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Vol. 43, No. 11

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 25, 2023

Focus Moves To U-M After 37-3 Senior Day Blowout Of Minnesota

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Considered the greatest rivalry in college football – and maybe all of sports – Ohio State-Michigan has had just about everything since these teams first matched up on Oct. 16, 1897. But even after 126 years, it finds a way to keep introducing new wrinkles.

Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh, bane of Ohio State head coach Ryan Day's existence over the past two seasons, will not be on the sidelines when the Wolverines host the Buckeyes on Nov. 25 at Michigan Stadium.

The basics are well-known at this point – former recruiting analyst Connor Stalions is believed to have masterminded an elaborate, in-person sign-stealing operation over the past three seasons, either attending himself or sending friends or family to games of upcoming opponents to record their sidelines in an attempt to steal signs and signals.

The evidence was apparently overwhelming enough that, amid an investigation by the Big Ten, Michigan accepted a no-questions-asked, three-game suspension of Harbaugh that will keep him off the sidelines against Ohio State – but still allow him to coach during the week – reportedly in return for the Big Ten dropping the investigation into the Wolverines.

The cheating allegations call into question Ohio State's last two losses to Michigan – a 42-27 loss in Ann Arbor in 2021, the season that the sign stealing is alleged to have started, and a 45-23 domination last year in Columbus – and how much Michigan might have known about Ohio

State's signs going into those contests.

But as far as the Buckeyes are concerned, all that is in the past as they hope to avoid Michigan winning a third consecutive outing in the rivalry for the first time since 1995-97. And once the clock hit all zeroes in the Buckeyes' 37-3 win against Minnesota on Nov. 18, all eyes looked toward The Team Up North.

"I think the key is to stay in the moment," Day said after the win. "There will be emotion this week, there will be a lot this week. There will be noise. We have to do a great job of preparing. We can't do anything different. We have to continue to stay with our routine, and then focus on maximizing every minute of this week. Then noon on Saturday is going to come. That's not going to come any faster by us doing something else, so we need a great week of preparation.

"We're all in this thing together.

We are. I love this team. We've been working hard to get to this point, so we need a great week of preparation, and then we get on that bus and then we head to Ann Arbor."

Ohio State and Michigan will play the second game in as many years that features both teams ranked in the top three nationally, with the

Buckeyes checking in at No. 2 and the Wolverines ranked at No. 3 according to The Associated Press.

The archrivals also enter the contest with undefeated records and another Big Ten Championship Game berth on the line. It's yet another gargantuan matchup in store for The Game, with everyone from FOX's "Big Noon Kickoff" to ESPN's "College GameDay" expected on Michigan's campus for the noon kickoff on FOX.

But for as hyped as the annual competition always is – especially so these last



SONNY BROCKWAY

ON DECK – With Ohio State's 37-3 win over Minnesota on Nov. 18 in the books, the focus shifts to Michigan on Nov. 25. Head coach Ryan Day and the Buckeyes will travel to Ann Arbor for a noon kickoff, hoping to avoid a third loss to the Wolverines in as many seasons.

two seasons given the high rankings – it's been anything but competitive of late, with Ohio State allowing 1,017 yards of offense and 12 touchdowns in those two losses, including backbreaking scores of 69, 75, 45, 75 and 85 yards in last year's defeat in Columbus.

It's a fair question to ask how much Michigan's alleged sign stealing may have impacted these losses considering Ohio State, before 2021, had won eight consecutive games against the Wolverines before The Game was canceled in 2020. But those what-ifs and past ruminations are not on Ohio State's collective minds – in fact, Day

would not even disclose if he started thinking about Michigan during the Buckeyes' blowout of Minnesota, with the game well in hand just a minute into the second half.

"No comment," he said. "I can't get into that. I would just say that our team did a great job of staying focused this week. Not easy to do for anybody, but we did. We stayed in the moment and played well. But the minute we got into the locker room, it's on to the next week."

Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles

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FAN FORUM

Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State came away with a 37-3 win over Minnesota on Senior Day on Nov. 18, moving to 11-0 on the season. With a strong performance by the Buckeyes on both sides of the ball, here are some choices from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members and readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum for players worthy of receiving Buckeye Leaves:

Patrick Engels, BSB: Jack Sawyer has received a ton of heat this season, mostly for his ineffectiveness as a push rusher, but he showed up in a big way against Minnesota. The former five-star was involved in a number of critical defensive plays early on in the game, coming away with four first-half tackles and a quarterback hurry. But he was most effective behind the line of scrimmage, where he recorded a team-high 3½ tackles for loss, a new career high.

Sawyer also showed up in the second half with a key strip-sack on Gopher quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis that led to a 16-yard fumble return from fellow edge rusher J.T. Tuimoloau and an eventual score from Marvin Harrison Jr. It capped off a dominant performance that many Ohio State fans have been waiting for all season, one that can give Sawyer even more confidence heading into the Michigan game.

Braden Moles, BSB: Tight end Cade Stover got

his big moment in his final game at Ohio Stadium, collecting a 1-yard touchdown in front of the packed crowd on Senior Day.

Stover finished with four receptions for 26 yards and the previously mentioned score, continuing a strong run since returning from injury a few games back. He also surpassed 1,000 career receiving yards, just the third tight end in school history to reach that benchmark, so he earns my Buckeye Leaf for the day.

Greg Wilson, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf goes to TreVeyon Henderson, who yet again had the offense run through him, which it has since he returned from his injury. It was obvious how involved he would be on the first drive when he ran for 35 yards and a touchdown on four carries and added a 13-yard reception.

It was an easy score for the Buckeyes, but the offense stalled for the rest of the first half, only adding two field goals. The game changed when Ohio State came out for the second half and Henderson immediately took a handoff on the first play and ran it 75 yards for a touchdown, giving the Buckeyes the momentum to take a lead big enough with which they were comfortable removing Henderson from the game.

He finished with 15 rushes for 146 yards and two touchdowns with two catches for 26 yards for 172 yards from scrimmage without playing most of the second half.

Subscribers

John Lanning: I'll give a leaf to Patrick Gurd, walk-on senior tight end. Thanks for the effort and hard work. You deserved the game time and catch.

PeyoteBuck: My leaves go to Emeka Egbuka for making a zesty comeback. It was great to see him. We will need Egbuka next week. Leaves to Sawyer and Stover, who are always dependable.

BOB CODY: Leaves for all the Buckeye seniors playing their last game in the Horseshoe. Extra leaves for Henderson, Stover, Tuimoloau, Egbuka, Sawyer and the entire defense for holding the Gophers to a field goal.

AnthonyBuckeye: Buckeye champion tight end Stover for a rare "1000-Yard Buckeye Career." Sawyer for a dominating performance with TFLs and a strip-sack. Henderson for again running with his speed and vision. Egbuka for being back (just in time). Jordan Hancock for his interception. The entire defense for constricting the Golden Gophers all game and Coach Ryan Day for his innovative play calling.

Mcarr: Offense: Egbuka. He's baaack. Defense: Sawyer. He's baaack. Special Teams: Jayden Fielding. His range may be longer than I thought it was.

Ohio State cruised to a 37-3 win over Minnesota on Nov. 18, moving to 11-0 on the season and setting up yet another significant matchup with also-undefeated Michigan in Ann Arbor on Nov. 25. We asked readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what their predictions were for how The Game might play out between Ohio State and Michigan. Here are some of the responses:



From The Message Board

"The Buckeyes will give Hairball a butt-kicking sendoff! I have the Buckeyes by double digits, considering how our defense is playing and especially how Jack Sawyer has been sealing one end on run defense all season and the domination of the other defensive linemen. It is also apparent watching the last few games that Ryan Day/Brian Hartline have created multiple and effective plays from each formation. Without the use of SignGate that TTUN is alleged to have used the last two years, I don't see the TTUN defense stopping the Buckeye offense. Please no 'Special Team Gaffes' or turnovers!"

– **AnthonyBuckeye**

"It's time for the biggest

stars to shine their brightest. Play big, play loud for four quarters: 60 minutes. Stay focused. Play smart. Embrace the Brotherhood. Be a complete package. The defense has met and exceeded every challenge this season so far. The offense has improved and should have all the weapons available. The team should be relatively healthy on Saturday and they can beat Michigan in that hostile environment. It will be an instant classic, an epic battle. It will be replayed over and over. The Buckeyes need to be on the winning side. ... It's what the rivalry is all about."

– **BYRON MCNUTT**

"After two consecutive butt-kickings – with or

without help from Connor Stalions – I remain a little nervous, but I like the way Day has brought the team along to peak at the right time, both on the field and health-wise. But this is The Game. Anything can happen. However, Ohio State is the toughest team TTUN has faced all season with that rinky-dink schedule. Let's see how they like it when the other team can hit back."

– **Poster That Harley Built**

"Teams all want to win. The last two years we looked pretty bad. This year will rectify those memories. Marvin Harrison Jr., TreVeyon Henderson, Cade Stover, Emeka Egbuka, Kyle McCord, etc., plus the outstanding defense will deliver justice. All

'signs' point to it."

– **John Lanning**

"I think both teams will be fueled by different sources. TTUN will be playing for their coach, filled with self-righteous indignation. The Bucks will be cranked by the desire to bring justice to the cheaters and send them packing. There is no reason for us to lose. We know what they bring to the table. And we know what we will be bringing. A victorious team."

– **PeyoteBuck**

"I worry about home field advantage but...may the best team (wearing Scarlet & Gray) win!"

– **Luckeeman**

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Michigan? America's Team?? LOL

You can read elsewhere in this issue about Ohio State's walkover win against Minnesota. I will use my space this week to speak to the apparent unmitigated fact that the Michigan football program under head coach Jim Harbaugh these past three years has apparently circumvented the rules off the field to gain an unfair advantage on it.

Simply put, the Wolverines and their head coach have been exposed as cheaters and should be punished as such.

We now know that Connor Stalions was not some low-level flunky, eager to weasel his way close to his football heroes by devising some sign-stealing scheme of which Harbaugh and his assistants had no knowledge. There is only one reason that Stalions was fired (or made to resign), and it's the same reason that the university backed away from its restraining order against the Big Ten to put a hold on Harbaugh's three-game suspension – which really isn't much of a suspension since he can coach his team throughout the week.

The reason is that Harbaugh is guilty, and both he and his university know the NCAA has him dead to rights.

During an investigation that is seemingly moving at lightning speed, the NCAA has apparently uncovered so much evidence that it says it “knew and could prove” the sign-stealing scheme. Meanwhile, the Big Ten has indicated the NCAA will continue to “determine, among other things, who else knew about and/or was involved in the scheme.”

Another shoe dropped the day before Michigan played Maryland on Nov. 18 when U-M linebacker coach Chris Partridge was fired. The university went to pains to point out Partridge had no knowledge of Stalions' sign-stealing scheme, but the assistant failed to cooperate with the NCAA investigation by destroying evidence of what Stalions had done. Does it sound plausible that someone would destroy evidence regarding something they knew nothing about?

The stench emanating from the north gets worse with each passing day. This isn't about players getting grades changed to stay eligible, trading memorabilia for free tattoos, or even lying on NCAA compliance forms. In Columbus, we know those are the kinds of things that not only get you fired, the NCAA shoves a show-cause penalty into your folder that effectively ends your coaching career at the college level. It would seem to me those transgressions pale in comparison to out-and-out cheating.

As with most scandals, no one has decorated themselves with glory. Certainly not Michigan fans, whose fever dreams include believing this is some setup job engineered by Ryan Day or some member of his family. Certainly not Michigan president Santa Ono, whose sanctimonious post on X (formerly Twitter) read, in part, “Like any community, we face our share of challenges and adversity. There have been many such moments in our history ...” That's the kind of sentiment reserved for tragedy, not for when your football program is exposed as a rule-breaker.

Certainly not Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel, who said the Big Ten's decision to suspend Harbaugh was “unethical, insulting to a well-established process within the NCAA, and an assault on the rights of everyone (especially in the Big Ten) to be judged by a fair and complete investigation.” So, if he's not guilty, why did Harbaugh accept the suspension?

Certainly not the media apologists such as former Michigan star Desmond Howard, inexplicably a regular on ESPN's “College

GameDay” since 2005 whose credibility as an analyst ranges somewhere between Pinocchio and Lloyd Christmas, the role played by comedian Jim Carrey in the 1994 film “Dumb and Dumber.”

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Howard said he was “always happy, like anybody should be, to see anybody who cheats the system get caught and get out of the game.” Oh, wait. That's what Howard said in 2011 about Jim Tressel and Tattoogate. Regarding Harbaugh's troubles, Howard offered his opinion that the so-called scandal was a big nothing-burger, adding, “It's like they're trying to get Jim Harbaugh out of college football.”

And certainly not interim U-M head coach Sherrone Moore, who followed his profanity-laced postgame interview after the Penn State game with a tone-deaf faux pas after a win against Maryland, telling Fox sideline reporter Jenny Taft that the Wolverines have a “do-whatever-it-takes-to-win mentality.” Perhaps truer words were never spoken.

If you want to discuss whether Michigan actually got a significant boost from employing Stalions and his sign-stealing shenanigans, we can have that debate. I will only point you to cold, hard numbers.

During Harbaugh's first six seasons in Ann Arbor, his teams combined for a 49-22 overall record (a .690 winning percentage), one division championship, zero Big Ten titles and an 0-5 mark against Ohio State. Over the last two seasons plus 11 games, the Wolverines are 36-3 (a .923 winning percentage), have beaten the Buckeyes in back-to-back seasons for the first time in 22 years, and are two-time defending outright Big Ten champions for the first time in 30 years.

Perhaps, as some have argued, Harbaugh's coaching style has finally taken hold on the Michigan program and its players. Perhaps. But why does the university continue to stonewall and obfuscate at every turn? After agreeing to drop its attempt to stay Harbaugh's suspension, Michigan has said in multiple statements that one of the conditions for allowing the punishment to stand was due to the Big Ten's agreement to “close its investigation” into the program. The Big Ten has said it never opened an investigation regarding the sign-stealing scandal. Only when confronted with information from the NCAA did a suddenly not-so-defiant Michigan withdraw its legal complaint.

What is a proper punishment for cheating your opponent, and in turn, cheating the very game itself? That's way above my pay grade. But I do know that something must be done and someone higher up the food chain than a recruiting assistant or position coach should have to pay for their transgressions with something more punitive than a slap on the wrist.

And that punishment should come swiftly. I'm all for due process, but I still remember how the 2012 Ohio State team got punished for what happened two years before it gutted out an undefeated season. What good would it do for this year's Wolverines to continue into the postseason unabated, and then retroactively vacate any victories or championships two or three years from now?

Would penalizing Michigan by forcing a forfeit of the game against Ohio State and banning postseason play be too harsh? Again, that's way above my pay grade. But desperate times call for desperate measures, and while that kind of punishment would likely produce a firestorm of criticism – not to mention legal action on the part of Michigan – it might also offer some form of deterrence to those contemplating similar acts in the future.

After watching his Wolverines defeat Penn State on Nov. 11 – presumably from the comfort of a hotel room somewhere in Happy Valley – Harbaugh went to the microphone and said, “(We've) got to be America's team. America loves a team that beats the odds and adversity and overcomes what the naysayers, critics and so-called experts think. That's my favorite kind of team.”

Michigan? America's team? That's equal parts pretentious and preposterous. America might love an underdog, but it certainly has no use for a cheater.

Only Way To End This

Of course, Michigan is not going to be forced to forfeit its game against Ohio State, so the only recourse anyone has to shut down the ridiculousness of the Wolverines and their head coach playing the role of victims of some vendetta against them is for the Buckeyes to go to Ann Arbor and put an end to that narrative.

As with most worthwhile pursuits, it is easier said than done.

For all their posturing, the Wolverines are still the team that has punched Ohio State in the mouth each of the last two years and discovered the Buckeyes don't like the taste of their own blood. All the talk about being soft didn't start with Lou Holtz. It started in 2021 when Michigan piled up 297 yards on the ground during a 42-27 win, and it continued last year when the Wolverines rushed for 252 more yards and ran away with a 45-23 victory. For those of you scoring at home, the last two games in the series have produced a plus-37 point differential in favor of Michigan.

How is that going to change? There are a couple of keys, of course.

Despite the fact they lead the Big Ten in scoring offense, the Wolverines have some weaknesses. Their offensive line is beat up, and left tackle Karsen Barnhart has been susceptible to a speed rush the last couple of weeks, leading to some uncharacteristic mistakes from quarterback J.J. McCarthy. If the Buckeyes can bottle up McCarthy and set an edge to prevent running back Blake Corum from bouncing outside, OSU can put the brakes on the Michigan offense.

On the other side of the ball, there is no secret Ohio State's offensive line will have to play its best game of the year. If there is nowhere for TreVeyon Henderson to run, and no time for Kyle McCord to get comfortable, it won't matter much how well the defense plays.

The Buckeyes have been able to move the ball the last two years against Michigan, averaging 475 total yards in those games, but they will have to do a much better job of putting the ball in the end zone.

The bottom line is this. The sign-stealing scandal has taken some of the shine off Michigan's last two victories in the series. But one must presume the Wolverines no longer know what's coming beforehand, so there is only one way Ohio State can put a stop to the nonsense and prevent this coming offseason of being a repeat of the last two.

Win the damn game.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Ohio State Recognizes 21 Buckeyes On Senior Day

Ohio State honored 21 players in Senior Day festivities before its 37-3 win over Minnesota on Nov. 18, which was the team's final home game of the season.

Each player was introduced by Ohio State's public address announcer and individually jogged out of the team's tunnel to greet head coach Ryan Day before heading to the north end zone to meet their families.

Among the honorees were seven starters for the Buckeyes – including linebackers Steele Chambers and Tommy Eichenberg, wide receiver Julian Fleming, safeties Lathan Ransom and Josh Proctor, offensive lineman Matthew Jones and tight end Cade Stover – as well as team captain Xavier Johnson, who has played in 54 career games, the most on Ohio State's roster.

Also honored were defensive backs Cameron Kittle and Andrew Moore, defensive tackle Jaden McKenzie, kicker Parker Lewis, linebacker Cody Simon, offensive linemen Quinton Burke, Jack Forsman, Troy

Leroux and Greg Toutant, quarterbacks Tristan Gebbia and Chad Ray, running back Miyan Williams and tight end Patrick Gurd.

The group of fifth-year seniors that make up the majority of the honorees have won two Big Ten Championship Games, have made three appearances in the College Football Playoff and have a 53-6 record after the Minnesota win.

Johnson, Jones and Proctor – as well as the seventh-year Gebbia – will all have exhausted their eligibility following this season, but the remaining seniors who walked all have the option of returning for at least one season granted by the NCAA due to the COVID-19 pandemic, though no players indicated their plans after the win over Minnesota.

"If they're eligible, then we certainly allow them the option to do it and then go from there," Day said. "It's a lot different than it was a decade ago."

No matter what their future holds with the Buckeyes, Day said on Nov. 14 that the senior class has left a lasting legacy at Ohio State due to their commitment to the program.

"A good portion of them started that first year (in 2019) when I became the head coach, so they've been soldiers along the way," he said. "They mean so much to me and my family, to the staff, to the university. There's leadership that they've shown, and they have an opportunity to really leave a legacy behind here in the next month."

Ransom Sideline For Rest Of Regular Season

Day was the bearer of some significant

2023 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Sept. 2	at Indiana	W, 23-3	CBS	3-8, 24-21 loss to Michigan State
Sept. 9	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 35-7	BTN	7-4, 34-17 win over Murray State
Sept. 16	WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 63-10	FOX	6-5, 28-23 win over Sam Houston
Sept. 23	at Notre Dame	W, 17-14	NBC	8-3, 45-7 win over Wake Forest
Oct. 7	MARYLAND	W, 37-17	FOX	6-5, 31-24 loss to Michigan
Oct. 14	at Purdue	W, 41-7	Peacock	3-8, 23-15 loss to Northwestern
Oct. 21	PENN STATE	W, 20-12	FOX	9-2, 27-6 win over Rutgers
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	W, 24-10	NBC	6-5, 24-17 win over Nebraska
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	W, 35-16	CBS	6-5, 27-6 loss to Penn State
Nov. 11	MICHIGAN STATE	W, 38-3	NBC	4-7, 24-21 win over Indiana
Nov. 18	MINNESOTA	W, 37-3	BTN	5-6, 37-3 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 25	at Michigan	12 p.m.	FOX	11-0, 31-24 win over Maryland

injury news on Nov. 14 when he announced that Ransom could return this season, but it "won't be in the next couple of weeks."

Ransom has not played since suffering what appeared to be a noncontact leg injury late in the Buckeyes' 24-10 victory over Wisconsin on Oct. 28. The ailment forced him to be carted off the field and taken into the locker room. He was also seen prior to the Buckeyes' win over Michigan State on Nov. 11 utilizing a knee scooter to get around.

Prior to his injury, the senior bandit safety had established himself as one of Ohio State's top performers in the secondary. In eight games, Ransom totaled 34 total tackles – a number that still ranks 10th on the team through the Buckeyes' contest against Minnesota – along with an interception, two pass breakups and a forced fumble.

Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles has turned to sophomore Sonny Styles to

slide over from nickel to bandit in relief of Ransom – though senior Ja'Had Carter has also seen some time at the position – while cornerback Jordan Hancock has assumed the majority of reps at nickel. The position changes have not affected the Buckeyes' stout defense, however. They have relinquished a combined 22 points and 702 yards in their last three games without Ransom.

Eichenberg, Hall Sit Against Gophers

Ohio State was without a trio of defensive starters against Minnesota, with Eichenberg, defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. and Ransom all sidelined due to injury.

Eichenberg missed his second consecutive game after suffering what appeared to be an arm injury late in the Buckeyes' win over Rutgers on Nov. 4. He was listed as

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questionable on the pregame injury report and was seen participating in pregame warmups with a cast over his right hand, but he was ultimately kept out of the game as a precaution. Ohio State turned to Cody Simon for the second consecutive game to assume the majority of Eichenberg's reps.

Hall played just one series last week against Michigan State before exiting with an undisclosed injury. The Buckeyes turned again to defensive tackle Ty Hamilton to fill in for Hall. Hamilton recorded two assisted tackles on the day.

Also out for the Buckeyes were wide receiver Kyion Grayes, safety Cameron Martinez and defensive lineman Jason Moore. Sophomore quarterback Devin Brown was listed as questionable after reinjuring his foot during pregame warmups against Michigan State, and he did not see time on the field, paving the way for freshman Lincoln Kienholz to earn more reps in the fourth quarter.

The Buckeyes did return a key defensive starter to the lineup in Proctor, who was held out of the Michigan State game after suffering an apparent head injury in the second half against Rutgers. He recorded one tackle and a pass breakup on Senior Day.

Day Expects Healthy Roster For Michigan

Despite the slew of injuries, Day said he expects his team to be at full strength for the Nov. 25 clash against Michigan in Ann Arbor, with the exception of the injured Ransom.

"I'll try to give you guys somewhat of an update next week," Day said after the game. "But we're expecting to get everybody back."

The Buckeyes have been gradually getting healthier as the season progresses, with key offensive playmakers such as wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, running back TreVeyon Henderson and Stover all seeming to be at or near their full capacities.

They have also welcomed back the services of a number of defensive starters who have been held out at times this season due to injury, such as cornerback Denzel Burke and Proctor.

With the Buckeyes close to full strength and his team trending in the right direction on the field, Day said his team is now fully equipped to take on rival Michigan.

"We've had a couple of guys down, but we should be at full capacity next week, which is great," he said. "It's all going to be tested next week. You're seeing the strides. We're getting better every week, but it's all headed toward the end of the season and playing our best football."

ESPN's "College GameDay" On Hand For The Game

ESPN's "College GameDay" will be heading to Ann Arbor for Ohio State's clash with unbeaten Michigan, the network announced during the program's live broadcast from James Madison on Nov. 18.

This marks the third consecutive season in which the pregame show will be on hand for an Ohio State-Michigan game, with the show visiting Columbus for the Buckeyes' 45-23 loss to Michigan last season and in Ann Arbor for the team's 42-27 loss in 2021.

It also is the third time this season in which "College GameDay" is on hand for an Ohio State game. The program first visited South Bend, Ind., for the Buckeyes' 17-14 victory over Notre Dame on Sept. 23 then came to Columbus on Oct. 21 for the 20-12 win over Penn State.

Ohio State holds a 40-18 all-time record when "College GameDay" is in attendance for one of its games. The 58 appearances are the most by any school in the show's 36-year history, with Alabama trailing close behind with 56.

OSU Rises To No. 2 In AP Poll Ahead Of The Game

After remaining behind Michigan in the AP top 25 for almost the entire season, Ohio State jumped up in the final poll ahead of The Game, with the Buckeyes checking in at No. 2 and the Wolverines settling in at No. 3.

Both trail Georgia, which remains at No. 1 and received 61 of 62 first-place votes, the other going to Ohio State. No. 4 Washington

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Another Sincere Note From Publisher Frank Moskowitz

A couple of issues back, I noted how proud I was to be Buckeye Sports Bulletin publisher in the wake of the patience shown by subscribers as they dealt with untimely mail service and by members of the BSB staff, who dealt with the hundreds of phone calls that the tardy delivery generated.

That patience on both sides of the equation was tested in this past week. Nov. 14, the Tuesday after the Michigan State game, generated far and away the most phone calls of this 10-week debacle, and the readers were not quite as patient as they may have been previously. And the sheer volume of phone calls – all lines were tied up with complaints for virtually the entire day – left the BSB staff not quite as patient as they have been throughout this ordeal.

This all culminated with an extremely agitated subscriber berating one of our staffers for our continued blaming of the post office, accusing us of in fact mailing out the paper late. That caused the staffer – who I am not going to identify because he/she has been one of our most patient people with understandably unhappy subscribers – to hang up on the disturbed reader, something we absolutely don't condone here but frankly, given the 10-week onslaught, was understandable.

A couple of things on this unfortunate incident, which has been in the making for weeks.

Sadly, I was out of the office when the incident happened. If I had been here, the call would have been passed on to me. However, I had taken so many phone calls that day, I probably would not have taken the verbal abuse any better than the staffer.

Secondly, in more than 42 years of publishing, we have faced sudden loss of staff members, massive computer failures, lengthy power outages, a major fire at the printing plant on a football Saturday, and even a hurricane (yes, a hurricane) and still gotten the paper out on time. As I have mentioned before, I admit that years ago during a crippling blizzard, we got the paper to the printer on time, but only half of the papers were mailed that day because we couldn't get enough help into the press through the snow to mail all of them. The remainder were sent out the next day.

There is no advantage to us suddenly sending out the paper late.

And as many of you know, we have replaced hundreds upon hundreds of papers that subscribers never received this fall, no questions asked. This is an expense difficult for a small business to absorb, but we believe it is the right thing to do.

Finally, I wanted to make a small but I think significant point.

When you call Buckeye Sports Bulletin, you don't have to hit any prompts or speak to any automated operators. A live person answers the phone – not in India, not in the Philippines, but right here in

Columbus, Ohio. That person works very hard to try to solve your problem or at least listen to your complaint, even if it is about bad postal service or poor offensive line play, things we have little or no control over. If the office is closed, we have a 24-hour answering service, and they will forward your message to us for response as quickly as possible. This is something we are really proud of and something that I will strive to maintain.

I did have one personal request. For those of you who have taken to calling us to say that you will not be renewing your BSB subscription when it expires because you are not receiving your paper in a timely fashion, there is no need to make that call. We are obviously aware of the delivery problem, and all you are doing is generating one more phone call we have to answer and throwing salt on the wounds of a staff that is weary after this season-long – and we admit justified – onslaught.

Your message will be received loud and clear when we experience the abnormal drop in circulation we are anticipating, an unfortunate development in these difficult times for the newspaper industry.

I suggest, once again, that while you are waiting for your BSB to arrive that you take advantage of the online version of the paper that is posted immediately upon completion of the print edition at BuckeyeSports.com. Like you, I am a newspaper reader and I understand that the online version is no substitute for your paper, but it is a stopgap until your paper arrives, assuring you a chance to read preview stories of the next game before that game is played.

I know some of you are reluctant to read online – and there are many more stories at BuckeyeSports.com than just the actual newspaper, plus our interactive Forum – because you fear that I am trying to set you up for the end of the print edition. That is NOT my intention.

Ultimately, it will be the readers who decide the fate of Buckeye Sports Bulletin print by whether you choose to subscribe or not. Here's hoping you elect to keep us around for a long time.

If you are not already taking advantage of the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers, simply email your name, address and preferred email address to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com, and we will send back easy instructions on how to access the site. Don't forget, subscriptions@buckeyesports.com is our email address, not the website. We will send you directions on how to access the site.

And by the way, despite all the turmoil of these last couple of months, I am still proud to be the publisher of Buckeye Sports Bulletin – proud because of our incredibly loyal, though frustrated subscribers, and proud of our incredibly loyal, though battle-weary staff.

Thank you, thank you to all of you from your very humble publisher.

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

and No. 5 Florida State round out the top five, followed by No. 6 Oregon, No. 7 Texas, No. 8 Alabama, No. 9 Louisville and No. 10 Missouri, with Penn State just outside the top 10 at No. 11.

The same top three held true in the College Football Playoff rankings released on Nov. 14, as well, though it will be updated on Nov. 21 ahead of The Game and could potentially shift Ohio State or Michigan before that matchup.

That represented a fall for Ohio State, which had opened on top of the College Football Playoff rankings. The committee instead opted for the Bulldogs, who had a 52-17 win over then-No. 9 Ole Miss on Nov. 11 and followed it up with a 38-10 win over No. 18 Tennessee.

"Looking at (Georgia's win over Ole Miss) and its résumé and everything combined, we thought Georgia was the No. 1 team this week," said Boo Corrigan, College Football Playoff selection committee chair and NC State athletic director.

Fleming Takes Responsibility For Special Teams Woes

One of the biggest criticisms of Ohio State this season has been special teams and how the unit has often put the other sides of the ball in unfavorable positions. Speaking with the media on Nov. 15, spe-

BSB Subscribers Show Support Through VIP Program

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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cial teams coordinator Parker Fleming took responsibility for the underperformance of the unit.

"There are a lot of plays that we wish we

had back for one reason or another," he said. "There's some we're really excited and happy with. Obviously, you could probably point to a bunch of individual plays that we wish

we had done differently in one way or another, and those are probably warranted."

There have been several examples of mistakes that continue to add up for Fleming's group this season, including a pair of punts – one each against Maryland and Rutgers – in which they were incorrectly run as fakes or the snap was botched.

"Anything that happens that's not good, that's on me to get it fixed," Fleming said. "The way we look at it around here is we try to put our players in the best position to make plays. When they make plays, that's awesome, that's them making plays. When they don't, I didn't prepare them well enough to make the play."

Communication issues have been consistent on special teams going back to at least the end of last season, with costly special teams errors on punts against Michigan and Georgia in back-to-back losses to end the season. This prolonged string of miscues has sparked murmurs about a potential staffing change, but Day defended Fleming on Nov. 7, saying the team wouldn't consider making a midseason change at coordinator.

"I watch Parker every day, and I see the way he coaches," Day said. "I think he's a great teacher and a great coach. I can just tell you that he works as hard as anybody in the building."

Fleming argued that there have been positives from the special teams unit but acknowledged that they need to be better at eliminating the individual bad plays that could prove costly if they are repeated in



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"Our job is to change field position, create explosives," he said. "We have opportunities and we've done some of that. You look at the net field position in a bunch of games, we've won it. People don't care about that because the big things can't happen, and they're right. You can't put your team in some situations that we have, and I totally understand that."

Ohio State To Raise Season-Ticket Prices In 2024

Ohio State is increasing football season-ticket prices for the 2024 season, the school announced on Nov. 16. The decision to raise prices, which was approved by the Ohio State board of trustees, stems from the home schedule increasing from six to eight games next season.

According to the university, season ticket prices of the six seating zones for the general public will range from \$596 to \$1,365.

This is a significant increase from the average tickets in each zone in the 2023 season, which ranged from \$398 to \$944. This is also a small increase from the last eight-game home schedule in 2022, where season-ticket prices were as low as \$559.

The Buckeyes' eight-game home slate features matchups against Southern Mississippi on Aug. 31, Western Michigan on Sept. 7, Marshall on Sept. 21, Iowa on Oct. 5, Nebraska on Oct. 26, Purdue on Nov. 9, Indiana on Nov. 23 and Michigan on Nov. 30.

The university also announced individual game ticket pricing for the 2025 and 2026 football seasons. Individual game tickets for

nonconference opponents in both years will range from \$50 to \$150 per ticket, while tickets for conference opponents will be priced as low as \$80 and as high as \$210 per ticket. Prices for "premium opponents" will range from \$125 to \$500.

The Buckeyes will play a number of notable home games in 2025 and 2026 that could qualify as "premium," including a nonconference game against Texas on Aug. 30, 2025, along with a first-ever conference matchup against UCLA in 2025 and first home Big Ten matchup with Oregon in 2026, both of which have unannounced dates.

DC Knowles Named Broyles Award Nominee

Knowles was named on Nov. 14 as one of 57 nominees for the Broyles Award, which honors the best assistant coach in all of college football. The recognition was announced by the National College Football Awards Association, and this is the third time Knowles has been nominated for the award.

Following an inconsistent first season at Ohio State that was defined by sluggish performances against Michigan and Georgia, Knowles has helped elevate his defense to one of the more dominant units in all of college football. Through 11 games, Knowles' defense ranked second in the nation in scoring defense (9.3 points) and third in total defense (252.9 yards). The unit also excelled on multiple fronts, ranking first in the nation in passing defense (144.4 yards) and 19th in rushing defense (108.5 yards).

This year, Knowles joins a list of top Division I assistants that includes fellow defensive coordinators Manny Diaz (Penn State), Al Golden (Notre Dame), Joe Harasymiak (Rutgers) and Phil Parker (Iowa) and offensive coordinators Mike Bobo (Georgia), Adam Fuller (Florida State), Sherrone Moore (Michigan) and Tommy Rees (Alabama), among many others.

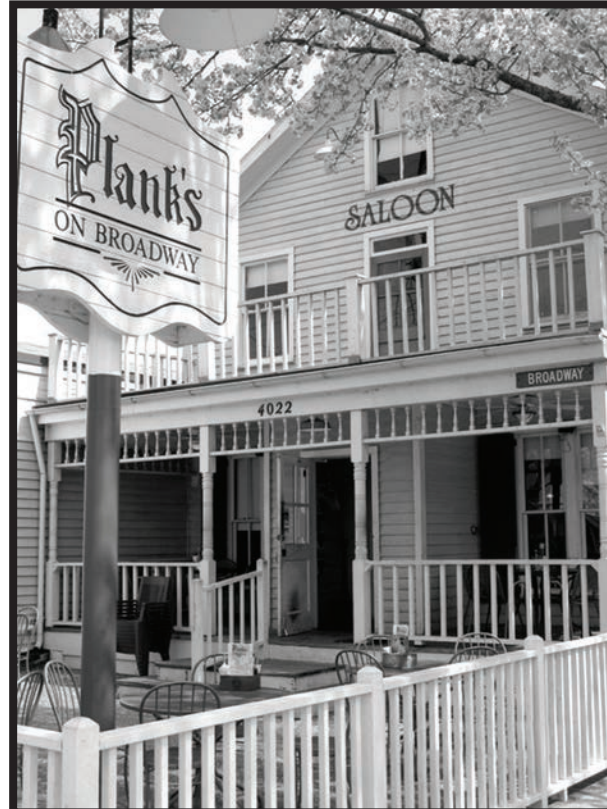
Finalists for the Broyles Award will be

announced at a later date with the winner being selected on Dec. 5 at the State Convention Center in Little Rock, Ark.

Harrison, Eichenberg Named Semifinalists For Awards

On Nov. 13, Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. was named one of 17

Continued On Page 8



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Continued From Page 7

semifinalists for the Maxwell Award, which honors college football's most outstanding player, and Eichenberg was selected as one of 20 candidates for the Chuck Bednarik Award, which recognizes the sport's best defensive player.

Harrison is viewed by many as among the favorites to win the Maxwell Award after once again establishing himself as one of the premier pass-catchers in all of college football. Through 11 games, the junior has totaled 62 receptions for 1,093 receiving yards and 13 touchdowns.

Harrison joins a distinguished group of 17 players that includes quarterbacks

Jayden Daniels (LSU), Michael Penix Jr. (Washington), Jalen Milroe (Alabama), Bo Nix (Oregon) and Caleb Williams (USC), running backs Blake Corum (Michigan) and Ollie Gordon II (Oklahoma State) and fellow pass-catchers Brock Bowers (Georgia), Luther Burden III (Missouri) and Malik Nabers (LSU), among others.

Eichenberg is featured as a Chuck Bednarik Award semifinalist for the second consecutive season after once again proving he is one of the most productive and valuable linebackers in the nation. He is the unquestioned leader of a vaunted Buckeyes' defense with 73 total tackles while also tackling on a sack and a forced fumble.

The fifth-year senior joins a list of 20 defenders that includes fellow linebackers Edgerrin Cooper (Texas A&M), Jason Henderson (Old Dominion), Jeremiah Trotter Jr. (Clemson), Dallas Turner (Alabama) and Payton Wilson (NC State), defensive linemen Howard Cross III (Notre Dame), Kris Jenkins (Michigan), Jer'Zhan Newton (Illinois) and T'Vondre Sweat (Texas), and defensive backs Beanie Bishop Jr. (West Virginia), Cooper DeJean (Iowa) and Malaki Starks (Georgia), among others.

Three finalists will be named for both the Maxwell and Bednarik Awards on Nov.

28, with the winners of both awards set to be announced during ESPN's Home Depot College Football Awards on Dec. 8.

NHL Mulls Potential Game In Ohio Stadium

According to a report on Nov. 14 from The Sports Network's Darren Dreger, a handful of NHL representatives visited Ohio Stadium during the Buckeyes' prime-time game against Michigan State on Nov. 11 to assess the venue for a potential outdoor game in the future.

"The National Hockey League is constantly planning the bigger events, and the Winter Classic is one of their marquee events. I know that league officials were at Ohio State on the weekend, and they were conducting a site survey of Ohio Stadium," Dreger said. "I'm sure the (Columbus) Blue Jackets are looking forward to this becoming official. It's not official yet. It's in the preliminary stages."

Ohio Stadium has long been suggested as a potential venue for an outdoor hockey game, as the Blue Jackets are one of just four NHL teams that have not played in an outdoor game.

The biggest issue precluding an outdoor game at Ohio Stadium has been the cost of

winterizing the venue, which has been speculated would be required for an outdoor game, though the NHL could also look at hosting a game at Ohio Stadium later in the season to avoid the need for winterization. But Dreger's report also said that the NHL is considering Ohio Stadium for the NHL's Winter Classic, which would be played in January.

Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith told WSYX's Clay Hall on Nov. 15 that he is optimistic that Ohio Stadium will eventually be able to host an outdoor game.

"They came and they were really impressed with how we operate, speaking to our game management staff and everything they do," Smith said. "They were really impressed with how well we run contests with 105,000 people in it. Not sure what we would get here, but they were very impressed. I think we've got a shot. They're really considering us really hard, so we're kind of in that wait and see mode right now."

Freshmen Bonsu, Walker Lose Black Stripes

Ohio State officially welcomed two true freshmen into the program on Nov. 15 when safety Jayden Bonsu and offensive tackle Miles Walker shed their black stripes.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1983

It was that time of year again. Priority one for the Ohio State football team was not keeping intact its four-game winning streak. Nor was it wedging its way into a possible Sugar Bowl berth.

Tight end John Frank shouted after the Northwestern game what time of the year it was: "Looking for Blue!" The Buckeyes finished their "regular season" on Nov. 12 against Northwestern, and now was time for the one-game second season to begin. Michigan week was here.

The Northwestern game was a special one for 21 seniors playing their final game in Ohio Stadium, and quite an easy one. The Buckeyes chalked up a 55-7 win. Fullback Vaughn Broadnax said it was a game to remember.

"There was a little incentive," he said. "I wanted to make my last game in the Horseshoe my best game. It's kind of a feeling that you always wish you could have played better here, but you knew you had to play your best today."

35 Years Ago — 1988

Question: When is a win not a win? Answer: When it is a 24-24 tie against Iowa.

The Ohio State football team rolled into Iowa City on a raw Nov. 12 afternoon and stayed right with the Hawkeyes, a team one preseason publication tabbed for the national championship. In the end, it was Iowa which desperately kicked the tying field goal with 16 seconds left to save face against the Buckeyes, who outplayed the Hawkeyes from stem to stern in the second half.

"What good is a tie?" head coach John Cooper asked. "What good is a tie to us the way our season has gone? A tie doesn't do us any good, doesn't do them any good."

Iowa head coach Hayden Fry said simply, "Nobody is happy with that, but it beats losing."

30 Years Ago — 1993

Walter Taylor and Butler By'not'e were clutching single roses on the sideline. A couple of players hoisted head coach John Cooper to their shoulders and carried him to midfield. Later, the players did a little hooting and hollering amid a chorus or two of "Buckeye Battle Cry" in the locker room.

Still, following a 23-17 victory over Indiana on Nov. 13, it wasn't exactly what you might expect from a team that had reason to celebrate after clinching a share of its first Big Ten football championship since 1986.

"What have we done?" OSU senior tailback Raymont Harris asked reporters after the game. "We have clinched a tie for the championship and that's all. If we go up to Michigan next week and lose, and then Wisconsin wins out, we don't go to the Rose Bowl and that's what this season has been all about.

"We have said all season that we want to take each game one at a time. We have done that 10 times now, and we still have to remain focused on one more. True, indeed, we have clinched a share of the championship, and that is an accomplishment we are proud of. But if we have come this far and don't get to the Rose Bowl, it won't mean as much. In fact, it won't mean much at all."

25 Years Ago — 1998

Ohio State would play for its 28th Big Ten championship when it hosted rival Michigan in The Game on Nov. 21 at Ohio Stadium.

Michigan (8-2, 7-0) had already clinched at least a share of the title with a win over previously unbeaten Wisconsin on Nov. 14. The Wolverines would be playing for an outright title and the Rose Bowl berth when they invaded the Horseshoe.

Ohio State (9-1, 6-1), still smarting from a Nov. 7 upset at the hands of Michigan State, rebounded with a decisive 45-14 win at Iowa on Nov. 14. "It will be another classic ballgame," Cooper said of the Michigan contest after his team disposed of the Hawkeyes.

20 Years Ago — 2003

Even though Craig Krenzel didn't throw a touchdown pass, Ben Hartsock had just one reception and Tim Anderson made only two tackles, Ohio State's 16-13 overtime victory over Purdue on Nov. 15 belonged to the seniors.

It wasn't because of their play, even though Michael Jenkins caught six passes for 123 yards, Will Smith made seven tackles including a sack and forced fumble, and B.J. Sander seemed to put the Boilermaker offense behind the eight ball every chance he got.

No, it was because the members of this senior class, along with needing a victory to keep their hopes for an undisputed Big Ten title alive, entered the game with a goal they had set before the season even started.

"This is the best way," said senior defensive lineman Darrion Scott. "This is what we hoped for. This is what we dreamed about – going undefeated in the 'Shoe our last year."

15 Years Ago — 2008

The next installment of the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry would be at least the second football-related battle of the year for the two schools.

In the weeks and months that followed OSU's 14-3 victory the previous season, the two schools found themselves both courting Jeannette, Pa., quarterback Terrelle Pryor. Although the Wolverines were out of the running for a time, they leaped back into the fray when Rich Rodriguez was hired to bring his spread offense to Ann Arbor.

On the date of his announcement, Pryor said he woke up still unsure if he would pick OSU or U-M. Those around him felt he would be a better fit in Rodriguez's system, but ultimately his heart was with the Buckeyes and he became the final member of their 2008 recruiting class. A week before his first Michigan game, Pryor said his teammates had been trying to prepare him for what lay ahead.

"I don't know what to expect, but I just keep getting it pounded in my ears, 'This is why you came here, for Michigan,'" he said after Ohio State's 30-20 win at Illinois on Nov. 15. "I can't wait to find out. They were the top team I was going to go to if not for here. It's going to be a good game."

10 Years Ago — 2013

Midway through the first quarter of what would become a 42-14 win against Indiana on Nov. 23, Ohio State junior quarterback Braxton Miller faked a handoff, took off through an open seam and sprinted 37 yards untouched toward the goal line, capping off the score with a somersault into the end zone.

With that jump, he also helped his squad leapfrog past the Woody Hayes-led Buckeyes of 1967-69 as the group with the most successful run in the history of the program.

The Buckeyes may have been third in the Bowl Championship Series standings, but they made no bones about the fact that they were cherishing every second of what was now a school-record 23-game winning streak.

Ever since the arrival of head coach Urban Meyer, who entered on the heels of a 6-7 season that finished with losses to Michigan in the regular season and Florida in the Gator Bowl, the Buckeyes had found a variety of ways to win. On a snowy, windy day in Ohio Stadium, the Buckeyes did it with the style and flare befitting a record-breaking effort.

"(OSU athletics director) Gene Smith came down to present our players with the game ball, the longest winning streak in Ohio State history," Meyer said. "We kind of avoided that thing like a team going through a no-hitter. Now that they have it, they talk about it, and it's over."

Five Years Ago — 2018

On one side, Ohio State played some of its best football of the season against Maryland. On the other side, the Buckeyes played some of their worst on Nov. 17.

It turned out that such a combination was still good enough for a win – just barely – in overtime. Ohio State racked up 688 yards of total offense – the most ever against a Big Ten opponent – and allowed 535 yards in a 52-51 shootout win that was cemented when the Terrapins failed on a two-point conversion attempt in the extra period.

After the Terrapins opted to receive the opening kickoff, redshirt freshman running back Anthony McFarland rushed once for a loss of a yard before busting an 81-yard touchdown that no Ohio State player was in position to stop. By the time the game was over, McFarland had racked up 298 yards on just 21 carries.

"It's the players and coaches together," Meyer said. "If it's a missed tackle, then we're not teaching tackling enough. If it's a scheme issue, then that's a coaching issue. I can't give you an answer right now. But that's very alarming."

One Year Ago — 2022

Ohio State overcame a halftime deficit and survived a late push by Maryland in a 43-30 win on Nov. 19, while Michigan utilized the leg of Jake Moody, who knocked in a 35-yard field goal with just seconds remaining, to boost the Wolverines over Illinois, 19-17, just a week ahead of The Game.

The Associated Press announced the following afternoon that No. 2 Ohio State and No. 3 Michigan were unmoved following their wins, confirming the top-three matchup for The Game. But focus had already shifted to the rivalry within moments of Ohio State's and Michigan's wins the previous evening. Head coach Ryan Day confirmed the first thing he said in the locker room after defeating Maryland had nothing to do with the Terrapins.

"It's hard to say," Day said when asked if Ohio State was looking ahead to Michigan against Maryland. "I just got done with the team, and you probably could imagine the first thing that was said is, 'It's on to The Team Up North.'"

Bonsu arrived at Ohio State in June as a four-star prospect out of Hillside (N.J.) Saint Peter's Prep. He was tabbed as the nation's No. 274 overall player and No. 24 safety in the class and as the No. 4 player in New Jersey.

He has yet to appear in a game this season, however, mostly due to more experienced safeties such as Proctor, Ransom and Styles assuming the majority of in-game reps.

Walker has also failed to make an appearance in a game so far this season, finding himself behind starting tackles Josh Fryar and Josh Simmons along with backups Zen Michalski and fellow freshman Luke Montgomery on the depth chart. The 6-5, 295-pound freshman arrived at Ohio State in January as a three-star prospect and the nation's No. 501 player and No. 33 offensive tackle. He also was ranked the No. 4 player in Connecticut after a stellar senior season at Greenwich (Conn.) Brunswick School, where he was named the NEPSAC Class A 2022 Lineman of the Year.

Bonsu and Walker are now the 18th and 19th freshmen to lose their stripe this season and the first since cornerback Calvin Simpson-Hunt did so on Nov. 8. They are also the 32nd and 33rd Buckeyes to be officially welcomed to the team this season dating back to the spring.

Burrow Out For Season After Wrist Injury

Former Ohio State and current Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow will miss the remainder of the NFL season after suffering a torn ligament in his right wrist during the team's 34-20 loss to the Baltimore Ravens on Nov. 16, an injury that will

likely require surgery.

Burrow's season-ending injury, which was announced a day later by Bengals head coach Zac Taylor, appeared to occur at the end of the first half on a touchdown pass to running back Joe Mixon, where he winced in pain and held his right wrist after delivering the throw. He attempted to shake off the injury by attempting a few passes on the Bengals' sideline but appeared to be in more pain after being unable to follow through on both throws, causing him to head to the locker room with trainers before halftime and be ruled out for the game in the third quarter.

"It's tough," Burrow said. "You work so hard for seasons and moments like these, so whenever you get hurt and it ends (your season) early, it's tough to handle. But that's part of the game. I've been through it before, so I just have to grind it out."

"I just felt a pop in the middle of the throw," Burrow added. "I tried to give it a go, but I just couldn't get it done. And then I obviously got the news today, so not great."

Burrow, who had signed a five-year, \$275 million extension with the franchise on Sept. 7 that made him the highest-paid player in NFL history, experienced an up-and-down season that was defined by injury.

Prior to signing the record-breaking contract, the former Buckeye and LSU quarterback was carted off the field after suffering a strained right calf during a training camp practice on July 27. The injury wasn't enough to keep him off the field at the start of the season, but the lingering effects did hinder his performance early on, where he completed just 87 of 151 (57.2 percent) of his passes for 728 yards, two touchdowns

and two interceptions, leading the Bengals to a disappointing 1-3 start.

Burrow appeared to regain his full strength, though, winning four of five games and throwing for 1,480 yards and 12 touchdowns to just four interceptions. But his attempted comeback was cut short under the lights in Baltimore.

He finished the season completing 244

of 365 (66.9 percent) pass attempts for 15 touchdowns and six interceptions and 2,309 yards.

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



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Defense Ready For Redemption Vs. Michigan

Continued From Page 1

— much maligned over defensive lapses against Michigan last season, as well as a down performance against Georgia in the College Football Playoff — has been able to do little else than think about The Game and how his defense can take that next step against the Wolverines.

“The overall defense has been on my mind since last year, of course, of how we can be better in these matchup performances,” he said. “We’ve already had a couple, and we’ve got to build off that and be at our best.”

The Game this season will offer a chance for Ohio State to right some of those wrongs from the last two losses. It’s a situation the Buckeyes were in last year, hoping to rebound from Michigan’s win in 2021 that was the program’s first since 2011, but it was even more devastating last season considering the Wolverines scored three touchdowns in the fourth quarter to ice Ohio State on the Buckeyes’ home turf.

The losses have left a noticeable mark on the program, which has not appeared in a Big Ten Championship Game since 2020 and has watched the Wolverines — at least until the sign-stealing scandal broke — become the class of the Big Ten. But the team is excited to have an opportunity to prove naysayers wrong and return to the top of the conference.

“We’re in the same spot we were last year at this time,” defensive end Jack Sawyer said. “We’re both undefeated. This year, we’re going up there, and it’s going to be a good game. We’re excited. All the focus goes to them now.”

Sawyer, who had 3½ tackles for loss against Minnesota, is a returning face for Ohio State who saw significant action in previous losses, experiencing firsthand the drubbing by the Wolverines over the past two seasons. Having those scars serves as significant motivation for him —



SONNY BROCKWAY

JACK ATTACK — Junior defensive end Jack Sawyer (R) had perhaps his best game as a Buckeye against Minnesota, finishing with a career-high 3½ tackles for loss.

as well as most of the team — heading into The Game.

“It definitely does (add fuel),” he said. “We’re going to use that as fuel and go in there and try to play as hard as we can for four quarters.”

But the defense will take several new

defensive starters into Ann Arbor — namely cornerbacks Davison Igbinosun and Jordan Hancock, safety Sonny Styles and defensive tackle Tyleik Williams. The common bond between those new and returning starters on defense is that Knowles feels confidence exuding from his unit that has allowed only 9.3 points per game this season, a mark that is second in the country behind — you guessed it — Michigan, which is allowing only 9.0 points per game.

Play has been consistent at all three levels of the defense, with a mix of new and old faces helping the Silver Bullets make their long-awaited return.

“It’s all about confidence, and playing defense at this level is a lot about confidence,” Knowles said. “When you can show them things that we’ve done well here this season and how that matches up to what we’re going to do, it certainly beats any talk. Experience is a great teacher, and we have it now where we can be counted on.”

Many of the scars have existed on the defensive side of the ball, but the offense has been culpable as well at points over the last two seasons.

Ohio State put up just 14 points in the second half in Ann Arbor in 2021, and last year in Columbus, a field goal by Noah Ruggles with 7:23 remaining that made it 31-23 in favor of the Wolverines were the only points put up in the final two quarters by the Buckeyes.

Junior quarterback Kyle McCord, who

will make his first start against Michigan, has yet to play in The Game, but he has felt the warts all the same and he’s excited for the opportunity to leave his imprint on the rivalry.

“We say we prepare for it 365 days a year, and I truly believe that,” he said. “The guys on the team, we think about it every day, especially the way the last two years have gone. To be back in the same position that we were in last year with a chance to right the ship, I think everybody is definitely excited for it, without a doubt.”

While Michigan has dominated Ohio State in each of the past two seasons, it is still expected to be an evenly-matched contest, with the Wolverines considered around a 3 ½-point favorite. It’s what Day, Knowles and the rest of the coaching staff would call a matchup game, where Ohio State’s talent is comparable with that of the opposition, something that isn’t common throughout the Buckeyes’ schedule.

It’s the type of game that Ohio State — whether winning close games against Notre Dame in each of the last two seasons or pulling out big second halves against Penn State — has been able to win outside of Michigan in recent memory, but that is a turnaround — specifically on defense — that Knowles is hoping to initiate.

“It’s been built since the first game,” he said, “but there’s been a focus since last spring, including myself, to make sure that we can be counted on and making the

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changes and adjustments that are necessary to win the matchup games.”

Regardless of all the outside noise – and you’d best believe there’s plenty floating around, and will be up until kickoff – it’s time for Ohio State and Michigan to play ball, and the Buckeyes are looking to turn the tides of the rivalry back in their favor.

“It’s definitely exciting,” Sawyer said. “It’s a big game. (Michigan is) good. They’re a great team. A lot of good players. It’s going to be a fun game. We’ve both had this game circled on the calendar. It’s what we work for over the offseason, both of us. I’m just looking forward to going out there and playing our best game.”

Not-So-Golden Gophers

Before the season finale against Michigan, Ohio State was afforded the chance to take a deep breath with back-to-back home contests against struggling Michigan State and Minnesota.

The Buckeyes took care of business against the Spartans in a 38-3 win, racking up 530 yards on offense and allowing just 182 yards by Michigan State. It was an important tuneup for Ohio State as Day’s squad played its most complete game of the season on both sides of the ball, and that fine-tuning continued against Minnesota.

Ohio State jumped out of the gate quickly, scoring on three of the team’s first four drives of the half – though two of those scores were field goals after flaming out in Minnesota territory – and went into the half up 13-0.

Not satisfied with just a two-possession advantage, the Buckeyes put the blowout in motion with a quick 75-yard score by running back TreVeyon Henderson on the first play of the second half. Then, on the first play of Minnesota’s ensuing drive, junior defensive ends J.T. Tuimoloau and Sawyer combined for an impressive play when Sawyer strip-sacked quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis and the ball was collected by Tuimoloau, leading to a 4-yard scoring reception by Marvin Harrison Jr. just three plays later for a 27-0 lead en route to the final score.

“We wanted to win the first five minutes,” Day said. “We ended up scoring 14 in the first minute (actually 1:07) – touchdown, turnover, touchdown. It’s something we’ve talked about all year is coming out in the second half and playing well. Every year you try to identify the areas that you want to improve on, and that was an area we wanted to do a great job with. It was good to see us come out like that and give us a little bit of a cushion, and it allowed us an opportunity to get some of those guys out of the game and rested up for next week.”

Like the win over Michigan State, it was a promising performance in which Ohio State took care of business against a lesser opponent, something the Buckeyes had previously struggled with this season. But Minnesota did not appear to stand a chance from the start, and finished with just 159 yards of total offense compared to 434 for Ohio State.

The offense would have liked to put up more points – just as the defense would have preferred that Dragan Kesich not connect on a 54-yard field goal in the fourth quarter to break the shutout – but it was another important step for the offense.

Whether it was Henderson rushing for 146 yards and two scores on 15 carries – including a career-long 75-yard touchdown run – Harrison doing his usual thing with a touchdown score or Emeka Egbuka looking close to 100 percent with a game-high five catches for 83 yards, Ohio State was back to full strength and looked every bit



SONNY BROCKWAY

JUST IN TIME — Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord (6) feels the offense is rounding into form, which is good timing considering the Buckeyes travel to Ann Arbor on Nov. 25 to face Michigan.

the well-oiled machine that has been customary in Columbus over the past few seasons.

“This is what I’ve been talking about all year,” McCord said. “I feel like we’ve been making strides in the right direction. Especially early on in the year, there were times where everything was clicking and we

looked really good, and now we’re starting to be more consistent, which is big.

“The challenge now with the opponent that we have coming up is how can we continue to elevate our game, continue to play on a consistent basis? That’s been the mindset all year, so we’re just continuing that into this week.”

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Sawyer, Tuimoloau Dominate In Blowout Win

Junior defensive ends Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau may have been playing their last game at Ohio Stadium on Nov. 18 against Minnesota, and they made the most of it in the Buckeyes' 37-3 win over the visiting Gophers.

Sawyer had unquestionably the biggest game of his career, finishing with six

GAME NOTEBOOK Greg Wilson

tackles, 3½ tackles for a loss, a sack and a forced fumble, all highs for Ohio State's defense. He was all over the field early on, making sure the Gophers weren't able to get any offense going by registering 2½ of those tackles for loss in the first quarter.

Despite playing so well in the past few games, he didn't take any of the credit himself, giving it all to the players around him.

"It's the defense as a whole," he said. "The way we're playing, our mentality right

now, everybody's playing downhill, being the aggressors on the defensive side of the ball. Coach (Jim) Knowles always says, 'We dictate what happens. Anything that happens, we either let happen, or we did it.' It's the mentality. That's allowing all of us to play faster and play more confident.

"Davison (Igbinosun) had another great game, J.T. had a great game, Tyleik (Williams) is playing tough in the middle, Ty Hamilton – you can just go down the list of guys. We're progressively getting better as the season goes on. It's really fun to see."

His biggest play was a strip-sack coming on Minnesota's first play of the second half that was recovered by Tuimoloau, who almost ran the ball back for a touchdown – though a block from Jordan Hancock downhill would have helped the cause.

"It's funny, I sacked him, and I didn't know it was a strip-sack," Sawyer said. "I heard the crowd go crazy, I roll over and J.T. has the ball running. I thought he was going to get in the end zone. I'm really mad he didn't. It was a great time.

"I don't know what Jordan was doing on that block. I thought he was going to throw a block. We were all messing with him on the

sidelines. But it was a fun play."

Tuimoloau added two tackles of his own plus the fumble recovery, but the entire front four and linebackers teamed up to play well when it came to stopping the run. The Gophers finished with just 70 yards on 29 carries, a 2.4-yard average.

"I love having those guys right there in the front seven," Hancock said. "(Sawyer) getting back to the quarterback is making my job easier, so I just applaud him. The amount of work he's been through and all that stuff is just crazy."

Offense Stalls Early Against Minnesota

On Nov. 11 against Michigan State, the Buckeyes were able to jump out to a 32-point lead at the half and take most of the starters out to rest them for upcoming games. The first drive against Minnesota looked to be a repeat. TreVeyon Henderson had 48 yards from scrimmage on five touches and capped it off with a 9-yard touchdown to put the Buckeyes up 7-0 just over five minutes into the game.

But on the next drive the Golden Gophers buried Ohio State at its own 3-yard

line after a 53-yard punt by Mark Crawford. The Buckeyes couldn't escape for a first down, and they were forced to punt, marking the beginning of a slow rest of the first half, at least on the scoreboard.

Junior quarterback Kyle McCord thought they were able to move the ball down the field well, but the problem was they weren't able to finish drives off with touchdowns once they got into Minnesota territory.

"Minnesota is a good team, they're a good defense," he said. "At certain points, they made good plays. But the other side of that is we weren't as sharp today on certain plays. I felt like a lot of the drives we moved the ball and we just stalled and had to kick a field goal instead of scoring a touchdown. Those are four-point plays. The biggest thing now is just going back, watching the film and looking at why we didn't execute, especially early on."

Three times Ohio State drove into Minnesota territory and had to settle for a field goal, and twice it did so after reaching the red zone. On back-to-back drives in the first half, the Buckeyes started on their own 13- and 11-yard lines and picked up a combined 139 yards on 20 plays. Those drives ended with just six points on the board off the foot of Jayden Fielding.

One reason finishing was a struggle was that McCord was off-target early on, notably throwing passes behind Emeka Egbuka and Marvin Harrison Jr. which killed both of those second-quarter drives. While McCord didn't look as sharp as he had the week prior against the Spartans when he threw for 335 yards and three touchdowns, head coach Ryan Day still feels like the quarterback is in a good spot going into the game against Michigan.

"You could see him when he's on rhythm and making some big-time reads down the field," Day said. "I thought he threw some good balls today. When he's playing situational football and his feet are in rhythm like that, you can see it. We've got the weapons and he's got the talent, so it's all been a build-up toward this week, to go swing as hard as we can and play our tails off. I feel like we have all of our weapons here and healthy and that's great."

Against Minnesota, McCord finished 20 of 30 passing for 212 yards and two touchdowns, but when he took a sack in the first half, he seemed to regravitate his ankle injury that he has been dealing with since Ohio State played Notre Dame on Sept. 23. He played through it, though, and said he would be good to go against the Wolverines.

"Obviously, a little bit of a weird tackle there," McCord said. "But I popped up and just started moving on, so I'm good. I don't know if there's anybody on that field that's 100 percent. But the offensive line has done a really good job of keeping me upright, and I feel good. The biggest thing is just making sure that you're doing everything you can during the week to get your body to top shape to go out there on Saturday."

Henderson Continues Impressive Stretch

Since running back TreVeyon Henderson came back from an injury on Oct. 28 against Wisconsin, the offense has run through the

Game Analysis

What Worked Well

It seems like Ohio State running back TreVeyon Henderson is getting better and better with each passing game this season, and he continued that positive momentum during the Buckeyes' 37-3 blowout win over Minnesota. Henderson showed off his improving explosiveness from the get-go on a 15-yard run on his first carry and never looked back. The junior totaled 146 yards on the ground on 15 totes, giving him an impressive average of 9.7 yards per attempt. To make his night better, he also found the end zone twice. His first score came on a 9-yard attempt during OSU's first drive of the game, which set the tone for his successful night. His second touchdown was perhaps his most impressive of the season, where he juke to his left and took a Kyle McCord handoff 75 yards for the score on the very first play of the second half.

Henderson may have had his best overall performance of the season against the Gophers, but it was also a collective effort by the Buckeyes' running backs in the final home game of the season. Chip Trayanum also showed off his speed out of the backfield with his first two rushes going for 10 and 11 yards, respectively, and he finished with 25 yards on four carries. Sophomore Dallan Hayden once again showed off his elite patience and vision while relieving Henderson in the second half with 34 yards rushing on eight carries. A lot of credit should go to Henderson and the other running backs for this strong performance, but props are also deserved for the Buckeyes' offensive line, which opened up gaping holes for the trio of tailbacks. These are all positive signs for Ohio State's offense heading into The Game on Nov. 25, as it will need to establish the run in what will likely be a low-scoring, grind-it-out affair.

What Didn't Work

Despite the blowout victory, Ohio State played nowhere near a perfect game in the final tuneup for Michigan. On both sides of the ball, the Buckeyes failed to convert on a number of missed opportunities that could have blown the game open much sooner than they actually did. Most of these mistakes happened in the first half, which allowed the Gophers to stay within striking distance despite not scoring a point until the end of the fourth quarter. The one missed opportunity that stuck out in the first half was the dropped interception

from Josh Proctor near the end of the second quarter, where the ball went right through his hands on an errant throw from Minnesota quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis. This turned what could've been a momentum-shifting play from the Buckeyes' defense into a promising opportunity for the Gophers to score their first points. Minnesota would not capitalize on the Proctor drop, punting the ball back to Ohio State, but it is something Day's team will not get away with in Ann Arbor.

The Buckeyes' defense had some other key mistakes in the first half that could have led to Minnesota points, mainly on some missed tackles early on that allowed the Gophers to establish some momentum on the ground. But the offense also had its fair share of errors early on, specifically in the red zone. McCord and the offense were able to move the ball down the field with ease, but they could not finish on several drives in the first half, forcing them to kick two field goals from the Minnesota 29- and 8-yard lines. These were mostly due to a few inaccurate throws from McCord and a lack of overall execution from the unit. With the biggest game of the season coming up, these types of mistakes simply cannot happen if Ohio State wants to exit Michigan Stadium with the win.

Play Of The Game

After a sluggish first half on offense, the Buckeyes needed a major jolt of energy coming out of halftime to create some separation on the scoreboard. Luckily for Ohio State, it would not have to wait long for that to happen. On the very first play of the second half, Henderson took a handoff from McCord and immediately made a sharp jump-cut to his left to evade an attempted tackle from Minnesota defensive back Jack Henderson. This would give Henderson all the separation he needed to make the biggest play of the game, where he sprinted past the entire Gopher secondary and streaked toward the sideline for an impressive 75-yard touchdown. The score handed Ohio State a commanding 20-0 lead, allowing it to make another big play on defense the next play from scrimmage and essentially cruise the rest of the way for the 34-point victory. It was also Henderson's longest rush of his career.

— Patrick Engels

OHIO STATE VS. MINNESOTA

junior back.

Henderson hit 200 yards from scrimmage against Wisconsin as well as against Rutgers on Nov. 4 and likely would have done so again against Minnesota had he played past the first play of the third quarter. Against the Gophers, he finished with 146 yards and two touchdowns on 15 carries – 9.7 yards per attempt – while adding two receptions for 26 yards.

His rushing average was helped along tremendously by his career-long touchdown, a 75-yarder that came on the very first play out of the locker room in the second half. Day said when the game runs through Henderson, the Buckeyes are a better team.

“He’s a home-run hitter, and the more opportunities he gets and he gets to the second level, he’s dangerous once we get him back there,” he said. “It’s everybody’s job to get him there. I thought on that play in particular, but I think Emeka and Julian (Fleming) sprung him on the perimeter, but the guys up front did a nice job moving the line. Then Cade (Stover) did a good job, too, on the back side of that.”

McCord said Minnesota was trying to take away the pass, especially to Harrison, so it was important for the Buckeyes to both have Henderson healthy and have him playing so well.

“Another big game from him, and we needed it,” McCord said. “There were times today where they sat at two-high shell and tried to take away the pass, especially to Marvin. When that’s the case, there are going to be favorable run boxes.

“Tre did his thing again today, which was huge. He springboarded the momentum in the second half with that big run and getting us going. It doesn’t surprise me what he does. The work he puts in is really starting to show.”

Simon Shines With Eichenberg Sidelined

Fifth-year senior linebacker Tommy Eichenberg suffered an arm injury in the

win over Rutgers, exiting the game late, and sat out against Michigan State as well, though Day indicated that Eichenberg was trending in a positive direction heading into Minnesota.

But Eichenberg did not take the field against the Gophers, with Day deciding to hold him out for an additional week so that he would be healthy against Michigan and moving forward.

“Tommy was ready to play in this one, and I had to pull him back. It was almost a fistfight, but I won,” Day said with a laugh. “It took some late-night texts. He wanted to play, and this is a guy who’s put so much into the program.

“For Senior Day, for him to not be out there, was really hard for Tommy. Really hard. But I just explained to him that there’s too much on the line moving forward to risk any kind of setback, that we need him at his best, and after some calming down, he was OK.”

The Buckeyes knew it was a possibility they would be playing without Eichenberg against the Gophers, but it was something they were completely comfortable with knowing that his starting replacement would be senior Cody Simon. Knowles said as much Nov. 14.

“Cody not only plays well, but he manages the game like Tommy does,” he said. “He’s got that kind of brain and that kind of football intelligence. We need both as we come down the stretch. We need to have the ability to put them in different places.”

The Buckeyes didn’t miss much, since Simon got off to a quick start with two first-quarter tackles, including half a tackle for loss.

“We had a good game plan coming in,” Simon said. “We put a lot of work in practice, and a lot of that came to fruition and I’m just happy for the rest of the defense because they played their tail off today. It was a really good day.”

The coaches feel Simon contributes enough to warrant their comfort with him,



SONNY BROCKWAY

1,000-YARD MAN — Ohio State fifth-year tight end Cade Stover (8), playing in his final game at Ohio Stadium against Minnesota on Nov. 18, surpassed 1,000 career receiving yards with the Buckeyes.

evident by the amount of playing time he’s been receiving even when Eichenberg has been healthy. But even though Simon has directly benefited in terms of his time on the turf with Eichenberg out, even he said he’s ready for the team leader in tackles to be back on the field, which Day said he would be against Michigan.

“He’s our leader really,” Simon said, “and he’s vocal and he’s going to be really physical, bring up a good presence for The Game, and we’re just excited to have him back.”

Even when Eichenberg wasn’t in the game, his teammates said he was able to contribute with his knowledge of the game.

“He’s really smart,” Sawyer said. “He knows everything that’s going on. He’s the quarterback of the defense. We get out there and we get a stop or we come off and they got a couple first downs, he’s telling us what he’s seeing. That really plays a big part in getting a stop the next series.”

Fifth-Year Stover Reaches Milestone On Senior Day

In what is expected to be fifth-year tight end Stover’s final game at Ohio Stadium,

he passed the 1,000 career receiving yards mark, making him only the third Ohio State tight end to reach that milestone. He joins John Frank (1,481 yards, 1980-83) and Billy Anders (1,218 yards, 1965-67) as Buckeyes who have reached that mark.

Stover did so on the first Buckeye drive, catching a 16-yard pass from McCord, one of four on the day for 26 yards. He also caught a touchdown later in the game, a 1-yard reception at the beginning of the fourth quarter.

“That’s my guy,” McCord said. “I don’t know if there’s a guy that is a tougher dude, works as hard as he does. He does the dirty work. To get him that touchdown, that might have been his last play in the ‘Shoe. It’s pretty special. I can’t really quantify what he means to this team. But to have that moment was pretty sweet.”

Stover was named a semifinalist for the John Mackey Award this season, given to the nation’s best tight end, and has 38 catches for 534 yards and five touchdowns. For his career, he is up to 79 catches for 1,016 yards and 10 scores.



SONNY BROCKWAY

NEXT MAN UP — Senior linebacker Cody Simon (30) filled in admirably against Minnesota for the injured Tommy Eichenberg, who is expected back against Michigan.

Henderson Keys Second-Half Burst For 37-3 Win

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The memories of a sluggish first half were quickly erased on one dynamic flash of speed from TreVeyon Henderson.

Among his 15 carries was a 75-yard lightning bolt that turned a close game into a breather for second-ranked Ohio State. His career-long touchdown on the first play of the third quarter put the Buckeyes (11-0, 8-0) ahead 20-0 on the way to a 37-3 win over Minnesota in Ohio Stadium on Nov. 18.

Henderson rushed for 146 yards and Kyle McCord passed for two touchdowns to the delight of 104,019 on a sunny 49-degree, late-afternoon home finale.

After the Henderson score, Minnesota (5-6, 3-5) turned the ball over, and Marvin Harrison Jr. had a 4-yard touchdown catch to make it 27-0. Harrison, a Heisman Trophy contender, had three receptions for 30 yards and one score before being rested midway through the third quarter. McCord finished 20 of 30 for 212 yards.

Bogged Down

Minnesota went three-and-out to start the game, and the Buckeyes began from the 15 after a holding penalty on the punt. Ohio State needed eight plays – five going for 10 or more yards – to go 85 yards in 4:02 for a 7-0 lead on Henderson's 9-yard touchdown run at 9:22.

Henderson opened with a 15-yard run followed by carries of 4 and 7 yards and a catch for 13 yards to the Minnesota 46. Chip Trayanum gained 10 yards on the ground, tight end Cade Stover made a reception for 16 yards to the 20, and Trayanum came back with a rush of 11 yards to the 9 before Henderson returned to score on the next handoff.

Ohio State's third possession began at its 13 after a punt and almost ended immediately with a bad snap on the first play. Fortunately for the Buckeyes, the ball bounced to McCord, and he hit Harrison for his first catch that went 20 yards. Emeke Egbuka later had a 26-yarder to the Gophers' 29, but three incompletions led to a career-long 47-yard field goal by Jayden Fielding to make it 10-0 at 13:05 of the second quarter.

The Buckeyes forced a punt to the 11 from their 42 after Corey Crooms made a 32-yard catch and run to the OSU 47 for the Gophers, who gained only 5 yards on the next three plays.

An 8-yard catch for Egbuka that turned



SONNY BROCKWAY

STRIKE A POSE — Six players were called for an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty against Minnesota after posing in the end zone following an interception by cornerback Jordan Hancock.

into another 15 for a face-mask penalty moved the chains to the OSU 42 to ignite the drive, and he hauled in a 23-yarder on the ensuing snap.

Three plays later, Egbuka took a shovel pass, racing 21 yards to the 6, but the Buckeyes could manage only a 26-yard field goal at the 4:51 mark to make it 13-0. McCord couldn't connect with Stover, and Henderson lost 2 yards on a run prior to McCord missing on third down.

The star for Minnesota in the first half was punter Mark Crawford. He pinned the Buckeyes to starts from their 15, 3, 13, 11 and 3 in the first half.

Ohio State had 232 yards (147 passing, 85 rushing) with McCord 11 of 18, Egbuka making five catches for 83 and Henderson rushing for 71 yards on 14 carries. Minnesota gained 90 yards (57 passing, 33 rushing).

Explosive

All the anxiety during halftime was

wiped away in 12 seconds, the amount of time it took for Henderson to take the handoff and go 75 yards to pay dirt to make it 20-0.

After the ensuing kickoff, quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis was strip-sacked by Jack Sawyer for a 3-yard loss to the 22 where J.T. Tuimoloau picked up the fumble and returned it 16 yards to the 6. Trayanum ran for 2 yards and McCord found Harrison for a 4-yard touchdown at 13:53, a span of 55 seconds between scores, to make it 27-0.

The defense came through again when the Gophers got the ball, but an overexuberant celebration led to a 32-yard field goal by Fielding for a 30-0 score at 10:17 instead of a possible touchdown.

Jordan Hancock had made an interception at the Ohio State 46 and made a return of 40 yards to the Minnesota 14. However, multiple Buckeyes were charged with an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for posing, and the ball was moved back 15 yards.

"Jordan has been just a huge plus for us, to have a cover skills corner who's also willing to mix it up in the run game," said defensive coordinator Jim Knowles. "You've seen him. He's willing to get dirty. He attacks in the run game, so it's really given us an added dimension."

Henderson's catch for 13 yards got the Buckeyes to the 16. Trayanum rushed for 2 yards then McCord was off the mark on two straight passes to end the threat.

The Buckeyes took a 37-0 lead at 13:43 of the fourth quarter on a Stover 1-yard catch. The drive was 16 plays and 84 yards and took 9:18 off the clock.

Dallan Hayden had a 15-yard run to the Ohio State 43 and Xavier Johnson's catch of 14 yards put the Buckeyes at Minnesota 19. Johnson later had an 8-yard reception to the 5.

"We felt like we wanted to get (Hayden) in the game a little bit because he hasn't played a ton this year, and I thought going into next week or moving forward, it would be good to get him some carries," Day said. "He had eight carries, so that's pretty good, 4.2 yards per carry. I thought he ran well when he was in there."

Minnesota avoided a shutout when Dragan Kesich kicked a 54-yard field goal with 6:43 to play.

Freshman Lincoln Kienholz took over for McCord and directed two series. The last started with 3:01 left at the OSU 40. Evan Pryor had four carries for 12 yards, and Kienholz had a 5-yard toss to tight end Joe Royer. The Buckeyes ended the game at the Minnesota 43.

Notes

Egbuka was credited with five catches for 83 yards, 54 after the catch. ... Hayden rushed eight times for 34 yards. ... Kienholz was 2 for 2 for 7 yards. ... The Buckeyes gained 434 yards (219 passing, 215 rushing) with 23 first downs. The Gophers gained 159 yards (89 passing, 70 rushing) and 10 first downs. ... Ohio State was 10 of 16 on third down and held Minnesota to 3 of 12... Sawyer had six tackles (three solo) and one of two team sacks.

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BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 37, Minnesota 3

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on what his defense showed him against Minnesota:

"Not having Tommy (Eichenberg) out there – we've had a couple of guys down –we should be at full capacity next week, which is great. But it's all going to be tested next week. You're just seeing the strides. It is what it is (not getting shutouts). We're getting better every week, but it's all headed toward the end of the season and playing our best football."

Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles on the focus of his unit:

"I felt like I saw it in the first game (against Indiana). I thought that was a big deal. (They) come out in the option and our guys are able to adjust and then you saw it over the course of the season with some good things in the red zone and some tight games and guys not flinching."

Knowles on how the play of his secondary helps elevate the entire defense:

"I think we all feel better when you're playing in the back end and getting your hands on passes and contesting routes and being in the right position and on top when you're supposed to be on top. You see the numbers and the explosive plays. I mean, that tells the story. It's just something that gives everybody confidence. It gives the whole team confidence."

Junior cornerback Jordan Hancock on his third-quarter interception:

"It means a lot converting that. It could be a (pass breakup), that's an OK play, but you want to convert it to an interception. I was happy to make that play. All my teammates were hyped with me."

Junior defensive end Jack Sawyer on his overall performance:

"It feels good. I just give all the credit and glory to God and give credit to my teammates and the coaches who put me in good positions today. Nothing really matters up to this point. All the focus goes to next week."

Ohio State junior quarterback Kyle McCord on his offense's missed opportunities in the first half:

"I thought we moved the ball well in the first half, but obviously we left some points off the board, especially in the red zone. If you convert those, it's a completely different first half. It's a different feeling, too. We were off a little bit and, as a result, left some points off the field. But I thought the second half was a cleaner execution by us. The biggest thing is just getting on those little errors early on."

Day on McCord's overall performance:

"I'll have to look at the film quickly. We're not going to really dive into this film all that much, but we are going to grade it and make sure we stay with our routine. The looks were a little bit different than what we expected, so in those moments you have to keep your feet moving and move on to the next thing. There was some good play, and then there's some things we could scheme up better."

McCord on what areas he has improved



SONNY BROCKWAY

PICKS A PLENTY — Ohio State cornerback Jordan Hancock has turned into a ball hawk for the Buckeyes this season, collecting his second interception of the year against Minnesota.

the most this season: "I think every area, honestly. The biggest thing would just be that confidence level, having confidence in myself and my teammates around me. That was the biggest thing, going back and watching that film from Week 1, I would say I had a little bit of uncertainty. You can get as many practice reps as you want, but nothing is quite like those game reps. Every week I've just been getting more confident, more comfortable in there. I feel like we're starting to get this thing rolling."

McCord on how it felt to see junior wide receiver Emeka Egbuka make an impact after his injury:

"I told Emeka this. I thought this was the best he's looked since coming back from his injury. I thought he looked explosive tonight, looked confident, too, with the way he was moving, and it was good to see. I know he's been working his tail off to get back to this point, so to get him back to almost 100 percent at this time is huge."

Linebacker Cody Simon on what the chal-

enge was like to not look ahead to the Michigan game:

"That's the big challenge of playing college football. There's always storylines and you try to stay focused, and I think our team has done a really good job of keeping our minds at what's here and now. We did a really good job of that this week, and now we're on to this weekend. It's the biggest week of all year. We've been practicing all year for it. Everyone knows the gravity of that situation, so we're just getting prepared."

Hancock on how his team will prepare for Michigan:

"The preparation is going to be crazy. There's not going to be any outside talk. We're not going to listen to outside talk. We might not be talking to our families as much, just watching film and really just trying to win that game."

Sawyer on his team's mentality heading into Michigan week:

"We wanted to make sure we won this game. We weren't looking ahead at all. But putting that game to rest and getting the 'W,' all of our focus shifts to (Michigan) now."

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 37, Minnesota 3

Nov. 18, 2023 – Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
MINNESOTA	0	0	0	3	3
OHIO STATE	7	6	17	7	37

First Quarter

OSU – Henderson, 9-yard rush (Fielding kick), 9:22.

Second Quarter

OSU – Fielding, 47-yard field goal, 13:05.

OSU – Fielding, 26-yard field goal, 4:51.

Third Quarter

OSU – Henderson, 75-yard rush (Fielding kick), 14:48.

OSU – Harrison Jr., 4-yard pass from McCord (Fielding kick), 13:53.

OSU – Fielding, 32-yard field goal, 10:17.

Fourth Quarter

OSU – Stover, 1-yard pass from McCord (Fielding kick), 13:43.

MIN – Kesich, 54-yard field goal, 6:43.

Att. – 104,019

Weather – Sunny, 49 F

Team Statistics		
	MIN	OSU
First Downs	10	23
Rushing	6	8
Passing	3	14
Penalty	1	1
Rushes-Yards	29-70	35-215
Passing Yards	89	219
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	11-19-1	22-32-0
Offensive Plays	48	67
Total Net Yards	159	434
Third Down Efficiency	3-12	10-16
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	0-0
Punts-Avg.	7-40.6	2-48.5
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	0-0
Penalties	1-15	5-43
Time of Possession	28:38	31:22

Individual Statistics		
RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)	MIN: Nubin 19-49; Evans 2-17; Kaliakmanis 7-3; Tyler 1-1.	OSU: Henderson 15-146; Hayden 8-34; Trayanum 4-25; Pryor 6-15; McCord 2-(-5).
PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)	MIN: Kaliakmanis 11-19-1-89-0.	OSU: McCord 20-30-0-212-2; Kienholz 2-2-0-7-0.
RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)	MIN: Jackson 3-29; Crooms 2-42; Spencer 2-14; Nubin 2-1; Kallerup 1-3; Tyler 1-0.	OSU: Egbuka 5-83; Stover 4-26; Harrison Jr. 3-30; Henderson 2-26; Johnson 2-22; Fleming 2-10; Gurd 1-9; Tate 1-6; Royer 1-5; Pryor 1-2.
PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)	MIN: Crawford 7-40.6-54.	OSU: Mirco 2-48.5-51.
PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)	MIN: None.	OSU: None.
KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)	MIN: None.	OSU: None.
FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.)	MIN: None.	OSU: Tuimoloau 1-16.
INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.)	MIN: None.	OSU: Hancock 1-40.
SACKS (No.-Yds.)	MIN: Joyner 1-7.	OSU: Sawyer 1-3; Curry 0.5-2; Jackson Jr. 0.5-1.
TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.)	MIN: Joyner 1-7; Selig 1-2.	OSU: Sawyer 3.5-8; Powers 1-3; Chambers 0.5-2; Curry 0.5-2; Williams 0.5-2; Jackson Jr. 0.5-1; Simon 0.5-1.
TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.)	MIN: Jones 11-0-11; Stolsky 5-3-8; Bryson 4-1-5; Henderson 3-2-5; Walley 4-0-4; Williams 4-0-4; Green 3-0-3; Logan-Redding 2-1-3; Striggow 0-3-3; Eastern 1-1-2; Selig 1-1-2; Joyner 1-0-1; Ersery 1-0-1; Kaliakmanis 1-0-1; Nubin 1-0-1; Collins 0-1-1; Baugh 0-1-1.	OSU: Sawyer 3-3-6; Chambers 4-1-5; Igbinosun 3-0-3; Powers 3-0-3; Burke 2-1-3; Williams 1-2-3; Simpson-Hunt 2-0-2; Turner 2-0-2; Simon 1-1-2; Tuimoloau 1-1-2; Hancock 1-1-2; Hicks 1-1-2; Hamilton 0-2-2; Styles 1-0-1; Proctor 1-0-1; Kanu 1-0-1; Malone 1-0-1; McKenzie 0-1-1; Curry 0-1-1; Jackson Jr. 0-1-1.
PLAYERS IN THE GAME	MIN: Spencer, J. Nubin, Boe, Ersery, Autman-Bell, Lewis, Cooper, Carroll, Kaliakmanis, Spann-Ford, Jackson, Green, Jones, T. Nubin, Selig, Stolsky, Walley, Williams, Eastern, Striggow, Baugh, Logan-Redding, Smith, Collins, Brown, Bryson, Joyner, Kelly, Gerlach, Tyler, Henderson, E. Redding, Watson, Evans, Jorgenson, Gregersen, Carrier, Bride, Shamburger, Weeks, Crooms, Hawkinson, Mau, Kingsbury, McCoy, Shaw, Johnson, Beers, Q. Redding, Geers, Kallerup, Richter, Crawford, Kesich.	OSU: Harrison Jr., Egbuka, Henderson, Jones, McCord, Fryar, Simmons, Jackson, Hinzman, Stover, Scott Jr., Igbinosun, Burke, Chambers, Simon, Sawyer, Proctor, Tuimoloau, Hamilton, Styles, Hancock, Williams, Johnson, Inniss, Hicks, Turner, Kienholz, Stokes, Carter, Antwi, Thurman, Simpson-Hunt, Melton, Tate, Trayanum, Reese, Pryor, Abor, Mathews Jr., Hartford, Carrico, Mirco, Jones, Powers, Fielding, Fleming, Ferlmann, Gurd, Hayden, Montgomery, McDonald, Cutler, Michalski, Vimahi, Fitzpatrick, Tshabola, James, Adolph, Royer, Ballard, McKenzie, Curry, Kanu, Malone, Jackson Jr.

Season Statistics

2023 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Sept. 2	(3) at Indiana	W, 23-3	50,050
Sept. 9	(5) YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 35-7	102,897
Sept. 16	(6) WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 63-10	100,217
Sept. 23	(6) at Notre Dame (9)	W, 17-14	77,622
Oct. 7	(4) MARYLAND	W, 37-17	104,974
Oct. 14	(3) at Purdue	W, 41-7	57,319
Oct. 21	(3) PENN STATE (7)	W, 20-12	105,506
Oct. 28	(3) at Wisconsin	W, 24-10	76,453
Nov. 4	(3) at Rutgers	W, 35-16	53,703
Nov. 11	(3) MICHIGAN STATE	W, 38-3	105,137
Nov. 18	(3) MINNESOTA	W, 37-3	104,019
Nov. 25	(2) at Michigan (3)	12 p.m.	

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

Team Statistics		
	OSU	Opp
First Downs	241	166
Rushing	79	67
Passing	143	80
Penalty	19	19
Average Per Game/Rush	145.5	108.5
Average Per Game/Pass	283.7	144.4
Total Offense	4722	2782
Total Plays	716	697
Average Per Game	429.3	252.9
Average Per Play	6.6	4.0
Penalties-Yards	65-517	52-455
Fumbles-Lost	7-6	10-4
Third Down Efficiency	66-142	47-161
Percentage	46%	29%
Fourth Down Efficiency	9-17	10-26
Percentage	53%	38%
Sacks-Yards	21-139	18-118
Time Of Possession Avg.	29:48	30:11

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	75	113	96	86	0	370	33.6	
Opponents	20	31	21	30	0	102	9.3	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
T. Henderson	118	794	6.7	10	75
Chip Trayanum	79	336	4.3	3	40
Miyan Williams	49	158	3.2	3	12
Xavier Johnson	21	142	6.8	0	27
Dallan Hayden	19	110	5.8	1	19
Evan Pryor	19	49	2.6	0	6
Devin Brown	19	35	1.8	1	8
Marvin Harrison Jr.	2	26	13.0	1	19
Emeka Egbuka	5	25	5.0	0	9
Jesse Mirco	1	2	2.0	0	0
Cody Simon	1	-3	-3.0	0	0
Kyle McCord	31	-62	-2.0	0	9
Team	6	-11	1-8	0	0
OSU Totals	370	1601	4.3	19	75
OPP Totals	360	1194	3.3	3	45

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Kyle McCord	211	318	66.4	2899	22-4	163.2
Devin Brown	12	22	54.5	197	2-1	150.7
Lincoln Kienholz	4	5	80.0	25	0-0	122.0
Team	0	1	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
OSU Totals	227	346	65.6	3121	24-5	161.4
OPP Totals	170	337	50.4	1588	7-7	92.7

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Marvin Harrison Jr.	62	1093	17.6	13	75
Cade Stover	38	534	14.1	5	49
Emeka Egbuka	32	427	13.3	3	28
Julian Fleming	23	212	9.2	0	37
Carnell Tate	17	260	15.3	1	55
T. Henderson	16	210	13.1	0	65
Xavier Johnson	10	138	13.8	0	40
Gee Scott Jr.	9	62	6.9	1	14
Chip Trayanum	9	53	5.9	0	19
Miyan Williams	4	42	10.5	0	27
Jelani Thurman	2	18	9.0	0	14
Patrick Gurd	1	9	9.0	0	9
Joe Royer	1	5	5.0	0	5
Evan Pryor	1	2	2.0	0	2
Dallan Hayden	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
Brandon Inniss	1	58	58.0	1	58
OSU Totals	227	3121	13.7	24	75
OPP Totals	170	1588	9.3	7	36

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jayden Fielding	-	46-47	-	-	14-16	88
Marvin Harrison Jr.	14	-	-	-	-	84
T. Henderson	10	-	-	-	-	60

Cade Stover	5	-	-	-	-	30
Chip Trayanum	3	-	-	-	-	18
Emeka Egbuka	3	-	-	-	-	18
Miyan Williams	3	-	-	-	-	18
Josh Proctor	1	-	-	-	-	6
Gee Scott Jr.	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jordan Hancock	1	-	-	-	-	6
Tyleik Williams	1	-	-	-	-	6
Dallan Hayden	1	-	-	-	-	6
Devin Brown	1	-	-	-	-	6
Brandon Inniss	1	-	-	-	-	6
Carnell Tate	1	-	-	-	-	6
J. Mathews Jr.	1	-	-	-	-	6
OSU Totals	437	46-47	-	-	14-16	370
OPP Totals	10	9-9	-	-	11-17	102

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Jayden Fielding	5-5	6-6	3-5	0-0	14-16
OSU Totals	5-5	6-6	3-5	0-0	14-16
OPP Totals	5-6	0-1	4-6	2-4	11-17

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	38	1645	43.3	0	72
OSU Totals	38	1645	43.3	0	72
OPP Totals	64	2685	42.0	0	60

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Jordan Hancock	2	133	66.5	1	93
Jermaine Mathews Jr.	1	58	58.0	1	58
Josh Proctor	1	24	24.0	1	24
Lathan Ransom	1	15	15.0	0	15
Denzel Burke	1	0	0.0	0	0
Steele Chambers	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	7	230	32.9	3	93
OPP Totals	5	35	7.0	0	19

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Jayden Ballard	8	47	5.9	0	18
Emeka Egbuka	7	23	3.3	0	8
Julian Fleming	1	3.0	0	0	3
OSU Totals	16	73	4.6	0	18
OPP Totals	10	135	13.5	0	35

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Xavier Johnson	9	208	23.1	0	32
Chip Trayanum	1	14	14.0	0	14
Caden Curry	1	-5	-5.0	0	0
OSU Totals	11	217	19.7	0	32
OPP Totals	13	235	18.1	0	30

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Tommy Eichenberg	37	36	73	2.5-8	1.0-7
Steele Chambers	31	31	62	1.5-3	0-0
Davison Igbinosun	34	14	48	1.5-4	0-0
Tyleik Williams	17	28	45	10.0-19	3.0-6
Cody Simon	18	26	44	3.0-6	0-0
Sonny Styles	25	16	41	4.0-10	2.0-6
Jack Sawyer	17	21	38	6.0-21	2.5-15
Josh Proctor	24	12	36	4.0-6	0-0
Jordan Hancock	23	12	35	1.0-10	1.0-10
Lathan Ransom	21	13	34	1.5-5	0-0
Ty Hamilton	12	18	30	2.5-9	1.0-7
J.T. Tuimoloau	11	19	30	5.5-37	4.0-32
Mike Hall Jr.	6	11	17	2.0-15	1.5-14
Denzel Burke	10	4	14	2.0-7	0-0
J. Mathews Jr.	9	4	13	0-0	0-0
Jaden McKenzie	4	6	10	1.5-6	0-0
Malik Hartford	5	5	10	0-0	0-0
Hero Kanu	7	2	9	1.0-5	1.0-5
Caden Curry	5	4	9	3.5-23	1.5-17
Gabe Powers	6	1	7	1.0-3	0-0
C.J. Hicks	4	3	7	1.0-2	0-0
Kenyatta Jackson Jr.	3	3	6	2.0-11	1.5-11
Ja'Had Carter	2	3	5	0-0	0-0
Tyhone Malone	3	2	5	0.5-1	0-0
Mitchell Melton	3	-	3	3.0-13	1.0-9
C. Simpson-Hunt	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Omari Abor	1	1	2	1.0-2	0-0
Ryan Turner	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Cameron Martinez	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Jyaire Brown	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Reid Carrico	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
Bryce Prater	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
Kayden McDonald	-	1	1	0.5-1	0-0
OSU Totals	352	300	652	62-227	21-139
OPP Totals	419	260	679	50-186	18-118
Fumbles Forced:	Hancock (2), Sawyer (2), Burke, Eichenberg, Ransom, Styles.				
Fumbles Recovered:	Igbinosun (2), T. Williams, Tuimoloau.				



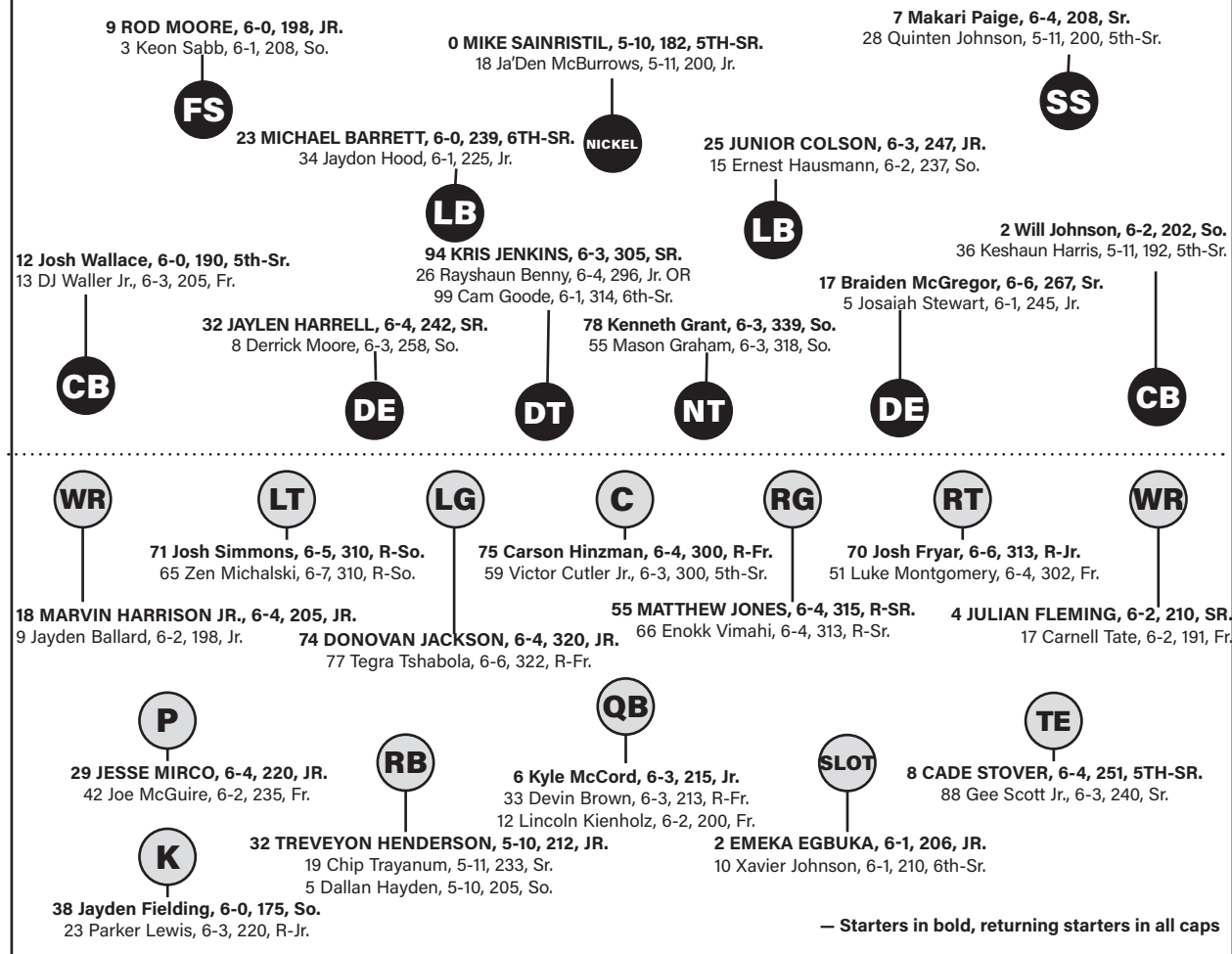
Ohio State at Michigan

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Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs.
MICHIGAN RUSH DEFENSE

TreVeyon Henderson has carried the load for several weeks and showed no signs of tiring in the 37-3 victory against Minnesota on Nov. 18. His career-long 75-yard game-changing touchdown to open the third quarter showed his ability to use his blocking, find the gaps and explode through the second level. His 146 yards came on 15 carries (9.7 yards per carry). He has scored in seven straight games. The Buckeyes totaled 215 rushing yards (6.1). They will likely pull out the whole arsenal against Michigan, including utilizing finally healthy receiver Emeka Egbuka. The Jim Harbaugh-less Wolverines looked vulnerable in spots for the first time this season but ultimately prevailed 31-24 over Maryland on Nov. 18. The rushing defense is ranked eighth nationally (90.0 yards per game), and the Wolverines are first in total defense (234.8) and scoring defense (9.0). Maryland gained a paltry 15 yards on 33 carries (0.5). U-M has held four opponents to less than 80 yards rushing and six to fewer than 100 yards, although Penn State on Nov. 11 gained a season-high 164 yards.

EDGE: MICHIGAN

MICHIGAN RUSH OFFENSE vs.
OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Blake Corum was seventh in the Heisman Trophy voting last season. He is the 10th Michigan player in history to surpass 3,000 career rushing yards and has 888 yards for a 4.9 average and 20 touchdowns this season. Corum rushed for 94 yards (3.4) and two touchdowns vs. Maryland. Much like Egbuka, Semaj Morgan doesn't run much but he's effective with 61 yards on just three carries (20.3) this season with a long of 44 and two scores, including a 13-yarder vs. the Terrapins. The running game has reached at least 150 yards eight times, with the Wolverines accumulating 150 yards on 45 totes (3.3) against Maryland. The Buckeyes allowed 70 yards (2.4) to Minnesota and are allowing just 108.5 yards on the ground, 19th in the country. Ohio State limited the Golden Gophers to 159 total yards, the second-lowest number of the season after Indiana gained 153 in the season opener.

EDGE: OHIO STATE

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs.
MICHIGAN PASS DEFENSE

Kyle McCord was an economic 20 of 30 for 212 yards, and he was not asked to do too much and didn't. He threw touchdowns passes of 4 yards to Marvin Harrison Jr. and 1 yard to Cade Stover. Egbuka led the way with five catches for 83 yard, including 54 after the catch. Harrison was targeted six times and had three catches for 30 yards. This was the fourth time this season he's had four or fewer catches for 32 yards or less. He would have to have the greatest receiving game in Ohio State history against Michigan to even be considered for the Heisman. The Wolverines have been stingy but allowed Maryland quarterback Tau Tagovailoa to throw for 247 yards. He had no touchdowns, was picked off twice and sacked five times. U-M is ranked second in the NCAA in pass defense (144.8). They have held seven opponents to less than 150 yards through the air and have allowed five touchdowns to 14 interceptions.

EDGE: MICHIGAN

MICHIGAN PASS OFFENSE vs.
OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

J.J. McCarthy was 12 of 23 for 141 yards and an interception against Maryland, and no receiver had more than 36 yards. Still, he has a record of 23-1 as a starter. Leading receiver Roman Wilson (37 catches, 612 yards, 10 TD) left in the first quarter vs. the Terrapins with an apparent head injury, and his status is unknown heading into The Game. The Buckeyes showed Minnesota why they were second in scoring defense (9.3) and first in passing defense (144.4). Gopher quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis was 11 of 19 for 89 yards, and he was intercepted by Jordan Hancock and sacked twice. The Buckeyes did their damage without linebacker Tommy Eichenberg, who will return from an injury to face the Wolverines.

EDGE: OHIO STATE

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Wolverines blocked their first punt this season, and it resulted in a safety. Tommy Doman had two of his punts downed inside the 10 for Michigan. On the Ohio State side, Jayden Fielding made a career-long 47-yard field goal while going 3 for 3. Jesse Mirco averaged 48.5 on two punts with one inside the 20.

EDGE: EVEN

INTANGIBLES

Even though scandal-bathed Harbaugh won't be on the sidelines, you can bet his mug will be on the video board more than Taylor Swift at a Chiefs game to provide inspiration. The Buckeyes should be the underdog after the disasters of the past two years. Don't be fooled by Michigan's lackluster win against Maryland. They beat Illinois by two points last season in the game prior to Ohio State, and we know what happened next.

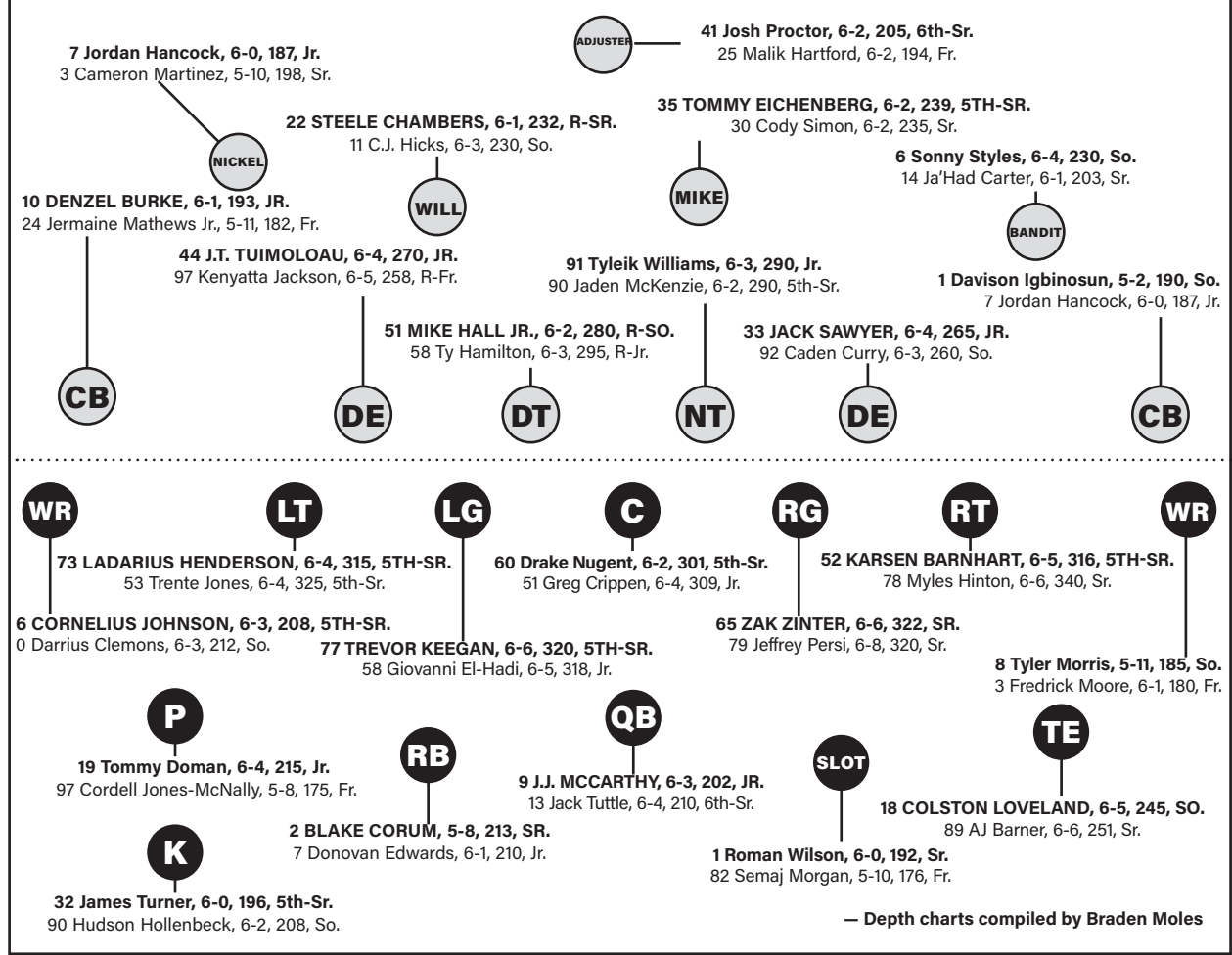
EDGE: MICHIGAN

STAFF PREDICTION

The heart says Ohio State is on a roll and ready for revenge. The head says Michigan is still the team to beat in the Big Ten. The numbers say it will be a tight game to the finish, but recent history suggests a double-digit win will occur. We'll go with our heart and take our chances.

OHIO STATE 24, MICHIGAN 21

WHEN MICHIGAN HAS THE BALL...



Bold, Confident U-M Has Chip On Its Shoulder

By **BRADEN MOLES**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Michigan's 31-24 win over Maryland on Nov. 18 was the 1,000th in program history, the first team in college football to reach that historic milestone. But it's going to be one heck of a fight to reach 1,001 wins with an undefeated and focused Ohio State team coming to Ann Arbor on Nov. 25 for a noon kickoff in The Game.

"Ecstatic to get that 1,000th win, but they all knew exactly what time it was right after that," said acting head coach and offensive coordinator Sherrone Moore. "They all know what's ahead. Excited for that challenge."

Moore, of course, will be the acting head coach for Michigan (11-0, 8-0) because usual lead man Jim Harbaugh – in his ninth season with the Wolverines – is not allowed on the sideline during the rest of the regular season as a result of punishment from the Big Ten surrounding Michigan's sign-stealing scandal.

The NCAA has received "overwhelming evidence" that former recruiting analyst Connor Stalions masterminded an advanced sign-stealing operation in which he either attended himself or paid friends and family to attend games of future opponents to record their sidelines in an attempt to steal their signs and signals.

While initially looking to take the battle to court to keep Harbaugh on the sidelines, Michigan accepted the three-game suspension for Harbaugh – two of which have already been served – reportedly in exchange for the Big Ten dropping its investigation into Michigan. And while some teams may display humility after such a blight on the program, the Wolverines have instead taken

the news in stride, utilizing it as a form of adversity to fuel the team.

"They just work," Harbaugh said on Nov. 6. "They just want to find some work, do some work. Something could be in their personal life, something could be in the game of football or school – some kind of stressor or whatever. You just go to work."

That work, of course, will be done without Harbaugh, at least on game day. But the team is looking to stick together without their head coach.

"People can make all the accusations and comments they want," offensive lineman Trevor Keegan said. "But we take it to heart, man. The players that have been here for a while, we did everything we could to turn this program around, bring it back to where Michigan needs to be. Guys in the '19, '20, '21 classes, we really changed this program as one."

"People can say whatever they want, but we know what's true. We know who we are. We know who's in his locker room. We trust each other, man. We're brothers. We're in this thing together, and that's the way it's going to be."

Moore has been on the sidelines as acting head coach for the last two games, including the previously mentioned win over Maryland as well as a 24-15 win at Penn State on Nov. 11.

But even though Harbaugh is still allowed to coach during the week, the Wolverines looked noticeably more vulnerable in these last couple of weeks without him on the sideline compared to a strong run to begin the season.

The offense totaled just 287 yards (5.3 per play) against Penn State and 291 yards (4.3 per play) against Maryland, both the two lowest marks of the season for Michigan. And defensively, the Nittany Lions



FILE PHOTO

BETTER LUCK THIS TIME — Defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau (44) and the Buckeyes are hoping for a better result than the last two seasons when they head to Ann Arbor to face Michigan on Nov. 25.

gained 238 yards and the Terrapins collected 262 yards, the latter the third most given up by the Wolverines this season.

It raises the reasonable question of what impact any potential sign stealing may have had on Michigan's games earlier in the season – and dating back to 2021 – but Harbaugh indicated previously that the team is not entertaining any of those thoughts.

"Yeah, go ahead and question them on why they're good and how they got good," Harbaugh said on Nov. 4. "It's practically a priceless gift to get to where we want to go."

Despite a clear shift without Harbaugh, Moore said he has not noticed a significant impact – at least on the field – from not having him on the sideline.

"I don't think there was that effect," Moore said after the win over Penn State. "It's always in your mind – human nature. I thought they did a really good job of staying poised and keeping the main thing the main thing, as we like to say."

But perhaps the biggest area where Harbaugh's absence has been felt – and could continue to be felt against Ohio State – is how quarterback J.J. McCarthy performs when his head coach is and is not present. He threw for at least 200 yards and a touchdown in six of Michigan's first nine games this season, including a 335-yard performance against Purdue on Nov. 4. But against Penn State and Maryland, McCarthy combined to complete just 19 of 31 (61.3 percent) of his passes for 201 yards,

no touchdowns and an interception.

In fact, McCarthy has not thrown for a touchdown since tossing four in a win over Michigan State on Oct. 21. For the season, McCarthy is completing 73.8 percent (175 of 237) of his passes for 2,335 yards and 18 touchdowns to four interceptions.

"As a football player in my mind, he's Tom Brady in his preparation and his willingness to be coached, his wanting to do anything and everything that he can for his own personal growth and also for the team," Harbaugh said. "Then he's got this side of him that I've only seen in one other quarterback, Jim McMahon, which is the love of playing and the fun that a guy has playing the game of football."

"I've never seen that personality – ultra-competitive but empathetic – come together in a football quarterback. And the way it does, he's like a blend of Tom Brady and Jim McMahon from what I've seen. It's hard not to love that."

Beyond McCarthy's recent struggles, there are additional concerns for Michigan's passing attack heading into The Game. In addition to Ohio State boasting the nation's best pass defense at just 144.4 yards per game – a touch ahead of Michigan's 144.8 yards allowed – leading receiver Roman Wilson (37 catches, 612 yards, 10 TDs) left the win over Maryland with an apparent head injury, and Moore did not have an update on Wilson after the game.

"Obviously, he was out," Moore said.

Get To Know ... Michigan

- **2023 Record:** 11-0.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation - Spread; Defensive Formation - 4-2-5; Starters Returning - Offense 7, Defense 6.
- **Head Coach:** Jim Harbaugh, 9th year at Michigan, 81-25/Sherrone Moore (interim), 3-0.
- **Series History:** 119th meeting; Michigan leads 60-52-6.
- **School Facts:** Location – Ann Arbor, Mich.; Enrollment – 44,718; Nickname – Wolverines; Colors – Maize, Blue; Conference – Big Ten (East Division); Stadium – Michigan Stadium (Surface, FieldTurf; Capacity – 107,601).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Blake Corum	180	888	4.9	20
Donovan Edwards	95	323	3.4	3
Kalel Mullings	29	180	6.2	1

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
J.J. McCarthy	175-237	73.8	2335	18-4
Jack Tuttle	15-17	88.2	130	1-0

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Roman Wilson	37	612	16.5	10
Colston Loveland	32	462	14.4	4
Cornelius Johnson	29	470	16.2	1

Team Offensive Stats
Points Per Game — 38.3
Rushing Yards Per Game — 171.0
Passing Yards Per Game — 228.6
Total Offense Avg. Per Game — 399.6

2023 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Sept. 2	EAST CAROLINA	W, 30-3
Sept. 9	UNLV	W, 35-7
Sept. 16	BOWLING GREEN	W, 31-6
Sept. 23	RUTGERS	W, 31-7
Sept. 30	at Nebraska	W, 45-7
Oct. 7	at Minnesota	W, 52-10
Oct. 14	INDIANA	W, 52-7
Oct. 21	at Michigan State	W, 49-0
Nov. 4	PURDUE	W, 41-13
Nov. 11	at Penn State	W, 24-15
Nov. 18	at Maryland	W, 31-24
Nov. 25	OHIO STATE	12 p.m.

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Junior Colson	24	36	60	2.0-2	0-0
Michael Barrett	23	19	42	2.5-34	2.0-32
Ernest Hausmann	12	20	32	2.0-5	0-0
Makari Paige	13	17	30	0-0	0-0
Derrick Moore	16	11	27	4.0-23	3.0-20
Mason Graham	17	10	27	5.5-36	2.0-16

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Mike Sainristil	4	151	37.8	2
Will Johnson	2	62	31.0	1
Keon Sabb	2	56	28.0	1

Team Defensive Stats
Points Per Game Allowed — 9.0
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed — 90.0
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed — 144.8
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed — 234.8

OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN

"Not sure the exact knowledge of what it is, but the trainers ruled him out at that time, which was the responsible thing for us to do as a staff. They're always on top of that stuff, especially when it has anything to do with the head. He was fine, and he was on the sideline with us afterwards."

"Other guys have got to step up – next man up. That's how it is with Big Ten football. It's physical. Things like that happen."

It would be a significant loss for Michigan, as the Wolverines are not particularly deep at wide receiver. Cornelius Johnson (29 catches, 470 yards, one TD) and Semaj Morgan (16, 188, two) are the only other wideouts with double-digit receptions, though Michigan has gotten receiving production from tight ends Colston Loveland (32, 462, four) and AJ Barner (19, 211, one).

"I've been thinking this for well over a year now," Harbaugh said earlier this season. "(Loveland)'s really great. A freak athlete, and a team guy all the way, in every way. The cat's out of the bag."

Wilson's injury could put even more emphasis on what was already expected to be a run-heavy game plan for the Wolverines. Michigan has just the 63rd passing offense nationally (228.6) but ranks 49th in rushing offense (171.0), while Ohio State is 19th in rushing defense, allowing just 108.5 yards per game.

Michigan boasts one of the nation's best one-two punches at running back with senior Blake Corum and junior Donovan Edwards both in the backfield for the Wolverines. Corum was mostly unable to play

last year against the Buckeyes – just two carries for 6 yards – but he is back in full force this season, rushing for 888 yards and 20 touchdowns on 180 attempts, averaging 4.9 yards per carry, while Edwards has toted the ball 95 times for 323 yards (3.4) and three scores.

The rushing attack is also boosted by one of the better offensive lines in the nation, featuring returning starters in Keegan at left guard, Zak Zinter at right guard and Karsen Barnhart at right tackle. Left tackle LaDarius Henderson was out against Maryland but is expected to play against Ohio State, and Drake Nugent starts at center on an offensive line that has allowed just 13 sacks in 11 games.

But as has been the case over the last few seasons, where the Wolverines make their money is on defense. Michigan ranks near the top nationally in essentially every defensive category, including scoring defense (9.0 points, first), total defense (234.8 yards, first), defensive touchdowns (five, first), opponent first downs (136, first), passing defense (144.8 yards, second) and rushing defense (90.0 yards, eighth).

"Those guys are the best in the country," Moore said. "We play them every week. Everybody talks about it every week. There's really no question to us who is the best defense in the country. They create turnovers, they create havoc every week. I'm just happy we have them on our team."

Starting up front, the Wolverines have a strong group of defensive ends in seniors Jaylen Harrell and Braiden McGregor, junior Josaiah Stewart and sophomore Der-

rick Moore, as well as an imposing interior led by senior defensive tackle Kris Jenkins and sophomore nose tackles Kenneth Grant and Mason Graham. Harrell and Stewart both lead the team with 6½ tackles for loss, while Harrell has a team-high 5½ sacks this season.

The strength of Michigan's defense, however, is in one of the nation's best line-backing duos. Junior Colson and Michael Barrett are both returning starters for the Wolverines and lead the team in tackles with 60 and 42 stops, respectively. A wrinkle for the unit, however, is that linebackers coach Chris Partridge was fired on Nov. 17 after allegedly destroying evidence once news broke of Michigan's sign stealing scandal.

"A few guys were frustrated with it," defensive back Mike Sainristil said. "But you know, where this team has thrived is just being able to say, 'You know what? No matter what is going on, we can handle anything.' Just go out there and play for your coach."

Barrett briefly exited with an injury against Maryland but expects to be good to go against Ohio State in what is shaping up to be a strong battle considering improved play from the Buckeyes' rushing attack in recent weeks.

"Just a little AC sprain on my shoulder," he said. "I kind of got hit by one of the players while I was making a tackle. Somebody just came in and hit my shoulder. Just came in, got it looked at, padded it up and got back out there. Nothing a Tylenol won't fix."

Moving to the secondary, the Wolverines are starting sophomore Will Johnson and

fifth-year senior Josh Wallace at cornerback, while junior Rod Moore lines up at free safety and senior Makari Paige steps in at strong safety. Fifth-year senior Sainristil is at nickel, and sophomore Keon Sabb rotates in frequently at safety.

All told, the unit has collected 11 interceptions this season – four courtesy of Sainristil – and has returned four for touchdowns. Opposing teams are completing just 54.0 percent of their passes against Michigan and have thrown for just five passing touchdowns.

Both teams will be highly motivated heading into The Game, with Michigan looking to three-peat against the Buckeyes, while Ohio State is looking to avoid three consecutive losses to the Wolverines for the first time since 1995-97. The stakes could not be higher, with Ohio State ranked No. 2 and Michigan checking in at No. 3 in the AP poll, the second game in as many years between undefeated, top-three teams – not to mention a Big Ten Championship Game berth and potential trip to the College Football Playoff on the line.

"We all know what time it is," Barrett said. "Once (Maryland) was over, we knew where our attention was going to go. It feels great to be a part of this kind of game, you know, coming into The Game undefeated with everything going on, just showing how this team's able to face adversity, work through adversity. Keep that one-track mind that we've been preaching all year. Just being able to be here at this point, it's a great feeling."

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Boston Experienced Rivalry Highs, Lows

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

If there is anyone who can speak with authority about the incredible highs and excruciating lows of the Ohio State-Michigan football rivalry, it would be David Boston.

Except the former Buckeye receiver remains somewhat reluctant to talk about the role he played in the series.

"That's a long time ago, man," Boston said. "A couple of lifetimes at least."

Boston brought a rare brand of swagger with him from his native Texas when he was recruited by Ohio State, but his talent could usually back up any cockiness on his part. That was especially apparent in 1998 when he totaled 10 receptions for 217 yards and a pair of touchdowns during a 31-16 wipeout of a Tom Brady-led Michigan team.

That performance came one year after Boston placed himself squarely in an eye of a hurricane with pregame predictions that fell flat when the Wolverines created three turnovers and took a 20-14 victory. Boston had told reporters during the week before the game that his team might beat its rivals by as many as three touchdowns, adding that teammate Antoine Winfield was a better defensive back than Heisman Trophy front-runner Charles Woodson.

"I said what I said because I thought it was true," Boston said. "We all had a tremendous amount of confidence going up there that year. The ball just didn't bounce our way. That happens sometimes."

According to Woodson, the acrimony between the two players began long before 1997.

"I knew David Boston," Woodson told ESPN in 2016. "He was on his recruiting trip to Michigan, and I remember him saying, 'Man, I'm just up here to take my visit. I'm going to Ohio State.' Everybody was mad at him, and I wanted to dominate this kid. I wanted to show him where he should have gone to school."

Woodson and Boston were each high

Boston vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
1996/Fr.	Columbus	L, 13-9
1997/Soph.	Ann Arbor	L, 20-14
1998/Jr.	Columbus	W, 31-16

school All-Americans, but that is where the similarity ended. Woodson was a product of Fremont (Ohio) Ross and was part of the exodus of talented Ohio prospects who played for Michigan during much of the John Cooper era. Meanwhile, Boston was one of the first big-name prospects Cooper was able to sign from the fertile recruiting fields of Texas.

Woodson had already had a full season of college experience under his belt when Boston made his series debut in 1996. Undeclared after 10 games and looking squarely at a possible national championship, the Buckeyes laid a king-sized egg, losing a 13-9 decision to a Wolverines team that had entered the game with three losses. Boston was limited to a single catch in the contest, a third-quarter sideline grab worth just 8 yards.

Ohio State rebounded from the loss to take a 20-17 victory against Arizona State in the Rose Bowl, an outcome very much in doubt until Boston caught a 5-yard touchdown pass from Joe Germaine with just 19 seconds remaining.

The Buckeyes intended to use that comeback win as a springboard for their 1997 campaign, but a midseason loss at Penn State meant they were playing catch-up to the undefeated Wolverines for much of the last half of the season. Oddsmakers installed Ohio State as a three-point underdog in the rivalry game, something that didn't sit well with Boston.

"We had been playing lights-out after the Penn State game," he remembered. "We weren't just beating teams; we were punishing them."

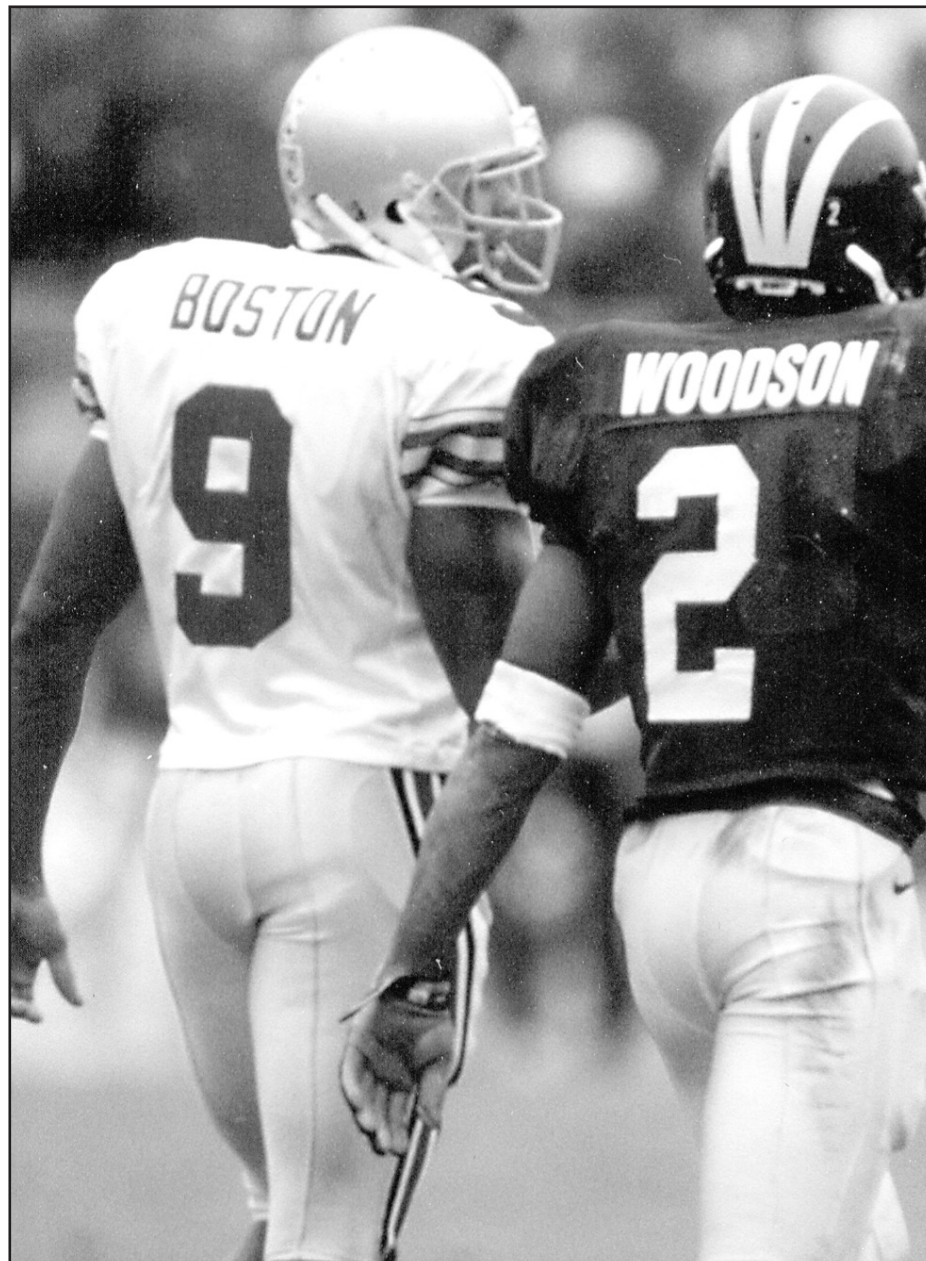
During a 49-6 win against Northwestern, Boston and fellow receiver Dee Miller combined for 10 receptions for 182 yards and three touchdowns as part of a 563 total-yard effort. The following week, Boston had eight catches for 119 yards and a touchdown while defensive back Gary Berry scored on an interception return and a blocked punt return during a 37-13 win at Michigan State.

Then, the week before the Michigan game, Ohio State tuned up with a 41-6 win against Illinois that included five catches for 105 yards from Miller and a 111-yard, two-touchdown rushing performance from tailback Pepe Pearson.

"We were firing on all cylinders – offense, defense and special teams," Boston remembered. "I didn't think there was any way we could lose that game. So I said what I said."

Words were exchanged by several players on both teams during on-the-field warm-ups, but things boiled over when Boston and Woodson matched up against one another during Ohio State's first possession.

On a third-down play along the Ohio State sideline, right in front of Cooper and in full view of a side judge, Boston shoved Woodson. Woodson shoved back, and for a few seconds it appeared that a full-scale brawl was about to break out. At one point, Woodson grabbed a fistful of Boston's jer-



FILE PHOTO

BUCKEYE GREAT — Former Ohio State wide receiver David Boston posted one of the most impressive individual performances in the history of The Game in 1998, collecting 10 receptions for 217 yards and two touchdowns.

sey while the OSU receiver got hold of his opponent's face mask, and violently yanked Woodson's head up and down. The players were finally separated after which Woodson ripped off his helmet and angrily barked at Boston.

It was the kind of scuffle that in today's game would likely feature expulsions of both players. In 1997, however, not even a flag for unsportsmanlike conduct was thrown.

"Our little scuffle on the sideline? We were going at it – throwing punches, basically," Woodson said. "You know how big the game was because it's a wonder that neither one of us got thrown out."

Neither team was able to gain much traction offensively until 1-yard touchdown run by Anthony Thomas accounted for the first points of the game and a 7-0 Michigan lead at the 6:22 mark of the second quarter. Less than three minutes later, Woodson returned a punt 78 yards for a touchdown to give his team a 13-0 halftime lead.

OSU quarterback Stan Jackson was intercepted twice in the third period – the first by Woodson and the second by fellow cornerback Andre Weathers, who turned

his into a pick-six and a 20-0 lead for the Wolverines.

The Buckeyes tried to fight back, getting a 56-yard touchdown pass from Germaine to Boston late in the third quarter, and a short TD run from Pearson early in the final period after Berry sacked Michigan QB Brian Griese, causing a fumble that linebacker Jerry Rudzinski recovered at the U-M 2-yard line.

But Ohio State could draw no closer, losing a 20-14 decision that gave Michigan its first Big Ten championship in five years. The defeat stung even more when the next issue of Sports Illustrated hit the streets with an upended Boston on the cover accompanied by the headline, "Take This!"

Boston had the 56-yard touchdown catch but only two other receptions in the game totaling 12 yards. He had turned around to wave the football in Woodson's face on the touchdown catch and incurred a 15-yard taunting penalty as well as further wrath from the Wolverines. Strong safety Marcus Ray, a Columbus native and eventual four-year starter at Michigan, dumped Boston hard on the receiver's right shoulder late in



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the fourth quarter, the hit glorified on the SI cover.

"Boston just called one guy out, but we have four DBs back there," Weathers told reporters after the game. "You take that as an insult."

Getting Some Payback

The following year, Woodson was gone to the NFL, taken with the fourth overall pick of the 1998 draft by the Oakland Raiders. But Ray and Weathers were still a part of the Michigan secondary, and Boston was able to exact some personal revenge.

Unlike the previous year when a steady, cold rain turned Michigan Stadium into something of an ice rink, an overcast sky, and temperatures in the upper 30s provided perfect conditions for an aerial show. As a result, the Buckeyes and Wolverines combined for 705 passing yards, the most ever in the series.

"I remember our mindset going into that game was to let our playmakers make plays," former OSU recruiting coordinator and tight ends coach Bill Conley told BSB. "We wanted to attack them from the very beginning, and that's pretty much what we did."

Not right away, though. Ohio State took possession to begin the game and did absolutely nothing – three straight incomplete passes followed by a punt. But Michigan followed with its own three-and-out, and when the Buckeyes got the ball back, the onslaught began.

Tailback Michael Wiley, on his way to a 1,235-yard season, broke off a 15-yard run on the second play of the drive, and then two

plays later, he took a pitch around the right side and didn't stop until he had reached the end zone. The 53-yard scoring run staked the Buckeyes to a 7-0 lead at the 12:20 mark of the first quarter, and they never looked back.

Michigan punter Jason Vinson mishandled a snap and got off a punt that never crossed the line of scrimmage, setting up a 16-yard touchdown pass from Germaine to Miller to make it 14-0 with 9:44 remaining in the opening period. After the Wolverines managed to cut their deficit to 14-3 with a 27-yard field goal from kicker Jay Feely, the Buckeyes struck again when Boston gathered in a 30-yard touchdown pass from Germaine to make it 21-3 with 3:15 left until halftime.

The score was set up by another gaffe committed by the Michigan punting unit. From near midfield, Vinson had his punt blocked by OSU backup cornerback Derek Ross, reserve running back Jonathan Wells tracked down the loose ball at the U-M 20-yard line, and the Buckeyes had another short field with which to operate.

After a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty moved the ball back to the 35, Wiley carried for 5 yards to set up a second down at the 30-yard line. Germaine dropped back to pass and, in the face of a heavy rush, spotted Boston on an out route headed to the sideline. The QB delivered the ball to his receiver just as Boston had beaten the coverage of Weathers. After catching the ball, Boston spun around and slipped past Weathers and then beat a sprinting Ray to the corner of the end zone, pointing at the Michigan safety as he flew past.

The move earned Boston a taunting penalty, but neither he nor the Ohio Stadium crowd of 94,339 seemed to care. Michigan closed to within 21-10 just before halftime, but the Buckeyes dominated the second half that included a 43-yard touchdown strike from Germaine to Boston, who again beat Weathers on the play.

Ohio State cruised to a 31-16 victory with Boston grabbing his 10 receptions for 217 yards and two touchdowns. The catch total tied for the second most by an OSU receiver against Michigan at the time, while the yardage remains the most ever by a Buckeye in the storied rivalry.

"All our offensive coordinator (Mike Jacobs) talked about that week was being aggressive," Boston said. "Be aggressive, stay aggressive. Attack, attack, attack. That's all we heard all week, so I knew that's what we were going to do in that game. I mean, I loved it. Get the ball to your big players and let them make big plays."

Wiley finished with 120 yards and a touchdown on only 12 carries while Germaine was an efficient 16 of 28 for 330 yards and three scores.

After falling behind early, the Wolverines were forced to play catch-up, and as a result Brady attempted 56 passes, completing 31 of them for 375 yards – each single-game Michigan records. But he got his team into the end zone only once while pitching two interceptions and taking seven sacks.

The loss ended Michigan's 17-game conference win streak and threw the Big Ten championship race into a three-way tie with the Buckeyes, Wolverines and Wisconsin. Because of the conference's tie-breaking

rules, the Badgers were awarded a berth in the Rose Bowl, where they took a 38-31 win against sixth-ranked UCLA.

Meanwhile, Michigan won a 45-31 decision against No. 11 Arkansas in the Florida Citrus Bowl, and Ohio State scored a 24-14 victory against eighth-rated Texas A&M in the Sugar Bowl. Despite playing on a sprained ankle, Boston caught 11 passes for 105 yards and took home game MVP honors.

For the 1998 season, Boston established new program records with 85 receptions for 1,435 yards, and pushed his career totals to 191 catches for 2,855 yards and 34 touchdowns – each of those establishing all-time OSU records. Twenty-five years later, each total remains second on the program career receiving list.

Boston left the Buckeyes after his junior season, selected in the first round of the 1999 NFL draft by the Arizona Cardinals with the eighth overall pick. A litany of injuries and off-the-field problems limited his pro career to just six seasons with three teams, and he is now back home in Texas where he operates his own business that concentrates on the development of commercial real estate.

"I enjoyed my time at Ohio State," Boston said. "It paved the way for me to go places and see things I never would have been able to experience. I had a great bunch of teammates, and together we enjoyed a lot of success. Looking back, I don't think I'd want to change much – except maybe what happened in the first two games against those guys up north."



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Anderson's Fire For U-M Still Burning Strong

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Fifty-three years removed from a Buckeye uniform, former defensive back Tim Anderson still feels the same way about the Michigan Wolverines as he did when he played against them from 1968-70, and those feelings have been brought back by the current sign-stealing scandal surrounding the program up north.

"Cheaters. Those no-good bastards. Those (SOBs)," Anderson said with a laugh. "Those no-good bastards, they brought this on themselves. It makes you want to go out there, put a helmet on and hit somebody. But we better stay away from that. Let the kids do it."

He can't get onto the field this year, but Anderson had his chance back at the beginning of the "Ten Year War" between the Buckeyes and the Wolverines. He believes those few years with Ohio State's Woody Hayes and Michigan's Bo Schembechler at the helm of their respective programs shaped the rivalry into what it is today.

"Let's face it," Anderson said, "Woody and Bo set the stage for how you look at that Michigan-Ohio State game today and what it means to you."

Growing up in Colliers, W. Va., just east of Steubenville, Ohio, Anderson said he knew about the rivalry between the two teams his whole life. He always wanted to go to Notre Dame because it was "the biggest thing in the

world" where he's from, but Hayes convinced Anderson – or rather, his mom – that Columbus was the right move.

"The one who really inspired me to go to Ohio was my mom," Anderson said. "Woody and Anne (Hayes), they recruited her. She just loved the place, so I couldn't go anywhere else. Woody and Anne really got to the parents."

In his first year at Ohio State, Anderson watched the varsity team come back from Ann Arbor with a 24-14 win over Michigan, but the football team was unranked and Anderson remembers fans calling for Hayes' job the year before. During his freshman season, Anderson knew even then how he felt about the Wolverines despite not playing a snap against them yet.

"Everybody that went through that program knew who Michigan was and how we hate Michigan," he said. "It was beaten into you and accepted by the whole coaching staff, the school, the history. Everything is on the line every year. No matter if you're not playing for a championship, and you're just playing Michigan. It is the season."

Those calls for Hayes' job were silenced in 1968, however, when Anderson and an exciting group of second-year players – now known as the "Super Sophomores" – saw the field for the first time. Ohio State, entering the game at 9-0, demolished Michigan in Columbus, 50-14, marking the Buckeyes' second-largest win over the Wolverines behind a 38-0 victory in Ann Arbor on Nov. 23, 1935.

"That's pretty awesome," Anderson said. "That was a beatdown that we practiced one year for, at the end of every practice, dedicating something to Michigan. It was a big deal."

Michigan running back Ron Johnson was in his senior year before moving on to a seven-year career in the NFL. He rushed for 1,391 yards on 255 carries that year, but the Ohio State defense held him in check, allowing just 91 yards, although he did punch in both of the Wolverines' touchdowns in the game.

"He was a really good running back, and they had really good receivers," Anderson said. "We out-hit them and beat them up pretty good in that game. We had a lot of blitzes with (Jack) Tatum and (Dave) Whitfield. That gave us good field position a few times."

Not only did the Buckeyes shut down Johnson, but they also picked off quarterback Dennis Brown three times. The dominant defense held the Wolverines to a scoreless second half, with Ohio State scoring 36 unanswered points after the game was tied at 14.

Ohio State running back Jim Otis ran for 143 yards and four touchdowns in the blow-out, and Anderson still remembers that performance well.

"Otie was cleaning up," Anderson said. "He was just a great offensive weapon. Of course, you have to have people up front blocking for you, and we did have that with our offensive tackles. They were brutalizing the line of scrimmage. That was quite an ordeal. I've never seen anything quite like it."

After Otis scored the game's last touchdown with 1:23 left in the fourth quarter, the Buckeyes elected to go for two, and quarterback Rex Kern's pass fell incomplete. The true story has likely been lost to history, with several outlets reporting that Hayes went for two because of injuries to center John Muhlbach and kicker Larry Zelina, and others putting into circulation the quote famously attributed to Hayes in that he went for two, "Because I couldn't go for three."

Hayes may or may not have uttered the statement – though it's a testament to him

Anderson vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
1968/So.	Columbus	W, 50-14
1969/Jr.	Ann Arbor	L, 24-12
1970/Sr.	Columbus	W, 20-9

that the quote would make sense – but Anderson said it was an important win for Hayes.

"What a great time," Anderson said. "(Hayes) had been pummeled by Michigan. And they didn't mind showing how much they wanted to kick our butts. It's a war."

The Buckeyes came out of that game with a newfound confidence going into the Rose Bowl against USC. They knew they were a good team, but Anderson said going into the win over Michigan that the team was not yet aware of its potential.

"We didn't know how good we were because we hadn't played Michigan yet," he said. "We wanted to establish a championship team, and they were in between us and winning the championship. We were fired up, and it was one of our better games. That game was good for us because it really instilled the idea that we were good enough to win the championship."

Ohio State's next team that looked to defend the team's 1968 national championship was talked about at the time as possibly one of the best college football teams of all time, and heading into that year's matchup with Michigan, the Buckeyes had won 22 straight games. Not only were they on a multi-season long winning streak, but they were outscoring their opponents 371-69. The closest games they played that year before Nov. 22 were a pair of 27-point wins at Washington (41-14 on Oct. 4, 1969) and at Minnesota (34-7 on Oct. 18, 1969).

The Wolverines came in as the No. 12 team in the country and, with a chip on their shoulders, stunned the top-ranked Buckeyes, 24-12, in Ann Arbor, a game that is in the conversation for one of the biggest college football upsets of all time. Anderson said it still hurts to this day thinking about that game and how Michigan fans treated them after the game.

"It was terrible, absolutely miserable," he said. "We came out underneath the stadium and there were about 30,000 fans that never left and were waiting as we came out of the locker room to get on the bus. I think one of them pushed Woody. It was a big mess until the police got control of it. We didn't even know whether we could get out of the stadium. Everyone stayed there and wanted to beat us down."

"They were lucky as well as good that day, and they won the ballgame. It's hard to swallow that even to this day."

It was the first year Schembechler took over as the Wolverines head coach, and Michigan – on both sides of the ball – had shades of Hayes, which is no surprise considering Schembechler was an assistant for Hayes at Ohio State from 1958-62. Anderson remembers how much the loss upset Hayes.

"Beating the old man like he did, he really pissed him off," Anderson said. "We got back, and I don't think Woody went home for a week. He stayed at the office and watched the film over the weekend."

Because of the Big Ten's rule at that time that a team couldn't make a repeat appear-

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MICHIGAN MEMORIES

ance in the Rose Bowl, Ohio State would not have been able to play in The Granddaddy of Them All even if it had beaten Michigan, and Anderson thinks that hurt the Buckeyes' chances going in.

"We couldn't go to the Rose Bowl that year, and we knew that," he said. "That hurts you when you're coming down the stretch when you can't go win a championship. You don't have too much to go for."

Between Ohio State and Michigan, it did seem like the Wolverines wanted it more. Anderson said Michigan was more physical than them that day, and they kept the Buckeyes' defense on the field longer than any team had been able to, wearing out the defenders who were used to forcing punts and watching their offense run the score up.

"They were physically beating us on the field," Anderson said. "It goes to show on any given day any team can win if it's their day. Their defense really held us up. I don't know what happened over there, but I do remember that the defense was on the field quite a bit. We couldn't get an offensive drive going."

Michigan scored all of its points in the first two quarters, coming out of the locker room firing on all cylinders. Even when the defense was able to make a stop, the Wolverines were right back on the field after a defensive masterpiece in which Michigan intercepted Ohio State six times on the afternoon. Kern had four passes intercepted and was replaced down the stretch by Ron Maciejowski, who threw two picks of his own.

"I don't ever want to see that game," Anderson said. "That was a real low point for us. We felt like we let everybody down. We had to come back and do some soul-searching to get to next year."

Hayes didn't let the team forget that loss. He had a rug made with the score of the game and put it down so that the players had to walk over it every single time they went out to practice. The entire 1970 season wasn't about a championship or a Rose Bowl anymore – it was about getting revenge on Michigan.

"It carried over, and we vowed to not let that happen again," Anderson said. "At the end of practices, 'Let's run five plays for Michigan.'"

After a down period of the rivalry due to both teams experiencing struggles throughout the early 1960s, that win for Michigan in 1969 put the wind back in the sails of the Ohio State-Michigan game, and the fire was more real than ever. Hayes was even more amped up because it was Schembechler who had beaten him.

"He was in the locker room talking about, 'Let me know when Bo comes out on the field because I'm going to meet him out on the 50-yard line and kick his butt,'" Anderson recalled about Hayes before the rivalry game in 1970. "The old man jumped up and ran out of the room, and the police tackled him. He got up and said, 'All right, fellas, let's go.' We were fired up."

That fire worked out for the Buckeyes, beating the Wolverines 20-9 to win the Big Ten outright and make another appearance in the Rose Bowl, where they would go on to lose to Stanford, 27-17. Anderson said the seniors on the team didn't care much about the loss to the Cardinal because of how much they were focused on the Wolverines all year.

In the win over Michigan, Anderson was returning punts, and with the 20-9 lead late in the game, a referee ruled that he had touched

a punt and the Wolverines recovered, threatening to make it a one-score game with only 50 yards to get to the end zone. They drove to the Ohio State 24-yard line before they were stopped on downs.

"The ball came down and took a sideways bounce by me and the referee couldn't see it," Anderson said. "He said I reached out and touched the ball when I didn't touch the ball at all. It went right by me. I was so fired up when that happened. I came to the sideline and Woody was all animated about me fumbling. I thought, 'If I get another chance, I'm going to show them.'"

Anderson, though, had his moment earlier in the game to make an impact when Michigan quarterback Don Moorhead led his team down the field to a touchdown early in the second half. The extra point would have tied the game up at 10, but Anderson blocked the kick to keep the Wolverines at just nine points, where they would be held the rest of the game.

Ohio State's defense held Michigan to

just 37 rushing yards the entire game, showing that the preparation by the Buckeyes for the entire year paid off when they got to the game.

"They had some favorite plays on their offense," Anderson said. "A lot of it was kicking butt on first down and second down. Of course, third-and-long was something we were laying in the cut for so we could knock it down or intercept it, whatever we had to do. It was big."

When the time came around to go to the Rose Bowl, the seniors on the team protested against it because Hayes had made their time difficult at the game two years prior since he made them skip all the festivities to practice twice per day. The Michigan game was all they cared about to end the season, but Hayes ended up convincing them to make the trip to Pasadena.

Anderson has kept close tabs on the rivalry and had been extremely pleased with the way it had gone during the 2010s, but he has his eyes ahead on the game this year on Nov.

25 after two straight losses to Michigan.

"We have to go up there prepared to kick their butts," Anderson said. "They have a good squad playing with a chip on their shoulder over what's going on with their coach. They're going to try to use that to show America just how great they are. We're going to step into a war with Michigan at the end of the year, and there's nothing stopping that from happening."

"We're in pretty unfamiliar territory. Your ears have to stand up when you hear the word Michigan. You have to be mad. It's such a big game. It means so much to your legacy, to the recruiting and to your own personal satisfaction."

Anderson walked away from Ohio State with the satisfaction of winning The Game twice, and doing so in spectacular fashion in 1968.

"I could sit here for days, but I'll say this," Anderson said. "We don't give a damn about the whole state of Michigan because we're from Ohio."

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Perry Relishes Unblemished Record In The Game

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Joshua Perry is part of an exclusive club to which he would love to add new members, but it will not be adding anyone for at least four years.

The former Ohio State linebacker was undefeated against Michigan from 2012-15 in a career that included an undefeated season, a national championship and heart-breaking losses that prevented the Buckeyes from competing for two more.

Perry, from Olentangy High School in the northern Columbus suburb of Lewis Center, has interactions with ex-Wolverine players all the time in his new role as studio analyst for NBC Sports after five seasons with the Big Ten Network. And, yes, he may mention his 4-0 record during the course of a conversation.

"It's a point of pride. I usually bring it up when I'm talking to former Michigan players," he said with a laugh. "But it's something that I definitely look fondly on, and we understand the gravity of that and how much it also means to the state.

"It's fun comparing against generations, meeting some of the older Ohio State guys who played before I did and we talk about our memories from that game, but it's especially fun when I'm talking to a former Wolverine player and I get to bring that up.

"Generally, they're good guys so you say, 'Hey, man, I wish you could have had it a little bit better but at the same time you didn't earn it, you didn't get it.'

"I've talked to former players from that era. Jake Butt is a central Ohio (Pickerington) guy that I worked with just about every day (at BTN) and we talked about it and there was no downplaying it within the program. There was no downplaying it for those guys. They wanted it just as bad as anybody else, and I think their fans, if they're being honest, will say the same thing."

Perry, in an interview with Buckeye Sports Bulletin on Nov. 14, not only gave insight into what it was like to play in The Game but its context within a season.

He was a freshman in 2012, Urban Meyer's first season after the Buckeyes had lost to Michigan the previous season under interim head coach Luke Fickell. Growing up in the epicenter of Buckeye Country, Perry fell in love with the school early.

"Both my parents are transplanted from New Jersey, and I grew up in Ohio," he said. "My dad's a big football fan. My mother's not a football fan at all.

"She used to go shopping the day of the Ohio State-Michigan game because she



FILE PHOTO

FOUR GOLD PANTS — Former Ohio State linebacker Joshua Perry finished with four wins against Michigan in as many tries during his career with the Buckeyes, playing from 2012-15.

knew the stores would be empty. So, my recollection of it as a kid is nobody's doing anything but watching that football game.

"That just shows the buy-in from the community. Everybody's got their scarlet and gray on all week long, and it truly felt like a celebration of what it means to be a Buckeye, and I always wanted to be a part of that. There was part of me that even being a kid thought it was really cool, how much it meant for one game out of the whole season to everybody who was around."

The clincher for him was 2006 – called the "Game of the Century" between undefeated foes – when No. 1 Ohio State defeated No. 2 Michigan, 42-39, some 24 hours after legendary Michigan coach Bo Schembechler died at age 77.

"The first one that I remember and said, 'Dang, if I could do this one day, I'd love to do it,' was 2006," Perry said. "It was amazing and it was the idea, too, that both Ohio

State and Michigan were superpowers at that point. They were the pinnacle of college football."

2012: Perfect

Ohio State went into the Michigan game in the throes of a one-year self-imposed postseason ban in the aftermath of Tootogate that cost Jim Tressel his job before the 2011 season.

"It was crazy because it was the first time for me prepping to play in that game and it was Urban's first year too," Perry said. "The whole facility, it seemed like it was just turned upside down. We walked in there Sunday before the game and there were Michigan scout-team jerseys that were taped to the floor so we could get used to walking over Michigan, and he's playing LL Cool J's 'It's Time for War,' which I've got stuck in my head even now and there were highlight videos of moments from The Game."

For the 11-0 and fourth-ranked Buckeyes, playing against No. 20 Michigan was their national title game. They trailed 21-20 at the half in Ohio Stadium but rode a defense that held the Wolverines to 60 total yards in the final two quarters, and a pair of Drew Basil field goals completed just the sixth undefeated season in program history with the 26-21 victory.

"Game day was crazy," Perry said. "I was a special teamer mostly, but I played a little bit on defense, and I remember I got one defensive rep and had an assist on a tackle on

Perry vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
2012/Fr.	Columbus	W, 26-21
2013/So.	Ann Arbor	W, 42-41
2014/Jr.	Columbus	W, 42-28
2015/Sr.	Ann Arbor	W, 42-13

that and I felt like I was on top of the world."

It was ingrained in Perry and other newcomers to the program that they couldn't lose to Michigan two years in a row.

"I can't repeat some of it, but it was basically, 'Screw those guys up north.' They wanted to go out right, and I think they wanted us to feel what it was like to be victorious in that football game as well so there was a sense of urgency for numerous reasons," he said. "Everybody wanted to go out the right way, and everybody wanted to get that win over Michigan."

Perry said the current sign-stealing scandal at Michigan reminds him how actions of others affected him and his teammates because it was Alabama that won the BCS National Championship Game, 42-14, over Notre Dame that season.

"I was paying the price for somebody else's sins because I was a freshman that wasn't a part of anything else that went on," he said. "A lot of guys on that team were not a part of what went on where Ohio State got the punishment.

"Then you start to look back in 2012, Alabama vs. Notre Dame, but 'Bama got in because we really couldn't be there. We would have played Notre Dame. It feels like it could have been a favorable matchup, thinking about what life could be like being a two-time national champion instead of just a one-time champ and then it starts to feel greedy. But I'm certainly fortunate for all the successes that we had. It's interesting to kind of think back about it."

2013: Thin Margin

No. 3 Ohio State was once again 11-0 going into the finale but this time had to go to Ann Arbor to play the 7-4 Wolverines. Perry said the pressure of a long winning streak took its toll.

"We were working through some things as well where we were in the middle of a winning streak," he said. "I think that would have been our 24th straight game, right? So, 23 in a row, 'Let's not mess it up on this one. If we continue to handle business the way that we need to, we could be squarely in the national championship conversation.'"

The 110th meeting came down to one play – a two-point conversion attempt by Michigan with 32 seconds left and the Buckeyes clinging to a 42-41 lead. Wolverines coach Brady Hoke opted for the two-pointer rather than kick the extra point to send the game to overtime. Quarterback Devin Gardner threw to Drew Dileo near the goal line, but Tyvis Powell made the interception and Bradley Roby would recover the onside kick to seal the win.

"I tell the story all the time. I thank God for Tyvis because we're running a blitz and I ran the wrong stunt," Perry said. "I was supposed to go up and under, and I kept going up the field so it kind of created that little gap for Devin Gardner to be able to see through and try to deliver the football, but

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Tyvis steps right in front of it because he was on top of his game.

"I remember we're all jumping up and down screaming on the field, and we're running off together and Tyvis takes the football that he just picked off and one of the Michigan ball boys tries to come and get the ball from him. He wouldn't give it up. It was almost like what you do with your little brother where you kind of put it out in front him and then you snatch it back real quick. He wanted to take that one home with him, and I certainly understand why. It was just a huge play in that game.

"It's crazy because when people talk about moments from the rivalry, a lot of folks will bring up Tyvis Powell stepping in front of that football. That's where legends are made."

The Buckeyes still had work to do to reach the final BCS title game before the four-team College Football Playoff system was instituted for the 2014 season. Alabama was ranked first and Florida State second, so the Buckeyes needed one of them to lose and also win the Big Ten Championship Game vs. Michigan State the following week.

Ohio State got its miracle when hours after the Michigan game, Auburn stunned Alabama with a 100-yard return of a missed field goal on the final play, the so-called "Kick Six," to open the door for the Buckeyes. But it was moot after Ohio State suffered a 34-24 loss to the Spartans in Indianapolis after giving up two fourth-quarter touchdowns.

"It was wild because after our game ended, we're riding back from Ann Arbor, 'Kick Six' Iron Bowl, we were watching that on the bus and we're sitting there thinking, 'One win in Indy, and we're playing for a national title.' " Perry said. "Of course, we screwed that thing up."

2014: Champions

The season started ominously when quarterback Braxton Miller went out in the preseason with a shoulder injury and unproven J.T. Barrett took over. He struggled early, and an upset loss at home to Virginia Tech threatened to send the season into an abyss.

But the Buckeyes rebounded and were 10-1 and ranked sixth in the College Football Playoff rankings heading into the regular-season finale in Ohio Stadium. Still, the Virginia Tech loss was transformative.

"It shifted the pressure from something different," Perry said. "First, it was about a national championship and we're thinking about that. Now, the pressure becomes are you guys actually who you say you are? Are you the program that you claim to be? That was a good pressure because it forced us to look deep within ourselves and have to prove it to ourselves."

It was Senior Day against Michigan, but the enthusiasm was dampened because of the disappearance of walk-on defensive lineman Kosta Karageorge, who was also on the wrestling team. He was supposed to be among the 24 players recognized for their final home game, but instead a police poster showing him with the word "Missing" was shown on the video board. He was found the following day, dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

With that as the backdrop, the Wolverines (5-6 entering the game) forged a 14-14

halftime tie. Ezekiel Elliott ran for a 2-yard score late in the third quarter for a 28-21 lead, but Barrett broke his ankle on the first play of the fourth quarter and was replaced by Cardale Jones.

"You could almost hear a pin drop in there, and this was a very unique year, with Braxton getting hurt in the preseason," Perry said. "We had taken that loss to Virginia Tech, and then, mentioning that win streak earlier, we win 24 straight then we lose three out of four games. We lose the Big Ten Championship (Game) to Michigan State. We lose the Orange Bowl to Clemson. We go on the road and we beat Navy for our season opener then our home opener, we lose to Virginia Tech.

"Now on top of that, it was already a little bit of an emotional day, celebrating our seniors, but also Kosta Karageorge had gone missing before we figured out that he had committed suicide, and they had run an ad in the stadium. It was just kind of, there were too many emotions going on that day.

"Then you lose your quarterback who had really emerged as the guy. There was a bit of somberness and then a little bit of panic, then a little bit of, 'OK, we've got this.' I can remember guys like Curtis Grant and Michael Bennett being on the sideline saying if we're going to win, it's going to be because of the defense. Whatever we do from here, it's the defense doing it."

The Buckeyes rallied around Jones. Elliott raced for a 44-yard touchdown on a fourth-and-1 with 4:58 left, and Darron Lee added a 33-yard fumble return a minute later for a 42-21 score before Michigan scored late for the 42-28 final.

The rest is history. Jones' passing and Elliott's running helped the Buckeyes beat Wisconsin 59-0 in the Big Ten Championship Game, a rout so convincing that the College Football Playoff committee selected Ohio State over unbeaten TCU, to the chagrin of many, for the No. 4 seed.

Ohio State pounded Alabama, 42-35, in the semifinal and crushed Oregon, 42-20, for its first national title since 2002.

2015: Lost Opportunity

For the third year in a row, the Buckeyes scored 42 points against Michigan, this time a 42-13 win in Ann Arbor. Unfortunately for the Buckeyes, the onslaught came too late.

A week earlier in Ohio Stadium, No. 9 Michigan State stunned the third-ranked Buckeyes 17-14 on a 41-yard field goal by Michael Geiger as time expired to end Ohio State's 23-game winning streak. Elliott ran for 33 yards on 12 carries and afterward criticized the play-calling while declaring he would enter the 2016 NFL draft.

The Spartans would go on to play in the conference title game while the Buckeyes were shut out of the College Football Playoff despite an 11-1 record.

Ohio State took out its frustrations over the loss on the Wolverines. The No. 8 Buckeyes used 214 yards and two touchdowns by Elliott to rip apart the No. 10 Wolverines. Ohio State led only 14-10 at the half before outscoring Michigan 28-3 in the final two quarters.

Perry went through four week-long build-ups to Michigan with Meyer, but the last one was unique.

"(Urban's) blood would rise every year, but that one was particularly different because we were coming off of a loss a week

before," Perry said. "Urban was distraught because that game essentially knocked us out of the College Football Playoff potential.

"I remember sitting up there on Sunday at training table, and it was myself and Taylor Decker and some of the other leaders on the team, and Urban comes up and he's making himself a plate and we just look at him and it's like, the only way to make this thing feel better is to go to Ann Arbor, and it was a top-10 matchup that year – go to Ann Arbor and get the win. We ended up winning 42-13, Jim Harbaugh's first year up there."

As much as Perry enjoyed the raucous atmosphere in Ohio Stadium after a win over Michigan, there was extra sweetness winning in Ann Arbor.

"It's a beautiful thing. They felt differently about that game, Michigan did, because it was Harbaugh's first year and they had a hell of a turnaround from what they were the year before," he said. "Again, we're coming off a loss and it felt like their opportunity to start off his tenure on a high note against a little bit of a wounded Ohio State team that might be, not less interested because you're always interested in that game, but maybe just in a different mentality.

"I think our thought process was that the only thing that makes any of this right is to beat Michigan this week and to do it in their home.

"It's great. Looking around at an empty stadium is ridiculous. It's so much fun."

A Look Ahead

With the playoffs expanding to 12 teams next year and the Big Ten getting rid of di-

visions, it's possible Ohio State and Michigan could play two straight weeks and even a third time later in the playoffs, but Perry doesn't believe the rivalry will be diminished.

"The idea of the matchup being back-to-back I think is one where I probably get the most trepidation moving forward," he said. "But the idea of playing them multiple times in a year, I think people would welcome that because of the context of it, too.

"It would mean that they are clearly two of the best teams in the Big Ten. If they meet in the College Football Playoff, they're two of the best teams nationally, and who doesn't want to watch a heated, intense rivalry like that be played out maybe one extra time? You thought you were going to have to wait another 365 days. I also think it would be intriguing to watch this game on a neutral field. Who knows? Whose fans are going to travel? All the different things. There's a lot of angles to it that I think are really interesting."

He also doesn't foresee The Game being moved from the last week of the regular season.

"If it became a situation where the first three, four years of the new iteration of the Big Ten where we're watching that game back-to-back for three or four years, they probably need to have the discussion about it," he said. "I think there's also a world where we could see Oregon and whoever else playing in the Big Ten championship and not just Ohio State and Michigan playing in it."

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Hall Put Imprint On Rivalry For Five Seasons

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When reflecting back on the storied 126-year history of the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry, few Buckeyes are more familiar with the ramifications and significance of The Game than former Ohio State wide receiver Roy Hall Jr.

Playing at Ohio State from 2002-06, Hall witnessed five intense and historically significant rivalry games, where he experienced the euphoric high of defeating the Wolverines at home in a championship-winning season, along with the demoralizing low of falling short in The Big House and making the silent bus ride back to Columbus.

He also had what may be the defining moment of his Buckeye career in an unforgettable matchup between the two programs coined “The Game of The Century” in 2006, corralling a 1-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter that turned momentum in the Buckeyes’ favor.

Hall, who amassed an impressive 4-1 record as a player against Michigan at Ohio State – though he was on the sidelines in 2002 before playing in the next four games – said these experiences have helped him gain an understanding of the magnitude of the matchup, one that is predicated on more than a century’s worth of history that stretches way beyond the gridiron. To him, The Game is not just a game, but by far the best rivalry in all of sports.

“It is definitely a war,” Hall told BSB. “It represents 100 years or so of football. It just goes beyond you. You can feel the presence of the past players when you’re playing, and what it means and what it represents, especially when it’s a home game. When you have the tunnel in front of you, you have hundreds of former players out there cheering you on. You just know you want to put your best foot forward. And it’s a year of bragging rights, because you don’t get a chance to do it for another year.”

Hall may have a complete grasp of what the rivalry means to both programs after going up against the Wolverines for five straight seasons, but as a kid growing up in northeast Ohio, he hardly paid any attention to it. With his mother, Sonya Edwards, passing down her Cleveland Browns fandom to her son, Hall was focused only on what was going on in the National Football League. In fact, the only early memory he has of Ohio State or Michigan stems from an art project he completed in grade school.

“To be honest, I don’t have any early memories of Ohio State-Michigan. For whatever reason, I didn’t watch a lot of college football growing up,” he said. “Growing up as a young kid, my mom was a big Cleveland Browns fan. I was probably more focused on or aware of what the Cleveland Browns were doing when they were playing like the Houston Oilers or the Pittsburgh Steelers. I remember those rivalries and those games in the household, but I don’t remember a lot of Ohio State-Michigan.

“I do remember being in the fifth or sixth grade and having an art project. I had to choose some colleges to draw logos for, and the three that I chose were Notre Dame, Miami (Fla.) and Michigan. I don’t know if



FILE PHOTO

BIG-TIME PLAYER — Former Ohio State wide receiver Roy Hall Jr. went 4-1 during his five games against Michigan, including a 42-39 win in 2006’s “Game of the Century.”

that was because their marketing was better at the time, but I remember those logos standing out to me. I wasn’t a Michigan fan, but for whatever reason I remember making these three buttons of those three teams.”

Hall’s awareness, or lack thereof, of the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry turned on a dime around a decade later when he was a highly-touted football prospect out of Charles F. Brush High School in Lyndhurst, Ohio. The future Buckeye, who was a successful three-sport athlete in football, basketball and track and field at the time, said he received his first real taste of the rivalry while he was getting recruited – in strikingly different ways – by both Ohio State and Michigan.

Hall said the Wolverines, then led by head coach Lloyd Carr (1995-2007), initially seemed to be in heavy pursuit of him, where he received multiple letters and phone calls from those within the program. But after Carr sent offensive coordinator Stan Parrish to Lyndhurst to meet with Hall and his family for the first time in person, it became clear to the high schooler that they were not operating with the sincerest intentions.

For Hall, this was evident during a specific conversation he had with the Michigan coordinator that ended his interest in pledging to the Wolverines and jump-started his desire to play for his home-state Buckeyes.

“(Parrish) came and visited my high school,” Hall said. “And I sat in the football office with my head coach and (Parrish), and they offered me a scholarship. But it had some strings attached, and those strings were, ‘If you don’t commit to us essentially by the end of the day, or at least the end of

that week, then we are going to move on to the next guy.’

“(Parrish) was very upfront and bold about it. I was turned off by that because I was a 16- or 17-year-old kid, and you’re trying to force me to make a decision about where I want to attend college and only give my mom and I 24 hours to talk it over. I just thought it was extremely arrogant. And as exciting as it was at the time to be offered by Michigan, I was really turned off by the fact that he put me in position to have to make that type of decision as a kid.

“It fueled my attention and focus on Ohio State even more, because I knew I wasn’t going to go to Michigan after that conversation.”

With Parrish and the Wolverines no longer in the picture, Hall said the Buckeyes made his decision to pledge to Ohio State an easy one soon after that conversation. In a recruiting pitch led by head coach Jim Tressel and defensive backs coach Mel Tucker – who was in charge of recruiting northeast Ohio at the time – Hall appreciated the care and consideration the program showed during their pitch, which he said was a night-and-day approach compared to their northern rivals.

“It was just consistent at the time,” Hall said. “(Tucker) just spent a lot of time writing handwritten letters, making phone calls, making pop-in visits. Coach Tressel came to a basketball game and watched me play basketball. They just showed a lot of interest. I wanted to stay close to home. Ohio State is two hours down (Interstate) 71 South, so I would be able to get back and forth. I was a mama’s boy and wanted to be home around

Hall vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
2002/Fr.	Columbus	W, 14-9
2003/R-Fr.	Ann Arbor	L, 35-21
2004/R-So.	Columbus	W, 37-21
2005/R-Jr.	Ann Arbor	W, 25-21
2006/R-Sr.	Columbus	W, 42-39

Mom. I wanted it to be easy for her to see me play. That was important.”

Hall redshirted his freshman year while waiting under the wings of older wideouts Chris Gamble and Michael Jenkins, but he would still make a significant impact in his first rivalry game, specifically during the days leading up to the contest. Hall and fellow freshman Santonio Holmes helped prepare the Buckeyes’ defense to go up against standout Wolverine wide receivers and future NFL players Ronald Bellamy, Braylon Edwards and Bennie Joppru by posing as them on Ohio State’s scout team during practice that week.

Unfortunately for Hall, these responsibilities would come with a caveat, where he and Holmes were forced to also wear the colors of the enemy for the entire practice.

“I just remember that week being intense,” Hall said. “The hardest part is having to wear the maize and blue. As tradition, you had to put the maize and blue on your helmets and put the winged little logo on your helmets, and you had to cover up those Buckeye leaves that you earned. I didn’t really like that part. But it’s a part of the tradition and you had to become that other team. But I remember working hard and just trying to do my part to get better not only for the Buckeyes, but getting them prepared to play against The Team Up North.”

Hall may have begrudgingly worn maize and blue throughout the week, but it was a tactic that would prove beneficial for the Buckeyes. With Ohio State trailing the Wolverines 9-7 toward the end of the fourth quarter, quarterback Craig Krenzel and the Ohio State offense embarked on a clutch eight-play, 57-yard touchdown drive that was capped by a 3-yard rushing score from running back Maurice Hall.

It was a sequence of plays that gave Ohio State a 14-9 lead with 4:55 remaining and an eventual dramatic victory in which it allowed the Wolverines to complete just 47.9 percent of their passes. It was a game that Hall said he would never forget in his first collegiate season.

“It was (my first game against Michigan), it was Senior Day, it’s a game against your rivals to go play in the national title,” Hall said. “I remember Maurice Hall scoring the game-winning touchdown, and with us having the same last name – I always took pride in that – and we called ourselves ‘cousins from somewhere.’ That was really cool.

“But it just was a grueling game – one of those games where you had to fight and scratch and claw, all the things that Coach Tressel preached about football. We just got all of those things, which just made it awesome. (I remember) being on the sideline and being pumped up the entire game, not really worrying about the weather or how cold it was. It was just a battle for all the marbles. And what a way to start your college football career, to play That Team Up

North and potentially play in the national title game. It was awesome.”

The rivalry win propelled the Buckeyes to the national championship game against a talented Miami squad, a game that resulted in a stunning 31-24 double-overtime victory for Tressel’s team and gave Ohio State its first national title since 1968. But while Hall’s introduction to the rivalry – albeit on the sidelines – started off with a bang and eventual national championship, it took on a different look in his second year with the program.

Hall earn his first chance to play in The Game in 2003, catching one pass for 10 yards during the Buckeyes’ final drive of the contest, but his team did not replicate that same success they had against the Wolverines at home. In the 100th edition of the rivalry game, the Buckeyes suffered a 35-21 defeat in Ann Arbor after clawing back from a 21-0 first-half deficit to make it 28-21 early in the fourth quarter.

It was a crushing loss that ended Ohio State’s chances of repeating as national champions, a missed opportunity at making history that Hall said he remembers well.

“That year was tough because we lost that game and I felt like we could have won,” Hall said. “We had a lot of guys back. Will Smith was a senior, Michael Jenkins was a senior, Craig Krenzel was a senior. Then we had a lot of young guys who were playing extremely well – A.J. Hawk, Bobby Carpenter, Nick Mangold – those guys. But we just came up short in that game. I remember being really disappointed from that standpoint.”

Luckily for Hall, he would never experience that feeling of anguish again. The wideout closed his Ohio State career with three straight victories over Michigan, an impressive feat that was kick-started after some new blood was introduced to the rivalry.

With dual-threat quarterback Troy Smith and dynamic wide receiver/punt returner Ted Ginn Jr. joining the fold, the Buckeyes began a stranglehold on The Game that started during Hall’s junior season in 2004.

That year, the Buckeyes were limping to the finish line with an uncharacteristic 6-4 record, with all four of those losses coming in the conference. With a 9-1 Michigan team coming to town that had legitimate championship aspirations, it seemed like the Buckeyes were in for another loss to the Wolverines. But Smith and true freshman Ginn had other plans.

Thanks to 386 total yards from the quarterback – then the third most in Ohio State single-game history – and an 82-yard punt return from Ginn in the third quarter that pushed the lead to 27-14, the Buckeyes ran the Wolverines off the field with a dominating 37-21 win. It was a strong finish that ended with the Scarlet and Gray faithful rushing the field, creating yet another special rivalry moment for Ohio State.

Hall did not record a statistic in that game, but he did recall the legendary performances of his teammates that allowed the team to not only put a bow on an otherwise gloomy season, but get the sour taste out of their mouths from the previous year’s defeat by the Wolverines.

“Our young guys stepped up,” Hall said. “Anthony Gonzalez balled out that game, and Ted balled out. Troy played extremely well in that game. A lot of big plays were

made, and we just exploded on them at the end of that game.

“But that was a huge game for us because our season wasn’t great. Whenever you beat That Team Up North, it starts to erase some of those negative memories throughout the year. It’s all about winning that football game. It put Coach Tressel in a situation where he was now 3-1 against Michigan in four years, so that meant a lot to us, and I know that meant a lot to him and his legacy. It gave us momentum going into that next season.”

Hall and Ohio State would continue their winning ways against their rivals in 2005, this time in front of a raucous Michigan Stadium crowd looking for revenge. With the Buckeyes facing a 21-12 deficit with 7:49 left in the fourth quarter, Smith and his offense once again came through for Ohio State. The Buckeyes embarked on two quick scoring drives, the first a five-play, 67-yard drive to make it 21-19 with 6:40 remaining, and then a 12-play, 88-yard drive capped off by a 3-yard score from tailback Antonio Pittman for a 25-21 lead with 24 seconds left.

Hall, who failed to record a catch on those final drives but had one reception for 11 yards on the day, said he has fond memories of that game, specifically of that final drive. He pointed to a 26-yard catch from Gonzalez that brought the Buckeyes down to the Wolverines’ 4-yard line as one of the key plays in that sequence, which served as not only a showing of poise and resilience for the Buckeye offense, but a legendary moment for Smith in The Game.

“The big thing that stood out from that game was just the big catch from Gonzo,” Hall said. “That was the play that kind of kept the momentum going and the drive going. And they call it ‘The Catch,’ or one of the catches. We really felt like we were the better team that game, and we weren’t intimidated.

“That was the one thing that was great about having Troy at quarterback. When that dude lined up, man, he wasn’t scared of anything. He made sure that he led that way, he played that way. We were locked in, and there was nothing in our minds that said we were going to lose that game. We really wanted to make sure we won that football game.”

Smith’s signature moment in The Game may have come in 2005 on the road, but Hall’s moment of glory arrived one year later at Ohio Stadium in a matchup that is still known by many as one of the more consequential and classic games in the storied Ohio State-Michigan rivalry.

The Buckeyes and Wolverines entered the matchup with identical 11-0 records and a No. 1 and No. 2 ranking in the AP poll, respectively, causing a whirlwind of hype and anticipation to swirl over both programs throughout the week.

While Hall and the Buckeyes were aware of the noise and knew a Big Ten championship and national championship berth were both on the line, Hall said he and his team were solely focused on the task at hand in the days leading up to the historic clash.

“It was a lot of hype, obviously,” Hall said. “Social media wasn’t around to make it that much bigger than they probably would have been. But that week, you really just lock in. You don’t really get caught up in that, you have to not pay attention to that stuff. You know what’s at stake. You’re playing for

a national title. Troy’s playing to win the Heisman. Our receivers are playing to be recognized as some of the best in the country. We had the weapons, we had the talent, we had the coach, and we were prepared.”

For Hall, however, “The Game of the Century” took on a whole different meaning in the minutes leading up to kickoff. Before the game, he was honored as part of the program’s Senior Day festivities. While these types of ceremonies are always significant for collegiate athletes, Hall said he was overcome with great emotion when he saw his mother and family waiting for him on the field.

This would spur a moment of great reflection for the fifth-year senior, where he looked back on his difficult childhood in northeast Ohio and became grateful for the opportunity Coach Tressel and the program granted him to play football at Ohio State.

“To have my mom on the field was awesome,” Hall said. “Just to have her be able to stand inside the ‘Shoe, considering where we came from, humble beginnings and challenges growing up. And to then be able to be in a position to graduate from Ohio State, play in the Michigan (games), already have a national title, but to be able to hand her a rose on the field just meant so much to me.

“I remember her crying and just being emotional before the game. I had a ton of pride and just was reflecting on how fast things went. Just really reflecting like, ‘Man, this is it. We’ll never be able to run into the ‘Shoe again, ever. It definitely was intense.”

With the whole country watching and emotions high, Hall delivered on the national stage, turning in arguably the best performance in his five-year career, considering the circumstances, to kick-start the Buckeyes to a program-defining victory.

The contest did not start out the way Hall and the Buckeyes hoped for, however, when Michigan quarterback Chad Henne drove his team 80 yards down the field in the first 2:28 of game action, taking an early 7-0 lead on a 1-yard rushing score from running back Mike Hart. With early momentum on the Wolverines’ side, the Buckeyes looked for someone to turn the tide back in the Buckeyes’ favor, and they found exactly that with Hall.

Just minutes after tears rolled down his and his mother’s faces on the field, Hall hauled in catches of 27, 10 and 1 yards on Ohio State’s very first offensive drive of the game. His shortest reception would prove to be the most crucial, when he sprinted toward the pylon and found himself wide open in the end zone for the score.

This play – along with his two other catches – helped instantly shift the momentum back to Ohio State, which would go on to score three more touchdowns in the half to take a 28-14 lead into the locker room. But it also proved to be a special personal moment for Hall, who had finally proved to be a vital weapon on the offense in the rivalry game after an injury-riddled senior season.

“I had a high-ankle sprain to start the season off,” he said. “It was a tough season for me. Going into your senior year, you want to be playing, you want to be playing well. I was slotted as one of the starters. But it was a bad high-ankle sprain, and I’m hobbling around all year, getting in and out sometimes. It was just tough to get out there and play, so I didn’t play a lot. You’re like, ‘Man,

this is messing up whatever your goals and dreams are throughout the season.’

“When you see me score that touchdown, I keep my hand up because I’m really pointing to the heavens. I’m really saying, ‘Thank you, God, for the opportunity for me to be in this position and make this happen. Because normally in those spots, Troy’s (first) read is to Ted or Gonzo, and because he was a smart enough quarterback to know they were trying to take away our best weapons he was like, ‘Number one, I trust my guy Roy, we came in together, but if they’re going to leave him open, let me go ahead and get him the football, because they don’t know what he can do.’

“He believed in me and what I can do, so I was extremely thankful for that.”

Hall’s career day was cut short in the second half due to another injury to his foot that sidelined him for the rest of the game, but his teammates picked him up in the final 30 minutes.

Led by Smith, who cemented himself as the unquestioned Heisman Trophy winner with 316 passing yards and four touchdowns, the Buckeyes fended off a late rally to hold onto a thrilling 42-39 win. It was a classic finish that clinched a Big Ten title and national championship berth, creating a wild scene inside Ohio Stadium where thousands of fans rushed the field.

“It was like, ‘We’re going to the national title game,’ ” Hall said when describing the scene. “We’re about to go try and win a championship our senior year. It was like, ‘Let’s go do it. Let’s go win it.’ I had a ton of people at the game. I also remember fans taking the grass because that was the last time there would be grass in the ‘Shoe, they were getting turf next year. I remember a bunch of people taking huge pieces of grass, like, ‘What are we doing, man?’ They were trying to stuff it in bags and all types of crazy things. It was a good time.”

Hall’s strong finish in The Game capped off an impressive 4-1 personal record against Michigan, an accomplishment that few other Buckeyes have matched. Hall said he doesn’t take any extra satisfaction in the wins because of the way Michigan recruited him back in high school, but he instead thinks back on the talented teammates and coaches who helped make these successes happen.

He and his teammates helped establish a standard for the football program to excel each and every year against the Wolverines, something the Buckeyes – at least until the last two seasons – have largely met in the recent era of the rivalry.

“I think the 4-1 (record) against Michigan just represents us as a team and how special that (2002) recruiting class was,” Hall said. “I feel like that was the class that did some special things. You think of the people who were in that class, we had so many great guys in that class who set the tone for everybody that came behind us.

“It was all those guys coming together four or five years prior, putting it together. Winning three years in a row was absolutely amazing. That’s the part that stands out to me. It’s not so much about how it started with the recruiting piece and all that. It was understanding that our team was able to accomplish some great things because all the guys were willing to sacrifice and do their part to try and win a championship. It was really, really cool to see that happen.”

Gurd, Teammates Carried Bruce In Greatest Win

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

For a wide-eyed freshman, there was not a more surreal moment than when Ohio State head coach Earle Bruce informed his team on Nov. 16, 1987, that he had been fired by university president Edward H. Jennings and would conclude his nine-year career in Columbus just five days later in Ann Arbor against Michigan.

The decision itself was not a surprise. Calls for Bruce's job had been steady in the preceding years as he and the Buckeyes struggled to meet expectations, finishing 9-3 in six consecutive seasons after going 11-1 in 1979 in his first season at Ohio State and failing to win the Rose Bowl during that stretch. Furthermore, heading into the game against Michigan, Ohio State was just 5-4-1 with a blowout loss to Indiana earlier in the season and suffered a stunning last second-loss to Iowa on a fourth-and-23 play two days prior that led to his dismissal.

But the timing of Bruce's firing – just days before the Buckeyes' biggest game of the season – was widely criticized, and Bruce still had his fair share of supporters, including then-athletic director Rick Bay, who resigned in protest after he was informed of Jennings' decision to fire Bruce. The largest contingent of support, however, came from Bruce's players, who

presented a united front behind their head coach amid his firing.

"You're just a kid," said former Ohio State linebacker Andy Gurd, who played for the Buckeyes from 1987-91. "Your body is absolutely worn down, your mind is worn down from the season and the academics and not really fully understanding what's going on. Coach Bruce comes in on that Monday and lets us know what occurred. Rick, he was amazing. He resigned over this as well. He went against Jennings and against the board.

"Coach Bruce was amazing with the fire and the passion. When Coach Bruce got fired, we used to laugh about it a little bit, but he was awesome. Spittle would get going and his face would get red and his arms would get flailing. He was a man that cared so much about his coaches and about his team and the players and their families and, frankly, the university, and the fans and the alumni. He cared about them so much.

"He was a combination of sweat, spit, and tears telling us what was going on, and that it didn't matter. We were going to go up north, and we were going to win that damn game. It was amazing. I could have run through a damn brick wall after he was done talking."

It was not the first time that Gurd had put his faith in Bruce. After moving to the United States from Ireland at a young age,

Gurd went on to play high school football at Kenston in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, where he was an honorable-mention All-Ohio linebacker and made it on the radar of several college programs, including Ohio State and Michigan.

Michigan head coach Bo Schembechler and defensive coordinator Gary Moeller made the pitch for the Wolverines, while Bruce and defensive line coach Randy Hart hoped to convince Gurd to play at Ohio State. It was the first of several battles between the programs that Gurd would experience.

"It was understanding that our states were ready to go to war over Toledo, the way we perceived them and they perceived us," he said. "Columbus was a cow town, and they looked down their noses at us. They were the big automotive giant, and we were silly farmers.

"It's an amazing history that, maybe up until this year, I would have said we're really two sides of the same coin. That's why, maybe, we're so competitive with each other because we were so similar. Now I don't know if I want to say that anymore."

Gurd developed strong bonds with both coaching staffs, but his decision between the schools ultimately came down to when he visited both campuses in back-to-back weeks.

"I went on my recruiting visit (to Michigan), and I couldn't have felt more like a fish out of water," he said. "I did not connect with the players. I didn't like the campus. People, frankly, were weird. And the next weekend, I had my trip to Ohio State and it couldn't have been more different. Coach Bruce was fantastic. And Randy Hart, who I still consider a friend to this day, was our defensive line coach, but he recruited northeast Ohio. He was wonderful.

"When I went on my visit, Gary Lickovitch was my host, and I played against Gary in high school. He went to Solon. We were big rivals in high school. He was my host, and man, I fit in there. That's what made the difference. It was the Monday after I made the decision, it was done, and I got a call from Gary Moeller, and he was not happy at all. I was really caught off guard with that, but that's what happened. It's what felt right. That's where I felt at home."

It ended up being an action-packed freshman season for Gurd. He appeared in all 11 games for Ohio State and finished with 37 tackles, three tackles for loss and a sack. But as was often the case under Bruce, all roads led to Michigan at the end of the season, and The Game this time around took on added meaning in the wake of Bruce's firing.

"That week has a bunch of special rituals and stuff," Gurd said. "It was my first time going through it, and I had no idea. The scout team has the winged helmets, and there is just a completely different feel to it, the practice from the previous weeks. Some of that was due to the fact that everyone on the staff was getting fired, but primarily because it was The Game."

The week leading up to Michigan is one filled with tradition, but Ohio State's players, wanting to show support for their

Gurd vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
1987/Fr.	Ann Arbor	W, 23-20
1988/So.	Columbus	L, 34-31
1989/R-So.	Ann Arbor	L, 28-18
1990/R-Jr.	Columbus	L, 16-13
1991/R-Sr.	Ann Arbor	L, 31-3

since-fired head coach, opted for a new custom. Running into Michigan Stadium prior to kickoff, Ohio State's players sported headbands – one that Gurd said he still has – that displayed a simple message: "EARLE."

"We loved Coach Bruce," Gurd said. "He was tough, but it's because he loved us and loved his university. Again, I was young, I didn't understand what was happening to the degree like I get it now. But I think that that was a raw, emotional support for someone that we cared very much about, because we knew that he cared very much about us."

Despite all the pregame hype, however, Ohio State looked flat in the early stages against Michigan, and the Wolverines jumped out to a 13-0 lead in the second quarter.

But the Buckeyes pulled off a dramatic turnaround in the second half, allowing just 91 yards by Michigan's offense as Ohio State quarterback Tom Tupa scored twice and Matt Frantz added a 26-yard field goal for the 23-20 final.

"We made plays, and they didn't," Gurd said. "I played a good bit of linebacker with Chris (Spielman) that day. Where I really felt like I made a meaningful impact was on four different punt plays where three of them were pretty doggone good tackles against John Kolesar, No. 40, who was an amazing athlete, an Ohio guy from Westlake.

"I remember one time coming off the field after making one of those hits and Coach (Fred Pagac), who was the outside linebacker coach and then my senior year was my coach, he almost took my arm off with a high five he was so fired up. It's the intensity that was there from everybody all the time."

One could have forgiven Gurd – or any other Ohio State player – for getting caught up in the week's proceedings leading up to The Game, but for Gurd's first outing against Michigan, he just tried to stay in the moment.

"The intensity of being on the field, it was so present," he said. "Not worrying about where we shower afterwards or what we are going to eat. It was like being so in the moment. It was one of the most focused times of my life. It was awesome, and everybody else was too. We were there to do a job."

Getting that job done led to a field storming by Ohio State fans – in Michigan Stadium, no less – and the perfect ending to Bruce's career in Columbus. He was carried off the field by his players after what he called his "greatest win" at Ohio State.

"Our fans stormed their field. Think about that today," Gurd said. "I hope we do that (this year). But to think about Ohio State fans storming Michigan Stadium

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with our victory and carrying Coach Bruce off, it was euphoria. It was amazing. Kind of silly enough to think, 'Oh, this is what it's going to be every year.' That wasn't so true."

As Gurd alluded, it was not so easy from that point on against Michigan. After the win in 1987, things changed on a number of fronts. For one, Gurd experienced a rash of shoulder injuries that led to four surgeries in three years. He played in just five games between 1988-90 and missed all three games against Michigan during that span.

"It's horrible," he said. "At least in our day, you went to one of those two schools to play the other. It was really hard to stand and watch where, you know, the mind knew that it could be in there and could be contributing, but the body was weak."

The other shift was a wider change for Ohio State football. After Bruce's firing, the Buckeyes brought in Arizona State head coach John Cooper, a soft-spoken Tennessean who said his goals were to win the Big Ten, win the Rose Bowl and win the national championship.

All were admirable goals for Ohio State, but the rivalry took a back seat with Cooper at the helm, and it showed when he finished just 2-10-1 against the Wolverines from 1988-2000.

"I really like Coach Cooper and I think he is a great guy, and it's really fun still to see him down on the sidelines and we have been able to introduce our son to him a number of times," Gurd said. "That's really special, and he's a good guy."

“I think – I know – he understands, appreciates and respects what that game means today much more than he ever could have when he first came here. Yes, there was a shift. With Coach Bruce, it was a countdown to it. Same thing that Coach (Jim) Tressel would do or that Coach (Urban) Meyer would do or Coach (Ryan) Day does today. It’s a bull’s-eye. It is the center target. It is on everybody’s mind, and you are driving towards that.

"I think a little bit when Coach Coop came in, it was de-emphasized and it was maybe talked about as, 'It's another game. It's a very important game. They're all important games. Let's go play to win.' But it wasn't the same."

Ohio State dropped all three games against Michigan that Gurd missed, falling 34-31 in Columbus in 1988, suffering a 28-18 loss in Ann Arbor in 1989 and watching the Wolverines win 16-13 on a last-second field goal in Ohio Stadium in 1990.

“To have those three games that we lost, it really was kind of down to the wire,” Gurd said. “They were very tight games, and it was hard. We had other bowl games, and those were nice trips and we got to practice and everything and get better. But losing that game certainly gives a tone that you don’t want to have.”

Gurd's fortune shifted the next season as, for the first time since his freshman year, he was relatively healthy and able to participate in the entire season. He played in all but one of Ohio State's 12 games, totaling 19 tackles, two tackles for loss, a

sack and a pass breakup. But that same positive shift was not felt in The Game. Ohio State suffered a 31-3 loss in Ann Arbor, the worst since a 58-6 thrashing by Michigan in Columbus on Nov. 23, 1946.

Michigan opened up the scoring with a 1-yard touchdown run by Burnie Legette, and Ohio State responded with a 50-yard field goal by Tim Williams, but it was all Michigan from there on out, with the Wolverines scoring 24 unanswered points, including one of the most famous – or infamous, depending on your perspective – plays in the history of The Game.

With the Wolverines already leading 17-3 in the second quarter, wide receiver/punt returner Desmond Howard collected a punt at his 7-yard line, escaping a tackle and streaking down the left sideline before striking his Heisman pose – an omen of things to come – as he sauntered into the end zone, erasing any slim hope of an Ohio State comeback.

"There were a number of things that we didn't do well that day in terms of some turnovers, and we didn't make some stops that we needed to make and then certainly that play," Gurd said. "If you're on that side, it's awesome. It's like it's made for you. And if you're on the other side, which we were, it's like, 'Oh crap, that's not good.' Momentum definitely felt like it was fully in their favor at that point, but you keep fighting. You can never give up. But you know, they beat us that day. '87 was better."

That was Gurd's last chance to take the field against Michigan, but it was far from his last experience with The Game. He has

since gotten an entirely new perspective. His son, Patrick, is a senior tight end at Ohio State and is set for his third matchup against the Wolverines. Unlike his father, though, Patrick is still looking for his first win.

“Our son hasn’t beat them,” Gurd said. “In the COVID year, they wouldn’t play us. One of the smartest things they’ve ever done because we would have beat them 100-0. They didn’t play us, and then two losses. He’s still looking for his pair of gold pants. My wife wears mine every game. I’m very proud of that. It’s time for these Buckeyes to get a pair of gold pants.”

Gurd sees a fistfight in store for this season's battle, with potential shades of the No. 1 vs. No. 2 contest in 2006 with evenly matched squads, and he will look for Ohio State to hold against Michigan's potent rushing attack. But the best advice he has – guidance that he has offered to his son ahead of his previous battles against the Wolverines – is to stay present when taking the field against Michigan.

“The moment is so large that if you let it take over, you’ll miss it because it’s just all the stuff going on around it,” he said. “The pomp and circumstance of all the reporters and just all the noise, it’s almost good just to kind of take a step back from that and be in the moment, stay present, focus on the now. Keep your head on a swivel, because on the games where the whistles are close and maybe people are pulling up, that isn’t going to happen on this Saturday. Be ready and deliver.”

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Years Later, Brockington Still Can't Stand Michigan

To note the passing of Ohio State running back John Brockington, who went on to an All-Pro career with the Green Bay Packers, on March 31, we are reprinting his *Michigan Memories*, originally published in the Nov. 25, 2017, edition of *Buckeye Sports Bulletin*.

By **GARRETT STEPIEN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When he hears the word, his mood swings 180 degrees.

It's been nearly half a century – 47 years, to be exact – since John Brockington last played as much as a snap in The Game.

Since then, the three-year varsity running back (1968-70) graduated from Ohio State. Brockington became a first-round pick in the 1971 NFL draft for the Green Bay Packers, where he starred as the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year and earned three Pro Bowl selections.

Following his seven-year professional football career in the league, he opened an entirely new chapter on his journey in 2002.

He started the John Brockington Foundation, aiding people impacted by diseases that require organ donations, inspired by his own experience after he received a life-saving kidney transplant from his wife, Diane Scott. But no matter how much changed in his life throughout the past few decades, regardless of how minor or how drastic, one constant always remained.

There's nothing he despises more than Michigan.

"I'm just as rabid as somebody who's been in Ohio the last 75 years – because I know what it means," Brockington said. "I can look at the 'M' on their hat and get upset. It just annoys me."

Outside of a doctor based in his foundation who is originally from Michigan, Brockington sums up his feelings for the state and the school in one word.

"Hatred," he said with a laugh. "It's funny – I mean, I'm in my 60s now and it still



FILE PHOTO

BRUISING BACK — John Brockington (42) helped power Ohio State to wins over Michigan in 1968 as a sophomore and again in 1970.

annoys me. It really does."

Brockington isn't the first Buckeye to have strong feelings for The School Up North, and he certainly won't be the last.

From the moment he arrived on campus in Columbus from New York City by way of Brooklyn, Brockington had the mentality permanently drilled into his head.

Woody Hayes, the legendary OSU head coach from 1951-78, wanted nothing more than to beat up on the Wolverines at the end of every season. The fiery mentality from Hayes trickled down to the players, including Brockington.

"I had no idea what it was like until the week of that game," he said, remembering his first varsity season in 1968. "Everything changed. When we were freshmen, we had to get the varsity ready. So we were working really close with Woody. We could hear how

everything was just amped up – everything was just amped up. By the time I got to the varsity, it was worse because we were with him."

However crazy Hayes was that week, it worked.

Then-No. 2 Ohio State wacked then-No. 4 Michigan in a 50-14 demolition Nov. 23, 1968, at Ohio Stadium, improving to 9-0 overall and 7-0 in Big Ten play. It locked up a Rose Bowl berth and a crack at the national championship.

The Buckeyes secured the title after their 27-16 victory over Southern California, but Brockington knew which win mattered more.

"Michigan is our national championship game, for the most part, because you could win every game that year and nothing wrong in the season, but you've got to beat Michigan," he said. "We just can't take it. We can't stomach it.

"It sounds stupid with some of the other things that are going on in the world, but that week, there's nothing more important."

Brockington realized that truth once and for all when he experienced the bitter, sour taste of defeat that came with being on the losing side of the rivalry.

The very next fall of 1969, OSU's high from the 36-point blowout and the national title ended in Ann Arbor when the Wolverines pulled out a 24-12 win Nov. 22 at Michigan Stadium.

The upset for then-No. 12 Michigan spoiled the season for Ohio State, which was the top-ranked team in the country at the time. The Buckeyes were all but bound for a repeat until the stunning loss, which snapped a 22-game win streak.

The pain of defeat lingered with the team into the spring. Hayes made sure it haunted Brockington and his teammates, coming up with an outside-the-box reminder of the loss to motivate OSU all year long leading up to the rematch.

"When we lost as juniors – we were No. 1 in the nation, we had a great football team – we went to Ann Arbor, and we lost,"

Brockington vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
1968/So.	Columbus	W, 50-14
1969/Jr.	Ann Arbor	L, 24-12
1970/Sr.	Columbus	W, 20-9

Brockington said. "It was horrible. It was horrible coming back on the plane.

"Well, that spring, (Hayes) had a rug made – Michigan 24, Ohio State 12. We walked across that rug – I think it was 15-20 days into the spring – then when we came back in the summer (for training camp), it was back, clean. I mean, that was right out of the locker room door, we had that Michigan score."

Ohio State answered, blitzing through its regular-season slate in 1970. Then the Buckeyes hit a roadblock Nov. 14, eventually squeezing past Purdue with a 10-7 edge.

Normally, Brockington said, Hayes would chew the team out with hours of studying the tape in the film room coupled with double the amount of time correcting those mistakes on the practice field.

Not this time.

"The perfect example of (how much focus goes into The Game) was my senior year," Brockington said. "We played Purdue before the Michigan game, and we were horrible that week. I mean, the first drive, we go down and score a touchdown. We couldn't do anything the rest of the day. And we had to win the game on a field goal that almost slipped off the tee, so we won 10-7. We played like crap.

"And that Sunday, we never even saw film of that game. It was all behind us. It was all about Michigan."

With the derailing loss from 1969 still fresh in the mind of Hayes, he walked straight into the locker room one day after practice with two materials – notepaper and a brown bag.

"Woody gave us notepaper, we put our name on the paper and wrote down what we were going to do to beat Michigan that week," Brockington said. "And then he made us all stand. And then he put all of our notes in the bag – brown bag – shook them up, took them out and read them all.

"He said, 'So-and-so! You said you're going to do this! Are you going to do it?' It was unbelievable. That week was intense, dude."

The OSU players stayed true to their word, and Hayes' unique locker-room exercise worked.

Then-No. 5 Ohio State avenged the 1969 loss with a 20-9 victory Nov. 21, 1970, over then-No. 4 Michigan at the 'Shoe.

"Thank God we won that game," Brockington said. "Thank God we won that game."

When it comes to the current state of his alma mater's football program, Brockington hasn't missed a game. Through the highs and the lows of the 2017 season, he's been watching every little detail closely from his television screen – from the kickoff struggles to the targeting woes.

His message to Urban Meyer and the Buckeyes ahead of The Game is simple.

"This is the big one," Brockington said. "This is Big Blue going against the Buckeyes. This is The Game."

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Schumacher's U-M Games Were All Or Nothing

To note the passing of All-America Ohio State offensive lineman Kurt Schumacher on Sept. 29, we are reprinting his *Michigan Memories*, originally published in the Nov. 30, 2013, edition of *Buckeye Sports Bulletin*.

By **JEFF SVOBODA**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

When Kurt Schumacher arrived at Ohio State, it was a different world in college football.

Teams could tie games because there was no overtime, and physical, hard-hitting, run-based football was the norm instead of the wide-open, offense-charged game of today. Perhaps most importantly, there was no BCS and only a handful of bowl games – in fact, only one Big Ten team made the postseason.

"The landscape has changed so much," Schumacher, an All-America offensive tackle at Ohio State from 1971-74, told BSB. "What was at stake was go to a bowl game or go home. It wasn't like, 'We're competing for a spot in a BCS game, but if we don't go to a BCS game, we're going to go to a really nice bowl game anyhow.'"

"This was for all the marbles. Either you won or you went home to spend the holiday with your family, and that just doesn't exist today."

All those factors came into collision repeatedly during Schumacher's career, especially in the famous 1973 game between Ohio State and Michigan in Ann Arbor. The teams were both undefeated before the game, with the Buckeyes ranked first and Michigan fourth.

At the end of the day, there was still nothing to separate the teams. Michigan rallied to tie the game at 10 in the fourth quarter, and that's how it ended. From there, the Big Ten's lone bowl bid was determined by a vote of the league's athletics directors, and as depicted in the recent Big Ten Network documentary "Tiebreaker," the ADs voted Ohio State to Pasadena by a 6-4 margin.

The decision – precipitated in part by a late-game injury to U-M quarterback Dennis Franklin, who broke his collarbone on a hit by Van Ness DeCree – stunned both teams, as Ohio State assumed it was not going to Pasadena because the Buckeyes had gone the year before and lost a 42-17 decision to USC.

"At the end of the game, both teams go up through the same tunnel to get to their locker room, and even though it was a 10-10 tie, we felt as though it was a loss and the Michigan players pretty much acted as though they felt it was a win," said Schumacher, OSU's starting left tackle in the game. "We really and truly felt as though our season was over, and it was just a horribly quiet locker room."

That was especially true because Ohio State – which had just nine first downs in the game – lost the lead late in the game. Pete Johnson's 5-yard touchdown run with less than a minute left in the first half made it 10-0, but Michigan kicked a field goal early in the fourth quarter and Franklin took in an option score over the right side with 9:32 to play to tie the score.

Schumacher vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
1972/So.	Columbus	W, 14-11
1973/Jr.	Ann Arbor	T, 10-10
1974/Sr.	Columbus	W, 12-10

From there, Michigan had a pair of chances to take the lead, but kicker Mike Lantry first missed a 58-yard field goal. He got another chance after OSU quarterback Greg Hare was picked off deep inside Buckeye territory inside a minute to play – part of an 0-for-4 passing game for the Buckeye QBs brought on by a combination of Woody Hayes' stubbornness, wet weather and Cornelius Greene's thumb injury – but Lantry pushed a final 44-yard try wide right.

"We were two very evenly matched teams," Schumacher said. "I was talking to (former Buckeye) Doug Plank recently about the Michigan games and how disappointing that 10-10 tie was because had we beaten Michigan, clearly we would have ended up as national champs."

"Doug played in Chicago with a couple of Michigan guys, and he said, 'If you think we have bitter feelings or mixed feelings about that 10-10 tie, you should talk to those guys.'"

Schumacher got his final chance at Michigan as a first-team All-American as a senior in 1974, and it was a fitting ending. With Keith Jackson and Joe Paterno broadcasting the game from the booth, No. 4 Ohio State ended third-ranked Michigan's perfect season with a 12-10 victory in Ohio Stadium.

"In both games I think our defense played marvelous football to hold Michigan to 10 points," Schumacher said. "That is an effort that should result in a win, not a tie. Fortunately, it did result in a win in 1974, albeit through four field goals. I can tell you there was no real satisfaction around the fact that we didn't score any touchdowns in that game, but we won at the end of the day."

Michigan took a 10-0 lead after one quarter, but the Buckeyes drew back within one by halftime thanks to a trio of field goals by Tom Klaban.

Archie Griffin finished with 111 rushing yards, and his running set up another Klaban field goal – this one a 45-yarder – midway through the third quarter. The Buckeyes made the lead stand up from there, though it took Lantry pushing a 33-yard field goal just wide of the left upright in the dying seconds to keep Ohio State ahead.

It is hard to tell on the videotape whether the high kick went through the uprights or not, but Schumacher has never questioned the referee's decision.

"It's why they have those uprights there," he said. "Did it go through or didn't it? Honestly, the two people that have the best view of that are the striped shirts standing under the uprights. If you're asking me if it went through the uprights or not, I couldn't even begin to give you an honest answer, but I have to believe 99.999 times out of 100 they get that call right."

A native of Lorain, Ohio, Schumacher was at Ohio State for the contests in both 1971 and '72 as well, though he didn't start either of those games. In fact, '71 was the last year freshmen were not eligible to play, so he was in Columbus when No. 3 Mich-



FILE PHOTO

LINE LINCHPIN – Former Ohio State offensive lineman Kurt Schumacher went 2-0-1 against Michigan.

igan posted a 10-7 victory against the unranked Buckeyes in Ann Arbor.

That game was marked by Hayes ripping up a sideline yard marker in response to what he believed to be a blown call by the referees, setting the stage for the next year's contest. Before the return match in Ohio Stadium, Hayes made sure the players remembered what happened the year before – in particular, a fumble recovery by Rick Middleton that was not awarded to the Buckeyes and a missed pass interference call on Michigan.

"The year before, there were a couple of calls from an Ohio State perspective that were very questionable," Schumacher said. "As we were getting ready to play Michigan and we were watching their game films, those plays were spliced into the reels multiple times just for a little additional motivation around the whole thing."

Ohio State captured that '72 contest in Schumacher's sophomore year by a 14-11 score. Champ Henson and Griffin ran for touchdowns to give No. 9 Ohio State a 14-3

lead against No. 3 and undefeated Michigan. The Wolverines rallied with a third-quarter touchdown, but a fourth-quarter goal-line stand by the Buckeyes preserved the victory.

Over a three-year span from 1972-74, Michigan went 30-0 against all opponents other than Ohio State but 0-2-1 against the Buckeyes, keeping the Wolverines from a bowl game in each season.

On the other side of the battle, Ohio State fell short of the national title each year, but Schumacher left Ohio State with two pairs of gold pants. The only thing that would have been sweeter would have been a third pair in '73 and the national championship that came with it.

"Beating Michigan twice and tying them once, that's OK, but it would have been ideal to have beaten them three times," Schumacher said. "That third victory would have gotten us that one thing we came up short on, which was bringing home the national championship."

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Harbaugh Won't Be On Sidelines For The Game

Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh will serve the remainder of his three-game suspension without a legal battle and will not be on the sideline in The Game against Ohio State to finish the regular season on Nov. 25.

BIG TEN NOTES Greg Wilson

Harbaugh was initially suspended for three games on Nov. 10 after the Big Ten determined Michigan had violated the league's sportsmanship policy, with the violations having to do with the Wolverines' in-person sign-stealing scheme coordinated by former recruiting analyst Connor Stalions, which violated NCAA rules.

Michigan's acceptance of the three-game suspension came on Nov. 16, one day before the university's temporary restraining order request was supposed to be heard that, if Michigan had won, would have allowed Harbaugh to remain on the sidelines this season. But Michigan decided to withdraw its legal challenge against the Big Ten and accept the punishment, and in turn, the conference reportedly agreed to stop its investigation into the football program.

"This morning, the University, Coach Harbaugh, and the Big Ten resolved their pending litigation," a statement from Michigan said. "The Conference agreed to close its investigation, and the University and Coach Harbaugh agreed to accept the three-game suspension."

"Coach Harbaugh, with the University's support, decided to accept this sanction to return the focus to our student-athletes and



SONNY BROCKWAY

HAIL TO THE VICTIMS — Michigan will be without head coach Jim Harbaugh against Ohio State on Nov. 25, after he was handed a three-game suspension by the Big Ten relating to the Wolverines' sign-stealing scheme.

their performance on the field. The Conference has confirmed that it is not aware of any information suggesting Coach Harbaugh's involvement in the allegations. The University continues to cooperate fully with the NCAA's investigation."

The Big Ten released its own statement on the agreement between the conference and the school after the news had been re-

ported.

"The Big Ten Conference's commitment to student-athletes, sportsmanship and the Commissioner's duty to protect the integrity of competition will never waver," the statement read. "Today's decision by the University of Michigan to withdraw its legal challenge against the Conference's November 10th Notice of Disciplinary Action is indicative of the high standards and values that the Conference and the University seek to uphold. The University of Michigan is a valued member of the Big Ten Conference, and the Conference will continue to work cooperatively with the University and the NCAA during this process."

Harbaugh already missed the Wolverines' game against Penn State on Nov. 11, which they won 24-15, though he is allowed to continue coaching Michigan during the week leading up to games. He also was not on the sideline for Michigan's 31-24 win at Maryland on Nov. 18, where offensive coordinator Sherrone Moore continued to serve as acting head coach.

The news of Michigan backing off from legal action was a surprise given how steadfast the program had appeared in fighting the sanctions from the Big Ten, but additional reporting after the fact may have provided the necessary context.

According to a Nov. 17 report from Yahoo Sports' Ross Dellenger and Dan Wetzel, the NCAA presented new evidence to Michigan that a university booster may have been partially funding Stalions' sign-stealing operation and that an assistant coach had participated in the destruction of evidence on a computer after the scandal broke.

The report said that the new evidence is what caused the shift in legal strategy from Michigan and Harbaugh. The day of

BIG 2023 Standings

East Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan	8	0	1.000	11	0	1.000
Ohio State	8	0	1.000	11	0	1.000
Penn State	6	2	0.750	9	2	0.818
Maryland	3	5	0.375	6	5	0.545
Rutgers	3	5	0.375	6	5	0.545
Michigan State	2	6	0.250	4	7	0.364
Indiana	1	7	0.125	3	8	0.273

West Division

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Iowa	6	2	0.750	9	2	0.818
Northwestern	4	4	0.500	6	5	0.545
Wisconsin	4	4	0.500	6	5	0.545
Nebraska	3	5	0.375	5	6	0.455
Minnesota	3	5	0.375	5	6	0.455
Illinois	3	5	0.375	5	6	0.455
Purdue	2	6	0.250	3	8	0.273

Nov. 18 Games

Northwestern 23, Purdue 15
Michigan State 24, Indiana 21
Michigan 31, Maryland 24
Penn State 27, Rutgers 6
Iowa 15, Illinois 13
Ohio State 37, Minnesota 3
Wisconsin 24, Nebraska 17

Nov. 24 Games

Iowa at Nebraska, noon
Michigan State at Penn State, 7:30 p.m.

Nov. 25 Games

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

that report, Michigan also announced that it had fired linebackers coach Chris Partridge, who had returned to the team this season after a stint at Ole Miss and whom Stalions had previously referred to as a close friend.

According to Yahoo Sports' report, while Partridge was not alleged to have known about Stalions' scheme at the time, he did act after the news broke to cover up evidence. As for the booster portion of the report, a Michigan booster — referred to by the NCAA as "Uncle T" — was allegedly funding Stalions and had given him thousands of dollars for expenses incurred by the extensive sign-stealing network.

While the investigation by the Big Ten reportedly has concluded — at least for now — penalties are still expected once the NCAA has finished its investigation, though that is not expected to conclude until next year.

Braun Earns Head Coaching Position At Northwestern

Northwestern announced on Nov. 15 that interim head coach David Braun will shed his interim tag, after being promoted to the school's permanent head coaching role.

"I am truly honored for the opportunity to continue leading Northwestern's football program," he said. "Over the past five

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BIG TEN NOTES

months, having the chance to lead this group has been the opportunity of a lifetime.

“Moving forward, my mission is to build on this positive momentum, aiming to create one of the best experiences in college football for our student-athletes.”

Braun took over as interim head coach on July 14 when the school fired Pat Fitzgerald amid hazing allegations against the football program. Fitzgerald had previously hired Braun as a defensive coordinator in January, and he quickly made an impression on the program.

“Upon his arrival at Northwestern, I quickly identified that Coach Braun embodies the values of our athletic department: respect, integrity, service and excellence,” athletic director Derrick Gragg said. “It was the right decision to appoint him as the interim leader, and I congratulate Coach Braun on being named the head coach of our football program. He has earned this position. Coach Braun has rallied the team under very adverse circumstances. He has gained the respect of the student-athletes, the staff, parents, alumni and our fans.”

In what was expected to be a down season for the Wildcats after losing their long-time head coach just weeks before fall camp began, Braun has led Northwestern to a 6-5 record this season after just four combined wins over the previous two years.

Following the Wildcats' 24-10 win over Wisconsin on Nov. 11, players on the team went to social media to post in support of Braun, saying to remove his interim tag, including freshman tight end Jack Fitzgerald, son of Pat Fitzgerald.

In his first game as Northwestern's permanent head coach, Braun and the Wildcats picked up a 23-15 win against Purdue and are now bowl-eligible for the first time since 2020.

The defensive-minded Braun has helped the Wildcats improve from just the nation's No. 82 scoring defense last season at 28.3 points per game to No. 43 this season, allowing just 22.1 points per contest, which is eighth in the Big Ten.

PSU Fires Offensive Coordinator Yurcich

Penn State announced on Nov. 12 that it had fired offensive coordinator Mike Yurcich following the team's 24-15 home loss to Michigan the day prior.

“We thank Mike for his contributions over the last three years but feel it is in our program's best interest to make a change at this time,” head coach James Franklin said. “We wish him and his family nothing but the best in the future.”

Yurcich has been at the helm of the offense since 2021 – also doubling as the quarterbacks coach – after spending the 2019 season as passing game coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Ohio State and becoming Texas' offensive coordinator in 2020.

He coordinated an offense in 2021 that scored just 25.0 points per game – 90th in the country – but improved to 35.8 points (19th) last season and had the Nittany Lions averaging 37.7 points (15th) before his firing.

But Penn State's offense has routinely struggled in the Nittany Lions' biggest games. They put up just 27 points and 478 yards of combined offense in losses to Ohio State and Michigan this season, including a

1-of-16 showing on third down against the Buckeyes.

First-time starting quarterback Drew Allar also struggled to get any rhythm going in those two games, combining for only 261 yards and two touchdowns and completing just 43.8 percent of his passes.

“Whether it's openers, third down, starting fast, all these things are things that we've had lengthy discussions about and had a plan for,” Franklin said Nov. 13. “But a lot of the times when we got to the games, either we did not call the games that way or we did not execute the plays the way we intended them to.”

Yurcich will be replaced for the remainder of the season by running backs coach JaJuan Seider and tight ends coach Ty Howle, who will co-coordinate the offense. In the Nittany Lions' first game since Yurcich's firing, Penn State's offense had 322 yards in a 27-6 win against Rutgers on Nov. 18.

Clark Becomes Iowa's All-Time Points Leader

Iowa senior guard Caitlin Clark became Iowa's all-time leading women's scorer on Nov. 12 with 24 points in the Hawkeyes' 94-53 win over Northern Iowa.

Her performance gave her 2,813 career points, passing Megan Gustafson (2,804 points), the previous record holder who played from 2015-19.

“Megan's been our biggest fan on this whole journey,” Clark said. “Megan reached out to me last night and said, ‘You're very, very deserving of this. Go out there and do it.’ It's not the first time she's reached out and texted me. She's always there. And that's not fake – Megan is one of the best people of all time.”

Through 103 career games with the Hawkeyes, Clark was averaging 27.3 points per game on 46.3 percent shooting, including a 37.3 percent mark from deep, in addition to 7.1 rebounds and 8.0 assists per contest. And in a 113-90 win over Drake on Nov. 19, she broke the Division I record for the most 30-point games, hitting that mark for the 39th time in her career.



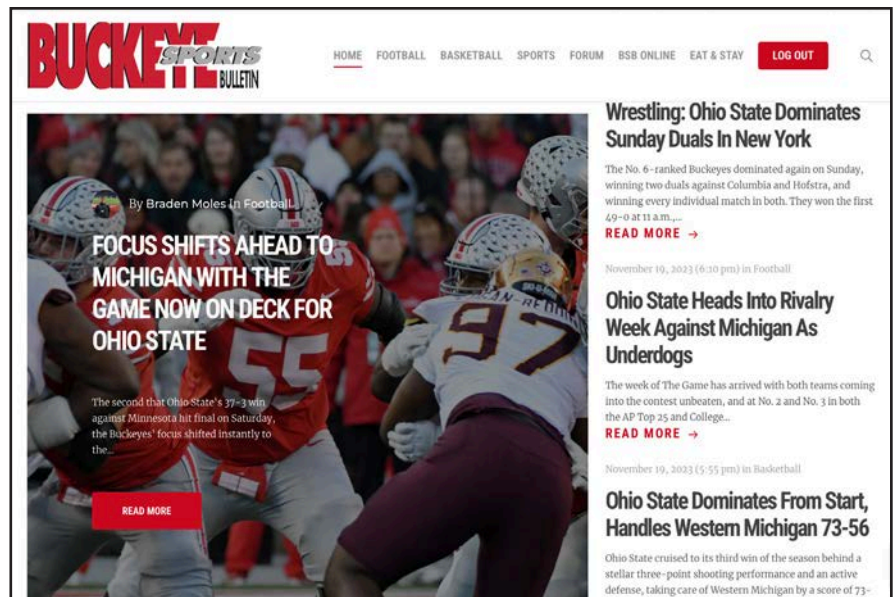
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Visitors On Hand For Ohio State’s Home Finale

Ohio State’s final home game of the season did not quite have the pomp and circumstance of some other contests at Ohio Stadium – namely a big matchup against Penn State on Oct. 21 or a night game against Michigan State on Nov. 11 – but the Buckeyes still made sure to host a handful of visitors for the team’s home finale.

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Braden Moles

In addition to several committed prospects in 2024, Ohio State was expected to host Bay City, Texas, four-star defensive lineman Carlon Jones (6-3, 270), whom the Buckeyes are attempting to flip from Nebraska, but he was unable to make the trip due to being hospitalized the evening prior after his team’s loss.

“My whole body cramped up,” Jones told 247Sports. “When I started to come out of it, I was going to try to get up there, but I would only make it by maybe the third quarter of the game. Coach (Larry) Johnson said he wants me to get the full experience of Ohio State so we rescheduled the visit for Dec. 8. I’m fine now.”

Jones is the No. 442 overall prospect and No. 49 defensive lineman in the class,

and he has been committed to the Cornhuskers since June. This would have been Jones’ first visit to Ohio State, and he is believed to be considering only Nebraska and Ohio State at this point.

A handful of 2025 prospects were also on hand, including Conroe, Texas, five-star cornerback Dorian Brew (6-2, 185); Chicago Simeon four-star defensive end Christopher Burgess Jr. (6-4, 240); Upper Arlington, Ohio, three-star defensive end Cal Thrush (6-4, 230); North Palm Beach (Fla.) Benjamin School four-star defensive end Amaree Williams (6-4, 215); and Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy three-star wide receiver Jackson Wiley (6-0, 165). There was also one 2026 prospect in attendance, and it was a significant one in Carrollton, Ga., five-star quarterback Julian Lewis (6-1, 185), who is committed to USC.

Lewis, who threw for 4,118 yards and 48 touchdowns last season, is the top-ranked prospect in the class and has been pledged to the Trojans since August.

“(Ohio State) throws the ball around,” Lewis told 247Sports. “The past couple years, they’ve had a lot of success. I have a good relationship with C.J. Stroud and had good talks with him about the whole thing. (Quarterbacks coach Corey) Dennis over there, we’ve talked a good amount.”

With Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes four-star quarterback Air Noland (6-3, 195) and Bellefontaine, Ohio, four-star quarterback Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 210) al-

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.)	
Jordan Lyle	RB	6-0	180	★★★★	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.)	St. Thomas Aquinas
Jaylen McClain	SAF	6-0	185	★★★★	West Orange (N.J.)	
Jeremiah McClellan	WR	6-0	190	★★★★	St. Louis Christian Brothers	
Eric Mensah	DL	6-3	290	★★★	Stafford (Va.)	
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)	
Leroy Roker	S	3-1	170	★★★	Fort Myers (Fla.)	
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)	
Bryce West	CB	5-11	177	★★★★	Cleveland Glenville	
Sam Williams-Dixon	RB	5-11	203	★★★	Pickerington (Ohio)	
Damarion Witten	TE	6-4	215	★★★★	Cleveland Glenville	

ready in the fold in 2024 and 2025, respectively, Ohio State is able to shift full focus toward the 2026 class when it comes to the quarterbacks.

Lewis is one of three quarterbacks already offered by Ohio State in the class along with Nashville (Tenn.) Christian School five-star Jared Curtis (6-3, 210) and Tampa (Fla.) Jesuit four-star Will Griffin (6-3, 215), who was offered by Ohio State this past summer after an impressive camp session with the Buckeyes.

DE Willor Visiting Ahead Of Early Signing Period

Jones is not the only defensive lineman whom Ohio State is continuing to pursue before the early signing period from Dec.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1983

Ohio State’s football recruiting of prep prospects, as usual, was touching numerous bases in several states. The Buckeyes, according to reports, were again courting the topflight seniors in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Illinois besides selected blue-chip seniors in Michigan, Indiana, New Jersey, Virginia, New York, Florida, West Virginia, Kansas, etc.

With Ohio well-stocked with Division I prospects this fall, the Buckeyes reportedly had expressed more than mild interest in several players.

One was linebacker Chris Spielman of Massillon Washington, who was also being courted by schools coast-to-coast including Michigan and UCLA. One newspaper reported that Columbus businessman and Buckeye booster John Galbreath made it a point to talk with the 6-2, 215-pound prep All-American on his visit, which was allowable under NCAA rules.

Ohio State was also showing interest in wide receiver-safety Cris Carter (6-3, 180) of Middletown, also a basketball standout and brother of ex-Indiana cager Butch Carter. His prep teammate from the previous year, Sonny Gordon, was on the OSU roster.

35 Years Ago — 1988

If speed, size and intelligence were the primary focus points for Ohio State football recruiters this year, they would have to look no further than Cincinnati.

Carlton Gray of Cincinnati Forest Park was considered one of the premier defensive backs in the state and one of the most outstanding players in what seemed to be a bumper crop of defensive backs.

Gray had all the abilities college recruiters looked for in a cornerback or safety, and the intangible qualities to go with those abilities.

“He is a standout defensive back and wide receiver prospect,” said national recruiting expert Tom Lemming. “Carlton is an exciting player with great speed and jumping ability.”

Although Gray liked what he saw when he looked at the Scarlet and Gray, he wanted to explore every option. Before the 1988 season began, he listed such schools as Air Force, Florida, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, North Carolina, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Oklahoma and Stanford.

25 Years Ago — 1998

Park Forest (Ill.) Rich East cornerback Richard McNutt was

saying Ohio State and Northwestern were his top schools.

McNutt (6-0, 160) had moved his OSU visit up from Jan. 8 to Dec. 4. He also had a trip set to UCLA on Dec. 11. Besides Northwestern, Georgia and Purdue were also in the mix.

McNutt, judged as The National Recruiting Advisor’s top free safety prospect, had missed much of the year with an ankle injury.

20 Years Ago — 2003

Vernon Gholston, a 6-3, 240-pound defensive end prospect from Cass Tech High School in Detroit, was beginning to assemble a list of schools, and Ohio State was set to receive one of his official visits.

“I’m starting to set up my visits now,” Gholston told BSB. “My coach and I are working on that. I’m looking at Michigan, Michigan State and Ohio State. Those are my top three.”

Gholston was in attendance at the OSU-Michigan State game on Nov. 8 and said he planned to kick off his visits the first weekend in December in Ann Arbor.

After that, he planned to tour East Lansing later that month but planned to come to Columbus in January.

15 Years Ago — 2008

As the Buckeyes began to put together the early pieces of their class of 2010, another name had been added to the mix of potential members. Cincinnati Anderson offensive lineman Andrew Norwell had been offered by OSU.

“They’re at the top of my list,” he told BSB. “I’m showing interest in the other schools, but they’d probably be at the bottom. I really like the coaches at Ohio State. I like the people up there. The stadium up there, it’s pretty sweet. I like how the crowd is. It’s pretty exciting and the facilities are nice, and that’s what draws me in along with the coaching staff.”

The 6-6, 275-pound Norwell was an offensive tackle prospect who held offers from Cincinnati, Duke and Indiana. Other schools showing interest included Boise State, Illinois, Maryland and Wisconsin.

10 Years Ago — 2013

Cleveland Glenville’s trio of star players remained one of head coach Urban Meyer’s top priorities heading into the winter recruiting months, and for good reason. In fact, on Nov. 14 defensive backs Marshon Lattimore (6-1, 180) and Erick Smith (6-1, 195) and offensive lineman Marcelys Jones (6-5, 325) – considered a “soft”

commit at this point – were each honored with selections to the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.

“This is a great honor to share with my teammates, and I’m looking forward to competing against other All-Americans,” Lattimore said. “Going with my brothers is great, and I consider my teammates as my family. I’m happy for these guys as much as I am for myself.”

In addition to Ohio State and Alabama, Lattimore said he planned on visiting Louisville, Michigan, Oregon and USC by the time his recruitment was up. His final decision would come at the game he was just selected to play in, which meant that plenty of eyes from Columbus would be on San Antonio come Jan. 5.

Five Years Ago — 2018

In possession of an Ohio State offer since Sept. 26, Cleveland St. Ignatius four-star linebacker Tommy Eichenberg remained among the Buckeyes’ top targets for 2019 but had been committed to Boston College since June 27.

The 6-3, 225-pound Eichenberg was being recruited by Michigan as well. The Wolverines extended a scholarship offer on Oct. 3. He followed up immediately with U-M and went to Ann Arbor, Mich., for its game against Penn State but had yet to check out OSU since the Buckeye offer. That was slated to change when Eichenberg visited Ohio State for The Game on Nov. 24.

He was the No. 358 overall prospect, No. 19 inside linebacker and No. 13 player in Ohio for 2019.

One Year Ago — 2022

Ohio State issued an offer on Nov. 9 to Indianapolis Lawrence Central four-star defensive end Joshua Mickens (6-5, 225), a 2023 prospect who was committed to LSU. Just days after receiving the offer, he made a trip to Columbus for the Buckeyes’ win over Indiana on Nov. 12, and he was set to return for an official visit on Nov. 26.

Mickens was the No. 136 overall prospect and No. 18 edge rusher in the class and had been committed to LSU since July.

“It’s kind of similar to what I’ve said about LSU – that’s Ohio State, they have the brand, they have the name, they have the people to show how good of a program they are,” Mickens said. “They have the coaches – Coach (Ryan) Day, Coach (Larry) Johnson, Coach (Kevin) Wilson, Coach (Justin) Frye, they’ve got the players, they have the production. The whole staff, they try to breed greatness, and that’s what I like about them.”

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

20-22. The Buckeyes will host Towson (Md.) Concordia Prep four-star defensive lineman Ernest Willor Jr. for an official visit in December.

Willor is the No. 115 overall prospect and No. 18 defensive lineman in the class, and he will visit Ohio State from Dec. 8-10. This is in addition to a visit to Wisconsin from Dec. 1-3 and Maryland from Dec. 15-17.

"I'm looking for a place where I'm going to get developed physically and mentally for the next level," he told 247Sports. "And a place that will give me a shot at playing now."

"I feel I am more of a four-down type of guy. I'm looking at playing inside and outside, covering a little bit. Doing a little bit of everything. Not just, 'OK, I am only a defensive lineman. I am only a pass rusher.'"

Ohio State also continues to pursue Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman Amaris Williams (6-3, 270), who is committed to Florida, and Goodyear (Ariz.) Desert Edge four-star defensive end De-shawn Warner (6-4, 225), who is committed to Kansas.

Former OL Pledge Nave Commits To Kentucky

Toledo Central Catholic three-star offensive lineman Marc Nave (6-5, 320), who was formerly committed to Ohio State, announced his pledge to Kentucky on Nov. 16.

"Coach (Vince) Marrow and (offensive

line) Coach (Zach) Yenser are the people that have sold me the most with it," Nave told 247Sports. "Coach Yenser is a former NFL offensive line coach, and he develops guys."

Nave is the No. 650 overall prospect and No. 42 interior lineman in the class, and he held additional offers from Auburn, Cincinnati, Georgia, Indiana, Louisville, Missouri, Pittsburgh, Purdue and Toledo, among others. He originally committed to Ohio State in March but announced in September that he was leaving the Buckeyes' class.

Ohio State has not been able to find a replacement in the class since, with only New Palestine, Ind., four-star Ian Moore (6-5, 295) and four-stars Devontae (6-5, 297) and Deontae (6-6, 280) Armstrong from Lakewood St. Edward committed to the Buckeyes.

2025 CB Brew Has OSU Among Finalists

In addition to visiting Ohio State on Nov. 18, Brew offered up some further good news for the Buckeyes when he included them among his top 10 schools on Nov. 16.

Ohio State was included along with Florida, Florida State, Michigan, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State, TCU, Texas and Texas A&M. Brew is the No. 21 overall prospect and fourth-ranked cornerback in the class.

While Brew plays high school football

now in Texas, he is originally from Ohio. He is also an Ohio State legacy as his mother, Donica Merriman, is a former track athlete at Ohio State and is in the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame.

Ohio State is already off to a strong start recruiting the secondary in 2025, as the Buckeyes appear in prime position to land Houston North Shore five-star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170), who is set to announce his commitment on Jan. 6, 2024, at the All-American Bowl.

DL Burgess Set To Announce On Jan. 6

Sanchez will not be the only Buckeye target announcing at the All-American Bowl. Burgess – who was on campus for Ohio State's win over Minnesota – is also set to announce his college of choice on Jan. 6.

Burgess is the No. 148 overall prospect and No. 18 defensive lineman in the class, and he has yet to whittle down his list of scholarship offers.

"I know Notre Dame is up there for sure," his father, Christopher Burgess Sr., told 247Sports. "He has a soft spot for Larry Johnson at Ohio State. Michigan is up there as well. There are quite a few schools he's interested in. The schools pushing hard are Notre Dame, Ohio State and LSU just came swooping in."

Ohio State's hosting of Burgess for Minnesota is not the last time the Buckeyes will see him this season. He will be in Ann Arbor on Nov. 25 when Michigan hosts Ohio State.

OSU Offers Prospects McFadden, Hicks

Ohio State sent out a pair of offers in recent weeks to Upper Marlboro (Md.) Riverdale Baptist three-star offensive lineman Jayvon McFadden (6-3, 270) in 2025 and Lilburn (Ga.) Parkview five-star safety Zelus Hicks (6-2, 180) in 2026.

McFadden is the No. 351 overall prospect and No. 18 interior lineman in his class. He holds additional offers from Boston College, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Michigan State, Ole Miss, Oregon and Penn State, among others. He was in attendance for Ohio State's win over Michigan State, during which he was offered by offensive line coach Justin Frye.

"Coach Frye offered me and let me know that I'm a priority for him and he wants me there and nowhere else," McFadden told 247Sports. "He wants to develop me, and that's what I'm looking for in a school, (which one) is going to make me the best man on and off the field."

Hicks was also in attendance for Michigan State, during which he was offered. He is the No. 32 overall prospect and third-ranked safety in the class.

WR Watkins Backs Off From Colorado

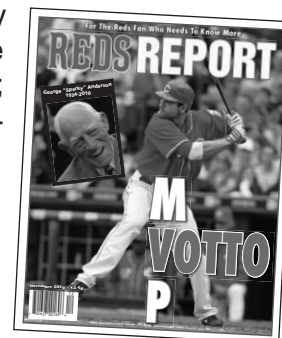
Naples (Fla.) First Baptist Academy four-star wide receiver Winston Watkins Jr. (5-10, 172), a 2025 prospect, continued his winding recruitment on Nov. 12 by an-

Continued On Page 36

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Running Backs Remain Priority In 2025 Class

Continued From Page 35

nouncing his decommitment from Colorado.

Watkins had been committed to the Buffaloes since last December. Prior to his pledge to Colorado, Watkins had been committed to Texas A&M, but he will now look for a third team in his recruitment. In announcing his decommitment, Watkins said that Colorado will remain among his top schools, but he will not commit to a school until he can sign next December.

He is the No. 74 overall prospect and No. 13 wide receiver in the class. He was offered by Ohio State after camping with the Buckeyes in June of 2022. He caught 25 passes for 393 yards and 10 touchdowns as a sophomore at IMG Academy, and as a junior at First Baptist, he appeared in five games with 38 catches for 804 yards and nine touchdowns.

OSU Leading For 2025 RB Louis

Things appear to be heating up between Ohio State and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage four-star running back Byron Louis (5-10, 180), who is coming off his second visit for a game this season when he was in town for the 38-3 win over Michigan State on Nov. 11.

Louis also attended Ohio State's win over Penn State, and camped in Colum-

bus over the summer, standing out among an impressive group of running backs on hand.

"That atmosphere was amazing and I loved it," he told 247Sports of his Nov. 11 visit. "What impressed me the most was how involved the fans were throughout the whole game."

Louis is the No. 190 overall prospect and No. 18 running back in the class, and he holds additional offers from Auburn, Colorado, Florida State, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Ole Miss, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Tennessee, Texas A&M and USC, among others.

Ohio State is pursuing a strong collection of running backs in 2025, including Humble (Texas) Atascocita four-star Tory Blaylock (5-11, 175), Cleveland Heights four-star Marquise Davis (6-0, 190), Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star Jordon Davison (5-11, 203) and Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph four-star Bo Jackson (6-1, 190) in addition to Louis.

"I think (Ohio State's chances of getting Louis) are really good," Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Bill Greene told BSB. "I think the question there is not so much their chances of getting him, but it's will they take him?"

"They are in on some big-time running backs in that 2025 class. We saw a bunch of them in camp last summer. Blaylock was there. Davis and Jackson were there. Davi-

son is definitely in the mix, so there are a bunch of guys there. I think Louis probably would commit to Ohio State today. If they push for a commitment, he would do it."

In nine games this season, Louis ran for 793 yards and 11 touchdowns on 97 carries, averaging 8.2 yards per attempt with a long of 73 yards.

"Louis is not the biggest kid in the world, but he has great vision," Greene said. "He knows how to gain yards. He knows where to go with the football. He can cut on a dime, he has good speed. He is a smaller back, but he's physical, he'll run hard. He can catch the ball, he can block. He can do a lot of things."

Semifinals On Deck For OHSAA Playoffs

After four weeks of grueling competition, the number of participants in the Ohio High School Athletic Association playoffs has been whittled down from 448 teams to just 28 left in the hunt for a state championship in their respective divisions.

A handful of teams featuring either Ohio State commitments or targets moved on to their division semifinals, while others saw their seasons come to an end. Here's a recap of all the action from the quarterfinals played on Nov. 17.

Division I, Region 1 – No. 6 Medina (10-4) vs. No. 1 Lakewood St. Edward (12-1): The Armstrong brothers, both

pledged to Ohio State's 2024 recruiting class, helped lead St. Edward to another big win, coming away with a 42-7 victory over Medina.

The Eagles totaled 470 yards of offense, with 341 coming on the ground. Through four playoff games, St. Edward has outscored the competition 160-24.

It moves on to face No. 2 Hilliard Bradley (13-1), which won Region 3 with a 35-28 win over No. 4 Upper Arlington in double overtime.

Division I, Region 2 – No. 12 Springfield (9-5) vs. No. 6 Dublin Coffman (10-4): An unbelievable playoff run continued for Springfield against Dublin Coffman, as the Wildcats advanced to the Division I final four with a 21-14 win.

The Wildcats – led by four-star cornerback and Ohio State pledge Aaron Scott (6-2, 190) – trailed 14-7 at the half, but after tying the game up, running back Bay Bay Norman ran in a score from 20 yards out to give Springfield the final lead with 4:23 left in the game.

The run by Springfield has been even more impressive considering the Wildcats were at one point just 1-5 on the season. But Springfield has rattled off wins in seven of the team's last eight games, and has taken down teams seeded Nos. 6, 5, 4 and 1 in the process.

The Wildcats' stunning run will continue into the semifinals, where it will face

ASK AN ANALYST With BuckeyeScoop's Bill Greene

There has seemingly been concern – at least from fans – about a potential flip from Opa Locka (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 198) since he committed to Ohio State. Do you find any of these fears to be founded with about a month to go until the early signing period?

"If (Brian) Hartline is still at Ohio State (next year), I don't see him flipping. After that Michigan game, there are going to be more firings coming, and I think he's going to get named for a lot of head coaching jobs. Now, whether he'll take them or not, who knows? But I think his name is going to be a hot name. He's already interviewed with Cincinnati for that opening (last year) and didn't get it.

"Florida State has backed up the Brinks truck. I don't know the numbers, but I know it's significant. But he really wants to come to Ohio State. He's following the Marvin Harrison Jr. career. I think there are comparisons that can be made between those two guys. They're both bigger, brute-type receivers.

"Florida State hasn't had a wide receiver drafted in the first round in forever. I mean, they're good, so we'll see. But how much money can Florida State realistically offer? He's a wide receiver, he's not a quarterback, so how much are they going to offer him compared to what the NIL opportunities are playing for Ohio State?

"I think Hartline is the bigger deal, to me, than the NIL. But both factors are there. If I had to put a bet in today, I'm going to say he's going to sign with Ohio State."

Speaking of those flips, Ohio State is continuing to pursue Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman and Florida commit Amaris Williams (6-3, 270), who is committed to Florida, and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star wide receiver Chance Robinson (6-2, 190), who is committed to Miami (Fla.). How do you view Ohio State's chances here, and are there

any potential flips on the radar?

"I've thought for the past couple of weeks that they are going to get Amaris Williams, and then they have some other offensive linemen who they are looking to flip. We'll see how that goes. They have Bay City, Texas, four-star defensive lineman and Nebraska commit Carlon Jones (6-3, 270) coming in for an official visit (against Minnesota). I think they know that they're getting Amaris Williams, and then it's a question of probably only needing one more defensive lineman. They have four-star defensive lineman Ernest Willor Jr. (6-3, 255) visiting (in December). They're chasing Goodyear (Ariz.) Desert Edge edge rusher and Kansas commit Deshawn Warner (6-4, 225), and they can get him if they want him. I think they are going to get Amaris Williams, and then I think they get one of Jones, Willor and Warner. That would complete the defensive lineman recruiting.

"Ohio State would be better off just bringing in three wide receivers this year, but Hartline knows way more than I know. If you bring in four wide receivers and Chance Robinson is one of them – he's clearly the fourth guy. You hate to say it, but it almost guarantees that he's going to end up in the portal. I mean, they all aren't going to play, and we've seen wide receivers transfer out recently. There's just a ton of receivers there, they have a million of them, and they're all good. But you can't play them all.

"Jeremiah Smith is a superstar for sure. New Haven, Ind. five-star wide receiver Mylan Graham (6-1, 170) is really good. St. Louis Christian Brothers College four-star wide receiver Jeremiah McClellan (6-0, 190) can play. If you bring in Chance Robinson – I like Chance, he's a good player – I don't think he's better than those three. Can they get him? I think they can. But it's up to Chance. If he goes to Miami, he has a clear path to the field. You come to Ohio State to play wide receiver, you better be really, really good."

Do you see any other position groups that Ohio

State could fill out with potential flips in this year's class?

"I don't know if desperation is the right word, it's probably not the right word, but offensive line recruiting has not gone well. New Palestine, Ind., four-star interior offensive lineman Ian Moore (6-5, 295) is good. Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward four-star offensive linemen Devontae (6-5, 296) and Deontae (6-6, 280) Armstrong might be good, but they're projects. And Ohio State has taken a lot of projects lately, so that offensive line really needs to be addressed. They got beat on Santa Ana, Calif., five-star offensive tackle and Texas commit Brandon Baker (6-5, 285). Are they going to get Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy offensive tackle Jordan Seaton (6-5, 287)? I don't think so. And now they're chasing Coopersville, Mich., three-star interior offensive lineman and Northwestern commit Gabe VanSickle (6-5, 283). Is that someone I would chase? No. I don't see anything special there at all.

"I think there are in-state kids that are just as good as Gabe Vansickle. He's just a guy. He's committed to Northwestern for a reason. He's not committed to Georgia or Alabama. You can't have an offensive line class with Ian Moore, the Armstrong kids and Gabe VanSickle. You just can't. But that might be what they end up with.

"Offensive line recruiting is just as important, if not more important, than any other position than quarterback. I mean, it's huge. You can't get all these Cadillac skill guys and then surround them with three-star offensive linemen that you're just flipping a coin on and hoping they're good. They fired Greg Studrawa for a reason, and I don't see anything different so far out of Justin Frye. It's the same type of recruiting, and eventually it catches up with you. That's the one position group that needs attention."

No. 5 Cincinnati Moeller (10-4), which came out on top in Region 4.

Division I, Region 4 – No. 5 Cincinnati Moeller (10-4) vs. No. 3 West Chester Lakota West (11-3): Speaking of Region 4, Lakota West and four-star tight end Luka Gilbert (6-8, 233) – a target of Ohio State in 2025 – saw their season come to an end courtesy of Moeller, when the Crusaders delivered a 22-0 blanking of the Firebirds.

Lakota West was unable to get anything going on offense, while Moeller was led by four-star running back Jordan Marshall (5-11, 193), who is committed to Michigan and finished with 101 yards and a touchdown on the ground.

Division II, Region 5 – No. 2 Cuyahoga Falls Walsh Jesuit (12-2) vs. No. 1 Akron Hoban (12-1): Hoban, led by linebacker Eli Lee (6-3, 215), a 2025 pledge to Ohio State, and two 2026 targets in offensive tackle Sam Greer (6-8, 290) and cornerback Elbert Hill IV (5-10, 160), cruised to a 30-6 win over Walsh Jesuit in the quarterfinals.

Hoban led 14-0 at the half before adding two touchdowns and a safety in the second half. Hoban's playoff run will continue against No. 1 Avon (14-0), which came out on top in Region 6 and remains undefeated this season.

Division II, Region 8 – No. 3 Cincinnati Withrow (12-2) vs. No. 1 Cincinnati Anderson (13-1): Five-star wide receiver and Ohio State commitment Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 185) saw his sophomore season come to an end when Withrow fell 49-28 to Anderson.

Anderson jumped on Withrow from the start, going up 21-7 after the first quarter and leading 35-21 going into the half. Anderson outgained Withrow – which had allowed just 6.0 points per game – 523-399 in the win.

Division III, Region 11 – No. 7 Bellefontaine (11-3) vs. No. 1 Columbus Bishop Watterson (13-1): The junior season for Bellefontaine four-star quarterback and Ohio State pledge Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 210) came to an end, as the Chieftains suffered a 19-13 loss to Columbus Watter-

son. Bellefontaine trailed 6-0 at the half but tied the game at 13 entering the final frame before Watterson added the final score.

Division IV, Region 14 – No. 2 Cleveland Glenville (11-2) vs. No. 1 Sandusky Perkins (12-1): A pair of four-star Ohio State pledges – cornerback Bryce West (5-11, 177) and tight end Damarion Witten (6-4, 215) – helped lead Glenville to a 36-26 win over top-ranked Sandusky Perkins to move on to the state semifinals.

Glenville was led in the win by running back D'Shawntae Jones, who ran for 264 yards and two touchdowns. Witten also added a 32-yard reception in the second half that led to an early fourth-quarter touchdown that put the Tarblooders up for good.

Glenville's search for a second state title in as many seasons will have to go through No. 1 Canton South (15-0), which won Region 13.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Esko (Minn.) Lincoln Secondary four-star safety Koi Perich (6-1, 195), who is committed to Minnesota, told 247Sports that he plans to take a visit to Ohio State in December before of the early signing period.

- A potential wrinkle has emerged in Ohio State's pursuit of Coopersville, Mich., three-star offensive lineman Gabe VanSickle (6-5, 283). Northwestern announced on Nov. 16 that interim head coach David Braun had been promoted to full-time head coach, and further reports indicated that the team plans to retain offensive line coach Kurt Anderson, who has been at the school since 2018, so the stability for the Wildcats could factor into VanSickle's decision.

- Ohio State landed among the top 10 schools for Pittsburg, Calif., four-star safety Jadyn Hudson (6-2, 175), a 2025 prospect, on Nov. 16. The Buckeyes were included along with Georgia, LSU, Miami, Michigan, Oregon, Penn State, Tennessee, USC and Washington.

- Michigan added a pledge on Nov. 14

OHSAA GAMES TO WATCH, SEMIFINALS

No. 1 Lakewood St. Edward (12-1) vs. No. 2 Hilliard Bradley (13-1)

No. 1 Akron Hoban (12-1) vs. No. 1 Avon (14-0)

No. 2 Cleveland Glenville (11-2) vs. No. 1 Canton South (15-0)

No. 12 Springfield (9-5) vs. No. 5 Cincinnati Moeller (10-4)

from Fort Myers (Fla.) Bishop Verot four-star quarterback Carter Smith (6-3, 180), who is the No. 213 overall prospect and No. 14 quarterback in 2025. While it does not preclude the Wolverines from continuing to recruit quarterbacks in the class, it likely does not bode well for Michigan landing Belleville, Mich., five-star Bryce Underwood (6-4, 205), who is the top-ranked signal caller in the class.

- Penn State added a commitment on Nov. 14 from Boulder (Colo.) Fairview three-star quarterback Bekkem Kritza (6-

5, 182), a 2025 prospect. He is the No. 406 overall recruit and No. 30 quarterback in the class.

- Wisconsin picked up a pledge on Nov. 12 from Wautoma, Wis., three-star offensive tackle Michael Roeske (6-7, 260), a 2025 prospect. He is just the third commitment in head coach Luke Fickell's class.

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Gayle Taking Game To Another Level This Season

During the offseason, Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann frequently called on sophomore guard Roddy Gayle Jr. to expand his game and emerge as a reliable scoring option for his team entering his second year. This is a challenge that Gayle has met – and maybe even exceeded – to start the season.

COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

Gayle has continued his positive momentum from last year's breakout performance in the Big Ten tournament by emerging as one of Ohio State's most efficient all-around players so far this year. In his first three games, he has averaged 15.3 points per game – second on the team behind Bruce Thornton's 16.3 points – on a crisp 51.4 percent shooting.

Gayle's progression as the second-most reliable scorer on the team was most evident in Ohio State's 76-52 victory over Merrimack on Nov. 15. With the Buckeyes' offense sputtering against the Warriors' formidable zone defense in the first half – and Thornton unable to get much going – Ohio State turned to Gayle to lead the team out of the early funk, and he kept the Buckeyes above water with 13 first-half points on 5-of-6 shooting, including two straight three-point makes to start the game.

"The threes that I hit early on opened it up for everybody else," Gayle said. "I felt like they had to extend a little bit more, which opened a lot more gaps and high-post touches."

Gayle's influence was also felt in the second half, when he helped spark separate 10-0 and 16-0 runs with several contested layups and another three-point make. These efforts put a potential upset bid out of reach

and allowed him to tie his career high with 20 points.

Gayle's big-time performance against the Warriors does not tell the full story of the impact he has made so far this season, however. The sophomore has also made a concerted effort to influence the game in more ways than just his scoring. He has accounted for 6.3 rebounds and 4.7 assists per contest, which rank second and first on the team.

Gayle's emergence as an all-around player is a product of the amount of confidence and comfort he has gained in his second year with the Buckeyes.

"Compared to last year, the game has slowed down tremendously," he said. "Coming in as a freshman and playing against such elite-level talent, those gaps close a lot faster than what you think. Thanks to Coach Holtmann and Coach (Jake) Diebler.

"They just put me in those positions to be able to fail (as a freshman). I think that I've learned from my mistakes, so now is where my game is beginning to thrive."

Battle Gaining Comfort In First Season With Buckeyes

In his first two games at Ohio State, it appeared as if fifth-year forward and Minnesota transfer Jamison Battle was struggling to find his sea legs.

Battle's Buckeye debut against Oakland on Nov. 6 did not go as planned. He shot just 3 of 8 from the field and 2 of 7 from three, two areas of his game that were viewed as strengths heading into the season. His second game for the Scarlet and Gray against Texas A&M on Nov. 10 was also a letdown, when he struggled to stay on the floor due to foul trouble and logged just 10 points in 23 minutes of action.

The tide seemed to shift for the veteran Battle in his third game against Merrimack, however, particularly in the second half. While he shot just 1 of 6 from the field with four points and two turnovers in the game's



SONNY BROCKWAY

BATTLING BUCKEYE — Ohio State forward Jamison Battle, who transferred from Minnesota this past offseason, is beginning to find his groove with the Buckeyes.

first 20 minutes, Battle flipped a switch after halftime with nine second-half points on an efficient 3-of-6 shooting.

Perhaps more importantly, Battle drained two three-point attempts in the second half that seemed to provide the Buckeyes a lift on offense en route to the 24-point win. This was a strong finish to the game that Holtmann said was a positive development for his fifth-year transfer as he continues to become more comfortable on his new team.

"That was great to see," Holtmann said. "I think once he made one (three-pointer), he was aggressive with it. Transfers, they're not like freshmen in terms of their learning curve, but they are like freshmen in terms of everything is new. The expectations are different than their previous place, and it takes them a little bit (to get comfortable). But I'm confident that he'll just get better and better as the year goes on."

Battle's second-half successes against the Warriors came as no surprise to his teammates. Sophomore guard Evan Mahaffey said after the game that he was anticipating Battle to break out and shoot well from beyond the arc sooner rather than later because he has shown the ability to get himself open and knock down shots at a consistent rate during practice.

"Jamison is a bucket, honestly," Mahaffey said. "He's going to get to his spots. That's one thing that I've really seen with him, and I'm learning from him, for sure. That's an

older guy who's played in this league for a couple of years and been in college for a while. You really see how comfortable he is with getting to where he wants to get and being able to read a defense as well, knowing where guys are going to fly at him, and knowing that he's a really good scorer.

"People are going to emphasize getting him off of his spot. But him still getting to his areas and being able to rise up and make shots, it's impressive."

Aside from his improving shooting and play-making, Battle's teammates have also seen him grow as a leader as his time at Ohio State progresses. Gayle said Battle has provided the team with a strong veteran presence so far this season, which can prove to be a valuable asset on a roster filled with young and inexperienced talent.

"Jamison has taken an exceptional turn with his leadership and his voice," Gayle said. "He's been able to teach us younger guys what this league has been about and what the expectations are to win. I appreciate Jamison being on our team and being a leader for us."

Holtmann Looking For Okpara To Reach Full Potential

Standing at an intimidating 6-11, sophomore center Felix Okpara possesses the physical tools to emerge as a dominant inside presence for Ohio State this season. According to Holtmann, however, the Buckeye big man has to clean up some aspects



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OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

of his game that are holding him back from reaching that full potential.

Speaking with the media on Nov. 14, Holtmann said Okpara needs to learn how to play without fouling if he wants to make an impact in the paint this year, an issue he said has prevented his center from staying on the floor.

Okpara started each of the first three games for the Buckeyes but failed to log more than 22 minutes in any of those contests, committing eight personal fouls in the process, and against Merrimack, he played 24 minutes but committed four fouls. This trend has forced Okpara to hand over significant playing time to forward Zed Key at the five position. Key has logged most of the minutes during high-pressure situations and at the end of games.

Holtmann attributed Okpara's inability to stay out of trouble to a lack of discipline on the court, which he added is especially evident when he attempts to defend away from the ball.

"He needs to have better awareness off the ball," Holtmann said. "He's gotten face-cut a couple of times, and then when he reacted and chunked the guy, he got a foul called. It's just better awareness, having a better stance."

"There's discipline required there. But some of his fouls have come off offensive rebound attempts, which we're OK with living with one or two of those. The ones we have to eliminate are the ones where he's out of a stance off the ball."

While Holtmann did laud Okpara's ability to be the "second off the floor," which allows him to have exceptional timing on his blocked shots, he also pointed to the center's rebounding efforts – just eight boards in three games – as something that has held him back, an issue that should not be as prevalent given his size.

"He has to rebound better," Holtmann said. "Far better than what he has been doing, and he knows that. He's more capable than what he's shown at rebounding the ball. That's an area where he has to take another major step."

Okpara committed two fouls against Merrimack and finished the game with only four points in just 12 minutes, with Key once again relieving the sophomore for most of the second half. Despite the lack of playing time and harsh criticism, however, Holtmann remained confident that Okpara could turn it around and reach his full capacity as the season progresses.

"Felix, he's such a special kid," Holtmann said. "He didn't play at the end of the game, but he was the loudest guy on the bench. He was literally calling out our defensive calls, challenging our guys. He was an unbelievable teammate to Zed, talking to him the whole time. It was a great example of what a great teammate looks like. He's going to be a really, really good player. His time will come."

Buckeyes Draw Record-Low Attendance Against Merrimack

History was made inside Value City Arena during Ohio State's win over Merrimack, but it was a record that the basketball program may not want to replicate again.

The announced crowd of 7,929 on Nov. 15 marked the lowest attendance ever for an Ohio State men's basketball regular-season game inside Value City Arena, as well as

the first time the Buckeyes have had fewer than 8,000 fans attend in the venue's 25-year history.

The sparse crowd may have been attributed to the game not being included in the Ohio State student season-ticket package, which offers 10 games for \$110. The only nonconference game offered on the student season ticket package was Ohio State's Nov. 10 game against Texas A&M, which drew 12,704 fans, while it also includes all nine Big Ten home games on the schedule. The Buckeyes' game against Merrimack was offered as an "option game," for students, however, where they could purchase a single-game ticket for \$11.

The record-low attendance comes after a disappointing 2022-23 season inside Value City Arena when the Buckeyes dropped six of their nine Big Ten home games, including four straight home conference losses from Feb. 2-26. This allowed Ohio State to finish the regular season with an average attendance of 12,181, a number that ranked ninth in the Big Ten and fell short of the venue's average mark of 13,276 fans in the 2021-22 season.

Liddell Assigned To Pelicans' G-League Squad

The New Orleans Pelicans announced on Nov. 9 that former Ohio State forward E.J. Liddell had been assigned to the Birmingham Squadron, the team's NBA G-League affiliate.

Liddell, who was drafted by the franchise with the 41st overall pick in the 2022 NBA draft after a decorated three-year career at Ohio State (2019-22), was off to a slow start with the Pelicans this season. He appeared in just three of New Orleans' first eight games and averaged 1.3 points and 0.7 rebounds in 3.0 minutes per contest.

Liddell's two-year NBA career has been a rocky one. Just 18 days after being selected by New Orleans on June 23, 2022, he suffered a torn ACL in his right knee during an NBA Summer League game, an injury that forced him to undergo reconstructive surgery on July 26, 2022, and miss his entire rookie season.

Liddell made his return to the court nearly one year later on July 7 in an NBA Summer League game against the Minnesota Timberwolves and played four games for the franchise in Las Vegas that month, averaging 12.8 points and three total rebounds in 21.3 minutes per game.

It was a return to form that impressed Pelicans brass, who signed him to a restructured three-year, \$6.2 million deal on July 6. Liddell had originally signed a two-way agreement with the franchise on Oct. 16, 2022.

"I'm so thankful, just to the program for trusting in me and sticking with me throughout this whole past year," Liddell said on July 7. "I come in and handle my business every day, I do the right things, and I'm happy they see that. I'm excited to be a part of this program, and I want to help this team for many years down the road."

In his first three games with the Squadron, Liddell logged 14.7 points per game on 50.0 percent shooting while also collecting 1.0 assists, 1.3 blocks and a team-high 9.3 rebounds per contest.



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OSU Uses Big Second Half To Defeat Merrimack

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State returned to the win column on Nov. 15, overcoming a poor display of shooting and utilizing a strong second half to fend off Merrimack 76-52 in front of 7,929 fans, which is the fewest ever for a men's basketball game at Value City Arena.

The Buckeyes (2-1) had no problems early on against Merrimack's vaunted zone defense, scoring on their first two possessions of the game on back-to-back three-point makes from sophomore guard Roddy Gayle Jr. to go up 6-0 just 1:33 into the game. But the remainder of the half told a different story as Ohio State struggled to put the ball in the net throughout the next 18 minutes of play, connecting on just seven of its next 26 shots (26.9 percent).

After going up 23-11 with 8:19 left, the Buckeyes ceded a 12-4 run to Merrimack (2-2) that cut the deficit to just 27-23, a stretch that included three turnovers and two missed shots by Ohio State. But it was able to maintain the lead due to the team's success at the charity stripe.

Thanks to 14 first-half personal fouls from Merrimack, the Buckeyes earned a trip to the foul-line 20 times and connected on 15 of those attempts, both numbers exceeding the team's 10 makes in 17 tries for the entire game against Texas A&M on Nov. 10.

Ohio State did get some offensive production away from the free-throw line in the first half, though. That came mostly from Gayle, who recorded 13 of the team's 35 first-half points on 5-of-6 shooting from the field to put the Buckeyes up 35-29 going into the half.

"We got into a pretty good rhythm earlier in the first half," sophomore guard Evan Mahaffey said. "I know our shots just weren't falling most of the time, so that made it pretty hard because it can mess with your head a little bit. But I felt like we stayed consistent with our attack. We were just able to make those adjustments and stick with our game plan, even if shots weren't falling, because we were getting really good shots."

Merrimack trimmed the deficit to 35-31 with 19:26 left to start the second half on a made layup from guard Bryan Etumnu. But momentum would soon turn back in the Buckeyes' favor after back-to-back makes from Gayle and Mahaffey, which sparked an 8-0 run from the sophomore



SONNY BROCKWAY

GOING UP — Ohio State sophomore guard Roddy Gayle Jr. tied a career high with 20 points in the Buckeyes' 76-52 win over Merrimack on Nov. 15.

guards that brought the lead back up to 43-31 at the 14:03 mark.

While the Warriors attempted to mount a comeback, cutting the lead to 49-43 with 9:24 remaining, Ohio State buckled down again with another run to create some added separation. This time, the Buckeyes embarked on an extended 16-0 run sparked by a quartet of three-point makes from Jamison Battle (2), Gayle and Bruce Thornton to make it 65-43 with 5:32 left to play.

The run provided the Buckeyes with the cushion they needed to put the game away. Holding the Warriors to just 33.3 percent (8 of 24) shooting in the second half and, conversely, shooting an improved 54.8 percent (17 of 31) from the field on offense, Ohio State increased its lead to as many 27 points to cruise to its second win of the season.

"It was a good final stretch there in the second half for our guys," head coach Chris Holtmann said. "I thought they did a great job kind of breaking free. Their

Ohio State 76, Merrimack 52								
Nov. 15, 2023 Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio								
		1	2	F				
Merrimack (2-2)		29	23	52				
Ohio State (2-1)		35	41	76				
Merrimack	Total	FG	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.	
Diallo	22	0-1	3-4	1-0	1	5	3	
Etumnu	23	5-9	0-0	0-4	1	3	11	
Clark	38	4-11	0-0	0-1	1	1	8	
Stinson	30	1-8	0-0	0-5	5	5	3	
Savage	35	7-13	0-0	0-2	0	3	20	
O'Connell	17	2-6	0-1	0-7	0	1	4	
McKoy	24	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	3	0	
Plintauskas	11	1-1	0-0	1-0	0	1	3	
Totals	200	20-50	3-5	2-20	8	22	52	
Percentages: FG: 40.0%. FT: 60.0%. Three-point field goals: 9-25 (Savage 6-9, Plintauskas 1-1, Stinson 1-4, Etumnu 1-3, O'Connell 0-4, Clark 0-2, Diallo 0-1, McKoy 0-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 5 (O'Connell 3, Etumnu 2). Turnovers: 19 (Clark 4, Etumnu 3, O'Connell 3, Diallo 2, Stinson 2, Savage 2, Plintauskas 2, Team). Steals: 6 (Savage 2, Stinson 2, Clark, Etumnu).								
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.	
Battle	33	4-12	3-4	1-3	1	1	13	
Okpara	12	2-4	0-0	2-2	0	2	4	
Gayle Jr.	34	8-12	1-3	2-3	3	0	20	
Thornton	29	2-6	3-4	0-2	6	0	8	
Mahaffey	18	2-6	2-2	2-2	2	3	6	
Key	26	3-8	5-8	6-6	0	1	11	
Middleton	18	1-4	2-2	0-2	0	0	5	
Bonner	17	2-3	0-0	0-5	2	0	5	
Royal	6	2-4	0-0	1-0	1	1	4	
Etzler	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	
Hardman	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	
Parks	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0	0	
Totals	200	26-59	16-23	14-25	16	22	76	
Percentages: FG: 44.1%. FT: 16-23%. Three-point field goals: 8-14 (Gayle 3-4, Battle 2-4, Thornton 1-2, Middleton 1-2, Bonner 1-1, Mahaffey 0-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 2. (Okpara, Key). Turnovers: 13 (Gayle 3, Battle 3, Royal 3, Thornton, Okpara, Key, Team). Steals: 9 (Mahaffey 3, Thornton 2, Gayle, Bonner, Key, Etzler). Officials: Smith, Kimble, O'Brien. Attendance: 7,929								

zone obviously bothered us a little bit. We played some long defensive possessions. They were playing pretty deliberate on offense. But it was good to see those guys make a few shots and break it open."

The Buckeyes were led in the win by Gayle, who tied a career high with 20 points on an efficient 8-of-12 shooting from the field and 3-of-4 shooting from three. Battle also reached double figures with 13 points, while Zed Key recorded his first double-double of the season with 11 points and a game-high 12 rebounds, helping the Buckeyes gain a 42-25 advantage of the boards. Thornton dished out six assists and had a pair of steals.

The Warriors were led in the loss by Devon Savage and Etumnu, who recorded 20 and 11 points, respectively.




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FOOTBALL (11-0, 8-0)

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

Oct. 7 MARYLAND, W 37-17; **14** at Purdue, W 41-7; **21** PENN STATE, W 20-12; **28** at Wisconsin, W 24-10.

Nov. 4 at Rutgers, W 35-16; **11** MICHIGAN STATE, W 38-3; **18** MINNESOTA, W 37-3; **25** at Michigan.

FOOTBALL 2024

Aug. 31 SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

Sept. 7 WESTERN MICHIGAN; **21** MARSHALL; **28** at Michigan State.

Oct. 5 IOWA; **12** at Oregon; **26** NEBRASKA.

Nov. 2 at Penn State; **9** PURDUE; **16** at Northwestern; **23** INDIANA; **30** MICHIGAN.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (3-1)

Oct. 22 at Dayton (Exh.), W 78-70

Nov. 6 OAKLAND, W 79-73; **10** TEXAS A&M, L 73-66; **15** MERRIMACK, W 76-52; **19** WESTERN MICHIGAN, W, 73-56; **24** Emerald Coast Classic at Niceville, Fla. vs. Alabama; **25** Emerald Coast Classic at Niceville, Fla. vs. Oregon/Santa Clara; **29** CENTRAL MICHIGAN

Dec. 3 MINNESOTA; **6** MIAMI (OHIO); **9** at Penn State; **16** CBS Sports Classic at Atlanta, Ga., vs. UCLA; **21** NEW ORLEANS; **30** West Virginia, Cleveland, Ohio

Jan. 3 RUTGERS; **6** at Indiana; **10** WISCONSIN; **15** at Michigan; **20** PENN STATE; **23** at Nebraska; **27** at Northwestern; **30** ILLINOIS

Feb. 2 at Iowa; **6** INDIANA; **10** MARYLAND; **13** at Wisconsin; **18** PURDUE; **22** at Minnesota; **25** at Michigan State; **29** NEBRASKA

March 3 MICHIGAN; **10** at Rutgers.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (2-1)

Nov. 6 Naismith Hall of Fame Series at Las Vegas vs. USC, L 83-74; **12** IUPUI, W 108-58; **16** BOSTON COLLEGE, W 88-66; **20** Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas vs. East Carolina; **22** Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas vs. Oklahoma State; **26** CORNELL.

Dec. 3 at Tennessee; **5** OHIO; **10** PENN STATE; **15** GRAND VALLEY STATE; **18** UCLA; **22** BELMONT; **30** at Michigan.

Jan. 5 at Northwestern; **11** RUTGERS; **14** MICHIGAN STATE; **17** at Maryland; **21** IOWA; **25** at Illinois; **28** at Purdue

Feb. 1 WISCONSIN; **4** INDIANA; **8** at Minnesota; **11** at Michigan State; **14** NEBRASKA; **22** at Penn State; **25** MARYLAND; **28** MICHIGAN.

March 3 at Iowa.

CROSS COUNTRY

Sept. 1 Wright State Mike Baumer Cross Country Classic at Dayton, OH, Men: 1st/15; Women: 1st/10; **9** Badger Classic at Wisconsin, Men 3rd/6; Women 5th/7; **29** Sean Earl Lakefront Invitational at Chicago, Ill., 13th/16.

Oct. 13 Arturo Barrios Invitational at College Station, Texas, Men 8th/39; Women 4th/41; **27** Big Ten Championships at Madison, Wis., Men 7th/12, Women 5th/14.

Nov. 10 NCAA Regional Championships at Madison, Wis. Men 15th/30, Women 5th/33.

FENCING

Oct. 1 OSU DUALS, Men: 5-0; Women: 5-0; **21-22** Garrett Open at University Park, Pa., NTS.

Nov. 4-5 Western Invitational at USAF Academy, Colo., Men: 4-1, Women 4-1; **19** ELITE INVITATIONAL, Men 4-2, Women 2-4.

Jan. 20 St. John's Invitational at Queens, N.Y.; **21** Philadelphia Invitational at Philadelphia.

Feb. 3-4 Northwestern Duals at Evanston, Ill.; **24-25** Central Collegiate Fencing Conference Championships.

FIELD HOCKEY (14-6, 4-4)

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

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

Oct. 1 Indiana, W 3-0; **6** Penn State, L 2-1; **8** Kent State, W 3-0; **13** RUTGERS, L 1-0 SO **15** MARYLAND, L 2-1; **22** BELLARMINE, W 7-0.

Nov. 2 Big Ten Tournament at Ann Arbor, Mich., vs. Penn State, W 4-3; **3** Big Ten Tournament at Ann Arbor, Mich., vs. Northwestern, L 3-1.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (3-5-3, 0-5-1)

Oct. 7 Mercyhurst, W 4-3; **13-14** LINDENWOOD, W 4-2; T 2-2; **20-21** Michigan, L 7-1; T 2-2 OT (SW); **27-28** Nebraska-Omaha, T 2-2 OT (SW) W 4-0.

Nov. 3-4 MICHIGAN STATE, L 6-0; L 6-4; **10-11** Notre Dame, L 4-1, L 3-0; **24-25** PRINCETON.

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

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

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

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

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (11-1, 10-0)

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

Oct. 13-14 Minnesota Duluth, W 5-0; W 2-0; **20-21** St. Thomas, W 6-2; W 7-1; **27-28** MINNESOTA, W 4-3 OT; W 6-5.

Nov. 3-4 Bemidji State, W 9-1; W 5-0; **17-18** WISCONSIN, W 3-0, W 2-1 OT; **24** ST. LAWRENCE, 6 p.m.; **25** ST. LAWRENCE, 3 p.m.

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

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

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

MEN'S SOCCER (6-6-6, 3-4-1)

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

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

Oct. 3 XAVIER T 0-0; **6** MICHIGAN, T 0-0; **10** Louisville, T 2-2; **15** Indiana, L 2-1; **20** WISCONSIN, L 1-0; **24** Michigan State, W 3-2; **29** MARYLAND, W 4-1.

Nov. 3 Big Ten Tournament Quarterfinals Vs. Michigan State, W 1-0; **8** Big Ten Tournament Semifinals vs. Penn State, T 1-1.

WOMEN'S SOCCER (9-8-2, 5-4-1)

Aug. 17 MIAMI (OHIO), W 3-0; **20** BUFFALO, L 2-1; **24** Memphis, L 6-1; **27** Montana, T 2-2; **31** OAKLAND, W 6-0.

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

Oct. 1 ILLINOIS, W 2-1; **8** Penn State, L, 2-1; **12** Minnesota, L 2-0; **15** Wisconsin, W 1-0; **19** RUTGERS, L 1-0; **22** MICHIGAN, W 4-1.

Nov. 11 NCAA Tournament at Pitt, L 6-0.

MEN'S SWIM & DIVE (2-0)

Oct. 28 VIRGINIA TECH, W 193.5-178.5.

Nov. 10 DENISON, W 186.0-103.0; **16-18** OHIO STATE FALL INVITATIONAL, 2nd; **29-Dec. 2** Toyota US Open at Greensboro, N.C.

Jan. 20 MICHIGAN, 12 p.m.; **26-27** Tim Welsh Classic at South Bend, Ind.

Feb. 2 PITTSBURGH, 3 p.m. **16-18** OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL; **28-March 2** BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIPS.

March 10 LAST CHANCE MEET; **13-16** Zone Championships at Louisville, Ky.; **14-16** CSCAA National Invitational at Ocala, Fla.; **27-30** NCAA Championships at Indianapolis.

WOMEN'S SWIM & DIVE (3-0)

Oct. 28 VIRGINIA TECH, W 226.0-135.0.

Nov. 3 AKRON, W 222.5-77.5; **10** DENISON, W 180.0-108.0; **16-18** OHIO STATE FALL INVITATIONAL, 1st; **29-Dec. 2** Toyota US Open at Greensboro, N.C.

Jan. 20 MICHIGAN, 12 p.m.; **26-27** Tim Welsh Classic at South Bend, Ind.

Feb. 2 PITTSBURGH, 3 p.m.; **16-18** OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL; **21-24** Big Ten Championships at West Lafayette, Ind.

March 3 LAST CHANCE MEET; **13-16** Zone Championships at Louisville, Ky.; **14-16** CSCAA National Invitational at Ocala, Fla.; **20-23** NCAA Championships at Athens, Ga.

MEN'S TENNIS

Sept. 18-24 COLUMBUS CHALLENGER, NTS. **30** ITA All-Amecian Championship at Tulsa, Okla., NTS.

Oct. 1-8 ITA All-Amecian Championship at Tulsa, Okla., NTS.; **19-23** ITA Midwest Regional Championship at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS; **23-29** Las Vegas Challenger at Las Vegas, NTS.

Nov. 1-5 ITA Fall National Championship

at San Diego, Calif., NTS; **1-5** Big Ten Singles & Doubles Championship at Madison, Wisc., NTS.

Jan. 27 VANDERBILT; **28** OREGON/BOISE STATE.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

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

Oct. 1 ITA All-Americans at Cary, N.C.. NTS; **12-16** ITA Midwest Regionals at East Lansing, Mich., NTS; **26-29** UT Home Invitational at Knoxville, Tenn., NTS.

Nov. 1-4 ITA Fall Championships at San Diego, Calif., NTS.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (10-17, 7-11)

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

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

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

Nov. 3 MINNESOTA, L 3-1; **4** INDIANA, W 3-1; **8** MICHIGAN STATE, W 3-0; **12** Maryland, L 3-0; **15** Illinois, L 3-2; **18** Minnesota, L 3-0; **24** PENN STATE, 7 p.m.; **25** RUTGERS, 7 p.m.

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Sheldon Surpasses 1,500 Career Points At OSU

Ohio State fifth-year guard Jacy Sheldon, with a three-pointer early in the second quarter of the Buckeyes' 88-66 win over Boston College on Nov. 16, reached 1,500 career points with the program.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

"It's special," Sheldon said. "I think more than anything, though, it shows how good this team is and how well we play together."

Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff, however, was a little more willing to offer up praise for the blossoming program great.

"She's an incredible player but an even better person," McGuff said. "She's been such a joy to have in our program, and she's represented herself, her family and us in such an incredible way. We'll have time for this at the end of the year, but it's hard to even say what she's meant because she means so much."

Sheldon is one of just 17 players in program history to reach 1,500 points and is the first since Kelsey Mitchell, who collected 3,402 points from 2015-18. Sheldon finished with 16 points in the win over Boston College, giving her 1,508 in her career.

At Sheldon's current average of 18.3 points per game, an attainable goal this

season would be to reach 2,000 points, which has been done by only seven players in team history. But Sheldon seems likely to, at minimum, finish among the team's top 10 all-time scorers, with just 245 points separating her and Kim Jordan (1977-80), who has 1,753 points, the 10th most in program history.

Vres Scores First Points In Win Against IUPUI

More than a year after arriving in Columbus after transferring from American University to Ohio State last summer, fifth-year senior forward Karla Vres finally got her moment in the 108-58 win over IUPUI on Nov. 12, scoring her first career points for the Scarlet and Gray.

Vres entered the game with 6:01 remaining, and after assisting a made basket by sophomore guard Kaia Henderson on the Buckeyes' ensuing possession, she connected on her first basket, connecting on a jumper with 3:42 remaining to make it 102-48.

"I felt great, amazing," she said. "It's something that obviously I've been working on for a long time, personally, and having the team there to support me to that extent was amazing, knowing that everybody wanted it and made it happen for me."

Vres added another basket later in the quarter, finishing with four points and an assist on 2-of-2 shooting in the win. Last season, she appeared in just nine games and tallied a total of 17:34 on the court, missing two attempts from the field.

Vres felt the team was particularly con-

nected in the win over the Jaguars, and that bond has helped her push through the last year.

"That's what carries us through tough losses, to get over them as quickly as we do and keep working, but also into wins like this," she said. "If we weren't all together today, there's no way we could beat anybody."

The crowd at Value City Arena was also happy to see Vres score, and her baskets garnered among the largest cheers in the game.

"She's a great kid, and I was happy to see her get those opportunities and be able to capitalize on it," McGuff said. "The team really likes her, and you see how excited they got when she was able to score a couple baskets."

Vres was not the only Buckeye to score her first career points. Freshman forward Faith Carson hit two free throws late in the fourth for her first points in scarlet and gray. She also added four rebounds and an assist in the win.

Three Buckeyes Named To Wooden Award Watch List

Ohio State guards Sheldon and Celeste Taylor, as well as sophomore forward Cotie McMahon, were named to the preseason watch list for the Wooden Award, given to the most outstanding player in women's college basketball, on Nov. 14.

They were three of 50 players named to the watch list, joined by the likes of UConn guard Paige Bueckers and Iowa guard Caitlin Clark, who won the award in both 2021 and last season. LSU has four players on the list, while Ohio State is one of three schools – along with UConn and UCLA – with three players included.

The watch list will be updated midseason and again later in the season before a ballot of 15 players is released ahead of the NCAA tournament, with a winner to be announced in April. McMahon, Sheldon and Taylor were also named to the Naismith Award preseason watch list.

Greene Not Expected Back In Short Term

Ohio State redshirt senior guard Madison Greene was initially expected to be back for the Buckeyes around mid-November after suffering a season-ending knee injury last year, but McGuff has pushed that timeline back a few weeks for Greene.

"I think Madison's (going to be ready) probably sometime the first or second week of December," he said after the win over Boston College.

Greene appeared in 12 games last season, averaging 10.9 points and 5.0 assists on 48.3 percent shooting, including a 56.0 percent clip from deep, before suffering a noncontact knee injury that forced her out for the remainder of the season. The injury came after Greene missed all of the 2021-22 season with another noncontact knee injury.

But should Greene return at some point in the next few weeks, it would be a welcome addition for Ohio State that has utilized a larger rotation at guard this season, and Greene would be sure to see plenty of



SONNY BROCKWAY

FIRST TIME — Ohio State forward Karla Vres, in her second season with the team, scored her first career points in the Buckeyes' 108-58 win over IUPUI on Nov. 12.

time on the court once she can play.

In addition to Greene, McGuff said that sophomore guard Kennedy Cambridge – who remains out with an undisclosed injury – will not be available when the Buckeyes travel to the Bahamas for the Pink Flamingo Championship from Nov. 21-23.

Ohio State Falls To No. 13 In AP Top 25

Following Ohio State's season-opening loss to USC, the Buckeyes – who opened the season at No. 7 in the country – fell to No. 13 in the AP top 25 released on Nov. 13.

Ohio State went as high as No. 2 last season after starting 19-0, but a series of losses dropped the Buckeyes to as low as No. 16 before finishing at No. 12 in the season's final poll.

The Buckeyes have ranked in every poll, though, dating back to Jan. 24, 2022, and the 29 consecutive rankings is the ninth-longest streak in the country. The leader at the top of the board is UConn, which has been ranked in 566 consecutive polls dating back to 1994.

Ohio State was joined in the most recent poll by No. 2 Iowa, No. 18 Indiana and No. 20 Maryland from the Big Ten. The Buckeyes also continue to have the makings of a significant nonconference match-up later this season, as Ohio State will host No. 3 UCLA on Dec. 18.



SONNY BROCKWAY

IN THE BOOKS — Ohio State fifth-year guard Jacy Sheldon surpassed 1,500 career points with the Buckeyes in their 88-66 win over Boston College on Nov. 16, just the 17th player in program history to reach that mark.

McMahon, Thierry Lead Buckeyes Past BC

By **BRADEN MOLES**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

No. 13 Ohio State (2-1) cruised to an 88-66 win over visiting Boston College (2-2) on Nov. 16 behind impressive performances from sophomore forward Cotie McMahon (24 points) and junior guard Taylor Thierry (18 points, eight rebounds).

They helped lead the Buckeyes in shooting 61.4 percent (35 of 57) from the field for the game – and 50.0 percent (6 of 12) from three – while forcing 20 turnovers by Boston College that resulted in 30 points for Ohio State in front of 4,523 fans at Value City Arena.

“We got off to a great start because our press was really effective,” head coach Kevin McGuff said. “We turned them over, got easy baskets and took them out of their rhythm.”

After McMahon opened the game with a basket, fifth-year guard Jacy Sheldon got off to a hot start, scoring off an impressive assist by senior forward Rebeka Mikulasikova, scoring again after Ohio State forced a turnover on the ensuing inbounds pass and then forcing a jump ball on defense. It was part of a 12-4 Buckeye run to begin the game, and after the run was broken up by a layup from forward Teya Sidberry, Ohio State took off yet again, utilizing a 10-0

stretch to go up 22-6 with 3:49 left in the first quarter.

Behind 11 points from McMahon, nine points from Thierry and six points from Sheldon, the Buckeyes finished the first frame with a 32-11 lead, shooting 76.5 percent in the first quarter while forcing the Eagles into nine turnovers.

“We wanted to come out and assert dominance from the start on the defensive end,” Sheldon said. “That’s always our main focus, but we carried that over to the offensive end, too. Cotie and (Thierry) did a great job of getting us going, and just keeping that same pace throughout the game was our focus.”

Ohio State opened the second quarter on a 7-2 run, capped off by a three-pointer from Sheldon, which gave her 1,500 career points with the Buckeyes.

Sidberry connected on back-to-back baskets and was answered with back-to-back scores by Thierry, kick-starting a 14-3 run that gave Ohio State a 53-20 lead with 2:42 left in the half before leading 55-26 heading into the locker room.

The Buckeyes shot an impressive 71.0 percent (22 of 31) from the floor in the first half while taking just three attempts from deep, connecting on two. McMahon led with 18 points as the Buckeyes forced Boston College into 15 turnovers that resulted in 25 points.

Ohio State continued to dominate in the second half, outscoring Boston College 20-12 in the third frame to lead 75-38 heading into the final quarter. The Buckeyes went up by as much as 77-38 in the fourth before clearing out the bench in the big win, though they were outscored 28-13 in the final frame.

“The only other thing I didn’t really like tonight is we didn’t finish the game very well,” McGuff said. “We had a lack of focus and intensity down the stretch. As I told them, if we’re going to play three quarters, we’re not going to be the team that we can be. We’ve got to get closer to 40 minutes



SONNY BROCKWAY

CALLING HER SHOT — Ohio State guard Taylor Thierry finished with 18 points and eight rebounds on 7-of-9 shooting in the Buckeyes’ 88-66 win over Boston College on Nov. 16. For the season, she is shooting 83.3 percent (15 of 18) from the field.

with our focus and intensity.”

McMahon led the Buckeyes with her 24 points on 8-of-10 shooting and was 8 of 12 from the free-throw line. Sheldon joined McMahon and Thierry in double digits with 16 points while junior guard Emma Shumate added 10 points on 3-of-5 shooting from deep.

“She’s really efficient,” McGuff said of Thierry. “She does exactly what she can do. She doesn’t try to do too much. She stays within the offense and stays within herself, and I think that’s why she is really efficient. When other players get outside of themselves a little bit, that’s when they get in

trouble. She doesn’t do that.”

The Eagles were led by guard T’yana Todd, who finished with 16 points, while guard Andrea Daley and Sidberry each added 14 points in the loss.

Ohio State was next scheduled to take the floor in the Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas, facing East Carolina on Nov. 20 and were set to play Oklahoma State on Nov. 22 at 6:30 p.m., with both games broadcast on FloHoops.

The Buckeyes will then return home to face Cornell on Nov. 26, set for a 1 p.m. tipoff at Value City Arena. The game will be available on Big Ten Plus.

Ohio State 88, Boston College 66

Nov. 16, 2023 Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio						
	1	2	3	4	F	
Boston College (2-2)	11	15	12	28	66	
Ohio State (2-1)	32	23	20	13	88	

	Total	FT		Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
		Min	M-A				
Sidberry	26	6-13	2-2	2-6	0	4	14
Ivey	27	0-2	0-0	0-1	1	1	0
Daley	26	5-10	4-6	1-1	1	2	14
Waggoner	19	1-7	2-2	3-3	0	4	4
Todd	35	4-9	5-6	1-2	0	1	16
Lacey	24	3-6	0-0	0-5	0	2	6
Ndiaye	18	3-6	0-0	1-2	2	1	6
McGee	12	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Krasovec	11	1-1	2-2	0-1	0	2	4
Lezama	6	1-2	0-0	0-0	1	0	2
Totals	200	24-57	15-18	11-21	5	17	66

Percentages: FG: 42.1%. FT: 83.3%. **Three-point field goals:** 3-14 (Todd 3-6, Daley 0-1, Ivey 0-1, Lacey 0-3, Lezama 0-1, Ndiaye 0-1, Sidberry 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 0. **Turnovers:** 20 (Todd 4, Ivey 3, Lacey 3, Daley 2, Sidberry 2, Team 2, Krasovec, Lezama, Ndiaye, Waggoner). **Steals:** 8 (Sidberry 3, Daley 2, Todd 2, Waggoner).

	Total	FT		Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
		Min	M-A				
Mikulasikova	16	1-2	0-0	0-0	2	1	2
McMahon	26	8-10	8-12	0-4	2	1	24
Thierry	20	7-9	3-3	2-6	3	2	18
Sheldon	21	7-10	0-0	1-2	2	3	16
Taylor	25	2-5	0-2	0-2	5	2	4
Harris	22	2-3	0-0	1-1	2	2	4
Parks	20	4-7	0-0	2-2	0	1	8
Collins	17	1-3	0-0	0-0	0	5	2
Walker	9	0-2	0-0	1-2	1	0	0
Shumate	14	3-5	1-2	0-0	0	1	10
Henderson	10	0-1	0-0	0-0	2	0	0
Vres	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Carson	1	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0
Totals	200	35-57	12-19	7-22	19	18	88

Percentages: FG: 61.4%. FT: 63.2%. **Three-point field goals:** 6-12 (Shumate 3-5, Sheldon 2-3, Thierry 1-1, Collins 0-1, Harris 0-1, McMahon 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 5 (Shumate 2, McMahon, Mikulasikova, Thierry). **Turnovers:** 17 (Sheldon 4, Harris 3, Taylor 3, Shumate 2, Walker 2, Collins, McMahon, Mikulasikova). **Steals:** 10 (McMahon 2, Parks 2, Taylor 2, Thierry 2, Harris, Sheldon). **Officials:** Morris, Larence, Niemiera. **Attendance:** 4,523.

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Buckeyes Look To Hit Reset Button After Break

There are times when having an open weekend is the worst thing for a team from a psychological standpoint. Said team might be on a long winning streak, feeling good about the way it's playing and fearful of losing momentum.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

That's not the case for Ohio State as the Buckeyes took a four-game losing streak into their idle weekend of Nov. 17-18. It's clear a break is needed. Even though Ohio State (3-5-3, 0-5-1 Big Ten) is last in the conference and has been blanked twice in the past four games, coach Steve Rohlik said a turnaround is possible.

"Every point is huge in our league, and teams can get on a run at different times during the year, which we have in the past," he said.

The Buckeyes have been up and down, a possible byproduct of having 15 newcomers (eight freshmen, seven transfers) and the early NHL departures of defensemen Mason Lohrei and Cole McWard and goaltender Jakub Dobeš, who played all 40 games last season.

They lost the series opener at Michigan

7-1 on Oct. 20 then responded the next night with a 2-2 tie and the extra conference point. The Buckeyes went to Omaha for a nonconference set from Oct. 27-28 and tied the first game before using the play of goalie Logan Terness for a dominating 4-0 victory.

Ohio State returned home and was blanked 6-0 by Michigan State in a game in which the score could have been worse. It was closer in the rematch, but the Spartans prevailed 6-4. In the final series before the break, the Buckeyes lost 4-1 and 3-0 at Notre Dame.

"The consistency is not there," Rohlik said. "We've got to figure that out as a coaching staff. I've got to make sure that I'm better and put these guys in the right situation, and it's all about preparation."

The season has a long way to go, but the Buckeyes have a lot of digging to do to get out of the hole they created. They are 34th in the PairWise rankings, the statistical formula the NCAA selection committee uses to pick the 10 at-large bids for the 16-team NCAA tournament (there are six automatic qualifiers).

There will be opportunities to move up, but the Big Ten so far is not as well represented at the top as in past seasons when four or five teams were regularly entrenched in the PairWise top 16. As of the open weekend, Wisconsin ranked third, followed by No. 12 Minnesota, No. 13 Michigan State, No. 19 Michigan, No. 21 Notre Dame and No. 22 Penn State. Ohio State goes to Wisconsin on Dec. 1-2 before facing Minnesota in Value City Arena on Dec. 8-9.

Even the remaining non-league games, though, won't help the Buckeyes' strength of schedule. They return from the off week to host No. 33 Princeton on Nov. 24-25, are home against No. 55 Mercyhurst on Dec. 30 and host No. 62 Bowling Green on Jan. 5 before visiting the Falcons the following night.

What that likely means is the Buckeyes' only route to returning to the NCAA tournament for a second straight season is to win the Big Ten tournament, something Ohio State has not done since it came into existence in 2014.

In the past two seasons, the Buckeyes went into the conference tournament clinging to a place in the top 16 with a high probability of earning a berth.

In 2022, they lost to Penn State in a first-round series and barely missed an at-large bid according to the PairWise parameters. Last season, Ohio State defeated the Nittany Lions in the first round, lost to Michigan in the semifinals but made the NCAAs. They defeated Harvard before losing to eventual national champion Quinnipiac in the regional final.

Taking Precautions

The death of professional hockey player Adam Johnson during a game in England on Oct. 28 has raised alarms about safety in hockey.

Johnson, a Minnesota native who played 13 games in the NHL for the Pittsburgh Penguins, was playing for the Nottingham Panthers when he was sliced in the neck by the skate blade of Matt Petgrave of the Sheffield Steelers after Petgrave collided with another player and was upended. Johnson, 29, got up while bleeding profusely then collapsed. He was administered aid on the ice before being transported to a hospital where he died.

The incident has brought calls to make cut-resistant neck guards, or wraparounds, mandatory in the sport. The NHL does not mandate neck protection nor does the NCAA or many junior hockey leagues. However, some NHL teams such as the Penguins have now made neck guards required for their minor-league affiliates.

Many players already wear cut-resistant socks and wrist protectors but have been slow to adopt neck guards because they feel they restrict movement and, like the cut-resistant turtlenecks, don't allow heat to evaporate from their bodies as well. Ohio State sophomore forward Davis Burnside said he wore a neck guard for the first time at practice on Nov. 8.

"I think it's a smart idea," he said. "Might as well. It's something that could obviously help. It was a little bit uncomfortable. You have a

little bit less range of motion in the throat, and it gets a little toasty. I feel like you sweat a little bit more with it being around there, but it's not too bad. You get used to it. If not, I'll just take it off."

Rohlik said he was stunned when he heard the news about Johnson's death. He also reached out to Minnesota-Duluth head coach Scott Sandelin, for whom Rohlik was an assistant from 2001-10. Johnson played for the Bulldogs from 2015-17.

After Johnson's death, Rohlik had his equipment staff acquire neck guards as quickly as possible for the Buckeyes.

"We certainly had a lot of discussion with the players, and a sports psychologist came in to talk with the team," he said. "We also ordered (neck guards) right away. We're like, 'Guys, whenever you need to talk to somebody, we'll have someone there. We're going to get you the neck guards. We're going to get everything you need.'"

Graduate forward Matt Cassidy also began practicing with a neck guard in response to Johnson's death.

"It's not really the most comfortable thing and it's not ideal, but I think it makes sense, especially in practice," he said. "You're practicing five, six times more than you're playing games on weekends, right? You never know what can happen out there. I'm just trying to be safe and keep everyone out there safe."

Skate cuts like Johnson's have happened before. One of the most famous was Buffalo Sabres goaltender Clint Malarchuk reportedly losing 1½ liters of blood after having his carotid artery severed by a skate blade in 1989, and he survived.

Columbus Blue Jackets forward Patrik Laine is an advocate of neck guards, saying they're required in several leagues in his native Finland.

"You kind of get used to it," he said to the media on Nov. 10. "Since I came over here, I just kept wearing it. It's nothing new. I've always had it."

"There's risks playing this sport and, personally, I don't love it so much that I'm willing to sacrifice my life, so I'm trying to do as much as I can to prevent any injuries and that kind of stuff from happening. Everyone's a grown man so they can decide for themselves, but that's my opinion and what I'm going to do, and hopefully a lot more guys are going to start doing that too."

For recaps of men's hockey games throughout the season, go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

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Ohio State Delivers Upset Of Virginia Tech

In Ohio State's first dual meet of the season, the Buckeyes traveled to Blacksburg, Va., on Nov. 10 to take on then-No. 3 Virginia Tech. It was an early test for Ohio State, coming into every season with a realistic goal of a national championship, and it passed that test, defeating the Hokies 24-12 despite lineup changes and unsettled weight classes.

ON THE MAT Greg Wilson

The day started off with a big win for the Buckeyes when Brendan McCrone, who is still fighting to keep his starting spot at 125 pounds, upset No. 4 Eddie Ventresca by major decision 11-3, earning the team four points. Head coach Tom Ryan said the coaches like what they have seen from the redshirt freshman so far.

"We're really happy with McCrone," Ryan told BSB. "He's a dangerous guy to wrestle. For all these guys, or anybody at this level, it's an inner belief that's needed. If you have it, you have a chance, and if you don't have it, you have no chance, and McCrone's is growing. We're seeing someone before our eyes start to really believe in himself."

The Buckeyes secured victories in six out of 10 classes, but two of the biggest were No. 5 Jesse Mendez' technical fall over Hunter Mason in a dominant 18-3 showing at 141 pounds and true freshman Ryder Rogotzke's upset over No. 21 Sam Fisher at 184 pounds, getting the win by fall at 5:35, with both wins adding six points for Ohio State.

Ryan said Mendez' work ethic, conditioning and mental approach have been extremely important for him, comparing his ability to stay aggressive for an entire match to the Buckeyes' women's basketball team that full-court presses to try to wear the opposing teams down.

"That's Jesse, he can full-court press the entire match," Ryan said. "That's when you really separate yourself from your opponents. That's not something you just make up your mind to do when you're on the stage. It's got to be something you do early in the morning, and then you're back in the afternoon and sometimes late at night."

Ryan said Nov. 1 that Rogotzke will likely redshirt this year because the other two wrestlers at 184 pounds, Seth Shumate and Gavin Hoffman, don't have theirs available anymore, but he put the freshman in against Virginia Tech because of his ability to get pins. He has had seven matches at Ohio State and now has six pins after coming out of high school with 193 pins. That decision worked out in the Buckeyes' favor, putting the team up 18-12.

Hoffman wasn't in the mix for the dual against the Hokies because under NCAA rules, he wasn't allowed to weigh in until Nov. 13 because he was dropping from the 197-pound weight class, but he is available going forward.

After Rogotzke created a big separation in the score, No. 19 Luke Geog (197 pounds) and No. 20 Nick Feldman (heavyweight) both

earned upset victories. Geog won an 11-8 decision over No. 14 Andy Smith, and Feldman had a 3-2 decision over No. 16 Hunter Catka.

Ohio State's remaining win came from senior Isaac Wilcox, who filled in well at the 165-pound weight class with a 6-5 win over No. 16 Connor Brady while No. 18 Bryce Hepner was sidelined with an injury. Ryan said Wilcox has built a lot of trust with the coaching staff because of how hard he's been working to compete.

"He's all the things that any employer is looking for," Ryan said. "They show up on time, they stay late. They're gritty, they're tough. They'll do anything that you ask. They're coachable. He's a great employee. He's really good. He's powerful and durable, and he keeps getting better."

Ryan said Hepner is going to have to earn the spot when he comes back. Hepner competed in Ohio State's duals against Hofstra on Nov. 19, finishing with an 18-2 tech fall win, but he and Wilcox will have a wrestle-off at some point to ultimately decide who will start.

As for Ohio State's four losses, No. 14 Nic Bouzakis suffered a 7-5 defeat to No. 7 Sam Latona at 133 pounds, No. 5 Dylan D'Emilio lost a 10-5 decision to No. 4 Caleb Henson at 149 pounds, No. 16 Paddy Gallagher had a 7-4 loss to No. 6 Bryce Andonian at 157 pounds, and No. 7 Carson Kharchla lost a close 4-2 decision to No. 3 Mekhi Lewis at 174 pounds.

Ohio State Shuts Out Edinboro

Two days after their big win over Virginia Tech, the Buckeyes were in Columbus for their first home dual against Edinboro, which they dominated for a 53-0 victory.

The quick turnaround on the schedule from a top matchup was intentional, according to Ryan, so he could test the toughness of his wrestlers.

"It was a planned schedule from a making weight standpoint," Ryan said. "Making weight twice in three days. We drove through the night, got in at 4 a.m. We practiced at 10 a.m., and they had to make weight at 10 a.m. the next day. It was just a tough three days."

McCrone set the tone early again, defeating Caleb Edwards by fall in just 1:05 to start the dual off, and the Buckeyes didn't look back after that. The team won all 10 weight classes with four falls, five technical falls and a major-decision win.

Kharchla was able to come back from a tough loss at Virginia Tech and win 21-5 in the second period. Ryan was happy with how he came back from the loss, especially after injuring his ankle at the Clarion Open on Nov. 5.

"I thought he out-wrestled (Lewis at Virginia Tech)," Ryan said. "We had more chances to score. We were inside the 20 more than they were, but they punched it in once. He really wrestled well, with good intensity and as the season wears on, he's going to feel really good at 174. He's going to get better as the season goes, rather than being more compromised with his energy level because of the weight cut."

Mendez dominated again, pinning Edinboro's Anthony Ferraro in just over a minute, and D'Emilio picked up his first dual win at

149 pounds, pinning Steffan Lynch in under a minute.

"He's where he wanted to be," Ryan said. "He's certainly big enough. He's another example of, he'll be stronger by the end of the year than he is the beginning. That doesn't happen that often in wrestling. Guys that cut a lot of weight, the anxiety of the season, the exhausting training, sometimes they wear down, and we should not see that with this group since they're not cutting a lot of weight."

All but one of the 10 wrestlers who competed against Virginia Tech won against Edinboro. Shumate filled in for Rogotzke and collected an 18-4 major decision over Brody Evans at 184.

Ryan Reaches 200 Career Dual Wins At Ohio State

The big win over Edinboro also doubled as an important milestone for Ryan. It was his 200th dual win at Ohio State in 18 years with the Buckeyes.

Ryan was excited to win the dual against Edinboro, but he wasn't focused on the milestone at all with dual season beginning.

"I don't track wins, so I don't know how many I have or I don't have," he said. "The coolest thing about it was my parents came to the match. I didn't know it was my 200th win. I had my mom and dad as the honorary coaches of the night, and it just so happened to be that it was my 200th win, and it was a good win for the team, an aggressive performance. That was the coolest thing about it."

He now has 309 total wins in his career as of Nov. 12. He started his head coaching career in 1995 at Hofstra, where he stayed for 11 years and won six consecutive conference championships from 2000-05 before coming to Ohio State for the 2006-07 season.

Wrestling is strong in the Big Ten at the Division I level, and in the middle of complete dominance by Penn State, which has won 10 of the last 12 NCAA championships, he has kept the Buckeyes competitive every

year.

He has led the team to three Big Ten championships – and an NCAA championship in 2014-15 – remaining a threat to win it almost every year he has been at Ohio State. Ryan is happy he has had so much success but said his time in Columbus has meant more to him than that.

"A lot more than the wins is just the people, the way this place has transformed my life, my family's lives," he said after the win. "The number of deep friendships, and two of my four kids graduated from Ohio State. I love the place. When (athletic director) Gene Smith called back in 2006, it was a lotto moment for us. It was better than the winning lotto ticket."

OSU Wins Dual Duals Out East

Ohio State traveled on Nov. 19 to face Columbia and Hofstra, coming away with respective 49-0 and 51-0 wins to improve to 4-0 in duals on the season.

Winning all 10 weights in both duals, the Buckeyes now haven't lost an individual match since Nov. 10 in the upset over Virginia Tech.

The three-point takedown rule change has proved beneficial to the Buckeyes in the early part of the season, allowing them to secure 18 tech fall wins in the past three duals.

Hoffman and Hepner both made their return to the mat in New York. Hoffman wrestled at both Columbia and Hofstra, getting a victory by pin in 1:26 over the Lions' Joe Curtis and winning 19-4 by tech fall against Will Conlon of Hofstra.

The Buckeyes are off the following weekend before returning to the mat on Dec. 1-2 in the Cliff Keen Invitational in Las Vegas.

For a full recap of Ohio State's wins over Columbia and Hofstra, visit BuckeyeSports.com, available for free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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OSU Could Be Cooking Something Special For U-M

Anybody hungry?

The appetizers have been consumed, and the main course awaits. It has taken nearly a year to get all of the elements together – to replace a few things, allow them to coalesce and marinate, in a quest to eliminate the terrible taste that has been lingering for two seasons now.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsmen

Does Ohio State have the proper ingredients, the right recipe, to heat up and devour its most hated opponent? We will know soon enough.

We know that Ohio State has quarterback Kyle McCord, who has gotten better yet is still prone to inconsistencies and will be playing his first game in the Big House; Marvin Harrison Jr., a receiver who does not have an equal in the college game; Cade Stover, a tight end who is underappreciated but dangerous; a ground game that appears to be finding itself; and an offensive line that has gotten better but which still is not up to typical Ohio State standards.

We also know that Michigan has a hammer of a ground game led by Blake Corum; an offensive line that can bully but is prone to wilting against an aggressive pass rush; J.J. McCarthy, a quarterback who can extend plays with his legs but hasn't thrown a touchdown pass in the last 12 quarters (not coincidentally since Connor Stalions was dismissed from the staff); receivers who scare no one; and a head coaching situation that can only be described as bizarre.

Which one of those two mixtures is the winning formula? We will know soon enough.

As usual, my eyes were keeping tabs on games and teams from across the football landscape. That's what I do on Saturdays – hunker down in front of my two TVs, fire up the multi-view feature on YouTube TV and watch eight games at once.

Special attention was paid to the goings on in College Park, Md., where Michigan was facing the Terrapins. The Wolverines won just 34-27 last year, and given the distractions of recent weeks, there was a curiosity about how they might fare in what many deemed to be a trap game.

Michigan won 31-24, but it was far from a dominating performance. Maryland rattled McCarthy, who was squarely in the Heisman Trophy chatter less than a month ago, and forced him into what may have been his worst performance of the season. Ohio State has a better pass rush than Maryland does, so you have to think that the Buckeyes will be able to affect McCarthy just as much. If Michigan cannot make some plays through the air, it cannot win because the Buckeyes' defense is too good.

That declaration will be stood on – maybe it is foolish after what happened last season, but the Buckeyes weren't nearly as sound on the back end as they are this year. The busts are much less frequent, and the veterans in the secondary have been able to hold down the fort while the front seven has played disci-

plined ball in the second year under coordinator Jim Knowles.

Speaking of the coach, don't think for a second that Knowles doesn't have a surprise or two up his sleeve. Whether it's a blitz package he hasn't yet unleashed or a coverage scheme that hasn't been unveiled, Michigan will see something it hasn't encountered on film – at least not legally.

Whether or not Michigan can galvanize itself behind Jim Harbaugh the way Ohio State did around Earle Bruce in 1987 after it was announced that the school had fired him remains to be seen. The players seem to adore Harbaugh, and even though the victim mentality is completely misplaced – Michigan did this to itself – there is a school of thought that the Wolverines will want to pull off a win for their embattled leader. The Buckeyes won that 1987 game 23-20, erasing a 13-0 halftime deficit and playing a spirited final 30 minutes of football.

Will Michigan do the same? We will know soon enough.

There is so much wrapped up in this game that it's difficult to pick out a singular moment. It would be foolish to even try. But since the game is being played in Ann Arbor, the focus will be on a couple of contests played up there.

I started following the Buckeyes in the early 1970s, just as Archie Griffin came to prominence. I wasn't nearly as well-versed in the technical aspects of the game as I am now. I just knew the Buckeyes won a lot. And I knew that Michigan was the big, bad rival, and had to be beaten. My first truly memorable game was 1979, when the Buckeye offense had a rough go of things and was bailed out by the special teams – namely the punt block unit.

Linebacker Jim Laughlin knifed through and got to punter Bryan Virgil, who had already had a poor game with a missed pass off a fake and a punt that was shanked and gave Ohio State the ball at midfield. The Buckeyes capitalized with a touchdown and led 12-7, but Michigan came back and forged a 15-12 lead before Laughlin got all of the ball, which bounced on the turf into the waiting arms of Todd Bell, who raced untouched into the end zone, giving the Buckeyes an 18-15 lead which would never be relinquished.

The other one that stands out clearly is one in which I had a bird's-eye view from the north end zone of Michigan Stadium. It was 2005, and Troy Smith was quickly making a name for himself as the Buckeyes' quarterback.

OSU trailed 21-19 with just over four minutes left to play and the ball at its own 12-yard line. The Buckeyes marched into Michigan territory, and with 47 seconds to play and the ball on the Wolverines' 30, Smith became a household name – for both fan bases. He evaded a rush from the edge, settled himself and launched the ball toward a streaking Anthony Gonzalez, who caught the ball and was helicoptered down at the Wolverines 4-yard line.

Two plays later, Antonio Pittman burst through the line and scampered in with a touchdown that made it 25-21, and the Buckeyes had wrested victory from the jaws of defeat. I'll never forget the look on the face of Derek Jeter, who was there that day with some of his baseball buddies. It's something that always makes me smile.

Can the Buckeyes – who enter the contest as around a 5.5-point underdog – pull off sim-

ilar magic if it's needed? We will know soon enough whether the taste in the mouths of Ohio State fans is bitter or sweet, and whether the hunger in the stomach of all of Buckeye Nation has been satisfied.

My Name Is Not Florence

With all of the acclaim garnered by Harrison, it's easy to forget that the Buckeyes have another offensive weapon in the form of running back TreVeyon Henderson.

Those who have followed this space closely know that Henderson has been a favorite of mine almost since the minute he arrived on campus. He was (correctly) forecast for immediate stardom, though the prospects dimmed a bit after an injury-plagued 2022. Once again healthy heading into this season, there was little doubt that Henderson could be a difference-maker for the Buckeyes and a safety net for McCord.

While he hasn't been completely injury-free, Henderson has been well enough to average just a touch under 100 yards per game (99.3) in eight contests for the Buckeyes. It isn't just the yardage that makes him special, however. It's how he arrives at that yardage.

Henderson has the frame of a bigger back but is blessed with home-run speed. He displayed that on a 75-yard touchdown jaunt against Minnesota, also exhibiting his almost otherworldly ability to cut on a dime and change direction to make defenders miss. Bigger backs often rely on power and have heavier feet, but Henderson often displays the nimbleness of a dancer when he gets the football. He's quick into his first step, and if a defender is in his way, he'll sidestep, shuffle and shimmy to daylight, and then turn on the afterburners.

Michigan has proved itself to be stout against opposing ground games, allowing just 3.0 yards per carry, seventh best in college football. While that is very impressive, it should be noted that against the team most similar to Ohio State in backfield talent, skill and scheme – Penn State – the Wolverines allowed 164 yards and a touchdown on 35 carries (4.7).

Henderson won't get 35 carries, but he has the ability to do similar damage to a Wolverines front seven that has been gashed more often late in the season.

If he can find creases and open space, he will be a force. And Ohio State will beat Brady's Boys.

Love Thy Neighbor, Hate Thy Rival

One of the things I love most about college football is the rivalries, most of which happen in the final week of the season.

Sure, there are great ones closer to the middle of the year – Texas-Oklahoma (Red River Shootout), Georgia-Florida (World's Largest Cocktail Party) and Notre Dame-USC. But most of the great ones are reserved for the final stop on the regular-season train.

We all know about The Game – not only because we in Ohio (and Michigan) live it, but because it the greatest rivalry in college football (apologies to Army and Navy).

But do you know about other rivalries with colorful names?

Here are six rivalries playing in the season's final week that are filled with animosity and tradition. See if you can guess which teams face off in each (answers at the bottom

of this piece).

- Egg Bowl
- Commonwealth Cup
- Territorial Cup
- Clean, Old-Fashioned Hate
- Oil Can
- Civil War

Dandy Dozen

It seems appropriate that in the final season of the four-team College Football Playoff there are five unbeaten squads at this juncture of the season. That almost never happens, and it could mean that we are gifted with four unbeaten teams playing for the national title.

A few teams have a clearer path than others.

The winner between Ohio State and Michigan will take an unblemished mark into the Big Ten Championship Game, where it will presumably be a comfortable favorite over Iowa.

Florida State is noticeably better than Louisville, though the gruesome injury suffered by stalwart Seminole quarterback Jordan Travis could make things a bit more even in the ACC.

Washington beat Oregon once, but the Ducks are playing as well as any team in America and will likely be favored in the Pac-12 Championship Game, assuming they get past rival Oregon State. Georgia is also humming but will face a stern test in Alabama in the SEC Championship Game.

While not easy, there is a path to an all-unbeaten College Football Playoff. And let me say I am here for it. Where others root for chaos and upsets, I want the best teams to play for the title. They have worked all season to show they are the best (or in the case of the College Football Playoff committee, the most deserving), so they should be rewarded.

It would be, in a word, glorious. But there is still some ball yet to be played, and upsets could come where least expected. For now, this is the latest version of the Dandy Dozen. These are 75.0 percent résumé, 25.0 percent team strength.

- Washington (11-0)
- Ohio State (11-0)
- Georgia (11-0)
- Michigan (11-0)
- Florida State (11-0)
- Texas (10-1)
- Alabama (10-1)
- Oregon (10-1)
- Missouri (9-2)
- Louisville (10-1)
- Penn State (9-2)
- Ole Miss (9-2)

Wishing everyone a Happy Thanksgiving – save me an extra slice (or seven) of pumpkin pie.

Rivalry Answers

- Ole Miss-Mississippi State (119 games, Ole Miss leads 64-49-6)
- Virginia-Virginia Tech (103 games, Virginia Tech leads 60-38-5)
- Arizona-Arizona State (96 games, Arizona leads 50-45-1)
- Georgia-Georgia Tech (116 games, Georgia leads 70-41-5)
- Fresno State-San Diego State (61 games, San Diego State leads 30-27-4)
- Oregon-Oregon State (126 games, Oregon leads 67-49-10)

Minny Disposed, Time to Gopher It Vs. U-M

I'm not under the same constraints as Ryan Day. I can look ahead and freely admit it. So as the Ohio State football team prepared to host Minnesota in the final home game of the season, I never doubted that Ohio State was going to win. All I cared about was getting through that game without any injuries as the team was just one game away from The Game – you know, the game that the Buckeyes were not allowed to talk about, but I could.

I was so convinced that the Buckeyes could handle the Gophers and so concerned that Ohio State might not be at as close to full strength as a team can be at this late stage of the season that on the live gameday thread at our BuckeyeSports.com Forum, I actually suggested that Day get TreVeyon Henderson out of the game in the first half. I believed that Ohio State could beat Minnesota with Chip Trayanum or Dallan Hayden, now relieved of any redshirt constraints. And I believe that Henderson is the most important piece of the puzzle if the Buckeyes are to defeat their rivals. He makes everyone on the offense better, including Marvin Harrison Jr., one of the best players in the country, and one who is even better if he has Henderson on the field to distract the double-teaming defenses.

But Harrison can be replaced in the lineup. Obviously not at the same level, but there are plenty of receivers to pick up the slack if he goes down, especially with Emeka Egbuka looking back at full strength against the Gophers. Can you say the same if Henderson went down? As mentioned, I was comfortable with the Buckeyes being able to defeat Minnesota with Trayanum or Hayden in the backfield. Against Michigan? I am not so sure.

About the only person as indispensable on offense for the game with Michigan would be quarterback Kyle McCord, and like everyone I was greatly concerned when McCord went down awkwardly on the final play of the first half. I think we were all relieved when he trotted on the field to start the third quarter and went 9 of 12 in the second half with touchdowns to Harrison and Cade Stover before finally giving way to Lincoln Kienholz.

As for getting Henderson out of there, he took care of that himself.

He opened the second half with a 75-yard touchdown run on the first play out of the locker room to extend the lead to 20-0, and after another quick score by the Buckeyes, there was little need for Henderson the rest of the way.

The Minnesota game was just a final preparation for the game that really counts – every year, but especially this year.

Some quick thoughts on the Minnesota game before we move on to the main event.

- A player who seems to be peaking at the right time is defensive end Jack Sawyer, who took his fair share of criticism from the media and Buckeye fans earlier in the season for not living up to his lofty prep credentials. But he has been getting better and better in the last few games, hopefully still one game away from peaking after he had six tackles, 3½ for loss, a sack, a forced fumble and a quarterback hurry against the Gophers. In the last six games starting with the contest with Purdue, he has had 24 tackles, 5½ tackles for loss, 2½ sacks, a pair of forced fumbles, a pass breakup and a quarterback hurry.

This is in contrast to what seemed like a very slow start to the season. It wasn't until the third game of the season that he had what I will call a "specialty stat," something other than a tackle, when he was credited with half a TFL against Western Kentucky. In the big win over Notre Dame, he had but one tackle and a pass breakup.

None of those early woes will matter if he is

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

indeed rounding into form in time for the Michigan game.

- Kicker Jayden Fielding caught my attention when he nailed a 47-yard field goal right down Broadway, with yards to spare. I was concerned that his range was limited after he went through the first 10 games with a long of 41 and his only two misses coming from 42 and 45 yards.

- Here's a stat that may have slipped by you. The Buckeyes and Gophers played their game in a crisp 2:55. That's 13 minutes less than the previous shortest game, which interestingly came the week before when the Buckeyes dispatched Michigan State in 3:08. The longest game of the year so far is a tie between the games with Penn State and Rutgers, which took 3:37 each, 42 minutes longer than the game with Minnesota.

The Main Event

And so, The Game is finally here.

For the last 12 months I have been telling anyone who would listen that I would have a hard time dealing with a third straight loss to Michigan. I can imagine how Ryan Day and the team must feel.

My mad desire for a Buckeye victory has only increased since the revelation of the sign-gate scandal. I don't know if it is arrogance or ignorance that caused that school up north, from top to bottom, from the president to the ball boy, to try to ignore the scandal as if it was no big deal.

I found it ironic that in our last issue of BSB, managing editor Mark Rea wrote a story on the 1961 Buckeyes, who were denied a trip to the Rose Bowl because the powers that be at Ohio State were concerned football was getting too big and would overshadow academics. Here we are 62 years later, and it seems like everyone at Michigan, the supposed bastion of education in the Big Ten, seems more concerned with winning a national championship than doing the right thing.

As more and more information comes out, it seems highly unlikely that Michigan is innocent of wrongdoing, and I am confident that more smoking guns are going to be revealed, such as the most recent accusation that an assistant coach was caught destroying evidence. If there were no violations, there would be no evidence to destroy.

I foresee Michigan finding out, like Richard Nixon and our own Jim Tressel did, that the coverup almost always proves more damaging than the crime.

Did the sign-stealing help Michigan in its two victories over Ohio State? I guess we will never know. But one has to wonder how Jim Harbaugh and his crew went from posting a pedestrian record for a college football blue blood to the class of the Big Ten with no extraordinary influx of talent in between.

I have to remind even Buckeye fans that Ryan Day is not the second coming of John Cooper when it comes to beating Michigan. He was 2-0 vs. the archrivals in his two years as an assistant coach, including the historic, 62-39 beatdown of a strong Michigan team in 2018. In his first outing in The Game as head coach, the Buckeyes beat the Wolverines handily, 56-27, in Ann Arbor. The next year, Harbaugh and his 2-4 team took a pass on playing the Buckeyes. After that, Day suddenly becomes a dunce and Harbaugh is the second coming of Bo Schembechler?

Even without Michigan's sign-stealing, I'm not sure the Buckeyes would have defeated

Michigan in 2021. In fairness to the Wolverines, they manhandled Ohio State. That's how you win an Ohio State-Michigan game. But the 2022 Michigan victory? Now I'm beginning to wonder.

All those big plays? Would it have been easier to pull them off if you knew what defense the Buckeyes were calling for and you could send in a play to exploit said defense?

As arrogant as the people up north seem to be about this whole situation, it seems unlikely that they would attempt to steal signs in this year's game. And I notice that since the scandal broke, Michigan's games have suddenly become more competitive. It seems like now we are back to who has the better team, who executes better, or who does both.

I am usually tied up with the Buckeyes on football Saturdays so I haven't seen much of the Wolverines. But a lot of what I have heard is about quarterback J.J. McCarthy and running back Blake Corum. Let's take a look at how their Buckeye counterparts stack up against the bally-hooed pair.

There is no doubt that McCarthy has put up an impressive stat line this season. He is fifth in the country in passing efficiency while completing 175 of 237 passes (73.8 percent) for 2,335 yards, 18 touchdowns and only four interceptions. He has averaged 212.3 passing yards per game.

Have you ever noticed that Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord takes more shots from the media and his own fans than he does from opposing defenders, and yet at the end of the game, he usually has a solid stat line?

Sure, McCord's passing efficiency rating is less than that of McCarthy, but it is a solid 163.2, good for No. 12 in the country. And I think you can make the case that McCord's other numbers are as good or better than those of his competitor. True, McCord's completion percentage of 66.4 is less than McCarthy's sparkling 73.8. But take a look at McCord's other numbers. He has passed for 2,899 yards and 22 touchdowns with only four interceptions and averages 263.5 passing yards a game – numbers that are at the least as good as, if not better than, McCarthy's.

And as for Corum, the supposed Heisman candidate, he has gained 888 yards rushing on 180 carries for a 4.9 average and 20 touchdowns and an 80.7 average per game. In three fewer games, Henderson has nearly as many yards with 794, is averaging 6.7 yards a carry and 99.3 yards per game. But where you really see the difference is in the four games since he came off the IL in time to play Wisconsin. In those games he has racked up 499 yards rushing, averaging 6.7 yards a carry and 124.8 yards per game, with five touchdowns to boot. Add to that 13 receptions for another 165 yards (12.7 per catch), and it gives him an average of 166.0 yards from scrimmage in those games. And that's with sitting for much of the games against the Spartans and Gophers. In case you are wondering, Corum has 11 catches for 72 yards for the season.

Even up, who would you take?

Anytime I suggest that Corum might be overrated, I am reminded that the Wolverines also have Donovan Edwards, who just killed the Buckeyes last season with 216 yards on 22 carries (9.8). Well, this season, he is averaging a robust 3.4 yards on 95 carries.

And receivers? Let's not even go there. Michigan's pass catchers can't compare to the Buckeyes, from Harrison on down, in quality or depth.

It appears that the two teams are about equal, at least statistically, on defense. But that would give the edge to Ohio State, in my mind, because the Buckeyes have played a tougher schedule.

Buckeye defensive coordinator Jim Knowles was probably the most humiliated on that side of the ball in a humiliating loss last season. He has to be just itching to get a chance to even the score.

"The overall defense has been on my mind since last year, of course, of how we can be better in these matchup performances," he said after the Minnesota victory. "We've already had a couple, and we've got to build off that and be at our best."

Knowles would be the first to admit (and I will be the second) that if the Buckeyes don't beat their rivals this year, or the defense struggles, all of the incredible strides Ohio State has made on defense would pretty much be for naught.

One last thought on the Wolverine players. If you are so smart, why is it you "against the world"? The world didn't do you wrong; your own coaches did. First of all, they didn't have enough confidence in you to think you were good enough to turn things around on your own. And now *you* are paying the price – or will pay the price – for rules violations that you had nothing to do with,

Get some new T-shirts.

It could be months or even years before the NCAA finishes its investigation and determines Michigan's punishment, if there is any. In the meantime, Ohio State can mete out what one reader described as "street justice." Beat your hated rival, and all the maneuvering and manipulating to stall any sanctions until after the national championship game will have been for nothing.

Or as Mark Rea says to close *his* column on page 3, "Win the damn game."

Recruiting Accuracy

One player who could help the Buckeye defense would be linebacker Tommy Eichenberg, who is scheduled to return to the lineup after a two-game absence. Despite that hiatus due to injury, Eichenberg still leads the team in tackles with 73 and he also, plain and simply, leads the team – or at least the defense.

With that in mind, I read with much interest a note in this issue's "A Look Back at Recruiting From the Pages of BSB" feature, found on page 34.

The note mentions that Eichenberg, who was slated to attend the Ohio State-Michigan game in 2018, the previously mentioned 63-29 demolition by the Buckeyes, was listed as the No. 358 overall prospect, No. 19 inside linebacker and No. 13 player in Ohio for 2019.

Now there's a player who has played above his ranking!

He led Ohio State in tackles against Michigan last season. Here's hoping he puts in an even better effort against the Wolverines this year and closes out his regular-season career with a bang.

Trials Still Available

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