

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 43, No. 6

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Oct. 21, 2023

## Running Back Depth Steps Up In Blowout Of Purdue

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Head coach Ryan Day has called this year's team one of his most veteran and deepest squads in his time at Ohio State, and no position group better exemplified that than the team's five scholarship running backs.

Most teams would be pleased to have just *one* of TreVeyon Henderson, Chip Trayanum, Miyan Williams, Dallan Hayden or Evan Pryor, but in an embarrassment of riches, running backs coach Tony Alford gets to lead all five.

"It's exciting," Alford said on Aug. 5 "It's great to have depth. Everybody wants depth. And how that gets dispersed, we will figure that out as we go. But it's good to have depth. It's good to have guys. It's good to have good players, improving players. And how we manage it, and how we get guys on the field, that will play itself out."

That depth was on full display in Ohio State's 41-7 win at Purdue on Oct. 14, with the injury bug that seemed to plague the Buckeye running backs last season returning in full force. After he missed the previous week's matchup against Maryland, Henderson – who Day had indicated throughout the week would be good to go and could have even played against the Terrapins if he was needed – was listed as questionable but did not take the field.

The other surprise on Ohio State's availability report was Williams, which was unexpected considering he finished the game against Maryland with six carries for 23 yards, the most since Week 1 at Indiana with seven carries, 25 yards and two touchdowns.

With Henderson and Williams both riding the bench – a sight not unlike much of last season, where the duo flipped in and



SONNY BROCKWAY

**NEXT MAN UP** – Tasked with carrying the load at running back following injuries to TreVeyon Henderson, Miyan Williams and Chip Trayanum, sophomore tailback Dallan Hayden responded by carrying the ball 11 times for 76 yards and a touchdown in Ohio State's 41-7 win at Purdue on Oct. 14.

out of the lineup with various bumps and bruises – Ohio State's already stretched depth was stretched further late in the first quarter.

Following a 9-yard completion from quarterback Kyle McCord to Trayanum on the first play of Ohio State's third drive of the game, already leading 13-0, Trayanum was brought down awkwardly by a pair of Boilermakers – safeties Cam Allen and Dillon Thieneman – and helped off the field. After discussions with Alford and the

medical staff, Trayanum would not return to the game, exiting with six carries for 28 yards and the previously mentioned reception.

"Being at a great university like Ohio State, we know the next man up is not going to be a step behind Chip," offensive lineman Donovan Jackson said. "Chip is an amazing back. I'm not going to read into what happened to him, but I hope he comes back fast."

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## Buckeye Leaves

*Ohio State had one of the team's most complete performances of the season in a 41-7 win at Purdue on Oct. 14, with a fast start on offense and a dominant defense combining to overcome any fears of playing at the Boilermakers' Ross-Ade Stadium. Here are some choices from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members and readers from the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum for players worthy of receiving Buckeye Leaves after the win:*

**Patrick Engels, BSB:** Ohio State had arguably its most dominant defensive performance of the season against Purdue, and at the forefront of that was defensive tackle Tyleik Williams. The third-year Williams was active early and often for Larry Johnson's unit, recording a tackle for loss and a pass deflection in the very first quarter. Williams' tackle of running back Dylan Downing in the first period was a loss of 1 yard, providing him with his fifth consecutive game with a tackle for loss.

The Manassas, Va., native also showed off his athleticism and ball awareness by batting down two passes from Purdue quarterback Hudson Card – one in the first quarter and another in the second – that both occurred on key third-down plays, all but ending the Boilermakers' chances of stringing together any form of production on offense.

Williams finished with a strong three tackles, two tackles for loss and two pass deflections, a performance that has only allowed him to keep impressing on an improving front four. The junior already has 27 tackles, six tackles for loss, a sack and four pass breakups on the season, a year that may be his most impressive yet.

**Braden Moles, BSB:** Kyle McCord had maybe his best outing so far as the starter for Ohio State, so he gets my Buckeye Leaf.

Despite a lack of help from receivers – including a handful of drops – and challenging weather conditions with consistent rain coming down in West Lafayette, McCord turned in a strong performance, finishing 16 of 28 passing for 276 yards and three touchdowns, though he was called for his third intentional grounding of the season.

While Marvin Harrison Jr. was again his favorite target, McCord was able to connect with six different receivers on the afternoon and had several impressive

instances of evading pressure in the pocket. It gives him plenty to build on heading into the matchup with Penn State.

**Greg Wilson, BSB:** My Buckeye Leaf goes to Cade Stover, who yet again was McCord's safety net. He finished the game with only four catches, but with that he was able to pick up 53 yards and two touchdowns. It was his second time as a Buckeye he put together a multi-score game, the last one coming last year against Indiana on Nov. 12, 2022. He is up to 359 yards and three touchdowns this season.

His first catch was a highly contested 23-yard reception McCord threw to his back shoulder, which brought the Buckeyes inside the 30-yard line, a drive that would have ended with a touchdown had Devin Brown not fumbled at the goal line.

His first touchdown came at the end of the next offensive drive for the Buckeyes with McCord finding him in the middle of the end zone. The throw was off target, but Stover was able to reach to his left to secure the catch and the score. With 4:36 left in the third quarter, he came off the line of scrimmage and made a hard cut left at the 10-yard line, and McCord found him for his second touchdown.

Stover has been the second target for McCord many times this season, but with Emeka Egbuka out, it was more important that he was able to give the quarterback another place to look than Harrison.

### Subscribers

**Tiffin Buckeye:** Dallan Hayden. Should've been playing a long time ago!

**AnthonyBuckeye:** Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau for harassing Card all day long and for sacks. Mike Hall Jr. and Williams for stellar play. The whole D, especially the secondary, for another spectacular performance. Brown for goal-line violence (he will learn to avoid the fumble). McCord for an efficient offense to start both halves fast. Stover for being the best Buckeye tight end TD machine in recent memory. Carnell Tate and Brandon Inniss for glimpses of the future and a shoutout to Hayden and Xavier Johnson for delivering whenever their numbers are called.

**PeyoteBuck:** I'm giving leaves to Hayden, who hit the ground running when he was needed. And one to pop-up star Brandon Inniss for his 58-yard touchdown.

## From The Message Board

**Ohio State's 41-7 win at Purdue on Oct. 14 was broadcast exclusively on NBC's streaming service, Peacock, making it the first time since the 1990s that the Buckeyes were not available through a linear broadcast option. We asked our readers their experience using Peacock to watch Ohio State football for the first time and what they think the future of streaming might be for the Buckeyes. Here are some of the responses:**

"Thought the announcers were god awful and had no enthusiasm and they missed quite a few plays having different visual pop ups on the screen."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"Watched it with a group of Ohioans at a sports bar in Florida. The audio was muted, so my experience was different than the view from home. I might eventually subscribe to Peacock but I am undecided now. Can't say that I like it."

– Terrier Buck

"Bought a quick subscription. One has to change with the times and use the phone to get to places, learn new acronyms and to use streaming if you want to watch your favorite team!"

– AnthonyBuckeye

"I knew this would happen when the BIG contract was signed with NBC. I live in Arizona and live streamed the game with Keels/Lachey on 97.1 FM The Fan while watching the ESPN gamecast. Not a bad alternative. The only

thing was that the gamecast reporting was about 10-15 seconds ahead of The Fan commentary."

– R1TBDBITL

"Watched at an Ohio State Alumni watch party at an Atlanta sports bar. The broadcast itself wasn't bad but the announcers left a lot to be desired. Still undecided on subscribing to Peacock going forward."

– bstu9

"I got a one-year free trial for Peacock through Spectrum TV. And I watched from my home desktop. The announcers were so bad I had the radio on, which was about 15 seconds ahead of the telecast. Hoping the hoops telecasts have better announcers."

– BOB CODY

"I logged in with a free trial for Peacock so I was able to watch the game. I don't mind The Fan on the radio but it's nice to see those close plays on the tube. I hope this is not a trend for the future, but I have a sinking feeling it is."

– PeyoteBuck

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

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## Buckeyes Avoid Ross-Ade Land Mines

All of the roadblocks and land mines had apparently been cleared from Ross-Ade Stadium this year before Ohio State motored into what has lately been a house of horrors before motoring back home with a solid 41-7 victory Oct. 14 against Purdue.

The Buckeyes had been losers on three of their most recent four trips to West Lafayette, including a particularly embarrassing 49-20 loss in 2018 to the unranked Boilermakers, a defeat so ugly it cost the one-loss Ohio State team its chance to play for the national championship that season.

Ryan Day, Devin Brown, Kyle McCord and a suddenly resurgent pass rush made sure there was no such repeat in 2023.

Day, clearly frustrated with his team's inability to run the ball in short-yardage situations, went back to the drawing board and came up with a package designed for backup quarterback Devin Brown. It worked (mostly) with Brown logging eight carries for 20 yards and a touchdown. He would have had another score, but the football was dislodged from his possession just before he crossed the goal line.

Brown also showed he can throw the ball effectively, connecting on a fourth-quarter pass to Brandon Inniss after which the freshman receiver bobbed and weaved his way through the Purdue defense for a 58-yard touchdown. Let's hope Day continues to give Brown a throwing option in that short-yardage package and not stick him with the tired, used-up Wildcat formation that my 87-year-old, sight-challenged grandmother can see coming.

McCord continued to experience growing pains as a first-year starting quarterback. It was still only his third road game as a starter – as well as his first ever at quirky Ross-Ade – and he made enough good decisions to finish the game with 276 yards and three touchdowns. He still has only one interception this season in 170 attempts and has presided over six straight victories for the No. 3 team in the nation.

But McCord still makes some head-scratching decisions that need to be addressed during the coming weeks. Pocket awareness still seems to be a problem at times with a penchant for holding the ball too long. The Buckeyes are going to face better defenses down the stretch than they have seen so far, yet McCord has been flagged for intentional grounding twice in the last three games. He has also fumbled the ball away twice, and those are lapses in concentration from which championship quarterbacks typically don't suffer.

Meanwhile, on the defensive side of the ledger, the Buckeyes apparently found something that clicked against the Boilermakers. They registered three sacks among their nine tackles for loss – both season-high totals – while limiting Purdue to just 257 total yards, nearly 140 below its season average.

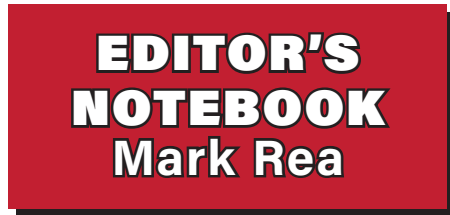
There was even a rare Jack Sawyer sighting as the former five-star prospect finally got his first sack of the season.

It's difficult to pick apart a 34-point road victory, but it's just as difficult to know just how well Ohio State did or didn't play because of the opponent. Purdue is a young team with a young coach, and I can't help thinking the final margin should have been much more than it was.

Still, in a college football season that has already proved anything can happen on any given Saturday, winning – however it can be achieved – remains the bottom line. If you don't believe me, ask Oregon ... or USC ... or Louisville ... or Coach Prime.

### Where's He Been?

There was a lot to like about the performance of the Ohio State running game against Purdue. Despite TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams being unavailable from the get-go, and Chip Trayanum missing most of the game after absorbing a teeth-chattering tackle following a 9-yard pass reception near the end of the first period, the Buckeyes pieced together an effort that netted 152 yards on 39 attempts.



Not so long ago, that rushing total would have been considered modest (at best) for Ohio State, but the fact that it represented the second-highest total in six games this season – behind 204 against Western Kentucky – speaks for itself.

What perhaps doesn't speak for itself is the reason it took a litany of injuries to get sophomore Dallan Hayden into a game. We're not privy to what goes on behind the doors of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, but there must be some reason Ryan Day floated the idea during his weekly media availability before the Purdue game that he was seriously thinking about redshirting Hayden.

In this day and age of unfettered transfers and unbridled NIL money lining players' pockets, I figured old-fashioned redshirting was for players whose minds and/or bodies needed extra time to acclimate to the college game. Hayden would not seem to be one of those players.

Last season, he was third on the team in rushing behind Williams and Henderson with 553 yards and five touchdowns. That included a performance in a 43-30 win at Maryland during which Hayden carried 27 times for 146 yards and three touchdowns. I don't think I was alone in believing that kind of freshman season was deserving of a spot in the 2023 running back rotation. And I don't think I'm the only one wondering where in the hell Hayden has been all season after he led the Buckeyes with 76 yards and a touchdown in just three quarters of action against Purdue.

Unlike a lot of other Ohio State running backs this season, Hayden didn't look the least bit tentative when his number was called. No pawing, no hesitating, no dancing. He more often than not took the handoff, stuck a foot in the ground and took off. That was especially true on his second carry of the game when he motored through a gaping hole in the left side of the Purdue defense for a 17-yard gain, and then early in the third quarter when he went left again, this time for 19 yards.

Several plays later, Hayden showed that power running is also in his arsenal when he ran through 6-3, 225-pound Purdue linebacker Yanni Karlaftis at the goal line for a 1-yard touchdown.

Since Ohio State insists upon keeping injury information as secret as NORAD does regarding the launch codes of its nuclear missiles, no one knows the availability of Henderson or Williams moving forward. Perhaps Henderson could have played against Purdue, but the nature of the opponent caused Day and his staff to save him for Penn State. Meanwhile, Williams has a history of leg injuries, and it doesn't take a medical degree to figure Trayanum will likely be in concussion

protocol for a while.

That means Hayden might again have a featured role in the OSU backfield against Penn State. It's a shame that injuries to his teammates seem to be the sole reason why.

### More Fun With Numbers

• Ohio State completed the Indiana trifecta – beating Indiana, Purdue and Notre Dame on the road during the same season – for the second time in program history. It also happened in 1996 when the Buckeyes took a 29-16 win at South Bend in late September, followed three weeks later with a 42-14 victory in West Lafayette, and finished in mid-November with a 27-17 win in Bloomington.

• With 276 yards against Purdue, McCord became the 25th player in Ohio State history to eclipse the 2,000 mark in career passing yardage. Now with 2,257 yards, he jumped John Borton (2,129, 1952-54) and Tom Tupa (2,252, 1985-87) on OSU's career list and sits at No. 23 all-time.

• Marvin Harrison Jr.'s performance against the Boilermakers also helped him achieve a career milestone. With 105 yards, he now has 2,006 for his career, making him only the 11th Ohio State player with 2,000 or more receiving yards. Harrison needs only 27 more yards to move past K.J. Hill (2,032, 2016-19) and crack OSU's all-time top 10.

• Harrison allowed the Buckeyes to run their streak to four consecutive 100-yard receiving performances against Purdue. Jaxon Smith-Njigba (139) and Garrett Wilson (126) each cracked the century mark during a 59-31 win against the Boilermakers in 2021, K.J. Hill had nine catches for 105 yards during the 49-20 disaster in West Lafayette in 2018, and tight end Jeff Heuerman caught five balls for a career-high 116 yards and a touchdown in 2013 when the Buckeyes rolled to a 56-0 win.

• Ohio State defeated an opponent by a 41-7 final score for the first time since beating Iowa in 1980. The only other two times in history the Buckeyes have beaten an opponent by an exact 41-7 final was against North Carolina in 1962 and Pittsburgh in 1950.

• The Buckeyes now have an all-time record of 283-1 when scoring 40 or more points. The only blemish on that mark is the 42-41 loss to Georgia in last season's national championship semifinal game.

• Thanks to three missed field goals by Purdue kicker Julio Macias, it appeared for a time that Ohio State might record its first shutout against a Big Ten opponent since a 56-0 win vs. Rutgers in 2017. When the Boilermakers scored early in the fourth quarter, it extended the longest drought between shutouts of conference opponents in OSU program history (including Big Ten Championship Games) to 55 games. The previous record was 46 between 1980 and 1986.

• When Jayden Fielding missed the extra-point kick after Ohio State's first touchdown, it ended a modest streak of 30 straight PATs for OSU kickers begun last year after Noah Ruggles had one blocked during the 43-30 win at Maryland. To find the previous kicker who whiffed on an extra point, however, you have to go back to 2019 when Dominic DiMaccio missed the final PAT try of a 76-5 blowout of Miami (Ohio).

• Purdue running back Devin Mockobee became the first opponent this season to crack the century mark on the ground against the Buckeyes. He is also only the second Boilermakers player since 1999 to rush for 100 or more yards vs. Ohio State. The other was D.J. Knox, who ran 128 yards during his team's upset win in 2018.

# OHIO STATE INSIDER

## Buckeyes Stay Put At No. 3 In AP Top 25

The Ohio State football team held steady in the AP top 25 released on Oct. 15, remaining at No. 3 after the team's 41-7 win at Purdue on Oct. 14.

Ohio State trails No. 2 Michigan and No. 1 Georgia, with the Bulldogs retaining the majority of first-place votes with 43. Also receiving first-place votes were Michigan (16), Ohio State (one), No. 4 Florida State (one) and No. 5 Washington (two).

Rounding out the top 10 were No. 6 Oklahoma, No. 7 Penn State, No. 8 Texas, No. 9 Oregon and No. 10 North Carolina, setting up a top-10 matchup between Ohio State and Penn State on Oct. 21. Also representing the Big Ten in the poll was No. 24 Iowa.

The biggest jump in the poll belonged to No. 15 Notre Dame, which blew out now-No. 18 USC 48-20, with the Trojans falling down from No. 10, the biggest fall in the poll. The Irish had been No. 21.

## Penn State At Ohio State Set For Noon Kickoff On FOX

Penn State's road trip to Ohio State on Oct. 21 is set for a noon kickoff on FOX, the Big Ten announced on Oct. 9, with Ohio Stadium set to "Scarlet the Shoe" against the Nittany Lions.

It will be the third consecutive noon kickoff for Ohio State, following the Buckeyes' home matchup with Maryland on Oct. 7, which also aired on FOX, and their road trip to Purdue, which aired exclusive-

## 2023 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Sept. 2	at Indiana	W, 23-3	CBS	2-4, 52-7 loss to Michigan
Sept. 9	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 35-7	BTN	3-3, 34-31 loss to South Dakota
Sept. 16	WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 63-10	FOX	4-2, idle
Sept. 23	at Notre Dame	W, 17-14	NBC	6-2, 48-20 win over USC
Oct. 7	MARYLAND	W, 37-17	FOX	5-2, 27-24 loss to Illinois
Oct. 14	at Purdue	W, 41-7	Peacock	2-5, <b>41-7 loss to Ohio State</b>
Oct. 21	PENN STATE	12 p.m.	FOX	6-0, 63-0 win over UMass
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	TBA	TBA	4-2, 15-6 loss to Iowa
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	TBA	TBA	5-2, 27-24 win over Michigan State
Nov. 11	MICHIGAN STATE	7:30 p.m.	NBC	2-4, 27-24 loss to Rutgers
Nov. 18	MINNESOTA	TBA	TBA	3-3, idle
Nov. 25	at Michigan	12 p.m.	FOX	7-0, 52-7 win over Indiana

ly on Peacock.

FOX also revealed that "Big Noon Kickoff" will be in attendance at Ohio Stadium. The Buckeyes are 8-2 when hosting the program and have an overall record of 12-3 when "Big Noon Kickoff" is covering one of the Buckeyes' games, with losses coming against Oregon and Michigan in 2021 as

well as the Wolverines last season.

In addition, ESPN's "College GameDay" will be on hand for the key Big Ten matchup. It will be the 58th time Ohio State has been on the show, the most of any university. The Buckeyes hold a 39-18 record in those instances, with their most recent victory coming in their 17-14 win over Notre Dame

## From The Pages Of BSB

### 40 Years Ago — 1983

Jim Karsatos took a deep breath and trotted onto the field. The third-string freshman quarterback was about to run the most important play of his brief Ohio State career — not to mention the Ohio State-Illinois game on Oct. 15.

It came with 1:47 remaining, fourth-and-4, Buckeye ball on the Illini 19-yard line. Nursing a 13-10 lead, coach Earle Bruce decided to eschew the field goal attempt. Karsatos suggested he play-action fake to tailback Keith Byars, then run a naked bootleg left. It turned out to be a very good call — for the Illini.

Karsatos, not the quickest Buckeye at 6-3, 220, ran for 2 yards and then ran into Illinois linebacker Vince Osby. Thirty-seven seconds later, the Illini were in the Ohio State end zone with a 17-13 victory. All thoughts went back to the Buckeyes' fourth-down play.

"I would have liked to have one play over, like everyone else," said Bruce. "The quarterback felt they didn't check him out when he handed off the last time we ran that play and he thought he could beat the defensive end to the first (down). I questioned that, but I went along."

### 35 Years Ago — 1988

The post-game statistics called Ohio State sophomore tailback Carlos Snow a hero. The post-game comments from Snow called him a zero.

The 5-9, 200-pounder from Cincinnati rushed for 128 yards against Purdue on Oct. 15, more than twice as many yards as any other running back in the game. And Snow also tallied a 58-yard touchdown run in the first quarter of the game to stake Ohio State to a 7-0 lead.

But Snow fumbled a kickoff return midway through the third quarter and the Boilermakers used it as a springboard to register a 31-26 victory over the Buckeyes.

"I thought it was the turning point in the game," Snow said of his fumble. "I wish he would have hit me in the chest, but he hit his helmet right on the ball and it popped loose."

### 30 Years Ago — 1993

Twenty-five years is a long time ago. A first-class postage stamp was six cents. Denny McLain won 31 games as a pitcher for the Detroit Tigers. Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In was one of the highest-rated shows on television.

On the Ohio State campus, though, it was a time of celebration as the Buckeyes won the collegiate national championship in football with a team of talented veterans interspersed with fresh-faced sophomores. On the 25th anniversary of that championship, approximately 70 members of that team were honored during a reunion banquet attended by nearly 2,300 family members, friends and fans.

The Woody Hayes Athletic Center was transformed into a huge banquet hall for the event, which lasted nearly six hours. During that time, members of the 1968 team reminisced for the audience, posed for snapshots and signed hundreds of autographs.

Most popular among the fans were the players who were most popular in 1968. All-Americans Rex Kern, Jack Tatum, John Brockington and Jim Stillwagon drew huge crowds around them.

### 25 Years Ago — 1998

The final question from OSU coach John Cooper's Minnesota postgame press conference following a 45-15 win on Oct. 17 was one he had heard before.

It dealt with how Cooper would keep his top-ranked Buckeyes from feeling overconfident against clearly outmatched Big Ten foes each week. The coach bristled and went on the anti-overconfidence offensive.

"You know, you guys worry more about overconfidence," he said. "I've never seen so much written about it and talked about it. You don't hear our players say anything about overconfidence, but there is in the paper, 'Buckeyes Overconfident.' We're trying to win football games."

### 20 Years Ago — 2003

Just as the Buckeyes had tied Wisconsin 10-10 in the fourth quarter on Oct. 11 and were trying to figure out a way to pull out another miracle finish, the Badgers turned the tables with a big play of their own.

Backup quarterback Matt Schabert connected on a 79-yard touchdown to wide receiver Lee Evans, providing the winning margin for Wisconsin's 17-10 victory, ending the Buckeyes' winning streak at 19 games.

"Is it a huge setback? Yes, but I think it's something we can come back from," defensive lineman Tim Anderson said. "Obviously, a lot has to happen around the Big Ten and the rest of the country (for a repeat national championship), but we can't worry about that stuff. We have to keep playing our game and get better every day. The other things will take care of themselves."

### 15 Years Ago — 2008

The Buckeyes improved to 6-1 with a 16-3 victory over visiting Purdue on Oct. 11 and remained perfect in conference play after three games, but they did not do so in a way that could be considered convincing to many of the 105,378 in attendance at Ohio Stadium.

Familiar as the formula was — stifling defense and exceptional special teams with just a sprinkling of offense — it was not one the Buckeyes and their followers thought would be necessary this season, especially against Purdue, a team that looked like it could be headed for the Big Ten basement.

The Boilermakers outgained Ohio State, 298-222, ran 21 more plays and picked up four more first downs. And although the visitors entered the Horseshoe with what was statistically the worst defense in the Big Ten, the only touchdown of the game was the result of a blocked punt.

"We just know we didn't play anywhere near how we can," frustrated tight end Jake Ballard said. "Our O-line, our tight ends, our receivers — everybody's down because we know we didn't play as good as we can, and we know it's not going to get the job done later in the season."

### 10 Years Ago — 2013

With Ohio State favored to beat Northwestern on Oct. 5 by seven points by the time the ball was kicked off in Evanston, Ill., the final play of the game dramatically altered the fortunes for those who had bet the spread in a Las Vegas sportsbook.

When freshman defensive lineman Joey Bosa recovered a botched hook and ladder in the end zone on the final play of the

game for a 40-30 final, it swung the victory to those who had Northwestern and the points to those who had OSU covering the spread.

One Vegas insider told the Sporting News that the reversal in outcome may have cost Vegas sports books up to \$3-4 million because of how many bettors had picked Ohio State to cover the spread.

"It was a horrific decision for us," Jay Rood, vice president of MGM Resorts sports book, told The Linemakers on Sporting News. "We had a little bit of sharp money early with Northwestern, but everything else from Friday through Saturday before kickoff was on Ohio State, the time frame in which we take our most bets."

### Five Years Ago — 2018

Ohio State sophomore quarterback Dwayne Haskins knew he was in the thick of the Heisman Trophy conversation, but he didn't really care.

"I am aware of it, but it is not my main focus right now," Haskins said before he threw for 412 yards and three touchdowns in a 30-14 win over Minnesota on Oct. 13. "My main focus is getting better every day so I can be in that conversation for the rest of the season. Right now, I am just focused on getting better every day."

From a numbers standpoint, it might be hard for Haskins to be much better. Through seven games — the first seven starts of his career — the Potomac (Md.) Bullis School product had racked up 175 completions on 242 attempts (72.3 completion percentage) for 2,331 yards and 28 touchdowns to just four interceptions.

He was first in the nation in touchdown passes, third in passing yards, third in completion percentage and third in QB rating (188.10). He was already just seven touchdowns shy of tying the program's single-season record (35 by J.T. Barrett in 2017), and he had twice tied the record for completions (33, against Minnesota and Indiana).

### One Year Ago — 2022

After his career at Ohio State wrapped, there would be no shortage of things to remember quarterback C.J. Stroud for.

Perhaps his most definable trait, though, was on display in Ohio State's 49-20 win at Michigan State on Oct. 8. Stroud had a clear ability to dominate the Spartans.

He finished with six passing touchdowns on 21-of-26 passing for 361 yards — helping lead the offense to 614 total yards — in another outstanding performance against Michigan State during Stroud's relatively brief career.

He also finished with more passing touchdowns than he did incompletions, the second time that Stroud had accomplished that feat. The first time was against — you may have guessed — Michigan State the previous season. In that contest, Stroud finished 32 of 35 for 432 yards and six touchdowns, arguably Ohio State's most dominant win of the season given the Spartans' ranking of No. 7 at the time.

In total, Stroud played in three games against the Spartans, totaling 793 passing yards on an 86.9 completion percentage (53 of 61) with 12 touchdowns and just one interception.

on Sept. 23. This is also the eighth time in which the show is visiting Columbus for an Ohio State-Penn State matchup, with the most recent occurrence on Nov. 23, 2019, a 28-17 victory for the Buckeyes.

The matchup should be one of the most anticipated games of the season, with both Ohio State and Penn State ranked in the top seven of the most recent AP top 25 and holding unblemished 6-0 records. While the Nittany Lions have mostly been competitive with the Buckeyes in recent years, Ohio State does bring a six-game winning streak against Penn State coming into the upcoming contest.

**Several Skill Players Out In Win Over Purdue**

Ohio State was without three offensive contributors against Purdue. Wide receiver Emeka Egbuka and running backs TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams each sat out with respective injuries.

Egbuka, who had suffered a lower-body injury early in the fourth quarter against Maryland after he was tackled on an 8-yard reception, did not make the trip to West Lafayette, Ind. To fill in for the injured Egbuka, head coach Ryan Day and his offense extended more playing time to first-year wide-outs Carnell Tate and Brandon Inniss, who combined for 137 receiving yards on four receptions, including a 58-yard score from Inniss.

Day was also without the services of Henderson and Williams, who were the team's two leading rushers last season. Henderson was seen without pads participating in initial team warmups, but he stayed in

street clothes when the team re-emerged from the tunnel.

Williams played against Maryland and did not appear to suffer an injury, so the reason for his absence was unclear.

Ohio State was also without several mainstays on the injury report: wide receivers Nolan Baudo, Kyion Grayes and Reis Stocksdale, running back TC Caffey, tight ends Zak Herbstreit and Joe Royer, defensive lineman Will Smith Jr. and linebacker Kourt Williams II.

**Burke Exits Purdue Game With Injury**

Ohio State also saw the injury bug hit the defensive side of the ball against Purdue when junior cornerback Denzel Burke was forced to miss the rest of the game after suffering a lower-body ailment at the beginning of the third quarter.

Burke seemed to have sustained the injury on the Boilermakers' first drive of the second half on an attempted tackle of wide receiver Mershawn Rice, who seemingly rolled up on the defensive back after being brought to the ground by cornerback Jordan Hancock. Burke then limped off the field and was tended to by trainers before being taken into Ohio State's medical tent for further evaluation.

He would not return to the game and was replaced by freshman cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr., then by Hancock, who would assume most of the reps at the position in the second half. The extent and type of Burke's injury is still unknown, with Day declining to offer an update after the game for any of Ohio State's injuries.

Before his exit, Burke was serving as a key contributor to the Buckeyes' near shutdown of Purdue. He helped the unit keep the Boilermakers off the scoreboard with a key pass deflection late in the first half that eventually led to a missed field goal.

His early-game performance was indicative of the stellar season he has had so far. After a subpar sophomore campaign riddled by injuries, Burke has re-emerged as a shutdown corner with eight tackles, a tackle for loss, an interception, eight pass break-ups and a forced fumble.

**Day Sees No Need To Change O-Line**

Ohio State's offensive line has been among the team's most criticized units this season, with struggles in the run game chief among the issues.

Chip Trayanum led the Buckeyes in their 37-17 victory over the Terrapins with 20 carries but was able to muster only 61 yards, a 3.1 yards per carry average, with

the run game as a whole managing only 1.9 yards per carry.

Despite the struggles in the run game and with the offensive line, Day still believes they have the right personnel on the field. Furthermore, he does not see any reserve performing well enough to take a starting spot at this point.

"When we looked hard at it, I don't see any of those guys right now pushing," he said on Oct. 10. "I'd like to see that. But I don't see them pushing on the door enough to say someone deserves 20, 30 snaps in a game just yet. There's still a lot of football left to play, and feel free to make a push. We want that in practice."

As a whole, the offense has not been as good as anyone is accustomed to seeing under a Day-led Ohio State team. In recent years, the unit has been the focal point of the team with the defense struggling to keep points off the board. This year has flipped

Continued On Page 6



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# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

the script with Jim Knowles' unit needing to carry the offense at times.

The offense still ranks 20th in the country with 36.0 points per game – and put together arguably its most complete performance in the team's rout of Purdue – but tougher conference opponents with top defenses are coming up on the schedule soon. Day said there are things the offensive line needs to fix, but every position group needs to take some responsibility until the entire offense gets to the point where they want it to be.

Day said the overall execution against the Terrapins wasn't there. There are things he believes he sees on individual plays that are fixable, like using their hands correctly and their pad level, but they will continue working hard to solve their problems.

"We're just going to keep swinging on this thing," he said. "It's one of those things where if you can solve it, it's going to be rewarding, because we're working so hard at

it. But everybody's got to take responsibility."

## Columbus Senator In Favor Of Banning Streaming Games

The debate surrounding streaming-only college football broadcasts has reached the political sphere, with Ohio Sen. Bill DeMora advocating for all public colleges and universities in the state to stop airing their sporting events on paid streaming services.

DeMora, a senator from Columbus who proclaimed himself as one of the biggest Ohio State fans in the legislature, said on Oct. 13 that he is actively searching for solutions to prevent sporting events from airing exclusively through streaming, stating that both fans and local businesses are being "blackmailed" into paying for a subscription for a single game.

Ohio State's tilt with Purdue was available only on Peacock, an NBC-affiliated streaming outlet.

"I've heard from a lot of folks that are pissed off that the local bar doesn't have the game or they have to spend 'X' amount of money to buy one football game on this Peacock network so they can watch Ohio State," DeMora said.

DeMora hopes to introduce legislation that could curb streaming-only games and has asked the Legislative Service Commission to look into the issue. He called streaming services a "pain in the keister" and said he sees an avenue for certain policies to be enacted in the future that will prevent this from happening, specifically stating that publicly-funded schools such as Ohio State should be required to provide fans with a

free and cable-based alternative broadcast.

## Curry Carving Out New Role At Fullback

Sophomore defensive end Caden Curry's role has increased as the season progresses, but he is also now in line to become even more of a weapon on the offensive side of the ball.

Curry, who has recorded five tackles, a tackle for loss and a pass breakup this season while serving mostly as a rotational piece behind fellow edge rushers Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloua, has been used as a fullback in short-yardage situations on offense, paving the way for the running backs to either extend drives on third downs or find the end zone at the goal line.

The Greenwood, Ind., native first lined up behind quarterback Kyle McCord in key situations against Notre Dame and Maryland, with him successfully finding a block for Trayanum on a successful fourth-and-1 rushing attempt in the second half of the game against the Terrapins.

He was then placed in a larger role on offense during Ohio State's blowout victory over Purdue. Curry first appeared at fullback on the Buckeyes' third drive of the game in the first quarter, where he helped springboard McCord past the first-down marker from behind on a quarterback sneak. He made his presence felt again when he provided a block for Hayden on a second-and-goal from the 1-yard line, capping off Ohio State's first drive of the second half with a touchdown.

Ohio State offensive coordinator and

wide receivers coach Brian Hartline said on Oct. 11 that Curry has embraced his new role on offense and has helped elevate the entire unit with his physical and hard-working presence, something that will surely earn him more reps at fullback.

"Caden's awesome," Hartline said. "I think he brings (to the offense) everything he brings defensively. I mean, he's tough. He's willing. He wants to make an impact. He's a joy to be around. I think that we're very happy to have him be a part of our group at times. It really says a lot about him."

Curry said he is happy to be in this expanded role on offense, and it is something he has tried to convince Hartline, Day and the coaching staff to implement throughout the season.

"It's a great time," Curry said on Oct. 11. "I did it in high school, and I'm just doing it again at a higher level, I love it. I've always kind of been teasing (the Ohio State coaches) about how I've always done it a little bit, kind of just throwing it out there, and then they eventually just kind of picked up on it and then it just took off from there."

For Day, having the 6-3, 260-pound Curry serving as a lead blocker for Ohio State's running backs can open up an extra realm of possibilities for his offense. This can bode well for the Buckeyes' unit as they enter the brunt of their Big Ten schedule, which features matchups against more physical defenses such as Penn State and Michigan.

"He's going to see an increased role on defense, but this is something that he can handle," Day said on Oct. 5. "He's a really good football player. And we think he gives



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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."

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us something. I think he's going to be a force for us. We've seen good things in practice that lead us to believe that he'll do a great job."

## Hartline Ready To Call On Tate If Needed

Ohio State's wide receiver room has been hit with injuries this season. Star junior wideouts Marvin Harrison Jr. and Egbuka have both been hampered by lower-body ailments, with Egbuka's ailment keeping him out of the Buckeyes' win over Purdue. This puts the spotlight on younger wideouts, such as Tate, as the season moves forward, who may be seeing an increasing

role at the position if injuries continue to negatively impact the unit.

In a potential scenario where the wide receiver room is thinned, Hartline said he is confident he can count on the first-year Buckeye to take on an expanded role, citing the work and preparation he has put in during practice as reasons that have spurred his confidence.

"I would like to think so," Hartline said on Oct. 11 when asked about Tate's readiness. "I think there's always a handful of guys that are ready to play, just like (Egbuka) and Marvin were back in 2021 for the Rose Bowl. So that's always the goal. You never know until you know, but I think the work that's being

put in throughout the week gives me lots of confidence."

Hartline held to his word against Purdue, when he and Day gave Tate a consid-

erable amount of playing time throughout the game to compensate for the loss of

**Continued On Page 8**



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Continued From Page 7

the inactive Egbuka. He emerged as one of McCord's favorite targets against the Boilermakers, logging a season-high three receptions for 79 yards. Tate's talents especially shone on consecutive plays during the Buckeyes' second touchdown drive of the second half, where he had a key 16-yard gain on third-and-10 then burst through the middle of the field for a 55-yard completion.

Tate's efforts were needed against the Boilermakers, but Hartline indicated that he cannot guarantee that the freshman wideout – or any other younger receiver, for that matter – receives a consistent amount of snaps throughout the season. This is something he admitted he will evaluate on a week-to-week basis based on the personnel available to him and the opponent at hand.

"I always say this when it comes to guys playing," Hartline said. "We don't just rotate the left tackle. We don't rotate the right tackle. We don't rotate the center. We don't rotate the guard. Our responsibility on the perimeter and in the receiver room is to make sure we put the best three guys on the field as much as possible to help our offense. We know we're not going to cater to make people feel good. I want everyone to feel good, but at the end of the day, we owe it to the team, and we owe it to this offense to put the best guys on the field at all times."

### UW AD Dannen Takes Shot At OSU Football Program

New Washington athletic director Troy Dannen has opted to stir the pot with his university's future Big Ten rival, saying in an Oct. 9 interview that Ohio State's football program has failed to meet winning expectations, something that he stated was set by their hefty budget.

In his first ever radio appearance as the Huskies' athletic director, Dannen – who assumed the role on Oct. 7 after eight years at Tulane – told 93.3 KJR in Seattle that athletic programs with large spending budgets have failed to achieve success in the past several years, specifically citing Ohio State as one of the main culprits of that trend.

## BSB Delivery Suffers Setback After Postal Holiday

Buckeye Sports Bulletin mail delivery had been slowly improving, but as feared, it suffered a setback following the postal holiday on Monday, Oct. 9, a day before the issue featuring coverage of the Maryland game was mailed.

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.

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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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"If budgets won championships, Ohio State and Texas would win everything – and they haven't won much lately," he said.

Dannen's interview comes just months after the Big Ten unanimously admitted both Washington and Oregon to the conference, with the two programs set to become the league's 17th and 18th member schools starting on Aug. 2, 2024.

While Dannen took a shot at Ohio State's ballooning budget, both Washington and Oregon were pulled away from the Pac-12 and to the Big Ten partly because the two schools were offered a base payout of \$20 million from the conference's lucrative \$7 billion media rights contract signed with FOX, CBS and NBC that began this season.

According to USA Today, Ohio State's athletics program compiled a total revenue of \$251,615,345 in the 2022-23 athletic season, which ranked first in the nation. Washington had the 25th-highest total revenue in college athletics at \$145,184,864.

### Drone Pilot Arrested After Maryland Game

Ohio State's matchup against Maryland

took a bizarre turn when play was paused just five minutes after kickoff due to an unauthorized drone flying over Ohio Stadium, and the culprit of the stoppage now faces serious legal consequences.

According to Columbus' NBC4, Columbus Police arrested 28-year-old Rigoberto Canaca Escoto of Lawrenceville, Ga., on Oct. 7 on four separate charges, including one count of unsafe operation of an aircraft in a careless or reckless manner, two counts of aircraft operation without a license, one count of inducing panic by committing an offense with reckless regard and one count of disorderly conduct in a physically offensive condition.

Columbus Police reportedly were able to track down Escoto after members of the CPD counterterrorism unit detected the drone and followed it to the Lennox Town Center, a shopping and entertainment hub located near Ohio Stadium.

Court records submitted to the Franklin County Municipal Court show that Escoto told authorities he had purchased the drone at a Best Buy on Oct. 6 with the intention of showing his coworkers and seeing "how far he could fly (it)." But he soon lost control of the device as it made its way toward campus, first to Morrill and Lincoln towers and then Ohio Stadium.

"Rigoberto stated that, while over the crowded stadium, he lost control of the aircraft for a period of approximately three minutes, creating an additional risk of physical harm to all attendees," a CPD detective wrote in his complaint.

The criminal complaint also revealed that Escoto faces charges because he does not possess a TRUST certificate, part of a law created by the Federal Aviation Administration that requires all recreational flyers to pass an aeronautical knowledge and safety test and provide proof of passage if questioned by law enforcement or FAA personnel. The pilot also violated a temporary flight restriction by entering a no-fly zone within a three-mile radius of Ohio Stadium, a rule that is heavily enforced by the FAA during and both one hour before and after athletic events.

According to court records, Escoto had his arraignment at 9 a.m. on Oct. 9. Prior to the date of publication, his legal fate had yet to be determined.

### Harrison, Proctor Earn BIG Player Of The Week Honors

A pair of Buckeyes were recognized for their dominating performances in the team's victory over Maryland, with Harrison and fifth-year safety Josh Proctor selected as Big Ten Players of the Week on Oct. 9.

Harrison, who took home Offensive Player of the Week honors, tallied eight receptions on 13 targets for 163 yards and a touchdown. Both his receptions and yards were season highs, beating his game against Youngstown State when he had seven catches for 160 yards.

Proctor led the way on a defense that continues to put together strong performances. He had seven tackles (six solo), 1½ tackles for loss and a 24-yard pick-six.

Proctor is not the only Silver Bullet to earn Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week nods this season, with safety Lathan Ransom also receiving the honor after a 13-tackle performance in Ohio State's victory over Notre Dame.

### Freshman DE Mickens Loses Black Stripe

Another Buckeye became an official member of the team on Oct. 11, when freshman defensive end Joshua Mickens shed his black stripe.


Mickens, a four-star prospect out of Indianapolis Lawrence Central, has yet to appear in a game for the Buckeyes, though with his black stripe being lost, his Ohio State debut could be on the horizon. In high school, he finished with 74 tackles, 20½ tackles for loss and 6½ sacks as a senior.

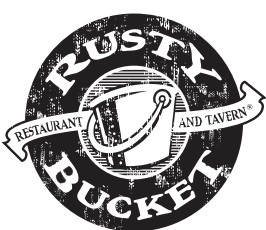
He is the 15th freshman to lose his black stripe and the first since quarterback Lincoln Kienholz and defensive lineman Jason Moore did so on Sept. 28. They are three of five players – along with long snapper John Ferlmann and walk-on safety Brenten Jones – to lose theirs since the season began.

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

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# Buckeyes Start Fast To Pound Boilermakers

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State was banged up at the skill positions and playing in a historically not so-friendly place, but none of that mattered to the fast-starting, third-ranked Buckeyes in a dominant 41-7 win against Purdue in West Lafayette, Ind., on Oct. 14.

Kyle McCord was 16 of 28 for 276 yards and three touchdowns, and Marvin Harrison Jr. had 105 receiving yards and a score while tight end Cade Stover had touchdown catches of 4 and 14 yards to overpower the Boilermakers (2-5, 1-3) at Ross-Ade Stadium before a crowd of 57,319 on a gray and sometimes rainy 56-degree afternoon.

The Buckeyes (6-0, 3-0 Big Ten) led 20-0 at the half to ensure there wouldn't be a repeat of the last visit in 2018 when the unranked Boilermakers stunned then-No. 2 Ohio State, 49-20. Purdue had been 5-3 at home vs. the Buckeyes since 2000.

Ohio State entered the game missing leading rusher TreVeyon Henderson, third-string back Miyan Williams and standout receiver Emeka Egbuka due to injuries before second-string back Chip Trayanum left with an injury late in the first quarter.

Dallan Hayden provided a spark for the running backs with 76 yards and a score on 11 carries.

## Dominant From The Onset

Purdue started from the 25 off the opening kickoff and reeled off 44 yards in nine plays but got nothing when Julio Macias missed a 48-yard field goal. Devin Mockobee ran for 19 yards on the first play, but the drive stalled at the Ohio State 31 when Hudson Card failed to complete a third-and-8.

It was Harrison's show that led the Buckeyes to a 6-0 lead at 9:11. He had three catches for 63 of the 69 yards on the eight-play, 2:43 drive that culminated with his 14-yard TD catch on third-and-6. Harrison had a 15-yard grab on third-and-10 from the Ohio State 31 and later made a gain of 34 yards to the 18. Trayanum then ran for 4 yards, and McCord had an incompletion to Harrison before the score. However, Jayden Fielding missed the extra point.

After forcing a Purdue three-and-out, the Buckeyes went 51 yards in eight plays and 4:06 to take a 13-0 lead at 3:44 thanks to the short-yardage running of backup quarterback Devin Brown. Trayanum had a 10-yard rush to the Purdue 36 followed by Harrison for another 14-yard catch to the 22. Needing a yard on third down from the 13, Brown was inserted and ran 8 yards.

With a new set of downs, McCord handed off to Trayanum for 3 yards, and Brown returned for a 2-yard score and his first career TD. Fielding made the PAT.

Following a Boilermaker punt, Trayanum was injured on the first play, a 9-yard catch to the Ohio State 37. McCord kept

the drive going with a keeper for 2 yards to the Purdue 48, and on the final play of the quarter, Stover's reception of 23 yards put the Buckeyes at the 25.

Hayden entered the backfield carousel and took a handoff for 1 yard but on the next snap ran for 17 to the 7. Brown returned and threw an incompletion. He stayed in and ran to the end zone but fumbled after being hit by Markevious Brown just before crossing the line. The ball was recovered for a touchback by Kydran Jenkins.

Ohio State chewed up the yards following a Purdue three-and-out. Beginning at the 27, Harrison had an 8-yard catch, Hayden ran for 8, Stover made a catch for 12 and Xavier Johnson picked up 9 yards on an end-around to the Purdue 36.

Three plays later, Hayden rushed for 14 yards, and Johnson ran for 15 to the 4 prior to Brown getting nothing on a run. On second down, McCord threw to Harrison for a catch first ruled a touchdown, but he juggled the ball and it was overturned after a review.

No matter. McCord drilled a pass in traffic to Stover for the 4-yard touchdown at 6:02 for the 20-0 lead. The drive took 5:27 with 73 yards gained on 11 plays.

After the Buckeyes' first punt, a 39-yarder by Jesse Mirco, the Boilermakers went on the move from their 30. On the third play, Card scrambled for 13 yards to the Ohio State 43, and Mockobee on the ensuing play raced for 21 yards to the 22. After an incompletion, Mockobee rambled 21 to set up first-and-goal from the 1.

That's where the Buckeyes made a stand.

Tommy Eichenberg tackled Mockobee for a 1-yard loss. A holding penalty moved the Boilermakers back to the 12 where on second down, Denzel Burke broke up a pass in the end zone intended for Jayden Dixon-Veal.

On third down, Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloua collaborated on a 10-yard sack, and Macias missed a 39-yard field goal with two seconds left.

Ohio State outgained Purdue 269-120 with almost a perfectly balanced attack of 136 yards rushing and 133 passing yards. Harrison had five catches for 85 yards.

## Putting It Away

Johnson helped the Buckeyes start the second half with a bang through a 26-yard kickoff return to the 33. Julian Fleming got 9 yards with a catch and Johnson added 21 with his reception to the Purdue 37. Pass interference on a throw to Fleming placed the ball on the 22.

Hayden burst through for 19 to the 3. After an incomplete throw to Harrison, Fleming drew another pass interference, setting Ohio State at the 2. Hayden gained 1 yard then carried the ball across from there on the next play for a 27-0 advantage. The series used six plays to go 67 yards in 2:30.

Purdue responded, aided by a 35-yard catch to the Ohio State 32 by Mershawn

Rice. On fourth-and-9, Lathan Ransom was flagged for pass interference, moving the ball to the 16. There was an incompletion, a run for 6 yards by Deion Burks and then a rush for no gain by Dylan Downing on third down. Boilermakers first-year coach Ryan Walters opted for a 27-yard field goal to the boos of the remaining Purdue fans, and Macias missed again with 7:35 left in the third.

The Buckeyes didn't take long to go up 34-0 thanks to a 14-yard scoring catch by Stover at 4:36. It looked bleak for a moment, but on third-and-10 from the OSU 20, freshman Carnell Tate caught a 16-yarder from McCord. After a delay of game infraction, the second of the game, Tate had a 55-yard catch-and-run to the 14. The score came on the next play as McCord went 3 for 3 for 85 yards on the five-play drive that consumed 2:59.

Ohio State gifted the Boilermakers a scoring chance, and they took advantage to make it 34-7 just 30 seconds into the fourth quarter on a 6-yard pass from Card to Burks.

The possession began at the Ohio State 20 after McCord was strip-sacked by Nic Scourton with Yanni Karlaftis recovering the fumble.

Two incompletions and a third-down run of 3 by Mockobee ended the third quarter. On fourth-and-7 from the 17, T.J. Sheffield caught a pass at the 2, and a

Sawyer roughing-the-passer penalty set the ball at the 1. Card threw an incompletion and a false start backed Purdue to the 6, but the next snap resulted in six points.

Freshman receiver Brandon Inniss made his first career catch memorable, making it 41-7 on a 58-yard toss from Brown at 7:35 on the third play of a 64-yard possession in 1:23.

Ohio State had one more series and Purdue two, with the final starting at its own 18 with 37 seconds left. The Boilermakers ran one play for a 2-yard loss.

## Notes

Stover had four catches for 53 yards and Tate three for 79. Inniss had one TD catch. ... Johnson ran for 39 yards on five carries. ... Brown netted 20 yards rushing on eight carries and completed 1 of 2 for 58 yards. ... Card went 13 of 32 for 126 yards and a TD. ... Mockobee gained 110 yards on 18 carries. ... Ohio State totaled 486 yards (334 passing, 152 rushing). Purdue had 257 (134 passing, 123 rushing). ... Ohio State was 8 of 13 on third down; Purdue 3 of 17. ... Each team had three sacks. ... Sawyer and Tuimoloua both had 1½ sacks. ... Cody Simon had five solos and three assisted tackles; Eichenberg also had eight (four solo).

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# Hayden Answers Call After Injuries To RBs

Continued From Page 1

But we knew that the next guy up was going to tote the ball well.”

The bright spotlights of Ross-Ade Stadium, which housed 57,319 fans – many of whom donned scarlet and gray – suddenly shone on Ohio State’s oft-forgotten running backs, with Hayden thrust into significant action after barely seeing the field over the first five weeks of the season and Pryor also getting his first carries in several weeks.

But instead of looking rusty, Ohio State’s rushing attack looked as refreshed as it had all season, finishing with 152 yards and averaging 3.9 yards per attempt. That jumps up to 6.5 yards per carry (143 yards on 22 attempts) when accounting for only the totes of Hayden, Trayanum and utility man Xavier Johnson, the latter finishing with five rushes for 39 yards and a 21-yard reception.

“We just saw looks that we liked, and we put in a lot of work during the week to try to correct the mistakes we had earlier on in the year,” Jackson said of the improved rushing attack. “We just tried to put it on the field. It’s good if you do it in practice, but it’s even better to do it on the field. So that’s what we were trying to aim for today.”

Hayden showed no signs of complacency after mostly riding the bench this season, going for a 1-yard gain on his first carry before ripping off runs of 17, 8, 3 and 14 yards in the second quarter. He added another 19-yard gain in the third and his first touchdown of the season on a 1-yard rush with 12:24 left in the third to put Ohio State up 27-0.

“Coach Day and Coach Alford told me to stay ready because they didn’t know if my number was going to get called,” Hayden

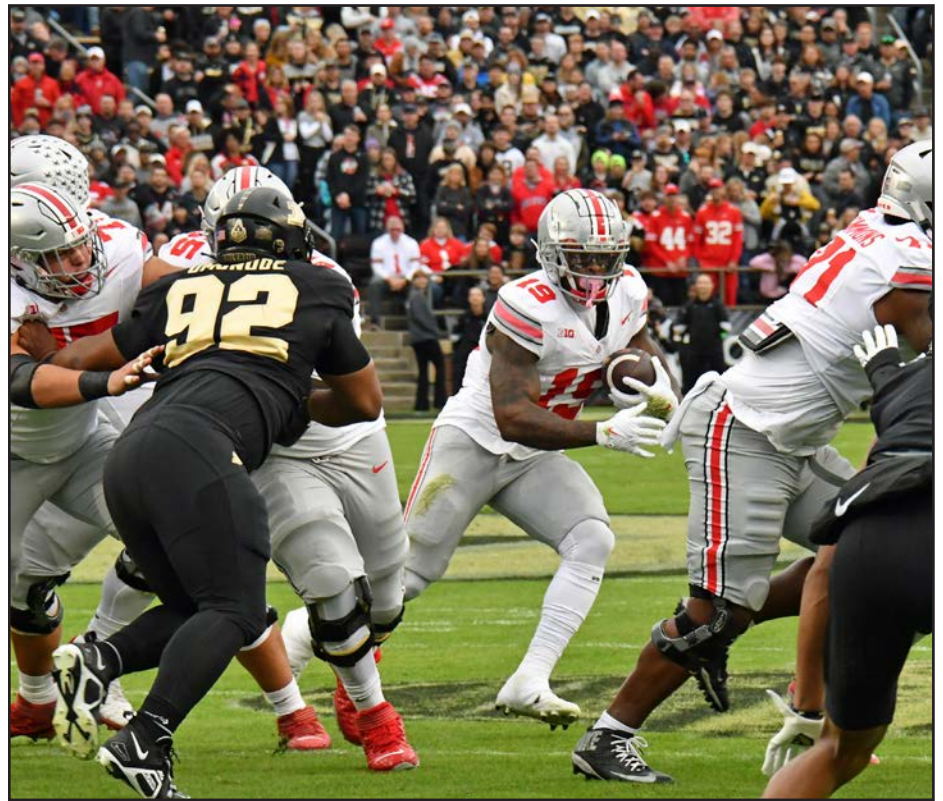
said, “and we go by competitive stamina at Ohio State, so it means if your number’s called, make a play.”

He wound up making plenty of plays, finishing with 76 yards on 11 carries with an average of 6.9 yards per attempt, surpassed only by Johnson’s 7.8 yards per tote. While it may not have been the most impressive statistical outing by an Ohio State running back this season, Hayden’s hard-nosed nature – often seeking out contact and fighting for those extra yards – stuck out as a particularly gritty performance when the team needed it most.

“Dallan trains hard,” Jackson said. “Even in the offseason, when there were a couple guys in front of him, he didn’t slack off. He worked hard. And we preach competitive excellence, that when your number is called, you make the play. And his number was called today, and he shined out for us.”

While Day was presumably happy to see Hayden succeed, it must have been partially begrudging. When pressed earlier in the week on why Hayden, who had 553 yards and five touchdowns during his freshman season, had appeared in just one game heading into the matchup with Purdue and had not even carried the ball, Day said it was in a conscious attempt to preserve a year of eligibility.

“We talked about it in the preseason, going into the season,” Day said on Oct. 11. “We didn’t want to put Dallan in a situation where, with three running backs, we were going to use up a year of eligibility for him. He’s ready to go. He’s practicing. If appropriate, we’ll put him in the game. But we don’t want to have him play in five or six games without a bunch of work. We don’t think that’s the right thing to do for Dallan.”



SONNY BROCKWAY

**HOLD THE CHIPS** – Ohio State was without running back Chip Trayanum (19) for the majority of its 41-7 win at Purdue on Oct. 14 after he suffered an injury following a 9-yard reception late in the first quarter.

With two games under his belt now – he can play up to four without burning his redshirt – and the health of Ohio State’s other running backs still in question, with Day declining to update the status of Henderson, Trayanum or Williams after the game, the coach said the team will continue to monitor whether to maintain Hayden’s redshirt.

“We’ve got to look and see what that room’s looking like, and we’ll play it week to week,” Day said. “We didn’t know how the season was going to play out, but we want to at least have the choice to be able to save his redshirt, if possible, but we’ll sit down and talk if it’s something that we’ve got to play and do what’s best for the team and

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there's opportunities to go play, then we'll go from there."

And whether it's Hayden, any of the three injured running backs or even Pryor who needs to take the field against Penn State – and potentially beyond – the team feels comfortable with whoever might step in for the Buckeyes.

"That's one of the deepest rooms we have in the country," quarterback Devin Brown said. "All five of those guys can go out there and make plays, so no matter who's out there, they're going to be a good player."

And an added benefit of the rejuvenated rushing attack was that it opened up everything for the offense that has, at times this season, struggled to find a rhythm either through the air or on the ground. Ohio State found plenty of success on play-action opportunities, including the second of tight end Cade Stover's two touchdown receptions.

It also helped McCord get into an early groove, completing eight of his first 13 passes and finishing with 276 yards and a trio of touchdowns. But the common factor between the rushing attack and McCord's success was the improved play of the offensive line, at least relative to how the unit has performed in other games this season.

While the offensive line did still collect a holding call on left tackle Josh Simmons – one which Day made his displeasure with clear on the sideline in an intense conversation with the San Diego State transfer – and a false start on right tackle Luke Montgomery later in the contest, it was overall one of the unit's stronger outings.

Purdue did not collect a sack until late in the third quarter – albeit one that resulted in a fumble by McCord – and the offensive line mostly held up with the game in the balance, keeping McCord clean and creating open lanes for the running backs. Hayden, the chief recipient of the offensive line's blocking efforts, felt the impact of an improved performance.

"The offensive line did a great job today," he said. "They were getting movement off the ball, rocking off the ball, so it made my job a little easier."

Day saw improvement as well, feeling after the game that the unit is moving in the right direction with bigger challenges coming up.

"I think they came off the field with a bunch of energy and finished off some drives and we ran the ball hard, we got downhill, we created some play-action passes where guys were open down the field," he said. "I felt on the sideline like we were knocking people off the ball at times. I felt like our running backs were running hard. Now, whether that shows up on film, I've got to go take a look at it. But you saw a good demeanor out there."

### Up Next

This type of performance – not just for the offense, but a continued dominance for the defense – is just what the doctor ordered for Ohio State heading into the team's most important game of the season (so far), with the team set to host Penn State for a noon kickoff on Oct. 21.

Both teams enter undefeated, boasting 6-0 records and rankings within the top seven of the AP top 25, with the Buckeyes entering at No. 3 and the Nittany Lions at No. 7. While not every win has been in dominating fashion, the most recent victory over the Boilermakers is about as complete as Ohio State has looked this season, and the team is hoping to carry that momentum into a game with both conference and national implications.

"It's huge," Brown said. "It's good to get this momentum going, this confidence going on this team. We know we have a big one ahead of us, so we just have to keep rolling."

The ugly nature of some of Ohio State's wins this season – slogs such as Indiana and Maryland or a nail-biter like Notre Dame – has Day feeling the team is prepared given that it has already been in battles through the first six games.

"There's been some times where our starters hadn't been in four quarters halfway through the season," he said. "That's not the

case in this situation. We've just got to keep pushing and keep growing. We're certainly a work in progress, and we're continuing to grow and build, and we're going to have to be at our best football next Saturday."

Ohio State has won the last six games against Penn State, including last season in a 44-31 win off the performance of defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau, who broke out with six tackles, three tackles for loss, two sacks and two interceptions, returning the second for a touchdown. With the Nittany Lions now coming into Ohio Stadium, he's looking forward to another crack at Penn State.

"(I'm looking forward to) just doing it for my brothers," he said. "Having fun, really. Not really going out there to make plays but just letting everything come to you. We work so hard, and I know it's going to be a great game, so we've just got to go out and play our game and trust in the Lord and continue to stay levelheaded."

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# Defense Continues To Bend But Not Break

For the first 45 minutes of Ohio State's 41-7 win over Purdue on Oct. 14, the Buckeye defense had a shutout in mind. But Purdue finally got on the board just 30 seconds into the final frame when quarterback Hudson Card found wide receiver Deion Burks for a 6-yard touchdown, ending Ohio State's hopes to finish the game with a zero on the scoreboard.

## GAME NOTEBOOK Greg Wilson

"We really wanted a shutout," defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau said. "That was our main goal, and when they scored we were kind of like, 'Dang, we were so close in our first shutout.' But to hold them to seven points – I know we could have held them to a shutout, so there's still a lot of things we can improve on, but we've got to celebrate the win."

The very first drive of the game, it looked as if the Boilermakers were going to get themselves on the board, taking the ball nine plays for 44 yards and a field-goal attempt. Purdue kicker Julio Macias missed a long 48-yard attempt to keep the score at zeroes all around, and it would be more of the same throughout the contest with three misses by Macias on the afternoon.

After the miss in the first quarter, the Buck-

eye defense forced four consecutive punts from the Boilermakers, with the defensive line showing up in a big way that they had yet to this season. Ends Tuimoloau and Jack Sawyer both had 1½ sacks in the game, and tackle Ty-leik Williams had two stops for a loss and two pass breakups at the line of scrimmage.

With Omari Abor, Mike Hall Jr., Tywone Malone, Kayden McDonald, Jaden McKenzie and Mitchell Melton each adding one tackle, the defensive line group combined for 14 tackles, six tackles for loss and three sacks, as well as three pass breakups.

Purdue worked down the field at the end of the second quarter, with running back Devin Mockobee gaining 21 yards to get within inches of the end zone, but after another run for a 1-yard loss and a holding penalty, Tuimoloau and Sawyer teamed up for a 10-yard sack that took the Boilermakers back to the 22-yard line followed by a miss from Macias, just another example of the defense – even if an opponent is able to sustain a drive – continuing to fight.

"It starts with our leaders on defense," head coach Ryan Day said. "There's a lot of guys who have been in a lot of battles before, so they've got to bring it, and they keep fighting and they're making teams get all the way into the end zone. They're fighting down to the 1-, 2-yard line and continuing to fight like that, and that's a good sign."

### Backup Brown Enters As Red Zone Quarterback

The Ohio State offense was marching

down the field easily in the first quarter, scoring on the first drive of the game with the help of the connection between Kyle McCord and Marvin Harrison. The two connected for 63 yards together and a touchdown on the drive to put the Buckeyes up 6-0 after the extra point was missed by Jayden Fielding.

It was more of the same on the second drive, with the Buckeyes getting into the red zone with ease. But this time around, backup quarterback Devin Brown came off of the sideline along with Xavier Johnson, replacing McCord and Harrison. Brown said he knew this was the game plan going into the game and he was ready for the new role.

"We game planned it all week," he said. "I knew going in that it was going to be a possibility, and they just kept hammering into me to protect the ball and get ready to go."

Brown ran the ball and picked up 8 yards to get the first down on his first play in the game. The next was an option he handed off to Chip Trayanum which took Ohio State down to the 2-yard line. Brown took the next snap and faked a handoff to Trayanum, taking the ball himself and bowling over two Boilermaker defenders to fall into the end zone for his first rushing touchdown as a Buckeye.

"It's great," Brown said. "It's always a good feeling to go out there and help your team, especially score."

The same thing happened the next drive with McCord taking the Buckeyes into the red zone before Brown took over. After his first pass to tight end Gee Scott Jr. fell incomplete,

Brown then carried the ball and dived into the end zone on the next play, but the ball was knocked out by Markevious Brown and recovered by Purdue to keep a touchdown off the board.

"We can't turn the ball over on the 1-yard line," Day said. "In a close game that could have been the difference."

Brown had one more rush when the game was within reach for Purdue, coming in on the Buckeyes' next appearance in the red zone, but he wasn't able to make it past the line of scrimmage. McCord replaced him on the next play, ending the drive with a 4-yard touchdown pass to tight end Cade Stover and putting the Buckeyes up 20-0.

Day said the weather at the beginning of the game factored into his decision to ultimately put Brown in the game and try out what they had worked on in practice.

"We started off with the weather," he said. "There was rain, there was wind. We certainly didn't want to have the same situation that happened last year (against Northwestern) and wanted to make sure that we had a good plan. Devin is very explosive with his feet. He's strong, he's big, he's powerful, he's athletic, and we feel like he gives us a little bit of something there."

McCord has stayed in the pocket for most of the year, going through his reads and throwing the ball away when there's no options. Brown believes he presents a very different type of threat that defenses have to respect and come to with a different approach.

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# Game Analysis

## What Worked Well

Getting off the field will be of the utmost importance against teams such as Penn State, Wisconsin and Michigan coming up on the schedule, and in the 41-7 win at Purdue on Oct. 14, Ohio State's defense allowed the Boilermakers to convert on just three of their 17 third-down conversions (17.6 percent), by far the lowest by Jim Knowles' unit all season. Ohio State held Purdue behind the sticks early and often at Ross-Ade Stadium, a trend that forced quarterback Hudson Card and his offense to settle for attempted field goals, all three of which would result in Julio Macias misses.

The first of the key third-down stops for the Buckeyes occurred on the very first drive of the game. With Card and Purdue looking like they were going to take the early lead and ignite a potential upset, the defense held their own in Ohio State territory, forcing an incompleteness on third-and-8 to set up an eventual 48-yard attempt from Macias, which he would miss wide left. The unit would also show their "bend-but-don't-break" attitude during another promising Boilermaker drive at the end of the second quarter when defensive ends J.T. Tuimoloau and Jack Sawyer combined for a sack on Card, a huge stop that not only stymied a 10-play, 48-yard drive for Purdue, but also resulted in Macias' second miss. Purdue would fail to move the chains on six of its seven third-down attempts in the first half, a dominating performance, the type of which the unit could use to their advantage against Penn State.

## What Didn't Work

While there has been a lot of talk surrounding Ohio State's lack of efficiency on offense, mainly on short-yardage situations, there has been another glaring weakness on the team that has not been discussed enough this season, that being the repeated miscues on special teams. Those issues would continue to rear their ugly head in West Lafayette, Ind. The string of special teams mistakes began after Ohio State's first touchdown drive of the game, when kicker Jayden Fielding, who had been reliable all season, hooked an extra point, his first miss of the season on either a field-goal or extra-point try.

This was not expected coming into the contest, but what was

anticipated was the Buckeyes' incompetence on punt returns. With the Buckeyes turning to wide receiver Jayden Ballard to relieve the inactive Emeka Egbuka as punt returner, the Buckeyes still failed to get any type of positive yardage, recording no punt-return yards, though Xavier Johnson did return two kickoffs for 49 yards. This lack of production from the punt-return team was only compounded by a string of penalties on special teams, where punter Jesse Mirco was issued a delay of game 5-yard penalty in the fourth quarter, only to be followed by another 5-yard illegal snap foul on long snapper John Ferlmann the very next play of the game. Ohio State can get away with these types of mistakes against lesser opponents such as Purdue, but it will surely pay for them as it plays against better teams down the stretch.

## Play Of The Game

There were many plays on offense that may have been deserving of this recognition, but there was a key defensive play that kept the Buckeyes in control of the game. With Purdue facing a 20-0 deficit with 2:02 remaining in the first half, the Boilermakers would embark on an extended 10-play, 48-yard drive that would put them in prime position to regain some momentum into halftime. Led by Card and running back Devin Mockobee, the Boilermakers would make it all the way to the Buckeyes' 1-yard line, threatening to trim the deficit to just two scores. But Ohio State's defense would buckle down. Facing second-and-goal from the 2-yard line, the Boilermakers were prevented from crossing the goal line thanks to a 1-yard tackle for loss from linebacker Tommy Eichenberg, a 10-yard Purdue holding penalty and a key pass deflection from cornerback Denzel Burke. With the Boilermakers now staring at a third-and-goal from the 12-yard line, they would once again be backed up due to the biggest defensive play of the game, where Sawyer and Tuimoloau both collapsed Card's pocket and corralled him down to the ground for a touchdown-preventing, 10-yard joint sack. This brought Purdue all the way back to Ohio State's 22-yard line, leading Ohio State to not only preserve the first-half shutout, but end Purdue's chances of staying in the game on the very next play thanks to yet another missed field goal from Macias.

— Patrick Engels

"I think they have to honor me," he said. "When I go into the game, they're instantly like, '33 is in.' As soon as I get in there, they're thinking I'm running or something like that, but I can also hurt them with the pass game as well."

Brown also came in toward the end of the game when Day pulled out the starters. He threw a 58-yard touchdown to Brandon Inniss with 7:35 left in the fourth quarter for the 41-7 final, and it was the first reception and touchdown of Inniss' career.

"As soon as I saw it was cover zero, I knew I had Brandon right there and just made a good play," Brown said. "It just builds confidence, especially him being a younger guy. Now he knows he can go out there and do it against high-level teams, and he just has to keep doing it every week."

## Third Downs Not A Problem For Offense

Early in the season, the Buckeyes had major issues when it came to converting on late downs, especially in short-yardage situations.

That was not an issue against the Boilermakers, as they went 8 of 13 on third-down attempts, and those they did not convert mostly came late in the third quarter and beyond when the game had already been decided.

"Third downs are a huge point of emphasis," offensive lineman Donovan Jackson said. "We drill the situations in practice, and we knew that on third down, we had to get our op-

portunities, had to get our looks, and I'm glad we executed on it today."

It had been a long time coming after going 25 of 63 on third down in their previous five games, a 39.6 percent conversion rate. Against Purdue, they converted on each of their first six tries, including Stover's first touchdown.

There were only three instances in this game when the Buckeyes faced third-and-3 or less, and they converted on all three by running the ball, with quarterback keepers by Brown and McCord as well as a 3-yard rush by Hayden early in the second quarter. Overall, Brown thought the running game was very effective against the Boilermakers.

"Our biggest thing on away games is we have to run the football and stop the run," he said. "We went out there and did that. We finally put a great game together, and it felt good."

Knowing the team is able to open up holes and push for 1 yard has to be a breath of fresh air for the Buckeyes after the struggles they've been through, but tougher defenses are on the horizon, with Penn State coming up Oct. 21.

"It's going to be a great matchup," Jackson said. "They're a very talented squad. We're just looking forward to having a great week of practice and preparation."

## McCord Has Big Performance In Win

Slow starts have been a problem all season for Ohio State – and by extension, McCord – but the Buckeyes' start was anything but

against Purdue, with McCord leading the way.

The Buckeyes made it into the red zone on four of their five drives in the first half and would have had a touchdown in each of those four had Brown not fumbled at the goal line on his dive into the end zone. McCord said that early success was huge for the Buckeyes later in the game, allowing them to play with a comfortable lead.

"We just made that a point of emphasis this week, starting fast in practice, and I think that definitely translated to the game," he said. "We weren't perfect by any means but got out and put some points on the board. The defense did a good job. We just have to continue to build on that."

He finished the game with 16 completions on 28 attempts and was able to connect with his pass catchers for three touchdowns, finding Stover twice and Harrison once on the Buckeyes' first drive of the game.

"That's sweet for him to get all of the attention he gets and still be able to put up numbers regardless of what they're trying to do to him," McCord said of Harrison.

It wasn't McCord's highest yardage total of the season, but there was never a moment when it did not feel like he was in control of the offense despite Day taking him out in the red zone for Brown. McCord did fumble late in the game, giving the Boilermakers the ball back in a 34-0 game when a pair of defenders slipped through the offensive line, but overall McCord was happy with the play of the line in

front of him, saying they allowed him to play a good game.

"Up front today there were a lot of one-on-one blocks across the board, especially in pass protection," he said. "I think they did a really good job and gave me enough time on the field, and teams are going to continue to try to do that to us. It's a good sign that we can handle it."

Going into the game against No. 7 Penn State, McCord said he feels he's ready for the challenge of another top-ranked team.

"That was the goal coming into the season, 6-0, and obviously a big test next week, so we're going to continue to prepare, and we know what it's going to be next week," he said.

## Stover Makes Impact In Passing Game

Stover ended with only four catches, but he was able to turn that into 53 yards and two touchdowns, yet again acting as McCord's safety net when he wasn't able to hit his first read.

Day was impressed with his first catch at the end of the first quarter, when McCord threw a contested back-shoulder pass that Stover was able to come down with, and his later touchdown grab to cap off an 11-play drive in the second quarter.

"He did a nice job snatching the ball quickly on the touchdown pass," Day said. "The ball was thrown a little bit outside of his frame, and he snatched it hard with his hands."

With wideout Emeka Egbuka out of the game, Stover's availability in the passing game was important for McCord. Day said Stover's presence on the offense is essential to both the passing and running game.

"He does a lot for us," Day said. "He does a lot of the dirty work for us in the run game, and then that creates play-action passes. He's a great captain, and he's a weapon for us, both in the run game and in the pass game."

Stover is up to 359 yards and three touchdowns for the season. This was his second multi-touchdown game of his college career, the first coming last season in a win over Indiana.

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## BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 41, Purdue 7

**Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on if his team needed to start fast:** "Yeah, sure, especially this game, this place. Everyone was talking about some of the games that happened in the past, 2018 in particular, and we all know we have a big game next week. Some people call it a trap game, and looking at the weather four or five days ago, you look at it and you say, 'Going to have visions of Northwestern last year.' We had to have a plan for that, but I talked to the team all week about how if you want to be a championship team, you've got to bring competitive stamina, competitive excellence, you've got to bring it every week. That's playing in the Big Ten."

**Junior offensive lineman Donovan Jackson on how the fast start ignited the offense:** "Well, whenever you stay on schedule, ahead of the sticks, you can run your offense properly. There are not a lot of first-and-20 calls that turn out successful. So if we can just keep the ball in front of the sticks and just maintain momentum, it's always the game plan."

**Jackson on how senior running back Chip Trayanum's injury affected the offensive line:** "As an offensive line, our philosophy is that it doesn't matter who's back there. It could be, I don't know, name a slow person, but our goal is just to make the best possible opportunities for the guy when we're holding the ball."

**Junior quarterback Kyle McCord on sophomore running back Dallan Hayden's performance:** "The running back room showed that last year and again this year, just how deep they are. Dallan stepped up, and I think he did a really, really good job. Obviously it stinks that Chip got pretty banged up there, but next man up mentality, and Dallan was ready for it."

**Day on the team's running game:** "I feel much better about the way we ran the ball, although we were down three running backs in the game, so that certainly did play a factor in all of this. Then Evan (Pryor) went in the game, we took Marvin (Harrison Jr.) out, took Cade (Stover) out in that stretch, so it was a job well done. But there's always things we have to get better at. We're certainly a work in progress and we're continuing to grow and build, and we're going to have to be at our best football next Saturday (vs. Penn State)."

**Day on what went into the decision to play sophomore quarterback Devin Brown:** "Devin's doing everything for the first time just like Kyle was doing, so I'm glad we were able to do that in this moment here, get him going with that. It was good he took a couple shots. I'm sure he'll be sore, but I thought he threw a nice ball. They loaded up the box, and we took a shot down there to Brandon (Inniss). That was good to get under his belt. To make that throw, that was a big-time throw. So we'll keep looking at it, keep building his package, because we do feel like it gives us a little bit of a different change-up."

**Brown on his favorite touchdown of the day:** "The rushing touchdown felt a little bit better because it was my first rushing touchdown in college. It felt good to lower my shoulder and get one in."

**McCord on Brown's performance:** "He got some good time today, and I think he did a really good job with it. He's a threat with his feet, and he made a really sweet pass there at the end. It's just the type of player he is, just a complete quarterback."

**Day on his defense's bend-but-don't-break approach:** "The defense, man, the ball goes down to the 1-yard line and they just keep fighting, just

keep playing. Great job. And then Purdue gets the (holding penalty), and then we hang in there and they miss the field goal (late in the first half). It was like, 'Wow.' "

**Purdue head coach Ryan Walters on his offense's missed opportunities:** "It kills you from a momentum standpoint. Our offense was moving the ball that last drive going into halftime. It really shouldn't have gotten to a point where we're kicking a field goal, though. We had the ball on the inch line and went backward. So we wanted to get points on the board to get some momentum – missed the kick."

**Junior defensive end J.T. Tuimolou on how the defense and offense play off each other:** "We've got a little secret in the locker room, but it's really just the energy. It's not really offense, defense, it's just us as a whole as the Buckeyes. The offense comes to us to say, 'Hey, have fun no matter what, we've got your back.' We go to them and say the same thing. It just allows us to play free and also not to worry about anything."

**Day on how his team shapes up heading into the Penn State matchup:** "I know Coach (Jim) Knowles and the defensive coaches are going to see things they want to get better at and keep growing because they know the challenges are going to be bigger and bigger, so the issues are there. They have to be addressed on both sides of the ball, all three phases. We've got to keep doing that. We know we're near where we need to be, but that's part of growing. You want to be playing your best football at the end of the season. You find a way to go 1-0 on Saturday, and that's the goal. We know we've got a big challenge ahead of us, and the preparation starts now."

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# The Numbers Game

## Ohio State 41, Purdue 7

Oct. 14, 2023 - Ross-Ade Stadium, West Lafayette, Ind.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
<b>OHIO STATE</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>PURDUE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>

### First Quarter

**OSU** - Harrison Jr., 14-yard pass from McCord (Fielding kick missed), 9:11.

**OSU** - Brown, 2-yard rush (Fielding kick), 3:44.

### Second Quarter

**OSU** - Stover, 4-yard pass from McCord (Fielding kick), 6:02.

### Third Quarter

**OSU** - Hayden, 1-yard rush (Fielding kick), 12:24.

**OSU** - Stover, 14-yard pass from McCord (Fielding kick), 4:36.

### Fourth Quarter

**PUR** - Burks, 6-yard pass from Card (Krockover kick), 14:30.

**OSU** - Inniss, 58-yard pass from Brown (Fielding kick), 7:35.

Att. - 57,319

Weather - Cloudy, 56 F

### Team Statistics

	OSU	PUR
<b>First Downs</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Rushing</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Passing</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Penalty</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Rushes-Yards</b>	<b>39-152</b>	<b>35-123</b>
<b>Passing Yards</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)</b>	<b>17-30-0</b>	<b>14-35-0</b>
<b>Offensive Plays</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Total Net Yards</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>Third Down Efficiency</b>	<b>8-13</b>	<b>3-17</b>
<b>Fourth Down Efficiency</b>	<b>0-0</b>	<b>2-3</b>
<b>Punts-Avg.</b>	<b>4-45.0</b>	<b>7-37.9</b>
<b>Fumbles-Lost</b>	<b>2-2</b>	<b>0-0</b>
<b>Penalties</b>	<b>9-51</b>	<b>5-41</b>
<b>Time of Possession</b>	<b>32:21</b>	<b>27:33</b>

### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) - OSU:** Hayden 11-76; Johnson 5-39; Trayanum 6-28; Brown 8-20; Pryor 3-2; Team 1-(-2); McCord 5-(-11). **PUR:** Mockabee 18-110; Downing 11-18; Burks 1-6; Lewellen 1-(-2); Card 4-(-9).

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) - OSU:** McCord 16-28-0-276-3; Brown 1-2-0-58-1. **PUR:** Card 13-32-0-126-1; Meredith 1-3-0-8-0.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) - OSU:** Harrison Jr. 6-105; Stover 4-53; Tate 3-79; Inniss 1-58; Johnson 1-21; Fleming 1-9; Trayanum 1-9. **PUR:** Rice 3-50; Burks 3-22; Sheffield 2-24; Miller 2-10; Dixon-Veal 1-8; Downing 1-8; Tibbs 1-8; Canion 1-4.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) - OSU:** Mirco 4-45.0-53. **PUR:** Ansell 7-37.9-48.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - OSU:** Ballard 1-0. **PUR:** Sheffield 1-13.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - OSU:** Johnson 2-49. **PUR:** Mockabee 2-38.

**FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) - OSU:** None. **PUR:** Jenkins 1-0; Karlaftis 1-0.

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

**SACKS - OSU:** Sawyer 1.5-12; Tuimolouau 1.5-12. **PUR:** Jenkins 1-10; Scourton 1-9; M'ba 1-4.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) - OSU:** Williams 2-2; Sawyer 1.5-12; Tuimolouau 1.5-12; Melton 1-2; Eichenberg 1-1; Simon 1-1; Malone 0.5-1; McDonald 0.5-1. **PUR:** Jenkins 1-10; Scourton 1-9; Brothers 1-4; Heldt 1-4; M'ba 1-4; Anderson 0.5-1; Sydnor 0.5-1.

**TACKLES (Solo-Assst.-Tot.) - OSU:** Simon 5-3-8; Eichenberg 4-4-8; Hancock 4-0-4; Igbinosun 3-1-4; Chambers 2-2-4; Burke 3-0-3; Williams 2-1-3; Sawyer 2-1-3; Ransom 2-1-3; Styles 1-2-3; Carter 1-2-3; Mathews Jr. 2-0-2; Proctor 1-1-2; Tuimolouau 1-1-2; Hartford 0-2-2; Hall Jr. 1-0-1; Melton 1-0-1; McKenzie 0-1-1; Hicks 0-1-1; Abor 0-1-1; McDoald 0-1-1; Malone 0-1-1. **PUR:** Karlaftis 6-3-9; Thieneman 4-5-9; Brown 5-1-6; Kane 4-2-6; Allen 2-3-5; Brothers 2-2-4; Jenkins 2-1-3; Scourton 2-1-3; Alisandro 1-2-3; Brevard 2-0-2; Omonode -0-2; Washington 1-1-2; Anderson 1-1-2; Heldt 0-2-2; Rogers Jr. 1-0-1; Stevens 1-0-1; M'ba 1-0-1; Krockover 0-1-1; Sydnor 0-1-1.

**PLAYERS IN THE GAME - OSU:** Johnson, Harrison Jr., Trayanum, Fleming, Jones, McCord, Fryar, Simmons, Jackson, Hinzman, Stover, Igbinosun, Burke, Chambers, Sawyer, Eichenberg, Proctor, Tuimolouau, Hall Jr., Styles, Ransom, Williams, Inniss, Hicks, Carter, Tate, Melton, Pryor, Abor, Mathews Jr., Hartford, Mirco, Simon, Jones, Brown, Powers, Fielding, Ferlmann, Gurd, Hayden, Montgomery, McDonald, Hamilton, Michalski, Vimahi, Hancock, Tshabola, James, Adolph, Scott Jr., Ballard, McKenzie, Curry, Malone, Jackson Jr. **PUR:** Dixon-Veal, Card, Burks, Mockabee, Nichols, Hartwig, Farrell, Grant, Moussa, Sheffield, Miller, Brown, Allen, Rogers Jr., Karlaftis, Kane, Thieneman, Langham, Jenkins, Scourton, Brevard, Nichols, M'ba, Stevens, Tibbs, Heldt, Meredith, Alisandro, Downing, Brown, Sowinski, Firestone, Lewellen, Ansell, Jefferson II, Van Noord, Krockover, Furtney, Washington, Macias, Cropsey, Canion, Kpaka, Kaltenberger, Steptoe, Johnson, Griffin, Brothers, Burhenn, Biber, Rice, Omonode, Anderson, Sydnor, Taylor.

## 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	W, 41-7	57,319	
Oct. 21	(3) PENN STATE (7)	12 p.m.		
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.		

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

### Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
<b>First Downs</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Rushing</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Passing</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Penalty</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Average Per Game/Rush</b>	<b>135.0</b>	<b>109.2</b>
<b>Average Per Game/Pass</b>	<b>308.0</b>	<b>154.3</b>
<b>Total Offense</b>	<b>2658</b>	<b>1581</b>
<b>Total Plays</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>395</b>
<b>Average Per Game</b>	<b>443.0</b>	<b>263.5</b>
<b>Average Per Play</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Penalties-Yards</b>	<b>40-313</b>	<b>33-316</b>
<b>Fumbles-Lost</b>	<b>5-3</b>	<b>6-2</b>
<b>Third Down Efficiency</b>	<b>33-75</b>	<b>31-91</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Fourth Down Efficiency</b>	<b>8-13</b>	<b>6-16</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Sacks-Yards</b>	<b>10-73</b>	<b>10-63</b>
<b>Time Of Possession Avg.</b>	<b>28:47</b>	<b>31:12</b>

### Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
<b>Ohio State</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>36.0</b>
<b>Opponents</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>9.7</b>

### Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
T. Henderson	44	295	6.7	5	61
Chip Trayanum	51	235	4.6	3	40
Miyan Williams	25	96	3.8	2	11
Dallan Hayden	11	76	6.9	1	19
Xavier Johnson	10	64	6.4	0	15
Devin Brown	17	30	1.8	1	8
Emeka Egbuka	4	21	5.3	0	9
Evan Pryor	6	14	2.3	0	6
Marvin Harrison Jr.	1	7	7.0	0	7
Cody Simon	1	-3	-3.0	0	0
Kyle McCord	18	-21	-1.2	0	9
Team	2	-4	-2.0	0	0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>810</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Kyle McCord	109	170	64.1	1651	11-1	165.9
Devin Brown	12	22	54.5	197	2-1	150.7
Team	0	1	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>1848</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>163.3</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>4-5</b>	<b>96.8</b>

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Marvin Harrison Jr.	31	604	19.5	5	75
Cade Stover	23	359	15.6	3	49
Emeka Egbuka	22	303	13.8	3	28
Julian Fleming	16	162	10.1	0	37
Carnell Tate	8	162	20.3	1	55
Xavier Johnson	5	79	15.8	0	40
Gee Scott Jr.	4	20	5.0	0	10
Chip Trayanum	4	15	3.8	0	12
Miyan Williams	3	43	14.3	0	27
T. Henderson	3	45	15.0	0	27
Dallan Hayden	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
Brandon Inniss	1	58	58.0	1	58
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>1848</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36</b>

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jayden Fielding	-	27-28	-	-	7-7	48
Marvin Harrison Jr.	5	-	-	-	-	30
T. Henderson	5	-	-	-	-	30
Cade Stover	3	-	-	-	-	18
Emeka Egbuka	3	-	-	-	-	18
Chip Trayanum	3	-	-	-	-	18
Miyan Williams	2	-	-	-	-	12
Josh Proctor	1	-	-	-	-	6
Tyleik Williams	1	-	-	-	-	6

Dallan Hayden	1	-	-	-	-	6
Devin Brown	1	-	-	-	-	6
Brandon Inniss	1	-	-	-	-	6
Carnell Tate	1	-	-	-	-	6
J. Mathews Jr.	1	-	-	-	-	6
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>2827-28</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7-7</b>	<b>216</b>	
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>7 7-7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3-7</b>	<b>58</b>	

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

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	18	776	43.1	0	56
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>43.1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1326</b>	<b>44.2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>60</b>

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
J. 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	3	17	5.7	0	18
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Xavier Johnson	9	208	23.1	0	32
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19</b>

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Tommy Eichenberg	30	16	46	2.0-8	1.0-7
Steele Chambers	19	17	36	1.0-1	0-0
Lathan Ransom	19	10	29	0.5-1	0-0
Davison Igbinosun	19	9	28	0.5-2	0-0
Tyleik Williams	12	15	27	6.0-11	1.0-2
Josh Proctor	18	7	25	2.5-2	0-0
Sonny Styles	13	9	22	2.0-4	0-0
Cody Simon	10	11	21	1.5-2	0-0
J.T. Tuimolouau	8	11	19	4.0-28	3.0-24
Jack Sawyer	7	10	17	2.0-13	1.5-12
Ty Hamilton	7	9	16	0-0	0-0
Jordan Hancock	11	5	16	0-0	0-0
Mike Hall Jr.					

# Impact Still Felt From 2018 Loss To Purdue

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Over the last five seasons of Ohio State football, perhaps no loss was more unexpected than the team's 49-20 blowout loss to Purdue at Ross-Ade Stadium on Oct. 20, 2018.

The then-No. 2-ranked Buckeyes, led by head coach Urban Meyer and star quarterback Dwayne Haskins, entered the matchup against the 3-3 Boilermakers looking like national title contenders, winning their first seven contests by an average margin of 29.4 points and logging an impressive 557.1 yards per game in the process.

They even had two signature victories already stamped on their résumé – a gritty 40-28 defeat of then-No. 15 TCU in Arlington, Texas' AT&T Stadium on Sept. 15 and a dramatic come-from-behind 27-26 victory over then-No. 9 Penn State in State College, Pa., on Sept. 29 – that would only boost their chances of earning a bid to the College Football Playoff for the third time in its then-five-year existence.

Those lofty postseason hopes would soon come crashing down on a frigid late-October evening in West Lafayette, Ind., where upset-hungry Purdue – led by senior quarterback David Blough and speedy freshman wide receiver Rondale Moore – outclassed heavily-favored Ohio State in virtually every aspect of the game, all but derailing their chances of a coveted second national championship in five seasons. It was a performance that not only sent Ohio State fans into a state of shock, but also the team itself.

"Am I surprised? I'm very surprised," Meyer said after the game. "I thought we had a good week of work. The glaring shortcomings we had were exposed."

"You never go into a game thinking you are going to lose," wideout Terry McLaurin said. "As a team, we felt like we had our best week of practice, but if we don't execute at a high level, you can get beat any Saturday.



FILE PHOTO

**NOT THEIR NIGHT – Still one of the most shocking losses in recent memory was Ohio State's trip to Purdue in 2018 in which the then-second-ranked Buckeyes suffered a 49-20 defeat at the hands of the unranked Boilermakers despite a school-record 470 passing yards from quarterback Dwayne Haskins.**

We didn't come in with a mentality where we feel like we have all these mistakes. We came in on a high note thinking we had a really good week of practice."

With Ohio State returning to Ross-Ade Stadium this season for the first time since

the surprising loss, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is taking a look back and evaluating how a talented and confident Ohio State team lost to an obviously less-skilled Purdue. To break it down, BSB caught up with three Ohio State reporters – Letterman Row's Tim May, Buckeye Huddle's Kevin Noon and 247Sports' Steve Helwagen – who each had boots on the ground in Purdue that evening.

According to all three, the story of the Purdue loss starts in the hours leading up to kickoff, where a dramatic shift in weather would soon test the balance of Ohio State's pass-heavy offense. With a strong cold front dropping the temperature at kickoff to an unseasonable 37 degrees with 18 mph winds, it began to cast doubts on Ohio State's chances of coming out of Purdue with another comfortable victory.

"Honestly, the winds felt stronger than (18 mph)," said Noon, who was working for Rivals/Buckeye Grove at the time. "They moved the media parking out to a distant parking lot, and we came in on golf carts. You could tell that the weather was not going to be Ohio State's friend with a pass-heavy, pass-first (and) pass-second type of team. You just wondered what Ohio State would be able to do. Would they be able to carry the load on the ground somewhat?"

"I think that there was at least some uneasiness in terms of what Ohio State's chances were going to be based on the weather. And don't forget too, that it was also the Tyler Trent game as well (a former Purdue student and cancer patient who served as an inspiration to the team during the 2018 season). There were a lot of external factors that were all kind of starting to swirl around along with the winds."

As the weather began to become a factor and an emotional Ross-Ade Stadium crowd of 60,716 began to file in, May – a reporter for The Columbus Dispatch at the time – began to see the game mirroring that of another gut-wrenching Buckeye loss under Meyer that would derail a season, that being Ohio State's last-second 17-14 defeat to Michigan State on Nov. 22, 2015, which came by way of a memorable game-winning field goal for the Spartans.

"It kind of reminded me of what preceded Ohio State's 2015 game with Michigan State at Ohio Stadium," May said. "That had been one of the great fall afternoons I can ever remember. Then all of a sudden, at about 3-3:15 p.m., right after pregame warmups had finished, this huge front just came through, big-time weather system, heavy rain. But it was like it blew Ohio State's offensive game plan out the door with it. So strange weather happens, and then all of a sudden, strange things happen on the football field, and that's what happened at Purdue."

For Ohio State, the wackiness began shortly after kickoff.

After a quick three-and-out worth just 1 yard to start the game, the Buckeye passing offense would be relatively unfazed by the treacherous conditions, embarking on four consecutive drives of 30 yards or more – a stretch during which Purdue got on the board with a 13-yard touchdown from Blough to wide receiver Isaac Zico late in the first quarter – with one drive early in

the second quarter that would take Ohio State all the way to the Purdue 6-yard line. This sequence would do little for the team on the scoreboard, however, due to a series of missed opportunities in Purdue territory.

The Buckeyes crossed the 50-yard line on three of those four possessions but had just three points to show for it, that being the previously mentioned six-play, 48-yard drive that stalled at the 6-yard line and resulted in a Blake Haubeil 24-yard field goal to make it 7-3. That sequence of plays also included a 16-play, 83-yard drive at the end of the second quarter that stalled at the 15-yard line and resulted in a 33-yard miss from Haubeil.

Noon said these miscues on offense provided him with some early indications that it might not be Ohio State's night. Helwagen referred to a key mistake on defense – along with some trickery by Purdue – at the end of the first half that gave signs of a possible upset.

With the Boilermakers already leading 7-3 and the offense facing a fourth-and-3 with 37 seconds remaining in the first half, Purdue lined up for what would be a 31-yard attempt. That try would turn into a fake, however, where holder Joe Schopper held the ball and scampered toward the sidelines for 4 yards to give Purdue the first down. This led to a 9-yard touchdown pass to Moore on the next snap, inflating the Purdue lead to 14-3 going into halftime.

"I think at that moment, I thought, 'OK, they've got Ohio State's number,' because Ohio State is completely out to lunch," Helwagen said. "It was a short field goal, and they were selling out to try and block it, whereas if you just play field goal safe defense there and either make them kick it or let them try it into your defense, then you get the stop. It was just a microcosm of the whole game. Ohio State just didn't have it mentally that day, it was obvious."

Ohio State may have fallen behind the Boilermakers early due to some missed opportunities from the offense, but the trio of reporters each said it was the defense that put the final nail in the coffin for Meyer's team.

Haskins and the Ohio State offense would trim the deficit to just 14-6 thanks to a 10-play, 69-yard drive that resulted in another Haubeil field goal to begin the third, but that was the closest they got the rest of the contest due to some major lapses on the defensive side.

After the field goal, Ohio State's defense relinquished four Purdue touchdowns in six second-half drives, a backbreaking sequence for Ohio State that was headlined by the explosive play of running back D.J. Knox, who scampered for 1-, 42- and 40-yard scores, and Moore, who capped off the touchdown parade with a 43-yard score of his own.

May said Moore's final touchdown – where he caught a screen pass from Blough at the line of scrimmage, bounced off attempted tackles from linebacker Pete Werner and cornerback Sevyn Banks and exploded to the end zone – put a bow on a shaky defensive performance defined by poor tackling. This was especially the case with Moore, who finished with 12 catches

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# OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

for 170 yards and two scores, along with an additional 58 return yards and 24 rushing yards.

"I know there's no 'I' team, but there was a Rondale in Purdue that night," May said. "Ohio State had so much trouble corraling him. Even when they had him corralled sometimes, he still got loose. That was, by the way, one of the worst tackling teams in Ohio State history, right up there with last year.

"But this was just basic football, tackle the guy who has the football, type of problems. Purdue's offensive line also did a hell of a job blocking. Knox had a hell of a night, also. They had over 500 yards (539) on offense. But the bottom line, the difference of the game was Rondale Moore. He was the difference in the game."

Purdue and Moore's manhandling of Ohio State's defense may have been the biggest contributor to the Buckeyes' 49-20 loss, but for Noon, the performance took on a much bigger meaning, signaling the beginning of a bleak period for that side of the ball as it – unknowingly, at the time – began transitioning out of the Meyer era.

"Ohio State's defense, we were starting to see some of the erosion of 'BIA,'" Noon said of Ohio State's best in America mantra for the secondary. "We saw poor tackling. It was a host of errors. I'm not saying that if you would have taken one error out of the equation that we would have had a different outcome. Ohio State was just thoroughly beaten in that game, and it became very apparent by the fourth quarter.

"Specifically on that play (with Moore), I figured that Ohio State tapped out. They

were done. They were ready to get their pizza and get on the bus and come home at that point. With Rondale Moore, it was just a case of he went out there and he wanted more, and Ohio State really didn't have an answer there. I think it was really the beginning of the 'What are we doing on defense?' era at Ohio State. Because you can win a game and give up a bunch of yards or give up a bunch of points and say, 'Oh, that's concerning.' But when you go out and give up 49 to Purdue when you are a top-five team, that's when you have to do a major internal housekeeping."

The defense endured more struggles the rest of the season, giving up 30 or more points in three of their final six games. But as a team, they bounced back from the difficult loss.

Led by the transcendent play of Haskins, who finished with 4,831 passing yards and 50 touchdowns – both of which set school and conference single-season passing records – Ohio State would rattle off six consecutive wins to end the season, a stretch that would allow Meyer to ride off into the sunset with both a Big Ten championship and Rose Bowl crown.

But while Big Ten Championship Game and Rose Bowl are strong ways to finish a season, it is hard not to look at that one loss at Purdue and wonder, "What could have been?"

Had the Buckeyes found a way to stave off the Boilermakers and finish the regular season undefeated, they would have secured a berth in the College Football Playoff, with a chance to ride their high-flying offense to a championship against the

likes of either Alabama, Clemson, Notre Dame or Oklahoma, with the Tigers – led by then-freshman quarterback Trevor Lawrence – going on to win it all that season.

Individually, it also would have put Haskins in prime position to win the Heisman Trophy, which he finished in third place for that season behind Alabama's Tua Tagovailoa and Oklahoma's Kyler Murray, the eventual winner. This is a scenario Helwagen thinks could have led to Haskins earning the school's eighth trophy, and the first since Troy Smith in 2006.

"Losing the game changed the trajectory of that," Helwagen said. "Because now on a team that had a loss, he was a finalist, but he didn't obviously win it. I think if he's on an undefeated team, that really makes it hard for them not to vote for him if he is the leader of a team that's undefeated. That one loss may be the thing that held him back from winning it."

Helwagen said the Purdue loss also raises the question of whether Meyer would have continued to coach at Ohio State past the 2018 season had they ended up going undefeated and winning a national title. While Meyer retired after the Rose Bowl to deal with health issues, a hypothetical return of Meyer in 2019 is something worth thinking about.

"It changes the trajectory of his coaching career, too," Helwagen said. "If they're in the playoff, does he make that decision at the end of the regular season to retire? It felt like he was pretty well wrung out at that point. I don't know. I'm not sure if that changes his outlook. He certainly would have coached through a playoff."

"But does he stick around? Does that change his mindset? Does that maybe he would have needed a leave of absence or whatever to deal with whatever his health issues were, but does he walk away from coaching altogether? That's a tremendous question."

While these are merely hypotheticals, May said the ramifications of the Purdue loss quickly became a reality for the team as they progressed through the season. Despite the strong end to the 2018 campaign, those within the Woody Hayes Athletic Center had a difficult time absorbing the dominating defeat that all but wiped away their chances at a national title, something May said still sticks with them five years later.

"From a goal standpoint, obviously they went on and won the Big Ten and went to the Rose Bowl, and won the Rose Bowl in dramatic fashion," May said. "But they knew they had blown it for the College Football Playoff, because all they heard after that was 'Yeah, Ohio State has a nice team, but man, it's hard to overlook this loss.' Not just the loss to Purdue, but the magnitude of the loss from the standpoint of the difference in score and how Ohio State on that particular night looked uncompetitive in the head-to-head matchup.

"I think if you talk to any player on that team, I would think it weighs on every one of them, still to this day," he continued. "Because they had a great offense and a mediocre defense. And that's what you get when you put those two together. Somewhere, somehow the dam is going to break, and the dam broke that night at Purdue."



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# THANKS A MILLION

# New-Look Offense Still A Work In Progress

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Under the guidance of head coach Ryan Day, Ohio State's offense has been widely regarded as one of the most efficient and innovative in the nation.

Led by outstanding passers and future NFL quarterbacks Justin Fields and C.J. Stroud, the Buckeyes dominated defenses with speed and creativity over the last few seasons, ranking in the top three in the nation in scoring offense in three of the four seasons.

Through the midway point of the 2023 season, however, Day and offensive coordinator Brian Hartline's unit has yet to experience the same type of success that spring boarded them to three College Football Playoff appearances in five seasons. With a first-year starter in Kyle McCord taking the reins from the electrifying Stroud and a new-look offensive line consisting of three new faces — left tackle Josh Simmons, center Carson Hinzman and right tackle Josh Fryar — the offense has been marred by inconsistent play and a lack of balance, forcing the unit to often rely on the defense to propel them to victory.

While the offense's numbers look strong from afar through six games, averaging 36.0 points and 443 yards per game, they still fall short of the lofty expectations put on this unit since Day took over as head coach in 2019 — something they are hoping to fix as the season progresses.

"We just have to execute better," Day said Oct. 10. "We have to coach it better, and that starts with me. And we have to figure out a way to determine whether we're doing too much, too little, whatever that is. But I feel like the scheme and what we were doing was very sound. And I think we have the right guys, so what does that come down to? We have to coach better."

Sitting atop Ohio State's laundry list of struggles is their inability to convert on third down. The Buckeyes ranked 26th in the nation last season in third-down percentage rate at 45.2 percent (75 of 166), but it has been a different story this year, with the team moving the chains just 33 times in 75 tries (44.0 percent), good for 40th in the nation, though the Buckeyes were an impressive 8 of 13 (61.5) against Purdue.

These numbers, which are only exacerbated as the team moves closer to the chains, have served as a major area of concern for the unit among both fans and the team. After converting on just three of their 12 attempts against Maryland, Day said these issues stem from his unit failing to put themselves in favorable positions on first and second down.

"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."

Despite these struggles, however, the Buckeye unit has shown some signs of brilliance. Ohio State's 63-10 rout of Western Kentucky on Sept. 16 had a previously sluggish offense erupt in the second quarter, where McCord and the offense embarked on four straight touchdown drives in just nine plays and 2:02 of game time. The next week against Notre Dame, the Buckeyes would have what is so far the defining moment of the season, going on a memorable 15-play, 65-yard touchdown drive that featured several clutch third and fourth-down conversions and was capped by a Chip Trayanum score. The group would also excel against Purdue after a poor outing against Maryland, accounting for 497 total yards and reaching the end zone on six of their 13 drives.

All in all, Ohio State's offense has been, in Day's terms, a "mixed bag" through the first half of the season, with plenty of time left in the year to make improvements. With that in mind, BSB graded each offensive position through the first six games.

## Quarterbacks

After a legendary five-year run by Dwayne Haskins, Fields and Stroud, Ohio State entered the 2023 season with uncertainty at the quarterback position for the first time in the Day era. The program found themselves entrenched in a tight quarterback battle between the veteran McCord and the younger, more athletic redshirt freshman Devin Brown, a competition that was still yet to be decided through the first two weeks of the season.

Day indicated that Brown would earn significant snaps at the beginning of the season, but that did not exactly come to fruition, with Brown only attempting 16 passes for 99 yards in the first two games against Indiana and Youngstown State. That opened the door for McCord to take control of the offense early on, something he did not exactly do through two games.

McCord did not exactly show the world he is capable of being a star in Bloomington, Ind., making several inaccurate throws — including a key second-quarter interception in Indiana territory on fourth-and-2 — to finish just 20 of 33 with 239 yards and only the interception to show for it. He looked more comfortable in

## Rating The Offense

Here is where the OSU offense ranked among the Big Ten and nationally (statistics through the Purdue game).

Category	Stats	NCAA	Big Ten
Rushing Offense	135.0	92nd	9th
Passing Offense	308.0	15th	1st
Total Offense	443.0	32nd	1st
Scoring Offense	36.0	20th	3rd
Turnovers Lost	5	T-11th	T-2nd
Third-Down Conv.	.440	40th	5th

the Buckeyes' 35-7 win over Youngstown State on Sept. 9, throwing for an efficient 258 yards and three touchdowns against the Penguins, but it still felt as if he had yet to unleash his full potential as he looked over his shoulder to the younger Brown.

That all changed in Week 3, however, when McCord was named the full-time starter by Day on Sept. 12. With a renewed sense of confidence and relief, he erupted on the Ohio Stadium field on Sept. 16, completing 19 of his 23 pass attempts for an impressive 318 yards and three touchdowns to lead the team to the resounding 63-10 victory. It was by far the best game of his still-young career, something he attributed to the comfort he felt in being named the starter.

"I think that's definitely a little bit of a confidence boost," McCord said after the game. "When (Day) gives you the official nod that you're the guy, whether it was subconscious or not, I really didn't think of it that way, but I felt just a little more confident I would say. That could be him naming me the starter or that could be just the more reps and experience and plays I get under my belt. But whatever it is, I felt like I took a step in the right direction."

McCord would continue his positive momentum into the Notre Dame game on Sept. 23 by showing up in the clutch on the previously mentioned game-winning drive. With the game — and possibly the season — on the line, McCord completed third- and fourth-down tries of 23, 7 and 21 to bring the Buckeyes to the 1-yard line for the eventual score. This performance not only helped give Ohio State the dramatic 17-14 victory, but it also cemented him as a key leader on the team who can rise to the occasion in the biggest of moments this season.

"If the offense is shaky, or in a tough spot, everybody can look at Kyle, and he's going to be the most calm person on the field," junior wideout Emeka Egbuka said on Sept. 27. "So that's something that's really encouraging, to have (somebody like McCord) in the pocket. And we all knew that was going to be the case when he took over the starting role."

McCord and the offense would struggle mightily — mostly in the first half — against Maryland, failing to score a touchdown until after halftime. But his overall body of work — 109 of 170 (64.1 percent) for 1,651 passing yards, 11 touchdowns and one interception — has proven that he is more than capable of not only holding his own, but thriving, under center.

**BSB Midterm Grade: B**

## Running Backs

Heading into the season, running backs coach Tony Alford delivered high praise to his running back room, saying it was "without question" among the deepest and most

versatile groups he has coached since he first assumed the position at Ohio State in 2015.

But that lauded depth has been questioned for Ohio State through the first six games of the season, with the Buckeyes instead mostly relying on just two running backs — junior TreVeyon Henderson and senior Chip Trayanum — to carry the load in the backfield, before the depth was severely challenged by injuries in the Purdue game.

Ohio State has received an encouraging amount of production from Henderson so far this season, but after missing wins over Maryland and Purdue, questions remain about how effective he can be down the stretch for the Buckeyes. Through the first four games of the season, he rushed for 295 rushing yards and five touchdowns on 44 attempts.

The Buckeyes have also been reliant on the legs of Trayanum, who has surprisingly emerged as Ohio State's No. 2 running back on the depth chart. The former linebacker has used his bruising and aggressive running style to rack up 242 yards and three touchdowns on a team-high 51 attempts this season, but he has also emerged as somewhat of a hometown hero after his dramatic 1-yard game-winning score against Notre Dame that likely needs no further explanation.

The running back production from this season mostly ended with Henderson and Trayanum, until the Purdue game, however. While the two top backs have met or exceeded expectations, senior Miyan Williams has been nonexistent at times in the Buckeye backfield. Besides a two-touchdown performance against Indiana, last season's leading rusher has gained just 96 total yards on the ground on 25 attempts, for a 3.8 average, a troubling trend that was not expected before the season started, and he was also unavailable in the win over Purdue.

In addition to Williams, Day and the offense also elected not to utilize their two younger rushers against the Terrapins in sophomore Dallan Hayden and junior Evan Pryor. While Pryor was not expected to gain many reps as the last back in the depth chart, Hayden's absence was more puzzling due to his contributions last season, where he was the third-leading rusher on the team with 553 yards and five touchdowns. Those concerns ended, for the time being, against Purdue, where Hayden was called on to replace the injured Trayanum and ran for a team-high 76 rushing yards and a touchdown on 11 attempts. Pryor also saw some action in relief against the Boilermakers, tacking on just two rushing yards on three carries.

Day offered an explanation following the win over Maryland, saying the team is planning to limit the number of games he appears in to preserve his redshirt for next season.

"He's ready to go," Day said. "He's practicing, and if appropriate, we'll put him in the game, but we don't want to have him play in five or six games without getting a bunch of work in. We just don't think that's the right thing to do for Dallan."

With Ohio State not electing to utilize Hayden, Pryor, or even Williams, the Buckeyes put up one of their worst rushing performances in recent memory, mustering just 62 yards on 33 carries, or 1.9 yards per carry, the lowest since Oct. 1, 2011. This has raised questions surrounding the consistency and efficiency

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of the run game this season, something that Hartline said must be fixed as the campaign progresses.

“That’s not good enough,” Hartline said on Oct. 11. “I think that anytime you throw the ball or run the ball, you are evaluated when you need it most. And I think that’s important. I think that when they know you’re going to run it, how well do you run it? And when they know you’re going to pass it, how well do you pass it? It’s a good indication.”

**BSB Midterm Grade: B-**

### Wide Receivers

Coming into the season as one of the more highly-touted units in recent memory, Hartline’s wide receiver group has mostly delivered. Led by star receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. and another projected first-round NFL draft selection Emeka Egbuka, the supremely talented core of wideouts has become a reliable safety blanket for McCord.

As expected, McCord’s No. 1 target through the halfway point of the season was his former high school teammate Harrison. He got off to an uncharacteristically slow start against Indiana, hauling in just two catches for 18 yards against Indiana, but that was soon forgotten due to a string of dominating performances.

Harrison instantly bounced back against Youngstown State, taking advantage of an inferior defense to corral in a deep ball from McCord and take it 71 yards to the end zone on just the fourth offensive play of the game. This kickstarted a vintage 160-yard, two-touchdown performance for the junior.

After recording another 126 yards and a touchdown score against Western Kentucky and battling through an ankle injury against Notre Dame with a gritty 32 yards, including a key 19-yarder into the red zone on the game-winning march, Harrison put on a receiving clinic against the Terrapins. Playing on a less-than-100-percent ankle, he overpowered a solid Maryland secondary, racking up a season-high 163 receiving yards and a touchdown along with several acrobatic catches. It was a performance that caught the eyes of his quarterback, who maintained full trust in his wideout — who now has a team-high 604 yards and five touchdowns — no matter what his status of health.

“I think they tried to double him or give them a little more attention,” McCord said after the game. “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.”

While Harrison is as advertised, Egbuka has been no slouch either, tacking on another 303 yards and three touchdowns, though he has appeared in just five games after missing the win over Purdue with a lower-leg injury.

The third-year wideout has also emerged as McCord’s go-to target in the middle of the field when the game is on the line. McCord’s trust in his other top wideout was evident against Notre Dame, where he hauled in a number of crucial catches in the fourth quarter with the game hanging in the balance. There was no catch bigger so far this season than Egbuka’s 21-yard reception on third-and-19 with 15 seconds remaining in the game, which placed Ohio State on the Notre Dame 1-yard line with a chance to come away with the eventual thrilling victory.

Harrison and Egbuka may get all the headlines for their exciting play, but the Buckeyes have also gotten some big-time production out of senior Julian Fleming. Like Egbuka, Flem-

ing has come up clutch during some high-pressure moments for the offense, most notably hauling in a 7-yard pass on fourth-and-7 on that same final drive. McCord’s trust in the fourth-year journeyman has allowed him to emerge among one of the top wideouts on the team with 162 receiving yards on 16 targets.

With the extra contributions of graduate captain Xavier Johnson and true freshman Carnell Tate, who have combined to tack on another 241 yards and one touchdown, Hartline’s receiver group has become one of the more deep and formidable groups in all of college football, an advantage that McCord is honored to possess.

“I think it’s kind of just pick your poison at that point,” McCord said on Sept. 27. “I mean, having Emeka, Julian and Cade (Stover), if you want to double-team Marvin then that’s going to present other problems. So I think it’s just all about what defensive coordinators feel like they have the most chance of success in. But I think regardless of what they choose, we’re going to have good answers for that.”

**BSB Midterm Grade: A**

### Tight Ends

Ohio State has been known for using its tight ends primarily as run blockers during the Day era, with some critics even accusing the coaching staff of under-utilizing the pass-catching talents of previous Buckeyes such as Luke Farrell and Jeremy Ruckert. That narrative has shifted this year, with fifth-year senior tight end Stover emerging as a premier pass catcher.

After being introduced to the dynamic Ohio State passing game last season with 36 receptions for 406 yards, Stover has experienced yet another uptick in his production. Through six games, the Mansfield, Ohio, native has once again used his physicality to his advantage in the passing game, ranking second on the team in both receiving yards and receptions at 359 and 23, respectively.

Stover’s patented hard-nosed mentality has once again shown during his receptions, where he has often refused to go down and carried defenders multiple yards after contact. This was evident in the third quarter of the Buckeyes’ season opener against the Hoosiers, when he caught a pass near midfield from McCord and rumbled all the way down to the Indiana 24-yard line for a 49-yard gain, putting them in prime position for an eventual Williams rushing touchdown.

While Stover has once again flashed with his physicality and never-say-never mentality in the passing game, it is the improvements in his run blocking that have impressed his coaches the most this season. He has been seen making a few bruising blocks, including a violent pancake block against Notre Dame, an improved approach that has turned him into a more versatile weapon in an already-talented offense.

“He takes a lot of snaps, he does a lot of the dirty work,” Day said on Oct. 10. “He blocks, and because of that, he creates pass-and-run conflicts. And that isn’t always the case when you have three receivers in the game. When you start to get into two tight ends, in those types of personnel groupings, you can create a lot of pass-and-run-conflicts — on linebackers, on safeties. And I think that’s what you’re seeing with Cade.”

“Now, he’s also run some really nice routes out in the open, just drop back pass, but I think you’re seeing some of the play-action open up because of some of his dirty work.”

Backing up Stover is Gee Scott Jr., who has gained a larger role on the team this season in his fourth season with the program. Scott has one significant catch so far this season, that being a 9-yard reception on fourth-and-7 off a rollout pass from Brown against Youngstown State, but he has emerged as a weapon in the run game with his blocking.

He has mostly seen the field in “jumbo” packages, a designed run-blocking scheme that often includes a two-tight end set and an extra offensive lineman, something that was utilized on Trayanum’s 1-yard score against the Fighting Irish.

According to Day, these two tight end formations with the physically imposing Stover and Scott can create matchup nightmares for opposing defenses attempting to stop the run this season, giving Ohio State a personnel advantage in short-yardage situations.

“Credit to (Stover and Scott),” tight ends coach Keenan Bailey said. “Coach Day said at the beginning of the season, this offense is trending towards having versatility. I think we played 60 percent 12-personnel, not counting third downs and red zone, and that’s just a credit to our guys. I’m looking to bring in the best tight ends in the country that are receivers and blockers and all-around guys. And hopefully with this offense, an NFL offense, you come here, you’re going to be in the perfect position to contribute.”

**BSB Midterm Grade: A**

### Offensive Line

Perhaps no unit has been more heavily scrutinized throughout the season than Justin Frye’s offensive line, and there have been many examples during the first six games that have justified these concerns.

The Buckeyes entered the campaign with an almost entirely reworked front five, with Simmons, Hinzman and Fryar each entering the fold as the team’s new starting left tackle, center and right tackle, respectively. This lack of cohesion and chemistry on the line would instantly rear its ugly head this season, with the entire unit falling flat on a number of missed assignments and some crucial holding penalties in games against Indiana and Youngstown State.

The unit’s slow start, where they gave up a combined nine tackles for loss, two sacks and 35 yards worth of penalties in two games, not only compelled Day to demand some fast improvement, but urged Frye to call out his team’s lack of toughness.

“We’ve been saying be violent,” Frye said Sept. 13. “If you want to be a tough guy, then be a tough guy all the time. We’ve got to play more violent. We can’t be lines on a page. We’re not making too many mental mistakes, which is a positive, but we have too many point-of-attack mistakes that we have to go

with, and you can solve that through aggression and violence.”

Ohio State’s new-look line seemed to have taken those comments to heart those next two weeks. In victories over Western Kentucky and Notre Dame, the front five flexed their muscles and generated much more push on the line of scrimmage, a change in mentality that allowed the team to rush for 330 combined yards and five touchdowns.

They also cut down on the mistakes, relinquishing just two total sacks and four tackles for loss, although they still committed 35 yards worth of penalties.

But their early-season mistakes would come back to bite them again after the off week against Maryland. Part of an ugly overall offensive performance, the offensive line failed to get much movement on the Terrapins’ front, limiting the run game to just 62 yards on the day. Perhaps more concerning, though, was their inability to pass block, where they allowed a Maryland defensive line to have its way against McCord, sacking him three times.

For Day, he still views these issues as correctable, where it is a matter of all five players — both new and old — using the right fundamentals to get the better of their opponent.

“I thought the angles and the leverage were decent,” Day said on Oct. 10. “And then with the personnel, are we just getting flat-out beat? Do I think we can do a better job with our hands? Yes. Do we need to do a better job with our pad level? Yes. But then between the line and the running back and just the overall execution, it just wasn’t there.”

“I don’t know if I have a word for it, other than we’re just going to keep swinging on this thing. And it’s one of those things where if you can solve it, it’s going to be rewarding because we’re working so hard at it. But everybody has to take responsibility.”

Day and the Buckeyes’ commitment to improving paid off for the unit against Purdue, where they flexed their dominance against a solid Boilermakers rush and paved the way for the rushing attack of Hayden, Johnson and Trayanum to average 6.5 yards per attempt. It wasn’t a perfect performance, however, as Purdue generated three sacks and six tackles for loss.

While it remains to be seen if Ohio State’s offensive line can make vast improvements as the season moves on, Day has remained confident in the abilities of the players he currently has lining up on his front five, saying that he is not looking to make any changes to the starting lineup. This may change, however, if the unit keeps underperforming, especially with more difficult matchups against Penn State, Wisconsin and Michigan on the horizon.

**BSB Midterm Grade: C-**




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# Defense Boosting Bucks Through Six Games

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's identity has seemingly changed in the first half of the 2023 season. When Ryan Day has been the coach, the offense is normally what carries the team to wins, putting up big point totals that are close to the top in the country.

But that hasn't been the recipe for success that the Buckeyes have put together this year. Only 36 points per game is low for a Day-led team, and the defense has had to keep them in games more than has been necessary in recent years, but they have had a lot of success doing so.

Through six games, the defense had not allowed more than 17 points, a mark surpassed seven times last season. They allowed only 9.7 points per game, which was third in the country, a significant improvement over last year's scoring defense of 21.0 points per game that ranked 24th nationally. Stronger teams are coming up on the schedule, but Notre Dame and Maryland offered solid offenses the Buckeyes were able to shut down for a majority of those games.

One way they have been able to do that has been not giving up big plays, which has been a significant emphasis for defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, and the game plan has been working. They haven't allowed a single play to go for 40 yards or more this season.

Knowles said the lack of sacks the Buckeyes have had this year – just 10 following the win over Purdue – hasn't bothered him. It's been somewhat by design, sending less pressure at the quarterback and keeping more defenders back to prevent big gains, and he said that's one of the biggest improvements for the defense this year.

While that has been successful, one thing it does is open up the opportunity to gain yards in the short game, extending drives when the defense is on the field. Multiple teams have put drives like that together,

## Rating The Defense

Here is where the OSU defense ranked among the Big Ten and nationally (statistics through the Purdue game).

Category	Stats	NCAA	Big Ten
Rushing Defense	109.2	22nd	4th
Passing Defense	154.3	4th	3rd
Total Defense	263.5	7th	3rd
Scoring Defense	9.7	3rd	3rd
Sacks/Game	1.67	104th	12th
Third-Down Def.	.341	36th	6th

er, able to march down and put points on the board.

Combined with the new clock rule that has limited possessions for the offense, it means the defense has to be even better at making stops, which it generally has been by forcing 30 punts and allowing just 4 yards per play.

The following are BSB's midterm grades for each defensive position group through six games of the 2023 season.

### Defensive Line

There has been plenty of conversation about whether the defensive line is playing well enough this year given the relative lack of sacks, at least compared to what Ohio State is used to.

The team has managed only 10 sacks through six games, with eight coming from defensive linemen J.T. Tuimoloau (3), Michael Hall Jr. (1.5) and Jack Sawyer (1.5), with Tyleik Williams and Hero Kanu combining for two sacks.

Pressuring the quarterback and making tackles in the backfield have been struggles for this team, and that's something it has been open about, but it is not believed to be a long-term concern. Knowles' goal is to simply limit big plays, and the defensive line's role in that has not changed since they're still rushing the passer and limiting big plays, even if they are not getting home all that often.

"Winning third down, winning fourth

down, and limiting explosive plays – that's the most important thing," Knowles said. "We seem to be on a good track with that, and we want to keep that up. Everybody loves a lot of sacks. So do I. I think when I was younger, I was probably driven more by that. But the bottom line is eliminate the explosive plays, win on third and fourth down. That's what we have to continue to focus on."

Along with the eight sacks, they have also managed six quarterback pressures and 19 tackles for loss. Last year, the team averaged 2.6 sacks per game compared to just 1.7 so far this year, and they have also dropped from 6.6 tackles for loss per game down to 5.5, which is 82nd in the nation, but the coaches have argued these drops are also by design. The pressure has been good enough to rush opposing quarterbacks in getting the ball out of their hands. The Buckeyes are allowing only 9.26 yards per completion which is sixth in the country.

"The ball is coming out fast, 0.6-0.7 (seconds). There's no way you can get there," defensive line coach Larry Johnson said. "All we have to do is create pressure, push the guy into the quarterback, hands up, see what happens. I've been very pleased. They're working hard, and our time is going to come as we move forward, but right now we're going to continue doing what we're doing."

The quartet of Hall, Tuimoloau, Williams and Sawyer has seen the most playing time, but freshmen Caden Curry and Kenyatta Jackson Jr. have also been knocking on the door recently, with Knowles saying he wants to get them more snaps.

Tuimoloau, though, has been the biggest strength for Ohio State's line. On the outside, he has not been able to put up many counting stats with just 19 tackles and the previously mentioned three sacks, but the team has been clear that he has had a big effect in limiting offenses.

"It's a strength combined with athleticism," Knowles said. "He's strong enough to defeat any block at the point of attack. But he's also athletic enough to maneuver in the trenches. You know, on stunts, or twists or different assignments that we give him. And he's football smart. He's really a complete player."

Sawyer has been another defensive end expected to dominate this season, but he hasn't shown what was expected of him so far. He picked up 1.5 sacks against Purdue after not having any in the first five games, and he has just two tackles for loss. When Curry has entered the game this season, he has mostly done so in relief of Sawyer, and that potential transfer of snaps could continue as the season progresses.

The competition for Ohio State's defensive line is going to get tougher the deeper the Buckeyes get into the Big Ten schedule, so while the line has been good enough so far, they will need to keep improving to keep teams limited.

**BSB Midterm Grade: B**

### Linebackers

The linebacker group for the Buckeyes has been mostly positive this year, outside of a poor outing against Notre Dame.

Returning starters Steele Chambers and

Tommy Eichenberg have maintained their starting roles, while Cody Simon and C.J. Hicks have occasionally rotated in for the unit.

Eichenberg has been as advertised. Voted a captain by the team at the beginning of the season, he leads with his play rather than with his words, and he's been doing so effectively. He has 46 total tackles (30 solo), one sack, one forced fumble and three quarterback pressures.

He crossed the mark for 200 tackles in his career at Ohio State against Western Kentucky, with 112 of those coming last year in the first year with Knowles at the helm of the defense. His season high of 13 tackles came against Maryland with the defense needing to step up, and Eichenberg did just that.

"We're using him more to be a quarterback on the field," Knowles said Oct. 3. "He's become that guy that can see things that I see, think like me and he can make changes and adjustments on the field. Maybe we're using him more for his mind and less for his aggression, but they're still both involved. He's become really a true quarterback of the defense."

Chambers has been solid so far as well, with 36 tackles (19 solo), one tackle for loss, one interception and one pass breakup. He believes that he and Eichenberg have both played well outside of the win over the Fighting Irish in which they struggled to stop the run.

"We played pretty bad," Chambers said Oct. 4. "We take responsibility for everything that happened in that game as far as scores and whatnot. We have to definitely play a lot better. We felt like we went in with a good game plan. We just weren't able to make adjustments on the field as far as their run scheme, some of their passes and whatnot."

Notre Dame ran for 176 yards as a team and averaged 4.5 yards per carry, but that was the worst game the defense has had against the run. Overall, they are 22nd in the country with 109.2 yards per game allowed.

Simon and Hicks have not seen the field as much as the coaching staff anticipated this season, with Chambers and Eichenberg holding down the fort for the most part. But with the pair struggling at points this season, Knowles is still looking to develop a rotation.

"Cody's earned more time," Knowles said on Oct. 10. "I've got to keep pushing his reps up."

Notre Dame, the only team on the schedule so far with an above-average rushing attack, mostly did what it wanted, so the question of whether the linebackers will be able to stop the run against teams such as Penn State or Michigan has not been answered yet. But so far, the unit has done what has been asked of it through six games.

**BSB Midterm Grade: B+**

### Safeties

The entire secondary for the Buckeyes has played well this season, with the safeties – the key tenet of Knowles' "safety-driven defense" – leading the way.

Lathan Ransom and Josh Proctor have



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## MIDTERM EXAMS: DEFENSE

been getting the most time on the field at bandit/strong safety and adjuster/free safety, respectively, with Sonny Styles rotating in as a nickel safety in most games, though he has occasionally been subbed out against pass-heavy offenses.

They have been everything Ohio State has needed, with the win over Maryland existing as the biggest proof of that. In a game where the offense was struggling to get going, punting four times on the first five drives, Proctor picked off Taulia Tagovailoa – one of the best quarterbacks in the Big Ten – and ran it back 24 yards to the end zone for the team's second pick-six of the season.

That completely flipped the script for the game, and after that the Buckeyes allowed only a touchdown after it looked like the Terrapins had complete control, marching down the field during their first few drives without much struggle. Proctor was arguably the biggest part of that turnaround, finishing with seven tackles (six solo) and 1½ tackles for loss. His performance earned him recognition as Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week, and his teammates harped on how he gives everyone on the field with him confidence.

"You know when they run that ball, he's flying downhill and going to smack somebody," Styles said. "It makes me feel pretty good. I know he's right there beside me."

Proctor's position was up in the air through the first few games of the season with Ja'Had Carter and Malik Hartford both swapping in at points, but neither has seen significant action in recent weeks, cementing Proctor's starting role for the Buckeyes.

Ransom had his first interception of the year against Maryland as well, and that was just a cherry on top of the performances he has been putting together. He was Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week after the win over Notre Dame, finishing with 13 tackles (seven solo). He credits the success of the defense to being in Knowles' system for a second season.

"Just being in the system for the second year, we're able to just fly around more confidently," Ransom said. "We're all on the same page, all communicating at a very high level. And when you're communicating, flying around at a high level, the plays just come to us."

Styles has earned more time in his second year with the Buckeyes with 22 tackles, 13 of those solo and two tackles for loss. His biggest play came early in the fourth quarter against Notre Dame when quarterback Sam Hartman ran the ball on a fourth-and-1 from Ohio State's 39-yard line, but Styles and Ransom teamed up for the stop and forced a turnover on downs.

When the defense has been having success, the common factor has usually been Styles' presence on the field, but every one of Ohio State's safeties is feeling confident.

"We've got something to prove," Styles said. "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."

**BSB Midterm Grade: A**

### Cornerbacks

If there was a most improved category for a defensive position group, it would un-

questionably go to the cornerbacks.

Last year, the group was the weak point of the defense with opposing quarterbacks able to find receivers on deep routes time and time again. Big plays were one of the downfalls of last year's team, often at the expense of the cornerbacks. As an individual player, Denzel Burke has been a microcosm of how the cornerback group has been able to improve this season.

In his freshman year with the Buckeyes, he exploded onto the scene, playing in all 13 games with 37 tackles (28 solo), a pick-six and 12 pass breakups. But his play fell off last season, something he said was due to him being complacent, happy with how he was performing and believing he did not work hard enough. That changed for him over the offseason and into this year.

"I'm more hungry," he said. "I feel like coming out of my freshman year, going into my sophomore year, I got a little complacent in the offseason. I wasn't getting the extra work I needed to get in. But you learn from those moments. Going into my third year, I have this whole different mindset, whole different approach. I know what I can do on the field. It's just a matter of me taking care of the little things and working hard every single day."

That has shown with Burke already recording seven pass breakups, one forced fumble and one interception. His pick was the first for an Ohio State cornerback since Oct. 30, 2021 – by Cameron Brown – when he collected an interception against Youngstown State.

Davison Igbinosun, lining up opposite Burke, has made an immediate impact on

the team after transferring from Ole Miss, where he played as a true freshman. He has recorded three pass breakups, a fumble recovery and 28 total tackles, 19 of those solo. Knowles said his presence is important for the entire defense.

"Davison is very aggressive," Knowles said. "I think you feel him out there, you feel his presence there. He's continuing to get better, but he's aggressive. And you know you can count on him to show up in the running game, which is a big deal there into the boundary."

Jordan Hancock has been rotating in at the nickel position with Styles, taking the field when the Buckeyes need more one-on-one coverage. He's still learning the nickel position and has had some slip-ups at times, but he has been improving with more snaps under his belt, and Knowles expects that to continue.

"Jordan is really talented," he said on Oct. 4. "Moving to that nickel position, it's not that easy, the nickel corner. You want to have a guy there with corner skills. Then there's a myriad of adjustments that go with it. He's just continued to improve. He's going to get better every game."

Ohio State has also seen spot contributions from Jyaire Brown and true freshman Jermaine Mathews Jr., who had a pick-six against Western Kentucky.

But overall, the group has shown significant improvement against legitimate passing attacks like Western Kentucky and Notre Dame. Bigger challenges await, but through six games, the unit has shown evidence that the Best In America might be just that.

**BSB Midterm Grade: A**

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# Return Game A Major Liability For Ohio State

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Head coach Ryan Day has claimed the same importance of special teams as his predecessors who made football's third phase the name of the game in Columbus, but in reality, the special teams have lacked under Day and coordinator Parker Fleming.

Ohio State has mostly avoided any serious mistakes on special teams this season, with the botched punt against Maryland the lone exception, but the team also has yet to make any significant plays on special teams, with no big kicks, punts or returns under their belts as yet.

But average is not the standard at Ohio State, and Day admitted as much during an Oct. 10 press conference, pointing to special teams as an area the team needs to improve in.

"I think we want all of our detail to be better just across the board," Day said. "But I can tell you that we work really hard on special teams. I think that the coaching detail is there. I think we just need to hold each other accountable."

"Again, it starts with me. I've got to help coach it better and hold the coaches accountable and the players accountable to play at a high level. We want it to be a weapon for us. We want it to be an area that we're winning in. There's been some good things and, just like offense and defense, there's areas we've got to get better at."

## Rating The Specialists

Here is where the OSU specialists ranked among the Big Ten and nationally (statistics through the Purdue game).

Category	Stats	NCAA	Big Ten
Net Punting	38.3	75th	11th
Punt Return Avg.	4.0	103th	11th
KO Return Avg.	23.1	34th	6th
Punt Return Def.	12.4	106th	12th
KO Return Def.	15.1	14th	2nd

Here are Buckeye Sports Bulletin's grades for Ohio State special teams through the first six games of the season.

## Kicking Game

There's not much to say here other than kicker Jayden Fielding has been mostly dynamite for Ohio State this season.

The sophomore, who was named starter before the season following an off-season competition between himself and junior Parker Lewis, has been nearly perfect through six games, hitting all seven field-goal attempts and 27 of 28 extra-point attempts, including three field goals in the season opener at Indiana.

"He's done a really good job in the spring, did a nice job kicking off for us last year, and his overall consistency has allowed him to be the starter," Day said on Aug. 29.

Distance has not mattered much for Fielding thus far, connecting on three kicks between 20-29 yards, two from 30-39 yards

and two between 40-49 yards.

"It definitely builds some confidence that he's going to make the kicks whenever they matter," linebacker Steele Chambers said. "Him going out there and making three kicks in the first game, that's huge."

His longest on the season, however, is just 41 yards. Fielding has indicated that he feels comfortable from within 60 yards and has hit from as far out as 55 yards back in high school, though Ohio State has not had to test that range so far this season.

He's also handled all but two of Ohio State's 38 kickoffs this season, averaging 63.0 yards per boot with 21 touchbacks and two kicks going out of bounds. Only 10 of those kickoffs have been returned by the opposition, with the Buckeyes allowing just 15.1 yards per return with a long of 19 yards.

Fielding could likely stand to get a few more boots into the end zone, and his place-kicking range remains a potential concern until Ohio State trots him out for a longer attempt, not to mention the missed extra point at Purdue. But overall, there has been little to complain about from this unit so far.

**BSB Midterm Grade: B**

## Punting Game

Kicking has been mostly positive for Ohio State this season, but the same cannot be said for the punting unit.

Punter Jesse Mirco is in his third season with the Buckeyes, and after averaging 45.4 yards per boot last season, he is down to just 43.1 yards per punt this season.

That is not to say that Mirco has played poorly, however. He has a long of 56 yards and has placed seven punts inside the opponents' 20-yard line without a touchback so far this season and has also booted four punts beyond 50 yards.

Not helping matters has been porous return defense, allowing 12.4 yards per return, and in total, Ohio State ranks 75th nationally in net punting at a measly 38.3 yards, which is also the fourth-worst mark in the Big Ten ahead of only Nebraska (38.2), Northwestern (36.7) and Purdue (35.5).

The punting unit's biggest black eye, though, was the botched snap on a punt against Maryland that was so poorly executed that it had people wondering if it was, in fact, a designed fake punt. Facing fourth-and-2 from Ohio State's own 33-yard line, long snapper John Ferlmann's snap bounced off the turf and into the hands of upback Cody Simon, who was dropped for a 3-yard loss, and the Terrapins found the end zone just four plays later.

"That was not supposed to be a fake," Day said after the game. "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."

Most of the issues come down to punt coverage, but there are areas to improve in across the board for the punting unit.

**BSB Midterm Grade: C-**

## Return Game

With every passing year, Jordan Hall and Jalin Marshall have to be wondering if they will go down as the last Ohio State players to ever return a kickoff and punt, respectively, for a touchdown. And if this year is any in-

dications, it will probably be at least another season before a Buckeye seriously threatens to take the ball to the house on a return.

It's maybe the most confounding aspect of Ohio State's team in recent years. How, with the amount of blue-chip receivers on the roster, can it not find someone who can consistently return punts and/or kickoffs and actually provide a boost for the unit?

Entering this season, Fleming indicated that Ohio State would run it back with Emeka Egbuka on punt returns and Xavier Johnson on kickoff returns, and he has stayed true to his word, though he did indicate that other players might get looks throughout the year.

Johnson has been serviceable in limited action, returning only nine kickoffs for 23.1 yards per return, which ranks 34th in the country.

But his longest return was just a 32-yarder against Notre Dame that got to Ohio State's 35-yard line, the farthest Johnson has gotten this season. And of his nine returns, four would have resulted in more or at least equivalent yardage had he just called for a fair catch.

"Sometimes you need a guy to fair catch the ball if the offense is really moving and you feel good about winning the game," Fleming said in May. "Sometimes you think we need a spark, and that's where your perfect balance is."

"You have that guy that can give you both – you trust him 100 percent to make the right decision based on game flow. We can have calls that say, 'Hey, kill it. Just fair catch the ball.' But you also like that guy that's hungry to steal a few yards."

That decision making has seemingly been a challenge for Egbuka, who is averaging just 3.3 yards on seven returns and a long of just 8 yards. Three of his returns have gone for either a loss or no gain, with many of his decisions to return the ball coming with a would-be-tackler just a few yards away from him.

All told, Ohio State's punt return average of 4.0 yards – boosted by three returns for 17 yards from Jayden Ballard, with a long of 18 yards – ranks 103rd nationally, and when considering only Egbuka's 3.3 yards per attempts, it would be 114th in the country and second-to-last in the Big Ten behind Rutgers (2.0).

The return game has been a nonfactor (if not damaging) for Ohio State this season, but prior to the campaign beginning, Day indicated that Egbuka and Johnson's ball security was a significant part of them being tasked with return responsibilities.

"When you talk about returning punt and kickoff, they require a certain skill set," he said. "The first thing is, they have to be able to field the ball. We put some different guys back there and felt like, once the ball was in their hands, they gave us a real good chance but didn't quite handle the ball well."

"You'll see different guys have some opportunities as the year goes on, but Emeka and Xavier certainly are the guys that give us the best chance right now."

Day and Fleming may be content with limited yardage in return for ball security. But if the special teams are looking for a significant boost in the return game, a change – whether that be Ballard, Carnell Tate or any of the other talented receivers – could be in order.

**BSB Midterm Grade: D+**



# Peacock Game Brings Back Memories Of Replays

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's game at Purdue on Oct. 14 was the first ever for the Buckeyes that was available only on a streaming platform, and it was a major change from having every game available on live television, something that has been the norm for fans around the country.

Peacock is a subscription-based service, so to watch the Buckeyes beat the Boiler-makers, it was necessary to sign up for the platform and either sign up for a free trial, which someone might forget to cancel, or pay for a service that wouldn't be necessary otherwise. But Big Ten commissioner Tony Petitti said at Big Ten Basketball Media Days on Oct. 9 that fans should get used to more games being available only on streaming services.

"I think there's been a long history in the media space of change," he said. "Not to go in the way-back machine, but radio to TV, free TV to cable. This is just part of that evolution. This is what is happening overall for all entertainment. Live sports wants to be where people are going to be ... I look at it that way, as this continuous evolution."

This game was the first for Ohio State that wasn't televised on a traditional network since 1997. For Jack Kramer, the former play-by-play voice of WOSU's delayed Ohio State football broadcasts from 1981-91, this was reminiscent of his time on those replays that provided an opportunity for fans – whether the game was not available on television or if they were not able to watch live – to catch up on the Buckeyes.

"People took part in it on Saturdays," Kramer said. "Saturday night replays, Sunday morning replays, the band show at the half was rebroadcasted fully, start to finish, there were no commercials. The band show was a big draw, people were singing 'Hang on Sloopy' walking down High Street back then."

Going back to when Kramer was behind the microphone, there were around three live Ohio State games on TV in a given season, usually including Michigan, another Big Ten game and the occasional nonconference matchup. Since the Buckeyes weren't available on TV and the fandom was "like a religion," as Kramer says, people still wanted to watch the Buckeyes, even if that was later that night or the next day.

He was chosen as the play-by-play voice for those broadcasts and was joined by former Buckeye and Cleveland Brown Paul Warfield, who was the color commentator for most of the time Kramer was on the air. Former station manager Ed Clay, who passed away in 2016, chose Kramer because they had worked together in grad school at Miami (Ohio) on football broadcasts, with Clay producing games announced by Kramer.

Kramer had always wanted to be a broadcaster since he was a kid. When he was 5 years old, he had a sandbox in his back yard that he said he would wet down with the hose, draw a football field using his mother's flowers, tie up flashlights to the tree above it to use as the stadium lights and announce games that he made up into the night.

"I would take Q-tips and color the tips

red and blue for the two teams, they were the players," he said. "The linemen were two Q-tips taped together. I found an old brown marble that I used over and over for years. I'd kick it around in the sand and describe what was going on."

"In the summer and the fall, I was out there until 10:30 in the dark making up the game each night. Mom and Dad would yell out and say, 'Jack, there's no way every play can be that exciting. Cool it down.'"

When Clay called Kramer with the opportunity to be the voice of the revamped delayed broadcast WOSU was starting back up, he jumped at it. After graduating from Indiana University with a major in broadcast journalism and adding to that résumé with a mass communication focus at Miami, he had been working toward a job like this since he was in the sand box.

He remembers his time on the broadcast very fondly. One of his favorite games he got to call was on Oct. 13, 1984, when the Buckeyes played Illinois at Ohio Stadium in a 45-38 win. The Illini jumped out to a 24-0 lead early in the second quarter, but the Buckeyes came back to win with the help of Keith Byars, who ran for 274 yards and five touchdowns, including a 67-yard score during which he lost his left shoe.

"When he got to the goal line I said, 'Illinois tackled his right shoe but not his left, and he's in for the touchdown,'" Kramer recalled. "That was a big comeback win."

He also remembers "The Game" in 1981 in Ann Arbor when Ohio State brought home a 14-9 win over Michigan. The Wolverines had to settle for three field goals on four trips to the red zone, while Ohio State found the end zone in the second and fourth quarters. Late in that final frame, down 9-7, quarterback Art Schlichter ran to the right and scored from 6 yards out with running back Vaughn Broadnax blocking ahead and leading the way.

"Broadnax was holding two people out in front of Schlichter," Kramer said. "I said it on the air, 'Here's Schlichter, he's going to keep Broadnax out in front, he's holding one guy, he's got another Wolverine. There ought to be a flag, there is none. Schlichter scores, and we'll take it.' He was holding big time."

Even though the delayed games were broadcast later on Saturday night – it was still a couple of decades before night games would become commonplace – or on Sunday morning, Kramer said it was treated like it was live every time, with nothing ever edited out. If he messed up on the broadcast, it would stay in the next day.

"I made mistakes, and I got phone calls from friends," he said. " 'Jack, why'd you say that?' and I'd just say it was a live program, that's the way we treated it every Saturday afternoon. It went to 25 PBS stations around the state, they all played it back Sunday morning. We researched and prepped for every game as if we were doing it live – and we were. There was no re-creation of the broadcast, no re-creation whatsoever."

There were no differences on the broad-



Jack Kramer

cast at the stadium on game day, either. Kramer said just like any other broadcaster, he would have a monitor that showed what people who would watch the broadcast would be seeing. It also showed a preview of the next view they would see so he could be prepared for what was coming next.

Someone would be outside the stadium in a production truck that showed all of the camera angles, and the truck would choose what to pull up next, constantly keeping in contact with Kramer so that he would always be prepared for the next call.

"Somebody was in constant communication with me in my ear as to what shots they were going to next," he said. "There would be a monitor in the booth that would show what was on live that instant. There would also be a preview monitor that was in the booth that would show what was upcoming. So, you did your play-by-play call and commentary in part based on what the viewers were seeing at home or what they were about to see next, so it was highly professional."

Kramer stopped doing the delayed broadcast after the 1991 season. More games for the Buckeyes were being televised, and with every game being easily accessible for everyone with a TV, there was no need for the game replay anymore. Kramer also said WOSU had to keep viewers – not all of whom were sports fans – happy.

"Their programming serves senior citizens, families and children," he said. "It's a varied audience at WOSU and all the stations they serve. It just became a programming call. 'How best do we meet the needs of our audience to maintain the proper funding?' Ohio State was on live every Saturday, people had the opportunity to record, play it

back and watch it themselves if they wanted. There was a combination of reasons. Those were the primary two."

Kramer continued his career in broadcasting and still does to this day, calling different high school sports in Shelby County, Ohio. He has done over 3,000 broadcasts dating back to 1968. He moved from the radio to online in 2006 at his website called ScoresBroadcast.com where he and broadcast partner Chuck McBee announce football, baseball, softball, boys basketball and girls basketball games for the high school Midwest Athletic Conference.

With Ohio State's win over Purdue and more games in future seasons being set to stream only, the need for replays after those games might be coming back. For now, that need doesn't exist, and there are going to be Buckeye fans who missed watching the game for the first time since 1997. If Petitti is right about fans needing to get used to more games that aren't available on live TV, Kramer thinks it won't be an easy transition for some people.

"They won't have the ready access to it that they're used to," he said. "A lot of Ohio State fans will be disappointed. Can you imagine the phone calls to the sports bars the next several days as people plan their Saturday? 'Where are we going to eat and go watch Ohio State?'"

"It's all about the dollar. It could very well be happening more. It could be the tip of the iceberg. These networks want exposure of whatever it takes to make some money, and if that means a subscription, fine."

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# Nittany Lions Taking Best Shot At Ohio State

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Penn State head coach James Franklin, despite his best efforts, has completed just one upset of Ohio State since he took over in State College, Pa., for the 2014 season.

It came in 2016, easily Franklin's best team to that point in his tenure. The Nittany Lions knocked the Buckeyes off in Beaver Stadium, 24-21, in a game that decided the Big Ten East and sent Penn State to the Big Ten Championship Game, where it won the team's first conference title since 2008.

Despite the midseason upset of Ohio State, it was early-season losses to Pittsburgh and then-No. 4 Michigan that would hold Penn State out of the College Football Playoff. Alabama, Clemson, Washington and – much to Franklin's chagrin – Ohio State ultimately got the call, with the committee instead sending the Nittany Lions to the Rose Bowl.

"Obviously, our guys would have liked to compete in the playoff and the national championship, but they also still know it's a tremendous opportunity to play in the Rose Bowl," Franklin said in 2016. "I just want to let everyone know just how humbled and honored we are to have this opportunity."

That team was good enough to beat Ohio State but not quite good enough for the College Football Playoff. But after years of meticulous team building, recruiting and player development, not only is Penn State good enough this season to knock off the Buckeyes, but it might just be good enough to go all the way for the first time since 1986.

"We have a three-deep at pretty much every position," Franklin said before the season began. "Having a three-deep across the board allows you to develop your entire roster when you feel like you have legitimate guys to put out there, both mentally and physically."

Penn State has been able to utilize that depth through the first six games of the season, off to a 6-0 start highlighted by a 31-0 blanking of Iowa on Sept. 23. The offense has been efficient and cerebral, but it's the defense under coordinator and former Miami (Fla.) head coach Manny Diaz that has led the Nittany Lions to such dominance through the first half of the season.

It starts up front, with perhaps the best defensive line in the conference, if not among the best in the country. In the interior, the Nittany Lions are led by fifth-year nose tackle Hakeem Beamon and sophomore defensive tackle Zane Durant, with Durant boasting the most production with 11 tackles (4½ for loss) and two sacks.

"I think we are bigger across the board," Franklin said. "Defensive end we're bigger; defensive tackle we're bigger. Part of that is the natural maturation process that happens. But I think they've done a good job of emphasizing it and putting the right kind of weight on. More importantly, they're playing in a way where they're so disruptive."

Coming off the outside are fifth-year senior Adisa Isaac, who already has 7½ tackles for loss and five sacks, and junior Chop Robinson, who came on last year with 10 tackles for loss and 5½ sacks. Buoying the pair are sophomore Dani Dennis-Sutton and junior Zuriah Fisher.

"Adisa is getting to the highest level that I've seen him play at since he's been in college," Diaz said. "And then you have a guy like Dani Dennis-Sutton behind him doing the same thing."

Should Kyle McCord escape the pass rush or one of the running backs get past the first lev-

el of the defense, things do not get easier when it comes to Penn State's linebackers.

Sophomore weakside linebacker Abdul Carter and junior strongside linebacker Curtis Jacobs are both returning starters, while last year's middle linebacker – junior Tyler Elsdon – has been usurped by sophomore Kobe King, a testament to the depth that also features sophomore Dominic DeLuca, redshirt freshman Keon Wylie and freshman Tony Rojas.

"We compete every day in what we do," Jacobs said. "It's one of our core values. I know at my position I have an elite guy in DeLuca backing me up. Knowing I have a guy like him behind me definitely brings the best out of me every day. It has to if you're a true competitor."

Penn State – mostly through the work of the defensive line and linebackers – has limited opposing teams to just 72.5 yards on the ground per game and 2.4 yards per carry, which could present a challenge for an Ohio State team that has struggled at times – whether it be from scheme or execution – to run the ball against stout defenses, an issue that could be made worse given potential injuries at running back heading into the game.

Making Ohio State one-dimensional is no problem for the Nittany Lions. They also boast an impressive secondary. The loss of cornerback Joey Porter Jr. to the NFL has been of little consequence as the unit has not skipped a beat, with returning junior starter Kalen King – brother of Kobe – helping to fill the void.

King has been a king in the secondary, at times a forgotten man considering that teams have largely shied away from throwing toward the future NFL draft pick.

"I feel like I haven't really been getting a lot of action, but that's just going back to me doing my job every play, not getting bored out there and not just focusing on me making plays, but rather me doing my job every play," King said. "I know that opportunities will come, and when they do, I'm looking to capitalize on them."

Along with starting safeties Jaylen Reed and Kevin Winston Jr., the Nittany Lions are limiting opposing quarterbacks to just 121.2 passing yards per game, which ranks first nationally, and have intercepted the ball seven times.

All told, these three levels of the defense have combined to allow just 8.0 points (second in the Big Ten and nationally, both behind Michigan) and 193.7 yards (first nationally) per game, making them arguably the best defense in the country through the first half of the season, and Diaz thinks the group might only be getting started.

"I like the fact that as a unit, we're starting to feel the soul of our defense," Diaz said. "The guys are enjoying playing for and with one another."

Moving to the other side of the ball, the biggest shift has been the transition from longtime starting quarterback Sean Clifford to sophomore Drew Allar, who has provided a significant boost for Penn State's offense.

Through six games, Allar completed 65.2 percent of his passes (118 of 181) for 1,254 yards and 12 touchdowns, and he has added 79 yards and three scores on the ground.

"Although we've had some good ones here, that's probably been the difference between us winning three New Year's Six bowl games and getting into the playoff and winning a national championship," Franklin said, "is having an elite quarterback that can make the plays that change games."

Furthermore, Allar has not turned the ball over once – in fact, the Nittany Lions have turned the ball over just three times, tied for sec-

## Get To Know ... Penn State

- **2023 Record:** 6-0.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation - Spread; Defensive Formation - 4-3; Starters Returning - Offense 8, Defense 5.
- **Head Coach:** James Franklin, 10th year at Penn State, 84-36.
- **Series History:** 39th meeting; Ohio State leads 24-14-0.
- **School Facts:** Location - State College, Pa.; Enrollment - 98,783; Nickname - Nittany Lions; Colors - Blue, White; Conference - Big Ten (East Division); Stadium - Beaver Stadium (Surface, Grass; Capacity - 106,572).

### Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Kaytron Allen	78	375	4.8	3
Nicholas Singleton	89	362	4.1	6
Beau Pribula	34	225	6.6	3

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Drew Allar	118-181	65.2	1254	12-0

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
K. Lambert-Smith	31	402	13.0	3
Theo Johnson	16	167	10.4	2
Tyler Warren	16	129	8.1	5

### Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game — 44.3  
 Rushing Yards Per Game — 203.3  
 Passing Yards Per Game — 223.3  
 Total Offense Avg. Per Game — 426.7

### 2023 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 2	WEST VIRGINIA	W, 38-15
Sept. 9	DELAWARE	W, 63-7
Sept. 16	at Illinois	W, 30-13
Sept. 23	IOWA	W, 31-0
Sept. 30	at Northwestern	W, 41-13
Oct. 14	MASSACHUSETTS	W, 63-0
Oct. 21	at Ohio State	12 p.m.
Oct. 28	INDIANA	TBA
Nov. 4	at Maryland	TBA
Nov. 11	MICHIGAN	12 p.m.
Nov. 18	RUTGERS	TBA
Nov. 24	vs. MSU at Detroit	7:30 p.m.

### Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Curtis Jacobs	17	6	23	3.0-3	1.0-1
Dominic DeLuca	9	7	16	3.0-9	1.0-5
Jaylen Reed	10	6	16	1.5-7	1.0-7
Kobe King	12	4	16	4.0-9	1.0-3
Cam Miller	11	2	13	3.0-12	2.0-11
Adisa Isaac	8	4	12	7.5-41	5.0-37

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Daequan Hardy	2	34	17.0	0
Dominic DeLuca	1	26	26.0	1
Johnny Dixon	1	21	21.0	0

### Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed — 8.0  
 Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed — 72.5  
 Passing Yards Per Game Allowed — 121.2  
 Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed — 193.7

ond-fewest giveaways in the country.

"I think what happens a lot of times because it's so exciting is that people spend a lot of time on the turnovers, but just as exciting to me is the lack of turnovers and how we're respecting the football and essentially the program by doing that," Franklin said. "We've got to continue to preach that. We've got to continue to not get bored with that, with those fundamentals in that period that we do every single day."

While Penn State's offense has taken care of business, one area where the team will need to improve – especially against teams such as Ohio State and Michigan – is in creating explosive plays. Through six games, the Nittany Lions had only 16 plays of at least 20 yards, which tied for No. 129 in the country, while Ohio State has allowed 15, tied for sixth nationally.

But should Penn State start looking to take more deep shots, it's likely they will be aimed toward junior wideout KeAndre Lambert Smith, who is leading the Nittany Lions with 31 receptions for 402 yards and three touchdowns this season, while the next closest receivers (Theo Johnson and Tyler Warren, both tight ends) have just 16 receptions.

"I just have been really proud of KeAndre," Franklin said. "His growth on the field, on game days, his maturity, his growth daily at practice and how he works and how he leads by example, how he makes plays consistently, how he is with contested catches going against some of the best defensive backs in the country every single day. Iron sharpens iron. Also how he is off the field in terms of his grades and graduation."

And don't forget about perhaps the best one-two punch at running back not only in the Big Ten, but maybe in the country. Sophomores Nicholas Singleton and Kaytron Allen came on the scene last year and have continued to improve, combining this season for 737 yards on 167 carries (4.4 per attempt) with nine touchdowns.

Boosting the performance of Singleton and Allen has been a veteran offensive line for the

Nittany Lions. The unit has allowed only four sacks while the rushing attack is averaging 203.3 yards per contest, which is best in the Big Ten and 15th in the country.

The offensive line has returnees in senior left tackle Olumuyiwa Fashanu, fifth-year seniors Sal Wormley (right guard) and Caedan Wallace (right tackle) and center Hunter Nourzad, who elected to return for a sixth season of college football after playing his first four seasons at Cornell and last year with Penn State.

"He's done a really good job," Franklin said of Nourzad. "Culturally, he's been a great culture fit for us. He's really well respected in the locker room from the players, from the staff. I think him coming back this year was important for him and for us. That was a decision he needed to make, and I think it was the right decision."

Special teams are also of note for the Nittany Lions. Defensive back Daequan Hardy returned two punts for touchdowns in Penn State's 63-0 win over UMass on Oct. 14.

"This is going to change things for us," Franklin said. "This is going to create issues for people who are evaluating us on film – something that's going to cause them long nights in how they're going to defend us."

It will not be clear until Penn State at Ohio State kicks off on Oct. 21 whether the Nittany Lions have reached the level of knocking off the Buckeyes – that is as much a mental exercise as it is executing on the field – but through six games, it is clear that Penn State is at least on Ohio State's level, with just as good a shot at winning the conference as the Buckeyes and Wolverines have through the midway point of the season.

"I think we're pretty good," Robinson said. "We're only chasing greatness, so we want to get better. We're not satisfied with our performances. We've been playing pretty good, and we're just building on it every week."



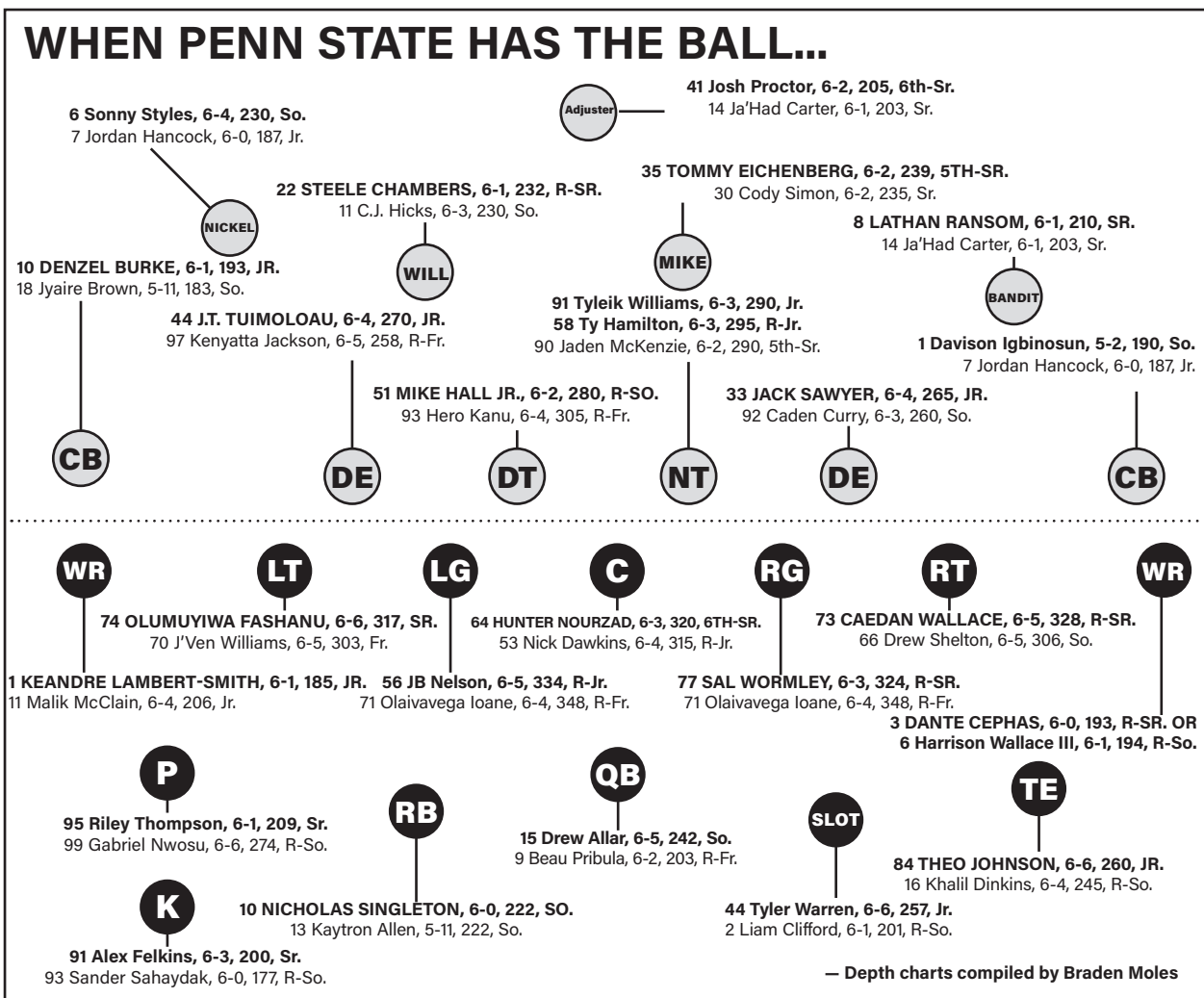
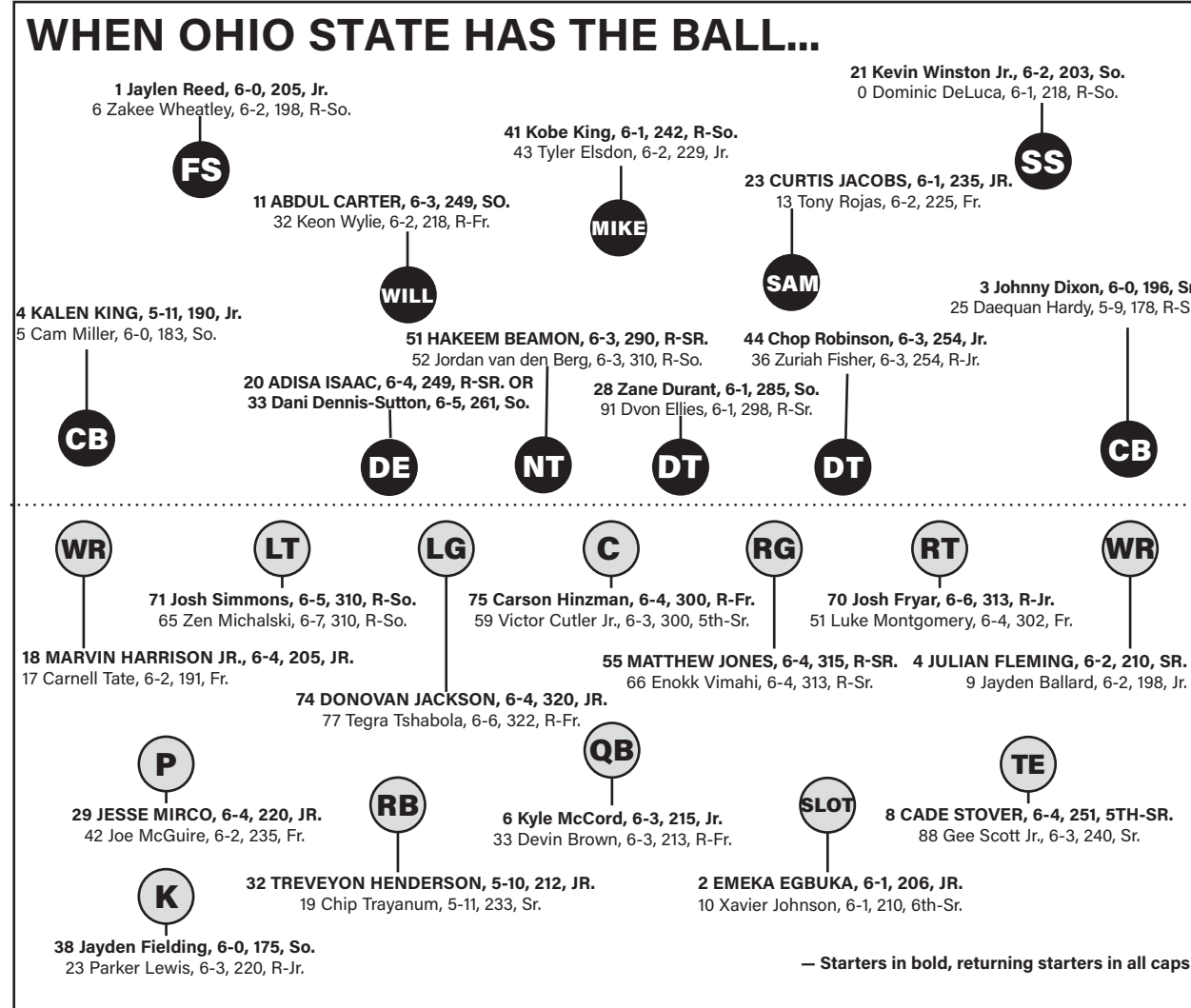


# Penn State at Ohio State

Saturday, Oct. 21 • Noon • FOX  
Ohio Stadium; Columbus



## Projected Depth Charts



## How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs.  
PENN STATE RUSH DEFENSE

It's hard to project what the backfield will look like when TreVeyon Henderson missed a second straight game and Miyan Williams was also out against Purdue on Oct. 14. Then, Chip Trayanum left with an injury in the first quarter during the 41-7 win over Purdue. Fortunately, Dallan Hayden was part of the run by committee that pushed the Buckeyes to 152 yards on a 3.9 average per rush, although OSU had just 16 in the second half. Hayden ran for 76 yards on 11 carries (6.9) with a long of 19 and a 1-yard TD. Xavier Johnson chipped in with 39 yards on five carries (7.8), and Trayanum had 28 yards on six totes (4.7). The big development was backup quarterback Devin Brown becoming an integral part of the short-yardage situations, especially near the end zone. It worked on his 2-yard touchdown, but on a later drive, he lost a fumble while trying to stretch across the goal line. He gained 20 yards on eight carries (2.5). Credit the maligned offensive line for finally pushing to the second level. Penn State cupcaked its way to a 63-0 win over UMass on Oct. 14. The Nittany Lions allowed 64 rushing yards on a 1.6 average. They have held opponents under 100 rushing yards in five straight games and are second nationally in rushing defense (72.5 yards per game). **EDGE: EVEN**

PENN STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs.  
OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Nittany Lions ran over UMass to the tune of 246 yards (6.6). Nick Singleton led the way with 79 yards (5.3), and Kaytron Allen gained 68 (7.6). They have depth and used it against the overwhelmed Minutemen as Tank Smith had a 39-yard run and backup quarterback Beau Pribula a 31-yarder. PSU had at least 28 first downs for the third time this season. The Buckeye defense had a so-so game, limiting the Boilermakers to 123 yards on a 3.5 average, but Devin Mockobee ripped off 110 of those with a 6.1 average, including runs of 19 and 21 yards. OSU is 22nd nationally at 109.2 rushing yards per game. **EDGE: EVEN**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs.  
PENN STATE PASS DEFENSE

Kyle McCord was without injured Emeka Egbuka, but he had a solid outing, tossing three touchdowns while completing 16 of 28 for 276 yards. His favorite target, of course, was Marvin Harrison Jr, who hauled in six throws for 105 yards and a score. Reliable tight end Cade Stover added 53 yards on four grabs, two of which were for touchdowns. Freshman Carnell Tate had a breakout game with a 55-yard reception among his three catches for 79 yards. Late in the game, freshman Brandon Inniss pulled in a 58-yard score from Brown for his first career reception and touchdown. The Buckeyes accumulated 334 yards through the air, but Purdue recorded three sacks, one of which was a strip-sack of McCord. There were also several delay-of-game penalties that drove coach Ryan Day nuts. Penn State held UMass to 45 passing yards and had seven sacks and an interception. The Nittany Lions lead the nation in pass defense (121.2 yards per game). **EDGE: EVEN**

PENN STATE PASS OFFENSE vs.  
OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Drew Allar connected on 16 of 23 passes for 162 yards and a touchdown and ran for another score against the Minutemen. Since 2000, he is the only Big Ten quarterback who has thrown 10-plus touchdowns (12) and no interceptions through the first six games. He has 181 pass attempts without an interception this season. The Buckeyes had three sacks with Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau making regular appearances in the Purdue backfield. Denzel Burke had another strong game that included a pass breakup in the end zone. The Boilermakers gained just 134 yards through the air, and the only points allowed by the Buckeyes came from a 20-yard drive after a McCord strip-sack. The Buckeyes are No. 4 nationally in pass defense (154.3). **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### SPECIAL TEAMS

The Buckeyes had a not-so-great game. Jayden Fielding missed the first point after, and Jesse Mirco's first punt was for just 39 yards when he had plenty of field to work with. He rebounded for a 53-yarder, and Johnson totaled 49 yards on two kickoff returns. Purdue had 38 yards on two kickoff returns and 13 for a punt run-back. PSUs Daequan Hardy had punt returns of 56 and 68 yards for touchdowns against UMass. **EDGE: PENN STATE**

### INTANGIBLES

Being at home will be an advantage, and Penn State boss James Franklin has had little success against the Buckeyes despite most of the recent games in the series being close going into the fourth quarter. He is 1-8 against OSU and 0-4 in Ohio Stadium. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### STAFF PREDICTION

Experts say this is Penn State's best team since 2017, when the Nittany Lions held an 11-point lead with 5:42 remaining in Columbus before J.T. Barrett rallied the Buckeyes to an epic 39-38 win. This one could be memorable, too. **OHIO STATE 28, PENN STATE 24**

# Penn State Game Set Tone For '98 Title Path

*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 sixth installment in our 2023 historical series.*

**By MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Ohio State was installed as the preseason No. 1 college football team in the nation in 1998 and had preserved that ranking through the first month of the season. But the Buckeyes hadn't been tested – really tested – as they prepared for their Big Ten opener in early October against seventh-ranked Penn State

In what had been billed as a season-opening showdown between two of the nation's top teams, Ohio State put a 34-17 hurting on No. 11 West Virginia in front of a prime-time crowd of 68,409 at Mountaineer Field – still the third-largest attendance in stadium history – as well as millions more making up a nationwide television audience.

The Buckeyes flexed their muscles on both sides of the ball, piling up 549 yards of total offense while limiting a vaunted Mountaineers running attack to only 78 yards, most of that coming in the first half. Star running back Amos Zereoue, who had finished 10th in the 1997 Heisman Trophy balloting, carried 20 times for 77 yards, but his seven attempts in the second half resulted in a net of minus-3 yards.

Meanwhile, OSU tailback Michael Wiley rushed for 140 yards and one touchdown, quarterback Joe Germaine threw for 301 yards and a pair of scores, and split end David Boston reeled in seven receptions for 129 yards and a touchdown. It was the first of six 100-yard rushing games Wiley turned in during the 1998 season, the first of seven 300-yard passing games for Germaine that year, and the first of eight times that season Boston would catch passes worth at least 100 yards.

Following the opening win against West Virginia, Ohio State returned to Columbus for a pair of victories during which the Buckeyes barely broke a sweat.

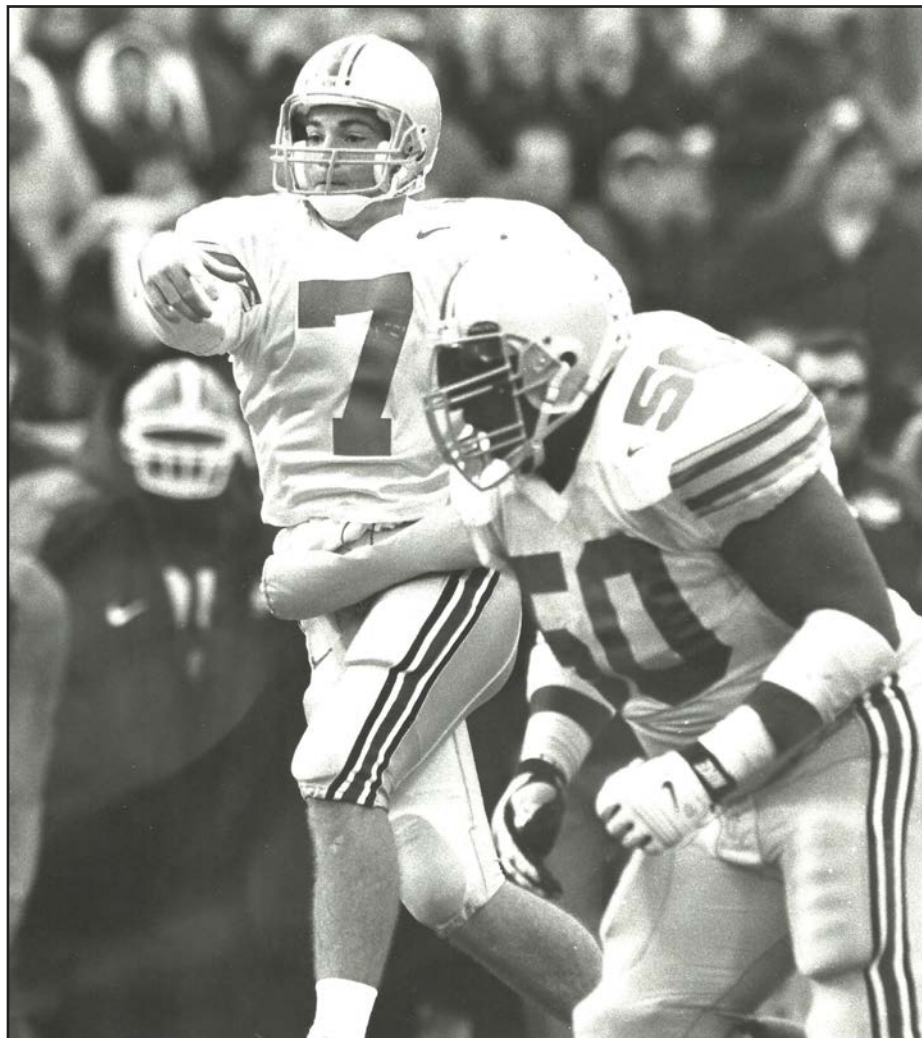
Wiley broke off a 76-yard touchdown run during the team's first possession of a 49-0 rout of in-state rival Toledo, and then the OSU defense choked off an upset bid from No. 19 Missouri, shutting out the Tigers in the second half and limiting them to only 78 total yards after intermission to secure a 35-14 victory.

Missouri head coach Larry Smith, an Ohio native who had coached USC to back-to-back victories over the Buckeyes in 1989 and 1990, said his team was simply outclassed.

"If Ohio State isn't the No. 1 team in the country, I don't know who is," Smith said. "We did about everything we could and still lost by three touchdowns. They're as good as I've seen."

The win must have been especially gratifying for OSU head coach John Cooper. He had been in the nascent days of his tenure with the Buckeyes in 1989 when Smith's USC team, led by defensive stalwart Junior Seau, rolled to a 42-3 victory at historic Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.

And although it was a closer verdict the following year when the Trojans came to Colum-



FILE PHOTO

**NO PROBLEM — Quarterback Joe Germaine (7) faced a fearsome Penn State defense in the Buckeyes' 28-9 win over the Nittany Lions on Oct. 3, 1998, throwing for 213 yards and a touchdown in the victory.**

bus and went home with a 35-26 win, Cooper was the victim of even more criticism when he agreed to allow the game to be called with 2:36 remaining (after USC had successfully recovered an onside kick) due to a life-threatening thunder and lightning storm that had enveloped Ohio Stadium.

If Cooper got any special kick out of beating Smith and his Missouri team, he didn't show it outwardly. And maybe that was because the coach knew neither he nor his team could afford to gloat. The Buckeyes followed that victory with an early-season off week before the Big Ten opener against Penn State, a team that already jumped six spots in the national rankings to No. 7. It was to be the marquee college football game of the week with ABC handling the national telecast and the ESPN "College GameDay" crew in attendance.

"That was the one we had circled from the beginning," former OSU recruiting coordinator and tight ends coach Bill Conley told BSB. "That was the one where we were going to find out if we were as good as we thought we were. Penn State was undefeated with a defense filled with guys who would play a long time in the NFL. And they'd beaten us the year before in a game we knew we should have won."

"We knew if we were going to get to where we wanted to go, we had to go through them. And they knew it, too."

## Old Foes Meet Again

More than a decade before the child sexual abuse scandal that ripped his program apart

and forced him into retirement, Joe Paterno was one of the bastions of college football in 1998. He was in his 33rd season at Penn State, a tenure that included five national coach of the year awards, 11 top-five finishes and two national championships.

Paterno had also claimed one Big Ten title and had never finished lower than third in the conference standings since joining the league in 1993. The championship came during the 1994 season, a year in which Paterno unleashed his top-ranked team on Ohio State in late October.

The Buckeyes had lost twice during the early going in 1994 and temporarily fell out of the nation's top 25. Back-to-back wins against Michigan State and Purdue in mid-October had gotten them back in the rankings, but they were hopelessly outgunned in Happy Valley, falling behind 35-0 at halftime on the way to an embarrassing 63-14 loss.

It was the most lopsided defeat for Ohio State since a 58-6 loss to Michigan in 1946, and it marked the first time the Buckeyes had allowed an opponent to crack the 60-point mark since an 86-0 loss to Michigan in 1902.

Making matters worse (if that was possible) was the fact the Nittany Lions were led by running back Ki-Jana Carter, who rushed for 137 yards and four touchdowns. Carter was a product of South High School in the northern Columbus suburb of Westerville but had chosen to attend Penn State rather than his hometown school.

To say the natives became restless follow-

ing the loss to the Nittany Lions would be an understatement. Nearly every television commentator, letter to the editor and radio call-in show listener was screaming for Cooper's immediate dismissal. The coach survived, of course, never publicly addressing the criticism until years later.

"Sure, we heard the criticism," Cooper said. "You could hardly ignore it. Some of it was mean-spirited in my opinion, but when you were a coach as long as I was, you know a lot of that goes with the territory. I think what a lot of those people didn't realize was that we wanted to win just as bad as they did. We were working as hard as we could."

Although he was always reluctant to admit it, Cooper used that lopsided loss to Penn State in 1994 as a touchstone for his program. The Buckeyes won three of their last four games that season – including a breakthrough 22-6 victory against Michigan – and then rattled off 35 wins in their next 40 games before facing the Nittany Lions in 1998.

"I don't think people give as much credit to Coach Cooper as they should for turning around his program the way he did after that loss at Penn State," longtime OSU football historian Jack Park told BSB. "In my opinion, that was one of the most impressive turnarounds in the history of college football, and I don't think Coach Cooper gets the kind of credit he deserves for accomplishing that."

To keep that momentum going was not going to be an easy task, however. Penn State had begun its 1998 season with a convincing 34-6 win against No. 21 Southern Miss before victories against Bowling Green and in-state rival Pittsburgh had elevated the Nittany Lions from the No. 13 spot in the preseason rankings to No. 7.

Leading the team was a ferocious defense featuring a trio of All-Americans – linebackers LaVar Arrington and Brandon Short and defensive end Courtney Brown. Each member of that threesome later played at least seven NFL seasons with Arrington becoming a two-time All-Pro with the Washington Redskins.

"They were loaded on defense," OSU quarterback Joe Germaine remembered. "It seemed like they had an All-American or an All-Big Ten guy at every position. We spent so much time looking at film because we knew we couldn't key on just one or two guys. If you tried to do that, somebody else would get you. Like I said, they were loaded on defense."

Offensively, the Nittany Lions weren't as explosive as they had been in recent years, but they still had plenty of talent. Starting quarterback Kevin Thompson threw for more than 3,500 yards combined during his junior and senior seasons, and he had a bevy of talented receivers including Chafie Fields and Joe Nastasi, each of whom averaged more than 16 yards per catch during their college careers.

Up front, offensive linemen Floyd Wedderburn and Kareem McKenzie were on their way to All-Big Ten honors in 1998.

Still, it appeared the Buckeyes had the better of it offensively. After three games, Germaine had completed 64.1 percent of his attempts for 662 yards and five touchdowns. Boston had become his quarterback's favorite target with 21 catches for 296 yards and two TDs, but right behind was flanker Dee Miller with 14 receptions for 213 yards and a pair of scores.

And then there was Wiley, who was coming off a 209-yard rushing performance against Missouri to push his total to an even 500 yards and five touchdowns after only three games. Better still was Wiley's gaudy average of 9.3 yards per carry.

"We knew they had a good defense," backup tailback Joe Montgomery told BSB, "but they hadn't seen any kind of offense like the one we had. We definitely felt we had the advantage going in."

With iconic broadcaster Keith Jackson on hand to call the play-by-play for ABC and Lee Corso ready to don the Brutus headgear on the "College GameDay" show, the stage seemed set for a classic showdown between two of college football's most dynamic teams.

"We honestly thought we had the better team," Conley said. "We knew they had a good defense, but with the passing ability we had and the rushing capabilities we had, we just thought we couldn't be stopped. And then you wake up that morning, look outside and just shake your head."

### Fighting The Elements

The Friday before the game had featured a warm 62-degree afternoon with no threat of rain. But that night, winds switched from westerly to out of the north, sending the mercury plummeting into the 40s. Making matters worse was a cold rain that started shortly after midnight and showed no signs of stopping as the noon kickoff approached.

That drizzle continued throughout the afternoon, making the Ohio Stadium turf just soggy enough to effectively neutralize Ohio State's offensive advantages.

"They sometimes put nine guys in the box because I guess they didn't think we could throw the ball under those conditions," Germaine said. "They weren't ideal to say the least, but we were never going to give up on throwing the ball."

Before the Nittany Lions began to completely sell out to stop the OSU running attack, Wiley broke off an 8-yard run on the first play from scrimmage, and fullback Matt Keller followed with a 4-yard burst on a draw play for a first down. But the drive fizzled when two plays in a row lost yardage, and Germaine threw incomplete on third down.

It was the beginning of a choppy first quarter during which neither team could gain much foothold. The teams combined for only 98 total yards, with Ohio State claiming the only scoring threat, a 40-yard field-goal attempt that Dan Stultz yanked wide to the left.

The Buckeyes were also stuck in first gear in terms of their running game. Entering the contest averaging 274.3 yards on the ground and 6.2 yards per attempt, they managed only 36 yards on 11 rushes during the first quarter against Penn State – and 22 of those came on a scramble by Germaine.

After the scoreless first quarter, things got progressively worse for the Buckeyes. With the running game still stuck in neutral, Germaine went to the air to convert a couple of third-down passes – the first for 29 yards to Boston on a third-and-7, the second for 14 yards to Miller on a third-and-6.

But things went backward from there. Wiley fumbled on first down, a loose ball alertly recovered by offensive guard Rob Murphy, and then two plays later, the OSU tailback was thrown for a 3-yard loss on third-and-10. Stultz stepped up to try a 50-yard field goal, but Penn State cornerback David Macklin blocked the

kick and teammate Anthony King recovered the ball near midfield.

The Nittany Lions capitalized on the special teams play when kicker Travis Forney booted a 42-yard field goal for the first points of the game. Penn State held a 3-0 lead with 8:08 remaining until halftime, and although it was a scant margin, it seemed big enough given the weather conditions.

Ohio State's next offensive possession nearly ended in disaster as the Nittany Lions and their defense seemingly began to take control of the game. Germaine took a keeper over left end where he was met by Arrington, who punched the ball from the OSU quarterback's grasp. A mad scramble ensued with the Buckeyes managing to swarm on the loose ball at midfield. But they couldn't do anything with it from there and were forced to punt.

At that point, the Buckeyes had had four possessions during which they had run a total of 33 plays – 18 of which had gained 2 yards or less – and had fumbled twice and missed two field goals.

And then, in the blink of an eye, the tide turned.

On the first play of Penn State's next possession, OSU linebacker Jerry Rudzinski stuffed running back Aaron Harris at the line of scrimmage for no gain. Then on second down, Rudzinski blew in unlocked on Thompson and hit the linebacker trifecta – a sack, forced fumble and recovered fumble in the end zone all in the same sequence.

A retreating Thompson tried to get a pass away while Rudzinski roared in on him, but the slippery ball shot straight into the air and the Ohio State linebacker smothered it in the back of the end zone for the game's first touchdown. The Ohio Stadium crowd of 93,479 – heretofore wet and chilled to the bone – exploded in a heated frenzy as Rudzinski triumphantly thrust his right fist into the air as he was being mobbed by his teammates. The deafening roar had barely dissipated when Stultz added the extra point, giving the Buckeyes a 7-3 lead with 3:55 remaining in the first half.

That was followed in rapid succession by a 20-yard touchdown pass from Germaine to Wiley with just 23 seconds left before halftime and a blocked punt by OSU safety Percy King that linebacker Joe Cooper recovered in the end zone within the first three minutes of the third quarter.

The Nittany Lions never recovered, and the Buckeyes rolled away with an eventual 28-9 victory.

In the end, it was Ohio State's defense that ruled the afternoon. Penn State managed only 181 total yards, with just 79 of that coming on the ground. Thompson was limited to 11 completions in 20 attempts for 106 yards, no touchdowns and an interception before he was knocked out of the game early in the fourth quarter. Backup QB Rashad Casey probably wished he could have stayed on the bench. He completed just 2 of 9 attempts for a net of minus-4 yards and was sacked once.

Meanwhile, Germaine struggled with the wet football, throwing his first interception of the season, fumbling twice and getting sacked three times. But he still managed to throw for 213 yards and a touchdown, while Miller fought his way through the raindrops to grab a game-best six receptions for 108 yards.

"I woke up that morning, looked out the window, and was like, 'Aw, man. You've got to be kidding me,'" Miller told BSB. "I saw the rain puddling in the street and knew we were



FILE PHOTO

**TURNING THE TIDES – Ohio State linebacker Jerry Rudzinski helped turn momentum in the Buckeyes' 28-9 win over Penn State on Oct. 3, 1998, sacking quarterback Kevin Thompson and forcing a fumble, which he also recovered in the end zone for the Buckeyes' first points of the game.**

going to have to adjust our game plan. We wanted to get into a track meet with those guys, but I knew that morning that probably wasn't going to happen."

Arrington and Short still managed to get in their licks, combining for 19 tackles, including five for loss and three sacks. Arrington also forced two fumbles, recovered one, and broke up two passes.

Wiley, who was held to a season-low 62 yards rushing on 19 carries, gave credit where credit was due.

"Under the conditions, we definitely knew we were going to have to run the ball today, and they knew it, too," he told reporters after the game. "They put nine men on the line, and on every play somebody came unblocked. Arrington had a great game and so did Short. Their whole defense played a great game. But in the end, we got the 'W,' and that's all that matters."

Conley remembered a supreme sense of satisfaction in the locker room after the game, a euphoria that carried over to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center the following day.

"We knew what kind of test that Penn State was going to present, and we passed that test," he said. "It proved to our team not only what we could do against a great team, but also what we could do when the weather condi-

tions were against us. But we also knew we couldn't celebrate that win for very long. The season was only four games old, and we still had a lot of work to do."

Cooper underscored that sentiment with one of his tried-and-true homilies, saying after the game, "As soon as you feel good about your football team, you'd better check your hole card. I just told our squad that we're going to have a great week of practice, and I guarantee there won't be any letdown next week."

The head coach was true to his word. The Buckeyes solidified their No. 1 ranking the following week with a 41-0 wipeout of Illinois. That was followed by a 45-15 homecoming victory against Minnesota and back-to-back road wins – 36-10 at Northwestern and 38-7 at Indiana.

The calendar flipped to November with Ohio State standing undefeated at 8-0 with another Big Ten championship showdown against archrival Michigan just two weeks away. All that stood in the Buckeyes' way before that were games in which they would be prohibitive favorites – at home Oct. 7 against a 4-4 Michigan State team and on the road Oct. 14 at an Iowa team on its way to a 3-8 finish in 1998.

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# OSU Sets Big Recruiting Weekend With PSU

Ohio State has just three home games remaining this season – vs. Penn State on Oct. 21, vs. Michigan State on Nov. 11 and vs. Minnesota on Nov. 18 – and the match-up with the Nittany Lions will be the biggest recruiting event left for the staff this season.

Pickett Jr. (6-3, 205); Goodyear (Ariz.) Desert Edge four-star defensive end Deshawn Warner (6-4, 225), who is a Kansas commit; and Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman Amaris Williams (6-3, 270), who is pledged to Florida.

In 2025, all three of Ohio State's pledges, including Cocoa, Fla., three-star wideout Jayvan Boggs (6-0, 188); Bellefontaine, Ohio, four-star quarterback Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 210); and Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star cornerback Blake Woodby (5-11, 180) – more on Boggs' and Woodby's commitments later – are expected to attend.

As for uncommitted prospects, it's a large list that includes Mission Viejo, Calif., four-star wide receiver Phillip Bell (6-2, 195); Cleveland Heights four-star running back Marquise Davis (6-0, 190); Olney (Md.) Good Counsel four-star safety Faheem Delane (6-2, 182); Detroit Jesuit three-star athlete Elijah Dotson (6-2, 175); West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star tight end Luke Gilbert (6-8, 233); and Cincinnati Winton Woods four-star defensive end Justin Hill (6-4, 215).

Also expected are Akron Hoban three-star linebacker Eli Lee (6-3, 215); Toledo Whitmer four-star offensive tackle Carter Lowe (6-5, 290); Shaker Heights, Ohio, four-star athlete Trey McNutt (6-0, 180); Kissimmee (Fla.) Osceola four-star linebacker Elijah Melendez (6-2, 223); Atlanta Woodward Academy four-star defensive end London Merritt (6-3, 235); Houston North Shore five-

## 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

star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170); and Buford, Ga., four-star cornerback Devin Williams (5-11, 168).

In 2026, Ohio State's lone commitment – Cincinnati Withrow five-star wide receiver Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 185) – will be in attendance along with Akron Hoban four-star offensive tackle Sam Greer (6-8, 290); Vero Beach, Fla., four-star offensive tackle Micah Smith (6-6, 295); Avon Lake, Ohio, five-star offensive tackle Maxwell Riley (6-5, 263); and Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star safety Jireh Edwards (6-1, 194).

(Fla.), Old Dominion and FCS-level South Dakota extending him offers prior to the Buckeyes, with his first offer coming from South Dakota in June.

"Coach 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."

Roker – who also plays basketball, averaging 17.1 points, 5.8 rebounds and 4.0 assists per game his junior season, along with track and field – is known for his speed and physicality at the safety position. He has also spent some time on offense at Bishop Verot this season, lining up at running back and wide receiver.

Prior to his time at Bishop Verot, Roker played at Canterbury School in Fort Myers, Fla., but his move to Bishop Verot before his senior season put some additional eyes on the three-star prospect and has led to his recruitment taking off.

With the commitment of Roker, Ohio State now has two safeties in the class, with Roker joining West Orange (N.J.) Seton Hall Prep three-star Jaylen McClain (6-0, 185).

### Three-Star SAF Roker Pledges To 2024 Class

Ohio State added another defensive back to its 2024 class on Oct. 11, securing a pledge from Fort Myers (Fla.) Bishop Verot three-star safety Leroy Roker (6-1, 170).

Roker is not considered one of the premier prospects in the class, ranking as just the nation's No. 1,153 prospect along with the No. 115 safety and No. 152 overall player in Florida, but he quickly piqued the interest of safeties coach Perry Eliano and Ohio State this fall. He earned an offer from the Buckeyes on Oct. 3 and took an official visit to campus four days later to attend the Buckeyes' 37-17 win over Maryland.

Ohio State was just the fifth school to express interest in him, with only Iowa, Miami

### OSU Offers Kansas DL Commit Warner

Ohio State is continuing to pursue sev-

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

Here is a list of recruits expected to attend the contest, with information coming from the recruits themselves and our reporting as well as reports from other outlets. This information is subject to change, so be sure to visit BuckeyeSports.com ahead of the game for the updated list of expected visitors.

Beginning in 2024, most of Ohio State's 22 commitments in the class are expected to be in attendance, though a handful – specifically ones coming from several states away, considering the noon kickoff – may end up not making the trip.

As for prospects not already in Ohio State's class, the Buckeyes are expected to welcome a trio of defensive line prospects for official visits. This includes Tampa (Fla.) Wharton four-star defensive end Booker

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## 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
Jayvan Boggs	WR	6-0	188	★★★	Cocoa, Fla.
Tavien St. Clair	QB	6-4	210	★★★★	Bellefontaine, Ohio
Blake Woodby	CB	5-11	180	★★★★	Baltimore St. Frances Academy

## 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

eral defensive linemen in 2024, issuing an offer on Oct. 9 to Warner, who has been committed to Kansas since July.

Warner is the No. 325 overall prospect and No. 27 defensive end in the class, and he holds additional offers from Michigan, Oregon and Texas, among others. He finished with 53 tackles (12 for loss) last season with nine sacks, and through six games this year he had already collected 33 tackles (11 for loss) with 10 sacks, two interceptions and five forced fumbles.

While Ohio State is likely looking to move fast considering that the early signing period is about two months away, Warner is being methodical in his recruitment.

"I've talked to the Ohio State coaches a little," he told 247Sports. "I'm taking it slow. I don't know that much about Ohio State yet. I want to hear them out. They've talked about coming out for the Penn State or Michigan State games. I have to talk about things with my family and coaches."

## WR Commit Smith Becomes Top-Ranked Prospect In 2024

Following 247Sports rankings update on Oct. 12, Opa Locka (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 198) is now considered the top prospect in the 2024 class by the recruiting

service.

Smith joined Ohio State's class in December and has continued to rise up the rankings, and should he finish as the top-ranked prospect in the class, it would be the first time that 247Sports ever had a wide receiver as the top recruit in a class.

He collected 58 receptions for 1,073 yards and 20 touchdowns last season and is already off to a blazing start this year with 52 receptions for 781 yards and 11 touchdowns through seven games.

Following the rankings update, Ohio State now has five five-star commits and nine top-100 prospects in the class, and it has the second-ranked class with 303.43 points behind Georgia (312.89), though the Buckeyes are significantly ahead of third-place Florida (284.22).

## Missouri Attempting To Flip 2024 WR McClellan

Ohio State is on the lookout for Missouri and head coach Eli Drinkwitz, as the program is attempting to flip in-state wide receiver Jeremiah McClellan (6-0, 190) from St. Louis Christian Brothers College, who has been committed to Ohio State since August.

McClellan committed to the Buckeyes following an official visit over the summer,

but Missouri has remained in close contact. In fact, the Tigers hosted McClellan for an unofficial visit on Oct. 7 for a 49-39 loss to LSU.

For the first time in a while, Missouri has a product on the field that has been able to impress recruits, with one of the nation's top offenses this season led by wide receiver Luther Burden III, a former in-state five-star in 2022 who had 54 receptions for 793 yards and five touchdowns through five games this season.

While it's unlikely that a wide receiver would flip away from Ohio State – it's usually the opposite for the Buckeyes, with them pulling wideouts away from other schools – it will continue to remain a point of concern until McClellan does (or potentially does not) sign with Ohio State in December.

## OSU Adds Four-Star CB Woodby In 2025

The first defensive commitment for 2025 joined Ohio State's class on Oct. 14 when Woodby announced his pledge to the Buckeyes.

Woodby is the No. 79 overall prospect and ninth-ranked cornerback in the class, and he chose Ohio State over Alabama, Clemson, Oregon and Tennessee. He was offered by the Buckeyes in December and returned for visits over the spring and summer, and he was also in attendance for Ohio State's win over Maryland a week before his eventual commitment.

"It was a tough decision because of my relationships with both of those coaching staffs," Woodby told On3 of the Buckeyes and Oregon. "I have great connections with my position coaches at Ohio State and Oregon, so I thought a lot about both schools. In the end, I chose Ohio State because of the feeling I had on campus. When I visited for the first time in the spring, it just felt like me."

Woodby is a two-way player for St. Fran-

ces, lining up as a slot receiver and outside cornerback, and he is a physical player who frequently gets his hands on the ball in coverage.

"Their slogan is 'develop here.' The biggest thing for me is getting to the league," he said. "Ohio State produces cornerbacks, they believe in guys like me and they coach their guys up. I was going where I felt I would be put into the best position to get to the NFL and that is why I chose Ohio State."

With Woodby in the fold at cornerback, Ohio State is also looking at Sanchez (6-2, 170), Williams and Indianapolis Ben Davis four-star Mark Zackery IV (6-0, 164), among others.

## Boggs Becomes First WR Commit In 2025

Woodby was not the only 2025 prospect Ohio State added since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press. The Buckeyes added their first wide receiver in Boggs, who announced his pledge on Oct. 9.

Boggs is another prototypical case of offensive coordinator/wide receivers coach Brian Hartline identifying and pouncing on a prospect. Boggs is just the No. 347 overall prospect and No. 48 wide receiver in the class, and he held Power Five offers from Boston College, Colorado, Florida, Louisville, Ole Miss, Penn State, Pittsburgh and West Virginia. Ohio State offered Boggs this past summer after he camped with the Buckeyes.

"It's kind of crazy. Growing up Ohio State was my favorite college team," Boggs told Eleven Warriors. "I watched all of their games. It was my favorite team. It's crazy to be able to say I'm committed to them and that I'm going there to play football."

He collected 41 receptions for 722 yards and six touchdowns last season for Cocoa and is also former teammates with current Ohio State freshman safety Ced-

Continued On Page 30

ASK AN ANALYST  
with Bill Kurelic of 247Sports

**Ohio State added a commitment on Oct. 11 from Fort Myers (Fla.) Bishop Verot three-star safety LeRoy Roker (6-1, 170). What does this pledge mean for the Buckeyes, and what do you think of Roker as a prospect?**

"They really needed to get another safety in the class, and it was their goal to get at least three, if not four safeties in this class. So they really needed to get someone they felt was Ohio State-level, and they got (Roker). It gives them two, I guess you could say pure safeties, in him and West Orange (N.J.) Seton Hall Prep four-star Jaylen McClain (6-0, 185). And then they have Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut four-star Garrett Stover (6-0, 195) who is kind of a hybrid guy at linebacker and safety.

"As far as Roker himself, I think he's a kid that has had a good senior season. He's at a new school, and he's had a good season and that happens, kids develop as they go along. He was really starting to blow up a little bit. He had received offers from Ohio State, Iowa and Miami (Fla.) in a fairly short period. He's just a good athlete. I mean, he's a college prospect in basketball, too. He's going to go to football, but he's just a good all-around athlete that really was a little under the radar in his previous school."

**Is Ohio State still looking to add a third safety following Roker's commitment, and if so, where might it be looking?**

"I think they would like to add a safety, if they can get a great one. I don't necessarily think that's likely to hap-

pen. If Buford, Ga., five-star K.J. Bolden (6-1, 185) wanted to flip (from Florida State), for instance, they would take him in a heartbeat. I think it's not particularly likely to happen, but you never know. I mean, Ohio State has a way of doing that and the longer you go into the recruiting process, coaching changes happen in places and all that. Maybe if Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep's Zaquan Patterson (6-0, 185) decided he wanted to look at Ohio State again, he's committed to Miami and things haven't gone according to how they hoped there.

"I'm just putting out names. I think most likely, they probably will stay with what they have, and if they need someone down the road, there's always a transfer portal. But if someone came available that they really, really wanted, I would certainly think they would go after him."

**Goodyear (Ariz.) Desert Edge four-star defensive end Deshawn Warner (6-3, 225) is one of several defensive line prospects committed to other schools that Ohio State has offered in recent weeks. How many more defensive linemen do you believe the Buckeyes are looking to take, and who are the biggest targets on the board?**

"Absolutely they want to get another defensive end, an edge guy. They have a strong-side defensive end in Buford, Ga., five-star Eddrick Houston (6-3, 265), and they're looking for a guy to go with him, someone that can rush the passer, perhaps play stand up, maybe even play the Jack position. But they're definitely looking for a defensive end. And the guy at the top of their list right

now would be Clinton, N.C. four-star defensive lineman Amaris Williams (6-3, 270), who's committed to Florida. He is certainly a guy that they would like to flip. And then they offered a scholarship to Warner as well. So those are the two guys right now to keep an eye on."

**Cocoa, Fla., three-star wide receiver Jayvan Boggs (6-0, 188) is yet another receiver identified early and secured by offensive coordinator/wide receivers coach Brian Hartline. What makes Hartline such a great recruiter for Ohio State?**

"Well, I think there's a lot of things. He's a young guy. He had a great career in the NFL. He knows how to connect with people. He has a great track record of producing high-first-round draft choices, and he has a great product. I mean, if you're a wide receiver, with the results they've had with Brian Hartline and Ryan Day, it's a really, really attractive situation."

**Following up on that, how is Boggs on the level of some of the other recent wide receivers that have either signed or are committed to Ohio State?**

"I think he's more of a slot guy. He's more along the lines of a Jaxon Smith-Njigba. And he's had a great junior season and he's really stood out. Ohio State was ready to go after him after they saw the first half of his junior season. He doesn't have absolutely blazing, blazing speed, but he's fast enough. He gets open. He can play the slot and probably could play wide receiver wideout too. He has good hands. He's very similar to Smith-Njigba."

# Buckeyes Targeting 2025 Defensive Ends

Continued From Page 29

rick Hawkins.

Through six games this season, Boggs had already surpassed those marks with 48 receptions for 779 yards and 14 touchdowns, making it easy to see why Hartline identified Boggs as a key target for the Buckeyes. While he lines up everywhere for Co-coa, Boggs will likely operate as a slot receiver for Ohio State.

“One thing I’d really say that stuck out to me about it was (Hartline) said I remind him of Jaxon Smith-Njigba,” Boggs said. “That really spoke to me, because he’s a first-round draft pick and was one of the best receivers in college football. I’d love to follow in his footsteps.”

Ohio State’s other key targets at wide receiver include Bell and West Palm Beach (Fla.) Cardinal Newman four-star Naeshaun Montgomery (6-0, 160).

## OSU Offers Pair Of 2025 Defensive Ends

Ohio State issued a pair of 2025 offers since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, with the recipients being Sugar Land (Texas) Fort Bend Christian Academy four-star defensive end Max Granville (6-3, 215) and Norfolk (Va.) Maury four-star defensive end Ari Watford (6-5, 220).

Starting with Watford, the higher-rated

of the two, he is the No. 36 overall prospect and third-ranked edge rusher in the class, as well as the top prospect from Virginia. He holds additional offers from Clemson, Duke, Florida, Florida State, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, North Carolina, Notre Dame, Penn State, Tennessee, Texas A&M and USC, among others.

“He likes to compete,” wrote 247Sports recruiting analyst Brian Dohn. “He plays as a stand-up edge in 3-4 and traditional defensive end in 4-3. He has very good get-off at snap and covers ground quickly in his first few steps. He has excellent change of direction, can chase plays down from the back side and demonstrates closing speed toward the ball carrier. He plays with a good motor and stays true to his assignment.”

Granville was the other offer, and he is the No. 125 overall prospect and No. 16 linebacker in the class. He holds additional offers from Alabama, Auburn, Duke, Georgia, Michigan, Notre Dame, Penn State, Tennessee, Texas, Texas A&M and USC, among others.

Granville, the son of former collegiate and NFL linebacker Billy Granville, who played at Duke in addition to stints with the Cincinnati Bengals and Houston Texans, finished with 112 tackles (25 for loss) with 20½ sacks in his sophomore season, also adding seven pass breakups and six forced fumbles.

He is also a two-way player for Fort Bend, lining up as a tight end – where he has nine receptions for 295 yards and two touchdowns this season – and at defensive end and outside linebacker.

Ohio State’s other pursuits at defensive end include Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star Nasir Wyatt (6-2, 210), Philadelphia Imhotep Institute four-star Zahir Mathis (6-6, 225), Cocoa, Fla., four-star Javion Hilson (6-4, 225) – a teammate of Boggs – and Hill.

## Ohio State Offers Top 2026 RB Hiter

Another offer sent out by Ohio State went to a 2026 prospect, with Woodberry Forest, Va., five-star running back Savion Hiter (5-11, 182) getting a bid from the Buckeyes.

Rankings often shift around for prospects two or more classes beyond the current crop of recruits, but Hiter is still shaping up to be one of the top running backs in the class, currently checking in as the No. 16 overall prospect and top-ranked running back. He has also picked up offers in recent weeks from Alabama and Texas, joining schools like Georgia, Maryland, Ole Miss, Oregon, Penn State and Tennessee in offering Hiter.

While Hiter just recently received an offer from Ohio State, Hiter’s relationship with the team dates back to the spring when he made his first visit to Columbus and met with running backs coach Tony Alford.

“He made a big impression on me,” Hiter told 247Sports. “I’ve always wanted to be part of a program like Ohio State and love how they develop their running backs.”

Through five games this season, Hiter had rushed for 627 yards and seven touchdowns on 97 carries, averaging 6.5 yards per attempt.

He is just the second running back offered by Ohio State in 2026, joining Boca Raton (Fla.) West’s Javian Mallory (5-11, 200).

## Other Notes And Tidbits

- Lucas (Texas) Lovejoy four-star linebacker Payton Pierce (6-1, 225), a member of Ohio State’s 2024 recruiting class, committed on Oct. 13 to play in the Adidas All-American Bowl, which will be broadcast on NBC on Jan. 6, 2024.

- Atlanta Douglass four-star safety Jontae Gilbert (6-1, 175), a 2025 prospect who was in Ohio State’s class before decommitting in July, announced a new top 10 on Oct. 13, including Auburn, Clemson, Colorado, Georgia Tech, LSU, NC State, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and USC.

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

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

### 35 Years Ago — 1988

College recruiters in search of a quarterback were unfolding their road maps to find Franklin, Ohio, much as they did nearly three decades ago.

In the fall of 1960, Franklin High School — located in southwestern Ohio about midway between Dayton and Cincinnati — had a guy named Bob Timberlake playing quarterback. He later went to the University of Michigan, where he led the Wolverines to a 34-7 victory over Oregon State in the 1965 Rose Bowl and earned All-American honors.

Now, almost 30 years later, Franklin High School had another highly-touted high school quarterback in Lance Harp. A 6-5, 195-pounder blessed with a strong and accurate arm, Harp was regarded as one of the top high school quarterbacks in the state.

“He is probably the most highly recruited quarterback in the state this year,” said recruiting expert Tom Lemming. “We considered Lance to be the top quarterback in the state. Harp has great all-around talent for the position. He reads defenses quickly and has a very good arm. And he’s got the classic size most college scouts are looking for when they recruit quarterbacks.”

### 30 Years Ago — 1993

Ohio Stadium was packed with the seventh-largest crowd (93,989) in its history as the Buckeyes hosted Michigan State on Oct. 16 for a 28-21 win, celebrated homecoming and honored the 1968 national championship team.

However, a little more room was saved in the Horseshoe for some of the top high school football recruits in the state.

The most prominent guest was probably Orlando Pace, a senior offensive lineman from Sandusky High School who was apparently trying to decide between Ohio State, Michigan and a trio of other schools.

Pace resembled a small downtown building at 6-8 and 300-plus pounds and was an amazing athlete for his size with 5.0 speed in the 40-yard dash and outstanding agility.

### 25 Years Ago — 1998

OSU commitment B.J. Sanders of Cincinnati Roger Bacon booted a state-record 60-yard field goal in his team’s 31-20 win over Kettering Alter on Oct. 16.

Sander, whose previous long kick was 54 yards, broke the state record of 57 yards set by former Buckeye Tim Williams of Waynesville in 1988.

“I knew it had a shot, but I didn’t know if it was long enough,” said Sander, whose kick gave Roger Bacon a 10-0 lead in the first quarter.

“I kept watching it, and it finally skipped off the crossbar and went over!”

### 20 Years Ago — 2003

Ohio State class of 2005 verbal commitment Jamario O’Neal had seen the football field just once this season, and there was no timetable set as to when he might see it again.

Ohio High School Athletic Association commissioner Clair Muscaro confirmed to BSB that there was an investigation being conducted into O’Neal’s August transfer from Mansfield Senior High School to Cleveland Glenville.

As part of that transfer, Glenville head coach Ted Ginn Sr. obtained legal guardianship of O’Neal. That apparently raised some eyebrows around the state.

“It throws up a red flag whenever a coach ends up to be the legal guardian of a player,” Muscaro told BSB. “A concern has been expressed by a member school.”

That school apparently was Mansfield Senior, which in recent weeks had been actively trying to obtain any news reports related to O’Neal’s transfer.

Muscaro said that the OHSAA would be investigating whether there was a violation of recruiting bylaws. Bylaw 4-9-1 of the OHSAA Handbook stated, in part, “Any attempt to recruit a prospective student-athlete for athletic purposes shall be strictly prohibited.”

### 15 Years Ago — 2008

With the class of 2009 already boasting 25 verbal members and just a handful of senior prospects on the board, the Buckeyes were turning some of their attention to next year’s class.

And, it turns out, to the class after that as well. Braxton Miller, a sophomore quarterback at Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne, received a verbal offer from the Buckeyes on Oct. 9. A 6-1, 174-pound athlete, Miller also played safety for the Warriors. However, a leg injury suffered in the team’s sixth game of the season likely would sideline him at least until the playoffs began. Miller had helped the team to a 5-0 record.

Wayne was just 1-2 with Miller. Prior to the injury, he had completed 59 of 113 passes for 643 yards and five touchdowns against one interception. Miller had also carried the ball 54 times for 284 yards and six scores.

### 10 Years Ago — 2013

One of the biggest names in attendance for the Buckeyes’ 31-24 win over Wisconsin on Sept. 28 was Memphis (Tenn.) University offensive tackle Drew Richmond. The 2015 four-star prospect enjoyed his trip to Columbus and OSU appeared to be one of the early leaders in the race for his services.

“It was another good visit,” he said. “It was everything it was hyped up to be. The fans made it a special time because the atmosphere was

crazy. I wasn’t disappointed at all. The fans were crazy. They are 17-0 now under Coach (Urban) Meyer so that speaks for itself!”

Despite not being able to spend much time with the coaching staff, the 6-6, 290-pounder appeared to have gotten what he needed out of his visit. Richmond’s second visit to Columbus only enhanced Ohio State’s reputation in his mind as he took in the gameday experience.

“My purpose of the trip was just to take in what a game day is like for the Ohio State players, and I got to so I’m happy. It was everything I expected and more.”

### Five Years Ago — 2018

In light of Avon, Ind., four-star running back Sampson James’ flip Oct. 7 from Ohio State to Indiana, the Buckeyes were evidently leaving no stone unturned at the position as they looked to fill their new void in the 2019 recruiting class.

On Oct. 11, OSU offered Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy three-star Marcus Crowley, who had been committed to Miami (Fla.) since Dec. 6, 2017.

The 6-1, 200-pounder came from the same high school as a pair of OSU players in freshman cornerback Tyreke Johnson and redshirt freshman defensive back Shaun Wade.

### One Year Ago — 2022

Ohio State had already suffered decommitments in the current recruiting class, with Thompson’s Station (Tenn.) Independence four-star tight end Ty Lockwood (6- 5, 225) and Tampa (Fla.) Wharton four-star cornerback Dijon Johnson (6-1, 190) both backing out of their pledges to the Buckeyes, and Ohio State was looking to avoid any more departures.

One such prospect who had fans concerned about a potential flip was Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage four-star running back Mark Fletcher (6-1, 225), an Ohio State commitment since April who had remained in contact with Miami (Fla.) and head coach Mario Cristobal since committing to the Buckeyes.

“It’s just really (Ohio State and Miami),” Fletcher told 247Sports. “Those are the two talking to me. But you know, I’m still committed to Ohio State.”

Fletcher — who was planning to attend the Buckeyes’ regular-season finale against Michigan — admitted that Cristobal still texted him every day, but he still felt Ohio State was the best place for him.

“I watch all their games,” Fletcher said. “I just feel like that’s the best place for me. A lot of people are trying to tell me that I’m not going to play early, but I’m not worried about that because I’m going to have someone to look up to in (TreVeyon Henderson). That’s a great running back. He can teach me some things and help me get ready!”

# BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

## FOOTBALL (6-0, 3-0)

**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, W 41-7; **21** PENN STATE; **28** at Wisconsin.

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

## MEN'S BASKETBALL

**Oct. 22** at Dayton (Exh.)

**Nov. 6** OAKLAND; **10** TEXAS A&M; **15** MERRIMACK; **19** WESTERN MICHIGAN; **24** Emerald Coast Classic at Niceville, Fla. vs. Alabama; **25** Emerald Coast Classic at Niceville, Fla. vs. Oregon/Santa Clara; **29** CENTRAL MICHIGAN

**Dec. 3** MINNESOTA; **6** MIAMI (OHIO); **9** at Penn State; **16** CBS Sports Classic at Atlanta, Ga., vs. UCLA; **21** NEW ORLEANS; **30** West Virginia, Cleveland, Ohio

**Jan. 3** RUTGERS; **6** at Indiana; **10** WISCONSIN; **15** at Michigan; **20** PENN STATE; **23** at Nebraska; **27** at Northwestern; **30** ILLINOIS

**Feb. 2** at Iowa; **6** INDIANA; **10** MARYLAND; **13** at Wisconsin; **18** PURDUE; **22** at Minnesota; **25** at Michigan State; **29** NEBRASKA

**March 3** MICHIGAN; **10** at Rutgers; **13-17** Big Ten Tournament, Minneapolis, Minn.

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

**Nov. 6** Naismith Hall of Fame Series at Las Vegas vs. USC; **12** IUPUI; **16** BOSTON COLLEGE; **20** Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas vs. East Carolina; **22** Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas vs. Oklahoma State; **26** CORNELL.

**Dec. 3** at Tennessee; **5** OHIO; **10** PENN STATE; **15** GRAND VALLEY STATE; **18** UCLA; **22** BELMONT; **30** at Michigan.

**Jan. 5** at Northwestern; **11** RUTGERS; **14** MICHIGAN STATE; **17** at Maryland; **21** IOWA; **25** at Illinois; **28** at Purdue

**Feb. 1** WISCONSIN; **4** INDIANA; **8** at Minnesota; **11** at Michigan State; **14** NEBRASKA; **22** at Penn State; **25** MARYLAND; **28** MICHIGAN.

**March. 3** at Iowa.

## 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, Men 8th/39; Women 4th/41; **27** Big Ten Championships at Madison, Wis.

**Nov. 10** NCAA Regional

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

## FIELD HOCKEY (12-5, 4-4)

**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, L 1-0 SO **15** MARYLAND, L 2-1; **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., 8th/15

## MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (2-0-1)

**Oct. 7** Mercyhurst, W 4-3; **13-14** LINDENWOOD, W 4-2; T 2-2; **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 (3-1, 2-0)

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

**Oct. 13** Minnesota Duluth, W 5-2; **14** Minnesota Duluth, W 2-0; **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 (3-5-5, 1-3-1)

**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, T 2-2; **15** Indiana, L 2-1; **20** WISCONSIN, 7 p.m.; **24** Michigan State, 7 p.m.; **29** MARYLAND, 1 p.m.

## WOMEN'S SOCCER (8-5-2, 4-3-1)

**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, L 2-0; **15** Wisconsin, W 1-0; **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 (7-10, 4-4)

**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, W 3-1; **15** PURDUE, L 3-1; **18** Wisconsin, 8 p.m.; **21** Indiana, 8 p.m.; **25** Northwestern, 6 p.m.; **29** Michigan, 2 p.m.

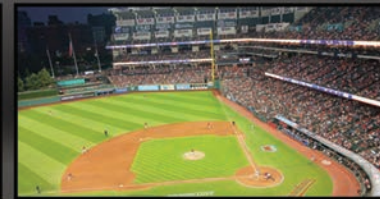
**Nov. 3** MINNESOTA, 6:30 p.m.; **4** INDIANA, 7 p.m.; **8** MICHIGAN STATE, 7 p.m.; **12** Maryland, 1 p.m.; **15** Illinois, 9 p.m.; **18** Minnesota, 8 p.m.; **24** PENN STATE, 7 p.m.; **25** RUTGERS, 7 p.m.

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# Petitti Speaks On Streaming, Big Ten Expansion

At Big Ten Basketball Media Days from Oct. 9-10 in Minneapolis, Big Ten commissioner Tony Petitti was asked about games that are not being shown on live television and are only available through separate streaming services – in this case, Peacock – that are available by subscription.

sports is only going to grow bigger, and after the Big Ten signed a seven-year media rights deal with CBS, FOX and NBC, there have been multiple football games shown only on NBC's Peacock, including when Ohio State went to Purdue on Oct. 14.

To fans who are upset about the change and might have a hard time finding the games, or affording yet another streaming service, Petitti seems to have only one sentiment: Get used to it.

"There are always going to be some disruptions in terms of how people find it, but it's happened before, and live sports – fortunately for everybody in college athletics – has been something that drives engagement, so it's going to be important to those companies," he said. "I look at it as this continuous evolution. In today's current space, the value of live sports has never been greater. I think the value of women's sports in that ecosystem has never been greater."

He does feel they have a responsibility to help fans who are struggling find games that

aren't available on TV. Schools, the conference and the media companies that own the rights to the broadcast each have to make it easier for fans, but he believes people will be willing to make the change if it continues to happen in the future.

"The great thing is that these games are so important and mean so much, that people want to learn how to find them."

In his first year as commissioner, Petitti is also dealing with what conference expansion is going to look like with Oregon, UCLA, USC and Washington slated to join the storied conference beginning in the 2024-25 athletic season.

With that meaning travel across the country, it has been a concern for sports that are not football since they play significantly more games and that travel might be tougher to work around for many sports. While there haven't been solutions put forth yet for that, Petitti said they are considering different things to help ease the issues it might cause.

"Everything should always be on the table, every idea," he said when asked about the travel for women's basketball. "How many conference games do you play? Can you play neutral-site games in the middle of the season? Do you change the way you think about how many teams come to a postseason in a particular sport? All of that, and basketball is no different. What's the right format?"

"What I've been trying to do a lot of is talk to our coaches about what they expect. What do they think the right number of games is? What's the right number of conference games in terms of strength and how the NCAA tournament selection committee will look at our teams?"

## Fleck Says Gophers Will Lose Recruits Because Of NIL

On his weekly radio show on Sept. 28, Minnesota football head coach P.J. Fleck raised concerns about his program declining because they are not keeping or getting enough recruits due to name, image and likeness.



P.J. Fleck

"We had players that were here that are now gone, playing at another school that should be here playing right now," he said. "Because again, NIL. We didn't pay them. We didn't pay them enough. That is the fact of life. And I know that we all laugh at it but that is a fact. If we want to keep players, all these guys we have, they won't be here next year. Just making sure everybody understands, our fans – (the players) won't be here. We'll be a Triple-A ballclub for somebody else. That is the reality and the truth of the situation."

After last season, the Golden Gophers lost quarterback Jacob Knuth to Kansas State, running back Trey Potts to Penn State and wide receivers Dylan Wright to TCU, Ike White to Charlotte and Mike Brown-Stephens to South Florida, among 19 outgoing transfers for the team.

With NIL and the new transfer portal rules, this has become a reality for many teams, especially ones that already found it harder to bring in talented recruits to schools without a winning pedigree or that do not send as many

# BIG

## 2023 Standings

### East Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan	4	0	1.000	7	0	1.000
<b>Ohio State</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.000</b>
Penn State	3	0	1.000	6	0	1.000
Maryland	2	2	0.500	5	2	0.714
Rutgers	2	2	0.500	5	2	0.714
Indiana	0	3	0.000	2	4	0.333
Michigan State	0	3	0.000	2	4	0.333

### West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Iowa	3	1	0.750	6	1	0.857
Wisconsin	2	1	0.667	4	2	0.667
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
Illinois	1	3	0.250	3	4	0.429
Purdue	1	3	0.250	2	5	0.286

### Oct. 14 Games

Michigan 52, Indiana 7  
Rutgers 27, Michigan State 24  
**Ohio State** 41, Purdue 7  
Illinois 27, Maryland 24  
Penn State 63, UMass 0  
Iowa 15, Wisconsin 6

### Oct. 21 Games

Rutgers at Indiana, noon  
Penn State at **Ohio State**, noon  
Minnesota at Iowa, 3:30 p.m.  
Northwestern at Nebraska, 3:30 p.m.  
Wisconsin at Illinois, 3:30 p.m.  
Michigan at Michigan State, 7:30 p.m.

**BIG TEN NOTES**  
**Greg Wilson**

"I think there's been a long history in the media space of change," he said. "Not to go in the way-back machine, but radio to TV, free TV to cable. This is just part of that evolution. This is what is happening overall for all entertainment. Live sports wants to be where people are going to be. You have to start somewhere."

Petitti believes the market for streaming

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## BIG TEN NOTES

tracts that are already signed to go in the complete opposite direction," he said.

That was seen as a slight against other teams in the conference, especially Michigan, whose fans seemed to take Franklin's comments to heart. Since then, Franklin has said people took his comments out of context, and he was actually saying teams should be scheduling easier nonconference games to get their win totals up early in the year with the Big Ten about to become more challenging.

"Even in the question that was asked to me, that's what was said," Franklin said. "I know every fan base and different school is looking for a reason to get angry and get mad and get motivated or something, but that to me is disappointing, when real media members grab a partial quote and use it out of context. That's frustrating."

After facing criticism for having FCS-level Delaware on the schedule, a 63-7 win for the Nittany Lions on Sept. 9, Franklin defended teams' ability to schedule opponents that are not expected to give them any trouble.

"I think if you look at the model of teams that have been in the championship, teams that have been in the playoffs, teams that have won conference championships, I think there's pretty good data and evidence on what's the right thing to do," he said.

"So I think at the end of the day, you're trying to do what you think is right for your university and your program. That's myself and the athletic director, but you're also doing studies and studying the data and seeing what the data says. This could be a long discussion."

### No Timetable For Howard's Return

After Michigan basketball head coach Juwan Howard had heart surgery in September to repair his aortic valve after he had an aortic aneurysm, assistant coach Saddi Washington said there's no timetable for his return to the program with basketball season approaching quickly.

With Howard unable to coach, associate head coach Phil Martelli has taken over his duties until he's able to recover and feels well enough to coach. Washington was at Big Ten Basketball Media Days in place of Howard.

"He's a very motivated individual to get back," Washington said. "There is no timetable. We want him back when he's ready. He's going to listen to his team of doctors. He's going to go through the process of working through his rehab and getting healthy. I know the competitive spirit that he is. We're just going to hold down the fort."

After his surgery, Howard released a statement thanking the surgeons and adding that he would be working hard so that he can return to the Wolverines as soon as possible.

"I feel so grateful and blessed that this surgery was performed at University of Michigan Health," he said. "My wife, Jenine, and our family appreciate the world-class care that has been provided to us."

"I am going to work very hard in my rehabilitation to be stronger than ever by the time our upcoming season is upon us."

Michigan opens up its season Nov. 7 at home against UNC Asheville.

### Tiebreaker Could Decide Big Ten East

With conference play in full swing for football and three teams in the Big Ten East all in the top 10 of the AP rankings, the scenario of a three-way tie in the standings between Ohio State, Penn State and Michigan is becoming more possible by the week.

In the scenario where either all three home teams or all three away teams win every matchup – Penn State plays at Ohio State on Oct. 21, Michigan is at Penn State on Oct. 28 and Ohio State is at Michigan on Nov. 25 – and assuming each team goes undefeated the rest of the way, they would all be 11-1 overall with an 8-1 Big Ten record, with no team holding a head-to-head tiebreaker over the other.

At that point, the tiebreaker would be the best conference winning percentage among each team's opponents in the Big Ten West. As of Oct. 14, Penn State's three Big Ten West opponents have a conference record of 5-6 (Illinois, Iowa and Northwestern), Ohio State's are 4-6 (Minnesota, Purdue and Wisconsin), and Michigan's are 3-7 (Minnesota, Nebraska and Purdue), giving the Nittany Lions the early fast track to the Big Ten Championship Game.



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# Holtmann Sees Big Role For Transfers In 2023-24

The Ohio State men's basketball program underwhelmed in 2022-23, failing to make the postseason for the first time in the Chris Holtmann era (excluding the COVID-19-shortened 2019-20 season) and finishing with just a 16-19 record, but the head coach is confident his group can bounce back this season with the help of his three incoming transfers.

## COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

Taking the lectern at the Big Ten Basketball Media Days held in Minneapolis' Target Center on Oct. 10, Holtmann said he expects the transfer trio of fifth-year forward Jamison Battle (Minnesota), fifth-year guard Dale Bonner (Baylor) and sophomore guard Evan Mahaffey (Penn State) to emerge as key contributors this year, citing each player's unique skill set and basketball intangibles as aspects that can elevate his team's level of play.

"We are really pleased with the three transfers that we have," Holtmann said. "They've had a really good summer and fall. I think every coach will come up here and talk about how excited he is about his team, but I really think that those three guys are going to have a real significant impact on this group."

Starting with Battle, Holtmann said the veteran can emerge as not only a key leader on a young team that features 11 underclassmen but also as a reliable and productive weapon on the offensive end. In his four collegiate seasons at George Washington (2019-21) and Minnesota (2021-22), Battle has been an effective scorer, averaging 14.4 points per game on 42.0 percent shooting, including 35.0 shooting from three.

"Jamison Battle is obviously a proven multidimensional wing who has been able to score in the Big Ten for the past couple of seasons," Holtmann said. "We're excited about his shooting and scoring that he is going to provide."

Holtmann extended similar praise to Bonner, while also lauding the former JUCO athlete for his rare athleticism and speed. These traits – which made him a pest on the defensive end at Baylor last season with a team-high 40 steals in 29 games – can propel him into a considerable role in the backcourt this season alongside starting point guard Bruce Thornton.

"Dale Bonner gives us something that we haven't had maybe in our entire time at Ohio State in terms of his quickness, his ability to shoot the ball and how dynamic he can be," Holtmann said. "It just gives us a different element. Certainly you can play him and Bruce together, and we plan to do that pretty consistently."

Holtmann also offered his thoughts on Mahaffey, the youngest of the team's three transfers. He added that despite his youth and relative inexperience compared to Battle and Bonner, the former Nittany Lion can quickly earn his scarlet and gray stripes with his blossoming talents. Mahaffey – a consensus three-star recruit out of Cincinnati Moeller – averaged 2.8 points and 1.7 rebounds in 34 games his freshman year at Penn State, while also shooting 56.9 percent from the floor.

"Evan is the youngest of the group," Holtmann said. "Evan has just spent a year in college, so he is a sophomore, and I think he is a growing, developing player."

Holtmann sees each of his three transfers becoming difference makers this season due to their individual talents, but he also envisions a scenario where they play a role in the development and progression of Ohio State's younger players, particularly sophomores Roddy Gayle Jr., Thornton and Felix Okpara.

## 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

This is something he and his staff considered while searching through the transfer portal over the offseason, leading them to eventually acquire the new trio of Buckeyes.

"When you have a young group of players, you can go out and recruit the player, but for us, we were looking for guys that we felt like could certainly make an impact, but could also allow these sophomores in particular to grow," Holtmann said. "All three of the transfers are going to play a really important role and a significant role. I really believe that."

"But we also wanted to balance that with the idea that these three sophomores that we have need to continue to grow and flourish as players."

### Chatman, Parks To Miss Time With Injuries

Ohio State will be without the services of two freshmen to start the preseason, with guard Taison Chatman and center Austin Parks dealing with injuries that will require them to miss time.

Holtmann told reporters at Big Ten Basketball Media Days that Chatman, Ohio State's highest-rated recruit in the 2023 class, will be sidelined for the next 4-6 weeks after undergoing a knee procedure in early October. Parks will also miss time while he deals with back spasms but is expected to return to practice before his freshman counterpart.

"It looks like Austin's return will be sooner than Taison, but we expect them both to be back here this season," Holtmann said.

Holtmann, who hinted at some possible

ailments affecting his team but declined to expand on the specifics during Ohio State's media day on Sept. 25, said both Chatman and Parks' injuries could potentially hinder their development and progress, putting them behind other first-years Scotty Middleton and Devin Royal as they watch practice from the sidelines.

The two freshmen were also forced to miss time during the summer with the same injuries, which the coach said can only hurt their chances to make an impact this season.

"Anytime you have an injury, it's going to set you back, and especially when you're a freshman," Holtmann said. "It's not their fault. It's out of their control, and I know they're both anxious to get back, really anxious to get back. I know they're hungry to do that."

"Anytime you have an inconsistent summer and an inconsistent preseason, it's going to delay your development."

Once healthy, Chatman is expected to compete for playing time in a crowded backcourt that also features Bonner, Middleton and Thornton.

Parks, known as a "throwback big man," enters his first year at Ohio State behind experienced senior Zed Key and rim-protecting Okpara on the depth chart. This reality, coupled with the injury, could make it difficult for the Ohio native to see much action for his hometown team this season.

### Buckeyes Picked Seventh In Big Ten Media Poll

The Buckeyes mostly faltered in conference play last season, finishing in second-to-last place with a 5-15 record that included a stretch of 14 losses in 15 games from Jan. 5 through Feb. 23, but the media sees the team finishing toward the middle of the pack this season.

In the seventh annual Big Ten basketball media poll conducted jointly by The Columbus Dispatch and The Athletic, voters picked Ohio State to finish in seventh place in the conference, earning 228 points in the poll. The Buckeyes, who ranked ahead of only Minnesota in the 2022-23 Big Ten standings, are slated to finish this season ahead of Northwestern (195 points), Iowa (164), Rutgers (147), Michigan (131), Nebraska (90), Penn State (71) and Minnesota (33).

They are projected to fall behind Indiana (244), Wisconsin (276), Illinois (301), Maryland (304), Michigan State (368) and reigning Big Ten regular and postseason champion Purdue (388). The Boilermakers and Spartans were the lone teams to receive first-place votes, with Purdue gaining 24 of 28 first-place nods and Michigan State earning the remaining four.

Holtmann's team garnered a wide mix of opinions from members of the Big Ten

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## OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

media, however. According to the Dispatch, no team had a wider swing of projected finishes than the Buckeyes, who were slated to finish as high as third and as low as 13th.

The Buckeyes also saw some players get recognized in the unofficial preseason poll. Middleton, who has been lauded throughout the offseason for his stout defensive play and athleticism, earned one vote for Big Ten Freshman of the Year, while Battle tallied four votes for Transfer of the Year. They also had players on all-conference ballots, with Thornton, (seven), Key (four) and Battle (two) garnering votes but falling short of all-conference consideration.

Ohio State will look to rebound in Big Ten play this season starting on Dec. 3 when it welcomes Minnesota to Value City Arena, the first of 20 conference games on tab for the program. The team will kick off the regular season on Nov. 6 with a home game against Oakland, which is slated for a 7 p.m. tip off on Big Ten Plus.

### We Visited OSU, Too!

Sherman Oaks (Calif.) Notre Dame 2025 three-star shooting guard Bryce James (6-4, 180) may have garnered all the attention on Oct. 7 when he took an unofficial visit – which led to an eventual offer – to Ohio State, but the son of NBA superstar LeBron James was not the only recruit to be welcomed in by the program that weekend.

In addition to James, the Buckeyes hosted several other 2025 and 2026 prospects, headlined by Chicago Kenwood Academy four-star power forward Aleks Alston (6-9, 170) in 2025. Alston, who is tabbed as the nation's 84th-best prospect in the class along with the 16th-best power forward and No. 1 overall player in Illinois, earned a scholarship offer from Ohio State after his visit on Oct. 7, announcing the news over Twitter that morning.

"I am blessed to have received an offer from (assistant coach) Jack Owens and head coach Chris Holtmann from The Ohio State University," he wrote. "#Go-Bucks."

Alston, who also holds offers from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, LSU, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee and Xavier, among many others, has impressed scouts with his unique length and outside scoring ability, a trait he put on display during his sophomore season with Kenwood Academy.

Playing for head coach Mike Irvin's program – which was regarded as one of the best high school teams in Illinois last year – Alston averaged 8.9 points on 47.3 percent shooting, along with 3.4 rebounds, 1.1 assists and 0.9 blocks per game. He also showed an ability to produce beyond the arc, connecting on 37.3 percent of his three-point tries.

Holtmann and his staff hosted another 2025 frontcourt prospect for the Ohio State football team's 38-17 victory over Maryland on Oct. 7 in Indianapolis Crispus Attucks four-star center Dezmon Briscoe (6-8, 200). Briscoe, the nation's 109th-best prospect and 15th-best center, emerged as one of the top high school prospects in Indianapolis his sophomore season after flashing his potential as a do-it-all big man.

He averaged 15.6 points, 11.1 rebounds, 2.4 assists, 0.7 steals and four blocks per

game last year, a versatile stat line that helped him be named the city's Co-Player of the Year. Although not as highly-touted as Alston, the 6-8 center holds offers from Butler, Cincinnati, Iowa, Kent State and Toledo, among others. Ohio State has yet to extend him a scholarship offer.

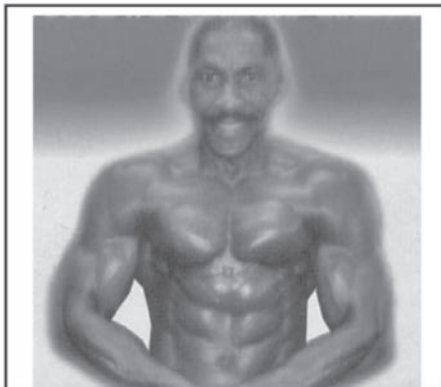
Moving onto the 2026 class, Ohio State also hosted Indianapolis Pike point guard Dezhon Hall (6-3, 175). Hall, who is currently unranked by 247Sports, spent the majority of the day alongside James. They were seen on the Ohio Stadium sidelines together before the Buckeyes' game against Maryland and also participated in a joint photo shoot where the sophomore donned an all-gray uniform.

Hall transferred to Pike High School after bursting onto the high school scene as a freshman at Indianapolis Tindley, becoming a prolific scorer with 18.8 points per game. He also turned heads with his raw offensive skill set and two-way potential while playing for the U15 AAU Team Indy Heat during the Peach Jam, where he recorded 9.5 points, 1.0 rebounds and 1.3 assists in four games.

"I'd say I'm a three-level scorer, underrated passer, and defender," Hall told StockRisers. "I'm super strong getting to the basket, athletic, and can get to the free-throw line at any given time. I have a nice midrange pull-up, and I'm a solid three-point shooter. I'm trying to keep improving on all these things so I can continue to get better."

Hall listed Illinois, Northwestern, Indiana and Ohio State as the schools that are most heavily involved in his recruiting, while Marquette, N.C. State, Wake Forest and Wisconsin have reportedly also shown interest. He added that he has built a strong connection with Ohio State's Owens, who has pursued him for an extended period of time.

"I like Ohio State," Hall said. "They have been interested in me for about a year now. The assistant, Coach Owens, is a great guy, and he always shows love."



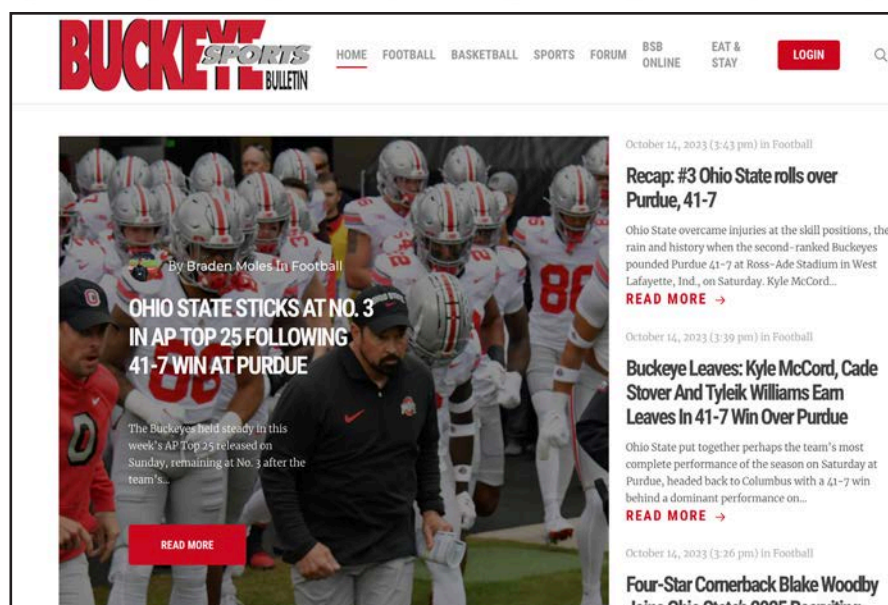
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# OSU's 3-Point Shooting To Be By Committee

What is a coach to do when a player like Taylor Mikesell, who shot 44.2 percent from three over the past two seasons, departs a program?

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

In the case of Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff, his solution, rather than hoping an individual steps up to fill Mikesell's shoes, is to have everybody on the team try to pick up the slack from deep, where the Buckeyes have been able to make their mark in recent seasons.

"It will have to be a little bit more by committee," he said on Sept. 26. "Hopefully Jacy (Sheldon) can have a full year where she stays healthy, and that would be very impactful for us. Hopefully, at some point, Madison (Greene) comes back because she's an excellent shooter. Taylor Thierry's made strides. I think Celeste (Taylor) and Cotie (McMahon) will shoot it at a little bit higher level than they have.

"Lastly, Rebeka (Mikulášiková) needs to have a consistent year. If you look at the way she shot the ball early in the season last year, she was great, then it faded down the stretch. I think if you put those all together, it's going to be a little more by committee."

Sheldon shot just 23.7 percent from beyond the arc last season in limited action but was a 35.2 shooter from deep in her first three seasons at Ohio State. Greene, meanwhile, was 56.0 percent (14 of 25) from three-point range before her season-ending knee injury last year, and both being back and healthy could be a significant boost.

Neither Taylor nor McMahon has been a noted three-point shooter, with Taylor just 30.8 percent over her first four seasons and McMahon just 26.3 percent in her freshman season. As McGuff alluded to, Mikulášiková shot 38.0 percent from three during the first 13 games of the season, but in the final 22 games – including the Big Ten and NCAA tournaments – she was just 27.2 percent from beyond the arc.

The team will be looking for more from them as well as Thierry, who shot 38.7 percent but mostly worked inside the arc, with just 31 attempts from deep last season.

"T-Mike (Mikesell) obviously was a tremendous shooter, but I think there's other players on the team that are very versatile, offensively," Thierry said. "While it sucks that we lost her, I think we're still going to have more ball movement and just facilitate the offense of other players on the team, so I think it's all going to be dispersed. It's not going to come down to one player, just one way we score like shooting threes and stuff.

"I think it's going to be a combination of shooting threes, jumpers, getting it into the post and layups. I think it's going to be mixed with everything, not just threes."

And while McGuff and the team are still working toward finding success from deep, he also admitted that the Buckeyes will likely be less reliant on three-pointers this season.

"This will be a little bit of a different team," he said. "We'll have to make some threes because I think people will try to make us score from there, but we can probably also score and be successful in different ways."

### OSU Expecting Greene Back In Mid-November

Speaking of Greene, Ohio State is hoping to have the point guard back in mid-to-late November after she suffered a season-ending knee injury last December.

## OSU Women's Basketball Verbal Commitments

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

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School/Previous Team
Seini Hicks	F	6-0		Cincinnati Purcell Marian
Ella Hobbs	F	6-4	★★★★	Concord (N.C.) J.M. Robinson
Elsa Lemmälä	C	6-6		Espoo (Finland) Tapiolan Honka
Ava Watson	G	5-7	★★★★	Buford, Ga.

She appeared in just 12 games last season before it was cut short, the second season-ending injury in as many years for Greene, but McGuff has been pleased with her progress in her recovery.

"Jacy will start at the point guard position, and she looks great right now. But Madison is doing really, really well with her rehab, and we anticipate her coming back at some point mid-November to late November," McGuff said on Oct. 9 at Big Ten Media Days. "We're going to certainly be somewhat cautious with that just to make sure we give her plenty of time to not only be healthy and be ready but to be comfortable in coming back, as well."

With Sheldon starting the season at point guard, it establishes a likely starting lineup of Sheldon and Taylor at guard, Thierry and McMahon at forward with either transfer forward Taiyier Parks or Mikulášiková in the post. Should Greene return, she and Rikki Harris would be Ohio State's first options off the bench at guard.

### NIL Not A Factor In Sheldon's Return

Sheldon's return for a fifth season is a significant boost for Ohio State, but with the recent influx of players coming back to take advantage of an extra year of potential name, image and likeness earnings, Sheldon made it clear that it was not a significant factor in her decision to come back to the Buckeyes.

"To be honest, not really. It's something

that we're so grateful for as athletes and it's definitely benefited us a lot and we've learned a lot from it and benefited from it, but – I guess it played a factor," she said on Sept. 26. "It's something that we're grateful for.

"But at the end of the day, it was about getting healthy. It was about being part of this team again and leading this group one more year. It wasn't a huge factor. It's something we're obviously grateful for and it's always going to be there, but that wasn't my main focus at all."

### McGuff, Players Appear At Big Ten Media Days

McGuff was joined at Big Ten Media Days in Minneapolis on Oct. 9 by Harris, Sheldon and Taylor to represent Ohio State.

"I'm excited about our team," McGuff said. "We had what I thought was a really great season last year, and we return the core of that group. Obviously, we graduated a great player in Taylor Mikesell, and we're going to miss her greatly, but we also added some exciting players that I think will really kind of bolster our team.

"We're going to need to be good. We've got a very challenging nonconference schedule. We play UCLA at home, we play at Tennessee. We open the season vs. a very talented USC team in Las Vegas. We play Oklahoma State. We've got some great games in there, and we'll be challenged, certainly, in the Big Ten.

"We also, on Dec. 22, we're going to play Belmont University where my daughter (Kilyn) is a junior playing basketball, so that'll be fun. So we've got a lot of great games, and we're going to need to be good because it's going to be very challenging for us."

McGuff also spoke for the first time about the team's non-conference schedule. While it may seem intentional that the Buckeyes scheduled two future conference opponents, McGuff said it was happenstance that both ended up on the calendar.

"The Las Vegas event, which is going to feature two women's games, we're going to play USC, and LSU is going to play Colorado, and then there's going to be two men's games," he said. "It's a good event against a great opponent to start the season.

"Then the UCLA thing literally just happened in the last couple weeks. We both were kind of desperate for a game, and I have great respect for their program. I know they're going to be extremely good this year. We wanted to add another quality opponent, so it just kind of worked out. It's a one-year thing with UCLA given that they're going to be in the conference and we couldn't schedule a home-and-home.

"We wanted to play them because I think it's a great game, because I really enjoy playing great programs like UCLA."



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# Captains Take Ownership of Leading Icers

The four newest captains for the Ohio State men's hockey team each have their own personalities but have one goal of providing leadership for the teammates who chose them.

## IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

"I'm ready for the role, and they see me as someone that's ready to go into battle every day and lead them the right way," fifth-year senior defenseman Scooter Brickey said. "That's something I look forward to every day."

Brickey and senior forward Patrick Guzzo will wear the captain's "C" while graduate forward Matt Cassidy and junior forward Cam Thiesing were voted alternate captains.

"It's an honor," Cassidy said. "I always thought I was that kind of guy that had the personality to do it, and I'm just happy that the guys look to me for some guidance and some maturity. It really means a lot."

Hockey values the captaincy with the prestige of wearing either a "C" or an "A" on the upper left chest of a jersey above the heart. It's a practice that other sports, such as the NFL, have adopted over the years, and Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik knows the feeling of wearing a "C." He was captain for Wisconsin his final two seasons, including 1990 when the Badgers won the national championship.

"It means a lot when you're voted in by your peers," he said. "For our captains, it's a lot of respect in that room for those four guys. They each bring something to the table, and the one thing I told them is this doesn't mean you change who you are. They voted for you because of who you are."

Brickey is in his second season with the Buckeyes after three seasons at Western Michigan. He scored his seventh goal in his 100th college game on Oct. 7 at Mercyhurst.

"Being voted as a captain is something truly special," he said.

Brickey is using the experience he gained as captain in junior hockey with Des Moines (Iowa) of the United States Hockey League.

"I learned how to lead," he said. "I know, it sounds like a cliché but it's about getting guys to come with you in the right direction. It was something that was really kind of unique to learn. Originally, I always thought I was a leader in my own way, and then I learned different ways to do it and how to put guys in the right direction and bring them along."

Guzzo has extensive playing experience as well. He reached 100 games for the Buckeyes after the two-game series against Lindenwood on Oct. 13 and 14.

"It's an honor and a privilege to be selected as a captain for this team," Guzzo said. "It means everything to me. It's a privilege to wear the 'C' on my jersey. To have 25 of my best friends vote you captain is pretty special."

"There have been great leaders before me that have shown the way, like Austin Pooley, Will Riedell, Jake Wise, Gustaf Westland and Jaedon Leslie. I learned so much from them."

Cassidy is a graduate student who played his freshman season for Quinnipiac in 2018-19. He was a captain in his youth hockey days, but through juniors and the first part of his

college career he was on numerous teams and never established roots.

"I never really stuck somewhere for a long time until I came here," Cassidy said. "I think that was really good for me because I got to inherit other cultures so that when I came here, I got to bring some other aspects to the program and build on it."

Thiesing had a team-best 15 goals when the Buckeyes bowed out in the NCAA regional final last season, one game shy of reaching the Frozen Four.

"I'm very grateful the team has that faith in me," he said. "I'm excited to get started this year with all of the new guys."

The tournament loss to eventual national champion Quinnipiac remains a motivator.

"We want to get that Frozen Four," he said. "That was a tough game to lose to Quinnipiac and didn't sit well with all of us over the summer. Every day, every time you're on the ice, you think about it because you're just that close."

There are 15 newcomers (eight freshmen, seven transfers) on the club, and Thiesing said it was important that the leaders of the team help make the assimilation work as quickly as possible.

"We're so close. I think that's going to be the No. 1 thing," Thiesing said. "The culture in the locker room is out of this world. Everyone gets along really well."

Rohlik likes the traits of the captains.

"You see Brickey and Guzzo wearing the C's, and they go out and lead by example in everything they do," he said. "For Cam and Cass, it's their work ethic, everything they do on the ice, off the ice. Everybody's watching them."

Brickey said he's probably the most vocal of the four captains.

"I think the traits of all of us are something that's very unique and can bring everybody together in the locker room," he said.

In addition to leadership roles, captains are the conduits from the players to the officials. They are the ones who discuss calls and handle disagreements. In that sense, it's imperative that the captains get along with the officials.

"I had a great relationship with them as a

leader and a captain when I played," Rohlik said. "It means a lot because they can't be intimidated at all. You have to have that good relationship. The guys have got to learn that."

Brickey understands what Rohlik is saying.

"I was always someone that didn't get along too well with them so I've learned pretty quickly over the years that you have to get along with them," Brickey said. "Something I like to do every game is go over there and just chat them up a little bit so hopefully they're giving you a favor. Those guys are doing a job just like we're doing a job so I've got to respect them."

Cassidy takes a similar approach.

"This is my fourth year in this league," he said. "Most of them have been around and they know me and they know our team and how we play so I try my best to be on their good side."

## On The Brink

The three Buckeyes who signed with NHL teams at the end of the 2022-23 season will start this season in the American Hockey League, a step below the NHL.

Goaltender Jakub Dobeš is with the Laval (Quebec) Rocket, the top farm club of the Montreal Canadiens.

Ken MacMillan of [awinninghabit.com](http://awinninghabit.com) wrote: "Jakub Dobeš will get the start in goal after two strong seasons of college hockey. The 22-year-old netminder will be making his pro debut and has the size, athleticism and résumé to possibly become the goaltender of the future."

Defenseman Cole McWard, who was signed as a free agent by the Vancouver Canucks, and Boston Bruins draft pick Mason Lohrei came down to the final cuts after making strong cases in their training camps.

McWard, who scored in his NHL debut for the Canucks last season, was assigned to Abbotsford (British Columbia). Veteran Vancouver defenseman Quinn Hughes praised McWard after they were paired for a preseason game.

"I know that the guys and the coaching staff have been really impressed with him, and he's having a great camp," Hughes said. "Whether he's with us the whole year or not, he'll be here

a long time. He takes his practices very seriously. He comes to the rink and he wants to have a really good day. For someone that age to just be so dialed-in and ready to play, it's good."

Lohrei, another defenseman, is in a similar situation. It seems only a matter of seasoning before he is promoted from the Providence (Rhode Island) Bruins.

"Mason has made our decisions really difficult," Bruins general manager Don Sweeney said. "I think everybody starts to see the talent and the vision that he has, the creativity, the confidence to be able to execute offensively – whether that's from his own goal line or the offensive blue line."

"The biggest adjustment to the National Hockey League is really defending against the top players because they lean on you, and they press you. Mason's going to have to continue to go through that. There'll be some growing pains associated with it."

## Mixed Results

The Buckeye defeated Lindenwood 4-2 in the home opener at Value City on Oct. 13 before the teams skated to a 2-2 tie the following night.

OSU (2-0-1) got a goal by Brent Johnson at 10:41 of the second period to break a 2-2 deadlock, and Davis Burnside added an insurance score at 5:22 of the third period against the Lions, who are in their second season at the Division I level. Jake Dunlap and Stephen Halliday also scored for the Buckeyes, and Logan Terness made 26 saves.

In the rematch, Theo Wallberg in the first period and Brickey in the second staked the Buckeyes to a 2-0 lead, but Lindenwood (1-2-1) scored twice in the third with the tying goal coming from Austin Fraser at 17:45.

After a five-minute overtime, an exhibition shootout was held. The Buckeyes prevailed on goals by Burnside and Thiesing and two saves by Terness.

*For a full recap of the Lindenwood series go to the [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com) website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.*



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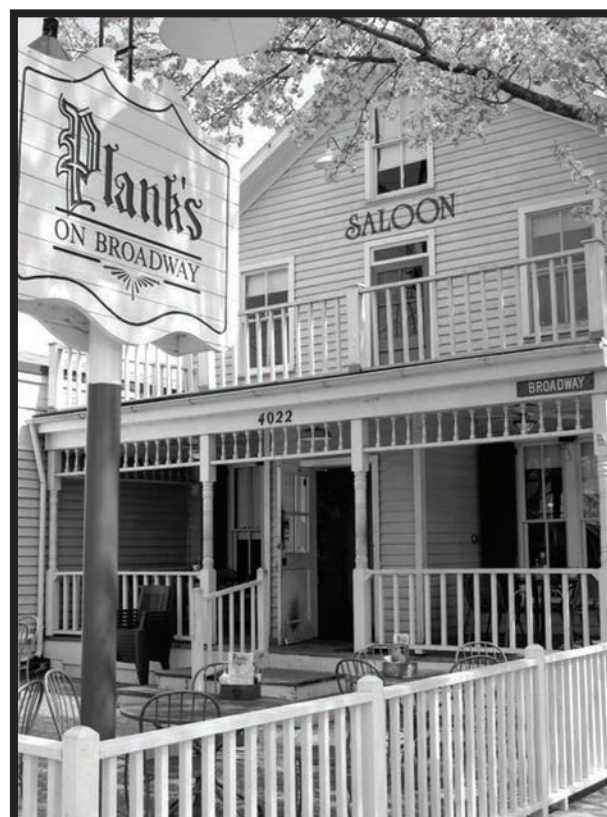
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# OSU Avoids Another October Scare At Purdue

With apologies going out to the residents of the town, spending an October Saturday in West Lafayette, Ind., is not most people's idea of fun.

## THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

It certainly hasn't been a hospitable place for the Ohio State football team over the years, that's for sure. Who can forget the stunning 49-20 beatdown on a chilly October evening in 2018, a loss that derailed the Buckeyes' hopes of making the College Football Playoff?

Or 2009, when OSU came in ranked seventh nationally and left as 26-18 dejected losers? And let us not forget about 2000, when the 12th-ranked Buckeyes seemingly had victory tucked away, only to see future star NFL rifleman Drew Brees torpedo their hopes, tossing a last-minute touchdown to give his 16th-ranked Boilermakers a 31-27 victory.

So it made a little bit of sense for people who believe in history and trends and all of that stuff to be a little worried about the Buckeyes' trip to Purdue. Those who had been paying attention, however, would have known that Purdue has the firepower of a cap gun and that the talent gap between the two schools was as wide as the Grand Canyon.

This was going to be more about Ohio State vs. itself than against Purdue, and to their credit, the Buckeyes didn't fool around – they improved – and they appear ready for a game that actually does have spooky ramifications: Penn State, in Columbus, on Oct. 21.

The Buckeyes dominated Purdue 41-7, showing more cohesion and explosion on offense and being their usual stingy selves on defense. The Boilermakers averaged 3.7 yards per play and were an abysmal 3 of 17 on third down.

"It was a job well done," OSU coach Ryan Day said. "There are things we need to get better at. It's a work in progress."

Even with the dominating performance at Purdue, Day cautioned his squad to not get too upbeat about things – especially with all that's on the line against the Nittany Lions.

"We are nowhere near where we need to be," Day stated. "We know we have a big challenge ahead of us. The preparation starts now."

There were a few things most Buckeye fans were watching out for, notably improvement from an offensive line that has been stoned far too often to this point in the season. It has impacted the ground game, so getting well in that area was a paramount concern.

It was a mixed bag as Ohio State averaged just 3.9 yards per carry, but the ground game seemed to get a jolt when sophomore Dallan Hayden entered the game. His straight-ahead, no-nonsense style poked holes in the Purdue stop unit, and he fin-

ished the day with a healthy 76 yards and a touchdown on just 11 carries. He could be in line for more work going forward, which would be a 180 from the plan the coaching staff set out for the season.

Day has said on a couple of occasions that redshirting Hayden would be best for the team – to preserve another season and keep the depth in the running back room after veterans TreVeyon Henderson, Miyan Williams and Chip Trayanum potentially depart for the NFL. But Henderson and Williams were absent for Purdue, and Trayanum was banged up on a big hit and left with what was presumed to be a concussion. The quick fix was do-it-all Xavier Johnson, who averaged nearly 8 yards per pop himself, but the more Day thought about it, the more beneficial it seemed for all parties to throw Hayden into the mix.

"When you get down Tre and Miyan and then Chip, that's not where you want to be," Day said. "We got down in there, and I thought Dallan started running pretty well. To run the way we did without three of our guys is a good sign."

Hayden had no qualms about entering the game.

"It's like the coaches always say, competitive spirit," he said. "When your number is called, you've got to make a play. I think we have the best running back room in the country, so I feel like when one goes down, it's just next man up."

Day noted that Hayden brings some standout qualities to the table, so the decision to use him against Purdue was easy. Whether or not it's enough to burn the redshirt and have him in the mix for the rest of the season remains to be seen.

"He's got really good feet," Day said. "When the ball is in his hands, that's when he's at his best. He put it on the field. He took care of the ball. He ran the ball hard. It was good to see him step up in this moment on the road."

Purdue was up against it on this day, lacking the required manpower to pull off yet another monumental upset. The last time the two teams squared off, Purdue had the flashy Rondale Moore, who turned out to be every bit the NFL talent he flashed on that night by grabbing a dozen passes for 170 yards and two scores in taking down the No. 2 Buckeyes.

There was no such player waiting in the wings for the Boilermakers, so all of the scares on this afternoon came from the visiting sideline.

"They're No. 3 in the country for a reason," first-year Purdue coach Ryan Walters said after a second straight loss. "And they're sitting where we want to go as a program."

### Quick Hits

- It isn't a stretch to say that the broadcast by Peacock was "lacking."

The announcers often missed on player names, weren't always the best at identifying why something worked, and the overall broadcast looked like a low-grade production compared to the sparkling production by FOX and ESPN.

- Cade Stover is having himself a sea-

son, and right now he is one of the top three tight ends in college football. His 23 catches and 359 yards are second on the team to Marvin Harrison Jr, and he has been Mr. Reliable for Kyle McCord when a spark play was needed.

- Speaking of McCord – it's funny how a bunch of people can watch the same game yet have wildly different views on a player.

This happened a bunch with J.T. Barrett, who is only the most productive quarterback in school history and the reason why the program was atop the Big Ten for his entire career. Because he wasn't a prototype passer, he was often beaten on by fans. To his credit, he never paid attention to any of it and ended his career as the most decorated signal-caller in OSU annals. Some think the Buckeyes could have done so much more with a different quarterback, but there wasn't anyone on the roster at that time who was better. He was a consummate leader and had a clutch gene for days, and folks who continue to dismiss him are simply looking at aesthetics.

It's the same with McCord. Maybe his passes aren't the prettiest, but they get where they're intended, and he doesn't throw a ton of dangerous passes. He has tossed just one interception, and when the lights were shining brightest in the closing moments on the road at Notre Dame, he played his best.

Some folks on social media claim that he constantly underthrows receivers, yet from my vantage point he did very little of that against Purdue. The first touchdown pass, to Harrison, was under pressure from the opposite hash and hit Marv – who was dragging toward the right side of the end zone – right in the hands. He also made a great throw – again to Harrison – into a tight window between two defenders. Not underthrown, but where it needed to be.

Yeah, he had a silly intentionally grounding play and a dangerous throw into triple coverage in the second half. But the numbers don't lie, and the numbers say he is second in the Big Ten and sixth nationally in QBR at 87.2.

For those new to the program, QBR values the quarterback on all play types on a 0-100 scale adjusted for the strength of opposing defenses faced, and unlike Pass Efficiency Rating (PER), it actually takes into account the kind of throw that was made. For instance, if he makes a 5-yard throw to the running back, who then takes it 30 yards, he will get minimal credit. But if he does most of the work on a 50-yard scoring strike, he will be rewarded. Not turning the ball over is a big part of the equation, and McCord has been very good in that aspect.

The stakes get higher and the defense gets tougher against Penn State, but based on the returns to this point, McCord should be among the least of the worries for Buckeye Nation.

- Penn State fans are salivating at the thought of this matchup, but they may want to be measured in their excitement for a couple of reasons.

One, James Franklin has never beaten the Buckeyes in Columbus despite having numerous close calls. He always seems to

find a way late in the game to botch things, and if it is tight late, it wouldn't be a shock if that happened again.

Second, even with this being Franklin's most talented team, there isn't a single important area where the Nittany Lions have an advantage.

Metrics? OSU is ahead in both ESPN FPI and SP+, both measurements of on-field play. The Buckeyes have an edge in net yards per play and net points per drive, and Penn State has a strength of schedule ranking in the 100s, compared to the Buckeyes' No. 62 schedule.

Penn State lacks pop on offense, so it will need the defense to create some turnovers and provide a short field. PSU is stout along both lines, which is always a formidable combo, but the Buckeyes have shown themselves to be up to the challenge against more explosive offenses.

So, in what should be a low-scoring game, Ohio State gets the edge due to having more home-run personnel.

It should be a great contest, and the fact that it kicks off at noon is a bonus. Oh, that's another bone of contention from much of Buckeye Nation. They seem to think if a game isn't at 3:30 p.m. or in prime time then it isn't a big game. It isn't the time slot that makes the game, but the teams. And they could play this one at 1:17 p.m. on a random Tuesday, it would still be huge. So disregard any noise you hear during the week about it being a bad kickoff time.

### Dandy Dozen

October isn't just about scares and candy, it's also about rankings. More specifically, my Dandy Dozen.

Unlike the run-of-the-mill AP rankings, which start in Week 1 and stay too heavily wedded to preseason expectation, my rankings are a combination of accomplishment and team strength – more of the former. That means you could be playing at a super high level, the way Georgia and Michigan and Penn State are, but if you haven't faced anyone, you aren't going to be rewarded. So consider this sort of a Most Deserving ranking.

1. Florida State (6-0)
2. Oklahoma (6-0)
3. Washington (6-0)
4. Ohio State (6-0)
5. Michigan (7-0)
6. Georgia (7-0)
7. Texas (5-1)
8. Penn State (6-0)
9. North Carolina (6-0)
10. Alabama (6-1)
11. Ole Miss (5-1)
12. Oregon (5-1)

Ohio State and Penn State are the only showdown of undefeated teams on Oct. 21, and the loser will have zero margin for error going forward. There are a couple of other tricky games to watch for, including Tennessee at Alabama and Utah at USC. The loser of each will be eliminated from the College Football Playoff race and will set things up for a wild November.

# It's A Safe Bet Defense Is Playing Better

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

In this space during the last issue, I noted that I was a little nervous when Ohio State got off to a slow start against an improving Maryland team. This week the Buckeyes got off to a quicker start, but I couldn't help but be wary of the fact that Ohio State was playing Purdue on the road. I have witnessed too many strange games at Ross-Ade Stadium and against Purdue in general not to be spooked by the opponent, even though the Buckeyes jumped out to a 13-0 lead in the first quarter.

My trepidation about playing in Ross-Ade probably dates back to 1984, when, with the Buckeyes trailing 28-23 and the clock winding down, Buckeye quarterback Mike Tomczak led one last drive to pull out the victory. He drove his club from the OSU 16 to the Boiler 34. Facing fourth down with no timeouts left, Tomczak threw the ball out of bounds to stop the clock, having lost track of the down. The ball turned over to Purdue, which ran out the clock.

"What can I say? I'm human," Tomczak said after the game.

Difficult losses continued right up until the last time Ohio State traveled to West Lafayette, when the Boilermakers derailed a potential national championship with their 49-20 upset of Ohio State in 2018. This game is skillfully analyzed by several Buckeye experts on pages 26-27 of this issue. That's one that few of us will ever forget. In between there were such other memorable (or forgettable) games as the one in 2000, where the Buckeyes were seemingly cruising to victory when Drew Brees hit Seth Morales for a 64-yard touchdown – with one of Ohio State's best defenders, Mike Doss, in coverage – inside the final two minutes to pull out a 31-27 victory.

"I knew exactly what I was supposed to do," Doss said of the winning play after the game. "I never looked at the outside receiver. He just threw it over the top of me, and I have to take the blame for that."

So I had my guard up for this year's game.

As mentioned, the Buckeyes came out of the gate quickly and scored on their first possession. But Jayden Fielding, one of the most reliable players on the team this year, missed the extra point, his first miss of any kind on the season. So I'm on guard, but no problem. The Buckeyes scored again on their next possession and drove all the way down to the goal line on their possession after that, ready to blow the game open, when Devin Brown fumbled and Purdue recovered in the end zone for a touchdown.

Then the Buckeyes, already without two of their top three running backs, had Chip Trayanum knocked out of the game.

Is this a curse?

Fortunately, those were just speed bumps on the way to a 41-7 Ohio State victory. Dallan Hayden became the "next man up" and rushed for 76 yards on 11 carries, aided by one of the better performances by the much-maligned offensive line. Quarterback Kyle McCord, while not as sharp as he has been at other times this season, still passed for 276 yards and three touchdowns without an interception (he did lose a fumble). Marvin Harrison Jr. and Cade Stover were their usual productive selves and were the recipients of McCord's three scoring tosses.

And the Ohio State defense turned in yet another excellent performance, holding Purdue to just seven points and 257 yards (though the score could have been worse if Julio Macias hadn't missed three field goals). The Buckeyes now rank third nationally in scoring defense (9.7 points) and seventh in total defense (263.5

yards), as they continue to try to limit big plays under second-year defensive coordinator Jim Knowles.

"Winning third down, winning fourth down, and limiting explosive plays – that's the most important thing," Knowles said recently. "We seem to be on a good track with that, and we want to keep that up. Everybody loves a lot of sacks. So do I. I think when I was younger, I was probably driven more by that. But the bottom line is eliminate the explosive plays, win on third and fourth down. That's what we have to continue to focus on."

Has anyone besides me noticed that this is a complete change in philosophy for Knowles in his second year in Columbus? When he first arrived before last season, he claimed that he was willing to give up a number of big plays in a game, as long as the defense was forcing mistakes, usually caused by pressure. It worked for the first 11 games of last season.

But then came the Michigan and Georgia games, when his Buckeyes were burned by the big play.

"You have to evaluate the explosive plays," Knowles said after the Wolverines torched the Buckeyes for five touchdowns of 45 yards or more, including three of more than 69 yards, in a 45-23 win. "When they go for touchdowns, they become a different story. Typically, over the course of my career, you preach the explosive plays, and you have a chance to get the guy on the ground, and then you recover. But when they go for touchdowns, certainly, that's something that falls on me. I need to look at it."

Was that when Knowles began to change his philosophy?

The longest touchdown the Buckeyes have given up so far this season is the 15-yard pass from Taulia Tagovailoa to Kaden Prather in the 37-17 win over Maryland. In fact, Ohio State has given up just seven touchdowns total in six games.

With the change in philosophy, here are some sack numbers to consider. The Buckeyes have 10 sacks so far this season, three of which came against Purdue, or 1.7 per game, tied for 104th nationally. Through six games last season, Ohio State had 14 sacks, or 2.3 per contest. Through the first 11 games last season, when the Knowles defense was clicking, OSU had 31 sacks, or 2.8 per game.

In the final two games, the Buckeyes got to Michigan's JJ. McCarthy only once and Georgia's Stetson Bennett twice. You know the results.

Even while tapering off, Ohio State finished the season with 34 sacks, or 2.6 per game – good for 34th in the country.

While Knowles' "less pressure, stop the big play" philosophy has worked so far this season, I am a little worried about things going forward, as the competition gets tougher. Even Purdue was able to put together three drives of 10 plays, two resulting in missed field goals and the third, late in the game, resulting in the Boilers turning the ball over on downs.

Maryland had two drives of 10 plays that resulted in no points, and Notre Dame had a 14-play 71-yard march that came up empty. Points on that possession and the game with the Irish and the entire season might have a different complexion.

I am worried that the Penn States and Michigans will march up and down the field but will be able to cap off their drives with points.

We will find out if that is the case soon enough.

### Quick Hitters

- I am officially suspending my traditional tight end watch after this issue, unless something unique happens with that position group. I originally started the watch to chronicle the lack of use of the tight ends by the OSU coaches. With Cade Stover on the scene, the watch seems obsolete. Stover produces week after week and is setting himself up as one of the best tight ends in Ohio State history.

He didn't disappoint against Purdue, reeling in four catches for 53 yards. And his receptions were significant.

His first catch was for 23 yards to the PU 25 and would have set up a touchdown if Devin Brown hadn't lost a fumble in the end zone. His next catch was good for 12 yards and moved the Buckeyes into Boilermaker territory. Next, he scored on a 4-yard pass, and finally he added another touchdown from 14 yards out in the third quarter.

"He does a lot for us," Day said. "He does a lot of the dirty work for us in the run game, and then that creates play-action passes. He's a great captain and he's a weapon for us, both in the run game and in the pass game."

I heard a talking head on sports radio refer to Stover as "Farmer Gronk," in homage to the great New England tight end, Rob Gronkowski. I thought that was a great – and complimentary – nickname.

Do you ever wonder if former Buckeye tight end Jeremy Ruckert, a terrific receiver coming out of high school, keeps track of Stover and wonders what it would have been like if the Buckeyes had thrown the ball to him?

- While there were plenty of good things coming out of Ohio State's victory over Purdue, the Buckeyes were still flagged for another nine penalties for 51 yards. The Buckeyes now have 40 penalties (6.7 per game) for 313 yards (52.2). That leaves them 83rd nationally in penalties and 61st in penalty yards per game.

In Day's first four seasons as head coach, Ohio State was ranked 83rd (6.7) in penalties per game in 2019, 73rd in 2020 (6.1), 81st (6.5) in 2021 and 49th (5.6) last season.

Is that being aggressive or undisciplined?

### Why We Are Asking

In case you came in on the middle of our quest to get readers involved in the well-being of Buckeye Sports Bulletin and are wondering why I have been so persistent in this space about reaching out to people, I wanted to do a little recap.

The newspaper business is a tough racket right now, given that print readers sadly die every day and the coveted 18- to 35-year-old readers, tethered to their cell phones, are not replacing them. Couple that fact with the hyper-inflation that all businesses have been facing, and you can see the problem.

But I speak to readers every day, and your enthusiasm toward Buckeye Sports Bulletin is apparent and humbling. We need to work together to keep BSB vibrant and viable.

Not long ago, there were probably 60 college sports publications at schools of varying sizes. That number has dwindled down to a handful, and publications at such schools as Michigan and Penn State are now monthly, and outlets at such schools as Purdue and Michigan State, once stalwarts in our industry, no longer have print components at all.

A monthly publication is not something our readers seem interested in and, quite frankly, is not something that I am really interested in publishing. We pride ourselves in timely coverage of Buckeye sports news with the ability to quickly pivot if there is a breaking story. And let's face it, a monthly publication would render recruiting coverage, one of our most popular features, useless.

That is why I continue to ask for your partnership.

We continue to be amazed how many readers have been paying full price for their subscriptions, even when we are in the midst of a money-saving promotion to help some of our readers who are on a fixed income and less able to meet the cost of their day-to-day needs, let alone their BSB subscription (though many of you consider BSB part of your day-to-day needs).

Our VIP subscription program also has been quite successful and helpful. Subscribers essentially become patrons of the paper, much like they would with the symphony or local museum. Now is a great time for those who are less able to meet the higher VIP thresholds to take advantage of the \$50 Brutus level. Brutus donors, who are recognized twice a year, will be listed in the Penn State wrap-up.

One initiative that has really picked up steam doesn't require any money at all. We have been asking readers to send four free trial issues of BSB to fellow Buckeye fans who might not be getting the paper. If each reader sent us just one such name (many of you have been sending several), we would be introduced to thousands of new readers.

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 or (800) 760-2862. There is absolutely no cost or obligation to you or the recipient.

Remember: If you are having trouble coming up with a Buckeye fan, try your children or grandchildren. They may end up enjoying BSB, and it will give us a leg up among those desirable 18- to 35-year-olds.

I'm in this battle to win. I hope you are too.

### Upgrade Cost Down

For those of you who are still having problems with your mail delivery of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, the cost of upgrading your existing subscription to first-class mail in an envelope for the remainder of football season has been reduced to \$17 and \$27 through football recruiting in February.

Service seemed to be improving over the last couple of issues, but the postal holiday on Oct. 9 was a definite setback. Just so you don't think you are the only one with delivery problems, the paper that we mail to ourselves for quality control purposes did not arrive until the Friday after the holiday, even though we are only 12 miles from the processing plant.

To upgrade, simply reach out to us at the above-mentioned phone numbers or post office box with your check or credit card information. Be sure to mention the "football" or "recruiting" upgrade.

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