honestly believe the Scarlet Knights were going to win that game?

Yet, the mark of a team with national championship aspirations is that it not only takes care of business early, it continues to take care of business. The white-hot national spotlight is going to be on Ohio State from here on out, and while any 49-10 victory might look impressive to someone who didn't witness it, those in the national media and especially those on the College Football Playoff selection committee will be looking for the tiniest of cracks in the veneer of any title contender.

So, yes, to quote a former coach, "The best thing about being 5-0 is the chance to go 6-0." But that's about all it is. Giving less than your best is still going to win a lot of games at Ohio State, and perhaps there is some switch the team can throw when the going gets rougher. But when the weather turns its coldest, and the competition gets its strongest, the Buckeyes had not only better find that switch, they'd better be able to turn it on.

What's In Store?

We're only one week into October, and there is little point in making a sweeping declaration about what's going to happen in November, much less December and beyond. Still, the way some teams have played during the first five weeks does offer some indication of what Ohio State faces in the coming weeks.

The Buckeyes travel to East Lansing on Oct. 8 for the first road test of the year. The Spartans can throw some points on the board, but they are defensively challenged. Twelfth in the Big Ten in total defense is not where you want to be when facing Ohio State.

After OSU enjoys its open week, Iowa comes to Columbus on Oct. 22 as almost the polar opposite of Michigan State. The Hawkeyes are fairly stout on defense, but not worth a lick on offense. They're dead last in the league in scoring with a total of nine touchdowns in five games. The Buckeyes have a conference-high 34.

Penn State is expected to give Ohio State something of a Halloween scare in Happy Valley on Oct. 29. But as long as Sean Clifford continues to quarterback the Nittany Lions, I'll remain unconvinced. He's thrown for four TDs the last two years against the Buckeyes, but he's also been intercepted twice and sacked nine times. Plus, there's the fact that OSU has taken up residence inside James Franklin's head. The Penn State head coach is 1-7 against the Buckeyes.

November begins with a trip to Northwestern, a team from the smoldering tire fire currently known as the Big Ten West. The Wildcats aren't very good at offense or defense, and there's the small matter of their track record against Ohio State. They've lost nine in a row and 33 of their last 34 in the series.

One week later, Indiana invades Ohio Stadium. The Hoosiers got off to a 3-0 start, but an Oct. 1 loss to a woeful Nebraska team exposed IU as a team with several deficiencies, not the least of which is quarterback Connor Bazelak and his league-low 52.8 completion percentage. Plus, there's the small matter that Indiana has lost 27 straight games to Ohio State.

Perhaps the biggest bump in the road will be Nov. 19 at Maryland if Terrapins quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa can remain healthy. But the Terps were supposed to play spoiler last year, and the Buckeyes intercepted Tagovailoa twice and sacked him five times on the way to a 66-17 laughter.

The regular season winds up, of course, with Michigan coming to Columbus on Nov. 26 in what possibly could be a battle of unbeaten teams. The Wolverines have a running game that looks every bit as good as the one that manhandled the Buckeyes last season, and they are eager to prove last year's win turned the tide in the rivalry. But the fact remains Michigan has not won in Ohio Stadium since 2000, and does anyone seriously believe the Buckeyes are going to let them end that streak during the Horse-shoe's 100th anniversary celebration?

If the Buckeyes do win the East, the team waiting for them in the Big Ten Championship Game just might be Illinois. The Fighting Illini, who are 4-1 for the first time since 2015 after a 34-10 rout of Wisconsin on Oct. 1, might not be the best team in the West, but they certainly have something going for them. How else do you explain how quarterback Tommy DeVito ran for three touchdowns against the Badgers but wound up with minus-2 yards rushing for the game?

In Case You Missed It

You might have missed the news that College Football Hall of Fame coach Darrell Mudra died Sept. 21 at the age of 92. Mudra's career spanned four decades and included head coaching stops at North Dakota State, Arizona, Western Illinois, Florida State, Eastern Illinois and Northern Iowa.

During his two-year stay at Arizona, Mudra compiled an 11-9-1 record, including a 14-7 upset win in Columbus against Ohio State in the 1967 season opener. Woody Hayes wouldn't lose another season opener until 1978, the last of his 28 seasons coaching the Buckeyes.

Mudra had been the oldest living coach to claim a victory against Ohio State. That distinction now falls to former Michigan State head coach Denny Stolz, whose team engineered a 16-13 upset of the top-ranked Buckeyes on Nov. 9, 1974, in East Lansing. Stolz, who coached the Spartans for three seasons before being forced out due to recruiting violations, celebrated his 88th birthday on Sept. 12.

The oldest living coach with a nonconference victory against Ohio State is now 84-year-old Barry Switzer, whose Oklahoma team came to Columbus and got a last-second field goal of 41 yards from Uwe von Schamann to squeeze out a 29-28 win vs. the Buckeyes in 1977.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

OSU Remains At No. 3 In AP Poll

Ohio State stayed consistent at No. 3 in the AP top 25 poll on Oct. 2 following the 49-10 win over Rutgers, though there was movement above the Buckeyes as Alabama jumped Georgia for the top spot in the poll.

The Buckeyes received 10 first-place votes, trailing Alabama with 25 first-place votes and Georgia with 28, the most in the poll despite dropping to No. 2.

No. 4 Michigan, No. 5 Clemson and No. 6 USC saw no movement, while Oklahoma State jumped up two spots to No. 7. Tennessee remained at No. 8, Ole Miss jumped five spots to No. 9, and Penn State rounded things out at No. 10. No other Big Ten teams are in the poll, though Maryland, Minnesota, Illinois and Purdue all received votes.

Kentucky and Washington each shared the biggest drop in the most recent poll, falling six spots to No. 13 and No. 21, respectively, while Wake Forest saw a jump up seven spots to No. 15.

Newcomers to the poll include No. 17 TCU, No. 18 UCLA, No. 19 Kansas, No. 22 Syracuse, No. 23 Mississippi State, No. 24 Cincinnati and No. 25 LSU.

Smith-Njigba, Cam Brown Inactive Against Rutgers

For the second consecutive week, Ohio State was without the services of star wide-out Jaxon Smith-Njigba and starting cornerback Cameron Brown when it took the field against Rutgers on Oct. 1.

Smith-Njigba has appeared in just two games this season after sustaining a low-

er-body injury against Notre Dame in the season opener on Sept. 3 and has not played since the first half of Ohio State's 77-21 win over Toledo on Sept. 17. Brown missed his first game against Wisconsin on Sept. 24 after tallying five tackles and a pass breakup in Ohio State's first three games.

Brown headlined a banged-up secondary unit, which was also without cornerbacks Jordan Hancock and Lloyd McFarquhar as well as safeties Jantzen Dunn and Cameron Martinez. Martinez was a new addition to the status report and was another significant hit to the secondary's depth. Martinez had collected nine tackles in the Buckeyes' first four games.

Ohio State's defensive front was missing a key rotational piece in fifth-year defensive end Tyler Friday. Freshman Omari Abor also remained unavailable while appearing on the status report for the third straight week. Linebackers Palaie Gaoteote IV, Teradja Mitchell and Mitchell Melton – who is nursing a season-ending injury – were also listed as unavailable.

Offensively, Smith-Njigba was joined by Kamryn Babb as the only unavailable receivers against the Scarlet Knights. Running back Evan Pryor remained on the injury report as he continues to rehab a season-ending knee injury. Tight end Joe Royer was also unavailable for the Buckeyes.

Smith-Njigba took to Twitter on Sept. 25 to provide an update on his injury and assure the Ohio State fan base that he would return sometime this season.

"Kills me that I haven't been out there yet. I know God has a bigger plan! I'll be back sooner than later. I know my brothers are going to keep handling business!" Smith-Njigba tweeted.

Henderson Receives Late Scratch Against Rutgers

As the Buckeyes' kickoff unit huddled up prior to getting the game under way, an Ohio State spokesperson informed the press box that running back TreVeyon Henderson had been added to the status report as a game-time decision against Rutgers.

Henderson was not the lone late addition



SONNY BROCKWAY

TAKING ADVANTAGE — When Ohio State running back TreVeyon Henderson (32) was ruled a late scratch against Rutgers due to injury, third-year back Miyan Williams (3) answered the call, leading Ohio State's rushing attack to 252 total yards on the day.

to the status report. Wide receiver Emeka Egbuka's status was also in doubt prior to Ohio State's bout with Rutgers. Egbuka ultimately ended up playing – producing four catches and 70 yards – but Henderson was held out.

After the game, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said Henderson registered a full week of practice and that the Buckeyes had not expected him to miss their 49-10 win over Rutgers.

While the Buckeyes typically utilize Henderson and third-year back Miyan Williams in a committee of ball carriers, the load was left to Williams against the Scarlet

Knights. He did not disappoint, rushing for a career-best 189 yards and tying the single-game program record for rushing touchdowns in a game with five. He joined former OSU running backs Pete Johnson – who accomplished the feat against North Carolina in 1975 – and Keith Byars, who dashed for five scores against Illinois in 1984.

Stokes Steps In After McCalister Injury

Ohio State safety Tanner McCalister sustained an injury in the first quarter against Rutgers and did not return for the rest of the afternoon.

With McCalister sidelined, the Buckeyes turned to freshman safety Kye Stokes to stem the tide at the nickel position. Stokes went largely unchallenged against the Scarlet Knights but aided the effort of the Ohio State pass defense to hold the Rutgers passing attack to just 80 yards and a 55.0 percent completion percentage.

Stokes picked up a tackle for loss on utility player Johnny Langan during the game's fourth quarter. Day said after the game that he did not have an update on McCalister.

MSU-OSU Kickoff Time Set

When Ohio State hits the road for the first time this season on Oct. 8 at Michigan State, the Buckeyes will kick off at 4 p.m. on ABC from East Lansing, Mich.

The game against the Spartans will mark the end of a five-game homestand to begin the season for Ohio State, which has gotten off to a 5-0 start, including wins over Wisconsin and Rutgers to begin conference play.

The only other announced kickoff time this season is for the season finale against Michigan on Nov. 26, which maintains the usual noon kickoff slot on FOX.



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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	2-3, 45-28 win over La.-Monroe
Sept. 17	TOLEDO	W, 77-21	FOX	3-2, 38-17 win over Central Mich.
Sept. 24	WISCONSIN	W, 52-21	ABC	2-3, 34-10 loss to Illinois
Oct. 1	RUTGERS	W, 49-10	BTN	3-2, 49-10 loss to Ohio State
Oct. 8	at Michigan State	4 p.m.	ABC	2-3, 27-13 loss to Maryland
Oct. 22	IOWA	TBA	TBA	3-2, 27-14 loss to Michigan
Oct. 29	at Penn State	TBA	TBA	5-0, 17-7 win over Northwestern
Nov. 5	at Northwestern	TBA	TBA	1-4, 17-7 loss to Penn State
Nov. 12	INDIANA	TBA	TBA	3-2, 35-21 loss to Nebraska
Nov. 19	at Maryland	TBA	TBA	4-1, 27-13 win over Michigan State
Nov. 26	MICHIGAN	12 p.m.	FOX	5-0, 27-14 win over Iowa

Transfer Kicker Lewis Granted Eligibility

Placekicker Parker Lewis, who transferred to Ohio State from USC this past off-season, has been ruled eligible to play for the Buckeyes this season.

Lewis missed Ohio State's first four games of the season but was able to practice with the team and was eligible to play against Rutgers but did not take the field. He has three years of eligibility remaining.

While Lewis is unlikely to usurp Noah Ruggles and his placekicking duties – Ruggles is 2 of 3 this season on field goals and 22 of 24 at Ohio State – he could see action on kickoffs, where he converted 27 of his 34 attempts into touchbacks for the Trojans last season.

True freshman walk-on Jayden Fielding has handled kickoff duties so far this season, converting 19 of his 41 kickoffs into touchbacks, with two kicks going out of bounds.

Day Enjoys "Black Out" Gameday Atmosphere

For the fourth time in its long history, Ohio State donned its all-black alternate uniforms while Buckeye fans followed suit with a "black out" of Ohio Stadium during their bout with Wisconsin.

With 105,473 fans packed into the 'Shoe, the Buckeyes dispatched the Badgers 52-21. Following the win, Day praised the Buckeye faithful for their role in the win.

"From the jump – the Skull Session, the walk, the beginning of the game all the way until the end, there were a lot of people that hung around at the end of the game, and we don't take that for granted, so I really appreciate Buckeye Nation and all the people that were here today," Day said after the game.

The Buckeyes are 4-0 all-time when they wear their all-black alternates, picking up wins over Penn State in 2015, Nebraska in 2018 and Michigan State in 2019, alongside their win over Wisconsin.

Jyaire Brown, Johnson Talk First Starts

The top three cornerbacks on Ohio State's depth chart were all down against Wisconsin. Cameron Brown and second-year players Denzel Burke and Hancock were all sidelined against the Badgers due to injuries, leaving just three scholarship corners available for Ohio State. Sophomore JK Johnson and freshman Jyaire Brown, the latter of whom just arrived in Columbus this spring, were forced to make their first starts.

If the numbers posted by Wisconsin quarterback Graham Mertz were any indication – he went 11 of 20 for a mere 94 yards with one touchdown against one interception – Johnson and Jyaire Brown filled in admirably.

"They stepped up big time," McCalis-

Continued On Page 6



JOSH WINSLOW

THE BIG TIME — Ohio State cornerback JK Johnson was thrust into his first career start against Wisconsin on Sept. 24, and he responded with a lockdown performance that helped limit the Badgers to just 104 passing yards.



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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.

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

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

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

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

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

ter said. "Obviously, when you've got Cam Brown and Denzel 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."

Johnson collected four tackles over the course of the game. He noted that he didn't enter the contest placing any pressure on himself, rather just focusing on his assignment play-to-play.

"I was just out there, that's all I wanted to do," Johnson said. "I didn't really have any expectations but to fly around and do my job, for real."

Jyaire Brown had one tackle and held up well in pass coverage, adding one pass breakup to his stat line. His day wasn't all smooth sailing, however. A pass-interference flag flew Brown's way on a ball over the head of the receiver he was covering, drawing a livid reaction from Day on the sideline.

"I obviously didn't like what I saw," Day said. "I felt like that was a big play, but I also

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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-

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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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."

McCalister noted that Brown is someone who's never afraid to go against the best of the best in Ohio State's practices, regularly lining up against sophomore wide receivers Marvin Harrison Jr. and Egbuka. He's been described as having a great deal of confi-

dence about him.

Brown said it's a two-way street in those terms, however. He has confidence because he sees some of the nation's top wideouts in practice.

"That confidence comes from practicing every day, going against the best receivers every day, seeing the best that you can see," Brown said. "Then getting into those games like that and going against other opponents, it's kind of initialized that, because we see the best in the business every day Zone 6 (the Ohio State receivers)."

Ohio State's more veteran defensive backs have taken notice of that approach from the freshman.

"I like Jyaire's mind-set," fourth-year safety Ronnie Hickman said. "Since day one, he's had that edge to him, that grimy edge, that hardworking edge. So I knew that, when his time was called, when his number was called, he was going to be ready."

Day said he hoped to have Cam Brown and Burke back against Rutgers Oct. 1, but Burke was the lone returner with Johnson slotted on the opposite side of the field from him. Burke struggled, allowing Rutgers' only touchdown of the afternoon, while Johnson finished the game with two tackles.

OSU Names Players Of The Week Vs. Wisconsin

Ohio State wasted no time to jump on Wisconsin, bursting out to a 21-0 lead by the end of the first quarter. From there, the Buckeyes remained in control and cruised to the win to open Big Ten play.

Leading the charge for the offense was tight end Cade Stover, who was named Offensive Player of the Week by the team. Stover hauled in a pair of first-quarter touchdowns, which doubled as the first scores of his career. His first touchdown came on a 13-yard throwback from quarterback C.J. Stroud and lifted the Buckeyes to a 14-0 lead with 8:54 to go in the opening quarter.

Stover came right back on the next drive, snagging a 2-yard touchdown as he found himself all alone in the end zone thanks to Stroud selling the run on a naked bootleg

and drawing in a pair of defenders. He finished the evening with four receptions for 51 yards alongside his two scores. He also showed his prowess as a blocker, aiding the Buckeyes' rushing attack to 258 yards on the ground.

While Stover earned honors for his play on the offensive side of the ball, McCalister and linebacker Tommy Eichenberg were recognized as the Defensive Players of the Week.

McCalister helped set the tone for Ohio State in the first quarter, intercepting Mertz on his first pass attempt of the evening and setting up Stover's 13-yard score. McCalister added four tackles and a pass breakup while aiding Ohio State's secondary in allowing just 104 passing yards.

Eichenberg produced 14 tackles, the second-highest mark in his career behind only his 17-tackle outing against Utah in last season's Rose Bowl. Seven of his 14 tackles were deemed solo tackles, while he added two tackles for loss in the Buckeyes' win.

Eichenberg was also named Big Ten Co-Defensive Player of the Week for his efforts against the Badgers, sharing the honor with Iowa defensive back Kaevon Merriweather. This was the first time Eichenberg earned conference Player of the Week honors, and he was the first Buckeye to be recognized since former Ohio State defensive tackle Tommy Togiai on Nov. 2, 2020.

Day Comments On Hurricane Ian

While the Buckeyes spent the week preparing to take on Rutgers, Hurricane Ian made landfall in Florida as a Category 4 hurricane on Sept. 28.

The storm produced winds of up to 150 mph while causing massive flooding across nearly the entire state of Florida. By the time BSB went to print, at least 54 people were confirmed dead as a result of the storm while millions were left without power.

The Ohio State football team has five players from Florida on its roster. Cornerback Ryan Turner, Stokes, long snapper Mason Arnold, Ruggles and defensive end Ken-

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yatta Jackson all call the state their home. Day expressed sympathy for those affected on Sept. 29.

"We have some players on our team with family members from Florida," Day said. "I talked with the team about it yesterday, and I just wanted to make sure that I mentioned the fact that it's been a tough couple of days for a lot of people in Florida. (We have) a lot of thoughts and prayers for so many people down there. We go through our day-to-day here, it goes from game to game. But to see some of the devastation that's gone on, people's lives turned upside down, it gives you a lot of pause.

"I'm thinking about all of those folks down there and certainly for the people that were affected close to our family. We're going to try to do everything we can to help them."

Former OSU Receiver Olave Named NFL Rookie Of The Month

The first month of the NFL season is in the books, and one rookie Buckeye is making a name for himself. New Orleans Saints wide receiver Chris Olave was named NFL Offensive Rookie of the Month for September. Olave hauled in 17 receptions for 268 receiving yards in the first three games of his NFL career, all in September. He was taken by the Saints with the 10th overall pick in the 2022 NFL draft, and he's rewarding the team so far by leading them in both receptions and receiving yards.

Olave faced stiff competition for the award, even from other former Buckeyes. New York Jets wide receiver Garrett Wilson, taken one pick before Olave, led all rookie receivers with 18 receptions and two receiving touchdowns.

During his four years at Ohio State, Olave caught 175 passes for 2,702 yards and 35 touchdowns, reaching career highs last season with 65 receptions for 936 yards and 13 touchdowns and leading the Buckeyes' receivers in scoring through the air.

Rossi Adds Old-School Wrinkle To OSU Offense

There's been some debate over whether Ohio State graduate tight end Mitch Rossi should be listed as a fullback.

The Tennessee native lined up at the traditional power back spot on a few select plays against Toledo and Wisconsin, taking one handoff in each game. It's a new wrinkle based on old football tricks for Day, and Rossi was asked on Sept. 27 whether it's fair to designate him as a tight end anymore.

"I'm just a ballplayer, in my eyes, and that's the most fullback answer I can give you right there," Rossi said as the press room erupted in laughter. "I like the mentality of fullback play. I think that I'm embodying that on the field, so whatever you want to call me works for me."

Regardless of what he's called positionally, Rossi has carved out a role for himself in the Buckeyes' offense this season, expanding on his usage from last year.

"We kind of recognized (what he could do) toward the end of last year but hadn't really put a lot into it," Day said. "Then as we went into the Utah game and the Rose Bowl, you could see we started to use Mitch a little bit. Then we had a long conversation with him in the offseason about this very thing."

Rossi's role last season served as a pure

Continued On Page 8



SONNY BROCKWAY

TRESSEL-LIKE — Ohio State tight end Mitch Rossi has seen a unique usage in the I-formation this season, scoring a touchdown and converting on a third-and-1 against Toledo on fullback dives.

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.

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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.

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 7

lead blocker out of spread formations, lined up offset in the backfield to help pave the way for Henderson and others.

Against Toledo, Ohio State unveiled its new design for the former walk-on. Facing a third-and-goal at the Toledo 1-yard line, Rossi came into the game to set up an I-formation with his hand in the dirt behind Stroud. Rossi took a handoff and plunged into the end zone.

It's a play that Rossi said he'd only started practicing earlier that week. His phone blew up with texts afterward.

"It was cool. It was a lot. A lot of family and friends reaching out, happy for me," Rossi said. "The work that I put in behind the spotlight that led to that moment – it was great."

Rossi again entered as a vintage hand-in-the-dirt fullback against Wisconsin, converting a third-and-1 on another fullback dive.

"We see some things in Mitch that really can help us," Day said. "You're starting to see it. You're starting to see what he can do, and it's a weapon for us. And as we go, especially situationally, it's going to be very, very

important for us."

Before Rossi got any meaningful playing time for the Buckeyes, offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson had spoken to him about some fullback-type responsibilities. He was a running back when he first walked on at OSU.

Eager to see the field, it was hard for Rossi to believe that the innovation of the offense could be his solution. But he put his faith in the coaching staff.

"It was tough because sometimes it didn't seem like there was a whole lot of light at the end of the tunnel," Rossi said. "But I did believe in his idea and his vision because he's done that before and he would kind of show me stuff that he's done at other places, or successful NFL teams were using that would work well against (other teams) when we're scheming up defenses. I just kept the faith and kept working."

Of course, he still sees the field as an in-line tight end and lead blocker in the spread, too. He's embraced the "blue collar" mentality of Ohio State's tight end room.

"I think it started with Luke (Farrell), Jake (Hausmann), (Jeremy Ruckert) and has passed down to us," Rossi said. "We just take pride in our toughness. Obviously Cade is that type of guy too. I think it's just the culture of the room."

Rossi was relied on heavily against Rutgers. The Buckeyes opted to play out of 12 personnel (two tight ends) more often than in the past. Rossi helped Ohio State's running game to 252 yards and five touchdowns in the win over Rutgers.

OSU AD Smith Jokingly Courts LeBron James

There are several examples of former

professional athletes returning to college to try their hands at a new sport. Recently, former NBA guard J.R. Smith enrolled at North Carolina A&T and joined the university's golf team despite playing 17 years of professional basketball.

NBA great LeBron James, Smith's former teammate with the Cleveland Cavaliers and Los Angeles Lakers, posed a question about his NCAA eligibility on Twitter on Sept. 24. James famously made the jump to the NBA directly from high school after dominating the Ohio high school scene with St. Vincent-St. Mary's High School in Akron.

"Do I have college eligibility if I went to play another sport besides basketball?" James tweeted. "How does that rule work?"

As James has been an outspoken Buckeye fan for virtually his entire basketball career, Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith reached out to the NBA star to provide guidance on making the step back to collegiate athletics.

"@KingJames – If you never enrolled full-time in college and didn't compete in the sport that you want to play after (high school) graduation, you could have eligibility remaining if you professionalize in one sport, you can still be considered an amateur in another," Smith tweeted on Sept. 25. "Would love to help you!"

James was in attendance at the Ohio State-Notre Dame game, during which his son, Bronny James, underwent an unofficial visit with the Ohio State men's basketball program.

OSU Attempts To Block Lawsuits By Strauss Victims

After a prior ruling in the Richard Strauss case was overturned to allow more

than 100 plaintiffs, whose cases were previously dismissed, to sue the university for their handling of Strauss' pattern of abuse, Ohio State filed for an en banc review, which is a rarely used legal technique, that would require all 16 judges at the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to review the original appeal.

This en banc review could prevent the aforementioned plaintiffs from having their cases heard in court. Ohio State's petition for the en banc review stated that the university believes that the court wrongfully reversed the decision of the district court.

Strauss served as a team doctor at the Ohio State Student Health Center from 1978-98, where it was found that he abused his position and sexually assaulted over 170 student-athletes during his time with the university, according to a 2019 independent investigation. The same investigation found that university officials were aware of the abuse and failed to act. Strauss died by suicide in 2005.

According to a report from The Columbus Dispatch, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals will now decide whether to rehear the case or uphold the initial ruling from the three-judge panel that would have allowed the additional plaintiffs to have their cases heard. If the court moves to uphold the decision, the lawsuits would be moved to district court.

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

Between football practices, OSU tight end John Frank liked to do a little studying. And he made the most of it.

The junior from Mt. Lebanon, Pa., carried a 3.94 grade point average, essential in his major – premed. Frank said studying came easier since he was on the team.

"They go hand in hand," Frank said. "Self-discipline is so stressed in football, it guides you through academics. You're disciplined all day, and when you come home and it's time to study you can control yourself better because you've been military all week.

"They each have their important parts (football and academics). Any wise man would know that in the long run academics has to take precedence. That's just the smart way to go."

35 Years Ago – 1987

OSU coach Earle Bruce wasn't about to make any excuses for the Buckeyes' narrow 10-6 win over Illinois. He didn't think one was needed.

"When you win at Illinois, if you're Ohio State, that's a great one, understand?" Bruce said after the win. "Everyone can write all the negatives they want about it, but it's a win. It was well-played, it was a tough football game. We'll just have to put it down as a win, 10-6, and go on from there."

30 Years Ago – 1992

After a big 35-12 win at Syracuse two weeks before, Ohio State got a wake-up call on Oct. 3 in Wisconsin. Wisconsin recovered from a 10-3 halftime deficit and then simply rammed the ball down 12th-ranked Ohio State's throat in the second half, holding on for a 20-16 victory.

The win triggered a mad celebration at Camp Randall Stadium during which fans tore down one set of goalposts, while the loss ended the Buckeyes' hopes for an undefeated season.

25 Years Ago – 1997

The Ohio State men's soccer team kicked its way to a pair of one-goal wins, beating Wright State 2-1 at home on Oct. 1 and traveling to Madison to beat Wisconsin 1-0 on Oct. 5.

The Buckeyes moved to 2-0 in the Big Ten with their victory over Wisconsin, the goal coming from freshman Nick Konerman off a pass from Tony Monroe. Jon Lowery, playing like an All-Big Ten stopper, turned back seven shots and posted his third shutout

of the season.

20 Years Ago – 2002

One week after Ohio State's dream season nearly sank to the bottom of the Ohio River, the Buckeyes returned home and took care of business.

Still smarting from a 23-19 scare at Cincinnati, the sixth-ranked Buckeyes opened Big Ten play with a 45-17 pasting of Indiana on Sept. 28 at Ohio Stadium.

"Our game plan for this game was to take it to them and put them out early," said OSU sophomore Simon Fraser, who made his first career start at defensive end. "We took it personally after last week."

Playing just 11 days after undergoing arthroscopic surgery to repair a torn meniscus in his right knee, freshman tailback Maurice Claret rushed for 104 yards and three touchdowns.

15 Years Ago – 2007

And in the blink of an eye, it was over.

That was the sentiment expressed in Lindy's college basketball preview issue for the 2007-08 season when describing the Greg Oden and Mike Conley Jr. era at Ohio State.

"Oden and Conley led Ohio State to its first NCAA title game since 1962 then fled for the NBA as one-and-done millionaires," the magazine said. "But hey, it was fun while it lasted."

The Buckeyes were pegged to finish fourth in the conference thanks to incoming 7-0 freshman Kosta Koufos and senior guard Jamar Butler, among others.

10 Years Ago – 2012

After No. 14 Ohio State and No. 20 Michigan State traded body blows for three hours and 12 minutes on Sept. 29, the scoreboard had the Buckeyes holding a 17-16 victory.

Battered and bruised after a game that had enough hard hits and excellent defense to extend the stereotype about Big Ten football for another year or two, the Spartans trudged off their home turf slowly and dejectedly.

On the other side of the field, the Ohio State players followed the postgame prayer with an excited jaunt to the northeast corner of the stadium to sing "Carmen Ohio" with the fans and the marching band.

"That was a great game," said Ohio State head coach Urban

Meyer. "This ranks as one of the great ones. I've been very lucky to be around great players and great teams. This ranks as one of the top wins. This was fantastic."

Five Years Ago – 2017

Over the final three weeks of September, the Ohio State football team posted 148 points on the scoreboard. In that same stretch, the Buckeyes allowed their opponents to score a grand total of 28.

That's one way to bounce back from a 31-16 loss to then-No. 5 Oklahoma at home back in the second week of the season.

Ohio State's resurgence to close out the year's ninth month was capped Sept. 30 with a dominant 56-0 win over Rutgers in Piscataway, N.J. The 11th-ranked Buckeyes (4-1, 2-0 Big Ten) took control of the game early with a 35-0 lead at halftime before polishing things off in the second half. Just for good measure, the Scarlet Knights had a late field-goal try clang off the right goalpost on their final possession of the game, preserving Ohio State's first shutout since a 58-0 romping over Rutgers the previous season.

One Year Ago – 2021

After what must have felt like the longest 13 days of his young life, Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud returned Oct. 2 from his forced sabbatical to showcase a seemingly more streamlined version of himself during a 52-13 blowout of Rutgers at SHI Stadium in Piscataway, N.J.

Showing none of the amped-up overthrows from his first three starts, and no ill effects of the sore shoulder that kept him on the sideline for a 59-7 romp over Akron, Stroud completed 17 of 23 pass attempts for 330 yards and five touchdowns in an almost effortless performance against an opponent that was supposed to have put up more of a fight.

"I had a good week of practice, and I definitely felt way better coming into this game," Stroud told reporters after the game. "That Tulsa game, I wasn't feeling right at all, but this week I could actually put something into my throws and did not feel like my shoulder was going to fall off.

"Last week helped me to take a step back and realize what position I'm in. This is a big-time university, a big-time fan base, a big-time everything, and that week off really helped me step back and take a rest. It helped me work on being a leader and seeing my guys and that they really do trust in me."

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 49, Rutgers 10

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on winning games through the running game and defense: "It feels great. Anytime you win games, it feels great. It isn't about all the other stuff. You win and you move on. That's what it comes down to. That's the way we look at it. You can try to put a square peg in a round hole or vice versa, but if a team says they're going to take away this, then you have to do something else, and that's just the way the game goes."

Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano on the loss: "Tough game. Ohio State's got a good ballclub. We didn't do enough things right to be, at the end, in the game. That was our hope was that we could get it to the fourth quarter, have it still be a game, (and) we'd have a chance. We didn't accomplish our goal, but very proud of our players."

Schiano on his biggest concern entering the game: "The thing that had me the most fearful was their passing game. We were going to try to make sure that didn't – that's how that game gets out of hand. You've seen it happen to many people. They're explosive, and they can throw well. They have a Heisman candidate quarterback. They have a deep stable of receivers. It's tough."

Ohio State third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud on the win in which he had just 154 passing yards: "From my perspective, we won. I don't really care. I think their goal as a defense was to not let our pass game win, and so we ran the ball. Early in the season, I said I was cool with that. It's not just about me. It's about getting wins and about other people eating, so when it's time for me to shine and do my thing, I feel like we'll do that."

Stroud on building chemistry with his receivers while several (Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Julian Fleming, Kamryn Babb) have missed time: "I built a good chemistry with everybody. The young guys even, they come out whenever we throw routes and stuff like that. Sometimes we're just throwing the ball so efficiently that it's just a big surprise when you're not perfect every Saturday. I get why maybe the question was asked, but I feel like our rhythm was fine."

Ohio State fourth-year linebacker

Steele Chambers on if this was his best game as a Buckeye: "I felt like that was. Especially from last week, I definitely improved. I was just trusting that I'd make plays and read my assignments but, yeah, I think that was one of them."

Chambers on handling the football after his interception: "It felt terrible. I didn't know what to do afterwards. I haven't had a ball in my hands in 2½ years or so. I just kind of ran to the sideline and ended up getting tackled by a quarterback. It is what it is. At least I caught it. But I didn't do too good after the catch."

Ohio State defensive end Zach Harrison on tipping the pass that was intercepted by Chambers: "I was trying to get off the ball. I got my hands underneath and (the offensive line) kind of stepped back a little bit so I just kept pushing them, and I couldn't get there. Coach (Larry) Johnson always says to match the hands, so that's what I did. I tipped the ball, and Steele picked it off. It was a great play by Steele."

Ohio State third-year running back Miyan Williams on his 70-yard touchdown run: "When I broke and I just saw green grass, I was just running. I was just telling myself, 'Don't get caught.' So I just kept running."

Williams on how the offensive line is succeeding for Ohio State: "Just rocking off the ball and really taking their men and just driving, so they're just doing a good job firming them up, just blocking."

Day on whether Schiano thought Day called a fake punt that led to a scuffle in the fourth quarter: "Oh, I don't know. I think he was just coming over to defend his player just because he was kind of over there on our sideline and it was a late hit and there's a lot of emotion. I think he was just trying to get his player out of there, and you know, things like that happen in football. He was just defending his player."

Harrison on Day defending punter Jesse Mirco following the late hit: "That's Coach Day. He didn't do anything extra because we know that's what he's going to do. Coach Day has our back just like we have his."



SONNY BROCKWAY

CALLING HIS SHOT — Ohio State punter Jesse Mirco went rogue late in the Buckeyes' win over Rutgers, faking a punt and rushing for a 22-yard gain on fourth-and-2. He received a late hit out of bounds that nearly incited a bench-clearing brawl.

Schiano on the late-game scuffle, his confrontation with Day and their post-game discussion: "It's literally just two competitive guys who are protecting their players. Like I said, I just didn't want a fight to break out. It's not good for Rutgers. It's not good for Ohio State. It's not good for college football. So, mission accomplished – it didn't happen."

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Williams Flashes In Relief Of Henderson

Continued From Page 1

a field goal for the remainder of the contest.

"We thought we could get something there," Schiano said. "Maybe we didn't quite do it exactly the way we had worked on it, but it was going to take a lot. We didn't come here to get close. We came here to win. That's something you have to learn, especially against a team of this quality. You've got to get good enough to do that. But we came here, that was our mission, and we weren't quite good enough to do that, but we weren't going to hold back. It was an opportunity that we couldn't take advantage of, but nonetheless it was an opportunity."

From there, Ohio State had a short field of just 48 yards to work with, and it took just five plays for Williams to tie the game up with a 2-yard plunge. Unbeknownst to anyone – Williams included – that was a precursor of things to come. With usual starting running back TreVeyon Henderson a late scratch due to injury, Williams finished with career highs across the board, rushing 21 times for 189 yards and five touchdowns.

Williams' five scores tied a school record for rushing touchdowns, permanently etching his name in the record book alongside Pete Johnson and Keith Byars, who each accomplished the feat during their time at Ohio State. Johnson rushed for five touchdowns against North Carolina in 1975, while Byars ran for five scores against Illinois in 1984.

"That's definitely one of my best friends on the team, so it's just good (to see)," Stroud said of Williams. "It's really inspiring to see him have a good game like that, all the stuff he's been through, all the stuff he's still going through now to this day. All the work he puts in and (how) focused he remains, it's kind of cool to see his work pay off."

Williams learned shortly before kickoff that he would take over starting duties for Henderson, though the starting designation has had less importance in recent weeks, with the backs sharing similar workloads



SONNY BROCKWAY

GOING THE DISTANCE — Ohio State running back Miyan Williams scored in a variety of ways against the Scarlet Knights, scoring two touchdowns each from 1 and 2 yards out, as well as a 70-yard tote in the third quarter, the second-longest rush of his three-year career with the Buckeyes.

through the first four games of the season. Not wanting to let Henderson down, Williams offered up a simple message to his peer before taking the field for what would become a record-tying performance.

"It wasn't like joy or energy," Williams said. "I looked him in his eyes, and I told Tre, 'I've got you. I've got you today.' It's a blessing just to be up there with those names. Those are legends here."

Four of Williams' five rushing touchdowns came near the goal line, all rushes

of 2 yards or less. The exception came in the third quarter, when Williams showed breakaway speed on a 70-yard score. Taking the ball 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage, Williams shed a single tackler who had worked past Ohio State's offensive line and proceeded to go untouched into the end zone for the second-longest run of his career (behind a 71-yarder at Minnesota in 2021), as well as the longest this season for Ohio State.

"Once I was running, I didn't feel like I was going to get caught, but it was just in the back of the head, 'Don't get caught,'" Williams said. "I was just telling myself that."

Williams was just one part – albeit a large one – of an Ohio State offense that went for 413 total yards and averaged 7.0 yards per play, and Day said it was a team effort that helped open the game up for Williams.

"Overall, the tight ends, the wide receivers, everybody's involved with this run game, but Miyan was running hard today and finished a bunch of runs," Day said. "He

turns a 3-yard run into 5 (yards), keeps us on schedule, and it was tough down there in the red zone. They dug in a few times, we had to go for it on fourth down, but Miyan had a really good day for us."

Tensions Heat Up After Late Hit

With the game in hand and Ohio State holding a 49-10 lead in the fourth quarter, punter Jesse Mirco couldn't have possibly imagined what he would incite.

The Buckeyes faced a fourth-and-2 at their own 39-yard line and sent Mirco out to punt. But instead of booting the ball away, he called his own number and tucked the ball, running past the first-down marker and across midfield before running out of bounds at Rutgers' 39-yard line. Running out of bounds may not be the most apt description, though, as Rutgers wide receiver Aron Cruickshank laid a vicious hit on Mirco after he had already reached the sideline, which sent him flying into Ohio State's bench.

"I just grabbed him, I said, 'What hap-

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SONNY BROCKWAY

HOLD ME BACK — Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano got in each other's faces after a late hit out of bounds on Ohio State punter Jesse Mirco, who initiated a fake punt in the fourth quarter with the Buckeyes up 49-10, the eventual final.

pened?" Day said after the game of his conversation with Mirco. "He said, 'I rolled out to the right and nobody was on me.' I said, 'OK, anybody tell you to do that?' He said no, so I said, 'OK, we'll talk about that tomorrow.'"

A flag was immediately thrown for the late hit – and Cruickshank was ejected from the game – but the penalty would do little to assuage the heated Ohio State sideline after the out-of-bounds collision. A near brawl broke out, with several Ohio State and Rutgers players pushing, shoving and getting in each other's face masks to defend either Mirco, who took the hit, or Cruickshank, who was being mobbed for delivering the hit.

The confrontation extended to the head coaches of the contest, who met near Ohio State's sideline and shared some intense words while being held back by assistant coaches and held at arm's length by the officials. Offsetting penalties were called on each coach.

While both coaches were clearly not pleased at the time – Day upset about the hit and Schiano worried for Cruickshank near Ohio State's sideline – the flared tempers had receded by the game's end, when they shared a handshake and a hug on the field.

"It's just one coach defending one side and one coach defending theirs," Day said. "No hard feelings at all. I told (Schiano) that after the game. I have an unbelievable amount of respect for him, so that's all that was."

Schiano also clarified that the issue was not between him and Day, but rather out of an abundance of caution to avoid an all-out brawl between the two teams, and along with Day, he confirmed that no ill will was being harbored.

"My player was in a sea of Ohio State players, and it was closing fast," Schiano said. "I wanted to make sure of two things: I wanted to stop our team from coming across the field (because) that's how things get very ugly, and I wanted to make sure our player got out of there safely."

"We're both very competitive guys," he continued. "I have the utmost respect for Ryan. We're good friends. We're good. There's no problem between us. We're good friends. We're not going to let that get in the way. It's a heat of the moment, competitive. We were both protecting our players. That's what good coaches do."

Health Hard To Come By For Buckeyes

Success on the field has come easily for Ohio State this season, both on offense and defense, but the one area where the Buckeyes can't appear to catch a break is in the injury department.

The Buckeyes were again without the services of wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba and cornerbacks Cameron Brown and Jordan Hancock, and there were new additions to the unavailable list in backup safeties Cameron Martinez and Jantzen Dunn. Defensive end Tyler Friday and linebacker Palaie Gaoteote IV were also ruled unavailable for the contest.

As if those losses weren't enough, both Egbuka and Henderson were named game-time decisions after the initial report had come out. Egbuka would ultimately take the field, leading Ohio State with four receptions for 70 yards, but Henderson did not make an appearance for the Buckeyes.

"We certainly didn't expect that to happen going in, but then he struggled in war-mups," Day said of Henderson. "We were

expecting him to play. He practiced this week. So (the injury) showed up and did linger from last week, but we were kind of surprised he wasn't able to make it, so we had to go with Miyan."

Ohio State also took a pair of hits during the game, as safety Tanner McCalister and defensive tackle Tyleik Williams both left the contest and did not return, though both did return to the sidelines after a brief trip to the medical tent.

"I don't really have much of an update right now on Tanner," Day said. "We'll evaluate him later today and tomorrow and see where that's at. Cam, we're trying to get back as soon as we can. Again, we'll come in tomorrow and see where things are at and hopefully get a week of practice out of those guys."

"We're going to always make sure that we're following the lead of the doctors and the medical staff on the whole thing, and certainly the feedback of the players is critically important in all this. At the end of the day, I'm out of it. I trust the guys, and they do a great job."

Better Luck Next Time

With Ohio State's 49-10 win over Rutgers, pushing the Buckeyes to 9-0 against the Scarlet Knights, this is now the most lopsided series in Ohio State's storied history. The Buckeyes have won all nine games by an average margin of 42.1 points, with the closest finish a 49-27 win on Nov. 7, 2020.

According to Ohio State's record book, nine wins is the most by the Buckeyes

against a single opponent without a loss or tie. The next closest for Ohio State is a team over which it has an unblemished 8-0 record: the Washington State Cougars.

The Buckeyes last played the Cougars on Sept. 14, 2002, a 25-7 win in Columbus. The first matchup was on Oct. 18, 1952, with the Buckeyes claiming a 35-7 victory on their home turf. Just one of the games took place on the road in Seattle, Wash. — a game played at Washington's Husky Stadium — a 45-29 win for Ohio State on Oct. 5, 1974. Despite Ohio State making 16 appearances in the Rose Bowl and Washington State playing in the contest four times (three times as a member of the Pac-12, once as an independent in 1916), all eight of these programs' games have come via nonconference scheduling.

Ohio State has double-digit wins and just one loss against just two teams: Missouri (10-1-1) and Denison (14-1-2). The Buckeyes last played the Tigers in 1998, and their last contest against Denison came nearly 100 years ago in 1927.

The Buckeyes have double-digit wins with just two losses against Chicago (10-2-2), Cincinnati (15-2), Ohio Wesleyan (26-2-1) and Otterbein (13-2-3), and they have similarly dominant records against Akron (8-1), California (7-1), Nebraska (9-1) and SMU (7-1-1). If Ohio State had defeated Oregon last season, it would have had a 10-0 record over the Ducks, but instead the Buckeyes sit at 9-1.

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LBs Chambers, Eichenberg Steal The Show

Rutgers entered its contest with Ohio State as a mixed bag on offense. The Scarlet Knights had utilized the services of three different quarterbacks and generally split carries between three different running backs during their first four games. They had also become notorious for their reliance on trick plays since Greg Schiano reclaimed his spot as the head coach of the program three seasons ago.

All of these factors would give any linebacking unit pause, particularly due to the uncertain nature of how the offense operates.

However, the two-man wrecking crew of linebackers Steele Chambers and Tommy Eichenberg did not flinch during Ohio State's 49-10 drubbing of the Scarlet Knights on Oct. 1. After Chambers and Eichenberg combined for 20 tackles, Buckeye skipper Ryan Day pointed to the duo's understanding of defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' defense, as well as an improvement in play recognition, as primary reasons for their performance against Rutgers.

"I think they are just playing faster," Day said after the win. "They're diagnosing plays faster, they understand how teams are trying to attack them. I think it's twofold – one is a year under your belt of playing and figuring out how teams are attacking you and in-game adjustments and just seeing things over and over again. You think about some

GAME NOTEBOOK Jack Emerson

of the best linebackers that we've had here in the last few years, it's usually guys who have played and seen things. You can flash when you're athletic, but it's the diagnosing of plays and understanding how teams are trying to really come after you.

"But then also they feel comfortable in the scheme. They have a good relationship with Jim Knowles, who they meet with every day. He's their position coach, and so I think he gives them really good perspective on how he fits into the run, but also in the pass game. That's huge.

"You can just see it. They're playing that way. You can just kind of feel it on the sideline."

Chambers echoed Day's sentiment, noting that having Knowles as his position coach has paid dividends in his growth as a linebacker.

"For us, it's just really cool because we're hearing what we need to know exactly from the source. He created the defense himself," Chambers said. "If the dude that created the defense is teaching you, you have to listen to him."

"What Coach Knowles has done for us just is let us play ball. He always says that all of the mistakes on Saturdays are on him. So it just lets us really play free."

Chambers registered 11 tackles and two tackles for loss, both of which were career highs for the Roswell, Ga., native.

While he certainly showed up against the run, Chambers also made a valuable impact in the passing game. He collected a quarterback hit on Evan Simon as well as his first interception of the season. With 18 seconds to go in the third quarter, Simon's pass attempt was tipped at the line of scrimmage by Ohio State defensive end Zach Harrison and floated into Chambers' arms. The former running back then took the return 12 yards to the Scarlet Knights' 20-yard line, where the Buckeyes started their next drive.

Chambers said that he was disappointed with how he returned the interception, especially since he had played running back up until last season.

"I saw it get (batted). I caught it, kind of caught it by the tips which felt really weird. So that's what really messed me up at first," Chambers said. "Then after that I just ran and got tackled.

"I got made fun of a lot because that was kind of my position. My whole job a couple years ago was to make people miss, and I couldn't make the quarterback miss," he continued. "It was a quarterback that got me. It was pretty embarrassing."

While Chambers flew around the field, Eichenberg was his typically consistent self. He produced nine tackles while aiding on a tackle for loss. The duo played a key role in holding Rutgers to just 107 rushing yards, an average of 3.0 yards per carry.

As Chambers and Eichenberg have registered 30 and 42 tackles on the season, respectively, Chambers emphasized that their



SONNY BROCKWAY

ONE IN THE CHAMBER — Ohio State linebacker Steele Chambers returned to his roots against Rutgers, getting the ball in his hands following an interception of Scarlet Knight quarterback Evan Simon.

chemistry on the field has been years in the making.

"It's just fun being out there with him," Chambers said. "He's one of my best friends, basically a brother to me. We've been living together for three years. So it's just us having fun out there."

Fleming Leads The Way For Receivers

It was a relatively quiet afternoon for quarterback C.J. Stroud, who completed just 59.1 percent of his passes – his lowest mark since his first career start against Minnesota – and passed for a career-low 154 yards. Although Stroud wasn't at his best against the Scarlet Knights, third-year wide receiver Julian Fleming still staked out another productive outing after he missed the first two games of the season.

Fleming hauled in four receptions for 51 yards and a touchdown against the Scarlet Knights. As he continues to distance himself from his injury troubles, Fleming said he feels that he's consistently getting better as he gets more in-game reps.

"Week after week, it's a process," Fleming said. "I just need to continue to stay healthy and continue to keep my body healthy enough to play. Right now, I feel like it's just constant improvement and a constant confidence boost. I just have to stay in the training room and continue to do what I'm doing."

With the Buckeyes facing a second-and-15 from the Rutgers 36-yard line early in the second quarter, Fleming burst off the ball and immediately found a soft spot in the secondary, angling himself toward the middle of the field where Stroud found him in stride for a touchdown.

As the Scarlet Knights primarily played with two deep safeties for much of the afternoon, with the objective of flustering Stroud, Fleming said his touchdown came on an unorthodox look from the Rutgers defense.

"It was honestly kind of a weird scheme," Fleming said. "I thought it was Cover 2, but the corner had come down and their other corner had rotated down to the field. It was pretty much just one-on-one with that near safety. I just attacked him head-up and then crossed his face, and there was nobody else on the opposite side of the ball. Then C.J. threw a dot to the other side, and it was kind of just home free from there."

Fleming's touchdown lifted Ohio State to a two-possession lead and contributed to the Buckeyes' run of 28 unanswered points following Rutgers' first-quarter touchdown.

Fleming's production was supported by four catches and 70 yards from Emeka Egbuka. Second-year wideout Marvin Harrison Jr. finished with just three receptions for 18 yards but added a 4-yard touchdown catch with 1:22 remaining in the third quarter.



SONNY BROCKWAY

LEADING THE CHARGE — Ohio State linebacker Tommy Eichenberg, along with linebacker Steele Chambers, has been one of the Buckeyes' leaders on defense this season, accruing 42 tackles — 5½ for loss — and tying a team high with two sacks through five games.

DE Harrison Hits On Big Plays

Chambers and Eichenberg weren't the only defensive Buckeyes to have big nights. Zach Harrison played a hand in both of Ohio State's takeaways against the Scarlet Knights.

As mentioned, Harrison aided in Chambers' interception thanks to his deflection of Simon's pass attempt at the line of scrimmage. Harrison noted that he dipped into his training on the play, pointing to defensive line coach Larry Johnson's constant message of mirroring the hand of the quarterback when in a pass-rush situation.

Harrison's disruption was not limited to the passing game, however. During the first quarter, Harrison – who lined up in a three-tech prior to the snap – shed a block from Rutgers center Ireland Brown and wrapped up a scrambling Simon. While taking Simon to the ground, Harrison jarred the ball loose, and Mike Hall Jr. fell on it, flipping possession in Ohio State's favor.

After the game, Harrison noted that his primary focus was just on corralling Simon rather than looking for the strip.

"I got a check from J.T. (Tuimoloau) and he said he was going to do this, so I was going to cover for him. The quarterback started scrambling and I was like, 'Oh, I'll just go tackle him.' And I did that," Harrison said. "I tackled him and hit the ball out, and Mike recovered it. It was a great play for the defense, and it was a momentum swing for sure."

Harrison saw several plays from the interior defensive line rather than his typical position on the edge, and he primarily lined up in a three-technique when he was bounced inside.

Harrison emphasized that he's willing to do whatever it takes to help the team as a whole and said that him playing on the interior adds another element to Ohio State's pass rush.

"I definitely like it," Harrison said. "Especially rushing with another three guys on the field, having J.T. and Jack (Sawyer) on the edge, I know they're going to get pressure. They're going to get the quarterback off his spot. I know that if I can push the pocket and get to where the quarterback can't step up, either I'm going to get a sack or J.T. is going to get a sack or Jack is going to get a sack or Mike is going to get a sack."

"We're all just out there rushing together. I feel like, with all four of us on the field, not just us four, whoever goes out there to rush, we just have confidence in each other and that we can rush together."

As Chambers and Eichenberg have largely been able to run free this season thanks to the defensive line eating up blockers, Chambers said Harrison has been a key cog of the Buckeyes' defensive success thus far this season.

"He's playing with his hair on fire," Chambers said. "I think just the entire D-line. That's where our defense thrives because they just create chaos up front. Everyone in the back just kind of adjusts. Without them, we can't really do anything. I can't tell you enough how much I appreciate the D-line."

Sophomore Burke's Struggles Continue

After missing Ohio State's 52-21 win over Wisconsin with a hand injury, sopho-

more Denzel Burke returned to his position as the No. 1 cornerback for the Buckeyes against the Scarlet Knights. However, it was more of the same for Burke, who has slumped out of the gate this season.

Burke was beat on multiple occasions, most notably on Rutgers' lone touchdown strike. Facing a third-and-6 from the Ohio State 14-yard line, Simon took the snap and immediately flipped his hips toward Burke and Rutgers wideout Sean Ryan. From there, Simon underthrew Ryan on a fade route, yet Ryan adjusted to the ball and caught it in front of Burke's face for the touchdown.

Burke was beat by Ryan again during the Scarlet Knights' first drive of the second half. Burke lined up over Ryan as the nickelback prior to the snap, and despite producing tight coverage on Ryan, he lost sight of him as the ball arrived, allowing Ryan to high-point the ball and pick up a 26-yard gain.

Burke finished the afternoon with two tackles.

First Road Trip On The Horizon

The Buckeyes enjoyed the comforts of home during the season's first five weeks, playing each of their first five games in Ohio Stadium. Ohio State concluded the home-stand with a 5-0 record while outscoring its opponents 244-74. Day praised the Ohio State faithful for helping his squad to the quick start to the season.

"During this five-game stretch, I can't say how much we appreciate the support from everybody," he said. "This is our fifth-straight game with over 100,000 in attendance, and

we feel it. It means a lot to us, and we want to put on a good show for everybody. Also all the people that make this work – to put on a game, there's so many people that have to do their part, from ticketing to marketing to the operations to on the field to maintenance to facilities to the audio and video – there's so many people, and certainly it all starts with our athletic director, Gene Smith.

"It's been a good five-week run here, and then we go on the road next week. I really wanted to say thank you to everyone involved."

The Buckeyes will head to East Lansing, Mich., to take on the ailing Michigan State Spartans, who enter the game on a three-game losing streak.

Despite Michigan State's early-season struggles, Zach Harrison emphasized that the Spartan Stadium crowd will be a factor during Ohio State's visit and noted that the Buckeyes' experienced guys will have the added expectation of getting the younger players ready to play in a hostile environ-

He finished the evening completing 13 of 22 attempts for 154 yards, his fewest as a starter, to go with two touchdowns and an interception. It was by no means a disastrous performance from Stroud, but it was a little out of character after he started the season so hot.

His most notable miscue of the afternoon came on his lone interception in which he tried to force the ball to Emeka Egbuka, who was blanketed by a trio of Scarlet Knights. The pick came on the first play of the second half and led to a Rutgers field goal to trim the Ohio State lead to 28-10.

Stroud did make up for the interception, though, as he found Marvin Harrison Jr. for a 4-yard touchdown strike two drives later. Overall, it wasn't a horrible outing from Stroud, but it certainly was not his best either.

Play Of The Game

After Rutgers took advantage of a fumble by Emeka Egbuka on its first punt attempt of the day, jumping out to a 7-0 lead, Scarlet Knights head coach Greg Schiano tried to catch Ohio State off guard with a surprise onside kick.

Although Rutgers lined up in its typical kickoff formation, kicker Jude McAtamney popped the kickoff toward Ohio State's front line, which was also lined up in its typical return formation.

As the only Buckeye in the area of the ball, second-year wide receiver Jayden Ballard scooped it up before running out of bounds to preserve the possession for Ohio State. The Buckeyes started their next drive from the Rutgers 48-yard line and went on to score within five plays to tie the game and kick off a run of 28 unanswered points.

The game could have had a much different complexion if Ballard were unable to recover the ball, as Rutgers would have received three offensive possessions before the Buckeyes even got the ball for the first time.

— Jack Emerson

Game Analysis

What Worked Well

With Ohio State down a pair of stars in wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba and running back TreVeyon Henderson, the Buckeyes turned to third-year running back Miyan Williams to carry the load on offense.

Williams did not disappoint, producing the best game of his Ohio State career against the Scarlet Knights. He rumbled past Rutgers' vaunted rushing defense, which ranked first in the Big Ten entering the game, for a career-best 189 yards and five touchdowns, a mark that tied the Ohio State single-game rushing touchdown record with Keith Byars (1984 vs. Illinois) and Pete Johnson (1975 vs. North Carolina).

Williams was largely the beneficiary of Ohio State's newfound infatuation with the I-formation, scoring three touchdowns out of the alignment during the Buckeyes' 49-10 win over the Scarlet Knights. As the go-to guy on the goal line, Williams produced pairs of touchdown runs of 2-yards and 1-yard each.

Although Williams is known for his reputation as a bruiser, he also flashed his speed and acceleration on a 70-yard touchdown during the third quarter. The Cincinnati native took the handoff from quarterback C.J. Stroud before surging through the middle of the Rutgers defense and striding to the end zone virtually untouched.

During a season in which Williams has largely shared running-back responsibilities with Henderson, he took advantage of his day as the lone running back. He received the first 21 rushing attempts by a running back before freshman Dallan Hayden registered his first carry with 11:39 to go in the fourth quarter.

What Didn't Work

While Williams dominated on the ground, Stroud registered his worst game of the season, and potentially of his career.

The Heisman hopeful completed less than 60 percent of his passes for the first time since his first career start against Minnesota in 2021.



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Williams Runs Wild in Rout Of Scarlet Knights

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State fell behind Rutgers. C.J. Stroud passed for less than 200 yards, and running back TreVeyon Henderson was a late scratch due to an injury. What had the making of an epic meltdown instead showed once again how deep the third-ranked Buckeyes are.

Miyan Williams, who had shared duties with Henderson, tied a school record with five rushing touchdowns when Ohio State defeated Rutgers 49-10 before a homecoming crowd of 104,245 in Ohio Stadium on Oct. 1.

Williams had two 1-yard scores and another from the 2-yard line when the Buckeyes (5-0, 2-0 Big Ten) took a 28-7 halftime lead. He added a 70-yarder in the third quarter and a rush from the 2-yard line early in the fourth quarter vs. the Scarlet Knights (3-2, 0-2) to join Pete Johnson (1975 vs. North Carolina) and Keith Byars (1984 vs. Illinois) in the Ohio State record book with five scores.

Uncommon Start

Rutgers took a surprising 7-0 lead at 11:00 of the opening quarter on its second possession before the Buckeyes even had the ball. It was the first time in nine meetings that the Scarlet Knights led.

They went three-and-out on the first series, but Emeka Egbuka fumbled a 45-yard punt by Adam Korsak and Max Melton made the recovery at the OSU 18-yard line. On third-and-6, Sean Ryan beat Denzel Burke to the right corner, and Evan Simon found him for the 14-yard scoring pass.

Rutgers coach Greg Schiano gambled and lost on the ensuing kickoff when Jayden Ballard recovered an onside kick at the Scarlet Knights 48-yard line. Five plays and 1:38 later, it was 7-7 when Williams scored from the 2-yard line. Tight end Cade Stover had a 12-yard reception to the 34, and Williams scooted 32 more on the next play.

After an incompletion, he powered his way across the line.

Egbuka held onto the next punt for a fair catch at the OSU 26-yard line, and he played a big part in the Buckeyes' go-ahead score via a 1-yard rush by Williams at the 4:05 mark. Egbuka had two catches for 47 yards, the latter placing the ball at the 15-yard line, and Marvin Harrison Jr. followed with a 14-yard run. Two plays later, Williams went over left tackle for the 14-7 lead on the ninth play of the 74-yard, 3:29 series.

The next time Rutgers got the ball, Simon was forced out of the pocket on third down and had the ball knocked loose by Zach Harrison and recovered by Mike Hall Jr. at the Ohio State 49-yard line.

Williams ripped off 10 yards on the ground, and a defensive holding on the play tacked on another 10 to the 31-yard line. A false start and an incompletion led to a 36-yard touchdown catch by Julian Fleming for a 21-7 advantage nine seconds into the second quarter.

Late in the second quarter, the Buckeyes had to go only 39 yards after a 34-yard punt. They extended the lead to 28-7 with 48 seconds left in the half, but it was laborious, and if not for a pair of Rutgers penalties, the end zone might not have been breached.

As it was, OSU needed six plays from the 4-yard line, including four after first-and-goal from the 1-yard line, to score on a 1-yard run for Williams.

The drive started with a 14-yard run by Williams. A defensive pass interference on a toss intended for Mitch Rossi gave the Buckeyes a first down at the 4-yard line. On third down, Stroud was sacked for 12 yards, but Rutgers was called for holding, and the ball moved to the 1-yard line. Stroud was sacked for a 1-yard loss, Williams got it back, and a quarterback sneak gained nothing before Williams went through a gaping hole on the right side of the line. The Buckeyes used 10 plays and 4:48.



SONNY BROCKWAY

BUTTERFINGERS — Ohio State sophomore wide receiver Emeka Egbuka got the game off to an unfortunate start for the Buckeyes, fumbling the ball away after Ohio State forced a punt on Rutgers' first possession of the game.

Spicy Second Half

On the first snap of the second half, Stroud was intercepted by Avery Young at the Rutgers 26-yard line, and he had a return of 15 yards to the 41-yard line. A 26-yard reception by Ryan moved the chains to the 30-yard line, and Samuel Brown V had two carries for 13 yards, but the drive stalled, and Jude McAtamney kicked a 35-yard field goal to make it 28-10 at 10:12.

It took one handoff for the Buckeyes to increase the margin to 35-10 when Williams burst up the middle for the 70-yard score at 10:01.

"When I got the ball, I knew the safety blitzed," he said. "So when I made him miss, I knew there was nobody behind him. When I broke, I just was seeing green grass and telling myself, 'Don't get caught.'"

The junior had six career rushing touchdowns entering the game, and his previous best yardage was 125 against Minnesota in 2021.

The OSU defense came through again, stopping Rutgers for a 1-yard gain at the Ohio State 45-yard line on fourth down when the Scarlet Knights needed just 2 yards.

Marvin Harrison upped the score to 42-10 at the end of a 55-yard, eight-play drive in 4:04. Williams collected 24 yards on three carries, and Egbuka made a catch for 18 yards to Rutgers' 8-yard line before another defensive holding penalty gave the Buckeyes the ball at the 4-yard line. Instead of going to Williams, Stroud threw two incompletions before finally connecting with Harrison on a slant for the 4-yard score.

After linebacker Steele Chambers picked off Simon at the Rutgers' 32-yard line and

returned it to the 20-yard line, the Scarlet Knights had two more pass interferences to place the ball on the 2-yard line, and Williams did the rest on the next play.

Kyle McCord replaced Stroud with 11:39 left in the game. The Buckeyes were headed for a three-and-out when on fourth down the game took a heated turn after punter Jesse Mirco didn't punt. Instead, he ran for 22 yards and was belted out of bounds by Aron Cruickshank, who was ejected. Schiano raced across the field to confront Ohio State coach Ryan Day. They jawed face-to-face before being separated, and each was given an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, though they hugged and shook hands after the game.

Mirco eventually punted, and Rutgers had one more series and booted the ball back to the Buckeyes. With Devin Brown quarterbacking, Dallan Hayden ran six times for 29 yards before Michael O'Shaughnessy punted into the end zone. The Scarlet Knights ran for 3 yards to their own 23-yard line to end the game.

Notes

Stroud was 13 of 22 for 154 yards with two touchdowns and an interception. Egbuka was targeted seven times and had four catches for 70 yards. Fleming caught four for 51 yards, and Harrison grabbed three passes for 18 yards. ... The Buckeyes had 413 total yards (252 rushing, 161 passing). Rutgers gained 187 (107 run, 80 pass). ... Quarterback Evan Simon was 10 of 19 for 74 yards with a touchdown and a pick. ... The Buckeyes have scored touchdowns in 12 consecutive quarters and in 18 of the 20 this season.

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 49, Rutgers 10

Oct. 1, 2022 - Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
RUTGERS	7	0	3	0	10
OHIO STATE	14	14	14	7	49

First Quarter

RUT – Ryan, 14-yard pass from Simon (McAtamney kick), 11:00.

OSU – Williams, 2-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 9:21.

OSU – Williams 1-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 4:05.

Second Quarter

OSU – Fleming, 36-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 14:51.

OSU – Williams, 1-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 0:48.

Third Quarter

RUT – McAtamney, 35-yard field goal, 10:12.

OSU – Williams, 70-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 10:01.

OSU – Harrison Jr., 4-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 1:22.

Fourth Quarter

OSU – Williams, 2-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 14:50.

Att. – 104,245

Weather – Cloudy

Team Statistics		
	RUT	OSU
First Downs	12	24
Rushing	6	13
Passing	4	7
Penalty	2	4
Rushes-Yards	36-107	34-252
Passing Yards	80	161
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	11-20-1	15-25-1
Offensive Plays	56	59
Total Net Yards	187	413
Third Down Efficiency	1-11	5-10
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-2	2-2
Punts-Avg.	5-45.2	3-40.7
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	1-1
Penalties	10-61	6-41
Time of Possession	33:05	26:55

Individual Statistics		
RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)	RUT: Brown V 15-79; Vedral 4-10; Simon 6-6; Monangai 4-5; Salaam 2-3; Langan 3-3; Day 1-3; Youngblood 1-(-2). OSU: Williams 21-189; Hayden 9-28; Mirco 1-22; Harrison Jr. 1-14; Stroud 2-(-1).	
PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)	RUT: Simon 10-19-1-74-1; Cruickshank 1-1-0-6-0. OSU: Stroud 13-22-1-154-2; McCord 2-3-0-7-0.	
RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)	RUT: Langan 3-23; Ryan 2-40; Cruickshank 2-16; Salaam 2-(-4); Alaimo 1-5; Long 1-0. OSU: Egbuka 4-70; Fleming 4-51; Harrison Jr. 3-18; Scott Jr. 2-7; Stover 1-12; Williams 1-3.	
PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)	RUT: Korsak 5-45.2-51. OSU: Mirco 2-40.5-47; O'Shaughnessy 1-41.0-41.	
PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)	RUT: None. OSU: Egbuka 1-(-3).	
KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)	RUT: Cruickshank 2-45; Youngblood 1-16. OSU: Ballard 1-0.	
FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.)	RUT: Melton 1-0. OSU: Hall Jr. 1-0.	
INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.)	RUT: Young 1-15. OSU: Chambers 1-12.	
SACKS	RUT: Powell 1-1. OSU: Turner 1-6.	
TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.)	RUT: Ahanotu 1.5-5; Wright-Collins 1-2; Powell 1-1; Jennings 0.5-1; Mack 0.5-0. OSU: Chambers 2-9; Turner 1-6; Stokes 1-4; Eichenberg 0.5-1; Jean-Baptiste 0.5-1; Sawyer 0.5-1; Vincent 0.5-1.	

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **RUT:** Jennings 6-1-7; Braswell 6-1-7; Young 6-0-6; Mack 2-4-6; Powell 2-2-4; Izien 1-3-4; Ahanotu 1-2-3; Abraham 1-1-2; Melton 1-1-2; Wright-Collins 1-1-2; Dean 1-1-2; Simon 1-0-1; Cruickshank 1-0-1; Collins 1-0-1; Bailey 0-1-1; Lewis 0-1-1; Majeh 0-1-1; Rainey 0-1-1; Angoy 0-1-1. **OSU:** Chambers 8-3-11; Eichenberg 3-6-9; Hickman 4-2-6; Proctor 1-4-5; Trayanum 1-3-4; Jean-Baptiste 1-2-3; Simon 1-2-3; Vincent 0-3-3; Harrison 2-0-2; K. Williams 2-0-2; Sawyer 1-1-2; J. Johnson 1-1-2; Burke 0-2-2; Tuimoloau 0-2-2; McCalister 1-0-1; Ransom 1-0-1; Harrison Jr. 1-0-1; Hicks 1-0-1; Stokes 1-0-1; Turner 1-0-1; Hall Jr. 0-1-1; T. Williams 0-1-1; X. Johnson 0-1-1; Cage 0-1-1; Hamilton 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – **RUT:** Vedral, Xeuickshank, Youngblood, Langan, Monangai, Dunlap Jr., DiRenzo, Brown, Jones, Pierce, Tyler III, Izien, Melton, Jennings, Young, Mack, Powell, Bailey, Hamilton, Abraham, Lewis, Majeh, Collins, Alaimo, Washington, Salaam, Brown V, Ledgister, Simon, Day, Dean, Rogowski, Ryan, Rainey, Angoy, Braswell, Wright-Collins, Long, Ahanotu, McAtamney, Korsak. **OSU:** Harrison Jr., Egbuka, M. Williams, Fleming, Wypler, M. Jones, Stroud, Jackson, Johnson Jr., D. Jones, Stover, Burke, Hickman, McCalister, Sawyer, Kaufmann, J. Johnson, Proctor, Hall Jr., Vincent, Harrison, X. Johnson, Hicks, Ransom, D. Brown, J. Brown, Trayanum, K. Williams, Turner, Mirco, Simon, Rossi, Eichenberg, Stokes, Fielding, Robinson, Tuimoloau, Hayden, Hamilton, McCord, JEan-Baptiste, Cage, Scott Jr., Ballard, T. Williams, Curry, Ruggles, O'Shaughnessy.

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	W, 49-10	104,245
Oct. 8	at Michigan State	4 p.m.	
Oct. 22	IOWA	TBA	
Oct. 29	at Penn State (10)	TBA	
Nov. 5	at Northwestern	TBA	
Nov. 12	INDIANA	TBA	
Nov. 19	at Maryland	TBA	
Nov. 26	MICHIGAN (4)	Noon	
Dec. 3	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.	

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

Team Statistics		
	OSU	Opp
First Downs	130	63
Rushing	54	26
Passing	64	29
Penalty	12	8
Average Per Game/Rush	226.2	110.4
Average Per Game/Pass	303.4	153.4
Total Offense	2648	1319
Total Plays	330	292
Average Per Game	529.6	263.8
Average Per Play	8.0	4.5
Penalties-Yards	26-233	30-265
Fumbles-Lost	3-2	4-2
Third Down Efficiency	35-58	19-70
Percentage	60%	27%
Fourth Down Efficiency	4-4	2-8
Percentage	100%	25%
Sacks-Yards	10-60	3-8
Time Of Possession Avg.	30:08	29:52

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	84	48	70	42	0	244	48.8	
Opponents	20	27	13	14	0	74	14.8	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Miyan Williams	64	497	7.8	8	70
T. Henderson	50	318	6.4	3	41
Dallan Hayden	38	180	4.7	1	45
C.J. Stroud	9	8	0.9	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
M. Harrison Jr.	1	14	14.0	0	14
Jesse Mirco	1	22	22.0	0	22
Devin Brown	1	1	1.0	0	1
Team	5	-9	-1.8	0	-1.8
OSU Totals	182	1176	6.2	15	70
OPP Totals	168	666	3.3	4	75

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
C.J. Stroud	92	134	68.7	1376	18-2 275.2
Kyle McCord	10	14	71.4	141	1-0 35.3
OSU Totals	102	148	68.9	1517	19-2 303.4
OPP Totals	70	124	56.5	767	4 153.4

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	30	512	17.1	5	51
Marvin Harrison Jr.	24	405	16.9	6	45
Cade Stover	13	200	15.4	2	38
Julian Fleming	11	141	12.8	4	36
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	4	26	6.5	0	12
Gee Scott Jr.	2	7	3.5	4	0
Dallan Hayden	2	13	6.5	0	10
Kyion Grayes	1	2	2.0	0	2
OSU Totals	102	1517	14.9	19	72
OPP Totals	70	767	11.0	4	58

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Miyan Williams	8	-	-	-	-	48
Noah Ruggles	-	34-34	-	-	2-3	40
Emeka Egbuka	6	-	-	-	-	36
Marvin Harrison Jr.	6	-	-	-	-	36
Julian Fleming	4	-	-	-	-	24
T. Henderson	3	-	-	-	-	18
Cade Stover	2	-	-	-	-	12
Mitch Rossi	1	-	-	-	-	6
Xavier Johnson	1	-	-	-	-	6

Jayden Ballard	1	-	-	-	-	6
Dallan Hayden	1	-	-	-	-	6
TC Caffey	1	-	-	-	-	6
OSU Totals	34	34-34	-	-	2-3	244
OPP Totals	7	8-8	0-0	0-0	6-6	74

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	4-4	1-1	0-0	6-6

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	15	651	43.4	0	52
M. O'Shaughnessy	1	41	41.0	0	41
OSU Totals	16	692	43.3	0	52
OPP Totals	31	1394	45.0	0	75

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Tanner McCalister	1	30	30.0	0	30
Steele Chambers	1	12	12.0	0	12
Ronnie Hickman	1	8	8.0	0	8
OSU Totals	3	50	16.7	0	30
OPP Totals	2	15	7.5	0	15

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	5	34	6.8	0	13
Jayden Ballard	1	14	14.0	0	14
JK Johnson	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	7	48	6.9	0	14
OPP Totals	0	0	0	0	0

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Chip Trayanum	2	22	11.0	0	17
Jayden Ballard	1	0	0.0	0	0
Emeka Egbuka	1	25	25.0	0	25
OSU Totals	4	47	11.8	0	25
OPP Totals	12	253	21.1	0	38

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
T. Eichenberg	23	19	42	5.5-16	2.0-8
Steele Chambers	18	12	30	4.0-19	1.0-7
Ronnie Hickman	8	10	18	0-0	0-0
Lathan Ransom	11	7	18	1.0-3	0-0
Cody Simon	7	10	17	2.0-2	0-0
Josh Proctor	9	5	14	0-0	0-0
JK Johnson	8	2	10	0-0	0-0
Mike Hall Jr.	6	4	10	5.0-26	2.0-19
Jack Sawyer	5	5	10	4.0-11	2.0-7
J. Jean-Baptiste	6	4	10	2.5-14	2.0-13
Cameron Martinez	6	3	9	0-0	0-0
Chip Trayanum	4	4	8	0-0	0-0
Tanner McCalister	6	1	7	0-0	0-0
Denzel Burke	3	4	7	1.0-1	0-0
Zach Harrison	5	2	7	0-0	0-0
J.T. Tuimoloau	4	3	7	3.0-7	0-0
Caden Curry	6	1	7	1.0-6	0-0
Taron Vincent	1	5	6	0.5-1	0-0
Tyleik Williams	3	3	6	1.5-5	0-0
Cameron Brown	4	1	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
Xavier Johnson	1	3	4	0-0	0-0
Kourt Williams	2	2	4	0-0	0-0
Kye Stokes	4	-	4	1.0-4	0-0
Sonny Styles	2	1	3	1.0-2	0-0
Ty Hamilton	2	1	3	0-0	0-0
Kenyatta Jackson	2	-	2	1.0-1	0-0
Ryan Turner	1	-	1	1.0-6	1.0-6
OSU Totals	167	120	287	36.0-125	10.0-60
OPP Totals	173	142	315	15.0-38	3.0-8
Fumbles Forced: Jean-Baptiste, Harrison.					
Fumbles Recovered: Gaoteote IV, Hall Jr.					

'02 Buckeyes Handle Adversity Vs. Bearcats

On the 20th anniversary of Ohio State's 2002 national championship, Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be running occasional stories on that magical season. The following story recalls a pivotal early-season non-conference win over Cincinnati.

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The 2002 Ohio State national championship football team was no stranger to close games. The Buckeyes won seven of their 14 contests by one score that year, including two overtime wins, one of which came in the BCS National Championship Game against No. 1 Miami.

Ohio State had comfortable wins against Texas Tech (45-21), Kent State (51-17) and Washington State (25-7) to open the season, but the fourth contest for the Buckeyes proved to be the first close game that Ohio State would participate in that season. That test of the Buckeyes' close-game mettle came in week four, a road contest at Cincinnati (then of the Conference USA) in which the Buckeyes dispatched the Bearcats, 23-19, at Paul Brown Stadium.

"That game proved, first of all, that we had the maturity to win close games," said former Ohio State assistant coach Bill Conley, who coached in the game. "That season there were a ton of them. It showed the toughness and the tenacity of our football team in relation to, really, putting it all on the line."

OSU historian and author Jack Park, who noted he's enjoyed a longtime friendship with then-head coach Jim Tressel, stated the win was not only indicative of Ohio State's 2002 championship season but also what made the 10-year Buckeye head man successful.

"It's one of the real special seasons of all time," Park said. "This win over Cincinnati was kind of indicative of what was to come."

Bucknuts writer Steve Helwage recalled a unique atmosphere that set the



FILE PHOTO

TAKING A GAMBLE — Ohio State wide receiver Chris Vance's (4) lone touchdown reception against Cincinnati gave the Buckeyes their first lead of the game, while wide receiver-turned-cornerback Chris Gamble (7) had a pivotal interception in the 23-19 win over the Bearcats.

stage for the game. Ohio State played away from home against a fellow Ohio-based team for the first time since 1911, and in a record that stood for over 20 years, it was the most fans – 66,319 – to attend a Cincinnati sporting event. That record was broken on Sept. 29 of this year when the Cincinnati Bengals welcomed in 67,260 fans against the Miami Dolphins in what is now known as Paycor Stadium.

"It was this once-in-a-lifetime-type event," Helwage said. "It was really a big deal."

That didn't mean the Bearcats were held in high regard at the time. They hadn't won

eight games in a season since 1997, and that was in a much weaker conference than the Big Ten.

"Here's Ohio State, which everyone thinks, 'Oh, this is a top-10 team,'" Helwage said. "They're going down there to play Cincinnati, which is a .500 team at their level. Not even a top Conference USA team, it didn't seem like. And it was a tough game."

Ohio State entered fresh off a win against the Cougars, but injuries served to damp expectations. Freshman running back Maurice Clarett, who had piled up 230 rushing yards against Washington State, underwent arthroscopic knee surgery and missed the action. Multiple injuries at defensive back also created a spot at cornerback for sophomore wide receiver Chris Gamble.

"The offense without Clarett, they were stuck in quicksand," Helwage said. "His ability to run the ball really made things go for them, because then they could run play action off of that and get the ball out to Gamble and (Michael) Jenkins and (Ben) Hartsock."

Tressel gave Cincinnati credit but acknowledged that the Buckeyes missed Clarett.

"Cincinnati did a great job of lining up, coming after it, did a good job of preparing for us," Tressel said after the victory was secured. "We had some execution problems that hurt us, and we never seemed to get into a great rhythm."

"In the past three games, Maurice broke a run that gave us a rhythm."

The Bearcats scored a touchdown on their opening drive and, despite missing the extra point, held a 9-0 lead midway through the first quarter. The Buckeyes got on the board on a 20-yard play-action toss from Krenzel to tight end Hartsock at 10:03 of the second frame and took their first lead – a 14-12 advantage with 10:53 to go in the

third quarter – on a 5-yard touchdown pass from Krenzel to wide receiver Chris Vance.

"(Cincinnati) led and missed some scoring opportunities, had opportunities to be ahead," Helwage said. "Ohio State moved the ball but just couldn't score. It was just kind of a messy game for Ohio State. They didn't have it that day."

Cincinnati quarterback Gino Guidugli responded by leading a touchdown drive of his own, putting the Bearcats back ahead 19-14 late in the third quarter. Ohio State drove all the way down to the Cincinnati 2-yard line immediately thereafter and faced a fourth-and-goal, electing to go for it – that was until the team was penalized 5 yards for having too many men on the field, and the Buckeyes instead settled for a Mike Nugent 24-yard field goal and a 19-17 deficit with 12:31 to play in the game.

"We put ourselves in a hole," Conley said, "but we were able to eventually fight our way out and win the thing."

Soon, Cincinnati was back at the Ohio State 13-yard line, searching for a touchdown to make it a two-score lead with less than two minutes to play. Guidugli heaved a toss toward the end zone that could have been the dagger in Ohio State's heart, only to have it intercepted by Gamble.

"We have our receivers do a little bit of coverage in our one-on-one drills and so forth, and we felt since last spring that one of the best cover guys on the field was Chris Gamble," Tressel said of inserting the receiver into the defensive backfield.

"We didn't have time to teach him all the formations and checks and so forth, so we decided a week or so ago if we could put him in a situation where, at least in the first game, he would simply play man, then the second game we'll probably have to mix it up because they'll know he's just playing

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man. For game one, we just gave him an opportunity. People like to throw the fade, and he's a guy that can break on the ball. He came up with a huge play."

The Bearcats got the ball again, still holding their 19-17 lead, but Ohio State defensive end Darrion Scott flew untouched off the edge to blindside Guidugli and force a fumble, recovered by defensive tackle David Thompson at the UC 47. Krenzel then connected with Jenkins for gains of 12 and 16 yards, and running back Lydell Ross strung together four straight carries for 15 yards to set Ohio State up with a second-and-goal at the Cincinnati 6-yard line with 3:52 to play.

Krenzel dropped back to throw and found no one open, so he scrambled left, and three Cincinnati defenders converged on him as he crossed the line of scrimmage. He spun through all three and dived across the goal line for a go-ahead touchdown, leaving reporters such as Helwage in disbelief from the press box.

"It was the damndest thing I can ever remember," Helwage said. "He somehow got the ball into the end zone on that play. Maybe it was just momentum that carried him in, but it was a hell of a run by him."

Krenzel described the play from his vantage point.

"We were trying to hit them on the slant, but their corner did a good job of covering it. The safety was covering Mike (Jenkins), so I decided to roll out. Chris Vance was coming back late, but I decided not to throw it. If you force it like that, that's a bad thing to do. I decided to take it and try to get as many yards as I could, and I got in."

Krenzel completed just 14 of 29 passes for 129 yards with two interceptions, although his late-game heroics helped pull out the victory.

"Craig was just kind of a caretaker at quarterback at that point," Helwage said of the signal-caller that season. "Tough kid, smart kid, made the right plays."

Facing a fourth-and-10 at the Buckeyes' 15-yard line with 32 seconds left, Cincinnati's last gasp was tipped by Ohio State linebacker Matt Wilhelm into the arms of safety Will Allen, sealing victory for the Buckeyes and keeping their record unblemished.

"I saw the ball get deflected," Tressel said. "I didn't see who did it. Then all I could think – you know how coaches are – was, 'Aw, man, it's going to go to them.' That's just the way we think, unfortunately. To see Will Allen come up with it then, that felt good."

Conley recalled the excitement.

"(The feeling) was obviously jubilation for the win, but also it was kind of a relief, because we didn't expect to be in that situation late in the game," Conley said. "We survived the moment."

OSU finished the game with three turnovers and eight penalties for 60 yards, including a holding call which negated a 94-yard kick return touchdown from Gamble in the second quarter.

"They said we had a penalty," Tressel said. "We always tell our kickoff return blockers when in doubt, don't. If it's close, don't do it. That would have been the most recent one since 1997, so we were excited about that. You can't make those kinds of mistakes."

Gamble was pragmatic about losing the return.

"In a way, that broke my heart," he said.



FILE PHOTO

GET ON UP — Ohio State linebacker Matt Wilhelm finished with a team-high nine tackles — four for loss — including tackles for loss on consecutive plays in the first quarter to force a Cincinnati field goal.

"They said he was holding. I'll just have to try and get one next week."

Hartsock felt great relief after the contest that the Buckeyes pulled through for a win.

"It was like there was a train wreck and I just missed it," Hartsock said of the win at time. "We are definitely very happy to get the win, but we made a lot of mistakes out there today. We found some things we need to work on, especially as we go into the Big Ten season."

Krenzel was also relieved to come away with the victory. He was asked how he felt after scoring the go-ahead touchdown.

"Not as great as the feeling I had when we picked that ball off in the end zone to end it. They marched down the field on us, but our defense came up with the big play."

Park echoed a similar sentiment looking back on the win 20 years later. As someone who's spent much of his life chronicling the history of Ohio State football, he stated he can't recall a time when the Buckeyes were so lucky to win a road contest.

"I've never walked out of an Ohio State away game thinking that Ohio State was more fortunate to win," Park said. "That's a game that we really lucked out on. It really was. Cincinnati had two passes into the end zone that were dropped late in the game, I think it was in the fourth quarter, and that allowed us to win the game."

The win didn't show the Buckeyes were championship contenders yet, according to Conley – that was several weeks down the road.

"Probably the late win at Purdue (10-6 in the 'Holy Buckeye' game) was the one that we thought, 'We have something special here,'" Conley said.

What it did prove, Conley said, was that the team could overcome adversity, and through all the turnovers, penalties and "really good" quarterback play from Guidugli, they'd still managed to pull out a win. That stood in stark contrast to the 2001 season in which Ohio State, with a 7-5 finish, dropped four one-score games during Tressel's inau-

gural season.

"They lost so many close games the year before that that's the impression you came away with (from the Cincinnati game), is that they figured out a way to win a close game on the road in a somewhat hostile en-

vironment," Helwage said.

It also proved that Gamble could play two ways. Conley said the coaching staff had experimented with him at corner previously, but not to the extent he saw the field against the Bearcats and going forward.

"Chris Gamble proved his athleticism and his versatility," Conley said. "That great kickoff return got called back, but he played both ways that game. That's not done much in college football anymore."

His fourth-quarter interception served as a key turning point, but it wouldn't even be the most crucial pick he'd make in the 2002 season. A pick-six from Gamble against Penn State later in the year was the most pivotal play in a 13-7 Buckeye win, and he also collected 499 receiving yards on the offensive side that year.

"It just seemed like he never got tired," Conley said. "Toward the end of the season, the last few games, he played over 100 snaps in all those games. The condition he was in and athleticism is something I haven't seen (since). He's the most overall athletic athlete I've ever experienced at Ohio State."

While on paper the win may not have been Ohio State's most impressive of the 2002 season, for a team that defied the odds in nip-and-tuck contests – they were the biggest point-spread underdog in championship-game history against Miami – the Cincinnati slugfest served as a sign of what was to come.

"I think it was really a huge step," Conley said. "It showed the mettle of the team, the toughness, the ability to hang in there against things that weren't going good."

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Losses, Injuries Stunting Spartans' Season

By **BRADEN MOLES**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Michigan State made head coach Mel Tucker one of the richest men in college football last season, the recipient of a 10-year, \$95 million contract extension following the Spartans' quick turnaround under his tutelage.

Other than a win at Michigan in 2020, Tucker's first season as Michigan State's head coach was mostly unremarkable, finishing with just a 2-5 record. In response to the challenging first year, he raided the transfer portal – a novel concept at the time given the portal's relative infancy – and brought in 20 new players to the program, several of whom plugged in as immediate starters for the Spartans.

That resulted in an 11-2 campaign in 2021 that ended in a Peach Bowl victory over Pitt for Tucker and company. Though his extension had been signed weeks earlier, the bowl win was the first step in repaying the program for placing trust in him to lead Michigan State.

Entering this season, even with the loss of several starters, including wide receiver Jalen Nailor, running back Kenneth Walker III and four starters on the offensive line, the expectation remained that the Spartans – ranked 15th in the AP top 25 preseason poll – would compete within the Big Ten's East Division along with Ohio State, Michigan and Penn State.

Through five games this season, though, Michigan State may be experiencing some buyer's remorse on Tucker's fully guaranteed contract. After dominant wins against Western Michigan and Akron, the Spartans dropped their final nonconference game to Washington, a 39-28 loss on the road in which they were outgained by 138 yards and the final score was made closer than the game appeared. The Huskies made quick work of Spartan quarterback Payton Thorne, sacking him twice and intercepting a pass.

Michigan State then opened Big Ten play with a complete no-show against visiting Minnesota, falling 34-7 as Thorne threw for just 132 yards and two interceptions and the offense as a whole put up only 240 total yards of offense compared to 508 yards by the Gophers. The Spartans crossed midfield just twice during the game and didn't do so for the first time until the second half on a drive that ended in a Thorne fumble.

"Offensively, when we do get the ball, we've got to do something with it," Tucker said after the loss. "When we don't do something with it, we put the defense back out there, and that's not complementary football."

The following week at Maryland, Michigan State continued to not play complementary football, dropping a 27-13 decision to the Terrapins to extend their losing streak to three games, rushing for just 100 yards on 22 carries while allowing Maryland to go for 489 total yards. It's the first three-game losing streak for the Spartans since they dropped five straight in the 2019 season.

While Tucker has not explicitly expounded on the Spartans' issues, problems clearly

exist on both sides of the ball for Michigan State. The biggest question entering the season on offense was at running back, where Michigan State lost the services of Walker to the NFL. Though Walker was a nonfactor in the Spartans' loss to Ohio State last season – picking up just 25 yards on six carries, both the lowest marks of the season for Walker – he still finished with 1,636 yards, second most in the country, and left a significant hole in Michigan State's rushing attack.

Like with Walker, Tucker elected to go to the portal, bringing in Wisconsin transfer Jalen Berger – who had been dismissed from the Badgers – and Colorado transfer Jarek Broussard. This is the third season of college football for both players, and though Broussard was a two-year starter with the Buffaloes, Berger ultimately won the starting job.

The Spartans' ground game got off to a positive start, beating up on Western Michigan and Akron to the tune of 457 rushing yards, but the Spartans totaled just 80 rushing yards on 43 carries (1.9 yards per carry) in the losses to Washington and Minnesota.

"From where I am, I'm just looking for push and surge," Tucker said. "Sometimes it's there and sometimes it's not. I'm going to look and see where we're not stout enough, where we're not strong enough. In the run game, it's not just the line. It's the line, the tight ends and the receivers."

While the rushing attack features several new faces, the quarterback position is owned by incumbent starter Thorne. He was an integral part of the Spartans' turnaround last season, throwing for 3,240 yards and 27 touchdowns (and 10 interceptions) while completing 60.4 percent of his passes. His completion percentage is up slightly this year – 64.2 percent – but he's thrown just eight touchdowns to six interceptions through five games, and the offense as a whole is averaging just 27.0 points and 370.4 total yards per game.

Thorne and the Michigan State offense have a solid trio of receivers in Keon Coleman, Jayden Reed and Tre Mosley, but the Spartans' predictable, one-dimensional offense and struggling offensive line have left little room for the skill talent to flourish.

"I'm really not happy with what I'm seeing," Tucker said. "I don't accept it, but – as I look at our team and I see things unfolding – I do understand what our issues are."

The defense has not fared much better, allowing 22.6 points per game and 411.8 total yards of offense to opposing teams. The secondary – which got lit up at Ohio State last season, with Buckeye quarterback C.J. Stroud throwing for 432 yards and six touchdowns, the most passing touchdowns ever thrown against Michigan State in a single game – returns sixth-year cornerback Ronald Williams, junior safety Angelo Grose and fifth-year safety Xavier Henderson, as well as senior nickelback Chester Kimbrough. Henderson, though, has not appeared since exiting the Spartans' week-one win over Western Michigan with an injury.

In place of Henderson, senior Kendell Brooks has earned a starting role, and sophomore cornerback Charles Brantley – a contributor last season – is also a starter for the Spartans. Michigan State also brought in transfer cornerback Ameer Speed, formerly

Get To Know ... Michigan State

- **2022 Record:** 2-3.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation - Spread; Defensive Formation - 4-2-5; Starters Returning - Offense 5, Defense 9, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Mel Tucker, 3rd year at Michigan State, 15-10.
- **Series History:** 51st meeting; Ohio State leads 35-15-0.
- **School Facts:** Location – East Lansing, Mich.; Enrollment – 50,344; Nickname – Spartans; Colors – Green, White; Conference – Big Ten (East Division); Stadium – Spartan Stadium (Surface, Grass; Capacity – 74,866).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Jalen Berger	59	301	5.1	4
Jarek Broussard	38	177	4.7	2
Elijah Collins	14	94	6.7	3

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Payton Thorne	104-162	64.2	1121	8-6

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Keon Coleman	25	308	12.3	3
Jayden Reed	19	189	9.9	1
Tre Mosley	15	181	12.1	3

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game — 27.0
Rushing Yards Per Game — 127.4
Passing Yards Per Game — 243.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game — 370.4

2022 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 2	WESTERN MICH.	W, 35-13
Sept. 10	AKRON	W, 52-0
Sept. 17	at Washington	L, 39-28
Sept. 24	MINNESOTA	L, 34-7
Oct. 1	at Maryland	L, 27-13
Oct. 8	OHIO STATE	4 p.m.
Oct. 15	WISCONSIN	3:30 p.m.
Oct. 29	at Michigan	TBA
Nov. 5	at Illinois	TBA
Nov. 12	RUTGERS	TBA
Nov. 19	INDIANA	TBA
Nov. 26	at Penn State	TBA
Dec. 3	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Kendell Brooks	24	23	47	0.5-0	0-0
Cal Hallway	12	31	43	2.0-13	1.0-10
Ben VanSumeren	11	23	43	1.0-8	0-0
Angelo Grose	17	18	35	1.5-5	0-0
Ameer Speed	18	16	34	1.0-2	0-0
Jacoby Windmon	8	15	23	8.0-39	5.5-31
Charles Brantley	11	11	22	0.5-3	0-0
Maverick Hansen	5	15	20	0.5-1	0-0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed — 22.6
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed — 136.8
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed — 275.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed — 411.8

of Georgia, who was immediately inserted into the starting lineup.

Even with the additions to the secondary, Michigan State's passing defense – especially with the loss of Henderson – ranks outside of the top 100, allowing 275.0 passing yards per game, though it's a slight improvement over last year's that ranked dead last in the nation at 324.8 passing yards allowed per game.

"There's a lot of bang-bang plays out there that we say, 'Dang, we just need to tighten up an alignment or tighten up a position,' or something like that," Michigan State defensive coordinator Scottie Hazelton said, "and then those bang-bang plays would be made, and that's really what's been hurting us a little bit is the little details."

The secondary has been bailed out by Michigan State's pass rush, which has 13 sacks and 28 tackles for loss through five games. Senior defensive end Jacoby Windmon – a transfer from UNLV who is a former linebacker – has led the way with 5½ sacks and eight tackles for loss, with junior Jeff Pietrowski Jr. starting on the opposite side.

The Spartans have dealt with injuries on the interior, with fifth-year defensive tackle Jacob Slade – who had 2½ sacks last season – out against Washington, Minnesota and Maryland, but third-year Simeon Barrow Jr. and sophomore Derrick Harmon have stepped up in the meantime, combining for 28 tackles (2½ for loss).

Junior linebacker Darius Snow was set to be one of the stars of Michigan State's defense, but he suffered a season-ending injury in the team's opener. Fifth-year linebacker Ben VanSumeren has stepped up in Snow's place alongside third-year linebacker and returning starter Cal Haladay, who tied for the team lead last season with 96

tackles and was named a FWAA Freshman All-American.

There's been little consistency among the first and second levels of the defense so far this season with various starters and role players missing time, but in contrast with the passing defense, the rushing defense has been solid due to the contributions of those players. They've allowed just 136.8 rushing yards per game, tied for the 63rd best mark in the country.

"It's a next man up situation, which we've talked about before," Tucker said. "You know, that's just what it is. Injuries are part of the game. From a rush and coverage working together standpoint, we can do a better job on coverage and get them to hold the ball a little bit longer. And because we're close on some rushes, we've identified some guys that can win one-on-one and we've had, from a scheme standpoint, gotten those guys one-on-one situations so they can win."

This will be the toughest contest of the season for the Spartan squad, entering with a 2-3 record, and just the second shot for Tucker at Ohio State in his third season. Given the tumultuous start to the season, Michigan State is being careful not to enter into a tailspin, and a strong performance against the Buckeyes may help assuage fears about the program's current direction.

"It's an all hands on deck, 24/7 challenge," Tucker said. "That's what we do as coaches. It's a lot easier to coach guys when everything is going well, but when adversity hits, that's really where the rubber meets the road. I have a lot of confidence in our staff and also our players. It's about how you respond to adversity, and I'm determined and optimistic because of the response that I'm seeing from our staff and the players."



Stover Heating Up In Ohio State Offense

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For all the thoughts one could conjure up to describe Cade Stover, fellow tight end Mitch Rossi provided an interesting selection: "Truly himself, all the time."

No secret to anyone who's seen Stover mentioned on a television broadcast or discussed at length by media types, coaches or teammates, the fourth-year breakout star was raised in an agricultural family in the village of Lexington, Ohio, near Mansfield, just under 70 miles north of Columbus. There's a blue-collar identity attached to growing up in such an environment.

"Cade's awesome," Rossi said. "You know his background of farming. He's got strong family values. Sometimes we'll be having conversations of, 'Where do we want to end up when we're done playing football?' And I probably want to get back to Tennessee or the South. People talk about living at the beach. Cade is going back to where he came from: Lexington, Ohio. He's going to have a beautiful farm and raise cattle. If that doesn't tell you enough about Cade, I don't know what will."

It's clear that that personality extends onto the football field for Stover, who's gone from a converted linebacker playing a position constantly maligned for its underuse at Ohio State to a sideline-to-sideline weapon who can road-grade at the line of scrimmage and still be a threat 40 yards away from it.

"I'm proud of what Cade is becoming for this offense," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "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 and does a good job in protection."

Stover started his stint at Ohio State at linebacker, the position at which he excelled in high school as a four-star recruit. He spent his redshirt season developing under



SONNY BROCKWAY

TURNIN' ON THE BURNER — Ohio State tight end Cade Stover has excelled as a pass-catcher for the Buckeyes this season despite the notion that tight ends are not typically utilized in the Ohio State offense.

then-linebackers coach Al Washington in that position room. Following that year, the staff made a change and swapped him over to tight end, where he waited as the team's fourth-stringer and tried to develop in the midst of Ohio State's pandemic-shortened season.

Then last year rolled around, and Stover found himself as the team's backup at tight end, earning more than 200 snaps but catching only five passes for 76 yards in relief of then-starter Jeremy Ruckert.

Suddenly, however, when Ohio State played Utah in the Rose Bowl, Stover took the field again as a linebacker due to shortages on that side of the ball. That left a choice to be made as to at what position his future was with the Buckeyes, one OSU's coaching staff said was left up to the player.

In the end, he sided with the tight end position, and he all but locked up a starting job for this season in doing so.

"We had to have conversations about what's (best) for me," Stover said. "I don't know how many teams want a 6-5, 260-pound middle linebacker anymore. I think 30 years ago I would be playing middle linebacker and there wouldn't be a question about it."

"I think with today's game and the way things are, and the way our defensive line was and playing the four-down defense and having all those guys out there, then having the experience over at tight end already and having the numbers, combine numbers, about where you stand and come out and stuff, it just made more sense to play tight end."

That didn't make him an automatic impact player, however. Ruckert received a five-star rating out of high school at tight end and never gained more than 309 receiving yards in a season with the Buckeyes. In general, no Ohio State tight end has recorded a 400-yard receiving season since Jeff Heuerman in 2013. Day fielded questions about utilizing more four-receiver sets in the offseason, forgoing the spot entirely and seemingly pushing the potential "Year of the

Tight End" back another season.

Behind the scenes, however, Stover kept his mouth shut and workload full. A player who's been quoted as saying "put your phone down" as it relates to hearing critics on social media, he didn't pay any due to doubts about his downfield ability. He just sought to improve it.

"Me and (Coach) Keenan Bailey, three, four nights a week, 5:15 after class in summer, we'd come out (to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center) and we'd spend 45 minutes to an hour every day working top-end, route work and footwork," Stover said. "That's something I'd never done before."

One quarter into Ohio State's week-two game against Arkansas State, Stover had already shown the benefits of that extra practice time. He leaked behind the Red Wolves' defense on a wheel route and snagged a 35-yard catch up the sideline.

Stover followed that up with a 38-yard reception on the same route against Toledo in week three and then added a 34-yard strike on a post pattern the next drive en route to a career-high 83 receiving yards. That not only exceeded Ruckert's career high — 57 yards against Penn State on Oct. 30, 2021 — but was the best single-game performance from a Buckeye tight end since Heuerman posted a five-catch, 116-yard day at Purdue on Nov. 2, 2013.

Still, Stover didn't record his first career touchdown until Sept. 24 against Wisconsin. On Ohio State's second drive of the game following safety Tanner McCalister's interception in Badger territory, Stover leaked out for a wide-open throwback and tumbled over two defenders for a 13-yard score. He added his second career score on the next drive, blocking on the right side of the line before sneaking into the end zone unimpeded for the 2-yard score.

"A lot of things went into that (first touchdown)," Stover said. "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's third-year, Heisman-contend-

ing quarterback C.J. Stroud has been a big proponent of Stover. The Buckeyes lined him up all over the field against Wisconsin, playing him as a traditional in-line tight end, offset as more of a wing behind the line of scrimmage and in the slot as a bigger receiver.

"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 see his work pay off. He's one of the first people that took me under his wing when I first got to school. He's a better person than he is a football player, so I'm really proud of him."

Stover has made his name so far in the receiving game, but as is the case with most tight ends at Ohio State, an important aspect of his role is also the run blocking, an area where Stover has shown improvement as the season has progressed.

"It's one of those things when you're developing as a tight end, it takes time," Day said. "Sometimes you feel like you're working, you're working, you're not making any progress. Then all of a sudden you wake up one day and you're like, 'Here we are.' And I think that's happened with Cade. It took some time to get there, because you have to do so many different things, but he had a great offseason. His leadership was off the charts."

Stover paved the way for third-year running back Miyan Williams to pick up 14 yards on a first-quarter run, going from a wing position to kick out Wisconsin second-year outside linebacker Darryl Peterson and open a truck-sized hole. Earlier in the first quarter, the Buckeyes maneuvered Stover into the slot to serve as a lead blocker for sophomore wide receiver Emeka Egbuka on a bubble screen, and he led the way for a 13-yard pickup.

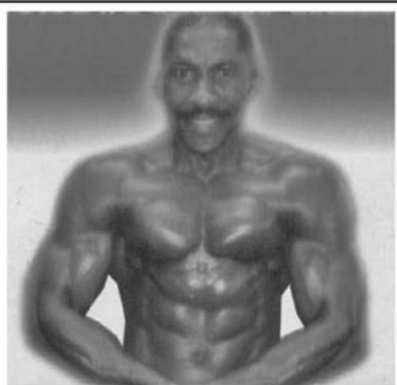
"Cade did an excellent job on that safety or nickel, whoever that was," Day said. "He was strong. His hands were inside. He used good technique, and that created a play of about 8-10 yards for us. We look at that as the run game, it's just an extension of the run game, and it's forcing defenses to cover us sideline to sideline."

Stover earned Offensive Player of the Game honors for his receiving and blocking efforts against the Badgers. His mind-set and above-mentioned leadership have been an example to the other tight ends in Ohio State's room. As much was indicated by his selection to be a team captain for the season.

"Really, I have no words," Stover said after being selected. "I love this team, love the people around me. It's really just a blessing. It's kind of a feeling that hasn't really hit me yet, to be honest with you."

Even if Ohio State plays only 13 or 14 games — and the possibility remains for up to 15 contests — Stover is on pace for at least 520 receiving yards following the win over Rutgers, which would be the most by a Buckeye tight end since Rickey Dudley in 1995. Not bad for a farmer-turned-linebacker-turned-receiver.

"You talk about where you were a year ago, two years ago, and sometimes you're sitting there like, 'What am I doing, why am I here?' to be honest with you," Stover said. "To the point where I am right now where I feel comfortable, I feel good, I feel confident with where I'm at, and that's probably the biggest part of (my development)."



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Vincent Showing Impact Beyond Box Score

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Last season was a long time coming for Ohio State fifth-year defensive tackle Taron Vincent. He played in eight games as a true freshman in 2018, but after he suffered through injuries in 2019 and experienced the pandemic-shortened season in 2020, the stars finally aligned last year for the former five-star prospect to make an impact for the Buckeyes.

He appeared in 12 games for Ohio State, capped off by a six-tackle performance in the team's Rose Bowl victory over Utah, the best game of his Ohio State tenure at this point, and finished the season with 23 tackles (3½ for loss) and half a sack.

"I was confident," Vincent said in the spring. "I went into (the Rose Bowl) confident. I practiced so hard that whole bowl season, so it wasn't a shock because I put in the work for that. If you put in the work for something, you're not surprised when it happens."

With little in the way of NFL draft stock and emboldened by the biggest game of his career, Vincent returned for a fifth season with the Buckeyes. He technically has another year of eligibility remaining if he chooses to take it, but based on the early returns from this season – specifically Ohio State's 52-21 win over Wisconsin – the NFL could come calling sooner rather than later.

"I thought he played really well (against Wisconsin)," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said. "He ate up a lot of double teams. He was efficient and graded out a champion. That's a big step for him, because we need him to be strong inside. With him and Mike (Hall Jr.) in there together, they're powerful. If we want to get to where we need to be, the D-line has to be the strength of our defense. I think it has been so far."

"Taron probably played one of his better games," Day noted.

If one read a recap of Ohio State's win or checked up on the box score, one might be surprised to hear that Vincent played one of his strongest games as a Buckeye. After all, the only time his name was brought up in the box score was in regard to him starting the contest for Ohio State.

But the stat sheet is not where Vincent has made his money this season. While linebackers Steele Chambers and Tommy Eichenberg, as well as Hall, have piled up tackles and sacks through the early part of the season, Vincent has made his mark by offering a consistent presence on the defense, opening the way for his peers to dominate.

"When I saw Tommy being successful every game, I know I'm playing a part in his success because I'm eating up double teams," Vincent said. "I'm cool with my job. As long as the team is being successful, my team is being successful, then I'm successful as well. I just don't get my name called on TV."

Eichenberg flashed with a game-high 14 tackles against the Badgers, though Vincent joked that he should have been credited with at least 11 of them. Even so, there are no regrets from Vincent that he's not the one stuffing the box score for Ohio State.



FILE PHOTO

UNSUNG HERO — Ohio State defensive tackle Taron Vincent's (6) impact typically does not appear in the box score, but the fifth-year Buckeye has aided the defense by swallowing blocks and allowing his linebackers to roam free.

"It just comes with my job as a three-tech (tackle)," Vincent said. "I know I'm getting a lot of double teams, so all the double teams that I'm able to hold off, the linebackers are able to scrape off me and make plays."

Of course, Vincent may have responded so well against Wisconsin because of some additional bragging rights on the line. His father, Troy, was a defensive back for the Badgers from 1988-91 and was winless in four tries against Ohio State. With Ohio State's most recent win against Wisconsin, Vincent has an unblemished 3-0 record against the Badgers in his five seasons with the Buckeyes.

His father "didn't say anything after that game," Vincent said. "He already knew what it was. I was talking mess to him in the middle of the game. He was sitting right behind the sideline. Every time we scored, every time we got a turnover, he already knew."

Vincent has been an integral part of Ohio State's defensive line that has opponents searching for answers through the first five games of the season. The Buckeyes have notched 10 sacks and 30 tackles for loss, and given up just 110.4 rushing yards per game, 33rd best in the country.

Vincent is just one aspect with his play up front, but he said the whole defense is playing with an edge.

"I think the confidence is through the roof," he said. "We all trust Coach (Jim) Knowles to put us in the best position to make plays, and everybody believes that to the fullest."

The talent had always been evident when Vincent stepped on the field, but his rise truly began last season once he could participate in a full season while healthy. At the end of the day, the biggest thing for his game was consistently seeing the field.

"Confidence is staying healthy, being healthy, and then just being able to just keep playing," Vincent said. "It just brings confidence the more I get to play."

That confidence was evident to Day, who said this offseason that he saw the work Vincent was putting in and that he expected a jump entering Vincent's fifth season in the program.

"His work ethic, his attitude, the production on the field, his work he put in the weight room – he's gotten stronger and faster," Day said. "He has another year under his belt of experience and approaching the

game. All those things matter."

Vincent noted improvement thus far this season in holding down his gaps, as well as his speed off the ball, and said he is taking what offenses are giving him. Some of those corrections could be attributed to Knowles, who has worked hard since arriving at Ohio State to fix those kinds of mistakes that have plagued Buckeye defenses over the past couple of seasons.

Though Knowles is basically the fifth defensive coordinator in five seasons for Vincent – Greg Schiano, Jeff Hafley, Kerry Coombs and Matt Barnes, at least in an unofficial capacity, have all filled the role – Vincent feels most at home with Knowles and how he operates as a coach.

"Coach Knowles is a cool coach," Vincent said. "You could talk to him. If you have questions about the defense, what we're doing, how we're doing it, why we're doing it, he has all the answers for you for those questions that you have for him."

"I feel like that's something new to me," he added. "Because I feel like I didn't really have that in the past, but this year I definitely just feel more open with Coach Knowles, coming to him about questions or anything about the defense."

While Vincent is coming into his own for Ohio State – he has six solo tackles this season, but as mentioned, has made plenty of contributions outside of the box score – he's also taken on the added role of teaching the next generation of defensive linemen for the Buckeyes.

Hall has already made a name for himself, and the likes of freshman Hero Kanu and third-year Tyleik Williams are on their way up, and Vincent has taken it upon himself to take them under his wing.

"I've been doing this for so long," Vincent said in the spring. "I know what's expected of me – what I need to do, how to produce. Now I'm just trying to bring guys along, teach them how the Rushmen practice."

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Brown, Woody Bookend Horseshoe's Third Decade

Throughout the 2022 football season, *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* is publishing stories commemorating the 100th anniversary of Ohio Stadium. This week, BSB looks at the memorable third decade (1942-51) at the Horseshoe that began with a national championship and ended with the dawn of the Woody Hayes era.

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

If the third decade in the 100-year history of Ohio Stadium could be summed up in just two words, those words would likely be "coaching carousel."

Beginning in 1942, the Horseshoe stood guard over a 10-year period during which five different head coaches would patrol the home sideline, the program's first national championship would be won, and the college football landscape itself would be upended because of World War II.

Second-year head coach Paul Brown had already lost 22 players to military service following the 1941 season, so there wasn't much expected of the 1942 Ohio State football team. Of course, many other schools around the country were experiencing the same kind of attrition as World War II waged in Europe and the Pacific.

The season began Sept. 26 with a 59-0 win against Fort Knox in front of a sparse crowd of 22,555 at Ohio Stadium. But the Buckeyes had a much taller task in week two against experienced Big Ten rival Indiana. The Hoosiers were set to invade Columbus with one of their all-time greatest teams, including triple-threat halfback Billy Hillenbrand and quarterback Lou Saban, who was voted his team's most valuable player that year.

IU was coached by the legendary Alvin Nugent "Bo" McMillin, who was in his ninth year in Bloomington and 20th overall as a college head coach. McMillin had told friends that he had his "best-manned squad in years," and that Hillenbrand was the greatest back in college football since Illinois superstar Red Grange. The Hoosiers were the bigger, stronger and more experienced team, and McMillin reasoned they not only would beat the Buckeyes, they would win rather convincingly.

Brown had a few tricks up his sleeve, however. The Hoosiers went into the fourth



FILE PHOTO

LEARNING FROM THE BEST — Legendary Ohio State coach Paul Brown (center) coaches up a group of his players while Ohio Stadium sits in the background. Brown was 18-8-1 during his three seasons at Ohio State.

quarter trying to protect a 21-19 lead but fell victim to a pair of late touchdowns by the Buckeyes. Sophomore fullback Gene Fekete tallied one of the OSU scores, and quarterback George Lynn tacked on the insurance TD, which was set up by a 44-yard interception return by future Heisman Trophy winner Les Horvath.

The result was a 32-21 victory attended by 48,227, a crowd more than double the size from the season opener just a week before. Those numbers would continue to grow until a season-high 71,691 fans made their way into the Horseshoe (capacity was 66,210 at the time) on Nov. 21 to watch the Buckeyes polish off No. 4-ranked Michigan

by a 21-7 final.

Ohio State capped off the 1942 season the following week with a 41-12 win against the Iowa Pre-Flight Seahawks, a military team that featured several former star college players, and the Buckeyes were named national champions by The Associated Press, the first time in school history the team was so honored.

Halfback Paul Sarringhaus, end Bob Shaw and lineman Lindell Houston earned first-team All-Big Ten accolades that season, and that trio was joined by lineman Chuck Csuri and Fekete as first-time All-Americans. Fekete also finished eighth in the Heisman Trophy balloting that season and led the Big Ten in scoring with a school-record 92 points. That single-season mark would stand for 26 years until another fullback, Jim Otis, broke it with 102 points in 1968.

Roster attrition continued to dog most college programs as the war effort ramped up, and an Ohio State team made up mostly of first- and second-year players fell to a 3-6 record in 1943. Attendance sagged as well as the Buckeyes played five home games with an average attendance of just a little more than 30,000.

At the end of the season, the team lost another valuable member when Brown resigned to accept a commission as a lieutenant junior grade in the Navy with the caveat that Ohio State would keep its head coaching job open so that he could resume his duties after the war. But that

1943 season had left a bitter taste in the coach's mouth.

"Not only were we being unfair to a group of 17-year-old kids, we were exposing them to serious injury whenever we played much bigger, older and stronger opponents," Brown said years later. "My sense of justice and personal pride rebelled at these inequities, and I didn't spare (then athletic director Lynn St. John) my feelings. His justification was that we were performing a service to intercollegiate football and saving the program at Ohio State. In reality, we were providing money for the athletic department, and while we may have kept the continuity of Ohio State's football program, it was at the personal expense of those kids."

"What made the situation worse was that no one ever appreciated what those kids went through. Actually, those Baby Bucks were a victim of the war, but I never could reconcile myself to the fact that the university never ever bothered to give them a year-end football banquet. It angered me so much that it influenced my decision to go into professional football instead of returning to Ohio State after the war."

Nevertheless, Brown was given the honorary title of head coach in absentia with most alumni and fans believing he would return to the Buckeyes following his military service. But in February 1945, he chose to become vice president, general manager and head coach for the Cleveland team in the upstart All-America Football

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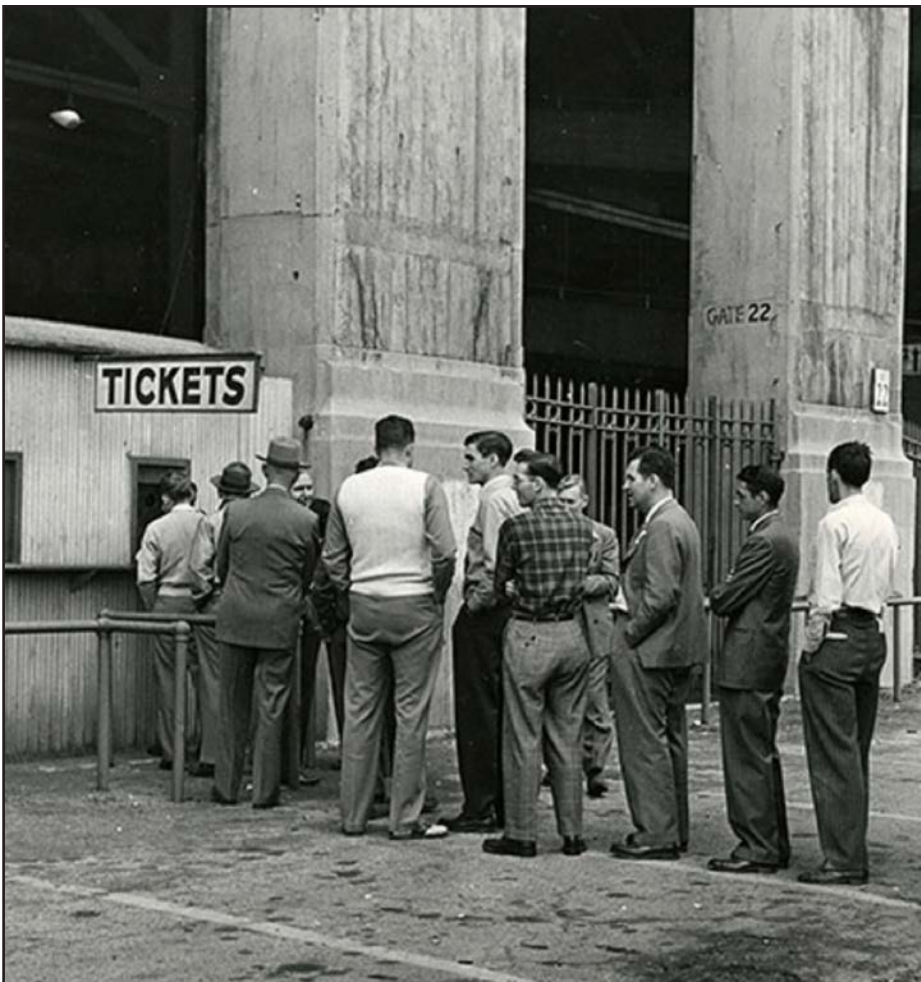
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FILE PHOTO

HOT TICKET — Ohio State fans lined up outside Ohio Stadium prior to a Buckeye game during the 1940s, eager to get their admittance to the game.

Conference. The news sent shock waves through Columbus, with several university officials and influential donors claiming Brown had reneged on a promise to return to Ohio State.

The university changed coaches four times during an eight-year span between 1944 and 1951, and while Brown was always mentioned as a leading candidate, he never wavered.

"I was constantly being touted as the next head coach, but I was with the Browns then and had no intentions of leaving," he said. "Every time my name came up, however, friction arose between some factions at Ohio State and among the alumni, some of whom never forgave me for my not returning as head coach after the war."

Constant Coaching Changes

Changes were under way in the Ohio State football program in 1944, and it wasn't just a new face in the head coach's office. Ohio Stadium underwent the first major renovation in its existence, a project that increased capacity at the facility from 66,210 to 72,754.

As when the stadium was built in 1921-22, university officials received widespread criticism regarding the expansion project.

"There was a considerable amount of heat that was coming their way," longtime OSU sports information director Marv Homan told BSB in 2004. "They were coming off a season when attendance had been way down, and World War II continued to wage on and on. There just didn't seem to be a need to increase the stadium's capacity at that particular time."

As things turned out, it was the perfect time.

Brown's hand-picked successor as head coach of the Buckeyes was longtime assistant Carroll Widdoes, and there have been few first-year coaches who have enjoyed as much success as Widdoes did in 1944. Beginning in late September with a 54-0 wipeout of Missouri, Ohio State enjoyed a perfect 9-0 season that included Horvath becoming the program's first Heisman Trophy winner and the team finishing second in the final AP poll as well as being named "National Civilian Champions" by a num-

ber of organizations.

Along the way, the Buckeyes won a 26-6 game in late October against the Great Lakes Navy Bluejackets, a game witnessed by 73,477 fans at Ohio Stadium. The game was a homecoming for Brown, who coached the Bluejackets to a 9-2-1 record in 1944. At halftime, the Ohio State marching band unveiled a special "PAUL" formation to honor the coach.

When a crowd of 71,958 filed into the Horseshoe on Nov. 25 to watch the No. 3 Buckeyes take an 18-14 win against No. 6 Michigan, it capped a seven-game home schedule that featured an average attendance figure in excess of 48,000, a 60-percent increase from the season before.

The average climbed again in 1945 to nearly 63,000, an increase of more than 30 percent, as Ohio State finished with a 7-2 mark. But Widdoes, who had spent much of his coaching career to that point as an assistant, had tired of the constant pressure of being a head coach. Despite a two-year record of 16-2 and an .889 winning percentage that stood as an Ohio State record for more than seven decades, Widdoes resigned as head coach after the 1945 season and went back to being a staff assistant.

Switching places with Widdoes was Paul Bixler, a product of Mount Union College who had been an assistant at Canton (Ohio) McKinley High School at the same time Brown was at nearby Massillon. Unfortunately, Bixler was a much better assistant than he was a head coach, and the Buckeyes slipped to a 4-3-2 record and

sixth-place tie in the conference standings in 1946. It was a season punctuated by a 58-6 thumping inflicted by Michigan, the worst loss to the Wolverines since an 86-0 loss in 1902.

The following February, Bixler announced his resignation, citing several of the same reasons that Widdoes chose to step down. Bixler found another job well away from the limelight, accepting the head coaching position at Colgate University, a small school in central New York with a stadium that seated approximately 15,000.

Meanwhile, despite the fortunes of the football team, Ohio Stadium enjoyed a record season in terms of attendance. The Buckeyes played five home games in 1946 and averaged 74,203 fans per game, the first time in the 25-year history of the Horseshoe that the season average was more than 70,000.

Unfortunately, OSU athletic director Richard Larkins was faced with another problem. Bixler's resignation had forced him to look for a fifth head coach in just seven years as Ohio State was rapidly earning the nickname of "The Graveyard of Coaches."

But Larkins thought he had found just the man who could put an end to that kind of talk when he hired Bixler's replacement. Wesley Fesler was a football, basketball and baseball star at Ohio State during the late 1920s and early 1930s and had been an assistant on Sam Willaman's OSU

Continued On Page 24



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Continued From Page 23

coaching staff in 1931 and '32. Perhaps no one at the time was a bigger-name "get" for the Buckeyes.

Unfortunately, the honeymoon was over almost before it got started.

Fesler Not The Answer

Despite the excellence he had exhibited as a player, Fesler could not seem to find the same formula for success as a head coach. Making matters worse was the loss of two key players just before the beginning of the 1947 season. Halfback Tommy James, who had already been elected a team co-captain, and veteran center Tony Adamle each left school to sign with professional teams.

Fesler's reliance on the old single-wing offense didn't help. The Buckeyes opened at home with an unimpressed crowd of 59,444 looking on while the team squeaked out a 13-7 win against Missouri. Unfortunately, it was one of only two victories in a 2-6-1 season that featured a last-place finish in the conference standings, the first time that had happened since 1918.

Things improved the following year with a 6-3 record and fourth-place conference finish, and then Fesler presided over a Big Ten co-championship in 1949. That season began with a 35-34 thriller against Missouri, a game that was the first to be televised from Ohio Stadium. Fears that TV would limit crowds at the stadium proved to be unfounded when 66,510 attended the opener, and 70,568 more were in the stands the following week to watch OSU pound out a 46-7 decision against Indiana.

The season ended with a 7-7 tie against Michigan – the first non-loss in Fesler's three-year tenure – and a 17-14 win against California that served as the program's first Rose Bowl victory.

Ohio State kicked off the 1950 campaign with a 32-27 home loss to SMU before rattling off six straight wins. Among them was an 83-21 blowout of Big Ten rival Iowa in front of a Dad's Day crowd of



FILE PHOTO

REVOLVING DOOR — Ohio State coach Wes Fesler ended a seven-year stretch in which the Buckeyes employed five different head coaches. However, Fesler's tenure ended in a similar way to his predecessors, as he resigned after four seasons due to the pressure of coaching in Columbus. Fesler amassed a 21-13-3 record as the Buckeyes' head coach.

82,174 at the Horseshoe.

Junior halfback Vic Janowicz had a game for the ages. Before the contest was six minutes old, Janowicz had already accounted for three touchdowns – one rushing, one passing and one on a 61-yard punt return – kicked three extra points and recovered two fumbles on defense.

OSU enjoyed a 35-0 lead after the first quarter and had a 55-14 advantage by halftime. Janowicz, who would go on

to win the 1950 Heisman Trophy, played very little in the second half but still managed to score two touchdowns, complete 5 of 6 pass attempts for 133 yards and four TDs, kick 10 extra points, punt twice for an average of 42.0 yards per kick and recover two fumbles at his defensive safety position.

The 83 points by the Buckeyes remains the highest total ever scored against a Big Ten opponent.

Ohio State boasted a 6-1 record and had risen to No. 1 in the national rankings until a 14-7 upset loss at Illinois in the season's penultimate game. The following week, the Buckeyes lost a 9-3 decision to Michigan in the famous "Snow Bowl" game, a contest that featured an NCAA-record 45 punts. Played in frigid conditions on an ice-covered field, the crowd was officially announced at 50,535, many of them building small bonfires in the stands in an effort to stay warm.

The way the 1950 season fizzled to an end and the fact that Fesler's four-year record against Michigan was 0-3-1 set tongues wagging in Columbus. Influential donors and boosters began a pressure campaign on Larkins and university president Howard Bevis to make another coaching change.

Fesler was way ahead of them, though. He had wanted to resign following the 1949 season only to be coaxed into staying by Larkins, who had been a teammate of Fesler at Ohio State from 1928-30. Now, he'd had enough of the criticism and second-guessing. Fourteen days after the Michigan game, saying that coaching in Columbus was "just too much," Fesler resigned and forced the university into another nationwide search for a coach.

Woody Era Begins

By the time Fesler had tendered his resignation, Larkins had already focused his attention on luring Don Faurot away from Missouri. Ten years earlier, when Larkins was working under St. John, Faurot was a finalist for the job when it went to Brown.

Faurot was a native Missourian who had played his college football in Columbia in the mid-1920s. He had returned to the Tigers as head coach in 1935 and had compiled a 78-44-8 record that included a couple of Big Eight championships. During that time, he devised a new kind of offensive formation that allowed for multiple options out of the same alignment. It was the Split-T formation, and Faurot is credited for its invention.

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Despite all he had accomplished, Faurot was 48 and beginning to wonder what the world was like outside Missouri. He was intrigued at the possibility of coaching at Ohio State, especially since the Buckeyes had the reigning Heisman Trophy winner in Janowicz returning for his senior season.

In Columbus, Larkins coordinated a six-man search committee that selected seven finalists for the coaching job, but the interview process was supposed to be a mere formality. Faurot met with the selection committee on a Saturday in early February 1951 and was immediately offered the job. He accepted and went home to Missouri to clean out his office.

Less than 48 hours later, as Larkins was preparing to call a news conference to announce the hiring of Faurot as the new head coach, his office telephone rang. It was Faurot, telling the AD that he had changed his mind. He was staying at Missouri.

With spring football only a few weeks away, Ohio State officials quickly reorganized and settled on a field of seven candidates – one professional coach, four coaches from the college ranks and two Ohio high school coaches.

The pro coach was Brown, who had led the Cleveland Browns to championships in each of his first five seasons in Cleveland – four in the All-America Football Conference and the 1950 crown in the NFL. He was the hands-down favorite of Ohio State fans and students to replace Fesler, but Larkins knew that a number of influential Columbus businessmen did not want

Brown to return. They felt he had reneged on a deal to return to Ohio State after the war and that he signed with Cleveland without notifying the university.

Also receiving formal interviews were OSU freshman coach Harry Strobel, Cincinnati head coach and former Ohio State All-America end Sid Gillman, Warren Gaer of Drake and Woody Hayes of Miami (Ohio) as well as high school coaches Chuck Mather of Massillon and Jim McDonald of Springfield.

In early February, the field had reportedly been pared to three – Brown, Mather and Hayes with Strobel as a possible dark-horse candidate. Brown was the choice of the fans, and Mather was backed by the Ohio High School Coaches Association. Meanwhile, Strobel was the original choice of the athletic department, but Hayes had supplanted him after a stellar interview.

Finally, on Feb. 18, just four days after Hayes' 38th birthday, the OSU board of trustees finally ended speculation by formally hiring Wayne Woodrow Hayes as the university's 19th head football coach. Hayes received a one-year, \$12,500 contract in accordance with university policy but received a five-year "gentleman's agreement" from Bevis.

Seven months later, a curious crowd of 80,735 – the largest opening-day crowd in stadium history – packed the Horseshoe to watch Hayes lead the Buckeyes to a lackluster 7-0 win against SMU in the 1951 season opener. It was the first game of what would become perhaps the most iconic era in Ohio State football history.



FILE PHOTO

A STAR IS BORN – After an extensive search for a new head coach, Ohio State ultimately landed on Miami (Ohio) skipper Woody Hayes. Hayes went on to coach Ohio State for 28 years, capturing a 205-61-10 record.

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Okudah Turns Corner In Third Season With Lions

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Detroit Lions cornerback Jeff Okudah is on the way to becoming an overnight sensation in just his third NFL season. Or so it seems to most people after the No. 3 pick from Ohio State in the 2020 NFL draft has gone from bust to boom following two difficult years.

Showing that he was fully recovered from a ruptured Achilles tendon that cost him all but the first game of the 2021 season, Okudah has zeroed in on becoming the shutdown player the Lions expected when he was drafted.

In the first three games this season, he was tasked with covering Philadelphia's DeVonta Smith, Washington's Terry McLaurin (a former OSU teammate) and Justin Jefferson of the Minnesota Vikings. Smith had no receiving yards vs. the Lions compared to a combined 249 in his other two games. McLaurin had 75 yards against Detroit while going for 160 in two other games.

Through the three games, Okudah played 91 percent of the snaps on defense and was allowing just 36 yards per game and 5.4 yards per target with no touchdowns in his coverage area. Opposing quarterbacks had a 74.6 passer rating when throwing at him in three games.

"I'm definitely proud of where I'm at right now from where I was in the past," Okudah said.

He drew attention for handling Jefferson, an All-Pro receiver. Okudah was a shadow and covered him on 32 plays. Jefferson was targeted just six times, catching three passes for 14 yards, his lowest yardage in his three NFL seasons. He had 232 yards in his two other games.

"I can play cornerback in the NFL," Okudah said. "A lot of people thought I was a safety at one point, but I think I proved I can play cornerback."

Though not at an All-Pro level, according to Seattle receiver DK Metcalf in the days leading up to the Seahawks' game against the Lions on Oct. 2. He implied Okudah was successful because he had help in coverage and

wasn't a shutdown corner.

"There's a safety over the top of him, so he's really not locking people down," Metcalf said. "But he's a good corner."

When pressed to explain the "good corner" comment, Metcalf said, "I guess you have to watch film, and that is just my opinion."

Okudah would not engage in verbal volleyball when informed of Metcalf's critique.

"Honestly, I'm not really overly concerned about it," he said. "I'm just focused on the game. I just try to keep the main thing the main thing and focus on the journey that I'm on right now."

Metcalf backed his words, making seven catches for 149 yards, with a long of 54, while being targeted 10 times. He beat Okudah in at least two one-on-one situations in the Seahawks' 48-45 win.

Okudah's path to the NFL included a stellar career at Ohio State, capped by the 2019 season when he was a unanimous All-American. He was also a Thorpe Award finalist, given to the top national defensive back, while leading the Buckeyes with three interceptions. Pro Football Focus spoke glowingly of him in their draft profile:

"Okudah really does have it all. The 'cons' on his scouting report were some of the most difficult to write of any prospect in the class. He not only has a high floor, but everything you want for a high ceiling."

"Look no further than Okudah's career for the Buckeyes, particularly the last two seasons. Over that stretch, he has allowed just 45 of the 106 passes into his coverage to be completed. Those targets have yielded opposing quarterbacks a passer rating of only 52.9. He hasn't allowed more than 50 yards receiving in any of the 27 games played over that stretch either. You're not going to find much more impressive numbers than that."

Okudah was the first cornerback drafted third overall since former Buckeye Shawn Springs was taken by the Seattle Seahawks in 1997. Those two and Bruce Pickens (1991, also No. 3 out of Nebraska) are the highest drafted cornerbacks by any team in the common draft era (since 1967).



FILE PHOTO

HEAR ME ROAR — After sustaining a season-ending Achilles tendon tear in 2021, former OSU cornerback Jeff Okudah has shown improvement in his third season with the Detroit Lions.

It wasn't a smooth transition for Okudah from college to the NFL. He struggled in nine games as a rookie, bothered by hamstring and shoulder problems before a core muscle injury required season-ending surgery. The low point came just before that.

He had a string of 12 straight completions on balls thrown his way, including against Minnesota when Kirk Cousins had a perfect passing rating (158.3) against him. Overall, he allowed 38 completions on 50 targets to rank among the worst cornerbacks in the league. Any chance for redemption in his second season in 2021 evaporated because of the Achilles injury.

"I just had big hopes for that last year," Okudah said Sept. 29. "It kind of felt like I was living a nightmare."

With just 10 games played over two seasons, critics began to wonder if he would develop into a No. 1 cornerback, and he vowed to answer the criticism this season.

"I keep that in the back of my mind for sure, but at the end of the day I just want to make my people proud," Okudah said. "I watch some (of my rookie) stuff to see the progress, just to see where I started off at, see where I am now. It's motivation to just keep going."

He spent his time during his most recent rehab watching film of his first two seasons, but make no mistake, he was eager to see live action after having played just one game in 658 days before this season's opener.

"Honestly, being in my third year, I don't have that many physical reps," Okudah told Sports Illustrated's All Lions. "So I have to make up for it on the mental side, something I've got to stay tapped into. I don't have the luxury of not embracing that part of the game because I've got to catch up mentally in certain aspects."

He hasn't officially been given the shutdown role as the top Lions cornerback, but he's making the decision easier.

"I'm just doing whatever the team asks of me right now," Okudah said. "Just building that reputation of being someone who's dependable, consistent week-in and week-out, that's really one of my top priorities."

"But for sure, anytime you can go one-on-one and erase somebody from the field, that obviously helps the coordinators with what they're going to call. I feel like I'm capable, but I want to earn the trust of all my teammates first."

"This is the healthiest I've been (as a pro)," he said. "I think me and my body are more in tune now, so that's also been good for me. As soon as I go back and watch my rookie practices and games, I just feel like mentally I'm at a different place. So it's pretty cool to see the growth, what happens when you put your head down and just work."

Defensive coordinator Aaron Glenn, who joined the Detroit staff for Okudah's second season when Dan Campbell replaced Matt Patricia as head coach, said during the preseason that he was impressed by Okudah's work ethic.

"I didn't have him as a rookie, but I will say this — just looking at him from training camp last year going to this year, his habits as far as becoming a pro have really improved," Glenn said. "That will be for any young player, and they have to improve because you just don't know until you get into the league. Then you start to learn off other people, then you start having coaches start to teach you. So obviously that's going to happen. But to the magnitude as far as him, he's diving into it every day as hard as he can. You see those things starting to help him."

A few weeks into a 17-game season doesn't provide a full picture of how much Okudah has developed from his rookie season, but Glenn is pleased with what he's seen so far.

"You see a player that from training camp, you start seeing glimpses of what he can be," he said. "As the season (has) progressed, you start seeing him get more confident in who he is as a player. You start seeing some things he did when he was at Ohio State, as far as shutting people down."

Glenn said he is reserving judgment on Okudah for the moment.

"You really don't know who you are until after the fourth game because sometimes you have to adjust what you do as a defense, and that's where we're at right now," Glenn said prior to the Seattle game. "Jeff is steadily climbing to be one of those (shutdown) corners who can go out and play that way."

"We have one more game to figure that out, and if he's that type, it allows us to do a lot as far as taking other guys out and letting them go out there and play and let him be that one-on-one matchup."

Campbell said Okudah's play makes the rest of the defense better.

"The more that you feel like he can get over there and you tell him that we need you to go play this receiver and just get up there and go compete, it helps," Campbell said. "Use your ability, be aggressive, finish at the catch point. Those are the things he does well. And he's playing at a high level and he's got a lot of confidence right now as it pertains to those things."

"So from that regard he's really come a long way. And it helps because now you can start to do some things coverage-wise that take pressure off other areas."

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Depth At Corner Stressed By Recruiting Misses

One of the early-season storylines for Ohio State has been the cornerbacks room. In fact, there isn't a position group on the roster that has gone through more turmoil, missed games and nagging injuries – the wide receivers have an argument, though – than the Buckeye corners.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

Every one of Ohio State's top three cornerbacks has missed at least one game, with fifth-year Cameron Brown out against Wisconsin and Rutgers, sophomore Denzel Burke a late scratch against the Badgers, and sophomore Jordan Hancock yet to appear this season. That's led to increased playing time for the likes of sophomore JK Johnson and freshman Jyaire Brown, who have responded admirably when they've been on the field, but it's still a slippery slope for the Buckeyes, who came into the season with just six scholarship cornerbacks.

Why is it, though, that the cornerbacks at Ohio State are the only position group dealing with low numbers? There are spoils of riches at linebacker and safety, with significantly more mouths to feed than there is food to go around, and the wide receivers haven't missed a beat even with several Buckeyes missing time. Offensive line depth was a concern entering the season, sure, but that was focused more on whether there were capable backups, not founded on a lack of bodies on the roster.

Concerns at cornerback can largely be traced back to Ohio State's recruiting over the past several years. Recruiting top-tier offensive players – especially at skill positions – has been no problem for the Buck-

eyes under head coach Ryan Day, but the secondary has been a different story.

Dating back to the 2019 recruiting class, Ohio State has earned commitments from just five cornerbacks: Lejond Cavazos in 2020, Johnson and Hancock in 2021, and Jyaire Brown and Ryan Turner in 2022. Cavazos, of course, entered the transfer portal this past offseason and landed at North Carolina. With his transfer, that averages out to just one cornerback per class, and when at least two are on the field at all times for the Buckeyes, those numbers start to not add up after a couple of seasons, especially with Ohio State's hesitation toward the transfer portal.

"If you have six committed in one class (2023), that's a lot of defensive backs," Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Bill Greene told BSB. "Then if you're still looking at other defensive backs, that tells me all I need to know about how they feel about what's on the roster right now. I don't think they're very happy with what's there."

Ohio State's low numbers aren't for a lack of trying, though. During that same span of time, the Buckeyes earned commitments from four cornerbacks – La Habra, Calif., four-star Clark Phillips III (5-11, 178) in 2020; Cincinnati La Salle four-star Devonta Smith (6-0, 185) in 2021; and Jacksonville (Fla.) Riverside four-star Jahiem Singletary (6-2, 170) and Little Elm, Texas, four-star Terrance Brooks (5-11, 190) in 2022 – that ended up at other schools.

Phillips – who registered three interceptions against Oregon State on Oct. 1 – landed at Utah, Smith wound up at Alabama and Singletary committed to Georgia, while Brooks flipped on the first day of the most recent early signing period to Texas. Landing just one of those prospects could have helped Ohio State's current situation, but as it stands, the brunt of the work now falls on the 2023 class that

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 Sierveld	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

has the six defensive backs committed.

That includes three cornerbacks in Waxahachie, Texas, four-star Calvin Simpson-Hunt (6-0, 175), Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove four-star Kayin Lee (5-11, 185) and Cincinnati Winton Woods four-star Jermaine Mathews (6-0, 175) and three safeties in West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star Malik Hartford (6-3, 175), Cocoa, Fla., four-star Cedrick Hawkins (6-0, 175) and Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter's Prep four-star Jayden Bonsu (6-1, 210), and the Buckeyes could still be looking to take more.

"I think there's disappointment in that cornerback room with what they have," Greene said. "I think when (cornerbacks coach) Tim Walton and (safeties coach) Perry Eliano got to Ohio State and watched film, saw what they had in that room, I don't think they were happy."

"They have six defensive backs committed right now, if you consider Bon-

su a safety, and they're still recruiting. They're trying to flip Hoschton (Ga.) Mill Creek five-star safety Caleb Downs (6-0, 185). There are a couple of other corners they've looked at."

OL Moore To Commit Soon

According to a report from Eleven Warriors' Garrick Hodge, New Palestine, Ind., four-star offensive lineman Ian Moore (6-5, 295) is set to make his college decision within the next few weeks.

Moore is the No. 99 overall prospect and No. 4 interior lineman in 2024, as well as the top recruit out of Indiana. He visited for Ohio State's win over Wisconsin (as well as against Notre Dame) and then visited the Badgers the following weekend. Iowa and Nebraska are the other top schools for Moore.

"I had a great time," Moore said of his Ohio State visit against Wisconsin. "I met



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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.	

a lot of great fans and parents that told me all about OSU. I got to meet a lot more fans than last time. I think my favorite part of the visit was getting to connect with the fans.”

“They played great,” he continued. “They did really good against the big guys Wisconsin has up front.”

Moore could become the second commitment in Ohio State’s 2024 class, which includes only Chandler, Ariz., five-star quarterback Dylan Raiola (6-3, 220). That’s nothing to be ashamed of for the Buckeyes, though, as Raiola is considered by several recruiting services to be the top overall recruit in the class.

DL McDonald Calls OSU Visit “Insane”

One of Ohio State’s top remaining targets in the 2023 class completed a recent visit to the Buckeyes and was blown away by the experience. Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett four-star defensive lineman Kayden McDonald (6-3, 310) was in attendance for Ohio State’s win over Wisconsin, and he told 247Sports it was a great

visit that offered everything he needed to see.

“It was insane,” McDonald said, adding that the game atmosphere was his favorite part.

McDonald is the No. 302 overall prospect and No. 44 defensive lineman in the class, and he holds additional offers from Clemson, Florida, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Texas A&M, among others.

The focus of the last several months for Ohio State’s defensive recruiting has been on the edge rushers, but McDonald would fill a pivotal role on the interior along with Dublin (Ohio) Coffman three-star defensive lineman Will Smith Jr. (6-3, 260), the only other interior lineman in Ohio State’s class.

Given the lack of true tackles, defensive line coach Larry Johnson has told McDonald he would have the opportunity to play early, and McDonald said Johnson has been like a mentor in addition to his relationship with Day.

“We’re close,” McDonald said. “I talk to Coach Day all the time. I had two meetings



SONNY BROCKWAY

HELP WANTED — Ohio State has dealt with a variety of injuries this season and, with only six scholarship cornerbacks, has felt the repercussions of a number of recruiting misses over the past few years. Safeties coach Perry Eliano (pictured) and cornerbacks coach Tim Walton look to build depth in the secondary with a 2023 class that currently features six commits.

with him. He’s just playing, but he said I can run the ball if I go to Ohio State.”

Through the first five games of his senior season, McDonald had accrued 32 tackles – 18 for loss – to go with seven sacks.

“Possesses ideal size at 6-3 and

300-pounds plus, but he possesses limited growth potential to add additional weight to frame,” said 247Sports recruiting analyst Cooper Petagna. “He displays good athletic ability as an interior defensive

Continued On Page 30

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago – 1982

Freshman tailback Mike Lanese rushed for 122 yards and scored a pair of touchdowns to lead the Ohio State junior varsity to a 17-6 win over the Michigan JV squad at Michigan on Sept. 27, 1982. Lanese, a Mayfield, Ohio, product, capped a 12-play, 40-yard scoring drive by plunging over from the 1-yard line with nine seconds to play in the first quarter. Kicker Scott Neff converted for the 7-0 lead. Ohio State put the game on ice with 13 seconds left in the contest, when Lanese capped a 70-yard scoring drive with his second 1-yard scoring plunge of the day.

35 Years Ago – 1987

Every once in a while a football player, like Ohio State linebacker Chris Spielman, comes along who simply loves the game, loves to hit and has a demeanor about him that elicits fear from opponents. Delphos (Ohio) Jefferson senior linebacker/fullback Tony Closson was from the Spielman mold. And Closson carried that fiery demeanor offensively and defensively. “He’s one of those kids a lot of people are afraid of, even the players on his own team, in practice,” said Delphos Jefferson coach Kevin Fell. “He’s about as close to Spielman as you’re going to find. He’s the same kind of kid – the one who has grown up playing football all of his life, a real hard-nosed son of a gun. He loves the game. And he’s faster than Spielman.” “I haven’t committed yet, but Ohio State is probably the number one school,” Closson said. “My brother (Matt) really wants me to go there, and he’s always been a big influence on me in my football career. So Ohio State looks very good to me right now.”

30 Years Ago – 1992

Mike Vrabel of Stow (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit High School had an impressive junior season, racking up 70 tackles and four sacks at inside linebacker last year. Those would be pretty good numbers for any high school linebacker trying to make an impression on college scouts, but making those numbers even more impressive was the fact they represented only seven games of work for the 6-5, 240-pound Vrabel. There was a point the previous season at which he was unsure he would ever be able to play football again due to a back injury. But after consultation with several doctors, he was told his back would heal normally and he would be able to return to the gridiron. “Once I got the OK from the doctors that I couldn’t hurt it anymore, I didn’t worry about it,” Vrabel said. His top choices among colleges were Ohio State, Michigan, Penn State, UCLA and Notre Dame.

25 Years Ago – 1997

Over the past few years, Euclid (Ohio) High School had be-

come the cradle of Ohio State running backs, sending standouts Robert Smith and Pepe Pearson to the Buckeyes. The Ohio State coaching staff was hoping to pull the hat trick from the northern Ohio school by landing Tony Fisher. Fisher, a 6-1, 205-pound running back, had narrowed his choice of colleges to Ohio State, Michigan, Michigan State, Penn State and Notre Dame. He said he planned to visit all five contenders. “Right now I’m looking at the academics and how soon I will play,” Fisher said. 20 Years Ago – 2002 Ohio State welcomed in two players for official visits for the Indiana game over the weekend of Sept. 28. They were defensive backs Dominique Brooks and Tarell Brown from Mesquite (Texas) North Mesquite High School. The duo helped their team claim a 49-14 win to improve to 4-0 on Sept. 26 before flying to Columbus the next day. The Buckeyes had offered Brown, who was ranked a national top-100 prospect (No. 56 overall) by Rivals.com. They had not offered Brooks.

15 Years Ago – 2007

With his size (6-4½, 220), Dublin (Ohio) Coffman tight end Jake Stoneburner created mismatches for opposing defenses. Primarily utilized as a wide receiver, he also came in and lined up at tight end in blocking situations for Coffman and could have played either position at the next level. Shadowed by a double team for the entire game against Dublin Scioto, Stoneburner struggled to get open to the tune of seven catches for 46 yards, all quick-strike passes into the flat where he often made the first defender miss before being brought down by a gang of defenders. The OSU coaching staff told him he would be a slot receiver, but his performance against Scioto seemed to showcase a player with a bigger future at tight end than at wideout. “I caught a lot of the 5-yard hitches,” he said of his role for the game. “That was basically it, and to block with the tight ends. There wasn’t much for me to do because I was being doubled, so I tried to do the best I could.”

10 Years Ago – 2012

The Ohio State coaching staff made big strides in the recruitment of Hinesville (Ga.) Liberty County linebacker Raekwon McMillan (6-2, 242) when the 2014 prospect said OSU and Georgia were the two programs standing out to him. The Buckeyes, however, were considered the underdog given that the Bulldogs held a big advantage because of proximity to the linebacker’s home. While on a visit to Athens on Sept. 29 to see Georgia beat SEC rival Tennessee by a 51-44 final, McMillan

returned home impressed by what he saw. “I had a nice time up there,” McMillan said. “The game was great. It is what SEC football is all about. Both teams played hard. It came down to the end, and Georgia won.” Further visits were still undetermined, but Ohio State remained on the linebacker’s mind. “Georgia is still up there for me, and I think they always will be,” McMillan said. “It is them and Ohio State at the top of my list.” Five Years Ago – 2017 Ohio State commit Master Teague was off to a great start in his senior season of high school football. The three-star running back out of Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Blackman had rushed for more than 700 yards and 11 touchdowns in four-plus games. A left ankle injury suffered in the third game of the season, however, brought Teague’s 2017 campaign to a halt. The 5-11, 210-pound tailback was limited in the next game but sat out the following contest in an attempt to recover from the injury, in which a tendon in his left ankle would pop out of place every time he made a cut. Teague then returned for Blackman’s game against Oakland on Sept. 22 and played the entire contest, finishing with 150 rushing yards and two touchdowns. The injury, however, did not subside. “We met with the doctor, and it kept doing what it was doing every time I planted it,” Teague told BSB, referring to his ankle. “We determined it would probably be necessary to go ahead and get (surgery).”

One Year Ago – 2021

Ohio State received some big news in the recruiting world two hours before kickoff against Rutgers on Oct. 2. In what would wind up being a day of winning for the Buckeyes, their first victory came when four-star safety Xavier Nwankpa of Altoona (Iowa) Southeast Polk included OSU among his top three schools. Iowa and Notre Dame were the other two finalists. Ohio State seemed to be in the driver’s seat to earn Nwankpa’s commitment, holding 247Sports crystal ball predictions from Michigan insider Steve Lorenz and 247Sports director of national recruiting Steve Wiltfong. But Buckeye Scoop recruiting insider Marc Givler talked to BSB the day before Nwankpa’s top three was released, and he was not 100 percent confident the Buckeyes would land the four-star prospect. “I suspect the top three is going to be Ohio State, Notre Dame and Iowa,” Givler said. “That’s what I suspect it’s going to be, but I think Texas A&M is in there, too. One of those four to be out, and whichever one of those falls out, I think it’s going to surprise that fan base. We’ll see. I think Ohio State will be on there. I’m just not convinced they’re a stone-cold lock.”

Handful Of Recruits In Attendance Vs. Rutgers

Continued From Page 29

lineman, showing the ability to play multiple positions on the defensive line.

"Exhibits good quick twitch explosiveness off the line of scrimmage with an excellent first step. He is nimble for his size, possessing good initial foot and body quickness. He can attack with speed, quickness, and power off the line of scrimmage, and he flashes heavy hands at the point of attack. In addition to good play strength, he shows the ability to penetrate consistently behind the line of scrimmage. Possesses the frame and the ability to anchor the run while also adding some pass-rush ability as an interior lineman."

Beyond football, McDonald also saw an attraction to Ohio State relative to his major: sports broadcasting.

"I plan to major in sports broadcasting," he said. "The opportunities for broadcasting are there."

2024 TE Smith High On Buckeyes

One of the top tight ends in 2024 has Ohio State among his top schools. Savannah (Ga.) Calvary Day School four-star Michael Smith (6-4, 225) recently told On3 Sports that Arkansas, Ohio State and South Carolina are three schools that have stood out so far in his recruitment.

He is the No. 138 overall prospect and No. 6 tight end in the class and also has offers from Florida, Kentucky, Miami (Fla.), Michigan and Tennessee, among others. Smith made his first trip to Ohio State for the win over Wisconsin on Sept. 24 and said the atmosphere and the bond with the coaches stood out.

"For it to be my first visit and how we bonded, it was really cool," he said. "We were going over things I can improve on and how they do things in their offense. I was with (tight ends coach Kevin Wilson)

the majority of the time I was there."

Smith has a unique mind-set of what his usage should be as a tight end – last season for Calvary Day, he caught 42 passes for 684 yards and nine touchdowns – and Ohio State's recent experimentation with Cade Stover could be a leg up for the Buckeyes.

"Use of the tight end is really important," he said. "I don't want to go to a school, be labeled a tight end and then be used as basically an extra right tackle or left tackle. I'm cool with blocking and all, but I want the ball in my hands as well. There's more to what I can do than just block. Location isn't as important, but I will probably get homesick, I know that for a fact. But use of the tight end is the biggest thing."

Smith said he would like to commit either in the spring or next summer after taking official visits. Ohio State has offers out to just three other uncommitted tight ends in 2024: Rochester (Minn.) Adams four-star Brady Prieskorn (6-6, 215), Hiram, Ga., four-star Walter Matthews (6-7, 245) and Woodstock (Ill.) Marian Central Catholic four-star Christian Bentancur (6-5, 240).

Visitor List Short Against Rutgers

Though the list was not as extensive as

some other games this season, Ohio State still welcomed in a number of visitors for the Buckeyes' win over Rutgers on Oct. 1. According to several Ohio State recruiting outlets, upwards of a dozen prospects made their way to Ohio Stadium.

Beginning in 2023, the Buckeyes hosted a pair of commitments in Findlay, Ohio, four-star offensive lineman Luke Montgomery (6-5, 280) and Cincinnati Winton Woods' Mathews. Ohio State also welcomed Cincinnati Winton Woods three-star running back Trey Cornist (5-11, 209), a Georgia Tech commit, and Concord (N.C.) Jay M. Robinson four-star defensive lineman Daevin Hobbs (6-4, 262), a recent offer for Ohio State – more on him later.

In the 2024 class, Ohio State hosted Loganville (Ga.) Grayson four-star tight end Kylan Fox (6-5, 215); Lewis Center (Ohio) Olenangy three-star tight end Gavin Grover (6-6, 220); Missouri City (Texas) Hightower four-star wide receiver Zion Kearney (6-3, 195); St. Louis Christian Brothers College four-star wide receiver Jeremiah McClellan (6-1, 185); and Chicago St. Ignatius five-star defensive lineman Justin Scott (6-5, 310).

Scott is the most notable of the group, shaping up as one of the most sought-after defensive linemen in his class. He has an Ohio State offer and has also been offered

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ASK AN ANALYST

With Bill Greene of Buckeye Scoop

Ohio State hosted Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett four-star defensive lineman Kayden McDonald (6-3, 310) for an official visit against Wisconsin. What have you heard about how his visit went, and how does he factor into Ohio State's plans in 2023?

"I don't know well enough to lock him down yet. There's still some work to do there. Everybody in the know seems to think Clemson is the team to beat here. We'll see what happens with him going forward. I think everything went well, from everything I heard.

"Then this week, they sent out another offer to Concord (N.C.) Jay M. Robinson four-star defensive lineman Daevin Hobbs (6-4, 262). I'm not sure what that means. Hobbs' sister, I believe, is visiting (the weekend of the Rutgers game). She's a basketball player. So you have to see how all that fits in.

"They have two committed on the D-line with Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic four-star defensive lineman Jason Moore (6-6, 255) and Dublin (Ohio) Coffman three-star defensive lineman Will Smith Jr. (6-3, 260). Then they're chasing the three defensive ends.

"There's a lot going on right now. I think that's where the action is right now, with the D-line recruiting. You mentioned McDonald, he's in the picture too. This one is probably going to go all the way to signing day until we see exactly how this shakes out. If there's a position group to follow going forward, definitely the D-line. There's an awful lot going on there."

Tampa (Fla.) Berkley Prep five-star defensive end Keon Keeley (6-6, 242) took an unofficial visit for the Wisconsin game, just a few weeks after he was here for the Notre Dame game. Where do the Buckeyes stand with him; Venice, Fla., four-star defensive end Damon Wilson; and Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco five-star defensive end Matayo Uiagalelei?

"He bounced back to Columbus a couple of weeks after he was there for the Notre Dame official visit. That one is all going to hinge on his official visit to Alabama. He goes there when they play Texas A&M (Oct. 8). That's going to tell the tale with him. I know Ohio State is in a great position with him. The fact that he comes back on his own dime a couple of weeks after he was already here shows that

it's business. He's taken Ohio State very seriously. I think it comes down to Ohio State and Alabama. I keep being told that Florida is in this one. I don't believe it. Someone is telling me that and is a really good source for me, but I'm not buying it. I think it's Alabama and Ohio State.

"Damon Wilson, I thought Ohio State might get a commitment from him within a week or 10 days after the Notre Dame game. That didn't happen. Now I'm hearing that Georgia is kind of fighting their way into that picture, and you've got to see if he takes an official there.

"Then Matayo Uiagalelei, nothing's going to happen there until after Thanksgiving. Ohio State shot its shot there, and it is in a great position. The relationship with Larry Johnson is strong. You just have to hope the kid ultimately picks Ohio State. Oregon's in that one. I keep being told not to sleep on USC. The kid is planning for a music career someday after football, and USC is going to pull out all the stops and call out all the music industry people they can in L.A.

"So a long way to go here. But you know, this is definitely the position group to follow because you're coming down the home-stretch. This is going to be where the action is."

New Palestine, Ind., four-star 2024 offensive lineman Ian Moore (6-5, 295) has said he could make a decision within the next few weeks. What do you make of him as a prospect, and what's your final call between his top schools?

"I think Ohio State is in great shape with Ian Moore. I'm surprised that he's making a decision soon because that's not what I was told was going to happen. But things change in this recruiting world quickly. He's a tackle and they need tackles. I think he's going to be welcomed at Ohio State.

"It's another position where when they look at what they have, I don't think they're totally thrilled there. Then if you look at what's in the current recruiting class, I think Findlay (Ohio) four-star offensive tackle Luke Montgomery (6-5, 280) is a great get, in terms of an offensive tackle, but I think he's going to take some time. They pretty much struck out with a lot of the other big-time tackles in the 2023

class, so now you're looking at 2024.

"Ian Moore, he's a four-star kid, I think he fits with what Ohio State wants to do, and he kind of reminds me of Zen Michalski, who they took a couple of years ago. I think they can get him. That 2024 class, I don't get too wrapped up in that until we get past Thanksgiving or so. He's a good player. They'll take him for sure.

"But I think they're still fighting for Brockton (Mass) Thayer Academy five-star offensive tackle Samson Okunlola (6-5, 305), still trying to get another tackle in this 2023 class, and maybe taking Moore right now indicates how they feel about the ability to get another tackle in this class."

It's still early in his tenure, but what have you made of offensive line coach Justin Frye's approach to recruiting since he arrived in Columbus?

"He missed out on some national, out-of-state guys, and I'm willing to give him a pass there. He wasn't recruiting those kids at UCLA. He just came to Ohio State in January. He's behind the eight ball in terms of developing relationships with those kids so I totally give him a pass on the national kids.

"The good thing he did is he locked up those linemen in Ohio. People can laugh about that, and just say, 'Oh, Ohio State gets everybody they want in Ohio.' Well, they do, but not on the O-line they don't. Greg Studrawa lost a ton of in-state offensive linemen during his tenure at Ohio State. That's totally unacceptable. He lost more recruits that Ohio State wanted in his tenure than all the other positional groups in Ohio, combined. It's unacceptable. Frye comes in right off the bat and locks down these Ohio kids. Already that's an improvement over what Studrawa was doing.

"Then you give him a full year to develop relationships with the 2024 class, with Ian Moore and that group of kids outside of Ohio. I think Justin Frye is going to be fine. I think he's going to be great as a recruiter. I love after four games, I know it's a small sample size, what they're doing on the field. I think the trade of Stud for Justin Frye, I think it's better on the field and recruiting-wise. I think that was a good move by Ryan Day."

by Auburn, Cincinnati, Iowa, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas A&M, among others.

Ohio State also had a trio of visitors from the 2025 class, including Cincinnati Elder linebacker Maddox Arnold (6-2, 208), Westerville (Ohio) North offensive lineman Jake Cook (6-5, 295) and St. Louis University athlete Landon Pace (6-2, 200), son of Ohio State legend Orlando Pace.

With Ohio State's five-game home stand to begin the season now in the books, just three opportunities are left to host prospects for games. That will be against Iowa on Oct. 22, Maryland on Nov. 19 and Michigan on Nov. 26, expected to be one of the biggest recruiting weekends this season for the Buckeyes along with the season opener against Notre Dame.

2024 LB Hayes Has OSU In Top Eight

Largo, Fla., four-star defensive end Adarius Hayes (6-4, 210) had Ohio State among his list of top eight schools that he released on Sept. 29. The Buckeyes are joined by Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Texas A&M and UCF.

He is the No. 63 overall prospect and No. 8 edge rusher in 2024 and holds offers from his top schools in addition to Florida State, Kentucky, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Michigan State and Tennessee, among others.

While Ohio State is seemingly in the mix, Hayes visited Florida on Sept. 3

– one of four trips he's made to the Gators – and told On3 Sports that it was his "dream school," so the Buckeyes may not be long for Hayes in his recruitment. Ohio State has been more closely involved with other pass rushers in the class, including Buford, Ga., five-star Eddrick Houston (6-3, 255) and Cincinnati Taft four-star Elias Rudolph (6-4, 220).

Buckeyes Send Out Two Offers

Since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, Ohio State issued offers to a pair of prospects in the 2023 class. These offers went out to Hobbs and Smyrna, Tenn., three-star linebacker Arion Carter (6-1, 210), who has been committed to Memphis since July 20.

Hobbs is the No. 150 overall prospect and No. 21 defensive lineman in the class, and he holds offers from Alabama, Auburn, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Penn State and Tennessee, among others, with the Tar Heels viewed as the favorite.

After receiving his offer on Sept. 29, Hobbs was on campus just two days later to take in Ohio State's 49-10 win over Rutgers.

"I liked it a lot," Hobbs said of his visit. "I like the coaches and the environment and feel of the campus. We toured the facilities and everything."

Carter is the less-heralded of the two, with an overall ranking of No. 393 in the class. Despite the low ranking, he holds offers from Alabama, Florida, LSU, Michigan, Ole Miss, Tennessee and USC, among others, with most flowing in within

the last month.

With just one linebacker committed in Cleveland Glenville four-star Arvell Reese (6-4, 212), taking one more was always under consideration for Ohio State, and it appears the Buckeyes could be ramping up their efforts now to find a second one for the class.

OSU Has Commanding Lead Over Conference Foes

Ohio State's 2023 recruiting class was designated as the No. 3 class in the country, according to the 247Sports composite rankings, and is far and away the best in the conference with a little over two months until the early signing period begins.

The next closest class is Penn State, which checks in at No. 12 with 20 commitments. Of those recruits, 14 are four-star prospects, and the remaining six check in with three stars. Michigan State is the only other conference team in the top 25, with the Spartans checking in at No. 23 with a 14-man class, 10 of whom are four-star prospects.

Next up is Northwestern at No. 27, with a class of 20 commits, though 16 are three-star prospects. Even so, the Wildcats are currently outclassing Michigan's recruiting haul which is ranked 28th with just 14 commitments. Further down, Purdue's class is 38th, Minnesota is 40th and Maryland checks in at 46th.

Nebraska and Rutgers are the only other Big Ten teams in the top 50, checking in at Nos. 48 and 49, respectively. The Cornhuskers have 13 commitments, while the

Scarlet Knights have 17.

Wisconsin's class – which had reached No. 16 as recently as 2021 – is all the way down at No. 56, with just 13 three-star commitments, followed by Illinois at No. 57 with 15 commitments. Indiana rounds things out as the worst class in the Big Ten, with just 10 three-star commitments in their 2023 haul to date.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep five-star defensive end Keon Keeley (6-6, 242) made his second trip to Ohio State for the Buckeyes' win over Wisconsin, and though Keon remained quiet about the visit, his mother, Janické, told 247Sports that the trip was "very good."

- Michigan State picked up its second commitment in 2024, adding Hialeah (Fla.) Westland four-star cornerback Jamari Howard (6-2, 175). The Spartans also have River Rouge, Mich., four-star wide receiver Nick Marsh (6-3, 195) in the class. Iowa currently has the top Big Ten class in 2024 with five commitments.

- As Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press, Ohio State, as mentioned, had moved up to the No. 3 recruiting class in the country with a team score of 284.63. This trails Georgia (289.81) and Alabama (309.14), and slightly edges out Notre Dame (284.62), Texas (284.61) and Oklahoma (284.49).

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

Holtmann Lauds Versatility Of OSU Roster

It was an offseason of turnover within the Ohio State men's basketball program. With 11 players from the 2021-22 roster leaving the program for a variety of reasons, head coach Chris Holtmann has welcomed 10 new Buckeyes to Columbus since his team's second-round loss to Villanova in the NCAA Tournament.

COURT REPORT Jack Emerson

The names on the roster are not the only thing that has changed. With the roster's makeup, Holtmann expects the team to play with more pace and improve on the defensive end of the floor thanks to the overall positional versatility of the new additions.

"I think we are more versatile," Holtmann said on Sept. 26. "We have a number of guys that are kind of in the middle of the lineup, those two, three, four positions that are pretty interchangeable. Their skill sets differ some, but they all can dribble, pass and shoot to varying degrees. They give us a bit of athleticism there."

"I think that versatility is really critical for us and has been critical for us both defensively and offensively."

The versatility Holtmann spoke of is seen in Ohio State's guard unit, one which

boasts six players who stand between 6-2 and 6-6. Manning the point will likely be 6-2, 215-pound guard Bruce Thornton, a freshman, and fifth-year senior Isaac Likekele, a 6-5 transfer from Oklahoma State.

Despite Thornton and Likekele slotting in at the same position, Holtmann said they both have the ability to play off-ball and will likely play together on numerous occasions.

"Isaac and Bruce will be on the floor together," Holtmann said. "Isaac has the ability to play the three and even some of the four. We'll have some small-ball lineups this year where we have some 6-5-and-over position-less groups, and I think Isaac will be a part of that group for sure. Both of those guys will be on the floor a lot."

Holtmann also noted that West Virginia transfer Sean McNeil may see some time at point guard. McNeil has been labeled as a sharpshooter for much of his career, tallying a 36.8 percent clip from deep during his three seasons as a Mountaineer, but Holtmann noted that McNeil is not limited to his three-point shooting and his game is more extensive than many believe.

"He's looking to expand part of his game, but he also understands that his greatest strength is going to be the fact that he has to be guarded almost all over the floor," Holtmann said. "He does have some ball skills that I think are good. He's got a game that I think is a little bigger than what people think."

Wright State transfer guard Tanner Holden and third-year guard Eugene Brown III will be tasked with playing in both the front-

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

court and backcourt, depending on the situation. Both Holden and Brown stand 6-6.

In the frontcourt, Ohio State's versatility is aided by freshman Brice Sensabaugh, who brings a polished offensive game to Columbus despite being a first-year player. Sensabaugh can score from anywhere on the court, and during an interview with Big Ten Network's Andy Katz, Holtmann noted that he is someone who will be relied on offensively despite his young age.

The Buckeyes also return the services of fifth-year forward Justice Sueing, who missed nearly all of last season with an abdominal injury. During his first season as a Buckeye, Sueing was counted on in a variety of roles and served as the emergency primary ball handler when Ohio State's guard depth was decimated by injury.

Third-year forward Zed Key has also placed more importance on increasing his versatility this offseason, noting that he has worked on his offensive game outside of the paint.

"I've been expanding my range from the midrange and shooting threes. I've been putting the ball on the floor a little bit," Key said. "I'm just trying to show my versatility."

With an increased focus on versatility, Holtmann emphasized that his roster will be able to adapt to the varying play styles seen in the Big Ten.

"There are certainly different styles in the Big Ten, but a consistency to the way Big Ten rosters are built," Holtmann said. "We traditionally have a few more big guys in our league than in other leagues. You've seen some teams in our league, maybe because they've been frustrated with not advancing as far as they've wanted to, that have gotten a little more versatile and a little more athletic. I think you'll see that wave in the Big Ten."

Sueing Seeking Health In 2022-23

The last time Ohio State fans saw Sueing, he was battling through pain while struggling on the floor against the likes of Akron and Niagara in the Buckeyes' first two games last season.

Following those two games, Sueing was shut down for the rest of the season due to an abdominal injury, leaving the Buckeyes without one of their more established pieces for much of the campaign. That same injury crept into the offseason and held him out of both of Ohio State's scrimmages during their overseas trip to the Bahamas in August.

Now, Sueing is fully cleared to participate in Ohio State's preseason practices with the goal of being able to play in the season opener against Robert Morris on Nov. 7 at the Schottenstein Center.

"It was one of the toughest things I've had to go through in my career, just trying to get back," Sueing said of his injury. "The

important thing is that I have a good support system here, a good support system at home. That got me through it."

Prior to missing last season, Sueing was a key member of the 2020-21 team that finished 21-10 and earned a No. 2 seed in the NCAA Tournament. In his only season of full health with the Buckeyes, Sueing averaged 10.7 points and 5.5 rebounds per game while shooting at a 49.1 percent clip. He also connected on 36.1 percent of his shots from deep.

Sueing carried high expectations into last season, but his injury greatly tempered those positive feelings early in the year. He did not play for more than 16 minutes in either game against Akron or Niagara and produced just 12 points and seven rebounds in his 30 minutes of game action last season.

While Sueing has rehabilitated his injury for much of the offseason, he said he's ready to go to work and feels that he's even improved from the last time he was at full strength.

"I feel better than I've felt, ever," he said. "It's a great feeling to have, finally."

2024 Recruiting Heating Up

Holtmann all but sealed up his 2023 recruiting class with the commitment of Minneapolis Totino-Grace four-star combo guard Taison Chatman (6-4, 170) on Sept. 20.

When BSB went to print, Ohio State's 2023 class ranked as the No. 5 class in the country, according to 247Sports, trailing Duke, Michigan State, Connecticut and Kentucky. With the early signing period approaching from Nov. 9-16, Holtmann and assistant coach Jake Diebler have turned their attention to building the 2024 class. The Buckeyes have yet to earn a commitment in the 2024 class, but their recruitment of several prospects has picked up.

Ohio State has made the top six of Las Vegas Bishop Gorman four-star point guard John Mobley Jr. (6-0, 150), alongside Arizona State, Creighton, LSU, USC and Xavier. Mobley is the No. 7 point guard and No. 37 overall player in the class, according to 247Sports' composite score. Also in the backcourt, the Buckeyes are considered early favorites for Centerville, Ohio, four-star shooting guard Jonathan Powell (6-6, 170), who is the top-ranked player in Ohio. Powell played for Dayton Chaminade Julianne last season, averaging 16.8 points and 4.8 rebounds per game.

In the frontcourt, Ohio State extended offers to a pair of four-star forwards in Mouth of Wilson (Va.) Oak Hill Academy small forward AJ Swinton (6-5, 180) and Phoenix Hillside Prep power forward Aiden Sherrell (6-8, 200). Swinton is the No. 25 small forward and No. 89 player in the class, while Sherrell ranks as the No. 5 power forward and No. 39 overall player.

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Returners Take On Leadership Responsibilities

By JACK EMERSON

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Entering last season, the Ohio State men's basketball team retained 10 members of its roster from the previous year, creating a nearly seamless transition between the two campaigns on paper.

With many of the same pieces, Ohio State won 20 games – marking the fifth time in head coach Chris Holtmann's five-year tenure that his Buckeyes reached or surpassed 20 wins in a season – and returned to the NCAA Tournament. The Buckeyes picked up a first-round win over 10th-seeded Loyola Chicago before falling to No. 2 Villanova, which eventually made the Final Four, in the second round.

The wounds were still fresh from the loss to the Wildcats when the Buckeyes also saw their two most notable contributors make the jump to the NBA. With three-year forward E.J. Liddell and one-and-done guard Malaki Branham off to the league, Holtmann knew big changes would be needed to remain in contention for the Big Ten crown this season.

While Liddell and Branham were the most notable departures, the Buckeyes also saw longtime glue guy Kyle Young, defensive-minded guard Jamari Wheeler and bench pieces Jimmy Sotos, Cedric Russell, Joey Brunk and Harrison Hookfin exhaust their eligibility. Justin Ahrens and Meechie Johnson Jr. found new homes by way of the transfer portal, while forward Seth Towns medically retired in September.

The exodus of players in the offseason left just three Buckeyes who received minutes during the 2021-22 season on the roster. Among those returners is forward Justice Sueing, who played in only Ohio State's first two games before an abdominal injury sidelined him for the rest of the season.

With three of Ohio State's four captains from the 2021-22 campaign off to new horizons, the leadership burden falls on Sueing – who served as a captain last season – forward Zed Key and guard Eugene Brown III, who are each entering their third seasons in the program. Holtmann noted that Sueing will remain in his role as a captain, while Key and Brown will be further looked to for leadership due to their experience in the program.

"Both kids are great kids," Holtmann said. "Zed and Gene both have new roles with this group. They both played important minutes on an NCAA Tournament team in the '21 season. They have experience under their belt. They just don't have it in the sense that they haven't played in the front-line roles. I think there are going to be some things expected of them both in leadership and in their daily performance, this year, that will be new for them. I'm anxious to see how those two will handle it, along with Justice."

Sueing is the most veteran member of the bunch, having played two seasons at California before transferring to Ohio State prior to the 2019-20 season. At 23 years old, Sueing is one of the oldest players on a roster that also boasts five scholarship freshmen.

One of the Buckeyes' top three scorers

during the 2020-21 season, Sueing produced 10.7 points per game behind 49.1 percent shooting and a 36.1 percent clip from beyond the arc. While Sueing contributed to Ohio State's scoring efforts, he was also counted on to play a variety of roles for the Buckeyes. When Ohio State's guard depth took hits with injuries to C.J. Walker and Jimmy Sotos early in conference play, Holtmann turned to Sueing to stem the tide while his squad lacked reliable ball handlers. Sueing was also counted on defensively, both on the perimeter and in the post, due to his length and anticipation on that side of the floor.

Although Sueing was unable to impact winning on the court last season, as the abdominal injury proved to be too much to recover from in time to play, he noted that he remained a steadfast leader of the team from the sidelines.

"Something that I've always been pretty consistent with is just being able to be a leader out there to these guys, especially a younger group," Sueing said. "As well as being able to produce whichever way we need, whether it's scoring, defending or making plays. I feel like I have a really good overall game, probably one of the best in the country. I'm excited to see how we mesh together."

Holtmann echoed Sueing's sentiment and emphasized that he'll be a key piece for this Ohio State team both on and off of the court.

"Justice looks great," Holtmann said. "He is healthy. He's a young man who's anxious to get out there. He's anxious to be healthy, and he really wants to stay healthy. For a kid like him, who had a whole season taken away from him – you really want it for him."

"He was a really important part of our team that was a No. 2 seed in the NCAA Tournament (in 2020-21) and had a good year. He was going to be a really important part of last year's team. We're excited about what he's going to be (this season)."

While Sueing is, by far, the most veteran member of the Ohio State returners, the growth of Brown and Key, as both players and leaders last season, is not to be ignored.

Brown jumped from a deep bench piece as a freshman into a much more defined role with the Buckeyes. While Brown was used sparingly during his first season in the program, he blossomed into a significant player for Ohio State as a sophomore, making 10 starts and being the first guy off of the bench in several games.

Brown saw nearly all of his per-game averages rise in his second season with the Buckeyes, producing 3.5 points and 2.4 rebounds per contest. He also improved his shooting percentage, jumping from 35.1 percent as a freshman to 44.2 percent shooting as a sophomore.

"Of course, defense is what I do, that's what I bank on," Brown said. "I feel like expanding that offensive role is going to be a big step for me, and it can help the team as well."

Not only is Brown looking to integrate

himself more into Ohio State's offensive plans, but he's also hoping to expand his leadership capabilities as well. Brown noted that he hopes he can keep the team connected on the court through his vocal nature, which is of particular need for the Buckeyes with the overwhelming roster turnover this offseason.

"(I strive to) just be a vocal leader on the court and try to keep everything together," Brown said. "With a lot of new guys and playing basketball in the Big Ten for the first time, there's going to be a lot of nerves. I'll just try to manage that as much as I can on the court."

Like Brown, Key is also entering his third season with the Ohio State program. However, Key's first two seasons with the Buckeyes have looked fairly different from Brown's.

Key played an important role for Ohio State off the bench during his freshman season before becoming a near-every day starter last year. As a result of his increased role, Key saw his scoring average rise from 5.2 to 7.8 points per game while his efficiency dipped, as he shot 61.6 percent during his freshman year but saw that mark drop to 56.2 percent as a sophomore, primarily thanks to an additional 2.6 shot attempts per game.

During the offseason, Key put much of his focus on increasing versatility within his offensive game. He said that he's worked on extending his range as a shooter to include midrange and three-point opportunities, as well as being a dribble threat with the ball in his hands.

While Key has put in the work to make strides in terms of his offense, he has also refocused his mind-set as one of the team's biggest voices. Key said that the coaching staff told him he would have to step up as one of Ohio State's leaders this season alongside Brown and Sueing.

As he transitions into a leadership position for the Buckeyes, Key noted that embracing that newfound status as a leader has been difficult at times but that he's enjoyed

everything that has come with his increase in responsibility.

"It was tough at first," Key said. "We were an older team last year. Now we have a whole bunch of younger guys coming in that don't really know how college is. They don't really know the ins and outs of the program so they're coming to me and asking questions. I've definitely embraced it and I'm loving it."

Redshirt freshman forward Kalen Etzler – technically a returner for Ohio State, though he has yet to take the floor for the Buckeyes – said he grew close to Key last season and stated that he's noticed Key take strides as a leader during this offseason.

"Zed is very vocal in the group chats and makes sure everyone is up and ready to go for lift," Etzler said. "Down in the locker room, he's always like, 'Let's go, let's get ready to go for practice today.' In practice, during drills, if you have a question, Zed is one of the first people you're going to ask about what's going on."

Although Brown, Key and Sueing boast the most experience within the program, they're not the only members on the roster to have been relied on at the college level. The additions of transfers Tanner Holden (Wright State), Isaac Likekele (Oklahoma State) and Sean McNeil (West Virginia) give the Buckeyes added experience entering the 2022-23 campaign.

While the trio of transfers will undoubtedly aid the Buckeyes on the floor, Key noted that they can also provide a leadership boost for the team. He added that he, Brown and Sueing can rely on the transfers to also share their wisdom with Ohio State's five-man freshman class.

"It definitely helps because we have Isaac, who's vocal in practice and guys go to him. Even though he hasn't been here, he's definitely a leader. You just see it in the way he presents himself" Key said. "Sean and Tanner, they're all leaders in their own ways. The guys go to them also. It's not just Zed, Gene and Justice – the young guys go to them as well."

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“An Honor” For Shumate To Play At OSU

It's seemingly a match made in heaven between Ohio State and guard Emma Shumate. Shumate was raised in Dresden, Ohio, and played high school basketball for Newark under head coach and her father, J.R. Shumate, making the Buckeyes the relative hometown college team for Emma, considered one of the top prospects in the 2021 recruiting class.

“I grew up in Ohio, and to play for Ohio State, it's an honor,” Shumate told BSB. “It's

revealing her transfer destination last fall.

“Ohio State was actually the first phone call I got after entering my name (into the portal) and that meant a lot to me,” Shumate said.

Of course, there was a reason Ohio State was so quick to contact Shumate. She was a four-star recruit in 2021 and was ranked by ESPN as the No. 23 guard and No. 59 overall prospect in the class. A two-time OP-SWA All-Ohio first-team honoree, Shumate helped lead Newark to a runner-up finish in the 2021 OHSAA Division I Girls Basketball Tournament, the best in program history.

“I've been watching Emma since she was really early in her high school career since she's local,” Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff told BSB. “I'm really excited about her potential. She played for her dad who's a great high school coach, and he's really prepared her well. I think she'll be a really terrific fit in our system and our style of play.”

The proximity to home was important in her decision to transfer to Ohio State, but she said the environment at Ohio State stood out to her.

“Especially with that comparison between another university and this one, things have been great for me here,” she said. “I'm closer to home and I'm surrounded by people that make me want to work. It's a great environment.”

Once the net was cast in her recruitment and she committed to Ohio State, Shumate

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

officially joined the team this past January, ineligible to play but still able to participate in practice and sit on the team's bench. Able to do little else besides watch the games, Shumate said the experience offered her a new perspective.

“Being down there on the court, the energy is not comparable to anything else, and it just made me really excited,” she said. “That's what came from it. I was just very excited that I get to be a part of something like this.”

Now eligible to play for the Buckeyes this season, Shumate said she is excited to get going and is grateful to be part of the program.

Having been on campus since January and involved with college basketball since her enrollment to West Virginia last fall, Shumate is listed as a sophomore on Ohio State's roster but has taken the path of few freshmen, yet to play or even be available for a game. When she takes the court this fall, though, Shumate doesn't feel that she will have missed a step.

“It was very advantageous for me to come in January and get that semester where I wasn't eligible but I was practicing,” she said. “I got a feel for my teammates, I got a feel for what we do offensively, defensively and my coaches. I think that that gave me a good start to this year.”

McGuff echoed Shumate's sentiment and added that she looks more advanced than someone normally in her position.

“I think being here in the second semester last year really helped in terms of just acclimating her to our system and our style of play,” he said. “She's a really bright kid, so she picked it up pretty quickly.”

Shumate got to Ohio State in time to watch the Buckeyes claw their way to a share of the Big Ten regular-season championship as well as make a run to the Sweet 16 in the NCAA tournament. Championship expectations are no surprise given Shumate's background at Newark, and she said those expectations have been made clear at Ohio State for her as well as the team.

“We're going to work hard together, we're going to strive to be in that same position that we were last year, and I think that we have a group to do it,” she said. “We're very committed to each other, so I think it's a good group.”

“Everyone has the opportunity to come up big for us. I think that it's obviously a team effort, and I think a lot of people are excited and ready to do the hard things to make our team successful.”

As for her role on the team, she's joining a roster that already features several guards such as Madison Greene, Taylor Mikesell and Jacy Sheldon. Playing time may be hard to come by at points, but Shumate's focus right now is on improving as a player.

“We've gotten really good feedback from (associate head coach) Carla (Morrow),” she said. “She's a great coach, knowledgeable about the game, and I think that they're

helping me to get stronger physically and just stronger all around as a player.”

While she becomes more acclimated to Ohio State, Shumate said that the veteran leadership on the team means a lot to her and inspires her as well as everyone else in the program.

“Jacj and T-Mike are great leaders and very encouraging,” she said. “They're just people that make you want to work. They're people that when you come in, they inspire you to do better just because they're such good leaders in what they do and their actions.”

As she prepares to take the court for the first time in her college career – perhaps as soon as Ohio State's season opener against Tennessee on Nov. 8 – she said that her goals for this season remain team driven.

“I really want to help this program in any way that I can,” she said. “But personally, I always want to get better at basketball. I just want to grow, and I think on this team I can become a better person too with the personnel we have. I just think it's the perfect environment for growth for me.”

Guzdanski, Murray Add New Titles



Reid Guzdanski

Ohio State announced new titles on Sept. 27 for a pair of support staffers in the program. Reid Guzdanski will now serve as director of recruiting operations and professional development, while Ryan Murray will now be

director of scouting and player development.

Guzdanski graduated from Ohio State in 2014 and was a student manager for the team during his time enrolled at the university. He then served as a graduate assistant and video coordinator for the team from 2014-16, and after a year as video coordinator for the New Mexico women's basketball program, he returned to the Buckeyes prior to the 2017-18 season as an administrative assistant, later becoming special assistant to the head coach.

Murray graduated from Ohio State in 2018. A former member of the men's club basketball team, Murray was also a practice player for the women's basketball team and played at Centre College in Kentucky prior to his time at Ohio State, a member of a team that won the Southern Athletic Conference and made it to the second round of the NCAA tournament.

During his time with the women's program as a student, he filmed games and practices while serving as director of camp operations. He then spent a season at Wisconsin as the program's video coordinator and director of scouting, and returned to Ohio State prior to the 2019-20 season.

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Wisconsin Fires HC Chryst After 2-3 Start

Wisconsin athletic director Chris McIntosh announced Oct. 2 that the program was parting ways with head coach Paul Chryst five games into his eighth season at the school. The Badgers opened their current season with a 2-3 record, featuring a loss to unranked Washington State, a 52-21 drubbing at the hands of No. 3 Ohio State and a 34-10 loss to another unranked opponent in Illinois on Oct. 1, just one day before his reported firing.

BIG TEN NOTES Andy Anders

Current defensive coordinator Jim Leonhard will step in as interim head coach as the school searches for a permanent replacement to Chryst, who is in line to receive a \$16.4 million buyout from his current contract if he is fired without cause, according to ESPN's Pete Thamel.

Chryst accepted the position at Wisconsin in 2015 following the departure of Gary Andersen. His first season ended in a 10-3 campaign, with the Badgers boasting the nation's No. 1 scoring defense. Wisconsin reached the Big Ten Championship Game the following year, where it lost to No. 8 Penn State, posting an 11-3 record after a win over No. 12 Western Michigan in the Cotton Bowl. All three of its losses were to top-10 opponents.

The following year, 2017, served as perhaps Chryst's crowning achievement at Wisconsin. The Badgers went 13-1 with an undefeated regular season, their lone loss a 27-21 bout with Ohio State in a second consecutive Big Ten Championship Game appearance. That led to a 34-24 win over No. 11 Miami (Fla.) in the Orange Bowl. Chryst won the Hayes-Schembechler Big Ten Coach of the Year Award in both 2016 and 2017 for his efforts.

Rebounding from an 8-5 season in 2018, Wisconsin reached another Big Ten Championship Game in 2019 following a 10-2 regular season. The Badgers dropped that contest to No. 1 Ohio State then closed out the year with a loss in the Rose Bowl to No. 6 Oregon. The season proved to be Chryst's final appearance in the Big Ten Championship Game and in a New Year's Six bowl.

With a 4-3 record in 2020 followed by a 9-4 mark and Las Vegas Bowl win in 2021, Chryst concludes his career at his alma mater with a 67-26 record. He coached five games against Ohio State, all losses.

West Coast Expansion Could Collapse Pac-12

The Big Ten conference's continued expansion could spell the demise of the Pac-12, according to a report from CBS Sports' Dennis Dodd.

With renewed interest from Amazon in picking up games from the Big Ten – perhaps generating a second media rights deal for the conference outside of the one it already struck with FOX, CBS and NBC – commissioner Kevin Warren and company are looking into adding California, Oregon, Stanford and Washington from the Pac-12. According

to Dodd, an offer approaching \$100 million from Amazon would be enough to convince the powers that be in the Big Ten that the move is worth it monetarily.

Should the Big Ten sign those four teams, it increases the chances of the Big 12 landing some combination of Arizona, Arizona State, Colorado and Utah in its own expansion, a source from the Big 12 told Dodd. That would leave only Oregon State and Washington State as current Pac-12 teams without a new conference to call home.

"If that (Big Ten move) happens, I think the other (four Pac-12) schools will want to jump to our league," the source said.

Big Ten presidents and athletic directors continue to evaluate whether such a move is the best thing for the conference. As it stands, the Big Ten is set to have 16 teams in 2024, with UCLA and USC joining the conference from the Pac-12 prior to that season. Four more would take that total to 20, with the possibility of Notre Dame aligning itself with the conference still on the table.

"We will not expand just to expand," Warren said at Big Ten Media Days in July. "It will be strategic, it will add additional value to our conference, and it will provide a platform to even have our student-athletes be put on a larger platform so they can build their careers but also that they have an opportunity to grow and learn from an education and from an athletic standpoint."

Northwestern Unveils New Stadium Design

Northwestern is planning to replace Ryan Field as its home stadium after 97 years of operation. On Sept. 29, the university revealed designs for a new \$800 million venue, which would also be named Ryan Field.

If approved, the new stadium will have a seating capacity of 35,000, down from the current Ryan Field's capacity of 47,130. During the 2021 season, they averaged well below that capacity at 30,796 fans and didn't record a single sellout.

"I have no doubt that the privately funded stadium will be a game-changer for our football program, athletics department and the community, and will be in line with our other excellent facilities including Welsh-Ryan Arena (basketball) and Ryan Fieldhouse (football practice facility)," said Derrick Gragg, Northwestern vice president for athletics and recreation.

The old Ryan Field will be demolished after the 2023 football season. Plans for the new Ryan Field also include a canopy to shield the surrounding neighborhood from noise and light pollution, plazas for tailgating fans and public green spaces modeled after Maggie Daley Park in Chicago.

Should it be approved by the city of Evanston, the new Ryan Field's expected completion date is in 2026. Northwestern is still exploring options as to where it would play during construction.

IU HC Allen Called "Clown" By Former Nebraska Coach

Not all in the coaching world hold Indiana head coach Tom Allen in high regard.

Former Nebraska defensive line coach Rick Kaczinski went on the "Hail Varsity" radio show Sept. 27 and called out the Hoosiers'

head man, suggesting his team was not up to the Cornhuskers' caliber before Nebraska and Indiana played Oct. 1.

"Let's be honest," Kaczinski said. "Tom Allen, is there a bigger clown in college football than that guy? For the love of God, we cannot lose to Indiana. We just can't."

After some prompting from the "Hail Varsity" hosts, Kaczinski furthered his diatribe on Allen, taking issue with his motivational tactics.

"Here's what I don't like about the guy. The guy likes running out of a tunnel. I don't like coaches that like running out of tunnels," Kaczinski said. "Nobody's there to see me run out of the tunnel, OK? I don't know. This guy's a frickin' cheerleader. He's just not my cup of tea. You can't lose to that clown. You want some motivation? Put a highlight reel together of that guy. You can't lose to Indiana."

Nebraska defeated the Hoosiers just four days after Kaczinski's comments, earning a 35-21 victory. The game was tied 21-21 entering the fourth quarter before the Cornhuskers tallied two touchdowns to secure victory, improving their record to 2-3 on the year. It was the first win for Nebraska against Big Ten competition in just short of a calendar year. The Cornhuskers last won a conference game on Oct. 2, 2021, in a 56-7 decision over Northwestern.

Badgers Battered, RB Ibrahim Out For Gophers

Wisconsin's injury report was 14 names long against Illinois on Oct. 1, a game in which the Badgers would fall 34-10 and land at 2-3 on the season.

In addition to tight end Clay Cundiff, who suffered a broken leg against Ohio State, the Badgers are still dealing with the absences of top cornerback Alexander Smith, starting right tackle Riley Mahlman, safety Travian Blaylock, wide receiver and top return man Stephan Bracey and kicker Vito Calvaruso.

Minnesota running back Mohamed Ibrahim headlines the remaining Big Ten injury news, with the Golden Gophers' star rusher becoming a late scratch from the lineup in a loss to Purdue on Oct. 1. Ibrahim is dealing with a reported ankle injury, and Minnesota coach PJ. Fleck indicated he could be back soon. Minnesota has a bye week before it plays Illinois on Oct. 15, and the Gophers will hope to have Ibrahim back on the field, after they struggled to just 44 yards on 26 carries in a 20-10 loss to the Boilermakers.

"Mo was close (to playing against Purdue)," Fleck said. "If we had a few more days, he would have been able to go. I kind of felt like he was going to go. But we're always going to keep our players safe."

Michigan tight end Erick All, who had 437 receiving yards in 2021 for the Wolverines, missed a second straight game with an undisclosed upper-body injury. The Detroit Free Press reported that back surgery is being considered for All to deal with an injury dating back to last season.

Iowa linebacker Jestin Jacobs, a starter who collected 53 tackles in 2021, underwent surgery Sept. 27 and will miss the rest of the season according to head coach Kirk Ferentz. Jacobs exited the Hawkeyes' week-one contest against South Dakota State and hasn't seen the field since.

BIG 2022 Standings

East Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan	2	0	1.000	4	0	1.000
Ohio State	2	0	1.000	4	0	1.000
Penn State	2	0	1.000	4	0	1.000
Maryland	1	1	0.500	4	1	0.800
Indiana	1	1	0.500	3	2	0.600
Rutgers	0	2	0.000	3	2	0.600
Michigan State	0	2	0.000	2	3	0.400

West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Illinois	1	1	0.500	4	1	.800
Purdue	1	1	0.500	3	2	.600
Northwestern	1	1	0.500	1	4	.200
Minnesota	1	1	0.500	4	1	.800
Iowa	1	1	0.500	3	2	.600
Nebraska	1	1	0.500	2	3	.400
Wisconsin	0	2	0.000	2	3	.400

Oct. 1 Games

Ohio State 49, Rutgers 10
Michigan 27, Iowa 14
Illinois 34, Wisconsin 10
Nebraska 35, Indiana 21
Purdue 20, Minnesota 10
Penn State 17, Northwestern 7
Maryland 27, Michigan State 13

Oct. 7 Game

Nebraska at Rutgers, 7 p.m.

Oct. 8 Games

Michigan at Indiana, noon
Purdue at Maryland, noon
Wisconsin at Northwestern, 3:30 p.m.
Ohio State at Michigan State, 4 p.m.
Iowa at Illinois, 7:30 p.m.

"That's obviously a very tough break," Ferentz said. "Tough on the team but, more importantly, just tough on the individual. And that's the worst part about injuries."

Terrapins Terrorizing In Field Hockey

Maryland field hockey picked up four wins, three over top-10 opponents, in a span of 10 days from Sept. 23 to Oct. 2 and sat atop the Big Ten standings with a 5-0 conference record. The team was 11-1 overall as Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press.

The Terrapins started with a home victory against No. 8 Michigan in overtime on Sept. 23, with graduate forward Leah Crouse notching a game-winning goal. Two days later, Maryland demolished Michigan State 7-2, with six different players scoring goals as the Terrapins raced out to a 7-0 lead and held on.

Two marquee road matchups awaited after the Spartans, however, first with No. 3 Iowa Sept. 30 then No. 2 Northwestern on Oct. 2. Maryland, ranked No. 4, handed the Hawkeyes a 2-1 loss in overtime and followed it up with another 2-1 overtime beating of the Wildcats. Graduate midfielder Dani Van Rootselaar tallied all four goals, including both game winners, in the two top-five contests.

"Being tied is the story of life in our game," Maryland coach Missy Meharg said. "The bottom line is you've got to be ready for overtime."

Freshman Rewards Bucks' Commitment To Him

When Stephen Halliday was at a low juncture of his junior hockey career, Ohio State was there, and he never forgot that.

Despite his being overweight and having what he considered a substandard season playing for Dubuque (Iowa) in the United States Hockey League in 2020-21, the Buckeyes – led by head coach Steve Rohlik and assistant coach JB Bittner – kept recruiting him, and their diligence eventually paid off for them and Halliday.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

He had an outstanding final season for Dubuque last season and parlayed that into the Ottawa Senators selecting him in the fourth round (104th) in the 2022 NHL draft. Halliday did not waiver on his commitment, though, and on Oct. 1 he made his OSU debut at Mercyhurst to start a two-game series. His first point came in the second game when he assisted on a power-play goal by Jake Wise in the second period.

"Last year before the year started, I had talked to JB and (Rohlik) and I just felt that they believed in me when I was at one of my lower points in my career," Halliday said.

"I really thought that was something that I took inside. I really felt good about that.

"So having a big year last year for them was really special to me too. Just knowing that they liked me when maybe I wasn't having that big of a year (in 2020-21), that was kind of the tipping point for me."

Halliday is a sturdy 6-4, 210-pound forward who finished his career fifth all-time in USHL history for regular-season career points (215) and third in assists (147) in four seasons. It was his third year in the league that he fell to the "low point." Even though he posted 48 points (10 goals, 38 assists) in 52 games, he admitted he was out of shape.

"I was a little bit overweight that year, and after that I cut a lot down, probably 35 pounds, over the summer. I attributed that to a lot of my success in the USHL, and I had a great coach who's the head coach now at (Boston College), Greg Brown. I owe a lot to him.

"I kind of took it upon myself that I want to play hockey and I want to get better and that weight was the biggest thing holding me back, so I felt I definitely addressed it."

His parents helped too. His father, James, played tennis in college and was



Stephen Halliday

ranked in the top 20 as a pro in Ontario, Canada. He and Stephen spent hours playing not only for fitness but to advance his hockey skills.

"I'm always on my toes, a lot of lateral movement in tennis," the younger Halliday said. He also started boxing, and said, "It helps not only to protect myself but for quick feet."

When he wasn't working out, he focused on improving his nutrition.

"I cut out lot of bread so I don't eat pizza, sandwiches," he said. "It wasn't too challenging but I also thank my mom (Amanda) for making me really nice meals like cauliflower rice instead of rice. If I really wanted pizza, it would be a cauliflower crust if I had that option. It definitely made me feel faster because I don't have to carry so much weight."

It wasn't easy to maintain his lower weight during a hockey season full of long bus rides and greasy postgame pizzas, but Halliday was committed.

"I'd bring my own lunch from home, which was nice, but sometimes they'd stop at a gas station and I'd get a couple of protein shakes and stuff like that to tide me over."

His diligence paid off. Last season, he had 95 points (35 goals, 60 assists) and was named to the USHL first team. He helped the Fighting Saints to a second-place finish in the Eastern Conference and an increase of 16 wins from the previous season.

Halliday's stock rose heading into the draft, and this is what Elite Prospects said of him in their draft guide:

"He's mastered the slow game, cutting back where most sprint and delaying momentarily to draw the extra defender. Combining body positioning and an albatross-like wingspan, he easily shields possession and pokes pucks away from defenders. He's also a master of deception, faking fakes on pass receptions, faking passes, and even faking cutbacks or turns. Those skills primarily serve Halliday's playmaking. He slips pucks through defenders, reaches out to pass around them, and saucers pucks over their sticks."

He was at home in Glenwood, Md., when he heard the Senators call his name on July 8. A few weeks later, he attended their development camp for prospects.

"That was definitely one of the coolest moments in my life, especially getting to shake the general manager's hand and meeting the assistant GM, which was unbelievable," Halliday said. "Honestly, the biggest thing for me was talking to the development coaches, because those are the guys that are always going to come and see me play and they're always a great resource to have."

At age 20, Halliday is not a typical teenage freshman on campus, and Rohlik thinks that will help him adjust to college hockey.

"He's a little bit older and has a lot of experience playing at a really high level in the USHL, but coming here is a step up," the coach said.

Meyer For Hire

It was almost former Buckeyes going against each other when the Columbus

Blue Jackets hosted the Buffalo Sabres in an NHL preseason game at Nationwide Arena on Sept. 28.

Carson Meyer suited for the Blue Jackets. Mason Jobst traveled with the Sabres but did not play. Jobst played 150 games for OSU from 2015-19, and his 164 points (69 goals, 95 assists) are 13th highest in program history.

He has played 100 games in the American Hockey League with 15 goals and 23 assists for 38 points and will likely start the season with the Sabres' American Hockey League affiliate in Rochester, N.Y. Jobst has yet to play an NHL game.

"I'm still working hard, still hoping to get an opportunity," he told BSB.

Meyer last season became the first player from the Columbus area (Powell) to play for Ohio State then make the Blue Jackets. He played for the Buckeyes from 2018-20 after two seasons at Miami (Ohio).

Last season, he played 57 games for Cleveland of the AHL and in 13 games for the Blue Jackets had a goal and two assists.

Meyer is in a battle to make the Columbus roster this season.

"I only played 13 games, but I think I proved to myself and hopefully to the organization that I can bring something to the table here in Columbus, and so that's certainly been my motivation throughout the summer," Meyer said.

Against Buffalo, Meyer had a shorthanded goal, scoring on his third breakaway chance of the game, and had five shots and six hits.

"One of the best players on the ice tonight, for me," Blue Jackets coach Brad Larsen said afterward. "I noticed him every shift. He did a great job on the penalty kill. He scores. He could have had one or two more (goals). He played right until the end. He was physical."

"We talk about guys who put the work in. He's a guy who's right at the top of the testing. He knocked it out of the park. You see him in the third period, and he's still got a lot of gas. This camp's been hard. He's catching our eye."

Meyer scored again in the preseason Oct. 1 against Washington.

Season Opener

The No. 16 Buckeyes won 4-2 and 4-1 at Mercyhurst. Travis Treloar had a goal and three assists in the series, and Jakub Dobeš made 25 saves in the opener and followed with 18 in the rematch.

The Buckeyes are set to begin their home and Big Ten schedule on Oct. 7 and 8 at Value City Arena against Wisconsin.

For a recap of the Mercyhurst series go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



Mason Jobst



Carson Meyer









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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, W 49-10; **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. Men: 13/17; Women 5/20; **30** Lakefront Invitational at Chicago, Ill. Men 2/7; Women: 2/11.

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 (5-5)

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, W 2-1 (OT)

Oct. 2 KENT STATE, W 4-0; **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** Inverness Intercollegiate at Toledo, Ohio, 4/16 **27** Inverness Intercollegiate at Toledo, Ohio, 7/16.

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., 1/17.

Oct. 3-4 Barbara Nicklaus Cup at Dublin, Ohio; **23-24** Jim West Challenge at San Marcos, Texas.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (2-0)

Oct. 1 at Mercyhurst, W 4-2; **2** at Mercyhurst, W 4-1; **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 (2-0)

Sept. 30 at Minnesota State, W 2-1.

Oct. 1 at Minnesota State, W 5-4; **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 (5-1-4)

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, T 2-2.

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 (8-2-2)

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, W 4-0.

Oct. 2 PENN STATE, W 3-0; **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** Ithica Challenger at Ithica, 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 (7-5)

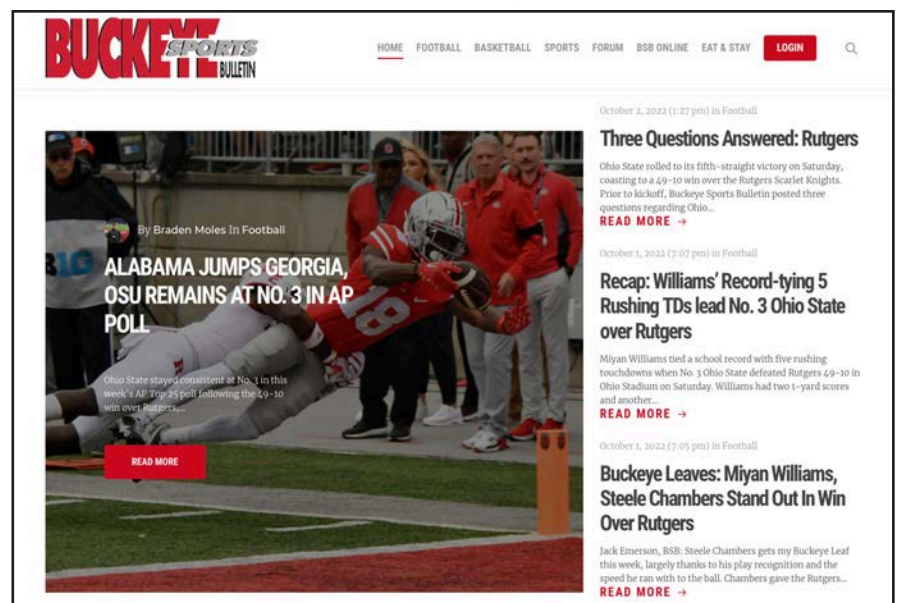
Aug. 26 TEXAS, L 3-0; **27** L 3-1.

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, W 3-1.

Oct. 1 Indiana, W 3-1; **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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Buckeyes May Have Set The Bar Too High

Maybe this is a minority opinion, but it didn't appear that Ohio State was particularly sharp against Rutgers. How can this be, you ask? Didn't the Buckeyes win by 39 points? Weren't they in control from pretty much the outset?

Well, yes, yes and maybe.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsmen

But maybe this feeling exists because of how high the Buckeyes have set the bar. Ohio State entered the game averaging 8.2 yards per play but finished the day at just 7.0 against Rutgers – and that was with a stellar performance by the ground game. Winning is the most important thing, sure. But it's not unfair to lob some light criticism at a team when it finishes more than a yard behind its typical average.

Right?

For maybe the first time this season, the passing attack looked like it was a beat or two off. The receivers weren't running routes as crisp as usual – they were called for two illegal touching penalties after going out of bounds and coming back in and touching the ball – and the usually pinpoint quarterback C.J. Stroud wasn't as eye-popping as usual. He was intercepted after throwing into triple coverage, and a couple of other passes that he normally hits with his eyes closed either sailed wide or beyond the reach of his target.

Maybe this is nitpicking; maybe it isn't. I just feel that if a team wants to win the national title, it needs to be close to the same level every time out. On the flip side, if you're going to have a blah game, it would be hard to find a team better than Rutgers to have it against.

All of that said, Ohio State rolled to another victory and certainly appears to once again be the class of the Big Ten – though Michigan and Penn State will probably have a little something to say about that later in the season.

While the win wasn't exciting – at least from this corner – it was efficient, and it was also old-school, which doesn't happen very often when Ryan Day is in charge of things.

I love Stroud and all of the weapons at his disposal, but I have always been partial to talented runners. It's no wonder that my all-time favorite Ohio State players are (with one exception) all running backs – Archie, Eddie, JK and TreVeyon. Throw in Antoine Winfield and there you have it. Henderson doesn't get nearly enough work in this offense, though in Day's defense Henderson does have a proclivity for being bitten by the injury bug. He wasn't available against the Scarlet Knights, so running back Miyan Williams happily stepped up and stepped on the visiting team to the tune of 189 yards and a record-tying five touchdowns.

Williams was unleashed early and showed his usual power. But he seemed to be just a bit more elusive than usual, making a couple of guys miss in the open field.

He also showed excellent explosiveness, especially on his 70-yard score right up the middle. Maybe it was because of the harrowing thought going through his mind.

"When I got the ball, I knew the safety blitzed," Williams said. "So, when I made him miss, I knew there was nobody behind him. When I broke, I just was seeing green grass and telling myself, 'Don't get caught.' Once I was running, I didn't feel like I was going to get caught, but it was just a thought in the back of my head."

Day saw early on that Rutgers was doing a lot of what Notre Dame did, playing two deep safeties in an effort to not give up the deep ball. So he wasn't afraid to lean on the ground game for a change.

"Twenty-one carries, 189 yards, five touchdowns, and the big one for 70 yards; that says a lot about the way he was running, especially in the red zone," Day said. "I think our red-zone numbers right now are really good (23 TDs in 25 trips, 92.0 percent) and it's a big part of the offensive line and the way we're running the football. Overall, the tight ends, the wide receivers, everybody's involved with this run game. But Miyan was running hard today and finished a bunch of runs in positive. He turns a 3-yard run into 5 (yards) and keeps us on schedule. It was tough down there in the red zone. They kind of dug in a few times, and we had to go for it on the fourth down. But Miyan had a really good day for us."

Though it wasn't a huge number day for Stroud, he was all smiles after the contest, beaming for his buddy.

"He's definitely one of my best friends on the team," Stroud said. "It's been really inspiring to see him have a good game like that with all the stuff he's been through, and all the stuff he's going through to this day. He puts in work and stays focused, so it's cool to see his work pay off."

Rutgers coach and former Ohio State defensive coordinator Greg Schiano knew his team was at a disadvantage from a personnel standpoint, so he made the decision to take away the thing that the Buckeyes are most known for: a high-flying air attack.

Good teams can win when you take away their best weapon, though, and that's exactly what the Buckeyes did.

"We were a depleted secondary today," Schiano explained. "So I thought all in all, we did a pretty good job against the pass. But it was the run that beat us. Again, you kind of have to pick what you are going to try and cover. But Ohio State is the third-ranked team in the country for a reason. I thought we played our guts out."

Finally A Believer

This is an opinion that could come back to haunt, but what is life if you don't take a swing every once in a while, right?

After a feeling-out process, it appears safe to say that Ohio State's defense is not only improved, but finally legitimate. Yes, it could be hard to really buy that given the strength of the opposition the Buckeyes have faced, but watching the games it's not tough to see.

There were a couple of instances against Rutgers that brought it home. In the first quarter, a runner had a hole on the left side, and linebacker Steele Chambers was

in pursuit. Last year, he either runs by or is out of position and misses the tackle, allowing a big gain. But he was able to corral the runner by playing assignment football and kept it to a small gain – maybe 2 or 3 yards. There were also a couple of cutback runs by Rutgers quarterback Noah Vedral that last year would have been broken because only one player would have been on him. But once he turned the corner, a cadre of Buckeyes were waiting, and he was easily taken to the ground.

The missed tackles seem to be a thing of the past, and players are in the right spots now, something fans didn't see much of in 2021.

The defense is playing loose and fast, and that has added up to production.

"Jim Knowles' whole thing is that we're playing offense on defense," Chambers said. "So we're just being really aggressive. I feel like that's something I thrive at. All the stuff in the offseason, getting with Coach Knowles, getting with (graduate assistant) Coach Koy (McFarland). And just going over the defense, understanding how to be a better linebacker in general outside the scheme. I think that was really big for me. I'm just getting to be a better player."

The coaching changes Day made in the offseason have paid off as the Buckeyes currently rank second nationally in yards per play (8.0), tied for 14th in scoring defense (14.8) and 20th in tackles for loss (7.2 per game). OSU is also 11th in opponent third down conversions (allowing just 19 of 70), a huge stat considering how lethal the Buckeyes offense can be.

Fans often use sacks as a gauge to whether the defensive line is playing well, but there is a lot more to it than that.

"Anytime you're trying to stop the run and play great defense, you have to win the line of scrimmage," Day said. "That's a big, big part of it. You can see that they were disruptive just watching the play. You could see the line of scrimmage get moved back a bunch. Overall, I thought our guys had a good feel for it and a good edge. Now we have to keep building on it and go on the road next week. I think you are starting to see a rhythm with those guys up there in terms of rotation and the way that they're playing. It's starting to become a body of work, which was important."

Late Game Fireworks

It was amusing to see Day and Schiano screaming at each other after a late hit out of bounds following Jesse Mirco's decision to run instead of punt. Rutgers' protection showed block, so Mirco took the opportunity to exploit that and took off with the ball. He was banged out of bounds, which drew a penalty, and his teammates came to his defense.

Schiano did the right thing in coming to get his guys, but yelling at Day for something he had no hand in was a bit much. As expected, it was all forgotten by the time the clock hit zero.

"They came after the punt and Jesse just rolled up to the right," Day said. "That was nothing we had ever worked on. When he saw it, he took it, and then they took that shot on the sideline. Things got heated



SONNY BROCKWAY

TEMPERS FLARED — Ohio State head coach Ryan Day spoke with the officials following a skirmish between his Buckeyes and Rutgers caused by OSU punter Jesse Mirco taking a punishing late hit from Rutgers' Aron Cruickshank.

and it was just one coach defending their side and one coach defending theirs. No hard feelings at all. I have an unbelievable amount of respect for (Greg Schiano), so that's all that was."

Lifting The Curtain

Anyone who follows social media knows that people have been posting college rankings since the first week of the season. Why they indulge in this pointless endeavor is beyond me, because there are no data points from which to draw conclusions about who is or isn't good.

After beating Notre Dame in the opener, Ohio State was mostly praised for a "top-five win." We now know it was nothing of the sort and know that the Buckeyes won't really face a test until they head to Happy Valley on Oct. 29.

Through five weeks, we finally have enough of a sample size to properly evaluate teams, which is why now is a perfect time to unveil the always exciting Dandy Dozen for the first time this season.

1. Ohio State (5-0)
2. Alabama (5-0)
3. Clemson (5-0)
4. Michigan (5-0)
5. Georgia (5-0)
6. Ole Miss (5-0)
7. Tennessee (4-0)
8. Penn State (5-0)
9. Kansas (5-0)
10. USC (5-0)
11. TCU (4-0)
12. Mississippi State (4-1)

Knight And Day Approach To Beating Feisty Rutgers

What can you say about a game where the most excitement generated was probably the heated exchange between coaches Ryan Day and Greg Schiano? You can say that it was a 49-10 Ohio State victory over a spunky, if outmanned, Rutgers team, close to the way Vegas saw it with a point spread that hovered around 40.

Still, the high-flying Ohio State offense was anything but high-flying. Day had an explanation for what one reporter called the “clunky” nature of the game.

“I think it has to do with the way that (Rutgers) kind of went into the game, playing a lot of two-high coverage, saying you’re going to run it for 5 (yards). We’re good with that, or you’re going to have to take the throws underneath.

“Then on offense, (they are) running it, huddling, running 30 seconds off the clock every play and snapping inside of 10 seconds. What happens with that is on offense, we ended up with 59 total plays and they ended up with 56. Not a lot of football there. Even at the end, in the fourth quarter, we’re just kind of running out the clock and moving on, but still, 49-10 is still a heck of a day.

“But in those types of games, you’re proud of the win. It’s hard to get style points when you’re playing in that style of a game. I think the one thing about our team is they’re good with that. You talk to the guys on defense, they love it. The guys on offense, it’s not always the best, but they understand that winning is the most important thing. If you start to get selfish or undisciplined, you can put yourself at risk in a hurry. Our guys know that it’s important to make sure that we win, and we have to win in different ways.”

The “different way” against Rutgers was riding Miyan Williams (who for the most part ran solo with injured TreVeyon Henderson on the bench) and the Buckeye defense to a victory that would make an observer think more of Woody Hayes or Jim Tressel than Ryan Day, though Tressel would have cringed at the Buckeyes starting the game off with a muffed punt. I am not sure exactly what he would have thought of Jesse Mirco’s fake punt run and the ensuing brouhaha, though I doubt he would have gotten into a heated argument with a former coaching colleague. Now Woody ...

Williams was nothing short of brilliant, rushing 21 times for 189 yards and a 9.0 per-carry average – a mark raised by this 70-yard TD burst in the third quarter but lowered by his four other scoring runs which were from either 1 or 2 yards out. To be honest, I was surprised in the end he had only 21 carries. Granted, he didn’t play the bulk of the fourth quarter, but still it seemed like he had more carries than that.

I know it wasn’t against the best of competition, but Rutgers entered the game second in the nation in rushing defense, allowing just 56.5 yards a game. The Buckeyes racked up 252 yards on the ground, with Williams alone more than tripling that yards-allowed average.

You have to wonder if Williams didn’t “Wally Pipp” Henderson with that performance. Anyone who reads this column knows that I have been advocating using Henderson more than the coaches have because of his breakaway ability. Henderson will still get his carries, but it is hard not to see Williams getting the start when the Buckeyes travel to East Lansing to play Michigan State.

Day can say what he wants about the Buckeye offense taking what Rutgers was giving, but it is hard to deny that this was

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

not one of C.J. Stroud’s better games. He was 13 of 22 for only 154 yards (a career low as a starter) with two touchdowns. And, oh that interception. I know it was only his second of the season, but it was his second in the last two games and right into triple coverage. He completed just 59.1 percent of his passes – his lowest mark since his first career start against Minnesota.

“From my perspective, we won,” Stroud said after the game. “I don’t really care. I think their goal as a defense was to not let our pass game win, and so we ran the ball. Early in the season I said I was cool with that. It’s not just about me, it’s about getting wins and about other people eating, so when it’s time for me to shine and do my thing, I feel like we’ll do that.”

On the one hand I know he is serious about just being happy with the win, but on the other hand I know he isn’t going to be happy when he watches the film. But I also know that he is going to “shine and do his thing” to use his words, plenty of times before the season is over.

As for the defense, nothing but kudos. Sure, the Scarlet Knights are not an offensive juggernaut, entering the game ranked 98th in the country in total offense. Even so, anytime you can hold a Big Ten team to 187 yards, you have to consider it a good day at the office, especially in comparison to what the defense looked like last year.

And if you think about the defense from last year and then you fast-forward to this year, you have to think about the linebackers. Have Steele Chambers and Tommy Eichenberg been terrific – and consistent – or what? This time it was Chambers who took the spotlight, registering 11 tackles – eight of the solo variety – two tackles for loss, a quarterback hurry and an interception that he returned 12 yards. Despite the solid return, the former running back still took grief from his teammates.

“I got made fun of a lot because that was kind of my position,” Chambers said of his interception return after starting his OSU career in the offensive backfield. “My whole job a couple years ago was to make people miss, and I couldn’t make the quarterback miss. It was a quarterback that got me. It was pretty embarrassing.”

It’s a dramatic change from last season, when the biggest quibble with the linebackers is now the length of an interception return.

While Chambers got the headlines this time around, Eichenberg was his usual solid self. He was credited with nine tackles, half a TFL and a quarterback hurry.

Ohio State continues to struggle to finish the deal on sacks. The Buckeyes had three hurries, but only Ryan Turner was credited with a sack, and that came during garbage time. Ohio State has 10 sacks on the season, as opposed to 15 by last year’s dysfunctional defense at the same point, and the Buckeyes are tied for 68th most in the country.

If I am giving plaudits to Chambers, I also must give kudos to one of the frequently more-maligned players on the defense, Zach Harrison. He may have played his best game as a Buckeye, or at least his best game this season. Harrison was involved in both Buckeye turnovers, tipping the pass that Chambers intercepted and forcing the fumble that Mike Hall Jr., who continues to be a playmaker, recovered.

The thing that Harrison may most be maligned for is not becoming the next Bosa or Chase Young, tough acts to follow. As I think about Harrison, I think about something Taron Vincent said elsewhere in this issue.

“I know I’m getting a lot of double teams, so all the double teams that I’m able to hold off, the linebackers are able to scrape off me and make plays,” said Vincent, who had three assists and half a TFL against Rutgers.

I am probably typical of the average fan. I don’t break down film after the game, and when I am watching, I am not paying detailed attention to the scrum at the line of scrimmage, so for all I know Harrison is playing at an elite level, to use Urban Meyer’s term, and the average fan just doesn’t know it. It seems that Buckeye fans rate their defensive linemen on sacks, and the Bosas and Young set a high bar in that department.

In contrast to the performance of such players as Chambers, Eichenberg and Harrison, there is the odd case of Denzel Burke. As surprised as I was last season with his emergence as a stalwart at cornerback while only a freshman, I am even more surprised at his struggles this season.

One thing working in Burke’s favor is that with the paucity of healthy cornerbacks right now, chances are he is going to be given the opportunity to work his problems out on the field. Whereas last season opponents were throwing away from him, I’m guessing teams this season will test Burke until he forces them to do otherwise.

Ohio State has moved up to No. 10 in the country in total defense at 263.8 yards allowed per game (one slot ahead of Georgia at 264.4), reaching the top-10 goal set by Day, but still shy of the top five predicted by defensive coordinator Jim Knowles. There are a minimum of seven games to go, so Knowles’ defense has a legitimate shot at reaching his lofty goal if they keep playing well.

With much of the same cast of characters on defense who finished 59th in the nation in yards allowed last year (372.9), you really must wonder if it was the coaching, not the players in 2021. I took notice of a couple of quotes from two defenders in this issue.

“Coach Knowles is a cool coach,” Vincent said. “You can talk to him. If you have questions about the defense, what we’re doing, how we’re doing it, why we’re doing it, he has all the answers for you for those questions that you have for him.

“I feel like that’s something new to me. Because I feel like I didn’t really have that in the past, but this year I definitely just feel more open with Coach Knowles, coming to him about questions or anything about the defense.”

It would have been hard for last year’s coaches to explain things when it didn’t appear that they understood what Ohio State was doing on defense themselves. There had to have been a lot of infighting, and the fact that three of the coaches are gone is telling.

Chambers seems to agree with Vincent. “For us, it’s just really cool because we’re hearing what we need to know exactly from the source,” the linebacker said. “He created the defense himself. If the dude that created the defense is teaching you, you have to listen to him.

“What Coach Knowles has done for us is let us play ball. He always says that all of the mistakes on Saturdays are on him. So it just lets us really play free.”

So far, the Knowles experiment seems to have proven a success. Is the sky the limit for the Buckeyes?

On to Michigan State.

Tight Ends And Tidbits

Cade Stover was targeted only twice against the Scarlet Knights, catching a pass for 12 yards, his lowest reception total of the season. But I didn’t get the feeling that Ohio State was abandoning the tight end, like the Buckeyes have done in the past after even a single strong performance from that position. Note that Gee Scott Jr. had his first two catches of the season. Day acknowledged that the Buckeyes were taking what Rutgers was giving, and I have to assume that a veteran defensive-minded coach such as Schiano and his staff would have been aware of the damage that Stover has done this season.

• Speaking of Schiano, I can’t say as I have ever seen two coaches get into it like Day and Schiano after Mirco’s fake punt run. They can say all they want about how buddy-buddy they are and how the coaches were just protecting their players, but I can’t believe there isn’t some animosity on Schiano’s part toward Day.

After all, Day did not retain Schiano on the Ohio State staff when he took over as head coach in 2019. And going back a season before that, when Urban Meyer was suspended for three games, Day, with no head coaching experience, was elevated to interim head coach, even though Schiano had 13 years of head coaching experience on the college and pro level. All reports were that Schiano was extremely helpful to Day, but there still had to be some bitterness.

I’m sure he thought Day was running up the score by calling the fake punt, but when he watches the film, he will see the way the teams were lined up and probably think otherwise. But I get why playing against Day may get Schiano’s competitive juices flowing.

I have nothing to base my theory on other than human nature. These guys are professional and will move on, but Ohio State and Day better watch out, because Schiano is going to give the Buckeyes his best shot every year. That I do know.

• It’s hard to believe that it was only a year ago that many Buckeye fans (you know who you are, and there were a bunch of you) were clamoring for Kyle McCord to take over as starting quarterback after an outstanding performance against hapless Akron. But after a week off to rest his ailing shoulder and take things in from the sideline, Stroud returned with an outstanding performance of his own in a 52-13 win at Rutgers to take command of the position. Stroud was 17 of 23 for 330 yards and five touchdowns without an interception.

“I had a good week of practice, and I definitely felt way better coming into this game,” Stroud said after the 2021 win. “That Tulsa game, I wasn’t feeling right at all, but this week I could actually put something into my throws and did not feel like my shoulder was going to fall off.

“Last week helped me to take a step back and realize what position I’m in. This is a big-time university, a big-time fan base, a big-time everything, and that week off really helped me step back and take a rest. It helped me work on being a leader and seeing my guys and that they really do trust in me.”

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