

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 42, No. 20

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

April 15, 2023

Setting The Standard

*Deepest Tourney
Run Since '93 Puts
OSU On New Path*

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

The common belief is that basketball, from the minutiae of an individual game to the success of a team over the span of several years, is a game of runs. It can be anything from a scoring burst in a game to a collection of NCAA tournament appearances over multiple seasons that help define a program.

But for all the positives that come with those streaks, whether it be in the short or long term, they all have to come to an end at some point. That's a belief shared by one of the most storied coaches in the history of women's basketball.

"The problem with streaks is the longer they go, you're closer to it ending than you are to the beginning of it. And it's just a matter of time," UConn head coach Geno Auriemma said after his team's loss to Ohio State in the Sweet 16. "It's not when will it happen. It's just a matter of time when it's going to happen. And it was going to happen sooner rather than later."

While the streak Auriemma spoke of was



SONNY BROCKWAY

BACK TO THE TOP — The Ohio State women's basketball team recently completed one of the most successful seasons in program history, making the team's fourth appearance all-time in the Elite Eight, and the Buckeyes are hoping to build on that moving forward.

in reference to his team's run of 16 consecutive appearances in the Elite Eight ending, as well as the Huskies' 30-year run without losing back-to-back games previously ending in the regular season, there was another 30-year streak that was snapped when the Buckeyes upset the Huskies on March 25 in the

Sweet 16.

The win advanced Ohio State to the Elite Eight for the first time since the 1992-93 season, which was the freshman campaign of Katie Smith, in which the Buckeyes advanced all the way to the national championship game before suffering an 84-82 loss

to Texas Tech (more on page 30). This past season marked just the fourth appearance in the Elite Eight in program history for the Buckeyes, along with the 1984-85 and 1986-87 seasons.

Continued On Page 8

Haskins' Influence Still Felt Among Buckeyes

By **JACK EMERSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

On May 17, 2008, Dwayne Haskins — then just 11 years old — called his shot.

Sporting an oversized Ohio State jersey, which bore the No. 7 and his last name etched across the back, along with a headband — later becoming his staple look

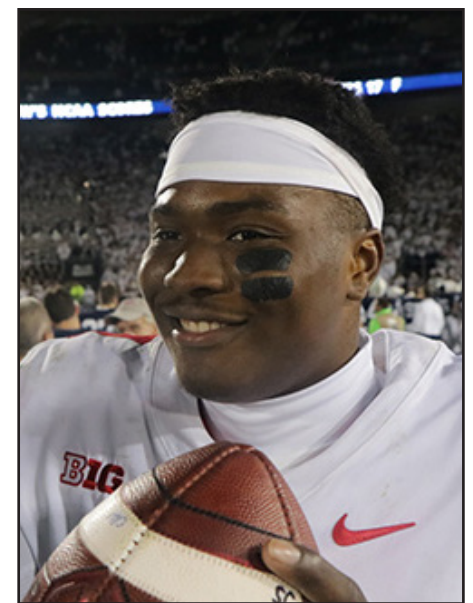
while at Ohio State — Haskins toured the Woody Hayes Athletic Center as a member of a youth camp and was in awe of what he saw.

"This is awesome," the young Haskins said. "I'm going to college here."

At the time, it appeared that it was just a young kid expounding on lofty dreams that might fade as the years passed, but Haskins made that declaration a reality. On Feb. 3, 2016, he signed his national letter of intent to become a Buckeye, and over three seasons in Columbus — including one season as a starter — he made a lasting impact on the Ohio State fan base.

In his lone season as the starting quarterback, Haskins shattered several program and Big Ten records, throwing for 4,831 yards and 50 touchdowns, producing one of the most prolific seasons by a quarterback in college football history.

"He was 11 years old, walking through this facility and said, 'This is what I'm going to do' and then did it," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day, who served as Haskins' offensive coordinator in his lone season as the starter. "I think that's the legacy he's going to leave behind to so many other younger people across the country, not just in Buckeye Nation. It's that you can set a dream and goal and go achieve, and he did it, and really broke a



FILE PHOTO

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN — Former Ohio State quarterback Dwayne Haskins, who passed away on April 9, 2022, at the age of 24, left fond memories for those who knew him on and off the field.

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From The Message Board

As several intriguing developments came out of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center over the past month with Ohio State going through spring camp, we asked readers what stood out to them during the practice period. Here are some of the responses:

"The possibility that the DL might be better than expected."
– Terrier Buck

"Definitely curious about OL but not in a bad way. More intrigued if they will add someone later or not."
– Tiffin Buckeye

"I'd like to be 'taking away' who the starting quarterback will be but don't seem to be getting much intel on that. I can't wait to see the spring game so I can try and evaluate the situation myself."
– Mcarr

"Big concern for the offensive line. Big concern, still, for the secondary. Lack of separation between the QBs (got to think that favors Devin Brown the longer it goes). Not being able to find a spot for Sonny Styles when he might be one of the most talented players on D."
– Otis Johnson

"Not much has jumped out to me yet because the information coming out of Fort WHAC is so limited. Why all the secrecy? The best I can come up with is the secondary may not be better, but it will be deeper. Still waiting to get a sense of the quarterback situation, though if I had to bet now that sports betting is legal in Ohio, I would put my money on Kyle McCord. How about a quarterback, offensive line parlay bet."
– Poster That Harley Built

"I'm thinking the team has a long way to go in some departments, especially for the OL. But that is fairly normal for this early in the year. However, I find myself wishing Ryan Day gave McCord more playing time on the field last year."
– PeyoteBuck

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Quarterback Carousel

In the March 18 issue, a letter to the editor suggests that Ohio State coaches have not done a good job of selecting quarterbacks since 2011.

In 2011, Joe Bauserman played at first because they thought Braxton Miller was not ready as a freshman. In 2014, Cardale Jones led the team to one of the most improbable championships of all time as a third-string QB. In 2015, Urban Meyer starts with Cardale Jones, although J.T. Barrett was always the better player (my opinion) and Meyer did so because he encouraged Cardale Jones to not go pro after winning the national championship (again, my opinion).

In 2015, Jones often started games and Barrett finished them. In 2017, J.T. Barrett was probably a better choice than either Dwayne Haskins or Joe Burrow. In 2018, Haskins was chosen over Burrow, and Haskins had a much better season than Burrow did in that year at LSU. Much better! In 2019 and 2021, the coaches may have decided who the quarterback was going to be before it was publicly announced.

Steven Brown
Port Charlotte, Fla.

St. John Memories

I read with great interest the articles about St. John Arena. I saw many high school tournament games at the old venue, including Clark Kellogg trying to keep his team in but unable to do it on his own. I also saw Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary lose because they horsed around the first half and got themselves in too big a hole to get out of. I saw many OSU games and some great opponents. My son got Woody's autograph at one of the games. Also saw an OSU gymnastics meet with great seating. Saw many pregame band shows.

But the best was at a high school game and it was raining

very hard and there was a leak in the old roof. A beautiful blonde was sitting next to a seat that the roof was leaking on, and guy after guy tried sitting there with the young lady just laughing them off.

We tried going to Value City Arena but the seats were so far from the action unlike at St. John, so we stopped going except to the OSU women's games, where seating is great.

Bob Shroyer
Galion, Ohio

Another New Season

The 2023 Ohio State football season commenced the day new recruited players signed their letters of choice to become another "freshman class" wanting to become Buckeye football players. The coaching staff makes plans for spring practice and replacing key players who either graduated or are preparing for the NFL. All being considered makes for predictions by Buckeye fans and reporters and a coaching staff facing new challenges, and another football season that will hopefully end with a delightful ending.

This type of competition and positive motivation is all we should base our new season on, success makes for more success that satisfies all concerned, especially the next 2023 football season and its possibilities.

Nelson Bell
Toledo

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No. 6	Oct. 22	No. 18	March 18
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No. 8	Nov. 5	No. 20	April 15
No. 9	Nov. 12	No. 21	May
No. 10	Nov. 19	No. 22	June
No. 11	Nov. 26	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 3	No. 24	August

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OSU Passing Game Has Evolved Over Years

When the Ohio State football team wrapped spring practice in 1978, no one could have known it marked the beginning of the end for one era and the end of the beginning for another.

Forty-five years ago, after a spirited but tightly controlled scrimmage to finish the spring, the Buckeyes began to channel their focus toward the regular-season opener against Penn State.

Although the Nittany Lions were still 15 years away from membership in the Big Ten and the game was more than 4½ months away, there was quite a bit of buzz surrounding the third matchup in four years between two of college football's coaching icons. Joe Paterno was set to begin his 12th season as head coach of the Nittany Lions and had already collected six top-five national finishes while Woody Hayes was about to embark upon his 28th year in Columbus with a team that was working on a Big Ten-record streak of six consecutive championships.

The two men weren't exactly strangers. Paterno had been Rip Engle's top assistant at Penn State when the Nittany Lions scored victories against Hayes-led Ohio State teams in 1956, 1963 and 1964. But Hayes had exacted his revenge with wins against Paterno and Penn State in 1975 and '76. Hayes had also been triumphant on the recruiting trail against Paterno, getting 1978's top quarterback prospect Art Schlichter to sign with the Buckeyes over Penn State and Michigan.

Under today's rules, Schlichter would likely have signed with OSU during the December early period, graduated from high school early, and then joined the Buckeyes for spring practice. But 45 years ago, Schlichter was leading his Miami Trace High School to its first (and still only) trip to the state basketball championship game while dabbling in the high jump for the school's track team.

It would have been interesting to chart a springtime battle between Schlichter and returning two-year starter Rod Gerald, who had already been selected by his teammates to serve as co-captain with center Tim Vogler, linebacker Tom Cousineau and defensive tackle Byron Cato. Perhaps had the young freshman QB had those extra practice sessions to ingratiate himself with his new teammates, his transition to starter over a respected and well-liked senior would have been smoother.

As it was, Hayes was emphatic at the end of spring ball when he told reporters, "Rarely has Ohio State had a quarterback with such impressive credentials as Art Schlichter, (but) Rod Gerald will start for a third straight year."

When Schlichter emerged as the starter against Penn State in the season opener, with Gerald lined up at a wide receiver position, Hayes merely grinned. "I told you Rod would start," he said. "I just didn't say at what position."

Much of what happened in the world 45 years ago has slipped from memory, but most Ohio State football fans have a vivid memory of what occurred all those years ago. Hayes' plan to modernize the Ohio State offense, spearheaded by Schlichter and mostly devised by quarterbacks coach George Chaump, backfired spectacularly.

Schlichter set a program record (that still stands) by pitching 21 interceptions during his freshman year. The first five came in a season-opening loss to Penn State (still an OSU single-game record) and the final one came during the Gator Bowl after which Hayes slugged Clemson middle guard Charlie Bauman and was subsequently fired the following day.

Earle Bruce was hired as Hayes's successor, and Schlichter went on to rewrite the Ohio State record books in terms of passing.

But while Schlichter finished his career with 7,547 yards through the air, a program mark that would last more than three decades, the Buckeyes never really fully committed to a state-of-the-art passing attack until Urban Meyer arrived on campus in 2012.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Even then, the OSU passing game didn't take off into the stratosphere until Meyer brought in Ryan Day in 2017 to be his quarterbacks coach.

Before Day's arrival in Columbus, Schlichter had the distinction of being the first Ohio State quarterback since World War II taken in the first round of an NFL draft. But when C.J. Stroud hears his name called April 27 in Kansas City, he will follow Dwayne Haskins and Justin Fields to become the third Ohio State quarterback in a row to be selected in the first round.

Here's to the evolution of the Ohio State passing attack over the past 45 years while wondering what it might look like during the 2068 season under the guidance of head coach R.J. Day.

What To Watch For

There are several things to watch for when Ohio State stages its annual spring game in the Horseshoe on April 15. Is Kyle McCord really that much ahead of Devin Brown in the starting quarterback race? Which of the young receivers is going to step up behind Marvin Harrison Jr. and Emeka Egbuka? Can the defense take the next step under the guidance of coordinator Jim Knowles and become a reliable lockdown unit?

As to that last question, here's hoping Knowles can find a reliable pass-rushing force from his stable of defensive linemen. I'm not asking him to unveil another Joey Bosa, Nick Bosa or Chase Young because those were transformational players, and the Buckeyes were beyond fortunate to have them over a seven-season stretch beginning in 2013.

I would settle for someone who merely approached that kind of greatness. In the three seasons since Young set the OSU single-season record with 16½ sacks, no one has recorded more than 5½. That was Haskell Garrett in 2021.

Last year, Mike Hall Jr. and Jack Sawyer tied for the team lead with 4½ sacks each. That was good enough only to rank tied for 13th in the Big Ten. Perhaps concentrating solely on a defensive end position will help Sawyer double his total from last year.

Meanwhile, I'll be paying close attention to the defensive backfield, a unit that I thought underperformed last year. I don't see how anyone could argue otherwise when in 2022 the Buckeyes surrendered 41 pass plays of 20 yards or more. Thirteen of those went for 40 yards or more.

In particular, I will be watching the spring game and looking to see if Ohio State defensive backs are looking to see. To put it another way, I'd like to see an OSU defensive back locate the football while in coverage and perhaps make a play on the ball.

Last season they were giving up a preponderance of big plays – not to mention yielding 1,219 of its 2,606 passing yards after the catch – and of the defense's 11 interceptions, only five of those INTs came from defensive backs.

Of the 19 defensive backs listed on Ohio State's spring roster – 10 safeties, seven cor-

nerbacks and two generic defensive backs – Syracuse transfer safety Ja'Had Carter has five career interceptions. That equals the total number of career picks for the rest of the entire current OSU secondary.

Now in his second year in charge of the defensive backfield, Tim Walton has to look at those numbers and shake his head. After all, during his four seasons with the Buckeyes back in the early 1990s, Walton grabbed 10 interceptions all by himself.

Remembering Brock

Boyhood memories came flooding back upon the March 31 passing of former Ohio State running back John Brockington. As I have written many times over the years, I was 10 years old during the 1968 national championship season, and that served as the touchstone to when I became a lifelong Buckeye football fan.

Over the years, I have been fortunate to interview and sometimes get to know several members from that 1968 team, including Brockington, who graced me on many occasions with his memories about time spent at Ohio State.

Although he is remembered as being one of the Super Sophs who helped lead the Buckeyes to the national championship in 1968, Brockington was hampered by a sprained ankle that season that sidelined him for two games and parts of three others. Still, he was so talented that several members of Hayes' coaching staff lobbied for Brockington to supplant starter Jim Otis at fullback in 1969.

Otis was coming off a season during which he had earned second-team All-America honors after rushing for 985 yards, more than any Buckeye in any single season in program history. He had been especially effective against archrival Michigan, rushing for 143 yards and tying an OSU single-game record by scoring four touchdowns during a 50-14 rout of the Wolverines.

Behind Otis on the depth chart in 1969 was Brockington, who had recovered from his ankle injury and was terrorizing defensive teammates in practice.

"In those days, our No. 1 offense practiced against the No. 2 defense, and the backup offense went against the No. 1 defense," former OSU quarterback Rex Kern told me. "I'm walking through the locker room one day, and I saw Jack Tatum sitting there, shaking his head. I went over and said, 'What's the matter, Tate?' He said, 'Brockington. That dude ...,' and then just shook his head. You know if Jack Tatum didn't want any part of you, you had to be something. And, man, Brock was something."

Just before the 1969 season began, there was such a groundswell of support among members of Hayes' offensive staff for Brockington to start at fullback that the head coach got tired of the bellyaching and agreed to put it to a vote. Brockington won in a landslide over Otis, after which the Ohio State assistants realized once again they were not living in a democracy.

"Well," Hayes disgustedly said in response to the vote, "you're all wrong."

Otis started all 10 games for the Buckeyes in 1969 and became the first player in program history to eclipse the 1,000-yard mark in rushing in a single season. The following year, with Otis having exhausted his eligibility, Brockington became the starting fullback and broke Otis' single-season rushing record with 1,142 yards. He also scored 17 touchdowns to equal the program record Otis had set during the 1968 season.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Full Spring Game Coverage In Next Issue

Ohio State's annual spring game is scheduled for a noon kickoff from Ohio Stadium on April 15, which is the same day for which this issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin is dated.

We'll have full coverage of the spring game in our next issue, scheduled to be mailed April 25, but for the latest on all of Ohio State's spring game results and storylines, stay tuned to BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers.

Defense Dominates, Tate Shines On Student Appreciation Day

As is tradition during Ohio State's spring camp, head coach Ryan Day opened the doors of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center to the Ohio State student body on April 1, allowing fans to get an early glimpse of the Buckeyes as they progress through the spring.

The students were able to assess several key storylines as the battle for the starting quarterback job, as well as several other positions, raged on. With the WHAC packed with students, family, recruits and media, Day said he was thankful for the turnout as Ohio State completed its eighth practice of spring camp.

"It was a great day," Day said. "There were a lot of great recruits and families here. It was good to see the families of the players here, as well. It was great to see the students out here."

"It's good for recruits to just see players live and in color. During the games, they're up in the stands and a little bit further away, and now they get to see how it goes."

While much of the offseason attention has been rightfully placed on the quarterback battle between Kyle McCord and Devin Brown, it was the defense that stole the show on Student Appreciation Day.

Starting up front, the defensive line made life difficult for both McCord and Brown. Defensive ends Jack Sawyer, J.T. Tuimoloau and Kenyatta Jackson were regulars in the backfield throughout practice. Tyleik Williams also registered a sack during the 11-on-11 session, while Ty Hamilton forced a strip-sack on Brown.

The secondary was also solid throughout the scrimmage, forcing several coverage sacks during the 7-on-7 and 11-on-11 scrimmages. Cornerback Davison Igbinosun was once again a standout, registering several pass breakups while continuing to battle for the starting cornerback spot opposite of Denzel Burke. Igbinosun also tallied an interception of McCord during the 7-on-7 scrimmage.

While the defensive front got the better of the offensive line in passing situations, the offense got them right back on running plays. During the 11-on-11 scrimmages, the offense's first touchdown drive came on a possession in which only run plays were called, with Dallan Hayden and Chip Trayanum benefiting from a solid push from the offensive line. Despite finding some success in the running game, Day said he felt the day belonged to the defense.

"I think we're playing hard and guys are working at it," Day said. "Overall, I thought the defense brought it today. I thought they played really well. They pretty much dominated today's winner or loser (scenarios). I thought it was a really good job by the defense today, and in particular the defensive line."

While the defensive unit staked its claim on the day, wide receiver Carnell Tate excelled on the offensive side of the ball. The true freshman brought in several difficult catches, including a pair of receptions along the sideline, while showing tremendous body control when tracking down passes.

Day noted he was impressed with how Tate has carried himself since arriving on campus as an early enrollee, and his performance on Student Appreciation Day was



SONNY BROCKWAY

DOMINANT DEFENSE — Ohio State's defense, led by the likes of defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau, has often got the best of the team's offense during spring practice.

another feather in the cap for the Chicago native.

"There's a lot to be impressed with when it comes to Carnell," Day said. "The first thing is just his maturity since he's been here, right from the jump. We do meetings, where we have everybody in the building and we go through each guy, and the feedback we're getting from academics, nutrition, strength and conditioning, position coaches and player development, everyone has such great things to say about Carnell off the field."

"It translates to on the field, as well. On the field, he's making a lot of plays. He's had to pick up a lot of the offense. For a young player, he has a pretty mature route tree. He does a good job at the line of scrimmage, catches the ball strong, and makes plays, all really encouraging signs."

In regard to the quarterback competition, Day made it clear that neither McCord or Brown has been able to separate themselves at this point in camp and that he's looking for one of them to "really step out." However, he also recognized that the battle is still in its

early stages with five months separating the Buckeyes from their season opener at Indiana on Sept. 2.

"It's a day-to-day process," Day said. "They're growing and learning. There are good days and there are not-so-good days, and the whole thing is, 'Can you learn from failures?' When you do well, it's great, but we're all going to fail. That's the thing. When you look at the elite quarterbacks, whether it's in the NFL or college, they learn from their mistakes quickly. They don't make the same mistake twice."

"These guys are making mistakes, just like any quarterback would. How quickly can they learn from those mistakes and grow? It's very hard to tell sometimes in a practice like this, and they're also not live, but it's all about decision-making."

Several Buckeyes Sustain Injuries In Spring Practice

Ohio State is dealing with several injuries that have been sustained over the course of spring practice, with some causing tempo-

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2023 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2022 Record, Bowl Result
Sept. 2	at Indiana	TBA	TBA	4-8, not eligible
Sept. 9	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	TBA	TBA	7-4
Sept. 16	WESTERN KENTUCKY	TBA	TBA	9-5, 44-23 win over So. Alabama (R&L Carriers)
Sept. 23	at Notre Dame	TBA	TBA	9-4, 45-38 win over So. Carolina (Gator)
Oct. 7	MARYLAND	TBA	TBA	8-5, 16-12 win over NC State (Duke's Mayo)
Oct. 14	at Purdue	TBA	TBA	8-6, 63-7 loss to LSU (Citrus)
Oct. 21	PENN STATE	TBA	TBA	11-2, 35-21 win over Utah (Rose)
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	TBA	TBA	7-6, 24-17 win over Okla. St. (Guar. Rate)
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	TBA	TBA	4-8, not eligible
Nov. 11	MICHIGAN STATE	TBA	TBA	5-7, not eligible
Nov. 18	MINNESOTA	TBA	TBA	9-4, 28-20 win over Syracuse (Pinstripe)
Nov. 25	at Michigan	TBA	TBA	13-1, 51-45 loss to TCU (Fiesta)

rary absences and others expected to hold a handful of Buckeyes out for the remainder of the spring.

During the Student Appreciation Day practice, safety Ja'Had Carter sustained a knee injury during 7-on-7 drills and was held out of the rest of practice. Ohio State was also without offensive lineman Zen Michalski – who has factored in at the battle for the starting right tackle spot – but he returned to practice the following week.

Day felt Carter's injury would not be a long-term issue, but he expressed concern about the ailment due to it coming at the safety's knee.

"We got good information back," Day said. "We'll have to get it evaluated. You hold your breath because you just don't know how stable that knee is, anytime you're dealing with a knee. We felt like it was (stable). We'll get it evaluated for sure and make sure we cross every 'T' and dot every 'I.' Ja'Had's had a really good spring, and hopefully we can get him back soon."

While Carter was not a full participant in ensuing spring practices, he was in uniform during practice on April 7 and went through some individual drills, indicating that the injury is not one expected to hold him out for long.

A pair of injuries were also revealed during that April 7 practice, with linebacker Steele Chambers and wide receiver Xavier Johnson both held out due to various injuries. Chambers was seen on crutches while Johnson sported a boot on his left leg and was making his way around practice with the help of a mobility scooter. Day confirmed after practice that both players would miss the rest of the spring but are expected to be ready by fall camp.

"(Chambers will) be back," Day said. "He'll have a procedure done, but he'll be back for preseason and should have a pretty good summer. Xavier is probably a little bit longer, but still we'll have him for the summer. It's not going to be something that's going to affect him in the preseason."

Ohio State was already without the services of wide receivers Emeka Egbuka and Julian Fleming, running backs TreVeyon Henderson and Evan Pryor, linebackers Tommy Eichenberg and Mitchell Melton, safety Kourt Williams and offensive lineman Jakob James. All eight were previously announced as unavailable for the spring, though James, Henderson and Melton have all been seen in uniform and going through noncontact drills at various points.

Five Buckeyes Lose Black Stripes

Since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went

to press, five Buckeyes shed their black stripes to complete a rite of passage within the Ohio State football program and become official members of the team.

The list includes a pair of walk-ons in running back Chase Brecht and offensive lineman Quinton Burke, as well as transfer quarterback Tristan Gebbia and a pair of first-year players in safety Malik Hartford and tight end Jelani Thurman. Gebbia was first up on April 1, following by Burke on April 3 and Brecht, Hartford and Thurman losing theirs on April 7.

Gebbia transferred to Ohio State from Oregon State, where he threw for 1,250 yards and five touchdowns against four interceptions in the last four seasons. He also spent time at Nebraska before joining the Beavers.

While there is a quarterback competition going on at Ohio State this spring between McCord and Brown, Gebbia is not expected to factor in for the starting job. He joined Ohio State in hopes of eventually becoming a coach, viewing Columbus as a place where he can begin building those connections while continuing to play football.

Burke is a native of Lancaster, Ohio, and he joined the Buckeyes in the spring of 2021 as a walk-on along the offensive front. Prior to his arrival at Ohio State, Burke anchored a Lancaster offensive line that averaged nearly 30 points and 200 yards rushing during his junior season before an injury held him out of his senior season. He was named second-team All-Ohio Capitol Conference and an All-District honorable mention after his junior season.

Thurman is one of the more highly-touted recruits at his position, with the four-star prospect out of Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes ranked the No. 3 line-ender in the country for his class and the No. 104 prospect overall. The 6-6, 253-pound tight end was a strong pull for the Buckeyes from The Peach State, ranked the fifth-best prospect in Georgia.

As a senior, Thurman hauled in 36 receptions for 582 yards and 12 touchdowns, helping the Panthers to a perfect 15-0 season and state championship.

"Thurman is working hard," Day said. "He's out here every day, shows toughness. He kind of got banged up a little bit, but continues to practice. He has a very high ceiling."

Hartford is a homegrown prospect, checking in as the third-best prospect from Ohio in the 2023 recruiting class out of West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West. The nation's 150th prospect overall and 11th-best safety, Hartford has made enough of an impression to shed his black stripe in the spring despite a crowded safeties room.

Brecht is a walk-on at running back out of Powell (Ohio) Olentangy Liberty and was a standout at Ohio State's practice on April 7 prior to losing his black stripe, hauling in several passes from McCord and Brown.

The five Buckeyes joined Igbinosun, offensive linemen George Fitzpatrick and Tegra Tshabola and Tate as players to lose their black stripes so far this spring. Thurman and Hartford became the second and third first-year Buckeyes to shed their black stripes, trailing only Tate.

Lawsuit Alleges Negligence, Conspiracy In Haskins' Death

Just over a year after the death of former Ohio State quarterback Dwayne Haskins, attorney Rick Ellsley announced April 10 that he has filed a lawsuit on behalf of Haskins' family alleging that Haskins was the victim of a "blackmail and robbery conspiracy."

On April 9, 2022, Haskins was struck and killed by a dump truck while walking across Interstate 595 in Broward County, Fla. According to the lawsuit filed last month by Ellsley – a member of The Ellsley Law Firm, a law office in Plantation, Fla. – they believe that Haskins was targeted and drugged as part of a blackmail and robbery conspiracy, pointing to Haskins' "highly expensive" watch being stolen shortly before his death.

"The filing of this lawsuit is an important step in the process of uncovering the complete truth about this tragedy," a statement from the firm said. "The civil justice system allows for subpoenas to be issued for critical documents and for sworn testimony to be taken of people who have knowledge about the events leading up to Dwayne's death."

The lawsuit also alleges that his death was avoidable, with the Florida Highway Patrol Traffic Homicide Report showing that Haskins was only feet away from safely crossing the road before being hit by the dump truck.

"This truck was going faster than the speed limit, carrying excessive cargo, had brake system problems, and was traveling on low tread tires with separated sidewalls," Ellsley's statement said.

The statement said several drivers ahead of the dump truck saw Haskins and avoided him, with some having time to dial 911, and also pointed to tail lights, brake lights and hazards from cars, as well as a bright construction signal board, which would have illuminated Haskins.

"Many questions remain as to why the truck driver did not avoid hitting Dwayne given the highly visible activity in the area before the impact and the fact that the other drivers did not hit Dwayne," the statement said. "The truck driver's cell phone records have not yet been disclosed. The report also notes that the driver refused to provide a blood sample to the police at the scene and still has not provided the alcohol test results."

A toxicology report from the Broward County Medical Examiner's Office concluded that Haskins was legally drunk when he was hit, with separate samples showing blood alcohol levels of .20 and .24, both of which were above the legal limit in Florida of .08.

"On behalf of Dwayne's wife, his family, and his memory, and on behalf of the truth, we respectfully request the public's patience

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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and its withholding of judgment while the legal process continues,” the statement said.

Three Buckeyes Named Walter Camp Preseason All-Americans

As anticipation continues to build for the upcoming college football season, three Ohio State players have already garnered attention for the upcoming campaign.

Wide receivers Marvin Harrison Jr. and Egbuka, as well as Eichenberg, were recognized as Walter Camp Preseason All-Americans on March 31. Harrison and Eichenberg earned first-team recognition while Egbuka garnered second-team honors.

Harrison is primed for another big year for the Buckeyes after a breakout sophomore campaign in which he reeled in 77 receptions for 1,263 yards and 14 touchdowns, all of which were team-best marks.

Egbuka also helped fill the void left by former Buckeyes Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave, who were both drafted in the first round after the 2021 season. In his sophomore season, Egbuka caught 74 receptions while tallying 1,151 yards and 10 touchdowns.

Eichenberg served as the centerpiece for a much-improved defense, leading the Buckeyes with 120 tackles while adding 12 tackles for loss, 2½ sacks and an interception

returned for a touchdown.

Hartline Expresses Desire To Coach In NFL

Earning a promotion to become Ohio State's next offensive coordinator this off-season, along with another stellar start in recruiting in the 2024 class, has led to Brian Hartline's stock having never been higher.

Hartline has undergone a meteoric rise during his time at Ohio State, receiving a pair of promotions in as many seasons while elevating himself to become one of the most sought-after assistant coaches in the nation. While he is content with his standing at his alma mater, he acknowledged during an appearance on Barstool Sports' "Bussin' With The Boys" podcast that he would like to make the jump to a head coaching position – whether at Ohio State or not – and eventually appear at the NFL level.

"I love my alma mater at Ohio State," Hartline said. "My heart's in the NFL. I think one day I'd want to coach there, and that's the reality of it. When? I don't know. My in-laws are here, and my wife's from Columbus. There's a big foundation that's been built here. I love coaching the receivers. When I started, I was like, 'I'll be the receivers coach for the next 15 to 20 years. Leave me alone. I'm good.' But then that grows.

"I love building the receivers room. I love it. That was an awesome opportunity, choosing and developing it. I'd love to do that on a team. I'd love to be a head coach and try to do that on a team, not just in one position. I'm kind of doing that now but just offensively, but I like dealing with people and building a team, whether that's a staff or with individual players. Where does that end up? I couldn't tell you."

Hartline said he would have to receive a head coaching opportunity from a contending college football program or be elevated to the professional ranks in order to be pried from Ohio State. Overall, Hartline's ambition



BRADEN MOLES

SUPER SOPHOMORE — Ohio State is attempting to find the best spot on the field for sophomore safety Sonny Styles, whose undeniable talent makes it difficult to keep the former five-star prospect on the bench.

ultimately lies in competing for championships.

"I want to be able to win a national championship," he said. "It would have to be a top program that paints that vision, that it can get done there. It's that or the NFL. For me, all the marbles have to be on the table. It has to be the pinnacle, or I may not have as much interest. If the pinnacle is not an option – a Super Bowl or a national championship – that's hard for me. I want all the marbles on the table."

Staff Looking To Get Styles On The Field

While he should have still been on winter

break after the first semester of his senior year of high school, Sonny Styles was guarding two of the nation's best tight ends in the College Football Playoff semifinals.

Georgia's Brock Bowers and Darnell Washington challenged the then-freshman and former five-star safety prospect out of Pickerington (Ohio) Central, as the staff trusted him enough to line him up near the box for 12 snaps during the most important game of the season.

"It gave me confidence, that trust (the coaching staff) had in me," Styles said. "Getting ready throughout that month we had, it was a good month for me. I think I gained some confidence, almost like (fall) camp

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Ohio State Spring Game Set For April 15

The Ohio State football team will cap off spring practice with the annual spring game in Ohio Stadium on April 15. Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be providing complete coverage of the game in the May print issue of BSB, scheduled to be mailed on April 25.

There is no need to wait for spring game coverage, however, as the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff will have coverage at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com immediately after the game and in the days following. The BSB staff will also reporting on any breaking news and providing additional features, along with the latest in football recruiting news. BuckeyeSports.com is free to all BSB subscribers.

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

as well as the new transfer portal thread.

Don't forget, 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.

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again. Them putting that confidence in me, giving me that big of a role in that big of a game, that meant a lot."

Now entering year two of his career, Styles figures to have a featured role in the team's defense throughout the season – even if that role isn't clearly defined just yet.

"We've streamlined it for Sonny," safeties coach Perry Eliano said. "You'll see Sonny more in a streamlined position to where he can excel and use his God-given ability. The beauty of it now is, year two, I've been around the guys, they've been around me. I know exactly what they are and where their strengths are, and we're continuing to close the gap on their challenges."

Eliano added that Styles having his first full spring under his belt after joining the program last fall will also be a huge help in his development.

There's no questioning Styles' versatility as an athlete. At Pickerington Central, he played over the top at deep safety, closer to the depth of a linebacker and also played off the edge to pressure quarterbacks. Eliano and defensive coordinator Jim Knowles have been toying and tooling with different roles for Styles, but the safeties coach is hoping to lock him into one spot sooner rather than later.

"It still remains to be seen (what his role will be)," Eliano said. "We're kind of dabbling in some things. Really and truthfully, we want him to be great at specific things instead of OK at a lot of things. So that's the conversation, what I mean by streamlining. You won't see him in a lot of places. You'll see him stationary in one to two spots."

That position seems to be either bandit or adjuster, the team's boundary and field safety positions, respectively. Styles' physicality and burst make him a natural fit at bandit, but he has the range to make an impact at adjuster, too.

"Right now I'm doing two positions, trying to get good at one thing, not trying to be OK at everything," Styles said. "Whatever Coach E puts in front of me, I'll focus on that."

Burke Eyes Bounce Back In Junior Season

Cornerback Denzel Burke entered last season riding high off of a promising freshman campaign in the Ohio State secondary.

He started all 13 of Ohio State's games as a freshman while picking up freshman All-American honors from ESPN and The Athletic after leading the Buckeyes with 12 pass-breakups. Expectations rose ahead of his sophomore season, but Burke struggled to keep up as injuries hampered his ability to produce at the same level he did as a freshman.

Now a junior, Burke knows what's at stake entering the third season as a Buckeye and has adjusted his approach in order to get back on track this campaign.

"Going into this year, it's a personal year for me," he said. "I want to prove all the doubters wrong. I'm going to go out there and do what I know I can do and put a lot of great stuff on tape and play hard for my team."

Upon his arrival on campus as an early enrollee in January 2021, Burke was an immediate impact player for Ohio State. During Ohio State's season opener against Minnesota, he became the first true freshman to start on defense for the Buckeyes in

a season opener since Andy Katzenmoyer in 1996, showing a clear level of trust between him and the coaching staff.

Burke proved that trust was well-warranted when he tallied 36 tackles and an interception while emerging as an All-Big Ten third-team honoree during the season.

Entering his sophomore campaign, there was no doubt that Burke would reclaim his starting spot, even though he battled injuries throughout fall camp and carried limited practice reps into the season. But it was clear the injuries hampered Burke during the early stages of the season. He was on the opposite end of several long passing plays and a pair of touchdowns in the Buckeyes' first three games.

Burke wound up missing a pair of games last season while also undergoing hand surgery prior to Ohio State's Sept. 24 game against Wisconsin. Now, he's back at full physical strength.

"(It impacted me) a lot," he said. "Physically, I couldn't do a lot of things. I had a shoulder (injury), I had an ankle (injury), the hand and fingers. I'm healthy this year, and thank God."

As Burke eyes a campaign of strong health, cornerbacks coach Tim Walton said Burke will also be relied on as a leader in the secondary due to his experience in the program.

"He's the guy that has the playing experience," Walton said. "He's the guy that's been around the longest, so you now have to lead the young guys by example and verbally. We just have to take the next step in that and grow."

While Burke is looking to elevate himself back to the level he played at as a freshman, while carrying that newfound leadership responsibility, he also recognizes that it's on him to help bring the Ohio State secondary back to prominence.

"We just want to show that BIA (Best in America) is back and we're not leaving anything to chance this year," he said. "I'm really excited."

Lee Arrested On Domestic Violence, Assault Charges

Former Ohio State linebacker Darron Lee was arrested on April 3 in Dublin, Ohio, and was charged with two counts of domestic violence and two counts of as-

sault, according to Franklin County Municipal Court records.

According to a report from The Columbus Dispatch, Lee faces two counts each of misdemeanor domestic violence and misdemeanor assault. One set of charges are related to an alleged incident on Oct. 17, 2022, with the other charges stemming from the incident on April 3 leading to his arrest. Lee appeared in court on April 4 with his bond set at \$20,000 in each case.

Court records showed that officers were called after Lee reportedly punched a female relative multiple times in the head during an argument, and both the relative and the mother of Lee's child reported the incident to the police. According to The Dispatch's report, the relative told officers that Lee became upset when she told him to leave, and that Lee began yelling and grabbed her shirt before shoving her into a wall.

"(The relative) was then thrown to the ground while Mr. Lee kept screaming at her," court records said. "Mr. Lee then began to strike her head with his fists making contact with her face and back of her head. (The relative) stated that he struck her approximately 8-9 times in the head area with a closed fist."

The investigation into that incident reportedly uncovered the alleged Oct. 17, 2022, incident in which Lee and the mother of his child argued after Lee believed she cheated on him.

"(The woman) was laying on the bed and Darron got on top of her, with his knees making contact with her knees, and his left hand on her neck where it remained for approximately 60 seconds," court records said. "During this time, (the woman) advised that Darron told her that he would kill her and their child."

According to the report, Lee also allegedly punched a pillow beside her head, squeezed her throat and struck the side of her head, and grabbed her by her neck and lifted her up.

"Lee reportedly told police that the woman had struck him in the face during the argument and again while they were going downstairs and denied ever putting his hands on the woman's neck," the Dispatch's report reads. "Police reportedly viewed photographs of injuries the woman

had taken that night by a relative, photos of a hole in the wall and a broken phone, as well as a journal entry the woman made related to the incident."

Lee played at Ohio State for three seasons from 2013-15 and was a starter on the Buckeyes' 2014 national championship team. Following his collegiate career, he was taken in the first round of the 2016 NFL draft by the New York Jets and also spent time with the Kansas City Chiefs, Buffalo Bills and Las Vegas Raiders, though he has been out of the league since 2021.

OSU Takes Lead For Directors' Cup

Ohio State has taken over first place in the LEARFIELD Directors' Cup standings, recognizing athletic department program excellence, holding a nearly 100-point advantage over second place in the second of three standings releases on April 6.

The Buckeyes check in at first with 858.00 points, ahead of No. 2 Texas (758.75), No. 3 Stanford (754.50), No. 4 North Carolina (686.50) and No. 5 Alabama (634.25). The final standings and winner will be announced in June. Ohio State finished fourth in the standings last year, with 11 teams finishing within the top 10 of their respective sport.

Leading the way for Ohio State in point gathering this year is the women's hockey team, whose runner-up finish netted 90 points for the Buckeyes. Football and wrestling both earned fourth-place finishes for 80 points, while fencing, women's basketball and women's volleyball (each placing fifth for 73 points) and women's swimming and diving (sixth for 73.5 points) all had top-10 finishes in their sports.

Joining Ohio State from the Big Ten among the top 25 in the standings is No. 6 Wisconsin, No. 7 Penn State, No. 19 Michigan and No. 23 Minnesota. The ACC currently boasts the most teams with seven.

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

OSU Continues Growth With Elite Eight Run

Continued From Page 1

"When I had the opportunity to come to Ohio State, this was certainly the goal and the vision to go farther than they have been going, and it's not easy to get here, obviously," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said following the win over UConn. "But I'm really proud of our team and our program of how we've evolved to be able to get to this point."

"I have so much respect for Geno and his staff and all that they have accomplished. So for us to be able to win this game in the Sweet 16 is obviously extremely significant. They're just hard to beat. They're so well coached. This is a great win for us."

Before that game, considering not just the accomplishment of reaching the Elite Eight but the optics of doing so by knocking off the blue blood of the sport, the team knew the opportunity that stood in front of them.

"My expectations are that we get past the Sweet 16, we go to the Elite Eight, we give ourselves a chance to go to the Final Four," McGuff said. "It's a great opportunity to do that, and I think we have a team that's good enough to do it. Now we just have to go execute and beat a great team to get there. It would be validation of where we are right now and where we're going with this program."

Senior guard Jacy Sheldon, who announced after the season's conclusion that she would be returning for a fifth and final season with the Buckeyes, added that it was a special opportunity for the Buckeyes that they would not take for granted.

"We're going to give it our best like we have every game, and we kind of preach just giving it our all every day and when we get on the court, giving it our 100 percent," she said. "That's what we're going to continue to do and that's what we rely on."

It was clear from the start that Ohio State came to play against the Huskies. The Buckeyes forced 18 first-half turnovers and held a 36-26 lead going into the break, with Auriemma's team unable to crack the code of McGuff's overpowering defensive press.

UConn fared better in the second half, turning the ball over just seven times, but foul trouble left star forward Aaliyah Edwards on the bench for all but 17 minutes of contest, and the Huskies were unable to cut the fourth-quarter deficit to fewer than nine points in the 73-61 win for Ohio State.

The win was a pivotal one in not just advancing to the Elite Eight, but putting everyone on notice that Ohio State is continuing to build on what was accomplished last season.

"It shows the Sweet 16 (last year) wasn't just a fluke," said Buckeye Sports Bulletin contributor Mike Wachsman, who covered the women's basketball team for many years. "If they got back again this year and fizzled out in the Sweet 16 or even before, people would have said, 'OK, that's the ceiling for this program.'"

"(McGuff) had not really proven that they could advance beyond that with teams that were maybe not top-to-bottom as good as this (one), but the best players were probably better than the best players on this team."

As for this year's team, the key factor in



SONNY BROCKWAY

COME TOGETHER — Much of Ohio State's run this past season was due to the Buckeyes' team chemistry, which head coach Kevin McGuff called some of the best he's seen in his years of coaching at the collegiate level.

being able to advance has been on the defensive end. Ohio State allowed more points this season (68.4 per game this year compared to 65.6 per game last year) but forced opponents into 20.1 turnovers per game and averaged 11.3 steals per contest, which ranked top 10 nationally. The defensive press was utilized at points last season but was a consistent obstacle for the opposition this year.

"I would say my first two years at Ohio State, there was definitely more focus on offense," redshirt junior guard Rikki Harris said. "These last two years I've been here, defense is the key. We have great offensive players and we can score with whoever, but if it's just going to be a scoring match, you don't know what's going to happen. We have the players to do it, we're fast, and like (Sheldon) said, we rely on each other, we trust in each other. If somebody gets beat, we know somebody's going to have our back. It's all about trust."

As Harris alluded to, the main factor for success in operating within a defensive press is the team's ability to play together and build that chemistry, and that's one area where McGuff has said he's never seen a stronger connection between teammates.

"We certainly have some really talented players, but I think more than anything our culture and the way these kids love to be around each other has been the key for us," he said after the win over UConn. "We've had so many come-from-behind wins, and a lot of that has to do with when things go south, people start pointing fingers and so forth. You have no chance to make a comeback. But that never happens with this group."

"They stay together, they support each other, and a lot has to do with we've got great kids in the program and just great chemistry."

That's one area where McGuff has felt his teams lacked in the years prior to this current squad. Despite coaching a program great such as Kelsey Mitchell for four seasons from 2014-18, the furthest Ohio State made it in the NCAA tournament during those seasons was two appearances in the Sweet 16

sandwiched between second-round upsets.

While Mitchell is undoubtedly among the best to have ever donned the scarlet and gray, those teams, according to McGuff, did not possess the chemistry and togetherness that has led to this current team's success over the last couple of seasons and will continue to do so.

"If you take it all the way back, I think we had, early on in the Kelsey Mitchell era, talented enough teams to do that," he said. "We didn't quite have the right cohesion and chemistry at that particular point. Now, I think we're maybe not as talented as back then, but our chemistry and cohesion and our culture is in a really healthy place."

That chemistry was not built overnight, instead forged over the last several seasons through several ups and downs for the program, from a record-breaking start to the year to injuries that cost a handful of Buckeyes most or all of the season.

"They really got along," said Kristin Watt, who played at Ohio State from 1981-85 and is a radio analyst for the team. "They had that same mutual respect. They had fun playing with each other. When you care for your teammates and you're doing things for your team and not just for yourself, I think that says a lot."

"You had quite a bit of adversity with Jacy initially going out and then Madison Greene going out, how she (Greene) fought to come all the way back, and her teammates respected what she did to get back to where she was. To see that go away, there's inner strength that you find as a player when you see the adversity of someone else, and it makes you appreciate what you have."

Despite those bonds, Ohio State's tournament run would end in the Elite Eight. The Buckeyes suffered an 84-74 loss to top-seeded Virginia Tech on March 27, coming up just one game short of the Final Four, which has also eluded the Buckeyes since that 1992-93 season. It's a logical stepping-stone, though, with the Buckeyes going from the Sweet 16 to the Elite Eight in successive seasons, and it opens the door for even more next year.

"Our best days are still ahead of us," McGuff said after the loss. "We'll have to see with some of the kids who have COVID years and stuff, but (I like) the possibilities of what we could have next year. We've got a great culture and got great kids in the program and we'll add some other people one way or another. This is a great opportunity for us to build off this."

"Last year, we took the experience of the Sweet 16 and I think we felt confident coming into that game because we were right there, a possession away. Hopefully we can get back (to Columbus) and learn from this one a little bit."

More than that, it helps to establish Ohio State as a team that should consistently compete on this stage, especially with the quality of talent expected over the next couple of years with Sheldon returning to join freshman forward Cotie McMahan, sophomore guard Taylor Thierry and many others who played a pivotal role in this year's Elite Eight squad.

The likes of Iowa's Caitlin Clark, LSU's Angel Reese and South Carolina's Aaliyah Boston dominated most of the conversation around the tournament, but McMahan got her share of the spotlight as well. In four games, she averaged 18.3 points and 6.5 rebounds on 48.1 percent shooting, including 23 points in the win over UConn.

"Whenever you can have a freshman that stands out not only from the other group of freshmen on your team but from really the rest of the team, when people are thinking that's their best player, then I think that is going to really put folks on notice when you've got a player like that," Wachsman said. "It's going to be hard to take a step backward because they're going to be a constant for the next two or three years."

Sheldon had a similarly impressive run, scoring 17.3 points per game with 5.8 rebounds and 5.0 assists per contest. Both helped lead Ohio State's run and, along with their own names, put the Buckeyes back on the national map. A win over the Huskies does not usurp their position among college basketball's elite, but it certainly helps to build up some recognition while creating the expectation that Ohio State will remain at that stage for the foreseeable future.

"I think when your expectations are high, people perform to those expectations," Watt said. "I just think it's human nature. When you look at what happened last year, when Taylor Mikesell decided to come back and play her fifth year of eligibility, it all started with the Sweet 16 last year and a three-point loss to Texas when they knew they were in that game."

"She and Jacy going back to the media room and looking at each other and saying to each other, 'Well, we could be really good next year.' That expectation — they knew it. I think it drove them all harder in the offseason. During the season, it flipped a switch in their head that they're like, 'Yeah, we are this elite team and we can play at this level and we are playing at this level.' It's like a self-fulfilling prophecy."



2023 PROMOTIONAL SCHEDULE

MARCH/APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					31 @IOW 7:08	1 @IOW 3:08
HOME OPENING NIGHT						
2 @IOW 1:08	3	4 CLT 6:15	5 CLT 6:15	6 CLT 6:15	7 CLT 7:05	8 CLT 4:15
9 CLT 1:05	10	11 @WOR 6:45	12 @WOR 6:45	13 @WOR 6:45	14 @WOR 6:45	15 @WOR 4:05
16 @WOR 1:05	17	18 TOL 6:15	19 TOL 6:15	20 TOL 12:05	21 TOL 7:05	22 TOL 4:15
23 TOL 1:05	24	25 @IND 6:35	26 @IND 1:35	27 @IND 11:05AM	28 @IND 7:05	29 @IND 6:35
30 @IND 1:35						

MAY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2 IOW 6:15	3 IOW 6:35	4 IOW 6:15	5 IOW 7:05	6 IOW 7:05
7 IOW 1:05	8	9 @LOU 6:05	10 @LOU 11:05AM	11 @LOU 6:35	12 @LOU 7:15	13 @LOU 7:15
14 @LOU 1:05	15	16 STP 7:05	17 STP 12:05	18 STP 7:05	19 STP 7:05	20 STP 7:05
21 STP 1:05	22	23 IND 7:05	24 IND 7:05	25 IND 7:05	26 IND 7:05	27 IND 7:05
28 IND 1:05	29	30 @IOW 6:38	31 @IOW 12:08			

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JUNE						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 @IOW 12:08	2 @IOW 7:08	3 @IOW 6:08
4 @IOW 1:08	5	6 LOU 7:05	7 LOU 7:05	8 LOU 12:05	9 LOU 7:05	10 LOU 7:05
11 LOU 1:05	12	13 @OMA 7:05	14 @OMA 12:05	15 @OMA 7:05	16 @OMA 7:05	17 @OMA 7:05
18 @OMA 2:05	19	20 @IND 7:05	21 @IND 1:35	22 @IND 7:05	23 @IND 7:05	24 @IND 7:05
25 @IND 1:35	26	27	28 TOL 7:05	29 TOL 7:05	30 TOL 7:05	

JULY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 TOL 5:05
2 TOL 6:05	3 TOL 6:05	4 @NAS 6:05	5 @NAS 6:35	6 @NAS 6:35	7 @NAS 6:35	8 @NAS 6:35
9 @NAS 1:05	10	11	12	13	14 IOW 7:05	15 IOW 7:05
16 IOW 4:05	17	18 @LOU 6:35	19 @LOU 6:35	20 @LOU 6:35	21 @LOU 7:15	22 @LOU 7:15
23 @LOU 6:05	24	25 OMA 7:05	26 OMA 12:05	27 OMA 7:05	28 OMA 7:05	29 OMA 7:05
30 OMA 4:05	31					

AUGUST						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 STP 7:05	2 STP 7:05	3 STP 12:05	4 STP 7:05	5 STP 7:05
6 STP 4:05	7	8 @TOL 7:05	9 @TOL 7:05	10 @TOL 7:05	11 @TOL 7:05	12 @TOL 7:05
13 @TOL 4:05	14	15 @SYR 6:35	16 @SYR 6:35	17 @SYR 6:35	18 @SYR 6:35	19 @SYR 6:35
20 @SYR 1:05	21	22 JAX 6:15	23 JAX 6:15	24 JAX 6:15	25 JAX 7:05	26 JAX 5:05
27 JAX 4:05	28	29 @STP 7:07	30 @STP 7:07	31 @STP 7:07		

SEPTEMBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 @STP 7:07	2 @STP 7:07
3 @STP 5:07	4	5 SWB 6:15	6 SWB 6:15	7 SWB 6:15	8 SWB 7:05	9 SWB 7:05
10 SWB 1:05	11	12 @TOL 6:35	13 @TOL 12:05	14 @TOL 6:35	15 @TOL 7:05	16 @TOL 5:05
17 @TOL 2:05	18	19 OMA 6:15	20 OMA 6:15	21 OMA 6:35	22 OMA 7:05	23 OMA 1:05
24 OMA 1:05	25	26	27	28	29	30

- TUE.** - "TANSKY TUESDAY DIME-A-DOG" NIGHTS
- 4/4, 4/18, 5/2, 5/16, 5/23, 6/6, 7/25, 8/1, 8/22, 9/5 & 9/19
- WED.** - "MILITARY & FIRST RESPONDERS" GAMES
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- THU.** - "COPA DE LA DIVERSION"
- Clippers transform into Los Veleros on Thursday Nights
"THIRSTY THURSDAYS"
- Beverage Specials on Beer, Margaritas & Soft Drinks
"COLLEGE ID NIGHT"
- \$10 includes Reserved ticket AND \$5 in Clippers Cash for food, beverage or souvenir purchase
- FRI.** - "\$5 FRIDAY"
- \$5 for a slice of Donatos Pizza & a Small Pepsi
- \$5 Beers (small)
- \$5 Wine
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Haskins Leaves Strong Legacy At Ohio State

Continued From Page 1

lot of records that year.

"He set a dream, he chased it and he did it."

Haskins parlayed his success at Ohio State into a first-round selection in the 2019 NFL draft, and after two tumultuous seasons with the now-Washington Commanders, he looked to revitalize his career with the Pittsburgh Steelers. But his pursuits would be tragically cut short.

During the early hours of April 9, 2022, Haskins – who had been training in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., for the upcoming season with teammates – was struck by a dump truck and killed while trying to cross the freeway after his rental car ran out of gas. He was 24 years old.

An autopsy conducted by the Broward County Medical Examiner's Office later confirmed that Haskins' blood-alcohol content tested at 0.20 and 0.24 in separate samples, the latter three times the legal limit, and also revealed that he had ketamine in his system.

In the aftermath of his death, the Ohio State and NFL community entered a period of mourning, and a large memorial was set up in his memory at the famed Ohio Stadium rotunda. Haskins was a talented football player, but it was clear that his impact reached far beyond the gridiron, evidenced by the outpouring of support following his untimely death, and his legacy has only grown in the year since his passing.

"He had a big smile and a big arm," Bucknuts reporter Steve Helwagen told BSB. "You'd see that guy smile and light everybody up. He was a very lighthearted guy, and I think that worked to his benefit because it was such a pressure-packed position to play quarterback at Ohio State, yet he handled everything with a smile on his face."

That smile also stood out to Day, who added that the quarterback was wise beyond his years during his time with Ohio State.

"The first thing was you saw someone who you enjoyed to be around," Day said two days after Haskins' passing. "Our guys really enjoyed being around him, and he just uplifted others. That smile that he had was just infectious, and he kind of had an old soul about him. He was somebody who was young and very, very talented on the field, just had a gift for throwing the football, but sometimes when you were talking to him, you thought you were talking to a 45- or 50-year-old man by the way he approached life in general."

Although Haskins undoubtedly left a legacy at Ohio State, his illustrious run with the Buckeyes almost never happened at all. As a native of Potomac, Md., Haskins initially committed to Maryland, seeking to lift his home-state university to prominence in the Big Ten despite holding an offer from Ohio State.

After coaching changes shook up the leadership structure at Maryland, Haskins made an official visit to Ohio State on Dec. 11, 2015, and a little over a month later, he ended up decommitting from Maryland



FILE PHOTO

RECORD-BREAKER – Former Ohio State quarterback Dwayne Haskins' name is littered throughout the Buckeye record books. He holds the single-season school and conference record for passing yards (4,831) and touchdowns (50).

and flipping his pledge to Urban Meyer and the Buckeyes on Jan. 18, 2016, just over two weeks away from National Signing Day.

As Ohio State had largely relied on dual-threat quarterbacks in recent seasons with Terrelle Pryor, Braxton Miller and J.T. Barrett growing to prominence at the position, Haskins' commitment signaled a shift in Ohio State's recruiting at quarterback due to his pro-style skill set.

"With Urban, they had worked a lot with the dual-threat guys, so that always stuck with me," Bucknuts reporter Patrick Murphy told BSB. "If you're evaluating high school kids, he's a different type of high school quarterback. I think that became apparent once you saw him play at Ohio State. He's not going to run around back there much, but he's still very effective."

"I think it's had an impact on what Ohio State has done since then. If he doesn't come to Ohio State, maybe you're still looking at more dual-threat guys at Ohio State as opposed to what we've seen with more pocket-passer types recently."

Haskins redshirted his first season with Ohio State, spending the campaign learning behind the veteran Barrett. In the spring of 2017, Haskins competed for the backup job behind Barrett, beginning

a competition with fellow gunslinger Joe Burrow – an Athens, Ohio, native who joined the Buckeyes in 2015 as a four-star prospect.

Although the story of Haskins' career is impossible to write without mentioning Burrow, their first true offseason competition became moot after Burrow broke his hand late in fall camp, pushing Haskins into the No. 2 slot on depth chart.

"One of the great unknowable questions is what if Joe Burrow never got hurt?" Columbus Dispatch reporter Bill Rabinowitz said.

With the opportunity to back up Barrett, Haskins received his first taste of action at the collegiate level, typically in a mop-up role with the Buckeyes well in the lead. While Haskins showed promise throughout the regular season, his contributions had largely gone unnoticed as most of his production came in garbage time – that was until The Game.

During the third quarter of the annual rivalry meeting with Michigan, Barrett came up hobbled after being tackled on a run and was unable to return to the game. The damage was done prior to the opening kickoff, however, when a cameraman inadvertently made contact with Barrett's right knee and aggravated a previous injury for the quarterback.

With the Buckeyes trailing 20-14 and sending their second-string quarterback into the fire in Ann Arbor, Ohio State's five-game winning streak over the Wolverines was in jeopardy.

"Ohio State was in trouble," Murphy said. "We'd seen Dwayne some throughout the season, and obviously he was talented, but you don't want your backup quarterback playing in that game on either side, at least when the game is still in hand. In the press box, you could feel a shift of, 'Oh, this may not go Ohio State's way.'"

"But once Dwayne started throwing the ball and once he got into a groove, I think everyone was kind of like, 'Oh, this guy's got something here and they might be able to do this with him.'"

Haskins immediately showed that he was ready for the moment, completing a pivotal 27-yard pass to wideout Austin Mack on third-and-13 before dashing for 22 yards to move Ohio State to Michigan's 1-yard line, setting up the go-ahead score for running back J.K. Dobbins.

In all, Haskins was 6 of 7 passing for 94 yards while adding 24 rushing yards, sparking Ohio State to a comeback 31-20 win over its rivals.

"He went in and looked like he belonged," Helwagen said. "That was a legendary moment to go in there sight unseen and lead the team to win over Michigan. To me, he deserved so much credit for that."

The comeback victory left an impression on Meyer, and entering spring camp in 2018, Haskins held an early edge over Burrow for the starting job following Barrett's departure.

"Dwayne coming in during that Michigan game, and some of the other stuff he'd shown, I got the sense that it was more Dwayne's job to lose than it was a true neck-and-neck quarterback battle," Murphy said. "I don't think there were very many people that expected Joe to win that job because of the impression that Dwayne had left on the program coming out of that year."

Haskins' status as the Buckeyes' starter was affirmed on May 18, 2018, when Burrow announced that he would transfer to LSU. Burrow went on to have a historic career with the Tigers, leading them to a national championship in 2019 while throwing for 5,671 yards and 60 touchdowns during the campaign.

Burrow saw immense success as a Tiger, but Haskins also proved that he deserved the starting job at Ohio State with that record-breaking season of his own. Haskins won the Big Ten's Graham-George Offensive Player of the Year and Griese-Brees Quarterback of the Year awards in 2018 and set single-season Big Ten records in touchdowns, passing yards and total offensive yardage (4,939) while leading the Buckeyes to a Big Ten title and Rose Bowl victory.

"He was great," Rabinowitz said. "People say, 'Oh, it should have been Burrow.' But he was better than Joe Burrow was in 2018."

Haskins carried the Buckeyes with several phenomenal individual performances during the campaign. His first true

feat came when he shook off the vaunted white-out environment at No. 9 Penn State by leading Ohio State on a 12-point fourth-quarter comeback with a pair of touchdown drives in the game's final eight minutes.

He later willed Ohio State to a 52-51 overtime victory over Maryland by scoring six touchdowns – three each through the air and on the ground – and also tallied a pair of six-touchdown performances in wins over Indiana and No. 4 Michigan. Even in Ohio State's lone loss of the season, a 49-20 defeat at Purdue, Haskins threw for 470 yards and completed a program-record 49 passes on 73 attempts, also an Ohio State record.

"They didn't lose that game because of Dwayne Haskins," Helwagen said. "They gave up 49 points to Purdue. That's the one that ultimately kept them from realizing their full potential."

To Helwagen and Murphy, the Maryland game stood out to them for a variety of reasons, including Haskins' previous history with the school and his willingness to carry the ball despite primarily operating in the pocket.

"You could tell that he just wouldn't lose that game," Murphy said. "He did everything. He ran the ball and obviously threw the ball all over the place."

"It meant something to him, going back home and playing that team. To him, despite the fact that Maryland wasn't Michigan or Penn State or really standing in Ohio State's way of where they wanted to go, that was a personal game for him."

Rabinowitz pointed to the Michigan game as another feather in Haskins' cap. Ohio State was coasting on a six-game winning streak against its rival and held homefield advantage for the 2018 meeting, but expectations weren't all that high for the Buckeyes entering the contest.

Michigan was in playoff position, held one of the nation's best defensive units and was in the midst of a self-appointed "revenge tour" while the Buckeyes had shown immense defensive vulnerabilities throughout the season and were limping

into the game off the closer-than-expected win over Maryland.

"There was a sense of dread, almost, going into that game," Rabinowitz said. "They had a loaded team, and it did not look like it was setting up well for Ohio State to win that game after Maryland. The defense was clearly in disarray. You thought, 'Oh man, this could get ugly.'"

But Haskins didn't let the outside noise get in his way as he racked up 396 passing yards, and his six passing touchdowns – the most by a quarterback in the history of The Game – led Ohio State to a 62-39 drubbing of the resurgent Wolverines.

"Ohio State just lit them up," Rabinowitz said. "For Haskins, it was like a video game."

Although the loss to Purdue ultimately held the Buckeyes out of the College Football Playoff, Haskins still was left with an opportunity to end his college career on a high note at the Rose Bowl and did just that. Ohio State triumphed over Washington, 28-23, on the back of 251 yards and three touchdowns from Haskins.

The win over Washington proved to be Haskins' final game in the scarlet and gray, and in the aftermath of the win, he described what it meant for him to play for the Buckeyes.

"Buckeye Nation loves me, and I've loved Buckeye Nation since I was 8 or 9," he said. "To receive that ovation from the fans, to know how much they value me as a player, and to know how much work that I put in to be in this spot, just to go to school here, I'm really just blessed. I really couldn't ask for more."

Haskins was selected with the No. 15 overall pick in the NFL draft to a tumultuous situation in Washington, with ownership and the coaching staff at odds over the selection. As a result, Haskins made just 13 starts in his two seasons with the organization, throwing for 2,804 yards, 12 touchdowns and 14 interceptions.

With factors both inside and outside of the organization impacting Haskins' elevation to the league, especially with him playing for his hometown team, Washing-

ton released Haskins just a day after he was benched in a 20-13 loss to the Carolina Panthers on Dec. 27, 2020.

Less than a month later, Haskins was picked up by the Pittsburgh Steelers, where he spent the next season learning under longtime starter and two-time Super Bowl champion Ben Roethlisberger.

Roethlisberger retired at the end of the 2021 season, and it appeared Haskins would have another shot at becoming an NFL starter with a three-man race for the job between him, Mason Rudolph and Mitchell Trubisky brewing entering the offseason. But that opportunity was never realized due to his death.

Although Haskins' NFL career didn't quite go to plan, his impact on Ohio State is unquestioned, especially at the quarterback position. Haskins set a new standard of passing excellence at the position, not seen at any point in the program's illustrious history, while leaving a foundation for the next generation of Ohio State quarterbacks.

"I don't know that there's a Justin Fields without Dwayne Haskins, and I don't know if there's a C.J. Stroud if there's not a Justin Fields before him," Rabinowitz said. "In terms of the modern NFL-style quarterback, he's the guy that you can trace it to."

"There's kind of a before Dwayne Haskins and an after Dwayne Haskins in terms of the type of quarterback and the expectation to be a first-round quarterback."

In last year's spring game, which oc-

curred just a week after Haskins' death, Ohio State remembered its former quarterback with a tribute video, helmet decals and by painting his No. 7 on the 7-yard lines on the field at Ohio Stadium.

Stroud also trotted onto the field for the offense's opening drive in a Haskins jersey and promptly led the offense on a touchdown drive. After the game, Stroud said the gesture was to give Haskins one final touchdown at Ohio Stadium.

Stroud added that Haskins was someone he looked up to as he was climbing up the high school ranks, and he recognized the significance of Haskins' career on Stroud's own journey.

"He was just a big-time player and a big-time dude, not just on the field but off it as well," Stroud said. "He inspired me being a Black quarterback, as well. He inspired me in so many different ways, and I respect that."

"He definitely left a legacy here that I watched. He changed the culture of the quarterback here. That's what intrigued me to come here for sure."

While the Ohio State record books are littered with Haskins' name and his mark will be left on the program forever, it will always be his smile and character that stands out to Day and so many others within the Buckeye family.

"I asked some of the players, and the first thing they say they remembered is just his smile," Day said. "The look in his eye, it was just so genuine. I think of his compassion that he had for people."



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Defensive Strides Are Standard Under Knowles

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

A comparison of Ohio State's defensive statistics from 2021 to its first year under defensive coordinator Jim Knowles in 2022 indicate solid improvement on the surface.

The Buckeyes allowed 1.8 fewer points, 51.4 fewer total yards of offense, 45.7 fewer passing yards and 5.7 fewer rushing yards per game this past season than they did in the one prior. The problem is, those numbers didn't hold up during the most important games of the season.

Big plays gouged Ohio State against Michigan in a rivalry contest with huge implications at the close of the regular season, with the Wolverines scoring on plays of 69, 75, 45, 75 and 85 yards, respectively. Michigan surpassed 250 yards both through the air and on the ground, where Ohio State surrendered an average of just 200.5 and 121.1 yards for the season, respectively.

With a shot at redemption against Georgia in the College Football Playoff on Dec. 31, the defense allowed more plays of 20 yards or more than it had all season, with the Bulldogs gaining such ground on 10 of their snaps. When Ohio State led by two scores in the fourth quarter of that contest, a 76-yard touchdown pass brought Georgia back within striking distance, and the Bulldogs eventually won 42-41 after the Buckeyes missed a last-second field goal.

"When you don't win the game, things can always be done better," Knowles said after the loss. "That's a fact. We didn't win the game. We got beat defensively in the fourth quarter. Yes, they're tough games, they're matchup games and it's going to be back-and-forth. But we didn't finish in the fourth quarter, that's what it comes down to."

Now entering Knowles' second year, the hope is that a season gaining familiarity with the intricate scheme of the former finalist for the Broyles Award, given to the best coordinator in college football, allows Ohio State's defenders to fly about freer than before and produce better results in big games as a result. And there's a track record of Knowles' defenses doing just that the longer he is with a program, at least since 2010.

"Now that I'm coming into year two, I've got to be even more demanding and push and put more steam on the players individually on the preciseness of the technique," Knowles said Feb. 1. "I've got to really bear down."

Knowles has coaching experience dating back to 1988 when he coached defensive line for Cornell, his alma mater. His first stint dialing up a defense didn't come until 2001, however, when Western Michigan promoted him from that same defensive line position to be its full-time defensive coordinator. The stint didn't go as well as others on Knowles' résumé.

The then-first-time coordinator inherited a relatively solid defensive group, one that finished second in the MAC for both scoring and total defense in 2000, but both those numbers worsened in Knowles' first season as the Broncos went from allowing 11.6 points per contest to 24.2 points, with their



SONNY BROCKWAY

SECOND-YEAR JUMP — Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles (left) will be looking for an improved defensive performance this year, led by returning starters such as linebacker Steele Chambers (center) and defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau (right).

record dipping from 9-3 to 5-6.

Western Michigan allowed 27.5 points per game in Knowles' second year, but the Broncos' total yards allowed dipped by 35.6 yards, with nearly all of that improvement coming from the rushing defense.

As it applies to Ohio State, after boasting an impressive group of run stoppers for much of last season, the Buckeyes' run defense finished just 24th in the country, mainly due to its lapses against Michigan, leaving plenty of room for improvement.

Following his stint at Western Michigan, Knowles accepted a head coaching position at Cornell, posting a 26-34 record in six seasons. He resigned after a 2-8 campaign in 2009, and Knowles landed at Duke as safeties coach and defensive coordinator, joining forces with head coach David Cutcliffe, whom Knowles had previously worked under at Ole Miss.

Duke's defense didn't exactly have a reputation for excellence before Knowles' arrival in 2010. The Blue Devils allowed 28.3 points per game (83rd nationally) the season prior to his start, and things got worse in Knowles' first year as Duke finished 109th in scoring (35.4 points) and 108th in total defense (450.1 yards) as part of a 3-9 season.

Things started trending upward in year two with a 92nd-place finish in total defense (425.4), but the Blue Devils dropped to 105th nationally a year later, surrendering 469.2 yards per contest to their opposition. In successive seasons after, Duke checked in at 82nd (418.0), 67th (399.7), 60th (394.7) and 67th (414.7) in total defense, and in Knowles' final season of 2017 in Durham, N.C., the Blue Devils posted a top-25 defense that ranked 21st nationally

in total defense at 332.6 yards.

That's eight seasons that it took for Knowles to produce a top-25 defense with the Blue Devils. Duke, of course, is nowhere near Ohio State's football program in terms of talent, with the school's highest-rated recruiting class in the modern era (since 2000) checking in at No. 33 in the country in 2016, according to the 247Sports composite rankings.

Since Urban Meyer arrived at OSU in 2012, Ohio State's lowest-rated class was the 2019 recruiting class, which was No. 14 for the cycle.

"It's not lost on me that I don't have four years here (in Columbus)," Knowles said in February 2022. "This program is ready to win every single game right now, and we have to get the defense to that level."

There's evidence to indicate that the more talent at Knowles' disposal, the shorter the turnaround time for a strong defense.

Oklahoma State served as his last stop prior to Ohio State, with Knowles taking over as defensive coordinator following his successful final season at Duke. The Cowboys had a history of soft defenses that paired with high-flying offenses, not unlike their counterparts in the Big 12 that opted for shootouts rather than defensive battles.

The Cowboys' scoring defense checked in at 85th (29.4 points) in 2017, the year prior to Knowles' arrival, but fell to 97th nationally (32.5 points) in his first season while allowing 452.5 total yards of offense per game, good for 112th nationally.

The next season had the Cowboys rebound to 61st in scoring (26.8) and 82nd in total defense (412.3), and progress continued showing in 2020 despite the chal-

lenges of COVID-19 when Oklahoma State made the top 50 in scoring (34th, 23.5), total (44th, 379.0) and passing defense (47th, 218.9).

Then came 2021, the season that made Knowles a finalist for the Broyles Award. Utilizing Knowles' aggressive 4-2-5 scheme and calling-card Jack position, the Cowboys gave up just 297.9 yards per contest and finished fifth in the country for total defense.

Early years at a program – or a singular early year when it's the caliber of Ohio State – are about relationship building and gaining familiarity, Knowles said. Now it's time for the conversations to change.

"You're coming in that first year and you're making sure that you make that connection with everybody," Knowles said. "Now is the time for me to use it. I need to use that connection and push, hone down on those techniques, because now we have enough on film to show, 'Look at this technique. It's the same play that we did here. Then we gave it up here.' So the bear is in the details, and that's what I need to push."

That ease of relationship and push to nail down those finer details has been felt by Ohio State's players, including those who have spent their fair share of time in the program.

"It's definitely easier to pick up on things and remember things from last year that I probably didn't notice," Ohio State graduate safety Josh Proctor said.

"Practices are the hardest they've been," senior safety Lathan Ransom said. "Coaches are pushing us harder than we've ever been pushed. We're just embracing it man, and we're excited for the journey."

Knowles' defense did just enough to



SONNY BROCKWAY

WORK HARDER — Ohio State senior safety Lathan Ransom (12) said the Buckeyes' spring practices have been among the toughest he's experienced in his time on campus.

win big games for Oklahoma State in his final season in Stillwater, Okla. The Cowboys picked up five ranked wins, including over then-No. 10 Oklahoma, 37-33, and then-No. 5 Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl by an even slimmer 37-35 margin, though Knowles had stepped away from the team at that point. The team's lone two losses on the season — at Iowa State and a rematch with then-No. 9 Baylor in the Big 12 Championship Game — were decided by a single score, with the Cowboys suffering respective 24-21 and 21-16 defeats.

Needless to say, those big-game defensive performances didn't come through for Ohio State last season. Knowles picked back through the Georgia game slowly in the offseason, viewing it in its entirety only once during the month of January. It wasn't all bad, he noted, in retrospect — the Bulldogs were shut out in the third quarter, after all. As he said, it's a matter of eliminating the big plays that cost the unit and finishing ballgames.

"You want to go back and look at a premier offense and a great quarterback, the things that they did to hurt us, we want to make sure that we look at those," Knowles said. "At the same time, you can emphasize the positives and the good things we did against their tight ends and the things that they were strong at that we did well at. It's just so valuable because it's the best competition in the country."

Personnel evaluations are paramount in Knowles attempting to replicate the leaps his defenses made over several years

at Duke and Oklahoma State.

Two transfers have been brought in and could be day-one starters, and Knowles' eyes lit up March 28 when asked about former Ole Miss cornerback Davison Igbinosun, who towers above the Buckeyes' other corners at 6-2. Knowles feels Igbinosun has looked fantastic, and Igbinosun relayed the fact that he's been adjusting well.

"I've felt very comfortable, to be honest with you," Igbinosun said. "After playing my true freshman season last year, I just feel comfortable playing college football now. I'm completely comfortable."

The other transfer is safety Ja'Had Carter, who will most likely play nickel and brings a wealth of experience as a three-year starter at Syracuse. He has 138 tackles, five interceptions and seven pass breakups thus far in his career.

"He's playing nickel right now and doing great," Knowles said. "I think he is going to have a continued role at all three safety positions when it ultimately comes down to being game-ready. He's extremely coachable. If he makes a mistake, you can get him on the sideline in practice and he goes out and fixes it the next play. Not all guys can do that."

Also in the discussions about where to improve the defense from year one to year two is the role the Jack position will play, and who plays it. Last year, the hybrid defensive end/linebacker spot was filled by Jack Sawyer, a former five-star recruit who said on March 23 that he didn't produce at a level that met his expectations.

Sawyer is back to playing a traditional defensive end role this spring, and it seems to be the long-term plan that he stays there. That could mean that Ohio State rolls with more traditional 4-2-5 looks this fall with two true defensive ends, featuring Sawyer opposite junior J.T. Tuimolouau in the front four.

Knowles said eliminating or heavily reducing the use of the Jack is not off the table, but he does still have a few names in mind who could play it. The main two are junior linebacker Mitchell Melton, who missed last season with a torn ACL, and sophomore linebacker C.J. Hicks, a former five-star prospect out of Kettering (Ohio) Alter.

"I was really high on (Melton) last spring until he got hurt," Knowles said. "He was a linebacker, (defensive) lineman. I think he's got a great combination. And come fall, I want to look at C.J., too, because C.J. is a guy who has such great athletic ability and speed, I think if I can direct him more and not have him read as much, but attack more, he can be a real threat."

All the players adjusting to new roles or trying to take the next step have a bevy of experience around them. Defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. is looking to build off a productive start to his second year that was severely limited by a shoulder injury after the team's midseason off week, and the team's two starting linebackers and top two tacklers, seniors Tommy Eichenberg and Steele Chambers, are back for one final go-round.

Proctor and Ransom bring plenty of experience at safety, with junior cornerback

Denzel Burke looking for a bounce-back year after an injury-riddled sophomore campaign followed a promising freshman season.

Generally, Knowles wants to see his players winning one-on-one matchups with the elite offensive talent they're lining up against daily in practice. That's where he draws confidence that the comfort level brought by a second year in the same system is there.

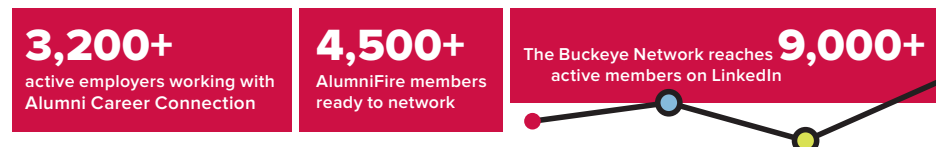
"We're getting our hands on more balls," Knowles said March 28. "We're competing. This is a great offense, and we did not do a great job in those matchup games that we needed to. In order to get better, we have to win against our offense. We have to compete. We have to fight."

While some experimentation and retooling were a part of the spring, the majority of focus for Ohio State's defense at this time has been working on execution and fundamentals in an effort to curb the issues that cost it against Michigan and Georgia. The hope is that all of this can lead to that boost Knowles generally sees in successive years at a program, but with the talent at Ohio State, he could be looking at an expedited process.

"Three-quarters of it (in the spring) is getting better at the base techniques, things we need to do to win every game," Knowles said. "We're looking at the explosive plays, things that might have hurt us, being able to show those to the players and say, 'OK, this is how we're going to fix that.'"

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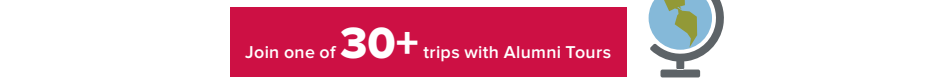
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Stroud, Smith-Njigba Headline Draft Hopefuls

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State made history last year when wide receivers Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave were taken back-to-back in the first round of the 2022 NFL draft, and while the Buckeyes won't have two first-round receivers in the upcoming draft, this draft class could be even more historic for Ohio State.

Quarterback C.J. Stroud enters as the presumed No. 1 overall selection, expected to be taken with the top pick by the Carolina Panthers, who gave up four picks – including two first-rounders – to claim the top spot in the 2023 NFL draft, scheduled for April 27-29 in Kansas City, Mo. Since trading up for the pick, the Panthers have spent significant time with Stroud and also sent a large contingent of team representatives – including head coach Frank Reich, general manager Scott Fitterer and owners David and Nicole Tepper – to Ohio State's pro day on March 22.

"It means a lot," Stroud said of the Panthers' support. "I think that shows how much – not only that they're interested in me – but I'm interested in them. To meet them, know them as people and get to know them better and better as a person, I think that's really big."

Stroud would become just the fifth Ohio State quarterback to be taken in the first round and the third in the last five drafts, joining Justin Fields in 2021 and Dwayne Haskins in 2019. If taken with any of the top three picks, he would become the highest-drafted quarterback in Ohio State history, surpassing the previous mark set by Art Schlichter, who was taken by the Baltimore Colts with the No. 4 pick in the 1982 NFL draft.

If taken with the top overall pick, he would become just the fourth Buckeye taken at No. 1, joining linebacker Tom Cousineau (1979, Buffalo Bills), defensive tackle Dan Wilkinson (1994, Cincinnati Bengals) and offensive tackle Orlando Pace (1997, St. Louis Rams). Being picked at that juncture would back up Stroud's thoughts on his play.

"You can put on my film," he said. "I think I've been the best player in college football two years in a row. I think I've consistently done that."

Stroud will be the first Buckeye off the board, but he most likely won't be the last to hear his name called in the first round. Also expected among the first 32 selections – potentially even as high as the top 10, according to some projections – is wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

Though Smith-Njigba appeared in just three games last season while dealing with a lingering hamstring injury, his stock has remained high, and impressive outings at the NFL Scouting Combine and Ohio State's pro day have only further catapulted his stock.

He's considered by most to be one of the top two wideouts in the draft, along with USC's Jordan Addison, and projections have Smith-Njigba going anywhere from late in the first round to one of the first non-quarterbacks off the board, with Houston at No. 12 as a popular landing spot.

Another Buckeye expected around this range is offensive tackle Paris Johnson Jr., whom few see getting past either the Chicago Bears at No. 9 or the Tennessee Titans at No. 11. Either way, Johnson would be joining a team with some Ohio State flair, blocking for Fields, his former quarterback, with the Bears or playing for former Buckeye Mike Vrabel in Tennessee.

Johnson was not a full participant at either the combine or pro day, doing just a handful of drills while opting to let his film and interviews with teams speak for his game.

"I feel like I've proven that in my film already," he said. "And at this time, it's me being able to show them in the interviews, being able to get (them) on board. I'm

able to explain my technique, what went right, what went wrong, things I can improve on, what's the mindset, how quick am I (remembering) a play (that was) installed. All that stuff's been great."

Northwestern offensive tackle Peter Skoronski is expected to be the first tackle off the board, followed shortly by Johnson. While not as highly regarded as either prospect, Ohio State offensive tackle Dawand Jones – who paced the Buckeyes at right tackle, with Johnson playing on the left side – is also a possible first-round selection for Ohio State, though that is not a guarantee like the others listed above him.

Jones' mock drafts range anywhere from midway through the first round all the way to a third-round pick, so there's a wide range of predictions on where the gargantuan tackle might end up. A selection by the Indianapolis Colts with the No. 35 overall pick is a popular landing spot, but a run on offensive tackles – as well as the general chaos of the draft – could see Jones rise into the first round.

That wraps up the Ohio State prospects with first-round potential, but it's far from the complete list of Buckeyes looking to hear their names called. Defensive end Zach Harrison and center Luke Wypler are both candidates to be selected on the second night of the draft, which includes rounds two and three.

Harrison was limited for much of the pre-draft process with a hamstring injury suffered just days before the combine, which is a significant blow considering that Harrison's athletic nature likely would have shone in those settings. A team could take a flyer on the former five-star prospect in an earlier round, but a third-round selection appears likely for Harrison.

Wypler was the only surprise among this group of draftees in regard to declaring for the draft, opting to leave Ohio State after just three overall seasons and

two as the Buckeyes' starting center. He doesn't have the buzz of his draft-eligible teammates on the offensive line, but a strong performance at the combine has Wypler in position to go during the first two days.

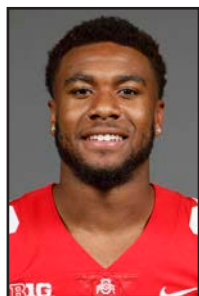
"You couldn't have really made a bad decision, I kept telling myself. Whatever I chose, I knew I was going to be all right," Wypler said. "For me, the NFL just made more sense."

All those previously listed are expected to hear their names called within the first three rounds, but there are a handful of draft-eligible Buckeyes who will likely have to wait until the draft's third day – rounds four through seven – before being selected.

Safety Ronnie Hickman is expected to be next off the board, projected as a fourth-round selection, while cornerback Cameron Brown is viewed as either a fifth- or sixth-round pick. The pair have been quiet during the pre-draft process, with both opting out of drills at the combine and only Brown participating at Ohio State's pro day, leaving scouts with little to work on other than film and interviews.

Two Buckeyes on the bubble are safety Tanner McCalister and defensive tackle Taron Vincent, both expected to end up as undrafted free agents once the draft has concluded. McCalister impressed at Ohio State's pro day with a speedy 4.44 40-yard dash and could be in high demand as a free agent if he doesn't sneak into the later rounds.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is highlighting eight potential draftees hoping to hear their names called at the NFL draft. The following boxes contain accolades, projected rounds, quotes from players, measurements, recruiting rankings and expert analysis from NFL.com's Lance Zierlein, who has profiled hundreds of draft-eligible prospects.



CAMERON BROWN

Cornerback
6-0 • 197

Recruit Rank: Overall 323
Pro Day 40: 4.53 seconds

ACCOLADES: Brown came back from an injury-shortened 2020 campaign to play in 10 games with five starts in 2021, earning all-Big Ten honorable mention after notching 24 tackles, seven pass breakups and an interception. He had 14 tackles and five breakups in eight games last season.

PROJECTED ROUND: Sixth round

BROWN SAYS: "Ohio State gave me the mindset of an NFL player. Most college coaches try to just teach certain things, but they showed me the more detailed part of the game that's not only athletic ability. Because when you get to the NFL, everybody's talented, everybody's athletic. It's all about what are you going to do with it."

ZIERLEIN'S TAKE: "Instinctive cover man with good size and strength but limited starting reps due to injuries. Brown plays the game with natural talent to pick up on route tells and read the quarterback. He can play man or zone, but is much better keeping the action in front of him than chasing it down the field. While he locates the deep ball and remains calm in the process, he might not have the speed or high-point talent to keep teams from picking on him deep. He's tough and willing in run support. Brown should have a career as a backup with some upside if he can stay healthy."



ZACH HARRISON

Defensive End
6-5 • 269

Recruit Rank: Overall 12; DE 2
Pro Day 40: Did not run (hamstring injury)

ACCOLADES: Harrison was named a team captain in 2021 and finished with eight tackles for loss and four sacks, earning second-team All-Big Ten honors. He posted or tied career highs in 2022 with 34 tackles, eight tackles for loss, four pass breakups and his first career interception.

PROJECTED ROUND: Third round

HARRISON SAYS: "You want to have double-digit sack seasons and things like that, but you've got to realize there are other ways to affect the game, and I feel that I did that well."

ZIERLEIN'S TAKE: "Harrison is big and long with the ability to neutralize base blocks as a 4-3 base end, but his gradual movement and lack of playmaking urgency limited his overall production. Harrison has the physical tools to create occasional advantages early in the rush but needs to get better at capitalizing on them. His size and length will always be appealing, but a more fiery demeanor on the field might be needed to raise his status beyond rotational end."



RONNIE HICKMAN

Safety
6-0 • 209

Recruit Rank: Overall 115; SAF 10 • Pro Day 40: Did not run

ACCOLADES: Hickman led Ohio State with 100 tackles in 2021 and earned all-conference nods from the media and coaches. He followed it up with 53 tackles and a career-high seven pass breakups this past season, earning third-team All-Big Ten honors.

PROJECTED ROUND: Fourth round

HICKMAN SAYS: "I've told all the teams that I've met with: When it comes to learning playbooks, when it comes to learning schemes, when it comes to different styles of coaching – I'm prepared for it. I'm ready for it."

ZIERLEIN'S TAKE: "Two-year starter with NFL size but lacking functional change of direction as an open-field tackler. Hickman is at his best as a down safety or big nickel, where he doesn't have to close as much distance on the runner or pass-catcher. He can make plays as a run defender and in coverage when he's in position, but issues redirecting in small spaces create uncertainty that he can play consistently enough to move beyond backup status."



PARIS JOHNSON JR.

Offensive Tackle
6-6 • 311

Recruit Rank: Overall 9; OT 1
Pro Day 40: Did not run

ACCOLADES: Johnson started 26 games over the last two seasons – 13 each at right guard and left tackle – and earned first-team All-Big Ten honors this past season. He was also named a semifinalist for the Rotary Lombardi Award, given to the best offensive lineman in college football.

PROJECTED ROUND: First round

JOHNSON SAYS: "I knew that Ohio State could give me everything I wanted to be, three-and-out if I did everything right. It wasn't going to come easy. It wasn't something that if I just sat back and waited, it would have happened. This is something I've always planned to do, but I had to do everything right."

ZIERLEIN'S TAKE: "Long, athletic tackle in need of additional technique work but possessing the traits to become a longtime starter on the left side. Johnson is still filling out his frame, and he should get stronger. He's much better as a move blocker than man blocker but he can bridge that gap with more coaching. He's loose and quick in pass protection but will need to add core strength and get better with inside hands to prevent edge defenders from bypassing his anchor. Johnson's athletic tools and position versatility are advantageous, but the going could be a little bumpy early on before he settles in."



DAWAND JONES

Offensive Tackle
6-8 • 374

Recruit Rank: Overall 1043; OT 86
NFL Combine 40: 5.35 seconds

ACCOLADES: Jones earned third-team All-American and second-team All-Big Ten honors in 2021 after starting all 13 games at right tackle, and he followed it up last season with a first-team All-American honor from CBS Sports and several second-team recognitions.

PROJECTED ROUND: First to second round

JONES SAYS: "If you turn on the tape, you can kind of just see the reasons why I love the game. I love the hustle. I love everything that comes with it. I feel like now, it's to the point where I die with it. It's not because of the money, it's because I have fun with the game."

ZIERLEIN'S TAKE: "Massive right tackle with rare length but limited athleticism that impacts his consistency. Defenders accustomed to winning with power will need to switch up their approach against Jones. His physical traits help cover up some of his athletic deficiencies, while his power can be better unleashed with accurate hand strikes and a run scheme tailored to what he does best ... Jones is a work in progress with holes that will have to be covered up with scheme help, but he should become a starting right tackle if he maintains the playing weight his team desires."



JAXON SMITH-NJIGBA

Wide Receiver
6-0 • 197

Recruit Rank: Overall 29; WR 5
Pro Day 40: 4.48 seconds

ACCOLADES: Smith-Njigba missed almost all of the 2022 season after setting Ohio State single-season records in 2021 with 1,606 receiving yards and 95 receptions, including an FBS bowl- and program-record 347 receiving yards in the Buckeyes' Rose Bowl win over Utah.

PROJECTED ROUND: First round

SMITH-NJIGBA SAYS: "I think my playmaking ability is second to none in this draft. From playing basketball (as a kid), I feel like my creativity is what sets me apart also. Just being able to create and react to the defender is the strong point in my game, and taking advantage of that. I just try to use all those qualities and get the job done."

ZIERLEIN'S TAKE: "Smith-Njigba is a possession slot receiver who lacks the shake to separate underneath and the speed to run past defenses. He's tough in the middle of the defense and has proven he can make catches in congestion. Smith-Njigba will need to fine-tune his route running to give himself his best chance to succeed at the next level. It is impossible to ignore his monster finish to the 2021 season, and he has starting slot potential, but the speed concerns coupled with an injury-plagued 2022 season threaten to negatively impact his draft stock."



C.J. STROUD

Quarterback
6-3 • 213

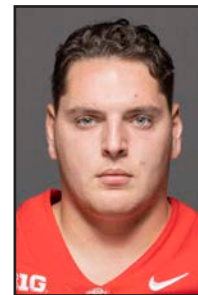
Recruit Rank: Overall 42; QB 2
Pro Day 40: Did not run

ACCOLADES: Stroud is a two-time Heisman finalist and finished second in Ohio State history with 8,123 yards and 85 passing touchdowns. He is a two-time Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year and Quarterback of the Year and has been a finalist for the Walter Camp Player of the Year, the Maxwell Award and the Davey O'Brien Award.

PROJECTED ROUND: First round

STROUD SAYS: "For me, if you put on my film, I think I've been the best player in college football two years in a row. Honestly, I haven't touched my potential yet."

ZIERLEIN'S TAKE: "Stroud's accuracy stands out on tape. He's able to lead receivers with good placement and make on-frame throws to targets on all areas of the field. The question now is how quickly he will acclimate outside of the Ohio State scheme. Stroud didn't often attack defenses with his legs, but if he can become a more willing runner, he will be able to extend drives rather than feeling forced into more challenging decision-making situations. NFL teams will have to balance what they saw on tape from Stroud during the 2022 regular season against his great College Football Playoff semifinal performance, when he shined versus Georgia's impressive collection of pro prospects."



LUKE WYPLER

Center
6-2 • 302

Recruit Rank: Overall 108; OC 2
• NFL Combine 40: 5.14 seconds

ACCOLADES: Wypler earned the starting center job for the 2021 season and has since started every game at center, and in the process he was named to the watch list for the Rimington Award – given to the nation's top center – in 2022.

PROJECTED ROUND: Second round

WYPLER SAYS: "I played against some of the best competition that college football has to offer, and for me, I excelled and played well. It made sense for the next step."

ZIERLEIN'S TAKE: "Wypler is undersized but highly athletic. His initial quickness gets him to the best angles, whether he's cutting off linebackers or reaching and sealing outside zone blocks. He's capable of pulling and leading the action in space, and is best suited for a move-based running attack. His lack of size and length will show up when working downhill, where he struggles to sustain. He's aware in pass protection but big bull rushers are a cause for concern. Wypler is a good technician and capable of becoming an average starter in the right scheme."

Former Buckeye Brockington Dies At 74

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

John Brockington always seemed to have a smile on his face, and it was no run-of-the-mill, I-know-something-you-don't-know kind of smirk. It was a gleaming, high-voltage, ear-to-ear, full-of-life grin that would have made the Cheshire cat envious. It was also a smile that belied the iron-willed toughness of a man who overcame hurdle after hurdle during a lifetime ultimately filled with triumphs.

From growing up in a drug-infested environment and overcoming the initial doubts of his head coach to becoming a football star at Ohio State to becoming a tireless healthcare advocate and fund-raiser after receiving a lifesaving kidney transplant, Brockington remained throughout the years a reliable friend, teammate and inspiration to fellow members of the Super Sophomores who helped lead the Buckeyes to the 1968 national championship.

"Brock was a pretty special guy who led a wonderful life," former OSU quarterback Rex Kern told BSB. "He was a great football player, of course, but he was also a great friend, a great man of faith, and just a great, great person. From the first time I met him to the last time I saw him, I always thoroughly enjoyed my time with Brock."

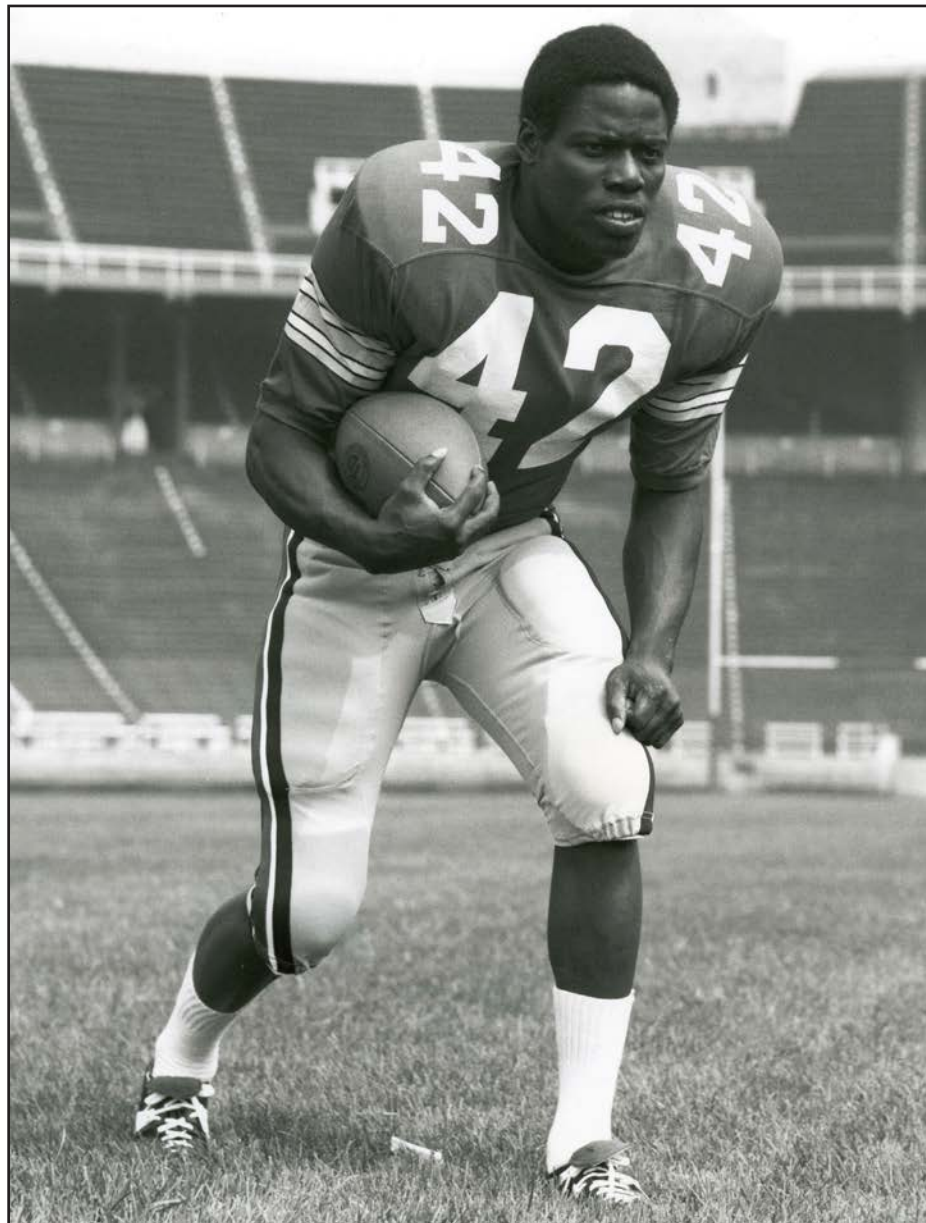
Brockington, who died March 31 at the age of 74 due to complications from cancer, is remembered by most Ohio State fans as a hulking fullback who helped the Buckeyes win 27 of 29 games between 1968 and 1970 as well as capturing the consensus national championship in 1968 and the National Football Foundation's version of the title in 1970.

The truth is that Brockington wasn't that big, standing only 6-1 and weighing a modest 216 pounds. And he was a starter at OSU for just one season. But his speed, leverage and power helped him strike terror in opposing defenses during his sophomore and junior seasons as a halfback running interference for such teammates as Kern and fullback Jim Otis.

When Otis graduated following the 1969 season, Brockington moved seamlessly into the fullback spot where his methodical, piston-like running style helped to establish a new program rushing record with 1,142 yards. He finished his OSU career with 1,663 yards on the ground, then the sixth-highest total in program history, trailing only Otis (2,542, 1967-69), Howard "Hopalong" Cassady (2,466, 1952-55), Bob Ferguson (2,162, 1959-61), Don Clark (2,116, 1956-58) and Kern (1,714, 1968-70).

That Brockington wound up wearing scarlet and gray was something of a fluke. Woody Hayes, who prided himself on taking young men from a wide range of environments, meshing their disparate personalities and molding them into a team with single-minded unity, wasn't sure he wanted to take a chance on an inner-city kid with questionable academics.

John Stanley Brockington was born Sept. 7, 1948, in New York City, and he spent most of his youth across the East



FILE PHOTO

REST IN PEACE — Former Ohio State fullback John Brockington, who played for the Buckeyes from 1968-70 and was a member of the famed "Super Sophomores," died March 31 at the age of 74 due to complications from cancer.

River, growing up in a housing complex in the heart of the Brooklyn melting pot. The Bayview Projects were predominantly white and Jewish, with only six Black families scattered among the 13-building cluster, but while everyone in that neighborhood seemed to get along well enough, the vagrancies of growing up in the inner city were a constant reminder with its pimps and pushers just a block or two away.

"There were temptations," Brockington once admitted. "But my dad and especially my mom were always warning me against that kind of stuff. My mom got every piece of anti-drug information she could get her hands on, and she made me watch educational programs on TV. Plus, I knew that from a very young age that if I was ever going to get out of the projects, I was going to have to stay clean."

Staying clean was also the mantra of Brockington's high school coach. Moe Finkelstein won more than 200 games as well as five city league championships and 18 division titles during his legendary career at Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn, and he also churned out a number of

future National Football League players including Brockington and Chicago Bears linebacker Otis Wilson.

"John was a big youngster who could run very fast, and it was obvious he was going places," Finkelstein said. "I will never forget this. We had a history teacher by the name of Bob Shane, and he used to do the announcing at the games. On the Monday after the first game that John played for us, Bob came over to me and said, 'This youngster's going to play in the NFL someday.' Obviously, that was true. Everyone could see the talent."

First, though, Brockington had to select a college, and Syracuse University seemed a logical choice for any New York high school running back. The Orange had a rich tradition of producing some of the best running backs in history, beginning with Pro Football Hall of Famer Jim Brown and Ernie Davis, the 1961 Heisman Trophy winner, and continuing into the middle 1960s with All-Pros Jim Nance and Floyd Little. But Brockington had drawn interest from other schools as well, including Ohio State.

Larry Catuzzi, a young assistant on Hayes' staff in 1967, had grown up in East Rutherford, N.J., just across the Hudson River from New York City, and was assigned to recruit the New Jersey and New York City areas. Those were fertile recruiting grounds for eastern colleges and universities in those days but largely neglected by Midwestern powers such as Ohio State.

Catuzzi contacted Finkelstein, who put him in touch with Brockington. But the OSU assistant faced an immediate hurdle as he sought to include the running back in a star-studded recruiting class of 1967 that would eventually include Kern, Jack Tatum, Mike Sensibaugh, Jim Stillwagon, Leo Hayden and Jan White.

Catuzzi discovered Brockington had begun studies at a New York prep school in order to improve his grades, but the schooling was being paid for by Syracuse, and it only stood to reason that longtime Orange head coach Ben Schwartzwalder would likely want something in return — such as the youngster's signature on a national letter of intent.

After an official trip to Columbus, however, Brockington was sold on the Buckeyes, but Catuzzi still had to sell his head coach on Brockington. The prospect's grades remained shaky, Hayes argued, and there was the matter of Syracuse paying for his prep school classes. And Brockington had another issue. By then, he had become a father of a little girl, and Hayes wondered if it wouldn't be better for all concerned if the New York native stayed closer to home to care for his young family.

But Catuzzi was unwavering, and as the May 17 signing deadline neared, Hayes finally relented. Brockington would become a Buckeye, a decision neither man would regret.

"If it wasn't for Larry Catuzzi," Brockington said, "I would never have gone to Ohio State. That little guy changed my life."

Still, there was some tough sledding ahead. Brockington got lost on campus during his first day of school at Ohio State, and when he finally stumbled his way into an American History class, he drew the stares of some 500 other freshmen in the lecture hall. Later, he looked on as several fellow students around him began scribbling in notebooks. Finally, curiosity got the better of him.

"What are you doing?" he asked a pretty girl seated next to him. "Taking notes," she whispered back.

"Taking notes? I didn't have any idea about taking notes," said Brockington, who enlisted the help of academic advisors to help him learn what notes to take and how to take them.

On the football field, things weren't going much better. On one of Brockington's first practice carries, he started up the middle before bouncing outside and using his speed to get to the edge for a long gain. As he returned to the huddle wearing that huge smile, Hayes came running over in a rage.

"That play goes off-tackle," the coach screamed, "and by God, you'll run off-tack-

JOHN BROCKINGTON: 1948-2023

le or you'll never carry the football here again!" Brockington got the message that there were two ways to do things at Ohio State: Woody's way and the wrong way.

Freshman coach Glenn "Tiger" Ellison took to calling him "Wild Horse" for his knee-pumping gallop. Meanwhile, Kern was forced to perfect his skills at handing off the ball after he got too close to Brock during a practice drill one afternoon and was knocked head over heels in the powerful running back's wake.

"But that was nothing compared to what happened to Mace," Kern said with a chuckle.

Quarterback Ron Maciejowski discovered on his first day of freshman practice what opposing defenders already knew about Brockington.

"I think we were both listed as third-teamers on the initial depth chart," Maciejowski said, "and they called what was supposed to be a simple off-tackle play. Nothing but taking the snap and handing the ball off, something I'd done about a million times. But here comes Brock to take the ball, and he comes at me with his arm way up. As I go to stick the ball in his belly, his elbow hit me in the nose as he's running past me. He almost knocked me out, and I'm out there thinking, 'If a guy from my own team does that to me, maybe I don't belong here.'

"But that was the beginning of a friendship that lasted more than 50 years. We were close in college, and then we just got closer and closer the last 20 years. He was absolutely the best."

When the Super Sophs joined the varsity for the 1968 season, they helped lead the Buckeyes to a Big Ten championship and the program's first Rose Bowl appearance in 11 years. In Pasadena, Brockington got only two carries for 6 yards during the 27-16 victory against defending national champion USC, but his devastating blocks sprang Kern, Otis and Hayden on countless occasions and helped the OSU running game pile up 260 yards against the Trojans.

The Buckeyes won another Big Ten championship and Rose Bowl berth two years later, and this time Brockington made his own holes, rumbling for 101 yards and a pair of touchdowns despite a 27-17 loss to Stanford. After college, Brockington was an instant star in the National Football League, becoming the first player in league history to rush for at least 1,000 yards in each of his first three seasons after Green Bay made him the ninth overall selection in the 1971 draft.

"John was the toughest, hardest-hitting running back that I ever knew," said Bill Lueck, who was the starting left guard for the Packers from 1969 to 1974. "We used to joke that nobody wanted to be the first guy to make contact with John Brockington. He was a beast. He'd run over you, but he was elusive, too. That's what made him such a dangerous running back. He might run over you on the first play, and then on the next, you're all tensed up and ready for this major collision, and then he'd put a move on you. That's why he was so good. You never knew what was coming."



FILE PHOTO

PAY IT FORWARD — Former Ohio State fullback John Brockington helped lift the Buckeyes — including head coach Woody Hayes (left) and quarterback Rex Kern (right) — to a pair of Rose Bowl trips as well as a national championship in 1968.

Following a seven-year pro career that included three trips to the Pro Bowl as well as NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year honors in 1971, Brockington settled in the San Diego area and went into private business.

He was a 2001 kidney transplant recipient from his then-girlfriend, Diane, and then after the couple married, they partnered in the John Brockington Foundation to provide a variety of benefits for

kidney-disease patients, including free screenings, assisting with expenses not covered by other sources, using dialysis clinics and social workers to identify those in greatest need of help, and offering food vouchers for those on dialysis.

"I'm just doing what Woody taught us," Brockington once said. "Pay forward, he used to say. You can never pay back, so you should always pay forward."

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Transfers Sparking Progress In Secondary

By JACK EMERSON

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Over the years, the Ohio State secondary has gone by many names.

The cornerbacks have fashioned themselves as the Best In America – or BIA, for short – while the secondary as a whole gained the moniker of Defensive Back University, also known as DBU, for the constant stream of NFL-caliber defensive backs that Ohio State produced for much of the 2010s.

Throughout the history of Ohio State football, the Buckeye secondary has largely lived up to those lofty expectations, but in recent seasons, the pass defense hasn't quite fit the bill.

The Buckeyes finished in the bottom half of the Big Ten in pass defense in 2020 and 2021, and after marginal improvements for much of last season, the unit floundered in the two biggest games, allowing 676 passing yards and six passing touchdowns in the regular-season finale against Michigan and the College Football Playoff semifinal against Georgia.

With the late-season slide and departures of three starters in the secondary in cornerback Cameron Brown and safeties Ronnie Hickman and Tanner McCalister, head coach Ryan Day recognized the need to bolster the unit for the upcoming campaign and did just that by adding Syracuse safety Ja'Had Carter (6-1, 203) and Ole Miss cornerback Davison Igbinosun (6-0, 203) by way of the transfer portal during the offseason.

Though the secondary remains a chief concern for Day, he's said he's largely been encouraged by the unit's progress this spring with Carter and Igbinosun in tow.

"They've gotten their hands on balls," Day said. "As a group, right now they're competing, they're challenging. I don't think we could ask for a better start to spring practice."

"I just like their attitude, I like their competitiveness. It's a bunch of guys working on the perimeter every day, and that's what we want. We want to be really competitive this spring in everything we do."

Neither Carter nor Igbinosun has been guaranteed a starting spot, with both largely working with the second unit during spring camp, but their presence on the roster means a great deal for depth in their position rooms. Ohio State entered last season with just six scholarship cornerbacks on the roster, and injuries further decimated the unit during fall camp and into the regular season, while the safeties also dealt with their own share of ailments.

With Igbinosun and Carter, the Buckeyes were able to bolster their depth with a pair of contributors at other Power Five programs, regardless of whether either player starts for the Buckeyes this season. But Igbinosun and Carter didn't just come to Ohio State to be depth pieces. They're both seeking opportunities to see the field in their first season with the Buckeyes.

Both transfer defensive backs believe they've fit right in with the culture built by Day and his staff.

"Competing is something I've done my whole life," Carter said. "Coming here, I just



BRADEN MOLES

ANSWER AT TRANSFER – Ohio State cornerback Davison Igbinosun, who joined the Buckeyes this offseason after transferring from Ole Miss, is looking to claim a starting spot in the secondary after starting 10 games as a true freshman in the SEC.

felt like it was a good opportunity. I'm willing to do whatever I've got to do to excel and get to that next level."

Igbinosun shares Carter's attitude, noting that Ohio State's approach to building competitive traits was one of the main factors in his choice of the Buckeyes.

"Every school preaches competition, but Ohio State lives competition every single day from the weight room to the field," Igbinosun said. "You're competing in everything."

Not only do both players possess the necessary competitiveness to survive at Ohio State, but the duo also adds some much-needed experience to lean on in the Buckeyes' secondary.

Carter appeared in 31 games in his three seasons at Syracuse, amassing 28 starts in that time for the Orange, while Igbinosun made 13 appearances and 10 starts in his freshman season last year with the Rebels. Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said their addition provides the secondary unit with a much-needed boost.

"We can really be picky about the guys (we bring in), and you're talking about two starters at Power Five programs that now come in with experience, and I think they give us great competition," he said. "That's what we need in the back end. We need competition. We need guys fighting to play. We need guys competing against our offense and getting hands on balls."

As to where either player may line up come Sept. 2 at Indiana, Carter is likely to factor in at the competition for Knowles' nickel safety spot, while Igbinosun looks to claim the starting cornerback spot opposite

two-year incumbent starter Denzel Burke.

While at Syracuse, Carter saw the field as one of the Orange's three starting safeties, typically lining up at either the boundary or nickel spot. He tallied 138 tackles, five interceptions and a defensive touchdown while earning freshman All-American honors in 2020 and an All-ACC honorable mention in 2022.

Carter's acclimation process to Ohio State has seen him get reps at all three of the safety positions in Knowles' safety-driven defense during spring camp in order for him to find his footing within the defense.

"They've had me around everything so I can learn all of the positions," Carter said. "I just don't want to be singling out one position. If you're playing one position, it's good to know everything because you never know if there are different adjustments when you have to go into the game. You have to be ready at all times."

However, Carter's acclimation process was thrown off course after he sustained a knee injury during Ohio State's Student Appreciation practice on April 1. Day tried to alleviate any long-term concerns regarding the injury, noting he received encouraging news from the team's medical staff.

"We got good information back," Day said. "We'll have to get it evaluated. You hold your breath because you just don't know how stable that knee is, anytime you're dealing with a knee. We felt like it was (stable). We'll get it evaluated for sure and make sure we cross every T on this thing and dot every I."

"Ja'Had's had a really good spring, and hopefully, we can get him back soon."

Safeties coach Perry Eliano said that Carter has brought a workmanlike approach to the safety unit since his arrival and has applied that to his fight for a starting job in the secondary.

"Ja'Had knew coming in that nothing is given to anybody in the building," Eliano said. "You earn everything here. He knew that coming in and said, 'I just want to compete. I want to develop. I want to be the best and play with the best.' He's come in and he's worked, and I love it. He's kept his head down and worked. He takes hard coaching, and I can see him getting better and better within the system."

Like Carter, Igbinosun also reached freshman All-American status, earning a nod from College Football News, after collecting 37 tackles and five pass breakups in his 13 games with Ole Miss.

Igbinosun already has a season of high-level SEC football under his belt and joins the Buckeyes as a true sophomore. He said those experiences helped make his transition to Ohio State much easier.

"Coming in as a freshman last year, that was probably the hardest thing that I've ever done in my entire life," Igbinosun said. "So I feel like nothing else, or everything that happens to me moving forward, is not going to be as hard."

In the short time since Igbinosun joined the Buckeyes, he's already left an impression on his fellow cornerbacks, including Burke, who said Igbinosun is a "dog" at cornerback for the Buckeyes. To Day, Igbinosun's aggressiveness and length have stood out since he arrived on campus, and he said Igbinosun has given Ohio State's talented wide receivers some issues in spring camp.

"His physicality, you see for sure," Day said. "And that length, once you get your hands on him when you have that type of length, it makes it hard for the receiver. Also, being a zone corner and having that type of length and size allows you to cover more ground and get your hands on more balls. For him, he's got experience playing in the SEC as a freshman, so I think that helps with his confidence."

With Igbinosun and Carter inserted into a unit that also boasts high-end talent with the likes of Burke and safety Lathan Ransom, among others, expectations are rising for Ohio State's secondary. As the group seeks to legitimize the use of the nicknames BIA and DBU again, the additions of Igbinosun and Carter may be exactly what was needed to right the ship.

"The next step and evolution of this defense really start in the back end," Knowles said. "Everywhere I've been it's taken me time to get the back end up to having that confidence to compete, and you bring in two guys like that and the other guys see it. They walk right in and they're mature and they're not messing around. They're not a young guy who're coming in and feeling things out. These guys aren't messing around, and it pushes everyone."

Modern Recruiting Begins With Pryor's Carousel

By **ANDY ANDERS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

So many major prospects update their own recruitments and interact with the fan bases of various schools over Twitter in the modern recruiting age, so one recruit generating significant media buzz and attention throughout his decision-making process has become par for the course.

Looking back at the origins of such trends, one recruitment stands out as one of the first national media frenzies playing out in a public space – that of former Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor, who joined up with the Buckeyes via the 2008 recruiting class.

“His commitment was before this era of self-reporting on your own recruitment through social media, whether it be Twitter, Instagram, however you want to do it,” Buckeye Huddle reporter Kevin Noon said. “It was much more of an industry where reporters had to go out and get the information because there weren’t a lot of outlets.

“While there certainly was the same interest when it came to following recruitments, I think that with Terrelle, we did see a lot of things that are much more commonplace now.”

Through the ups and downs of his recruitment, Pryor drew attention from a who’s-who of media outlets including The Washington Post and The New York Times, the subject of both features and columns, with reporters – not unlike recruiting analysts now across any number of recruiting websites – giving their opinions on how Pryor was going about his decision.

“It was the precursor to the Internet going insane over recruiting,” said Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst and former BSB contributor Bill Greene. “It was such a shift for me from the early Buckeye Sports Bulletin days to this. It was so crazy, and it took off from there. You saw people really starting to build classes the way Ohio State did back then – from the inside, with the commitments themselves.”

In the end, Pryor signed with a class that identified with his approach in many ways. Nicknamed the “Brew Crew” after five-star center Michael Brewster (6-5, 293) due to his perceived leadership of the class, Ohio State’s class of 2008 commitments were all about publicly trying to pull the best talent from around the country to join them in Columbus. Greene referred to them as “rock stars” given how the Ohio State fan base ate up coverage of the group.

Pryor’s talent was obvious to anyone who watched him in person or saw him on film. Standing 6-6 and weighing in at 210 pounds during his recruitment, Pryor was clocked at 4.46 seconds in the 40-yard dash, rushed for 1,901 yards and threw for 1,790 more for Jeannette, Pa., as the Jayhawks went undefeated and won a state championship.

“He had this transcendent athletic ability at quarterback and could run so incredibly fast and escape defenders,” Bucknuts reporter Steve Helwage said. “If a play broke down, he could get you 40 yards, so that was a unique thing about him. But when he had the time, and the inclination, he could also throw the ball all over the yard.”

The Buckeyes were involved in Pryor’s recruitment from early on. Then-head coach Jim Tressel and his staff made inroads as quickly as they could, recognizing the talent they saw on tape.

“I think Jim Tressel made the kid a priority,” Helwage said. “And Joe Daniels was the quarterbacks coach, Darrell Hazel would have probably been there too. They all made Terrelle Pryor a priority, and I think he sensed that.”

Keeping to himself during much of football season, Pryor seemed to slow-play his recruitment through the fall and winter months. He took an official visit to Ohio State on Nov. 2, 2007, and then to Michigan on Jan. 18, 2008.

Four candidates emerged as the process unfolded for Pryor, those that would be his finalists when he ultimately made his decision: Michigan, Ohio State, Oregon and Penn State. The Nittany Lions had an advantage in that Pryor’s dad, Craig, grew a close relationship with Penn State head coach Joe Paterno, according to Greene.

“Ohio State was in from the beginning. They were right there,” Greene said. “Penn State was thought to maybe be the leader in where his family wanted him to go. Oregon was also in it, and Oregon was running that Chip Kelly offense then, and to be honest that was the perfect offense for him.”

Given the athleticism that he possessed, a thought emerged at the time that a spread offense could make the best use of Pryor’s skill set, unlike Tressel’s scheme that centered on ball control, field position and strong defense. A spread offense like Kelly’s or that of Rich Rodriguez, the pending coach at Michigan, looked better on paper.

“The Tressel offense really didn’t fit Pryor at all,” Greene added, “but he was so good that he could make anything work.”

Despite the number of reasons that Pryor’s other top schools seemed appealing, those covering his recruitment felt confident throughout the journey that Ohio State would end up as Pryor’s destination, mainly due to sources close to Pryor. Still, Pryor’s own quiet approach to the process left a lot of speculation, mostly heightened by his talent.

“It made it more tricky, and there was a lot more trying to read the tea leaves with Terrelle than some other guys, because I think that, truthfully speaking, nobody knew until they knew,” Noon said. “(Even) from the time Terrelle said, ‘I’m going to Ohio State’ to the time that he faxed the letter of intent in, nobody was sure if anything would change at that point. It was just one of those recruitments.”

Another one of things that separated Pryor’s recruitment and the media circus around it was the interplay between the prospect and the fan bases of the schools that coveted him. It’s commonplace now for recruits to post photos and tag teams on Twitter and Instagram from visits, looking to grow their social media brand, or wear apparel from schools they haven’t committed to yet. The photoshoot during a visit means as much now to some as meeting with the coaches.

When Pryor donned a Michigan sweatshirt during Army All-American Bowl practices in January of 2008, it created quite a

buzz about where he could be leaning. A similar buzz was generated when viewers spotted a Buckeye sticker on his helmet during the All-American Bowl Game itself after hanging out with a group of Ohio State commitments that were there.

An Ohio State wide receiver commit and a friend of Pryor’s, DeVier Posey, later revealed that he put the sticker there as a prank.

“It was an interesting time, that’s for sure,” Helwage said. “It was kind of this period of college athletics where you figured some things were going to change at some point, because it wasn’t going to go on in the way that it was. It’s kind of a precursor to what we’re seeing now with name, image and likeness.”

National Signing Day arrived weeks later on Feb. 6, and a national television audience tuned in to watch Pryor choose his school. He came on the air and announced that his commitment announcement would come at a later date.

“We won the state championship, we went through 16 games. Then right from there, two days later, I jumped into basketball,” Pryor said. “We’re just on the run with that too. So I haven’t really had that much time to get involved in the recruiting process, and I’d like to just take some time and be fair to all the coaches that are recruiting me.”

That’s when the pandemonium cranked up yet another notch. Pryor didn’t give a date for when his pledge would come, though he did say he still wanted to take official visits to Penn State and Oregon.

“You start the whole sequence all over again of, ‘Well, where is he going to go?’ ” Greene said. “Everybody is looking for every little tidbit you could get.”

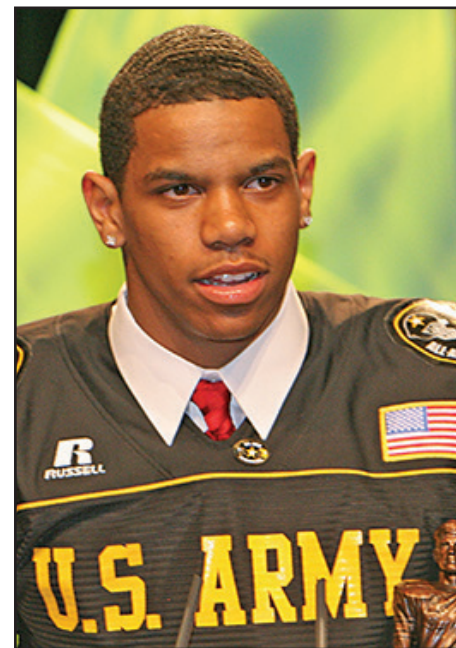
Part of the reason for the delay past signing day, Greene added, might have been that Pryor’s dad wanted to give the Nittany Lions one more shot, though it was almost all speculation at the time because the family was not talking to the media. Other potential reasons for the postponement were his basketball team’s state tournament run or indecisiveness on Pryor’s end.

“Terrelle Pryor took so much crap for not signing on signing day,” Greene said. “Nobody did it back then, nobody does it today. And it was like (the media thought) he was like, ‘Look at me, I want all eyes on me. I’m the man, I don’t sign when everybody else signs. I sign when I want to and you all bow at my feet until I do.’ He took a thrashing in the media. People were just roasting him.”

Others believed the delay simply came down to aligning Pryor’s wishes with those of the people around him, all of whom had different ideas floating around.

“In the thick of it,” Noon said, “it really felt as if it was a kid who was getting yanked in multiple different directions and just had a hard time getting everybody on board with his decision, which in my opinion was always Ohio State.”

Less than three weeks later on Feb. 24, Pryor showed up at an Ohio State men’s basketball game against Wisconsin with teammate and future Buckeye Jordan Hall. As the first half drew to a close, the crowd at the Schottenstein Center erupted with chants of “We want Pryor,” drowning out a



Terrelle Pryor

halftime honoring of the men’s soccer team, which had won the Big Ten tournament and finished as runners-up for a national title that year.

“You had to have a story on him almost every day,” Greene said. “There was something going on for probably a year. It was just suspense and drama every day.”

The circus came to a close on March 19, 2008, when Pryor eventually sealed his pledge to Ohio State, ending his recruitment the way that most believed it would end up.

“I always felt that Ohio State was going to be the school to land him, but Terrelle was never in much of a hurry to make his decision,” Noon said. “It always felt like he was getting pulled in multiple directions.”

Pryor went on to play three seasons at Ohio State, throwing for 6,177 yards and rushing for 2,164 more as its starter under center before departing early for the NFL draft amid the infamous Tattoogate scandal, where he and some teammates exchanged their team memorabilia for money and free tattoos, violating NCAA rules.

He helped the team to Big Ten titles in three straight years from 2008 through 2010, with wins in the Rose Bowl and the Sugar Bowl, though the Sugar Bowl victory and conference title were later vacated along with all wins from the 2010 season because of NCAA sanctions.

Looking back on the entire escapade surrounding Pryor’s recruitment, Greene remembers the time fondly. Despite the circus, there’s no doubt it kept him and other reporters busy.

He had written a series on the Ohio State recruits in the class, one called “The Making of the Brew Crew,” and Pryor had been refusing any media engagements due to the barrage he suffered from certain outlets, Greene said. Posey convinced the quarterback to interview with Greene at Ohio State’s spring game to complete his series, though, and he came away impressed with how pleasant of an interview Pryor was.

“He was almost shy and humble,” Greene said. “He was totally different to me in-person than the way everything played out for him after that. But my memories of him are all fun ones.”

Trio Of Commitments Highlight Recent Stretch

In the span of just a few weeks, Ohio State went from just two commitments on offense to nearly the entire class being settled on that side of the ball.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

The Buckeyes have held commitments for several months from Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 198) and New Palestine, Ind., four-star offensive lineman Ian Moore (6-5, 295), and then over a period of around three weeks Ohio State added a trio of offensive linemen in Toledo Central Catholic three-star Marc Nave Jr. (6-5, 315) and four-stars Deontae (6-6, 280) and Devontae (6-5, 288) Armstrong of Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward.

Since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, Ohio State has added another trio of commitments, this time at the skill positions. The list includes New Haven, Ind., five-star wide receiver Mylan Graham (6-1, 170), Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes four-star quarterback Air Noland (6-3, 195) and San Antonio Veterans Memorial four-star running back James Peoples (5-10, 192), all top-

100 prospects.

Beginning with Noland, he announced his commitment to Ohio State on April 8, selecting the Buckeyes over Alabama, Arkansas, Clemson, Miami (Fla.), Oregon and Texas A&M. He is the No. 84 overall prospect in the class and the No. 8 quarterback.

His commitment to Ohio State was a rapid development. He made his first visit to the school the weekend of March 31 and earned his offer from the Buckeyes on that same trip. Shortly after, he announced his commitment date, and it wasn't hard to make the connection as to where he might end up.

"Of course, Coach Ryan Day, Coach (Corey) Dennis and Coach (Brian) Hartline, the three-headed snake at Ohio State speaks for itself," Noland said during his commitment ceremony. "They develop quarterbacks, Black quarterbacks, into NFL-caliber quarterbacks in the quarterback-oriented offense they have. Jelani (Thurman)'s up there, so I have a teammate of mine up there, but the people around Ohio State, they're very welcoming.

"I saw teammates pushing each other. Everybody has one goal at Ohio State, and that's to make it to the next level. Coach Day preaches that to his kids at Ohio State. It's a brotherhood. They're a family. They're all one on and off the field, so that played a big role."



COURTESY OF AIR NOLAND

HIS AIRNESS — Ohio State landed the commitment of Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes four-star quarterback Air Noland (6-3, 195) on April 8. He is the No. 84 overall prospect in the class and the No. 8 quarterback.

The Southern southpaw has thrown for 8,024 yards and 104 touchdowns in his first three seasons of high school football, including an outstanding junior season in which he tossed for 4,095 yards and 55 touchdowns to just four interceptions while completing 73.1 percent of his passing attempts.

"I like Air Noland," Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Bill Greene told BSB ahead of Noland's commitment. "I saw him this winter in Florida, saw him play 7-on-7. He's a big, tall and lanky kid. He's got a nice arm. He's smart as can be and plays for a great high school program, and he's being coached well in high school, so I think he'll fit in well at Ohio State.

"There won't be any pressure on him to play right away or to start right away, so he can learn and develop. I think he's great. I like Air Noland a lot."

Landing on Noland for the class was likely a best-case scenario for Ohio State around four months after losing out on Phoenix Pinnacle five-star quarterback Dylan Raiola (6-3, 220), the top-ranked prospect in 2024 who was previously committed to the Buckeyes. They kicked

the tires on several other quarterback prospects, though many had already committed to other schools, leaving Noland as one of the top uncommitted prospects in the class.

As for who Noland might throw the ball to, Ohio State offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach Brian Hartline once again worked his magic on April 4 with the commitment of Graham, who became the second five-star wide receiver in the class to commit to Ohio State.

He is the No. 27 overall prospect and No. 5 wideout in the class. While now a highly rated prospect, that was not the case when Graham was first offered by Ohio State after camping last summer. In fact, Ohio State was the first Division I school to offer Graham, getting a head start on his recruitment.

"I love everything about them," Graham told 247Sports. "(They have a) nice air-raid offensive scheme. I love Coach Hartline. (They have a) great football program I can trust to develop me, (and it is) close to home."

In addition to camping with the Buckeyes, he visited Ohio State several times

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OSU Football 2024 Commitments

Players in the class of 2024 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Deontae Armstrong	OL	6-6	280	★★★★	Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward
Devontae Armstrong	OL	6-5	288	★★★★	Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward
Mylan Graham	WR	6-1	170	★★★★★	New Haven, Ind.
Ian Moore	OL	6-5	295	★★★★	New Palestine, Ind.
Marc Nave Jr.	OL	6-5	315	★★★	Toledo Central Catholic
Air Noland	QB	6-3	195	★★★★	Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes
James Peoples	RB	5-10	192	★★★★	San Antonio Veterans Memorial
Jeremiah Smith	WR	6-3	198	★★★★★	Opa Locka (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep
Garrett Stover	SAF	6-0	195	★★★★	Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut

this past season and was in Columbus twice this spring, including the first weekend of April. The Buckeyes were first to the scene, but Graham added offers from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Penn State and Tennessee, among others.

His commitment comes after a junior season in which he hauled in 48 receptions for 1,149 yards and 13 touchdowns. He displays excellent route-running abilities that have him consistently open at the high school level, and those skills will no doubt be built upon once he arrives on campus. Other targets at wideout include St. Louis Christian Brothers College four-star Jeremiah McClellan (6-0, 190) and Tampa (Fla.) Catholic four-star Terrance Moore (6-3, 190), among others.

Last but certainly not least, Peoples also joined Ohio State's class in recent weeks, issuing a verbal pledge to the Buckeyes on April 2. He is the No. 69 overall prospect and No. 5 running back

in the class, and he picked Ohio State over Oklahoma and Texas.

"It really came down to the people," he told 247Sports. "They are special. I had a lot of hard questions for them, and they answered them really well and truthfully. Everyone took me in, not just the coaches but the players, too. When I stepped in the 'Shoe it was amazing. Coach Day said I'm the No. 1 guy they've been trying to get. I feel like I made the right decision."

His commitment is an especially important one for Ohio State given the recent loss of Cincinnati Moeller four-star running back Jordan Marshall (5-11, 193), who committed to Michigan on March 21. Peoples' commitment is the first at running back in this class for Ohio State, with Pickerington (Ohio) North three-star running back Sam Williams-Dixon (5-11, 203) as the other key target for the Buckeyes.

Peoples had previously put Ohio State among his top schools and committed following his visit to Columbus from March

30 through April 1. He had an official visit on deck in June, which will now be undertaken as a committed prospect.

Peoples' commitment comes after a junior season in which he rushed for 1,904 yards and 28 touchdowns. He camped with the Buckeyes last summer and received his offer from Ohio State and running backs coach Tony Alford in October.

With the recent commitments, Ohio State's nine-man recruiting class – as of April 8 – stands as the fourth best class in the nation, trailing only No. 3 LSU, No. 2 Michigan and No. 1 Georgia, all of which have at least three more commitments than the Buckeyes.

Big Group Expected For Spring Game

Ohio State's annual spring game is usually a hot spot for recruiting visits, and this year's game on April 15 should be no exception. What follows is a preliminary list of prospects expected to be in attendance.

This list was accurate as of the time Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press. This final list of visitors will likely undergo changes – whether that's additions or subtractions to the list – before the spring game begins, so for the latest on expected prospects, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com.

Beginning with 2024 prospects, a handful of commitments will be in attendance, including both Armstrongs, Moore, Nave and Smith. Uncommitted prospects expected include Hoschton

(Ga.) Mill Creek four-star defensive end King Joseph Edwards (6-5, 242); Lake Cormorant, Miss., four-star defensive lineman Kamarion Franklin (6-5, 265); Lancaster, Texas, four-star cornerback Corian Gipson (6-0, 170); Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy three-star defensive lineman Jayden Jackson (6-2, 300); Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star cornerback Ify Obidegwu (6-1, 185); Tampa (Fla.) Wharton four-star defensive end Booker Pickett Jr. (6-3, 200); Picayune (Miss.) Memorial four-star defensive end Jamonta Waller (6-2, 225); Williams-Dixon; and Cleveland Glenville four-star tight end Damarion Witten (6-4, 215).

In 2025, expected prospects include Franklin (Mich.) Wylie E. Groves offensive tackle Avery Gach (6-5, 275); Cincinnati Winton Woods defensive end Justin Hill (6-4, 215); Findlay, Ohio, quarterback Ryan Montgomery (6-3, 200), who is the brother of Ohio State freshman offensive lineman Luke Montgomery; Alcoa, Tenn., four-star athlete Eli Owens (6-2, 226); Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day School five-star offensive tackle David Sanders (6-6, 255); Mission Hills (Calif.) Bishop Alemany offensive tackle Maki Stewart (6-6, 290); and Calhoun, Ga., tight end Emaree Winston (6-2, 235).

A trio of players from St. Frances Academy in Baltimore, including defensive lineman Darrion Smith (6-3, 260), defensive lineman Trent Wilson (6-3, 270) and cornerback Blake Woodby (5-11, 180) are also expected to appear at

Continued On Page 22

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OSU Prioritizing In-State Cornerbacks

Continued From Page 21

the spring game.

The fun doesn't stop there, as a pair of 2026 prospects are also expected in Upper Marlboro (Md.) Rock Creek Christian Academy safety Jireh Edwards (6-1, 194) and Carrollton, Ga., quarterback Julian Lewis (6-1, 175).

Davis Commits To Wolverines

Before Noland's commitment to Ohio State, another quarterback domino had fallen with the commitment of Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day School five-star signal caller Jady Davis (6-1, 202) to Michigan on March 31.

Davis, the No. 28 overall prospect and No. 4 quarterback in the class, pledged to the Wolverines over Clemson, North Carolina and Tennessee. Ohio State was also listed as one of his finalists, but based on his comments after committing, it was never much of an option.

"Coach (Jim) Harbaugh is a straightforward man," Davis told 247Sports. "I love that man. I'd run through a brick wall for him. He's someone I'm looking forward to playing under and being under his tutelage to develop my game."

Davis had been heavily recruited by Ohio State earlier in the cycle, but the two parties went separate ways after the Buckeyes made it clear that Raiola was their priority target at quarterback for the

class. Both were expected to attend last year's spring game, but only Raiola ended up making the trip.

Ohio State reconnected with Davis after Raiola's decommitment, even sending a handful of coaches down to Providence Day School to visit, but nothing much materialized. Even so, both parties – with Davis now at Michigan and Ohio State landing Noland – appear pleased with their respective quarterbacks.

Stewart Sets Official Visit For Summer

Washington (D.C.) Friendship Collegiate Academy five-star defensive end Dylan Stewart (6-5, 235) has set an official visit to Ohio State for June 16, one of three he'll take over the summer along with Georgia (June 2) and South Carolina (June 23).

Stewart is the No. 10 overall prospect and No. 2 defensive end in the 2024 class, trailing only Duncanville, Texas, five-star Colin Simmons (6-3, 225), the third-ranked player nationally. This won't be his first visit to Columbus, however, as he was on campus on March 24.

"It was eye-opening for me," Stewart told On3. "The opportunities for me on and off the field at Ohio State are great. Ohio State is a huge brand. It is one of the biggest brands in college football, and Ohio State could do a lot for me. I really like what the program is, what it is about, and it is not going anywhere."

He finished with 16 sacks last season while helping lead his school to a state championship. He takes snaps at both defensive end and as an outside linebacker, which could make him a candidate to play at Jack for Ohio State.

Ohio State Impresses Pair Of In-State Cornerbacks

Ohio State hosted a pair of in-state, four-star cornerbacks on April 3 during spring practice, welcoming in Cleveland Glenville's Bryce West (5-11, 177) and Springfield's Aaron Scott (6-0, 170), and they came away with positive things to say about the Buckeyes.

West, the No. 49 overall prospect and No. 4 cornerback in the class, has made several visits to Ohio State and is expected back for an official visit the weekend of June 23.

"Everything there was amazing," West told 247Sports. "The staff working with the players, seeing all the players working together, seeing how tight they were with each other."

West was named a Junior All-American by MaxPreps after not allowing a touchdown this past season and helping lead Glenville to the program's first state championship.

He also holds offers from Alabama, Florida, Florida State, Georgia, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Penn State, Tennessee and Texas A&M, among others, though it appears likely he will stay in the Big Ten.

Scott, meanwhile, is the No. 71 overall prospect and No. 9 cornerback in the class, and he holds offers from Florida State, Kentucky, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Ole Miss, Tennessee and USC. He was also impressed on his visit and had high praise for Ohio State's coaching staff.

"Coach (Tim) Walton is a great coach," Scott told 247Sports. "He's very energetic, very hands-on. He knows the game. Coach Day talked to me a lot. He's a great coach. He told me they will do whatever they can to get me."

He is also expected to return for an official visit the weekend of June 24 and expects to make a college decision either at the end of June or in July.

Ohio State Among Top 20 Spenders On Recruiting Trail

According to a report released by CBS Sports, Ohio State's expenses on the recruiting trail, while still large, may not be quite as expansive as one would expect for one of the country's recruiting powerhouses.

Ohio State's recruiting expenses in 2022 checked in at \$1,292,799, which is just 18th in the nation and just fifth in the Big Ten, behind Maryland (\$1,380,974), Penn State (\$1,486,521), Rutgers (\$1,609,032) and Michigan (\$2,240,064). And Ohio State's spending in 2022 was not out of the regular, as the Buckeyes' average spending over the last five years

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1993

The Ohio State football program was poised to become a national powerhouse over the next few seasons, according to one Buckeye recruit.

Timiko Payton, a 6-1, 265-pound defensive line prospect from Alliance, Ohio, visited Illinois and considered Michigan State, Penn State and Louisville before deciding Ohio State was where he could be most successful.

"Ohio State had a good recruiting class last year, and we could get real good in the next few years. The other schools didn't seem as strong," Payton said.

Whatever reason he had for choosing OSU, the Buckeyes were getting a big, strong, fast defensive lineman, said Phil Dorn, the former coach at Alliance High School.

"Timiko was a great player for us. He was the anchor of our offensive and defensive line," Dorn said. "I can't express how quick and agile he is for his size. Plus he has great strength."

25 Years Ago – 1998

One key player attending the April 3 spring practice was Utica (Mich.) Ford quarterback Craig Krenzle (6-4, 195, 4.85).

As a junior, Krenzle completed 114 of 220 passes (51.8 percent) for 1,350 yards. He had 10 touchdowns and five interceptions. Krenzle also held a 3.7 GPA.

According to Bill Kurelic of The Ohio Football Recruiting News, Krenzle had been offered scholarships by OSU, Michigan State, Boston College and Duke. He was also looking at Northwestern, Wisconsin and Stanford. Krenzle was expected to decide before the start of his senior season, and all indications pointed to him selecting either OSU or MSU, Kurelic said.

20 Years Ago – 2003

Akron Buchtel junior running back Antonio Pittman became the third member of OSU's 2004 recruiting class April 1 when he issued a verbal commitment by telephone to the OSU coaches.

Pittman (5-11, 195, 4.32) had been offered a scholarship a day earlier by the Buckeyes. It did not take him long to pull the trigger and commit.

"I was excited," Pittman told BSB. "My coaches were telling me they were going to offer, but I didn't know when it was going to be."

"I got the news yesterday. My coaches came and got me out of lunch and told me about it. I went home and talked it over with my mom. She was like, 'If you're going to commit, you may as well

go ahead and do it now! We thought that was the best thing to do, so I committed today."

Pittman was the first of what figured to be the "next wave" of OSU running backs. Maurice Claret was expected to be around though at least his junior year in 2004. Backups Maurice Hall and Lydell Ross figured to be seniors that same season.

Pittman, ranked Ohio's 27th-best prospect by Ohio's Future Stars, had been offered previously by Minnesota, Pittsburgh and Toledo. He also was interested in Michigan.

15 Years Ago – 2008

The Buckeyes might have fallen one person short of their goal of bringing in four elite offensive linemen in their class of 2008, but the calendar year could have them nabbing one from the unlikely of places – the University of Michigan.

As new head coach Rich Rodriguez continued to get acclimated to the program, he apparently butted heads enough with offensive lineman Justin Boren that the player who would have been the team's most experienced returning lineman had opted to leave the program. Boren was a product of Pickerington North High School in suburban Columbus.

"I regret leaving behind my friends and teammates, but I need to stand up for what I know is right," he said. "I wore the winged helmet with pride, whether we won or lost, whether things were going well or times were tough."

"Michigan football was a family, built on mutual respect and support for each other from Coach (Lloyd) Carr on down. We knew it took the entire family, a team effort, and we all worked together. I have great trouble accepting that those family values have eroded in just a few months."

Ohio State was one of several schools including Notre Dame, Pittsburgh and Penn State to express interest in Boren. Boren – listed at 6-3, 310 pounds on Michigan's 2007 roster – would have to sit out for a season to satisfy NCAA transfer rules should he transfer to a Division I-A school.

10 Years Ago – 2013

Having said goodbye to senior linebackers Zach Boren and Etienne Sabino following the previous season, Urban Meyer knew filling his rather shallow linebacker position on Ohio State's current roster would be a priority in the 2014 recruiting class.

Meyer's effort to build depth at that all-important defensive spot took two huge steps forward in early April when the OSU

head coach received verbal commitments from in-state prospects Sam Hubbard (6-6, 221) of Cincinnati Moeller and Kyle Berger (6-3, 215) of Cleveland St. Ignatius.

Both players were regarded as outside linebacker prospects, and each had been given a four-star rating by Scout.com. Hubbard issued his commitment to Ohio State during an April 5 unofficial visit, and Berger followed suit three days later.

Five Years Ago – 2018

When BSB went to press on April 2, Ohio State was still waiting to secure a commitment from a quarterback in the 2019 class.

A year previously at that time, Franklin (Ga.) Heard County signal caller Emory Jones had already been a member of OSU's 2018 class for eight months. Jones ultimately decommitted and signed with Florida on Dec. 20, the first day of the early signing period. Meyer, however, replaced Jones by garnering a signed letter of intent from Matthew Baldwin (6-3, 195) of Austin (Texas) Lake Travis, who enrolled in January.

Meyer said March 26 that not having a quarterback committed to the 2019 class was not by design. He pointed to the lack of premier talent in this year's batch of prospects as a major reason for the delay. There were no five-star QBs in the 247Sports composite rankings.

"We're not on purpose taking it slower," Meyer said. "There's not a lot of depth at quarterback this year in the recruiting world. So other than that we're just working as hard as we can to get them here. We've had a bunch visit, so now we have to find the right marriage between them and us."

One Year Ago – 2022

Ohio State gained its sixth commitment for 2023 when West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star safety Malik Hartford (6-3, 175) issued a verbal commitment to the Buckeyes April 6.

Hartford was the No. 205 overall prospect and No. 20 safety in the class and committed to Ohio State over his other top schools including Cincinnati, Kentucky, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame and West Virginia.

"The overall program," Hartford said of why he committed to Ohio State. "It's a great program. I have plenty of opportunities going there. I want to get developed, and they can do that."

"I'm going to be a hard worker, give effort on every play. I love the game so I'm going to give it my all."

ASK AN ANALYST

With Buckeye Scoop's Bill Greene

Ohio State added a commitment on April 5 from New Haven, Ind., five-star wide receiver Mylan Graham (6-1, 170), making it two five-star wide receivers in the class for the Buckeyes. Have you ever seen a run like the one Brian Hartline is having right now?

"No, I wouldn't think so. Especially not at that position. Over the years, Ohio State was never looked at as a haven for wide receivers under (Jim) Tressel and then even under Urban (Meyer).

"With Ryan Day and his history of what he's doing with the quarterbacks, that's the first key of things impacting these wide-outs. It's got to be a big-time passing attack, and you better have a big-time quarterback. The way they're putting QBs in the NFL, it's definitely got these wide receivers' attention.

"I think they're going to be able to bring in three or four every year. When they keep bringing in three or four a year, somebody's got to be nine or 10 on the depth chart. You're going to see really good players leaving the program. You saw Jameson Williams leave Ohio State a couple of years ago and he's a tremendous football player, but he was not going to play at Ohio State the year he left. He was pretty much buried on the depth chart, and he goes to Alabama and he ends up being a first-round draft pick. I think that's going to continue at Ohio State.

"I think Carnell Tate is going to force his way onto the field this year, in some way. He's going to be three or four, he's going to challenge Julian Fleming, and I think he's going to jump ahead of all the guys they brought in last year. Jayden Ballard better get it together, and he's looked really good so far. He better continue that. And then Brandon Inniss isn't even at Ohio State yet. And then both (Bryson Rodgers and Noah Rogers) are getting rave reviews.

"If you're going to come to Ohio State and play wide receiver, you better be really good because you could be a heck of a player and be the sixth or seventh guy (on the depth chart) and get no playing time at all."

Where does Hartline stack up among national assistant coaches on the recruiting trail? Is he in a class of his own or are there any on a comparable level?

"No, I wouldn't think so. It's actually harder for him because, taking (Ohio State quarterbacks coach) Corey Dennis for example, he's only concentrating on one kid. You're only going to bring one in. You don't bring in three quarterbacks.

"But Hartline, not only does he have to bring in great players, but he's bringing in three or four of them. He doesn't get to concentrate on one guy or two guys. There's no way Ryan Day would go to him and say 'We're going to take one wide receiver this year, so give me a great one.' It doesn't work that way. He's got to bring in – usually it's four. It's amazing and, obviously, it's going to continue.

"You've got two committed in this class. Opa Locka (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 198) is a kid I know really well from my contacts in Florida and being in Florida a lot, and he's going to start the first day. The first day he gets there, he's starting. And he's got the luxury of coming in a year after Fleming, (Emeka) Egbuka and (Marvin) Harrison (Jr.) will be gone. But he's going to start and somebody's going to sit for him.

"So it's really exciting to watch, and I think as long as Day and Dennis can keep bringing in quarterbacks and this offense is still going to be a heavy-pass offense, I think it's going to continue."

Ohio State rebounded from the loss of Cincinnati's Moeller four-star running back Jordan Marshall (5-11, 193) to Michigan with the commitment of San Antonio Veterans Memorial four-star running back James Peoples (5-10, 192). How much did that mitigate the anxiety among OSU fans in regard to losing out on a top-100 player to Michigan?

"You never like that. And Peoples is a heck of a back, but so is Jordan Marshall. If you're looking at a perfect world, I think Ohio State would have liked to have had both of them. They

didn't take one (on scholarship) last year.

"Running backs, it's the one position where you always think you have depth until you don't, and then you get to the Michigan game last year and you have to start a kid that's played linebacker all year at running back. Chip Trayanum played well in that game, but yet you don't want to start a kid in the Michigan game that's played linebacker all year. That's just not the way it's supposed to go.

"I think they need two big-time backs in this class. Peoples is certainly one. I think they're going to ??? Pickerington (Ohio) North three-star running back Sam Williams-Dixon (5-11, 203). I'm not sure he is a pure running back, I can see that guy playing a lot of positions here as a kind of an all-around, jack-of-all-trades guy, special teams guy, kick returner, punt returner, catch the ball, run the ball a little bit. I just don't know that he's that bell cow back type.

"So it wouldn't surprise me to see them chase another pure running back for this class or wait until after the season and grab one in the portal. But I think in a perfect world, they would have loved to have had Marshall and Peoples. Getting one is good, but if you'd have got both of them that would have been amazing."

Did Michigan pulling Marshall out of Ohio signify a shift in the rivalry when it comes to recruiting?

"They had their hooks in him really early. For some reason, they really made a connection there. They had that relationship formed early, and they just did a great job recruiting him, so no I wouldn't say that.

"Although they've beaten Ohio State soundly the past couple of years, they've run the heck out of the ball, so I can kind of see it makes sense. When you're looking at what they did with Blake Corum, it's not that shocking, to be honest. Ohio State was able to follow it up and grab Peoples right away, so it did kind of mitigate it. But gosh, I really think they felt they had a shot at getting both of them."

was \$845,113, which ranked just 21st in the country.

Nationally, the top spender was Georgia, which expended \$4,506,248 on recruiting in 2022, followed by Clemson (\$3,158,941), Texas A&M (\$2,984,168), Tennessee (\$2,918,691) and Oklahoma (\$2,632,817). These costs can include everything from the cost of hosting a recruit on a visit to recruiting staffs that continue to grow across the country.

Prospects Have Ohio State Among Top Programs

Since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, several prospects have listed Ohio State among their top programs as they continue to whittle down their list of scholarships.

Waco (Texas) Connally five-star cornerback Kobe Black (6-0, 190), the No. 16 overall prospect and No. 3 cornerback in the class, listed the Buckeyes in his top 11 along with Alabama, Florida, LSU, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon, TCU, Texas, Texas A&M and USC. He was offered by Ohio State in January and visited campus this spring.

Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes three-star safety Jakob Gude (6-0, 180) included the Buckeyes in his top 10 with Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia Tech, Louisville, Oregon, Texas, Texas A&M and UCF.

Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School four-star tight end Max LeBlanc, who visited Columbus this spring, had Ohio State in his top four, along with Michigan, North Carolina and Tennessee. LeBlanc is the No. 347 overall prospect and No. 17 tight end in the class, and he is one of Ohio State's top targets at tight end along

with Witten.

Other top lists Ohio State was included on was a top 12 for Lilburn (Ga.) Parkview five-star wide receiver Mike Matthews (6-1, 180), a top 12 for McClellan, a top 13 for Terrance Moore and the top six for Nashville (Tenn.) Lipscomb Academy four-star linebacker Edwin Spillman (6-1, 216).

Matthews is the higher ranked receiver (No. 6 overall, No. 2 at wideout) between himself, McClellan and Moore, but McClellan is a more realistic option to end up in Ohio State's class by the end of the cycle among the group.

New Offers Go Out In Several Classes

Ohio State has issued a handful of offers to prospects in 2024 and beyond in recent weeks, with the search for prep talent going far and wide.

Beginning in 2024, the Buckeyes offered East Northport (N.Y.) St. Anthony's defensive lineman Preston Carey (6-4, 270); Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Cardinal Gibbons three-star tight end Colton Heinrich (6-4, 230); Chatsworth (Calif.) Sierra Canyon four-star wide receiver Xavier Jordan (6-1, 165); Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas three-star linebacker Nicholas Rodriguez (6-1, 190); and Brunswick, Ga., three-star linebacker Devin Smith (6-1, 220).

Moving to 2025, Ohio State sent out offers to Aliquippa, Pa., running back Tiqwai Hayes (5-10, 185); Cleveland Shaker Heights athlete Trey McNutt (6-0, 180); La Verne (Calif.) Bonita five-star linebacker Noah Mikhail (6-3, 205); and Darrion Smith. McNutt is of particular note, as he is the son of former Ohio

State cornerback Richard McNutt, who appeared in 30 games from 2000-02 and was a member of the Buckeyes' 2002 national championship team.

The two 2026 offers sent out by Ohio State were to Suwanee (Ga.) Collins Hill defensive lineman Deuce Geraldts (6-3, 239) and Akron Hoban offensive lineman Sam Greer (6-8, 290), which marked the first Division I offer for Greer.

"I felt extremely blessed and excited to get an offer from The Ohio State University," Greer told Eleven Warriors. "Coach Day said he wanted to offer me based off my size and athleticism and wanted me to help be a recruiter as well."

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Former Maryland defensive tackle Anthony Booker (6-4, 320), who played high school football at Winton Woods in Cincinnati, will announce his transfer destination on April 12 between Arkansas, Ohio State, Purdue, South Carolina and Texas A&M.

- Penn State added a pair of commitments in recent weeks, earning pledges

from Belle Vernon, Pa., four-star athlete Quinton Martin (6-2, 200) on April 7 and Jacksonville (Fla.) Mandarin four-star cornerback Jon Mitchell (6-0, 177). Martin is the No. 30 overall prospect and No. 3 athlete in the class, though he is expected to play at running back for the Nittany Lions, and he held an offer from Ohio State.

- Michigan picked up a commitment on April 7 from Kansas City (Mo.) Rockhurst four-star offensive tackle Andrew Sprague (6-8, 290), making it three offensive linemen in the Wolverines' class along with Avon, Ohio, four-star interior lineman Luke Hamilton (6-5, 290) and Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward three-star tackle Ben Roebuck (6-7, 320).

- Michigan State earned a verbal pledge on April 8 from Mount Pleasant, Mich., three-star offensive lineman Andrew Dennis (6-5, 275).

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

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Transfer Forward Battle Commits To OSU

Ohio State made its first transfer portal splash of the offseason on April 6, landing the commitment of former Minnesota forward Jamison Battle (6-7, 225).

Battle spent the past two seasons at Minnesota after playing his first two years at George Washington. While with the Golden Gophers, Battle produced 15.1 points and 5.1 rebounds per game while shooting 41.4 percent, including a 34.4 percent clip from deep.

COURT REPORT Jack Emerson

Battle averaged double-digit scoring in all four seasons of his college career, including a career-best 17.5 points per game as a junior at Minnesota, his first season with the Gophers. He took a step back last season after undergoing surgery prior to the season, compounded with the emergence of sophomore big man Dawson Garcia, causing him to average 12.4 points per game – his lowest scoring output since his freshman season – while shooting 37.1 percent from the field and 31.1 percent from three, both of which were career lows.

Battle's addition to the Buckeyes is a major one as he provides Ohio State with ver-

satility at the power forward position with his ability to stretch the floor and attack closeouts while also providing a post presence offensively. Battle will likely compete for time at the four with incoming freshman Devin Royal and incumbent starting center Zed Key.

While also carrying the ability to play at the three, Battle's arrival will help alleviate the loss of forwards Justice Sueing, Eugene Brown III and Brice Sensabaugh, assuming Sensabaugh remains in the NBA draft pool.

He joins the Buckeyes with one remaining season of eligibility.

Brown First Buckeye To Hit Transfer Portal

Brown announced on March 30 that he will enter the transfer portal after three seasons with the Buckeyes.

Brown wore many hats in his time as a Buckeye, playing anywhere from shooting guard to center while being primarily relied on for his defensive acumen. In 77 games with Ohio State, he averaged 2.2 points and 1.7 rebounds on 43.8 percent shooting while playing 10.9 minutes per game. Brown is set to graduate from Ohio State with a degree in sports industry this spring.

"First, I want to thank God for the opportunity to attend and graduate with a degree from THE Ohio State University," Brown said in a statement. "The lessons, experiences and bonds I have created while here will forever be a chapter in my life journey



SONNY BROCKWAY

IN THE PORTAL — Guard Eugene Brown III became the first Buckeye to enter the transfer portal this offseason after spending three seasons at Ohio State, where he averaged 2.2 points and 1.7 rebounds per game in 77 appearances.

that has made me who I am today."

Brown arrived at Ohio State as a four-star prospect out of Conyers, Ga., where he blossomed into one of the top players in his home state, ranking No. 9 in his recruiting class in the state. He didn't see the court much during his first season with the Buckeyes, averaging 6.1 minutes per game in 29 outings while tallying 1.2 points and 1.3 rebounds per game.

His role increased in his second year as he started in 10 games and made his first career start on Feb. 12, 2022, against Michigan, scoring two points and pulling down eight rebounds in a 68-57 win. As a sophomore, Brown tallied his three highest single-game scoring totals, including his career-high 14 points against IUPUI on Jan. 18, 2022. He averaged career highs in points (3.5) and rebounds (2.4) during his sophomore season.

Before his junior campaign, Brown suffered a concussion during summer work-

outs and was held out of the first 11 games until he made his season debut against Alabama A&M on Dec. 29, 2022. Brown struggled to fit into the wing rotation but found his niche as a small-ball center for the Buckeyes.

As injuries to the Ohio State frontcourt piled up, Brown's role at center increased and nearly became his staple position for the season, registering his lone start of the campaign at the five in a 70-67 loss to Minnesota on Jan. 12. In his final season with the Buckeyes, Brown averaged 2.2 points and 1.5 rebounds while shooting career-best marks from the field (53.1 percent) and deep (37.5 percent).

Sueing Enters NBA Draft

Brown wasn't the only departure since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, as Sueing announced March 29 that he is entering into the 2023 NBA draft pool.

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The former Buckeye spent four seasons in the program, posting averages of 11.4 points and 5.3 rebounds per contest in 68 games for the Scarlet and Gray. Sueing decided to forgo a remaining season of eligibility granted to him due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"My years at Ohio State have been filled with unforgettable moments and invaluable lessons that I will hold onto for the rest of my life," Sueing said. "I'm forever grateful for the friendships and bonds I've built with Coach (Chris) Holtmann, the staff, and my teammates. The Scarlet and Gray will always be etched in my heart."

Sueing transferred to Ohio State after spending his first two collegiate seasons at California, where he led the Golden Bears in scoring as a sophomore during the 2018-19 season. Due to transfer rules, Sueing was required to sit out the 2019-20 season but became a major contributor for the Buckeyes in 2020-21.

In his first season of game action for the Scarlet and Gray, Sueing helped Ohio State to a 21-10 record and No. 2 seed in the NCAA Tournament by producing 10.7 points and 5.5 rebounds per game. Due to injuries, Sueing was thrust into a primary ball-handler role late in the season and tallied 1.5 assists per game.

Sueing missed much of the 2021-22 season due to an abdominal injury, appearing in Ohio State's first two games before being held out for the rest of the season.

He enjoyed an injury-free final season in Columbus, appearing in all 35 games and making 32 starts for the Buckeyes while earning All-Big Ten honorable mention. Stepping into a larger role for Ohio State, leading a roster reliant on four freshmen, Sueing averaged 12.3 points per game – the second-highest mark among Buckeyes this season, behind only Sensabaugh – and 5.2 rebounds per game, but Ohio State sputtered to a 13-18 record by the regular season's end.

Sueing helped ignite a shocking run to the semifinals of the Big Ten tournament in which Ohio State became the first No. 13 seed to reach the semifinal, averaging 14.8 points per game on 52.6 percent shooting from deep while hitting several key shots in wins over Wisconsin, Iowa and Michigan State, as well as a semifinals loss to Purdue.

Middleton's Game-Winner Lifts Prep School To Huge Upset

Soon-to-be freshman Scotty Middleton is still months away from his arrival into the program, but he's already providing Buckeye fans with a glimpse of what could be coming.

Middleton, a 6-6 forward for Wichita (Kan.) Sunrise Christian Academy, has been a key cog for Sunrise, helping the program to the GEICO Nationals, a postseason tournament that features some of the most prominent programs in high school basketball. Sunrise Christian's chances in the opening round were considered a long shot after it drew top-seeded Montverde Academy, led by top-15 recruits Kwame Evans Jr. and Sean Stewart.

But Middleton left his mark on the tournament early by knocking down a game-winning three-pointer with 23 seconds remaining to lift Sunrise Christian to a big upset win, 46-45, on March 30.

"I just stood there at the wing and I said,



SONNY BROCKWAY

CHASING HIS DREAM – Ohio State forward Justice Sueing declared for the 2023 NBA draft on March 29. In three seasons with the Buckeyes, Sueing averaged 11.4 points and 5.3 rebounds per game.

"Please hit me," Middleton said of waiting for the pass. "We made eye contact, and he hit me. Once I got the ball, I knew I was going to shoot it, and I put it up and it went in."

The victory snapped a 15-game winning streak for Montverde and also served as revenge for Sunrise Christian, which fell to Montverde twice during January. Middleton tallied 12 points, three assists and two rebounds in the win.

Middleton ranks as the No. 44 player in the 2023 class and No. 10 small forward. Although his defense is what typically stands out about his game, it was his refined offensive game that helped push Sunrise Christian to the huge upset.

"It was one of those moments where it had to go in," Middleton said of the game-winner. "I hadn't been hitting threes all game, so it was one of those ones where I got my knees under me, got my legs under me, and I just knew it was going in once it came off."

Sunrise Christian's run ended in the semifinal, after Middleton and Co. fell to the eventual champion Branson (Mo.) Link Academy – the alma mater of Ohio State center Felix Okpara – 67-61 on March 31.

Former Buckeye Forward LeDee Competes In Final Four

Although Ohio State spent the NCAA Tournament as spectators rather than com-

petitors, one former Buckeye enjoyed a deep run through the field and into the Final Four.

San Diego State forward Jaedon LeDee – who played his true freshman season for Ohio State in 2018-19 – helped the Aztecs to the school's first-ever national championship game appearance, a 76-59 defeat to fourth-seeded UConn on April 3.

After his lone season in Columbus, LeDee first transferred to TCU, where he spent the next two seasons before heading to San Diego State as a graduate transfer.

"Jaedon has a great family and is a great kid," Holtmann said prior to Ohio State's game against San Diego State in November. "I'm happy for him."

As a freshman, LeDee was largely utilized by Holtmann as a bench piece, appearing in 26 games and averaging 3.0 points and 1.7 rebounds in 6.6 minutes per game. He scored a season-high 16 points on two occasions, including in his first career game against Purdue-Fort Wayne on Nov. 11, 2018, and then on March 2, 2019, in the lone Big Ten start of his career against Purdue.

Following his lone season with the Buckeyes, the Houston native opted to return to his home state and play for TCU. LeDee struggled to catch on with the Horned Frogs, appearing in 53 games and starting just once for TCU while posting 4.1 points and 3.3 rebounds per game in 13.2 minutes

per contest.

After his junior season, LeDee transferred again, and since it was his second move prior to his graduation, he was forced to sit out a season before making his debut for the Aztecs. San Diego State is where LeDee truly blossomed, and while his 7.9 points and 5.3 rebounds per game don't jump off the stat sheet, he played a key role on the Aztecs' hounding defense, which ranked fourth in adjusted defensive efficiency on KenPom.

During his season with the Aztecs, LeDee had the opportunity to play against Ohio State during the Maui Invitational, registering six points and five rebounds in 21 minutes of the 88-77 triumph over his former school on Nov. 21, 2022.

Following the title game, LeDee declared for the NBA draft on April 6, though he will maintain his college eligibility.

Former OSU Assistant Tabbed As Head Coach At George Mason

Former Ohio State assistant coach Tony Skinn will be the next head coach at his alma mater, George Mason, the university announced on March 30.

Skinn was the starting point guard on George Mason's famed 2006 Final Four team in which it claimed the East region despite being the No. 11 seed before falling to eventual back-to-back national champion Florida, 73-58, in the national semifinal. Now, Skinn is back in Fairfax, Va., and hoping to return his alma mater to the glory he brought it to as a player.

"It is with great excitement that I return home to George Mason," Skinn said. "It's an unbelievable feeling to step back on campus. I've had some of my greatest memories here, and I'm looking forward to making new ones with our fans and our community. Our best days are ahead. Mason Nation, I missed you and I am honored to represent you."

Skinn served on Ohio State's staff during the 2021-22 season alongside Holtmann, helping the Buckeyes claim a 20-12 record en route to a second-round appearance in the NCAA Tournament.

"Tony is a very bright basketball mind who connects well with players," Holtmann said. "He has tremendous recruiting connections along the East Coast, and I believe he is ready for this next step in his coaching career. The George Mason community knows Tony Skinn well as a player, and I'm excited that he and his family now get to return in this role. Congratulations on an excellent hire."

Following his lone campaign in Columbus, Skinn served as an assistant coach on Kevin Willard's staff at Maryland last season. Skinn also worked with Willard prior to his brief stint with the Buckeyes, spending three seasons on his staff at Seton Hall from 2018-21.

As a player at George Mason, Skinn averaged 12.6 points and 2.8 assists per game as a senior during the Final Four campaign and produced three double-digit scoring outputs during the Cinderella tournament run. Following his collegiate career, Skinn played in Europe and competed in the 2012 Summer Olympics for the Nigerian national team.

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

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.

BASEBALL (15-15, 2-7)

Feb. 17 vs. UConn at Venice, Fla., W 3-0; **18-19** vs. UConn at Sarasota, Fla., L 9-6, L 8-6; **20** vs. UConn at Port Charlotte, Fla., W 10-5; **23** vs. Grand Canyon at Phoenix, Ariz., L 1-0; **24** vs. Gonzaga at Phoenix, Ariz., L 11-9 (10 innings); **25** vs. Grand Canyon at Phoenix, Ariz., L 7-5; **26** vs. Gonzaga at Phoenix, Ariz., W 8-2.

March 3 vs. Mississippi State at Frisco Classic in Frisco, Texas, W 8-3; **4** vs. Cal at Frisco Classic in Frisco, Texas, L 16-1; **5** vs. Oklahoma at Frisco Classic in Frisco, Texas, W 12-9; **11-12** at Cal State Bakersfield, W 17-5; W 19-6; W 9-5; **14** at Marshall, canceled; **15** at Marshall, W 5-1; **17** DAYTON, W 7-2; **18** DAYTON, canceled; **17** DAYTON, W 12-8; **21** WRIGHT STATE, L 3-0; **22** TOLEDO, W 6-4; **25** at Indiana, L 14-6; **26** at Indiana, L 9-6, L 7-5; **28** XAVIER, L 8-1; **31** MINNESOTA, L 3-2.

April 1-2 W 6-2, L 6-2; **4** KENT STATE, W 7-6; **7-9** at Michigan State, L 7-1, W 13-2 (7 innings), L 16-3 (7 innings) **11** AKRON; **12** BOWLING GREEN; **14-16** MARYLAND; **18** at Miami (Ohio); **21-23** at Penn State; **25** at Kent State; **28-30** ILLINOIS.

May 2 at Wright State; **5-7** at Iowa; **9** UCF; **10** CENTRAL MICHIGAN; **12-14** UNC GREENSBORO; **18-20** MICHIGAN; **24-28** Big Ten Championships.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (16-19, 5-15)

Nov. 1 CHAMINADE (EXH.), W 101-57; **7** ROBERT MORRIS, W 91-57; **10** CHARLESTON SOUTHERN, W 82-56; **16** EASTERN ILLINOIS, W 65-43; **21** at Maui Invitational vs. San Diego State, L 88-77; **22** at Maui Invitational vs. Cincinnati, W 81-53; **23** at Maui Invitational vs. Texas Tech, W 80-73; **30** at Duke, L 81-72.

Dec. 3 ST. FRANCIS, W 96-59; **8** RUTGERS, W 67-66; **17** at New York, vs. North Carolina, L 89-84 (OT); **21** MAINE, W 95-61; **29** ALABAMA A&M, W 90-59.

Jan. 1 at Northwestern, W 73-57; **5** PURDUE, L 71-69; **8** at Maryland, L 80-73; **12** MINNESOTA, L 70-67; **15** at Rutgers, L 68-64 (OT); **18** at Nebraska, L 63-60; **21** IOWA, W 93-77; **24** at Illinois, L 69-60; **28** at Indiana, L 86-70.

Feb. 2 WISCONSIN, L 65-60; **5** at Michigan, L 77-69; **9** NORTHWESTERN, L 69-63; **12** MICHIGAN STATE, L 62-41; **16** at Iowa, L 92-75; **19** at Purdue, L 82-55; **23** PENN STATE, L 75-71; **26** ILLINOIS, W 72-60.

March 1 MARYLAND, W 73-62; **6** at Michigan State, L 84-78; **8** Big Ten Tournament at Chicago, vs. Wisconsin, W 65-57; **9** Big Ten Tournament at Chicago, vs. Iowa, W 73-69; **10** Big Ten Tournament at Chicago, vs. Michigan State, W 68-58; **11** Big Ten Tournament at Chicago, vs. Purdue, L 80-66.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (28-8, 12-6)

Oct. 31 NOTRE DAME COLLEGE (EXH.), W 108-33.

Nov. 8 TENNESSEE, W 87-75; **13** at Boston College, W 82-64; **17** at Ohio, W 86-56; **20** MCNEESE STATE, W 99-43; **23** WRIGHT STATE, W 105-52; **27** NORTH ALABAMA, W, 105-67; **30** at Louisville, W 96-77.

Dec. 4 at Rutgers, W 82-70; **8** NEW HAMPSHIRE, W 92-36; **11** MICHIGAN STATE, W 74-68; **16** UALBANY, W 82-57; **20** at South Florida, W 88-86 (OT); **21** at Oregon, W 84-67; **28** at Northwestern, W 81-48; **31** MICHIGAN, W 66-57.

Jan. 5 at Minnesota, W 83-71; **8** ILLINOIS, W 87-81; **14** at Nebraska, W 76-67; **19** NORTHWESTERN, W 84-54; **23** IOWA, L 83-72; **26** at Indiana, L 78-65; **29** PURDUE, L 73-65.

Feb. 1 at Wisconsin, W 90-67; **5** at Maryland, L 90-54; **8** MINNESOTA, W 93-63; **13** INDIANA, L 83-59; **16** at Penn State, W 67-55; **20** at Michigan, W 74-61; **24** MARYLAND, L 76-74.

March 3 Big Ten Tournament at Minneapolis, vs. Michigan, W 81-79; **4** Big Ten Tournament at Minneapolis, vs. Indiana, W 79-75; **5** Big Ten Tournament at Minneapolis, vs. Iowa, L 105-72. **18** NCAA Tournament at Columbus, vs. James Madison, W 80-66; **20** NCAA Tournament at Columbus, vs. UNC, W 71-69; **25** NCAA Tournament at Seattle, vs. UConn, W 73-61; **27** NCAA Tournament at Seattle, vs. Virginia Tech, L 84-74.

MEN'S GOLF

Feb. 12 Puerto Rico Classic at Grand Reserve, Puerto Rico, 8/13; **13** Puerto Rico Classic at Grand Reserve, Puerto Rico, 2/13; **14** Puerto Rico Classic at Grand Reserve, Puerto Rico, 5/13.

March 6 Colleton River Collegiate at Bluffton, S.C., 11/12; **7** Colleton River Collegiate at Bluffton, S.C., 8/12; **13** Sea Island Invitational at St. Simons Island, Ga, 1st/13; **13** Sea Island Invitational at St. Simons Island, Ga, 2nd/13; **17** Valspar Collegiate at Stuart, Fla., 5th/16; **28** Valspar Collegiate at Stuart, Fla., 4th/16.

April 2 Calusa Cup at Naples, Fla., 3rd/9; **3** Calusa Cup at Naples, Fla., 7th/9; **4** Calusa Cup at Naples, Fla., 7th/9; **21-23** ROBERT KEPLER INTERCOLLEGIATE; **28-30** Big Ten Championship

WOMEN'S GOLF

Feb. 12 Therese Hession Regional Challenge at Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., T2/16; **13** Therese Hession Regional Challenge at Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., T4/16; **12** Therese Hession Regional Challenge at Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., 6/16; **26** Westbrook Invitational at Peoria, Ariz, T2/14; **27** Westbrook Invitational at Peoria, Ariz, 2/14.

March 17 Mountain View Collegiate at Tucson, Ariz., T2nd/17; **18** Mountain View Collegiate at Tucson, Ariz., 2nd/17; **19** Mountain View Collegiate at Tucson, Ariz., 2nd/17.

April 3 Silverado Showdown at Napa, Calif., 10th/17; **4** Silverado Showdown at Napa, Calif., 9th/17; **5** Silverado Showdown at Napa, Calif., 9th/17; **15-16** LADY BUCKEYE INVITATIONAL; **21-23** Big Ten Championship at Pittsburgh.

MEN'S GYMNASTICS

Jan. 14 Windy City Invite at Chicago, Ill., 3rd/6 (394.900); **21** at Navy Open, 1st/6 (405.350); **28** at Michigan, L 409.200-404.000.

Feb. 11 ILLINOIS, W 401.000-399.200; **24** at Winter Cup at Louisville, Ky, NTS; **26** at Winter Cup at Louisville, Ky, NTS.

March 4 at Army, W 409.950-387.600; **11** TRI-MEET, 3rd/3 (397.600) vs. PENN STATE (404.450) & OKLAHOMA (410.000); **17** Tri-Meet at Nebraska, 2nd/3 (401.750), vs. Nebraska (410.400) & Greenville (384.050); **31** BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIPS, 5th/5 (405.500).

April 1 BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIPS, NTS; **14-15** NCAA Championships at State College, Pa.

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS (13-1, 5-1)

Jan. 8 OHIO STATE QUAD MEET, 1st/4 (196.775) vs. KENTUCKY (196.575), ARIZONA (194.950) AND GREENVILLE (181.425); **16** at Georgia Quad Meet at Athens, Ga., 1st/4 (196.250) vs. Georgia (196.125), Rutgers (194.675) and Fisk (190.100); **22** IOWA, W 197.225-196.900; **28** at Michigan, L 197.075-196.350.

Feb. 5 MARYLAND, W 197.575-196.475; **13** at Illinois, W 196.825-196.475; **17** at Penn State, W 196.725-196.125; **25** at B1G Five Meet, 3rd/5 (196.750).

March 3 BRIGHAM YOUNG, W 196.700-195.575; **5** TRI-MEET, 1st/3 (197.600) vs. ILLINOIS (196.875) AND KENT STATE (196.025); **10** at Cal Quad, 3rd/4 (196.900); **18** Big Ten Championships at Iowa City, Iowa, 4th/10 (196.975); **30** NCAA Regional, 2nd/4 (197.350).

April 1 NCAA Regional, 3rd/4 (197.750); **13** NCAA Regional Semifinal.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (21-16-3, 11-11-2)

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, L 2-4, L 3-4; **18-19** NOTRE DAME, W 5-2, L 1-0; **25-26** at Long Island University, L 3-2, W 4-1.

Dec. 2-3 at Penn State, L 2-1, W 4-3; **16** at Bowling Green, W 5-2; **17** BOWLING GREEN, W 9-4.

Jan. 6-7 MICHIGAN STATE, W 3-1, W 6-0; **13-14** at Michigan, W 7-2, L 4-2; **20-21** at Wisconsin, L 4-0, W 2-0.

Feb. 3-4 PENN STATE, L 4-3, W 4-2; **10-11** at Notre Dame, L 2-1, T 2-2 OT (SL); **16** MICHIGAN, T 3-3 OT (SW) **18** at FirstEnergy Stadium, Cleveland, vs. Michigan, W 4-2; **24-25** at Minnesota, L 4-0, L 5-2.

March 3 Big Ten Tournament quarterfinals vs. Penn State, W 5-1, L 2-1 (OT), W 3-1; **11** Big Ten Tournament semifinal at Michigan, L 7-3; **24** NCAA Tournament at Bridgeport, Conn., vs. Harvard, W 8-1; **26** NCAA Tournament at Bridgeport, Conn., vs. Quinnipiac, L 4-1.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (33-6-2, 23-4-1)

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** BEMIDJI STATE, W 5-0; **19** BEMIDJI STATE, W 7-1; **22** COLGATE, T 4-4 (OT); **23** COLGATE, W 6-2.

Dec. 2 at Minnesota Duluth, W 2-1; **3** at Minnesota Duluth, L 5-4 (OT); **17-18** at Cornell, W 4-3, W 4-0; **30-31** at Lindenwood, W 9-1, W 6-0.

Jan. 13 WISCONSIN, W 2-1 (OT); **14** WISCONSIN, W 5-0; **20** at St. Cloud State, W 6-2; **21** at St. Cloud State, W, 3-2 (OT); **27** MINNESOTA STATE, W 6-2; **28** MINNESOTA STATE, W 4-2.

Feb. 3-4 at Minnesota, L 4-2, W 5-1; **10-11** ST. THOMAS, W 6-1, W 5-0; **17-18** at Wisconsin, L 6-5 (OT), W 3-1; **24-25** BEMIDJI STATE (WCHA quarterfinals), W 4-1, W 2-1.

March 3 WCHA semifinal at Minneapolis vs. Minnesota Duluth, W 2-1; **4** WCHA Championship at Minneapolis vs. Minnesota, L 3-1; **11** NCAA Regional final vs. Quinnipiac, W 5-2; **17** NCAA Frozen Four semifinals at Duluth, Minn. vs. Northeastern, W 3-0; **19** NCAA national championship game at Duluth, Minn., vs. Wisconsin, L 1-0.

MEN'S LACROSSE (5-6, 1-2)

Feb. 4 AIR FORCE, W 15-7 **11** CLEVELAND STATE, W 19-12; **19** NORTH CAROLINA, W 8-5; **25** vs. Virginia at Naples, Fla., L 17-6.

March 4 CORNELL, L 16-13; **11** at Notre Dame, L 16-3; **14** DETROIT MERCY, W 19-6; **19** at Denver, L 17-12; **26** RUTGERS, W 11-7.

April 2 at Penn State, L 17-9; **7**, L 12-11 (OT); **15** at Johns Hopkins; **21** at Michigan; **29** Big Ten Tournament Quarterfinals.

May 4 Big Ten Tournament Semifinals; **6** Big Ten Tournament Championship.

WOMEN'S LACROSSE (5-9, 0-4)

Feb. 10 ROBERT MORRIS, W 18-6; **12** TEMPLE, W 10-9; **17** at San Diego State, W 10-4; **19** at USC, L 18-10; **25** DENVER, L 11-4; **28** CINCINNATI, W 13-12 (OT)

March 4 at James Madison, L 16-7; **9** MICHIGAN, L 14-12; **12** COLORADO, L 14-10; **18** JOHNS HOPKINS, L 11-8; **25** at Penn State, L 13-3; **28** LOUISVILLE, W 16-6.

April 4 at Marquette, L 13-12; **8** at Maryland, L 18-7; **15** NORTHWESTERN; **20** at Rutgers.

SOFTBALL (23-13, 4-5)

Feb. 10 at UCF Invitational at Orlando, Fla., vs. Georgia, L 11-4; **11** at UCF Invitational at Orlando, Fla., vs. Boise State, W 8-2; **11** at UCF Invitational at Orlando, Fla., vs. UCF, L 1-0; **12** at UCF Invitational at Orlando, Fla., vs. UMass, W 1-0; **17** at Big Ten/ACC Challenge at Clemson, S.C., vs. Notre Dame, L 7-2; **18** at Big Ten/ACC Challenge at Clemson, S.C., vs. Notre Dame, W 6-5 (9 innings); **18** at Big Ten/ACC Challenge at Clemson, S.C., vs. Clemson, L 5-1; **19** at Big Ten/ACC Challenge at Clemson, S.C., vs. Clemson, L 10-0 (5 innings); **24** at Mary Nutter Classic at Palm Springs, Calif., vs. Cal State Northridge, W 12-0 (5 innings); **25** at Mary Nutter Classic at Palm Springs, Calif., vs. Oregon State, W 6-0; **25** at Mary Nutter Classic at Palm Springs, Calif., vs. San Diego State, W 5-4; **26** at Mary Nutter Classic at Palm Springs, Calif., vs. Utah, L 9-1 (5 innings).

March 10 at Conway, S.C., vs. Coastal Carolina, L 6-4; vs. Canisius, W 8-0 (5 innings) **11** at Conway, S.C., vs. Houston Christian, W 5-4; vs. Canisius, W 5-0 **14** at Charleston Southern (DH), W 2-1 (9 innings), W 13-2; **15** at College of Charleston, W 5-4; **17** at Greenville, N.C., vs. Cleveland State, W 10-0 (5 innings); **17** at Greenville, N.C., vs. East Carolina, W 7-0; **18** at Greenville, N.C., vs. Presbyterian, W 5-2; **18** at Greenville, N.C., vs. East Carolina, W 9-2; **19** at Greenville, N.C., vs. Cleveland State, W 10-0 (5 innings) **21** KENT STATE, W 4-3; **26** MICHIGAN, L 3-1 (10 innings), W 11-2 (5 innings); **27** MICHIGAN, W 8-7, **29** at Dayton, W 17-6 (5 innings); **31** at Indiana, L 17-9 (6 innings).

April 2 at Indiana, L 6-5, L 10-7; **4** OHIO, L 1-0 (9 innings); **7-9** RUTGERS, L 6-5, W 3-2, W 4-3 (9 innings); **11** at Penn State (DH); **14-16** at Illinois; **18** YOUNGSTOWN STATE; **21-23** PURDUE; **28-30** MINNESOTA.

May 5-7 at Nebraska; **10-13** Big Ten Tournament.

SWIMMING & DIVING

Jan. 13 Tri-Meet at Tuscaloosa, Ala., Men: vs. Alabama, W 124-62, vs. Texas W 101-85; Women: vs. Texas L 109-77, vs. Alabama W 115-71; **14** Tri-Meet at Tuscaloosa, Ala., Men: vs. Alabama, W 230-123, vs. Texas W 189-164; Women: vs. Texas L 196-157,

vs. Alabama W 220-133; **21** at Michigan, Men: W 151.5-148.5; Women: W 186.5-113.5; **27-28** Tim Welsh Classic at South Bend, Ind., Men: 1st/4 (1,955.5); Women: 1st/4 (1,803).

Feb. 10-12 OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL, NTS; **22-25** Big Ten Championships at Ann Arbor, Mich., Men: 2/8; Women: 1/12.

March 5 LAST CHANCE MEET, NTS; **9-11** CSCAA National Invitational at Elkhart, Ind., Men: 3rd/10; Women: 3rd/10; **9-11** NCAA Zone Championships at Bloomington, Ind., NTS; **22-25** NCAA Championships at Minneapolis, Men: 11th/38; Women: 6th/39.

MEN'S TENNIS (23-2, 6-0)

Jan. 15 NORTHERN KENTUCKY, W 4-0; XAVIER, W 7-0; **19** CLEVELAND STATE, W 7-0; TOLEDO, W 4-0; **22** ILLINOIS, W 6-1; **28** UCF, W 4-0; TULSA., W 4-0

Feb. 3 TEXAS A&M, W 7-0; **5** TEXAS, W 4-0; **9** at Wake Forest; W 4-3 **11** at Virginia, W 4-1; **14** BAYLOR, W 4-0; **17** ITA Indoor National Team Championship at Champaign, Ill., vs. Illinois, W 4-0; **18** ITA Indoor National Team Championship at Champaign, Ill., vs. Texas, L 4-3; **19** ITA Indoor National Team Championship at Champaign, Ill., vs. Virginia, W 4-0; **25** NOTRE DAME, W 7-0.

March 8 at South Carolina, L 4-1; **15** at UCF, W 4-0; **19** MICHIGAN, W 4-2; **24** at Northwestern, W 4-1; **26** at Illinois, W 4-0; **31** NEBRASKA, W 7-0.

April 2 WISCONSIN, W 6-1; **7** at Michigan State, W 7-0; **9** at Michigan, W 4-2; **15** PENN STATE; **21** PURDUE; **23** INDIANA; **28** Big Ten Tournament.

WOMEN'S TENNIS (15-5, 7-0)

Jan. 22 OKLAHOMA W 5-1; **27** ITA KICKOFF WEEKEND VS. OLD DOMINION, W 4-0; **28** ITA KICKOFF WEEKEND VS. TENNESSEE, W 4-2.

Feb. 2 OKLAHOMA STATE, W 4-3; **4** GEORGIA, W 4-0; **10** ITA National Team Indoor Championship at Seattle, Wash., vs. Auburn, W 4-0; **11** ITA National Team Indoor Championship quarterfinals at Seattle, Wash., vs. Texas A&M, L 4-0; **12** ITA National Team Indoor Championship consolation at Seattle, Wash., vs. Michigan, L 4-1; **19** ARIZONA STATE, W 5-2; **22** NC STATE, L 4-3; **26** vs. Texas A&M at Lake Nona, Fla., L 5-2.

March 4 PENN STATE, W 7-0; **12** at UCLA, L 4-3; **14** at Pepperdine, canceled; **17** WISCONSIN, W 7-0; **19** MINNESOTA, W 4-0; **24** PURDUE, W 4-0; **26** at Northwestern, W 4-0.

April 5 KENTUCKY, W 4-2; **7** NEBRASKA, W 4-0; **9** IOWA, W 4-0; **14** at Michigan State; **16** at Michigan; **22** at Rutgers; **23** at Maryland; **27** Big Ten Tournament.

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL (19-9, 11-3)

Jan. 5 CENTRAL STATE, W 3-0; **7** PENN STATE, L 3-1; **14** at Patriot Invitational in Fairfax, Va., vs. Grand Canyon, L 3-2; **15** at Patriot Invitational in Fairfax, Va., vs. George Mason, W 3-1; **20** MARYVILLE, W 3-0; **21** MISSOURI S&T, W 3-0; **26-27** PRINCETON, W 3-1, W 3-2.

Feb. 3 at Big Ten/Pac 12 Challenge in State College, Pa., vs. UCLA, L 3-1; **4** at Big Ten/Pac 12 Challenge in State College, Pa., vs. USC, W 3-1; **9** MCKENDREE, W 3-1; **11** LEWIS, W 3-0; **16** at Purdue Fort Wayne, W 3-1; **18** at Loyola Chicago, L 3-0; **24** at Quincy, W 3-0; **25** at Lindenwood, L 3-2.

March 4 CHARLESTON, L 3-1; **10-11** at BYU, L 3-1, L 3-2; **15** at Ball State, : 3-0; **18** BALL STATE, W 3-2; **21** at Penn State, W 3-2; **24** LINDENWOOD, W 3-1; **25** QUINCY, W 3-0; **30** at Lewis, W 3-0.

April 1 at McKendree, W 3-1; **6** PURDUE FORT WAYNE, W 3-0; **8** LOYOLA CHICAGO, W 3-0; **15** MIVA Quarterfinals; **19** MIVA Semifinals; **22** MIVA Finals.

WRESTLING (13-3, 6-2)

Nov. 5 at Michigan State Open, 8 champs; **11** VIRGINIA TECH, W 18-13; **18** COLUMBIA, W 33-6; **20** at North Carolina, W 33-9.

Dec. 2-3 Cliff Keen Invitational at Las Vegas, Nev., 8th/34; **11** KENT STATE, W 32-9; **19** Collegiate Duals at New Orleans, La., vs. Lock Haven, W 39-3; vs. Northern Iowa, L

Buckeyes Fall To Virginia Tech In Elite Eight

By **BRADEN MOLES**
BSB Associate Editor

No. 3 Ohio State was unable to carry a strong first-half shooting performance to the finish line in an 84-74 loss to No. 1 Virginia Tech in the Elite Eight on March 27, falling just short of the program's first Final Four appearance since 1993.

The Buckeyes shot a blistering 64.3 percent (18 of 28) from the field and 55.6 percent (5 of 9) from deep in the first half, but they shot just 27.6 percent in the second half (8 of 29) and were outscored 36-29 across the final 20 minutes.

"I do think in the first half, both teams were playing at a really high level and making tough shots and executing to get good shots," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "I think as the game went on, they just did a little more of that than we did in the second half and took advantage of the opportunities they got."

What was advertised as a basketball game was instead a track meet to start things out, with the teams combining to hit 11 of their first 12 shots of the contest – including five three-pointers – as Virginia Tech led 17-10 just 3:46 into the game. Ohio State's lauded defensive press did little to slow the Hokies, who connected on their first seven shots and did not commit a turnover until midway through the opening frame.

"I felt like we were a little tired coming into it," McGuff said. "We had put so much energy into (UConn, a 73-61 victory) and

we didn't have quite the same energy in the press, and when you don't have it, it's tough because you can really get beat up on the back end and give up easy baskets."

After going down early, the Buckeyes took off on a 15-5 run – boosted by a triple from guard Taylor Mikesell to tie the game at 19, one of three in the quarter for the fifth-year senior – to take a 25-22 lead at the end of the first frame. Despite Virginia Tech's strong start from the field, the Hokies missed on eight of their final nine shots of the quarter with just three points – all coming from free throws by Cayla King – over the last four minutes.

Ohio State's run continued into the second quarter, forcing a turnover on Virginia Tech's first possession and getting a fast-break score from guard Taylor Thierry. Hokies forward D'asia Gregg responded with a jumper on their next possession, and it kick-started a 9-2 run resulting in Virginia Tech taking a 31-29 lead with 6:22 left in the first half.

Mikesell's dominance from deep continued, however, as she responded with a three-pointer – her fourth of the game – to regain the lead and later hit her fifth on as many attempts to put Ohio State up 41-36 with 2:38 left. Her three-pointer wound up as the last basket of the half for the Buckeyes, who missed on their last three attempts, while Virginia Tech closed on a 12-4 run to lead 48-45 going into the break.

Both teams had three players reach double-digit scoring in the first half, with Mikesell leading all scorers with 19 points on 6-of-7 shooting and 5-of-6 shooting from deep. Freshman forward Cotie McMahon and guard Jacy Sheldon each added 10 points.

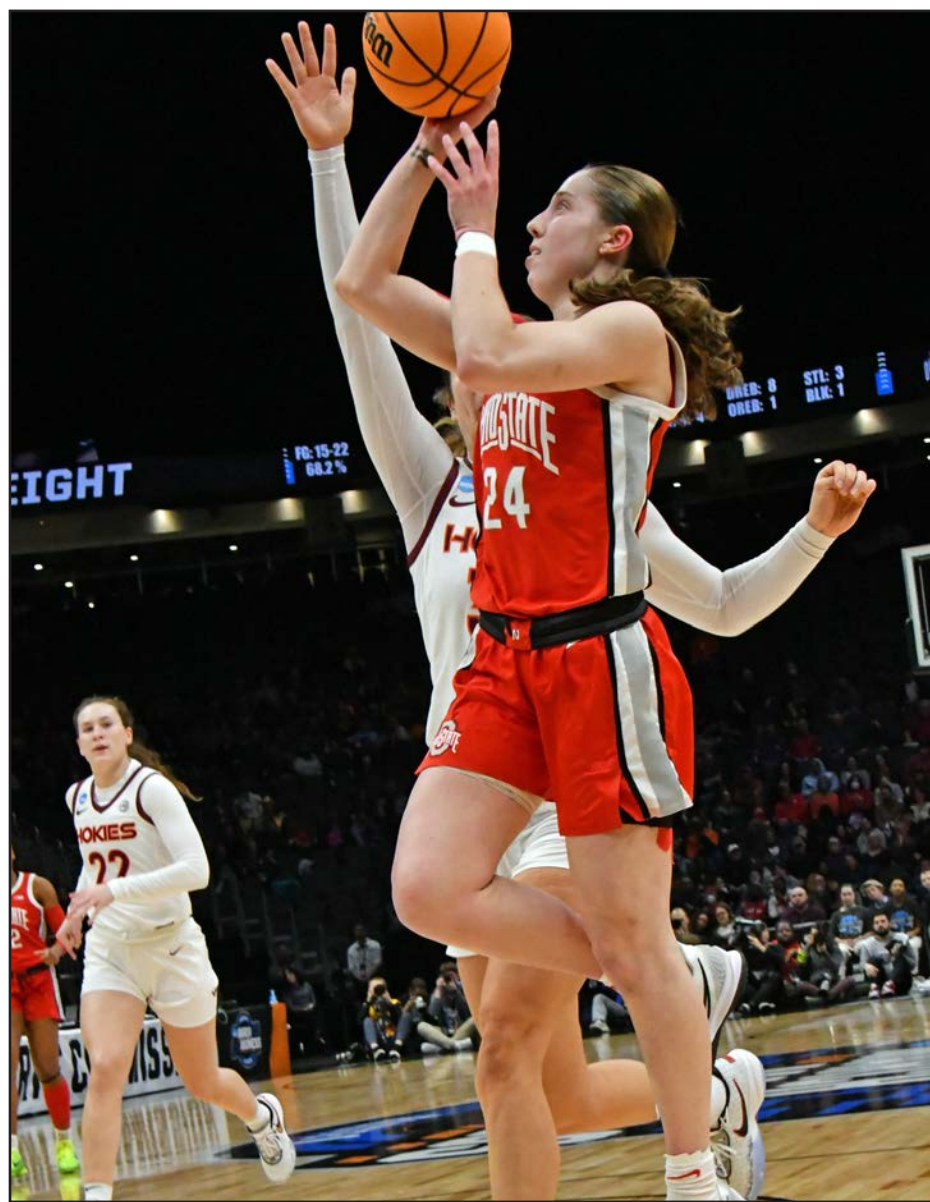
After a fast-paced first half, scoring nearly came to a halt in the opening minutes of the second half. The Buckeyes got a layup from Sheldon with 8:11 left in the quarter but missed their next four shots. Their next points came over three minutes later on a jumper from McMahon, and the Hokies led 55-51 with 4:52 left in the third.

The Buckeyes' cold shooting continued throughout the frame, with Ohio State hitting just one of its next five shots after McMahon's basket, resulting in McGuff calling a timeout trailing 58-53 with 1:49 remaining in the quarter.

"We picked our defense up there in the second half, and they did too," Sheldon said. "We got the stops we wanted. We didn't make the most of them on offense. We didn't execute the way we wanted to, so props to them. They played a great game."

Coming out of that break, the Buckeyes reintroduced the press and were able to force a pair of turnovers, but it amounted to little. Ohio State gave up a three at the buzzer from Virginia Tech guard Georgia Amoore and trailed 63-55 entering the fourth. During the third quarter, Ohio State was outscored 15-10, shot just 26.7 percent (4 of 15) from the field and was 0 of 5 from deep.

Ohio State looked to build some momentum to begin the fourth after McMahon knocked down a pair at the free-throw line, but Virginia Tech responded with back-to-back baskets from center Elizabeth Kitley to



SONNY BROCKWAY

LEAVING HER MARK – Ohio State guard Taylor Mikesell left it all on the floor in her final game as a Buckeye, scoring a team-high 25 points while hitting 7 of 11 three-point attempts in an 84-74 loss to top-seeded Virginia Tech in the Elite Eight.

take a 67-57 lead with 8:33 left in the game.

Despite Ohio State's penchant for comebacks this season, there was not another one to be had for the Buckeyes. Sheldon scored on a layup and at the line to make it 67-60, but the Hokies scored the next six points, capped off by an Amoore triple to go up 73-60 with 4:36 remaining.

Ohio State got big shots down the stretch from Mikesell and Sheldon, including a three-pointer from Mikesell to make it 80-74 with just 44 seconds remaining, but the Buckeyes were unable to complete the comeback and Virginia Tech closed things out at the foul line. The Buckeyes shot just 28.6 percent (4 of 14) in the fourth quarter in the Elite Eight loss. For the second half, OSU shot 27.6 percent.

The Buckeyes were led by Mikesell in her last Ohio State game with 25 points on 8-of-15 shooting (with a 7-of-11 mark from deep), while Sheldon (19 points) and McMahon (18 points) also finished in double digits, with McMahon posting a team-high seven rebounds. The Hokies got 25 points and 12 rebounds from Kitley, while Amoore finished with 24 points. King and forward Taylor Soule each added 12 points.

Ohio State was 5 of 9 from beyond the arc in the first half but just 2 of 11 in the second half, while the Hokies – who were just 8 of 26 from deep for the game (30.8 percent) – held a 32-24 advantage in rebounds, scored 28 points in the paint and went 24 of 28 at the line (85.7 percent).

"We scored well from the perimeter, but not so well around the basket," McGuff said. "I think that was a big problem for us – the balance that they got out of scoring on the perimeter and Kitley running the basket. We couldn't replicate that, and that just gave them better opportunities."

Ohio State's season concluded with a 28-8 record and just the fourth appearance in the Elite Eight in program history. The Buckeyes last made it past the Elite Eight in 1993, advancing all the way to the national championship game before falling to Texas Tech.

"I think this is a great opportunity for us to even build off of this," McGuff said. "And I think last year we took the experience of the Sweet 16 and I think we felt confident coming into that game, because we were right there, a possession away. Hopefully we can get back and learn from this one a little bit."

Virginia Tech 84, Ohio State 74

March 27, 2023
Climate Pledge Arena • Seattle

	1	2	3	4	F
Ohio State (28-8)	25	20	10	19	74
Virginia Tech (31-4)	22	26	15	21	84

Ohio State	Total		FT		Reb.		A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF			
Walker	19	3-7	0-0	1-0	2	3	6		
McMahon	38	6-12	6-7	0-7	3	2	18		
Thierry	40	2-4	2-2	0-5	1	2	6		
Sheldon	36	7-14	5-6	1-4	1	4	19		
Mikesell	38	8-15	2-2	0-0	0	2	25		
Harris	12	0-1	0-0	1-1	1	5	0		
Mikulaskova	17	0-4	0-0	1-0	3	4	0		
Bristow	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0		
Shumate	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	2	0		
Totals	200	26-57	15-17	4-20	11	25	74		

Percentages: FG: 45.6%. FT: 88.2%. **Three-point field goals:** 7-20 (Mikesell 7-11, Harris 0-1, McMahon 0-1, Mikulasikova 0-4, Sheldon 0-3). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 1 (McMahon). **Turnovers:** 10 (Sheldon 4, Mikulasikova 2, Thierry 2, Harris, McMahon). **Steals:** 6 (Mikesell 2, Harris, McMahon, Sheldon, Walker).

Virginia Tech	Total		FT		Reb.		A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF			
Soule	35	4-7	4-5	2-2	2	4	12		
Kitley	40	9-14	7-10	2-10	1	0	25		
Amoore	39	7-19	6-6	0-4	2	0	24		
King	32	3-7	3-3	0-4	2	5	12		
Traylor	28	2-3	2-2	0-0	2	4	7		
Gregg	25	1-4	2-2	0-4	1	3	4		
Geiman	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0		
Totals	200	26-54	24-28	5-27	10	17	84		

Percentages: FG: 48.1%. FT: 85.7%. **Three-point field goals:** 8-26 (Amoore 4-14, King 3-7, Traylor 1-2, Gregg 0-3). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 4 (Kitley 3, Traylor). **Turnovers:** 13 (Kitley 4, Amoore 3, Traylor 3, Gregg, Soule, Team). **Steals:** 3 (King 2, Soule). **Officials:** Pantoja, Gulbeyan, Lukanich. **Attendance:** 8,466.

Sheldon Announces Return For Fifth Season

Ohio State senior guard Jacy Sheldon announced March 29 that she will be returning for a fifth and final season with the Buckeyes.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

Sheldon recently completed her fourth season at Ohio State but has an additional year of eligibility granted by the COVID-19 waiver afforded to all student-athletes, and she will utilize that for one last run with the Buckeyes instead of opting for the WNBA draft.

"I love being a Buckeye, and I can't wait to run it back with my teammates," Sheldon said in a statement. "See you next year, Buckeye Nation."

Sheldon looked the part of a WNBA draft prospect through the first seven games of the season (appearing in five of those contests), averaging 16.0 points, 3.4 rebounds, 3.2 assists and 6.0 steals per game on 48.5 percent shooting, but her season came to a screeching halt as she suffered a lower-leg injury that would force her to miss 22 of the next 23 games for the Buckeyes.

She returned to the court in the Big Ten Women's Basketball Tournament, coming off the bench in three games and averaging

6.0 points, 2.0 assists and 2.0 steals in just 15.3 minutes per game as she was brought back slowly from her injury.

Her return to the starting lineup came in Ohio State's first-round NCAA tournament matchup against James Madison, and it started a run for the ages for Sheldon. She scored 17 points, dished out nine assists and went 9 of 9 at the free-throw line against the Dukes.

"She's the person on our team that makes everybody better," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "Everybody gets a little bit better when Jacy is on the court."

She followed it up in the next round against North Carolina with 16 points on 6-of-14 shooting, including the game-winner with just 1.8 seconds remaining to send the Buckeyes to the Sweet 16. She was also pivotal in Ohio State's upset of UConn in the Sweet 16, scoring 17 points and going 10 of 10 at the line while adding seven rebounds and five assists.

Though the Buckeyes suffered an 84-74 loss to Virginia Tech in the Elite Eight, their first appearance in that round since 1993, Sheldon still finished with 19 points.

In four tournament games, Sheldon averaged 17.3 points, 5.8 rebounds, 5.0 assists and 2.3 steals on 40.0 percent shooting while going 27 of 29 at the line. For the season, she was still able to appear in 13 games, averaging 13.2 points, 3.6 rebounds, 3.5 assists and 3.5 steals on 43.2 percent shooting.



SONNY BROCKWAY

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES — Taylor Mikesell (right) finished her Ohio State career in the record books with 1,215 points as a Buckeye.

Sheldon held off until after the tournament on making an announcement on her future plans, but when asked about the possibility of returning for another season following Ohio State's loss to Virginia Tech, her answer provided a hint toward her eventual decision.

"To be honest, I've been so worried about winning games and getting healthy, I haven't even given that much thought," she said. "We had a great team this year and we're going to build off that next year, and obviously, losing Taylor (Mikesell) is going to be big shoes to fill because she's an amazing player and a great teammate."

Sheldon's return is an important one for the Buckeyes given that the fifth-year guard Mikesell's eligibility is exhausted following the recently concluded season, though Ohio State does welcome back guard Taylor Thierry and will have guard Madison Greene returning coming off her second season-ending injury in as many years.

Mikesell Leaves Mark In Final Game

During several stretches of Ohio State's 84-74 loss in the Elite Eight to Virginia Tech, the Buckeyes looked outmatched, outworked and outplayed as the Hokies maintained a consistent double-digit lead in the second half.

But even as Ohio State's season approached an unceremonious end with the Buckeyes cold from the field in the second half – shooting just 27.6 percent – it was Mikesell who continued to put up shots,

unwilling to go away quietly in what was becoming the final game of her collegiate career.

In fact, it was her shooting stroke that allowed the Buckeyes to be in position to keep the game close early on, trailing just 48-45 entering the locker room. She scored 19 points in the first half on 6-of-7 shooting, with five of those makes coming from beyond the arc.

While Mikesell was just 2 of 5 from deep in the second half, it was a testament to her competitive spirit to try to will the Buckeyes on, even when the game appeared out of hand. She hit a three-pointer with just 44 seconds left to make it 80-74, the closest deficit in nearly a quarter of action, but it was too late as Virginia Tech was able to close the game out at the line. The result was not what Mikesell, her teammates or coaches wanted, but she was still proud of the team's ability to get to that point and compete for a berth in the Final Four.

"I think it's meant a lot (to me)," she said after the game. "From being in the position we were last year, kind of driving the reason why I wanted to come back and just being able to put ourselves in that position to get to the Final Four, we had the opportunity. I think it has meant everything to me."

The final buzzer wrapped Mikesell's collegiate career. In five seasons between Maryland, Oregon and Ohio State, Mikesell averaged 14.3 points per game on 43.4 percent shooting, including 42.0 percent shooting from beyond the arc.

Plank's Cafe



Jacy Sheldon
Senior Guard
Dublin, Ohio

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In her two seasons at Ohio State, Mikesell appeared in and started 68 games, scoring 17.9 points and adding 3.1 rebounds and 2.1 assists per game on 45.4 percent shooting, including a blistering 44.2 percent clip from deep, which ranks second in program history, while her 230 triples rank fourth all-time.

She also surpassed the 1,000-point barrier with the program this season – eventually finishing with 1,215 points as a Buckeye – to become the 36th player in program history to surpass 1,000 points while at Ohio State. In her career as a whole, Mikesell tallied 2,253 total points.

“She’s been such a great kid in our program,” McGuff said. “She’s a wonderful young person. She’s leaving the way you should leave, knowing that you poured every ounce of heart and soul, effort, energy into a program. That’s just who she is, and it says so much about her.”

As the WNBA now awaits for Mikesell, one year after she opted to return to Ohio State instead of testing the professional waters, what she’ll remember above all else were the bonds she forged in her two seasons as a Buckeye.

“(My teammates are) kind of the best part about this whole thing,” she said. “Honestly, I’m probably going to miss just being able to hang out with them most, more than anything.”

The WNBA draft was scheduled to begin on April 10 just hours after Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press, so for the latest on Mikesell’s potential landing spot, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com.

Perry Enters Transfer Portal

Ohio State freshman guard Mya Perry announced March 29 that she will be entering the transfer portal after just one season in Columbus.

“First, I want to thank Columbus and everyone that has followed me throughout my journey,” Perry said in a statement. “It has honestly been a great experience. I want to thank The Ohio State University for the opportunity that they have given me. I will forever value and appreciate the memories that were made with my teammates.

“With that being said, I will be entering the transfer portal ... I am excited for the journey that is ahead of me, and I can’t wait to see what my future holds.”

Perry appeared in just six games this season for 19 total minutes played, with opportunities on the court few and far between due to Ohio State’s depth at guard. She played a season-high six minutes against McNeese State on Nov. 20 and scored a season-high four points.

She joined Ohio State out of Reynoldsburg (Ohio) Summit, where she is the program’s all-time leading scorer and three-point scorer. She also picked up first-team all-state and all-conference recognition during her standout prep career.

Perry was unlikely to factor in at guard next season with Sheldon returning in addition to Greene, Rikki Harris, Emma Shumate and Thierry all expected on the roster. Ohio State will also be welcoming in freshman guard Diana Collins out of Lilburn (Ga.) Brookwood.

Win Over UConn Sets

Viewership Record

Ohio State’s 73-61 win over UConn in the Sweet 16 was record-breaking, with the Buckeyes winning their first game in program history over the Huskies. But it broke records off the court as well.

The Buckeyes’ win drew 2.4 million viewers on ABC, which is the largest audience to ever take in a women’s Sweet 16 game on an ESPN network, and it helped the Sweet 16 average 1.2 million viewers for all eight games, also the most on record. In total, Sweet 16 viewership was up 73 percent from last season

Viewers likely tuned in expecting to see UConn advance to the program’s 17th consecutive Elite Eight appearance dating back to 2005 but instead saw Ohio State utilizing a stifling defensive performance to send the Huskies home early.

While Ohio State’s Elite Eight loss was not the most-watched game of the round – that honor belongs to Iowa’s win over Louisville, which drew 2.5 million viewers – the Buckeyes were still part of history after the Elite Eight averaged 2.2 million viewers in the four games, also the most on record.

Former Buckeye Poole Hits Dagger In Title Game

When LSU and Iowa tipped off in the national championship game on April 2, it had been just over a year since former Ohio State guard Kateri Poole entered her name into the transfer portal before eventually settling on the Tigers as her next destination.

Now, with a year under her belt in Baton Rouge and a national championship to boot, it’s clear that Poole made her best decision in opting to transfer out of Columbus.

Not only was Poole a significant contributor for the Tigers, appearing in 35 games with six starts and averaging 4.5 points per game with 45.2 percent shooting from deep, but that three-point shooting helped to put a cap on the title game.

With the Tigers leading 95-83, Poole drained a three-pointer to give the Tigers a 15-point lead with just 1:11 remaining in the game, and that shot began the official celebration for LSU in advance of the buzzer sounding on the program’s first national championship. She finished the contest with six points, connecting on both attempts from deep, and added three rebounds and an assist.

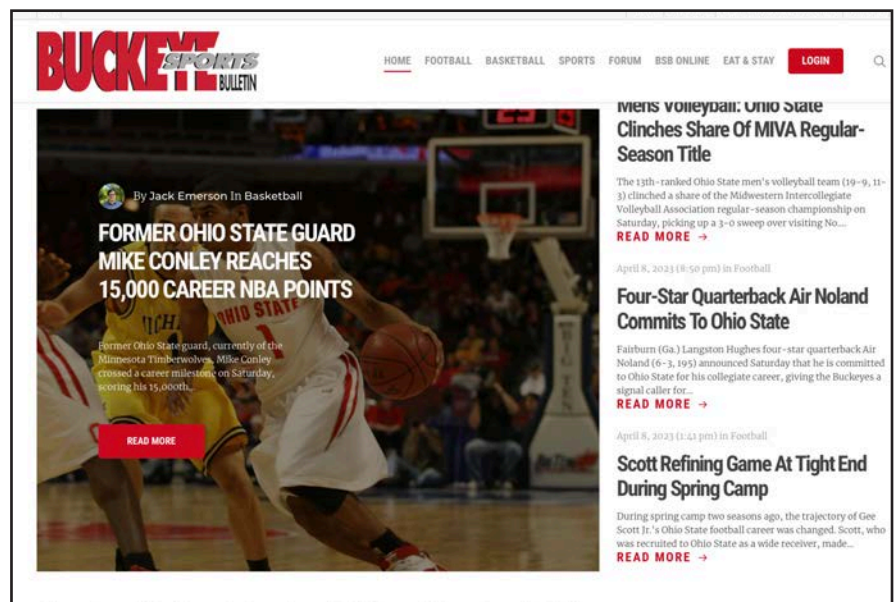
Sheldon Is Plank’s Lady Buck of the Month

There is no shortage of candidates for Plank’s Lady Buck of the Month for March given the number of Buckeyes who made significant impacts in the Big Ten and NCAA tournaments, but it’s hard to deny the boost Ohio State got when Sheldon returned.

She appeared in seven games during March – all of the win-or-go-home variety – and averaged 12.4 points, 3.6 rebounds, 3.7 assists and 2.1 steals on 40.0 percent shooting, helping lead the Buckeyes to their first Elite Eight appearance since 1993.

And while her game-winner to lift Ohio State past North Carolina – on the Buckeyes’ home court, no less – will be ingrained in the minds of fans for years to come, Sheldon will have another shot to create some memories for the Scarlet and Gray when she returns to Ohio State for her fifth and final season.

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Swoopes' Hoops Downs OSU In '93 Title Game

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

It was a stage that few – including those Buckeyes who scrapped and clawed their way to a previously unseen mark for the women's basketball program – expected Ohio State to be at by the end of the season.

Coming off a 15-13 record in the 1991-92 season and an 11-17 record the season before, the first losing campaign for Ohio State since before it competed in the Big Ten, not much thought was given to the Buckeyes' chances of making the NCAA tournament after missing it in each of the two prior seasons under head coach Nancy Darsch, let alone the idea of contending for a national championship.

But it was that lack of expectations – not to mention a heralded freshman class that included Kelly Fergus, GiGi Jackson, Adrienne Johnson, Lisa Negri and Katie Smith, from down the road in Logan, Ohio – that helped boost the Buckeyes to an improbable run through the regular season and NCAA tournament, eventually falling just two points shy of a national championship in an 84-82 loss to Texas Tech on April 4, 1993, in Atlanta.

"Part of the reason we've been able to accomplish this much is maybe we didn't have the expectations on us and there wasn't that pressure," Darsch said after the title game loss. "We truly did have fun this year. This has been a very special team in many ways."

With 30 years having passed since Ohio State's magical run to the program's first – and to date, only – appearance in the Final Four and national championship game, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is taking a look back at what remains the crowning achievement for Ohio State women's basketball.

While Ohio State was a clear contender for the title entering the NCAA tournament as a No. 1 seed, the Buckeyes' contention didn't become evident until later in the season. After an early nonconference win over No. 20 Georgia, the Buckeyes later picked up a win over No. 5 Virginia, a 91-84 victory at St. John Arena on Jan. 2, 1993.

"We did this fastbreak thing, and I just remember thinking – the play-by-play (commentator) at the time was Herb Howenstine – and I remember turning to him during a commercial and saying, 'Wow, this team is good. They're talented. They're fast,'" former Ohio State women's basketball player and current radio analyst Kristin Watt told BSB. "I don't know what happened in the offseason, but my goodness."

But the schedule makers were none too



FILE PHOTO

FRESHMAN STANDOUT – Ohio State's 1993 Final Four run was sparked by freshman guard Katie Smith, who led the Buckeyes with a team-high 18.1 points per game on 50.4 percent shooting that season.

kind to Ohio State, as just five days later, it had to hit the road to face No. 1 Vanderbilt, led by future OSU head coach Jim Foster. Despite the Buckeyes suffering a 70-67 defeat, it was on the road to a team that finished the season 30-3, and it showed Ohio State's potential as Smith and the other freshmen continued to jell with senior guards Audrey Burcy, Averrill Roberts and Lisa Sebastian and forward Nikki Keyton.

"When they beat Virginia and nearly beat Vanderbilt ... I mean, Katie Smith took a shot from half court that looked like it was going in that would have tied the game," said BSB's Mike Wachsman, who covered the women's team at the time. "It was back and forth the entire time. Once they won (against Virginia) and barely lost (against Vanderbilt), you're thinking, 'OK, this team's really starting to show that it might have something.'"

Ohio State would lose just twice more in the regular season, falling at No. 6 Penn State, 97-80, on Jan. 27 and dropping a 79-62 contest at No. 3 Iowa just nine days later. The Buckeyes would return the favor to the Hawkeyes, however, winning 72-60 at

home on March 7, and eventually finished the regular season with a 24-3 record, securing one of the top four seeds in the 48-team field.

"It was exciting seeing our names come up first on the screen," Darsch said after being selected for the tournament. "That eliminates the situation of having to wait and makes the heart beat a little easier."

The Buckeyes took care of business in the second and third rounds (the top four seeds received a first-round bye), taking down Rutgers and Western Kentucky by double digits to set up an Elite Eight matchup with Virginia.

In that rematch from the regular season, Ohio State led by as many as 13 points with under three minutes remaining, but it took a turnover on the Cavaliers' final possession of the game to secure the 75-73 win for the Buckeyes, who received the first-ever berth to the Final Four for both the program and the Big Ten as a whole.

"It's extremely rewarding," Darsch said. "I'm sitting here shaking my head because I'm not sure I believe it yet that we are going to the Final Four. It's extremely rewarding to take a team that wasn't ranked in the preseason to the Final Four. It's really overwhelming."

Ohio State's seniors stepped up to keep the season going, with Burcy, Keyton, Roberts and Sebastian combining for 59 of the Buckeyes' 75 points and all but 13 of the team's 56 field-goal attempts. Burcy was a standout, finishing with 20 points on 50.0 percent shooting and four made three-pointers.

"The script couldn't be written any better for us," Keyton said. "I'm excited for the seniors because we worked hard for this and we deserve it. Nancy deserves it and

this team deserves it. We've worked hard since day one and believed in ourselves and stayed focused throughout the season. The feeling's indescribable because we've never been this far before."

That set up a rubber match between the Buckeyes and Hawkeyes in the Final Four on April 3 in Atlanta, with each team winning on their home court during the regular season while sharing the Big Ten regular-season championship. It was the latest in a string of intense contests between the conference foes, but the stakes had never been higher with an appearance in the national championship game on the line.

"These were the days when it was Iowa and Ohio State leading the Big Ten," Watt said. "That rivalry started with C. Vivian Stringer when she went to Iowa and in '84-85, we filled up the brand-new Carver-Hawkeye Arena. The arena held something like 17-18,000, and they had over 22,000 in there and broke all kinds of fire codes and all kinds of things and it was national media. Then you go and play Iowa in the Final Four."

Given the split series entering the game, there was little separating Ohio State and Iowa other than the Buckeyes being seeded one spot better than the Hawkeyes.

"You know Iowa was really good," Wachsman said. "They were every bit the starting five that Ohio State had. They had a little more experience and Stringer was always one of the top coaches in the game."

And it only made sense that in this heated rivalry, it couldn't be decided in just 40 minutes. After Iowa took a 61-59 lead with 1:28 remaining, Smith responded with the tying layup with just eight seconds remaining to send the contest to overtime, and just five minutes separated either team from their first shot in program history at claiming a national title.

After the Buckeyes connected on a trio of three-pointers in overtime, Keyton and Smith combined for three makes at the line to put Ohio State up 73-72 with 33.5 seconds left, and on Iowa's final possession of the game, point guard Laurie Aaron tripped over a teammate and lost the ball, which was quickly collected by Roberts as the buzzer sounded. That play was one of many pivotal ones for the senior, who led the Buckeyes with 16 points and helped punch their ticket to the national championship game.

"Ohio State had very good teams for a long time, and that continued when Nancy Darsh first got here, and then it struggled a little bit," Watt said. "Ohio State was used to being at the top. They were used to making the NCAA tournament every year. They were used to competing for the Big Ten championship every year. It was a really big deal to be back on top and not just be back on top of the conference, but back on top and recognized as a national powerhouse once again.

"It was this fleeting thing, because the year before the team was 15-13, and the year after (the tournament run) they were 14-14. It was this magical run of Ohio State being on top of the heap, being recognized for the power that they were in the conference as well as nationally. This was the

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FILE PHOTO

DAZZLING DARSCH — Ohio State was coached by Nancy Darsch during its lone run to the Final Four in 1993. Darsch led the Buckeyes to four Big Ten regular-season titles and seven NCAA tournament appearances while collecting a 234-125 record as head coach.

highest pedestal you could step on, and they did."

While a monumental accomplishment for the program, there was little time to celebrate. Ohio State was tasked with facing Texas Tech and forward Sheryl Swoopes, the Naismith Player of the Year who had been called the female Michael Jordan, and she lived up to the hype. She averaged 28.1 points during the season and had eclipsed the 30-point mark in each of the last five games entering the national championship.

"Sheryl Swoopes was the cat's meow at the time," Watt said. "Everybody knew Sheryl. She was an All-American. It was kind of like, is this going to be her coronation, or is this going to be the changing the guard with Katie Smith, the new All-American coming in? There was a lot of hype coming into the game because Ohio State wasn't expected (to be there)."

Texas Tech had long been viewed as a title contender behind Swoopes' spectacular season and entered as the favorites given Ohio State's run coming after a 15-13 finish the previous season. But entering as the underdog offered an advantage for the Buckeyes, who were able to play loose, if not a bit fatigued given the game was played the day following their overtime win over Iowa.

"It was a little bit of, 'Well, we're playing with house money.' They were a No. 1 seed, but they went into the season with really no expectations," Wachsman said. "I think people would have been fine if they weren't No. 1 and maybe made the Elite Eight. They would have said, 'OK, this is step one on the path to the next three or four years being really, really good.' The team had a quiet confidence."

And that confidence showed, at least early on. Ohio State got out to an 11-7 lead, with Roberts scoring eight of those early points. But the Raiders responded with a 15-4 run and, behind 23 first-half points from Swoopes, took a 40-31 lead into the half. As it had done all season, though, Ohio State fought back, taking off on an 18-8 run in the second half to tie the game at 54 before eventually taking a 62-61 lead with

8:30 remaining.

"I thought once we tied it up and went ahead by a point we were going to take care of things," Darsch said. "But then they went to the line on three straight possessions, and that seemed to take our momentum away some."

Ohio State kept things close – largely behind a team-high 28 points from Smith on 11-of-20 shooting, as well as 7-of-11 shooting from the line – and trailed 70-69 with 4:12, but Swoopes went on to score seven of the Raiders' final 12 points, with her last score of the game – a three-point play – putting Texas Tech up 80-73 with 45.2 seconds remaining.

"When they got within two or three, I decided to take control of the game," Swoopes said. "A couple of times down the floor my teammates did a good job getting the ball to me, and I felt like I needed to score whenever I got it."

Despite a pair of three-pointers from Burcy in the final 11.5 seconds, time ran out on Ohio State, with Texas Tech holding an 84-82 advantage as the buzzer sounded.

"Texas Tech played with a lot of poise," Darsch said. "We did look a bit flat. It's hard to know what is jitters and what is fatigue. Our players left what they had on the court. We fought very hard and played very hard. Tech just had a little more oomph today."

That oomph came in the form of a still-standing championship-game record of 47 points from Swoopes, doing so on 16-of-24 shooting and making all 11 of her attempts at the free-throw line. It crushed the previous women's record of 28 points, achieved by both Tennessee's Dena Head and Virginia's Dawn Staley (both in 1991), and was ahead of the men's record held by Bill Walton, who scored 44 points for UCLA in 1973.

"You don't really appreciate Sheryl Swoopes until you have to stop her," Darsch said. "She hurt us today, not just by the scoring, but because we take such pride in our defense. She attacked our heart. I saw us get a little dejected and down when she scored some tough shots against us."

Watt, who said Swoopes' performance is among the best she has seen in either her playing or broadcasting career, said it was just Swoopes' night despite Ohio State's attempts to stop her scoring.

"I can recall thinking if she were playing horse," Watt said, "she could have put up a shot from half court backwards and it would have gone in."

The irony of it all is that Smith finished with the quietest 28-point outing in title-game history, which would have tied the previous record. Smith added a game-high 11 rebounds for a double-double, but it was largely overshadowed. That was of no concern to Smith, though, who Watt said rarely drew attention to herself.

"She respected the game. She played for the team. She was not someone that played for the hype," Watt said. "She was a freshman with a bunch of upperclassmen. That can sometimes be hard because you're displacing an upperclassman on a roster. But she was so good and so mature that she fit right into the team, and because she had that competitive spirit that she brought to practice and games, she immediately had respect among her peers."

"For a team that struggled so much the two years prior, with virtually all the same

players and internal angst among teammates, to pull it all together, it was almost like Katie was the glue to help make that all happen."

The result in the title game was not what anybody wanted, but it was not going to diminish the success of the season and a new benchmark set for the program. It was especially important for the seniors, who knew that – regardless of the outcome of that national championship game – it would be their last time suiting up for the Scarlet and Gray.

While leaving with a title would have been preferred, the upperclassmen realized the significance of their accomplishment despite coming up short of their biggest goal.

"When you make it to the national championship game, you think, 'I've come this far, I don't want to lose now,'" Sebastian said. "This was not good enough. No one really cares who came in second. But we got beat by a great Texas Tech team, and I give them all the credit."

"We can't really hang our heads, though. We had a great season, and when we look

back in a week or so, we'll realize just how much we accomplished. We did something no Ohio State team ever did. It might seem like one loss lessens the season, but really it doesn't."

Despite the players and coaches who have come through the program in the years since, that tournament run remains the highlight for Ohio State's program, with this year's run to the Elite Eight marking the deepest run for the Buckeyes since that loss in the title game. As improbable as that run may have seemed at the time, it's only grown in reverence as it's become more and more apparent how truly difficult it is to get to that stage.

Ohio State is hoping to surpass those accomplishments at some point to bring home the program's first national championship, but in the meantime, that scrappy group from 30 years ago continues to serve as the standard.

"I'm very proud of our players, not only today, but for the whole season with what they've accomplished," Darsch said. "It's been a great ride for us. It's kind of unbelievable."

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Iowa Runner-Up In NCAA Women's Tournament

The Iowa women's basketball team made it all the way to the national championship game against Louisiana State before falling to the Tigers, 102-85, at the American Airlines Center in Dallas on April 2, falling just short of a national title.

BIG TEN NOTES Andy Anders

"I'm so proud of my team," Iowa head coach Lisa Bluder said following the loss. "I'm proud of the women they are. I'm so proud of what they stand for. The Iowa fans that came here in droves, I'm so thankful for them. I'm thankful that I get to coach at a university like the University of Iowa.

"But I'm telling you, this is brutal. It's really tough to walk out of that locker room today and not ever be able to coach Monika (Czinano) and McKenna (Warnock) ever again."

Iowa cruised through the first two weekends of the tournament, knocking off No. 15 Southeastern Louisiana, No. 10 Georgia, No. 6 Colorado and No. 5 Louisville – all but one (Georgia) by double digits – to advance to the Final Four.

"This group is amazing," Bluder said after defeating the Cardinals. "To do the thing you love with the people you love, it doesn't get any better than that. That's exactly how this team is. Everybody talks about being a family, this team is a true family."

That's where most prognosticators thought Iowa's run would end, as the Hawkeyes' reward for making the Final Four was a matchup with South Carolina, the tournament's No. 1 overall seed which boasted a 42-game winning streak that included the previous season's national championship. The Gamecocks entered with a significant size advantage in the paint, and

it showed with a 49-25 advantage on the glass in the contest. Caitlin Clark was the difference, however.

She recorded 41 points with eight assists against the odds-on favorite to win the tournament. South Carolina took a 60-59 lead with 9:05 to play, but it was there Clark truly took over, scoring or assisting on every single one of her team's 18 fourth-quarter points and hitting a layup with 1:17 to play to give Iowa a 73-69 advantage. She then closed things out with four makes at the line to send the Hawkeyes to the title game.

"South Carolina, unbelievable basketball team," Bluder said after the win. "I'm so proud of my women because I think they're the only people that really believed. I don't think anybody else, unless you were in Black and Gold, believed that we were going to win that game. The women in that circle, they believed. We prepared all week as if we were going to win this game."

Iowa's season came to an end just two days later, however, when third-seeded LSU defeated the Hawkeyes in the national championship game. Outstanding shooting from guard Jasmine Carson in the first half allowed LSU to take a 59-42 lead into halftime.

Carson, a 35.8 percent shooter from three in the regular season, was 5 of 5 from behind the arc and 7 of 7 from the field in the first 20 minutes, including a three off the dribble over two defenders that banked into the basket as the buzzer sounded for intermission.

Trailing by as many as 21 points in the second half, Iowa managed to whittle its deficit down to as little as eight with 8:44 left in the game but ultimately fell 102-85. The Tigers had four players score 15 points or more, and Carson led the way with 22 points. Clark finished with 30 points on 8-of-19 shooting from deep, adding eight assists.

The contest drew an average television audience of 9.9 million on ESPN, with viewership peaking at 12.6 million. It's the most-viewed women's basketball game ever, college or pro.

"This is the game we love, and seeing it get the recognition it deserves is obviously super rewarding," Iowa senior center Czinano said. "It's about time women's basketball gets this kind of viewership, and it can only go up."

Clark With Tournament Performance For The Ages

Despite a loss in the title game, it was still a historic outing for Clark, who during Iowa's six-game run scored more points than any player ever has in an NCAA tournament – including both men and women – tallying 191 points for the tournament.

Clark – who swept every national player of the year award, including the Associated Press Player of the Year, the Naismith Trophy, Wade Trophy, Wooden Award and USBWA National Player of the Year – also recorded the most assists in a single NCAA women's tournament, passing out 60 helpers over the span of her team's NCAA runner-up run.

"I think she's the most phenomenal basketball player in America," Bluder said. "I just don't think there's anybody like her, in so many regards, not only scoring but passing the ball, handling the ball – it's her men-



SONNY BROCKWAY

GIANT IMPACT – Purdue center Zach Edey – who stands 7-4 – earned both the Wooden Award and AP Player of the Year with 22.3 points, 12.9 rebounds and 2.1 blocks per game this season.

tality. I think that's what's so special. She believes in herself, she believes in her teammates. She's so confident. But she's put the work in to deserve to have that confidence."

Clark's 30-point outing in the title game was impressive, but the crown jewel of her immaculate tournament run remains the victory over South Carolina, where she scored or assisted on 61 of Iowa's 77 points (79.2 percent) for the contest.

"They were guarding (Czinano) pretty high up, so that was allowing me to get to the rim," Clark said. "I thought we were dragging their rim protectors away from the rim, where they're used to being. But honestly a lot of screening action (is what freed me up)."

Prior to the win over South Carolina, Clark piled up 41 points on 11-of-19 shooting against Louisville, including eight made threes, just one triple shy of the women's tournament single-game record. Those 41 points came with 12 assists and 10 rebounds, making it the first 40-point triple-double in NCAA tournament history, for the men or women.

Clark will return to Iowa for her senior season next year, not yet draft-eligible in the WNBA.

Edey Wins AP, Wooden Award

Clark wasn't the only Big Ten basketball

player to collect hardware at season's end. Purdue center Zach Edey took home both the coveted Wooden Award and Associated Press Player of the Year honor on the men's side.

Edey also won the Naismith Trophy and earned player of the year awards from the National Association of Basketball Coaches, Sporting News and United States Basketball Writers Association.

The 7-4 frontcourt worker averaged 22.3 points, 12.9 rebounds and 2.1 blocks for the season. He helped guide the Boilermakers to a Big Ten championship, both in the regular season and the conference tournament, to take a No. 1 seed at the NCAA Tournament. There, Purdue became just the second one-seed ever to be upset by a No. 16 seed, falling 63-58 to Fairleigh Dickinson.

Edey took an early lead for the Wooden Award with eight consecutive games of 20 points in the first nine games of the season for Purdue, a stretch that included contests against such national powers as Duke, Gonzaga, Marquette and West Virginia. Edey reached 30 points eight times on the season and recorded double-doubles in 27 of his 34 games.

As of the time of press, Edey had yet to make a decision on whether he will enter the NBA draft or return for his senior season with Purdue.

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Penn State Paving New Rhoades With HC Hire

Coming off its first NCAA Tournament win since 2011, Penn State found itself in a position of transition after head coach Micah Shrewsberry turned down a contract extension from the school to take the head coaching job at Notre Dame.

It didn't take long to find his replacement, though, as on March 29, the Nittany Lions tabbed former VCU head coach Mike Rhoades to fill the position, Rhoades inked a seven-year contract that will begin at \$3.4 million per year and total around \$25.9 million by the end of the deal.

"We will be bold, different and aggressive moving our program forward," Rhoades said. "We will play with great energy and excitement while always being relentless in our pursuit of making this basketball family into something special. I can't wait to get to work."

Rhoades made three NCAA Tournaments in his six seasons at VCU, winning the Atlantic 10 twice during his tenure. His record with the Rams was 129-61, with a 72-32 record in conference play.

Prior to VCU, Rhoades coached three seasons at Rice and eight at Division III Randolph-Macon, where he began his head coaching career. During his time with the Yellow Jackets, he won the Old Dominion Athletic Conference four consecutive years from 2001-05 and finished with a 197-76 mark during his tenure.

Rhoades felt attracted to Penn State not only because it is a program on the rise, but also the relationship that the team and university has with the student body.

"It's a special place," Rhoades said. "Just

walking around here today, people look excited to be here, and how much fun it was to get to know everybody. I'm looking forward to building great relationships with so many people. This is a great moment for my family, my staff, and now here at Penn State basketball, this will become our family as well."

Fralick Tabbed As New MSU WBB Head Coach

Michigan State women's basketball found its next head coach in former Bowling Green program leader Robyn Fralick, the program announced on March 31.

Fralick replaces Suzy Merchant, who stepped down following this past season due to health concerns following 16 years at the team's helm. Merchant posted a 327-187 record with 10 NCAA tournament appearances during her tenure.

"(Fralick) has been very successful and went 104-3 at Ashland and two years undefeated and won a national title," MSU athletic director Alan Haller said. "She went to Bowling Green and turned around that program. In her last three years, they were competing for championships."

That national title was at the Division II level with the Eagles, who went a perfect 37-0 en route to the 2017 championship. In five seasons at Bowling Green, she went 88-73 and posted winning seasons in each of the last three years. She guided the Falcons to a 31-7 record this past season after winning the MAC's regular-season title in 2020-21.

Originally from Michigan, Fralick grew up a Michigan State fan despite playing collegiately at Davidson in North Carolina. She's happy to have a bit of a homecoming.

"I can't believe it," Fralick said. "I've been here as a fan, I've been here as a little kid, and it's the community I grew up in. I've marveled and watched the teams and players with so much admiration. It feels surreal."

"We will work hard to build on the tradition of MSU women's basketball. The tradition of the program is incredibly motivating. Our expectations of the program will be to continually stay in pursuit of excellence on and off the court. We will play team basketball and use the sport of basketball as a transformative experience for our student-athletes."

Dickinson, Epps Headline Transfers For Men

There's been a bit of an exodus of talent around the Big Ten men's basketball scene since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press.

Dating back to March 27, 14 men's hoop-ers from the conference have entered the portal, and three names stand out from the rest of the group as star players for their respective teams.

Michigan had the most movement in that span with perhaps the most notable loss in the conference, after center Hunter Dickinson entered his name into the portal. The 7-1 behemoth averaged 18.5 points and 8.8 rebounds per game combined over of the past two seasons for the Wolverines.

They did get a solid return from the portal, though, landing former North Carolina senior guard Caleb Love. Love is a former five-star recruit and a three-year starter for the Tar Heels who averaged 16.7 points per game his past season. Guard Nimari Bur-

nett also looks to provide the Wolverines with some depth out of Alabama.

Freshman combo guard Jayden Epps showed a lot of promise for his collegiate career during his first season at Illinois, putting up 9.5 points in just 24.6 minutes per contest. The Fighting Illini will not be the ones to benefit from that promise, however, as he was one of three Illinois players to enter the portal in recent weeks, along with junior forward Brandon Lieb and sophomore guard RJ Melendez;

"After careful conversations with my family, I have decided to enter the transfer portal," Epps said on March 28. "I am confident that this is the best decision for my future and personal growth."

Purdue suffered a loss in junior guard Brandon Newman, who played in 17.8 minutes per game and contributed 6.0 points with 1.1 assists this past season. Also departing from the conference are Indiana junior forward Jordan Geronimo and sophomore guard Tamar Bates; Michigan State sophomore guard Pierre Brooks; Northwestern sophomore guard Julian Roper; Penn State freshman forward Kebba Njie, freshman guard Jameel Brown and freshman forward Evan Mahaffey; Rutgers junior forward Dean Reiber; and Wisconsin junior guard Jordan Davis.

Wisconsin made an addition in former Wyoming guard Noah Reynolds, who averaged 14.5 points per game this past season with the Cowboys. Reynolds will enter Wisconsin with two remaining years of eligibility.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago - 1983

Ohio State football coach Earle Bruce was in the market for four new starters at four positions in the interior part of his defense entering the season, but it appeared that at least one of those spots would be in the hands of an experienced player.

Rowland Tatum, who had handled the outside linebacking chores along with Orlando Lowry and Curt Curtis the previous season, was moved to inside linebacker during spring drills.

"I'm pretty confident in myself," Tatum said about his move to the middle.

35 Years Ago - 1988

There was a strong competition for the starting quarterback position in spring camp, assured quarterbacks coach Bill Dudley.

"It certainly appears to be a very competitive position right now, early in the spring. I hope it remains that way," Dudley said.

That may have come as a surprise to many who figured the job belonged to Greg Frey until incoming freshmen Kirk Herbstreit, Nick Cochran and Jason Frank were able to report and challenge for the position in the fall. But with the trio of incoming freshmen still finishing high school, Frey was tasked with holding off Scott Powell, John Wagoner and Chris Stablein during the spring.

But Dudley hinted that if a clear-cut favorite emerged in the spring, that would be the one likely to take Ohio State's first snap from center in the season opener against Syracuse.

30 Years Ago - 1993

Even though the ring was silver instead of gold, the Ohio State women's basketball team had a monumental 1992-93 campaign.

In addition to tying archrival Iowa for the Big Ten title, being the first Big Ten team to ever make the NCAA tournament's championship game, and finishing second nationally in attendance, the Lady Buckeyes fell just two points short of winning it all against Texas Tech, losing 84-82 on April 4.

That narrow defeat, though, could not erase the memories of the best season in Ohio State women's basketball history.

"I'm very proud of our players, not only today, but for the whole season with what they've accomplished," head coach Nancy Darsch said after the national championship game in Atlanta. "It's been a great ride for us. It's kind of unbelievable."

25 Years Ago - 1998

Maybe it wasn't a Cinderella season after all. That fairy tale ends with, "And they lived happily ever after."

The Ohio State men's hockey season ended with a 5-2 loss to Boston College in the NCAA national semifinal game on April 2. But as OSU head coach John Markell said, "It was one of the greatest rides the kids will ever be on."

20 Years Ago - 2003

There were many sides to Maurice Clarett, as Ohio State football fans found out during the 2002 season.

Clarett, when healthy, was among the best running backs in the country. That was proved when he racked up six 100-yard games in his first seven appearances as a Buckeye during his freshman season.

But the phrase "when healthy" was also imperative in discussing Clarett, who had missed games to injury in four of his last five seasons, dating back to his Ohio high school days at Austintown Fitch and Warren Harding.

"I'm anxious to get back out there," Clarett said.

15 Years Ago - 2008

As the senior co-captain and unquestioned emotional leader for his team, it was no surprise that Jamar Butler summed it up best for the Ohio State men's basketball team.

"That's what happens when you put an NCAA Tournament team in the NIT: They walk through it," Butler said. "Send that to the committee. Write that."

Butler's announcement came after the Buckeyes turned a first-half double-digit deficit into an early second-half lead and held on the rest of the way, capturing the National Invitation Tournament with a 92-85 victory against Massachusetts on April 3.

10 Years Ago - 2013

Ohio State narrowly missed achieving back-to-back Final Fours for the first time in a half-century, bowing from the 2013 NCAA Tournament on March 30 with a 70-66 loss to Wichita State in the West regional finals.

The second-seeded Buckeyes advanced to the Elite Eight with a 73-70 win against Arizona thanks to a three-pointer from sophomore LaQuinton Ross with 2.1 seconds remaining. But OSU fell behind the upset-minded Shockers by as many as 20 points in the second half, and although the Buckeyes made things in-

teresting down the stretch, that hole ultimately proved to be too deep.

"You get so close to going to your second straight Final Four, and everybody (only) remembers the last game," Ohio State coach Thad Matta told reporters after the loss. "I'm not going to. I'm going to remember this entire season because I'm very, very proud of what these guys have accomplished this year."

Five Years Ago - 2018

Dre'Mont Jones could very well have been preparing for the 2018 NFL draft during the spring. Instead, the defensive tackle, who had 20 tackles in 12 games as a third-year sophomore in 2017, decided to return to Ohio State for his junior campaign.

At least from OSU head coach Urban Meyer's perspective, it appeared Jones made the right choice.

"The guy that probably had the best spring of anybody on our team is Dre'Mont Jones," Meyer said after the program's annual spring game on April 14. "He was outstanding this spring. For a guy to come back when a lot of people thought he should leave, a lot of times we have to deal with - whether it be effort issues or guys asking, 'Why am I doing this?' - zero. That's a credit to his family and (defensive line coach) Larry Johnson. He had a great spring. If he continues his development, he could be one of the best in America at what he does."

One Year Ago - 2022

Dwayne Haskins, who shattered school and conference records in his lone season as a starting quarterback at Ohio State, died on April 9 in South Florida after being struck by a dump truck on Interstate 595. He was 24 years old.

Florida Highway Patrol spokesperson Lt. Indiana Miranda shared in a statement that Haskins, "was attempting to cross the westbound lanes of Interstate 595 (on foot) when there was oncoming traffic," and confirmed that he was pronounced dead at the scene. Rumors swirled in the immediate hours after news broke of his death that Haskins' car had broken down on the side of the road, but the FHP released no further details on the incident and had launched an investigation.

Haskins, who had signed a one-year contract with the Pittsburgh Steelers on March 16, had been in South Florida training with fellow Steelers players, including quarterback Mason Rudolph and wide receiver Chase Claypool.

Rebuild Or Reboot? Buckeyes' Roster In Flux

The more things change ... well, for the Ohio State hockey team, the more they really change.

Take several players who exhausted their eligibility, combine them with a half-dozen players from a large senior class that could return for a fifth season but instead opted to transfer, and throw in three others who signed with NHL teams, and the result is going to be a different looking roster next season.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

Head coach Steve Rohlik may need to fill nearly half of the 27-player team from this year's squad which reached the Elite Eight, depending on the status of several seniors who may take advantage of a bonus season afforded because of the pandemic.

He said there is a measure of having some seniors returning for a fifth year next season while also giving opportunities to the freshmen.

"You don't want to waste your incoming guys, but you want to do the right thing on the back end," he said. "These guys have been here for four years, and it's kind of

a balancing act between them, us, everything."

Forwards Gustaf Westlund and Jake Wise were the only ones among the 13 seniors who were out of eligibility, but five of the other 11 so far have decided to leave the program. Westlund is returning home after signing with IK Oskarshamn in the Swedish Hockey League on April 7 while Wise is a Chicago Blackhawks draftee from the 2018 entry draft.

Defenseman James Marooney (St. Thomas) and C.J. Regula (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) have transferred, as did junior forward Travis Treloar, who will play for Quinnipiac next season, the school that defeated the Buckeyes on March 26 in the Bridgeport, Conn., regional final to advance to the Frozen Four.

The other seniors in the portal are defenseman Dominic Vidoli and forwards Mark Cheremeta and Jaedon Leslie.

The Buckeyes were second among the 16 NCAA tournament teams with their 13 seniors (tied for second with 18 upperclassmen) and had the fewest freshmen with four, but that first-year class was fourth among the teams in scoring with 72 points entering the tournament.

The one senior who will return for a bonus season, Rohlik confirmed to Buckeye Sports Bulletin, is defenseman Scooter Brickley. Rohlik said there will likely be several more that will stick around.



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

EARLY DEPARTURE — Ohio State sophomore goaltender Jakub Dobeš signed a two-year entry-level contract with the Montreal Canadiens on March 31, leaving the Buckeyes despite possessing two remaining seasons of eligibility.

Added to the departure list are three sophomores — defensemen Mason Lohrei and Cole McWard and goalie Jakub Dobeš. McWard was undrafted but signed with the Vancouver Canucks and made his NHL debut on April 6.

Lohrei, a 2020 second-round pick (58th overall) by the Boston Bruins, signed an amateur tryout agreement with the Bruins' American Hockey League affiliate on March 31 and played his first professional game on April 5 for the Providence Bru-

ins. It's a forerunner to him signing an entry-level (rookie) contract with the Bruins before next season.

On March 31, Dobeš signed a two-year entry level deal with the Montreal Canadiens as well as an AHL contract to finish this season with the Laval Rocket. He was formerly a fifth-round (136th) selection by Montreal in the 2020 draft. He had yet to play prior to Buckeye Sports Bulletin going to press.

Rohlik will replenish the roster through a recruited class and the portal. To date, the lone incoming transfer is Northeastern University forward Riley Hughes, who had two goals and four assists in 32 games last season. There will be more arrivals once the exact number of open spots are determined.

A hold-up is that the list of incoming freshmen is incomplete. Rohlik has six players committed with several more expected in the coming weeks.

"We've got some great kids coming in that we're excited about," Rohlik said. "We're excited and looking forward."

Moving On

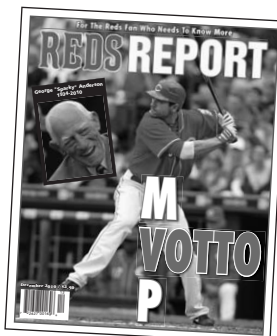
It was assumed by the Ohio State staff that Lohrei and Dobeš were good possibilities to leave after two seasons. The respective NHL teams for the two were happy with their development with the Buckeyes, and the players were eager to try the next level.

"I figured it was a good decision," Dobeš told the Montreal Gazette. "I just felt I was ready. I wanted a new challenge. I wanted to face better players and improve as a player. I think this will make me a better hockey player. It only took me a couple of

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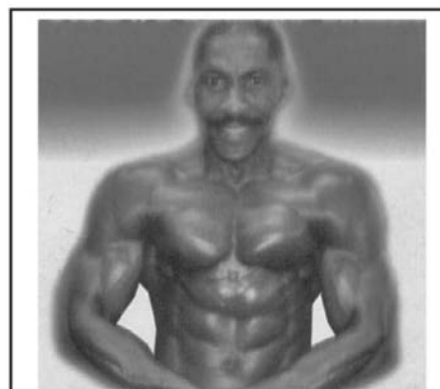
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PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

OFF TO THE PROS — Sophomore defenseman Mason Lohrei departed the Ohio State program after signing an amateur tryout agreement with the Boston Bruins on March 31 and making his professional debut on April 5 with the AHL Providence Bruins.

days. I wanted to make sure I was making the best decision for myself.”

Dobeš was 21-16-3 with a 2.31 goals-against average and a .918 save percentage in 40 games this season with three shut-outs. He was the Big Ten Goaltender of the Year for the 2021-22 season as a freshman. He will make \$925,000 in each of the next two seasons.

The Bruins have kept a close watch on Lohrei throughout his time in Columbus and see him as capable of making a smooth transition to what is already a deep and talented organization. Boston leads the NHL in points, and Providence is one of the top AHL teams.

“My plan going into the year was to make the jump (at) this time,” Lohrei said on April 1. “The decision’s hard no matter what just because I loved it at school and have a bunch of my best friends there.

“I had a great time over two years, but it’s time to move on and make the next jump, and I’m really excited for it.”

Providence coach Ryan Mougénel was impressed with Lohrei after his first game with the Bruins.

“He obviously had some nerves early on, but they went away very quickly,” he said. “You saw a lot of the poise that we’ve seen from him in the past.

“He did a great job of understanding the level, kept it pretty simple, but then you saw glimpses where he’s got a great mind for the game. He’s going to be a great pro.”

Lohrei picked up an assist across his

first three games with Providence.

As for Ohio State, he had 32 points (four goals, 28 assists) in 40 games this season and as a freshman had 29 points (four goals, 25 assists) in 31 games. He was a Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year finalist in both seasons.

Lohrei is the second Buckeye on the Providence roster. Georgii Merkulov, who left after scoring 20 goals for the Buckeyes as a freshman last season, has 53 points (23 goals, 30 assists) through 62 games.

While the Buckeyes had been planning for the departures of Dobeš and Lohrei, McWard’s signing was unexpected but still pleasing for Rohlik.

“When a team says we’re going to give you an NHL deal right now to play some NHL games, at that point it’s a kid’s dream,” Rohlik said. “We put these guys in a position to develop here to compete at that level. I’m happy for him. Hopefully, everything goes in his favor. He put himself in a great spot.”

Because McWard was undrafted, it was assumed he would stay in college for at least three or maybe four years to better develop, then try the free agent market. However, a solid postseason run for him and the Buckeyes convinced the Canucks to offer him a two-year entry level deal on April 4 for a total value of \$1.9 million. He will be a restricted free agent at the end of the 2023-24 season.

He had 21 points (nine goals, 12 assists) in 39 games this season, including a

pair of goals in the 8-1 win against Harvard in the NCAA tournament.

“It’s been a quick turnaround, but I couldn’t be more excited to be here,” McWard said after the signing. “It’s been a dream of mine since I was a kid, and wearing the Canucks logo is going to be something special. I really feel like I have a good opportunity here.”

He joins former Buckeye forward Dakota Joshua on the Canucks’ roster, although they were not teammates at Ohio State.

“It’s been great talking to him so far,” McWard said. “Definitely having a Buckeye in the locker room is a special thing.”

McWard played 14:35 and had one blocked shot in his first game, a 3-0 victory over the Chicago Blackhawks. He scored his first goal in his second career game vs. Calgary on April 8, assisted by Joshua.

Staying Put

Playing another season for the Buckeyes was a no-brainer for Brickey. His playing time decreased in each of his three seasons at Western Michigan before he transferred to Ohio State for the 2022-23 season, where he played in all 40 games and had three goals and 11 assists.

“My goal is to be a pro player and I want to be a pro hockey player for a long time, and I think it’s best to continue to improve my game and learn under Coach,” he said. “I think next year is really going to help me explode into a good pro player and help me take the next step.”

Incoming

Among the class of 2023, the Buckeyes have one goalie to date in Kris Eberly (6-4, 192), who plays for the Green Bay Gamblers in the United States Hockey League.

Forward Max Montes (5-8, 159) and Swedish defenseman Theo Wallberg (6-5, 203) will arrive from Dubuque of the USHL. Wallberg was taken in the sixth round (168th) by the Ottawa Senators in the 2022 NHL draft. A third Dubuque player, forward Noah Powell (6-0, 201), is a 2024 commit.

The Buckeyes picked up a local pros-

pect in defenseman Nate McBrayer (5-11, 179) from suburban Dublin. He’s with the USHL’s Muskegon Lumberjacks but grew up in the Ohio Blue Jackets AAA organization.

Forwards Sam Deckhut (5-11, 185) of the Sioux City Musketeers (USHL) and Ryan Gordon (6-0, 170) from the Sioux Falls Stampede of the USHL are the other signees.

Help Wanted

Players aren’t the only ones moving on. Assistant coach Luke Strand is leaving after one season to become the head coach of Minnesota State, the Mavericks announced April 10.

Strand replaces Mike Hastings, who took the Wisconsin head coaching position on March 30. Rohlik, a former Wisconsin player, had his name mentioned for the Badgers’ job but he never acknowledged an interest in it or the school in him.

Strand, 50, came to the Buckeyes after five seasons as head coach for the Sioux City Musketeers to replace associate head coach Steve Miller, who joined the Minnesota staff.

In his one season, Strand helped the Buckeyes to a 21-16-3 record and a spot in the NCAA Elite Eight.

He coached the penalty kill, which led the nation in shorthanded goals (10) and kill percentage (88.7 percent). The Buckeyes allowed only 18 power-play goals.

Ending Strong

Wise, who took advantage of the portal to have two productive seasons for the Buckeyes after three disappointing ones at Boston University, finished his career on a high note to earn the Varsity Club Icer of the Month for March.

He had one assist in each of the three Big Ten quarterfinal series games against Penn State, followed with a goal and two assists in the semifinal loss to Michigan and recorded four assists during the 8-1 rout of Harvard. Wise totaled 39 points (12 goals, 27 assists) in 40 games this season.

VARSITY CLUB ICER OF THE MONTH For March



Jake Wise
Senior Forward
Reading, Mass.

Mosiello Building Resiliency In Locker Room

Ohio State's current squad was always going to hit some bumps after a 21-30 campaign last season and the ensuing coaching transition, but a streak of six losses in seven games from March 25 through April 2 – one that included a 1-5 mark to open conference play – had head coach Bill Mosiello attempting to teach his team a lesson in resiliency.

FROM THE STRETCH Andy Anders

“When you're dealing with a wounded group who hasn't come back a lot in their history, the players, it's really hard to do it,” Mosiello said. “They haven't bounced back and won (those types of games). So we just need to keep fighting through it.”

The Buckeyes snapped their skid April 4 with a 7-6 win over Kent State, but how Ohio State responds to its recent lull will be crucial in determining whether it can contend in the Big Ten down the stretch. Only the top eight teams out of 14 in the Big Ten standings make the annual conference tournament in Omaha, Neb., and the Buckeyes have work to do from 13th place after losing two of three against Michigan State April 7 and 8.

“Keep your head, keep playing,” Mosiello said of his message to the team. “The recipe is to get good pitching, get good hitting, play timely defense and you've got to drive runners in with guys in scoring position. We left 11 guys on base (against

Minnesota on April 2).”

There's no one solution to get Ohio State to a place where it's competing for the conference title, from Mosiello's perspective. It will be about staying the course and executing when critical situations arrive within games.

“There's no pill, there's no secret thing, there's no, ‘Here, let's go do this today and that makes us better tomorrow.’ You play the game. That's why you play more games than almost any other sport. You play every day, you have lulls. Who can get out of it? Who is mentally tough enough?”

The Buckeyes opened Big Ten competition March 25 in Bloomington, Ind. with a three-game set against the Hoosiers, dropping three consecutive contests by scores of 14-6, 9-6 and 7-5. An 8-1 loss against Xavier followed March 28 before Ohio State got its first home series in conference play from March 31 through April 2 against Minnesota, which entered the weekend with a meager 5-19 record. Ohio State's 12-11 mark compared favorably.

Off one of his worst outings of the year against Indiana the previous week, starting pitcher Isaiah Coupet – who had allowed 10 earned runs in just four innings against the Hoosiers – put up seven shutout innings with 10 strikeouts in game one against the Golden Gophers, and the Buckeyes carried a 2-0 lead into the eighth inning.

They couldn't hang on. After graduate reliever Nolan Clegg allowed two runs in the top of the ninth, freshman reliever Landon Beidelschies collected his first loss by surrendering a go-ahead double en route to a 3-2 defeat. Even with the tough outing, Beidelschies' ERA for the season sits at a strong 2.84.

“We had a great pitching weekend for us; we just didn't play good offense,” Mosiello said following the Minnesota series. “It's not a hitters vs. pitchers (thing). A baseball team that doesn't do a lot of things well at the same time equals not winning games. That simple.”

A 6-2 win followed the next day that featured a two-run home run from shortstop Henry Kaczmar, his first of the season. Starter Gavin Bruni, who had yet to record a decision and held a 4.87 ERA entering the contest, showed some perseverance of his own by tossing six innings with just two runs allowed and 11 strikeouts to record his first victory of the year.

As the season has gone on, Bruni feels his biggest improvements have come on the mental side. He said his changeup worked particularly well against the Golden Gophers.

“Just being able to flush things, not letting a lot of little things bother me,” Bruni said of his improvement. “Give up a hit, maybe get frustrated, but move on within a pitch. You've always got to live for that next pitch. So one pitch at a time, go after it as you can.”

In the rubber match, Ohio State starting pitcher George Eisenhardt surrendered five runs, four earned, in 1²/₃ innings of work before giving way to the bullpen with his team trailing 5-1. The Buckeye relievers put on one of their best performances of the season, giving up just one run in the remaining 7¹/₃ innings of work and throwing zeros on the scoreboard each of the final five frames. Ohio State's batters couldn't make much of a dent, though, resulting in a 6-2 defeat after 11 runners were stranded on base.

“It's disappointing when you don't play good offense to help pick up a great day from your bullpen,” Mosiello said.

Bats Come Alive Against Kent State

Production came from up and down the Ohio State (14-13) lineup in its home contest against Kent State (18-10) on April 4, with six different players either scoring a run or batting one in during a 7-6 victory. It took some innings to get that motor turned over, however.

Given it was a midweek matchup played on a Tuesday, each side started relievers and worked through a deep rotation of bullpen arms, none tossing more than two innings. Josh Timmerman and Blayne Robinson combined for three shutout innings to open the contest for Ohio State, but the Buckeyes couldn't assemble any runs of their own in those first three frames.

In the bottom of the fourth, Ohio State – specifically, senior outfielder Mitchell Okuley – finally broke the ice. He pounded an 0-1 pitch directly over the center-field fence, giving the Buckeyes a 2-0 lead.

The Golden Flashes quickly fired back, scoring five consecutive runs over the fifth and sixth innings to grab a 5-2 advantage, only for Ohio State to respond with three runs of its own in the bottom of the sixth and knot the contest up at 5-5.

With his team trailing 6-5 in the sev-

enth-inning stretch, Kaczmar blasted his second home run of the year, a two-run shot that gave the Buckeyes a 7-6 lead and put junior righthander Justin Eckhardt in position to be the winning pitcher. Beidelschies tossed two shutout innings for his fourth save to ensure that was the case, allowing two hits with no walks and two strikeouts.

Michigan State Takes Two Of Three

Following its midweek contest against Kent State, Ohio State traveled to Michigan State for a three-game road series. Originally scheduled for April 6-8, a rainout on the first scheduled day was rescheduled for April 8 to make a doubleheader, and the Spartans ended up taking two of three.

None of the three contests was closer than six runs in their respective final scorelines. The Spartans got their bats going early against Ohio State (14-14) staff ace Coupet, picking up two runs on a first-inning single by catcher Bryan Broecker and two more in the second, the latter coming off a bases-loaded walk from Coupet.

OSU simply couldn't get the bats going from there against either Michigan State starter Joseph Dzierwa, who pitched six innings and allowed just three hits, or reliever Andrew Carson, who tossed three shutout frames to pick up a save. Freshman designated hitter Matthew Graveline batted in Ohio State's lone run in a 7-1 loss.

Ohio State painted a completely different picture in the first game of the teams' doubleheader April 8, run-ruling Michigan State in the minimum seven innings by a 13-2 final. RBI hits from senior center fielder Kade Kern and Graveline got the ball rolling in the first inning, and by the conclusion of the fifth, OSU was up 6-2 with a two-run home run from Graveline.

That sparked the beginning of a 9-0 stretch of play to close out the contest for the Buckeyes. Graveline collected a game-high four RBI in total while Bruni (2-0) earned his second win of the season on five innings of two-run pitching.

MSU flipped the script on OSU in game two of the doubleheader, however. The Spartans' bats caught fire in a dominant 16-3 win, also a run-rule in the minimum seven innings.

The Green and White scored six runs in the top of the first inning, and the contest was never in question afterward. Third baseman Dillon Kark led the way with a home run and four RBI. OSU starter Josh Timmerman (0-1) picked up his first loss of the season, allowing five earned runs without any innings to his credit, pulled before he recorded an out.

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Buckeye Cruise For Cancer Raises Record Amount

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The 2023 edition of the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer was the most successful yet, raising a record \$4.38 million, even though by design there were fewer passengers than previous cruises.

For the first time in the 16 years of the event, there was an inclusive yacht cruise with 596 passengers, said cruise founder Lisa Cisco of Travel Partners in Dublin.

In the past, the Cruise for Cancer participants were on a luxury liner as was the case in 2022 when nearly 2,000 Buckeye fans set sail. Even at that, COVID-19 restrictions limited the capacity to about half of pre-pandemic trips. Not that anyone this year on the Silversea Silver Dawn was complaining, because all 298 cabins came with butler service.

"We've still been able to do many of the things we've done before," Cisco said. "We still had 40 athletes. We still had two coaches and entertainment."

The coaches making their maiden voyages were current football coach Ryan Day and former coach Jim Tressel.

"They both said they had an amazing time," Cisco said.

The cruise sailed Feb. 27 from San Juan, Puerto Rico, and returned March 6. Among the stops were Saint Kitts and Nevis in the West Indies, Saint John, U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Caribbean country of Dominica.

Since its inception, the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer has raised more than \$35 million for The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James

Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute.

One of the highlights of the cruise was Day's one-on-one interview with ESPN college football analyst and former Ohio State quarterback Kirk Herbstreit.

"Everyone had to put their phones away, and it was a really intimate chat," Cisco said. "Coach Day told the story of the night his life changed forever when he took the head coaching job at Ohio State and told his family. It was very heartwarming."

Another memorable event was a surprise party for Tressel in honor of his recent retirement as Youngstown State's president on Feb. 1.

"We supplied every single person on the ship with T-shirt or a sweater vest complete with an American flag pin," Cisco said. "He said, 'This is the best dressed group of people I've been around.' It was funny."

In a video recap produced by the cruise, Tressel commented on the familial environment.

"I'm not surprised at the atmosphere because I know Buckeye Nation," he said. "It's fun to see how the people that have been on the cruise for years have gotten to create relationships and it's just like a bunch of mini family reunions going on."

As always, there were a bevy of former Ohio State athletes such as football players Bobby Carpenter, A.J. Hawk, Cardale Jones, James Laurinaitis and Ryan Shazier as well as women's basketball's Katie Smith and men's basketball's J.J. Sullinger among the many notables.

"If I could describe the cruise to somebody, I would tell them to get ready for multi-



PHOTO COURTESY OF BUCKEYE CRUISE FOR CANCER

ALL ABOARD — The 2023 Buckeye Cruise for Cancer sailed with 596 passengers this year and raised a record \$4.38 million. To date, the organization has raised over \$35 million for cancer research.

ple days of non-stop Buckeye action," Hawk said in the video.

For the first time, the cruise involved current football players. Steele Chambers, Tommy Eichenberg, Emeka Egbuka and Cade Stover joined the festivities as did Kamryn Babb, who finished his fifth season in 2022 and had another year of eligibility but decided several weeks before the cruise not to return to the field.

Cisco said the younger players provided a fresh perspective on the cruise and what it meant to be engulfed in the Buckeye fandom, adding that, "They were an amazing addition."

"Current players never really had the opportunity to come to this great and wonderful event," Egbuka said. "So, getting the opportunity, I'm blessed and thankful to be a part of this great family."

The auction held during the cruise raised \$1.4 million. Among the items up for bid were a swimming pool, a stay at a house in Italy, trips to Lake Tahoe or Costa Rica and a chance to attend the College Football Playoff national championship game.

"We had only gotten to \$900,000 once before," Cisco said, "so it was incredible."

Planning is under way for the 2024 Buckeye Cruise for Cancer, which will also be on the Silver Dawn. It will sail Feb. 17-23, leaving from Fort Lauderdale and making stops in Key West, Fla., Turks and Caicos, and Bimini, Bahamas.

Cisco said there are simple reasons why the Cruise is so successful and patrons keep coming back year after year.

"Nobody has celebrities like we do," she said. "Nobody has the star power either."



PHOTO COURTESY OF BUCKEYE CRUISE FOR CANCER

BUCKEYE BROTHERS — Ohio State head coach Ryan Day (right) and former Ohio State quarterback Kirk Herbstreit set sail on the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer, offering a highlight for the cruise when Herbstreit interviewed Day.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BUCKEYE CRUISE FOR CANCER

BUCKEYE FEEL — For the first time ever, the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer featured several current Ohio State football players. From left to right: Kamryn Babb, Steele Chambers, Emeka Egbuka, Tommy Eichenberg and Cade Stover.

Taking Stock Of Ohio State's Stars This Spring

The star power of Ohio State football will be on the national stage again later this month with the NFL draft, starting perhaps with quarterback C.J. Stroud being the first pick overall.

This would come a year after wide receiver Garrett Wilson was chosen 10th and became the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year during the same ceremony that Nick Bosa, a Buckeye from 2016-2018, was named the NFL Defensive Player of the Year.

But none of these players – Bosa, Stroud,

THE EXNER POINT
Rich Exner

Wilson and many others – reached the national stage in the NFL. They did so at Ohio State. From one year to the next, it's just a matter of who is up next. With that in mind, here are five players I look most forward to watching this season for the Buckeyes.

No. 1 Marvin Harrison Jr. – Does Ohio State win the national championship if Harrison doesn't get hurt, sidelined by a head injury during the third quarter of the national semifinal against Georgia? I think so. We will never know for sure.

But what we do know is that that even among a growing line of phenomenal Ohio State receivers, he just might be the very best. Pick one player whom I'm looking forward to watching this season, and Harrison is at the top of my list.

Ohio State has had big receivers before. David Boston comes to mind first in that regard. They've had receivers with great hands and savvy – think Cris Carter. They've had the athletic, like Garrett Wilson. And when it comes to consistent, reliable route running to get open, who can beat Chris Olave?

Harrison has all those skills in one pack-

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FILE PHOTO

EYEING AN ENCORE – Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. is looking to build off a dominant sophomore campaign in which he totaled 1,263 yards and 14 touchdowns, both of which ranked in the top five in OSU history.

age. About the only thing he doesn't have is the explosiveness Jaxon Smith-Njigba showed during his sophomore year in 2021 before missing most all of last season.

Harrison's 1,263 receiving yards last year were the fourth most in OSU history, behind Smith-Njigba (1,606 in 2021), Boston (1,435 in 1998) and Terry Glenn (1,411 in 1995). And his 14 touchdown receptions tied for second with Boston (1997) behind only Glenn (17 in 1995).

We were robbed of seeing Smith-Njigba last season. But we have Harrison's junior season to look forward to this year.

No. 2 Kyle McCord or Devin Brown – Here's a crazy piece of trivia. When was the last time a quarterback other than someone from Ohio State was named first-team All-Big Ten by either the media or the coaches? Answer: Michigan State's Connor Cook in 2015.

That's right. For seven years running now, only Ohio State quarterbacks have been first-team All-Big Ten: J.T. Barrett in 2016 and 2017, Dwayne Haskins in 2018, Justin Fields in 2019 and 2020, and Stroud in 2021 and 2022.

So why should we expect anything but superior play at quarterback again this year, regardless of whether McCord or Brown wins the job? Watching the development will be exciting. And if the first choice doesn't live up to expectations, the backup will be ready.

No. 3 TreVeyon Henderson – Crossing fingers that Henderson will be healthy this season after missing so much time due to injury a year ago.

Don't forget how much of a touchdown maker Henderson was as a freshman in 2021, scoring a freshman-record 19 times (15 rushing, four receiving) and rushing for 1,248 yards (second most by an Ohio State freshman). His 6.8 yards per carry ranked

second in the nation.

Together with my No. 3B, Miyan Williams (also injured for much of last season), they make up quite a tandem when healthy. Combined, they bring 3,216 rushing yards of experience to the running back spot this season. Williams certainly is more than solid, averaging 6.4, 7.2 and 6.4 yards per carry in his three seasons. But Henderson is the type of guy who can score from anywhere on the field.

No. 4 J.T. Tuimolou – If Tuimolou can have a half-dozen games this year like he did at Penn State last year, we'll be telling stories about him for decades to come.

To refresh: In that game at Happy Valley, the defensive end had two sacks among three tackles for loss, two interceptions, a forced fumble and a touchdown. It was the game we were waiting for since his high-profile, late commitment to Ohio State just before the start of training camp in 2021 – on July 4, to be precise.

But he really was more than a one-game wonder last season. He was a first-team All-Big Ten choice by the coaches and second team by the media. And he flashed enough dominating play down the stretch last season to raise expectations that he will be in All-America discussions this season.

No. 5 Emeka Egbuka – With Harrison, Olave and Wilson of late, it might be easy to overlook Egbuka at the receiver position. But it's not easy to do so because of Egbuka.

Explosive is the one word that comes to mind. Egbuka had six 100-yard receiving games last season, fifth most in Ohio State history and finished the year with 1,151 receiving yards, ninth best in the country.

We don't have to wait for the offense to take the field to see Egbuka's magic at work. He was the Big Ten's top kickoff returner last season. None of this, of course, is a surprise. Some rankings had him as the top

wide receiver prospect nationally coming out of high school.

Preseason All-Americans

There are any number of preseason All-America teams out there, you'll find with a quick Google search. Here's a peek at a couple of those teams, and the Ohio State players being mentioned.

Three Buckeyes are on the Walter Camp Preseason FBS All-America Team. Harrison is listed as first team at wide receiver, with Tommy Eichenberg a first-team choice at linebacker. Listed on the second team is Egbuka.

While not an All-American listing, Pro Football Focus did break down the top returning receivers for the upcoming season, naming Harrison with this note: "He may not have won the Biletnikoff Award, but Harrison was the best receiver in college football this past season."

As far as the second-best receiver in the country for the coming season, Pro Football Focus says it is Egbuka. Pro Football Focus takes things to the next level when it comes to evaluations: "Outside of Harrison Jr., Egbuka was the most valuable Power Five wide receiver last year according to PFF's wins above average metric, as only Harrison had more receiving yards and receiving touchdowns last year than Egbuka among returning Power-Five receivers."

Mark Your Calendar

Excited yet? Key dates to keep in mind just a few months away.

Sept. 2, the opener at Indiana. Sept. 23, the rematch with Notre Dame, this time in South Bend. Nov. 25, the team that shall not be named. Jan. 1, the playoff semifinals. Jan. 8, championship Monday, this time just seven days after the semis.

Sophomoric To Think '68 Buckeyes Aren't Impactful Today

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

Before members of the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff ever put fingers to keyboard in preparation for each issue, there is ample discussion about what the stories should be, how long they should be, where they should go in the paper and things of that nature.

When John Brockington passed away on March 31, BSB managing editor emeritus and resident historian Mark Rea and I had a discussion on how long our memorial piece should be and where it should be placed. When a former Buckeye passes away, there are three options as to how and where to note their death – a note in the Insider section, an extended, boxed note in the Insider section or a separate story, placed in an appropriate spot in the paper.

“What do you think we should do,” I asked Mark.

“Well, he was a member of the Super Sophs,” Mark responded.

End of conversation. Obviously, Brockington merited his own story.

In fact, I felt a little like an idiot for even asking. The Super Sophs, of which Brockington was a record-breaking member, should be declared a national treasure. There should be an historical marker at Ohio Stadium saying, “The Super Sophs played here.” That’s how significant their impact on Ohio State football was for both the fans and the program going forward.

Elsewhere in this issue, the Brew Crew, the recruiting class of 2008, is mentioned. That group is the only other recruiting class that I can think of that earned a nickname and included such players as Michael Brewster (the “Brew” in Brew Crew), Mike Adams, J.B. Shugarts, DeVier Posey, Etienne Sabino and a host of others, including, ultimately, Terrelle Pryor. They had a successful stay at Ohio State, winning three straight Big Ten championships from 2008-10, before Tattogate brought the run to a screeching halt.

But by the time they arrived, Ohio State was a perennial power in the midst of a long-term run of success that really started with the Super Sophs and, for that matter, the entire 1968 national championship team. There was plenty of talent among the upperclassmen on that team, with such players as Dave Brungard, Dave Foley, Rufus Mayes, Jim Otis, Ted Provost and ultimate '68 team MVP Mark Stier. With freshmen ineligible back then, those veterans had led the Buckeyes to just a 6-3 mark in 1967.

Then came the infusion of the Super Sophs, including some of the biggest names in Ohio State football history – Doug Adams, Tim Anderson, Brockington, Mark Debevc, Leo Hayden, Bruce Jankowski, Rex Kern, Ron Maciejowski, Mike Sensibaugh, Jim Stillwagon, Jack Tatum, Jan White and Larry Zelina, among others.

The group would finish 27-2 for its career, with at least a share of the Big Ten title all three years and two trips to the Rose Bowl in a time when the Rose Bowl was the only postseason destination for Big Ten teams.

In today’s Ohio State football world, that might not seem so out-of-the ordinary. But not so back then.

From 1960-67, nine teams had won at least a share of the Big Ten title with only Northwestern failing to finish on top. The last time a conference team had won at least a piece of the championship crown three times in a row was 1947-50, when Michigan won it four straight times. The last time Ohio State had lost just two games or fewer in a three-year period was the Chic Harley years, when the Buckeyes went 20-1-2 from 1915-17.

Ohio State and the Big Ten have not been the same since 1968.

Of the Super Sophs, Anderson, Brockington, Kern, Sensibaugh, Stillwagon, Tatum and White would all go on to win first-team All-America honors. Other members of the '68 team who won such honors in their careers were Foley, Mayes, Otis and Provost. Other Super Sophs who earned at least first-team All-Big Ten mention during their careers were Adams, Dave Cheney, Debevc, Brian Donovan and Phil Strickland, according to the Ohio State media guide.

That’s a lot of hardware to be won by one group.

In fact, the Buckeyes were so loaded back then that some great players, including Brockington, had to wait their turn.

In 1968, Otis, a junior, played fullback for the Buckeyes, leaving Brockington on the bench. Otis broke Hop Cassidy’s season rushing record with 985 yards that season. Otis broke his own record as a senior with 1,027. In 1970, Brockington stepped in seamlessly and broke Otis’ record with 1,142.

A guy like Maciejowski, a capable quarterback who filled in ably when Kern was injured, was never able to crack the starting lineup. That’s how stacked the Buckeyes were in what was truly a Golden Era of Ohio State football.

Awhile back, we had a writer here at BSB who steadfastly insisted that any Ohio State team of the '80s, '90s or beyond was a better team than the 1968 Buckeyes because today’s players are bigger, faster and stronger than those players more than 50 years ago. I have never bought into that line of thinking, because the players back then would just be bigger, faster and stronger themselves if they had today’s training, nutritional support, etc. Would Rex Kern be any less of a leader or have any less football IQ if he played today? Would a beefed-up Jim Stillwagon be any less rough and tumble? And I shudder to think what havoc Jack Tatum would have created if he were faster and stronger (unless his output was limited by today’s targeting rules).

Besides, it really takes the fun out of being a sports fan if you don’t have the imagination to compare teams and players from different eras. I always maintain that Jim Brown is the greatest running back of all time. What do I base that on? He played nine seasons in the NFL and led the league in rushing eight of them. He dominated his era.

The 1968 Buckeyes and the Super Sophs dominated the Big Ten in their era and defeated an equally dominant USC team, led by Heisman Trophy winner O.J. Simpson, who – love him or hate him – was one of the greatest running backs of his time. After the Buckeyes’ impressive win over the Trojans in the Rose Bowl, Simpson was moved to come to the Ohio State locker room and congratulate the victors.

“You’re the best ball team in the country and don’t let anyone tell you you aren’t,” Simpson said after the 27-16 Buckeye victory.

Ohio State has had many great teams since that run from 1968-70, but I am comfortable in saying the teams from the Super Soph era are among the greatest Buckeye squads of all time. Some would even say that the 1969 Ohio State team that lost to Michigan and upstart coach Bo Schembechler to kick off the famed 10-year war was even better than the championship squad.

A couple of things are for sure. Since 1970, Ohio State had had only two

losing seasons (1988 and 2011) and the Buckeyes have had more than three losses only 13 times in the 52 years since, five of which came in a row from 1987-91 and three from 1999-2001. The Buckeyes have not lost more than two games since 2011. And I believe you can trace that success back to 1968.

The other thing that is for sure is that John Brockington merited a story of his own upon his passing, which you can find on page 16. Rest in peace, John Brockington.

An Anniversary Issue

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is marking several milestone anniversaries in this issue. It’s been one year since the passing of Dwayne Haskins, 15 years since the recruitment of Terrelle Pryor and 30 years since the Ohio State women’s basketball team made it to the national championship game – still the high-water mark for the program.

Kudos to the BSB staff for doing a good job of looking back at these significant events in Ohio State sports history. I was especially intrigued by the story on Pryor’s recruitment. In my 42 years here, I would say the recruitment of Robert Smith and Pryor were the most scrutinized, with Pryor’s especially so because it extended well beyond National Signing Day.

What I hadn’t thought about was the impact that Pryor’s lengthy and scrutinized recruitment had on future coverage of the harvesting of prep talent. Two of the analysts contacted by BSB’s Andy Anders saw a shift in coverage going forward.

“His commitment was before this era of self-reporting on your own recruitment through social media, whether it be Twitter, Instagram, however you want to do it,” Buckeye Huddle reporter Kevin Noon said. “It was much more of an industry where reporters had to go out and get the information because there weren’t a lot of outlets.

“While there certainly was the same interest when it came to following recruitments, I think that with Terrelle, we did see a lot of things that are much more commonplace now.”

Added Buckeye Scoop’s Bill Greene, who was a contributor to BSB at the time, “It was the precursor to the Internet going insane over recruiting. It was such a shift for me from the early Buckeye Sports Bulletin days to this. It was so crazy, and it took off from there.”

A Moment Of Coaching Candor

In Braden Moles’ cover story on the success of the Ohio State women’s basketball team this season – making it all the way to the Elite Eight for the first time since the previously mentioned trip to the Final Four 30 years ago – much is made of the team’s chemistry.

“We certainly have some really talented players, but I think more than anything our culture and the way these kids love to be around each other has been the key for us,” coach Kevin McGuff said after his team had knocked off perennial power Connecticut to advance to the Elite Eight. “We’ve had so many come-from-behind wins, and a lot of that has to do with when things go south, people start pointing fingers and so forth. You have no chance to make a comeback. But that never happens with this group.

“They stay together, they support each other, and a lot has to do with we’ve got great kids in the program and just great chemistry.”

BSB’s Mike Wachsman, who covered the Lady Buckeyes for many years, believes the season was a step forward for the program under McGuff.

“It shows the Sweet 16 (last year) wasn’t just a fluke,” Mike said. “If they got back again this year and fizzled out in the Sweet 16 or even before, people would have said, ‘OK, that’s the ceiling for this program.’

“(McGuff) had not really proven that they could advance beyond that with teams that were maybe not top-to-bottom as good as this one, but the best players were probably better than the best players on this team.”

That last comment would make any follower of the women’s program think back to the Kelsey Mitchell years, when the Buckeyes, led by one of the program’s greatest players, could not make it past the Sweet 16 and did even less so in two of her four years.

Then McGuff addressed that very issue.

“If you take it all the way back, I think we had, early on in the Kelsey Mitchell era, talented enough teams to do that,” he said of advancing past the Sweet 16. “We didn’t quite have the right cohesion and chemistry at that particular point. Now, I think we’re maybe not as talented as back then, but our chemistry and cohesion and our culture is in a really healthy place.”

I thought that was a really candid comment from McGuff, the type of remark coaches in any sport don’t usually make, and a situation that followers of the program have probably pondered both in real time and the years that have passed since.

Don’t forget that it wasn’t just Kelsey back then, but rather Team Mitchell, with her father, Mark, present as an assistant coach and her sister, Chelsea, also on the team. Was that situation optimum?

Another Suggestion

By now readers of this column have figured out that I have been sharing BSB’s battle to deal with two major postal increases and a substantial printing increase within less than a year without implementing the type of major price increase that we have seen on virtually everything in our lives, from food to fun.

I have been offering suggestions on how to mitigate or minimize any increase in the past few issues.

One way to help is to pay full price for your subscription.

Throughout the year we offer many money-saving specials. These are frequently designed to help our fixed-income readers. Not every reader feels the pinch of an extra \$15 a year or so. If you are one of those readers, go ahead and pay full price, even if you have a special offer. The regular price is almost always listed with any special offer.

Also, don’t forget the Vibrant and Viable promotion, where you can introduce a Buckeye friend to a year of BSB for just \$19.95. If they like the paper, we will make our money back when they renew.

Loyal reader Fred Fingerhut from Phoenix seemingly calls every day to buy a Vibrant and Viable subscription for an additional Buckeye fan.

Just give us a call at (614) 486-2202 or mail your payment along with your names and addresses to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212 and we will get your Buckeye Sports Bulletin started immediately. Remember, don’t use this price for existing subscribers. That defeats the purpose of the promotion.

Reds

APRIL LINEUP!




MAR. 30-APR. 2



presented by **altafiber**

THURSDAY // 4:10

• **OPENING DAY** 

• **Reds Magnetic Schedule and Car Magnet, presented by PNC Bank** (while supplies last)



SATURDAY // 4:10

• **KIDS OPENING DAY**, presented by Cutie's 

• **Kids Opening Day Cap, presented by Cincinnati Children's** (to kids 14 and younger in attendance, while supplies last)



SUNDAY // 1:40

• **Family Sundays, presented by Klosterman Bakery**

• **Reds Calendar, presented by Kroger** (to fans in attendance, while supplies last)



APRIL 3-5



presented by **Kroger Zero Hunger Zero Waste**

MONDAY // 6:40

TUESDAY // 6:40

• **3-2-1 Tuesdays***, presented by Budweiser and Bud Light \$3 12oz Beer, \$2 Hot Dog and \$1 Ice Cream Cup available at select concession stands!

*Limit 2 per person

WEDNESDAY // 12:35

• **Business Day Specials**

Enjoy afternoon baseball and \$10 in concession credits for only \$20!

• **Senior Days, presented by Meals on Wheels**

3-2-1 TUESDAYS



APRIL 13-16



presented by **LifeCenter**

THURSDAY // 6:40

• **Thirsty Thursdays**

Catch the game & receive \$10 in concession credits for \$30!

FRIDAY // 6:40

• **Fireworks Friday Post-Game Show, presented by LifeCenter**

SATURDAY // 4:10

• **Great American Ball Park Replica, presented by TriHealth** (celebrating the 20th anniversary of the ballpark's opening, to fans in attendance, while supplies last)



• **Jackie Robinson Baseball Card, presented by LifeCenter** (celebrating MLB's annual Jackie Robinson Day, to fans in attendance, while supplies last)



SUNDAY // 1:40

• **Family Sundays, presented by Klosterman Bakery**

• **Kids Sticker Sheet, presented by Thomas More University** (to kids 14 and younger as part of Family Day at the ballpark, while supplies last)



APRIL 17-19



MONDAY // 6:40

3-2-1 TUESDAYS

TUESDAY // 6:40

• **3-2-1 Tuesdays***, presented by Budweiser and Bud Light \$3 12oz Beer, \$2 Hot Dog and \$1 Ice Cream Cup available at select concession stands!

*Limit 2 per person

WEDNESDAY // 12:35

• **Business Day Specials**

Enjoy afternoon baseball and \$10 in concession credits for only \$20!

• **Senior Days, presented by Meals on Wheels**



APRIL 24-26



MONDAY // 6:40

TUESDAY // 6:40

• **3-2-1 Tuesdays***, presented by Budweiser and Bud Light \$3 12oz Beer, \$2 Hot Dog and \$1 Ice Cream Cup available at select concession stands!

*Limit 2 per person

WEDNESDAY // 12:35

• **Business Day Specials**

Enjoy afternoon baseball and \$10 in concession credits for only \$20!

• **Senior Days, presented by Meals on Wheels**

(513) 381-REDS (7337)



reds.com/Tickets

*Some restrictions apply. Schedule and promotions subject to change.