

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER
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Vol. 42, No. 9

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 12, 2022



SONNY BROCKWAY

GALE FORCE WIN — Despite some of the worst playing conditions seen by several coaches and players, Ohio State outlasted Northwestern at Ryan Field in Evanston, Ill., on Nov. 5, taking home a 21-7 win in a slugfest with the Wildcats.

WINDY CITY WARRIORS

OSU Outlasts Northwestern Wildcats In Saturday Slog

By BRADEN MOLES

BSB Associate Editor

Walking into Northwestern's Ryan Field, the general vibe of the venue — one which has a maximum capacity of 47,130 fans, fewest in the Big Ten — is rarely one of a big college football game. That was especially evident on Nov. 5 in advance of the Wildcats' contest against No. 2 Ohio State, as there was little in the way of evidence that a game was being played, with sleepy streets and a sense of serenity throughout Evanston, Ill.

As it turns out, that may not have been due to dwindling interest in the Northwestern program after a 1-7 start to this season or the belief that the Buckeyes would do little more than show up, exert their will and then leave. Rather, it may have been because all the fans who planned to attend got blown away by the whirlwind storms that whipped through the area before, during and after the game.

The devastating winds — some of which reached upwards of 60 miles per hour, according to a high wind warning issued during the game by the National Weather Service — and torrential rain led to a quintessential example of Big Ten football that had two teams duking it out, mostly on the ground, for 60 minutes and braving the elements.

Hours after the game, it appeared as though a tornado had ripped through the venue with food wrappers, game programs and trash cans littered throughout the concourse and playing surface of Ryan Field. One could be forgiven for thinking the officials were loose with their flags, as the field — even during play — was rarely without several pieces of trash flying about, ripped from the hands of the 42,774 fans in attendance, most of whom appeared to be donning scarlet and gray.

But a tornado — a whirlwind of chaos and confusion — is not far off from an apt description of the game itself, as the Buckeyes (9-0, 6-0) overcame what is becoming a far-from-unusual slow start

on offense to avoid an unthinkable upset against Northwestern (1-8, 1-5), coming away with a 21-7 victory in a raging road environment.

"I've never been around conditions like this," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "I don't know what the numbers showed. It must have been 30 mile per hour winds. And if you've ever tried playing golf in 30 mile per hour winds, it's hard to get off the tee, forget throw a football."

"We saw this coming, so we had a plan. You could see we were under center some and tried to handle it that way. I mean, there were times I was concerned about the snap coming back in the shotgun, it was so windy. I can tell you this right now. I'm glad this game's over with."

Someone else who was almost certainly glad the game was over with was quarterback C.J. Stroud, who had easily his worst performance as a

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From The Message Board

Ohio State struggled to find any sort of an offensive rhythm against Northwestern, but the Buckeyes still emerged with a 21-7 win over the Wildcats. As Ohio State has now endured three consecutive slow starts offensively since the off week, we asked BSB subscribers if they were concerned about the Buckeyes' flat outings of late. Here are some of the responses:

"Not very concerned. Iowa has an excellent defense. Penn State has a good defense and played very well vs. Ohio State. At Northwestern, everything was about the weather. Under normal weather conditions, Ohio State beats that Northwestern team easily."

– Terrier Buck

"Very concerned. It feels like this team has gone backwards since the bye week."

– bstu9

"There should be concern about the team's lack of intensity. For the last three games opposing players have gained extra yards after being initially hit. We have not seen such intensity by the Buckeyes as they have failed to gain many first downs by not pushing for the extra yard. Lack of toughness was a concern last year. It still falls short on this year's team!"

– Dennis E. Giroux

"If the Bucks start a game on offense vs. Michigan or Georgia the way they've started against the last three teams, they might be in a really deep hole by the middle of the second quarter. Watching the Georgia-Tennessee game, the Bulldogs will present a challenge from the opening kickoff. If Ohio State doesn't solve the offensive line run-blocking issues, opposing defenses will overwhelm them. As for the offensive offensive line blocking ... I think Coach Ryan Day is playing possum with his future opponents. He's saving the schemes for Michigan and the playoff teams. No (Big Ten) West Division champion is a concern. These future NFL linemen can't be this bad. Day was saving the QB running plays for desperate situations. NW and the gusty wind on Saturday forced his hand. When the rubber meets the road, holes will open."

– BYRON MCNUTT

"Here's what concerns me. 1) This team has a hard time tackling. At one point (Zach) Harrison had a running back wrapped up, yet he couldn't get him down until three other Buckeye defenders joined the fray. Stuff like that happened over and over. 2) This team seems built as a video game team. We are heading into November, with the prospect of bad weather every week, and I am not confident that this team can even hang with TSUN in a scrum. I have no idea what changed

since the off week, but something has not been right. The offense can't run, the defense has trouble tackling, and that spells trouble against anybody good. Obviously, the Buckeyes will have more pure talent than anyone we play in the regular season, but this team isn't playing well right now."

– Michael Bauer

"I don't know how concerned I am, but they better get things corrected."

– Mcarr

"I do wish this team played with more intensity."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"My concern is TTUN's running game. We must control the line of scrimmage. Our unstoppable offense has been very slow ... no excuses as to the team. I am hoping this style of C.J. Stroud running will open up our offense as in years gone by."

– John Lanning

"I am still not concerned about this team at all. The new OL coach and the offensive schemes have shown adjustability when faced with adverse conditions, especially with the passing game and QB scrambling/rushing. But the new OL coach is yet to fix the run offense and he has two more games in which to figure out what works. The adversity faced in the last few games may be a blessing as when the prototypes give a lot of trouble, the production units (the TTUN game) work well. That the QB is now determined to win in any way possible in difficult conditions is also encouraging."

– AnthonyBuckeye

"We are in November and I get concerned about the outcome, not the method. We just beat a B1G Team at their home in crazy bad Midwestern weather. Oh yeah – ask Tennessee, Clemson and Alabama how they feel!"

– BuckeyeScott

"Our yards and score could have been significantly higher if Day's stubbornness hadn't gotten in the way. He kept calling for long throws when it was painfully obvious they wouldn't work in the gale-force wind."

– R1TBDITL

FAN FORUM

Buckeye Leaves

Although it wasn't pretty, Ohio State logged to a 21-7 win over Northwestern in Evanston, Ill., on Nov. 5. While the Buckeyes displayed one of their worst performances of the Ryan Day era, there were several Ohio State players who left it all on the field and were deserving of Buckeye Leaves.

Andy Anders, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf goes to safety Lathan Ransom, who continued excelling against Northwestern after grabbing the starting "bandit" position earlier this season.

Ransom collected nine tackles, serving as a sweeper on the back end of Ohio State's defense. Five of his stops were solo takedowns. The Arizona native was a top reason why the Buckeyes held Northwestern to 3.5 yards per carry.

Jack Emerson, BSB: Ohio State's performance against Northwestern didn't provide many options for Buckeye Leaf recipients. However, linebacker Tommy Eichenberg remained a steady presence for the OSU defense and is one of the few players deserving of recognition.

Eichenberg keyed several third-down stops for the Ohio State defense while racking up yet another double-digit tackling output, finishing the game with 13 total tackles and 10 solo stops. Eichenberg added a tackle for loss while helping the Buckeye defense, which dealt with several unorthodox formations from the Northwestern offense, to hold the Wildcats to just 285 total yards.

Braden Moles, BSB: When Ohio State's offense struggled, the one man that helped turn things around was punter Jesse Mirco, who became a weapon for the Buckeyes in their win over the Wildcats.

Mirco launched seven punts for a whopping 352 yards and an average of 50.3 yards per boot. He set a new career mark with a 77-yarder in the first half, and late in the third quarter, he pinned the Wildcats at their own 4-yard line with a 48-yard punt.

Field position was a pivotal part of Ohio State's win, and Mirco was arguably the biggest part of the Buckeyes flipping the field.

BSB Subscribers

BYRON MCNUTT: Stroud and Marvin Harrison Jr. on offense. Without Harrison the last three weeks, the Bucks may have lost two of those games. Most valuable, most reliable. Hard to pick a defensive player who stood out, despite holding NW to just 7 points. NW ball carriers – running backs and

their quarterback – always seemed to get 2-4 extra yards after first contact. They did enough to win the game. The mission each week is to figure out a way to win. Learn how to win under any conditions and when dealing with adversity. Mission accomplished.

bstu9: If I had to award a Buckeye leaf, I guess I'll go with C.J. Stroud for his few big runs.

Terrier Buck: I suggest omitting the Leaves this week. Mirco maybe?

BOB CODY: Jesse Mirco in lousy weather conditions gets a leaf. C.J. Stroud with a crucial long run to help seal the win gets a leaf. After struggling early, Miyan Williams returned to form, gets two TDs plus 111 yards rushing, and gets a leaf.

AnthonyBuckeye: C.J. Stroud for a turnover-free and winning performance in the face of torrential rain and gusty winds. Marvin Harrison Jr. for catching any pass that comes his way. Lathan Ransom for visibly bringing energy to the Buckeye D after the NW score. Tommy Eichenberg, Ronnie Hickman and Steele Chambers for being the tackling machines they are and Denzel Burke for joining them this week. The punter, Jesse Mirco, for his long punts and the defensive coaching staff for yet another second half shut-out.

Poster That Harley Built: Jesse Mirco was the most consistent Buckeye. Sometimes I skip over C.J. Stroud because he is so obvious each week. I think this week you have to give him props. You can tell he doesn't LIKE to run, but he did and the Buckeyes won.

BuckeyeScott: I agree that Miyan Williams deserves some Buckeye Leaves. Not only did he average 4.3 yards per carry with two TDs, he had to rush 30 yards sideways to get those 111 yards north and south.

PeyoteBuck: Mirco is what the post office is supposed to be, dependable. And he is in all weather. No leaves for the coaches. Marvin Harrison Jr and Eichenberg made up for the bad play-calling. I know it was difficult down there on the field but adapt to it. Could happen again.

Mcarr: Stroud for his runs, Mirco for being Mirco regardless of weather, and I thought Lathan Ransom seemed to be active on defense. (Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald) did a good job of taking J.T. Tuimololau out of the action, didn't he?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No Excuse For OSU's Performance

Sure, the weather was terrible. That's no excuse. This was Northwestern! We should have been able to line up and run the ball successfully on every play. We should have been able to dominate the line of scrimmage. We didn't. We haven't been able to run the ball against good defenses (Iowa and Penn State), and now we can't even run the ball against Northwestern. Pathetic.

Meanwhile, Brendan Sullivan made our defense look foolish – Brendan Sullivan! – and little Evan Hull ran for more than 100 yards. Again, we are weak at the point of attack. We are still not tough, and we remain a "finesse" team. Michigan must be licking their chops.

Sorry, Buckeye fans, but it's time to curb your enthusiasm.

**Terry Walrath
Hinckley, Ohio**

Scuffle In The Tunnel

There are numerous noteworthy legendary football rivalries. Perhaps the most noteworthy being Ohio State vs. Michigan. A healthy rivalry increases enthusiasm and competitive spirit. Fortunately, the Shoe will provide no such tunnel for Michigan football players embittered by their Nov. 26 loss.

**David Young
Supply, N.C.**

If you would like to express an opinion concerning Ohio State University sports, please send your letter to BSB Letters, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212, or email it to bsb@buckeyesports.com. Letters must be signed and include the writer's hometown and a daytime telephone number for verification. Publication priority will be given to those letters that are brief, and we reserve the right to edit letters for publication.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin (USPS 705-690, ISSN 0883-6833.) is published 24 times a year (weekly September through November, biweekly mid-March through May and January through early March and monthly June through August and December) by:

Columbus Sports Publications
 1350 W. Fifth Ave., Suite 30
 P.O. Box 12453
 Columbus, Ohio 43212
 (614) 486-2202
bsb@buckeyesports.com

Periodical class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212. Subscription rates: \$99.95/year.

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2022-23 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 42)

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The next issue (Nov. 19 cover date) will be mailed on Nov. 15.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is a privately owned newspaper and is not affiliated directly or indirectly with The Ohio State University.



OPINION

Problematic Line Play Reaching Critical Stage

The one irrefutable fact emanating from Ohio State's titanic struggle against the gale-force winds Mother Nature was throwing off the shore of Lake Michigan and the admirable grittiness of a nothing-to-lose Northwestern team is that if the Buckeyes do not begin to control the line of scrimmage, they can forget entertaining any hope of beating Michigan at the end of this month.

There will be those who look at the final statistics, see that Ohio State averaged 5.9 yards on each of its 35 carries, finishing with 207 yards on the ground, and wonder how anyone could say the Buckeyes did not control the line of scrimmage against the Wildcats. My answer to that would be that Northwestern entered the game ranked next-to-last in the Big Ten and 111th in the country against the run. You, me and Uncle Bill with his bum knee should have been able to run for 207 yards against the Wildcats. Heck, Miami (Ohio), only the fourth-best running team in the Mid-American Conference, went for 216 on the ground during a 17-14 win against Northwestern in late September.

Yet, there were the Buckeyes, struggling to get their offensive engine to fire while a cold wind whipped through the ancient concrete edifice once known as Dyche Stadium (before commerce and capitalism changed its name to Ryan Field). For some odd reason, perhaps known only to him, OSU head coach Ryan Day chose to ignore the weather and instructed his quarterback to try to conduct business as usual.

As a result, C.J. Stroud, the kid from the Southern California city of Rancho Cuyamonga, where the Chamber of Commerce boasts of having 287 sunny days per year, went from Heisman Trophy candidate to the proverbial kite dancing in a hurricane. A steady wind officially clocked at 26 mph – with gusts up past twice that – played such havoc with the usually lethal OSU passing attack that Stroud misfired on each of his first five attempts and finished the game with 10 completions on 26 attempts for 76 yards and no touchdowns.

Since he became the starter at the beginning of the 2021 season, Stroud had never missed more than two passes in a row to begin a game, had never completed fewer than 13 passes, had never thrown for fewer than 154 yards, and had gone 20 straight games with throwing at least one touchdown pass.

Not that Stroud is completely to blame for his uncharacteristically low numbers. Some of his head coach's play-calling wasn't exactly passer-friendly. When trying to throw a football in a howling wind, it really doesn't matter if the gusts are at your back or blowing smack in your face. If you think you're going to see tight spirals under those conditions, you're often going to be disappointed.

Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald certainly seemed to get the memo regarding the weather. His team ran the ball 59 times during the game, finishing with 206 yards, the most allowed all season by the Ohio State defense. It was also a season-best total for the Wildcats, who entered the game with a rushing attack ranked 11th in the Big Ten and 106th nationally.

Much of the damage was done by 5-11, 210-pound tailback Evan Hull, who finished with 122 yards and a touchdown on 30 carries. The Wildcats pretty much gave up throwing the ball during long periods of the game – mostly when they were going against the wind – and often lined up in the wildcat formation with Hull taking a direct snap from center. Anyone who has seen that formation in the past knows the team running it rarely (if ever) pass-

es from the Wildcat, yet it seemed fairly effective at times against the Buckeyes.

Meanwhile, on the offensive side of things, yes, Ohio State rushed for 207 yards with Mivan Williams carrying 26 times for 111 yards and two touchdowns and Stroud adding a career-high 79 yards on just six carries. I've already thrown a little shade at Day for stubbornly sticking to a pass-heavy script despite the weather, but the OSU head coach deserves praise for his fourth-down call late in the second quarter when the Buckeyes were facing a 7-0 deficit.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Going for a first down on fourth-and-1 at the Northwestern 37, Stroud executed an excellent play fake to Williams before scooting around right end on a 16-yard run. Two plays later, Emeka Egbuka took a reverse 15 yards into the end zone for the Buckeyes' first points of the afternoon.

The play on which Stroud got the first down was a thing of beauty, a call executed to perfection. But it also underscored what is rapidly becoming a problem for the Ohio State offense. Day perhaps called for some sleight of hand because of what he had witnessed from his offensive line earlier in the game. Twice on third-and-short, and once on fourth-and-1 during the first quarter, Williams failed to pick up a first down when OSU got zero push at the line of scrimmage.

Now, tell me how an Ohio State offensive line that struggled to move a Northwestern defense off the ball is going to have much of a chance against Michigan's much more physical front. Those short-yardage failures in the first half, and a couple more in the second half, had nothing whatsoever to do with the weather.

We can have the argument about finesse vs. power and which team has a better chance to win in the Big Ten. But at some point, if it truly believes it is a national championship-caliber team, Ohio State is going to have to line up and physically take over a football game. Regardless of the weather, the Buckeyes did not do that at Northwestern.

Once Upon A Time

There was a time when physical domination was not a problem when Ohio State played Northwestern. Almost 33 years to the day before their win against the Wildcats, the Buckeyes rolled into Evanston on a chilly, windy Nov. 4, 1989, and rolled back out with a 52-27 victory that was historic in a number of ways.

It marked the first time the team had scored 50 or more points on the road against a Big Ten opponent since a 56-17 win at Indiana in 1983 and the first time a John Cooper-led team had eclipsed the 50-point barrier in a road game since Cooper was coaching at Tulsa and his Golden Hurricane pinned a 59-20 loss on Texas Tech in 1983.

Perhaps more remarkable was the fact the Buckeyes piled up 456 rushing yards in the game and had a trio of running backs who each cracked the century mark. Dante Lee set career bests with 24 carries for 157 yards and three touchdowns, while Scottie Graham and Carlos Snow added 102 and 100 yards, respectively.

It marked only the fourth time in program

history that three OSU players ran for 100 or more yards in the same game and the first time against a Big Ten opponent since Galen Cisco (160), Jim Roseboro (157) and Don Clark (112) did it during a 35-14 win against Indiana in 1956.

The fact that Graham and Snow each rushed for more than 100 yards against Northwestern wasn't that unusual. Graham had six 100-plus games during his OSU career while Snow had eight. But that was the only time Lee broke through the 100-yard barrier during his three-year career with the Buckeyes.

After rushing for 503 yards and six touchdowns as a freshman in 1989, the product from Meadowdale High School in Dayton nicknamed "Quick" by his teammates seemed poised to take a bigger role during the 1990 season, especially after Snow was sidelined for the season following hip surgery. But freshman Robert Smith took over the starting tailback spot, and Lee totaled only 53 yards on 14 carries during the entire season.

The following year, Lee was moved from running back to a receiver position in the spring but got locked behind more experienced players such as Bernard Edwards, Brian Stablein and Joey Galloway, and he finished the season with only four receptions for 56 yards. He appeared in 10 games in 1991 but played a total of only 44 minutes – not enough to qualify for a varsity letter.

Lee returned to a tailback position for his senior season in 1992, but an ankle injury suffered in the spring lingered into the fall, and he left the team before the season began. His career totals with the Buckeyes amounted to 565 yards and seven touchdowns, nine receptions for 112 yards, and 36 kickoff returns for 696 yards.

Whatever happened to Lee? He returned to Dayton for a while but now lives in Columbus where he is a successful and much in-demand DJ throughout the city going under the moniker of "DJ Quickmode."

As for the other two Buckeyes who rushed for 100 yards in that long-ago game at Northwestern, Graham had a six-year pro career before spending 15 years in a variety of capacities for the NFL Players Association. Graham left the NFLPA in 2021, and since last season he has served as running backs coach on Jedd Fisch's staff at the University of Arizona.

Meanwhile, Snow has experienced a checkered life since leaving Ohio State after the 1991 season. He has fought battles against addictions and injuries and at one point in the not-too-distant past was living out of his car. But in 2019, Snow began to turn his life around and is now sober and with a group called Directions for Youth in Columbus, specifically working with gang members, hoping to help them turn their lives around.

In May, Snow's life came full-circle when he joined more than 12,000 other Ohio State students to participate in commencement exercises, receiving a bachelor's degree in sociology.

A Perfect Segue

Snow's stirring story from football star to homeless and hopeless to proud Ohio State graduate is just one of 50 biographies contained in my new book "The Legends, Volume II – Ohio State Buckeyes: The Men, The Deeds, The Consequences."

In my humble opinion, it's perfect for that hard-to-buy-for Buckeye fan on your Christmas list, and copies are available for purchase at most online booksellers as well as at the publisher's website OrangeFrazer.com.

If you'd like a personalized, signed copy of the book, please call BSB at (614) 486-2202.

OHIO STATE

INSIDER

Day, Hartline Expect JSN To Return This Season

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and wide receivers coach Brian Hartline said they are confident that wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba will take the field again for the Buckeyes this season.

Smith-Njigba has appeared in just three games this season while dealing with a lingering hamstring injury. He started Ohio State's season opener against Notre Dame before leaving the game, and he made brief appearances against Toledo and Iowa but did not look full healthy and did not finish either contest.

With the season beginning to wind down – Ohio State has, at most, six games remaining after starting with an 9-0 record – there's understandable concern about whether Smith-Njigba can return and stay healthy, and Day said he felt optimistic that Smith-Njigba will be back, though he added the Buckeyes can achieve their goals this season even if he doesn't come back.

"But at the same time, we'd love to have

him back, as I'm sure you can imagine," Day said Nov. 1. "But this team is working hard. And that's why we build depth because you just don't know. I'm sure that there's more adversity coming our way, so we're going to rely on our leadership."

"We're into November now, so you just never know what's coming. I think we build up some hardness to us, and we've got to keep building on that as well."

Hartline said it's been challenging for Smith-Njigba to miss the time he has this season. Entering the year, he was viewed as the top receiver in college football and was expected to continue rewriting Ohio State's record book. Instead, he has just five catches for 43 yards.

"He's beating himself up a little bit," Hartline said. "He's been better this week, I'll say that. I think I could echo what he's saying if he was here standing in front. He wants to play in the worst way, and he's frustrated."

Relegated to the bench instead of a starting role due to his injury, Smith-Njigba has continued to be a positive influence within Ohio State's locker room, according to Hartline.

"That being said, he's done a great job of not being a distraction and picking the guys up and staying locked in and FaceTimed them before the game on Saturday," Hartline said. "Like all those things have been awesome. But I know as a competitor, he's frustrated and he wants to get back. But I think overall, he's OK."

Kickoff Time Set For OSU-Indiana

For the fourth straight week, Ohio State

will kick off at noon when the Buckeyes take on Indiana on Nov. 12. The game will be FOX's "Big Noon Kickoff" game, in which the Buckeyes have appeared twice this season (vs. Iowa, at Penn State).

The Buckeyes are 4-0 when playing in the noon slot this season, with wins over Arkansas State, Iowa, Penn State and Northwestern, outscoring their opponents 164-60 in those games.

Ohio State dominates the all-time head-to-head matchup with Indiana, sporting a 77-12-5 record against the Hoosiers. The Buckeyes have won their last 27 games against Indiana, with the Hoosiers' last win coming in a 41-7 drubbing of Ohio State in Bloomington, Ind., during John Cooper's first season as head coach in 1988.

Henderson, Cam Brown Out Against Northwestern

Ohio State was again without several starters against Northwestern. Running back TreVeyon Henderson, cornerback Cameron Brown and Smith-Njigba were all listed as unavailable against the Wildcats.

Henderson was a surprise scratch after playing in each of the last three games, though there have been struggles in recent games for the sophomore running back. He finished with just 38 yards on 11 carries against Iowa and got off to a slow start against Penn State before adding a pair of rushing touchdowns, including a 41-yarder.

Brown was out for his third consecutive game and his fourth of the season, and Ohio State was also without a starter on special teams, as long snapper Bradley Robinson remained out after sustaining an injury against

Iowa on Oct. 22. Mason Arnold again filled in for Robinson and had no issue snapping on seven punts in the game despite high winds at Northwestern.

Tight end Joe Royer, who has been listed as unavailable for most of the season, was not on Ohio State's injury report for Northwestern and appeared in a special teams role, his first action since Arkansas State.

OSU Stays No. 2 In AP Poll, Opens No. 2 In CFP Rankings

After surviving a trip to Evanston, Ill., with a 21-7 victory over Northwestern, Ohio State remained at No. 2 in the most recent AP poll on Nov. 6. The Buckeyes were more fortunate than a trio of their top-10 counterparts. Tennessee, Clemson and Alabama all came out of the week with losses.

After taking down then-No. 2 Tennessee, Georgia remained in the top spot while seeing a surge in first-place votes, gaining 31 votes from last week and rising to 62 total votes. Ohio State was the only other team to receive a first-place vote, obtaining just one. No. 3 Michigan, No. 4 TCU and No. 5 Tennessee rounded out the top five, while No. 6 Oregon, No. 7 LSU, No. 8 USC, No. 9 UCLA and No. 10 Alabama completed the top 10.

In addition to Michigan and Ohio State, Penn State checked in at No. 14 after its 45-14 win over Indiana, while Illinois dropped seven spots to No. 21 after its 23-15 loss to Michigan State at home.

Thanks to its win over Alabama, LSU was the highest riser, gaining eight spots to move into the top 10. Several teams saw significant falls, as Clemson and Illinois each dropped seven spots. Kansas State saw the largest



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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	6-3, 35-14 win over Clemson
Sept. 10	ARKANSAS STATE	W, 45-12	BTN	2-7, idle
Sept. 17	TOLEDO	W, 77-21	FOX	6-3, idle
Sept. 24	WISCONSIN	W, 52-21	ABC	5-4, 23-10 win over Maryland
Oct. 1	RUTGERS	W, 49-10	BTN	4-5, 52-17 loss to Michigan
Oct. 8	at Michigan State	W, 49-20	ABC	4-5, 23-15 win over Illinois
Oct. 22	IOWA	W, 54-10	FOX	5-4, 24-3 win over Purdue
Oct. 29	at Penn State	W, 44-31	FOX	7-2, 45-14 win over Indiana
Nov. 5	at Northwestern	W, 21-7	ABC	1-8, 21-7 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 12	INDIANA	12 p.m.	FOX	3-6, 45-14 loss to Penn State
Nov. 19	at Maryland	TBA	TBA	6-3, 23-10 loss to Wisconsin
Nov. 26	MICHIGAN	12 p.m.	FOX	9-0, 52-17 win over Rutgers

drop, falling from No. 13 to No. 23 after a 34-27 loss to Texas.

The Buckeyes also learned their fate in the first College Football Playoff rankings of the season when the committee released its initial top 25 on Nov. 1, and Ohio State came in at No. 2 in the country.

The Buckeyes were coming off a 44-31 win over Penn State, which checked in at No. 15, and Ohio State trailed No. 1 Tennessee and was ahead of No. 3 Georgia and No. 4 Clemson. The first team out was No. 5 Michigan, with No. 6 Alabama, No. 7 TCU, No. 8 Oregon, No. 9 USC and No. 10 LSU rounding out the top grouping.

"I think the explosive nature of their offense at Ohio State – C.J. Stroud, Marvin Harrison Jr. – the win over Penn State, the way they came back to win that game," said committee chairman and NC State athletic director Boo Corrigan of the Buckeyes' ranking. "Again very close, two well-balanced teams.

At the end of the day, the committee decided that we would go with Ohio State No. 2 and Georgia No. 3."

This was the fourth time Ohio State has appeared in the top four of the first College Football Playoff rankings in a given season. The Buckeyes opened the poll at No. 4 in 2020, No. 1 in 2019 and No. 3 in 2015. Of course, Ohio State's only national championship in the College Football Playoff era came after being outside of the top four in the original poll, checking in at No. 16 in 2014's first rankings.

Illinois was the only other Big Ten team in the rankings, coming in at No. 14. TCU was the highest-ranked Big 12 team at No. 7, and Oregon was the Pac-12's highest-ranked representative at No. 8.

The rankings set up a No. 1 vs. No. 3 matchup, with Tennessee traveling to face Georgia with the winner almost certainly taking ownership of the No. 1 spot. Georgia pre-

vailed over the Volunteers 27-13, giving the Bulldogs another statement win.

The rankings will continue to be released each Tuesday evening, with immediate coverage available online at BuckeyeSports.com.

Day Touches On Running Attack Struggles

It's no secret Ohio State has not run the ball well since its off week.

The Buckeyes, in fact, averaged just 2.2 yards per carry against Iowa on Oct. 22 and 3.8 yards against Penn State on Oct. 29, an average that dips to 2.3 when excluding Henderson's 41-yard touchdown jaunt in the fourth quarter.

Ohio State also saw its fair share of struggles against Northwestern before getting into a rhythm in the second half and finishing with an average of 5.9 yards per rush. If the Buckeyes want to stay ahead of the chains and maintain offensive balance, it will require better production from its rushing attack going forward, according to Day.

"I think when you look at each of (the teams we've played), they're a little bit different," he said. "Each team that we play has a different style up front. There were certainly some runs that we could have blocked better, there were some runs that were blocked very well. So we've just got to continue to work at it and swing at it and get more efficient at it."

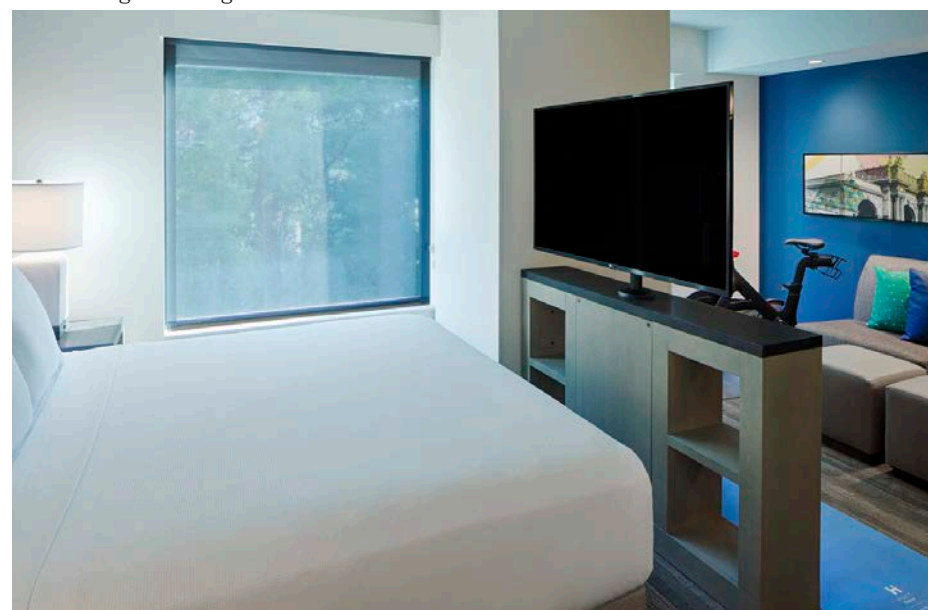
Henderson's above-mentioned long scoring run came straight up the middle of the Nittany Lions' defense. Meanwhile, an earlier third-and-1 handoff to an outside zone was stuffed when Penn State defensive tackle Coziah Izzard blew up Ohio State offensive guard Matthew Jones and took Henderson down behind the line of scrimmage.

That's just one example, but it's indicative of how a variety of wider concepts have turned out for the Buckeyes on the ground of late. The holes Henderson and running back Miyon Williams were finding off-tackle against Wisconsin, when both rushed for 100 yards, either haven't been there or aren't being found.

"There's nothing in there that's just glaring," Day said. "Like, 'Oh my God, we can't run the ball outside' or 'We can't block these guys' or 'We can't read the hole.' It sounds kind of like loser talk, but it's true – it was kind of one guy on each play. But that's how it works in football."

Day did state that the problems don't stem from any formational tendencies Ohio State exhibits, though. Against Penn State, every single time the Buckeyes went under center or out of the pistol, they ran the football. When presented with that data point, Day pointed out that four of the five runs out of pistol were "efficient."

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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"We were efficient 80 percent of the time in pistol runs," Day said. "So I think the question probably is, 'Why don't we run the ball more out of pistol?'"

Given how the Buckeyes have thrown the ball – Stroud averages 14.5 yards per completion this season – if they can get the ground game working again, it will be that much tougher to stop the nation's No. 1 scoring (45.8 points) and No. 14 total offense (484.1 yards).

"We can clean it up, and we have to clean it up to get more efficient early in a game, because that's when it's at its hardest," Day said. "Especially the first first down. That's always the hardest. Once we get going, we usually do OK. Too many three-and-outs, and we

could have done a better job early in the game (against Penn State). I thought we got some really good movement late in the game."

OSU Breaks Record For Consecutive 20+ Point Games

When Williams plunged into the end zone for a 2-yard touchdown run with 4:21 remaining in regulation against Northwestern, he did more than just provide the Buckeyes with an insurance touchdown.

Williams' late touchdown, and kicker Noah Ruggles' ensuing extra point, also pushed Ohio State above the 20-point mark for the 70th consecutive game, breaking the record for the most consecutive games in FBS history scoring at least 20 points. This broke a tie with Oklahoma, which tallied 69 total games with 20 or more points from 2016-2021.

Ironically, the Buckeyes began their streak one week after their 31-16 loss to Oklahoma in 2017 with a 38-7 drubbing of Army at Ohio Stadium.

The streak coincides with Day's arrival in Columbus, when he joined then-head coach Urban Meyer's coaching staff in 2017 as the offensive coordinator. To this day, Ohio State's 31-16 loss to Oklahoma marks the Buckeyes' lowest scoring output since Day became a Buckeye, though Ohio State's 283 yards of offense against Northwestern were the fewest since he became head coach.

Stroud, WR Harrison Named Maxwell Award Semifinalists

Several Buckeyes have helped Ohio State to its 9-0 record to this point in the season, but the duo of Stroud and Harrison has garnered particular national attention for their role in leading the OSU high-powered offense.

Stroud and Harrison were named semifinalists for the Maxwell Award – which is given to the most outstanding player in college football – on Nov. 1.

Stroud leads the nation in passing efficiency (185.8), boosted by 29 touchdowns – which ranks second in the country behind North Carolina's Drake Maye (31 scores) – and his 67.9 percent completion percentage while adding a Big Ten-best 2,453 passing yards.

As one of the primary beneficiaries of Stroud's passing acumen, Harrison has carried the torch of topflight Ohio State receivers. Through nine games this season, Harrison has snared 53 receptions for 834 yards and 10 touchdowns, leading the team in all three categories. Harrison is 13th in the nation in receiving yardage and is third in touchdown receptions. He has had a pair of three-touchdown outings this season, reaching that mark against Arkansas State and Michigan State.

Ohio State was one of three teams to boast at least two semifinalists, joining Alabama (quarterback Bryce Young, running back Jahmyr Gibbs) and Tennessee (quarterback Hendon Hooker, wide receiver Jalin Hyatt).

Arnold, Forsman Shed Black Stripes

A pair of Buckeyes shed their black stripes before of Ohio State's game with Northwestern, as Arnold and offensive lineman Jack Forsman both "officially" became Buckeyes on Nov. 3.

As mentioned, Arnold has been thrust into the starting long snapper role after an injury to longtime starter Robinson has sidelined him since the Iowa game. The Tampa (Fla.) native joined the Buckeyes as a preferred walk-on in 2021 after playing football and wrestling at Carrollwood Day High School in his hometown.

As a high school senior, Arnold was an undefeated Florida state champion in wrestling, and he attributes his success as a long snapper to his wrestling acumen.

Forsman also joined the program as a preferred walk-on in 2021 after playing football at Powell (Ohio) Olentangy Liberty. While with the Patriots, Forsman was named an honorable mention for the All-OCC Buckeye Division and All-Delaware county teams in 2019.

Eichenberg Named Semifinalist For Bednarik

As one of the primary contributors to Ohio State's defensive turnaround this season, linebacker Tommy Eichenberg is garnering attention on a national scale.

The Cleveland native was named one of 20

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1982

Dennis Fryzel would have been proud.

The former Ohio State defensive coordinator had talked often the previous season of the Buckeye defense bending but not breaking.

The Buck defenders did just that against Purdue, allowing the Boilermakers to rack up 423 total yards but not score a touchdown in OSU's 38-6 win at Ohio Stadium on Oct. 30.

"We were doing the right stuff," said OSU's fine defensive tackle Jerome Foster. "We messed up a couple of times, but we didn't let them get into the end zone. That's what I'm happy about today."

35 Years Ago — 1987

OSU quarterback Tom Tupa often tried looking away but ended up facing what seemed like a flurry of darts – questions concerning Ohio State's 68 total yards in the final three quarters and 14:45 of OSU's second home debacle of the season, a 13-7 loss to Michigan State.

Two yards rushing, 145 yards passing with two interceptions and six first downs were Ohio State's offense for the game.

"I'm humiliated, embarrassed and anything else you can think of," Tupa said, his voice a bit hoarse. "It was just a lousy day all together. It seemed like they knew what we were doing the whole time. They knew when we were going to run and when we were going to pass."

30 Years Ago — 1992

Though there may not have been any plans to cue up any Patti Labelle hits during the Ohio State women's basketball practices, there was definitely a "new attitude" present among the veterans and coaches heading into the season.

The previous year's squad went 15-13 overall and 9-9 in Big Ten play, good enough for only fifth place. Still, that overall mark represented a four-game improvement over 1990. And the Lady Buckeyes were hoping this might be the year that they improved by leaps and bounds and would again reside in the upper reaches of the conference standings, a place they were familiar with for five of Nancy Darsch's first seven seasons as head coach.

"I have seen the attitude of wanting to work hard and wanting to win the Big Ten from them," Darsch said. "What's going to be important will be to sustain that attitude. When we do suffer a setback, we have to figure out what went wrong and come back stronger. The leadership and direction of our senior class will be the most important thing."

25 Years Ago — 1997

Antoine Winfield was, quite simply, the little guy who made big plays.

That's what it said in his bio in the weekly Ohio State press release, and that's precisely what the 5-9, 180-pound junior cornerback proved week in and week out in the Big Ten.

"He plays the game with heart, he has the athletic skills to

match his heart, and the little sucker can play football," OSU defensive coordinator Fred Pagac said after Winfield helped the Buckeyes win at Michigan State 37-13 on Nov. 1.

Winfield was named Buckeye Sports Bulletin's Big Bear Buckeye of the Week for his play against the Spartans. He finished the game with 11 tackles – 10 of them solo – and two passes deflected.

20 Years Ago — 2002

OSU sophomore Chris Gamble's performance against Penn State on Oct. 26 at Ohio Stadium elicited comparisons to a number of names from the past.

They included such people as Ted Provost and Paul Warfield from OSU lore and luminaries such as Deion Sanders and Charles Woodson from the history of college football.

Gamble made his own kind of history, however, as he started at wide receiver and cornerback, returned punts and kicks and, for good measure, returned an interception 40 yards for the decisive touchdown in OSU's narrow 13-7 win over the Nittany Lions.

As the final seconds ticked off the clock, many in the Ohio Stadium-record crowd of 105,103 began chanting "Gamble, Gamble!"

"It feels real good that we got the win and that I got my name chanted by the crowd," Gamble said.

15 Years Ago — 2007

The expectations were there for the Ohio State men's basketball team, clearly written on the wall for all to see.

Two seasons previously, Ohio State shocked the league by capturing its first outright Big Ten regular-season championship in 14 years thanks in large part to sheer willpower and determination shown by a foursome of seniors determined to leave on a winning note. Last year, out went the seniors and in swooped in the so-called "Thad Five" in the form of one of the nation's top recruiting classes.

The likes of Greg Oden, Mike Conley Jr. and Daequan Cook joined with a small core of returnees and helped the Buckeyes put together enough momentum to carry themselves all the way to early April and a berth in the national championship game. OSU fell short at the hands of the Florida Gators, but the team was still the first Scarlet and Gray squad to advance to the nation's final game since 1962 – five full years before head coach Thad Matta was born.

Now, with a taste of what the Big Dance was like, the Buckeyes set their eyes on a season culminating in two wins in San Antonio, the site of the season's Final Four. Another run deep into the NCAA Tournament would go a long way in solidifying Ohio State as an elite program in the eyes of the nation.

"I think the caliber of kids you have is vitally important to have an elite program," Matta said when asked to define what makes a college basketball program elite. "I think that it's the year after year after year (victories), to say that you're going to win the national championship or get to the Final Four every year (type of success)."

10 Years Ago — 2012

Ryan Shazier proved it was possible to play a college football game as much with a heavy heart as with an iron fist.

The sophomore linebacker switched his jersey number to No. 48 to honor his friend – Gary Curtis, who had passed away earlier in the year – and then played the game of his life, leading No. 9 Ohio State to a 35-23 victory at Penn State in a battle for supremacy in the Big Ten Leaders Division.

Shazier shared the team lead (with Zach Boren) with seven tackles and also contributed a pair of sacks, a forced fumble and an early second-half interception return for a touchdown that gave the Buckeyes a lead they would never relinquish.

"I was thinking about him the whole game," Shazier said of Curtis. "I knew I had his number on, and I just felt like he was playing through me. No matter what was going on, I just felt like he had my back."

Five Years Ago — 2017

What just happened?

At least in the first moments after No. 6 Ohio State fell at unranked Iowa, 55-24, on Nov. 4, head coach Urban Meyer didn't have an answer. The Buckeyes had just suffered their second loss of the year. Ohio State had just allowed the most points ever by a Meyer-coached team. The Buckeyes could forget about the College Football Playoff.

And it all happened in a game that Ohio State was favored to win by nearly 20 points.

"I don't know," Meyer said when asked what happened to cause the lopsided loss. He repeated those same words multiple times during a brief postgame press conference in the depths of Kinnick Stadium while the Hawkeye faithful continued their celebration on the field.

One Year Ago — 2021

OSU wide receivers coach Brian Hartline was a rising star in the coaching profession, or so said his biography on the football team's website. It was high praise, but not unearned. In a five-year tenure with the Buckeyes, including one as a quality control coach, Hartline became one of the country's best recruiters, consistently finding the best high school wide receivers and bringing them to Columbus.

Hartline's work didn't stop with recruiting. Once he brought talent to campus, he developed it. His success was noticeable, which led some to wonder if Hartline might consider leaving Ohio State to pursue offensive coordinator or head coach opportunities at other schools. When asked if he would move on from the Buckeyes in the near future, Hartline said there was a low chance he would look elsewhere to coach football.

"Ohio State's my home," Hartline said. "I have a strong passion here. I loved seeing all the coach conversations and how coaches answer different questions because of all the speculations."

Brutus Level VIPs To Be Recognized In The Michigan Issue

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

VIP donors help Buckeye Sports Bulletin stay alive and vibrant.

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

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

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Those who add \$100 to their subscriptions will have their names and cities listed in all 24 issues each year as BSB Scarlet patrons. Those who donate \$125 will be designated as Elite patrons in each issue.

And those who donate more than \$125 will have their names listed as Elite-Plus VIPs.

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semifinalists for the Bednarik Award, which is given to the most outstanding defensive player in the country as voted on by national sports-writers, members of the Maxwell Football Club and NCAA coaches.

Former Ohio State defensive end Chase Young is the only Buckeye to win the award, taking the honor home for his efforts during the 2019 season.

Through nine games this season, Eichenberg has racked up a team-high 85 tackles (eight for loss) along with 2½ sacks and a pick-six, which occurred against Iowa.

Eichenberg also picked up honors for his 15-tackle outing against Penn State when he was named the LOTT Impact Player of the Week on Nov. 2 after also winning the weekly award on Oct. 26.

OT Johnson Named Semifinalist For Lombardi

Ohio State offensive tackle Paris Johnson Jr. has been named one of 12 semifinalists for the Rotary Lombardi Award, given annually to the top lineman in college football.

Johnson has been an anchor for Ohio State's offensive line that has allowed just seven sacks in nine games. According to Pro Football Focus, Johnson has allowed just eight pressures on Stroud and has not given up a sack.

He made the transition this season from right guard to left tackle after some shuffling on Ohio State's offensive line, but the change has appeared flawless, with Johnson looking like a natural covering Stroud's blind side.

The award can be won by an offensive or defensive player who lines up no more than 10 yards to the left or right of the ball – including tight ends – as well as linebackers who traditionally line up no farther than 5 yards deep

from the line of scrimmage.

Ohio State has had five previous Lombardi Award winners. Offensive lineman Jim Stillwagon won the inaugural award in 1970, with offensive lineman John Hicks (1973), linebacker Chris Spielman (1987), offensive lineman Orlando Pace (1995, 1996) and linebacker A.J. Hawk (2005) also taking home the honor.

Pace remains the only player to win the award twice. Ohio State's six honorees lead all schools, with Nebraska and Notre Dame each

boasting five recipients.

The Lombardi Award will announce the four finalists on Nov. 17, with the winner announced on Dec. 7.

Day Not Looking Ahead To Michigan Game

After big matchups against Iowa and Penn State coming out of the off week, opponents like Northwestern, Indiana and Maryland don't exactly inspire the same fear or attention from fans as the undefeated archrival that awaits at

the end of Ohio State's regular season schedule, leading to some looking ahead to the Buckeyes' season finale against Michigan.

One person whose mind isn't wandering to the Wolverines is Day, however. And he hopes his players are staying focused on the task at hand too.

"We've always said, 'It's about us,' " Day said Nov. 1. "So why does that change this week? It doesn't matter. Last week going into

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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Penn State, it was about us, it was about our preparation. I think that's the first thing."

Looking ahead multiple weeks can also create a cascading effect where teams get a few steps behind over time, Day said. If a team loses focus because its opponent one week isn't of a certain caliber, the progress it didn't make in practice snowballs through to the next time it does play somebody challenging.

"You have to continue to do what you're doing and get better every week," Day said. "If you don't, not only do you show weakness but you set yourself up for problems down the road. And I think that when you have a problem or you lose a game, maybe it's something you did that week but maybe it's something you did in the weeks leading up to it."

Day stated that he didn't hold back anything against Penn State with Michigan or any other future opponent in mind.

"When you go to Penn State, the No. 1 goal is to win the game," Day said. "That's it,

Many readers continue to report struggling to get their Buckeye Sports Bulletin in a timely fashion. Delivery of the BSB covering the Iowa issue seems to have been a particular problem.

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"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 pro-

cess 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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period. I'm very impressed with just how well we took care of the ball in that game. When you win the turnover battle 4-0 in a game like that, your chances of winning schematically go through the roof."

Thus, Day and his team entered their

matchup at Northwestern with the same mentality, even if the Wildcats boasted an abysmal 1-7 record. He and his staff wanted to maximize every minute of time with their team.

"Listen, it's a Big Ten matchup, it's on the road. (Northwestern coach Pat Fitzgerald) does an unbelievable job," Day said. "I know they don't have the record that they want to, but we've got to go play football and we want to play at a high level. That's the goal here. So it, again, really shouldn't matter who we're playing against."

Fields Breaks NFL QB Rushing Record

Former Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields broke the record for rushing yards by an NFL quarterback in a regular-season contest on Nov. 6, rushing for 178 yards in a 35-32 loss to the Miami Dolphins.

Fields accomplished the feat on just 15 carries, averaging 11.9 yards per tote with a rushing touchdown. He added 123 yards and a trio of scores through the air, becoming the first quarterback in NFL history to throw for three touchdowns and rush for at least 140 yards in a game.

The previous record was held by Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick, who rushed for 173 yards in a game in 2002. While Fields broke Vick's regular-season record, the overall record – regular season and playoffs included – is held by former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who rushed for 181 yards in a playoff game in 2013.

Through nine games this season, Fields has completed 58.8 percent of his passes (110 of 187) for 10 touchdowns and six interceptions while rushing for 602 yards and three touchdowns on 91 carries, good for 6.6 yards per attempt.

Wilson Collects NFL Rookie Of The Week Honors

For the second time this season, former Ohio State wide receiver Garrett Wilson, currently with the New York Jets, was recognized

as the NFL Rookie of the Week on Nov. 3.

Although the Jets fell 22-17 at the hands of the New England Patriots, Wilson hauled in six receptions for 115 yards, becoming the second rookie in Jets history to register a pair of 100-yard receiving games during his first season with the team.

Wilson previously received the honor after his outing against the Cleveland Browns on Sept. 18 in which he caught eight passes for 102 yards and two scores, including the game-winning touchdown with 22 seconds remaining in regulation.

Through nine games this season, Wilson has racked up 42 receptions for 521 yards and a pair of touchdowns, leading the Jets in both receptions and receiving yards.

WR Thomas Expected To Miss Rest Of Season

Former Ohio State wideout Michael Thomas, who has played for the New Orleans Saints since 2016, is expected to miss the rest of the NFL season due to a dislocated toe.

Thomas emerged as one of the league's most highly-regarded receivers early in his career, leading the NFL in receptions in 2018 and 2019, as well as receiving yards in 2019. He holds the single-season record for receptions after hauling in 149 catches in 2019.

However, Thomas has dealt with a multitude of issues the last three seasons, appearing in just 12 games since 2020. Thomas missed all of last season due to an ankle injury he sustained during the 2020 campaign. He played in just three games this season, snagging 16 catches for 171 yards and three touchdowns.

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.



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Stroud, OSU Offense Slow To Get Rolling

Continued From Page 1

starter at Ohio State, finishing just 10 of 26 passing (38.5 percent) for 76 yards. It's by far the worst completion percentage of his career (previously two games at 59.1 percent) and the first game of his career without a touchdown.

It was an outlier in the annals of history, though, in that Stroud still finished with a win. It's just the fourth time since 2000 that an Ohio State quarterback has won a game in which he threw at least 15 passes and completed 38.5 percent of his passes or fewer. Braxton Miller accomplished this feat at Penn State in 2012 (7 of 19 for 143 yards) and Craig Krenzel did it twice, going 5 of 20 against San Diego State in 2003 and finishing with a familiar line of 7 of 21 for 122 yards in Ohio State's national championship win over Miami (Fla.) in 2002.

"I tried to do my best, and it was really tough," Stroud said. "I'm frustrated with the way that I was kind of throwing it. I was trying to rip it as hard as I could. But at the end of the day, I don't have any regrets. I'm blessed to be able to play this sport, so I've got to be able to take the good with the bad."

Several of Stroud's passes sailed past receivers when throwing with the wind to his back, and throwing against the wind, his passes would routinely get taken in the air. It was a miracle when the ball did arrive in the arms of a wideout. That was a rare occurrence, though, as Stroud's 10 completed passes went to just four receivers, with Marvin Harrison Jr. (five catches, 51 yards) leading the pack.

For as much as the wind may have stunted Stroud's throwing ability, his receivers did little to help out their quarterback. They made little separation from Northwestern's defensive backs, who totaled five pass breakups on the day, and when Stroud did find them open, several balls ended up being dropped, including a sure touchdown to Emeka Egbuka that the sophomore could not corral.

"I can definitely say I've never played in

a game like that," Egbuka said. "We saw the weather report going in. And it's hard to prepare, it's hard to practice for something like that. But at the end of the day, we got it done and we're happy to leave here with a victory."

Northwestern took advantage of the conditions early on, utilizing running back Evan Hull both as a traditional back and in the wildcat formation to catch Ohio State off guard. The Wildcats punted on their first drive of the game, but their second drive was a nine-play, 80-yard drive that featured seven runs for 61 yards, including a direct snap to Hull at Ohio State's 16-yard line that he worked into the end zone to give the Wildcats a 7-0 lead.

Ohio State's defense stepped up from that point on, however, allowing no points and just 201 yards of offense in the final 3½ quarters of the game. There were some lapses in the second half, including a drive late in the third and early in the fourth quarter in which Northwestern quarterback Brendan Sullivan rushed for 25 yards on three carries and helped the Wildcats convert four third-down opportunities. But the defense responded to force a stop on fourth-and-8 from the OSU 36-yard line.

"At the end of the day, it comes down to scoring points," Day said. "And they did (run it well), had a couple first downs but they really weren't able to score on us, and that's a tribute to our defense and how well they played. Anytime you hold someone to seven points, even in conditions like this, it's a job well done."

"And they were involving the quarterback. The quarterback ran hard. I thought we tackled him well. He took some shots in there and kept playing. I give him a lot of credit, because in the style of game like that – the other thing they had was the wildcat, trying to equate numbers that way. So hats off to (Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald) – he had a good game plan, and that's why he's been here a long time and is a great coach."

The domination of the defense kept op-



SONNY BROCKWAY

STEELE RESOLVE — Ohio State's defense was up to the task against Northwestern, allowing just seven points and 285 yards of offense in the horrid conditions at Ryan Field. Linebacker Steele Chambers (22) finished with eight tackles (seven solo) and a tackle for loss.

portunities open for the offense, which has been a key tenet of Ohio State's defense this season, especially in contrast to recent years.

"You play together," linebacker Tommy Eichenberg said. "Offense helps out defense and defense helps out offense. Getting the

ball back to the offense is our job, so we try to do that the best we can."

It took time for the offense to start doing its job, though. The Buckeyes' first six drives of the game featured five punts and a turnover on downs in which running back Miyan Williams was stuffed on fourth-and-1 after also being stuffed on the preceding third-and-1, another symptom of the recently anemic rushing attack for Ohio State. Those six drives accounted for just 62 yards of offense as the Wildcats clung to their slim lead.

With Northwestern threatening to take the lead into the half and add to it, receiving the ball to start the second half, the Buckeyes – with 4:55 remaining in the first half – had accounted for just 26 rushing yards on 10 carries. Some of these struggles were courtesy of the monsoon tearing through Ryan Field, but the rushing attack was also hampered due to injuries.

TreVeyon Henderson was a surprise scratch ahead of the contest after playing in each of Ohio State's previous three games, and Williams was clearly not 100 percent after suffering a hand injury the previous week at Penn State. This led to Chip Trayanum being moved to a full-time running back as insurance, and with freshman Dallan Hayden, this meant the Buckeyes had just three scholarship running backs against the Wildcats.

But it was the final drive of the first half that the Buckeye offense finally broke through. Moving away from the passing attack, Ohio State rushed the ball six times

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for 46 yards, capping it off with a 15-yard end-around touchdown by Egbuka to tie the game.

"It was exhilarating," said Egbuka, who finished with two catches for 6 yards and two carries for 21 yards. "You don't get the ball too much as a receiver out of the backfield, so I was just building that toolkit. It's maybe something we can build off later on in the season. That's really big for us. I was really happy to score that touchdown – amazing blocks by our linemen and Marvin on that play. I'm just really grateful."

Egbuka has been used in that role several times this season, accruing 59 rushing yards on six carries entering this game. It's a relatively new role with the Buckeyes – one likely brought on by the absence of wideout Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who was once again out against Northwestern – but it's one he has a deep history with.

"I didn't really play receiver until my freshman year of high school, but running the ball out of the backfield is something that I grew up with," Egbuka said. "I grew up playing running back pretty much my whole life. I just feel like I can be a physical runner, but I can also put my foot on the ground and make a cut. So when you combine those two, I feel like it's a good combination."

Another boost to the rushing attack was Stroud, who broke his tendencies and finished with 79 rushing yards on six carries, several of which were either designed or option runs. The highlight was a 16-yard gain on fourth-and-1 that led to Ohio State's touchdown drive in the second quarter.

"That's huge," Egbuka said. "And that just goes back to C.J. being a real leader, knowing what he needs to do in certain situations. He doesn't want to run the ball – he wants to sling it downfield and stuff like that – but when the weather isn't permitting that, C.J. is able to run and gives us a lot of yards. Just being able to do that is just a testament to his leadership."

The Buckeyes added another touchdown on their first possession of the third quarter, another run-heavy drive that featured Williams with three carries for 33 yards and a touchdown. While the score remained close

before Ohio State's final touchdown of the game, another rushing score by Williams with 4:21 remaining in the contest, the game never felt much in doubt in the second half due to Northwestern's inability to move the ball after some opening success in the wildcat.

If the rushing attack hadn't found its way – for this game, at least – Ohio State could have been in trouble, as Day said there was a point in the game where he realized the passing attack wouldn't work down the stretch.

"It was that point where there was (a pass) maybe to Cade (Stover), there was one maybe to Julian (Fleming). They were so low and there was so much more green grass," Day said. "I thought (Stroud) threw a couple good balls and the wind absolutely just took it, darted the ball. It's almost like throwing a knuckleball into the wind."

"And that's frustrating, because now you know you're going to be swimming uphill all day, and that's not something we're used to."

But at the end of the windy day, it worked. Despite being outgained 285-283, going just 4 of 15 on third down (Northwestern was 9 of 20), being stopped twice on fourth down and being dominated in time of possession (36:26 to 23:34), Ohio State walked away with the victory. Even if the Buckeyes didn't look like the No. 2 team in the country for most of the afternoon – and style points take on an increased emphasis with the College Football Playoff rankings having started on Nov. 1 – they did what good teams do, and that's find a way to win despite the circumstances.

"I wouldn't say we came in with any expectation to beat the brakes off Northwestern," Egbuka said. "We go in and respect our opponent week after week. We feel like we're a great team and we can run anybody out of the building."

"But it comes down to execution. We knew here in Chicago it wouldn't be an easy win by any means, especially when we saw the weather reports. Just coming out here and leaving with a win is something we're happy about."



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OSU's Offensive Woes Headline Sloppy Win

Since the off week, Ohio State's typically high-powered offense has looked disjointed and out of rhythm over long stretches of the Buckeyes' battles with Iowa, Penn State and Northwestern. OSU's 21-7 win over the Wildcats on Nov. 5 provided the most glaring examples of the team's strange regression in that facet of the game following its time off.

As was the case in the previous two games, Ohio State came out of the locker room flat offensively, but unlike its wins over Iowa and Penn State, the offense was generally knocked off track for a majority of the contest against the Wildcats. While the whipping winds and pouring rain played a factor in the Buckeyes' struggles against Northwestern, head coach Ryan Day admitted that his team could have played a cleaner game but added that he was glad to escape with a win.

"I think the first thing is that we found a way to win a hard-fought game like this, and it wasn't about anything other than winning the game," Day said. "When you get into November and you get in certain games, it's like, 'How can you win by "X" number of points' or whatever. This had nothing to do with that. You're dealing with these types of conditions, it's impossible."

"I could tell you what some of the issues are going to be right now: There was an extra guy sitting at 3 yards (off the ball). So what do you do? You either read it or you throw it. And one of those was out of the picture," he continued. "Could we have done some things better? Absolutely. But it was a very challenging day, and I'm glad it's now behind us."

From the start, it appeared that it was going to be a long day for the Buckeye offense. Although running back Miyan Williams busted a 6-yard run on Ohio State's first play from scrimmage, the play was negated by a holding penalty on guard Matthew Jones. After that, the Buckeyes couldn't make much happen as wide receiver Emeka Egbuka sprinted for a 6-yard gain, but a pair of in-

GAME NOTEBOOK Jack Emerson

completions from quarterback C.J. Stroud stalled the drive.

The Buckeyes' next five drives followed with similar disappointment, four resulting in punts and one ending in a pair of failed conversions in a short-yardage situation on both third and fourth downs. Williams was stuffed on back-to-back carries to keep him from the line to gain.

"We're going to look at it and realize that we could have moved guys. Even if there are two extra guys in the box, we've still got to convert in those situations," Day said. "Angles change because there are two extra guys down there. Again, no excuse, we've got to do a better job for sure. But I think that played into some of those things early."

Williams said that facing fronts of eight or nine Wildcats just come with the territory of playing in those weather conditions.

"I wouldn't say it's difficult," he said. "It's just like this is a game of football. You deal with it, turn nothing into something."

During the game's first frame, Ohio State netted just 47 yards for an average of 2.6 yards per play, along with an 0-for-5 mark on third down. The Buckeyes' third-down woes carried over to the second quarter, where they also were unable to come up with a single conversion, going 0 of 3.

The Buckeyes trailed 7-0 for the majority of the first half, but their offensive unit caught a break when Northwestern punter Hunter Renner could muster only a 32-yard punt from his own 14-yard line, giving Ohio State a short field with 4:55 remaining in the second quarter. It appeared that the offense was heading toward another three-and-out, as three runs from Williams netted just 9 yards. However, Stroud extended the



SONNY BROCKWAY

TAKING OFF — Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud got out of his comfort zone against Northwestern, carrying the ball six times for a career-high 79 yards, including a 44-yard scamper in the fourth quarter.

drive on a 16-yard gain on an option keeper.

"I was just out there playing with instincts on that fourth-and-1," Stroud said. "I had an idea pre-snap of what they could possibly do. They can possibly take away Miyan because a lot of teams probably think that I can't run or I'm not willing to. I took it in my hands and tried to get a first down for my teammates, so I feel like I did such."

"It was the nickel who came off the edge trying to wrap around, trying to get Miyan, so I just felt like it was necessary for me to pull, try to get upfield."

Just two plays later, the Buckeyes finally found pay dirt on a 15-yard touchdown run by Egbuka, who beat the Wildcat defense to the right corner of the end zone on an end around.

"It was definitely a big momentum shift," Egbuka said. "It was a huge play for us. We really needed that one, big time. But even if we didn't get it, we weren't feeling pressured. We weren't trying to press. We were just playing our game."

Ohio State again benefited from a short field on its next possession in the second

half, and similar to the previous drive, the Buckeyes were able to take advantage. Ohio State went 45 yards in six plays, a drive capped off by a 27-yard touchdown in which Williams weaved through several Northwestern defenders to claim the lead.

However, the Buckeyes lost any momentum they gained from their back-to-back scoring drives, punting on each of their next two drives, one of which was a result of their third three-and-out of the afternoon. The Buckeyes were able to put the game on ice with 4:21 remaining in regulation thanks to a 2-yard plunge into the end zone by Williams to extend the lead to two scores.

Ohio State finished the afternoon with 283 yards of total offense, which is the lowest mark by the Buckeyes since their 24-7 win over USC in the 2017 Cotton Bowl when they gained 277. While the weather did play a factor in Ohio State's offensive struggles, Egbuka emphasized that the Buckeyes still found a way to get enough points on the board to escape with a win.

"We knew it was going to be windy," he

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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

While the offense spun its wheels for much of its matchup with Northwestern, the defense responded to an early Wildcat touchdown drive and looked nearly impenetrable the rest of the way.

Northwestern didn't score for the final 51:45 minutes of game time against Ohio State, and the defense did it a different way than it had been stopping opponents the past few weeks. Although Ohio State collected 10 takeaways in its last two contests against Iowa and Penn State, it didn't need to force a turnover against the Wildcats to keep them declawed, instead stopping them four times on fourth down.

Safety Ronnie Hickman stopped Northwestern wide receiver Malik Washington 4 yards short on fourth-and-8 early in the second quarter, and on the Wildcats' first possession of the third quarter, safety Lathan Ransom and defensive tackle Taron Vincent combined to stop running back Evan Hull on a wildcat dive on fourth-and-1.

After Ohio State forced an incomplete pass on fourth-and-8 with 9:41 remaining, another stop of a desperation fourth-and-9 attempt from the Wildcats with less than four minutes to play all but sealed the win for Ohio State when the Buckeyes' combination of pressure and tight coverage forced an incompleteness to wide receiver Jacob Gill.

What Didn't Work

Ohio State's passing game looked more out-of-sync against Northwestern than it has all season. Quarterback C.J. Stroud finished a mere 10 of 26 with 76 yards and failed to toss a touchdown strike in what turned out to be a defensive battle.

Attempts in the direction of wide receiver Julian Fleming proved especially fruitless. The Pennsylvania native was targeted nine times but managed just one catch for 7 yards.

There were swirling wind gusts in Evanston, Ill., which surely contributed to some of the issues. Both sets of goalposts were dancing around all game in the face of the strong winds. Attempts to push the

ing able to run is something that he doesn't do too much because of the execution of our offensive line. He has time a lot of time, so he doesn't really have to scramble too much. And he can get it downfield to the guys like Marv, Julian and all our tight ends."

Day noted that Stroud has carried the ability to run throughout his time as the starting quarterback but said that his health is of paramount importance to the team, which gives Day pause when dialing up quarterback runs. Day pointed to injuries sustained by former Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields prior to the national championship in 2021 as one of his motivating factors for keeping Stroud in the pocket.

Beyond that, Day said that he felt he made the right choice to let Stroud loose as a runner and his contributions on the ground were valuable to the Buckeyes' win.

"That's the balance you try to find of, 'Is it worth it to get the quarterback involved and expose him to shots that could potentially get him out of the game?' Or do you need those yards, and I think that's where you have to make good decisions," Day said. "You have to take a deep breath at times and keep working through that, knowing that if you involve the quarterback, yeah, you might gain more yards, but you also expose him to hits.

"We needed it today in these conditions, at the right time. Those two runs were huge. We didn't just throw them in there to make 4 yards – they were big hits."

said. "And we knew the passing game would be difficult at times. When you're going against a team that knows that you're not going to pass the ball, they kind of stack the box and prevent us from running because they know that's all we can do. We just tried to equate physicality and rock off the ball. That's something that we were emphasizing all throughout the week. In the end, we got it done."

Stroud Struggles In Wind But Excels With His Legs

Playing into Ohio State's disjointed offensive display against the Wildcats was Stroud's inability to find his receivers on a consistent basis. However, Stroud saw several passes hit off the hands of his intended targets while a few of his other attempts also were thrown off course by the windy conditions.

Stroud finished the day completing just 38.5 percent of his passes for a career-low 76 yards, which is the lowest single-game yardage mark by an Ohio State quarterback since J.T. Barrett threw for just 46 yards in a 17-14 loss to Michigan State on Nov. 21, 2015.

"I'm not sure the exact miles per hour it was, but those conditions are tough, especially when you add rain into it," Stroud said. "But I felt like we did a decent job and were trying to throw the ball. I feel like I was ripping it through (the wind) a little bit. It's hard to tell where the ball is going from the receiver's aspect as well. It's tough playing in the Big Ten, so you've got to find different ways to win."

Although Stroud was limited in what he could do through the air, he still was able to continue to strengthen his connection with wideout Marvin Harrison Jr., who finished the afternoon with a team-best five receptions for 51 yards.

Since Stroud was unable to get into a groove with his arm, he relied on his running ability, which has largely gone under-utilized, much to the Ohio State fan base's chagrin. Stroud rushed for a career-best 79 yards while making several key runs to aid the Buckeyes' rushing attack.

Stroud emphasized that his ability to run the ball has always been in his arsenal despite his typical reluctance to carry the rock.

"We had to find another way to win. I'm like that every game where I tell Coach to run me if he wants to or if he doesn't, that's up to him," Stroud said. "Usually every run play I do have a read. I read a certain player. (There were) a couple of times in the game where my defender or my gap was closed off or it was open, so I would take it."

Stroud's big day on the ground was headlined by his previously mentioned 16-yard dash on fourth-and-1 to go with a 44-yard run on Ohio State's last scoring drive which set up Williams' 2-yard insurance score. Stroud's 44-yard carry marked the second-longest run of his career, nearly matching his 48-yard touchdown run which occurred during his freshman season against Michigan State.

Egbuka said he wasn't surprised by Stroud's unexpected surge on the ground, noting that his prowess as a runner has largely been kept under wraps due to solid protection from his offensive line.

"We see it in practice sometimes," Egbuka said. "C.J.'s got a little bit of wheels. You guys saw it on that long run he had. Be-

ball downfield from Ohio State were futile, and Stroud's longest completion of the game went for just 15 yards.

Weather doesn't fully account for how bad a normally vaunted passing offense, which ranked 12th nationally in pass yards per game entering its matchup with the Wildcats, performed. Two drops and several other balls going off receivers' fingertips didn't help matters, but it seemed as though Stroud and his receivers just weren't in sync much of the contest.

Several tosses found their way into no man's land, typically a result of when a receiver runs a different route than expected by his quarterback. Stroud struggled from the outset, too, opening the contest with five straight incompleteness across Ohio State's first two drives.

Such issues throwing the ball made it much more difficult to convert on third down for the Buckeyes. Each of their first eight third-down tries fell short, with a 4 of 15 mark as a whole. Stroud was 2 for 8 for 23 yards on third down, though the Buckeyes did convert on two of their four fourth-down attempts.

Play Of The Game

Ohio State's running game chose a great time to finally break through against Northwestern.

With the game still knotted up 7-7, running back Miyan Williams took a third-and-3 handoff up the middle from a shotgun set. He plowed into a pile of people as he crossed the first-down line, then bounced off to his right and kept trucking.

Another jump cut made along the right hashes fooled Northwestern defensive back Theran Johnson and brought Williams up the right sideline, where he slipped an arm tackle from Wildcats defensive back Devin Turner and beat a recovering Johnson to the corner of the end zone for a 27-yard touchdown jaunt.

It proved to be the game winner for Ohio State, putting it ahead 14-7 midway through the third quarter. The Buckeyes proceeded to pick up 88 yards on 14 carries in the fourth quarter to put the game away as Williams added another rushing score.

— **Andy Anders**

our guys worked their tails off to execute it."

Ohio State linebacker Tommy Eichenberg, who finished the afternoon with a game-best 13 tackles, noted that the Buckeyes expected Northwestern to expand their running game as a result of the weather conditions.

"It kind of makes a team one-dimensional, really," Eichenberg said of the elements. "With the wind blowing everywhere, it's hard to throw. They went wildcat a lot. They were running the ball a lot. Not a lot of passing."

Mirco Hangs Strong In Punt Game

Ohio State also received some strong special teams play against Northwestern, primarily boosted by the leg of punter Jesse Mirco.

Mirco boomed a career-long 77-yard punt with 6:17 remaining in the first half, but that was merely the highlight in a big day for the punter from Down Under. The Australian national amassed 352 total yards on his punts, good for an average of 50.3 yards per punt.

Mirco added a pair of punts that were downed inside the Northwestern 20-yard line, including a coffin corner kick that rolled out of bounds at the Wildcat 4-yard line with 1:24 remaining in the third quarter.

On a day in which the Buckeyes couldn't generate much offensively, Mirco was a useful weapon thanks to his prowess in flipping the field.

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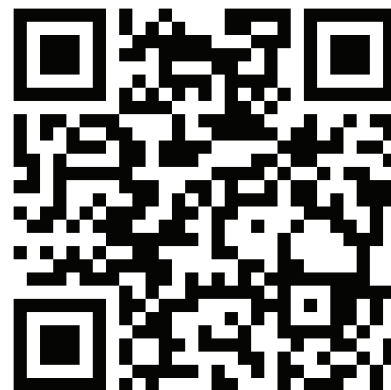
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Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on the Ohio State defense: "I thought a couple of the short-yardage situations were excellent. You've still got to make the play, you've still got to defeat blocks, and they did that. There was a point in the game where the defense really had a lot of energy. You could feel that field flipping."

Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald on Ohio State: "Ryan's got, not a good team, he's got a great team, a very talented team at every position. I thought our defense, for the most part, did a pretty darn good job of keeping the ball inside and in front. Unfortunately on a couple of plays we let it get around us, which ended up being the difference in the game."

Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud on whether he proved he could run the ball against Northwestern: "I don't really care. I'm willing to do anything. I'm willing to do anything to win, and that's throwing the ball, running the ball. I don't play this game to please anybody. Of course, I want to be appreciative of Buckeye Nation, which I am, and the fans out there that support me. But at the end of the day, I'm here to win for my brothers in the locker room and my family back home."

Ohio State running back Miyan Williams on his go-ahead touchdown: "It just felt great just to put some points on the board,

because we know – we expected to put way more points on the board. Tough game. I'm just glad we came out with the win."

Day on mixing in running backs Dallan Hayden and Chip Trayanum with TreVeyon Henderson out: "We talked about it at one point, but we felt like Miyan was running well. There were a lot of guys down in the box, and we felt like with more and more at-bats, he'd start to break them there the more opportunities he had. And that's part of the run game. For us, whether it's an RPO or reading somebody, we try to equate numbers that way, and on days like today when you're lining up under center, it's very difficult."

Ohio State wide receiver Emeka Egbuka on what the wind was doing to deep passes: "If you were going against the wind, they would just stop and die in midair, especially on special teams like the punt game and all that type of stuff. If you're with the wind, it kind of just carried and carried and carried. You wouldn't really know where it was landing. It was kind of hard to gauge. Definitely big for eye control for us receivers, but it was a good learning experience as well."

Egbuka on frustration at Ohio State not being able to pass the ball: "Even if it does get frustrating, we can't let it get to us. Our defense has been playing amazing football – they only allowed seven points in this game. I

would say we can't get frustrated. Maybe you can have a little moment after that play, but after that's done, you have to let it pass. That's something that we've been working on all season. And just staying on schedule is going to be a big emphasis watching this film. But there's no time to be frustrated in a four-quarter game."

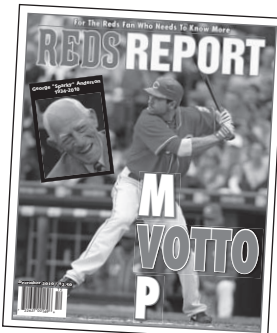
Egbuka on the weather: "I thought it would be a little rainier. I thought there would be more of a storm, maybe a delay or something like that. But I did not think it would be as windy (as it was). I thought they were just kind of hyping it up when they said like 40 mile per hour gusts. But, pregame when you're catching those punts and kickoff returns in the air, it looked like it's going over your head and lands 20 yards shorter. I've never played in conditions like that."

Day on Ohio State's problems in short-yardage: "When there's two extra guys down because it's real zero, low coverage, there's going to be an extra guy. No excuse, we should still convert. But when there's no threat of any kind of pass at all in those situations, because in the past in those third-down and shorts, if they leave the middle of the field open, we're going to go get it and try to score. When you can't do that, it's a whole different feel."

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A Wind Is A Wind – Bucks Down Wildcats, 21-7

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Quarterback C.J. Stroud had the worst passing game of his Ohio State career. Fortunately for the No. 2 Buckeyes on a wacky weather afternoon in Evanston, Ill., he had his best game with his legs to help defeat pesky Northwestern 21-7 on Nov. 5.

Running back Miyan Williams scored twice in the second half to break a stunning halftime tie with the Wildcats (1-8, 1-5 Big Ten), who were a 38-point underdog and lost for the eighth straight time.

Williams put the Buckeyes (9-0, 6-0 Big Ten) ahead 14-7 in the third quarter on a 27-yard run and added a 2-yard score late in the fourth quarter.

Northwestern hoped for and got a home-field advantage with the conditions. There was rain – sometimes sideways – and sustained winds between 20 and 30 mph with gusts up to 50.

Stroud passed for a career-low 76 yards (10 of 26), but he ran for a career-high 79 yards on six carries, including a 44-yarder late in the fourth quarter to set up the final score. Williams had 111 yards on 26 attempts.

Windy City

The Buckeyes went three-and-out on the first drive of the game working into the wind. It didn't help that guard Matthew Jones was called for holding on the first play.

Jesse Mirco had only a 34-yard punt to the Northwestern 40, but the Wildcats ended their first possession with a 56-yard punt for a touchback.

Following a second Buckeye punt, the Wildcats had no problem shredding the defense to go 80 yards in nine plays and 3:18 off the clock to take a 7-0 lead at 6:45 when running back Evan Hull rushed 16 yards for the score.

The series started with running back Cam Porter taking a direct snap and running for 13 yards. Two plays later, he rushed for 10 yards to the 50. Quarterback Brendan Sullivan passed 12 yards to Bryce Kirtz, then Sullivan ran for 8 yards to the 30. Hull rushed three times to the 16 before his TD in front of a Ryan Field crowd of 42,774.

When the Buckeyes got the ball back, Stroud completed his first pass in six attempts, a 7-yarder to Julian Fleming, but OSU failed to get a first down and punted again.

Ohio State didn't punt the next possession. Instead, with the Buckeyes needing a yard for a first down, Williams was stopped for no gain on third and fourth downs and Northwestern took over at the OSU 40. The Buckeyes rushed 10 times for 26 yards as they were held scoreless in the first quarter for the first time this season.

Early in the second quarter, the Wildcats faced a fourth-and-8 from the OSU 25 when Malik Washington made a catch but was stopped at the 21 by Ronnie Hickman.

The Buckeyes responded by getting one first down followed by a 64-yard punt with the wind by Mirco. The next series he boot-ed one 77 yards into the end zone.

"When we saw (the weather report), we knew it would be a major factor in the game," said Northwestern coach Pat Fitzgerald.

With under five minutes left in the half, the Buckeyes started at the Northwestern 46 after a rolling 32-yard punt and got the tying score on a 15-yard run by Emeka Egbuka with 2:26 remaining.

The series started ominously with Williams gaining only 9 yards on three carries. On fourth down from the 37, Stroud fooled everyone and kept the ball, rushing to the right for 16 yards to the 21. He was forced out of the pocket on the next play and ran for 6 yards. Egbuka then completed the six-play drive that used 2:29.

"I definitely wouldn't say that's his forte," Egbuka said of Stroud running the ball. "But C.J. got it done today in more ways than one ... The pull that he had, and then the long run that he had was huge. Just really big momentum shifts that came from a really special player on our team."

OSU was outgained 140-118 at the half, with the Wildcats holding a 109-72 advantage in rushing yards, led by Hull (75 yards on 15 carries). Stroud was 6 of 16 for 46 yards, and he was the Buckeyes' leading rusher with 29 yards on three totes. Williams ran 11 times for 22 yards.

Second Half

Northwestern got the ball to start the third quarter into the wind, and Hull was stuffed on fourth down for no gain needing a yard at the Wildcats 45. Defensive tackle Taron Vincent and safety Lathan Ransom were the tacklers.

The Buckeyes finally capitalized, taking a 14-7 lead at 8:44 on Williams' 27-yard touchdown run on third-and-3. Earlier, Marvin Harrison Jr. had a 12-yard grab on third down, a yard beyond the sticks to the 34. The drive was six plays in 2:01.

Late in the third, Mirco's 48-yard punt landed at the 4. After a false start moved the ball back 2 yards, the Wildcats started going forward. They reached the OSU 36 on the strength of four third-down conversions and runs of 15 and 8 yards by Sullivan, but on a fourth-and-8, Sullivan threw an incom- pletion to turn the ball over to the Buckeyes with 9:41 left in the game.

"I thought they did a nice job of incorporating the quarterback in some of their run game," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "They had a couple of good ideas, but I also think our defense played strong. And as the game wore on, you realize the pass was not going to happen, you just start bringing guys lower and lower down into the box."

Ohio State proceeded to go three-and-out, 2 yards shy of maintaining possession, and Mirco put a 45-yard punt to the 11. The Wildcats were unable to get a first down on three Hull runs for 7 yards, and Hunter Renner's 44-yard punt gave the Buckeyes the ball at their 38 with 6:27 to play.

Williams gave them breathing room with a 2-yard run with 4:21 remaining to make it 21-7 as the Buckeyes set the FBS record with a 70th straight game of scoring 20-plus points, breaking a tie with Oklahoma (2016-21).

He started the drive with a 12-yard run before Stroud later used his feet for a 44-yard run down the right sideline to the 5. Stroud ran for 3 more off the next snap to set up the score to end the five-play, 62 yard, 2:06 drive.

Northwestern's series then stalled at the OSU 44 when backup Ryan Hilinski, playing for the injured Sullivan, threw an incom- pletion on fourth-and-9.

The Buckeyes almost ran out the clock, leaving eight ticks left after Williams gained 22 yards on six runs and Stroud took a knee at the Northwestern 38. The Wildcats decided to run one more play, and Hull ran for 6 yards to the 44.

Notes

The Buckeyes failed to break a Big Ten record with 40 or more points in eight straight games. They share the mark with the 1901-02 Michigan Wolverines. ... Ohio State's 283 total yards (207 running, 76 passing) were the fewest in a game under Day as head coach at Ohio State. Northwestern had 285 yards (206 running, 79 passing). ... Ohio State entered the game averaging 48.9 points and 509.2 yards in total offense. ... The Wildcats went 9 for 20 on third down and 0 for 4 on fourth. OSU was 4 of 15 and 2 of 4, respectively. ... Northwestern led in possession (36:26-23:34). ... Harrison led the Buckeyes with five catches for 51 yards. ... Sullivan was 10 of 14 for 79 yards, and Hull rushed for 122 yards via 30 runs. ... Tommy Eichenberg had a game-high 13 tackles (10 solo) for the Buckeyes.

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 21, Northwestern 7

Nov. 5, 2022 – Ryan Field, Evanston, Ill.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	0	7	7	7	21
NORTHWESTERN	7	0	0	0	7

First Quarter

NW – Hull, 16-yard rush (Stage kick), 6:45.

Second Quarter

OSU – Egbuka, 15-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 2:26.

Third Quarter

OSU – M. Williams, 27-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 8:44.

Fourth Quarter

OSU – M. Williams, 2-yard rush (Ruggles kick), 4:21.

Att. – 42,774

Weather – Rain, 26 mph wind

Team Statistics		
	OSU	NW
First Downs	13	17
Rushing	8	12
Passing	4	5
Penalty	1	0
Rushes-Yards	35-207	59-206
Passing Yards	76	79
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	10-26-0	10-17-0
Offensive Plays	61	76
Total Net Yards	283	285
Third Down Efficiency	4-15	9-20
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-4	0-4
Punts-Avg.	7-50.3	6-40.8
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	1-0
Penalties	3-20	4-27
Time of Possession	23:34	36:26

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – OSU: M. Williams 26-111; Stroud 6-79; Egbuka 2-21; Team 1-(-4). **NW:** Hull 30-122; Sullivan 12-55; Porter 11-50; Clair 1-1; Washington 1-(-2); Team 4-(-20).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – OSU: Stroud 10-26-0-76-0. **NW:** Sullivan 10-14-0-79-0; Hilinski 0-3-0-0-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – OSU: Harrison Jr. 5-51; Stover 2-12; Egbuka 2-6; Fleming 1-7. **NW:** Washington 6-49; Porter 2-14; Kirtz 1-12; Hull 1-4.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – OSU: Mirco 7-50.3-77. **NW:** Renner 4-34.2-44; Akers 2-54.0-56.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Egbuka 1-18. **NW:** None.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: X. Johnson 1-21. **NW:** Hull 1-17; Carr 1-3.

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

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: None. **NW:** None.

SACKS – OSU: None. **NW:** None.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Chambers 1-6; Tuimoloau 1-3; Eichenberg 1-2; Harrison 1-2. **NW:** Hampton Jr. 1-1; Adebawore 0.5-1; Mueller 0.5-0

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – OSU: Eichenberg 10-3-13; Hickman 6-4-10; Ransom 5-4-9; Chambers 7-1-8; Burke 6-0-6; Vincent 4-1-5; J. Johnson 3-2-5; Tuimoloau 3-1-4; Harrison 2-1-3; McCalister 2-0-2; Curry 2-0-2; Jean-Baptiste 2-0-2; T. Williams 1-1-2; Sawyer 1-0-1; Proctor 1-0-1; Hamilton 1-0-1; Hall Jr. 0-1-1; Cage 0-1-1. **NW:** Gallagher 5-2-7; Heard II 3-3-6; Mueller 3-3-6; Turner 5-0-5; Lewis 5-0-5; Metz 4-0-4; Mitchell 4-0-4; Adebawore 2-2-4; O'Rourke 2-1-3; Hampton Jr. 2-0-2; Niro III 1-0-1; Story 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – OSU: Harrison Jr., Egbuka, M. Williams, Fleming, Wypler, M. Jones, Stroud, Jackson, Johnson Jr., D. Jones, Stover, Burke, Ransom, Hickman, McCalister, Chambers, Eichenberg, J. Johnson, Tuimoloau, Hamilton, Vincent, Harrison, X. Johnson, Hicks, Martinez, J. Brown, Trayanum, Styles, Gaoteote IV, Mirco, Simon, Sawyer, Rossi, Fielding, Proctor, Hall Jr., Vimahi, Hancock, Fryar, Jaan-Baptiste, Cage, Scott Jr., Ballard, McKenzie, T. Williams, Curry, Arnold, Ruggles. **NW:** Sullivan, Hull, Washington, Schmidt, Tiernan, Picozzi, Wiederkehr, Skoronski, Navarro, Lang, Ogles, Hampton Jr., Mitchell, Turner, Heard II, Gallagher, Mueller, O'Rourke, Lewis, Hubbard, McLaughlin, Adebawore, Niro III, T. Johnson, Clair, N. Williams, Kirtz, Wallace, Hooper Price, Haskins, Hilinski, Fitzgerald, Brus, Declan, Uihlein, Porter, Pate, Halkyard, Akers, Bergin, Gill, Butler, Metz, D'Antonio, Adeyi, Wrather, Franks, Albright, Stage, Story, Renner.

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	(2) at Northwestern	W, 21-7	42,774	
Nov. 12	INDIANA	12 p.m.		
Nov. 19	at Maryland	TBA		
Nov. 26	MICHIGAN (3)	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	210	124
Rushing	80	47
Passing	113	64
Penalty	17	13
Average Per Game/Rush	193.2	105.9
Average Per Game/Pass	290.9	165.9
Total Offense	4357	2446
Total Plays	587	555
Average Per Game	484.1	271.8
Average Per Play	7.4	4.4
Penalties-Yards	46-397	49-398
Fumbles-Lost	6-3	13-6
Third Down Efficiency	51-109	38-130
Percentage	47%	29%
Fourth Down Efficiency	12-14	6-20
Percentage	86%	30%
Sacks-Yards	22-129	7-38
Time Of Possession Avg.	30:12	29:48

Score									
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.		
Ohio State	124	89	108	91	0	412	45.8		
Opponents	41	50	13	38	0	142	15.8		

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Miyan Williams	102	636	6.2	12	70
T. Henderson	96	552	5.8	6	41
Dallan Hayden	54	255	4.7	1	45
Emeka Egbuka	8	80	10.0	2	27
C.J. Stroud	25	75	3.0	0	44
TC Caffey	10	66	6.6	1	49
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	1	9	9.0	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
Team	8	-17	-2.1	0	0
OSU Totals	319	1739	5.5	23	70
OPP Totals	315	953	3.0	6	75

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
C.J. Stroud	169	249	67.9	2453	29-4	185.8
Kyle McCord	14	18	77.8	165	1-0	173.1
Team	0	1	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
OSU Totals	183	268	68.3	2618	30-4	184.3
OPP Totals	140	240	58.3	1493	9-10	114.6

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Marvin Harrison Jr.	53	834	15.7	10	45
Emeka Egbuka	49	794	16.2	7	69
Cade Stover	26	321	12.3	3	38
Julian Fleming	20	361	18.1	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 Stocksdale	1	12	12.0	0	12
Kaleb Brown	1	5	5.0	0	5
Kyion Grayes	1	2	2.0	0	2
OSU Totals	183	2618	14.3	30	79
OPP Totals	140	1493	10.7	9	58

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Noah Ruggles	-	55-55	-	-	9-11	82
Miyan Williams	12	-	-	-	-	72

M. Harrison Jr.	10	-	-	-	-	60
Emeka Egbuka	9	-	-	-	-	54
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	55	55-55	-	-	9-11	412
OPP Totals	17	16-17	0-0	0-0	8-8	142

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	31	1451	46.8	0	77
M. O'Shaughnessy	1	41	41.0	0	41
OSU Totals	32	1492	46.6	0	77
OPP Totals	53	2365	44.6	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	9	77	8.6	0	18
Jayden Ballard	1	14	14.0	0	14
JK Johnson	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	11	91	8.3	0	18
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	2	47	23.5	0	26
Jayden Ballard	1	0	0.0	0	0
Emeka Egbuka	1	25	25.0	0	25
OSU Totals	7	101	14.4	0	26
OPP Totals	26	538	20.7	0	38

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
T. Eichenberg	53	32	85	8.0-24	2.5-12
Steele Chambers	32	20	52	5.0-25	1.0-7
Lathan Ransom	28	17	45	1.0-3	0-0
Ronnie Hickman	18	21	39	0-0	0-0
Cody Simon	14	13	27	4.0-10	1.0-6
Denzel Burke	15	7	22	2.0-2	0-0
JK Johnson	15	4	19	0-0	0-0
J.T. Tuimoloau	11	8	19	7.5-30	2.5-19
Mike Hall Jr.	9	8	17	7.5-46	4.5-39
Zach Harrison	11	6	17	3.0-9	1.0-4
J. Jean-Baptiste	9	8	17	4.0-20	3.5-19
Josh Proctor	12	5	17	0-0	0-0
Jack Sawyer	7	9	16	4.0-11	2.0-7
Taron Vincent	7	8	15	1.5-6	0-0
Tyleik Williams	8	7	15	2.5-7	1.0-2
Tanner McCalister	13	2	15	0-0	0-0
Cameron Martinez	9	5	14	0-0	0-0
Caden Curry	10	3	13	1.5-6	0.5-0
Chip Trayanum	8	4	12	0-0	0-0
Jerron Cage	4	6	10	2.5-11	1.5-8
Kye Stokes	8	1	9	1.0-4	0-0
Cameron Brown	5	1	6	0-0	0-0
Jyaire Brown	3	3	6	0-0	0-0
Ty Hamilton	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
Palaie Gaoteote IV	3	1	4	0-0	0-0

OSU Totals	334	218	552	59.0-224	22.0-129
OPP Totals	318	252	570	33.0-104	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.					

Expectations Hard To Meet For Hoosiers

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

This past offseason, as is often the case in Bloomington, Ind., was one of reflection and change for Indiana following one of the worst seasons in program history. Last year, the Hoosiers limped to a 2-10 finish and an 0-9 record in conference play, both low marks under sixth-year head coach Tom Allen and the worst respective overall and conference records since Indiana finished 1-11 (0-8) in 2011 under first-year head coach Kevin Wilson.

Indiana's offense struggled throughout the season, averaging just 17.2 points and 290.0 yards of offense per game, both of which ranked in the bottom 10 nationally. The defense didn't fare any better, giving up 33.2 points per game, including 54 points in a loss to Ohio State, the second-most points ever scored by the Buckeyes against the Hoosiers dating back to 1901.

The campaign was made all the worse given Indiana's expectations coming off 2019 and 2020. The Hoosiers finished 14-7 (11-5 in the Big Ten) in those two seasons, earning a pair of bowl berths and putting themselves in position to play for the Big Ten championship in 2020, at least until a rule change put Ohio State in the conference title game. Allen was named Big Ten Coach of the Year that season, resulting in a new seven-year contract that bumped his annual pay up to \$4.9 million, and it had people thinking Indiana wasn't just a basketball school anymore.

Of course, the bottom fell out on the Hoosiers last year. Allen's seat remained cool given his recent contract, which led to the program making a change by firing offensive coordinator Nick Sheridan.

"We did not meet the standard that I expect from our football program, and that starts with me," Allen said. "This season was not acceptable and we will work to address it."

Sheridan had stepped into the role in 2020 in place of departing offensive coordinator Kalen DeBoer, who left for the head coaching job at Fresno State. Sheridan and DeBoer reconnected this past offseason, however, when Sheridan was brought in as a tight ends coach at Washington, where DeBoer became head coach after a season with Bulldogs.

"I'm not telling you I was Bill Walsh last year, because I wasn't," Sheridan told Sports Illustrated about his Indiana tenure. "Sometimes there's more to it than that. If I was doing it over, with the quarterbacks, with everyone, I would have alleviated some of that pressure on the offensive line, maybe with more screens, more short passes, but you've got to throw the ball downfield eventually, and we just couldn't do that."

Needing to fill the offensive coordinator job, Allen first hired former UMass coach Walt Bell, who was fired last season from the Minutemen after a 1-8 start to the season and a 2-23 overall record in three seasons. Adam Henry, a longtime NFL and collegiate wide receivers coach, was added on staff to the same role in March and also received a co-offensive coordinator designation.

It was thought that Bell's up-tempo of-

fense and Henry's acumen for development – wideouts Odell Beckham Jr. and Jarvis Landry, who have carved out successful NFL careers, played under Henry at LSU – as well as the addition of Missouri transfer quarterback Connor Bazelak, coming after incumbent quarterback Michael Penix Jr.'s transfer to Washington, would help reinvigorate the offense after a down year. Instead, the Hoosiers have been largely stagnant on offense, seeing marginal improvement compared to last season (23.3 points, 329.0 yards per game this year) but still nowhere close to where the team needs or wants to be with a 3-6 record through their first nine games.

Indiana's three wins have come against Western Kentucky in overtime, FCS-level Idaho and a win over Illinois in the Hoosiers' season opener, in retrospect one of the bigger upsets of the season given the Illini's dash since to a 7-2 record and No. 21 spot in the AP top 25.

As with last year, the offense has been the main culprit behind Indiana's struggles, and the offensive line has taken much of the criticism. The Hoosiers had just two returning starters on the line entering the year in right tackle Matthew Bedford and right guard Mike Katic, but Bedford was lost for the season after Indiana's opener. Since then, Bazelak likely developed a sixth sense in the pocket given the consistent pressure allowed from the front five, as he was sacked 12 times through the first five games.

The issues came to a head in Indiana's 31-10 loss to Michigan on Oct. 8 in which Bazelak was sacked seven times and the rushing attack averaged just 0.8 yards per attempt, leading to the firing of offensive line coach Darren Hiller on the next day.

"It starts up front," Allen said after the loss to the Wolverines. "We've got to protect. We're not getting the job done there."

As for the quarterback himself, Bazelak has completed just 54.9 percent of his passes in eight games for 2,099 yards and 12 touchdowns to nine interceptions, and he did not play against Penn State on Nov. 5 as he was "dinged up," according to Allen.

Even before Bazelak's injury, there had been some calls for a switch to either fifth-year senior Jack Tuttle, who has backed up Bazelak this season and did so for Penix for the last two seasons, or redshirt sophomore Dexter Williams II, who hasn't seen the field in any meaningful capacity.

Tuttle made some news earlier this season when he announced he plans to transfer from Indiana this offseason but remain with the team throughout the season. With Bazelak out against Penn State on Nov. 5, Tuttle ultimately earned the start for the Hoosiers, finishing just 9 of 12 passing for 82 yards and a touchdown before he was also forced out due to injury, with Williams and true freshman Brendan Sorsby also seeing time in the loss to the Nittany Lions.

Regardless of who is under center for Indiana, the job has not been made easier given injuries on the offense. Wide receiver Cam Camper, who leads the team with 46 receptions for 569 yards and has a pair of touchdowns, was ruled out for the season after suffering a torn ACL against Rutgers on Oct. 22.

"I feel terrible for him," Allen said. "He's part of our team. He'll be on that long road to recovery. Our staff will do a great job of getting

Get To Know ... Indiana

2022 Record: 3-6.

Team Information: Offensive Formation - Pistol; **Defensive Formation** - 4-2-5; **Starters Returning** - Offense 5, Defense 7, Specialists 2.

Head Coach: Tom Allen, 6th year at Indiana, 29-38.

Series History: 95th meeting; Ohio State leads 77-12-5.

School Facts: **Location** - Location - Bloomington, Ind.; Enrollment - 32,986; Nickname - Hoosiers; Colors - Red, White; Conference - Big Ten (East Division); Stadium - Memorial Stadium (Surface - FieldTurf; Capacity - 52,626).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Shaun Shivers	106	399	3.8	4
Josh Henderson	63	286	4.5	3
Jaylin Lucas	31	130	4.2	1

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Connor Bazelak	208-379	54.9	2099	12-9
Jack Tuttle	9-12	75.0	82	1-0
Dexter Williams II	4-11	36.4	41	0-2

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Emery Simmons	32	335	10.5	1
Josh Henderson	18	232	12.9	3

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game — 23.3
Rushing Yards Per Game — 78.7
Passing Yards Per Game — 250.3
Total Offense Avg. Per Game — 329.0

2022 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 2	ILLINOIS	W, 23-20
Sept. 10	IDAHO	W, 35-22
Sept. 17	WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 33-30 (OT)
Sept. 24	at Cincinnati	L, 45-24
Oct. 1	at Nebraska	L, 35-21
Oct. 8	MICHIGAN	L, 31-10
Oct. 15	MARYLAND	L, 38-33
Oct. 22	at Rutgers	L, 24-17
Nov. 5	PENN STATE	L, 45-14
Nov. 12	at Ohio State	12 p.m.
Nov. 19	at Michigan State	TBA
Nov. 26	PURDUE	TBA
Dec. 3	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Aaron Casey	43	27	70	9.0-24	1.5-11
Cam Jones	24	30	54	3.0-15	1.0-7
Bradley Jennings Jr.	21	30	51	4.5-16	1.0-7
Bryant Fitzgerald	33	15	48	0.5-1	0.5-1
Dasan McCullough	23	15	38	5.5-37	4.0-33

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Tiawan Mullen	2	0	0	0
Myles Jackson	1	10	10.0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed — 32.2
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed — 157.9
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed — 264.4
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed — 422.3

him back and having him ready for the fall."

Emery Simmons (32 catches, 335 yards) has the next most receptions on the team, followed by running back Shaun Shivers, who has pulled in 21 catches for 125 yards. Shivers is also the team's leading rusher, going for 399 yards on 106 carries (3.8 per attempt) with four rushing touchdowns.

"He's hard to tackle because there's just not a lot there," Allen said of the 5-7, 188-pound Shivers. "Just a lot of muscle, and he's got vertical speed."

Unfortunately for Indiana, injuries like Camper's are not just limited to the offense. Linebacker Cam Jones, Indiana's most impactful defensive player and an All-Big Ten honorable mention last season, has missed the last four games as he returns from a foot injury and remains week-to-week rather than day-to-day.

"I understand patience is the key," he said. "It's been killing me, but I know something good will come."

Jones totaled 64 tackles (two for loss), a sack, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery last season. His tackles were third most on the team behind safety Raheem Layne and linebacker Micah McFadden, neither of whom is on this year's team after going off to the NFL.

Bradley Jennings Jr. has appeared in Jones' place, racking up 51 tackles (4½ for loss), a sack and five pass breakups in nine games this season, with linebacker Aaron Casey filling the other spot in the middle of the field. Casey is the team's far-and-away leader on defense in Jones' absence, leading the Hoosiers with 70 tackles (nine for loss) and two forced fumbles.

Alfred Bryant is the starter at Indiana's "Bull" position, which is a hybrid defensive end/outside linebacker, and he is backed up by linebacker Dasan McCullough, a former Ohio State commitment in the 2021 recruit-

ing class. Elsewhere on the defensive line, the Hoosiers have gotten contributions from tackles Demarcus Elliott and Sio Nofoga-toto'a and defensive end James Head Jr., who have all started in recent weeks.

In the back end of the defense, the Hoosiers have an experienced secondary with cornerbacks Jaylin Williams and Tiawan Mullen, safeties Devon Matthews and Bryant Fitzgerald, as well as starting nickelback Noah Pierre – also known as the "Husky" for Indiana – all in at least their senior year. The unit has struggled to find consistency, however, allowing 264.4 passing yards per game, dead last in the Big Ten and 108th overall in the country.

This season and last have made it clear that Indiana – which has not defeated Ohio State since 1988 and hasn't done so in Columbus since 1987 – may be further away than ever after what was evidently an alignment of the stars in 2019 and 2020.

With games remaining against Ohio State, Michigan State and Purdue, there are few opportunities left on the schedule for victory, but additional numbers in the win column are not the focus at this point for Indiana heading into the final stretch. Rather, it's time for the Hoosiers' youth to shine and provide a glimmer for the future.

"I just want to see that fight, that finish, the execution at those critical times," Allen said. "That's never going to cease to be a priority. Continue to make changes. We have to make changes, whatever we've got to do schematically, personnel-wise, to get ourselves in that position."

"I just want to see younger guys develop as well. Some guys will get opportunities because of some guys being dinged up. We already have had those. I want to see them rise up and have a great finish to the 2022 season."



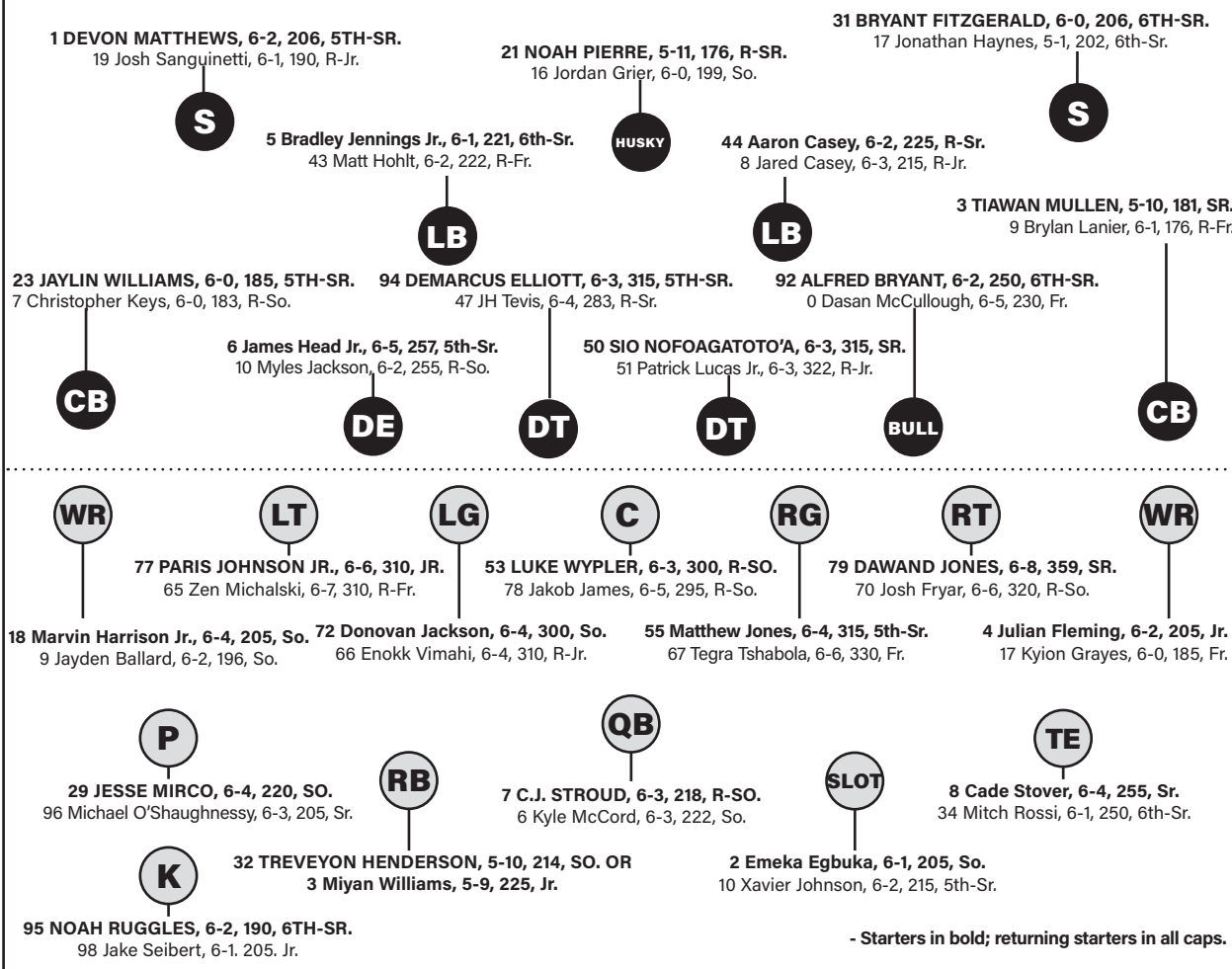
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Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. INDIANA RUSH DEFENSE

The running game has returned! The running game has returned! Anybody looking at the 207 yards on 35 carries (5.9 yards per rush) in the slogging 21-7 win over Northwestern on Nov. 5 without watching the game would rightfully come to that conclusion. But for the majority of the game when the Buckeyes needed to keep the ball on the ground because of the extraordinarily strong winds, the rush was as ineffective as it was in gaining just a combined 164 yards in the previous two games against Iowa and Penn State. The secret weapon against Northwestern was a career-high 79 yards on six runs for former slow-of-foot quarterback C.J. Stroud, including a mind-boggling 44-yarder in the fourth quarter. In fact, he was the leading rusher for the Buckeyes in the first half with 29 yards. That should never happen. Unintentionally, TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams are alternating games missed due to injuries. This time, Williams was mostly healthy, but he was held to 22 yards on 11 totes in the first half. To his credit, he finished with 111 yards on 26 carries (4.3) with touchdowns of 27 and 2 yards, but make no mistake that the rushing attack is nowhere near where it should be. Penn State gained 179 yards (3.7 average) on Nov. 5 in a 45-14 final over Indiana. The Hoosiers are 83rd nationally against the run. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

INDIANA RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Seven Hoosiers combined to run for 65 yards on 34 carries (1.9) against Penn State. Josh Henderson led the way with 44 yards, including a long of 23 yards, but Indiana was simply overmatched along the line. The Nittany Lions had 13 first-half tackles for loss and 16 for the game. Indiana rushed for minus-6 yards in the first half and it had 11 total yards in the second quarter. The Ohio State rush defense was adequate vs. Northwestern, allowing 206 yards (3.5) with Evan Hull rushing for 122 yards on 30 carries. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. INDIANA PASS DEFENSE

Stroud had a miserable game throwing in miserable weather, completing 10 of 26 for a career-low 76 yards. Yes, winds reaching 50 miles per hour made it extremely difficult, but he was still off target more than Northwestern quarterback Brendan Sullivan, who somehow managed to go 10 of 14 for 79 yards. The passing game plan was basically to wait until third down then find Marvin Harrison Jr. for a first. At some point opponents will figure this out, especially if Jaxon Smith-Njigba continues to be out with an injury. It's never a good thing to be in triple digits in the rankings, but that's where the Hoosiers are in total defense (104th) and pass defense (108th). **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

INDIANA PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

The quarterback situation is a mess. Starter Connor Bazelak (12 touchdowns, nine interceptions) was injured and did not play vs. Penn State. He may be ready for the Buckeyes. Jack Tuttle, a team captain, announced last month that he would transfer after the season and had not played this season until getting the start vs. the Nittany Lions. He was 9 of 12 for 82 yards and a touchdown before he was injured. He was replaced by Brendan Sorsby, who was 3 of 6 for 8 yards and an interception. He was replaced by Dexter Williams III (4 of 11, 41 yards, two picks). To top it off, Penn State had six sacks in the first half. It's hard to judge how well Ohio State did in defending Northwestern, but the Buckeyes have to be excited to tee off on the Hoosiers. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jesse Mirco had a wind-aided 77-yard punt for the Buckeyes and averaged 50.3 on seven kicks. Indiana freshman Jaylin Lucas was sixth in the country with a 28.2-yard average on kickoff returns, including a touchdown against Rutgers. **EDGE: EVEN**

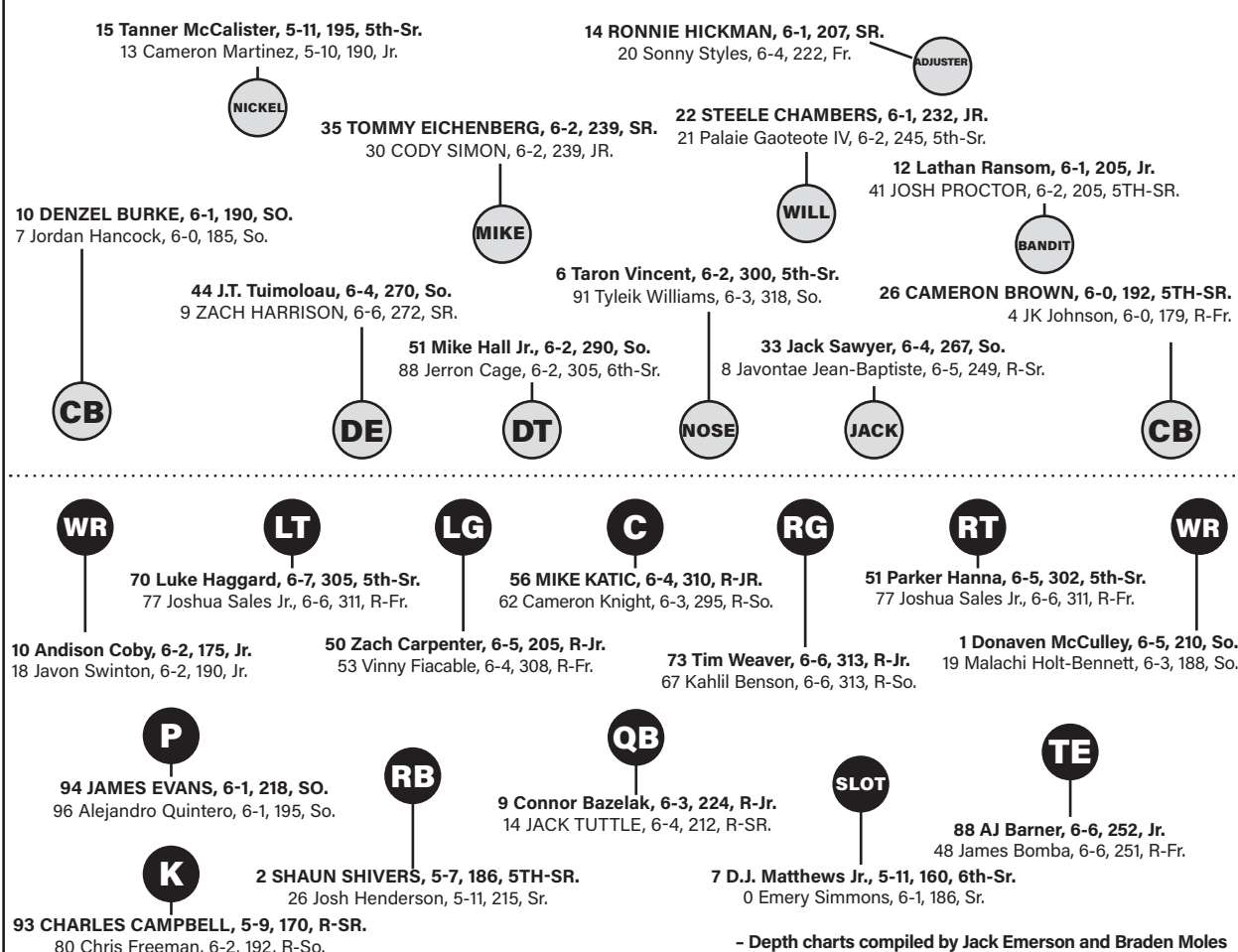
INTANGIBLES

Indiana is banged up and going nowhere in a disappointing season while the Buckeyes have been frustrating to watch in recent games. They've had three straight poor first halves, and the running game disappears for stretches. Those are fixable stumbles and should be worked out against the overmatched Hoosiers. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

STAFF PREDICTION

All signs point to a patented blowout, and 60-plus points seem doable for the Buckeyes. However, this team – despite gaudy statistics – still seems like a work in progress and not one ready to contend for a national title. **OHIO STATE 42, INDIANA 7**

WHEN INDIANA HAS THE BALL...



Former Players Decry U-M Tunnel Situation

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Eight Michigan State players have been suspended and police are still investigating following a brawl in the tunnel of Michigan Stadium after the Wolverines' 29-7 win over the Spartans on Oct. 29, and it seems to have evolved into a bigger story than the result of the rivalry game.

"What happened after the game is completely unacceptable," said Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel. "I've talked to (Big Ten) commissioner (Kevin Warren). He is looking into it. The police are also looking into it because they've seen the video. So they are 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."

Video surfaced after the altercation that showed Michigan defensive back Ja'Den McBurrows being punched and shoved by a group of Michigan State players. In the aftermath, the Spartans have suspended student-athletes Tank Brown, Khary Crump, Angelo Grose, Malcolm Jones, Justin White, Jacoby Windmon, Brandon Wright and Zion Young.

"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."

One of the questions that lingers following the altercation is whether stadium design is to blame. For the duration of its existence, Michigan Stadium has utilized one tunnel for both teams, making it easy for opposing sides to cross paths before kickoff, at halftime and in postgame. Buckeye Sports Bulletin spoke with several former players who have walked through the tunnel, and the issues date back several decades.

"It is the worst setup in all of college football for games in which there is a high level of intensity, marquee games," former Ohio State running back Jeff Logan (1974-77) said.

Former Ohio State linebacker Jim Laughlin (1976-79) stated that the setup was a problem when he played in the 1970s and it remains a problem now.

"It's a bull-crap situation," Laughlin said. "They've never done anything about it, and they should. Or the officials should. The Big Ten should do something about it. I mean, they do it on purpose."

Bill Conley experienced Ann Arbor's tunnel turbulence as both a player and an assistant coach for the Buckeyes. Much like Laughlin, he feels there's an ongoing problem that dates back decades.

"When I played it was the same way," Conley said. "It's been that situation, now, as both locker rooms emptied out into the tunnel. There's no other way to get to the field. And what Michigan did, they waited until they saw our doors open and then they



FILE PHOTO

BRAWL IN THE HALL — Penn State head coach James Franklin is one of several who have recently taken issue with the tunnel at Michigan Stadium that forces both teams to walk through it at the same time.

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would open theirs. It was a purposeful type of thing. They wanted some and they thought it would be intimidating on the opposing team, because it's not a very wide tunnel anyway. When you come out of those doors, the noise echoes, like it does in any tunnel. That was one of their intimidating factors."

Logan, on the other hand, recalled a specific incident his sophomore year with the Buckeyes in 1975. No guidance had been given to the team from officials, coaches or security, making for an open season on the way to the field.

"It was absolute mayhem in that tunnel, because at least back then, the Michigan team did not come out of their locker room until the Ohio State door opened," Logan said. "As soon as our door opened, they came out. So it was like they wanted to incite some sort of riot, if you will, in that tunnel going down. And as much as the officials tried to get Ohio State out on the field first, I can tell you there was a lot of pushing and shoving and yelling and screaming, a lot of stuff going on."

One thing Logan and Laughlin agreed upon is that something needs to be done about Michigan's tunnel setup, something even perhaps mandated by the Big Ten. The former Buckeyes aren't alone.

Penn State head coach James Franklin took to a lectern three days after his team's 41-17 loss to Michigan in Ann Arbor on Oct. 15 and called for similar changes.

"I prefer to talk about these things in the offseason, but the one tunnel is a problem," Franklin said. "It's a problem and has been. To me, we need to put a policy in place from a

conference perspective in my mind that's going to stop it. We're not the first team to kind of get into a jawing match in the tunnel. For me, I want to focus on getting my team into the locker room and not jawing back and forth."

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day – who has visited the venue once as an assistant coach and twice as the lead man for the Buckeyes – was asked for his thoughts on the incident on Nov. 1 but stated he didn't have any comment to give on the matter. Player safety when entering/exiting the field does cross his mind though, he noted.

Emotions are going to run high in a football game. Rivalries, especially ones with conference or national championship implications, will breed hostility beyond the field of play if squads aren't kept separated.

"You're jacked up – you're playing Michigan," Laughlin said. "The stadium's full, 110,000 people. The place is nuts."

Logan agreed.

"Especially with the high level of intensity that they had up there with Michigan State, it's an evening game and it's all fired up," Logan said. "Mel Tucker had won the last couple of those."

In lieu of a stadium reconstruction, an increase in security and protocol seems in order to prevent situations similar to what occurred Oct. 29. One solution several have suggested was a close monitoring of when either team is entering or exiting the field before kickoff, at halftime and following the game.

"The officials should say, 'OK, Ohio State's gone, you guys can come out now,' or vice versa," Laughlin said. "It's crap the way they do it. It was inevitable that something

was going to happen."

"I think their only resolution to this whole thing is going to have to be a complete delay in the beginning of a game until one team is out there, fully on the field, (and) that tunnel is empty," Logan said. "Nobody else is allowed to come out. They've got to manage that situation. Then at halftime – and it's not just the football team, it's all the support staff – they've got to make sure that they not only get them off the field and in the tunnel before and after the game, but they've got to go in and close the locker room doors before they let the home team be able to access that."

Laughlin and the 1977 Buckeye squad may not have experienced any confrontation with the Michigan football players, but in one of his favorite stories about former head coach Woody Hayes, they did have an encounter with some other athletes.

Michigan had formed a channel of about 100 wrestlers, hockey players and other athletes to guide Ohio State from the tunnel

directly to its bench, trying to prevent it from going on the field prior to kick because Ohio State tore down the Wolverines' "Go Blue" banner in 1973. Hayes didn't take kindly to that premise.

"He goes, 'You know what I think of that? I think that's bulls–t,' " Laughlin recalled. "He goes, 'You go down that tunnel, after you knock those guys down with that yellow M on their chest, step on the back of their necks and go out to the middle of the field. You do whatever the hell you want to do."

"We've got 54 guys, they've got well over 100.' So he said, 'I think that would make us about even in a fight.' "

Laughlin remembered with a laugh just how fired up that made the team. Ohio State ran right through the cavalcade of Michigan athletes and took the field.

"We just started smashing right through," he said. "We had Jimmy Moore, all these big guys – (the Michigan athletes) didn't want any part of that, especially without a helmet on and pads."

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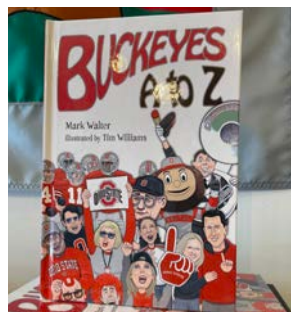
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Burke Gains Confidence After Slow Start

By **JACK EMERSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

By all accounts, Ohio State's defense last season was underwhelming at best. The Buckeyes ranked in the bottom half of the Big Ten in total defense (372.9 yards per game, ninth) and scoring defense (22.8 points per game, ninth) while its pass defense was among the league's worst (246.2 yards per game, 12th).

Despite the defensive deficiencies last season, then-freshman cornerback Denzel Burke made a name for himself during the 2021 campaign. Burke started every game of his first season as a Buckeye and led Ohio State in pass breakups by a wide margin, registering 12 – five more than second-place Cameron Brown's seven – and an interception. Burke added 36 total tackles, 28 of which were unassisted.

Burke's stellar play as a freshman launched him into national recognition. He was named a Freshman All-American by ESPN, The Athletic and 247Sports. The Saguaro, Ariz., native was also named to the All-Big Ten third team, as voted on by the conference's coaches.

For better or worse, Burke's emergence during his debut season only heightened the expectations heading into his sophomore campaign. While the buzz around Burke only grew prior to the start of the 2022 season, it has been largely a difficult run for him in the season's first nine games. Although Ohio State has improved against the pass as a whole, holding opponents to 165.9 yards per game, which ranks No. 3 in the Big Ten and seventh in the country, Burke has been one of the few regressions this season under new defensive coordinator Jim Knowles.

According to Pro Football Focus coverage statistics, Burke has seen a dip in efficiency. Through nine games, receivers have caught 53.6 percent of targets against Burke, which is up from 48.4 percent last season. Burke has also allowed receivers to churn out more yards upon the catch this season with opponents averaging 17.8 yards per reception against him, which is an 6.7 yard increase from a year ago.

Despite Burke's struggles to this point in the season, Knowles has displayed continued confidence in the sophomore and said that he's seen growth from him as the season has progressed.

"Denzel is the same," Knowles said on Oct. 25. "I've always had great confidence in him, and I continue to throughout the season. If he wasn't making enough plays, because he is talented and skilled, you have to then look at the cause, which goes on me."

"He has always been a really fun guy to coach. He's an easy guy to coach. He's coachable. He competes. He tries hard. He listens to what you have to say, and I think that's what you want. You want a guy that's going to respond, and he's always responded to every challenge since I've been here."

In the face of his early-season struggles, Burke recognized that he wasn't playing up to his standards but preached the idea of staying in the moment and focusing on improvement rather than dwelling on previous miscues.

"Obviously the start of the season wasn't



FILE PHOTO

BOUNCE-BACK BURKE — After a sluggish start to his sophomore season, Ohio State cornerback Denzel Burke has had improved play since the idle week. Burke has tallied 22 tackles and four pass breakups this season.

what I expected and wasn't what I wanted either," Burke said. "But I'm not really worried about the past. I'm just worried about going forward and stacking games, and just winning games and, game-by-game, doing what I can to the best of my ability for this team."

Although much was made about his issues in coverage during nonconference competition, Burke registered a solid outing during the Buckeyes' season opener against Notre Dame. His reputation preceded him entering the game, and Fighting Irish quarterback Tyler Buchner hardly looked in his direction but still completed three passes against Burke for 66 yards on five targets.

However, concerns grew following Burke's less-than-impressive performances against the likes of Arkansas State and Toledo. Against the Red Wolves, Burke was flagged twice for clear pass-interference calls, and his most egregious play came early in the second quarter. With 14:48 to go in the first half, Burke was tasked with covering 5-5, 142-pound wide receiver Champ Flemings. With a burst of speed off the line, Flemings quickly got a step on Burke and took advantage, hauling in a bomb from quarterback James Blackman on a fly route and taking it for a gain of 58 yards to Ohio State's 12-yard line while shaking tackle attempts from Burke after the catch.

The following week against Toledo, Burke appeared to improve in coverage, steering clear of any pass-interference infractions, but showed deficiencies in 50-50 ball scenarios. With 10:23 remaining in the third quarter, Rockets quarterback Dequan Finn took the snap out of the shotgun and was immediately knocked off his spot and flushed out to the left. Although Burke kept tight coverage on wide receiver Jerjuan Newton near the end zone, Finn tossed a prayer in Newton's direction. As both Burke and Newton made a play on the ball, it was Newton who won that one-on-one battle, high-pointing the ball and shrugging off Burke to stride into the end zone.

While Burke faced Flemings and Newton in one-on-one coverage in both scenarios,

he emphasized the need to be locked in at all times because mistakes are amplified in those situations.

"That mentality on the island is that mistakes aren't forgiven out there," Burke said. "You really have to be honed in on your technique, your eyes and everything that you see because it's unforgiving out there. You've just got to be on your P's and Q's."

Prior to Ohio State's bout with Wisconsin on Sept. 24, Burke underwent warmups as normal, except he sported a club on his right hand which greatly interfered with his ability to corral the ball. When the Buckeyes reemerged from the locker room in full uniform, Burke came out in street clothes and was forced to miss Ohio State's 52-21 win over the Badgers. Burke later revealed that he had surgery on that hand on the Wednesday prior to the game.

That wasn't Burke's only ailment throughout the early stages of the season, as he also battled through a shoulder injury during training camp, greatly impacting the number of snaps he received in practice prior to the start of the campaign.

"That's part of the game," Burke said of his injuries. "For me, I just had to keep having a strong mind and keep going forward and control things that I could control."

After playing through pain during the first few weeks, Burke noted that he's back to full strength. Burke returned a week later against Rutgers, but instead of donning the No. 5 jersey that he wore during the season's first three games, he came out of the tunnel in No. 10.

"Last year, I really just wanted a single-digit (jersey number)," Burke said. "I thought I liked it – I did like the No. 5 a little bit – but it was just something about me. I wanted to go back to my high school number. I had No. 10 in high school and really liked that number."

"I'm just going to stick with that, probably for the rest of my time here."

Despite the number change, Burke still looked a step behind his freshman self against the Scarlet Knights. It was his play against 50-50 balls that doomed him yet

again, and he allowed Rutgers to get on the board first. As the Scarlet Knights dialed up a pass on third-and-6 from the Ohio State 14-yard line with just four minutes gone by in the game, quarterback Evan Simon looked in Burke's direction.

Even with tight coverage from Burke, wide receiver Sean Ryan was able to create just enough separation while the ball traveled through the air to haul in the touchdown catch in traffic along the front right corner of the end zone. Ryan went on to beat Burke again on a similar play early in the third quarter, that time for a 26-yard gain.

Burke's struggles to defend jump balls were not unique to him, but rather a unit-wide issue in the cornerbacks room to that point in the season. Following Ohio State's 49-20 win over Michigan State, head coach Ryan Day emphasized that the cornerbacks had played well in coverage but noted that he needed to see more from them when the ball was in the air.

"I keep looking at it and we're there, we just don't seem to be making the plays," Day said. "I think if it's something where guys are just creating separation, we can't cover anybody, that's one issue. But this issue seems to be that we're there, we're just not making the play."

"We have the right guys over there and they're pressing a little bit but that's OK," he added.

Burke's fortunes appeared to flip during the Michigan State game. He was targeted just twice against the Spartans and allowed just one reception for a gain of 5 yards. From there, Burke has once again started to look like his freshman self, and opposing quarterbacks are starting to take notice.

After Burke faced an average of 4.3 targets per game in his first four games, that number has dwindled to 2.8 since the Rutgers game. According to PFF, Burke has registered two of his best games this season during the stretch, earning coverage grades of 71.3 against Iowa and 72.2 vs. Penn State. In the Buckeyes' bout against Northwestern, Burke remained in form, finishing with a coverage grade of 64.1.

While Burke has turned the page by stringing together some strong starts in the last few weeks, fellow cornerback Jordan Hancock emphasized that the unit's trust in Burke never wavered despite his early-season struggles.

"I'm extremely proud of Denzel," Hancock said. "He could easily be down on himself, but he's always been a team player. It's a hard process, but he never felt down on himself – he didn't show it at least. I'm just extremely grateful to be his teammate."

"We know how good Denzel is. Denzel is a really good ballplayer. He loves football, so it's really good seeing him out there now and gaining that confidence back. The sky's the limit for him, for sure."

While Hancock expressed pride for the strides Burke has made since the beginning of the season, Burke emphasized that his confidence never wavered in the face of his subpar play.

"I believe in myself, and again, I play for an audience of one," Burke said. "I have a strong mind-set, and I know what I can do and what I can do for this team."

Hancock Is Handy At Corner After Injury

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For six games this season, Ohio State didn't have its full complement of cornerbacks. Denzel Burke and Cameron Brown had played, though each missed time at various points, and JK Johnson and Jyaire Brown filled in as needed.

But there was one piece, a player who had blossomed in fall camp, who remained sidelined. That was Jordan Hancock.

"He has great length and skills, but he also sees the formation well," Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said Oct. 25. "He sees the adjustment. He can predict, pre-snap, what's going to happen. He's really got a high football intelligence."

Hancock has steadily worked back into the fold for Ohio State, finding a new appreciation for his craft as he overcame the first injury of his football career. With the ups and downs the Buckeyes' secondary has faced outside, he could be an important reinforcement.

"There's a lot of stuff I can still work on (to help the team)," Hancock said. "Just discipline, eyes. That's why I'm in there with Coach (Tim) Walton, just learning. He keeps on growing me."

A good deal of fanfare surrounded Hancock as a recruit. Rated the nation's No. 5 cornerback prospect and No. 73 player overall in the 2021 class, the Suwanee, Ga., native picked Ohio State in July 2020 just days after decommitting from another national powerhouse in Clemson.

"(Ohio State) was very consistent," Hancock said after the flip. "They never let off the gas. They were the first big school to offer me. I wasn't even ranked when they offered, so they were the first school to take a chance on me."

Hancock entered as one of a trio of four-star cornerback prospects in the class, and all of them – Burke, Hancock and Johnson – have already seen meaningful snaps two years into their respective Ohio State careers, and the three share a close bond off the field.

"We're extremely close," Hancock said.

"We hang outside of practice, we challenge each other in the facility. We just have fun, be out there, because we came in together."

While Burke enjoyed a breakout season last year, Hancock saw only 31 defensive snaps for the campaign. Lumping in special teams plays, he finished the year with four tackles and one pass breakup.

Despite his recruiting pedigree, Hancock stated that such a developmental year was necessary for him. He had to put a "Freshman 15" on his 6-1 frame, in a good way. He's up to 185 pounds since graduating from high school at a mere 170.

"I felt like I had good growing pains (my freshman season)," Hancock said. "I feel like I needed to feel things out because I came in the summer. My body wasn't ready, but I feel like my body has taken a big jump, and I feel like, physically, I'm ready. And playing special teams, getting my feet wet and just getting used to the speed of the game, I feel like that was a good change."

With the transfers of more corners this past offseason in Sevn Banks, Lejond Cavazos and Ryan Watts, a door opened for Hancock to compete for spot duty alongside Cameron Brown and Burke, who were returning as starters.

"I felt like I made a move (in preseason practices), but I didn't get complacent or anything," Hancock said. "I was playing more, but I wasn't getting complacent. I was still putting in the work."

A setback occurred during the opening weeks of fall camp, however. Ohio State doesn't provide exact details on the when and what of practice injuries, but Hancock appeared to have a limp and a wrap around his leg during the Buckeyes' open practice on Aug. 9, which is now known to have been a hamstring injury.

"I was just dealing with a little pull," Hancock said.

He added that much of his recovery time was precautionary, heeding every bit of advice the team's medical personnel gave him. Burke noticed a methodical approach from

his classmate during team activities.

"A hamstring (injury) is nothing to joke with," Burke said. "It's a lingering deal. You've really got to take your time with that, not rush back too early. And I'm just glad we got him back."

Burke dealt with his own injury and some related on-field struggles to open this season, harboring shoulder and hand issues. The cornerback duo leaned on each other through the hard times.

"We've just got to keep our heads strong," Burke said. "I told him to keep his head strong. Just keep moving forward. It's part of the game. You've got to control what you can control."

Hancock said he put his trust in God's plan as he fought his way back to the field. Throughout his high school career at North Gwinnett, he'd never dealt with an injury. In fact, Hancock indicated that the injury was his first ever.

"I could probably say I took it for granted before I was injured," Hancock said. "Now being back, I'm extremely grateful, extremely blessed. It was a long process. I just want to thank the strength staff, the training staff for really believing in me and getting me back on the field."

That feeling of gratitude has changed his approach to his development. Now that he knows what it's like to not have football, he values it more when he's playing, whatever the setting.

"(Before the injury) during practice you'd be like, 'Oh, it's just another day of practice,'" Hancock said. "But now, being back, I'm grateful. I'm extremely blessed to be out here because I could be injured, not be doing anything. So you can't take those days for granted."

Ohio State's injury report filed Hancock

under "unavailable" the first six games of the season while he recovered. Coming off the team's off week, Hancock finally made his first appearance of the season against Iowa, and the following week against Penn State, he made his first tackle of the season as he ramps back up.

"I haven't been a baseball coach, but it is like a pitcher. That's why they call it a pitch count, I guess," Knowles said. "Because a guy can taper off as a game goes on if he hasn't built up that stamina. So we're gradually increasing him and looking for more reps from him this week (against Northwestern)."

Hancock appeared on Ohio State's participation report against Northwestern but did not log any defensive statistics.

His return came at a welcome time for Ohio State. With injuries to Brown, Burke and Hancock throughout this season stressing the Buckeyes' depth at cornerback, as well as some questionable play at the position, Hancock being back in the lineup – as a starter against Iowa and Penn State with Brown out – is a significant boost to the room.

Now back on the field, there should only be more Hancock unlocks as he works his way back to being a full participant, and it's just in time for Ohio State's stretch run.

"It's been a long road for him," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said Oct. 26. "He's been dying to get back on the field. There's been ups and downs for those nine weeks where he was coming back and he did a great job, especially the last couple weeks, of really diving in and being serious and making sacrifices and really focusing on being healthy to get back out there."

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'Shoe Capacity Rises Throughout 7th 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 seventh decade (1982-91) that featured ever-increasing seating capacity, thrilling victories and another messy coaching change.

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

For a facility that was entering its seventh decade in 1982, Ohio Stadium didn't seem to be showing any age. If anything, the Horseshoe remained vibrant thanks to several innovations as well as some of the most exciting games in football program history.

After leading all of college football in average attendance for 14 consecutive seasons beginning in 1958, Ohio State had slipped behind 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 university officials began to figure out new ways to increase attendance, head coach Earle Bruce began to redouble his recruiting efforts to once again make a ticket to an Ohio State football game the hottest of commodities.

Prior to the 1982 season, the university removed the track that had been part of the stadium since its earliest days and replaced it with a state-of-the-art surface designed to draw national and international meets to the Horseshoe. The new track was named in honor of four-time Olympic gold medalist Jesse Owens, who won a record eight individual NCAA championships while competing for Ohio State in 1935 and 1936.

The installation of the new track also paid an additional dividend. It allowed the south bleacher stands to be moved and 18 rows of seats to be added. That provided room for nearly 2,200 additional fans, pushing the official capacity of the stadium to 85,290.

Capacity increased three more times during the decade until finally pushing past the 90,000 mark for the 1991 season.

In the meantime, Bruce and his assistant coaches were expanding their recruiting base. No longer content to simply comb Ohio for its best players, the coach began to make inroads in such high school hotbeds as Detroit, Chicago, Atlanta, Miami and Southern California. Meanwhile, the pipeline of talent throughout the Buckeye State continued to produce an abundance of star power.

During the three-year period that began in 1981, Bruce signed such future starters as running back Keith Byars; linebackers Eric Kumerow and Thomas "Pepper" Johnson; quarterbacks Mike Tomczak and Jim Karsatos; receiver Mike Lanese; defensive backs Doug Hill, Kelvin Bell and Sonny Gordon; offensive linemen Rory Graves, Jim Lachey and Kirk Lowdermilk; and kicker Rich Spangler. Then just during the 1984 recruiting season, Bruce added defensive backs Sean Bell, Greg Rogan, Dwight Smith and William White; tight end Alex Higdon; offensive linemen Greg Zackeroff, Jim Davidson and Jeff Uhlenhake; quarterback/punter Tom Tupa; wide receivers Jamie Holland and Cris Carter; and linebackers Mike McCray and Chris Spielman.

"In my opinion, Coach Bruce never got the recognition he deserved for being an evaluator of talent," OSU football historian Jack Park told BSB. "And I'm not just talking about players. Look at some of the coaches he hired – guys like Nick Saban, Pete Carroll, Dom Capers, Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer. Those are some pretty big names."

Capers had just been hired by Bruce to take over the defensive backfield coaching duties when Ohio State opened its 1982 season with a lackluster 21-14 win against Baylor. A crowd of 88,622 marked the 84th consecutive sellout at Ohio Stadium as the Buckeyes got two first-half touchdown runs from fullback Vaughn Broadnax and a 1-yard scramble in the fourth quarter by

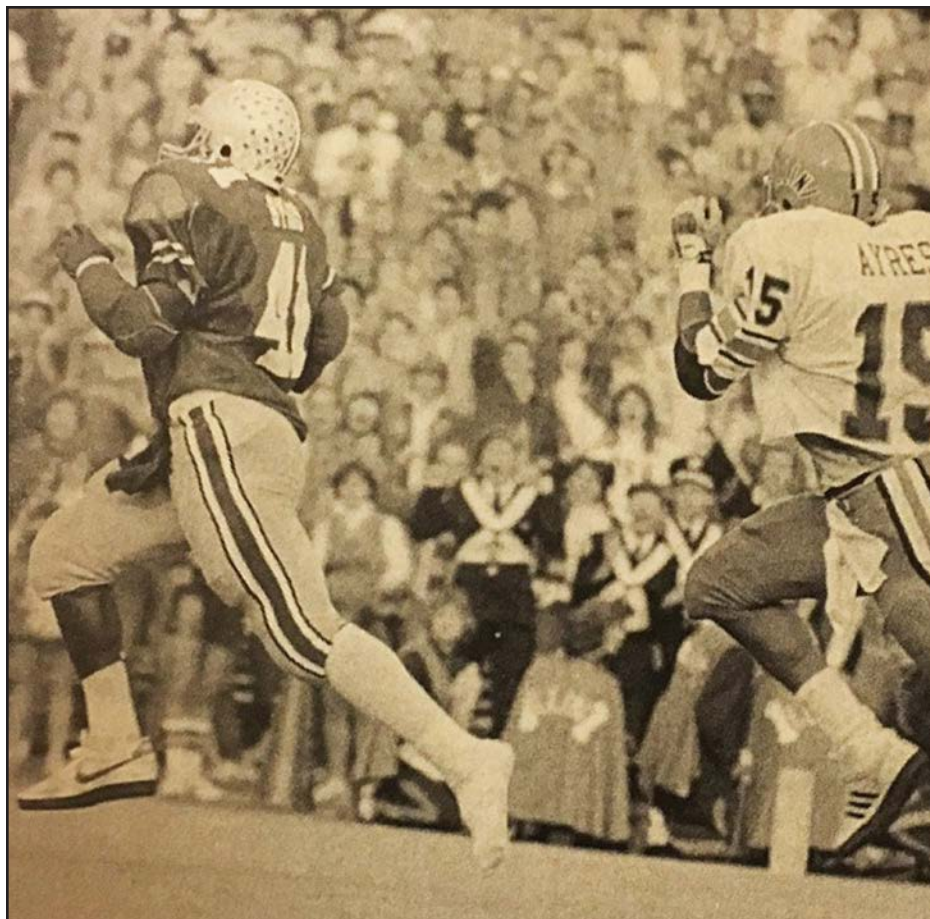


PHOTO COURTESY OF 247 SPORTS

NO SHOES REQUIRED — Ohio State running back Keith Byars finished with 274 rushing yards and five touchdowns on 39 carries in a 45-38 win over Illinois in 1984, even scoring on a 67-yard touchdown after losing one of his shoes.

Tomczak in his first game as starting quarterback.

A week later, Ohio State kicked off the Big Ten schedule with a 31-10 win at Michigan State but then returned to Columbus for a disastrous three-game homestand.

It began with a rematch against Stanford and its All-America quarterback John Elway, who had been outdueled by OSU's Art

Schlichter during a 24-19 loss to the Buckeyes the year before. This time, in front of an Ohio Stadium-record crowd of 89,436, Elway rallied his team from a seven-point deficit late in the fourth quarter, throwing an 18-yard touchdown pass with just 34 seconds remaining to give Stanford a 23-20 victory.

That was followed by a 34-17 loss to Florida State, during which Bruce benched Tomczak in favor of backup Brent Offenbacher, and an especially excruciating 6-0 loss to Wisconsin. It marked the first-ever win in the Horseshoe for the Badgers in 22 tries and gave the Buckeyes their first three-game losing streak at home in 15 years.

Making matters worse was the weather. The game was played in a relentless downpour, and although attendance was reported as 88,234, which exceeded stadium capacity, there were more than 1,000 tickets that went unsold. As a result, the home sellout streak which had begun during the 1968 national championship season ended at 86 games.

Bruce managed to rally his team, however, and Ohio State ran the table on the remainder of the 1982 season with seven straight victories by an average margin of nearly 20 points per game. Included was a 24-14 win against Michigan in front of another stadium-record crowd of 90,252, and a 47-17 mauling of a Steve Young-led BYU team in the Holiday Bowl.

The Buckeyes followed their 9-3 finish in 1982 with another 9-3 season in 1983, a campaign that included a 24-14 win at Oklahoma in mid-September and back-to-back wins against Indiana (56-17) and North-



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western (55-7) in early November marking the first time in more than 90 years that Ohio State had topped the 50-point mark in successive games. During the 1892 season, the Buckeyes took a 62-0 win at Akron and followed with an 80-0 shutout win against Marietta.

But the 1983 season was checkered with road losses at Iowa and Illinois – each to lower-ranked teams – as well as a 24-21 loss at Michigan in the traditional regular-season finale.

The defeat at Illinois was an especially tough 17-13 decision that included a lost fumble and four OSU interceptions. A sixth turnover, this one on downs at the Illini 17-yard line with just 1:43 to play, allowed Illinois to travel 83 yards in just 37 seconds to score the winning touchdown.

The Buckeyes would have to wait an entire year to gain their revenge, and when they did, the Fighting Illini were victimized by one of the most exciting comebacks in Ohio State program history.

We're Comin' Back!

The 1984 season began with a scare as the Buckeyes fell into a 14-3 halftime hole against Oregon State before pulling out a 22-14 victory in front of a somewhat ambivalent crowd of 88,072 spectators at Ohio Stadium.

But OSU followed with three more victories, including a 45-26 pounding of No. 14 Iowa, and ascended to No. 2 in the national rankings before an inexplicable 28-23 upset loss at Purdue in early October. The defeat dropped OSU six spots in the polls, and there was definitely some carryover the following week when unranked Illinois came to town.

The Fighting Illini were carrying a 4-2 record and were double-digit underdogs, but things could not have started any worse for the Buckeyes. Their first possession ended in a punt after which Illinois marched 80 yards for the game's first touchdown. The biggest play in the drive was a 38-yard run by junior tailback Thomas Rooks, the same player who had rushed for the game-winning touchdown in Champaign the year before.

By the time the first quarter had ended, Illinois had staked itself to a 17-0 lead, and the onslaught continued into the second period. After an OSU turnover gave the Illini the ball at the Ohio State 21-yard line, the visitors tacked on another touchdown to make it 24-0 at the 14:47 mark of the second quarter.

Suddenly, though, the Buckeyes began to show some life. The defense finally came up with a stop and forced Illinois to punt before the offense got itself on track. Starting at its own 9, Ohio State struck with electrifying quickness, moving 91 yards in just six plays. Byars finished off the drive with a 16-yard touchdown bolt, and after Spangler added the extra point, the Buckeyes were finally on the scoreboard at the 4:13 mark of the second period.

Then Bruce took a gamble. Still facing a 17-point deficit but desperately wanting to build upon the small amount of momentum the touchdown had afforded his team, the Ohio State head coach called for an onside kick. The Buckeyes already had the advantage of kicking off an additional 15 yards closer due to an unsportsmanlike penalty on Illinois after the touchdown, and when

the football bounced off the hands of Illini linebacker Jeff Martin and into the arms of OSU linebacker Joe Jenkins, the game's fortunes continued to turn.

Recovery of the onside kick gave the Buckeyes possession at the Illinois 31, and on the second play of the drive, Tomczak faked a reverse to Lanese and fired a pass to Carter that the freshman speedster turned into a 30-yard touchdown. Spangler added the extra point, and suddenly Ohio State had some life after paring Illinois' lead to 24-14.

The sellout crowd of 89,937, which had fallen deathly silent after the home team had gotten so far behind so early, was also beginning to stir. That stir became a full-throated roar when Gordon picked off a pass from Illini QB Jack Trudeau that gave the Buckeyes one final first-half possession at their own 38.

Using the middle of the field and his timeouts wisely, Tomczak engineered a 62-yard drive that culminated with Byars crashing

into the end zone from 4 yards out with just 23 seconds remaining in the first half. Spangler tacked on the extra point, and within the span of less than four minutes, Ohio State had closed to within striking distance of the Illini at 24-21.

Best of all, a national television audience got to join in the excitement when cameras got a glimpse of Byars on the OSU bench following the touchdown. The running back turned his head, smiled for the camera, and shouted, "We're comin' back!"

The momentum swing continued into the second half when Illinois fumbled the opening kickoff and White recovered for the Buckeyes at the Illinois 26. Four plays later, Byars bolted into the end zone from the 1 to completely wipe out the early deficit. Spangler's PAT pushed the Buckeyes' first lead of the afternoon to 28-24 with only 80 seconds elapsed in the third quarter.

The Illini rallied with a 46-yard field goal to narrow the gap to a single point at 28-27, but back came the Buckeyes with what was

easily the seminal moment of the back-and-forth game as well as one of the most memorable highlights in Horseshoe history.

Following the kickoff, Ohio State set up its offense at the 23-yard line and got a pair of Byars runs that netted a total of 15 yards. An illegal procedure penalty pushed the Buckeyes back 5 yards to the 33, and then thunder struck. Byars broke through the line of scrimmage, cut once toward the right sideline and then back toward his original direction in the middle of the field. He picked up downfield blocks from Carter and Holland and then began to pull away from two final would-be tacklers nipping at his heels.

All they ever caught was Byars' left shoe, which came off at about midfield, but the Ohio State tailback never broke stride, finishing the 67-yard romp as the crowd inside the Horseshoe became unglued.

Spangler's extra-point attempt was good,

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Continued From Page 25

giving the Buckeyes a 35-27 lead with 8:57 remaining in the third quarter. Most fans assumed in their delirium that the game was over. There was no way the Illini could recover from that kind of play.

Instead, the game got even better.

Trudeau rallied his team once again near the close of the third quarter. He drove them 63 yards in 10 plays before tossing a 9-yard touchdown pass. Then on the two-point conversion try, the Illini QB rolled to his right and kept on rolling right into the end zone to tie the score at 35 with 1:09 left in the third quarter.

The teams exchanged field goals in the final period, and it was beginning to look like the game would end in a deadlock. But with 3:18 to play, the Buckeyes marched 80 yards with Byars scoring from the 3 with just 36 seconds to play to give Ohio State a thrilling 45-38 victory.

By the time the final gun had sounded, the Ohio Stadium scene was surreal. Fans exploded out of the stands and even tore down the goalpost in the north end zone, a practice usually reserved only for Michigan games.

Byars finished the game with 39 carries for 274 yards and five touchdowns. The yardage figure shattered the old single-game OSU record of 246, set by Archie Griffin in 1973 against Iowa, and the five TDs matched the mark set by Pete Johnson vs. North Carolina in 1975. It also tied a Big Ten mark for most points scored in a single game, first set by Harold "Red" Grange of Illinois in 1924.

The Buckeyes went on to win four more games in 1984, including a 21-6 victory against Michigan, a win in front of 90,286 fans that propelled them to the Big Ten championship and their first Rose Bowl appearance in five years.

Under The Lights

Ohio Stadium ushered in a new era Sept. 14, 1985, when the first night game was held at the Horseshoe. Pittsburgh provided the opposition, and the Buckeyes scratched their way to a come-from-behind 10-7 victory in front of 88,518 fans.

OSU was hampered by the lack of a run-

ning attack due to the loss of Byars. The Heisman Trophy candidate broke a bone in his foot during a noncontact practice drill just 12 days before the opener, and the Buckeyes were held to just 48 yards rushing against a veteran Pitt defense.

Karsatos came to the rescue, though, throwing for 246 yards including the winning touchdown, a 1-yard strike to Carter, with just 4:19 left to go in the game.

White was the defensive hero of the game for Ohio State. He made a key interception at the OSU 44-yard line to stop the Panthers' final drive at the 1:43 mark of the fourth quarter.

In addition to the lights hovering over C-deck behind the east and west sides of the stadium, the opening-night crowd was treated to a new video scoreboard behind the south bleachers. The massive scoreboard, erected the previous spring and summer at a cost of \$2.1 million, provided state-of-the-art graphics and up-to-the-minute stats as well as the score and game clock.

Despite snarled traffic leaving the stadium after the game that ended at 10:52 p.m., and some dark spots on the field left uncovered by the portable lighting system, university officials proclaimed the first night game a smashing success. Still, there wasn't another night game held at Ohio Stadium for eight years.

Seven weeks after the first night game in the stadium, undefeated and top-ranked Iowa invaded the Horseshoe, looking for its first victory in Columbus since 1959. The Hawkeyes, who featured a potent offense led by Heisman Trophy candidate Chuck Long at quarterback, entered the game with a perfect 7-0 record and were installed as 1½-point favorites.

That made Ohio State underdogs at home for the first time in eight years, a fact not lost on the Buckeyes. Byars, still sidelined by his foot injury, delivered an emotional pregame speech that was punctuated by upsetting food trays, shattering a water glass against a wall and kicking over chairs.

"Keith usually plays it pretty cool," OSU fullback George Cooper said after the game. "But today, he absolutely lost his mind."

Another Horseshoe record crowd, this

one numbering 90,467, sat through a rainy afternoon to watch the Buckeyes explode from the locker room to grab an early 15-0 lead. But by late in the third quarter, Iowa had trimmed that margin to 15-7 and was rallying deep in Ohio State territory. But Spielman dropped Hawkeyes tailback Ronnie Harmon for no gain on a crucial fourth-and-1 at the Ohio State 10-yard line to end the threat.

Spielman came up with another big play late in the fourth quarter when he picked off Long near midfield to clinch the 22-13 victory for the Buckeyes and trigger a wild celebration that culminated with the sellout crowd swarming the field and tearing down both goalposts in celebration. Spielman finished the contest with 19 tackles and two interceptions, and after the game he admitted he had been incensed by the fact Iowa was favored to win the game.

When asked what motivated him most, the sophomore linebacker replied, "The motivational factor was that we were underdogs in Ohio Stadium. If somebody wants to fight me in my own back yard, he had better bring an army with him."

Messy Coaching Change

The second half of Ohio Stadium's seventh decade didn't hold as many thrills for Buckeye fans. In fact, just the opposite was true.

The 1986 season got under way with two road games, the first time that had ever happened in program history, and Ohio State dropped both contests – a narrow 16-10 decision to Alabama in the Kickoff Classic played at the Meadowlands in East Rutherford, N.J., and an embarrassing 40-7 beating at the hands of the University of Washington in Seattle.

It marked the first time since 1894 that the Buckeyes had lost their first two games of the season and ratcheted up criticism of Bruce. The team rallied to win its next nine games and grab a share of the Big Ten championship, but a 26-24 loss to Michigan before another record stadium crowd of 90,674 tempered any enthusiasm fans might have had.

The following year, the Buckeyes struggled for much of the season and suffered their first three-game losing streak since 1982. Then less than 48 hours after the third straight defeat, a 29-27 loss in the final seconds to a three-loss Iowa team in the Horseshoe on an unseasonably warm and sunny November afternoon in front of 90,090 stunned fans, Ohio State president Edward Jennings instructed athletic director Rick Bay to fire Bruce during the week leading up to the Michigan game.

Bay tendered his resignation in protest while Bruce's players gave the coach an emotional sendoff with a come-from-behind 23-20 victory in Ann Arbor after which a triumphant, fist-pumping Bruce was carried

from the field atop his players' shoulders.

The botched firing of Bruce during Michigan week capped an already dark year at Ohio State.

On March 12, 1987, longtime head coach Woody Hayes died in his sleep of an apparent heart attack at the age of 74. Ohio Stadium hosted one of two memorial services for the coach with more than 10,000 in attendance to hear eulogies from All-America quarterback Rex Kern, two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin, Michigan head coach Bo Schembechler, and Bruce.

Ohio State conducted a nationwide search for Bruce's successor before settling upon Arizona State head coach John Cooper, whose Sun Devils team had upset No. 4 Michigan in the 1987 Rose Bowl. A crowd of 89,768 turned out to watch the Tennessee-born Cooper lead the Buckeyes to a nearly flawless 26-9 victory against Syracuse in the 1988 season opener.

But the roof caved in just one week later with a 42-10 loss at Pittsburgh, and Ohio State stumbled to a 4-6-1 record, the program's first losing season in 22 years. Putting an exclamation mark on the season was a 34-31 loss to Michigan in front of 90,176 fans. It was a particularly heart-wrenching defeat due to the fact the Buckeyes couldn't protect a 31-27 lead with only 2:02 remaining in the game.

As Cooper struggled to get his program up and running, Ohio Stadium underwent several changes, both cultural and cosmetic.

The facility hosted its first-ever rock concert on May 28, 1988, when Pink Floyd entertained a crowd of nearly 64,000. Prior to the 1990 football season, natural grass returned as the stadium's playing surface when Prescription Athletic Turf was installed.

The following year, seating in the south stands was increased for the third time. An additional 5,700 seats allowed for a new record home total attendance of 654,500, including another new record crowd of 95,357 that attended an early November game against Iowa. Unfortunately, as happened too often during the early part of the Cooper era, Buckeyes fans went home disappointed after the Hawkeyes won a 16-9 decision.

Ohio State finished the 1991 season with a 7-4-1 record, giving Cooper a decidedly pedestrian 19-14-2 mark after three years as head coach. Perhaps even worse was the fact that despite several modest expansion projects at Ohio Stadium, the Buckeyes had slipped to fourth in national attendance average behind Michigan, Tennessee and Penn State.

That was an unfortunate trend that would continue into the next decade while the Buckeyes under Cooper strained to maintain their status as a member of the college football elite.



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Spartans Hand Down More Suspensions

Michigan State has handed down four more suspensions in the aftermath of its postgame altercation with Michigan in the tunnel of Michigan Stadium Oct. 29, which occurred following a 29-7 win by the Wolverines.

BIG TEN NOTES Andy Anders

Cornerbacks Malcolm Jones and Justin White and defensive ends Jacoby Windmon and Brandon Wright were all suspended on Nov. 1 following the initial suspensions of linebacker Itayvion "Tank" Brown, cornerback Khary Crump, safety Angelo Grose and defensive end Zion Young on Oct. 30. All received indefinite suspensions for their roles in the incident.

"We are transparently working with law enforcement and the Big Ten Conference to evaluate additional facts and evidence surrounding the events in Ann Arbor," Michigan State athletic director Alan Haller and head coach Mel Tucker said in a joint statement. "We will continue to take appropriate action in this matter as we learn more. The student-athlete suspensions will remain in place until the investigations are completed."

A video surfaced on Twitter following the contest of one of the multiple scuffles that broke out. In it, a group of Spartan players including Brown, Grose and Young, among several others, are shoving and throwing blows at Michigan defensive back Ja'Den McBurrows.

A second video appeared two days later on Nov. 1 which showed Crump swinging his helmet at Michigan defensive back Gemon Green.

"There needs to be accountability," Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh said. "There needs to be a full, thorough, timely investigation. I can't imagine this will not result in criminal charges. The videos are bad. It's clear what transpired. This is very open and shut. As they say, watch the tape."

The police investigation into the tunnel incident in Ann Arbor is still ongoing as of Nov. 6.

Spartans Upset Fighting Illini

Speaking of the Spartans, Michigan State threw a wrench into the Big Ten West Division race on Nov. 5, upsetting No. 14 Illinois by a 23-15 score.

Michigan State entered the contest with a mere 3-5 record before downing the Illini without the services of the eight suspended players. Illinois' record fell to 7-2 on the season with a 4-2 mark in conference play.

"I'm really proud of the way our guys played today," Tucker said. "Not just the way they played today, but the way they prepared throughout the week – just very, very focused, very confident, very intentional and deliberate about everything that we did this week in our preparation."

The Spartans raced out to a 23-7 lead

by the end of the third quarter, capped by a 16-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Payton Thorne to wide receiver Jayden Reed. Illinois answered seconds into the final quarter with a 7-yard touchdown on a jet sweep to wide receiver Isaiah Williams, his second of two touchdowns on the day.

A two-point conversion followed to cut the Spartans' lead to one score. A mostly fruitless fourth ensued from there with two turnovers on downs by the Illini, though Illinois embarked on one last long drive and progressed to the Spartans' 7-yard line with 11 seconds to play. Illinois wide receiver Brian Hightower got tackled in bounds following his catch on the next snap, though, and time expired for a Fighting Illini defeat.

After the results of Nov. 5, every team in the Big Ten West had at least two losses in conference play. Illinois still held the outright lead with its 4-2 record, as four other teams (Iowa, Purdue, Wisconsin and Minnesota) are tied behind the squad at 3-3, with Nebraska (3-6, 2-4) and Northwestern (1-8, 1-5) holding down the bottom of the division. The Fighting Illini host Purdue on Nov. 12 and still have to play at Michigan on Nov. 19 before closing the season at Northwestern on Nov. 26, leaving the divisional race wide open should they lose any of their remaining contests.

Rutgers, Schiano Give Michigan Their Best Shot

The Michigan Wolverines finished their Nov. 5 contest against Rutgers with a comfortable 52-17 win, not the mark of a game considered well-contested. Some might be surprised to learn that despite losing by a 35-point margin, the Scarlet Knights – who were hosting the Wolverines – were actually up 17-14 at the half.

After allowing a Michigan touchdown on the first possession of the game and a punt on Rutgers' ensuing drive, it appeared the Scarlet Knights, sitting with a 4-4 record entering the game, were already overmatched. But it was Rutgers' third unit of the game, the vaunted special teams, that turned the early tides.

After forcing a punt by the Wolverines midway through the first quarter, Rutgers defensive back Max Melton blocked the punt by Brad Robbins, which was picked up by defensive back Timmy Ward and returned 7 yards for a Scarlet Knight touchdown to tie the game.

It was at this point that Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano sensed the opportunity to seize the momentum. He opted for a surprise onside kick – maybe not a surprise anymore given Schiano's tendencies, but the Scarlet Knights at least didn't line up for one – but it was recovered by Michigan, and the Wolverines then drove 50 yards in six plays for a touchdown.

Rutgers didn't back down, though, kicking a field goal on the next possession and finishing the half with another touchdown to take the 17-14 lead. Unfortunately, those would be the last points of the game for the Scarlet Knights. They came out of the locker room with turnovers on three of their next five possessions, including a pick-six by the Wolverines.

"It's hard when you turn it over three times in a consecutive manner like that, because then all of a sudden you're looking up and the mountain's pretty steep," Schiano said. "I thought our guys really, really committed this week in practice. They knew what this challenge was. If we could get it to the fourth in the last six minutes, we thought we had a good opportunity to win the game. But we didn't do that."

Rutgers had just 57 yards and no points in the second half of the 52-17 loss as it fell to a 4-5 record on the season with a 1-5 mark in conference play.

Penn State Wins Women's Soccer Title

Penn State won the Big Ten women's soccer championship on Nov. 6, defeating Michigan State 3-2 at Lower.com Field in Columbus.

The match stood as a back-and-forth affair, with neither side ever gaining more than a goal of separation. Spartan midfielder Justina Gaynor punched a shot into the top-left corner of the Nittany Lions' goal at 4:43 in the first half to put Michigan State up 1-0. Penn State forward Kaitlin MacBean answered at 37:21 to knot things up 1-1.

That bled into a 2-1 lead for the Nittany Lions in the second half at 53:25 when forward Ally Schlegel scored a goal of her own. Michigan State's equalizer came at 74:37 from forward Lauren DeBeau, but Schlegel notched her second of the night and 13th of the season, a team high, to lock down a Penn State victory in the 82nd minute.

The Nittany Lions entered the conference tournament as the No. 6 seed while Michigan State was the No. 1 seed in the bracket and was undefeated in Big Ten play prior to Nov. 6.

With the conference championship victory, Penn State received an automatic bid to the NCAA Women's College Cup, a 64-team single-elimination tournament to decide the women's collegiate national championship. Thirty-three at-large bids are still available, and with a No. 6 national ranking as of Nov. 6, Michigan State was likely to make the field that was scheduled to be announced on Nov. 7.

U-M Takes Field Hockey Crown

In other conference championship news, the Michigan field hockey team completed its quest for a Big Ten championship

BIG 2022 Standings

East Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan	6	0	1.000	9	0	1.000
Ohio State	6	0	1.000	9	0	1.000
Penn State	4	2	0.667	7	2	0.778
Maryland	3	3	0.500	6	3	0.667
Michigan State	2	4	0.333	4	5	0.444
Rutgers	1	5	0.167	4	5	0.444
Indiana	1	5	0.167	3	6	0.333

West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Illinois	4	2	0.667	7	2	0.778
Minnesota	3	3	0.500	6	3	0.667
Iowa	3	3	0.500	5	4	0.556
Purdue	3	3	0.500	5	4	0.556
Wisconsin	3	3	0.500	5	4	0.556
Nebraska	2	4	0.333	3	6	0.333
Northwestern	1	5	0.167	1	8	0.111

Nov. 5 Games

Iowa 24, Purdue 3
Ohio State 21, at Northwestern 7
 Minnesota 20, Nebraska 13
 Wisconsin 23, Maryland 10
 Penn State 45, Indiana 14
 Michigan State 23, Illinois 15
 Michigan 52, Rutgers 17

Nov. 12 Games

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

with a 2-1 victory over Northwestern on Nov. 6.

Both the Wolverines' goals came off re-directs of saves that were initially made. Forward Kate McLaughlin knocked home the first score in the first quarter, sending it back home in the short side of the goal. After a scoreless second frame, midfielder Brynn Zorilla hit an acrobatic shot in the third quarter, knocking the ball out of the air and into the net to place the Wolverines ahead 2-0.

Northwestern midfielder Lauren Wadas put the Wildcats back within a goal with 5:05 remaining in the contest, but Michigan held on to topple the sport's defending national champion and take home the conference title.




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DT McDonald Joins Buckeyes' 2023 Class

Ohio State added its latest commitment on Oct. 31, earning a verbal pledge from Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett four-star defensive tackle Kayden McDonald (6-3, 310).

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

McDonald is the No. 294 overall prospect and No. 40 defensive lineman in 2023, and he chose Ohio State over Clemson – the perceived favorite for much of his recruitment – as well as Florida, Michigan and Oklahoma.

"Every school had a great academic and football school," he said after his commitment. "What separated Ohio State

(was coach Ryan) Day and Coach (Larry) Johnson. They were one of the first teams to believe in me, and they recruited me consistently. It's great academics and the opportunity to play early."

McDonald was offered by Ohio State in September 2021, and there hadn't been much news between McDonald and the Buckeyes until he came to Columbus for an official visit on Sept. 24 for Ohio State's win over Wisconsin. He took visits to Oklahoma on Oct. 15 and a final visit to Clemson on Oct. 22 before ultimately selecting the Buckeyes.

He told On3 Sports that one reason he chose Ohio State over Clemson – something he called a "50-50 decision" – was because of relationships, and that Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney had not been a consistent part of McDonald's recruitment.

"I really only started talking to Dabo about a month ago," McDonald said. "I've

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
Kayden McDonald	DT	6-3	310	★★★★	Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett
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 Sierrevel	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

never really had a conversation with him until recently."

He had 95 tackles – 62 for loss – with 20 sacks last season at North Gwinnett. Through eight games this year, McDonald had 46 tackles – 27 of which were for loss – and eight sacks. He also has a pass breakup and two recovered fumbles on the season.

"He possesses ideal size at 6-3, 300-pounds plus and possesses limited growth potential to add additional weight to frame," said 247Sports recruiting analyst Cooper Petagna. "He displays good athletic ability as an interior defensive lineman, showing the ability to play multiple positions on the defensive line."

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

Ohio State cornerback Jordan Hancock was a teammate of McDonald's at North Gwinnett and is excited to see what he'll bring to Ohio State.

"Kayden's a dog," Hancock said. "I grew up with Kayden, and we're kind of neighbors. We live in the same neighborhood. He's going to be a dog, be a team

player. He'd do anything for our team to win. So I'm happy for him to be a Buckeye with me and just have another friend from Georgia. You know, we want to get a pipeline from Georgia going. So I feel like that's coming in."

Hancock said he also played a part in recruiting McDonald to Ohio State.

"I was really on him hard, recruiting him because that's my boy," Hancock said. "So I really loved him for coming here. And I'll look out for him when he's here. I'm so thankful for that."

McDonald is the 21st commitment in Ohio State's class. The Buckeyes are still targeting several prospects in the class, including Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco five-star defensive end Matayo Uiagalelei (6-5, 265), Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep five-star defensive end Keon Keeley (6-6, 242) and Venice, Fla., five-star defensive end Damon Wilson (6-4, 230).

2023 DL Hall Has OSU In Top Five

Even though Ohio State continues to recruit the trio of five-star defensive ends in Keeley, Uiagalelei and Wilson, it doesn't mean the Buckeyes have stopped trying for other targets in 2023.

One of those targets is Jacksonville (Fla.) Westside four-star defensive lineman Jordan Hall (6-5, 300), who announced a top five of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, LSU and Ohio State on Nov. 4.

Hall is the No. 119 overall prospect

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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.

and No. 18 defensive lineman in the class, and he plans to take an official visit to Ohio State for the Buckeyes’ season finale against Michigan on Nov. 26.

“By far one of the most promising prospects to ever come out of Jacksonville Westside,” said 247Sports recruiting analyst Andrew Ivins. “He looks like a man amongst boys next to his teammates when down in a three- or four-point stance. He shoots his way into the backfield with a quick first step.

“He does a nice job of shifting his weight as he works east to west and has shown that he can squeeze his way through gaps to make a stop. He wins more times than not on Friday nights by simply overwhelming opposing blockers with his sheer mass and power.”

Hall is not expected to make a decision until at least the early signing period, which begins on Dec. 21, but Ohio State is not currently viewed as one of the favorites to land his services. Anything could change, though, if the Buckeyes can get him on campus for the first time, as well

as if Ohio State ramps up pressure depending on where Keeley, Uiagalelei and Wilson end up.

QB Hurley Reclassifies And Commits To LSU

A potential quarterback target in 2025 is off the board for Ohio State as Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy five-star quarterback Colin Hurley (6-0, 213) announced on Nov. 4 that he was not only committing to play for LSU and head coach Brian Kelly but was reclassifying from 2025 to 2024.

Hurley was offered this past summer after camping at Ohio State. He had an impressive outing, throwing alongside several quarterbacks in 2024 and beyond, including Chandler, Ariz., five-star Dylan Raiola (6-3, 220), who is committed to the Buckeyes.

Hurley was ranked the No. 24 overall prospect and No. 3 quarterback in 2025, and his composite rating of .9867 would slot him in as the No. 23 prospect and No. 4 quarterback in his new class.

“This wasn’t about what the other pro-

grams didn’t do, because they were all awesome,” Hurley told 247Sports. “I’m very grateful to all the other coaches who recruited me. I want to thank them, and I owe them all the respect in the world. This is really about what LSU did. They did everything right. I want LSU and Baton Rouge to know that I’m thrilled to be coming there and I fully expect to bring a national championship there.”

Though Hurley is off the board, Ohio State still has an important target remaining in Findlay, Ohio, quarterback Ryan Montgomery (6-3, 200), the younger brother of current Ohio State four-star offensive line commitment Luke Montgomery (6-5, 280). The younger Montgomery does not hold a star rating yet but is expected to be among the top quarterbacks in the 2025 class, already holding offers from Georgia, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Penn State and Tennessee, among others.

Montgomery has already made a visit to Ohio State and has also made trips to Georgia, Michigan State, Penn State and Tennessee.

2024 TE Smith Includes Buckeyes In Top Eight

Savannah (Ga.) Calvary Day School four-star tight end Michael Smith (6-4,

225) included Ohio State among his top eight schools on Oct. 31 along with Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Penn State, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

Smith is the No 152 overall prospect and No. 6 tight end in 2024 and also holds offers from Alabama, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Michigan State and Oklahoma, among others. He visited Ohio State for the Sept. 24 win over Wisconsin.

“The energy was alive,” Smith told 247Sports. “I liked the atmosphere. The energy was just off the charts. It was a blackout game, so I felt like everybody in the crowd was into it.”

He has dominated at the prep level, hauling in 42 catches for 684 yards and nine touchdowns in his sophomore season, and this year, he has 17 catches for 364 yards and eight touchdowns in eight games.

Smith is one of several tight ends offered by Ohio State in 2024, with Woodstock (Ill.) Marian Central Catholic four-star Christian Bentancur and Cleveland Glenville four-star Damarion Witten (6-4, 215) as other notable targets.

Ohio State Offers 2024 TE Reddell

Speaking of tight ends, Ohio State issued just one offer since BSB last went

Continued On Page 30

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1987

National high school recruiting expert Tom Lemming rated some of the best recruits in 1987 from outside the Midwest, and all had interest in attending Ohio State. One such prospect was Jason Messersmith, a 6-3, 210 quarterback from Anaheim-Servite in California.

“He is the son of former major-league pitcher Andy Messersmith,” Lemming wrote. “He has impressed people with his arm strength and accuracy. He stays in the pocket well and is not afraid to take a hit. He is a blue-chipper. He also pitches in baseball and has a 2.5 GPA.”

Messersmith was also considering Arizona State, Illinois, Penn State and USC.

30 Years Ago — 1992

Ohio State football was looking to become a family affair in its next season, at least for one central Ohio family.

Columbus Brookhaven senior defensive back/quarterback Anthony Gwinn said he was leaning toward joining his brother, Jayson, as a member of the Buckeyes for the 1993 season.

“I’m leaning toward Ohio State right now,” The 6-1, 180-pound Gwinn said. “I think their program is on the rise. There’s another reason, too. I think my mother would love it if I went to Ohio State. That way, she would have two sons who would be Buckeyes.”

Gwinn had been one of the keys to Brookhaven reaching the state playoffs the past two seasons and had thrown for 600 yards and seven touchdowns seven games into the 1992 season. But as good as he was at quarterback, he also enjoyed prowling the secondary, and he believed that was the position where he was at his best. Gwinn was also interested in Michigan State, Minnesota, Purdue and Wisconsin.

25 Years Ago — 1997

Quarterback/athlete Cie Grant (6-3, 190, 4.4) was turning some heads despite his No. 25 overall ranking in Ohio, according to The Ohio Football Recruiting News.

He had experience at quarterback and running back on offense and free safety and inside linebacker on defense. Most scouts said he could be a knockout free safety because of his speed and ability to close on the ball.

“This is my first year as a defensive back, so I’m just learning all the technique,” Grant said. “Where I’ve been playing, I don’t have much of a chance to get interceptions. I’m playing sometimes as a free safety and sometimes as a third linebacker. I’m just wherever I need to be to make the tackle.”

Grant made an unofficial visit to OSU for the Indiana game. His top schools were Indiana, Michigan, Michigan State, Ohio State and Pittsburgh.

20 Years Ago — 2002

During his two years as a starter on the offensive line, Ty Hall and the Redskins of Cincinnati Anderson High School hadn’t lost a regular-season game. In fact, they’d lost only once overall during that span, dropping a first-round playoff game in the 1991 season.

After splitting time at guard and tackle on the left side of the offensive line the previous season, Hall manned the left tackle spot exclusively in 1992, except for week one when he missed the opener recovering from a shoulder injury. He had partially torn his labrum and rotator cuff during the first week of two-a-days, and he was completely out of action for three weeks.

“I’ve played from the second week on,” Hall said. “I’m fine. I’m playing. It wasn’t too serious of an injury, but it could have been if I had kept going. I was supposed to take up to eight weeks off, but I had to get back.”

At 6-6, 280 pounds, Hall thought he was equally adept at playing either the power or finesse game, but he really delighted in the former. Hall found himself in competition for one of the few, precious offensive line scholarships that Ohio State would be doling out in February.

But he wasn’t going to wait on Ohio State forever. If Anderson advanced deep into the postseason, there wouldn’t be a whole lot of time for him to take his five official visits. Hall said he would like to make a decision by Christmas, with Boston College, Clemson, Michigan, Stanford and Tennessee also among his top schools.

15 Years Ago — 2007

Travis Howard did not take long to make up his mind.

The three-star cornerback prospect from Miami Dr. Michael M. Krop took an official visit to see the Buckeyes host Michigan State on Oct. 20 but did not go home with a coveted offer from Ohio State.

Less than a week later, with an offer then in hand, Howard became the 13th verbal member of OSU’s class of 2008 when he called linebackers coach Luke Fickell on Oct. 26 and offered his commitment.

“At first he was shocked, and then he asked me if I was serious and I said, ‘Yes,’” Howard said.

A 6-1, 170-pound prospect who had been timed at 4.6 seconds in the 50-yard dash, Howard recorded 50 tackles, 10 pass break-ups and two interceptions during his junior year. He also had offers from Auburn, Georgia Tech, North Carolina and Tennessee, among others.

10 Years Ago — 2012

If Ohio State’s depth issues at linebacker provided any indication of how Urban Meyer would approach recruiting the position moving forward, then it was probably a top priority for the Buckeye head coach.

So it was big news when Ohio State emerged as one of the programs positioned atop Hinesville (Ga.) Liberty County line-

backer Raekwon McMillan’s list, especially because he was one of the most sought-after linebackers in the 2014 class.

A four-star recruit ranked by Scout as the No. 2 junior MLB in the country, McMillan asserted himself as one of the top prospects in the country after a dominant sophomore season. The 6-2, 230-pounder posted 97 tackles (20 for a loss), forced five fumbles, recorded a sack and grabbed an interception.

“Ohio State and Clemson,” McMillan responded when asked who currently led in the run for his services. “Then Georgia, Alabama and USC.”

Five Years Ago — 2017

Tension had continued to mount in the saga that was Emory Jones’ pledge to Ohio State. The four-star dual-threat quarterback from Franklin (Ga.) Heard County had been committed to the Buckeyes since July 29, 2016.

Since then, Jones had said on multiple occasions that he remained steadfast in his verbal to OSU. While doing so, he had also kept an open line of communication with Alabama. In fact, he went on an official visit to Tuscaloosa on Oct. 21, 2017, before taking his official to Ohio State on Oct. 28 for the win over Penn State.

On Nov. 1, just days after Jones’ official visit, Ohio State extended an offer to four-star quarterback Jarren Williams, a Kentucky commit out of Lawrenceville (Ga.) Central Gwinnett.

Williams (6-2, 206) was rated by Scout the No. 263 overall player for 2018 and the No. 10 dual-threat quarterback. Jones (6-2½, 195) was the No. 88 overall player and the fourth-ranked player at the position.

“I saw Jarren Williams at a camp this summer, and he is a dual-threat guy,” Scout recruiting analyst Bill Greene said. “He’s good, he’s really good. I like Emory Jones better. But if you’re going to lose Emory Jones and you’re looking for a plan B guy, (Williams) would be a good one.”

One Year Ago — 2021

Offensive lineman Joshua Padilla of Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne issued a verbal commitment Nov. 4, 2021, to Ohio State and became the second member of the Buckeyes’ 2023 recruiting class. He joined four-star tight end Ty Lockwood of Thompson’s Station (Tenn.) Independence.

Padilla played guard and tackle for Wayne, but he profiled as a guard at the next level. The 6-4, 265-pound lineman had received an offer from Ohio State in March and said he first knew the Buckeyes were interested when OSU offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson retweeted one of Padilla’s wrestling highlights after he won his district championship in the 285-pound class.

According to 247Sports’ composite rankings, Padilla was ranked the 194th-best prospect in the 2023 cycle and the 10th-best interior offensive lineman. He also held offers from Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame and Penn State, among others.

Commits, Targets Continue Playoff Runs

Continued From Page 29

to press, with Peculiar (Mo.) Raymore four-star Jaden Reddell (6-5, 225), a 2024 prospect, receiving the honor.

Reddell is the No. 291 overall prospect and No. 16 tight end in the class, though he could also project as a wide receiver at the next level. He holds additional offers from Alabama, Auburn, Cincinnati, Michigan, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Oregon, Penn State and Tennessee, among others.

The Buckeyes offered Reddell on Oct. 30, and he told 247Sports that he was “extremely blessed” to receive the offer. Ohio State offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson has recruited Reddell and made the offer.

“I have been talking to (Wilson) for a while,” Reddell said. “I feel like we have a relationship right now, but I would still like to further our connection.”

Fresh off the offer, Reddell said he plans to attend Ohio State’s game against Indiana on Nov. 12. It will be his first visit to Ohio State.

OHSAA Playoffs Roll On For Commits, Targets

The season came to an end the week-end of Oct. 28 for half of the 448 high school football teams in the Ohio High

School Athletic Association football playoffs, with several teams boasting Ohio State commitments and targets – including Findlay and Dublin Coffman – falling to the competition.

The pool was further cut in half as the second-round games were played, but this time around, the teams with an Ohio State shine – either with committed prospects or those with an interest in the Buckeyes – fared much better. Here’s a look at some notable results from the second-round games, all of which were played on Nov. 4.

Division I, Region 2: No. 7 Fairmont (8-4) at No. 2 Springfield (9-1): The Wildcats walked to an easy victory in the second round of the playoffs, knocking off Fairmont by a 21-0 score and avenging an earlier 24-21 loss to the Firebirds in the regular season.

The defense was led by four-star cornerback Aaron Scott (6-1, 170), an Ohio State target in 2024, and three-star linebacker Jaivian Norman (5-10, 184), a 2023 prospect who is committed to Eastern Michigan. Norman led the team with 14 tackles, with 2½ for loss.

Springfield’s first score of the game came late in the first half when quarterback Bryce Schondelmyer connected with wide receiver Anthony Brown (5-10, 170), a three-star prospect in 2023 who is

OHSAA GAMES TO WATCH, ROUND THREE

No. 3 Centerville (10-2) vs. No. 2 Springfield (10-1)

No. 3 West Chester Lakota West (12-0) vs. No. 2 Cincinnati Elder (10-2)

No. 5 Sunbury Big Walnut (10-2) vs. No. 1 Massillon Washington (10-1)

No. 4 Kings Mills Kings (11-1) vs. No. 1 Cincinnati Winton Woods (12-0)

No. 4 Elyria Catholic (10-2) vs. No. 1 Cleveland Glenville (11-0)

committed to Kentucky.

“It was huge,” Schondelmyer told The Dayton Daily News. “They did a little drop in the middle of the field. The guy tried to rob it. I put it over the top, and (Brown) made a great play going up for it. It was perfect.”

Division I, Region 4: No. 6 Princeton (9-3) at No. 3 Lakota West (12-0): The undefeated season continued for Lakota West and four-star safety Malik Hartford (6-3, 175), an Ohio State commitment in 2023, knocking off Princeton 35-0 in the second round. The Firebirds used a 21-point first quarter to control the contest, leading to their second consecutive shutout win and fourth time blanking an opponent this season.

Division II, Region 7: No. 5 Big Walnut (10-2) at No. 4 Watkins Memorial (9-3): Big Walnut continued an impressive playoff run by upsetting Watkins Memorial by a score of 35-21.

Tied at 21 in the fourth quarter, the Golden Eagles saw running back Nate Severs – who finished with 151 yards and three touchdowns – get into the end zone with 5:16 remaining, and the defense forced a fumble and returned it for a touchdown on the next possession.

Big Walnut’s roster features four-star linebacker/safety Garrett Stover (6-2, 195), an Ohio State target in 2024 and the cousin of Ohio State tight end Cade Stover. The Buckeyes are viewed as the favorite to land the younger Stover.

ASK AN ANALYST

With Bill Greene of Buckeye Scoop

What is the impact of Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett four-star defensive tackle Kayden McDonald’s (6-3, 310) commitment to Ohio State? Does it change anything with the Buckeyes’ pursuits of several five-star defensive ends?

“First, I don’t really think there’s any connection there. He’s an inside guy all the way. I like him, but I don’t think it’s the type of thing that him committing either hurts with the other guys or helps. It could possibly help. Great players like to play with great players. They may look at Kayden McDonald as a guy that they would love to have that guy on their team. So I’m not sure there’s much of an impact there on how it affects Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco five-star defensive end Matayo Uiagalelei (6-5, 265) or Venice (Fla.) five-star defensive end Damon Wilson (6-4, 230) or Tampa (Fla.) Berkley Prep five-star defensive end Keon Keeley (6-6, 242).

“In terms of McDonald, I think he’s a pretty good player. The rankings on him are kind of all over the board from pretty much about as low a four-star as you can be and then some people have him at a mid-four star. I like him. I like the film.

“If I had to make a comparison, I would compare him to (OSU defensive tackle) Tyleik Williams. I think there’s a huge comparison there, in terms of that big run-stopper in the middle. I don’t know how much of an effect he’s going to have pass rushing, but he’s a big, wide body in the middle there. I think he needs to get in a little bit better shape, and that happens at Ohio State.”

The Buckeyes also added a recent commitment from New Palestine, Ind., four-star offensive lineman Ian Moore (6-5, 295). Who are the other priority targets for Ohio State on the offensive line in 2024?

“They’ve got a ton of guys that they’re interested in, from Dorchester (S.C.) Woodland four-star tackle Kam Pringle (6-7, 330), West Roxbury (Mass.) Catholic Memorial four-star tackle Guerby Lambert (6-6, 280), Washington (D.C.) St. John’s four-star interior Jordan Seaton (6-6, 295), Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star tackle Brandon Baker (6-5, 285), Waukesha (Wis.) Catholic Memorial four-star tackle Donovan Harbour (6-5, 310) –

there’s a lot of guys. It’s just so soon right now for that 2024 class.

“It’s good to get a guy like Ian Moore in early, get him locked up. It’s good for Justin Frye.

“The key for that kid is going to be is if he’s a tackle or not. I think opinions are pretty much divided on Ian Moore’s game, whether he’s an inside guy or a tackle. I think he’s a right tackle. They need tackles. If you look at the roster going forward, that is probably the potential question mark position down the line, so it’s good to get one locked up. About three more would be really good. And again, the key to this kid’s impact is ‘Can he play tackle?’ If he’s an inside guy, they’ve got a ton of those. So the hope has to be that he’s a tackle.”

Braintree (Mass.) Thayer Academy five-star offensive tackle Samson Okunlola (6-5, 305) continues to tease that he might take an official visit to Ohio State for the Michigan game. Do you think this visit ends up happening, and if so, what are Ohio State’s chances to land him?

“I really don’t at this point. He’s been talking about visiting Ohio State since last June or last April. It just never seems to happen, and you’re running out of time right now. So that would be one of those things – I’d have to see that visit, not just be scheduled, (but) I’d have to see it take place. I’d have to see that guy step off the plane or however you want to put it. I have no hope at all, right now. There’s no reason for any optimism that they’re going to get Samson Okunlola. If he shows up on campus, then we’ll have a different conversation at that point. But he’s to the point now where I’ll believe it when I see it.”

As for The Game, how is the visitor list shaping up so far? Any notable names you are aware of?

“When you’re three weeks out, I don’t really even look at a list yet. I’m going to look at that list about four or five days before, probably Monday or Tuesday of that week. Right now, it’s just such a mumble jumble. Guys, they all say they’re coming, some do and some don’t. Then, some who aren’t really in the plans right now, all of a sudden, you’ll see a guy pop up that he’s visiting and you’ll hear about it on Friday. It will be big for sure, especially big

for these 2024 kids.

“But I’m really looking to see, does Hoschton (Ga.) Mill Creek five-star safety Caleb Downs (6-0, 185) come? Does Samson Okunlola show up? Does Buford (Ga.) five-star running back Justice Haynes (5-11, 200) show up? There are names that have been floated, and those are really the names that I’m looking for, any 2023 guy that pops in there. At this point, you have to think it’s the last regular-season game, you’ve got to think it’s serious business at that point. The 2024s, I think that list will be amazing. But the 2023s are the ones – Okunlola would be at the top of that list along with Caleb Downs. Justice Haynes has been a name thrown out there, would love to see if he would show up. Chillicothe (Ohio) four-star tight end Tayvion Galloway (6-5, 230), who’s committed to LSU, (I’m) hearing rumblings that may be about him. Let’s see what happens there.

“There’ll be a ton of 2024s, maybe some 2025s, but in terms of finishing this class, those few 2023s are ones to really keep an eye on.”

The NCAA recently introduced a measure that would eliminate the cap of five official visits for recruits. How might this change how recruits conduct their business if they can take official visits to however many schools they please?

“I don’t think the coaches are going to like the extra visits. Maybe they will. I don’t know. Maybe the position coaches would really love it. I think (Ohio State general manager for player personnel) Mark Pantoni would probably pull all his hair out and be bald after the first year of this.

“It’s just more craziness. NIL is insane. If they go to unlimited official visits or even extend them by two or three, whatever, it’ll go hand-in-hand with NIL and create more madness and more confusion. For me, for what I do, for what we do for a living, it would be awesome. We’ll have something to write about every day of the week, that’s for sure. For somebody that kind of loves the chaos and the madness, I hope they approve all that stuff. I would love to see all of it.”

Division II, Region 8: No. 9 Hamilton Ross (6-6) at No. 1 Winton Woods (12-0): Winton Woods survived a scare from Ross, outlasting the Rams in a 34-21 second-round matchup.

The Warriors got the scoring started with a 40-yard touchdown from three-star running back Trey Cornist (5-11, 209), a 2023 prospect who has been connected with the Buckeyes after decommitting from Georgia Tech. After a touchdown by Ross, it appeared Winton Woods had scored again when four-star cornerback and Ohio State commit Jermaine Mathews (6-0, 175) returned a kickoff 97 yards for a touchdown, but the play was called back due to holding.

Winton Woods held just a 21-14 lead going into the half, and that score remained entering the fourth quarter, but Cornist added a pair of rushing touchdowns in the final frame to lead the Warriors to their 12th win of the season.

Division IV, Region 14: No. 8 Bellevue (7-5) at No. 1 Glenville (11-0): The Tarblooders continued their undefeated season as Glenville knocked off Bellevue 43-6 in the second round.

Quarterback Deonte Rucker finished 9 of 12 for 231 yards and three touchdowns as well as a pair of rushing scores. Tight end Witten finished with two receptions for 64 yards and one of Rucker's touchdown passes.

Bellevue's offense was able to move the ball, getting deep into Glenville territory on four occasions, but suffered interceptions on three of those drives. One of

those picks was courtesy of four-star cornerback Bryce West (5-11, 177), another Ohio State target in 2024.

The teams were tied 6-6 in the first quarter before the Tarblooders closed the game on a 37-0 run.

"When we stopped them on (defense), we hit them with a quick shot. You know you have to go deep," Glenville coach Ted Ginn Sr. told Cleveland.com. "But I didn't like the start of the game, and I didn't like the penalties. We shouldn't be 6-6 like that."

Other Notes And Tidbits

- While it won't have as many visitors as some other home games for Ohio State this season, a handful of visitors are still expected for the Buckeyes' Nov. 12 matchup against Indiana. The highlight is Smyrna, Tenn., four-star linebacker Arion Carter (6-1, 210) – a 2023 linebacker who is committed to Memphis – who is taking an official visit to Ohio State. The group will likely remain small ahead of a huge list of prospects expected to attend the season finale against Michigan on Nov. 26.

- Uiagalelei took a visit to South Bend, Ind., on Nov. 5 to watch Notre Dame host Clemson in a losing effort for the Tigers. Matayo's brother, DJ Uiagalelei, is the starting quarterback for the Tigers, but Clemson isn't believed to be a contender for Matayo.

- Though it was not much of a surprise, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star cornerback Desmond Ricks (6-1,

170) – a 2023 prospect who recently reclassified from 2024 – left Ohio State off his top three schools, instead including Alabama, Florida and LSU. Ricks also announced he will make a college decision on Dec. 23.

- As BSB went to press, Ohio State had the No. 5 recruiting class in 2023, according to 247Sports. The Buckeyes trailed No. 4 LSU – whose class could

receive a further boost after the Tigers knocked off Alabama on Nov. 5 – No. 3 Notre Dame, No. 2 Georgia and No. 1 Alabama.

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Transfer Holden Ready For Jump To Big Ten

Tanner Holden became a household name during the First Four of the 2021 NCAA Tournament, aiding the Wright State Raiders to a 93-82 victory over Bryant while producing 37

COURT
REPORT
Jack Emerson

points and 11 rebounds en route to the win. While Holden’s NCAA Tournament outing thrust him into the national spotlight, it was just another night for the Wheelersburg, Ohio, native, who posted averages of 20.1 points, 7.1 rebounds and 2.6 assists per game in his junior season with the Raiders. Although Holden showcased his scoring talent while with Wright State, he noted that his role now that he is with Ohio State will be much different. “I’m not going to score 20 a game,” Holden said. “I was happy to do it last year. That was a big accomplishment for me. Overall, I knew I wasn’t going to be able to just step into that role and just score 20 a game. Not a lot of people can do that. E.J. (Liddell) was able to score 19 a game last year, and he’s a great player. “We have a lot of great players here this year. We’re going to be able to spread the

wealth, and a lot of people are going to be able to have good games and show out this season.” Holden was a standout in football and basketball at Wheelersburg High School, earning All-Ohio honors in basketball as a senior while contending for the Mr. Football award, placing as a finalist. During his recruitment, Holden was approached by Thad Matta to play at Ohio State, but that notion was flipped on its head when Matta resigned as the Buckeyes’ head coach in 2017. Holden ultimately decided to play his collegiate career at Wright State.

While with the Raiders, Holden showcased his durability as he did not miss a single game in his three seasons with the program. Holden posted career averages of 16.1 points, 7.0 rebounds, 2.3 assists and 1.2 steals during his 92 games with Wright State. Holden noted that playing in the Horizon League helped him prepare to play against stiffer competition in the Big Ten. “I feel like I needed that next level of competition,” Holden said. “The Horizon League, Wright State, they helped me advance my game. It’s crazy how much I evolved from my freshman year to my junior year. That’s all credit to (Wright State head coach Scott Nagy), (assistant coach Clint Sargent) and all the players there for helping me out. “When I entered my name in the portal, there were a lot of things that went into it. I went back for a whole week and talked to my family about it. Overall, I just felt that this was the best decision for me, and being able to land at Ohio State was awesome.”

Holden has already made a strong first impression with the Ohio State fan base. He dropped a game-high 25 points while connecting on 10 of his 12 field-goal attempts during the Buckeyes’ 101-57 exhibition win over Chaminade on Nov. 1. While Holden came off the bench in the win, he noted that he’s willing to play whatever role is asked of him. “I’ll play wherever,” Holden said after the game. “(Head coach Chris) Holtmann is a great coach. He knows where to put people and knows what to do. I think we have a lot of top players that can make plays. My teammates were really setting me up very well.” Holden is one of 10 new faces on the Ohio State roster in 2022-23, but he feels that the team has built chemistry quickly and is looking forward to showcasing what they can do come November. “It will be a super exciting season,” Holden said. “We’re a really versatile group. We’re a really tight-knit group. I think that will carry over onto the court, as well as off of the court. I feel like it will be a really fun team. We’re going to play fast, and we’re going to do a lot of good things this year.”

Freshmen, Transfers Shine In Chaminade Exhibition

Ohio State cruised past Division II-level Chaminade 101-57 in their exhibition game at the Schottenstein Center on Nov. 1, while several new faces showcased their talent for the Ohio State faithful for the first time. Holden’s previously mentioned offensive outburst represented a changing of the guard of sorts for the Buckeyes, who saw a near-complete roster turnover during the off-season. This was the first time Holtmann’s new roster was on display for the Ohio State faithful, and the coach noted that he learned a decent amount about his team during the win.

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

“Obviously, this was a good opportunity for us to get in front of our fans,” Holtmann said. “(It was also) a chance to get some game conditioning that we desperately needed. It was good to do that against somebody else. I appreciate Chaminade doing that.

“There are a lot of good things to take from tonight and then some things that I was just disappointed in and we have to get better at.” Chaminade kept things interesting during the contest’s first 10 minutes, matching Ohio State’s 15 points while forging an advantage on the boards. However, the Buckeyes cruised from there, finishing the half on a 31-8 run. Holden sparked the run by scoring 19 of his 25 points in the frame while shooting a hot 7-of-9 from the field and drilling both of his three-point attempts during the half. The Buckeyes kept their foot on the gas in the second half, outscoring the Silverswords 55-34 in the frame and running away with the win.

Ohio State’s defense was the catalyst in the win. The Buckeyes held the Silverswords to just 27.6 percent shooting (21 of 76) from the field and 6-of-33 shooting (18.2 percent) from deep. Ohio State also forced Chaminade into several mistakes. The Silverswords tallied 15 turnovers, leading to 15 Buckeye points. However, the Buckeye offense wasn’t shabby either, drilling 55.4 percent of its shots (41 of 74) from the field and scoring 54 points in the paint.

Although the Buckeyes struggled in the rebounding department early against the Silverswords, Ohio State still staked out a 49-41 advantage on the glass. “I just don’t think we’re nearly where we need to be on that end,” Holtmann said about the team’s rebounding effort. “We have really stressed it.”

As Holden led Ohio State in scoring during his debut for the Scarlet and Gray, several other Buckeyes also took the Value City Arena floor for the first time during the exhibition in front of 7,884 fans.

Among the transfers, former Oklahoma State guard Isaac Likekele also stood out, as he hit 4 of 6 shots en route to 10 points. He added four rebounds and three assists, while primarily operating off-ball despite playing the point guard role in his four seasons with the Cowboys. West Virginia transfer shooting guard Sean McNeil was held scoreless in the first half but scored nine second-half points while shooting 60.0 percent from three (3 of 5) for the game. Ohio State connected on 12 of 23 attempts from beyond the arc.

Ohio State also saw five freshmen take the floor against the Silverswords. Guard Roddy Gayle Jr. led the pack with 14 points on 6-of-7 shooting. Point guard Bruce Thornton struggled with his shot, hitting just 1 of 7, but he facilitated the offense well by dishing out 11 assists. Center Felix Okpara established himself as a dangerous presence in the painted area, tallying three blocks to go with his four points and nine rebounds. Sharpshooting guard Bowen Hardman

also saw minutes late in the game, drilling four threes on six attempts from long range for 12 total points. Forward Brice Sensabaugh struggled to get into a rhythm, hitting three of his 11 shots en route to eight points. He did however pull down eight rebounds.

Both Thornton and Gayle praised the team’s veteran leadership for helping them get through the nerves of playing in their first college action. “We have great leaders,” Gayle said. “Whenever I felt nervous or unsure about something, the upperclassmen helped me out and got me through it. “After the first few minutes I was in, it just felt like second nature,” he added. “I kind of blocked out the fans, but it just kind of a felt like another practice. I just felt comfortable with doing what I was supposed to do.”

The Silverswords were led by guards Braden Olsen and Isaac Amaral-Artharee, who each scored 12 points. The Buckeyes were without a pair of their three returning contributors. Justice Sueing was unavailable due to an ankle sprain while Eugene Brown III was inactive as he processes through concussion protocol. According to an Ohio State press release, Sueing was held out as a precaution. Returning forward Zed Key had 15 points and five rebounds.

Former Buckeye Commit Forges Pact With Michigan

Dayton Chaminade Julianne four-star shooting guard George Washington III (6-2, 165), Ohio State’s first member in the 2023 class prior to his eventual decommitment in September, announced on Nov. 1 that he would play his collegiate career at Michigan. Washington initially committed to the Buckeyes on Nov. 3, 2021, kicking off Holtmann’s recruiting pursuits in the class. However, as Ohio State continued recruiting at Washington’s position – courting Minneapolis Totino-Grace four-star combo guard Taison Chatman (6-4, 170) and Los Angeles Sierra Canyon four-star combo guard Bronny James (6-3, 190) – Washington ultimately decided to look elsewhere.

After spirited pursuits from Wake Forest and Dayton, Washington ultimately landed on playing for Ohio State’s bitter rival, Michigan, and head coach Juwan Howard. Washington is the No. 75 overall player and No. 9 shooting guard in the class. His addition to Howard’s 2023 group vaulted Michigan to No. 33 in the 247Sports team rankings, as Washington will slot alongside South Kent, Conn., four-star center Papa Kante (6-10, 215).

The Buckeyes held the No. 5 class in the nation as BSB went to press, populated by Chatman, Wichita (Kan.) Sunrise Christian four-star small forward Scotty Middleton (6-6, 180), St. Marys (Ohio) Memorial three-star center Austin Parks (6-9, 240) and Pickerington (Ohio) Central four-star small forward Devin Royal (6-7, 210).

Eight Hit Double Digits In Exhibition Win

Ohio State's season wasn't scheduled to officially open until a Nov. 8 matchup with No. 5 Tennessee, but the 14th-ranked Buckeyes took the floor for an exhibition game on Oct. 31, knocking off the visiting Notre Dame College (from South Euclid, Ohio) in a 118-33 rout at the Schottenstein Center.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

The Buckeyes trotted out a starting lineup of guards Jacy Sheldon, Taylor Mikesell and Taylor Thierry – who was listed as a guard on Ohio State's box score – as well as forwards Rebeka Mikulášiková and Cottie McMahon, a true freshman. This lineup helped Ohio State pour it on early against the Falcons, taking a 31-9 lead after the first quarter and a 62-19 lead into the break.

"There's a lot of different lineups we could start for a lot of reasons," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "I think this year, it could be a season where (lineups) are based on matchups and so forth. But we have a lot of players that can play, so it gives us a lot of options."

One of the early standouts from the game was McMahon, whose athleticism and playmaking ability shone despite taking the floor for the first time in her career, even if it was an exhibition. She scored Ohio State's first three points of the game (a layup and a made free throw) and pulled down a pair of rebounds while dishing out an assist in the first frame.

In the second quarter, she fought for a defensive rebound and found Mikulášiková down the court, picking up an assist for facilitating the fastbreak score. Later, she forced a turnover by Falcons guard Peyton Wells and scored on the fast break. McMahon finished the game with nine points on 4-of-7 shooting with six assists and four rebounds in 20:20 of play, just a few seconds shy of guard Madison Greene (20:38) for the most minutes played in the exhibition.

"She's got a lot of talent, and the good news is I think she's really just scratching the surface of it, but she's working hard at it," McGuff said of McMahon. "She's already made a lot of progress, but she's still really got a long way to go to reach the great potential that she has."

The Buckeyes added 36 points in the third and 20 points in the fourth for the 118-33 final, holding Notre Dame College to just 20.7 percent shooting from the field. Other than Falcon guard Alana Ellis, who finished with 20 points on 7-of-24 shooting, no other Falcon finished with more than five points.

Ohio State was led in scoring by transfer guard Emma Shumate, who finished with 18 points on 7-of-10 shooting, including a 4-of-6 clip from deep. Given that Shumate did not take the floor at West Virginia before transferring to Ohio State – and returning closer to home as a native of Dresden, Ohio – it was the first time Shumate had played in an organized game since high school.

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

"I haven't played since my high school state tournament, so I was excited," she said. "I was excited to be out there playing. I felt pretty comfortable tonight, but we've got big ones coming up."

It was also a return to the court for Greene, who hadn't appeared in a game since the 2020-21 season. She finished with 12 points on 3-of-8 shooting and dished out five assists while picking up a pair of steals and going 5 of 6 from the foul line.

While it may have been understandable if Greene had looked hesitant in her return, she was anything but. Beyond leading the team in minutes, she was diving on the floor for loose balls and appeared to be fully healthy coming off a knee injury that knocked her out for all of last season.

"I thought she did really well," McGuff said. "She's doing great. She's coming along. We're better, obviously, with her. And she's a really, really good defender. She runs the offense very efficiently. So it's great to have her back out there. Every day she gets a little more comfortable, and you can see she's doing well."

Ohio State also got a first look at several newcomers. Forward Eboni Walker, a transfer from Syracuse, played nearly 20 minutes and finished with 10 points on perfect 5-of-5 shooting from the field, and she added a game-high nine rebounds, including three offensive boards.

Transfer forward Karla Vreš also got in the game, pulling down a pair of rebounds, and in addition to McMahon, the other two freshmen in guards Mya Perry and Kaia Henderson saw the floor. In total, all 14 scholarship players got in against Notre Dame College, and eight of them finished with double-digit scoring.

"I think the biggest thing was trying to continue to look at different rotations and how people were playing with each other," McGuff said. "We got to play a lot of different lineups, and that was the biggest thing we wanted to try and do."

Recruiting Update As 2023 Class Winds Down

The early signing period for the 2023 recruiting class began on Nov. 9 and will last through Nov. 16, signaling that the current cycle is coming to an end, though recruits do have a second opportunity to sign during the regular signing period from April 12 through May 17 of next year.

Ohio State currently has two commitments in 2023 in Snellville (Ga.) Brookwood four-star point guard Diana Collins (5-9) and Buchanan, Mich., center Faith Carson (6-4). Collins committed to the Buckeyes in September, while Carson made her pledge back in February. The Buckeyes also remain in the hunt for several other prospects who have yet to commit – either to Ohio State or to another school – as BSB went to press.

Ohio State has offers out to a trio of centers in London (Ontario, Can.) Southwest Academy's Jada Bediako (6-3), Jacksonville (Fla.) Sandalwood's Jada Jones (6-4) and Atlantic City, N.J., four-star Quanirah Cherry-Montague (6-4).

Bediako was offered by Ohio State in June and listed the Buckeyes as one of her top two schools on Oct. 30 along with Georgia Tech. She averaged 7.6 points and 5.2 rebounds per game for Team Canada in the FIBA U16 Americas Women's Championships in 2021. Jones was offered by the Buckeyes in 2020 and averaged 13.3 points, 8.1 rebounds and 3.0 blocks per game last season for Sandalwood.

Cherry-Montague, meanwhile, is the No. 48 overall prospect in the class, according to ESPN. She was offered by the Buckeyes in April and visited Ohio Stadium for the Ohio State football team's win over Toledo on Sept. 17. The Buckeyes are one of her top schools along with Mississippi State, Penn State and UCLA, where she either has taken or plans to take visits, according to The Press of Atlantic City. She averaged 13.8 points, 11.1 rebounds and 3.8 blocks in her junior season.

Ohio State also continues to recruit Hadsonfield (N.J.) Paul IV five-star point guard Hannah Hidalgo (5-7), who is the No. 5 prospect in the class, according to ESPN. Hidalgo announced a top six of Duke, Michigan, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Stanford and UCF on Aug. 1 and is reportedly set to announce her decision in November. She visited the Buckeyes last December and has taken visits this fall to Duke, Notre Dame and Stanford.

She's averaged 21.5 points, 4.7 rebounds, 3.8 assists and 5.4 steals per game in her first three seasons in high school, and she also played for Team USA in the U17 FIBA World Cup in Debrecen, Hungary, over the summer, averaging 7.7 points, 2.1 rebounds, 2.9 assists and 2.6 steals in seven games as the United States took the gold.

While Ohio State signed three players out of high school in last year's cycle, it's unclear how many the Buckeyes can take in this class. Ohio State's current roster is one short of the 15-person scholarship limit, but

Ohio St. 118, ND Coll. 33 (Exh.)

Oct. 31, 2022
Value City Arena, Columbus, Ohio

	1	2	3	4	F
Notre Dame College	9	10	8	6	33
Ohio State	31	31	36	20	118

ND College	Total		FT	Reb.			
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Carlson	21	1-6	0-0	2-0	0	2	2
Adachi	28	1-8	0-0	0-0	1	1	3
Ali-Shakir	24	2-4	0-2	1-3	1	1	5
Weathers	17	1-5	0-0	0-2	1	4	2
McDaniel	16	0-2	0-0	1-3	1	0	0
Ellis	20	7-24	2-4	0-3	0	3	20
Martcheva	10	0-2	0-0	1-1	0	2	0
Anker	6	0-1	0-0	0-1	1	0	0
Wells	21	0-1	0-0	0-4	0	0	0
Jackson	14	0-4	1-2	0-2	0	0	1
Hamilton	8	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Kulhman	5	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Montagner	6	0-1	0-0	1-1	0	0	0
Hullinger	6	0-0	0-0	0-2	0	0	0
Totals	200	12-58	3-8	7-23	6	13	33

Percentages: FG: 20.7%. FT: 37.5%. **Three-point field goals:** 6-23 (Ellis 4-11, Ali-Shakir 1-2, Apache 1-5, Weather 0-2, Anker 0-1, Jackson 0-1, Wells 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. Blocked shots: 2 (Ellis, Weathers). **Turnovers:** 26 (Ali-Shakir 6, Ellis 5, McDaniel 3, Carlson 2, Jackson 2, Martcheva 2, Weathers 2, Wells 2, Anker, Hamilton). **Steals:** 2 (Adachi, Carlson).

Ohio State	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Mikulasikova	15	3-5	5-5	2-6	1	0	11
McMahon	20	4-7	1-4	0-4	6	0	9
Thierry	16	2-3	1-1	1-1	4	4	5
Sheldon	16	8-10	0-0	2-2	2	0	16
Mikesell	18	3-12	0-0	0-2	1	0	10
Greene	21	3-8	5-6	1-1	5	1	12
Walker	20	5-5	0-0	3-6	2	1	10
Harris	19	5-10	1-1	0-6	3	0	13
Shumate	20	7-10	0-0	3-2	0	3	18
Bristow	18	4-8	4-4	0-3	5	1	12
Vres	6	0-0	0-0	1-1	1	1	0
Costner	6	0-2	0-0	0-3	1	1	0
Perry	4	0-1	0-0	2-0	0	0	0
Henderson	3	1-2	0-0	0-1	0	0	2
Totals	200	46-83	17-21	46-42	31	12	118

Percentages: FG: 55.4%. FT: 81.0%. **Three-point field goals:** 9-30 (Shumate 4-6, Harris 2-6, Mikesell 2-8, Greene 1-3, Bristow 0-1, Sheldon 0-2, Henderson 0-1, McMahon 0-1, Perry 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 5. **Blocked shots:** 7 (Bristow 2, Thierry 2, Harris, Shumate, Walker). **Turnovers:** 6 (Bristow, Costner, Mikulasikova, Sheldon, Thierry, Walker). **Steals:** 14 (Thierry 4, Greene 2, Sheldon 2, Bristow, Harris, McMahon, Mikesell, Mikulasikova, Walker). **Officials:** Harris, Hallead, Gatling. **Attendance:** 2,300.

the Buckeyes will have just one guaranteed departure after this season with Mikesell, who will have exhausted her eligibility.

Sheldon could test the waters of the WNBA following this season, but she – as well as the other four seniors on the roster besides Mikesell – all have another year of eligibility remaining. In short, a class of more than two players would require at least one more departure – either Sheldon to the WNBA or a potential transfer out of the program – beyond Mikesell.

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Former Buckeye Stars Find Their Way Back To City

While Ohio State plays its home games on campus in Value City Arena at The Schottenstein Center, several former Buckeye standouts have recently made appearances at nearby Nationwide Arena, home

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

of the NHL's Columbus Blue Jackets.

Vancouver forward Dakota Joshua was the most recent when he played there for his new team on Oct. 18. Dakota signed a two-year contract with the Canucks on July 13 after playing 42 games with the St. Louis Blues over the previous two seasons.

"It felt like a good fit with the Canucks," he told BSB. "It's a good opportunity here to slide in and establish myself as a regular NHL player. I'm in the midst of trying to do that."

He was part of a group that helped the Buckeyes to three consecutive NCAA tournament appearances (2016-19), including the 2018 Frozen Four and a Big Ten regular-season title in the 2018-19 season. Joshua had 100 points (41 goals, 59 assists) in 128 games for the Buckeyes from 2015-19.

Forward Mason Jobst was a teammate those four seasons and completed his eligibility as one of the most decorated players in team history, joining Hugo Boisvert (1998 and '99) as the only two-time All-Americans. Jobst was named to the second team in 2017 and 2019. In 150 career games, he had 164 points (69 goals, 95 assists) to rank 13th in points all-time for the Buckeyes.

He signed with the New York Islanders out of college but has not made it to the NHL and is playing for the Buffalo Sabres' top farm club in Rochester, N.Y., of the American Hockey League. Jobst traveled with the Sabres to Nationwide Arena for the preseason game vs. the Blue Jackets on Sept. 28 but did not play. He hasn't given up on his goal of making his NHL debut.

"The dream's still there," he said. "If there's an opportunity, I have to be ready for it."

Tanner Laczynski might be the next ex-Buckeye to play in Columbus. He was teammates with Joshua and Jobst his first two seasons and finished his four-year career in 2020 when the Buckeyes would

have made the NCAA tournament for a program-record fourth straight season, but the start of the COVID-19 pandemic ended the campaign prematurely.

He finished 22nd in career points with 143 (48 goals, 95 assists) in 138 games but has been plagued by injuries after turning pro with the Philadelphia Flyers, the team that drafted him in 2016. Over the past 18 months, he underwent surgeries to each hip and an operation for a core muscle, but as of Nov. 4 he was on the Flyers' roster.

He picked up his first two NHL assists while playing seven games this season. He's played 13 games for the Flyers since his debut on April 3, 2021, but has not scored. The Flyers are scheduled to be in Columbus on Nov. 10 and 15.

Carson Meyer was Laczynski's OSU teammate from 2018-20 and has been in the Blue Jackets' system since. The forward played his first NHL game on April 4 and has a goal and two assists for three points in 13 games. He was one of the last cuts in the preseason and is with Cleveland in the AHL. Meyer had 55 points (27 goals, 28 assists) in 73 games at Ohio State.

A one-time Buckeye who could show up in Nationwide Arena in the near future is forward Georgii Merkulov, who as a freshman last season led the team with 20 goals in 36 games. He parlayed that into a three-year contract with the Boston Bruins and is playing for the Providence Bruins of the AHL.

Learning to play defense to augment his offensive talents will be the key to him making the big club.

"We're just real proud of how he's really bought in, and it shows in practice and now it's translating to his game," Providence coach Ryan Mougenel told AHL.com. "We know he's going to get points. He's got a great ability to see plays and make plays, but the stuff away from the puck is going to give him sustainability in the NHL."

In his first nine games for Providence this season, Merkulov had nine points (four goals, five assists). Unless he's traded, Merkulov will have to wait until next season to play in Columbus because the Bruins' lone game at Nationwide Arena this season was Oct. 28. The Blue Jackets play in Boston on Dec. 17 and March 30, 2023.

Tough Love

The path to the NHL is challenging for most players, and Joshua had many obsta-

cles, some self-inflicted. He has the size (6-3, 206) to play a physical game and do the grunt work third- and fourth-line players need to do, but he hasn't always played to his ability.

He was taken in the fifth round of the 2014 NHL draft by the Toronto Maple Leafs, but his rights were traded to St. Louis in July 2019 after his Ohio State career ended. Joshua was benched or suspended several times by Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik along the way.

"Those were tough times early," Joshua said. "It wasn't easy sledding at the start. So using that experience, that once I got into the pros and realized that you've got to go about your business or else they'll find someone else to do it, college as a whole was just a great life learning lesson for that."

Rohlik always saw the potential in Joshua.

"Nothing's been easy for Dakota, but like I've told him, you've got to work through those tough times," the coach said. "And for him to stick with it and get a degree here is most impressive to me. The skill set and hockey stuff has always been there. It's a matter of him being consistent and going out there and doing it."

"He's playing pro hockey. He's finding his niche, and he can do that for a long time. He's just got to continue to go through the good and the bad and stay that even keel."

Joshua has fond memories from his Ohio State days.

"I was really lucky to have a good group for my four years there," he said. "Looking back on it now, in the moment I didn't realize how good we actually were, which is a tough part of life. We had great Ohio State hockey teams for sure that will go down in the history books."

"I will stay in touch with a lot of the guys for the rest of our lives, and you wouldn't want it any other way from college. But it's nice to see everybody growing up and finding their own path in life."

Baby Buckeye

Laczynski missed two games recently, but unlike in the past when it was for injuries, he had a much happier reason.

His wife, Madison, whom he met while at Ohio State, gave birth to their first child on Oct. 29. The boy, Leo, was 8 pounds, 2 ounces. Flyers coach John Tortorella said there was no question that Laczynski should be away from the team for a few days.

"Let's remember what we're doing," Tortorella said. "We're entertainers. It's a sport. There was no way he was coming back here. Everybody's thrilled for him, thrilled for his wife. I know it was a long night for her. That stuff's more important than anything – your family."

Laczynski was appreciative of Tortorella, the former Blue Jackets coach.

"He was great about it," Laczynski said. "He said, 'Be with your family, that's most important.'"

"There's so much stuff in the league, you're always so busy that you don't usually get that time. It was nice to have two or three days off to be there for my wife and our beautiful boy."

Next

The Buckeyes had an open weekend Nov. 4 and 5. They return to the ice at Michigan State on Nov. 10 and 11. The next home games are Nov. 18 and 19 vs. Notre Dame.

Take A Bow

Senior forward Kamil Sadlocha is the Varsity Club Icer of the Month for October. He scored a team-high five goals in 10 games and added three assists. Sadlocha scored three times in the two-game sweep of Bentley, including two goals and two assists in the Oct. 20 game vs. the Falcons.

For a recap of all Ohio State games go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

VARSITY CLUB ICER OF THE MONTH For October



Kamil Sadlocha
Senior Forward
Carpentersville, Ill.

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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

2022 FOOTBALL

Sept. 3 NOTRE DAME, W 21-10; **10** ARKANSAS STATE, W 45-12; **17** TOLEDO, W, 77-21.; **24** WISCONSIN, W 52-21.

Oct. 1 RUTGERS, W 49-10; **8** at Michigan State, W 49-20; **22** IOWA, W 54-10; **29** at Penn State, W 44-31.

Nov. 5 at Northwestern, W 21-7 **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 (11-8, 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, Maryland, L 5-2.

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., 1/13

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 (10-1-1, 9-1-1)

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 at St. Thomas, W 4-0; **6** at St. Thomas, W 6-0 **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 (10-2-5, 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.;

Nov. 4 Big Ten Tournament, Michigan State, W 1-0; **9** Big Ten Tournament at Rutgers.

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 (17-5, 13-1)

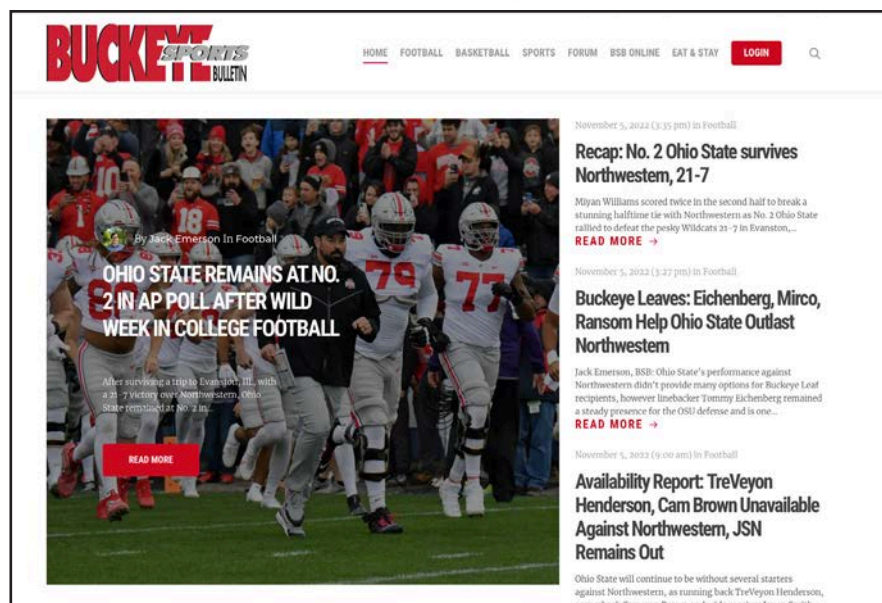
Aug. 26 TEXAS, L 3-0; **27** L 3-1.

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, W 3-0; **5** Michigan State, W 3-0; **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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Bucks Showed Toughness But Still Work To Do

Regardless of the weather conditions, Ohio State entered its contest with Northwestern intent on improving a ground game that had sputtered the last two weeks. The Buckeyes averaged 2.2 yards against Iowa and 3.8 against Penn State, with both games showing less than 100 rushing yards total.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

The numbers were improved against a Wildcats defense designed to stop the ground game as Ohio State averaged 5.9 yards per carry and had 207 rushing yards. Miyan Williams had 111 of them, but the surprising figure was quarterback C.J. Stroud, who added 79 rushing yards after coming in with minus-4 for the season.

"It's all about winning," head coach Ryan Day said. "That's always been the focus. Really, for half the game you could not throw the ball in this type of weather. But even when the wind was at our back, it was hard to do anything in the pass game. It was not for a lack of trying. If we could have run the ball a little bit better, maybe we could have got some momentum going."

While the numbers are somewhat encouraging, there are a couple that could still be a source of worry. Ohio State was faced with third-and-2 or less on four separate occasions and converted only once. The offensive line did a poor job holding blocks and allowed Northwestern to knife into the backfield and corral Williams before he could get up a head of steam.

Day brought in Justin Frye from UCLA to instill consistency and toughness into the offensive line, but the jury is out on whether that's happening. It's still too

common to see an OSU lineman on the ground, whiffing at a defender who has already gone past and stopped a play for no gain. And the receivers have been terribly inconsistent with their blocking, too.

"No excuse," Day said. "We need to be better, but (Northwestern) did a good job, especially early."

Ohio State was without TreVeyon Henderson, who didn't make the trip after aggravating a prior foot injury late in the win over Penn State. With Northwestern selling out to stop Williams, Day added a new wrinkle.

"They had two extra guys down (in the box defensively)," he said. "That's the way they are built. We tried to throw the ball at times. Finally, we equated some numbers and got C.J. involved with the run game and found a way to win the game in a very difficult situation."

Stroud broke off a 44-yard run to the Northwestern 5-yard line in the fourth quarter, which set up Ohio State's final touchdown.

"We had to find another way to win," Stroud said. "I'm like that every game, where I tell Coach run me if he wants to, or if he doesn't (want to), it's up to him."

The fact that OSU struggled in less-than-ideal weather conditions for the second time in its last 10 regular-season games has led some to question whether Day's program is all finesse and no toughness.

While I am not ready to pile on yet, it does seem to really throw the Buckeyes off if there are any kind of conditions not conducive to throwing the football. Why Day doesn't lean on the ground game more, especially when he has a great one-two punch in Henderson and Williams, is beyond me.

The defense has certainly taken to its makeover, adopting the personality of coordinator Jim Knowles. It's an aggressive bunch, generally good at tackling with the ability to step up and make a big play when needed. It's amazing just how big a difference there is between this year's group and last year's undisciplined, out of position, deer in headlights crew. The fact it's largely the same players makes it even more stunning.

But the offense? I don't know.

It's hard to find fault with an offense that has been, for the last couple of seasons, among the toughest in college football to defend. But that may be more a by-product of talent than anything else. The Buckeyes have more and better players than just about anyone, which can sometimes mask scheme deficiencies.

Look at Alabama. It's running the same stuff it ran when it won the national title in 2020. Problem is, there is no Devonta Smith or Jameson Williams on the roster. So plays that were talent-reliant instead of scheme-sound are now not working. The Tide also have their own problems on the offensive line, but theirs is more protection-based. Quarterback Bryce Young seems to be running for his life on every play. That's not usually the case with Stroud.

No, Ohio State's problems up front ap-

pear to be mental. Attitude. Toughness.

The disaster that was the Buckeyes' four-tackle offensive line last year seemed to play into that, and even though this year there is a more standard two-tackle/two-guard lineup, the softness may have lingered. Tackles are the finesse position, the guys with quick feet holding pass rushers at bay while the quarterback drops back to do his thing.

But guards and centers are the maulers, the tough guys, the ones on the inside taking on mammoth defensive tackles and close-to-the-box linebackers. That's where you pick up the hard yards, inside. And right now Ohio State is lacking in that area.

If it isn't fixed by the time the Maize and Blue come to town, the outcome will be written before the game even kicks off.

A New Wrinkle?

Fans have been screaming for Day to employ more quarterback runs this year, and it finally happened against Northwestern.

The Buckeyes offense was at its best with a dual-threat quarterback because it made the defense account for that guy as a possible ground threat. Ohio State was easier to defend schematically when the quarterback wasn't in play as a runner as in 2018 with Dwayne Haskins and 2021 with Stroud. It taxes a defense when a mobile quarterback is the opponent because they are just as likely to take off and pick up quality yardage as they are to sling it downfield.

The funny thing is that Stroud's first collegiate touchdown was a nifty 48-yard run against Michigan State in 2020. So fans have seen him do it. It may not be his forte, as he makes his living with uncanny accuracy and a high football IQ. But he can do it.

He just was not asked to. Until Northwestern.

I will give Day credit for changing things up and calling some designed quarterback runs. Stroud's 16-yard scamper and 6-yard play extender before Emeka Egbuka's jet sweep touchdown were unexpected, and his 44-yard foray into Northwestern's red zone that set up the backbreaking score was a thing of beauty.

Here's the question – was it all just a one-day, adapting-to-conditions thing? Or is it something that opposing defenses will now have to pay attention to?

"We know how important it is to keep C.J. healthy, and he's not going to take shots unless we need him to," Day said. "We needed him to (run) today and he did it. You can see he's capable when we need him to do it for us."

The sudden specter of the quarterback run allowed the Buckeyes to finally wear down the pesky Wildcats and made defenders just hesitant enough for Williams to do his thing inside. While Stroud said that he still thrives on the passing game, he isn't against tucking the ball and running with it.

"It felt good to get a couple of runs in today," he said. "Hopefully Coach Day calls some more. Everybody in the world

will be happier with me."

These Things Work Themselves Out

There are a few things you can depend on with certainty – death, taxes, and fans complaining about the initial College Football Playoff rankings. Like clockwork, certain fan bases were out on social media decrying the committee, saying "that team stinks" and "why are you slandering this team?"

Even though the rankings unveiled in December are the only ones that matter, there was much discussion and debate about where teams were slotted and which ones "have a path" to the playoff.

I'm here to drop a little secret, folks: This will all play itself out.

As we saw the weekend of Nov. 5, Alabama said bye-bye with a second loss. Illinois, peripheral contenders but contenders just the same, suffered a second loss. Sayonara, Bret Bielema. There are now two fewer contenders. Even Clemson, expected to go unbeaten, lost to Notre Dame and is on life support.

The thing that's said every year again holds true – win all of your games and you're in. Unless you're a Group of Five team, then you have to win all of your games and hope that at least one of them is a Power Five squad.

Here is my latest Dandy Dozen, and as a public service, provided with the two remaining toughest opponents for each team. That will make it easier to track who has a tough road and who has an easy one leading up to the final College Football Playoff ranking.

1. Georgia (9-0) – at Mississippi State, SEC title game
2. Ohio State (9-0) – at Maryland, Michigan
3. Michigan (9-0) – Illinois, at Ohio State
4. TCU (9-0) – at Texas, at Baylor
5. Tennessee (8-1) – Missouri, at South Carolina
6. Oregon (8-1) – Washington, Utah
7. LSU (7-2) – at Arkansas, at Texas A&M
8. USC (8-1) – at UCLA, Notre Dame
9. Clemson (8-1) – Louisville, ACC title game
10. Ole Miss (8-1) – Alabama, Mississippi State
11. Alabama (7-2) – at Ole Miss, Auburn
12. UCLA (8-1) – USC, at Cal

There is still quite a bit of football to be played, but we know mostly what teams are, and there won't be a ton of surprises at this point in the season. Either you're good enough or you aren't.

For Ohio State and its fan base, it's easy – win out and you're in. Hell, even if you lose to Michigan, there's still a possibility of getting in if there is chaos in other leagues. Just enjoy the roller coaster until it comes to a complete stop, which will be roughly 3:30 pm on Nov. 26.

Until then, keep hands and feet inside the car, and keep your safety belt fastened at all times.



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Debatable “Weather” Run Game Is Back In Stride

First let me get something off my chest.

Did Ryan Day mention the weather enough times in his postgame press conference? Coach, you are from New Hampshire. Haven't you ever seen bad weather before? This is the Big Ten in November. Believe me. It can be a lot worse. Have you ever heard of the Snow Bowl?

And here is the most important thing about bad weather. Both teams play in it. While you were shivering and fretting about it, your team was being outplayed and out-coached by Northwestern.

There. I feel better now.

I'm actually a big Ryan Day guy. I think Ohio State is blessed to have a coach of not only his offensive acumen and recruiting ability but of his demeanor and ability to deal with his players, the press and public.

Those of you who read this column on a regular basis know that about the only complaint I have had with him during his time at the helm is his tendency to keep his starting quarterback in the game too long. Which is ironic because I thought the game with Northwestern was one where Kyle McCord might see extended action and get some experience in case the unspeakable happened (and it's unspeakable so I am not going to mention it, but you know what it is). I even wondered if Day might do something Urban Meyer was known to do – put his backup QB in for a series or two in the first half when the game was still being contested and the second-stringer could do more than just turn and hand the ball to a backup running back.

Of course, putting McCord in at any point in the Northwestern game never proved to be an option.

Now before I get into one of the rare instances when I am critical of Day and his offensive staff that took the No. 2 scoring offense (48.9) and No. 6 total offense (509.2) into the game, let me make it perfectly clear that I am not an expert on football. But I speak to a lot of experts on football, and I speak to a lot of average fans, as well. What was on everyone's mind after the Iowa and Penn State games? Ohio State's running game.

Against the Hawkeyes and Nittany Lions the Buckeyes picked up only a combined 164 yards for just a 2.9-yard average. Take away TreVeyon Henderson's 41-yard burst against PSU – which I know you can't – and you are down to a 2.2-yard average.

Ohio State has what seems like 412 people on its football staff. Surely one of them pointed out to Day that Northwestern ranked 111th in the country in rushing defense. And with the weather forecast known well in advance (the weather people got it right for once), this seemed like a logical game to work on the rushing attack and get it back to where it was before the off week, when it was averaging 228.0 yards a game and 6.0 yards per carry.

In fact, the Buckeyes ran Miyan Williams on the very first play of the game and he gained 6 yards, but the play was called back for holding. Day went to wide receiver Emeka Egbuka for a 6-yard run and then C.J. Stroud threw a pair of incompletions to force a punt.

After that the Buckeyes didn't seem committed to just lining up and pounding Williams, wearing the Northwestern defense down, and after Williams failed to convert on third- and fourth-down attempts to close the first quarter, they abandoned him and, with the wind at their backs, went to the passing game to no avail.

The first drive of the second quarter was all passes, and the Buckeyes ran four plays for 15 yards. On the possession after that, it was all passing again with four plays for

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

5 yards after a delay of game penalty was marked off, with the Buckeyes all the while trailing 7-0.

Oddly, it was Stroud, known (rightfully or not) for his lack of desire to run with the ball, who finally got the ground game untracked with a nifty 16-yard run on a fourth-and-1 late in the second quarter to the Wildcat 21. Stroud carried again for 6 more yards, and the Buckeyes went nontraditional a different way, giving the ball to Egbuka for the 15-yard touchdown.

Day explained that the problem was that the Wildcats were stacking the box and the way to beat that was with the pass, which wasn't working, or to involve Stroud in the running game to even the numbers. I just wonder why it took so long to figure out the pass wasn't going to work. Stroud was 3 of 8 passing in each of the first and second quarters for a whopping 46 yards.

He did, however, lead the Buckeye rushing attack in the first half with three carries for 29 yards, and Egbuka added 21 yards on two carries. Williams struggled to 11 carries for 22 yards.

Williams was much stronger in the second half, with 15 carries for 89 yards with a 27-yard touchdown run, while Stroud continued his rushing ways with three carries for another 50 yards, including a 44-yarder to set up Ohio State's final touchdown – a Williams 2-yard run.

Fifty years from now fans will see that Williams carried for 111 yards on 26 carries and the Buckeyes gained 207 yards on the ground and think it was a pretty good effort for a game played in November Chicago-area weather. And it was.

All I'm asking is whether things might have played out differently if Ohio State had committed to the run right out of the gate and stuck with it, with the help of Stroud or not, rather than trying to force the pass in weather that Day reminded us repeatedly was inclement. Ultimately Ohio State and its big offensive line were going to wear down the overmatched Wildcats. The coach admitted as much himself

“We talked about it at one point, but we felt like Miyan was running well. There were a lot of guys down in the box, and we felt like with more and more at-bats, he'd start to break them there the more opportunities he had.”

So why not give those opportunities to him and let the running game start to build back to where it was and where it needs to be?

“We're going to look at it and realize that we could have moved guys, even if there are two extra guys in the box,” Day said. “We've still got to convert in those situations.”

And more importantly I am asking whether the Buckeyes have solved their problem with the run. By showing Stroud and Egbuka, the Buckeyes have certainly given future opponents – and we know who that means – more to think about.

But I have always believed that an effective running game is built on rhythm and chemistry. And to get that, you have to have continuity.

In fact, I'll go so far as to say that the week off killed the rhythm and chemistry that the offensive line and the running backs had built up over the course of the first six games. Don't forget, it was only a couple of weeks ago that we were raving about the big guys up

front and the balance they were helping bring to the Ohio State offense.

If the weather is better on Nov. 12, Indiana might be an opponent to help get the run game back in sync and, after the Northwestern game, the passing game too.

Tight End Watch

Cade Stover was as caught up in Ohio State's sputtering passing game as the wide receivers, being targeted four times and catching just two for 12 yards, the second-highest production on the team behind Marvin Harrison Jr.'s 51 yards.

As mentioned, it became obvious that the high-flying passing attack – to the tight end or otherwise – was not going to work in that kind of weather, and the game got more down and dirty.

That leaves me to point to tight end Mitch Rossi. Is that guy having a great season or what? By my calculation he had the key block on Egbuka's touchdown run in the second quarter and on Williams' second TD to round out the scoring. I know Rossi doesn't always play out of the actual tight end spot anymore, but he has been as consistent a contributor as anyone, and I'm crediting any of his production to the tight ends room.

Big Defensive Performances

The old linebacker, Pat Fitzgerald, tried to limit J.T. Tuimoloau's impact on the Ohio State-Northwestern game after Tuimoloau's dominant performance against Penn State the previous week. JTT was credited with four tackles, including one for loss along with a pass breakup vs. the Wildcats, but he did not have an impact on the game the way he had the week before.

He was definitely the toast of the town after he carried the Buckeyes on his back in the win over the Nittany Lions. He recorded six tackles, had two sacks, forced a fumble, recovered a fumble, broke up a pass and had two interceptions, including one he returned for a touchdown. We tend to get caught up in the moment, and people were telling me it was the greatest defensive performance they had ever seen, a performance that might never be equaled. That covers a lot of ground. There have been a lot of great performances in the past and there will be in the future, hopefully including ones from Tuimoloau.

But I didn't have to think back too far to recall another dominant defensive performance. We had just chronicled it on our electronic Reprint Thursday at BuckeyeSports.com. We have been looking back 10 years to Urban Meyer's first year at Ohio State, and we reprinted stories covering OSU's 35-23 victory at Penn State on Oct. 27, 2012.

Linebacker Ryan Shazier, who changed his number from 10 to 48 that game to honor a high school friend and teammate who had recently passed away, led Ohio State with seven tackles, a pair of sacks, a forced fumble and an interception he returned for a touchdown to help run the Buckeyes' record to 9-0, 5-0 in the conference. Penn State fell to 5-3, 3-1. Sound familiar?

Another Ohio State performance that came to mind was that of Chris Spielman when Ohio State upset No. 1 Iowa in the rain in Ohio Stadium, 22-13, in 1985.

Spielman had 19 tackles, including one for loss, two interceptions and a pass breakup and generally wreaked havoc on the

Hawkeyes and star quarterback Chuck Long.

That win remains one of my all-time favorite Buckeye games.

My Favorite Game

I was editing Mark Rea's latest installment of his look back at 100 years of Ohio Stadium history, and he was recalling Ohio State's thrilling come-from-behind victory over Illinois in 1984, a game in which Keith Byars (my all-time favorite Buckeye) turned in a record-setting performance. I'm not going to go into detail about the game, in which the Buckeyes had been down 24-0 but rallied for a 45-38 win in Ohio Stadium, because Mark does a good job of that in the story on pages 24-26. I will say that while the '85 Iowa game was up there for me, the win over the Illini is absolutely my all-time favorite.

In reading Mark's recap, I actually got goose bumps, especially when he told of Byars telling the national TV audience, “We're comin' back!”

I must say that I had forgotten that the game turned on an onside kick, which – when it works – can be one of the most exciting plays in football, though it usually fails and is ho-hum.

Reading about that game got me to wondering why my favorite games tend to be from decades ago, such as the wins over Illinois and Iowa. I came up with a theory.

I was not born a Buckeye fan.

Growing up in Washington, D.C., I was a Redskins fan following the likes of Sonny Jurgensen and Bobby Mitchell, rather than Rex Kern or Jack Tatum. College football wasn't really on my radar.

I came to Columbus to go to school in 1976. It's very hard to live in Columbus and not be aware of the Buckeyes, but the first game that I actually recall seeing – on TV, mind you – was the infamous 1978 Gator Bowl. By 1979 I was working for the old Buckeye Leaves, and by 1981 I was at Buckeye Sports Bulletin. Since that time I have seen more than 500 Buckeye games, missing a game for John Plank's bachelor party and another for my niece Helen's wedding.

What I realize is that when I was watching those games against Illinois and Iowa, they were a big part of a very small set of Buckeye games that I had actually experienced, making them stand out even more than a game might normally. By the time I got to the 2002 national championship game or the 2006 Michigan game or the 2014 win over Alabama in the CFP playoffs – all favorites of mine – these were just a few games in a large catalog of big wins and disappointing losses that I have ultimately accumulated. Thus, they seemingly have had less impact on me. I have better recollection of game details and Buckeye players from 30 and 40 years ago than I seem to have from the 21st century.

Does that make any sense?

Speaking of the Redskins, do any of you recall that Vince Lombardi was their coach in 1969? The Redskins were 7-5-2 that season, finishing second behind the rival Dallas Cowboys in the NFL Capitol Division (sounds like Leaders and Legends). Other divisions were the Century, Coastal and Central. The AFL, with traditional East and West Divisions, was still a separate league at the time, though a merger had already been agreed upon and Pete Rozelle was commissioner of both leagues.

I remember a reporter asking Jurgensen why he always referred to Lombardi as “Mr.” Lombardi.

“I thought Mr. was his first name,” the Hall of Fame quarterback replied.

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