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Vol. 43, No. 4

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Oct. 7, 2023

STUNNER IN SOUTH BEND

OSU Walks Off Notre Dame With Last-Second Score



SONNY BROCKWAY

AT THE BUZZER — Ohio State picked up the program's biggest win of the last few seasons on Sept. 23, taking home a 17-14 victory at Notre Dame. It was a game in which the Buckeyes took the lead on a last-second touchdown run by Chip Trayanum, leading to a massive celebration from the Ohio State sideline.

By BRADEN MOLES

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

At 86 years old, former Fighting Irish head coach Lou Holtz — also a former Ohio State assistant coach under Woody Hayes in 1968 — could not have imagined the firestorm he would ignite ahead of the Buckeyes' top-10 showdown at Notre Dame on Sept. 23.

In an appearance on "The Pat McAfee Show" on Sept. 22, Holtz — who won Notre Dame's most recent national championship in 1988 and won a title during his lone season with the Buckeyes — gave his thoughts on the matchup.

"Notre Dame is a better football team than Ohio State, and let me tell you why," he began. "We have the best offensive line in the country. Sam Hartman won't even get his jersey

dirty all year. He has time to throw the football. We have great running backs. (Audric) Estime is averaging about 10 yards per carry. We have great receivers, so offensively, we're set. Defensively, our defensive line is better.

"You look at Coach (Ryan) Day — and I coached at Ohio State under Woody Hayes. We won the national championship when I was there. However, Day has lost to Alabama, Georgia, Clemson, Michigan twice, and everybody that beats him does so because they're more physical than Ohio State, and I think Notre Dame will take that same approach. ... You take this message to Ohio State; they better bring their lunch, because it's going to be a full damn day's work."

And what a day of work it was. Ohio State, entering as the nation's sixth-ranked team and visiting ninth-ranked Notre Dame, needed every second to take down the Fighting Irish, scoring a game-winning touchdown courtesy of running back Chip Trayanum's 1-yard rush with just one tick remaining on the clock, leaving South Bend, Ind., with a 17-14 win in front of 77,622 shell-shocked fans at Notre Dame Stadium.

But in the midst of it all — the hype of facing Notre Dame on the road and coming out with such an exciting win, one that will almost certainly join the ranks of legendary victories for the Buckeyes — Day had just one thought on his mind.

"I'd like to know where Lou Holtz is right now," he said in a postgame interview with NBC. "What he said about our team, I cannot believe. This is a tough team right here. We're proud to be from Ohio, and it's always been Ohio against the world, and it will continue to be Ohio against the world. But I'll tell you what, I love those kids, and we've got a tough team."

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Continued On Page 10

Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State pulled out one of the greatest wins in program history on Sept. 23, walking into Notre Dame Stadium and coming out with a 17-14 win after a last-second touchdown from running back Chip Trayanum. But it was also a standout defensive performance for the Buckeyes, so there was no shortage of players worthy of receiving Buckeye Leaves after the game. Here are some choices from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members and readers from the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum:

Patrick Engels, BSB: I'm extending my Buckeye Leaf to safety Lathan Ransom, who was a key contributor for Ohio State's run defense and finished with a game-high 13 tackles. He showed his physicality on the defensive side, striking towards the line of scrimmage for a number of big hits on Audric Estime and Sam Hartman.

Ransom's second-down hit on Jeremiyah Love in the second quarter changed the tenor of that drive, leading to a temporary change of momentum in the Buckeyes' favor. He also was involved in the big fourth-down stop of Hartman in the third quarter, which helped spur TreVeyon Henderson's long touchdown a few plays later.

Braden Moles, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf goes to defensive tackle Tyleik Williams, who continued his coming-out party with four tackles, one tackle for loss and a pass breakup.

Williams has been dominant in the trenches this season, and while Ohio State's defensive line as a whole struggled at points against the Fighting Irish, he was still able to make an impact, especially in the run game, where Notre Dame finished with just 4.5 yards per attempt.

Greg Wilson, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf is for tight end Cade Stover, who was yet again Kyle McCord's favorite target, and he made the most of his 11 targets with seven receptions for 52 yards, with a long of 21 yards on the evening.

There were times when he was the first read, and he was open quite a bit, but he was also available in emergencies for McCord when he was able to go through his other options and nothing was open.

BSB Subscribers

Tiffin Buckeye: Emeka Egbuka. Put Ohio St. on his back and saved them when they really needed it time and time again.

BOB CODY: McCord, Egbuka, Henderson, Stover, Ransom, J.T. Tuimoloau (almost with another pick-six), most of the defense and of course, the Hoban Knight - Chip Trayanum!

Peyote Buck: Leaves to Ryan Day for blasting Lou Holtz. When a team plays with all their working parts, they all get leaves.

John Lanning: My leaf goes to Coach Day. He stood up for "Ohio" Against the World. The comments made by the former ND coach were personal and against the program. Day stepped up and defended Buckeye success. Great job.

BuckeyeScott: For a game like this, under the pressure of a game like this, I've got to give Buckeye leaves to everybody! I mean everybody, including the dude for ND that can only count to 10!

AnthonyBuckeye: Tuimoloau for getting the ball back in the last four minutes with two superlative plays. Cody Simon for the fourth-down stop on Hartman. Ransom (for all his tackles as well) and Sonny Styles for piling up on Hartman's fourth-down run. Williams for a dominating performance. Henderson for his speedy 104 yards. Egbuka for a champion performance. Xavier Johnson for a big play. Trayanum for the winning TD. Coach Jim Knowles and all the defensive coaching staff for a great defensive performance against a very good ND offense.

Poster That Harley Built: There are so many Ohio State players who are worthy that I would be afraid I left someone out. So I am giving mine to Holtz (he was a Buckeye). He gave the equivalent of a "win one for the Gipper" speech to the Buckeyes and it worked.

Luckeeman: Buckeye Leaf to all Buckeye fans in the stadium who traveled from afar and paid exorbitant prices to be there to cheer on the Buckeyes in a very hostile environment!

BYRON MCNUTT: It seems Johnson always contributes in some way. He had a nice kickoff return and had a 40-yard pass reception. Egbuka has become the team's go-to-receiver when they need a play. Without him, the team probably doesn't win. This team can't become complacent. Maryland can play and Penn State will be a lot like Notre Dame. Penn State is a well-balanced team that feels it can finally beat the Buckeyes.

From The Message Board

Ohio State's 17-14 win over Notre Dame on Sept. 23 - featuring a last-second touchdown from running back Chip Trayanum - is one that will likely go down in the annals of Buckeye history. Following the victory, we asked our readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum where the win over the Fighting Irish ranks among their favorite wins of all time. Here are some of the responses:

"I've got to break this question up into two types of games: regular season and championship/playoff/national title games. The Miami natty game in 2002 reminds me the most of this game with its last-minute outcome. Next, the 'monkey off our back' win over Clemson in the 2020 CFP was very satisfying. Finally, the 2015 Sugar Bowl against Alabama and the '85 yards through the heart of the south' game was legendary. In the regular season; beating an undefeated and untied Michigan in 2006 in the 'Game of the Century' was very, very satisfying.

"However, what made this game very special was how we won in the last seconds, where we won in their house, a nighttime top-10 matchup, national TV broadcast and who we just beat, the so-called 'Legendary' Notre Dame 'Fricking Golden Domers' Irish. One more thing: oh yeah, that rant by Ryan Day afterwards, now that was legendary! Lou who?"

- BuckeyeScott

"This one is definitely a keeper. As others mentioned, you have to categorize bowls/postseason, TTUN, and regular-season games separately. Regarding the latter, the 2017 comeback at home against Penn State is a tough one to top given the big deficit in the score for most of the game. To

secure the win with one second (or less) on the road last night was pretty, pretty, pretty sweet though!"

- BILL RADLER

"It's top three. Clemson 2020 and Alabama 2014 are still above it."

- Tiffin Buckeye

"I want to exclude all wins vs. Michigan so I'll say No. 1, double-overtime win vs. Miami in the national championship game. No. 2, Joe Germaine to David Boston in the Rose Bowl vs. undefeated Arizona State in 1996 and No. 3, this win, 17-14, at Notre Dame in 2023. This is considering only games against good teams."

- Terrier Buck

"It ranks just below the 2014 victory against Alabama and the 2002 national championship victory over Miami."

- AnthonyBuckeye

"I think most of the favorites have been mentioned, but the 'Holy Buckeye' pass from Craig Krenzler to Michael Jenkins against Purdue was in the top 10 because it was critical to the national title run. There were quite a few last-minute wins that season, so you don't have to win every game by 25 points to be a good team."

- BYRON MCNUTT



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No. 1	Sept. 9	No. 13	Dec. 16
No. 2	Sept. 16	No. 14	Jan. 13
No. 3	Sept. 23	No. 15	Jan. 27
No. 4	Oct. 7	No. 16	Feb. 17
No. 5	Oct. 14	No. 17	March 2
No. 6	Oct. 21	No. 18	March 16
No. 7	Oct. 28	No. 19	April 6
No. 8	Nov. 4	No. 20	April 20
No. 9	Nov. 11	No. 21	May
No. 10	Nov. 18	No. 22	June
No. 11	Nov. 25	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 2	No. 24	August

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Day, McCord Have Mic Drop Moments

Over the course of just 86 seconds, Ryan Day and Kyle McCord took the criticism they'd been choking down for the last several months and managed to turn it into another Ohio State football legend.

Facing a 14-10 deficit on the road at ninth-ranked Notre Dame with just 1:26 showing on the game clock, McCord drove the Buckeyes from their own 35-yard line to the shadow of the goal line, completing third-and-10, fourth-and-7 and third-and-19 passes in the process.

And then, faced with a third-and-goal at the 1-yard line, and everyone from South Bend to Columbus expecting McCord to throw the ball again, Day called for an old-fashioned, off-tackle running play. How gutsy was that? Well, Ohio State had failed miserably each of the four previous times during the game when it needed a single yard to convert a first down.

Apparently that didn't matter to Day, who called for a handoff to 233-pound wrecking ball Chip Trayanum. Bouncing to his left off a block from pulling right tackle Josh Fryar, and with left tackle Josh Simmons and left guard Donovan Jackson collapsing the right side of the Notre Dame defensive line, Trayanum bulled his way through Fighting Irish safety D.J. Brown and somehow managed to stretch the football to the goal line just before his knee hit the ground, giving the fourth-ranked Buckeyes an improbable 17-14 comeback victory.

And then Day produced a mic drop moment typically reserved for standup comics, rappers and rock stars. Apparently fed up to his bearded chin with criticisms he'd heard from such Notre Dame apologists as former head coach Lou Holtz, Day let loose a diatribe on NBC sideline reporter Kathryn Tappen that resembled the speech Kurt Russell made as Wyatt Earp in the 1993 film "Tombstone" when he brandished a shiny new U.S. marshal's badge and yelled, "You tell 'em I'm coming! And hell's coming with me, you hear? Hell's coming with me!"

Tappen initially asked about McCord and the game-winning drive, to which Day replied, "Toughness. Toughness. That's it. Physicality across the board. Finishing it off. Having guts."

But then the OSU head coach veered off into an impassioned screed for the ages.

"You know," Day said, his voice rising in decibels as well as octaves. "I'd like to know where Lou Holtz is right now. What he said about our team – what he said about our team, I cannot believe. This is a tough team right here. We're proud to be from Ohio. It's always been Ohio against the world, and it will continue to be Ohio against the world. ... I love those kids, and we've got a tough team."

In case you haven't been paying attention, the 86-year-old Holtz is about as relevant in today's college game as leather helmets and the Split-T formation. Nevertheless, on one of ESPN's bottomless supply of mindless scream-fests during the week before the game, Holtz listed Ohio State's defeats with Day as head coach before adding, "Everybody beats them because they're more physical than Ohio State ... You tell Ohio State to bring their lunch because it's going to be a full damn day's work."

After Day's opening rant, Tappen tried to steer the interview back to the usual blah-blah-blah that passes for postgame interviews. But Day was having none of that, stripping away the vanilla veneer of coach-speak and giving a nationwide television audience a rare glimpse into the heart of the coach.

When asked his takeaway from the win, Day repeated, "Toughness. Toughness. Everybody's questioning these kids all the time. We

had one bad half the last couple of years, and that's it. Everybody wants to question these guys.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

"These kids are warriors right here to come back and win. This kid right here (pointing to McCord) – to come back and win in the second half ... I'm emotional about this. For a reason. A lot of people question these kids and say a lot of things about them (but) I love 'em. And when somebody comes in and attacks your family, to come here and win like this is special. It's a great win for our program and a great win for Ohio State."

Later during his postgame press conference, Day had calmed down – but only a little.

"We're not going to stand for that," he said, once again referring to Holtz and others' assertions that the Buckeyes are not a physical team. "That's not even close to true. We had one bad half a couple of years ago up in Ann Arbor – the second half – but in every game we play, we're physical. We are. I don't know where that narrative comes from, but that ends tonight."

Full disclosure. The column that ran in this exact space in the last issue of BSB carried the headline "Buckeyes Are Running Team No Longer."

Fuller disclosure. When NBC play-by-play announcer Noah Eagle said before the final play, "If you're Notre Dame, you've got to be alert for a run here as the last play of the game," I thought Eagle was out of his mind. No way were the Buckeyes going to run the ball on the final play. Apparently, Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman and defensive coordinator Al Golden agreed with me since they elected to play a man short rather than running an 11th defender on the field and risking a penalty.

And yet, perhaps part of being a good coach isn't only developing players, devising new ways to attack the opponent, and staying ahead of the curve. Maybe it's also doing the unexpected – and having enough faith in your players to call a do-or-die run on the final play of the game.

When It Mattered Most

McCord is kind of like his head coach in that most of the time he doesn't show all that much emotion. But once officials took an inordinate amount of time to pore over replays before finally arriving at the conclusion they had no choice but to award the touchdown to the Buckeyes, McCord's face hardened into a menacing scowl as he turned toward the stands at Notre Dame Stadium and began barking at the crowd.

The doubt surrounding the Buckeyes and their ability to get the tough stuff done during crunch time just as easily could have been applied to their quarterback.

Whether it is a lack of flash or simple unfamiliarity with the fan base, McCord hasn't exactly been embraced as the next great thing at Ohio State. That was underscored by the pregame narrative when McCord received only cursory mention while Eagle and broadcast partner Todd Blackledge literally gushed over Notre Dame QB Sam Hartman, who transferred from Wake Forest after throwing for a million yards (actually 12,976) and a

thousand touchdowns (really only 110).

Yet, it was Hartman who produced a decidedly pedestrian 17-of-25 performance for 175 yards and a touchdown while McCord connected on 21 of 37 attempts for 240 yards.

The fact of the matter is that Hartman is a polished product while McCord is still a work in progress – Joe Germaine at times, Joe Bauserman at others. The OSU quarterback had some cringeworthy moments during the game, failing to get enough air on some throws and putting way too much under others. He also seemed tentative at different junctures, almost unwilling to pull the trigger in fear of making a mistake.

But on the final drive of the game – the game-winning drive – McCord was the kind of stone-cold killer he must have been while helping lead his high school team to three straight state championships. Faced with 65 yards of real estate in front of him, only 1:26 of game clock with which to work, and a mostly hostile crowd of 77,622 praying loudly for him to fail, McCord began the possession with jangled misfires intended for running back TreVeyon Henderson.

But he responded by throwing an absolute seed to Emeka Egbuka on third-and-10, a pass play that netted 23 yards. Later, facing a fourth-and-7, McCord threw a perfectly placed ball to Julian Fleming at the first-down marker. That was followed two plays later by a laser into zone coverage that a gimpy Marvin Harrison Jr. turned into a leaping 18-yard gain.

Two plays later, as the clock wound under 20 seconds, McCord was trapped by Notre Dame pressure but somehow managed to avoid a sack and get the ball away. But even though the ball crossed the line of scrimmage, and Harrison was in the vicinity of the throw, officials determined McCord was not actually throwing in the direction of his receiver and called intentional grounding.

That pushed the Buckeyes back to the Notre Dame 22-yard line, where they faced a third-and-19 situation. That might have unnerved most quarterbacks, but after Day called his final timeout with 0:15 remaining, McCord stuck his back foot in the ground and unleashed another frozen rope to Egbuka, who made the catch at the 1-yard line with two Irish defenders draped over him.

After clocking the ball with seven seconds remaining, McCord rolled to his right and threw too high to Harrison in the corner of the end zone. That left just three seconds remaining, and you know the rest. Trayanum got the glory, but it was McCord who completed five passes for 73 yards on the final possession.

And yet, when it came time for postgame interviews, McCord wasn't asked about his passing or what it took to engineer that last-ditch touchdown drive. It was still about the final call and his team's toughness factor.

"The narrative around us is that we're not tough, but I don't know how else you would want to draw it up," McCord told reporters. "Last play of the game, top-10 opponent, no timeouts, three seconds left. Either we get that yard and win, or we don't get that yard and lose. I think that says a lot about the boys up front. I know they're tired of hearing that narrative, too."

Being asked about a 1-yard run after you had just thrown for 240 yards and led your team to arguably its biggest road win in years might be construed as just one more example of disrespect toward McCord. But it didn't seem to faze him. Nor should it have.

Buckeye Nation is a fickle group, but as long as you keep winning, it'll come around.



Ohio State Jumps To No. 4 In AP Top 25

After a last-second 17-14 win in South Bend, Ind., over Notre Dame, Ohio State jumped two spots in the most recent AP top 25 poll that was released on Sept. 24, coming in at No. 4.

The two teams that were ahead of the Buckeyes that they jumped were USC – who fell to No. 8 after beating Arizona State 42-28 – and Florida State, which beat out Clemson in overtime, 31-24. The top three teams of Georgia, Michigan and Texas remained the same, and the Fighting Irish fell two spots to No. 11 after the loss.

After the off week, the Buckeyes will return to Big Ten play when they host Maryland on Oct. 7. There are two teams in the conference in the AP top 25 other than the Buckeyes, with the Wolverines as well as

No. 6 Penn State, but the previously mentioned Terrapins and Wisconsin, whom the Buckeyes travel to on Oct. 28, also received votes, earning 20 and six, respectively.

Irish Play Short-Handed On Game-Winner

Amid the chaos of Chip Trayanum's game-winning 1-yard touchdown score, head coach Marcus Freeman and his Notre Dame team committed a game-altering blunder.

Replay footage after the game revealed that the Fighting Irish had just 10 players on the field during Trayanum's score, leaving them down one defensive lineman on the left side of the field, the same side Trayanum rumbled through to the end zone on.

Freeman stated after the game that he opted not to rush another defensive lineman onto the field because he did not want to run the risk of committing a penalty, which would have brought the Buckeyes closer, albeit by a small margin, to the end zone.

"Yeah, you could have (taken the penalty). You could have," Freeman said. "But to me it was, like, 'Hey, don't give them another opportunity to get settled and to try to make a different call. Hey, guys, like, stay off the field. Let's not give them a freebie from the half-yard line and let's try to stop them.' And I thought maybe they would do the same thing they did the snap before

2023 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Sept. 2	at Indiana	W, 23-3	CBS	2-2, 29-27 win over Akron
Sept. 9	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 35-7	BTN	2-1, idle
Sept. 16	WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 63-10	FOX	2-2, 27-24 loss to Troy
Sept. 23	at Notre Dame	W, 17-14	NBC	3-1, 17-14 loss to Ohio State
Oct. 7	MARYLAND	TBA	TBA	4-0, 31-9 win over Michigan State
Oct. 14	at Purdue	TBA	TBA	1-3, 38-17 loss to Wisconsin
Oct. 21	PENN STATE	TBA	TBA	4-0, 31-0 win over Iowa
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	TBA	TBA	3-1, 38-17 win over Purdue
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	TBA	TBA	3-1, 31-7 loss to Michigan
Nov. 11	MICHIGAN STATE	7:30 p.m.	NBC	2-2, 31-9 loss to Maryland
Nov. 18	MINNESOTA	TBA	TBA	2-2, 37-34 loss to Northwestern
Nov. 25	at Michigan	12 p.m.	FOX	4-0, 31-7 win over Rutgers

and then they ended up running the ball. So I got to watch the play and see where the ball hit. But that's why I made that decision."

This was not the only time the Fighting Irish were playing a defender down on the Buckeyes' 15-play, 65-yard final drive. According to replay, Notre Dame also had just 10 defenders on the field on the second-to-last play of the sequence, which resulted in an incomplete pass to Marvin Harrison Jr. in the end zone.

Despite having the advantage on the last two plays of the game, Kyle McCord admitted the number of defenders Notre Dame had on the field did not cross his mind. He

was focused only on reaching the end zone and winning the game.

"No, I didn't notice it was, but the play before the sprint out we had a similar look on defense, it might have been the same call," he said. "I saw that and I'm sure they saw it up in the booth, relayed it to Coach (Ryan) Day and I'm sure he saw it on the field. As much as I would have liked to complete that pass to Marvin (Harrison Jr.) there, I think it was only fitting we scored that way with Chip."

Martinez Among Seven Buckeyes Out Against Irish

Ohio State was without seven players in its thrilling 17-14 victory against Notre Dame on Sept. 23, including safety Cameron Martinez, who has rotated in at nickel for the Buckeyes.

Martinez, who is in his fourth year with the program, saw the field during Ohio State's Week 2 and 3 victories over Youngstown State and Western Kentucky, contributing just one tackle for defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' secondary. At the time of publication, the status and type of his injury was unknown.

With the absence of Martinez, Ohio State elected to extend more playing time to sophomore Sonny Styles, who helped limit the Irish' offense to just 14 points with six total tackles. The Buckeyes also used junior Jordan Hancock, who has been increasingly used at nickel this season. He did not record a tackle on the night but logged one of Ohio State's five pass breakups.

The team was also without the services of wide receiver Kyion Grayes and linebacker Arvell Reese, who continue to recover from undisclosed ailments. Reese, who was used primarily on special teams during Ohio State's season opener against Indiana, was injured on the first play of the game against Youngstown State on Sept. 9, but the coaching staff has indicated that it is not a long-term injury.

The Buckeyes were also without several mainstays on the availability report so far this season, including tight end Zak Herbstreit, defensive lineman Will Smith Jr., wide receiver Reis Stocksdale and linebacker Kourt Williams II.

Ohio State welcomed back tight end Joe Royer, who was a late scratch against Western Kentucky. Royer did not record a statistic against the Fighting Irish but was seen on special teams.

NFL Scouts On Hand For OSU-ND Matchup

Representatives from half the Nation-

How To Watch Maryland-Ohio State On Peacock

For the first time ever, Ohio State will play in a game that will be exclusively broadcast through streaming, with the Buckeyes' home contest against Maryland on Oct. 7 expected to be set for a 3:30 p.m. kickoff on Peacock, a streaming service owned by NBC.

With Ohio State and the Big Ten taking a new leap into the future, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is here to make sure that you don't miss your fix of Ohio State football, even if it isn't as easy as turning on your TV and flipping to a channel. Whether watching on your TV, computer or phone, here's how you can sign up for Peacock and watch Ohio State.

Watching On Your TV: Make sure you have either an Internet-connected Smart TV that allows you to download streaming applications or a streaming device such as a Roku, Chromecast or Amazon Fire TV Stick that can be plugged into your television.

Once you have one of those devices set up, find the App Store on your device – usually located on either the TV or streaming device's home page – and search for Peacock to download the application. Once it's downloaded, find and open the application and select "Pick A Plan," and choose either Premium (\$5.99/month) or Premium Plus (\$11.99/month), though note that you only need the cheaper Premium plan to be able to watch the game.

After choosing your plan, create your account with a username and password, and you will then be asked to fill out your first and last name, your birth year, gender and the zip code that you're watching from. After inputting your account information, you will be asked to provide payment information, and you will then be able to browse Peacock.

On the day of the game, the game between Ohio State and Maryland is likely to be on Peacock's

home screen when you first open the app for easy access. If you're having trouble finding it, navigate to the left side of the screen and click on the "Sports" section, which should have the game listed.

Watching On Your Computer/Phone: If you have a smart phone, visit your respective App Store and download "Peacock TV," and if you're browsing on a computer, visit PeacockTV.com. From there, open either the app or webpage and follow the same steps above of picking your plan and inputting your information to create your account. On the day of the game, navigate to the "Sports" section at the top of the screen to find the game.

None of Ohio State's remaining games this season are expected to be exclusive to Peacock, so if you are not interested in keeping the service, don't forget to cancel before your subscription renews one month after you sign up.

If you don't have a Smart TV or streaming device and would like to watch the game on something larger than a phone or computer, don't fret! No shortage of Buckeye fans – probably plenty that you know – will have the game on, and NBC/Peacock also reached a deal in August to allow bars and restaurants to stream games on Peacock, so your local watering hole will likely be a source to watch the game as well. If you'd prefer to read about the action as it's happening, visit the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum and keep up with our "Official Game Thread."

And rest assured – the dulcet tones of Paul Keels and Jim Lachey will still be providing their call of the game on The Ohio State Sports Radio Network. Visit OhioStateBuckeyes.com to find your local affiliate.

– Braden Moles



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

FAMILY AFFAIR — Former Notre Dame wide receiver (and now cornerback) Lorenzo Styles Jr. (right) transferred to Ohio State this offseason, joining forces with his brother, Sonny (left), a sophomore safety on the team.

al Football League were on hand for Ohio State's Week 3 primetime matchup against Notre Dame, as 19 scouts from 16 franchises were in attendance to witness the Buckeyes' victory over the Fighting Irish.

The Los Angeles Chargers, Detroit Lions and Houston Texans each had two scouts take in the action in Notre Dame Stadium, while the San Francisco 49ers, Cleveland Browns, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Indianapolis Colts, Dallas Cowboys, Miami Dolphins, Philadelphia Eagles, Carolina

Panthers, Los Angeles Rams, Baltimore Ravens, New Orleans Saints, Seattle Seahawks and Tennessee Titans each had one representative.

The Buckeyes' battle with the Irish featured a plethora of NFL-ready talent, headlined by AP Preseason All-American wide receivers Harrison and Emeka Egbuka. The duo, who both are slated by many media outlets to be selected in the top 10 in the 2024 NFL draft, produced under the lights, totaling a combined 10 catches for 128 yards.

In addition to the pair of third-year wideouts, juniors Denzel Burke, Michael Hall Jr., TreVeyon Henderson, Donovan Jackson and J.T. Tuimoloau; seniors Tommy Eichenberg and Cade Stover; and graduate Steele Chambers have all garnered their own NFL interest for next year's draft.

Each of the mentioned Buckeyes received significant playing time against the Fighting Irish, with Henderson and Stover seeing the most production. Stover racked up 52 receiving yards and was a key target for McCord in the early portions of the game, while Henderson earned 14 carries and knocked off a 61-yard touchdown score in the third quarter.

Other than Burke, who failed to appear on the stat sheet for the first time this season, the Buckeyes also got important contributions from Hall, Eichenberg, Tuimoloau and Chambers. They each played a significant role in holding the Irish to just two scores the entire game, accounting for 21 of the unit's 64 tackles. Tuimoloau's efforts were especially felt late in the game. He helped force a key Notre Dame punt on the Irish's last drive by knocking down Hartman for a loss of 5 yards and forcing a pass deflection.

"J.T. made a couple of big plays," Knowles said after the game. "You need the guys that are going to be able to make the big-time plays."

Styles Brothers Share Field At ND Stadium

While a primetime matchup between Ohio State and Notre Dame has no shortage of storylines, perhaps no story was more intriguing than the Ohio State wide-out-turned-corner Lorenzo Styles Jr.'s return to Notre Dame Stadium.

In last season's Week 1 matchup between the two storied programs at Ohio Stadium, Styles — who was Notre Dame's leading wide receiver with 340 yards — lined up on offense against his brother, Sonny, who was an 18-year-old true freshman at the time.

"It was a pretty cool moment," Sonny Styles said. "Last year, I wasn't really play-

ing as much the first game, but it was still a pretty cool moment, me and my brother sharing the field."

Fast-forward over a year later, and the two siblings from Pickerington, Ohio, donned the same uniform in this historic matchup, this time for the Scarlet and Gray.

In Ohio State's 17-14 victory over the Fighting Irish, both Sonny, now the Buckeyes' starting nickel safety, and Lorenzo, who transferred to Ohio State from Notre Dame and has been featured primarily on special teams this season, saw the field for their hometown team, with Sonny logging six tackles and Lorenzo seeing time on special teams.

This was a moment the two brothers had circled on their calendars for quite some time.

"This year, it's even more special," Sonny Styles said on Sept. 20. "Lorenzo, he transferred here. Obviously, he still has love for Notre Dame. But I think this time, we're both on the same side of the ball and on the same team. So I think it will be pretty cool."

"I mean, playing Notre Dame Stadium is amazing," Lorenzo Styles Jr. said on Aug. 10. "They have a big stadium. great fan base. So this is going to be a big game for all of us, and we're going to go there and we're going to show out."

Lorenzo, who has two seasons of eligibility left with the Buckeyes, said he enjoyed his two seasons at Notre Dame, but he ultimately decided to leave South Bend, Ind., for Columbus because it would bring him closer to his brother and family.

"I wouldn't necessarily say I feel more at home, just because I did get pretty comfortable at Notre Dame being there for two years," Styles said. "But the difference is now I have my family here. Sometimes it does get lonely, and I try to make new friends and do things like that. But I came here on a mission. I have my family here. I have my brother here. So I'm just trying to stay on that course."

Continued On Page 6

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

Corso Sides With Brutus Once Again

ESPN's "College GameDay" was on hand for Ohio State's Week 4 primetime matchup against Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., and that meant it was time for the legendary Lee Corso to put on a familiar piece of headwear.

Just minutes before the noon slate of college games, the 88-year-old Corso donned the Brutus Buckeye headgear for the 39th time in the pregame show's 36-year history, and with Ohio State's win later that evening over Notre Dame, the team improved to 26-13 when Corso puts his faith in the Buckeyes.

With the win, Ohio State improved to 39-18 all-time when "College GameDay" is on hand for one of the team's games, whether at home or on the road.

AD Smith Supports Federal NIL Legislation

Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith took part in a House Committee on Small Business hearing on Sept. 20 in Washington D.C., testifying in support of federal legislation for name, image and likeness.

The hearing, meant to analyze NIL's impact on college athletes, had Smith testify



FIL PHOTO

MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON — Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith spoke in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 20 in support of federal legislation for name, image and likeness.

along with TCU athletic director Jeremiah Donati, College Football Players Association vice president Madeline Salamone and former Heisman Trophy winner Gino Torretta, who played quarterback for Miami (Fla.) from 1989-92.

In his opening statement, Smith said "Congress needs to enact NIL legislation as soon as possible," adding that an effective

bill would include a national NIL standard, NIL agent registration, standard contracts, prohibition of inducements, a public NIL registry and strong enforcement measures.

He said over 420 student-athletes at Ohio State have at least one NIL deal, with student-athletes having made over 2,000 NIL deals, with football and women's volleyball making the most, and most of those

activities include social media engagements (44 percent), royalty payouts (24 percent), public appearances (nine percent) and autographs (two percent), among others.

While Smith reiterated that he believes NIL is "beneficial to the student-athlete experience," he said the implementation of NIL — which was put in place on July 1, 2021 — has "not been without challenges."

"When NIL was sanctioned by the NCAA, 'bad actors' emerged seeking personal gain from their ability to influence a young person and/or a family regarding an institution," Smith said. "This has always been a challenge, but NIL has allowed this behavior to be more aggressive. In professional sports, drafts preclude this issue, but the collegiate model relies upon recruiting, not drafting."

Smith issued support earlier this year for the Student Athlete Level Playing Field Act, a bipartisan bill that was introduced in Congress in May to create a federal standard for NIL in college athletics. Since NIL was introduced, Smith has argued for more guardrails considering that several states — as many as 18 — have different laws for NIL, leading to a lack of clarity around rules and some "bad actors" taking advantage of student-athletes.

"In worst-case scenarios, student-athletes have been offered lucrative NIL 'promises' that have not materialized once they arrived on campus," he said. "In other cases, verbal NIL offers have been tendered to elite student-athletes to entice them to leave one institution and transfer to another based on a lucrative verbal NIL inducement.

"Some of the NIL deals fall apart and families and student-athletes are left with empty promises and no recourse. Some have sought legal support ... Many states have created legislation to support their institutions' NIL activities, but there is no uni-

Attention! No BSB Print Issue Until Oct. 10

With the Ohio State football team enjoying an off day on Sept. 30, the next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin will not be mailed until Oct. 10. However, there is no need for BSB readers to miss any of the Ohio State action. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff will be manning the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, reporting on any breaking stories, plus posting additional features, between now and the next print issue dated Oct. 14. Football recruiting is a 365-day-a-year process these days, and the BSB staff has stepped up its coverage of Ohio State's quest for prep talent. The Ohio State coaches will be taking advantage of their "week off" to continue their pursuit of future Buckeyes, so be sure to check in regularly at BuckeyeSports.com.

Along with daily posts, we offer reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays. Also, staff members man the Fan Forum, interacting with subscribers on the hot topics of the day.

Many readers continue to report struggling to get their Buckeye Sports Bulletin in a timely fashion. The complete edition of each issue is posted at BuckeyeSports.com immediately upon completion of

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

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Brutus Level VIPs To Be Recognized

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

"We want to thank the many BSB readers who have stepped up and shown their support for Buckeye Sports Bulletin through the VIP program," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said. "It is a true vote of confidence in what we are doing now, what we have done the previous 42 years and what we plan to do in the future."

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

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

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

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

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

To upgrade your existing subscription to VIP status, with all the benefits that come with that designation, go to BuckeyeSports.com/vip-memberships to pay by credit card, or call us at (614) 486-2202 during regular business hours. If readers have questions about this program, they can call the same number.

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

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formity to these state laws. As you all know, there is no federal law regarding NIL."

Day Receives Salary Increase

Day will make \$9.96 million this season – with the potential to go as high as \$10.2 million with bonuses – after receiving a 5.25 percent salary increase over the off-season.

According to documents obtained by The Columbus Dispatch, Day will receive guaranteed compensation totaling \$9,960,650, including \$2 million as a base salary, \$1.25 million for the school's shoe and apparel contract with Nike, a \$1 million annual retention payment, and a \$10,000 Coca-Cola sponsorship.

Day, who is in his fifth season as Ohio State's head coach, will also receive a \$250,000 retention bonus should he stay with the program through this upcoming January that would increase his total compensation to \$10.19 million, making him among the highest-paid coaches in the country. He had previously received a seven-year contract extension last offseason that tied him to the university through 2028, and the contract makes Day eligible for annual raises in compensation, with the most recent approved on Feb. 1.

In his first five seasons as head coach, Day has amassed a 49-6 record, firmly cementing Ohio State as one of the nation's most successful football programs. In that time, he has led the Buckeyes to College Football Playoff appearances in three of his first four seasons along with a national championship game berth in 2020, a 52-24 loss to Nick Saban's Alabama.

Harrison Played Through Ankle Sprain Last Season

Harrison was a unanimous All-American

last season, hauling in 72 receptions for 1,263 yards and 14 touchdowns, and he finished as a finalist for the Biletnikoff Award, which is given to the top receiver in college football.

The honor went to Tennessee's Jalin Hyatt, but the committee might have reconsidered had they known that Harrison played almost all of last season with a sprained ankle suffered in just the second game of the season against Arkansas State, an injury that limited him for the rest of the year.

"I was only able to cut off one foot throughout the whole year, so I just didn't really have much strength or mobility in the ankle," Harrison said on Sept. 20. "It was really hard, but I just managed it."

Harrison did not seem impacted given how impressive his season was, but he said that it was something he was aware of every game, adjusting his approach to help account for the injury.

"I felt it each game," he said. "I knew I couldn't really plant off that one leg how I really wanted to. I think if you really watch the film, I switched my feet a little bit on the route or just being mindful of it. I changed my depth a little bit still being within the offense but worked some ways around it."

Harrison is already off to a good start this season with 17 receptions for 336 yards and three touchdowns, and while he does not consider himself fully healthy due to a shoulder injury he suffered against Indiana, he said he is not feeling any lingering effects from the ankle injury, and that's shown in his play this season.

"I definitely have confidence in both legs now to be able to decelerate and accelerate on both legs," Harrison said, "So I'm excited about that."

Despite the confidence in his lower body,

Harrison suffered another ankle injury in the third quarter against Notre Dame while blocking for Henderson's 61-yard touchdown. Although the injury, which occurred on his right ankle, forced him to be taken out of the game and helped off the field by

trainers, he returned on the following drive, hauling in a 6-yard catch on his next offensive snap, finishing with three receptions for 32 yards.

Continued On Page 8

Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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Continued From Page 7

Buckeyes Slated To Play Ohio University In 2025

Ohio State will host Ohio University on Sept. 13, 2025, with the Buckeyes paying the Bobcats \$1.9 million for the nonconference matchup at Ohio Stadium.

This will be the eighth time that Ohio State and Ohio have played, with the most recent a 43-7 win for Ohio State on Sept. 18, 2010, though the game was later vacated, leaving the Buckeyes with an official 6-0 record over the Bobcats. They first played on Oct. 21, 1899, with all games played at home for Ohio State.

This tentatively completes Ohio State's nonconference schedule for the 2025 season, with home games previously announced against Texas on Aug. 30, 2025, and UConn on Oct. 18, 2025. The Big Ten had previously announced the Buckeyes' set of conference opponents for that season – as well as 2024 – but those are likely to be adjusted following the Big Ten's inclusion of Oregon and Washington.

Three Buckeyes Earn WKU Player Of The Game Nods

Ohio State named three Players of The Game for its 63-10 trouncing of Western Kentucky on Sept. 16, recognizing Henderson on offense, Burke on defense and defensive end Caden Curry on special teams.

Henderson put forth another productive performance in the Buckeyes' backfield, logging a game-high 13 carries, 88 rushing yards and two touchdowns on the day, along with a 27-yard reception. The junior running back also etched his name in the Ohio State history books on his final carry midway through the third quarter, becoming just the 28th player in program history to reach the 2,000-yard rushing plateau.

Burke earned Player of the Game honors for the second consecutive week after he played a large role in limiting quarterback Austin Reed and the Hilltoppers' high-flying offense to just 204 total passing yards and 10 points. The junior cornerback continued to show signs of returning to his freshman and ball-hawking form, recording two pass

breakups along with a forced fumble that led to a Tyleik Williams defensive touch-down.

Curry, who logged 218 snaps on special teams as a true freshman last season, continued to be a mainstay on Parker Fleming's unit against the Hilltoppers, recording one tackle.

Ten Buckeyes Selected In Women's Hockey Draft

The Professional Women's Hockey League had its first-ever draft Sept. 18, and there were 10 former Buckeyes drafted by the league's six franchises.

Ohio State's draftees were Sophie Jaques, Emma Maltais, Jincy Dunne, Natalie Spooner, Clair DeGeorge, Madison Bizal, Paetyn Levis, Liz Schepers, Tatum Skaggs and Minttu Tuominen. Jaques, who won Western College Hockey Association Defensive Player of the Year award as a Buckeye last season, was the first to see her name called, taken in the second round with the 10th overall pick by Boston.

Maltais, another key contributor on last

season's team that finished as a national runner-up, adds to her résumé by being drafted right after Jaques with the 11th pick to Toronto, her hometown team. Dunne was picked at No. 17 by Ottawa, followed by Spooner (No. 23, Toronto), DeGeorge (No. 36, Minnesota), Bizal (No. 43, Montreal), Levis (No. 57, New York), Schepers (No. 73, Minnesota), Skaggs (No. 82, Boston) and Tuominen (No. 84, Minnesota).

Five of the 10 draftees – including Bizal, DeGeorge, Jaques, Levis and Schepers – were part of the 2021-22 national championship team.

Details surrounding the teams, including their arenas, team names and logos, have yet to be determined, but while the schedule has also not been announced yet, play is reportedly set to begin in January of 2024.

Patrick Engels, Braden Moles and Greg Wilson contributed to this report. For the latest in Ohio State news, be sure to visit BuckeyeSports.com, available for free to all [Buckeye Sports Bulletin](http://BuckeyeSportsBulletin.com) subscribers.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1983

If the scoreboard in Ohio Stadium ever blanks out and you want to know the score, don't ask OSU kicker Rich Spangler. He may not know.

It's not that Spangler was unconcerned with what was going on in the game, mind you; it's just that a certain aloofness is something that goes along with being a kicker. At least that's what Spangler said.

"Kickers are weird people," he insisted matter-of-factly. "They're more centered upon themselves. You have to be thinking about yourself. You can't be worried about what the other people on the team are doing because they can't help you kick the ball, you know?"

35 Years Ago — 1988

Trailing Louisiana State 33-20 with less than 4½ minutes left in the game on Sept. 24, Carlos Snow softened up the Tigers with a touchdown jab and then Greg Frey and Bobby Olive combined to deliver the knockout punch as Ohio State pulled out an emotion-filled 36-33 home victory over the sixth-ranked Tigers.

"One week you're stomping the grapes and the next week you're drinking the wine," said OSU head coach John Cooper after the game. "I don't know if I've ever been around a more exciting finish. I just finished talking to our recruits and told them the next time they came we'd try to play an exciting game for them."

30 Years Ago — 1993

Ohio State was celebrating the 25th anniversary of the school's 1968 national championship football team. And while the current football team was wearing replica 1968 jerseys in each game during the season to commemorate the champions, some players were not content just to look like their national championship counterparts.

Some were intent on playing like the Buckeyes of a quarter-century ago. That is why Ohio State defensive back Tim Walton didn't talk much about the future. He was dwelling a lot on the past those days.

Although he seemed smaller than his listed 5-10 and 180 pounds, no one delivered a harder hit than Walton did. If he had a clear shot at the ball carrier, the OSU senior cornerback literally flew into the opponent. And that mentality conjured up another former Buckeye defensive back who loved to dole out the helmet-knockers. Twenty-five years previously, a guy by the name of Jack Tatum patrolled the defensive secondary for Ohio State, and opposing players knew that to go into Tatum's territory was risking a lot.

"He struck fear into his opponents," Walton said, his eyes growing wider. "That's what we want to do. If you want to throw against us, go right ahead. We just want everybody to know that if you come into our territory, get ready to pay the price."

25 Years Ago — 1998

It took Ohio State's offense just over 29 minutes to finally reach the end zone against Penn State on Oct. 3.

Michael Wiley's 20-yard touchdown catch from Joe

Germaine to put OSU up 14-3 with 23 seconds left was apparently cause for celebration in the coaches booth on the north end of the press box. Quarterbacks coach Tim Salem reacted by thrusting his fist into the air – and through the glass that fronted the enclosed booth.

Shards of glass fell on reporters in the front row of the press box. Kimberly Jones, a reporter from the Centre Daily Times of State College, Pa., suffered minor cuts. Salem, who was unavailable for comment, needed stitches to repair cuts on his forearm and the middle knuckle on his right hand.

"It's a good thing we didn't score that much," Germaine said. "He might have been out for the Illinois game (the next week). I hope he's capable of going next week."

20 Years Ago — 2003

Katie Smith had been helping basketball programs out for years, so when an opportunity to assist at her alma mater came up, she figured it was a no-brainer.

One of the Ohio State women's basketball program's most beloved former players, Smith was back at OSU as an office assistant, doing "whatever they need me to" and recharging her brain as she prepared for OSU dental school.

"I'm taking classes to kind of refresh myself," she told BSB. "I've been away from this for six years because of basketball, so it will be a little different."

15 Years Ago — 2008

With No. 13 Ohio State (3-1) coming off its most lopsided loss under head coach Jim Tressel and its worst in 14 years, the coaching staff showed that the status quo would not do on Sept. 20 against Troy. Out of the lineup for all but two plays was senior quarterback Todd Boeckman, whose three turnovers played a major part in Ohio State's 35-3 loss Sept. 13 to No. 1 USC, and in was the nation's No. 1 recruit in Terrelle Pryor.

Pryor entered Ohio State as ballyhooed as the last freshman – Art Schlichter – to start a game at quarterback, but it's safe to say that his debut was much more successful than Schlichter's five-interception performance in the 1978 opener against Penn State.

The Jeannette, Pa., native responded to the news he would start with a debut that would only whet the appetite of eager Buckeye fans who had been clamoring to see more of the electric Pryor. He became the 10th Buckeye in history to throw for four or more touchdowns in a game and the only one to do so as a freshman as the Buckeyes outlasted Troy for a 28-10 win. Not bad for a guy who didn't find out he was starting until the morning of the game.

"I feel good," Pryor said afterward. "It just helped me believe in myself even more. It's all about confidence."

10 Years Ago — 2013

In the moments immediately following each of Ohio State's first 15 games of the Urban Meyer era, the head coach and his staff stood in front of their team to single out the day's top performers. Win No. 16 for Ohio State,

however, didn't follow such a script.

The Buckeyes had just scored the most points in any game that they had played in the past 63 years, while limiting their severely undermanned opponent to just two first downs and 80 yards of total offense. But rather than reflect and celebrate Ohio State's 76-0 win over Football Championship Subdivision's Florida A&M on Sept. 21, Meyer left his team with a simple, yet powerful message – move forward.

"We usually have the offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator, special teams coordinator come up and call out a couple of players that played well," Buckeye running back Jordan Hall said. "Coach (Meyer) was just like, 'This game's over. We're on to Wisconsin.'"

Five Years Ago — 2018

On Sept. 22, unranked Tulane entered Ohio Stadium with a 1-2 record. The Green Wave left that evening with a 1-3 mark after a 49-6 shellacking at the hands of Ohio State.

For the Buckeyes, beating up on an overmatched opponent was no big deal, at least not under normal circumstances. But this time around, for this game, the circumstances weren't normal. Not even close.

On the field, things were normal. No. 4 Ohio State racked up 42 first-half points and pulled the starters for the final 30 minutes. It was on the sidelines where something was different – as different as something usually so normal can be.

Head coach Urban Meyer was with his team for the first time this season after serving a three-game suspension for mishandling the employment of former assistant coach Zach Smith. He had watched from home as Ohio State dispatched Oregon State in the season opener, and he did the same for wins over Rutgers and TCU as well.

"My family is completely ingrained in this community, they love this place, I love this university," Meyer said after the win. "Walking into that Skull Session and seeing Buckeye Nation's support, myself and our team – that was something overwhelming and I appreciate that. I'm very appreciative of it."

One Year Ago — 2022

Just 15 days removed from the decommitment of Dayton Chaminade Julienne four-star combo guard George Washington III (6-2, 165), Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann had already filled his void in the class, with Minneapolis Totino-Grace four-star combo guard Taison Chatman (6-4, 170) announcing his commitment to Ohio State on Sept. 20.

Chatman was the No. 44 overall player, the No. 11 combo guard and the top-ranked player from Minnesota according to 247Sports' composite ranking. Chatman selected the Buckeyes over Xavier, Kansas, Minnesota and Virginia.

Chatman was known for his offensive game, and he had picked up the reputation of a sharpshooter. He could play both guard positions but leaned toward the two more than the one.

Last-Second TD Leads To Stunning Win Over ND

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The quarterback with 50 career starts engineered a second-half rally and, aided by a late defensive stand, was poised to lead No. 9 Notre Dame to its first victory over No. 6 Ohio State since 1936.

His counterpart, in his fifth start, wouldn't have it and produced magic of his own that led to the Buckeyes' stunning 17-14 win in South Bend, Ind., on Sept. 23 when Chip Trayanum plowed his way – barely – into the end zone from the 1-yard line with one second left before a shocked crowd of 77,622 at Notre Dame Stadium.

Junior Kyle McCord, in the biggest test of his young career, guided the Buckeyes (4-0) 65 yards for the winning drive that began with 1:26 to play after the Ohio State defense forced a punt. The big play was a 21-yard catch by Emeka Egbuka to the 1 with nine seconds left on third-and-19 from the 22 after an intentional grounding by McCord put the Buckeyes in a precarious spot.

TreVeyon Henderson's 61-yard gallop on the Buckeyes' first play of the third quarter had made it 10-0, but grizzled veteran Sam Hartman, who spent four seasons at Wake Forest before transferring to Notre Dame (4-1), gave the Fighting Irish a 14-10 lead with 8:22 to play on a 2-yard pass to Rico Flores Jr.

The situation looked bleak for the Buckeyes after being stopped on downs at the ND 11 with 4:12 to play, but the Irish could not run out the clock.

McCord was 21 of 37 for 240 yards, Egbuka had seven catches for 96 yards, and Henderson gained 104 yards on 14 carries.

Getting Defensive

Notre Dame won the toss on the first day of fall with 72-degree weather and deferred to the Buckeyes, who started at the 25 after the touchback. They reached as far as the Notre Dame 47 before the drive stalled, forcing a punt.

On third down, needing 6 yards from the Ohio State 29, McCord connected with tight end Cade Stover for 14 yards. After a 4-yard run by Henderson, Stover had another catch for 8 yards, but two incompletions, a false start and 3 yards by Henderson weren't enough.

Notre Dame then held the ball for 14 plays and 8:12, moving from the 11 to the OSU 18, but on fourth-and-1, Hartman ran to his right and was hit at the sideline by Cody Simon inches shy of the marker. The call on the field was a first down, but it was overturned. On the drive, Hartman was 7 of 8 for 64 yards, and tight end Mitchell Evans had three catches for 26 yards.

After a three-and-out by the Buckeyes, the Irish, from their 32, had back-to-back 12-yard receptions by Jaden Greathouse and Evans followed by a 10-yard rush for Jeremiyah Love to end the quarter, one which ND led in yards 105-41 and had 10:01 of possession. The OSU defense stiffened, and Spencer Shrader missed a 47-yard field-goal try at the 14:04 mark of the second quarter.

It was the Buckeyes' turn to be stuffed when they got the ball back because on fourth-and-goal from the 1, a rollout pass by



SONNY BROCKWAY

DOWN THE STRETCH — Ohio State head coach Ryan Day made the pivotal play call to hand the ball off to Chip Trayanum at Notre Dame's 1-yard line, a run that gave the Buckeyes a 17-14 win in South Bend, Ind.

McCord to Stover was broken up by Jaylen Sneed with 6:53 left in the half. OSU went 70 yards using 13 plays and 7:11.

Egbuka had started the drive with a 9-yard run, and three plays later a pass interference penalty on a throw intended for Stover put the ball at the ND 36. On third-and-8, Trayanum caught a pass for 12 yards to the 22, and on third-and-5 from the 17, Egbuka's catch gained 10.

From there, Trayanum had two runs for 6 and Miyan Williams rushed for no gain to set up the ill-fated fourth-down play.

Following a Notre Dame punt, OSU finally broke through for a 3-0 halftime lead on a Jayden Fielding field goal from 31 yards with 26 seconds left in the half.

The series began at the 21 with 3:46 left. Marvin Harrison Jr.'s 7-yarder on the first play was his first catch. Stover had a third-down catch of 6 yards for a first at the 35. A deep ball to Harrison resulted in a pass interference on Benjamin Morrison to the ND 48. Facing third-and-7 from the Irish 45, Egbuka had consecutive grabs for 12 and 18 yards to the 15.

On the next play it appeared Egbuka made a diving catch for a touchdown, but he dropped the ball. Henderson ran for 2, but a pass to Stover on third down was incomplete and the Buckeyes settled for the three points. OSU had the ball for 3:20 and ran 12 plays.

Ohio State had a sizable advantage in the second quarter for a total of 147 yards (84 passing, 63 rushing) in the half compared to 141 yards (88 passing, 53 rushing) for the Irish, who gained only 36 yards and had the ball for 4:29 in the second quarter.

Late Drama

The OSU defense continued to shine

on Notre Dame's opening drive of the third quarter. A 16-yard run for Audric Estime helped the Irish get to the OSU 39. On fourth-and-1, Hartman was stopped for no gain by Sonny Styles and Lathan Ransom.

Then, boom, Henderson on the next play broke through the left side and raced 61 yards, aided by a Harrison block on the edge, to make it 10-0 at 11:14. Harrison sustained a leg injury on the play when a Notre Dame player rolled on his right leg, but he returned for the next series.

The Irish responded with a methodical 13-play, 75-yard, 7:39 drive to pull to within 10-7 with 3:35 remaining in the third on a 1-yard run by Gi'Bran Payne.

Love had a 16-yard run and Jadarian Price rushed for 18 yards to the OSU 39. Flores later made a third-down catch for 6 yards to the 28 for another first down. After another first at the 18, Hartman on second down had a 15-yard strike to Tobias Merrinweather to the 1, and Payne scored from a direct snap on the next play. Notre Dame had 10 runs for 54 yards on the drive.

After Xavier Johnson returned the kickoff 32 yards to the OSU 35, the Buckeyes were on the move and had converted an 11-yard pass to Egbuka on third down to the ND 28, but right tackle Josh Fryar was penalized for unnecessary roughness, moving the ball back to the OSU 46, setting up third-and-24. Stover's catch regained 13, but OSU had to punt to open the fourth.

The penalty was costly as Notre Dame drove down the field, mixing big passes with bruising runs after a Jesse Mirco punt to the 4. The Irish went 96 yards on 11 plays in 6:28 to take the lead on Hartman's 2-yard pass to Flores with 8:22 left.

Greathouse had a reception for 28 yards and Evans added 25 yards. A holding call

on Davison Igbinosun gave the Irish the ball at the 20. Love ran for 6 and 10 yards, and Estime added another pair of yards on the ground before the score.

McCord got the ball back and completed a third-and-5 from the OSU 30 across the middle to Johnson for 40 yards to the Irish 30. After a false start, a pass interference placed the ball on the 20. There was an incompleteness before Henderson ran for 9 yards but he got nothing on third down, and on fourth, Egbuka on a sweep to the right was also stuffed for no gain by a group of Irish, including Javontae Jean-Baptiste, who transferred there this season from Ohio State.

The Irish went about trying to chew up the clock. Flores opened with a 12-yard reception, and Estime reeled off 11 yards on a run, making the situation even bleaker for the Buckeyes. However, Hartman lost 5 yards on a scramble and next threw an incompleteness. Payne gained 3 yards to the 32, then ND took a false start penalty.

The 46-yard punt by Bryce McFerson was returned by Egbuka for 8 yards to the 35 to set up the dramatic finish, although it didn't start well with two straight incomplete passes. But on third down, Egbuka had a catch for 23 yards across the middle to the ND 42.

With the game on the line with a fourth-and-7 from the 39, Julian Fleming made a clutch 7-yard catch. Two plays later, Harrison hauled in a 19-yarder to the 13.

After an incompleteness to Harrison, McCord was penalized for intentional grounding back to the 22. That's when he connected with Egbuka to the 1 with nine seconds left. McCord spiked the ball, leaving seven seconds.

He threw incomplete to Harrison to leave three seconds remaining, and Trayanum scored with his bull run through the left side of the line. Of note, Notre Dame had 10 players on the field for the final two plays, leaving a hole where Trayanum scored.

Fielding's kickoff went out of bounds to give the Irish the ball at the 35. Hartman tossed the ball for 5 yards to Evans to begin a series of laterals that ended with Hartman being tackled for a loss at the 27. OSU declined the penalty for an illegal forward pass.

Notes

Ohio State is 6-2 in the series with all the wins coming since 1995 after the Irish won in Columbus in 1935 and at home the next season. ... Stover's seven catches went for 52 yards. ... Harrison had three for 32 yards. ... Hartman was 17 of 25 for 175 yards. ... Evans made seven catches for 75 yards. ... Estime had 70 yards on 14 runs. ... OSU finished with 366 yards (240 passing, 126 rushing). Notre Dame totaled 351 (176 rushing, 175 passing). ... ND led in first downs, 22-19, and possession, 34:59-25:01, but the Buckeyes ran one more play, 65-64. ... Ransom had a game-high 13 tackles (seven solo). ... Notre Dame had one sack, OSU none. ... Ohio State's streak of 77 games scoring 20 or more points, the nation's longest, was snapped.

Buckeyes Make Statement With Physical Win

Continued From Page 1

Pressed about his comment after the game, Day was happy to elaborate on the perceived disrespect that he and the team felt coming into the game.

"I said it earlier, I'll say it again. A lot of people took a lot of shots at this team over the last 48 hours and it really hit home to me," Day said. "The way that our team played, not only did we physically get after these guys last year, but we did it here at the end of the game. I think it really says a lot about this team. I'm really upset and disrespected by what Lou Holtz said publicly about our team and Ohio State and Buckeye Nation, and we're not going to stand for that because that's not even close to true.

"We had one bad half a couple years ago up in Ann Arbor in the second half. Every game we play, we're physical. We are. I don't know where that narrative comes from, but that ends tonight. This team right here showed toughness, they showed grit, they didn't give up and they found a way to win and get that last yard. And I'm sick over those short-yardage (plays) that we didn't finish, but that's the game. The last matchup game we were in (against Georgia), we were one play short. This play, we finished it the right way, and I'm really proud of our team."

And that attitude was one felt throughout the week as Ohio State prepared to face Notre Dame, with the chorus of criticism permeating the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

"I think that's definitely the most animated I've ever seen (Day), and rightfully so," quarterback Kyle McCord said. "People were taking shots at him, taking shots at the team that weren't true. We did a good job of just staying quiet, but that was definitely fuel to the fire. I'd be lying if we said that didn't bother us. We came out here and I think we proved a lot of people wrong, but the bigger thing is I think we proved ourselves right."

The win over Notre Dame – the sixth in eight tries for Ohio State dating back to 1935, with the Buckeyes taking each of the last six games – was one built on grit and physicality, though to Holtz' point, that was not particularly evident for the majority of the contest.

A defensive battle brewed through the first half with just 288 total yards and three points – all from a 31-yarder from kicker Jayden Fielding – from a pair of supposedly high-scoring offenses. The Buckeyes finally found the end zone on a 61-yard score from TreVeyon Henderson on their first drive of the second half, but Notre Dame and veteran quarterback Sam Hartman quickly responded, getting on the board with a score of their own to make it 10-7 in favor of Ohio State with 3:35 left in the third.

Through that third quarter, Ohio State's offense had struggled to do much of anything at that point outside of Henderson's long rushing score, with McCord kept mostly under wraps, boasting only 122 passing yards heading into the final period.



SONNY BROCKWAY

CRUNCH TIME — Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord (6) was masterful on the Buckeyes' game-winning drive against Notre Dame, leading the team 65 yards in just 1:25.

Notre Dame also did not have much in the way of offensive production – the Fighting Irish had just 252 yards to the Buckeyes' 247 yards, and Hartman had six fewer passing yards than McCord – but the fourth quarter, at least early on, is when Notre

Dame began to flex.

Hartman and the offense struck again midway through the final frame, with the signal caller connecting with wideout Rico Flores Jr. for a 2-yard touchdown to take a 14-10 lead with 8:22 remaining. Hartman



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SONNY BROCKWAY

BIG GAINS — Ohio State wide receiver Emeka Egbuka (2) helped set up Chip Trayanum's game-winner, collecting a 21-yard pass to get the Buckeyes down to the 1-yard line with just nine seconds remaining.

was 3 of 4 for 55 yards on the drive while Notre Dame's running backs rushed for 31 yards on seven carries, good for 4.4 yards per attempt.

It pointed to a lack of game-changing play in the trenches for Ohio State, something that Day and Co. evidently took personally heading into the game. But after those scoring drives — as well as the ensuing turnover on downs by Ohio State and punt by Notre Dame — it set the stage for the only drive of the game that would matter, and one that would help right the narrative that Ohio State felt unfairly tasked with heading into South Bend.

"We felt like there was a lot of disrespect this week," wideout Emeka Egbuka said. "I'm going to bat just as much as my coach is going to bat for me. I support everything Coach Day is saying. He's raising a phenomenal team. We're going to go really far this year, and the hate's going to keep coming, the disrespect is going to keep coming. It's always been that way for Ohio State. We're not necessarily looking to go out there and prove people wrong. We might do that in the process, but we're trying to prove the people who love us right."

After the Fighting Irish were forced to punt following some long-awaited pressure on Hartman from defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau, it gave Ohio State the football at the team's 35-yard line, trailing 14-10 with 65 yards, 1:26 of game time and a single timeout separating the Buckeyes from a crushing defeat and a program-defining win.

"We spent some time talking about the two-minute (drill) today," Day said. "When you work a game plan, you just keep grinding and you keep working and you keep working all the way up until four hours before the game. We met with the receivers. We showed what we were expecting in that moment, and you never know exactly what you're going to get."

What Ohio State got was a master class.

After incomplete passes aimed at Henderson on first and second down, McCord connected with Egbuka for a 23-yard gain up to Notre Dame's 42-yard line. And after the Fighting Irish defense worked the Buckeyes down to fourth-and-7, McCord yet again responded, this time finding Julian Fleming for a game-extending conversion.

Ohio State eventually worked up to Notre Dame's 13-yard line after a 19-yard gain to Harrison, and after McCord was penalized for intentional grounding, he bounced back yet again, finding Egbuka downfield for a 21-yard gain, setting the Buckeyes up just a single yard away from the end zone with just seven seconds remaining after a McCord spike.

"We practice those two-minute situations all the time," McCord said. "At that point it was just reverting back to our training. My job is to get the ball in the hands of the play-makers and let them do special things, and that's exactly what it was. It wasn't perfect by any means, but at the end of the day we found a way to make it work and that's all that matters."

An incomplete pass to Harrison on second down left time for just one play. Ohio State approached the left hash with two receivers split out to the right, two tight ends lined up as additional blockers next to each tackle, and Trayanum flanking McCord to his right, with the reality of just one play remaining — for better or worse — opening up the playbook and allowing a run with the game on the line.

The previous 59:57 had all built up to just one play that would determine bragging rights, offer significant postseason implications and potentially set both teams on new paths. With that in mind, McCord called for the snap, handing it off to Trayanum who then cut left before diving into the end zone, barely keeping his knee off the ground before crossing the plane of the goal line, giving Ohio State — what appeared at the time

— a walk-off win.

"It means a lot," Trayanum said of getting the ball in that situation. "It just echoes the confidence that my teammates and my coaches have in me just to give me the ball with the game on the line like that. Just to keep our season, our dreams alive at the end of the day.

"It means a lot that they have confidence like that in me, and I just knew the job had to be done. It's as simple as that. I mean, we always preach one-play, 1-yard and toughness and fight, and I believe that one play sums it all up."

Trayanum's score was later reviewed before being confirmed, though one second was added back to the clock, necessitating a successful extra point from Fielding and ensuing kickoff before Notre Dame ran one unsuccessful play resulting in the 17-14 final.

But that scoring play — one in which Ohio State simply took it to its opponent, using a distinct talent advantage to overpower the competition — was an encapsulation of everything Day feels this team is built on. It may not have been evident through the first

quarter of the season — or even through the first three quarters against Notre Dame — but the team believes a statement was made, and that attitude, with Day at his most impassioned since taking over at Ohio State, appears to be here to stay as the Buckeyes take that momentum into the off week and harness it for the rest of the season.

"It was a great win for Ohio State," Day said. "It's always been Ohio against the world, and it continues to be to this day, and I hope everybody in Buckeye Nation enjoys that win. Because to come in here and win like that after winning the way we did last year — because we physically got after them last year, we did. Put the film on. A lot of people make a lot of comments and they don't watch film. Put the film on and watch what goes on.

"And for us to hang in there — because the momentum was going to Notre Dame at one point and our guys stuck their foot in the ground, and J.T. makes a big-time play, and the guts of our team to go and win that game on the road. You're going to tell me this team's not physical, they're not tough? You're wrong."

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Harrison Jr. Returns After Right Ankle Injury

Ohio State's first offensive score of the game in its 17-14 win over Notre Dame on Sept. 23 came on a 61-yard rushing touchdown from TreVeyon Henderson on the Buckeyes' first offensive play in the third quarter, but it was largely overshadowed by a potentially more significant moment on the play.

GAME NOTEBOOK Greg Wilson

Blocking for Henderson, star wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. had his right ankle rolled up on by a Notre Dame defender, leaving him on the field for a few minutes before being helped to the medical tent where he would remain for the majority of the Fighting Irish's ensuing drive that lasted 7:39 and 13 plays, resulting in their first touchdown.

He came out of the tent limping slightly with his ankle taped up and jogged up and down the sideline to try to get ready to get back in for the next time the offense took the field, which he was able to do. The very first play Harrison was back on the field, quarterback Kyle McCord would find him for a 6-yard pass across the middle of the field, showing that he was still good to go.

He would stay in for the rest of the game, collecting one more catch on four additional targets and drawing plenty of attention from defenders.

"If Marvin couldn't go back in, it would've been Carnell Tate's turn to step in the game and do what he does," running back Chip Trayanum said. "But it was definitely a blessing just to see Marv get up and get back out there on the field and fight for his brothers."

Harrison said before the game that he had been dealing with an ankle injury all of last season which he said didn't affect his speed, but it was tough for him to make certain cuts and decelerate. While the ankle had not been a concern for Harrison this season – at least heading into the Notre Dame game – he was not fully healthy, as he has been fighting through a shoulder injury suffered against Indiana.

The Fighting Irish gave Harrison plenty of attention, double-teaming him most of the time he was on the field. He didn't receive a target in the first quarter and had only one catch in the second quarter on three targets. He finished with just three receptions for 32 yards, but head coach Ryan Day said he was still an extremely important player for them because of how that opened up the rest of the offense



SONNY BROCKWAY

TAKE A WEEK — Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. returned to the game against Notre Dame after suffering an ankle injury, and he will have the Buckeyes' off week to get that ankle in shape for an Oct. 7 game against Maryland.

for the Buckeyes.

"We were trying to get it to him the best we could, but when they decide they're going to double him in those situations, we have to continue to try to find ways," Day said. "I've said this before, in a two-minute situation, if you're going to double him, somebody's in a one-on-one."

"So Marvin doesn't get the catch to win the game, although we tried to get it to him on the sprint out, but his presence made a huge impact on the game. If he doesn't come back after he sprained his ankle, he doesn't draw the attention that opened up Emeka (Egbuka)."

To Day's point, when McCord found Egbuka for the 21-yard pass on third-and-19 to get the Buckeyes down to the 1-yard line setting up Trayanum's game-winning touchdown, Harrison was still being double-teamed by Notre Dame's secondary, even while playing on

an injured ankle.

"You talk about toughness, that was toughness right there by 18," Day said.

OSU Defense Limits Veteran QB Hartman

In the four games before he matched up against the Ohio State defense, Notre Dame quarterback Sam Hartman completed 64 of 90 passes, a 71.1 percent completion rate, and threw for 1,061 yards and 13 touchdowns with no interceptions. It wasn't against great competition, but Hartman – a sixth-year veteran – was playing well.

That changed against the Buckeyes, as he threw for only 175 yards and one touchdown while completing 17 of 25 passes (68.0 percent), with just 87 yards in the pivotal second half.

He had previous success throwing the deep ball and converting on big plays, but the Buckeyes secondary covered the Fighting Irish receivers well throughout the game, with nearly half of Hartman's production coming from short passes to Mitchell Evans. The tight end caught all seven of his targets for 75 yards, converting five first downs for Notre Dame.

The Fighting Irish offensive line is one of the top units in the country, but the Buckeyes were able to get through them and put pressure on Hartman, notching three quarterback hurries, and while his jersey was kept clean, he was still forced to get rid of the ball on several occasions. Even when he had time, Hartman was able to go deep on only two occasions,

connecting with Jaden Greathouse and Evans on completions of 28 and 25 yards early in the fourth quarter, leaving most of Notre Dame's big plays to come from running that ball, though they averaged only 4.5 yards per carry on the ground.

Hartman was largely held in check by Ohio State with the front four and back seven of the defense showing the ability to work well together to stall both high-powered passing and rushing attacks from their opponents. His 175 passing yards were two fewer than former Notre Dame quarterback Tyler Buchner's 177 yards in the season opener against the Buckeyes last year.

"When an offense drives the ball, we talk about the next play and making a stop in the red zone and winning those situations," defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said. "It's just something that we emphasize, so it's good. A defense has to be resilient. It's not all going to go your way."

But the game ultimately went the way of the Buckeyes, and in two games in as many seasons against Notre Dame, they have allowed only 24 points, with the secondary showing the "Best In America" name they want to bring back might be coming to fruition.

"Fourteen points is great," Knowles said. "We made enough stops early on that really kept our team in the game, but I know we can be better. I know we can do better."

Offense Finds Success On Third And Fourth Down

In the first two games of the season against Indiana and Youngstown State, the Buckeyes converted only seven of their 24 third-down opportunities, something Day was adamant Ohio State needed to fix going forward.

They were better against Western Kentucky, converting going 5 of 10 on third down, though Ohio State showed better efficiency by avoiding those late downs as often.

However, the win over Notre Dame displayed Ohio State's best performance so far this season when it came to converting, whether it was on third-and-short or if the Buckeyes needed a chunk of yards to convert.

The most prominent example is when McCord converted a 21-yard pass to Egbuka on third-and-19 that would set the Buckeyes up for the game-winning touchdown. That capped off a performance of 10 times moving the sticks on third down on 17 chances, a rate any coach would be extremely pleased with, even if it weren't against a top-10 team.

They also converted on fourth down once – a pivotal fourth-and-7 conversion earlier in that same game-winning drive – showing the offense can handle the pressure of needing to move the ball to keep a drive going.

"I thought (McCord) made some nice throws on first and second down, but he had his best ball on third down," Day said. "I thought he played his best ball on third down today."

McCord and the entire offense have been improving every week, and they showed that against a big-time opponent in the Fighting Irish. Their conversions in late-down situations are offering proof that this is a different team than it was in Week 1, and while there were some missed opportunities along the way, the performance was much improved.

"There were four opportunities where the whole game could be different if we convert



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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Ohio State's offense has faced its fair share of criticism this season – mainly for its inability to convert on third and fourth down – but the unit completely flipped the script against Notre Dame. Led by the calm, cool and collected Kyle McCord, the Buckeyes moved the chains with ease when their backs were seemingly against a wall, converting on 10 of their 17 third-down conversions and one of their three fourth-down tries. Ohio State's late-down success was most evident when the game mattered most. With the game – and possibly the season – on the line late in the fourth quarter, McCord and his offense quieted the boisterous Notre Dame faithful on almost every third- and fourth-down attempt. This clutch string of plays started with a third-and-10 on Ohio State's 35-yard line, where McCord stood tall in the pocket and delivered a strike to Emeka Egbuka for a crucial 23-yard gain. Then, on what was – at the time – the most important play of the night, the junior quarterback once again extended the drive on fourth-and-7 when he found a crossing Julian Fleming, who was brought down just past the first-down marker for a gain of seven. McCord's string of clutch throws was capped by what may have been the most improbable of them all, a 21-yard back-shoulder toss to Egbuka again, this time on third-and-19, which brought the Buckeyes all the way to the 1-yard line and put them in position to win the game two plays later.

What Didn't Work

There was a lot of talk leading up to this game about how it would be decided in the trenches, and that was almost the case. With the exception of the 61-yard TreVeyon Henderson touchdown and some flashes of brilliance from defensive end J.T. Tuimolou at the end of the game, Notre Dame dominated Ohio State on the offensive and defensive lines. Starting with the defense, the Buckeyes' front four was once again unable to impose its will, as they failed to record a sack and

generated just three quarterback hurries – with just one coming from the defensive line – on Irish quarterback Sam Hartman, allowing him to stand in the pocket and pick apart the Buckeye secondary at times throughout the game. They also allowed Notre Dame's formidable run game to awaken in the second half, allowing running back Audric Estime and his unit to rack up 123 of their 176 rushing yards in the final two frames. On the other side, the Buckeyes' offensive line still did not show many signs of improvement, often unable to generate enough movement to get a consistent running game going. This was evident during Notre Dame's second-quarter goal-line stand, where Ohio State was unable to convert on both a third- and fourth-down attempt from the Irish's 1-yard line.

Play Of The Game

Forget play of the game. Chip Trayanum's game-winning 1-yard touchdown may just be the play of the entire Ryan Day era. With legacies and reputations on the line, the Buckeyes' staff pulled out their big gun – that being the 5-11, 223-pound Trayanum – to cap off a miraculous 15-play, 65-yard game-winning drive. With the Buckeyes lining up in shotgun at the 1-yard line with just three seconds remaining, Day placed all his trust in the former linebacker-turned-running back to find the end zone and win the game. And boy, did he deliver. Taking advantage of Notre Dame's questionable miscue of having just 10 defenders on the final play, Trayanum took the handoff from McCord and bulldozed his way behind left tackle Josh Simmons and into the Irish end zone, sending the Buckeyes' players and fans into a state of elation that will likely last into the off week. Trayanum's score seemed to end a prolonged period of frustration for a program that had been placed under a critical microscope for its alleged lack of physicality, making it one of the more significant – and satisfying – plays in recent Ohio State history.

— Patrick Engels

Ohio State's overall average with five rushes for no gain.

Henderson has been looking more and more like the player he was in the 2021 season when he came out as a true freshman and rushed for 1,248 yards and 15 touchdowns. Despite playing through an injury last season, he has since reached the 2,000 rushing yards mark at Ohio State, and he has scored 31 touchdowns in just 25 games as a Buckeye, five of them this season.

Stover Used As McCord's Anchor

With attention being drawn by Harrison and Egbuka, Stover found himself open in the middle of the field many times throughout the game, and McCord was able to find the big man. He finished the game with seven receptions on 11 targets for 52 yards. It was his career high in receptions, though his career high in yards came against the Hoosiers in Week 1 with 98 yards.

Stover's highlight came in the third quarter on a third-and-4 on the Buckeyes' side of the field. McCord was in trouble, facing pressure in the pocket, and he tried to make a desperate attempt for a first down. The pass was deflected by the Fighting Irish and looked to be a possible interception with defenders swarming where the ball was coming down, but Stover was able to keep calm and make the catch on one knee to convert the first down.

That play didn't end up meaning anything in the grand scheme of the game since the drive didn't end with points, but it showed things were going Stover's way. He has become a safe option for his quarterback when he gets into trouble, with 17 receptions for 240 yards this season, proving he can be trusted to make catches and fight for yards after the catch.

The wide receivers at Ohio State are well-respected by defenses that have to guard them, and for good reason with what offensive coordinator Brian Hartline has been able to accomplish with them. But Stover is adding another element to make it even more difficult to defend the pass against the Buckeyes.

in those situations," Day said. "So I'm upset about that, but I'm not going to be upset right now because that was one heck of a win for our team."

Henderson Displays Explosiveness On TD

On the first drive of the game, Henderson had three carries for 14 yards, and it looked like the Buckeyes would have some success in the running game. That production stalled through the rest of the first half, and the Buckeyes had just 63 rushing yards heading into the locker room.

After the game went to the half with the Buckeyes holding a 3-0 lead, Notre Dame received the kick to start the third quarter, and Hartman was stuffed by safeties Lathan Ransom and Sonny Styles on fourth-and-1 to turn the ball over on downs. The very next play, Henderson took an inside handoff from McCord out to the left and ran it 61 yards to the end zone.

It was the first big, explosive play of the game for either team, and it made a statement coming out of the locker room for the second half after the only score of the first half was a Jayden Fielding field goal. Henderson's run set the tone for Ohio State's offense and made it a two-possession game.

He finished the contest with 14 carries for 104 yards (7.4 average) and the touchdown. This was his first game with 100 or more yards on the season – and the sixth of his career – and it showed that he is back fully healthy after he suffered a broken bone in his foot last season that kept him off the field in

five games. Last season against the Fighting Irish, he ran for 91 yards on 15 touches with no touchdowns.

The Notre Dame defense had allowed only 107.5 yards rushing per game in 37 attempts

to opposing teams entering the contest, and Henderson was almost able to reach that mark on his own on just 14 attempts. Trayanum and Emeka Egbuka added 22 more yards, while Miyan Williams and McCord brought down



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BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 17, Notre Dame 14

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on who called Chip Trayanum's game-winning touchdown: "Me, I made the call. Was there doubt? I looked at the clock and there were three seconds left so I'm thinking that's the last play anyways. I knew we couldn't get two plays with no timeouts because we lost the timeout on the grounding. So I said, 'Well, at this point it would probably just make sense for 1 yard.' Not only do we need to get that yard for this program, but I felt like it was the right thing to do schematically."

Trayanum on his buzzer-beating touchdown score: "I knew I was definitely in. It was close. But as a running back you live for runs like that – the nitty gritty runs, the runs where you're fighting with your body to stay up and making sure nothing touches (the ground). I mean, you definitely practice that and you envision that as a running back, but man, God is great. This feeling, it's still surreal. It's definitely a good Buckeye win, too, to go into the bye week."

Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord on his confidence on the last play: "I had no doubt because that's what we talked about, especially coming off that game from last year where we felt we were really one play away. To have it all come full circle, this early in the year, there's no doubt we were going to get in there. Our offensive line did a great job getting a push, and there was no way Chip was going to be denied with the game on the line. It was just a tribute to everybody on the offense, and what a way to win."

McCord on the game-winning touchdown drive: "We're never out of it until there's no time left on the clock. As long as we have the ball and we have some time left, the sky is the limit for this offense. I thought the offensive line did a really good job, the running backs too in pass protection. It wasn't perfect, but at the end of the day the receivers did a really good job of getting open and understanding what they were trying to do defensively. It was almost backyard football-esque there at the end just trying to find the open guy. We did that, and the rest is history."

Day on McCord's performance: "You judge a quarterback on third down, in the red zone and in two-minute (situations). Third down, I was just looking at the stats, it was pretty good – 10 of 17. There were some nice third-down conversions there. Then to win the game in a two-minute drill, that's what great quarterbacks do. For his first top-10 road game, to be put in that situation and come through, that says a lot about his future. There were some big-time throws in there. He hung in there and he's poised. What a great win for our program. But for Kyle to come into that spot, that's big."

Ohio State wide receiver Emeka Egbuka



SONNY BROCKWAY

JUMP FOR JOY — Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord (6) delivered the pivotal handoff to running back Chip Trayanum on the tailback's game-winning touchdown run.

on what he saw from McCord at the end of the game: "Poise, and it's nothing I haven't seen before. He's one of the most calm, cool and collected quarterbacks I know. He's a natural leader. He's leading the offense really well, and he made all the throws necessary. He has elite arm talent, and you guys saw that tonight."

Egbuka on his support for Day: "That's my head coach. I'm behind him 24/7, and I support him in everything he's saying right now. I feel like Ohio State gets a lot of unwanted hate, and even after this win that we just got, that hate's going to even come on stronger because we didn't beat them by however much. They were a top-10 opponent. We knew it was going to be a dogfight, and offense, I feel like we didn't play our best. But at the same time, we got a top-10 win, which is nothing to laugh about. Whatever Coach Day is saying, I fully support him, I fully back him up, because every once in a while, you have to stand up and let people know that's enough."

Day on what triggered his response after the game: "People said we weren't physical. They said they were going to run the ball all over the place on us. Where do people get off saying that? There was a half of football that I agree with, up in Ann Arbor two years ago, that was not done very well at all. When else has that happened? I want to know, because that's not true, and I take offense to that. I know everybody else in Buckeye Nation does too. So we weren't going to let that happen to us tonight."

Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim

Knowles on how his defense buckled down on the last drive: "Well, we were having some problems against the run. We definitely have some things to work on. I think on that last drive, we just had to make some adjustments there. We had to get more guys down in the box. It's just the way the game was going. But J.T. (Tuimoloau) made a couple of big plays. You need the guys that are going to be able to make the big-time plays."

Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman on why there were only 10 players on the field for the last play: "We were trying to get a fourth defensive lineman on the field, and I told him just stay off because we can't afford a penalty. I didn't have any time-outs, right? So we couldn't afford a penalty there. You know – yeah, it's on us. We've got to be better."

Notre Dame safety Thomas Harper on the last play: "I mean, everything was going fast. I'm trying to do my job, get the call. That's something that we can't – I mean, we've got to do better. Like, we can't be down – in that situation, we've got to do better, players and coaches. We're going to learn from that and grow."

Day on the significance of this win over Notre Dame: "I think it's going to go down as one of the big wins in Ohio State history. It was one of the clutch comebacks on the road in a top-10 environment. We had this home-and-home with Notre Dame, and to go 2-0 says a lot about this team."

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 17, Notre Dame 14

Sept. 23, 2023 - Notre Dame Stadium, South Bend, Ind.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	0	3	7	7	17
NOTRE DAME	0	0	7	7	14

Second Quarter

OSU - Fielding, 31-yard field goal, 0:26.

Third Quarter

OSU - Henderson, 61-yard rush (Fielding kick), 11:14.

ND - Payne, 1-yard rush (Shrader kick), 3:35.

Fourth Quarter

ND - Flores Jr., 2-yard pass from Hartman (Shrader kick), 8:22.

OSU - Trayanum, 1-yard rush (Fielding kick), 0:01.

Att. - 77,622

Weather - Sunny, 72 F

Team Statistics

	OSU	ND
First Downs	19	22
Rushing	2	10
Passing	14	11
Penalty	3	1
Rushes-Yards	27-126	39-176
Passing Yards	240	175
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	21-38-0	17-25-0
Offensive Plays	65	64
Total Net Yards	366	351
Third Down Efficiency	10-17	5-10
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-3	0-2
Punts-Avg.	3-38.3	2-46.0
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties	5-35	4-50
Time of Possession	25:01	34:59

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) - OSU: Henderson 14-104; Trayanum 6-13; Egbuka 2-9; McCord 4-0; M. Williams 1-0. **ND:** Estime 14-70; Love 8-57; Price 3-22; Payne 6-18; Ford 2-9; Greathouse 1-3; Team 1-(-1); Hartman 4-(-2).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) - OSU: McCord 21-37-0-240-0; Team 0-1-0-0-0. **ND:** Hartman 17-25-0-175-1.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) - OSU: Egbuka 7-96; Stover 7-52; Harrison Jr. 3-32; Fleming 2-8; Johnson 1-40; Trayanum 1-12. **ND:** Evans 7-75; Flores Jr. 3-20; Greathouse 2-40; Payne 2-6; Tyree 1-25; Thomas 1-7; Merriweather 1-6.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) - OSU: Mirco 3-38.3-42. **ND:** McFerson 2-46.0-46.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - OSU: Egbuka 1-8. **ND:** None.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - OSU: Johnson 1-32. **ND:** None.

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

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) - OSU: None. **ND:** None.

SACKS - OSU: None. **ND:** Botelho 1-9.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) - OSU: T. Williams 1-1; Tuimoloau 0.5-3; Igbinosun 0.5-2. **ND:** Botelho 1-9; Bertrand 1-3.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst-Tot.) - OSU: Ransom 7-6-13; Proctor 5-2-7; Chambers 4-2-6; Tuimoloau 3-3-6; Styles 3-3-6; Igbinosun 2-4-6; Eichenberg 4-1-5; T. Williams 3-1-4; Hamilton 2-2-4; Hall Jr. 1-3-4; Simon 1-1-2; Sawyer 1-0-1. **ND:** Bertrand 4-4-8; Jean-Baptiste 3-5-8; Cross III 4-2-6; Harper 4-1-5; Watts 4-1-5; Botelho 3-1-4; Mills 2-2-4; Hart 2-1-3; Brown 1-2-3; Henderson 1-1-2; Kiser 0-2-2; Rubio 1-0-1; Talich 1-0-1; Burnham 1-0-1; Morrison 1-0-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME - OSU: Harrison Jr., Egbuka, Henderson, Fleming, Jones, McCord, Fryar, Simmons, Jackson, Hinzman, Stover, Burke, Chambers, Simon, Sawyer, Eichenberg, Proctor, Tuimoloau, Hamilton, Styles, Ransom, T. Williams, Johnson, Igbinosun, Hicks, Carter, Tate, Brown, Trayanum, Carrico, Mirco, M. Williams, Fielding, Styles Jr., Ferlmann, Montgomery, Hall Jr., Michalski, Hancock, Tshabola, James, Adolph, Royer, Scott Jr., Ballard, Curry, Kanu. **ND:** Hartman, Staes, Greathouse, Spindler, Correll, Fisher, Estime, Alt, Coogan, Baker, Evans, Watts, Jean-Baptiste, Botelho, Harper, Brown, Morrison, Bertrand, Hart, Cross III, Liufau, Mills, Henderson, Love, McFerson, Flores Jr., Auer, Ford, Ausberry, Price, Kiser, Talich, Sneed, Payne, Osafo-Mensah, Shrader, Bowen, Sherwood, Tyree, Burnham, Tuihalamaka, Onye, Merriweather, Lewis, Vinson, Mickey, Kristofic, Schrauth, Thomas, Flanagan, Rubio.

Season Statistics

2023 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Sept. 2	(3) at Indiana	W, 23-3	50,050
Sept. 9	(5) YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 35-7	102,897
Sept. 16	(6) WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 63-10	100,217
Sept. 23	(6) at Notre Dame (9)	W, 17-14	77,622
Oct. 7	(4) MARYLAND	TBA	
Oct. 14	at Purdue	TBA	
Oct. 21	PENN STATE (7)	TBA	
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin (19)	TBA	
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	TBA	
Nov. 11	MICHIGAN STATE	7:30 p.m.	
Nov. 18	MINNESOTA	TBA	
Nov. 25	at Michigan (2)	12 p.m.	

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

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	88	59
Rushing	25	22
Passing	55	32
Penalty	8	5
Average Per Game/Rush	149.0	106.5
Average Per Game/Pass	298.5	149.0
Total Offense	1790	1022
Total Plays	252	249
Average Per Game	447.5	255.5
Average Per Play	7.1	4.1
Penalties-Yards	21-181	24-225
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	5-2
Third Down Efficiency	22-50	20-56
Percentage	44%	36%
Fourth Down Efficiency	7-11	4-12
Percentage	64%	33%
Sacks-Yards	5-33	4-19
Time Of Possession Avg.	27:36	32:24

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	28	55	31	24	0	138	34.5
Opponents	10	10	7	7	0	34	8.5

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
T. Henderson	44	295	6.7	5	61
Chip Trayanum	25	146	5.8	2	40
Miyan Williams	19	73	3.8	2	8
Xavier Johnson	5	25	5.0	0	9
Emeka Egbuka	3	18	6.0	0	9
Evan Pryor	3	12	4.0	0	6
Kyle McCord	9	10	1.1	0	6
Devin Brown	9	10	1.1	0	6
Marvin Harrison Jr.	1	7	7.0	0	7
OSU Totals	118	596	5.1	9	61
OPP Totals	138	426	3.1	2	22

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Kyle McCord	74	113	65.5	1055	6-1	159.7
Devin Brown	11	20	55.0	139	1-1	119.9
Team	0	1	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
OSU Totals	85	134	63.4	1194	7-2	152.5
OPP Totals	65	111	58.6	596	2-3	104.2

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	19	263	13.8	3	28
Cade Stover	17	240	14.1	0	49
Marvin Harrison Jr.	17	336	19.8	3	75
Julian Fleming	13	108	8.3	0	27
Gee Scott Jr.	4	20	5.0	0	10
Carnell Tate	4	75	18.8	1	28
Xavier Johnson	3	46	15.3	0	40
T. Henderson	3	45	15.0	0	27
Miyan Williams	2	39	19.5	0	27
Chip Trayanum	2	24	12.0	0	12
Dallan Hayden	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
OSU Totals	85	1194	14.0	7	75
OPP Totals	65	596	9.2	2	36

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
T. Henderson	5	-	-	-	-	30
Jayden Fielding	-	18-18	-	-	4-4	30
Emeka Egbuka	3	-	-	-	-	18
Marvin Harrison Jr.	3	-	-	-	-	18
Miyan Williams	2	-	-	-	-	12
Chip Trayanum	2	-	-	-	-	12
Tyleik Williams	1	-	-	-	-	6
Carnell Tate	1	-	-	-	-	6
J. Mathews Jr.	1	-	-	-	-	6
OSU Totals	1818-18	-	-	-	4-4	138
OPP Totals	4	4-4	-	-	2-3	34

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Jayden Fielding	2-2	1-1	1-1	0	4-4
OSU Totals	2-2	1-1	1-1	0	4-4
OPP Totals	0-0	0-0	2-3	0	2-3

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	11	457	41.5	0	56
OSU Totals	11	457	41.5	0	56
OPP Totals	18	853	47.4	0	60

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
J. Mathews Jr.	1	58	58.0	1	58
Denzel Burke	1	0	0.0	0	0
Steele Chambers	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	3	58	19.3	1	58
OPP Totals	2	11	5.5	0	11

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	5	25	5.0	0	8
Jayden Ballard	1	18	18.0	0	18
OSU Totals	6	43	7.2	0	18
OPP Totals	4	42	10.5	0	29

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Xavier Johnson	6	135	22.5	0	32
OSU Totals	6	135	22.5	0	32
OPP Totals	7	95	13.6	0	18

Def. Leaders

Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks	
Steele Chambers	14	11	25	1.0-1	0-0
Tommy Eichenberg	19	6	25	1.0-7	1.0-7
Tyleik Williams	8	13	21	3.0-8	1.0-2
Davison Igbinosun	13	7	20	0.5-2	0-0
Lathan Ransom	11	9	20	0.5-1	0-0
Josh Proctor	11	5	16	1.0-1	0-0
Sonny Styles	9	5	14	1.5-3	0-0
J.T. Tuimoloau	6	7	13	1.0-4	0-0
Ty Hamilton	6	6	12	0-0	0-0
Jordan Hancock	6	5	11	0-0	0-0
Cody Simon	4	7	11	0.5-1	0-0
Jack Sawyer	5	6	11	0.5-1	0-0
Mike Hall Jr.	4	4	8	1.0-10	1.0-10
Jaden McKenzie	4	2	6	1.5-6	0-0
Caden Curry	3	2	5	1.0-3	0-0
Hero Kanu	4	1	5	1.0-5	1.0-5
Malik Hartford	1	2	3	0-0	0-0
Denzel Burke	2	-	2	1.0-5	0-0
J. Mathews Jr.	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
Gabe Powers	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
Ja'Had Carter	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
Mitchell Melton	2	-	2	2.0-11	1.0-9
C.J. Hicks	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
Kenyatta Jackson Jr.	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
John Ferlmann	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Jesse Mirco	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Julian Fleming	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Tyhone Malone	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Donovan Jackson	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Cameron Martinez	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Omari Abor	1	-	1	1.0-2	0-0
OSU Totals	144	102	246	19.0-71	5.0-33
OPP Totals	149	76	225	13.0-39	4.0-19

Fumbles Forced: Burke, Eichenberg, Hancock, Ransom.

Fumbles Recovered: Igbinosun, T. Williams.

Terrapins Off To Hot Start Ahead Of OSU Visit

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Maryland, led by quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa, has been no stranger to making history over the last few seasons.

It starts with the signal caller, who has become – arguably – the greatest quarterback in program history. Through four games this season, he has extended his program record of 8,991 passing yards, 9,233 yards of total offense, 752 completions, 59 passing touchdowns and 69 total touchdowns accounted for.

That type of performance has given hope to Maryland, which has largely struggled since joining the Big Ten in 2014. The Terrapins have yet to finish with a winning record in conference play, but after back-to-back bowl appearances (and wins), as well as a 4-5 finish in the Big Ten last season, Maryland looked to continue that growth this season.

“I think the sky’s the limit for us,” Tagovailoa said before the season began. “I for sure want to have a better year than I’ve had the last couple years, and I feel like we can do that for sure with (offensive coordinator Josh) Gattis now in our offense.”

Through four games this season, Maryland has mostly delivered, entering a Sept. 30 matchup against Indiana with an undefeated 4-0 record, with a good shot that the Terrapins remain unblemished entering Oct. 7 at Ohio State.

But that previously mentioned making of history continued in their most recent contest, as the Terrapins – who had not won at Michigan State since 1950 – went into Spartan Stadium and dominated the aimless opposition, returning to College Park, Md., with a 31-9 win over Michigan State on Sept. 23.

“I’ll start off by saying, I’m really proud of this team and the way they responded to the coaching,” head coach Mike Locksley said. “We’ve talked a lot the past couple of



SONNY BROCKWAY

SPECIAL TEAMS WEAPONS – It should be another battle this season between Maryland punter Colton Spangler (left) and Ohio State safety Lathan Ransom (right) after Ransom blocked one of Spangler’s punts last season in the Buckeyes’ 43-30 win at Maryland on Nov. 19, 2022.

weeks about starting fast, and we were able to do that today. Anytime you can win on the road in the Big Ten, that’s huge. For us to come up here and do something that hasn’t been done since 1950, which is to win here in this stadium, I’m definitely proud of the team and happy to be 4-0.”

That win was a microcosm of what Maryland has done well this season. Tagovailoa threw for 223 yards and three scores while the defense – which has allowed just 49 points through four games – held Michigan State to just 376 total yards and 4.9 yards

per play while forcing five turnovers, courtesy of three interceptions and two recovered fumbles.

“It helps a lot because it gives us a lot of opportunities to go score,” wide receiver Tai Felton said of the defense’s five takeaways. “Coach has been emphasizing the defense touching the ball and the offense making a play after that. It’s a blessing and it’s very exciting to see those guys catch the ball like they’re receivers. And it’s very exciting that we were able to go out and get a ‘W’ today.”

The Terrapins have already gotten five interceptions this season courtesy of the secondary, which has limited opposing passing attacks to just 213.5 yards per game through the air. Maryland has four returning starters in the back end, including safeties Beau Brade and Dante Trader Jr., cornerbacks Ja’Quan Sheppard and Tarheeb Still – who had three picks through four games – while Glendon Miller is in at nickel for the Terrapins.

“We have a lot of guys that are hungry to make plays, a lot of guys that are going to make plays for this team to win,” Still said. “Every day guys come into the facility ready to work, ready to achieve more. I feel like we

have a good group of guys who go out there and make plays and we have fun together. We have a great bond, and that’s something we’ve built over the years.”

Patrolling the middle of the field is Jaishawn Barham and Ruben Hyppolite II, one of the better linebacker duos within the conference. The pair combined for 27 tackles (2½ for loss) and two sacks through four games, and they are buoyed by senior Fa’Najae Gotay and sophomore Caleb Wheatland.

Depending on Maryland’s alignment, they will occasionally be joined by hybrid defensive end/linebacker Kellan Wyatt, who lines up at the “Jack” for the Terrapins. He has taken on this responsibility in just his second season in the program. Elsewhere on the defensive line, the Terrapins do not have much in the way of returning starters but have received significant contributions from the likes of defensive ends Quashon Fuller and Donnell Brown as well as tackles Tommy Akingbesote and Jordan Phillips.

Brown, who transferred in from FCS-level St. Francis this offseason, has been a particular standout, with four tackles, a recovered fumble and a pair of interceptions.

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Get To Know ... Maryland

- **2023 Record:** 4-0.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation - Spread; Defensive Formation - 4-3; Starters Returning - Offense 4, Defense 6, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Mike Locksley, 6th year at Maryland, 25-28.
- **Series History:** 9th meeting; Ohio State leads 8-0-0.
- **School Facts:** Location - College Park, Md.; Enrollment - 40,521; Nickname - Terrapins; Colors - Red, Yellow; Conference - Big Ten (East Division); Stadium - Maryland Stadium (Surface - FieldTurf; Capacity - 51,802).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Roman Hemby	50	255	5.1	4
Colby McDonald	26	204	7.8	2
Antwain Littleton II	32	113	3.5	1

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Taulia Tagovailoa	87-135	64.4	1112	8-3

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Kaden Prather	14	209	14.9	2
Corey Dyches	17	204	12.0	1
Jeshaun Jones	13	198	15.2	2

Team Offensive Stats

- Points Per Game - 37.3
- Rushing Yards Per Game - 166.8
- Passing Yards Per Game - 283.8
- Total Offense Avg. Per Game - 450.5

2023 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 2	TOWSON	W, 38-6
Sept. 9	CHARLOTTE	W, 38-20
Sept. 15	VIRGINIA	W, 42-14
Sept. 23	at Michigan State	W, 31-9
Sept. 30	INDIANA	3:30 p.m.
Oct. 7	at Ohio State	3:30 p.m.
Oct. 14	ILLINOIS	TBA
Oct. 21	at Northwestern	TBA
Nov. 4	PENN STATE	TBA
Nov. 11	at Nebraska	TBA
Nov. 18	MICHIGAN	TBA
Nov. 25	at Rutgers	TBA

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Beau Brade	12	11	23	0.5-2	0-0
Caleb Wheatland	9	7	16	1.5-15	1.5-15
Ruben Hyppolite II	12	3	15	0.5-0	0-0

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Tarheeb Still	3	10	3.3	0
Donnell Brown	2	19	9.5	0
Beau Brade	1	27	27.0	0

Team Defensive Stats

- Points Per Game Allowed - 12.3
- Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed - 116.5
- Passing Yards Per Game Allowed - 213.5
- Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed - 330.0

when we brought him here, we brought him here to get after the quarterback and as I joke with him, he's dropping into space and getting interceptions and doing everything other than getting sacks," Locksley said. "I'd love to see him get after the quarterback a little bit, but he's one of those guys that's always around the ball and he's an athletic big guy so we utilize him in a lot of different ways. What I found out is he has a knack for the ball, and we need to continue to have him make those plays."

Maryland's defense has seen continued improvement over the last few seasons, going from the nation's 98th scoring defense in 2021-22 to 41st last year, and through four games this season, the Terrapins are 11th nationally and fourth in the Big Ten behind Michigan (5.8 points per game), Ohio State (8.5) and Penn State (8.8).

But for as much as the Terrapins are looking for the defense to make plays, Maryland's success will largely come down to how the offense performs. It's been a series of positive outings so far this season, averaging 37.3 points and 450.5 yards per game, with Tagovailoa tossing 1,112 yards and eight touchdowns to just three picks while completing 64.4 percent of his passes through four games.

Maryland has five receivers - as well as running back Roman Hemby - who have already surpassed 10 receptions, including Kaden Prather (14 receptions, 209 yards, two TDs), Corey Dyches (17, 204, one), Jeshaun Jones (13, 198, two), Felton (11, 165) and Octavian Smith Jr. (10, 117, one). Against Michigan State, Tagovailoa completed passes to 11 different players, continuing to spread the ball out among a deep group of targets.

"Anybody that's followed us for years will understand that we play a lot of players, we've improved at depth, we've had the opportunity to get a lot of guys involved," Locksley said. "It's great to see that type of

diversity, but there's still some things that we've got to get cleaned up, still some things that we'll be able to get fixed here this week (ahead of Indiana)."

Speaking of Hemby, he's leading the Terrapins with 255 yards and four rushing touchdowns, with Colby McDonald (26 carries, 204 yards, two TDs) offering a chance of pace. Tagovailoa is no slouch as a rusher, either, averaging 4.8 yards per carry.

While much of Maryland's defense is veteran, the same cannot be said for the Terrapins' offensive line, which returns only left tackle Delmar Glaze.

"It was a little weird for me," Locksley said after Maryland's season-opening win over Towson. "We're trying to figure out the best five, and so we're mixing and matching. We're going to continue to try to play as many guys as we can. I'd like to get settled."

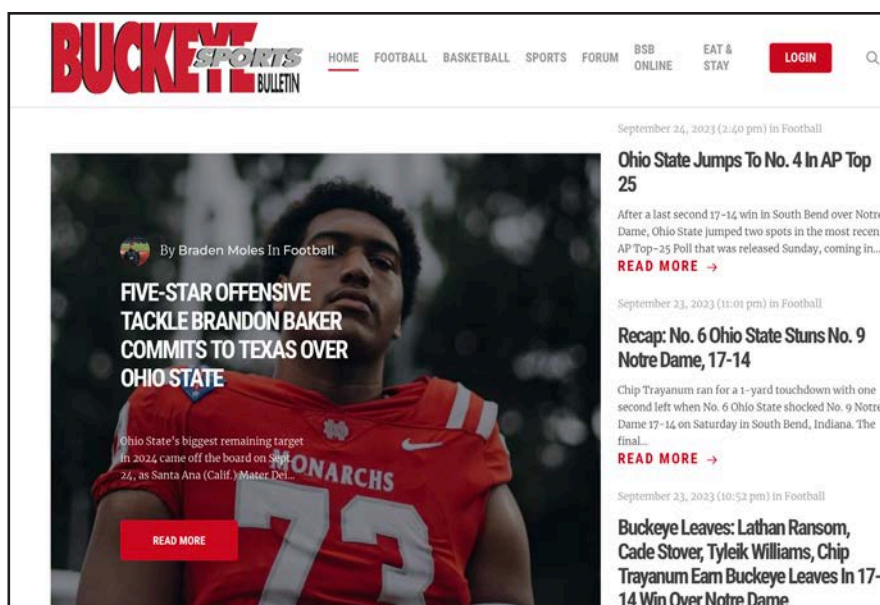
That line has wound up as, from left to right, Glaze, seniors Corey Bullock, Aric Harris and Amelio Moran and junior Conor Fagan. Through four games, Tagovailoa has been mostly kept clean with just three sacks, while the rushing attack is averaging 5.1 yards per tote.

Maryland also has several players of note on special teams. Kicker Jack Howes was good from 48 yards against Michigan State but missed from 40 and 29 yards. Punter Colton Spangler is also a weapon, calling his own number on a fake punt against the Spartans.

"Colton's one of those guys, he's athletic enough to do it," Locksley said. "I'm glad he did it because he was able to extend the drive for us, but I cannot take credit for calling a fake punt down in there."

Freshman Braeden Wisloski is also averaging 43.0 yards per kickoff return and took a 96-yard return to the house, and with some spotty special teams coverage for Ohio State this season, that could be an area the Terrapins look to take advantage of.

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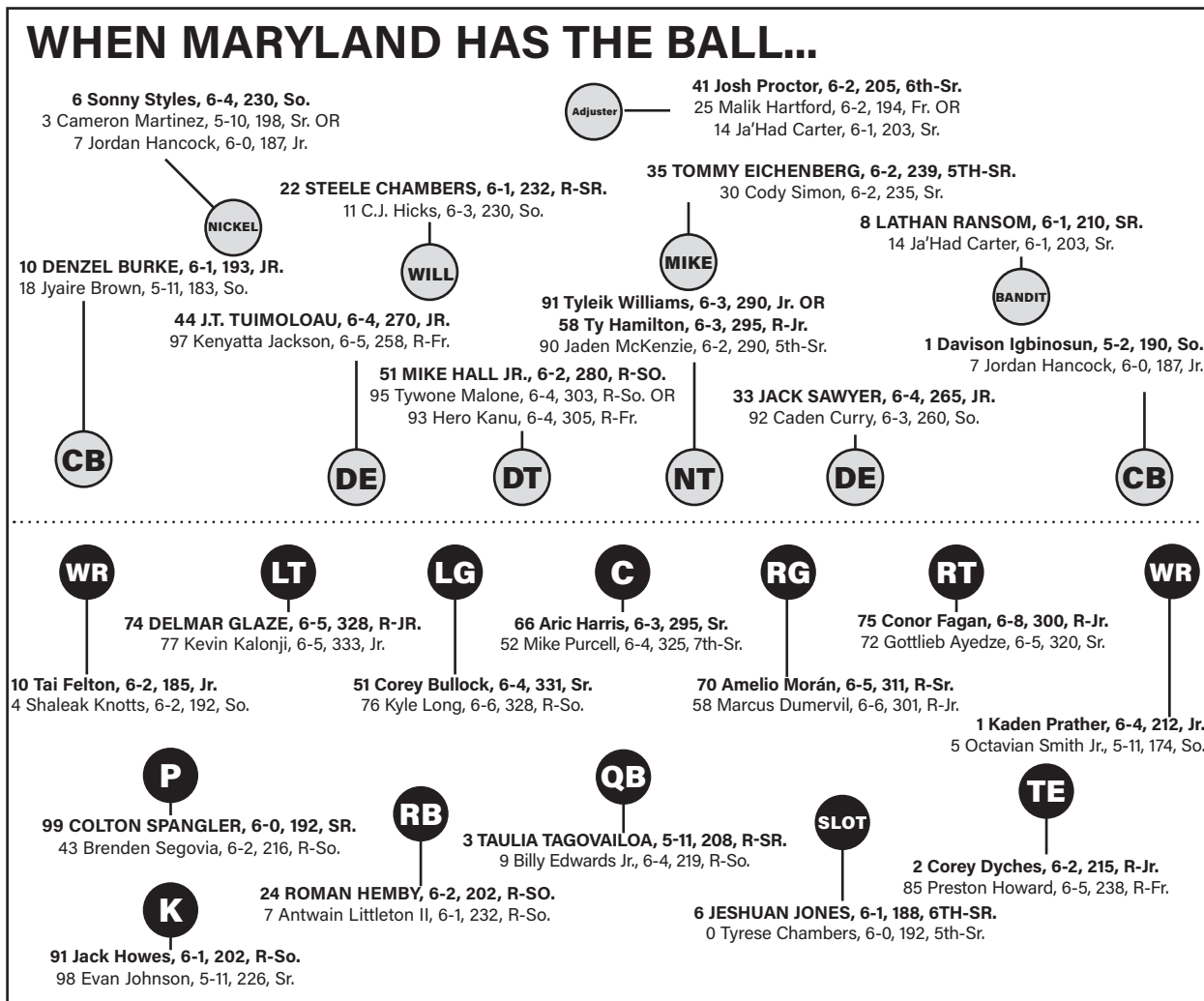
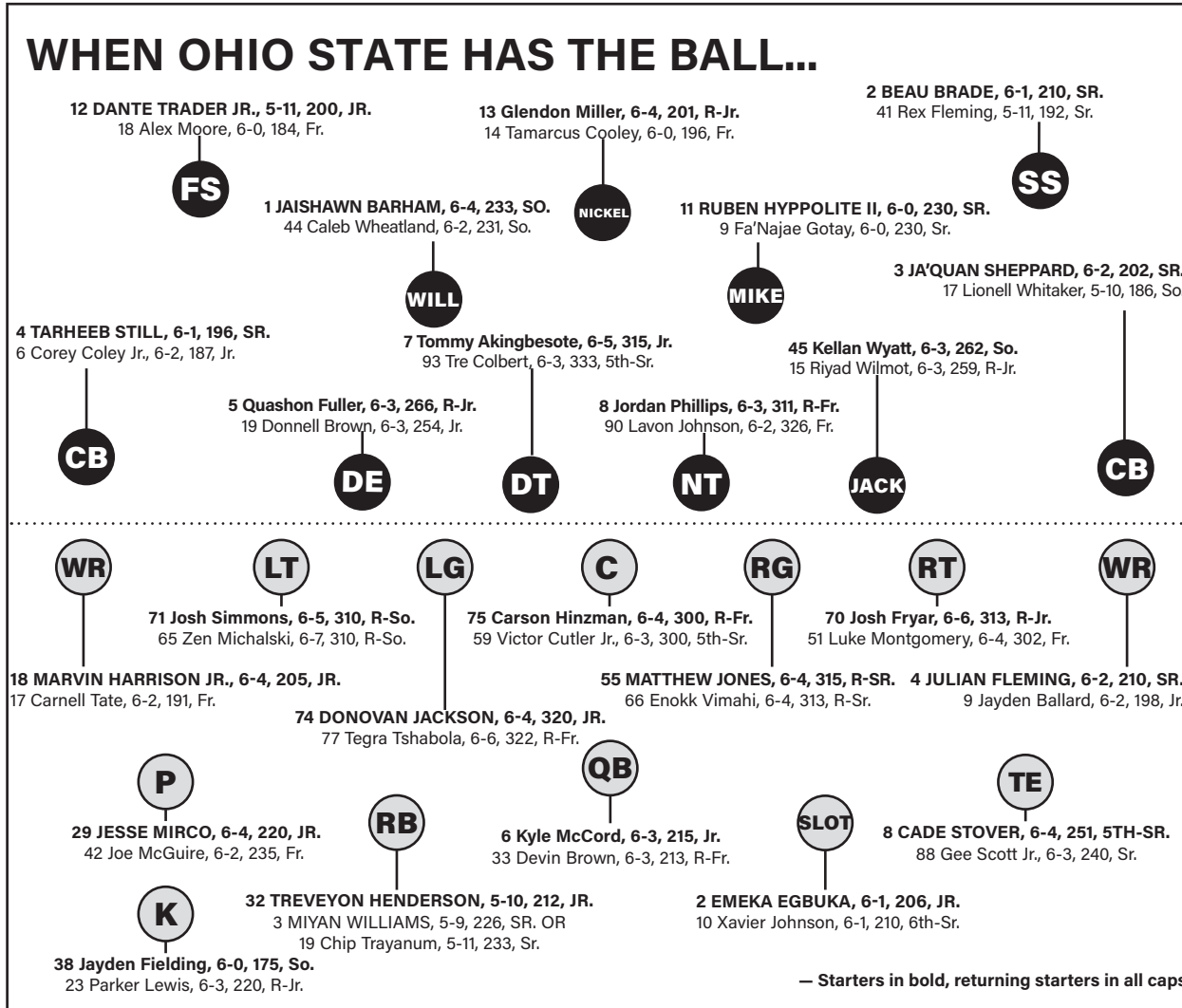


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How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs.
MARYLAND RUSH DEFENSE

First, the usual disclaimer: While the Buckeyes are idle on Sept. 30, Maryland hosts Indiana that day, so stats may not be as relevant and injuries could affect the Terrapins' lineup. That being said, the Buckeyes should be feeling good after the 17-14 win at Notre Dame, but there are still flaws. First, the good news. TreVeyon Henderson reintroduced himself to a national audience with a 61-yard touchdown at the start of the third quarter. He gained 104 yards on 14 carries (7.4 per attempt), and none of the backs had a negative rush. Still, there was a lot to be desired with Ohio State finishing with 126 yards on 27 runs (4.7). Chip Trayanum scored the winner on a 1-yard run with one second left, although the Fighting Irish helped by having 10 players on the field. Otherwise, he gained only 12 yards on five attempts (2.4) as the offensive line continued to struggle, especially in short-yardage situations. Maryland presents stout defensive stats, allowing 49 points in four games (12.3). Michigan State gained 102 yards (3.3) on the ground in the Terps' 31-9 win on Sept. 23. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

MARYLAND RUSH OFFENSE vs.
OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Terrapins are a pass-oriented team, and well they should be with Taulia Tagovailoa. They ran for 139 yards (4.5) against the Spartans, and the leading rusher was Colby McDonald with 38 yards (7.6), with 25 yards coming on one run. Tagovailoa rushed for 37 yards (7.4), including an 18-yarder and a 1-yard touchdown. Roman Hemby, who entered the game fourth in the Big Ten with 337 all-purpose yards and four touchdowns, ran for only 12 yards on 10 carries (1.2) and caught one pass for 4 yards. OSU did a decent job containing Notre Dame, giving up 176 yards on 39 totes (4.5), but did surrender runs of 22, 18 and 16 yards. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs.
MARYLAND PASS DEFENSE

Head coach Ryan Day can talk about toughness, but the offensive line needs a lot of work to become elite. Kyle McCord was under constant pressure but still managed to engineer a memorable 65-yard drive for the winning score. He converted a third-and-10, fourth-and-7 and third-and-19 along the way to victory. He was an efficient 21 of 37 for 240 yards with no touchdowns or interceptions but was at his best on third down, completing 10 of 13 for 155 yards. With so much attention given to Marvin Harrison Jr. (three catches for 32 yards), Emeka Egbuka (7 for 96) and Cade Stover (7 for 52) came through. Don't forget Xavier Johnson's 40-yard grab or the critical 7-yard, fourth-down reception by Julian Fleming when OSU needed 7 yards to keep the last series alive. Maryland has consecutive games with three interceptions and recorded three sacks against Michigan State. **EDGE: EVEN**

MARYLAND PASS OFFENSE vs.
OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Tagovailoa passed for 223 yards, with three touchdowns to go along with an interception. He is Maryland's career leader in passings yards (8,991), passing touchdowns (59), total touchdowns (69), and total offense (9,233) among the numerous records he holds. He had completions to 11 players vs. MSU. One of them was linebacker Sean Greeley, who came out of the fullback spot to catch a wide-open score. Notre Dame's Sam Hartman had gaudy numbers before facing the Buckeyes (13 TDs, zero interceptions) but was held to 17 of 25 for 175 yards and a score. Ohio State got the stop it needed late in the game to get the ball back for the winning drive but applied little pressure unless blitzing. He was hurried just three times and was not sacked. **EDGE: MARYLAND**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Johnson had a 32-yard kickoff return, Jesse Mirco placed two punts inside the Notre Dame 15 and one inside the 5, and Jayden Fielding made a 31-yard field goal. Jack Howes made a field goal from 48 yards for Maryland but missed from 40 and 29 yards. Colton Spangler averaged 42.3 yards on three punts and rushed for 14 yards on a fake punt in the third quarter. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

INTANGIBLES

The Buckeyes have time to recover and improve after the emotional and physical victory but should not take the Terrapins lightly. It feels like the first three games were warmup acts for Notre Dame. Maryland is a confident bunch, but it's hard to judge their 4-0 record with wins over Towson (38-6), Charlotte (38-20) and Virginia (42-14) before playing their first road game vs. Michigan State. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

STAFF PREDICTION

This could be an interesting afternoon if Tagovailoa has time to throw and the Buckeye offensive line remains susceptible. However, Ohio State has the talent advantage all over the field to overcome any possible letdown, though more words from Lou Holtz might help. **OHIO STATE 38, MARYLAND 14**

Henderson Back To Freshman Form After Injury

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In Ohio State's 2021 season opener against Minnesota, then-redshirt freshman Miyan Williams received much of the workload in the backfield with nine carries for 125 yards and a touchdown. The Buckeyes would win that game 45-31, and another freshman, TreVeyon Henderson, had only two attempts for 15 yards, though he still had a memorable performance.

He didn't receive much work in the run game, but he did catch one pass behind the line of scrimmage from C.J. Stroud and exploded for a 70-yard touchdown, weaving through the defense, and his speed had the Golden Gophers struggling to keep up with him in the open field.

That speed forced head coach Ryan Day's hand, and two games after he ran for only 15 yards, he broke the Ohio State freshman record for yards in a game with 270 yards and three touchdowns on 23 carries (11.7 yards per carry) against Tulsa. With more work over the full season, he finished with 1,560 yards from scrimmage and 19 total touchdowns, leading the team. His 19 scores also broke a program record for a freshman, previously held by Maurice Clarett, who had 18 touchdowns in 2002.

Just over two years later, that five-star recruit – also the No. 1 running back in his class – out of Hopewell, Va., became just the 28th running back in Ohio State history to surpass 2,000 rushing yards for his career. He became the first since J.K. Dobbins, whose 4,459 yards is second to only Archie Griffin in a Buckeye uniform, and joined a group that includes Griffin, Dobbins, Ezekiel Elliott, Eddie George, Carlos Hyde and Chris "Beanie" Wells, among others.

He reached that milestone in Week 3 against Western Kentucky, when he ran for 88 yards on 13 carries with two touchdowns, with a 19-yard rush up the middle with 7:55 left in the third quarter pushing him past 2,000 yards. He left that game with 2,010 rushing yards in his career, ready to add more.

The road to 2,000 yards wasn't an easy one for Henderson, who dealt with nagging injuries all of last season. He suffered a broken bone in his foot in the third week of the season against Toledo and tried to play through it for much of the year. Prior to the injury, he was off to a quick start with 178 yards on 25 carries (7.1 per attempt) and two touchdowns through two games.

He was able to handle only 107 carries for 571 yards in eight games last season, scoring six touchdowns along the way. He missed five games last year, two of those being the Buckeyes' biggest games of the year against Michigan and the Peach Bowl against Georgia.

And even when he was on the field, he didn't have the same explosiveness he had previously shown, and there were times it was obvious the tough stretch was getting to him. He said April 5 that the last time he felt like himself was before the injury happened.

"I never felt like myself again, but I'm finally being able to feel like myself again, get that confidence back and get going again," he said.

The injury affected him both on and off the field, as he said in April that was the first injury he ever had that kept him off the field. Every time he would come into a game while playing through it, he would tweak his foot the first time he was tackled, and this impacted his ability to play without thinking about the injury, always concerned about it happening again.

Over the offseason, he got surgery on the foot, and coming into the season he was feeling better and was looking forward to a healthy season. Running backs coach Tony Alford said Aug. 5 that Henderson's energy level was back to what it was before he was injured and that his speed, burst and change of direction showed obvious improvement compared to what he did last year when he was trying to play through the pain.

Through the first four games this season, Henderson had already rushed the ball 44 times for 295 yards (6.7 per attempt) and five touchdowns, including a pair against both Youngstown State and Western Kentucky.

"Tre had a great fall camp," quarterback Kyle McCord said after the Youngstown State game. "He looked really good and kind of had that explosive step that maybe he didn't have last year because he was hurt a little bit. But a healthy TreVeyon Henderson is scary. And he's shown flashes of it. Last year and this year with him starting to get healthy again and getting his feet under him, you see it how electric he is."

The ball has been put into Henderson's hands frequently this season. He has shown efficiency with the work he's been given and has been finding his way back into the end zone at a high rate as he did in his first year. He has also made an impact in the receiving game, already collecting more receiving yards (45) than he did all of last season.

He hasn't missed a beat, and that is largely due to the work he has put into recovering from his injury. Henderson said the rehabilitation process has been useful in helping him to regain the same confidence he used to have.

"This year, my work ethic has been great," he said. "I've just been working very hard, getting those practice reps, working hard each and every day. When you're able to practice and get those reps that I need, you're able to go into the game with confidence, a lot of confidence."

Day has noticed that work he has put in and has been trying to use him in games, at least as much as it makes sense to with the Buckeyes' bloated running back rotation. Day said with the new clock rule that is limiting plays and possessions, there are fewer carries to split between the tailbacks, so he is unable to play Henderson as much as he would like. But Day wants to get him the ball whenever possible.

"We have to keep trying to find ways to get him the ball," Day said Sept. 9. "Running the ball, but also out in space, because he's so good out in space. Just how fast he is, when he gets to that edge, it's got a chance to go."

Not only has recovering from the injury allowed him to regain his confidence – and get his level of explosiveness back – but he has been able to be much more physical as



SONNY BROCKWAY

FEELING GOOD – After an injury-plagued 2022 season, running back TreVeyon Henderson is getting back to his old form through the first part of this season.

well, trying to get an extra few yards and pushing through tacklers. His drive for extra yards has also been on display with several impressive hurdles over opposing defenders this season.

"You can see the explosiveness and having him healthy is a home-run threat at any point in the game, and that's what's fun about being around an explosive offense," Day said.

Day also said that Henderson's personality has come out more since he has recovered from his injury, able to display his competitive nature on and off the field.

"We're looking for guys who are just super competitive, and that's the way he is," Day said. "And the other thing I like about Tre is he's going to challenge something that isn't the way it should be. He'll speak up, and I like that. I like guys like that. He's not going to hold back, and that's good."

The offensive line has three new starters – Josh Simmons and Josh Fryar on the outside, and redshirt freshman Carson Hinzman at center – and that has hardly been an issue for Henderson. The line has not offered many opportunities for runs up the middle, but the versatility of his game has allowed him to create value in other ways like catching passes or getting to the outside on a run, where he can use his elite speed to turn a corner and break free.

Furthermore, the rotation of running backs and the depth they have at the position have helped Henderson's workload stay a little lighter so far with Williams returning and Chip Trayanum making the permanent switch to running back this season. Sopho-

mores Dallan Hayden and Evan Pryor are also available but haven't worked into that rotation.

Henderson getting back to full health has been important for the entire offense.

"Any way that we can get the ball in Tre's hands," McCord said, "it's a win for the Buckeyes."

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Conference Teams Offer Obstacles To OSU's Goals

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State may have faced its stiffest opponent to date when it traveled to South Bend, Ind., to take on Notre Dame on Sept. 23, but that isn't to say that its conference schedule does not include its own set of challenges.

After opening the season at Indiana and taking a break from the conference for the school's nonconference slate, the Buckeyes will resume Big Ten play on Oct. 7 when they host All-Big Ten quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa and his Maryland Terrapins, the start of an eight-game slate for an Ohio State program that is looking to secure a berth in the Big Ten Championship Game for the first time since 2020.

Before the Buckeyes attempt to climb back up to the conference mountaintop and return to Lucas Oil Stadium on Dec. 2, Buckeye Sports Bulletin assessed the five Big Ten teams that can threaten their chances of achieving that feat. To do that, BSB spoke with Eleven Warriors lead football beat writer Dan Hope, who offered his opinion on which Big Ten teams present the biggest challenges for Ohio State moving forward this season.

U-M Dangerous In Search For Third Straight Title

The archrival Wolverines are – once again – the largest threat to Ohio State's Big Ten title hopes, having beaten the Buckeyes and claimed the conference crown in back-to-back seasons. Michigan has established itself as the Big Ten's premier team due to its bruising style of play in the trenches, as evident in its dominance of the Buckeyes in recent seasons, but Jim Harbaugh's program is beginning to adopt a flashier philosophy in 2023.

Led by standout junior quarterback J.J. McCarthy and a returning dynamic duo at running back in Blake Corum and Donovan Edwards, the Wolverines' offense has the tools to be an even more explosive group this season, averaging 32.0 points and 402.0 yards through the first three games of the season. Although McCarthy and his offense showed some blemishes in Week 3 against Bowling Green, tossing for only 143 passing yards and three interceptions, Hope believes the Wolverines' offense is as deep as it has been in the Harbaugh era.

"The trenches have certainly been a big part of their 'MO' the last couple of years," Hope said. "But the thing that makes them potentially even more dangerous this year is having an experienced quarterback in J.J. McCarthy, having a dynamic duo at running back in Blake Corum and Donovan Edwards. I know that Edwards has gotten off to kind of a slow start this year, but I still think he's a very talented player who's capable of doing big things for them. Certainly, Corum is one of the best running backs in the country. And I think McCarthy's a really good quarterback.

"They're a team that you expect to be strong in the trenches. And that's been a big part of their success in recent years. But I almost think this year, they're more dangerous in terms of what they have at the skill positions.



FILE PHOTO

SERIOUS THREAT — Michigan running back Donovan Edwards (7) is expected to be a major contributor for the Wolverines at the top of the Big Ten, where they are hoping to remain this season despite pushes from Ohio State and Penn State.

"I think they're better at receiver than they've been. I think they have a lot of talent in the secondary. Their offensive line and defensive line, maybe they're taking a bit of a step back this year. They're replacing some key players on the offensive line. They don't really have an elite pass rusher, and so I think if you're looking for a potential vulnerability there, it's maybe that they're not quite as strong in the trenches as they'd been the last couple years. But I think their talent everywhere else is as good as it's been in a long time."

Michigan's improved perimeter production starts with veteran wideouts Cornelius Johnson and Roman Wilson, who are both looking to take on larger roles this season with the departure of current San Francisco 49ers wide receiver Ronnie Bell. Through three games, the duo had spearheaded the passing attack with a combined 448 receiving yards and seven scores, with six coming courtesy of Wilson.

While Hope sees a small drop-off coming for the defense, it has yet to show it, relinquishing just 16 total points through three games along with three interceptions and two forced fumbles. If the Wolverines can continue this impressive play from both sides in Big Ten play, they will once again be the team to beat in the conference.

Allar Electrifies Penn State's Offense

After four years with Sean Clifford under center, Penn State has a new look on offense this year, with Medina, Ohio, five-star quarterback Drew Allar stepping into the fold.

Allar's first three games were – to put it in Ryan Day's terms – a mixed bag. Allar showed fans why he is deserving of the hype in his first two starts against West Virginia

and Delaware, combining to complete 43 of 55 passes (78.2 percent) for 529 yards and three touchdowns. But in his next game – a 30-13 win at Illinois on Sept. 16 – he completed just 48.5 percent of his passes and threw for no scores along with 208 yards.

Despite the topsy-turvy play, Hope thinks Allar can propel this Penn State offense to new heights due to his unique arm strength and ability to stretch the field.

"He gives them more as a downfield passer than what Sean Clifford had," Hope said. "He has a bigger arm. So his upside is really high, and he started off the season really strong. Much like McCarthy, he kind of had a down game (on Sept. 16) when they played Illinois.

"But I think in terms of ability, I think he's somebody who gives him the upside to be as dynamic as they've been in a long time. And you pair that with the running backs in Nicholas Singleton and Kaytron Allen and a really good offensive line, I think that Penn State's offense has the potential to be the most dangerous it's been in a while."

Coupled with Allar's explosiveness and the aforementioned play of Singleton and Allen – who combined to rush for 374 rushing yards and seven touchdowns in three games – Penn State may be more equipped than ever to leave Ohio Stadium with an upset victory, something it has not accomplished since Nov. 19, 2011. Hope gives the Nittany Lions a shot to knock off the Buckeyes at home on Oct. 21, which would make them a prime candidate for a Big Ten title and possibly a College Football Playoff berth.

"I'm certainly not going to rule it out," Hope said. "I think if you just look at their roster as a whole, they're very talented. I think they have a lot of really good players on defense, whether that be Abdul Carter at

linebacker, Chop Robinson or Adisa Isaac at defensive end, Kalen King at corner. All around, I think their roster is as good as it's been in some time.

"I think this Penn State team is more capable of beating Ohio State or Michigan than maybe it has been in the last several years. That doesn't mean I'm predicting it, per se. It's going to be tough for them to come into Ohio State and win. But it's certainly going to be a real challenge for Ohio State, because I think that the talent is there for Penn State to be a legitimate contender for the Big Ten East title this year."

Fickell's Badgers A Key Road Test

Just one week after taking on the Nittany Lions in what should be an ultracompetitive game, Ohio State will travel to play at Wisconsin's always-hostile Camp Randall Stadium, a matchup that is reportedly slated to be a primetime game on NBC.

The Buckeyes have not made the trip out to Madison, Wis., since Oct. 15, 2016, a thrilling 20-13 overtime victory under the lights over the then-Paul Chryst-led Badgers, so the Wisconsin faithful will be more than ready to make this a tough environment for Day's squad.

"I do think that's a trap kind of spot for Ohio State," Hope said. "It comes one week after Penn State, and you have to go play on the road in Madison where you haven't played since 2016. I think there's definitely some trap game potential there for Ohio State."

This year's matchup features a Buckeye reunion, as former interim head coach Luke Fickell has taken the reins as leader of the Badgers' program. Fickell and offensive coordinator Phil Longo have instituted an air-raid offense in year one, bringing in SMU transfer gunslinger Tanner Mordecai. But his vision had yet to come to fruition early on, with the Badgers picking up a 31-22 loss at Washington State on Sept. 9 where they had just 277 passing yards.

Despite the Badgers' passing game being grounded, they still present a formidable threat with their run game, anchored by the explosive two-man punch of Braelon Allen and Chaz Mellusi. The duo produced 523 rushing yards and eight touchdowns through three games, keeping the Badgers afloat until they get more production out of the passing attack.

"They still have a couple of really good running backs in Allen and Mellusi, so I still think stopping the run is going to be the most important thing for a defense going against Wisconsin," Hope said. "I mean, Mordecai has thrown two touchdowns in three games. He's been not great so far. He's talented, but he hasn't been great so far.

"The team as a whole, Wisconsin has underperformed my expectations so far, losing to Washington State and not really looking like a world-beater against Buffalo or Georgia Southern. I'm interested to see how they progress between now and that late October game."

Purdue A Familiar Foe For Ohio State

Speaking of difficult road opponents, Purdue's Ross-Ade Stadium has become a

house of horrors for Ohio State in recent memory. The Buckeyes hold a 41-15-2 overall record against Purdue dating back to 1919, but they have dropped four of their last six games in West Lafayette, Ind., most notably a gut-wrenching 49-20 loss to the unranked Boilermakers on Oct. 20, 2018.

While five years have passed since the last road loss to Purdue, Hope thinks the recent string of defeats will sit in the back of the Buckeyes' minds in the days leading up to their Oct. 14 matchup, emerging as a major talking point for Day and his staff.

"I'm sure (Day) will bring it up, because that's the kind of game that otherwise you run the risk of maybe people sleepwalking through it," Hope said. "You have Penn State coming in one week afterwards, so that's the kind of a game that could be a little bit easy to overlook. I'm sure it's something that is going to get brought up that whole week. I'm sure the media is going to bring it up because everybody remembers what happened the last time they went there in 2018.

"I think if you're looking for something to motivate the team and make sure they're plugged in on that game, you can definitely look at the history of what's happened in recent years when they've gone to West Lafayette."

This year's Purdue team does not have a transcendent talent who can dominate a game like the speedy Rondale Moore did in 2018, but they still have a viable offense, led by Texas transfer Hudson Card. The former Longhorn, who filled in for the injured former Buckeye signal caller Quinn Ewers for three games last fall, completed 72 of his

110 pass attempts (65.5 percent) for a respectable 825 yards and three touchdowns (and a pick) through his first three games as a Boilermaker.

He has also built a strong connection with wideouts Deion Burks and Abdur-Rahmaan Yaseen, who have accounted for 53.2 percent of his total passing yards this season (439).

"I do think Card at quarterback gives them more potential in terms of what they can be offensively," Hope said. "I mean, Aidan O'Connell was a good quarterback too, but I think bringing in Card was a good transfer move that makes them dangerous, at least in the passing game. But I still think if you're looking at the overall roster, they're closer to the bottom than they are at the top in the Big Ten."

Ferentz Has Hawkeyes Set On B1G West Crown

Ohio State will share the field with Iowa this season only if the teams face off in the Big Ten Championship Game on Dec. 2, a matchup that has yet to occur at Lucas Oil Stadium since the conference switched to East and West Divisions in 2013. Through the first month of play, head coach Kirk Ferentz's team has shown they are more than capable of competing for the Big Ten West Crown.

The Hawkeyes have once again begun to establish themselves as one of the more stout defenses in the Big Ten, allowing an average of just 268.0 yards and 12.3 points through their first three games. Iowa's defensive efforts have been spearheaded by senior linebackers Jay Higgins and Nick

Jackson, who led the team with 32 and 23 tackles, respectively.

While Iowa is always strong on the defensive end, they have seen a surprising uptick in offensive production in September, led by the efforts of former Michigan quarterback Cade McNamara. With the senior gunslinger under center, the Hawkeyes averaged 28.3 points per game through their first three contests against Utah State, Iowa State and Western Michigan, a vast improvement on offense compared to the 17.7 points per game they generated last season.

The Hawkeyes will be without starting tight end Luke Lachey for the rest of the season due to an ankle injury he suffered in Week 3, however, a significant blow to the passing game considering he led the team with 131 receiving yards through three games.

They have been able to produce from both sides of the ball so far this season, but Hope does not see this same offensive production carrying over to Big Ten play, citing a major lack of talent surrounding McNamara moving forward.

"I mean, they've played Utah State, Iowa State and Western Michigan," Hope said. "And if you look at the numbers in those games, they're averaging just over 300 yards a game, and Western Michigan's the only one they actually topped 300 against. I haven't seen from them the kind of offensive improvement that would make me think that they're going to be dangerous on that side of the ball. I don't see anything right now that makes me think that Ohio State would need to be really worried about Iowa in a Big Ten Championship Game."

U-M Still The Favorite, But PSU Close Behind

With the verdict still out on Ohio State and its ability to reclaim the Big Ten throne, Hope said Michigan remains the biggest threat to the Buckeyes this season, as well as the clear-cut favorite to win the conference, with most betting odds also favoring the Wolverines.

"To me it's Michigan," Hope said. "For one, Ohio State has lost to Michigan two years in a row. So in that sense, it's kind of like, how can it be anyone else? That's the team that's ruined your season two years in a row. To me, there's no doubt that's the team you circle. You haven't been able to beat them the last two years. And not only have you not beaten them, you've been pretty much dominated by them the last two years. Beating them, that's the No. 1 thing. That's been the No. 1 question for this season."

Despite the Buckeyes and Wolverines likely duking it out for the Big Ten East crown once again this season, Hope warned fans not to overlook head coach James Franklin and his Penn State program, who get a crack at both teams later this season, with Michigan visiting Beaver Stadium on Nov. 11.

"I would put Penn State as a pretty close second," Hope said. "Penn State is good enough to give both Ohio State and Michigan a serious challenge this year. But I think the fact that (Ohio State) is playing Michigan on the road and playing Penn State at home, that's one reason why I'm more confident Ohio State will beat Penn State than I am about them beating Michigan."

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Young Had Heisman-Worthy Year In 2019

Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be offering a variety of historical pieces this fall, including a look back at the 1998 Ohio State football team, one of the better teams in school history, upon that team's 25th anniversary. There will also be looks back at seasons in which an Ohio State player could have (and perhaps should have) won the Heisman Trophy. The following is the fourth installment in our 2023 historical series.

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

No one was going to deny Joe Burrow the Heisman Trophy in 2019. What the former Ohio State backup quarterback accomplished following his transfer to LSU and the resulting national championship stardom was nothing short of legendary.

After getting his feet wet in Baton Rouge in 2018 by throwing for 2,894 yards and 16 touchdowns, Burrow obliterated the opposition the following season, piling up more than 5,600 yards and averaging an astounding four touchdown passes per game while leading the Tigers to a perfect 15-0 season that culminated in a 17-point rout of defending national champion Clemson.

As a result, Burrow was a near-unanimous choice to win the 2019 Heisman Trophy, receiving 841 out of 891 first-place votes cast. His total was more than the next six vote-getters combined.

It was a quarterback-centric Heisman vote that year. Finishing second and third were two other transfers – Jalen Hurts, who went from Alabama to Oklahoma, and Justin Fields, who began his college career at Georgia before finishing at Ohio State.

But the player who finished the 2019 Heisman race with the second-most first-place votes went into that season with the deck already stacked against him. Defensive players have typically been a Heisman afterthought, but Chase Young's performance for the Buckeyes during the 2019



FILE PHOTO

HEISMAN HOPEFUL – Despite finishing with 21 tackles for loss and 16½ sacks in 2019 – an Ohio State single-season record – defensive end Chase Young finished fourth in Heisman Trophy voting behind Joe Burrow, but second in the number of first-place votes.

season was arguably every bit as dominating on his side of the ball as Burrow's was on his.

The only defensive player ever to win the Heisman Trophy was Charles Woodson of Michigan in 1997, but even though Woodson was primarily a defensive back, his candidacy was aided by the fact he was an electrifying kick returner and played occasionally as a wide receiver.

Proving the difficulty for defensive players to earn Heisman recognition, Woodson won by one of the narrowest margins in the trophy's history, edging Tennessee quarterback Peyton Manning by only 272 votes. Before that, one has to go all the way to 1980 when Pitt defensive end Hugh Green finished a strong runner-up in the Heisman voting to South Carolina running back George Rogers.

"There are all kinds of individual honors that recognize defensive players," said longtime college football writer Stewart Mandel, who was with Sports Illustrated and Fox Sports before joining The Athletic in 2016. "But being the marquee award in college football, the Heisman is going to be the one that celebrates the marquee players, and more often than not, those are the quarterbacks and running backs."

As well as earning unanimous first-team All-America honors in 2019, Young was the recipient of the Bronko Nagurski and Chuck Bednarik awards symbolic of the

top college defensive player of the year and the Ted Hendricks Award, given to college football's most outstanding defensive end. Young became only the second player to win each of those three awards in the same season, following Jonathan Allen of Alabama, who pulled off the trifecta in 2016.

"There's no doubt that Young had an outstanding season in 2019, and that is reflected in the awards he won," Mandel said. "But you'd have a tough time convincing anyone that he deserved to win the Heisman over Burrow. The fact that maybe he should have finished ahead of Hurts and Fields in the voting – well, now maybe you've got an argument to make."

Longtime Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson wouldn't mind making that argument.

"I don't think you can overstate the way Chase performed that season," said Johnson, who has coached such other All-America defensive ends as Joey and Nick Bosa at Ohio State and Courtney Brown at Penn State. "No one was going to take that Heisman away from Joe with the kind of season he had, but you'd have a tough time convincing me that Chase wasn't deserving of finishing second in the voting."

Race Gets Under Way

The 2019 college football season kicked off Aug. 24 with No. 8 Florida scoring a 24-20 win against in-state rival Miami (Fla.) in

the Camping World Kickoff game, but the Heisman race didn't get started until the following week.

Burrow gave every indication he was going to be the man to beat, completing 23 of 27 passes for 278 yards and five touchdowns during a 55-3 manhandling of Georgia Southern in the LSU opener. But it was the following week, when he connected on 31 of 39 throws for 471 yards and four scores during a 45-38 thriller at No. 9 Texas, that Burrow's record-setting season really began to lift off.

Meanwhile, Hurts and Fields were doing their best to keep up. Hurts threw for 591 yards and six touchdowns with an 82.9 percent completion rate during Oklahoma's first two victories, and Fields piled up 458 yards and six touchdowns while connecting on 76.0 percent of his throws as Ohio State raced out to a 2-0 start.

Young put up less gaudy numbers on his side of the ball but still recorded 1½ sacks in each of the Buckeyes' first two games, running his streak to four consecutive games with at least one sack and six straight games with at least one tackle for loss.

By the end of October, a Heisman race that had seemed very much up in the air for the first two months of the season suddenly began to settle itself.

Burrow and Hurts had comparable passing stats – 205 of 260 attempts (78.8 percent) for 2,805 yards and 30 touchdowns against only four interceptions for the LSU quarterback, and 133 for 180 (73.9 percent) for 2,469 yards, 21 TDs and only three INTs for the Oklahoma signal-caller. And Hurts had also rushed for 801 yards and three scores with Burrow showing only 125 yards and three touchdowns on the ground.

But while Burrow had led LSU to a perfect 8-0 record and the No. 2 spot in the national rankings, No. 5 Oklahoma suffered a 48-41 upset loss to Kansas State on Oct. 26. The loss not only dealt the Sooners a crippling blow to their national championship aspirations, but it placed Hurts firmly behind Burrow in the minds of Heisman voters.

Meanwhile in Columbus, Fields was presiding over the third-ranked team in the nation, but he was not the primary focus of the Ohio State offense. Running back J.K. Dobbins, who was on his way to finishing sixth in the final Heisman balloting, had already eclipsed the 1,000-yard mark by late October and was on his way to becoming the first Buckeye to rush for 2,000 yards in a single season.

Fields had an incredible 24-to-1 ratio of touchdowns to interceptions, but his 1,659 passing yards paled in comparison to Burrow and Hurts.

At the same time, Young was beginning to make noise as a bona fide Heisman contender. During Ohio State's dominant 38-7 win against No. 13 Wisconsin on Oct. 26, Young had a game for the ages. Five of his six total tackles went for losses, and four of those five TFLs were sacks. Both the TFL and sack totals equaled OSU single-game records.

Following the win against the Badgers,

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FILE PHOTO

HOPES DASHED — In the midst of a record-breaking season for Ohio State, defensive end Chase Young was suspended for two games in 2019 for accepting an unauthorized loan, ending any hopes of him bringing home the Heisman Trophy.

the Buckeyes were 8-0 and headed into an off-week during which they would be installed as the nation's No. 1 team when the initial College Football Playoff rankings of the season were released.

But just as that celebration was beginning, it suddenly came to a grinding halt when Young was hit with an NCAA suspension for accepting an unauthorized loan from a family friend to help Young's girlfriend attend the 2019 Rose Bowl. In the sport today, with its unfettered transfer rules and seemingly endless supply of NIL money, it seems almost quaint that Young would have landed in hot water for accepting the small loan — money he reportedly repaid in full before the NCAA became involved.

Nevertheless, Young was handed a two-game suspension that for all intents and purposes ended his Heisman hopes for good.

Perhaps to make a point about how to handle adversity, however, Young returned for the Nov. 23 home game against No. 8 Penn State and collected three more sacks as the Buckeyes took a 28-17 victory to remain undefeated. Seven sacks over a two-game span established another program record.

"As I remember it, I don't think I was thinking about anything except getting back to playing with my guys," Young told BSB in August while training for his fourth NFL season. "Revenge or anything like that, no, I don't think so. We were still in the race for the (national championship), and I was just happy to be part of that again."

The Buckeyes would finish the regular season with a 56-27 win at No. 13 Michigan, a game in which Young's consecutive games streak with at least a half-sack ended at 11, and a convincing 34-21 rematch against Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game. The Badgers had risen to No. 8 in the national rankings but were still no match for the Buckeyes or Young, who totaled six tackles including 1½ for loss.

The season ended with a 29-23 loss to third-ranked Clemson in a national championship semifinal game, a contest that hinged on a controversial second-quarter targeting call against OSU defensive back Shaun Wade. Despite holding a 16-0 lead at the time, the wind seemed to go out of the Buckeyes' sails after the call. Young finished with only two tackles in the game — none for loss — and was credited with a quarterback hurry as Clemson QB Trevor Lawrence threw for 259 yards and two touchdowns while adding another 107 yards and a TD on the ground.

Lawrence and his team were on the other side of the ledger against Burrow and LSU in the national title game, and the Tigers ran away with a 42-25 decision and the program's first national championship since 2007. Burrow, who had already been to New York in December to accept the Heisman Trophy, put an exclamation point on his season by throwing for 463 yards and five touchdowns. That was after a 493-yard, seven-TD performance against Hurts and Oklahoma during a 63-28 win in the other national semifinal game.

Burrow finished the 2019 season with eye-popping numbers that included 5,671 yards and 60 touchdowns with only six interceptions in 527 attempts. Hurts finished second in the Heisman voting after combining for 5,149 yards and 52 TDs through the air and on the ground. Fields was third with 3,273 yards and 41 touchdowns against only three INTs in 354 attempts. He also ran for 484 yards and 10 scores.

Young finished the season with 46 total tackles, 21 of which resulted in losses. The TFL total tied for fourth most in a single season by an OSU defense, and Young's 16½ sacks that year established a new single-season record, eclipsing the mark of 14 set by Vernon Gholston in 2007. Young finished his career with 30½ sacks, second all-time in program history to Mike Vrabel, who had 36 during his four-year career from 1993-96.

In addition to Burrow winning the Heisman Trophy and Young finishing fourth, the National Football League took notice the following April. The Cincinnati Bengals made Burrow the No. 1 overall selection in the 2020 NFL draft, while the Washington Commanders (then playing as the Washington Football Team) took Young at No. 3.

Somehow, Hurts fell all the way to a late second-round pick (No. 53 overall), but he got some payback in 2022 when he led the Philadelphia Eagles to their first Super Bowl appearance in five years, earning his first career Pro Bowl honor in the process.

Fields returned to Ohio State in 2020 and led the Buckeyes back to the College Football Playoff, where the Buckeyes lost a 52-24 decision to Alabama in the title game. The following April, the Chicago Bears selected Fields with the 11th overall pick of the 2021 draft, and Fields has been the Bears' starting quarterback ever since. In 2022, he rushed for 1,143 yards, becoming only the third QB in NFL history to crack the 1,000-yard mark in a season. Michael Vick (2006) and Lamar Jackson (2019 and 2020) are the other two.

Even More Accolades

After the 2019 season, Young took little time to declare his eligibility for the NFL draft after only three years with the Buckeyes. But there was one more piece of hardware to pick up before leaving school. That was when he was named Big Ten Male Athlete of the Year, an award named for Ohio State track great and Olympic

gold medalist Jesse Owens.

"That was one that really took me by surprise," Young said. "Coming to college, that was something I didn't even know they had, so I can't say it was on my goal list. Truly, my only goal was to be an All-American. I wanted to be an All-American so bad because that's the best of the best. And I got to achieve that thanks in large part to Coach Johnson. I give most of the credit to Coach J. He was one of the biggest parts in any success I might have had at Ohio State.

"But to win an award as the top male athlete in any sport in the Big Ten? Plus the fact that it's named for Jesse Owens? That just blew me away. I felt very humbled and truly blessed."

Four years removed from his final collegiate season, Young admitted he doesn't dwell much on the past. That's understandable for a player who was the NFL's top defensive rookie in 2020 but has lost a significant amount of time since then to a right knee injury suffered in November 2021.

Still, when reminiscing about being a rare defensive player to make the Heisman finalist list, he said he can't help but smile.

"That was just crazy," Young said. "When I was at the Heisman ceremony, I didn't really realize the importance or the significance or ... I was like, man, this is the Heisman. I'm a D-lineman. I'm not supposed to be up here on stage with these guys.

"But being in New York, and doing all of that stuff, it was a crazy moment and something that I'll never forget. What a blessing."



Ohio State Loses Out On Five-Star OT Baker

Ohio State's biggest remaining target in 2024 came off the board on Sept. 24 when Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star offensive tackle Brandon Baker (6-5, 285) announced his commitment to Texas.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

Baker is the No. 25 overall prospect and top-ranked offensive tackle in the class, and he chose Texas over his other top schools of Georgia, Nebraska, Ohio State and Oregon. He took visits to each of his final schools this summer, with his trip to Columbus coming on June 9, one that he told 247Sports was "probably (his) favorite one," but it was not enough to persuade him to commit to Ohio State, with the Buckeyes appearing to finish second in his recruitment.

"The development is unmatched, and the trajectory that they're on headed to the SEC next year," Baker said when asked what drew him to Texas. "That's big boy football. Recently beat Alabama. I could see them winning a national championship within the next few years."

"I felt really good after the official visit. I kind of just sat on it, prayed about it. Honestly, I didn't know until today. I just let (of-

fensive coordinator Kyle) Flood and (head coach Steve) Sarkisian know. It was really just on the fly. ... They know what the (mountain top) looks like."

Baker's pledge to Texas is a significant loss for Ohio State and offensive line coach Justin Frye, who were hoping to sign the program's first five-star offensive tackle since Paris Johnson Jr. in 2020. While Ohio State does have a pair of offensive line commitments – Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward four-star Deontae Armstrong (6-6, 280) and New Palestine, Ind., four-star Ian Moore (6-5, 295) – who could play tackle in college, neither is at the level of Baker, who has the talent to start as a true freshman in many programs.

"Athletically-built offensive lineman who can live long term on the outside," wrote 247Sports recruiting analyst Gabe Brooks. "He owns adequate height with above average length and frame space to continue adding mass. He plays mad and it shows in the run game. He's an excellent drive blocker who looks to finish blocks to the ground and displays impressive lateral quickness and range when required to pull or reach targets at the second level."

"He plays with consistent leg drive, especially once engaged, and his play strength is good and combines with size to often overwhelm smaller, overmatched defenders."

With Baker off the board, Ohio State's pursuit at offensive tackle has likely ended, though it doesn't mean that Frye is not trying to find prospects on the offensive line.

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	297	★★★★	Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward
Mylan Graham	WR	6-1	170	★★★★★	New Haven, Ind.
Eddrick Houston	DL	6-3	265	★★★★★	Buford, Ga.,
Max LeBlanc	TE	6-4	222	★★★★	Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School
Miles Lockhart	CB	5-10	185	★★★★	Chandler (Ariz.) Basha
Jordan Lyle	RB	6-0	180	★★★★	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas
Jaylen McClain	SAF	6-0	185	★★★★	West Orange (N.J.) Seton Hall Prep
Jeremiah McClellan	WR	6-0	190	★★★★	St. Louis Christian Brothers College
Eric Mensah	DL	6-3	290	★★★	Stafford (Va.) Mountain View
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
Payton Pierce	LB	6-1	225	★★★★	Lucas (Texas) Lovejoy
Aaron Scott	CB	6-2	190	★★★★	Springfield, Ohio
Justin Scott	DT	6-4	310	★★★★★	Chicago St. Ignatius
Jeremiah Smith	WR	6-3	198	★★★★★	Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep
Garrett Stover	LB	6-0	195	★★★★	Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut
Bryce West	CB	5-11	177	★★★★	Cleveland Glenville
Sam Williams-Dixon	RB	5-11	203	★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) North
Damarion Witten	TE	6-4	215	★★★★	Cleveland Glenville

The Buckeyes continue to pursue Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star offensive lineman Jordan Seaton (6-5, 287), who is not expected to make a decision until closer to the early signing period in December. He is considering Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina and Tennessee in addition to Ohio State, which he is planning to officially visit on Nov. 11 when the Buckeyes host Michigan State.

"He has the frame to play either guard or tackle at the college level," wrote 247Sports recruiting analyst Brian Dohn. "He plays left tackle in high school and has legitimate size and length. He has high level athleticism combined with a nasty streak."

If Ohio State is able to land Seaton, he would join an offensive line group that includes Deontae Armstrong, his brother, four-star interior lineman Devontae Armstrong (6-6, 280), Moore and Toledo Central Catholic three-star interior lineman Marc Nave

(6-5, 315).

With Baker off the board, Ohio State's top uncommitted targets remaining in the class include Tampa (Fla.) Wharton four-star defensive end Booker Pickett Jr. (6-3, 205) and Towson (Md.) Concordia Prep four-star defensive end Ernest Willor Jr. (6-4, 250), though the Buckeyes do continue to pursue flips at linebacker and safety.

AD Smith Says Recruits Are Asking \$5k For Official Visits

Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith took part in a House Committee on Small Business hearing on Sept. 20 in Washington, D.C., testifying in support of federal legislation for name, image and likeness (more on page 6), but he offered up an intriguing comment about the state of recruiting when it comes to NIL.

In his opening statement, Smith discussed how NIL has been mostly beneficial

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

OSU Football 2025 Commitment

Player(s) in the class of 2025 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Tavien St. Clair	QB	6-4	210	★★★★	Bellefontaine, Ohio

OSU Football 2026 Commitment

Player(s) in the class of 2026 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Chris Henry Jr.	WR	6-5	185	★★★★★	Cincinnati Withrow

for Ohio State's student-athletes but added that there have been challenges in implementing NIL since it was introduced on July 1, 2021.

"When NIL was sanctioned by the NCAA, 'bad actors' emerged seeking personal gain from their ability to influence a young person and/or a family regarding an institution," Smith said. "This has always been a challenge, but NIL has allowed this behavior to be more aggressive. In professional sports, drafts preclude this issue, but the collegiate model relies upon recruiting, not drafting.

"For example, student-athletes and their parents visit campuses at the expense of those universities to evaluate where they may make a commitment. A practice of asking a school for a fee to simply visit campus has become common. During visits, discussions now emerge regarding how much a student-athlete can expect from NIL."

While it's no surprise that conversations about NIL take place when a recruit visits, considering Smith noted Ohio State's stu-

dent-athletes have signed an NIL deal in every sport, with over 2,000 deals reported for Ohio State as a whole, it is surprising – yet not entirely unbelievable – to hear that recruits are being paid \$5,000 to take a visit to a school, and this is just one of the tenets at the crux of Smith's argument about why federal legislation is needed for NIL to help college athletics.

"We do a lot of education," he said. "All of our schools do. But it's the third party that impresses that individual. It's an uncle who's not an uncle that it's very difficult for us to get to. Many of these deals are cut by them. That's a challenge that we have in our space and it's why we need help."

More On DL Mensah's Flip To Ohio State

Now that the dust has settled surrounding Stafford (Va.) Mountain View three-star defensive lineman Eric Mensah's (6-3, 290) flip to Ohio State from Virginia Tech, the out-of-state prospect was able to reflect on his verbal pledge to the Buckeyes.

Mensah – the No. 805 overall prospect and No. 81 defensive lineman in the class – told 247Sports that he is expecting to mostly play in the interior at Ohio State, though he lines up at tackle for Mountain View. He camped with the Buckeyes back in June, beginning to build that relationship that led to his eventual flip, and he feels comfortable with his decision.

"It was a decision I had to talk over with my family, do my research, pray about. It was a pretty hard decision," he said. "But when I made it, I felt relieved. I'm 100 percent committed to Ohio State. I'm looking forward to being a Buckeye. I want to get back there in the next one or two (home) games."

Miami Wide Receiver Commit Robinson Enjoys OSU Visit

Mensah was not the last candidate in the class whom Ohio State is looking to flip, however, as the Buckeyes continue to pursue Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star wide receiver Chance Robinson (6-2, 190), who has been committed to Miami (Fla.) since April.

Robinson is the No. 151 overall prospect and No. 22 wide receiver in the class, and he visited for Ohio State's 63-10 win over Western Kentucky on Sept. 16 after receiving an offer from the Buckeyes in July.

"That was my first Ohio State game, my first time at Ohio State," Robinson told 247Sports. "I went up with my parents. I watched practice on Friday, met with Coach (Ryan) Day, spent time with Coach (Brian) Hartline. It was all great. They just want me to come there. They say I fit their program."

Robinson had 29 receptions for 540 yards

and 13 touchdowns last season, and through four games this year, he had 18 catches for 247 yards and three scores. He plays alongside four-star running back and Ohio State commit Jordan Lyle (6-0, 185), who has been similarly impressive with 42 carries for 364 yards (8.7 per attempt) and five touchdowns.

"I talk with Jordan about Ohio State a little," said Robinson, who added that he could take an official visit for the Penn State game on Oct. 21. "He says to do what is best for me."

Should Robinson flip to Ohio State and join Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 198); New Haven, Ind., five-star Mylan Graham (6-1, 170); and St. Louis Christian Brothers College four-star Jeremiah McClellan (6-0, 190), that would give the Buckeyes four top-200 receivers in the recruiting class.

And Robinson is not the only prospect from St. Thomas Aquinas whom Ohio State is attempting to flip. The Buckeyes are also keeping an eye on four-star linebacker Nicholas Rodriguez (6-1, 190), who has been committed to Missouri since July but took an official visit to Columbus in June and returned for Ohio State's win over Youngstown State on Sept. 9.

"That was my first Ohio State game," Rodriguez told 247Sports. "I went through all the traditions. Coach (James) Laurinaitis and Coach (Jim) Knowles, they've been trying to keep in contact as much as they can. Overall I'd say they have been recruiting me hard."

Continued On Page 26

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2026 WR Commit Henry Jr. Making Waves

Continued From Page 25

Buckeyes In Top 10 For 2025 RB Louis

Ohio State landed in the top 10 on Sept. 17 for Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage four-star running back Byron Louis (5-10, 180), a 2025 prospect.

He is the No. 193 overall prospect and No. 19 running back in the class. The Buckeyes were joined on his list by Alabama, Florida State, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Oklahoma, Penn State, USC, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

Rushing for 439 yards and 11 touchdowns last season for American Heritage – as a backup, no less, to Mark Fletcher, who was briefly committed to Ohio State in the 2023 class before signing with Miami – Louis, now as the lead tailback, had rushed for 177 yards and two touchdowns through two games this season.

Louis was offered by Ohio State last year and camped with the Buckeyes this summer, putting on a strong performance at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

“I feel like I’ve done pretty well,” Louis told BSB after the camp session. “I’ve been pretty active. I made a couple of nice plays – no dropped passes, so that’s good.”

Louis’ camp experience was part of a three-day visit in which he got to spend plenty of time with running backs coach Tony Alford, with the pair continuing to build their relationship.

“A lot of me and coach Tony Alford’s conversations are more of just getting to know each other,” Louis said. “It’s not all football based – just getting to know how he is as a person, how he is as a human, as a father, and how he will be able to change my life off the field, not just on the field, and build me to be the man that I want to be.”

WR Henry Jr. Impressing In Sophomore Season

Cincinnati Withrow five-star wide receiver and Ohio State commitment Chris Henry Jr. is off to a hot start in his sophomore season, already collecting some impressive stats.

Through five games, Henry had 20 receptions for 272 yards and three touchdowns, with a pair of five-reception games already under his belt.

This is building on a freshman season in which Henry – who is the No. 4 overall prospect and top-ranked wideout in 2026 – was named a MaxPreps Freshman All-American after collecting 29 receptions for 292 yards and five touchdowns.

He was offered by Ohio State after camping in June of 2022, and he has continued to grow on and off the field, boasting a 6-5, 185-pound frame with more than two years to go until he arrives on campus for the Buckeyes.

Visitors Flock To South Bend

Ohio State was not playing a home game on Sept. 23 in the team’s 17-14 win over Notre Dame, but there were still plenty of prospects whom the Buckeyes continue to recruit in attendance, with the caveat that most were likely there to visit with Notre Dame’s staff.

According to reports, recruits being pursued by both schools who were present included Greenwich (Conn.) Brunswick School four-star offensive tackle Matty Augustine (6-7, 290); Chicago Simeon four-star defensive end Chris Burgess (6-4, 240); Greenwich (Conn.) Brunswick School four-star safety Ethan Long (6-2, 185); Philadelphia St. Joseph’s Prep four-star linebacker



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS HENRY JR.

NEXT UP – Ohio State wide receiver commitment Chris Henry Jr. (left) is still a few years away from arriving on campus as a 2026 prospect, but he already looks the part standing next to Marvin Harrison Jr. (right).

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1988

Why were major-college football recruiters so eager to get the name of Zanesville (Ohio) High School’s Matt Warth on a national letter of intent?

For one thing, the 6-4 tackle who played both offense and defense for the Blue Devils had added 20 pounds of muscle to his frame since his junior season, when he earned first-team All-Ohio honors. That put him at about 245 pounds, and he had actually improved upon his time in the 40-yard dash.

“He’s definitely a good prospect,” said national high school recruiting expert Tom Lemming. “He certainly has the size to play major college football, and he appears to still be growing.”

“Colleges are always looking for linemen, and I’d say he ranks right up there with the best ones in the state. He’s a good student and a hard worker.”

25 Years Ago – 1998

Hurricane Georges wasn’t the only thing to hit Florida during the week of Sept. 21. At least three OSU assistant coaches ventured to Florida to watch topflight football prospects in the Sunshine State practice.

The OSU coaches took full advantage of the team’s off week to get on the road Sept. 21-22 to observe some of their top prospects in practice settings.

“We had seven coaches on the road during those two days off,” said OSU recruiting coordinator Bill Conley. According to Conley, OSU covered players in 10 states over those two days, including California, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia.

20 Years Ago – 2003

Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne linebacker Marcus Freeman (6-2, 240), one of the state’s top three prospects, was set to announce his college choice on Sept. 24, and Ohio State was very much in the running.

In fact, many believed that the Buckeyes would be the even-

tual choice for Freeman, but he refused to tip his hand just before press time, telling BSB, “It’s down to Ohio State and Notre Dame.”

Freeman was ranked by Rivals.com as the 44th overall prospect in the country and the No. 4 inside linebacker. Aside from his two favorites, he had offers from Florida, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Oklahoma and Tennessee, among others, but he was spotted at the Ohio State-N.C. State game enjoying himself on the sideline during OSU’s thrilling overtime victory.

15 Years Ago – 2008

As followers of Ohio State recruiting are well aware, a Buckeye loss on the field is not limited to the scoreboard and the team’s record at the time. The failure to come out with victories in big-time games can hurt the team’s national image, a situation that can have a trickle-down effect to that team’s ability to recruit.

The fact that the Buckeyes were waxed 35-3 by No. 1 USC during the season’s third week was something the coaching staff would have to cope with as the program moved forward.

Whether the loss would have any sort of noticeable impact on Ohio State’s class of 2009 and beyond remained to be seen, even to recruiting coordinator John Peterson.

“Time will tell,” he said during the week following the loss to the Trojans. “It’s just like anything. You have to be able to address it, and we’ll call recruits this week and talk to them and we’ll talk to parents and we’ll go do our typical things.”

10 Years Ago – 2013

Days before Ohio State’s Sept. 21 matchup with Florida A&M, Urban Meyer admitted that his team had some misses in recent years when it came to evaluating linebacker prospects. Landing Raekwon McMillan, however, could make up for a few of those mistakes.

McMillan, a five-star prospect out of Hinesville (Ga.) Liberty County, was the nation’s 46th-ranked recruit and the No. 5 middle linebacker in the 2014 class. The 6-2, 230-pounder had been highly sought-after ever since the end of his freshman season of high

school football, and he recently had narrowed his list of potential suitors to five. Ohio State made McMillan’s final quintet, joining Alabama, Clemson, Florida and Georgia.

“I will be signing with one of those schools,” McMillan said. “That is the five for me. Those five are the only schools I am considering.”

Five Years Ago – 2018

On Sept. 17, Ohio State went national with an offer to Rockwall, Texas, four-star wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

The Buckeyes became the latest Power Five program to enter Smith-Njigba’s blossoming recruitment. Over the past two months, he had added offers from Arkansas (Sept. 10), Texas Tech (Sept. 6) and TCU (Aug. 1).

His process originally blew up between the spring evaluation period and summer camp circuit from April through June. He had since racked up 16 offers, including the most recent from Ohio State. The 6-1, 188-pounder was the 247Sports composite’s No. 287 overall prospect, No. 58 wide receiver and No. 36 player in Texas for 2020.

One Year Ago – 2022

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

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

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

ASK AN ANALYST

with Buckeye Huddle's Marc Givler

Ohio State is continuing to pursue Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star wide receiver Chance Robinson (6-2, 190), who is committed to Miami. How do you feel about the Buckeyes' chances of flipping him?

"I think they have a pretty decent chance. He came up for a visit (on Sept. 16). He's going to return for another one later in the process, so that's a very good sign that it wasn't just kind of a come up and check out a game thing. They were able to get him up on a week where they didn't have a ton of big-name visitors, so they spent a lot of time with him. I think Ohio State is definitely in high consideration for him right now, or I don't think he'd be doing this. He's not a guy who's really done a lot of extra stuff as far as making a whole bunch of visits, so I think he's very serious about Ohio State.

"Now, Miami is off to a pretty good start to its season, so I think the better Miami goes this year, the harder that will probably become. But they've really started to push for him. And Brian Hartline, when he wants a guy, he generally has a pretty good chance of getting him."

If they were to flip Robinson, what would the timeline look like? And what would it mean for Ohio State's 2024 wide receiver class as a whole?

"I don't see it happening in the next couple of weeks or anything like that. I think it would probably be later in the fall. Again, he's probably going to come back for another visit in October or November. So I think this will be somebody that may be a little bit closer to like the early signing period or Thanksgiving. I don't think this is anything that would happen in the next week or two or anything like that.

"But that would cap off the receiver class. They are looking for a fourth wide receiver. And it would be another monster, monster group for (Hartline). They signed this great class last year, and we kind of all sat around and said, 'How is he going to possibly be able to do that again in 2024?' And when you look at 2024, I would actually – if they added Chance – make the case that 2024

is even better than 2023. It would be the No. 1 receiver class in the country again, and it's probably already going to be anyway, but it would just cement them as the No. 1 receiver class in the country. And I think you could argue that it would maybe even be Hartline's best receiver class so far, which is obviously saying something pretty incredible."

With 22 prospects already committed, how large could this class end up being for Ohio State with needs remaining on the lines and at safety?

"They could certainly get this to 27 or 28 if they wanted to. If they want to, and also if they can in terms of if they can get some of the targets they like. Will it get all the way there? Or will it kind of top out at 25 or 26, and maybe they go to the portal in the winter? I think that remains to be seen. But they can definitely get six more guys in this class. You can get two more defensive linemen, you could get another offensive lineman, you could get another receiver. I mean, that's four right there. And then I think there's room for probably two more defensive backs. There's certainly room for at least two more players in the back seven, whether that's two defensive backs, or maybe even one defensive back and a linebacker, if they could find a linebacker they really like.

"Gosh, I think even seven more would be possible, but they would have to really find guys they like at all those spots. That means finding another linebacker they really like, finding a couple of defensive backs they really like, so it just kind of depends. Again, could they add seven more? Yes. Do I think they'll get that high with guys? I think they'll probably settle in closer to the 27 range, and then whatever they're not able to put together from the high school group they will go portal hunting here this offseason."

Looking elsewhere in the conference, is it surprising that Michigan – with just the 13th overall class nationally and just one top-100 prospect – is seemingly unable to capitalize in recruiting with the team's success on the field?

"You could look at this two ways: On one hand, they felt they did a really good job with the transfer portal, especially with the lines. So the transfer portal makes life a little bit easier for teams who may be recruiting in that 10-to-15 range to compete with top-10 recruiting teams. On the other hand, and I've said this a lot the last couple of years, they have not done things – from an administrative standpoint – that would lend itself to recruiting at a top-five level.

"You have these stalemates every year with Jim Harbaugh on contracts. He doesn't have this long-term deal that every coach really should have. You have these rumors every January and February about him leaving for the NFL, which has cratered a couple of their recruiting classes the last five years. I think at some point they're going to have to figure this out. Whether it's Harbaugh leaving for the NFL finally, which seems to be the thing every winter, or whether it's 'Hey, I'm staying and here's an eight-year contract I'm signing.' This back-and-forth tug-of-war they play every year between Harbaugh and the administration, it just doesn't lend itself to recruiting at the level of Alabama, Georgia and Ohio State, where everything is very stable. That has been their huge problem on the recruiting trail.

"I don't know how you recruit with the Alabamas and Georgias of the world in that environment where, again, your coach never seems to have a long-term contract and there constantly seems to be questions about whether he's going to the NFL, there constantly seems to be questions about how well he's getting along with the administration there. The recruiting violations and the suspension I don't think matter as much to the recruits necessarily. It's another thing there. But I just don't think they've thought this out properly in terms of the vibe they're giving recruits. When you commit to a school, you want to know that your head coach is going to be there, so I think they've kind of handicapped themselves on that."

Anthony Sacca (6-3, 225); Buford, Ga., four-star cornerback Devin Williams (5-11, 168); and Indianapolis Ben Davis four-star cornerback Mark Zackery IV (6-0, 164).

Ohio State's next home game will be Oct. 7 vs. Maryland, with that being the next opportunity for the Buckeyes to host recruits at Ohio Stadium. While it's too far out for even a preliminary list of which recruits might be in attendance, stay tuned to BuckeyeSports.com during Ohio State's off week for the latest on who might stop by.

Fallout Remains To Be Seen For MSU Recruiting

As Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press, Michigan State's 2024 recruiting class checked in at No. 48 nationally and dead last in the Big Ten, with just 13 commitments, and it's hard to imagine things will get much easier from here for the Spartans.

With interim head coach Harlon Barnett taking over for Mel Tucker, who was notified by the university on Sept. 19 of its intention to fire him for misconduct (more on Page 30), the focus will simply turn to holding onto the Spartans' current crop of commitments.

"Fortunately, because I got a chance to speak with all the committed recruits, they've been really good," Barnett said. "They've been really good so far, especially last week. I'm going to do it again this week, and I'll get on an actual FaceTime with those guys and talk with them. They've been good. They've been good so far.

"Everybody knows what has to happen and all that kind of stuff. They love Michigan

State as of now, right now, themselves. And the parents are good. Talking to the parents and the kids, and they've been good."

It's already clear that it might be a struggle, as River Rouge, Mich., four-star wide receiver Nick Marsh (6-3, 200), who has been committed to the Spartans since July, recently received an offer from Colorado and head coach Deion Sanders, so programs across the country will see Michigan State as ripe for the picking.

As for Ohio State, the only prospect in Michigan State's class whom the program was involved with was Dayton Centerville four-star safety Reggie Powers (6-0, 195), who visited Columbus over the summer but ultimately committed to the Spartans.

But with the Buckeyes' struggles at safety for this cycle – West Orange (N.J.) Seton Hall Prep four-star safety Jaylen McClain (6-0, 185) is the only committed safety in the class – it seems probable that Ohio State could circle back to Powers.

"What I think is going to happen is that they're going to end up really pushing for either him or Cincinnati Withrow four-star cornerback Terhyon Nichols (6-0, 180), but not both," Buckeye Huddle recruiting analyst Marc Givler told BSB. "And I think that decision is still being made. I think they're still looking at senior film every week and trying to determine it. I don't know if they're going to actually go for both of those guys. But I could see one of those two ending up in (Ohio State's) class."

Powers had previously told several publications that Ohio State was a "dream

school," which would indicate that the safety backing off from the Buckeyes was not his decision. And while he has since said that he is locked in with Michigan State, programs are still likely to be after the four-star prospect.

"I do not think Reggie Powers is going to end up at Michigan State," Givler said. "Whether that's Ohio State, or Oklahoma or somebody else, I really don't think he's going to end up at Michigan State at this point. Mel Tucker is a defensive backs coach by trade, so that was a pretty big draw for Powers when he committed. So I would be surprised if Michigan State was able to hang onto him."

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Another offensive line target came off the board on Sept. 19 as West Roxbury (Mass.) Catholic Memorial four-star offensive tackle Guerby Lambert (6-6, 280) announced his commitment to Notre Dame. He was the No. 48 overall prospect and second-ranked tackle in 2024, and he held an offer from the Buckeyes.

- According to 247Sports, La Verne (Calif.) Bonita four-star linebacker Noah Mikhail (6-3, 205), a 2025 prospect, is planning to attend Penn State at Ohio State on Oct. 21. He is the No. 51 overall prospect and eighth-ranked linebacker in the class.

- Aliquippa, Pa., four-star running back Tiqwai Hayes (5-10, 185), a 2025 prospect, planned to announce his commitment on Sept. 25 between Cincinnati, Maryland, Michigan, Michigan State, Ohio State, Penn

State, Pittsburgh and West Virginia, with the Nittany Lions viewed as the favorite.

For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to visit BuckeyeSports.com, available for free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (4-0)

Sept. 2 at Indiana, W 23-3; **9** YOUNGSTOWN STATE, W 35-7; **16** WESTERN KENTUCKY, W 63-10; **23** at Notre Dame, W 17-14.

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

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

CROSS COUNTRY

Sept. 1 Wright State Mike Baumer Cross Country Classic at Dayton, OH, Men: 1st/15; Women: 1st/10; **9** Badger Classic at Wisconsin, Men 3rd/6; Women 5th/7; **29** Sean Earl Lakefront Invitational at Chicago, Ill.

Oct. 13 Arturo Barrios Invitational at College Station, Texas; **27** Big Ten Championships at Madison, Wis.

Nov. 10 NCAA Regional Championships at Madison, Wisc.; **18** NCAA Championships at Charlottesville, Va.

FIELD HOCKEY (9-2)

Aug. 25 Lehigh, W 5-2; **27** Lafayette W 4-1.

Sept. 1 NEW HAMPSHIRE, W 4-1; **3** BUCKNELL, W 2-1; **4** UC DAVIS, W 5-0; **8** Louisville, L 2-1; **10** STANFORD, W, 6-0; **15** MICHIGAN, W 5-1; **17** Michigan State, W 2-1 (OT); **22** NORTHWESTERN, L 4-3; **24** OHIO, W, 3-2; **29** Iowa,

4 p.m.

Oct. 1 Indiana, noon; **6** Penn State, 5 p.m.; **8** Kent State 1 p.m.; **13** RUTGERS 3 p.m.; **15** MARYLAND, 1 p.m.; **22** BELLARMINE, 1 p.m.

Nov. 2 Big Ten Tournament at Ann Arbor, Mich.; **3** Big Ten Tournament at Ann Arbor, Mich.; **5** Big Ten Tournament at Ann Arbor, Mich.

MEN'S GOLF

Sept. 8 Maui Jim Collegiate at Scottsdale, Ariz., 6th/15; **9** Maui Jim Collegiate at Scottsdale, Ariz., 5th/15; **10** Maui Jim Collegiate at Scottsdale, Ariz., 4th/15;

Oct. 2-3 Hamptons Invitational at East Hamptons, N.Y.; **30-31** Cal Poly Collegiate at Carmel-by-the-Sea, Calif.

WOMEN'S GOLF

Sept. 11-12 Dick McGuire/Branch Law Firm at Albuquerque, N.M., 10th/16; **17-18** Mary Fossum Invitational at Michigan State, 3rd/15.

Oct. 9-10 Illini Invitational at Medinah, Ill.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY

Oct. 7 Mercyhurst, 7 p.m.; **13-14** LINDENWOOD; **20** Michigan, 6 p.m.; **21** Michigan; **27-28** Nebraska-Omaha, 8:07 p.m.

Nov. 3-4 MICHIGAN STATE; **10-11** Notre Dame; **24-25** PRINCETON.

Dec. 1-2 Wisconsin; **8-9** MINNESOTA; **30** MERCYHURST.

Jan. 5-6 Bowling Green; **12-13** NOTRE DAME; **19-20** Minnesota; **26-27** Penn State.

Feb. 2-3 MICHIGAN; **16-17** WISCONSIN; **23-24** MICHIGAN STATE.

March 1-2 PENN STATE; **8-10** Big Ten Tournament Quarterfinals; **16** Big Ten Tournament Semifinals; **23** Big Ten Tournament Final.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY

Sept. 29 Colgate, 6 p.m.; **30** Colgate, 3 p.m.

Oct. 13 Minnesota Duluth, 4 p.m.; **14** Minnesota Duluth, 4 p.m.; **20** St. Thomas, 4 p.m.; **21** St. Thomas, 3 p.m.; **27** MINNESOTA, 6 p.m.; **28** MINNESOTA, 3 p.m.

Nov. 3 Bemidji State, 7 p.m.; **4** Bemidji State, 4 p.m.; **17** WISCONSIN, 6 p.m.; **18** WISCONSIN, 3 p.m.; **24** ST. LAWRENCE, 6 p.m.; **25** ST. LAWRENCE, 3 p.m.

Dec. 1 ST. CLOUD STATE, 6 P.M.; **2** ST. CLOUD STATE, 3 p.m.; **9** MINNESOTA STATE, 6 p.m.; **10** MINNESOTA STATE, 2 p.m.

Jan. 12 Minnesota, 7 p.m.; **13** Minnesota, 3 p.m.; **19** MINNESOTA DULUTH, 6 p.m.; **20** MINNESOTA DULUTH, 2 p.m.; **26** St. Cloud State, 4 p.m.; **27** St. Cloud State, 2 p.m.

Feb. 2 BEMIDJI STATE, 6 p.m.; **3** BEMIDJI STATE, 3 p.m.; **9** Minnesota State, 7 p.m.; **10** Minnesota State, 4 p.m.; **16** ST. THOMAS, 6 p.m.; **17** ST. THOMAS, 3 p.m.; **24-25** Wisconsin.

March 1-2 WCHA Quarterfinals.

MEN'S SOCCER (2-4-2)

Aug. 24 CAL STATE NORTH-RIDGE, T 1-1; **27** UC DAVIS, L 2-1.

Sept. 1 at IU Classic in Bloomington, Ind., vs. Seton Hall, L 1-0. **4** WASHINGTON, T 1-1; **9** Butler, W 1-0; **15** PENN STATE, L 3-0; **19** KENTUCKY, W 3-0; **24** Northwestern, L 4-2; **29** Rutgers, 7 p.m.

Oct. 3 XAVIER 7 p.m.; **6** MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; **10** Louisville, 7 p.m.; **15** Indiana, noon; **20** WISCONSIN, 7 p.m.; **24** Michigan State, 7 p.m.; **29** MARYLAND, 1 p.m.

WOMEN'S SOCCER (5-3-2)

Aug. 17 MIAMI (OHIO), W 3-0;

20 BUFFALO, L 2-1; **24** Memphis, L 6-1; **27** Montana, T 2-2; **31** OAKLAND, W 6-0.

Sept. 7 OHIO, W 4-1; **10** AUBURN, W, 2-0; **17** Michigan State, T 1-1; **21** NEBRASKA, L 2-1; **24** Maryland, W 1-0; **28** INDIANA, 7 p.m.

Oct. 1 ILLINOIS, noon; **8** Penn State, 1 p.m.; **12** Minnesota, 7 p.m.; **15** Wisconsin, 2 p.m.; **19** RUTGERS, 6 p.m.; **22** MICHIGAN, 1 p.m.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Sept. 15-17 Debbie Southern Furman Fall Classic at Greenville, S.C.; **21-24** Fall Spotlight at Raleigh, N.C.

Oct. 1 ITA All-Americans at Cary, N.C.; **14** Buckeye Invite at Columbus, Ohio; **20** ITA Midwest Regionals at Ann Arbor, Mich.

Nov. 2 ITA Fall Championships at San Diego, Calif.; **4** ASU Thunderbolt Invitational at San Diego, Calif.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

(4-7)

Aug. 25 at NKU Tournament in Highland Heights, Ky., vs. Northern Kentucky, W 3-0; **26** at NKU Tournament in Highland Heights, Ky., vs. Bowling Green, W 3-2; **27** at NKU Tournament in Highland Heights, Ky., vs. East Tennessee State, W 3-0.

Sept. 1 SPORTS IMPORTS CLASSIC VS. GEORGIA TECH, L 3-1; **2** SPORTS IMPORTS CLASSIC VS. GEORGIA TECH, L 3-1; **8** Big Ten/Pac 12 Challenge in Stanford, Calif., vs. Stanford, L 3-0; **9** Big Ten/Pac 12 Challenge in Stanford, Calif., vs. Oregon, L 3-1. **14** Texas, L 3-1; **15** Baylor, L 3-2; **22** Nebraska, L 3-0; **24** Iowa, W 3-0; **27** WISCONSIN, 8 p.m.

Oct. 1 MARYLAND, noon; **6** Rutgers, 7 p.m.; **7** Penn State, 6:30 p.m.; **13** ILLINOIS, 7 p.m.; **15** PURDUE, 1 p.m.; **18** Wisconsin, 8 p.m.; **21** Indiana, 8 p.m.; **25** Northwestern, 6 p.m.; **29** Michigan, 2 p.m.

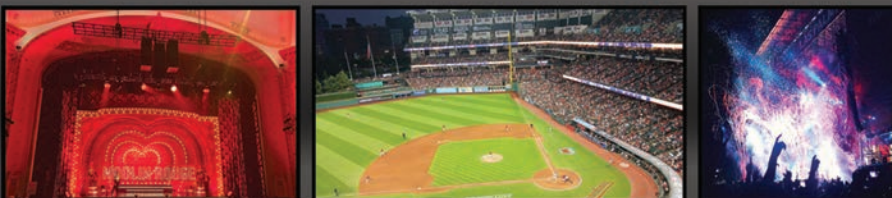
Nov. 3 MINNESOTA, 6:30 p.m.; **4** INDIANA, 7 p.m.; **8** MICHIGAN STATE, 7 p.m.; **12** Maryland, 1 p.m.; **15** Illinois, 9 p.m.; **18** Minnesota, 8 p.m.; **24** PENN STATE, 7 p.m.; **25** RUTGERS, 7 p.m.

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Fields Bearing Brunt Of Criticism In Chicago

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Justin Fields threw shade on his Chicago Bears coaches during the turbulent week of Sept. 18 for the former Ohio State standout, who had come under criticism for his play through the first two weeks of the season.

Fields was coming off completing just 16 of 29 passes for 211 yards with a touchdown and two interceptions, including his second pick-six of the young season for the third-year quarterback, in a 27-17 loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sept. 17. He was also sacked six times and fumbled twice.

In the aftermath, critics were divided if the problems for the Bears, who had lost 12 consecutive games dating back to last season, were mainly Fields' fault or a byproduct of an inept organization – or both. Along the way, some also questioned whether Ohio State head coach Ryan Day's system is beneficial to developing NFL-caliber signal callers.

Fields started the firestorm at a press conference on Sept. 20 when he expressed frustration with the game-planning that kept him in the pocket rather than taking advantage of his running ability. He rushed for 1,143 yards and eight touchdowns last season, the second-most yards ever for a quarterback and the seventh-most in the NFL last season. In the loss to the Buccaneers, he ran four times for 3 yards.

"I wasn't necessarily playing my game," Fields said. "I felt like I was kind of robotic and not playing like myself. My goal this week is just to say, 'F it' and go out there and play football how I know to play football. That includes thinking less and just going out there and playing off of instincts rather than so much info in my head, data in my head."

"Going out there and playing football. Going back to 'It's a game,' and that's it. That's when I play my best, when I'm just out there playing free and being myself, so I'm going to say dump all the 'What I should do,' this and that, pocket stuff. I'm going to go out there and be me."

When asked why he was playing that way, his first words sent social media into a frenzy: "You know, could be coaching, I think."

He added more in-depth comments and explanations, but the headlines were already being written about how he was ripping head coach Matt Eberflus and staff.

"At the end of the day, they are doing their job when they are giving me what to look at, but at the end of the day, I can't be thinking about that when the game comes," Fields continued. "I prepare myself throughout the week, and then when the game comes, it's time to play free at that point. Thinking less and playing more."

"I don't think it's too many coaching voices, but I just think when you're fed a lot of information at a point in time and you're trying to think about that info when you're playing, it doesn't let you play like yourself. You're trying to process so much information to where it's like, if I just simplify it in my mind, I would have done this."

He pointed to a strip-sack against Tampa Bay when he tried to be perfect and stay in the pocket instead of scrambling. Fields said he should have listened to his internal clock that was telling him to run.

"Yes, there's times where I could have stayed in the pocket, but in that play specifically, I was in the pocket for a long time," he said. "I've got to extend the play, get out of the pocket, extend the play and do something with it. Make something shake. That's kind of what I'm talking about, though, in getting back into my game and becoming more of a football player than such a thinker on the field."

He soon after departed for the practice field, but afterward, certainly aware of the stir he created, he clarified his remarks, saying they were taken out of context.

"Whenever you hear anything come out of my mouth to where I would blame it on somebody else in this organization, my teammates, never will you hear that," he said. "I just want to clear that up. Just know I need to play better. That's it. Point-blank. That's what it should have been in the first place."

Finding Support

Well, he did blame the coaches, who were already under fire, particularly Eberflus and offensive coordinator Luke Getsy.

Through two games, the Bears' offense ranked 22nd in points per game, 28th in yards per game, 22nd in third-down conversion rate, last in sack percentage, and 25th in passing yards per game. Fields' totals through two games were 40 of 66, 427 yards, two touchdowns, three interceptions and 10 sacks for a 70.7 passer rating with 13 rushes for 62 yards (4.8 average). Eberflus was unflustered by Fields' quotes.

"I think that a player needs to feel free, he needs to have the flow of the game, he needs to use his instincts," the coach said. "That's what you want from players."

"I want him to speak free to us. I want him to be honest. I want him to be forthright with what he's saying. And then, can we work through this together and get him to play free and have that flow?"

Bears general manager Ryan Poles gave his opinion on Sept. 21.

"No one in our entire building, none of our coaches see Fields as a finger pointer at all," he said. "When I listen to him and that whole deal, the majority of it was like, 'All right, I've got to create this clarity, I've got to get better.'"

"I thought he took ownership of everything. He didn't have to say anything about that. Our coaches are like, 'How can we make you better? How can we help you be successful?' And there's always that balance. No one took it personally. We all know we have a hand in our success, and we want him to be successful and it takes everyone for him to be successful, including himself. I kind of thought he hit on all of that. It was no shock to anyone."

Through 29 career games as of Sept. 17, Fields had thrown for 4,539 yards with 26 touchdown passes and 24 interceptions. He completed 59.8 percent of his passes while rushing for 1,625 yards and 11 touchdowns.

Last season, he threw for 2,242 yards with 17 touchdown passes and 15 interceptions and was sacked a league-high 55 times. He was on pace for 85 this season through two games, with the record – at least since sacks became an official statistic in 1982 – sitting at 76 sacks taken by former Houston Texans quarterback David Carr in 2002.

"I think as we talk about his evolution," Getsy said, "he's becoming an NFL quarterback and I think that part of it, that experience and that style of play, I think he was ... there's a few plays in the game that he wishes he had different reactions. He refers to them as instincts, let his instincts take over, right? And that is real. ... He has special talent. He has special instincts."

Fields also got support from quarterback Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs, the Bears' opponent on Sept. 24. It should be noted that when Mahomes was asked what advice he'd give to Fields, his answer came prior to Fields' press conference.

"Trust your talent. Trust your instincts," Mahomes said. "He's here for a reason. He's made a lot of big plays happen in the NFL and college. ... Just trusting in your instincts and then go out there be the player you've always been – just not against us hopefully."

Mahomes' wish came true, as Fields finished just 11-of-22 passing against the Chiefs for 99 yards, a touchdown and an interception (with three sacks) in a 41-10 loss.

Everyone seemed to have an opinion on Fields' success, or lack thereof. Pro Football Hall of Fame quarterback and TV analyst Terry Bradshaw thinks Fields needs to get comfortable in the pocket.

"He can run like crazy, and he needs movement to create his passing," Bradshaw said on a broadcast. "The pocket stuff has not gotten there yet. I'm not quick to judge quarterbacks, but Jordan Love (of the Green Bay Packers) is in his fourth year and look at what he's done."

"I want him to do so well, and it just doesn't happen. He does incredible things, but from the pocket – look, I'm 75 years old, I am so old school, and I've done a good job of educating and moving myself to the modern era of the NFL. But if you can't throw from the pocket, my friend, it's hard to win in this league."

Taking Shots

There has been a lot of criticism directed toward the Bears. Fields was drafted No. 11 in the 2021 draft, but Chicago didn't surround him with a good team.

"I see somebody that's not being developed," ESPN's Stephen A. Smith said on ESPN's "First Take" on Sept. 18. "I see somebody that's not growing. I see apathy kicking in, if not despondency. He knows what kind of situation he's in. He doesn't want to be there, and I don't blame him one bit. That's how I feel. I don't know that. I haven't heard that, but I am surmising he does not want to be there."

"I can't look at Justin Fields with that talent and say, 'That's him.' That's not him. If this brother was in another organization, he wouldn't look like this. This is an indictment

against the Chicago Bears organization."

Over the offseason, the Bears traded the No. 1 overall pick – and a chance to draft Alabama quarterback Bryce Young or Ohio State's C.J. Stroud – away to the Carolina Panthers. Chicago then used the No. 9 pick to draft right tackle Darnell Wright. The Bears also added receivers D.J. Moore and Chase Claypool to bolster support for Fields.

But after Fields went 24 of 37 for 216 yards, a touchdown and a 37-yard pick-six in the 38-20 loss to the Packers in the season opener on Sept. 10, Kyle Brandt, a co-host on "Good Morning Football" on the NFL Network, opined on "The Dan Patrick Show" the next day that it was time to stop making excuses for Fields.

"It's like the parents whose kid is the quarterback and their kid is struggling in sports," Brandt said. "It's, 'The coach isn't teaching them right,' or, 'The kid didn't get the math test right and we've got to get new teachers.' After a while your kid is stupid and not athletic. I'm sorry, but we can only say that (excuses) for so long."

Fields is the second of three highly-drafted quarterbacks from Ohio State under Day. Dwayne Haskins fell short with Washington though was looking at a resurgence in Pittsburgh before his passing while Stroud's career with the Houston Texans is just starting.

On3's Andy Staples was on the same show Sept. 22 when Patrick asked him why Fields is struggling to be a good passer.

"There were always those questions because the late Dwayne Haskins had some of the same issues coming out of a similar offense, and it was what you saw with Justin," he said. "It was more about reading the defense and about what he was asked to do in that offense. And I think that's been sort of a complaint about Ohio State quarterbacks under Ryan Day."

"Joe Burrow was there but then left to go to LSU. He was running a different offense at LSU. I think that's going to be the question until one of them breaks out and becomes a success in the NFL. Are they not asked to do the things that they need to do? And the other obvious thing with Ohio State quarterbacks is their receivers are so much better than everyone else."

"There's a different kind of open at Ohio State than somewhere else. I'll give you an example. (San Francisco's) Brock Purdy's receivers at Iowa State weren't nearly as open as Justin Fields' receivers. So Purdy had to learn to fit it in there. Justin Fields, for the most part, had somebody wide open."

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Spartans Intend To Fire Tucker For Cause

Michigan State University notified suspended head football coach Mel Tucker of its plans to terminate his contract for cause in a written letter sent on Sept. 18, citing “a body of undisputed evidence of misconduct” as grounds for the decision.

BIG TEN NOTES
Patrick Engels

In a five-page letter signed by athletic director Alan Haller, the university claimed Tucker breached the agreement signed by the two parties on Nov. 21, 2021, that gave Tucker a 10-year, \$95 million extension that made him one of college football’s highest-paid coaches.

Tucker was originally suspended on Sept. 10, less than 24 hours after a USA Today report revealed he faced allegations of sexually harassing renowned activist and rape survivor Brenda Tracy during an April 2022 phone call, which occurred a few weeks after she made her second visit to the university to speak with Tucker’s team about sexual abuse and misconduct – a meeting that ended with the coach naming her an honorary captain for the team’s spring game.

The letter stated that Tucker had

breached his contract by participating in a number of “unprofessional and unethical” acts, including making flirtatious and sexual comments about Tracy’s figure and performing “phone sex” with the former gang rape survivor during a 36-minute phone call on April 28, 2022. Haller also said that a public statement issued by Tucker through his attorney on Sept. 11 did not adhere to a portion of the contract that said he must “keep positive and constructive in tone any public comments about University policies.”

Tucker admitted to masturbating on the phone with Tracy in his first public statement since the suspension but added that the pending Oct. 5-6 university hearing – which will decide if he was in violation of the school’s harassment policy – is a “sham.”

Haller noted later in the letter that Tucker’s conduct also violated the “moral turpitude” clause in his contract by engaging in the sexual acts – while married – with Tracy, a “Vendor” of the university who was paid \$10,000 to come speak to the football team about sexual abuse and misconduct in 2021.

“The Vendor had a contractual relationship with the University when she was paid in 2021 for her speaking engagement educating the University Football Team on sexual misconduct and sexual violence, and had a continued relationship with the University Football Team demonstrated by her ‘Honorary Captain’ title bestowed in

the Spring of 2022,” the letter stated. “Your comments about the Vendor’s ‘a-,’ admitted flirtation, and act of masturbating on the phone with the Vendor, while married amount to moral turpitude. It is highly inappropriate and improper to engage in extramarital sexual conduct with a Vendor, let alone an Honorary Captain of the Football Team, whose mission is to educate coaches and student-athletes, and specifically to the University’s Football student-athletes under your direction, on sexual misconduct.”

Aside from violating the “moral turpitude” clause, the university claimed Tucker’s admitted actions have “brought public disrespect, contempt and ridicule upon the university.” Haller cited several news articles – including the original USA Today story that brought light to Tracy’s allegations – as examples where Michigan State has been painted in a negative light.

“Headlines from various prominent other news outlets also have brought public disrespect, contempt, and ridicule onto the University and prominently and negatively placed the University’s culture and reputation at the forefront of the news cycle,” the letter said. “University fans and alumni have also expressed their negative views of the University, further evidencing that your behavior has resulted in the University being subject to public disrespect, contempt and ridicule.”

Haller concluded the letter by notifying Tucker – who has more than \$79 million remaining on his contract – that he had seven days (until Sept. 26) to “present sufficient reasons to dispute the above-identified ground for termination.” Tucker responded less than 24 hours later, saying in a Sept. 19 statement that he is being denied fair process and subjected to a double-standard, among other things.

“Let’s be clear,” Tucker said. “I don’t believe MSU plans to fire me because I admitted to an entirely consensual, private relationship with another adult who gave one presentation at MSU, at my behest, over two years ago. MSU knew about the information on which it supposedly relies to end my contract since at least March 2023. Yet only after Ms. Tracy and potentially others leaked the confidential investigation report to the press, did MSU suddenly decide this same information warrants termination.”

“So when I complain, nothing happens; when she complains, MSU acts?” he continued. “This double standard reflects the bias against me throughout this process.”

If Tucker is fired for cause on Sept. 26 – which remained the expectation as Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press – the remainder of his contract will be voided, leaving Harlon Barnett as interim head coach and former head coach Mark Dantonio as associate head coach until further notice.

Narduzzi, Elko Headline Potential Replacements

With Tucker likely to be fired on Sept. 26, Michigan State will need to launch a search for its 17th head coach in program history. While the Spartans still have the rest of the 2023 season to contend with, BSB is taking a look at five potential candidates who may garner interest from the program moving forward.

BIG

2023 Standings

East Division

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

West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Wisconsin	1	0	1.000	3	1	0.750
Minnesota	1	0	1.000	2	2	0.500
Northwestern	1	1	0.500	2	2	0.500
Iowa	0	1	0.000	3	1	0.750
Illinois	0	1	0.000	2	2	0.500
Nebraska	0	1	0.000	2	2	0.333
Purdue	0	1	0.000	1	3	0.250

Sept. 22 Game

Wisconsin 38, Purdue 17

Sept. 23 Games

Nebraska 28, Louisiana Tech 14
Michigan 31, Rutgers 7
Illinois 23, Florida Atlantic 17
Maryland 31, Michigan State 9
Indiana 29, Akron 27 (4OT)
Northwestern 37, Minnesota 34 (OT)
Ohio State 17, Notre Dame 14
Penn State 31, Iowa 0

Sept. 30 Games

Louisiana-Lafayette at Minnesota, noon
Penn State at Northwestern, noon
Michigan at Nebraska, 3:30 p.m.
Illinois at Purdue, 3:30 p.m.
Wagner at Rutgers, 3:30 p.m.
Indiana at Maryland, 3:30 p.m.
Michigan State at Iowa, 7:30 p.m.

Harlon Barnett, Michigan State interim head coach: It would be remiss not to mention the Spartans’ interim leader as a potential candidate. The 56-year-old oozes Green and White, having spent 15 total seasons coaching defense for the Spartans after serving as a reliable three-year starter for the Michigan State secondary from 1986-89.

The Cincinnati native, who served as Florida State’s defensive coordinator from 2018-2019, also experienced a seven-year NFL career with the Cleveland Browns (1990-92), New England Patriots (1993-94) and Minnesota Vikings (1995-96). If Barnett can galvanize his team amid a chaotic season and string together some significant Big Ten wins for his alma mater, Haller may consider him for the opening.

Pat Narduzzi, Pittsburgh head coach:

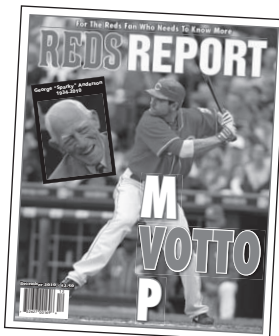
Like Barnett, Narduzzi has deep ties to Michigan State, having served eight seasons as Dantonio’s defensive coordinator from 2007-14 and assistant head coach from 2013-14.

The 57-year-old helped build a hard-nosed culture in East Lansing during that span, leading his defense to top-10 finishes in both total defense and rushing defense from 2011-2014. Narduzzi’s tenacious approach has translated to head coaching

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BIG TEN NOTES

success at Pittsburgh, where he has led his Panther program to a 63-44 overall record since taking the reins in 2015, the second-most wins in program history.

It is still too early to say if Narduzzi would leave the program he built to return to his former stomping grounds, but it is certainly an intriguing possibility.

Mike Elko, Duke head coach: Since being named head coach in December 2021, Elko has helped mold his Blue Devil program into a formidable threat in the ACC.

Last season, he guided Duke to an impressive 9-4 record along with a 30-13 postseason victory over UCF in the Military Bowl, an effort that allowed him to be named ACC Coach of the Year. The 46-year-old has continued this success into 2023, as his program holds a perfect 4-0 record, headlined by a 28-7 shellacking of Dabo Swinney's Clemson in Week 1.

Elko's early success as head coach can propel him to pursue a more lucrative position in another Power Five conference, making Michigan State a plausible destination.

Jason Candle, Toledo head coach: Candle may not be as attractive a potential candidate as Narduzzi or Elko, but he still carries an impressive résumé.

The Salem, Ohio, native has held the head coaching position at Toledo for the last eight seasons, leading the Rockets to a pair of MAC titles, six bowl appearances and a 57-33 overall record. Candle also had success as Toledo's offensive coordinator. His unit finished in the top five of the MAC in scoring offense in each of his four seasons calling plays from 2012-2015.

Candle has been a part of the Rockets' program for the past 15 years, so there is no telling if he will leave for a Power Five head-coaching gig. But that will not stop the Spartans from pursuing him, as sources told The Athletic that Candle is expected to be considered.

Matt House, LSU defensive coordinator/linebackers coach: The only non-head coach on this list, House is an intriguing candidate mostly due to his ties to the Spartans football program. He is a Michigan State graduate and earned his first coaching gig with the Spartans back in 2001 as a graduate assistant, where he primarily worked with the secondary and special teams.

Since then, House has established himself as an intelligent defensive mind who has put his fingerprints on numerous NFL and collegiate programs. He spent seven years in the NFL as a special teams and defensive assistant and won a Super Bowl ring with the Kansas City Chiefs in 2019 as a linebackers coach, while also having another seven years' worth of experience as a collegiate defensive coordinator at Pittsburgh (2013-14), Florida International (2015) Kentucky (2017-18) and LSU (2022-present).

House had his most impressive coaching season in his first season leading the Tigers' defense last year, elevating his new-look unit from 11th to fifth in SEC scoring defense (22.5 points per game), a successful season that may propel him up the coaching ranks in the future.

Rounding Up Big Ten Injuries

A pair of Big Ten West teams were hit

by the injury bug in Week 3, with players from both Iowa and Illinois succumbing to season-ending ailments.

The unfortunate news starts with Hawkeyes junior tight end Luke Lachey, who is expected to miss the rest of the season after undergoing surgery to repair his right ankle on Sept. 19. He suffered the injury on an incomplete pass from quarterback Cade McNamara in the first quarter of Iowa's 41-10 victory over Western Michigan on Sept. 16. He was unable to put any pressure on his right foot after the play, forcing trainers to help him off the field.

"Unfortunately, you kind of hate to lose Luke to an injury," Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz said after the game. "It's fairly significant, so we'll know more about that in a couple days. They're assessing that, but that's the one downside right there (to the game)."

Lachey, a Columbus native and Grandview High School graduate, has emerged as a staple in Iowa's offense since 2021, hauling in 46 catches for 662 yards and four touchdowns in three seasons with the Hawkeyes. His 398 receiving yards last season ranked second on the team, allowing him to earn All-Big Ten honorable mention by league media.

Illinois, meanwhile, lost a pair of contributing safeties for the season in sophomores Matthew Bailey and Demetrius Hill, who will both undergo season-ending surgeries to repair a shoulder and knee injury, respectively.

Bailey, who was slated to start after playing in all 13 games and recording three interceptions as a true freshman last season, dislocated his shoulder early in Illinois' 30-13 loss to Penn State on Sept. 16 – his first snap since making a full recovery from an offseason foot injury. According to head coach Bret Bielema, Bailey suffered structural damage to his shoulder that will force him to miss the remainder of the season.

"He just put his left hand out and everything piled on top of him," Bielema said on Sept. 19. "He did get enough strength to go back in, but what the X-ray found out was sometimes these guys have these types of moments and can play with it, but his injury was one that he won't be able to do that. That's why we wasted no time and no decision to get the surgery done as fast as we can. He'll probably be looking at about a six-month rehab with that."

Hill, who did not record a statistic in Illinois' first two games against Toledo and Kansas, suffered a torn ACL during practice on Sept. 14, just two days before the Illini's game against Penn State. The Miami native was in the midst of his first season with Bielema's program after transferring from Florida International in the offseason. He was selected to the Football Writers Association of America (FWAA) Freshman All-America Team last season after recording 95 tackles, one sack, three forced fumbles and one interception.

With the losses of Hill and Bailey, Illinois will look to seniors Clayton Bush and Nicario Harper, along with freshman Mac Resetch, to assume the majority of snaps at safety. The trio recorded four tackles and a pass breakup in their Week 4 win against Florida Atlantic on Sept. 23.



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Smith Praises “Excellent” Holtmann In Review

Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann has received his fair share of criticism following a disappointing 16-19 campaign last season, but that has not prevented athletic director Gene Smith from remaining optimistic that the seventh-year coach can get his program back on track.

COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

According to a 2022-23 performance evaluation obtained by Buckeye Sports Bulletin, Smith – who is set to retire on June 30, 2024 – complimented Holtmann for the culture he has instilled and sustained at Ohio State, a positive development that he thinks was on display last year while Holtmann navigated his team through a challenging season. These efforts prompted Smith to grant Holtmann an “excellent” year-end performance rating, according to the report.

“While the athletic performance of the team on the court did not meet expectations, Chris did an excellent job in all other areas,” Smith wrote in the performance evaluation. “Personnel management, budget, communication with all operations, schedule improvement focus, and especially recruiting. Having two ranked classes of recruits gives the program a great chance of success on the court in the future.”

“The student-athletes did an exceptional job in the classroom and represented the University exceptionally well. Chris’ focus on talent and character is seen in the young men who make up the future program. Despite the challenges on the court, Chris’ focus to build for the future was represented in the tough decisions he made last year. He showed excellent leadership in staying the course and playing the young players which is great for the future.”

Led by freshmen upstarts Bruce Thornton and Brice Sensabaugh along with established veterans Zed Key and Justice Sueing, the Buckeyes started their 2022-23 campaign strong, winning 10 of their first 13 games to propel them to No. 24 in the AP top 25 after New Year’s. But the trajectory of the season soon endured a drastic change due to an extended string of poor play, with the team dropping 14 of 15 contests from Jan. 5 through Feb. 23, a grim midseason stretch that derailed any hopes of earning postseason play.

While Holtmann and his young roster would rebound by winning five of their last seven games and making a run to the Big Ten tournament semifinals, he feels the late-season success was too little and too late for his usually competitive program.

“I needed to get us playing better earlier than what we did,” Holtmann wrote in his performance evaluation. “Analytics stated we played like a top-15 team the last five weeks of the season. I needed to get us there earlier.”

Holtmann listed his team’s improved performance toward the end of the year and a strong incoming recruiting class as some

of his main accomplishments from last season, but he wrote in the “opportunities for improvement” section of the report that “a lot” needs to be fixed before his team returns to prominence in the Big Ten.

According to the head coach, this includes getting “dramatically better defensively,” after having what he called the “worst efficiency we have had in my six years” last season, along with having more ball movement and “overall efficiency” on offense.

Despite the areas that need improvement, Holtmann – who received a three-year contract extension in May of 2022 – still sees a path for his program to return to the level of success they achieved through the first six years of his tenure.

“After five years of NCAA Tournament teams and a solid level of success on the court, the results this past season were unacceptable,” Holtmann wrote. “I love being a Buckeye and take great pride in representing this University and program. Although we did not meet our standards here last season I am really excited about our program and team.”

“While we will be young again, I absolutely love our sophomore class and the lessons we learned together last year and how that can help us moving forward,” he added. “That combined with a core of veterans gives us a chance at real improvement if we grow in the areas we have publicly and privately discussed as a team.”

Ohio State’s Big Ten Slate Solidified

The Ohio State men’s basketball team’s conference schedule was solidified on Sept. 19, when the Big Ten announced a 20-game slate that includes several intriguing matchups.

Ohio State kicks off its Big Ten schedule with a home game against Minnesota on Dec. 3, the sole team that finished behind it in last season’s conference standings. The Buckeyes will then travel to Penn State on Dec. 9 to close out the calendar year in the conference.

After a nearly month-long break in conference play, Ohio State will then face the meat of its conference schedule, starting with a home contest against Rutgers on Jan. 3. The Buckeyes will travel to Indiana on Jan. 6 and welcome Wisconsin to Value City Arena on Jan. 10 before they face off against archrival Michigan for the first time of the season on Jan. 15 at Michigan’s Crisler Center, the first game of a home-and-home series between the two programs.

Following games vs. Penn State (Jan. 20), at Nebraska (Jan. 23) and Northwestern (Jan. 27) and vs. Illinois (Jan. 30), the Buckeyes will endure a difficult eight-game slate in February beginning at Iowa (Feb. 2), vs. Indiana (Feb. 6) and Maryland (Feb. 10) and at Wisconsin (Feb. 13). The month will be headlined by a home matchup with reigning Big Ten champion Purdue on Feb. 18 (followed by a road game at Minnesota on Feb. 22) and a road battle against Michigan State on Feb. 25, with the Buckeyes closing the month out at home against Nebraska on Feb. 29.

After the home finale against the Wolver-

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Players in the class of 2024 who have issued a verbal commitment to play basketball at Ohio State.						
Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School	
John Mobley Jr.	G	6-0	150	★★★★	Mt. Pleasant (Utah) Wasatch Academy	
Colin White	SF	6-6	180	★★★	Ottawa (Ohio) Glandorf	

ines on March 3, Ohio State will close its conference schedule in Piscataway, N.J., for a battle with Rutgers on March 10, before heading to Minneapolis, Minn., to compete in the Big Ten tournament held from March 13-17.

Ohio State will kick off its season on Nov. 6 when it welcomes Oakland to Value City Arena, the first of an 11-game nonconference schedule that is headlined by matchups with Texas A&M (Nov. 10), Alabama (Nov. 24), UCLA (Dec. 16) and West Virginia (Dec. 30).

The Buckeyes will also head to Dayton’s UD Arena on Oct. 22 for a charity exhibition game with the Flyers, part of a two-day event between the two programs that aims to raise awareness toward adolescent and young adult mental health and suicide prevention.

Robinson, Reynolds Earn Offers After Visits

Ohio State extended offers to a pair of younger prospects following their respective visits to Columbus on the weekend of Sept. 16, offering scholarships to Indianapolis Lawrence North three-star point guard Azavier Robinson (6-0, 165) in 2025 and South Bend (Ind.) Washington shooting guard Steven Reynolds (6-5, 170) in 2026.

Robinson, the nation’s 135th-best prospect and No. 22 point guard, plays for the same high school program that produced Buckeye greats Mike Conley Jr. and Greg Oden. He experienced a breakout campaign for the Wildcats last season, stuffing the stat sheets with 20.3 points, 7.6 rebounds, 3.1 assists and 2.6 steals as a sophomore. Robinson’s strong season has accelerated his recruitment. He holds offers from other schools including Butler, Notre Dame, Oklahoma State and St. John’s.

Reynolds is unranked by 247Sports, but he is tabbed as the No. 34 overall prospect according to On3. He made an instant impact with head coach Ryan Varga’s Panthers’ program, averaging 13.3 points on right around 35 percent shooting from three as a freshman.

Reynolds, who also competes for the AAU program Phenom Unit alongside 2025 Ohio State offer and Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) Huntington Prep five-star shooting guard Darryn Peterson (6-5, 195), currently holds other offers from Purdue – where his sisters, Mila and Amiyah Reynolds, play for the Boilermakers’ women’s basketball team – along with Nebraska and Notre Dame, among others.

“I’m looking for a place that I can fit in at, on and off the court,” Reynolds told On3 on Sept. 6. “I want to go somewhere (where) I can contribute to their program. I can play on or off the ball, I can play fast or slow, so the system won’t really matter. But I would like to play for a coach that will let me do all of that.”

Five-Star Crumble, Other Prospects See OSU

Aside from Robinson and Reynolds, Ohio State hosted several other key targets in the 2025 and 2026 classes on the weekend of Sept. 16, headlined by one of the premier 2026 prospects in Richmond Heights (Ohio) five-star forward TJ Crumble (6-7, 180).

According to The Columbus Dispatch, Crumble’s trip to Columbus was his second in two weeks, as the Buckeyes also hosted him during the football team’s Sept. 9 contest against Youngstown State. Crumble – the No. 1 player in Ohio and No. 24 overall prospect – said his second unofficial visit consisted of taking in the Ohio State football team’s 63-10 victory over Western Kentucky on Sept. 16, touring the basketball program’s facilities and meeting extensively with Holtmann and associate head coach Jake Diebler, the latter of whom made a lasting impression on the Cleveland native.

“Ohio State is one of the teams that’s been recruiting me the heaviest as of now,” Crumble told the Dispatch, “one of about four schools. They’ve proven a lot of good points to me about being an Ohio kid and how it means more and what it could do for me even after the ball stops bouncing. We were with my family and Coach Diebler and Coach Holtmann in his office. He gave me a slideshow showing me what Ohio State’s really about and what it could do for me and what it means to be a Buckeye.”

Crumble, who was first offered by Ohio State on May 3 and holds interests from other prominent Division I schools such as Arizona State, Illinois and Texas A&M, is busy on the recruiting trail this fall. He completed unofficial visits to Michigan State and Texas A&M on Sept. 2 and Sept. 23, respectively, while he is also planning to see Illinois on Oct. 6, Cincinnati – for the second time – on Oct. 14, Ohio University on Oct. 28 and Notre Dame on an unannounced date.

Crumble was joined on Sept. 16 by Toledo Whitmer shooting guard Antoine West (6-3, 175) in 2025 along with 2026 prospects Louisville (Ky.) Trinity four-star shooting guard Jayden Johnson (6-5, 175); Newport, Ky., point guard Taylen Kinney (6-0, 160); and Upper Arlington, Ohio, forward Alex Smith (6-8).

Although Kinney, Smith and West are all unranked by 247Sports, Johnson is regarded as one of the top players in the 2026 class. Tabbed as the nation’s 37th-best prospect, 10th-best shooting guard and No. 1 player in Kentucky, he holds offers from a number of notable programs such as Cincinnati, Iowa State, Kentucky, Louisville, Texas A&M and West Virginia, among others. Prior to the date of publication, Ohio State had yet to grant Johnson an offer.

Breaking Down Ohio State's Big Ten Schedule

At long last, Ohio State fans can finally begin to plan their schedule for attending some of the women's basketball team's upcoming games, after the Big Ten released each school's conference schedule on Sept. 21.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

In lieu of listing every Big Ten game for Ohio State in this space – check BuckeyeSports.com for the full schedule and continued coverage of the women's team – we'll instead take a look at some of the highlights for the Buckeyes' conference slate, including high-profile games to look out for and some the team should avoid overlooking.

Dec. 30, at Michigan (23-10, 11-7 Big Ten last season): After beginning conference play on Dec. 10 against Penn State, the Buckeyes will have a nearly three-week break between conference games before returning to the Big Ten at Michigan on Dec. 30.

The Wolverines will certainly be looking for some revenge, as Ohio State – for the first time in program history – swept a three-game series against Michigan last season, picking up wins at home and on the road as well as in the Big Ten tournament. They lose forward Emily Kiser and guards Leigha Brown and Maddie Nolan but return guard Laila Phelia, who averaged 16.7 points and 4.2 rebounds on 43.7 percent shooting last season.

Jan. 17, at Maryland (28-7, 15-3): After three tune-up games at Northwestern and against Rutgers and Michigan – all of which should be comfortable wins for Ohio State – the Buckeyes travel for another important road game, this time at Maryland on Jan. 17.

The Terrapins return one of the conference's best players in guard Shyanne Sellers – a native of Aurora, Ohio – who was third on the team in scoring last season at 13.9 points per game but is expected to take over as the team's lead scorer following the departures of Diamond Miller (19.7 ppg) and Abby Meyers (14.3 ppg) to the professional ranks.

Ohio State was swept by Maryland last season, losing a heartbreaker in Columbus on Feb. 24 when forward Cotie McMahon's last-second tip-in was ruled to have come after the final buzzer sounded. But it was a stark improvement over the result on the road just a few weeks prior, when the Terrapins handed the Buckeyes a 90-54 loss.

Jan. 21, vs. Iowa (31-7, 15-3): The schedule does not let up from there. Ohio State returns home to face one of the top teams in the country – as well as the best player – in Iowa and star guard Caitlin Clark.

Clark's impact needs no further explanation, though there are questions on Iowa's roster outside of Clark. The Hawkeyes lost two of their three leading scorers to grad-

uation, with center Monika Czinano (17.1 points, 6.5 rebounds) and forward McKenna Warnock (10.9 points, 5.9 rebounds) both graduating from the program.

Iowa does return sophomore forward Hannah Stuelke – who likely would have won Big Ten Freshman of the Year last season had it not been for McMahon's breakout campaign – but does not have much else in terms of frontcourt experience.

But when Iowa takes the court, it will come down to – as it will for any other game the Hawkeyes take part in – the performance of Clark, and she's been a particular standout when playing against the Buckeyes. In five career games against Ohio State, she has averaged 31.6 points, 10.6 assists and 7.6 rebounds on 49.5 percent shooting, including a 40.0 percent clip from deep. Clark has 11 career triple-doubles, with two coming against the Buckeyes.

Feb. 4, vs. Indiana (28-4, 16-2): Ohio State's next significant home contest will come against Indiana on Feb. 4.

The Hoosiers return three of the conference's best players in forward Mackenzie Holmes and guards Sydney Parrish and Sara Scalia, and they should be among the conference's top contenders, including Iowa, Maryland and Ohio State.

The Buckeyes were swept in the regular season by Indiana by a combined score of 161-137 before pulling off the largest comeback in the history of the Big Ten Women's Basketball Tournament – 24 points – in a 79-75 win in the semifinals.

Feb. 22, at Penn State (14-17, 4-14): As Ohio State gears up for the close of the regular season, there's one potentially sneaky game left on the schedule before facing some of the conference's top contenders in the last weeks of the regular season.

The Nittany Lions were not a great team last season but did have a great player in guard Makenna Marisa, who averaged 17.5 points, 4.2 assists and 4.1 rebounds on 38.5 percent shooting. Penn State will also be looking for contributions from six newcomers – notably all transfers, without a single incoming freshman – including guard Ashley Owusu, whom some might recognize from her stint at Maryland (2019-21).

Owusu had a down year at Virginia Tech last season, playing just 15.1 minutes per game and averaging 5.1 points per contest, but over her first three seasons with the Terrapins, she averaged 14.6 points, 5.0 assists and 4.2 rebounds per game on 45.7 percent shooting in 88 games. The Nittany Lions are hoping to see her return to that form, and if she does, this could present a late-season challenge for Ohio State.

March 3, at Iowa: After a pair of tough home games against Maryland (Feb. 25) and Michigan (Feb. 28), Ohio State will close out the regular season at Iowa on March 3 in a game that is likely to have conference title implications, whether that be for the regular season or for seeding in the conference tournament.

Everything said about Iowa before applies, but the Hawkeyes – with several contributors stepping into bigger roles this season – are likely to have figured some things out by this point and will be ready to

OSU Women's Basketball Verbal Commitments

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

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School/Previous Team
Seini Hicks	F	6-0		Cincinnati Purcell Marian
Ella Hobbs	F	6-4	★★★★	Concord (N.C.) J.M. Robinson
Elsa Lemmälä	C	6-6		Espoo (Finland) Tapiolan Honka
Ava Watson	G	5-7	★★★★	Buford, Ga.

go with postseason play approaching.

The Buckeyes were swept by Iowa last season but did win in their last game at Carver-Hawkeye Arena on Jan. 31, 2022, a 92-88 victory in which Ohio State shot 45.8 percent from deep, including five makes on six attempts from forward Rebecka Mikulášiková. If the Buckeyes can get past Iowa this time around, the end result could be a conference title.

The team's nonconference schedule has yet to be formally announced, with the only games of note thus far including a neutral-site contest against USC on Nov. 6 in Las Vegas, the Baha Mar Pink Flamingo Championship (Nov. 20 vs. East Carolina, Nov. 22 vs. Oklahoma State) and at Tennessee on Dec. 3.

Ohio State Earns No. 1 Seed In ESPN Bracketology

The women's college basketball season doesn't begin until early November, with March Madness even further off, but it's never too early to predict who might be dancing.

In ESPN's first prediction for the NCAA women's basketball tournament, the publication had Ohio State as one of the top four seeds, along with UCLA, UConn and LSU, the defending national champions.

The Buckeyes have twice been a No. 1 seed in the tournament, doing so in 1993 – the team's most recent appearance in the Elite Eight until this past season – and 2006, when they suffered a 79-69 upset against No. 8 Boston College in the second

round.

ESPN has eight other Big Ten teams in their projections, including No. 2 Iowa, No. 3 Indiana, No. 4 Maryland, Nebraska and Illinois at No. 7, No. 8 Michigan and No. 11 Purdue.

"The changes since April's bracket begin at the top," wrote ESPN's Charlie Creme. "LSU won the national championship – and the offseason, with the additions of transfers Hailey Van Lith and Aneesah Morrow. Morrow's decision to leave DePaul for Baton Rouge pushed LSU past UConn for the top overall seed.

"UCLA and Ohio State bump conference rivals Utah and Iowa to claim the final two No. 1 seeds. That shift hints at how compelling the Pac-12 and Big Ten races will be, as those conferences lead the way with nine and eight bids, respectively."

Ohio State Offers 2025 Center Gordon

Ohio State issued an offer on Sept. 17 to Brownsburg, Ind., four-star center Avery Gordon (6-5), one of the nation's top recruits in 2025, after she visited Columbus.

According to ESPN, she is the No. 42 overall prospect in the class. She has reported additional offers from BYU, Clemson, Iowa State, Kansas State, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi State, Penn State and Texas Tech.

Brownsburg finished 16-10 last season with Gordon, in her sophomore season, averaging 18.2 points, 8.7 rebounds and 2.6 blocks per game on 58.2 percent shooting.

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Icers Reload For Another NCAA Tournament Run

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Maintaining culture, chemistry and tradition are the goals of every coach at the beginning of every season.

Ohio State men's hockey coach Steve Rohlik is no different, but the combination of the transfer portal and the rewards from a successful program that saw three players from last season's team leave early for the professional ranks means he's facing a massive overhaul of the roster. Also, eight players transferred out.

There are 15 new faces – eight freshmen and seven transfers (two of them graduates) – on the 26-man roster. Among them are seven forwards, six defenseman and two goalies who will try to help the Buckeyes earn a spot in the NCAA tournament for a second straight season.

They will be tasked with replacing the second-, third- and fourth leading scorers (Jake Wise, Mason Lohrei and Tate Singleton, respectively), the top two defenseman (Lohrei and Cole McWard) and goalie Jakub Dobeš, who played all 40 games.

"We have 15 new guys," Rohlik said. "I think that's the good and the bad. It's good because it's great energy – guys are hungry, they're excited. And then the bad is it's just a feeling out of what I do, what our staff does, how we approach things, what our day-to-day is. And we can only get a limited amount of time on the ice with them right now.

"So in years past we've had guys around for a while and you're not quite as worried when that first game comes up in a hurry. Now all of a sudden, you've got, obviously, a lot of different personalities, a lot of new guys. It's like, where are we going to be Oct. 7 (for the season opener at Mercyhurst)? I don't know that."

It's a unique group of newcomers in that one is the son of the general manager for the Montreal Canadiens, and another is the son of a former NHL coach. There's another son of a former NHL player and a fourth who is the son of an ex-NHLer and brother of a current NHL player.

What it means is added eyes on the Buckeyes, an attractive situation for those undrafted players such as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) graduate transfer defenseman Mason Klee, whose father, Ken, played for Bowling Green and saw action in 934 NHL games.

"It's definitely cool," Klee said. "Especially being in the Big Ten, I'm sure there's going to be NHL teams that are watching every night, and it's such a skilled league. That's always what you're looking for when you're trying to move on to the next level."

While the Buckeyes (21-16-3 last season) will have a revamped defensive corps and a new goalie – or goalies – at the back end, they do have leading scorer Stephen Halliday returning. The sophomore, the 104th pick (fourth round) in the 2022 NHL draft by the Ottawa Senators, had a team-high 41 points (nine goals, 32 assists) in 40 games last season.

Halliday's focus is on staying in the moment even though he saw Lohrei (Boston Bruins), McWard (Vancouver Canucks) and Dobeš (Montreal Canadiens) ink profession-



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE MEN'S ICE HOCKEY

BIG ASSISTS – Ohio State men's hockey returns the team's leading scorer from last season, sophomore Stephen Halliday, who had nine goals and 32 assists last year.

al contracts following their seasons.

"If it's not my time, it's not my time," Halliday said. "At the end of the year I'll reconvene and see where I am, but I don't think about that at all because it's in the future. I've seen a lot of the great players just staying in the present. I'm learning from those guys."

Senior forward Joe Dunlap (13 goals, nine assists) was fifth in scoring but will miss the early portion of the schedule with an injury. Forward Davis Burnside was right behind Dunlap with 21 points as a freshman, including 14 goals. Junior forward Cam Thiesing led the Buckeyes with 15 goals to go along with five assists.

Driving Force

The Buckeyes' first NCAA appearance since 2019 (they would have made it in 2020 had the postseason not been canceled because of COVID-19) got off to a bang with an 8-1 thumping of Harvard in the opening round before a 4-1 loss to eventual national champion Quinnipiac in the regional final. That's all the motivation the returning players need.

"Go to the Frozen Four and win a championship," fifth-year defenseman Scooter Brickley said. "That's every year we want that. Yeah, we have new guys, but that's not going to be something that holds us back. We've got some guys that came in with a lot of experience too, and we have older freshmen that came in as well. So it's not something that we're shying away from. This is what we want. We're working toward that every day."

The way the season ended still sticks with senior forward Patrick Guzzo.

"It's crazy. I mean, we talked about it almost every day," he said. "The boys have talked about it just as a group so it's in the back of our minds for sure. But we're also not focusing on that last game before the Frozen Four.

"We're focused on Mercyhurst and the first game of the season. The ultimate goal is to make the Frozen Four and win it, but we've got to start from the beginning."

Klee can sense the motivation of the returning players.

"Once you get that close, it only makes you want it more," he said. "I think that's the story for all those guys, and they've done a good job of instilling how cool it is to make it that far, but they're definitely not satisfied with where they ended up. Taking that next step is a big part of our plan this year, and we're going to do everything we can to get there."

The Buckeyes' season factored in Klee's transfer decision.

"They had a really good team last year," he said. "They made the tournament, and hopefully we can do the same thing this year. Whenever you're looking for new places to play, that always helps coming to a spot that's had success in the recent past and having a good coaching staff and a good group of guys coming back."

For Rohlik and his staff, the priority when recruiting a transfer is finding someone who, while personally motivated, places the team over individual goals.

"There's two parts to that," the coach said. "Obviously, you want to come here because you have all the resources in the world

to help you become a better player, a better person, a better student-athlete. The other part of it is if the team has more success, you're going to have success as an individual. The last time I checked, you can't win a hockey game with one guy on the ice vs. five. We're going to win as a team. You've heard me say that a zillion times.

"We've had success here at Ohio State and won because of our depth, our team aspect, and that's just going to continue. If we can go out there, keep getting better and be better as a team, the individual success will follow, and I think we've had the best of both worlds."

Meet And Greet

Here is a look at the new players in alphabetical order with comments by Rohlik, unless noted:

Caden Brown, junior, forward: St. Louis native played in 45 games for Wisconsin the past two seasons. ... Injured and will not be available at the start of the season. ... Father, Jeff, played 747 NHL games. ... Older brother, Logan, is with the Tampa Bay Lightning.

"Unfortunately, he hasn't been on the ice with us at all yet. Hopefully we'll get him back soon. He has a high-end skill set."

Damien Carfagna, sophomore, defenseman: Transferred after one season at New Hampshire where he had 12 points (four goals, eight assists) in 28 games.

"Really calm demeanor. Never looks like he's pushing himself, but he's at a calm level."

Sam Deckhut, freshman, forward: Played last two seasons with Sioux City (Iowa) in the United States Hockey League. ... Alternate captain in 2022-23 when he had 44 points (13 goals, 31 assists) in 61 games. ... From San Diego.

"Responsible, an older junior player that can plug and play probably anywhere."

Jake Dunlap, sophomore, forward: Younger brother of Joe Dunlap. ... Transferred after one season (25 games) at New Hampshire. ... Played for Madison (Wis.) of the USHL the previous season and led the team with 24 goals in 57 games.

"The opportunity was there with Jake because, obviously, we knew his family. You can see what he brings to the table – high motor, has some talent."

Kristoffer Eberly, freshman, goalie: Had 25 wins in 46 games with a 2.97 goals-against average and .893 save percentage for Green Bay (Wis.) of the USHL last season.

"Big kid (6-4, 208). First year, really, full-time in the USHL last year. Had some really outstanding games. His big thing is consistency but you can see his raw talent."

Ryan Gordon, freshman, forward: Had 22 points (11 goals, 11 assists) in 58 games for Sioux City last season. ... Played in the lower-tier North American Hockey League the previous two seasons. ... Father, Scott, played 23 games in the NHL and coached the New York Islanders (2008-11) and was interim coach of the Philadelphia Flyers (2018-19); now assistant coach for the San Jose Sharks.

"He loves the game and studies it, puts in the extra time. A responsible 200-foot player."

Riley Hughes, graduate, forward: Trans-

fer from Northeastern where he earned a finance degree. ... No. 216 (seventh round) selection by New York Rangers in 2018. ... Younger brother, Jack, plays for Northeastern and was second-round pick (No. 51) of the Los Angeles Kings in 2022. ... Father, Kent, is general manager of the Montreal Canadiens.

"His dad was in town. The family was so excited to come to see what this campus was all about. I mean, there's a general manager of the Montreal Canadiens right in our own back yard. So, that part's exciting."

Brent Johnson, junior, defenseman: Played 36 games for North Dakota the past two seasons before transferring. ... No. 80 (third round) pick by Washington Capitals in 2021. ... From Dallas.

"Excellent skater. Great skill set. Hasn't played much the past two years."

Mason Klee, graduate, defenseman: Transfer who graduated from RPI magna cum laude with degree in business management. ... In three seasons for the Engineers, had 16 points (four goals, 12 assists) in 88 games. ... Had never attended a college football game before the Sept. 16 game against Western Kentucky.

Klee on why he chose Ohio State: "The culture here, the fans, the people around it just make it such a special place. I enjoyed my time at RPI, which is a smaller school, and I just wanted to try something new. Kind of the opposite end of that, which is here."

Nathan McBrayer, freshman, defenseman: From nearby Dublin, Ohio. Played for the Ohio AAA Blue Jackets. ... Spent the past two seasons with Muskegon (Mich.) of the USHL. ... First skate as a child was at the OSU Ice Rink.

"What a great story. It seems so long ago everybody was asking, 'Is he committed? Is he committed?' Well, Nate's finally coming here."

Max Montes, freshman, forward: Scored 23 goals and had 21 assists last season for Dubuque (Iowa) in the USHL, where he played the past three seasons.

"Really good junior career, tons of energy. A smaller skill guy that loves to compete."

William Smith, freshman, defenseman: Started last season with Sioux City before finishing with Omaha (Neb.). ... Toronto native.

"Eager to learn. He's not afraid to be involved in any part of the game. His skating ability, to me, is his asset."

Logan Terness, junior, goalie: Played 24 games over the past two seasons for Connecticut. ... Had a 2.56 goals-against average and .912 save percentage last season.

"He's got a track record. He's won some big games playing in a very competitive conference (Hockey East). He's shown in the past that he can beat the best teams out there."

Theo Wallberg, freshman, defenseman: Stockholm, Sweden, native. ... A sixth-round (No. 168) pick of the Ottawa Senators in 2022. ... Had 22 points (five goals, 17 assists) for Dubuque in 2022-2023.

"He uses his size but it's not like he's out there running through people. He plays with a calm demeanor. Ottawa wants him to play with a little more of an edge. He's just scratching (the surface of) where he's going to be."

Thomas Weis, freshman, forward: Played last two seasons in USHL. ... Limited to nine games for Madison (Wis.) last season. ... Played in Fargo (N.D.) the previous

season.

"Thomas is an absolute worker. You know what you get. He's the same every day, he gives you everything he's got."

Moving Forward

The Buckeyes always rely on scoring by committee and trying to get four productive lines on the ice.

Among the returning forwards, Guzzo had 17 points (nine goals, eight assists), senior Michael Gildon 15 points (three goals, 12 assists), graduate Matt Cassidy had 14 points (three goals, 11 assists) and graduate Dalton Messina had a goal and three assists in 25 games.

"Our identity is we're a hard-nosed team," Guzzo said. "We have balance throughout the lineup."

Tough To Defend

Sophomore John Larkin returns for the defense. He was used as a forward at times when the team was hit hard by injuries but had no points in 10 games.

The unexpected transfer of defenseman Tyler Duke after his freshman season to join his brother, Dylan, at Michigan leaves Larkin and Brickey (three goals, 11 assists) as the lone returnees on the blue line, and Brickey is excited to see how the new defensive corps develops.

"You're going to see a lot of big bodies being thrown around. We have some good size, and we've also got some guys that are super skilled," he said. "Overall, it's going to be good puck-moving, the bodies being thrown around and a lot of joining the play for some nice goals."

In Net

It's an open competition between the pipes. Of course, Rohlik figured as much three seasons ago when he had Dobeš and Ryan Snowden. Dobeš debuted in his second game as a freshman and never relinquished the No. 1 spot.

The same could happen this season, or there may be sharing of the duties until a winner emerges. The battle figures to be between Eberly and Terness. Junior Reilly Herbst's lone career game was making three saves while allowing one goal in 5:40 of mop-up duty last season against Bentley during a 9-2 win.

"You look at Jakub, he came in as a freshman and we were planning on every other game and all of a sudden he took the ball and ran with it, and the last few years were history," Rohlik said. "I like what I see so far. I like all three. They're very competitive. They're very anxious to be out here. Where that goes is the unknown question right now."

More Changes

Two former Buckeyes are joining Rohlik and JB Bittner, an assistant coach and former Ohio State player.

Paul Kirtland arrived as an assistant coach from Minnesota State. He replaces Luke Strand, who took the Minnesota State head coaching position. Kirtland played for the Buckeyes from 2009-12. His wife, Colleen, was a second-team All-American gymnast during her Ohio State career that spanned 2009-13.

"Paul has been great," Halliday said. "He's such a personable guy. Like him, I'm a huge hockey nerd. I love talking to him about the game and what he sees and what he did

2023-24 Ohio State Men's Hockey Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Yr.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown
1	Logan Terness	Goalie	Jr.	6-0	175	North Vancouver, British Columbia
2	Nathan McBrayer	Defenseman	Fr.	6-0	195	Dublin, Ohio
4	John Larkin	Defenseman	So.	6-2	190	Northville, Mich.
6	Mason Klee	Defenseman	Gr.	6-2	195	Castle Rock, Colo.
7	Brent Johnson	Defenseman	Jr.	6-0	185	Dallas, Texas
8	Scooter Brickey	Defenseman	5th	6-4	215	Burtchville, Mich.
9	Riley Hughes	Forward	Gr.	6-2	200	Westwood, Mass.
10	Thomas Weis	Forward	Fr.	5-10	180	Madison, Wis.
12	Caden Brown	Forward	Jr.	5-11	185	St. Louis, Mo.
14	Dalton Messina	Forward	Gr.	5-11	195	Macomb, Mich.
15	Cam Thiesing	Forward	Jr.	6-0	184	Nashville, Tenn.
16	Max Montes	Forward	Fr.	5-8	165	Hartland, Wis.
18	Michael Gildon	Forward	Sr.	6-2	196	Plano, Texas
19	Stephen Halliday	Forward	So.	6-4	210	Glenwood, Md.
20	Matt Cassidy	Forward	Gr.	6-0	187	Medford, N.J.
21	Joe Dunlap	Forward	Sr.	6-0	185	Windham, N.H.
23	Davis Burnside	Forward	So.	6-0	176	Scottsdale, Ariz.
25	Sam Deckhut	Forward	Fr.	5-11	195	San Diego, Calif.
28	William Smith	Defenseman	Fr.	6-1	195	Toronto, Ontario
29	Ryan Gordon	Forward	Fr.	6-0	185	Duluth, Ga.
34	Reilly Herbst	Goalie	Jr.	6-0	185	Niwot, Colo.
44	Theo Wallberg	Defenseman	Fr.	6-5	203	Stockholm, Sweden
60	Kristoffer Eberly	Goalie	Fr.	6-4	208	Pinckney, Mich.
71	Patrick Guzzo	Forward	Sr.	6-3	198	Marysville, Mich.
91	Jake Dunlap	Forward	So.	5-9	175	Windham, N.H.
93	Damien Carfagna	Defenseman	So.	6-0	185	Wood-Ridge, N.J.

Head Coach — Steve Rohlik

Assistant Coach — JB Bittner, **Assistant Coach** — Paul Kirtland, **Assistant Coach** — Nate Guenin, **Director of Hockey Operations** — Layne LeBel, **Equipment Manager** — Tim Adams, **Athletic Trainer** — Jason Rule

at (Minnesota State)."

Nate Guenin was hired after the NCAA approved a third assistant coach effective July 1. He played four years for the Buckeyes (2003-06) before an 11-year professional career that included 205 NHL games, and three with the Blue Jackets in 2010-11.

The former defenseman was part of the 2004 Central Collegiate Hockey Association tournament championship team and three teams that reached the NCAA tournament.

The coaches are limited in their access to players before Oct. 1, but Halliday already has seen the benefits from having Guenin around.

"I can't wait for him to be able to come on the ice because I know he's really loving it," Halliday said. "He took me aside one (players') practice and was trying to teach me about D-zone coverage and stuff like that in the NHL."

"I'm obviously going to try and play there, just like everyone else on the team, and being able to talk about the (defensive) zone and little things like that is invaluable because he played there. He knows the game so well that I'm really excited to learn from him just because he has so much to offer."

Former Buckeye netminder David Caruso is the new goalie consultant, replacing

Dustin Carlson.

Book It

After the one-off at Mercyhurst on Oct. 7, the Buckeyes open the home schedule vs. Lindenwood in nonconference games Oct. 13-14 at Value City Arena.

The 24-game Big Ten schedule begins Oct. 20-21 at Michigan in what should be a spicy series. Not only did the Wolverines win 7-3 in the Big Ten semifinals last season, but the transfer of Tyler Duke hit a nerve.

When U-M announced Duke's transfer, its Twitter account jabbed at Ohio State, saying, "He realized his mistake. That Team Up North is just better." The folks inside Value City Arena were not amused, and Halliday is looking forward to the matchup.

"Obviously Michigan, with our boy Duke, he transferred. Hopefully we can stick it to those guys in the third week up there," he said.

The following weekend, the Buckeyes play at Omaha, where former teammate Dominic Vidoli transferred this season.

"It will be good to see him again and to play against those guys," Halliday said. "They have a really nice rink so that will be a fun trip, too."

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Field Hockey Hoping To Build On Win Over U-M

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Last season ended in disappointing fashion with the No. 20 Ohio State field hockey team falling to No. 2 Maryland in a game that was much closer than the 5-2 final score would signal. It was tied up late into the third quarter, and then-junior forward Makenna Webster had a chance to give Ohio State the lead, but her shot bounced off the post, and the Terrapins scored three goals in the fourth quarter, two of them late, to pull away.

It was more of the same for the Buckeyes, who the entire year had been hanging with the best teams in the country but were not able to hang on late and come out with the win. Though they did finish with an overall record of 11-8, they barely made the Big Ten tournament after finishing 3-5 in conference play.

Of the Big Ten's nine field hockey teams, six were consistently ranked in the top 20 in the National Field Hockey Coaches Association Poll. Ohio State remained in the rankings throughout the season but struggled against ranked competition, dropping four games to ranked conference teams and winning just one in a 2-0 victory over No. 5 Iowa on Oct. 14, 2022.

Struggling to compete regularly among the best in the Big Ten has been a consistent factor for Ohio State, and that has not been more evident than in the Buckeyes' struggles in beating Michigan. A 3-1 loss to the then-sixth-ranked Wolverines on Oct. 28, 2022,

marked the 13th consecutive defeat to Michigan for the program dating back to 2012.

This season is different. Ohio State has already built up a 9-2 record through the first 11 games, and for the first time in 11 years, the team was able to knock off Michigan, defeating the eighth-ranked Wolverines in convincing 5-1 fashion on Sept. 15 in Columbus. Going into the game, head coach Jarred Martin told Buckeye Sports Bulletin the plan was to be as aggressive as possible and keep that energy up throughout the entire game.

"I told them, 'The game's going to favor the aggressor, so we just have to come out and be ready to go from the start,' and it showed," he said. "You could tell we were energized. Our warmup was great – a lot of cheering, a lot of high fives. The leaders on our team did a great job preparing us mentally and physically. Then to be able to sustain that for the whole game, I was impressed with how well we did that."

That game plan paid off early, with Webster giving Ohio State the lead just 38 seconds into the game, one the team would not relinquish. The Buckeyes went into the locker room at halftime with a 2-0 lead after freshman forward/midfielder Brenna Bough scored at 12:06 off an assist by junior forward Hallie Brost.

With half of the game left, Martin wanted to make sure the Buckeyes didn't get comfortable up two goals, telling the team they needed to add more because a 2-1 game offers a different feel than a 3-0 game. And within the

first minute of the second half, Bough scored again, tapping in a pass from graduate midfielder/back Julie Rodijk for her third multi-goal game of the season. Ohio State would not stop there, with sophomore forward/midfielder Zella Bailey scoring from an assist by senior back Sarah Richards to take a 4-0 lead.

"The third quarter, we came out quick and took it to them right off the bat," Martin said. "That was good to see. We had these ideas and had these game plans, and we put it into place."

The Wolverines responded just 28 seconds later with a goal, but Rodijk came right back with a goal of her own with 2:24 remaining in the third quarter, assisted by Webster and junior midfielder Claudia Thomas for the eventual 5-1 final.

"We've been close a lot," Martin said. "Not only to beat them, but to do it in the way we did with a lot of aggressiveness, a lot of great play on offense and defense. It was really nice for the seniors and the fifth-years. I was proud of them. I don't forget about us losing to them in the Big Ten Championship Game (in 2021), or my very first year we lost to them in overtime. Maybe now we can start our own run."

"I want them to feel happy to be a part of this rivalry. For our fifth-years, I'm really proud of them. They were supposed to step off (the field) at the end, and I felt like they could stay on the field and enjoy this."

After that game, the Buckeyes would go on to beat Michigan State 2-1 in overtime on Sept. 17 for their second conference win in as many games. The next weekend, the Buckeyes suffered a 4-3 loss in overtime to Northwestern on Sept. 22 before bouncing back with a 3-2 win over Ohio University on Sept. 24.

Ohio State's 8-1 record after the big wins over Michigan and Michigan State is the program's best start to a season since 2006, and it has helped that so many of the players getting time this season are returning from last year, with 24 players back. Of the team's nine newcomers, they had only one transfer join in Rodijk, and the other eight are freshmen.

Webster has been important to the team this season with 13 goals through 11 games, with the aggressive approach Martin has preached paying off. She has six game-winning goals already this season, five more than any other player on the team, and her six assists give her 32 points through 11 games.

She came in last season as a transfer out of Wisconsin, picking field hockey back up after taking some time off in college to focus solely on ice hockey where she won a national championship. She came to Ohio State so that she could play both sports and has excelled in both since arriving in Columbus.

Martin said she has an unbelievable ability to be able to get touches in the circle and give the team extra chances to score. She also has been an important part of the team buying into the program and helping the freshmen along. She has been more confident in her second year with the team, according to Martin, since she has been able to build trust with her teammates.

"She is just tremendous," he said. "Her leadership, her work rate, what you see on the field is what I'd be able to see every day at practice. She's somebody who really pushes the tone and the tempo of our practices, the work rate we expect on the field for us and

helps just bring the team together.

"Her field hockey knowledge, her awareness, her ability to move off the ball when she doesn't have it is a lot better. She's able to win the ball on defense. Her defense has gotten better. She just changes the tempo of the whole game. She makes people rush."

A freshman whom Webster has helped along has been Bough, who is second on the team (behind Webster) with 14 points (six goals, two assists).

It has been easier for Bough to adjust to being at Ohio State because she joined a team on which her sister, graduate midfielder Leanne Bough, a team captain, is entering her fifth season. Leanne is a returning starter, and during her previous four years, Brenna had been coming to games and was able to learn more about the program and what they expect from their players. Her immediate impact hasn't been a surprise to Martin.

"For her to fit right in with our forward line, it's a tough task to try and take on," he said. "You have some pretty potent attackers. She's been starting for us the last few games. She just has a great skill set around the cage and is pretty hungry to score. That mentality, it's tough. You can't really teach that. She's a great player, but having her sister on the team has really made that transition a little bit easier for her to come in and know the ways of Ohio State field hockey."

Midfielder Anne Marie-Krebs is another freshman who has been able to make an immediate impact. She knows Thomas well, coming from the same high school, and also played for the United States' U18 Women's National Team earlier this year, which Martin is involved with, so she knows how he likes to play and understands what he wants out of his players.

Another newcomer who has been important to the team has been Rodijk, who played four years at Albany. Martin said her maturity and fast play has helped the team get off to this start, not to mention the fact that with Albany, she beat Michigan in the NCAA tournament, so she was the only player on the roster before Sept. 15 who had taken down the Wolverines.

Now that they have beat Michigan, the team is focused on keeping that same energized attitude through the full season. They have never been able to beat Maryland in 17 tries, even before they joined the Big Ten, but they are hoping they are able to end that streak as well. Even if they're unable to do that, the team still has bigger goals in mind.

"At the end of this season, where are we in the Big Ten standings?" Martin wonders. "What are our calculations like for the NCAA tournaments. This year, we're making some statements."

The Buckeyes were unranked in the NF-HCA Poll to begin the season but have since worked their way up to No. 12 in the country as of the Sept. 19 rankings, and they are looking to climb even higher with conference play in full swing.

"We're not done yet," Martin said. "It's been a great start, but there's still some big-time opponents coming up and we have to make sure we stay true to (what they have been doing) because that will give us the best opportunity to win."

"But I really think there's something special with this group."



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QB McCord Delivers To Down Fighting Irish

Two outstanding and legendary football programs faced off in South Bend, Ind., the evening of Sept. 23 when Ohio State met Notre Dame. Two programs that have a combined 17 national championships, each with seven Heisman award winners in their history, and each with a tradition of outstanding coaches as part of their legacy.

running game, Freeman hoped to consume time and keep the football away from Ohio State's explosive offense that had skill players as good as any other team in college football. Even though Notre Dame had some quick-strike potential of its own, it didn't come close to the depth the Buckeyes had at the wide receiver and running back positions.

Another key goal for Freeman was to dominate the Buckeyes in time of possession. He accomplished that goal by holding onto the football a lopsided 34:59 to Ohio State's 25:01. In the third quarter alone, the Fighting Irish ran 21 plays to eight for the Buckeyes.

If Freeman could sustain drives by running the football and letting his veteran quarterback, Sam Hartman, dink the ball to his tight ends on short passing routes, he could keep drives alive and eat up valuable time on the clock.

His plan nearly worked if it hadn't been foiled by a first year starting quarterback by the name of Kyle McCord, who put together a two-minute drill to perfection in mounting a come-from-behind drive that ended in the Notre Dame end zone and a Buckeye victory.

Holtz The Motivator

Lou Holtz makes thousands of dollars to give motivational speeches, but he may have made one too many prior to the face-off between the Buckeyes and the Fighting Irish.

Coaches are always looking for an edge to help motivate their players. If the opposing coach, or his players, say something negative about the team they're going to play, those words become instant "bulletin board" material. When former Notre Dame head coach and Ohio State assistant coach Holtz said, on national television, the Buckeyes are not tough enough to beat the Fighting Irish, Ryan Day took offense. Holtz insinuated that Coach Day was no Woody Hayes in terms of coaching toughness. That was the perfect motivational position for the Buckeyes.

Day let his players know prior to kickoff and he let the whole world know after the game that those were what was called in the old days "fighting words." A still irritated and emotional Day was still hot under the collar regarding Holtz's words at the postgame news conference.

This usually even-tempered and guarded Buckeye coach again called out Holtz and any other naysayer regarding the toughness and physicality of the Buck-

eyes. Day, the former college quarterback, sounded more like a linebacker and even a lot like Hayes.

I am sure Holtz won't receive a Christmas card from Day, but if there is a game ball given out for the great Ohio State victory over Notre Dame, I say give it to Holtz. He may have done more than anyone else to motivate the Buckeyes. One thing is for sure: He motivated Day.

Short Yardage Still A Concern

The nemesis for the Buckeye offense in recent seasons has been the inability to make a first down to keep drives alive or get the ball in the end zone in short-yardage situations.

The Buckeyes struggled at converting red-zone possessions into touchdowns three of four times against Notre Dame, including a fourth-and-1 at the Fighting Irish 1-yard line in the fourth quarter. It was the last play of the game, however, when Chip Trayanum plunged in from the Notre Dame 1-yard line to ice the victory with a red-zone touchdown.

It's tough to run power football out of the gun formation in a spread-type of offense. The offensive staff must figure out different ways to get that much-needed yardage in key situations. Settling for field goals instead of touchdowns on the opponent's side of the 50 is not good enough for a team to win championships, especially against future opponents such as Penn

State and Michigan.

McCord Takes Big Step

With 1:26 left in the game, McCord had to take his team 65 yards downfield and into the end zone to win.

He had to accomplish this task for the first time in his collegiate career on national television in a hostile environment. He had to make the right decisions in split seconds while keeping his poise under pressure. If he threw an interception, coughed up the ball or didn't convert third- and fourth-down situations, the Buckeyes would be denied a victory along with the hopes of an undefeated season.

But McCord refused to lose. He completed a key pass to Emeka Egbuka on third-and-10 and just four plays later to Julian Fleming on fourth-and-7 at the Notre Dame 39-yard line. Then, with only 15 seconds and no timeouts left, McCord hit Egbuka for a 21-yarder to the Notre Dame 1-yard line, and the heads-up quarterback got his offense to the line of scrimmage to kill the clock before time expired.

After an incomplete pass and with only three seconds remaining, Day called one of the most important plays in his coaching career, the dive play to Trayanum. That play and that final drive led by McCord will go down in Buckeye lore as one of the greatest Ohio State victories ever.

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

Two undefeated teams ranked in the top 10 of the polls, one led by a young charismatic coach who's trying to prove himself as a head coach against one that is a proven winner in one of the most pressured jobs in all of college football. The field would be full of talented athletes who would be future NFL stars.

Even though this would be only the eighth time these two storied football programs have met on the gridiron, the emotions shared by players and fans alike would make it seem like an historic rivalry like no other. Like two heavyweight fighters, these proud teams would square off toe-to-toe without flinching, giving the other their best shots until, alas, only one would remain standing and still undefeated.

It would go down as one of the most epic games in college football history.

Freeman's Plan Nearly Worked

Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman thought he had the right formula to take down the Buckeyes in South Bend and avenge the loss he suffered a year ago in Columbus.

The first part of his strategy was to win the battle in the trenches. Specifically, to wear down the Buckeye defensive front by winning the rushing battle. Going into the game against Ohio State, the Irish had averaged 47.8 more yards on the ground per game than the Buckeyes. The offensive line of Notre Dame was a seasoned group of big and athletic maulers who had showed the ability to manhandle opposing defensive fronts.

The other part of Freeman's strategy was to wear down the Buckeye defense was to alternate as many as five different tailbacks into the game. By controlling the

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McCord, Henderson Show Improvement At ND

What a difference a couple of hours can make.

Early in the Notre Dame game, Kyle McCord in making his first big start seemed a tad slow to read things. Maybe it wouldn't have been so noticeable if sixth-year college player Sam Hartman weren't on the other side leading the ND offense.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Hartman, not surprisingly at 24 years old and making his 50th start, was a model of patience. Taking his time. Looking over his options. And then making easy throws because of solid choices.

But by the time the game ended, the gap between the two – in this regard – closed significantly. Drop, decide and throw. McCord put the Buckeyes in position for the winning touchdown on the last-minute drive, and throughout the second half he seemed more decisive.

By the end of the game, it was McCord who had more passing yards (240 to Hartman's 175), and it was McCord who ended up on the winning side because of the way he engineered the final drive.

Who was the better quarterback on the

night? That's hard to say. They were asked to do different things at different times. Notre Dame took control of the game because of the run game. And Hartman did complete 68.0 percent of his passes in comparison to McCord's 56.8 percent.

But what was clear is that McCord took another leap forward in his play. The next big test comes Oct. 21 against Penn State.

Streak Extender

Ohio State has had the first-team All-Big Ten quarterback each of the last seven seasons (J.T. Barrett, Dwayne Haskins, Justin Fields and C.J. Stroud).

At this point, McCord would be considered a long shot to extend that streak to eight years. But if he continues to rapidly improve and is the best quarterback on the field against Penn State, it will become a real possibility as the season heads down the stretch.

Looking at just one key stat, entering last week's games, McCord ranked 11th nationally in passer rating at 183.2. USC's Caleb Williams was first at 240.5. Notre Dame's Hartman was third at 217.8. The only Big Ten quarterback ahead of McCord was Michigan's J.J. McCarthy, eighth at 194.1 Penn State's Drew Allar was way down the list at 152.4.

McCord's rating fell, largely because the formula greatly rewards touchdown passes (he had none against Notre Dame) but remained in the middle of the three. After the

latest games, McCarthy's rating was 190.5, McCord's 159.7 and Allar's 149.0.

For comparison, Stroud's rating through his first four starts in 2021 was 181.7. He completed 80 of 124 passes for 1,293 yards and 13 touchdowns while throwing three interceptions in wins against Minnesota, Tulsa and Rutgers and the loss to Oregon.

McCord, now 4-0 as the starter this season, is 74 of 113 for 1,055 yards and six touchdowns with just one interception.

Double-Edged Sword

The Buckeyes were certainly more than happy when TreVeyon Henderson raced 61 yards for a touchdown to give OSU a 10-0 lead early in the third quarter.

But the play, in an odd sort of way, also hurt the Buckeyes beyond the injury by Marvin Harrison Jr. on the play. It played into Notre Dame's game-control mode that helped turn the contest into its favor until the final seconds.

As a result of the one-play "drive" by Ohio State, Notre Dame ended up running 21 of the first 22 plays of the third quarter. Time of possession, by the time Notre Dame scored to draw within 10-7, was 11 minutes and 14 seconds for Notre Dame, and just 11 seconds for Ohio State in the quarter.

That's a lot of time for the Buckeye defense to be on the field, especially when Notre Dame was pounding play after play on runs between the ends.

You've got to believe that tired the Ohio State defense at least some. Any defense would be worn out. Yes, some of the blame goes on the defense for failing to make more stops, but being out there on the field for 21 of 22 plays covering nearly the entire third quarter didn't help.

Why Kick The Extra Point?

One second on the clock. Up by two points. I would have taken a knee instead of kicking the extra point.

Why? An extra point returned the length of the field by the defense is a safety, worth two points – or in this case a tie game. Rare? Of course. But it does happen. I'd eliminate any chance by taking the knee in that situation.

Gamblers betting the three-point spread likely had other thoughts.

On The Plus Side

Ohio State is 4-0. McCord is getting better. Henderson looks like the running back he was two years ago before an injury-plagued season. Tight end Cade Stover has proved to be a fine complement to the three wideouts. And the defense continues to impress, especially with the significantly improved play in the defensive backfield.

Those are all things that have been impressive so far this year. And they have the makings of a championship team, if there is continued improvement, especially on both the offensive and defensive line. Those units have been good enough to remain undefeated.

But to be championship level, those are among the areas that will need continued improvement. One glaring stat: zero sacks against Notre Dame. One reason is that the veteran Hartman knows when to hold the ball and when to run (or throw). But at times, he seemed to have way too much time to throw. Maybe part of that was by design, as OSU didn't blitz a lot. But even without blitzing, it would be nice to have a sack or two, or at least more pressures.

And, of course, there will have to be continued improvement in the offense, both the running game and the passing game. But, hey, it's early. The regular season isn't at the halfway point. And, most importantly, Ohio State has gotten this far without a loss.

Replay

The replay booth got it right on the stop of Hartman on the key fourth-down play in the first quarter. He was stopped short of the stick. But I thought the play was so close that it wouldn't be reversed. Kudos for those involved in the reversal.

I thought the replay review got it wrong on Harrison's falling backwards catch along the sideline in ruling it incomplete. His foot was down inbounds and, to me, he appeared to maintain control of the ball through the landing.

But the review got it right on the winning touchdown, both in confirming the touchdown and putting one second on the clock. Overall, no complaints about the officiating. That's a good thing in a marquee game.

What Now For Notre Dame?

Win out and Notre Dame very likely is in the playoffs. But it will take some doing. This is because USC looms on the schedule, visiting Notre Dame Stadium on Oct. 14.

Plus, Notre Dame has a handful of other games that will be at least midlevel tests – at undefeated Duke on Sept. 30, at undefeated Louisville on Oct. 7 and against a still competitive Clemson on the road on Nov. 4.

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A Matter of Heart, Man, Not Hartman

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

As I watched Ohio State's 17-14 win over Notre Dame play out, I thought about how the first meeting between the two teams, nearly 90 years previous, was dubbed "The Game of the Century." It might be a bit of hyperbole to call the most recent game The Game of this still fairly young century, but it was certainly an entertaining installment in the storied rivalry.

The Buckeyes did all sorts of things wrong in the game, and there are all sorts of things that still need to be worked on. However, Ohio State showed what Buckeye coach Ryan Day called "toughness and grit," and then some. I would add the word "heart." A very impressive showing, despite any of the flaws.

I also thought about the famed "Holy Buckeye" game from 2002, where in a fourth-down situation, Craig Krenzel connected with Michael Jenkins for the game-winning score at Purdue. That fourth-down conversion went for 37 yards, while this score came from a matter of feet. But Chip Trayanum's run will join the Krenzel to Jenkins connection as part of Buckeye lore.

Krenzel's legendary pass keyed a march to the national title for Ohio State. Will Trayanum's score do the same?

Also going down in Buckeye lore will be the usually cool, calm and collected Day's emotional outburst after the game. Not something you would have seen from Day's championship predecessors Jim Tressel or Urban Meyer. Maybe Woody Hayes or his protégé Earle Bruce, but certainly unexpected from Day.

I can relate, however.

I had been bothered all week by the hype that was surrounding Notre Dame, especially Irish quarterback Sam Hartman and the lack of respect that the Buckeyes, especially the ever-improving Kyle McCord, were getting. The Irish, and Hartman, were building up their status against the likes of Navy, Tennessee State, North Carolina State and Central Michigan. If anyone had bothered to take a look at Hartman's record at Wake Forest, they would have seen that his numbers were not overwhelming by today's standards, and as impressive as his numbers this season were, his weakest stats were against the team's toughest opponent, N.C. State. Hartman was 15 of 24 (62.5 percent) for 286 yards and was sacked four times. He did throw for four scores without an interception. Still, not overwhelming numbers by today's standards.

And Hartman was going to face a defense that had given up just 20 total points in its first three games and had shut down an arguably better QB than the Irish signal-caller, Western Kentucky's Austin Reed, the week before.

Meanwhile, McCord was being written off because of his lack of experience.

Then there was the former Buckeye Marcus Freeman. He was coming off a 9-4 season in his inaugural season leading the Irish, the most losses for a Notre Dame team since 2016. Why the assumption that Notre Dame was among the college elite, based on performances against such a modest early-season schedule?

In fairness to Freeman and his troops, they fought the Buckeyes tooth and nail for 59 minutes and 57 seconds. But as my all-time favorite professional wrestler, Ric Flair, would say, "In order to be the man, you've got to beat the man."

Freeman has had two shots at "the man" now and has come up empty both times, sending out only 10 men on defense for the final two plays of the most recent game – hardly the stuff of champions.

The experienced Hartman, the next Joe Montana to hear people tell it, had his moments against the Buckeyes but in the end could lead his team to only 14 points, failing to run out the clock on his team's final drive, leaving him to watch helplessly from the sidelines as the "inexperienced" McCord marched his team 65 yards to the winning score in just 1:25.

It's not just that he marched the team to the score. Other quarterbacks might have been able to do that, maybe even Hartman. What was amazing was that the inexperienced quarterback converted on third-and-10, fourth-and-7 and third-and-19 passes in the process. He also overcame an intentional grounding call and was able to get his team downfield and lined up in time to spike the ball and buy the Buckeyes seven seconds to try to win the game.

Is he the next C.J. Stroud? That remains to be seen. Is he good enough to lead Ohio State to the playoffs? That remains to be seen. Should he have been relegated to Hartman's shadow in the days leading up to the game? Absolutely not. The talking heads were clearly blinded by Hartman's numbers and Notre Dame's mystique. Those same talking heads obviously weren't paying attention as McCord got better and better each week.

While I didn't have the platform that Day had to express his anger, especially with Lou Holtz (I was limited to rants on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum), I feel equally vindicated by the big win for the Buckeyes.

However, at the risk of drawing the ire of Day, I will say that I am not as sold on the physicality of the team as he is just yet. Toughness, grit, heart? The Buckeyes have it. The ability to get a yard when needed, maybe not so much – at least not on a consistent basis. The ability of the defensive line to put pressure on the quarterback? I'm tired of hearing how the Buckeyes are mounting pressure, even if they are not actually getting to the quarterback. It's time to lay the wood. I was so thrilled – and the game turned – when J.T. Tuimoloau finally got to Hartman late in the game, though the play went down as a TFL, not a sack.

I think the Buckeyes proved that they can be physical, especially on the final play. They just need to be so on a regular basis, especially come Nov. 25.

Don't yell at me, Coach.

Quick Hitters

- If Cade Stover continues to produce like he has been, my traditional tight end watch is going to become obsolete. It seems that if opposing defenses are going to try to blanket Marvin Harrison Jr. and Emeka Egbuka, McCord is perfectly happy to look toward Stover, among others. Against the Irish, Stover pulled in another seven catches for 52 yards, giving him 17 catches on the season, tied with Harrison for second most on the team behind Egbuka with 19.

Stover's best catch against the Irish no doubt came when he corralled a wounded duck in the middle of a scrum to convert a third down late in the third quarter.

- Speaking of McCord looking to other receivers, Harrison may lose any shot at the Heisman or other awards because of the attention he has been receiving from opposing de-

fenses which have limited his numbers. But as long as McCord can pick out the other receivers such as Stover, the Buckeye offense should be able to move the ball, taking advantage of Harrison as a decoy. Egbuka equaled Stover vs. the Irish, also reeling in seven catches for 96 yards, including two for 44 yards on the game-winning drive. Not that Harrison didn't contribute on the march, catching a 19-yarder of his own, down to the ND 13.

- Speaking of McCord looking to other receivers, years from now fans will remember the heroics of McCord, Trayanum and Egbuka on that final drive. What people may forget is that none of the heroics from those players would have been possible if McCord had not hit Julian Fleming for 7 yards, just enough to convert a fourth down and keep the game-winning drive alive. Fleming had two catches for 8 yards in the game.

- I don't know what it is about Xavier Johnson, but he seems to play his best against the Fighting Irish. Last season he brought the Buckeyes from behind with a 24-yard touchdown catch from Stroud to make the score 14-10 in favor of Ohio State with 17 seconds to play in the third quarter.

This year he again stepped up late in the game. After the Irish pulled ahead 14-10 in the fourth quarter, Johnson turned in a 40-yard reception and the Buckeyes marched all the way to the Irish 11. Unfortunately, the Buckeyes turned the ball over on downs, but Johnson's reception helped the Buckeyes with the field-position game late in the contest. It was Johnson's only catch, but he also had a 32-yard kick return.

- In the little things add up to victory and championships department, don't forget that Jayden Fielding nailed his only field-goal attempt from 31 yards out to give Ohio State a 3-0 lead with 26 seconds to go in the half. In contrast, Notre Dame's Spencer Shrader missed his only field-goal attempt from 47 yards out early in that same period.

If Shrader made his attempt, or Fielding had missed his, the trajectory of the game might have been completely different.

Fielding has now hit on all four of his field-goal attempts, with a long of 40 against Indiana, and all 18 of his extra-point attempts.

- While the jury still remains out for many Buckeye fans on how Jim Knowles' defense is taking hold in his second year, the stop troops passed the test against Ohio State's first true competition of the season in Notre Dame. The Buckeyes gave up just 14 points and 351 yards to the Irish, who had come into the game averaging 46.0 points and 508.8 yards per game.

The Buckeyes are ranked sixth in the country in total defense, giving up 255.5 yards per game and second in scoring defense, yielding 8.5 points per game.

I'd sure like to see them get a few more sacks though. They have just five in four games.

Just Like PBS

I feel like I am part of the annual Public Broadcasting Service fund-raising drive or the Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon as I continue to reach out to readers to help Buckeye Sports Bulletin grow in a difficult environment for print publications.

I usually devote this space to laud the many subscribers who have been more than generous in their support of BSB. This is the time, if this were the Jerry Lewis Telethon and I were Jerry, my tuxedo bow tie would be loosened and I would poke at the readers who love Buckeye Sports Bulletin but insist on paying the lowest price possible. Some of you have no choice, but others are just looking for a bargain.

Whatever your situation, I am asking you to support BSB without paying an extra penny.

I have been looking for readers to send four free trial issues to Buckeye fans they know. I was expecting thousands of new names and addresses, and we have yet to receive even dozens.

Think of how many new readers we could introduce BSB to if each subscriber sent in just one name and address, or more. Don't know any Buckeye fans (seems unlikely)? Send the four free issues to your barber shop, your local library or your local high school library.

Send your names and addresses to BSB at subscriptions@buckeyesports.com, mail them to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212, or give us a call at (614) 486-2202. There is absolutely no cost to you or the recipient. In fact, we will even pay for the phone call if you would like at (800) 760-2862.

Remember, if you have already sent us a name, there is no reason to send it again. We will reach out to those people on our own.

Speaking of high school libraries, to add some real new blood to the circulation list, consider sending a gift to your children or grandchildren. We are offering a special price of \$29.95 per year on subscriptions for readers under the age of 35 for one, two or three years – a \$90 discount over the regular rate for up to \$270 savings. Many of those potential readers may have never read a newspaper. They might even find they enjoy it. Use the same addresses as above.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is a community, and all of us, those on staff and our loyal readers, need to participate.

First-Class Upgrade?

I know I say this every year, but the mail service for BSB has been absolutely brutal early in the football season. BSB is sent to the printer at the same time each week. It seems like the post office got behind on Labor Day, and it has had a hard time catching up. Things appear to slowly be getting better, but you might want to consider upgrading your existing subscription to first-class mail in an envelope for the remainder of football season.

You can upgrade your subscription through the Michigan game for just \$21 or through the traditional recruiting season for just \$31. Use any of the addresses or phone numbers above. Be sure to mention either "football" or "recruiting" upgrade.

No BSB In The Off Week

There will be no Buckeye Sports Bulletin the week of Oct. 1 due to the Buckeyes' off week. We will return with coverage of the Maryland game on Oct. 10.

In the meantime, don't forget that the electronic BuckeyeSports.com is available 24/7 for any breaking news between print publications. BuckeyeSports.com is free to all BSB subscribers.



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