

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 43, No. 5

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Oct. 14, 2023

## OSU Defense Continues Return To Dominance In 37-17 Victory

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ask any college football fan, and there are a handful of things that Ohio State – at least under Ryan Day – is generally associated with.

Maybe it's the endless supply of NFL quarterbacks or wide receivers, or perhaps the punishing running backs such as J.K. Dobbins, Trey Sermon and – when healthy – TreVeyon Henderson. Even on the offensive line, eight Buckeyes have been drafted since Day took over in 2019, and two tight ends have heard their names called in that same span.

But the common thread is that it all comes back to the offense. Considered among the sport's top play callers, Day's teams have been synonymous with high-powered offenses that routinely rank among the best in college football, with no amount of turnover at any position seeming to slow down the Ohio State machine.

That was, until this season. While the Buckeyes have by no means fallen off a cliff in terms of offense – the team still averages 35.0 points and 434.4 yards per game – it has not been at quite the level of efficiency that those in or outside of the program have been accustomed to over the past few seasons, with Ohio State still breaking in a new starting quarterback, a new offensive coordinator and three new starters on the offensive line.

The lack of an overwhelming offense has left an opening for the opposition, which is used to needing to score upwards of 40 points to remain in contention with the Buckeyes. But that opening has been slammed shut by defensive coordinator Jim Knowles and his stop troops, who have shown that defense might be the name of the game in Columbus right now.



SONNY BROCKWAY

**MAN OF THE HOUR** – Ohio State sixth-year safety Josh Proctor shone in the Buckeyes' 37-17 win over Maryland on Oct. 7, helping lead the defense with a 24-yard interception return for a touchdown that sparked the team to victory.

That announcement was made clear in Ohio State's 37-17 win over Maryland in front of 104,974 fans at Ohio Stadium on Oct. 7, holding the Terrapins to their fewest points and yards this season while helping overcome – at least in the first half – an uninspiring performance for the offense, which scored just a field goal in the first half for the second consecutive game.

It's become a common occurrence at this point, with the defense standing tall this season in wins over Indiana, Notre Dame and now the Terrapins as quarterback Kyle

McCord and his offensive teammates have consistently struggled to find a rhythm. But despite that offense being Day's calling card, the coach does not mind how his team picks up a victory as long as they're adding a one to the win column.

"I have no preference as long as we win," he said after the game. "I think the defense did some great things in this game. I thought Jim and the staff did a really good job with the game plan. I thought they were a step ahead in terms of the defenses we were in. He did a great job of getting them into the right calls."

The Terrapins were not the first high-flying offense that Ohio State has faced this season. Western Kentucky has been among the best air-raid teams in the country over the last few years, but Maryland quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa may be the best signal caller that the Buckeyes match up with all season.

Tagovailoa, who has rewritten the record books for the Terrapins, torched the Buckeyes last season for 293 yards and

two touchdowns while completing 72.2 percent of his passes in Ohio State's 43-30 win at Maryland, but it was a much different story this time around. After completing 6 of 10 passes for 71 yards and a touchdown in the first quarter, the defense limited Tagovailoa to just 15-of-31 passing for 125 yards and a pair of interceptions through the final three quarters.

The turning point for the game, with Ohio State trailing 10-0 early in the second, as well as for Tagovailoa, came on the first interception of the day for the defense. With Maryland at its 19-yard line and threatening to go up three scores, sixth-year safety Josh Proctor picked off Tagovailoa, taking the ball 24 yards to the house to get the Buckeyes on the board.

"Overall, the goal was to contain him," Day said. "He had 196 yards, 21 of 41, two sacks, and obviously the pick-six, so if you had said that going into the game, I probably would have signed on the dotted line on that

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## Buckeye Leaves

After a slow first half, Ohio State eventually found a rhythm on offense in a 37-17 win over Maryland on Oct. 7, but it was mostly on the back of yet another strong defensive performance by the Buckeyes. Here are some of the choices from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members and readers from the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum on players worthy of receiving Buckeye Leaves after the win:

**Patrick Engels, BSB:** Coming into this game, there were questions surrounding the health of Marvin Harrison Jr., who went down with an ankle injury against Notre Dame. But those concerns were quickly forgotten against Maryland. Harrison put a sputtering offense on his back for most of the game, flashing his talent with a number of game-changing catches.

His 58-yard reception in the second quarter was arguably the Buckeyes' only positive play on offense in the first half, which later led to a field goal from Jayden Fielding. Harrison's biggest play was a 17-yard score to put his team up 34-17, just another spectacular performance to add to his already-decorated Ohio State career.

Also in the second half, Harrison again broke free for another key 37-yard catch in the fourth quarter, which came on an Ohio State second-and-33, setting the team up for a Cade Stover 44-yard touchdown that put the game away for Ohio State. He finished with eight catches for 163 yards and the score.

**Braden Moles, BSB:** On a day with plenty of hard hits, no Buckeye hit harder than sixth-year safety Josh Proctor, who was a consistent thorn in the side of the Terrapins.

In perhaps his best outing at Ohio State, Proctor finished with seven tackles (1½ for loss) and an interception (the third of his career) that he returned 24 yards for a touchdown, the first in his six seasons with the Buckeyes.

But beyond the numbers, Proctor helped turn the momentum for Ohio State, scoring his touchdown with the Buckeyes trailing and infecting the defense with physicality with several big stops.

**Greg Wilson, BSB:** My Buckeye Leaf goes

to safety Lathan Ransom, who was coming off a 13-tackle performance against Notre Dame before the off week. He showed up for the second straight game against Maryland, this time with six tackles, one pass breakup and one interception.

The interception came at a pivotal time for the Buckeyes, with a 17-17 score with six minutes to go in the third quarter. Taulia Tagovailoa faced pressure from a three-man pass rush and had to roll out to the left with nobody open, and Ransom picked off the pass on the run to get the Buckeyes the ball back.

They would go on to get a field goal on the ensuing drive, giving them a lead they would not relinquish. The secondary has been one of the brightest spots on this team, and Ransom has been a big part of that.

### Subscribers

**Tiffin Buckeye:** MHJ. Enough said.

**BOB CODY:** Buckeye Leaves for Proctor (pick-six), Ransom (INT), J.T. Tuimoloua (harassing, pressuring Tagovailoa), Harrison (163 yards receiving, TD), Stover (TD reception that broke the Terps' shells), Kyle McCord (after a shaky start, 2 TDs and over 300 yards passing) and Jayden Fielding (3 for 3 FGs and all XPs).

**PeyoteBuck:** Proctor for sparking a game badly in need of sparking. He turned it around.

**AnthonyBuckeye:** Proctor and Ransom for violent play, game-changing interceptions and the TD. Denzel Burke and Jordan Hancock for tight coverage. Jack Sawyer, Tuimoloua and Tyleik Williams for dominant DL play. Tommy Eichenberg for being the tackle machine. Harrison for a memorable performance. Stover and Julian Fleming for champion play and McCord for excellent second-half play.

**BuckeyeScott:** Give Buckeye Leaves to Tuimoloua for waking up at the right time with his 1½ sacks and Eichenberg for a team leading 13 tackles, seven solo.

**Mcarr:** It's an easy one for me this week. Offense: Harrison. Defense: Proctor. Special teams: Fielding.

## From The Message Board

**Ohio State is up to 5-0 on the season, but the schedule begins to ramp up from here: at Purdue on Oct. 14, at home against Penn State on Oct. 21 and at Wisconsin on Oct. 28. With some significant challenges ahead, we asked our readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum how well they feel the Buckeyes are equipped to deal with the rest of the season with five games now under their belts. Here are some of the responses:**

"Feel they can beat anybody. There's a lot of parity in college football this season. O-line needs to get better!"

– Tiffin Buckeye

"Is that a Big Ten caliber offensive line? Will a defense built almost exclusively on stopping the big play work against better teams with lots of film to watch? Is Kyle McCord the Mr. Hyde of the first half against Maryland or the Dr. Jekyll of the second? There seem to be more questions than answers after five games. But as Urban Meyer would say, the best thing about being 5-0 is that it gives you a chance to be 6-0."

– Mcarr

"I love the toughness we've shown in a couple of these wins, but concerned that at Wisky, PSU and TTUN it will just be too much for us to 'tough' out. Can't hide this offensive line, they are what they are. Getting a little worried about the WR room. I have bad memories of the RB room at the end of last year. Marvin Harrison Jr. and Emeka Egbuka hobbling around is an ugly sight!"

– Otis johnson

"I'm less confident than I was when the season began because then I thought Ohio State was more likely to go 12-0 than not. Now, I'm increasingly concerned about the

OL, which is an understatement."

– Terrier Buck

"The defense is better than some may think. There appears to be some inconsistency in the offensive passing game at times. I'm quite disappointed in the running game. I'm happy we are undefeated. That is all."

– BuckeyeScott

"I only worry about one game at a time but if pressed, the next three games don't worry me. McCord isn't always pretty but he gets the job done with his cool determination. Bucks have too much talent not to succeed."

– PeyoteBuck

"Second-half adjustments on both offense and defense have been very good and effective. The defensive scheme changes and the second year playing in the system appears to be working. But we will need to see the PSU and TTUN games to be sure. McCord, in only his fifth start after becoming the starter, is showing glimpses of greatness and shows a great upside. The entire defensive team is playing tough and violent. The offense is doing so as well, except the OL. Opposing linebackers are constantly coming free against the Buckeye run game. Thirty odd carries for 60 odd yards against Maryland needs some serious work to fix and the OL may make the difference between championship or bust for the Buckeyes."

– AnthonyBuckeye

"Every time I see the Buckeyes play an early game, they come out flat. It seems like they just got out of bed two hours ago and downed a big breakfast. Opponent LBs are salivating when we run the ball. Sixty-two rushing yards on 33 attempts and three of 12 on third down conversions point to serious OL issues. Coach can say we're tough all he wants but these numbers don't back him up."

– R1TBDBITL

"I'd like to be optimistic about the offensive line improving its execution but I've learned over the years that it is unlikely. It's this team's Achilles heel. If this team has to play a game in driving rain, a snowstorm or very gusty winds (unable to pass the ball) it will be in big trouble. The defense will need to win 4-5 games. Maybe we are being too hard on this team. They are ranked either three or four in most polls. Almost every top-10 team has had its struggles. With parity, every game is a challenge."

– BRYON MCNUIT

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Conclusions Through Five Games

What conclusions can we reach about this Ohio State team after five games?

1. Kyle McCord is a significant drop-off from our last three quarterbacks. He lacks their accuracy and their consistency. He should not be the starting quarterback at Ohio State. This is a failure in recruiting by Ryan Day.

2. Day's protestations to Lou Holtz notwithstanding, this is not a physical team. The offensive line is particularly weak. When you average less than 2 yards per carry against any team in the country, you can't run the ball.

3. Maybe they are carrying out their assignments in Jim Knowles' new defense, but our defensive ends have disappeared. I'm sure that when they came to Ohio State to play for a great coach like Larry Johnson, they thought they would be getting lots of sacks. Remind

me again how many sacks our five-star ends have so far this year. That's what I thought.

4. TreVeyon Henderson is fragile and unreliable.

Penn State and Michigan must be dreaming about playing this team.

**Terry Walrath  
Hinckley, Ohio**

### A Great Victory

I hope all of the OSU critics can take a break and enjoy the win over Notre Dame. All we hear about is that Notre Dame had 10 men on defense during OSU's final score. How about OSU beginning its last drive on its own 35-yard line with excellent execution from its quarterback, offensive line and receivers?

They moved to the ND 1-yard line. This took place when ND had 11 men on defense. In 75 years, that final drive

should be considered one of the best I can remember. Especially since it was Kyle McCord's fifth start at quarterback.

Regarding shots at OSU by Lou Holtz and Ryan Day's response, I have one point to make – if you're big enough to fire a salvo, you should be big enough to receive return fire.

**Jim Chesney  
Bluffton, S.C.**

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

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

Columbus Sports Publications  
1200 Chambers Road, Suite 206  
P.O. Box 12453  
Columbus, Ohio 43212  
(614) 486-2202  
bsb@buckeyesports.com

Periodical class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212. Subscription rates: \$119.95/year.

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### 2023-24 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 43)

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The next issue (Oct. 21 cover date) will be mailed on Oct. 17.

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

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# OSU Able To Overcome Its Own Flaws

All of the ingredients to make a supersized stink-burger were there for Ohio State when it entertained a Maryland team undefeated after five games for the first time since Ryan Day was playing his senior year of college football at New Hampshire.

Day and his Buckeyes already faced the usual letdown that follows the euphoria of an emotional, last-second victory on the road and topped that with all the intrinsic start-stop-start problems created by an off week. As a result, Ohio State treated an early October homecoming crowd of 104,974 to a series of mishaps, missed blocks and misadventures that staked the visiting Terrapins to a 10-0 lead early in the second quarter, an advantage that could have been more had Maryland cashed in on every opportunity afforded it.

In what Fox Sports color analyst Joel Klatt described at one point as a “comedy of errors,” Ohio State ended its first possession of the game with a botched special teams play so bad that it was difficult to tell if it was a called fake punt or a contender for worst center snap of all time. In any event, the play (which Day later admitted was indeed a horribly bad snap) led to Maryland taking early control of the game.

While the Buckeyes and their powerful offense produced only 28 total yards in the first quarter, the Terrapins produced nearly four times that amount led by veteran quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa, who completed 6 of 10 passes in the opening period for 71 yards and a touchdown.

During the early going, Tagovailoa seemed to be particularly picking on Ohio State safeties Lathan Ransom and Sonny Styles, and only a dropped pass in the end zone on the part of Maryland receiver Kyle Prather – after he had suckered Ransom on the route – prevented the Buckeyes from falling into a 14-0 hole.

Two plays later, Tagovailoa converted a third-and-2 situation by connecting with receiver Jashaun Jones for a 26-yard gain to the OSU 6. Styles had the coverage on that one.

And then, as if someone waved a magic wand, the complexion of the game completely changes. Maryland head coach Mike Locksley suddenly decided to play it safe. A third-and-goal jet sweep by his quarterback was stuffed by the Buckeyes for a 1-yard loss, and the Terrapins had to settle for a field goal and a 10-0 lead.

Tagovailoa was victimized on his team’s next possession by a Josh Proctor pick-six, the Buckeyes finally shifted their offensive machine out of neutral, and Ohio State eventually ran away with a 37-17 victory due in no small measure to Marvin Harrison Jr. helping Kyle McCord recover from a rocky start.

McCord misfired on five of his first seven pass attempts and had only 14 yards to show for his first quarter of work. He had also taken two sacks, equaling the number he had absorbed in the first four games of the season combined.

But after Proctor’s game-shifting interception return, McCord was a different quarterback. Helped by his familiarity with Harrison, who was targeted 15 times and caught eight balls for 163 yards and a touchdown, McCord finished his afternoon with completions on eight of his final nine throws. That allowed the third-year QB to finish a 19-for-29 performance with a career-high 320 yards and two scores.

On the other side of the line, the OSU defense was making the necessary adjustments to rattle Tagovailoa. The Big Ten’s leading passer, playing in the 50th game of his career, finished with a season-low 196 yards through the air, only 52 of that coming in the second half. He was also intercepted twice and sacked twice.

At the end of the season, the 20-point victory will be all the matters. The fact the Buckeyes sputtered early and often, committed a

season-high 10 penalties, and looked positively somnambulist through much of the first half won’t matter. After all, good teams are supposed to overcome mistakes and win ugly games.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

But there were some problems that continue to plague this team, flaws that the nation’s newly-minted No. 3 team aren’t supposed to have.

### Spinning Their Gears

Sticking out like the proverbial sore thumb was the OSU running attack against Maryland. Calling it an attack is being overly generous, but I digress. The Buckeyes totaled only 62 yards on the ground, their lowest total since managing only 35 during a 10-7 loss to Michigan State in 2011.

Having anything to do with that disastrous 2011 season, let alone being mentioned in the same sentence with that team, should set off alarm bells throughout the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, and there appears to be plenty of blame to go around.

Two weeks after the make-them-eat-their-words win against Notre Dame, it was back to the same old, same old for the Ohio State offensive line. There was no physical domination at the line of scrimmage, Maryland linebackers were free to roam wherever they liked, and the Buckeyes’ longest run of 11 yards came during their final full possession of the game.

I will continue to keep my powder dry regarding the toughness argument, but when a team that features as many talented running backs as Ohio State averages 1.9 yards on 33 attempts, something is wrong. Take out McCord’s lost yardage on four sacks, you argue? OK. That pushes the rushing average to 2.8 yards on 29 attempts. Still unacceptable.

Everyone knew the offensive line was going to take some time to mesh this season, but we’re almost halfway through the regular season and it is getting pushed around by the likes of Maryland. Yes, the Terps are a much-improved bunch on defense, but there is no way the athletes on that sideline should manhandle those on the OSU sideline. And if they do, it might be worth looking into whether or not the weight and conditioning program needs a tweak or two.

I’m also left scratching my head about the rotation at running back. It’s obvious that TreVeyon Henderson is a home-run hitter, but he’s apparently unable to remain healthy. But is the battering-ram style of Chip Trayanum really the team’s second-best option?

With the start against the Terrapins, perhaps Day was rewarding Trayanum for his game-winning dive against Notre Dame, but I thought Miyan Williams was second behind Henderson in the pecking order at running back. There certainly is a place for Trayanum and his power game as was evidenced when he got the necessary yardage on a fourth-and-1 to sustain a drive in the third quarter. But Williams seems to be a better breakaway runner, and it was his 11-yard gain in the fourth quarter that represented Ohio State’s longest running play of the game.

And while we’re on the subject of the running back rotation, where have Evan Pryor and Dallan Hayden been? Pryor hasn’t had a carry since the blowout of Western Kentucky, and Hayden – who rushed for 146 yards and three TDs last year against Maryland – hasn’t had a single carry all season. What good is recruiting

depth at the position if you never use it?

McCord’s lack of mobility also seems to be hamstringing the running game. I know the OSU quarterback can run with the football, but more often than not, he stands statue-like in the pocket and rarely makes opposing defenses pay for loading up on pressure. I’m not asking for him to imitate J.T. Barrett or Justin Fields, but his timing and accuracy are not yet on the level of C.J. Stroud, either, so McCord is going to have to tuck and run every once in a while if for no other reason than to keep the defense honest.

Ohio State can probably live with a subpar running game against most of its upcoming opponents. But being a pass-only team might not get it done in a couple of weeks against Penn State, and it certainly won’t fly against the maize and blue roadblock that’s sitting at the end of November.

### The Numbers Game

- The victory was the 50th for Day as head coach of the Buckeyes, and he reached the milestone faster than any of his predecessors except one. While Day took 56 games to notch win No. 50, it took Urban Meyer (2012-18) only 54 games.

- Only five other Ohio State head coaches have won at least 50 games. It took 63 games for Jim Tressel (2001-10) to reach the 50-win mark with the Buckeyes, 64 games for John Wilce (1913-28), 66 for Earle Bruce (1979-87), 67 games for Woody Hayes (1951-78), and 78 for John Cooper (1988-2000).

- Since becoming a Big Ten member in 2014, Maryland is now 0-9 against Ohio State with those nine losses coming by an average margin of 33.1 points. Take out the 52-51 overtime win by the Buckeyes in 2018, and the average margin of victory for OSU in the other eight games goes up to 37.1 points.

- The Buckeyes are perfect against only two other opponents they have played at least eight times. Washington State is 0-8 all-time against Ohio State while Rutgers is 0-9 since entering the Big Ten along with Maryland in 2014. OSU and Wazzu last played in 2002, while the Buckeyes are scheduled to meet the Scarlet Knights on Nov. 4.

- McCord became only the third OSU quarterback all-time to top the 300-yard mark against Maryland. Dwayne Haskins threw for 405 yards and three touchdowns during that overtime win in 2018, and Stroud bettered that total by one in 2021, passing for 406 yards and five touchdowns during a 66-17 blowout of the Terps.

- With his 163 yards against Maryland, Harrison jumped seven spots into 14th place on the career receiving yardage list at Ohio State. Now with 1,901 yards, Harrison leaped over Joey Galloway (1,894, 1991-94), Dane Sanzenbacher (1,879, 2007-10), Brian Robiskie (1,866, 2005-08), Ken-Yon Rambo (1,849, 1997-2000), Jeff Graham (1,809, 1988-90), Parris Campbell (1,768, 2016-18) and Corey “Philly” Brown (1,750, 2010-13).

- When Proctor returned his interception 24 yards for a touchdown, it marked the first time in nearly 14 years that an Ohio State player wearing jersey No. 41 had crossed the goal line. Fullback Jermil Martin was wearing that number when he rumbled 39 yards for a touchdown during a 38-7 win against Minnesota on Oct. 24, 2009.



**Ohio State-Purdue Set To Air On Peacock**

Ohio State's Week 7 road matchup at Purdue on Oct. 14 will be a first for the Buckeyes, as the team's noon kickoff will be broadcast exclusively on Peacock as announced on Oct. 2.

This will be the first-ever game for Ohio State that is exclusive to streaming, with no linear option available for the broadcast. The Buckeyes have already appeared on the Big Ten Network, CBS, FOX and NBC this season, with Peacock making it five different broadcast homes through six games.

Ohio State will travel to Purdue for the first time since 2018, a 49-20 upset for the Boilermakers under the lights at Ross-Ade Stadium. Purdue's home venue has been noted as a challenging environment for opposing teams, though a noon kickoff as opposed to a night game could take some of those concerns away for the Buckeyes.

For the remainder of Ohio State's schedule, times and networks have been announced only for Michigan State on Nov. 11 (7:30 p.m., NBC) and at Michigan on Nov. 25 (12 p.m., FOX).

**Henderson, Eight Others Out Against Maryland**

Ohio State was without the team's leading rusher against Maryland after running back TreVeyon Henderson was ruled inactive before the game with an undisclosed injury.

After being in and out of the lineup last season, Henderson had played in all four games this year, rushing for 295 yards and five touchdowns and averaging a team-high

6.7 yards per carry. The junior running back's ailment does not seem to be a long-term issue, however. Head coach Ryan Day said after the game that they expect him to return to the field for the Buckeyes against Purdue.

With Henderson on the sidelines, Ohio State relied on running backs Chip Trayanum and Miyan Williams to carry the load in the backfield. The tandem was largely ineffective against the Terrapins, however, averaging just 3.2 yards per rush on 26 combined carries.

Henderson was one of nine players out against Maryland, though only two were notable contributors for the Buckeyes, with sophomore cornerback Jyaire Brown also out. Brown has seen time mostly in relief of Denzel Burke with games out of reach late in the second half but has failed to record a statistic.

Brown and Henderson were joined on the injury list by wide receivers Nolan Baudo and Kyion Grayes, as well as the five mainstays on the availability report this season: tight end Zak Herbstreit, linebacker Arvell Reese, defensive lineman Will Smith Jr., wide receiver Reis Stocksdale and linebacker Kourt Williams II.

Coming out of the idle week, Ohio State also returned safety Cameron Martinez from the injury report. He was out against Notre Dame with an undisclosed ailment. Martinez did not record a snap against the Terrapins.

**Buckeyes Rise To No. 3 In Latest AP Poll**

Coming off Ohio State's 37-17 win over Maryland on Oct. 7, the Buckeyes jumped up to No. 3 in the AP top 25, trailing only No. 2 Michigan and No. 1 Georgia.

Also in the top five are No. 4 Florida State and No. 5 Oklahoma, which picked up a big win over then-No. 3 Texas (now No. 9) in the Red River Rivalry. Rounding out the top 10 is No. 6 Penn State, No. 7 Washington, No. 8 Oregon, the Longhorns and No. 10 USC.

No other Big Ten teams are in the rankings outside of Michigan, Ohio State and Penn State, though Wisconsin (41), Maryland (nine) and Iowa (seven) all received votes.

The biggest rise in the poll belonged to No. 14 Louisville, which jumped 11 spots after a win over Notre Dame, while the Fighting

**2023 Ohio State Football Schedule**

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Sept. 2	at Indiana	W, 23-3	CBS	2-3, idle
Sept. 9	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 35-7	BTN	3-2, 31-3 win over Southern Illinois
Sept. 16	WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 63-10	FOX	4-2, 35-28 win over Louisiana Tech
Sept. 23	at Notre Dame	W, 17-14	NBC	5-2, 33-20 loss to Louisville
Oct. 7	MARYLAND	W, 37-17	FOX	5-1, <b>37-17 loss to Ohio State</b>
Oct. 14	at Purdue	12 p.m.	Peacock	2-4, 20-14 loss to Iowa
Oct. 21	PENN STATE	TBA	TBA	5-0, idle
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	TBA	TBA	4-1, 24-13 win over Rutgers
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	TBA	TBA	4-2, 24-13 loss to Wisconsin
Nov. 11	MICHIGAN STATE	7:30 p.m.	NBC	2-3, idle
Nov. 18	MINNESOTA	TBA	TBA	3-3, 52-10 loss to Michigan
Nov. 25	at Michigan	12 p.m.	FOX	6-0, 52-10 win over Minnesota

Irish fell 11 spots down to No. 21.

**Day Reaches 50-Win Plateau Against Terps**

With Ohio State's win over Maryland, Day has etched his name in the Ohio State football program's history books, becoming the team's seventh head coach to reach 50 wins. He joins an exclusive list that includes John Wilce (1913-1928), Woody Hayes (1951-1978), Earle Bruce (1979-1987), John Cooper (1988-2000) and Urban Meyer (2012-2018).

When asked about the milestone by Fox Sports' Jenny Taft on the field after the team's win over Maryland, Day deflected the accomplishment onto his staff and players who have made his first five seasons as Ohio State's leader worthwhile.

"It just means – everybody here," Day said "It's the players, it's the coaches. It is a wonderful place. It's a great place to be. One of my favorite things is getting the win at noon and going home and celebrating with the family, so we're going to do that today."

Day also becomes the second-fastest head coach to eclipse the 50-win mark at Ohio State. His 50-6 record puts him just shy of his predecessor Meyer, who reached the milestone with only four losses.

**Bucks Fill Out Future Schedule**

The Big Ten on Oct. 5 announced each team's home and away opponents through the 2028-29 football season, an updated schedule accounting for the upcoming additions of Oregon, UCLA, USC and Washington to the conference.

Beginning in 2024, Ohio State will host Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska and Purdue while traveling to Michigan State, Northwestern, Oregon and Penn State. It will be the first time since 1967 (and just the second time overall) that the Buckeyes have played the Ducks in Eugene, Ore.

The schedule is part of the Big Ten's "Flex Protect XVIII Model," which maintains a nine-game conference schedule with every team in the conference playing each other at least twice in a five-year period. The model also has protected rivalries, including Ohio State-Michigan, Illinois-Northwestern, Illinois-Purdue, Indiana-Purdue, Iowa-Minnesota, Iowa-Nebraska, Iowa-Wisconsin, Maryland-Rutgers, Michigan-Michigan State, Minnesota-Wisconsin, Oregon-Washington and UCLA-USC.

Ohio State had already announced three nonconference games for next season, including Southern Mississippi (Aug. 31), Western Michigan (Sept. 7) and Marshall (Sept. 21).

Dates for the conference games are expected to be announced later this season. This will also be the first season in which the Big Ten Championship Game will be played between the conference's top two teams in the overall standings.

In 2025, Ohio State will host Minnesota, Penn State, Rutgers and UCLA while traveling to Illinois, Michigan, Purdue, Washington and Wisconsin. The Buckeyes will also host Texas on Aug. 30, Ohio on Sept. 13 and UConn on Oct 18. It will be the first time the Bruins have played at Ohio Stadium since 1999 and the first trip for the Buckeyes to Seattle since 2007.

In 2026, the Buckeyes will host Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Northwestern and Oregon while traveling to face Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska and USC. The Buckeyes won their last game against the Trojans – a 24-7 win in the Cotton Bowl on Dec. 29, 2017 – but have lost their last four regular-season games to USC. In the nonconference, Ohio State will host Ball State (Sept. 5) and Kent State (Sept. 19), with a road trip to Texas scheduled for Sept. 12.

In 2027, Ohio State will host Michigan State, Purdue, Nebraska and USC while hitting the road for five games at Michigan, Minnesota, Northwestern, Oregon and Rutgers. The nonconference includes home contests against Bowling Green (Sept. 4), New Hampshire (Sept. 11) and Alabama (Sept. 18).

In 2028, the Buckeyes will host Michigan, Minnesota, Rutgers, Washington and Wisconsin while traveling to play Illinois, Maryland, Penn State and UCLA. The nonconference includes home games against Buffalo (Sept. 2) and Northern Illinois (Sept. 16) as well as a road trip to Alabama on Sept. 9.

**Players Stand Behind Day Amid Feud With Holtz**

While former Notre Dame head coach Lou Holtz has doubled down on his statements made about the Ohio State football program in recent weeks, adding that he still believes the Fighting Irish are a better football team, those within the locker room are all standing behind Day for the comments he made following the Notre Dame victory.

"I think every single guy on this team has Coach Day's back, and we all know that he has ours," quarterback Kyle McCord said on Sept. 27. "For him to go do that (defend the team), I think it just showed his true emotion and how he feels about this team. I think that fired the guys up a lot. You don't really see too many head coaches after a game like that show that type of emotion."

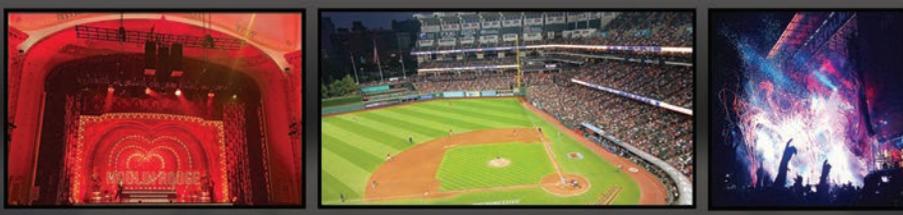
After Trayanum scored the final touchdown, McCord uncharacteristically showed

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"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.

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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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some emotion as well, running to the crowd and yelling to anyone who would listen to him. For a player who normally doesn't show much, it was obvious that what Day had been preaching in the locker room since Holtz's comments before the game resonated with him.

"We did a good job of just staying quiet, but that was definitely fuel to the fire," McCord said after the win over the Fighting Irish. "I'd be lying if we said that didn't bother us. We came out here and we proved a lot of people wrong, but the bigger thing is we proved ourselves right."

McCord is not the only player who offered their full support to Day. Trayanum also said after the game the whole team stands behind him, adopting the "Ohio against the world" attitude that so many Buckeye teams have taken. Linebacker Cody Simon added that isn't so much about feeling like everyone is after them, but knowing they need to be together.

"It's a level of pride that we know that we're going to get the best out of everybody," he said. "It's not that everybody's against us, but we are together. And when we're together, no one can beat us besides ourselves. So we always just try to stay together as a unit."

### Former OSU Players Schumacher, Cook Die

The Ohio State football program mourned the loss of two Buckeyes in September when former All-American offensive lineman Kurt Schumacher and offensive tackle Ron Cook passed away at ages 70 and 87 on Sept. 29 and Sept. 16, respectively.

Schumacher, born in Cleveland on Dec. 26, 1952, made a considerable impact for the Scarlet and Gray while playing under legendary head coach Woody Hayes from 1971-1974. During those four years, he helped pave the way for all-time great Ohio State

running backs Archie Griffin and Pete Johnson, and he was key to a two-year stretch in 1973-1974 when the Buckeyes posted a 20-2-1 record with two Big Ten titles and a 42-21 Rose Bowl victory over USC on Jan 1, 1974. Schumacher's efforts his senior year allowed him to earn a consensus All-American nod in 1974, the same year Griffin won his first Heisman Trophy.

After graduating from Ohio State, Schumacher continued his football life in the NFL,

where he was drafted by the New Orleans Saints with the No. 12 overall pick in 1975. He spent three seasons with New Orleans from 1975-1977 and finished his playing career with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1978. He spent his post-football career working for various incentive and motivational companies for 34 years before opening his own company, which he operated for six years before retiring.

He is survived by his wife, Jackie; a son,

Tim Schumacher and wife Sara of Highlands Ranch, Colo.; a daughter, Betsy Liston and husband Sonny of Stafford, Va.; five grandchildren, Nathan, Grace, Kyle, Andrew, and Paige; brothers-in-law, Randy Krul and wife Kathy of St. Louis and Bob Krul and wife Terri of Clifton Park, N.Y.; and his two Greyhounds, Thea and Chase.

Cook, a loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin

**Continued On Page 6**



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# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

subscriber who was born on June 22, 1936, in Lima, Ohio, was offered a scholarship by Hayes and Ohio State in 1954 after graduating from Lima Central High School. He played left tackle for the Buckeyes from 1954-1957 and earned his degree in petroleum engineering.

Cook played a role on Ohio State's 1957 national championship team that went 9-1 and defeated Oregon by a score of 10-7 in the Rose Bowl on Jan. 1, 1958. While he would help the Buckeyes secure their third-ever national title while opening lanes for running backs Don Clark and Dick LeBeau, among others, his favorite moment from that season may have come off the field on the night before the championship-winning victory.

In what his obituary referred to as his favorite story and his "15 minutes of fame," Cook fondly remembered a moment during a team dinner party held that night where he was called up to the stage by comedian and master of ceremonies Bob Hope to meet – and get a kiss from – renowned actress Jayne Mansfield.

"(Hope) calls my name to come up on stage," Cook recalled. "So I go up there, and we talk a little bit. And he says, 'Ron, we have a special gift for you.' And he said, 'Here she is, Ms. Jayne Mansfield.' Jayne Mansfield comes walking across that stage and, of course, at that time, she was a very beautiful movie star along the lines of Marilyn Monroe. So she came up, and everyone was going wild and cheering, and Bob Hope introduced me to Jane, and then Bob left the stage, left Jane and I out there. So we talked a little bit, and finally she turned to the microphone and says... 'Are you ready?' And I said, 'Well anytime you are.' So she closed her eyes and puckered up."

"It was quite a surprise, because I had no idea Coach Hayes would pick me, of all people, to go up there. I wasn't a starter or All-American, I was a backup tackle. Yet he picked me from the team to go up and get the kiss from Jayne Mansfield. That was a lot of fun."

After college, Cook worked for Panhandle Eastern Gas Co. in Liberal, Kan., and later opened his own firm in Kansas City, where he was a highly-respected expert consultant in the gas and oil business.

Cook was previously married to Sandy (Sexton) Cook, and they had three children together: sons Ron and Andrew Cook, and daughter Jill Malick. He later married Nancy (Gordon) Miller and added two stepsons, Jeff and Brad Miller. He had seven grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren and one on the way. Ron is also survived by a sister, Carol Luke.

## 14 Buckeyes Enshrined In Ohio State Hall Of Fame

Fourteen former Buckeyes were inducted into the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame on

## BSB Delivery Issues Persist But Are Improving

Buckeye Sports Bulletin postal delivery issues continue to improve, but many readers are still reporting struggling to get their BSB in a timely fashion. We are concerned that delivery may take another step back with a postal holiday on Monday, Oct. 9.

We want to remind readers that 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. This service, while not a substitute for your print edition, is a stopgap as your paper winds its way through the postal system and is free to all subscribers.

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. Simply 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.

BuckeyeSports.com also offers plenty of additional content not found in your paper. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff mans the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, reporting on any breaking

stories, plus posting additional features. 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.

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.

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Oct. 6, with players and coaches from 12 different programs all being recognized for their efforts in the ceremony held at Ohio State's Covelli Center.

Three Ohio State football players – 2008 Jim Thorpe Award winner and All-American defensive back Malcolm Jenkins (2005-2008), All-American center and 2002 national champion Nick Mangold (2002-2005) and starting linebacker/tight end Rick Middleton (1971-1974) – headlined the group of enshrinees, with each of them recalling fond memories from their respective careers at Ohio State.

Jenkins, who was once a one-star recruit out of Piscataway, N.J., recalled a story where he became motivated to achieve success while conversing with a fellow high school prospect during an Ohio State recruiting camp, a moment that helped springboard his successful and lengthy collegiate and professional career.

"If you wanted to turn me into an animal, tell me I couldn't do something," Jenkins said. "One kid asked me where I was from. When I told him I was from New Jersey, he laughed at me with his boys and said, 'They can't play no football in Jersey.' And the monster came out."

Mangold detailed during his induction speech the impact playing for Ohio State has had on his personal and professional life, specifically praising his coaches for molding him into a better person and player. Mangold's time at Ohio State propelled him to a decorated 11-year NFL career – all with the New York Jets – where he earned seven Pro Bowl nods and two All-Pro selections.

"Coach (Jim) Tressel brought me in and was my coach all four years, Coach (Jim) Heacock recruited me and Coach (Jim) Bollman was my offensive line coach, and those three men had a profound impact on my life as a player and as a person," Mangold said. "It was here where I made my friendships, I made my teammates and we had a lot of fun. We won some games, which was a lot of fun. And it was very special to me."

Middleton, who carved out a five-year NFL career with the New Orleans Saints and San Diego Chargers from 1974-18, said one of the most important moments of his football life came in 1973 when he was named a team captain for Ohio State and helped lead the Buckeyes to a 10-0-1 record and a Rose

Bowl victory.

"If there's anything that can make me prouder than getting this honor, it's to have been elected as captain in 1973," Middleton said. "That was one of the greatest honors I've ever had, that these guys wanted me to be in charge of the team."

The Hall of Fame class was also headlined by women's basketball guard and all-time scoring leader Kelsey Mitchell (2015-2018); Buckeyes men's basketball player and 1960 national champion Joe Roberts (1958-60); and longtime wrestling coach and 2015 national champion Tom Ryan (2005-present).

Maureen Cogan (women's cross country/track and field, 1981-85), Miho Kowase (women's tennis, 2014-17), Yesenia Luces (field hockey, 2004-07), Sean Melton (men's gymnastics, 2014-18), Steven Moneke (men's tennis, 2006-09), Renee Powell (women's golf, 1967), Taylor Sandbothe (women's volleyball, 2013-16) and Nicolas Szerszen (men's volleyball, 2015-18) round out the list of new members.

In addition to the 14 inductees, the ceremony also recognized athletic director Gene Smith for his service to the Ohio State athletics program by making him an honorary varsity "O" letter winner. Smith, who announced in August that he will retire from his role, effective June 30, 2024, after 18 years as athletic director, said the distinction is a special one for him and his family as they prepare to say goodbye to the program.

"It means a great deal to me," Smith said. "I just can't imagine what that conversation was in the room. It means a great deal to me. I'll cherish it and be respectful of it, and it's just a great honor for me."

## NCAA Shrinks Transfer Portal Window To 45 Days

The NCAA announced on Oct. 4 that the Division I Council has approved changes to the transfer portal in all collegiate sports, reducing the window for all student-athletes to enter their name in the portal to 45 total days.

The council enacted the change in collaboration with the Division I Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, which supported the 45-day window as opposed to a previously suggested 30-day transfer period.

"We are pleased the student-athlete voice

was acknowledged and emphasized as part of the conversation about amending transfer windows," said Cody Shimp, chair of the Division I SAAC. "We are happy that the council was able to find common ground and push forward a 45-day window to continue to provide a reasonable period of time for student-athletes to make rational and informed decisions about their athletic and academic futures."

According to the press release, the new 45-day transfer window is divided differently for each sport. In FBS and FCS football, for example, student-athletes will have 30 days to enter their name in the portal beginning the Monday after their respective conference championship games – as opposed to the previously agreed upon 45-day window which opened the day after the College Football Playoff teams were announced – while players competing in the College Football Playoff will receive an extra five days to transfer in January. The portal will then reopen for an additional 15 days during the second half of April, allowing players the opportunity to transfer once most schools have completed spring practice.

For men's and women's basketball, the entire 45-day transfer period will begin the Monday after Selection Sunday. Unlike football, there will be no stoppages in this window.

"In both men's and women's basketball, the council determined that a 45-day window that concludes on or before May 1 best enables coaches to understand their current rosters, provides stability for student-athletes remaining at the school as they prepare for summer basketball, and encourages student-athletes who intend to transfer to do so before final exams at their current schools and summer school application deadlines at most campuses," said Lynda Tealer, chair of the council and deputy athletics director at Florida. "Moving forward, we will continue to evaluate the impact of transfer windows on student-athletes, coaches and athletics programs."

The NCAA also announced that graduate transfers will now face a notification-of-transfer deadline of May 1 for fall and winter sports and July 1 for spring sports.

## Kienholz, Moore Shed Black Stripes

A pair of true freshmen became "official"

members of the Ohio State football program on Sept. 28 when quarterback Lincoln Kienholz and defensive lineman Jason Moore shed their black stripes after practice.

Kienholz, a four-star prospect, joined the team in June after an illustrious multi-sport high school career at Pierre (S.D.) T.F. Riggs. He was named the 2022-23 USA Today Overall Boys Athlete of the Year after leading the football program to its third consecutive state championship by throwing for 3,422 passing yards and 46 touchdowns, while also excelling for the basketball and baseball teams.

Kienholz has yet to see the field for the Buckeyes and is currently serving as the fourth-string quarterback on the roster – and if he does play, he would be the first-ever from South Dakota to take the field for Ohio State – but Day indicated earlier this season that he would like for the first-year quarterback to get some game action at some point. Kienholz can play up to four games this season and still have an opportunity to redshirt.

Moore also arrived on campus in June as a four-star prospect. The 6-6 first-year is known for his outstanding athleticism and length.

According to Pro Football Focus, Moore has registered three defensive snaps so far this season, with all of them coming late in Ohio State's 63-10 blowout victory over Western Kentucky on Sept. 16.

### Ohio State-ND Draws Historic Viewership

Ohio State's thrilling win over Notre Dame on Sept. 23 averaged 10.5 million viewers, making it the network's most-watched college football broadcast since 1993.

The broadcast, which was the most-watched regular-season college football game in prime time on any network (excluding Labor Day weekend) since 2018, peaked at 14.2 million viewers during Ohio State's game-winning drive, capped off by Traynum's game winner.

The contest is NBC's most-watched game since No. 2 Notre Dame defeated No. 1 Florida State 31-24 on Nov. 13, 1993, in what was dubbed the "Game of the Century" and drew 22 million viewers. Columbus, Cleveland and Cincinnati made up the three largest metered markets for the game, with Indianapolis as the fourth-largest metered market.

### Ransom Earns B1G Honors After ND Game

Following a career-high 13 tackles in Ohio State's victory over Notre Dame, safety Lathan Ransom was named Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week.

Of Ransom's 13 tackles, seven were solo, and he was also in on a significant fourth-down stop of Notre Dame quarterback Sam Hartman. He also accounted for a quarterback hurry. This is the first Defensive Player of the Week accolade for Ransom.

Through five games this season, Ransom is third on the team with 26 tackles.

Ohio State's last Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week was defensive end J.T. Tuimolou, who won the award after a dominant outing against Penn State last season.

### OSU Field Hockey Upsets No. 1 Iowa

On Sept. 29, the Ohio State field hockey team went on the road to Grant Field in Iowa City, Iowa, and took down the top team in the country – the Iowa Hawkeyes – who had been undefeated before the 2-1 loss. The Buckeyes came into the game with a 9-2 record and

already had one top-10 win on their resumé after a Sept. 15 victory over then-No. 8 Michigan.

The first half of the game was scoreless until senior forward Makenna Webster connected with the back of the cage as time expired in the second quarter off a penalty corner with assists by senior back Sarah Richards and freshman midfielder Anne Marie-Krebs.

Iowa answered in the third quarter, but just over three minutes later, Ohio State breakout freshman forward Brenna Bough scored her seventh goal of the year off a penalty corner to give them the 2-1 lead for the final. Senior goalkeeper Abby Danson was not busy, finishing without a single save because the defense allowed only one shot on goal.

Through 15 games this season, the Buckeyes are already off to a 12-3 start and 4-2 mark in conference play, surpassing their 11-8 overall record last season. Ranked seventh in the National Field Hockey Coaches Association poll on Oct. 3, things are set up well for Ohio State to make the program's first NCAA tournament appearance since 2011.

## From The Pages Of BSB

### 40 Years Ago — 1983

A week previously, OSU coach Earle Bruce said this was the time of year that football teams began to jell. If they didn't, he said, "There's a problem."

Little did Bruce know that his team would look somewhat listless in a 33-22 win over Purdue on Oct. 8. Execution was often a problem, as penalties and interceptions often stymied touchdown drives, forcing the Buckeyes to settle for much less.

"We moved the ball effectively until we got down inside the 10-yard line, and then we stopped ourselves with an interception in the end zone and a couple of penalties. It was a problem today, and we've had a few of those this year that have been disgusting."

### 35 Years Ago — 1988

John Cooper knew exactly what Thomas Paine meant when he wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls."

A frustrated Cooper watched helplessly from the sidelines as Indiana thoroughly manhandled Ohio State on Oct. 8, taking a 41-7 victory, the Hoosier's first win over the Buckeyes in Bloomington in 84 years.

After the game, Cooper wondered aloud about the fortitude of his players, challenging their pride in the Scarlet and Gray.

"To be honest with you, I think we've got too many players that are participating. I don't see a lot of competitors on this team," said Cooper, shaking his head. "I don't see a lot of guys that get upset when they play like they did today. To me, that's the difference between participating and competing. I don't see too many competitors out there."

### 30 Years Ago — 1993

Ever had someone stick your face in the mud and then have them laugh about it? Well, the Ohio State football team knew how you felt.

The Buckeyes were wearing five years' worth of mud on their faces where Illinois was concerned. And if it wasn't bad enough, some members of the Fighting Illini decided their five-year winning streak was pretty funny.

"Ohio State has this prima donna attitude that it's only them and Michigan as the top two teams in the Big Ten," said Illinois nose tackle Mikki Johnson. "Obviously, we have been proving them wrong the last five years."

The Buckeyes put an end to the laughing in Champaign on Oct. 9, dragging the Illini through the mud of a 20-12 victory. Whether or not they could do anything to stop the tittering in Ann Arbor was problematic. But they weren't exactly thinking about that after the game.

"It felt good to win, but to me personally, it wasn't any bigger game than any other," said OSU senior tailback Raymont Harris. "In my mind, this was no more important than beating Northwestern. They all count just one."

### 25 Years Ago — 1998

Under Cooper, Ohio State had gained a national reputation. The roster was littered with players from California, Florida, Illinois, Texas and many other states.

But there were still plenty of Ohioans doing their job to make the Buckeyes better, and it seemed only fitting that on a classic Ohio day – drizzle, cold and wind – the Buckeyes turned to their native sons to

key the game against Penn State, a 28-9 win on Oct. 3.

Linebacker Jerry Rudzinski, a native of Kettering, opened things with a fumble recovery in the end zone, his first touchdown since his final high school game. He was later joined by central Ohioans Percy King and Joe Cooper, who teamed on a punt block and recovered to give the Buckeyes another score. Their schools – King prepped at Columbus Marion-Franklin, while Cooper was a Columbus Independence grad – had hooked up in classic City League battles, but now they were working for a common cause.

"I think there's a little bit of state pride, especially today," said tackle Tyson Walter, a Chagrin Falls native. "We knew some guys from Ohio we played with in the Big 33 game, and they were over with Penn State. You can say to them, 'Maybe you should have stayed at home and played for Ohio State.'"

### 20 Years Ago — 2003

While most Ohio State fans had been focusing on the performance of Scott McMullen in relief of injured starter Craig Krenzel, head coach Jim Tressel was already looking ahead to 2004 and beyond.

Redshirt freshman quarterbacks Justin Zwick and Troy Smith took their first meaningful career snaps in a 20-0 win against Northwestern with a mix of good and not-so-good results. Smith did not get to attempt a pass, but he did get to showcase his running talents, picking up 12 yards on two carries and lining up alongside Chris Gamble on the second-half kickoff return. Tressel said that he planned to utilize Smith in a variety of roles, much like the Pittsburgh Steelers used to do with Kordell "Slash" Stewart.

"In fact, we call him 'Slash,'" the OSU coach said of Smith. "He was back on kickoff returns and had a couple of little things designed in the offense to get him involved. Again, we're trying to make everyone part of what we're trying to do."

### 15 Years Ago — 2008

On the remote chance that a football career did not work out for Ohio State running back Chris "Beanie" Wells, he might have wanted to consider a career in motivational speaking. With just 6:26 showing on the scoreboard clock in frenzied Camp Randall Stadium and the Buckeyes trailing Wisconsin by four points, freshman quarterback Terrelle Pryor was trying to get his thoughts together before embarking on what he hoped would be a winning touchdown drive.

As he put on his helmet, the freshman felt a tug on his shoulder pads. It was Wells, face grim and eyes narrowed into tiny slits. Pryor expected to get just a nod of encouragement but instead received an impassioned pep talk.

"This is a man's world," Wells said to the freshman. "What are you going to be? A man or a kid?"

Pryor shook his head in disbelief and then did something many veteran players could not have done in the same position. He smiled and laughed.

"When he said that, I was like, 'Damn, Beanie. You can't put even more pressure on me,'" Pryor said after the 20-17 win on Oct. 4. "But that boosted me a lot. It gave me confidence to go in there and do what needed to be done. I like to be challenged, and I don't like to let my teammates down."

### 10 Years Ago — 2013

Mere moments after a performance in which he rushed for a

career high in yards and scored three crucial touchdowns, Carlos Hyde stood in front of a room packed full of reporters, at a loss for words, and with tears streaming down his face.

The Ohio State running back had just rushed for 168 yards and the trio of scores in the fourth-ranked Buckeyes' 40-30 win at Northwestern on Oct. 5, but it was a mix of emotions that got to Hyde in the closing moments of his postgame press conference.

Even after his career night in Evanston, the three-game suspension due to an alleged altercation with a woman at a Columbus bar that kept him out of the first fourth of Ohio State's regular season sat in the back of his mind.

"I'm giving thanks to God. That suspension, it really hurt, not being out there with my brothers because I made a mistake," said Hyde, fighting out words over the course of more than a minute. "It's definitely something I've been waiting for. That suspension was hard. That was one of the hardest things I've had to go through."

### Five Years Ago — 2018

Ohio State junior defensive end Nick Bosa, an All-American, had been out since suffering a core muscle injury in the second half against TCU on Sept. 15 and subsequently undergoing surgery the following week.

While there was no exact timeline for his return, Bosa's parents said he would be re-evaluated in November before making a decision on his next steps.

Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson said Oct. 2 that Bosa returned to Columbus on Sept. 28, the day before Ohio State's game at Penn State. He was back on the sidelines at Ohio Stadium on Oct. 6 when the Buckeyes hosted Indiana.

Johnson said he had no idea if Bosa would play again in 2018 and said he'd listen to the Bosa family in regard to what would happen going forward.

"We're going to talk somewhere down the road," Johnson said. "Right now, I'm going to let them make the decision (about) what they're going to do."

"I'm just here to listen, to give them my opinion. But I'm certainly not going to be the guy to make the decision of what he does with his future. That's up to the family."

### One Year Ago — 2022

With the game in hand and Ohio State holding a 49-10 lead against Rutgers on Oct. 1, punter Jesse Mirco couldn't have possibly imagined what he would incite.

The Buckeyes faced a fourth-and-2 at their own 39-yard line and sent Mirco out to punt. But instead of booting the ball away, he called his own number and tucked the ball, running past the first-down marker and across midfield before running out of bounds at Rutgers' 39-yard line.

Running out of bounds may not be the most apt description, though, as Rutgers wide receiver Aron Cruickshank laid a vicious hit on Mirco after he had already gone out of bounds, which sent him flying into Ohio State's sidelines and caused both benches to clear before cooler heads prevailed.

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

# Hard-Hitting Buckeye Defense Sends Message

Continued From Page 1

one, so job well done.”

It was just one play – and Ohio State still ended up trailing midway through the third quarter – but it lit a fire under the team, and specifically for the defense, that continued to display a renewed physicality on that side of the ball that has not been seen consistently in Day’s time as head coach of the Buckeyes.

Proctor added several more highlight reel-worthy tackles throughout the contest, including a potentially touchdown-saving stop of running back Roman Hemby early in the third and a crushing tackle on a kickoff return later in the same frame. All told, he finished with seven tackles (1½ for loss) and the pick-six, and it was a performance that inspired confidence in the rest of the defense.

“That definitely sets the tone,” sophomore safety Sonny Styles said. “When guys are catching the ball and getting hit, it makes them a little more concerned when they’re running routes and ball’s getting thrown to them and they’re looking for somebody to come hit them, so that definitely sets the tone. It gets everyone else going. You see somebody hit somebody really hard, and you want to go hit somebody really hard, and everyone’s just flying around.”

That attitude permeated throughout the whole defense, as Ohio State also saw cornerback Denzel Burke deliver a big hit midway through the third that stopped wide re-



SONNY BROCKWAY

**ABOUT TIME** — Ohio State defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau notched his first sack of the season against Maryland, finishing with four tackles and 1½ sacks in the win over the Terrapins.

ceiver Tyrese Chambers dead in his tracks, and the defense as a whole finished with five tackles for loss and two sacks, with defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau picking up his first of the season. Those types of plays are what gave the offense some breathing room to

pull away in the second half.

“Our guys are playing hard, and I think that’s the thing, to me,” Day said. “There’s certain things we can clean up, some things that were close, but our team is playing with passion, they’re playing physical, they’re playing hard. To see Josh make that play and then run down on the kickoff, stick the guy inside the 20-yard line, there’s a lot of that play going on. It’s an exciting team to be around. The most exciting part of it is we haven’t even reached where we can be, so we have to keep building and growing.”

“One of the things that you’re starting to see about this team is we don’t panic. If it’s not going quite right, we’re going to keep pushing forward. In the past it was like, OK, if things weren’t going well in the first half,

the scoreboard wasn’t turning over every couple drives, everybody would start (panicking). I think these guys have some poise. They’ve played some games, and we’re counting on that experience to pay off here in October and November.”

That response has been evident for the defense, with the Buckeyes – albeit with a small sample size through just five games – allowing 30 points in the first two quarters but just 21 points in the last two quarters. Like the offense, the defense has, at times, been slow to start, but it has not stopped the unit from bouncing back.

“People are going to score,” Tuimoloau said. “It’s football. It was a matter of if we bounced back or not, and when they scored we just came onto the sideline and said, ‘Hey, we’re not going to let them score again.’ I think we came out and did that.”

Ohio State is hoping the offense returns to its usual standards here soon, especially with the Big Ten schedule now in full swing, but if the unit needs a little help from the defense from time to time, that’s of no concern. They’re happy to take matters into their own hands.

“Our offense is really talented,” Styles said. “I think we, as a defense, take pride in it. We want to win the game. Regardless of what the offense is doing, we take that, we come with that chip on our shoulder like we want to win the game.”

## Henderson Heads Back To Sidelines

The word all season was that Henderson – happy and healthy for the first time since his freshman campaign – had looked as good as he had during his time at Ohio State, and it was mostly true through four games.

The tailback had operated as the Buckeyes’ bell cow so far this season, with 37.3 percent of the team’s carries (44 of 118) and 295 of their 596 rushing yards, not to mention five of nine rushing touchdowns.

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SONNY BROCKWAY

**NEXT MAN UP** — Ohio State running back Chip Trayanum was next in line when TreVeyon Henderson was scratched from the lineup against Maryland, but Trayanum finished with just 61 yards on 20 carries.

So coming out of the off week, it was a surprise to see that Henderson — who dealt with injuries throughout last season, limiting him to just eight games as he was in and out of the lineup — was a scratch against Maryland, unavailable for the first time this season. But Day does not expect the injury to hold Henderson out for long.

“We expect him to be ready for next week (at Purdue),” Day said after the game. “It was one of those things where the question was if he played in the game, could he have a setback if something happened in the game? The answer was yes. And just based on how everything played out last year, the decision was made to hold him this week to make sure he was full go next week, because we know we’ve got a lot of football ahead of us.

“We have a ton of confidence in Chip (Trayanum) and Miyan (Williams) to go in the game and go play, and they did. But we’re excited to get Tre back for next week. He could have played in the game, but the decision was made.”

Trayanum and Williams likely needed the confidence boost after a team-wide poor rushing performance against Maryland, with the Buckeyes finishing with just 62 yards on 33 carries for a paltry 1.9 yards per attempt, the worst mark in the Day era and the worst for Ohio State since averaging 0.9 yards per attempt in a 10-7 loss to Michigan State on Oct. 1, 2011.

The numbers look slightly better when accounting for the 20 yards that McCord lost on four rushes, though it still only comes out to 2.8 yards per rush, which still would rank among the worst in recent memory for the Buckeyes.

It also begs the question of where sophomores Dallan Hayden and Evan Pryor have been. The pair have appeared in just one game each — with Hayden yet to even tote the ball this season — despite the coaching staff indicating in the preseason that all five running backs would get their chance to shine.

“Tre has had a great offseason,” Day said in August. “I think he looks fast. He’s seeing the holes. ... From there, I think Miyan and Dallan, Chip, Evan, those guys will all get in the game. There’s a lot of different ways that we can do that, and we’ll let them keep working.”

It was especially surprising considering Hayden’s best game last season was against Maryland, rushing for 146 yards and three touchdowns in place of Henderson and Williams. Furthermore, all of his scores came in the second half, the first freshman Buckeye to rush for three touchdowns in a half since Maurice Clarett in 2002.

But with neither seeing action in a game

like this — one where the team is missing their lead rusher and the rushing attack, in general, is struggling at just 1.9 yards per attempt — it may be a while before either is able to see the field with the schedule ramping with a road trip at Purdue on Oct. 14 and a home date with Penn State on Oct. 21 on deck.

### OSU Often Wins The Off Week

Day is now 50-6 as Ohio State’s head coach, but it might be more appropriate to add an additional four mythical wins to that column with how the Buckeyes have seemingly won the off week the past five seasons.

With the exception of the 2020 season, which featured several stops and starts but no formal off week, the Buckeyes are 4-0 under Day in games coming off an idle week, and most of those outings have been among Ohio State’s most dominant in a given season.

Day’s first was a 52-3 win at Northwest-

ern on Oct. 18, 2019, in which the Buckeyes put up 480 yards of offense and limited the Wildcats to just 199 yards. Kicker Blake Haubeil also provided a highlight with a 55-yard field goal, tied for the second longest in program history.

Ohio State looked sleepy early on against Indiana on Oct. 23, 2021, but after the Hoosiers tied things up at 7-all with 2:58 left in the first quarter, the Buckeyes scored 47 unanswered points courtesy of four passing touchdowns from C.J. Stroud and two rushing scores from Henderson. Last year’s game coming out of the off week was a defensive domination of Iowa on Oct. 22, 2022, when the Buckeyes turned the Hawkeyes over six times in a 54-10 win, including a pick-six from linebacker Tommy Eichenberg.

All told, Ohio State under Day is outscoring opponents by 40.0 points per game coming out of the idle week while holding them to just 196.8 yards of total offense, with Maryland’s 302 yards of offense this season as the outlier.

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# Proctor Has Career Day In Win Over Maryland

Last season, safety Josh Proctor saw his starting role slip away from his hands in the very first game of his then-fifth-year campaign where he was replaced by Lathan Ransom at the strong safety/bandit position against Notre Dame, a decision that relegated him to a backup role for the rest of the year.

## GAME NOTEBOOK Patrick Engels

Now firmly back in the starting secondary this season – this time at the adjuster/free safety role – Proctor has made the most of his second chance, a strong showing of resilience that was on full display in Ohio State's 37-17 victory over Maryland on Oct. 7.

With the Buckeyes' offense seemingly sputtering throughout the first half, forcing them to face an early 10-0 deficit, the team looked to the defense to make a play that would shift the tenor of the game in Ohio State's favor, and that exact play came from the veteran Proctor.

With 9:41 remaining in the half, he intercepted a Taulia Tagovailoa pass intended for wide receiver Tyrese Chambers and ran the ball all the way to the end zone for the 24-yard score, putting the Buckeyes on the board and shifting the momentum with a game-changing play.

"We knew the route concept," Proctor said after the game when asked to reflect on the pick-six. "They usually sit right at the sticks like a little curl route. I knew it was coming. I didn't expect him to throw it, but when he threw it, I knew then jumped right in front of it."

"I think that gave us a lot of juice," sophomore safety Sonny Styles added. "He got

us going. Proctor is really good. Obviously he's been here for a while. He's a leader on our defense, and for me, just knowing him personally, it feels good. It feels good to see him do it. I think he's been through a lot – injuries over the years, stuff like that. So it feels good to see him (get the interception)."

Proctor's stellar play did not end with his second-quarter interception, however. He was also involved in a number of crucial plays on the defensive end, including a key third-down red-zone stop earlier in the second frame when he and Styles combined for the tackle that prevented Tagovailoa from reaching the end zone, forcing the Terrapins to settle for a field goal.

He also flashed his talents on special teams, delivering a bruising hit on kick returner Braeden Wisloski with 8:56 left in the third frame that sent the Ohio Stadium crowd of 104,974 and the sideline into a frenzy.

"I felt like it was (my best game)," Proctor said. "I was just out there having fun, wasn't thinking too much, just having fun."

Proctor's productive day – an impressive final stat line of seven tackles (1½ for loss) and the interception – comes as no surprise to his teammates, who saw him come into the offseason and fall camp with newfound edge and intensity.

This, according to Styles, has allowed his fellow safety to play at an all-time high level through the first five games of the season.

"You can see a different focus from him, like a laser focus, like he was on a mission," Styles said. "You saw that from him. It's not like he wasn't focused before, it was just a different level of intensity. You could see it in his eyes every day. I think that's really why you're seeing him play his best ball right now."

After a season of uncertainty and a career filled with injury setbacks, including missing almost all of the 2021 season with a broken leg, Proctor said he has seen his



SONNY BROCKWAY

**STRONG RESPONSE** – After a poor first half, quarterback Kyle McCord had a much more impressive outing in the final two quarters to finish 19 of 29 passing for 320 yards and a pair of touchdowns against Maryland.

hard work and commitment to the program pay off – a feat that, in his mind, was years in the making.

"Everything is coming to fruition," he said. "I prayed about these moments. I've dreamt about these moments. Sometimes I had my ups and downs, but honestly, I'm just living in the moment and I'm here now."

### Sluggish Offense Finds Groove In Second Half

Coming off an improbable 13-play, 75-yard game-winning drive on Sept. 23 against Notre Dame, many thought that Ohio State's offense would carry its positive momentum into the next game against Maryland. That was not the case early on in the contest, as the unit instead put forth arguably their worst performance of the still-young season.

Succumbing to a lack of separation by the wide receivers and an often stagnant rushing attack, the Ohio State offense failed to generate many positive plays throughout the first half, notching just 142 total yards – a number inflated by a 58-yard reception by Marvin Harrison Jr. in the second quarter – with just three points to show for it.

The unit also gave up three Terrapin sacks and punted on four of its first five possessions, with the only other drive ending in a failed direct snap to senior linebacker Cody Simon on fourth-down that head coach Ryan Day later said was a mistake

from junior long snapper John Ferlmann.

"I couldn't quite understand what was going on there in the first couple of drives," Day said after the game. "We didn't quite get in sync on offense, and then we had the botched snap. That was not supposed to be a fake. That was just a bad snap. It just kind of slipped out of his hands, and it was one of those things, 'OK, what's going on here?' But that is the game, and you've got to respond."

The Buckeyes' poor first-half start on offense may have drawn the ire of Day, but they would meet Day's challenge after half-time with a string of more crisp and productive drives.

The unit's change of tone started on its very first drive of the second half, where, led by junior quarterback Kyle McCord, they marched 76 yards in just four plays – a stellar sequence headlined by 19- and 37-yard completions to wideouts Emeka Egbuka and Julian Fleming, respectively, and capped by a 4-yard rush from running back Chip Trayanum.

"We obviously want to score every drive, but we really needed a touchdown, especially in that first drive coming out of the second half," Harrison said. "Maryland went down and had a score, and we knew we had to answer there."

Ohio State's response would spark a much more efficient half for McCord and the offense, who would score on the next

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four drives – two Jayden Fielding field goals, a 44-yard pitch-and-catch from McCord to tight end Cade Stover and a 17-yard grab from Harrison – to inflate the Buckeyes' lead to 20 and put the game out of reach for the upset-hungry Terrapins.

McCord, who finished the day completing 19 of his 29 passes (65.5 percent) for 320 passing yards and two touchdowns after the sluggish start, said the drastic second-half turnaround was attributed to the poise and resiliency displayed by him and his teammates amid the first-half struggles, a positive development he added the team can look to build upon moving forward this season.

"You want to start fast and not put yourself in that position," he said. "But today, obviously that wasn't the case. We didn't have a fast start. And the game was tied going into halftime. I think we were fiery at times when we needed to get going. And then I think other times, it was like, 'We're good. We just need to get the ball back and just take a deep breath.'

"And so I think that's (a product of) the leaders. When you have a good amount of guys all preaching that same message, I think it just calms everybody down and reminds me that there's a lot of football left to be played. There's no reason to panic. We just need to go out there and do our thing."

### Third Downs An Issue On Both Sides Of The Ball

Ohio State may have found a rhythm on offense in the second half against Maryland, but it did once again fall victim to one of the more glaring weaknesses of this year's team.

The Buckeyes continued to be plagued by a lack of third-down efficiency in their victory over the Terrapins, converting just three of their 12 attempts throughout the game, or a lowly 25.0 percent. This only adds to a season-long trend that has become a major topic of discussion for fans and experts alike, with the Buckeyes just 25 of 62 (40.3 percent) this season.

While the Buckeyes have been specifically criticized for their lack of success on short-yardage situations on third and fourth down, Day said the issues against the Terrapins mostly stemmed from the team being forced to move the chains from third-and-long. In their 12 third-down attempts, Ohio State faced an average distance of 7.1 yards and failed on three of their four tries from third-and-9 and beyond.

"I don't really have a good answer for (our first-half offensive struggles) other than we got ourselves off schedule and then found ourselves in some third-and-bad situations, which is why the third down (percentage) looks the way it does," Day said. "One thing about the third downs is a couple weeks ago, we did a nice job of staying in pretty manageable situations. This was not the case today, so (we) didn't quite get that done."

The Buckeyes also struggled on third down on the defensive side, allowing Tagovailoa and the Terrapins' high-powered offense to move the sticks on 8 of their 19 tries, good for 42.1 percent. These struggles were exacerbated as Maryland moved closer to the chains, where it was 6 of 7 on third-down attempts from 1-4 yards.

Ohio State's defense may have allowed Tagovailoa to extend some plays with his

legs and show his unique pocket mobility on third down throughout the game – something defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said they were preparing for all week leading up to the game – but the players feel they did enough to limit the abilities of the star quarterback. Tagovailoa finished the day completing 21 of his 41 pass attempts (51.2 percent) for a season-low 196 yards, along with a touchdown and two interceptions.

"I think we did all right," Styles said. "We had a few plays where he was scrambling out late. The defensive backs did a good job of staying on their man, the scramble drill, but I felt like we did solid."

### Harrison Jr. Shines Despite Ankle Injury

There were many storylines for Ohio State entering its matchup against Maryland, but perhaps no headline sparked more attention than the health – or potential lack thereof – of standout wideout Harrison, who put Buckeyes fans into a state of panic after suffering a right ankle injury early in the third quarter of Ohio State's victory over Notre Dame.

Harrison quickly put those narratives to bed, however, displaying his superior talent with a number of acrobatic and game-altering catches throughout the contest.

The star wideout, who said on Oct. 4 that his ankle was "good enough" to play, put a struggling offense on his back in the first two quarters, accounting for 109 of McCord's 126 passing yards before halftime on six receptions. This sequence was headlined by a 58-yard connection between the two former high school teammates, a play that set up a 36-yard field goal from Fielding, the only points from the offense in the first half.

Harrison continued to display his dominance in the second half. He corralled

another two catches for 54 yards, with the last reception resulting in a 17-yard score in the fourth quarter that pushed the Buckeyes' lead to 34-17, essentially putting the game out of reach. He also scored on the previous play which was negated by a Xavier Johnson 5-yard illegal motion penalty. He finished with a season-high 163 receiving yards along with the score – a dazzling performance where he showed no signs of slowing down due to injury.

"There were some really good plays by Marvin Harrison Jr.," Day said. "We needed that, because they were putting a lot of guys in the box and left the middle of the field open at times, and we took advantage of that in the second half."

Harrison may not have looked like he was hampered by his ankle injury against Maryland, but the star wideout said the ailment did cause him to change his approach throughout the game, limiting him in what routes he could run and where he could line up on the field. Regardless of the pain he was in, however, he was content to be back out on the field, lauding Ohio State's training staff for keeping him ready throughout the week.

"I think adrenaline helped me out a lot today," Harrison said. "I definitely felt it. I'm definitely going to feel it a lot tomorrow, so I'm going to keep it still. The rest of the trainers did a great job this week preparing for the game, and I'll shout out a lot of credit to them."

Despite being hampered by the injury, Harrison still received a team-high 15 targets on the day, an obvious show of trust by McCord that should continue throughout the rest of the season – regardless of his wide receiver's health status.

"I think they tried to double him or give them a little more attention," McCord said. "But if there's a one-on-one opportunity with

Marvin, I don't care who's guarding him, I like Marvin 10 times out of 10."

### Penalties Plague OSU Against Terrapins

The Buckeyes were once again hit by the penalty bug against Maryland, committing 10 fouls accepted for 81 yards, four more penalties than any other game this season.

Ohio State's offense was called for seven flags on the day, including an intentional grounding call on McCord and several procedural penalties with a delay of game, false start, illegal formation and illegal motion, with a holding call to boot.

The defense was also a participant in the penalty parade, committing three fouls headlined by a 15-yard pass-interference flag on cornerback Denzel Burke and an 11-yard roughing-the-passer foul on defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. late in the first half.

"I will say this, we can't have that many penalties," Day said. "That can't happen. We can disagree on a few of them, but there's too many out there."

Ohio State's lack of discipline showed on all aspects of the field against the Terrapins, even on the sidelines. Early in the fourth quarter, Day was called for a 15-yard sideline-interference penalty that pushed the Buckeyes back after a 37-yard gain by Harrison. While the coach – who was seen animatedly contesting the flag with officials during a TV timeout – opted not to expand much on the specifics of the foul, he did take ownership of the mishap, saying the emotions may have gotten the best of him.

"I'm going to have to run with the guys tomorrow for that one," Day joked. "I'll take that one. But listen, football's a tough sport. There's a lot of passion. There's a lot going on out there, and I'm coaching my tail off. I was just trying to coach as hard as I could."

## Game Analysis

### What Worked Well

The defense allowed only 17 points in the game, with 10 coming in the first half, but the secondary especially shone, shutting down the high-powered offense that Maryland brought into Columbus. Together they totaled 26 tackles, two of them for a loss, with three passes broken up and interceptions from Josh Proctor, who had his first career pick-six, and Lathan Ransom, who had his pick when the game was tied at 17, giving the ball back to Ohio State's offense in the third quarter. Terrapins quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa finished the game with 196 yards, one touchdown that came on their first drive and the previously mentioned interceptions. In the five games before this, Tagovailoa was averaging 292.8 passing yards per game, but the Buckeyes were able to keep him in check. He was forced to scramble or throw short passes for much of the game, and even though that was effective at times, after the first quarter he completed only two passes of 15 yards or longer. Maryland could not pick up any big plays, which has been an emphasis for the Buckeye defense this year, and they have been doing it well.

### What Didn't Work

Almost all of the first half was nothing short of a disaster for Ohio State's offense, but for the most part, Kyle McCord had a solid second half and started putting together drives that ended in points. But those drives were not helped along by the running game that was missing TreVeyon Henderson. Chip Trayanum saw most of the work in the

backfield, finishing the game with 20 of the team's 33 carries for 61 yards. Trayanum did score a touchdown, beating three defenders around the right edge for 4 yards on a pitch from McCord, but he finished with just five rushes of at least 5 yards. Miyan Williams didn't see the field until the second quarter and rushed only six times for 23 yards. Whether it was the offensive line or the backs not seeing the field well, the run game was the weakest aspect of the Buckeyes' game against the Terrapins.

### Play Of The Game

With Maryland leading 10-0 with 10:57 left in the second quarter, the Terrapins looked to extend their lead after starting at their own 14-yard line. But after the offense gained 5 yards on two plays, Tagovailoa threw an interception to Proctor, which he took all the way to the end zone for a 24-yard pick-six. The Buckeyes sent a four-man rush at Tagovailoa, which pushed the offensive line back enough to make the quarterback feel some pressure on third down and throw a quick pass to the middle of the field intended for wide receiver Tyrese Chambers, which Proctor said the defense was able to anticipate. Before he put the Buckeyes on the board, the team felt flat on both sides of the ball with the Terrapins in complete control of the game. But Proctor's interception flipped the momentum and got the Buckeyes going. The defense would give up only a touchdown the rest of the game.

— Greg Wilson

# Buckeyes Start Slow But Roll Over Terrapins

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State defense held upset-minded Maryland at bay long enough for the offense to get untracked in the second half when the fourth-ranked Buckeyes rallied then routed Maryland 37-17 in front of an antsy crowd of 104,974 in Ohio Stadium on Oct. 7.

Even without TreVeyon Henderson, the Buckeyes' leading rusher who was out with an undisclosed injury, there should have been enough firepower to light the scoreboard, but the only touchdown through two quarters for OSU was a pick-six by safety Josh Proctor.

The Buckeyes (5-0, 2-0 Big Ten) trailed 10-0 in the first half and 17-10 in the third quarter against the Terrapins (5-1, 2-1) before OSU scored 27 unanswered points. The Buckeyes took a 20-17 lead on a 24-yard field goal by Jayden Fielding, and touchdown catches of 44 yards by Cade Stover and 17 yards by Marvin Harrison Jr. increased the lead to 17.

Kyle McCord rebounded from a shaky start to go 19 of 29 for a career-high 320 yards and two second-half touchdowns, and Harrison made eight catches for 163 yards and a touchdown.

## Slumbering First Half

The Buckeyes turned the ball over on downs in a strange way on the game's first series. After an incompleteness, an 8-yard run from Chip Trayanum and another incomplete pass, the Buckeyes lined up to punt, but an errant snap was collected by linebacker Cody Simon, who stumbled in surprise for a 3-yard loss at the OSU 30.

The Terrapins needed four plays to take a 7-0 lead at 12:41 on a 15-yard pass from Taulia Tagovailoa to Kaden Prather.

After a pass to running back Roman Hemby went for no gain, Tagovailoa had a second-down 15-yard pass to Corey Dyches to the 15. Tagovailoa had a run for no gain



SONNY BROCKWAY

**FIGHTING THROUGH IT — Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. showed immense toughness in the Buckeyes' win over Maryland, going for eight catches, 163 yards and a touchdown despite playing with an injured ankle.**

prior to the scoring strike that Prather grabbed with one hand at the back of the end zone.

OSU's second drive ended at the Maryland 48 when McCord was sacked for a 3-yard loss on third-and-10. Jesse Mirco's punt was muffed by Jashaun Jones and recovered by teammate Dante Trader Jr. at the 21.

Maryland was stopped at the Ohio State 29 to end its next possession. Prather had a 24-yard reception on third down to the OSU 38, but on fourth-and-1, backup quarterback Billy Edwards Jr. was inserted and his run up the gut was stopped for no gain by Tommy Eichenberg and J.T. Tuimoloau.

OSU then went three-and-out after McCord lost 8 yards on a sack to the Buckeye 15.

The Terrapins made it 10-0 at 12:56 of the second quarter on a 21-yard field goal by Jack Howes after the drive started at the UM 37.

The big play was on third-and-2 from the OSU 32 that resulted in a 26-yard catch to the 6 by Jones. Antwain Littleton II ran for 4 yards followed by an incompleteness and a third-down rollout to the left by Tagovailoa that went for a 1-yard loss.

The defense came through for the Buckeyes to make it 10-7 at the 9:41 mark thanks to a 24-yard interception and return for a touchdown by Proctor. He stepped in front of a pass intended for Tyrese Chambers across the middle on a third-and-5 from the Terrapin 19.

Later, a 26-yard punt return by Jones and an OSU penalty for an illegal formation started the Terps at the OSU 49, but a 10-yard sack by Tuimoloau helped push them back to a fourth-and-26 before punting.

The Buckeyes started at their own 10 and moved downfield to the Maryland 7 but had to settle for a 36-yard field goal by Fielding with 1:32 left in the half.

On the first two plays, Harrison had catches of 58 and 19 yards to the 13. Trayanum ran for a total of 5 yards on two carries, but on third down, McCord was called for intentional grounding, moving the ball back to the 18.

Maryland had a crack at taking the lead before the half when, aided by pass-interference and roughing-the-passer penalties, the Terps got to the 18-yard line. However, Littleton caught a pass and was tackled at the 14. The Terps, who were out of timeouts, were unable to stop the clock to attempt a field goal before time expired.

Maryland had 181 yards in the first half compared to 142 for the Buckeyes. McCord was 8 of 15 for 126 yards, with 77 coming on the two throws to Harrison.

## Taking Command

Tagovailoa used his legs to put the Terps up 17-10 at 11:03 of the third. After a touch-back on the kickoff, Maryland went 75 yards on nine plays in 3:57.

Hemby ran for 17 yards, and Tai Felton's catch went for 12. Jones made a grab for 23 yards to the 10, and on second down from the 9, Tagovailoa ran up the middle for the score.

The Buckeyes responded for a 17-17 tie at 8:56 on a 4-yard run by Trayanum. OSU needed four plays to go 76 yards in 2:01. The drive started with a pass interference to the Ohio State 39 drawn by Harrison.

After a 1-yard Trayanum run, Emeka Egbuka made a catch for 19 yards, and Julian Fleming followed with a 37-yarder to the 4 to set up Trayanum.

The OSU defense came through again when Maryland got the ball back. With the Terps facing a third-and-10 from the 43, safety Lathan Ransom picked off a pressured Tagovailoa at the OSU 47 and returned the ball 15 yards to the Maryland 38.

Ohio State took advantage for a 20-17 lead when Fielding made a 24-yard field goal at 2:19 of the third.

Trayanum had four straight runs that netted 10 yards and a first down. McCord went to Stover for 22 yards to the 6, but the drive stalled after an incompleteness to Harrison, a Trayanum rush for 1 and another incompleteness.

"Even in the second half when they went down to score, nobody panicked, nobody was freaking out," Harrison said. "We knew exactly what we needed to do, and that was get the ball down and score."

The Buckeyes extended the lead to 27-17 at 10:16 of the fourth quarter on a 44-yard toss by McCord to Stover to complete a weird drive.

Egbuka caught an 8-yarder for a first down at the OSU 35 but had to be helped off the field with a possible leg injury, of which head coach Ryan Day did not have an update after the game. Later in the series, the Buckeyes faced a second-and-33 from the Maryland 34 after McCord shoveled a pass to Trayanum before being sacked. That play lost 18 yards and was followed by delay of game.

But Harrison made a spectacular over-the-shoulder catch, toeing the right sideline, for 37 yards to the 29 only to have Day penalized 15 yards for sideline interference. Undeterred, the Buckeyes faked an end-around, and McCord found Stover open for the score.

The Buckeyes held the Terps on fourth-and-3 from the Maryland 32 on the next series. Littleton was stopped for no gain on the play, and a Maryland personal foul placed the ball on the 17. Three plays later, Harrison caught a 17-yard touchdown pass for a 34-17 advantage with 7:01 left. This was after Harrison had a TD reception negated due to an illegal motion penalty on the previous play.

After a Maryland punt, OSU started at the 50-yard line. Miyan Williams gained 18 yards on four carries during the drive, Carnell Tate mixed in an 8-yard reception, and Fielding hit a 41-yard field goal with 2:10 remaining for the final score. Maryland punted again and OSU began the final series at its 35 with 54 seconds left. Williams rushed for 4 yards, and McCord kneeled for a loss of 2 to end the game.

"I thought we did respond well in the second half," Day said. "We got into a rhythm. The No. 1 goal is to be 1-0 on Saturday, so check that box. We want to play well in the second half, check that box. We wanted to start fast in this game and didn't get that done. So we have to look at why that (was)."

## Notes

The Buckeyes outgained the Terps 382 yards (320 passing, 62 rushing) to 302 (196 passing, 106 rushing). ... Trayanum gained 61 yards on 20 carries and a TD. ... Egbuka's three catches went for 40 yards. ... Stover made two catches for 66 yards. ... Tagovailoa was 21 of 41 for 196 yards, a TD and two picks. ... Eichenberg had 13 tackles (seven solo). Proctor, in addition to his score, had seven tackles (six solo). ... OSU is 9-0 vs. Maryland, 5-0 at Ohio Stadium.

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# BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 37, Maryland 17

**Head coach Ryan Day on the offensive line's performance against Maryland:** "I know that there's a lot of guys in the box. They're going to stop the run, and that opened up the pass game in the second half. I've got to figure out what it is – is it the personnel, the scheme or the coaching of it? I felt like we had a good plan going in. They've got a pretty good front. They do a nice job. But we want to be more explosive. But for instance, you're coming out on the 10-yard line and there's a lot of guys in the box and it opened up a huge play for Marvin (Harrison Jr.) down the middle of the field, so those are the things that we have to do, is if they're going to put that many guys in a box, then we've got to be able to throw the football with what we have. But at the same time, when the box looks right, we've got to be efficient, and I'll look at that."

**Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord on if the offense can still be great if the running game doesn't get going:** "That's part of playing football. If they're going to try to take away the run, we have to do a good job passing the ball. And vice versa, if they want to play us with high safeties and get those linebackers out there, they think it's a pass, then we have to be able to run the ball. There have been points this year when we weren't throwing the ball great and the running game picked us up, and then there were points where we weren't running the ball great and we picked it up while throwing. But there's room for improvement there. I just need to continue to grow. This offense is no doubt at its best when we have both of those departments going."

**McCord on what affected his underthrown completions to Ohio State wide receivers Harrison and Julian Fleming:** "The biggest thing with the deep ball is just seeing it early and then getting a good pre-snap look and giving myself an idea of what I'm going to do with the ball pre-snap. That way I can get those balls out just a hair quicker and hit them on the run."

**McCord on improving his accuracy going forward:** "That's probably the biggest area I'm going to try to focus on for next week is just starting fast and getting into that rhythm, not trying to overthink plays. I feel like sometimes, especially early on, you want to make the perfect read and the perfect throw or whatever, but playing quarterback, you almost have to just let the game come to you. If the shot's there, take it. Don't force it. If they drop out of there, you've got to take something up underneath and be fine with that and just kind of get into the flow of the game. I think once you do that, everything kind of slows down a tick. The biggest thing is just coming out next week and being focused in on starting fast."



SONNY BROCKWAY

**KEEP GROWING — Ohio State head coach Ryan Day sees plenty of room for improvement coming out of his team's 37-17 win over Maryland on Oct. 7.**

**Harrison on what clicked for the offense in the second half:** "We have to make plays, really. It came down to executing, and obviously I had one-on-one matchups there in the second half that they weren't really going to give us in the first half. They played a lot of zone. The second half they kind of took their risk playing one-on-one with me and the rest of the receivers, and then we made them pay for it."

**Day on Ohio State safety Josh Proctor's performance against the Terrapins:** "I just called him out in our little get-together there in the locker room, because I think he's the best version of himself right now. The guy's been through a lot of ups and downs, injuries, things like that, and he's playing his best football. He's the best version of himself. Now, in order for us to get to where we need to be in the next two months, we're going to need him to play like that. I just think this is a guy who's been through a lot, and you can't substitute experience and maturity, and I'm proud that he's playing like he is."

**Proctor on if the defense thought before the game whether there would be multiple chances**

**to force turnovers:** "Yeah, we did. We knew they were an air-raid offense. We knew they like to get the ball down the field and throw shots, so we just wanted to make sure we did our job when the plays came."

**Ohio State safety Sonny Styles on the safeties group:** "We've got something to prove. Last year we weren't where we wanted to be, and we've got to play every game like we've got something to prove, because we do."

**Ohio State defensive end J.T. Tuimolou on what changed between the first and second half:** "I think it was just adjustments. We knew they were a great offense, and they had a lot of things going for them, but when we came in at halftime we just had to regroup and we just had to continue to play our game, play our role, continue to give the ball to our offense and just do our thing."

**Tuimolou on how the Buckeyes don't seem to panic when they're down:** "The biggest thing that plays a role in us not panicking is just the fact that we're also having fun in what we do off and on the field as brothers. We're close on the field – you have to be – but off the field it makes a big difference. We continue to watch film with each other, know each other, grow our faith with each other and keep God at the center and continue to play. Moments like that happen. It's nothing but just a smile and, 'Hey, let's overcome this obstacle that's in front of us.' But we've just been having fun and playing our game."

**Tuimolou on who is the most vocal player on the defense:** "I think there's a lot. I'd throw myself in there. Tommy (Eichenberg)'s in there, Mike (Hall Jr.)'s there. It's just all of us. We all are hungry. We take in the things that we hear about our defense, especially from last year, and we add it to our pit of fire and continue to keep that chip on our shoulder and to grow. But I think there's a lot of us who are loud. I can't just single out one person."

**Maryland head coach Mike Locksley on his team's performance:** "Ohio State did a really good job of limiting and creating turnovers, which we talked about with our squad. Our winning formula is being able to generate explosives, take care of the football, and then on defense to limit the explosives and create turnovers, and we didn't do either very well today."

**Proctor, who was on the roster for Ohio State's loss at Purdue in 2018, on returning to West Lafayette, Ind., on Oct. 14:** "It means a lot. It means a lot. I haven't been back since, so I'm definitely looking forward to that one."

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# The Numbers Game

## Ohio State 37, Maryland 17

Oct. 7, 2023 - Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
MARYLAND	7	3	7	0	17
OHIO STATE	0	10	10	17	37

### First Quarter

**UMD** - Prather, 15-yard pass from Tagovailoa (Howes kick), 12:41.

### Second Quarter

**UMD** - Howes, 21-yard field goal, 12:56

**OSU** - Proctor, 24-yard INT return (Fielding kick), 9:41.

**OSU** - Fielding, 36-yard field goal, 1:32.

### Third Quarter

**UMD** - Tagovailoa, 9-yard rush (Howes kick), 11:03.

**OSU** - Trayanum, 4-yard rush (Fielding kick), 8:56.

**OSU** - Fielding, 24-yard field goal, 2:19.

### Fourth Quarter

**OSU** - Stover, 44-yard pass from McCord (Fielding kick), 10:16.

**OSU** - Harrison Jr., 17-yard pass from McCord (Fielding kick), 7:01.

**OSU** - Fielding, 41-yard field goal, 2:10.

**Att.** - 104,974

**Weather** - Cloudy, 54 F

### Team Statistics

	UMD	OSU
First Downs	20	21
Rushing	8	3
Passing	10	15
Penalty	2	3
Rushes-Yards	35-106	33-62
Passing Yards	196	320
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	21-41-2	19-29-0
Offensive Plays	76	62
Total Net Yards	302	382
Third Down Efficiency	8-19	3-12
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-1	1-2
Punts-Avg.	5-41.6	4-43.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	0-0
Penalties	4-50	10-81
Time of Possession	30:04	29:56

### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)** - **UMD:** Littleton II 11-38; Hemby 8-35; Tagovailoa 11-21; McDonald 4-12; Edwards Jr. 1-0. **OSU:** Trayanum 20-61; M. Williams 6-23; Egbuka 1-3; Team 1-(-2); Simon 1-(-3); McCord 4-(-20).

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)** - **UMD:** Tagovailoa 21-41-2-196-1. **OSU:** McCord 19-29-0-320-2.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)** - **UMD:** Jones 5-59; Dyches 5-41; Prather 3-49; Felton 3-30; Howard 2-8; Chambers 1-5; Littleton II 1-4; Hemby 1-0. **OSU:** Harrison Jr. 8-163; Egbuka 3-40; Stover 2-66; Fleming 2-45; Johnson 1-12; Tate 1-8; M. Williams 1-4; Trayanum 1-(-18).

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)** - **UMD:** Spangler 5-41.6-53. **OSU:** Mirco 4-43.0-48

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** - **UMD:** Jones 2-32. **OSU:** Egbuka 2-(-2); Ballard 1-(-1).

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** - **UMD:** Wisloski 1-18. **OSU:** Johnson 1-24.

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

**INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.)** - **UMD:** None. **OSU:** Proctor 1-24; Ransom 1-15.

**SACKS (No.-Yds.)** - **UMD:** Bunyun 1-10; Brown 1-8; Wyatt 1-3. **OSU:** Tuimolouau 1.5-14; Hall Jr. 0.5-4.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.)** - **UMD:** Bunyun 1-10; Brown 1-8; Wyatt 1-3; Littleton II 1-3; Brade 1-1. **OSU:** Tuimolouau 1.5-14; Proctor 1.5-1; T. Williams 1-1; Hall Jr. 0.5-4; Styles 0.5-1.

**TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.)** - **UMD:** Brade 5-3-8; Hyppolite II 6-1-7; Trader Jr. 6-1-7; Brown 3-2-5; Wyatt 2-2-4; Greeley 2-2-4; Bunyun 2-2-4; Gotay 1-2-3; Gibson 1-2-3; Sheppard 1-1-2; Whitaker 0-2-2; Spraggins 0-2-2; Wilmot 1-0-1; Littleton II 1-0-1; Barham 1-0-1; Jones 1-0-1; Fleton 1-0-1; Wheatland 1-0-1; Octavian Smith Jr. 1-0-1; Phillips 0-1-1; Harris 0-1-1; Teague 0-1-1; Akingbesote 0-1-1. **OSU:** Eichenberg 7-6-13; Proctor 6-1-7; Chambers 3-4-7; Ransom 6-0-6; Styles 3-2-5; Igbinosun 3-1-4; Tuimolouau 1-3-4; Hamilton 1-3-4; Burke 2-1-3; T. Williams 2-1-3; Sawyer 0-3-3; Simon 1-1-2; Hall Jr. 0-2-2; Hancock 1-0-1.

**PLAYERS IN THE GAME** - **UMD:** Prather, Felton, Hemby, Tagovailoa, Bullock, Purcell, Jones, Ayedze, Glaze, Long, Howard, Barham, Hyppolite II, Trader Jr., Wilmot, Brade, Sheppard, Wyatt, Fuller, Coley Jr., Akingbesote, Phillips, Chambers, Miller, Cooley, Wingate, Whitaker, Wade, Moore, Wisloski, Brown, Dyches, Fisher, Spraggins, Greeley, McDonald, Harley, Gibson, Mason, Harris, Scruggs, Knotts, Johnson, Fleming, Wheatland, Fontus, Smith Jr., Roye Jr., Bunyun, Dumervil, Gough, Littleton II, Gotay, Edwards Jr., Howes, Teague, Colbert, Spangler. **OSU:** Harrison Jr., Trayanum, Fleming, Jones, McCord, Fryar, Simmons, Jackson, Hinzman, Stover, Scott Jr., Igbinosun, Burke, Chambers, Sawyer, Eichenberg, Proctor, Tuimolouau, Hall Jr., Styles, Ransom, T. Williams, Johnson, Inniss, Hicks, Carter, Tate, Melton, Egbuka, Mathews Jr., Hartford, Carrico, Mirco, M. Williams, Simon, Powers, Fielding, Ferlmann, Hamilton, Cutler, Michalski, Vimahi, Hancock, Tshabola, James, Adolph, Ballard, McKenzie, Curry, Kanu, Jackson Jr.

## 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	W, 37-17	104,974	
Oct. 14	(3) at Purdue	12 p.m.		
Oct. 21	PENN STATE (6)	TBA		
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	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.		

<b>OSU Totals</b>	22	22-22	-	-	7-7	175
<b>OPP Totals</b>	6	6-6	-	-	3-4	51

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Jayden Fielding	3-3	2-2	2-2	0-0	7-7
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>3-3</b>	<b>2-2</b>	<b>2-2</b>	<b>0-0</b>	<b>7-7</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>1-1</b>	<b>0-0</b>	<b>2-3</b>	<b>0-0</b>	<b>3-4</b>

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	14	596	42.6	0	56
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>42.6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1061</b>	<b>46.1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>60</b>

Team Statistics		
	OSU	Opp
First Downs	109	79
Rushing	28	30
Passing	70	42
Penalty	11	7
Average Per Game/Rush	131.6	106.4
Average Per Game/Pass	302.8	158.4
Total Offense	2172	1324
Total Plays	314	325
Average Per Game	434.4	264.8
Average Per Play	6.9	4.1
Penalties-Yards	31-262	28-275
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	6-2
Third Down Efficiency	25-62	28-74
Percentage	40%	38%
Fourth Down Efficiency	8-13	4-13
Percentage	62%	31%
Sacks-Yards	7-51	7-40
Time Of Possession Avg.	28:04	31:56

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Jermaine Mathews Jr.	1	58	58.0	1	58
Josh Proctor	1	24	24.0	1	24
Lathan Ransom	1	15	15.0	0	15
Denzel Burke	1	0	0.0	0	0
Steele Chambers	1	0	0.0	0	0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	7	23	3.3	0	8
Jayden Ballard	2	17	8.5	0	18
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Xavier Johnson	7	159	22.7	0	32
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>

Score							
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	28	65	41	41	0	175	35.0
Opponents	17	13	14	7	0	51	10.2

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
T. Henderson	44	295	6.7	5	61
Chip Trayanum	45	207	4.6	3	40
Miyan Williams	25	96	3.8	2	11
Xavier Johnson	5	25	5.0	0	9
Emeka Egbuka	4	21	5.3	0	9
Evan Pryor	3	12	4.0	0	6
Devin Brown	9	10	1.1	0	6
Marvin Harrison Jr.	1	7	7.0	0	7
Cody Simon	1	-3	-3.0	0	0
Kyle McCord	13	-10	-0.8	0	8
Team	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Tommy Eichenberg	26	12	38	1.0-7	1.0-7
Steele Chambers	17	15	32	1.0-1	0-0
Lathan Ransom	17	9	26	0.5-1	0-0
Davison Igbinosun	16	8	24	0.5-2	0-0
Tyleik Williams	10	14	24	4.0-9	1.0-2
Josh Proctor	17	6	23	2.5-2	0-0
Sonny Styles	12	7	19	2.0-4	0-0
J.T. Tuimolouau	7	9	16	0-0	0-0
Ty Hamilton	7	9	16	0-0	0-0
Jack Sawyer	4	9	14	0.5-1	0-0
Cody Simon	5	8	13	0.5-1	0-0
Jordan Hancock	7	5	12	0-0	0-0
Mike Hall Jr.	4	6	10	1.5-14	1.5-14
Jaden McKenzie	4	2	6	1.5-6	0-0
Denzel Burke	4	1	5	1.0-5	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
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
Tyhone Malone	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Julian Fleming	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

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Kyle McCord	93	142	65.5	1375	8-1	164.0
Devin Brown	11	20	55.0	139	1-1	119.9
Team	0	1	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>1514</b>	<b>9-2</b>	<b>157.6</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>56.6</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>3-5</b>	<b>100.3</b>

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Marvin Harrison Jr.	25	499	20.0	4	75
Emeka Egbuka	22	303	13.8	3	28
Cade Stover	19	306	16.1	1	49
Julian Fleming	15	153	10.2	0	37
Carnell Tate	5	83	16.6	1	28
Xavier Johnson	4	58	14.5	0	40
Gee Scott Jr.	4	20	5.0	0	10
Miyan Williams	3	43	14.3	0	27
Chip Trayanum	3	6	2.0	0	12
T. Henderson	3	45	15.0	0	27
Dallan Hayden	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>1514</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>36</b>

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jayden Fielding	-	22-22	-	-	7-7	43
T. Henderson	5	-	-	-	-	30
Marvin Harrison Jr.	4	-	-	-	-	24
Chip Trayanum	3	-	-	-	-	18
Emeka Egbuka	3	-	-	-	-	18
Miyan Williams	2	-	-	-	-	

# Trayanum's Story Unwritten After Game-Winner

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

On Feb. 2, 2022, a bulky Chip Trayanum – then just known as DeaMonte Trayanum – stepped up to the microphone on the Woody Hayes Athletic Center turf to meet the media for the first time as a Buckeye.

Transferring from Arizona State in December of 2021 as a junior running back-turned-linebacker, the former Akron Hoban phenom was still uncertain of the role he could carve out for himself on his hometown team, telling the media that he would do anything to help Ohio State win.

“Honestly, no, I don’t know,” Trayanum said when asked about the role he saw himself playing on the defense. “I’m just coming in, keeping my head down and just working every day. I just want to be in the best spot where I can help the team the most at.”

Little did he know the kind of impact he would make on the Ohio State football program two seasons later. Just under 20 months after that statement, Trayanum – now more commonly referred to as Chip – scored what many experts are calling one of the more consequential touchdowns in Ohio State’s storied history when he took a handoff from quarterback Kyle McCord from the 1-yard line and stretched into Notre Dame Stadium’s south end zone to give the Buckeyes a stunning last-second 17-14 road win over the Fighting Irish on Sept. 23, capping off a 15-play, 65-yard game-winning drive.

“It means a lot,” Trayanum said after the game of getting the final carry. “God is great. I’ve never even envisioned a moment like this. But ultimately, it happened at the end of the day. I’m just thankful. It was such a tough, nail-biting game. We knew it was going to come down to the fourth quarter. We didn’t know it was going to come down to the last play and 1 yard, but we always preach at the beginning of the game to keep swinging, keep swinging and keep swinging. And that’s exactly what we did.”

Trayanum, now a full-time running back, may not have pictured his Ohio State career panning out this way when he arrived on campus, but his teammates knew exactly what he was capable of. Senior linebacker Steele Chambers, who made a position change of his own from running back to linebacker in 2021, said his former linebacker-mate has prepared himself for a moment like this by putting in countless hours of work ever since he arrived at Ohio State.

“I mean, it’s really no surprise,” Chambers said on Oct. 4. “Everyone (outside the facility) was all surprised when he scored that touchdown. For us, everyone in this facility knew it was going to happen because he just comes in and puts the work in every single day. That’s just something that we knew was going to happen. I knew as soon as he switched. He’s good at whatever he does.”

Trayanum’s adaptability and determination have paid dividends in his first two seasons at Ohio State, something that first came to light toward the end of his junior campaign last season. Initially listed as a linebacker on the roster sheet, Trayanum made most of his impact on special teams

through the first few months of the season while backing up starters Chambers and Tommy Eichenberg, totaling just 12 tackles through October.

His role would completely change in November, however, when late-season injuries to running backs TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams forced head coach Ryan Day and his staff to get creative and place the former Sun Devil back, who had gained 692 yards rushing (5.4-yard average) and scored 10 touchdowns at ASU, into the tailback room.

While some collegiate players might have scoffed at yet another position change, Trayanum instead embraced it, keeping the Buckeyes’ laboring offense afloat in the most important regular-season game of the season. Amid the pain of the Buckeyes’ 45-23 home loss to Michigan, Trayanum proved to be one of the few bright spots on an otherwise gloomy day for Ohio State, churning out 83 of his 92 rushing yards from all of last season to help the team stay in reach of the victory.

“I thought in The Game, Chip ran well,” Day said. “Especially for his first game, getting put in that environment.”

“I’ve seen him play before, but everybody else hasn’t seen him play, so I knew when he got out there, he was going to do what he does,” Williams added after the loss. “He had a great week of practice, just finishing runs and running hard.”

Trayanum’s selfless attitude has paid off for him this season, when he has earned an even larger role on the team. Now firmly established in Tony Alford’s running backs room, he has emerged as Ohio State’s No. 2 rusher through the first five games of the season, racking up a team-high 45 carries for 207 yards and three touchdowns, including a 20-carry, 61-yard and one-touchdown performance against Maryland on Oct. 7. Trayanum has stayed grounded despite this recent success, however, continuing to perfect his craft as the season progresses.

“I work day in and day out,” Trayanum said before the Maryland game. “I just come into the building with a hard-hat mentality, just like another workday, trying to stack days. When you come to Ohio State and you’re around great players and you see what they do in their daily routine, it makes you want to add something new or different to your nuance or routine. So seeing those guys work hard inspires me to work harder and ultimately achieve greatness.”

This grinding mentality has allowed Trayanum to thrive in the Buckeyes’ backfield this season, but it has also helped him earn the respect of the locker room. Junior wideout and projected top-five NFL draft pick Marvin Harrison Jr., whom McCord targeted in the end zone the play prior to Trayanum’s game-winning score, said the emerging running back has stepped up as a team leader this season, letting his on-field production and selfless approach do all the talking.

“Chip, he’s a do-it-all guy,” Harrison said. “He’s worked very hard to excel in the passing game and running game. He came here playing linebacker. To move over to running back now shows he’s a team-first kind of guy. He’s going to do whatever we need him to do



SONNY BROCKWAY

**NOT DONE YET — Ohio State running back Chip Trayanum is looking for more after running in the game winner against Notre Dame on Sept. 23.**

as a team to help us win, so I respect Chip a lot. He’s one of the most respected players in our program.

“For him to get that touchdown, I was super proud of him because he’s just doing whatever he needs to do to help the team win.”

“Chip has always been super mature,” junior wideout Emeka Egbuka added on Sept. 27. “And he’s always been a leader. He really immersed himself in the culture when he got here from Arizona State, and it was like he’s been here since day one. Chip has always been a guy you can rely on, he’s an iron Buckeye, good guy, a leader.”

“We only have three captains this year, but if we had a fourth it would probably be Chip. He’s just a really great dude to have on your side of the ball, because you know he’s going to get his job done, you know he’s going to lead the team.”

Trayanum’s unique combination of humility and toughness has impressed his peers for the past two seasons at Ohio State, a mindset he said was cultivated during his first stint in the Buckeye State as a high schooler.

Playing under longtime Hoban head coach Tim Tyrell, who has led the Knights to five state championships and a 187-71 record (.725) in 11 seasons at the helm, the future Ohio State tailback said he learned the importance of both mental and physical toughness, something that he has since ingrained in his identity on the gridiron. This realization spurred success for Trayanum in his high school career.

A four-year starter for Tyrell, he helped lead Hoban to three state championships while playing both sides of the ball. Trayanum mostly thrived as a linebacker, however,

where he recorded 60 tackles, eight sacks, five forced fumbles and 10 pass breakups as a junior on his way to an Ohio Prep Sports-writers Association Division II All-Ohio nod.

“I’m a big personal advocate for Ohio high school football,” Trayanum said after his arrival at Ohio State. “It’s just a different type of toughness, just really in the trenches the whole game. A lot of the schools out West and down South, it’s more like a spread, West Coast style of offense in high school. But I feel like in Ohio, you can experience a little bit of it all. I feel like being in Ohio and playing football here in high school, it definitely readies you.”

Now in the midst of his second stint in Ohio after a two-year stay in Tempe, Ariz., Trayanum continues to make a name for himself in the same state that raised him. After sending shockwaves through the crowd of 77,622 at Notre Dame Stadium and into Columbus with his game-winning score, the Ohio native has become a folk hero for the Buckeyes faithful, providing them with a single moment in time that will live in Ohio State history.

Trayanum, however, does not want that one play to define his career at Ohio State. For him, there is still much more left in the tank, and his legacy has yet to be written.

“(The play) has hit me, but God willing, I’ve been able to stay grounded through it,” Trayanum said. “I know the first thing I told Coach Alford that following Monday was like, ‘Having that moment is great and all, but I didn’t come to Ohio State to have one moment. I came here to have many moments.’ I’m just using that as motivation just to keep striving and keep pushing towards greatness.”

# Purdue Rebuilding After Brohm's Departure

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

After years of the churning rumor mill, contract negotiations and pleas from Louisville football fans, Purdue head coach Jeff Brohm – a native of Louisville, Ky., and a former college football player with the Cardinals – resigned his post from the Boilermakers this past offseason to return home after a five-year stint in West Lafayette, Ind.

It was a significant blow for Purdue considering that Brohm led the team to two bowl wins in four appearances and a 36-35 record over the past five seasons. That included a nine-win season in 2021, the program's first since 2003 under Joe Tiller, the last coach for the Boilermakers before Brohm who was able to sustain any sort of success.

Louisville went big with Brohm's hire, but the Boilermakers on Dec. 13, 2022, opted for a quiet yet sensible pick in Ryan Walters, the then-36-year-old defensive coordinator at Illinois and former safety at Colorado. With the Fighting Illini, he coordinated a defense last season that finished first nationally in scoring defense (12.8 points), third in total defense (273.5 yards), eighth in passing defense (173.8 yards) and ninth in rushing defense (99.8 yards) and was also tied for first nationally with 32 takeaways.

At the time, he was the fourth-youngest coach in the FBS, but his hiring made sense given his finalist finish for the Broyles Award last season, given to the top assistant coach in college football. Despite his youth, he set a clear path forward for his time at Purdue.

"We're going to build this program the right way through hard work, through class, through integrity and an unmatched competitive edge to go chase and win championships," he said. "We're not shying away from any of that."

But through six games this season, it's largely been more of the same from Purdue, with a couple of big moments mixed with mostly disappointment. The Boilermakers opened the season with a 39-35 home loss to Fresno State of the Mountain West Conference.

After a win at Virginia Tech the following week, Purdue then lost consecutive home contests, dropping a 35-20 decision to Syracuse and getting blown off the field by Wisconsin, 38-17. A 44-19 win over Illinois provided some hope, but after a 20-14 loss to Iowa on Oct. 7, the path does not get easier from there with Ohio State coming to town on Oct. 14.

There will be some additional motivation as well for Ohio State, which will be looking to avenge the 49-20 loss at Purdue in 2018. While only three players (Xavier Johnson, Matthew Jones and Josh Proctor) and a handful of coaches remain on the roster, it's likely to be a significant talking point in the lead-up to the contest.

As for the current year Boilermakers, the offense has been serviceable this season, racking up 25.7 points and 390.3 yards per contest, but the issues have come – ironically, given Walters' background – on defense, where Purdue is allowing 28.0 points and 380.3 yards per game through six contests, both bottom-two marks in the Big Ten.

"I saw us fighting and fighting together,"

Walters said of the defense after the win over Illinois. "We have seen it in spurts. We haven't really played complementary football yet. I thought today was a great example of what happens when we play complementary football. Guys go out there and really give it their all for four quarters.

"We see what we're capable of doing when we are playing clean, we're executing at a high level, we're communicating at a high level and we're playing tough and physical."

The defense has not been able to find that groove so far, but there are still some individual standouts on that side of the ball for the Boilermakers, starting with freshman safety Dillon Thieneman.

A true freshman starting for the Boilermaker's defense would have most assuming that he stepped in due to injury and has not relinquished his role, but the opposite is true. Since arriving on campus as an early enrollee, Thieneman was able to earn the starting job to begin the season over players on the roster who have several more years of experience.

"He's got no fear, and I think because of that he's earned the respect of the guys in the locker room and really impressed the staff and he's earned the right to start," Walter said before the season began.

And since earning that starting job, Thieneman has given Purdue no reason to second-guess the decision. He has already accounted for a team-high 53 tackles – 11 more than second most – and has added three interceptions.

"Coming in, in the weight room, on the field, wherever you look at, he's already on top of the boards on everything," senior safety Cam Allen said. "Looking through my eyes, it's a whole bunch of things he did that I haven't seen a true freshman do in a long time."

Thieneman is joined in the secondary by Allen, Purdue's other starting safety, and cornerbacks Sanoussi Kane and Markevious Brown, with defensive back Marquis Wilson also seeing the field as a nickelback for the Boilermakers. The unit – allowing 226.5 passing yards per game – will be in for a stiff challenge with the Buckeyes' strong passing attack.

Sophomore linebacker Gianni Karlaftis – the younger brother of former Purdue defensive end George Karlaftis, who played under Brohm from 2019-21 – has stepped up in recent weeks due to an injury to starting linebacker OC Brothers, who did not play in the loss to Iowa.

Karlaftis has 20 tackles and one tackle for loss, including his first career sack in the win over Illinois. But the injury to Brothers is still something to keep an eye on considering that Purdue runs a 3-4 front, with senior Clyde Washington at inside linebacker and senior Kydran Jenkins and sophomore Nic Scourton at outside linebacker.

That three-man front runs with a small but tight rotation, with seniors Isaiah Nichols and Malik Langham – as well as junior Cole Brevard – accounting for over half of the snaps for the interior defensive line. Through five games, the trio has combined for 34 tackles (5½ for loss) and two sacks.

While the Boilermakers were likely ex-

## Get To Know ... Purdue

- **2023 Record:** 2-4.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation - Air Raid; Defensive Formation - 3-4; Starters Returning - Offense 5, Defense 4, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Ryan Walters, 1st year at Purdue, 2-4.
- **Series History:** 58th meeting, Ohio State leads 40-15-2.
- **School Facts:** Location - West Lafayette, Ind.; Enrollment - 52,211; Nickname - Boilermakers; Colors - Old Gold, Black; Conference - Big Ten (West Division); Stadium - Ross-Ade Stadium (Surface, Grass; Capacity - 61,441).

### Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Devin Mockobee	87	372	4.3	4
Tyrone Tracy Jr.	50	296	5.9	5
Dylan Downing	30	143	4.8	1

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Hudson Card	136-214	63.6	1491	6-5

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Abdur-Rahmaan Yaseen	25	329	13.2	0
TJ Sheffield	24	284	11.8	1
Deion Burks	24	396	16.5	4

### Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 25.7  
 Rushing Yards Per Game – 141.8  
 Passing Yards Per Game – 248.5  
 Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 390.3

### 2023 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 2	FRESNO STATE	L, 39-35
Sept. 9	at Virginia Tech	W, 24-17
Sept. 16	SYRACUSE	L, 35-20
Sept. 22	WISCONSIN	L, 28-17
Sept. 30	ILLINOIS	W, 44-19
Oct. 7	at Iowa	L, 20-14
Oct. 14	OHIO STATE	12 p.m.
Oct. 28	at Nebraska	12, 3 or 4 p.m.
Nov. 4	at Michigan	TBA
Nov. 11	MINNESOTA	TBA
Nov. 18	at Northwestern	TBA
Nov. 25	INDIANA	TBA
Dec. 2	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.

### Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Dillon Thieneman	41	12	53	0-0	0-0
Sanoussi Kane	32	10	42	5.0-14	1.0-4
Kydran Jenkins	19	7	26	6.0-39	4.0-37
Markevious Brown	17	5	22	3.0-17	1.0-12
Nic Scourton	14	8	22	5.5-25	3.0-16

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Dillon Thieneman	3	26	8.7	0
Cam Allen	2	5	2.5	0
Botros Alisandro	1	16	16.0	0

### Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 28.0  
 Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 153.8  
 Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 226.5  
 Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 380.3

pecting more from a defense that features eight either juniors or seniors in the starting lineup, defensive coordinator Kevin Kane – despite what will likely be a tough outing against the Buckeyes – is seeing continued improvement from his group as the season progresses.

"I think right now the guys understand the big picture," he said. "We're so close. We're still not there yet, but we're still so close. We've got to keep sawing wood."

Brohm was the most notable replacement for Purdue this offseason, but he was not the only important loss for the Boilermakers. Also gone is Aidan O'Connell, who saw action in 33 games for Purdue over the last four seasons and threw for 9,219 yards and 65 touchdowns. He was taken in the fourth round of this year's NFL draft by the Las Vegas Raiders and made his first career start on Oct. 1, completing 24 of 39 passes for 238 yards in place of the injured Jimmy Garoppolo.

Like many teams did this offseason, the Boilermakers went shopping in the portal and found former Texas quarterback Hudson Card, who left the Longhorns after losing his starting job to Quinn Ewers last season. Through six games at Purdue, Card has thrown for 1,491 yards and six touchdowns to five interceptions while completing 63.6 percent of his passes.

"I think what's most important and most impressive from my vantage point is just his poise he's got," Walters said earlier this season. "Calm, confident, still understands the scheme and can get the ball out quickly and go through his reads on time. He's a great quarterback, is one of the best I've been around in person and I'm excited to see him play as well."

Junior Abdur-Rahmaan Yaseen has been Card's favorite target with 25 catches for

329 yards, though sophomore Deion Burks leads the way with 396 receiving yards and four scores.

Hudson is also flanked by a pair of talented running backs. Sophomore Devin Mockobee was a heartwarming story coming into the season, put on scholarship the day that Walters took over as head coach in December after leading the team with 968 rushing yards and nine touchdowns as a walk-on.

Mockobee has led Purdue with 368 rushing yards and four touchdowns, and the Boilermakers have also gotten significant contributions from fifth-year senior Tyrone Tracy Jr., who has five touchdowns and averages a team-high 5.9 yards per carry.

"I think our running backs are starting to get their groove, and we as an offensive staff are finding out what they're good at and what's their comfort level in the type of runs that we're calling," Walters said.

Even though Purdue's rushing offense has totaled 141.2 yards per game this season, it's difficult to imagine the Boilermakers finding sustained success against Ohio State, which has allowed only 106.4 rushing yards per game.

All told, Purdue's best team in recent seasons (the 2021 squad that finished 9-4) suffered a 59-31 loss in Columbus, and Walters' first-year team – despite showing some improvement through the first six games – does not have the talent in the early stages of the team's rebuild.

That being said, Ohio State has had its fair share of struggles in West Lafayette, with five losses since 2000 on the road. And given that the calendar has turned to October, the Buckeyes should be on high alert to avoid succumbing to the house of horrors that is Ross-Ade Stadium.

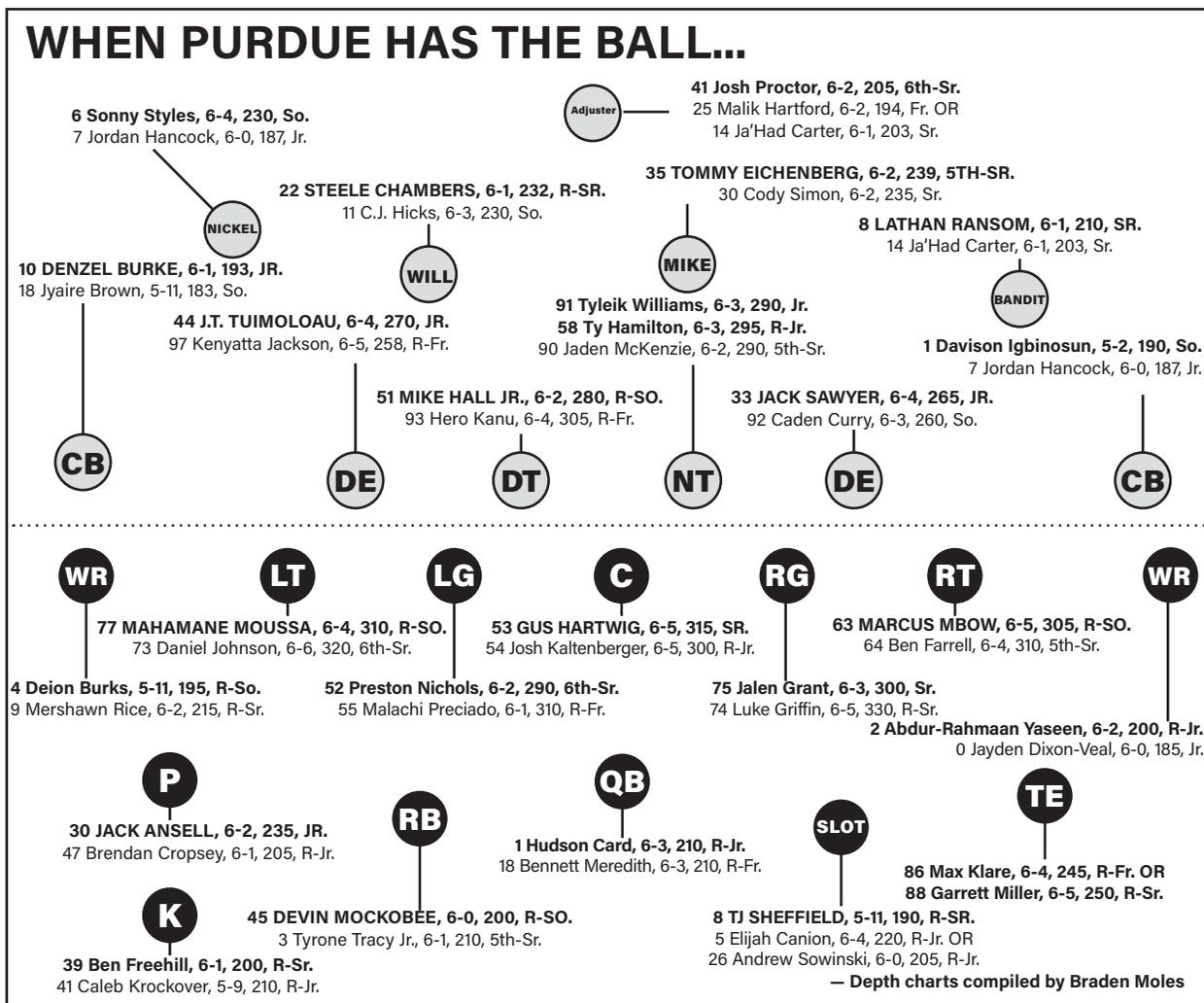
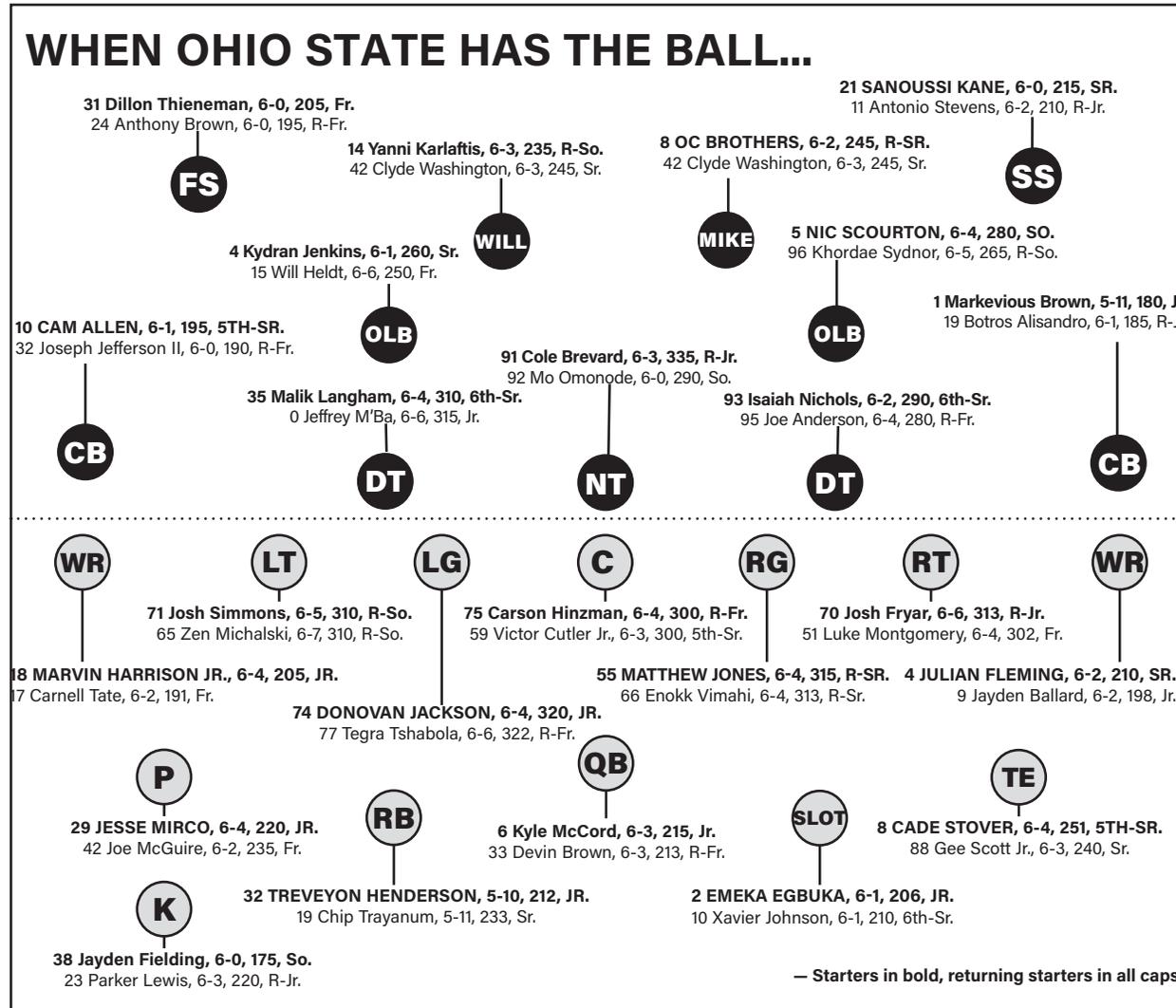


# Ohio State at Purdue

Saturday, Oct. 14 - Noon - Peacock  
Ross-Ade Stadium; West Lafayette, Ind.



## Projected Depth Charts



## How We See It

### OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. PURDUE RUSH DEFENSE

The Buckeyes played without leading rusher Tre'Veyon Henderson in the 37-17 win vs. Maryland on Oct. 7 because of an undisclosed injury, but coach Ryan Day expects him to be available for Purdue. The final score might indicate a running game wasn't needed, but the lack of a sustainable ground game – an astounding 16 yards on 15 carries in the first two quarters – contributed to a scoreless first half for the offense against the Terrapins. OSU was marginally better over the final two quarters to finish with a mere 62 yards on 33 runs for a paltry 1.9 yards per carry. The Buckeyes missed Henderson's breakaway capability, as their longest run of 11 yards was by third-stringer Miyan Williams. He gained 23 yards on six totes (3.8). Chip Trayanum's 61 yards came on 20 rushes (3.1). The underwhelming offensive line contributed to a lack of production. The Boilermakers enter the game ranked 85th nationally with 153.8 yards allowed per game. In the 20-14 setback to Iowa on Oct. 7, they were gashed by Kaleb Johnson for 134 yards on just 17 carries (7.9). On his second rush, he went for a 67-yard touchdown. Iowa ran for 181 yards (5.2), but if Henderson is healthy, the Buckeyes should do better than that. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### PURDUE RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Boilermakers struggled to a 2.4 average on their 40 carries for 96 yards against Iowa. Devin Mockobee led the way with 89 yards and a touchdown on 20 carries (4.5) but Purdue's numbers were skewed by the minus-40 yards in sacks to quarterback Hudson Card. Mockobee, Tyrone Tracy Jr. and Dylan Downing combined for 675 yards (135.0 yards per game) and nine touchdowns through the first five games of the season before running into a wall vs. the Hawkeyes. Tracy did not breach the goal line for the first time this season. Meanwhile, Maryland ran for 106 yards on 35 carries (3.0) and got a 17-yarder from Roman Hemby but otherwise was non-threatening to the Buckeyes. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. PURDUE PASS DEFENSE

It would be hard to fathom Kyle McCord setting a career high against Maryland with 320 yards if you watched him for the first 25 minutes. Then he hit Marvin Harrison Jr. for 58 and 19 yards on consecutive plays on a drive that ended with a field goal. He was 8 of 15 for 126 yards in the first half and 19 of 29 with two touchdowns in the game. Yet, he was under constant pressure and sacked three times for 21 yards, not including a shovel pass to Trayanum to avoid another sack that resulted in an 18-yard loss. Harrison, per usual, bailed out McCord with a great 37-yard catch to save the drive before tight end Cade Stover's 44-yard touchdown reception. Harrison was targeted 15 times, making eight catches for 163 yards. Emeka Egbuka was injured early in the fourth quarter, and his status for the game is unknown. Iowa QB Deacon Hill was 6 of 21 for 110 yards in his first career start but did throw for a 22-yard touchdown. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### PURDUE PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Of note, Maryland and Purdue entered their Oct. 7 games as the only teams in the Big Ten to average at least 240 passing yards per game and at least 150 yards rushing yards per game. The Boilermakers barely made it passing (247 yards) while the Buckeyes limited Maryland's Taulia Tagovailoa to 21 of 41 for 196 yards. He had a touchdown but suffered a pick-six by Josh Proctor and another interception by Lathan Ransom. Card was 25 for 40 with a 43-yard touchdown and two interceptions for the Boilermakers. Iowa had only three sacks prior to the Purdue game, but Card was sacked six times. Ohio State had two sacks, but Tagovailoa was scrambling the whole game and often threw the ball away instead of being tackled. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### SPECIAL TEAMS

Julio Macias tried a 41-yard field goal and missed against Iowa. Purdue's TJ Sheffield had a 48-yard punt return, and Jack Ansell averaged 41.3 yards on seven punts with a long of 54. Purdue also blocked a field-goal attempt. Maryland's Jashaun Jones had a 26-yard punt return vs. the Buckeyes. Jesse Mirco's three punts averaged 43.0, and Jayden Fielding made field goals from 36, 24 and 41 yards. **EDGE: EVEN**

### INTANGIBLES

Everybody remembers what happened when the Buckeyes went to West Lafayette, Ind., in 2018 and the No. 2-ranked team was humiliated 49-20. The last time Purdue beat a team ranked that high was when they took down the second-ranked Buckeyes 28-23 on Oct. 6, 1984. The scenario is perfect for Purdue to pull off another stunner. **EDGE: PURDUE**

### STAFF PREDICTION

The numbers say the Buckeyes should win in a blowout. But anybody who squirmed through three tight quarters against Maryland knows Ohio State is vulnerable. Add in the home crowd for the Boilermakers, and it could get interesting. **OHIO STATE 38, PURDUE 20**

# Physicality Debate At Forefront For Buckeyes

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Besides the unparalleled attention Deion Sanders and his team are garnering out in Boulder, Colo., perhaps no college football storyline has been more well-documented this season than the war of words between legendary ex-Notre Dame head football coach Lou Holtz and Ohio State's Ryan Day.

Holtz' harsh criticisms regarding Ohio State's lack of physicality when compared to other national powerhouses drew the ire of Day, leading to an impassioned callout of the 86-year-old retiree moments after the Buckeyes' 17-14 road victory over the Fighting Irish on Sept. 23 that likely needs no more explanation. But cooler heads seemed to have prevailed between the two combatants as the calendar flipped to October.

"We've moved on from Notre Dame," Day told WBNS-TV's Dom Tiberi on Sept. 28. "We have bigger fish to fry right now. That was all talked about leading into the game, and now that game's over with. Ohio State won. We're proud of the fact that we are 2-0 against Notre Dame (over the previous two seasons). To go 2-0 in the last two years and win like that is great, but that's behind us. Now we're all looking forward."

The feud has seemingly come to an end, but Holtz' provoking comments bring light to a deeper series of questions about the construction and identity of Ohio State's football program under Day, something that emerged as a major point of dialogue among

both fans and critics long before the former Notre Dame head coach lit Day's fuse.

The Buckeyes' back-to-back blowout losses to Michigan, coupled with an early-season slip-up against Oregon in 2021, have cast doubts surrounding the program's level of toughness.

"Every game we play, we're physical. We are," Day said after the win over the Irish. "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."

With a mix of opinions – both positive and negative – swirling around Day's team, Buckeye Sports Bulletin caught up with a trio of former Buckeyes – linebacker Jim Laughlin, fullback Vaughn Broadnax and longtime assistant and recruiting coordinator Bill Conley – along with Ohio State beat reporter Marcus Hartman to dig deeper into this pressing debate: Is Ohio State physical enough to compete for national championships, or does Holtz have a point?

The search for an answer started with Laughlin, an eight-year NFL linebacker from 1980-1987 and captain of Ohio State's 1979 football team. He helped lead the Buckeyes to an 11-1 record and Rose Bowl appearance that same year by registering 77 tackles, nine tackles for loss and two pass breakups, along with two blocked kicks.

Laughlin, who was known for his bruising style of play, echoed Day's statements

regarding Ohio State's physicality, stating that despite lapses in 2021 against Michigan, Oregon and even Minnesota, the Buckeyes have more than stood their ground in the trenches, especially in the postseason where it mattered most.

"There was truth to (Holtz's comments) the year before because we got pushed around by Oregon and Michigan," Laughlin said. "He wasn't out of line about that because Michigan pushed us around up there. Oregon pushed us around, and so did Minnesota back in the beginning of that season (rushing for 203 yards). That's totally unacceptable."

"Last year, we were physical. Michigan did nothing, but they had five huge plays. That's unacceptable too, but those five big plays were probably because in three of them we were being physical and blitzing, and boom, we got beat deep. But it wasn't because we weren't physical. Like I said, the year before, there's some truth to that. And Holtz's comment about Clemson, that wasn't right, because we thrashed Clemson in 2020. Those last two Clemson games, we were physical. Heck, we out-physicaled Georgia, we outplayed them. Even (Georgia head coach) Kirby Smart said so. He said, 'Ohio State deserved to win.'"

Laughlin, who also said that Ohio State's offensive and defensive lines held their own during their first significant test against Notre Dame, added that dominating the line of scrimmage is a critical aspect of football that has regularly determined the outcomes of games over decades. This is a trend that he witnessed while going up against the all-time great NFL teams who have most accurately personified what toughness looks like on the gridiron.

"It's almost always the more physical team that wins," he said. "I mean, when I played, good God, we played in the NFC championship game, I was with the Rams, and we played the '85 Bears (who won 24-0). They just crushed you. And you knew they were going to crush you and they knew it. They were just relentless."

"On the defensive line, physicality is penetration, and on the offensive line, it's not letting them get penetration, especially when you get down inside the 5-yard line," he continued. "When the talent is even, the team that's more physical always wins. When I played, the 49ers, they won four Super Bowls, and they were a finesse team with their offense, but they were physical, too. Their offensive linemen were physical, their defensive line and linebackers and defensive backs, guys like Ronnie Lott, those guys were physical. People thought of them as a finesse team, and they did have a great offense with (head coach) Bill Walsh, but they were very physical."

Like Laughlin, Conley – who spent 29 years at Ohio State, first as an offensive guard under head coach Woody Hayes from 1968-1971, then as an assistant coach from 1984-2004 as well as recruiting coordinator from 1992-2004 – stood up for Day and the Buckeyes.

"First of all, I thought his comments were extremely out of place," Conley said of Holtz, who was Ohio State's secondary coach during Conley's freshman season in 1968. "For a former coach like him to really

make a personal attack against the coaching abilities of somebody else, especially at a school where he had formerly coached at, it was completely uncalled for. Because he not only attacked the physicality part of Day's coaching, but he really attacked the whole program saying basically that the Buckeyes aren't as tough as they used to be."

"We've been extremely successful, physically, at protecting the quarterback," he continued. "If you look at this year, we haven't given up many sacks, only (seven) so far this year, so you have to be physical, because that's a one-on-one battle most of the time. You're taking on talented defensive ends, fast athletes, big athletes, and you have to be physical to win that battle. I don't think you can say we're not a physical football team. I think with what we do, I think the coaches do a doggone good job of getting the most out of their players."

Conley's words certainly hold some credibility. Not only did he play under Hayes for four seasons, but he also coached or helped recruit a number of Ohio State's more physically imposing players of the modern era, from offensive lineman Orlando Pace (1994-96) to former defensive end and current Tennessee Titans head coach Mike Vrabel (1993-96).

But the longtime Buckeye listed a player who is more widely known for his speed and athleticism as someone who flashed his toughness while he donned the scarlet and gray, that being wide receiver Cris Carter, who played under Conley and Earle Bruce from 1984-86.

"You don't think of wide receivers necessarily being great physical guys, but he was," Conley said. "He made acrobatic catches, he was a great blocker, all that stuff. He made critical catches in critical situations. He played great when he had to and made plays when he had to."

Speaking of physical guys, Broadnax, who served as the Buckeyes' fullback from 1980-83 under Bruce and used his brute strength to rush for 1,079 yards and 14 touchdowns, agreed with Laughlin and Conley's statements regarding the importance of toughness in football. Reflecting on his experiences playing for Ohio State, he said that the result of games ultimately comes down to which teams can flex their muscles and impose their will not only in the trenches, but across the entire field.

"Football is a lot of one-on-one battles," Broadnax said. "You have the one-on-one battles on the line, the one-on-one battles with the receivers, and defensive backs, and the tight end and linebacker battles. Who's going to win those battles? That's physicality."

He also mentioned that toughness is a mentality that all players must possess when they walk onto the field. For Broadnax, this means having the confidence that you can beat the man in front of you with aggression and intensity – something he saw from the Buckeyes' offensive line, albeit on a play that led to a 15-yard unnecessary roughness penalty, against Notre Dame.

"Our offensive line is improving, and I'll give you an example," Broadnax said. "Josh Fryar, when he blocked his man to the ground, pancaked him and went after him, nine times out of 10, that's never called a

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penalty. But that's physicality. Because he wants your man to know that you can dominate him. And that's with any lineman, that's with a running back trying to block a linebacker, that's with the defensive backs. You want to give them the impression that 'I can block you. You're not just going to run over me, you're not going to run around me. I'm going to take you head on.' And that's what physicality is.

"I look at (former OSU offensive tackle) Dawand Jones, and when he gets his hooks on you, they can't get around him. He's long, he's tall, and he has some agility. But he has that strength and belief that 'I'm more of a man than you are,' literally and figuratively. And that's how you have to be on the offensive line."

Broadnax did laud the hard-nosed mentality Fryar and the Ohio State offensive linemen – both new and old – possess, but he also noted one glaring weakness among the Buckeyes' entire offense that could point to a lack of physicality up front. He sees the ineffectiveness in short-yardage situations on third and fourth down as an aspect of Day's offense that may validate some of Holtz's remarks – a soft spot that reared its ugly head against the Fighting Irish.

While Ohio State connected on all five of its third- and fourth-down attempts from 3 yards or less in a 63-10 victory over Western Kentucky on Sept. 16, it failed to convert on 4 of 6 attempts of the same yardage one week later against Notre Dame. This regression was headlined by an unsuccessful reverse attempt from junior wideout Emeka Egbuka late in the fourth quarter on fourth-and-1, which gave the Fighting Irish the ball back with just 4:12 left in the contest.

"I have a disdain for shotgun formations when you're trying to get short yardage, right, or when you're at the goal line," Broadnax said. "It's a simple principle. If you allow penetration into your line, it is going to impact your running game. If you're snapping the ball 6, 7 yards back to hand it off to a running back, that allows the defense to get penetration and dictate what's going. If you get up behind center, and even do a quarterback sneak, you know it is legal.

I want all the coaches to know that. It is legal for somebody to push your quarterback forward.

"Ohio State needs to utilize all the options they have, and I think that will dispel the lack of toughness that Ohio State has. Because you want to be able to dictate 1 or 2 yards with your line, and being on the offense, you have an advantage, so use it."

Broadnax places a good portion of the blame on the play calling, but Hartman views these issues as stemming from a lack of strength and experience on the new-look offensive line. Hartman, who has covered Ohio State since 2005, admitted the short-yardage schemes have not led to success, but he has also seen the Buckeye blockers – particularly newcomers Carson Hinzman at center and Josh Simmons at left tackle – get pushed around so far this season.

"I admire what they have tried to do," Hartman said. "They just need to execute better. I think there are times that they have put the offensive line in a position to fail, and then they have failed. But I also think that if you really look back, there's a handful of runs where you see somebody sliding off a block and then that guy's man makes the tackle. It's not that hard to break down, and it's a couple of the newer guys.

"Simmons and Hinzman have both had some issues. If a run goes wrong, a lot of times that's because one of them didn't maintain their block. And with Hinzman, that's exactly the reason you don't want to have a redshirt freshman starting on the offensive line. I think he just needs to get stronger and bigger, and he probably will. It's just hard for guys who are in their first or second year out of high school to make it. But I would definitely consider that a physicality issue, where they get their hands on people but they don't get the block. Everybody has their turn, but those are the two guys who kind of stick out a little bit more."

Hartman added that these struggles highlight a deeper issue within the program regarding their recent inability to recruit and develop physically imposing offensive linemen. This has forced the Buckeyes to

sacrifice some toughness on offense since 2019 – a team that he claimed was one of Ohio State's most rugged in recent memory.

"It's just that they didn't recruit well enough on the offensive line the last two years," Hartman said. "They just got guys who weren't ready to play. Ideally, you never have a guy who's less than three years out of high school playing offensive line, unless it's Orlando Pace. Even Paris Johnson Jr., I thought he was honestly not that close to a finished product. Based on his expectations, he could have been better.

"The 2019 offensive line was really physical," he continued. "And guess what? It was all five-star recruits and (senior transfer Jonah Jackson). I think it's a valid question to say, 'Well are they just not physical enough because of the style of play?' But they have been good when they've had older, more talented offensive linemen. I think the No. 1 issue this year is the lack of talent and experience on the offensive line."

While the verdict regarding Ohio State's level of toughness still may be out, with each source offering differing opinions on the subject, the quartet all admitted that the perception of and emphasis on physicality has changed since Holtz last manned the sidelines for Notre Dame.

With a new set of rules in place that favor a more free-flowing offense and the players displaying a type of athleticism and speed that is unprecedented in college football, the door has opened for teams to "finesse" their way to college football prominence – while also still flexing their muscles when it is needed most.

"To win in the College Football Playoff,

you have to be a high-powered offense," Hartman said. "There's no question about that. If you look at all the results from the last 15 years, it's the same way in the NFL. Defense doesn't win championships anymore because they changed the rules to give a huge disadvantage to the defense.

"This is the gamble that Michigan makes. Back in the day, for teams to win championships, it helped when you were a defensive team that ran into another defensive team. But now, almost everybody is a high-scoring offense. The odds of you running into another team that's not trying to put 50 on the board are extremely low. That makes it even more likely that you're going to have to score at least a few points."

Scoring has not been an issue under Day, with Ohio State's offenses – regardless of who is under center or running routes – continuing to run opposing defenses off the field. And while questions persist over the team's perceived physicality, Ohio State has established itself as a new-age contender, combining that high-scoring offense with a more than capable defense. And if it continues to build on that physicality coming off the win over Notre Dame? Look out.

"You can win being a finesse team that runs it enough, especially if you have a good defense," Hartman said. "In a perfect world, you want to be able to do both, because the less physicality you have, the easier it's going to be to defend. Ohio State can win it all playing this style, if they execute at a high level. I get what they're trying to do overall, and I would support it."

"But I would say, if you like your job, do it right."



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# Holtz Is A Buckeye For Life To 1968 Team

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The 1968 football season ended with Ohio State on top, defeating Southern California 27-16 in the Rose Bowl, securing an undefeated 10-0 season and the program's fourth national championship. Woody Hayes was in his 18th season as head coach at Ohio State, and for that year, he had brought on a young defensive backs coach who would go on to do great things himself.

Lou Holtz helped the Buckeyes to that national championship win, staying only one season and moving on to his first head coaching position at William & Mary, the beginning of a 34-year run as the head coach of seven programs between the college ranks and the NFL. Former Ohio State quarterback Rex Kern played on the 1968 team and remembers his year with Holtz.

"Lou was really a pistol," he told BSB "He had new defensive backs. He had Jack Tatum, he had Mike Sensibaugh, who's still tied for the most interceptions at Ohio State, Ted Provost and Tim Anderson. Lou was always pretty funny, and he was just so excited."

Since that 1968 season, though, Holtz had not been on the minds of Buckeye fans outside of games the teams would later play against him, which most of the time went Ohio State's way. In his two years coaching

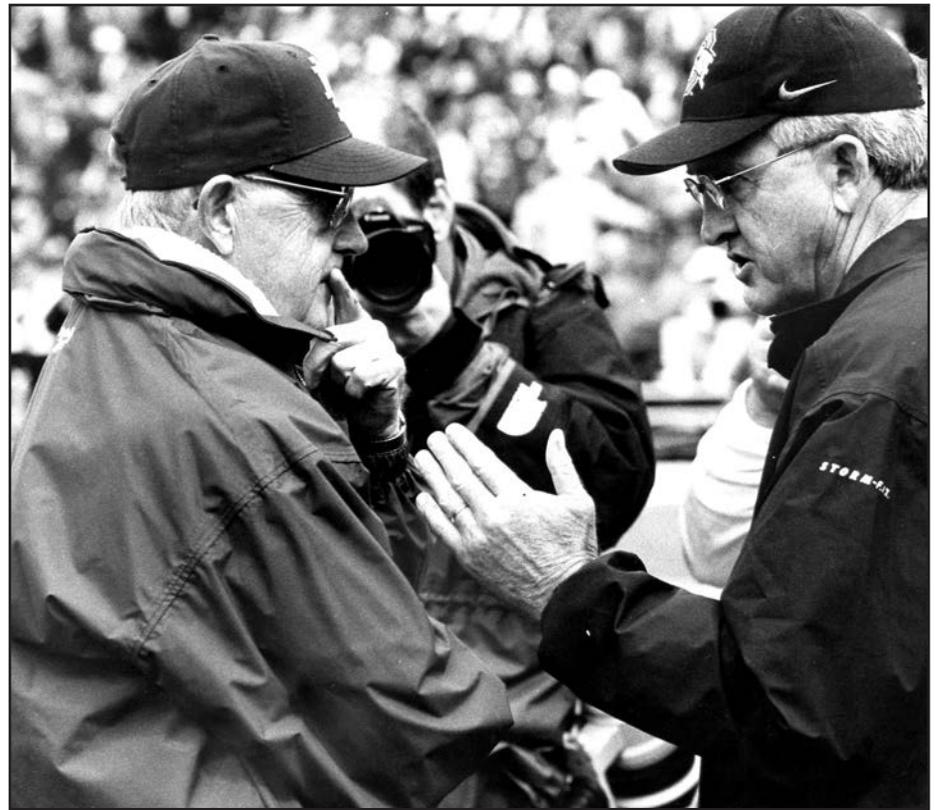
at Minnesota (1984-85), he lost to them twice, and he fell to the Scarlet and Gray in 1995 and 1996 in a home-and-home series during his time at Notre Dame (1986-96).

He finally got the best of the Buckeyes after the turn of the century, with South Carolina – where Holtz coached from 1999-2004 – defeating Ohio State in the Outback Bowl in consecutive seasons from 2001-02. That was a momentary blip, however, and Holtz retired in 2004 after a fight in the Gamecock's final regular-season game against Clemson. Holtz would joke of the irony that both he and Hayes would be remembered for getting into a fight against Clemson in their final games.

After Holtz' retirement, other than a run in broadcasting, he was mostly out of sight and out of mind when it came to college football. But after several years away from the spotlight, he was back in the minds of the Buckeyes ahead of their matchup at Notre Dame on Sept. 23, and that went on throughout the week with him and Ryan Day getting in an unexpected clash.

Holtz spent 11 years with Notre Dame, so it wasn't a surprise to see him calling for a Fighting Irish win, but his allegiance to the Buckeyes was questioned since he only spent one year in Columbus. Buckeye Sports Bulletin contacted members of the 1968 team to see how they felt about him.

"I don't really think I had the privilege of playing with any other coach that got you so prepared for a game situation," Ander-



FILE PHOTO

**STILL SCARLET AND GRAY — Despite his recent comments about Ohio State, former OSU assistant and Notre Dame head coach Lou Holtz (left) is beloved by those Buckeyes who played under him for his lone season in Columbus in 1968.**

son said. "He was just wonderful. Him being there for our sophomore year really set the tempo for our defense, our team, and our defensive backs. He deserves a lot of credit."

Anderson spoke very highly of Holtz as a coach. He was always aware of the tendencies of opponents and simplified the game for his players so much that they didn't have to worry about anything other than playing football. Holtz also taught Anderson techniques of tackling and covering receivers that he said helped his game immensely.

"A lot of people know what you need to do," Anderson said, "but they don't know how to teach it like he did."

Bruce Jankowski, a wide receiver for that championship team, remembered that in practice they always had very good competition when they had to go up against the defensive backs whom Holtz coached. Tatum, Sensibaugh and Provost would go on to play in the NFL from that group, Tatum being drafted in the first round.

Holtz hadn't been a head coach yet, so he was able to absorb a bevy of knowledge in that season at Ohio State and has been open about what a great influence Hayes was.

"Woody Hayes was such a special person," Holtz said in 2015, "the love and the feeling he had for people. At the same time, he fired me five times, but he told me, 'Don't worry unless I put it in writing.' I learned so much from him."

But while Hayes and Holtz got along, they still had some clashes of their own even though his tenure with the Buckeyes lasted only one year. Anderson said one he remembers happened off the field when many players on the team had long hair or afros, the style at the time, and Hayes wanted them to cut their hair before their game

against Oregon. Hayes gave Holtz \$10 to give to players to get a haircut, but Anderson said the players each took their money and bought a bunch of hamburgers because they weren't going to get rid of their hair.

"If we all show up with long hair, he can't get us all," he said. "They fought the whole way across the country."

Kern remembered hearing about Holtz' first coaches meeting with Hayes. The coaches were all together in a room, and one of them made Hayes angry, and he threw the projector they were using through the office window. He said Glenn "Tiger" Ellison was on the staff at the time and when Holtz came out of that meeting saying he had never seen a coach behave that way, Ellison gave him some advice.

"Tiger said, 'Well, Attila the Hun was a great leader, but you don't have to invite him over for dinner do you?' So Lou got baptized pretty early on with Woody's antics," Kern said.

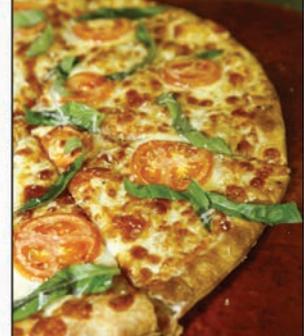
Hayes was famously a very tough coach, and that's where Holtz learned to be tough. Hayes had a fiery personality that he didn't turn off even at practice. Kern recalled that the players would have to be careful around him, making sure they didn't get him angry.

"If Woody got mad like that, you had to circle around to Woody's left because Woody was a prize fighter in the Navy, and he was a boxer," Kern said. "He would always swing with his left hand, and for quarterbacks, he'd hit you in the stomach."

Holtz was only with the Buckeyes for that one year, but none of Anderson, Kern or Jankowski hold any hard feelings toward Holtz after he went head to head with Ohio State's current head coach. Kern still considers him a Buckeye for life, and Holtz offered some important advice for Kern on his way out of the program.










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“Before Lou left,” Kern said, “he called me in and said, ‘Rex, let me tell you. Here’s what you need to be looking for in your professional career. You need to go places where you can learn, then when the opportunity comes, jump at it and go again.’”

Anderson also felt a significant impact despite the coach spending just one season with the team.

“Lou was on his way to football history, and we just had to be his first go-around in the big leagues,” he said. “He helped us out and got us prepared to win a championship. I think that was the start of our dynasty, and he deserves a lot of credit.”

Holtz continued to move up in his career after leaving Ohio State and even tried to jump to the NFL, hired as the New York Jets’ head coach for the 1976 season when they went 3-10 before he resigned. At the time, the 38-year-old who left his coaching job out of NC State said he had never watched an NFL game before his first pre-season game with the Jets. Kern said that opportunity wasn’t one Holtz wanted to try again.

“He always had these comical comments,” Kern said. “He said, ‘The good lord didn’t put me on this Earth to coach in the NFL.’ Lou was just quite a character.”

Kern recalled being invited down to a quarterbacks camp Holtz had when he was at NC State, and the next year he moved on to the Jets and then to Arkansas.

“He was like a grasshopper,” he said. “But he was doing right for his profession, and he was awfully good at it. He ends up at Notre Dame and wins a national champion-

ship out there, and people love him.”

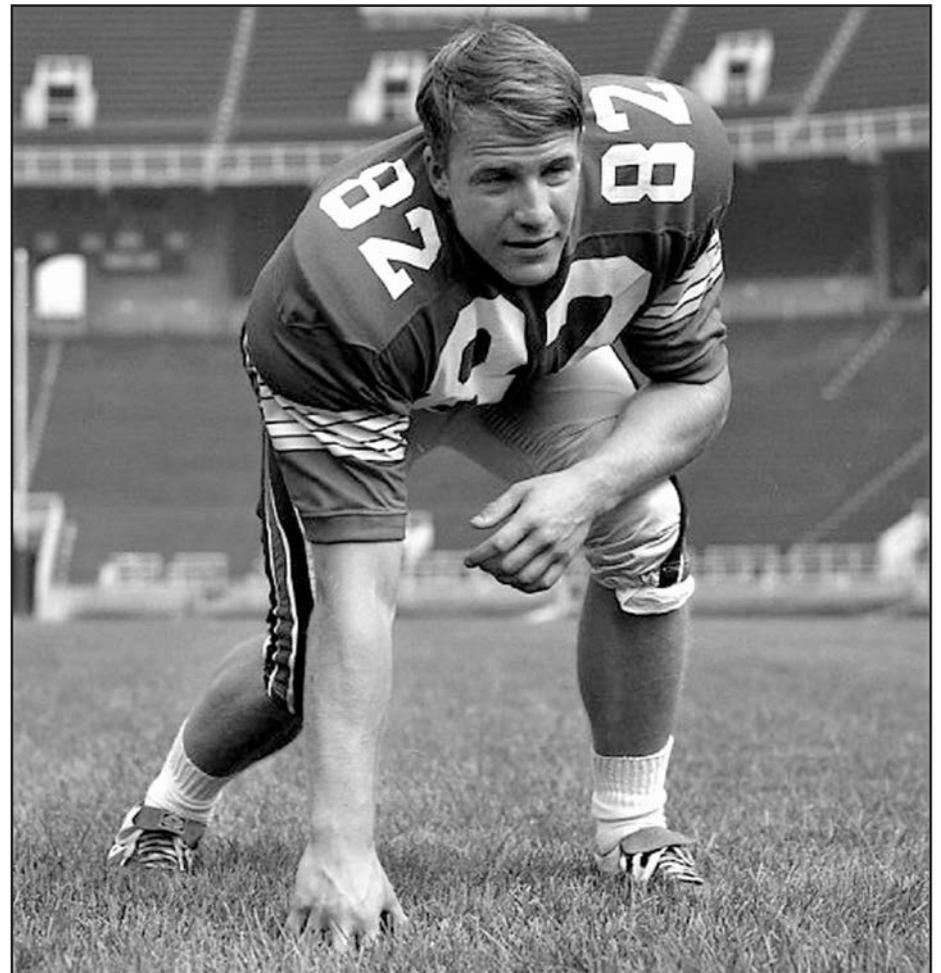
After his time with the Jets that didn’t work out, Holtz would go on to coach 26 more years at the college level for four more schools, something Jankowski wasn’t surprised by, adding that “this guy was special.”

“I have great memories from him,” Jankowski said. “Wow, was he a blast in practice. And I’ve run into him a couple other instances. Just a neat person, smart, great motivator, a great speaker, all of those things.”

“I think about the teams and the players I played with, just what an opportunity I had to meet coaches like Coach Holtz or Woody Hayes and be a part of that program. The bonds that we still have with my teammates, it’s wonderful.”

Anderson also liked Holtz for much more than his coaching style. He remembers being invited over to Holtz’ house for dinner with all of the other defensive backs many times that year, and despite the recent war of words between Holtz and Ohio State, nothing could make him forget what a good guy he is.

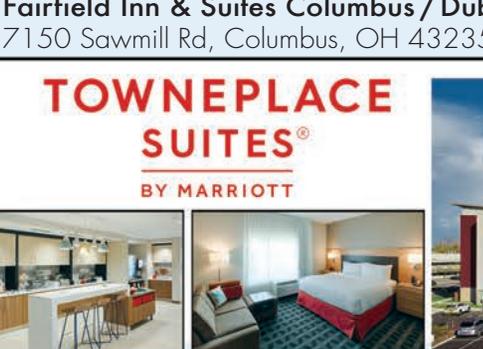
“Lou is probably one of the best people that I’ve ever been associated with in football and in life. He’s a mentor,” he said. “The lessons that he taught us back there on and off the field came in handy in life, and still do. I have nothing but the most honor for his brains and wit for communicating with people. He’s someone that I patterned a lot of what I did in life off of what he taught me. Just a wonderful guy.”



FILE PHOTO

**FOND MEMORIES** — Former Ohio State wide receiver Bruce Jankowski said that one-time Ohio State assistant coach Lou Holtz was “a blast” in practice.

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# Quarterback Scott Was Hero On, Off Field

*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. The following is the fifth installment in our 2023 historical series*

**By MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

It was 80 years ago – Oct. 4, 1943, to be exact – and no one at Ohio State felt much like celebrating.

Just two days after Ernie Parks and Dean Sensenbaurer had combined to rush for 338 yards and four touchdowns during a 27-6 victory against Missouri in a half-empty Ohio Stadium, the university got word that former quarterback Don Scott's bomber aircraft had crashed during a routine training flight near a U.S. Marauder Base in Great Britain. Scott was killed instantly along with his co-pilot and a flight engineer.

Scott's death was front-page news in Columbus as well as in his hometown of Canton during an era when hundreds of thousands of American families were mourning loved ones killed in action in World War II. Scott's death seemed more meaningful, though. If he could be taken, no mother's son seemed immune to the horror of war.

Born May 4, 1919, Don Frank Scott lived a storybook life and had the boyish charm and good looks to match. His father, Charles, was a truck driver and later operated a gas station while his mother, Anna, ran the household. As a youngster, Don attended Worley School, where he was regarded as the best at any game he chose – football, basketball, golf,

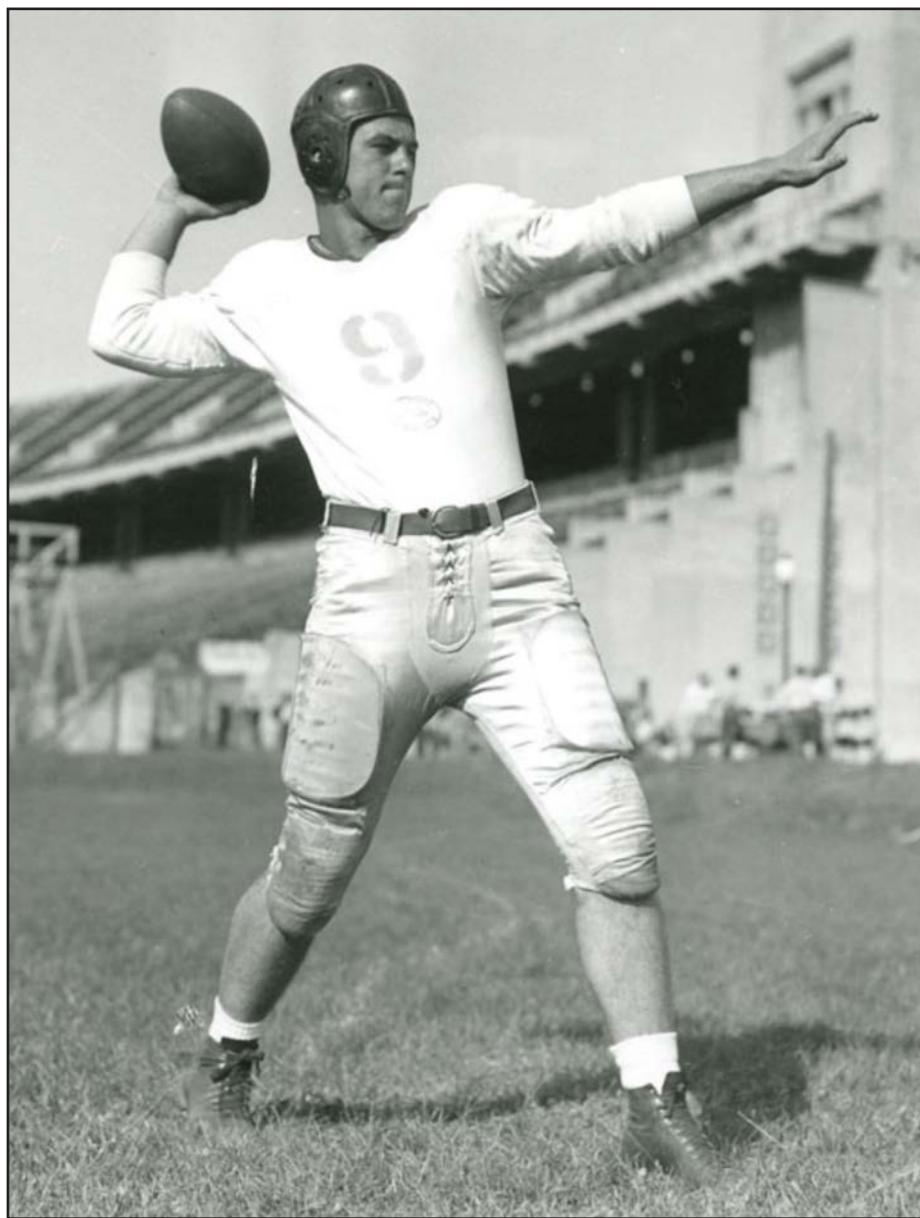
bowling. He was even considered the school's best sharpshooter at marbles.

Later, he would spend his freshman and sophomore years at Lehman High School, playing defensive tackle on the football team and center on the basketball team. That was before a transfer to Canton McKinley in 1935, where he led the McKinley basketball team to the state semifinals twice. He was a two-way tackle for the Bulldogs his junior year of football before switching to quarterback as a senior, and that year he completed 48 of 93 passes for 991 yards and 11 touchdowns. He also rushed for 657 yards and kicked 34 extra points.

When Scott decided to attend college at Ohio State, success followed him from Canton to Columbus. He lettered in basketball in 1939, the year the Buckeyes lost a 46-33 decision to Oregon in the first NCAA Tournament championship game, and he earned three varsity letters on the football team from 1938 to 1940. He led the Buckeyes to the Big Ten championship in 1939 and earned All-America honors in both '39 and '40, but his football career at Ohio State was a rocky one.

Head coach Francis A. Schmidt was an ahead-of-his-time offensive tactician who was constantly tinkering with an already-voluminous playbook. Unfortunately, the fidgety Schmidt also liked to tinker with his players, and Scott had become one of his pet projects.

Intrigued by Scott's size – thick shoulders, muscular thighs and quick feet packed onto a 6-2, 210-pound frame – Schmidt tried to place his prodigy at the all-important left halfback position. The experiment progressed throughout Scott's freshman season, but Schmidt's penchant for restlessness caused him to lose interest, and after Scott played nearly the en-



FILE PHOTO

**MAN OF MANY TALENTS** – Former Ohio State quarterback Don Scott, who played with the Buckeyes from 1938-40, lettered in both football and men's basketball during his time in Columbus.

tire season opener in 1938 – a lackluster 6-0 home win against Indiana – the sophomore saw his playing time increasingly diminish until he appeared in only nine minutes of action during an 18-0 loss to Michigan in the season's final contest.

The following spring, Schmidt had changed his mind again about Scott, this time switching him to the quarterback spot in the middle of the Ohio State offense. The transformation was amazing as Scott took on the responsibility of operating Schmidt's intricate philosophy and led the Buckeyes to the Big Ten championship. Scott was among the nation's leaders in passing and punting, and he remained a lethal threat to opposing defenses while running with the ball.

He also continued to possess exceptional blocking skills, honed during his years as a lineman. Following a 61-0 rout of the University of Chicago in early November 1939, Schmidt remarked, "I can't remember a back so dangerous in so many departments of play."

The era of good feeling between coach and quarterback would be short-lived, however.

## Schmidt Era Ends

Ohio State followed its blowout of the Maroons with a 21-0 romp over Illinois. It

was the team's third straight shutout and fifth of the year, and the Buckeyes were seeking to put the finishing touches on an undefeated conference campaign with their traditional season finale against Michigan. Unfortunately, the outcome seemed predetermined.

The arrival of Ohio State's train into Ann Arbor was delayed, sending the already high-strung Schmidt into a lathered frenzy. When the Buckeyes finally made it to the stadium just minutes before kickoff, their coach blew another fuse when his plea to push back the starting time of the game was rebuffed.

The players ran onto the field, many of them improperly taped and none of them in their usual game-time mindset, but they had adrenaline and anger working for them, which paid off early.

Ohio State raced out to a 14-0 lead on the strength of two touchdown passes from Scott, one to end Frank Clair and the other to Vic Marino, a guard who had lined up at an end position before drifting to the back of the end zone to snare an easy pass thrown against misdirection. But the Buckeyes couldn't sustain their initial emotion, and Michigan came back to tie the game midway through the third quarter.

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FILE PHOTO

**GONE TOO SOON** — Following his football career, former Ohio State quarterback Don Scott enlisted in the U.S. Army's Air Corps in 1941. But on Oct. 1, 1943, he was tragically killed along with two others in a plane crash after his engines failed in bad weather.

The teams remained deadlocked until the final minute of the game when Michigan scored a 24-yard touchdown off a fake field goal. Scott did his best to rally the Buckeyes in the final 50 seconds of the pitched battle, picking up 38 yards on back-to-back scrambles to move the ball to the Wolverines' 23-yard line. But with time left for only one more play, Scott's desperation throw toward the end zone was intercepted, and Michigan was able to secure a 21-14 victory.

Despite the loss, the Buckeyes were still Big Ten champions, and Scott and his teammates tried their best to celebrate their triumph. But the idiosyncratic Schmidt wouldn't allow it. His solution to the loss at Michigan was to make marathon practice sessions even longer, riding and deriding players so mercilessly that many began plotting against him.

Scott was never in the anti-Schmidt camp, but with so much dissension on the team, his production began to suffer. What no one knew was that Schmidt had entrusted his quarterback to call his own plays in 1940, but while Scott was attempting to direct his team's attack, the normally quiet huddle had become a place for teammates to air personal grievances against their coach. Scott didn't enjoy the role of dictator or arbiter, and Schmidt felt Scott didn't have the work ethic or commitment to gain a strong enough grip on the coach's complex system.

By the time the season finale against Michigan was played, the Ohio State team was a fractured mess, and the Wolverines took full advantage. Halfback Tom Harmon solidified his front-runner status in the Heisman Trophy race by accounting for five touchdowns during a 40-0 victory, the most lopsided loss

the Buckeyes had suffered in the series in 35 years. It also marked the final game of the seven-year Schmidt era.

Several weeks later, after having grown increasingly tired of Schmidt and his antics, the university voted not to renew the coach's contract, replacing him with Paul Brown, the vibrant young high school coach from Massillon, Ohio.

### WWII Flying Ace

Despite his challenging senior season,

Scott earned his second All-America honor and was selected by the Chicago Bears with the ninth overall pick of the first round of the 1941 NFL draft.

Entering his sophomore season at Ohio State, Scott had joked, "Upon graduating, I would like to enter into an engineering practice, but would consider a 'palm-greasing' pro football offer." That tongue-in-cheek comment never came to fruition, however. Despite a lucrative offer from the Bears, as well as the offer of a Major League Baseball contract from the Pittsburgh Pirates, Scott decided against a career in professional sports.

While an undergrad, he had participated in the Civilian Pilot Training Program, an initiative by the United States aimed at increasing the number of qualified pilots in the event the country was drawn into World War II. Unlike many of his peers at the time, however, Scott didn't wait. He enlisted in the U.S. Army's Air Corps on March 15, 1941, more than eight months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Scott immediately became a commissioned pilot and was sent to Kelly Field in San Antonio to continue his training, eventually advancing to the rank of captain. In June 1943, he was sent to one of several AAC airbases in Great Britain where he was placed in command of a B-26 Marauder bomber crew. Scott participated in nine successful bombing missions over the next three months and was rapidly earning the reputation as one of the Air Corps' finest pilots.

Eager to enhance that reputation, Scott took advantage of a rare lull in the fighting to gain more experience in the air. Three days earlier, he had been made squadron commander and led a successful raid over France, and he wanted to make further tests of his airplane's instrumentation.

He took off Oct. 1, 1943, in a B-26 Marauder nicknamed "9 Nina with the Ruby Ts" accompanied by his co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Ramsey J. Toon, and MSGT James R. Sutton, who was serving as mechanical engineer on the routine training flight.

Approximately 20 minutes after takeoff, bad weather suddenly enveloped the area and buffeted the aircraft. Scott tried valiantly to keep the Marauder in the sky and get back to

the airfield, but it was no use. Both engines failed and the plane crashed near where it had taken off, killing all three men aboard.

Col. Carl R. Storrie, Scott's commanding officer, immediately cabled Scott's father in Canton to inform him of his son's death, saying, "Captain Scott was one of the best pilots in the Air Corps. Much was expected of him as a commanding officer, and his ability as a pilot and leader of men was outstanding. He will be difficult to replace."

Scott left behind his parents and his wife, the former Leone Shafer, whom he had married Oct. 10, 1942, at the post chapel in Midland, Texas. Eight days after learning of her husband's death, Leone gave birth to the couple's only child, a boy named Don Sands Scott, who was born at Grant Hospital in Columbus. The new mother bravely posed with her newborn son for newspaper photographers but was clearly in shock over the reports of her husband's death.

"Just before he went overseas, Don told me not to give up," Leone said. "He said, 'If you get a report that I'm missing, don't believe it. I have a pretty good idea of what to expect, and I think I can get out of most situations. Don't give up. I'll be back.'"

Scott's body was flown back to Canton, where he was laid to rest with full military honors. Two weeks after his death, Ohio State officials announced they would rename the university airport in Scott's honor, and that next spring, with the fallen hero's wife and infant son participating in the ceremonies, Don Scott Airport — located just 15 minutes northwest of Ohio Stadium — was dedicated.

Unfortunately, the loss of her husband was not the only heartbreak for Leone Scott. The couple's son died at the age of 5 in 1948 due to pancreatic disease.

Leone remarried the following year after meeting and falling in love with Col. Frederic Bott, an Army officer stationed at Fort Hayes in Columbus. The couple, who later had a son of their own, relocated to the Fort Lee, Va., area, and it was there where Leone died in January 1969 of a heart attack at the age of 48.

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# Three-Star OL Nave Backs Off OSU Pledge

Ohio State lost out on a member of the 2024 recruiting class on Sept. 30, when Toledo Central Catholic three-star offensive lineman Marc Nave (6-5, 315) announced he was decommitting from the Buckeyes.

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

"I just wanted to inform everyone that I have decommitted from OSU," Nave wrote on Twitter. "I want to thank everyone involved. I feel as if I rushed this process, and I've prayed on it and it is God's plan, not mine. I want to thank you all, and I wish nothing but the best for your program going forward. Thanks be to God."

He is the No. 639 overall prospect and No. 44 interior lineman in his class, and he had initially committed to Ohio State back in March. He holds additional offers from Auburn, Boston College, Cincinnati, Duke, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisville, Missouri, Pittsburgh and Purdue, among others, with Oklahoma and Texas A&M also showing interest.

Nave backing off his pledge leaves Ohio State with just three committed offensive linemen in New Palestine, Ind., four-star Ian Moore (6-5, 295) and Devontae (6-5, 297)

and Deontae Armstrong (6-6, 280) of Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward. A five-man class appears unlikely at this point, though the Buckeyes will continue to push for a fourth member.

Chief among the candidates is Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star offensive lineman Jordan Seaton (6-5, 287), whom Ohio State has been involved with since offering him last September following a visit to campus.

Things cooled off for a time between Seaton and Ohio State, but the Buckeyes have shown renewed interest in recent months, and with Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star offensive tackle Brandon Baker (6-5, 285) committing to Texas on Sept. 24, Seaton is the top remaining target for Ohio State in 2024.

Should the Buckeyes strike out with Seaton, they could look to the transfer portal to help fill the need after this season concludes or take a second look at in-state options such as Akron Hoban four-star interior lineman William Satterwhite (6-3, 300), who is committed to Tennessee.

### DL Houston Locked In With Ohio State

Buford, Ga., five-star defensive lineman Eddrick Houston (6-3, 265) is one of the most important prospects in Ohio State's class, and while there's always a fear that highly-touted recruits such as Houston could continue to explore their options, he

## 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.
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

appears locked in with the Buckeyes with just over two months until the early signing period.

Houston, who visited for Ohio State's 37-17 win over Maryland on Oct. 7, told 247Sports that he has continued to hear from other schools but is not returning the communication.

"I'm also going up there when they play Penn State and Michigan State," Houston said. "I want everyone to know I'm committed to Ohio State and not going anywhere else. Other schools still hit me up, but I don't talk to them."

Through five games this season, Houston – the No. 22 overall prospect and fourth-ranked defensive lineman in the class – had picked up five sacks. He is Ohio State's fourth-highest rated recruit behind New Haven, Ind., five-star wide receiver Mylan Graham, Chicago St. Ignatius five-star defensive lineman Justin Scott and Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide re-

ceiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 198), who took a visit to Miami (Fla.) on Oct. 7 for the Hurricanes' 23-20 loss to Georgia Tech.

### Buckeyes Offer Florida DL Commit Williams

Ohio State is continuing to pursue options on the defensive line, issuing an offer on Oct. 2 to Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman Amaris Williams (6-3, 270), who has been committed to Florida since June.

He is the No. 156 overall prospect and No. 21 defensive lineman in the class, and he holds additional offers from Auburn, Georgia, Louisville, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee and USC, among others.

"Ohio State, (defensive line coach Larry Johnson), he's talking to me a lot about how coming to Ohio State is a good deal. But you know, he produces well as a coach" Williams told On3. "He's the highest-paid

## 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

defensive line coach in college football so he produces well and he feels like me coming there, he'll produce and send me off (to the NFL)."

Williams lines up everywhere across the defensive line for Clinton (as well as on offense as a running back and tight end) but figures to be best suited to rush off the edge, though he could pack on some weight and play in the interior.

Regardless, he finished last season with 43 tackles for loss and 18 sacks, and through five games this year he had added to that total with 12 more tackles for loss and four sacks. The Buckeyes are hoping to flip him and have him join a room that includes Houston, Scott and Mountain View (Va.)

Stafford three-star defensive lineman Eric Mensah (6-3, 290).

## In-State SAF Powers Decommits From MSU

Ohio State will have another chance for Centerville, Ohio, four-star safety Reggie Powers III (6-1, 200), as the former Michigan State commit left the Spartan class on Sept. 26.

"Thank you MSU staff and fans for all the love and support," Powers wrote on Twitter. "After much consideration with my family, I have decided to reopen my recruitment."

Powers is the No. 374 overall prospect and No. 36 safety in 2024, and he holds an

offer from the Buckeyes. After being viewed as a lean toward Ohio State throughout his recruitment, he ended up joining Michigan State in June.

But according to 247Sports, the Buckeyes do not appear to be the favorite the second time around in Powers' recruitment, with Oklahoma holding an edge ahead of an official visit on Oct. 21. Ohio State has a significant need at safety with West Orange (N.J.) Seton Hall Prep four-star Jaylen McClain (6-0, 185) as the only committed one in the class.

## OSU Sends Out Offer To 2024 SAF Roker

While Powers may end up with the Sooners, the Buckeyes are still expanding their horizon at safety, sending out an offer on Oct. 3 to Fort Myers (Fla.) Bishop Verot three-star safety Leroy Roker (6-1, 170).

Roker is not ranked among the top 1,000 recruits nationally and is the No. 121 overall safety. His only other offers were from Iowa, Old Dominion and FCS-level South Dakota, but Ohio State appears to be moving quickly with Roker taking an official visit for the Maryland game.

"Coach (Perry) Eliano offered me," Roker told 247Sports. "I was shocked, but I greatly

appreciated the offer – just that Coach Eliano took the time to come out and look at me. He came out last week and watched me at practice."

Ohio State has shown a knack in recent classes of finding diamonds in the rough, and while Roker is not as highly-ranked as other prospects whom the Buckeyes are pursuing, his profile is likely to build in the coming weeks after picking up his Ohio State offer, and he has already added an offer from Miami (Fla.) since picking one up from the Buckeyes.

## CB Woodby Includes OSU In Top Five Ahead Of Commitment

Sticking in the secondary but jumping ahead to 2025, the Buckeyes appear to be in good shape for Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star cornerback Blake Woodby (5-11, 180) leading up to his upcoming commitment.

Woody, who planned to announce his college of choice on Oct. 14, included the Buckeyes among his top five schools along with Alabama, Clemson, Oregon and Tennessee.

"Ohio State was my dream school when I started playing corner," he told On3. "There's

Continued On Page 26

ASK AN ANALYST  
with Bill Greene of Buckeye Scoop

## What do you make of the decommitment of Toledo Central Catholic three-star offensive lineman Marc Nave (6-5, 315)?

"I can't say I saw it coming. And we don't know all the details of that publicly, everything that happened behind the scenes. I mean, to me, it's unthinkable that he decided he just doesn't like Ohio State anymore and doesn't want to be a part of Ohio State. I don't believe that. But who knows? To me, on the outside, it looks like he was kind of nudged out of the class. And when you watch his film, it's not surprising. I've never been high on Marc as a guy you go to war with to beat Georgia or Alabama. I think he's more of a Purdue, Iowa State, Virginia Tech kind of guy. I think he's a definite Power Five fit, I just didn't think he was a difference maker for Ohio State on the offensive line.

"Now, the fact that they're having a hard time getting offensive linemen, and I think they need five or six in this class, seems surprising that they would nudge somebody out of the class. But I just don't think Nave is what they need to beat Michigan, to win the Big Ten East, to win the Big Ten, go to the (College Football Playoff) and win. I just don't see him as that kind of player. I could be dead wrong, but I see him as a mid-three-star kid. So I kind of am surprised the way it happened, but I was surprised when they took him in the first place. So I guess it's a surprise from start to finish with Nave."

## With just three offensive linemen now committed, how important is Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star offensive lineman Jordan Seaton (6-5, 287), and how do you view Ohio State's chances?

"I would take him in a minute, I know that. I don't think they're going to get him. To be honest with you, I think this is a pure NIL recruitment. Ohio State doesn't seem to win those. I thought their chances were better of landing Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star offensive tackle and Texas commit Brandon Baker (6-5, 285) than they were with Jordan Seaton. So we'll see. I mean, they have to get him on campus for an official visit and then go from there. But right now, I don't think they're getting Jordan Seaton. They need to pull some magic there.

"Justin Frye, most of his success recruiting offensive linemen has come from recruiting inside the state of Ohio. And that is just not going to get it done to build the kind of offensive line that wins national championships – or even beats Michigan. They're not going to be

able to get it done just recruiting the state of Ohio with the offensive line. They don't do it with any other position group on the team. It won't work with wide receivers. It won't work with running backs. It certainly won't work with offensive linemen. They need to be able to recruit nationally. They need to be able to get Baker and Seaton and dudes like that.

"So, we'll see. I mean, they got rid of (former offensive line coach Greg Studrawa) in part because of his recruiting and what happened on the field. And I think Justin Frye is going to get a similar fate if his recruiting doesn't ramp up. Like I said, you're just not going to beat the top teams in America with these Ohio projects on the offensive line. It just won't work. And I think Ryan Day knows that too."

## Ohio State recently offered Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman Amaris Williams (6-3, 270), who is committed to Florida. Do you believe the Buckeyes will pull off the flip here?

"I do, I definitely do. I think they're in good shape for that kid. I think the Florida class is kind of in trouble. There's a lot of stuff going on that could (result in) head coach Billy Napier getting run (off). There's sure a lot of bad vibes around that program right now. And that's another program that's kind of been built on NIL. And if you look at that Florida class, it's really strange, because they have 21 commits, but only seven are from the state of Florida. And that's highly unusual. That's a result of NIL. So with Napier, there are all kinds of rumors out there that even though this is only his second year, are the people that are handing out the NIL money unhappy with Napier and will they pay to have him bought out? There's a lot going on with Florida right now, so I think that recruiting class is right to be ticked. And I think the Williams kid is definitely in play for Ohio State.

"The next step will be him setting up an official visit and taking that official visit to Ohio State. That's the next key point in them landing him. The relationship with Larry Johnson is building, and it's going good. And the next step is getting him on campus for that 48-hour visit and let Ohio State work their magic.

"I've been doing this over 20 years, and it just seems like if Ohio State can get a kid to come on that official visit, their success rate is really, really high – especially with these kids from Florida. I think a lot of them that haven't spent a lot of time at Ohio State – some have never been

to Ohio State – show up for that 48-hour visit and they think they're going to Kansas or somewhere out in the hinterlands. And then they get to Columbus and it's like, 'Oh my gosh, this campus is unbelievable.' And then they go downtown to Columbus and it's like, 'This is unbelievable.' Ohio State has a great attraction, and I think kids that have never been there think they're going to Manhattan, Kan., or something like that. And then they get to Columbus, and they find out, 'Man this is a great place.'"

## Baltimore St. Frances four-star cornerback Blake Woodby (5-11, 180), a 2025 prospect, is set to announce his commitment on Oct. 14. What are the chances of Ohio State landing him, and how big would that get be?

"I think they're super high. I would have them as the favorite. I'm not calling him a lock, but if I had to put in the famous crystal ball pick, I would put it in for Ohio State. They've done a great job there. Tim Walton has proven to be a monster recruiter, so I think they're set up to land another great cornerback class. They have a great chance to get this kid, they have a great chance to get Houston North Shore five-star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170). Those are both really highly-ranked 2025 corners. I would put Ohio State as the favorite to land this kid.

"He is a national kid, long arms, quick, good feet, hip turn. Even when you look at last year, Cameron Brown was (Ohio State's) starter. They played five defensive backs, and they had three safeties on the field most of the time. They need an influx of corners, and the current class is really good. I love Cleveland Glenville four-star Bryce West (5-11, 177). Chandler (Ariz.) Basha four-star Miles Lockhart (5-10, 185) can play. So can Springfield, Ohio, four-star Aaron Scott (6-2, 190). So Walton is doing his job, and if he brings in another couple good corners for the 2025 class, they're set.

"Then going forward, you're going to see more of the transition we're seeing this year, with Jordan Hancock out there as the nickel instead of having three safeties out there. When you're out there trying to cover people with Tanner McCalister or Brown, you're in trouble. You start putting West and those kinds of guys out there on the field, now you can match up with Georgia, you can match up with the Michigan wideouts. I love what Tim Walton is doing with his cornerback recruiting, and I think it's going to continue through 2025."

# Ohio State In Hot Pursuit Of Five-Star CB

Continued From Page 25

nothing like the Block O.”

Additionally, he visited for Ohio State's home contest against Maryland, his final visit before his commitment day. He is the No. 79 overall prospect and ninth-ranked cornerback in the class. He was offered by Ohio State in December.

## OSU Among Leaders For 2025 CB Sanchez

Elsewhere in the secondary in 2025, the Buckeyes continue to position themselves strongly for Houston North Shore five-star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170), the sixth-ranked overall prospect and top-ranked cornerback in the class.

He included Ohio State among his top 10 schools back in August and has since identified the Buckeyes as a team that is standing out in his recruitment in addition to Alabama and Texas A&M.

“Every time I go down there, they make it feel like home,” Sanchez told 247Sports. “Just building that relationship with them and them showing me what they do on the field and in the weight room, it's fun. Coach (Tim) Walton showing me what he does on the field in the film room is big, too.”

He said that he plans to decide on a school the weekend prior to his senior season beginning, so it will be a long road ahead for Ohio State in the battle for Sanchez, but it has established itself as an early contender for the five-star prospect.

In addition to Sanchez and Woodby, the Buckeyes' other targets at cornerback in

the class include Indianapolis Ben Davis four-star Mark Zackery IV (6-0, 164), Katy (Texas) Paetow four-star Deyjhon Pettaway (5-10, 165) and Cleveland Shaker Heights four-star Trey McNutt (160, 180), among others.

## Rounding Up Prospects' Lists Of Top Schools

Since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, a handful of 2025 prospects (and beyond) have whittled down their lists of favorite schools.

Starting in 2025, Alpharetta (Ga.) Milton three-star cornerback Tyler Redmond (6-1, 169) included Ohio State in his top five along with NC State, Tennessee, Texas A&M and UCF. He is playing his junior season at Milton after playing at St. Francis in Alpharetta last season, where he had 41 tackles, 14 pass breakups and three interceptions.

The No. 424 overall prospect and No. 43 cornerback in the class, he is scheduled to visit for Ohio State's home contest against Penn State on Oct. 21.

Next up is West Palm Beach (Fla.) Cardinal Newman four-star wide receiver Nae-shaun Montgomery (6-0, 160), who had the Buckeyes in his top 10 along with Florida, Florida State, Georgia, LSU, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Oregon, Penn State and Tennessee. He is the No. 64 overall prospect and No. 11 receiver in the class.

Ohio State was also in the top 10 for DeSoto, Texas, four-star running back Deondrae Riden (5-10, 195), the No. 147 overall prospect and No. 14 running back in the

class. He included the Buckeyes along with Baylor, Oklahoma, Ole Miss, Oregon, SMU, Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and USC. He rushed for 1,354 yards and 18 touchdowns last season.

The highest-ranked of the group is Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star linebacker Nasir Wyatt (6-2, 210), who had Ohio State in his top eight along with Alabama, Michigan, Notre Dame, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and USC. He is the No. 20 overall prospect and second-ranked edge rusher in the class.

“Ohio State, I've built a connection with them solely based on the fact of Coach (James) Laurinaitis,” Wyatt told 247Sports. “He was a legend at Ohio State, and to have him come back – he says he really likes the way I play. I play like him and he wants me to play that same position. Having a legend and a Hall of Famer like that come back, he was telling me that and he wants me to play off the edge.”

“Seeing the energy Coach (Ryan) Day is bringing right now, it's a real great experience. The mindset he has for his team, he has that good love for them. I was hearing that speech from Coach Day (after Notre Dame), and I was like ‘Wow, he really has love for his players.’ Having the ability to have that kind of connection with Coach Day and Coach James, all those guys up there, it's a good spot.”

The lone 2026 prospect to cut his list down was Loganville (Ga.) Grayson five-star linebacker Tyler Atkinson (6-2, 190). He had Ohio State in his top 10 along with Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Florida State, Georgia, LSU, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

Atkinson was Ohio State's first offer in the 2026 recruiting class, getting the opportunity to join the Buckeyes while he was still in the eighth grade. He has continued to build his résumé, now checking in as the No. 12 overall player and second-ranked linebacker in the class.

“I had a lot of interest because my favorite player is Chase Young. He's a guy I really look up to,” Atkinson said after camping at Ohio State last June. “He does everything. He can drop back in coverage, and he can cover. I mean, he can rush the passer from everywhere. So me getting offered at the school that Chase Young played for, that's very good.”

## Day Talks Visits, Impact Of NIL On Recruiting

During his press conference on Oct. 3, Day was asked about whether the power dynamics have shifted in recruiting when it comes to NIL, and the head coach offered up an affirmative response.

“I think that NIL certainly has had an impact,” he said. “I think that if anyone says it hasn't, then that's not accurate. It definitely has had an impact. There have been some swings in that area for sure. But that's not going to change what we are doing here.”

“We feel great about the opportunity our players have but also, you know, what it means to be a Buckeye. And we are going to continue to talk about that, and we want to always find the right fit here.”

Day was also asked about the staff's recruiting efforts given that the Buckeyes had three weeks between home games and are

## A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

### 35 Years Ago — 1988

One of the finest athletes in the entire state was sitting right in Ohio State head coach John Cooper's back yard.

Roger Harper, a 6-4, 215-pound senior at Columbus Independence High School, was rated one of the finest collegiate prospects in Ohio by recruiting experts.

“He is one of the best pure athletes in the state this year,” said recruiting expert Tom Lemming. “He's a kid who colleges look at because of his size and the potential he gives them. He plays wide receiver and defensive back right now, but he could play at any one of several positions when he plays in college. He has good speed for a player his size and has a good set of hands.”

### 30 Years Ago — 1993

Family ties could go a long way in helping Ohio State nab one of the top offensive linemen in Ohio. Eric Gohlstin, a 6-6, 318-pound offensive lineman out of perennial powerhouse Cleveland St. Ignatius, was already giving the Buckeyes heavy consideration.

Gohlstin was a cousin of Ohio State redshirt freshman Juan Porter, another former St. Ignatius star. Porter had come on strong this season as a solid backup and sometime starter on the Buckeyes' offensive line. Gohlstin and Porter grew up in the same neighborhood, and their families were very close.

“We went to the same grade school, the same high school and he lives right up the street,” Gohlstin said of Porter. “I've talked to him a couple of times about how he likes Ohio State, and he really does like it.”

### 25 Years Ago — 1998

Hamilton, Ohio, quarterback Andy Mignery had a busy first month of the football season.

Besides leading the Big Blue to a 3-1 start with close to 650 passing yards, Mignery had taken the opportunity to travel on Saturdays and see some of the biggest early games of the college season. Mignery (6-5, 255) told BSB he had his choices narrowed down to Michigan, Ohio State and Tennessee.

“I do believe I want to get my decision over with before the season ends,” he said. “When that will be, I don't know.”

### 20 Years Ago — 2003

BSB caught up with defensive back Ted Ginn Jr. following his Sept. 26 game, but he didn't shed a great deal of light on his recruiting picture. Maybe he didn't want to say anything because he was still recovering from his do-it-all performance.

During Cleveland Glenville's 70-0 victory over Cleveland Rhodes, Ginn scored five touchdowns in four different ways. He rushed for 175 yards and two touchdowns on four carries, threw for another TD, returned an interception 53 yards for a score and returned the second half's opening kickoff 80 yards to the end zone.

Ginn said he didn't have any favorites at that point and was open to any number of schools. He was known to at least be considering Iowa, Miami (Fla.), Michigan and USC, though many believed him to be an Ohio State lean.

### 15 Years Ago — 2008

Fighting for their playoff lives, the Toledo St. John's Jesuit Titans took to the field against City League foe Toledo Whitmer, which entered the game undefeated in conference play. Forty-eight minutes and one backbreaking run later, the Titans had improved to 4-3 overall and 3-1 in conference play – and senior left guard Jack Mewhort had a big part in the turnaround.

After holding a lead for nearly the entire game, the Titans watched as the Panthers pulled to within one score at 14-10 with less than seven minutes remaining. At the 6:54 mark of the fourth quarter, the Titans handed the ball off to Hunter Lent, who found a seam, followed a sealing block delivered to a linebacker by Mewhort and outraced everyone to the end zone for an 83-yard touchdown that clinched the win for St. John's.

“It was really exciting,” Mewhort told BSB. “Our running back is one of the best athletes I've ever met in my life. He's just a tough kid. I was really proud of him. That sealed it for us.”

### 10 Years Ago — 2013

A blue chipper from the 2015 class took in Ohio State's 31-24 win over Wisconsin on Sept. 28 was Cincinnati St. Xavier linebacker Justin Hilliard. The four-star prospect had more than 30 offers from Division I schools but appeared to have the Buckeyes at the front of his mind following his most recent trip to Columbus.

“It was a really good visit,” Hilliard said. “The game was crazy. Real loud and cool!”

Having also enjoyed weekly chats with the OSU coaches, the 6-2, 225-pounder enjoyed his opportunity to talk to the Buckeye staff members in person during his time on campus.

“I talked with Coach (Urban) Meyer, Coach (Kerry) Coombs and Coach (Mike) Vrabel,” Hilliard said. “I usually call them every Monday to discuss recruiting stuff, so at the game we pretty much just chatted.”

### Five Years Ago — 2018

When Ohio State offered four-star tight end Brenton Strange (6-5, 210) after the Buckeyes' second one-day camp of the summer June 12, the Parkersburg, W.Va., prospect told BSB how Meyer pushed for his commitment in the head coach's office at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

Strange held off on any immediate decision. While he stayed on OSU's radar with mutual interest into the fall, his recruitment wrapped up Oct. 1 when he took to Twitter and announced his commitment to Penn State.

“Thank you to all the universities that have recruited me. Ever since I stepped on campus, I had a feeling that this was the one.”

### One Year Ago — 2022

New Palestine, Ind., four-star offensive lineman Ian Moore (6-5, 295) was set to make his college decision within the next few weeks.

Moore was the No. 99 overall prospect and No. 4 interior lineman in 2024, as well as the top recruit out of Indiana. He visited for Ohio State's win over Wisconsin on Sept. 24 (as well as against Notre Dame) and then visited the Badgers the following weekend. Iowa and Nebraska were the other top schools for Moore.

“I had a great time,” Moore said of his visit for Ohio State's 52-21 win over Wisconsin. “I met a lot of great fans and parents that told me all about OSU. I got to meet a lot more fans than last time. I think my favorite part of the visit was getting to connect with the fans.”

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

## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

now prepared to host prospects over the rest of the season.

“When we went to the spring visits, the official visits now really take place in the spring where in the past maybe somebody sprinkled those in throughout the season,” Day said. “So you don’t see as many official visits during the fall. There’s a couple mixed in, but in terms of unofficial visitors, I think you are going to see that ramp up as we get into the meat of the season.”

### Ohio State Welcomes Visitors For Maryland

After three weeks between games at Ohio Stadium, the Buckeyes returned home against Maryland and were able to welcome over 20 prospects to campus for visits.

Beginning with recruits in 2024, Ohio State welcomed Graham; Houston; McClain; Mensah; Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut four-star linebacker Garrett Stover (6-0, 195); Cleveland Glenville four-star cornerback Bryce West (5-11, 177); and Pickerington (Ohio) North three-star running back Sam Williams-Dixon (5-11, 203) – all of whom are committed to the Buckeyes – as well as Roker, who was on an official visit. Another visitor of note is Painesville (Ohio) Riverside four-star defensive lineman Dominic Kirks (6-5, 250), who is committed to Washington but the Buckeyes have continued to keep an eye on.

In 2025, Ohio State hosted the team’s one commitment in Bellefontaine, Ohio, four-star quarterback Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 210); Franklin (Mich.) Wylie E. Groves four-star offensive tackle Avery Gach (6-5, 275);

Columbus Marion-Franklin three-star cornerback Dawayne Galloway Jr. (6-2, 175); Baltimore St. Frances wide receiver Jeremiah Koger (6-3, 170); Kings Mills, Ohio, three-star offensive lineman Kage Payne (6-3, 280); Columbus Bishop Ready three-star running back Kentrell Rinehart (6-1, 205); Franklin (Mich.) Wylie E. Groves running back Noah Sanders (5-11, 170); Daltown, Pa., wide receiver Mikey Scott (5-8, 155); Woodby; and Zackery.

In 2026, the Buckeyes hosted Painesville (Ohio) Harvey running back Shahn Alston (5-9, 196); Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star safety Jireh Edwards (6-1, 194); Alpharetta (Ga.) St. Francis cornerback Wayne Henry (5-10, 160); Davison, Mich., defensive lineman Ben Nichols (6-5, 315); Pittsburgh Westinghouse running back Kyshawn Robinson (5-9, 160); and Toledo Central Catholic wide receiver Victor Singleton (6-0, 160), as well as a lone 2027 prospect in Baltimore St. Frances Academy wide receiver James Branch (6-2, 173), who has already been offered by Maryland, Michigan and Penn State, among others.

### Ohio State Sends New 2025 Offers

In addition to Roker and Williams in 2024, the Buckeyes also sent out four new offers to prospects in 2025 in recent weeks as focus begins to shift to the next cycle.

Going alphabetically, first up was Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic four-star wide receiver De’zie Jones (6-0, 180), the No. 283 overall prospect and No. 43 wide receiver in the class. He holds additional offers from Duke,

Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, Ole Miss, Penn State, Pittsburgh and Texas, among others.

Next up was Akron Hoban three-star linebacker Eli Lee (6-3, 215), who holds additional offers from Akron, Iowa State, Toledo, UMass and West Virginia, but it would be a surprise to see him end up somewhere besides Ohio State.

Oak Park (Ill.) Fenwick four-star defensive lineman Nathaniel Marshall (6-4, 265) was also offered, adding to a list that includes Alabama, Iowa, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Notre Dame, Oregon, Penn State, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin, among others.

The Buckeyes also offered Atco (N.J.) Washington Township four-star cornerback Cameron Miller (5-11, 175), the No. 299 overall prospect and No. 28 cornerback in the class. He has offers from Duke, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Michigan State, Oregon, Penn State, Texas A&M and Wisconsin, among others.

Last up was Cypress (Texas) Cy-Fair four-star defensive lineman Landon Rink (6-2, 270). He is the No. 289 overall prospect and No. 31 defensive lineman in the class, and had 76 tackles (18 for loss) with five sacks last season.

He has additional offers from Duke, Kansas, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State, Texas and Texas A&M, among others, and the in-state Longhorns are considered favorites.

### Other Notes And Tidbits

- Westerville (Ohio) North four-star

defensive end Brian Robinson (6-5, 255), a 2024 prospect, announced his commitment to Kentucky on Oct. 4. While he had not been offered by Ohio State, the two parties had communicated as recently as this summer.

- Five-star cornerback Dorian Brew (6-2, 185) will play the remainder of his high school football at Conroe High School in Conroe, Texas. Brew, who is originally from Houston, had played his freshman and sophomore seasons (as well as part of his junior season) at Clayton (Ohio) Northmont.

- Alpharetta, Ga., four-star tight end Ethan Barbour (6-3, 235), a 2025 prospect who held an offer from Ohio State, committed to Georgia on Sept. 22.

- Aliquippa, Pa., four-star running back Tiqwai Hayes (5-10, 185), a 2025 prospect who held an offer from Ohio State, committed to Penn State on Sept. 25.

- Dublin (Ohio) Jerome wide receiver Brayden Alford (5-8, 170), the son of Ohio State running backs coach Tony Alford, announced his commitment to Butler, an FCS program, on Sept. 30.

- The NCAA Division I Council passed a rule change on Oct. 4 eliminating the 25-player per year initial counter limit for football scholarships, though schools are still limited to 85 total scholarships.

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# Stroud Making His Mark Early For Houston

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Fate can bite you in the rear or slap you on the back.

For the Houston Texans, winning the final game last season cost them the No. 1 pick in the 2023 NFL draft and the ability to control whom they selected to help turn around the franchise.

That victory let the Chicago Bears slide into the top spot ahead of the Texans, and the Bears would eventually trade the No. 1 pick to the Carolina Panthers for four draft picks and wide receiver D.J. Moore to aid the development of former Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields in Chicago. The transaction led to debates on which quarterback the Panthers would choose – Ohio State's C.J. Stroud or Alabama's Bryce Young, with Florida's Anthony Richardson and Kentucky's Will Levis also floating around in the conversation.

When it became clear Carolina was leaning toward Young, the obvious choice at No. 2 for Houston was Stroud. But what if the Texans had lost the final game instead of a 32-31 win over Indianapolis? Would they have taken Young first overall? The point is moot, and Texans tight end Brevin Jordan couldn't be happier with the selection of Stroud.

"The best thing that happened to the Houston Texans' franchise was us beating the Indianapolis Colts last year," Jordan told ESPN. "We drafted the right guy. Man, he's a leader. He's a phenomenal player and a phenomenal guy with God-given talent. He's unbelievable."

Jordan made his statement after the third game of the season, a 37-17 upset of Jacksonville on Sept. 24 when Stroud went 20 for 30 for 280 yards and two touchdowns to become the first quarterback in NFL history to have at least 900 passing yards (he had 970), four passing touchdowns and zero interceptions in his first three career starts, according to ESPN.

Stroud also joined Justin Herbert of the Los Angeles Chargers (931) and Carolina's Cam Newton (1,012) as the only quarterbacks with 900-plus yards in their first three starts.

"I have great guys around me," Stroud said. "Nothing I can do without those guys up front battling, the receiver running the right route at the right depth, (offensive coordinator Bobby Slowik) calling the right plays at the right time."

Imagine how Jordan and his teammates felt about Stroud after the fourth game when the Texans, who were 3-13-1 last season, routed the Pittsburgh Steelers 30-6 on Oct. 1 to even their record at 2-2. Stroud was 16 of 30 for 306 yards and two touchdowns to add to his historic numbers, and through four games, he was 94 of 151 (62.3 percent) for 1,212 yards and six scores with no interceptions.

"With C.J. and the growth and what I've seen most is how he has continued to get better throughout the weeks," Houston head coach DeMeco Ryans said. "Anything we have pointed out to him as a point of emphasis, he has taken it to heart and shown those improvements next week in a game. That's big-time for a QB, when you can take the corrections and take that to the game. Some guys it takes more time. He is doing it week to week."

Making the win over the Steelers even better, it was the Texans' first at home since Dec. 26, 2021, going the entire 2022 season without a victory at NRG Stadium.

"You all deserve to feel special," Stroud said after the game. "You all deserve to root the Texans on. ... Not winning (at home) since 2021, around Christmas? That's not flying for me or anybody in this building. I want them to know that we're fighting our tails off every day to make sure you all are walking around wearing Texans gear with pride."

Stroud's NFL debut was a 25-9 loss at Baltimore in which he completed 28 of 44 passes for 242 yards with no touchdowns while being sacked five times. He was sacked six more times the next game, a 31-20 defeat of the Colts on Sept. 24, but he was not sacked the next two games.

Against Indianapolis, Stroud was 30 of 47 for 384 yards and two touchdowns. His passing yards were the second most in the NFL by a player age 21 or younger since the merger (1970), trailing only Matthew Stafford (422 yards) in 2009. Stroud turned 22 on Oct. 3. It was also the second-most passing yards by a Texans rookie in franchise history, surpassed only by Deshaun Watson (402 yards) in 2017.

"I think it's really cool when you see your work pay off a little bit, but for me, it's just the beginning," Stroud said. "It's a blessing, but I want to do more. I want to be great at this game."

Through four games, he had the third-most passing attempts (151) by a rookie without an interception to start his career, behind the Dallas Cowboys' Dak Prescott (176) and Miami Dolphins' Tua Tagovailoa (152).

"The sky is the limit for C.J.," Ryans said.

"He just keeps his head down and keeps working. C.J. is a very humble young man. Everything starts with the quarterback, and we have a good one who's doing really good things. He's improved every week. And that's what I like and admire about C.J. is he's dialed into improvement every week. He's not satisfied. He's been a leader for us as an offensive unit, and it's impressive to see a young man continue to get better each week and lead that group."

Stroud became the sixth quarterback in NFL history to throw for at least 1,200 yards with no picks in the first four games of the season, joining Aaron Rodgers (2020), Patrick Mahomes (2018 and '19), Drew Brees (2018), Tom Brady (2015 and '17) and Peyton Manning (2013). They all have Super Bowl rings at some point in their careers.

"It's cool to be mentioned with those guys," Stroud said. "They're all legends, guys that I looked up to. It's just letting me know that I have the opportunity to do something special and I've got to continue to work really hard to be where those guys are at and try to be better than them."

"I've talked to Brady before and a couple of those guys, and they always have positive and good things to say. They always tell me the work and being a great teammate is more important than the accolades and the yards and everything like that. Those are what get you championships, make you become a better quarterback and not only a quarterback, but a better person is doing it for your teammates. I take that to heart."

"I have a lot of work to do, a lot of growing still to happen. I have to get a lot better in multiple areas, but I think that's going to be every year."

## Buckeye Pride

Stroud threw for 8,123 yards and 85 touchdowns in 28 games (25 starts) for Ohio State and was a two-time Heisman Trophy finalist.

But it was his pedigree that may have given some NFL personnel some doubts about his transitioning from college based on Fields and the late Dwayne Haskins being former Buckeyes who did not meet expectations.

Ironically, Fields threw four touchdowns in consecutive games, including a 40-20 win over the Washington Commanders on Oct. 5 to quiet his skeptics for the moment. But listening to the Houston coaches, they feel Ohio State coach Ryan Day and his staff prepared Stroud well.

"As a rookie, I would say that he's really good because he knows when and why, which I think is rare for a rookie," Slowik said. "A lot of times, like in college, he definitely did it. Without a doubt, it showed up on his college tape. It was really neat to see him do it on his (top) 30 visit and our Zooms and stuff with him."

"You could tell he had a good understand-

ing in college of why he was trying to look somebody off, and then that's only grown since he's gotten to the NFL and growing within our scheme, where I think initially when we first got to camp, you go through this period where you get so used to doing it that it's a little too much and then you bring it back to balance it out and then it starts growing again. 'Oh, now I understand on this concept – this is why I may want to put this defender here' and it just keeps building and building."

"Obviously, you get in a game playing situation, and you attack specific coverages and specific defenders – he's been awesome in that regard."

Ryans said there's a reason Stroud is avoiding interceptions.

"C.J., his quarterback play, he played a lot of football in college, and you've seen some of the same things whether it's looking off safeties, moving curl flat defenders, he's done that in college, and it continues to show," Ryans said. "He's a good quarterback. He goes through his progressions, he makes the right reads, and he's able to do that because of the guys that he has up front and what they're doing to protect him."

That Stroud was named a captain was not surprising to his head coach.

"His teammates spoke very highly of him throughout the interview process, coaches spoke highly of him, and that hasn't changed," Ryans said. "He was a great teammate in college, he's been a great teammate since he's been here with us. He was a leader at Ohio State, and he's been a leader since he's been here with us, so it just goes to show that they don't change much from who they are in college, and that's been proven with C.J. as well."

The respect for Stroud goes beyond his teammates, as Dallas Cowboys linebacker Micah Parsons – a former Nittany Lion – is a fan.

"We need to get on board with C.J. Stroud," Parsons said. "He has the most pass attempts without an interception to start your career (in Houston) and I want you to realize who C.J. Stroud has now beat, OK? He just did something Deshaun Watson hasn't been able to do. He just dominated this Steelers defense, a defense that we said had TJ Watt, has Kevin Hayward, has Alex Highsmith, and he dominated them. C.J. Stroud is the real deal."

## So Close

Stroud almost engineered a late comeback victory against Atlanta on Oct. 8, but the Texans fell to 2-3 when Younghoe Koo hit a 37-yard field goal as time expired to lift the Falcons to a 21-19 victory.

Stroud took the Texans 75 yards in 11 plays, capping the drive with an 18-yard touchdown pass to Dalton Schultz on a third-and-9 with 1:49 remaining for a 19-18 lead.

He was 20 of 35 for 249 yards. His 1,461 yards for the season left him 23 yards short of tying Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs for the fifth-most yards in NFL history through a quarterback's first five games. Cam Newton for the Carolina Panthers set the rookie record of 1,610 yards in 2011.

However, early in the third quarter, Stroud set the NFL record for most pass attempts to start a career without an interception (177), surpassing Prescott. Stroud was not picked off by the Falcons and extended the streak to 186 passes.

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## FOOTBALL (5-0, 2-0)

**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, W 37-17; **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., 13th/16.

**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 (12-3, 4-2)

**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, W 2-1.

**Oct. 1** Indiana, W 3-0; **6** Penn State, L 2-1; **8** Kent State, W, 3-0; **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., 2nd/11; **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 (1-0)

**Oct. 7** Mercyhurst, W 4-3; **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 (1-1)

**Sept. 29** Colgate, L 3-2; **30** Colgate, W 3-2 (OT).

**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 (3-4-4, 1-2-1)

**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, W 2-0.

**Oct. 3** XAVIER T 0-0; **6** MICHIGAN, T 0-0; **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 (7-4-2, 3-2-1)

**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, W 2-1.

**Oct. 1** ILLINOIS, W 2-1; **8** Penn State, L, 2-1; **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., NTS; **21-24** Fall Spotlight at Raleigh, N.C., NTS.

**Oct. 1** ITA All-Americans at Cary, N.C.. NTS; **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 (6-9, 3-3)

**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, L 3-0.

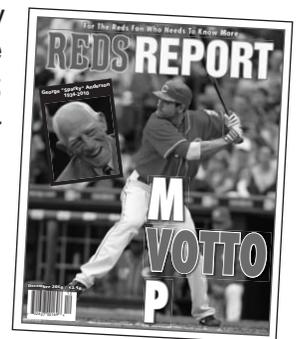
**Oct. 1** MARYLAND, W 3-0; **6** Rutgers, W 3-1.; **7** Penn State, L 3-2; **13** ILLINOIS, 7 p.m.; **15** PURDUE, 1 p.m.; **18** Wisconsin, 8 p.m.; **21** Indiana, 8 p.m.; **25** Northwestern, 6 p.m.; **29** Michigan, 2 p.m.

**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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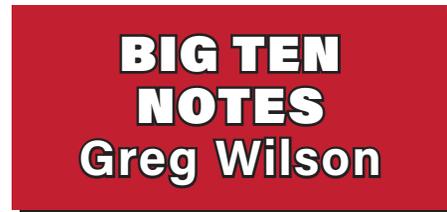
# Iowa QB McNamara Out With Torn ACL

In the first quarter of Iowa's 26-16 win over Michigan State on Sept. 30, the Hawkeyes were backed up to their own 2-yard line, and quarterback Cade McNamara went down with a leg injury attempting to scramble his way out of the end zone trying to avoid a safety. He made it through the middle but went down without being hit at the line of scrimmage, his left leg buckling underneath him after trying to make a cut.

The former Michigan quarterback had torn his ACL, confirmed by head coach Kirk Ferentz on Oct. 3, and he will miss the remainder of the season.

"It was a tough break considering the last two years for him," Ferentz said. "He's had more than his share of obstacles and challenges from that standpoint. Your heart goes out to guys when they're fighting hard to have a chance to go out and compete and don't have that opportunity due to health challenges. He should be fine once the recovery is over. It's just a tough deal for him."

Ferentz said he believes McNamara, in his fifth season of college football, intends to return to the Hawkeyes next year after he recovers from his injury, but he has a long road to getting better before they are able to think about what that would mean for the Hawkeyes.



"I can't imagine he'll do much in the spring, other than maybe he'll be throwing the ball, things like that, but he won't be practicing," Ferentz said. "Hopefully he'll have June, July and then August, full speed to go."

Sophomore Deacon Hill stepped up against Michigan State to take McNamara's

spot and will have the starting job for the foreseeable future. After McNamara went down, Hill completed 11 of 27 passes for 115 yards, one touchdown and one interception against the Spartans, and in a 20-14 win over Purdue on Oct. 7, he finished with six completions for 110 yards, one touchdown and an interception.

McNamara's surgery is expected to take place following the Purdue game, and Ferentz is encouraged by what he has heard from the medical staff up to this point.

"If there is good news, it's a clean injury," he said. "Sometimes they can be a little bit messy, but it looks clean, and that's good. He's been fighting some other stuff too. Maybe this will give him a chance to get totally healthy again."

## Tucker Fired, Plans To Sue Michigan State

After Michigan State provided written intent to fire former head coach Mel Tucker, the school made it official Sept. 27 by firing Tucker with cause amid a university investigation for a sexual misconduct complaint by Brenda Tracy, a rape survivor and sexual assault awareness speaker who spoke to the Spartans football team.

In a statement made by the university, Tucker was fired for "admitted and undisputed behaviors which have brought public disrespect, contempt and ridicule upon the university; and constitute a material breach of his agreement, and moral turpitude."

By firing Tucker, Michigan State will not have to pay any of his remaining salary from his 10-year, \$95 million contract, of which he was still owed nearly \$80 million.

Tucker and his lawyers have indicated that they plan to sue Michigan State for wrongful termination, with his legal team requesting that Michigan State keep any electronic or paper documentation pertaining to the case "in anticipation of litigation."

"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," Tucker said in a statement, released by his agent, Neil Cornrich. "A cursory reading of the facts and timeline should cause any fair-minded person to conclude that other motives are at play."

Tucker was initially suspended without pay Sept. 10, the day after USA Today published the story about his alleged sexual harassment. The university hearing to release findings by an independent investigator was Oct. 5-6, and Tucker did not attend citing a "serious medical condition." Tucker's lawyer said that although they have not provided medical evidence for the public, there is documentation that exists to prove he has a serious medical condition.

Tucker and his legal team in a previous statement referred to the hearing as a "sham."

## Fitzgerald Sues NU For Wrongful Termination

Former Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald filed a lawsuit against the university and president Michael Schill on Oct. 5, seeking \$130 million for wrongful termina-

# BIG

## 2023 Standings

### East Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan	3	0	1.000	6	0	1.000
Penn State	3	0	1.000	5	0	1.000
<b>Ohio State</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.000</b>
Maryland	2	1	0.667	5	1	0.833
Rutgers	1	2	0.333	4	2	0.667
Indiana	0	2	0.000	2	3	0.400
Michigan State	0	2	0.000	2	3	0.400

### West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Wisconsin	2	0	1.000	4	1	0.800
Iowa	2	1	0.667	5	1	0.833
Minnesota	1	2	0.333	3	3	0.500
Nebraska	1	2	0.333	3	3	0.500
Northwestern	1	2	0.333	3	3	0.500
Purdue	1	2	0.333	2	4	0.333
Illinois	0	3	0.000	2	4	0.333

### Sept. 30 Games

Minnesota 35, Louisiana-Lafayette 24  
 Penn State 41, Northwestern 13  
 Michigan 45, Nebraska 7  
 Purdue 44, Illinois 19  
 Rutgers 52, Wagner 3  
 Maryland 44, Indiana 17  
 Iowa 26, Michigan State 16

### Oct. 6 Game

Nebraska 20, Illinois 7

### Oct. 7 Games

Ohio State 37, Maryland 17  
 Wisconsin 24, Rutgers 13  
 Northwestern 23, Howard 20  
 Iowa 20, Purdue 14  
 Michigan 52, Minnesota 10

### Oct. 14 Games

Indiana at Michigan, noon  
 Michigan State at Rutgers, noon  
**Ohio State** at Purdue, noon  
 Illinois at Maryland, 3:30 p.m.  
 UMass at Penn State, 3:30 p.m.  
 Iowa at Wisconsin, 4 p.m.

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## BIG TEN NOTES

“As head coach of the football program for 17 years, Patrick Fitzgerald was responsible for the conduct of the program,” read an Oct. 5 statement from Northwestern. “He had the responsibility to know that hazing was occurring and to stop it. He failed to do so.

“The safety of our students remains our highest priority, and we deeply regret that any student-athletes experienced hazing. We remain confident that the University acted appropriately in terminating Fitzgerald, and we will vigorously defend our position in court.”

### Indiana Changes Offensive Coordinator

Following a 2-3 start to the season and mediocre offensive performance, the Hoosiers announced on Oct. 1 that the program was firing offensive coordinator Walt Bell.

The announcement came after a 44-17 loss to Maryland on Sept. 30. Through the first five games of the season, Indiana averaged just 20.8 points and 334.2 yards of offense, both ranking 12th in the Big Ten. Bell, whose contract was set to expire at the end of this season, will be replaced by quality control coach Rod Carey, who joined Indiana's program last season.

Carey was formerly a head coach at Northern Illinois for seven years (2012-18) where he had a record of 64-50, and at Temple for three years (2019-21), going 11-20 in that time. He also played for the Hoosiers from 1990-93 as a center, winning Indiana's Corby Davis Outstanding Offensive Player Award his senior year.

Carey will hope to inject some life into a struggling Indiana offense, with starting quarterback Tayven Jackson completing 61.7 percent of his passes for 862 yards and two touchdowns to three interceptions. The rushing attack, meanwhile, is averaging just 3.2 yards per attempt, which is second-to-last in the Big Ten behind Northwestern (2.9 yards).

The Hoosiers were off in Week 6 but play at No. 2 Michigan in Carey's first game in his new role on Oct. 14.

### SD4L Cancels NIL Deals with MSU Players

The “Spartan Dawgs 4 Life,” the official NIL brand of Michigan State, on Sept. 29 canceled contracts with a portion of Michigan State's football team, voiding them immediately.

“SD4L has made the strategic decision to reduce our advertising budget with select student-athletes in an effort to build a sustainable NIL model for our programs,” it said in a statement on Sept. 29. “Our platform has produced millions of sponsorship opportunities to MSU student-athletes and

will continue to invest in campaigns that best promote the SD4L brand.”

The statement also said they had secured fewer than 100 subscriptions to their service, which was “significantly short” of their projections, while between 30-35 football players were believed to have been under contract.

The brand makes clothing and other Michigan State merchandise which can be bought on its own, or received through a subscription-based model, where the highest level would receive a trip on a private jet to any away Spartans game and a one-on-one with the coaches.

This comes less than a month after SD4L was announced as Michigan State's official NIL brand, supported by head basketball coach Tom Izzo and athletic director Alan Haller.

### Nebraska Stadium To Get \$450 Million Renovation

Nebraska football's iconic Memorial Stadium in Lincoln is going to get a \$450 million renovation, which will include the complete rebuild of the entire south side of the stadium.

The Nebraska University board of regents unanimously approved the renovation plans Oct. 5, but university president Ted Carter – who will take over at Ohio State on Jan. 1, 2024 – said they won't begin until there is enough money raised from the fundraising efforts. The school projects \$225 million will come from private donations, and the other half will be from an internal lending program Nebraska uses to fund large facility projects.

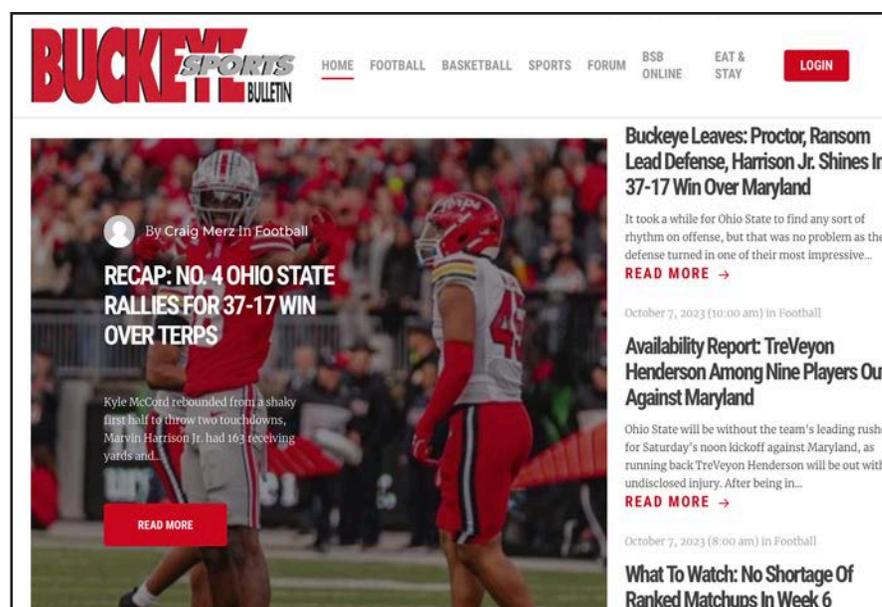
There will be no tax dollars used in the renovation of the stadium, something the university wanted to stress.

Other than the rebuilding of the full south side, the renovation will also include chair backs on the new south side along with in the east and west seating as well, a 360-degree main level concourse connection and a 270-degree upper level concourse connection, concession upgrades that come with new menu items and more points of sale throughout the stadium, modernization of the restrooms across the entire stadium, academic curriculum space and enhanced student life amenities.

One other upgrade that will be taking place is making Memorial Stadium compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The stadium was grandfathered in since it was built before the act was signed into law, but athletic director Trev Alberts said it is time to address those issues.

Should funds be raised, construction would be set to begin in January 2025 with a completion date of August 2026.

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# 2025 Guard James Pays Visit To Ohio State

The Ohio State men's basketball program extended an offer to Sherman Oaks (Calif.) Notre Dame three-star shooting guard Bryce James (6-4, 180), a 2025 prospect and the youngest son of NBA superstar and Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, after he took an unofficial visit to Ohio State on Oct. 7.

## COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

James, who was seen on the Ohio Stadium sidelines alongside his mother, Savannah James, head coach Chris Holtmann and Indianapolis (Ind.) Pike 2026 point guard Dezhon Hall (6-3, 175), among others, during pregame warm-ups before the Buckeyes' 37-17 win over Maryland, announced the offer via Twitter later that night.

"Blessed to receive an offer from Ohio State," James wrote on Oct. 7. "#GoBuckeyes."

Aside from taking in pregame warm-ups, James, along with Hall and several other recruits, spent the morning soaking in the gameday atmosphere on campus. He attended Ohio State's pregame "Skull Session" tradition held at St. John Arena, where he stood on the floor and listened to remarks made by head football coach Ryan Day, wide receiver Emeka Egbuka and others, all before attending a tailgate party near the arena. The famed prospect also participated in a photoshoot where he donned an all-scarlet Buckeyes uniform and posed with Savannah James, a series of photos which he later posted on Instagram — and was reposted by LeBron and older brother, Bronny — on Oct. 7.

James, who transferred to Notre Dame High School after spending his sophomore season at Los Angeles Sierra Canyon alongside Bronny, the eldest James son, is currently tabbed as the nation's 129th-best prospect and 20th-best shooting guard. He is also ranked the No. 13 overall player in California.

As Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press, it was unclear if other schools have hosted or offered the 16-year-old prospect. However, 247Sports listed USC as a potential team of interest. The Trojans are familiar with the James family, having signed Bronny James — a five-star prospect — to their 2023 class in May.

This is not the first time Holtmann and his men's basketball program have hosted a member of the James family. The team also held an unofficial visit for Bronny James for last year's season-opening matchup with Notre Dame, where he spent time with Holtmann, watched the team practice and participated in a photoshoot with his parents all before taking in the Buckeyes' 21-10 victory over the Fighting Irish on Sept. 3. The visit enticed James to place Ohio State in his top three, along with USC and Oregon.

Bryce James has begun to turn heads after experiencing a significant growth spurt, with many scouts clamoring over his

improving size and athleticism. He most notably flashed his potential while competing for Team Strive For Greatness at the Peach Jam this July, averaging 8.3 points, 2.8 rebounds and 1.0 assists in four games. It was reported that scouts from several NBA teams, including the Cleveland Cavaliers, Miami Heat and New York Knicks, made James a priority during the slate of games.

"James has started to come into his own as a player over the last six months. We've been able to see what he can become," an On3 scouting report said. "More of a wing than his older brother Bronny, Bryce has a smooth shooting stroke and nice length. He is getting comfortable playing off two dribbles, and he moves fluidly for a wing. Still developing, still getting stronger, continue taking three-month snapshots as he comes into his own."

### Key Slimming Down, Okpara Bulking Up

Ohio State senior forward Zed Key and sophomore center Felix Okpara each made significant impacts in the Buckeyes' frontcourt last season — combining for 14.8 points and 11.1 rebounds per game as well as 68 blocks on the season — but they both will enter the 2023-24 campaign with noticeably different frames.

Key, who was hindered by a shoulder sprain during his junior year that required him to undergo season-ending surgery in late February, said during the team's media day on Sept. 25 that he has shed 18 pounds during the offseason, cutting his weight from 253 to 235. This was a gradual change that occurred throughout the spring and summer months, according to the fourth-year Buckeye, where he walked the fine line between losing fat and dropping muscle.

"I just thought, 'Let's lose some weight and see how I feel,'" Key said. "As I lost 10 pounds, I was like, 'OK, I feel good down here. I noticed a difference at 10 pounds, so let's keep it going.' I didn't want to lose too much weight and be like 215, that's not feasible. But at 230, I feel like it's optimal. My body feels great out there."

This weight loss has paid dividends for the Bay Shore, N.Y., native this offseason. Key said his new frame at 6-8 and 235 pounds has allowed him to feel more agile in the post, which can help him return to — or even exceed — the production he had prior to his injury.

"Losing this much weight, I feel better on the court," Key said. "Even on the joints, conditioning-wise, athletically, I feel great out there on the court. It definitely helped me for the better. I definitely feel quicker and more explosive. It definitely helped me a lot."

While Key has decided to shed body mass, the second-year Okpara opted to bulk up. The 6-11 Nigerian, who started the last nine games of the season in place of the injured Key and emerged as the Buckeyes' most formidable rim protector, has added 28 pounds of muscle since the beginning of his freshman season, inflating from a slim 207 to a bulkier 235.

Okpara said he worked with Ohio State's training and strength staff to improve his diet, eating four or five protein-filled meals

## OSU Men'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.	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

a day — a commitment that he admitted was necessary to produce in a physically demanding Big Ten this season.

"I'm not going to lie," Okpara said. "Some of the guys in the Big Ten are really strong. I needed that weight. Last year, guarding (7-4, 300-pound Purdue center) Zach Edey was a struggle. He was really big. I don't want to say I was scrawny, but I needed some weight on me."

Okpara and Key's transformations have allowed Holtmann to consider a scenario where the two frontcourt players are sharing the floor together at the four and five positions. This is a style of play that the Buckeye head coach has rarely used throughout his first six seasons at Ohio State, where he has often relied on smaller forwards to man the paint.

"It's certainly something we're going to look at these next 4-6 weeks where we have a package where we play bigger, perhaps," Holtmann said. "(Zed's) mobility is good. He has to keep it at a certain level. He's been able to throw around 235 pounds as a really strong presence. We don't want him to lose that, but his mobility has been really good and we certainly will look at a big package, for sure."

### OSU's Full 2023-24 Schedule Solidified

The 2023-24 Ohio State men's basketball schedule has been finalized, with the Big Ten confirming on Oct. 3 game times and TV designations for all 31 games this season.

The Buckeyes, who begin the regular season on Nov. 6 against Oakland, will have 10 nationally televised games this year on FOX, FS1 and CBS. This slate is headlined by their Dec. 16 matchup against UCLA in the CBS Sports Classic, which will tip off at 3 p.m. on CBS, along with their Dec. 30 game against West Virginia in Cleveland's Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse (FOX, 7 or 8 p.m.) and home finale against Michigan on March 3 (CBS, 4 p.m.).

Ohio State will also have eight games this season available exclusively through streaming services. The Buckeyes will play five games on Peacock — an NBC streaming platform — including their Nov. 10 home matchup with Texas A&M. They will also have three games broadcast on B1G+, including the previously mentioned season opener against Oakland on Nov. 6 along with contests against Miami (Ohio) and New Orleans on Dec. 6 and Dec. 21, respectively.

The Buckeyes, who held their first official practice on Sept. 27, will also face off against Dayton on Oct. 22 in a charity exhibition game held at UD Arena, though it is not expected to be televised or on a streaming service.

"We have the best schedule we've had since I've been here," Holtmann said. "I really believe that. We have the best home

schedule, we have a top-15 team (Texas A&M) coming in our second game of the season. We have some great mid-majors, and we have an unbelievable home slate of Big Ten opponents, which we kind of missed out on last year, just the way the Big Ten schedule works. It's the best schedule we've had."

### OSU Picked To Return To NCAA Tournament

Ohio State may have missed the NCAA Tournament for the first time in the Holtmann era (excluding the COVID-19-shortened 2019-20 season) last year, but that has not stopped experts from picking the Buckeyes to return to the Big Dance.

Following a disappointing 16-19 campaign, the Scarlet and Gray are slated by both The Almanac and Lindy's annual preseason magazine to earn a berth in the NCAA Tournament this season, although both publications do not have them making any type of significant run. The Almanac listed Ohio State as a No. 10 seed, going up against No. 7 Florida in the round of 64. Lindy's magazine did not include any seeds or matchups in its preseason projections but had the Buckeyes finishing seventh in the Big Ten and falling in the first round of the tournament.

"This season, Holtmann has enough between the returners coming back and the veterans and talented freshmen that he added," college basketball analyst Jeff Goodman stated in The Almanac. "The Buckeyes should make another tourney appearance. But Holtmann can ill afford to have a repeat performance of 2022-23 if he wants to get the fan base back. And it won't just be regular-season success. It's more about what this program does come March."

"Ohio State came on strong down the stretch as youngsters (Bruce) Thornton, (Roddy) Gayle, etc., figured things out," Lindy's magazine wrote. "Top frosh Brice Sensabaugh went to the NBA, so more youngsters must mature quickly. If transfers Jamison Battle and Dale Bonner are awesome, it's an NCAA year."

The two publications also recognized a trio of individual Buckeyes as players to watch in their respective previews. Lindy's projects first-year forward Devin Royal, a former four-star prospect and No. 1 player in Ohio, as the No. 26 freshman in the nation, while it also lists him as both a player who will make the most impact and one who will take you by surprise.

The Almanac featured sophomore guard Roddy Gayle as one of its 25 breakout players to watch, coming in at No. 11, while it also ranked first-year guard and top-60 2023 prospect Scotty Middleton at No. 15 on its list of top 25 freshmen to watch.

"Ohio State needs defense, so Middleton could quickly ascend into a key role," the magazine wrote.

# McMahon Hopes To Maintain Competitive Edge

Through Cotie McMahon's freshman season at Ohio State, plenty was said about the first-year player – both positive and negative – but one thing that could not be said was that McMahon did not give it her all every time she was on the court.

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

It showed as McMahon started right out of the gate for Ohio State and eventually finished second on the team in scoring with 15.1 points per game and also finished third on the team in minutes behind Taylor Mikesell and Taylor Thierry. But it also showed as McMahon finished with 102 personal fouls (2nd) and fouled out of five contests (2nd) in her freshman season and turned the ball over a team-high 105 times.

"My game was just very aggressive all the time, and I'm never going to turn that off," McMahon said Sept. 26. "But it's learning when to be that aggressive self and when to ease up a little bit and then go right back into my aggressiveness. So just learning when to use my full strength and when to use that full ability is kind of what I've been working on."

In addition to harnessing that aggressiveness into something more consistent for Ohio State, head coach Kevin McGuff is also looking for more consistency from McMahon as a shooter, specifically on the perimeter. The Buckeyes are looking to replace serious three-point shooting ability with Mikesell's departure, and with McMahon just 26.3 percent (15 of 57) from deep last season, that's an area in which McGuff is looking for her to take a step.

"She had a great first year," he said. "She played extremely hard, was really impactful for us. I think (we need) just a little more consistency from the perimeter in terms of her shooting. I think also a little more under control, less charges around the basket. I love her aggressive nature, and we'll never do anything to take that away, but just avoiding some of those charges."

"Then I think lastly, just being a dominant defender. With as hard as she plays, the intensity she plays with, the athleticism and toughness that she has, she should be a dominant defender."

All of those aspects – from improving her defense and three-point shooting to limiting her turnovers and charges – are part of the need she feels this season to take on more responsibility. She's entering just her second season at Ohio State but is a clear leader for the team, and it's likely that the Buckeyes will go as far as McMahon does this year.

"I definitely do (feel more pressure)," she said. "Having the season that I had, I feel like a lot of the pressure is on me, and so I feel like my teammates count on me a lot more than they would count on a sophomore usually. I'm just making sure

that even on my bad days I focus on why I'm here, and I'm not here for myself. I'm here for my team to have a good practice and make sure everybody gets through, have fun and, at the end of the day, have a lot of energy."

## Greene Working Back From Knee Injury

Ohio State guard Madison Greene suffered her second season-ending injury in as many years back in December, and she is continuing to recover in preparation for this season.

"Everything's on track right now," McGuff said Sept. 25. "She's doing a great job. She's very diligent, and we've got a great sports performance team that's kind of guiding her in that process. But she's working really hard. We feel really good where she is right now."

Greene was able to play in Ohio State's opener last season coming off a knee injury the previous November, but considering that she suffered her latest knee injury this past December, it's likely that this December or the beginning of conference play in January is a realistic target for her to return rather than being ready for the beginning of the season.

For what it's worth, Greene was seen actively participating in Ohio State's first preseason practice on Sept. 26 and did not appear to be limited, though it was light work participating in layup lines and running across the court.

Should Greene return at some point for Ohio State, it would be a significant boost considering she was shooting 48.3 percent from the floor and 56.0 percent from deep last season prior to her injury. Long-range shooting will be at a premium for the Buckeyes with the loss of Mikesell, so Greene's return will be much appreciated for Ohio State.

## OSU Well-Regarded In Preseason Awards

The Big Ten announced the conference's preseason All-Big Ten team and preseason rankings on Oct. 4 as voted on by coaches and media, and Ohio State is expected to be among the best in the conference this season.

Ohio State finished second in the coaches' poll and third in media voting, with the coaches voting for Iowa, Ohio State, Indiana, Maryland and Illinois, and the media voting for Iowa, Indiana, Ohio State, Maryland and Michigan. Both McMahon and Sheldon were named to the All-Big Ten team, with McMahon as a unanimous selection for the coaches, and Iowa guard Caitlin Clark was named preseason Player of the Year.

Elsewhere on the All-Big Ten team, Clark, McMahon and fifth-year guard Jacy Sheldon were joined on both the coaches and media polls by Illinois guard Makira Cook, Indiana forward Mackenzie Holmes, Maryland guard Shyanne Sellers, Michigan guard Laila Phelia, Nebraska forward Alexis Markowski and guard Jaz Shelley, and Penn State guard Makenna Marisa.

Clark was the only unanimous selection for the media, while the coaches agreed on

## 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 Lemmilä	C	6-6		Espoo (Finland) Tapiolan Honka
Ava Watson	G	5-7	★★★★	Buford, Ga.

Clark, Holmes, McMahon, Phelia and Sellers. The coaches also had an 11th player in Minnesota guard Mara Braun due to a tie in voting. As a representative for media voting, this writer had the same top five teams as the coaches and nine of 10 players in the poll, with Indiana guard Sydney Parrish as the one change at the expense of Markowski.

## Ohio State Releases Full Nonconference Schedule

Ohio State's schedule for the upcoming season is now complete, after the program announced the team's full nonconference schedule on Oct. 3.

After opening the season with a previously announced matchup against USC in Las Vegas on Nov. 6, the Buckeyes will return home to face IUPUI on Nov. 12. Ohio State's nonconference schedule will continue with a home contest against Boston College on Nov. 16 before participating in the Baha Mars Pink Flamingo Championship in The Bahamas from Nov. 20-22, facing East Carolina and Oklahoma State.

The Buckeyes will then host Cornell on Nov. 26 before traveling to face Tennessee on Dec. 3, completing a home-and-home series that began last season. They will then host Ohio University on Dec. 5, Grand Valley State on Dec. 15 and UCLA on Dec. 18 in a likely top-10 matchup. Ohio State will then close the nonconference slate against Belmont on Dec. 22, where McGuff's daughter Kilyn is entering her junior season, and enter full conference play on Dec. 30 at Michigan.

The Big Ten also released the full list of tip-off times and networks for Ohio State's schedule, which will see a contest on NBC in addition to six games on Peacock, five on the Big Ten Network, two on FOX and FS1 and nine on Big Ten Plus, with networks yet to be announced for the opener against USC and the Pink Flamingo Championship. Visit BuckeyeSports.com to check out the full schedule for the Buckeyes.

## McGuff In Favor Of WNBA Expansion

The WNBA playoffs are in full swing, with the five-game WNBA finals beginning on Oct. 8 between the Las Vegas Aces and New York Liberty.

But bigger things are on the horizon for the WNBA, with the league announcing a 13th team in California's Bay Area on Oct. 5. Furthermore, everyone from executives to coaches to players has asked the league to look at expanding the current 12-player rosters.

One notable player who has not been able to maintain a roster spot this season despite being drafted 13th overall in this year's draft is Mikesell, who has already

been cut by two teams since entering the league. This comes despite shooting 50.0 percent from the floor and 42.9 percent from deep in limited action.

"They need to expand," McGuff said prior to the Oct. 5 announcement. "There's a lot of great players who should be in that league that aren't. There's just not enough spots. I think the interest level is there where the league can support at least two more teams. I'd love to see them expand the rosters, too."

"But I think we've got to start (with more teams), and I say the time is now. Women's basketball and interest level in college, WNBA, is at an all-time high, so we need to take advantage of that as a sport."

## OSU Is Fourth In ESPN's Way-Too-Early Top 25

The AP top 25 will not be released until just before the season beginning in November, but it's never too early to look at where other publications have Ohio State ranked.

According to ESPN's Charlie Creme and his "Way-Too-Early" top 25 on Sept. 28, the Buckeyes check in at No. 4 in the country ahead of this season, trailing only No. 3 UCLA, No. 2 UConn and No. 1 LSU, the defending national champions.

"A devastating full-court press fueled the Buckeyes' 28 victories and Elite Eight appearance, and that was without Jacy Sheldon for much of the season and with Celeste Taylor still at Duke," Creme wrote. "Now Sheldon, who averaged 3.5 steals in the 13 games she played, and Taylor, the ACC's Defensive Player of the Year, are healthy and teammates. The Ohio State press should be even better."

"The Buckeyes don't have a replacement for the shooting of Mikesell, but McMahon, who was the Big Ten Freshman of the Year, was often the best player on the floor regardless of class. A potential All-American for the next three years, McMahon is a perfect fit for Ohio State's up-tempo style. That holds true for Thierry and Rikki Harris; the Buckeyes will need their contributions if Ohio State is to reach the Final Four for the first time since 1993."

The top 10 is rounded out by No. 5 Utah, No. 6 Iowa, No. 7 Virginia Tech, No. 8 South Carolina, No. 9 Tennessee and No. 10 Indiana. Maryland is the only other Big Ten team in the rankings, checking in at No. 13.

According to Creme's rankings, Ohio State would play five top-10 teams, including Indiana, Iowa (twice), Tennessee and UCLA, and eight ranked teams this season, including the aforementioned squads as well as the Terrapins (twice) and No. 18 USC.

# Graduates Add Degree of Experience For Icers

There are many new players, 15 in all, for the Ohio State men's hockey team, so coach Steve Rohlik is relying on a few veterans who have completed their degrees to help the newcomers navigate their first months on campus.

## IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

There are five graduates on the 26-player roster, including transfers Mason Klee (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, business management) and Riley Hughes (Northeastern, finance). They join a trio of Ohio State graduates: Matt Cassidy, who received his economics degree this past summer, and Michael Gildon and Dalton Messina, who each earned diplomas in sports industry in the spring after the completion of the season.

Rohlik said it's a win-win situation. He gets experienced players for another season while they can pursue postgraduate schooling.

"First of all, these guys get another opportunity to put another piece of paper in their pockets," he said. "That's really important. I think people are forgetting that part of it, especially with a degree coming from the Ohio State. So that's really good for those guys.

"And then, obviously, from a hockey standpoint you get some veteran guys that have been around a long time that understand what it takes to compete and play and go to school at this level. Those are all really good positives for us."

Messina took advantage of the NCAA's rule that allows athletes a fifth season of eligibility if they competed in the COVID-impacted 2020-21 season.



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"I just love it here," he said. "My life's here. I love the boys, the coaches and staff – just the atmosphere here."

Messina is a four-time Ohio State scholar-athlete and three-time academic All-Big Ten pick who played in 49 career games, 26 last season, with a goal and five assists entering this year. He's taking courses in a graduate certificate program for diversity and inclusion, but he has a long-range goal.

"Obviously, everybody here has the same goal," he said. "Everyone wants to play in the NHL, to keep playing hockey after (college). But for me, I'd love to get my foot in the door in terms of I want to be a (general manager) in hockey. That's my plan for my career, so get my foot in the door somewhere and kind of just work my way up. Coaching's not my style. I like being behind the scenes more than on the bench."

Rohlik said Messina and the other grads are invaluable to his staff in helping the new players get acclimated.

"These guys have done it," the coach said. "They've been around on every aspect of college, both on and off the ice, so when you have a lot of new guys coming in, they're all wide-eyed and looking to see what we actually do here. You've got some older guys here that understand what it takes. That's what you need."

Gildon is also a four-time Ohio State scholar-athlete and three-time academic All-Big Ten selection. This is his fifth year on the team but fourth playing after he received a medical redshirt following a season-ending injury eight games into his freshman season of 2019-20. He played 20 games the following season but suffered another injury late in the campaign. He has 28 points (seven goals, 21 assists) in 84 games.

"I give credit to Michael," Rohlik said. "To have to go through a couple of surgeries like that, to miss summers of training just to get back to try to be able to play, there's another guy that's been through it all as an older player. I'm hoping that he can go out and have his best year yet."

Gildon said it was a no-brainer to return for another season.

"Columbus has everything here for me, and I wanted to continue playing as long as possible. Ohio State gives me the best opportunity," he said. "The coaches wanted me back, so it's good to be at a place where you're wanted."

Gildon hopes to complete a master's in coaching in the spring of 2024.

"To keep playing (post college) is a dream of most, but I want to be a coach, be behind the bench. I like helping kids out. I think I have a pretty good hockey mind, so maybe pass on my information and if they're open to you keep my passion alive for those kids that I coach one day."

Cassidy took a different route to his diploma. He began his career at Quinnipiac in 2018-19 but returned to junior hockey the following season for Youngstown (Ohio)



**Dalton Messina**

of the United States Hockey League before playing for the Buckeyes in 2020-21 as a sophomore.

"It was a long time coming," he said of graduating. "Transferring kind of hurt me. I could have probably had two degrees, but it feels good."

He knew Youngstown was a stopgap, so he visited Ohio State and was immediately sold.

"I like the vibe it has," Cassidy said. "It's special. "It's a great school, and I think the good thing about Ohio State is there's a place for everyone. You can really enjoy what you want to enjoy and do what you want to do. You know, there's a group for everyone around here, and it's so big that you get to make those decisions."

He's been an Ohio State scholar-athlete all three seasons on campus and a two-time academic All-Big Ten honoree. He was also ECAC All-Academic while at Quinnipiac. In 79 career games at the two schools, he has four goals and 17 assists for 21 points. When considering another year of school, he acknowledged that many of his contemporaries have moved on.

"It's an interesting experience being here now. It's a different life," Cassidy said. "All my friends are working downtown in Manhattan right now and do what they do. But it's great. You're going to work for a long time in your life. You might as well do what you love to do and enjoy it. That's kind of how I've taken it, and I get to have two degrees when I'm done."

"I'm doing a master's in business analytics, so it's a little testy with the schedule with some weekend classes since I think most of the students are employed. Klee is doing it with me as well so we're tag-teaming, getting everything together so we know what to do when."

Cassidy hopes his future employment involves the business side of sports.

"I've always been interested in wealth management. I know there's teams specifically that work with pro athletes and entertainment," he said. "I feel like that would be a good avenue for me since my connections in the hockey world are growing every day and that's always what I've been interested in."

"And obviously now with all the (name, image and likeness) stuff, that kind intrigued me too. I think there's a lot of opportunity there, and there hasn't been much development in that space, in terms of financially advising or assisting students. Having students as clients in that kind of world is kind of interesting."

### Best Of The Best

Sophomore forward Stephen Halliday was voted preseason first-team All-Big Ten by the conference coaches. He is the lone Buckeye among the 18 spots (first and second teams and honorable mention) consisting of three forwards, two defensemen and a goalie for each.

"It's a huge honor, but at the end of the day that's not what wins championships," he said. "I think that as a group that we're ready to go and do something special, but it is great to be recognized."

Halliday, a 2022 fourth-round pick (No.

104) of the Ottawa Senators, led Ohio State with 41 points on nine goals and a team-high 32 assists. Rohlik expects more this season.

"He's been able to take the next step," he said. "I think he's put in a really good summer. He's in better shape, and he just studies the game, so I'm excited to see him play."

### (Sometimes) Prime Time

The Buckeyes will make eight appearances on the Big Ten Network beginning Oct. 20 at Michigan (6 p.m.) to open conference play.

Other telecasts are home to Minnesota on Dec. 8 (6:30 p.m.) and 9 (8 p.m.) and Notre Dame on Jan. 13 (7 p.m.) before playing at Minnesota on Jan. 20 (8 p.m.). They host Michigan on Feb. 3 (8 p.m.), Wisconsin on Feb. 17 (4:30 p.m.) and Penn State on March 1 (6 p.m.).

### Welcome To The Club

Ohio State's home-opening weekend is against Lindenwood on Oct. 13 (7 p.m.) and 14 (5 p.m.) at Value City Arena.

Who? It's a fair question because this is the first-ever series against the Lions, who are in their second year at the Division I level. They were 7-22-1 last season. Rohlik has made an effort to schedule new programs in recent years such as Arizona State and Long Island University.

"I think it's really important. I think you see that across the country," he said. "We're all in it to try to grow the sport, and when these new teams come in, the one thing that I've really tried to do is actually not only play here but play there too. I think that's a really important piece of this so we've done that as much as I've been able to."

The Buckeyes will travel to St. Charles, Mo., near St. Louis next season to play the Lions.

### Comeback Kids

Sophomore Davis Burnside scored twice in a three-goal third period when the No. 13 Buckeyes rallied from a 2-1 deficit to defeat Mercyhurst 4-3 on Oct. 7 in the season opener. Gildon scored the Buckeyes' first goal.

Burnside tied it 2-2 less than a minute into the period, and senior Scooter Brickey put OSU ahead at 2:13 with a power-play goal. Burnside extended the lead to 4-2 at 18:46 before the Lakers scored with one second left.

Theo Wallberg had three assists and Max Montes had two helpers among the six freshmen who debuted. Six transfers, including Logan Terness (18 saves), also played their first games for the Buckeyes.

For a complete recap of the Mercyhurst game, go to [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com), free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



**Davis Burnside**

# No Offense, OSU Line Needs An Upgrade

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

Admit it. You were a little nervous when Ohio State struggled out of the gate against upstart Maryland. I know I was. This game had “trap” written all over it. We had heard all during the off week how much improved the undefeated Terps were and how good quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa was. And there was always the chance that the Buckeyes would still be basking in the glow of their stunning victory over Notre Dame on Sept. 23.

And come kickoff, here was the trap scenario playing out right before our very eyes. Tagovailoa directed his club to a 10-0 lead. Meanwhile, his quarterback counterpart, Kyle McCord, who was the hero of the win over the Irish, looked like Joe Bauserman on his worst day.

Yes, I was nervous.

The Buckeyes bounced back in the second half. That’s the sign of a good team. The question after five games seems to be *how good?*

The Ohio State offense, and which way it is heading, obviously starts with McCord. By the time the game was over, his passing line looked solid, with 19 completions on 29 attempts for 320 yards with a pair of touchdowns and no interceptions, numbers good enough to win many a ballgame. But it was a tale of two halves – of one quarter and three quarters, actually. McCord was 2 of 7 in the first quarter for 14 yards and was sacked twice in the first 15 minutes before getting untracked on a drive late in the second quarter that was kick-started with a 58-yard pass to Marvin Harrison Jr. followed by a 19-yard strike to Harrison on the very next play, taking the Buckeyes down to the Maryland 13.

The Buckeyes had to settle for a field goal after that promising start to the drive, but the offense – or at least the passing offense – produced the rest of the game, tallying over 300 yards in the final three periods.

And it was a good thing that McCord and his receivers got untracked, because you can’t say the same thing about the run game, which tallied a dismal 62 yards on 33 tries. That’s a 1.9-yard average if you are keeping track. Chip Trayanum, another hero from the Notre Dame victory, was given the ball 20 times and could muster only 61 yards with a long of 8, causing a poster on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum to ask, “What is the definition of insanity? Running Trayanum over and over again and expecting a different result.”

In fairness to the running backs room, the Buckeyes were playing without their best ball carrier, with TreVeyon Henderson out with an undisclosed injury. But let’s face it. It’s hard to ignore the elephant in the Buckeye offense’s room – the offensive line. There can’t be too many Buckeye fans or observers out there who don’t think it’s a problem. Just check our Fan Forum on page 2 of this issue. If Joe Fan in C-Deck can see it, you know Ryan Day can.

The coach seemed to downplay the problem after the game with Maryland, suggesting that the defense the Terps were playing affected the offensive line and actually opened up the passing game, though he sort of acknowledged there is a problem.

“I know that there’s a lot of guys in the box,” he said when asked about the Maryland defense and his offensive line after the game. “They’re going to stop the run, and that opened up the pass game in the second half.”

But then he all but acknowledged there was a problem.

“I’ve got to figure out what it is – is it the personnel, the scheme or the coaching of it? I felt like we had a good plan going in,” he said. “They’ve got a pretty good front. They do a nice job. But we want to be more explosive.”

For the record, the offensive line had seemingly done better with pass blocking than run

blocking, allowing McCord to be sacked only twice in the first four games. However, he was sacked three times by the Terrapins.

As we try to answer the question of how good this Ohio State team is, at least on the offensive side of the ball, the answer may rest with the guys up front.

As for the defense, the stop troops continue to roll.

Tagovailoa came into the game ranked 16th in the country with 292.8 passing yards per game and had 13 touchdown passes against only three interceptions. The Buckeyes held him to 21-of-41 passing (51.2 percent) for just 196 yards, only one touchdown and two critical picks.

“Overall, the goal was to contain him,” Day said. “He had 196 yards, 21 of 41, two sacks, and obviously the pick-six, so if you had said that going into the game, I probably would have signed on the dotted line on that one, so job well done.”

The Terp run game didn’t fare much better, grinding out just 106 yards on 35 carries.

Against a variety of opponents thus far, the defense has yet to allow more than the 17 points the Terrapins scored, and seven of those points can be attributed to the botched punt early in the first quarter (raise your hand if you think that was just a bad snap, as Day claimed, and not an attempt at a fake).

The Buckeyes rank third nationally in scoring defense (10.2), sixth in pass defense (158.4), eighth in total defense (264.8) and 25th in rushing defense (106.4) – pretty good numbers, all-in-all.

So, what worries me about the defense? In response to the final two games of last season, the defense under Jim Knowles appears to me to be designed to prevent the big play. It worked against Maryland, with the Terps’ longest play being 26 yards. Notre Dame’s longest play was 28 yards.

But what if some of the better teams down the road say, “Fine. Take away the big plays. We’ll just march the ball up and down the field, scoring and keeping the ball away from you and your high-powered offense?”

Notre Dame had touchdown drives of 75 yards on 13 plays and 96 yards on 11 plays. The Irish also had a 14-play, 71-yard drive that stalled at the OSU 18 and resulted in no points. What if the Irish had scored there?

Did you know that Ohio State is tied for 112th in the nation with 1.4 sacks per game? And that’s with two against Maryland. I know, the Buckeyes put a lot of pressure on the quarterback.

Pressure is great, but sacks are game-changers. The Buckeyes might need a few down the road, as the schedule gets tougher.

So, to the question of how good the Buckeyes are, I don’t know.

I’m not sure Ryan Day does either.

### Quick Hitters

- On the traditional tight end watch, Cade Stover may have been overshadowed by Harrison in the win over the Terrapins, but he did his part. He had only two catches, but they went for a 33.0-yard average. One was for a 44-yard touchdown early in the fourth quarter that made the score 27-17 in favor of the Buckeyes. His 22-yarder in the third quarter moved Ohio State to the Maryland 6-yard line, setting up a 24-yard Jayden Fielding field goal that gave the Buckeyes the lead they never relinquished.
- Speaking of Harrison, this was the first game this season where I felt he dominated

like we thought he would after last year’s great campaign. His eight catches for 163 yards sparked the Buckeyes.

There was one catch, in particular, that caught my attention. He reeled in an over-the-shoulder catch at the sideline, just getting a foot down, that set up Stover’s 44-yard score. It was the first time I really thought he looked like the Harrison of last season, making the difficult catch look easy, and it reminded me of the type of connection he had with C.J. Stroud. If he can build that same chemistry with McCord, the Buckeyes could go a long way.

- In this space last issue, I mentioned that one of the hidden plays that led to victory against Notre Dame came when McCord was able to get his team 21 yards downfield and lined up in time to spike the ball, leaving the Buckeyes with seven seconds to win the game.

The importance – and difficulty – of that play was demonstrated when Tagovailoa was unable to get his team lined up to spike the ball at the end of the first half, and they had to go a much shorter distance to line up. The failure denied Maryland a field-goal attempt and a chance at a 13-10 lead going into the locker room, with the Terps set to get the ball to start the second half. Three points for Maryland there might have changed the entire complexion of the game.

### Cowtown No More

I found a quote from our good friend Bill Greene elsewhere in this issue on the importance of getting potential recruits on campus interesting.

“I’ve been doing this for over 20 years, and it just seems like if Ohio State can get a kid to come on that official visit, their success rate is really, really high – especially with these kids from Florida,” Greene explained. “I think a lot of them that haven’t spent a lot of time at Ohio State – some have never been to Ohio State – they show up for that 48-hour visit and they think they’re going to Kansas or somewhere out in the hinterlands.

“And then they get to Columbus, and it’s like, ‘Oh my gosh, this campus is unbelievable.’ And then they go downtown to Columbus, and it’s like, ‘This is unbelievable.’ Ohio State has a great attraction, and I think kids that have never been there think they’re going to Manhattan, Kansas, or something like that. And then they get to Columbus, and they find out, ‘Man this is a great place.’”

Aside from giving some great insight on the recruiting process, Greene had me remembering years back, to when I made my own college choice for graduate school. I was offered money by two schools – Purdue and Ohio State – and I was offered substantially more money by Purdue. In classic Frank fashion, I didn’t bother to visit either school and had never been to West Lafayette or Columbus. But I knew my Midwest geography well enough to know West Lafayette was pretty much in the middle of nowhere and Columbus was a larger city. Being the city boy that I was, hailing from Washington, D.C., I chose Ohio State purely on the size of Columbus – a silly reason for choosing a school, but, 47 years later, I can say it worked out really well for me.

The funny thing is, when I arrived in the fall of 1976, Columbus truly lived up to its then reputation as a “cowtown.” It has grown so much in the time I have been here, almost all for the better, and has become a true gem.

I can see why recruits are impressed.

### Correction

I am not wild about printing corrections in Buckeye Sports Bulletin, and in 42-plus years of publication there have been very few of them, a testament to our thorough and thoughtful editing process.

By now, however, you know that we listed the network for the Maryland game as Peacock, with a probable start time as 3:30 p.m. And by now you know that neither proved correct.

That one is on me. I knew that information had not been officially confirmed, though all signs pointed in that direction. Yet, after a brief discussion among management types, it was decided to go with that network and start time. I’m getting soft in my old age because that was the wrong thing to do. It is better to offer incomplete information, which we should have done, rather than incorrect information.

I should mention that assistant publisher Becky Roberts was the least comfortable with our decision, but she is usually pretty good about talking me out of bad decisions and did not successfully do so this time.

While I apologize to the readers for the misinformation, it’s good for all of us at BSB to be reminded occasionally (very occasionally I hope) that getting the facts right is paramount. In today’s Internet world, it seems that for some it is more important to get it fast or first than it is to get it right.

That’s not what real journalism is all about.

### Trials Gaining Steam

The number of free trial requests has definitely picked up since the last issue. As you may recall (I’m not sure how you can’t because I am so persistent about it), I have been asking all BSB readers to send in at least one name and address of a potential Buckeye Sports Bulletin reader and we will send that Buckeye fan four free issues of the paper. Perhaps you were introduced to BSB through a free trial. In fact, some of you reading this note may be on a free trial at this moment. It’s OK for you to send us names and addresses of Buckeye fans as well.

Send your names and addresses to BSB at [subscriptions@buckeyesports.com](mailto:subscriptions@buckeyesports.com), mail them to PO 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, we are especially targeting younger readers, so don’t forget your children and grandchildren. And don’t forget that you can send a full subscription to anyone 35 or under for just \$29.95, a \$90 savings over the regular rate.

One last pitch before I get off my huckster platform for this issue.

We will be listing the Brutus Level BSB VIPs in the Penn State issue. If you would like to have your name listed in the paper as a patron of Buckeye Sports Bulletin but can’t afford the higher VIP levels, now is the time to sign up as a Brutus VIP for just \$50. See the note on page 5 for more information.

Thanks to everyone for working to help BSB remain vibrant and viable.

### On A Personal Note

Speaking of loyal BSB subscribers, we lost one with the passing of Ron Cook of Lima, Ohio, a member of the 1957 Ohio State national championship team, on Sept. 16. I may have met Ron at a speaking engagement in the Lima area at some point – or maybe not. I don’t recall anymore. Regardless, we became friends by telephone, and he was a great Buckeye fan and supporter of BSB.

My thoughts and prayers go out to Ron’s family.

*Bally* SPORTS



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