

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 43, No. 8

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 4, 2023



MARV- ELOUS

SONNY BROCKWAY

EARNING SOME HARDWARE — Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. finished with six receptions for 123 yards and two touchdowns in the team's 24-10 win at Wisconsin on Oct. 28, another in a long string of performances that have some seriously considering Harrison's chances as a Heisman Trophy contender.

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Harrison Jr. Continues Building Heisman Campaign, Leads OSU To 24-10 Win At Wisconsin

By **BRADEN MOLES**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The Mount Rushmore of Ohio State wide receivers is often debated, but the general list includes the likes of David Boston, Cris Carter, Chris Olave and Santonio Holmes, among some other difficult choices. But after this season, it may be time to get the chisel out.

In Ohio State's 24-10 win at Wisconsin on Oct. 28, Marvin Harrison Jr. not only cemented himself among the greatest receivers to come through Columbus, but he continued to build upon his blossoming campaign for the Heisman Trophy, an accomplishment that becomes more and more probable with each passing week.

Don't believe that Harrison could win the Heisman, becoming the first receiver since Alabama's DeVonta Smith in 2020 and just the sixth all-time to do so? Try telling that to Ryan Day.

"I say it every week, he's just tremendous," Ohio State's head coach said after the win. "I believe he's the best football player in the country."

It continued an otherworldly stretch for Harrison, who finished with six receptions for 123 yards and two touchdowns — his fourth consecutive game with at least six receptions, 100 yards and a touchdown — giving him 48 catches for 889 yards and eight scores in his junior season with the Buckeyes. Those totals have him firmly in the record books with 136 receptions for 2,291 yards and 25 touchdowns in his three seasons at Ohio State, totals that respectively rank 11th, ninth and tied for fifth in program history.

But beyond Harrison's impressive statistics, he has offered unique leadership and calmness for an Ohio State offense that has routinely struggled this season — outside of his contributions, of course. Slow starts have become less of an anomaly and more of an identity for the Buckeyes, who have required strong second-half performances this season in wins over Indiana, Notre Dame, Maryland, Penn State and now Wisconsin.

Against the Badgers and head coach Luke Fickell, in his first season at Wisconsin's helm, Ohio State went into the half with just a 10-3 lead, one that could have been a lot greater had the Buckeyes not turned the ball over three times — once on a fumble and two courtesy of interceptions by Kyle McCord. To make matters

worse, Ohio State's defense, known for a certain degree of bend without breaking, gave up a touchdown on Wisconsin's first drive of the second half that tied the game up with 12:30 remaining in the third.

It put Ohio State in yet another uncomfortable yet all-too-common scenario of needing to go out and win the game in the second half, but the offense — after the three first-half turnovers and a troubling inability to move the ball — was able to put things away eventually, with Harrison and the returning TreVeyon Henderson tacking on scores in the third and fourth quarters, respectively, to secure the win in front of 76,453 fans at Camp Randall Stadium.

"The offense, when we need a touchdown, all year we've been clutch in those situations," Harrison said. "The defense has kept us in the game all year, and it gets us (through) slow starts, but it's something we're still working on. Injuries definitely play a part and trying to get everybody back healthy would be nice, but credit to the coaches and players who are in the fourth quarter when we need touchdowns and need to make big plays — we do that."

Harrison was among the biggest to answer the call. His second-quarter touchdown, a 16-yarder he collected on a slant, got Ohio State into the end zone for the first time. His second score, a 19-yarder where he maneuvered through the secondary for the touchdown, gave Ohio State the lead for good, calming the team that had otherwise been playing with some jitters as the game stretched on without the Buckeyes pulling away.

It was not his best game in terms of receptions, yards, touchdowns or his defining circus catches, but it may have been the one that cemented him as not a defining force for Ohio State, but the defining force in college football, helping to lead the team through yet another situation that most others could not bail their teams out of.

The scary thing — for both Ohio State's future opponents and any potential Heisman contenders — is that Harrison still might just be scratching the surface.

"To have another couple of touchdowns and 123 yards — I guess we targeted him 10 times, probably could have targeted him a few more," Day said. "We always want to try to figure out ways to do that."

Continued On Page 8

Buckeye Leaves

No. 3 Ohio State was able to come away from Wisconsin's Camp Randall Stadium on Oct. 28 with a win behind impressive performances from Marvin Harrison Jr. and TreVeyon Henderson, as well as another strong outing from the defense. 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:

Patrick Engels, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf goes to Harrison, who once again proved why he is the unquestioned best wide receiver in college football against the Badgers. Other than Henderson on the ground, Harrison seemed to be the only thing working for the Buckeyes' offense. Kyle McCord found him on a number of key catches, none more significant than the two touchdowns he corralled in the second and third quarters.

Harrison's toe-tapping second touchdown was his most impressive, and it completely turned the momentum of the game back in Ohio State's favor. All in all, he finished with six catches for 123 yards (a 20.5-yard average) and two touchdowns. It was a big-time performance from a big-time player in prime time.

Braden Moles, BSB: Ohio State welcomed back cornerback Denzel Burke, but the biggest standout in the secondary was cornerback Jordan Hancock, who started in the slot at nickel for the Buckeyes.

He finished with four tackles, a forced fumble and a pivotal 10-yard sack in the second quarter, eventually leading to a Wisconsin field goal. He helped the secondary limit the Badgers' passing attack to just 165 yards on the evening while quarterback Braedyn Locke completed just 46.2 percent of his passes.

Greg Wilson, BSB: Henderson hadn't played in a game since Sept. 23, and that five weeks of rest appeared extremely useful for him as he finished with 162 yards rushing and a late touchdown to put the game out of reach for the Badgers. He also had four

catches and 45 receiving yards.

He started the game off with a 9-yard rush on the first play, foreshadowing what the rest of the game would look like. He was able to break off a few big runs – one for 25 yards in the third quarter and 30 yards in the fourth – to go along with his touchdown run of 33 yards with 5:15 left in the game.

Ryan Day said earlier in the week that Henderson was going to be a full-go, and with 28 touches total for 207 scrimmage yards, it was obvious that he meant it. Other than the game at Purdue when Dallan Hayden looked pretty good, the backfield has lacked explosiveness and elusiveness, both of which Henderson had in this game consistently.

Subscribers

Tiffin Buckeye: Henderson and Harrison. Both showed up, and glad Henderson is back healthy.

AnthonyBuckeye: Henderson for running like Ezekiel Elliot in 2014. Harrison for yet another marvelous outing. Xavier Johnson for again delivering whenever his number is called. The OL for significant continuous improvement. Tommy Eichenberg for the goal-line stand, tackles, and for showing that he is the best LB in the B1G. Jack Sawyer and Tyleik Williams for awesome DL play and the goal-line stand. Hancock for energetic tackles and sacks. Steele Chambers for speedy sideline to sideline tackles, and the whole D for shutting the Badgers down except for their two scoring drives.

Mcarr: I'm going to give a leaf to Sawyer. He's taken more than his share of criticism so far this season, but he showed up to play against Wisconsin. Also to Henderson. He's BACK!

PeyoteBuck: Henderson made me wonder how we got along without him. That man is amazing. Don't just give him leaves, give him the whole tree.

BOB CODY: Henderson – WOW! Marvelous Marvin Harrison Jr. – living legend! Each and every member of the entire defense – national championship caliber!

From The Message Board

Ohio State came away from Wisconsin and Camp Randall Stadium with a significant 24-10 win, and it was especially important for the program given it was against former Ohio State assistant coach and interim coach Luke Fickell, who is in his first season coaching at Wisconsin. We asked readers in the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what they believe Fickell's legacy is at Ohio State given his extensive experience as a player and coach for the Buckeyes. Here are some of the responses:

"It's much too early to talk about his legacy. He's young enough that he may be the head coach at Ohio State for 28 years, like Woody Hayes. Then, we can talk about his legacy. I'm not predicting it but it could happen."

– Terrier Buck

"We love Fickell at Ohio State except when he is coaching against the Buckeyes! I watched him play the whole 1997 Rose Bowl with a significant injury. He is tough, disciplined, ethical and hard working. He has been a class act as a player, coach and a Buckeye!"

– AnthonyBuckeye

"Fickell has been and most likely will continue to be a winner. He was a winner in wrestling in high school. He was a winner as a player at Ohio State. He was a winner as an assistant coach at Ohio State. He was a winner as a head coach at Cincinnati. He will be a winner as a head coach at Wisconsin. Of course, the exception will be when he plays the

Buckeyes!"

– BuckeyeScott

"I think Buckeye fans will always root for Fickell, unless he is playing Ohio State. Aside from his accomplishments as a player and coach in Columbus, his role in the transition from Jim Tressel to Urban Meyer helped Ohio State football barely miss a beat in what could have been a difficult time. We'll see if TTUN transitions as well when Jim Harbaugh gets the inevitable boot (or will he?)."

– Poster That Harley Built

"Fickell won me over forever when he played with a torn pec in the Rose Bowl. We need more guys like that."

– Mcarr

"Fickell has left a great legacy at OSU as a player, coach and mentor. He will always be a great Buckeye in my eyes."

– PeyoteBuck



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

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

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

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2023-24 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 43)

No. 1	Sept. 9	No. 13	Dec. 16
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No. 5	Oct. 14	No. 17	March 2
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No. 10	Nov. 18	No. 22	June
No. 11	Nov. 25	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 2	No. 24	August

The next issue (Nov. 11 cover date) will be mailed on Nov. 7.

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

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Every Victory Is A Thing Of Beauty

I realize the common reaction throughout Buckeye Nation following Ohio State's somewhat-messy victory at Wisconsin is one of derision.

A certain amount of grouching is to be expected after your quarterback plays the worst game of his still-budding career, your strategy of winning the first three minutes of the second half goes awry, your highly productive tight end gets not a single target in the game, and constant pressure against the opposing quarterback produces only two sacks.

The bottom line, however, is that the Buckeyes went on the road to play the Big Ten West leaders and came home with a 24-10 victory. While some fans wonder what happened to the high-flying offense they've become accustomed to, and others contemplate whether Ryan Day has suddenly turned into Jim Tressel, the fact remains that no matter how pretty or ugly the wins have been, Ohio State remains on course for a fourth College Football Playoff berth in Day's five full seasons as head coach.

I've been to Camp Randall Stadium when the plane ride home had a much different vibe.

I was there in 1992 when the Buckeyes squandered a 10-3 halftime lead, turned the ball over twice, and wound up on the wrong end of a 20-16 decision to a Wisconsin team headed for a 5-6 finish.

I was there the following year when the only thing preventing another Ohio State defeat was Marlon Kerner blocking a 32-yard field-goal attempt in the final seconds to preserve a 14-14 tie. The normally-reliable Bobby Hoying pitched interceptions on back-to-back possessions in the fourth quarter of that game.

I was there in 2003 when a momentary slip by the normally-reliable Chris Gamble allowed Wisconsin receiver Lee Evans to run by him for a 79-yard touchdown with 5:20 remaining in the game. It was the decisive score during a 17-10 victory for the Badgers, and it not only ended Ohio State's program record of 19 consecutive wins, it cost the Buckeyes a chance to defend their national championship.

I was there in 2010 when Wisconsin receiver David Gilreath took the opening kickoff 97 yards for a touchdown, an early punch in the mouth from which the Buckeyes never recovered. The 31-18 loss featured one of Terrelle Pryor's poorest performances – he was intercepted once, sacked three times, and had a fumble – and very likely cost Ohio State another opportunity to play for the national title.

So, spare me the complaints about winning ugly. To paraphrase the old Ray Stevens hit song from the 1970s, every win is beautiful ... in its own way.

Welcome Back

For the three weeks that TreVeyon Henderson was sidelined after taking what he described as "a cheap shot" during the win at Notre Dame, we perhaps lost sight of the impact the talented running back can have on a game.

Ohio State entered the game against Wisconsin with an anemic rushing attack that was ranked 10th in the Big Ten and 99th in the nation. Henderson flipped that narrative with 162 yards on 24 carries, including a slicing, weaving 33-yard touchdown romp in the fourth quarter that plunged the dagger into any hopes the Badgers had of pulling the upset.

It's hardly a secret that a healthy Henderson will make the OSU offense a much more formidable unit down the stretch of the regular season. He has the only two 100-yard performances by an Ohio State running back this year, and with all due respect to the other Buckeyes at that position, Henderson is the legitimate home-run hitter of the bunch. He can also be a lethal weapon coming out of the backfield as ev-

idenced by his four pass receptions for 45 yards.

When you can pair him with Marvin Harrison Jr., for whom catching a football is truly an art form, the Buckeyes can be explosive on offense. Harrison caught six more balls for 123 yards and two touchdowns against Wisconsin, including a 19-yard score in the third quarter despite Wisconsin cornerback Nyzier Fourqurean's hand being locked on Harrison's face mask.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Star players such as Henderson and Harrison can help to paper over subpar performances from quarterbacks, and there really is no way to soft-soap the game Kyle McCord had against the Badgers.

After losing a fourth-down fumble on his team's first possession of the game, McCord ended a personal streak of 204 straight attempts without an interception when he threw into end-zone traffic and got picked off by Wisconsin safety Preston Zachman near the end of the first quarter.

McCord tried to force another throw to Harrison into zone coverage during the second quarter and apparently never saw cornerback Ricardo Hallman, who made what might be the easiest interception he'll ever have. In addition to those turnovers, McCord took four sacks and was flagged for a pair of intentional grounding penalties in the second half.

On the flip side, that second half also included a perfect 7-for-7 passing performance for 86 yards, giving McCord more respectable game totals of 17 completions in 26 attempts for 226 yards and two touchdowns.

Still, the numbers are skewed somewhat by the three turnovers. McCord now has nine collegiate starts under his belt, and it's time he stopped making rookie mistakes. No one is asking him to be the next J.T. Barrett, Dwayne Haskins, Justin Fields or C.J. Stroud. They're just asking him to stop pressing and be the best Kyle McCord he can be.

Sign-Stealing Kerfuffle

I truly don't know what to make of the sign-stealing situation at Michigan.

When I first heard about it, it seemed to me about as penny-ante as trading memorabilia for tattoos. But once more information came out regarding the lengths to which Michigan assistant Connor Stalions would go to gather his information regarding opponents' sideline communications, the situation seems to have gotten more serious.

If you are the least bit interested in this story, you already know the basic facts of Stalions buying tickets to games throughout the Big Ten and then either going himself or having someone go in his place to video various future opponents' sideline communications. That is in violation of a rule the NCAA put in place during the mid-1990s against in-person scouting of opponents.

No one is going to buy the supposition that Stalions was nothing more than a jock-sniffing hanger-on. The guy was reportedly being paid \$55,000 annually for doing whatever it was he was doing. His name is among those listed on Michigan's official football website as being on head coach Jim Harbaugh's recruiting staff with the designation of "analytics."

Additionally, Stalions has been photographed on Michigan's sideline in proximity to Harbaugh as well as the team's offensive and defensive coordinators. No low-level flunky has

that kind of access to the top three members of any coaching staff.

My particular take is that Harbaugh fancies himself in much the same way NFL head coach Bill Belichick does. In addition to the fact that each are legends in their own minds, they seem to delight in pushing the limits of the rulebook as well as finding loopholes that allow them to occasionally push past those limits. If you have to deflate a football or clandestinely film an opponent's practice to gain a competitive edge, so be it.

How the sign-stealing case plays out with regard to Harbaugh and his program remains anyone's guess. NCAA investigations typically move at a snail's pace, and I would be hard-pressed to believe Big Ten commissioner Tony Petitti wants to wade into the quagmire after barely five months on the job.

My uninformed and unsolicited opinion is that Stalions will become the one and only fall guy, the Michigan football team will continue unabated toward its Nov. 25 showdown against Ohio State, and Harbaugh will return to the NFL in 2024.

Maybe There's Hope Yet

While conference commissioners, university presidents and television executives continue to devise ways to squeeze every last penny out of college football – and render the game almost unrecognizable from the athletic purity it has always enjoyed – there comes a moment that underscores everything that is great about the sport.

Kansas, which hasn't had a winning season since 2008, entered its Oct. 28 home game against undefeated and sixth-ranked Oklahoma as 7½-point underdogs and somehow came away with a 38-33 victory. It ended an 18-game losing streak in the series for the Jayhawks and represented their first victory against a top-six opponent since a 24-21 win against No. 5 Virginia Tech in the 2008 Orange Bowl.

The scene in Lawrence was surreal on several levels. It marked the final matchup between Kansas and Oklahoma as Big 12 rivals as the Sooners head to the SEC next season. The two schools have been conference foes since 1919, first as members of the conference that eventually became the Big Eight, and since 1996 as members of the Big 12.

Sixth-year quarterback Jason Bean, who began his college career at North Texas, rebounded from throwing two fourth-quarter interceptions to drive his team 80 yards in a little more than a minute for the game-winning score with just 0:55 remaining in the game. As the final seconds ticked away, Bean buried his face in a towel and cried tears of joy while most of the Memorial Stadium capacity crowd of 47,233 – a throng that had waited out a second-quarter weather delay that lasted about an hour – stormed the field in jubilation.

Rarely in this era will any university allow goalposts to be claimed in old-school fashion, citing safety and/or insurance risks. But that's exactly what Kansas allowed and exactly what Jayhawks fans did, scaling the goalpost until the uprights finally gave way, disappearing into a sea of crimson and blue-clad humanity. They later resurfaced about two-tenths of a mile southwest of the stadium being triumphantly deposited into Potter Lake.

Games like that – indeed, spontaneous scenes like that – well, that's what college football is all about. Despite the machinations of those chasing the almighty dollar at all costs, despite conference-jumping and NIL money, despite unlimited transfers and attempts to blur the lines between what's right and what's wrong, maybe college football will be all right after all.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Ohio State Stays Put At No. 3 In AP Poll

Ohio State remained at No. 3 in the AP top 25 Poll for the fourth straight week after beating Wisconsin 24-10 at Camp Randall Stadium on Oct. 28. The Buckeyes earned three first-place votes, the same amount they had in the previous poll.

The top five remained unchanged, with No. 1 Georgia (48 first-place votes), No. 2 Michigan (nine), No. 4 Florida State (three) and No. 5 Washington all staying put.

Rounding out the top 10 are No. 6 Oregon, which jumped two spots after trouncing Utah 35-6, No. 7 Texas, No. 8 Alabama, No. 9 Penn State and No. 10 Oklahoma, which dropped four spots after suffering its first loss of the season to Kansas by a score of 38-33.

No. 18 Utah took the biggest fall in the rankings just one week after taking down quarterback Caleb Williams and No. 24 USC, dropping five spots from where it was in the last poll after its loss to Oregon. No. 15 Louisville and No. 20 UCLA each climbed three spots, the biggest jumps from any team this week.

Two Key Buckeyes Return At Wisconsin

Ohio State welcomed back a pair of key contributors for its victory over Wisconsin, with cornerback Denzel Burke and running back TreVeyon Henderson returning to the Buckeyes' starting lineup.

Burke missed Ohio State's 20-12 victory over Penn State on Oct. 21 after going down with what appeared to be a low-

er-body injury in the second half of a 41-7 win against Purdue on Oct. 14. After freshman Jermaine Mathews Jr. and slot corner Jordan Hancock filled in for Burke against the Nittany Lions, the junior returned to the top of the depth chart against the Badgers, totaling a tackle and a pass breakup.

The Buckeyes also welcomed back the services of one of their top offensive weapons in Henderson. He had missed the previous three games with an undisclosed injury, last seen sprinting through the middle of Notre Dame Stadium for a 61-yard touchdown in the third quarter of Ohio State's thrilling 17-14 victory over the Fighting Irish on Sept. 23. He attempted to make a return against Penn State and was a full participant in pregame warmups but did not take the field.

Ohio State's rushing attack struggled in Henderson's absence, averaging just 2.6 yards per carry in those three games. That trend flipped upon his return against the Badgers, where the team averaged 4.2 yards per carry, with Henderson adding 162 yards on 24 carries.

While that duo returned, Ohio State was without running back Miyan Williams, who was out with an undisclosed injury. The senior logged a game-high 62 rushing yards on 24 carries against the Nittany Lions but has also missed the game against Purdue with an injury.

Quarterback Devin Brown also remained out after suffering an ankle injury on a red-zone rush against Penn State. The Buckeyes were also without cornerback Jyaire Brown, safety Ja'Had Carter and wide receivers Nolan Baudo and Kyion Grayes.

2023 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Sept. 2	at Indiana	W, 23-3	CBS	2-6, 33-24 loss to Penn State
Sept. 9	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 35-7	BTN	5-3, 44-28 win over Missouri State
Sept. 16	WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 63-10	FOX	4-4, 42-29 loss to Liberty
Sept. 23	at Notre Dame	W, 17-14	NBC	7-2, 58-7 win over Pitt
Oct. 7	MARYLAND	W, 37-17	FOX	5-3, 33-27 loss to Northwestern
Oct. 14	at Purdue	W, 41-7	Peacock	2-6, 31-14 loss to Nebraska
Oct. 21	PENN STATE	W, 20-12	FOX	7-1, 33-24 win over Indiana
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	W, 24-10	NBC	5-3, 24-10 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	12 p.m.	CBS	6-2, idle
Nov. 11	MICHIGAN STATE	7:30 p.m.	NBC	2-6, 27-12 loss to Minnesota
Nov. 18	MINNESOTA	TBA	TBA	5-3, 27-12 win over Michigan State
Nov. 25	at Michigan	12 p.m.	FOX	8-0, idle

Egbuka Cleared But Does Not Play At Wisconsin

One Buckeye who did not return to the field was junior wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, who did not play despite not being listed as either questionable or out for the contest.

Egbuka had been dealing with a low-er-body injury for the last few weeks after he seemed to have his leg rolled up on by a Maryland defender in their Oct. 7 matchup at Ohio Stadium, an ailment that kept him out of the team's games against the Boiler-makers and Nittany Lions, and now against the Badgers.

Head coach Ryan Day said the team is continuing to exercise caution when it comes to Egbuka seeing the field again.

"We decided to hold Emeka back one more week," he said. "He was close, but we just made the decision to hold him. I do feel really confident we'll get him back next week. He makes a difference."

Safety Ransom Carted Off After Non-Contact Injury

Ohio State safety Lathan Ransom's status remains in question moving forward after he left the win over Wisconsin after suffering a non-contact injury.

It was unclear when Ransom's injury occurred, but he limped to the sideline, and after being examined by Ohio State's medical staff, he was carted back to the locker room. He returned to the sideline later in the game without his helmet and was appearing to test his left leg.

"I'm not even sure exactly how it all shook out there," Day said. "It was kind of chaotic."

Through eight games, Ransom has started every contest and has 34 tackles with 1½ tackles for loss, an interception and two pass breakups.

If he is forced to miss time, Ohio State could shuffle the defensive backfield and

A Sincere Note From BSB Publisher Frank Moskowitz

As I look through back issues of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, I always notice that somewhere in the paper each year, it says that we are experiencing "the worst mail service ever."

Here we are in 2023, and as so many of you can attest, we are experiencing the worst mail service ever. I'll even go so far as to say the delivery of the Oct. 14 issue covering the Maryland game was the worst single issue in our more than 42 years of publishing. The paper was mailed right after a postal holiday, and some of you have still not received it.

Dozens of you have been calling each day since the beginning of football season, wondering where your BSB is, and rightfully so. This has been very taxing on those of us who answer the phone here because it is both time-consuming to take so many calls and frustrating because we have no answer for you. BSB assistant publisher Becky Roberts and the affable Dave Breithaupt, who has somehow managed to maintain his affability through all of this, have been much more patient and pleasant than me. My apologies to anyone whom I have been edgy with.

But the real reason I am writing this note is to thank you, the readers, who have called and been so gracious and understanding throughout this ordeal. You guys and gals are the best. It seems like now that all of us have had that card from Aunt

Millie that arrived two weeks after our birthday, or that letter threatening a utility shut-off over a bill we paid weeks previously, we better understand the current pace of the post office.

Still, we at Buckeye Sports Bulletin believe that you have paid for a service and we will continue to do our best to fulfill that obligation of getting you the latest Buckeye news in a timely manner.

And for the very few of you who were cranky about the non-delivery, I try to tell myself that you are paying us the highest compliment. *You want your BSB!*

Some of you have chosen to upgrade your subscription to first-class mail for the remainder of football season, which is now only an additional \$13. Local readers have been stopping by our office to pick up a missing copy. And I want to again remind all of you that the complete edition of each Buckeye Sports Bulletin is available immediately upon completion at BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers. Nobody understands better than me that this is no substitute for your paper, but you can at least read the preview of the upcoming game while waiting for your copy to show up in the mailbox.

Again, thanks to all of you for your loyalty and understanding. It makes me proud to be the publisher of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

Brutus Level Donors Recognized Among VIP Subscribers

Now is the time for loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers to show their support through our VIP subscription program as we struggle through these times of high inflation, which have affected all small businesses. As most of you know, the newspaper business these days is challenging in even the best of times.

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

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

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

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

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

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put usual nickel Sonny Styles at strong safety and have cornerback Jordan Hancock fill in full time at nickel, or look to safeties Cameron Martinez or Malik Hartford to step in. The Buckeyes' depth is also being tested with the absence of Carter, who was seen on crutches at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center in the week leading up to the game.

Ohio State-Rutgers To Kick Off At Noon On CBS

Ohio State's game at Rutgers on Nov. 4 will kick off at noon on CBS, the Big Ten announced on Oct. 23.

The Buckeyes are looking for a 10th consecutive win over the Scarlet Knights, who have yet to knock off Ohio State since joining the Big Ten in 2014. While the Buckeyes have won the previous nine games by a considerable margin – the "closest" a 49-27 win in Columbus on Nov. 7, 2020 – these Scarlet Knights under head coach Greg Schiano have already reached bowl eligibility for the first time since 2014 and could present a tougher challenge than usual.

Ohio State's Nov. 18 matchup at Ohio Stadium with Minnesota is the only game remaining this season without an announced kickoff time. The Buckeyes will host Michigan State on Nov. 11 at 7:30 p.m. on NBC and visit Michigan on Nov. 25 for a noon kickoff on FOX.

U-M Planned To Scout Eight Ohio State Games

Michigan's football program reportedly planned to spend over \$3,000 to scout as

many as eight Ohio State games this season, according to evidence found by an outside investigation firm and handed to the NCAA.

According to an article published by The Washington Post on Oct. 25, the evidence presented to the NCAA – which sparked its investigation into the program's alleged sign-stealing of opponents – listed a "detailed schedule of Michigan's planned sign-stealing travel for the rest of this season, listing opponents' schedules, which games Michigan scouts would attend, and how much money was budgeted for travel and tickets to scout each team."

That schedule showed that the program spent \$15,000 in total to send scouts to more than 40 games played by 10 opponents, including "as many as eight" Ohio State games.

Although the specific games the scouts planned to attend are still unclear, an ESPN report published on Oct. 23 revealed that suspended Michigan staffer Connor Stalions, who is the subject of the NCAA's investigation, had purchased tickets in his own name to Ohio State's home game against Penn State.

The report also confirmed that Stalions paid for two tickets in direct sight of both the Buckeyes and Nittany Lions' benches, and that those tickets were not used.

Additional reporting by ESPN also revealed that Stalions purchased tickets in his name for three additional Ohio State games, all of which were in opposing stadiums where the tickets were bought across from the Buckeyes' sidelines. It was determined that one of those games was Ohio

State's road game against Nebraska on Nov. 6, 2021, where he bought tickets near the 40-yard-line, in direct sight of the Buckeyes' sideline.

The NCAA's investigation of Michigan's alleged sign stealing was still open when Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press. See Big Ten Notes on page 26 in this issue for more information on the matter.

Brown To Miss Time With Ankle Injury

After Brown suffered an ankle injury against Penn State, he will miss at least a couple of weeks, Day said on Oct. 24.

Brown's injury occurred late in the third quarter of the win over the Nittany Lions on a red-zone rushing attempt – a spot Brown has been used in previously this season – but was stopped short of the goal line and suffered a sprained right ankle.

"He really went hard on that one play, just didn't quite get in, and then got twisted up," Day said. "We'll kind of see how the week goes, where that's going to go. It will probably be at least a couple weeks."

Day added on Oct. 24 that the team's other two non-starting scholarship quarterbacks – seventh-year Tristan Gebbia and freshman Lincoln Kienholz – will compete to determine who will back up McCord, though Gebbia did warm up on the sideline against Penn State following Brown's injury. Gebbia did not take the field against Wisconsin, but he did follow McCord during pregame warmups and warmed up in the first half after McCord appeared to be limping.

Day also indicated that Kienholz could

be used in a similar capacity to Brown, coming in once Ohio State reaches the red zone and utilizing his dual-threat ability. That was not the case against the Badgers, however, as he did not see the field.

TE Stover Added To Biletnikoff Watch List

Ohio State tight end Cade Stover received some notable recognition for his hot start to the season on Oct. 25 when he was added to the watch list for the Biletnikoff Award, which is annually presented to the best pass-catcher in college football.

Stover has impressed many after emerging as one of McCord's top targets this season, hauling in 27 catches for 429 yards and three touchdowns, though he did not have any receptions against Wisconsin. Stover is on pace to break the program's single-season record for receiving yards by a tight end of 671, which was set by Billy Anders in 1966.

Stover is joined on the list by three other tight ends – Georgia's Brock Bowers, Syracuse's Oronde Gadsden II and Colorado State's Dallin Holker. A tight end has never taken home the Biletnikoff Award, with a wide receiver earning the honor every year since its installation in 1994.

Stover is also joined on the watch list by Egbuka and Marvin Harrison Jr., who have been mainstays on the list since it was first announced on Aug. 7. Harrison has 48 receptions for 889 yards and eight touchdowns, though Egbuka has started falling off statistically with just 22 catches for 303

Continued On Page 6

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

yards and three touchdowns after missing the last three games.

Former Ohio State QB Guiton Named Interim OC At Arkansas

A familiar face has earned a new coaching title, with former Ohio State quarterback and Arkansas quarterbacks coach Kenny Guiton elevated to the Razorbacks' interim offensive coordinator position on Oct. 22 to replace the relieved Dan Enos.

Guiton, who is also the team's wide receivers coach, has been with the program since 2021. He helped guide an offense last year that eclipsed 6,000 total yards for just the third time in program history, and he also helped mold current Tennessee Titans

wideout Treyton Burks to a stellar year in 2021 when he logged 1,104 receiving yards and 11 touchdowns while also earning a first-team All-SEC selection.

The former Buckeye has nearly a decade's worth of collegiate coaching experi-

ence, first serving as a graduate assistant at Houston under head coach Tom Herman from 2015-16, then as a wide receivers coach with the Cougars from 2017-18, with a year spent as a quality control coach at Texas. Guiton then became wide receivers coach at Louisiana Tech and Colorado State in 2019 and 2020, respectively before coming to Arkansas.

Guiton's coaching career comes after a solid four-year career at Ohio State, where he was a quarterback for head coaches Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer from 2009-13. He appeared in 22 games during that span and threw for 893 and 16 touchdowns, a tenure that was headlined by his program-record six first-half touchdown passes in just his second career start against Florida A&M on Sept. 21, 2013. Guiton's efforts earned him a spot on the Buffalo Bills' preseason mini-camp roster in 2014 as well as the Arena Football League's LA Kiss roster that same year.

Engel Wins Second Big Ten XC Title

Ohio State cross country runner Addie Engel claimed her second straight individual Big Ten title on Oct. 27, completing the 6000m in 20:47:9 at the Big Ten championships held in Madison, Wis.

Engel crossed the finish line 9.5 seconds before Wisconsin's Leane Willemse (20:57:4) and also preceded Michigan State's Makenna Veen (21:01:1) and Katie Osika (21:05:1), as well as Northwestern's Katherine Hesser (21:10:0). The senior put forth a similar performance in last year's competition (20:00:0), a time that allowed her to become the first runner in Ohio State women's cross country history to take home the Big Ten crown.

"Honestly, it's still amazing to have this experience," Engel said after the race. "I'm so grateful for everything, to have this opportunity again. It's just a lot of fun to come back out here with my teammates and everything."

"For Addie to defend her Big Ten title is an incredible accomplishment and testament to her toughness and work ethic," added head coach Sara Mason Vergote.

Engel's accomplishments do not stop with the back-to-back titles. She also took

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home the Big Ten Athlete of the Year award in 2022 and was named an All-American after a 10th-place finish at the 2022 NCAA Cross Country Championships.

The Springfield, Ohio, native also has two All-Big Ten and two All-Great Lakes Region honors to her name and holds program records for both the indoor 3000m (9:12:26) and outdoor 5000m (15:44:02).

Herbstreit To Be Inducted Into Rose Bowl Hall Of Fame

Former Ohio State quarterback and longtime ESPN college football broadcaster Kirk Herbstreit will be inducted into the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame as part of its 2023 class, the Tournament of Roses announced on Oct. 24.

Herbstreit will be honored alongside former Washington offensive lineman Lincoln Kennedy and former Columbia quarterback Cliff Montgomery during the 135th Rose Bowl Parade and on the field during the College Football Playoff Semifinal on Jan. 1, 2024.

Herbstreit has lent his voice to the iconic Rose Bowl Game for over a decade and a half, having called "The Granddaddy of Them All" 15 times from 2007-2022. He is set to broadcast his 16th Rose Bowl game this season, passing Keith Jackson for the most all-time. The former Buckeye has called three Ohio State victories in his Rose Bowl broadcasting career, including wins over Utah (2022), Washington (2019) and Oregon (2010).

Herbstreit, who logged 2,263 passing yards and five touchdowns for the Scarlet and Gray from 1989-1992, has no shortage of accolades as a broadcaster. Serving as ESPN and ABC's lead college football color analyst since 2006 and their "College GameDay" analyst since 1996, he has five Emmy Awards, making him the most decorated on-air commentator in ESPN history.

Buckeyes Name Players Of Game After PSU Win

Ohio State named its players of the game after the win over Penn State, extending the offensive nod to Harrison and the special teams honor to punter Jesse Mirco. It must have been too difficult to choose one single player for the defense,



FILE PHOTO

MOVING ON UP — Former Ohio State quarterback Kenny Guiton is continuing to rise up the coaching ranks, as he was named interim offensive coordinator at Arkansas on Oct. 22 in his third season with the team, which has also included coaching the wide receivers.

though, after the dominant performance, because the defensive player of the game went to the entire unit.

If there's any week to give a player award to an entire group, it was the Buckeyes' tilt with the Nittany Lions. The defense ended with four sacks, tallied eight tackles for loss and forced the Nittany Lions to go 1 for 16 on third downs, with the only conversion coming late in the fourth quarter.

The Buckeyes held quarterback Drew Allar to 18-of-42 passing for 191 yards. They also largely stopped a run game that was one of the best in the country, holding the tandem of Nicholas Singleton and Kaytron Allen to 74 yards on 18 attempts.

Harrison forced his name into the Heisman Trophy conversation with another game over 100 yards. He finished with a career-high 11 receptions and 162 yards. This was his fifth time going over 160 yards in his Ohio State career, breaking David Boston's record of four games.

Mirco was forced to punt six times and

had the 10th-longest punt in Ohio State history – a 72-yard boot in the middle of the third quarter when the Buckeyes were backed up against their own end zone.

Harrison Jr. Tabbed As Co-B1G Player Of Week

Harrison's performance against Penn State also earned him a conference accolade, with the Big Ten naming him its co-Offensive Player of the Week on Oct. 23.

This is the junior wideout's second Big Ten honor of the season. He also earned Big Ten Offensive Player of the Week mention after Ohio State's 37-17 win over Maryland, a game where he finished with eight catches for 163 yards and a touch-down. It's also the fourth time this season a Buckeye was recognized, with Josh Proctor and Lathan Ransom taking home Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week honors against Maryland and Notre Dame, respectively.

Harrison shared the recognition with Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy, who

led the Wolverines to a 49-0 win over Michigan State, completing 21 of 27 passes for 287 yards and a career-high four touch-down passes.

Former OSU WR Olave Arrested For Reckless Driving

Former Ohio State and current New Orleans Saints wide receiver Chris Olave was arrested at 9:10 p.m. on Oct. 23 in Kenner, La., for reckless operation of a motor vehicle.

According to a report from ESPN, Olave was going 70 miles per hour in a 35 mile-per-hour zone in what police described as a "mixed business/residential area." Police said the Dodge Charger driven by Olave was "traveling at the high rate of speed, recklessly maneuvering between lanes and around other drivers on the roadway." He was booked into Kenner City Jail and released later that evening.

Olave has not made a public comment since the arrest, but he did make two posts on Twitter on Oct. 24, with one reading

"Damn crazy world" and the other saying "They couldn't wait to try and bash me."

Saints head coach Dennis Allen indicated on Oct. 25 that the arrest would not change the franchise's decision to start the former Ohio State wideout and that Olave is owning up to his mistake.

"He was arrested for speeding and reckless driving," Allen said. "That's something that we've had a chance to sit down and visit with him. He obviously understands that he made a mistake, and he just has got to slow down. That's really what it was, so we're not going to make any more of it than that."

Allen and the Saints did not back down from that statement, inserting Olave into their starting lineup in their Week 7 game against the Indianapolis Colts on Oct. 29. He played a role in the team's 38-27 victory, recording five catches for 46 yards. Through eight games, the second-year Olave has 44 catches for 517 yards and a touchdown.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1983

Mike Tomczak's memories of Ohio State's past two football games with Wisconsin were not happy ones.

Tomczak watched from the sidelines as the Buckeyes lost both of those games. The previous year was especially agonizing for the junior quarterback since he was benched for the encounter after starting the first four games. So this time, he was ready and more than willing. And revenge definitely was a factor.

"I was looking forward to this game" he said. "It was in the back of our minds – you read about it in the paper and everything. You want to go out there and not only win the game, but if you get a chance, to beat them up physically."

Led by Tomczak, tailback Keith Byars and a resurgent defense, the Buckeyes did just that. Their 45-27 win on Oct. 29 abruptly ended the Badgers' two-game OSU winning streak, with Tomczak finishing 12 of 14 for 167 yards with a passing and rushing touchdown.

35 Years Ago — 1988

Greg Frey was simply being honest.

The performance of Ohio State's offense during a 20-10 loss to Michigan State in East Lansing on Oct. 29 – the team's fourth loss in the last five games – nauseated him.

"I'm really frustrated," said the sophomore signal caller after OSU's fourth loss in five 1988 Big Ten contests. "We've got a good offense. We just keep stopping ourselves over and over and over. I'm getting sick of it."

Frey played a credible game against the Spartans, moving the Buckeyes for 360 total yards against a team that came into the game ranked third in the Big Ten in total defense. The Cincinnati Xavier product completed 19 of 33 passes for 229 yards and one touchdown.

But a couple of glaring mistakes marred an otherwise excellent game for Frey. He was intercepted twice, the first on an aborted option play which stopped an OSU drive on the Michigan State 8-yard line, the second in the fourth quarter when the Buckeyes were trying to mount a last-minute comeback.

30 Years Ago — 1993

It was a mob scene seldom seen in Ohio Stadium in recent years. In fact, the last time anyone could remember Ohio State fans storming the field after any game was in 1987 when Earle Bruce was carried off on the shoulders of his team after beating Michigan in Ann Arbor in his last game as head coach.

But this was different. Much different. In the unusual snowy darkness of Halloween eve, Buckeye fans erupted onto the muddy stadium field to help celebrate their team's 24-6 whupping of No. 12 (and now Big Ten rival) Penn State.

It was a celebration normally reserved for Michigan games, title-clinching performances and Rose Bowl victories. But somehow, with all of the hype surrounding Penn State's entrance into the Big Ten, the aura that swirled around coaching legend Joe Paterno and a spreading epidemic of championship fever, the venerable Horse-shoe exploded in revelry.

"This is really great," said senior tight end and co-captain Cedric Saunders. "I couldn't get to the locker room, and that was the best feeling I've had since I've been here. In the past, we've been kind of up and down, and that kind of stuff never really happened here."

25 Years Ago — 1998

In the final days leading up to the first event at the Jerome Schottenstein Center, it was amazing to some exactly how much progress had been made on Ohio State's new basketball/hockey arena.

"It's hard to believe that a year ago this place was still a mud hole," said an unnamed worker, one of an army of about 400 who had worked overtime to get the arena ready.

Four years of careful planning and 2½ years of painstaking construction culminated in opening night at OSU's \$110 million arena for a men's basketball exhibition game on Nov. 3.

"Seeing it evolve has been the best thing," said OSU athletic director Andy Geiger, who had shepherded the project since arriving in Columbus in mid-1994. "You have an idea and a dream, and then you see it actually come through and it's better than you thought it would be – that's a wonderful feeling."

20 Years Ago — 2003

If only for one day, Fred Pagac Sr. was back on the Ohio State sideline.

Pagac, the father of OSU middle linebacker Fred Pagac Jr., played tight end at OSU from 1971-73 and went on to serve nearly 20 years (1982-2000) at his alma mater in various assistant coaching capacities.

Now a linebackers coach with the NFL's Oakland Raiders, Pagac served as the Buckeyes' honorary captain for their 38-7 win at Indiana on Oct. 31.

"It was great," Pagac told BSB. "I enjoyed the hell out of it. It was exciting, and probably more so (because) I had a chance to watch my son play."

15 Years Ago — 2008

After quarterback Terrelle Pryor and the offense struggled in a 16-3 win over Purdue on Oct. 11, some wondered if Todd Boeckman, the sixth-year senior who had started every game last season and the first three this year before giving way to Pryor, might be useful as a relief man for the freshman.

Pryor heard the talk and told head coach Jim Tressel before the team left for East Lansing that he should be benched if he did not perform well early, but Tressel told him not to worry about that as long as he continued to limit his turnovers.

When asked about Pryor's request that Tressel bench him if the quarterback performed poorly, quarterbacks coach Joe Daniels – OSU's chief recruiter in Pennsylvania – said he was not a bit surprised.

"Last week was a tough week for Terrelle," he said. "There were a lot of things floating around both in and out of print. I think it was a tough week for him. I think he grew up a lot."

Asked what he meant by that statement, Daniels turned the question around on reporters.

"You guys wrote it, so why are you asking me?" he said. "Should Todd play? Shouldn't Todd play? All the stuff that was that type of thing. You think it doesn't affect a kid, but it does, because it affects other people around him. It affects the students. It affects the average fan, which you guys should be happy with, because at least they're reading what you're writing."

10 Years Ago — 2013

In the days leading up to his team's matchup with Penn State,

Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer forecast a street fight between the Buckeyes and Nittany Lions. If that was the case, consider Ohio State the victor by first-round knockout.

The Buckeyes scored early and often, outmanning a Penn State squad that looked just as crippled by NCAA sanctions as some had predicted it would be when the Nittany Lions were handed a four-year bowl ban and a reduction of 20 overall scholarships per season in the summer of 2012 due to allegations against PSU over the Jerry Sandusky abuse scandal.

If anybody was looking for a statement win from Ohio State, which was coming off two consecutive second-half comeback victories, it was found in the Buckeyes' 63-14 dismantling of Penn State on Oct. 26, which extended fourth-ranked OSU's record to 8-0.

"This was a really big game for us," said freshman running back Dontre Wilson, who accumulated 96 yards and scored on a 26-yard touchdown reception against the Nittany Lions. "For us to win a big game against Penn State, who just beat Michigan, is big. We really needed this dominating win."

Five Years Ago — 2018

In both 2016 and 2017, Ohio State had a star offensive guard switch to center. Each one of those players – Pat Elflein followed by Billy Price – ended up winning the Rimington Award as the nation's best at that position before being drafted into the NFL.

In 2018, Ohio State faced a similar situation when starting left guard Michael Jordan (6-7, 310) switched to the middle of the line before the season after never having previously played the position. While the line had struggled at times, the move had become a success for Jordan, but it wasn't without concerns at the start.

Offensive line coach Greg Studrawa said that he had concerns about Jordan's move early in the year, especially after he struggled snapping the ball against TCU in Week 3. Since then, though, Jordan had seemingly improved on an almost daily basis, becoming a consistent performer on an inconsistent line.

"His snap accuracy has gone through the roof since the TCU game," Studrawa said. "We worked on that. We fixed his stance a little bit. He's getting more and more comfortable each game."

One Year Ago — 2022

During the turmoil of Ohio State's win at Penn State on Oct. 29, a 44-31 victory that moved the Buckeyes to 8-0 on the season and a perfect 5-0 mark in Big Ten play, there was one Buckeye who stood head and shoulders above the rest.

Sophomore defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau, a quiet yet consistent presence on Ohio State's defense, exploded for not only the best game of his young career, but one of the best performances by an Ohio State defender in recent memory.

Tuimoloau's final stat line in this game read six tackles (three for loss) with a pair of sacks, two interceptions (one for a touchdown), a forced fumble and recovery, and a pass breakup. It was just the seventh time since 2000 that an Ohio State defender recovered a fumble and had an interception in a game. Playing for his second defensive coordinator in two seasons, Tuimoloau credited his coach for his being able to take another step this year.

"I've got to shout out Coach (Jim) Knowles," Tuimoloau said. "He's allowed us to show that versatility, and he has trust in me to do those things. I've got to thank him."

Henderson, Harrison Provide Dual Threats

Continued From Page 1

But he's a dynamic player, and he keeps bringing it every week. The consistency is starting to show more week in and week out, and the playmaking ability."

Henderson Makes Triumphant Return

Harrison was his usual dominant self, but he was not the only Buckeye who exerted his will against the Badgers. After missing the last three games with an injury, Henderson returned to the lineup and carried the ball 24 times for 162 yards and a touchdown, a return-to-form performance for the oft-injured tailback.

"I don't know what we had in terms of a number coming in," Day said. "We held him out last week, it was close, but we felt like we wanted to make sure he was 100 percent. This is a big run we're about to go on, and you can see the difference he makes when he's out there – the explosiveness, the speed. I thought he ran hard tonight, and he's a weapon out of the backfield. You can see that down the sideline."

Henderson's total represented the second-most carries and rushing yards in his three-year career with the Buckeyes, with those other top performances coming during his standout freshman season. But since that breakout first-year campaign, Henderson has largely been in and out of

the lineup, unable to develop a rhythm as Ohio State's lead back.

He received the ball early and often against Wisconsin, carrying the ball eight times for 27 yards in the first quarter. While Henderson fell victim to some of the offense's early struggles, he turned on the jets in the second half with 14 totes for 118 yards, including the game-sealing 33-yard touchdown run late in the fourth.

"You can just see when he's out there the impact he's having on our offense," Day said. "To get that run there in the fourth quarter was big."

It was the type of outing not seen in a while from Henderson, who said after the game that he was "100 percent healthy." He also clarified why he had missed the last three games, last appearing in Ohio State's win over Notre Dame on Sept. 23.

"I took a cheap shot at the beginning of that game, so that's why I've been out," he said. "But thank God, he's healed me and allowed me to come back out here and give my team everything I have. Me being out here is all because of him, so I give all glory to him."

Henderson averaged 6.8 yards per attempt, but Ohio State's rushing attack otherwise stalled out, with other rushers combining for just 19 yards on 19 carries – just 1 yard per attempt, for those keeping track at home. But it was no matter, as with Henderson in the lineup, Ohio



SONNY BROCKWAY

WELCOME BACK – Ohio State saw the return of running back TreVeyon Henderson in the 24-10 win at Wisconsin on Oct. 28, and he returned in style, rushing for 162 yards and a touchdown on 24 carries.

State's rushing attack looked as invigorated as it had all season, able to mostly convert in short-yardage situations as well as break off the occasional explosive run.

So while Harrison may be the best player in the country, according to his teammates and coaches, a healthy Henderson may at least be the best running back in the nation.

"He's a big difference," Harrison said. "He's the most explosive back in the country. Anytime he touches the ball, he could take it for six. That puts a lot of pressure on the defense. A lot of the attention

sometimes goes to the passing game and the receivers, but when you have a dynamic back like that in the backfield, you have to account for him as well, so you can't not load the box with numbers. Having him back was great. He's the best back in the country."

With Henderson healthy and Harrison continuing his impressive run – not to mention the impending return of Emeka Egbuka, who Day said should be good to go at Rutgers on Nov. 4 – the potential for Ohio State's offense, which has largely played without a full deck of cards this

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SONNY BROCKWAY

MOVING FORWARD — After his second loss to Ohio State in as many tries, Wisconsin head coach Luke Fickell is hoping his team is able to take lessons from the defeat and use them as he continues to build the program back up.

season, is suddenly looking up.

“It’s as high as it can be,” Harrison said. “I don’t think there’s any limit that we would ever put on ourselves, and when we’re all healthy and clicking with the defense we have right now, we’re a national championship team. We just have to prove it each and every week.”

Fickell Moving Forward After Second Loss To OSU

When Fickell, the former Ohio State assistant coach – and one-time interim head coach – made his first coaching outing against the Buckeyes in 2019, it came under very different circumstances than

those that exist now.

At the time, Fickell was in his third season at Cincinnati, slowly building an eventual College Football Playoff participant with the Bearcats. But it was little more than a standard nonconference affair for Ohio State, which cruised to a 42-0 win in Ohio Stadium, one of three blowout victories in the nonconference schedule that year, including a 45-21 win over Florida Atlantic and a 76-5 drubbing of Miami (Ohio).

But a blanking in his return to Ohio State is not what Fickell had in mind, even if the Bearcats were considered a significant underdog headed into the contest.

“They just ruined any type of sentimental thought you might have had,” Fickell said after the 2019 game. “It was an emotional week, not just coming home but knowing what you’re coming up against. I think I tried to avoid it a little too much, and in the long run we didn’t do a good job of handling it when it came down to it.

“Whether it’s a homecoming or not, it’s still a shot in the gut. In this game, you’re going to have them. It just happened to be here where I went to school and around a lot of people I know, and I think that’s an even more humbling experience.”

The result was the same in Fickell’s second shot at Ohio State, this time with the Buckeyes visiting Camp Randall Stadium, but the mentality of the Badgers and Fickell – not to mention the final margin – was different.

While the Bearcats were likely never going to contend with Ohio State, no matter how many years Fickell might have built the program up, the Badgers have a chance to that point, even if it was unlikely to happen in his first year of the program.

Fickell’s last loss to Ohio State in 2019 left a sour taste in his mouth – just as this most recent one will – but he came out this time around with a positive look toward the future for Wisconsin and the idea that it may eventually be on the same stage as Ohio State, even if it will take time to get the program moving in the right direction.

“I give (the team) credit,” he said after the most recent loss to Ohio State. “I’m proud of them for following the plan and doing that, getting to the fourth quarter. Then the fourth quarter comes and we can’t execute. We can’t make the plays we need to make, the stops we need to stop. That’s what it comes down to.

“Kind of gut-wrenching for those guys and for all of us just because of all you put into it, what you built it up to be.

“This is a tough one. We’ve got to put this thing behind us fast and be able to move forward because I reminded those guys we got one guaranteed month left to us, four guaranteed games left to us. We have got to find a way to put this behind us and move forward.”

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McCord Continues Struggling With Turnovers

Starting games slowly has become a trend for quarterback Kyle McCord – and the offense as a whole – who has had trouble acclimating to defenses early in games this season. In Ohio State's 24-10 win over Wisconsin on Oct. 28, he had his most challenging outing yet.

McCord finished the game 17 of 26 passing for 226 yards and two touchdowns but also had a fumble – a concerning trend at this point – and two interceptions, along

GAME NOTEBOOK Greg Wilson

with several other questionable throws that often halted the offense.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day was frustrated after the game that the team was not able to put more than 24 points on the board since the Buckeyes were frequently able to move the ball before drives ended in unfortunate fashion, but Day did not put all of the blame on the quarterback, taking some of it himself.

"We're all frustrated that we're not able to finish off some of those drives," Day said. "When we get into those plus territories, we have to finish them off. There's a lot that goes with that. Certainly, the coaching is a

big part of it."

McCord's first interception came late in the first quarter. The Buckeyes had worked their way to Wisconsin's 9-yard line after a missed field goal by the Badgers, and it appeared there were going to be points on the board, whether it was a field goal or touchdown. But McCord faked a handoff to TreVeyon Henderson, rolled out to the right and threw the ball to the right side of the end zone, looking for freshman wide receiver Carnell Tate but instead finding Wisconsin sophomore safety Preston Zachman.

It was McCord's first interception since the season opener at Indiana, but while he had not thrown a pick in several weeks, several throws in recent games came close to being intercepted, and Day said McCord knew immediately after the play that he had made a mistake.

"I think he would tell you on the first one it was just a bad decision," Day said. "It was first down, the play was designed to go to the tight end, the tight end didn't get caught up, and it was not how we designed it, and the ball should have been thrown away. It was a bad decision. He knew right when he came off the field after the first one that he wanted that one back."

While McCord went six games in a row without an interception, he couldn't make it out of the next quarter without giving up his third of the season. The throw was intended for Marvin Harrison Jr. but ended up in the hands of Wisconsin cornerback Ricardo



SONNY BROCKWAY

BUTTERFINGERS — Ohio State cruised to a 24-10 win at Wisconsin on Oct. 28 despite three turnovers from quarterback Kyle McCord, including a fumble and two interceptions.

Hallman, and the Badgers turned it into a field goal going into the locker room. Day was not as upset about McCord's second pick, understanding why it happened.

"The second one, the corner came off on Cover 3," Day said. "He's reading the flat defender on Cover 3, and that corner just came right off him. (Hallman) took a chance, and he made a nice play. I don't really blame (McCord) for that play. I don't. There's going to be times where you push it down the field, things like that are going to happen. I told him, 'Hey, I get it. The corner came off. Let's just play the next play. Those plays are behind us.'"

McCord had operated with a slight limp over the last several games, but it was exacerbated against the Badgers after a couple of sneaks and a 5-yard scramble for first downs throughout the game. The limp worsened throughout the contest, with McCord seemingly hobbled in the backfield, but Day didn't think that had any effect on how he played against the Badgers. He ultimately liked the toughness he saw from McCord and is hoping to see him respond moving forward as Ohio State enters the final stretch of the regular season.

"No, I think it's bumps and bruises and things like that," Day said. "I think something maybe happened in the game there, and he was able to fight through it, which was great. We'll get him an evaluation, but he'll be fine. I don't think that those things are in his way right now, but I thought he toughed it out at the end. He still hung in there."

"When you have a couple of tough plays, what most people do is they start to get gunshy. He didn't do that. He kept swinging.

He kept pushing. You can hear him on the sideline. Right before that last drive when TreVeyon ran to make it a two-score game, he was in that huddle getting after the guys, and he showed good leadership there. I thought that was a positive."

Penalties Again Hurt Offense

Not only did McCord struggle with turning the ball over against the Badgers, but he also took them out of good field position by picking up flags of his own. He had two penalties called on him for intentional grounding, losing a down in both instances and a total of 20 yards.

On Ohio State's final drive of the third quarter, the Buckeyes were faced with a third-and-8 on the Wisconsin 28-yard line, well within the range where Jayden Fielding would be able to attempt a field goal. But with linebacker Darryl Peterson bearing down, McCord threw the ball away and was called for grounding, moving the Buckeyes to the Wisconsin 37-yard line.

That took the Buckeyes out of what Day believed was a reasonable distance to attempt a field goal in what was a 17-10 game, forcing Jesse Mirco to punt, though it ultimately did not hurt Ohio State since Wisconsin was also forced to punt on the ensuing drive.

But a similar play happened in the fourth quarter, with McCord – again facing third-and-8, this time on the Wisconsin 41-yard line – again called for intentional grounding, pushing the Buckeyes back 11 yards to their own 48-yard line. Although they were not in field-goal range, a short gain could have put them into possible four-down territory to ex-

Game Analysis

What Worked Well

A few weeks ago, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day told reporters that defensive coordinator Jim Knowles had a few tricks up his sleeve when it comes to implementing some blitz packages. While Knowles seemed to push back on that at the time, saying that he has grown to blitz less and less with his old age, those packages came out in the 24-10 win at Wisconsin in a big way. The Buckeye defense put together one of its best efforts of the season when it comes to bringing the pressure at Camp Randall Stadium, disrupting the rhythm of Badger quarterback Braedyn Locke early and often. Ohio State sent the house on a number of occasions in the first half, which forced Locke to make several inaccurate and off-balance throws and record a dismal 43 passing yards at halftime.

This pressure was headlined by nickel corner Jordan Hancock's sack of Locke in the second quarter, which went for a loss of 10 and pushed the Badgers all the way back to the Ohio State 49-yard line. The Badger offense got a field goal out of that possession and would wake up a bit in the second half with some positive plays, but Knowles would not blink and allowed his defense to continue to impact the game with the blitz. The Buckeyes got bit by an all-out blitz in the fourth quarter that allowed Wisconsin to convert on a third-and-15, but another pressure from Lathan Ransom in the third quarter would prove more beneficial, resulting in a loss of 4 yards and an eventual punt for the Badgers a few plays later.

If the Buckeyes can continue to generate pressure on the quarterback this way, it can prove to be yet another strength for an already-dominant defense, which can bode well for them as the calendar flips to November.

What Didn't Work

If there were concerns about the play of quarterback Kyle McCord after the Penn State game, those doubts would be even more plentiful following his performance against Wisconsin. McCord had arguably the worst game of his career under the lights, turning the ball over an inexcusable three times and tossing a number of inaccurate throws throughout the night. McCord's first turnover came on the very first drive of the game when he was strip-sacked by Wisconsin linebacker C.J. Goetz. While this play occurred on fourth-and-3 and would have resulted in a turnover regardless if they failed to convert,

McCord still showed poor pocket presence and most importantly a carelessness with the ball that has come back to bite him multiple times this season.

McCord also threw a pair of puzzling interceptions on the night. His first may have been his worst, when he rolled to his right from the Badgers' 9-yard line and forced the ball to freshman Carnell Tate – who was blanketed by a pair of Badgers defenders – in the end zone. His second occurred in the second quarter and was more of an inaccurate toss, where he stared down Marvin Harrison Jr. for far too long and delivered a throw that was way behind the star wideout, finding the hands of standout cornerback Ricardo Hallman. Those kinds of mistakes, along with his two intentional grounding penalties – which is quickly becoming a major problem for the quarterback this season – simply cannot happen again if the Buckeyes want to compete for a Big Ten or College Football Playoff title this season.

Play Of The Game

McCord's 19-yard toss to Harrison in the third quarter may have been the biggest play of this game. Wisconsin had made it interesting a few minutes earlier when it embarked on a seven-play, 75-yard drive that was capped by a Will Pauling 13-yard touchdown reception to tie the game at 10, a sequence of events that put the Camp Randall Stadium faithful into a frenzy. With the momentum on head coach Luke Fickell and the Badgers' side, Ohio State needed an immediate answer on offense, and they got exactly that from the tandem of McCord and Harrison.

With 7:20 remaining in the quarter and the Buckeyes facing a second-and-12, McCord delivered what may have been his best throw of the night – a 19-yard strike under intense pressure to his favorite target near the right hash of the Wisconsin end zone – which allowed the Heisman Trophy candidate to do the rest. With Badgers cornerback Nyzier Fourqurean draped all over him, Harrison located the ball and found a way to get his right foot in bounds at the perfect time for the score, giving him yet another highlight-reel worthy play to his already-impressive catalog of catches. More importantly, Harrison's score turned the momentum back into Ohio State's favor and gave the Buckeyes a 17-10 lead, a lead they would never relinquish, and propelled the team to the 24-10 road victory.

— Patrick Engels

Safeties Sonny Styles and Josh Proctor each had four tackles of their own, and both broke up one pass as well. Lathan Ransom had three tackles and picked up a tackle for a loss, though he left the game following a noncontact injury and was later carted to the locker room. Day did not have an update after the game.

Cornerbacks Burke and Davison Igbino-sun combined for three tackles, and Burke broke up a pass in the fourth quarter.

Sawyer, Defensive Line Dominate Badgers

Defensive end Jack Sawyer's name has not been mentioned much this season, other than to acknowledge that he and J.T. Tuimoloau weren't getting to the quarterback as much as people expected they would. Knowles didn't believe it was a problem and said that even though they didn't have the counting stats, he could still see on film that Sawyer was doing his job.

Sawyer did not add any sacks or tackles for loss to his numbers against Wisconsin, but his name was in the box score as he helped keep Wisconsin running back Braelon Allen in check.

Of Sawyer's six tackles, five were in the first half, and all were either combined or solo tackles of Allen, including a forced fumble that was recovered by Igbino-sun in the first quarter. He helped Ohio State limit Allen to just 50 yards on 10 carries.

One solo tackle he had was at the end of the second quarter, stopping Allen at the line of scrimmage for no gain when the Badgers were on Ohio State's 1-yard line, but they managed to get only a field goal. Sawyer said that stop was big for the Buckeyes going into halftime.

"I feel like it gives us a lot of momentum," he said. "We always say, 'Give us an inch, and we'll defend it.' That's kind of just our motto. It felt really good to be able to hold strong and force them to a field goal at the end of the half. I think that was big for us."

After a slow start, the entire defensive line has shown improvement over the past few games, getting into the pocket to put pressure on quarterbacks and forcing them to get rid of the ball quickly. Sawyer said defensive line coach Larry Johnson prepared them well for what they needed to do against the Badgers' offensive line.

"I just think as a front, it was time for us to start dominating and making plays into the scheme," Sawyer said. "That's kind of what we went out there and did. We knocked the line of scrimmage back. Being able to get off the blocks was huge. This week, Coach Johnson preached that to us, so I think that's what led to us getting off blocks and making some tackles."

tend the drive.

"We get into a one-score game, we're trying to make it a two-score game and we get around the 30-yard line," Day said. "We have to make sure we're in field-goal range to just give Jayden an opportunity. Two times we didn't do that. That was an opportunity that was missed."

But the penalties were not exclusive to McCord. Tight end Gee Scott Jr. and offensive tackle Josh Simmons both had false-start penalties that combined to take the Buckeyes back another 10 yards. The penalties have been a concern for Simmons – and the offensive line as a whole – and it's an issue that seemingly has not improved as the season has progressed.

Day said earlier in the season that no backup offensive linemen are pushing themselves into a starting spot, and he said he doesn't expect there to be a change made anytime soon. But besides the penalties, he did believe the line played one of their better games of the season, helping Henderson rush for 162 yards, though they did allow four sacks of McCord.

"I thought the offensive line got movement today," Day said. "I thought so, and the tight ends. We moved the line of scrimmage."

Secondary Continues Lockdown Performance

The secondary has proved they are back after a tough few seasons for the Best In America, and they showed up to play again against quarterback Braedyn Locke and the Badgers.

Locke finished the game just 18 of 39 passing (46.2 percent) and threw for only 165 yards. It was only the second start of Locke's young career with regular starter Tanner Mordecai out with a broken hand. But entering this game, Locke had proved to be no slouch, throwing for 240 yards and two touchdowns in a win over Illinois on Oct. 21.

But the Ohio State defense was an entirely different monster, and nickel cornerback Jordan Hancock said defensive coordinator Jim Knowles called a great game.

"That's all credit to Coach Knowles," he said. "He gave the quarterback a lot of different looks. We had to respond well to their personnel because we haven't seen, sometimes, maybe four receivers on the field. I feel like our defense responded well to that."

With cornerback Denzel Burke making his return after missing the win over Penn State, Hancock adjusted well, moving back

into the slot where he has lined up most of the season.

He had four tackles, a forced fumble and a 10-yard sack where he came at Locke on an inside blitz that was in a big spot, helping the defense hold Wisconsin to just a field goal. Hancock said it was nice to have Burke in the secondary after his absence against Penn State.

"It meant everything," he said. "I could really play that nickel spot. That third-down stop he had (midway through the third), that's an elite ball player, All-American like player. You won't see that from any other corner in the country, so I'm just happy to have him back."

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Harrison Catches, Henderson Runs Lead To Win

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The combination of Marvin Harrison Jr. and TreVeyon Henderson proved too much for upset-minded Wisconsin when No. 3 Ohio State held off the Badgers 24-10 at Camp Randall Stadium in Madison, Wis., on Oct. 28.

Harrison had two touchdown catches and Henderson returned from an injury to run for 162 yards and a late insurance score to offset a subpar performance by quarterback Kyle McCord, who had two interceptions and a fumble in the first half.

The Buckeyes (8-0, 5-0) had a 10-3 half-time lead thanks to a late goal-line stand, but that lead quickly evaporated on Wisconsin's first drive of the second half before Harrison's 19-yard catch made it 17-10 midway through the third and Henderson's 33-yard run extended the lead to the final margin with 5:15 remaining in the game.

Harrison had six catches for 123 yards while McCord was 17 of 26 for 226 yards and two TDs to go with the interceptions. Henderson, who had missed the previous three games, had 24 carries as well as four catches for 45 yards.

Wisconsin (5-3, 3-2) played the second half without injured standout back Braelon Allen (10 carries for 50 yards) before a crowd of 76,453.

Battling Badgers

The Buckeyes started the opening drive on the 40-degree evening from their 35 after the kickoff went out of bounds. Henderson ripped off 9 yards on the first play and Julian Fleming later had a 14-yard catch, but on fourth-and-3 from the Badgers' 33, McCord was strip-sacked by C.J. Goetz for an 8-yard loss and Maema Njongmeta recovered the ball at the Wisconsin 41.

With the first play from scrimmage, Allen ran for 4 yards. On second down, he rumbled for 11 yards, but Jack Sawyer forced a fumble and Davison Igbinosun fell on it at the OSU 44.

The Buckeyes converted the turnover into a 3-0 lead at 8:09 of the first quarter on a 27-yard field goal by Jayden Fielding. The drive started well with Henderson gaining 9 yards on two rushes followed by his 30-yard catch to the 17. After an incompleteness, Xavier Johnson ran for 6 yards and Chip Trayanum's rush went for 2 yards to the 9 to set up the field goal.

The Buckeyes were stopped on their next possession, and Jesse Mirco's 42-yard punt was returned 35 yards by Chimere Dike to the Ohio State 36.



SONNY BROCKWAY

DRIVE SAFELY — In Ohio State's 24-10 win at Wisconsin on Oct. 28, running back TreVeyon Henderson finished things off with a 33-yard rushing touchdown in the fourth quarter to put the game out of reach for the Badgers.

There was an incompleteness and a 5-yard catch for Skyler Bell. However, on third-and-5 from the 31, the Badgers took a delay of game, and the third-down pass by Braedyn Locke was incomplete before Nathaniel Vakos missed a 54-yard field-goal try.

Ohio State responded by driving to the 9 thanks to a 35-yard catch for Harrison on third-and-6 to the 24. An offside penalty against Wisconsin moved the ball to the 19.

On first down, Henderson had his fingers on a pass in the end zone but couldn't hold on. He gained 4 yards on the next snap, but on third-and-1 he was stopped for a 1-yard loss only to have Wisconsin's Gio Paez penalized for taunting, placing the ball on the 9 where McCord then forced a pass that was intercepted by Preston Zachman in the end zone for a touchback.

Following a 29-yard punt by Atticus Bertrams to the Ohio State 48, the Buckeyes went 52 yards in seven plays and 4:07 to go ahead 10-0 on a 16-yard catch-and-run touchdown for Harrison, giving him at least

one touchdown in four straight games.

Henderson started the drive with a 10-yard run. Three plays later, McCord converted a third-and-1 from the 33 with a keeper for 2 yards. On the next play, he found tight end Gee Scott Jr. for 11 yards to the 20. Trayanum carried for 4 yards, and Harrison scored on a crossing route, making the catch at the 15 and running in from there.

After a 45-yard Wisconsin punt, Ohio State marched from its 22 to the Wisconsin 39 with the aid of a 14-yard reception by Carnell Tate. A false start backed the Buckeyes to the 44, and McCord was picked off for a second time with Ricardo Hallman making the play at the 29 and returning it 19 yards to the 48 with 5:09 left.

The Buckeye defense made a goal-line stand to force a 19-yard field goal by Vakos as time expired for the 10-3 score.

A 10-yard sack on a cornerback blitz by Jordan Hancock put the Badgers in a predicament, but on third-and-13 from the Ohio State 42, Will Pauling made a catch for 19 yards to the 23. Allen ran up the middle for 7 yards, and Bell had a reception of 5 yards to the 11 for a first down. Allen bulled his way to the 2 then got 1 yard for a first down with 1:01 left.

Locke then threw low to Bell in the backfield at the 2. He made the catch and ran in for the score, but after a review it was ruled his knee touched the turf at the 1. Allen was stuffed at the line on second and third down and then left the game with a leg injury, and coach Luke Fickell opted for the three-pointer.

In the first half, the Buckeyes had 209

total yards (140 passing, 69 rushing) compared to 83 (43 passing, 40 rushing) for the Badgers. McCord was 10 of 19 for 140 yards.

Pushing To The End

Wisconsin started the second half with a bang, using seven plays to go 75 yards in 2:30 to tie it 10-10 on a 13-yard reception by Pauling.

Locke opened the series with a 27-yarder to Bryson Green, and Locke added a 29-yard run to the 15. Three plays later the score was tied.

The Buckeyes retook the lead at 7:14 of the third on Harrison's 19-yard grab to complete a nine-play, 75-yard, 5:16 drive. The big plays were a 16-yard catch for Harrison and Henderson's 25-yard gallop to the 17. He lost 2 yards on his next carry before McCord tossed a pass to the right corner and Harrison went up between defenders to haul it in.

Harrison had a 22-yard reception on the next OSU drive, but the Buckeyes faced a third-and-8 on the Wisconsin 28 when McCord was called for intentional grounding back to the 37. Mirco had a 30-yard punt for a fair catch at the 7.

The Badgers got a 16-yard completion to Bell and a 19-yarder to Green among the plays that helped them reach the Ohio State 48 early in the fourth quarter, but the drive ended and the Buckeyes got the ball at their 14 off the punt.

Henderson on the first snap ran for 30. Later, McCord went to Harrison for 15 yards to the Wisconsin 43. Henderson chewed up 3 yards on the ground, but McCord was sacked for a 1-yard loss. He had another intentional grounding to move Ohio State to its 48. Mirco booted a 43-yard punt to the 9, and a false start prior to the first Wisconsin play backed the Badgers to the 5.

The Ohio State defense got a three-and-out, and Bertrams' punt traveled only 34 yards for a fair catch by Jayden Ballard that enabled the next possession to start at the Wisconsin 45.

Three plays and 1:30 later it was 24-10 when Henderson bolted 33 yards with 5:15 to play. Johnson gained 10 yards and Henderson 2 yards before he put the dagger into the hearts of the Badgers with his touchdown.

After the kickoff, Wisconsin moved to the 50, but a fourth-down pass was broken up by Sonny Styles with 2:55 to play. Trayanum's three runs totaled 3 yards, and Mirco lofted a punt 36 yards to the 11. After the Badgers turned the ball over on downs at their 27, McCord took two knees to end the game at the 29.

Notes

The Buckeyes gained 407 yards on 226 through the air and 181 rushing with 23 first downs. They were 6 of 12 on third downs. ... Wisconsin had 259 yards (165 passing, 94 rushing) with 14 first downs and was 6 of 16 on third-down conversions. ... Locke was 18 of 39 for 165 yards with one touchdown. ... Ohio State had two sacks for 13 yards, the Badgers four for 29. ... The Buckeyes have beaten the Badgers 10 straight times.



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Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on what went well against Wisconsin: "It started out with a good combination of the run game, and we did have some pretty good passing plays as well, and I thought that combination was good. There were some really tough performances out there. Certainly we can talk about the defense all night, but offensively, Cade (Stover) and Julian (Fleming), these guys were battling at the end. You get to this time of the year, you have a lot of bumps and bruises and things like that. We moved the line of scrimmage, and having TreVeyon (Henderson) back made a big difference, running for 162 yards."

Wisconsin head coach Luke Fickell on his team's loss: "I don't even really know where to start. That's a tough one. It's a tough one in that locker room. It wasn't from a lack of effort. I think I've said that in the past. These guys have given us everything they can all week with the mindset and the mentality."

Day on Henderson's performance: "The one thing about Tre is you can do so much with him because he has such a great skill set. He's one of the more competitive guys we have. Nobody wants to be out there more than him, and you can see when he's out there, he has that drive. He hadn't played a game in a few weeks now, so even at the end he was toughing it out because he was a little winded there at the end. He hadn't had that many carries in a while, and he had a couple receptions and a couple routes. I thought he handled it well."

Day on what a healthy Henderson can bring to Ohio State's offense: "You can see what a weapon he is when he's out there and he's at full-go. Hopefully we have another great week of practice and we can keep doing those things. It just puts more and more pressure on the defense when you have someone like Marvin (Harrison Jr.), Julian out there, and Cade, so that's the idea. I still don't think we put a complete game together on offense, so we'll get

back to it this week and keep swinging."

Henderson on what enabled him to have a productive game: "Our offensive line has been taking care of business – the receivers, tight ends blocking on the perimeter. That's all because of those guys. When they take care of business like that, it's dangerous."

Fickell on the impact Henderson and wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. had on the game: "Players make plays. I mean, it's not hard to figure out sometimes. It's hard to stop. Yeah, they had two difference-makers that everybody knows about, but they were difference-makers again tonight."

Fickell on how Ohio State pulled away in the fourth quarter: "I give them credit. They got us to the fourth quarter, then we couldn't get it done. Maybe some situations I need to be more aggressive and some other situations we need to take advantage of some opportunities that we have, just based on what kind of game it's going to be and what we're going to have to do to win the game."

Day on his team's ability to come alive in the fourth quarter: "Our team at halftime has always had a good look in their eye all year knowing that they want to come out and play really well in the fourth quarter. You're seeing us do that. We're playing really well in the fourth quarter. I'd like to see us play better in the first half, but we're finishing games where we're supposed to finish them – well, we're finishing games. There's ways we can finish them better."

Day on his defense's performance: "Excellent. Not giving up an inch with the ball on the 1-yard line. Just keep fighting and keep swinging and keep playing. The play Tommy (Eichenberg) made on the shovel was huge. Our guys, they played hard, they rallied to the ball. The secondary played well. They got their hands on some balls. That was another really good performance by our guys."

Cornerback Jordan Hancock on the defense's goal-line stand at the end of the first half: "It was a big stop before halftime. There was like three seconds left. They tried to do a shovel pass. I was coming off the edge, but Tommy made a great play right there to hold (Wisconsin running back Braelon Allen), so that's just a huge goal-line stand. We have to win the last three minutes of the half, and that's what we did."

Hancock on the confidence he has in his teammates on defense: "We had a lot of confidence there. Me personally, I have a lot of confidence in our defensive line. They're getting back to the quarterback. I don't think their offensive line could block our front seven for the whole game, so I just give credit to my defensive line."

Day on his team's ability to fight through injuries: "This time of year, we play a physical brand of football, and things like that are going to happen. Most of those guys, they get right back into the game after taking a shot. For those who have played football before, you get leg whipped, it's like someone taking a Louisville Slugger and smacking it into your shin. It hurts. There's a difference between hurt and injured, but our guys, they battled. You saw a bunch of guys just fighting at the end, and they didn't want to come out of the game."

Day on why his team needs to stay focused: "You have one bad day and your season's ruined. The teams that we play are very good teams that are well-coached. Winning is just not something that we're entitled to, we have to do it. That's the competitive stamina that we talk about, especially going on the road. These games are hard, and the next one will be a battle next week against Rutgers. Greg (Schiano) is doing a good job with those guys. The good thing is we're getting battle-tested as well. The more battles you get into, the more poise you have, because you have something to reference. You don't panic."



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McClain's 1980s Badgers Mystified Buckeyes

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's 24-10 win over Wisconsin on Oct. 28 extended the Buckeyes' winning streak over the Badgers to 10 games, a dominant showing in recent years, but it still does not represent Ohio State's longest winning streak over Wisconsin.

The longest stretch of success for the Buckeyes over the Badgers was from 1960-80, a streak that included 21 wins, five shut-outs and just four one-score games. That winning run seemed as if it would go on forever, but it ended suddenly on Oct. 10, 1981, when Wisconsin and fourth-year coach Dave McClain pulled off a 24-21 win over Ohio State and head coach Earle Bruce, then in his third season with the Buckeyes.

It may have appeared a temporary blip to some, but McClain and the Badgers remained a thorn in the side of the Buckeyes during his time in Madison, Wis., and Bill Conley, former Ohio State player and assistant coach, remembers how much it bothered Bruce, who was on staff alongside McClain at Ohio State from 1969-70 under head coach Woody Hayes.

"Earle was pissed," he said. "It's because it was Wisconsin, Dave was the head coach. When you're assistant coaches together and you end up being head coaches and play against guys who had been on the same staff, it's a little bit extra. That did fire Earle up, I know that."

While the coaches went their separate ways after spending two years together in Columbus, Conley said he believes both coaches learned plenty from Hayes in their years as an assistant under him and that McClain's defensive, ground-and-pound football approach to the game couldn't be from anywhere else.

"How can you coach (with) Woody Hayes and not take that from him?" Conley said. "All head coaches are a reflection of people they worked for. I'm sure he (McClain) took a lot from Woody. It ties in with the Ohio State philosophy at that time. You played solid offense, but you played great defense. You had players who run the ball, and you had to give great effort to be in great physical shape."

A native of Sandusky, Ohio, McClain graduated in 1960 from Bowling Green, where he played safety and quarterback. He started his coaching career at Crestline High School in Ohio before returning to Bowling Green as a graduate assistant, followed by assistant coaching stints at Cornell, Miami (Ohio) – where he was the freshman football coach and later defensive assistant under future Michigan head coach Bo Schembechler – Kansas and Ohio State before accepting his first heading coaching job at Ball State in 1971.

He was 20-18-3 in his first four seasons with the Cardinals, and after they joined the Mid-American Conference in 1975, he won a conference title in 1976. He finished with a 46-25-3 record at Ball State, which set the stage for his tenure at Wisconsin that began in 1978, a stint in which the Badgers routinely badgered the Buckeyes.

While Bruce had the best conference record of any coach in the Big Ten over his time at Ohio State and had a winning record

against Michigan and Schembechler, Wisconsin presented a particular challenge from 1979-85, the seasons in which both Bruce and McClain led their respective programs in the Big Ten, with McClain's Badgers posting a 4-3 record against the Buckeyes over those seven games.

Bruce got the best of McClain the first two times they faced off as head coaches, beating the Badgers 59-0 in 1979 and 21-0 in 1980. But the tides began to turn at that point in favor of Wisconsin, which won four of the next five games and might have single-handedly kept the Buckeyes out of the Rose Bowl on more than one occasion, according to Ohio State football historian Jack Park.

"Look at the records and see," he said. "Take a Wisconsin loss out and add a victory. That would have made us the Rose Bowl representatives. There was a maybe a year or two back then that that would have been the case."

And in 1981, the first time the Badgers beat the Buckeyes since 1959, that was the case. In the final Big Ten standings, Ohio State and Iowa were tied with a 6-2 record in the conference but, since the teams did not play and Ohio State had been to the Rose Bowl more recently, the Hawkeyes got the bowl nod and, on Jan. 1, 1982, suffered a 28-0 loss to No. 12 Washington.

If Bruce could have led his troops to a win over McClain, the Buckeyes would have had sole possession of first place in the conference, avoiding a tiebreaker and assuring a trip to Pasadena, Calif. Offensive lineman Nick Miller said after the loss that it made him realize the days of the Big Ten being known as the "Big Two, Little Eight" were over.

"Wisconsin is a good team," said Miller, who was in his fifth season with the Buckeyes. "Wisconsin beat us, they beat Michigan, they beat Purdue. They've proved that they were a very good ballclub. You can't talk down at something like that."

McClain's defensive approach was too much for Ohio State to handle. Quarterback Art Schlichter threw three interceptions, and the Buckeyes lost two fumbles. Wisconsin quarterback Jess Cole was just 2 of 12 passing on the day, but both of his two completed passes were for touchdowns, and it was good enough to take home the 24-21 win.

Ohio State's failure to make the Rose Bowl occurred by Wisconsin's hand in 1982 as well. The Badgers won a defensive battle 6-0, and it remains just the fourth time that Ohio State has been held scoreless against Wisconsin, the others coming in a 12-0 loss on Nov. 8, 1913, a 21-0 loss on Oct. 23, 1915, and a 0-0 tie on Nov. 1, 1930.

Furthermore, the Buckeyes missed the Rose Bowl as Michigan beat them out with one more win in the conference standings. It was Ohio State's only loss in the Big Ten that season and the first time Wisconsin had ever won a game in Ohio Stadium. McClain was very pleased with the way his team came into Columbus.

"We studied Ohio State's film and just coached a little bit harder," he said after the game. "Anytime you come into Columbus and not only beat Ohio State, but shut them out, it has to be a tremendous victory."

Bruce and the Buckeyes were able to beat McClain in 1983, a 45-27 win in Columbus, but it ultimately mattered little to Ohio State's season as it finished just 6-3 in the conference while 9-0 Illinois earned the Rose Bowl bid. But after the win, it was obvious that this game had become much more important to Ohio State after consecutive losses to Wisconsin. Quarterback Mike Tomczak wanted to beat the Badgers and beat them badly.

"I was looking forward to this game," he said after the win. "It was in the back of our minds – you read about it in the paper and everything. You want to go out there and not only win the game, but if you get a chance, to beat them up physically."

With the series developing into a full-fledged rivalry after years of domination by Ohio State, McClain said it was tough to accept the loss at the time.

"You hate to lose," he said, "but the sun will come up tomorrow – maybe not in Madison, but somewhere in the country."

The sun came up the next year in Madison, as McClain was right back to his winning ways against Ohio State, beating the Buckeyes 16-14 with 11 future NFL draft picks on the roster. But with a tie and three other regular-season losses by the Badgers, Ohio State – which finished 7-2 in the Big Ten – finished atop the conference standings and advanced to the Rose Bowl, where it suffered a 20-17 loss to USC.

And a loss for Ohio State the following year to Wisconsin – a 12-7 Badger win in Columbus – proved to be "devastating," in the words of Bruce, because it came the week before he took his team to Ann Arbor. The team was broken up about falling to the Badgers going into the game against Michigan, with the coach concerned about his team getting their morale back up.

"It's going to be awful tough," Bruce said. "We are going to have to come back very slowly this week and make some adjustments."

With only one loss that season in Week 4 to Illinois, the Buckeyes were looking forward to having another shot at the Rose Bowl if they could win out. Wisconsin had a team that finished 2-6 in the conference in that year, but McClain continued to have Bruce's number. Park wonders if the Buckeyes had been focusing on their game the following week against Schembechler before they took on McClain.

"I think most people were looking ahead to the Michigan game," he said. "Maybe, just maybe, the team was too. They ended up losing to Wisconsin, and that sometimes happens when you look too far ahead."

It was the second win for the Badgers in Columbus in their last three tries, and Ohio State wide receiver Mike Lanese wondered at the time if Wisconsin wasn't intimidated coming into Ohio Stadium like other teams were.

"Some teams play well against other teams," he said. "We intimidate most teams. I don't know if we intimidate (Wisconsin). Most teams, when they come into Ohio Stadium, they have to beat the crowds and they have to beat the Ohio State image, then they have to beat the Ohio State football team. Wisconsin seems to find a way around that."

Wisconsin's 1986 team looked to be a

worthy opponent with most impact players returning on their defense and a rushing attack that featured tailback Larry Emery and fullback Joe Armentrout. But just two days after Wisconsin's spring intrasquad scrimmage, McClain suffered a heart attack and was later pronounced dead at just 48, and his unexpected death shocked the college football world. Park said that despite the battles, Bruce and McClain remained close friends since they had been on staff under Hayes at the same time.

"I remember Earle saying this," Park said. "He was devastated because they were such close friends. He had talked to McClain earlier that day."

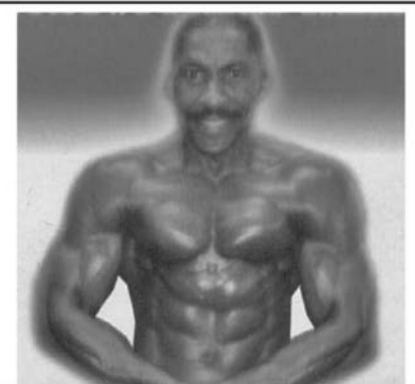
Former Wisconsin head coach Paul Chryst, who played as a Badger from 1986-88, remembered how hard it was for the people around the football program to move past the death of McClain, who made a significant impact during his eight years with the program.

"It was tough to get over," Chryst said in 2006. "We all appreciated him as players. I also had some history with him because (my) dad was on his first staff. That was just really hard on everybody."

Despite a talented team, Wisconsin managed only a 3-9 record in 1986 after defensive coordinator Jim Hilles took over as the interim head coach, and the Buckeyes' troubles with the Badgers ended, with Ohio State since posting a 23-7-1 record in the series.

But for those great seasons – at least for Wisconsin – in which Bruce and McClain matched up, the Badgers' lead man was the only person whom Bruce could not find an answer for. And as much as Wisconsin has since missed McClain on the field, the impact has been felt just as much off the field, where McClain had an impeccable reputation.

"We lost more than an outstanding coach," Wisconsin's athletic director Elroy Hirsch said after McClain's death. "He was a great father, husband and human being. People like this are not replaced."



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Veteran LB Simon Making Push For More Reps

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Entering this season, Ohio State senior linebacker Cody Simon was somewhat overlooked – maybe even forgotten – by fans and media alike.

He began his senior campaign as the solidified backup behind unquestioned starters Tommy Eichenberg and Steele Chambers, both of whom returned to the team after breaking out last season. Simon also entered fall camp with promising sophomore linebacker C.J. Hicks breathing down his neck, with Hicks a highly-touted five-star prospect from the 2022 recruiting class who was expected by many to make a considerable push toward a starting role.

With a whirlwind of uncertainty swirling around Simon this summer about his role, he told reporters in August that he would embrace any opportunity that was presented to him on the team, whether that be on Jim Knowles' defense, Parker Fleming's special teams or even cheering his teammates on from the bench.

"I pride myself on being a big team player," Simon said on Aug. 3. "I love those guys like those guys are my brothers. Everyone in that linebacker room, we're all so close. It's never like, 'Man, I wish I was in there instead of him.' I feel like anybody who is on that field can produce. And it's ultimately up to Coach (Ryan Day), whatever he decides, I'm cool with whatever he decides. I'm going to go out there and play my hardest and do whatever I can for the team."

Three months later, Simon's commitment to giving it all for his team has paid off. Although he saw sporadic playing time in the first three games of the season, the fourth-year Buckeye has experienced a major uptick in his snap count over the last five contests, where he has shared – sometimes even exceeded – playing time with Eichenberg and Chambers and emerged as a major weapon in stopping the run.

For those who are around him the most, Simon's increasing usage is a testament to the selfless and hardworking attitude he has brought to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, a mentality that he has carried with him since arriving to the program in 2020.

"You know, he deserves it," Day said on Oct. 19 of his playing. "He's shown production. He's been challenged in certain areas and he's responded well to those challenges. And whether it's on special teams or now playing linebacker, he's been a productive member of our defense."

Added Knowles, "This is what I hoped for. Cody's earned it. He's really earned it with what he's done in practice and what he's done with his chances in the game."

Simon's resurgent senior season first took flight on Sept. 23 in South Bend, Ind., where he proved to be a critical piece of the Buckeyes' exciting 17-14 prime-time victory against Notre Dame. With the Fighting Irish offense methodically marching down the field on their first drive of the game and facing a fourth-and-1 at the Buckeye 18-yard line, Knowles called on Simon to serve as the third linebacker in the short-yardage scheme, and that decision would work wonders for the defensive mastermind and his unit.

The senior quickly read a play-action fake from quarterback Sam Hartman, took away his first read to standout tight end Michael Mayer, then shed the block to knock Hartman out of bounds for no gain. It was an impressive and instinctual play that kept Notre Dame off the board, proving critical later in the game as Ohio State held for the narrow victory.

"At that point, I just felt like the (play) was going too far and I had to make him make a decision," Simon said. "It's a rare play that happens – fourth-and-1, middle of the field of play – and I just felt like I had to make that play."

"(Playing Cody) worked out for us," Knowles said. "He is really a guy who has been practicing well. He's accountable, he's dependable, and we have to find a way to get him more snaps, and that was one way to do it."

Simon's breakout performance against Notre Dame, which included another tackle on Hartman in the second quarter, would pave the way for him to play a much larger role in what is quickly proving to be one of the better defensive teams in the nation.

He logged 21 snaps in the team's 37-17 victory over Maryland on Oct. 7, recording another two tackles. Then, in the Buckeyes' 41-7 trouncing of Purdue on Oct. 14, he had arguably the best game of his Ohio State tenure, tying a career high with eight tackles (the other on Nov. 6, 2021, against Nebraska) and adding one tackle for loss.

He also played 45 snaps against the Boilermakers, 13 more than Chambers, who has still been solid for Ohio State this season but not quite at the level he was at this time last year. While Chambers entered the campaign as the proven starter alongside Eichenberg, Simon has worked his way into the rotation and has taken some reps away from the former running back, a development that Knowles said may continue through the rest of this season.

"They're neck and neck," he said on Oct. 17. "Cody is continuing to earn more playing time. He plays both (linebacker) positions and is extremely valuable. But he's earned the time, and he's extremely competitive at the position."

Knowles said Simon has earned more snaps this season due to his unique ability to defend against the run. He has served as a disruptor on opposing rush attempts at or near the line of scrimmage, providing a solid line of defense in the middle of the unit that has helped the Buckeyes give up just 99.8 yards per game on the ground, good for 16th in the nation.

These efforts were best felt in the Buckeyes' 20-12 victory over Penn State on Oct. 21, where he recorded another five tackles (one for loss) to help the Buckeyes limit a usually potent Nittany Lions' rushing attack to a mere 49 yards and 1.9 yards per attempt, the lowest since Penn State had 33 yards on 29 carries (1.1) in a 33-24 loss at Ohio State on Oct. 30, 2021.

"Cody brings an added dimension in the run game because he's more of a Mike linebacker type," Knowles said. "When he's in there at Will, he can be more effective in the run game."

While Simon is making an enormous impact with his run-stuffing and game-changing abilities, he knows this year's successes have



SONNY BROCKWAY

BREAKING THROUGH — In his fourth season with the Buckeyes, linebacker Cody Simon (30) is making perhaps his biggest impact yet, offering valuable depth at the position for Ohio State.

not come without some prior adversity. He came into the program in 2020 as a touted four-star prospect out of Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter's Prep, where he was rated the state's No. 1 overall player, fourth-best linebacker and 75th-best player in the nation. Those distinctions helped him carve out a role on a Kerry Coombs-led defense early in his career, where he earned a spot as a starting linebacker during his sophomore season after appearing in just five games as a freshman.

Simon would post a solid season during an otherwise poor year for Ohio State defensively in 2021, recording 54 tackles – a mark that ranked fourth on the team – with 2½ stops for loss while also racking up a sack, an interception and a pass breakup. But while others saw this as a successful season for the sophomore, Simon himself viewed it as a year when he was dealing with an almost unbearable amount of pain.

While it was not known during the year, Simon later revealed that he was playing most of the season with a torn labrum on his right shoulder, an ailment that would usually sideline players for the entire season. He said that although he tried his best to manage the pain, the injury become more severe as his sophomore year progressed, eventually leading him to sit out the team's Rose Bowl matchup against Utah and watch a last-second victory from the sidelines with his right arm in a sling.

"It hurt to not play in that Rose Bowl," Simon said in 2021. "Guys are struggling every day. Bowl practice is really important, and they're grinding every day. To not be able to be out there with them was tough. But at some point, you know when it's gone too far to keep

playing."

To add insult to injury, Simon's ailment and continued surgery recovery would linger into the offseason and last year's preseason, causing him to miss some much-needed reps and eventually lose out on the starting position in favor of the healthier Eichenberg and Chambers. This change would limit his production last season, though he still finished with 32 tackles, good for seventh on the team, and he was a significant part of Ohio State's special teams efforts.

But this year, with a now full offseason of practice and camp behind him and his shoulder completely healed, Simon has finally shown what he is capable of, emerging as one of the most impactful players on a Knowles-led defense that ranks in the top-five nationally. Despite injuries and a lack of reps, Simon has been able to excel this season by committing to the same hard-nosed and humble approach he has carried with him throughout his career, a mentality that has finally been rewarded in his fourth year with the program.

"I'm just blessed that I'm in this position, I really am," Simon said "I'm taking it one day at a time. I appreciate everything that's been going for me in my life, good or bad. So am I in my best form? I guess you can say that. But I'm just trying to stay on top of everything."

"Staying hungry, that's the main thing. It doesn't really matter if I get one rep or if I play the whole game, my job is to be as prepared as anyone is on that field. And when my number is called, I'll do whatever Coach tells me and do it with as much energy as I can."

Frosh Tate In Line To Be Next Star Receiver

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's 2023 recruiting class, as usual, was among the best in the country and had a specific embarrassment of riches at wide receiver with three top-60 receivers. Out of that group, most of the attention landed on Carnell Tate, a four-star prospect out of IMG Academy in Bradenton, Fla.

With schools such as LSU, Notre Dame and Texas involved in Tate's recruitment, it signaled yet another success for offensive coordinator/wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, who has established himself as not only one of the best developers of wide receivers, but one of the best recruiters in the country based on his recent classes. But as highly-ranked as Tate was coming out of high school, he has only continued to raise the bar since arriving in Columbus.

"There's a lot to be impressed with," head coach Ryan Day said this spring of Tate, an early enrollee who arrived on campus over the winter. "He's prepared, he takes care of his business and he's very, very mature. That's off the field. On the field, the dude's making a lot of plays. He has to pick up a lot of offense for a young player. He's got a pretty mature route tree, does a nice job at the line of scrimmage, catches the ball strong, makes plays."

But Tate's positive offseason took a hit on July 16, as he lost his mother, Ashley Griggs, a victim of a drive-by shooting in Chicago.

"I got the call at 6 a.m. about Ashley, and it was not easy for anybody, but certainly for Carnell," Day said. "I know he and his mom were very close. When you lose somebody close to you like that, it just takes the rug out from underneath you, and I know that happened to Carnell."

"We've all surrounded him and try to help him the best we can. You have to go through a process of grieving, and we've talked about that. That's not easy. But football has allowed him a distraction to get his mind off it when he's not in his room or back in Chicago."

It has been a tough situation for Tate, one that he has not spoken about publicly other than thanking people for their well wishes on social media. But even after he went through that, he has still been just as consistent whenever he's on the field, whether that's in practice or a game.

"He continues to impress," Day said during training camp. "To go through what he's been through this month, and then just to continue to show up every day and play the way he's playing, you're talking about someone who not only has talent but has maturity at a high level."

That positive trend has continued upward into his freshman season, as Tate has appeared in all eight games and has gotten a chance to offer significant contributions for the offense, proving he is ready despite his age. In those games, he has 12 receptions for 197 yards and a touchdown and his yardage total is fourth on the team behind Marvin Harrison Jr., Emeka Egbuka and Cade Stover.

He had his first catch against Indiana in the season opener, and his snaps have mostly continued to ramp up. In the first five weeks, Tate was on the field for just 53 snaps, and 23 of those came in the 63-10 blowout over Western Kentucky in Week 3. The week after that against Notre Dame, the only time Tate got



SONNY BROCKWAY

MAKING A PUSH — Freshman wide receiver Carnell Tate (17) has made a push for more playing time of late with several Buckeye receivers in and out of the lineup due to injuries, and he's made the most of his time in his first year at Ohio State.

onto the field was for special teams.

After playing just nine snaps against Maryland — a game in which Egbuka suffered a low-leg injury in the second half — he was next man up for Ohio State. He played 26 snaps in the win over Purdue while Egbuka was absent, bringing in three catches for 79 yards, including a 55-yarder, and that convinced Day he deserved to be on the field against Penn State.

"Carnell has continued to prove that he deserves to play," Day said before that game. "This goes back to the preseason, and you're seeing it. You saw him make a couple nice catches there in the game last week (at Purdue). You've seen it a couple weeks before with the touchdown catch (against Western Kentucky). He continues to impress."

"It's about that time when you think about some of the freshmen who have made it as a freshman around the middle of the season and end of the season when they start coming on. That time frame is about right here for Carnell. We have the confidence to put him in the game."

Tate rose to the occasion against the Nittany Lions, playing a season-high 36 snaps while Egbuka remained out and bringing in three receptions for 21 yards, including a chain-moving catch in the first quarter. And against Wisconsin — with Egbuka still out — Tate finished with one catch for 14 yards and another first down.

He has been able to earn his time on the field quickly, just like other young receivers at Ohio State who have not languished deep on the depth chart. It offers an advantage not only for the on-the-field product, but for the Buckeyes' recruiting efforts, showing that it doesn't matter whether it's a fifth-year player or a true

freshman — if someone is good enough to play, they will.

"We're trying to put the best guys on the field at all times," Hartline said. "Carnell earned that opportunity doing good things in the spring and in the summer, whether you're playing the outside or the inside. If he's one of the best guys, and he's shown that, you have to find ways to get him in the slot and let him fill that void."

The fact that he has been able to get on the field as a freshman comes from his natural ability as a receiver, but he also puts in the work in practice so he can continue to improve, something that's noticed by his teammates as well as the coaches. Egbuka said Tate is surprisingly consistent for a freshman, and that has been what has helped him get to this point, adding that Tate is probably far ahead of where he was coming into a new environment.

"It's just the consistency," he said. "He doesn't have too many missed assignments. He does everything right — catches the ball, gets open. He just does what you need him to time and time again. He's really consistent with it. And he's handled coming into a new offense, to a higher level of play with grace."

Harrison had perhaps the strongest endorsement of Tate, adding his belief that the freshman is already better now than Harrison was entering his sophomore season — yes, the one last year where Harrison finished with 77 catches for 1,263 yards and 14 touchdowns. Tate won't reach those numbers this year, but Harrison thinks it's only a matter of time.

"Carnell's going to be special," Harrison said. "I think he's amazing. He handles his business. He's always in the right spot, catches the ball and runs great routes. I'm excited

to see what his career looks like. I think he'll be one of the best receivers to ever come to Ohio State. His future is very bright, and just how he's handled his situation, on and off the field, I can't speak to how hard that must be for him."

Coming from one of the best weapons in college football in Harrison, who knows what it takes to play at that type of level, that's high praise for Tate. And with that, it seems like he could be the next in a line of the elite wide receivers who have gone from Ohio State to the NFL. Chris Olave, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Garrett Wilson have already begun to make a name for themselves as professionals, and as projected first-round draft picks, both Harrison and Egbuka have a great chance to do the same.

None of those other receivers put up otherworldly impressive numbers in their freshman seasons — and that will likely be the case for Tate — but it was obvious that the talent needed to be a star wideout at Ohio State was there, and it is for Tate as well. While he has already found the end zone, perhaps his most impressive catch was against the Nittany Lions, diving for a 15-yard reception and surviving the impact of the ground to hold onto the ball.

It's a type of play that looked simple enough for Tate, but it's also a play that separates the good from the great, something that he appears on his way to becoming for Ohio State.

"As a football player, he is very mature," Hartline said. "When you give that mature tag to a football player, it says a lot. It's hard to put into words, and I can try. But his ability to take meetings to the field, his ability to correct mistakes in one try, his ability to hold himself accountable to mistakes — for me to ask him questions about why he did something and for him to give me the answers back, shows a lot of intentional work, which is very, very important. And that's usually an older guy kind of thing. I'm just really proud of him."

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Rutgers Going Bowling In Best Start Since 2012

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Rutgers' last appearance in a bowl game came in 2021, when the Scarlet Knights suffered a 38-10 loss to Wake Forest in the Gator Bowl. But it was hard to take much positive away from the bowl appearance as Rutgers entered with just a 5-7 record, inserted only because Texas A&M was forced to withdraw due to a COVID-19 breakout within the program.

It was a hollow achievement for the Scarlet Knights and head coach Greg Schiano, but it also helped the program continue to grow. After finishing just 4-8 last season, Rutgers appears to have taken another step this year, posting a 6-2 record through eight games – the team's best start since beginning 7-1 in 2012 under head coach Kyle Flood – and becoming bowl eligible the old-fashioned way for the first time since 2014.

"It's monumental for us and our program," linebacker Deion Jennings said. "What Coach Schiano has done for this program, we've seen consistent growth. Seeing the ups and downs of this program – it's been a wild ride, but I'm glad we're here."

Rutgers' early bowl eligibility has been due to the Scarlet Knights taking care of business on their schedule and defeating teams that they're expected to beat, something that this program has had trouble doing in recent years. Rutgers has notched dominant wins over Northwestern, Temple and Wagner by a combined score of 112-17 while collecting victories over Virginia Tech, Michigan State and Indiana, the sort of toss-up games that have not always gone the Scarlet Knights' way in the past.

"I think it's leadership," Schiano said. "Now we have more guys toward the back end of the pipeline that have been in the program for 3½ years, understand the culture inside-out, have paid the price (in the) offseason, spring, summer and then in-season. The cumulative effect, those cumulative repetitions not only of game reps and practice reps, but the inter-program and all those things that make you mentally tougher, physically stronger."

"When push comes to shove, those guys have got to lead the program. There's a bunch of young guys that are playing out there, they don't know. So who do they follow? They follow the leaders. We have some guys right now that I'm really encouraged when our guys follow them."

Most of those leaders have been on the defensive side of the ball for Rutgers, allowing just 15.8 points and 276.8 yards per game, which respectively ranked 12th and eighth nationally heading into the Scarlet Knights' off week on Oct. 28. The most yards given up by Rutgers this season was 415 in a 31-7 loss at Michigan on Sept. 23, but otherwise the Knights have allowed fewer than 300 yards of offense in five of eight games this season.

It has mostly gone according to plan for defensive coordinator Joe Harasymiak, who is in his second season with the Scarlet Knights and has already seen a significant improvement from last year's 94th-ranked scoring defense (29.2 points).

"I think we've just got to stick to what we believe in," Harasymiak said. "Violence – we talk about it all the time – it's non-negotiable. It starts with that. And then certainly taking the ball away, because the ball is the program. If we can stick to that and sustain that throughout the game, I think we'll give ourselves a better shot in the fourth quarter."

The Scarlet Knights have already forced 12 turnovers (seven fumbles recovered off eight forced, plus five interceptions) and have been particularly stingy in the passing game, allowing just 156.3 yards through the air – second best in the country – while allowing only eight passing touchdowns. It's the result of an experienced secondary, with junior cornerbacks Robert Longerbeam and Max Melton both returning starters, while junior safeties Desmond Igbinosun – the older brother of Ohio State cornerback Davison Igbinosun – Shaquan Loyal and Flip Dixon patrol the defensive backfield.

Dixon, Loyal and Igbinosun have combined for 122 tackles, with Igbinosun racking up 5½ tackles for loss and a sack while often playing in the box. Longerbeam – who started at Rutgers as a wideout before making the switch to defense – has 23 tackles with a team-high eight pass breakups and has recovered two fumbles.

"The main focus for me this offseason was to put more weight on to help me stay healthier during the season," Longerbeam said. "I wanted to get stronger and faster. The guys we had here and the guys that came in, we pushed each other so much that everybody made gains."

The heart of Rutgers' defense, however, has been at linebacker, and the Scarlet Knights received unfortunate news on Oct. 24 that starting linebacker Tyreem Powell will miss the rest of the season after undergoing hand surgery. Prior to his season ending, Powell led Rutgers with 53 tackles and added two sacks, two pass breakups and a forced fumble.

"Tyreem was playing at a very, very high level, so he'll be a very tough player to replace," Schiano said. "Thank goodness we have some depth. But now that depth will be tested – not only the immediate depth but the young guys behind them. But it's somebody's opportunity now. They need to step up and take advantage of it. Tyreem will heal up and he'll be well again, I'm confident of that. It's just a shame it happened to him."

Powell's injury does not change the calculus for Jennings, Rutgers' other starting linebacker and second-leading tackler with 51 stops, half a tackle for loss and four pass breakups. But as Schiano alluded to, it opens up plenty of opportunities for the Scarlet Knights' others at linebacker, and specifically for senior Mohamed Toure.

While Toure has started just three games for Rutgers this season at linebacker, with the team instead opting to start Igbinosun as a fifth defensive back, Toure has essentially been a third starter at linebacker along with Jennings and Powell, playing 372 snaps compared to 444 for Jennings and 371 for Powell. Toure is also the team's third-leading tackler with 50 stops, four tackles for loss, 1½ sacks and two pass breakups.

"I think Mo's doing a great job, and I think

Get To Know ... Rutgers

- **2023 Record:** 6-2.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation - Spread; Defensive Formation - 4-3; Starters Returning - Offense 5, Defense 7.
- **Head Coach:** Greg Schiano, 15th year at Rutgers (2001-11, 2020-present), 86-91.
- **Series History:** 10th meeting; Ohio State leads 9-0-0.
- **School Facts:** Location - Piscataway, NJ; Enrollment - 67,556; Nickname - Scarlet Knights; Colors - Scarlet, White; Conference - Big Ten (East Division); Stadium - SHI Stadium (Surface - FieldTurf; Capacity - 52,454).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Kyle Monangai	144	744	5.2	7
Gavin Wimsatt	73	362	5.0	7
Jason Benjamin	43	174	4.0	1

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Gavin Wimsatt	91-181	50.3	1134	7-4

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Christian Dremel	23	294	12.8	3
JaQuae Jackson	17	290	17.1	0
Isaiah Washington	15	179	11.9	1

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game — 28.1
Rushing Yards Per Game — 178.8
Passing Yards Per Game — 148.4
Total Offense Avg. Per Game — 327.1

2023 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 3	NORTHWESTERN	W, 24-7
Sept. 9	TEMPLE	W, 36-7
Sept. 16	VIRGINIA TECH	W, 35-16
Sept. 23	at Michigan	L, 31-7
Sept. 30	WAGNER	W, 52-3
Oct. 7	at Wisconsin	L, 24-13
Oct. 14	MICHIGAN STATE	W, 27-24
Oct. 21	at Indiana	W, 31-14
Nov. 4	OHIO STATE	12 p.m.
Nov. 11	at Iowa	TBA
Nov. 19	at Penn State	TBA
Nov. 25	MARYLAND	TBA

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Tyreem Powell	25	28	53	2.0-8	2.0-8
Deion Jennings	21	30	51	0.5-0	0-0
Mohamed Toure	22	28	50	4.0-12	1.5-8
Flip Dixon	32	16	48	1.0-1	0-0
Shaquan Loyal	25	15	40	1.5-8	1.0-6
Desmond Igbinosun	21	13	34	5.5-26	1.0-15

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Shaquan Loyal	1	37	37.0	0
Jordan Thompson	1	2	2.0	0
Robert Longerbeam	1	0	0.0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed — 15.8
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed — 121.3
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed — 156.3
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed — 277.5

what it does is it gives us great depth at the linebacker position," Schiano said. "Instead of guys playing 70, 80, 90 plays, they are playing 50, 48, 52, and they are splitting those reps, and over time that adds up."

Returning junior defensive ends Aaron Lewis and Wesley Bailey anchor Rutgers' defensive line, combining for 46 tackles, 7½ tackles for loss and six sacks, while seniors Isaiah Iton and Mayan Ahanotu have the interior locked down for the Scarlet Knights.

But as has been the case during Schiano's tenure at Rutgers, the team continues to be held back by shortcomings on the offensive side of the ball, even if things are slightly improved. The Scarlet Knights are averaging 28.1 points and 327.1 yards per game, which respectively ranked 70th and 107th nationally heading into the off week, a stark improvement over last year's offense which accounted for just 17.4 points (123rd) and 282.1 yards (126th) per game.

Most of that improvement has come in the rushing attack, which is averaging 178.8 yards per game. The majority of that production has come from Kyle Monangai, with 144 carries for 744 yards (5.2 per attempt) and seven touchdowns in eight games.

"What I think Kyle is a great representation of, is this is his fourth year in the program," Schiano said. "He's developed year after year. He's gotten stronger. He's gotten better as a football player. He's matured and now he's a grown man playing running back."

Junior quarterback Gavin Wimsatt has also been a factor in the running game, carrying the ball 73 times for 362 yards (5.0) and seven touchdowns, and at times it has been more effective than actually passing the ball. Wimsatt has completed just 50.3 percent of his passes (91 of 181) this season for 1,134 yards, seven touchdowns and four interceptions.

Helping Wimsatt through a challenging season has been the receiving trio of Christian Dremel, JaQuae Jackson and Isaiah Washington. Dremel has been a favorite of Wimsatt, collecting 23 receptions for 294 yards and three touchdowns – all team highs.

"Dremel has been steady all year and at times spectacular," Schiano said. "He's as tough as they come. The other day he had an oversized sweatshirt on and some loose pants, and you would have said the guy was, you know, the guy who serves the coffee at Starbucks. You wouldn't say he was a Big Ten slot receiver who is really doing well."

"He's a fighter. He's a warrior, and he's a lot faster than people think, which helps him, really helps him. The biggest thing that helps him is he chops like nobody else. He is special."

An area that Schiano is looking for the offense to improve is in the trenches, which could help Rutgers take a step across the board on that side of the ball. The Scarlet Knights have struggled to develop a rhythm, with players rotating in and out all season due to injuries and performance issues, leading to nine players already starting on the offensive line this year.

"Inconsistent would probably be the No. 1 word that comes to mind," he said. "We need to build consistency. I know we're capable. I know that. We just need to do it under pressure in a game against really good personnel."

In the third phase of the game, Rutgers' special teams have been adequate, with kicker Jai Patel connecting on 8 of 10 field-goal attempts, punter Flynn Appleby averaging 41.8 yards per boot with a long of 75 yards and kickoff return man Rashad Rochelle averaging 55.0 yards on two returns with a long of 88.



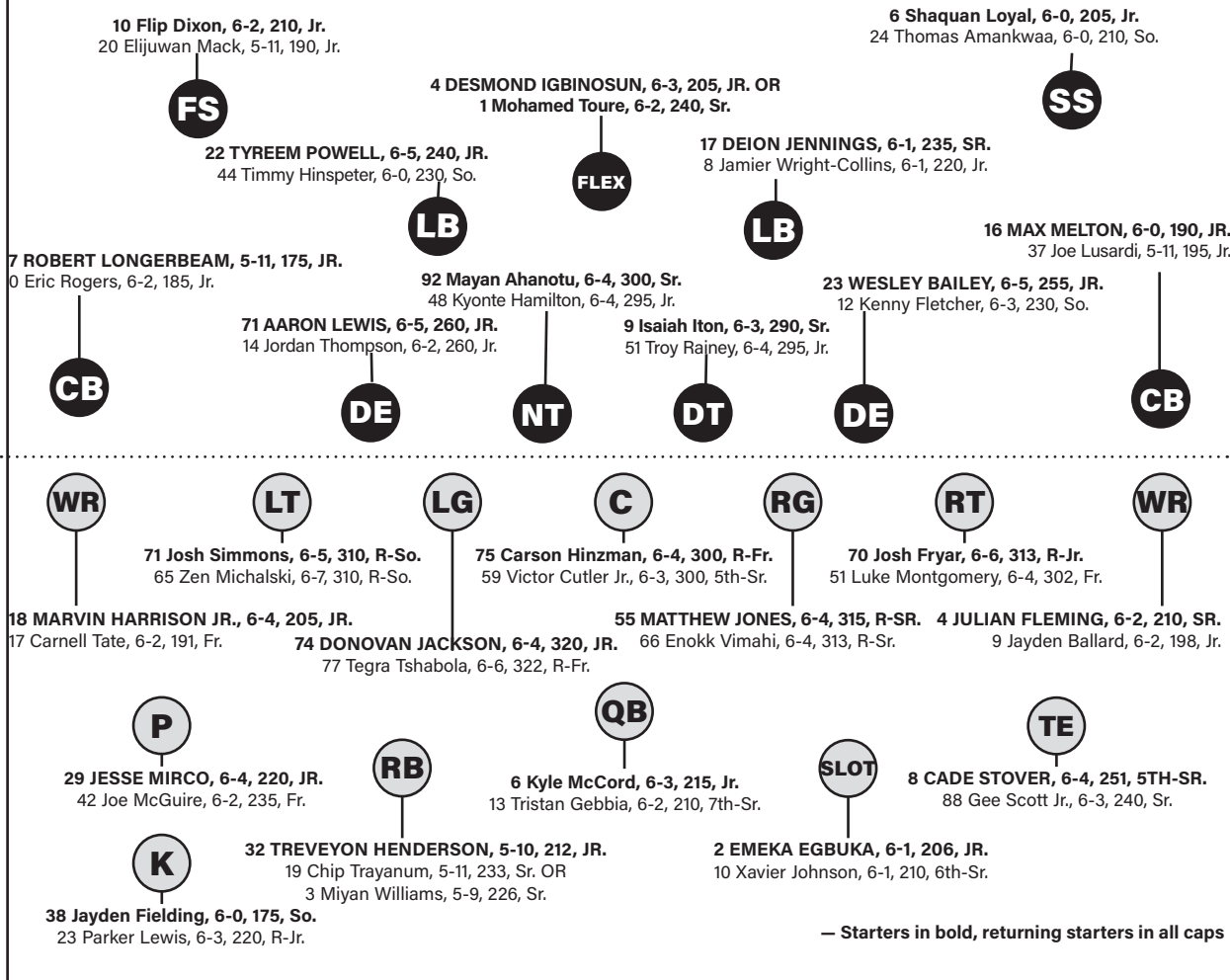
Ohio State at Rutgers

Saturday, Nov. 4 • Noon • CBS
SHI Stadium • Piscataway, N.J.



Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. RUTGERS RUSH DEFENSE

TreVeyon Henderson is well, and so is the Buckeyes' running game. After missing three games, he returned with a purpose in the 24-10 win at Wisconsin on Oct. 28. Henderson had a 33-yard touchdown among his 162 yards, which was exactly 100 more yards than OSU rushed for without him vs. Maryland on Oct. 7. The Buckeyes were also coming off gaining 79 yards on a 1.9 average against Penn State on Oct. 21. Henderson made all the difference, especially when quarterback Kyle McCord struggled against the Badgers. Rutgers is feeling pretty good about itself coming off an open weekend following a 31-14 win at Indiana on Oct. 21 to become bowl-eligible. The Scarlet Knights rank in the top 10 nationally in total defense (276.8), although the rush defense is somewhat of a weak link, allowing 120.5 yards to rank 35th. The Hoosiers gained 153 yards on a healthy 5.3 average and had four players who each had a long run ranging from 11 to 17 yards. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

RUTGERS RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Scarlet Knights like to run the ball – a lot – if the opponent can't find a way to stop them. Against a team like Indiana, of Rutgers' 67 offensive plays against the Hoosiers, 55 were runs for 276 yards (5.0) – the most ever for Rutgers in a Big Ten game. Leading the way was Gavin Wimsatt, who slashed his way for 143 yards, a program record for a quarterback, on an 8.9 average. He had three touchdowns, including an 80-yarder, and has seven rushing touchdowns this season. He shares the spotlight with Kyle Monangai, who surpassed 100 yards for the fourth time this season vs. the Hoosiers (109 yards). OSU faced a stud back in Wisconsin's Braelon Allen, who had 50 yards in 10 rushes before being injured. The Badgers gained 94 yards (3.8) with the longest run a 29-yarder for quarterback Braedyn Locke. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. RUTGERS PASS DEFENSE

McCord did not have a good outing, but Marvin Harrison Jr. (six catches, 123 yards, two TDs) bailed him out. McCord was under constant siege but made some bad decisions as well that led to two interceptions, a lost fumble and two intentional groundings. He was sacked four times. Rutgers, under coach Greg Schiano, has been stingy in the pass defense, ranking second in the NCAA (156.2), just ahead of the Buckeyes (4th). The Scarlet Knights allow only 15.8 points per game. Indiana gained 126 yards through the air with a TD. The leaky OSU line gives Rutgers a shot. **EDGE: EVEN**

RUTGERS PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

The Scarlet Knights average 28.1 points per game and 327.1 yards per game, brought down by an anemic passing attack that is 123rd of 130 teams (148.4). Wimsatt was 5 for 12 for 39 yards vs. the Hoosiers, the second time he's had less than 100 yards this season (7 for 16 for 46 yards and a touchdown against Virginia Tech). Wimsatt has completed 50.3 percent of his passes for 1,134 yards, seven touchdowns and four interceptions. Last season, he completed 44.8 percent for 757 yards with five TDs to seven INTs. Locke threw for 165 yards on 18-of-39 passing against the Buckeyes, but he was not a threat. He was sacked twice. Ohio State is allowing just 160.2 passing yards per game and was buoyed by the return from injury of Denzel Burke. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Rutgers blocked a punt for a TD against Indiana, the 13th touchdown on a blocked punt in Schiano's tenure. The Scarlet Knights averaged 36.7 yards on their three kickoff returns this season. Jai Patel made 8 of 10 field goals, including a 51-yarder among his two tries from beyond 50 yards. Ohio State's special teams usually aren't special as evidenced by Wisconsin's 35-yard punt return. **EDGE: RUTGERS**

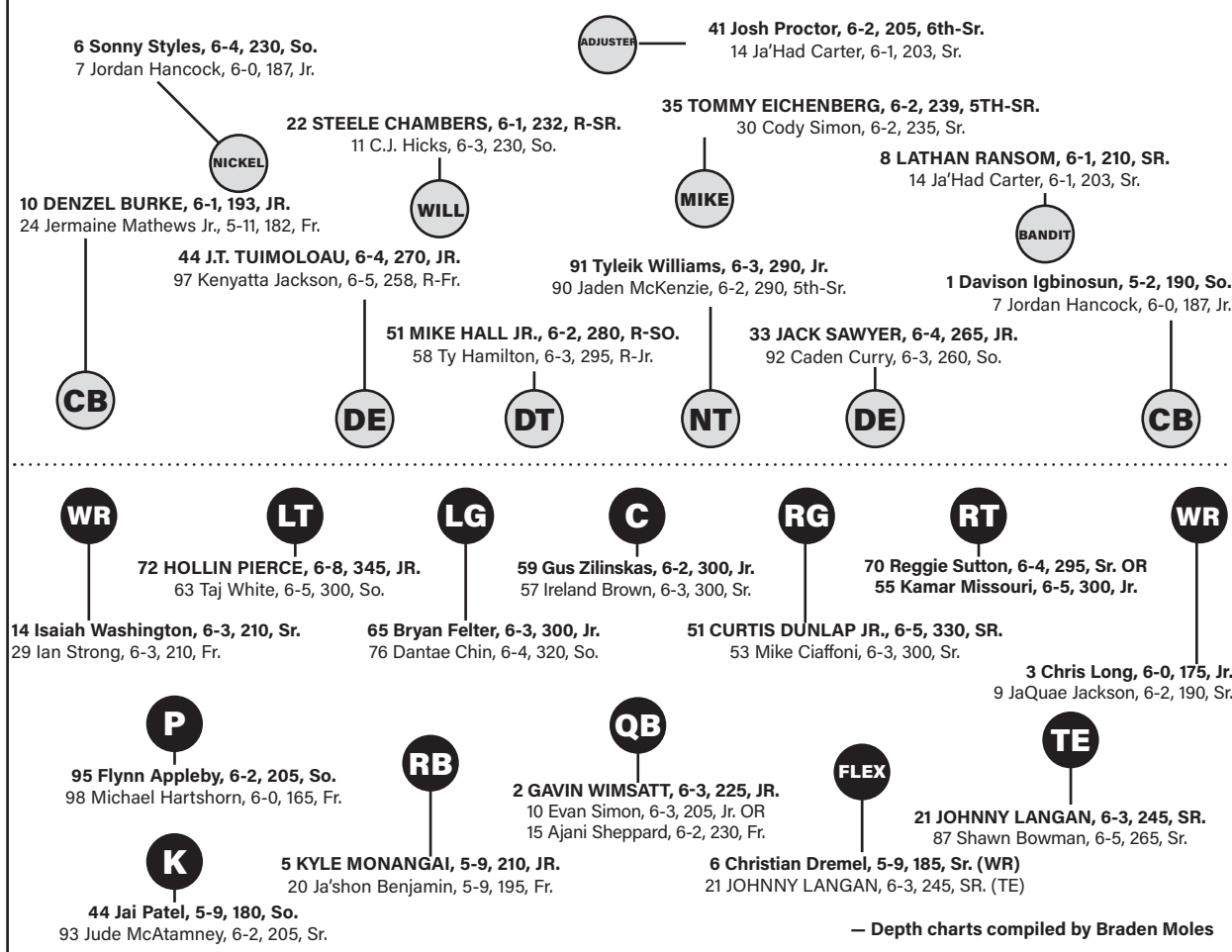
INTANGIBLES

Rutgers already has its most wins since going 8-5 in 2014. With two weeks to prepare for the Buckeyes, Schiano will go deep into his bag of tricks again. For the Buckeyes, this is no time to relax. The Scarlet Knights are 5-0 at home, and Schiano is looking for a signature win, especially after the testiness with Ryan Day last season after OSU's Jesse Mirco orchestrated his own fake punt with the game well in hand. **EDGE: RUTGERS**

STAFF PREDICTION

Rutgers is improving but still is several rungs below the big boys in the conference. The Scarlet Knights are 12-1 since 2020 when not committing a turnover, so it's imperative the Buckeyes create some chaos. **OHIO STATE 35, RUTGERS 10**

WHEN RUTGERS HAS THE BALL...



No Heisman Love For WR Boston In '98

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

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day has made it clear he believes wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. should be garnering more attention for the Heisman Trophy, and he took his case to a nationwide audience three days after Harrison torched the acclaimed Penn State defense for 11 receptions, 162 yards and a touchdown during the Buckeyes' 20-12 victory.

"He's the most outstanding player in the country," Day told the Big Ten Network. "You watch the way he goes about his business. He can do so many things. He solidified himself as one of the best players in the country this past week, and as he continues to produce on the field, he should be in consideration for the Heisman Trophy."

DeVonta Smith of Alabama is the most recent wide receiver to win the Heisman Trophy, taking home the honor after a 2020 season during which he totaled 98 receptions for 1,511 yards and 17 touchdowns. But while Ohio State has recently churned out more than its share of topflight receivers – including such NFL first-round selections as Garrett Wilson, Chris Olave and Jaxon Smith-Njigba – no Ohio State receiver has ever finished among the top 10 in the Heisman balloting.

That is a head-scratching factoid especially in light of the season David Boston turned in a quarter-century ago.

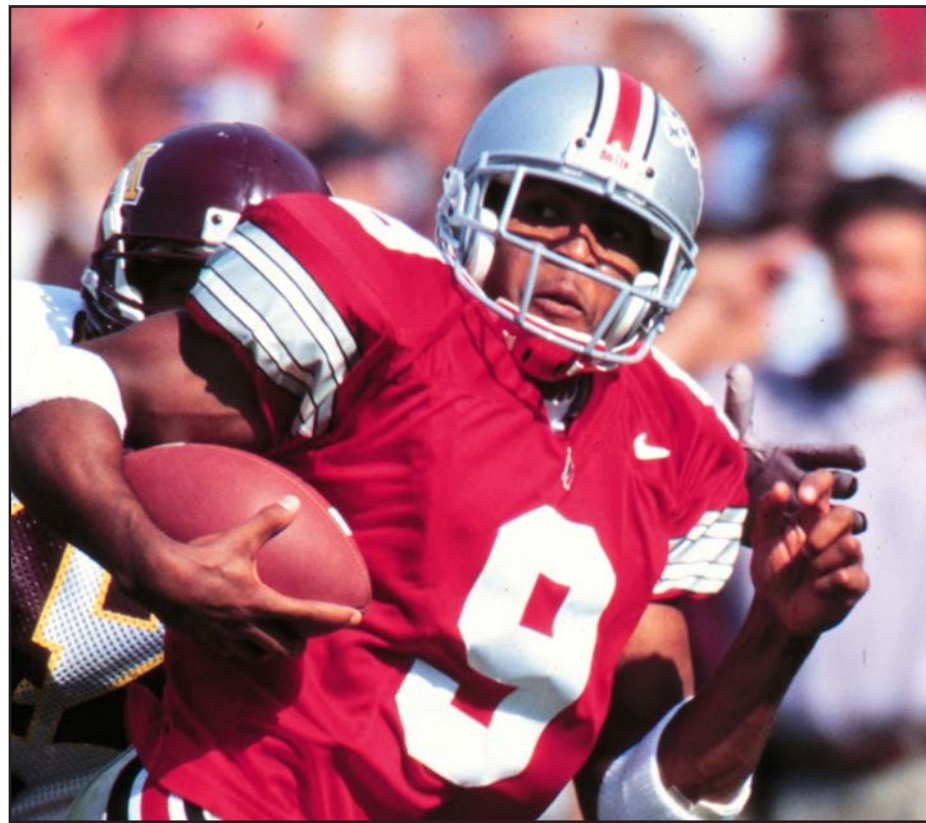
It would be difficult to make a case awarding the 1998 Heisman Trophy to anyone other than Texas running back Ricky Williams. Despite the fact the Longhorns finished with a disappointing 9-3 record and No. 15 in the final Associated Press rankings, Williams rushed for 2,124 yards and 27 touchdowns during the regular season, set more than 20 single-season and career NCAA records, and received what was then the greatest percentage of first-place votes in Heisman history.

The remainder of the top-six vote-getters in 1998 were each quarterbacks – Michael Bishop of Kansas State, Cade McNown of UCLA, Tim Couch of Kentucky, Donovan McNabb of Syracuse, and Daunte Culpepper of UCF.

Finishing ninth that season was Ohio State quarterback Joe Germaine, who rewrote the program record book in terms of throwing the football. Germaine set new single-season marks for attempts and completions, and his 3,330 yards in 1998 remained an OSU record for two decades until it was broken by Dwayne Haskins, who threw for 4,831 yards in 2018.

But while Germaine at least got token recognition in the Heisman race, there was none for his favorite target.

Boston set almost as many records in 1998 as his quarterback, finishing the season with 85 receptions for 1,435 yards and 13 touchdowns. While the TD total fell short of Terry



FILE PHOTO

BOSTON FOR HEISMAN — Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. is receiving serious consideration for the Heisman Trophy, but former Buckeye receiver David Boston (pictured) may have been the original Ohio State wideout deserving of the honor.

Glenn's mark of 17 set in 1995, the catch and yardage totals were long-standing single-season records until Parris Campbell had 90 receptions in 2018 and Smith-Njigba recorded 1,606 receiving yards in 2021.

"During that season, I can't remember one time when the Heisman Trophy was ever mentioned in our locker room," Germaine told BSB. "We were too focused on what we were doing at the time. Now, as you look back over time, and you look at some of the numbers and some of things that we accomplished, yeah, I would have to say Dave should have had more Heisman recognition than he did. A lot more."

There were two receivers who did earn Heisman mention that season.

Champ Bailey of Georgia finished seventh in the voting, but Bailey was more of a hybrid player. In addition to catching 47 passes for 745 yards and five TDs for the Bulldogs, he grabbed three interceptions at cornerback and also returned kickoffs and punts. Meanwhile, Torry Holt of North Carolina State came in eighth for the Heisman after a season during which he had 88 receptions for 1,604 yards and 11 touchdowns.

While it is difficult to go back 25 years and try to compare individual seasons, it seems just as difficult to quantify why Bailey and Holt got Heisman recognition while Boston received none. Bailey was likely rewarded for his all-around play while Holt had marginally better numbers. But Boston was also a dual threat, averaging 14.2 yards on 19 punt returns including a 70-yard touchdown against Indiana. He remains Ohio State's career leader in punt returns (98) and punt return yardage (959).

"I'm not sure anyone outside our program really knew how much value we placed on David Boston," former OSU recruiting coordinator Bill Conley told BSB. "He was 6-1 or

6-2 and 215-220 pounds, but he looked a lot bigger than that. And he had explosive speed. I mean, he had 4.4 speed, but his first step was explosive. He created a mismatch for just about any defensive back he played against."

The fact that Boston wound up in Columbus was something of a minor miracle. Long before the Buckeyes harvested such five-star talent as Wilson and Smith-Njigba out of the Lone Star State, Texas high school receivers were a rarity at Ohio State. That changed during the 1996 recruiting season when the Buckeyes won the sweepstakes for Boston's services against such rivals as Florida, Michigan and Texas.

Boston grew up in Humble, a small Houston suburb that was once the site of the largest oilfield in Texas. His father, Byron, played Division III college football and later became an NFL official, working 10 conference championship games and three Super Bowls during a 26-year career.

"Being around football with my dad and being able to travel around to some of the games, it gave me a goal to reach for," David said.

Still, he nearly took a different route. The youngster was equally adept at basketball and thought for a long time that he would pursue his future on the hardwood.

"If it wasn't for my dad, I might have stuck with basketball," he said. "I was this close to going in that direction."

Instead, Boston decided to sift through hundreds of scholarship offers to play college football. He really didn't have a favorite until traveling to Ohio State.

"I went on a visit there, loved the school and loved the players there," he said. "They had a lot of guys either already in the league or getting ready to enter the draft – Shawn Springs, Eddie George, Joey Galloway – so the environment was great. Out of all those

schools that offered me, I just thought Ohio State felt like the right place."

Conley remembered the sense of satisfaction for the OSU coaching staff once they had signed Boston.

"We were working hard trying to make inroads into Texas, and while we'd gotten a couple of guys from down there, we hadn't really landed a big fish," Conley said. "But when we got a commitment from David, and then he signed with us on signing day, we all felt that our hard work was finally paying off."

Boston made an immediate impact on the field for the Buckeyes, catching a pair of passes during the 70-7 rout of Rice in the 2016 season opener. One of those receptions was a 58-yard touchdown catch late in the first half.

But as good as that first career touchdown catch must have felt, it couldn't compare to the 5-yard reception he made during the team's final game that season. It was a flip from Germaine with just 19 seconds remaining in the Rose Bowl to give Ohio State a 20-17 victory against second-ranked Arizona State.

The win allowed the Buckeyes to win their first Rose Bowl in 23 years and capture the No. 2 spot in the final national rankings of the season. It was the program's highest consensus finish since winning the 1968 national championship, but the moment was nearly lost on Boston.

"I wasn't really aware of how big of a moment that was for the school," he said. "It didn't take long to realize how big it was, though. A lot of stuff changed for me after that game."

Boston finished his rookie year with 33 receptions, good for 450 yards and seven scores, and he also returned 32 punts for 297 yards, including a 66-yard touchdown return during a 72-0 rout of Pitt. The return was made even more thrilling because the Buckeyes had only eight men on the field – including Boston – at the time.

"I've been around the game of football for a long time, and I've never seen anything like that," Conley said of the return. "We were trying to send in the second-team punt return unit, and I guess not everyone got the message. It didn't matter, though. Those other guys would have probably just gotten in David's way."

The following year, the sophomore receiver set new single-season highs for OSU receivers with 73 catches for 970 yards and 14 TDs. But apparently, he was just getting warmed up.

Monster Season

Three games into the 1998 season, Boston already had 296 yards and two touchdowns on 21 catches for the undefeated Buckeyes. Meanwhile, Texas and Williams had flexed their muscles during a season-opening win against New Mexico State, a 66-33 shootout during which Williams had rushed for 215 yards and six touchdowns. But the Longhorns suffered back-to-back losses during the next two weeks, games during which Williams amassed only a combined 203 yards and just one touchdown.

Then, Texas got rolling again with blowout victories against Big 12 rivals Rice and Iowa State, games in which Williams rushed for a combined 668 yards and 11 TDs. Those performances breathed new life into his Heisman campaign, and he never lost his front-runner status the remainder of the season.

Meanwhile, Ohio State was concerned with steeper competition as undefeated and seventh-ranked Penn State came to town in early October featuring one of college football's most fearsome defenses. Coupled with a chilly rain that slickened the Ohio Stadium turf, the Nittany Lions were able to hold Boston to season lows of two catches for 37 yards. But Penn State couldn't muster much offense of its own, and the Buckeyes salted away a convincing 28-9 victory.

After that, Boston went on a month-long rampage. He began with a five-catch, 96-yard effort during a 41-0 win at Illinois, and he then enjoyed perhaps the best two-week stretch any Ohio State receiver has ever had. He caught 10 passes for 191 yards and two touchdowns during a 45-15 home win against Minnesota and followed that with eight receptions for 171 yards and two more scores during a 36-10 victory at Northwestern.

Nine more catches for 110 yards and two more touchdowns came the following week during a 38-7 win at Indiana, a performance punctuated by a 70-yard punt return for another score.

What followed was a total team breakdown against Michigan State, a 28-24 upset loss during which the Buckeyes squandered an early 17-3 lead. Germaine was harassed all afternoon by the Spartans, who sacked the OSU quarterback five times and made him fumble twice. As a result, Boston managed only four catches for 49 yards and never got near the end zone.

But as he had after his light contribution to the Penn State win earlier in the season, Boston finished the season with a flourish. During

a 45-14 win at Iowa, he turned just five catches into 163 yards and two touchdowns. His average of 32.6 yards per catch remains the Ohio State single-game record for receivers with at least five catches.

As good as that performance was, he returned home the following week and had a monster game during a 31-16 wipeout of No. 11 Michigan. To say the Wolverines had no answer for Boston is an understatement as he caught 10 balls for a career-best 217 yards and two touchdowns. At the time, it was the third-highest yardage total in a single game in OSU history, and it remains the highest total ever for a Buckeye receiver against Michigan.

For a time, it seemed that Boston might be a no-go for a Sugar Bowl matchup against eighth-ranked Texas A&M. While visiting his Texas home during Christmas break, he had slipped on a patch of ice and sprained his ankle.

Despite operating at a self-described 80-percent efficiency, Boston grabbed a season-high 11 catches for 105 yards and earned game MVP honors when Ohio State rolled to a 24-14 win against the Aggies. It was his eighth game that year and 14th of his career with 100 or more receiving yards and his fifth career game with double-digit catches. All remain Ohio State records.

"I knew it was probably going to be my last college game, but I never thought about not playing," Boston said. "I just wanted to go out there and have fun like we did all year. I was OK early in the game, but it was pretty sore by the end. I just had to suck it up and show some heart for those seniors."

Going Back Home

After the 1998 season, Boston was named to the All-Big Ten first team for the second year in a row and also earned first-team All-America honors. The Arizona Cardinals selected him in the first round of the 1999 NFL draft, taking Boston with the eighth overall pick. His best season with the Cardinals came in 2001 when he set career highs with 98 receptions for 1,598 yards and eight touchdowns, earning first-team All-Pro honors as well as a trip to the Pro Bowl.

But a litany of injuries and off-the-field problems conspired to cut short a promising pro career. He wound up playing only six seasons in the NFL with three different teams, a stint that ended in 2005 after he tore ligaments in his knee for the second time in as many years. He attempted a comeback in 2007 with Toronto in the Canadian Football League, but that ended after only one game due to a stress fracture in his foot.

With the exception of a 2011 incident when Boston pleaded guilty to an aggravated battery charge after allegedly striking a woman in Florida and received a six-month jail sentence, the former wide receiver seemed to fade from public view. He took stock of his life and decided to return to his roots, going back to his Texas hometown in 2012.

"I just wanted to reconnect with my family," Boston said. "We are all a really close family here in Houston, so once my playing days were over, I felt like I wanted to be around a good support system and be around them."

The return to Humble has allowed Boston to feel more grounded, and he has branched

off into a new career.

"After football ended for me, I worked for a short time as a personal trainer in the Miami area," he said. "Then when I moved back to Texas, I started a cross-fit gym and trained younger kids. I loved that, and I still do some of that with some of the high school kids. But now my focus is on commercial real estate development."

Along with his wife, Erin, whom he met once he moved back to Humble, Boston owns a commercial plaza in his hometown with plans to expand in the near future.

"We hope to open another commercial building on another tract of land somewhere here in Houston," he said. "We've been scouting several locations, so we're going to continue to stay in the real estate business on the development side – buying the land and developing the business."

"I never thought when I was at Ohio State that I'd be in the commercial real estate business. I mean, I was a sociology major in college, but here I am in commercial real estate back in my hometown. I love it."

Boston also loves watching his sons become budding star athletes.

"Jaylen, who is 14, is a basketball player year-round and he's doing really well," Boston said. "My younger son, Brayden, is primarily a baseball player, but he plays basketball as well. He's doing really well in both sports. I'm really, really looking forward to watching them grow and develop into top athletes."

"You know, it's funny. Football took me to places I never dreamed of going, but it's all led me back here – back home where I need to be."

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OSU Adds To Defense With In-State 2025 LB Lee

Ohio State added a commitment on Oct. 25 from Akron Hoban three-star linebacker Eli Lee (6-3, 215). He becomes the first linebacker in the team's 2025 recruiting class.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

Lee's commitment came fresh off a visit to Columbus for the Buckeyes' 20-12 win over Penn State, his first since being offered by Ohio State on Oct. 4 and one of several visits he has taken to the school over the last year.

"I picked Ohio State because I've felt since the beginning they've just been the best fit for me," Lee told 247Sports. "I've been very impressed with their program, staff and players."

He is the No. 438 overall prospect and No. 44 linebacker in the class, and he held additional offers from Akron, Central Michigan, Iowa State, Massachusetts, Toledo and West Virginia. He lines up primarily as an inside linebacker for Hoban, with middle linebacker as a potential landing spot once he arrives on campus.

Lee and Hoban were off to an 8-1 start this season entering the playoffs, and in the team's lone defeat – a 14-7 loss to Lakewood St. Edward – he scored Hoban's only points of the game off an interception that he returned 6 yards for a touchdown.

Ohio State has already been busy at linebacker for 2025, issuing offers to 19 potential prospects so far. The list includes the likes of Vero Beach, Fla., four-star Tarvos Alford (6-2, 210); San Juan Capistrano (Calif.) J. Serra Catholic four-star Madden Faraimo (6-3, 210); Kissimmee (Fla.) Osceola four-star Elijah Melendez (6-2, 223); La Verne (Calif.) Bonita four-star Noah Mikhail (6-3, 205); McKinney, Texas, four-star Riley Pettijohn (6-2, 205); and San Juan Capistrano (Calif.) Hills four-star Weston Port (6-1, 215), among others.

He is the fourth commitment in Ohio State's class and the second on the defensive side of the ball, joining Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star cornerback Blake Woodby (5-11, 180), who committed to the Buckeyes on Oct. 14.

Ohio State Visit A Hit For 2024 DL Williams

One of Ohio State's key visitors for the 20-12 win over Penn State on Oct. 21 was Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman Amaris Williams (6-3, 270), who is committed to Florida. But that pledge may not

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

last long based on how the trip to Columbus went.

"He loved it," Williams' mother, Lacheta, told 247Sports. "He loved the people, the atmosphere, but it was really more the strength and conditioning program."

Williams was also impressed by defensive line coach Larry Johnson, who his

mother said was "very well-rounded" and "very family-oriented."

"I spoke to a few workers and athletes, and I was asking about his training program," she said. "There are a lot of NFL players that come back to train with him. With them being under so many different umbrellas, making it to NFL level to come

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1988

When Ohio State head coach John Cooper went in search of high school running backs to stock his stable of the future, he would undoubtedly turn his attention to Lorain, Ohio, and Admiral King High School running back Raymont Harris (6-2, 208).

Harris had been called one of the best running backs in the Midwest by several high school recruiting experts and possessed the speed, power and size to prove those predictions correct. National recruiting expert Tom Lemming didn't mince words when he talked about Harris. He thought the Admiral King senior was one of the best running backs in that part of the United States.

"He is one of the top four running backs in the Midwest," Lemming said. "He runs with great power and speed. He's very tough to defend because not only does he enjoy running over people but he also has the speed to turn the corner."

30 Years Ago — 1993

Ohio State not only moved a step closer to a Big Ten championship with a 24-6 win over Penn State on Oct. 30. The Buckeyes may also have gained a notch on league competition in heated recruiting races as well.

The same afternoon OSU dispensed with the Nittany Lions with relative ease, archrival Michigan suffered its fourth loss of the season at Wisconsin and Michigan State was shut out at Indiana. Those results could prove to be a factor in landing some of the better high school players in the country, including in-state running back Pepe Pearson.

Pearson was 5-11, 175 pounds and super quick. He had been timed at 4.4 seconds in the 40 and 10.5 seconds in the 100 meters. The previous season, he had gained more than 1,500 yards and scored 18 times. He was cleared academically and wanted to choose between Ohio State, Penn State, Michigan and Notre Dame.

25 Years Ago — 1998

With Ohio State playing at Indiana on Oct. 31 in a 38-7 win, a number of the state's top football prospects converged on Bloomington to watch the top-ranked Buckeyes.

Decatur (Ind.) Central teammates Tyrece Butler, a wide receiver, and Franklin Callicut, a defensive back, attended the game. From Ben Davis High School in Indianapolis, running back Jesse Avant and lineman Jesse Mayfield, who both had attended an OSU home game earlier in the season, attended the game.

Butler (6-4, 195) told BSB that Ohio State had offered him a scholarship.

"They actually offered me a scholarship while I was there for the spring game," he said. "I've been talking to (receivers coach Chuck) Stobart about once a week."

20 Years Ago — 2003

One of the nation's top prospects had Ohio State among his final group of schools, and he was set to announce his college choice before Nov. 1.

Jeff Byers of Loveland, Colo., was ranked by Rivals.com as the nation's No. 13 prospect overall and its No. 1 center prospect. At 6-4 and 280 pounds, with a 40-yard dash time of 4.8 seconds and a bench press of 385 pounds, Byers was coveted by college coaching staffs from coast to coast.

After his visit to Ohio State for the team's season opener against Washington, he said, "I had a really great time. I really enjoyed myself."

More than a month later, Byers still had kind words for the Buckeyes.

"I think the coaching staff is fantastic," he told BSB. "I feel that they have a very strong bond between their offensive linemen."

15 Years Ago — 2008

With the lights on and a packed house in Ohio Stadium, the Ohio State coaching staff welcomed in a number of prep prospects for the 13-6 loss to Penn State on Oct. 25.

Chief among them was a five-star defensive tackle making his official visit to check out the Buckeyes. Five-star prospect Corey Adams from Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguaro arrived in Columbus early Saturday morning and was due to fly home after BSB went to press.

Scout.com ranked the 6-3, 288-pound Adams as the No. 7 defensive tackle in the country. Speaking with BSB prior to Adams' visit, Saguaro head coach John Sanders said the Buckeyes were one of Adams' three top schools along with USC and Arizona State.

"Ohio State's been in the mix since the kid was a sophomore," Sanders said. "I wouldn't say they started coming around and contacting him, but the kid knew that was a place he would love to play. When kids are 14 or 15 they talk about going to be a Gator or going to be a Buckeye or going to be a Sooner or whatever. That was out of his mouth since he was a young kid."

10 Years Ago — 2013

If the Buckeyes are playing inside Ohio Stadium at night and in front of a national audience, it's probably a safe bet that there will be some high-profile prospects on the sidelines of The Horseshoe.

Of the big names in attendance at Ohio Stadium on Oct. 26 for Ohio State's 63-14 win over Penn State, none was larger than Hinesville (Ga.) Liberty Country linebacker Raekwon McMillan.

Urban Meyer and Ohio State's coaches finally got a chance to put on a show for the 6-2, 230-pounder, who was the nation's fifth-ranked middle linebacker and made his long-awaited trip to the Buckeye State before he headed to Tuscaloosa on Nov. 9 for Alabama's matchup with LSU.

Five Years Ago — 2018

In an Oct. 19 showdown between two of Arizona's top high school teams, Scottsdale Chaparral took on Phoenix Pinnacle without Jack Miller. The four-star quarterback, who committed July 1 to Ohio State, suffered a high-grade medial collateral knee sprain early in the Firebirds' Oct. 12 game against Phoenix Mountain Pointe.

According to the Arizona Republic, Miller was expected to be out three weeks with his return hopeful for Nov. 2 when the state's 6A playoffs began.

Miller suffered his injury on Chaparral's second drive, but he elected to stay in the game. The 6-4, 210-pounder ended up passing for 267 yards and three touchdowns in a 42-24 defeat. For the season, he had 141 completions on 256 attempts (55.1 percent) for 2,431 yards and 27 touchdowns to six interceptions in eight games.

Miller hoped to be back in Columbus the weekend of Nov. 24 for the Michigan game. Miller (No. 64 overall prospect, No. 4 pro-style quarterback, No. 4 player in Arizona) was one of the cornerstone commitments in Ohio State's six-member class of 2020.

One Year Ago — 2022

Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut four-star linebacker/safety Garrett Stover (6-2, 195) said that he was nearing a decision and could announce his college choice as soon as December.

"I've kind of narrowed it down," Stover said. "Really, I'm keeping my options a little open, but it's coming down to I really like Ohio State and I really like Notre Dame. I want to take that visit to Notre Dame, and then I'll probably be looking at a commitment a little after that."

Stover, a 2024 prospect, was the No. 165 overall prospect and the No. 22 athlete in the class, though the Buckeyes were recruiting him at both linebacker and safety. He had made numerous visits to Ohio State in 2022, attending the Buckeyes' wins over Notre Dame, Toledo, Wisconsin and Iowa, and he was considering coming back for the final home games against Indiana on Nov. 12 and Michigan on Nov. 26.

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

OSU Football 2025 Commitments

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.
Eli Lee	LB	6-3	215	★★★	Akron Hoban
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

back to that one individual speaks volumes about his morals and values as a coach. I can really appreciate that when I'm sending my baby off to college."

Williams is the No. 100 overall prospect and No. 15 defensive lineman in the class and has been committed to Florida since June. He picked up his offer from Ohio State and head coach Ryan Day on Oct. 2 and got the chance to meet Day during his visit.

"We enjoyed that conversation," Lachesta said. "He got down to the nitty gritty of what he was looking for, why they reached out to Amaris. He's a really laid-back guy, family-oriented."

Williams posted 65 tackles and 18 sacks last season for Clinton, and through eight games this year he had 24 tackles – 17 for loss – with six sacks and a forced fumble. He would likely complete Ohio State's class on the defensive line that also features Chicago St. Ignatius five-star Jus-

tin Scott (6-4, 310), Buford, Ga., five-star Eddrick Houston (6-3, 265) and Stafford (Va.) Mountain View three-star Eric Mensah (6-3, 290).

It would be a theoretically balanced group, with Houston as a definitive edge rusher and Williams as a potential tweener, and Mensah and Scott both playing in the interior.

Buckeyes In Top 10 For Four-Star LB Melendez

Going back to those 2025 linebackers, Ohio State has landed in the top 10 for Melendez, who included the Buckeyes along with Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Georgia Tech, LSU, Kentucky, Miami (Fla.), Michigan and USC on Oct. 22.

Melendez is the No. 179 overall prospect and No. 21 linebacker in the class, and he is coming off a recent visit to Ohio State for the team's win over Penn State. He was offered by the Buckeyes in September, and

while Ohio State was included among his top schools, it appears the Buckeyes might be in an even better position.

"It's such a prestigious university," Melendez told Eleven Warriors after receiving his offer. "The program is legendary. Coach (James) Laurinaitis is legendary. Everything is prestigious and top-tier."

Melendez not only plans to return to another Ohio State game this season – one of two home games remaining against Michigan State on Nov. 11 or Minnesota on Nov. 18 – but will take an official visit down the road.

2025 LB Alford Has Buckeyes In Top 10

Another linebacker from that class who has Ohio State on top is Alford – no relation to the Buckeyes' running backs coach – who had Ohio State in his top 10 along with Florida, Florida State, Georgia, Louisville, Miami (Fla.), Penn State, Rutgers,

Tennessee and UCF.

Alford is the No. 91 overall prospect and No. 12 linebacker in the class, and he was offered by Ohio State in April before visiting campus this past summer for a recruiting camp. While the in-state schools have a lead in Alford's recruitment, the Buckeyes continue to hang around, and he will be on campus again when Ohio State faces Michigan State.

"I went up there during the summer," Alford told 247Sports. "I really like their program. They have a great offense. Their defense has been playing lights-out this year. I can see myself being part of that linebacker corps. And just the legacy they have and success they have and the relationship I have with Coach Laurinaitis."

Ohio State Continues To Lead For Top 2025 CB Sanchez

Continued On Page 24

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High School Football Playoffs Under Way

Continued From Page 23

Houston North Shore five-star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170) is one of the top-ranked recruits in 2025, checking in as the sixth-ranked overall prospect and top-ranked cornerback in the class, but Ohio State appears to be already pulling away in his recruitment.

He was in attendance for Ohio State's win over Penn State and was impressed with the defensive performance, which held the Nittany Lions to just 1 of 16 on third down.

"The defense, when it counted, they made some big plays when it was needed," he told 247Sports. "The defensive backs played well, especially Jermaine (Mathews Jr.), to play like that against a team that's probably going to win the rest of their games. And to hold a top-10 team to 12 points is really impressive. And the crowd is crazy."

He noted that he has a strong relationship with cornerbacks coach Tim Walton, who has put the Buckeyes in a strong position to land Sanchez.

"Ohio State is still No. 1," he said.

"They are kind of running away with it. My recruitment is still open, but if they keep doing what they're doing, it won't be open for too long."

OSU Sends Out Three New Offers

Ohio State has sent out three new offers since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, including to Lucas (Texas) Lovejoy four-star wide receiver Daylan McCutcheon (6-0, 175) in 2025 and Douglasville (Ga.) County five-star wide receiver Aaron Gregory (6-3, 170) and Nixa, Mo., five-star offensive tackle Jackson Cantwell (6-8, 300) in 2026.

Starting with McCutcheon, he was in attendance for Ohio State's win over Penn State, after which he received his offer from the Buckeyes.

"It felt amazing," McCutcheon told Eleven Warriors. "Knowing that they're 'Wide Receiver University' means a lot to me, to be a wide receiver and get offered by the biggest powerhouse in college football.

"(Brian Hartline) was just telling me about Ohio State and told me that for people in my class to get offered, you can have all the talent in the world, but if you don't

have the right mindset or attitude, you won't be able to play at Ohio State. Those were the things he liked about me and he liked how I played, and he wants me to keep playing the way that I am."

He is the No. 103 overall prospect and No. 17 wide receiver in the class. Ohio State already has one verbal pledge at wideout in Cocoa, Fla., four-star Jayvan Boggs (6-0, 188) and has also issued offers to highly-touted prospects such as Mission Viejo, Calif., four-star Phillip Bell, Pompano Beach (Fla.) Monarch five-star Jabari Brady (6-2, 185) and West Palm Beach (Fla.) Cardinal Newman four-star Naeshaun Montgomery (6-0, 160), among others.

Gregory is one of just a handful of wide receivers in 2026 to have been offered by Ohio State, along with Charlotte (N.C.) Myers Park's Brody Keefe (6-3, 185) and Cincinnati Withrow five-star Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 185), who is committed to the Buckeyes. Gregory is considered the No. 16 overall prospect and third-ranked receiver behind Brady and Henry.

Gregory – who has 26 receptions for 453 yards and four touchdowns this season – took his second visit to Ohio State

for the win over Penn State and also visited for a game last season, and he is likely to be back this spring.

Cantwell is already among the top-ranked prospects in 2026, checking in as the third-ranked recruit and top-ranked offensive tackle in the class. He holds additional offers Alabama, Florida State, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Miami (Fla.), Michigan State, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State, Tennessee and Texas A&M, among others.

While he has not taken a visit to Ohio State, he was in attendance for the Buckeyes' win over Notre Dame on Sept. 23.

"It feels really good," Cantwell told Eleven Warriors. "Obviously being from Missouri, I haven't watched a whole lot of Ohio State football. But it's a top program so it's definitely great (that) I have the opportunity to learn more about them as time goes on."

OHSAA Playoffs Begin For Commits, Targets

The Ohio High School Athletic Association football playoffs began on Oct. 27, with 448 teams – seven divisions split into four regions each with 16 teams per

ASK AN ANALYST

with With BuckeyeScoop's Bill Greene

Ohio State seems to have made a strong impression on Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman and Florida commit Amaris Williams (6-3, 270) during his visit for Penn State. Coming out of that trip, how do you view the Buckeyes' chances of landing him?

"I had him pretty much at 90 percent (going to Ohio State) before the trip, and now I think it's coming, I think it's a done deal. I don't know when the kid will announce it, and I don't know how it's going to go down. I really feel pretty strongly that Ohio State is going to get him. And I felt that way before he visited, and then he saw a crazy atmosphere, his folks really bonded with Larry Johnson, with Ryan Day, guys on the team. Everything just went perfectly for Ohio State. So I'll be shocked if he doesn't flip to Ohio State. That would be a shock to me. It's not a matter if he does, but when he does.

"I don't think it's going to take too long. If he knows in his heart that Ohio State is where he's going to go, usually those things usually go down pretty quick. I would (expect Williams to commit) in the next couple of weeks. If he's not decommitted from Florida and committed to Ohio State by like, Nov. 1, I'm going to start to think, 'What's going on here?' I feel pretty confident in him ending up at Ohio State."

Ohio State has shown interest of late in Coopersville, Mich., three-star offensive lineman Gabe VanSickle (6-5, 283), who is committed to Northwestern. Is this a backup should the Buckeyes miss on Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star Jordan Seaton (6-5, 287), or might they be looking to add two more on the offensive line?

"They probably would take two more. They lost out on Toledo Central Catholic three-star interior offensive lineman Mark Nave (6-5, 315), and they wanted one even before Nave walked down the road. I don't think it would be an either-or with Seaton and VanSickle, or some of the other guys that they're interested in. I don't think it would be that type of deal at all."

Speaking of Seaton, where do you view him at in college in terms of playing guard or tackle? And how do you feel Ohio State's chances are ahead of

his expected official visit on Nov. 11?

"I think Ohio State sees him as a right tackle. To me he looks like an inside player. Just judging off what I see on film, I think he's an inside guy. But I think they see him as not a left tackle, but a right tackle. Until they get him on campus and they get him in pads and work him out, maybe he is a Josh Fryar-type. Maybe he could play on the right side. When I look at Seaton, he doesn't look as tall on film compared to what he's listed at. He looks a lot heavier than what he's listed at, so he looks like an inside guy to me. But what they think is more important than what I think.

"I don't think their chances of landing him are good. I think he's NIL-driven, and Ohio State usually doesn't win those. Not that they can't, but the first thing you have to do is get him on campus. He has to make that visit. And Ohio State has such a good track record of having guys commit after visiting. If they can just get him to visit, things are really good for Ohio State, but we'll see. He's going to have to make that trip first, and I want to see what these other visits do for him. I've been told it's total NIL. And if I had to make a guess today on where Jordan Seaton would end up, I would say Florida State.

"It just doesn't seem like the type of recruitment that Ohio State wins. The NIL-driven, out-of-state kid that is looking at Alabama, Florida State, Oregon, all schools that pay, and pay heavily. But we'll see what happens. If he visits, then all bets are off. I think he has to visit. If this kid is purely NIL-driven, like I've been told he is, and his actions show that he is an NIL kid, you can see where the visits are. This is not a recruitment between Ohio State, Michigan and Notre Dame. That would be a different type. This is a Florida kid looking at Oregon, Alabama, South Carolina, Florida State. If they win this one, it will be a really great sales job."

With the way Ohio State's defense has played this season, have you gotten the sense that it's giving the Buckeyes a boost on the recruiting trail in terms of offering a proof of concept for Jim Knowles' defense?

"Well, you have to think with Amaris Williams, he had to have been blown away by what he saw on the field.

Then you're going to get to be coached by Johnson, and that defense is playing great, so yeah, of course it helps. They just don't have a ton of openings on defense, but it can help with 2025. I just put out a thing (on Oct. 25) that I have them getting Houston North Shore five-star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170). And I think he could be the No. 1 player in the country for 2025. I saw him at camp this summer, that guy is really good. And I think they're going to get him. I think everything you do in recruiting, everything plays a part. When your defense is giving up 30, 40 points a game and your DBs look like crap, it makes it tougher. So what they're doing right now absolutely should pay dividends in recruiting."

Why do you feel so strongly that Sanchez will commit to Ohio State?

"I think they've done enough. He was at camp last summer, too, and they just fell all over him. And I could see him and Tim Walton had a great relationship in camp. Walton worked him out hard and corrected a lot of stuff that that kid did wrong, and I always like saying, when a superstar gets corrected, how do they handle it? This kid, man, he couldn't get enough. He coached him hard, too. And he was telling him what he needed to change, what he needed to fix, and that kid was soaking it up like a sponge. He was doing everything Walton told him to do, and it really looked like a kid that appreciated that relationship, wanted to get better.

"You can tell when a kid is really not interested in a school just by how he interacts with the coaches. If you're not interested in a school, you're not taking any crap from some coach telling you you're doing something wrong. You're just not going to do it. Well, this kid was a total sponge. He loved every minute of it. I can tell he responded to being coached hard, where some kids, man, if you're a five-star kid as a high school junior, you probably don't have a lot of people telling you you're doing anything wrong.

"I think they're getting Sanchez. He could be the No. 1 player in the country to me, let alone the No. 1 one defensive back. He was as good as anyone I saw last year in-person from 2025. He's pretty darn special. He's a Jeff Okudah-type, maybe a little longer. He's a special kid."

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

region – competing for the state football championship in their respective divisions.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is tracking Ohio State's commitments and targets through their playoff journeys, whether they end in the first weekend or with a state championship. Here are the results from games played on Oct. 27.

Division I, Region 1 – No. 16 Elyria (1-10) at No. 1 Lakewood St. Edward (9-1): Four-star offensive linemen Devontae (6-5, 297) and Deontae (6-6, 280) Armstrong, who are committed to Ohio State, helped lead St. Edward to a 42-0 win to open the playoffs.

St. Edward – looking for a third consecutive state championship – will host No. 8 Canton GlenOak on Nov. 3.

Division I, Region 1 – No. 15 Euclid (1-10) at No. 2 Cleveland Heights (10-1): A pair of Ohio State targets in 2025 – four-star defensive lineman Brandon Caesar (6-4, 250) and four-star running back Marquise Davis (6-0, 190) – led Cleveland Heights to a 39-0 win.

Caesar had an impressive outing, intercepting a pass in the third quarter that led to a touchdown, and he had back-to-back sacks on the next defensive drive on third and fourth down. Caesar, Davis and the rest of the Lakes will face No. 7 Berea-Midpark in the next round.

Division I, Region 2 – No. 12 Springfield (6-5) at No. 5 Huber Heights Wayne (7-4): Springfield and four-star cornerback Aaron Scott (6-2, 190), who is committed to Ohio State, pulled off an upset of higher-seeded Wayne, winning 38-14 to advance in the playoffs.

Springfield went into the half with a 21-7 lead before adding another 14 points in the third quarter. The Wildcats will face No. 4 Centerville on Nov. 3.

Division I, Region 2 – No. 10 Perrysburg (8-3) at No. 7 Toledo Whitmer (7-4): The season for four-star offensive tackle Carter Lowe (6-5, 290), a target of Ohio State in 2025, came to an end as Whitmer suffered a 20-14 loss to lower-seeded Perrysburg.

Division I, Region 3 – No. 14 Westerville Central (2-9) at No. 3 Pickerington

North (10-1): Pickerington North and three-star running back Sam Williams-Dixon (5-11, 203), who is committed to Ohio State, blanked Central 28-0 to open the playoffs. The Panthers will play No. 6 Hilliard Darby in the next round.

Division I, Region 4 – No. 14 Cincinnati Western Hills (4-7) at No. 3 West Chester Lakota West (9-2): Lakota West unloaded on Western Hills to open the playoffs, working to a 69-0 win. The Firebirds' roster includes four-star tight end Luka Gilbert (6-8, 233), a target for Ohio State in 2025. They will face No. 6 Cincinnati Elder on Nov. 3.

Division II, Region 5 – No. 16 Akron Ellet (3-8) at No. 1 Akron Hoban (9-1): Hoban – whose roster features recent linebacker commit Lee as well as a pair of 2026 targets in offensive tackle Sam Greer (6-8, 290) and cornerback Elbert Hill (5-10, 160) – picked up a 39-7 win over Ellet to open the playoffs. The Knights move on to play No. 8 Barberton.

Division II, Region 8 – No. 14 Trenton Edgewood (4-7) at No. 3 Cincinnati Withrow (10-1): Ohio State wide receiver commitment Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 185), the Buckeyes' lone 2026 pledge, is moving on after he and Withrow blanked Edgewood in the opening round of the playoffs, 49-0. Henry and the Tigers will play No. 6 Cincinnati Winton Woods on Nov. 3.

Division II, Region 7 – No. 12 Sunbury Big Walnut (6-5) at No. 5 Columbus Northland (9-2): Ohio State linebacker commit Garrett Stover (6-0, 195) had a rushing touchdown in Big Walnut's 43-14 upset of Northland to open the playoffs.

Playing through a broken thumb, he helped build up a 43-7 lead early in the fourth before a late score by Northland. Big Walnut will play No. 4 Uniontown Lake in the next round.

Division II, Region 8 – No. 11 Cincinnati La Salle (4-7) at No. 6 Cincinnati Winton Woods (8-3): Winton Woods edged out La Salle 12-6 in the opening round of the playoffs, overcoming a 6-0 deficit with just nine minutes remaining to secure the win, and will move on to face Withrow on Nov. 3.

Led by four-star defensive end Justin Hill (6-4, 215), a 2025 prospect being pursued by Ohio State, the Winton Woods defense limited La Salle to just 83 total yards of offense.

"We had guys make big plays, special teams made some plays," Winton Woods head coach Chad Murphy told The Cincinnati Enquirer. "The defense has been rock solid all year, and they always give us a chance to win."

Division III, Region 11 – No. 10 New Concord John Glenn (8-3) at No. 7 Bellefontaine (9-2): Bellefontaine quarterback Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 210), committed to Ohio State's 2025 recruiting class, led a powerful offense to a 49-7 win over John Glenn. The Chieftains will travel to play No. 2 London on Nov. 3.

Division IV, Region 14 – No. 15 Lima Bath (4-7) at No. 2 Cleveland Glenville (8-2): A pair of Ohio State commitments in 2024 – cornerback Bryce West (5-11, 177) and tight end Damarion Witten (6-4, 215) – led Glenville to a 44-0 win over Bath to open the playoffs.

West helped Glenville get off to a fast start with a first-quarter interception, while Witten finished with four receptions for 116 yards and a touchdown that went for 61 yards. The Tarblooders will host No. 10 Napoleon on Nov. 3.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- St. Louis University five-star wide receiver Ryan Wingo (6-2, 205), a 2024 prospect who held an offer from Ohio State, announced his commitment to Texas on Oct. 25.

- Oklahoma added a pledge on Oct. 28 from Centerville, Ohio, four-star safety Reggie Powers III (6-1, 200), a 2024 prospect who decommitted from Michigan State in September. Ohio State had previously recruited Powers and offered him back in March.

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

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Investigation Into U-M Sign Stealing Heats Up

New information has continued to come out in the week since the Big Ten confirmed reports that the NCAA was investigating Michigan's football program for stealing signs illegally, with the scope of the alleged scheme becoming more clear.

BIG TEN NOTES Greg Wilson

It begins with Connor Stalions, the Michigan recruiting assistant reportedly at the center of the scandal, who has been suspended by the university. Head coach Jim Harbaugh denied any knowledge of the alleged scheme in a statement after the first reports.

Since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, several outlets have reported that Stalions purchased tickets to nearly 40 games – all under his own name – over the last three seasons, including to 12 of 13 schools in the Big Ten. He forwarded those tickets to at least three other people in different parts of the country to scout those teams by filming games, with the contests always featuring at least one team upcoming on Michigan's schedule and the tickets usually set up near the 50-yard line and across from the sideline of the future opponent.

In an Oct. 27 story from ESPN, the outlet published statements from an anonymous former Division III football player and coach who was reportedly paid "a couple hundred dollars" and received a ticket to a Michigan home football game to record the sidelines of a future opponent for the team.

He said he attended games at Rutgers and Penn State last season, was at Penn State's 63-0 win over UMass on Oct. 14, and was provided a ticket to Penn State's 33-24 win over Indiana on Oct. 28, though he did not attend. He said he uploaded the video footage to a shared iPhone photo album, though he did not know who had access to the album other than Stalions.

"I didn't like it, but it's a gray line," he said. "You can call me naive, but no one is reading the bylaws. I'm not a contractual lawyer. ... I just felt like if you're not doing it, you're not trying to get ahead."

Beyond purchasing tickets to scout future Big Ten competition, according to an ESPN report, Stalions also purchased tickets to each of the last two SEC Championship Games, as well as tickets to multiple other games where a potential playoff contender was featured, including Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, Oregon and Tennessee.

While Stalions, a former Marine who began working with Michigan's football program as a volunteer assistant in 2015, has not yet been reported to have attended games for in-person scouting, he has been seen in numerous photos and videos over the past three seasons watching the opposing sidelines during games and often communicating to Michigan's play callers on either side of the ball before plays. He also reportedly had a 550-600 page document

with a blueprint for the football program's future, which he dubbed the "Michigan Manifesto."

ESPN's report also indicated that at least an hour of video evidence has been sent to the NCAA showing a person sitting in a seat, appearing to video the home sideline with a phone in a seat purchased by Stalions. NCAA investigators were in Ann Arbor on Oct. 26, but the investigation will almost certainly outlast this football season, meaning the organization would not be able to hand out any punishments that would impact Michigan this year.

"Unless something happens right now, it's irrelevant," a source from a Big Ten school said to ESPN. "Everyone is mad. This is not right. But what is the NCAA going to do about it?"

While the NCAA's hands may be tied, there still exist potential penalties from the Big Ten and commissioner Tony Petitti. According to ESPN's report, the Big Ten's sportsmanship policy states that Petitti has "exclusive authority to determine whether offensive actions have occurred" and to impose potential discipline on Michigan.

Additional reporting from The Washington Post on Oct. 25 revealed that the NCAA first learned about Michigan's alleged sign stealing from an outside investigative firm, which approached the NCAA with documents, videos, travel expenses and schedules for future trips, which the firm said it acquired from computer drives that were maintained and accessed by multiple Michigan coaches.

BIG Teams Warned TCU About Sign Stealing Ahead Of CFP

According to a Yahoo report published on Oct. 26, TCU – Michigan's College Football Playoff opponent this past season – was informed by multiple coaches before the game that the Wolverines would attempt to steal their signs.

Coaches and staffers from several Big Ten schools – including Ohio State – were aware of the alleged sign stealing and alerted the TCU staff. One of the coaches told them that Michigan "has the most elaborate signal-stealing in the history of the world."

"Literally everybody we talked to knew," a TCU coach said. "They'd say, 'Just so you know, they steal your signals and they're going to have everything, so you better change them.'"

The Horned Frogs changed their signals before the game but also used old signals to try to trick the Wolverines. New play calls were mixed in with the old ones to confuse Michigan, and TCU also used "dummy signals" by calling a play, sending in a new signal and then running the original play. The Horned Frogs also signaled some plays late so Stalions didn't have enough time to relay the information to coaches, but a staff member at TCU said Michigan still got them occasionally, especially on short yardage.

"(Stalions) was wrong a couple of times," a TCU staff member said. "We watched the TV version of the game. You can see him standing next to the defensive coordinator. He tells something to the coordinator, and he points in the air to mean

pass. You can see the play sheet he's holding with our hand signs on them."

The heads-up may have done the trick for TCU, as the Horned Frogs won 51-45 to advance to the national championship game – where it was waxed by Georgia, 65-7 – and scored the most points against the Wolverines since Ohio States' 56-27 win on Nov. 30, 2019.

Tucker Found Responsible For Violating Harassment Policy

Former Michigan State head coach Mel Tucker has been found responsible for violating the school's sexual harassment policy, according to a report obtained by USA Today on Oct. 25.

The 73-page report indicated that a university hearing officer had determined that Tucker sexually harassed and exploited Brenda Tracy – a rape survivor and activist who had previously spoken at the school – when he made sexual comments and masturbated without her consent on a phone call with her in April of 2022.

This happened just eight months after Tucker had hired Tracy to be a sexual violence prevention educator for the football team. The report also said Tucker made unwanted sexual advances toward Tracy in the months before the phone call.

"In sum," the report read, "considering all available evidence, the Resolution Officer finds, by a preponderance of the evidence, that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that Respondent subjected Claimant to unwelcome conduct based on sex when he FaceTime video called Claimant without a shirt on; when he attempted to meet up with Claimant alone following the Spring Game; and when he non-consensually masturbated and used graphic, sexual language on a phone call with Claimant."

Tucker's agent, Neil Cornrich, said in a statement that the decision was "fraught with countless factual and legal errors" and they will appeal and file a lawsuit if necessary.

A formal hearing on the case was held on Oct. 5, which he didn't attend due to a "serious medical condition" that his legal team did not disclose. Tucker and his lawyers have indicated plans to sue Michigan State for wrongful termination, but a move on that front has not been made at time of publication.

The initial suspension of Tucker came on Sept. 10 after USA Today published a story alleging the sexual harassment toward Tracy. He was fired for cause on Sept. 27 during the investigation, making it so the school did not have to pay him the remainder of his 10-year, \$95 million contract of which he was still owed nearly \$80 million.

Iowa QB McNamara Returning In 2024

Iowa quarterback Cade McNamara said in a post on his Instagram that he will return to the Hawkeyes for the 2024 season after suffering a season-ending ACL tear in the team's 26-16 win over Michigan State on Sept. 30.

"Was not anticipating posting one of these when this year began however, there

BIG 2023 Standings

East Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan	5	0	1.000	8	0	1.000
Ohio State	5	0	1.000	8	0	1.000
Penn State	4	1	0.750	7	1	0.875
Rutgers	3	2	0.600	6	2	0.750
Maryland	2	3	0.500	5	3	0.625
Indiana	0	5	0.000	2	6	0.250
Michigan State	0	5	0.000	2	6	0.250

West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Iowa	3	2	0.600	6	2	0.750
Nebraska	3	2	0.600	5	3	0.625
Minnesota	3	2	0.600	5	3	0.625
Wisconsin	3	2	0.600	5	3	0.625
Northwestern	2	3	0.400	4	4	0.500
Illinois	1	4	0.200	3	5	0.375
Purdue	1	4	0.200	2	6	0.250

Oct. 28 Games

Northwestern 33, Maryland 27
Penn State 33, Indiana 24
Nebraska 31, Purdue 14
Minnesota 27, Michigan State 12
Ohio State 24, Wisconsin 10

Nov. 4 Games

Wisconsin at Indiana, noon
Nebraska at Michigan State, noon
Ohio State at Rutgers, noon
Iowa at Northwestern, 3:30 p.m.
Penn State at Maryland, 3:30 p.m.
Illinois at Minnesota, 3:30 p.m.
Purdue at Michigan, 7:30 p.m.

are some things in life that can not be explained but the best we can do is put our faith in God and follow the path that he has chosen for us," he said. "I want to thank everyone for all the love and support. The road ahead is a rigorous one but nothing I haven't overcome before. I can't wait to get back to Iowa City to support my teammates for the rest of this season!

"I had a vision when I decided to come to Iowa and that vision remains the same. There is still a lot I want to accomplish in the Black and Gold and look forward to bringing it to life in the 2024 season."

Before McNamara went down, he was 46 of 90 passing (51.1 percent) for 505 yards, four touchdowns and three interceptions. This season was his first at Iowa after spending four at Michigan and suffering through leg injuries last season with the Wolverines. He had also suffered a quad injury in the Hawkeyes' training camp but was able to return for the season opener.

"It was a tough break considering the last two years for him, he's had more than his share of obstacles and challenges from that standpoint," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said Oct. 3. "Your heart goes out to guys when they're fighting hard to have a chance to go out and compete and don't have that opportunity due to health challenges. He should be fine once the recovery is over, and it's just a tough deal for him."

Third Time's A Charm In Taylor's Recruitment

Ohio State was finally able to land shooting guard Celeste Taylor this offseason, offering a chance for her to compete on a team with championship aspirations, but it wasn't the first time that the Buckeyes have tried to bring Taylor to Columbus.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

Taylor, a former five-star prospect, was a member of the 2019 recruiting class and was considered the No. 40 player in the class and ninth-ranked guard among her peers, according to ESPN. And it was no wonder that she was so highly rated considering her status as a McDonald's All-American and New York Gatorade Player of the Year in 2019.

But that first time around, Taylor opted to commit to Texas on Dec. 3, 2017, and eventually signed with the Longhorns. Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff tried his best to land her, even getting her on campus for an unofficial visit, but it was not enough to pull the New York native to Columbus.

Cut to over three years later, and Taylor made her first entry into the transfer portal, leaving Texas after two seasons and announcing her pledge to Duke on April 10, 2021. Ohio State, always a bridesmaid but never the bride, again pursued Taylor during the process but again lost on a top prospect in the portal.

And like clockwork, another two years later, it was time. Taylor entered the portal again this past offseason, immediately eligible to join a team due to graduation, and McGuff was not going to strike out a third time.

"When she went into the portal, obviously, we got after that very quickly," he said. "I've seen her since she was in high school and AAU and certainly had been very aware of her success, most recently at Duke, and I thought she'd be a great fit. As we kind of looked to round out the team, that was a high priority for us, and so we were able to reach out to her and get her on a visit and get it done. That was a really big moment for us."

It was an equally long journey for Taylor, playing four seasons at two schools before finding what now appears to be her preferred landing spot. But she would not give up the experiences she had at her previous stops.

"I always say everything happens for a reason, and it's not my timing. It's God's timing," she said. "Throughout the whole process, it just was a perfect fit at this time. They've had a lot of success throughout the years, and then for me, I think if I didn't start out where I was at Texas, then I wouldn't be the player that I am today, so I'm honestly grateful."

"It was a lot of transfers, but I'm grateful that I went through everything that I went through, trying to build a program, learn from different coaches and their culture and their style of play, to just help me grow as a player. I'm really happy about my decision to come here."

Taylor said the biggest thing she took from that journey was patience, something that McGuff had to exercise in waiting years longer than he would have liked to get her on the

roster. But that type of recruitment was one he had already been through, twice missing out on former Ohio State guard Taylor Mikesell – once out of high school and then again once she transferred from Maryland to Oregon.

But having been through this process twice before with Taylor, McGuff and the coaching staff were able to focus on her priorities and what would make for her best final season of college basketball.

"With (Taylor), it was an opportunity to play on a great team, which I think we have a chance to be. Have a big role, and for Celeste, she aspires to be a pro," he said. "One of the things I think she probably needed was a little bit of a different offensive system to showcase her ability a little bit more, so that was the final piece in terms of what the fit would be like."

Several Bucks Earn Preseason Honors

Ohio State's season will begin on Nov. 6 against No. 21 USC in Las Vegas, and before that opener, a handful of Buckeyes received recognition with appearances on several preseason watch lists, as well as an All-American honor.

The most notable recognitions belonged to sophomore forward Cotie McMahon, who was named an AP preseason All-American honorable mention and to the watch list for the Cheryl Miller Award, given to the top small forward in women's college basketball.

McMahon – also named to the All-Big Ten preseason team – averaged 15.1 points and 5.5 rebounds on 51.0 percent shooting last season, and she is expected to take an even larger offensive role for the Buckeyes following Mikesell's departure.

Taylor has not played a game yet for Ohio State but is already receiving some preseason honors. She was named to the watch list for the Ann Meyers-Drysdale Award, given to the top shooting guard in women's college basketball. She averaged 11.4 points, 4.8 rebounds, 2.5 assists and 2.2 steals per game last season.

Jacy Sheldon was the final honoree, put on the preseason watch list for the Nancy Lieberman Award, which is given to the top point guard in women's college basketball. While Sheldon appeared in just 13 games last season due to injury, expectations remain high after she averaged 13.2 points, 3.6 rebounds, 3.5 assists and 3.5 steals in limited action.

For all three awards, fan voting began on Oct. 20, and the watch list will be narrowed down to 10 players in January and five in February, with a winner to be selected in March.

McGuff Open To Big Women's Sporting Events At Ohio State

There have been several record-breaking women's sports events in the Big Ten over the last few months, including Nebraska women's volleyball's match at Memorial Stadium, which drew 92,003 fans, and Iowa's Crossover at Kinnick, a women's basketball exhibition in Kinnick Stadium that had 55,646 fans.

It begs the question – which other schools or venues might make sense for these types of events? When looking at the potential of Ohio State hosting a similar event at Ohio Stadium, count McGuff in.

"As our fan base has really grown and the interest in our program in the city and the community has expanded, I would love for us

OSU Women's Basketball Verbal Commitments

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

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School/Previous Team
Seini Hicks	F	6-0		Cincinnati Purcell Marian
Ella Hobbs	F	6-4	★★★★	Concord (N.C.) J.M. Robinson
Elsa Lemmilä	C	6-6		Espoo (Finland) Tapiolan Honka
Ava Watson	G	5-7	★★★★	Buford, Ga.

to get creative and try some things like that," he said. "I think it would be very well received here."

There have not been any serious discussions about hosting any sort of event, but it's something that McGuff said the school – whether it's for women's basketball, women's volleyball or some other program – would want to put their own spin on.

"I don't really (have any ideas)," he said. "It's something that we kind of talk about, but we really haven't come up with anything that would be unique to us or to Ohio State or to Columbus that we think could really be a big hit. But we're going to continue to have those conversations, for sure."

ESPN Has Sheldon In WNBA Mock Draft

Along with the preseason honors, some are already looking ahead to what the future may hold for Sheldon after this season.

In ESPN's 2024 WNBA mock draft released on Oct. 25, Sheldon was projected as the No. 10 pick to the Connecticut Sun. Leading the mock draft was Iowa guard Caitlin Clark, projected first to the Indiana Fever, followed by UConn's Paige Bueckers (Phoenix), Stanford's Cameron Brink (Los Angeles) and South Carolina's Kamilla Cardoso (Seattle).

"We didn't see the true Sheldon last season,

as she played just 13 games because of a leg injury," wrote ESPN's Charlie Creme. "We're basing this pick on two things: her returning to her 2021-22 form (19.7 points, 4.2 assists and 1.9 steals) and how much WNBA Coach of the Year Stephanie White appreciates Sheldon's game as a Big Ten standout. If we see the best version of Sheldon, it could make a big difference in where she's picked."

Sheldon is hoping to become the 18th Buckeye drafted into the WNBA, with Mikesell the most recent, taken at No. 13 in this year's draft, though she was unable to maintain a roster spot this season and remains a free agent heading into the offseason.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Cincinnati West Clermont forward Seini Hicks (6-0), who committed to the Buckeyes in April, took her official visit to Ohio State the weekend of Oct. 20 and took in the football team's 20-12 win over Penn State.

- Ohio State is among the 10 finalists for Lubbock (Texas) Monterey five-star point guard Aaliyah Chavez, considered the top prospect in 2025 by ESPN. The Buckeyes are included in her top schools along with Arizona, LSU, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Texas Tech, UCLA and USC.

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Retooled Buckeyes Poised For Bounce-Back Year

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In his first five seasons in Columbus, Ohio State men's basketball coach Chris Holtmann helped establish a stable program that was predicated on winning and player development.

The highlights include four top-five finishes in the conference standings and four NCAA Tournament berths, as well as the cultivation of a rich NBA pipeline during that span, with a trio of Buckeyes – forwards Keita Bates-Diop (2018) and E.J. Liddell and guard Malaki Branham (2022) – all selected in the NBA draft during that span.

Those successes would all come crashing down last season, however. Marred by major roster overhaul and inconsistent play on both ends, Holtmann and the Buckeyes endured their worst season to date, finishing the year with an uncharacteristic 16-19 record – aided by a 1-14 stretch from Jan. 5 through Feb. 23 – while missing postseason play for the first time in the Holtmann era, excluding the 2019-20 season in which the NCAA Tournament was canceled.

The disappointing campaign sparked criticism toward Holtmann and his program over the offseason, with some even putting the coach firmly on the hot seat before the season begins. But for Holtmann and the team, last season's failures, along with the criticism swirling around them, can only

help them get back on the right footing this season, serving as a motivating factor as they look to regain the program's previous success.

"How can you not be motivated after what we all went through last year?" Holtmann said at his team's media day on Sept. 25. "That's the benefit of having guys that have scars on them from last year. There can be real power in the pain we went through last year. If it's used in a way that provides fuel, I think that's a really positive thing. I don't think you can go through what we went through last year and not feel that way, unless you're not a competitive guy."

"We're just not going to put last season away," sophomore guard Bruce Thornton added. "We're going to have it in the back of our minds to make sure that we don't have the season we had last year. That's going to make us work harder, just having that thought, 'You can't lose that many games.' At the end of the day, if you want to do big things and win big games, you can't lose that many games. And we're going to make sure that doesn't happen this year."

Luckily for Ohio State fans, there is reason for optimism that this year's squad can turn it around. The Buckeyes did finish last season strong, embarking on a three-game winning streak in the Big Ten tournament that propelled them all the way to the semifinal round, a stretch galvanized by the play of emerging freshmen Roddy Gayle Jr., Thorn-

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

ton and Felix Okpara.

With all three of those players returning to the fold this season and entering their sophomore campaigns with improved skill sets, Holtmann sees the trio playing a significant role in the team's success as leaders both on and off the court.

"I think the experience that those three sophomores got last year will really prove beneficial," he said. "And I'm not sure if I even look at them as sophomores because of the experience they got last year. Hopefully that provides great benefit."

"Those three guys that went through the battles last year, the struggles, and then finishing well – they need to take a big role. We'll decide on captains for the season in about a month, but I would assume all three of those guys are going to play an important role."

The Buckeyes have another important player in forward Zed Key returning to the lineup. Key is entering his senior campaign with a slimmer frame and focused mindset. But the rest of the team's success will be predicated on their many newcomers, with Holtmann welcoming in three transfers and

a quartet of true freshmen who can each help the program return to form.

Ohio State hauled in a three-man transfer portal class of fifth-year forward Jamison Battle (Minnesota), fifth-year guard Dale Bonner (Baylor) and sophomore guard Evan Mahaffey (Penn State). Each offers a unique skill and can help elevate the team's level of play on both ends of the floor.

Switching to the freshmen, the Buckeyes reeled in four highly-rated prospects: center Austin Parks, forwards Devin Royal and Scotty Middleton, and guard Taison Chatman, most of whom are slated to put their imprints on a young team this season.

But if there is one thing these newcomers and key returners will be tasked with improving upon this season, it will most likely be the defense. That side of the court has been an area of weakness for Holtmann's teams in the past, but the unit's struggles were especially evident last season, where they allowed 69.0 points per game and held opponents to 43.0 percent shooting, both ranking 10th in the Big Ten.

This is an area the Buckeyes have committed to fixing this season, a sentiment that

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2023-24 Ohio State Men's Basketball Projected Starting Lineup

1 • Roddy Gayle Jr. • G Ht: 6-4 • Class: So.	2 • Bruce Thornton • G Ht: 6-2 • Class: So.	10 • Jamison Battle • F Ht: 6-7 • Class: 5th-Sr.	12 • Evan Mahaffey • G Ht: 6-6 • Class: So.	34 • Felix Okpara • C Ht: 6-11 • Class: So.
				
Served as one of the leading catalysts for the Buckeyes' Big Ten tournament run, recording 12.0 points per game on 16-of-25 shooting (64.0 percent) from the field in their four post-season games.	Started in all of Ohio State's 35 games last season and averaged 10.6 points, 2.7 rebounds and 2.6 assists per game.	Was hindered by a foot injury last season at Minnesota but still proved effective, ranking second on the team with 12.4 points per contest.	Transferred to Ohio State this offseason from Penn State, where he appeared in 34 games as a true freshman and logged 19 minutes in the Nittany Lions' two NCAA Tournament games.	Flashed his potential as an intimidating rim protector toward the end of his freshman season, earning 2.0 blocks per game over his final nine appearances.

is felt by both the staff and players alike.

"When you look at teams who are successful at the college level, they're generally a top-25, top-30 defensive team," Battle said. "You look at UConn last year, they were a top-five team. You look at San Diego State, top-five, they were a Final Four team. FAU is probably up there too. When you look at it, you have to be able to defend the ball when you're playing college basketball. You can score all you want, but if you can't defend and teams score more than you, then you lose the game. That's something we as a team need to improve on."

With multiple areas of improvement in the back of their minds, this new-look Ohio State team is confident they can bond together and regain their previous identity as a perennial Big Ten contender who is constantly vying for a berth in the NCAA Tournament. It is a standard set by Holtmann since he took over, and one he thinks this team can get back to this winter.

"I'm really excited about the potential of this group," he said. "I'm really excited about what this group can grow into and be. Health is always an important part of that, but there are a lot of guys that have the ability to take steps as players. If our team takes steps in terms of those areas we've identified we have to improve in, then I'll be excited about what this group can be."

Buckeye Sports Bulletin has a position-by-position breakdown in alphabetical order of Ohio State's roster for the 2023-24 season, which begins on Nov. 6 with a home matchup against Oakland.

FORWARDS

Jamison Battle, 6-7, 220, 5th-Sr. (12.4 points per game, 3.8 rebounds per game last season at Minnesota) – Following a subpar offensive showing, Holtmann and the Buckeyes looked to the transfer portal to help improve their shot-making and overall efficiency, and at the forefront of that initiative was the addition of Battle.

The Robbinsdale, Minn., native has excelled on the offensive end his entire collegiate career, averaging 13.5 points per game in his two seasons at George Washington (2019-2021) then 15.1 points per contest while playing for his hometown Gophers (2021-2023). He also consistently displayed his shooting ability at both schools, setting George Washington's single-season record for three-pointers made (89) during his freshman season and then shooting 34.4 percent from beyond the arc with Minnesota.

Holtmann said that it is these polished qualities that can allow the veteran Battle to make an instant impact this season, providing the Buckeyes with a reliable offensive weapon that was often hard to find last season. In Ohio State's scrimmage against Dayton on Oct. 22, he collected 15 points

on 6-of-7 shooting from the field and a 3-of-4 mark from three.

"He's a really proven, gifted scorer," Holtmann said. "I think that is what we've seen from him so far in the preseason, the fact that he can score the ball. And I think we needed that with the loss of some of our wings, namely Brice (Sensabaugh) and Justice (Sueing). We just knew we needed some scoring, and he's proven that. Now we have to get him to continue to be that guy."

Kalen Etzler, 6-8, 190, So. (0.8 ppg, 1.3 rpg) – Etzler joined the program in 2021 as a three-star prospect and the No. 4 overall player in Ohio, but he has yet to get much floor time in his first two seasons with the Buckeyes. After redshirting as a true freshman in 2021-22, he appeared in just nine of Ohio State's 35 games last season, recording a mere total of seven points, 12 rebounds and one assist in 29:55 of game action.

"It was tough for me, especially knowing there's nothing besides in practice that I can do," Etzler said. "I was always there for my teammates, being as supportive as possible. I was trying to make sure I could be as detailed as possible and give any sort of small tips to the guys."

Etzler will begin the season backing up forwards Battle, Key and even Royal, who are all expected to assume the majority of the reps at forward. But there is an avenue where the redshirt sophomore can impact games with his size and tenacity.

Zed Key, 6-8, 230, Sr. (10.8 ppg, 7.5 rpg) – Key's junior campaign – much like Ohio State's season – had its fair share of ups and downs. He looked like he was ready to emerge as one of the Big Ten's premier front-court players through the first two months of the season, averaging an efficient 13.4 points and 8.4 rebounds per game through Jan. 1. He had even displayed a new aspect of his game on the perimeter that had been virtually nonexistent his first two seasons, netting six of his 19 attempts (31.6 percent) from beyond the arc.

But that production would start to disintegrate during the Buckeyes' 71-69 loss to then-No. 1 Purdue on Jan. 5. That night, he suffered a left shoulder strain that would hinder his movement throughout the winter and shut his season down for good on Feb. 12, having surgery on his ailing shoulder later that month.

Now eight months removed from his operation and two months removed from his medical clearance, Key is back to full health and is poised to pick up where he left off.

"My shoulder is good," Key said. "It's 100 percent. I just want to give credit to the training staff. After the surgery, they had me in the training room and weight room, just trying to strengthen it and just get it back to 100 percent. It feels really good. It feels stable, and I feel like I did before the surgery. I'm excited to play this year."

Key's renewed health could play a large factor in his effectiveness in the paint this season, especially as he battles for playing time with the emerging Okpara. But it may also be aided by the dramatic weight change he experienced during the offseason. The senior forward told reporters during the team's media day that he has slimmed down from 253 to 235 pounds, a change that he said was a major point of emphasis during the summer.

"Losing this much weight, I feel better on the court," he said. "Even on the joints, conditioning wise, athletically, I feel great out there on the court. It definitely helped me for the better. I definitely feel quicker and more explosive. It definitely helped me a lot."

Devin Royal, 6-6, 210, Fr. – Royal is a key piece of a promising recruiting class that ranked eighth in the nation and second in the Big Ten behind Michigan State. The Pickerington (Ohio) Central product was ranked the nation's 49th-best overall prospect, ninth-best power forward and No. 1 overall player in Ohio, and he is attempting

to prove that worth by serving as a physically imposing do-it-all player inside the paint.

"I just want to be a versatile guy that comes in, plays hard, doing everything I need to do to get around the rim," Royal said, "just doing what Coach needs done. I see myself moving around, guarding throughout, just moving around and being versatile. That's what Coach really wants me to be."

He has been lauded by scouts for his unique strength around the rim and ability to score off contact, an aspect of his game that allowed him to thrive on offense at the high school level. Royal became Pickerington Central's all-time leading scorer at the end of his senior campaign last March, breaking former Buckeye and current Houston Rockets forward Jae'Sean Tate's previous record of 1,489 points.

Royal may be behind returning contributors Key and Okpara on the frontcourt depth chart at the beginning of the year, but if the Oct. 22 exhibition against Dayton is any

Continued On Page 30








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Gayle Jr. Could Be Force To Reckon With

Continued From Page 29

indicator of how Holtmann plans to utilize his players this season, Royal is equipped to make an early impact for his hometown team. He logged 19 minutes against the Flyers denting the stat sheets with six points, three rebounds, two assists and one steal.

Owen Spencer, 6-9, 230, Sr. (0.4 ppg, 1.3 rpg) – Spencer earned little playing time in his first season at Ohio State, logging just 18:54 minutes in seven appearances and contributing just three total points and nine rebounds. It may be more of the same this season, where he once again enters the campaign toward the bottom of the frontcourt depth chart.

Spencer will likely not make much of an impact on the floor, but his presence is surely appreciated in practice. Last season, he helped provide forwards Key and Okpara with a physical force to compete against on a daily basis, something that better prepared them to face intimidating Big Ten big men such as Purdue's Zach Edey and Indiana's Trayce-Jackson Davis.

With Edey returning and the conference still filled with imposing bigs, Spencer can slip into that much-needed role again.

"It's something I embrace," Spencer said last season. "Even if I wasn't going against Zed and Felix, even if I was back at a smaller Division I school, my play style, I like to be very physical and rebound. That's part of basketball I enjoy is the physicality of it, taking some anger out whether it's through school. I enjoy that."

GUARDS

Dale Bonner, 6-2, 175, 5th-Sr. (4.7 ppg, 1.2 rpg at Baylor last season) – A transfer from Baylor, Bonner brings a whirlwind of experience from multiple levels of college basketball.

He began his career at Division II Fairmont State, where he led the Fighting Falcons in scoring, assists and steals in each of his two seasons (2019-2021). That included a career-high 20.2 points per game his sophomore year. After transferring to Baylor, Bonner's offensive production took a hit while coming off the bench over the last two seasons – averaging just 3.9 points a game on 38.7 percent shooting – but it was his defensive prowess that instead shone.

He served as a pest for opposing guards with 67 total steals in his two seasons, including an impressive 21 games with multiple swipes. Bonner's ball-hawking abilities are certainly his main selling point, but Holtmann believes he can put it all together for the Buckeyes, emerging as a formidable two-way guard who can soon work his way into the starting lineup.

"He 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. You can play him and Bruce together, and we plan to do that pretty consistently."

Bonner sees his role mostly on the defensive end, where he can use his energy and toughness to elevate a unit that has struggled in years past. This is a mentality that the veteran guard has carried with him

throughout his basketball life, which can help him become a difference maker for the Buckeyes in his last collegiate season.

"I've always been a defender," he said. "I got a chance to showcase it on the biggest stage at Baylor, and I'm going to continue to do that at Ohio State and do whatever Coach Holtmann and my teammates want me to do."

Taison Chatman, 6-4, 175, Fr. – The highest-rated recruit in Ohio State's 2023 class, Chatman enters his freshman season with a plethora of potential and hype surrounding him. The Minneapolis Totino-Grace product and four-star prospect is the 39th-best overall player, eighth-best combo guard and No. 1 player in Minnesota, a profile he earned after helping lead his team to back-to-back Class 3A state titles.

Chatman is known by many as a polished scorer who can especially flourish in the midrange. But he sees himself as a player who can both fill the basket and dish the ball out to his teammates, a combination that could earn him some playing time this season alongside proven guards Thornton and Gayle. If there's one thing that can prevent Chatman from competing for playing time this season, however, it may be injuries.

He suffered a knee injury in the summer of 2022 that forced him to undergo surgery, an ailment that he said hampered him all the way into March of his senior season. Although Chatman proclaimed during the team's media day that he is fully healthy, he underwent yet another knee procedure this offseason that has kept him out of the early portion of fall practice, yet another setback that Holtmann said can hinder his development moving forward this season.

"Anytime you have an injury, it's going to set you back, and especially when you're a freshman," Holtmann said. "When you have an inconsistent summer and an inconsistent preseason, it's going to delay your development."

Roddy Gayle Jr., 6-4, 210, So. (4.6 ppg, 1.6 rpg) – Perhaps no player on the roster is entering the season with more momentum than Gayle, who burst onto the scene in the final month of last season after a rather quiet start to his Buckeye career.

Coming into the program as a top-50 prospect in the 2022 class, he failed to make much of an impact on offense in the first three months of his freshman campaign, recording eight or more points in just four of his first 24 games. But after some key injuries and subpar play forced Holtmann to insert the young freshman into the starting lineup beginning on Feb. 12, Gayle took his game to another level, serving as one of the key contributors on the team's late-season run.

Gayle's impact was best felt in the Big Ten tournament, where he helped the Buckeyes advance all the way to the semifinals as a No. 13 seed. The freshman averaged 12.0 points and 3.3 rebounds while shooting 64.0 percent from the field and 81.8 percent from deep in their four tournament games. These games – along with the entire season itself – allowed Gayle to experience the highs and lows that come with college basketball earlier than expected, something that can only help his development and maturity as he

looks to make a larger impact.

"It took me all year to be able to shine and be the kind of player that I know I am," he said. "Being patient and trusting the process is a key component of what college basketball is."

Holtmann echoed those sentiments over the offseason, saying that Gayle now has all the tools and intangibles needed to take his game to the next level. If all goes according to plan, this can propel him to a starting role at shooting guard alongside fellow sophomore Thornton.

"I expect him to make a real positive jump," Holtmann said. "I think there's going to be a lot asked of him, but I expect him to be able to build upon what he was able to do last year. He's a sophomore, he's going to go through some ups and downs, but he's better. He's gotten some really good work in. I think he's in the best shape since he's been here, and that will be important for him because he's going to play a good amount of minutes."

Bowen Hardman, 6-3, 190, So. (1.7 ppg, 0.0 rpg) – Hardman will be looking to poke through the depth chart and earn some playing time, but it will not be an easy task for the Cincinnati native, who opens the season behind the likes of sophomores Gayle, Mahaffey and Thornton, the veteran Bonner and possibly even true freshmen Chatman and Middleton.

If Hardman is to make any difference on the court this year for the Buckeyes, he will do it with his shooting. Widely regarded as one of the better shooters on the team, Hardman showed flashes of that potential in his short time on the floor last season, where he connected on four of his eight attempts from beyond the arc.

"He has an incredible ability to shoot the basketball," Gayle said. "We have problems in practice guarding him. Especially when we go against the scout team and he's playing the opposite shooter, we have a really hard time guarding him. It's amazing. You have to have your eye on him no matter where he is."

Hardman possesses some great shooting prowess, but his defensive skills have yet to follow suit in college. This is a key pitfall that Holtmann said can continue to hold him back and prevent him from making a significant difference on the court this season.

"I think Bowen has improved, and he's done some good things and has shown the ability," Holtmann said. "The question for him is he's got to be able to defend at this level, because he is a terrific, terrific shooter."

Evan Mahaffey, 6-6, 200, So. (2.8 ppg, 1.7 rpg at Penn State last season) – Mahaffey has just one year of college basketball under his belt at Penn State, but those who were around the former Nittany Lion this offseason see him already displaying some veteran tendencies.

He gained some valuable experience playing under former Penn State and current Notre Dame head coach Micah Shrewsberry, appearing in 34 games as a true freshman, including two NCAA Tournament tilts. Mahaffey said his elongated freshman season and tournament experience allowed him to mature and develop, potentially propelling him into a leadership role this year on a young and inexperienced Ohio State team.

2023-24 OSU Men's Basketball Schedule

Date	Opponent
Oct. 22	at Dayton (Exh.)
Nov. 6	Oakland
Nov. 10	#12 Texas A&M
Nov. 15	Merrimack
Nov. 19	Western Michigan*
Nov. 24	#21 Alabama*
Nov. 25	Oregon/Santa Clara*
Nov. 29	Central Michigan
Dec. 3	Minnesota
Dec. 6	Miami (Ohio)
Dec. 9	at Penn State
Dec. 16	UCLA#
Dec. 21	New Orleans
Dec. 30	West Virginia, Cleveland, Ohio
Jan. 3	Rutgers
Jan. 6	at Indiana
Jan. 10	Wisconsin
Jan. 15	at Michigan
Jan. 20	Penn State
Jan. 23	at Nebraska
Jan. 27	at Northwestern
Jan. 30	Illinois
Feb. 2	at Iowa
Feb. 6	Indiana
Feb. 10	Maryland
Feb. 13	at Wisconsin
Feb. 18	Purdue
Feb. 22	at Minnesota
Feb. 25	at Michigan State
Feb. 29	Nebraska
March 3	Michigan
March 10	at Rutgers
Mar 13-17	Big Ten Tournament, Minneapolis, Minn.

* - Emerald Coast Classic, Niceville, Fla.

- CBS Sports Classic, Atlanta, Ga.

"Playing under Coach (Shrewsberry) and that staff, they brought a lot of knowledge and made me realize that I do not know anything about the game, at least as much as I thought I did," he said. "Just playing under them and just being like, 'Wow, this opens the game up a lot more,' I think those are some of the things that I'm looking to bring here."

Mahaffey also alluded to his defense as an element of his game that he can bring to the table. The defensive stats don't pop off the screen – just nine steals all of last season – but both he and Holtmann believe he is just scratching the surface with his two-way abilities.

"I know Coach has talked about it. The defense was not where it needed to be to win, especially win at a high level," Mahaffey said. "That's one thing that, coming into this school, is something I think I can bring to the table and be really, really good at. We really need to be dominant on the defensive end."

Scotty Middleton, 6-7, 190, Fr. – Another highly-touted member of Holtmann's 2023 class, Middleton was the nation's 50th-best prospect and 10th-best small forward. He is still fine-tuning his offensive game, but most of his hype revolves around his suffocating defense, which can earn him an immediate spot in the rotation this season.

Known in high school as "Off Night," meaning the player he is guarding is in for a rough offensive performance, Middleton

OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

has turned heads with his athleticism and defensive instincts. These are aspects of his game that Holtmann said can make him an intriguing weapon, utilizing him as a lanky and tenacious guard who can disrupt the continuity of opposing offenses.

"Scotty, I think right now, up to this point, has shown the ability to be the most complete on both ends in terms of his impact," Holtmann said. "I think he's shown the ability through practice to impact both ends the most. We'll see if that stays consistent."

Middleton, who played all five positions in high school, said he is committed to mastering his craft on the defensive side of the ball. This is a mentality that he thinks comes from the ultra-competitiveness he has possessed all throughout high school and now into college.

"I hate losing more than anything," Middleton said. "Anytime we win, I feel good, no matter if I score zero points, 20 points. I just guard the best player, and if I score zero and we win the game, I'd rather do that than score 20 points and lose the game."

Bruce Thornton, 6-2, 215, So. (10.6 ppg, 2.7 rpg) – Sensabaugh stole most of the headlines for his strong freshman performance at Ohio State last year, but Thornton may have very well been the best player on that team on both ends.

The only Buckeye on the roster to start all 35 games last season, he immediately inserted himself as one of the premier first-year players in the Big Ten, scoring double figures in 19 games and producing seven games with five or more assists. He also got it done on the other side of the floor, collecting a team-high 29 steals.

Much like Gayle, Thornton seemed to get better as the season progressed. He averaged 14.5 points and 2.7 assists in his final 10 games, a late-season stretch that was headlined by his 15-, 17- and 21-point performances in the team's three Big Ten tournament wins.

"I just feel like the speed just slowed down so much (at the end of the season)," Thornton said. "Just thinking about how the beginning of the year was to how the end was, I could just see stuff so much different, so much slower. And that gives you confidence that you can play with all the best guys in the country."

Thornton seemed to have absolute command of the offense toward the end of his freshman campaign, but he is expected to take on a much larger role as a sophomore – especially in the locker room. Considered by many to be the best player on the roster, Thornton is poised to assume the role of the unquestioned team leader, an honor that will surely have him named a captain before the season starts.

"I feel like I accepted the role of being the leader this year, being the captain," Thornton said. "Just showing them how we play basketball at Ohio State. I feel like a lot of people don't know how we play, but this year we are going to show them."

Thornton may be close to a finished product, but he will still need to sharpen his offensive skill set before he is considered among the league's best. He shot 45.6 percent from the floor and 37.5 from three, but an increase in efficiency from both the mid-range and beyond the arc could increase his production – and maybe even his NBA draft stock – come March.

CENTERS

Felix Okpara, 6-11, 235, So. (4.0 ppg, 3.6 rpg) – Filling in for the injured Key at the end of last season, the Nigerian displayed his unique potential as a rim-protecting big man. Starting the final nine games of his freshman campaign, Okpara averaged 5.8 points, 4.4 rebounds and 2.0 blocks per contest.

Okpara may have taken his game to another level late last season, but Holtmann said he is continuing to find unique ways to impact games with his length on the defensive end.

"He has a real intelligence he brings to ball-screen coverages, to ball-screen defense, to reading actions and understanding how to play certain actions," he said. "He's got a real feel for those things that is maybe a little bit uncommon for a young guy. That's helped him on that end."

In addition to his improving lateral defense, Okpara is also trying to become more of a physical presence in the paint. To accomplish that this season, he has changed his diet and put on a considerable amount of weight, adding 28 pounds of muscle from 207 to 235. Okpara said this change was necessary if he wants to bruise inside with some of the Big Ten's elite bigs, an area of his game he admitted he struggled in last season.

"I'm not going to lie, some of the guys in the Big Ten are really strong," he said. "I needed that weight. Last year, guarding Edey was a struggle. He was really big. I don't want to say I was scrawny, but I needed some weight on me."

Now fully equipped to dominate on the defensive side, Okpara will need to shift his focus toward improving his efficiency at the rim. He shot 58.7 percent from the field his freshman season, a number that could be higher considering most of his shots are near or at the basket.

Austin Parks, 6-10, 250, Fr. – Parks begins his freshman season in Columbus after an illustrious high school career at St. Marys (Ohio) Memorial, where he became the team's all-time leading scorer (1,528) and rebounder (645) and was named All-Northwest Ohio D-II Player of the Year after averaging 22.4 points, 6.5 rebounds, 3.2 assists and 1.8 blocks as a senior.

Parks, who returned to practice in the middle of October after missing the beginning of fall practice with back spasms, is described by scouts as a "throwback big man" who can produce inside the paint with his back away from the basket. Those qualities allowed Parks to thrive throughout high school, but he knows he will need more than just a post game if he wants to see some time on the floor for the Buckeyes. He listed multiple aspects of his game that still need some improvement, placing extra emphasis on his play on the defensive end.

"I'm always willing to acknowledge what I need to get better at, and I feel like defense is definitely one of the things I need to (get better in)," Parks said. "In high school, I was a great defender. But that's high school. College is different. Going against these guys, they showed me that defense is definitely one of the most important things I need to work on."

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The screenshot shows the Buckeye Sports Bulletin website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'HOME', 'FOOTBALL', 'BASKETBALL', 'SPORTS', 'FORUM', 'BSB ONLINE', 'EAT & STAY', and a 'LOGIN' button. The main content area features a large image of football players in action. Overlaid on the image is a 'RECAP' article titled 'HARRISON, HENDERSON LEAD #3 OHIO STATE TO 24-10 WIN OVER BADGERS'. Below the image, there's a 'READ MORE' button. To the right of the image, there's a list of articles with titles like 'Buckeye Leaves: Marvin Harrison Jr., TreVeyon Henderson, Jordan Hancock Impress In 24-10 Win At Wisconsin' and 'Availability Report: Denzel Burke, Emeka Egbuka, TreVeyon Henderson All Back At Wisconsin, Miyan Williams Out'. Each article has a 'READ MORE' button and a timestamp.

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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (8-0, 5-0)

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, W 20-12; **28** at Wisconsin, W 24-10.

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

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Oct. 22 at Dayton (Exh.), W 78-70

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

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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., Men 7th/12, Women 5th/14.

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

FENCING

Oct. 1 OSU DUALS, Men: 5-0; Women: 5-0; **21-22** Garrett Open at University Park, Pa., NTS.

Nov. 4-5 Western Invitational at USAF Academy, Colo.; **19** ELITE INVITATIONAL.

Jan. 20 St. John's Invitational at Queens, N.Y.; **21** Philadelphia Invitational at Philadelphia.

Feb. 3-4 Northwestern Duals at Evanston, Ill.; **24-25** Central Collegiate Fencing Conference Championships.

FIELD HOCKEY (13-5, 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, W 7-0.

Nov. 2-3 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 (3-1-3, 0-1-1)

Oct. 7 Mercyhurst, W 4-3; **13-14** LINDENWOOD, W 4-2; T 2-2; **20-21** Michigan, L 7-1; T 2-2 OT (SW); **27-28** Nebraska-Omaha, T 2-2 OT (SW); W 4-0.

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 (7-1, 6-0)

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

Oct. 13-14 Minnesota Duluth, W 5-2; W 2-0; **20-21** St. Thomas, W 6-2; W 7-1; **27-28** MINNESOTA, W 4-3 OT; W 6-5.

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 (5-6-5, 3-4-1)

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, L 1-0; **24** Michigan State, W 3-2; **29** MARYLAND, W 4-1.

Nov. 3 Big Ten Tournament Quarterfinals; **8** Big Ten Tournament Semifinals; **12** Big Ten Tournament Finals.

WOMEN'S SOCCER (9-6-2, 5-4-1)

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, L 1-0; **22** MICHIGAN, W 4-1.

MEN'S SWIM & DIVE (1-0)

Oct. 28 VIRGINIA TECH, W 193.5-178.5.

Nov. 10 DENISON, 5 p.m.; **16-18** OHIO STATE FALL INVITATIONAL; **29-Dec. 2** Toyota US Open at Greensboro, N.C.

Jan. 20 MICHIGAN, 12 p.m.; **26-27** Tim Welsh Classic at South Bend, Ind.

Feb. 2 PITTSBURGH, 3 p.m. **16-18** OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL; **28-March 2** BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIPS.

March 10 LAST CHANCE MEET; **13-16** Zone Championships at Louisville, Ky.; **14-16** CSCAA National Invitational at Ocala, Fla.;

27-30 NCAA Championships at Indianapolis.

WOMEN'S SWIM & DIVE (1-0)

Oct. 28 VIRGINIA TECH, W 226.0-135.0.

Nov. 3 AKRON, 5 p.m.; **10** DENISON, 5 p.m.; **16-18** OHIO STATE FALL INVITATIONAL; **29-Dec. 2** Toyota US Open at Greensboro, N.C.

Jan. 20 MICHIGAN, 12 p.m.; **26-27** Tim Welsh Classic at South Bend, Ind.

Feb. 2 PITTSBURGH, 3 p.m.; **16-18** OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL; **21-24** Big Ten Championships at West Lafayette, Ind.

March 3 LAST CHANCE MEET; **13-16** Zone Championships at Louisville, Ky.; **14-16** CSCAA National Invitational at Ocala, Fla.; **20-23** NCAA Championships at Athens, Ga.

MEN'S TENNIS

Sept. 18-24 COLUMBUS CHALLENGER, NTS. **30** ITA All-American Championship at Tulsa, Okla., NTS.

Oct. 1-8 ITA All-American Championship at Tulsa, Okla., NTS.; **19-23** ITA Midwest Regional Championship at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS; **23-29** Las Vegas Challenger at Las Vegas.

Nov. 1-5 ITA Fall National Championship at San Diego, Calif. **1-5** Big Ten Singles & Doubles Championship at Madison, Wisc.

Jan. 27 VANDERBILT; **28** OREGON/BOISE STATE.

April 26-28 Big Ten Tournament at Madison, Wisc.

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; **12-16** ITA Midwest Regionals at East Lansing, Mich., NTS; **26-29** UT Home Invitational at Knoxville, Tenn., NTS.

Nov. 1-4 ITA Fall Championships at San Diego, Calif.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (8-13, 5-7)

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

Sept. 1 SPORTS IMPORTS CLASSIC VS. GEORGIA TECH, L 3-1; **2** SPORTS IMPORTS CLASSIC VS. GEORGIA TECH, L 3-1; **8** Big Ten/Pac 12 Challenge in Stanford, Calif., vs. Stanford, L 3-0; **9** Big Ten/Pac 12 Challenge in Stanford, Calif., vs. Oregon, L 3-1. **14** Texas, L 3-1; **15** Baylor, L 3-2; **22** Nebraska, L 3-0; **24** Iowa, W 3-0; **27** WISCONSIN, 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, L 3-0; **21** Indiana, L 3-2; **25** Northwestern, W 3-0; **29** Michigan, L 3-1.

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.

Frosh Forward Montes Has Hunger For Goals

Max Montes was skating at a young age, loved the Chicago Blackhawks and attended numerous minor-league games in Milwaukee near his home of Hartland, Wis.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

But in all his longtime love affair with hockey, he never considered any position other than a forward. Making saves? Leave that to the guys who wanted to be goalies. A shot-blocking defenseman? Nah.

"I've always been more intrigued with scoring goals and being that presence on the ice," the Ohio State freshman forward said. "That's kind of always been my mindset as a player.

"I just love scoring goals. I mean, you can't really explain the feeling a goal brings, especially in a big tournament or at a big game. It's euphoric or a just happy feeling that you get, and I always chase that and hopefully I can score a lot of goals this year."

Montes has yet to score but has three assists in seven games. He had two assists in the Buckeyes' season opening 4-3 win at Mercyhurst on Oct. 7 and another helper in a 2-2 tie vs. Lindenwood on Oct. 14.

There's a learning curve for every player coming out of juniors to the faster and more physical collegiate game, and Montes in the same game against Lindenwood that he earned an assist was on the scoresheet in another column he'd rather forget. He was assessed a major penalty (five minutes) for elbowing midway through the first period. Fortunately, his teammates were able to kill the penalty without allowing a goal.

"He's got to live and learn," coach Steve Rohlik said. "We can't afford penalties, nonetheless five-minute majors. The nice part was he wasn't kicked out, so I thought that was a great call. But hopefully he learns from those things because we need guys on the ice, not in the box."

Montes knew he messed up, adding, "You feel like you let the team down. You never want to take that penalty. It's just a learning experience getting used to college."

Rohlik said the penalty is an aberration, as the boarding call is Montes' only penalty this season.

"He's not going to take a ton of penalties," the coach said. "I think that's just almost a needle in a haystack, really, of what happened there. But when you play hard, some things happen, but that's certainly not his nature."

In fact, Montes' willingness to play bigger than his size (5-8, 165) attracted the coaching staff.

"The biggest thing we talk about, and especially with a guy like him, is skating energy around the puck," Rohlik said. "Those are the guys I love to have. They get up and down a rink and want to be around the puck."

In that regard, Rohlik said Montes reminds him of another small ball of energy in Tate Singleton, who completed his eligibility for the Buckeyes in March and is playing for Newfoundland in the ECHL.

"You think of Tate and his energy, his skating and what he brought to the table," Rohlik said. "You think of getting up and down the rink with energy and being involved. That's what we saw in Max."

That's how Montes views himself.

"I'm fast. I'm skilled," he said. "I love to have the puck. I love to make plays and be in the offensive zone. I am a scoring threat when I have the puck. I'm also a defensive forward as well. I can block a shot when the team needs me to do that, but overall, I think I'm just a skilled forward that can play both sides of the puck."

Early Start

Montes started playing at age 3 after his father, who was born in Venezuela and knew little of hockey, saw one of Montes' uncles playing in Wisconsin.

"My dad was like, 'Wow, this sport is awesome. I want my kids playing the sport,' so we got pushed into it pretty early," Montes said of he and older brother, Franklin. "I used to be crying and asking for my dad when I was on the ice to take me off, but I'm happy he said no.

"I'm happy that I got into the sport. I think there's no better sport than hockey. I think it's the fastest sport, it's physical, it's skill. I mean, what else can you ask for?"

His favorite players as a kid were Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews of the Blackhawks, not a bad pair to follow since Chicago won the Stanley Cup in 2010, 2013 and in 2015.

"Growing up, Jonathan Toews was my favorite player for a long time," Montes said. "He was a great two-way forward, center, and just made plays and I loved that about him."

He even wore Toews' No. 19 for many years before switching to 16, his number with the Buckeyes. Closer to home, Montes' family had season tickets for the Milwaukee Admirals in the American Hockey League for several years.

"I think we were like 10-12 rows up from behind the penalty box," Montes said. "So, we had really good seats, and then I remember after the game I was always trying to go down to the penalty box and ask for a puck. Sometimes I got lucky, sometimes I didn't."

Montes played football, lacrosse and baseball growing up before eventually gravitating to solely hockey.

"Baseball, I played it when I was younger and then just didn't like it anymore," he said. "Kind of the same thing with football. I just didn't like it anymore. I think the practices were just way too long. Way too much commitment. So, I think hockey was the best route for sure."

He found lacrosse helpful for developing his hockey skills.

"The footwork that you use and the conditioning helped me on the ice," he said. "I also played roller hockey in the summer. It's just a different way to play the game, makes you think differently about plays that you would normally make. I think that helps me out thinking differently of the game and just to be more creative."

Montes played for the Milwaukee Junior Admirals before spending three seasons with Dubuque (Iowa) in the United States Hockey League. Last season in 59 games, he

had 44 points (23 goals, 21 assists). While his brother went to Wisconsin – not to play hockey – and his mother did as well, Montes opted for Ohio State.

"I think my mom really wanted me to go to Wisconsin and keep the tradition going, but I feel like it wasn't for me," he said. "I thought Ohio State had more things that I wanted to be successful. Looking at all my options, I think this was the best one out there for me.

"I liked their hunger for success and how they push you as a player. I think it's really good to be pushed as a player and be uncomfortable in situations.

"The coaches want you to be better, they want you to learn, which is really important for me as a player to develop to get to the next level. Also, the facilities here are insane."

New Guy

With the Buckeyes playing at Omaha on Oct. 27-28, incoming Ohio State president Walter "Ted" Carter Jr. took the opportunity to meet the players and staff from his future school. He will assume the presidency at OSU on Jan. 1.

He is the president of the University of Nebraska system, which includes Omaha. The school is also known as the University of Nebraska-Omaha, or UNO.

Carter played hockey at the Naval Academy and is an avid fan. His call sign as a "Top Gun" fighter pilot was "Slapshot."

Logan's Run

Goalie Logan Terness, a transfer from Connecticut, stopped 64 of 66 shots in helping the No. 16 Buckeyes to a 2-2 tie and 4-0 win in nonconference games at Omaha on Oct. 27-28. He had 34 stops in the series opener and didn't allow a goal in seven rounds of the shootout.

Michael Gildon and Mason Klee scored for the Buckeyes (3-1-3) in the first game. It was officially a tie after a scoreless five-minute overtime, but in the exhibition shootout the only goal came in the top of the seventh frame by Damien Carfagna. Terness then forced the Mavericks' Ray Fust to shoot wide.

In the rematch, Brent Johnson had a goal and an assist, Stephen Halliday and Davis Burnside each had two assists while John Larkin, Dalton Messina (shorthanded) and Carfagna scored against the No. 20 Mavericks (2-1-1). Terness made 30 saves for his first Buckeye shutout and the second of his college career.

Next

The Buckeyes return to Big Ten play hosting Michigan State on Nov. 3-4 at Value City Arena.

For a recap of the Omaha series go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

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Harrison Joins Mount Rushmore Of OSU Players

Who is on your Mount Rushmore of Ohio State football?

By this, I mean the very greatest of the great players, limiting the picks to just four players worthy of their likeness being carved in granite. I've been thinking about that this season in watching Marvin Harrison Jr. He's the best receiver I've witnessed at Ohio State. Better than Cris Carter. Better than David Boston. Better than Joey Gallows. Better than all of the great ones of late, like Garrett Wilson, Chris Olave, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and more.

THE EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Speed. Size. Precise routes. Great hands. Harrison has it all at a premium level, which justifies the ramped-up talk of him being in the race for the Heisman Trophy. So, of course, I have Harrison slotted in for one of those spots on the Mount Rushmore of Ohio State football.

And I'm pretty sure about two other spots, handing those to Archie Griffin and Orlando Pace. Griffin, I'll admit, may not be the best running back in Ohio State history. Eddie George, for one, was a freak of nature with his size and speed en route to a then-OSU record 1,927 yards rushing in 1995. But George won a Heisman Trophy. Griffin won two. And Griffin is still the only player in college football history with two rooms in the Heisman House.

Pace also was an easy pick. I've never seen a more dominating offensive lineman, at Ohio State or elsewhere. He started on opening day as a freshman in 1994, and by the time he was done, he was the first and still only player to win the Lombardi Award twice as the best lineman or linebacker in college football.

You can now find Pace in both the Pro Football Hall of Fame and the College Football Hall of Fame. Go to Canton and you may bump into Pace and Marvin Harrison (the dad) near each other. They were part of the 2016 class of inductees into the Pro Hall.

So those are my three locks: Harrison, Pace and Griffin. Other candidates? These come to mind.

Eddie George (1992-95), as mentioned, was a tremendous talent at running back. Imposing in his day at 6-3, 230 pounds, and fast, George was a force.

Cris Carter (1984-86) was the first receiver I remember at Ohio State who demonstrated NFL-type skills from the get-go, going back and high-pointing the ball instead of waiting for the ball to come to him, even as a freshman. He set a Rose Bowl record as a freshman with 172 receiving yards. But his OSU career was cut short when players normally played four years of college ball. He was disqualified from his senior year after signing with an agent, and he entered the NFL through the supplemental draft to begin his Hall-of-Fame career.

One of the great defensive ends, whether it be **Joey Bosa** (2013-15), **Nick Bosa** (2016-18) or **Chase Young** (2017-19) deserves consideration. Take your choice. They were all great. Nick Bosa and Young were the second picks overall in their NFL drafts. Joey Bosa lasted all the way to the third pick in his draft. I guess I lean toward Young, maybe because his plays are most recent in my memory. But the single most memorable play for any of the three is how Joey Bosa ended an overtime thriller in Happy Valley with a sack of the Penn State quarterback in 2014.

I have no personal memories of seeing **John Hicks** (1970-73) on the football field at Ohio State. Few games were on TV then, and I was young, probably focusing on people like Griffin when I was watching. But I have always been amazed that Hicks, an offensive lineman, finished second in the Heisman Trophy voting to Penn State run-

ning back John Cappelletti in 1973. He won all the college awards for linemen that year and then, after being selected third overall in the 1974 NFL draft, made the all-rookie team.

As for potential Ohio State players before then to include, I'll defer to people older than I. But I would assume you could start the debate with Heisman Trophy winners **Les Horvath** (1944), **Vic Janowicz** (1950) and **Howard Cassidy** (1955).

Another list to review could be the select company of Ohio State players considered so good that they were the first overall pick in their NFL draft. But that list includes only three. One of them is already spoken for, Pace (1997). Another, defensive lineman Dan Wilkinson (1994) was drafted more on potential. So that leaves **Tom Cousineau** (1979), who did have a pretty remarkable Ohio State career before initially skipping out on the NFL after the draft to play in Canada for a while. Cousineau was a two-time All-American and tackle record holder at OSU. His last game was Woody Hayes' last game, the 1978 Gator Bowl.

I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts. Shoot me an email at richexner@hotmail.com, and maybe we can follow up on this after the season.

Key Wisconsin Takeaway

A win is a win, a friend quickly reminded me after the game that was at times a nail-biter at Wisconsin, accurately texting, "Winning is hard. Went 1 and 0 today."

That friend, Bob Boon, knows what he is talking about, not only as a longtime follower of Ohio State football but as someone who wears a national championship ring. He's one of the announcers for a small school in Kentucky, Lindsey Wilson College, which navigated a season undefeated to win an NAIA title a couple of years back.

Whether it's NAIA, the top level of NCAA football, high school or the pros, wins should never be taken for granted. And in the college landscape with one last year of a four-team playoff, there's little, if any, room for error.

Ohio State had its difficulties at Wisconsin, but it won on the strength of an outstanding defense and two phenomenal playmakers on offense. And 8-0 is a lot better than 7-1.

(Bob, by the way, used to hand out BSBs with me in front of St. John Arena when we were students many moons ago.)

Two Threats Better Than One

Most everyone by now knows of Harri-

son's game-breaking talent at receiver. TreVeyon Henderson served a reminder in his return after several games off that he too is a difference maker.

Amassing 162 yards on 24 carries, Henderson suddenly made the offensive line look a lot better. Henderson got through holes before they had a chance to close. His biggest play amounted to being the clincher, a 33-yard touchdown run late in which it appeared things were closed up on him for just a short gain.

With quarterback play below the level Buckeye fans grew accustomed to the past several years, it's especially valuable to have in Henderson and Harrison a run and catch combo capable of scoring on any one play from anywhere on the field. Remember Henderson's 61-yard touchdown at Notre Dame?

The Quarterback

Watching the Maryland game, it appeared Kyle McCord was often taking too long to make decisions but when he did throw, he made some remarkable passes. Then against Penn State, he seemed off-target too often in making quicker decisions. Yet McCord avoided turnovers for the most part through the first seven games.

Then came a fumble and two interceptions at Wisconsin. He was the Big Ten's second-rated passer and No. 1 for yards passing entering the Wisconsin game, but he isn't a C.J. Stroud or Justin Fields. Yet he is undefeated as a starter.

Can he be the game manager that is all Ohio State may need to continue to win with one of the best defenses it has had in years and a few big-time game-breakers on offense? The answer to that question will go a long way toward deciding whether Ohio State wins the Big Ten title.

The Ohio State-Michigan game is shaping up to be a lot like the Penn State game, with two of the best – if not the two best – defenses in college football (no one has allowed fewer points than OSU or U-M). Avoiding turnovers and hitting receivers, when they are open, will be critical, because there may not be many chances.

Michigan Take

If what we are reading about Michigan is true, one of two things should happen. Michigan should be banned from postseason play, starting this season, or the scouting rules should be scrapped. The rules mean nothing if they're not being enforced. And according to news accounts so far, the evidence of Michigan's actions is already available.

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Don't Badger Me About 'Ugly' Victory

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

The guys in the office who do the predictions each Friday for BuckeyeSports.com's Staff Predictions on average saw a 34-10 Ohio State victory over Wisconsin. If you looked at things on paper, I could see why they were predicting such a comfortable Buckeye victory. But I've been around a lot longer than the guys, and I was prepared for a battle.

That's the way games between OSU and Wisconsin can be.

It's not like games with Purdue, where weird things happen. The games between these two rivals are more about hard hitting, avoiding mistakes and playing until the final gun. May the best team win.

If you don't believe me, see Greg Wilson's story in this issue about the late Badger coach and former Buckeye assistant Dave McClain or Mark Rea's column about losses to Wisconsin that he has witnessed.

With the game being played in Madison, the Buckeyes possibly suffering a letdown after the big win over Penn State the week before and Wisconsin being coached by former Ohio State player and coach Luke Fickell, who was sure to have his team ready, I was on upset alert.

The teams kept me on the edge of my seat until TreVeyon Henderson finally sealed the victory for the Buckeyes with a 33-yard touchdown run late in the fourth quarter. I was especially uncomfortable as Buckeye quarterback Kyle McCord struggled through the first half, the vaunted Buckeye defense had its lapses and the Badgers stayed within a touchdown for most of the second half.

There ended up being three things that spelled relief for me and the Buckeyes.

One, Marvin Harrison Jr. is truly one of the best players in the nation. Two, you forget how different Ohio State is when a healthy TreVeyon Henderson is in the lineup, and three, despite Wisconsin's ability to move the ball from time to time in the game, the defense turned in yet another stifling performance.

Harrison is the real deal, and I am glad he is getting mention for the Heisman Trophy, which has sadly turned into a quarterback's award. He had six catches for 123 yards and two scores. There are many receivers who can catch a ball in full stride and outrace defenders for long gains, including Harrison. But few can catch a ball in a crowd or in small windows like he does. And then there is the control of his feet, which allows him to use the sideline as an ally before he touches down with the catch, just inside the chalk.

As for Henderson, we have been saying since his freshman year that he is a threat to go all the way – or at least some distance – every time he touches the ball. He proved that against the Badgers both on the ground with his 162 yards, and through the air with his four catches for 45 yards and another near catch that could have gone for a touchdown. Henderson is a lot like a home-run hitter in baseball. The slugger strikes out a lot and looks bad doing it, but when he connects, it is majestic. You have to keep giving Henderson the ball, one way or another, because ultimately, he, too, is going to connect.

One wonders what Henderson would look like if he played behind a more consistent offensive line – though the big guys did look better against the Badgers – or if he could stay in the lineup. Is he injury-prone, or does he just have bad luck?

As for the defense, they allowed Wisconsin to march 75 yards on seven plays to tie the game at 10 to start the second half. But in the end, it was the same-old, same-old. Jim Knowles' troops allowed just 10 points and 259 total yards. They rank second in the nation in scoring defense

(10.0) and fourth in the nation in total defense (260.0),

On the downside, McCord had arguably his worst game as the Buckeye quarterback, with his three turnovers and two intentional grounding penalties. But he was 7 for 7 in the second half, for 86 yards and a touchdown to Harrison to help secure the victory. Head coach Ryan Day has to figure out how to get McCord off to faster starts, as he is frequently slow out of the gate, including against Wisconsin.

There has been a heated debate on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum about the play of the OSU special teams. Against the Badgers, Ohio State yielded a 35-yard punt return to Chimere Dike, which fortunately did not result in any points, while the best Ohio State's Jayden Ballard could do was a return for 6 yards. Ohio State ranks 121st in punt return defense, yielding 15.2 yards, and is 106th in punt returns at 4.1.

On the bright side, Jesse Mirco had a strong day against the Badgers, dropping three of his four punts inside the 20 at the 7, 9, and 11.

What does this all add up to?

Despite all my fretting, it was a big win for the Buckeyes. And as Urban Meyer would say, "The best thing about being 8-0 is that it gives you a chance to be 9-0."

Before There Was Marvin

Some of you may have noticed that on Reprint Thursdays at BuckeyeSports.com this fall we have been running stories covering the 1998 Ohio State football team, one of the school's best yet most polarizing teams on the occasion of the squad's 25th anniversary. As I have been reading the BSB game coverage from that season, it was hard to ignore the play of receiver David Boston. I have been left wondering why Boston does not get more notice when there are discussions about the greatest Ohio State receivers of all time. Boston was Marvin Harrison Jr. before Marvin Harrison Jr. was born. I think the string of great OSU receivers in the past few years has made us lose sight of the great Buckeye receivers who came before them.

Little did I know that managing editor emeritus Mark Rea was working on a story on Boston, which appears in this issue. It is well worth the read and can be found on pages 20-21.

Something to note about Boston is that he was also an outstanding and prolific punt returner, especially notable in these days when Ryan Day is unable to find a game-changing returner. Boston returned two punts for touchdowns, one of them 70 yards and another for 66 yards coming against Pitt, when Ohio State famously had only eight men on the field.

"I've been around the game of football for a long time, and I've never seen anything like that," former Ohio State coach and recruiting coordinator Bill Conley said of the return. "We were trying to send in the second-team punt return unit, and I guess not everyone got the message. It didn't matter, though. Those other guys would have probably just gotten in David's way."

Do Cheaters Ever Prosper?

Like many of you, I have been following the Michigan sign-stealing scandal fairly closely. Regular readers of this space know that I have never been a big fan of Jim Harbaugh, dating back to 1986, when he came into Ohio State as quarterback of the Wolverines, guaranteeing a Michigan victory. It was just not the type of thing

that was done back then and would have been considered disrespectful to the rivalry by many in both camps, including me.

Fast-forward to today and I am bothered by the fact that he has done some things that are questionable and there never seems to be any accountability or consequences to his actions.

One of the things that has caught my attention as I have followed this latest scandal – and I don't think I am using that word loosely or inappropriately – is the fact that many in the sports media world do not consider this a big deal. Generally, the arguments in his favor have to do with the talking heads believing that the rules, especially the one that bans live scouting, are absurd or obsolete, or the more ubiquitous argument that "everybody does it."

I'm not sure everybody does it to quite the elaborate degree that Michigan is alleged to have done it. If somebody, within the rules, can decipher signals without electronic assistance and without being in the opposing stadium, more power to them. But rules are rules. Virtually everyone drives over the speed limit on the freeway, but if you get pulled over, you are going to get a ticket, even as cars whiz by at 75 or more.

There are also those out there who think this is about an anti-Harbaugh agenda, a "witch hunt," as somebody suggested on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum. Why defend this guy? He doesn't strike me as a particularly likeable or compassionate person. Why do I always feel like there is an anti-Ohio State undercurrent to these things? Maybe there is.

I am not one of those Buckeye fans who is advocating the "death penalty" for the Wolverines. But some appropriate penalty is called for. And please, no vacating of victories. The only people punished by vacating games are record-keepers and media types who are left to try to sort out numbers for teams and players from games that millions have seen and know were played, whether you wipe them out or not.

I'm talking something between vacating and the death penalty.

Will the sign stealing, if proven (and there is already a lot of evidence out there), have been worth it?

In a case of purely circumstantial evidence, Harbaugh was a pedestrian (for a traditional power) 49-22 in his first six seasons (.690 winning mark) as head man at Michigan, with an 0-5 record against archrival Ohio State and a 1-4 record in bowl games, including losing four post-season games in a row after a win in his first season. The highest final AP ranking for his Wolverines was 10th in 2016, and they finished higher than third in the Big Ten East only once (2018).

And then, suddenly, they make the CFP playoffs twice in a row, thrash their archrivals twice in a row and post a 33-3 record (.917) over the past two seasons and the first eight games of this year?

It's not like they had a huge influx of talent.

Michigan ranked 13th in a five-year average of the 247 composite recruiting rankings from 2018-2022 with teams like Alabama, Georgia and Ohio State ranking one, two and three, respectively. It does make you wonder.

Do I think Ohio State would have beaten Michigan in the last two games if the opponents were not stealing signs, assuming that's what they were doing? Probably not. There's no overlooking the way the Buckeyes were manhandled in 2021. Maybe the game in 2022 would have

been a little closer.

Here's one thing to remember as this plays out and maybe Harbaugh has to finally pay the piper.

In Ohio State's Tattogate, Jim Tressel did not lose his job because his players traded memorabilia that belonged to them. He got in trouble because he was not forthcoming to the NCAA about what he knew about it.

Here is what Harbaugh said in a statement once news of the current investigation became public:

"I do not have any knowledge or information regarding the University of Michigan football program illegally stealing signals, nor have I directed any staff member or others to participate in an off-campus scouting assignment. I have no awareness of anyone on our staff having done that or having directed that action."

The smoking gun or guns seem like they are already out there. If he ends up with a slap on the wrist while Tressel lost his job, I will really be annoyed.

Michigan Free Trials

The names and addresses loyal subscribers have been sending in to give four free trial issues of BSB to potential subscribers have been pouring in. If you haven't sent in your names yet – and we are trying to get every subscriber to send in at least one name – now would be a great time to do it because trial subscribers will get both the Michigan preview, featuring the popular Michigan Memories, and the Michigan Wrap-Up, hopefully featuring coverage of a big Buckeye victory.

Send your names and addresses to BSB at 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.

One other "support BSB" suggestion surrounding the Michigan game. Many of you own businesses, and you can advertise in the Michigan preview at a special subscriber rate for as low as \$56 for an ad slightly larger than a business card. Larger sizes are available with ads up to a full page for \$496. Some of you without businesses might want to take advantage of this offer to buy an ad showing your support of the Buckeyes or BSB. Give me a call at one of the above numbers, and I will explain the details.

First-Class Upgrade

Mail service for the BSB covering the Penn State game seemed a little better, though for some reason readers in the Dayton area were not getting their paper. We think that the postal service may be eliminating some of the backlog created by the Oct. 9 postal holiday.

Don't forget that the complete issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin is posted at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers, upon completion of each paper. If you are not already enjoying this complimentary service, see the simple instructions on page 6 of this issue.

You can also upgrade your existing subscription to first-class mail in an envelope for the remainder of football season for just \$13 and \$23 through football recruiting in February. 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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