

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 43, No. 12

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Dec. 2, 2023

## BACK-TO-BACK-TO-BACK



SONNY BROCKWAY

**START OF A STREAK** — A negative streak has officially formed for Ohio State when it comes to The Game. The Buckeyes have now lost three straight to Michigan following a 30-24 loss on Nov. 25 in which Ohio State saw struggles in all three phases.

### OSU Mistakes Result In Third Straight Loss To U-M, 30-24

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The leadup to the 119th edition of The Game between Ohio State and Michigan on Nov. 25 in Ann Arbor was perhaps the strangest this rivalry has seen.

The Wolverines had been enveloped over the preceding month in a sign-stealing scandal, resulting in head coach Jim Harbaugh's suspension on Nov. 10 being

upheld just over a week before the contest. The Buckeyes, meanwhile, were determined in their quest to stop a Michigan winning streak, and other implications hung over the game within the Big Ten and national title race.

Despite all of that noise — the talk of Michigan being a better team, the impact of the Wolverines' sign stealing and 110,615 fans in The Big House — Ohio State ended up with all it could ask for as the game approached the final stage: a

chance.

Trailing 30-24 with just one minute remaining and no timeouts, Ohio State had gains of 22 and 21 yards from quarterback Kyle McCord to wideouts Marvin Harrison Jr. and Julian Fleming, respectively, that got the Buckeyes down to Michigan's 37-yard line.

But that chance — to score, end a two-game winning streak for Michigan and nullify the wrongs of the last two seasons — evaporated on the next play when McCord faced immediate pressure with the left side of the offensive line collapsing, airing a ball toward Harrison as he was hit that was intercepted by Michigan safety Rod Moore, ending the game with a 30-24 advantage for the Wolverines.

It was an extended 365-day buildup to The Game, with countless practices, film sessions and preparation, but it came crashing down in just one play, with the Buckeyes extending their losing streak to Michigan to three games for the first time

since 1995-97.

"It's hard to describe," head coach Ryan Day said. "I'm just sick, the fact that we came up short in this game. You work your whole year for it, and we came up short."

It was McCord's final interception that cost Ohio State, but it was far from the only costly mistake that led to a loss. McCord's day, in fact, was bookended by interceptions. Just his fifth pass of the day was picked off — resulting in an early Michigan touchdown four plays later to go up 7-0 — before his final pass wound up in the arms of a Wolverine defender.

"Not a good start," Day said. "You want to have a quick start. They made a nice play. I'd have to see it on film, but I know he was playing a little bit of inside leverage there and Kyle just fired it in there on a slant. It's a bang-bang play, so I'll have to look at the film and find out exactly what

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## Buckeye Leaves

*Ohio State suffered a third consecutive loss to Michigan on Nov. 25, falling 30-24 in Ann Arbor following a late interception from quarterback Kyle McCord. While Buckeye Leaves are often in short supply following a loss – especially one to the Wolverines – here are some choices (or lack thereof) 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:** Defensive end Jack Sawyer once again showed why he was a five-star recruit against the Wolverines with another strong performance off the edge. Sawyer seemed to be all over the field the entire game and was key in the run game with three solo tackles. He also racked up another significant sack when he and Mike Hall Jr. teamed up to bring down J.J. McCarthy in the second quarter.

All in all, Sawyer ended up with six tackles (one for loss) and the previously mentioned sack, giving him another impressive showing in what could be his final few games as a Buckeye.

**Braden Moles, BSB:** Ohio State wide receiver Julian Fleming has had a tough go of it for much of his career with the Buckeyes, but he was a star for Ohio State against Michigan.

Fleming hauled in arguably two of the most important passes of his tenure with Ohio State, including a 28-yarder that put the Buckeyes in scoring position to tie the game early in the fourth and a later 22-yard reception on Ohio State's final drive.

He finished with three catches for 58 yards, not as much as some of his teammates, but his impact was noticeable throughout the contest.

**Greg Wilson, BSB:** The best wide receiver in college football left his mark in the best game in college football this season. Marvin

Harrison Jr. was the team leader in yards again with five catches for 118 yards, and catches that came in big situations.

He also got into the end zone again in the fourth quarter with a 14-yard touchdown to bring the Buckeyes back within 27-24 when they desperately needed a score to stay in the game. It didn't end up mattering because they fell to the Wolverines for the third straight year, but not by any fault of Harrison.

### Subscribers

**Michael Bauer:** I'll hold my peace. Lose to Michigan and you get no consolation prizes.

**Terrier Buck:** I guess I like the three mentioned (Fleming, Harrison, Sawyer). Maybe give some credit to Jayden Fielding for making 1 of 2 field goals. It's unfortunate that Michigan called timeout before the second one from 52 yards was good.

**PeyoteBuck:** My Buckeye leaves are wilted. They went up there and fought and had a great year up to now. We will get them next year. Still love my Bucks.

**BuckeyeScott:** The township came and got all the Buckeye Leaves we raked up.

**Tiffin Buckeye:** None.

**Mcarr:** Fleming. He's the forgotten man among Ohio State receivers and I think he had his best game as a Buckeye. And Harrison always deserves a Buckeye leaf.

**RITBDBITL:** Marvelous Marvin.

**John Lanning:** This reminds me of "Mudville" when mighty Casey struck out. But there were several good performances. Leaves to Harrison for another 100-plus yards, Sawyer for a strong game, and Fielding. The season's not over.

**BOB CODY:** No Buckeye leaves after a loss.

## From The Message Board

**Ohio State and head coach Ryan Day suffered a third consecutive loss to Michigan on Nov. 25, dropping a 30-24 game in Ann Arbor. With Day and several of his decisions during The Game a popular topic, we asked readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum how confident they feel in Day as Ohio State's head coach and his ability to lead the Buckeyes to their goals, namely beating Michigan, winning the Big Ten and winning a national championship. Here are some of the responses:**

"Who in his right mind would want Day's job? Or that of any collegiate coach? The stress and pressure must be enormous. Maybe Day should take the money and run."  
– slimjim

"I'm 100 percent confident in Day. I can't think of anyone I'd prefer to have as the coach at Ohio State, period."  
– Terrier Buck

"I have faith in Day. Next year will make this year feel like a bad dream you had after a late-night visit to White Castle. Air Noland is coming in, Tavien St. Clair too, and Devin Brown is currently developing. Brian Hartline's recruiting is our best weapon."  
– PeyoteBuck

"Lou Holtz said he didn't want to follow Woody Hayes as OSU's coach but wanted to follow the guy who followed Woody. Point being, it's a tough act to follow. So now Day follows Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer. Day is an excellent coach. He will evaluate the program, prioritize our needs, make changes, and implement his plan. He's a fine coach."  
– John Lanning

"In five years at the helm, Day has proven he is one of the top two or three coaches in the country. In terms of recruiting, building a program, running a program (cleanly) and

directing the product on the field, there are few better. I don't think Nick Saban or Kirby Smart are coming here, and Smart is lucky to have last year's championship after Day battled him toe-to-toe. If COVID hadn't interrupted Day's success against TTUN (not to mention possible cheating) we might not be having this conversation. He represents Ohio State well, and I am happy to have him."

– Poster That Harley Built

"Unless Meyer is willing to come back (and I think his offense may be obsolete), Day is our best bet."  
– Mcarr

"During the last 35 years, Buckeye coaches from Ohio are 16-2 against Michigan. Buckeye coaches not from Ohio are 3-13-1. It seems pretty simple to me. Day is a good coach and a quality person, just like John Cooper. But just like Cooper, we are in for a lot of disappointment every Thanksgiving weekend as long as Day is the coach. He was way too conservative this year. Tressel and Meyer both took many chances and won. Worrying about making mistakes assures that you will make them. I wish Day was a championship coach, and I hope I'm wrong. But he's not the guy."  
– CLIFFORD A

"I'm 100 percent behind Day. Great coach, great recruiter, great human being. He's not another Cooper, and to suggest that is patently absurd. As a third-generation OSU grad and lifetime resident of Columbus, there's no one else I'd rather have as our head coach."  
– BOB CODY

"Getting rid of Day would be a moronic – I repeat, moronic – idea and anybody that even remotely considers that needs their heads examined. Fact is he's 56-7 as head coach. Sure I want him to beat Michigan as much as everybody else but there isn't another coach in my mind who would realistically come here that would be better."  
– Tiffin Buckeye

"There are only four active college coaches that have a national championship in their resume: Mack Brown (72), Saban (72), Smart (47) and Dabo Swinney (54), and they are not going anywhere. Tell me who has a better record than Day (44) as a head coach among those active coaches that don't have a national championship?"  
– BuckeyeScott

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Integrity And Morals

The Buckeyes outplayed Michigan, but whoever makes the fewest errors usually is the winner and it proved to have happened in this game. It is Coach Ryan Day's first loss to Michigan. The other losses were because of cheating. And if you never played or coached college football, you have no idea what advantage you have if you know your opponent's defensive or offensive plays. I do wish Michigan good luck in the Big Ten Championship and College Football Playoffs. I firmly believe Jim Harbaugh should never be allowed to coach again, college or pros. Whatever happened to coaches' integrity and morals? Michigan's coaching staff hit an all-time low. Sad that players are ex-

posed to this lowlife conduct.

**Fred Bernheisel  
Bowling Green, Ohio**

### The Game

Can it be that Ryan Day has become our Lloyd Carr?

**Ed Violet  
Columbus**

### McCord's Grounding Calls

In the Nov. 18 issue of BSB, Mark Rea's column criticized Kyle McCord for lack of judgment in committing intentional grounding penalties. I don't get it. On all the grounding penalties I can recall, Kyle was a second from getting sacked and unloaded the ball. If he takes the sack, we lose yardage and the down. If intentional grounding is called, we lose the same yard-

age and the down. Nothing lost. By throwing it away there is a chance that a grounding penalty is not called, and we get the ball back at the original line of scrimmage. Possible yards to be gained by throwing it away. Good judgment in my book.

**Phil Haas  
Marion, Ohio**

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

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

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

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

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

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

The next issue (Dec. 16 cover date) will be mailed the week of Dec. 16.

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

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# Buckeyes Fall Just Short Vs. U-M

This is not going to be a popular opinion in and around Buckeye Nation, but Kyle McCord did not lose the Michigan game. Neither did Donovan Jackson, Emeka Egbuka, Tommy Eichenberg, Sonny Styles, Jayden Fielding or Ryan Day.

The cold, hard truth is that Ohio State – as a team – lost an extremely hard-fought 30-24 decision to Michigan because the Wolverines made plays when they needed them most and the Buckeyes did not.

Before Ohio State made its last-ditch effort to pull victory out of the jaws of defeat, I received a text from a friend who is typically negative even when the Buckeyes are playing well. “Outplayed and outcoached,” it read, and he received a simple one-word response from me, suggesting his comment was something akin to what comes out of the south end of a northbound bull.

While it’s true that Michigan made more decisive plays than Ohio State, that doesn’t mean the home team outplayed the visitors. It also doesn’t mean the Jim Harbaugh-less Wolverines had a better battle plan than Day and his staff. As much as we don’t want to admit it, the football sometimes doesn’t bounce your way, and this year’s Ohio State-Michigan game was a perfect example.

I think it would be ridiculous to question the heart of the Ohio State team. Heck, even Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy – as cocky a customer as there is in college football – acknowledged as much after the game, saying, “So much respect to Ohio State. ... They played their hearts out.” The Buckeyes played from behind almost the entire game and came back time after time.

Yes, McCord made some mistakes. He assumed star receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. would get inside position on a slant pattern early in the first quarter and assumed wrong. U-M cornerback Will Johnson managed to jump the route, grab the interception and set his team up at the Ohio State 7-yard line. Cornerbacks jumping a slant route is a rarity seldom seen even in the NFL, but credit Johnson for making that play and giving Michigan the ability to take an early 7-0 lead.

Many first-year starting quarterbacks, especially those making their first start in front of a crowd of more than 110,000 out for blood, would have wilted after that early INT. Instead, McCord completed 16 of his next 24 attempts for 251 yards and two touchdowns against the No. 2 pass defense in the country. His final throw was an interception with just 25 seconds remaining, but it was under heavy pressure from Michigan edge rusher Jaylen Harrell, who bull-rushed his way through Jackson to jostle McCord just enough to alter the trajectory of the throw.

McCord’s slow start was exacerbated by a third-down drop by Egbuka during Ohio State’s first possession of the game. Had Egbuka made that catch for a first down, perhaps the entire complexion of the game would have changed. And perhaps it might have made no difference at all.

Egbuka recovered enough to grab three receptions for 25 yards, including a 3-yard touchdown catch to keep things close in the second quarter. And he was the one who pounced on Julian Fleming’s fumble at the U-M 37 during Ohio State’s last-second drive.

Eichenberg seemed to get exposed as a weak link in the OSU defense on Michigan’s first possession of the second half. He whiffed on a tackle against U-M tight end Colston Loveland that wound up becoming a 21-yard gain, and on the next play, he failed to set an edge and allowed backup QB Alex Orji to skirt around the right end for a gain

of 20 yards.

But he helped stuff Orji for a minimal 2-yard gain on the next play, and the Wolverines wound up settling for a field goal.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Eichenberg wound up with seven tackles in the game, the same number as Styles, who was a quarter-step too late to stop Michigan running back Blake Corum from converting a fourth-and-1 play into a first down early in the second quarter. He also let Loveland get behind him for a 34-yard gain on a tailback pass from Donovan Edwards early in the fourth quarter. But three plays later, Styles sniffed out a sideline screen, a third-down play that resulted in a 5-yard loss and forced another Michigan field goal.

I disagreed with Day’s decision to kill the clock at the end of the first half after his offense had fought its way out from its own 2-yard line to the Michigan 34 with about 38 seconds left. It was fourth-and-2, and would have made for a gutsy call had Day decided to go for a first down in that situation. Instead, he allowed the clock to run down to 0:03 before asking Fielding to make a 52-yard field goal – something the OSU kicker has not done at the collegiate level. Fielding made a practice kick from that distance after Michigan called timeout to ice him but then hooked the try that counted.

But that was just one decision over the course of an entire game during which I thought the Buckeyes otherwise went toe to toe with their archrivals.

The play call on Egbuka’s touchdown was a thing of beauty. Off play-action with everyone moving to their left, an in-motion Egbuka created an impossible matchup for Michigan cornerback Ja’Den McBurrows. The DB made up ground as quickly as he could and even got to Egbuka at the goal line, but the OSU receiver powered his way through McBurrows and into the end zone.

Likewise, the red-zone call midway through the fourth quarter to shake Harrison loose in the middle of the field was played to perfection. Taking advantage of soft zone coverage, Harrison ran a simple crossing pattern that resulted in what might have been McCord’s easiest throw of the day. The OSU receiver caught the ball at about the 10-yard line and ran untouched into the end zone.

That touchdown might never have happened without another ingenious call that occurred two plays before it. Staring at a 10-point deficit with the clock winding under 10 minutes to play, the Buckeyes faced what appeared to be an obvious passing situation with third-and-8 at the Michigan 23. Instead, Day reached deep into his playbook and called a formation that pushed running back TreVeyon Henderson out wide to the left and brought utilityman Xavier Johnson into the backfield at the pistol spot.

But rather than set up for a pass, McCord handed off to Johnson, who took full advantage of excellent blocking on a simple counter play to pick up 9 yards and sustain the drive. Two plays later, Harrison was in the end zone to close OSU’s deficit to 27-24 with 8:05 remaining.

As I mentioned in the opening, the game – as it often has through the years – came down to a play here and a play there. How

different might things have been had officials reversed their decision on Michigan’s second touchdown and ruled that OSU cornerback Denzel Burke had indeed dislodged the ball from U-M receiver Roman Wilson? It seemed to me there was enough evidence to give Burke the interception, but calls made on the field in that type of situation usually stand.

For the past two years, I have been extremely disappointed with the play of the Buckeyes against Michigan. I don’t feel that way this year. Yes, it would have been a much better outcome – especially in view of Harbaugh’s continued troubles off the field – had Ohio State beaten its archrivals. But sometimes teams facing distractions can channel that inward and use it to their benefit. I think that is what happened Nov. 25 in Ann Arbor.

So ... disappointing? Certainly. End of the world stuff? Hardly.

### Moving Forward

If this were 2024 already, there wouldn’t be nearly as much fuss. Ohio State would already have sewed up one of the 12 spots in the expanded College Football Playoff field, so the Buckeyes could conceivably get another shot at their archrivals.

But it’s not next year, and a third straight loss to Michigan is going to sting just as badly – if not more so – than the previous two.

Right or wrong, the narrative entering the game was that the 2021 and 2022 outcomes were tainted by the sign-stealing scandal. There are no excuses this year, and even though the Buckeyes took the Wolverines down to the last 25 seconds before succumbing, there remains a certain faction among the Ohio State fan base that doesn’t care. A loss is a loss is a loss, and three in a row is unforgivable.

A quick look through the program history books will find that Day is now among only five head coaches in Ohio State history who have absorbed at least three losses in a row to Michigan. Of the previous four, three were fired – albeit for differing reasons than just losing three times in a row to the Wolverines.

To the dismay of some, and the relief of others, Day isn’t going anywhere unless he wants to. There was a report earlier in the week that had him entertaining an outlandish offer to go to Texas A&M, but that rumor likely emanated from the same place as the one that had Urban Meyer taking over at Michigan State. The Spartans and Aggies have since named new head coaches, and neither is named Meyer nor Day.

Day has a 56-7 record at Ohio State with six of those seven losses coming against top-five teams among the CFP rankings. Recruiting remains at a high level, and the Buckeyes are well-positioned to remain atop the Big Ten standings even when Pac-12 interlopers USC, UCLA, Washington and Oregon join the conference next year.

Meanwhile at Michigan, Harbaugh and his program are whistling past the graveyard. The coach was suspended twice this season – for two separate violations – and was off the sideline for half of his team’s 12 regular-season games. The NCAA seems prepared to sanction the program with Harbaugh apparently squarely in its crosshairs. Additionally, a good chunk of Michigan’s star players will be off to the NFL next year or headed to the transfer portal if their coach doesn’t return.

So, you tell me which program you’d rather be in 2024? The one under the white-hot spotlight of an NCAA investigation or the one with a boulder-sized chip on its shoulder that will be even bigger this time next November?



# OHIO STATE INSIDER

## Harrison Unsure Of Football Future After This Season

While it is almost a formality that Ohio State junior wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. will forgo his senior season at Ohio State and enter his name in the 2024 NFL draft – where he is projected to be a top-five pick – the star wideout was not ready to make any type of declaration after the Buckeyes' 30-24 loss to Michigan on Nov. 25.

When asked about his future at Ohio State during the postgame press conference, Harrison declined to make any kind of formal announcement, saying that he needs some time to talk things over with his family before he puts any plan in motion.

"I don't know," Harrison said. "I don't have an answer for you just yet. It's a conversation to be had with family, coaches, teammates. I don't have an answer for you yet."

If Harrison chooses to sit out the Buckeyes' bowl game and depart for the draft, he will leave the program as one of the

most prolific pass-catchers in Ohio State history.

In three seasons, the junior has amassed 2,613 receiving yards, which puts him at sixth all-time in program history behind Michael Jenkins (2,898), David Boston (2,855), Gary Williams (2,792), Cris Carter (2,725) and Chris Olave (2,711). His 31 career touchdowns rank third all-time behind Olave (35) and Boston (34), while his 155 receptions rank sixth in program history, trailing KJ Hill (201), Boston (191), Olave (176), Carter (168) and Jenkins (165).

"It's been an incredible run," quarterback Kyle McCord said of Harrison's Ohio State career. "I'd love to get another chance to play with him here. I hope this isn't the end of it. But if it is, he cemented himself as one of the best players to ever come through this program. He's a special dude, and I love that guy."

## Harrison Breaks School Record With 15th 100-Yard Game

Harrison made history in what may be his last game playing for the Buckeyes when he recorded the 15th 100-yard game of his career against the Wolverines, a mark that passed David Boston for the most 100-yard receiving games in Ohio State history.

Harrison eclipsed Boston's record after he hauled in a 22-yard reception from McCord on Ohio State's final drive of the game, which put him at 118 receiving yards on the day. He finished the contest with a team-high five receptions and a 14-

## 2023 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Sept. 2	at Indiana	W, 23-3	CBS	3-9, 35-31 loss to Purdue
Sept. 9	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 35-7	BTN	8-4, 40-7 win over Duquesne
Sept. 16	WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 63-10	FOX	7-5, 41-28 win over FIU
Sept. 23	at Notre Dame	W, 17-14	NBC	8-3, 56-23 win over Stanford
Oct. 7	MARYLAND	W, 37-17	FOX	7-5, 42-24 win over Rutgers
Oct. 14	at Purdue	W, 41-7	Peacock	4-8, 35-31 win over Indiana
Oct. 21	PENN STATE	W, 20-12	FOX	10-2, 42-0 win over Michigan State
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	W, 24-10	NBC	7-5, 28-14 win over Minnesota
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	W, 35-16	CBS	6-6, 42-24 loss to Maryland
Nov. 11	MICHIGAN STATE	W, 38-3	NBC	4-8, 42-0 loss to Penn State
Nov. 18	MINNESOTA	W, 37-3	BTN	5-6, 28-14 loss to Wisconsin
Nov. 25	at Michigan	L, 30-24	FOX	12-0, <b>30-24 win over Ohio State</b>

yard score, giving him his eighth game of the season with at least five catches, 100 receiving yards and a touchdown.

This is not the first time this season that Harrison has broken a program record. In Ohio State's 38-3 victory over Michigan State on Nov. 11, the wideout became the first player in school history to surpass 1,000 receiving yards in two separate seasons.

Harrison's 1,211 receiving yards this season rank fifth all-time in Ohio State single-season history, trailing Jaxon Smith-Njigba (1,606), Boston (1,435) Terry Glenn (1,411) and Harrison himself, where he totaled 1,263 receiving yards in 2022.

## No Love Lost Between Day And Harbaugh

Ohio State and Michigan is a rivalry built on mutual respect, but after the lead-

up to this year's game, that may no longer be the case between the two archrivals.

Asked on Nov. 20 whether he respects Ohio State and head coach Ryan Day, Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh declined to answer the question, instead talking about the team's preparation for The Game.

"It's all about our preparation for Ohio," Harbaugh said. "The days, the minutes, the hours, everything leading up to this game, that's where our focus is: preparing ourselves and planning. We're going to practice then execute. Anything else is irrelevant when it comes to this big game week."

Day was asked the same question on Nov. 21 about his respect for Harbaugh and Michigan's coaching staff – which has been under fire this fall for the program's alleged sign-stealing scandal – and also declined to give a straightforward answer.

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## No BSB Print Until Week Of Dec. 16

The next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be mailed the week of Dec. 16. But there is bound to be plenty of Ohio State sports news in the interim, including such things as Ohio State's bowl destination, last-minute recruiting news as the early signing day approaches and plenty of basketball action. There is no reason to wait for your next Buckeye Sports Bulletin to get the latest news. All the news is available in real time at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers.

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

Along with daily posts, we offer reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays. Also, staff members man the Fan Forum, where the discussion is bound to be lively after Ohio State's third straight loss to Michigan.

We want to remind readers that the complete edition

of each BSB is posted at BuckeyeSports.com immediately upon completion of the paper, making the site a must for the readers having continuing mail problems. This service, while not a substitute for your print edition, is a stopgap as your paper winds its way through the postal system and is also free to subscribers.

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"With everything going on and all of the things that are out there, we have stayed away from the distractions and focused on our team," Day said. "We're just going to continue to do that."

Day did, however, talk about the general respect he has for the rivalry, indicating that he and the program show respect by preparing for the rivalry game every day.

"I was taught that the way you respect the rivalry is to work it every day," he said. "Whether it's in the weight room, whether

it's game planning, talking to your players, periods of practice during the spring, periods of practice in the preseason. We do respect the rivalry."

There was also a moment of respect between the two programs during The Game when Michigan offensive linemen Zak Zinter went down with a leg injury late in the third quarter, an ailment that forced him to be carted off the field and was later ruled a broken tibia and fibula.

With a number of Ohio State players

taking a knee on the field near the injured Zinter and Day looking on, Michigan head coach Sherrone Moore made sure to approach his rival coach and shake his hand, while also doing the same with defensive ends J.T. Tuimolou and Jack Sawyer, among others.

### Buckeyes Close To Full Strength In The Game

Ohio State entered Michigan Stadium on Nov. 25 as healthy as it has been all sea-

son, with safety Lathan Ransom the only major contributor unavailable.

The Buckeyes, who have been dealing with a number of injuries to key players on both sides of the ball all year, returned three significant pieces from the injury report in their loss to the Wolverines in backup quarterback Devin Brown, linebacker Tommy Eichenberg and defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr.

Brown, who reagravated an ankle injury during pregame warmups before the Buckeyes' win over Michigan State, was listed as questionable for Ohio State's 37-3 victory over Minnesota on Nov. 18, paving the way for true freshman Lincoln Kienholz to enter the contest. Brown was able to return to the field against Michigan but did not play.


The sophomore finished the regular season 12 of 22 passing (54.5 percent) for 197 yards and two touchdowns, but he did emerge as a weapon in the running game in the middle of the year, totaling 35 yards and a touchdown on 19 carries.

The Buckeyes saw their two returning defensive starters make a large impact in the rivalry game, with each player making key contributions. Eichenberg, who sat out against Michigan State and Minnesota as a precaution after injuring his right arm against Rutgers on Nov. 4, had seven total tackles (three solo). Despite missing two games, the graduate linebacker finished the regular season as the team's leading tackler with 80 stops (2½ for loss), while

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# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

also earning a sack and a forced fumble.

Hall, who returned to the lineup after missing just one game with an undisclosed injury, flashed his talents as an interior pass rusher, where he applied pressure on Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy on numerous occasions, with one in the second quarter leading to a sack from defensive end Jack Sawyer.

While it is unknown if Hall has played his last game in a scarlet and gray uniform, the junior made an impact in the regular season with 21 tackles (two for loss) and 1½ sacks.

## Meyer Quashes Reports Of Day To Texas A&M

In the hours before dropping his third straight game to Michigan, Day's name was surprisingly circulated in a report by FOX Sports and The Athletic's Bruce Feldman, who listed Day as a potential candidate for the open head coaching job at Texas A&M.

Appearing on FOX's "Big Noon Kick-off" pregame show inside Michigan Stadium on Nov. 25, Feldman reported that Day could be open to talking with Aggies brass about a potential move to the Lone Star State, especially if he were to lose again to his archrival, which ended up being the case.

"Don't be surprised if the Aggies don't pursue Ryan Day," Feldman said. "Day is 56-6 (now 56-7) as a head coach, and he came within a field goal in the last second of knocking off Georgia in the College Football Playoff. But keep in mind, the specter of back-to-back losses to Michigan to the hated archrival Michigan hangs heavy over Columbus. ... The Aggies, I think, are optimistic that if (the Buckeyes) don't win that game (against Michigan), that he might be open to their pitch."

Feldman's report was made with former Ohio State head coach and current "Big Noon Kickoff" analyst Urban Meyer listening live on set, who immediately dismissed the possibility of Day leaving Columbus on

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his own terms.

"I love you, Bruce," Meyer said. "No way."

Texas A&M's reported interest in Day became a hotter topic of conversation after Day's third straight loss to Michigan, which has placed him under heavy scrutiny by fans, media members and even former Ohio State football players. But those rumors were laid to rest when it was reported on Nov. 26 that Texas A&M had hired Duke head coach Mike Elko to the same position for the Aggies.

In his five seasons with Ohio State, Day has led his team to a Big Ten championship and three College Football Playoff appearances. Feldman added that Day's résumé may be defined by his losses more than his wins, which includes three consecutive defeats to the Wolverines and an overall 1-6 record against teams ranked within the top

five of the College Football Playoff rankings.

## Ohio State Drops To No. 6 In AP Poll After U-M Loss

Ohio State saw a major dip in the latest AP poll released on Nov. 26 after losing its third straight game to Michigan, dropping to No. 6.

This is the lowest ranking the Buckeyes have had in the AP top 25 since entering their matchup against Notre Dame on Sept. 23 as the sixth-ranked team in the nation.

Michigan, meanwhile, moved up to No. 2, trailing only No. 1 Georgia. The Bulldogs maintained 52 first-place votes, while the Wolverines had 10 first-place votes after their win over the Buckeyes. The top five was rounded out by No. 3 Washington, No. 4 Florida State and No. 5 Oregon, which each moved up one spot. No. 7 Texas, No. 8 Alabama, No. 9 Missouri and No. 10 Penn State rounded out the top 10, while Iowa was No. 18.

Louisville and Oregon State saw the largest falls, dropping from No. 9 to No. 15 and No. 15 to No. 21, respectively, while four teams – No. 14 Arizona, No. 18 Iowa, No. 19 Oklahoma State and No. 20 Liberty – each rose two spots.

In the College Football Playoff rankings released on Nov. 21 ahead of the The Game, Ohio State stayed put at No. 2 while Michigan remained at No. 3.

Both trailed No. 1 Georgia, with No. 4

Washington as the other team in the top four of the rankings. No. 5 Florida State and No. 6 Oregon were the first two teams out, with No. 7 Texas, No. 8 Alabama, No. 9 Missouri and No. 10 Louisville also in the top 10.

The Buckeyes and Wolverines are joined in the Big Ten by No. 11 Penn State and No. 17 Iowa, who will now face Michigan in the Big Ten Championship Game on Dec. 2. With the loss to Michigan, Ohio State is expected to fall out of the top four when new rankings are revealed on Nov. 28 ahead of the final rankings on Dec. 3.

## OSU Now Opening 2024 Schedule Against Akron

Ohio State announced a shift on Nov. 21 to the school's nonconference schedule for the 2024 season, with a previously scheduled matchup with Southern Mississippi on Aug. 31 now replaced with a game against in-state Akron on that same date.

According to a release from Ohio State, the schools mutually agreed to cancel the game to modify their respective schedules. The rest of Ohio State's nonconference schedule includes home games against Western Michigan on Sept. 7 and Marshall on Sept. 21.

This will be the 10th time that Ohio State and Akron have faced off, with the Buckeyes holding an 8-1 lead in the series. The schools first played on Dec. 5, 1891, in a 4-0 win for Ohio State, and Akron's lone

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win came on Sept. 5, 1894, in a 12-6 win in Columbus. The teams most recently played on Sept. 25, 2021, in a 59-7 win for Ohio State in Columbus.

Ohio State's conference schedule will remain the same, featuring home games against Iowa on Oct. 5, Nebraska on Oct. 26, Purdue on Nov. 9, Indiana on Nov. 23 and Michigan on Nov. 30 and away games against Michigan State on Sept. 28, Penn State on Nov. 2 and Northwestern on Nov. 16. The Buckeyes are also set to travel to Oregon on Oct. 12, where they will match up against the Ducks for the first time as Big Ten foes.

### Harrison Named Semifinalist For Several National Awards

Harrison continued to receive national recognition for his performance this season when he was named one of 10 semifinalists for both the Biletnikoff and Walter Camp Awards on Nov. 20 and Nov. 21, hon-

ors that are rewarded respectively to college football's most outstanding receiver, regardless of position, and the sport's best overall player.

Harrison is considered at least one of the favorites to take home the Biletnikoff after proving himself as one of the best – if not the best – pass-catchers in all of college football this season. He finished the regular season with 67 receptions for 1,211 yards and 14 touchdowns, the latter two ranking ninth and second in the nation, respectively.

These stats have also allowed his name to be considered for the Heisman Trophy, although it is unlikely he will win the award.

Harrison is joined on the Biletnikoff list by wide receivers Luther Burden III (Missouri), Keon Coleman (Florida State), Troy Franklin (Oregon), Xavier Legette (South Carolina), Malik Nabers (LSU), Rome Odunze (Washington), Brian Thomas Jr.

(LSU) and Malik Washington (Virginia), along with Georgia tight end Brock Bowers.

The Tallahassee Quarterback Club Foundation was slated to trim the Biletnikoff list of receivers down to three finalists on Nov. 28. The winner of the award will be announced at the Home Depot College Football Awards on Dec. 8.

He is joined on the Walter Camp list by quarterbacks Jayden Daniels (LSU), Bo Nix (Oregon), Michael Penix Jr. (Washington) and Jordan Travis (Florida State); running backs Blake Corum (Michigan) and Ollie Gordon II (Oklahoma State); defensive linemen Laiatu Latu (Washington) and T'Vondre Sweat (Texas); and Bowers.

The Walter Camp award will be voted on by 131 FBS head coaches and sports information directors. Three finalists for the award were also expected to be announced on Nov. 28 with the winner crowned at the Home Depot College Foot-

ball Awards.

### Knowles On Semifinalist List For Broyles Award

Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles – after being named among a group of 57 nominees for the Broyles Award on Nov. 14 – was further recognized for his efforts during the season when the Frank & Barbara Broyles Foundation named him one of 15 semifinalists for the Broyles Award on Nov. 20. The award is given to the top assistant coach in all of college football.

Knowles transformed the Buckeyes' defense into one of the nation's best this season in just his second year leading the unit. Despite an uncharacteristic performance against Michigan where they gave up a season-high 30 points and 338 total yards, his group finished the regular season ranked

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## From The Pages Of BSB

### 40 Years Ago — 1983

Ohio State's 24-21 loss to Michigan reflected a storyline that had become painfully unpleasant throughout the 1983 season: Another close game, another Big Ten defeat.

It was the first time since 1971 that Ohio State had lost three conference games, but this time they were oh so close to victory: six points to Iowa, four points to Illinois, three points to Michigan. So it was off to the Fiesta Bowl on Jan. 2 for OSU, not the Rose, not the Sugar. After the Michigan loss, OSU coach Earle Bruce didn't want to think about it.

"I'm not even thinking about the bowl," he said. "I'm thinking about Ohio State and the Buckeyes and piecing our football team back together. It's been a tough three losses if you think about it. We've been just a few plays away from victory, and we've lost three games. We're a very good 8-3 football team, but that's what we are."

### 35 Years Ago — 1988

It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. Not unlike a Dickens novel, the final game of Ohio State's 1988 football season had a slow beginning, plenty of plot twists and a heart-wrenching ending for the heroes.

Down by 20 points at halftime, the Buckeyes came storming back to eventually take leads of 21-20, 24-20 and 31-27 in the second half before finally succumbing to Rose Bowl-bound Michigan, 34-31.

"Obviously, I was very proud of our football team, particularly the way we played in the second half, head coach John Cooper said. "The comeback we made was, I guess, about as good as any I've ever been around."

### 30 Years Ago — 1993

Cooper termed it his most embarrassing moment in nearly three decades as a college coach. Dan Wilkinson said the way his team played didn't merit a trip to the Rose Bowl. Bobby Hoying said he felt empty. Korey Stringer couldn't look into his teammates' eyes.

All of them were struggling with their emotions as fifth-ranked Ohio State tried to make some sense of getting drilled by archrival Michigan 28-0 in front of an NCAA-record crowd of 106,867 fans on Nov. 20.

But while Cooper, Wilkinson, Hoying and Stringer may all yet have had another shot at beating Michigan, there were 20 members of the Buckeyes who would never have another chance. That was how many seniors there were on the OSU roster and that was how many more Buckeyes would have to go through life with the stigma of never beating Michigan.

"Going through an entire career and not beating Michigan, it makes you sick to your stomach," said senior offensive lineman Jason Winrow. "It's very disheartening."

### 25 Years Ago — 1998

Redemption, vindication, call it whatever you want: Ohio State achieved it by defeating rival Michigan 31-16 in The Game on Nov. 21 at Ohio Stadium.

The Buckeyes claimed their 28th Big Ten championship – they actually would share the title with Michigan and Wisconsin – by virtue of the win. They jumped on Michigan for a 14-0 lead, capitalizing on several Michigan miscues and stuffing the Wolverines' ground attack.

It was how a team once ranked No. 1 nationally should play in a rivalry game.

"I felt like we were going to win the game all week," Cooper said. "I had great confidence in our football team. I thought our assistant coaches did a great job of preparing the football team, and I was probably as relaxed around here this week as I've been in a long, long time – certainly the most relaxed I've been before the Michigan game."

### 20 Years Ago — 2003

Ohio State's dream of defending its national championship was shattered by Michigan on Nov. 22 when the Wolverines pounded out a 35-21 victory over the Buckeyes before an NCAA-record crowd of 112,118 in a jam-packed Michigan Stadium.

Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel tasted his first defeat in the series, which celebrated its 100th incarnation. Tressel missed a chance to become only the second OSU head coach in history to beat Michigan in his first three years with the Buckeyes. Francis A. Schmidt beat the Wolverines in each of his first four seasons from 1934-37.

"We didn't come out and do the things that we needed to do to be the Big Ten champions," Tressel said. "So, obviously, we have to tip our cap to Michigan."

### 15 Years Ago — 2008

This is how a senior class rides off into the sunset. A little more than three hours after Tressel celebrated his 28 seniors during pregame ceremonies on Senior Day, he was situated in the postgame interview room at Ohio Stadium toasting their accomplishments after the No. 10 Buckeyes earned a 42-7 victory on Nov. 22 against archrival Michigan.

One night prior to the game, though, Tressel called a meeting with just the seniors. There, he attempted to express his emotional ties to the group.

"I told them...I've been coaching a long time," he said. "This is my 23rd senior class – I don't know if I'm getting old or whatever – but this is a group that was as unselfish as I've ever seen and as special as I've ever seen and has had as many battles as I've ever seen and accomplished now, I guess you can say, quite a bit."

"They're a special group," Tressel said of players like quarterback Todd Boeckman, linebackers Marcus Freeman and James Laurinaitis, offensive lineman Alex Boone and wide receiver Brian Robiskie.

### 10 Years Ago — 2013

Urban Meyer looked exhausted. Tyvis Powell couldn't stop smiling. But in the moments following the latest edition of The Game, the sentiments among Ohio State coaches and players alike were the same.

"That's an instant classic," said Meyer emphatically. After capping off an 84-yard drive by finding tight end Devin Funchess in the end zone with just 32 seconds remaining in regulation to make it 42-41, Michigan quarterback Devin Gardner remained on the field with his team trailing by one point. Rather than kick the customary extra point to tie the game and likely send it into overtime, Michigan head coach Brady Hoke opted to attempt a two-point conversion – the type of gamble that the coach of a 7-4 team could afford to take against an undefeated opponent.

Meyer called a timeout, hoping to give his defense a rest before the most important play of its season, and the Wolverines returned to the field with three wide receivers stacked to Gardner's right. With Ohio State's 23-0 record under Meyer – and a potential trip to the national championship game for the third-ranked

Buckeyes – hanging in the balance, the Wolverines' signal caller dropped back and locked in on Drew Dileo.

The pass never made it to the senior wideout, however. It was intercepted by Powell, OSU's freshman nickel back who could be credited with keeping both the Buckeyes' undefeated season and program-record winning streak intact.

"That was our season on the line," Powell said. "We had 12-0, the gold pants, chances for the national championship, and it just kind of hit me – wow, I kind of saved the season."

### Five Years Ago — 2018

Winning The Game was nothing new for Meyer's Ohio State. He was 6 for 6 against Michigan as the head coach in Columbus heading into 2018 with his eyes set on a perfect 7-0 start. This time, though, the Buckeyes weren't supposed to win – at least if you asked almost anyone outside the program.

Michigan was ranked fourth in the nation. The Wolverines were 10-1 overall and a perfect 8-0 in the Big Ten. They were favored in The Game in Columbus for the first time since 2004. It was Ohio State that was coming off a 52-51 overtime win against unranked Maryland. It was the Buckeyes who had struggled on defense all year and who were preparing to face the No. 1 defense in the nation in various major categories.

But when the clock struck zero at Ohio Stadium on Nov. 24, it was Meyer's Buckeyes ahead once again. And it wasn't close. Ohio State responded to being the underdog by shellacking the Wolverines, 62-39. Meyer's perfect streak against Michigan stayed alive in resounding fashion. At this point, the Ohio State players themselves could hardly remember The Game going any other way.

"I don't recall the last time they won against us. I was definitely a little boy and we did not want to be part of the team that gave them the first (win) in, what, 10 years?" said junior defensive tackle Dre'Mont Jones.

### One Year Ago — 2022

Within seconds of the clock hitting all zeroes in No. 2 Ohio State's 45-23 loss to No. 3 Michigan on Nov. 26, a clear plan was set into motion by the Wolverines. Several players produced a sizable flag from the sideline with Michigan's "Block M" logo and carried it to midfield before firmly planting it directly in the center of Ohio State's "Block O" logo at the 50-yard line, all the while gesturing to the stunned crowd of 106,787 who watched the Wolverines come into Ohio Stadium and win for the first time since 2000.

The act itself is a relatively harmless one – in fact it was done by Baker Mayfield of Oklahoma in 2017 – but the flag planting by Michigan marked a turning point in the rivalry. Not only did the Wolverines (12-0, 9-0 Big Ten) feel confident enough in a win to plan the spectacle at the game's conclusion, but they were able to follow through, coming into Ohio State's house and issuing another beatdown – the second in as many seasons – and the Buckeyes' undefeated season was brought to an end.

"We'll figure out what's next," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day, who fell to 1-2 against the Wolverines. "I don't know exactly what is next right now, but that's life at Ohio State. I certainly know what this game means to everybody, and so when you lose, it all comes back to me. I'm the head coach, and that's what probably hurts the most."



# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 7

second in the nation in scoring defense at 11.0 points per game and third in total defense at 260.0 yards per contest.

The unit also excelled on multiple fronts, ranking first in the nation in passing defense (147.5) and 21st in rushing defense (112.5), while also earning four defensive touchdowns, tied for sixth best in the country.

Knowles is joined on the list by defensive coordinators Manny Diaz (Penn State), Ron English (Louisville), Adam Fuller (Florida State), Bryant Haines (James Madison), Pete Kwiatowski (Texas), D'Anton Lynn (UCLA) and Phil Parker (Iowa), as well as offensive coordinators Mike Bobo (Georgia), Mike Denbrock (LSU), Ryan Grubb (Washington), Sherrone Moore (Michigan), Tommy Rees (Alabama) and Will Stein (Oregon). The list also includes Missouri defensive line coach Kevin Peoples.

Finalists for the Broyles Award will be

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

## OSU Serves Thanksgiving Dinner At Charity Event

Members of the Ohio State football team gave back to the community on Nov. 20 when they helped serve Thanksgiving meals to over 5,000 people at the third annual "Feed the Need," charity event at TownHall in downtown Columbus.

Running back TreVeyon Henderson led the efforts by helping organize the event, while cornerbacks Denzel Burke, Jordan Hancock and Davison Igbinosun; defensive tackles Hall, Ty Hamilton and Tyleik Williams; linebackers Steele Chambers and Eichenberg; running back Miyan Williams; and wide receiver Xavier Johnson all volunteered.

"I'm just so thankful to be here," Henderson told Eleven Warriors. "I'm so thankful that God put me in this position to allow me to come here and give back and help people that are in need. It's a blessing to be able to be here."

Johnson, who was voted team captain before the season, told Eleven Warriors that he and his teammates took great pride in being able to use their platform to help those in need.

This is an opportunity that he has not taken for granted because of the charitable mentality his family instilled in him.

"One of the things that I'm big on and my family taught me – the core value of my family – is serving others," he said. "Especially when you're in a fortunate situation,

and there might be someone in a less fortunate situation. So wherever I can find a way to kind of escape from football, take a deep breath and serve others, I love to do so."

The Buckeyes were also joined at the charity event by former Ohio State safety Tyvis Powell. He said it is important for collegiate athletes to put things in perspective and use their platform to elevate the lives of others in their community.

"We're more than just athletes," Powell said. "Football can finally get put to the side for just today. There are things out there that are bigger than us, and to be a part of that and help these guys get a good meal and make the world a better place (is important). That's really what life is all about."

## Ohio State-Minnesota Makes History On BTN

Ohio State's win over Minnesota on Nov. 18 at Ohio Stadium was the most-watched broadcast in the Big Ten Network's 16-year history with 2,015,000 viewers, the company announced on Nov. 21. The game also marked the first event in the network's history to surpass two million viewers, according to Nielsen Media Research.

The Buckeyes' matchup with the Gophers eclipsed the previous BTN record of 1.99 million viewers set during an Iowa-Nebraska football game on Nov. 26, 2021. The third-most watched broadcast occurred earlier this season on Sept. 23, when 1.93 million people tuned in to watch Michigan's 31-7 victory over Rutgers.

Sports Media Watch data showed that Ohio State garnered 47.56 million total viewers in 10 games on four different networks. This excludes Ohio State's game against Purdue, which was streamed exclusively on Peacock.

The Buckeyes' two most-watched games through Nov. 18 were against Notre Dame on Sept. 23 (9.98 million, NBC) and Penn State on Oct. 21 (FOX, 9.96 million), which had the first- and second-most viewership those two weeks, though Ohio State's loss to Michigan is expected to be a ratings juggernaut once numbers are revealed.

## Women's Hockey Explodes For Team-Record 11 Goals

The Ohio State women's hockey team continues to make history under head coach Nadine Muzerall.

The top-ranked Buckeyes tallied 11 goals in their 11-0 shutout victory over No. 6 St. Lawrence at the OSU Ice Rink on Nov. 24, setting a program record for most goals in one game. The team also tied the program record for most goals in a period with seven in the second frame.

Ohio State broke the record of 10 goals previously set by Muzerall's program in a 10-0 win over Lindenwood on Jan. 8, 2022. The Buckeyes' 11th-goal was scored by freshman forward Joy Dunne and assisted by senior forward Olivia Mobley and graduate defenseman Cayla Barnes.

Ohio State also had 16 of its 18 skaters record at least a point on the night, and nine players ended with multi-point outings.



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## BSB Quotebook: Michigan 30, Ohio State 24

### Head coach Ryan Day on the run game not being able to get a consistent rhythm:

"There was some traction for sure. There was one drive in particular (in the third quarter) where I felt like we were really rocking off the ball and we were doing a good job. When you go into this game you have to win rushing yards, and that didn't happen. They had more than we did, and that's a big part of controlling the game. It certainly has to do with the last couple of drives. Then the turnover battle. I'd like to say it's more than that, but I'm not sure it is."

### Day on what he saw on quarterback Kyle McCord's interception at the end of the game:

"They were in a zone coverage, and we needed a touchdown there right inside of 30 seconds and they were in deep coverage. I'm not sure even if he wouldn't have gotten hit what would have happened. It looked like he got hit, and they made a nice play."

### McCord on what he was thinking on the last possession and last play:

"The defense got us the ball back down six points with about a minute to go. We had no timeouts, so we knew we had to get the ball moving. We started off with a good completion to Marvin (Harrison Jr.) on the sideline, and then obviously Julian (Fleming's) play and Emeka (Egbuka) with the great recovery. In that situation, they knew we were able to take a shot down the field to get the ball moving. And it looked like they played Cover 2 in the boundary to Julian, and so I went back to Marvin, kind of got hit as I threw it and didn't get as much on the ball as I wanted to. And they made a play."

### McCord on Ohio State running the ball eight straight times on the team's opening drive of the third quarter:

"That drive, we started with a sack, started second-and-14 behind the chains. Marvin made a good play, got the first down, and then we just called straight runs after that. The offensive line did a great job of moving them. Tre (Henderson) and Chip (Trayanum) did a great job of pushing the ball, and to cap it off with a touchdown, that was good. I think that was one of the better drives we had in the game, to be able to run the ball like that."

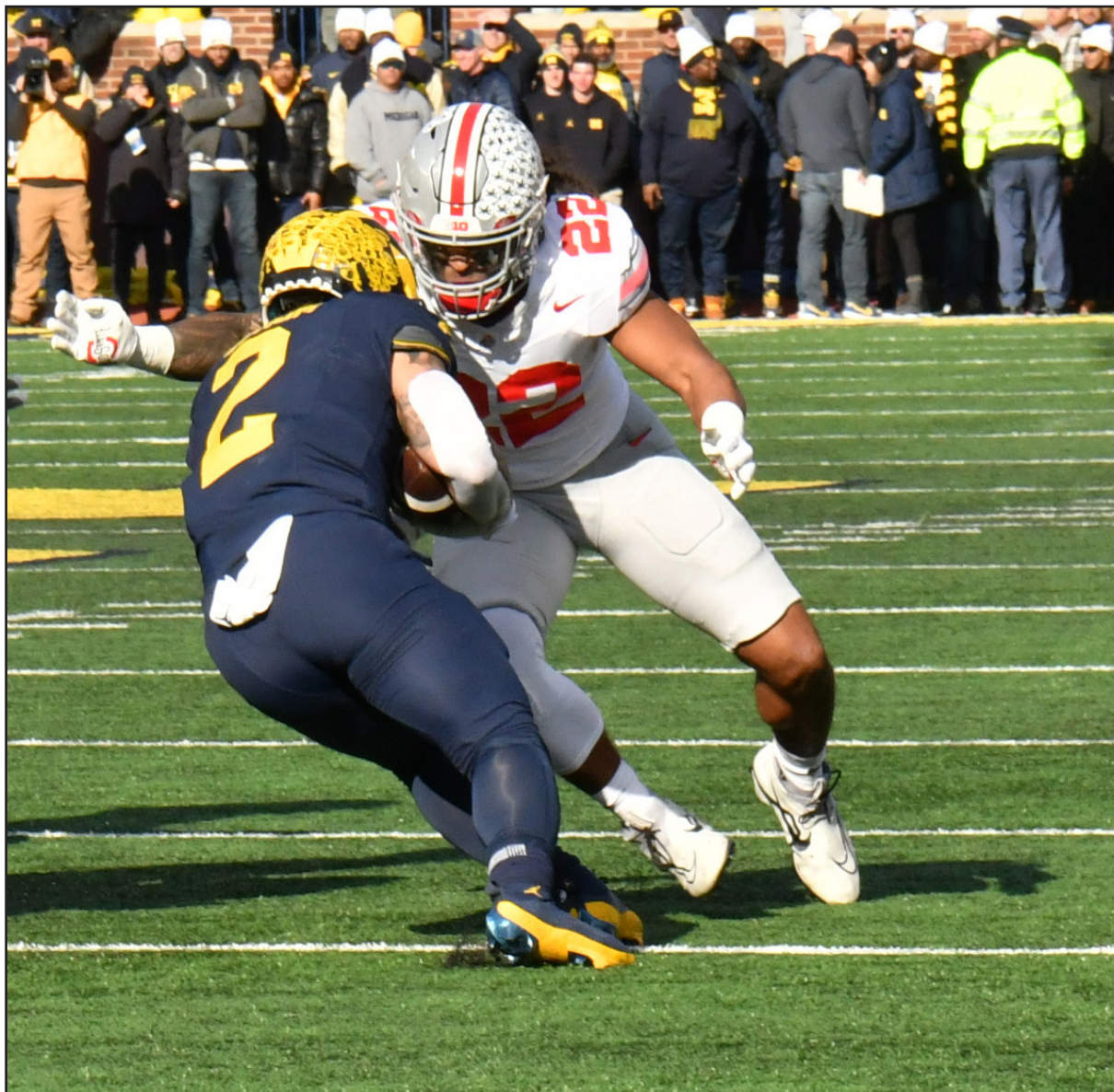
### McCord's thoughts on playing with Harrison this year:

"It's been an incredible run. I'd love to get another chance to play with him here. I hope this isn't the end of it. But if it is, he cemented himself as one of the best players to ever come through this program. He's a special dude, and I love that guy."

### Harrison on what he saw from Michigan defensively:

"I don't know if I've been doubled more in a game than today. The safety helped over the top or inside. I didn't ever see anything like it until today, the bracket coverage in the red zone that we got. I definitely got doubled a lot more today than I ever have."

### Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles on



SONNY BROCKWAY

**DEFENSIVE LAPSES** — Linebacker Steele Chambers (22) and the rest of the Ohio State defense struggled in the 30-24 loss to Michigan on Nov. 25, allowing a season-high 30 points and 338 yards of offense.

### Michigan's touchdown to Roman Wilson that ended up in cornerback Denzel Burke's hands:

"We had a good call, but we didn't make the play. I thought Denzel battled as hard as anybody could battle. He ended up with the ball. That's all I saw. But somebody else makes those decisions, not me."

### Day on what explanation the referees gave for keeping the call on the field for Wilson's touchdown:

"I was told that it was called on the field a touchdown and because of that it was upheld. I didn't quite understand exactly how that was, but that's what they said."

### Knowles on what he saw from Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy:

"He showed he's an excellent quarterback. He made the plays with his feet when he couldn't with his arm, and we didn't. That's what happens in matchup games. You go against great players, and we needed another play."

### Acting Michigan head coach Sherrone Moore on the Wolverines' response to Ohio State tying the game up 17-17:

"Huge. We always talk about never flinching, and our guys

don't flinch regardless of the situation. It was such a great response by our guys. What would you expect from a trained group like ours?"

### Moore on what was going through his mind going for it on fourth down and converting three times:

"Let's go. That's it. The players practiced so well this week. They practice well every week. When you have confidence that they're going to execute at a high level, it's just like first down. I told them we were going to be aggressive and wanted to be aggressive, wanted to attack it. Those guys went out there and played their tails off."

### Michigan running back Blake Corum on if this win feels different than the last two because of the sign-stealing investigation:

"I don't think it feels different. We know what type of team this is. We handle business. Whatever is going on outside of the building doesn't affect us. The only thing that matters is what's going on with this team. I don't talk to other people about what plays we're calling, how's practice going. I just talk to (Moore) and that's all that matters, what happens in this building."



# Ohio State Falters In All Phases Vs. Michigan

Continued From Page 1

took place on the play, but that's what I saw from my vantage point. That was the communication we had on the sideline."

Call it coaching malpractice or well-intentioned conservatism that went wrong, but the next folly came with the Buckeyes trailing 14-10 late in the second quarter. Following a completion from McCord to tight end Cade Stover that put Ohio State at Michigan's 34-yard line facing fourth-and-2 with 40 seconds and a timeout remaining, Day opted to let the clock run out for a 52-yard field-goal attempt – 5 yards more than kicker Jayden Fielding's career long – that went wide left, leaving the Buckeyes with no points out of the eight-play, 64-yard drive heading into the locker room.

"I thought the best thing to do was to decide to go for a field goal," Day said. "Whether it was the end of the half, or if it was eight minutes to go in the second quarter, I would have made the decision to kick a field goal. I wanted the clock to run down so we were out of the half. Whether there were 30 seconds on the clock at the half or not, the decision was made to kick a field goal. I thought we might as well run it down and make that the last play of the half."

McCord's interceptions, Fielding's miss and Day's decision to kick instead of trying for a score were all moments that turned the tides of The Game. But once it flipped to the second half, it seemed as if every Buckeye was involved in one way or another in ensuring a third defeat in as many years to the Wolverines.

The special teams proved negative for Ohio State, with punter Jesse Mirco averaging just 36.7 yards per boot, and in a game of field position, the offense started, on average, at its own 23-yard line. The defense, meanwhile, allowed scores on all of Michigan's second-half drives, giving up a total of 219 yards in the last two quar-

ters. Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' unit, which had allowed just 9.3 points per game entering the contest, gave up 16 points in the second half.

Knowles was not responsible for the second-half collapse in Ann Arbor in 2021 in which the Buckeyes allowed 28 points in the last two quarters, but he was in charge in this season's defeat as well as last year's loss to the Wolverines in Columbus – another 28 points given up in the second half – and he said as much after the game.

"(It was) not enough," he said. "Ultimately, you've got to win this game, and I certainly feel like we were a play short, so that's something that I've got to keep working on."

It was a game, at least on paper, that seemed ripe for an Ohio State victory. The Buckeyes led 378-338 in total yardage, averaged 6.5 yards per play to 5.6 yards for Michigan, had 21 first downs to 18 for the Wolverines and converted third downs at a 44.4 percent clip (4 of 9) to just 25.0 percent (3 of 12) for Michigan. But Ohio State lost in the key areas that have often resulted in wins in The Game: rushing offense and the turnover margin. The Buckeyes were outgained on the ground 156-107 and committed two turnovers to none for the Wolverines, and the team is left with as many questions now as it had following the previous two losses.

"I try to keep what we talk about in the locker room to ourselves, but we're all disappointed," Day said. "We all know what this game means to so many people. To come up short is certainly crushing. Not only because you invest your whole year in it – we know at Ohio State what this game means. There's a locker room in there that's devastated.

"It wasn't by lack of effort, but we didn't win the rushing yards, we didn't win the turnover battle, so you're not going to win the game."

McCord, who finished 18 of 30 passing



SONNY BROCKWAY

**DECISIONS, DECISIONS** – Ohio State head coach Ryan Day (pictured) and Michigan acting head coach Sherrone Moore each were tasked with several high-stakes decisions in The Game.

for 271 yards, two touchdowns and the previously mentioned interceptions, said it was a difficult feeling in the locker room after the game.

"It's tough," he said. "To be honest, there really aren't a lot of words to say in a moment like this. It's one of those games

where you put everything in, and it hurts to come up short."

Speaking of tough, it's a characteristic that Michigan had hinted at in the past that Ohio State lacked, and the Wolverines still seem to believe that.

"I told the receivers this week: 'You've got guys (at Ohio State), guys who put on the Louis (Vuitton), the thousand-dollar outfit,' " Michigan wide receiver Roman Wilson said after the game. "You want to act hard, but when we're out there, they're not hard. I see the film. You're not tough. I don't think I'm the toughest guy in the world, but I'm out there. I'm getting physical. I don't think they wanted it like I wanted it."

What is left to do now? This was the season that Knowles' defense was supposed to take over. All of the work the program had done over the last few years – additions in the transfer portal, fifth-year players returning and coaching hires – was leading to this year, when players on both sides of the ball would make Ohio State a Big Ten and national title favorite, with a win over the Wolverines the appetizer en route to something greater.

Now that has all turned to dust. Several key contributors played in what will likely be one of their last games at Ohio State, the defense showed again that it cannot be trusted even after an impressive first 11 games to begin the season, questions of toughness have once again infiltrated

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SONNY BROCKWAY

**ON HIS BACK** — Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. (18) was one of few Buckeyes with a standout performance in the loss to Michigan, finishing with five catches for 118 yards and a touchdown.

the program, and Day was left with little to say after his record against Michigan fell to just 1-3.

"It's just after the game, so it's hard to start thinking about all of that," Day said. "I'm just trying to process the game right now, and we'll go from there."

Once he decides to start thinking about where to go from here, all roads should lead to Ohio Stadium on Nov. 30, 2024, when the Buckeyes will be looking to defeat Michigan for the first time in 1,827 days.

### Last Of An Era

Adding insult to injury for Ohio State is that while this will not be the last iteration of The Game, it may be the last with significant implications for either team in a given season.

Bragging rights will continue to exist, sure, but a loss for either Ohio State or Michigan against the other that has traditionally represented elimination from the

conference and national title race will no longer be quite the season-ender that it has been in the past.

Next season will feature the introduction of the 12-team College Football Playoff and the elimination of divisions within the Big Ten.

To that first point, the playoff will be reserved for the six highest-ranked conference champions, who will each receive automatic bids, as well as six at-large bids that can be earned by any team. Dating back to the first set of final College Football Playoff rankings in 2014, Ohio State has been ranked in the top 12 in every season, while Michigan has finished in the top 12 in 2016, 2018 and 2021-22, with top-14 finishes in 2015 and 2019.

With the way the Wolverines have played over the last few seasons, there's an expectation that both they and Ohio State will remain as consistent contenders in the College Football Playoff, meaning that a win in The Game may not be the

prerequisite it once was to compete for a national championship.

When it comes to the divisional race, gone will be the Big Ten East and West, with division winners heading to the Big Ten Championship Game. Instead, the conference will take the two teams with the best conference winning percentage – to little surprise, that is likely to be Michigan and Ohio State. Going off that metric, the Buckeyes and Wolverines would have been the Big Ten's representatives in three of the last five conference title games and would have done so this season regardless of Michigan's win.

It's likely in a given year moving forward that Ohio State and Michigan could play twice in a season, likely back-to-back, which could take some heat off the traditional matchup after Thanksgiving. But even if the stakes are not as high as they once were, this is still a game that will be at the forefront for both teams.

"I'm sure there'll always be just as much on the line when these two teams play," Day said on Nov. 21. "And certainly, it will be different. But I don't think it will change anything just (because of) the format. The format will certainly change next year, but I don't think the rivalry will ever be anything less than it is right now."

### What's Next

Ohio State was able to endure a loss to Michigan last season and still earn a backdoor bid to the College Football Playoff, but the cards are unlikely to fall the Buckeyes' way this time around after another loss to the Wolverines.

Entering conference championship weekend, college football still has four undefeated teams at 12-0, including Florida State, Georgia, Michigan and Washington, not to mention one-loss teams in Alabama (11-1), Oregon (11-1) and Texas (11-1) that will compete in their respective conference championship games.

With only four spots remaining, it's difficult to see a path for Ohio State to the College Football Playoff and the team's fourth appearance in five years. The most

likely scenario would be wins by Georgia, Michigan and Washington in their respective title games and upsets by Oklahoma State and Louisville, respectively, in the Big 12 and ACC Championship Games, but those are a lot of results that would need to go Ohio State's way.

And given the chance after Ohio State's loss to Michigan to make a case for his team, Day's response is unlikely to persuade anybody who was on the fence.

"I haven't even thought that far," he said. "Everything is so focused on this game. I have to process this. We have a very good team, but we came up short today and it's devastating. But I believe in our players. We have a veteran team. We have a team that is solid in all three phases. I'd have to see what else is out there. I've been so focused on this game."

"I appreciate the question, but I don't have a great answer for you right now. I do believe this team can play with anybody in the country."

The best option for Ohio State at this point, assuming the College Football Playoff is out of the question, is a potential bid for the Orange Bowl in Miami, Fla., which – according to the College Football Playoff rankings – pits the top-ranked ACC team against the top-ranked Big Ten or SEC team that did not make the playoff.

But there's still some uncertainty there. Alabama – which will face Georgia in the SEC Championship Game – could finish above the Buckeyes, leaving Ohio State to an at-large bid in either the Cotton Bowl (Arlington, Texas), Peach Bowl (Atlanta) or Fiesta Bowl (Glendale, Ariz.). Regardless, it's out of Ohio State's hands at this point.

"We'll regroup tomorrow, watch the film, make the corrections on it, but the worst part is that we kind of have to sit back now and see how everything shakes out," McCord said. "It's out of our control. Last year we had a second chance of life getting in the playoff, and we came ready to play and motivated, but we'll see. The worst part is that it's out of our control."

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# Second-Half Lapses Put Ohio State In Big Hole

Heading into The Game, Ohio State's defense received universal praise for its overall performance this season, with many fans and media members especially lauding the unit's ability to buckle down in the second half and put games away. That was not the case in Michigan Stadium on Nov. 25, however, when the Buckeyes' vaunted defense showed some cracks in its armor in the final two quarters.

## GAME NOTEBOOK Patrick Engels

Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' group looked as advertised in the first half, allowing just 119 total yards and one extended touchdown drive while looking even stronger against the rush with 34 yards allowed. The script was entirely flipped when the Buckeyes exited the locker room after the break, when they allowed the Wolverines to march down the field in each of their four possessions and score three James Turner field goals and a 22-yard Blake Corum rushing touchdown, a sequence of drives that led to the eventual 30-24 defeat.

Knowles admitted after the game that these uncharacteristic mistakes simply cannot happen if Ohio State wants to compete in a game of this magnitude, which had been a major point of emphasis throughout the offseason and during the season.

"I think you saw it," Knowles said. "We

just didn't get the stops when we had to. We had some guys in position and didn't make the plays. You always wish you had just made those plays in the critical moments. I thought the guys played hard, but it's just disappointing for the players."

The Buckeyes' lapses on the defensive side may have been most felt on Michigan's final drive of the game, a deliberate 13-play, 56-yard sequence that chewed up exactly seven minutes of game time. With Ohio State's offense able to cut the Michigan lead to just 27-24 on the previous drive after a 14-yard Marvin Harrison Jr. score, Knowles' unit needed to make a stop to keep the momentum in the Buckeyes' favor and give them a chance to reclaim the lead.

Instead, the unit allowed the Wolverines' offense to march down the field with nine time-shaving rushes worth 42 yards while also staying on the field due to two third-down conversions.

"They did a nice job running the ball," said head coach Ryan Day. "We ended up hanging on in the end and giving our offense a chance to win, but they took too much time off the clock there. We have to get a stop and get off the field."

The Buckeyes did eventually get off the field after defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. wrapped up Corum for a gain of only 2 yards on third-and-6, forcing a Turner 37-yard field goal that extended the Wolverines' lead to 30-24. But the unit may have buckled down too late, giving the offense the ball back with just 1:00 remaining on the clock and no timeouts.

This subpar defensive showing in the second half may have been one of the only blips in the Buckeyes' overall performance



SONNY BROCKWAY

**WEAK FINISH** — After a strong first 11 games of the season for defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' unit, Ohio State's defense allowed Michigan to score on all four of its second-half drives in the 30-24 loss.

this season, which is a credit to Knowles and his staff, but it leaves a sour taste in their mouths that they will need to endure

for the second straight season.

### McCord's Turnovers Define Performance Against U-M

Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord was playing arguably his best football coming into the Michigan game, delivering a number of accurate throws to his skill players and – perhaps most importantly – taking care of the football.

The latter had been an issue in the latter parts of the season, specifically after key turnovers against Wisconsin and Rutgers, and it reared its ugly head again in Ann Arbor.

On just his fifth passing attempt, McCord dug himself into an early hole when he threw an inaccurate pass behind Harrison that landed in the hands of Michigan defensive back Will Johnson, who returned the interception for 18 yards all the way to the Ohio State 7-yard line. McCord's early mistake proved to be the first real momentum shift in the game, where Michigan scored just four plays later on a Corum 1-yard touchdown to give the Wolverines a quick 7-0 lead with 5:36 remaining in the first quarter.

"Obviously, the corner made a good play on the ball," McCord said. "He jumped inside on the slant, so my eyes were on the linebacker, and I pulled the ball and threw it to Marvin and he just jumped it. If I could have it back, I would obviously want to burn that one in the ground and live to see the next play, because we put our defense in a tough situation there."

While this mistake proved costly,

## Game Analysis

### What Worked Well

Marvin Harrison Jr. has been the star of this offense the entire season, and it's been obvious that the Buckeyes are better at moving the ball down the field when he is heavily involved. It was more of the same in Ohio State's 30-24 loss to Michigan, as he was able to bring in five catches for 118 yards, as well as a fourth-quarter touchdown, and he did so in double coverage for nearly the entire game. After the game, Harrison said that he had never seen anything like what Michigan brought at him in terms of several players covering him. It was tough for Kyle McCord – who finished 18 of 30 for 271 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions – to find Harrison, but when he was able to, things went well for Ohio State. All five of his receptions went for either a touchdown or a first down. And outside of the interception McCord threw in the first quarter targeting Harrison, when the ball went his way, the Buckeyes were moving down the field.

### What Didn't Work

The two sidelines had offensive-minded coaches acting as head coach on Nov. 25, but the approach to the game from both of them was very different. Sherrone Moore was aggressive anytime he got the chance, highlighted by the Michigan drive that began at the end of the first quarter and finished with quarterback J.J. McCarthy throwing a 22-yard touchdown to Roman Wilson. Michigan made it that far because of the aggressiveness Moore had, going for it on fourth down twice on that drive and converting both times. The Wolverines converted three fourth downs on three tries, while Ohio State and head

coach Ryan Day never elected to go for it on fourth. Two opportunities, though, presented themselves in the first half. Day chose to punt on fourth-and-1 in the first quarter on Ohio State's own 46-yard line, and then at the end of the first half, Day opted to let around 40 seconds run off the clock facing fourth-and-2 from Michigan's 34-yard line and attempt a 52-yard field goal by Jayden Fielding, which went wide left and was little surprise considering his career long is 47 yards. The decisions all indicated a clear lack of trust in the ability of the offense to pick up short yardage.

### Play Of The Game

Ohio State was in it until the very end with a chance to win it on the last drive. The Buckeyes began on their own 19-yard line with exactly 60 seconds on the clock on the road in a situation that felt a little familiar looking back at the win over Notre Dame. After a 22-yard completion to Harrison and a 21-yard catch by Julian Fleming that he fumbled and saw recovered by Emeka Egbuka, McCord dropped back and immediately felt pressure. Knowing he couldn't take a sack or else the clock would continue to run off, he took a hit and made a desperate attempt to find Harrison but was well short, and it was intercepted by Michigan's Rod Moore. It was McCord's second interception of the game, and it was the dagger that ended the Buckeyes' chances at a Big Ten title, a spot in the College Football Playoff and, most importantly to many fans, the opportunity to beat the Wolverines for the first time since 2019.

— Greg Wilson



## OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN

the junior did show some resolve in his first-ever start inside Michigan Stadium. After the interception, McCord led the Buckeyes on two consecutive positive drives that resulted in a 43-yard field goal from kicker Jayden Fielding and a 3-yard score to wide receiver Emeka Egbuka.

These two drives, which went a combined 16 plays and 124 yards, were defined by two of McCord's best throws of the day, where he first found Harrison on an accurate back-shoulder catch for 24 yards, then floated a pass over Wolverine defensive back Jimmy Rolder to tight end Cade Stover for a 32-yard gain.

These two successful plays seemed to calm McCord down even more in the second half, when he embarked on another two touchdown drives of 75 and 65 yards to cut the deficit, the second of which ended in a 14-yard score from Harrison that cut the margin to 27-24.

But, just like in the first quarter, the game took another huge swing – this time for good – with another McCord interception. With the Buckeyes driving to Michigan's 37-yard line, McCord was picked off again, this time by Wolverine safety Rod Moore.

Although the turnover was aided by an offensive line miscue on Ohio State's end that allowed Michigan defensive end Jaylen Harrell to get a hand on McCord's arm, the quarterback said the two picks were simply mistakes that cannot happen during a game of this significance. This, according to McCord, could serve as a learning experience for him that he could take with him into next year, if he decides to return.

"I think the biggest thing (I learned) was that games like this come down to one or two plays," he said. "You prepare all offseason, prepare all year long. Your season really comes down to a handful of plays, whether you make them or you don't. That just goes to show that the margin of error, especially in games like this, are so slim. It's not the result we wanted, but like I said earlier, we need to get back on the film, correct our mistakes and move forward."

### Day's Decision Before Half Sparks Postgame Conversation

Last season ended by way of a missed 50-yard field goal by Noah Ruggles in the last seconds of the College Football Playoff semifinal against Georgia, a crushing result that many said could have been avoided if Day and the Buckeyes had been more aggressive on their final drive. A similar scenario occurred in Ohio State's loss against Michigan, where Day and the offense once again elected to trot the field-goal unit out for an attempt of 50 or more yards.

With the Buckeyes trailing 14-10 late in the second half, McCord and the offense were embarking on a promising drive that brought the offense all the way to Michigan's 34-yard line with 40 seconds left after a 7-yard catch from Stover on third-and-9. This was the closest Ohio State would get to the end zone on this drive, however.

Instead of keeping the offense on the field in an attempt to gain more yards and convert on fourth-and-2, Day elected to wind the clock down and call his final



SONNY BROCKWAY

**BALL CONTROL — Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord (6) threw two interceptions in the team's 30-24 loss to Michigan, though the second pick — which ended the game — came after he was hit by a Wolverine defender.**

timeout with just three seconds remaining, setting up a long 52-yard attempt from Fielding. With winds swirling all day, Fielding's attempt veered left, keeping the Buckeyes off the board and ensuring the Wolverines a 14-10 lead heading into the locker room.

Day's decision to kick the long field goal was a major point of contention during his postgame press conference, where he was asked three separate questions about the matter. The coach said he chose to send Fielding out because he wanted to enter halftime with points rather than attempting a fourth-and-2 that could have resulted in a turnover on downs.

"I felt like I had 52 yards, it was worth a field goal," Day said. "If you don't get it on — I think it was fourth-and-2, fourth-and-3 — you get no points. I felt like it was worth the opportunity to kick the field goal at least. If we come up short there then it's a turnover on downs, so I felt like that was the right move."

"Early in the game around midfield, we just don't want to give them any momentum. It felt like we could pin them down and play defense. We were playing pretty good early on."

Day's decision — and Fielding's miss — may have proved costly later on, when Turner connected on a 50-yard boot of his own on the first drive of the second half to extend the Wolverines' lead to 17-10. This sequence of events was the difference between a close 14-13 game and a 17-10 deficit, which could have changed the entire tenor of the game in the second half.

### 2021 Class Still Stuck With Zero Wins Against U-M

Ohio State's 2021 recruiting class was

one of the most heralded in recent memory for the Buckeyes, ranking second in the nation at the end of the recruiting cycle and including the signings of five-stars Egbuka, running back TreVeyon Henderson, offensive lineman Donovan Jackson and defensive ends Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau, along with four-stars Denzel Burke, Hall, Jordan Hancock, Harrison, McCord and Tyleik Williams, among others.

While this class flashed on paper, they also produced on the field for the Buckeyes, helping guide the team to a 33-4

overall record along with a College Football Playoff appearance last season, entering The Game. Despite the success on the field and in the stat sheets, many within this class will leave the program over the offseason without a pair of gold pants after suffering their third straight defeat to archrival Michigan.

It's a reality that has quickly sunk in for the players who have grown within the program for three straight seasons, something McCord said will stick with them for quite some time.


"Our future is not really in our hands anymore, so we'll sit back and see what happens," McCord said. "But the 2021 class, those are my brothers, man. Three years where I felt like we were building to this moment, and to not get it done, it hurts."

Exiting the program without a win over Michigan will likely become a formality for several juniors who have each made their mark while donning the Scarlet and Gray for three seasons. The loss to the Wolverines may very well mean the end of Harrison's illustrious Ohio State career. He could elect to sit out of the Buckeyes' bowl game to preserve his stock as a projected top-five pick in the 2024 NFL draft.

It could also mark the final opportunity for juniors such as Burke, Egbuka and Tuimoloau to dethrone their rivals, who are all expected to depart for the NFL next season alongside Harrison. The future is also unclear for other notable players such as Hall, Hancock, Henderson, McCord, Sawyer and Williams, all of whom may leave for the NFL but could also benefit from playing another full season at Ohio State.

Regardless of each player's respective future at Ohio State, McCord said he is confident that he and his teammates can do great things on the professional level.

"We have a bunch of talented guys in that group," McCord said, "a bunch of guys that are going to do great things at the next level. But I know this one definitely stings, because this is what we talked about when we first got here. And to lose on this stage hurts."



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# Buckeyes Come Up Short Again In The Game

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Unlike the past two seasons when Michigan pulled away for blowout wins, this time No. 2 Ohio State controlled its destiny with the clock winding down and the 110,615 fans in Michigan Stadium in a frenzy.

Unfortunately for the Buckeyes, their hope for a Big Ten title and almost certainly a chance to compete for a national championship died at the Wolverines' 22-yard line with 25 seconds left when Kyle McCord was intercepted by Rod Moore, the junior quarterback's second pick of the game, that allowed U-M to escape with a 30-24 win on Nov. 25.

Blake Corum ran for two touchdowns, J.J. McCarthy passed for another and James Turner kicked three field goals for the third-ranked Wolverines (12-0, 9-0), who will be a heavy favorite against Iowa in the conference championship game in Indianapolis on Dec. 2.

Michigan took advantage of a McCord interception for an early 7-0 lead and was up 14-10 at halftime.

Trailing 17-10 in the third quarter, the Buckeyes (11-1, 8-1) tied it on TreVeyon Henderson's 3-yard run, but a 22-yard touchdown run by Corum late in the quarter and a 38-yard field goal by Turner made it 27-17 before Marvin Harrison Jr.'s 14-yard catch pulled Ohio State to within three at 27-24. Turner added a 37-yard field goal with 1:05 left for the Wolverines, and their defense provided the fatal blow to give them their first three-game winning streak in the series since 1995-97.

McCord was 18 of 30 for 271 yards and two touchdowns. Harrison made five catches for 118 yards and a score while Henderson's 60 yards and a touchdown came on 19 attempts.

## Back-And-Forth Start

Ohio State started at the 25 after the opening kickoff on a sunny 35-degree afternoon and went three-and-out. Henderson gained 5 and 1 yards, but Emeka Egbuka dropped a pass that would have been a first down and Jesse Mirco punted 34 yards to the U-M 35.

The Wolverines punted it back after failing to move the chains, and a Tommy Doman 36-yard punt was fair caught by Egbuka at the OSU 24.

During the ensuing drive, Henderson had a catch for 11 yards to the 37. The Buckeyes then faced a fourth-and-1 after Xavier Johnson's 9-yard catch-and-run, but head coach Ryan Day elected to punt from the OSU 46. The Wolverines took over at their 21. They gained 8 yards, and Doman booted a 71-yard punt for a touchback.

The Buckeyes blinked first when McCord's short pass for Harrison was intercepted by Will Johnson at the 25 and returned 18 yards to 7.

Corum ran for 1 yard, then 5, and on third he was stopped in a pileup at the goal line. The play went to review, and it was ruled he did not make it into the end zone, but on the next play he went up the middle for a yard to make it 7-0 at 5:36.

After the kickoff, Harrison made a third-



SONNY BROCKWAY

**NOT AGAIN — The team that wins the rushing battle in The Game often comes away with victory, and that was true on Nov. 25 when the Wolverines outgained the Buckeyes 156-107. The bulk of Ohio State's rushing yards were courtesy of TreVeyon Henderson (32), who had 19 rushes for 60 yards.**

down catch of 24 yards to the Michigan 45. Two plays later, Cade Stover's catch went for 3 yards, and a face mask penalty against the Wolverines added 15 yards to the 27. Henderson got 3 yards, and a pass to Stover was broken up. On third down, after an OSU timeout, McCord's pass to Egbuka was off target, and Jayden Fielding kicked a 43-yard field goal to make it 7-3 at the 2:13 mark.

The Wolverines marched 75 yards in 14 plays over a 6:51 span – with the Buckeyes burning their second timeout – to go ahead 14-3 on a 22-yard catch by Roman Wilson with 10:22 left in the second quarter.

U-M started at its 25, and J.J. McCarthy had completions of 9 yards to Wilson and 16 to Colston Loveland for a first down at the OSU 48. An incompleting and a 2-yard run for Corum ended the quarter.

AJ Barner hauled in a 7-yarder on the first play of the second quarter to set up fourth-and-1 from the 39. U-M used its first timeout, and Corum got the yard needed. Donovan Edwards followed with 4 yards on two rushes, and McCarthy scrambled for 5. On fourth-and-1, he found Loveland for 7 yards for the first at the 22.

Edwards rushed for no gain, and a pass was incomplete. On third down, Wilson snagged the touchdown toss, although it was controversial. Denzel Burke battled for the ball as Wilson was going down, and Burke eventually came away with the ball as

they wrestled to the ground, but the ruling after a review was that Wilson held on long enough for the score despite an extended and heated protest by Day.

The Buckeyes responded to cut the deficit to 14-10 at 6:27 with McCord throwing to Egbuka for a 3-yard touchdown on the end of a 73-yard, seven-play, 3:50 drive.

Looking for a spark, Johnson returned the kickoff 27 yards to the 27. Chip Trayanum's first carry went for 9 yards, and Stover made a 32-yard catch to the U-M 32. Egbuka hauled in a throw for 6 yards, and Henderson's catch went for 7. Johnson rushed for 4 yards, and a holding call on Michigan's Mason Graham placed the ball on the 7. From there, Trayanum gained 4 yards before the pass to the right side for Egbuka.

Michigan's next drive ended with a 49-yard punt that was downed at the 2 with 3:23 left in the half.

The Buckeyes got out of trouble thanks to several McCord clutch throws, but Fielding missed a 52-yard field goal on the last play of the half.

On third-and-7 from the 5, Julian Fleming went full extension to pull in a McCord pass for 9 yards to keep the drive alive at the 14. On the next snap, Harrison caught a pass for 44 yards to the U-M 42 despite being interfered with.

However, there was an incompleting, a pass of a yard to Henderson and Stover's catch for 7 to make it fourth-and-2 from the 34. Day elected to let the clock run down to three seconds before the field-goal miss.

The Buckeyes had 193 yards (156 passing, 37 rushing) in the half. Michigan gained 119 (85 passing, 34 rushing). McCord was 12 of 19 for 156 yards with a touchdown and pick, and Harrison's two catches went for 68 yards. McCarthy was 8 of 11 for 85 yards with a touchdown.

## Too Blue

Michigan came out hot to start the third quarter. Semaj Morgan returned the kickoff 16 yards to the 22. McCarthy connected with Loveland for 21 yards, and backup quarterback Alex Orji rushed for 20 to the OSU 37. Orji then ran for 2 before McCarthy returned. Corum gained 3, but an incompleting led to a 50-yard field goal by James Turner to make it 17-10 at 11:43.

Ohio State drove the field and tied it 17-17 at 5:35 on Henderson's 3-yard run to cap a 75-yard, 6:08 series on 12 plays, the last eight on the ground.

Harrison's 14-yard catch and Egbuka's 15-yarder gave the Buckeyes a first down at the U-M 46. Henderson had three rushes for 12, 6 and 5 yards to the 11. Henderson rushed for 8 yards before scoring on the next play.

Michigan took a 24-17 lead with 1:55 left in the third when Corum raced 22 yards one play after center Zak Zinter was carted off with a leg injury. The drive was seven plays and 75 yards in 3:40.

A key play was McCarthy being forced out of the pocket and running for 15 yards to the OSU 41. Corum ran for 1 yard, and Barner snared a short pass and turned it into an 18-yarder to the 22 on the play

Zinter was injured. Zinter gave a thumbs up to the crowd as he left. The crowd and team got fired up, and it showed on the next play when Corum burst through the line.

Ohio State then went three-and-out, and Michigan started from its 36 after a 43-yard punt and a 5-yard illegal formation penalty on the Buckeyes.

On the first play of the fourth quarter, Edwards fooled the defense with a rollout and a 34-yard pass to Loveland to the 20. The defense stiffened and Turner upped the margin to 27-17 on a 38-yard field goal with 11:57 left in the game.

Harrison brought the Buckeyes to within three at 27-24 with his 14-yard catch with 8:05 remaining. They went 65 yards in eight plays and 3:52.

OSU began from the 35 after the kickoff went out of bounds. On the third play, McCord completed a 28-yard pass to Fleming to the Michigan 25. After an incompleting to Henderson and Henderson's run for 2 yards, Johnson gained 9 yards to the 14 on third-and-8. Henderson was stopped for no gain on first down, but the McCord-Harrison connection worked again on the next play to close the gap to three.

Michigan milked the clock on its next possession that began with 8:05 left and took a 30-24 lead. The Wolverines picked up four first downs before Turner's 37-yard field goal with 1:05 to play, which came when Corum was stopped for a 2-yard gain at the 19 on third-and-6. The Wolverines used 7:00 to go 56 yards in 13 plays leaving 1:05 and the Buckeyes with no timeouts.

With the season on the line, the Buckeyes started from their 19 after Johnson used up five seconds returning the kick 15 yards.

Harrison made a 22-yard grab to the 41, and McCord came back with a 21-yarder to Fleming. He fumbled the ball at the U-M 38 but Egbuka fell on it at the 37.

On the next play, a throw intended for Harrison was picked off at the 22, and Moore was tackled for no return. U-M was assessed an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty after the pick, and the ball was moved back to the 11 with 25 seconds left. McCarthy took a knee at the 9 to end the game and continue Ohio State's worst nightmare.

## Notes

Fleming had three receptions for 58 yards and Stover three for 42. Egbuka also had three catches which gained 25 yards. ... Harrison was targeted nine times. ... McCarthy threw for 148 yards (16 of 20) and a touchdown. ... Corum rushed for 88 yards on 22 carries. ... Loveland had 88 yards on five receptions. ... Ohio State's Steele Chambers had a game-high 13 tackles (five solo). Jack Sawyer had the Buckeyes' lone sack for 5 yards. McCord was sacked once for 3 yards. ... Ohio State gained 378 yards (271 passing, 107 rushing). The Buckeyes had 21 first downs, three more than U-M. ... The Wolverines' 338 yards came on 182 passing and 156 rushing. ... Ohio State was 4 of 9 on third down and didn't have any attempts on fourth. Michigan converted 3 of 12 on third and was 3 of 3 on fourth down. ... The Buckeyes had one penalty for 5 yards, U-M 3 for 33.



# The Numbers Game

## Michigan 30, Ohio State 24

Nov. 25, 2023 - Michigan Stadium, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
<b>OHIO STATE</b>	3	7	7	7	24
<b>MICHIGAN</b>	7	7	10	6	30

### First Quarter

**UM** - Corum, 1-yard rush (Turner kick), 5:36.

**OSU** - Fielding, 43-yard field goal, 2:13.

### Second Quarter

**UM** - Wilson, 22-yard pass from McCarthy (Turner kick), 10:22.

**OSU** - Egbuka, 3-yard pass from McCord (Fielding kick), 6:27.

### Third Quarter

**UM** - Turner, 50-yard field goal, 11:43.

**OSU** - Henderson, 3-yard rush (Fielding kick), 5:35.

**UM** - Corum, 22-yard rush (Turner kick), 1:55.

### Fourth Quarter

**UM** - Turner, 38-yard field goal, 11:57.

**OSU** - Harrison Jr., 14-yard pass from McCord (Fielding kick), 8:05.

**UM** - Turner, 37-yard field goal, 1:05.

Att. - 110,615

Weather - Sunny, 35 F

### Team Statistics

	OSU	UM
<b>First Downs</b>	22	18
<b>Rushing</b>	6	8
<b>Passing</b>	13	10
<b>Penalty</b>	3	0
<b>Rushes-Yards</b>	28-107	39-156
<b>Passing Yards</b>	271	182
<b>Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)</b>	18-30-2	17-21-0
<b>Offensive Plays</b>	58	60
<b>Total Net Yards</b>	378	338
<b>Third Down Efficiency</b>	4-9	3-12
<b>Fourth Down Efficiency</b>	0-0	3-3
<b>Punts-Avg.</b>	3-36.7	3-52.0
<b>Fumbles-Lost</b>	1-0	0-0
<b>Penalties</b>	1-5	3-34
<b>Time of Possession</b>	26:32	33:28

### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) - OSU:** Henderson 19-60; Trayanum 6-37; Johnson 2-13; McCord 1-(-3).

**UM:** Corum 22-88; Edwards 10-31; Orji 2-22; McCarthy 4-17; Team 1-(-2).

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) - OSU:** McCord 18-30-2-271-2. **UM:** McCarthy 16-20-0-148-1, Edwards 1-1-0-34-0.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) - OSU:** Harrison Jr. 5-118; Fleming 3-58; Stover 3-42; Egbuka 3-25; Henderson 3-19; Johnson 1-9. **UM:** Loveland 5-88; Johnson 4-33; Wilson 3-36; Barner 2-25; Edwards 2-5; Morgan 1-(-5).

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) - OSU:** Mirco 3-36.7-43. **UM:** Doman 3-52.0-71.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - OSU:** None. **UM:** None.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - OSU:** Johnson 2-42. **UM:** Morgan 1-16.

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

**INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) - OSU:** None. **UM:** Johnson 1-18; Moore 1-0.

**SACKS - OSU:** Sawyer 1-5. **UM:** Graham 1-3.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) - OSU:** Sawyer 1-5; Styles 0.5-3; Tuimoloau 0.5-2. **UM:** Graham 1-3.

**TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) - OSU:** Chambers 5-8-13; Styles 4-3-7; Eichenberg 3-4-7; Sawyer 3-3-6; Proctor 5-0-5; Burke 3-2-5; Williams 2-3-5; Hall Jr. 1-3-4; Igbinosun 0-4-4; Tuimoloau 0-4-4; Hancock 2-1-3; Hamilton 2-0-2; McCord 1-0-1; Hicks 1-0-1; Kanu 1-0-1; Simon 0-1-1. **UM:** Colson 7-4-11; Moore 5-0-5; Jenkins 3-2-5; Wallace 3-1-4; Moore 1-3-4; Barrett 3-0-3; Sainristil 2-1-3; Hausmann 1-2-3; Graham 2-0-2; Q. Johnson 2-0-2; W. Johnson 2-0-2; Stewart 1-1-2; Rolder 1-0-1; McGregor 1-0-1; Harrell 1-0-1; Hood 0-1-1; Mullings 0-1-1; Benny 0-1-1; Paige 0-1-1; Pollard 0-1-1; Green 0-1-1.

**PLAYERS IN THE GAME - OSU:** Harrison Jr., Egbuka, Henderson, Fleming, Jones, McCord, Fryar, Simmons, Jackson, Hinzman, Stover, Igbinosun, Burke, Simon, Sawyer, Eichenberg, Proctor, Tuimoloau, Hamilton, Styles, Hancock, Williams, Johnson, Inniss, Hicks, Simpson-Hunt, Tate, Trayanum, Chambers, Mathews Jr., Mirco, Powers, Fielding, Styles Jr., Ferlmann, Montgomery, Hall Jr., Michalski, Tshabola, James, Scott Jr., Ballard, Curry, Kanu, Jackson Jr. **UM:** Wilson, Loveland, Corum, Barnhart, Johnson, Nugent, Zinter, Henderson, Keegan, Morris, McCarthy, Sainristil, Wallace, McGregor, W. Johnson, Barrett, Colson, Harrell, Graham, Paige, Moore, Jenkins, Orji, Berry, Hausmann, McBurrows, Doman, Mullings, Thaw, Benny, Q. Johnson, Sabb, Rodler, Turner, Green, Hood, Franklin, Kolesar, Hughes, Taylor, Pollard, Bolvin, Bredeson, Wagner, Stewart, Bennett, Jones, El-Hadi, Edwards, Atteberry, Gentry, Grant, Persi, Moore, Dennis, Morgan, Hibner, Barner, Brandt, Pierce, Goode.

## 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)	L, 30-24	110,615

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

### Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
<b>First Downs</b>	263	184
<b>Rushing</b>	85	75
<b>Passing</b>	156	90
<b>Penalty</b>	22	19
<b>Average Per Game/Rush</b>	142.3	112.5
<b>Average Per Game/Pass</b>	282.7	147.5
<b>Total Offense</b>	5100	3120
<b>Total Plays</b>	774	757
<b>Average Per Game</b>	425.0	260.0
<b>Average Per Play</b>	6.6	4.1
<b>Penalties-Yards</b>	66-522	55-489
<b>Fumbles-Lost</b>	8-5	10-4
<b>Third Down Efficiency</b>	70-151	50-173
<b>Percentage</b>	46%	29%
<b>Fourth Down Efficiency</b>	9-17	13-29
<b>Percentage</b>	53%	45%
<b>Sacks-Yards</b>	22-144	19-121
<b>Time Of Possession Avg.</b>	29:32	30:28

### Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	78	120	103	93	0	394	32.8
Opponents	27	38	31	36	0	132	11.0

### Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
T. Henderson	137	854	6.2	11	75
Chip Trayanum	85	373	4.4	3	40
Miyan Williams	49	158	3.2	3	12
Xavier Johnson	23	155	6.7	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	2
Cody Simon	1	-3	-3.0	0	0
Kyle McCord	32	-65	-2.0	0	9
Team	6	-11	-1.8	0	0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>1708</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>1350</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>45</b>

### Passing

Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Kyle McCord	229	348	65.8	3170-24-6	161.6
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
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>65.2</b>	<b>3392-26-7</b>	<b>160.0</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>52.2</b>	<b>1770-8-7</b>	<b>97.2</b>

### Receiving

Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Marvin Harrison Jr.	67	1211	18.1	14-75
Cade Stover	41	576	14.0	5-49
Emeka Egbuka	35	452	12.9	4-28
Julian Fleming	26	270	10.4	0-37
T. Henderson	19	229	12.1	0-65
Carnell Tate	17	260	15.3	1-55
Xavier Johnson	11	147	13.4	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	0-9
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
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>3392</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>26-75</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>1770</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>8-36</b>

### Scoring

TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jayden Fielding	-	49-50	-	-	15-18-94
Marvin Harrison Jr.	15	-	-	-	-90
T. Henderson	11	-	-	-	-66
Cade Stover	5	-	-	-	-30

Emeka Egbuka	4	-	-	-	-	24
Chip Trayanum	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
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>49-50</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>15-18</b>	<b>394</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12-12</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>14-20</b>	<b>132</b>

### FG Distance

	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Jayden Fielding	5-5	6-6	4-6	0-1	15-18
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>5-5</b>	<b>6-6</b>	<b>4-6</b>	<b>0-1</b>	<b>15-18</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>5-6</b>	<b>2-3</b>	<b>4-6</b>	<b>3-5</b>	<b>14-20</b>

### Punting

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jesse Mirco	41	1755	42.8	0	72
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>1755</b>	<b>42.8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>2841</b>	<b>42.4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>71</b>

### Interceptions

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Jordan Hancock	2	133	66.5	1	93
J. Mathews Jr.	1	58	58.0	1	58
Josh Proctor	1	24	24.0	1	24
Lathan Ransom	1	15	15.0	0	15
Denzel Burke	1	0	0.0	0	0
Steele Chambers	1	0	0.0	0	0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19</b>

### 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	3.0	0	3
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35</b>

### Kickoff Returns

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Xavier Johnson	11	250	22.7	0	32
Chip Trayanum	1	14	14.0	0	14
Caden Curry	1	-5	-5.0	0	0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>

### Def. Leaders

Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Tommy Eichenberg	40	40	80	2.5-8-10.7
Steele Chambers	36	39	75	1.5-3-0-0
Davison Igbinosun	34	18	52	1.5-4-0-0
Tyleik Williams	19	31	50	10.0-19-3.0-6
Sonny Styles	29			



# Gravity Of The Game Differs Across Generations

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

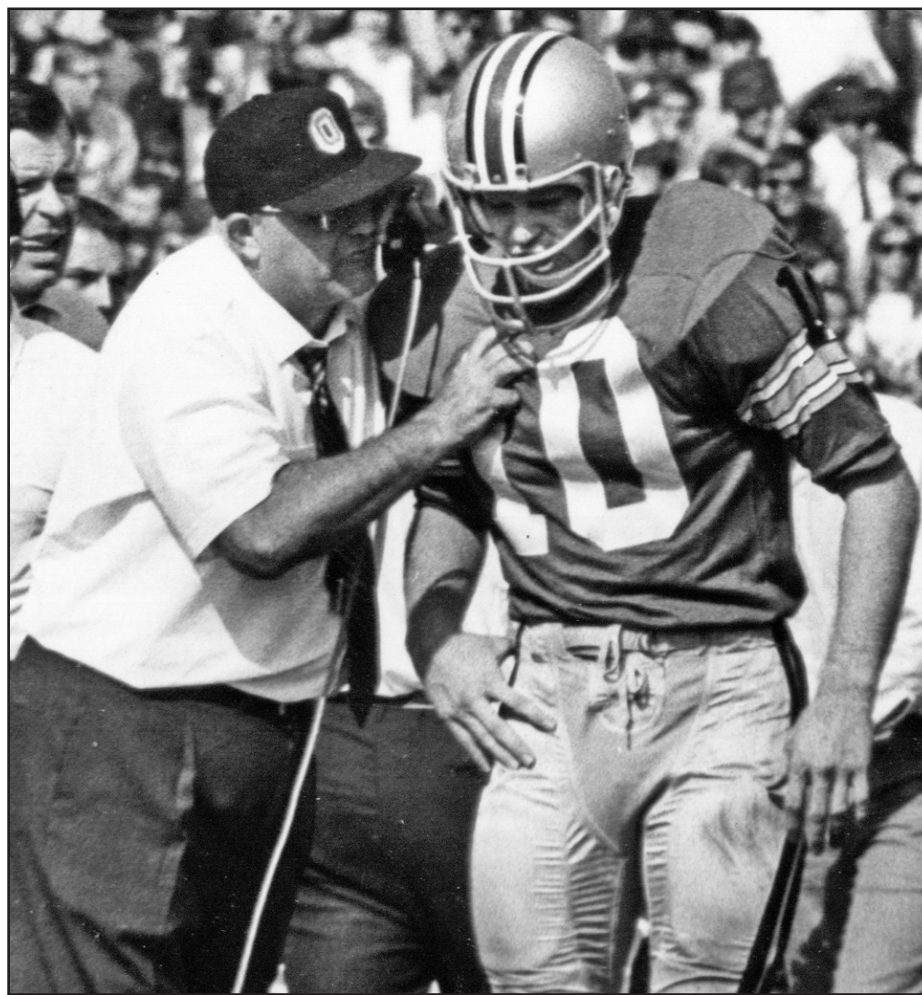
Within the world of sports, perhaps no rivalry holds more significance and magnitude than Ohio State vs. Michigan, known as just The Game. The annual matchup between the two college football powerhouses has evoked a wide range of emotions from fans, coaches and players for 126 years, with the winner of the game happily claiming bragging rights for one year, and the loser doing everything in their power to not feel that pain again the next season.

"Livelihoods are at stake," Ohio State cornerback Denzel Burke said on Nov. 22. "You have to win this game. It's mandatory. We had to live with it for 365 days, and now it's here."

The ramifications of The Game are so large that some Ohio State fans – mostly of the older crowd who are used to life before the Bowl Championship Series and College Football Playoff format – place more weight on defeating the Maize and Blue than winning a Big Ten championship, a College Football Playoff appearance or even a national championship. But are these feelings still true today and uniform across all generations?

"I think most people, especially if they're older, they value beating Michigan (more than a national championship)," said Zach Downing, a 32-year-old Ohio State fan and Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscriber. "And I get it, because before (Jim) Tressel, it was more lopsided towards Michigan's favor than it was towards Ohio State's. The people I mostly talk to would probably go the other direction (of valuing a national championship more than beating Michigan)."

While there seems to be a mix of opinions on this matter today based on age, the same cannot be said in the previous eras of Ohio State football. According to Bill Conley, who played for the Buckeyes under head coach Woody Hayes from 1968-1971 and



FILE PHOTO

**BACK IN MY DAY – The Ohio State-Michigan rivalry appears to have differing levels of importance among fans, with some older Buckeyes – those who would have watched Woody Hayes and Rex Kern (pictured) – preferring a win over Michigan to a national title.**

then served as a recruiting coordinator and assistant coach for the program from 1991-2004, a Michigan victory used to be at the very top of everyone's priorities – both fans and the team included.

He said this was especially the case before the implementation of the BCS and College Football Playoff systems, when the Michigan matchup would be the deciding factor in whether the Buckeyes were going to earn a trip out west to the Rose Bowl.

"Before a playoff system, you went to a bowl game, but even before that, there was only one bowl the Big Ten champion went to, and that was the Rose Bowl," he said. "There was a rule that you couldn't go to the Rose Bowl twice in a row, so the Michigan game was of utmost importance at that point. So many times it determined who was going to win the Big Ten championship, and if you were eligible to go to the Rose Bowl, it became more important.

"Back when I played in my day, it was two separate seasons. You had the regular season, then you had the Michigan game. And it was more important back then to beat Michigan than anything else. That was such an emphasis."

Conley said the high stakes of the rivalry during that time forced Hayes and his staff to prepare for Michigan throughout the entire regular season, where the primary focus each year was to defeat Bo Schembechler's Wolverines. He explained this was especially the case during Monday practice that was entirely devoted to game-planning

for their rivals.

"We practiced for Michigan every Monday of every week of the season," Conley said. "There was no starting on the other team on Monday, that was Michigan day. We started on the other team we were going to play that week on Tuesday. That's how much emphasis it was on beating Michigan back then."

Conley thinks this emphasis began to diminish in the decades to follow, however, particularly when the NCAA implemented the BCS format in 1998 then the College Football Playoff format in 2014. He said these changes, which granted Ohio State a better chance to still compete for a national championship regardless of the result of The Game, allowed coaches and players to think more about the big picture and less about the rivalry.

These feelings, according to Conley, were only more intensified when Ohio State began to recruit and bring in prospects from outside of the Midwest, where incoming players entered campus more oblivious to the significance of the rivalry and instead placed more emphasis on winning a national title and getting exposure for the NFL.

"What has changed, in a lot of ways, is that players now come from all areas of the country," he said. "Prior to that, most players that went to Ohio State were from Ohio or somewhere in the Midwest. Now players are from all over the country, in greater percentages than ever before. In a lot of ways, they have to be really taught the rivalry. It's

up to the coaches, especially the head coach, to instill that into the players. Once they understand that, they buy in really well."

Conley's thoughts about the changing impact of the rivalry and its importance are also reflected from the perspective of many younger fans today. But for many within the older generation, such as Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscriber and Ohio State fan Steven Brown, who has fond memories – both good and bad – of the two schools battling for it all, they still believe defeating their archrivals trumps all.

Brown, who was a sophomore at Ohio State when Conley and the Buckeyes won their 1968 national championship, admitted he had an "internal conflict" regarding this question. But when considering all factors at hand, he still places more value on winning The Game than a national championship, among many other things.

"Everything else in the sports universe – the World Series, the NBA championship ... nothing to me, including the national championship or the College Football Playoff, nothing is as important to me as beating Michigan. That's where my head is at."

Brown believes he developed this opinion while watching the two teams duke it out in '68 and then the "Ten Year War" from 1969-1978, where he experienced the highs of defeating the Wolverines at home in 1968 en route to a national championship along with the lows of falling flat on the road against the Wolverines in 1969 in what was later dubbed "The Upset of the Century."

Watching both these games in person helped him better understand the significance of the rivalry, something he still carries with him today.

"(In 1969), Ohio State had beaten every team by 27 points or something," Brown said. "That upset was probably one of the things that really made me realize how important it was to beat Michigan. Michigan had lost (two) games that year (coming in), and I thought they would certainly win that game. Most people think losing it cost Ohio State a second consecutive national championship."

But like Conley alluded to, Brown believes he, along with many other fans in his generation, are outliers in their opinion in the present era. He attributes this generational divide in thinking to the introduction to the College Football Playoff, which placed less importance on winning The Game compared to when he was in college rooting for Hayes' Buckeyes.

"It's the rise of the playoff," Brown said. "In the old days, if you went undefeated and went to the Rose Bowl, I'm not sure if there was ever an instance where an Ohio State team was not considered the national champion. Since the playoff has been in existence, people care less about beating Michigan."

Brown's thoughts about younger fans putting less emphasis on The Game are reflected in the opinions of Downing, who said that despite what older fans think, he is firm in his stance on a national championship being more important.

"Obviously, I like to beat Michigan, but at the same time, I want Ohio State to win national championships," Downing said. "I feel



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FILE PHOTO

**TAKING A BACK SEAT — Many feel that The Game was considered less important once head coach John Cooper took over in 1988, with the teams of his era treating it as just another game. Cooper is pictured above with quarterback Joe Germaine following the Buckeyes' 1996 Rose Bowl win.**

like that's the main reason why kids come to play at Ohio State, is to get the chance to win national championships. They know how good Ohio State is, so to win a national championship, to me, I feel is more important.

"Like last year, for instance, if they beat Georgia and make that field goal, they're probably going to win the national championship. So in my mind, yeah, they lost to Michigan, and that sucked. But nobody would have remembered it, at the end of the day, if they won the national championship. That's the whole reason you play the sport and why kids come there, is to win the ultimate prize."

Downing thinks he and many others in his generation may not live and die by the result of the Michigan game as much as their elders because they are used to the Buckeyes' mostly taking care of the Wolverines during the eras of Jim Tressel (2001-10) and Urban Meyer (2012-18). These successes were not always the case in Brown and Conley's time, when Ohio State would struggle more with Michigan, even in instances when they were the better team.

"I was born in '91, so I didn't really understand and grasp football until 2000, right around the time Jim Tressel took over," Downing said. "So the older folks that were probably my age or a little younger in the '90s and '80s, they're used to Cooper's 2-10-1 record (against Michigan), they're used to Earle Bruce, who lost to Michigan quite a bit. And then Woody, he always told the players that the Michigan game was the most important game. The College Football Play-

off wasn't around back then, so you almost had to beat Michigan in order to be the final two for the BCS system or before that when the media picked somebody. You almost had to win that game. It's just different now.

"I totally get where they're coming from," he continued. "I think people even now, almost 30 years later, are still scarred from having really good teams in the '90s and it all going to waste because they could never win against Michigan at the end of the year."

Downing said those who have fond memories of Ohio State's dominance over Michigan in the 2000s and 2010s see the Buckeyes' success in a season going beyond beating the Wolverines. But for students currently on Ohio State's campus, nothing is more important than getting revenge on their archrivals.

According to third-year Ohio State student Tyler Danburg, who is the play-by-play announcer for Scarlet and Gray Sports Radio — a student-run sports broadcasting club — most people on campus have been more focused this season on beating Michigan than winning a national championship. In his eyes, this year's iteration of The Game became an increasingly discussed topic that soon became inescapable throughout the school come November.

"It's all you hear about," Danburg said. "Everybody's following not just Ohio State, but you're following Michigan throughout the season. You're talking about their strength of schedule. You're talking about what they've done this season, the off-field things that they have done, the Connor Stalions sign-stealing scandal and Jim Har-

baugh. You are following Michigan as much as you are Ohio State to see what happens and how they're doing when they come into that final weekend in November.

"You're going to talk a lot about the national championship. That is ultimately where you know you want to be if you are a program in college football. However, it's everything everybody's talking about. Even when we're all back on Thanksgiving break, my buddies and I will say, 'What is this game going to be like? How's it going to go down? Who's going to win?' You see the paraphernalia on the streets. You see the M's being crossed off. It just means more.

"It's that fork in the road before the national championship, before the College Football Playoff semifinals. To get there, you have to get past Michigan."

Danburg, who has called nine football games as SGSR's play-by-play announcer, said these campus-wide cravings are mostly driven by Ohio State's consecutive losses to Michigan over the last two years along with the Wolverines' sign-stealing scandal this season, both of which have only intensified the students' desires to defeat their hated rivals.

"One of the things that I've heard from fellow classmates is how these underclassmen, myself included, have not been there to see Ohio State beat Michigan. That's something that a bunch of my classmates have said throughout the last couple of weeks. The fact that that's such a talking point goes to show you how important this rivalry is and how much it means."

Despite the mix of opinions regarding the importance of the rivalry stretching across generations, each person who spoke with BSB ahead of this year's game reached a consensus that head coach Ryan Day's résumé at Ohio State will be defined — fair or not — by his overall record against Michigan, which fell to 1-3 following Ohio State's 30-24 loss to the Wolverines.

"I already think he's one of the best Ohio State coaches that I've personally watched," Downing said. "I really respect him. I think he's a good coach. He's a good motivator, great recruiter. I think he's really gotten some unnecessary flak from fans.

"I can imagine Ohio State fans would want him fired (if he has a losing record against Michigan). I know a bunch of them wanted him fired last year after the loss. A lot of people from Ohio I know felt the same way. The losses to Michigan, especially after last year, they were already turning on him. I would imagine they would probably want him fired if he continued to struggle against Michigan."

"Players and coaches alike are judged by the Michigan game," Conley said. "(John Cooper) was a great coach. He won a lot of games. But he only beat Michigan two times. You're judged as a coach not only by your total record, but your record against Michigan. I think around the country, if (Ryan Day) were to have a losing record against Michigan, he would be considered a great coach. In the state of Ohio, he would be considered a good coach."

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# Media Offer Reaction After U-M Win Over OSU

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State lost its third straight game to Michigan in a 30-24 fight on Nov. 25 in which the Buckeyes had a chance to win it in the final minute. It's the first time since 1995-97 that the Wolverines have been able to take three straight games.

The goals for Ohio State in any given season always have beating Michigan at the forefront, which in most cases would earn the Buckeyes a shot at the Big Ten championship and a spot in the College Football Playoff. It's now been four years since head coach Ryan Day and the Buckeyes have defeated Michigan – with the canceled game in 2020 factored in – and three years without a Big Ten title, though the Buckeyes have consistently found themselves in the national title race for most of Day's tenure.

Here are some reactions from the media across the country about Ohio State's loss in Ann Arbor:

"Kirk Ferentz would be proud.

"Over the course of the last three years, Ohio State and Michigan have essentially swapped identities. Many of us are old enough to remember when (Jim) Harbaugh was the overly conservative coach who couldn't beat his rival, and Ohio State – first under Urban Meyer then under Day – would blitzkrieg The Team Up North by scores like 62-39 and 56-27. At that point, the Buckeyes had beaten their rival eight straight times.

"Then the pandemic hit in 2020, The Game got canceled (mercifully for Michigan), and it's almost like the football gods decided to hit reset. The Wolverines stole momentum back, first with a swarming defense that suffocated future NFL rookie of the year candidate C.J. Stroud in 2021, then with an unexpected deluge of explosive plays in 2022. Michigan by no means dominated the 2023 edition; in fact, Ohio State actually averaged more yards per play (6.5 to 5.6) and gained more first downs (21 to 18).

"The difference was simple: When key moments arose, Michigan went for the kill – kind of like Ohio State used to. And the Buckeyes tensed up – much like Michigan used to."

– **Stewart Mandel,**  
**The Athletic**

"Before Ohio State's game with Penn State earlier this year, coaches Ryan Day and James Franklin met at midfield with one of the biggest bro hugs you'll ever see. We don't know for sure, but we'd guess that Jim Harbaugh's name came up as they engaged in giddy chat like a couple of pre-teen girls at a slumber party.

"Both coaches were afforded great opportunities when the Big Ten suspended the Michigan head coach for their games in unprecedented fashion. With that, though, came something they probably didn't think much about at the time – the added pressure of having to beat one of the nation's most battle-tested teams without him.

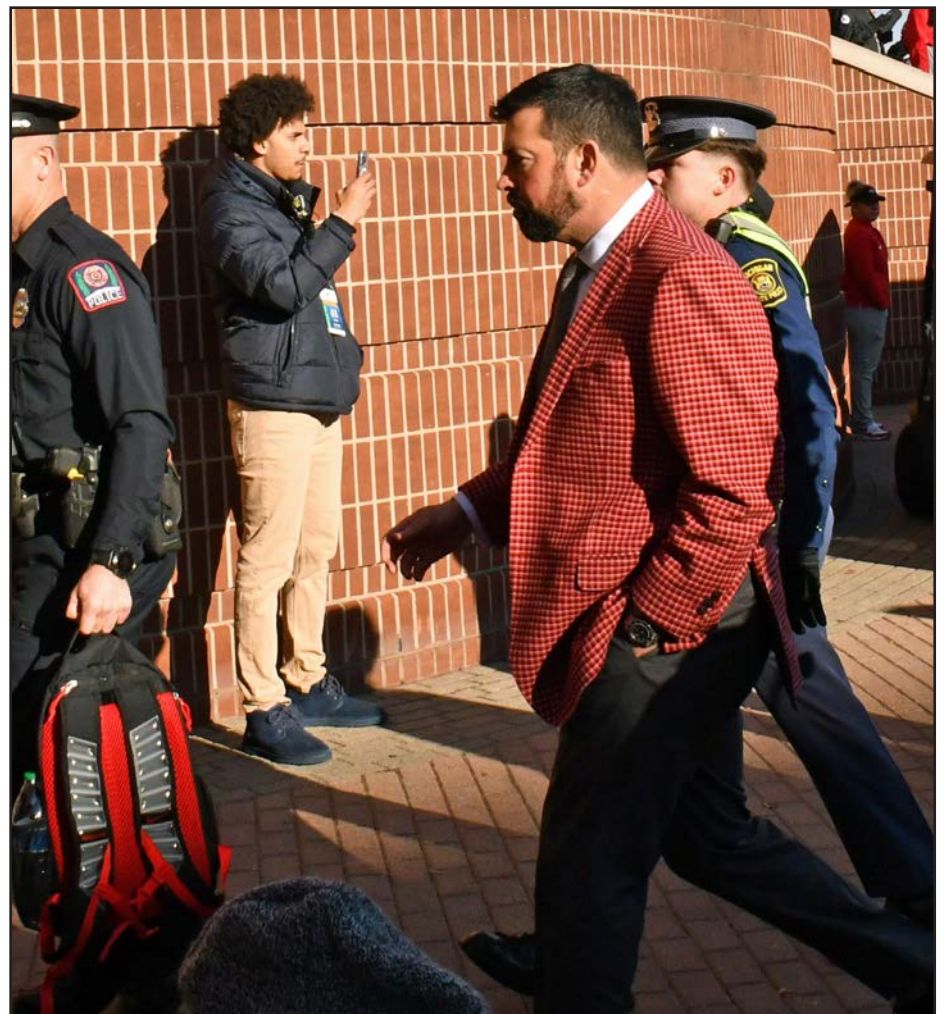
"For the second time in three weeks, the Wolverines overcame all the noise, the B.S. media narrative from the talking heads about sign stealing, etc., and beat a top-10 team. This one – a 30-24 win over Day's Buckeyes – was especially sweet given many believe OSU was behind the private investigator(s) hired to try to take down the program for 'illegal on-site scouting.'

"Like Franklin, Day didn't have quite the same pep during his postgame walk through the tunnel. Michigan vanquished his Buckeyes for the third straight season. And while this one was actually relatively close (unlike the others), it was no less sweet. It was one of the biggest, in fact, in that it should – *should* – put to rest the narrative that Michigan needed anyone's signs or any other advantage than each other to win."

– **Chris Balas,**  
**The Wolverine (On3)**

"When historians document this era of the Michigan-Ohio State rivalry, the final scene will be Michigan fans rushing the field to celebrate a third consecutive victory against the Buckeyes. Two years ago, Michigan fans celebrated in the snow. This time the sky had a few streaks of sunlight. Otherwise, it was the same scene and the same result, another rush of validation for Michigan and another dose of misery for Ohio State.

"This victory was a stamp of legitimacy for Michigan's entire three-year reign atop the Big Ten. It doesn't excuse Michigan's alleged in-person scouting scheme or exonerate the program from potential conse-



SONNY BROCKWAY

**UNDER FIRE** – Ohio State and head coach Ryan Day are left looking for answers following a third consecutive loss to Michigan.

quences down the road. It won't stop rival fans from branding the Wolverines as cheaters. But it showed that, even without head coach Jim Harbaugh and whatever advantage they may have gained from decoding signals, the Wolverines were better than the second-best team in the Big Ten.

"'Everyone's entitled to their own perception of how they view us,' quarterback J.J. McCarthy said. 'They're entitled to their own opinion. We only care about us.'"

– **Austin Meek,**  
**The Athletic (Michigan Reporter)**

"The fact that Ohio State has lost three games in a row to Michigan is problematic on its own. But losing three in a row for many of the same reasons is a bigger issue. And it's one that can't be fixed right away.

"Yes, Michigan is graduating a wealth of seniors – 14 started (on Nov. 25) – so the Buckeyes could have an advantage next season. But there's also a recruiting problem. The Buckeyes continue to miss on the recruiting trail with elite offensive linemen. And though the defensive line has two five-star prospects, it missed in the last cycle.

"Perhaps more than any roster issues, Day's play calling has been confusing, too. The most confusing call came just before halftime when he decided to run 30 seconds off the clock to attempt a 52-yard field goal. Jayden Fielding's career long is 47. He missed.

"Instead of running a play, trying to con-

vert on fourth-and-2 and attempting a more manageable field goal, Day wanted to kick then. He said he would've done it even if it wasn't the end of the half."

– **Cameron Teague Robinson,**  
**The Athletic (Ohio State Reporter)**

"Well, here they are again with a date in Indianapolis that feels like a foregone conclusion – again, apologies to Iowa; they're back and just as incompetent offensively – leading to a likely return to the College Football Playoff.

"And as nice as it was for U-M to quiet the sign-stealing noise and bring Ryan Day near tears (metaphorically, of course), as nice as those results were after holding off Ohio State for a third consecutive season, this program and its practitioners are getting a little antsy.

"They'd just as soon finish the quest this time. As Blake Corum said before the season began: *National title or bust.*

"He meant it, if you were wondering. And was prepared to live with the results if his team hadn't gutted through a grinding, taut slog at Michigan Stadium.

"'This is why I came back,' he said.

"He didn't want to end his career here with an injury. He also wanted one more chance to play the Buckeyes in the Big House. He got his chance. He took it."

– **Shawn Windsor,**  
**Detroit Free Press**

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## OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN

"A win would have unmuzzled OSU coach Ryan Day. He took the high road repeatedly when asked about Michigan's scandalous season from every possible angle. He knew even a 'No comment' could be spun into a viral distraction. He wanted none of those in his team's periphery, since every small miscue or shortcoming became magnified in The Game.

"If that focus paid off and the Buckeyes won, what would Day say then? Ask Lou Holtz. Every reporter on the OSU beat braced for what Day might say into a Fox microphone before leaving the field, or into our voice recorders in the interview room.

"Instead, Day somberly discussed how in a game everyone believes unfolded on the up and up, OSU made those few, key mistakes anyway.

"Walking to midfield and shaking acting head coach Sherrone Moore's hand post-game may linger as one of the more humbling moments of Day's OSU tenure."

– **Nathan Baird,**  
**Cleveland.com**

"After an offseason of reflection and a season of improvement, Ohio State's defense ultimately let it down when it mattered most in The Game. Much like in 2022, when losses to Michigan and Georgia invalidated the unit's progress, Ohio State's inability to generate stops or make game-changing plays on defense proved to be glaring down the stretch. The Buckeyes allowed scores on six of Michigan's seven possessions before a kneel-down. A defensive line that entered the season talking openly about being the nation's best got pushed around by a Michigan front missing star guard Zak Zinter. Coordinator Jim Knowles, who told me he had sleepless nights after the way last season ended and simplified what he did schematically, ultimately was outflanked by Sherrone Moore, Michigan's 37-year-old offensive coordinator and acting head coach.

"What now for Ryan Day and the Buckeyes, losers of three straight to their archrivals? A backdoor entry to the College Football Playoff like last year seems highly unlikely. Ohio State's national title drought is approaching a decade, and Day, despite producing strong quarterbacks and offenses, hasn't found the right formula to get the Buckeyes over the top. John Cooper comparisons will start to be made, and some big and difficult decisions are ahead for a program that has undoubtedly lost its grip on the Big Ten."

– **Adam Rittenberg,**  
**ESPN**

"The second Michigan defensive back Rod Moore hauled in the interception to seal the game, my brain took me back to Chicago in May 2019.

"That's when I visited J.J. McCarthy as a recruit after he had committed to Michigan. I met a blond kid – who still looked like a child – with a golden smile and enough confidence to look me square in the eye and say that Michigan would be a different place by the time he left.

"Why? Because he hated Ohio State after what Day and his staff did to him.

"McCarthy grew up loving Ohio State and went to Columbus on visits as a recruit. But he felt as though Ohio State lied to him during the recruiting process after Day de-

clared he preferred McCord.

" 'I get it's a business,' McCarthy said back in his high school coach's office over four years ago. 'But it always sucks being lied to. And that's kind of where the rivalry started for me, and the hatred. But what are you going to do? It's a business and they have to do what they have to do. They lied to my face, but it's all good now.'

"Imagine how he feels now."

– **Ari Wasserman,**  
**The Athletic (Senior CFB Writer)**

"Perhaps not bad enough to deter Texas A&M from pursuing Ohio State's 44-year-old coach? The Aggies need a coach and reportedly might be interested in luring Day from Columbus. Is the report pure speculation? The usual coaching scuttlebutt? An agent floating the 'rumor' as some type of leverage for his client? Anything is possible, especially when A&M has pockets deeper than the oil wells that supply that money. Hey, a man has to feed his family. And with \$75 million, which is what Jimbo Fisher's 10-year contract was worth when A&M fired him last week, well, a coach can feed his family for generations.

"But let's not get ahead of things.

"Important No. 1: No one is suggesting Day is interested in leaving Ohio State.

"Important No. 2: Ohio State is not getting rid of Day sooner than later. Not even close. If you think athletic director Gene Smith is pulling the plug on a coach he hired, one who is 56-7 overall, you don't know how these things work. Smith retires on June 30, 2024. He's leaving future hiring decisions to his successor.

"If it was my decision, I would keep Day, not only because he recruits top-level quarterbacks but I'm not sure how much better Ohio State could do than to keep moving forward with a guy who is 39-3 in the Big Ten and 40-0 against unranked teams. Day does not lose the little games."

– **Rob Oller,**  
**The Columbus Dispatch**

"The mood had darkened like the skies above. It was quiet as a sanctuary inside the cavernous Big House with the home crowd subdued and on edge. Ohio State had just cobbled together its most impressive drive of the game, tearing through Michigan football's defensive front on a 75-yard march to the end zone that left the score tied at 17. Team captain and right guard Zak Zinter was down on the turf after suffering a gruesome injury to his lower left leg late in the third quarter.

"This was the moment when everything could have changed, when a rivalry could have flipped again, when the Wolverines could have folded and finally succumbed to all the adversity that has rocked this program over the past three months.

" 'But,' running back Blake Corum reminded everyone afterward, 'we're battle-tested.'

"They're also confident.

"So, they didn't blink, cringe or cower. As soon as their best offensive lineman was wheeled away and play resumed, they instead lined up and unleashed their fury on the unsuspecting Buckeyes. Corum took a handoff, surged through a hole that opened on the left side, slipped an oncoming tackler, and sprinted 22 yards for a touchdown. It was the defining moment of a thrilling 30-

24 triumph that may go down as the most significant victory since the Wolverines were reborn three years ago."

– **Rainer Sabin,**  
**Detroit Free Press**

"Marvin Harrison Jr. caught 67 passes for 1,211 yards and 14 touchdowns this season. He bent defenses and beat their double coverage schemes. For my money, he deserves this year's Heisman Trophy just as much as whichever 27-year-old quarterback ends up winning it. If none of Oregon's Bo Nix (69 college starts), LSU's Jayden Daniels (54 college starts) or Washington's Michael Penix (sixth year of school) earned an extra COVID year, Harrison might win it, anyway.

"At bare minimum, he deserves the Biletnikoff Award. He deserves *some* hardware for the career that, in all likelihood, just ended on (Nov. 25).

"But after the loss, he'll probably leave Columbus deserving more than he won. In three seasons at Ohio State, the star receiver beat Michigan zero times, won zero Big Ten championship games and won one postseason game. His concussion swung last year's College Football Playoff loss against Georgia, and the last of image of his college career depicts the pass he couldn't catch.

"That's no proper send off for a legend, but that's why I'll remember it."

– **Jimmy Watkins,**  
**Cleveland.com**

"Based on the way defensive coordinator

Jim Knowles deployed his safeties this season, the Buckeyes' plan for eliminating the explosive plays that doomed them in losses to Michigan and Georgia last season grew increasingly clear. No matter what, they were going to keep the opposing offense in front of them by always protecting the deep middle of the field. No more blown coverages without help over the top. No more running plays that exploded into marathon touchdowns because the defensive backs were too tight to the line of scrimmage. As a result, the Buckeyes entered The Game having allowed the fewest gains over 40 yards of any team in the country, with just one such play surrendered all season.

"The cruel irony from Saturday's loss is that once again Knowles' defense prevented the big plays he was so desperate to avoid. Michigan's longest run was the 22-yard touchdown by Corum. Its longest pass was a 34-yard trick play from Edwards to tight end Colston Loveland. But when it mattered most – when the Buckeyes were trailing by a field goal in the fourth quarter and needed to stand tall by getting Michigan's offense off the field – Ohio State got pushed around in the trenches for a third straight year. If last year's lengthy touchdown runs by Edwards formed the memories that haunted Knowles all offseason, then Michigan's 13-play, 56-yard march that milked seven of the final eight minutes off the clock will be his nightmare from now until the 2024 campaign. He still doesn't have the right answers."

– **Michael Cohen,**  
**Fox Sports**





# Harrison Leaving Significant Legacy At OSU

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

There have been many great receivers to come through Ohio State, but a few of them stand out above all the others, with such players as David Boston, Cris Carter, Santonio Holmes, Chris Olave and more just a few of the best receivers who have come through Columbus. The newest name added to that exclusive list is Marvin Harrison Jr., who has solidified himself over the last three seasons as one of the greatest pass catchers to play for the Buckeyes.

Of all of those receivers who have gone on to have successful careers in the NFL, or are currently paving their way in the pros, Harrison is the only one who has eclipsed the 1,000-yard receiving mark in more than one season at Ohio State. And if he does leave after this season – which is likely – he has played his last game in Ohio Stadium.

After the 37-3 win over Minnesota on Nov. 18, he turned around as he walked up the tunnel for the last time and looked at the crowd, reflecting on his time in Columbus.

“I’m not certain, but it could have been my last time at Ohio Stadium,” he said. “Looking back on how far I’ve come, the spring game my freshman year, I caught a slant in the exact same spot that I caught my last touchdown in the ‘Shoe (against Minnesota). I didn’t expect to accomplish as much as I did in my career. It’s not over yet, but there’s definitely special moments. It’s a special place to play in front of those fans each and every Saturday.”

Back before his first spring game appearance, Harrison was a four-star recruit in 2021 out of St. Joseph’s Prep in Philadelphia, where he was the No. 97 overall prospect in the country and No. 14 at his position. Brian Dohn, who wrote his scouting report for 247Sports, called him a “great route tactician (who) gets out of breaks quickly and is precise in his route depths,” a fitting description for the man later dubbed “Route Man Marv” by C.J. Stroud.

He didn’t do much in his freshman year due to the depth ahead of him in Olave, Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba. But at the end of the year, both Olave and Wilson sat out for the Rose Bowl against Utah, so Harrison got his chance to show who he could be going forward.

Smith-Njigba was the biggest story of that game with 15 catches for 347 yards and three touchdowns, but Harrison also reeled in six receptions for 71 yards and three touchdowns of his own. Harrison went on to have 77 catches for 1,263 yards and 14 touchdowns in 2022, and Smith-Njigba said himself before last season that he knew Harrison was going to be great.

“He’s got it all,” Smith-Njigba said. “Routes, speed, in and out of breaks, great hands, great routes. He’s a big guy, and he’s a smart player. He knows his football. He comes in every day like a pro, and on the field he goes 100 (percent). If you do that every day and stack those days up, you can’t do anything but get better.”

After his success in his sophomore season, he went into this year as the undisputed No. 1 receiver in the room but with a new quarterback throwing to him. Harrison and Kyle McCord went to the same high school, so they already were very familiar with the



FILE PHOTO

**LAST CALL? — Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. may have played his last game for the Buckeyes against Michigan on Nov. 25.**

way they each played, and Harrison said McCord coming to Ohio State had an impact on his college decision.

“It definitely had a little impact going to college, but not just a quarterback. Also a friend first. He definitely helps a lot,” Harrison said. “You go to a new state, a place you haven’t really been much, and you’re going to meet a whole bunch of new people from all over. Going into college with Kyle was more so he’s my friend more than a quarterback.”

The duo had a tough first game against Indiana, connecting for only two catches for 18 yards, but the spark was there immediately in the next game against Youngstown State when Harrison had seven catches and 160 yards with two touchdowns.

“It was cool to finally see it come all the way from when we first started playing with each other sophomore year of high school to now – it’s been a long time coming,” McCord said after the game. “Just continue to use that momentum and continue to use that experience and grow, and we create more of those.”

The stats continued to add up after that game, and quickly for the star receiver. He had five catches for 126 yards for a touchdown in the Buckeyes’ win over Western Kentucky. His ankle was rolled up on in the win over Notre Dame, but even that couldn’t slow him down and he notched at least 100 yards in the next four games after the meeting with the Irish.

And with 11 catches for 162 yards against Penn State on Oct. 21, he surpassed Boston’s Ohio State record of five games with at least 160 receiving yards. McCord said he wasn’t surprised when Harrison was able to play so well through the ankle injury.

“I think that is a side of Marvin that I don’t know if people have seen yet, just his toughness,” McCord said. “He could have easily just preserved himself in that moment. But that’s not who he is. It’s not the type of competitor that he is.”

And Harrison still is not done. After the 30-24 loss to Michigan, Harrison finished the regular season with 67 catches, 1,211 yards and 14 touchdowns, which has put him into conversations for several different awards, and he’ll look to add to those totals in the bowl game.

But looking back on his time as a Buckeye, Harrison said his favorite memory in Ohio Stadium was the Penn State win this year and the 18-yard touchdown he had in the fourth quarter to put the Buckeyes up by two scores.

“The moment and who Penn State was as a team at that time and just the magnitude of the game,” he said. “It’s something I’m always going to remember.”

Those impressive performances have come despite being double-teamed for much of the season, but he has been mostly able to get himself open in those situations as well. Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said that presents a significant challenge in practice.

“Kyle-Marvin, that whole thing is difficult to handle for me in practice,” Knowles said on Nov. 14. “I remember one time in practice, we had a bracket on him, two guys, and he went through both of them and just caught the ball. I was like, ‘How can that happen? We had two guys on him.’ Well, that’s Marv. He just went over both of them and caught it. It’s extremely challenging for a defense.”

There still are times when Harrison finds himself in a one-on-one matchup – generally a mistake by the defense, as most teams have learned to not begin a play with just one person covering Harrison – and if McCord sees that, he is going to be looking that way.

“If there’s a one-on-one opportunity with Marvin,” McCord said, “I don’t care who’s guarding him. I like Marvin 10 times out of 10.”

He has proved that to be true time and time again, beating defenders with catches that don’t seem realistic for a player to make at first, but when the slow-motion replay is shown, it proves to be yet another improbable catch by Harrison that he makes look easy.

The best example is the catch he had against Indiana last season, leaping up near the sideline with a defender draped all over him, and as he was pushed out of bounds, he contorted his body in a way so he was nearly horizontal but still came down with his right foot inbounds. Some of that skill is natural ability, which Harrison has plenty of, but it also comes from hours of working at his craft, something often noticed by the coaches in the room.

“People ask me when they’re in the Woody during a Tuesday or Wednesday, or whenever they’re in there, and they say ‘Who’s going to leave first, you or Marvin?’ ” head coach Ryan Day said Oct. 21. “I say, ‘I don’t know,’

but I always look before I leave to see. He’s in there early in the morning. He’s out there late at night. When practice gets done, I’ll go up and eat and they’ll still be there on the JUGS machine going through the routine. He goes through every play, going through it in his head. He’ll go out there and throw it with Kyle and get on the machine that he has.

“You should see this machine. He can actually feed it and then he presses the button, and he shoots into himself. Coach (Mickey Marotti) made a rule that he has to bring somebody with him now, though, he can’t just go on his own. That’s a legacy that he’s going to leave behind.”

Offensive coordinator/wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, who led the recruitment for Harrison, said that Harrison’s talent and ability were obvious once he arrived on campus.

“It was the ability for himself to continue to fine tune and enhance,” Hartline said on Nov. 15. “He had a phenomenal foundation, but every guy grows. No one shows up the same and leaves the same. That’s a false narrative. A lot of work has been put in. I know Marv sees incremental growth every day, every week.”

That inherent ability as well as the statistics have had Harrison in the Heisman Trophy discussion for a significant chunk of the season, though it mostly cooled down after slow games against Rutgers and Minnesota. But even without the stats, Hartline and the rest of the team still believe he deserves that and the Biletnikoff Award, which is given to the best receiver in the country.

“These awards aren’t just stat awards,” Hartline said. “There’s a lot that goes into those things. If this is a stat award, they should just call it that. But if you’re trying to find the best player in college football, obviously I’m biased, but he’s the best player in college football. If the Biletnikoff is looking for the best receiver in college football and not just stats – it just depends on what you’re looking for. That’s just the reality of the post-season awards.”

Harrison has always garnered attention being a great football player, but it’s reached a crescendo with the Heisman discussion as well as the expectation that he will be a top pick in the upcoming NFL draft. But even with more attention than ever, he hasn’t gotten lost in it, and his approach hasn’t changed to how he prepares for and plays in games.

“I’ve definitely been comfortable the whole time,” Harrison said. “On my end, we try not to worry about it too much. That definitely helps as well. A lot of people are saying, ‘You’re going to win the Heisman,’ or, ‘I want you to win the Heisman or the Biletnikoff Award,’ or whatever the award may be. But my focus is on a weekly basis, just beating the team across from you. The awards will take care of themselves.”

He has the potential to follow in the footsteps of his father, Marvin Harrison Sr., who is in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. But before the junior Harrison goes on to what likely will be a successful NFL career, he will leave a large legacy at Ohio State as one of the greatest receivers the Buckeyes ever had – and he may not be done yet.



# Gurd Achieves Dream Of Playing For OSU

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Senior walk-on tight end Patrick Gurd, a native of New Albany, Ohio, has put himself in position to be a contributor for Ohio State's offense this season.

He played a career-high 14 snaps in Ohio State's win at Rutgers on Nov. 4 and followed it up two weeks later with his first career catch against Minnesota, a 9-yarder in the third quarter that gave the Buckeyes a first down.

The moments have come after several years of hard work and perseverance, achieving a lifelong goal for Gurd in the process.

"It's always been a dream of mine to play for Ohio State," Gurd said on Nov. 8. "I just know it makes my family proud that I'm here and able to wear scarlet and gray. Showing them I can do it and then being able to play on the field as well and show them that I've taken that next step, it's really cool for me."

His family, of course, includes his father, Andy, who played linebacker for Ohio State from 1987-91, appearing in 28 games and collecting 91 tackles over five seasons. The elder Gurd told Buckeye Sports Bulletin that his son has worked hard to get to the position he is in now as a significant contributor for the offense.

"He's certainly worked very hard," Andy Gurd said. "Kudos to the coaches and to Mickey (Marotti) and his staff and the cooks to come up with some good food and good weightlifting and proper technique and all those kinds of things."

"He's worked hard like all the other guys on the team have worked very hard. The offseason stuff, in particular – winter ball, tough stuff. Mat drills, tough stuff. But all of that not only builds camaraderie and a stronger team, but makes you stronger for the rest of your life, and knowing what you can do, and what to do when adversity hits, because it's going to hit us all in life. So how do we deal with it? I think he's learned amazing lessons around that."

"Not to mention, a great academic performance and doing well in school. So we're very proud of him. We're proud of this team. We're proud of the growth that, from top to bottom, on both sides of the ball, they've had this year."

It's been a long road for Patrick Gurd, a former all-conference selection at New Albany, where he totaled 42 tackles, 3½ sacks, eight tackles for loss and two forced fumbles during his senior season with the Eagles. He received some interest from Mid-American Conference schools such as Ball State and Miami (Ohio) and even visited Cincinnati, but the Buckeyes were always around as a potential option, even if it was as a walk-on.

"Growing up a Buckeye fan, I always loved it. I was always going to the games here," Gurd said. "When I got the opportunity to (go here), I just felt like it was the right choice due to the football here and then also the academics."

There may have also been some nudging from his father, who offered guidance throughout the recruiting process having done it himself some 30-plus years prior.

"(I told him) to keep an open mind and

ask questions and definitely that we needed to go see different places," Andy Gurd said. "Of course, we're 100 percent biased with Ohio State. But it was really neat to get down to Cincinnati and Ball State and Miami (Ohio), some of the other universities, also Northwestern. That was a great experience. I really enjoyed it. I really enjoyed the time with him in the car – when he wasn't sleeping – being able to talk. That's kind of a cool dad-son moment."

"But I just encouraged him to ask the questions that were on his mind and really have both kind of a logical perspective to it, but also intrinsically what felt right."

Patrick committed to Ohio State as a preferred walk-on on Jan. 24, 2020, around two months before college football – and most of the world – came to a screeching halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It threw into question what his freshman season – if there even would be a season – might look like.

"There's definitely been some days where it's been harder," he said. "But if you don't have those days and if you can't move past those days, then you're going to get stuck. It just helped shape me into who I am today, and I'm grateful for those days."

Ohio State did ultimately take the field that season, though Gurd did not appear in any games for the Buckeyes. But from there, he started building upon his time spent in the program and found himself ready if he was needed to step in for the Buckeyes.

"(My) sophomore year, I started feeling it near the end of the season and definitely junior year," he said. "When I was getting more time on special teams, I knew I could help our team out. I had my body weight, Coach Mick was happy with me, so that worked out."

Much of that improvement is from Gurd's work with former quality control coach and now tight ends coach Keenan Bailey, who has helped Gurd continue to develop.

"Keenan's mindset has definitely helped me a lot," Gurd said. "I enjoy coming in and being able to talk with him just about little things, whether that's the footwork or hand striking or pass concepts and understanding where the linebackers could be and how that can affect the overall defensive scheme."

That has opened up an opportunity for Gurd this season. Beyond his first career catch, Gurd has mostly been utilized as a blocker, including a key block that he made on running back TreVeyon Henderson's 9-yard rushing touchdown against Rutgers.

"I got to hit someone pretty good on that play," Gurd said.

It was a play that involved everyone doing their job, and one of Gurd's key takeaways from his time at Ohio State is that result – whether a touchdown on an individual play or a win for the entire team – happens when everyone is on the same page.

"When we put our mind to something, no one can stop us," he said. "The second half (against Rutgers) was fantastic, I thought, and no one could stop us. From my point of view, just building confidence being on the field."

Those moments have been of no surprise to his coaches, who have seen him put



FILE PHOTO

**FAMILY TIES** – Senior tight end Patrick Gurd – the son of former Ohio State linebacker Andy Gurd – is a walk-on and has seen hard work pay off this season with increased playing time.

in the work behind the scenes to get to this point where he is contributing on offense.

"It starts with just showing up every day with no expectations other than trying to get better. And some days you wake up and you find yourself on the field," head coach Ryan Day said. "This is somebody who came in, non-scholarship, and he's earned his way on the field. Certainly when you're in a walk-on situation, you have to earn everything you get, and he's done that. He's earned the respect of the guys on the team."

"He's a physical guy, he's a tough guy, and no-nonsense. When you play that position, it takes time to learn all the job descriptions, and so it's good to see him on the field and good to see him participating and certainly making an impact on the offense."

Those are all things that have been instilled by his father, with Patrick raised on two key tenets: attitude and effort.

"The biggest thing that I've kind of told

myself every day is just attitude and effort," he said. "We have that here as well, just tough love and then fight. It's kind of the same thing. But that principle that I was brought up on, attitude and effort, those are the two things you can control. (He helped me) with the mindset side of things, and football, he just helped me out with feet, using my hands."

Gurd remains a walk-on at this point, but with the work he's put in over the past few seasons and his increased role on offense – shades of former walk-on and now scholarship wideout Xavier Johnson – his teammates would not be surprised to see that change soon.

"He's the type of guy who I wouldn't be surprised if he got a scholarship after the season," defensive end Jack Sawyer said. "I think he's earned everything. He's a great guy, and I'm just super happy for him."



# Hicks Centerpiece Of Wild Season In '73

*Buckeye Sports Bulletin is offering a variety of historical pieces this fall, including a look back at the 1998 Ohio State football team, one of the better teams in school history, upon that team's 25th anniversary. There will also be looks back at seasons during which an Ohio State player could have (and perhaps should have) won the Heisman Trophy. The following is the 11th installment in our 2023 historical series*

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Earlier this year, there was a poll conducted by one of those ubiquitous social media platforms asking for opinions regarding the greatest offensive lineman in college football history.

Ohio State can lay claim to several nominees in that category, including two-time All-Americans Bill Willis and Jim Parker during the pre-platoon era as well as Orlando Pace, the two-time Lombardi Award winner and 1996 Big Ten Most Valuable Player who many believe solidified the G.O.A.T. title for himself in terms of college linemen during his time with the Buckeyes in the mid-1990s.

The fact that each of the three players are members of both the College and Pro Football halls of fame is testament to their considerable abilities. But in terms of college football's highest individual honor, none came closer than OSU offensive tackle John Hicks did 50 years ago this season.

The 6-3, 258-pound Hicks cut an imposing figure with his trademark scowl and a pair of shoulder pads that looked as wide as an aircraft carrier. But he was also quick as a cat and the key to many of his team's blocking schemes.

"Nearly every game," longtime OSU head coach Woody Hayes once said, "John Hicks teaches a master class on playing the offensive tackle position."

In addition to earning a second straight selection to the All-Big Ten first team and being named a unanimous first-team All-American in 1973, Hicks won both the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award – only the third player in history to win both in the same year – and was named by The Sporting News as college football's player of the year.

Then, in early December, Hicks was named runner-up to Penn State running back John Cappelletti in the Heisman Trophy balloting. Cappelletti, who had rushed for 1,522 yards and 17 touchdowns for the sixth-ranked Nittany Lions, finished with 1,057 points to 524 for Hicks. The Ohio State offensive tackle had received 114 first-place votes and actually finished ahead of Cappelletti in the Midwest region.

The unusual finish in the Heisman race 50 years ago was perhaps the perfect coda to what turned out to be a most unusual season for the Buckeyes – although it didn't begin that way.

Thanks to a high-powered offense and smothering defense, the Buckeyes ramrodded their way through their first nine opponents to set up a showdown with Michigan, also undefeated and largely unchallenged through 10 games.

Ohio State was the No. 1-ranked team



FILE PHOTO

**HEISMAN-WORTHY — Former Ohio State offensive tackle John Hicks won both the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Trophy in 1973, just the third player in history to win both in the same season.**

in the nation as it headed to Ann Arbor, and that ranking was unquestioned on the strength of nine victories by an average of 32.8 points. Behind sophomore running back Archie Griffin, who would finish fifth in the Heisman voting, and an offensive line that featured Hicks as well as first-team All-Big Ten selections Jim Kregel at guard and Kurt Schumacher at the other tackle position, Ohio State punished opponents with a running attack that averaged a school-record 355.3 yards per game.

On the other side of the ball, the Buckeyes were just as strong with a bevy of All-Americans including defensive end Van Ness DeCree and linebacker Randy Gradishar. While the offense was steamrolling opponents, the OSU defense had already recorded four shutouts and was allowing an average of a minuscule 3.7 points per game heading into the Michigan contest.

Meanwhile, the Wolverines weren't too shabby themselves. They had been ranked in the top five all season and entered the game against the Buckeyes as the No. 4 team in the nation.

Former OSU assistant Glenn E. "Bo" Schembechler was in his fifth season in Ann Arbor and already had become a thorn in his former mentor's side. Schembechler's 1969 team had pulled off a huge upset over Hayes' top-ranked team, preventing them from playing for a second straight national championship, and the Buckeyes were 0-2 in Michigan Stadium since Schembechler had taken over.

In 1973, the Wolverines had also played in their share of blowouts. Their average margin of victory was 26.2 points per game

heading into the season finale, and their defense had shut out three opponents and held four others to a touchdown or less.

They were led by such All-Americans as defensive tackle Dave Gallagher and safety Dave Brown as well as shifty quarterback Dennis Franklin and hard-nosed fullback Ed Shuttlesworth. Upping the ante even more was the fact that all four of those players were native Ohioans, a fact not lost on the Wolverines leading up to the game.

"Yes, we're from Ohio," Franklin told a reporter, "but all the good ones go to Michigan."

When asked during his weekly press luncheon why so many Ohio natives had chosen to play their college football at Michigan, Hayes glared at the questioner and shook his head.

"Does anyone else have anything?" the coach finally said after several awkward seconds.

A handful of Ohio natives wearing maize and blue weren't the only Michigan team members with ties to the Buckeye State. Schembechler, of course, was also an Ohio native, had been on Hayes' staff in Columbus from 1958-62 and had been head coach at his alma mater Miami (Ohio) from 1963-68. Members of his U-M staff in 1973 included Gary Moeller, who played for Hayes and was OSU team co-captain in 1962, as well as Chuck Stobart and Elliot Uzela, who would later become assistant coaches under John Cooper at Ohio State.

"That game was right in the middle of what they call 'The Ten-Year War' between Woody and Bo," longtime OSU football historian Jack Park told BSB. "There was a lot

of mutual respect between the two coaches, but no love lost when it came to playing one another.

"Just like this year, that game was huge. Both teams were undefeated, tickets were going for outrageous prices and the game was for the Rose Bowl and a chance to win the national championship. There was just so much buzz and electricity leading up to it."

OSU quarterback Cornelius Greene recalled that the week leading up to the game seemed endless.

"We had beaten Iowa pretty good the week before (55-13), and a lot of the starters didn't play much in the second half," Greene said. "That just made the wait seem longer. It was like time stood still that week. Saturday took forever to get there."

While the buzz reached a fever pitch at midweek, everyone started to don a game face in the hours leading up to the contest.

"The campus got real quiet as the game got closer," Gradishar said. "You could sense there was something different. You could feel the intensity building. Not just the players and students – the faculty, the whole city of Columbus. It was the perfect record, the polls, the conference championship and the Rose Bowl trip, and of course, the whole Bo and Woody thing."

The same was true in Ann Arbor.

"I remember this one German professor," Franklin said. "She taught calculus, and she couldn't stand athletes. If you were an athlete, she wouldn't even talk to you, and if you came into her class unprepared, you were going to suffer. That particular week, though, she smiled at us. That was about it, but we considered it a major victory."

## Banner Comes Down

The day after Thanksgiving, the Buckeyes made the 200-mile trip north to Ann Arbor, ate their traditional meal, watched the movie "Billy Jack" for the third time that season and turned in for the night.

They awoke the next morning to a chilly rain mixed with occasional sleet and an atmosphere that had reached a fever pitch. By the time the team made it from the hotel to the stadium, pulses were racing and emotions were off the charts. When it came time for the teams to leave the cramped tunnel that leads from the locker rooms to the Michigan Stadium field, the tension overflowed.

As players streamed onto the field in front of an NCAA-record crowd of 105,223, several collided in a mass near midfield, and in the confusion, the "M-Go Blue" Letterman's Club banner that stretches across the field for Michigan players to run under went tumbling to the ground.

Legendary Michigan radio announcer Bob Ufer, known for his pronunciation of "Meesh-i-gun" as well as an unbridled love for anything maize or blue, went absolutely apoplectic. He accused the Ohio State players of intentionally tearing down the banner, screaming into the microphone, "And they're tearing down Michigan's coveted M Club banner! They will meet a dastardly fate here for that! There isn't a Michigan man in the stadium who wouldn't like to go out and scalp those Buckeyes right now!"

"They had the audacity – the unmitigated





FILE PHOTO

**TEAR IT DOWN — When Ohio State visited Michigan Stadium in 1973, the team tore down a Michigan banner when the teams took the field ahead of the game, with many teammates claiming offensive tackle John Hicks first got his hands on the banner.**

gall – to tear down the coveted M that Michigan is going to run out from under! But the M men will prevail! ... What a football game we're going to have here this afternoon!!"

Although several of his teammates swore it was Hicks who first got his hands on the Michigan banner, he always denied it.

"Woody said something like, 'Buckle up because we're going to take on those SOB's right here in the tunnel.' As if we needed any more motivation," Hicks told BSB in 2003. "Next thing I knew, the banner was coming down on top of me. I had nothing to do with pulling it down."

When asked if he knew who did pull it down, Hicks allowed the faintest of grins to cross his lips.

"Yeah," he replied, "but you don't think I'm telling you, do you?"

Once the game began, the defenses took over. Despite its powerful offense, Ohio State was forced to punt away each of its first three possessions and even squandered away a golden opportunity when defensive back Neal Colzie recovered a Michigan fumble at the OSU 40-yard line.

Things began to change, however, near the end of the first quarter when the Buckeyes finally mounted a charge with Griffin leading the way. The OSU tailback broke a 38-yard run to the Michigan 34, giving his team its best field position of the game.

But the drive bogged down, and the Buckeyes had to settle for a 31-yard field goal from kicker Blair Conway, making it 3-0 with 11:04 remaining in the second quarter.

On the ensuing kickoff, Ohio State lost freshman kicker Tom Skladany to a frightening injury. Unlike most kickers, Skladany was a good enough athlete to find a seam and sneak downfield to assist on tackles. He tried to do just that moments after the Buckeyes' first score, but on the play a Wolverine player flew into the back of his left leg,

breaking it and severely dislocating his left ankle.

"The bone was almost protruding and the ankle was almost completely out of its socket," Skladany said. "It was one of those injuries that was so gruesome that I didn't feel any pain. My body just shut off. I remember (head trainer) Billy Hill and (team physician) Dr. Bob (Murphy) telling me not to look."

Just before the end of the half, Hayes walked to the bench to check on his kicker.

"He came over and asked if I could still kick off," Skladany remembered. "The doctors said, 'No, he's in pretty bad shape.' So Woody said, 'Well, at least tape him up so we can use him for punting.'"

The clip on Skladany wiped out a long return by Michigan, sent the Wolverines back to their own 12-yard line and helped set the tempo for the remainder of the first half.

The Buckeyes completely shut down U-M while the offense was picking up steam. Ohio State played the field-position game until taking possession at its own 45 with under four minutes left until intermission. From there, the Buckeyes marched 55 yards in eight plays – mostly runs by Griffin – before freshman fullback Pete Johnson bulled his way into the end zone from 5 yards out with only 53 seconds left.

Conway added the extra point, giving Ohio State a 10-0 halftime lead and what appeared to be an insurmountable lead.

### Trying To Hold On

The Buckeyes might have had the lead, but all was not well in the OSU locker room at halftime. Greene, who had entered the game with a sore thumb on his throwing hand, had tweaked the injury, and the thumb was beginning to swell.

After that, Hayes made the decision that

his team would stay strictly on the ground in the second half. Unfortunately, that strategy backfired as Michigan began to stack the line of scrimmage with eight and nine defenders.

Behind the running of Shuttlesworth, the Wolverines gained the early second-half momentum and got their first scoring opportunity of the game. But Colzie created another turnover, intercepting a Franklin pass in the end zone to end the threat.

Michigan was revitalized by the resurgence of its offense, however, and got into scoring position again before the third quarter ended. Shuttlesworth pounded away time after time, and the Wolverines were able to get a 30-yard field goal from kicker Mike Lantry early in the fourth quarter.

After another Ohio State three-and-out, U-M was on the move again. After a short punt by Skladany's replacement, Tom Bartozek, gave the Wolverines possession at their own 49, Franklin connected with tight end Paul Seal for a 27-yard gain. A few plays later, faced with fourth-and-1 at the 10, Franklin faked a handoff to Shuttlesworth and rolled around right end to the end zone. Lantry tacked on the PAT to tie the game at 10-10 with 9:32 remaining.

Ohio State's last best chance to win the game came on its next possession. Taking the ball from their own 20, the Buckeyes marched to the Michigan 47. But on third-and-6, Griffin managed only a 3-yard gain, and Hayes elected to punt.

With the clock winding under five minutes, the Wolverines took over at their own 12-yard line, and Franklin quickly moved them out, completing two passes of 14 yards each to wingback Clint Haslerig, another Ohio product. Three plays later, the U-M quarterback completed a short pass to Shuttlesworth but was thrown hard to the turf. The result was a shoulder separation, knocking Franklin out of the game.

The drive stalled quickly, but with time running out and no overtime rule in those days, Schembechler asked Lantry to try a 58-yard field goal into the swirling wind. The left-footed kicker, a 25-year-old Vietnam War veteran who had returned to school after his military service, appeared to have enough leg for the attempt, but the kick sailed just outside the left upright.

With 1:01 remaining, Hayes finally decided to substitute at quarterback, sending senior co-captain Greg Hare into the game in relief of Greene. But after running an ultraconservative offense through the second half, Hayes' sudden change in strategy produced disastrous results. Hare's first-down pass was intercepted by Michigan defensive back Tom Drake, giving the Wolverines one last chance to win the game.

This time, Lantry lined up from 44 yards. Reminding himself the previous kick had gone slightly left, he compensated – but too much. His attempt sailed just outside the right upright.

Ohio State took over on its own 20 and used up the final 24 seconds with three unsuccessful passes from Hare.

The final stats showed big days for Griffin and Shuttlesworth. Griffin rushed for 163 of the Buckeyes' 247 total rushing yards during the game while Shuttlesworth gained 116 yards. It was the passing yardage that separated the two teams, however. Before his injury, Franklin completed 7 of 11 attempts for 99 yards while the Buckeyes failed to gain a single yard through the air.

Buttoning up his offense and sitting on the lead was a move by Hayes that has been debated to this day. A former player, who did not want to give his name, said that was the only time he remembered the legendary coach's strategy being second-guessed.

"I don't want to disrespect Coach Hayes, but we could have won that game," the player said. "We should have won that game."

Greene later added, "Woody only called two passes when I was in, and I ended up

**Continued On Page 24**

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## Continued From Page 23

running on both of those plays. Hare came in late and threw an interception, but they missed the field goal.

"That was real tough for me because when the game was on national TV and the season was on the line, I always felt like it was my time to shine. I never missed a game and never missed a practice, so it wasn't fun standing there watching."

As the teams left the field, Michigan was in a much more upbeat mood. The band started playing "California Dreamin'." Meanwhile, a jubilant Schembechler was telling reporters, "In my opinion, we're No. 1. (Ohio State) was No. 1 and we outplayed them in the second half."

Because the two teams finished the season with identical 7-0-1 records and played to a tie in head-to-head competition, the Big Ten athletic directors would have to be called upon to break the tie and decide which team would be the league's Rose Bowl representative.

A meeting was called for the following day in Chicago to poll the ADs, and as the stadium emptied, Schembechler figured his team had done enough to sway the vote.

"We did everything we could to win, including gambling in our territory and going for the victory," he said. "If they vote us to go, then we deserve it. Frankly, I'll be disappointed if the vote goes the other way."

Less than 24 hours later, the word "disappointed" wouldn't come close to describing Schembechler's mood.

## Controversial Vote

By the time all 10 conference athletic directors arrived in Chicago, the assumption was that Michigan would indeed win the vote. Although the Big Ten had done away with its self-imposed rule not to allow teams to go to successive Rose Bowls, the prevailing thought remained that because Ohio State had been to Pasadena the previous

year, it was the Wolverines' turn.

Also in U-M's favor was the fact that four of the conference's athletic directors – William Orwig of Indiana, Chalmers "Bump" Elliott of Iowa, Burt Smith of Michigan State and Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch of Wisconsin – were all either former Michigan athletes or coaches.

With Michigan athletic director Don Canham obviously voting for his school, conventional wisdom gave the Wolverines at least five votes. In case of a tie between the ADs, the team that had been to Pasadena more recently would be eliminated, giving Michigan the Rose Bowl trip.

Hayes had spent a difficult morning back in Columbus. He woke up to the news that OSU's head athletic trainer, Alan Hart, had died at the age of 37 after a bout with cancer. Later, he visited Skladany in the hospital before going to his St. John Arena office.

About 1:30 p.m., the telephone rang in Hayes' office. He answered, mumbled a couple of words and then hung up. The coach picked up the phone again, dialed his wife and hummed the first few bars of "California, Here We Come."

The conference athletic directors had voted 6-4 to send the Buckeyes back to Pasadena.

"I was shocked," Hare admitted. "I didn't think we'd go, but it would have been terrible to watch Michigan go out there and play Southern Cal."

Meanwhile, Schembechler was fit to be tied.

"I'm very bitter," he told reporters. "It's a tragic thing for Big Ten football. This is the darkest day in my athletic career."

The U-M coach's outlook didn't improve any when he discovered which of the conference athletic directors had voted for Ohio State. They included Hirsch and Smith, both of whom indicated they leaned toward the Buckeyes because Franklin's injury would likely have sidelined him for the Rose Bowl.



FILE PHOTO

**RUNNER-UP — Former Ohio State offensive tackle John Hicks finished second in Heisman Trophy voting in 1973, something he learned from talking to a cab driver.**

"I did what I felt was best for the conference," Smith said later. "Naturally, Franklin's injury would have something to do with the decision. That's only natural. I agree with the decision because it's a conference decision."

That didn't sit well with Schembechler. He stated that if Clarence "Biggie" Munn were still athletic director at Michigan State and Hugh "Duffy" Daugherty were still head coach of the Spartans, MSU would have voted for the Wolverines "because they're class guys and would have done what's right."

Park isn't so sure.

"I have always had a theory about that vote," the OSU football historian said. "I can't prove this, of course, but from following the story and from interviews I have done over the years, I think that vote might have been a little payback from Michigan State."

"When Michigan State joined the Big Ten in 1953, Ohio State supported their membership, but Michigan wanted the University of Pittsburgh. It wasn't that Michigan loved Pitt, but I think they just didn't want another Michigan team in the conference because of recruiting and revenue and things of that nature."

"I certainly don't have any evidence of that, but when you look at who voted for who, what happened in 1953 when Michigan State wanted to join the Big Ten may have impacted that vote 20 years later."

There is another theory, first floated in the 1974 book "Buckeye: A Study of Coach Woody Hayes and the Ohio State Football Machine." Author Robert Vare surmised that many of the Big Ten's athletic directors were known to resent Canham, a self-made

millionaire whose business savvy and talent for selling and promotion were the talk of the college football world.

"In five years, Canham has transformed Michigan's floundering sports programs into one of the nation's money-making showcases, and he was being widely hailed as the prototype of the new breed athletic director," Vare wrote. "Next to Canham, most of the directors looked like candy store operators and they knew it."

"Besides being envious, several directors were said to be nursing grudges against Canham. A man with a habit of stepping on toes and speaking plainly, Canham had more than once publicly referred to his Big Ten counterparts as a 'bunch of donkeys.' One of them, Northwestern's Tippy Dye, has something more specific to be mad about."

"Several years earlier, Northwestern has been on the verge of closing a deal to rent its stadium to the Chicago Bears," Vare wrote. "Canham, thinking that it would set a dangerous business precedent, had led the drive to quash the play and cost the Big Ten's only private school much-needed revenue. It certainly seemed hard to believe that Dye's vote was not influenced by a desire to get even."

Vare added that it didn't seem likely that someone like Smith would have voted for Ohio State just because he believed it was the stronger team, believing it only natural that the Michigan State athletic director would want to deny his sister school the recruiting clout a Rose Bowl appearance would bring.

Furthering the "conspiracy theory" was the fact that although many of the ADs brought up Franklin's injury as a reason for

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their vote, none of them contacted the Michigan team doctors to ask about the quarterback's prognosis for playing in the Rose Bowl. In addition, eight of the 10 men had not even watched the OSU-Michigan game.

"The Rose Bowl is supposed to be a reward and an educational experience, and our kids earned it," Schembechler fumed. "But the directors and (Big Ten commissioner Wayne) Duke were running scared. After losing four straight Rose Bowls, they needed a winner to help their prestige.

"Well, the Big Ten has lost any prestige it ever had. I'm disillusioned with the administration of college football. This is why kids are losing respect for America. You wonder why kids go wrong? I wouldn't trust the older generation either. They're just out for themselves."

Those comments incensed the Big Ten athletic directors, although none would say so publicly. Even so, that didn't prevent them from expressing their opinions. Former Ohio State athletic director Jim Jones, who was an assistant AD under J. Edward Weaver in 1973, remembered a phone call Weaver took after the Buckeyes had rolled to a 42-21 victory over USC in the Rose Bowl.

"It was Hirsch," Jones told BSB in 2003. "He had been vacationing in Hawaii and had been, shall we say, celebrating a bit. His first words were, 'Well, I guess we showed 'em that the ADs do know a little something about football after all.'"

### A Fitting End

Nine days after the Big Ten athletic directors voted to send Ohio State to the Rose Bowl, Hicks was looking ahead to preparations for taking on a talented USC team that had won the Pac-8 championship. Before that, however, the lineman hit the banquet circuit to pick up the various trophies and other hardware he had accumulated.

"That's when I heard about the Heisman voting," Hicks said. "I found out from a cab driver as I was on my way to pick up the Outland Trophy. The guy said, 'Hey, did you hear? Some lineman from Ohio State finished second in the Heisman voting.' I just shook my head – you know, like in the cartoons – and said, 'Huh?' He said, 'Yeah, a lineman. Can you imagine?'"

"The Heisman wasn't the big deal in the media as it is now, but yeah, I found out I finished second from a cab driver."

Ohio State was a slight two-point favorite to beat the defending national champion and seventh-ranked Trojans in the Rose Bowl. The point spread would likely have been more had the Buckeyes not been coming off a 42-17 loss to USC the previous year. But Hicks wanted to make his final game in scarlet and gray a memorable one for several reasons.

"First of all, I'd been out there (to Pasadena) twice before and lost," he said. "I'd only lost three times during my entire college career, and two of them were in the Rose Bowl. That made things burn just a little hotter for me personally.

"Second, we wanted to win one for the Old Man. There was talk about the game beginning to pass Woody by, and we wanted to make a statement for him. I'm happy to say that we did that."

The Buckeyes spotted the Trojans a 14-7 lead in the first half before roaring to a 42-21 victory, mostly on the strength of a running attack that netted 320 yards. With Hicks and his linemates running interference, Griffin rushed for 149 yards and a touchdown while Johnson added 94 yards and three scores. Greene was an efficient

6 for 8 in the passing department for 129 yards, and the QB also ran for 45 yards and a touchdown.

The victory finished off the eighth unbeaten season in Ohio State program history, but the tie with Michigan denied the Buckeyes the 1973 national championship. They finished second behind undefeated Notre Dame in the final writers' poll from The Associated Press and third behind Alabama and Oklahoma in the final United Press International coaches rankings.

In one final twist to the most unusual of college football seasons, the UPI released its final rankings before bowl season, making for more than a slight bit of embarrassment when Notre Dame – which finished fourth in the final coaches poll – dealt top-ranked Alabama a 24-23 loss in the Sugar Bowl. The Tide finished fourth in the final AP poll.

Oklahoma, which was No. 3 in the final AP rankings, finished with a 10-0-1 record in 1973. It's lone blemish was a 7-7 tie at USC in late September.

Michigan, also 10-0-1, finished sixth in both final polls.

# BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

## FOOTBALL (11-1, 8-1)

**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, L 30-24.

## FOOTBALL 2024

**Aug. 31** AKRON.

**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 (5-1)

**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, W 92-81; **25** Emerald Coast Classic at Niceville, Fla. vs. Santa Clara, W 86-56; **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 (5-1)

**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, W 79-55; **22** Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas vs. Oklahoma State, W 75-57; **26** CORNELL, W, 83-40.

**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.

## 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.

## MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (5-5-3, 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, W 6-3, W 4-3.

**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 (13-1, 10-0)

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

**Oct. 13-14** Minnesota Duluth, W 5-2; W 2-0; **20-21** St. Thomas, W 6-2; W 7-1; **27-28** MINNESOTA, W 4-3 OT; W 6-5.

**Nov. 3-4** Bemidji State, W 9-1; W 5-0; **17-18** WISCONSIN, W 3-0, W 2-1 OT; **24-25** ST. LAWRENCE, W 11-0, W 5-1.

**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 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-American Championship at Tulsa, Okla., NTS.

**Oct. 1-8** ITA All-American Championship at Tulsa, Okla., NTS.; **19-23** ITA Midwest Regional Championship at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS; **23-29** Las Vegas Challenger at Las Vegas, 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 VOLLEYBALL (11-18, 8-12)

**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, L 3-0; **25** RUTGERS, W 3-1.



# Michigan, Iowa Set For Big Ten Championship

Iowa had already secured its spot in the Big Ten Championship Game as the winners of the West division with a 15-13 win over Illinois on Nov. 18, but with Michigan's 30-24 win over Ohio State on Nov. 25, the Wolverines' spot in the title game is set as well, and they will play Dec. 2 at 8 p.m. at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

## BIG TEN NOTES Greg Wilson

Iowa comes in with a 10-2 record this season and has won four consecutive games, but the Hawkeyes also have a previous shutout loss to then-No. 7 Penn State on Sept. 23, 31-0, and a 12-10 loss to unranked Minnesota on Oct. 21.

Michigan is undefeated after beating the Buckeyes and is a heavy favorite coming into the game, picked by more than 20 points in the championship. With a victory, the Wolverines would win their third consecutive Big Ten Championship Game and secure a spot in the College Football Playoff for the third straight season.

The last time the two teams played each other was Oct. 1, 2022, when the Wolverines came out on top in Iowa City, 27-14. They also met up in the Big Ten Championship Game two seasons ago, a 42-3 win for Michigan.

The Hawkeyes are coming off a 13-10 win over Nebraska on Nov. 24, a game in which quarterback Deacon Hill was 11 of 28 passing for only 94 yards and one interception. The only touchdown they scored was a Hill rushing touchdown.

Offense, though, has not been Iowa's strong suit this season. The Hawkeyes announced on Oct. 30 that offensive coordinator Brian Ferentz – who had initially been given a contract entering this season requiring him to maintain 25.0 points per game for Iowa – would not be returning to the program next season. Through 12 games, Iowa is tied for 121st in scoring offense (18.0 points) and is dead last out of 130 teams in total offense at 246.3 yards per game, which is 24.1 yards per game less than No. 129 Kent State (270.4).

Michigan comes into the game with the best scoring defense in the nation, allowing only 10.2 points per game, and the Wolverines are putting up 37.6 points per game



SONNY BROCKWAY

**HOOSIER COACH** – Indiana announced on Nov. 26 that it had fired head coach Tom Allen, who had recently completed his seventh season with the team and had just a 33-49 record during that span.

after scoring 30 on Ohio State, the nation's No. 2 scoring defense. What has kept the Hawkeyes at the top of the division is their defense. They are fourth nationally in scoring defense at 12.2 points per game.

Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh, who was suspended by the Big Ten for violating the conference's sportsmanship policy, will be able to return for the championship game. Sherrone Moore will step back into his role as the offensive coordinator after having success as the acting head coach over the last three games.

### Beavers' Smith Named Next MSU Head Coach

Oregon State head coach Jonathan Smith will be the next head coach at Michigan State, it was announced on Nov. 25, the day after the Spartans finished their season

with a 42-0 loss to Penn State. The opening came after former head coach Mel Tucker was fired for cause earlier this season due to allegations of sexual harassment.

Smith and the Beavers finished the regular season with an 8-4 record after a 31-7 loss to then-No. 6 Oregon on Nov. 24. Smith – an Oregon State alum who started at quarterback for the Beavers from 1998-01 – is 34-35 in six years with Oregon State and won Pac-12 Coach of the Year last season after leading the Beavers to a 10-3 record. Smith posted a statement on Twitter after the news came out that he would be headed to East Lansing.

"As I start this next chapter of my coaching career, I want to first thank all the players, coaches, and colleagues I have worked with the last six years," the statement read. "I will cherish the memories and friendships. I also want to express my deepest gratitude to the people of OSU/Corvallis for your support.

"When I first arrived as a freshman college student, I had no idea the opportunities and relationships this community would provide for me and my family. The collective impact you have made makes it impossible for me to thank everyone individually, but I am forever grateful."

Following Tucker's firing, Michigan State selected secondary coach Harlon Barnett as the team's interim head coach, though he finished with just a 2-8 record this season (the Spartans were 4-8 overall). Barnett received some consideration for the head coaching

## BIG 2023 Standings

East Division	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan	9	0	1.000	12	0	1.000
<b>Ohio State</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.889</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.917</b>
Penn State	7	2	0.778	10	2	0.833
Maryland	4	5	0.444	7	5	0.583
Rutgers	3	6	0.333	6	6	0.500
Michigan State	2	7	0.222	4	8	0.333
Indiana	1	8	0.111	3	9	0.250

West Division	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Iowa	7	2	0.778	10	2	0.833
Northwestern	5	4	0.556	7	5	0.583
Wisconsin	5	4	0.556	7	5	0.583
Nebraska	3	6	0.333	5	7	0.417
Minnesota	3	6	0.333	5	7	0.417
Illinois	3	6	0.333	5	7	0.417
Purdue	3	6	0.333	4	8	0.333

### Nov. 24 Games

Iowa 13, Nebraska 10  
Penn State 42, Michigan State 0

### Nov. 25 Games

Michigan 30, Ohio State 24  
Purdue 35, Indiana 31  
Maryland 42, Rutgers 24  
Northwestern 45, Illinois 43  
Wisconsin 28, Minnesota 14

### Dec. 2 Game

Michigan vs. Iowa, Big Ten Championship at Indianapolis, Ind.

job and, according to reports, could remain on Smith's staff moving forward.

### Allen Out As IU Head Coach

Following Indiana's 35-31 loss to Purdue on Nov. 25 that dropped the Hoosiers to 3-9 on the season, the program announced on Nov. 26 that head coach Tom Allen will not return next season at Indiana. Allen was owed a \$20.8 million buyout, but the school and the coach agreed to a \$15.5 settlement that will be paid over two installments.

"After continued evaluation of our entire football program, I have determined that we have lost momentum and that a change in leadership is necessary at this time," athletic director Scott Dolson said. "I want to thank Tom for all of the contributions he has made to IU in his seven years leading our program. His passion, character, and class made a positive impact on our student-athletes. We wish him well in his future endeavors."

Allen took over the Indiana program in 2017 after spending one year as the defensive coordinator under then-head coach Kevin Wilson. After a 10-14 record over his first two seasons, Allen led the Hoosiers to an 8-5 record in 2019 and a 6-2 finish in 2020. Indiana and Allen then reached a new agreement on a seven-year contract that gave him \$4.9 million annually.

But Allen has been unable to return to those heights, posting a combined 9-27 record over the last three seasons. He leaves




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## BIG TEN NOTES

the program with a 33-49 record in the seven years.

According to The Athletic's Chris Vanini, sitting head coaches expected to be in the mix to replace Allen include Toledo's Jason Candle, Eastern Michigan's Chris Creighton, Tulane's Willie Fritz, Western Kentucky's Tyson Helton, New Mexico State's Jerry Kill and South Alabama's Kane Wommack. Also listed as candidates were Ohio State's Brian Hartline and Justin Frye.

### UMD's Tagovailoa Becomes B1G All-Time Leading Passer

In Maryland's 42-24 win at Rutgers on Nov. 25, Terrapins quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa threw for 361 yards to reach 11,256 yards, surpassing Purdue's Curtis Painter (11,163) to become the Big Ten's all-time leading passer.

During his performance against Rutgers, Tagovailoa also passed Purdue's Drew Brees (10,909) and Minnesota's Adam Weber (10,917). Through 12 games this season — with a 7-5 record, meaning Maryland is going bowling — Tagovailoa has completed 66.4 percent of his passes (290 of 437) for 3,377 yards and 25 touchdowns to 11 interceptions.

"I have to also congratulate Taulia Tagovailoa for breaking the record today and leaving Maryland as the all-time leading passer in the history of the Big Ten, which is a huge feat when you think about the type of quarterbacks who play in this league," head coach Mike Locksley said. "He'd be the first to tell you that he didn't do it alone. He's had a bunch of teammates along the way that have contributed.

"But for a guy who came here under the shadow of a huge last name to make his own mark not only at Maryland, but also in the Big Ten, I think that speaks volumes about the type of character he has. We're really proud about what he's done to help elevate this program."

### Boilermakers Win Maui Invitational

The Purdue men's basketball team — ranked second in the AP poll released on Nov. 20 — went to Hawaii to compete in the Maui Invitational Tournament and went back to West Lafayette, Ind., as champions.

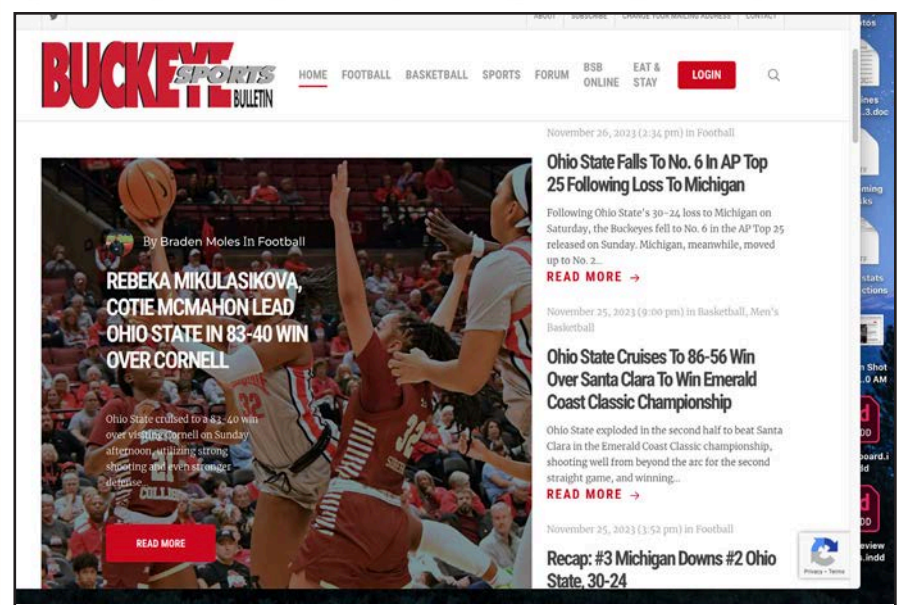
The Boilermakers began their run playing then-No. 11 Gonzaga on Nov. 20 in a 73-63 win in which center Zach Edey led the way with 25 points and 14 rebounds. Guards Braden Smith and Lance Jones each added 13 points and four rebounds, and Smith also had six assists.

They moved on to then-No. 7 Tennessee and won a close 71-67 game. Edey had 23 points and 10 rebounds, but guard Fletcher Loyer led in scoring with 27 points and brought in six rebounds of his own.

The Boilermakers matched up against then-No. 4 Marquette in the championship round, emerging victorious, 78-75, after leading by 12 at the half. Edey led in scoring again with 28 points and 15 rebounds, with Smith (18), Jones (11) and Loyer (10) breaking double digits.

Purdue remained undefeated at 6-0 as Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press. Ohio State will see the Boilermakers just once this season, hosting Purdue on Feb. 18, 2024.

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# McCord, McCarthy Reflect On OSU Recruitment

Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord and Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy lined up on opposite sidelines for The Game on Nov. 25, but the battle lines had been drawn several years before during their recruitment.

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

Both McCord and McCarthy, prospects in the 2021 recruiting class, had been offered by Ohio State. McCarthy was the No. 25 overall prospect and fifth-ranked quarterback, while McCord trailed just slightly at No. 28 in the class and the sixth-ranked quarterback.

But McCord committed to Ohio State on April 30, 2019, and McCarthy pledged to Michigan on May 11, 2019. So with Ohio State recruiting both quarterbacks, what exactly happened? As McCarthy would tell *The Athletic* shortly after his commitment, he felt that Ohio State – and specifically head coach Ryan Day – did not keep their word.

“Coach Day told me he wasn’t going to take (a 2021 quarterback) until the end of summer or anything like that because he wanted to make sure everything was all good,” McCarthy said. “So I didn’t really worry about all that during my visit. But I didn’t get that feeling when I was there (in March). I really didn’t with all the coaches there and how they interacted with us, I didn’t feel the big family tradition part of it. It was either you’re good at football or you’re over here. That’s what I felt.”

After McCord committed to Ohio State, taking the spot of McCarthy who would have been just as content going to Ohio State as he would have Michigan, it instilled the type



SONNY BROCKWAY

**ON THE TRAIL — Ohio State underwent a publicized battle when selecting a quarterback for the team’s 2021 recruiting class, with the Buckeyes eventually settling on Kyle McCord over J.J. McCarthy, who ended up at Michigan.**

of attitude often seen in the rivalry before he even stepped on campus.

“I get it’s a business,” he said. “But it always sucks being lied to. That’s kind of where the rivalry started for me and the hatred. But what are you going to do? It’s a business and they have to do what they have to do. They lied to my face, but it’s all good now.”

“I used to love them,” he added. “Now I want to kill them.”

Over four years later, however, things

appear to have cooled down. Both McCord and McCarthy were complimentary of each other heading into this year’s game.

“I’ve known J.J. since my sophomore year of high school,” McCord said. “Really when we started to go to those national camps, and obviously we got recruited by a lot of the same schools, so just getting to know him as one of the kids in my class, I got pretty close with him.”

“Kyle’s my guy,” McCarthy said. “We were always (at the camps) together. We just kind

of meshed, had two alike personalities. It’s going to be really cool. It’s going to be really surreal to see him out there in this environment, this game, and just going out there and wishing him safety and making sure he stays healthy. He’s going to give our defense a little bit of trouble at times, and we’ve got to respond and be able to attack him in any way possible.”

As for Day’s part – making the decision to select McCord in the class over McCarthy – he saw plenty of reasons to want to build Ohio State’s 2021 class around McCord, even if McCarthy may have gotten the last laugh.

“You saw (McCord’s) productive play on the field,” Day said. “You saw his size, his arm strength, intelligence and he just had a good way of leadership with the guys in his class. He was the first one to jump on board then brought a lot of guys with him.”

## Former NU Commit VanSickle Pledges To Ohio State

Ohio State earned an important pledge on Nov. 23, adding a verbal commitment from Coopersville, Mich., three-star offensive lineman Gabe VanSickle (6-5, 283).

VanSickle is the No. 613 overall prospect and No. 41 interior lineman in 2024, and he held additional offers from Bowling Green, Central Michigan, Indiana and Northwestern, among others. He had been committed to the Wildcats since May but backed off his pledge on Nov. 21, just days before flipping to Ohio State.

VanSickle visited for Ohio State’s win over Penn State on Oct. 21 and was then offered on Nov. 7, and he followed that up with a visit for the win over Michigan State on Nov. 11.

He is the fourth commitment on the offensive line for Ohio State, joining four-star offensive linemen Devontae (6-5, 297) and Deontae (6-6, 280) Armstrong from Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward and New Palestine, Ind., four-star Ian Moore (6-5, 295).

Moore and Deontae Armstrong are considered tackle prospects for Ohio State, while Devontae Armstrong and VanSickle are expected to play in the interior once they arrive.

## LeBron Shouts Out WR Commit Smith

Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 198) – the nation’s unanimous top-ranked player in 2024 who has been committed to Ohio State since last December – received a significant shout-out on Nov. 20 that should put all eyes on him once he arrives in Columbus.

Responding to a tweet that showed a highlight reel of Smith, Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James – a four-time NBA champion and four-time MVP winner who recently became the only NBA player to eclipse 39,000 career points – offered up praise for Smith.

“Can’t wait to see him in Scarlet & Gray,” James tweeted.

While a fairly innocuous statement, it shows the reach that Ohio State football has with a superfan like James representing the program, and it can only help the team’s recruiting efforts as future prospects see the

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# OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

## OSU Football 2024 Commitments

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

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Deontae Armstrong	OL	6-6	280	★★★★	Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward
Devontae Armstrong	OL	6-5	297	★★★★	Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward
Mylan Graham	WR	6-1	170	★★★★★	New Haven, Ind.
Eddrick Houston	DL	6-3	265	★★★★★	Buford, Ga.,
Max LeBlanc	TE	6-4	222	★★★★	Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School
Miles Lockhart	CB	5-10	185	★★★★	Chandler (Ariz.) Basha
Jordan Lyle	RB	6-0	180	★★★★	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas
Jaylen McClain	SAF	6-0	185	★★★★	West Orange (N.J.) Seton Hall Prep
Jeremiah McClellan	WR	6-0	190	★★★★	St. Louis Christian Brothers College
Eric Mensah	DL	6-3	290	★★★	Stafford (Va.) Mountain View
Ian Moore	OL	6-5	295	★★★★	New Palestine, Ind.
Air Noland	QB	6-3	195	★★★★★	Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes
James Peoples	RB	5-10	192	★★★★	San Antonio Veterans Memorial
Payton Pierce	LB	6-1	225	★★★★	Lucas (Texas) Lovejoy
Leroy Roker	S	6-1	170	★★★	Fort Myers (Fla.) Bishop Verot
Aaron Scott	CB	6-2	190	★★★★	Springfield, Ohio
Justin Scott	DT	6-4	310	★★★★★	Chicago St. Ignatius
Jeremiah Smith	WR	6-3	198	★★★★★	Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep
Garrett Stover	LB	6-1	195	★★★★	Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut
Gabe VanSickle	OL	6-5	283	★★★	Coopersville, Mich
Bryce West	CB	5-11	177	★★★★	Cleveland Glenville
Sam Williams-Dixon	RB	5-11	203	★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) North
Damarion Witten	TE	6-4	215	★★★★	Cleveland Glenville

## 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

nation's No. 15 overall prospect and top-ranked offensive tackle in 2024 – making a trip to Columbus, the Buckeyes' chances of landing him are slim to none.

With VanSickle's commitment and Seaton drifting away from Ohio State, the Buckeyes are likely done on the offensive line for the 2024 class unless a new target emerges between the early signing period and national signing day.

### Minnesota SAF Perich To Visit On Dec. 9-10

Esko (Minn.) Lincoln Secondary four-star safety Koi Perich (6-1, 195), a 2024 prospect whom Ohio State is attempting to flip from Minnesota, will make his official visit to Ohio State from Dec. 9-10, he told 247Sports.

He will also visit Florida State from Dec.

15-17 and could take an official visit to USC at some point in December. He is the No. 137 overall prospect and No. 11 safety in the class and has been committed to the Gophers since April.

Last season, he totaled 1,167 yards of offense and 20 touchdowns while adding 74 tackles, three interceptions and four forced fumbles on defense. He is also a multi-sport athlete, competing in track and basketball.

Ohio State currently has just one safety committed in West Orange (N.J.) Seton Hall Prep three-star Jaylen McClain (6-0, 185).

### 2025 TE Winston Has OSU In Top Three

Ohio State could soon learn whether it lands Calhoun, Ga., four-star tight end Ema-

**Continued On Page 30**

type of people that Ohio State recruits rub shoulders with.

### Five-Star OL Seaton Has Ohio State In Top Seven

Things don't appear to be trending in a positive direction for Ohio State when it comes to Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy

five-star offensive tackle Jordan Seaton (6-5, 287) considering he never made it to campus this fall, but he did at least include the Buckeyes among his final seven schools on Nov. 18.

Ohio State was included along with Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Oregon and Tennessee. But without Seaton – the

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

### 35 Years Ago – 1988

Although Ohio State head coach John Cooper would enjoy the benefit of having nearly all of his defensive backfield return in 1989, he was still looking for help in a secondary that was riddled by injuries and enemy pass attacks.

There were as many as a half-dozen excellent defensive back prospects scattered throughout Ohio, and Myron Bell of Toledo Macomber-Whitney was one of the best. The 6-1, 198-pound Bell first caught the attention of college scouts as a junior for the Macmen. He returned for his senior year and continued his excellent play, earning first-team all-district honors from The Associated Press.

"He is rated by many as one of the top defensive back prospects in the country," said national recruiting expert Tom Lemming. "He will come up and stuff the run like a pro. Myron breaks very well to the ball"

### 30 Years Ago – 1993

With tailbacks Raymont Harris and Butler By'not'e departing Ohio State after the season, leaving only Eddie George, Travis McGuire and Keith Wilkerson at the position, the Buckeyes would likely be looking to replenish their stable of running backs.

One of the leading candidates was Pepe Pearson, a 5-10, 175-pound speedster from Euclid High School, the same school that produced former Buckeye tailback Robert Smith.

Heavily recruited throughout his high school career, Pearson had narrowed his list of prospective colleges to six: Ohio State, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Syracuse and Penn State.

"After the season, I'll finalize my visits. I have already scheduled visits to Notre Dame and Michigan State," Pearson said. "I also plan on visiting Ohio State. It's a matter of scheduling it. I went to both the Washington and the Penn State games and had a pretty good time."

### 25 Years Ago – 1998

Miami (Fla.) Senior wide receiver Andre Johnson (6-3, 200) was rated among the nation's top three wide receivers by The National Recruiting Advisor and No. 6 by SuperPrep.

A positive for Johnson was he played in a run-oriented offense, so he understood the importance of blocking. This year he had 21 catches for 635 yards (30.2 average) and seven touchdowns for an 8-1 playoff team. The previous year he caught 25 passes for 618 yards.

"I think people like me because of my speed and size," Johnson said, "and I also have good hands."

He planned to visit OSU, Florida, Florida State, Miami (Fla.), and USC.

"I like their tradition of receivers," said Johnson, who was being recruited by Bill Conley. "David Boston, for instance, is somebody I watch."

### 20 Years Ago – 2003

Even though Ohio State went on the road to face archrival Michigan, a number of the Buckeyes' top recruiting prospects took in the contest firsthand.

Among the visitors to Michigan Stadium for the 100th meeting between OSU and the Wolverines was one of the top players in the state of Ohio, according to Rivals.com – defensive back Ted Ginn Jr. of Cleveland Glenville.

Ginn (6-1, 170) was making his official visit to Ann Arbor and was accompanied by both of his parents as well as teammate Jamario O'Neal, a junior who had already committed to Ohio State.

"It went fine," Ginn told BSB of his visit. "A couple of things were new. I saw the ins and outs of the program, and I talked to a couple of players."

### 15 Years Ago – 2008

There was no shortage of storylines when it came to Zach Boren.

A senior at Pickerington (Ohio) Central, the three-star linebacker prospect had two parents who were letter winners for Michigan. His older brother, Justin, spent two years playing for the Wolverines before making a controversial, high-profile decision to transfer to Ohio State and sit out one season before suiting up for the Buckeyes.

In the end, Zach Boren opted to issue his verbal commitment to OSU head coach Jim Tressel, allowing him to join his older brother for the next season. But now, as Zach and his teammates put together a 13-1 season and made a run that ended in the state semifinals, Central head coach Jay Sharrett said one story about Boren that stood out.

"You're talking about a kid that absolutely enjoys the physical part of football," Sharrett told BSB. "There are not a lot of guys that do that. Sometimes you'll get guys who tolerate the physical part, but he enjoys the physical part of football – the hitting, the banging around. He enjoys all areas of it – conditioning, lifting, preparing for the season, watching film. He just loves to play football."

### 10 Years Ago – 2013

It was no secret that Hinesville (Ga.) Liberty County linebacker Raekwon McMillan sat at the top of Ohio State's wish list for the 2014 class. And come Dec. 16, the Buckeyes would finally find out their fate with the four-star prospect.

McMillan posted an announcement to his Twitter account stating that would be the day he would announce where he would be spending his college career. The fifth-ranked middle linebacker in the 2014 class was considering offers from Ohio State as well as Alabama, Florida and Clemson. The Buckeyes had long been thought to be the favorite to land the 6-2, 230-pound McMillan, as he had taken a number of unofficial visits to Columbus on his own dime.

McMillan took his official visit to Ohio State on Oct. 26 for the Penn State game, where he was spotted wearing a Buckeye winter jacket on the sidelines. McMillan was the No. 53 overall player in the Scout 100 for 2014.

### Five Years Ago – 2018

As expected, two top targets from Ohio checked in Nov. 24 for the Michigan game with the four-star linebacker duo of Cleveland St. Ignatius' Tommy Eichenberg (6-3, 225) and Clayton Northmont's Justin Jacobs (6-3, 210) both on campus.

However, a surprise visitor from within state borders who was committed elsewhere also showed up when J.D. Duplain appeared from the southeast tunnel to take in pregame warmups. A three-star offensive guard from Strongsville, Ohio, Duplain had been committed to Michigan State since Aug. 1. The Buckeyes offered Duplain on Oct. 2, but he had appeared to be sticking with his pledge to the Spartans.

For the first time since OSU began recruiting him in the spring, when he made his March 23 unofficial visit, Duplain quietly returned to campus and signaled a chance for a flip. The 6-4, 295-pounder was the 247Sports composite's No. 802 overall prospect, No. 47 offensive guard and No. 35 player in Ohio.

### One Year Ago – 2022

Ohio State added a third commitment in 2024 on Nov. 21, earning a verbal pledge from Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut four-star linebacker/safety Garrett Stover (6-1, 195).

Stover – the cousin of current Ohio State tight end Cade Stover – was the No. 168 overall prospect and No. 17 athlete in the class. He held additional offers from Cincinnati, Duke, Iowa State, Kentucky, Michigan State, Notre Dame and Pittsburgh, among others.

"It's always been a dream of mine to be a Buckeye," he told 247Sports. "It feels amazing. It's awesome that it's close to home, and it really just shows all the work I have put in has paid off. It is all around the perfect fit for me, and it just feels like home. That place is filled with amazing people that I have built relationships with, and I have a great relationship with the staff as well. I'm excited to get developed and join the brotherhood."



# State Championships On The Line In Ohio

Continued From Page 29

ree Winston (6-2, 235), a 2025 prospect, after he trimmed his list of offers down to three schools. He could make a decision in the coming weeks.

The Buckeyes were included in Winston's top three along with Texas and UCF. He is the No. 253 overall prospect and No. 12 tight end in the class. He has taken several visits to Ohio State over the last year, though he is considered a lean toward the Longhorns.

"They have 105,000 people there every week," Winston told On3 about Ohio State. "The stadium fills up, it is loud and I like the atmosphere. My relationship with Coach Keenan Bailey is big, too. I always enjoy it when I am there. I was at the Michigan State game, the Michigan game last season and two times in the spring."

In addition to Winston, Ohio State is also pursuing West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star Luka Gilbert (6-7, 233); Alcoa, Tenn., three-star Eli Owens (6-2, 243); St. Louis University three-star Landon Pace (6-3, 215); and Washington, Okla., four-star Nate Roberts (6-4, 235) at tight end.

## OSU Sends Out Three New Offers

Ohio State has issued three new offers since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, including to Newberry, Fla., three-star defensive lineman Jarquez Carter (6-2,

284), Newport News (Va.) Warwick four-star safety Messiah Delhomme (6-1, 196) and Geneva (Ill.) Community four-star wide receiver Talyn Taylor (6-0, 165), all 2025 prospects.

Carter does not yet hold a composite ranking on 247Sports, but he holds additional offers from Cincinnati, Duke, Louisville, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Notre Dame, Penn State and Tennessee, among others. He had 78 tackles (23 for loss) with 10 sacks last season.

"It felt great knowing all the great defensive linemen they've produced," he told Eleven Warriors. "That was a big-time offer for me. Day told me that he really appreciated me coming all the way to Ohio State from Florida. He said that means a lot and shows I'm really interested in the school."

"He said, 'If you show interest in me, I'll show interest in you,' and he offered me and told me he wants me to come back in the spring and spend more time here."

Delhomme is the No. 224 overall prospect and No. 16 safety in the class, and he holds additional offers from Alabama, Florida State, Maryland and Michigan, among others.

He does a little bit of everything for Warwick, operating as both a running back and receiver as well as a defensive back. Last season, he rushed for 827 yards and 12 touchdowns on 74 carries (11.1 yards per attempt), had 28 catches for 575 yards and three touchdowns, and had 61 tackles, 2½

## OHSAA GAMES TO WATCH, FINALS

- No. 1 Lakewood St. Edward (13-1) vs. No. 12 Springfield (10-5)
- No. 1 Akron Hoban (13-1) vs. No. 1 Massillon Washington (15-0)
- No. 2 Cleveland Glenville (12-2) vs. No. 4 Kettering Alter (12-3)

sacks and eight interceptions – including two pick-sixes – on defense.

"Coach Ryan Day made the time to personally make me the offer," he told 247Sports. "Coach Perry Eliano talked to me more after my meeting with Coach Day and told me they enjoyed my film and they liked what I could bring to the team."

Taylor is the No. 107 overall prospect and No. 16 wide receiver in the class, and he holds additional offers from Alabama, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Notre Dame, Tennessee and USC, among others. Last season, he collected 45 receptions for 660 yards and eight touchdowns.

## Six Future Buckeyes To Compete In OHSAA Finals

The finals of the Ohio High School Athletic Association football playoffs are now on deck, and six future Buckeyes will be competing for state championships on Dec. 1-2. Here are the results from notable

games played on Nov. 24 that determined the final two teams in each division ahead of championship weekend:

**Division I – No. 2 Hilliard Bradley (13-2) vs. No. 1 Lakewood St. Edward (13-1):** St. Edward's quest for a three-peat will continue, after the Eagles pulled off a 26-3 victory over No. 2 Hilliard Bradley.

St. Edward – led by the Armstrong brothers – helped tailback Brandon White rush for 240 yards in the win, and the Eagles collected 398 yards of offense.

**Division I – No. 12 Springfield (10-5) vs. No. 5 Cincinnati Moeller (10-5):** St. Edward's opponent will be No. 12 Springfield, which continued the Wildcats' upset-filled playoff run with a 26-19 win over No. 5 Cincinnati Moeller.

After going to overtime tied at 19, four-star cornerback and Ohio State pledge Aaron Scott (6-2, 190) threw a touchdown pass to give the Wildcats the final lead before the defense held on with Moeller facing second-

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## ASK AN ANALYST

### With Eleven Warriors' Garrick Hodge

**We're now under a month to go until the early signing period begins on Dec. 20. What position group and which individual player do you view as the biggest priorities for Ohio State over the next few weeks?**

"I'd say defensive line. They want at least two more players in the current cycle and are pursuing guys like Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman and Florida commit Amaris Williams (6-3, 270); Bay City, Texas, four-star defensive lineman and Nebraska commit Carlton Jones (6-3, 285); Goodyear (Ariz.) Desert Edge four-star defensive end and Kansas commit Deshawn Warner (6-4, 225); and Towson (Md.) Concordia Prep four-star defensive lineman Ernest Willor Jr. (6-3-255). Landing two of those four players would be a great finish for the Buckeyes."

**Opa Locka (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 198) recently received a shout-out on social media from LeBron**

**James. How much do other recruits take notice of something like this and the amount of attention that Ohio State verbal pledges or players receive?**

"I think it's definitely good for the 'street cred,' or whatever term the kids use these days. I'm sure it definitely makes a teenager's day unexpectedly getting a shoutout from arguably the most famous athlete alive right now. But I don't think any teenager is basing their commitment on getting a shoutout from a celebrity."

**Speaking of Smith, he's one of several prospects whom other schools are attempting to flip from Ohio State. Do you find those fears founded around Smith, and are there any other potential flips that you're keeping an eye on in Ohio State's class?**

"I've consistently said that as long as Brian Hartline and Ryan Day are here, Jeremiah Smith will be too. The recent aggression from Florida State and Florida has me raising

my eyebrow a little, but I'd still pick Ohio State right now."

**Ohio State was included on Nov. 21 among the top three schools for Calhoun, Ga., 2025 four-star tight end Emaree Winston (6-2, 235). Where do you feel the Buckeyes stand, and could timing be a factor here considering the number of targets - including Washington, Okla., four-star Nate Roberts (6-4, 235), West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star Luka Gilbert and St. Louis University three-star Landon Pace (6-3, 215) - Ohio State has at tight end in 2025?**

"I would guess Winston is headed to Texas. I do like where the Buckeyes stand with Nate Roberts and Alcoa, Tenn. four-star tight end Eli Owens (6-2, 243), though. Those would be my picks to round out Ohio State's 2025 class if I made them today, but a lot can happen between now and next year's national signing day."

and-goal from Springfield's 1-yard line.

**Division II - No. 1 Akron Hoban (13-1) vs. No. 1 Avon (14-1):** Three-star 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) will get the chance to compete for a state title after Hoban knocked off previously undefeated Avon, 17-14.

Avon opened up a 14-3 lead midway through the third before Hoban stormed back, scoring back-to-back touchdowns - the latter set up by a Hill interception - to

take the lead, and Avon's potential game-tying 44-yard field-goal attempt fell short as time ran out.

Hoban's quest for a state championship will go through No. 1 Massillon Washington (15-0), the Region 7 winner, on Dec. 1.

**Division IV - No. 2 Cleveland Glenville (12-2) vs. No. 1 Canton South (15-1):** Glenville and cornerback Bryce West (5-11, 177) and tight end Damarion Witten (6-4, 215) - both committed to Ohio State's 2024 class - will have a chance to defend their state championship after a 42-21 rout of previously undefeated Canton South.

Witten had a touchdown reception in the win, though West did not play after suffering a shoulder injury the previous week against Sandusky Perkins. Glenville will face No. 4 Kettering Alter (12-3), which won Region 16.

#### Other Notes And Tidbits

• Ohio State continues to hold steady as the No. 2 overall class in 2024, according to the 247Sports composite rankings. With a team score of 305.08, the Buckeyes trail only Georgia, which has five more com-

mitments than Ohio State. The Buckeyes' .9330 average player rating is also second behind Georgia (.9344).

• Alpharetta (Ga.) Milton three-star cornerback Tyler Redmond (6-1, 175), a 2025 prospect who held an offer from Ohio State, committed to Tennessee on Nov. 19. He is the No. 525 overall prospect and No. 56 cornerback in the class.

*For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to visit [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com), available for free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.*

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# OSU Wins Emerald Coast Classic In 5-1 Start

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State racked up three wins since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, winning one game at home against Western Michigan and then traveling to Niceville, Fla., and sweeping its two-game slate against No. 17 Alabama and Santa Clara to win the Emerald Coast Classic championship. This three-game stretch improved the Buckeyes' overall record this season to an impressive 5-1, while they also hold an active four-game winning streak.

Ohio State cruised to its third win of the season on Nov. 19 behind a solid three-point shooting performance and an active defense, dominating Western Michigan 73-56 in front of 9,505 fans at Value City Arena.

The Buckeyes had five players reach double figures in scoring and netted 10 threes on the night while holding the Broncos (0-4) to just 37.1 percent shooting from the field (23 of 62) and 26.9 percent (7 of 26) from beyond the arc.

"Guys are getting open," fifth-year forward Jamison Battle said. "The offense is flowing. I think that's the talent level we have and the depth that we have. That's what makes us so special. Defensively, we were pretty locked in. That's something we took pride in, and we're going to keep taking pride in that."

Ohio State connected on its first two three-point attempts from Battle and sophomore guard Bruce Thornton for an early 7-2 lead and eventually led 9-6 with 15:29 remaining. But after a slow start for both sides, the Buckeyes took off on a 21-3 run over the next 5:57, a run that included five three-pointers by Ohio State – two by Dale Bonner and one each by Roddy Gayle Jr., Zed Key and Bruce Thornton – to take a 30-9 lead with 9:31 left in the half.

The Broncos responded quickly to cut the deficit to 30-15, but Ohio State answered with another strong 7-0 run to bring the lead back to 37-15, one that eventually inflated to 41-18 just before halftime before Anthony Crump connected on a three to make it 41-21 at the half.

Ohio State was sound on the defensive end in the first half, forcing seven turnovers that led to 14 points and limiting the Broncos to just 30.0 percent shooting (9 of 30).

"It was as good a 20 minutes as we've played in a while," head coach Chris Holtmann said. "We really were locked in physically. Mentally we were locked in. And we imposed ourselves. It was a really, really high-level 20 minutes."

The Buckeyes' dominance continued af-



SONNY BROCKWAY

**RAISE THE ROOF — Ohio State forward Zed Key has collected at least 10 points in four consecutive games as of Nov. 25, continuing a strong start to the season in which he has come off the bench for the Buckeyes.**

ter halftime, where – after Western Michigan scored on back-to-back possessions out of the locker room sandwiching a basket by Battle – the Buckeyes responded with a commanding 16-2 run to push the lead to 59-28 with 13:41 remaining. This was spearheaded by Gayle and Thornton, who accounted for eight of those points during that stretch.

Ohio State continued a stranglehold on the game throughout the second half, holding a lead that swelled to 31 points twice, the second time with 11:05 left after a Bonner three-point make. The Broncos cut the deficit to just 17 points at the final buzzer,

but the Buckeyes managed the blowout win by shooting 29 of 62 (46.8 percent) from the field and 10 of 25 (40.0) from three.

Ohio State was led by Battle and Gayle, with 13 points each, followed by Thornton (12), Bonner (11) and Key (11). They accounted for 60 of the Buckeyes' 73 points. Felix Okpara added a team-high 11 rebounds along with four blocks. Thornton also dished out five assists and had three steals.

The Broncos were led in the loss by sophomore guard Seth Hubbard, who finished with a game-high 24 points on 10-of-18 shooting. Owen Lobsinger added 11 off the boards.

## OSU Earns Statement Win In Emerald Coast Classic

Ohio State (4-1) started off the Emerald Coast Classic with its signature win of the young season on Nov. 24, using a solid shooting performance to upset favored No. 17 Alabama (4-1), 92-81, at Raider Arena in Niceville, Fla.

The Buckeyes connected on 10 of their 18 (55.6 percent) three-point attempts, with four of those makes coming from Thornton, who finished with a career-high 29 points. Ohio State also shot 54.0 percent from the

## Ohio State 73, Western Michigan 56

Nov. 19, 2023  
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio

	1	2	F
Western Michigan (0-4)	21	35	56
Ohio State (3-1)	41	32	73

West Mich.	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D			
Muntu	28	2-3	0-0	0-5	3	1	4
D. Monegro	30	3-8	0-0	0-2	2	1	7
Hubbard	28	10-18	0-0	0-1	1	3	24
Lobsinger	32	1-5	2-2	2-9	0	1	4
Wright	23	3-6	1-3	2-1	2	3	7
Crump	22	1-9	0-4	2-4	0	1	3
White	10	0-3	0-0	1-1	1	0	0
Hannah	18	2-7	0-0	0-1	2	0	4
Burton	7	1-3	0-0	2-1	0	1	3
Stefanski	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>23-62</b>	<b>3-9</b>	<b>9-25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>56</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 37.1%. FT: 33.3%. **Three-point field goals:** 7-26 (Hubbard 4-9, Burton 1-2, De La Cruz Monegro 1-3, Crump 1-3, Lobsinger 0-3, White 0-3, Hannah 0-2, Muntu 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Lobsinger). **Turnovers:** 11 (De La Cruz Monegro 5, Hannah 2, Munti, Hubbard, Crump, White). **Steals:** 3 (De La Cruz Monegro, Hubbard, Lobsinger).

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D			
Gayle	26	6-9	0-2	3-5	2	2	13
Thornton	26	5-10	0-0	0-1	5	0	12
Battle	20	5-12	0-1	0-4	2	2	13
Mahaffey	20	1-5	1-2	0-2	0	0	3
Okpara	24	2-3	2-4	3-8	0	4	6
Middleton	21	1-4	0-0	1-1	3	1	2
Bonner	21	4-8	0-0	0-2	2	0	11
Hardman	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Royal	17	1-2	0-0	1-1	0	3	2
Key	16	4-5	2-2	0-2	1	1	11
Eztler	4	0-3	0-0	1-1	0	0	0
Parks	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>29-62</b>	<b>5-11</b>	<b>9-27</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>73</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 46.8%. FT: 45.5%. **Three-point field goals:** 10-25 (Battle 3-7, Boner 3-5, Thornton 2-4, Gayle 1-2, Key 1-1, Eztler 0-2, Okpara 0-1, Middleton 0-1, Hardman 0-1, Royal 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 6 (Okpara 4, Key 2). **Turnovers:** 8 (Gayle 3, Bonner 2, Royal 2, Okpara). **Steals:** 10 (Thornton 3, Mahaffey 2, Key 2, Gayle, Okpara, Bonner). **Officials:** Breeding, Love, Kueneman. **Attendance:** 9,505

field and a near-perfect 28 of 30 (93.3 percent) from the free-throw line, while it held Alabama's top-ranked scoring offense to just 46.4 percent from the field (26 of 56) and 30.0 percent (9 of 30) from three.

"I thought our guys were locked in," Holtmann said.

But the Buckeyes were sloppy at the start, turning the ball over on their first three possessions of the game, which led to three consecutive baskets by Alabama. Ohio State quickly found its sea legs and erased the early 6-0 hole, though, when Thornton connected on a three-pointer for the team's first points of the game. This kick-started an 11-2 run for the Buckeyes where they took an 11-8 lead with 15:34 remaining in the half.

"We had a couple times where we dribbled off our foot and kicked it out of bounds in the first four minutes," Holtmann said. "We just had some uncharacteristic turnovers. I've learned, probably the hard way, that the worst thing you can do is get on your guys at that moment. They're trying hard, and in some cases they just have to slow down and somebody has to make a play. Bruce making that open three gave us a little bit of a chance to relax."

That lead did not last long, however, as the Crimson Tide bounced back with a quick 11-2 run of their own, holding a 19-13 advantage after a made layup from Ala-

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# OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

## Ohio State 92, Alabama 81

Nov. 24, 2023 Raider Arena • Niceville, Fla.									
	1	2	F						
Alabama (4-1)	33	48	81						
Ohio State (4-1)	38	54	92						
Alabama	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.		
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D					
Sears	36	6-12	3-6	2-2	4	3	17		
Nelson	32	5-11	9-9	1-5	2	3	20		
Griffen	22	1-4	2-2	0-1	0	3	5		
Pringle	17	0-0	1-3	1-3	0	1	1		
Estrada	32	8-15	1-2	1-2	4	3	19		
Wague	4	1-1	0-0	1-0	0	2	2		
Wrightsell Jr.	24	2-4	4-4	0-1	0	5	9		
Stevenson	24	2-7	0-0	1-2	0	4	5		
Walters	9	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	2	3		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>26-56</b>	<b>20-26</b>	<b>7-17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>81</b>		
<b>Percentages:</b> FG: 46.4%. FT: 76.9%. <b>Three-point field goals:</b> 9-30 (Sears 2-6, Estrada 2-5, Stevenson 1-6, Nelson 1-5, Griffen 1-4, Wrightsell 1-3, Walters 1-1). <b>Team rebounds:</b> 0. <b>Blocked shots:</b> 3 (Nelson 3). <b>Turnovers:</b> 12 (Sears 3, Estrada 3, Stevenson 2, Nelson, Pringle, Walters). <b>Steals:</b> 5 (Sears 3, Estrada, Wague).									
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.		
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D					
Gayle Jr.	36	8-11	6-6	1-3	2	3	23		
Thornton	35	6-12	13-14	0-3	4	2	29		
Battle	27	2-7	4-4	1-2	1	2	9		
Mahaffey	23	1-2	2-2	0-1	1	4	4		
Okpara	18	1-3	0-0	1-9	0	4	2		
Middleton	9	2-2	0-0	1-0	0	2	5		
Chatman	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0		
Bonner	26	3-8	0-0	0-2	1	2	9		
Royal	3	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	0		
Key	22	4-4	3-4	2-1	1	4	11		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>27-50</b>	<b>28-30</b>	<b>7-25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>92</b>		
<b>Percentages:</b> FG: 54.0%. FT: 93.3%. <b>Three-point field goals:</b> 10-18 (Thornton 4-6, Bonner 3-4, Battle 1-5, Bonner 1-2, Middleton 1-1). <b>Team rebounds:</b> 4. <b>Blocked shots:</b> 1 (Okpara). <b>Turnovers:</b> 14 (Gayle 3, Middleton 3, Thornton 2, Battle 2, Mahaffey 2, Okpara, Key). <b>Steals:</b> 9 (Battle 3, Mahaffey 3, Gayle, Thornton, Bonner). <b>Officials:</b> Gaffney, Adams, Dorsey. <b>Attendance:</b> 2,196									

## Ohio State 86, Santa Clara 56

Nov. 25, 2023 Raider Arena • Niceville, Fla.									
	1	2	F						
Ohio State (5-1)	34	52	86						
Santa Clara (6-1)	26	30	56						
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.		
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D					
Battle	33	8-18	0-0	0-1	1	0	21		
Thornton	32	4-9	4-5	0-5	7	1	13		
Okpara	19	4-6	0-0	3-4	2	1	8		
Gayle Jr.	15	2-5	2-2	0-3	4	4	8		
Mahaffey	22	1-5	0-0	1-4	2	3	2		
Bonner	26	4-7	1-2	1-2	2	0	11		
Key	17	5-6	0-0	2-3	0	3	10		
Middleton	20	3-4	0-0	1-0	0	2	7		
Royal	9	1-1	0-0	0-1	1	1	3		
Hardman	1	1-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	3		
Chatman	4	0-1	0-0	0-0	2	2	0		
Etzler	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	3	0		
Parks	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>33-63</b>	<b>7-9</b>	<b>11-24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>86</b>		
<b>Percentages:</b> FG: 52.4%. FT: 77.8%. <b>Three-point field goals:</b> 13-28 (Battle 5-10, Gayle 2-3, Bonner 2-3, Middleton 1-1, Royal 1-1, Hardman 1-1, Thornton 1-5, Chatman 0-1, Okpara 0-1). <b>Team rebounds:</b> 3. <b>Blocked shots:</b> 4 (Okpara 3, Mahaffey 1). <b>Turnovers:</b> 7 (Thornton 2, Battle, Okpara, Key, Middleton, Chatman). <b>Steals:</b> 8 (Thornton 3, Bonner 2, Battle, Okpara, Middleton).									
Santa Clara	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.		
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D					
Bal	30	4-13	4-5	1-1	2	3	13		
Tilly	16	2-6	3-3	1-1	1	3	7		
O'Neil	28	1-4	0-0	1-4	1	0	2		
Benjamin	17	3-7	1-3	0-1	1	2	7		
Marshall Jr.	28	4-11	0-0	4-4	2	2	10		
Bryan	25	4-10	0-2	0-1	1	3	10		
Hammond	9	2-2	0-0	0-1	0	1	4		
Caffaro	19	0-0	0-0	2-3	0	0	0		
McEldon	4	0-0	0-1	1-0	0	0	0		
Tongue	6	0-0	0-2	3-0	0	0	0		
Ensminger	18	1-2	0-0	1-2	1	1	3		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>21-55</b>	<b>8-16</b>	<b>14-18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>56</b>		
<b>Percentages:</b> FG: 38.2%. FT: 50.0%. <b>Three-point field goals:</b> 6-20 (Bryan 2-4, Ensminger 1-2, Marshall 2-5, Bal 1-4, Benjamin 0-2, O'Neil 0-3). <b>Team rebounds:</b> 5. <b>Blocked shots:</b> 1 (O'Neil). <b>Turnovers:</b> 15 (Bal 2, Tilly 2, O'Neil 2, Marshall Jr. 2, Caffaro 2, Benjamin, Bryan, Hammond, Tongue, Ensminger). <b>Steals:</b> 3 (Benjamin 2, Bryan 1). <b>Officials:</b> Dorsey, Adams, Curry. <b>Attendance:</b> 2,196.									

Unlike the previous night against Alabama, Ohio State got off to a good start against Santa Clara, jumping out to an early 11-4 lead with 15:55 remaining after a three-point make from Battle, then increasing its advantage to 14-6 just 45 seconds later following a hit from beyond the arc by Bonner.

After the Broncos trimmed their deficit to just 17-11 on a made basket from guard Tyeree Bryan, the Buckeyes went on a 7-0 run that was sparked by another basket from Bonner and a three-point make from Battle to increase the lead to 24-11 with 9:18 remaining, the largest lead they held in the first half.

Santa Clara did not go away, however, making a late push with an 11-4 run of its own to cut the deficit down to just 28-22 with 4:43 left in the frame. This run was spearheaded by Bronco guard Adama Bal, who contributed five of his 13 total points in that spurt off a made layup and three-pointer.

But the Buckeyes still held a comfortable 34-26 lead heading into the half, mostly due to the stellar play of Battle, who recorded 16 of the team's 34 first-half points on 6-of-12 shooting, with four of those makes being threes.

Ohio State shot an efficient 6 of 14 (42.9 percent) from three in the game's first 20 minutes, while Santa Clara made just 10 of its 28 shots from the floor (35.7 percent).

After Okpara and Santa Clara guard Jalen Benjamin traded baskets coming out of the locker rooms, the Buckeyes began their second-half avalanche with a 19-5 run

that stretched the Ohio State advantage to 55-33 with 11:49 left in the game. This run was led by a balanced offensive attack, which had five different players make baskets.

While the Broncos attempted to battle back, going on an 11-5 run to trail 60-44 with 8:10 left, the Buckeyes' offensive onslaught continued. The team scored seven straight points off a dunk by Key and Bonner's three-point make and layup to push the lead back up to 67-44.

Then, after two free throws from Bal, Ohio State took off again, this time scoring 11 straight points, led by two more baskets from Key and a three-pointer from Middleton to extend the lead to 78-46 points with 2:29 left. Ohio State increased its lead to a game-high 33 points with 0:53 and 0:23 seconds left on threes by Bowen Hardman and Devin Royal respectively, capping off a strong second half on the offensive end.

The Buckeyes were led by Battle and Thornton, who scored 21 and 13 points, respectively, on 12-of-27 shooting. Bonner (11) and Key (10) also reached double figures while Okpara led the team with seven rebounds and three blocks to go with eight points. Santa Clara was led by Adama, who had 13 points.

Ohio State will return from Florida to host Central Michigan on Nov. 29 (7 p.m., Big Ten Network), Minnesota on Dec. 3 (6:30 p.m., Big Ten Network) and Miami (Ohio) on Dec. 6 (7 p.m., Big Ten Plus) before traveling to face Penn State on Dec. 9 (6 p.m., Big Ten Network).

bama forward Mohamed Wague with 10:47 remaining in the first frame.

The rapid pace of the game continued throughout much of the first half when the Buckeyes bounced back again with five quick points from freshman forward Scotty Middleton and two baskets from Thornton following a bucket by Key to give the Buckeyes a 24-22 advantage. Ohio State eventually created some separation with an 11-6 run to close the half and take a 38-33 lead into the locker room.

Alabama attempted to reclaim the momentum coming out of halftime, shrinking the deficit to just two points after a three-pointer from Crimson Tide guard Mark Sears made it 40-38 with 18:05 remaining. But the Buckeyes then got seven early second-half points from Battle and a three-point make from Bonner, which gave Ohio State a 52-42 advantage. After a Grant Nelson three, that was followed by three consecutive makes by way of a Gayle jumper, Key dunk and another Bonner three to increase the lead to a then-game-high 59-48 with 12:30 remaining.

The Crimson Tide trudged ahead with one last run, cutting the deficit down to five points with 10:24 remaining after a made second-chance layup by Alabama guard Aaron Estrada. But another impressive shooting barrage from the Buckeyes sparked a 10-0 run in just 2:06 to push the lead up to 71-56 with 8:10 left in the game before leading for the rest of the contest, mostly by double digits.

Ohio State was led in the win by the career nights of Thornton and Gayle, who set a career high with 23 points. The pair com-

bined for 14-of-23 shooting (60.9 percent), while Key (11 points) also reached double figures on a perfect 4-of-4 shooting from the field. Okpara led the team on the glass with 10 rebounds, while Thornton dished out a team-high four assists. Alabama was led by Nelson and Estrada, who earned 20 and 19 points, respectively. Sears added 17.

### OSU Downs Santa Clara To Win Emerald Coast Classic

Ohio State continued to build off its strong start to the season with a convincing 86-56 win over Santa Clara on Nov. 25 to win the Emerald Coast Classic in front of 2,196 fans.

The Buckeyes (5-1) utilized a strong second half where they shot 63.6 percent from the field (21 of 33) and 50.0 percent from three (7 of 14) while also limiting Santa Clara (6-1) to just 38.2 percent shooting on the night (21 of 55) and forcing 15 turnovers.

"I'm just really proud of our guys," Holtmann said. "Proud of our effort, proud of the growth we had this weekend."

"Our guys really wanted this. They had an edge to them. They knew (Santa Clara) had just beaten Oregon and kind of controlled the game for stretches. We just had a hunger that last night (against Alabama) was not a one-off and that they were ready to compete again."











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# Bonner Finding Stride In First Month At OSU

Ohio State transfer guard Dale Bonner entered the program this offseason with a whirlwind of college basketball experience, having spent time with two teams (Fairmont State and Baylor) over the last four seasons. That experience has not made him immune to some struggles to start his Buckeyes' career, however.

## COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

In his first three games with his new team, the fifth-year made little impact on the floor, recording a total of just nine points, eight rebounds and four assists in 55 minutes of game action, including a disappointing debut on Nov. 6 against Oakland where he went 0 for 4 from the field.

He looked tentative to start the year on the offensive end, oftentimes electing to quickly pass instead of making a move to the rim, a trend that caused him to lose playing time in favor of sophomore guards Roddy Gayle Jr., Evan Mahaffey and Bruce Thornton.

But Bonner seemed to flip a switch in Ohio State's 76-53 win over Western Michigan on Nov. 19. In 21 minutes of action, Bonner turned in his most productive outing of the young season, knocking down a season-high 11 points on an efficient 4-of-8 shooting, along with two rebounds, two assists and a steal. He also showed off his aggressiveness from beyond the arc, netting three of his five attempts from three.

"I don't really think anything was different," Bonner said after the game. "I'm just continuing to play with confidence and play hard every time I step on the floor. Today I hit shots, so it was a good day."

While Bonner said his confidence has

never wavered through his early-season struggles, head coach Chris Holtmann saw his strong performance against the Broncos as a promising sign as he continues to gain more comfort with his new team. Bonner's aggressiveness on offense was something he may not have seen from his guard in his first three games at Ohio State, where he was less poised and assertive on the court.

"Dale's the one I noticed (show more comfort) tonight," Holtmann said. "Just because Dale's a much better shooter than what he had shown early. And now it's like, 'OK, he's relaxing a little bit and playing like we've seen him play."

"I liked his pace today. His speed is terrific. I liked his shot prep and shot readiness today off some of (Western Michigan's) gaps. It's a highly gapped-up defense, and I thought he punched some gaps, had great shot prep and played off penetration."

Holtmann did say that Bonner's development with the Buckeyes is still not a finished product. He thinks he has to show some improvements on the defensive end, specifically with his discipline while defending passing lanes. But his overall talent and game-by-game improvements could prove to be critical this season while they increasingly rely on him to be the third primary ball handler behind Gayle and Thornton.

"Until Taison (Chatman) gets healthy and we see how he's coming along, (Bonner's play will be) critical," Holtmann said. "He's really important for us. He knows that. He has to keep developing. He has to keep getting better. He has to keep playing to his strengths and impact the game as we know he can. He's a really important part of this group."

### Chatman Makes Collegiate Debut After Knee Surgery

Speaking of Chatman, the first-year guard made his collegiate debut in the Emerald Coast Classic after making a full recovery from a knee procedure he underwent prior to the season.

He first took the floor with 4:16 remaining in the first half of Ohio State's 92-81 victory over No. 17 Alabama on Nov. 24, replacing Bonner after he committed his second foul.

The freshman committed a foul of his own just one second into his debut, however, forcing him to be substituted out just 26 seconds later. He would not return to the game.

Chatman saw more extended time in Ohio State's 86-56 win over Santa Clara on Nov. 25, entering the game with 3:56 left in the second half and playing the rest of the contest. He immediately made a difference in the game, assisting Thornton on a made jumper with 3:25 left, but he turned the ball over on Ohio State's next offensive possession and then committed his second foul in as many games.

The guard bounced back with his second assist of his career which led to a three-point make from fellow freshman Scotty Middleton. Then he missed from beyond the arc with 1:04 left before committing another foul and finishing out the game.

Chatman, a former four-star product

out of Minneapolis Totino-Grace, had been unable to practice for the majority of the preseason and the beginning of the regular season after having knee surgery in early October.

The first-year guard returned to the practice floor earlier this month as a full participant and also participated in pregame warmups before the team's first four home games, all of which served as an encouraging sign for Chatman as he inched closer to his collegiate debut.

"The most important thing for him is I think he's feeling physically better, which is a really exciting thing for the kid," Holtmann said on Nov. 21. "It's a hard thing when you get to college and you have not been able to suit up for most of the time he's been here. He's just started to come back and fully practice. We're looking forward to seeing his continued health get better and better."

### Holtmann Wants Buckeyes To Play Fast This Season

Facing a mix of unique zone defenses early on in games against Oakland, Texas A&M and Merrimack, Ohio State has not been able to run the floor as much as it wanted to this season. Despite having to play more of a half-court offense in those contests, Holtmann said his guard-oriented team is still looking to pick up the pace, an element of their game that they have stressed even while playing against the zone.

"It's been an emphasis all year for us," Holtmann said on Nov. 19. "And sometimes we've been better at it than other times. A lot of it's predicated on our defense. It's just so important. But we have been pushing it off makes more this year than we have in the past."

These efforts to play with pace were evident in Ohio State's blowout of Western Michigan, where it faced a traditional man-to-man defense for the first time all season. The Buckeyes ran up and down the floor from the start, taking off several times after misses by the Broncos and scoring 10 points in transition. As Holtmann alluded to, the Buckeyes achieved this by playing off their defense, where they recorded 10 steals that led to many of their fastbreak points, including a breakaway dunk by forward Zed Key in the first half.

"I thought our pace was good," Holtmann said. "And it also helped that we didn't face a zone. There's a rhythm to playing offensive basketball when you've practiced 75 percent of your possessions against man. There's just a rhythm that naturally happens. Well, we didn't have that rhythm for the bulk of these first three games, and certainly for two of the three."

Despite the encouraging sign, Holtmann's team still has a lot of ground to cover before they reach their goals of becoming a team that plays well in transition.

Entering the win over Western Michigan, the Buckeyes were generating only 7.7 fastbreak points per game. These shortcomings were reflected in the KenPom rankings, where they entered the tournament ranked 261st out of 362 teams in the nation in adjusted tempo at 67.7, a metric that tracks each team's possessions per 40 minutes of game action.

### Holtmann Sees Positives In Letting Freshmen Develop

Last season, Holtmann was dealt a difficult hand when he was forced to extend significant playing time to still-blossoming freshmen Gayle, Thornton, Felix Okpara and Brice Sensabaugh in an effort to find scoring on a struggling roster. This season has been a much different story to start, where he has instead relied on his veteran players and returning sophomores to carry the load, allowing his three healthy freshmen to adjust to the speed and style of college basketball from the sidelines rather than on the court.

Holtmann's change in approach has been reflected through the beginning portion of the season. Through the first six games of the season, the freshman quartet of guards Taison Chatman, Scotty Middleton, center Austin Parks and forward Devin Royal have seen the court sparingly, led by Middleton at 18.7 minutes per game, while Royal was averaging 7.8 minutes, Parks had 1.7 minutes and Chatman appeared in just four total minutes.

Holtmann said his lack of reliance on his freshmen this season can prove to be a positive thing for their overall development as collegiate players, giving them some time to improve upon their game during practice before they are called upon to make a difference on the court.

"I think it can really help them if they continue to just take the feedback from the game and work on playing their role at a higher level the next time they practice, and the next time they play," Holtmann said. "If they embrace that, I think that can really help those guys."

Holtmann added that this strategy has helped some of his former players develop their games behind the scenes as their freshmen seasons progressed, specifically with former Ohio State forward E.J. Liddell. Before his stellar two years as the team's starting forward, Liddell received limited playing time behind more experienced forwards Kyle Young and Andre Wesson, starting zero games and averaging just 16.6 minutes per game during the 2019-2020 season.

"Freshmen can get better behind the scenes," Holtmann said. "E.J. did that. We were saying all year that he's starting to play well in practice. The media didn't see it, because he didn't always play as much as he wanted to, or just didn't give (the media) an opportunity to see it. We saw it, and then come the end of the year, I think we might have had an injury and we started playing him more. Then he just started playing better."

Holtmann expressed his desire to keep his four freshmen off the court during games as much as possible, but he did not rule out having to rely on the quartet later on in the season when the health and endurance of his team could be tested.

He said his first-years must still be ready to take the court at any moment, something he thinks they can work to prepare themselves for during practice.

"It's a long season in college basketball, and they have to keep working and find a way to impact," Holtmann said. "And that's the case for all those freshmen."

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# Thierry Taking Advantage Of Increased Role

With former Ohio State guard Taylor Mikesell departing the program following last season, it opened up a significant opportunity this year for somebody to step up and fill the void both on and off the court. And through the early stages of this season, it appears that junior guard Taylor Thierry has answered the call.

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

Through six games, Thierry was averaging 14.8 points – third on the team – and a team-best 7.7 rebounds on 67.4 percent shooting, which is a top-15 mark nationally. After she scored 12 points on 3-of-3 shooting against IUPUI on Nov. 12, head coach Kevin McGuff said he was hoping to see her play with more aggressiveness considering her scoring acumen.

"She's a really talented player, and I think we need her to be assertive, and she was today," he said. "We need more of that out of her."

Thierry responded by collecting 18 points and eight rebounds on 7-of-9 shooting against Boston College just four days later, and against Oklahoma State on Nov. 22, she had 16 points and a career-high 14 rebounds for just her third career double-double.

Thierry has always been an efficient shooter – she hit 54.1 percent as a freshman and 62.5 percent last season – but with Ohio State needing someone to step up to fill the scoring and shooting volume that Mikesell provided, Thierry is on pace to increase her shots and has taken definitive steps in increasing her confidence.

"I feel like she's always kind of been the underdog," said sophomore forward Cotie McMahon. "What we see is helping her get her confidence up. With (Taylor Mikesell) being gone – yes, it was a blessing having her here. She's a great player. But it just opens opportunities for other players to feel like they have the chance to be that next star player."

"For Taylor, she's more confident. She's letting that thing go. I told you all she's a great shooter, so she has more opportunity to be able to get those looks because people aren't going to be respecting her shot as much because last year she just didn't look to shoot it."

Mikesell operated mostly beyond the arc – and was efficient at that, connecting on 44.2 percent from deep over her two seasons with the Buckeyes – but Thierry has shown the ability to play the perimeter and inside. She's taken just four three-point attempts this season but has hit on 75.0 percent of them, while most of her two-point baskets are either in or around the paint.

Thierry has largely been able to fill in as Ohio State's third scorer this season along with McMahon and fifth-year guard Jacy Sheldon, but McMahon said that on any given night, there is no shortage of Buckeyes who can get to the basket.



SONNY BROCKWAY

**BIG BANG THIERRY** – Stepping into a more significant role for Ohio State this season, junior guard Taylor Thierry (C) has taken her game to a new level, averaging 14.8 points and 7.7 rebounds on 67.4 percent shooting.

"I wouldn't say it's a huge adjustment (not having Mikesell)," she said. "We had other people who scored as well last year. Losing a shooter, we have other people who can step up. You guys haven't seen those who can shoot like T-Mike yet. We have so many people who can score around the board this year, so I feel like we don't have to count on just one person to hit that big shot. There's multiple people on the floor who can do so."

"I feel like it just opens opportunities. You know, it is a little bit of an adjustment, but our offense just flows. I feel like whoever's out there can really hit that shot like T-Mike could."

### Teammates Come To Defense Of Thierry

In the third quarter of Ohio State's 79-55 win over East Carolina on Nov. 20, Thierry took a hard foul with 1:29 remaining in the frame that resulted in her going to the floor. As fifth-year guard Celeste Taylor went to help her teammate up, Taylor shoulder-checked an East Carolina player, resulting in some words and shoves being shared between the teams.

"(Thierry) got hit in the head on the shot pretty hard, and then there's some words exchanged," McGuff said. "This is a tight-knit group so I'm not surprised that they really stepped in to defend their teammates."

The play resulted in a standard foul on ECU's Jade Tillman as well as technical fouls on ECU's Amiya Joyner and Ohio State's Taylor and Rikki Harris. It ultimately had little impact on the game, with the Buckeyes already up 57-41 leading up to the scuffle, but Thierry said it showed what type of team Ohio State has.

"That just shows our team culture and how we have each other's backs and we can rely on each other through thick and thin," she said. "I was very happy to see my teammates have my back, and I know that my

teammates can be confident that I'll have their back as well. Seeing my teammates stand up for me, that meant a lot, for sure."

"We definitely did our best not to let it get to us, just control what we can control and focus on ourselves rather than the other team and what they're doing. We just relied on each other as teammates and had each other's backs."

### ESPN Ranks OSU's Class No. 20 In The Country

Ohio State has signed all four members of the team's 2024 recruiting class, and it is considered the No. 20 group in the country, according to ESPN.

The Buckeyes' class includes Cincinnati

Purcell Marian forward Seini Hicks (6-0); Concord (N.C.) J.M. Robinson forward Ella Hobbs (6-4); Helsinki, Finland, forward Elsa Lemmilä (6-6); and Flowery Branch (Ga.) Buford guard Ava Watson (5-8). According to ESPN's rankings, Watson is the No. 51 recruit and Hobbs is No. 92.

"McGuff has landed size inside and versatility on the perimeter in Ohio State's class," wrote ESPN's Shane Laffin. "Watson is a dynamic combo guard who can catch fire from deep. She is good in a fast-paced system and does a solid job of pressuring the ball defensively."

"Ella Hobbs is a physical presence inside. She carves out space for rebounds and finishes well on dump-off passes. She is starting to realize some of her potential, and with the resources of strength and conditioning at the collegiate level, she can continue that climb."

"Seini Hicks is a wing out of Ohio who brings a savviness and versatility to the floor particularly defensively. Elsa Lemmilä is a 6-6 center from Finland. She is a strong paint presence on both ends with touch out to the free-throw line."

At the top of the rankings are No. 1 USC, which signed six total players and five within ESPN's top-100 players. No. 2 South Carolina and No. 3 UCLA signed three top-30 players, No. 4 Texas signed three top-50 prospects, and No. 5 Duke added three top-100 recruits.

Other Big Ten teams in the rankings include No. 7 Michigan, which signed the No. 11 and 15 overall prospects in Sudbury, Ontario, five-star guard Syla Swords (6-0) and St. Louis Park (Minn.) Benilde Saint Margaret five-star guard Olivia Olson (6-1), respectively.

Iowa signed the nation's ninth-ranked class, highlighted by Sherwood, Ore., four-star forward Ava Heiden (6-4), the No. 40 recruit in the class. No. 15 Maryland, No. 24 Michigan State and No. 25 Northwestern were also in the rankings.



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# Buckeyes Have Successful Trip To Bahamas

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State had a successful trip out of the country since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, winning both games of the Baha Mar Hoops Pink Flamingo Championship in The Bahamas and then returning home for a win over Cornell to move to 5-1 on the season.

The 15th-ranked Buckeyes got things started with a 79-55 win over East Carolina (2-2) on Nov. 20, holding the Pirates to just 35.1 percent shooting from the floor (20 of 57) and forcing 20 turnovers while holding a 33-31 advantage in rebounding.

"We were a little more disciplined than we had been in the first couple of games, just hitting them and being physical, pursuing the ball," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "In particular, Taylor Thierry and Cotie (McMahon) were really good on the boards."

Ohio State jumped out to an early 10-0 lead, connecting on 5 of 8 shots to begin the game while East Carolina missed on its first five attempts of the contest. The Pirates responded with the first made three-pointer of the contest by either team when Danae McNeal connected, and they later cut the deficit to 17-11 with 1:09 to go in the quarter, but the Buckeyes entered the second frame

leading 21-11.

After dueling threes to begin the second quarter – one each by East Carolina's Micah Dennis and Ohio State's Jacy Sheldon – the Pirates embarked on an 8-2 run to make it 26-22 with 6:47 left in the half. Ohio State fifth-year guard Celeste Taylor broke the run with a triple off an East Carolina turnover, but the Pirates took off on another 8-2 run, this time making it just 31-30 with 2:47 remaining in the second quarter.

The Buckeyes eventually went into the half up 38-32, helped by another triple from Sheldon, but East Carolina outscored Ohio State 21-17 in the second frame behind 58.8 percent shooting (10 of 17) from the field, and committed just two turnovers after having eight giveaways in the first quarter. The Buckeyes gave the ball away 12 times in the first half.

"Not only were we turning the ball over, but we were giving them pick-sixes where they were getting the steal and going and making layups," McGuff said. "I thought if we could take care of the ball, we would execute to get good enough shots. Even if we missed it we could get back and set our defense, and we did a much better job in the second half."

The Buckeyes opened the third quarter on an 11-2 run – boosted by five points from McMahon – and after back-to-back triples from fifth-year senior guard Rikki Harris, Ohio State's lead went up to 55-39 with 3:37 left in the quarter.



SONNY BROCKWAY

**HOT START — Ohio State and head coach Kevin McGuff are off to a 5-1 start to begin this season, including a pair of wins in the Baha Mar Hoops Pink Flamingo Championship.**

The game came to a screeching halt after a hard foul on Thierry, as technicals were called on ECU's Amiya Joiner as well as Ohio State's Taylor and Harris. It sent Sheldon to the line, where she connected on a pair, and Harris hit another triple before the Buckeyes led 62-44 entering the fourth.

Ohio State was held scoreless for the first 2:30 of the final frame, and East Carolina cut the deficit to 62-47, but fifth-year forward Rebeka Mikulášiková responded with a three-pointer that kickstarted an 11-4 run to put the Buckeyes up 73-51 with 4:21 to play before closing things out.

Sheldon led the Buckeyes with 20 points on 7-of-10 shooting and was 4 of 5 from beyond the arc, while Thierry added 14 points on 5-of-6 shooting, with eight rebounds, four assists and a pair of steals. Mikulášiková (12 points), Harris (11 points) and McMahon (11 points) also reached double digits, while ECU guard Synia Johnson led the Pirates with 14 points.

Ohio State shot 53.1 percent from the field (26 of 49) and a strong 52.6 percent from three, connecting on 10 of 19 shots from deep, while East Carolina was just 3 of 11 from beyond the arc (27.3 percent). The Buckeyes were guilty of 24 turnovers, which ECU converted into 20 points.

## Thierry Crashes Boards In Win Over Oklahoma State

Ohio State held on for a 75-57 win over Oklahoma State in the Baha Mar Hoops Pink Flamingo Championship on Nov. 22, leaving The Bahamas with a pair of wins and moving to 4-1 on the season.

The Buckeyes, who led by as many as 16 points in the first half, saw that lead cut to just six points late in the third quarter but held on for the win behind a dominant performance from Thierry, who posted her third career double-double with 16 points and a career-high 14 rebounds against the Cowgirls.

Ohio State opened on an 8-0 run – with six points courtesy of McMahon – and after an Oklahoma State basket by Stailee Heard, the Buckeyes took off on another dominant stretch, utilizing a 10-0 run to lead 18-2 with 5:16 left in the first quarter. The Cowgirls began to find a scoring rhythm, however, closing on an 11-6 run to make it 24-13 entering the second quarter.

After shooting just 29.4 percent in the first quarter (5 of 17), Oklahoma State opened the second frame on a 9-3 run to cut the deficit to just 27-22 with 6:17 left in the quarter. Thierry responded with a layup following a steal by Sheldon, who then scored

### Ohio State 79, East Carolina 55

Nov. 20, 2023

Baha Mar Convention Ctr. • Nassau, Bahamas

	1	2	3	4	F
Ohio State (3-1)	21	17	24	17	79
East Carolina (2-2)	11	21	12	11	55

Ohio State	Total FT Reb.						
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Mikulášiková	34	3-9	4-4	0-1	3	3	12
McMahon	27	4-8	3-5	0-7	1	4	11
Thierry	26	5-6	4-5	2-6	4	4	14
Sheldon	34	7-10	2-2	2-3	2	2	20
Taylor	31	2-7	0-0	2-2	3	4	5
Harris	23	3-3	2-3	0-1	1	3	11
Parks	6	2-2	0-0	0-1	0	1	4
Collins	10	0-3	2-2	0-1	0	2	2
Shumate	5	0-1	0-0	2-1	0	1	0
Walker	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Henderson	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>26-49</b>	<b>17-21</b>	<b>8-25</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>79</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 53.1%. FT: 81.0%. **Three-point field goals:** 10-19 (Sheldon 4-5, Harris 3-3, Mikulášiková 2-4, Taylor 1-3, Collins 0-2, McMahon 0-1, Shumate 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Thierry). **Turnovers:** 24 (Sheldon 5, McMahon 4, Taylor 4, Harris 3, Mikulášiková 3, Thierry 3, Shumate, Walker). **Steals:** 8 (Taylor 3, Mikulášiková 2, Thierry 2, Harris).

East Carolina	Total FT Reb.						
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Tatyana Wyche	5	0-2	1-2	4-1	1	3	1
Joyner	25	5-11	2-4	3-6	0	4	12
Dennis	34	1-10	5-6	0-3	4	4	8
Johnson	39	7-12	0-0	2-5	0	1	14
McNeal	33	4-14	2-4	1-0	1	0	11
Morseley	19	1-2	0-0	0-0	2	3	3
Miller	11	0-3	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Taliyah Wyche	12	0-1	0-2	0-1	0	3	0
Gordon	7	0-0	2-2	0-0	0	0	2
Tillman	5	2-2	0-0	3-0	0	3	4
Smith	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Jenkins	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>20-57</b>	<b>12-20</b>	<b>13-18</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>55</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 35.1%. FT: 60.0%. **Three-point field goals:** 3-11 (Dennis 1-2, McNeal 1-4, Morseley 1-1, Johnson 0-1, Joyner 0-1, Miller 0-1, Taliyah Wyche 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 0. **Turnovers:** 20 (McNeal 5, Dennis 4, Joyner 4, Johnson 3, Jenkins 2, Morseley, Tatyana Wyche). **Steals:** 5 (McNeal 3, Dennis, Gordon). **Officials:** Thompson, Macey, Carey. **Attendance:** 391.

### Ohio State 75, Oklahoma State 57

Nov. 22, 2023

Baha Mar Convention Ctr. • Nassau, Bahamas

	1	2	3	4	F
Oklahoma State (2-3)	13	17	14	13	57
Ohio State (4-1)	24	12	18	21	75

Oklahoma St.	Total FT Reb.						
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Garzon	25	1-6	0-0	1-1	0	0	2
Egharevba	12	0-1	1-2	1-3	0	5	1
Noble	40	5-14	0-0	1-4	1	2	12
Gret Asi	25	2-11	1-2	0-1	1	4	6
Heard	33	6-9	3-4	5-2	0	4	15
Fauntleroy	27	2-11	3-4	0-6	1	1	7
Prater	19	5-10	0-0	5-6	1	1	10
Langerman	21	1-4	2-2	1-2	1	4	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>22-66</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-26</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>57</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 33.3%. FT: 71.4%. **Three-point field goals:** 3-24 (Noble 2-6, Great Ash 1-7, Fauntleroy 0-2, Garzon 0-5, Heard 0-2, Langerman 0-1, Prater 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Noble). **Turnovers:** 15 (Prater 4, Fauntleroy 3, Gret Asi 3, Heard 2, Noble 2, Garzon). **Steals:** 6 (Fauntleroy 3, Heard, Langerman, Prater).

Ohio State	Total FT Reb.						
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Mikulášiková	24	2-7	2-2	0-3	0	0	6
McMahon	30	6-10	1-3	1-5	4	3	14
Thierry	36	6-13	4-7	9-5	1	2	16
Sheldon	40	8-18	4-4	1-5	5	1	22
Taylor	24	2-7	1-3	2-3	2	4	5
Harris	20	0-3	0-0	0-2	1	2	0
Parks	8	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	2
Collins	6	1-2	0-0	0-2	0	0	2
Shumate	13	3-7	0-0	1-4	0	2	8
Henderson	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>29-68</b>	<b>12-19</b>	<b>16-31</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>75</b>

**Percentages:** FG: 42.6%. FT: 63.2%. **Three-point field goals:** 5-27 (Sheldon 2-9, Shumate 2-6, McMahon 1-3, Collins 0-1, Harris 0-3, Mikulášiková 0-2, Taylor 0-3). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 2 (Harris 2). **Turnovers:** 13 (McMahon 4, Sheldon 3, Thierry 3, Harris, Mikulášiková, Taylor). **Steals:** 6 (Sheldon 4, Harris, Thierry). **Officials:** Hobbes, Seales, Macey. **Attendance:** N/A.



# OHIO STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

## Ohio State 83, Cornell 40

Nov. 26, 2023  
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio

	1	2	3	4	F
Cornell (2-4)	11	2	17	10	40
Ohio State (5-1)	22	23	26	12	83

Cornell	Total		FT		Reb.		A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF			
Parker-Hall	32	6-11	0-0	0-4	1	3	13		
Pape	20	3-12	0-0	0-7	1	3	6		
Ingram	26	2-7	0-0	0-2	4	3	4		
Kilgoe	25	1-4	1-2	0-2	4	0	3		
Beam	22	1-1	0-0	0-3	0	2	2		
Kaus	21	3-7	0-0	3-1	0	1	6		
Jackson	23	2-6	0-0	0-2	0	1	4		
Davis	5	1-2	0-0	0-1	0	0	2		
Knee	17	0-2	0-0	4-3	0	1	0		
Garcia-Martinez	4	0-2	0-0	0-3	0	0	0		
Hathorn	3	0-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Watts	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>19-56</b>	<b>1-2</b>	<b>10-29</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>40</b>		

**Percentages:** FG: 33.9%. FT: 50.0%. **Three-point field goals:** 1-12 (Parker-Hall 1-2, Garcia-Martinez 0-1, Hathorn 0-2, Kilo 0-2, Knee 0-1, Ingram 0-1, Pape 0-3). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 2 (Kaus, Parker-Hall). **Turnovers:** 26 (Ingram 6, Kilgoe 5, Beam 4, Jackson 3, Knee 2, Team 2, Garcia-Martinez, Knee, Pape, Parker-Hall). **Steals:** 2 (Jackson, Kaus).

Ohio State	Total		FT		Reb.		A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF			
McMahon	19	4-6	5-6	0-2	4	0	14		
Mikulashikova	17	7-9	0-0	0-0	0	0	14		
Thierry	20	5-9	3-4	3-3	4	1	13		
Sheldon	17	4-7	0-0	0-0	3	2	10		
Taylor	21	1-4	0-0	0-4	7	0	2		
Shumate	18	3-5	0-1	0	0	1	9		
Collins	21	3-12	2-2	2-3	0	1	8		
Parks	19	3-9	0-2	3-5	2	2	6		
Walker	11	1-1	2-2	1-4	3	0	4		
Harris	16	1-4	0-0	0-1	0	2	3		
Henderson	16	0-2	0-0	1-1	1	2	0		
Vres	4	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	1	0		
Carson	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>32-68</b>	<b>12-18</b>	<b>10-27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>83</b>		

**Percentages:** FG: 47.1%. FT: 66.7%. **Three-point field goals:** 7-19 (Shumate 3-5, Sheldon 2-3, Harris 1-3, McMahon 1-2, Collins 0-3, Mikulasikova 0-1, Taylor 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 4 (Collins, Parks, Taylor, Thierry). **Turnovers:** 7 (Collins 2, Henderson, McMahon, Sheldon, Shumate, Taylor). **Steals:** 14 (Sheldon 4, Collins 2, McMahon 2, Thierry 2, Mikulasikova, Parks, Shumate, Taylor). **Officials:** Broderick, Hall, McConnell. **Attendance:** 5,695.

points from Sheldon and seven fourth-quarter rebounds from Thierry – including five on the offensive end – Ohio State increased the lead to as many as 19 points before closing out the contest.

Ohio State was led in scoring in the win by Sheldon, who had 22 points on 8-of-18 shooting. She also tallied six rebounds, five assists and four steals. McMahon (14 points) and Thierry also reached double digits. Oklahoma State was led by Heard, who had 15 points.

Neither team shot particularly well on the evening, with the Cowgirls shooting just 33.3 percent (22 of 66) from the field and 12.5 percent (3 of 24) from deep, while the Buckeyes were 42.6 percent (29 of 68) from the field and 18.5 percent (5 of 27) from beyond the arc.

### McMahon, Mikulashikova Lead OSU Past Cornell

Ohio State cruised to an 83-40 win over visiting Cornell on Nov. 26, utilizing strong shooting and even stronger defense to down the Big Red to move to 5-1 on the season in front of 5,695 at Value City Arena.

The Buckeyes shot 47.1 percent from the field (32 of 68) and 36.8 percent (7 of 19) from deep in the win while forcing Cornell into 26 turnovers that resulted in 33 points for Ohio State. McMahon and Mikulashikova combined for 28 points in the win.

"I thought we had some really good moments," McGuff said. "I was a little disappointed that we didn't sustain those moments for closer to 40 minutes. We had some stretches where our press was very effective. We executed and our pressure was good and those turnovers resulted in a lot of points for us."

Ohio State opened up a 13-4 lead with 6:03 left in the first quarter behind a pair of early baskets from Mikulashikova. The Big Red responded with a 7-3 run over the next 3:58 to cut the deficit to 16-11, but the Buckeyes still exited the first quarter with a 22-11 advantage.

Mikulashikova continued her strong performance in the second quarter, leading the Buckeyes with six points in the frame on 3-of-4 shooting, and Ohio State opened

up a 45-13 lead at the half, allowing just two points by Cornell in the second quarter. The Big Red shot just 1 of 12 from the field and turned the ball over nine times. Mikulashikova reached 10 points entering the half, while Thierry and Sheldon each added eight first-half points, and the Buckeyes as a whole shot 50.0 percent from the floor.

The Big Red had a more spirited performance in the third quarter, shooting 50.0 percent (8 of 16) from the field, but they were still outscored 26-17 by Ohio State in the frame. The Buckeyes shot 69.2 percent (9 of 13) in the quarter. McMahon was the biggest reason, adding 10 points on 3-of-4 shooting – including a make from beyond the arc – and the Buckeyes led 71-30 going into the fourth.

Ohio State's lead increased to 75-32 early in the fourth behind baskets from fifth-year forward Taiyier Parks and freshman Diana Collins. The Big Red made it 80-40 on a basket by Azareya Kilgoe with 4:31 remaining in the contest, but those were the last points of the game from Cornell, which missed its last six shots, while Ohio State

was just one of its last nine attempts, the lone make a triple from Shumate with 1:57 remaining that resulted in the final points of the game.

"Games like today help us because we get to switch up our lineups and use our pieces that we have in different areas," McMahon said. "That gives a lot of people opportunity on the bench to show where they're strong. Games like today are used to help us jell better together and help our chemistry and counting on each other."

McMahon and Mikulashikova led the Buckeyes with 14 points each, combining to do so on 11-of-15 shooting, while Thierry (13 points) and Sheldon (10 points) also reached double digits. Parks also finished with six points and a game-high eight rebounds, while Taylor dished out a game-high seven assists.

The Big Red were led by forward Summer Parker-Hall's 13 points.

Ohio State will be off for most of the week before traveling to face No. 19 Tennessee (4-2) in Knoxville on Dec. 3 at 5 p.m. on ESPN.

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a basket of her own. The Cowgirls again cut the deficit to just five points, 33-28, on another bucket by Heard, but Ohio State sophomore guard Emma Shumate got on the board with a three-pointer before a late basket by Oklahoma State's Chandler Prater made it 36-30 at the half.

Despite leading at the half, Ohio State was at a significant disadvantage on the boards, with Oklahoma State holding a 29-19 advantage in rebounds, including 13 on the offensive end for the Cowgirls that led to nine second-chance points.

"We weren't physical enough," McGuff said. "They were the more physical team on the boards in the first half, so I challenged them to match that physicality and toughness and win the war on the boards, and our kids responded."

After the late push by Oklahoma State in the second quarter, the Buckeyes came out strong in the third frame, opening on a 10-2 run – capped by another triple from Shumate – that pushed the lead to 46-32 with 5:44 left in the quarter. The teams traded field goals until a triple from Oklahoma State guard Quincy Noble made it 48-42, but Sheldon responded with a three-pointer before the Buckeyes led 54-44 going into the fourth.

Ohio State had its lead cut to as few as eight points when Oklahoma State made it 56-48 with 7:58 left in the game on a Noble jumper. But behind nine fourth-quarter

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# Goalie Terness Keeps Focus On Making Saves

Logan Terness understands the paradox of being a goaltender.

On one hand, part of his craft is learning and remembering the tendencies of the shooters he's trying to stop. However, when the puck gets past him, he must immediately erase that memory of the goal to concentrate on the next play when a puck traveling 80 or 90 miles per hour is headed toward his body.

## IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

"It's just next shot up," Terness told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "It doesn't matter what happened the shot before, it's the shot coming up and making the save. If you think too far ahead or you keep thinking about what just happened, you're getting in your own head and you just hurt yourself. So I try the best I can making the next save, and it's over once that save happens.

"It's a work in progress. It still is. It's always going to be, but being able to keep that level head and just reset after each shot and be dialed in as long as I possibly can in a game, that's what I'm going for."

Terness admits it's not easy to focus solely on what comes next. He's consulted with performance psychologist Dr. Saul Miller, who had worked with Terness' hometown Vancouver Canucks of the NHL.

"We've done quite a bit of work the last couple of years," Terness said. "It's just resetting after a shot or after a goal. It's the most important part of (being) a goalie. Everyone's good now. It's basically what you have up top that's going to get you to the next level. He's been a big help for me. I haven't been talking to him too much lately,

but all the stuff I have worked on over the years is definitely sticking."

Terness is in his first season with the Buckeyes after two years at Connecticut. He was 10-7-1 in 23 games with a 2.58 goals-against average, a .911 save percentage and one shutout last season for the Huskies after playing just one game his freshman season when he allowed three goals.

### Lasting Impression

His lone shutout for UConn was against the Buckeyes on Oct. 14, 2022, when he made 43 saves in a 0-0 tie. Ohio State's Jakub Dobeš stopped 20 shots, but no one could have known at the time how their careers would intertwine months later.

Dobeš starred for two seasons and signed with the Montreal Canadiens at the conclusion of last season. Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik and his staff knew that was a possibility but were under the assumption that Dobeš would return for his junior season.

His departure on March 31 left a big hole. Dobeš started all 40 games last season (21-16-3, 2.31, .918, four shutouts) when the Buckeyes reached the NCAA regional final.

At about the same time Dobeš turned pro, Terness was looking for a change of scenery and entered the transfer portal on April 3, and the Buckeyes had to act swiftly. Their only goalies on the roster at that point were junior Reilly Herbst, who had played 5:40 in one game last year, and incoming freshman Kristoffer Eberly.

"All of a sudden when Jakub signs – when he talked to us leading up to it that he was going to be here (another season) – it puts you in mode where we've got to find a goalie," Rohlik said. "At that point there's only a couple out there in the portal so you've got to make some quick decisions, not that that's always a good thing, but that's really what we were presented."

Rohlik explained the process of tracking down a goalie in the portal by contacting coaches, scouts and friends in the hockey community.

"My staff does as much as they can," he said. "They make the phone call, 'What do you think of this guy? What do you think of that guy?' But then, at the same time, you don't know if they're recruiting him as well. So, it's really a tough situation to be in, to be honest with you."

Fortunately, Terness became available.

"When someone goes in the portal, you've got to hurry up and do your due diligence," Rohlik said. "The first thing was we did play him last year so it was easy to look on tape and watch that part of him. Then also we watched as many other games as possible as quickly as possible because of the short (transfer) window.

"We saw his compete and his work ethic in games, and obviously he played very well against us. Those were a lot of the things that we saw right away."

The Buckeyes wanted him, and the feeling was mutual.

"Coach has done a great job with the team here," Terness said. "That's something that I loved looking into when I decided where I wanted to go. I saw that, and I just knew it was the right fit for me."

### On The Lookout

There was a bonus in coming to Columbus – at least temporarily. Childhood friend Kent Johnson started his second full season this fall with the Columbus Blue Jackets after an excellent rookie season when the former Michigan standout had 40 points (16 goals, 24 assists).

"We've been skating together since we're about 8, 10 years old," Terness said. "It's pretty cool to see him in the NHL now.

"We've been able to hang out a couple times. It's something that you don't really get to do very often during the season, hanging with your buddies from back home, so it's definitely a plus being here when he's with the Blue Jackets."

Terness made those remarks in late October, a few days before Johnson was surprisingly sent to Cleveland of the American Hockey League, where he has been since. Johnson is known for scoring a "Michigan" goal, so-called because the lacrosse-style score was made famous by former Wolverines player Mike Legg in an NCAA tournament game in 1996 against Minnesota. Johnson scored his for the Blue Jackets on March 24, exactly 27 years after Legg's.

The Michigan goal is not a favorite of goalies because it makes them look bad in the same vein of when a defensive player in basketball is victimized by a dunk over him. Terness said it's happened a few times in his career when the player comes from behind the net, scoops the puck and slams it into net past the unsuspecting goalie.

"It's kind of a big thing right now, so everyone's always looking for it," he said. "I

was trying to be alert when they're behind the net, but if someone can pull it off, it's a pretty special move."

Terness is lucky, though, because Johnson has tried it on him when they played and practiced together each other in Vancouver. That gives Terness a chance to stop a Michigan try.

"Especially watching Kent do it so many times, I've kind of picked up on it, so I've stopped a couple, but it doesn't always go that way," he said.

Despite craziness like that, Terness has always wanted to be a goalie and never pursued other team sports growing up.

"All hockey," he said. "I'll play a lot of tennis in the summer. That's really good for athleticism and a lot of fun too. It gets pretty competitive with my brother and a couple of friends. I picked up pickleball last summer, too. That one's really good for agility as well but no other team sports. Really, it's all just been hockey my whole life."

Terness has started all 13 games. He is 5-5-3 with a 3.08 goals against average, .903 save percentage and one shutout, making 30 saves in a 4-0 win at Omaha on Oct. 28.

He's no different from most players who want to use college as a pathway to pro hockey. He got a taste of it this past summer when he attended the Seattle Kraken's development camp for prospects.

"It's definitely eye-opening," he said. "Just to be able to say I went to an NHL camp and compete with those guys was a great experience."

### Taming The Tigers

The Buckeyes ended a four-game losing streak by sweeping Princeton 6-3 and 4-3 in nonconference games at Value City Arena on Nov. 24 and 25.

Cam Thiesing (two goals, three assists) and Scooter Brickey (goal, four assists) each had five points in the series, and Stephen Halliday had his second career four-point game (two goals, two assists) in the opener.

He broke a 3-3 tie 50 seconds into the third period with a power-play goal, and the Buckeyes (5-5-3) added two empty-net goals to back the 33 saves by Terness.

In the rematch, OSU was up 3-0 and 4-1 before the Tigers (3-4-1) pulled to within 4-3 three minutes into the third period, but the Buckeyes held on. Caden Brown had a goal and an assist, and Terness stopped 15 shots.

### Up Next

The Buckeyes play at Wisconsin on Dec. 1-2 with both games on Big Ten Plus. Their final games before the holiday break will be when they host Minnesota at Value City Arena on Dec. 8 (6:30 p.m.) and 9 (8 p.m.). Each will be on the Big Ten Network.

For recaps of the Princeton and Wisconsin series, go to [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com), available for free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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# Sasso Fighting To Return For Next Season

On Aug. 18, Ohio State wrestler Sammy Sasso was shot in the abdomen in an attempted carjacking, requiring multiple surgeries to repair his colon and remove the bullet that was near his spine and damaged his nervous system. He spent three days in the intensive care unit and left unable to walk, requiring further physical therapy.

## ON THE MAT Greg Wilson

Nearly three months later, Sasso is back to being able to walk, making his return to Covelli Center for the Buckeyes' first home dual against Edinboro on Nov. 12, where he received a standing ovation from the 3,150 fans in attendance for the 53-0 win.

"It's a real dose of life's reality, that things can change on a dime and you have to be thankful and grateful for what you've got," head coach Tom Ryan told BSB. "Having him in the room has been really nice. He's doing better. He's walking a little better every day."

Sasso travels everywhere with the team even though he isn't able to wrestle right now, but Ryan said his presence has had a remarkable influence on this year's team, which is off to a 4-0 start, including an upset over then-No. 3 Virginia Tech on Nov. 10.

"Sammy has been really incredible," Ryan said. "He's an incredible example. He's in the room every day, he's helping the guys technically with stuff, he's walking around. He's part of the team. They're watching someone who would be ranked first in the country who's not struggling to walk, but he's not walking the way he used to walk."

"It's incredibly valuable. You can talk about scenarios in life when you're coaching people, 'Imagine this and imagine that,' but when you're walking alongside it, and you're actually experiencing it and witnessing it, it's a powerful thing. Gratitude is a real thing, and authenticity is real, and love is real, and they're witnessing that firsthand. They're feeling it. It's been really powerful for our team."

Sasso isn't around the team just for his love of the game and Ohio State, though. He's also trying to make his own comeback with the goal of wrestling for the Buckeyes next season. While the rest of the team practices, Ryan said Sasso has been pushing sleds around, trying to get his left leg into the shape it was before his injury.

On Nov. 20, Ryan excitedly shared that Sasso was able to take another gigantic step toward his goal, getting on the mat in practice and actually wrestling with his teammates.

"It's with the lightweights and it's obviously a much more toned-down version of what we've seen, but he's moving," Ryan said. "It's pretty amazing to see."

Ryan said Sasso's mentality has been the biggest thing that has allowed him to get from needing to relearn to walk to back on the mat, even if he isn't back in full form quite yet.



SONNY BROCKWAY

**WARRIOR — Ohio State wrestler Sammy Sasso continues to recover after being shot in an attempted carjacking on Aug. 18 and has recently returned to the mat to do light work with his teammates.**

"The back surgery went well, but that alone you would think would cause someone to take much more time before they could get going," Ryan said. "He's just determined. We all have seen — we believe in the power of the mind to heal. He wants to heal. There's nothing about him that is thinking, 'I'm not going to wrestle again.' He's a man on a mission."

### Mendez Setting Standard For Ohio State Wrestlers

Jesse Mendez was nearly unbeatable on the mat in high school. He was undefeated as a freshman (42-0), junior (34-0) and senior (41-0) and went 40-1 as a sophomore, taking home Indiana state championships in each of the four years and becoming the 10th wrestler in Indiana high school history to win four state titles.

His dominance made him the No. 1 overall recruit in the 2022 class, and he was awarded the Junior Hodge Trophy in 2021, given to the best high school wrestler in America.

Mendez was always expected to be a great wrestler in college, but he impressed early on when he shot up the rankings through his freshman season, making it all the way up to No. 8 in the country at 133 pounds. He not only qualified for the NCAA tournament but came in sixth place in a sport where experience is a huge advantage

at the college level.

Now into his sophomore season, Mendez moved up to the 141-pound weight class to start the year and hasn't missed a step. He's off to a 6-0 start with two dual wins, one of them by technical fall against Virginia Tech. Of his six wins, three have been by technical fall and three have been by pin, showing a type of dominance that is rare.

That separation between him and other wrestlers isn't an accident. Ryan said he sees the work Mendez puts into being great, and it isn't surprising to see him at this level as a sophomore.

"Any elite athlete I've coached, they've had deep competitive desire and just an unbelievable will to win, and he has that," Ryan said. "Typically, when you have that, you'll do all the things that you need to do to be really competent in this sport. He puts a lot of time into his fitness level, strength, skill. He's a great example."

That example and desire have gone past just the Division I college level. Over the off-season, Mendez wrestled in Amman City, Jordan, at the U20 World Championships, where he made it to the finals, losing in a close 5-2 decision to Mohammad Shakeri from Iran.

"It sucks I didn't win worlds," Mendez said on Nov. 1. "I still think about it, but I'm going to have more opportunities to do that, and I'd rather do it at a senior level than ju-

nior level. I'm proud of the way I performed, but I'm not really satisfied with that medal and would rather come back with gold."

He wrestled in the 65-kilo weight class (around 143 pounds) at the world championships, something that helped him realize the jump from 133 pounds to 141 pounds at the NCAA level was going to be a good one for him after he was hesitant at first.

"Wrestling 65 kilos at worlds was just wonderful," Mendez said. "I feel really good at 141, and I think I have a good shot at a title."

Ryan said he's impressed by just how mature Mendez is for his age and that he works at least as hard as anyone he has seen.

"The difference between an expert and a professional is an expert does it until they get it right, but a professional will do it until they can't get it wrong," Ryan said. "Jesse falls into that category. He's a professional. He comes at you at a tempo that unless you train at that tempo you can't deal with. It's nice having someone that wrestles with his intensity. He's the standard."

Mendez didn't wrestle in the duals with the team on Nov. 19 against Columbia and Hofstra, though Ohio State still turned in 49-0 and 51-0 wins, respectively. Instead, he wrestled on Nov. 18 at the USA Wrestling 2023 Bill Farrell Memorial Tournament so he could attempt to qualify for a spot at the Olympic trials in State College, Pa., from April 19-20, 2024.



Jesse Mendez

He won his first bout in the round of 16 but suffered a 7-6 loss to Kaleb Larkin (Arizona State) in the quarterfinals. Ryan and the other Ohio State coaches pulled Mendez out of the tournament after his loss because he could no longer qualify for the Olympic trials, but they wanted to keep him healthy for the rest of the NCAA season.

Mendez said he's trying to be a leader for the team in his second season at Ohio State, and he learned how to do that from Sasso, watching how he went about his business last year.

"In that first year I looked to Sasso a lot," Mendez said. "He's probably one of the best leaders I've been around. He's a very vocal leader, and he leads by example. Watching the way he operates and how he goes about things has helped me become a better leader."

"I've tried to step up and become a better leader and do more for the team. I feel like I'm at the point where I'm going to be a leader on this team. I have to vocalize and lead by example. That's living a healthy lifestyle, working as hard as I can, and that's contagious."

### Up Next

Ohio State was off the weekend of Nov. 25-26 and will return to the mat on Dec. 1-2 for the Cliff Keen Invitational in Las Vegas.



# Ohio State Suffers Heartbreak in Ann Arbor

This sounds like the title of a Hallmark movie, but in this script, there is no happy ending for Buckeye fans. I am sure many football fanatics, with no allegiance to either school, saw a competitive and hard-hitting four-quarter battle on the gridiron with both teams playing their hearts out. They were right, but the 30-24 loss for the Buckeye faithful was devastating.

## COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

Every year the legendary rivalry between the two schools is intense, with the winner getting bragging rights for 12 months until the ball is kicked off again at the alternating team's stadium. But this year, this game meant so much more for Ohio State.

The proud men wearing scarlet and gray had lost two years in a row, a trip to a Big Ten Championship Game was on the line, a spot in the College Football Playoff was most likely at stake, and a coveted pair of "gold pants" that many players had yet to earn were within reach.

Yet there was something added to the

mix this year, in this game. The Buckeyes had a chance to right a wrong. A chance to pay back a football program that had blatantly and unapologetically broken the rules by in-person scouting of opponents and using technology to steal the signals used by those opponents on game day. The Michigan football staff and administration has been so brash to not even deny the rules were broken by Jim Harbaugh's staff. They have acted like they were the victims through this whole ordeal. Even after the Big Ten put a three-game suspension on Harbaugh, Michigan still acted as if they had done nothing wrong.

It's very likely the NCAA will come down even harder on the Michigan program and Harbaugh, but that will most likely be months away. Until then, Buckeye Nation will feel the sting of this loss for a long time. This time, evil won out over good, and it sucks.

### Ground Game Subpar Again

The winner of the Ohio State and Michigan game is normally the team that runs the football best, and such was the case on Nov. 25 in Ann Arbor. Even though the Buckeyes won in many statistical categories including total yards (378-338), passing yards (271-182) and first downs (21-18), the Wolverines racked up 49 more rushing yards than the Buckeyes (156-

107).

This deficit could have been easily offset if the Buckeyes had delivered with more explosive plays on offense. That was not to be the case with the longest Buckeye run being a 12-yard rush by Chip Trayanum to go along with a 44-yard pass reception by Marvin Harrison Jr.

The Ohio State offense mounted only one scoring drive of more than 10 plays, largely due to their inability to run the football effectively. Michigan, on the other hand, was able to eat up seven minutes of the clock on a 13-play drive in the fourth quarter. The Wolverine drive ended in only a field goal, but in the seven-minute drive of 56 yards, 42 of them came from running the football. The Buckeyes were forced to use valuable timeouts to stop the clock, and by the time the Buckeye offense received the Michigan kickoff, there was only one minute left in the fourth quarter.

### Special Teams Not So Special

All three phases of the game need to be elite for a team to win a championship. Throughout the season, the Buckeye special teams have been subpar, and that deficiency reared its ugly head, again, in Ann Arbor.

The kicking game didn't lose the game but did little to help the Buckeye cause. The Buckeyes punted once from their own 46-yard line and had a chance to pin the Wolverines deep in their own territory but the punt was too short, allowing the opponent to start their next drive at their 21-yard line. This inconsistency in the punting game along with breakdowns in communication is something Ryan Day must address for next season.

The Buckeyes ended the regular season as one of the worst return teams in the conference. The kickoff return team ended up ninth in the Big Ten, and the punt return team finished 11th. There is no excuse for a team with so much talent in terms of skilled athletes to perform so poorly. A serious evaluation of the personnel and scheme needs to take place.

### McCord Still Maturing

Kyle McCord has done a very good job as a first-year starter at quarterback. He is one of the top two quarterbacks in the Big Ten performance-wise and will only get better as he matures.

In several ways he outperformed his counterpart, J.J. McCarthy, in The Game. McCord threw for more yards and one more touchdown than McCarthy. Unfortunately, McCord had a slow start and threw an interception deep in his own territory to set up the first Michigan score. One thing the away team cannot do in big games is turn the ball over on its side of the 50. That can be devastating, and it was against Michigan.

McCarthy's experience really showed against the Buckeyes. He was not spectacular but was nearly flawless in leading the Michigan offense. Most of the passes he completed were shorter, high-efficiency passes that enabled his team to control the tempo of the game. His most impressive stretch came in the fourth quarter where

his offense ate up 10:28 of the clock.

McCord will most likely have his victories over the Wolverines in the future. By becoming more consistent, mastering reading defenses and handling pressure situations, he should develop into an exceptional quarterback. For now, however, the pain of experiencing his first loss to Michigan as the starting quarterback hurts deeply.

### Defense Comes Up Short

There is little doubt the Buckeye defense took a huge step forward this year under Jim Knowles. The Buckeyes ended up being one of the very best defenses in the nation in several categories. Unfortunately, the Michigan defense was even better in most categories.

No one can argue, however, against the "Silver Bullets" impressing in not giving up big plays this season. Every position group and every player performed better this year than last season. Buckeye defenders were physical, ran to the ball and shut down most opposing offenses throughout the season.

As good as the defense played, they weren't as strong as they needed to be in a couple of categories. The Buckeye defense did not force enough turnovers this season. Ohio State ended up minus-one in the turnover margin for the season and was minus-two against Michigan. The Wolverines ended the regular season plus-14 in turnover margin, which was a big reason they won the Big Ten East. The short field advantage with the early Michigan interception made all the difference in the world.

Buckeye defenders sacked the opposition 22 times this season. That's not an impressive number, and considering how well the Buckeye defense played, you would expect that number to be higher. Still, very little to complain about this season.

The Michigan offense won the battle in the trenches too many times. Though not dominating for four quarters, the Wolverines were able to convert three fourth-and-short situations and were able to win the time of possession by nearly seven minutes.

### Day Feeling The Heat

Day is one of the very best college coaches in the country. With a winning percentage in the high 80s and his recruiting success second-to-none, most college athletic directors would give their right arm to have Day as their head football coach.

Unfortunately for Day, to many, the expectation at Ohio State to beat "The Team Up North" takes priority over all other accomplishments. As well as he has done and as many games as he has won, losing to Michigan dampens all the success.

Day is quickly learning that one's legacy at Ohio State is largely measured by what happens in that final regular-season game in November. It is very likely the Buckeyes will get their revenge next year in the Horseshoe, but for Day, his staff, the players and Buckeye Nation, that is a really long time.



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# Ohio State Needs To Close Chasm With Michigan

There are roughly 15 steps separating the locker rooms from each other at Michigan Stadium, but the distance between the football programs that occupied those locker rooms on Nov. 25 was much wider.

## THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsmen

On one side was toughness, savvy, an underdog mentality despite being the favorite and celebration, while on the other side was dejection, consternation and a feeling of failure. The approaches both teams took to get to that point were also different, with Michigan saying that they were a brotherhood and together and fighting for one cause, while Ohio State was saying the game was important but just another step on the road to their goals.

The side with the toughness was victorious. Despite being the favorite, Michigan felt like it was a wounded animal after all of the external distractions surrounding the program. And the Wolverines played that way, getting creative with play calling, and when it was absolutely needed, the Wolverines went back to their identity and pounded the rock before kicking a field goal that pushed the margin to 30-24 and left Ohio State barely more than 60 seconds on the clock to get it done.

While the Buckeyes made a valiant effort, it wasn't enough, and they walked back to the visitors' quarters feeling the effects of a third straight loss to their rival. And here's where things get silly.

The know-it-alls on social media climbed up on their soapboxes and said it was time for Ryan Day to pack his bags, that he's John Cooper 2.0. Among the luminaries flapping their gums were former players Maurice Claret and Cie Grant – neither of whom offered a solution, just yelling at air. If you're going to complain without offering alternatives, it's best to keep it to yourself as it is productive to no one.

The few who did offer solutions said Brian Hartline – thanks but no thanks to a guy with zero head coaching experience. But he's from Ohio! – and Mike Vrabel, who would maybe take it but is currently in the NFL and may not be looking to get out. He would also likely be taking a pay cut. There aren't realistically any coaches out there who could give OSU fans their desired results, yet they'll still clamor for change, just for the sake of it.

Are there things Day needs to work on? Sure there are.

Start with the special teams. It wasn't all that long ago when Ohio State return units were feared. David Boston, Santonio Holmes and Ted Ginn Jr. all could change a game on a single play in the open field. OSU returners now just throw up the fair catch signal, and the Buckeye offense walks on the field.

Jesse Mirco has done admirably for most of his time in Columbus, but against the Wolverines he was lackluster with just 36.7 yards per punt. Where Tommy Doman was able to pin the Buckeyes deep on a couple of occasions, Mirco was booting short punts that put the Wolverines in mostly advantageous positions.

And where is the aggressiveness on the kick block units? When you find it, tell Parker Flem-

ing, Ohio State's special teams coach – though that last part may be semantics as the unit is one of the worst in college football.

Day said going into the game that OSU would leave it all on the field, leave nothing in the holster. So then why settle for a 52-yard field goal attempt just before halftime instead of being aggressive and going for it on fourth-and-2 with over 30 seconds left near the Michigan red zone? I don't have a problem with the decision itself and understand why it was made. Going for it and failing could have allowed the Wolverines to run a couple of plays and maybe get a fluke score before halftime. I get it. The problem is saying you're going to be aggressive then folding like a cheap card table when the situation arises.

This seems to be a pattern in bigger games for Day. He appears to play not to lose rather than play to win. And while I don't believe Buckeye Nation when it says it would be OK with failing through aggressiveness – I remember last year's Michigan game, when defensive coordinator Jim Knowles was aggressive and lambasted for it – going conservative in big moments hasn't been working well.

Speaking of Knowles, it was his unit that couldn't make a play when it was needed in the fourth quarter. Michigan exhausted seven minutes and kicked a field goal that pushed the margin to 30-24 ahead of Ohio State's ill-fated final drive.

"We've got to get off the field," Day said.

Even so, OSU moved the ball into Michigan territory in three plays before Kyle McCord threw an interception that sealed the game for the Wolverines. Donovan Jackson couldn't sustain his block and allowed pressure to get to McCord, who couldn't get nearly enough into his throw to reach intended target Marvin Harrison Jr.

I put that one less on McCord and more on the protection. The first pick, however, was all on McCord and gave the Wolverines a short field, and they were able to cash in and take an early 7-0 lead. McCord eventually settled down and was pretty good until that final pick. He may have been a reason Ohio State lost but was far from the reason.

That said, it doesn't appear that he has that "it" factor predecessors J.T. Barrett, Dwayne Haskins, Justin Field and C.J. Stroud had. Everything appears to be hard work for McCord. His toughness cannot be questioned, but this may be his ceiling.

He isn't a difference-maker, and at a school that has had an assembly line of those at quarterback, that's an issue. It limits your game plan and likely factors into a coach making a decision to try a long field goal before halftime instead of putting his trust in you (and an offensive line that has been maddeningly inconsistent all year) to pick up 2 yards.

So it's not wrong for Ohio State fans to scrutinize Day and some of the decisions he made before and during The Game.

But to want to toss out a guy who is 56-7 with four top-six rankings in four complete seasons and three College Football Playoff appearances in that same span is mind-boggling. Revisionist history believes Day has never beaten Michigan and has never done anything in the CFP, which are incorrect. If I read Buckeye Nation correctly, it believes that beating Michigan is more important than getting to the College Football Playoff. Also mind-boggling, but based on what I've seen on social media from OSU followers, that seems to be the case.

So you're OK with not competing for a national title if you beat Michigan? Instead of a loss to Michigan but still having a chance to win the title? That sounds like a loser's mentality in my book – wanting to beat your regional rival instead of striving for the big prize.

Sure, beating Michigan is great and should be the aspiration every year. But so should competing for the national title. And if you aren't in the CFP you can't do that. You can reach the CFP with a loss to the Wolverines, which is why I have always said I'd be OK with losing to U-M if it meant the Buckeyes still had a chance at the crown. That was the case last year. It may not be this year, which makes the loss more difficult to take.

After the game, Day said, "We know what this game means to so many people, so to come up short is certainly crushing, not only because you invest your whole year in it. We know at Ohio State what this game means. There's a locker room in there that's devastated."

There's a perception from the outside that losses don't seem to bother Ohio State. There isn't the yelling or carrying on that you see with a lot of teams when they lose. There's passivity, and that seems to be unacceptable. Aside from the fact that everyone handles losing differently, no one knows how the players feel based solely on outward appearances.

But it wasn't lost on Michigan receiver Roman Wilson that his team was able to dig down when things got tough and find a way to win.

"You want to put on the Louis (Vuitton), the \$1,000 outfit, you want to act hard but when you're out there, I see the film, you're not tough," Wilson said. "I don't think they wanted it like how I wanted it."

Maybe there's something to that. Day has shifted to recruiting a different kind of player than Urban Meyer did, and while the talent is undeniably there, maybe the dog isn't. Meyer started guys who maybe weren't the most talented, but you knew they were tough and focused and would do whatever it took to win games. The last two national championship squads had those types of players – Ryan Shazier, Michael Thomas, Mike Doss, Claret, Grant, Craig Krenzel. Those were guys you would want next to you in a foxhole.

Who on this year's Ohio State roster fits that bill?

It's all fine and good to put together wacky dance routines during pregame, but that has nothing to do with winning. Being tough does. Maybe Day needs to bring in a few more three-stars who aren't afraid of getting dirty over the five-stars who play well but can't produce when the lights are brightest.

As the clock struck zero, Marvin Harrison Jr. walked a few steps and then sat down on the Michigan Stadium field, arms folded over his legs, and just thought for a few moments. It wasn't long, but it was long enough to know that he left everything out there and was disappointed about the outcome. He seems to be one of those guys bothered by losing, but he won't be in the program next season.

The look on Day's face as he walked with his team up the tunnel spoke volumes – it was almost blank, like he had been run over by a maize and blue truck. Still, there was Buckeye Nation questioning whether or not Day cared about the outcome afterward.

It seems ludicrous to believe that these guys just play or coach a game and don't care about

the outcome. Too much work goes into it to not care and to end up leaving your fate in the hands of others, as Ohio State has.

"The worst part is that we have to sit back now and see how everything shakes out," McCord said. "Our future is really not in our hands anymore."

What that future looks like, immediate and long term, is anybody's guess.

It would help Ohio State immensely if it could close the chasm that exists between it and its neighbors. Whether that means embracing toughness, changing some coaching staff members or bringing in a higher-level quarterback, something needs to be done.

Otherwise, the future will resemble the past, and the divide between the programs will continue to be much wider than those 15 steps.

### You Think There's A Chance?

After dropping last year's game to the Wolverines, Ohio State's hopes of making the CFP seemed all but over. Chaos needed to happen for the Buckeyes to get in – and it did, with LSU losing to Texas A&M and USC dropping the Pac-12 championship game to Utah.

OSU went in the back door as the least non-worthy team (there were only three truly worthy teams last year) and found itself where all teams aspire to be.

This year the roadblocks are more abundant, and less likely to be removed – but not impossible. While it seems unlikely that all of this happens, here is a scenario that could find Ohio State once again in the CFP:

Georgia beats Alabama and the Tide have two losses and are eliminated. Oklahoma State beats Texas and the Longhorns have two losses and are eliminated. Florida State loses to Louisville and the Seminoles have one loss but have been holding on by a thread and would almost certainly be eliminated.

The Pac-12 game seems largely irrelevant as the Buckeyes have been ahead of Washington the entire time. So if the Huskies lost it wouldn't be a stretch to think the Buckeyes could have an edge over them. But just to be safe, let's say Washington beats Oregon, eliminating the two-loss Ducks.

That would leave unbeaten Georgia, unbeaten Michigan and unbeaten Washington. The debate would come down to Ohio State and Florida State as the only one-loss teams, and it's a good bet the committee would favor the Buckeyes in that instance.

### Dandy Dozen

Rivalry Week made for a shake-up in the rankings, as Ohio State lost, Washington escaped by the skin of its teeth and Alabama needed some Southern intervention to slide past Auburn on the 10-year anniversary of the Kick Six.

Heading into championship week, here is how things look from my vantage point:

1. Georgia (12-0)
2. Michigan (12-0)
3. Washington (12-0)
4. Florida State (12-0)
5. Texas (11-1)
6. Alabama (11-1)
7. Oregon (11-1)
8. Ohio State (11-1)
9. Missouri (10-2)
10. Penn State (10-2)
11. Ole Miss (10-2)
12. Oklahoma (10-2)



# The Game Often Comes Down To A Few Plays

Big games. Two closely matched teams. The little things matter.

There were 118 offensive plays in this year's Ohio State-Michigan game. I point to two plays as the difference makers. Ohio State never did recover from the early interception that gave Michigan the ball at the 7-yard-line. Until that point, Michigan had moved the ball just 13 yards total on two drives with zero first downs.

**EXNER  
POINT  
Rich Exner**

But that turnover instantly put Michigan in scoring position, and the Wolverines responded, scoring four plays later. Michigan 7, Ohio State 0.

Think of that. Michigan ran 10 plays for 20 yards and no first downs the first three times it had the ball and had a 7-0 lead. Turnovers deep in the field matter.

Michigan never turned the ball over. Ohio State did twice. It sounds like just coach talk when you hear that the winner of the turnovers will be the winner of the game. In the case of this year's Ohio State-Michigan game, it was very true.

The other pivotal moment came with just over 10 minutes left in the second quarter. Roman Wilson pulled in a 22-yard touchdown reception for Michigan. Replays appeared to show Ohio State's Denzel Burke actually intercepted the ball, but the officials on the field said touchdown for the Wolverines.

After replay, the call was allowed to stand. It appeared to me to be an interception, but the play was so close I never expected the officials to reverse their call, especially in front of the home fans

on such an important play.

(If you don't believe officials are impacted by the home fans, grab a copy of the thoroughly researched book "Scorecasting: The Hidden Influence Behind How Sports are Played and Games are Won." It lays out pretty conclusively that on the "judgement calls," the home team in about any sport worldwide enjoys an advantage not from the emotion of playing at home, but by getting the breaks from the officials.)

Now, I'm not saying the play was so conclusive as to have been a blown call. I'm just saying it was close and probably wrong, and that the result was pivotal in the game. A 7-3 Michigan lead and the ball back in the hands of Ohio State would have been a lot different from a 14-3 Michigan lead.

From that point on, Ohio State won the game, 21-16. But the Buckeyes never were able to recover from those two big plays early in the game. The mountain was too steep to climb against a team of the quality of Michigan. Little things matter in really big games when there isn't a clear separation between the teams.

And for that, Michigan is on its first three-game winning streak over Ohio State since, gulp, during the John Cooper era in 1995-97, having this year won the most competitive of the games over the last three years.

## What Else Went Wrong?

There also was the drop, the off-target and the miss. Those were some of the other things that went wrong for Ohio State in the first half, leaving the Buckeyes in comeback mode for nearly the rest of the game (they were tied briefly late in the third quarter).

The drop: Ohio State took the opening kickoff and would have kept the chains moving on the first possession instead of going three-and-out. Kyle McCord hit

an open Emeka Egbuka on a pass that would have been a first down, but Egbuka dropped the ball. Ohio State punts.

The off-target: Ohio State stops Michigan in three plays on the ensuing drive and gets the ball back. The Buckeyes get a first down. And then on the next play, Marvin Harrison Jr. is wide open. But either because of inaccuracy or miscommunication, the pass is way off target. Ohio State is left in a second-and-long and ends up punting.

The second drive in a row ends more the result of Ohio State mistakes than it does because of Michigan's defense. Missed opportunities are killers against a good defense.

The miss: Ohio State battles back and has a chance to pull within 14-13 at the half. Ohio State runs the clock down and elects to try a 52-yard field goal rather than trying to advance the ball closer on a fourth-and-2. Jayden Fielding's kick has plenty of leg but floats left.

Those three points would have come in handy in the strategy of the way the game played out in the second half.

Those missed passes, as well as the interception earlier, allowed Michigan to keep to its run-first mentality on offense the entire day. I can't help but think that Michigan would have struggled offensively if Ohio State could have forced the Wolverines to play from behind.

## Day's Field Goal Decision

There seemed to be immediate criticism of coach Ryan Day's decision to opt for a field goal at the end of the first half instead of going for it on fourth-and-2, potentially setting up a closer field-goal try, or maybe even scoring a touchdown.

No criticism here on that decision. Day could have called timeout with 40 seconds left and the ball on the 34-yard-line. But if you come up short, Michigan has the ball 30 yards from solid field-goal range with two timeouts remaining. The 14-10 deficit easily could have become 17-10. I think Day made the right call.

## Silly Talk On Day

Is it time for Day to go? That's silly talk, but it's the kind of talk you hear from the social media and radio talk show worlds.

Day is 56-7 as a coach. He's lost only once before Thanksgiving in his five-plus seasons as coach. He's been to the playoffs in three of four completed seasons and won the Rose Bowl to close out the other one.

If there had been a 12-team field since the start of the playoffs in 2014, Ohio State would be the only team in the country in the playoffs every single year, including four under Day.

Yes, he's lost to Michigan three straight times. (It's fair to question the validity of the first two losses because of Michigan's cheating, but at least for now, they officially are losses, and regardless, fans of both teams will remember them as losses for Ohio State.)

Losing to Michigan is not a good thing. But this year's game confirmed that there isn't much of a separation. Ohio State continues to be loaded. To replace Day would be to run the risk of the program going south. That would be stupid.

The Buckeyes will be back in 2024. And with the 12-team playoff, I think we'll find out more often than not that Ohio State can be a championship contender under Day.

Oh, and by the way, even if Michigan does count this year's game as a Jim Harbaugh win (hard to figure out why), he also will still have a losing record in the series at 3-5.

A refresher on coaching records at Ohio State:

- Urban Meyer – 83-9 (.902)
- Day – 56-7 (.889)
- Jim Tressel – 106-22 (.828)
- Woody Hayes – 205-61-10 (.761)
- Earle Bruce – 81-26-1 (.755)
- John Cooper – 111-43-4 (.715)

## Playoffs?

I think Ohio State is one of the four best teams in the country, but much like that questionable Michigan touchdown, I don't see that call going Ohio State's way. Just too many chips would have to fall the right way for Ohio State to be in the field.

Yet the Buckeyes' only loss came to a team that likely will enter the playoffs ranked first or second nationally, and it was a nail-biter.

There is no argument if four unbeaten teams remain. And if Alabama beats Georgia, Alabama should be ranked ahead of Ohio State. Assuming Georgia beats Alabama, though, I don't agree at this point with any argument putting Ohio State below another one-loss team. But I'm also not optimistic Ohio State will be chosen.



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# Not A Great Day To Be A Buckeye Fan

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

To understand why this most recent loss to Michigan stings so much for me, perhaps you have to have a little bit of history about me and The Game.

I was not born a Buckeye. In fact, my parents were both born in Michigan, and my father went to Cass Tech, the same school that has produced many Buckeyes and Wolverines.

But, as most of you know by now, I grew up in Washington, D.C. While kids in Ohio were following Rex Kern and Jack Tatum, I was more worried about Sonny Jurgensen and Bobby Mitchell, two of my all-time favorite Redskins. D.C. was definitely a pro town. The only time I recall paying attention to college football was when the dynamic Roger Staubach was at nearby Navy. No one paid much attention to Ohio State or Michigan football, though when people in the nation's capital did give the Buckeyes any thought it was usually in the context of Woody Hayes being some sort of madman. Sometimes people within the Buckeye state don't realize how crazed people outside the state thought the old man was. To this day I believe that much of the hostility that people have around the country toward Ohio State dates back to Woody Hayes.

I grew up and left home for school, arriving in Columbus in 1976. Once you get to this town, it is hard not to become a Buckeye fan. The Buckeyes are everywhere. And simultaneously this English major stumbled into sportswriting. A job writing and covering sports? What more could you ask for? After a couple of years covering high school sports – that's where everyone started back then – I hit the big time with the old Buckeye Leaves. I was covering Ohio State football during the early part of the Earle Bruce era.

I never covered Woody Hayes, but Earle was his disciple when it came to the Ohio State-Michigan game. It was hard not to get sucked up in his enthusiasm for The Game.

I was telling the boys in the office the other day that the first really big event I covered live was the 1982 Michigan game. What I recall from that game was what a beautiful, brisk fall day it was – perfect football weather – and how the players were hitting so hard that you could hear the pads popping all the way up in the press box – the big shoulder pads that really made noise in a physical game.

I've always said that the 24-14 score in the Buckeye victory was not indicative of how Ohio State dominated its rivals that day, and I was hooked on The Game.

Earle capped his tenure at Ohio State with the famous "head band" victory in Ann Arbor in 1987, still one of the great wins for OSU in the series.

And then came John Cooper.

At the time, Buckeye fans were beginning to believe that the old-school ways of Woody and Earle were obsolete, and they were eager for new blood. Coop was the perfect man for the job. He had gone to the Rose Bowl; he had beaten Michigan. What more could Buckeye fans ask for? But not only was he new blood – a good thing – but he was a stranger to the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry – maybe a bad thing.

His philosophy for the rivalry was actually not necessarily a bad one. It seemed like he wanted to treat the regular-season finale like a big game, but just *another* big game. Go about your business, but don't be overwhelmed by the moment.

The problem with that strategy was that the Buckeyes were treating it like a big game, and the Wolverines were treating it like *The Game*. Once the Buckeyes lost the first few games to their rivals, things became more and more tense, defeating the whole purpose of trying to treat it like just another big game. Suddenly you are not

just playing your rival, but you are also playing the losing streak. I saw Michigan doing that after Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer took over, and I fear that's where we are with Ryan Day today.

As everyone knows, Coop ended up 2-10-1 against Michigan, many of the losses of the painful variety. When Tressel and Urban reversed that trend, I wanted to pour on the payback, far surpassing that 2-10-1 mark.

Some people forget that Day started off in the rivalry with a bang, winning his first two games as an assistant and his first game as a head man. I thought the Buckeye winning streak would go on forever, and I was enjoying it immensely. Then came COVID, and perhaps the effects from the sign-stealing scandal, and suddenly the Buckeyes were in a two-game skid against their rivals with two humiliating losses. I was not ready for a third, yet here we are.

Seeing the Michigan fans celebrating the victory in the midst of a huge scandal, totally loyal to a coach who has been suspended for six games of a 12-game regular season, just didn't sit well with me.

I'm not sure this loss was "humiliating" like the previous two – at least on the field. I thought the Buckeyes had their moments in the game, and they fought until the end. I'll even go so far as to admit I thought, until the late interception, that they were going to win. Now that's a diehard fan, not an unbiased journalist.

The humiliation this time was losing for a third straight time and knowing that next year it will be that much more difficult to win because of the mounting pressure of "the streak."

A note from our "From the Pages of BSB" feature on page 7 of this issue stood out to me. Cooper was talking about the team's win over the Wolverines in 1998:

"I felt like we were going to win the game all week," Cooper said. "I had great confidence in our football team. I thought our assistant coaches did a great job of preparing the football team, and I was probably as relaxed around here this week as I've been in a long, long time – certainly the most relaxed I've been before the Michigan game" (my italics).

The pressure was off that season, after the Buckeyes had been knocked out of the national championship picture by losing to Michigan State two weeks earlier. The more relaxed Cooper became the victorious Cooper.

Day knew the significance of the previous two losses coming into this game. And it seemed like he was coaching not to lose at times, while his rivals, Jim Harbaugh/Sherrone Moore, were letting it all hang out, using trick plays, going for it on fourth downs, keeping it loose. That conflict of coaching styles proved to be a recipe for disaster.

### Thoughts About The Game

Enough about me. What about The Game?

Rarely am I critical of Ryan Day, except for his habit of leaving his quarterback in too long during games that are completely under control.

But count me among those who think he should have been more aggressive at the end of the first half. At some point you have to have confidence that your team can pick up 2 yards. But what if they didn't pick it up? What was the worst-case scenario? You are not trusting your defense to keep Michigan from the minimum 30 yards needed in roughly 30 seconds to get in field-goal range when the risk/reward is a poten-

tial 17-14 lead or at least moving your team into better field-goal range.

I didn't have a problem with having Jayden Fielding attempt the 52-yard shot. His make from 43-yards in the first quarter was right down Broadway, with plenty of distance to spare, and Fielding showed his leg when he actually connected on the 52-yard try but had it negated after Moore had quickly called timeout.

You can point to McCord's interceptions as key factors in the loss, but this was right up there. It was an example of playing not to lose instead of aggressively playing to win like the Wolverines.

Of course, as Coop himself would say, "You guys want to gamble, but you want to gamble with my chips".

Similarly, the defense that Buckeye coordinator Jim Knowles had been building all season may have been designed to play not to lose as well. Knowles was obsessed with not allowing the big plays that killed the Buckeyes at the end of last season. The plan worked against the Wolverines. They had a long run of 22 yards and 34 yards on a trick pass play, compared to the backbreaking really big plays in The Game last season.

But was it the effort to limit the big plays that allowed Michigan's backbreaking 13-play, 56-yard fourth-quarter march that consumed a full seven minutes and left Ohio State with no timeouts and in scramble mode to try to pull out a last-second victory? That Michigan march had as much to do with the Buckeye loss as McCord's interceptions.

Did Knowles win the battle (eliminating big plays) but lose the war (winning the game)?

"If last year's lengthy touchdown runs by (Donovan) Edwards formed the memories that haunted Knowles all offseason, then Michigan's 13-play, 56-yard march that milked seven of the final eight minutes off the clock will be his nightmare from now until the 2024 campaign," Michael Cohen of Fox Sports said. "He still doesn't have the right answers."

Speaking of McCord, he started slowly in multiple games this season, which was the case, again, against the Wolverines. McCord played really well in between his interceptions, and I don't really blame him for the interception in the final minute that sealed Ohio State's fate. At that point, everyone knows what's coming, and it makes it much easier to defend.

Heading into next season (assuming both of them come back) Day has got to find a way to ensure that McCord gets off to a fast start, each and every game.

I don't think Michigan's JJ. McCarthy is that much better than McCord, especially given his greater experience. I would say the biggest difference between the two would be McCarthy's ability (or willingness) to run. McCarthy ran four times for 17 net yards against the Buckeyes, and the threat is always there. McCord did not have a run in the game.

After watching the game, I was a little surprised that the notion that Ohio State is not physical or tough came up again. But Michigan receiver Roman Wilson apparently believes so.

"I told the receivers this week: 'You've got guys (at Ohio State), guys who put on the Louis (Vuitton), the thousand-dollar outfit,'" Wilson said after the game. "You want to act hard, but when we're out there, they're not hard. I see the film. You're not tough. I don't think I'm the toughest guy in the world, but I'm out there. I'm getting

physical. I don't think they wanted it like I wanted it."

I have to ask Wilson where he was when Ohio State was holding Michigan to 34 yards on 18 carries in the first half, including 19 yards on nine carries (2.1 average) by everyone's All-American, Blake Corum? Where was he when the Buckeyes played Woody ball in the third quarter, marching 75 yards in 12 plays, including the final eight on the ground to tie the game at 17 on a 3-yard run by TreVeyon Henderson?

I'll go so far as to say the offensive line played about as well as it can play against the Wolverines. About the only thing the big guys did not do is open the crease that Henderson needed to break off one of his patented long ones, leaving him with 19 carries for 60 yards (3.2 average) vs. Corum's 22 carries for 88 yards and a 4.0 average, hardly spectacular.

Also, you probably noticed, and I am sure Jim Tressel noticed, that Jesse Mirco did not have his finest day as a Buckeye. He punted three times for a 36.7-yard average. But that doesn't tell the whole story. He had none inside the 20, leaving Michigan at their 35-, 21- and 36-yard lines to start. Michigan punter Tommy Doman, meanwhile, was averaging 52.0 on his three punts, starting the Buckeyes at their 24, 20 and 2. Ohio State-Michigan games are almost always games of field position, and when it came to punting in this one, advantage Wolverines.

Finally, I wanted to give a shout-out to Julian Fleming. He has been the forgotten man of the Buckeye receiving corps but rose to the occasion in The Game, having one of his best games as a Buckeye with three key catches for 58 yards. A shout-out also to Xavier Johnson, for this game and every game. Anytime the former walk-on gets on the field, he produces. This time he had two runs for 13 yards and a 9-yard reception. Did anyone besides my think Day should have had them at least take a look at Johnson's third-and-10 reception in the first quarter that I thought was at least close to a first down. A favorable ruling and the Buckeyes have a first down at their 46. Instead, they were forced to punt.

### The Scandal Continues

I'll let our own Bill Conley, who is very familiar with the rivalry as a player, coach and broadcaster, have the last word about Michigan for this issue:

"There was something added to the mix this year, in this game," Conley writes on page 40 of this issue. "The Buckeyes had a chance to right a wrong. A chance to pay back a football program that had blatantly and unapologetically broken the rules by in-person scouting of opponents and using technology to steal the signals used by those opponents on game day. The Michigan football staff and administration has been so brash to not even deny the rules were broken by Jim Harbaugh's staff. They have acted like they were the victims through this whole ordeal. Even after the Big Ten put a three-game suspension on Harbaugh, Michigan still acted as if they had done nothing wrong."

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