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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 11, 2023

Henderson Puts Ohio State On His Back In 35-16 Win Over Scarlet Knights

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Sometimes, you don't know how good you have it until it's gone.

Think back to the excitement of running back TreVeyon Henderson's first few games at Ohio State. He scored on a 70-yard catch-and-run in his first outing as a Buckeye and set the freshman rushing record just two weeks later, going for 270 yards and three scores in a 41-20 win over Tulsa. When a record held by Archie Griffin since 1972 is broken, things usually bode well for whoever is replacing his name in the books.

"We already knew he was special," quarterback C.J. Stroud said after Henderson broke the record. "He has a God-given talent, and he put it on display today. He showed the whole nation what he can do, and he's just getting started. It was amazing watching him do what he did today, and I feel like he'll do even better."

But little has gone according to plan for Henderson since his breakout freshman season. He appeared in just eight games last season and did not look like himself even when he was on the field, averaging 5.3 yards per carry – over a yard less than his 6.8-yard average the year before – as he dealt with a lingering foot injury suffered earlier in the season that resulted in surgery after his sophomore campaign concluded.

Heading into this year, though, Henderson said he felt good about his return to the field after an up-and-down season, and he thought he had returned to that explosive nature that many – himself included – did not see last year. That statement was backed up through the first four games of this season, when he carried the ball 44 times for 295 yards and five touchdowns, including a 61-yarder in the 17-14 win at Notre Dame on Sept. 23.

It was the win over the Fighting Irish, though, where Henderson said he took a cheap shot from a Notre Dame defender. That forced him back to the bench for the next three games, and Ohio State's rushing attack largely floundered without Henderson's presence.

Over that three-game span, the Buckeyes had just 293 yards on the ground and averaged 2.6 yards per attempt, so it was a welcome reprieve when Henderson returned at Wisconsin, totaling 162 rushing yards and a touchdown in the win.

But as it turns out, that may have just been a warning shot. If it was not clear before, Henderson's return to his freshman form was solidified in Ohio State's 35-16 win at Rutgers on Nov. 4. He carried the ball 22 times for 128 yards and a touchdown while also leading the Buckeyes with five receptions for 80 yards.

"It feels great," Henderson said. "It's a blessing to be out here and give this team everything I've got. With God on my side, I'm going to continue to try to do that."

Henderson ran hard from start to finish. He carried the ball seven times for 34 yards in the first quarter before adding an 11-yard gain in the second and scoring his only touchdown of the game – a 9-yarder – in the third. In the final frame, he went 65 yards on a reception from Kyle McCord that led to one of the team's four touchdowns on offense.

"When you get him to the second level, he's dangerous," head coach Ryan Day said. "Once he gets out in the open field,



SONNY BROCKWAY

TRE TO THE RESCUE – Ohio State running back TreVeyon Henderson had his second strong outing in as many games on Nov. 4 against Rutgers, going for 208 yards from scrimmage, with 128 coming on the ground, in the 35-16 win.

like the check down for 65 yards, he is a mismatch and a very explosive player."

Wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. – who had just four receptions on the day, though two went for touchdowns – said it has been great for the offense to have Henderson back.

"He's such an explosive playmaker," Harrison said. "He has a chance to take the ball to the end zone no matter where he is on the field. Having a guy like that on the offense definitely benefits us a lot."

But that offense outside of Henderson? Well, it remains a concern for Ohio State, which had yet another slow start as Rut-

gers not only held a 9-7 lead going into the half, but it was the first ever lead the Scarlet Knights – now winless in 10 tries against Ohio State – have ever had over the Buckeyes after one quarter of play.

It happened as a result of Ohio State failing to score on five of the first six drives of the game, including a three-and-out to open the contest and back-to-back drives entering the locker room where the Buckeyes turned the ball over, the first coming on a failed punt fake by Jesse Mirco that

IN MEMORIAM

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FAN FORUM

Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State, which opened at No. 1 in the College Football Playoff rankings, did not exactly look like the nation's top team in a 35-16 win at Rutgers on Nov. 4, which occurred after trailing 9-7 at the half. But on the back of strong performances by the Buckeyes' playmakers, Ohio State was able to stay undefeated through nine games. 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: Ohio State's defensive performance wasn't always pretty against Rutgers, but they did get a monster performance from safety Josh Proctor. The longtime Buckeye was all over the field for Jim Knowles' unit, serving as a major run-stopper in the red zone when the team needed a stop most.

Proctor's physicality was most felt at the end of the first half, when he came through in the clutch on consecutive plays at the goal line. With Rutgers at the Buckeyes' 2-yard line, Proctor burst through the middle of the field to stop Gavin Wimsatt for a huge 1-yard loss, and on the next play he stopped Christian Dremel for no gain.

Proctor's efforts were most felt on arguably the biggest play of the game, though, when he provided

the key hit on Kyle Monangai that led to the eventual 93-yard pick-six by Jordan Hancock. He sustained what looked like a head injury on that play that forced him out of the game, but that play, and his overall performance, helped lead the Buckeyes to a gutsy win in Piscataway, N.J.

Braden Moles, BSB: Look no further than TreVeyon Henderson for the reason Ohio State was able to escape from New Jersey with a win.

It was the third consecutive 100-yard rushing performance for Henderson, who finished with 128 yards and a touchdown on 22 carries, averaging 5.8 yards per attempt. He also led Ohio State in receiving, hauling in five receptions for 80 yards, including a 65-yard catch-and-run in the fourth.

He has run hard ever since returning from injury against Wisconsin and has not shown any signs of slowing down as the season enters the homestretch.

Greg Wilson, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf goes to Hancock, who had one of the biggest plays of the game with a 93-yard pick six on Rutgers' first drive of the second half, which they entered with a 9-7 lead.

The momentum flipped back into the Buckeyes hands, helping them retake the lead and ultimately win the game. Hancock finished with five tackles and the interception, which was the first of his career.

Subscribers

Tiffin Buckeye: Henderson, feed him the rock and don't overthink it.

Terrier Buck: Maybe others played well (I don't know) but Henderson was the star of the game.

Michael Bauer: I have Henderson, Hancock, and Harrison, probably in that order.

John Lanning: Proctor had a game before he got hurt. Leaf him. Of course, Henderson and Harrison earned leaves.

PeyoteBuck: Even though he can't block as well as Cade Stover, Gee Scott Jr carried his load. He made an impact.

Mcarr: Offense: Henderson. Defense: Proctor. Special Teams: Uh, uh, uh. I'd say Jesse Mirco but that failed punt fake could have been costly. I guess Jayden Fielding. He hit all of his extra points.

BOB CODY: The entire defense again, especially the goal-line defense. Hancock and Proctor. TreVeyon, Marvin, and the unfairly maligned Kyle McCord.

bstu9: Proctor. He was literally everywhere. Played one of his best games as a Buckeye.

Ohio State's 35-16 win at Rutgers on Nov. 4 was another game where the defense – even if it wasn't up to the usual snuff – led the team to a win with big plays like Jordan Hancock's pick-six. But that leaves plenty of questions about the offense, which seems to struggle whenever the ball is not in the hands of Marvin Harrison Jr. or TreVeyon Henderson. We asked readers in the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum how confident they are that Ohio State's offense can lead the Buckeyes to their goals as the regular season starts to come to a close. Here are some of the responses:

BUCKEYE SPORTS .COM

From The Message Board

"I'm pretty confident. I feel as if they get in their own way more so than not. They tend to go away from the things that work instead of working their offense around it. Still have a couple games to get humming and I hope it happens soon."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"The question asks about the team's goals. My goal is to go undefeated in the regular season, and I thought before the season began that Ohio State would be more likely than not to go undefeated. After the Rutgers game, I am marginally less confident than I originally was. A reminder, OSU has ten five-star players and the rest of the B1G has seven."

– Terrier Buck

"The past two weeks have been good practice of blocking for the run game. Henderson is quick. Open the hole and he'll get there. The pass blocking

has been suspect. Now that has to be improved. This group is coming along just fine. They will be there when the time arrives."

– John Lanning

"(Nov. 11)'s Michigan at Penn State game will tell us a lot. The Buckeyes need to get every player healthy for the trip to Ann Arbor. A healthy team will need to play smart, execute plays, avoid mistakes, not commit any unforced errors, have the breaks go their way and play inspired football for 60 minutes. Thirty minutes won't do it. This team hasn't played a 60-minute game yet. Our big-time players will need to show up and perform. I'm hopeful, but not confident."

– BRYON MCNUTT

"With this team, I just feel like there's no looking forward. The offense is unpredictable and the defense showed some cracks against Rutgers' rushing game. Just take them one week

at a time and try to go 1-0 each week."

– bstu9

"Confident! This Buckeye team is getting everyone's best shot on defense and they still prevail!"

– Luckeeman

"I believe that Ryan Day is holding several plays back on offense for the TTUN game. Also, offensive players such as Cade Stover and Chip Trayanum have a chance to recover as they have a few weeks before the big one. I believe we will give Jim Harbaugh a butt-kicking send-off."

– AnthonyBuckeye

"My confidence is lacking because, as usual, The Game is an early kickoff. Once again, the Buckeyes came out sluggish, like they just got out of bed. Maybe trade one of the breakfast burritos for a Red Bull? They will

need to play four solid quarters against top competition."

– R1TBDBITL

"Things are questionable from my perspective. It all comes down to the ifs ... if Henderson is healthy, if Emeka Egbuka is healthy, if the tight end show with Stover and Gee Scott Jr. continues and if Kyle McCord can stay on schedule. Finally, if the defense can continue to provide the offense time during a tight game to get its act together."

– BuckeyeScott

"Having Henderson back is a huge plus. But McCord seems to be regressing, not progressing. He doesn't have to be C.J. Stroud. Just don't make mistakes! The offensive line is getting better, but are they championship caliber?"

– Poster That Harley Built

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Chalk Up Another Ugly Win For OSU

The headline for last week's column was "Every Victory Is A Thing Of Beauty," and while I'll continue to stick with that sentiment, I think the Ohio State football team might be taking this "win ugly" thing a bit too far.

The newly-christened No. 1 team in the country, courtesy of the initial College Football Playoff rankings of the season, played like anything but the No. 1 team in the country, allowing usual woodshed victim Rutgers to hang around into the fourth quarter before the Buckeyes could salt away a 35-16 victory.

There is no doubt that former OSU defensive coordinator Greg Schiano has resurrected the Scarlet Knights program from doormat status in the Big Ten to an opponent that plays hard from the opening kickoff to the final whistle. Rutgers is already bowl-eligible for the first time in nine years, and if you don't think that's a big deal in Piscataway, you didn't see video of the jubilant locker room dance after the Knights secured their sixth win of the season.

Still, Schiano has a long way to go if his program is to challenge for a conference championship. As he alluded to during the week before his team took on Ohio State, the Knights rarely get "ready-made players." In other words, while the Buckeyes harvest more than their share of four- and five-star prospects, Rutgers has to make do with two- and three-star prospects whose hunger to compete against the best of the best might sometimes outweigh their individual talents.

That was on full display against the Buckeyes, who appeared at times much more enamored with their top-ranked status than their opponents did.

For example, tight end Gee Scott Jr. did his best Marvin Harrison Jr. imitation on a contested 14-yard touchdown reception to open the scoring in the first quarter. While the catch was likely special for Scott since it was his first TD this season and second of his career, the fact that it came against Rutgers linebacker Mohamed Toure must have made it even sweeter. Toure had made Scott whiff on an attempted block on the play before the touchdown.

But midway through the second quarter, Scott flat-out dropped a third-down pass over the middle that would have given the Buckeyes a fresh set of downs near midfield. As it was, OSU was forced to punt, and Rutgers turned that possession into a field goal.

Scott's drop was the third straight misfire from Kyle McCord after the Ohio State quarterback began the game completing each of his first 11 attempts. Coupled with seven connections in a row to finish the Wisconsin game, the QB established a new program record with 18 consecutive completions. C.J. Stroud had the old record of 17 in a row set just last year during a 49-20 win at Michigan State.

But McCord, who typically starts slow and finishes fast, went cold after his hot start, and despite matching his career high with three touchdown passes, he finished the game 19 for 26 for 189 yards and an interception.

I'm not sure what the game plan was for the OSU wide receivers – there was a tricky breeze swirling around SHI Stadium – but I'm pretty certain Harrison's Heisman Trophy candidacy blew away in that wind when the star receiver had only four catches for 25 yards. He did have a pair of touchdown receptions, but neither went for more than 4 yards. In fact, Harrison's longest catch during the afternoon was 16 yards, and no Ohio State wide receiver caught a pass longer than 22 yards. That was freshman Carnell Tate,

whose 22-yarder didn't come until the 5:09 mark of the third quarter.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Emeka Egbuka eased back into the rotation after two games away but totaled only 29 yards on four receptions. But at least Harrison, Tate and Ebuka were in the mix. Julian Fleming was relegated to mostly decoy work and downfield blocking. As a result, he was targeted only once and saw a personal streak of catches in 20 straight games come to an end.

Of course, maybe it was a case of the Rutgers pass defense identifying weaknesses in the Ohio State offensive attack and then exploiting them. Stroud was held to just 154 yards through the air during last year's 49-10 win, and McCord was held to his career low in 10 games so far as a starter.

Uneven Defensive Effort

After back-to-back games of excellent defense, the Buckeyes appeared to take a step backward against Rutgers.

The Scarlet Knights totaled 361 yards, including 232 on the ground – both season-high totals for an OSU opponent. Running back Kyle Monangai rushed 24 times for 159 yards, marking the first time a Rutgers player had cracked the century mark against the Buckeyes in the 10-game history of the series.

More than one-quarter of Monangai's rushing total came when the Ohio State defense was caught flat-footed on a fourth-and-1 play in the second quarter. Expecting a quarterback sneak, the Buckeyes crowded the line of scrimmage prior to the snap, but when Rutgers QB Gavin Wimsatt executed a double snap of sorts – taking the snap and essentially snapping the ball again through his legs to a waiting Monangai – the play went for 45 yards to set up the first of three field goals for the Knights.

The unusual play – a modern-day variation on the old "fumblerooski" – shouldn't have taken Ohio State that much by surprise. Schiano has always been a master of trickery over the years, including punt fakes, throwback passes on kick returns and anything else he can think of to gain an advantage.

Regardless of the tricks, subtract the 45-yard gain on that play, and Monangai would still have cracked the century mark against the Buckeyes, signaling something of a troubling trend.

The tenor of the game against Wisconsin changed dramatically when Badgers running back Braelon Allen was sidelined near the end of the first half with an ankle injury. Wisconsin was beginning to get its run game going, but with Allen unavailable in the second half, the Badgers managed only 54 yards on the ground after the break and Ohio State was able to salt away a 24-10 victory.

Two games before that, Purdue running back Devin Mockobee rushed for 110 yards during his team's 41-7 loss to the Buckeyes.

I'm not going to dredge up that whole thing regarding the so-called toughness of Ohio State, and the Buckeyes managed to keep Rutgers to just one touchdown despite six trips inside the red zone. But I must admit to a certain bit of leftover shellshock from the

last two Michigan games and wonder what's going to happen in Ann Arbor on Nov. 25 if the Buckeyes are sometimes unable to control the line of scrimmage against the likes of Purdue or Rutgers.

Perhaps, though, it is a talented defensive unit that can look so vulnerable at times and still turn in the game-altering play. That, of course, came early in the third quarter when a hit from safety Josh Proctor dislodged a potential completion to Monangai, and the ball bounced to cornerback Jordan Hancock (subbing for the injured Denzel Burke). Hancock was so happy with his first career pick that he returned it 93 yards for a touchdown.

In addition to the pick-six turning a 9-7 deficit into a 14-9 lead – a lead Ohio State would never relinquish the remainder of the afternoon – it was the sixth-longest interception return in program history.

A Difference-Maker

With the passing attack parked in first gear most of the day, TreVeyon Henderson showed up (again) in a big way. He carried 22 times for 128 yards and a touchdown, giving the Buckeyes a shot in the arm seemingly whenever they needed it most. Of his 22 carries, Henderson gained 5 or more yards on 12 of them, and seven of those 12 resulted in either a first down or a touchdown.

Henderson now has three consecutive 100-yard performances, which includes 104 yards against Notre Dame before he was sidelined for three games. Perhaps more importantly, though, is the fact that the third-year running back has cracked the century mark in back-to-back games for the first time in his college career. In other words, he seems to be hitting his stride at the right time.

With Henderson on the sideline, Ohio State's rushing attack had dropped to 10th in the Big Ten and 99th in the nation. After two games with him back in the lineup, the Buckeyes have improved to fifth in the conference and are up 11 spots nationally.

Henderson also showcased his speed in the passing game against Rutgers, becoming the team's leading receiver in a game for the first time in his career. A catch-and-run worth 65 yards not only helped to pad McCord's final stats, it gave Henderson five receptions for 80 yards against the Scarlet Knights. It represented the most receiving yards for a true OSU running back (that doesn't count H-backs) since Brandon Saine had four catches for 84 yards and a touchdown during a 38-10 win against Indiana in 2010.

And while we're handing out accolades for Henderson, how about some more for the Oscar-worthy acting job just prior to a quarterback sneak late in the third quarter?

Faced with third-and-1 at the Rutgers 12-yard line, the Buckeyes lined up in a bunch formation with McCord under center. But Henderson appeared not to know which play was called, and he turned to the sidelines, flailing both arms while jumping up and down.

Meanwhile, the Rutgers defense had yet to get itself set when McCord took a perfectly-executed sneak up the middle for a 3-yard gain. On the next play, Henderson capped an eight-play, 71-yard drive with a 9-yard touchdown run to give the Buckeyes a 21-9 lead with 2:39 left in the third period.

Thinking up such a ruse was likely the brainchild of OSU head coach Ryan Day, but it works that well only when the offensive linemen, McCord and Henderson play their roles to perfection. Why Day chose to unveil it against Rutgers rather than save it for another opponent is a discussion for another time.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Ohio State's 2024 Schedule Announced

The Big Ten announced Ohio State's 2024 football schedule on Nov. 2, which includes eight home games and two off weeks for the Buckeyes.

As previously announced, Ohio State's nonconference schedule will include home contests against Southern Mississippi on Aug. 31, Western Michigan on Sept. 7 and Marshall on Sept. 21, with an off week on Sept. 14. The Buckeyes will then play at Michigan State on Sept. 28 to begin the conference portion of the schedule before hosting Iowa on Oct. 5.

Ohio State will then welcome Oregon to the Big Ten on Oct. 12, visiting the Ducks in Eugene, Ore., for just the second time ever and the first time since 1967. The Buckeyes will then be off the following week.

Ohio State will begin the final stretch of the regular season on Oct. 26 at home against Nebraska, followed by games at Penn State on Nov. 2, home against Purdue on Nov. 9, at Northwestern on Nov. 16 and back-to-back home games to close the season: Indiana on Nov. 23 and Michigan on Nov. 30, with kickoff times and broadcast networks to be announced closer to the season.

RB Williams Out For The Season After Knee Injury

Head coach Ryan Day said on Oct. 31 that senior running back Miyan Williams is out for the season after undergoing a procedure on an injured knee.

Williams missed Ohio State's 24-10 win at Wisconsin, and Day confirmed that the ailment that held him out led to season-ending surgery for Williams, who is in his fourth season with the Buckeyes and has two seasons of eligibility remaining.

"I feel really bad for Miyan," Day said. "He's not going to be able to play. He's had a procedure done. That is a big hit for that room and our team. He's done a lot of great things for our team."

Williams finishes the season with 158 rushing yards and three touchdowns on 49 carries, averaging 3.2 yards per attempt, and Day said there had been no decisions made on a potential return for Williams next season.

With Williams out, Ohio State will look to TreVeyon Henderson, who returned against the Badgers and has 415 scrimmage yards over the last two games, as well as Chip Trayanum. The Buckeyes could also look at a larger role for sophomore Dallan Hayden, whom Day had previously indicated that he hopes to redshirt this season but who could step in if needed.

"He moves up, certainly," Day said on Nov. 1 when asked how Williams' injury impacts Hayden. "We do have some games here. It moves him up into a much more impactful role, yes."

With that said, Hayden has not appeared in the last three games for Ohio State, with his last appearance coming against Purdue on Oct. 14.

Burke, Ransom Out, Egbuka Returns Against Rutgers

Ohio State was without the services of two of its top defensive players for the win over Rutgers, with cornerback Denzel Burke and safety Lathan Ransom among six players listed as out before kickoff.

Burke had returned the week prior against Wisconsin after missing the Buckeyes' win over Penn State with a lower-body injury, which he appeared to suffer during the third quarter the previous week against Purdue.

Despite missing his second game in

2023 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Sept. 2	at Indiana	W, 23-3	CBS	3-6, 20-14 win over Wisconsin
Sept. 9	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 35-7	BTN	6-3, 19-7 win over Indiana State
Sept. 16	WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 63-10	FOX	5-4, 21-13 win over UTEP
Sept. 23	at Notre Dame	W, 17-14	NBC	7-3, 31-23 loss to Clemson
Oct. 7	MARYLAND	W, 37-17	FOX	5-4, 51-15 loss to Penn State
Oct. 14	at Purdue	W, 41-7	Peacock	2-7, 41-13 loss to Michigan
Oct. 21	PENN STATE	W, 20-12	FOX	8-1, 51-15 win over Maryland
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	W, 24-10	NBC	5-4, 20-14 loss to Indiana
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	W, 35-16	CBS	6-3, 35-16 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 11	MICHIGAN STATE	7:30 p.m.	NBC	3-6, 20-17 win over Nebraska
Nov. 18	MINNESOTA	TBA	TBA	5-4, 27-26 loss to Illinois
Nov. 25	at Michigan	12 p.m.	FOX	9-0, 41-13 win over Purdue

three weeks, Burke has still emerged as one of the team's most productive players on defense, serving as a lockdown corner for the Buckeyes with nine pass breakups, a forced fumble and an interception.

Ransom did not travel with the team after sustaining what appeared to be a non-contact leg injury during Ohio State's win over Wisconsin. It was not clear when the injury occurred, but it forced him to limp off to the sideline and be looked at by medical trainers before being carted off the field and taken to the locker room.

Like Burke, Ransom has been one of the defense's top performers this season in his fourth year with the program, contributing 34 tackles (1½ for loss), a forced fumble, an interception and two pass breakups. Day did not offer an update on either player after the game.

Burke and Ransom were joined on the injury list by four other Buckeyes. Usual inactives Kyion Grayes, Jason Moore and Joe Royer each did not dress along with Williams.

The Buckeyes were without the services of six players, but they did return wide receiver Emeka Egbuka to the lineup, who had missed the last three games after suffering a lower-body injury against Maryland. Egbuka had tried to return against the Badgers after being listed as active prior to kickoff, but he did not see the field, a decision that Day was precautionary.

Egbuka did not make much of a difference in his return against the Scarlet Knights, however, totaling just four catches for 29 yards and one carry for 4 yards.

TE Stover Sits With Apparent Knee Injury

Ohio State was more shorthanded on offense against the Scarlet Knights than the injury report indicated. Tight end Cade Stover sat out the entire game with an apparent knee injury.

Stover was seen throughout the game on the sidelines without a helmet wearing what appeared to be a brace on his right knee. The tight end was also walking with a noticeable limp.

Stover, who was often pacing back and forth on the sidelines in the first half while the Buckeye offense was struggling to move the ball downfield, flirted with entering the game after halftime. He put his helmet on during a TV timeout before Ohio State's first drive of the second half and was in the unit's sideline huddle, but he failed to enter the game when play resumed and took his helmet off for the rest of the game without registering a snap.

After the game, Day said Stover could

have entered the game, but he was kept out as a precaution. The Buckeye offense looked to tight end Gee Scott Jr. to serve as the starting tight end against Rutgers. He filled in well for Stover, recording a 14-yard touchdown and finishing with three catches for 24 yards and the score.

Prior to his injury, Stover had served as one of McCord's favorite targets this season. Through nine games, he has racked up 27 catches for 429 yards and three touchdowns, all still ranking second on the team. Having missed the game, along with a reception-less outing at Wisconsin, Stover's current pace would require 15 games to break the team's single-season record for receiving yards by a tight end of 671, set by Billy Anders in 1966.

Proctor Goes Down With Apparent Head Injury

Ohio State continued to be hit by the injury bug on the field in Piscataway, N.J., losing one of their top defensive players for the rest of the game in the third quarter.

After delivering a bruising hit on Rutgers running back Kyle Monangai that led to a 93-yard pick-six from Jordan Hancock, safety Josh Proctor went down with what appeared to be a head injury, an ailment he suffered while delivering the hit on the Scarlet Knights tailback.

Proctor remained on the turf for an extended period while trainers were tending to him, but he got up under his own power a few minutes later before being immediately taken to the medical tent. The safety stayed in the tent for a while before heading back to the sidelines with a trainer without his helmet. While he was standing up and talking to his teammates for the majority of the second half, he did not return to the game.

Proctor, who had one of the better defensive performances on the team prior to his injury with two key red-zone plays, told reporters that he had felt the impact of the hit while he lay on the ground, which caused him to stay on the turf for that long period of time.


"My head was hurting a little bit," he said. "I just tried to gather myself on the ground right there. I wasn't really sure what was going on in the moment right away."

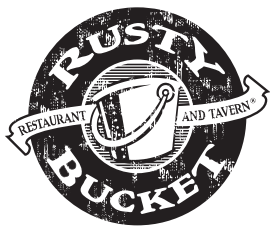
"I felt OK," he added when asked if he could have gone back into the game. "But that's probably best for me to sit out."

Proctor has experienced a career year in his sixth season with the program, serving as one of the more physical players on the Buckeyes' intimidating defense. Through nine games, he has logged 35 tackles (four for loss), an interception and seven pass breakups.

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OSU No. 1 In First CFP Rankings, Third In AP Poll

Ohio State was No. 1 in the first College Football Playoff rankings of the season released on Oct. 31, just the second time that the Buckeyes have started first in the initial selection.

"As we looked at it, the big win at Notre Dame, the win over Penn State, the top-five defense, the difference makers on offense like Marvin Harrison Jr., who is an elite player – as we looked at it, we came to a conclusion as a group that Ohio State deserves to be the number one team," said Boo Corrigan, CFP committee chairman and NC State athletic director.

The Buckeyes were joined at the top of the rankings by No. 2 Georgia, No. 3 Michigan and No. 4 Florida State, with No. 5 Washington and No. 6 Oregon as the first teams left out of the playoff field. This is the fifth time Ohio State has opened among the top four teams, including in 2015 (No. 3), 2019 (No. 1), 2020 (No. 4) and last season, when the Buckeyes began at No. 2.

The other Big Ten team in the rankings

is No. 11 Penn State, which Ohio State dispatched in Columbus by a score of 20-12 on Oct. 21. Along with a 17-14 win over No. 15 Notre Dame earlier this season, the Buckeyes have two wins over top-15 teams in the initial playoff rankings and would have another ranked matchup left this season at Michigan on Nov. 25.

Ohio State is looking for the program's sixth appearance in the College Football Playoffs and the fourth in five years under Day. Rankings will be released every Tuesday until the final rankings are released on Dec. 3 following the conclusion of conference championship weekend.

AP voters, however, did not agree with those rankings, slotting Ohio State in at No. 3 in the AP top 25 released on Nov. 5 following the Buckeyes' 35-16 win at Rutgers on Nov. 4.

The Buckeyes checked in at No. 3 behind No. 2 Michigan and No. 1 Georgia, with No. 4 Florida State and No. 5 Washington rounding out the top five. In fact, there was no movement among the top nine spots, with No. 6 Oregon, No. 7 Texas, No. 8 Ala-

bama and No. 9 Penn State all staying put. Ole Miss, which moved up one spot to No. 10, was the only shift in the top 10.

The largest rise in the poll belonged to No. 13 Utah and No. 14 Tennessee, which each rose five spots, while No. 22 Notre Dame fell 10 spots after a 31-23 loss to unranked Clemson.

Igbinosun Brothers Face Off In Piscataway

Ohio State's win over Rutgers took on some additional importance for cornerback Davison Igbinosun, a Union, N.J., native who had a chance to play against his brother, Desmond, a defensive back for the Scarlet Knights.

"It's definitely exciting," Davison Igbinosun said. "It's a dream come true."

It was a possibility, though, that the brothers could have played together in college. Davison Igbinosun was originally committed to Rutgers out of high school before electing to attend Ole Miss, where he played for one season before transferring to Ohio State.

"We did recruit Davison coming out of

high school, and that didn't work out," Rutgers coach Greg Schiano said. "The second time I talked to him (once he entered the portal), he was looking to go to a national championship contender, and he didn't feel we were that, so I understood that we weren't what he was looking for."

But in attending Ole Miss and now Ohio State, Igbinosun has been able to establish himself as a lockdown cornerback for the Buckeyes, and Desmond Igbinosun is working toward doing so for the Scarlet Knights in his junior season. Desmond Igbinosun said before the game that these were the types of moments that he and his brother dreamed about growing up.

"Did we know it would shake out like this? Not quite," he said, "but we always talked about playing in big games, so I'm excited because he's playing in big games, and I know he's excited for me because we're playing a big game."

It was a significant family affair for the rest of the Igbinosun clan as well, as the

Continued On Page 6

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1983

Ohio State defensive tackle Dave Morrill felt the best way to thin out the bad rap the Buckeye pass rush had taken this year was to lose some weight. The new and improved, slim Morrill had been leading the way for the defensive line.

"At the beginning of the summer I weighed 274, and now I'm down to 248, so I feel a lot quicker," Morrill said. "I tried to get down to 260, and then the weight just kept coming off."

Morrill was just as successful shedding offensive linemen in a 56-17 win against Indiana on Nov. 5 as he had been at shedding pounds. He finished with seven tackles, including two quarterback sacks and another tackle for loss. He had helped the Ohio State pass rush, seemingly dormant for much of the year, rise to an effective level.

35 Years Ago — 1988

Thanks to a former star, the Ohio State basketball team had a future star. The friendship between former OSU basketball star Dennis Hopson and Toledo Macomber Whitney High School senior Jimmy Jackson ultimately helped lead to Jackson's decision to attend Ohio State next fall.

Generally acknowledged as one of the finest high school players in the nation, Jackson indicated at a press conference Nov. 2 that he was verbally committing to become a Buckeye. He was scheduled to sign a national letter of intent at his high school on Nov. 9, the first day of the NCAA's early signing period.

Hopson, also a Toledo native, was helpful to OSU head coach Gary Williams in his attempt to lure Jackson to Columbus. Friendship with Hopson was a factor for Jackson's decision, along with Williams' reputation for building outstanding basketball programs.

"After getting to know Gary Williams and (assistant coach) Randy Ayers, I felt that this was the best choice for me," Jackson said. "It's a program that is building with a new coach. I felt I would fit in with their program."

30 Years Ago — 1993

Wisconsin was looking for a repeat, Ohio State was looking for revenge, and all either team got was an empty feeling that would remain unfulfilled until next year's rematch.

The Badgers had hoped to repeat last year's 20-16 upset victory over the Buckeyes and, in so doing, put themselves on track for their first Rose Bowl appearance since 1963. OSU was looking to get a little payback on Wisconsin for last year's game and continue on its way to a possible national championship.

But when Ohio State cornerback Marlon Kerner blocked a potential game-winning field goal by Wisconsin kicker Rick Schnetzky with seven seconds left in the game, it left the two teams in a 14-14 tie that had each trying to make some sense of the afternoon's proceedings.

"Ties suck because you don't know how to feel," senior quarterback Bret Powers said. "You don't want to feel good because you didn't win, and you don't want to feel bad because you didn't lose."

25 Years Ago — 1998

The sentiment and the statement were familiar, and the meaning was not lost.

"We shocked the world!" Michigan State tailback Sedrick Irvin

said as his teammates tore up pieces of sod from Ohio Stadium's south end zone moments after the Spartans did the unthinkable, upsetting heavily favored and No. 1-ranked Ohio State, 28-24 on Nov. 7.

On a day when Ohio Sen. John Glenn returned to Earth after nine days aboard the space shuttle and news trickled out that House speaker Newt Gingrich announced his resignation, the upstart Spartans – and certainly, less willingly, the Buckeyes – found themselves as legitimate front-page news. The defeat killed any hopes that Ohio State, the front-runner in both major college football polls since the preseason, would earn its first national championship in 30 years.

"Every day since last summer, every time we've broken it down, we say, 'National champs,'" OSU flanker Dee Miller said. "Today, all we could say was 'Hard work.' That hurt a lot. We've put in so much hard work, and we've worked hard year in and year out. There was just a missing element today that we didn't have, and we took an 'L.'"

20 Years Ago — 2003

Penn State kicker David Kimball had been booming kickoffs all day long, sending three of his power bombs through the uprights. So when the senior trotted onto the field at the end of the game to attempt a 60-yard field goal to win it for the Lions, it made for some tense moments on the Ohio State sideline.

"He certainly had a strong leg," said OSU coach Jim Tressel. "From that distance, any kick is difficult, but I truly thought he had a chance there. Thankfully, he got under it a slight bit."

Kimball, who had kicked field goals of 42 and 48 yards earlier in the game, was slightly short and to the right with his potential game winner, securing a 21-20 win for Ohio State at Penn State on Nov. 1.

15 Years Ago — 2008

For the Ohio State football team, the eighth day of November was far from perfect, but the chilly fall afternoon contained as many positive returns as they could have asked for.

The Buckeyes started without all cylinders firing after what was an 11 a.m. opening kickoff locally in Evanston, Ill., on Nov. 8, but eventually they reminded themselves that they had enough playmakers to beat anyone in the Big Ten. That was clear by the time the Ryan Field scoreboard showed Ohio State leading Northwestern 45-10 with zeros on the clock.

After the game, the team insisted on the importance of playing quality November football despite dealing with the reality that their dreams of a third consecutive outright Big Ten championship or even a fourth title overall had been dealt a heavy blow by Penn State two weeks earlier, the last time the Buckeyes (8-2, 5-1) played a game. Pride was on the line, whether anything else was or not.

"We still want to look up at the end of the year and see only two losses," senior captain and cornerback Malcom Jenkins said. "That's the only thing we can control. With that, we've got to win all these games."

10 Years Ago — 2013

In the days leading up to his team's Nov. 2 trip to Purdue, Jeff Heuerman described Ohio State's upcoming destination as "gray" and "not the most beautiful city in the county." And while a

mostly cloudy day may have reinforced Heuerman's forecast, the Buckeye tight end did his very best to light up West Lafayette.

As Ohio State enjoyed its second blowout in as many weeks, Heuerman stole the show, catching five passes for 116 yards and a touchdown against the Boilermakers. The 6-6, 252-pounder's career day played a prominent role in the Buckeyes' 56-0 pounding of Purdue and was the best outing for an OSU tight end since John Frank's 123-yard performance against Michigan in 1983.

"It was a good game," Heuerman said afterward. "We had a good game plan coming in, and they gave us some things that we thought they were going to give us. We just go out and practice every day and work hard. My job is easy. It trickles down."

Five Years Ago — 2018

During Ohio State's 49-26 win over Indiana on Oct. 6, head coach Urban Meyer briefly dropped to the Ohio Stadium turf as a headache flared up. The incident sparked questions about his health and the future of his career, which Meyer clarified during the week leading up to his team's 36-31 win over Nebraska on Nov. 3.

"I appreciate it, and I'm fine," Meyer said. "I want Ohio State to be successful in the worst way. I'm working extremely hard to make sure that's happening. I love Ohio State, I love our players, so the issue, I don't want people to worry about me. I want to make sure we're getting some things right around here, and that is what the effort is. That is 100 percent of what my focus is on."

Despite the issue, even with the flare-ups of the past two years, Meyer had stressed that he had no plans to leave his post as Ohio State's head coach. When asked about his future, he said, "I plan on coaching." When asked directly if he would be the head coach in Columbus in 2019, Meyer kept it even more simple than that.

"Yes."

One Year Ago — 2022

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and wide receivers coach Brian Hartline said they were confident that wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba would take the field again for the Buckeyes this season.

Smith-Njigba had appeared in just three games previous to that while dealing with a lingering hamstring injury. He started Ohio State's season opener against Notre Dame before leaving the game, and he made brief appearances against Toledo and Iowa but did not look fully healthy and did not finish either contest.

With the season beginning to wind down – Ohio State had, at most, six games remaining after starting with an 9-0 record – there was understandable concern about whether Smith-Njigba could return and stay healthy, and Day said he felt optimistic that Smith-Njigba would be back, though he added the Buckeyes could achieve their goals even if he didn't come back.

"But at the same time, we'd love to have him back, as I'm sure you can imagine," Day said Nov. 1. "But this team is working hard. And that's why we build depth because you just don't know. I'm sure that there's more adversity coming our way, so we're going to rely on our leadership."

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

brothers said that their mother – who was in attendance alongside many family members – wore a split Ohio State-Rutgers jersey to the game.

McCord Sets OSU Record For Consecutive Completions

In the midst of an up-and-down offensive performance against Rutgers, quarterback Kyle McCord etched his name into the Ohio State record books by completing his 18th consecutive pass, breaking the program record for consecutive passes.

McCord completed his first 11 passes against Rutgers, which came after completing his final seven passes against Wisconsin the week prior. He finished the win over the Scarlet Knights 19 of 26 passing for 189 yards, three touchdowns and an interception, with the record-breaking pass a 3-yard completion to Henderson early in the second quarter.

The record was previously held by C.J. Stroud, who completed 17 consecutive passes in Ohio State's 56-7 win against Michigan State in 2021. Stroud broke the record that had previously been held by both J.T. Barrett



SONNY BROCKWAY

RECORD-BREAKER — Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord (left) set the program record for consecutive completions with 18, doing so by completing his final seven passes against Wisconsin on Oct. 28 and then completing his first 11 passes against Rutgers on Nov. 4.

Buckeye News Happens On More Than Just Saturday

With the Ohio State football team in the stretch drive of its quest for a Big Ten championship and beyond, interest is high and there is no reason to wait for your next Buckeye Sports Bulletin to get the latest news. Such things as injury reports, news of the Michigan sign-stealing case and information on upcoming opponents are all available in real time at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers.

BuckeyeSports.com also offers plenty of additional content not found in your paper. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff mans BuckeyeSports.com, reporting on the breaking stories, plus posting additional features. Football recruiting is a 365-day-a-year process these days, and the BSB staff has stepped up its coverage of Ohio State's quest for prep talent.

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

We want to remind readers that the complete edition of each issue is posted at BuckeyeSports.com immediately upon completion of the paper, making the site a must for the readers having continuing mail problems. This service, while not

a substitute for your print edition, is a stopgap as your paper winds its way through the postal system and is also free to subscribers.

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and Justin Fields, who completed 16 consecutive passes during their careers with the Buckeyes.

Ohio State Plans To Redshirt Styles Jr.

A redshirt always seemed to be in line for junior cornerback Lorenzo Styles Jr., who transferred to Ohio State from Notre Dame this offseason and is also making the transition from wide receiver to cornerback, and Day confirmed that it is still the plan.

"He's got one more game to play in," Day said on Oct. 31. "The plan is for him to play in one more game and then go from there. We just felt like if we needed him and there was an emergency that we were going to put

him in the game. We were going to try to hold this year for him to learn the position, get better – play in those four games and then keep that redshirt."

Styles has taken the field this season against Indiana, Notre Dame and Penn State, with the win over the Fighting Irish the only one where he took a snap on defense. While a redshirt has appeared logical from the start for Styles, he said over the summer that was not what he envisioned for his first season at Ohio State.

"I'm working to be a starter," Styles said in July. "I'm working to be one of the best corners in the country. I think that's just my mindset, trying to attack that every single day. No matter what it really looks like right now, that's my ultimate goal."

Burke, McCord Earn Midseason Honors

A pair of Buckeyes earned midseason honors on Oct. 31, with Burke named as one of 15 semifinalists for the Jim Thorpe Award, which is given to the best defensive back in the country, and McCord being named as one of 35 players in the Davey O'Brien Award's Class of 2023, watch makes him a candidate to win the award for the nation's top quarterback.

Burke has been helping an Ohio State secondary that is limiting the opposition to just 156.7 passing yards per game, which is third in the nation. Burke and Ransom were on the preseason watch list, though only Burke retained his spot in the midseason update. Ohio State has two previous winners of the Thorpe Award: Antoine Winfield (1998) and Malcolm Jenkins (2008).

Burke is on the watch list along with Air Force's Trey Taylor, Alabama's Kool-Aid McKinstry, Auburn's Jaylin Simpson, BYU's Jakob Robinson, Colorado's Travis Hunter, Florida State's Renardo Green, Georgia's Malaki Starks, Iowa's Cooper DeJean, Iowa State's T.J. Tampa, Louisiana Tech's Willie Roberts, Missouri's Kris Abrams-Draine, Notre Dame's Benjamin Morrison, Texas' Jahdae Barron and Utah's Cole Bishop.

McCord has endured an up-and-down season as a first-year starter, but his stat line still suggests that he is one of the better throwers in the Big Ten. Through nine games, McCord had completed 167 of his 257 passes (65.0 percent) and ranked second in the conference in passing yards (2,352) and fourth in touchdowns (17) while also throwing four interceptions.

McCord is joined on the long list by a number of notable quarterbacks, such as Penn State's Drew Allar, Georgia's Carson Beck, LSU's Jayden Daniels, Texas' Quinn Ewers, Notre Dame's Sam Hartman, North Carolina's Drake May and Michigan's J.J. McCarthy, among many others. Only one Ohio State player has been named the winner of the Davey O'Brien Award, that being Troy Smith, who took home the honor in 2006.

Finalists for both awards will be named on Nov. 28, while the winners of both awards will be announced during ESPN's College Football Awards show on Dec. 8.

Former Ohio State DE Young Traded To 49ers

Former Ohio State defensive end Chase Young is on the move. The former Washington Commander was traded on Oct. 31

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to the San Francisco 49ers, where he will team up with another former Buckeye in defensive end Nick Bosa.

Young and Bosa were teammates at Ohio State for two seasons in 2017 and 2018, though they did not see the field together all that often considering Young was a true freshman in 2017 and Bosa missed the majority of Young's sophomore season with a core muscle injury.

Through seven games this season, Young totaled 15 tackles, six tackles for loss and five sacks, though injuries have largely limited his career with just 34 games to this point in his four seasons in the NFL.

Nakashima, Stearns Win Big Ten Doubles Title

The Ohio State men's tennis team took home a Big Ten title on Nov. 4 when the doubles pairing of freshman Bryce Nakashima and redshirt freshman Preston Stearns won the Big Ten doubles title in Madison, Wis.

Nakashima and Stearns blazed through their bracket, defeating Nebraska's Mert Oral and Rudolf Christiansen, 6-1, on Nov. 1 then taking down Northwestern's Felix Nerdy and Gleb Blekher by a 6-4 score the next day.

In the semifinals, Nakashima and Stearns defeated Michigan's top-seeded Nino Ehrensneider and Patorn Hanchaikul 7-4 in a tiebreaker, and in the finals, they defeated yet another team from Ann Arbor, taking down Alex Cairo and Bjorn Swenson by a 6-1 margin in the finals to win the title.

They are the eighth Ohio State duo to win the Big Ten doubles title.

Steiber Selected To National Wrestling Hall Of Fame

Former Ohio State wrestler Logan

Steiber, a four-time national champion from 2012-15 with the Buckeyes, was announced as a member of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame's 2024 class on Oct. 30. He is the first Ohio State wrestler to receive this recognition.

Admission to the National Wrestling Hall of Fame is reserved for "a wrestler who has achieved extraordinary success in national and/or international competition; a coach who has demonstrated great leadership in the profession and who has compiled an outstanding record; or a contributor whose long-term activities have substantially enhanced the development and advancement of the sport," and has been retired from active competition for at least five years.

In addition to Steiber's four national championships with the Buckeyes, he also helped lead Ohio State to a team national championship in 2015 and won the Dan Hodge Trophy that season, which is awarded to the nation's best collegiate wrestler.

During his four seasons at Ohio State, Steiber won 119 of his 122 matches. His 97.5 winning percentage is the best in school history, and he also won the world men's freestyle wrestling competition in the 61 kg weight class in 2016. He helped the United States win a team title at the world championships in 2018.

Steiber, a current assistant for Ohio State's wrestling program, will be inducted next year during the National Wrestling Hall of Fame's 47th Honors Weekend from May 31 through June 1, 2024, in Stillwater, Okla.

Patrick Engels, Braden Moles and Greg Wilson contributed to this report. For the latest Ohio State news, be sure to visit BuckeyeSports.com, available for free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

GAME, SET, MATCH — Ohio State men's tennis players Bryce Nakashima (left) and Preston Stearns (right) won the Big Ten doubles title on Nov. 4, knocking off back-to-back pairings from Michigan to secure the conference championship.

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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."

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

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The following are our Elite Wachsman, Elite-Plus, Elite, Scarlet and Brutus VIP subscribers.

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Day And Knight: Two Sides Of Legendary Coach

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Bob Knight, the Hall of Fame coach, three-time national champion at Indiana and former Ohio State basketball player who was well known for his deep basketball knowledge and his outbursts on and off the court, passed away on Nov. 1 at age 83 after a battle with dementia.

"It is with heavy hearts that we share that Coach Bob Knight passed away at his home in Bloomington surrounded by his family," a statement from his family read. "We are grateful for all the thoughts and prayers, and appreciate the continued respect for our privacy as Coach requested a private family gathering, which is being honored."

The legacy Knight leaves behind is a complicated one given his excellence as a coach and the way he changed the game of basketball – not to mention Knight being synonymous with Indiana basketball, and vice versa – juxtaposed with his conduct on and off the court that drew harsh criticism from media and fans alike from across the country.

Dick Furry, a college teammate of Knight's at Ohio State who remained a friend throughout his life, thinks while that is true, Knight would have been much more popular nationwide if he had toned down his explosive nature. And it means more coming from Furry, who knew another side of Knight that the public didn't get to see.

"One of my opinions is that if Bob would have been 10 percent less intense, everybody in the world would have loved him," Furry told BSB. "He just had that habit and characteristic of being a very intense person, and it got him in trouble sometimes."

There were signs of that personality in college. Knight played at Ohio State from 1960-62, appearing as a reserve forward during that span while averaging 3.8 points and 2.1 rebounds per game, appearing in 74 contests. Furry said Knight used to be vocal

if he disagreed with something head coach Fred Taylor was doing with the team, but it never got to the point where he threw what Furry described as a temper tantrum.

Knight and Furry were both on the national championship-winning team at Ohio State in 1960, still the only one the Buckeyes have won in their long history. Knight was a sophomore that year along with classmates John Havlicek, Jerry Lucas and Mel Nowell, who would all go on to the NBA, as well as seniors Furry and Joe Roberts.

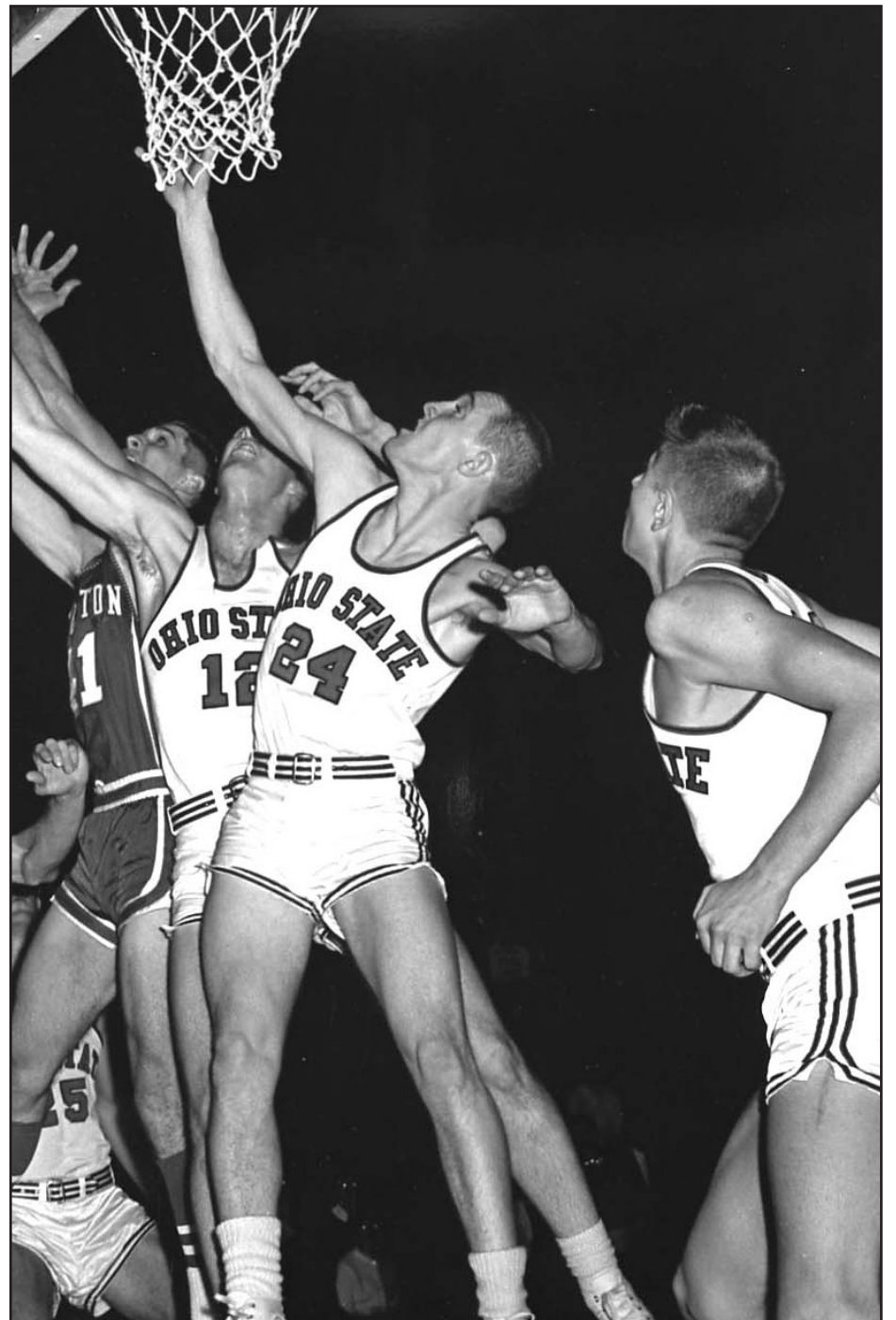
According to Furry, even as a player, Knight was a student of the game and always asking questions, but Ohio State basketball historian Lee Caryer said despite him loving the game of basketball, Knight almost left it when he was in college.

Caryer said the editor of The Columbus Dispatch at the time traveled with the team, and Knight came to him one night asking for money to get a plane ticket out of Champaign, Ill., because he wasn't playing as much as he believed he should have been.

"Knight said, 'I'm getting the hell out of here. I'm leaving.'" Caryer recalled. "So, (the editor) said, 'You're going to buy a plane ticket. Is that right?'" and Knight said, "Yeah, that's what I have in mind." He said, "Bob, if you think about it, there aren't too many airlines that fly from Champaign-Urbana to Orrville, Ohio."

Knight ended up staying with the team and finishing his college career with the Buckeyes, but his playing time never got better with the likes of Havlicek, Lucas and Nowell leading the roster ahead of him. Caryer added that while Knight was a good offensive player, he didn't care much about defense when he was a player, which would be surprising to anyone who paid attention to his eventual career in coaching.

"He was a very good shooter," Caryer said. "When I was a kid and a fan, you'd watch Bobby Knight play, and then you go out to the back yard and you play horse. If you called a Bobby Knight jump shot, that meant a line-drive jump shot which had zero



FILE PHOTO

CHAMPION — Legendary basketball coach Bob Knight (24), who died at 83 on Nov. 1, got his start at Ohio State, where he was a forward from 1959-62 and was a member of the program's only national championship team in 1960.

margin for error. And if it went in, it was beautiful, but if it was just a little bit off, it didn't have a chance."

Despite a lack of significant playing time, Knight was still able to take plenty away from his time at Ohio State, and specifically from Taylor, whom both Caryer and Furry believe he took much of his coaching philosophy from.

"Knight had always said, 'If you liked the way I coach defense, I learned everything from Fred Taylor,'" Caryer said. "Now, Ohio State did not have a passing-game offense because they focused on Jerry Lucas. Knight didn't learn that from Fred, but he did learn the defensive concepts."

Taylor also helped Knight find his first assistant coaching job at Cuyahoga Falls High School after his college career ended and then when he went on to Army as an assistant coach. Knight wound up as the head coach at Army at just 24 years old, but

the lack of experience didn't show as he won 102 games over the next six seasons.

Knight's stint at West Point set the stage for one of college basketball's greatest runs ever. He coached at Indiana for the next 29 seasons, winning 73.5 percent of his games (662-239) and taking the Hoosiers to 24 NCAA Tournaments, including national championships in 1976, 1981 and 1987. Knight's first title team was particularly impressive, finishing with a perfect 32-0 record and remaining the most recent team to win a national championship during an undefeated season.

Of course, there was more to his days in Bloomington than his success. Rick Notter, who covered the later stages of Knight's tenure at Indiana from the 1990s through his firing in 2000 for Inside Indiana, told BSB how difficult it could be to deal with Knight as a reporter.

"I was always a little intimidated by him



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FILE PHOTO

HOOSIER ICON — In 29 seasons at Indiana, head coach Bob Knight led the Hoosiers to three national championships, 24 appearances in the NCAA Tournament and a 662-239 record during his tenure.

just because of his basketball knowledge, but you never knew what he was going to say or how he was going to react or how he might treat you as a member of the press,” Notter said. “It could be incredibly cordial, or he could just jump your ass for asking a stupid question. And I’ve had both of those happen in my career covering him.”

Notter saw both sides of Knight, but the intimidation was more common, especially when his teams weren’t playing to the level he expected them to. He remembered that Knight would get angry because he believed his words would be taken out of context, so Notter started printing every single word he said during press conferences in his publication.

“We decided to just print every word he said, word for word, verbatim,” Notter said. “We called it ‘Knight Verbatim.’ That way, he could never be taken out of context, never be misquoted. The fans loved it because they wanted to hear that raw Bob Knight, cuss words and all that he would use at news conferences.”

Knight is also known for some of his more infamous moments, like throwing a chair during a game against Purdue in 1985 that earned him an early trip back to the locker room.

“I get up, and I’m up and down a lot, and one time I’m standing up and I looked across the floor and (hear) ‘Coach Knight?’ And here’s a little old lady across the floor that reminded me of my grandmother,” he joked on “The Late Show with David Letterman” in 1987. “I thought (it was sweet), particularly to take time during the course of a

tough game, so I said, ‘Did you want something?’ And she said, ‘If you’re not going to sit down any more today than you have so far, could I have your chair?’ ”

Knights’ other notable incidents included appearing to headbutt a Hoosier he took out of a game who wasn’t playing well in 1994 and choking a player during practice in 2000, the latter incident eventually leading to his firing by Indiana.

“Those things where he just couldn’t control his temper because of his strive for perfection and respect from people were his downfall,” Notter said. “I remember when I started covering him. There were people saying eventually he was going to go out like Woody Hayes. He was going to punch somebody and lose his job.”

And that wasn’t far off from how he left Indiana, leaving behind a tainted legacy with the Hoosiers. But that wasn’t the only side of Knight. Notter also remembers what a good person he could be when he wasn’t on the basketball court.

“Seeing him at times interact with fans and interact with certain players like Landon Turner, who was hurt in a in a car accident which ruined his basketball career, and he came back in a wheelchair. Just seeing the way that Knight did have a big heart, the way he treated Landon. Reaching out to kids in hospitals, making sure that he helped raise money for the library. He had a very good side that people didn’t always see.”

Though Knight is much more well-known for his antics while he was coaching, there was a good side to him, and that much

is obvious given the outpouring of support since his passing. But with fans of Indiana, Knight – who had reconciled with the university in recent years, attending a game at Assembly Hall in 2020 – will always be known as an all-time great coach.

“They adore him still to this day,” Notter said. “The entire community of Bloomington, every Indiana fan is in mourning today. They struggled sometimes with things that he did. They overlooked that as often as they could because of how good the basketball teams were and the national championships. There are already calls for Indiana to have a statue of Bob Knight outside of Assembly Hall. That’s how much fans respect him and want him to be honored.”

He believes the memory of Knight will begin to shift as more time passes and as more people tell the good stories they have of him rather than just the outbursts.

Furry remained close with Knight after they played together because his son went to Indiana. Even after Knight went to coach at Texas Tech, where he remained for seven seasons before retiring in 2008, Furry and Knight continued to play golf together, which Furry said the coach also had a temper about because he wanted everything to be perfect. But it was always friendly between the two.

“He was just a kind person,” Furry said. “He was a hard-nosed person and was really a dear friend. We just developed a good relationship and kept it the whole time. I consider him, as much as the rest of the team, a very dear friend.”

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Howard Stood Tall Among His Contemporaries

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

He was known as the “Gentle Giant,” and that he was, except for those times he was around the rim in basketball or for the way he treated a baseball.

Columbus native and Ohio State two-sport star Frank Howard died Oct. 30 at a hospital in Aldie, Va., at 87. The cause was complications from a stroke, daughter Catherine Braun said.

Howard, an All-America basketball player for the Buckeyes and World Series winner with the Los Angeles Dodgers, was 6-7 with a playing weight listed between 250 and 290 pounds during various points of his career.

“He just had all the physical characteristics,” longtime friend Gene Millard told Buckeye Sports Bulletin a day after the passing of his former OSU basketball teammate. “Whatever he set his mind to, he could do.”

Howard was a three-year letter winner at Ohio State from 1956-58. He had a career average of 17.4 points, and his 13.9 rebounds per game are second best in program history behind Jerry Lucas’ 17.2 rebounds per contest from 1960-62. Howard still holds the school record with 32 rebounds against BYU on Dec. 29, 1956. Howard was a first-team All-American in 1957 when he averaged 20.1 points and 15.3 rebounds.

“There was some talk of him playing for the (Cleveland) Browns – tight end, defensive end,” said Millard, captain of the 1957-58 team. “He could do whatever he wanted to. Nobody wanted to be around him under the basket. He just cleaned it up.

“He was quick enough for a big man. He just wouldn’t give up. People around him got knocked around pretty good. They didn’t want anything to do with him.”

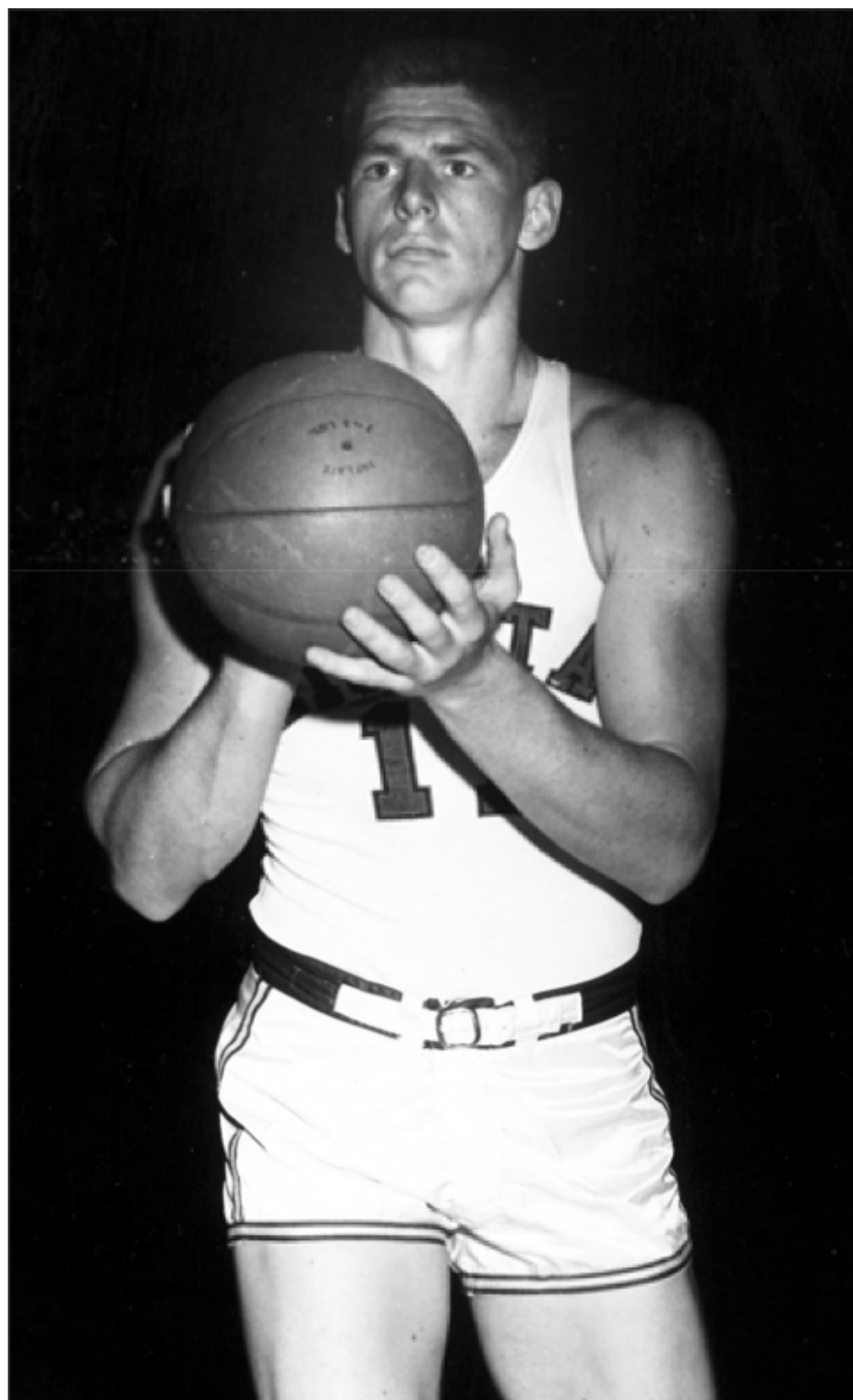
That was the competitive side of Howard coming out, but that was not a true picture of the man, said Dick Bosman, a teammate of Howard’s for more than six years with the Washington Senators and Texas Rangers.

“I don’t think I saw him angry more than two or three times,” he told The Associated Press. “I mean, you didn’t want that big guy to be angry anyway, but that’s just the way that he felt that he should carry himself.

“Playing with Frank Howard was one of the best experiences I had, and the reason I say that is because he taught us how to be big-leaguers. He taught us how to carry ourselves when we were bad – and we were bad. And when we did win, he taught us how to carry ourselves when we won a few ballgames here and there. He was that example in word and deed all the time. ... He was the ultimate teammate, always. Next to my dad, he’s the greatest guy I know.”

Millard echoed those sentiments.

“He was a good team man,” he said. “He would do anything to help the team win. He was one of the best rebounders around. You may not have known this, but when Frank was a junior, that’s when I was a senior, the NBA selected five play-



FILE PHOTO

TWO-SPORT STAR — Frank Howard, an All-American basketball player at Ohio State (as well as baseball player) and eventual World Series champion with the Los Angeles Dodgers, died on Oct. 30 at the age of 87.

ers that had the best chances to make it in the pros. He was one of the five.”

Howard was drafted by the Philadelphia Warriors in the third round (21st overall) of the 1958 draft. Despite his accomplishments on the hardwood, did Millard feel that Howard’s calling was always going to be baseball?

“Money was his calling,” Millard said with a laugh.

But in reality, that was true in some sense. Howard was the third of six children of John and Erma Howard. His father was a machinist for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway and played semipro baseball. Howard grew up dirt poor on the south side of Columbus and helped South High School to the final of the 1954 Class

A basketball championship game.

At Ohio State, he led the Buckeyes with 27 RBI and five homers in 1956. The following season, he led them in batting average (.366), hits (26), RBI (13), doubles (six) and stolen bases (six). He was inducted into the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame in 1982.

He signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1958 for a \$100,000 bonus (about \$1.2 million today) – plus an extra \$8,000 to buy his parents a house.

“When he got his big bonus, he took care of the family,” Millard said. “He was just a good person.”

“I was more than just a baseball player, but I always loved baseball more,” Howard told BallNine.com in 2021. “I just

loved the game of baseball, and I figured if I was going to try a sport professionally, it was going to be baseball. In those days we played all the sports, but baseball was my favorite game. I followed it as a kid growing up. I followed our local team, the Columbus Redbirds, the Triple-A team for the Cardinals. I didn’t dwell much on it (playing basketball) in my lifetime.”

He watched those games at Redbird Stadium, which in later years in a renovated state was Cooper Stadium, where he spent time for the Triple-A Columbus Clippers as interim manager in 2002 and several other seasons as a coach. Clippers president and general manager Ken Schnacke gave the following statement to BSB:

“The Columbus Clippers organization is saddened to learn of the passing of Frank Howard. He was affectionately known as ‘The Gentle Giant,’ and at 6’7” he was every bit of that. He was the ultimate professional; and while he was a great player, he was an even better man. He was a steady influence for our players when he managed for us back in our Yankees days. Our heartfelt wishes go out to his family.”

Growing Legend

Howard worked his way through the minor leagues, and in 1960 he won the National League Rookie of the Year Award when he hit .268 with 23 home runs and 77 RBI in 117 games.

One of his homers went over the left-field wall at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh and was found near a parked car about 560 feet from home plate. It wouldn’t be the last prodigious blast, as he is one of four men to hit a home run over the roof in left field at Tiger Stadium, joining Cecil Fielder, Harmon Killebrew and Mark McGwire.

In Game 3 of the 1963 World Series against the Yankees, he hit what was called “the longest double in the 41-year history of Yankee Stadium” when he hit a ball so hard off a speaker in left center, 457 feet away, that it bounced back toward the infield. In the fourth game, he hit a 450-foot homer to help the Dodgers to a 2-1 victory and a series sweep.

He was traded to the Senators in 1965, and in a six-game stretch in 1968 from May 12-18, he hit 10 homers and drove in 17 runs.

“No player can electrify a ballpark as much, simply by taking his bat to the plate and taking up a stance that tells the pitcher he is ready,” Washington Post sports columnist Shirley Povich wrote in 1969.

On Sept. 30, 1971, the “Capital Punisher,” as he was known, hit a home run in the sixth inning, the last for the franchise before it moved to Arlington, Texas, for the 1972 season.

He led the American League in homers in 1968 and 1970 with 44 each season, and in between he smacked a career-high 48 in 1969. During that three-year period, he hit more homers than anyone in the majors (136) while averaging .284, 45 homers, 114 RBI and 96 walks.

The last figure was important because Howard, who finished his career with a

IN MEMORIAM

.273 average, 382 homers and 1,119 RBI in 1,895 games, also struck out 1,460 times.

Hall of Famer Ted Williams, one of the best hitters in history, took over as manager in 1969 and set about making Howard more selective at the plate. A year later, Howard led the AL with 132 walks. Still, Howard related how Williams could at times be frustrated by his swinging for the fences.

"Somebody was explaining to a visitor that some of the outfield seats in RFK Stadium had been painted white to mark where some of my long home runs had landed," Howard told The New York Times in 1981. "Ted turned to the guy and said, 'All the green seats are for the times he struck out.'"

Yet even Williams was in awe of Howard's power.

"That son-of-a-gun is the biggest and strongest hitter who ever played this game, and that includes Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jimmie Foxx, Hank Greenberg – all of them," Williams said in 1969. "Nobody ever hit the ball harder and further, nobody."

Howard retired after playing for the Detroit Tigers in 1973 but continued in baseball as a coach with the Yankees, New York Mets, Tampa Bay Rays and other teams. He had a stint as the San Diego Padres manager during the strike-shortened 1981 season and as interim manager for the Mets in 1983.

In a statement after his passing, the Mets said, "Frank Howard was one of the most intimidating figures to ever wear a Mets uniform. He stood 6-7 and weighed about 270. Despite his size, Howard was known to all as 'The Gentle Giant.' Frank had two tenures as a coach with us and served as interim manager in 1983. He was known throughout the organization as one of the most kind and generous individuals."

Howard was most associated with the Senators, a woebegone expansion franchise in 1961 after the original Senators relocated to Minneapolis to become the Minnesota Twins.

He was the main and sometimes only star attraction for the Senators before the move to Arlington, Texas, and it was ironic that the "new" Senators/Rangers franchise won their first World Series just two days after his death. Baseball returned to D.C. in 2005 when the Montreal Expos relocated, and the Washington Nationals organization made sure to honor the past.

In 2009, the Nationals erected three statues at their ballpark, representing a timeline of baseball in Washington: Howard, Hall of Fame pitcher Walter Johnson

and Josh Gibson, the star catcher of the Homestead Grays of the Negro leagues, who played their home games in both Pittsburgh and Washington. Howard was inducted into the Nationals' ring of honor in 2016.

"Growing up a baseball fan in Washington, D.C., Frank Howard was my hero," Nationals owner Mark Lerner said in a statement upon Howard's passing. "The towering home runs he hit into the stands at RFK Stadium gave him the nickname 'Capital Punisher,' but I'll always remember him as a kind and gentle man. The entire Lerner family would like to offer our thoughts and condolences to Frank's family during this difficult time. The world of baseball has truly lost a giant."

A gentle one at that.

Epilogue

He was "Cousin Frank" to me. My father, David, was Frank's cousin. Dad would tell stories of babysitting Frank and rocking him to sleep, which was amusing because Frank weighed 13 pounds at birth and was never a small child.

Our family would occasionally visit Aunt Erma's house for parties, but I first met Frank when I was 14 in the summer of 1973 on our vacation to Michigan. Visiting Mackinac Island was great – and touring the Stroh brewery in Detroit was even better – but the lasting memory was the night of Aug. 6.

The Tigers were playing the Yankees with first place on the line on "ABC Monday Night Baseball" before a packed house of 51,001 at Tiger Stadium. Detroit trailed 4-2 in the bottom of the ninth with one on and two outs when Frank entered as a pinch hitter. Fooled by a curve ball from Sparky Lyle, he one-handed a home run into the left-field seats to send us and the rest of the fans into a frenzy. The Tigers would win it in the 10th.

Over the years, I would see Frank at various ballparks, including the Yankees' spring training in the mid-2000s, but I had not seen him in years.

About two months ago, I found a six-minute YouTube video of his playing career so I saved it. My brother, Eric, was in town the week of Oct. 23, and for some reason on Oct. 26 I remembered the video and showed it to him. It made me wonder how Frank was doing, maybe because the 10th anniversary of my dad's passing was on Oct. 28, which turned out to be two days prior to Frank's.

I'm glad I got to share that memory with Eric just as "Cousin Frank" provided a thrill of a lifetime for the Merz family 50 years ago.



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Passing Game Not Up To OSU's Standard

Continued From Page 1

gave the Knights the ball on downs and the next on a midfield interception thrown by McCord.

The only glimmer of hope for the Buckeyes in that first half was a touchdown on the second drive of the game – a 14-yarder from McCord to tight end Gee Scott Jr., who started in place of Cade Stover – as well as a stout defense that limited the Scarlet Knights to three field goals in as many trips inside Ohio State's 4-yard line.

"We played against a good defense," Day said. "It was good to get right down the field and get that touchdown to Gee early on, that was good. Then a couple tough drives in there, and all it takes is you're off a little bit, then you're punting. The run game takes time. You have to wear teams down with the run game, but we'll look at the film and keep swinging."

Ohio State was largely able to establish that run throughout the afternoon, but the struggles came in trying to get the passing game moving. McCord finished with a positive outing on paper, completing 19 of 26 passes for 189 yards, three touchdowns and the interception, though it came at the expense of explosive plays for the offense. He completed his first 11 passes – which, combined with completing all seven passes in the second half against Wisconsin, set the Ohio State record with 18 consecutive

completions – though just five went beyond 5 yards, with several checkdowns to Henderson in the early stages of the contest.

"I found some good completions early on and got in a rhythm," McCord said. "Although a lot of the 11 passes weren't down-the-field shots, I think they kept us on schedule. I think the biggest thing is just continuing to replicate that regardless of if they're playing coverage or allowing us to take shots down the field, just continuing that success early on."

To his credit, McCord was largely taking what was given to him by Rutgers' defense – one which came into the game with the nation's second-ranked passing defense at 156.2 yards per game – and he was not helped by a series of drops from his receivers, including a drop by Julian Fleming on his only target of the game and a drop by Scott on third-and-5 midway through the second quarter that led to Mirco's ill-fated fake.

"We're not used to seeing that," Day said. "We have great receivers and have for the last few years. Throw it better, catch it better is what we say. We can always look at each other and figure out a way to get that better. There were a couple there where if we connect on those, certainly it keeps those drives moving and maybe it's a different situation. We'll keep working at it and get better."

But the Buckeyes – at least on offense



SONNY BROCKWAY

STEPPING UP – Tight end Gee Scott Jr. (88) was pivotal in Ohio State's 35-16 win at Rutgers on Nov. 4, getting the Buckeyes on the board early with a 14-yard touchdown.

– were largely unable to stay out of their own way, with McCord's interception late in the second quarter allowing the Scarlet Knights to succeed in the two-minute drill, driving 44 yards in nine plays and kicking a field goal to enter the locker room with the lead. It was the first time Ohio State had entered the half with a deficit this season, but the situation of a slow start is one that has been all too familiar. For better or worse, it was not something that Harrison was concerned about.

"We're not worried," he said. "We've

been a second-half team all year, really. It's kind of unfortunate that we haven't been able to get off to the hot start we'd like to have."

Harrison was wise not to worry, as the defense continued to stay the course, allowing just a single scoring drive in the second half while cornerback Jordan Hancock returned an interception 93 yards for a touchdown resulting in a 14-9 lead, one that Ohio State would not give up, much to the disappointment of the 53,703 in attendance at SHI Stadium.

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SONNY BROCKWAY

THERE HE GOES — Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. (18) had his usual collection of impressive catches in the 35-16 win at Rutgers on Nov. 4, including two touchdown receptions.

sides to take that part away, so we kind of recognized that at halftime and realized we've got to be patient enough to run the ball down the field. You'd have to ask Greg (Schiano), but their philosophy was probably, 'Well, they're going to have to be patient enough to run the ball down the field and take the receivers out of the game,' which is sort of what happened.

"But we also had to check the ball down and take some of that underneath stuff that Kyle ended up doing in the second half. I thought we could have recognized that and done a better job early on, but we did in the second half."

Those final two quarters were a stark contrast to the first two. Ohio State was outgained by Rutgers 170-128 in the first half but flipped the script in the second, holding a 200-191 advantage in yards, with 125 of those yards by the Scarlet Knights coming on drives where the Buckeyes forced a turnover, with an interception and two turnovers on downs.

In addition to Harrison's two fourth-quarter touchdowns, Henderson helped to close things out with seven carries for 44 yards in the final frame as well as his 65-yard catch-and-run to finish with 208 all-purpose yards on 27 touches.

"It's another 200-yard all-purpose game for him today, so that's huge when you add a piece like that back to the offense," Harrison said. "That's 200 yards that we haven't been accounting for having him out, so it's good to have him back."

Ohio State has the playmakers to close these types of games out, but the team's

consistent role as a second-half squad is not one that Day would prefer to maintain. He does appreciate, however, the way his team has not flinched in the face of adversity, which has been present in nearly every game on the schedule this season.

"I feel like this team finds a way," he said. "They don't panic, they keep swinging, they keep fighting. We've been at halftime in these games and we said we wanted to play better in the second half this year. That was a huge part of our offseason, and you're seeing that."

"Again, I keep saying we could play better in the first half so we don't have to be in these situations, but the No. 1 goal is to win games, and we're going to continue to do that. We have to take care of the ball better on offense."

Although it's a point that's repeated every week, it remains true: The slow starts by Ohio State can be managed against the likes of Indiana and Rutgers, but when it comes to games later in the season — namely a matchup in Ann Arbor on Nov. 25 — the Buckeyes know they will have to be better across the board.

"It's obviously never easy to win, especially not on the road in the Big Ten," Scott said. "The goal is to go back to the drawing board no matter what happens, and we just continue to get better and better. Week by week, win or lose, we're coming back to the drawing board to get better. We're glad to be 9-0, but we're going to continue to get better as the year goes."

That breathing room opened up opportunities for the offense, which Harrison said was a case of the team simply executing better over the final two quarters.

"The players need to execute better," he said. "A play here or there is the difference between four points. Our offense just needs to execute better."

Day said it came down to some adjustments Ohio State was able to make in the

locker room. Rutgers had largely taken away the downfield throw through the first half, and Day and offensive coordinator Brian Hartline leaned into shorter passes and a greater reliance on Henderson and the rushing attack.

"When you look at the overall consistency, early on, they were playing us in a two-high shell," Day said. "They dropped the safeties real deep and put clouds on both

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Defense Steps Up To Secure Win Against Rutgers

Another week and another standout performance for Ohio State's defense as the offense struggled to get going. It has become a consistent theme this season of the defense winning games for the Buckeyes, and even though the most recent outing might have been made a little more challenging for the unit, the defense still got the job done, giving up just a touchdown and three short field goals in a 35-16 win at Rutgers on Nov. 4.

GAME NOTEBOOK Greg Wilson

"I'll definitely take the 16 points and the way we forced field goals," defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said. "It was a situational game against their offense. We really had to win the situations."

Ohio State forced three straight three-and-outs by Rutgers to begin the game, showing that it had come to play early, and allowed just 21 yards in the first quarter. Rutgers quarterback Gavin Wimsatt, meanwhile, didn't complete a single pass until late in the second quarter.

He finished the game 10 of 25 passing for 129 yards, a touchdown and an interception. He also added 49 yards with his legs on 13 attempts, a 3.8 yards per rush average. Knowles knew it was going to be tough to defend the rushing attack – which also had Kyle Monangai go for 159 yards on 24 carries – but he said they prepared for it.

"It was just the kind of philosophy we had going into this game, and the running quarterback is tough to defend," he said. "We knew they might pick up some yards, but we were going to have to win those situations."

But the red-zone stops were the biggest key to the defensive performance, especially in the second quarter when the Scarlet

Knights – who went up 9-7 after field goals of 22, 21 and 20 yards – could have put a lot more points on the board had they converted in Ohio State territory. Knowles said they were able to make those stops because everyone on the field has a strong understanding of his system at this point.

"They understand the system," he said. "They understand when their number is going to be called, they understand how to make checks and things that happen quickly in the red zone. They're just feeling the system."

Rutgers' scoring output was the second most any team has scored on the Buckeyes this season, with Maryland offering the biggest test for the defense in Ohio State's 37-17 win on Oct. 7, but it was still an impressive performance because of the field position the Buckeye defense was often backed into to start multiple drives.

On back-to-back drives in the second quarter, Rutgers started in Ohio State territory due to a failed fake punt and an interception thrown by quarterback Kyle McCord. On both of those drives, the defense bent but didn't break, allowing 73 yards over those possessions but holding the Scarlet Knights to just a pair of field goals.

"The defense has shown that week after week," head coach Ryan Day said. "They're going to make you work the entire field, and they're hanging in there, so we're going to have to continue to do that. But we don't want to be putting them in those situations too many times."

Sixth-year safety Josh Proctor, who impressed with a pass breakup and half a tackle for loss before he was taken out in the third quarter following an injury after a collision, said going into the season the defense was ready to be counted on to win games.

"We came into spring ball with that mindset that we as a defense are going to step up this year," he said. "That's what we wanted to show the world."

Ohio State's defense finished with four pass breakups, four tackles for loss and a



SONNY BROCKWAY

RUN IT BACK – Ohio State cornerback Jordan Hancock (7) turned the tide in the 35-16 win over Rutgers on Nov. 4, intercepting a pass and returning it 93 yards for a score.

sack, as well as a 93-yard interception returned for a touchdown by cornerback Jordan Hancock.

Secondary Depth Significant In Win

Coming into the game, Ohio State knew it would be without safety Lathan Ransom and cornerback Denzel Burke, who are both dealing with injuries. Sonny Styles moved to strong safety to make the start, giving

Hancock the start at nickel and freshman Jermaine Mathews Jr. at cornerback in Burke's place.

But all those shuffling pieces were not a big deal for the Buckeyes, who turned in a solid performance in the defensive backfield.

Wimsatt struggled to throw the ball early on even to open receivers, making things easy for Ohio State, though the Buckeyes' coverage of opposing receivers remained tight, including when freshman Malik Hartford had to come in for Proctor after he was hurt in the third quarter.

"We were playing a couple true freshmen, playing Sonny (Styles) deep," Knowles said. "These guys are good players. They're going to be great players. You show your mettle early in your career when you can step up for the team in a big game. We're confident in them, but they have to get out there and win in a tough situation."

The play that forced Proctor out of the game was Hancock's interception, which occurred on the first drive of the third quarter. Rutgers had worked down to Ohio State's 20-yard line, largely due to help from penalties on the secondary and trouble containing Monangai. The secondary made up for the mishaps, though, when a pass intended for Monangai was deflected off Proctor and into the hands of Hancock, who took it 93 yards for a touchdown and gave the Buckeyes a 14-9 lead.

"That's all the props to Josh Proctor," Hancock said. "He's a great player. He's been through this program for so many years. I'm just so proud of him. I'm thankful for him. I just had to find a way, but I'm thankful to my

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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Ohio State's defense may not have put forth its most spotless performance of the season against Rutgers, but the defenders did buckle down when the team needed them most. Jim Knowles' unit embraced their "bend but don't break" attitude throughout the game, preventing the Scarlet Knights from breaking the pylon almost every time they neared the end zone. Rutgers, although mostly inefficient on offense, did embark on a number of promising drives, getting inside Ohio State's 20 on six different occasions throughout the game.

The Buckeyes' red-zone dominance on defense shone the brightest in the second quarter, where they succeeded on three straight goal-line stands to keep the Scarlet Knights out of the end zone. Thanks to a Sonny Styles tackle on third-and-6, a Josh Proctor stop on third-and-3 and a Gavin Wimsatt overthrow on second-and-2, Rutgers stalled their promising drives on the Buckeyes' 4-, 3-, and 2-yard lines, respectively, a series of missed opportunities for the Scarlet Knights that led to a trio of Jai Patel field goals. This allowed Rutgers to take a 9-7 lead at the half, but the lead certainly could have been much larger if the Buckeyes hadn't stood tall.

Knowles' unit finished off this solid performance in the second half with another pair of red-zone stops. The first was a pivotal third-quarter interception at Ohio State's 7-yard line – more on that later – and the second another goal-line stop, this time with the Buckeyes holding onto a 28-16 lead in the fourth quarter. Facing first-and-goal from the 9-yard line, Rutgers was stopped on four consecutive plays, capped by a huge fourth-down sack by Ty Hamilton at the 6-yard line that sealed the game for Ohio State. The defense may not have been as dominant, but these goal-line stops were indicative of the toughness that entire unit has shown all season.

What Didn't Work

This seems to be a common occurrence in Game Analysis every week, but the Buckeyes continue to have some major flaws on offense, with most of the problems occurring in the beginning of games. Kyle McCord and his unit did bounce back with some positive drives in the second half, but the first-half performance was a totally different story.

Much like previous games against Penn State and Wisconsin, the Buckeyes were largely ineffective in the first half against Rutgers,

recording 24 yards or less on five of their six drives before halftime. McCord dinked-and-dunked his way to an impressive 11-of-11 start passing, but the Buckeyes had only one touchdown to show for it, that being a 14-yard toss to Gee Scott Jr. on the second drive of the game. Other than that, McCord and the offense looked disjointed for most of the half. He targeted Marvin Harrison Jr. only four times during that stretch, with one of them being a costly interception where he tried to fit the ball in a tight window and underthrew the standout wideout, allowing Mohamed Toure to pick it off and return it to the Buckeyes' 46-yard line and Rutgers to take a 9-7 lead a few plays later.

McCord's teammates did not help him either, with both Scott and Julian Fleming dropping key passes that could have gone for big gains. Ohio State's first-half struggles have become a recurring problem for this offense this season, and while it may not have hindered the Buckeyes against the Scarlet Knights, it could very well come back to bite them on Nov. 25.

Play Of The Game

The Buckeyes made multiple game-changing plays at Rutgers' SHI Stadium, but there was no play that was larger than Jordan Hancock's 93-yard pick-six in the third quarter. There's no question that head coach Greg Schiano and his stingy Scarlet Knights had Ohio State on the ropes during their first drive of the second half. Wimsatt and the offense were embarking on one of their best drives of the game so far, a positive series of plays that took the Scarlet Knights all the way to the Buckeyes' 20-yard line. With the Scarlet Knights threatening and already holding a 9-7 lead, Ohio State needed someone to make a play, and that play came from the duo of Proctor and Hancock.

On second-and-7, Wimsatt faked a quarterback run and dropped back to deliver a pass down the middle to running back Kyle Monangai. That ball was overthrown, allowing Proctor to deliver a bruising hit that sent the ball flying into the air and into the hands of Hancock. The nickel corner then streaked toward the Buckeyes' sideline and ran all the way to the end zone for the 93-yard score, a game-altering play that gave Ohio State the 14-9 lead and the program its sixth-longest interception return in its history.

— Patrick Engels

lead blockers out there blocking their tails off."

Proctor's hit left him on the ground, where he would be looked at by the training staff for a few minutes before being removed for the rest of the game, though Proctor said after the fact that he felt like he could have played.

Knowles said that play changed the game not only for the defense, but for the entire team that was having trouble scoring on the other side of the ball since the first quarter.

"We talk about winning the game on defense and being there working when needed and were counted on," he said. "Those kinds of plays, they make a huge difference in the flow of the game."

It was yet another stop the Buckeyes made deep into their own territory, keeping a Rutgers offense that was driving down the field off the board again. The defense would do it one more time in the fourth quarter with a fourth-and-6 sack of Wimsatt with 8:14 left in the game.

Knowles didn't like that the defense had gotten itself into those situations of requiring a stop near the goal line, but he was happy to get out of them.

"We have a lot of confidence," he said.

"We wouldn't like to let (the offense) down. The guys know what to do. We work on it in practice. They understand the system, and it showed up."

Day did not offer an update on Burke or Ransom after the game, and while he also did not add anything on Proctor's status, the fact that Proctor took part in postgame media interviews indicates he will likely be good to go moving forward.

Scott Fills In For Injured Stover

Tight end Cade Stover was listed as active going into the game at SHI Stadium, but he did not take the field for the Buckeyes, missing his first game of the season with an undisclosed injury, though Day said Stover could have played if the team needed him.

"He was available and could have played, but we felt like it wasn't the right thing to do for him," Day said. "You talk about one of the tougher guys we've been around at Ohio State in my time here. He's going to say he can go, and it was a decision made to hold him back. We're looking forward to getting him back next week (against Michigan State)."

Backup Gee Scott Jr. stepped up in his

spot and impressed early on with a pair of first-quarter receptions, including one that would go for the Buckeyes' only score in the first half, a heavily contested 14-yard touchdown on a perfect pass from McCord. The ball was placed on Scott's back shoulder in the corner of the end zone with linebacker Mohamed Toure all over him, and he was able to keep control of the ball while he was brought to the ground.

Day was happy with how Scott and Patrick Gurd, a walk-on who saw time with the offense against the Scarlet Knights, stepped up when their number was called.

"We didn't have Cade today, but I have to give Gee Scott and Pat Gurd some credit for stepping in," he said. "Cade has shouldered a lot of snaps in the last couple of years, so for those guys to step up and play well – they played well, at least it seemed like it – it was good."

Scott finished with three catches for 24 yards and the touchdown on four targets after bringing in two catches for 18 yards the week before against Wisconsin. He said he's always ready to step in whenever the Buckeyes need him.

"No matter where you are on the depth chart, you prepare every single week like you're the starter," he said. "That's the mind-

set you've got to have, and if for any reason anybody ever goes down, it's the next man up. You've got to be ready to go. It's not necessarily whether (Stover) was good to go or not. I think on a week-to-week basis, so you always prepare like you're ready to go."

Schiano Up To His Old Tricks

Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano is well known for his trick plays, which had Ohio State fans holding their breath waiting for the shoe to drop. It came in the second quarter with the Scarlet Knights facing fourth-and-1 from their own 43-yard line.

Wimsatt took the snap on what looked to be a quarterback sneak with Monangai behind him looking ready to push, but instead, Wimsatt put the football through his legs, handing it off to Monangai who ran right for 45 yards, a rush that nearly turned into a touchdown before cornerback Davison Igbinosun made the tackle, and Rutgers was later held to a field goal.

"That was a great play," Knowles said. "It was a nice trick play."

It certainly had the Buckeyes fooled. They understandably had the box stacked in a short-yardage situation and didn't think twice about diving at Wimsatt when it looked like he was attempting to push for the first down on his own.

The Buckeyes seemed to attempt a trick play of their own the very next drive after they were unable to convert a first down. Following a drop by Scott on third down, the punt team came out facing fourth-and-5 from the Ohio State 30-yard line. Punter Jesse Mirco took the snap and ran left looking to get the first down with his legs, not unlike last year's fake punt attempt, but he was able to gain only 2 yards this time around.

Day quickly clarified after the game that it was not Ohio State's intention to fake the punt, especially from the Buckeyes' own territory, though he did not specify whether the fault belonged with him, Mirco or special teams coordinator Parker Fleming.

"It was not a fake punt," he said. "It was a miscommunication on that, and that can't happen."

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Hancock, Henderson Lead Buckeyes To Victory

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The final score, 35-16, did not reflect the scare Rutgers gave top-ranked Ohio State at SHI Stadium in Piscataway, N.J., on Nov. 4.

Trailing at the half for the first time this season, having allowed its longest play from scrimmage and missing key defensive players, the defense came through with a game-changing interception, and two fourth-quarter touchdowns to Marvin Harrison Jr. from Kyle McCord turned the game into a perceived rout before 53,703 fans on a sunny, 55-degree afternoon.

Jordan Hancock's 93-yard interception return early in the third quarter put the Buckeyes (9-0, 6-0) ahead for good, 14-9. Harrison's first touchdown catch extended the lead to 28-16, and he added a 2-yard score late for the final margin.

TreVeyon Henderson had 208 total yards (22 rushes for 128 yards and a touchdown, five catches for 80 yards), and McCord was 19 of 26 for 189 yards with three touchdowns and one interception.

Rutgers (6-3, 3-3) took a surprising 9-7 halftime lead on Jai Patel field goals of 22, 21 and 20 yards after Ohio State took a 7-0 lead on its second of six drives in the half.

Scarlet Fever

The Buckeyes started at their 25 after the opening kickoff and went three-and-out as did the Scarlet Knights, except punter Flynn Appleby got a bad snap and hurried an 18-yard punt to the Ohio State 46.

It took six plays and 2:43 for the Buckeyes to take a 7-0 lead on tight end Gee Scott Jr.'s 14-yard catch. Henderson had carries for 6, 7 and 13 yards to the 28. Emeka Egbuka made a grab for 10 yards, and Chip Trayanum had 4 yards on the ground before Scott grappled with linebacker Mohamed Toure for the pass and came down with it along the right sideline in the end zone.

The Buckeyes' fourth possession ended a first quarter in which McCord was 10 for 10 for 61 yards.

On fourth-and-1 from the 41, Henderson made the first down by the tip of the ball on the first play of the second quarter. He ran for 11 on the next play, but the Buckeyes gained only 3 more yards – one play was a drop by Julian Fleming to end a string of 18 straight completions, 11 in this game, for McCord – and Jesse Mirco punted to the end zone.

Rutgers wasted a trick play by coach Greg Schiano and settled for a 22-yard field goal by Jai Patel to make it 7-3 with 7:49 left in the half.

Facing fourth-and-1 from the Rutgers 43, quarterback Gavin Wimsatt went under center, took the snap, then went between his legs to hand the ball to Kyle Monangai, who raced 45 yards to the Ohio State 12. It was the first 40-yard play allowed by the Buckeyes this season.

Wimsatt fell to 0 for 5 passing with an incompleting on first down before his two runs of 8 yards to set up the field goal.

Ohio State tried to return the favor on fourth down from its 30 with 5 to go when Mirco ran out of punt formation, but he was stopped after 2 yards and Rutgers took over



SONNY BROCKWAY

GOOD TO SEE YOU – Since returning on Oct. 28 at Wisconsin, running back TreVeyon Henderson has been on a strong run, including against Rutgers on Nov. 4, when he rushed for 128 yards and added 80 yards on five receptions.

at the OSU 32.

Monangai ran for 7 and 9 yards to the 16. Wimsatt gained 4 yards, and Monangai went up the middle for 8 yards for a first down at the 4. He followed with a 2-yard gain before Wimsatt lost 1 yard. His first completion went to Christian Dremel for no gain to set up fourth-and-goal from the 3 where Patel made a 21-yard field goal to pull Rutgers to within 7-6 with 2:03 left in the half.

McCord was intercepted on the second play of the Buckeyes' next possession after Harrison had a 16-yard catch to the Ohio State 41. Toure got the pick at the Rutgers 49 and returned it to the Ohio State 46 with 1:46 remaining.

Patel drilled a 20-yarder for the halftime lead with one second left.

The Scarlet Knights got there when JaQue Jackson made a third-down catch for 13 yards to the 33. On second down, Dremel made a 16-yard grab to the 15, and Johnny Langan gained 13 yards with his catch for another first down, but two incompleting followed and with five seconds remaining, Schiano elected not to risk another try at the end zone.

Rutgers had an advantage in total yards at the half, leading 170 (128 rushing, 42 passing) to 128 (80 passing, 48 rushing), and had the ball for 16:25. McCord after his hot start was 12 of 16 for 80 yards with a TD and an interception. Wimsatt was 4 of

12 for 42 yards, and Monangai rushed for 93 yards.

The Buckeyes had just 38 yards on 11 plays in the second quarter compared to 149 yards on 24 snaps for Rutgers.

Pulling Away

Rutgers received the ball at the 25 to start the second half and was helped early in the drive by pass interference calls against Proctor and Sonny Styles to move to the 50.

Monangai carried for 13 and 14 yards on consecutive plays to the 23. After Wimsatt rushed for 3 yards, momentum dramatically shifted on the next play with Hancock's pick-six to go up 14-9.

The pass was intended for Monangai, but Proctor went for the breakup. They collided, and the ball deflected off Proctor to Hancock at the 9:49 mark for the sixth-longest interception return in school history.

Ohio State marched 71 yards in eight plays, using 3:49 to increase the lead to 21-9 on Henderson's rushing touchdown of 9 yards.

OSU's first offensive series of the third quarter began at 6:28 from the 29 after a 31-yard punt. Carnell Tate hauled in throws for 9 and 22 yards on back-to-back snaps to the Rutgers 41.

Henderson got to full speed down the right side for 20 yards to put the ball on the 21. Egbuka picked up 4 yards and Henderson added 5. McCord did a quick snap to

sneak his way for 3 prior to Henderson using his blocking on the left side for the score with 2:39 to go in the quarter.

Rutgers would not go away, and Wimsatt found Jackson for a 19-yard touchdown to make it 21-16 on the second play of the fourth quarter at the 14:07 mark. The previous snap was a 35-yard catch for Dremel on the 75-yard drive that encompassed six plays in 3:32.

When Ohio State needed a response, it got it thanks to Henderson's effort that led to a 4-yard touchdown catch for Harrison for a 28-16 score at 12:02.

The Buckeyes were headed to a punt situation when on third-and-9 from their 26, McCord dumped a pass across the middle to Henderson, who caught it at the 31 and zipped to the opposing 9 for a 65-yard play. After a toss to Harrison was broken up in the end zone and Xavier Johnson ran for 5 yards, Harrison made the catch in the left corner at the end of the six-play, 75-yard drive in 2:05.

The Buckeyes then helped Rutgers drive to the 6 with consecutive 15-yard penalties to Mike Hall Jr. (personal foul) and Tyleik Williams (unsportsmanlike conduct) to move the ball to the 26 after earlier in the drive, Monangai had a 16-yard run. Wimsatt then ran to the 12 and fumbled after being hit by Styles, but Dremel recovered it at the 9.

On first down, Wimsatt rushed for 3 yards. He then had two incompleting. The second was reviewed for a possible touchdown for Ian Strong, and on fourth down, Ty Hamilton sacked Wimsatt for a 7-yard loss with 8:14 left.

Starting from the 13, Henderson went for 2 and 27 yards to the Buckeye 42 to go over 100 yards rushing, but Rutgers stiffened and Mirco's 41-yard punt rolled to the 9.

The Scarlet Knights turned the ball over on downs from their 17 needing 2 yards with 4:16 remaining. Henderson picked up 9 on two carries. Trayanum ran up the middle for 2, but Henderson was tackled for a 2-yard loss. He gained back 6 yards to the 2 before Harrison's second touchdown for a 35-16 lead with 2:07 left. There were six plays on the short drive that chewed up 2:09.

Rutgers ran three times for 18 yards to finish the game at its 43.

The Buckeyes were without safety Lathan Ransom and cornerback Denzel Burke in the game because of injuries, but Egbuka returned after missing three games. However, Proctor left with an injury on Hancock's touchdown, though he participated in an interview with media after the game and appeared OK.

Notes

Rutgers led in yardage with 361 (129 passing, 232 rushing) compared to Ohio State's 328 (189 passing, 139 rushing). ... Wimsatt threw for 129 yards on 10 of 25 with one TD and a pick. ... Monangai gained 159 yards on 24 carries (6.6 average). ... Egbuka (29 yards) and Harrison (25 yards) each had four catches. ... Tommy Eichenberg led the Buckeyes with 12 tackles (two solo). ... Each team had one sack.

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 35, Rutgers 16

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on how his team overcame its first-half struggles to win on the road: "It's a team game, but the first half, just gutsy, tough, hanging in there in some bad spots. Those guys are playing hard across the board, and we were down a couple of guys. Rutgers is physical. Coming off their bye week, they were fresh and ready to go and they played us hard. We've had multiple weeks now – Penn State and then Wisconsin – and now these guys. These have been physical weeks, but our guys are playing hard, they're playing physical and we're playing good football down the stretch. We're wearing teams down in the second half, but certainly we'd like to play better in the first half as a team."

Wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. on his team's mindset entering halftime facing a 9-7 deficit: "We had seven points at halftime. That's obviously not the start our offense is supposed to have. We want to have 50 points. But you go into the second half with a new mindset. It's 0-0 no matter what the score is, and kind of work from there."

Quarterback Kyle McCord on how confident his team was entering the second half: "We definitely have been a second-half team this entire year. We play our best football in the second half, and that's a credit to our guys just being able to have great endurance. That's the biggest thing, not getting worn out early on, and we know that teams are going to give us their best punch early on, and if we can just handle that and keep going, good things have happened."

Day on his offense's overall performance: "You'd like to see, early on, some third-down conversions. We (had zero) in the first half, then we ended up 6 of 12, so we must have been better in the second half. That was a big part of it because we weren't finishing the drives, and third down is such a huge deal. We did do a better job on third down, and that made a difference. Situational football is critical. When, for instance, in this game we recognized that they were

in a two-high shell and they were going to try to take way the outside, we had to run the football and be patient enough to work the football down the field on a couple of those drives. We'd love to get Cade (Stover) back so we can really be at full strength."

Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano on his reaction to the team falling short in the second half: "I feel bad for those guys down there in that locker room. But as I told them, the way they worked and the way they prepared and all that, and the way they played, doesn't guarantee anything. It just gives you a chance. But we are now giving ourselves a chance and we are just not quite ready yet, I guess, to finish it, but that's – the sun is going to come up tomorrow and we are going to keep working and we are going to get better, and we'll eventually get there. And that's me and that's the staff and it's the players, everybody. But I'm proud of our guys. Proud of our staff. We're going to keep getting better."

McCord on running back TreVeyon Henderson's impact on the offense: "He's done a great job this year, I think not only running the ball but catching the ball too, as you guys saw today. He's become a great weapon for us. When he's healthy, I don't think there's a better back in the country, and he's doing an unbelievable job. So my hat's off to him."

Henderson on his 65-yard catch on third down in the fourth quarter: "I wasn't even expecting it to hit that big. Kyle just put the ball where it needed to be, and I ended up making a play. I wasn't expecting it to be that huge, though."

McCord on his reaction to Gee Scott Jr.'s 14-yard touchdown: "That's a cool moment to rep it a bunch of times during the week, watch film on it, and talk about it off the field, like, 'How do I want him to run the route? Where is he expecting the ball?' And to see it all play out and score six points, that was huge."

Safety Josh Proctor on what he saw to deliver the hit that led to Jordan Hancock's 93-yard interception return for a touchdown: "They called a timeout. We figured they were going to try to come out and do something to get our eyes off. I was expecting the tight end to pop, but the running back slipped out, so I just wanted to get him down."

Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles on the pick-six: "(Rutgers) tried a trick play to slip the back out. Josh, playing in the middle of field, had a great break on the ball, just a really heads-up play by him. Then Jordan was just hustling to the ball."

Proctor on how the defense buckles down in the red zone: "It's just taking it one play at a time no matter what happens. They might make a big play, they might do something that we don't want to give up, but other than that, we just keep going and keep fighting as a team."

Knowles on defensive linemen Ty Hamilton's fourth-down sack in the red zone in the final period: "We knew that was going to come. We worked on that all week with that quarterback. That was going to come. He's an inside scramble kind of guy, and we knew we'd have to make a couple of those plays."

Schiano on if the loss was a moral victory: "I don't believe in moral victories, no. I believe that you learn lessons, and we learned some lessons today. I did. The players did. But no moral victory."

Day on his team's mindset moving forward as the No. 1-ranked team in the nation: "Our goal is to be the No. 1 team at the end of the year. All it means is it's a good start, and we know we're going to take everybody's best shot. We did again today. Give Rutgers a lot of credit. That doesn't mean anything to us. It's great for the fans, but it just means we're off to a good start and beat some good teams."

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CB Mathews Impressing Early In His Career

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Jermaine Mathews Jr. started at Ohio State, he came into a cornerback room that had struggled the season prior. The Buckeyes gave up many long passing plays late in the season, part of what allowed both Michigan and Georgia to get the better of them, scoring a combined 87 points in those two games.

That caused head coach Ryan Day and defensive coordinator Jim Knowles to bring in a transfer in Davison Igbinosun, and with a resurgent performance from junior Denzel Burke, the secondary has been the most improved aspect of the team this season.

But despite a talented and veteran secondary that has helped turn Ohio State's defense into one of the nation's best, Mathews has still found a way to contribute as a true freshman, impressing in limited action.

After Burke was injured in the 41-7 win at Purdue on Oct. 14, Mathews was the next man up and ready to play in the biggest game of the year against Penn State the following week. With the possibility that Burke might miss the contest, Knowles said before the game they were confident Mathews was going to be ready to compete on that stage.

"We're confident in Jermaine," he said on Oct. 17. "For a true freshman, he's got a lot of guts. He's got a lot of moxie. He's just talented, and he's shown the ability to make plays, so we're confident in putting him in there."

Mathews proved that confidence from his defensive coordinator was warranted. He had played only 46 snaps in the prior six games, but matching up against one of the top teams in the country, he surpassed those totals with a season-high 47 plays against the Nittany Lions.

He had three tackles in the game and a pass breakup in the third quarter that contributed to a three-and-out by Penn State. He contributed to a team defensive performance that raised eyebrows, holding Penn State to just 1 of 16 on third down.

"He doesn't flinch at the point of competitive excellence," Knowles said on Oct. 24. "There was a shot in press coverage, and he got his head back from the ball, he finished through the ball on a huge stage. So I think that speaks right there."

After the win, Knowles was happy with how Mathews stepped up in the top-10 matchup, adding that his lack of experience likely helped him stay calm despite being on one of the biggest stages in college football.

"Like I said, the kid's got moxie," Knowles said. "I don't think he knew how big the moment was, and that's not a bad thing. He just went out and played. He made some tackles, and he didn't flinch at the moment of truth."

Mathews said he appreciated the compliment, but he had to look up the word moxie in the dictionary. He also said he did know how big the game was, but he just wanted to go out and play football like he has been doing his whole life without feeling the pressure.

"Pressure breaks pipes," Mathews said. "I guess it's just in me. I knew the moment was big, and I just really wanted to go in there and do my job and just ensure that



SONNY BROCKWAY

FEISTY FROSH — Freshman cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. (24) notched his first career start against Rutgers on Nov. 4, continuing a strong trajectory for the Ohio native during his first year with the Buckeyes.

we win the game. That was really my whole mindset going into the game.

"I was just playing football. I've been playing football my whole life. So I feel like the stage really doesn't matter. You have to still go out there and play."

Mathews had that confidence since he started at Ohio State, something his teammates mentioned after the win over the Nittany Lions.

"It felt like he was built for that moment, honestly," safety Josh Proctor said. "It wasn't too big for him. He went out there and he played like a vet that's been out there before."

Cornerback Jordan Hancock, who spent time at both outside and slot corner against Penn State, said he felt very comfortable knowing Mathews was on the field with him.

"That kid, he's great," Hancock said. "He came out there, we had the most confidence in him, and we're just super proud of him. We see how he prepares and he's just a dog, so I'm happy to have him in the secondary with us."

Day was also impressed with how the freshman performed on the big stage, adding that the next step for Mathews is to maintain that consistency the rest of the season.

"He's one of the more competitive guys that we had this incoming class," Day said. "He loves to compete, and the moment wasn't too big for him. Now he's got to be consistent. It's one thing to do it, now it's another thing to do it multiple weeks in a row. He did step up in a big way, and he has made a lot of progress from when he came in, but

an players on the team. Burke, who himself broke onto the scene as a freshman, has been one of the biggest helps in Mathews' development and getting him ready to play at this level.

"He has helped a lot," Mathews said. "The whole corner room, we are all very tight. And I asked a lot of questions. I asked a lot of questions, and they just helped me. Coach (Tim Walton), he's a big part of that too."

Mathews came to Ohio State out of Cincinnati Winton Woods, where he shot up the rankings as a prospect through his senior year, putting together a season of 51 tackles, four forced fumbles, four fumble recoveries and six interceptions. He finished as a four-star recruit, listed as the best prospect in Ohio and the No. 51 overall prospect in the class.

Just like wide receiver Carnell Tate on the other side of the ball, Mathews is showing that no matter how new a player is at Ohio State, there is a chance to crack the lineup if they prove themselves ready for the big stage. And the offense, that routinely has to deal with Mathews in practice, certainly sees the talent.

"These guys come in now as freshmen – I wish I had half the talent they come in with," wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. said. "He's a talented guy. You see that right away from the first play that he played."

Mathews' talent was evident during the recruiting process, and he has since shown it for Ohio State, but he is still continuing to improve, with Knowles adding that Mathews is good at applying coaching to his game.

"He's gotten a lot of naturalness, and he takes coaching well," Knowles said. "You can coach him hard, and he doesn't back down."

Burke was back on the field for the win against Wisconsin, relegating Mathews back to special teams, but against Rutgers, Burke was ruled out again. With safety Lathan Ransom not making the trip to New Jersey, Sonny Styles was slotted in at strong safety and Hancock made the start at nickel, allowing Mathews to make his first career start at cornerback. He finished the game with three tackles, one of them solo.

His experience during his freshman season – not to mention whatever he is able to pick up through the rest of the season – will help him make a push next year for a potential starting job in Ohio State's lineup.

"I feel like everything just happened for a reason, and I feel like I'm just blessed to be in this position," Mathews said. "I just take everything in, don't take anything for granted."

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Tucker's Firing Overshadowing MSU's Season

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Since Michigan State's football season kicked off with back-to-back wins over Central Michigan and Richmond, things have gone dramatically downhill for the Spartans.

On Sept. 10, the day following the 45-14 win over the Spiders, head coach Mel Tucker was suspended after USA Today published a story detailing Tucker's alleged sexual harassment of rape survivor and noted anti-sexual assault advocate Brenda Tracy, whom he had invited on campus to speak with the team. But after developing a professional relationship with her, he allegedly made sexual comments and masturbated on a phone call without her consent on April 28, 2022, and she filed a Title IX complaint with the university.

As a result of the investigation into the incident by Michigan State, the university announced on Sept. 18 that it planned to fire Tucker for cause and made it official on Sept. 27. Tucker has disputed allegations while he and his attorneys indicated that they may pursue legal action for wrongful termination given that Tucker had roughly \$80 million remaining on his contract with Michigan State.

It has almost been easy to forget that Michigan State, despite all these distractions, still has a schedule full of football to play this season. Chosen to lead the Spartans through these troubling times as interim head coach was safeties coach Harlon Barnett, who has spent all but two of the last 17 seasons in East Lansing.



Harlon Barnett

"Coach Barnett has an incredible connection to our university and takes incredible pride in being a Spartan," athletic director Alan Haller said. "He has established relationships with student-athletes and is focused on their well-being first and foremost."

"I want to be the head coach of Michigan State, but not in this way," Barnett said. "I really appreciate the opportunity to be able to be the head coach here."

Barnett's job has been made more difficult given that Michigan State's players, due to Tucker's firing on Sept. 27, had 30 days to enter the transfer portal, of which several have taken advantage. Long snapper Hank Pepper, defensive back Justin White, offensive lineman Keyshawn Blackstock, and running back Jordon Simmons have all publicly announced their entry to the portal, while defensive end Tunmise Adeleye has reportedly left the team.

That's not to mention the extra work Barnett is doing to try to maintain the Spartans' 2024 recruiting class, which has already lost four members since Tucker's firing.

"I've been trying to make sure we stay together," Barnett said. "That's been my No. 1 thing, my No. 1 thing since I've been put in this position. There's going to be tough times that you're going to have to get

through, so you have to be able to not just fall down with the adversity but to continue to fight. I believe that's just a lifestyle.

"You have to be willing to fight, because in life, when the world throws crap at you, you've got to be able to stand up and fight. And where we are right now, we have to continue to fight. We can't lay down."

If even for a moment, it all seemed worth it after Barnett picked up his first win as Michigan State's head coach, leading the Spartans to a 20-17 win over Nebraska on Nov. 4, a victory that came after six consecutive losses to begin Barnett's interim tenure.

"Finally, right? Finally. Finally got us a victory," he said after the win. "I'm really happy for our guys. All we talked about was finish, finish, finish, and that's what they did. We finally finished one and got a victory, so I'm really happy for our players. It was an awesome feeling in the locker room. You love to have that. It's the first of four games we have here in the month of November, so we're going to keep trying to just finish everything that we do."

The win was a momentary reprieve to what has been a tough season on the field for Michigan State, which is averaging just 18.2 points per game – 121st in the country and dead last in the Big Ten, even behind Iowa's notably horrid offense – and allowing 26.6 points per game, which is 72nd nationally and 11th in the conference.

The struggles on offense have started at quarterback, where the Spartans have pinballed between junior Noah Kim and redshirt freshman Katin Houser at quarterback, though neither has been particularly effective. Kim started the first five games of the season and has completed 56.9 percent of his passes for 1,090 yards, six touchdowns and six interceptions, while Houser has started the last four – and is expected to start against Ohio State – while completing 58.7 percent of his passes for 674 yards, three touchdowns and two picks.

"I thought Katin actually stepped up – no turnovers," Barnett said after the win over Nebraska. "He runs the offense, he understands the offense. The plan that we had for today is what we executed."

The rushing attack has not fared much better, because while sophomore Nate Carter has rushed 156 times for 659 yards and four touchdowns – good for 4.2 yards per attempt – the Spartans as a whole are averaging just 3.3 yards per carry, which is 114th nationally. Michigan State also has several capable pass catchers – including wideouts Montorie Foster Jr. (33 catches, 436 yards, two TD), Tre Mosley (28, 288, two) and tight end Maliq Carr (19, 201, one) – but they have not been given a chance with less-than-stellar play under center.

It's put much of the onus this season on Michigan State's defense, which has done the best job it can under challenging circumstances.

"Our defense has been playing fairly well, I think, over the last several weeks," Barnett said after the win over Nebraska. "We had the game against (Michigan, a 49-0 loss), but other than that, I think we've been playing fairly well. They understand what to do. (Defensive coordinator Scottie) Hazelton and the staff do a great job of game planning

Get To Know ... Michigan State

- **2023 Record:** 3-6.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation - Spread; Defensive Formation - 4-2-5; Starters Returning - Offense 4, Defense 4.
- **Head Coach:** Harlon Barnett (interim), 1st year at Michigan State, 1-6.
- **Series History:** 52nd meeting; Ohio State leads 36-15-0.
- **School Facts:** Location - East Lansing, Mich.; Enrollment - 50,344; Nickname - Spartans; Colors - Green, White; Conference - Big Ten (East Division); Stadium - Spartan Stadium (Surface, Grass; Capacity - 74,866).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Nate Carter	156	659	4.2	4
Jalen Berger	25	93	3.7	1
Sam Leavitt	13	67	5.2	0

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Noah Kim	91-160	56.9	1090	6-6
Katin Houser	64-109	58.7	674	3-2

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Montorie Foster Jr.	33	436	13.2	2
Tre Mosley	28	288	10.3	2
Maliq Carr	19	201	10.6	1

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 18.2
Rushing Yards Per Game – 103.0
Passing Yards Per Game – 216.1
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 319.1

2023 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 1	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	W, 31-7
Sept. 9	RICHMOND	W, 45-14
Sept. 16	WASHINGTON	L, 41-7
Sept. 23	MARYLAND	L, 31-9
Sept. 30	at Iowa	L, 26-16
Oct. 14	at Rutgers	L, 27-24
Oct. 21	MICHIGAN	L, 49-0
Oct. 28	at Minnesota	L, 27-12
Nov. 4	NEBRASKA	W, 20-17
Nov. 11	at Ohio State	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 18	at Indiana	TBA
Nov. 24	vs. Penn S. at Detroit	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 2	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Cal Haladay	27	38	65	5.0-15	1.0-11
Malik Spencer	28	39	57	1.0-0	0-0
Angelo Grose	23	24	47	2.5-10	0.5-2
Jordan Hall	22	25	47	5.5-27	2.5-20
Dillon Tatum	30	15	45	2.5-8	0-0
Aaron Brule	24	20	44	6.5-25	4.0-18

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Jared Mangham	4	14	3.5	0
Angelo Grose	2	2	1.0	0
Cal Haladay	1	2	2.0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 22.0
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 128.6
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 222.3
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 350.9

and understanding how a team is trying to attack us, and our guys go out and execute. This is another product of them just playing better overall over the last several weeks."

The defense's most impressive unit has been the secondary, which is allowing only 222.3 passing yards per game. Led by the likes of sophomores Jaden Mangham, Malik Spencer and Dillon Tatum, as well as senior Angelo Grose and freshman Chance Rucker, the secondary has intercepted seven passes – four coming from Mangham – and the team has broken up 33 passes this season.

It's no surprise that the unit has excelled given that it was Barnett's responsibility before taking over as interim head coach. It was those same Spartans who knocked down the would-be Hail Mary that secured the win over the Cornhuskers for Barnett's first victory.

"It was great just seeing everybody happy, seeing all of this," Mangham said. "We enjoy that, being able to come in and celebrate with our brothers and celebrate with Coach Barnett getting his first win. That was a great feeling for all of us."

"A lot of people, a lot of teams, if they go through stuff like this, they'd probably break apart. But he's held us together. I couldn't be happier for him."

In the front seven, the Spartans have a talented duo of linebackers in sixth-year senior Aaron Brule and junior Cal Haladay, the latter leading Michigan State with 65 tackles this season, while Brule has a team-high four sacks and 6½ tackles for loss.

But the biggest boost for Michigan State has been the return of junior defensive tackle Simeon Barrow Jr., who briefly entered the transfer portal before opting to return to the team.

"I was by myself in the transfer portal for

two days just thinking about the guys, thinking about football, thinking about my teammates and just hearing from my teammates that live with me," Barrow said. "I just felt like I can't leave like that. I've got to go back, and I've got to help. At the end of the day, I still believe in Michigan State football. I feel like we can still win a bowl game. I just feel I can't leave it like that."

Barrow has added 28 tackles, 2½ sacks and 3½ tackles for loss this season along with six quarterback hurries, and his teammates were happy to welcome him back.

"He brings leadership, he brings enthusiasm, he brings toughness and he's a really good football player," Barnett said. "He brings all of that to the table for us, and he has the respect of his teammates. They love him, we love him and he loves us. That's what he brings. He's a guy that has been here and been through some things with us and has played well and done really well."

With so many moving parts on the team, a win for Michigan State over Ohio State would certainly be classified as a monumental upset – a spoiler, if you will, for the Buckeyes' season – but being a potential spoiler is not something that Barnett and the Spartans have in mind. Rather, the team would prefer to just go out and win.

"My mind goes to positive – win," Barnett said. "I never think about losing or being a spoiler. Saying I'm a spoiler means I'm a scrub, and I'm not a scrub. So I don't think spoiler, I think, go win. That's me."

"I never think about losing or being a spoiler. Saying I'm a spoiler means I'm a scrub, and I'm not a scrub. So I don't think spoiler, I think, go win. That's me."



Simeon Barrow Jr.



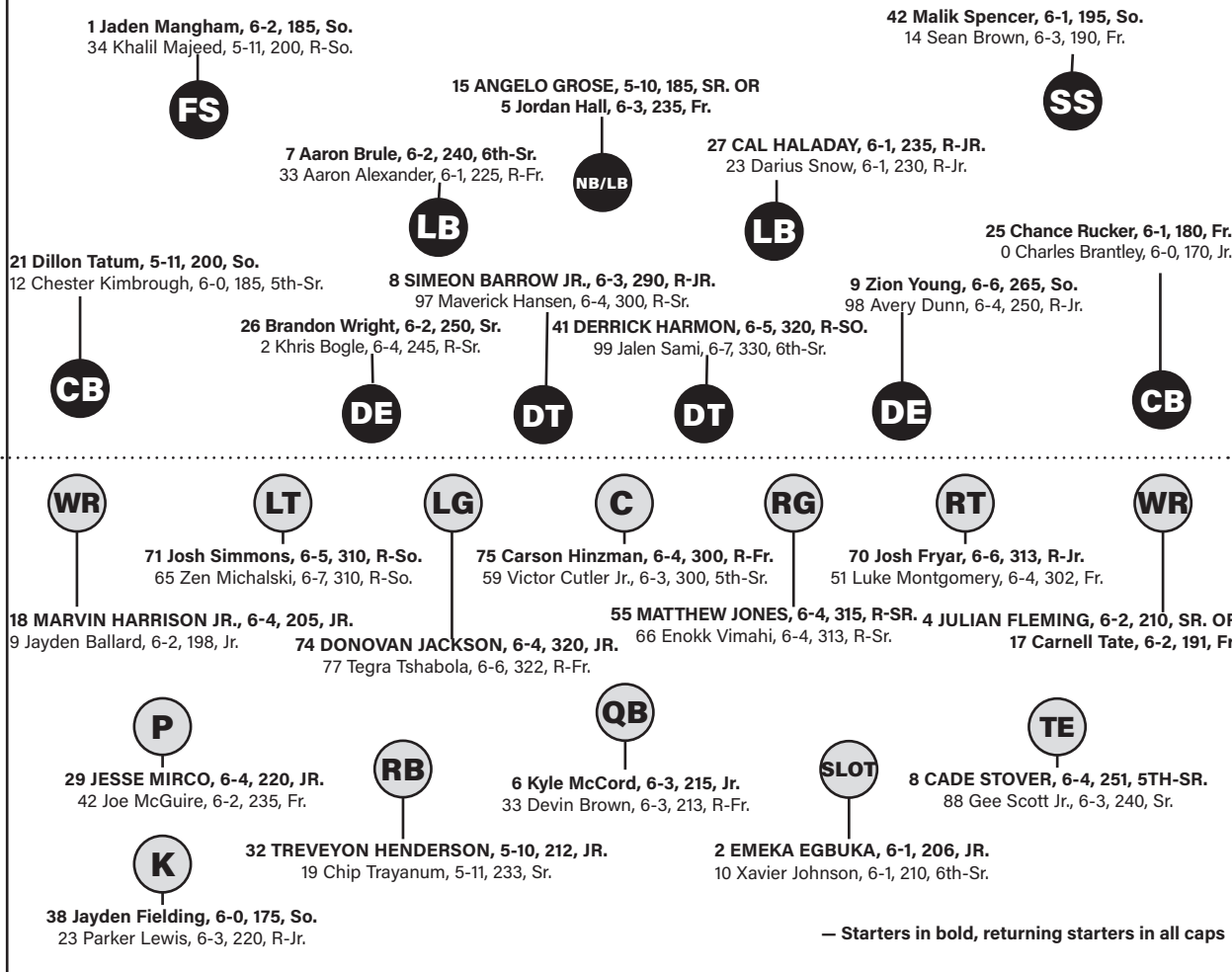
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Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. MICHIGAN STATE RUSH DEFENSE

All TreVeyon, all the time. It can be argued that Henderson is the most valuable Buckeye because without his 61-yard TD run against Notre Dame, his return from injury performance at Wisconsin (162 yards, touchdown) and his 208 total yards in the last game at Rutgers, OSU might not be undefeated. With Miyan Williams done for the season, the burden becomes even greater on Henderson, and he's responded. He rushed for 128 of the Buckeyes' 139 yards against the Scarlet Knights, scoring a third-quarter TD of 9 yards. Otherwise, Chip Trayanum had two carries for 6 yards, Xavier Johnson one for 5 yards and Emeka Egbuka one for 4 yards. You can add punter Jesse Mirco's 2-yarder for good – or bad – measure and quarterback Kyle McCord's minus-6 yards. Fingers are crossed in Buckeye Land that Henderson makes it to Michigan. When two bad teams play, statistics could be rendered meaningless. For what it's worth, Michigan State broke a six-game losing streak with a 20-17 win over Nebraska Nov. 4 but allowed the Cornhuskers 154 yards (3.8) on the ground. The Spartans had 12 tackles for loss. They entered the game giving up 126.1 yards on the ground. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

MICHIGAN STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Spartans were pretty awful running, managing just 63 yards on 31 carries for a meager 2.0 average against the Huskers. Nate Carter had 15 carries for 50 yards (3.3) with a long of 9 yards. OSU entered the Rutgers game averaging 99.8 rushing yards allowed, but they gave up 232 yards and a 5.4 average. Kyle Monangai totaled 159 yards (6.6) but 45 came on a trick play. The defense also had to contend with running quarterback Gavin Wimsatt, who netted 49 yards on 13 carries (3.8). But when it counted, the Buckeyes were tough to run against with their backs to the goal line, forcing Rutgers into fields goals from 22, 21, and 20 yards. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. MICHIGAN STATE PASS DEFENSE

It's hard to figure out McCord. He was 10 for 10 in the first quarter vs. the Scarlet Knights, yet it was another unimpressive and sometimes head-scratching outing. He threw his third interception in two games, but on the plus side he did not have his customary intentional grounding. Credit the offensive line for allowing only one sack. He had time to throw, but his decision-making was questionable. Some of the blame for Marvin Harrison Jr. being targeted only eight times lies with the coaches, but there were at least three occasions Harrison was wide open but McCord never got the ball to him. Harrison scored twice but had just four catches for 25 yards, and his Heisman hopes may have been buried in New Jersey. McCord was 19 of 26 with three touchdowns and one pick. Of his 189 yards, over one-third came via a catch-and-run of 65 yards by Henderson. MSU could be tricky, but again, it's based on playing Nebraska. The Spartans forced three turnovers (two interceptions, fumble) and had seven sacks for 41 yards. The Cornhuskers gained 129 yards through the air, significantly less than MSU's average of 234.0 yards allowed entering the game. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

MICHIGAN STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

The Buckeyes will have to prepare for one or maybe two quarterbacks. Redshirt freshman Katin Houser started his fourth straight game, going 13 of 20 for 165 yards and a TD as well as a 46-yard completion, but freshman Sam Leavitt threw a 25-yard touchdown pass to Montorie Foster Jr. early in the fourth quarter. Leavitt played only two series, but it was his fourth game and if he plays again, he burns his redshirt year. Like Rutgers, MSU had a trick play – wide receiver Alante Brown caught a lateral and threw a 42-yard pass to Foster that put the Spartans in the red zone. It's impossible to gauge how well the Buckeyes did with cornerback Denzel Burke and safety Lathan Ransom unavailable and safety Josh Proctor exiting early in the third quarter on the 93-yard pick-six by Jordan Hancock that put the Buckeyes ahead to stay, 14-9. Rutgers' Jordan Wimsatt is a poor passer, but after a rough start he finished 10 of 25 with 129 yards, one TD and an interception. Head coach Ryan Day isn't sure when Burke and Ransom will return but the Buckeyes should be able to manage the next two games. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Plain and simple: if Mirco attempts another fake punt, his scholarship should be revoked immediately. MSU punter Ryan Eckley averaged 48.3 on seven boots with a long of 57, and Jonathan Kim made field goals from 35 and 50 yards but missed a 44-yarder. **EDGE: MICHIGAN STATE**

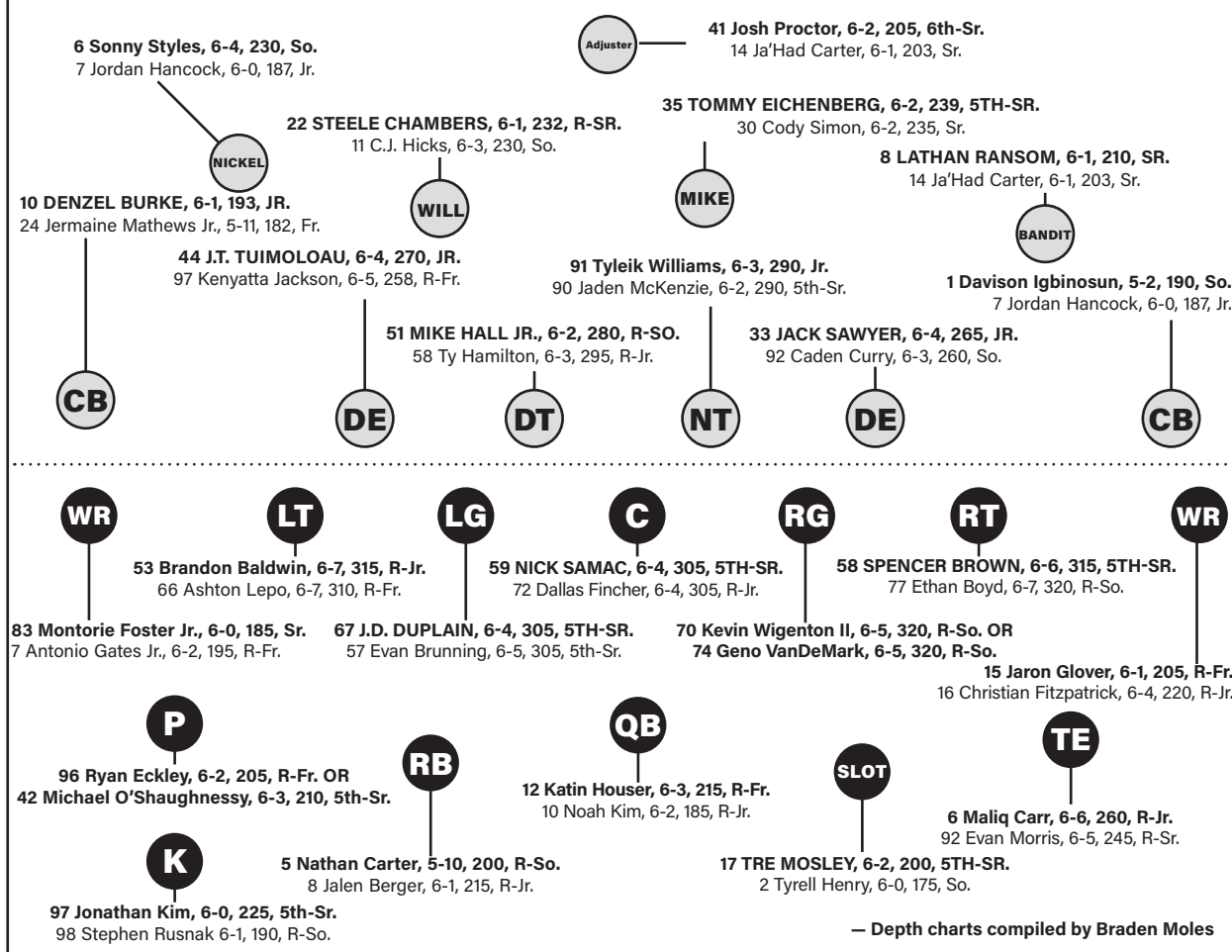
INTANGIBLES

Michigan State has survived the dumping of coach Mel Tucker, and a win over Nebraska gives the Spartans a lift, but they are far from being good. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

STAFF PREDICTION

It's time the Buckeyes stop playing like 2002 and start burying teams. Can they? **OHIO STATE 42, MICHIGAN STATE 7**

WHEN MICHIGAN STATE HAS THE BALL...



Quarter-Century Later, Loss ‘Still Hurts’

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. The following is the ninth installment in our 2023 historical series.

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

As exhilarating as it is to play David in the story of an epic upset, there is no joy to be found in taking on the role of Goliath, and the Ohio State football team knows perhaps better than most college programs how it is to be on the humiliating end of that role play.

Going all the way back to 1919 when Illinois kicked a last-second field goal for a 9-7 win that cost the Buckeyes a conference championship in the final game of Chic Harley's collegiate career, through crushing defeats to Michigan in 1969 and UCLA in the 1976 Rose Bowl – losses that transformed national championship dreams into nightmares – Ohio State has known its share of upset misery over the years.

But even those outcomes, as devastating as they were at the time, hold no candle to the heartbreak the Buckeyes experienced 25 years ago this week.

Fresh off the road following a 38-7 manhandling of Indiana, Ohio State boasted a perfect 8-0 record, sat atop the national rankings as a near-unanimous No. 1 selection, and was installed as a 28-point favorite to beat Michigan State, a team that had already lost four times that season.

The Buckeyes flexed their muscles early in the game, running out to a 17-3 lead after the first quarter and extending that advantage to 15 points early in the second half. But the Spartans refused to go away, chipping away at the OSU lead until 19 unanswered points down the stretch left Michigan State with a 28-24 victory and the Ohio State players and coaches with a truckload of what-ifs.

“Do we have to talk about that game?” former Ohio State recruiting coordinator and tight ends coach Bill Conley asked BSB. “As far as what happened, I think it was more what we didn't do rather than anything they did. Unfortunately, if you're in this game long enough, you're going to run into situations like that. There's no reason for it, no explanation for it, but it happens.

“I can tell you this, though. I don't care that it's been 25 years. It still hurts.”

The point spread established by oddsmakers was indicative of the colossal mismatch the game appeared to be on paper. The Buckeyes had dispatched their eight previous opponents by a combined score of 306-72, an average winning margin of more than 29 points per game, and seemed to be hitting their stride. Meanwhile, Michigan State featured a middle-of-the-pack defense, allowing an average of 23.1 points through its first eight games.

Quarterback Joe Germaine, on his way to rewriting the program record book in terms of passing stats, was averaging more than 30 attempts per game and completing 62.7 percent of them. He had thrown for 2,214 yards – already the fifth-highest single-season total in OSU history with four more regular-season



FILE PHOTO

GIVING HIS ALL — Ohio State cornerback Antoine Winfield recovered his own forced fumble against Michigan State in 1998 that led to a 17-3 lead in the first quarter, but things did not go the way of the Buckeyes for the remaining three frames in a 28-24 loss to the Spartans.

contests and a bowl game to go – as well as 17 touchdowns.

At Germaine's disposal were two of college football's top receivers. David Boston had caught 55 passes for 901 yards and nine TDs through the first eight games, while Dee Miller added 46 receptions for 717 yards and two scores.

But the Buckeyes were far from a one-trick passing pony. On the ground, tailback Michael Wiley was zeroing in on a 1,000-yard season with 866 yards and eight touchdowns, while backup Joe Montgomery had added 490 yards and five more TDs. Better still, Wiley and Montgomery were averaging a collective 6.4 yards on 214 combined carries.

“That was going to be our year,” Montgomery told BSB. “We started talking about it in the spring and all through summer conditioning. No one was going to stop our offense. And as good as we were offensively, we were just as good defensively. We went against them every day in practice, and we knew. Those were flat-out ballers.”

Defensively, Ohio State featured a ferocious pass rush that had already collected 20 sacks and a sticky secondary that had accounted for 13 interceptions during the team's first eight games.

Even special teams play was a plus. Punter Brent Bartholomew was averaging 41.8 yards per kick, Boston was averaging 13.5 yards per punt return – and had just returned one 70 yards for a touchdown against Indiana – and kicker Dan Stultz had booted nine field goals in eight games.

In short, it was top to bottom the best collection of talent put together by John Cooper in his 11 seasons as head coach of the Buckeyes.

“You want to talk about great teams,” Cooper said. “I think we had five first-team

All-Americans on that team and I don't know how many guys who made the first or second All-Big Ten team. And I think there were four or five guys who went on to become first-round draft picks in the NFL.

“The credit for putting together that team goes to Bill Conley and the rest of our coaching and recruiting staff. Look at the names, for crying out loud. Joe Germaine, Andy Katzenmoyer, Ahmed Plummer, Michael Wiley, David Boston, Rob Murphy – I hate to start naming them because I know I'll leave some out. Antoine Winfield and Damon Moore were on that team, too.

“I was fortunate enough to coach some really, really talented teams during my career, and I'd put that one up there at or near the top.”

Conversely, Nick Saban was still trying to gain a foothold at Michigan State. It was the fourth year in East Lansing for the West Virginia native, Kent State graduate and former Ohio State assistant, but the best Saban could do during his previous three seasons was a pair of fifth-place finishes in the Big Ten standings.

He had taken over a program in 1995 that had been sanctioned by the NCAA for recruiting violations committed under predecessor George Perles. But while Saban had produced winning seasons, when he brought his Spartans into Ohio Stadium in 1998, his overall record was a pedestrian 23-20-1 record that included an 0-3 mark in bowl games.

Michigan State fans, used to the six national championships produced by Clarence “Biggie” Munn and Hugh “Duffy” Daugherty during the 1950s and 1960s, expected more. Much more.

“I don't recall being under any kind of pressure rather than what's normal,” Saban

remembered years later. “I do remember that our record that year wasn't necessarily indicative of the team we had. We had beaten a pretty good Notre Dame team earlier that season, and I think a couple of our losses were by just one or two points.

“I don't think we had any preconceived notions going into that game against Ohio State. We knew what kind of challenge they presented, but we didn't feel like we had anything to lose.”

Saban's teams had earned something of a reputation as being a giant-killer. During his only season as head coach at Toledo in 1990, his team knocked off defending MAC champion Ball State on its way to a 9-2 finish, the program's best record in seven years. Then, after a four-year stint as defensive coordinator for the NFL's Cleveland Browns, his Michigan State teams enjoyed victories against No. 7 Michigan in 1995, No. 4 Penn State in 1997 and No. 10 Notre Dame in September 1998. But each of those wins had come in East Lansing. Entering the contest against the Buckeyes, the Spartans were 0-5 on the road against ranked teams during Saban's tenure.

“I can't say we were looking past them because you're taught never to do that,” Germaine told BSB. “I can say, though, that we thought we were unstoppable. We thought that if we played anywhere close to our best, nobody could stop us. But I guess everyone remembers what happened when we didn't play anywhere close to our best.”

Off To A Fast Start

With a crowd of 93,595 on hand at Ohio Stadium on a crisp, clear November afternoon, and millions more watching the nationwide telecast, veteran ABC sideline reporter Jack Arute grabbed Cooper just before kickoff and asked the coach how he expected the game to transpire. What Arute got was one of the coach's tried and true sayings.

“I think we can expect Michigan State's best shot,” Cooper said. “They've got good athletes, they've got good coaches. Those guys are on scholarship, too, you know.”

Be that as it may, the early going featured the kind of mismatch most observers and pundits expected. Ohio State took the opening kickoff and quickly marched downfield with Germaine at the controls.

After fullback Matt Keller picked up 5 yards on the first play from scrimmage, Germaine went to the air for a 7-yard pass to Boston, a 21-yard strike to Miller, and a sideline toss to Wiley that the running back turned into a 35-yard gain to move the ball to the Michigan State 6-yard line.

The drive suddenly fizzled, and the Buckeyes were forced to settle for a 20-yard field goal from Stultz, but there was no stopping them on their next two possessions.

Spotting the Spartans a game-tying field goal midway through the first period, Ohio State stampeded 80 yards in just five plays to grab a 10-3 lead. The drive began harmlessly enough with Germaine scrambling for a 3-yard gain. But three plays later, Wiley broke up the middle for a 25-yard burst, and then Germaine found tight end John Lumpkin wide open for a 41-yard touchdown completion.

With the first-quarter clock winding down,

a 44-yard punt from Bartholomew pinned the Spartans at their own 14-yard line. On first down, Winfield forced MSU quarterback Bill Burke to fumble, and then the Ohio State cornerback recovered the loose ball himself to give his team possession at the Michigan State 11.

Four straight handoffs to Wiley put the ball in the end zone, and the Buckeyes took a 17-3 advantage with 39 seconds remaining in a decidedly lopsided opening period. In addition to holding a 14-point lead, Ohio State had outgained Michigan State by a 171-113 margin.

But as skewed as the first-quarter stats were in favor of the Buckeyes, the pendulum slowly began to swing the other way in the second period.

The Spartans got a couple of field goals from kicker Paul Edinger while their defense began to find some cracks in the OSU pass protection. Blitzing linebacker Courtney Ledyard sacked Germaine on third down for a 16-yard loss to finish off one Ohio State possession, and the next one was terminated when defensive end Julian Peterson got to the OSU quarterback for an 11-yard, third-down loss.

It was Peterson's second sack of the quarter. The first resulted in a Germaine fumble at his own 33-yard line that set up the Spartans for Edinger's second field goal of the period.

After playing so well to begin the game, the Buckeyes managed only 42 yards on 24 plays in the second quarter. Couple that with a turnover, three penalties (only two of which were accepted), giving up three sacks and scoring no points, murmurs of concern began wafting through the Horseshoe.

Even so, there didn't seem to be much reason for panic since the Buckeyes still held a 17-9 advantage as the teams headed to the locker rooms at halftime.

"We were still in control of that football game at the half," Conley remembered. "We went over a few things like we always did, and our concentration was on the defense because Michigan State was getting the ball to start the second half. You always want to control the first three minutes of every half, and that was our focus at halftime."

Second-Half Disaster

The second half began just as the Ohio State coaching staff had envisioned with the defense forcing a three-and-out. Things got even better when defensive back Derek Ross blocked the punt to give his team the ball around midfield. But the Buckeyes were flagged for a personal foul penalty, pushing them back to their own 33.

They wound up punting away that possession, but a few plays later, Moore jumped a sideline route and returned an interception 73 yards for a touchdown, triggering an end zone celebration amid a thunderous stadium roar. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties against the Buckeyes following the touchdown pushed the PAT try all the way back to the 25-yard line, but Stultz made the kick anyway to give his team a 24-9 lead at the 9:51 mark of the third quarter.

"We thought we had them at that point," Montgomery remembered. "No way they were coming back from that."

It certainly seemed that way when Michigan State was forced to punt away its next possession. Standing on his own goal line, MSU punter Craig Jarrett managed to field an

errant snap and get his kick away, a short punt that landed just short of midfield. But the ball hit OSU gunner Tony Locke in the rear end – technically an Ohio State fumble – and the Spartans recovered at their own 49.

"That's when things started to go haywire," Conley said. "We had originally called for a punt block on that play, and after the bad snap we'd have probably blocked it and got a touchdown. But then the punt hits our gunner in the backside and they recover it. How many times does that happen?"

"You just couldn't believe some of the stuff that went on in that second half. On another play, they had a defensive misalignment – had both of their defensive ends lined up on the short side of the field. We had a sprint-out called that should have been a big play for us, but in his desperation to get back where he should have been, their defensive end somehow shot through a gap and tackled our quarterback. You just shake your head when that stuff happens.

"Three or four things like that happened for no reason, and every one of those things went against us."

Michigan State took full advantage of the punt-return gaffe, eventually scoring a 23-yard touchdown on a pass from Burke to wide receiver Lavaile Richardson and drawing the Spartans to within nine points again at 24-15. Edington missed his extra-point try, but the gap narrowed even further after Wiley fumbled away OSU's next possession, a turnover the Spartans turned into a 49-yard field goal from Edington.

The Buckeyes still held a 24-18 advantage with 4:55 remaining in the third quarter, but their vaunted offense found itself stuck in first gear. All Ohio State had to show for its first three second-half possessions was 34 yards – none of it through the air – and another turnover.

Meanwhile, the Spartans were beginning to smell blood in the water. On a drive that began at his own 8-yard line late in the third period, Burke engineered a 92-yard touchdown march that featured back-to-back big pass plays – 37 yards down the sideline to wideout Plaxico Burress and 23 yards over the middle to tight end Chris Baker.

Tailback Sedrick Irvin capped the eight-play drive with a 3-yard touchdown run, and when Edington added the PAT, Michigan State had come all the way back to claim a 25-24 lead with 14:20 left in the game.

The Buckeyes tried several times to answer but couldn't. Germaine fumbled again after a sack, a play the Spartans turned into a 42-yard field goal from Edington that padded their lead to 28-24 with 9:26 to play.

Ohio State had two more possessions to pull out the victory, but the first ended when Montgomery was stuffed for no gain on a fourth-and-1 at the MSU 26 with 3:33 to go in the game. The Buckeyes still had one final chance inside the final minute and a half, but Germaine was intercepted at the goal line by MSU cornerback Renaldo Hill with 1:12 remaining. It was the Buckeyes' fifth turnover of the game, and Burke simply executed a pair of kneel-downs as the OSU sideline and crowd could do nothing but look on in stunned silence.

"Unbelievable," OSU offensive tackle Tyson Walter said. "We figured they were going to go away after our 17-point first quarter. Considering their past history, we were surprised they hung in there. They had an M.O. of giving

up when the going gets rough, but they didn't."

The victory was the first for an unranked team against a top-ranked opponent since Michigan State took a 28-27 victory against in-state rival Michigan in 1990, and the moment was not lost on Saban.

"We came in here with the attitude that we were the squirts in the neighborhood who had to go and pick a fight with the bully," he said. "Not that we wanted to pick one, but it was on the schedule, so we had to do it. We played like we had nothing to lose."

Meanwhile, a dejected Cooper faced the media after the heartbreaking loss.

"They outcoached us, they outplayed us, their defense was better than ours, their offense was better than ours, their kicking game was better than ours, and of course they came away with the victory," the OSU head coach said. "Sometimes we didn't make the right adjustments, sometimes we didn't throw the right pass. Give them credit."

Germaine, who was coming off a then program-record four consecutive 300-yard passing games, was limited to 245 yards by the Spartans. He completed only 15 of 33 attempts, was intercepted once, fumbled twice and absorbed five sacks. The OSU quarterback suffered through a nightmarish second half, connecting on just 4 of 14 passes for 56 yards and committing two turnovers.

"We had plenty of opportunities," Germaine said. "There at the end when we had four tries from their 15, there was no doubt in our minds that we were going to pull that thing out. But we didn't take advantage, and when you don't take advantage of your opportunities, that's when you get beat."

Michigan State was held to just 48 yards rushing in the game, but Burke threw for 323 yards and a touchdown. Four of his 18 completions went to Burress, who turned them into 125 yards.

Meanwhile, Miller and Boston combined for nine catches for 123 yards but no touchdowns. They were each targeted twice during Ohio State's final set of downs, but the MSU secondary swatted away three of the attempts before Hill grabbed his game-clinching interception in front of Miller.

The Buckeyes rebounded from the loss, defeating their final three opponents by a combined score of 100-44 and finishing the 1998 season with an 11-1 record and No. 2 national ranking. But a quarter-century later, the loss to the Spartans remains one of the most agonizing upsets in Ohio State football history.

"Certainly there have been big upsets over the years," longtime OSU football historian Jack Park told BSB. "There have been losses to Michigan such as the ones in 1969 and 1996 when the Buckeyes were heavily favored. There was the Rose Bowl against UCLA after the 1975 season. Ohio State had gone out there earlier that season and won, 41-20, but UCLA won the rematch in the Rose Bowl, 23-10, and I think Ohio State was a 20-point favorite in that game.

"There are others, of course, but in terms of what was at stake, the relative strengths and records of the teams and all of those sorts of things, I think it would be difficult to come up with a bigger upset in the history of Ohio State football than the one Michigan State pulled off in 1998."



Wilson Making Plays Regardless Of QB

By CRAIG MERZ

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Imagine getting a sports car as a graduation gift.

You get the keys, sit inside and surround yourself with that new car smell while fiddling with all the controls. Next, press start, rev the engine, put it in gear and then get ready to roll out of the driveway and head for the highway.

But wait. There's a recall on that shiny piece of transportation and your mom and dad take your ride straight to the dealership down the block with an undetermined return date.

Welcome to the world of Garrett Wilson, although it's hard to feel sorry for the former Ohio State receiver. He's earning a good paycheck for the New York Jets and coming off a first season when he was named the AP NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year and had expectations for an even better 2023 for himself and his team.

That optimism flourished because of the arrival of Aaron Rodgers, one of the most accomplished quarterbacks in NFL history. Wilson and Rodgers, a four-time MVP, built a connection during the preseason and were looking forward to the regular-season opener on Sept. 11 vs. the Buffalo Bills.

"We're really just excited to get in here, put in that work every day and make sure that we're ready to play on Monday to give ourselves, our fans, everyone that's been so loyal to this fan base for so long, something to root for," Wilson said prior to the game. "At the end of the day, we know what we have in here, and now it's time to go show the world.

"Our chemistry is good, man. It's as good as it can be at this point. We still have to get out there and get some game reps. You got a little taste of it, but a full game, we'll really see where we're at and where we stack up."

Rodgers, for his part, praised Wilson throughout training camp by comparing him to his star receiver with the Green Bay Packers, Davante Adams, now of the Las Vegas Raiders.

"The talent is really impressive," Rodgers said of Wilson in August. "He makes difficult things look easy. Just the person that he is, too. Receivers are an interesting personality. They are usually the most talented guys on the team, athletically. Everybody wants the football, everybody wants to be on the field, everybody thinks they're open all the time.

"I've had some great ones over the years who are great people as well, and he's one of those guys. He's a great person."

Change In Plans

For all the hype – and there was plenty being the New York media – it all evaporated spectacularly just four offensive snaps into the season when Rodgers sustained an Achilles tendon rupture. He underwent surgery on Sept. 13.

Suddenly, the future Hall of Fame signal caller was gone, to be replaced by the maligned Zach Wilson, who went 14 of 21 for 140 yards with one touchdown and an interception in relief against the Bills. The Jets won 22-16 in overtime on a punt return

by Xavier Gipson.

Garrett Wilson caught five passes for 34 yards and a touchdown, a one-handed grab on a poorly thrown ball, and he said Rodgers apologized to him for getting hurt.

"At halftime I just went in to check on him in the training room and just make sure I gave him a hug and told him I love him," Wilson said on 98.7 FM ESPN New York. "It really hurt my heart. He told me 'Sorry, kid' and said he loved me back and that was it. I'm just truly heartbroken."

Wilson, the 10th pick in the 2022 NFL draft, finished last season with 83 catches for 1,103 yards (13.3 yards per catch) and four touchdowns in 17 games. He was on the receiving end of throws from Joe Flacco, Mike White and Zach Wilson.

Many in the media felt the Jets' season was doomed without Rodgers, more specifically with Zach Wilson taking snaps, but New York had worked to a 4-3 record through seven games, including a pair of overtime wins.

Garrett Wilson has 39 catches for 469 yards (12.0 average) with two touchdowns, but there have been bumps along the way. He had five catches for 48 yards in a 15-10 loss to the Patriots on Sept. 24.

"I'm frustrated with not winning," Wilson said after the game. "Whatever reason that may be, we're trying to figure it out. That's my job. I feel like I'm a player on this team, and everyone knows that about me. I don't play about (anything but) losing and winning.

"When it's competition, I'm about all that, and we haven't met the challenge the last two weeks. That's where the frustration comes from, and that's where the emotion comes from."

Wilson survived a scare on Oct. 15 when he suffered a noncontact leg injury against the Philadelphia Eagles. He was able to return, but afterward, he was angry about the turf at MetLife Stadium, home of the Jets and New York Giants, which some blamed for Rodgers' injury. New turf was installed before the season.

"It's garbage, man," Wilson said. "You're out there running and all of a sudden your legs aren't in the same place your head is at. What's the difference between (practice during) the week and now? You look down, and you see the turf."

Moving Forward

Wilson is not afraid to speak out, and he did so in defense of Zach Wilson, who has been under scrutiny by Jets fans and the media for his inconsistency. He explained why he did it.

"Just because of the effect that can have on people," Garrett Wilson said. "Belief, people believing in you, people that you get to work with every day believing in you. Sometimes it can seem like the world is against you, but it's never really the case. We've always got our guy's back.

"It can be tough playing ball, especially playing quarterback, in this part of the world. Because of that, and all the other things, we always want to make sure we got our brother's back. If he doesn't know that, then I'm doing my job wrong. I want to make



FILE PHOTO

DEVELOPED HERE – Former Ohio State wide receiver Garrett Wilson has continued to impress in the NFL in his second season with the New York Jets, where he has 39 catches for 469 yards and two touchdowns in seven games.

sure I give him all the empowerment in the world, and I know all the other guys feel the same about it."

The Wilson-to-Wilson combo worked for a 68-yard touchdown against the Dallas Cowboys on Sept. 17, and Garrett Wilson said afterward the two are on the same page.

"We got a chance to start on it last year, and we've had a chance to pick back up on it since the games started and then in practice. All those reps are so valuable. We're building on it every day, but it's great."

It was on display again Oct. 29 in the rivalry game against the Giants. Garrett Wilson had a 29-yard catch that helped set up the tying field goal with one second left and in overtime made a third-down catch of 11 yards to keep the drive alive for a field goal to win 13-10.

He had seven receptions for 100 yards in that game and is on pace for 95 catches for more than 1,100 yards this season.

And there may or may not be good news on Rodgers. Jets general manager Joe Douglas got fans excited on Oct. 31 when he said he was expecting him to return this season. However, Douglas later clarified that he meant that Rodgers, who turns 40 on Dec. 2, was rehabbing in California but could return to the team, not necessarily for a game.

"I am not putting anything out there like that," Douglas said. "That's not my place. I'm not a doctor. I don't have any breaking

news for you like that."

"We're in the moment," Jets coach Robert Saleh said. "It's admirable from Aaron's standpoint, and I think it demonstrates how much he loves and cares about his teammates in this locker room. For him to want to come back, clawing his way back when everyone in the world would understand that he doesn't have to, I think that's why we have such a genuine appreciation for him."

No matter who is quarterbacking, the Jets know they have a reliable receiver. Wilson, from Austin, Texas, teamed with Chris Olave in 2020 to become the first set of Ohio State receivers to be named first-team All-American in the same season. Olave was the 11th pick by the New Orleans Saints in the 2022 draft.

As a junior in 2021, Wilson had 70 catches for 1,058 yards and 12 scores despite missing two games. In 33 career games (19 starts), he made 143 catches for 2,213 yards and 23 TDs. Saleh said the keys for Wilson are his precise routes and sharp cuts that allow him to get open.

"He's so powerful that when he is running his routes, it looks like he can break four different ways and he gets people on his heels," Saleh said. "He's one of those guys who's intrinsically motivated."

"He's got a great head on his shoulders. Everything for him is all ball, all day, every day, and he's just one of those kids, everything he does in life is to be the best version of himself every day."

Coaches Ask Petitti To Take Action Against U-M

As November rolled around, new Big Ten commissioner Tony Petitti could feel the pressure mounting on him from around the conference – both from coaches and administrators – regarding Michigan's alleged sign-stealing.

BIG TEN NOTES Greg Wilson

Big Ten coaches spent close to an hour during a 90-minute video call with Petitti on Nov. 1, according to a report from ESPN's Pete Thamel, expressing their frustration with the situation, asking the commissioner to take action against the Wolverines since they believe the NCAA's investigation will not conclude by the end of this season.

Head coach Jim Harbaugh was on the call with all of the coaches to conduct regular business but left so that everyone could freely discuss the investigation.

"Collectively, the coaches want the Big Ten to act right now," a source told ESPN. "What are we waiting on? We know what happened."

The athletic directors of the Big Ten schools also met with Petitti on Nov. 2 to encourage him to take action soon, according to a report from Yahoo Sports' Ross Dellenger.

While the Big Ten does not have a formal investigative branch, Petitti could punish Michigan or members of its staff under the Big Ten's Sportsmanship Policy independent of the NCAA's investigation. Dellenger's report states that different possible penalties have been discussed by the conference, with a suspension of Harbaugh seeming the most likely.

Michigan would likely fight back against any severe penalties before the official investigation has been finished. Harbaugh has previously denied any knowledge of any wrongdoing in the program, but it would not matter when it comes to the NCAA's investigation. The NCAA can punish a head coach for anything that happened in their program, regardless of whether the head coach had knowledge.

NCAA investigators met with Michigan administrators on Oct. 23, though it has not issued a formal 90-day notice of allegations. Petitti, meanwhile, was in Ann Arbor on Nov. 3 and met with Michigan officials about the sign-stealing scandal.

According to a report from ESPN's Adam Rittenberg, Michigan president Santa Ono has asked Petitti to respect the NCAA investigation and allow the Wolverines due process. Ono emailed Petitti on Nov. 2 before the commissioner came to Ann Arbor for the field hockey conference tournament and to meet with school officials.

"It's precisely at these times – when all key facts are not known but others are all too comfortable offering strongly held opinions – that it is essential for everyone to ensure that investigations are conducted fairly and that conclusions are based

on what actually happened," Ono wrote to Petitti. "The reputation and livelihoods of coaches, students, and programs cannot be sacrificed in a rush to judgment, no matter how many and how loudly people protest otherwise. Due process matters.

"We, as would any other member of the Big Ten, deserve nothing less. Our students, our coaches, our program – all are entitled to a fair, deliberate, thoughtful process."

Should a potential suspension for Harbaugh extend past two games, Petitti would need approval from the Big Ten's Joint Group Executive Committee

In Michigan's first outing on the football field since the sign-stealing scandal broke, the Wolverines picked up a 41-13 win against Purdue on Nov. 4. Since Harbaugh returned to regular availabilities following the team's off week, he has mostly declined to discuss the situation.

"You just have to let it play out," he said on Oct. 30. "Cooperate with the investigation and see how it plays out. I have too much of a one-track mind with the team to engage with all the speculation."

With the situation rapidly developing, be sure to visit BuckeyeSports.com for the latest on the issue and any potential punishment for Harbaugh or the Wolverines.

Stalions Resigns From Michigan

Connor Stalions, the recruiting analyst at the center of Michigan's alleged sign-stealing scandal, resigned from his position on Nov. 3. He had previously been suspended by the university with pay on Oct. 20.

It had been reported that Stalions was fired, but Michigan released a statement later to clarify that he had resigned from his position.

"Connor Stalions resigned his position with Michigan Athletics this afternoon," the statement read. "We are unable to comment further regarding this personnel matter."

According to multiple reports, Stalions has not been cooperating with any internal or external investigations. In a statement to The Athletic, his attorney said that he chose to resign because the recent stories surrounding him at Michigan had created a distraction for the team.

"He hopes his resignation will help the team and coaching staff focus on tomorrow's game and the remainder of the season," the statement read. "Connor also wants to make it clear that, to his knowledge, neither Coach Harbaugh, nor any other coach or staff member, told anyone to break any rules or were aware of improper conduct regarding the recent allegations of advanced scouting."

This news comes after photos were revealed of a person that looks similar to Stalions on Central Michigan's sideline for the Chippewas' Sept. 1 game against Michigan State. The person was wearing sunglasses during a night game, ones that appeared to have a blinking light at points, which could indicate that they were potentially recording.

Central Michigan head coach Jim

McElwain, who worked at Michigan as a wide receivers coach in 2018, said the team is investigating the situation.

"We obviously are aware of a picture floating around with the sign-stealer guy," McElwain said on Oct. 31 after Central Michigan's 37-31 win against Northern Illinois. "Our people are doing everything they can to get to the bottom of it. We're totally unaware of it. I certainly don't condone it in any way, shape or form. I do know his name was on none of the passes that were let out. We keep tracing it back and tracing it back and try to figure it out. It's in good hands with our people. Again, there's no place in football for that."

It has been reported that Stalions had bought tickets for nearly 40 games in his own name over a three-year period, which he distributed to friends or acquaintances who would attend the game in his place. He had also bought tickets to games which would feature possible College Football Playoff opponents.

Brian Ferentz Not Returning As Iowa OC

Iowa's offensive coordinator Brian Ferentz, son of head coach Kirk Ferentz, will not be returning as the team's offensive coordinator next season. Interim athletic director Beth Goetz, who supervises Brian Ferentz due to nepotism laws, announced the decision on Oct. 30.

"Anyone who loves Iowa football recognizes both the success and challenges that have brought attention to our program this season," Goetz said in a statement. "Our struggles on offense coupled with the offensive coordinator's contract make this a unique situation."

"After conversations with head coach Kirk Ferentz, coach Brian Ferentz and President (Barbara) Wilson, I informed Brian that our intention is for him to be with us through the bowl game, but this is his last season with the program. Making this known today is in the best interest of the program and its loyal fans. It provides clarity during this pivotal time in the schedule."

He has been the Hawkeyes' offensive coordinator since 2017 and has been on staff for his father since 2012. Kirk Ferentz has led the program since 1999, making him the longest tenured coach in the country, and he did not appear pleased with the decision.

"My policy has typically been to evaluate everything – players, coaches, all that – postseason because in-season we've got a lot on our plates," he said on Oct. 31. "That's been the nature of it. It's been that way since I got started full-time in '81. There's just not enough time in the day. To me, it's a better time. It's a less emotional time. I can give you a lot of reasons why I've done it that way. But it really doesn't matter. We are dealing with something we have to deal with, and we will."

The offense has struggled, averaging only 18.4 points per game, which is 119th nationally and second-to-last in the Big Ten, just ahead of Michigan State's 18.2 points per game. The announcement comes after an off week which was needed to regroup from a 12-10 loss to Minne-

BIG 2023 Standings

East Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan	6	0	1.000	9	0	1.000
Ohio State	6	0	1.000	9	0	1.000
Penn State	5	1	0.833	8	1	0.889
Rutgers	3	3	0.500	6	3	0.667
Maryland	2	4	0.333	5	4	0.556
Indiana	1	5	0.167	3	6	0.333
Michigan State	1	5	0.167	3	6	0.333

West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Iowa	4	2	0.667	7	2	0.778
Nebraska	3	3	0.500	5	4	0.556
Minnesota	3	3	0.500	5	4	0.556
Wisconsin	3	3	0.500	5	4	0.556
Illinois	2	4	0.333	4	5	0.444
Northwestern	2	4	0.333	4	5	0.444
Purdue	1	5	0.167	2	7	0.222

Nov. 4 Games

Indiana 20, Wisconsin 14
Michigan State 20, Nebraska 17
Ohio State 35, Rutgers 16
Iowa 10, Northwestern 7
Penn State 51, Maryland 15
Illinois 27, Minnesota 26
Michigan 41, Purdue 13

Nov. 11 Games

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

sota in which the Golden Gophers were able to win without a touchdown.

Brian Ferentz had signed a revised one-year contract in February which said the Hawkeyes would have to score at least 25 points per game, including defense and special teams points, and win seven games this season for his contract to be automatically renewed for 2024.

That was signed after Iowa finished last season with only 17.7 points per game (122nd in the country) and 251.5 yards per game (129th), ahead of only New Mexico (228.1 yards).

The Hawkeyes started this season on pace, scoring 28.3 per game in their first three of the year but were shut out in Week 4 against Penn State and have been unable to recover since then, scoring over 25 points only in a 26-16 win against Michigan State on Sept. 30.

Kirk Ferentz announced that he intends to remain at Iowa despite his son's departure.

"While my immediate focus is on finishing the season strong, I love coaching and my intent is to continue coaching here at the University of Iowa," Ferentz said in a statement released Nov. 1. "We have built something very special here, and I plan to coach until I am no longer passionate about the game, players or coaches."

OSU Building Momentum With 2024 D-Linemen

Perhaps the largest hole in Ohio State's 2024 recruiting class exists on the defensive line, but the Buckeyes and defensive line coach Larry Johnson are making moves to beef things up in the trenches with just over a month to go until the early signing period begins.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

Ohio State's biggest target is Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman Amaris Williams (6-3, 270), who is committed to Florida but took an official visit for the Buckeyes' 20-12 win over Penn State on Oct. 21 and is already set to return on Nov. 11 vs. Michigan State for another unofficial visit.

He is the No. 100 overall prospect and No. 15 defensive lineman in the class and is also considering Tennessee. His wavering from the Gators comes after Florida was off to just a 5-3 start this season through eight games under head coach Billy Napier, who was 6-7 last year in his first outing as head coach of the Gators.

But Florida's winning record also includes blowout losses to Kentucky (33-14) and Georgia (43-20), making it apparent that

the Gators are no longer one of the classes of the Southeastern Conference. Williams took another visit to Florida on Nov. 4 for the Gators' 39-36 overtime loss to Arkansas, and it was clear heading in what he was looking for.

"I want to see execution," he told 247Sports. "We haven't been executing like we're supposed to. When Florida played Georgia, they didn't execute like they were supposed to. They came out and had a good start. They have to keep the same intensity throughout the game. I feel like if they just keep that consistent, it would be a different ballgame for the other teams. Florida already has a good defense. Offense, we've got to work on some things.

"If we keep the same mindset throughout the whole game, we could beat any team that we want to. That's all I want to see out of Florida. I want to see some things differently."

Florida's struggles have opened the door that has since been kicked in by Johnson, who has made a significant impact on Williams during their interactions. Ahead of Williams' most recent visit, he had positive things to say about Ohio State.

"I really just felt at peace when I was there," Williams said. "Being around the fans, the coaches, the players, I felt peace in my heart, like I belong there. There are a lot of things to think about other than that feeling. That's really the main reason I want to go

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
Leroy Roker	S	3-1	170	★★★	Fort Myers (Fla.) Bishop Verot
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

back there, especially with Coach Johnson."

Williams is not the only defensive line prospect that Ohio State continues to kick the tires on. The Buckeyes on Oct. 30 offered Bay City, Texas, four-star defensive lineman Carlton Jones (6-3, 270), who has been com-

mitted to Nebraska since June.

Jones is the No. 441 overall prospect and No. 49 defensive lineman in the class, and through nine games this season, he had 73 tackles, 22 tackles for loss and 10½ sacks. While he had publicly signaled that his com-

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1988

Ohio State had a good nucleus of linebackers returning to the fold the next season, but the Buckeyes would still lose the services of starters Michael McCray and John Sullivan.

The gaps left by the graduation of such players would have to be filled by incoming freshmen. Ohio State head coach John Cooper would undoubtedly attempt to recruit linebacking talent like that possessed by Cincinnati Forest Park's Nick Smith, called by many experts the top high school linebacker prospect in Ohio that year.

"He is the state of Ohio's top linebacker prospect," said recruiting expert Tom Lemming. "He makes tackles from sideline to sideline and loves to hit people. Nick shows great instincts for the game and is always around the ball. He is a great bet for All-American honors this fall."

30 Years Ago — 1993

If Ohio State was looking to land its next great wide receiver, it had to travel only about 10 miles east of campus to check out one of the top prospects in Ohio.

Keith Dimmy, a 6-2, 170-pound combination wide receiver and defensive back from Columbus Eastmoor, the same high school that produced Buckeye All-Americans Archie and Ray Griffin, was considering attending Ohio State as well as a handful of other colleges.

Through eight games, Dimmy had helped Eastmoor to an undefeated season and had eclipsed 300 yards in both rushing and receiving. He had also snatched three interceptions on defense.

"He's been a great player for us offensively because he takes the pressure off our running backs," Eastmoor coach Marv Bohanan said. "Then over on defense he provides great leadership, especially making calls for the secondary."

25 Years Ago — 1998

Longtime Ohio State fans remember what happened the last time an offensive lineman from St. Henry, Ohio, chose the Buckeyes to play his college football.

In 1981, Jim Lachey ventured to Columbus, and by the time he left, he had become an All-American guard for the Buckeyes. He was a four-year letter winner and became a first-round draft choice of the San Diego Chargers. And on May 11, another St. Henry Redskin, following in the footsteps of not only Lachey, but also Hoying brothers Bobby and Tommy, verbally committed to Ohio State.

Already listed at 6-7, 350 pounds in his senior season bigger than Lachey probably ever dreamed of becoming, Matt Zahn could eventually settle into a tackle position before his stay in Columbus was completed. Zahn was quick to point out that the only legitimate comparisons between himself and Lachey were that they both played on St. Henry's offensive line and they both chose Ohio State for college.

"I don't know much about his high school days," Zahn said of Lachey, "but I know he was an All-American at Ohio State. I know that he won a Super Bowl with the (Washington) Redskins and was an All-Pro several times. He's definitely someone to look up to."

20 Years Ago — 2003

As the Ohio high school football state playoffs got under way the weekend of Oct. 31 through Nov. 1, several of Ohio State's verbal commitments and many of its top recruiting targets were facing win-or-lose-your-career situations.

Among the teams that looked to be in the most dire of situations was Columbus Beechcroft, featuring OSU verbal Sirjo Welch, who projected as a defensive back at the next level. His Cougar squad, ranked eighth in its region, was facing top-ranked and undefeated Big Walnut. According to Welch, that didn't make much difference to Beechcroft.

"That doesn't matter to us," he told BSB. "Records don't mean anything to us. We weren't intimidated by them."

That showed in Beechcroft's Halloween night performance, when a strong rushing attack led to the Cougars ending the Eagles' perfect season by a count of 28-23.

15 Years Ago — 2008

Although he maintained that his focus was on his team's trek through the Ohio state playoffs, defensive end Jamel Turner (6-2, 200) was still impressed with what he saw from the Buckeyes when they hosted Penn State on Oct. 25 in a 13-6 loss.

The junior sack-master from Youngstown Ursuline burst onto the scene as a sophomore when he recorded 23 sacks and helped lead his team to the state championship game. This year, he had led the Fighting Irish to two victories in the state playoffs with his eyes on an eventual state title.

Although his final statistics for the 2008 season were yet to be determined, Turner told BSB that he felt he had improved as a player even if his statistics did not reflect that.

"I think I played pretty well this year even though my stats are a little down compared to last season," he said. "I think people double-teamed me a lot more this year, and it seemed like teams really concentrated on trying to keep me out of the backfield. The main thing is we are back in the playoffs and hoping to win a state championship."

10 Years Ago — 2013

In September, head coach Urban Meyer and his staff extended an offer to Wake Forest, N.C., running back Bryce Love, and a month later, he made the trek to Columbus for an unofficial visit. The 40th-ranked running back in his class, Love loved his time at Ohio State, which exceeded his expectations.

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

mitment to Nebraska was strong, just days after his offer from the Buckeyes, he quickly set up an official visit for Nov. 11.

"They are one of the best schools in the country," Jones told 247Sports. "It definitely means a lot. I'm (still) committed to (Nebraska). They are a great school also, but in life, you have to weigh all your options so nothing is overlooked."

Jones indicated that Ohio State is the only other school he is considering along with his current pledge to Nebraska.

Ohio State is also in on Goodyear (Ariz.) Desert Edge four-star defensive end Dashaun Warner (6-4, 225), who is committed to Kansas. He is expected to attend Ohio State's matchup with Michigan State as well in what is quickly shaping up to be a star-studded list of visitors for the game, one of just two home contests left this season for the Buckeyes.

With three commitments already on the defensive line in Chicago St. Ignatius five-star Justin 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), the Buckeyes have to add at least one more prospect in the trenches and would ideally like to add two to the current group.

OSU Continues Building Steam With Sanchez

Ohio State has appeared on top all the way through the recruiting process for Houston North Shore five-star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170). He is the top-ranked corner in 2025, and momentum is still building toward a potential pledge for Sanchez to the Buckeyes.

247Sports recruiting analyst Steve Wiltfong, known for his "crystal ball predictions" of where recruits will eventually land, predicted on Nov. 2 that Ohio State will win out for the services of Sanchez, the No. 6 prospect in the class.

"Following his visit to Ohio State for the Buckeyes' victory over Penn State, it looked like the Big Ten program also grabbed all the momentum in the sweepstakes to ultimately land Sanchez," Wiltfong wrote. "A few weeks removed from that trip, the Big Ten powerhouse still looks like the one to beat."

"Tim Walton and Perry Eliano continue to lead the charge for Ohio State in recruiting Sanchez. A decision from Sanchez is not expected until after his junior season, but Alabama, Georgia and Texas A&M look like they need to make up ground on the Buckeyes as the blue-chipper continues to work through his process."

Sanchez has been high on Ohio State ever since being offered in January and camping at Ohio State in June, and he views the Buckeyes as a team that can develop him.

"An Ohio State cornerback, (you are) good at everything," he said after his camp session. "You can press, you can play off, that's what they like to do. I feel like if you can do all of that and you can be great at it, you've got a chance to be on that wall (of great players). There's not that many schools that call themselves DBU, and Ohio State is probably one of the No. 1 schools, just looking at the guys in the league. It speaks for itself."

Buckeyes In Top Five For 2025 DE Mathis

Ohio State landed in the top five on Oct. 31 for Philadelphia Imhotep Institute four-star defensive end Zahir Mathis (6-6, 225), a 2025 prospect, along with Florida State, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

Mathis is the No. 40 overall prospect and fifth-ranked edge rusher in the class and was offered by Ohio State in May. He later camped with the Buckeyes in June, where he got a chance to work out with Johnson.

"It was great," Mathis said. "He talked with me about my work ethic. I love this coaching staff. They did me well, helped me out with some reps. I lost some reps then I won some reps so it was pretty good for me just to come down here."

Mathis has long looked up to Johnson for the work he has done sending defensive ends into the NFL, including Joey and Nick Bosa as well as Chase Young, who Mathis said grew up just a couple of hours from where he plays high school football.

"He had a big impact on me, because Chase Young was coming from the DMV," Mathis said. "Myself, I'm from Philadelphia, so just to be so close to home and see his big impact on the world. Then Larry Legend had both of the Bosa brothers (Joey and Nick). I've got that love and respect for him."

Mathis is one of Ohio State's top priorities at defensive end in the class along with Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star Nasir Wyatt (6-2, 210), Cincinnati Winton Woods four-star Justin Hill (6-4, 215) and Chicago Simeon four-star Chris Burgess (6-4, 240).

OSU Remains In Running For Four-Star OT Lowe

On the other side of the ball, Ohio State was included in the top five on Oct. 31 for Toledo Whitmer four-star offensive tackle Carter Lowe (6-5, 290), who included the Buckeyes along with Alabama, Georgia, Michigan and Tennessee.

Lowe is the No. 154 overall prospect and No. 13 tackle in 2025, and he has taken several visits to Ohio State this season, including for the Buckeyes' win over Penn State.

"The atmosphere was electric, especially for a noon game, and that says a lot about their fan base," he told 247Sports. "Their de-

fense surprised me a lot today. I would love to see the offense get rolling too. I think they fought hard as a whole, and I loved the way they played."

Lowe was offered by Ohio State in January and camped in Columbus in June, where he stood out among the hundreds of campers in attendance.

"I had a really fun time," Lowe said. "I come out here every year to compete and get better. I really think I did that today. We did a lot of stuff with run blocking that we don't do at my school so that's something I can take home and improve on. I have a really good relationship with (offensive line coach Justin Frye). I love talking with him. I love speaking to him. He does a really good job coaching the offensive line, and I have a lot of respect for him."

Ohio State continues to recruit Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day School five-star offensive tackle David Sanders Jr. (6-6, 270), the top overall player in the class, but is also focused on Franklin (Mich.) Wylie E. Groves four-star offensive tackle Avery Gach (6-5, 275).

Other Prospects Have OSU Among Top Schools

Lowe and Mathis were not the only prospects to include Ohio State among their top schools since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press.

Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star running back Donovan Johnson (6-0, 205), Alcoa, Tenn., four-star tight end Eli Owens (6-2, 243) and Jacksonville (Fla.) Raines four-star offensive tackle Solomon Thomas (6-3,

278) – all 2025 prospects – have narrowed down their list of scholarship offers, and Ohio State remains in the running for each.

Starting with Johnson, he released a top five that included Florida State, Georgia, Ohio State, Tennessee and USC. He is the No. 115 overall prospect and ninth-ranked running back in the class and has not visited Ohio State since last summer.

Owens had the Buckeyes in his top nine, joined by Alabama, Cincinnati, Michigan, North Carolina, South Florida, Tennessee, Virginia Tech and Wisconsin. He is the No. 321 overall prospect and No. 17 tight end in the class, and he visited earlier this season for Ohio State's 37-17 win over Maryland.

"I thought overall it was a good visit," Owens told Eleven Warriors. "Getting to see what the fan environment would be like was really important. I already know all the coaches and know what the coaches want from me, so it's not like you go in there expecting more from them with them already having done all they can do. Getting to see what the fans would do, how they interact and stay in the game, is really cool."

Thomas is a recent target for the Buckeyes, offered only in August. But it was enough for him to have Ohio State in his top 10 along with Arkansas, Florida, Florida State, Georgia, LSU, Miami (Fla.), South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas A&M.

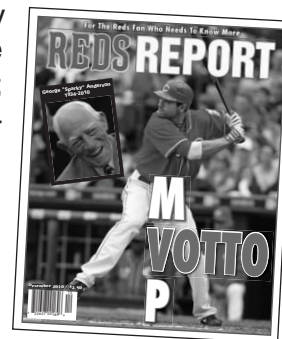
He is the No. 22 overall prospect and fourth-ranked offensive tackle in the class, and he has yet to visit Ohio State.

Continued On Page 28

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Other Visitors On Tap For MSU Game

Along with Jones and Williams, the sidelines at Ohio Stadium will be packed for Ohio State's home matchup with Michigan State.

The most notable visits outside of the defensive linemen will be another pair of 2024 prospects on official visits – Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star wide receiver Chance Robinson (6-2, 190), who is committed to Miami (Fla.), and Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star offensive lineman Jordan Seaton (6-5, 287).

Robinson has been committed to the Hurricanes since April, but the Buckeyes have been in the race ever since offering him in July. Robinson is the No. 155 overall prospect and No. 23 wide receiver in the class, and he would be the fourth wideout in 2024 for Ohio State should it be able to pull off the flip.

He previously took in Columbus on an unofficial visit in September and has stated that former Ohio State wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba is his favorite receiver, which

can only serve to boost the Buckeyes' chances of landing Robinson.

Seaton, however, might be the most important recruit left on the board for Ohio State, which also makes him perhaps the toughest pull of the Buckeyes' remaining targets. He is the No. 16 overall prospect and top-ranked offensive lineman in the class, and Ohio State remains in the battle along with Alabama, Colorado, Florida and Oklahoma.

The quartet of visitors will also be joined by several of Ohio State's current commitments, including St. Louis Christian Brothers College four-star wide receiver Jeremiah McClellan (6-0, 190), four-star linebacker Garrett Stover (6-0, 195) and three-star running back Sam Williams-Dixon (5-11, 203), among others.

In 2025, Bellefontaine, Ohio, four-star quarterback Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 210) will make his usual appearance in his goal to attend every Ohio State home game this season.

He will be joined by several uncommitted prospects in the class, including Vero Beach, Fla., four-star linebacker Tarvos Alford (6-

2, 210); Mission Viejo, Calif., four-star wide receiver Phillip Bell (6-2, 195); Pickerington (Ohio) North three-star wide receiver Preston Bowman (6-0, 190); Savannah (Ga.) Calvary Day School three-star wide receiver Edward Coleman (5-10, 180); Richmond (Va.) Trinity Episcopal School three-star cornerback Terrance Edwards (6-1, 180); Alpharetta (Ga.) Milton four-star tight end Ryan Ghea (6-5, 231); Mathis; and Atlanta Woodward Academy four-star defensive end London Merritt (6-3, 235).

The list is shorter in 2026, but it still includes Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Cumberland Valley four-star offensive tackle Tyler Merrill (6-5, 310), Boca Raton (Fla.) West running back Javian Mallory (5-11, 200) and West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West athlete Cam Thomas (6-2, 200).

OHSAA Playoffs Continue Rolling On

The second week of the Ohio High School Athletic Association playoffs are in the books, and several teams featuring Ohio State commitments and potential pledges

down the line won, earning a trip to the next round in pursuit of a state championship. Here's a look at some notable results from the second-round games played the weekend of Nov. 3.

Division I, Region 1 – No. 8 Canton GlenOak (7-5) at No. 1 Lakewood St. Edward (10-1): St. Edward notched a second consecutive shutout in the playoffs, blanking GlenOak 35-0. Four-star offensive linemen Devontae (6-5, 297) and Deontae (6-6, 280) Armstrong helped running back Brandon White rush for 116 yards and four touchdowns in the win.

The Eagles move on to face No. 4 Canton McKinley (9-3).

Division I, Region 1 – No. 7 Berea-Midpark (7-5) at No. 2 Cleveland Heights (11-1): Heights posted the team's second shutout in as many weeks in the second round of the playoffs, picking up a 35-0 win.

The Tigers were led in part by four-star running back Marquise Davis (6-0, 190), a target of Ohio State's in 2025, who had a 68-yard touchdown on the second play of the game and finished with 121 yards on 11 car-

ASK AN ANALYST With BuckeyeScoop's Bill Greene

Ohio State recently sent out an offer to Bay City, Texas, four-star defensive lineman Carlon Jones (6-3, 270), who is committed to Nebraska. What do you make of this, and with several recent offers going out on the defensive line, how do you view the board shaping up there for the Buckeyes?

"Well, I think they can take two more. The first reaction (to the Jones offer) may be, 'Well, that means that they're not getting Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman and Florida commit Amaris Williams (6-3, 270).' I don't think it means that at all. I still think they have a good shot at flipping Williams. The only thing there is he is supposedly a big NIL guy, and Florida has a war chest of NIL money that they're willing to spend and enjoy spending, so that gives me a little bit of pause there. Maybe Ohio State feels that way too, and that's why they're going after Jones. He looks like a nice player. You know, he's not Buford, Ga. five-star defensive lineman and Ohio State commit Eddrick Houston (6-3, 265), I can tell you that. But they need to take four or five (defensive linemen) in this class. I mean, there's a chance that (Jack) Sawyer, (J.T. Tuimolou), Tyleik (Williams) and Mike (Hall Jr.) could all leave at the end of this year. I don't know how logical that is, but I wouldn't be stunned to see all four of them go, so they need to bulk up this defensive line. I think they need to take two more, but pickings are kind of slim right now, so you work down your board and you go after the next best available.

"To me, Williams would be the highest guy on my board. I would put everything I had into flipping that guy. That guy's a big-time player. Some of the other guys that they are looking at now I would call projects that you hope you can develop. I wouldn't look at Williams as a project at all. He's pretty darn good."

Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut four-star linebacker Garrett Stover (6-0, 195) was recently named to the All-American Bowl. He's risen up the rankings over the past year or so since he committed to Ohio State – what do you make of him as a prospect?

"I like him. It's going to be interesting to see where they play him. I don't think there's any chance that he can play safety at Ohio State. I saw him before the season started, he was in Columbus, and he looked a little stiff to me. I don't think he can play safety. I think he has to be a linebacker, a bulked-up linebacker. I think he's kind of a Steele Chambers type of player. So I like him, but I just don't think he's a safety. I think that he has to play linebacker.

"I think it's speed and I think it's changing of direction that he just didn't move like a safety when I saw him. He was just a little stiffer. And plus, he had a frame that looks like it's going to fill out. He didn't look like the guy that's going to stay at 200-205

pounds. He looks like a guy that's going to be 225 when he gets to the strength and conditioning program at Ohio State. So I think he's a linebacker down the road, and they haven't really recruited linebackers well. So I think it's best for him and best for Ohio State."

There has been some smoke around Miami attempting to flip Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star running back Jordan Lyle (6-0, 180). Is there anything to these rumors, or is Lyle locked in with Ohio State?

"You always worry about the kid who wants to stay close to home, but Miami has a lot of running backs in that room. They have two committed in this class. I know they took Mark Fletcher from Ohio State last year, and they took another running back last year. That's a very full running back room, so I don't see a playing-time advantage for him going to Miami, just because of sheer numbers. It doesn't really make sense unless it's proximity. That would be the only thing that I would see.

"If you look at the Ohio State running back room, I can see two or three of those guys walking out the door after this year. So I think depth chart-wise and opportunity-wise, even though Ohio State's a much better program than Miami, there might be a better opportunity at Ohio State for him to play, too. It's a big running back room at Miami, so from that standpoint, it doesn't make sense to me that he would flip to Miami. Unless it would be a proximity to home thing where he just doesn't want to go 1,000 miles away from home. But that one just doesn't make a lot of sense to me. But a lot of times recruiting doesn't make sense, believe me.

"I have not heard (the rumors). I know he's visited Miami a lot, I know he's been there a lot and there's just a lot of chatter. To me, it would fall under the, 'Where there's smoke, there could be fire' thing. When I look at it, it doesn't make sense. If they could promise him immediate playing time or a quick path to the field, then I can almost see it, maybe. But it doesn't really make sense. But if it's proximity to home, it could be a girlfriend, it could be a family situation, these are things that I may not be aware of. Maybe once stuff comes out, maybe it does make sense then. But on the surface, it doesn't make a lot of sense.

"And the guys that I'm close with in Florida, the South Florida Express guys, they have not said anything to me about that, so we'll see what happens. They do have San Antonio Veterans Memorial four-star running back James Peoples (5-10, 192) committed, who is a monster, I think. And then Pickerington North three-star athlete Sam Williams-Dixon (5-11, 203), he's also committed, whether they play him at running back or switch to defense, I'm not sure. I'm not sure Lyle would be a huge loss. I'm sure they don't want to lose him, but if I had my choice of Lyle or Peoples, that's not even a comparison for me."

What impact do you feel that the Michigan sign stealing scandal might have on the Wolverines' recruiting, which some already viewed as not at the level it should be coming off back-to-back College Football Playoff appearances?

"I mean, it's not good. These recruits, they read everything we read, believe me. And the only thing for me is, as it relates to Michigan, I can see this class falling apart. I mean, there's almost been a steady drip of news that comes out almost every day, and the news almost gets worse with each day. So I don't know what's coming, and these kids read everything we read, so that's not good for their class.

"As it pertains to Ohio State, I look at (Michigan's) class almost every day and it's like, I don't really see a fit for anyone in that class. The only one I see a fit for is Kansas City (Mo.) Rockhurst four-star offensive tackle Andrew Sprague (6-8, 295). He's not from Michigan, so he doesn't have any ties to the program that way. That is a guy that would really interest me. But as I went down the list guy-by-guy, it's either an area that Ohio State doesn't really need or an area where Ohio State already has better players committed, so I didn't see a lot there.

"My first thought was that it was almost like when Joe Paterno was forced out of Penn State. They had a great recruiting class and Urban Meyer went through and just picked that thing clean. I think there were two or three of them Meyer picked out of that Penn State class, so that was the first thing I looked at was trying to think that there could be a comparable situation. And then it was like, 'Well, I don't want that guy. I don't think they'd want that guy. I don't think they'd want that guy.' And it was pretty much that way for the whole class, other than Sprague.

"I think those guys (at Michigan) are all at risk. Nobody wants to enter into that situation, and people are predicting just horrible things – maybe not so much today, but going forward for Michigan. Jim Harbaugh may not be there, and the coordinators may be getting fired. I've covered recruiting for 25 years and I know what things trigger these kids and their parents, and this is it. This is it. I mean, this is bad. I think every kid in that class is at risk for someone to come in and pick through it. The only thing is, a lot of (the recruits) want to sign in December, and nothing is going to be decided by December, I don't think, unless Harbaugh is gone by then. But you're not going to get penalties by the first signing period, and you're probably not going to get penalties announced even during the second signing period if the kids wait until February. I don't think they can really wait and see if Michigan survives this. I think those kids are at risk. I really think that whole recruiting class is at risk."

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

ries. Heights will face No. 6 Medina (9-3) in the next round.

“This is the first time the program has gotten past the second round,” Cleveland Heights coach Mac Stephens told Cleveland.com, “but we’re not satisfied. We have goals that we set prior to the year that we still want to reach.”

Division I, Region 2 – No. 12 Springfield (7-5) at No. 4 Centerville (9-3): Ohio State cornerback commitment Aaron Scott (6-2, 190) helped lead Springfield to another upset this postseason, when the Wildcats knocked off Centerville 17-10.

With Springfield up 10-3 with just over two minutes remaining, Scott provided the game-clinching score, carrying the ball on a sweep for a score inside the red zone. The Wildcats’ uphill path continues into the third round, where they will face No. 1 Lewis Center Olentangy (11-1).

“We can make it to state,” Scott told the Dayton Daily News. “We can make history. No team that went 5-5 has made it to state. We could be the first to do it. Why not?”

Division I, Region 3 – No. 6 Hilliard Darby (6-6) at No. 3 Pickerington North (11-1): Williams-Dixon and Pickerington North are moving on after they took down Hilliard Darby 35-16 in the second round. Next up for the Panthers is No. 2 Hilliard Bradley (11-1).

Division I, Region 4 – No. 6 Cincinnati Elder (7-5) at No. 3 West Chester Lakota West (10-2): Lakota West and four-star tight end Luka Gilbert (6-8, 233), a target of Ohio State in 2025, overcame a second-half deficit in a 24-14 win over Elder.

The Firebirds were down 14-10 in the third before rattling off the final 14 points of

the game for the win. Lakota West will face undefeated No. 2 Cincinnati Princeton (12-0), which it previously lost to 18-3 earlier this season.

Division II, Region 5 – No. 8 Barberton (7-5) at No. 1 Akron Hoban (10-1): An Ohio State pledge in 2025 – three-star linebacker Eli Lee (6-3, 215) – and two 2026 targets in offensive tackle Sam Greer (6-8, 290) and cornerback Elbert Hill IV (5-10, 160) are moving on in the playoffs after a 41-7 win over Barberton.

Hoban led 20-0 at the half, helped in part by a first-half interception by Hill that led to a touchdown. The Knights will face No. 4 Painesville Riverside (9-2) in the next round.

Division II, Region 7 – No. 12 Sunbury Big Walnut (6-6) at No. 4 Uniontown Lake (9-3): Ohio State linebacker commitment Garrett Stover’s (6-0, 195) season came to an end when Big Walnut fell to Lake 21-20 in triple overtime.

The game was a complete shutout through regulation, and both teams added a touchdown in each of the first and second overtimes to make it 14-14 heading into the third extra period. But after a touchdown and missed extra point on Big Walnut’s first possession due to a bobbled snap, Uniontown scored the deciding touchdown and extra point.

Division II, Region 8 – No. 6 Cincinnati Winton Woods (8-4) at No. 3 Cincinnati Withrow (11-1): Withrow and five-star wide receiver and Ohio State commitment Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 185) came out on top in a crosstown battle, ending Winton Woods’ season – and that of four-star defensive end Justin Hill (6-4, 215), an Ohio State 2025 target

OHSAA GAMES TO WATCH, ROUND THREE

- No. 1 Akron Hoban (10-1) vs. No. 4 Painesville Riverside (9-2)
- No. 1 Lakewood St. Edward (10-1) vs. No. 4 Canton McKinley (9-3)
- No. 2 Cleveland Glenville (9-2) vs. No. 3 Shelby (10-2)
- No. 2 Cleveland Heights (11-1) vs. No. 6 Medina (9-3)
- No. 3 Cincinnati Withrow (11-1) vs. No. 2 Troy (11-1)
- No. 3 Pickerington North vs. No. 2 Hilliard Bradley (11-1)
- No. 3 West Chester Lakota West (10-2) vs. No. 2 Cin. Princeton (12-0)
- No. 7 Bellefontaine (10-2) vs. No. 3 Granville (12-0)
- No. 12 Springfield (7-5) vs. No. 1 Lewis Center Olentangy (11-1)

– in a 16-7 win.

Withrow added touchdowns in the first and third quarters, as well as a clinching field goal in the fourth, while Winton Woods’ only score came off a blocked punt returned for a touchdown. Henry added key 26- and 43-yard receptions that both led to scores, and he will hope to carry that momentum as Withrow will face No. 2 Troy (11-1) in the third round.

“We were just taking what they gave us,” Henry told The Cincinnati Enquirer. “They’re a pretty good team. They’re sound. Good defense. We just stayed disciplined and waited for our moment, take what they gave us. Being patient.”

Division III, Region 11 – No. 7 Bellefontaine (10-2) at No. 2 London (11-1): St. Clair threw for 250 yards and four touchdowns – just two fewer than his number of incompletions, finishing 16-of-22 passing – as Belle-

fontaine cruised to a 35-28 upset of London.

The Chieftains will remain the underdog moving forward, however, as they will face No. 3 Granville (12-0) in the next round, looking to knock off another undefeated team.

Division IV, Region 14 – No. 10 Napoleon (6-6) at No. 2 Cleveland Glenville (9-2): Glenville – led by a pair of Ohio State commitments in cornerback Bryce West (5-11, 177) and tight end Damarion Witten (6-4, 215) – took care of business in a 44-7 win over Napoleon.

The Tarblooders’ search for a second consecutive state championship will continue when they face No. 3 Shelby (10-2) in the next round.

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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Schottenstein Center A Pillar For 25 Years

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For many longtime Ohio State fans and traditionalists, the history of Buckeye basketball begins – and maybe even ends – with historic St. John Arena. Located at 410 Woody Hayes Dr., the 13,276-seat venue served as the charming home of the men's and women's basketball programs from 1956-1998, creating over four decades' worth of memories and providing both programs with a unique atmosphere that was considered by many among the best in college basketball at that time.

"The Schott," which can hold 17,500 fans for ice hockey and up to 19,700 for basketball, has endured its fair share of criticism over these first 25 years due to its more spread-out layout and inconvenient location. But it has also helped deliver some iconic moments and housed some all-time teams that will be remembered in Buckeye lore for decades to come.

With the men's and women's basketball teams set to begin their next quarter century at the Schottenstein Center in early November, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is taking a look back at the first 25 years of the arena and examining several moments – both good and bad – that have helped define it during that.

The Best-Laid Plans

The story of the Schottenstein Center begins all the way back in the late 1980s,

when the university – then led by then-president Edward H. Jennings and athletic director Jim Jones – began to mull a plan that would move the Buckeyes' basketball teams out of historic St. John Arena and into a brand-new and much larger multipurpose venue.

Ohio State saw this as an attempt to keep up with their Big Ten rivals, many of whom – Michigan State, Penn State and Wisconsin, to name a few – had developed plans to construct modernized arenas of their own. But for those who attended the school at the time, such as former Schottenstein Center public address announcer and current WTVN sports director Matt McCoy, the mere idea of abandoning St. John Arena was something they did not want to consider.

"It was definitely, at least among my friends, like 'Why do we need a new arena?' " said McCoy, who graduated from Ohio State in 1987 with a degree in broadcast journalism. "Because people, at least in my group, loved the intimacy of St. John Arena. Even in the balcony seats, you felt like you were on top of the court. You're way up high, but they hovered over the court, and that place got loud at big games. So it was more of, 'Do we really need a new arena?' than it was 'Oh, I'm excited to get a new arena.'"

"Having said that, though, you could see the train coming down the tracks. Other places are getting new arenas, and you heard people say, 'Well, Ohio State's basketball facility is behind others.' So you knew it

was coming. But there was just an attachment to St. John Arena. I still have it, to be honest with you."

To make matters worse for McCoy and his friends, Ohio State had entered discussions with the city of Columbus around that same time about potentially moving their home stadium downtown to a location close to where Nationwide Arena currently resides. This was a plan that was heavily pushed by mayor Greg Lashutka – a former Ohio State football player and captain under head coach Woody Hayes from 1963-1965 – and other Columbus business leaders in hopes that the move would help bring a professional sports team to the city, allowing both Ohio State and the new franchise to serve as co-tenants of the new facility.

Although the plan would help boost the city itself, longtime Ohio State beat reporter Steve Helwagen said the potential move downtown would serve as a major travel burden for Ohio State fans, especially students, giving the Buckeyes a lack of a home-court advantage that was never an issue in the previous venue.

"I was a student here in the late '80s, and there was discussion that they needed a new basketball arena," Helwagen said. "And then it was like, 'Can we put it downtown?' There was a penitentiary site downtown, which is right near where Nationwide Arena and the arch for the Union Station is. They wanted to put it down there, potentially, but then it was like 'Well then you have to bus students down and back because it's about a mile-and-a-half, two miles to get down there from campus.' And you just wondered if the students would want to go downtown."

Luckily for Ohio State students, having a home basketball arena over three miles away from the center of campus was not in the future plans of Ohio State's next administration. Led by school president E. Gordon Gee and athletic director Andy Geiger, who assumed their positions in 1990 and 1994, respectively, the university pushed back on the city's proposals and lobbied for the arena to be built near the campus.

These efforts turned successful in the mid-1990s. After it was determined that Ohio State had a primary tenant to build the arena and the city did not, the university received the green light to build a brand-new arena on campus in June of 1995, garnering \$15 million in seed money from the state of Ohio to initiate the building process.

"The state of Ohio got the ball rolling in 1995, and Greg Lashutka was trying like hell to get (the arena) for the city of Columbus," Helwagen said. "But he didn't have a tenant. So the state's looking at him like, 'No.' It was interesting, because there was brief talk that maybe they would locate downtown, but you just couldn't do that."

Gee and Geiger spent the next few months working on the financing of the new arena, working with an initial budget of \$75 million, which included the previously mentioned \$15 million from the state, \$25 million in fundraising and naming rights – \$12.5 of that from the Schottenstein family – and \$35 million in bond sales. That number soon increased after they broke ground on a vacant lot on the corner of Lane Ave. and Olentangy River Road in the spring of 1996, with the final budget for the project

swelling to \$115 million when the venue completed construction on Oct. 29, 1998.

"As a gateway to the university, this center will symbolize Ohio State's commitment to our students, alumni and friends, to our community, and to our future," Gee said on April 2, 1996, during the groundbreaking ceremony.

Strong Start At Schott

While costly, Gee and Geiger hoped Ohio State's new multipurpose arena would help usher in a new era of Buckeye athletics, injecting new life into the programs as they moved closer to the 21st century. This dream came true for the university in the very first year of installation, when the arena spurred a new – and improved – version of Buckeye basketball.

Prior to 1998, the Ohio State men's basketball program had endured a prolonged stretch of poor play, finishing with a combined 47-94 record in the last five seasons in St. John Arena, a lowly 33.3 winning percentage. This poor play disintegrated, however, once the Buckeyes stepped foot in the Schottenstein Center.

Led by second-year head coach Jim O'Brien along with blossoming sophomores Michael Redd and Ken Johnson, as well as junior Scoonie Penn, Ohio State christened the new arena with a memorable first season, completely flipping the script of the year prior (8-22) with a 27-9 final record and an eventual Final Four appearance against UConn, their first since 1967-68.

While many attribute these triumphs to the coaching efforts of O'Brien or the play of Redd (19.5 points, 5.6 rebounds per game), Penn (16.9 points, 3.9 rebounds, 4.3 assists) and Johnson (6.4 points, 5.7 rebounds), those who followed the team that year also witnessed the Schottenstein Center play an integral role in the team's success. The first-year arena served as an obvious home-court advantage for the Buckeyes that season, with the team finishing with a nearly unblemished 14-1 home record.

McCoy, who was starting his first year as public address announcer at the time, said the venue gave the Buckeyes a significant energy boost throughout the season. He felt a clear shift in energy on the very first game of that season against Oakland on Nov. 13, 1998, which Ohio State coincidentally hosted again to start the current season on Nov. 6.

"They're going to play Oakland this year in the first game and there's probably going to be 10,000-12,000 people in there," McCoy said. "There were 19,000 people in there for the first game. It was because of the newness of the arena. And that's not unique to Ohio State. Whenever you open a new arena, people are excited about the new facility. But that place was hopping."

"People complain about the atmosphere in the Schottenstein Center, and I get it. But I'm telling you, in that first year, that atmosphere was great. The place was filled. The team was good. People got loud and behind it. The new facility definitely injected life into the basketball program. Everybody was longing for a winner. They hadn't been to an NCAA Tournament since 1992. And then all of a sudden they have this team that just came out of nowhere. It was a really, really

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fun year because of the new arena, and because of that basketball team.”

Helwagen said he remembers one moment from the middle of that year that best exemplified the energy that was inside that building during those 15 games. On Jan. 9, 1999, Bob Knight (more on pages 8-9) and his then-13th-ranked Indiana Hoosiers came to town on a Saturday, and the Buckeye faithful helped their team to a program-altering 73-56 victory. Helwagen said he saw the fans pack the arena and relentlessly support the team during – and even before – the game, an atmosphere that may still be unmatched to this day.

“They hadn’t been ranked in seven years, and so they went on the road and won a big road game (against Wisconsin) in January,” Helwagen said. “And they entered the rankings (at No. 21). In the next home game (against Indiana), the crowd of 19,000 people gave them a standing ovation before the opening tip. And that’s unheard of. Not up and cheering or whatever, but a standing ovation for the team, because finally winning basketball had come back to Ohio State. That can’t be undersold in any way.”

Memorable Moments

Ohio State’s first season inside the Schottenstein Center may still be fondly remembered today, but there have also been a number of other notable games and moments that happened in the last 25 years that have helped define the arena.

McCoy and Helwagen each listed the Buckeyes’ thrilling 65-64 victory over then-No. 1 Illinois during the 2004-05 season as one of the more memorable games inside the Schottenstein Center. This matchup had Ohio State hand the Illini their first defeat of the season on the very last game of the regular season off a game-winning three-pointer from Matt Sylvester with 5.1 seconds left, a moment that sent the Buckeye faithful into a frenzy and led the students to rush the floor seconds after the buzzer sounded.

“The best atmosphere that place ever had, in my opinion, in the years that I (was the public address announcer) was that Illinois upset in Thad Matta’s first year,” McCoy said. “That place was bonkers. The whole game, they were behind double digits, but the fans wouldn’t give up on them. And then when they made the run, that place went bonkers. It was incredible.

“One of the memorable things about that game was that at halftime, I introduced Gene Smith as the new athletic director at Ohio State. That was his first time waving his hands to the fans. And I remember thinking afterwards, ‘Boy-oh-boy, they have a tough act to follow.’ I mean, that was his first-ever game.”

Also of note was a pair of home games against Wisconsin in the 2006-2007 and 2010-11 seasons as some of the more iconic games and moments in the Schottenstein Center’s history.

The first of the two was a historic matchup on Feb. 25, 2007, which had Ohio State ranked No. 1 in the coaches’ poll and Wisconsin ranked No. 1 in the AP top 25. With the Big Ten regular-season title on the line, the Buckeyes came away with a low-scoring 49-48 victory, securing their second straight conference crown.

“The game went down to the wire – it was a low-scoring game,” McCoy said. “Mike Conley hit a floater to win the game,

but then Wisconsin had a chance to come back and win it, but Ron Lewis blocked the shot. I remember that was his senior day. His last play ever in that arena was to block a shot to win the Big Ten title. That one was a great atmosphere.”

The next memorable game against Wisconsin occurred on March 6, 2011, when No. 1 Ohio State, led by two-time All-American Jared Sullinger, came away with an emotional 93-65 blowout win over the No. 10 Badgers. The Buckeyes had been upset by Wisconsin in Madison a month earlier, a game that ended on a sour note after a Badger fan allegedly spit in Sullinger’s face as he left the Kohl Center floor.

To add fuel to the fire for the next matchup in Columbus, Wisconsin head coach Bo Ryan sent a strong message to the Ohio State locker room at his postgame press conference, saying, “We won the game. Deal with it.”

The program – along with those working in the Schottenstein Center – did not take these comments lightly leading up to the rematch. Equipped with over 1,400 towels that read “Deal With It,” the student section heckled Wisconsin early and often, leading to an unforgettable pregame atmosphere and eventual 28-point blowout win for Ohio State.

“In terms of pregame atmospheres, that’s the best I’ve ever seen,” McCoy said. “The fans were ready for Wisconsin and for Bo Ryan to bring his team in there. Somebody put together a pregame video that they played on the scoreboard that got everybody fired up, and that place was rocking before that game, and Ohio State just blitzed them. (Jon) Diebler went crazy with threes, and they played maybe their best game of the year and just destroyed them. So that atmosphere I’ll always remember.”

But amid these memorable moments, the arena has not gone a quarter century without its pitfalls, and perhaps the biggest gripe fans have with the Schottenstein Center is the arena’s spaced-out seating arrangement. With the multipurpose venue built to fill out to at least 20,000 people for concerts, many critics argue that not only

are there too many seats in the arena, but the seats, especially in the upper section, are too far away from the court.

Those who have been around the arena since its opening in 1998 say its design offers a pro-like atmosphere that is not conducive to raucous college crowds, giving the Buckeyes an almost nonexistent home-court advantage for the majority of their games.

“Unless it’s packed and really loud, it’s a cavern to watch a game in,” said former Columbus Dispatch beat reporter Bob Baptist. “I’m not an architect and don’t know how to design a building. But the thing that stood out to me that makes it such a bad place to watch a game vs. other arenas with the same capacity, such as Nationwide Arena, (is) where the balcony and the upper deck is more on top of the floor than it is in the Schottenstein Center. The upper deck in the Schottenstein Center is a mile from the basketball floor, and that hurts. It would help if the upper deck was closer to the floor. It would also help if the arena was 15,000 or 16,000 people.”

“(The Schottenstein Center) is bigger,” Ohio State basketball historian and author

Lee Caryer added. “It is more spacious. There is more wasted space. The fans are not close to the game, even in the cheap seats. I had season tickets in the last row at midcourt one season (in St. John Arena). That was great. It was exciting, and I was a lot closer in that seat than I’ve ever been in the Schottenstein Center in the upper deck in various locations.

“I remember seeing a game against Michigan State (in 2012) when Draymond Green was there, and I was so high up that I could hardly see the game. It was a great game, but I wish I’d been home watching it on television.”

Caryer and Baptist listed several other aspects of the arena that they argue both hinder the fan experience and prove no comparison to the venue that preceded it. Baptist, who did say he prefers watching hockey games inside the Schottenstein Center because they block off the top section of the stadium, also brought up inflated ticket prices and demanding requirements of season-ticket holders as additional pit-

Continued On Page 32

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Schott Helped Ohio State Reach New Heights

Continued From Page 31

falls of Ohio State's arena. He specifically mentioned a "20-year seat license" that has prevented many fans from becoming season-ticket holders.

"They turned off a lot of fans and season-ticket holders when they instituted that 20-year seat license," Baptist said. "Unless you were a student, faculty or staff, you could not sit downstairs without buying a seat license."

"I remember when they unveiled their plans, I was at an Ohio State golf course. They had architect renderings of what the place was going to look like, and they had all of the ticket plans, and Andy Geiger walked up to me after the press conference and said, 'What do you think?' And I looked at him and I said, 'You just priced me out of the building.'"

Caryer also takes issue with some of the Schottenstein Center's policies. He believes the arena should show more appreciation and respect toward the players and coaches who helped define the illustrious history of the Buckeyes' athletics by having a larger display of the Ohio State Hall of Fame. This is something he argued St. John Arena did for decades, a practice The Schottenstein Center fails to replicate.

"I feel this with a passion," Caryer said. "The Ohio State Athletic Hall of Fame, I mean, it's a big deal. It is a big deal to get

a scholarship offer from Ohio State. It's a big deal to play at Ohio State. It's a big deal to win at Ohio State. But to be in the Ohio State Athletic Hall of Fame, I mean, I can't even imagine what that's like. I've talked to people who are in there, and they basically agree with what I speculate on.

"In St. John, there was a wonderful place for it. It had a physical presence. In the Schottenstein Center, for several years it had a physical presence. And then a few years ago it was taken out, and when I noticed that, I asked around and said, 'Where is it? Why is it (gone)?' So I was with someone who was in the Ohio State Athletic Hall of Fame attending a game, and I told him, and he asked some people. And they said, 'It's all locked away in a room.'"

The drawbacks of the Schottenstein Center may have traditionalists such as Caryer longing for the old days of the more fan-friendly St. John Arena, but for the others, they see the overall impact the arena has had on each of the athletic programs it houses as a positive one. Baptist, Helwagen and McCoy each argued that, despite its faults, the construction of the multipurpose arena has helped elevate each program to new heights.

Baptist and Helwagen both said the arena has had the most positive impact on recruiting, specifically with the men's basketball team. They argued that because the Schottenstein Center possesses top-notch

facilities and resources, from the locker room to the weight room and everything in between, it has allowed Ohio State to compete with its competitors not only in the Big Ten, but across the country.

This is a recent phenomenon that was not available to the program while it was playing in the less-modernized St. John Arena, allowing the basketball program to welcome in top recruits such as Greg Oden, Jared Sullinger and D'Angelo Russell and make 17 NCAA Tournament appearances in 25 seasons at the venue.

"(The Schottenstein Center) definitely turned the program around," Helwagen said. "Kids were coming to play in a state-of-the-art building, and they showed them the backstage areas here with the workout facility and the practice gym and everything else. Very few colleges at that point 25 years ago would have had anything close to matching what Ohio State had. You could say it's a trade-off of the playing arena being fabulous for only five games a year, but everything that attracted players to go play at a college, they had it here at the Schott."

The Schottenstein Center has been the home of three major athletic programs for 25 years and counting, but the verdict may still be out over whether or not the arena has helped or hindered these teams for the last quarter century. McCoy, who has experienced countless sporting events in that venue since its grand opening in 1998, thinks

the arena has served these programs well, providing them with a positive gameday atmosphere that has often received an unfair amount of criticism. However, he also believes the venue can only reach new heights in the next 25 years if the basketball program returns to its once-successful form.

"I have a love affair with St. John Arena," McCoy said. "It was great. Having said that, I think the Schottenstein Center gets a bad rap. Do they make mistakes? Could they have done it better? Yes. However, the basketball team has to contribute to creating the atmosphere. I remember Thad Matta when he came to Ohio State, he had the team running up and down the aisles in an empty Schottenstein Center. And he said to them, 'You guys want to get this place filled? That's your job. Your job is to make this a destination place.' And Thad did that."

"That atmosphere when that team was going and when Thad Matta had it humming and Jim O'Brien had it humming. That atmosphere is good, it just is. And nowadays everybody says 'Oh, the arena is terrible, it's the arena's fault.' It's not the arena's fault. I'm not pointing the finger at the basketball program at all. But when they get good – and they will get good under Chris Holtmann – that place will be hopping again. That's the challenge for any basketball coach, is to make it like that. But it can be in that arena."

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OSU Falls To Clemson In "Secret" Scrimmage

Ohio State's final tune-up before the 2023-24 season came by way of a "secret" scrimmage against Clemson on Oct. 28 in an undisclosed location in Nashville, Tenn., a game that had the Buckeyes reportedly struggle on offense and fall to the Tigers by a score of 86-64.

COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

According to NCAA rules, both teams were prohibited from releasing the results of the game to the public and no fans or reporters were allowed inside the facility. But some information regarding the matchup slipped through the cracks and into the hands of reporters, giving fans a glimpse of how the team is shaping up before the regular season begins.

According to reports, Ohio State struggled on the offensive end throughout the game, failing to make shots at a consistent rate and succumbing to a bevy of turnovers against a defense that allowed the third-fewest points per game in the ACC last season (67.9). The Buckeyes' shortcomings specifically fell on backcourt players and promising sophomores Bruce Thornton and Roddy Gayle Jr., who had what was described by The Co-

lumbus Dispatch as a "learning experience" against the Tigers.

Gayle – who also reportedly struggled to take care of the ball – and Thornton are both expected to play significant roles on this year's Ohio State team, with head coach Chris Holtmann saying that he will need them to lead the program both on and off the court this year if they want to rebound from a tough campaign.

The two returning sophomores struggled against Clemson, but the Buckeyes had a much better outing from another tandem of guards, Baylor transfer Dale Bonner and Penn State transfer Evan Mahaffey, who flashed their two-way abilities.

Switching to the frontcourt, the Buckeyes played without fifth-year Minnesota transfer forward Jamison Battle, who was out due to a family matter, and true freshman forward Devin Royal, who missed the scrimmage with a minor injury. Despite playing shorthanded, Ohio State still received a solid performance from its frontcourt players, which led to an advantage in rebounds in the loss.

Ohio State's successes in the paint may have been attributed to a notable lineup tweak Holtmann installed in the scrimmage. He started both forward Zed Key and center Felix Okpara at the four and five positions, respectively, and played them at those same positions for extended stretches. Holtmann had previously flirted with implementing this "big" lineup this season as a way to increase production and physicality in the paint.

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

While it is unclear how the tandem played together during the scrimmage, the two big men are poised to make more of an impact this season due to their skill sets and frames, with Key (6-8) slimming down from 253 to 235 pounds and Okpara (6-11) bulking up from 207 to 235.

Ohio State's private scrimmage against Clemson, which is projected to finish fifth in the ACC this year, gives the team a 1-1 record in scrimmages and exhibitions this fall. The Buckeyes defeated Dayton in a charity exhibition held at UD Arena on Oct. 22 by a final score of 78-70.

Holtmann and his squad will begin the regular season on Nov. 6 with a home tilt against Oakland. For coverage of the game, visit BuckeyeSports.com, and look for a full recap in the Nov. 18 issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

Holtmann Plans Smaller Rotation This Season

Last season, Holtmann and his staff extended considerable playing time to the majority of his roster, with 10 of his 13 scholarship players earning at least 10 minutes of floor time per game. Holtmann is planning to alter that approach this year, however, indicating after the Dayton exhibition that he wants to institute a tighter rotation all year.

"I don't know if we'll necessarily play 10 or 11 guys," Holtmann said following the exhibition win. "I think we'll probably play a bit of a shorter rotation at times this year. You don't always get to see that in an exhibition. I think we ended up playing 11 guys, but nine or 10 fairly consistently."

Holtmann did not specifically say which players would earn significant minutes for the

Buckeyes this season, but he did provide fans with a glimpse of what the rotations could look like against the Flyers. He mixed and matched with a number of different lineups – even starting an almost completely different starting five in each half, with only Thornton penciled in both lineups. But he did reward nine players with at least 18 minutes of floor time.

The Buckeyes had five players earn at least 20 minutes of playing time, with Thornton leading the charge with 28, followed by Bonner (26), Gayle (25), Battle (22) and Key (21). Holtmann also gave significant playing time to a quartet of underclassmen, with Royal and Mahaffey each getting 19 minutes of play, and freshman guard Scotty Middleton and Okpara seeing the floor for 18 minutes.

Holtmann's plan to shorten the end of his bench this season may allow his best players to impact the game more, but it also could spell trouble for a group of younger Buckeyes who are trying to crack into the rotation.

A few scholarship players who may see limited time on the floor this season could be forward Kalen Etzler, guard Bowen Hardman and center Owen Spencer, who each played under four minutes per game last year and logged a combined four minutes against Dayton. Freshmen Austin Parks and Taison Chatman, meanwhile, have both been dealing with injuries this fall.

ESPN's Lunardi Sees OSU Returning To Big Dance

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OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Buckeyes as a No. 10 seed in the East Region.

Lunardi, who updated his bracket on Oct. 24, has Ohio State earning one of the last four byes of the tournament, a position they share with fellow No. 10 seeds Indiana and St. John's along with No. 11 seed Iowa State. This ranking comes after the Buckeyes were named one of the first four out in Lunardi's previous projection, meaning Holtmann's squad would have been on the outside looking in when the field of 68 was announced.

The Big Ten is well represented in Lunardi's bracket with eight teams earning berths, tied for the most out of any conference with the SEC. The Buckeyes would be joined in the Big Dance by Indiana in addition to No. 1 Michigan State, No. 1 Purdue, No. 6 Illinois, No. 8 Wisconsin, No. 8 Maryland and No. 11 Northwestern.

The 2024 NCAA Tournament begins on March 19 with the First Four at Dayton's UD Arena and runs until the national championship game at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Ariz., on April 8. The entire field of 68 will be revealed on March 17.

Five-Star Guard Peterson Enjoys Second Visit To OSU

Huntington (W.Va.) Prep five-star shooting guard Darryn Peterson (6-5, 195) – one of the best prospects in the 2025 class – took his second unofficial visit to Ohio State on Oct. 21. Peterson, who visited with his family and was seen taking in the football team's 20-12 victory over Penn State, was reportedly impressed by the campus and Holtmann's program, with his father, Darryl, saying that it affirmed their interest in the Buckeyes.

"We always said Ohio State from the beginning, just being Ohio guys," he told The Columbus Dispatch. "But people (were) saying, 'Can you get everything you want from a place like that?' Going on campus for the second time, it answered the question the first time but that was more of a visit, seeing the place.

"This time it was more, we saw film, saw some offensive stuff, and saw the practices. The time was more letting us see that we can get what we need from a place like Ohio State."

Peterson, who grew up in northeast Ohio and attended Cuyahoga Valley (Ohio) Christian Academy last year, has shown increasing interest in Ohio State this fall. He placed the Buckeyes in his top 16 list of schools on Sept. 23, a list that included Big Ten rivals Indiana, Michigan and Michigan State along with blue bloods Kentucky, North Carolina, and UCLA, among others.

According to the Dispatch, Peterson is also planning to put Ohio State in his top eight, which he is planning to reveal in the coming months, a decision that was made because Holtmann's program has shown that he can get all the resources and guidance he needs in Columbus to thrive and take his game to the next level.

"All these places are great, but we're Ohio guys," Darryl Peterson said. "We're an Ohio family. Ohio State means a lot to us as a family, being a hometown kid. We've been to all the top campuses – Kentucky and Kansas and all these places – and Ohio State's facility and everything is just as great. You don't have to go to those big places to get everything that you need. It feels good to see they have that kind of stuff here at home."

Peterson is entering his junior season at Huntington Prep as the nation's third-best

prospect, No. 1 shooting guard and the No. 1 player in West Virginia. With his stock rising this fall, Peterson and his family have set their sights on him developing into a nationally recognized prospect with one-and-done potential.

The junior also has plans to win at the collegiate level, and luckily for Ohio State, he and his family see the Buckeyes being able to provide both.

"You've got to love who loves you," Darryl Peterson said. "One thing about them, they make us feel important. They make us feel like, 'Hey, we know he's a big-time kid who can go anywhere, but we can do the same thing for him here at Ohio State.' Darryn wants to be a No. 1 pick. They're saying they can help him do that from here. Darryn wants to win a national championship. They're saying, let's get that guy, we can do that from here.

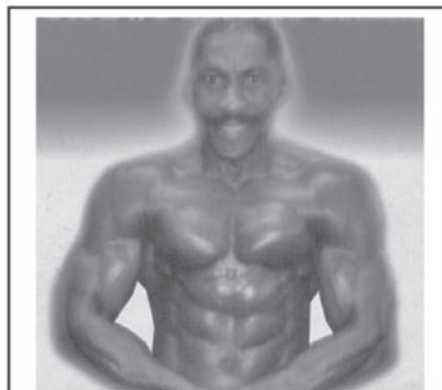
"Coach Holtmann said, 'I've never had a caliber of player ever here as far as this type of player,' a generational talent, the best player since LeBron James in Ohio."

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Minnesota transfer Battle has been named one of 20 players on the Julius Erving Small Forward of the Year preseason watch list, the Naismith Basketball Hall Of Fame announced on Oct. 25. He is joined on the list by Iowa's Payton Sandfort, Michigan State's Coen Carr and Wisconsin's Tyler Wahl, among others.

- Glen Head (N.Y.) Long Island Lutheran four-star power forward Alier Maluk (6-9, 180), a 2025 prospect, verbally pledged to Florida State on Oct. 20. Maluk placed Ohio State in his top five list on Oct. 12, a group that also included the Seminoles, LSU, Pittsburgh and Oregon.

- In national recruiting news, Montverde, Fla. Montverde Academy five-star power forward Cooper Flagg (6-8, 195), a 2024 prospect, announced his pledge to Duke on Oct. 30. Flagg is the top overall prospect in high school and the unanimous favorite to be the No. 1 pick in the 2025 NBA draft. He committed to the Blue Devils over UConn.



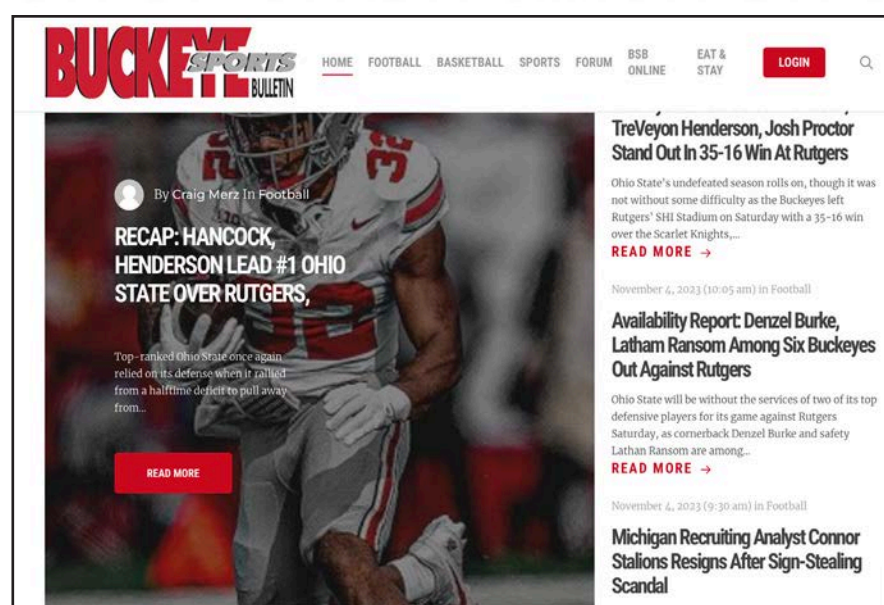
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Sophomore McMahon Adding Responsibility

Ohio State sophomore forward Cotie McMahon is entering just her second season with the program, but she is expected to be among the team's leaders this year – both on and off the floor – after a breakout freshman campaign.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

While McMahon's talent was evident, averaging 15.1 points and 5.5 rebounds on 51.0 percent shooting, it's her leadership that has impressed coaches and teammates this offseason, with the already vocal and outspoken McMahon taking a further step in that area.

"She's out there and doing a good job of communicating," head coach Kevin McGuff said. "She's playing really hard and setting a great example in terms of her effort and intensity on a daily basis, so I think she's taken some positive steps in that space."

McMahon said earlier in the offseason that she feels a greater responsibility to step up for Ohio State as a leader, especially with Taylor Mikesell no longer here. That includes setting the tone in practice – and eventually in games – and lifting her teammates up when needed.

It won't be fully realized until the Buckeyes take the court this season, but it's a task that McMahon has taken head on.

"It's made me want to better myself for my team," she said. "Every day they expect me to show up ready to work and with a positive attitude and just be excited and have fun, so that's what I'm going to do."

"Basketball, it's very serious, but it doesn't always need to be serious. What they look for out of me is to come in and just make it fun, make it less serious and more relaxed."

For as much responsibility as McMahon is adding in the leadership department, there's just as much pressure adding to her on-the-court performance, where she could take a leap as one of the best players in the Big Ten – and maybe even in the country. In line to be the focal point of Ohio State's offensive efforts,

McMahon is expected to expand her scoring output while continuing to refine her game.

It's been well-reflected in preseason honors, with McMahon named a preseason All-Big Ten selection as well as to the watch list for the Cheryl Miller Award, given to the best small forward in women's college basketball. But those accolades don't mean much to McMahon if she and the Buckeyes are not where they want to be at the end of the season.

"I'm very blessed to have all the accolades and stuff like that, but that means nothing without proving yourself each year," she said. "Honestly, each year is a whole new clean slate. Going into my sophomore year is just like going into my freshman year. I have something to prove. It's just kind of the same mentality – not too much pressure, just play my game, and everything else will take care of itself."

Team Chemistry Continues Building

Ohio State is expected to have a new starter in guard Celeste Taylor as well as a rotational piece in forward Taiyier Parks, who are both coming into the program as transfers, with Taylor arriving from Duke and Parks coming from Michigan State.

Chemistry between new teammates is always a work in progress – and will not truly become apparent until the season begins – but McGuff believes the team is in a good spot when it comes to assimilating the newest Buckeyes.

"I think the chemistry is good," he said. "I like the way the kids are playing together and sharing the ball, so I think that's a good space."

Taylor has made a particularly strong impact on her teammates, coming in to help Ohio State's efforts on the defensive end of the floor. But while Taylor – the reigning ACC Defensive Player of the Year – was always going to excel on defense, she has continued to take steps on the offensive end, where Ohio State will need her following the departure of Mikesell, who shot the lights out at shooting guard over the last two seasons.

"She's awesome," fifth-year guard Jacy Sheldon said of Taylor. "We got along right when she got here, but the chemistry with me and her playing has gotten a lot better, and it's going to continue to get better as

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.

we play.

"She's really fun to play with, she's easy to play with and gets her hands on everything. She's really good on the offensive side of the ball, too, so we love that she's here and we're super happy. She's going to help us a lot."

McGuff Could Employ Larger Guard Rotation

Ohio State's rotation at guard over the last few seasons has mostly been limited to Sheldon and Mikesell playing the majority of minutes with Rikki Harris coming off the bench, but this season, McGuff is hoping to spread minutes around for the Buckeye guards.

"Knock on wood, if we can stay healthy, we'll have a larger rotation than what we've had in the past," he said. "I think that will be really beneficial for resting people like Jacy a little bit more than we have in the past."

Sheldon and Taylor are still expected to play the majority of minutes at guard – along with Taylor Thierry, though she is arguably the most positionless player on the roster – but McGuff has no shortage of potential options beyond those three.

Harris is still expected to be first off the bench for Ohio State, but the Buckeyes can also look to sophomore Emma Shumate, who led the team with 27 blocks last season, as well as sophomores Kaia Henderson and Kennedy Cambridge.

Neither Henderson nor Cambridge played much last season – with Cambridge's freshman season played at Kentucky – but could see extended minutes this year as Ohio State grapples with the reality of losing Sheldon and Taylor following this season. There's also a case to be made for freshman guard Diana Collins – assuming she is ready to play – getting some minutes in her first year, because she has the talent to see a significant role for the Buckeyes beginning next season.

While Ohio State is not going to take important minutes away from Sheldon and Taylor this season as the team looks to return to the Elite Eight, McGuff said they will look at ways to get some of the younger guards on the roster into games.

"We'll put the focus on making sure we win and have the best year we can possibly have," he said, "but we certainly want to get some of the younger players some minutes just to get some experience for the future."

Greene Continues Rehab, Other Open Practice Observations

Ohio State held an open practice on Oct. 30 at The Schottenstein Center, with the team practicing in front of a couple hundred fans just days ahead of the sea-

son beginning, followed by a meet-and-greet for fans with the players and coaches.

"I want to thank you all for coming out today," McGuff said. "We're really excited about the season. We're really proud of the young women we have in the program. We've got great kids that are working extremely hard, and we're really excited about this season."

"We're going to really need your help because we have one of the most difficult schedules in the country. We're playing really excellent teams in the nonconference, and then the Big Ten schedule is going to be one of the hardest that we've ever had."

"But we need you guys to be at the Schott. We need you to bring your friends, your neighbors, your cousins, anybody you can get to come with you, because it's going to be a great season and we're looking forward to you guys being along for the ride with us."

During the open practice session, Madison Greene appeared to be a full participant, running drills alongside her teammates and doing so without a brace. But McGuff cautioned that Greene, who is expected back in mid-November, is not fully cleared yet.

"Madison's doing things but not full-go yet," McGuff said. "But outside of that, we're in good shape. She's doing some stuff on the court with us. Not full-go, but getting closer."

Also of note during the practice was an apparent starting five that shaped up for the Buckeyes, including Sheldon, Taylor, Thierry, McMahon and forward Rebeka Mikulášiková. While Mikulášiková ended up out of Ohio State's starting lineup by the time last season ended, McGuff has been pleased with how she has handled her offseason and expects her to be a starter again for the Buckeyes this year.

The Buckeyes appeared otherwise healthy, with all 15 scholarship players participating in the open practice. That includes Cambridge, who had not been seen practicing so far this offseason due to an undisclosed reason.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Ohio State held a secret scrimmage at Kentucky on Oct. 28, and while a score has yet to leak out, McGuff felt positive coming out of the scrimmage, saying, "It was good to play an SEC opponent. They have some talent. So overall, I'd say pretty good."

- This issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press on Nov. 6, the day of Ohio State's season opener at No. 21 USC. For full coverage, visit BuckeyeSports.com, and look for a full recap in our next issue.



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Former Bucks Lohrei, Tomkins Have A Night

The second night of November was special for the Ohio State men's hockey team and a historic one for the NHL.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

No, the milestones set by two former Buckeyes were not about performance or setting records, but their appearances on the ice created a pair of firsts. In Columbus at Nationwide Arena, Matt Tomkins made his second NHL start for the Tampa Bay Lightning to become the first Ohio State goaltender in NHL history to play against the hometown Blue Jackets.

Meanwhile, in Boston, defenseman Mason Lohrei, who at this time a year ago was in his sophomore season for the Buckeyes, made his NHL debut for the Bruins vs. the Toronto Maple Leafs. He was born in Baton Rouge while his father, David, was head coach of the Kingfish of the ECHL, making him the first Louisiana-born player to play at least one regular-season or playoff game in the NHL.

With Lohrei making it official, the NHL said 42 U.S. states (plus the District of Columbia) have had at least one player play for an NHL team. The eight remaining states are Arkansas, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, New Mexico, Tennessee, West Virginia and Wyoming.

The results were mixed for Tomkins and Lohrei. Tomkins, a seventh-round selection (No. 199) by the Chicago Blackhawks in the 2012 NHL draft who played for Ohio State from 2013-17, came within 20 minutes of his first NHL victory before the Blue Jackets rallied from a 2-1 deficit in the third period for a 4-2 win, including an empty-net goal.

Lohrei, 22, made a strong first impression after his call-up from Providence of the American Hockey League. With three regular defensemen out of the Bruins' lineup, he logged 21:28 of ice time, a high number for a player in his debut, in the 3-2 shootout win. He also earned his first point with a secondary assist on a first-period goal by Pavel Zacha.

"He was dynamite. He played really well," Bruins head coach Jim Montgomery said. "His poise with the puck in all three zones was very noticeable. He made a lot of intelligent hockey plays."

Montgomery had a simple message for Lohrei before the game: "Enjoy the moment. You belong in the league. Show everybody why."

And Lohrei listened to his coach.

"Once the puck drops, you get rid of the nerves pretty quick and you're just playing the game," he said. "I felt good. I was trying to keep it simple and had some good partners to work with. Keep it simple, play fast, use my poise to make plays when I can."

The fact Montgomery had no hesitation rolling with Lohrei did not go unnoticed by the rookie.

"You get pretty comfortable, and it's good for your confidence when they keep calling



FILE PHOTO

BAYOU STATE BUCKEYE — Former Ohio State defenseman Mason Lohrei made his NHL debut for the Boston Bruins on Nov. 2, becoming the first Louisiana-born player to compete in an NHL game.

your number," said Lohrei, who even got 1:43 of ice time on the penalty kill.

"I've penalty killed my whole life. I did it in junior, we had a really good penalty kill at Ohio State, so it's not new to me," he said. "Obviously doing it up here is new and harder, but it's a great group up here to learn from. Coach (Joe) Sacco has been great, watching film and stuff. I just try to use my stick and my size. I like to play all situations, and the PK is one of them."

Lohrei's strength is his offensive skills, but he's learning the defensive side and almost made the Bruins' roster at the beginning of the season.

"You could see in training camp that he's gifted," Bruins captain Brad Marchand said. "Big kid, skates well, really smart with the puck. What I liked about his game tonight is he didn't try to do too much. That's where you can get in trouble a little bit. When you have that kind of talent and ability, you sometimes want to try to do too much, and he didn't do that. He made strong plays, competed hard and took what was in front of him. He had a really good game."

Letdown

Tomkins, 29, took a longer route than Lohrei to the NHL. He spent many years in the North American minor leagues before heading overseas. He signed with the Lightning in the offseason and was added to the roster when All-Star goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy injured his back earlier this season.

Jonas Johansson became the starter, and

Tomkins made his debut on Oct. 15, making 34 saves in a 5-2 loss to the Ottawa Senators. Lightning defenseman Darren Raddysh said prior to the game in Columbus that he and his teammates were driven to play well in front of Tomkins.

"You want to do your best for a guy like him. He's an unbelievable dude," Raddysh said. "He's a great teammate. I've known him for seven years now when we started together in Rockford (AHL). To see him get the opportunity and how hard he works and everything he does, it gives us a little bit of motivation to try to get him this first win and try to start this career for him."

"He earned his dues and he's here now, and I think he's a pretty good goalie."

Lightning coach Jon Cooper said starting Tomkins in Columbus was on his mind, but the schedule was the main factor.

"When you talk to him," Cooper said, "I think he's the first one that says he cherishes this league so whether he was playing or not, he's pretty happy-go-lucky and just gives you that, 'Put me in, Coach, I'm ready to go anytime.'"

"But for us, we don't completely calculate where guys are going to play, but we do have a plan and we've had some days off between games and so it's pretty easy for (Johansson), I think, to handle those, but now the games get a little more condensed and Tom is going to play. This one just kind of fit on the calendar at the right time for him. So, it's out of the corner of our eye, we did notice that he's had success here (with Ohio State)."

Tomkins made a save on a breakaway by Johnny Gaudreau in the opening minute and looked comfortable holding the lead going into the third period before the Blue Jackets scored a pair of quick goals to take the lead.

"I feel bad for Matty," Lightning captain Steven Stamkos said. "He played two awesome games and doesn't have anything to show for it. That's on us as a team to reward him for the effort he's given and the performances he's had. Hopefully, he'll get another

crack."

Cooper was displeased by the team's effort more so than Tomkins in the final period.

"His confidence shouldn't be down," the coach said. "He didn't have that tough a night until we gave up some looks in the third period. You feel bad he couldn't come up with one of those, but I don't know if anybody is (going to)."

"It's too bad because for most of the game he played well enough to win. A disappointing third period, no question."

Tomkins wasn't the first Ohio State goalie to play against an Ohio NHL team, however. Bill McKenzie, who would later be a longtime assistant to Ohio State coach Jerry Welsh, played for the Colorado Rockies twice against the Cleveland Barons in the 1977-78 season in matchups of soon-to-be defunct franchises.

Spartan Result

No. 12 Michigan State defeated the No. 13 Buckeyes 6-0 and 5-4 at Value City Arena on Nov. 3-4.

The Spartans (7-3-0, 2-0-0) scored twice in the first period of the opener, added another in the second then dominated with three more scores in the final period.

Ohio State (3-3-3, 0-3-1) got off to a good start in the rematch when Brent Johnson scored 11 seconds into the game, but the Buckeyes couldn't hold a 4-3 lead early in the third. Defenseman Scooter Brickey had two goals for the Buckeyes.

Up Next

The Buckeyes will travel to South Bend, Ind., for a series against Notre Dame on Nov. 10-11, with both games available to watch on Peacock.

For a complete recap of the Michigan State series go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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OSU Fans' View Of Season Blurred By Outlook

Expectations can be a maddening thing.

It turns what should be a reason to celebrate into something to be concerned about. It takes the joy from an accomplishment and makes you wonder whether you accomplished anything at all. It's what Ohio State has to live with every week of every football season.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsmann

The latest example is its 35-16 victory over Rutgers. The Buckeyes went on the road against an improving team and covered an 18.5-point spread yet still had a bunch of detractors within their own fan base. They start too slow. The quarterback is mid. The line-backers stink. Why do they even have special teams?

All of those are actual social media comments either during or after the contest – a contest that, from this perch, wasn't any reason to get up in arms.

The fact that the Buckeyes have beaten Rutgers like a drum in every previous meeting probably had a bit to do with the tepid reaction after the victory. Rutgers led at halftime, and it was actually able to put together a few solid drives but not ultimately able to cash them in.

Too many people remember Rutgers as 1970s-era Northwestern, which it was when it entered the Big Ten. But Greg Schiano – who turned the Scarlet Knights into a more than respectable outfit in his first coaching stint – seems to know what buttons to push to get the program going. Rutgers is already bowl-el-

igible and has one of the tougher defenses around. The corners are really good, and Aaron Lewis will be a Sunday player.

The fact that Rutgers led Ohio State at half-time showed that the Scarlet Knights are progressing but have not quite reached the level to which they aspire.

"I think it's one of the signs. I think there are a lot of signs," Schiano said. "The way that we played defense today, we've played all season, the way that we ran the ball. But we also gave up a pick-six. There's a lot of signs, good and not so good. But we are getting better. I don't know how to put it other than we are not there yet. We are a work-in-progress."

So while the Buckeyes dwarf Rutgers in terms of talent, we all know that talent alone doesn't automatically add up to victories. In football especially, talent can take a back seat to chemistry. Right now, it looks like the Buckeyes are going more on the latter than the former. But it's working, whatever the formula.

And that's all that is important at the moment.

Ohio State settled in at No. 1 in the initial College Football Playoff rankings that were released on Oct. 31, but that ensures the Buckeyes absolutely nothing. And Ryan Day knows this.

"Our goal is to be No. 1 at the end," Day said. "All it means is we are off to a good start, and we've beaten some good teams. It doesn't mean anything to us. It's good for the fans. We know we're going to take everyone's best shot, and we did today. Give Rutgers credit."

Rutgers was able to run the ball a bit better than other teams have and got inventive when running back Kyle Monangai broke off a 45-yard run to the shadow of Ohio State's end zone. Rutgers used a version of the fumbler-

ooski, with quarterback Gavin Wimsatt taking the snap then putting the ball between his legs and handing it off to Monangai, who broke a tackle at the line of scrimmage and scampered to daylight. It was the first play of 40-plus yards allowed by the Buckeyes all year, but as it has so many times this season, the defense stiffened and limited Rutgers to a field goal.

That was the story of the day, really. Rutgers ventured into OSU's red zone six times but scored only one touchdown. After a 93-yard pick six by Jordan Hancock made the score 14-9 Ohio State, there was never much worry about the outcome, at least from here. It seemed to give the Buckeyes confidence, too.

"It was a point there in the second half we put the defense in a tough spot. Rutgers got the ball in our territory, and the defense hung in there," Day said. "The pick-six certainly opened things up."

Ohio State scored 28 points after halftime, largely because it leaned on TreVeyon Henderson to get things going. For the second straight week, Henderson was the catalyst for the offense, finishing with 128 yards and a touchdown on 22 carries and adding 80 more yards on five receptions.

It's been said before in this space but will be said again – it's jaw-dropping how quick Henderson's feet and burst are. He sees a hole, shifts his weight almost imperceptibly and goes, usually for a big gain. He can also get physical, as he showed with a couple of shoulder-leaning finishes that stopped Rutgers defenders in their tracks.

Henderson had just 51 yards at the break, but Ohio State went to him early and often in the second 30 minutes because it found something to exploit in Rutgers' defense.

"Early on, they were playing us in a two-high shell," Day said. "They dropped the safeties real deep and put clouds on both sides to take that part away, so we kind of recognized that at halftime and realized we've got to be patient enough to run the ball down the field. You'd have to ask Greg, but their philosophy was probably, 'Well, they're going to have to be patient enough to run the ball down the field and take the receivers out of the game.'"

Rutgers brings the added element of a running quarterback, but Ohio State did a pretty good job keeping Wimsatt in check. He managed just 3.8 yards per carry and had just one long run, of 17 yards. His passing is a work in progress, which allowed the Buckeyes to channel their focus toward stopping the Scarlet Knights' ground attack.

"I feel like this team finds a way," Day said. "They don't panic, they keep swinging, they keep fighting. We said in the offseason how we want to play better in the second half. We're going to continue to do that – take care of the ball better. I thought we played well in the second half. You have to bring it every week, and I think our guys are doing that."

The win was another step in the progression of Kyle McCord as quarterback, and unlike Wisconsin, where he seemed to never really settle in, McCord was quite good against Rutgers. He completed 73.1 percent of his passes and really threw just one bad one all day, which resulted in an interception. People lament that he isn't seeing open receivers or that he holds the ball too long. Both things may be true.

But here is the bottom line – he is learning

to not put the ball in harm's way, so instead of forcing it into a spot, he checks it down, lives to fight another play. You can do that when you have a defense as good as Ohio State's is.

So McCord isn't the next Justin Fields or C.J. Stroud. Who is? Those guys don't come along very often. Fans need to allow him to be who he is – a tough competitor who seems to get better as the game goes on, and who thrives at crunch time. If they can take the warts that come with it, they will be much better off.

Stumbling Out Of The Blocks

During Day's tenure as head coach, Ohio State is known for putting up what analysts called an avalanche of points. It might take a series or two, but once the offense got going it was, "Katy, bar the door." Most teams are helpless to stop it, but this year has been different.

Ohio State has scored just 54 points in the first quarter, just a touchdown on average. That leads people to believe that the Buckeyes are solely a second-half team.

While they have been more consistent in the second half, it might be surprising to learn that OSU has scored more points in the second quarter (86) than any other quarter this season. That's almost 10 points on average, a good portion of Ohio State's 32.8 points per game.

There isn't much concern about the start, at least from the players.

"We were not worried. We have been a second-half team all year," said receiver Marvin Harrison Jr., who finished with just 25 yards on four catches against Rutgers. But two of those grabs were fourth-quarter touchdowns on back-shoulder fades. "It's unfortunate we haven't gotten off to the start we would like, but we weren't worried."

Down The Stretch They Come

As the calendar grows shorter, the window of opportunity grows smaller. There will be fewer chances for teams to polish up their résumés as the bulk of the work is behind them.

There are still some potential season-changing matchups on Nov. 11, including Ole Miss (which has its only loss against Alabama) going to Georgia; unbeaten Washington hosting Utah, who knocked off the Huskies the last time they played in Seattle in 2019; Oregon facing a desperate USC; and Michigan facing Penn State, with both teams having a ton on the line.

Those games will help to shape the College Football Playoff, for good or bad, as will the games played during the rest of November, so it will all work itself out. For now, these are who this scribe feels are the most accomplished teams in college football:

1. Ohio State (9-0)
2. Washington (9-0)
3. Florida State (9-0)
4. Texas (8-1)
5. Georgia (9-0)
6. Alabama (8-1)
7. Michigan (9-0)
8. Oregon (8-1)
9. Ole Miss (8-1)
10. Penn State (8-1)
11. Louisville (8-1)
12. Kansas (7-2)

Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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Frankly, A Good Day To Avoid Knight Loss

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

As most of you know, we have been looking back – both in print and online – at Ohio State’s 1998 football team, one of the better editions of the club, but one that left most Buckeye fans unfulfilled, despite a No. 2 finish in the county when all was said and done. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the ‘98 team.

As our look back at the team progressed through the fall, all of us knew what was ultimately coming in our coverage, and it finally came. The Friday before Ohio State’s game with Rutgers, I edited Mark Rea’s comprehensive look at Michigan State’s stunning upset of the Buckeyes (see pages 22-23) on Nov. 7, 1998, derailing what seemed an inevitable march to OSU’s first national championship in 30 years. It was one of the biggest upsets of the Buckeyes in school history.

After reading the story, I had monumental upsets on my mind while watching the current Buckeyes tangle with the Scarlet Knights. When Rutgers took a 9-7 lead into halftime, I assumed Ohio State’s superior talent would ultimately wear Greg Schiano’s team down, but there was that slight seed of doubt in the back of my mind. As I expected, the Buckeyes took a 21-9 lead late in the third quarter, and with the Buckeyes’ stout defense, I figured the game was finally under control.

But I will admit in front of the entire Buckeye Sports Bulletin Nation that when Rutgers scored a touchdown to start the fourth quarter and pull to 21-16, I wondered – or is it worried – if I was about to witness another monumental upset. Footballs bounce funny ways – see the Michigan State upset – and Schiano is known for his bag of tricks. His well-coached team had both moved the ball against the vaunted OSU defense and confounded Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord at times as well. Was it possible that I would witness an upset of the Buckeyes even bigger than that by the Spartans?

No.

For all the things that Rutgers had going for it, there were two things that the Knights didn’t have – TreVeyon Henderson and Marvin Harrison Jr. Leading by five points and facing a third-and-9 at their own 26 early in the fourth quarter, the Buckeyes were at a possible upset crossroads. McCord threw a short pass to Henderson, who bobbed and weaved his way 65 yards to the Rutgers 9. Three plays later McCord hit Harrison for a 4-yard touchdown, and even a Nervous Nellie like me knew that there wasn’t going to be a monumental upset on this afternoon. Harrison tacked on another touchdown reception to make the final score a more respectable 35-16.

Years from now people scanning the record book will see a 19-point Ohio State victory. Little will they know that there was a possibility of a big upset. Schiano has taken his team a long way since returning to Rutgers, but not quite that far.

Rutgers Odds And Ends

- While Ohio State is playing solid defense under Jim Knowles this season, that was not the case in 2018, when the Buckeyes had one of the worst defenses in program history, a porous defense that may have cost Ohio State a shot at a national championship.

Schiano was defensive coordinator of that team, along with Alex Grinch, who would leave for Oklahoma after that season and then follow Lincoln Riley to USC as his defensive coordinator. Buckeye fans were playing the blame game back in 2018 as to who was responsible for the terrible defense. For some reason, Buckeye Nation had a bug up its butt about Schiano and frequently blamed him.

Fast-forward to 2023. Even after yielding

35 points to Ohio State – six on an interception return – Schiano’s Scarlet Knights rank 20th in the country in scoring defense (17.9 points) and 10th in total defense at 282.4 yards per game.

Meanwhile, Grinch was relieved of his DC duties at USC on Nov. 5 with two games to go in the regular season. The Trojans are giving up 34.5 points, to rank 121st in the country, and 436.0 yards to place 119th at a school with far more football resources than Rutgers.

When it comes to 2018, you be the judge.

- Schiano is not only known for his defensive acumen, but he is also known for his penchant for the trick play. In the second quarter of the game with Ohio State, the Scarlet Knights pulled off a 45-yard bit of trickery on a play the television announcers referred to as the “fumblerooski” play. At the time I wished that I was listening to the game on radio because Buckeye analyst Jim Lachey was part of a failed fumblerooski play in the 1983 Ohio State-Michigan game.

By name alone, you would think that a fumblerooski would require a fumble. In Rutgers’ version, the ball never hit the ground. Rather, quarterback Gavin Wimsatt passed the ball through his legs to Kyle Monangai, who was off to the races.

According to BSB at the time, Ohio State’s version was designed to work like this: “Center Joe Dooley would snap the ball to quarterback Mike Tomczak, then quickly return it to the ground. Guard Jim Lachey would then scoop up the ball and head for the great green field that would lay in front of him,” BSB reported.

The Wolverines were leading 17-14 with about 11 minutes to go in the game, when coach Earle Bruce called “Lachey Right.”

Tomczak explained what went wrong: “The center, of course, touched my hands with the ball to make the ball live. He did that, and I guess the nose guard just stuck our center pretty good – he came off the ball pretty good – and the ball was trapped under our center and the defensive lineman. Jim never had a chance to pick it up because there was too much congestion inside there.”

The Wolverines would go on to win, 24-21.

Lachey, described as somber, had little to say about the play after the game.

“I don’t know,” he said. “It just didn’t work out.”

A young Buckeye assistant coach, Jim Tressel, was a little more pragmatic.

“You never want to look back and second guess,” the quarterbacks and receivers coach said. “You’ve got to do what you think is right at the moment and then handle the consequences.

“It’s one of those things that if it works, we look like geniuses, and we might put the game away.”

Giant Childhood Memories

As a kid growing up in Washington, D.C., I had no idea I would end up going to Ohio State, much less end up as the publisher of a newspaper devoted to Ohio State University sports. But I knew I loved baseball. Sadly, in the infancy of my love affair with the game, the team that was always referred to at the time as the “old” Washington Senators, whisked off to Minneapolis-St. Paul in 1961, taking stars like Harmon Killebrew with it, leaving us with the so-called “new” Senators, an expansion club that in its 11 years of existence before moving Texas in 1972 to become the Rangers, gave new meaning to the old

adage, “First in war, first in peace and last in the American League.”

One thing that stunted the success – both on the field and at the turnstiles – of the new Washington Senators was their complete lack of star power. Unless you consider Jimmy Piersall – way past his prime – a star, there were not any players to make you want to come out and see the team. Except for one.

Frank Howard.

I doubt that I even knew at the time that Howard, who passed away on Oct. 30, played at Ohio State, or that he had played basketball in Columbus as well. I just knew that he gave the few fans of the club a reason to come out to what was then D.C. Stadium. There was always the chance that you might see the giant Howard hit one of his majestic home run shots. With little to distinguish the franchise, management took to painting seats where some of his longest blasts landed (the seats were empty of course). Late in his career I saw Mickey Mantle hit a monster shot into the empty right field upper deck. Let me assure you, Mantle’s blast was nowhere near the distance of Howard’s home runs to the upper deck in center field. His hits were comparable to shots by Mark McGwire during his most juiced days.

Long after I had moved on to Columbus and ultimately become publisher of BSB, the current Washington Nationals were on the verge of making their first playoff in 2012. New York Times reporter and Washington native Peter Khoury, similar in age to me, wrote of his only passing interest in the Nationals and his enduring passion for the new Washington Senators. He talked of still looking at his Senators baseball cards from back in the day.

“Del Unser, Tim Cullen. Paul Casanova. They’re all here,” Khoury wrote in the Times. “But I display only one baseball player’s card in a clear plastic holder on a bookshelf. He is Frank Howard, a.k.a. Hondo, whose towering presence and seemingly effortless display of power inspired many a D.C. youngster to swing a bat.”

Like Khoury, I have an autographed picture of Howard in his Senators uniform on a shelf in my office which someone must have given me because I know I never met Howard. Apparently Khoury never did either.

“One of the trips we took to R.F.K (the new name for D.C. Stadium) with our parents was for Camera Day, when fans were allowed onto the field before the game to take pictures with the players,” Khoury recalled. “By the time we got out there, left field was mobbed with people trying to get as close as they could to Hondo. But my father managed to get pictures of Paul (Khoury’s brother) and me with a couple of players, including Dick Billings, a catcher and outfielder.”

Like I said, the Senators didn’t have much star power.

I was so moved by my shared experience with Khoury that I actually wrote to him and he actually wrote back. It turned out we grew up in the same neighborhood (different schools), even got our pizza at the same place – the Zebra Room, a legendary Cleveland Park staple, now the site of some trendy restaurant.

One thing Khoury would know is that a couple of years before the Senators headed south, we finally got a star other than Howard on the club, only he wasn’t a player. Hall of Famer Ted Williams took over as manager of the club from 1969-71 and had an extremely successful collab-

oration with Howard.

Howard had hit 40 or more home runs once before Williams’ arrival but had a season for the ages in The Splendid Splinter’s first year at the helm. Hondo hit 48 home runs in 1969 under William’s tutelage, raising his batting average from .274 to .296, raising his walks from 54 to 102 and cutting his strikeouts from 141 to 96. More importantly, the duo led the Senators to their only winning season (86-76) in the franchise’s brief, 11-year history.

Howard would lead the league with 44 home runs the next season, his second home run title, 126 RBI and 132 walks (the Senators dropped to 70-92 and last place), before his numbers began to wane the following season.

So just remember. While kids in Ohio were idolizing Rex Kern in the late ‘60s, kids in the Washington, D.C., area were idolizing another great Buckeye – Frank Howard.

As for the other Buckeye icon to recently pass away, I became aware of Bob Knight while at my first sportswriting job in the sports information office at Bowling Green, shortly after Knight had won his first national championship at Indiana in 1976. BG sports information director Bob Moyers was always looking for unique items to promote the Falcons, and the year I was there (also the year of the Great Blizzard) he thought the fact that BG played the two most recent NCAA champions, Indiana and Marquette (back-to-back no less) was worth a note. Needless to say, the Falcons lost both games, but I was aware of Knight now.

A couple of years later I was in Columbus and much more familiar with Knight, finding myself in the middle of the heated rivalry between the Buckeyes and the Hoosiers, a rivalry fueled by highly competitive basketball and the love-hate relationship Buckeye fans had with Knight. As heated as that was, and as controversial as the 1960 Buckeye national championship player was, deep down, Ohio State fans always considered him a Buckeye. It was always exciting to see the two teams play, and the Ohio State double-overtime victory in St. John Arena in 1991 is still the most exciting game I have ever attended.

One thing I will always remember, and something that proves Knight at least had a sense of humor, was when he told of not understanding what a “game face” was. He then went into a series of funny faces, wondering if those were game faces. Google it. It’s worth seeing the clip.

As far as basketball, Knight’s three national championships, bettered only by John Wooden (10), Mike Krzyzewski, a Knight protégé (5), and Adolph Rupp (4), speak for themselves.

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