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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 5, 2022

Sophomore DE Has Breakout Game In 44-31 Win Over PSU

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

During the chaos of Ohio State's win at Penn State on Oct. 29, a 44-31 victory that moved the Buckeyes to 8-0 on the season and a perfect 5-0 mark in Big Ten play, there was one Buckeye who stood head and shoulders above the rest.

Sophomore defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau, a quiet yet consistent presence on Ohio State's defense this season, exploded for not only the best game of his young career, but one of the best performances by an Ohio State defender in recent memory.

On Penn State's first offensive drive of the game, Tuimoloau batted a ball into the air thrown by quarterback Sean Clifford, and it was intercepted by defensive end Zach Harrison. Tuimoloau, not wanting to be left out of the festivities, intercepted a pass of his own on the Nittany Lions' next drive, the first pick of his career. They were the first of several disruptive plays accrued by Tuimoloau.

"It was a great game," he said. "The defense, we just trusted each other and just stuck together and came out strong."

The most pivotal plays, though, came in the fourth quarter. With Ohio State holding just a 16-14 lead entering the final frame, by far the closest game played by the Buckeyes this season due to some anemic offensive play in the first half, Tuimoloau could not be contained in the final 15 minutes.

He opened the quarter with a 9-yard sack of Clifford, and on Penn State's next drive – with the Nittany Lions threatening to take the lead with a 23-21 deficit – he again got to Clifford, dropping him for 7 yards and forcing a fumble, one that Tuimoloau also recovered, that led to another Buckeye score on the next play by Ohio State.

However, he still wasn't done making plays. Later in the fourth, with the clock winding down and the final result no longer in question after a shaky start to the game, he stepped in front of yet another pass from Clifford and hauled in his second interception of the game, which he took back for a 14-yard touchdown and a 44-24 Buckeye lead.

"It's all kind of a blur the way it happened," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "To intercept balls like that as a defensive end and then get a defensive score, I don't know if I've ever



SONNY BROCKWAY

ONE FOR THE BOOKS — Ohio State defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau had one of the most impressive individual defensive performances in program history in the Buckeyes' 44-31 win over Penn State on Oct. 29. The sophomore finished with six tackles (three for loss), two sacks, a forced fumble and subsequent recovery, a pair of interceptions — one of which was returned for a touchdown — and a pass breakup that led to another interception by defensive end Zach Harrison.

seen that before. That's big time.

"(Tuimoloau) has put so much hard work into this. He's an unbelievable player, but he's a better person, and you can see his talent. This is kind of his coming-out party today. Nobody wants it more than he does, so at this stage, for him to play the way he did means a lot to him. I think his teammates are very proud of him."

The Edgewood, Wash., native has flown all around Ohio State's defense this season but has been just a few feet away from making several plays through the first seven games. He had just nine tackles (3½ for loss) entering this game

with half a sack, not the production one would necessarily expect from the five-star prospect, but his play has opened up opportunities for others on the defensive line.

"J.T. is that combination of get-off quickness and strength kind of like Mike (Hall Jr.) has on the inside," defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said earlier this season. "I think J.T. has that on the outside. So he's being accounted for and uses up a lot of blocks (and) makes initial penetration a lot in the

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From The Message Board

Outside of TreVeyon Henderson's 41-yard touchdown during the fourth quarter, the Buckeyes' rushing attack largely struggled to find a rhythm against Penn State, finishing below the century mark for the second consecutive week. Miyan Williams also went down with an injury during the first half and did not return. We asked BSB subscribers how concerned they are about the running game's struggles. Here are some of the responses:

"If Williams is unable to play for a while, I have some concern, but not a great deal of concern. Henderson, Dallan Hayden, Xavier Johnson, Mitch Rossi, and Chip Trayanum should provide enough depth at least until Nov. 26."

– Terrier Buck

"After last week, my concern level was a three. After this week, it is an eight. Our O-line was constantly bullied by Penn State and showed an inability to open running lanes consistently. The lack of success on short-yardage situations is concerning as well."

– bstu9

"My concern level on the run offense is a little lower now than after the Iowa game. The reason is that the OL did not allow too much pressure on C.J. Stroud as well and enabled him to complete more than 75 percent of his passes in this game, while in the Iowa game, C.J. was under pressure as well. Also, run blocking and scheme adjustments were tried and seemed to work towards the second half of the fourth quarter. The play calling by Ryan Day/Kevin Wilson has, however, been somewhat slow in developing/changing to handle the formula used by Oregon/TTUN/Utah against the Buckeyes last year and by Iowa/Penn State this year. I hope they can make first-half adjustments to handle this by the time the TTUN game comes around."

– AnthonyBuck

"Ohio State has future NFL talent on the offensive line: Paris Johnson Jr., Donovan Jackson, Luke Wypler, Dawand Jones, not sure about Matt Jones, and it is hard to believe those dudes are struggling to open running lanes. There was one play in which Henderson had a running lane off left tackle that would have gained many yards and a first down but it appeared Matt Jones was too slow to get to his block. Henderson was tackled in the backfield for a loss."

"Some former players contend Day's play calling has been predictable, the formations have tipped off the defense and the fact Stroud can't/won't be a running option has doomed many of the running plays from the

start. Injuries to the running backs have also complicated the problem. With NW and Indiana next up, the team has 2-3 weeks to come up with a solution.

"The challenge is to win the game they have control over. So far, they have accomplished that. They have no control over what other teams are doing. Stay focused and take care of the business in front of them. A win is a win."

– BYRON MCNUTT

"It honestly wasn't as bad as it looked, they were just running super long handoffs. When they finally stopped doing that and ran a counter-read option play, they ran a 41-yard TD. Sometimes Day needs to not be so stubborn."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"I've been concerned the last two weeks. But If TTUN hadn't rushed for 400 yards against Penn State would we be THAT concerned? When the game was on the line (if you will pardon the expression) in the fourth quarter, the run game looked just fine. And in case you haven't noticed, the run game is not Ohio State's primary mode of transportation. How many yards did TTUN pass for against PSU?"

– Poster That Harley Built

"I'm no Jim Knowles so I don't always recognize these things, but did Iowa and Penn State sell out to stop the run? If so they did a decent job, at least until the fourth quarter in Happy Valley. But check the stat sheet. The Hawkeyes and Lions gave up over 600 yards combined passing. You can stop the run or you can stop the pass, but it takes a really good defense to stop both against a high-powered offense like that of Ohio State. I'm not afraid of TSUN."

– Mcarr

"On a scale of 1 to 10 about a 6.5. But looking at it from a team perspective, my combined concerns in the Ohio State passing game, special teams and our new defense is a negative 6.5. So for you math majors that is (6.5 - 6.5) = Zero Concern."

– BuckeyeScott

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Let McCord See The Field

Reading the Oct. 29 BSB, coach Ryan Day is explaining the lack of reps given to Kyle McCord as keeping sanctity of the game. I don't think Coach gets his back-up QB in early enough.

Kyle practices too! Let him display his talents. It is only running up the score if you leave starters in. Day seems to get all other positions quality reps. He needs to be thinking about preparing a QB for next year's team!

Pence Roth
Bradenton, Fla.

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FAN FORUM

Buckeye Leaves

Although OSU struggled to deal with the adverse environment early against Penn State, the Buckeyes ultimately ran away with the game in the fourth quarter with several players standing out during Ohio State's 44-31 win over the Nittany Lions in Happy Valley Oct. 29. We asked the BSB staff and readers, alike, to award Buckeye Leaves to the most deserving players.

Andy Anders, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf this week goes to wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr.

Quarterback C.J. Stroud and the Ohio State passing offense didn't muster a touchdown through the air until midway through the fourth quarter, but Harrison stayed a dependable option throughout the game, racking up 185 yards on 10 receptions.

Much of Harrison's work came on downfield routes breaking over the middle, and each of his 10 catches recorded at least 10 yards. None was as big as a third-and-10 reception with less than five minutes to play in a one-score game that moved the chains for Ohio State, leading to an eventual touchdown run for running back TreVeyon Henderson.

Jack Emerson, BSB: In what turned out to be a bizarre game with plenty of ups and downs for the Buckeyes, defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau remained a consistent presence for Ohio State.

Tuimoloau set the tone for the Buckeye defense by forcing an interception on Sean Clifford's fourth throw of the game, getting his hand on the ball and popping it in the air for Zach Harrison to register the pick. Just two throws later, Tuimoloau snagged an interception for himself by jumping between Clifford and his target, Brenton Strange. He also added a devastating sack of Clifford for a loss of 9 during the first play of the fourth quarter.

He also keyed another huge turnover with 8:26 to go in regulation, getting to Clifford and jarring the ball loose while falling on it himself to set the Buckeyes up from the PSU 24-yard line. The Buckeyes took a two-possession lead on the very next play, and he capped the game off later with a 14-yard interception return for a touchdown.

He finished the afternoon with six tackles, three of which went for a loss, along with his pair of interceptions and the fumble recovery.

Braden Moles, BSB: While few would have expected him to finish with a solid stat line, running back TreVeyon Henderson ultimately turned in a good game for the Buckeyes after a slow start.

It took him time to get going after running back Miyan Williams was knocked out of the game with a hand injury, but Henderson responded exactly when the Buckeyes needed him, rushing for a 41-yard score in the fourth quarter to put Ohio State back on top, 23-21.

He added an insurance touchdown later on, a 7-yard score to put the Buckeyes up 37-24 and ice the game before the 44-31 final. Henderson finished with 16 carries for 78 yards (4.9 per attempt) with his pair of scores. Several defenders for Ohio State could have also earned this leaf, but it's hard not to mention the player who helped kick-start an impressive fourth quarter for the Buckeyes.

Mark Rea, BSB: Marvin Harrison Jr. is an obvious choice with J.T. Tuimoloau even more

so. I'd also give one to Tyleik Williams, who had a big stop on a fourth-and-2 play to end Penn State's first possession of the second half at the OSU 19.

BSB Subscribers

BYRON MCNUTT: You can't forget Zach Harrison. He had a few big plays in the first half. The team needs him big time. If he keeps it up, the NFL scouts will reward him come draft time. The play of Marvin Harrison Jr. and J.T. Tuimoloau were legendary. I'd put the play of C.J. Stroud a level above that of TreVeyon Henderson.

Tiffin Buckeye: JTT and good thing because we needed him. Straight beast mode and opposing teams better look alive because he's getting better week by week

bstu9: JTT JTT JTT!!! J.T. Tuimoloau deserves all of the Buckeye leaves. It has been a while since a single Buckeye defensive player had such a direct impact on the outcome of a game. But JTT certainly did today. Not sure the Buckeyes win that game without him.

Terrier Buck: The original three are obvious, but maybe half a leaf for Cade Stover for six important receptions and what seemed like the "clinching" TD.

AnthonyBuck: JTT for his unbelievable-fantasy-unreal performance that must rank among the best in college football all time. Marvin Harrison Jr. for already playing like his Hall-of-Fame dad. Cade Stover for his ferocious blocking and his power running after catches. Zach Harrison for another stupendous performance. C.J. Stroud for a calm and game-winning performance completing more than 75 percent of his passes when the run offense did not work for most of the game. Mitch Rossi for being an unsung hero on this team with his effective running, catching and blocking, and Tommy Eichenberg, Steele Chambers, Lathan Ransom and Ronnie Hickman for all the tackles and JTT again for a game of a lifetime!

Poster That Harley Built: JTT gets the obvious leaf (what a game!) followed by Marvin Harrison Jr. But what about C.J. Stroud? It seems like he is having an off game and you look at the stat sheet and he has well over 300 yards passing and NO INTERCEPTIONS. Most importantly, his cool, calm, confident demeanor makes the exciting victory just another day at the office.

BuckeyeScott: Give my Buckeye Leaves to all members of the Ohio State Defensive Corporation known as "The Knowles Effect."

PeyoteBuck: I give a leaf to Cade Stover for his quiet and excellent performance. Marvin Harrison Jr. was amazing too. By the fourth quarter, all parts of the team were working just as a team should.

John Lanning: My leaf goes to Noah Ruggles. He kept us in the game until we worked the kinks out ... cutting it close I thought. No question about Harrison and Tuimoloau. And I thought Stover had a game of "Chutes and Ladders" on his touchdown and key blocks in getting to the second level.

Rick Fuchs: JTT gets all the leaves. Without his play, it could've gone bad.

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OPINION

Time To Learn How To Pronounce Tuimoloau

During an afternoon when for long stretches the No. 2 team in the nation didn't play very much like the No. 2 team in the nation, the country's No. 1-rated high school player in the 2021 recruiting class had his official coming-out party and helped Ohio State carve out a 44-31 victory against a determined and up-set-minded Penn State.

There have been a number of outstanding individual defensive performances in program history. Chris Spielman registering 29 tackles during a losing effort against Michigan in 1986 readily comes to mind. There was Chase Young's four-sack game vs. Wisconsin in 2019, a 38-7 victory during which Young also forced two fumbles. And the legendary Chic Harley had four interceptions during the 13-3 win at Michigan in 1919, a single-game record the university for some reason fails to recognize.

But perhaps surpassing them all was the stat sheet stuffing by second-year defensive end Jaylahn (better known as "J.T.") Tuimoloau against the Nittany Lions. His tipped pass in the first quarter led to an interception by fellow DE Zach Harrison, and then Tuimoloau got a pick of his own later in the opening period. That interception set up an eventual touchdown run by Miyan Williams to give Ohio State an early 10-0 lead.

And the engine inside the 6-4, 270-pound dynamo was just getting revved up.

On the first play of the fourth quarter, Tuimoloau motored past Penn State tight end Brenton Strange to throw quarterback Sean Clifford for a 9-yard loss. It's highly likely Clifford had "44" nightmares after the game because Tuimoloau wasn't finished acquainting himself with the Penn State signal-caller.

The Buckeyes had just taken a 23-21 lead on TreVeyon Henderson's 41-yard touchdown run when Tuimoloau abused Nittany Lions offensive tackle Bryce Effner on his way to a strip-sack of Clifford. The OSU defensive end then pounced on the loose football for good measure, and Ohio State scored on the very next play to pad its lead to a more comfortable 30-21 margin.

Then, after another Henderson scoring run made it 37-24 with 2:52 remaining, Tuimoloau put the icing on his coming-out cake by spearing a Clifford pass out of the air and returning it 14 yards for the Buckeyes' final touchdown of the afternoon.

It was a dreamlike sequence for a youngster who was among the top five prospects of nearly every recruiting service's 2021 rankings, including the No. 1 overall prospect according to 247Sports.com. But until the Penn State contest, he really hadn't done very much in an Ohio State uniform. In 20 previous games, the native of Edgewood, Wash., a small city of about 12,000 in the western part of the state, had never registered more than three tackles, had never forced or recovered a fumble, and never had an interception.

Against the Nittany Lions, Tuimoloau finished with six tackles, including two sacks, a forced fumble, a fumble recovery, and two interceptions, one of which he returned for a touchdown.

After a game during which quarterback C.J. Stroud threw for more than 350 yards for the 11th time in his career (all other OSU quarterbacks in program history have 11 such games combined), Marvin Harrison Jr. caught 10 passes for 185 yards (no Ohio State player has ever had more receiving yards during the 38-game series against Penn State), and linebacker Tommy Eichenberg totaled a game-high 15 tackles (the third time in his last nine games he has registered double-digit tackles), most of

the spotlight was reserved for Tuimoloau.

Reporters repeatedly asked him to talk about his breakout game, but Tuimoloau demurred mostly to answers about the team and teammates. After claiming that his favorite play in the game was his tipped pass that resulted in Harrison's interception, he said, "Seeing Zach get that pick made me very happy. I just try to play to the best of my ability every play."

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

It was an expected response from a guy who said this upon his first meeting last year with Ohio State beat writers: "My goal is just to compete and be the best version of myself that I could be. Keep your head down, stay humble and stay close to God."

Talent and humility. Commodities often in short supply these days. Maybe it's long past time we all learned how to correctly pronounce Tuimoloau. It's "Too-ee-mo-lo-ow," and I'm pretty sure opposing offensive coordinators are beginning to hear it in their sleep.

Uptempo ... Finally

Since the midseason break in the schedule, Ohio State has increasingly become a one-dimensional offense. Neither Henderson nor Williams is 100-percent healthy, but no one is at this time of the season. There really isn't much of an excuse for averaging a measly 2.2 yards on 30 rushing attempts against Iowa, and then just 1.9 on 19 carries through three quarters against Penn State. The Hawkeyes and Nittany Lions are admittedly pretty good on defense, but come on.

Some of it might have had to do with the approach the Buckeyes were taking offensively. There seemed to be a lot of starting, stopping, adjusting and starting again within the 40-second play clock – too much window dressing in my opinion that prevented the attack from gaining any sort of continuity.

Then, faced with a 21-16 deficit with 9:26 remaining, it was as if Ryan Day suddenly remembered how well his offense performs when it plays with tempo. Rather than have players look over the defense, look to the sideline, look back at the defense and then run the play, the Buckeyes shifted into high gear and quickly traversed 75 yards, taking only three plays to do it.

Stroud connected with Harrison for 21 yards down the right sideline and then quickly found Emeka Egbuka breaking away to his left for another 13 yards. As soon as the offense got back to the line, Henderson was on his way to the end zone. The 41-yard touchdown run – Ohio State had only 37 rushing yards in the entire game to that point – jump-started an attack that scored three touchdowns in a matter of 5:59 of game clock.

The OSU running game might be problematic over the remainder of the season. Henderson finished with 78 yards and two touchdowns on 16 carries, but it appears he is not fully healthy. Meanwhile, Williams continues to nurse a sore knee and apparently added a hand or finger injury that limited him to just two carries for 9 yards. One of those carries was a 5-yard touchdown, though.

Perhaps Stroud will finally become a greater threat to run. His official totals against Penn State were six carries for 5 yards, but take

out his two sacks, and the QB scrambled four times for 18 yards, including an 11-yard run up the middle late in the first half.

Eighteen yards on four carries isn't a whole lot to get excited about, but for a quarterback heretofore reluctant to tuck the ball and run under any conditions, it's at least a start.

Glaring Errors

During the same game in which Tuimoloau had such an outstanding performance, there were too many defensive stinkers, many of which had to do with poor tackling.

Safety Tanner McCalister and cornerback JK Johnson pinballed off Penn State receiver Parker Washington early in the second quarter, allowing Washington to escape with a 58-yard touchdown play that put the Nittany Lions on the scoreboard for the first time. Washington finished the game with 11 catches for 179 yards, with 80 of those yards coming after the catch. Penn State finished the game with 371 yards through the air, and nearly half of that (184 to be exact) came after the catch was made.

As well as Eichenberg has played so far this season, even he was subject to missing tackles. He let Clifford escape early in the fourth quarter on a fourth-and-1 that the Penn State quarterback turned into a 4-yard pass play for a first down. And four plays later, on fourth-and-goal at the 1-yard line, Eichenberg had a clear shot in the backfield on freshman running back Kaytron Allen but whiffed again as Allen shed the OSU linebacker and scooted into the end zone to give his team a 21-16 lead at that point.

I couldn't help watching the OSU defense surrender nearly 500 total yards to the Nittany Lions – including an average of 7.0 yards on first down – while giving up seven plays of 20 yards or more and wondering how that kind of effort is going to get it done against Michigan.

Up-And-Down Day

Speaking of a mixture of marquee plays and cringe-inducing ones, that pretty well sums up the afternoon for OSU tight end Cade Stover. His six catches not only represented a new career best, but the output was the best for an Ohio State tight end since Rory Nicol had six receptions during a 37-17 win at Penn State in 2007.

Stover converted his catches into 78 yards and a touchdown, the score coming during the Buckeyes' fourth-quarter barrage. It was a 24-yard touchdown on which the 6-4, 255-pounder broke three tackles on his way to the end zone.

It's likely, however, that the fourth-year tight end still wasn't too comfortable in his seat while the coaching staff graded game film.

Stover whiffed badly trying to block Penn State safety Zakee Wheatley on a first-quarter receiver screen, a missed block that nearly got Egbuka decapitated and led to a missed 53-yard field-goal try by kicker Noah Ruggles. Stover left Egbuka out to dry on another third-down screen, this one midway through the second quarter when Nittany Lions cornerback Kalen King blew up the play and forced an Ohio State punt.

Then, there were a pair of false starts by Stover on successive two-point tries in the fourth quarter, penalties that changed Day's strategy from going for two to trotting Ruggles onto the field for PAT kicks.

Stover can be a tremendous weapon for the Buckeyes as they navigate the final month of the regular season. But like his teammates, he still has several things he needs to address before becoming a finished product.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Ohio State Releases 2023 Football Schedule

Although Ohio State still has several games remaining this season, the Buckeyes found out the outlook for their next campaign on Oct. 26 when next season's schedule was revealed.

The slate begins with a conference road contest at Indiana on Sept. 2, followed by nonconference home games against Youngstown State on Sept. 9 and Western Kentucky on Sept. 16. The Buckeyes will then hit the road to take on Notre Dame on Sept. 23, completing the home-and-home series after playing at Ohio Stadium earlier this season.

Ohio State then has an early off week in just the fifth week of the season. The Buckeyes return on Oct. 7 with a home

game against Maryland to kick off the remaining Big Ten slate and will then travel to West Lafayette, Ind., on Oct. 14 to try to exact a measure of revenge on the Boilermakers after falling to Purdue in 2018.

The Buckeyes conclude the month of October with a pair of marquee matchups, hosting Penn State on Oct. 21 before heading to Madison, Wis., to face the Badgers on Oct. 28.

Ohio State starts November with another road game, taking on Rutgers in Piscataway, N.J., on Nov. 4. The Buckeyes then get a brief two-game homestand, hosting Michigan State on Nov. 11 and Minnesota on Nov. 18.

Ohio State ends the regular season on the road, squaring off against rival Michigan at the Big House on Nov. 25. The Big Ten Championship Game will be played at Lucas Oil Stadium on Dec. 2.

OSU-Northwestern Set For Noon Kickoff

After Ohio State's first half of the season was defined by night and late afternoon kickoffs, the Buckeyes will play in their third consecutive noon kickoff – 11 a.m. local time – when they travel to Evanston, Ill., to take on Northwestern on Nov. 5. The game will be televised on ABC.

While the Buckeyes played in just one noon game during their first six contests,

they're already set to triple that number during the back half of the season. Ohio State took care of business at home against Iowa and beat Penn State on the road in the last two weeks in the same time slot.

Ohio State controls the all-time series against Northwestern, holding a 64-14-1 record against the Wildcats while claiming the last nine wins, including a pair of Big Ten Championship Game victories in 2018 and 2020.

OSU Shares No. 2 Spot With Tennessee In AP Poll

After taking down then-No. 13 Penn State 44-31 at Beaver Stadium on Oct. 29, Ohio State remained at No. 2 in the most recent Associated Press rankings. However, the Buckeyes share the second spot with Tennessee, which is coming off a 44-6 win over then-No. 19 Kentucky.

Georgia remained at No. 1, collecting 1,528 points while garnering 30 first-place votes. The Buckeyes and Volunteers each followed, amassing 1,500 points with Tennessee carrying a slight edge in first-place votes with 18 compared to OSU's 15. Michigan and Clemson rounded out the top five, while No. 6 Alabama, No. 7 TCU, No. 8 Oregon, No. 9 USC and No. 10 UCLA completed the top 10.

No. 14 Illinois and No. 16 Penn State also represented the Big Ten. The Fighting Illini rose three spots after taking down Nebraska, 26-9, while the Nittany Lions fell three positions after the loss to Ohio State at home.

The highest riser was Kansas State, which rose nine spots to No. 13 after blowing out then-No. 9 Oklahoma State, 48-0, causing the Cowboys to drop nine spots to No. 18. Despite the large fall by Oklahoma State, it was outdone by Wake Forest, which fell 10 slots to No. 20 after a 48-21 loss to Louisville.

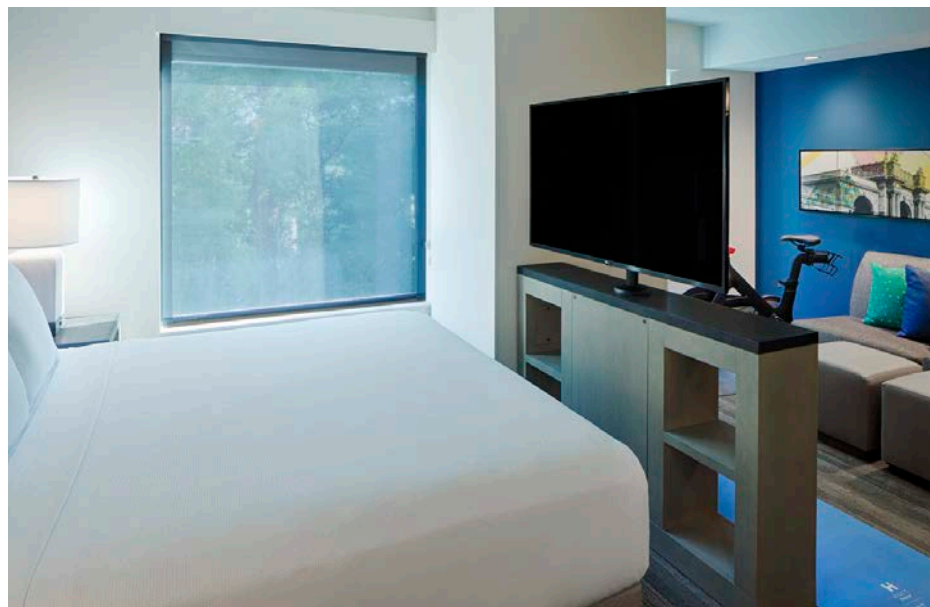
The first College Football Playoff rankings were set to be released on Nov. 1 and will be updated every Tuesday on ESPN at 7 p.m. with coverage on BuckeyeSports.com.

Smith-Njigba, CB Brown Inactive Against Penn State

Ohio State was once again without wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba against Penn State while another pair of starters were unavailable. Cornerback Cameron Brown was out for the second consecutive week, and long snapper Bradley Robinson was listed as unavailable when the Buckeyes kicked off against the Nittany Lions at noon on Oct. 29. Mason Arnold started in his place against Penn State after filling in against the Hawkeyes, with no notable gaffes in the snapping game.

Smith-Njigba played briefly against Iowa before exiting the game after reaching a "pitch count," which coincided with him seemingly tweaking his leg. Ohio State was also without wide receivers Caleb Brown and Corban Cleveland.

On defense, Brown was out for the fourth time this season after also missing time earlier against Wisconsin, Rutgers and Iowa, though the Buckeyes saw the



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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	5-3, 41-24 win over Syracuse
Sept. 10	ARKANSAS STATE	W, 45-12	BTN	2-7, 31-3 loss to South Alabama
Sept. 17	TOLEDO	W, 77-21	FOX	6-3, 27-24 win over Eastern Michigan
Sept. 24	WISCONSIN	W, 52-21	ABC	4-4, idle
Oct. 1	RUTGERS	W, 49-10	BTN	4-4, 31-0 loss to Minnesota
Oct. 8	at Michigan State	W, 49-20	ABC	3-5, 29-7 loss to Michigan
Oct. 22	IOWA	W, 54-10	FOX	4-4, 33-13 win over Northwestern
Oct. 29	at Penn State	W, 44-31	FOX	6-2, 44-31 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 5	at Northwestern	12 p.m.	ABC	1-7, 33-13 loss to Iowa
Nov. 12	INDIANA	TBA	TBA	3-5, idle
Nov. 19	at Maryland	TBA	TBA	6-2, idle
Nov. 26	MICHIGAN	12 p.m.	FOX	8-0, 29-7 win over Michigan State

return of cornerback Jordan Hancock last week to help bolster depth at cornerback.

The Buckeyes were also without safety Kourt Williams, who has been “banged up,” according to defensive coordinator Jim Knowles. Head coach Ryan Day also noted that Williams is dealing with a long-term injury, keeping the OSU captain off of the field.

RB Williams “All Good” After Exiting With Injury

Ohio State’s running game took a hit against Penn State when Miyan Williams sustained a hand/wrist injury during the contest’s second quarter and did not return.

The injury came on Williams’ second carry after the afternoon. The Cincinnati native angled toward the sideline and pushed for extra yards before landing awkwardly against the chain operator. Williams appeared to be unable to move his arm following the play, opting to high-five his teammates with his opposite hand, though he was also seen icing his knee. Williams did return to the sideline but had several fingers taped together.

Williams carried the ball twice against the Nittany Lions, producing 9 yards and the Buckeyes’ first touchdown of the game – a 4-yard plow into the end zone to lift the OSU lead to 10-0. TreVeyon Henderson took bell cow responsibilities following Williams’ injury, churning out 78 yards on 16 carries while adding a pair of fourth-quarter touchdowns, including a 41-yard go-ahead score with 8:51 remaining in the game.

While Day could not provide an update on Williams’ status after the game, the Buckeye running back took to Twitter to note that he was “all good” following the win.

The Buckeyes had already received the news that running back TC Caffey would be out for the season prior to the Penn State game.

Ohio State No Longer Perfect In Red Zone

Ohio State entered its bout with Penn State as the only perfect team in the red zone in the country. The Buckeyes had scored on all 36 of their red-zone possessions during their first seven games, scoring 31 touchdowns and five field goals.

The Buckeyes remained perfect in that department early in the contest, as Williams’ aforementioned touchdown came as the result of a successful red-zone trip. After a pair of punts, Ohio State again scored on a red-zone trip, this time settling for a 37-yard field goal from Noah

Ruggles.

But Ohio State would finally be denied in its final red-zone trip of the first half. As the Buckeyes operated within their two-minute offense, quarterback C.J. Stroud marched the offense from their own 31-yard line to the Penn State 8-yard line in just 1:01. As Ohio State faced second-and-goal with six seconds to go in the half, Day opted to look for a touchdown rather than attempt a go-ahead field goal. That decision held disastrous consequences as Stroud was sacked and time ran out on the half, leaving Ohio State empty-handed during the possession.

The Buckeyes did respond by capping off the afternoon with two touchdowns that resulted from red-zone trips during the second half.

After its lone failed red-zone trip, Ohio State dropped to second in the country in red-zone efficiency behind Georgia, which boasts a 97.9 percent success rate (46 of 47) compared to the Buckeyes’ 97.6 percent (40 of 41).

Tuimoloau Honored For PSU Performance

As Penn State gave the Buckeyes all they could handle during the first three quarters and change, defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau remained a steady force for Ohio State by playing a key role in all four of the Nittany Lions’ turnovers while also adding a pair of sacks, six tackles (three for loss) and a pair of interceptions, including one that was returned for a touchdown.

Tuimoloau’s dominant performance against Penn State earned him national recognition when he was named the Walter Camp National FBS Defensive Player of the Week.

Tuimoloau is the 14th Buckeye to pick up a Walter Camp weekly honor and is the first to do so since Stroud on Nov. 20, 2021, who was honored for his role in Ohio State’s 56-7 win over Michigan State.

OSU Gets First Individual XC Big Ten Champion

For the first time in Ohio State women’s cross country history, the Buckeyes registered an individual Big Ten champion when Addie Engel outpaced the field with a winning-time of 20 minutes flat.

Engel passed the third-mile mark in third place, trailing Michigan State’s Katie Osika and Michigan’s Ericka VanderLende before dashing to the win during the final two kilometers. Engel beat out Osika by 4.7 seconds to claim the first-place finish, while VanderLende followed behind in third with a time of 20:13.6.

Broadnax Dishes On Stover, Ohio State Offense

Ohio State tight end Cade Stover sprang running back TreVeyon Henderson for what proved a game-winning touchdown against Penn State on Oct. 29, sealing off one Nittany Lion before advancing to the second level to wall off another. The play was reminiscent of another two-for-one block in Buckeye lore.

Late in the fourth quarter of Ohio State’s 1981 matchup against Michigan, fullback Vaughn Broadnax stayed in to pass protect for quarterback Art Schlichter on third-and-goal at the Wolverine 6-yard line. As Schlichter rolled left, Broadnax held his block on a Wolverine edge defender for what seemed like ages, and then as Schlichter scrambled around Broadnax’s back side, the Xenia, Ohio, native moved to make a second block as his signal caller bolted into the end zone for his own eventual game-winning score.

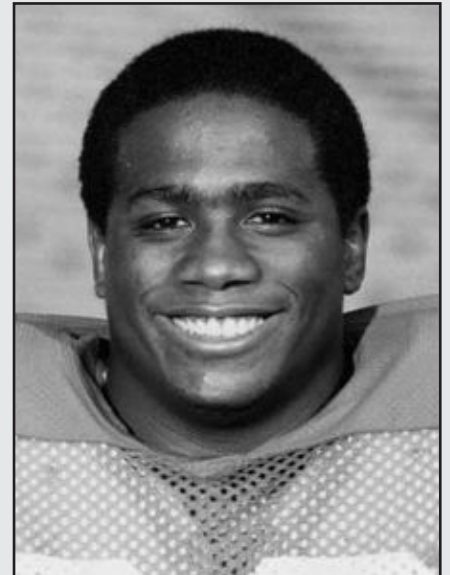
The play didn’t immediately enter Broadnax’s mind when he watched Stover’s block on television, he said, but he can see where one would draw the comparison. He said two-for-one blocks like his in 1981 and Stover’s against Penn State are what offenses often need to spring runs like Schlichter’s or Henderson’s.

“If you’re blocking a running play, you’re blocking for two. You’re looking to take out two people, whoever you are,” Broadnax said. “That’s the only way you’re going to even up the odds when you’re blocking, because you have a running back or a quarterback that’s not blocking.”

Stover’s physicality to make such blocks in the run game and to finish off runs after receptions stands out to Broadnax on the whole. He admired Stover’s 24-yard touchdown reception against Penn State.

“Cade has found his way,” Broadnax said. “Cade has found a position where he is excelling, and he’s that guy that will sacrifice his body for the game. He’s catching the ball great. The block was one thing, but I was really impressed with that TD run because he literally shed three tacklers to get to the end zone.”

Broadnax would know what makes a great Buckeye tight end. He played alongside end-man John Frank (1980-83), who holds the career marks for receptions (121) and yards (1,481) by a tight end at Ohio State. Those two re-



Vaughn Broadnax

cords have stood for 39 years.

“John gave 100 percent effort every play,” Broadnax said. “Even in practice. One guy wasn’t going to tackle him. He never wanted to go down if people were trying to tackle him, and he just had the ferocity. John was probably 6-1, 6-2, 215, 220 (pounds) at the most. But he was a ferocious blocker.”

As a fullback himself, Broadnax has also been happy to see Ohio State make use of the position once again in certain situations this season, deploying graduate tight end Mitch Rossi in the lead-back spot for goal-line and short-yardage situations.

Rossi attended high school in Franklin, Tenn., a 25-minute drive from where Broadnax lives in Nashville. He’s heard a lot of talk about the former rugby star as a result.

“I have friends down here in Nashville who talk a lot about Mitch,” Broadnax said. “They’ve known him since he was a kid because they played in the same small youth football leagues, stuff like that. So I was always aware of Mitch.”

“I’m an old dinosaur fullback, and I love to see fullbacks in the game. My thought is, if you’re looking for a short-yardage play, why snap the ball 6, 7 yards back to a quarterback in a shotgun? It gives time for penetration from the defensive line and linebackers when you can just hand it off to a fullback coming up there, initially to block, and you’re just handing it off to a guy who’s already driving toward the hole.”

— Andy Anders

“I can’t say enough good things about Addie,” said OSU cross country head coach Sara Mason Vergote. “To be the Big Ten champion in cross country is a huge accomplishment, and I’m so happy for her.”

Engel’s 20:00.0 finish was just 0:00.4 off of her career best, which she set at the NCAA Regional event last season.

Ohio State also had top-10 finishes

from Daniella Santos (20:15.8), who finished in fourth, and sixth-place Andrea Kuhn (20:18.7). Engel, Santos and Kuhn each earned All-Big Ten first-team honors since they all placed in the top seven of the event, marking the first time Ohio State has produced a trio of all-conference first-team selections.

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

Engel led the Buckeyes to a fourth-place finish at the Big Ten Cross Country Championship, which ties the best finish in program history. OSU last reached that mark in 2014. Michigan State was crowned the conference champion, boasting three top-15 finishers.

Former WBB Star Smith To Speak At OSU Graduation

Former Ohio State women's basketball star Katie Smith is set to speak at Ohio State's autumn commencement ceremony on Dec. 18 at 2 p.m. at Value City Arena.

Smith played for the Buckeyes from 1993-96, leading Ohio State to a Big Ten title and Final Four appearance as a freshman in 1993 while garnering Big Ten Freshman of the Year honors. She picked up a pair of Big Ten Player of the Year honors while breaking the conference record for career points with 2,578 during her four-year career.

Smith's illustrious career was memorialized by her No. 30 being retired by the Ohio State women's basketball program. She earned both her bachelor's degree in 2008 and her master's in 2014 at Ohio

Mail Delivery Still A Problem For BSB Subscribers

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BSB subscribers can upgrade their existing subscriptions to first-class mail in an envelope through football season for just \$15 and through recruiting season for \$25. Just give us a call at (614) 486-2202 for credit card orders or send your check or money order to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Mention the "football" or "recruiting" upgrade. Don't forget that the Thanksgiving holiday falls right before the Michigan game, which is sure to wreak havoc on the mail delivery.

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 electronic stories throughout the week, including coverage of Ryan Day's weekly press conference, as well as news from any other press availabilities leading up to the next game. Football recruiting is a 365-day-a-year process these days, and the BSB staff has stepped up its coverage

of Ohio State's quest for prep talent. We have also upped our basketball recruiting coverage, so be sure to check in regularly at BuckeyeSports.com.

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

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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State.

Following her Ohio State career, Smith went on to play 15 seasons in the WNBA, playing on two WNBA championship teams with the Detroit Shock and garnering seven all-star nods. She also became a three-time Olympic gold medalist, winning with Team USA in 2000, 2004 and 2008.

Smith retired from playing in 2013 before immediately entering the coaching side of things, joining the New York Liberty staff in 2014 and remaining as an assistant until 2017 before being elevated to the head coaching position from 2018-19. She now serves as an assistant coach for the Minnesota Lynx.

"Katie Smith knows what it takes to win, and she is dedicated to teaching others how to do it – both on and off the court," university president Kristina M. Johnson said. "Smith's message of how perseverance, dedication, and hard work breed success in all aspects of life – be they in the gym, the boardroom, or any other arena – is one I believe will be invaluable for our graduates, their friends and family, and our entire campus community. We couldn't be more excited that she will be speaking at autumn commencement. I am looking forward to hearing from her and to welcoming her back to campus."

Day Lauds History Of OSU-PSU Rivalry

Since Penn State joined the Big Ten in 1993, the rivalry has grown between Ohio State and the Nittany Lions.

The competitiveness has only festered since the Buckeyes and Nittany Lions have been forced to share a division, with both occupying the Big Ten's Leaders Division from 2011-13 and the East Division from 2014 to the present day. While Ohio State fans tend to dismiss Penn State as just another game, rather than a rivalry matchup, Day recognized the importance of their yearly meeting in terms of divisional title

and College Football Playoff implications prior to their most recent game.

"When you look at the schedule year-in and year-out, you want to know where Penn State is on the schedule if you want to get to Indy," Day said. "When you look at the tradition and the games that have been played between Ohio State and Penn State, not only in the last decade but further back than that, they're some of the biggest games that we've had. When you think about some of the games, even in 2018, 2017 and 2016 on the road, there's been some huge games here."

"That's one of the reasons why you come to Ohio State, to play in games like this," he continued. "I think they recognize that. We talk about that in recruiting. And I think they have a feel for that. I've heard some guys talk about it this week."

The Buckeyes have largely dominated the Nittany Lions in recent seasons, winning 10 of the last 11 meetings, and are rolling along on a six-game winning streak against Penn State. However, the Nittany Lions have not made life easy for Ohio State.

In 2016, Penn State dashed Ohio State's playoff chances with a go-ahead touchdown on a blocked field goal return with 4:27 to play in regulation. Penn State would go on to win that game 24-21, but it marked the last time head coach James Franklin and Co. got the better of the Buckeyes.

However, it's hard to say it's been all Ohio State since then. The Buckeyes needed a furious fourth-quarter comeback to down the Nittany Lions in 2017, rallying from down 11 with less than five minutes to play. It took another comeback for the Buckeyes to triumph in 2018. OSU needed a pair of touchdown passes from Dwayne Haskins to erase a 12-point deficit with less than seven minutes in regulation.

Ohio State turned in a pair of double-digit wins in 2019 and 2020, and

Brutus Level VIPs To Be Recognized In The Michigan Issue

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VIP donors help Buckeye Sports Bulletin stay alive and vibrant.

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

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

VIP subscribers enjoy a 20 percent discount at Conrads College Gifts. VIP subscribers also enjoy a 5 percent discount on any Ohio State football trip booked through Reynolds Travel. And VIP subscribers receive a certificate good for \$10 off at Roosters restaurants, the "Fun, Casual Joint," as well as a card good for \$10 off your next food purchase at any Cameron Mitchell Restaurant.

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

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The following are our Elite Wachsman, Elite-Plus, Elite and Scarlet VIP subscribers. **Elite Wachsman Donor (in honor of late BSB assistant publisher Karen Wachsman):** Roosters Restaurants Foundation.

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while the Nittany Lions gave the Buckeyes all they could handle last year, Ruggles put the game on ice with four field goals en route to a 33-24 win. This most recent contest is likely to go down as a classic as well given the Buckeyes' furious fourth quarter and the general chaos of the game.

Day emphasized that Penn State always provides challenges regardless of its record entering the game.

"No matter when you go into Penn State, it's going to be a challenge," Day said. "They do a great job with the atmosphere. There's still a handful of guys that went in 2018, but not all of them. When we went in 2020, it was different, there was COVID. But we know, whether it's a night game, an afternoon game or a noon game, it's going to be a challenge. Their crowd is going to be in it, and they'll play a factor."

Three-Linebacker Look New Wrinkle For Knowles

Ineptitude isn't the only thing that defines Iowa's offense, ranked among the worst teams in the nation in yards per game (248.6). As long as Kirk Ferentz has coached the Hawkeyes, they've had schemes in their attack designed to get the ball downhill on running plays in old-school fashion. These looks, often involving multiple tight ends, call for a bigger box from opposing defenses.

That's why Ohio State turned to its three-linebacker look against the Hawkeyes, significantly using the package for the first time this season.

"We've been planning for this," Knowles said after the game. "We have to morph the defense when it gets to big personnel

and multiple tight ends and fullbacks."

In the majority of the packages, it was linebacker Cody Simon seeing the field for Ohio State. Simon picked up six tackles in his rotational usage against the Hawkeyes, third most on the team. He now has the fifth-most tackles for the team on the season, with 27 total.

"Cody is the guy," Knowles said. "He's earned that right by how he's practiced. It was good to see him get a significant role because I think he can add a lot to the defense when we face those kinds of teams."

Another option behind Simon moving forward is Palaie Gaoteote IV, who recovered a fumble late in the contest. With Chip Trayanum moving from linebacker to running back, Gaoteote is a player who could be called upon, especially if an injury should happen to Simon or starting linebackers Eichenberg or Chambers.

"Palaie has great athleticism," Knowles said. "He has linebacker instinct, I guess, too. Palaie, we just want him to stay healthy right now. I just really want him to have a good week of practice, because I've always felt like he could emerge if he strung together some games and some weeks of practice of being healthy. He's just had a tough time of it."

The majority of three-linebacker sets Ohio State unveiled saw Simon come down to the line of scrimmage, playing on the end alongside four defensive linemen with hands in the dirt. Knowles has no aversion to playing a 4-3 with stacked linebackers, though. Much of it depends on the formation presented by the opposition.

"It just depends on what you're facing and what you're trying to do," Knowles

said. "You want to try not to be predictable. Sometimes you have to be based on what you're getting and the opponent, but you'd like to be able to have both, and there's different reasons for it. But it really just depends on what you're getting from the offense."

While Northwestern, Indiana and Maryland don't run as many big personnel packages as Iowa, a 4-3 could come in handy for the biggest game remaining on Ohio State's schedule against Michigan.

Ruggles Named B1G Special Teams Player Of The Week

Ohio State kicker Noah Ruggles entered the Oct. 22 contest against Iowa with only three field goals attempted and two makes, but he tripled his field goal makes against the Hawkeyes, drilling all four attempts and earning Big Ten Special Teams Player of the Week honors.

The Buckeyes' offense relied heavily on

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Ruggles' services during the early stages of the contest as several of their drives stalled within Iowa territory, opening the door for Ruggles to hit kicks from 46, 41, 35, and 26 yards out during the first half. Ruggles also hit all six of his extra-point attempts.

On the season, Ruggles is 9 for 11 on field goals, with his misses coming on a 39-yard attempt against Notre Dame and a 53-yard shot against Penn State. Ruggles has hit on all 52 of his extra-point attempts this season and is a perfect 126 for 126 on extra-point attempts during his Ohio State career. Ruggles' four field goals against Iowa match a career best set against Penn State and Nebraska last season.

He is the sixth Buckeye to earn Big Ten Weekly honors this, joining wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. (Sept. 12 vs. Arkansas State), Stroud (Sept. 19 vs. Toledo; Oct. 10 vs. Michigan State), linebacker Tommy Eichenberg (Sept. 25 vs. Wisconsin) and Williams (Oct. 3 vs. Rutgers).

Ransom Named Semifinalist For Thorpe Award

Ohio State safety Lathan Ransom was named a semifinalist on Oct. 24 for the Jim Thorpe Award, given annually to the top defensive back in college football.

Ransom's stock has risen quickly throughout the season, becoming a consistent starter for the Buckeyes after swapping in for safety Josh Proctor against Notre Dame. Since then, he has started four games, including each of the last three against Michigan State, Iowa and Penn State.

So far this season, Ransom is third on the team with 36 tackles, including seven against the Fighting Irish, and he also has a tackle for loss, a pass breakup and an interception, snared against the Spartans.

Ohio State safety Ronnie Hickman and cornerback Denzel Burke were both on the preseason watch list while Ransom was a midseason addition, but neither Burke nor Hickman joined Ransom on the updated 12-man list.

Three finalists will be announced at a later date, and the winner will be revealed during the Home Depot College Football Awards on Dec. 8 on ESPN.

Eichenberg Named Lott IMPACT Player of the Week

Following another stand-out performance against Iowa on Oct. 22, Eichenberg was named the Lott IMPACT Trophy Player of the Week for the eighth week of the college football season.

Eichenberg recorded seven tackles and a pass breakup against the Hawkeyes, adding his first career defensive touch-down on a second-quarter pick-six of Iowa quarterback Spencer Petras. Eichenberg ran the interception back 15 yards to pay dirt.

The Ohio native is the Buckeyes' leader in tackles this season by a wide margin, with 72 takedowns outpacing linebacker Steele Chambers' second-best total of 44. Eichenberg has added seven tackles for loss and 2½ sacks, good for second and tied for third on the squad, respectively.

The Lott IMPACT Trophy is awarded annually to college football's defensive player who best exemplifies the values of the IMPACT acronym: integrity, maturity, performance, academics, community and tenacity.

NCAA Proposes New Coaching Limits

The NCAA Division I Council introduced a proposal based around coaching limitations on Oct. 27, with the objective of having programs share a proportionate coaching staff size.

The proposal would remove the designation of volunteer coaches while increasing countable coach limitations. It also would redefine the status of graduate assistant coaches at the Football Bowl Sub-division level.

The proposal would also increase the number of countable coaches to five in baseball, softball and ice hockey. The council is also considering a change in basketball by allowing programs to hire a pair of individuals to provide team-related instruction, but they would not be able to engage in off-campus recruiting.

The NCAA Division I Council will vote on the new coaching proposals in January 2023. If the proposals are approved, the changes will likely not be placed into effect until July 2023.

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 free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1982

Paul Pooley was a marked man.

Opposing hockey teams put No. 22 first on their hit list. They knew the spiritual and goal-scoring leader of Ohio State was the man to get out of the lineup.

So far, it hadn't worked. Despite being hit and checked, grabbed and pulled down, and scrutinized more closely than an unemployed worker looks through the want-ads, he continued to pile up points.

Through the Bucks' first four games, the junior center from Exeter, Ontario, had six goals and an equal number of assists.

"It makes me feel good in a sense that they figure they have to watch me," Pooley said. "It makes me work harder. I'm more aware when someone is watching my wingers, and I give them chances."

35 Years Ago — 1987

Carlos Snow's performance kept Ohio State (5-1-1, 3-1) in the hunt for a Rose Bowl berth. A 5-9, 194-pounder from Cincinnati, Snow looked like an Archie Griffin highlight film from the early '70s, scoring a Big Ten season-high four touchdowns as the Buckeyes romped past Minnesota 42-9, in rainy, cold Ohio Stadium on Oct. 24.

"Today I was excited," Snow said. "It was like I knew what I had to do. I was ready to go. I felt real good out there."

The OSU offense rolled up 422 yards, including 252 yards rushing. Snow accounted for 85 yards on 15 carries, including three TDs. He scored six more points on a 45-yard pass from quarterback Tom Tupa early in the fourth quarter.

Not bad for a guy celebrating his 19th birthday.

30 Years Ago — 1992

While the Ohio State passing game looked good at times this season, it hadn't exactly looked like a million bucks.

However, in a 27-17 win over Michigan State on Oct. 24 in East Lansing, spreading the wealth throughout the receiving corps helped the Buckeyes hit the jackpot.

Ohio State had 201 passing yards, and quarterback Kirk Herbstreit was 14 of 22 passing with one touchdown and no interceptions.

"We have a lot of great receivers," Herbstreit said. "Our running backs and tight ends can do it, too."

25 Years Ago — 1997

Scoonie Penn did not play competitive basketball this winter for the first time in a long time.

The 5-11 Penn was sitting out the 1997-98 season after leading Boston College to the Big East tournament championship and an NCAA Tournament berth the previous year. The 20-year-old junior followed his coach, Jim O'Brien, when he left BC for Ohio State in the spring.

That didn't make sitting out any easier, though.

"It's going to be really tough," Penn said prior to joining the

Buckeyes. "But I did enough thinking about it before I decided to transfer, so I'm sure everything will be OK."

20 Years Ago — 2002

If the remaining five games in Ohio State's quest for a Big Ten championship – and maybe something more – were to be like the team's 19-14 win at Wisconsin, it was clear they were not for the faint of heart.

For the second time in the season, the Buckeyes needed a fourth-quarter touchdown to engineer a come-from-behind victory. The physical win came on Oct. 19 in Camp Randall Stadium, one of the Big Ten's toughest playing venues.

"That was Big Ten football," said OSU strong safety Mike Doss, who tallied 14 tackles and a fumble recovery in the win. "It was an old-fashioned street fight out there."

15 Years Ago — 2007

The first presentation of the Phyllis Bailey Career Achievement Award went to the honor's namesake in a ceremony between the third and fourth quarters of Ohio State's win over Michigan State on Oct. 20.

The award, which is sponsored by the Women's Varsity "O" Alumnae Society, was presented by past group president Sue B. Gahn and associate athletics director Michéle Willis.

If anyone was an appropriate namesake for an OSU athletics career achievement award, it was Bailey, whose own career made thousands more possible, but she remained modest in accepting the award.

"I'm very honored," she said. "I'm humbled to think they would do something like this."

10 Years Ago — 2012

Ohio State emerged victorious at home over Purdue 29-22 on Oct. 20 in a football game as unpredictable as the autumn weather in the Midwest.

Despite more than three quarters of nearly inept offense, more breakdowns on defense and another special teams gaffe, the seventh-ranked Buckeyes improved to 8-0 on the season by rallying in the final minute before dominating in overtime.

The Buckeyes had fallen into a 13-7 hole heading into halftime, as the Boilermakers scored a pair of touchdowns of 80-plus yards – including a 100-yard kick return from Akeem Hunt during the first quarter. An 8-yard touchdown run from quarterback Braxton Miller kept OSU in striking distance, but that would be the pinnacle of his impact as he was carted off the field during the third quarter. The Buckeyes and Boilermakers went back and forth during the third frame, but Purdue entered the fourth quarter with a 20-14 lead.

With Miller sidelined and the Buckeyes trailing 22-14, backup quarterback Kenny Guiton marched the Ohio State offense down the field in 44 seconds – while tossing a touchdown to wideout Chris Fields with two seconds remaining. The Buckeyes completed the game-tying two-point conversion as Guiton hit tight end

Jeff Heuerman to send the game into overtime. There, OSU vaulted itself into the lead thanks to a 1-yard plow into the end zone by running back Carlos Hyde. Ohio State's defense held strong, forcing Purdue's offense off the field in four plays and securing the win.

Overall, it seemed everything about the Buckeyes was imperfect except their record, but no one dressed in scarlet and gray was about to complain after the Boilermakers' last pass fell incomplete on fourth down in the extra session.

When it was over, one of the revelers among those remaining of the 105,290 people who filled Ohio Stadium was Urban Meyer. He fist-pumped his left hand in the air in exultation then followed with a wild right. Then he threw both arms in the air as the crowd went crazy in response.

Five Years Ago — 2017

Ohio State fans were certainly on a roller-coaster ride on Oct. 28 when the Buckeyes came back from deficits of 21-3 in the first half, 35-20 in the fourth quarter and 38-27 with just 5:42 to play before knocking off then-No. 2 Penn State, 39-38, at Ohio Stadium.

When Urban Meyer addressed the media some 40 minutes after thousands of fans had stormed onto the Ohio Stadium field, he was still in awe of what had transpired.

"Wow. What the heck just happened?" he asked.

Ohio State rallied behind the wizardry of fifth-year senior quarterback J.T. Barrett – who was 33 of 39 and threw for 328 yards and four touchdowns while adding 95 yards on the ground – to stun the Nittany Lions before a delirious crowd of 109,302 who witnessed the late afternoon/early evening classic.

Barrett hit tight end Marcus Baugh for a 16-yard TD pass with 1:48 left to cap an improbable comeback that saw the Buckeyes (7-1, 5-0 Big Ten) score twice in the last 4:20.

One Year Ago — 2021

As much as No. 5 Ohio State relied on the arm of C.J. Stroud and the legs of TreVeyon Henderson to amass more than 50 points in four straight games, the Buckeyes needed the foot of Noah Ruggles to provide the difference in a 33-24 victory over No. 20 Penn State at Ohio Stadium on Oct. 30.

Although Stroud passed for 305 yards and a touchdown and Henderson rushed for 152 yards and a score, it was Ruggles, a graduate transfer from North Carolina, who made all four field-goal attempts, including a late 26-yarder that provided the final margin with 2:41 to play. It left the Nittany Lions (5-3, 2-3) in a two-score game when they got the ball back, and they dropped their third straight in an October to forget.

"When you look at a game like this, Penn State to me is one of the better defenses in the country and a really strong team year in and year out," OSU coach Ryan Day said. "I think this is a gritty win. To win how we did, not even playing our best ball or converting in the red zone, I think it says a lot about where we are and how well we've played over the last month. I think you can see this thing building."

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 44, Penn State 31

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on the importance of being tested into the fourth quarter: "It's huge, because nothing comes easy in this environment against Penn State, who does a tremendous job. There are times where things may become a little bit easy for us, and that's a different experience than this (game) right here. This is totally different. To respond the way we did and figure out what was going on is great, because really the last time that happened a little bit was in the Notre Dame game."

Penn State head coach James Franklin on what swung the game: "To me, it starts with the turnovers. You can't give that type of team a short field that many times and be successful. It's going to make it pretty challenging."

Day on what the win said about his team's toughness: "That's what means everything to us because there's a lot of things that come into play here. We're talking about the best quarterback in the country in C.J. Stroud, J.T. (Tuimoloau)'s coming-out party and Marvin (Harrison Jr.) and then the score and what we did in the first half. That's, to me, the difference between winning a championship, reaching our goals or not, and we responded tonight."

Day on how satisfying the win was: "Every game has its own story, and this is one we'll be telling for a while. The feeling of the emotion that was on the sideline during that fourth quarter when J.T. got that pick, when

Cade (Stover) broke those tackles for the touchdown, it reminded me of (Binjimen Victor) when he cut that one out here (in 2018). They believed. We knew it was going to take four quarters. We don't always have to play four quarters. We knew we were going to have to play four quarters today."

Stroud on Penn State's secondary: "I definitely think we've got to be better in the red zone. But Joey (Porter Jr.) is a hell of a player, along with (safety Ji'Ayir Brown and linebacker Curtis Jacobs), and players like that. It feels good to go against them and have a little bit of success. I definitely think that they'll continue to do great, great things over at Penn State."

Day on what he saw on Ohio State's sideline while down in the fourth quarter: "We had leadership. Cade was there, but C.J. led it. I don't know what C.J.'s numbers were in the fourth quarter. I mean, he was tremendous. To come in and play like that in this environment and go put the offense on his shoulders like this – it's everybody on offense – but boy, he was gutsy in this game. I'm proud of him."

Stover on his touchdown catch: "It's nice to get trusted with the ball in that situation, so you better make the most of it when you get it."

Stover on tight ends being a passing threat for Ohio State: "All the tight ends at

Ohio State, we've always tried to pride ourselves on being well-rounded tight ends. And it's nice to finally make plays in the passing game like that and be able to keep showcasing our blocking skills."

Tuimoloau on his breakout performance: "I told myself to let God handle it and just let it come to you. I think that's what happened today."

Stroud on his willingness to run the ball: "I'm willing to do anything to win. So I'm blessed to have the ability to be able to run and things like that. But at the same time, I tried to do what's best to win, and if that's staying in the pocket and giving my guy a chance, I'll do that."

Harrison on why slant routes thrown to him have been successful: "Just a lot of repetition, getting on the same page (with Stroud). There's a lot of communication that you guys probably don't see during the play that helped a lot today."

Ohio State defensive end Zach Harrison on how the defense hung in the game: "We just keep playing, keep playing and never pull up. Never stop. It's a long game. It's a game of momentum. Early on, we were playing well, and then we kind of stalled out a little bit. Coach Day said, 'Just keep playing, keep playing. Next play, next play, next play, next play.' And eventually, the offense opened up and we got the stops for them."

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Bubble Bursts For Ohio State Offense

Continued From Page 1

pass rush.

"I'm sure you guys see it a lot of times that he draws holding calls or (what should have been a) holding call. He's one of those guys that kind of makes things happen initially at the play but doesn't always get the credit. But he's making the ball redirect or the quarterback do something different right at the snap."

Tuimoloau's final stat line in this game read six tackles (three for loss) with a pair of sacks, his two interceptions and a forced fumble and recovery and a pass breakup. It's just the seventh time since 2000 that an Ohio State defender recovered a fumble and had an interception in a game.

Playing for his second defensive coordinator in two seasons, Tuimoloau credited his coach for being able to take another step this year.

"I've got to shout out Coach Knowles," Tuimoloau said. "He's allowed us to show that versatility, and he has trust in me to do those things. I've got to thank him."

Ohio State Overcomes Offensive Struggles In Win

It may seem strange to categorize a team that finished with 452 total yards of offense – including 354 passing yards courtesy of quarterback C.J. Stroud – as one with a struggling offense, but early in Ohio State's eventual win over Penn State, the Buckeyes looked nothing like the team that has be-

come known as one of the top offenses in college football.

The Buckeyes settled for a field goal on their opening drive after stalling in Penn State territory, a combination of questionable play calling and the impact of the 108,433 fans in attendance at Beaver Stadium. Ohio State saw three plays go for no gain on the drive, and the Buckeyes also had a delay of game penalty at Penn State's 23-yard line. In total, Ohio State was called three times for delay of game and once for a false start, and in general they looked to have difficulty at times getting a play in from the sideline.

"We definitely haven't had a lot of road games," Stroud said. "This is our second one of the year. We did a great job preparing early on with the noise, and we weren't going off of a silent (count). Matt (Jones) and Luke (Wypler) had great communication up there. Luke had a lot of protection, a lot of times I would come up there and try to veto it or confirm it. I think we had constant communication in practice. It's where it started with just being focused in so in the game it wouldn't rattle us."

The Ohio State defense forced turnovers on each of Penn State's next two possessions – interceptions courtesy of Harrison and Tuimoloau – setting the Buckeyes up in Nittany Lion territory. Harrison's pick led to a missed 53-yard field goal from kicker Noah Ruggles after the offense gained just 4 yards, but after forcing the second turnover, Ohio State took just three plays for Mi-



SONNY BROCKWAY

BRIGHT SPOT — Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. was one of the few constants for the Buckeye offense against Penn State, pulling in 10 catches for 185 yards, both career highs for the sophomore.

yan Williams to find the end zone following gains through the air of 18 and 19 yards for wideout Marvin Harrison Jr.

Both of Harrison's catches on that drive – he finished the game with a team-high 10 receptions for 185 yards, both career highs – were between the numbers, and that's where Ohio State's passing attack found the most success against Penn State. The Buckeyes had a nasty habit against the Nittany Lions of running far too many plays for loss, including several on screens and runs outside.

They were numerous throughout the first half and even into the third quarter, but once Ohio State started operating the offense almost exclusively between the numbers in the fourth quarter, the offense was able to take off.

"I thought we finally got into rhythm, finding those seam routes in there," Day said. "We hit a couple shots on the outside of the protection when it was clean. I felt like we would have done a better job of the perimeter run game, with the bubble throws that just – we got blown up on those a few times. That really hurts. We struggled on third down early on. We got that solved, which was huge, because it kept the drives going."

Day said the bubble screens and gener-

al plays outside the numbers served Ohio State's rushing attack – or would have, at least, if the plays had gone according to plan.

"What it does is it forces everyone to run to that side of the field if you complete it," he said. "It sounds crazy, but it's true. We want them to defend the entire field, and if they put a lot of guys in a box then we need to spread them out to the perimeter. We always say that we want to be able to take them inside, attack them outside and then throw the ball down the field."

"We probably could have done that more in the game, but I think if we had done a little bit better job on the perimeter in that area, we could have cracked the rock sooner."

Speaking of the run game, it was another up-and-down performance for Ohio State's rushing attack. Miyan Williams got all of two carries before exiting the game with an apparent hand injury, and Day provided no update after the game on his status.

That left TreVeyon Henderson with the bulk of the carries, and it wasn't a pretty sight early on. In the first half, Henderson had eight carries for just 19 yards, with five of those attempts going for either no gain or a loss. He was also tackled in the backfield for a 5-yard loss after hauling in one of Stroud's aforementioned screens.



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SONNY BROCKWAY

POWERING ON — Ohio State running back TreVeyon Henderson's day got off to a slow start against Penn State, but he eventually responded with a 41-yard touchdown to put the Buckeyes up in the fourth quarter against the Nittany Lions.

To his credit — as well as Day's for not abandoning the run despite the struggles — Henderson kept pushing. After just three carries for 4 yards in the third quarter, he took his first carry of the fourth quarter — which came with under nine minutes remaining in the game and Ohio State facing a 21-16 deficit — 41 yards for a score, his first of the game to put the Buckeyes up 23-21.

"That's huge," Day said of Henderson's touchdown. "We're going to have to figure out what's going on with a couple of things, but in that moment right there, we started to kind of wear them down a little bit up front and started to move the pile a little bit."

Henderson's day wasn't finished, though,

as he added another touchdown two drives later, this time on a 7-yard tote. While Henderson's first rushing score was one of the pivotal moments in Ohio State's win, it doesn't tell the full story of his day or that of the rushing attack for the Buckeyes.

Outside of his 41-yard score, Henderson had just 37 yards on 15 carries, an average of just 2.5 yards per attempt. Part of the issue was with Ohio State's blocking, which far too often got blown up by the Nittany Lion defensive line, though Henderson was culpable as well with several missed holes — at least when they were available — and a few instances of him slipping on Penn State's grass field.

Over the last two games against Iowa and Penn State, the Buckeyes have accounted for just 164 yards on 56 carries, a hair under 3 yards per attempt. Even with Henderson's highlights against the Nittany Lions, the run game is approaching a concern for Ohio State entering the back stretch, especially if Williams — who was seen with fingers taped up on his right hand — was to miss time.

Asked about the impact of the running game on his play calling, Day said they will assess the running game after enjoying the win.

"Some things, certainly, we want better, but at the end of the day, it's great to get a win," he said. "When we go into these games, the expectation is to win. I know that's not everybody's expectation. That's our expectation. Do we want to play perfect? Yeah. Do we want to win by four touchdowns? Yeah. But the expectation coming in here has to be to win, and that's what we did."

"When you look at the scoreboard at the end and it says 44-31, what's the story? This story has its own unique tale. We always come out and want to do things better, but to play the way we did in the fourth quarter was tremendous."

Confusion Costs OSU Points Before Halftime

Lost amid the chaos of the game and the eventual 44-31 win was a confusing sequence that took place as the teams were preparing to go to the locker room at the half.

With Penn State holding a 14-13 lead, the Buckeyes got the ball back at their own 31 with just over a minute remaining with a chance to put points on the board. There was extra significance because the Nittany Lions were to receive the ball in the second half, so the deficit could have grown by the next time Ohio State had the ball on offense.

The Buckeyes started the drive off with a 23-yard gain to tight end Cade Stover, and after the Penn State defense worked Ohio State down to fourth-and-7 following an 8-yard sack of Stroud, the quarterback responded with a 14-yard pass to Harrison to keep the drive alive, and he followed it up with another 21-yard gain to the PSU 8.

After spiking the ball to stop the clock with just six seconds remaining and time for one more play before settling for a field goal, Stroud did the one thing he couldn't do: take a sack. He was dropped for a 5-yard loss and fumbled the ball away, ending any chance of Ohio State coming away with points before the half. The play was meant to develop quickly and have Stroud throw the ball up in the corner of the end zone, but with unfavorable numbers for the Buckeyes, Penn State cornerback Johnny Dixon came off the edge and was on Stroud in an instant, forcing the fumble that was recovered by Wypler.

"We had six seconds left," Day said. "I thought that we could take a shot in the end zone. We knew they were in zero coverage, and I was going to take the delay game and then just kick the field goal, but then felt like maybe C.J. would want to throw the fade up and see if we get it vs. zero coverage."

"We were not on the same page, he and I, but I'll take all the blame for that. It's totally not his fault. He shouldn't have been in that situation. Six seconds left, just kick the field goal, get some momentum going into halftime."

Day considered calling a timeout but then realized he did not have one — perhaps due to some confusion between the officials, the in-house scorekeepers and even the FOX broadcast, which were not in consensus about how many the Buckeyes had remaining in the first half — and said it was not a good feeling.

Stroud echoed his coach's comment and said it was just a miscommunication, though he also admitted he should have thrown up the fade.

"I knew I was going to get zero (coverage) and I just had to get the ball out of my hand," Stroud said. "I wanted Emeka (Egbuka) to run a one-step slant right away and catch them off guard. They were backed up 3 yards in the end zone. But it is what it is. I appreciate Coach Day having the trust in me to move the ball down the field. I think we did that pretty well."



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Buckeyes Utilize Wild 4th Quarter in Win

Ohio State and Penn State entered the game's final quarter with 30 points combined and the Buckeyes ahead 16-14. However, neither team was prepared for the nature of the final frame.

The Buckeyes and Nittany Lions produced 45 total points in the fourth quarter, while both teams combined to churn out 368 yards of offense during the final period. Although Ohio State and Penn State slogged through the first three quarters, with neither team getting much separation on the other, it was the Buckeyes who reigned supreme in the game's wild final act, outscoring the Nittany Lions 28-17 in the contest's last 15 minutes.

"It was Buckeye football," quarterback C.J. Stroud said. "We know that it gets tough in the fourth quarter. I think we're a fourth quarter-type of team, at least we try to be. We work for that in the offseason, pushing sleds, lifting weights with (the strength staff). So those are the dudes who are why we are so good in the fourth."

It wasn't necessarily a ceremonious start for the Buckeyes in the quarter, though. After the Buckeyes retook the lead with 10 seconds to go in the third thanks to the leg of kicker Noah Ruggles, the Nittany Lions found themselves backed up deep in their own territory and facing a third-and-16 after a sack from defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau. Although Penn State quarterback Sean Clifford's third-down attempt fell to the turf, Ohio State cornerback JK Johnson was flagged for pass interference, giving the Nittany Lions a free set of downs. Aided by gains of 14 and 26 yards, Penn State reached the red zone, where the Buckeyes hardened and held the Nittany Lions to a field-goal attempt. Again, Penn State was bailed out by an Ohio State mistake, as kicker Jake Pinegar's missed 35-yard attempt was wiped off the board due to an illegal formation on the Buckeyes.

The Nittany Lions then converted a fourth-and-1 from the Buckeyes' 13-yard line before reaching the goal line for a huge fourth-and-goal three plays later. It appeared that fourth-

GAME NOTEBOOK Jack Emerson

down attempt was doomed to fail when line-backer Tommy Eichenberg corralled running back Kaytron Allen in the backfield, but Allen slipped away from his grasp and fell into the end zone to give Penn State the 21-16 lead with 9:26 remaining in regulation.

Although it appeared to be a demoralizing possession for the Ohio State defense, especially due to the several penalties that allowed the drive to continue, Stroud noted that the Buckeye offense kept calm on the sideline and rallied together to prepare for their next possession.

"Coach (Ryan) Day has a lot of trust in me, along with my teammates," Stroud said. "I definitely think that when those moments come, I definitely try to look at myself in the mirror and be like, 'C.J., this is your time. God made you for this.' But on the sideline, I'm just trying to give everybody positive feedback and give confidence. That's what I think I did, and that's why we went out there and scored."

The Buckeyes showcased that confidence on the very next drive, going 75 yards in just three plays and benefiting from a 41-yard touchdown run from running back TreVeyon Henderson, who had largely struggled up until that point, to retake the lead, 23-21.

Just two plays later, the Ohio State defense came up big. Tuimoloau, who had already registered an interception during the first half, bull-rushed through Penn State tackle Bryce Effner before slapping Clifford's arm and jarring the ball free. Tuimoloau then landed on the ball himself, giving the Buckeyes possession at the Penn State 24-yard line. One play later, Stroud found tight end Cade Stover, who bounced off a trio of would-be tacklers before plowing into the end zone to extend Ohio State's lead to 30-21.



SONNY BROCKWAY

WATCH HIM GO — Ohio State tight end Cade Stover provided one of the most exciting moments during the Buckeyes' win over Penn State, weaving through several Nittany Lion defenders on a 24-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter to extend Ohio State's lead to 30-21.

The Nittany Lions quickly made it a one-possession game again as Pinegar drilled a 44-yard field goal to make it 30-24 with 5:49 remaining in regulation. However, the Buckeyes responded yet again, driving 75 yards in 2:57 to set up a 7-yard touchdown run by Henderson. The scoring possession was boosted by a 42-yard connection between Stroud and wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, placing Ohio State in the red zone.

But lightning struck twice for the Nittany Lions, and it was Tuimoloau delivering the dagger into the heart of the Beaver Stadium crowd.

The Nittany Lions regained possession down 37-24, and Clifford, once again, tried to make something happen with his arm. Looking to find wideout Parker Washington, Clifford instead found Tuimoloau, who rumbled into the end zone with a pick-six on his second interception of the afternoon. Tuimoloau's pick-six put the cap on a huge day for the sophomore. He tallied six tackles (three for loss) and two sacks along with his pair of interceptions, fumble recovery and pass breakup.

"It was a great win," Tuimoloau said. "This is not an easy place to play. I know you guys heard the fans were rocking. We played a great defense and came out with the win."

Day relished his team's ability to come together in the final quarter and make the necessary plays needed to emerge victorious.

"I'd say it was crazy, but we expect when we play this game here it to be that way," Day said. "We think about our game in 2018

here, the game we played in 2017 back at our place. It comes down to the fourth quarter. We knew that was going to be the case. There are a lot of things in the first half we wish we'd done better, no question. But that's playing football. That's competing. Penn State's got one heck of a team. They played really hard, and it doesn't come easy. That being said, I'm very proud of the way the team played, especially in the fourth quarter.

"I thought C.J. Stroud was unbelievable in the fourth quarter, the way he played. (Tuimoloau) was off the charts, Marvin Harrison (Jr.) — but it was everybody. Cade Stover, what can you say about that run he had? Clutch. Just the way we played in that fourth quarter was tremendous. I'm proud of our guys."

Buckeyes Allow Clifford To Get Into Rhythm

At the game's onset, it appeared Clifford was doomed for a difficult outing. The Penn State quarterback threw a pair of interceptions in his first six attempts, with Tuimoloau playing a hand in both.

On Clifford's first pick, Tuimoloau got between him and Washington and batted the ball into the air toward fellow defensive end Zach Harrison, who bobbled it once before reeling it in and setting up the OSU offense at the Penn State 39-yard line. The Buckeye offense was unable to produce points off that turnover, though, as a 53-yard attempt from Ruggles landed wide right and short.

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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Aerial strikes into the middle of Penn State's defense proved most effective for quarterback C.J. Stroud and the Ohio State passing attack against the Nittany Lions.

Wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. was the biggest beneficiary of such plays, finishing with 10 catches for 185 yards on the day. Each catch Harrison made went for at least 10 yards, and a vast majority came on in-breaking routes. Perhaps no such route was more effective for him in Beaver Stadium than the slant.

That's the route head coach Ryan Day drew up for Harrison on a crucial third-and-10 with less than five minutes to play, and he made use of soft Penn State coverage on a 12-yard first-down gain.

Tight end Cade Stover, Stroud's biggest target over the middle in terms of size, set a career high for receptions against the Nittany Lions, hauling in six passes. He went for 78 yards, five short of his career best.

Stover also notched the touchdown that put the Buckeyes up two scores with 8:17 to play. Blocking and releasing on a short route over the middle, he found plenty of space as all of Penn State's linebackers were either blitzing or in man coverage elsewhere. Stroud hit him, and Stover turned and rumbled up field, bowling over not one or two, but three Penn State defenders as he tumbled into the end zone for a 24-yard score.

Even graduate tight end Mitch Rossi got in on the over-the-middle action, hauling in a catch between the hashes with plenty of space in the third quarter. He picked up 16 yards on the reception.

What Didn't Work

A deficiency running the ball one week against a good defense can be written off. In back-to-back weeks, though, with the latter against a team that's struggled previously to stop opposing ground games in Penn State, there's an issue.

For a second straight contest, Ohio State couldn't establish its rushing attack. The Buckeyes finished with 98 yards on 26 carries – a mere 3.8 per attempt – with running back TreVeyon Henderson at a dreadful pace of 2.1 yards per carry through his first 11 runs.

Particularly, outside runs were Ohio State's kryptonite. Henderson had his longest runs of those first 11 totes, gains of 8 and 9 yards, on handoffs heading straight up the middle. Ohio

State ran three bubble screens and a swing pass in the first half, all outside throws behind the line of scrimmage that head coach Ryan Day has said he considers extensions of the running game. Those combined for 7 yards of losses on four plays.

Trailing 14-13 late in the third quarter, the Buckeyes moved to Penn State's 30-yard line for a first down. They dialed up two such bubble screens, one which gained 4 yards and another that went for no gain, before running on third-and-6 and settling for a field goal on fourth-and-2.

Ohio State did manage to bust a big run when it needed to, however, on Henderson's 12th carry of the day. The Virginia native dashed through an open hole and outran the back end of Penn State's defense for a 41-yard touchdown that put the Buckeyes up 23-21 with 8:51 to play. He added a second touchdown run from 7 yards out with 2:52 remaining.

Still, concern lingers about the long-term viability of the Buckeyes' ground game, particularly when Michigan managed 418 yards rushing against the same Penn State team.

Play Of The Game

A certain former five-star defensive end named J.T. Tuimoloau had a breakout performance against Penn State. One play served as the exclamation point, not just in terms of said breakout but in terms of Ohio State's victory as well.

The Nittany Lions had the ball at their own 19-yard line with 2:47 to play. Screens had picked up consistent yardage much of the day for Penn State, and that's where the squad went on a first-and-10, where wide receiver Parker Washington quickly turned open for a tunnel screen behind the line of scrimmage.

Meanwhile, Tuimoloau had flattened Penn State right tackle Bryce Effner and stood in quarterback Sean Clifford's passing lane. The signal caller still thought he could fit the ball in over Tuimoloau, however, and he thought wrong. Tuimoloau, flexing his basketball background, leapt up and snagged the throw with his fingertips, then proceeded to run untouched for a 14-yard pick-six. The defensive score, the second in as many games for the Buckeyes, put the contest out of reach at 44-24 before the eventual 44-31 final.

— Andy Anders

with 4:42 remaining in the opening frame, Tuimoloau again showcased his threatening presence in pass defense. This time, he dropped back into zone coverage before jumping in front of Clifford's checkdown target, Allen, and intercepting the ball. The Buckeyes went on to score three plays later and take an early 10-0 lead.

But Ohio State was unable to hold Clifford, and Washington for that matter, down the whole way through. After his second interception, Clifford went on to complete nine of his next 11 pass attempts, including a 58-yard touchdown pass to Washington in which he bounced off a pair of would-be tacklers in safety Tanner McCalister and Johnson. Clifford capped off that run with another touchdown, this time to KeAndre Lambert-Smith to give Penn State its first lead of the afternoon, 14-10.

Clifford managed the game well from there, until disaster struck with his previously mentioned pair of turnovers in the fourth quarter. While Clifford was up-and-down for much of the afternoon, he completed 32 of 47 attempts for 371 yards, three touchdowns and three interceptions.

"I thought he played gutsy and made some big-time plays," said Penn State head coach James Franklin. "Obviously, you can't have the turnovers. The (fumble), I don't know if it was necessarily his fault, it was a pressure and a strip sack. The other ones, whether he left the ball inside or whether he has to find a throwing lane around really athletic, long defensive ends, you have to find a throwing lane."

Despite their inconsistency against Clifford and his band of receivers, the Buckeyes remained steady against the Nittany Lions' rushing attack, holding Penn State to just 111 rushing yards and an average of 3.4 yards per attempt.

Although Ohio State's defensive performance against Clifford also took a roller-coaster trajectory, Day was largely pleased with the way his defense held up at key points in the game.

"I thought they competed," Day said of the defense. "(The Nittany Lions) had their big plays, but they also had their turnovers too. We could feed off each other like we did. That's when we can flip the scoreboard, and would we like to have done it more? Sure. But that's a great challenge today that we responded to."

Zach Harrison also noted that the Buckeyes needed to regroup after Clifford's pair of touchdowns but all-in-all registered a strong day on the defensive side of the football.

"We just keep playing, just keep playing and never fold," Harrison said. "Early on, we were playing well and then we kind of stalled out a little bit. But Coach Day just said, 'Keep playing.' It's just the next play, next play and next play. The offense opened up and we got them stops."

'Route-Man Marv' Strikes Again

While the Ohio State offensive attack was largely limited through much of the first three quarters against Penn State, Marvin Harrison remained a steady hand for the Buckeyes throughout their visit to State College, Pa.

Harrison largely contributed through his prowess across the middle and in slant routes, snagging 10 of Stroud's 26 completions and accounting for 185 yards against the Nittany Lions. Although Stroud and Harrison largely connected through slant

routes, the Buckeyes' signal caller noted that wasn't the team's initial plan against Penn State's vaunted secondary.

"It was something we kind of felt on the fly," Stroud said. "We knew they were in zero coverage, and we had a plan for that, but it wasn't really working. We kind of got away from that and had another plan for it and talked about it on the sideline. That just shows you what type of coaches we have in Coach Day and Coach (Brian) Hartline, people like that just showing how much they trust in us on plays."

Harrison got going from the game's start, hauling in three catches for 74 yards in the opening frame. His ability to pick up chunks of yardage extended beyond just the first quarter, however, as each of his 10 receptions went for 11 or more yards. Harrison finished the afternoon with an average of 18.5 yards per reception.

Harrison was also sure-handed for the Buckeyes on third and fourth down, snagging three first-down receptions in third-and-long situations. The Philadelphia native also added a conversion on fourth-and-7 during Ohio State's final drive of the first half.

He also showcased his physical and mental toughness, tweaking his shoulder during the first half but ultimately opting to remain in the game.

"We know Marvin is talented, but to play tough the way he did says a lot about him,"

Day said. "He was gutsy today."

In terms of the mental aspect, Harrison dealt with the emotions of playing in his home state as a native of Philadelphia.

"It means a lot," Harrison said. "This might be one of the only times I'm able to come back here to Penn State and play here, so I try to make the best of it."

Buckeyes Handle Beaver Stadium

Entering their dance with the Nittany Lions, the Buckeyes had been challenged on the road only once in a comparatively sleepy atmosphere at Spartan Stadium in East Lansing, Mich., on Oct. 8.

Although Ohio State passed its visit to Michigan State with flying colors, outpacing the Spartans 49-20 on the road, its trip to Beaver Stadium was a whole different beast. For starters, the Buckeyes played in front of just 72,809 fans at Spartan Stadium – a number that pales in comparison to the 108,433 people who trekked to Happy Valley to see Penn State take on Ohio State.

While the Buckeyes had to deal with the raucous Penn State crowd all afternoon, Zach Harrison emphasized that he was just happy to leave Happy Valley with a win.

"It feels good just to get a win," he said. "Penn State is always a tough team to play, tough place to play. It was rocking a few times in that stadium. And to just come out with a

win, that's what we worked all week for."

Although Ohio State came away with the win, the Buckeyes still showed some ineptitude when dealing with a hostile environment. Ohio State's offense was called for delay of game on three separate occasions while also picking up a false start and offsides penalty during the course of the contest.

Stroud acknowledged that some miscommunication took place during the win, specifically on the Buckeyes' final possession of the first half. As OSU operated within the two-minute offense, Stroud was able to march Ohio State 61 yards to the Penn State 8-yard line with six seconds remaining.

Although the Buckeyes had the opportunity to take a chip-shot field-goal attempt and head into the locker room with the lead, Ohio State opted to run one more offensive play while seeking to find pay dirt. Stroud instead succumbed to pressure caused by the Penn State defensive front and took a sack, and the Buckeyes were unable to stop the clock as they did not possess a timeout at the time.

The Buckeyes showed momentary lapses against the sea of white and blue, but Day was pleased with his team's resilience in a hostile environment.

"A lot of respect for Penn State and James Franklin and his staff," Day said. "In this environment, this is a hard place to play, and it always is. For us to do that – I mean, that locker room was on fire afterwards."

Buckeyes State Their Case In 4th-Quarter Surge

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Quarterback C.J. Stroud, after a slow start, did his thing. Running back TreVeyon Henderson, after a slow start, did his thing. Defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau really did his thing the entire game, and as a result, No. 2 Ohio State remained on course for a spot in the College Football Playoff after a dramatic and pulsating 44-31 win over No. 13 Penn State in State College, Pa., on Oct. 29.

For the second game in a row, Stroud couldn't find a rhythm in the first half but clicked after halftime to finish with 354 yards and a touchdown, which came during a 28-point fourth quarter explosion in a 6:09 stretch that included two rushing TDs by Henderson and a pick-six from Tuimoloau as the Buckeyes (8-0, 5-0 Big Ten) overcame a 21-16 deficit against the pesky Nittany Lions (6-2, 3-2).

Peaks and Valleys

Just as they had started against Iowa the previous game when the Buckeyes had to settle for field goals on three of their first four trips to the red zone, they took the opening kickoff and marched from their 25 to the PSU 20 before Noah Ruggles kicked a 38-yard field goal at 9:47 for a 3-0 lead.

After a completion for no gain and an incompletion to begin the drive, Stroud found Marvin Harrison Jr. for 37 yards to the Penn State 38. Henderson then rushed for 5 yards, and Cade Stover had a catch for 10 yards to the 23. Henderson gained nothing on two carries, and a delay of game pushed the ball back to the 28 before Stover's grab gained 8 yards to set up the field goal.

The Buckeyes got the ball back when quarterback Sean Clifford, on third-and-9 from the PSU 47, was intercepted by Zach Harrison after the pass was tipped by Tuimoloau. Harrison made a return of 2 yards to the Penn State 39.

But the Lions defense stiffened, and Ruggles missed from 53 yards after Henderson was stuffed again for nothing and a completion each to Stover and Emeka Egbuka netted 4 total yards.

On PSU's third snap of the ensuing drive after the kickoff, Tuimoloau cut in front of Kaytron Allen for an interception at the Nittany Lions' 43 and returned it 2 yards.

"He really stepped up," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said of Tuimoloau. "You're seeing what he is capable of now. This was a coming-out party for him. It's well deserved, and I'm happy for him. He's been working hard, and I'm glad all of his hard work is paying off."

From there, Harrison made catches of 18 and 19 yards to the 4. Miyan Williams bulled his way in to make 10-0 with 2:48 left in the first quarter. He was initially ruled short of the goal line, but video review overturned the call on the field. The three-play drive took 1:54.

Following a touchback on a Penn State punt, Stroud scrambled for 4 yards, and Williams rushed for 5 yards but was tackled along the left sideline and suffered an injury and left the game at the end of the quarter before an Ohio State punt.

Parker Washington ignited the stadium with a 58-yard catch-and-run TD for a 10-7 score at 11:13 of the second quarter. Facing a 3rd-and-4, Clifford tossed a pass to Wash-



SONNY BROCKWAY

FIVE-STAR TALENT — Ohio State defensive end Zach Harrison (9) put an early stop to Penn State's offense, intercepting quarterback Sean Clifford after defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau batted a pass up in the air. It was the first of four turnovers on the day by Clifford.

ington at the PSU 46. He shirked two would-be defenders in cornerback JK Johnson and safety Tanner McCalister and sprinted to the end zone.

Penn State took a 14-10 lead at 6:50 on a 23-yard reception by KeAndre Lambert-Smith to complete a six-play, 79-yard drive in 1:49. On the previous play, Clifford had rolled left and connected with tight end Theo Johnson for 42 yards.

Ohio State didn't fully capitalize on another red-zone opportunity after Penn State gifted the Buckeyes 15 yards on a pass-interference penalty, and Ruggles nailed a 37-yard field goal to make it 14-13 at 3:14.

It had started with the kickoff out-of-bounds to give the Buckeyes possession at their 35. The pass interference moved the ball to the 50. Stroud would later have a 23-yard pass to Julian Fleming to the 32. Stover's catch gained 9 yards, and Henderson rushed for 9 more to the 14 only for Ohio State to have an incompletion, a 5-yard loss on a screen to Henderson and an incompletion.

The Buckeyes blew a chance to take the lead going into halftime, driving to the 8 but failing to put points on the board.

An 8-yard Egbuka punt return placed the ball at the OSU 31 with 1:07 left in the half. Stover had a catch for 23 to the PSU 46, but the drive was in peril on fourth-and-7 following a Stroud scramble for 11 yards on third down while needing 18. From the 43 and after an Ohio State timeout, Harrison hauled in a 14-yarder to the 29, and he made another

catch to the 8. Stroud spiked the ball with six seconds left, and the Buckeyes decided to go for a TD, but Stroud was sacked for 5 yards by Johnny Dixon and fumbled the ball. Center Luke Wypler recovered at the 13, but the clock expired.

Nit Picking

The Buckeye defense got a fourth-down stop early in the third quarter. PSU moved to the OSU 19 with the aid of a 27-yard catch by Washington, but Tyleik Williams tackled running back Nick Singleton for no gain, and the Buckeyes took over on downs only to have to punt it back.

Later, Ruggles kicked a 40-yard field near the end of the third quarter to put the Buckeyes ahead 16-14.

Starting from the OSU 33, Harrison caught a ball for 16 yards, and Mitch Rossi later added another 16 yards to the Lion 30. Fleming had a 4-yard catch, but Egbuka's reception went for no yards before Henderson rushed for 4 yards to the 22 to set up the field goal.

Penn State regained the lead in a most unique way, going up 21-16 with 9:26 to play on a 1-yard run by Allen. Penn State had faced fourth-and 1 from the OSU 13, and Jake Pinegar missed a 30-yard field goal to the right, but a false start nullified the play. Pinegar then missed to the right from 35, but OSU was called for an illegal formation, setting up another fourth-and-1.

Given new life, Clifford passed 4 yards to

Tyler Warren to the 9 for the first down. Allen ran for 1 yard, and on second down, Mitchell Tinsley caught the ball at the 5 and appeared to get into the end zone, but he fumbled at the goal line and a review showed tight end Brenton Strange recovered it just short of the line. Clifford was stopped for no gain, but on fourth down, Allen took it in. He slipped away from linebacker Tommy Eichenberg at the 4 then pushed his way past three more Buckeyes. The drive used 5:44 and 13 plays to go 75 yards.

The Buckeyes responded in stunning fashion, going 75 yards in three plays and 35 seconds for a 23-21 lead with 8:51 remaining.

Harrison got a 21-yarder from Stroud, and Egbuka had 13 more before Henderson rushed 41 yards for the score. The Buckeyes wanted to go for two, but a false start changed the plans and Ruggles made the point after.

When PSU got the ball back, Tuimoloau strip-sacked Clifford and recovered the fumble at the 24. On the first play of the ensuing drive, Stroud spotted Stover open in the middle at the 18, and the tight end scored from 24 yards out with 8:17 remaining to extend the lead to 30-21.

A Pinegar field goal then made it 30-24 with 5:49 left. The big play was a 27-yard run by Allen.

Back came the Buckeyes, and on third-and-10 from the OSU 41, Harrison made a 12-yard catch. Three plays later, Egbuka had a 42-yard catch to the 2. Following a delay of game, Henderson ran in from the 7 with 2:52 left for a 37-24 advantage.

Tuimoloau then intercepted Clifford on the first play and returned it 14 yards for the score with 2:42 left to make 44-24 before Allen had a 5-yard TD catch with 1:12 left for the 44-31 final. The series consumed eight plays over 75 yards in 1:30.

Penn State then had an unsuccessful on-side kick when the ball went out of bounds. Starting from the PSU 40, Henderson had 9 yards on two runs, and Rossi gained 8 prior to Stroud taking a knee at the Penn State 25 to conclude the game.

Tuimoloau finished with six tackles, three of them for losses, a forced fumble and a recovery, two interceptions, two sacks and a tipped ball that led to an interception.

Stroud was 26 of 33 for 354 yards with Harrison making 10 catches for 185 yards.

Clifford was 32 of 47 for 371 yards with three touchdowns, three interceptions and a lost fumble, and he was sacked three times while Washington had 11 catches for 179 yards and a score.

Notes

Stover had six catches for 78 yards and a touchdown. Egbuka made six catches for 53 yards. ... Henderson netted 78 yards off 16 carries. ... Jesse Mirco averaged 52.0 yards for three punts. Allen gained 76 yards on 12 rushes for Penn State. ... Eichenberg had a game-high 15 tackles (10 solo), and linebacker Steele Chambers was second with nine (five solo). ... Ohio State totaled 452 yards (354 passing, 98 rushing) with 21 first downs. Penn State gained 482 yards (371 passing, 111 rushing) and 24 first downs. ... OSU was 4 of 12 on third-down conversions and 1 of 1 on fourth. Penn State was 6 of 16 on third and 3 of 4 on fourth.

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 44, Penn State 31

Oct. 29, 2022 – Beaver Stadium, State College, Pa.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	10	3	3	28	44
PENN STATE	0	14	0	17	31

First Quarter

OSU – Ruggles, 38-yard field goal, 9:47.

OSU – M. Williams, 4-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 2:48.

Second Quarter

PSU – Washington, 58-yard pass from Clifford (Pinegar kick), 11:13.

PSU – Lambert-Smith, 23-yard pass from Clifford (Pinegar kick), 6:50.

OSU – Ruggles, 37-yard field goal, 3:14.

Third Quarter

OSU – Ruggles, 40-yard field goal, 0:10.

Fourth Quarter

PSU – Allen, 1-yard rush (Pinegar kick), 9:26.

OSU – Henderson, 41-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 8:51.

OSU – Stover, 24-yard pass from Stroud (Ruggles kick), 8:17.

PSU – Pinegar, 44-yard field goal, 5:49.

OSU – Henderson, 7-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 2:52.

OSU – Tuimoloau, 14-yard INT return (Ruggles kick), 2:42.

PSU – Allen, 5-yard pass from Clifford (Pinegar kick), 1:12.

Att. – 108,433

Weather – Sunny

Team Statistics		
	OSU	PSU
First Downs	21	24
Rushing	3	5
Passing	17	18
Penalty	1	1
Rushes-Yards	26-98	33-111
Passing Yards	354	371
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	26-34-0	32-47-3
Offensive Plays	60	80
Total Net Yards	452	482
Third Down Efficiency	4-12	6-16
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-1	3-4
Punts-Avg.	3-52.0	3-44.7
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	3-1
Penalties	8-50	6-50
Time of Possession	29:34	30:26

Individual Statistics		
RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – OSU: Henderson 16-78; M. Williams 2-9; Rossi 1-8; Stroud 6-5; Team 1-(-2). PSU: Allen 12-76; Singleton 14-45; Clifford 7-(-10).		
PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – OSU: Stroud 26-33-0-354-1; Team 0-1-0-0-0. PSU: Clifford 32-47-3-371-3.		
RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – OSU: Harrison Jr. 10-185; Stover 6-78; Egbuka 6-53; Fleming 2-27; Rossi 1-16; Henderson 1-(-5). PSU: Washington 11-179; Tinsley 5-24; Strange 4-13; Lambert-Smith 2-58; Johnson 2-57; Evans 2-14; Allen 2-13; Singleton 1-6; Wallace III 1-4; Warren 1-4; Clifford 1-(-1).		
PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – OSU: Mirco 3-52.0-53. PSU: Amor 3-44.7-59.		
PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Egbuka 1-8. PSU: Washington 2-4.		
KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: X. Johnson 1-26. PSU: Hardy 1-22; Evans 1-17.		
FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Tuimoloau 1-0. PSU: None.		
INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Tuimoloau 2-16; Harrison 1-2. PSU: None.		
SACKS – OSU: Tuimoloau 2-16; T. Williams 1-2. PSU: Carter 1-8; Dixon 1-5.		
TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Tuimoloau 3-17; T. Williams 1-2. PSU: Carter 1-8; Dixon 1-5; Ellis 1-5; Ellies 1-3; Kalen King 1-2; Reed 1-2; Kobe King 0.5-1; Dennis-Sutton 0.5-1		

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **OSU:** Eichenberg 10-5-15; Chambers 5-4-9; Ransom 7-0-7; Tuimoloau 3-3-6; Hickman 2-4-6; Burke 4-1-5; T. Williams 2-3-5; Harrison 2-2-4; J. Johnson 3-0-3; McCalister 2-1-3; Proctor 2-0-2; Vincent 0-2-2; Hall Jr. 1-0-1; Simon 1-0-1; Cage 1-0-1; Sawyer 0-1-1; Jean-Baptiste 0-1-1; Martinez 0-1-1; Hamilton 0-1-1; Hancock 0-1-1. **PSU:** Brown 6-2-8; Ellis 3-2-5; Porter Jr. 4-0-4; Dixon 4-0-4; Carter 3-1-4; Kalen King 2-2-4; Jacobs 1-2-3; Mustipher 1-2-3; Kobe King 1-2-3; Reed 2-0-2; DeLuca 2-0-2; Sutherland 1-1-2; Beamon 1-0-1; Elson 1-0-1; Clifford 1-0-1; Tarburton 1-0-1; Wheatley 1-0-1; Allen 1-0-1; Izzard 1-0-1; Ellies 1-0-1; Hardy 1-0-1; Robinson 1-0-1; Isaac 0-1-1; Dennis-Sutton 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – **OSU:** Harrison Jr., Egbuka, Henderson, Fleming, Wypler, M. Jones, Stroud, Jackson, Johnson Jr., D. Jones, Stover, Burke, Ransom, Hickman, McCalister, Chambers, Eichenberg, J. Johnson, Tuimoloau, Hall Jr., Vincent, Harrison, X. Johnson, Hicks, Martinez, Trayanum, Styles, Gaoteote IV, Dunn, Turner, Mirco, M. Williams, Mitchell, Simon, Sawyer, Rossi, Fielding, Proctor, Hamilton, Prater, Michalski, Vimahi, Hancock, James, Jean-Baptiste, Adolph, Cage, Scott Jr., Ballard, T. Williams, Curry, Arnold, Ruggles. **PSU:** Allen, S. Clifford, Washington, Tinsley, Nourzad, Scruggs, Effner, Fashanu, Wormley, Johnson, Strange, Carter, Brown, Ellis, Isaac, Jacobs, Kalen King, Elson, Tarburton, Beamon, Porter Jr., Mustipher, Sutherland, Lambert-Smith, Singleton, Evans, Winston, Hardy, Durant, Constantini, Dixon, Dennis-Sutton, DeLuca, Kobe King, Warren, Robinsin, Miller, Christ, van der Berg, Mulbah, Vanover, Wheatley, Wallace III, Reed, Meiga, L. Clifford, Stoll, Ellies, Pinegar, Sahaydak, Wilson, Amor, Izzard.

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	(3) at Michigan State	W, 49-20	72,809
Oct. 22	(2) IOWA	W, 54-10	104,848
Oct. 29	(2) at Penn State (13)	W, 44-31	108,433
Nov. 5	at Northwestern	12 p.m.	
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	197	107
Rushing	72	35
Passing	109	59
Penalty	16	13
Average Per Game/Rush	191.5	93.4
Average Per Game/Pass	317.8	176.8
Total Offense	4074	2161
Total Plays	526	479
Average Per Game	509.3	270.1
Average Per Play	7.7	4.5
Penalties-Yards	43-377	45-371
Fumbles-Lost	6-3	12-6
Third Down Efficiency	47-94	29-110
Percentage	50%	26%
Fourth Down Efficiency	10-10	6-16
Percentage	100%	38%
Sacks-Yards	22-129	7-38
Time Of Possession Avg.	31:01	28:58

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	124	82	101	84	0	391	48.9	
Opponents	34	50	13	38	0	135	16.9	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
T. Henderson	96	552	5.8	6	41
Miyan Williams	76	525	6.9	10	70
Dallan Hayden	54	255	4.7	1	45
TC Caffey	10	66	6.6	1	49
Emeka Egbuka	6	59	9.8	1	27
Xavier Johnson	3	23	7.7	0	8
Jesse Mirco	1	22	22.0	0	22
M. Harrison Jr.	1	14	14.0	0	14
Mitch Rossi	4	13	3.3	1	8
Chip Trayanum	2	6	3.0	0	9
Cayden Saunders	2	6	3.0	0	5
Kyle McCord	3	4	1.3	0	3
Devin Brown	1	1	1.0	0	1
C.J. Stroud	19	-4	-0.2	0	11
Team	7	-13	-1.9	0	0
OSU Totals	284	1635	5.4	20	70
OPP Totals	256	946	2.9	5	75

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
C.J. Stroud	159	223	71.3	2377	29-4	200.2
Kyle McCord	14	18	77.8	165	1-0	173.1
Team	0	1	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
OSU Totals	173	242	71.5	2542	30-4	197.3
OPP Totals	130	223	58.3	1414	9-10	115.9

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Marvin Harrison Jr.	48	783	16.3	10	45
Emeka Egbuka	47	788	16.8	7	69
Cade Stover	24	309	12.9	3	38
Julian Fleming	19	354	18.6	6	79
Jayden Ballard	7	131	18.7	1	72
Xavier Johnson	5	48	9.6	1	24
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	5	43	8.6	0	21
Miyan Williams	4	26	6.5	0	12
Gee Scott Jr.	4	12	3.0	1	4
T. Henderson	3	-3	-1.0	0	4
Mitch Rossi	2	19	9.5	1	16
Dallan Hayden	2	13	6.5	0	10
Reis Stocksedale	1	12	12.0	0	12
Kaleb Brown	1	5	5.0	0	5
Kyion Grayes	1	2	2.0	0	2
OSU Totals	173	2542	14.7	30	79
OPP Totals	130	1414	10.9	9	58

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Noah Ruggles	-	52-52	-	-	9-11	79
Miyan Williams	10	-	-	-	-	60

M. Harrison Jr.	10	-	-	-	-	60
Emeka Egbuka	8	-	-	-	-	48
Julian Fleming	6	-	-	-	-	36
T. Henderson	6	-	-	-	-	36
Cade Stover	3	-	-	-	-	18
Mitch Rossi	2	-	-	-	-	12
T. Eichenberg	1	-	-	-	-	6
Xavier Johnson	1	-	-	-	-	6
Gee Scott Jr.	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jayden Ballard	1	-	-	-	-	6
J.T. Tuimoloau	1	-	-	-	-	6
Dallan Hayden	1	-	-	-	-	6
TC Caffey	1	-	-	-	-	6
OSU Totals	52	52-52	-	-	9-11	391
OPP Totals	16	15-16	0-0	0-0	8-8	135

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Noah Ruggles	3-3	3-4	3-3	0-1	9-11
OSU Totals	3-3	3-4	3-3	0-1	9-11
OPP Totals	1-1	4-4	3-3	0-0	8-8

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	24	1099	45.8	0	55
M. O'Shaughnessy	1	41	41.0	0	41
OSU Totals	25	1140	45.6	0	55
OPP Totals	47	2120	45.1	0	75

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Tanner McCalister	3	41	13.7	0	30
J.T. Tuimoloau	2	16	8.0	1	14
Tommy Eichenberg	1	15	15.0	1	15
Zach Harrison	1	2	2.0	0	2
Steele Chambers	1	12	12.0	0	12
Ronnie Hickman	1	8	8.0	0	8
Lathan Ransom	1	0	0	0	0
OSU Totals	10	94	9.4	2	30
OPP Totals	4	47	11.8	1	32

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	8	59	7.4	0	16
Jayden Ballard	1	14	14.0	0	14
JK Johnson	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	10	73	7.3	0	16
OPP Totals	5	37	7.4	0	15

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Chip Trayanum	3	29	9.7	0	17
Xavier Johnson	1	26	26.0	0	26
Jayden Ballard	1	0	0.0	0	0
Emeka Egbuka	1	25	25.0	0	25
OSU Totals	6	80	13.3	0	26
OPP Totals	24	518	21.6	0	38

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
T. Eichenberg	43	29	7270-22		2.5-12
Steele Chambers	25	19	44	4.0-19	1.0-7
Lathan Ransom	23	13	36	1.0-3	0-0
Ronnie Hickman	12	17	29	0-0	0-0
Cody Simon	14	13	27	4.0-10	1.0-6
Mike Hall Jr.	9	7	16	7.5-46	4.5-39
Josh Proctor	11	5	16	0-0	0-0
Denzel Burke	9	7	16	2.0-2	0-0
Jack Sawyer	6	9	15	4.0-11	2.0-7
J. Jean-Baptiste	7	8	15	4.0-20	3.5-19
J.T. Tuimoloau	8	7	15	6.5-27	2.5-19
JK Johnson	12	2	14	0-0	0-0
Zach Harrison	9	5	14	2.0-7	1.0-4
Cameron Martinez	9	5	14	0-0	0-0
Tyleik Williams	7	6	13	2.5-7	1.0-2
Tanner McCalister	11	2	13	0-0	0-0
Chip Trayanum	8	4	12	0-0	0-0
Caden Curry	8	3	11	1.5-6	0.5-0
Taron Vincent	3	7	10	1.5-6	0-0
Kye Stokes	8	1	9	1.0-4	0-0
Jerron Cage	4	5	9	2.5-11	1.5-8
Cameron Brown	5	1	6	0-0	0-0
Jyaire Brown	3	3	6	0-0	0-0
Sonny Styles	3	3	6	1.0-2	0-0
Jaden McKenzie	2	3	5	1.0-1	0-0
C.J. Hicks	3	2	5	0-0	0-0
Ty Hamilton	2	3	5	0-0	0-0
Palaie Gaoteote IV	3	1	4	0-0	0-0

OSU Totals	278	198	476	55.0-211	22.0-129
OPP Totals	282	240	522	31.0-102	7.0-38
Fumbles Forced:	Harrison (2), J. Brown, Hickman, Jean-Baptiste, Ransom, Simon, Stokes, Tuimoloau, .				
Fumbles Recovered:	Gaoteote IV (2), Hall Jr., Ransom, Tuimoloau, Vinent.				

Egbuka Emerges In Loaded Receiver Room

By JACK EMERSON

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

During the tenure of Ohio State wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, the Buckeyes have been adept at recruiting and developing high-end talent at the position while seamlessly restocking their losses – whether to graduation, transfer or the NFL – with similarly dominant pass-catchers.

The Buckeyes transitioned from the losses of Parris Campbell and Terry McLaurin before the 2019 season with relative ease. K.J. Hill remained a steady hand, and Chris Olave emerged as a deep threat while Garrett Wilson flashed his potential as a freshman. When Hill left to turn pro prior to the 2020 campaign, Wilson stepped into a much larger role while Ohio State saw encouraging developments from Jameson Williams and Jaxon Smith-Njigba. Although Olave and Wilson remained in the fold in 2021, Williams opted to transfer to Alabama, where he blossomed into a household name, prompting the emergence of Smith-Njigba, who broke single-season program records for receptions (95) and receiving yards (1,606).

While Hartline's ability to plug and play at a high level showed during his first three seasons as the wide receiver coach, he was certainly put to the challenge this season. As program cornerstones Olave and Wilson became first-round picks in the 2022 NFL draft, Hartline was tasked with filling nearly 2,000 yards and 25 touchdowns of production. With Olave and Wilson opting to sit out of the Rose Bowl, Smith-Njigba registered a record-breaking performance against Utah while Marvin Harrison Jr. also hauled in a trio of touchdowns during the Buckeyes' wild come-from-behind win over the Utes.

While Smith-Njigba and Harrison displayed their overwhelming talent in Pasadena, then-freshman Emeka Egbuka flew under the radar, hauling in three catches for 46 yards. However, with the game tied at 45 and under two minutes remaining in regu-

lation, Egbuka sprang a clutch kick return to set up the Buckeyes' game-winning drive from their own 42-yard line. Although Egbuka's outing against the Utes paled in comparison to Smith-Njigba's and Harrison's, it gave him his first true taste of playing meaningful snaps at the collegiate level.

Now in his sophomore season, Egbuka has become one of quarterback C.J. Stroud's most relied on targets and has played a huge part in the Buckeyes' seamless transition away from Olave and Wilson as well as Smith-Njigba, who has played sparingly this season due to a nagging hamstring injury. Egbuka has emerged as one of the top pass-catchers in the country while settling into a feature role within the Ohio State offense through the first eight weeks of the season, snagging 47 receptions for a team-best 788 yards alongside seven touchdowns.

Prior to the start of the season, Egbuka pointed to his own need to settle into the environment of college football, something he was able to do during his Rose Bowl outing and as a kick returner last season.

"Football is football, but at the same time, the play speed is way faster," Egbuka said. "I feel like (entering) this year, I'm playing with a lot more confidence."

Egbuka entered the program as a five-star receiver out of Steilacoom, Wash., and he was able to spend time developing behind the likes of Olave, Smith-Njigba and Wilson during his freshman season. He was also able to hone his skills with the ball in his hands as a kick returner. Egbuka returned 20 kicks last season, churning out an average of 29.0 yards per return.

Egbuka's role as a kick returner has largely diminished during his sophomore campaign, likely prompted by his increased usage at the wide receiver position. However, the valuable skills he picked up at the position remain important aspects of his game.

"Kick and punt returning is something I've always done, especially in high school,

and they've really helped me with my run after the catch and stuff like that," Egbuka said. "It especially helps me since you're running full speed (and) you've got to make moves on the fly. It's normally a one-cut-and-go situation, and that's how you spring big ones on offense."

Egbuka showcased that "one-cut-and-go" ability on his first career reception. Early in the third quarter of Ohio State's 59-7 win over Akron, Egbuka hauled in a pass from quarterback Kyle McCord near the Buckeyes' 30-yard line before taking off. From there, he put his foot in the ground and cut hard toward the center of the field, shaking the safety. Egbuka was finally tackled at the Akron 2-yard line after an 85-yard gain, which marked the third-longest passing play in Ohio State history.

That play set the tone for Egbuka's growing reputation as a yards-after-the-catch threat. Despite sharing the receiver room with Harrison, Olave, Smith-Njigba and Wilson last season, he led the Buckeyes with a 21.2 yards per catch average, which was 4.3 yards more than second-place Smith-Njigba. His yards-per-catch average has dwindled in his second season, largely a product of his increased workload. However, he still boasts a 16.8-yard average.

While Egbuka played a limited role as a freshman, he stepped into a much larger one as a sophomore. As injuries ravaged the receiving corps with Julian Fleming and Smith-Njigba largely held out of the first two games, Egbuka jumped on the opportunities put forth in front of him. Prior to the returns of Fleming and Smith-Njigba against Toledo, Egbuka registered a nine-catch, 90-yard outing against Notre Dame and a four-reception, 118-yard afternoon vs. Arkansas State. He added a touchdown in each contest.

Egbuka acknowledged that his individual performances weren't all that important to him and that claiming victories stood chief among his priorities.

"I was just really concerned about the

team win," Egbuka said after the Notre Dame game. "We ended up getting it. That was the best part of my night. It didn't matter if I caught a touchdown, it didn't matter if I had any catches at all. As far as the rest of the season goes, it's the same thing. We're looking to get as far as we can with this thing, and I think we have a great squad to do so. We're trying to make a run this year."

The injuries to Fleming and Smith-Njigba also opened up the opportunity for him to line up from a variety of spots in the offense. He has operated both from the slot and on the perimeter this season. He carries a level of versatility for the Buckeyes' receiving corps, and Stroud emphasized that Egbuka, alongside Harrison, has stepped up his game in order to keep the Ohio State offense rolling with high efficiency.

"Emeka, even Marvin, both are extremely hard workers," Stroud said. "Both are always in the building working on their games and doing something right. Even off the field, they're just trying to make sure their bodies are right. We see them. They're all buffed up. They're chiseled up, so that just shows how great they are at what they do and how serious they take it even being so young."

"Emeka has gotten to show a little bit of what he can do, and he can even do more. I feel like in our passing game, he fits it perfectly."

Even with the full-time return of Fleming, Egbuka's production has hardly dipped. Although Fleming was reinserted into the rotation against Toledo, Egbuka hauled in seven receptions for 116 yards and a touchdown vs. the Rockets. A week later, Egbuka snared a career-best two touchdowns against Wisconsin among his six catches for 118 yards.

Egbuka also showcased his resilience during Ohio State's 49-20 win over Michigan State. After a miscommunication with Stroud resulted in a pick-six by Spartans cornerback Charles Brantley, Egbuka came right back to connect on a 69-yard catch-and-run into the end zone just three plays later.

"We got together with Coach Hartline and Coach Day (after the interception) and talked about what the coverage was, and we made sure we fixed it," Egbuka said after the win. "We made sure it didn't happen again."

As Egbuka has proved that he is in the upper echelon of college receivers through the season's first eight games, he has become another example of the revolving door of overwhelming talent at the position. Hartline and Day have helped foster a healthy rotation of receiving threats year in and year out, and Day emphasized that the unit's success also comes down to the work put in by Egbuka and his fellow receivers and their consistent drive to improve.

"I think there are some guys in that room that are very mature," Day said. "When you're around them, you realize for their age, they don't look like they're 18, 19 or 20. They don't talk like it, they don't act like it, they don't speak like it. But they are. It's pretty remarkable sometimes when you think about who they are as people and the maturity level of all those guys in that room."

"You're seeing Emeka, Marvin and Julian really take it over and run."



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Hall Acting As ‘Spark Plug’ For Ohio State

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Michael Hall Jr. spun around with a boisterous fist pump as he threw Notre Dame quarterback Tyler Buchner to the ground.

While ESPN play-by-play commentator Chris Fowler exclaimed that Hall had been Ohio State's best defensive player that night, Hall arched backward and let out a triumphant yell, mouthpiece swinging back and forth rapidly from his face mask as he shook with violent excitement. He leaned back up and flexed his arms at the Ohio State sideline, still yelling.

"Mike is definitely one of the guys who brings the juice," said Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles. "He's high-energy, has that personality, that big smile when he makes plays. He can keep guys loose. I think that's part of having a great defense. You need people like that."

Hall's game-sealing 11-yard sack with 4:38 remaining against the Fighting Irish served as the exclamation point on a breakout performance for the sophomore defensive tackle. He has since established himself as a go-to playmaker on the Buckeyes' defensive line, a key piece for a revamped OSU defense that now ranks sixth in the country for yards allowed.

"That first step (Hall has) is very rare – very rare," Knowles said. "There's a lot of talented guys, a lot of strong guys, a lot of athletic guys. But the ability to get off the ball, it's a split-second thing, and it's something that some guys have. He has it."

That explosive first step is matched only by Hall's bombastic arrival onto the scene this season. The Ohio native recorded 35 snaps total and two tackles on the Buckeyes' defensive line in 2021, spread across four games to maintain his redshirt. Through seven games in 2022 – he missed OSU's matchup with Toledo due to injury – he's recorded a team-high 4½ sacks and 7½ tackles for loss.

"Really it's my explosiveness and getting off the ball (that's made the difference)," Hall said. "Time with (defensive line coach Larry Johnson) doing extra drills and all of that. Really just working on my hands."

Hall has had such production in spite of the fact that he's played more than 28 snaps in a game only once this season. The most obvious example of the defensive tackle putting up gaudy numbers in limited work came against Michigan State, when a limited Hall played only eight snaps but still piled up 2½ sacks. An additional sack by Hall got called back for a hands-to-the-face penalty by defensive end Zach Harrison.

"Coming out here and trying to dominate coming off that win last year, it's just a blessing," Hall said afterward. "I'm just trying to take advantage again."

It's not just the numbers Hall posts, however. It's that he has versatility to post them from any number of spots along the defensive line. Ohio State has lined him up at the one-technique, three-technique and five-technique – that's outside shoulder of the opposing center, guard and tackle, respectively – at various points this year.

"That's a big, strong guy with, like I said, a great first step, a great takeoff," Knowles said. "He's got some things that are hard to coach. We move him around to different positions to take advantage of that."

Despite his overpowering 290-pound



SONNY BROCKWAY

LIVE WIRE — Ohio State defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. has dominated in limited action this season for the Buckeyes, accounting for 16 tackles (a team-high 7½ for loss) with 4½ sacks and a fumble recovery on the year.

frame, Hall played defensive end at Streetsboro High School in Ohio, still showing the speed and bend required to get to opposing quarterbacks from the edge of the line. That combination of background and athletic traits plays right into his hand at three-technique. He's got the burst to fly by interior offensive linemen but is strong enough at the point of attack to fulfill the typical duties of a defensive tackle.

"I have to say three-tech is my favorite because it gives me a lot of leeway where I can go inside or out," Hall said. "It just gives me a lot of space to work with."

With Knowles known for rolling through a variety of creative stunts and blitzes to aid the defensive front in its effort to get pressure via schematics, the attention Hall attracts creates space for teammates. Linebacker Tommy Eichenberg looped over a slanting Hall and went untouched for a sack through the center of Notre Dame.

"He's really disruptive as a pass rusher but also great in the run game too," Eichenberg said. "I think the O-line focuses on him, and it frees up other people to (make plays)."

While Ohio State fans have been seeing Hall's abilities only since the opener, his teammates and coaches have been witnesses since fall camp. Prior to the season, as Hall was working his way up the depth chart, offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson stated he got a laugh watching him work with the third-team defensive line. He called him "the best (third string) I've seen in my life."

Meanwhile, Hall's fellow defensive linemen were drumming up a nickname, one that referenced an active three-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year and eight-time pro bowler from his position.

"Baby Aaron Donald," defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau called him Sept. 6, comparing Hall's 6-2, 290-pound frame to that of Donald's 6-1, 280-pound stature.

"That's a crazy comparison, but for real, I was thinking about that the other day," Harrison added. "And he's strong. He's small, he's built like a nose guard, but he's not weak. He's got heavy hands, he's strong."

It sounded as if Harrison had more compliments to give Hall at that day's interview session, but as he was about to go further, cornerback Cameron Brown popped in unprompted to ask what Harrison and Tuimoloau were discussing. When Harrison told him, "Mike Hall," Brown immediately responded, "Shoot, he looks like Aaron Donald to me."

The comparison is so prevalent that even OSU's defensive backs are thinking it, apparently.

Johnson expanded on some of the offseason work Hall did to get to that point, which came alongside an emphasis on explosiveness for the entire defensive front that Hall alluded to above.

"It starts in the weight room, first, that's the most important thing," Johnson said. "Coach Mick (Marotti) and his group do a great job of getting those guys physically ready. That's the bottom line. The second part is just getting ready to play on the field. We probably spent more time this season attacking the sleds, just really pounding the sleds, getting more physical fits throughout practice."

Hall's explosion and productivity are demonstrated at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. That's why he was trusted to start against Notre Dame despite the presence of more veteran defensive tackles such as graduate Jerron Cage, fourth-year Jaden McKenzie and third-year Ty Hamilton.

"There are some guys that, when you watch them in practice, they go hard every single play," Knowles said. "Game, non-game, walk-through, it doesn't matter. I think Mike has a lot of that in him. He's always going hard. That's something that's going to lead his game to higher levels."

Hall credited his mother with instilling that mentality in him. She always told him to never be satisfied, to keep working. With his natural abilities, energy and the production he's already shown to this point, Hall is certainly far from satisfying his full potential at defensive tackle for the Buckeyes.

"He's building on it and getting the confidence to go out there and be like, 'No, these dudes can't block me,'" Harrison said. "That's the mind-set (he should have). We try to tell Mike, 'Mike, you're like that. You're a dog.'"

"Mike's almost like a spark plug for the defense. You see him out there going crazy. We all feed off of that."

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Struggling Wildcats Searching For Answers

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

Heading into this season, the idea of “even-year” Northwestern had some merit. Back in 2018, the Wildcats finished with a 9-5 record and an 8-1 mark in conference play, with the lone loss a 20-17 defeat at the hands of No. 14 Michigan in just the fourth week of the season. Northwestern then ripped off seven straight conference wins, earning the program’s first appearance in the Big Ten Championship Game.

The contest ended in a decisive 45-24 win by Ohio State when quarterback Dwayne Haskins threw for 499 yards and five touchdowns, but it still showed continued growth for Northwestern by winning the Big Ten’s West Division, one which had been dominated by Wisconsin and Iowa since the conference reworked the divisions in 2014. The bottom fell out the next season, though, as the Wildcats finished just 3-9, with their lone conference win coming against Illinois in the final week of the season. It was the fewest wins in a single season under head coach Pat Fitzgerald, whose tenure dates back to 2006.

That relative aberration was quickly wiped from the minds of the Northwestern faithful, who saw their team return to the Big Ten Championship Game the next season. The Wildcats were able to develop a rhythm in 2020, one of just three teams in the Big Ten (along with Penn State and Rutgers) that had no games canceled due to the pandemic, and they rode that energy to their second appearance in the conference title game in three seasons.

This established another date with Ohio State, and the Wildcats held their own, at least early on. Ohio State played one of the uglier first halves in recent memory, but a school-record 331 rushing yards from Trey Sermon helped lift the Buckeyes to a 22-10 win, while the defense allowed no points in the second half after facing a 10-6 deficit at the break.

Northwestern looked to continue that momentum last season, but the pattern continued, and the Wildcats stumbled to another 3-9 finish, dropping their final six games of the year and finishing last in their division.

History would indicate that this season – another even year in 2022 – would be another success for the Wildcats, continuing the roller coaster that can’t be good for the health of the Evanston, Ill., natives, and that was further evidenced in Northwestern’s season opener against Nebraska in Dublin, Ireland. Despite entering the game as a double-digit underdog, the Wildcats won a wild back-and-forth contest with quarterback Ryan Hilinski throwing for 314 yards and running back Evan Hull going for 119 yards rushing in the 31-28 win.

Played during “Week Zero,” a full week before most programs kicked off their seasons, it was one of the first college football games to grace television sets, and for a brief, perfect moment in time, Northwestern stood as one of college football’s lone undefeated teams.

“It’s a great stage to be on having the first game of college football, back in the States and worldwide to have all the eyes of college football on us,” Fitzgerald said after the win. “Let’s not lose the moment. Let’s go and seize the moment. All the credit goes to our players.”

Instead, the moment has seized Northwestern. The Wildcats have since lost seven straight games, including home losses to FCS-level Southern Illinois and to the Mid-American Conference’s Miami (Ohio). Southern Illinois had lost the first two games of the season to Incarnate Word and Southeast Missouri, and it looked to be going that way against the Wildcats after Northwestern took a 14-7 lead early in the second quarter. The Salukis then rattled off 24 points sandwiched around a Northwestern field goal, and a late touchdown by the Wildcats made the 31-24 final appear closer than the true result was.

It was the fourth win against an FBS team in program history for Southern Illinois and just the second against a Power Five opponent (Indiana, 2006). Northwestern followed the loss up with a similarly disappointing result against the RedHawks the next week.

Northwestern has played close contests – keeping the final score to a possession in losses to Miami (Ohio), Southern Illinois, Duke and Maryland – and had a close 17-7 loss at Penn State on Oct. 1, but wins have remained elusive for the Wildcats.

“Disappointing loss to say the least,” Fitzgerald said after the loss to the Terrapins. “Now it’s four times that we’ve been in one-score games that we’ve had every opportunity to win the game and our mistakes have led, unfortunately, to us not being successful.”

The blame for this season’s struggles is shared across the field, from coaching to execution on offense and defense. Northwestern is putting up just 17.9 points per game this season, 120th in the country, and it’s led to some mild controversy at quarterback.

Despite the strong play of Hilinski – the incumbent starter for Northwestern who also started a season for South Carolina in 2019 – in the season opener against Nebraska and 435 passing yards in the Wildcats’ loss to Duke, his numbers began dropping across the board, with his completion percentage, passing yards and touchdowns all taking a dip while his turnovers remained up.

He was pulled from Northwestern’s loss to Wisconsin on Oct. 8, but after three consecutive three-and-outs by the offense led by quarterback Brendan Sullivan, Hilinski returned. That was short-lived, however, when Hilinski suffered a concussion on the first drive of the second half, and Sullivan closed the contest out, finishing 11 of 17 for 114 yards and a touchdown.

“My athletic ability is what separates me, the ability to make big plays on the run and in the pocket,” Sullivan said. “I stayed the course and worked hard to prepare like I was the starter every day, so I feel like that’s just a testament to who I am as a person.”

With Hilinski still recovering from his concussion, Sullivan made his first career start in the loss to Maryland and was 18 of 24 for 143 yards, two scores (one passing, one rushing) and a pair of interceptions. After earning the start against Iowa, where he went 23 of 30 for 159 yards with two touchdowns against one interception, it appears the job is now solely possessed by Sullivan.

“We felt like making the decision at this time was the right decision for the (team),” Fitzgerald said. “It’s as much as trying to get a spark as much as we’re trying to do some-

Get To Know ... Northwestern

2022 Record: 1-7.
Team Information: Offensive Formation - Multiple; **Defensive Formation** - 4-3; **Starters Returning** - Offense 9, Defense 5, Specialists 1.
Head Coach: Pat Fitzgerald, 17th year at Northwestern, 110-97.
Series History: 80th meeting; Ohio State leads 64-14-1.
School Facts: **Location** - Evanston, IL.; Enrollment – 21,946; Nickname – Wildcats; Colors – Purple, White; Conference – Big Ten (West Division); Stadium – Ryan Field (Surface, Grass; Capacity – 47,130).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Evan Hull	136	579	4.3	3
Cam Porter	62	201	3.2	2

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Ryan Hilinski	141-244	57.8	1576	6-6
Brendan Sullivan	52-71	73.2	416	4-3

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Malik Washington	43	470	10.9	1
Evan Hull	45	461	10.2	2
Donny Navarro	29	230	7.9	2

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game — 17.9
Rushing Yards Per Game — 113.4
Passing Yards Per Game — 249.3
Total Offense Avg. Per Game — 362.6

2022 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 27	vs. Nebraska at Dublin W	31-28
Sept. 10	DUKE	L, 31-23
Sept. 17	SOUTHERN ILLINOIS	L, 31-24
Sept. 24	MIAMI (OHIO)	L, 17-14
Oct. 1	at Penn State	L, 17-7
Oct. 8	WISCONSIN	L, 42-7
Oct. 22	at Maryland	L, 31-24
Oct. 29	at Iowa	L, 33-13
Nov. 5	OHIO STATE	12 p.m.
Nov. 12	at Minnesota	TBA
Nov. 19	at Purdue	TBA
Nov. 26	ILLINOIS	TBA
Dec. 3	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Bryce Gallagher	44	35	79	5.0-11	1.5-6
Xander Mueller	37	27	64	6.5-22	1.0-7
Jeremiah Lewis	35	17	52	3.0-5	0-0
Rod Heard II	28	10	38	2.5-9	0.5-4
Cameron Mitchell	25	10	35	2.0-24	1.0-22

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Xander Mueller	2	0	0	0
Cameron Mitchell	1	33	33.0	0
Bryce Gallagher	1	0	0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed — 28.8
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed — 185.8
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed — 220.8
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed — 406.5

thing for the team.”

The quarterbacks for Northwestern have been on somewhat of an island this season in terms of trying to move the ball. Despite a veteran offensive line with several returning starters, including one of the prospects in the upcoming NFL draft in left tackle Peter Skoronski, and junior running backs Hull and Cam Porter both back for the Wildcats, the rushing attack has been inconsistent at best.

Hull has been the main ball carrier, totting the rock 136 times for 579 yards, just 4.3 per carry, to go with three touchdowns, though he’s also a threat in the receiving game with 45 receptions on the year for 461 yards. Malik Washington (43 receptions for 470 yard and one TD) and Donny Navarro (29, 230, two TDs) have been the other notable receiving options for the Wildcats. Porter has seen less utilization in the run game, carrying the ball just 62 times for 201 yards, averaging just 3.2 yards per attempt.

The lack of offense has put a greater strain on Northwestern’s defense, which is allowing 28.8 points and 407.1 yards per game, both of which rank among the bottom half of the country. The Wildcats have a passable passing defense at 220.8 yards allowed per game, led by cornerbacks Cameron Mitchell and Garnett Hollis Jr., safeties Jeremiah Lewis and Coco Azema, and nickelback Rod Heard II. Defensive backs A.J. Hampton Jr. and Theran Johnson have also seen significant snaps for Northwestern.

The rushing defense has been more stunted, allowing 186.4 yards per game, a mark that puts the Wildcats at 111th in the country and 13th in the Big Ten. Opposing running backs have found the end zone on 14 occasions and are averaging 4.5 yards per carry. As a whole, the defense has also had a penchant for allowing explosive plays, giving up seven plays of at least 50 yards

through their first eight games.

“We’re very close to breaking through,” Heard said. “We have these one-play breakdowns and these few plays a game that we need to find a way to win. Speaking for the team, the energy is still there.”

While the linebacker unit for Northwestern still has room to grow, they’ve had positive contributions from Bryce Gallagher, Xander Mueller and Grayson Metz, who have taken the majority of snaps at the position. Gallagher leads the team with 79 tackles (five for loss), 1½ sacks and an interception on the season.

“He’s playing great,” Fitzgerald said. “He’s a heck of a football player. He’s a great leader for our defense and our team. He’s been spectacular, and we’re going to need him here as we move forward.”

The interior of the defense is led by defensive tackle Adetomiwa Adebawore, who leads the Wildcats with four sacks and has 5½ tackles for loss, and Northwestern also welcomed in transfer defensive lineman Taishan Holmes from UMass in addition to returning defensive linemen Devin O’Rourke and Sean McLaughlin, who have combined for 47 tackles (6½ for loss).

With what one can likely chalk up as a loss to Ohio State, the Wildcats have few opportunities left on their schedule to pick up wins. After hosting the Buckeyes on Nov. 5, Northwestern will travel to face Minnesota on Nov. 12 and Purdue on Nov. 19 before finishing the season at home against No. 14 Illinois.

Fitzgerald has never finished with fewer than three wins in any of his seasons in Evanston, but with just one win under his belt entering his matchup with Ohio State – a game last won by the Wildcats in 2004, two years before Fitzgerald took over – it may take whatever even-year magic remains to stop the program from reaching a new low.



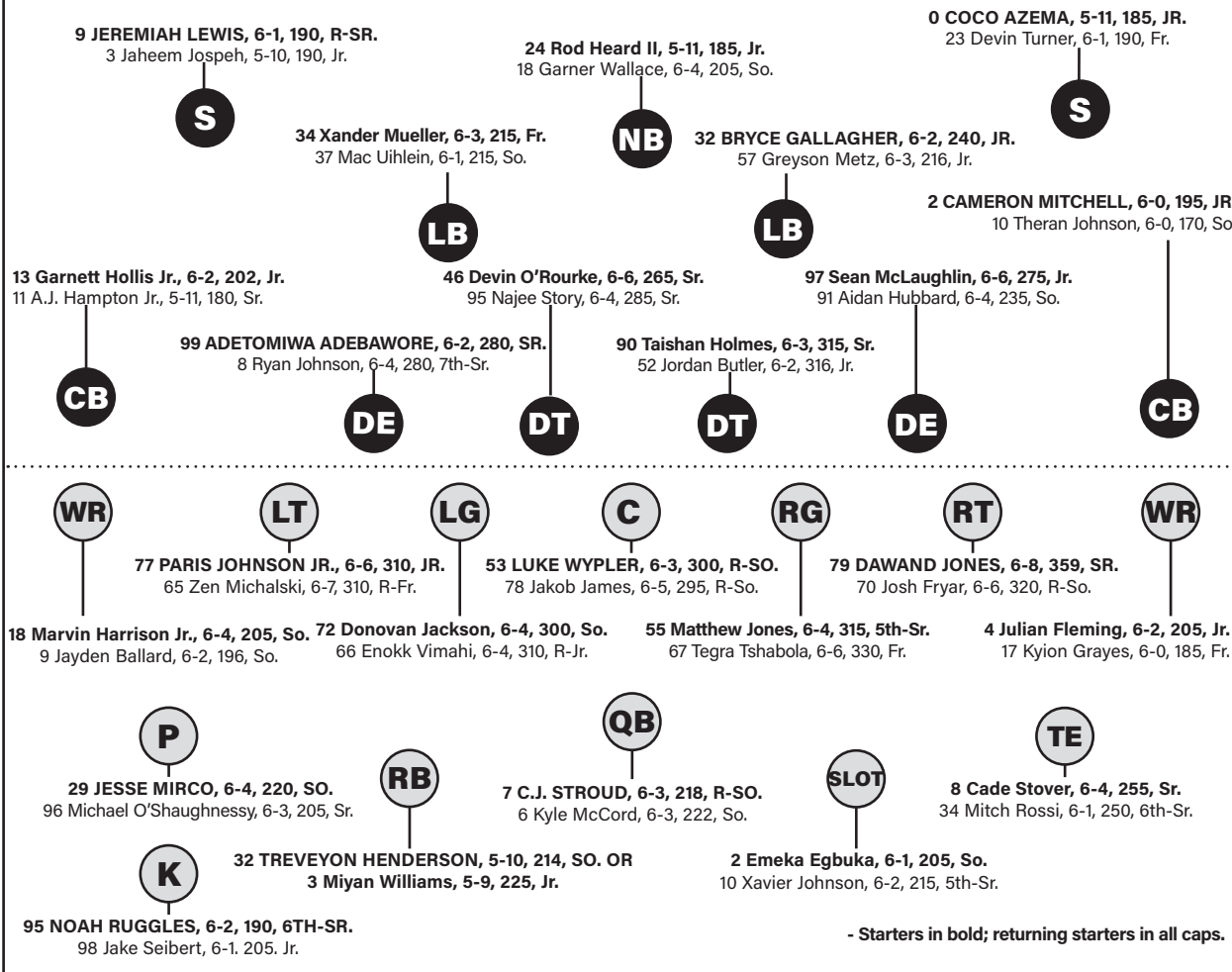
Ohio State at Northwestern

Saturday, Nov. 5 • Noon • ABC
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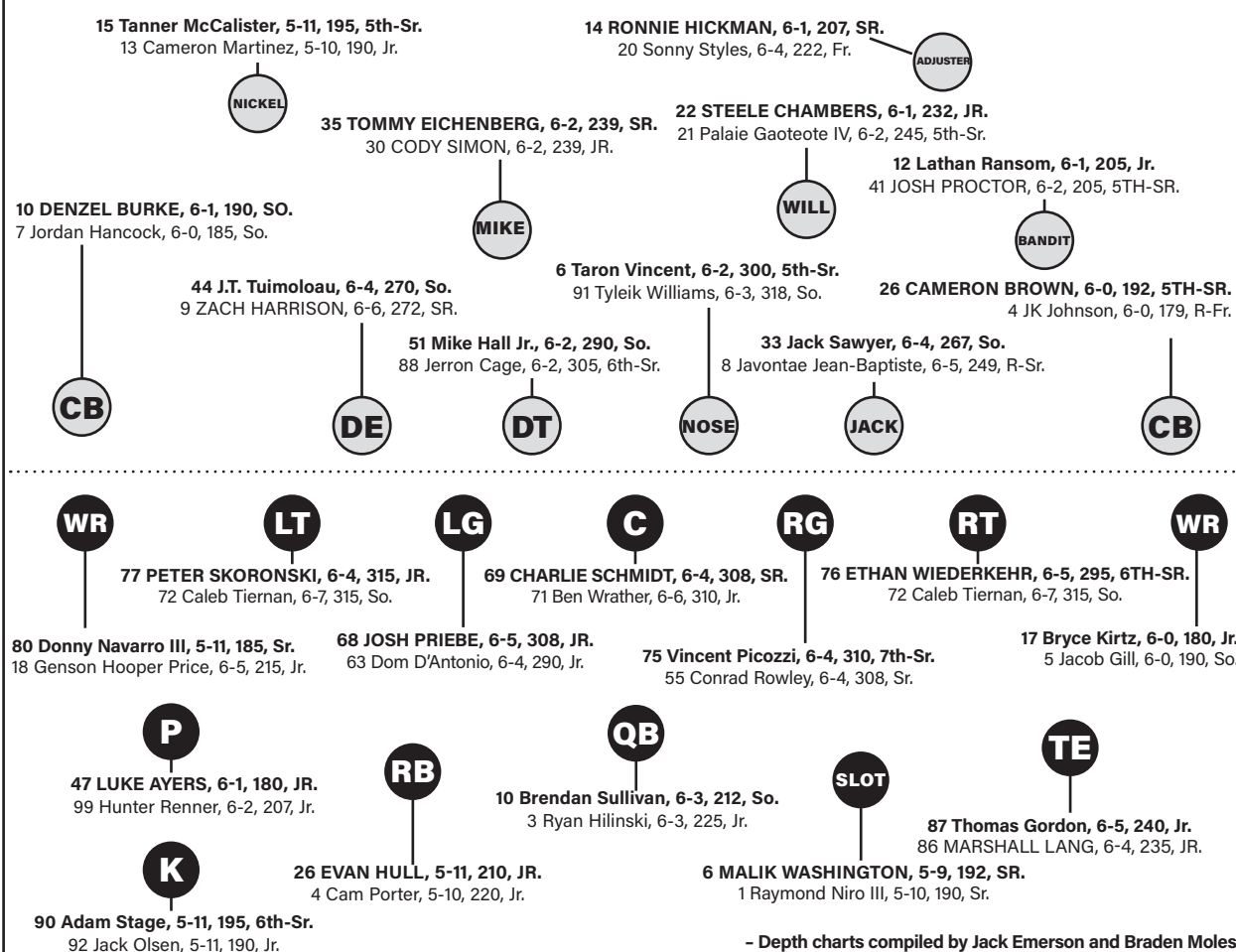


Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



WHEN NORTHWESTERN HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. NORTHWESTERN RUSH DEFENSE

Northwestern's defense isn't Iowa or Penn State – Ohio State's past two opponents – so Buckeye fans can exhale knowing the floundering running game has a chance to regain momentum entering the stretch run of the regular season. The biggest concern will be the health of Miyan Williams, who left with an injury in the second quarter against Penn State. With neither him nor TreVeyon Henderson immune to injuries, it behooves the Buckeyes to make quick work of the Wildcats and let the backups take a licking. Henderson was held in check for much of the Penn State game before breaking off a 41-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter. That accounted for a large portion of the 98 yards (3.8 per carry) Ohio State had for the game on the ground. Michigan obliterated the Penn State defense for 418 rushing yards on Oct. 15 in the Nittany Lions' only other loss of the season. Add the fact that the Buckeyes gained 66 yards on 30 runs the previous game vs. Iowa and there has to be concern, just like the tail end of last season. Fortunately for the Buckeyes, Northwestern is 111th of 131 schools in rush defense, allowing 186.4 yards per game **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

NORTHWESTERN RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Northwestern doesn't have much going for it, having lost seven straight, but Evan Hull has been a standout on a bad team. He is eighth nationally in all-purpose yards (143.4). He has 579 running, 461 receiving and 107 on kickoff returns. Everyone knows Iowa has a tough defense – just ask the Buckeyes – but in a 33-13 loss to the Hawkeyes on Oct. 29, Northwestern rushed for 18 yards on 37 attempts (0.5). OSU is 10th in the nation vs. the run (93.4). **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. NORTHWESTERN PASS DEFENSE

C.J. Stroud made the big plays when needed in the second half of the 44-31 win over Penn State on Oct. 29, but his lack of sharpness, poor game management and questionable play calling by the coaches made the game closer than it should have been. When you have great receivers, you throw downfield, not the bubble screens to Emeka Egbuka that continually were stopped before the line of scrimmage. Stroud finally connected with him on a key 42-yarder during the decisive fourth quarter. Until then, Stroud relied on Marvin Harrison Jr. (10 catches, 185 yards) every time he was in trouble due to the continued absence of injured receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba. While Stroud threw for 354 yards, he was sacked twice. Northwestern did the near impossible, making Iowa appear to have a passing game after the Hawkeyes totaled 220 yards through the air. The Wildcats have allowed 15 passing touchdowns against five interceptions. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

NORTHWESTERN PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Brendan Sullivan made his second start of the season and went 23 of 30 for 159 yards, two touchdowns and an interception against Iowa. He was also sacked seven times. He must be wary of defensive end J.T. Tuimoloua, who had a monster game against Penn State including two interceptions (one a pick-six) as well as a strip sack and fumble recovery. If there's any hope for Northwestern, it's that Penn State torched the Buckeyes for 371 passing yards. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Noah Ruggles made three field goals (38, 37 and 40 yards) but missed from 53 yards while punter Jesse Mirco did his usual outstanding job (52.0 average on three punts). The good news was Mason Arnold filled in for injured long snapper Bradley Robinson and nobody noticed. On the downside, Cade Stover jumped early on a two-point conversion try. Northwestern punter Luke Akers averages 41.3 and Adam Stage has made 4 of 6 field goals with a long of 35 yards. **EDGE: EVEN**

INTANGIBLES

Ohio State is playing Northwestern, but in reality everything is focused on the Nov. 26 showdown with Michigan. Iowa offered a great defense but a lousy offense. Penn State was good on both sides of the ball so the Buckeyes have been tested for large portions of the past two games. Northwestern will not be a challenge. That will be left to the Buckeyes to improve in such areas as third-down conversions, of which they were 1 of 7 in the first half vs. the Nittany Lions. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

STAFF PREDICTION

There were times when Northwestern provided cause for concern to the Buckeyes, and many predicted a far better season for the Wildcats. They have several quality players such as Hull and offensive lineman Peter Skoronski but little else to cause worry. **OHIO STATE 56, NORTHWESTERN 14**

Coombs Back Home On Staff With Cincinnati

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

If former Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs somehow acquired Dorothy's red slippers from "The Wizard of Oz," tapped his heels three times and said, "There's no place like home," Cincinnati is probably where he'd end up.

Coombs was born and raised in Colerain, Ohio, a Cincinnati suburb. He spent more than two decades coaching high school football in the Cincinnati area at four separate academic institutions. His first collegiate coaching job came as defensive backs coach for the University of Cincinnati in 2007, where he was promoted to associate head coach and special teams coordinator in 2009.

"I know the people, I love the people of Cincinnati," Coombs said this past spring. "There's no place like this."

For the first time since 2011, Coombs is back coaching the Bearcats this season, serving as Cincinnati's cornerbacks coach and, ironically, replacing Perry Eliano, who is now Ohio State's safeties coach. Indications are that Cincinnati is as happy to have Coombs back as he is happy to have landed there.

"He's a perfect fit here," The Cincinnati Enquirer's Keith Jenkins told BSB. "Obviously he has a relationship with (head coach) Luke Fickell. It was just a natural fit for him, for the other coaches, for the players and the fan base. People love him here."

Coombs' otherwise heralded time at Ohio State came to an unceremonious end in 2021. In eight seasons with the Buckeyes he had a hand in developing nine total NFL draft picks with seven first-rounders at cornerback. His ability to recruit and maximize talent was never really in question at Ohio State, where he spent the 2012-2017 seasons before leaving to become a defensive backs coach with the Tennessee Titans under head coach Mike Vrabel, a former Buckeye. The two coached together at Ohio State in 2012 and 2013.

He decided to return to Columbus in 2020, but this time it was as defensive

coordinator. Ohio State finished with the 59th-ranked total defense in college football during the eight-game season, allowing more than 400 yards per game for just the second time in school history. Passing defense was the main culprit, finishing 122nd of 127 schools who played that season, allowing 304.0 yards per contest.

Coombs got another year to right the ship, but the Buckeyes came out of the gate with a home loss to Oregon in the second week of the season, allowing 269 rushing yards. The Ducks picked up solid gains on several similar-looking outside runs into the boundary, taking advantage of Ohio State's defense that looked out of position.

Coombs was stripped of defensive play-calling duties following the contest. It seemed likely he wouldn't be at Ohio State beyond the 2021 campaign, but he soldiered on.

"Picking up your ball and going home, kicking the can down the road, quitting, packing your stuff up, being a miserable human being – if I had done those things, that would make me a liar to every one of those young men that I've coached along the way that had tough times, that got replaced on a given Saturday," Coombs said after his demotion. "I had to have the conversation, 'Hang in there, it's going to be OK.' Whether they agreed with the decision or not, it didn't matter, you had to battle and fight through."

But Fickell came calling soon after last season closed. Fickell and Coombs had worked together during the latter's first stint at Ohio State, and securing a Cincinnati native with a proven track record of developing corners seemed an easy hire.

"I'm thrilled to welcome Kerry Coombs and his family back to Cincinnati and to our program," Fickell said after hiring Coombs. "Kerry has had tremendous success everywhere he has been at the high school, college and professional levels because he's an exceptional motivator and teacher of the game. Coaching with him, I've seen firsthand the positive impact Kerry can have on a program."

That prior relationship with Fickell and familiarity with the city smoothed out Coombs' move, Jenkins said. His pedigree also helped in establishing connections with a new cast of characters in his cornerbacks room.

"It was an easy transition for us, as far as the media goes, and for the fan base," Jenkins said. "Then the players, he already had a lot of relationships with guys on this team, whether it's through recruiting or the industry or knowing this area. Then he immediately has the respect of those guys because of his accolades and his achievements and his accomplishments."

Despite losing a top-10 pick at cornerback in the 2022 NFL draft in Ahmad "Sauce" Gardner and a fourth-rounder in Coby Bryant, the Bearcats boast the nation's No. 26 pass defense this year. Arquon Bush has since stepped into a starting role, with two interceptions on the season, including one he returned for a touchdown.

"I don't think you'll ever replace Coby Bryant and Ahmad 'Sauce' Gardner," Jenkins said. "But (Bush and corner Ja'Quan Sheppard) have stepped in pretty well, and that's a credit to Kerry giving them the confidence and instilling in them the belief that they can be successful."

Jenkins added that he's enjoyed the energy and intensity Coombs brings to practice. That's a place he differs from the laid-back Eliano. As Buckeye fans know, Coombs is more the type of coach to get in a player's face and be an intense motivator.

"He's got more energy than anybody I've ever seen," Jenkins said. "And he's 60 years old. I've teased him before, like, 'Man, you've got to tell me your secret, because when I get to 60 I hope I have half as much energy as you have.'"

Coombs still has some input in the defensive scheme for the Bearcats, though he's not involved in down-to-down play calling, according to Jenkins. He's also taken on the role of special teams coordinator, overseeing football's often-overlooked third phase.

"It's the gateway to playing offense and defense (for players)," Coombs said. "If

you're not playing special teams, you don't deserve to play offense and defense. That level of competition to get on the field, whether it's covering kicks or being on the punt team, that's critical here. And it's valued, and it should be."

Off the field, Coombs' Ohio ties are an ideal mesh with Cincinnati's recruiting footprint. He sent his kids to nearby Colerain High School, which he and his wife both attended.

"I love that we are recruiting Cincinnati kids and Ohio kids and lining up and playing ball," Coombs said. "That is really exciting to me, because I don't think there's any better high school football played anywhere in the country than there is right here in our back yard. We're going to find good, tough, hard-nosed kids and line them up and play."

Since taking the job at Cincinnati, Coombs has added four cornerbacks to the Bearcats' 24th-ranked recruiting class for 2023, including Roseville, Mich., four-star Amare Snowden (6-3, 187) and a local prospect Cincinnati Winton Woods in three-star Cameron Calhoun (6-0, 170), evidence of Coombs' recruiting bread-and-butter remaining in the Cincinnati area.

"This has been his sweet spot as a recruiter for several years," Jenkins said. "He's a guy that's not only familiar with this area, but we're familiar with him."

Both on the field and off it, it's clear Coombs is at home in Cincinnati in the best ways possible.

"It's just been fun to have Kerry present with his energy," Jenkins said. "It's not only as he's coaching the corners, but with him being the special teams coordinator. It's the different things that he tries to cook up to distract the kickers and the punters. Saying certain things, some expletives – friendly expletives – but just trying to get guys off their game. It's just been fun to see a different energy. He's beyond comfortable here, and it's been funny and hilarious and a blast all at the same time."

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Browning Happy As Outsider For Denver

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Baron Browning has an edge to his game this season, and it has helped the former Ohio State linebacker become a vital cog in the defense of the Denver Broncos.

After playing his rookie season in 2021 as inside linebacker out of necessity due to injuries, he was moved to his more natural spot on the outside this season and at times has become a dominate edge defender.

After getting limited playing time in the first four games this season, an injury to Randy Gregory opened the door for Browning and he took full advantage before a national television audience during the Thursday night game of Oct. 6 against the Indianapolis Colts. He made his first career start and had five tackles (two solo) and 1½ sacks for 17 yards. He had no sacks in his previous 18 NFL games.

Impressively, he had six quarterback hits, the most since T.J. Watt of the Pittsburgh Steelers had six vs. Baltimore in the sixth week of the 2021 season. Even more impressively, Browning had 10 quarterback pressures on 20 pass rush snaps, winning 12 of those 20.

The 50 percent pressure percentage and the 60 percent pass rush win rate were the highest marks in Pro Football Focus history (since 2006) in a game where a player had at least 20 pass rush snaps.

Browning, the 105th overall pick by the Broncos in the 2021 NFL draft, was in the spotlight the following game as well on a Monday night matchup against the Los Angeles Chargers on Oct. 17. He had three tackles (two for losses), two pass breakups, a sack and his first career interception, and afterward, he thanked outside linebacker Bradley Chubb and Gregory for their support and tutoring.

"I feel pretty comfortable," Browning said. "I feel like that's a credit to Bradley Chubb and Randy Gregory helping me out a lot with the transition and just being guys I can call or text to ask questions or go over to their crib to watch film."

Per Next Gen Stats, Browning sacked Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert just 2.70 seconds after the snap. The Broncos to that point of the season averaged 3.76 seconds, the fastest in the NFL.

With the sack and the interception, he became the first Bronco outside linebacker to do so in the same game since Von Miller in 2018.

Unfortunately for Browning, his ascent came to a grinding halt Oct. 23 vs. the New York Jets when he sustained a hip injury that was expected to keep him out for at least two games. His absence may give linebacker and former Ohio State teammate Jonathon Cooper more playing time. Another Buckeye on the Broncos is defensive end Dre'Mont Jones, a 2019 draft pick.

Together they are part of a strong defensive unit that has kept the Broncos in games despite a weak offense. Denver is 3-5 after a 21-17 win over the Jacksonville Jaguars in London on Oct. 30.

"The defense is playing at such a high level, and they are battling nonstop," head coach Nathaniel Hackett said Oct. 18. "The defensive line is penetrating, rushing the quarterback. Just watching them play, it's a great defense. I give them so much credit, and it's on the rest of the team to be able to step up to



FILE PHOTO

LET'S RIDE — Former Ohio State linebacker Baron Browning has enjoyed a career renaissance with the Denver Broncos, where he has largely been utilized as an edge rusher. He has amassed 2½ sacks and an interception this season.

their level and have that same standard that they have to be able to make plays."

The defense is playing like a group that doesn't want to disappoint each other as evidenced by five players having at least half a sack against the Colts.

"It's been a world of fun, to be honest with you," Chubb told The Athletic's Nick Kosmider. "When you've got all the guys who are on the field at the same time, with the ability to rush and the ability to do multiple things, then Dre'Mont could easily have the 5½ (sacks that Chubb has) or DeShawn (Williams) or D.J. (Jones) or Baron. The fact that we're all rushing so hard together as one, it's been working out, man, and it's been fun. We're moving as one in these meeting rooms, and then we're going out there and executing it."

Browning (6-3, 240) explained that competition among the linebackers is why the defense had excelled and said, "I feel like it's made us all better, especially myself. It's kind of the standard no matter who's in. So I feel like we've been doing a great job of that as a unit just upholding that standard."

He likes the familial feel created by the first-year coaching staff and how that has extended to the players.

"With the coaches you notice a lot of back and forth, like they trust our feedback," he said. "I also think just the relationships you build with the players on my team, it's the little details you guys (media) might see at the (training facility) but when we're not at the facility what people don't see is a lot of guys will be hanging, like one group is having a dinner and they invite another group. You just see a bunch of camaraderie."

"So, it's pretty dope and I think that's one reason why we play as hard as we do. It's one thing that we play hard but when you have those relationships with guys that only makes

you want to play that much harder because you don't want to let them down. I think just from the offseason, we did a good job of building that chemistry — the relationships not only as players, but also with the coaches."

In his time at Ohio State from 2017-20, Browning played 43 games (10 starts) and totaled 110 tackles, seven sacks for 37 yards, three pass breakups, two forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries.

Making An Impression

His athleticism at the NFL Combine before the draft wowed potential suitors.

Browning's 23 bench press repetitions, 40-inch vertical, 4.56 40-yard dash and several other tests were computed in something called the Relative Athletic Score to measure players against each other. He scored a 9.98 out of 10 for the fifth-best mark among the 2,137 linebackers who have participated in the combine since 1987.

"He's a freak of nature," Chubb said. "A lot of things he does you just can't really duplicate. That's why he's so successful."

Browning appeared in 14 games (nine starts) for the Broncos last season, posting 58 tackles (32 solo) and two passes defend-

ed.

It was a good start to his pro career, but his level of anticipation for the 2022 season jumped when he was told in the spring he would be tried at outside linebacker. He showed up at the Organized Team Activities (OTA) in the offseason with a fresh outlook.

"It started at the OTAs" he said. "Every day I became more comfortable, and I feel more comfortable now than where I was at the OTAs."

"I just feel like it's my position now and feel like it's not new for me anymore. So I'm kind of pretty hard on myself and I don't treat it as if it's a new position."

As mentioned earlier, Chubb has been a big influence on Browning developing into the player he is now. Their relationship began to grow when Jones invited him to go along on a visit to Chubb's house.

"(Chubb) was really the first guy to take me under his wing when I got here," Browning said. "We already had that big brother-little brother relationship. We do a pretty good job of communicating."

"It's definitely been a lot of fun playing with him. I'm just out there playing football, like when you're a kid and you're in your neighborhood."

Chubb had no doubt that Browning would step into the hole left by Gregory's injury.

"I know he's going to step up," Chubb said Oct. 5. "I know he's going to be that presence on the edge that Randy was. With Baron, I just know he's going to fill into that role and do the same things. I've seen it in practice. I've seen the freaky athleticism that he has and stuff like that. So I'm not worried about a drop in anything. I know that he's going to do everything that we ask of him."

Ironically, another player who was helpful in Browning advancing his career was edge rusher Malik Reed, whose trade to the Pittsburgh Steelers before the season showed that the Broncos coaching staff was committed to Browning in his new role.

"I will say I kind of do miss Malik being here," Browning said. "He was very helpful for me going into this role this year. He was one of the guys as far as being a leader and taking me under his wing and just showing me how he prepared. I was working with him after practice, working on my moves, extra conditioning. All around he was a great guy. I definitely miss him around the building, but I took a lot of things from him that can be part of my game to help me get better."

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Archie, Coaching Change Mark Stadium's 6th 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 Horseshoe's sixth decade (1972-81) that included the Archie Griffin era as well as the end of the longest coaching tenure in program history.

By MARK REA

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Ohio Stadium entered its sixth decade with the dawn of a legendary era, but before the decade had ended, the sun would set on another iconic period in the university football program's history.

The Buckeyes were coming off a mediocre 6-4 record in 1971, and a skeptical crowd of 77,098 showed up on a balmy mid-September afternoon to witness a rather boring 21-0 win against Iowa in the 1972 season opener. Woody Hayes began his 22nd season as head coach pretty much the way he had begun the previous 21, calling for only eight passes among his team's 73 offensive plays.

One of those running plays came late in the fourth quarter and resulted in a botched option pitch between two backup players – sophomore quarterback Dave Purdy and a freshman tailback named Archie Griffin, who was making his college football debut. It's doubtful that any of those on hand in the Horseshoe that day realized the butterfingering running back who mishandled the football on that play would become one of the sport's most legendary players.

That legend began in earnest two weeks later when the Buckeyes entertained non-conference opponent North Carolina. Temperatures in central Ohio had taken a tumble with the mercury struggling to get above 50 degrees and a chilly 12-mph wind blowing in from the northwest. Nevertheless, the announced attendance was 86,180 – nearly a 12-percent hike from the season opener – and the crowd was treated to an electrifying performance from Griffin.

After the Buckeyes went three-and-out on their first two offensive possessions, the second of which ended in a blocked punt that North Carolina turned into a touchdown and an early 7-0 lead, Hayes knew his team needed some kind of spark. He called for Griffin to take over the tailback spot to begin his team's third series, and the 5-10, 185-pound freshman took it from there.

Griffin took a pitch from quarterback Greg Hare and sprinted around left end for a gain of 6 yards. It was the first official carry of his college career and the first of 27 during an afternoon when Griffin rushed for 239 yards and a touchdown while leading the Buckeyes to a 29-14 victory.

The performance broke the OSU single-game rushing record of 229 yards, set by Ollie Cline against Pittsburgh in 1945.

Two weeks later, Griffin was at it again, this time piling up 192 yards on 27 attempts during a 26-7 victory against Illinois in front of a home crowd of 86,298. The freshman sensation would not crack the century mark again during the 1972 season, but the campaign featured several other highlights.



FILE PHOTO

END OF AN ERA — The sixth decade of Ohio Stadium's existence saw the end of Woody Hayes' 28-year tenure as Ohio State's head coach. Hayes amassed a 205-61-10 record while leading the Buckeyes to consensus national titles in 1954, 1957 and 1968.

The Buckeyes hosted Indiana on Oct. 21, the 50th anniversary of the Ohio Stadium Dedication Game. Among the 86,365 on hand to watch the 44-7 rout of the Hoosiers were 14 former Ohio State players who had participated in the stadium dedication game. The 1922 players in attendance, including halfback Wilmer Isabel, who scored the first touchdown in stadium history, were honored on the field at halftime.

A month later, Ohio State and Michigan squared off in a classic game with a crowd of 87,040 – at the time the second-largest crowd in Ohio Stadium history – braving cold and rainy conditions to watch the ninth-ranked Buckeyes take a hard-fought 14-11 decision against the undefeated and third-ranked Wolverines.

The game featured one of the finest defensive efforts in OSU program history, including a pair of goal-line stands. The first occurred just before halftime when the Buckeyes turned Michigan away after the Wolverines had first-and-goal at the 1-yard line, and the second happened early in the fourth quarter after U-M had a first down at the Ohio State 5.

Sophomore linebacker Arnie Jones, playing for injured starter Vic Koegel, led the Buckeyes with a career-high 24 tackles. Fellow linebackers Rick Middleton and Randy Gradishar finished with 17 and 15 stops, respectively.

The victory allowed Ohio State to tie Michigan for the Big Ten championship and qualify for the first of what would be an unprecedented four straight trips to the Rose Bowl.

The Wolverines got some measure of satisfaction, however, when they ended OSU's 14-year streak of leading college football in home attendance. Seating capacity at Mich-

igan Stadium had been officially 101,001 since an expansion project was completed in 1956, but with the exception of the Ohio State game every other year, the facility rarely sold out. Still, Michigan's average attendance during the 1972 season was 85,566, narrowly edging OSU's average of 84,903. The two schools would occupy the top two spots in college football's attendance numbers for the remainder of the 1970s.

Record-Setting Era

A crowd of 86,005 – the largest opening-day crowd at the Horseshoe in four years – watched Ohio State roll to a 56-7 victory against Minnesota in the 1973 season opener. Griffin brought the crowd to its feet early in the second quarter with a kickoff return of 93 yards for a touchdown. And the sophomore added 129 yards on just 15 carries, the first of what would be 31 consecutive regular-season games with at least 100 yards rushing, a streak that remains an NCAA record at the Football Bowl Subdivision level.

Hayes fielded what was arguably his most talented team in 1973, a squad that featured four first-team All-Americans, 10 players who earned first-team All-Big Ten honors, and three who finished among the top six vote-getters for the Heisman Trophy. Offensive tackle John Hicks was runner-up to trophy winner John Cappelletti of Penn State while Griffin finished fifth and Gradishar was sixth.

The Buckeyes featured an explosive offense as well as a stifling defense, outscoring 11 opponents by a 413-64 margin. The defense pitched four shutouts that season, including three in a row that began with a 60-0 annihilation of Northwestern in late

October.

A new stadium record crowd of 87,453 was on hand for homecoming as seven different Buckeyes scored touchdowns against the Wildcats. Northwestern held Ohio State scoreless in the first quarter before the Buckeyes tallied 27 points in the second quarter and followed with 26 more in the third period.

The only thing preventing Ohio State from winning the 1973 national championship was a 10-10 tie at Michigan, after which a controversial vote by Big Ten athletic directors sent the Buckeyes to the Rose Bowl where they rolled to a 42-21 win against seventh-ranked USC.

Ohio State won outright conference titles in 1974 and '75 with Griffin running his way to becoming the first (and still only) two-time Heisman winner. One of the highlights of the 1974 season came during a 49-7 victory against Illinois in early November. In front of another stadium record crowd of 87,813, Hayes recorded the 200th victory of his coaching career while Griffin rushed for 144 yards to become the first player in major college football to rush for 100 or more yards in 18 consecutive regular-season games.

Griffin's final home game came Nov. 15, 1975, and was a 38-6 victory against Minnesota during which he carried 23 times for 124 yards and one touchdown. With the game clock running under four minutes, Hayes took Griffin out of the game to a tumultuous ovation from the 87,817 in attendance. Afterward, the coach tried to put into words what his star running back had meant to the Buckeyes.

"This is the closest team I have ever had," Hayes said, "and the thing that makes it so close is the presence of Archie Griffin. Archie is our biggest star, but our biggest star is also our biggest team player."

Griffin finished his career with 5,589 career rushing yards, a total that was an NCAA record at the time and remains the Ohio State program standard. He also still holds the OSU career records with 924 carries and an average of 121.5 yards per game.

Oklahoma Barn Burner

Despite the loss of Griffin, as well as several other offensive and defensive standouts, the Buckeyes continued their winning ways. They ran their streak of consecutive Big Ten championships to a record six with co-titles in 1976 and '77. But there were cracks appearing as Hayes passed the quarter-century mark as head coach of the program.

On Sept. 25, 1976, in front of a stunned Horseshoe crowd of 87,936, backup quarterback Pete Woods led unranked Missouri to a 22-21 upset of the No. 2 Buckeyes. The loss ended a 25-game home winning streak and was the first against an unranked non-conference opponent in eight years.

The following week, as 87,969 fans baked in unseasonably warm temperatures, Ohio State and UCLA played to a 10-10 tie. The Buckeyes righted the ship and won each of their next six games but had to settle for a tie for the conference championship after suffering a 22-0 loss to Michigan in the season finale. Another stadium record was set with a crowd of 88,250, but it had to bear witness to the Buckeyes' first shutout

loss in the rivalry series in 12 years.

Yet another record crowd was on hand the following September when Ohio State hosted Oklahoma in a highly anticipated matchup between two college football titans. Each team was undefeated and ranked among the nation's top four teams as 88,119 fans filed through the turnstiles to watch what turned out to be one of the most exciting games – featuring perhaps the most exciting finish – in the history of the Horseshoe.

Played on an overcast afternoon that featured temperatures near 80 degrees and a strong 15-mph wind out of the South, the game featured a seesaw battle in which Oklahoma and its famed wishbone offense took early control. The Sooners scored on each of their first four possessions, getting touchdown runs from Elvis Peacock and Billy Sims as well as a pair of field goals from Uwe von Schamann, a German-born, soccer-style kicker who went to high school in Texas.

Von Schamann's 33-yard field goal at the 12:58 mark of the second quarter gave Oklahoma a 20-0 lead. Meanwhile, the Ohio State offense had failed to generate a single first down, and the defense had lost All-America linebacker Tom Cousineau with a separated shoulder. As the Buckeyes twice rejected fourth-down field-goal attempts in the second quarter and were stopped both times short of the line to gain, ABC executives began discussions about shifting some of the network's affiliated stations from the burgeoning blowout to coverage of the Maryland-Penn State game.

But a 30-yard touchdown run from running back Ron Springs capped an 80-yard scoring drive for the Buckeyes and touched off a streak of 28 unanswered points for Ohio State.

QB Rod Gerald ran for a 19-yard touchdown to make it 20-14 at halftime, and then fullback Joel Payton scored on a 1-yard plunge to give Ohio State its first lead of the afternoon at 21-20 with 8:04 left in the third quarter. Less than four minutes later, the lead grew to 28-20 after an interception by OSU defensive end Kelton Dansler led to a 16-yard scoring pass from backup quarterback Greg Castignola to tight end Jimmy Moore.

That's the way it stayed until midway through the fourth quarter when momentum swung back in Oklahoma's favor. On a third-and-12 play at the Sooners 46, Castignola fumbled on a keeper and OU defensive tackle Reggie Kinlaw recovered at the Ohio State 43. Twelve plays later, Peacock took an option pitch and dived into the end zone on fourth-and-goal from the 1.

But when the Sooners tried a similar play on the two-point try, OSU linebacker Tom Blinco – Cousineau's replacement in the lineup – met and dropped Peacock short of the goal line to preserve the Buckeyes' 28-26 lead.

With 1:21 remaining in the game, and nearly everyone in the stadium anticipating an onside kick, von Schamann still managed to execute it perfectly with OU teammate Mike Babb recovering the loose ball at midfield. Oklahoma quickly moved into range for von Schamann, who calmly split the uprights from 41 yards away with just three seconds left to give the Sooners a 29-28 victory.

Oklahoma head coach Barry Switzer, who thought his team had a chance to score 100 points before the loss of starting quarterback Thomas Lott to a knee injury, told

reporters after the game, "I'm sure glad football games are 60 minutes. This game had more drama, more tension than any game I've ever been associated with."

The Sooners went on to win the Big Eight championship, finishing with a 10-2 record and a No. 7 ranking in the season's final poll from The Associated Press.

Meanwhile, the Buckeyes rallied from the loss to win their next seven games by an average margin of more than 31 points, sewing up a share of another Big Ten championship. But the regular season ended with a mistake-filled 14-6 loss at Michigan, a game in which Hayes lunged at an ABC cameraman in front of a nationwide audience, drawing a reprimand from university officials and a fine from the Big Ten.

While the Wolverines headed off to the Rose Bowl, Hayes had a date with another legend in the Sugar Bowl, one that didn't turn out very well. Paul "Bear" Bryant led his third-ranked Alabama team to a 35-6 victory against the Buckeyes.

End Of An Era

Hayes knew he had to make a philosophical change. His team had accounted for only 103 passing yards during the loss to Alabama, but even that meager total was higher than Ohio State's regular-season average of 92.5 yards per game through the air. The Buckeyes had become increasingly one-dimensional on offense, so the OSU head coach – now 65 years old and the survivor of at least two heart attacks – signed rifle-armed quarterback Art Schlichter out of high school, intending to jump-start what had become a plodding offensive attack.

Unfortunately, while Hayes might have realized a change was needed, he never really committed to it. A still-unsure-of-himself Schlichter started the 1978 opener against fifth-ranked Penn State, and before he was mercifully relieved late in the game, the freshman had pitched a program-record five interceptions during a 19-0 loss in front of 88,202 fans. He was also sacked twice and lost a fumble.

"As I'm sure you know, Woody wasn't that enamored with the passing game," OSU quarterbacks coach George Chaump told BSB in 2008. "As a result, we had a talented quarterback but never devised the type of offense to allow him to perform well. Our passing game that day consisted of keeping both backs and the tight end in for protection. That only left two guys in the patterns. In short, we didn't give Art what he needed to be successful. We sent him into battle unarmed."

Schlichter still managed to have a pretty good rookie season in 1978, leading the team with 13 rushing touchdowns and establishing a new OSU single-season mark for total offense with 1,840 yards. But he attempted only 175 passes in 12 games, a lot for a Hayes-coached team but still just a little more than 14 per game. Take out games against Penn State (26), Purdue (34) and Clemson (20), and the attempts average drops to only about 10 per game.

The freshman QB completed only 6 of

Continued On Page 24

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Continued From Page 23

12 passes during a 31-7 win against Iowa on Oct. 21, including a 78-yard touchdown to wide receiver Doug Donley. But the 87,586 fans in attendance likely got a bigger kick out of the marching band's halftime show when comedian Bob Hope became the first non-band member to dot the "i" in Script Ohio.

Three weeks later, no one in the Veteran's Day crowd of 87,719 knew it at the time, but they were watching history while the Buckeyes administered a 45-7 thumping to Illinois on an unseasonably warm and sunny November afternoon. It turned out to be the final home victory for Hayes, and it was vintage Woody. Ohio State ran the ball 65 times while Schlichter rushed for three touchdowns but threw for none.

The last of Hayes' 205 victories at Ohio State came the following week with a 21-18 decision at Indiana after which came a 14-3 loss to sixth-ranked Michigan in front of 88,358 fans. The Buckeyes looked as tired as their coach, managing only 216 total yards with Schlichter going 4 for 9 passing for 43 yards and one interception.

It marked the third straight loss to the Wolverines and put Hayes on extremely thin ice with influential boosters. Three losses in a row to Michigan had typically been the kiss of death for Ohio State head coaches, and there were rumors of backroom machinations that had the university discussing how to delicately sever ties with its football coach of 28 years.

Then came the loss to Clemson in the Gator Bowl, and the rest is history.

Welcome, Earle

Earle Bruce was already making plans

for his seventh season as head coach at Iowa State when he sat down in front of a television set on the night of Dec. 29, 1978, to watch his alma mater Ohio State take on Clemson in the Gator Bowl. Bruce stared in disbelief as he watched Hayes slug Tigers middle guard Charlie Bauman near the conclusion of the game.

Almost immediately, speculation began regarding Hayes' successor. Several names were bandied about including three OSU assistants – Chaump, running backs coach Rudy Hubbard, and defensive coordinator George Hill – but the favorites from the beginning seemed to be Washington head coach Don James, a native of Massillon, Ohio, and Arkansas head coach Lou Holtz, who had spent the 1968 season as defensive backs coach on Hayes' staff at Ohio State.

In the end, however, Bruce was the one who was named to succeed Hayes.

"To be honest, I had fallen in love with Iowa State and never thought about leaving," Bruce told BSB in 2017. "I'd been an assistant on Woody's staff (for six seasons from 1966-71) and never really thought about going back. But when your alma mater calls, you have to answer."

While the new coach made no bones about wanting to retool the Ohio State program with his own philosophy, Bruce also continued to solicit advice from his old mentor. The two coaches conferred over the telephone at least twice during the week before the Sept. 8 opener against Syracuse, and Hayes was a special guest at the team's traditional Thursday night dinner.

"That meant a lot to the team, and it meant a lot to me," Bruce said. "There was

still a lot of Woody Hayes on that team."

Almost perfect football weather greeted the Ohio Stadium crowd of 86,205 that watched the Buckeyes run out to a 24-0 lead midway through the third quarter and then cruise home with a 31-8 victory. Tailbacks Calvin Murray and Jimmy Gayle combined with fullback Paul Campbell to rush for 201 yards and three touchdowns, while Schlichter added 91 more on the ground to lead the team to a rushing total of 383 yards on 69 attempts.

The OSU quarterback completed only 8 of 16 pass attempts for a modest 81 yards and one touchdown, but that 11-yard scoring toss to tight end Ron Barwig accounted for the first points of a new coaching era, and Bruce admitted after the game that was by design.

"I wanted to tell everyone to watch out," the coach said, "because we're going to throw the ball."

The numbers from the season opener notwithstanding, Bruce made good on that promise. Schlichter threw for 1,816 yards during the 1979 season, breaking the program record of 1,555 held by John Borton since 1952 and leading Ohio State to an undefeated regular-season record as well as a Big Ten championship. The Buckeyes also came within a whisker of winning the national championship, losing a 17-16 decision to USC in the Rose Bowl.

Perhaps the streamlined offensive attack had something to do with a change in the playing surface at Ohio Stadium. After eight seasons of playing on an AstroTurf field that become increasingly hard and slick, a new artificial surface called SuperTurf was installed. SuperTurf, developed by an Oklahoma firm, was supposedly a new and improved AstroTurf with better fibers, backing and shock absorption. It would remain the surface on which Ohio State played its home games until 1990.

Meanwhile, the run-first mentality of Hayes faded farther and farther into the rearview mirror in 1980 when Ohio State and Illinois staged an aerial circus that set school and conference records that remain on the books.

It is likely few of the 87,952 who filed into the Horseshoe on the chilly overcast afternoon of Nov. 8 knew what to expect when Fighting Illini quarterback Dave Wilson fumbled on the first offensive play from scrimmage for a 4-yard loss. By the time the game had ended, OSU and Illinois had combined for 905 yards through the air, and the Buckeyes had somehow outlasted the Illini by a 49-42 final in one of the wildest games Ohio Stadium has ever seen.

Ohio State got three scoring passes from Schlichter and a 2-yard touchdown run from fullback Tim Spencer to jump out to a 28-0 advantage midway through the second quarter. But the Buckeyes nearly let it slip away as Wilson had a day for the ages. He finished the game with 43 completions in 69 attempts for an NCAA-record 621 yards and six touchdowns. The NCAA yardage total has since been eclipsed, but it remains a Big Ten single-game record.

Five of Wilson's scoring passes and 344 of his passing yards came in the second half, overshadowing what was one of Schlichter's finest games to that point in his career. The junior QB connected on his first 11 attempts and finished 17 for 21 for 284 yards and a career-high four touchdowns.

Ohio State took what seemed to be a

comfortable 49-35 lead with 10:55 remaining in the game, but Wilson kept his team in the game. He might have even rallied the Illini for the victory if not for two costly final-period turnovers – a fumble inside the OSU 10-yard line and an interception in the end zone at the 3:06 mark.

Thanks to Wilson's efforts, Illinois piled up 36 first downs – 26 of them through the air – and amassed 659 total yards. Each of those figures remains an all-time single-game high for an Ohio State opponent.

Two weeks later, Bruce got his first shot at home against Michigan as head coach of the Buckeyes, but things did not go as planned. An OSU team that entered the game averaging 36.5 points per game (and 46.0 in its most recent three games), managed only a second-quarter field goal in a 9-3 loss in front of a record Ohio Stadium crowd of 88,827.

The loss to Michigan – which ended Ohio State's 15-game conference win streak – coupled with a 31-19 loss to Penn State in the Fiesta Bowl gave the Buckeyes a 9-3 record, the first of seven consecutive three-loss seasons that earned Bruce the derisive nickname of "Ol' 9-3 Earle."

One of the three losses during the 1981 campaign was another shootout, this time against Florida State.

Just seven days after Schlichter had outdueled Stanford quarterback John Elway during a 24-19 win in Palo Alto, the Buckeyes returned to Columbus with a 3-0 record and No. 7 national ranking to take on Bobby Bowden and his unranked Seminoles in the first-ever meeting between the programs.

But while Schlichter put up head-spinning numbers through the air, he got little help from his defense. Florida State totaled 496 yards of offense, including 197 on the ground, and ran away with a 36-27 victory in front of 87,158 mostly stunned Ohio State fans.

Schlichter connected on 31 of 52 attempts for 458 yards – all single-game program records – and a pair of touchdowns. The 31 completions were tied in 1998 by Joe Germaine during a 38-7 win at Indiana and then broken by J.T. Barrett, who completed 33 passes during a 39-38 thriller against Penn State in 2017. The attempts and yardage figures remained OSU records until Dwayne Haskins attempted 73 passes and connected for 470 yards during a 49-20 loss at Purdue in 2018.

Also during the loss to Florida State, OSU wide receiver Gary Williams caught 13 of Schlichter's passes for 220 yards. The yardage figure remained a single-game program record until Terry Glenn accumulated 253 yards during a 54-14 win at Pittsburgh in 1995, while the catch total stood until David Boston had 14 receptions during a 31-27 loss at Penn State in 1997.

Despite the record-setting pace of the Buckeyes' passing game, the euphoria from the success generated by Bruce's first season seemed to be fading. Ohio State slipped behind both Michigan and Tennessee in terms of national attendance figures, and the Ohio Stadium average of 86,960 during the 1981 season was its lowest in nine years.

But as the stadium entered its next decade, new innovations and some of the strongest and most exciting teams during the Bruce era would make attendance figures begin to jump again at the old Horseshoe.

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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, W 49-20; **22** IOWA, W 54-10; **29** at Penn State, W 44-31.

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

2023 FOOTBALL

Sept. 2 at Indiana; **9** YOUNGSTOWN STATE; **16** WESTERN KENTUCKY; **23** at Notre Dame.

Oct. 7 MARYLAND; **14** at Purdue; **21** PENN STATE; **28** at Wisconsin.

Nov. 4 at Rutgers; **11** MICHIGAN STATE; **18** MINNESOTA; **25** at Michigan.

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. Men: 8/12; Women 4/14.

Nov. 11 NCAA Regional Championships at Terre Haute, Ind.; **18** NCAA Championships at Stillwater, Okla.

WOMEN'S FIELD HOCKEY (11-7, 3-5)

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

Sept. 4 LEHIGH, W 4-0; **11** Miami (Ohio), L 1-0; **16** MARYLAND, L 4-2; **18** WAKE FOREST, L 1-0; **23** Rutgers, L 2-0; **25** Penn State, L 2-0; **30** MICHIGAN STATE, W 2-1 (OT)

Oct. 2 KENT STATE, W 4-0; **7** CENTRAL MICHIGAN, W 7-1; **9** Ohio, W 7-1, **14** IOWA, W 2-0; **16** NORTHWESTERN, L 2-1; **21** Indiana, W 2-1; **23** Bellarmine, W 5-1; **28** Michigan, L 3-1; **30** BALL STATE, W 4-0.

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 Hamptons Invitational at East Hamptons, N.Y., 6/10; **4** Hamptons Invitational at East Hamptons, N.Y., 4/10; **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, 7/8; **23** Jim West Challenge at San Marcos, Texas, T9/15; **24** Jim West Challenge at San Marcos, Texas, T7/15.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (7-2-1, 3-1)

Oct. 1 at Mercyhurst, W 4-2; **2** at Mercyhurst, W 4-1; **7** WISCONSIN, W 3-1; **8** WISCONSIN, W 4-3; **14-15** at UConn, T 0-0; L 1-6; **20-21** BENTLEY, W 9-2; W 3-1; **28-29** MINNESOTA, W 6-4, L 4-2.

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 (8-1-1, 8-1-1)

Sept. 30 at Minnesota State, W 2-1.

Oct. 1 at Minnesota State, W 5-4; **7** ST. CLOUD STATE, W 5-2; **8** ST. CLOUD STATE, W 6-2; **15-16** at Bemidji State, W 4-0; W 5-2; **21-22** MINNESOTA DULUTH, W 3-2 OT; W 3-2 **28-29** MINNESOTA, L 4-2, T 4-4 (SOW).

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 (9-2-5, 4-2-2)

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, W 3-2; **11** Michigan, W 3-1; **16** NORTHWESTERN, W 2-1; **21** Penn State, T 1-1; **25** MICHIGAN STATE, W 2-1; **30** Wisconsin, L 3-2.

WOMEN'S SOCCER (10-5-3, 5-3-2)

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, T 2-2; **13** MARYLAND, W 7-0; **16** Illinois, W 6-1; **20** MICHIGAN STATE, L 0-1; **23** NORTHWESTERN, L 0-2; **30** Big Ten quarterfinals at Nebraska, L 4-0.

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 (15-5, 1-1)

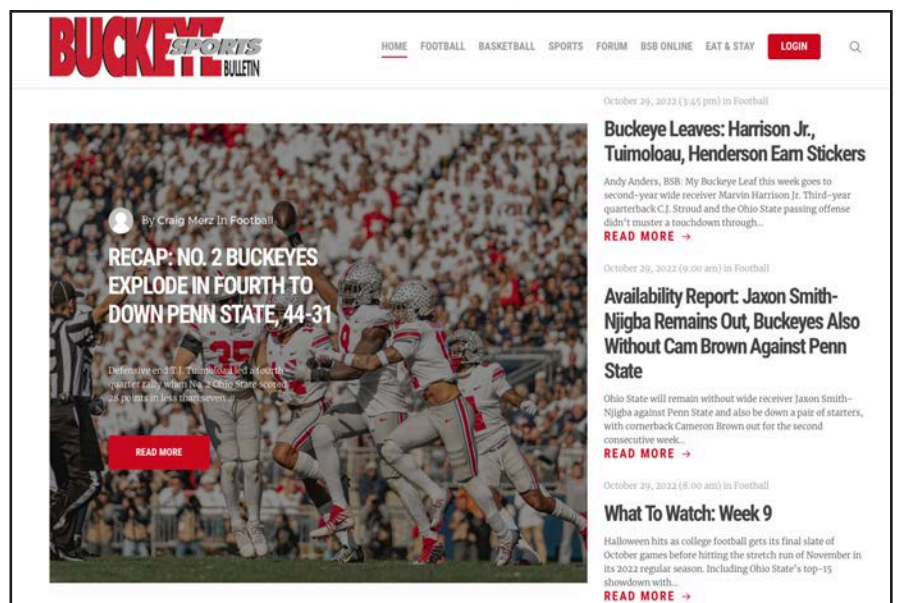
Aug. 26 TEXAS, L 3-0; **27** L 3-1.

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, W 3-2; **9** NORTHWESTERN, W, 3-1; **12** Minnesota, W 3-0; **15** RUTGERS, W 3-0; **19** ILLINOIS, W 3-0; **21** IOWA, W 3-1; **26** MICHIGAN, W 3-0; **29** Penn State, W 3-2.

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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Recruits Buying Into Defensive Turnaround

Asked about Ohio State's defensive recruiting at Big Ten Media Days in July, head coach Ryan Day – who had recently lost on Hoschton (Ga.) Mill Creek five-star safety Caleb Downs (6-0, 185) and Many, La., four-star linebacker Tackett Curtis (6-2, 218) – said it would take time to see the impact of recruits watching Ohio State's new defense under defensive coordinator Jim Knowles.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

"I think when you change a defense as drastically as we have, a lot of people want to see what it's going to look like," Day said. "I think when they see the energy and a bunch of guys flying around

and all that, it's going to be a much easier sell."

Ohio State's defense has lived up to the billing, flying around the field and dominating opponents to the tune of 16.9 points and 270.1 yards allowed per game. There have been several standouts, including linebacker Tommy Eichenberg and defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr., and the safeties – with Ronnie Hickman, Tanner McCalister and Lathan Ransom seeing the most time – have excelled in Knowles' "safety-driven" defense.

While it has yet to culminate in any defensive commitments – the last verbal on that side of the ball was Hillside (N.J.) St. Peter's Prep four-star safety Jayden Bonsu (6-1, 210), who committed before the season began – recruits are taking notice of how the Buckeyes have looked, specifically in regard to the safety position.

"I think it helps a lot," Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Bill Greene told BSB. "Especially, as you can see right now, re-

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

cruits are looking to be able to be developed to play in the NFL. That's the number one thing right now, even with NIL. That's still the number one thing. Ohio State had some trouble in the secondary with (Kerry) Coombs and (Matt) Barnes, but now you look at these guys and I think the play has been amazing."

Greene pointed specifically at the play of Ransom, Hickman and McCalister and said each has stood out this season for Ohio State.

"I think Ransom – you can make the argument that Eichenberg is the best defensive player, for sure – but Ransom is in that picture. He's in the discussion, for sure. He's had a great year.

"Ronnie Hickman shows out to me every single week. I watch (the game) for the first time and he seems like a guy that I don't really notice much. I don't notice him screwing up, but I don't notice him doing great things. And then I watch it the second time and it's like, 'Wow, that was a great play there,' that kind of went unnoticed on the TV where you just follow the ball and everything. He's really a tremendous player.

"McCalister is kind of like Knowles' guy on the field right now, kind of the coach on the field. I don't know if he's the most uber-talented player out there, but Tanner McCalister is really smart, in the right position all the time, and kind of the coach to the secondary out there."

It gives Ohio State a boost not only in recruits seeing players flourish on the

field, but seeing several at the same position play at the same time and still have the opportunity to stand out, and Greene said it could cause a similar effect to how the Buckeyes saw several cornerbacks excel over the past few seasons.

"If you look back to the last really great defense Ohio State had under Jeff Hafley, the team that lost to Clemson in the playoffs, they played that single-high safety and the emphasis there was on the corners," Greene said. "They had three corners on the field. It was (Shaun) Wade, (Jeff) Okudah and Damon Arnette with that single-high safety in the middle of the field. They were only playing one, which looks a lot different than today's Knowles defense where you're playing three."

While expectations were perhaps lofty that the turnaround would significantly impact Ohio State's recruiting class in 2023, the Buckeyes are already in a solid position with several safeties in 2024, including Buford, Ga., five-star KJ Bolden (6-1, 185); Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco five-star Peyton Woodyard (6-2, 188); and Irvington, N.J., four-star Vaboue Toure (6-1, 185), among others. As a whole, Day said Ohio State's staff is already seeing an impact across the board on recruiting.

"I think everything we talked about in recruiting leading up to the season now they're seeing, which is great, because what we said was going to happen has happened, and it's happening and we've got to keep going on that," he said Oct. 25.

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OSU Football 2024 Commitments

Players 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
Ian Moore	OL	6-5	295	★★★★	New Palestine, Ind.
Dylan Raiola	QB	6-3	220	★★★★★	Chandler, Ariz.

“But I think the recruits have seen it. And they’re excited about that and they want to jump on board.”

2023 CB Toviano Taking Official Visit

There hasn’t been much in the way of news regarding Ohio State and Arlington (Texas) Martin four-star cornerback Javien Toviano (6-0, 185) lately, but the Buckeyes received recent notice that they aren’t completely out of his recruitment. Toviano told On3 Sports that he plans to make Ohio State one of his five official visits, with a trip in the works for the Buckeyes’ season finale against Michigan. This would be his first trip to Columbus. “They’re a top-rated program in the country right now,” Toviano said. “Top-four program in the country. I think that’s self-explanatory. Definitely a (program) I want to play for. Going into the Big Ten with Michigan is attractive as well.” Toviano has already taken official visits to Michigan and LSU, with trips to Ohio State and Oregon planned in addition to either Texas or Texas A&M for that

fifth visit. Once he’s wrapped those trips, his decision shouldn’t be far off. “I’m near,” Toviano said. “I absolutely know in my head where I want to be. I definitely want to take my last three officials before I put that out. I just think out of respect, once you commit to a school, you kind of want to lock that in. You’ve already seen everything you need to see. It’s time to lock it in and focus. In my head, I think I’m on perfect pacing.” He is the No. 43 overall prospect and No. 7 cornerback in the class. It’s worth noting, though, that the odds are not in Ohio State’s favor. Toviano evidently has a top school in mind without having visited Columbus, which makes it difficult to see him ending up in scarlet and gray, but anything could happen once he arrives on campus. 2024 Target Stover Nearing Decision Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut four-star linebacker/safety Garrett Stover (6-2, 195) told Eleven Warriors that he is nearing a decision and could announce his

college choice as soon as December. “I’ve kind of narrowed it down,” Stover said. “Really, I’m keeping my options a little open, but it’s coming down to I really like Ohio State and I really like Notre Dame. I want to take that visit to Notre Dame, and then I’ll probably be looking at a commitment a little after that.” Stover, a 2024 prospect, is the No. 165 overall prospect and the No. 22 athlete in the class, though the Buckeyes are recruiting him at both linebacker and safety. He’s made numerous visits to Ohio State this season, attending the Buckeyes’ wins over Notre Dame, Toledo, Wisconsin and Iowa, and he’s considering coming back for the final home games against Indiana on Nov. 12 and Michigan on Nov. 26. He’s also scheduled to visit Notre Dame on Nov. 5, but a strong impression has been left on Stover each time he’s been to Ohio State. “Really, you just get the same amazing feeling every time,” Stover said. “They make it seem like you’ve never been there. I just feel like my Saturday is complete every time I get home from the Ohio State game and see them fly around and blow out teams like that. It’s really amazing to watch. You want to be a part of it. I want to get to as many remaining home games as I can.” Stover earned an offer over the sum-

mer from Ohio State and has long been connected to the Buckeyes given his family ties with his cousin, Cade Stover, starring at tight end at Ohio State. Two crystal ball predictions on 247Sports have been entered favoring the Buckeyes to land Stover. RB Cornish Decommits From Georgia Tech Cincinnati Winton Woods three-star running back Trey Cornist (5-11, 209) announced on Oct. 25 that he was decommitting from Georgia Tech. The local prospect is the No. 1,216 recruit in 2023 and the No. 78 running back in the class and had been committed to Georgia Tech since June. “First and foremost I would like to thank the entire coaching staff at Georgia Tech for all of the love and support you have shown me over the past few months,” he said. “It has honestly meant the world to me and that is what has made this decision such a tough one for me to make.” Cornist was one of two running backs committed to the Yellow Jackets, with the other being Miami (Fla.) Norland three-star Javin Simpkins (5-9, 183), the No. 425 overall prospect and No. 32 running

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A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1987 Quarterback Kirk Herbstreit was a diehard Buckeye. He was filled with the Buckeye spirit by his father, Jim, who was a half-back/defensive end for Ohio State from 1958-60. “I would cry after Ohio State lost,” the then 17-year-old Herbstreit recalled. “I would play in the back yard and dream I was playing for the Buckeyes. I wanted to be the one to win the game in the final seconds to send them to the Rose Bowl.” As the years rolled on, the 6-3, 190-pound signal caller from Centerville, Ohio, matured. He still remained a Buckeye at heart but learned to appreciate other college programs, especially since they were beating down his door in hopes of gaining his signature on a letter of intent in February. “I talked with (Michigan coach) Bo Schembechler and (Penn State coach) Joe Paterno. They were neat,” Herbstreit said. “Once I got to hear what they had to say, I appreciated what they had to offer even more. “I still love Ohio State, but it’s too early to decide where I’ll go. It all depends on which school I like the most after I visit them after the season.” 30 Years Ago — 1992 Much like a Halloween spirit, one of the top prep running backs in the state of Ohio for the 1992 season suddenly popped up from nowhere in Ohio State’s back yard. Now, that’s not to say that Charles Henley of Columbus Brookhaven was an unknown when the 1992 prep season began. Many college scouts already had Henley pegged as a pretty good defensive backfield prospect. But the two-way player, who also ran for 926 yards and 14 touchdowns as a junior, had blossomed into the best running back in central Ohio and one of the top prospects in the entire Midwest. Eight games into his senior season, Henley had already rushed for 1,747 yards and 27 touchdowns. With Henley’s tremendous success, colleges were lining up to have a look at the 6-0, 180-pound sensation. Colleges topping his list were Kansas, Michigan, Ohio State and Purdue, and that represented only some minor changes from the list he was giving to recruiting services the previous summer.

25 Years Ago — 1997 With the commitment of Jamar Martin, the days of Ohio State converting tailbacks to fullbacks may have been in the past. Martin, a 6-0, 245-pound bruiser from Canton (Ohio) McKinley, verbally committed to the Buckeyes after attending their football camp the summer of 1996. McKinley coach Thom McDaniels said Martin was a true full-back. “They don’t make many players like Jamar,” the coach said. “A lot of colleges have gotten frustrated by taking tailbacks and trying

to make them fullbacks. Jamar is a fullback, is incredibly strong, very willing to block and an exceptional blocker. He will be quicker and have better feet than people expect. He’s very team-oriented and unselfish.” “Ohio State is looking at me as a fullback,” Martin said. “I can run and I can block.” 20 Years Ago — 2002 In a year when top-notch offensive linemen were seemingly hard to come by in Ohio, 6-6, 320-pound Dan Pribula of Strongsville was one who literally loomed head and shoulders above them all. For three years, Pribula had helped lead the way on the ground for one of the most prolific running backs the Cleveland area had ever produced. At 5-7, 160, Brandon Murphy (1,804 yards after eight games) was on the cusp of rushing for more than 2,000 in each of those same three years. “I would say that in 70 to 80 percent of our offense Dan is either at the point of attack or he’s pulling in front of Brandon and is his lead blocker,” Strongsville head coach Russ Jacques said. “So he’s very much a part of the yardage that Brandon has been able to gain in the last three seasons.” Overall, Jacques thought that Pribula looked a little like Tony Boselli, in the mold of a true prototypical back-side tackle. While Notre Dame and Stanford and a host of many other colleges had certainly thought enough of Pribula to offer him a scholarship, Ohio State had yet to pull the trigger with an offer of its own. “That is a complete question mark to me,” Jacques said. “I have no idea. I don’t know what else they could be looking for in an offensive lineman.” 15 Years Ago — 2007 While in Columbus for an official visit during the Sept. 22 weekend, Lazaar Thomas purchased, among a few other items, an Ohio State hat. Almost exactly one month later, Thomas was donning that same hat in front of a national television audience announcing his intention to become a Buckeye. On an announcement during halftime of the Arkansas-Pine Bluff and Alabama A&M game aired on ESPNU, the wide receiver/running back prospect became the 12th member of OSU’s class of 2008, choosing the Buckeyes over Maryland and Illinois. “What really stood out for (Ohio State) was the family atmosphere that they have,” he told BSB. “From when I went down there both times, I liked that both times. I knew that my parents would feel comfortable with the coaches down there, and they felt comfortable with me being down there for four years. They knew that I was going to be taken care of.” A 5-10½, 178-pound prospect from Fort Washington (Md.) Friendly, Thomas was ranked the No. 34 running back in the coun-

try by Scout.com. As a junior, he carried the ball 42 times for more than 800 yards while catching 22 passes for more than 350 yards. 10 Years Ago — 2012 Rossville (Ga.) Ridgeland safety Vonn Bell was universally considered to be one of the best remaining uncommitted prospects in the 2013 class, but details about his recruitment were being kept rather quiet. Rated by Scout.com the No. 3 senior safety in the nation, Bell said in an interview that he felt honored to be in his position. “I am just blessed,” Bell told Scout. “My coach always told me it was going to come to me if I kept working hard out there and that schools would find me. I just always did what my coach told me to do. I kept working hard, and I just thank the Lord for it.” While details regarding Bell’s recruitment were hard to come by, the 6-1 190-pound defender reiterated his top three, and Ohio State remained one of the programs being heavily considered by the five-star prospect. “My top three are Alabama, Ohio State and Tennessee right now,” Bell said, “but anything can change.”

Five Years Ago — 2017 Jackson Carman, the 18th-best overall prospect in the class of 2018, was Ohio State’s top remaining in-state recruit on the board and visited for the Penn State game Oct. 28. He had already been to Ohio State at least three times, including a trip to Columbus for the Oklahoma game Sept. 9. Carman, who was planning to enroll early, had official visits scheduled for Florida State the weekend of Nov. 17, Clemson the weekend of Dec. 8 and USC the weekend of Dec. 15. “He wants to take his officials, but Jack is going to sign early in December and then I think he is gone,” Scout.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene said. “He’ll be graduated from high school in mid-December or early December. He’s going to sign in the early period (Dec. 20-22), and he’ll report the first of January.”

One Year Ago — 2021 The Montgomery brothers – four-star offensive lineman Luke (6-5, 280) in 2023 and quarterback Ryan (6-3, 200) in 2025 of Findlay, Ohio – survived a scare from No. 11 Miamisburg (6-4) in the Ohio High School Athletic Association playoffs on Oct. 29, narrowly avoiding a fourth quarter two-point try that would have tied the game and escaping with a 28-26 victory. Ryan completed 17 of 26 passes for 255 yards and four scores for No. 6 Findlay (7-3), though he did toss an interception, and his team fumbled twice as it dealt with rough weather conditions. “Conditions were bad, but we have no excuses,” Findlay head coach Stefan Adams told The Courier in Findlay. “We have to do better, but we showed resolve, and in the end that’s what mattered.”

Ohio State Commits Are In Playoff Mode

Continued From Page 27

back in the class. Cornist told 247Sports that schools he's communicated with include California, Iowa, Ohio State, Purdue, Syracuse and Tulane.

Cornist has long been viewed as a potential backup option for Ohio State if things were to go south with Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage four-star running back Mark Fletcher (6-1, 225), who has been committed to Ohio State since April but is often connected with Florida schools given his proximity, or if the Buckeyes decide they want a second running back in the class.

Another option is Ironton, Ohio, three-star running back Jaquez Keyes (6-1, 207), who is committed to Wisconsin but visited Ohio State over the summer. Neither Cornist nor Keyes holds an offer from the Buckeyes.

2024 CB Heyward Has OSU In Top Six

Rockledge, Fla., four-star safety Jaylen Heyward (6-0, 180), a 2024 prospect, included Ohio State among his top six schools along with Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Michigan and Tennessee.

Heyward is the No. 38 prospect in the class and the No. 3 safety in the class, and he said Ohio State's coaches and their track record of development have made him consider the Buckeyes.

"With Ohio State, they're one of the top programs in the country as well with Coach (Perry) Eliano as the (safeties) coach, he could turn me into the next Sauce Gardner because he came from Cincinnati and he was his coach, so that's one reason why I'm fired up about them," he told 247Sports. "Also, with Ryan Day as the head coach, he's a family guy and a good head coach. Even though I haven't been up there, I feel like I will love the en-

vironment up there."

Heyward has made visits to Florida and Georgia this season and said the Bulldogs are currently leading in his recruitment.

OHSAA Playoffs Begin For Commits, Targets

The Ohio High School Athletic Association football playoffs began on Oct. 28, with 448 teams – seven divisions split into four regions each with 16 teams per region – competing for state football championship in their respective divisions.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is tracking Ohio State's commitments and targets through their playoff journey, whether it ends in the first weekend or with a state championship. Here are the results from games played on Oct. 28.

Division I, Region 2: No. 2 Springfield (9-1) vs. No. 15 Lewis Center Olen-tangy Orange (4-7): Springfield, led by four-star cornerback Aaron Scott (6-1, 170), a 2024 target for the Buckeyes, picked up a comfortable 35-7 win over Olen-tangy Orange in the first round.

Springfield led just 14-0 at the half but opened the game up with three touchdowns in the third quarter, two courtesy of three-star wide receiver Anthony Brown (5-10, 170), a 2023 prospect who is committed to Kentucky. Brown finished the game with three scores.

"We went to the locker room and we made some adjustments," Brown told The Dayton Daily News. "Coach (Maurice Douglass) came in and said the first half was on him, so it was up to us to put our foot on the gas."

Olen-tangy's roster features 2024 four-star tight end Gavin Grover (6-6, 220) and 2025 athlete Jackson Wiley (6-0, 165), who is the son of former Ohio State running back Michael Wiley. Both have made

OHSAA GAMES TO WATCH, ROUND TWO

No. 7 Fairmont (8-3) at No. 2 Springfield (9-1)
No. 6 Princeton (9-2) at No. 3 Lakota West (11-0)
No. 5 Big Walnut (9-2) at No. 4 Watkins Memorial (9-2)
No. 9 Ross (6-5) at No. 1 Winton Woods (11-0)
No. 8 Bellevue (7-4) at No. 1 Glenville (10-0)

visits this fall to Ohio State.

Division I, Region 2: No. 4 Perrysburg (10-1) vs. No. 13 Findlay (5-6): The high school football season came to an end for the Montgomery brothers of Findlay – four-star offensive lineman Luke (6-5, 280), an Ohio State commit in 2023, and Ryan (6-3, 200), a quarterback in 2025 – as the Trojans suffered a 17-14 defeat to Perrysburg.

Perrysburg had a 17-7 lead entering the fourth quarter, but a touchdown from Findlay – a fake handoff on fourth-and-1 from Ryan that he ran into the end zone – kept things close. The Trojans were unable to get the ball back late in the fourth, though, and Perrysburg was able to run out the clock.

"We had opportunities," Findlay coach Stefan Adams told The Courier. "Unfortunately, we did not capitalize on them. I kept telling everybody we have a good team, and I still believe that. We kept fighting, and I think we showed tonight we're a top team."

Ryan finished 13 of 28 passing for 111 yards, and Luke also contributed on one of Findlay's scores, throwing a block and then literally carrying running back Dallas De La Cruz through the defense and into the end zone.

Division I, Region 2: No. 6 Dublin Coffman (7-4) vs. No. 11 Marysville (7-4): Coffman, home to four-star defensive lineman and Ohio State commit Will Smith Jr. (6-3, 260), who recently earned his fourth composite star from 247Sports, suffered an upset loss to Marysville, falling 28-24.

Coffman faced a 21-7 deficit in the second quarter but roared back to take a 24-21 lead with 9:45 remaining in the game. Marysville responded with an 11-play, 80-yard scoring drive for the go-ahead touchdown, and once Coffman got the ball back with a chance to win it, the Monarchs forced four straight incompletions to ice the game.

Marysville was led in rushing by Colton Powers, who had 123 yards on 16 carries and a trio of touchdowns. Colton is the younger brother of Ohio State freshman linebacker Gabe Powers.

Division I, Region 2: No. 7 Fairmont (8-3) vs. No. 10 Wayne (6-5): The season also came to an end for Wayne's Josh Padilla (6-4, 280), a four-star offensive lineman who is committed to the Buckeyes, when the Warriors fell 24-20 to the Fairmont Firebirds.

Fairmont was down 20-17 in the fourth quarter but mounted a 13-play,

ASK AN ANALYST

With Bill Greene of Buckeye Scoop

Arlington (Texas) Martin four-star cornerback Javien Toviano (6-0, 185) has said he plans to take an official visit to Ohio State at some point this season. Are the Buckeyes a serious contender, and how many might they be willing to take in the secondary in 2023 when factoring in the continued pursuit of several safeties?

"I do (see Ohio State as a contender for Toviano).

"They've got a ton of them committed now. They had the Tampa Wharton four-star cornerback Dijon Johnson (6-1, 190) for a while, which was another name, and of course, they would take Hoschton (Ga.) Mill Creek five-star safety Caleb Downs (6-0, 185).

"I don't know what the final number would be. They've had some attrition there. They've had some guys transfer out. I think there are some guys that they don't trust right now that are still on the roster. So maybe they take six or seven? I don't know. I wish I had the answer to what their target number is. I think they're already heavy in the secondary, and they're still looking."

Temple (Texas) Lake Belton five-star wide receiver Micah Hudson (6-0, 186) attended Ohio State's win over Iowa. Where do the Buckeyes stand with the 2024 prospect?

"He's a stud for sure. They would take him in a minute. That's a tough one there.

"They probably have, I would say, five guys that I've kind of isolated for them as receivers in that 2024 class. He's in there

for sure. I think they're going to get Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 185). They're definitely in the game for Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Joshisa Trader (6-1.5, 170). There's also Philadelphia Roman Catholic four-star receiver Tyseer Denmark (5-11, 180).

"Micah Hudson is another guy that, I think, if they want him and they push for him, I won't be surprised that they get that kid. That kid is a stud, I think that he's listed in the top five of the top receivers in the country by just about everybody. I think Jeremiah Smith is the best, but I think Micah Hudson is right there. He's really good and I think they can get him."

Speaking of receivers, what's the final call on Denmark, who's expected to make his commitment announcement on Nov. 24?

"That could be a deal where I think it's Ohio State or Penn State, with maybe Tennessee still in that one. I think he visited Penn State (the weekend of Oct. 29).

"I like him. I wouldn't have him anywhere near Hudson as a prospect now, but it doesn't matter what I think, it's about what Brian Hartline and Ryan Day think. I think it's probably Ohio State and Penn State, with maybe Tennessee kind of trailing a little bit, but we'll see what happens there.

"I think it's a position where they're always going to take four. If you ask me who the four are going to be right now, I'd

say, Jeremiah Smith, Micah Hudson, Tyseer Denmark and Joshisa Trader. But we're a long way off from signing day for the 2024 guys. I think if Ohio State wants this kid, I think they can get them."

What Ohio State commits or prospects do you have your eye on as the OHSAA football playoffs kick off?

"The one guy that I wanted to see that I haven't really checked in on lately is Findlay (Ohio) four-star offensive lineman Luke Montgomery (6-5, 280). He's a guy that I saw as a freshman, and then to see the player that he's become now, it's great to see for me.

"Luke plays (Oct. 29), they play Perrysburg. This could be his last high school game. He's a kid that started as a freshman. I saw him as a freshman. And time goes so fast for these kids. It's hard for me to believe that he is now approaching his final game as a high school senior. They play Perrysburg. They've already played Perrysburg, and Perrysburg got them pretty good. This could be his last high school game, so he's really the one guy that I'm kind of anxious to see this week. I won't be going to the game, but I want to check out the highlights and watch his film because this could be it for him.

"For a kid that started as a freshman, it's just amazing how his career has progressed and developed. He's a great kid with a great family. So he's the one guy that I'm really anxious to see how things go for him this week."

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

87-yard drive that ended with a go-ahead, 1-yard rushing touchdown by running back Drew Baker with under two minutes remaining.

Division I, Region 4: No. 3 Lakota West (11-0) vs. No. 14 Lebanon (4-7): Lakota West blanked Lebanon to open the playoffs, picking up a 43-0 win. The Firebirds returned two punts for a touchdown and scored two touchdowns in each of the first three quarters.

Four-star safety and Ohio State commit Malik Hartford (6-3, 175) had an interception for Lakota West.

Division II, Region 7: No. 5 Big Walnut (9-2) vs. No. 12 Green (4-7): Big Walnut, whose roster includes Garrett Stover, survived a scare against Uniontown Green, coming away with a 35-22 victory.

The Golden Eagles of Big Walnut found themselves with a 9-0 deficit at halftime but exploded with a 28-point third quarter and added an insurance touchdown in the fourth to come away with the win.

Division II, Region 8: No. 1 Winton Woods (11-0) vs. No. 16 La Salle (1-10): Winton Woods played to an easy 35-13 victory over La Salle to move on to the second round. Cornist was featured heavily in the contest, and Winton Woods also had a pick-six courtesy of four-star cornerback Jermaine Matthews (6-0, 175), who is committed to Ohio State.

Division IV, Region 14: No. 1 Glenville (10-0) vs. No. 16 Napoleon (4-7): Glenville – with four-star linebacker and Ohio State commit Arvell Reese (6-4, 212), as well as another Buckeye target in West – knocked off Napoleon, 46-8, in the first round.

The Tarblooders jumped out to a 13-0 lead in the first quarter before adding 21 more points in the second frame. Napoleon's lone score – a touchdown and ensuing two-point conversion – came in the third before Glenville added 12 more points in the fourth.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- A pair of crystal ball predictions on 247Sports have come in for Ohio State to land Philadelphia Roman Catholic four-star wide receiver Tyseer Denmark (5-11, 180), a 2024 prospect who recently announced he will make his college decision on Nov. 24. He visited Penn State on Oct. 22, his final planned visit before announcing his commitment.

- Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star cornerback Desmond Ricks (6-1, 170) announced on Oct. 22 that he was reclassifying from 2024 to 2023. He is now the No. 15 overall prospect and No. 2 cornerback in his new class, with Alabama, Florida, LSU, Miami (Fla.) and Oklahoma all fighting for his services.

- Opa Locka (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 185), a 2024 prospect, was set to make an official visit to Michigan on Oct. 29 but it was canceled just days prior. Ohio State is viewed as the favorite to land Smith – the No. 2 overall prospect in the class – with four crystal ball predictions on 247Sports.

- Michigan State suffered a decommitment from New Caney, Texas, four-star running back Kedrick Reescano (5-11,

190). As the No. 174 prospect in 2023, he was the third-highest rated recruit in the Spartans' class, which now ranks 31st overall and sixth in the Big Ten.

- Nebraska sent out an offer to Chandler, Ariz., quarterback Dayton Raiola, a 2026 prospect who is the younger brother of Chandler, Ariz., five-star quarterback Dylan Raiola (6-3, 220). Their father, Dominic, was a center for the Cornhuskers from 1998-00.

- The NCAA Division I Council introduced a proposal on Oct. 27 to remove the limit of official visits a recruit can take, which is currently capped at five. The council will vote on the proposal in January.

ary with the change expected to go into effect in July. Recruits would still be limited to one official visit per school, except in the case of a head coaching change.

- As BSB was last going to press, Buford, Ga., linebacker Mantrez Walker (6-1, 215), a 2025 prospect, announced he had received an offer from Ohio State. He visited the Buckeyes for their win over Iowa. He is one of five linebackers offered by Ohio State in 2025, with Buford, Ga., five-star Jadon Perlotte (6-3, 200) and San Juan Capistrano (Calif.) Hills four-star Weston Port (6-1, 215) as the other priority targets.

- Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett four-

star defensive lineman Kayden McDonald (6-3, 310) was expected to announce between Clemson, Florida, Michigan, Ohio State and Oklahoma on Oct. 31, shortly after BSB has gone to press. Check BuckeyeSports.com for the latest on McDonald's commitment and look for more information on his commitment in the next issue.

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

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Montgomery Making Mark As Peer Recruiter

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Luke Montgomery's commitment ceremony at Findlay (Ohio) High School was everything one would expect from a high schooler fulfilling a lifelong dream. A vast Ohio State media presence, hundreds of local supporters, an uproar of applause when he and his family revealed Buckeye apparel to signify his commitment. A night out with family and friends rang in the celebration.

It took all of 12 hours for him to move on to his mission within Ohio State's 2023 recruiting class.

"The next morning it was like, 'OK, let's go, I've got to get the best class ever, Dad,'" Mike Montgomery, Luke's father, told BSB. "That's the goal, right? Can he beat the '22 class and the '21 class, all these other highly-ranked classes?"

That's been Montgomery's objective since he made the transfer of his talent to Columbus official. While focused on driving his prep squad to a playoff appearance and furthering his own individual development, he's doing whatever he can to ensure the best possible collection of talent wears scarlet and gray alongside him.

"He's taken that recruiting role and run with it," the elder Montgomery said.

Though coaches aren't allowed to comment on specific recruits until after they've signed their letters of intent with the team, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day noted

the importance of peer recruiters such as Montgomery. He pointed specifically to the recruitment of third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud, who was partially drawn to Ohio State by the efforts of receivers within the program.

"You always look for that pied piper in the recruiting class that can kind of show the way, lead the way, and we have a couple of those guys in the class right now," Day said.

That's why Montgomery populates the sideline at almost every Buckeye home game. He's actively reaching out to players over the phone, interacting on social media, doing what he can to forge relationships with the top players in Ohio State's crosshairs.

Since childhood, the ability to develop connections with people has been a strength of the premier offensive lineman, his father noted. It's something he loves doing. It's always been his personality.

"Luke's just a really gregarious kid," Montgomery said. "I always say, 'He's never met a stranger.' He's the kind of kid that could talk to anybody. I'd say he's a pretty natural leader because of that."

Montgomery may be the ideal candidate to sell Ohio State, too. Born and raised in Ohio, he took the time to examine and visit all the schools that piqued his interest before arriving at what he felt was the best decision for him. He took trips to see Alabama, Clemson, Georgia Tech, Michigan, Michigan State, Penn State and South Car-

olina, among other schools. That perspective helped him articulate why the Buckeyes won his services in the end.

"At the end of the day, coaches leave left and right, and I thought Ohio State was the place I'd be fine being at if any coach was ever to leave," the younger Montgomery said.

On the field, Montgomery looks like the future of Ohio State's offensive line, particularly if he plays tackle. Should both of the Buckeyes' current offensive tackles in third-year Paris Johnson and fourth-year Dawand Jones leave after this season for the NFL, depth options are lean at the spot for the Buckeyes.

Third-year offensive tackle Josh Fryar has seen a handful of meaningful reps this season, sometimes as an extra blocker near the goal line. Former four-star Zen Michalski, a member of the 2021 recruiting class, has assumed the backup left tackle spot in his second year, and freshman George Fitzpatrick arrived via Ohio State's most recent class as the No. 244 prospect and No. 19 offensive tackle according to the 247Sports' composite rating.

Fellow 2022 four-stars Carson Hinzman and Tegra Tshabola have a chance to factor in at tackle as well, though Hinzman projected as a guard out of high school and Tshabola has been utilized at the interior on Ohio State's two-deep.

None of them has the pedigree of Montgomery, though, the No. 72 prospect in his class regardless of position, No. 11 offensive tackle and No. 1 player in the state of Ohio. Whether it's answering depth questions at tackle or sliding inside to be a guard, the 6-5, 280-pound front wrecker projects a high ceiling.

"As an offensive lineman, he is athletic and aggressive," said 247Sports recruiting analyst Allen Trieu. "He keeps his feet as he drives and finishes blocks and also has the coordination and comfort in space to get out in front of plays and make blocks in the open field. He shows quickness off the snap and gets to his blocks easily because of his

physical gifts."

Montgomery made first-team All-Ohio at offensive tackle for Division I in his junior season, a year after making second-team All-Ohio on the defensive line in 2020. Findlay is utilizing him fully on both sides of the ball for his senior year, and he's accepted an invitation to the All-American Bowl in January.

The Trojans opened the year by dropping four of their first five but closed the season out by winning four of their last five to qualify for the OHSAA football playoffs as the No. 13 seed in their region, falling to Perrysburg in the first round. Montgomery has been mounting reps and experience against Division I Ohio high school competition.

"(The season) was pretty bleak," his father said earlier in the year. "Then we won an unbelievable game on a last-second kickoff return (against Hamilton Ross on Sept. 23) to win it to get us going."

Meanwhile, Luke has also been advising his younger brother, Ryan, on his own recruiting journey. Ryan is a highly-sought after quarterback in the class of 2025, a sophomore who already has offers from Georgia, Michigan, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Penn State and Tennessee, among others.

There's no pressure from his older sibling to join him in Columbus – beyond playful ribbing, at least. Quarterback recruiting is typically of a different variety than offensive tackle as well, with the fact that only one can see the field at a time and teams often take only one, at most, per class.

"Luke's giving Ryan his space," their father said. "He's always going to tease and say, 'You know you're coming to Ohio State, Ryan – let's just do this.' But he's super supportive of Ryan, and he understands that it's different for the quarterback position specifically."

Where the Montgomery brothers have some commonality in their recruitments, however, is in their willingness to get out and check out a variety of programs. It's a process that's beneficial to them not just in terms of gaining knowledge about potential future schools, their father stated, but it provides them the experience of seeing several college football atmospheres.

Ryan's own timeline is uncertain at this point. While in the past his goal may have been to commit prior to his junior season of football, he's beginning to take the process a bit slower now and make the best decision he can.

"It's been a whirlwind," the elder Montgomery said. "We went to the Ohio State-Notre Dame game, we went to Wisconsin and Washington State, and then we went to Tennessee and Florida. Then this Saturday (Oct. 8) we'll leave Friday night after the game and go to Georgia for the Georgia and Auburn game."

The early signing period awaits in less than two months for the class of 2023 – and is still a couple of years away for Ryan – and Luke will be putting forth his best effort to ensure as many top targets as possible put pen to paper for Ohio State. More than anything, however, he's excited to get on campus himself and get to work.

"I grew up an Ohio State fan," Montgomery said, "and an Ohio kid being able to play for his home team is pretty amazing."










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Fight Breaks Out In Tunnel After UM-MSU

Four Michigan State players have been suspended indefinitely and could face legal troubles following an altercation in the Michigan Stadium tunnel after the Spartans' 29-7 loss to the Wolverines on Oct. 29.

BIG TEN NOTES Andy Anders

A video surfaced on Twitter of one of multiple scuffles that broke out in the Michigan Stadium tunnel postgame, which players from both teams are required to walk through to return to their locker rooms. In it, a group of Spartan players including linebacker Itayvion Brown, defensive end Zion Young and safety Angelo Grose, among several others, are shoving and throwing blows at Michigan defensive back Ja'Den McBurrows. Another video also showed a Michigan player being hit with the helmet of a Michigan State player.

"Two of our players were assaulted," Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh said. "You saw the one video, the 10-on-one. It was pretty bad. I'm going to let our athletic director Warde Manuel address it with the authorities."

Manuel said what happened after the game was completely unacceptable.

"I've talked to the (Big Ten) commissioner. He's looking into it," Manuel said. "The police are also looking into it, because they've seen the video and they're addressing it. We will leave it in their hands, but this is not how we should interact after a game."

"This is not the way another team should grab a player and do what they did. It's completely and utterly unacceptable. We will let the Big Ten and law enforcement handle it, but this is not what a rivalry should be about."

Michigan State head coach Mel Tucker didn't have much to add in his postgame press conference, telling reporters that the team was still trying to figure out the specifics of the altercation. The next morning, Tucker released a statement on Twitter.

"As Spartans, our program has a responsibility to uphold the highest level of sportsmanship," he said. "While emotions were very high at the conclusion of our rivalry game at Michigan Stadium, there is no excuse for behavior that puts our team or our opponents at risk."

"In complete cooperation with law enforcement, the Big Ten Conference and MSU and U-M leadership, we will evaluate the events in Ann Arbor and take swift and appropriate action."

Later in the day, Michigan State released a statement that said several student-athletes were suspended indefinitely in light of the altercation.

"Michigan State University football core values include integrity, discipline, unselfishness, toughness, and accountability. After reviewing the disturbing electronic evidence collected to date of the altercation between Michigan State and University of Michigan student-athletes on Oct. 29, 2022, we are

suspending Tank Brown, Khary Crump, Angelo Grose and Zion Young, effective immediately.

"We are currently working with law enforcement, Michigan State and Michigan campus leadership, and the Big Ten Conference to further evaluate the events in Ann Arbor, including but not limited to, additional student-athlete participation in the altercations and contributing factors," the statement continued. "The initial student-athlete suspensions will remain in place until the investigations are completed."

This was not the only instance of an issue within Michigan's tunnel this season. While it did not come to blows, there was another altercation between Penn State and the Wolverines during halftime of their game on Oct. 15 in which a shouting match took place between the teams.

"All there has to be is a two-minute or minute buffer in between the two teams," Penn State coach James Franklin said after that game. "This team is in before that team gets close and however we want to do it. But we're not the first team that's had issues like that. To me, under the current structure, we won't be the last."

Harbaugh took issue with Franklin's comment and viewed it as a problem with Penn State rather than the tunnel itself.

"Really got bigger fish to fry than Franklin's opinion on the halftime tunnel from a game ago," Harbaugh said. "All you've got to do is walk into their locker room. Like, you saw pretty clearly that they completely stopped. They weren't letting us get up the tunnel. And it just seemed like a sophomoric ploy to keep us out of the locker rooms. And (Franklin) looked like he was the ringleader of the whole thing. I got bigger fish to fry than worry about that kind of whining."

The Big Ten conference will continue with its East-West divisional alignment for the 2023 football season before configuring a new model when USC and UCLA arrive in 2024.

According to the report from The Athletic, there was strong consideration of moving away from divisions for 2023, but too many concerns persisted. Among them were the difficulty of unveiling new models in back-to-back years, potential issues with TV contracts and the number of protected games.

"I want to make sure whatever decisions we make on that leave enough time, because I know how important it is to want to get schedules down and get them out on time so people can plan," Big Ten commissioner Kevin Warren told The Athletic.

The representative from the Big Ten's East Division has won the Big Ten Championship Game each of the eight seasons since the conference introduced the East-West model prior to the 2014 season. Such competitive imbalance was one reason Warren and company considered moving on from the model, but it will stay in place through at least next season.

"Every lever you pull, there's a different one that you've got to say, 'Wait a minute, that was really great globally, but now we've taken away this or we've added that issue,'" Warren said.

In addition to the decision to keep divisions for one more year, the Big Ten released

its complete football schedule for the 2023 season.

Pair Of Big Ten QBs Return To The Field

Two of the Big Ten's most well-known quarterbacks are back from injuries. Minnesota sixth-year signal caller Tanner Morgan cleared concussion protocol and played for the Golden Gophers against Rutgers on Oct. 29, while Maryland head coach Mike Locksley said during his team's off week that he expected Taulia Tagovailoa to return Nov. 5 at Wisconsin.

Morgan has thrown for 9,358 yards in his career at Minnesota, racking up 63 touchdowns against 32 interceptions. In seven games this season, his completion percentage is the highest it's ever been at 66.9 percent. Against the Scarlet Knights, Morgan completed 14 of 21 passes for 122 yards in a 31-0 victory for the Gophers.

"I thought he played well," Minnesota head coach P.J. Fleck said. "You're going to go by stats, right? That's kind of how you do that. We had too many drops today, and again that goes on Tanner's incompletions. Where's the category of drops on (the stat sheet)? Is there a drop one? Maybe we need to add one of those. But it's not on there. It goes to the quarterback, though that's part of the quarterback's responsibility. But I thought he had a heck of a week of practice."

Tagovailoa has been among the Big Ten's best when healthy this season, completing a blistering 72.5 percent of his throws for 2,001 yards in seven games. In 2021, he hit 69.2 percent of his passes for 3,860 yards, 26 touchdowns and 11 interceptions for the Terrapins.

The Alabama transfer was carted off the field in the second half of Maryland's game against Indiana Oct. 15 and did not play against Northwestern on Oct. 22.

Minnesota's Ibrahim Breaks TD Record

Speaking of Minnesota, its running back broke a 33-year-old school record on Oct. 29. Having already broken former running back Darrell Thompson's career rushing touchdown record earlier in the season, sixth-year running back Mohamed Ibrahim topped Thompson's career total touchdown mark against Rutgers, tallying his 44th career score in the second quarter. He finished the day with three touchdowns total to make it 46 for his career.

Unlike Thompson, who tallied three career receiving touchdowns, each of Ibrahim's end-zone trips have come on the ground. Ibrahim is two touchdowns away from matching his best single season in terms of rushing touchdowns – 15 in just seven games in 2020.

"Congratulations to Mo, that's a huge record," Fleck said. "I prefer we announce that a little later in the game, rather than eight minutes to go. I still get a little nervous at that point. We're not done (with the game). But it was great to see D.T. up there on the scoreboard. What a class act, and nobody's rooting harder for Mohamed than D.T."

On the year, Ibrahim has carried the ball 170 times for 955 yards, a clip of 5.6 yards per carry.

BIG 2022 Standings

East Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan	5	0	1.000	8	0	1.000
Ohio State	5	0	1.000	8	0	1.000
Maryland	3	2	0.600	6	2	0.750
Penn State	3	2	0.600	6	2	0.750
Rutgers	1	4	0.200	4	4	0.500
Michigan State	1	4	0.200	3	5	0.375
Indiana	1	4	0.200	3	5	0.375

West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Illinois	4	1	0.800	7	1	0.875
Purdue	3	2	0.600	5	3	0.625
Wisconsin	2	3	0.400	4	4	0.500
Minnesota	2	3	0.400	5	3	0.625
Nebraska	2	3	0.400	3	5	0.375
Iowa	1	3	0.250	4	4	0.500
Northwestern	1	3	0.250	1	7	0.125

Oct. 29 Games

Ohio State 44, Penn State 31
Minnesota 31, Rutgers 0
Illinois 26, Nebraska 9
Iowa 33, Northwestern 13
Michigan 29, Michigan State 7

Nov. 5 Games

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

MSU Women, UW Men Nab XC Titles

The Big Ten held its men's and women's cross country championships Oct. 28 in Ann Arbor, Mich. The women ran a 6-kilometer course around the University of Michigan golf course, while the men ran an 8-kilometer race.

A runner's numbered finish in a cross country race reflects the number of points they score for their team, with the lowest score winning a given meet. Michigan State took home the women's conference title, with 78 points from its five runners. Katie Osika led the way for the Spartans, finishing second.

Michigan followed behind Michigan State on its home course with 86 points, trailed by Wisconsin at 94 and Ohio State at 104. The Buckeyes did produce the individual women's first-place finisher in Addie Engel.

Wisconsin dominated the men's race with an average finish of fifth place for its top five runners, landing them a team score of 25 points. That left 32 points of separation between the Badgers and second-place Michigan at 57, with Indiana taking third at 89 points. Ohio State landed eighth with 232.

Bob Liking took home the individual men's title for Wisconsin, with teammate Jackson Sharp following right behind him in silver-medal position. Indiana's Gavin Sanchez rounded out the top three. The top men's finisher for the Buckeyes was Giovanni Copploe, who finished 27th.

Ohio State Mounting Big Ten Title Defense

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

For the first time since Kelsey Mitchell was last on the roster, the Ohio State women's basketball team is entering the season not in the hunt for a conference title, but as one of the teams being hunted as a defending Big Ten regular-season champion.

The Buckeyes split the conference title with Iowa (who went on to win the Big Ten Women's Basketball Tournament) after finishing the regular season on a 15-3 run, bringing home the program's first Big Ten championship since the 2017-18 season.

Ohio State continued that success in the postseason, making it to the Sweet 16 and dropping a 66-63 contest to Texas, just three points shy of the program's first Elite Eight appearance since the 1992-93 season. Overall, the Buckeyes finished with a 25-7 mark on the year.

"With COVID and then the postseason ban, we had some ups and downs in the program there for a couple of years," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "But it speaks to the character of the kids we have in our program that we kept moving forward and there was nothing but positive energy from them. That's what allowed us to have the success we had last year, and now the goal is to hopefully build on that and even do better things."

McGuff – who is entering his 10th sea-

son at the helm for the Buckeyes – was rewarded with a new contract that ties him to Ohio State through the 2025-26 season, but the focus now shifts to this year.

No. 14 Ohio State returns most of last season's core, with guards Jacy Sheldon, Taylor Mikesell, Rikki Harris and forward Rebeka Mikulášiková back, and guard Braxtin Miller and forward Tanaya Beacham as the only notable losses. The Buckeyes also welcome back guard Madison Greene, who suffered a season-ending knee injury last year just days prior to Ohio State's season opener.

The returning production, as well as the addition of Greene, should help Ohio State maintain its position as one of the nation's best offenses. The Buckeyes averaged 78.2 points per game last season, eighth in the country, by deploying a guard-heavy lineup to operate as one of the fastest teams in the nation, averaging 74.8 possessions per 40 minutes and 0.92 points per play.

"We have so many different guards who are so versatile and so many bigs who have their style," Sheldon said. "Our team is fun to play with. We play at a pace that, quite honestly, I don't think I've played at before on any other team, so it's fun. We have a lot of freedom. We have a lot of openness in our offense, and it's fun to play with."

The biggest reason for last year's run, though, was Ohio State's defensive turnaround in the latter portion of the season. After allowing at least 70 points in 11 of

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

their first 24 games, the Buckeyes gave up 70 points just once in their final eight games of the season, including through the Big Ten tournament and NCAA tournament.

"Conditioning is a big part of how we play, and us being smaller this year has really been emphasized on defense and on offense," Greene said. "We like to run, we like to play fast, so it's really important for us to make sure we're good on defense this year."

Perhaps the most important aspect of repeating as Big Ten champions, though, will be the team's chemistry. There are three incoming freshmen and two transfer additions in forwards Karla Vreš and Eboni Walker, and the Buckeyes will also be working Greene back into the lineup, though she did remain with the team during her rehab last season.

McGuff said several times last year that the team had some of the strongest chemistry he had seen in his time at Ohio State, but he said this season will present new challenges.

"As much as we enjoyed last year and the success that we had, it's almost like starting from scratch again and re-creating the chemistry and the togetherness and things that really made us special, and those are things you've got to work at," he said. "We've got to be mindful of that."

"The good news is with leaders like Jacy Sheldon, Rikki Harris, Taylor Mikesell and Madison Greene back, they're not the type of kids to get complacent. They worked really hard in the offseason."

Harris noted in the preseason that chemistry already looked strong for this year's team in anticipation of the opener.

"(The chemistry) is great that we have so far, and we're adding back new pieces and have Madison back. It's just been different and special," she said. "This is definitely going to be a different type of year for us, and we can't wait to get started."

As that chemistry develops, it will all serve to help the Buckeyes maintain their standing atop the Big Ten, expected to be one of the most competitive conferences in the nation with Iowa, Indiana, Maryland and Michigan all expected to contend. Mikesell said entering the season with a target on their backs doesn't change Ohio State's mind-set for this year.

"Last year, we still kind of had that underdog mentality," she said. "Even though we had won the Big Ten, we still came into the Big Ten tournament as underdogs. We're just going to not necessarily go into it as defending the title, but still chasing the title as well."

As for a potential starting lineup, Mikesell, Sheldon and Mikulášiková will remain in the starting five for Ohio State, while Greene is expected to return at point guard. Harris is likely to fill in the fifth slot, especially if the Buckeyes continue to play small as they have in recent years, but McGuff indicated that the starting lineup could be fluid.

"It's much more of an open competition situation," he said. "You get Madison back in the fold, Taylor Thierry had a really good year last year and a good offseason. We've got some other talented young people that we've added in, so we'll see. But it's more competition this year than we've probably had in a long time."

The following is a position-by-position breakdown of Ohio State's roster for the 2022-23 season, which begins at home on Nov. 8 against No. 5 Tennessee. Players in position groups are listed in alphabetical order. Statistics are from last season unless otherwise indicated.

FORWARDS

Cotie McMahon, 6-0, Fr. – McMahon was the star of Ohio State's recruiting class for 2022, checking in as the No. 23 overall prospect and No. 4 wing in the class, according to ESPN. She averaged 20.2 points per game in her junior season at Centerville, Ohio, before enrolling early at Ohio State, and McGuff said that McMahon had a great offseason.

McMahon also made an appearance over the summer on the USA Basketball Women's U18 National Team in which the United States – with an unblemished 6-0 record – took home the gold medal. She averaged 14.2 points, 7.5 rebounds and 3.2 assists on 49.2 percent shooting in six games and was named to the all-tournament team.

She is one of three new forwards on the team who will help to replace the loss of Beacham, who averaged 7.3 points and 4.6 rebounds in 31 games for Ohio State last season while shooting a team-best 52.4 percent from the field (min. 100 attempts).

Given the leap that forward Thierry took last season, it isn't unthinkable that McMahon – who is an inch taller than Thierry – could see a similar jump this season, especially if she can develop some consistency as a scorer at the next level.

Rebeka Mikulášiková, 6-4, Sr. (9.4 points per game, 5.0 rebounds per game) – With Ohio State bringing in more forwards through the freshman class and the transfer portal, as well as Thierry's continued rise, some pressure has been taken off Mikulášiková. She and Beacham were the only forwards who saw significant time for most of last season, and it resulted in Mikulášiková being left in for too long and having to come back in on short rest because otherwise the Buckeyes were lacking in rim protection.

She started and played in all 32 games last year, averaging just 20.1 minutes per game, but with some additional depth, Ohio State should be able to utilize more consistent rotations and keep her, as well as the other forwards, fresh throughout 40 minutes. "It's really nice to have more forwards on the team, especially during practice," Mikulášiková said. "There's bigger rotation. We can play one-on-one more, and it's just good to know during games (that) if I'm

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2022-23 Ohio State Women's Basketball Projected Starting Lineup

0 • Madison Greene • G
Ht.: 5-8 - Class: R-Jr.



Greene will return at point guard for Ohio State after missing all of last season with a knee injury.

1 • Rikki Harris • G
Ht.: 5-10 - Class: R-Jr.



Harris averaged 7.1 points and 4.3 rebounds per game last season, appearing in all 32 contests with 19 starts.

4 • Jacy Sheldon • G
Ht.: 5-10 - Class: Sr.



Sheldon scored a team-high 19.7 points per game last season on 50.4 percent shooting from the field.

23 • Rebeka Mikulášiková • F
Ht.: 6-4 - Class: Sr.



Mikulášiková led the Buckeyes with 5.0 rebounds per game while averaging just 20.1 minutes per contest.

24 • Taylor Mikesell • G
Ht.: 5-11 - Class: Sr.



Mikesell shot 47.5 percent from beyond the arc in her first season at Ohio State, which ranked second in the country.

tired, or anyone else is tired, we will step up for them. So it's good to have more players."

Conditioning will continue to be a focus for Mikulášiková this season as well as developing stronger defensive instincts in the paint. She was a solid shooter for Ohio State last season, connecting on 45.9 percent of her shots, but she could do with fewer attempts from deep, where she was just 21 of 73 (28.8 percent). In addition to improving on the court, she's trying to improve just as much off the court for the Buckeyes.

"This season I'm trying to be a bigger leader for the team, just trying to communicate with – especially the new post players that we have – and just explain to them the way we play and what we need from them," she said. "Communicate well and be a leader on and off the court."

Taylor Thierry, 5-11, So. (2.9 ppg, 3.4 rpg, 28 blocks) – Thierry's final stat line from last season shows minimal point and rebound totals, as well as just 15.2 minutes per game, but it doesn't tell the full story of the jump she took in the second half of the season.

Starting at roughly the midway point of last year, the game appeared to click with Thierry, who began receiving increased minutes. She scored a season-high nine points and seven rebounds and also dished out three assists in a win over Nebraska, and she was on the floor for 26 minutes in Ohio State's NCAA tournament win over Missouri State. She finished her first tournament game with five points and five rebounds, and she followed up against LSU with six points and four rebounds.

It was never perfect, as one would expect with a freshman, but she provided a spark for Ohio State whenever she entered the lineup.

"She had a really great first season, an excellent offseason, and the reason she could be an 'X' factor for us is that she's got an athleticism that other people just don't have," McGuff said. "She can make some plays that we're going to need that other people can't make."

Thierry may not be ready to start for the Buckeyes – all bets could be off, though, once Ohio State gets deeper into the season – but she should provide valuable minutes as the first player off the bench and one who provides some impressive athleticism at the forward spot. Her teammates have also said she can dunk, so if she gets the ball in transition, it might be wise to step out of the way.

Karla Vreš, 6-3, Sr. (3.5 ppg, 1.6 rpg at American) – Vreš was the first transfer addition for Ohio State this offseason, painting a clear picture of where McGuff felt the Buckeyes may have been deficient last season, as she became the second-tallest player on the roster when she stepped on campus.

While Vreš saw a decline at American University last season, she averaged 18.8 points

and 2.4 rebounds per game in 2020-21 on 60.3 percent shooting, one of the best marks in the country. She was actually a better shooter from deep than she was from the field, going 61.9 percent from three-point range.

Ohio State may not need her ability as a deep shooter, but McGuff will never pass up points in the paint, and if Vreš can return to her previous form at American, she should provide an immediate boost to the Buckeyes' play in the post.

"Karla, we brought in – obviously she's got the size, but also the skill to give us some depth with our post play," McGuff said. "We're really happy to be able to bring her in."

Eboni Walker, 6-0, Sr. (4.2 ppg, 3.2 rpg at Syracuse) – Ohio State's other transfer addition this offseason was Walker, who joined the Buckeyes this offseason from Syracuse. Walker played in just six games with the Orange before being ruled out with an injury, and in her prior two seasons at Arizona State, she appeared in 53 games (with nine starts), averaging 6.9 points and 5.0 rebounds per game on 47.2 percent shooting.

Much of what was said about Vreš applies to Walker in regard to her ability near the rim, though Walker offers more versatility given her ability to score from several spots on the floor.

"Eboni brings us some size and toughness, and she's a really versatile player that could score around the basket," McGuff said. "She can also shoot it from the perimeter and put it on the floor. And she is going to give opposing teams real matchup problems."

While Walker fits in as more of a forward on Ohio State's roster given the abundance of guards, she views herself as capable of playing anywhere on the court.

"I play whatever position I need to play to win," Walker said. "If you need me to go out there and call a play and dribble, I'll do that. If you need me to do defense, I'll do that. If you need a rebound, I'll do that. I don't want to just be a five or a four or a post player."

GUARDS

Heyvne Bristow, 6-1, Sr. (3.2 ppg, 2.4 rpg) – Despite entering her third year with the program, Bristow – a former Providence transfer – remains somewhat of an unknown for the Buckeyes.

Bristow started Ohio State's first game of the season against Bucknell but was not on the floor to begin the second half and was ultimately outpaced in minutes by guard Kateri Poole, who transferred out of the program this offseason. Bristow then played at least 15 minutes in each of the next two contests but then appeared in just eight games to close out the year.

She played a half of action against Alabama State on Dec. 15, 2021, and after earning a few minutes at San Diego State on Dec. 21, 2021, she did not take the floor for Ohio State until a Feb. 14 matchup at

Illinois and then made just two more appearances. Bristow was reported as feeling under the weather at times last season, and she also suffered a bout with COVID-19 that caused her to miss several games in late December into January. It's unknown, though, if that's what caused her to go nearly two months without seeing the floor.

When Bristow did play, she was just 11 of 30 from the field and added 26 rebounds on the season, including two games with five boards. Her height offers her an advantage over most guards on the roster, but depth at guard and some new additions at forward – Bristow could conceivably play both positions – could push her further down the lineup. It isn't out of the question, though, that she finds a regular role in the rotation if she is healthy entering this season.

Kaitlyn Costner, 5-8, So. (0.5 ppg, 1.0 rpg) – Costner appeared in just 11 games last season, averaging the second-fewest minutes on the team (5.4) behind guard Anyssa Jones, who transferred to Dayton this past offseason. In her limited action, Costner was 3 of 11 from the field and did not connect on any of her four three-point attempts, though she did pull down 11 rebounds.

The high mark of her season came in Ohio State's win over Norfolk State in the second game of the season. Costner saw the floor for 12:18 and scored 4 points on 2-of-4 shooting, and she also finished with a pair of rebounds and three assists.

Given Ohio State's embarrassment of riches at the guard position, it's likely that minutes for the Osceola, Ind., native will again be reserved for late in contests, with

the opportunity to potentially fight for some more time on the floor next season with Mikesell (and potentially Sheldon) departing the program.

Madison Greene, 5-8, R-Jr. (7.7 ppg, 2.1 rpg, 4.3 assists per game, 1.7 steals per game in 2020-21) – Greene will return to Ohio State's lineup after missing all of last season with a knee injury. When she last started for the Buckeyes at point guard in 2020-21, she appeared in 15 games and averaged 13.4 points, 4.3 assists and 3.5 rebounds per game while shooting 42.7 percent from the field.

While not a prolific three-point shooter like her fellow guards, Greene had a knack for getting to the free-throw line where she connected on 85.7 percent of her foul shots. She was also an excellent defender for Ohio State and can add another dimension to the Buckeyes' defensive efforts that saw improvement as last season progressed.

"I'm excited to have Madison back," Mikesell said. "Madison's defense and her leadership and her ability to create from the point guard position is pretty impressive. That's her natural position, which allows Jacy and I to play our natural positions as well, which is nice. It's going to be pretty exciting what all three of us can do in the backcourt."

While McGuff said the injury was really tough on Greene, he noted she did a great job with her rehab, and Greene said she feels completely healthy entering this season.

"I feel great. It's really exciting to be back on the court again and to play with my team."

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mates," she said. "I'm really excited about this year and what we can do, so it's going to be fun, for sure."

Time spent on the bench during her rehab also allowed Greene to look at the game from a new perspective, especially as her team went on to win the conference title.

"She did spend time doing an internship with us and just had more of a – certainly a great teammate last year – but kind of a coach on the bench (role) with the other players," McGuff said. "She had to look at the game a little bit differently not being in there from the bench, so I think she learned some things and just observing the team and how we played and the things we were trying to accomplish."

Rikki Harris, 5-10, R-Jr. (7.1 ppg, 4.3 rpg, 2.5 apg, 1.6 spg) – Harris was expected to contribute for Ohio State last season, but few expected the impact she ultimately had on the team. She was a consistent member of the rotation throughout the first half of the season, often playing upward of 20 minutes off the bench, and was the first guard in when Mikesell, Miller or Sheldon came off the court.

She earned her first start of the season against Michigan on New Year's Eve, and after Ohio State committed to Sheldon at point guard, it opened up a permanent spot on the starting lineup, which Harris seized. She started the final 18 games of the season (19 total) for the Buckeyes, averaging 7.6 points and 4.5 rebounds during that stretch.

Along with Miller, Harris was one of Ohio State's most consistent defenders last season and should fulfill that role again this year.

"Rikki's very similar to Braxtin," McGuff said. "She has a very high basketball IQ, and she's a good communicator on the court in helping others be in the right position. That's an area where she could really help us this year with Braxtin gone. She's got some toughness to her that we're going to need on the defensive end. She gets tough rebounds, she dives on the floor, and so we're going to need even more of that this year with Braxtin gone."

Harris shot just 39.2 percent from the field last season, but if things go to plan while playing alongside Greene, Mikesell and Sheldon, the Buckeyes will rarely need Harris to be the one making a play, and she can instead rely on her defensive prowess and off-the-ball skill.

"It doesn't really change," Harris said of her role this season. "We lost some leaders, so we definitely have to step up a little more. But my teammates know who I am, so just keep doing what we do."

Kaia Henderson, 5-6, Fr. – Henderson arrives at Ohio State from New Hartford High School in Utica, N.Y., where she became that school's leading scorer with 2,093 points in just three seasons. Henderson graduated from high school early and enrolled at Ohio State for this past spring semester.

As with Costner, Ohio State's assortment of guards makes it difficult to foresee Henderson getting significant time on the floor, especially with Greene returning at point guard and Sheldon perfectly capable of filling in at the spot as evidenced by last season. Any minutes the staff can sneak for Henderson, though, will be valuable for her development as a potential point guard of the future for the program.



SONNY BROCKWAY

RIKKI SHUFFLE – Redshirt junior guard Rikki Harris came into her own for the Buckeyes last season, becoming an everyday starter while averaging 7.1 points and 4.3 rebounds, and is expected to be a key defensive piece for Ohio State this season.

Taylor Mikesell, 5-11, Sr. (18.6 ppg, 3.5 rpg, 2.0 apg) – Ohio State suffered a loss just before last season with Greene's injury, but it also gained a superstar in Mikesell, who transferred in from Oregon and was ruled eligible to play for the Buckeyes just days before the season began.

She turned in one of the greatest shooting seasons in program history, knocking down 47.5 percent of her three-point attempts, second best in the country and first among Power Five competition. Though it wasn't the best single-season mark in Ohio State history – that belongs to Brittany Johnson, who made 48.1 percent of her attempts in 2009-10 – it established Mikesell as the career leader for three-point percentage. It wasn't due to a lack of volume, either, as Mikesell attempted 240 triples, tied for 14th in the country.

Despite being a late addition to Ohio State's starting lineup, she slotted in perfectly, starting all 32 games for the Buckeyes and averaging 18.6 points in those contests. She complemented Sheldon and Miller in Ohio State's backcourt, allowing the Buckeyes to run an efficient offense and spread out defensive pressure. This established her as a potential WNBA draft lottery pick, but Mikesell decided to return for a fifth and final season of college basketball and her second at Ohio State.

"It's huge," McGuff said of her return. "She's obviously an incredible player. The way she impacts us on the court is going to be tremendous. Now she's in year two at Ohio State and really is much more comfortable being a leader and sharing her experiences with her teammates and being very helpful and helping the young kids – not that she wasn't doing that last year, but it's hard to really get that going in just one year."

"Now, heading into her second year, she's got a tremendous amount of respect from her teammates because of her work ethic and her ability, and I think you'll see her not only be a great player, but also a great leader."

Mikesell echoed McGuff's comments

and said she's hoping to be a better leader in addition to improving on the court.

"Basketball wise, just trying to improve on a little bit of everything, and then obviously just touching up some defensive things and getting quicker off the ball," she said of where she's trying to improve.

Mya Perry, 5-9, Fr. – Perry joins Henderson and McMahon in the freshman class, though she isn't having to go far to attend Ohio State, hailing from Reynoldsburg, Ohio.

She saw increases in her scoring average from year to year in high school, going from 14.0 points as a sophomore to 15.0 as a junior and topping out at 18.1 points in her senior season. She finished her prep career as Reynoldsburg's all-time leading scorer and helped lead the Raiders to their first state title this past spring.

Perry is the lone member of the freshman class who did not enroll early at Ohio State, but it hasn't stopped her from potentially making an impact this season.

"She came in here and she's prepared to work," McGuff said. "She's working really hard, she's a good kid, she's fitting in, and we think she's going to definitely add a lot to our program over the time that she's here."

For perhaps the first time in her career, the onus of scoring will not fall on Perry – that will instead be left to the trio of starting guards in Greene, Mikesell and Sheldon. In the meantime, Perry will get the chance to learn from perhaps the nation's best backcourt and could get the chance to show off in limited minutes.

Jacy Sheldon, 5-10, Sr. (19.7 ppg, 3.7 rpg, 4.2 apg, 1.9 spg) – Mikesell provided the highlights for Ohio State last season, but the heart of the team – as well as its most well-rounded player – was Sheldon.

She entered last season expecting to be Ohio State's top-scoring option, buoyed by Greene at point guard and Mikesell adding some additional scoring on the perimeter. Mikesell held up her end of the bargain, but Greene's injury left the Buckeyes without a viable option at point guard. Brief experiments at the point with Bristow and Poole were largely unsuccessful, so McGuff – in an attempt to find anyone who could run the offense – turned to Sheldon, who hadn't played point guard at Ohio State but had done so in high school.

Not only did Sheldon answer the call, delivering a team-high 4.2 assists per game as the Buckeyes churned out 78.2 points per contest, but she was able to boost her game, averaging a team-high 19.7 points in 32 games. She scored at least 30 points on three occasions last season and had two double-doubles (with points and assists) while shooting 50.4 percent from the field. She was a standout in the Buckeyes' NCAA tournament run, averaging 21.7 points, 5.7 assists, 4.0 rebounds and 4.0 steals in three games on 51.1 percent shooting.

"She did a great job in that position last year, so I would say it gives us a lot more options this year," McGuff said. "She was really effective in that role last year, and I thought we executed well with her there, so I think the way I look at it is definitely a lot more options. Especially with her versatility – she can play the one, she can play the two, and we just have to figure out how the team best fits around that."

Though Greene will regain her spot at point guard, McGuff said that Sheldon may still see some time there. Sheldon said she

doesn't care what position she plays as long as it serves the team.

"I love the game. I love to win," Sheldon said. "I want everyone I'm playing with to succeed just as much or even more than I am. I don't really care what it takes – I want to win. So whatever we have to do to do that, I think whatever is best for the team is what we're going to do."

Sheldon has seen increases from year to year in her point, rebound, assist and steal averages as well as her shooting percentage. Another increase in her fourth season, or at least something comparable to last season, could put her in position – if she isn't already – to be a lottery pick in next year's WNBA draft. With Mikesell a near lock to hear her name called, it could be just the third time in program history that Ohio State had two players taken in the same WNBA draft (Jessica Davenport and Brandie Hoskins, 2007; Kelsey Mitchell and Stephanie Mavunga, 2018).

If Sheldon chooses, though, she does have another season of eligibility at Ohio State. She hasn't given any indication yet as to whether this is her last season for the Scarlet and Gray, but either way, her impact on the program will be felt for years to come.

"Her legacy is going to be incredibly impressive," McGuff said. "She's such a great kid, and it's a great story in just consistency and perseverance in that she came in and on day one she wasn't a starter, but as the season progressed as a freshman, she just earned her way into that spot and has never looked back. She's gotten better each year. She's a relentless worker, and she's going to leave an incredible mark in our program when she leaves."

Emma Shumate, 6-1, So. – Shumate, a native of Dresden, Ohio, who played at Newark High School, offers one of the more interesting options on the roster for McGuff.

She was the No. 59 overall prospect and No. 23 guard in the 2021 recruiting class, according to ESPN, and originally signed with West Virginia out of high school. She never played for the Mountaineers, though, opting to enter the transfer portal after just a few weeks on campus before returning closer to home at Ohio State.

"Especially with that comparison between another university and this one, things have been great for me here," said Shumate, who has been on campus since January. "I'm closer to home, and I'm surrounded by people that make me want to work. It's a great environment."

Shumate averaged 13.4 points per game in her final season at Newark in 2020-21, helping lead the Wildcats to a runner-up finish in the OHSAA Girls Basketball Division I Championship. Though it's been some time since she's taken the court in any official capacity, she's been practicing all the while with the Buckeyes and should be set to contribute this season.

"She's a great kid," McGuff said. "I'm really happy to have her in the program. We just have such a different style than what they had at West Virginia, so it was a little bit of an adjustment. She's long, she's got a great basketball IQ, and she can really shoot the ball, so we're really excited about her."

Tied for the tallest guard on the roster along with Bristow, Shumate offers some versatility for Ohio State's lineup as both an excellent shooter and a larger body near the post for rebounds and rim protection.

Okpara Steps Into Big Man Role For OSU

Ohio State men's basketball head coach Chris Holtmann has placed considerable attention to improving defensively in recent years, and he may have found

COURT REPORT Jack Emerson

an answer to help shore up the team's rim protection.

Standing 6-11, freshman center Felix Okpara gained a reputation for his defensive acumen throughout his high school career. Okpara's large frame and quickness, despite his size, allowed him to become one of the more feared shot-blockers in the nation, and Holtmann took notice.

"He's different than the bigs we've had," Holtmann said. "He's different than Zed (Key). He's really unique in his shot-blocking ability. At 6-11 and with about a 7-3 wingspan, I think he really provides a dimension that's exciting for us. He's quick off of his feet. "We obviously needed to add another guy, and we were looking for someone who could bring something different than Zed. He's exciting for us."

While Okpara excelled as a basketball player during his high school years, his first true love was soccer. Growing up in Lagos, Nigeria, Okpara placed his primary focus on soccer until he moved to the United States when he was 18 years old. Just two years later, Okpara was already turning heads on the national scene, tallying 11 blocks against Oak Hill Academy in 2020 for Chattanooga (Tenn.) Hamilton Heights Christian Academy.

As a junior at Hamilton Heights Christian Academy, Okpara averaged 11.1 points, 7.9 rebounds and 2.6 blocks per game. Okpara opted to transfer to the more nationally-recognized Link Academy in Branson, Mo., for his senior season, where he helped the program to the finals of the Geico National Tournament.

Okpara made his commitment to Ohio State on July 26, 2021, and buzz quickly circulated around the Buckeye fan base that the Scarlet and Gray might have finally found the true big man they were waiting for.

As Okpara prepares for his first collegiate season, as well as the notorious physicality of the Big Ten, he's placed specific attention on building strength in order to battle with some of the larger big men in the conference. With the college basketball season fast approaching and Ohio State's season opener on Nov. 7, Okpara noted that he's prepared to help this team in any way that he can.

"I'm ready to get in there and try to help my team win," Okpara said. "Whether I play two minutes or 15 minutes, I'm always ready. This year, I don't really care if I play that much time in a game. I just want to see my team succeed and get better."

Buckeyes To Open Season With Tough Nonconference Slate

Since his arrival as the head coach of

the Ohio State men's basketball program, Holtmann has carried the philosophy of challenging his team prior to Big Ten play.

In 2020, Ohio State's nonconference schedule included such opponents as Villanova, North Carolina, Kentucky and West Virginia, as well as a season-opening matchup against in-state rival Cincinnati. A year later, the Buckeyes saw solid Notre Dame and UCLA teams, and Ohio State also played marquee matchups against Seton Hall, Florida and Duke last season.

This season is no different for the Buckeyes, and it arguably may be their toughest nonconference schedule in the Holtmann era.

"The schedulers, they put it on us here," Holtmann said in an interview with Big Ten Network's Andy Katz. "It's great that we'll get those kinds of tests early."

Ohio State's first three games aren't exactly murderers' row. The Buckeyes open their season with home games against Robert Morris, Charleston Southern and Eastern Illinois. Although those games may not provide much of a challenge for the Buckeyes, it will allow the new-look roster – which boasts 10 new faces – to jell prior to reaching the meat of the nonconference schedule.

After the three-game homestand to open the season, the Buckeyes travel to Hawaii for the Maui Invitational. The Buckeyes kick off tournament play against preseason-No. 19 San Diego State, which Holtmann lauded as one of the tougher teams on OSU's schedule.

"I've watched San Diego State, who we open with," Holtmann said. "They're terrific. They're going to be a top-15 program."

Following the tournament opener, Ohio State will play either preseason-No. 17 Arizona or Cincinnati in the next round. In round three, the Buckeyes would see one of No. 9 Creighton, No. 10 Arkansas, No. 25 Texas Tech or Louisville.

Holtmann noted that the Buckeyes will get three distinct challenges regardless of whom they end up playing.

"It's an incredible event, an incredible tournament," Holtmann said. "The competition is incredible. The teams out there are phenomenal. We're opening with a team that was second in the country in defense and has most of their team back. They're grown men."

"I think the experience will be really good for our new, young group. I think it's going to be really important for them."

The Buckeyes won't get much time to breathe upon their return to Columbus from Maui. A matchup with Duke looms on Nov. 30 as part of the Big Ten/ACC Challenge. Ohio State stunned the then-No. 1 Blue Devils at Value City Arena last year, giving Duke its first loss during long-time head coach Mike Krzyzewski's retirement tour.

This time around the stakes will be a little different. For starters, Ohio State will have to play in a hostile environment, venturing to Cameron Indoor Stadium, considered one of the toughest places to play in college basketball. Duke will also have a new coach on its sideline, with longtime

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

assistant Jon Scheyer elevated to the head coaching position left vacant by Krzyzewski's retirement.

Following the trip to Duke, the Buckeyes will return home for a nonconference bout against St. Francis from Philadelphia before kicking off conference play against Rutgers at Value City Arena.

Those games will serve as the appetizer for quite possibly the toughest game on Ohio State's nonconference schedule, a neutral-site battle with No. 1 North Carolina. The Buckeyes and Tar Heels will play at Madison Square Garden in New York City as part of the CBS Sports Classic. The top-ranked Tar Heels are coming off an appearance in last season's national championship game, falling to Kansas in a 72-69 thriller.

Ohio State has been part of the CBS Sports Classic – a yearly event with Kentucky, North Carolina and UCLA – since 2014 and boasts a 4-3 record with wins over Kentucky in 2015 and 2019 and UCLA in 2018 and 2020. The Buckeyes have won three straight CBS Sports Classic games but have yet to vanquish the Tar Heels, falling in 2014 and 2017. (Due to Covid issues, Ohio State and UCLA were unable to compete in 2021.)

The Buckeyes close their nonconference slate similarly to how they start it, with games against Maine and Alabama A&M at Value City Arena that give OSU a few tune-up contests prior to entering the bulk of Big Ten play.

While Ohio State's nonconference schedule boasts several distinct challenges for the Buckeyes, Holtmann emphasized its value in preparing his young team for the tribulations of playing in the Big Ten.

"The exciting thing when you have a bunch of new faces and when you have a young team is, OK, you don't have a lot of time to figure things out but you do, in a sport that spans two semesters, have a chance to say 'OK, what can we become come January and February?' " Holtmann said. "There's no question that I think early (in the season), there's going to be some challenges put in front of us, both in terms of our schedule and just the fact that we're going to be young. With that, I think there can be some inconsistency. We'll have to figure that out as we get moving through the year."

OSU Lands First 2024 Commit In Four-Star Mobley

As BSB last went to press, it was learned that 2024 Las Vegas Bishop Gorman four-star point guard John Mobley Jr. (6-0, 150) had committed to Ohio State, marking the first addition to the 2024 class for head coach Chris Holtmann.

Mobley ranks as the No. 7 point guard

and No. 44 overall player in the 2024 class, primarily boosted by his outside shooting ability and playmaking skills according to the 247Sports composite score. Mobley selected the Buckeyes over Arizona State, Creighton, LSU, USC and Xavier.

"I chose Ohio State because I feel like it fits my game best, along with my relationship with the coaches," Mobley told On3 Sports. "They are getting a hard worker and a winner."

Mobley took an official visit to Ohio State on Oct. 2 where he took in the Rutgers-OSU football game and participated in a photoshoot clad in a Buckeyes uniform.

As Mobley kicked off Ohio State's 2024 class, his addition vaulted OSU all the way up to No. 2 in 247Sports' team rankings, slotting in behind Baylor.

OSU Hosts Ohio Guards On Unofficial Visits

Since BSB last went to press, the Buckeyes hosted a pair of Ohio-based guards on unofficial visits.

For 2024, Holtmann welcomed Ottawa (Ohio) Glandorf guard Colin White (6-5) to campus on Oct. 22. White earned Ohio High School Athletic Association Division III first-team All-State honors during his sophomore season while leading the Titans to a 28-3 record. White averaged 19.1 points per game last season and blossomed into the Western Buckeye League Player of the Year, leading Ottawa-Glandorf to the conference title. He was also named Division III Northwest Ohio Player of the Year for his efforts as a sophomore.

White has yet to receive a scholarship offer from the Buckeyes but has picked up offers from Akron, Cincinnati, Miami (Ohio), Northern Iowa, Oakland, Ohio University, Toledo and West Virginia.

The Buckeyes also looked to the 2025 class when Toledo Emmanuel Christian School four-star shooting guard Jerry Easter II (6-3, 190) enjoyed an unofficial visit on Oct. 23. Easter is the No. 11 shooting guard and No. 48 overall player in the class, according to 247Sports. Easter appeared on the OHSAA Division IV All-State Second Team after averaging 25.0 points per game as a freshman.

Easter received an offer from Ohio State in May and has garnered considerable attention from several other high-profile programs. He has picked up additional offers from Michigan State, Louisville, Memphis, Syracuse and UCLA, among others.

Marooney Enjoys Playing Golden Gophers

When preparing for the home series against top-ranked Minnesota on Oct. 28 and 29, the Ohio State men's hockey team viewed the game as business as usual with another Big Ten opponent.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

But it was more than that for senior defenseman James Marooney. It was personal. As a kid in Chaska, Minn., he followed the Golden Gophers and his brother Joey played for them from 2017-20.

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They competed against each other when Marooney was a freshman for the Buckeyes, and he earned his first college assist vs. the Gophers, who went 2-1-1 in the season series.

"When we were playing against them my freshman year, there were some bragging rights," he said. "I mean, there still is kind of. He just texts me throughout the weekends and the week prior to the games just to see how's it going. That's pretty much it."

Those bragging rights were split in the first series this season when the No. 11 Buckeyes defeated Minnesota 6-4 in the opener Oct. 28 before a 4-2 loss in the rematch. Marooney had an assist in each game to give him three in nine games this season.

Even though his brother hasn't played for Minnesota for three years, Marooney still gets hyped for the series.

"It's always fun playing against guys that you grew up playing against and you skate with in the summer," he said. "I always look forward to playing against Minnesota and a bunch of guys I grew up playing with in youth hockey as well as against some in high school."

He said he knows almost every player on the Minnesota team, but there isn't a lot of jawing on the ice between friends.

"It's minimum. Just playing," he said.

Minnesota recruited him, but he opted not follow his brother.

"When I committed back in 2017, they were one of the teams I was talking to, but I decided that Ohio State was the best fit for me," Marooney said.

He cited three factors in the tradition of Ohio State, the academics and wanting to create his own path. It's sort of a tradition because another brother, Cody, played for Alabama-Huntsville from 2014-17.

"We're a big hockey family," Marooney said. "I can't thank my parents enough for helping us be in this position that we are in today."

Marooney played two years for Waterloo, Iowa, in the United States Hockey League. He had 29 points (four goals, 25 assists) in 62 regular-season games his final season.

As a Buckeye freshman, he played only 13 games on a team that was headed to the NCAA tournament before the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly ended the season. For someone used to being in the lineup barring injuries, it was a difficult transition.

"I didn't see a lot of ice time just due to a lot of great defensemen, a lot of senior defensemen, but I think it helped me in the long run, just developing a stronger mindset," Marooney said. "Sometimes it's good to take a step back and watch the game a little bit more and how it processes at this level. I think it was for the better."

He played just 10 games as a sophomore before sustaining a season-ending injury, but last season, he played 31 games and had a goal and eight assists along with 45 blocks. He was also sixth on the team with a plus-14 plus/minus.

His offensive statistics don't stand out, but that's fine by coach Steve Rohlik.

"Sometimes when you come into a program, everybody tries to measure themselves on points and unfortunately, that's the way it is," Rohlik said. "But for us as a staff, we certainly don't do that and James is a prime example of that."

"He does so many good things out there. You might not see him on a score sheet, but sometimes as a player that doesn't resonate, and maybe you don't see your name in the paper and social media and all those things. But he's just as important as the guy that scored the goal."

Marooney is learning to balance offense without sacrificing defense.

"It's getting shots through and not getting any blocked," he said. "The biggest thing is creating offense by quick transition pucks as well as bringing pucks efficiently up the ice and when necessary, holding pucks in as well and minimizing high risk plays."

Marooney is 5-9, 175 pounds but he doesn't see that as a detriment.

"I try to use my speed and I also think I play a bigger than my size," he said. "I like to be physical."

Rohlik said Marooney has the intangibles that can't be measured.

"He's a warrior. He's a heart and soul kid," Rohlik said. "He's going to show up every day and give everything he's got, and that's what I love about him. There's no shortcuts in his game, and I think the guys have a ton of respect for that. He's a good leader in our locker room by how he works every day, and that's a credit to him."

"He has huge heart and huge compete. I don't care how big or small you are, if

you have that, you're going to do some good things. And really, that's what he's all about."

Some Friend

Gordi Myer, a Buckeye defenseman from 2016-20, had the No 1 goal of the week in the minor league ECHL when he scored for the Toledo Walleye on Oct. 22.

He was behind the net when he settled the puck on the blade of his stick, lifted it and then deposited the puck lacrosse-style into the net and past the unsuspecting goalie.

While it's known as the "Michigan Move" for former Wolverines player Mike Legg, who was the first to attempt it in 1996, Myer's goal had a distinct Buckeye flavor. He scored against Wheeling Nailers goalie Tommy Nappier, a teammate at Ohio State, and it rallied the Walleye from a 3-0 deficit to a 5-3 victory.

"He texted me after the game, and I went and met him near the Zamboni entrance," Myer told The (Toledo) Blade. "He was upset, but I think he was more upset that we scored five unanswered on him. That opened the floodgates."

Myer added that the move became popular when he was a junior in 2018-19, and he practiced it on Nappier.

"A bunch of guys started to do it after practice and before practice," he said. "I would just practice it in summer skates, just kind of messing around practicing it."

Not Quite Enough

The Buckeyes had a chance to make a major statement nationally with a sweep of Minnesota, but the Gophers (5-3-0, 1-1-0 Big Ten) broke a 1-1 tie with two late goals in the second period of game two on Oct. 29. Freshman Davis Burnside scored two shorthanded goals for the Buckeyes (7-2-1, 3-1-0).

"Just disappointing," Rohlik said. "You put yourself in a great spot anytime you win on a Friday night in this league because it's so hard to win one, nonetheless have a chance to sweep. We had a great opportunity tonight. I thought we shot ourselves in the foot a little too much tonight."

In the first game, twelve Buckeyes registered points, led by Travis Treloar with two goals and Joe Dunlap with a goal and an assist.

Next

After an open weekend Nov. 4 and 5, the Buckeyes play at Michigan State Nov. 10 and 11.

For a recap of the Minnesota series go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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Buckeyes Come Out On Top In Happy Valley

There is no bronze trophy, no wooden plaque nor special award of any type for the winner of the Ohio State and Penn State football game. Despite that, each season the game seems to have significant importance in determining the winner of the Big Ten East Division, the Big Ten conference and possible college football playoff consideration.

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

Since the Nittany Lions entered the Big Ten in 1993, the annual bout between two of the most storied college football programs has been fierce. Even though Ohio State has won the majority of the showdowns, there have been upsets, come-from-behind victories and big plays that have determined the final outcome of the game for both teams. When the Buckeyes and the Nittany Lions square off, one thing is certain – you can throw away the record books. An intense four-hour battle on the gridiron is going to take place.

The most recent game was no exception. For three quarters, Happy Valley was looking like Death Valley for the Ohio State Buckeyes. A loss to the Nittany Lions would put a dagger in the hearts of the Buckeyes in terms of that berth in the college playoffs and a potential Big Ten championship. Instead, it would be Penn State whose hopes would be dashed in the last 10 minutes of the final quarter. The ticking time bomb, better known as the C.J. Stroud-led offense, took a while to ignite, but when it did, the explosion rattled through Beaver Stadium, leaving Nittany Lion fans stunned.

Penn State would carry the day in terms of most statistics. They rushed the ball for 13 more yards than Ohio State and threw the ball for 17 more yards. The same Penn State defense that gave up over 400 yards rushing to Michigan just the week before shut down the Buckeye running attack, allowing just 37 yards for three quarters.

But with 9:26 left in the fourth quarter and behind by five points, it was time for the Buckeyes to get serious. A 21-yard strike to Marvin Harrison Jr. from Stroud, followed by a 13 yarder to Emeka Egbuka, got the Buckeyes into Penn State territory. It was then the Buckeye rushing attack would double in terms of yardage for the day when TreVeyon Henderson darted 41 yards for an Ohio State touchdown and a Buckeye lead.

This 75-yard drive in just three plays in under a minute gave the Buckeyes a lead that would not be relinquished for the rest of the game. The C.J. Stroud offense that had been stymied much of the day would add more points with a touchdown pass to Cade Stover and another rushing touchdown by Henderson.

Turnovers the Key

It wasn't just offensive heroics that won the day for the Buckeyes. The key statistic of the game would be the four turnovers caused by the Ohio State defense, and es-

pecially the play of the defensive front. Penn State quarterback Sean Clifford had some success for the afternoon but found it hard to throw through the picket fence of arms of rushing Buckeye defensive linemen. In the final minutes of play, it was the fresh, fast and athletic defensive front of the Buckeyes that sealed the fate of Penn State.

No player left Happy Valley happier than Ohio State defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau. He not only had a great day on the gridiron but the game of a lifetime, leaving the field with six tackles, two sacks, two interceptions, one forced fumble and recovery, and one touchdown. J.T. did everything but dot the "i" for the Ohio State marching band that accompanied the team to State College.

Along with Tuimoloau, fellow defensive end Zach Harrison also recorded an interception. It was the second week in a row the senior has stepped up his game to a high level, and he has been a real difference maker up front. It is doubtful any defensive front has recorded three interceptions and a fumble recovery in one game prior to the Buckeye victory. One thing for sure, it was a great day for former Penn State coach Larry Johnson and his elite group of warriors. They are a dynamic part of this reborn Ohio State defense.

The Buckeye defense has played outstanding this season, but going into the game against Iowa, the unit had not tallied many turnovers to show for their success. Oh, how things have changed. Six turnovers against the Hawkeyes and the four crucial ones against Penn State give the Buckeye defense 16 combined interceptions and fumble recoveries for the season, and they now are plus 10 in the turnover margin.

Plenty of Things to Work on

The 2022 Ohio State Buckeyes have proved to be one of the most talented, well-coached and explosive teams in Ohio State history. They possess elite physical talent and football skills. They have also displayed key intangible qualities like mental toughness, true grit and determination, along with the ability to stay focused in pressure situations. If they continue their march toward a Big Ten title and national championship, they will not only accomplish all their goals as set forth by head coach Ryan Day, but will also go down as one of the very best college teams of all time.

That is a huge task to accomplish, and it's imperative they still grow both physically and mentally. This team has few weaknesses, but there are areas of concern which need to be addressed for these Buckeyes to reach their highest level of performance. Time management and on-field communication need to be improved. The Buckeyes could have had at least a field goal right before halftime, but a C.J. Stroud sack and fumble allowed the clock to run out. Instead of a lead at half, the Buckeyes went into the locker room a point down.

The Buckeyes also had several delay-of-game penalties – real momentum killers. This issue has plagued the offense the last few weeks and has cost them valuable yardage. At the same time, the Buckeyes have had to use timeouts too early due to plays not getting called or checked soon enough. It is understandable that in a hostile envi-

ronment like Penn State communication and play calling can be difficult, but the early use of timeouts has been an issue at home as well.

Red-zone efficiency is an area that the Buckeyes have been strong all season, and going into the game against Penn State, the Buckeye offense had scored 100 percent of the time in the red zone with touchdowns and field goals, mainly touchdowns. We still are one of the nation's best in red-zone production but we have dropped to an 80.5 percent touchdown efficiency.

The Buckeyes had a chance to take a 14-0 lead against the Nittany Lions early in the game. A first-quarter field goal instead of a touchdown gave the Buckeyes a 3-0 lead at that point in the game. After a Buckeye touchdown late in the first quarter, Ohio State would take a 10-0 lead, but Penn State would strike back with two second-quarter touchdowns and the lead. It would now be a dogfight the rest of the day. Instead of making the rowdy Nittany Lion fans sit on their hands, it allowed them to remain in a frenzy till late in the fourth quarter.

Rushing Attack Anemic

In the first six games of the season, the Buckeye run game seemed much improved from recent years with a renewed physicality by the offensive line and two outstanding running backs. The balance between the rushing and passing attack of the Buckeyes

made it hard on opposing defenses to overly concentrate on one area to attempt to stop or even slow down the second top-scoring offense in college football.

Nagging injuries to both TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams have meant one or the other has been limited on playing time or ruled out of nearly every game. At the same time, the offensive line has lost its domination on the line of scrimmage the last two games. Both the Iowa and Penn State defense committed to stopping the Buckeye run game by loading the box, slanting their defensive fronts and blitzing.

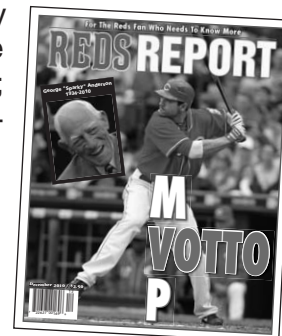
This strategy cost both teams to some degree in terms of pass defense but it did expose some weaknesses in the Buckeye offensive line. The lack of push at the point of attack along with the inability to cut off defenders from the back side has allowed too much defensive penetration up front. Ohio State running backs have not been able to find the same creases in the defense they had earlier in the year.

One thing is for certain: the Buckeye run game must improve drastically, and quickly. We are most likely on a head-on course with Michigan for all the marbles, and the Buckeye offense must be at full throttle in both their passing and running game.

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OSU's Stars Stand Out Against Penn State

It must be frustrating to be Penn State. The Nittany Lions did everything they could. But Ohio State has one big advantage over everyone else in the Big Ten and about any other school this side of Alabama or Georgia: Ohio State has premium talent in numbers. Not one or two, but many premium players.

THE EXNER POINT Rich Exner

It's often said that big-time players make big plays in the biggest of games. We've now seen it again from Ohio State at Penn State. The latest to do so were Marvin Harrison Jr. and J.T. Tuimoloau.

Harrison, the son of an NFL Hall-of-Famer, who as a sophomore is already looking NFL ready – ready at NFL star level – carried the offense at times. And Tuimoloau, regarded as the third-best player nationally in the 2021 recruiting class, had one of the best defensive performances you'll ever see.

In the end, it didn't matter how well PSU contained Ohio State's run game, how much pressure the Nittany Lions put on C.J. Stroud, nor how effective Penn State was in moving the ball. What mattered at the end – again – was that the superstar talent was on Ohio State's side.

It was reminiscent of the 2014 game when defensive end and future NFL star Joey Bosa plowed through a running back prepared to block and instead shoved that back into Christian Hackenberg for a game-ending sack. That secured the 31-24 Buckeye win in overtime. The season ended with a national championship. It was James Franklin's first year as coach at Penn State.

When Franklin's Penn State teams are not playing Ohio State, they win 72.0

percent of the time (72-28), but he's 1-8 against the Buckeyes.

Without being able to land the kind of talent Ohio State recruits, days like these must be really frustrating for Penn State.

The Ultimate Breakout Game

Ahead of this latest game, Tuimoloau showed flashes of talent but his stat line had been far from noteworthy. On the season, he had just nine tackles, a sack, no interceptions, no passes broken up, no forced fumbles.

But against Penn State, Tuimoloau had a season's worth of stats: two interceptions, a touchdown, a forced fumble that he recovered, and a tipped pass that led to another interception.

All those plays came in dominating fashion, whether it was rushing the quarterback for his sacks, jumping a route for an interception, or leaping off a block for his other interception (and score).

It was a very big deal when Ohio State landed the commitment from Tuimoloau so late, with the announcement coming in July 2021 just before his freshman training camp. Now Buckeye fans have had a chance to witness why that signing was such a big deal.

Harrison Getting Better Each Week

The gaudy stat line for Harrison (48 catches for 783 yards and 10 touchdowns) comes up short in assessing his talent, which seems to rise by the week.

It's the way Harrison runs patterns, catches the ball and advances downfield after the catches that makes him so dominating.

FOX announcer, and former Colorado quarterback, Joe Klatt said during the Iowa broadcast that he believes Harrison will be the best receiver in the NFL in four to five years. Klatt could be right. At a minimum, I would expect him to be one of the NFL's top five receivers within that time frame.

Speaking Of Buckeye Stars

Defensive end Zach Harrison is looking more like a dominating force as the season moves along, and not just because of his imposing 6-6, 272-pound build.

He's not new to success. Harrison twice has been named as high as second-team all-Big Ten. But he seems to be playing better than ever.

His interception – off the Tuimoloau tip – was his signature play at Penn State. But, more importantly, he's been wreaking havoc on opposing quarterbacks, now leading the team with five quarterback hurries. He's also broken up two passes, has a sack and caused two fumbles.

Offensive Concerns?

This is odd to say for a team averaging 48.9 points a game, but some concerns have been showing up on the offensive side of the football.

Ohio State has at times struggled to run. The line sometimes struggles to open holes. And running backs TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams seem to be taking turns suffering injuries leaving them on the sideline.

Take away Henderson's 41-yard TD run, and he picked up just 37 yards on 15 carries (2.5 yards a carry) at Penn State.

I say don't worry too much.

You cannot simply remove the best play from the stat line. Ohio State is three or four deep at running back. And there are other ways to have a run-like game when traditional runs aren't working, namely involving the receivers in run-like pass plays outside or actual handoffs to the receivers for end runs.

Quick Hits

Here's some quick takeaways from the last couple of games.

Rare INTs: Sean Clifford threw three interceptions against Ohio State, but none was downfield.

The Harrison interception off the Tuimoloau tip came in the backfield. When Tuimoloau made his first interception, the ball had just made it to the line of scrimmage when he got his hands on it. And Tuimoloau's second interception came in the backfield.

I can't ever remember seeing three interceptions in a game at the line of scrimmage or behind.

Second-guessing: I heard more than one person question Ryan Day's decision not to kick a field goal at the end of the first half, instead going to the locker room with nothing to show for a 56-yard drive deep into Penn State territory.

I'll defend Day. There were six seconds left in the half before the last play. If Stroud doesn't fumble, extending the play, there's time to kick a field goal. I thought it was worth it to try a quick pass into the end zone. Trouble was, Stroud wasn't able to unload the ball quick enough.

Not honest or not knowing? Sometimes, it seems, there's no use asking a coach about an injury. People watching the Iowa game saw Jaxon Smith-Njigba hobble off the field during the second quarter. Some others may have seen him meeting with the medical team

soon thereafter. He never returned to the game.

But when asked about Smith-Njigba after the game, Day implied Smith-Njigba did not return because he was on a pitch count and his time was up for the game. Well, after seeing Smith-Njigba not even make the trip to Penn State – apparently still hurting – it sure doesn't look the way Day made it sound.

Lack of insight: When I become king of the football television world, I'm going to eliminate the so-called rules analysts who chime in with their "insight" while plays are being reviewed.

They seem so afraid to say anything that would stray from the decisions being made by the officials, especially ahead of the final call after review. The latest example was the Williams touchdown at Penn State. He was, at first, incorrectly ruled short of the goal.

One replay view in particular made it clear that Williams had crossed the goal before going down.

Rules analyst Mike Pereira saw it that way, too, but instead of being decisive, he tiptoed: "I really kind of feel like there is enough to overturn it and make it a touchdown."

The Top 10

The College Football Playoff Committee's rankings is the only one that matters, but here's my take as the season enters November.

1. Ohio State (8-0) – Impressive throughout; schedule has been light, but no games have been close at the end. Penn State is better than advertised.

2. Georgia (8-0) – A couple of close calls, but the Bulldogs appear back on the roll.

3. Tennessee (8-0) – Credit the Vols for the best win to date, knocking off Alabama. But somehow, for some reason, I'm not a believer until I see Tennessee beat Georgia. Then, gulp, there could be a rematch with Alabama.

4. Michigan (8-0) – U-M finally got Michigan State's number.

5. Alabama (7-1) – The Tide have struggled more than once this year, but I'd still rather play Clemson or TCU than Alabama in a playoff game.

6. TCU (8-0) – A little bit of uncertainty here, but this team just keeps winning. Key game is Nov. 12 vs. Texas.

7. Clemson (8-0) – Is this the week Clemson finally doesn't escape with a win? At Notre Dame on Nov. 5.

8. Oregon (7-1) – Embarrassed early, losing to Georgia, 49-3, the Ducks have won seven straight.

9. Illinois (7-1) – When we're talking about one-loss teams, why not Illinois? Lone setback was way back on Sept. 2, at Indiana, 23-20.

10. USC (7-1) – The USC-UCLA game could be interesting this year on Nov. 19.

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Stover Makes Sure Outcome Not Tight At End

The exploits of J.T. Tuimoloau in Ohio State's 44-31 victory over Penn State are well-documented throughout this issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, and rightfully so. As the season has progressed, the Buckeyes have unleashed various big-play makers on opposing offenses, and Tuimoloau joined such fellow defenders as Mike Hall Jr. and Zach Harrison on the highlight-reel brigade against the Nittany Lions.

While the sterling play of Tuimoloau is well-chronicled, I am not sure such is the case with tight end Cade Stover. Rather than include a random note about the tight ends somewhere down-column, I want to jump right into his play because he was in on the action from the get-go against Penn State and is really establishing himself as a key part of the Buckeye arsenal and one of the better – if not simply more used – Ohio State tight ends in recent memory. Maybe he did not get his due in this issue for his play against the Lions.

The 6-4, 255-pound bruiser helped the Buckeyes get on the board on the game's opening possession, albeit on only a field goal. While C.J. Stroud and Co. were struggling to establish a running or short passing game, it was Stover who got Noah Ruggles in field-goal range with a 10-yard reception to the PSU 23 and, after an OSU delay-of-game penalty, another catch to the Lion 20 to give Ruggles the 38-yard boot and Ohio State a 3-0 lead.

He helped Ruggles get into field-goal range again in the second quarter with a 9-yard catch from Stroud to the Penn State 23. Five plays later Ruggles connected from 37, and the Buckeyes, who had found themselves trailing, pulled to 14-13.

Ohio State had a good shot at retaking the lead just before halftime, and Stover helped create that opportunity by starting the possession with a 23-yard catch into PSU territory at the 46. The Buckeyes drove all the way to the 8 before bungling the opportunity away.

But it was when Ohio State came to play for real in the fourth quarter that Stover really came to play.

After Tuimoloau set the Buckeye offense up at the Nittany Lion 24 with a strip-sack of Sean Clifford, Stover took a nice pass over the middle and made three Penn State defenders miss on his way to the end zone, giving Ohio State some breathing room at 30-21 with 8:17 to play. Stover showed off the athleticism of a running back or wide receiver, along with his tight end power, as he weaved his way to the end zone.

And speaking of tight end power, it was the play that finally got the Buckeyes rolling for real earlier in the quarter that I will probably remember most.

Penn State had just capped a bizarre 75-yard drive with a 1-yard scoring run by Kaytron Allen to take a 21-16 lead.

Stroud seemed undaunted, hitting Marvin Harrison Jr. for 21 yards and Emeka Egbuka for 13 more to the Penn State 41. There, TreVeyon Henderson, who had more than struggled for the first three quarters, did what TreVeyon Henderson – supposedly always a threat to go all the way – is supposed to do. He blew through a hole and was off to the races, giving the Buckeyes the lead back at 23-21.

Like any big run, there is usually a big block, and this time it was Stover paving the way, taking out not one but two Nittany Lion defenders. It was shades of fullback Vaughn Broadnax taking out multiple Wolverines to allow Art Schlichter to tally the winning score in the 1981 Michigan game, a 14-9 Buckeye victory in Ann Arbor (see page 5 for more on Broadnax).

Stover finished the game with six receptions for 78 yards and his touchdown.

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

Not that Stover was the only tight end to contribute to the game or the pivotal fourth quarter. For a role player, Mitch Rossi had a strong outing. He did a little bit of everything.

On Ohio State's lone scoring drive of the third quarter, Rossi took the Buckeyes into field goal range with a 16-yard catch to the PSU 30. Ruggles would ultimately connect from 40 yards to give OSU a 16-14 lead heading into the final frame. Rossi threw the key block on Henderson's second touchdown run from 7 yards to give Ohio State a 37-24 lead with 2:52 to play to pretty much seal the deal. And finally, as Ohio State was running out the clock while leading 44-31, Rossi had an 8-yard carry before Stroud took a knee on the following play to end the game.

Kudos to Stover and Rossi and to Ryan Day and Kevin Wilson for continuing to call their numbers. If things keep going the way they have been, the Buckeyes will render my "Tight End Watch" obsolete.

The Game Itself

I'm not going to lie. I thought this game was going to be a blowout. I believe that Ohio State has too much offense and too much defense for any team in the Big Ten – including Michigan. And you saw what the Wolverines did to the Lions, so I was expecting at least the same from the Buckeyes and hoping for even more.

Most of the posters on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum in the week leading up to the game were fairly optimistic as well, though perhaps not as optimistic as I was. The consensus seemed to be that the only way that Penn State would win – other than if the Buckeyes beat themselves with turnovers, of which they had none – was if something fluky happened, such as the last time the Lions beat Ohio State. If you recall, Penn State blocked two kicks in the 2016 game to win 24-21, James Franklin's only victory over Ohio State to date.

The Buckeyes didn't look spectacular out of the gate, but they found themselves up 10-0 heading into the second quarter. My blowout was still in play.

But then the fluke things started to happen.

Clifford hit Parker Washington with a short pass early in the second quarter. JK Johnson and Tanner McCalister were right there, but somehow Washington broke free and turned what appeared to be a routine reception into a 58-yard touchdown, and suddenly, after two early interceptions, Penn State was back in business, trailing 10-7. The Lions quickly added another touchdown to make it 14-10, but after a Ruggles field goal made it 14-13, Ohio State made a defensive stop late in the quarter and took over with 1:07 before the half, ample time for OSU's high-powered offense to retake the lead.

And sure enough, as mentioned earlier, Ohio State marched down to the PSU 8, converting a fourth down in the process, and appeared on the verge of adding points. Instead, perhaps confused about how many timeouts they had remaining (or not remaining), the Buckeyes squandered the opportunity. Another fluke?

But everyone knows that the real fluke, the one that might have paved the way for a Penn State upset, was yet to come.

Early in the fourth quarter, Jim Knowles' defense appeared to make a stop on a drive by Penn State, which had yet to score a second-half point, at the Buckeye 13, forcing a

field-goal attempt by Jake Pinegar. In a rare instance where a team was rewarded for being guilty of a penalty, Pinegar missed but the play was ruled dead due to a Lion false start. No problem. Pinegar promptly missed again, but this time it was Ohio State that was flagged for a marginal illegal formation infraction.

Penn State did not let a third chance go by, converting the fourth down to set up first-and-goal at the 9. The Buckeye defense battled, and Clifford and the Lions faced a fourth and goal at the 1. Clifford called on Allen to cap the drive, but Tommy Eichenberg, one of Ohio State's best tacklers, blew into the backfield and had Allen dead to rights. Somehow Eichenberg whiffed and Allen scored, putting Penn State back up 21-16.

Now I'm getting a little nervous. Is it going to be one of those games?

Stroud and Henderson answered my question in all of 35 seconds with the passes to Harrison and Egbuka and Henderson's touchdown bolt, setting off an Ohio State avalanche of 28 points in just over six minutes. Penn State managed to score 10 more points within the deluge, but I am not sure the Nittany Lions ever knew what hit them.

I know there will be some hand-wringing among some Buckeye fans because Ohio State beat the Nittany Lions by only 13 points as opposed to the 24 that Michigan beat them by. And the Buckeyes didn't run the ball for 418 yards like the Wolverines did. In fact, they didn't even run it for 100 yards. But when the game was on the line in the fourth quarter, they did run the football. And oh, by the way, Ohio State passed for 354 yards against the Lions, while Michigan threw for just 145. And in case you missed it, the Buckeyes scored 44 points to Michigan's 41. It's about points, not ground yards, isn't it?

I don't think Ohio State's game with Penn State was that far from my predicted blowout.

The Lion touchdown to start the fourth quarter was, as mentioned, pretty much a fluke. And PSU scored another TD in the final quarter after the game was well in hand, with the Buckeyes taking a 20-point lead with just 2:42 left to play. I think there may have been a bit of a letdown there, which I think is understandable, and Ohio State was probably in a softer defense to prevent any quick strikes. It took Penn State eight plays to march the 75 yards to their final score.

Take away those PSU touchdowns at the beginning and end of Ohio State's dominant fourth quarter – which I know you can't – and the score is 44-17, right in line with Michigan's 41-17 victory. And don't forget, Michigan hosted the Lions. Ohio State had to invade one of the more difficult places to play in the Big Ten and left with the victory.

One last thought.

Ohio State has been involved in two marquee games this season, that with Notre Dame and the victory over the Lions. In both cases the Buckeyes dominated the fourth quarter. Ohio State has outscored its opponents 84-38 in the fourth quarter this season, and that includes games where reserves played much of the period and Day made every effort to not run up the score.

This is not last season. Question Ohio State's toughness at your own peril.

Rising To The Occasion

One of the reasons that Ohio State was able to rally with ease in the fourth quarter was that several of its key players who had

struggled early on came to play when it was showtime.

While JTT, Marvin Harrison, and even Stover, were consistent from the opening whistle, Henderson entered the final stanza with 11 carries for 23 yards and a 2.1-yard average. In the fourth quarter he carried five times for 55 yards, two scores and an 11.0 average.

Emeka Egbuka, who had entered the game averaging 17.9 yards on a team-leading 41 receptions, had been bottled up all afternoon, taking four catches into the fourth quarter with just two negative yards to show for it. In the fourth quarter he caught two balls for 55 yards, one going for 42 yards and both helping set up scores.

And then there is the odd case of Stroud.

Every time you think the guy is having an off-game, you look at the final stat sheet and he has posted another Heisman-caliber entry. I say "odd case" because he actually entered the final frame having connected on 20 of 25 passes for 226 yards, hardly bad numbers to the naked eye. But some of the misses were passes he would normally hit. Some of those completions – possibly because of questionable play calling by the coaches – went for little or no gain. Stroud also looked completely out of sorts at times, especially in the final seconds of the first half.

The true bottom line for Stroud is the bottom line, and the Buckeyes had only 16 points entering the pivotal fourth quarter. Yet he entered it confident, cool, calm and collected. He completed six of his eight passes in the quarter for 128 yards and his only touchdown.

While looking like a random, inexperienced quarterback for parts of the game, he finished with 26 completions on 33 attempts (78.8 percent), good for 354 yards and – maybe most importantly – no interceptions, snapping a string of four straight games with a pick. His counterpart, Clifford, passed for 371 yards but threw three interceptions and lost a fumble.

Advantage Stroud, advantage Buckeyes.

Quick Hitters

If you are looking for a sign as to whether the Ohio State coaches can make adjustments at halftime, look no farther than the cumulative scores in the second and third quarters this season.

Opponents have had their best success against the Buckeyes in the second quarter, where Ohio State is outscoring opponents only 82-50. Give the coaches a little time to talk it over and in the third quarter the Buckeyes are outscoring the opposition by a decisive 101-13 margin.

In the Penn State game, Clifford and the Nittany Lions were starting to gain some offensive momentum in the second quarter, running up 180 yards and scoring 14 points to take a 14-13 lead into the locker room. PSU had the ball to start the third quarter, yet the Buckeyes held their hosts to 78 yards and kept them off the scoreboard in the third frame.

• There are some who may have wondered if veteran defensive line coach Larry Johnson was slipping during the last few seasons. His troops had been kind of quiet since the run of the Bosas and Chase Young ended in 2019.

But predictions of his demise have been proven premature. This year's group may be, overall, one of his best. The playmakers just keep coming at you. There was even a Tyleik Williams sighting against Penn State. Williams had five tackles, including a sack, against the Lions and made a key fourth-down stop on PSU's first drive of the second half.

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