

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 43, No. 21

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

May 2024

Harrison Becomes Highest-Drafted WR In OSU History

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Expectations were high for Marvin Harrison Jr. since the day he arrived on Ohio State's campus as an early enrollee in 2021. While his recruiting rankings were not all that notable coming out of high school – just the No. 97 player in the class and the 14th-ranked receiver – he put on a show at St. Joseph's Prep in Philadelphia, playing alongside future Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord and setting program records with 2,625 yards and 37 touchdowns.

Beyond his clear talent on the field, there is a pedigree associated with his name. His father, Marvin Harrison Sr., had a Hall of Fame career as a receiver for the Indianapolis Colts from 1996-2008. So, it was of little surprise when Harrison met and surpassed those expectations at Ohio State, becoming a Heisman Trophy finalist and filling his trophy case with numerous awards and recognitions while he totaled 155 catches for 2,613 yards and 31 touchdowns.

All of that work culminated in Harrison's selection by the Arizona Cardinals with the fourth overall pick in the 2024 NFL draft on April 25, surpassing former Ohio State wideout Terry Glenn (seventh overall, 1996) to become the highest-drafted receiver in program history.

"I cannot be more excited than to be an Arizona Cardinal, really," Harrison said. "I'm super excited to get to work, and that's really all where my mind is at right now."

"I'm just happy for my kid," his father added. "He's put a lot of work into it and had a lot of pressure growing up. I'm just excited for him and looking forward to a lot of good things. He definitely put the work in, and he is deserving of what he is getting."

But for everything the younger Harrison has already put into the game, the true work starts now. Even with all his accolades and accomplishments at Ohio



New Legacy

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READY TO WORK – Former Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. was the first non-quarterback selected in the 2024 NFL draft, coming off the board with the fourth overall pick to the Arizona Cardinals. He also became the highest-drafted wideout in Ohio State history, surpassing Terry Glenn, who was taken seventh overall by the New England Patriots in 1996.

State, he is starting on the bottom rung in the NFL while looking to establish his own legacy, one that many believe can surpass

his father's legendary professional career.

"It is a full circle moment to see myself grow up, play football and follow in his footsteps," Harrison said. "Hopefully, I can reach the Hall of Fame just like him. We'll see."

Beyond the shadow of his father, Harrison also has plenty of legacies on his new team to contend with. Two decades prior to Harrison's selection at fourth by the Cardinals, the organization picked third overall in the 2004 NFL draft, taking a productive Pittsburgh wide receiver by the name of Larry Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald went on to spend his entire

17-year NFL career in Arizona, earning 11 Pro Bowl nods and a first-team All-Pro recognition in 2008 as well as twice leading the NFL in both receptions (2005, 2016) and receiving touchdowns (2008, 2009), finishing with 1,432 receptions for 17,492 yards and 121 touchdowns. He last played in 2020 and will almost certainly be a first-ballot Hall of Fame selection when he becomes eligible in 2026.

In addition to their selection by Arizona, the parallels during their college careers are clear, with both Fitzgerald and

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From The Message Board

The Heisman Trust announced on April 24 that it is reinstating former USC running back Reggie Bush's 2005 Heisman Trophy that was taken away after Bush received impermissible benefits during his time with the Trojans, citing "enormous changes in college athletics over the last several years." On the heels of that announcement, we asked readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum if they believe it is time for the NCAA to reinstate Ohio State's wins (including the Sugar Bowl) from the 2010 season that were vacated following Tattoogate, and given the NCAA instituted a bowl ban for the Buckeyes' undefeated season in 2012 after that investigation, if they believe Ohio State should claim a national championship for that season. Here are some of the responses:

"Yes, the wins should've never been vacated in the first place because they sold their own personal property. Also OSU should be crowned 2012 national champions after being screwed out of the bowl season."

- Tiffin Buckeye

"I'm more interested in vacating TTUN's last two seasons. Tattoogate was a farce and the punishment was out of line. I demand a pardon. The NCAA beat us like a circus mule."

- PeyoteBuck

"I wasn't going to respond to this because cheating is cheating whenever it occurred. But my answers to both questions raised here are in the affirmative."

- Terrier Buck

"With the 'anything goes' atmosphere in college football today, absolutely the 2012 wins should be reinstated. To take the national championship away from another team at this late date is a bridge too far."

- R1TBDBITL

"Yes and no. Terrelle Pryor is one of the best Ohio State athletic quarterbacks of all time. He and all his Tattoogate buddies should all be forgiven as well as one Jim 'The Senator' Tressel for sticking up for his players. The Buckeyes' record should be corrected for those games they actually won. Unfortunately, I can't agree to give a national championship to those that didn't play a final championship game to

finish out the season."

- BuckeyeScott

"I'd rather focus on Bush and his Heisman. I know the Heisman group is separate from the NCAA and they can give Bush his trophy if that's what they want. But just because what Bush did (taking all sorts of money and benefits) may be legal now, doesn't mean it was not illegal then. Rules are rules and cheating is cheating. And don't forget, Tressel did not get in trouble for Tattoogate. He got in trouble for the cover-up and not cooperating with the NCAA. Unless you are Jim Harbaugh, I believe that is still an NCAA violation."

- Mcarr

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Competition Fear Keeps Portal Door Swinging

The passing of another birthday once again afforded me the knowledge that common sense isn't so common anymore. But I must confess that I'm missing something. Wasn't the relative haste with which Ohio State hired Jake Diebler as full-time men's basketball coach supposed to keep players from fleeing the program? Or is it simply that players in this particular era are fonder of guarantees than competition?

Shooting guard Roddy Gayle has bolted to Michigan (of all places) while center Felix Okpara decided to leave Columbus and head for Tennessee. Apparently, it doesn't matter to either Gayle or Okpara that they could have stayed to build the foundation for a new era of Buckeye basketball. In this day and age of college competition, the grass is infinitely greener on the other side – especially if you sense the presence of someone trying to take your place.

Players using the transfer portal multiple times underscores another facet of the current college landscape. Competition for playing time – once the only way to prove yourself worthy – has become something of a punch line. Does anyone really believe Gayle's departure had nothing to do with Meechie Johnson returning to Ohio State from South Carolina? Did Okpara, once steadfast in his desire to remain a Buckeye especially after Zed Key packed off to Dayton, become much less steadfast once Aaron Bradshaw, a 7-1 center from Kentucky, used the portal to leave Lexington and head to Columbus?

I guess it's not much different than Kyle McCord making what he termed "a business decision" to leave Ohio State after one season as the starting quarterback. Reports were that McCord was unsatisfied with the amount of NIL money he was making – although it seems ludicrous he could make more at Syracuse – and that Ryan Day refused to guarantee McCord the starting job in 2024.

Over the past five months, I'm willing to wager I'm not the only one who ponders how different things might be had McCord been able to finish that last-second comeback attempt against Michigan. The Wolverines would have had nothing to show for their cheating scandal, Jim Harbaugh might well be staring down the barrel of a NCAA show cause penalty, Day would likely not have felt the pressure to shop for a new offensive coordinator to call his plays, and McCord would have performed in front of more than 80,000 adoring fans at Ohio State's spring game rather than the 16,579 who attended the Syracuse spring game inside whatever they're calling the Carrier Dome these days. That was a spring-record attendance figure for Syracuse, by the way, which should tell McCord something.

But none of the aforementioned actually happened. The Buckeyes lost to their archrivals for a third straight time, Michigan won its first undisputed national championship since 1948, the Los Angeles Chargers made Harbaugh a rich man, Day hired Chip Kelly to run the offense, and McCord is secure in the fact that he will be starting for a program that has never finished a season among the top 10 during his lifetime.

To be sure, McCord isn't the first, nor will he be the last, who is more comfortable being a big fish in a small pond. Ohio State running back Dallan Hayden got tired of waiting for his turn and decided to run away and join the Coach Prime Traveling Circus in Colorado. McCord and Hayden – each high school phenoms the so-called recruiting experts would have had us believe were destined to make college football only a speed bump on their way to NFL stardom – apparently found the

competition at Ohio State a bit too much for their liking.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

The same could be said for Okpara, who averaged 6.6 points and 6.4 rebounds in 24 minutes a game for the Buckeyes this past season. Those certainly aren't numbers that jump off the page, but neither does what Bradshaw compiled last season (4.9 points, 3.0 rebounds, 13.7 minutes) as a freshman at Kentucky. In the words of Columbus Dispatch sports columnist Rob Oller, "Okpara leaving feels like a cook handing in his apron at a four-star restaurant because the new hire knows how to boil water."

Although the transfer portal seems like the proverbial runaway train – more than 2,400 football players and more than 1,800 basketball players have taken advantage of college free agency just this year – players running away from one kind of adversity or another isn't new.

Nearly 30 years ago, I wrote a column for BSB imploring an Ohio State basketball star to remain with the program.

For those of you who have forgotten, Derek Anderson was an electrifying guard who had averaged 15.0 points per game during a sophomore season cut short by a torn ACL. There was talk of the Buckeyes going on probation the following year, a season during which Anderson would be sidelined while rehabbing his injury.

Rick Pitino, then head coach at Kentucky, contacted Anderson (a native of Louisville) about transferring out of a bad situation into one at UK that was making an annual charge for national championships.

The column I wrote begged Anderson to eschew Pitino's sales pitch and finish the hard work he had started at Ohio State. I even had the temerity to paraphrase JFK, writing, "Stay at Ohio State, not because staying at Ohio State would be easy, but because it would be hard. Because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of your energies and skills. Because that challenge is one you are willing to accept, and one you intend to win."

Did Anderson read the column? Who knows, but even if he did, it made no difference. He transferred to Kentucky, won a national championship ring with the Wildcats in 1997, and then enjoyed an 11-year career in the NBA that included another title, this one as a backup with Miami in 2006.

Every player's situation is different, and choosing an easier path doesn't necessarily equate with a fear of failure. I only know the more things change, the more they seem to stay the same.

Present Vs. Past

Amid what it termed "enormous changes in the college football landscape," the Heisman Trust announced April 24 that it had formally reinstated former USC running back Reggie Bush as the 2005 recipient of the Heisman Trophy.

Bush forfeited his Heisman in 2010 in the wake of NCAA sanctions against the USC athletic department, which included Bush receiving improper benefits (estimated at nearly \$300,000 in cash and gifts) during his college career from 2003 to 2005. USC was also forced to vacate its 14 victories during

the 2004 season as well as that season's national championship.

The Heisman Trust is obviously using the NIL legislation of today for its reasoning to return the 2005 trophy to Bush. It is the same kind of warped logic seen in today's society where it seems that the only rule is that there are no rules.

Once Bush was released from his Heisman exile, a cacophony of voices was heard demanding their own restitution, not the least of which were members of the 2010 Ohio State football team, a group now calling itself the "Tattoo 5."

Citing NIL legislation, and calling it a "fundamental right (that) has been granted to a new generation of athletes," former OSU football players Terrelle Pryor, DeVier Posey, Solomon Thomas, Mike Adams and Daniel "Boom" Herron signed their names to a statement "calling for our school records and legacy to be restored so that Buckeye Nation can look at us with the same love and fondness that we've always had for them."

What the aforementioned players received for their transgressions – trading memorabilia for tattoos – always seemed penny-ante stuff to me. It certainly paled in comparison to the windfall reaped by Bush and his family during his college career.

But let's be clear. The Heisman Trust and the NCAA are two separate entities. Bush getting his trophy back has nothing to do with the sanctions Ohio State, its head coach and its players received regarding the 2010 season.

It is more comparable to the situation regarding Pete Rose and the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Rose has repeatedly petitioned the commissioner of baseball for reinstatement from a lifetime ban for gambling, a reinstatement Rose believes would be the first step toward enshrinement in the Hall of Fame. Yet every commissioner who has received the petition has refused to act upon it, claiming his jurisdiction does not extend to the Hall of Fame. Likewise, the Hall of Fame repeatedly claims that no one on the restricted list can be considered for enshrinement, leaving Rose locked in an unwinnable situation.

Presenting the reinstatement of Bush's Heisman Trophy as evidence of why the "enormous changes in the college football landscape" should be grounds for the restoration of the records and legacy of Ohio State's "Tattoo 5" likely means nothing to the NCAA.

The NCAA realizes its days of lording over college athletics are numbered. Name, image and likeness legislation was ignored until pending lawsuits threatened to crush the NCAA, and then it blindly opened the financial floodgates with no guardrails. The transfer portal is another decent idea gone haywire because the NCAA couldn't be bothered to regulate it.

I doubt very seriously whether the NCAA even cares about the records or legacy of the "Tattoo 5" any more than it does about the 1971 Howard men's soccer team, the 1988 Tulsa women's golf team, or the 2013 Louisville men's basketball team. Those programs are among the more than 20 that have had national championships vacated by the NCAA for wrongdoing, most of which paled in comparison to the indiscretions Bush committed.

And as long as we're forgiving yesterday's transgressions, how about wiping Jim Tressel's record clean? And Jim O'Brien's, too. For that matter, was what Woody Hayes did on the sideline at the end of the 1978 Gator Bowl really all that bad?

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Three Buckeyes Enter Portal During Spring Window

Ohio State had suffered three losses to the transfer portal as Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press just one day before the spring window ended on April 30, with safeties Ja'Had Carter and Cedrick Hawkins as well as running back Dallan Hayden departing the program.

Starting with Carter, he entered the transfer portal on April 28 after just one season with the Buckeyes. This is the second time in as many years that he has hit the portal, as he initially spent three seasons at Syracuse before transferring to Ohio State in January 2023.

Despite being in the running for several starting safety roles entering last season, Carter saw limited time in his lone season in Columbus as he dealt with multiple injuries. He ultimately appeared in just eight games – mostly on special teams – and totaled just five tackles.

He was once again expected to assume a

reserve role on Ohio State's defense this season, likely sitting behind the likes of safeties Caleb Downs and Malik Hartford.

Hawkins, a Titusville, Fla., native, leaves Ohio State after just one season and has four seasons of eligibility remaining. He has decided to play closer to home, announcing his commitment on April 20 to UCF.

Hawkins entered Ohio State as a four-star prospect. Beginning his college career behind the likes of Lathan Ransom and Sonny Styles on the Buckeyes' safety depth chart, Hawkins failed to receive any playing time in his lone season in Columbus, which earned him a redshirt for this upcoming season. He was expected to be a reserve again this upcoming season, potentially at nickel, but did make a considerable impact in the Buckeyes' spring game on April 13, logging five tackles in 46 snaps.

Hayden's entry to the portal was announced before the portal formally opened for the spring window, but he made good on the reports and entered on April 16 before committing to Colorado on April 22. He chose to play for the Buffaloes and coach Deion Sanders over schools such as Auburn, Georgia Tech, Louisville and UCLA.

Hayden, who has three years of collegiate eligibility remaining, joins a program that is experiencing a massive roster overhaul following an eventful 2023 season in which they finished with a 4-8 record and lost eight of their final nine games.

Sanders and Colorado have had nearly 20 players from last year's roster depart from the program this offseason – most notably sophomore running back Dylan Ed-

2024 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2023 Record, Bowl Result
Aug. 31	AKRON	TBA	TBA	2-10, not eligible
Sept. 7	WESTERN MICHIGAN	TBA	TBA	4-8, not eligible
Sept. 21	MARSHALL	TBA	TBA	6-7, 35-17 loss to UTSA (Frisco)
Sept. 28	at Michigan State	TBA	TBA	4-8, not eligible
Oct. 5	IOWA	TBA	TBA	10-4, 35-0 loss to Tennessee (Citrus)
Oct. 12	at Oregon	TBA	TBA	12-2, 45-6 win over Liberty (Fiesta)
Oct. 26	NEBRASKA	TBA	TBA	5-7, not eligible
Nov. 2	at Penn State	TBA	TBA	10-3, 38-25 loss to Ole Miss (Peach)
Nov. 9	PURDUE	TBA	TBA	4-8, not eligible
Nov. 16	at Northwestern	TBA	TBA	8-5, 14-7 win over Utah (Las Vegas)
Nov. 23	INDIANA	TBA	TBA	3-9, not eligible
Nov. 30	MICHIGAN	TBA	TBA	15-0, 34-13 win over Washington (CFP Champ.)

wards, who entered his name in the transfer portal one day after Hayden's commitment – while it has conversely brought in nearly 30 transfers, including former Buckeye tight end Sam Hart.

AD Smith Went "All In" For Football Program

Ohio State has had one of college football's biggest offseasons, retooling the roster with several high-profile transfer additions and returning a significant number of last year's players who could have departed for the NFL.

With many of those moves requiring additional resources from Ohio State's name, image and likeness efforts, the Buckeyes have outgoing athletic director Gene Smith to thank. He said on April 18 – following a one-hour discussion at the Fawcett Center about his career – that he made the active decision to go all in for this year's football team.

"I probably put a significant burden on Ross (Bjork) with the budget because I was playing poker with football. I went all in," he said. "Where we are in football, not winning Big Ten championships, I wanted to make sure we did everything we could to make sure football has a real chance next year."

Ohio State has not competed in a national championship game or won the Big Ten since 2020, and it has to go back to 2019 to find the last win over rival Michigan, with the Wolverines having taken each of the last three contests between the conference foes.

But the Buckeyes are looking to turn those tides this season. In addition to transfer-portal pickups such as running back Quinshon Judkins, quarterback Will Howard and safety Caleb Downs, Ohio State is returning double-digit starters from last year's team, including the likes of defensive ends Jack Sawyer and JT Tuimoloau, cornerback Denzel Burke and wide receiver Emeka Egbuka.

Smith will be on the job only until June 30 at which point Bjork will take over, but he still wanted to look ahead to the upcoming football season and make sure the team was in position to compete and return to winning titles as well as games over Michigan.

"When I think about my legacy, so to speak, I think about that," he said. "I hate to leave Ohio State when football's not back to winning Big Ten championships. I put a financial burden on Ross, and he's got to balance the budget in the future, because I just went berserk."

Smith Calls For WHAC Expansion

Smith also touched on the current state

and future of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, which has served as the Buckeye football team's multipurpose practice facility since 1987, suggesting the facility may need a facelift in the near future.

"You go into the Woody Hayes, and you see how beautiful it is," Smith said. "But we're putting lipstick on it right now."

"When I came in '05, we didn't have a recruiting department, and we didn't have a creative services department. We didn't have the sports science people that we have (now). We didn't have all the modalities and the training. We need more square footage. That's practical. That's not like an arms race. It's not because Alabama's got it. It's just the practical reality."

Smith continued to stress the importance of creating more square footage during the breakout session with media, saying that the WHAC has become overcrowded as Ohio State continues to expand its staff, with the program even having to convert closet spaces into offices for new staff members. He also mentioned that there are ongoing talks about expanding the roughly 13,000-square-foot facility, a task that will likely be led by Bjork.

Ohio State most recently renovated the Woody Hayes Athletic Center in 2019, when the university spent \$19.5 million to add amenities such as a new dining and kitchen area, a new lounge, a new basketball court with arcade games and a hallway that features memorabilia related to the success and history of the program.

"The addition is huge for us," head coach Ryan Day said when talking about the renovations in August 2019. "It's really catapulting us in recruiting, which is really important. We give and create an environment which is one of the best in the country in terms of taking care of a student-athlete on the field, off the field. With something like that, it's huge. Guys come here, play arcades, shoot baskets, play on the golf simulator and recover on the cryo (chambers). We want them to feel like this is their home."

Smith Supports Revenue Sharing In College Athletics

Smith also commented on the direction he wants to see college athletics take in the future, saying that he envisions an ideal future for collegiate athletics that involves a more regulated NIL space that has the universities directly paying student-athletes for NIL deals rather than the players signing deals themselves or with the help of an agent.

This would allow universities to begin revenue-sharing with players, where they



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A Postal Note From The BSB Publisher

Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers continue to be experiencing deteriorating postal delivery service.

"The calls and complaints have been increasing and coming from all areas," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said, "though problems in the Toledo and northwest Ohio areas continue to be the most prevalent. It has all been a little overwhelming for the BSB staff members, who understand the readers' frustration."

For a limited time, BSB is offering a discount on the cost of a subscription upgrade to first-class mail during football season or through football recruiting season in February. The first-class upgrade for football season, regularly \$30, will be just \$25, and the upgrade through the traditional National Signing Day in February will be just \$35, down from \$40.

"The reduced rates do not even cover the cost of postage, the enve-

lope and the handling to label and insert the copy of BSB," Moskowitz said. "However, we hope we can offset some of this cost with a reduction in the number of replacement papers we have to send out and a reduction in the number of subscriptions we have been bleeding because of untimely delivery.

"We do ask that those of you who have traditionally upgraded to first class for football season do so now, to save us the cost of sending you a reminder postcard in the summer. And as always, we are appreciative of those of you who pay full price on promotions like this, even when presented with a discount."

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will grant athletes – especially ones in the money-making sports such as football and basketball – a share of the profits that come from lucrative TV deals.

"There's going to be some revenue share," he said. "Obviously football is very much a part of that. I look at it this way, just simplifying it. It's room, board, books, tuition, cost of attendance. I'm hopeful that it's NIL rights, whatever that number is.

"You've got 125 football players, you've got 13 (men's basketball) players, you're at 138 (athletes to compensate)," Smith said. "For us, at least, you have to find 138 women on the other side. So you've got 276 student-athletes, you have to figure out what that model is.

"I call it NIL rights. Then you create a licensing program for all of your student-athletes, you bring NIL in-house like Virginia is doing, then you allow the university and you allow the athletic department to be able to do NIL deals for those student-athletes."

This model, according to Smith, mimics a state law Virginia is enacting this summer which will allow all schools to directly pay student-athletes for NIL deals effective July 1. This revenue-sharing model is currently outlawed by the NCAA, but it is something that many prominent names in college sports have advocated in recent years, including former Michigan head football coach Jim Harbaugh and Penn State head football coach James Franklin.

"We need Congress' help," Smith said. "State laws across the country are so different. I think it's going to be very difficult for the NCAA or any organization to say, 'OK, student-athletes are employees.'"

Regardless of how these changes are made, Smith said both Ohio State and the NCAA need to act quickly to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of collegiate sports, an initiative that he wishes he could help lead.

"I'm not leaving because of the changes," Smith said. "I'm probably that idiot that embraces it. There's a little part of me that wishes I was younger, and I'd want to embrace that change. Change is inevitable in life. And

changes always happen in our industry. Now there's never been this aggregate of issues that's causing these changes. Never. But you either embrace change, or you become irrelevant. It's that simple."

Ryan Injured In Car Accident

Ohio State wrestling coach Tom Ryan was hospitalized on the morning of April 23 after suffering non-life-threatening injuries stemming from his involvement in a car accident.

According to a statement released by the Ohio State athletic department later that day, Ryan was transported to the university's Wexner Medical Center after getting in the accident on his way to work, and no other driver or passenger involved was hurt at the scene. Columbus police said that Ryan was taken to the hospital in serious condition.

"University and department of athletics staff members have Tom and his family in their thoughts," the university statement read.

The crash report read that Ryan swerved into the right shoulder of I-270 at 5:53 a.m. on April 23 and struck the rear of a parked semi-trailer truck, pushing the trailer back into the right lane. The impact of the accident forced Ryan's front airbags to be deployed and closed the highway for 90 minutes. The report also stated that Ryan was wearing a seatbelt at the time of the accident but was cited for failure to control his vehicle, a minor misdemeanor by Ohio law.

In an update provided by his family, they said that Ryan experienced multiple fractures in his left leg – including his femur, patella and tibia – along with a severe concussion, and had to undergo a 10-hour surgery to repair the fractures in his leg. He is expected to remain in the hospital for the next few weeks as he continues his recovery.

"In the coming days, (Ryan) will begin some rehabilitation on his left leg," the family wrote on April 27 "Your continued prayers for his recovery mean the world to us, especially as he embarks on this next phase of healing."

Ryan has served as head coach for Ohio State wrestling since 2006 and has excelled in the role, winning a national championship in 2015 and finishing as a runner-up in 2008, 2009, 2017, 2018 and 2019. He has also earned personal accolades during his tenure, capturing NCAA Head Coach of the Year honors twice (2009, 2015) and the Big Ten Coach of the Year Award three times (2015, 2017, 2018).

Former OSU Linebackers Reflect On Playing Days

Four of Ohio State's most successful linebackers – Bobby Carpenter, A.J. Hawk, James Laurinaitis and Anthony Schlegel – shared the stage in a roundtable discussion

held at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on April 17 as part of the program's annual coaches' clinic, where they each recounted their favorite memories while representing the Scarlet and Gray.

In a nearly 35-minute conversation moderated by former Ohio State wide receiver and current ESPN analyst Joey Galloway, the quartet each were asked about their favorite plays as Buckeyes, sparking a unique answer from each linebacker.

Carpenter recounted a play during his senior year in 2005 that may not necessarily live in Buckeye lore but serves as a prime example of the linebacker's efforts during

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

his four years at Ohio State. He described a drive-stopping tackle he made against No. 16 Michigan State, where he stopped Spartans quarterback Drew Stanton just before the first-down marker while coming off the edge as a defensive end, one of 11 tackles he made on the day that helped the Buckeyes come back from 10 points down and secure a 35-24 win.

"I just took a beeline right down the line," he said. "(I said), 'I'm going to get him right before the pylon.' And I was able to get him before the got (the first down). It was total panic, but then total jubilation."

Hawk recounted a signature moment during his freshman debut in 2002, a year that would later result in a national championship win over Miami (Fla.). He recalled a play in that year's 45-21 season-opening win against Texas Tech where he laid a booming hit on quarterback Kliff Kingsbury as he released the ball.

Hawk stated that while it did not mean much in terms of the final score, with the Buckeyes already having a commanding late-game lead when it happened, the hit helped ignite his eventual decorated Ohio State career, an important moment that caused him to frame a picture of the play and hang it up in his home.

"He got rid of the ball and I blasted him," Hawk said. "I took, probably, three steps (before I hit him). I got him right in the chin back when you could do that. It was the first time I heard the stadium say, 'Ooh,' and that did something to me. It was the best feeling ever. It gave me a ton of confidence, it honestly did. I felt like I could play, even though I hit a defenseless guy falling out of bounds. It made me feel good."

Laurinaitis, who has since returned to the Buckeyes as linebackers coach after an extensive NFL career, told a story of a goal-line tackle he made in top-ranked Ohio State's 24-7 road win against No. 2 Texas during his sophomore season in 2006, one which came right after a mistake he had made earlier in that play.

Laurinaitis said he and fellow linebacker and current Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman were both out of position on a second-and-goal play from Ohio State's 7-yard line, with one linebacker going in coverage and the other blitzing on an intended double-blitz package. Despite being out of position, Laurinaitis said he recovered and made a key tackle on wideout Billy Pittman, a showing of resiliency that he thinks can serve as a lesson for his players.

"You have a mental error, who cares?" he said. "The ball is still going, you run. It's a play that took absolutely zero talent on my end. It was just hustle. It's everything that we preach here, everything that Coach Day preaches."

The Last Print Issue Of BSB Until June 4

This is the final issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin on our winter/spring biweekly schedule. The next issue of BSB, the June issue, is set to be mailed on June 4 as we switch to our monthly summer schedule. In this ever-changing college sports landscape, there is bound to be plenty of news between now and when the next issue hits the mail.

There is no reason to wait for your next Buckeye Sports Bulletin to get the latest OSU sports news, including any recruiting or transfer portal activity. 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 between staff and readers is always lively.

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 electronic service, while not a substitute for your print edition, is a stop-gap as your paper winds its way through the postal system and is also free to subscribers. BSB is also offering special savings on upgrading your subscription to first class mail. See the box on page 5.

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If you are a current subscriber and have been unable to access all features on the site, please give us a call at (614) 486-2202 and we will help you gain access. If you have any questions about BuckeyeSports.com, our print schedule or your mail service, feel free to call us at the above number.

Remember, the BSB mailing schedule is always listed in the credit box on page 3 of each issue.

Schlegel, who described himself as the most unathletic linebacker of the four, recalled a formation rather than a play as his favorite, that being a special defensive package instituted from 2004-05 called "Field Alaska Magic." This had Schlegel race toward the line of scrimmage and make contact with an offensive lineman, allowing Hawk or Carpenter to loop around him and have a free rush at the quarterback.

"(Coach would say), 'Schlegel, run into the guard and center, blow it up, A.J. wrap around and make a sack, because obviously you can't,'" Schlegel said. "That was my greatest play. We talked about it. There are roles that we all have to play. Know your freaking role. Go smash your skull into somebody else and let the players make the play."

NCAA Approves Helmet Comms, Other Rule Changes For 2024

College football will officially be adding a helmet communication system and a two-minute warning at the end of each half after the rules changes were approved by the NCAA's Playing Rules Oversight Panel on April 18.

According to the NCAA, one player on the field will be able to have the system in his helmet, and that player will be identifiable by a green dot on the midline of their helmet. The communication system will be shut off with 15 seconds left on the play clock, or at the snap of the ball, whichever of the two comes first.

Ohio State has already tried to adjust to this change in practice, with the team allowing up to three players to wear the new helmet in a given drill, with the players who received the new helmets alternating throughout spring camp.

"It's been good to work through that," Day said on March 19. "Chip (Kelly) dealt with it when he was in the NFL, so he has experience in that. The easy thing is, when you're in the huddle, you just call the play and the quarterback calls the play and that's simple. But there are other ways to build in different hybrids between signals and calling it into the quarterback. There's verbal and then there's the physical signal. It's something

new in college. Each day we're learning a little bit more about it."

The NCAA first proposed this rule change in March, even though it had been previously discussed for years, and it comes after a season in which Michigan was investigated by the NCAA for orchestrating an alleged elaborate sign-stealing scandal.

The new two-minute warning will work similarly to how the NFLs does, with the clock stopping at the 2:00 minute mark of both the second and fourth quarters. The timeouts, however, won't be additional television timeouts.

Another rule approved is that teams will have the option to use tablets to view in-game video, receiving up to 18 tablets that can be distributed between the sideline, locker room and coaches' booths. The tablets are not allowed to be connected to other devices, project larger images or provide data and analytics.

One final rule change approved is that horse-collar tackles inside the tackle box will result in a 15-yard penalty when previously no penalty was called on those tackles.

Dobbins Signs With Chargers, Elliott Returning To Dallas

A pair of former Ohio State tailbacks inked new NFL contracts since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, with J.K. Dobbins agreeing to a one-year, \$1.6 million contract with Harbaugh and the Los Angeles Chargers on April 17 and Ezekiel Elliott reuniting with the Dallas Cowboys – pending physical – on April 29.

Dobbins, a former second-round draft selection by the Baltimore Ravens in 2020, was signed by the Chargers after experiencing an up-and-down first four years in the NFL that have been hampered by a pair of significant season-ending injuries.

After having a breakout rookie season in 2020, rushing for 805 yards and a franchise rookie-record nine touchdowns on 134 attempts, his career took a downturn in 2021. Set to be Baltimore's starting running back that season, Dobbins suffered a torn ACL during the Ravens' preseason finale, an ailment that forced him to miss the entire 2021 season while also limiting him to just eight

games in 2022 as he continued to make a full recovery.

Dobbins declared himself 100 percent healthy before the 2023 season began, where he was once again slotted to be the Ravens' starting running back. But the former Buckeye suffered yet another setback just five minutes into the team's season opener, this time a torn Achilles after hauling in a short pass from quarterback Lamar Jackson.

Dobbins' recovery seems to have gone well. His surgeon, Dr. Neal ElAttrache, wrote a letter to NFL teams in late March that stated his patient has been fully cleared for football activities and looks "outstanding." This statement may have caught the attention of Harbaugh – who faced off against Dobbins three times while at Michigan – and the Chargers signed him to a one-year deal roughly three weeks later.

Elliott returns to Dallas after spending just one season with the New England Patriots, where he finished with career lows in carries (184), rushing yards (642) and rushing touchdowns (three). He will look to bounce back on a Dallas team that he spent his first seven NFL seasons with from 2016-22, a span in which he was one of the league's more productive running backs with 8,262 rushing yards and 68 touchdowns on 1,881 carries.

Elliott's production dipped considerably toward the end of his first Cowboy tenure, however, forcing the franchise to release him last March to clear cap space. But the former Buckeye will now look to resurrect his career on a Cowboys team that lost its leading rusher from last season, Tony Pollard, to the Tennessee Titans this offseason.

Smith's Killer Sentenced To 25 Years In Prison

Cardell Hayes, the man who shot and killed former Ohio State defensive end Will Smith after a traffic crash in 2016, received a 25-year prison sentence on April 25.

Hayes, 36, receives his sentence nearly three months after being found guilty of manslaughter for a second time at a Jan. 26 retrial held in New Orleans, where it was determined that he would face up to 40 years of

prison for shooting and killing Smith – and wounding Smith's widow, Raquel Smith – on April 9, 2016, during a road confrontation in New Orleans. He was taken into custody on Jan. 27 as he awaited his sentence.

Hayes was originally convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison for the same crime in December 2016, but the ruling – which was determined by a 10-2 jury vote – was reversed after the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed nonunanimous verdicts in 2020. Hayes was then released on bond on March 18, 2021, after serving more than four years of his 25-year sentence, and he remained free as the retrial was delayed multiple times due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Smith was shot eight times during the 2016 traffic confrontation with Hayes, which stemmed from Hayes rear-ending Smith. Hayes' defense team argued throughout both the trial and retrial that he was acting in self-defense from a reportedly intoxicated Smith, but no evidence showed Smith had wielded or fired a weapon.

Several of Smith's family members spoke in the courtroom following the sentencing, including Smith's daughter, Lisa – now a high school senior – who said Hayes caused irreparable damage by taking away her father.

"My dad will never watch me walk across the stage or walk me down the aisle," she said. "He will never see any of my achievements, ever. ... Mr. Hayes, you ruined my life. You took my father away from me."

While Raquel Smith declined to speak, Hayes' mother, Dawn Mumphrey, spoke directly to the Smith family, apologizing for the grief her son caused them and asking for forgiveness.

"I pray for y'all's strength and your success," she told the family. "I ask that y'all pray for us too."

Will Smith, who was 34 at the time of his death, had a decorated career at Ohio State.

He played in Columbus from 2000-03 and was an integral part of the Buckeyes' 2002 national championship team. He was then selected with the No. 18 pick in the 2004 NFL draft by the New Orleans Saints, where he played all of his nine professional seasons.

Snyder To Compete At Paris Olympics

Former Ohio State wrestler Kyle Snyder will participate in his third straight Olympics in Paris this summer after winning the 97 kg freestyle bracket at the U.S. Olympic Trials held in State College, Pa. from April 20-21.

Snyder cruised to his third straight Olympic berth by defeating active N.C. State wrestler Isaac Trumble in two straight matches, 5-0 and 4-0. Due to his previous success at the 2023 World Championships, where he took home a bronze medal in his weight class, the former Buckeye earned a bye until the best-of-three final round.

With Snyder's victory over Trumble, he has now qualified for 10 straight Olympics or World Championships, a streak that dates back to 2015 when he was a sophomore at Ohio State. The former Buckeye has also won three gold medals, two silver medals and two bronze medals at the World Championships in non-Olympic years, as well as a gold and silver medal in the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games and 2021 Tokyo Games, respectively.

Snyder's 2016 gold medal was most no-

table, as it made him the youngest Olympic wrestling champion in United States history and the first active Ohio State student to take home a gold medal since men's basketball's Jerry Lucas achieved the feat in 1960.

Snyder had a decorated career at Ohio State, becoming a three-time NCAA champion (2016-18) and four-time All-American (2015-18) in his four years with Ryan's program.

Men's Tennis Secures 18th Straight B1G Title

The top-ranked Ohio State men's tennis team continued an impressive streak on April 21, sweeping Wisconsin to secure the program's 18th consecutive Big Ten regular-season championship.

The Buckeyes – led by head coach Ty Tucker, who earned his 17th Big Ten Coach of the Year honor on April 25 – finished the regular season with a 27-1 record and an unblemished 9-0 mark in conference play, with the only loss coming at No. 12 Texas on March 10.

Ohio State clinched a share of the regular-season conference championship on April 19 with a win over Nebraska before sweeping the Badgers to secure the outright title. The 18th consecutive title is the second-longest streak in any sport in Big Ten history, trailing only Iowa wrestling, which won 25 consecutive conference titles from 1974-98.

In the win over Wisconsin, Ohio State first got on the board with a 6-0 doubles

win in just 22 minutes by Robert Cash and JJ Tracy, with Cash setting a program record with his 140th career doubles victory. The Badgers forfeited a pair of singles matches to give Ohio State an early 3-0 lead, and Tracy got on the board in singles play with a 6-1, 6-2 win over Gabriel Huber. Alexander Bernard followed with a 6-2, 6-2 win over Matthew Fullerton, and the Buckeyes were able to complete the sweep with a 6-3, 6-0 win by Cannon Kingsley and a 6-4, 7-5 win by Jack Anthrop.

Ohio State also took home the Big Ten tournament title, defeating Michigan by a score of 4-1 in the championship game on April 28. With both Big Ten regular-season and tournament crowns under their belt, the Buckeyes will gear up to win their first-ever national title, a feat they came one match shy of last season, losing to Virginia 4-0 in the championship.

The NCAA regionals will take place from May 3-5, followed by the super regional from May 10-11, the championship from May 16-19 and the singles and doubles championships from May 20-26.

Men's Volleyball Earns 19th MIVA Tourney Title

The men's tennis team was not the only Ohio State program to take home hardware since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press. The men's volleyball team secured its 19th Midwestern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association Tournament title with a 3-1 win over No. 4 seeded Lindenwood on April 20

at Worthen Arena in Muncie, Ind.

The third-seeded Buckeyes, led by fourth-year head coach Kevin Burch, fell to the Lions in the first game by a score of 20-25 but stormed back with three straight victories of 25-17, 25-18 and 25-16 to secure the title. Ohio State has now won the last nine MIVA Tournament titles it has appeared in as well as 12 of the last 13.

The Buckeyes were led in the championship-winning match by senior outside hitter Jacob Pasteur and sophomore opposite hitter Shane Wetzel, who combined for 31 kills in the match, helping Ohio State hold a 57-44 advantage over Lindenwood.

Pasteur and Wetzel's efforts allowed them to be named to the All-MIVA Tournament Team, while senior setter Michael Wright was named the MIVA Tournament Most Valuable Player for the second consecutive year after leading both teams with 45 assists.

Ohio State's MIVA Tournament title earns the program its 23rd berth in the NCAA tournament as a No. 6 seed, where it is set to take on No. 3 seed Grand Canyon on April 30 in Long Beach, Calif., in the quarter-final round. The Buckeyes enter the tournament with a 22-8 record and 11-5 mark in the Big Ten.

"As a unit we are super excited to get back to the NCAA tournament," said senior and Long Beach native Justin Howard. "We are ready to get out there and show everybody what Buckeye Nation is about."

BSB Subscribers Show Support Through VIP Program

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

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

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

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

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Cardinals Target Harrison As Top Receiver

Continued From Page 1

Harrison becoming Heisman Trophy finalists in addition to winning the Biletnikoff Award and earning unanimous All-America honors.

So, no pressure.

"I'm going to just go in there and be me," Harrison said. "I'm not going to try to be anybody else. Hopefully I can have the career that Larry had. That would be amazing, but like I said, I'm just going to go there, try to be me, work as hard as I can and help the team win football games.

"I'm trying to learn the playbook, get my connection down with Kyler (Murray), and whatever happens from there, happens," he added. "(Becoming the top receiver is) definitely not my thought. Go in there and work as hard as I can, and we'll see how it goes from there."

There will be little time, however, for Harrison to establish his sea legs with the Cardinals. The fourth overall pick for any team is often expected to hit the ground running, especially for a team that lost its leading wide receiver in each of the past two offseasons to free agency. It leaves an open depth chart for Harrison to come in and make an immediate impact.

"I'm built for it. I've been training for this my whole life," he said. "This has always been my goal to play in the NFL. There's going to be some learning curve, but hopefully I'll learn fast."

Arizona feels comfortable that Harrison will come in and immediately contribute. It was long considered the presumed destination for Harrison, with quarterbacks correctly expected to come off the board with the first three picks, and the Cardinals did their homework.

The team communicated with Harrison during the NFL Scouting Combine in February, even though Harrison did not participate in drills, and then hosted him at the team's facility in Tempe, Ariz., for a one-day visit during the pre-draft process.



FILE PHOTO

REUNITED — A pair of former Buckeyes will team up again in Arizona, when wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. (left), drafted fourth overall by the Cardinals in the 2024 NFL draft, will again be teammates with offensive tackle Paris Johnson Jr. (right), who was taken sixth overall by the team in last year's draft.

"When that day concluded, I felt pretty convicted about who Marvin was," general manager Monti Ossenfort told AZCardinals.com. "I was already convicted about who Marvin was as a player. After that day, I was convicted of who he was as a per-

son. That was a big day for me as we went through the process of figuring out who we were going to pick at No. 4.

"We've done a lot of work on him," Ossenfort added. "Marvin is everything we're looking for. He's big, he's fast, he's a good route runner, he catches the ball, he separates. And on top of that, he's a great person."

Harrison will serve as the presumed top target for Murray, who is entering his sixth season as the Cardinals' starting quarterback after being drafted out of Oklahoma in 2019. But even with a clear franchise quarterback — Murray has thrown for over 15,000 yards and rushed for nearly 2,500 more with 120 total touchdowns — Arizona has struggled, with just one winning season and one playoff appearance in the

past five years.

Each of Murray's five seasons has featured a different leading receiver, so Harrison could represent a much-needed constant when Murray is surveying the field. And Harrison looks forward to making Murray's job easier.

"Kyler's awesome," Harrison said. "You look at his record from high school, he's always won, and that's the kind of guy I want to play with. He's just so dynamic as a quarterback, and I just want to go in there and make his job easier as much as I can."

Harrison won't be the only former Buckeye looking to lend a helping hand for Murray, either. In last year's draft the Cardinals selected former Ohio State offensive tackle Paris Johnson Jr. with the



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sixth overall pick, and he went on to start all 17 games for Arizona, allowing eight sacks and just 42 pressures in 1,130 snaps.

"It's really awesome," Harrison said. "It's kind of like a full-circle moment. Last year before he even got drafted he was leaning toward Arizona and I was telling him how cool that would be if we played on the same team. A year later we all made it work."

Johnson is excited to see how Harrison and Murray develop chemistry.

"I think that's the most explosive combination in the country," Johnson said. "You have a quarterback that nobody can touch, and now you have a receiver that can't be guarded. As a tackle, how can you not want to block for that?"

That Ohio State connection is one that Harrison won't forget, and there were signs of his alma mater all throughout the draft. While Harrison was the only former Buckeye taken in the first round, he was joined on-site at the draft by head coach Ryan Day, who has routinely joined his future draft picks in person when they hear their names called.

"Coach Day is so special to me," Harrison said. "He's one of the first coaches that started recruiting me when I was a freshman in high school. We built that relationship up all throughout the recruiting process, and all the things that he's done for me and my family has been tremendous. I'm super thankful that I can share this moment with him."

Ohio State will always be a part of Har-

risson, but the focus now shifts to his professional pursuits and the expectations that await him. Former Buckeyes have won NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year honors in each of the past two seasons, with quarterback C.J. Stroud and wide receiver Garrett Wilson both doing so, and that will be a clear goal for Harrison as a rookie.

But for all the talk of Harrison's potential legacy – both at Ohio State and whatever the NFL might bring him – he is simply focused on arriving in Arizona and getting to work.

"It means a lot," Harrison said of being the first wide receiver drafted. "To be the first receiver and obviously the first offensive player not a quarterback, it does mean a lot but at the end of the day, you have to go out there and produce once the season comes."

Developed Here

Ohio State's marketing of players in the NFL has been a simple statement in recent years: "developed here." Former Buckeyes litter rosters at the professional level, with no fewer than 50 players in the NFL having called Columbus home.

Harrison's selection in the first round extended several notable draft streaks for Ohio State, which has been one of the most consistent sources of talent for the NFL. He became the 91st first-round selection from Ohio State, extending the all-time lead by any college over USC (86), Alabama (82), Notre Dame (72), Miami (67), Florida (59), LSU (53), Michigan

(53), Oklahoma (51) and Georgia (49).

This was the ninth consecutive draft where Ohio State had a first-round pick (Alabama currently leads with 15 consecutive drafts) and the 26th consecutive draft where at least one player was selected. The 1998 NFL draft remains the only one in history, dating back to 1936, in which an Ohio State player was not picked.

As it relates to wide receivers, Harrison became the 12th first-round wideout from Ohio State (most all-time) and the fourth in the last three drafts, joining Jaxon Smith-Njigba (2023) and Chris Olave and Wilson (both in 2022). The first Ohio State wide receiver taken in the first round was Paul Warfield, selected with the No. 11 overall pick in 1964 by the Cleveland Browns.

Dating back to 2000, Ohio State has had 24 wide receivers taken in the NFL draft, more than any school besides LSU, which leads the way with 25 wideouts taken.

Ohio State could be in position to add to that streak of first-round receivers in upcoming years. Emeka Egbuka seemed to be a likely first-round pick before he decided to come back for another season, so his name is an expected inclusion to that list in the 2025 NFL draft. Current sophomore Carnell Tate, should he continue building on a strong freshman season, could be in the same position in 2026. And why not give some recognition to freshman Jeremiah Smith, whose expectations have gone sky high this spring, and include him as a potential

first-rounder in 2027?

With three additional selections in the second through seventh rounds, Ohio State now has 489 all-time draftees, trailing only Notre Dame (532) and USC (529).

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Ohio State Has Fewest Draftees Since 2013

By **BRADEN MOLES**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

It was already expected to be a quiet draft for Ohio State with so many juniors and seniors deciding to return for an additional season, but few would have expected just how quiet it would ultimately be for the Buckeyes in the 2024 NFL draft held in Detroit from April 25-27.

With as many as nine former Ohio State players hoping to hear their names called, just four Buckeyes were ultimately selected among the 257 draft picks, the fewest for Ohio State since just three players – defensive linemen Johnathan Hankins and John Simon, and offensive lineman Reid Fragel – were selected in the 2013 NFL draft.

Only two offensive players selected – wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. and tight end Cade Stover – is the fewest in a draft for Ohio State since only center Billy Price and offensive tackle Jamarco Jones were taken in 2018.

The draft did start with a bang, however, when Harrison became the first non-quarterback off the board, taken with the fourth overall pick by the Arizona Cardinals. He was preceded in the draft by USC quarterback Caleb Williams to the Chicago Bears at No. 1, LSU quarterback Jayden Daniels to the Washington Commanders at No. 2 and North Carolina quarterback Drake Maye to the New England Patriots at No. 3.

“I could not be more excited to be an Arizona Cardinal, really,” Harrison said. “I didn’t have any expectations. When I got the phone call, man, I was really excited.”

It ended up being a long wait for the next Buckeye off the board – 50 picks, in fact – as another Ohio State player was not taken until defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. was selected in the second round with the No. 54 pick to the Cleveland Browns. It is a homecoming for Hall, who hails from Cleveland (more on page 13), but after an injury-riddled career at

Ohio State, his team has high hopes for his ability to produce at the next level.

“Ultimately it just came down to the talent,” said Browns assistant general manager Glenn Cook. “He’s a very talented young man. The way I would describe him is a shape-shifter, the way he can move his body, the way he can attack the quarterback. I think, probably next to (Browns general manager Andrew Berry), the most happy person was (defensive coordinator) Jim Schwartz. Just with our attacking style, he really fits our model.”

Hall was the last Buckeye to hear his name in the second round, saving any further Ohio State selections for the final day. Stover was next off the board, taken in the fourth with the No. 123 overall pick by the Houston Texans, reuniting with quarterback C.J. Stroud.

“It’s such an honor to play with C.J. again,” Stover said. “There are a lot of emotions. I’m excited to contribute any way I can. He’s an awesome human being and an even better teammate. We were captains together. It was no surprise to me what he did last season. The dude is unbelievable.”

Stroud helped lead Houston to a surprise playoff berth last season en route to winning NFL Rookie of the Year and surely will be happy to have Stover – who was productive in 2022 with Stroud throwing to him, hauling in 36 receptions for 406 yards and five touchdowns – back on the same team with him.

The final pick for Ohio State came in the fifth round when linebacker Tommy Eichenberg was selected with the No. 148 overall pick by the Las Vegas Raiders.

“Something that I told a lot of the teams is my love for the game is unmatched,” Eichenberg said. “There’s nothing else I want to do right now in my life. It’s hard to turn it off, but I love the game. I’m always around it, always just trying to learn. I can’t even name all the things I’ve done back in college that just revolved around football because I love the game so much. I love the dudes, I love the coaches. I love

just everything that comes with it. I’m excited to just continue my journey.”

But with over 100 picks to go, that was it for Ohio State. Linebacker Steele Chambers, wide receiver Xavier Johnson, offensive lineman Matthew Jones, safety Josh Proctor and running back Miyan Williams all went without being selected, with Chambers and Proctor as the most surprising snubs given that most viewed them as late-round selections.

That is not the end of their careers, however. Shortly after the draft, four of the five (with Williams the lone exception) signed as undrafted free agents. Chambers is joining forces with the Detroit Lions, while Johnson signed with the Buffalo Bills, Jones inked a deal with the Miami Dolphins and Proctor is headed to the Jacksonville Jaguars. Although signing as an undrafted free agent does not guarantee a roster spot, it does guarantee they will have a chance to prove their worth during the offseason and as training camp approaches later this summer.

Also of note are several players who previously played for Ohio State but finished out their careers elsewhere. Defensive end Javontae Jean-Baptiste, who transferred to Notre Dame last season, was taken with the No. 222 overall pick in the seventh round by the Commanders.

Several other players who spent time at Ohio State also signed as undrafted free agents, including linebacker Dallas Gant (Toledo to Minnesota Vikings), wide receivers Jaelen Gill (Fresno State to Los Angeles Chargers) and Sam Wigelusz (Ohio University to Los Angeles Rams), and linebacker Craig Young (Kansas to Indianapolis Colts).

Buckeye Sports Bulletin has compiled draft boxes for eight former Buckeyes who were either drafted or signed as undrafted free agents and finished their careers at Ohio State, including their pre-draft measurables, the team that selected them, where they were selected, expert’s takes and where they project on their team’s depth chart.



MARVIN HARRISON JR.

Wide Receiver
6-3 • 209

Recruit Rank: Overall 97;
WR 14



DRAFTED: Round: 1 Pick: 4

2023 RECORD: 4-13

EXPERT’S TAKE: “Harrison could not fit better. The Cardinals entered the offseason in desperate need of a No. 1 receiver, someone who would strike fear in opposing defenses. Last year the Cardinals’ production at the receiver position ranked near the bottom of the NFL. Quarterback Kyler Murray has a trustworthy running back in James Conner and an emerging tight end in Trey McBride. What he lacked was a dynamic receiver. Harrison is athletic and explosive. He has great hands and can make difficult catches look easy.

“Plus, as the son of Hall of Fame receiver Marvin Harrison, he has football in his blood. Projecting stars out of the draft is tricky, but Harrison looks the part.” – Doug Haller and Amos Morale III, The Athletic

DEPTH CHART: Marvin Harrison Jr., Michael Wilson, Chris Moore, Zach Pascal



MIKE HALL JR.

Defensive Tackle
6-2 • 299

Recruit Rank: Overall 53;
DL 10



DRAFTED: Round: 2 Pick: 54

2023 RECORD: 11-6

EXPERT’S TAKE: “Hall is an explosive, upfield-style defensive tackle who fits the scheme the Browns employ under defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz. He’s just 20, and though he wasn’t a full-time starter during his three seasons at Ohio State, his flashes were enough to make him a second-round pick.

“The Browns return three veteran defensive tackles, added Quinton Jefferson in free agency and drafted Siaki Ika in the third round last year. Their top three defensive tackles are in their 30s, so this pick is about the future. Hall will be on the roster, obviously, and will be given a chance to crack the rotation. But the Browns are betting on his upside and thinking long-term.” – Zac Jackson, The Athletic

DEPTH CHART: Dalvin Tomlinson, Shelby Harris, Maurice Hurst II, **Mike Hall Jr.**



CADE STOVER

Tight End
6-3 • 247

Recruit Rank: Overall 114;
OLB 7



DRAFTED: Round: 4 Pick: 123

2023 RECORD: 10-7

EXPERT’S TAKE: “The Texans having to give up a future fifth-round pick doesn’t take value away from the pick as Stover should give a return on investment over his career on par more with a fringe second- or third-round talent at his position. Houston pairs its rookie tight end with stellar second-year quarterback C.J. Stroud to give Stover a comfortable environment to enter and instant chemistry between the duo from their time together at Ohio State. The Texans were as patient as they could be and still landed one of the top prospects at a position of need that has instant chemistry with their quarterback.” – Jayson Braddock, The Sporting News

DEPTH CHART: Dalton Schultz, **Cade Stover**



TOMMY EICHENBERG

Linebacker

6-2 • 233

Recruit Rank: Overall 318;
ILB 19



DRAFTED: Round: 5 Pick: 148

2023 RECORD: 8-9

EXPERT'S TAKE: "The Raiders found a potential day-three steal at linebacker down in the fifth round with Ohio State's Tommy Eichenberg.

"A two-time captain at Ohio State and one of the most serious defenders on the board, Eichenberg's testing wasn't great and he can be a bit stiff in coverage, but this is a very intelligent off-ball linebacker who loves football as much as anyone on the board.

"Being a captain anywhere is a big deal. Being a two-time captain at a place like Ohio State is not nothing. This is a highly respected player who will do anything he's asked at 100 miles an hour. And drag others along with him.

"You can see the culture (head coach) Antonio Pierce wants to build inside that locker room in just about every pick so far. Toughness, no-nonsense football players." – Nick Baumgardner, The Athletic

DEPTH CHART: Robert Spillane, **Tommy Eichenberg**



STEELE CHAMBERS

Linebacker

6-0 • 229

Recruit Rank: Overall 236;
ATH 11



DRAFTED: Undrafted Free Agent

2023 RECORD: 12-5

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Here's a guy that I didn't think the Detroit Lions would have a chance at unless they drafted him. In fact, I mocked him to the Lions in the fifth round of one of my mock drafts this year.

"A spot just opened for a linebacker on special teams. The Lions lost longtime special teams ace Anthony Pittman in free agency when he signed with the Commanders. Chambers' speed and tackling ability could give him a shot to make things happen on special teams. Plus he'd get the chance to play alongside the best special teams player in the NFL in Jalen Reeves-Maybin.

"The thing that could prevent Chambers from making the 53-man roster is that there are just so many linebackers on this team right now. He's a top candidate to make the Lions' practice squad this year if he doesn't show enough to get him on the 53-man roster as a special teamer." – Mike Payton, AtoZSports.com

DEPTH CHART: Jack Campbell, Jalen Reeves-Maybin, **Steele Chambers**



XAVIER JOHNSON

Wide Receiver

6-0 • 202

Recruit Rank: Overall 1,138;
WR 170



DRAFTED: Undrafted Free Agent

2023 RECORD: 11-6

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Johnson, a Cincinnati native, posted 26 catches for 329 receiving yards and two touchdowns over the past two seasons. He added 44 carries for 353 yards and one score. The Bills used their first pick of this year's draft on Florida State WR Keon Coleman at No. 33 overall. The move addressed a receiving corps that's desperate for talent after the losses of Stefon Diggs and Gabe Davis.

"Johnson now has the chance to carve out a potential depth or practice squad role with the Bills. Some action on special teams is certainly an option as well, as Johnson had 28 kickoff returns for 601 yards during his college career." – Zach Dimmitt, Sports Illustrated

DEPTH CHART: Khalil Shakir, Keon Coleman, Curtis Samuel, Mack Hollins, Justin Shorter, Andy Isabella, KJ Hamler, **Xavier Johnson**



MATTHEW JONES

Offensive Lineman

6-3 • 316

Recruit Rank: Overall 68; OC 1



DRAFTED: Undrafted Free Agent

2023 RECORD: 11-6

EXPERT'S TAKE: "The Dolphins have an established two-deep at all spots on the interior line, but Jones gives himself a fighting chance to make the roster – or at least the practice squad – given his positional versatility.

"He started games at left and right guard during his time with the Buckeyes, as well as one game at center in the Cotton Bowl last season. He is unlikely to come in and compete for a starting job anytime soon, but being able to step in at almost any position on the offensive line should give him a leg up when it comes time for rosters to be cut down." – Braden Moles, Buckeye Sports Bulletin

DEPTH CHART: Isaiah Wynn, Robert Jones, Lester Cotton, Chasen Hines, **Matthew Jones**



JOSH PROCTOR

Safety

6-2 • 205

Recruit Rank: Overall 71;
SAF 7



DRAFTED: Undrafted Free Agent

2023 RECORD: 9-8

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Proctor enters a crowded safety room in Jacksonville, but like with most defensive backs who come from Ohio State, he has extensive experience on special teams that should help him compete for a roster spot.

"Proctor overcame injuries to turn in his best season in 2023, and while it was not enough to parlay it into hearing his name called in the draft, he will have his chance to impress the Jaguars this offseason with a hardworking attitude that he displayed at Ohio State." – Braden Moles, Buckeye Sports Bulletin

DEPTH CHART: Andre Cisco, Daniel Thomas, Erick Hallett II, **Josh Proctor**



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Hall Happy To Be Staying Home With Browns

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Few professional athletes are granted the privilege of playing within their home state in their entire careers, but for former Ohio State defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr., that dream seems to be trending toward becoming an exciting reality.

Hall, a native of Garfield Heights, Ohio, began his football career playing in Pop Warner leagues in the Cleveland area before continuing his playing days at the high school level at the Catholic preparatory school Cleveland Benedictine.

He spent just his freshman season at Benedictine until his mother, Lynda, accepted a new job in Streetsboro, Ohio – a suburb roughly 25 miles southeast of Cleveland – which forced him and his family to move away from the city. There, he played his final three high school seasons at Streetsboro, where he blossomed into one of the top defensive prospects in the state and earned first-team All-Ohio honors his senior year.

Upon graduating from high school, Hall then took his talents roughly 144 miles southwest of Streetsboro to Columbus in 2021, where he played three seasons at Ohio State at defensive tackle, totaling 45 tackles, 10 tackles for loss and six sacks for Larry Johnson's unit while earning third-team All-Big Ten honors in his final season.

Now, after multiple different stops within the Buckeye State, Hall will head back north to his hometown to continue his football life in Ohio, this time at the professional level.

Surrounded by his mother, Johnson and other close family members and friends, the former Buckeye was selected on April 26 by the Cleveland Browns with the No. 54 overall pick in the second round of the 2024 NFL draft.

Around a half-hour after being selected, the 20-year-old Hall met virtually with local Browns media, where he called being able to stay within the city that raised him and play for his hometown team in the NFL the “greatest feeling ever in the world.”

“Growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, it's a great feeling,” Hall said. “I'm really familiar with the area and to stay here for my whole career – I mean, from Pop Warner to high school, middle school up to college, going to Ohio State, then staying home at the top of the peak of the level – it's just great.”

With this excitement also comes some added pressure, however. Being one of five former Ohio State players on the Browns' roster – a group that includes his former teammates Ronnie Hickman, Dawand Jones and Luke Wypler along with 2018 first-round draft pick Denzel Ward, who encouraged his team to take Hall at a press conference earlier this spring – there will likely be extra attention placed on him to produce, as many who follow and are a part of the team are already familiar with his talents while watching him suit up with the Buckeyes on Saturdays.

Hall said that he is not only aware of this added pressure, but also looking forward to embracing it, a mentality that he thinks will help him during his rookie year.

“I love it,” Hall said when asked about the pressure he feels playing for his home-

town team. “I'm not going to run away from the pressure, I'm going to run to it and meet it head-on. There's going to be a lot of pressure on me playing in my hometown. A lot of people are going to have expectations. But at the end of the day, I still have demands (for myself). I'm going to have to meet expectations. I'm going to hold myself very high on that and hold myself accountable.”

One thing that could help Hall better manage these expectations is having a quartet of former teammates to lean on, many of whom he has already formed close relationships with while at Ohio State. Hall was former locker mates and lifting partners with Wypler during their time with the Buckeyes, and he developed a tight bond with Jones, who started nine games for the Browns in his rookie year before going down with a season-ending injury in December.

Hall told the media that he is especially excited to reunite with Jones – who supported Hall by attending Ohio State's pro day on March 20 – as he feels that they can feed off the same vibrant energy and enthusiasm they exuded together in practice while with the Buckeyes.

“That's my dog,” Hall said of Jones. “He just called me right before this (conference call). We were talking about this the whole (offseason). He was just saying, ‘Man, if you get here, it's over.’ We're a great duo, offense and defense-wise. We bring a lot of juice in practice, even at Ohio State. I know it's going to be 10 times more at the next level, but I'm really blessed to be able to play with my brother for life.”

But beyond being able to play for his hometown team and reunite with his former teammates and close friends, there is perhaps a far bigger motivating factor for Hall heading into his professional career.

On Sept. 15 – just one day before the Buckeyes' home game against Western Kentucky – Hall announced that he had become a father, sharing news of the birth of his son, Michael “Trey” Hall III. Hall proclaimed throughout the NFL draft process that the birth of his son played perhaps the biggest factor in him forgoing his senior season at Ohio State and beginning his professional career, even going as far as saying the birth had changed him as a man.

“That was the day I really became a man,” he told reporters during the NFL Scouting Combine this February. “It's not about Mike Hall anymore. It's about my son.”

Hall repeated these same sentiments just hours after he was drafted, saying that while it was difficult to leave the brotherhood at Ohio State, especially without having beaten Michigan or winning a Big Ten or national championship, he needed to think about the bigger picture and focus on providing lifelong financial support for his son and growing family.

“I was pretty sure on leaving, especially when I had my son late in the year,” he said. “That solidified it. It wasn't like I wasn't tempted to go back. I mean, I feel like there's still unfinished business. But I have to do what's right for my family. It was just better that way. I can't think about it as a personal preference. I have to think about it as a whole.

“It's been the greatest addition to my life,



FILE PHOTO

STAYING HOME — Former Ohio State defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. (51) will not have to travel far at the professional level. He was taken with the No. 54 overall pick in the 2024 NFL draft by the Cleveland Browns.

for sure,” he added of his son. “It's teaching me a lot of patience. To be a role model for my son, it's just the best feeling. For him to even be around this and witnessing this – he's in all the videos, just giving him something good to look back on and (say), ‘Dang, my dad did something.’”

Hall has all the outside motivation needed from his family and hometown to get him through the adversity he will likely encounter throughout his rookie season. But on the field, he still may need to show more to gain significant playing time this upcoming season, especially when it comes to his health and overall consistency.

Despite being a highly touted second-round draft selection, Hall started just 11 games for the Buckeyes in his three seasons with the program as he battled a series of injuries that often hindered his explosiveness and overall production.

This was especially evident during his 2022 season, when a nagging shoulder ailment caused him to play no more than 19 snaps in each of the final five games of the year.

“I wouldn't say (the injury was) severe, but it bothered him,” Johnson said in March of 2023. “When you're playing inside and you have a shoulder injury, you can't lock out, so now you're playing with one arm. That's tough to do to play the run, and it affected him. There's no question about it. It affected him mentally.”

Hall proclaimed he was fully healthy before this past season but was unable to be a consistently dominant force on the inside. While he did rack up a career-high 24 tackles, he still failed to put more than one tackle on the stat sheet in half of his 12 appear-

ances while missing a game with an injury.

Despite these reliability concerns, the Browns see Hall emerging as a major piece on their defensive line as early as this season, when they think he can serve as a much-needed force on the inside to complement the dominance of three-time NFL All-Pro defensive end Myles Garrett.

“(Hall) is really tailor-made for our attack front,” Browns general manager Andrew Berry said after selecting Hall. “He's explosive, he's quick, he can rush the passer, he's long and he plays with a very high motor. For us, pass rushers will always come at a premium, especially those who can affect the pocket from the inside. We think that that's something Mike will be able to do along our front. We're really excited to keep him home, so to speak, and I think his skill set and passion really matches perfectly for our organization.”

With the support of his family, hometown and new organization behind him, Hall is once again ready to represent the state of Ohio and learn under the tutelage of some of the game's greatest pass rushers and overall defenses in Cleveland. It's a unique opportunity that he said he will not take for granted at any point this season.

“From day one, I'm definitely going to be doing whatever (Garrett) does. He's just really aware of getting his body right – what does he eat? What is he doing after practice? Those guys, those vets, they're not vets for no reason. They've been in this league playing multiple years, back-to-back, having these great seasons. It's just a great honor to be around somebody like that. I have to come in and put my hard hat on from day one until whenever I leave.”

Buckeyes Poised For Historic Draft In 2025

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Aside from the buzz that surrounded former Buckeye wideout Marvin Harrison Jr. this offseason, Ohio State experienced one of the more quiet NFL draft cycles in recent memory with just four players taken in the 2024 NFL draft, the lowest total since 2013.

This lack of attention was evident during the Buckeyes' pro day held at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on March 20, which had only a small collection of NFL scouts and assistants came to view the program's pro-bound prospects compared to the swarm of top executives and head coaches who witnessed future Houston Texans quarterback C.J. Stroud and other future NFL Buckeyes participate in last year's version of the event.

While there was little noise surrounding Ohio State's NFL draft selections this year, the program may end up being the center of attention in 2025, when the Buckeyes will likely send double-digit draftees to the league, many of whom will enter the pro ranks with four years of high-level collegiate experience after returning for their senior seasons at Ohio State.

With Ohio State possessing pro-bound talent at nearly every skill position this season, it could be in line to break the previous program record of 14 players taken in a single draft, set in 2004 with former Buckeyes such as cornerback Chris Gamble, defensive end Will Smith and wide receiver Michael Jenkins selected. The Buckeyes may even challenge the all-time record of 15 players selected, achieved by Georgia in 2022.

Although there is just under a year left until the event, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is taking a look ahead at how Ohio State will fare in next season's NFL draft, which is scheduled to take place from April 24-26 at historic Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wis., with the first round on April 24, followed by the second and third rounds on April 25 and then closing things out with rounds four through seven on April 26.

Dominant D-Line

Ohio State's NFL talent is perhaps most abundant on the defensive line, which boasts numerous veterans who could hear their names called early on at Lambeau Field next April.

At the top of that list is senior defensive end JT Tuimoloau, who – if he had not opted to return for his senior season – might have already been selected in the first round this year.

Tuimoloau, the highest-rated defensive prospect to sign with the Buckeyes in the modern recruiting era, has often served as a game-wrecker off the edge for Ohio State, totaling 83 tackles (22 for loss), 11 sacks, seven pass deflections, two interceptions and a defensive touchdown in his first three seasons with the program. He has also shown a knack for performing when his team needs him most, most notably in 2022 when he willed the Buckeyes to a road victory over Penn State with three turnovers, including a key pick-six in the



SONNY BROCKWAY

UP NEXT — Ohio State cornerback Denzel Burke (left) and defensive end JT Tuimoloau (right) are among the Buckeyes in position to lead next year's draft class.

fourth quarter.

Joining Tuimoloau near the top of scouts' draft boards may be fellow senior defensive end Jack Sawyer. The former five-star had a bumpy start to his Ohio State career but seemed to hit his stride toward the end of last season, picking up 7½ tackles for loss along with five of his 6½ total sacks in the final three games.

Sawyer credited these late-season successes to him playing with more comfort and confidence in his more natural defensive end position, as opposed to the hybrid "Jack" position he occupied for the majority of the 2022 campaign.

"I felt like I was in a groove, probably the whole second half of the season," Sawyer said earlier this offseason. "I felt like myself again. I was just out there playing, having fun with my teammates. When you come here and you expect to hit the field and to be a certain way, it's hard to get over that for a little bit."

If Sawyer can put together a full productive season at his natural position in 2024, it could drive his draft stock up and propel

him to a day-one or day-two selection.

Tuimoloau and Sawyer are not the only draft-eligible defensive line prospects who could generate some buzz next offseason. Senior defensive tackle Tyleik Williams is coming off a breakout junior campaign of his own, where he was tied for fifth in tackles (53) and tied for first in tackles for loss (10), and could work his way into a day-two selection.

Fellow senior defensive tackle Ty Hamilton, meanwhile, could impress scouts as a full-time starter after serving primarily as a rotational piece last season. Hamilton, who is projected as a fifth-round selection per NFLMockDraftDatabase.com, still made an impact despite the limited reps, earning 38 tackles (4½ for loss) and two sacks.

Star-Studded Secondary

Ohio State is also loaded with NFL-ready talent in its secondary, and that talent starts with senior cornerback Denzel Burke.

After an injury-riddled sophomore campaign, Burke flashed his potential as a shut-

down corner in 2023, blanketing opposing team's top receivers on a game-by-game basis and leading the Buckeyes with nine pass deflections to go with his lone interception. Burke also showed off his physicality near the line of scrimmage, delivering a few notable bruising hits last season and finishing with three tackles for loss and one forced fumble.

In addition to his obvious talents, Burke's confident and unfiltered persona could win over NFL executives and coaches who may be searching for an organizational culture change, an aspect that could make him a first-round selection in 2025.

"I want to be recognized as the No. 1 corner in the country, the No. 1 corner taken off in the 2025 draft, (win the) Jim Thorpe (Award)," Burke said when asked about his goals for this season. "I have a lot of big personal goals I want this year, and I'm striving daily to reach that and get one percent better every day."

Playing alongside Burke in the Buckeyes' cornerback room this season are senior Jordan Hancock and junior Davison Igbinosun, both of whom could see their names called if they put together strong seasons in the secondary. Hancock is looking to build off a breakout season in which he racked up 41 tackles, five pass breakups, two sacks and two interceptions at nickel safety, showing his potential versatility at the next level.

Igbinosun is also an intriguing prospect, as his overall length and athleticism could pique the interest of some NFL teams in the next draft cycle. Standing 6-2, the Ole Miss transfer was a physical presence in the secondary in his first season with the Buckeyes, recording 59 tackles – third on the team – along with five pass breakups and two fumble recoveries.

That physicality also served as a hindrance for Igbinosun last season, however, as he was called for multiple holding and pass interference penalties that cost the Buckeyes significant yardage. If Igbinosun can improve upon his coverage skills and cut down on his penalties this season, the junior could emerge as a mid-round selection.

At safety, the hype currently revolves around sophomore Caleb Downs, who still has two years of required eligibility remaining but could become an early-round selection in 2026. But fifth-year senior Lathan Ransom could see his name called next season if he puts together a strong final campaign with Ohio State.

Ransom produced early on last season at the bandit, earning 34 tackles, two pass deflections and an interception through eight games, but he missed the final five contests of last season after suffering a foot injury. While he has been limited for most of spring practice and was held out of the spring game, he is expected to be healthy for the regular season, where he will be penciled back into the Buckeyes' starting lineup.

Linebacker A Wild Card

Sticking with the defense, another position that could produce some NFL talent is linebacker, which features an established

veteran in Cody Simon along with two upstart juniors in C.J. Hicks and Sonny Styles.

Simon is slated to start at the Mike this season. His five-year tenure has been a rocky one filled with adversity and injuries, but he experienced a solid year last season, totaling 57 tackles – fourth most on the team despite mostly coming off the bench – along with three tackles for loss and two pass breakups.

Simon, who shared starting reps at times last season with Steele Chambers and Tommy Eichenberg, will have a larger role on the field and is also expected to serve as one of the defense's leaders, giving him some NFL exposure heading into next offseason.

"It's been a long time coming, but I feel honored," Simon said earlier this spring when asked about assuming the role of starting linebacker. "There is a lot of respect and effort that goes into being a linebacker at Ohio State. And it's a great honor. I want to honor the guys who came before me but also play my own way, be a great defender here and lead the defense."

Who will line up alongside Simon is still a mystery, though, with Hicks and Styles both vying to start at Will linebacker.

Hicks – a former-five star whose impact has largely been limited to special teams in his first two seasons – has assumed most of the first-team reps this spring, but Styles likely possesses the most professional talent, especially due to his versatility.

With Styles' game still largely an unfinished product, however, the junior could opt to return for his senior season in hopes of boosting his draft stock. And even if Hicks were to win the job or see the field for extended stretches, he is unlikely to depart to the NFL after his first season seeing significant action for the Buckeyes.

Tantalizing Tailbacks

Ohio State has not produced a first- or second-round running back since 2020, when former Buckeye tailback J.K. Dobbins was selected with the No. 55 overall pick in the second round by the Baltimore Ravens. That may change in 2025, with the Buckeyes boasting two premier tailbacks – senior TreVeyon Henderson and junior Quinshon Judkins – who can both surge up the draft boards with strong campaigns.

Henderson is the most likely of the two to fall into that category. He has emerged as one of the more explosive Ohio State tailbacks in recent memory, totaling 2,745 rushing yards and 32 touchdowns on 446 totes in his first three seasons with the program. His career has been slowed by injury, however. He has missed a combined eight games in the last two seasons due to a series of lower-body ailments. But if he can showcase his home-run-hitting ability for a full season, he could position himself to be a potential first- or second-round pick in 2025.

Judkins also boasts a strong résumé out of the backfield, having spent two successful seasons in the SEC as the lead running back for Ole Miss. He made his presence felt as an underclassman, earning SEC Freshman of the Year and first-team all-conference honors his freshman season after rushing for 1,567 yards and 16 touchdowns, then tacking on another 1,158 yards and an SEC-leading 15 touchdowns as a sophomore.

Judkins will not receive the same amount of volume at Ohio State this season as he did at Ole Miss while he splits carries with Henderson, but he could still elevate his draft stock with another productive year out of the backfield.

Egbuka Leading The Way

Ohio State's wide receivers room has produced a litany of NFL talent since Brian Hartline began leading the room in 2019, with Harrison (2024) Jaxon Smith-Njigba (2023), Chris Olave (2022) and Garrett Wilson (2022) all selected in the first round.

That successful stretch may continue into 2025 when senior wideout Emeka Egbuka enters the draft after four seasons with the Buckeyes. Last summer, Egbuka was lauded by many as a potential top-10 pick in the 2024 NFL draft, with many even suggesting that he and Harrison were one of the better wide receiver tandems to come out of college in recent memory.

"Watching these two, they are a better combination than when Wilson and Olave came out," said former Minnesota Vikings general manager Rick Spielman last July. "I'll put them up there with the Justin Jefferson and Ja'Marr Chase combo that LSU had."

But those lofty expectations and hype surrounding Egbuka subsided once the 2023 season began, as he dealt with injuries that hindered his movement and production. He hauled in just 41 catches for 515 yards and four touchdowns in 10 games last season, compared to the 74 catches for 1,151 yards and 10 touchdowns he collected while catching passes from Stroud in 2022.

Egbuka's disappointing campaign prompted him to return for his senior season, when he will serve as the team's unquestioned top wide receiver target. Barring any other significant injuries, a bounce-back year can thrust Egbuka back into the NFL draft discussion next offseason, when he can become Ohio State's fifth first-round selection in four seasons.

Egbuka will likely be the only Buckeye receiver taken next season, with Hartline's room featuring many younger wide receivers – mainly sophomores Brandon Inniss and Carnell Tate and freshman Jeremiah Smith – who are still removed from entering the draft.

But Keenan Bailey's tight end room could potentially produce a future pro in Gee Scott Jr. He earned limited playing time last season behind Cade Stover but still showed flashes as a pass-catcher, hauling in 10 catches for 70 yards and a touchdown, but is now in position to assume starting reps at tight end this year and become more of a factor in the passing game.

Talent In the Trenches

While the bevy of NFL-ready talent on Ohio State's defensive line has already been discussed, there are a few linemen on the other side of the ball who should also be considered as potential draft prospects next season. These discussions begin on the left side of the line with left tackle Josh Simmons and left guard Donovan Jackson.

Jackson, a senior, is perhaps the most stable figure on Ohio State's somewhat inexperienced and new-look offensive line. He has started each game the last two seasons at left guard. Jackson stands 6-4 and

320 pounds, a physical frame that mirrors that of an NFL offensive lineman.

Simmons, who is 6-5 and 310 pounds, is also an imposing figure on the left side. But he enters the season with some question marks, mainly with his tendency to commit penalties. He was called for several false starts and holds throughout his first season with Ohio State, which often backed the offense up and stalled drives. But he cut down on those penalties toward the end of the year and showed significant improvement as the season progressed.

While Jackson and Simmons should garner attention from scouts on the left side of the Buckeye line, center Seth McLaughlin could also warrant some NFL consideration if he has a successful fifth-year senior campaign.

McLaughlin, who split first-team reps with Carson Hinzman this spring but is likely to win the starting job, started every game at center last season for now-former head coach Nick Saban at Alabama. But he also had his fair share of struggles toward the end of the season, delivering several errant snaps to quarterback Jalen Milroe, including a low snap on the last play of the Rose Bowl that contributed to Michigan stopping the Tide on fourth-and-goal.

McLaughlin said throughout the offseason that he has fixed these snapping issues, which can certainly help his chances of being drafted next April. According to NFLMockDraftDatabase, he is projected to be selected in the third round.

On the right side of the offensive line, senior Josh Fryar – whether he ultimately

lines up at guard or tackle – could turn into a late-round selection after starting his second full season with the Buckeyes.

Howard Targeting Pro Career

While Will Howard has yet to win the starting job this year after transferring from Kansas State in January – sophomore Devin Brown and true freshman Julian Sabin are competing with him this offseason – he does enter Columbus with plenty of experience.

He is coming off an impressive campaign as the Wildcats' full-time starter last year. He completed 61.3 percent of his passes (219 of 357) for 2,643 yards and 24 touchdowns to 10 interceptions. He also possesses a dual-threat ability that could translate to the next level, having rushed for 921 yards and 19 scores in his four seasons with Kansas State. But even with these successes, the former Wildcat said that his game still needs some fine-tuning before he seeks a professional career, a goal that he thinks he can attain in his lone season at Ohio State.

"The resounding thing that I heard from these NFL guys and from people around the league was, 'You need to play more,' and, 'We need to see more high-level play,'" Howard said before spring camp began. "I feel like I played a lot of football in my time at K-State but I only had one year where I was really the true starter and where I played the whole year. I felt like I wasn't ready to leave college yet. I still had more I wanted to accomplish."



BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

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.

BASEBALL (20-20, 7-8)

Feb 16 vs. Boston College at Phoenix, L 9-2; **17** vs. BYU at Phoenix, W 7-2; **18** vs. USC at Phoenix, W 5-2; **20** vs. Grand Canyon at Phoenix, L 10-3; **22** at Arizona State, W 11-4; **23** at Arizona State, L 14-4; **24** at Arizona State, W 13-4; **25** at Arizona State, L 10-8 (8 innings).

March 1 vs. California at Las Vegas Classic in Las Vegas, W 9-4; **2** vs. Pittsburgh at Las Vegas Classic in Las Vegas, canceled; **3** vs. Oklahoma at Las Vegas Classic in Las Vegas, W 4-3; **8** at Cal Poly, L 4-2; **9** at Cal Poly, L 19-2; **10** at Cal Poly, W 5-3; **11** at Cal Poly, L 3-1; **13** at Cal State Fullerton, W 13-10; **15** at West Virginia, L 5-2; **16** at West Virginia, W 7-4; **17** at West Virginia, W 26-11; **22** GEORGETOWN, L 8-5; **24** GEORGETOWN, L 4-2 (10 innings); **26** KENT STATE, postponed; **29** PURDUE, W 8-2; **30** PURDUE, W 12-10; **31** PURDUE, L 7-1.

April 2 at Kent State, postponed; **3** at Kent State, postponed; **5** at Nebraska, L 3-0; **6** at Nebraska, L 7-3; **7** at Nebraska, W 9-3; **9** BOWLING GREEN, W 6-4; **10** MOREHEAD STATE, W 13-7; **12** IOWA, W 8-5; **13** IOWA, L 3-2; **14** IOWA, W 11-1 (8 innings); **16** WRIGHT STATE, W 14-13; **17** at Kent State, postponed; **19** at Michigan, L 4-0; **20** at Michigan, W 16-1; **21** at Michigan, L 7-5; **23** at Wright State, L 14-13; **26** MICHIGAN STATE, L 11-4; **27** MICHIGAN STATE, L 17-12; **28** MICHIGAN STATE, W 10-6; **30** CINCINNATI.

May 1 AKRON.; **3-5** at Illinois; **7** EASTERN MICHIGAN; **8** YOUNGSTOWN STATE; **10-12** NORTHWESTERN; **16-18** at Rutgers; **21-26** Big Ten Championships at Omaha, Neb.

MEN'S GOLF

Jan. 29-31 Southwestern Invitational at Thousand Oaks, Calif., 1st/13.

Feb. 11-13 Puerto Rico Classic at Grand Reserve, Puerto Rico, 9th/15; **19-21** Watersound Collegiate at Destin, Fla.,

7th/12.

March 9-11 Hayt Invitational at Ponte Vedra, Fla., 4th/14; **25-26** Valspar Collegiate at Palm City, Fla., 15th/16.

April 19-21 ROBERT KEPLER INTERCOLLEGIATE, 2nd/18; **26-28** BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIP, 5th/18.

May 13-15 NCAA Regionals.

WOMEN'S GOLF

Feb. 3 Therese Hession Regional Challenge at Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., vs. USC, L 1-3-1; **3** Therese Hession Regional Challenge at Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., vs. ASU, W 2-1-2; **4** Therese Hession Regional Challenge at Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., vs. Baylor, T 2-2-1; **18-19** Spartan Sun Coast Invitational at Sarasota, Fla., 1st/15.

March 4-6 Darius Rucker Intercollegiate at Hilton Head Island, S.C., 16th/17; **15-16** Florida State Match-Up, 6th/14; **22-24** Clemson Invitational, 6th/16.

April 13-14 THERESE HESSION BUCKEYE INVITATIONAL, 1st/12; **19-21** Big Ten Championships at Havre de Grace, Md., 6th/14.

May 6-8 NCAA Regionals.

MEN'S GYMNASTICS (4-4)

Jan. 13 GREENVILLE, W 395.000-387.350; **20** at Navy, 1st/6

Feb. 2 at Oklahoma, L 411.500-400.600; **3** vs. Arizona State at Norman, Okla., W 400.600-379.000; **10** at Penn State, L 407.500-399.300.

March 9 MICHIGAN, W 412.150-407.400; **16** at Illinois, L 413.200-406.350; **26** NEBRASKA, L 418.200-414.150.

April 5-6 Big Ten Championships, 4th (406.550); **19** NCAA Qualifier, 3rd/6 (408.725); **20** NCAA Championships, 6th (399.122).

MEN'S LACROSSE (6-9, 1-4)

Feb. 3 UTAH, W 11-8; **10** CLEVELAND STATE, 13-6; **13** BELLARMINE, W 10-6; **17** at Air Force, W 12-4; **25** at Virginia, L 14-8.

March 2 at Cornell, L 15-11; **8** NOTRE DAME, L 13-10; **12** DETROIT MERCY, W 16-10; **17** DENVER, L 9-6; **24** PENN STATE, L 12-9; **30** at Rutgers, W 14-8.

April 6 at Maryland, L 8-7; **14** JOHNS HOPKINS, L 11-10 OT; **20** MICHIGAN, L 13-12; **27** Big Ten tournament at Ann Arbor vs. Michigan, L 15-9.

WOMEN'S LACROSSE (8-9, 1-5)

Feb. 9 ROBERT MORRIS, W 19-3; **11** KENT STATE, W 17-6; **16** at Youngstown State, W 17-9; **18** at Akron, W 18-3; **23** at Denver, L 15-5.

March 2 BUTLER, W 17-10; **7** at Michigan, L 11-5; **12** MARQUETTE, W 22-17; **16** MARYLAND, L 12-6; **23** at Johns Hopkins, L 15-5; **28** PENN STATE, W 9-8.

April 5 at Cincinnati, L 13-11; **9** at Louisville, L 22-10; **13** at Northwestern, L 19-10; **18** RUTGERS, L 13-11; **21** at Temple W 10-9; **27** Big Ten tournament at Penn State, L 15-13.

SOFTBALL (29-18, 10-10)

Feb. 9 Felsberg Invitational at Miami, Fla., vs. Stony Brook, L 7-5; **9** Felsberg Invitational at Miami, Fla., vs. FIU, W 6-1; **9** Felsberg Invitational at Miami, Fla., vs. Southeast Missouri State, W 13-0 (5 innings); **10** Felsberg Invitational at Miami, Fla., vs. Stony Brook, W 9-0 (6 innings); **11** Felsberg Invitational at Miami, Fla., vs. FIU, W 7-5; **16** The Spring Games at Leesburg, Fla., vs. Coastal Carolina, W 6-0; **16** The Spring Games at Leesburg, Fla., vs. UC Riverside, W 7-2; **23** Sun Devil Classic at Tempe, Ariz., vs. Texas State, L 6-1; **23** Sun Devil Classic at Tempe, Ariz., vs. Arizona State, L 12-10 (10 innings); **24** Sun Devil Classic at Phoenix, Ariz., vs. New Mexico State, W 10-0 (5 innings); **24** Sun Devil Classic at Phoenix, Ariz., vs. Grand Canton, L 2-1 (8 innings); **25** Sun Devil Classic at Phoenix, Ariz., vs. Idaho State, W 5-2.

March 8 Tennessee Invitational at Knoxville, Tenn., vs. Missouri State, W 6-2; **8** Tennessee Invitational at Knoxville, Tenn., vs. Missouri State, W 6-2; **9** Tennessee Invitational at Knoxville, Tenn., vs. Tennessee, L 5-0; **10** Tennessee Invitational at Knoxville, Tenn., vs. Tennessee, L 11-0 (5 innings); **10** Tennessee Invitational at Knoxville, Tenn., vs. South Dakota, W 5-3; **12** at Belmont, W 8-0 (5 innings); **13** at Austin Peay, W 7-5 (8 innings); **14** John Cropp Classic at Lexington, Ky., vs. South Dakota State, W 10-8; **15** John Cropp Classic at Lexington, Ky., vs. Columbia, W 9-0 (5 innings); **16** John Cropp Classic at Lexington, Ky., vs. South Dakota State, L 7-3; **16** John Cropp Classic at Lexington, Ky., vs. Kentucky, L 9-4; **17** John Cropp Classic at Lexington, Ky., vs. Kentucky, W 12-6; **22** at Rutgers, L 6-1; **22** at Rutgers, W 11-9 (9 innings); **24** at Rutgers, L 8-6; **27** DAYTON, W 6-2; **29** NORTHWESTERN, L 10-0; **30** NORTHWESTERN, L 9-7; **29** NORTHWESTERN, W 6-0.

April 2 PENN STATE, postponed; **5** at Minnesota, L 9-1 (5 innings); **6** at Minnesota, L 14-6 (6 innings); **6** at Minnesota, L 12-11; **10** OHIO, W 8-0 (5 innings); **12** at Wisconsin, L 8-4; **13** at Wisconsin, L 10-5; **14** at Wisconsin, W 9-5; **16** PENN STATE, W 16-8 (6 innings); **16** PENN STATE, W 2-1; **17** PITTSBURGH, W 3-2; **19** MARYLAND, W 4-0; **20** MARYLAND, W 6-3; **21** MARYLAND, W 3-2; **26** ILLINOIS, W 3-1; **27** ILLINOIS, W 13-5 (5 innings); **28** ILLINOIS, L 11-6.

May 3-5 at Michigan; **8-11** Big Ten tournament.

MEN'S TENNIS (30-1)

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. 21 Eastern Illinois, W 7-0; Xavier, W 7-0; **24** Northern Kentucky, W 4-0; Toledo, W 7-0; **27** VANDERBILT, W 4-0; **28** BOISE STATE, W 4-0.

Feb. 2 VIRGINIA, W 7-0; **4** WAKE FOREST W 6-1; **11** SOUTH CAROLINA, W 6-1; **16** National Team Indoor Championship at New York, N.Y., vs. Alabama, W 4-2; **17** National Team Indoor Championship at New York, N.Y., vs. Harvard, W 4-1; **18** National Team Indoor Championship at New York, N.Y., vs. Virginia, W 4-0; **19** National Team Indoor Championship at New York, N.Y., vs. TCU, W 4-3; **24** Notre Dame, W 7-0; **28** Baylor, W 4-1.

March 6 Illinois, W 4-1; **10** Texas, L 5-2; **13** Texas A&M, W 6-1; **17** Michigan, W 4-0; **22** NORTHWESTERN, W 4-0; **24** ILLINOIS, W 4-1; **29** Purdue, W 4-0; **31** Indiana, W 7-0.

April 5 Penn State, W 7-0; **13** MICHIGAN STATE, W 6-1; **14** MICHIGAN, W 4-0; **19** Nebraska, W 6-1; **21** Wisconsin, W 7-0; **26** Big Ten tournament vs. Penn State, W 4-0; **27** Big Ten tournament vs. Nebraska, W 4-1; **28** Big Ten tournament vs. Michigan, W 4-1.

May 3-5 NCAA Regional; **10-11** NCAA Super Regional; **16-19** NCAA Championship; **20-26** NCAA Singles & Doubles Championships.



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Quarterback Run To Be Pivotal Under Kelly

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State's season opener against Akron on Aug. 31 will mark 1,328 days since quarterback Justin Fields last played for the Buckeyes. It will also represent 1,328 days since Ohio State last had a true running threat under center, and one that the coaching staff felt comfortable utilizing as a significant part of the game plan.

That reality is one that head coach Ryan Day has clearly become uncomfortable with. Over the last three seasons – two quarterbacked by C.J. Stroud and one by Kyle McCord – the starting quarterbacks have combined to rush 111 times and gain 346 yards, though the net yards (just 23) are nearly a nonfactor when accounting for 42 sacks given up. And just once has an Ohio State quarterback reached the end zone in the last three seasons, with Devin Brown doing so once in a specialized package last year against Purdue.

The days of Ohio State taking away defenders by forcing them to respect a running quarterback like Fields, J.T. Barrett, Braxton Miller or Terrelle Pryor are long gone – or at least they have been. Day admitted earlier this spring that the lack of a running quarterback has hurt Ohio State, especially in the biggest moments of the season.

“One of the things we’ve got to do to win the last game of the year is run the football,” Day said on Feb. 7. “And in order to do that, you want to have somebody who at least needs to be accounted for in the run game. If the other defense says ‘Well, he’s not a threat at all to run,’ that certainly changes the angles, the numbers, the leverage, all the above.”

Ohio State made two significant moves toward rectifying the situation this offseason. The first came on Jan. 4, when former Kansas State quarterback Will Howard announced he was transferring to the Buckeyes for his final season of college football.

“He has the ability to throw the football,” Day said of Howard. “When he needs to run, he can run. But he’s big. You see the size of him when he gets up on you. He’s a big guy. So there’s a few things there that we can really grab onto.”

In addition to throwing for 5,786 yards and 48 touchdowns with the Wildcats, he also carried the ball 226 times for 921 yards and 19 touchdowns, averaging 4.1 yards per carry.

“We’ve talked about it, and I know that when we need to run the quarterback, I’m going to run the ball,” Howard said. “And I mean, if we need to run the quarterback 16 times a game, I’ll do it. I’m one of those people that – I don’t care. I just want to freaking go win. At the end of the day, I don’t care.”

In addition to Howard, all of Ohio State’s quarterbacks on the roster – including Brown, redshirt freshman Lincoln Kienholz and freshmen Air Noland and Julian Sayin – have shown the ability to run, either at the collegiate or high school level. It is part of a concerted effort to make sure that each of Ohio State’s signal callers are able to take off.

“That was one I wanted to make sure we had,” Day said. “When you look at the guys



SONNY BROCKWAY

OUT OF POCKET – Ohio State offensive coordinator Chip Kelly could bring a new look to the Buckeyes’ offense this year. His previous stops in college and in the NFL have featured him utilizing his quarterbacks’ legs.

we have on our roster right now, they all have the ability to do that. We started with that. Then, from there, how do they throw the football? What’s their size? What’s their intelligence? All those things. We wanted to make sure there was enough of it. He doesn’t need to be running around doing all kinds of running with the ball but needs to at least be accounted for by the defense.”

But having quarterbacks who can run is no use if a coach is not prepared to use them. Enter the second significant move for Ohio State this offseason, as it announced on Feb. 9 that it had hired former UCLA head coach Chip Kelly as Day’s new offensive coordinator.

“(The quarterback run is) another weapon,” Kelly said on April 13. “It helps keep defenses honest. If your defensive end is going to continue to bend (inside), your quarterback pulls it and he’s on the edge and he’s gaining first downs, then the defensive end has to stay outside and defend the quarterback. Then we can run the ball up and hand the ball off.”

Kelly has come by that philosophy honestly.

He led a renowned rushing attack at New Hampshire and carried it to the next

and 39 touchdowns during Thomas’ two seasons as the starting quarterback.

Running quarterbacks have also been used in his more recent stops, with Kelly utilizing Michael Vick at quarterback for the Philadelphia Eagles in 2013 (306 yards, two touchdowns in six starts) and Dorian Thompson-Robinson at UCLA, where he threw for 10,710 yards and rushed for 1,826 more (with 28 touchdowns) from 2018-22, both accounting for sacks taken.

All of that is to say that Kelly brings with him a certain pedigree when it comes to running quarterbacks, and that was evident in his first outing with the Buckeyes during their spring game on April 13. Ohio State’s scholarship quarterbacks took off 18 times – which would represent the most carries by the Buckeyes’ signal callers since Fields took off 21 times for 68 yards in a 28-17 win against Penn State on Nov. 23, 2019 – and gained 90 yards, though six sacks created a net gain of just 46 yards, led by Noland with 42 yards on five carries.

“I think a running quarterback causes problems for a defense,” Kelly said after the game. “When plays break down, it’s the unscheduled plays.”

That is not to say that the spring game is indicative of a complete turnaround for Ohio State. While Kelly’s quarterbacks at his past stops routinely had double-digit carries in most games, he said that won’t be the case at Ohio State, which also has to find the carries to utilize the menacing combination of TreVeyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins.

“You’re not going to see us, 20 times a game, we’re running the quarterback,” Kelly said. “There are people that run offensive styles (like that) and are really successful with it, but with this group we have right now, that’s not our goal.”

“Now, (all the quarterbacks) can hurt you with their feet. Will did it when he was at Kansas State. Devin took off a couple times today, Air took off a couple times today. Lincoln’s a really, really good athlete. Julian can run, but we’re not calling designed quarterback runs here.”

But those handful of runs per game – whether the starting quarterback is limited to five scrambles or takes off 15 times – will still be a factor for the Buckeyes. It doesn’t just keep defenses honest by forcing them to keep an eye on the quarterback, but having a quarterback who can get the extra yard – whether on a designed play or not – is significant given Ohio State’s struggles in short yardage in recent seasons.

Even with the increased emphasis on quarterback runs, though, Kelly acknowledged that who is ultimately under center for Ohio State – whether that’s Howard, Brown or any of the other three scholarship quarterbacks – will be decided by their ability to pass the ball rather than tuck and run. And whatever advantage they can provide on the ground, the Buckeyes will be happy to have it after going far too long without a significant rushing threat under center.

“We are always looking for quarterbacks that have the ability to run,” Kelly said. “We’re not looking for running backs that can throw.”

Ohio State Recognizes 811 Scholar-Athletes

By **BRADEN MOLES**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State recognized 811 student-athletes with Scholar-Athlete Awards at the Ohio State Scholar-Athlete Awards Ceremony on April 15 at the Schottenstein Center. Those awards recognize Buckeyes who maintained a 3.0 grade-point average or higher for the 2023-24 academic year. Ohio State recognized 765 such athletes last year.

The university also recognized winners of the Big Ten Medal of Honor, with the awards going to Amy Fulmer of the women's swimming program and Lyle Yost of the men's diving program. The honor is given to an outstanding male and female senior student-athlete on each Big Ten campus who has "attained the greatest proficiency in athletics and scholastic work."

Other finalists included Katelyn Abeln (pistol), Regan Alexander (lacrosse), Leanne Bough (field hockey), Irina Cantos Siemers (tennis), Jennifer Gardiner (ice hockey) and Sam Hackenbracht (softball) for the women and Donovan Hewitt (gymnastics) and Robert Cash (tennis) for the men.

The softball program was recognized for having the most improved large-team grade-point average, while men's basketball had the most improved grade-point average among smaller teams. The top grade-point averages were held by women's ice hockey for large rosters and synchronized swimming for small rosters.

The rowing team led with 75 scholar-athletes, followed by football with 62, men's lacrosse with 49, women's lacrosse with 39, baseball with 34, field hockey with 29, women's swimming with 28 and cheer, men's swimming and women's track all with 26 student-athletes honored. The complete list is included below.

Baseball — Landon Beidelschies, business; Zachary Brown, sport coaching, rec and phys ed; Clay Burdette, exploration; Isaac Cadena, criminol-

ogy & criminal justice; William Carpenter, child and youth studies; Mason Eckelman, exercise science education; Justin Eckhardt, environmental assessment; Andrew Edrington, sport industry; Nolan Farley, finance; Zachary Fjelstad, business; Zachary Freeman, consumer and family financial services; Nicolas Giamarusti, consumer and family financial services; Matthew Graveline, sport industry; William Henson, communication; Jaylen Jones, sport industry; Logan Jones, sport industry; Henry Kaczmar, communication; Isaiah Leeth, marketing; Joseph Mershon, sports coaching; Jake Michalak, international studies; Ryan Miller, logistics management; Jacob Morin, kinesiology; Mitchell Okuley, mechanical engineering; Max Palinski, marketing; Alonzo Paul, health sciences; Christian Pownall, finance; Colin Purcell, sport industry; CJ Richard, communication; Hunter Rosson, sport industry; Mason Sawyer, sport industry; Ben Schechterman, exercise science education; Hunter Shaw, sport industry; Josh Stevenson, sport industry; Noah Williamson, sport industry.

Men's Basketball — Jamison Battle, sports coaching; Colby Baumann, sport industry; Dale Bonner, sports coaching; Kalen Etzler, finance; Bowen Hardman, sport industry; Robert Mahaffey, management & industry exploring; Eberechukwu Okpara, economics — business; Devin Royal, sport industry; Bruce Thornton, sport industry.

Women's Basketball — Deayonna Cambridge, political science; Diana Collins, biomedical engineering; Madison Greene, kinesiology; Rikki Harris, sports coaching; Rebeka Mikulasikova, consumer science; Jacy Sheldon, public management; Emma Shumate, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Celeste Taylor, sports coaching; Taylor Thierry, sport industry; Karla Vres, Master in the Study of Law.

Cheer — William Bertsch, human development & family science; Isabel Crouch, communication; Tristan Cruz, neuroscience; Rylie Davis, health sciences; Bella Eldredge, marketing; Garrett Fogel, industrial and systems engineering; Brendan Gass, computer science & engineering; William Glover, communication; Ocean Henthorn, communication; Marley Hosier, visual communication design; Karsyn Reader, health sciences; Maria Law, health sciences; Cali Mitchey, management & industry exploring; Michael Osinski, finance; Kyle Rodriguez, construction systems management; Emily Schaaf, biomedical engineering; Jack Seitz, aviation; Bella Skoog, biomedical engineering; Mikayla Smith, marketing; Claire Snyder, visual communication design; Joshua Sobecks, biochemistry; Rachel Sorge, exercise science; Noah Subasic, aerospace engineering; Avery Thielman, industrial design; Will Young, construction systems management; Madison Yuzwa, pharmaceutical sciences.

Men's Cross Country — Colby Adams, marketing; Jack Agnew, exercise science education; Kevin Agnew, electrical and computer engineering; Zachary Beneteau, biology; Sean Carney, economics — business; Giovanni Copploe, fashion and retail studies; John Cuozzo, mechanical engineering; Alex Dediu, economics — business; Keegan Freyhof, electrical and computer engineering; Evan Hughes, economics; Zubin Jha, computer science & engineering; Kaleb Martin, mechanical engineering; William McGraw, industrial and systems engineering; William Shaughnessy, exercise science education; Ivan Slyepkan, health sciences; Keegan Souhan, chemical engineering.

Women's Cross Country — Ann Allen, operations management; Emma Bucher, primary education; Samantha Coleman, science & mathematics education; Chloe Dawson, environmental science; Audrey DeSantis, exercise science; Lillian Eckels, criminology & criminal justice; Adeline Engel, health sciences; Amelia Figler, history; Teodora Iovi, biochemistry; Ana Karmol, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Andrea Kuhn, statistics; Zoe Lehman, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Carina Napoleon, speech and hearing science; Gianni Napoleon, women's, gender & sexuality studies; Sydney Paul, exercise science education; Mia Robillard, mechanical engineering; Daniella Santos, social work; Morgan Schmitt, economics — business; Lindsay Stull, human nutrition; Dillon Sweetman, health sciences; Akemi Von Scherr, human resources.

Dance — Nina Andrianos, sport industry; Macie Blacklidge, exercise science; Marley Blanchard, communication; Brenna Bocik, exercise science; Josie Cahall, communication; Reagan Ceglie, marketing; Isabelle Davis, exercise science education; Bennet EspindaBanick, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Berlynn Gonzalez, exercise science education; Emma Hellenkamp, exploration; Kara Hurst, communication; Jenna Kosco, human

development & family science; Hailey Meyers, sport industry; Diana Natalicchio, psychology; Jesslene O'Loughlin, neuroscience; Julia Paslawski, marketing; Alina Serafin, health sciences; Olivia Taylor, business; Elizabeth Wagner, communication; Lauren Wainz, health professions exploration; Molly Youngblood, finance.

Men's Diving — Clayton Chaplin, psychology; Samuel Flory, computer science & engineering; Jack Matthews, information systems; Mohamed Noaman, applied economics; Tyler Read, computer & information science (pre); Lyle Yost, education: teaching & learning.

Women's Diving — Jane Boyle, biomedical informatics; Lena Hentschel, journalism; Michelle Mazara, exploration; Ciara McGing, health sciences; Blake Skilken, marketing.

Men's Fencing — Ilya Vadimovich Ayupov, psychology; Hank Bauer, environmental engineering; Matthew Buelau, psychology; Nathan Cheng, economics; Luca Fioretto, Specialized Master Bus-Fin; Samuel Freedman, sport industry; Nowell Gibson, computer science & engineering; Vincent Haney, neuroscience; Mitchell Huth, management & industry exploring; Clark Kokenge, political science; Anitya Kumar, computer science & engineering; Wesley Lee, marketing; Wangjie Li, physics; Kelly Liu, marketing; Lorenzo Mion, computer science & engineering; Advait Prasanna, computer science & engineering (pre); Jack Price, information systems; Samuel Rightler, construction systems management; Maxwell Rodney, communication; Paul Veltrup, psychology; Justin Vogler, computer science & engineering; Miles Weiss, environment, economy, development & sustainability.

Women's Fencing — Maria Alexe, psychology; Chandini Antal, accounting; Sydney Brush, political science; Karina Dyer, political science; Yun-Cian Fan, data analytics (pre); Kelly Feng, international studies; Miranda Freedman, psychology; Claire Galavotti, psychology; Mikaela Guillen, economics — business; Anna Heiser, finance; Katherine Larimer, English; Alina Lee, finance; Yeva Mazur, psychology; Raiyan Moradi-Bidhendi, psychology; Daria Myroniuk, psychology; Eleonore Perrier, finance; Kristen Ruscitelli, evolution and ecology; Cara Santos, finance; Zoe Shay-Tannas, industrial design; Jewella Smith, materials science and engineering; Gabriela Viveros Mendoza, marketing; Lucy Whittemore, sport industry; Susan Wiggers, nursing; Wenjun Zhou, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science.

Field Hockey — Zella Bailey, sport industry; Emily Barker, health sciences; Holland Bell, international studies; Brenna Bough, health sciences; Leanne Bough, Specialized Master Bus-Bus Ana; Hallie Brost, health sciences; Jessica Courtright, business; Abby Danson, construction systems management; Kelly Davis, business; Reagan Eickhoff, human resources; Katherine Fichtner, criminology & criminal justice; Ellen Ford, international business; Cameryn Forgash, health sciences; Ali Gordon, communication; Riley Hudson, political science; Loryn Jordon, sport industry; Hanna Killeen, communication; Anne Krebs, biology; Erin Little, biology; Nina Osherow, exploration; Sarah Richards, health sciences; Julie Rodijk, kinesiology; Camryn Standish, business; Lilly Sweeney, health sciences; Claudia Thomas, marketing; Olivia Wallace, communication; Makenna Webster, communication; Olivia Zettervall, communication; Jenna Zunic, human development & family science.

Football — David Adolph, business; Jayden Bonsu, business; Devin Brown, finance; Quinton Burke, Zoology; JaHad Carter, human development & family science; Caden Davis, marketing; Alec DelSignore, marketing; Emeka Egbuka, marketing; John Ferlmann, communication; Tristan Gebbia, sports coaching; Nigel Glover, finance; Patrick Gurd, health sciences; Marvin Harrison, sport industry; Samuel Hart, logistics management; Malik Hartford, marketing; Dallon Hayden, communication; TreVeyon Henderson, sport industry; Carson Hinzman, sport industry; Aimuamwosa Igbinosun, psychology; Brandon Inniss, sport industry; Donovan Jackson, sport industry; Jakob James, sport industry; Collin Johnson, marketing; Xavier Johnson, translational data analytics; Hero Kanu, hospitality management; Lincoln Kienholz, real estate and urban analysis; Cameron Kittle, construction systems management; Parker Lewis, human development & family science; Maxwell Lomonico, human development & family science; Mason Maggs, accounting; Casey Magyar, mathematics; Tywone Malone, human development & family science; Kayden McDonald, communication; Joseph McGuire, sport industry; Jaden McKenzie, sports coaching, rec and phys ed; Zen Michalski, sport industry; Joshua Mickens, construction systems management; Jace Middleton, human

development & family science; Jesse Mirco, sports coaching; William Mitchell, finance; Luke Montgomery, sport industry; Jason Moore, journalism; Jalen Pace, sport industry; Gabe Powers, sport industry; Bryce Prater, construction systems management; Chad Ray, health sciences; Arvell Reese, business; Ryan Rudzinski, finance; Jack Sawyer, sport industry; Brennen Schramm, business; Austin Siereveld, sport industry; Josh Simmons, human development & family science; Cody Simon, human development & family science; Calvin Simpson-Hunt, criminology & criminal justice; Austin Snyder, sport industry; Reis Stocksdale, sport industry; Alexander Styles, business; Lorenzo Styles, consumer and family financial services; Carnell Tate, real estate and urban analysis; Jelani Thurman, sport industry; Kourt Williams, journalism; Toby Wilson, sport industry.

Men's Golf — Jackson Chandler, kinesiology; Tyler Groomes, finance; Maxwell Moldovan, marketing; Andrew Mulcahy, finance; Christopher Reed, sport industry; Patrick Schmuckering, Specialized Master Bus-Fin; Neal Shipley, public management; Jacob Tarkany, finance; Adam Wallin, consumer and family financial services; Joseph Wilson, finance.

Women's Golf — Kavya Ajarapu, biology; Jillian Bourdage, aviation management; Faith Choi, sport industry; Kary Hollenbaugh, business; Emily Hummer, accounting; Kailie Vongsaga, sport industry.

Men's Gymnastics — Drake Andrews, exercise science education; Arthur Ashton, biochemistry; Christian Bartolini, psychology; Chase Davenport-Mills, aviation; Jacob Harmon, exercise science; Kazuki Hayashi, electrical and computer engineering; Donovan Hewitt, law; Tomohiro Kawada, air transportation; Jakob Murray, electrical and computer engineering; Kameron Nelson, communication; Jadon Roberson, marketing; Tyler Rockwood, finance; Zachary Snyder, real estate and urban analysis; Caden Spencer, sport industry; Parker Thackston, statistics.

Women's Gymnastics — Samara Buchanan, biomedical engineering; Mary Green, health sciences; Kaitlyn Grimes, sport industry; Alexis Hankins, exercise science; Ella Hodges, Master of accounting; Courtney McCann, biology; Kaylyn Mintz, criminology & criminal justice; Emma Pritchard, communication; Maisyn Rader, finance; Nicole Riccardi, finance; Tory Vetter, health sciences; Grace Walker, exploration; Joselyn Wurga, fashion and retail studies; Sidney Washington, biology.

Men's Ice Hockey — Ronald Brickey, consumer and family financial services; Caden Brown, consumer and family financial services; Davis Burnside, sport industry; Damien Carfagna, sport industry; Matthew Cassidy, Specialized Master Bus-Bus Ana; Samuel Deckhut, finance; Jake Dunlap, communication; Joseph Dunlap, economics; Kristoffer Eberly, finance; Michael Gildon, sports coaching; Ryan Gordon, exploration; Patrick Guzzo, economics; Reilly Herbst, marketing; Riley Hughes, diversity, equity & inclusion; Brent Johnson, consumer and family financial services; Mason Klee, Specialized Master Bus-Bus Ana; John Larkin, accounting; Nathan McBrayer, finance; Dalton Messina, diversity, equity & inclusion; William Smith, communication; Theo Wallberg, economics — business; Thomas Weis, economics.

Women's Ice Hockey — Jocelyn Amos, health sciences; Cayla Barnes, kinesiology; Jordan Baxter, exercise science education; Lauren Bernard, civil engineering; Hannah Bilka, kinesiology; Riley Brengman, kinesiology; Jenna Buglioni, kinesiology; Joy Dunne, exploration; Delaney Fleming, health sciences; Jennifer Gardiner, kinesiology; Hadley Hartmetz, sports coaching; McKenzie Hauswirth, bioethics; Kelsey King, kinesiology; Raygan Kirk, environmental science; Quinn Kuntz, kinesiology; Stephanie Markowski, kinesiology; Sloane Matthews, biomedical engineering; Olivia Mobley, consumer and family financial services; Emma Peschel, health sciences; Lexington Secreto, human development & family science; Amanda Thiele, criminology & criminal justice; Kiara Zanon, sport industry.

Men's Lacrosse — Ari Allen, communication; Zack Antoniou, sport industry; Gavin Begonia, finance; Henry Blake, finance; Aiden Bodonyi, psychology; Dante Bowen, marketing; Danny Brady, diversity, equity & inclusion; Cullen Brown, finance; Kurt Bruun, food, agricultural and biological engineering; Tommy Burke, Specialized Master Bus-Fin; Sam Burns, finance; Matt Caputo, finance; Connor Cmiel, finance; Jonny Cool, management & industry exploring; Trent DiCicco, mechanical engineering; Alex Dixon, business; Blake Eiland, finance; Eli Fisher, diversity, equity & inclusion; Taji Flynn, marketing; Kyle Foster, finance; Caleb Fyock, exploration; Brett Gladstone, diversity, equity & inclusion; Thomas Greenblatt, healthcare leadership & innovation; Garrett Haas, finance; Zach Hepworth, sport indus-



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try; Marcus Hudgins, physics; Tate Jones, communication; Aidan Kenley, construction systems management; Coleman Kraske, communication; Greg Langermeier, finance; Kyle Lewis, diversity, equity & inclusion; Griffin Liedel, logistics management; Johnny Maccarone, sport industry; Dillon Magee, real estate and urban analysis; Alex Marinier, finance; Gannon Matthews, sport industry; Ben Mayer, logistics management; Ellis McDonald, marketing; Jack McKenna, sport industry; Noah Mendoza, information systems; Matt Mercer, finance; Caden Minniti, science & technology exploration; Mitchell Sandberg, health sciences; Ed Shean, marketing; Justin Sherrer, healthcare leadership & innovation; Jake Snyder, public management; Bobby Van Buren, sport industry; Jackson Walsh, business; Keaton Zavit, sport industry.

Women's Lacrosse - Regan Alexander, finance; Riley Alexander, marketing; Brynn Ammerman, health sciences; Madeline Barhorst, communication; Katie Chisholm, fashion and retail studies; Gabriella Cleveland, sport industry; Isabella Cleveland, economics; Zoe Coleman, marketing; Chelsea Debevec, primary education; Mackenzie Fitzgerald, political science; Darrien Furiness, exploration; Antoinette Hargraves, sport industry; Delaney Harlan, marketing; Sarah Johnson, diversity, equity & inclusion; Kathleen Kauchek, exploration; Amani Kimball-McKavish, marketing; Sarah Klein, healthcare leadership & innovation; Alexa Kupka, communication; Jamie Lasda, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Margaret Lawler, communication; Emily Magalotti, sport industry; Erin O'Neil, finance; Sophia Patton, sport industry; Kiana Perez, pharmaceutical sciences; Casey Roberts, sport industry; Whitney Robinson, finance; Audrey Rudolph, communication; Leah Sax, health sciences; Audrey Schoemer, business; Lilli Sherman, sport industry; Gracie Shoup, marketing; Maeve Simonds, health sciences; Annika Spoor, finance; Kampbell Stone, health sciences; Kate Tyack, marketing; Brooke Vinson, public management, leadership & policy; Stella Wineman, international studies; Ella Wright, marketing; Katherine Zanelli, sport industry.

Pistol - Katelyn Abeln, public health (MPH) - STEM; Panagiota Charalampous, sport industry; Ada Korkhin, biochemistry; Abbie Leverett, dental hygiene; Henry Leverett, international studies; Jack Leverett, computer & information science; Leah Mueller, biology; Riya Salian, computer science & engineering (pre).

Rifle - Philip Becker, aerospace engineering; John Hamilton, air transportation; Tyler Hanson, communication; Elizabeth Hollowell, communication; Eva Horgan, marketing; Derek Keiser, finance; Viktor Kiss, international studies; Frank Steyn, public health (MPH) - STEM; Lillian Warren, public management, leadership & policy; Nathan Wehrlein, hospitality management.

Rowing - Hannah Akel, environmental science; Ceylan Algan, mechanical engineering; Annie Ayers, exploration; Taylor Benedict, medical anthropology; Abigail Bluhm, economics - business; Amelia Boes, integrated language arts/English education; Giorgia Borriello, consumer and family financial services; Eloise Brindle, anthropological sciences; Eliana Bujwalo-Nowak, mechanical engineering; Natalie Chourova, kinesiology; Olivia Clotten, international business; Emma Cuzzocrea, marketing; Alessandra Flevares, psychology; Jacinda Floyd, international business; Ellen Flynn, environmental science; Meryl Freiman, biomedical engineering; Emilia Fritz, industrial and systems engineering; Alexandra Gluntz, mechanical engineering; Emma Hall, finance; Ella Harrison, biology; Courtney Higgins, health sciences; Anna Hodge, marketing; Leandra Hogrefe, physics; Claire Holtyn, marketing; Isabelle Huebener, sport industry; Madalena Hughes, political science; Anna Ingram, speech and hearing science; Sierra Jones, arts and sciences-BA-undecided; Ula Jonusaite, biology; Kathryn Kastelic, human nutrition; Kira Katterle, biomedical engineering; Emily Koziol, speech and hearing science; Alana Kramer, health sciences; Alexandra Kushnir, environmental science; Natalie Larivey, biology; Emma Leavens, sports coaching; Erika Linton, mechanical engineering; Hannah Locke, environmental engineering; Constance Loring, biology; Mara Mangiola, marketing; Rylie McCall, criminology & criminal justice; Regan McElwee, political science; Morgan Miller, sport industry; Audrey Murphy, health sciences; Cara Nel, physics; Megan O'Connor, public management, leadership & policy; Rebeca Okhuyesen, marketing; Mary Papova, electrical and computer engineering; Morgan Perce, exercise science; Darby Pethrick, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Svea Pichner, operations management; Natalie Rarick, Earth sciences; Giovanna Robson, finance; Iman Sattar, neuroscience; Gabrielle Schmidt, psychology; Isabella Schmitt, criminology & criminal justice; Katherine Scott, psychology; Lucy Scott, marketing; Amelie Sens, primary education; Chloe Sharp, agribusiness and applied economics;

Alexis Sherman, pharmaceutical sciences; Emma Shuck, exploration; Jocelyn Spanbauer, psychology; Lydia Stute, sport industry; Halen Swickard, food business management; Abigail Thomas, psychology; Tess Thompson, kinesiology; Reagan Toopes, health sciences; Phoebe Underhill-Reed, physics; Cambelle Uveges, animal sciences; Wanjiku Watene, animal sciences; Caroline Williams, chemical engineering; Carlotta Wolff, fashion and retail studies; Avery Wynn, environmental engineering; Shannon Xu, psychology.

Men's Soccer - Mike Adedokun, sport industry; Ashton Bilow, primary education; Tanner Creech, finance; Reed Davis, sport management; Nathan Demian, computer & information science; Connor DesRoches, finance; Brayden Durbin, sport industry; Thomas Gilej, economics; Sigurdur Magnusson, industrial and systems engineering; Jacob Maison-neuve, aerospace engineering; Patrick McLaughlin, sport industry; Dyland Onwona-Agyeman, exercise science; Luciano Pechota, finance; Andre Roberts, business; Sean Ryan, accounting; Anthony Samways, psychology; RJ Stoller, finance; Owen Sullivan, accounting; Peter Van Euwen, finance; Deylen Vellios, psychology; Tommaso Villa, economics; Donny Williams, marketing; David Wrona, diversity, equity & inclusion.

Women's Soccer - Tatum Adamson, biology; Christin Baumbick, health sciences; Ava Bramblett, health sciences; Sydney Browning, human nutrition; Lillian Danner, health sciences; Kailyn Dudukovich, actuarial science; Caitlin Foley, communication; Mirann Gacioc, sport industry; Natalie Garcia, marketing; Nina LeFlore, public management, leadership & policy; Sophia Louder, biology; Dakota Lyons, biology; Berkley Mape, management & industry exploration; Mai Ly Marella, environmental engineering; Peyton McNamara, international business; Kine Myhrer Floetre, human development & family science; Maya Naimoli, sport industry; Molly Pritchard, sport industry; Amanda Schlueter, finance; Emma Sears, health sciences; Sydney Walters, marketing; Kira Watase, mathematics.

Softball - Hannah Bryan, health sciences; McKenzie Bump, sport industry; Hannah Church, sport industry; Tegan Cortelletti, sports coaching; Taylor Cruse, exploration; Kirsten Epele, health sciences; Kaitlyn Farley, human development & family science; Samantha Hackenbracht, sports coaching; Taylor Heckman, human development & family science; Kennedy Kay, human development & family science; Kamryn Kortokrax, communication; Lottie Landmesser, marketing; Hailey Lang, marketing; Skylar Limon, exploration; Julia Miller, health sciences; Reagan Milliken, human development & family science; Destinee Noury, communication; Alexis Paulsen, health professions exploration; Cadyn Ruffer, real estate and urban analysis; Allison Smith, biomedical engineering; Melina Wilkison, sport industry.

Spirit - Nathan Chaykowski, environment, economy, development & sustainability; Emily Hayward, biomedical engineering; William Moddeman, public management, leadership & policy; Jeffrey Moody, exercise science education; Kurt Steelman, mechanical engineering; Ryan Vespi, exercise science; Tyler Wisman, communication.

Men's Swimming - Eric Albers, computer & information science (pre); Daniel Baltes, atmospheric sciences; William Bansberg, exercise science; Joshua Bedford, finance; Evan Blazer, business; Samuel Campbell, finance; Charles Clark, sport industry; Henry Dvorak, political science; Mason Edmund, finance; Caleb Ellis, sport industry; William Fentress, biology; Servaas Fick, finance; Juan Garcia Ruiz, sport industry; Charles Gustafson, computer & information science; Karl Helmuth, actuarial science; Nathan Holtz, astronomy and astrophysics; Jean-Pierre Khouzam, exercise science; Peter Krusinski, finance; Rylan McDaniel, biology; Mario McDonald, exercise science; Nolan Miller, agricultural systems management; Tomas Navikonis, geographic information sciences; Christopher Paxton, aerospace engineering; William Regan, sports coaching, rec and phys ed; John Satterfield, finance; Elijah Stoll, exploration.

Women's Swimming - Hannah Bach, public health; Lauren Clippard, finance; Reese Dehen, biology; Paige Delma, exercise science education; Mackenzie DeWitt, speech and hearing science; Jessica Eden, health sciences; Allison Fenska, exercise science; Bella Fisco, exercise science education; Amy Fulmer, clinical research; Nyah Funderburke, communication; Maya Geringer, environmental policy & decision making; Liberty Gilbert, political science; Alyssa Graves, communication; Paige Hall, biology; Tristan Harrison, communication; Teresa Ivan, health sciences; Morgan Kraus, human nutrition; Anne Krusinski, human nutrition; Mia Lachey, finance; Lucy Malys, speech and hearing science; Krista Marlin, respiratory therapy; Mairin O'Brien, health sciences; Josephine Panitz, public management; Mia Rankin, philosophy; Catherine Russo, neuroscience; Kyra Sommerstad, health sciences; Gwenyth Woodbury,

biology; Katherine Zenick, neuroscience.

Synchronized Swimming - Emily Armstrong, kinesiology; Diana Calixto, management & industry exploring; Victoria Carlson, landscape architecture; Marian Catahan, health sciences; Rikki Evans, international studies; Charlotte Gray, biochemistry; Hannah Heffernan, communication; Daniella Molano Arango, biology; Gabriella Molano Arango, biology; Lilly Ortiz, biomedical engineering; Angelie Roger, biochemistry; Madison Romney, marketing; Venice Shoda, health sciences; Emma Spott, animal sciences; Taylor Sullivan, sport industry; Caroline Walsh, marketing.

Men's Tennis - Jack Anthop, economics; Alexander Bernard, sport industry; Brandon Carpico, air transportation; Robert Cash, chemistry; Alexander Fuchs, sport industry; Bryce Nakashima, business; James Tracy, finance; Reece Yakubov, biology.

Women's Tennis - Maddie Atway, finance; Megan Basil, political science; Shelly Bereznyak, accounting; Akanksha Bhan, Specialized Master Bus-Fin; Irina Cantos Siemers, kinesiology; Alessia Cau, biochemistry; Luciana Perry, exercise science education; Sydney Ratliff, communication; Danielle Schoenly, human resources; Audrey Spencer, exploration.

Men's Track - Brian Bates, moving image production; Nicholas Biega, exercise science education; Dylan Chittum, business; Cooper Citro, finance; Daniel Drellishak, finance; Jaxson Eckert, finance; Daniel Edwards, finance; Eli Hitzhusen, construction systems management; Nazzio John, human development & family science; Evan Johnson, real estate and urban analysis; Sean Kaminski, finance; Brian Kellon, biochemistry; Isaac Lefeld, mechanical engineering; Mason Louis, exercise science education; Lawson Maag, sport industry; Armani Modeste, economics; Christian Seibert, marketing; Nathaniel Streby, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Nathaniel Tamminga, physics; Hayden Tobias, chemistry; Leo Uusimaki, electrical and computer engineering; Anthony Wilks, exercise science education; Reign Winston, film studies.

Women's Track - Sophie Bidwell, primary education; Morgan Bridges, international business; Sydney Bryant, business; Nya Bussey, psychology; Avery Clark, information systems; Fatouma Conde, public health; Columba Effiong, real estate and ur-

ban analysis; Morgan Fijalkowski, health sciences; Sophia Fong, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Nicole Grimes, environmental engineering; Sydney Khosla, psychology; Abigail Kuhn, finance; Anne Moses, industrial and systems engineering; Zamesha Myle, sport industry; Amara Okpalaoka, statistics; Samantha Potts, exercise science education; Olivia Powell, biochemistry; Chanler Robinson, animal sciences; Makenzie Shannon, air transportation; Atinuke Shittu, immunology and micro pathogen; Noa Smith, communication; Janela Spencer, information systems; Lacey Stringer, psychology; Kayla Watson, finance; Veronica Waugaman, data analytics (pre); Kiera White, business.

Men's Volleyball - Aaron Grimm, economics - business; Nathan Habermas, exploration; Hudson Harris, marketing; Justin Howard, kinesiology; Daniel Hurley, sport industry; Kristian Kold, sport industry; Jason Kozak, communication; John O'Riordan, finance; Jacob Pasteur, marketing; Owen Pickering, mechanical engineering; Noah Platfoot, finance; Thomas Poole, mechanical engineering; Benjamin Putnam, economics; Kyle Teune, accounting; Michael Wright, public management.

Women's Volleyball - Eloise Brandewie, exploration; Grace Egan, sport industry; Kamiah Gibson, psychology; Kaitlyn Hoffman, biology; Emily Londot, kinesiology; Anna McClure, finance; Sarah Morbitzer, exercise science; Anna Morris, communication; Lauren Murphy, accounting; Rylee Rader, kinesiology; Zaria Ragler, social work; Sydney Taylor, marketing; Mia Tuman, exploration; Ella Wrobel, sport industry.

Wrestling - Brandon Cannon, computer & information science (pre); Carter Chase, computer science & engineering (pre); Dylan D'Emilio, educational studies; Patrick Downing, aviation management; Nicholas Feldman, sport industry; Padraic Gallagher, sport industry; Luke Geog, health sciences; Gavin Hoffman, diversity, equity & inclusion; Carson Kharchla, sports coaching; Vincent Kilkeary, marketing; Stephen O'Neil, finance; Klay Reeves, kinesiology; Ryder Rogotzke, exploration; Timothy Schierl, finance; Seth Shumate, marketing; Hogan Swenski, consumer and family financial services; Isaac Wilcox, communication.

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QB Commit St. Clair Headed To Elite 11 Finals

Ohio State commitment and Bellefontaine, Ohio, five-star quarterback Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 210) will have the chance to represent the Buckeyes on a big stage, as the signal caller received an invite to the Elite 11 Finals on April 21 after impressing at the Elite 11 Columbus Regional at Upper Arlington High School.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Braden Moles

"It's a great opportunity," St. Clair said. "My family and I have talked about this moment for a very long time. So just being able to come out here and do what I said I wanted to do and do the things I was striving to be, it's going to be a high point in my life for a long time."

St. Clair outdueled the other 63 quarterbacks in attendance to earn the lone invite from the regional event. The Columbus Regional is one of eight regional sites – along with Atlanta; Austin, Texas; Las Vegas; Los Angeles; Orlando, Fla.; Oxford, Ms.; and State College, Pa. – that will eventually send 20 quarterbacks to the Elite 11 Finals

in Los Angeles in June.

Ohio State has had success at the event in recent years. Current quarterbacks Devin Brown and Air Noland both received invites to the Elite 11 Finals, and alumni such as Justin Fields, Dwayne Haskins, Kyle McCord and C.J. Stroud all made it to the finals, with Fields and Stroud winning the competition.

"Now that it's here, it's really a full-circle moment," St. Clair said. "It's been really special."

St. Clair was supported at the event by both Brown and Noland, whom St. Clair said he has gotten to know along with the rest of Ohio State's quarterbacks.

"We have a really close relationship now," St. Clair said. "I can text them or get ahold of them anytime, ask them questions, all that. It really is and has become a brotherhood now. For them to come out and support me when I got my Finals invite like they had, it was really special. I'm glad they came out and supported me and helped this brotherhood get stronger."

He has also grown his relationship in recent months with new offensive coordinator Chip Kelly, who St. Clair said has been a "great add-on" since arriving at Ohio State.

"He's been great," St. Clair said. "I think he's going to do great things in Columbus. In a few weeks, I've learned so much already,



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELITE 11
REPRESENTING OHIO STATE — Bellefontaine, Ohio, five-star quarterback Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 210), who is committed to Ohio State, will represent the Buckeyes at the Elite 11 Finals in Los Angeles in June.

more than I have in my entire football career, just being in the quarterback meetings. It's going to be really special in Columbus."

As he returns to Bellefontaine for his senior season, St. Clair is looking to take lessons away from not only the Elite 11 Finals, but from the time he has spent around Ohio State's program during spring practice.

"Something I can take back to my team is just to compete every day," St. Clair said. "Trying to be the best that you can for your teammates and not only for yourself but for the university and my school back at home. Compete every day, because Ohio State is going to be the best team in the country this year. Their competitive excellence shows that in practice. That's something I'll take back with me to my practice."

St. Clair recently earned his fifth composite star from 247Sports, and even with his senior season still ahead of him, expectations remain high for when he eventually arrives on Ohio State's campus.

"He's a sure starter at Ohio State one day," Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Bill

Greene told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "Almost as sure as you could be he is going to get drafted in the NFL one day unless he falls on his face and everything that we're seeing right now isn't what we think it is. He's got the size. He's got the arm strength. He's smart as heck. He's tough. I mean, there's nothing he doesn't have. The upside on the high end, he's C.J. Stroud, and Ohio State would for sure take that."

CB Commit Sanchez Closes Recruitment

It's always scary waiting to see if Ohio State will hold on to an elite prospect like Houston North Shore five-star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170), who pledged to the Buckeyes in January, but he has assured Buckeye Nation that he isn't going anywhere.

While actions will ultimately speak louder than words, Sanchez – the fifth-ranked overall prospect and top-ranked cornerback in the class – announced on April 17 that he is shutting down his recruitment and will

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OSU Football 2025 Commitments

Players in the class of 2025 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Tarvos Alford	LB	6-2	210	★★★★	Vero Beach, Fla.
De'zie Jones	WR	6-0	180	★★★★	Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic
Eli Lee	LB	6-3	215	★★★	Akron Hoban
Cody Haddad	SF	6-1	175	★★★	Cleveland St. Ignatius
Carter Lowe	OT	6-5	290	★★★★	Toledo Whitmer
Zahir Mathis	DL	6-6	225	★★★★	Philadelphia Imhotep Institute
London Merritt	DL	6-3	250	★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Na'eem Offord	CB	6-1	185	★★★★★	Birmingham (Ala.) Parker
Nate Roberts	TE	6-4	235	★★★★	Washington, Okla.,
Devin Sanchez	CB	6-2	170	★★★★★	Houston North Shore
Tavien St. Clair	QB	6-4	210	★★★★★	Bellefontaine, Ohio
DeShawn Stewart	SF	6-2	185	★★★★	Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic
Blake Woodyby	CB	5-11	175	★★★★	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	★★★★★	Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei

not take any additional visits.

Sanchez's announcement comes after his visit for Ohio State's spring game on April 13, where he informed the coaching staff that he was all in with the Buckeyes.

"It was really just a family thing," Sanchez told 247Sports. "I talked with my parents Saturday after the game, and it was really about doing that. There's nowhere else I can see myself, so it was just making it known I was shutting my commitment down and focused on becoming a Buckeye in these next few months."

Sanchez cited his relationship with cornerback coach Tim Walton as one of the biggest reasons for his strong connection with Ohio State.

"Really, the relationship I have with Coach Walton and that whole defensive staff is better than any relationship I'd built with other coaches," Sanchez said. "Ohio State was one of the last schools to offer me in my journey, but when I went up there the first time it just felt different from any other place I'd been. They are one of the few coaching staffs that hasn't had a coaching change. That played a big part into it, but also the relationship part."

"I have a great relationship with (four) dudes on that staff. Coach Walton, (safeties) coach Matt Guerrieri, (defensive coordinator Jim) Knowles and (program assistant Gerren) DuHart. Not too many people know about Coach Duhart, but he's just as big as Coach Walt in my recruitment. There's a lot of guys involved in my recruitment, and not too many other schools did that. Ohio State just took it and ran with it, and it just felt like home from day one."

OSU Offers Alabama RB Commit Rogers

Ohio State is looking to poach a recruit from newly minted Alabama head coach Kalen DeBoer. The Buckeyes sent out a recent offer to Montgomery (Ala.) Carver four-star running back Anthony Rogers (5-8, 185).

Rogers is the No. 88 overall prospect and sixth-ranked running back in the class, and he committed to the Crimson Tide last June, remaining committed following Nick Saban's retirement. But that has not stopped him from accepting communication from other schools, and he was offered by Ohio State running backs coach Carlos Locklyn.

"Coach Lock called and offered me," Rogers told 247Sports. "It kind of came out of the blue. But he was recruiting me when he was at Oregon (and offered).

"I'm still committed to Alabama, but I'm checking schools out to make sure. Lock and I just have to set up a date for a visit. He wants me to make an unofficial visit, then if I like it, move forward. I haven't decided yet (about visiting)."

In addition to Ohio State, Rogers said he is looking at another visit to Alabama along with trips to Auburn and Georgia. He rushed for 316 yards and five touchdowns as a junior at Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy, appearing in only nine games. He ran for 1,626 yards and 22 touchdowns as a sophomore and 1,139 yards and 18 touchdowns as a freshman, with his first two high school seasons played at Pike Road, Ala.

Ohio State does not have a running back committed in 2025 but continues to be involved with Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star Jordon Davison (5-11, 203), Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph four-star Bo Jackson (6-0, 205) and Fort Lauderdale

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(Fla.) American Heritage four-star Byron Louis (5-11, 200), among others.

DE Target Shanklin Committing Sept. 21

Indianapolis Warren Central four-star defensive end Damien Shanklin (6-4, 230), one of Ohio State's top targets at edge rusher, will announce his college decision on Sept. 21.

While Shanklin has yet to whittle down a list of finalists, he has visits scheduled this summer for Ohio State (May 31), Notre Dame (June 7), Tennessee (June 14) and Texas (June 21), all schools likely to be among his finalists.

Shanklin is the No. 108 overall prospect and No. 10 defensive end in the class, as well as the top-ranked prospect out of Indiana. Ohio State has had success in the Hoosier State in recent years, signing wide receiver Mylan Graham in last year's class and defensive end Joshua Mickens the cycle prior.

As a junior, Shanklin had 66 tackles (17 for loss), three sacks, one interception and four pass breakups. He was offered by the

Buckeyes in March following a visit to campus.

Ohio State already has a commitment at defensive end from Philadelphia Imhotep Institute four-star Zahir Mathis (6-6, 225) and continues to pursue Cincinnati Winton Woods four-star Justin Hill (6-3, 200) and Elkhart, Ind., four-star Mariyon Dye (6-5, 255).

2026 QB Grubbs Has OSU In Top 10

Ohio State recently landed in the top 10 for Lake Mary, Fla., four-star quarterback Noah Grubbs (6-4, 188), the No. 122 overall prospect and No. 10 signal caller in 2026.

The Buckeyes were included in his top 10 along with Auburn, Florida, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Nebraska, North Carolina, Notre Dame, Texas A&M and UCF. He was offered by Ohio State following a visit to Columbus this spring.

During his sophomore season, Grubbs completed 208 of 354 passes (58.8 percent) for 3,670 yards and 49 touchdowns with 10

Continued On Page 22

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OSU's Tight End Board Shaping Up In 2026

Continued From Page 21

interceptions. Grubbs is one of nine quarterbacks offered by Ohio State in 2026.

While it's far too early to truly assess the Buckeyes' big board at the position, Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage four-star Dia Bell (6-2, 195), Tampa (Fla.) Jesuit four-star Will Griffin (6-3, 225), Cartersville (Ga.) Cass three-star Brodie McWhorter (6-2, 190) and Frankfort (Ill.) Lincoln-Way East four-star Jonas Williams (6-3, 185) are among the more high-profile offers thus far.

OSU Offers Five-Star TE Harris In 2026

Another notable offer sent out for 2026 went to Saint George (Utah) Pine View five-star tight end Brock Harris (6-6, 238).

Harris is the No. 22 overall prospect and second-ranked tight end in the class, as well as the top-ranked prospect in Utah. He holds additional offers from Alabama, Baylor, Florida State, Georgia, Michigan, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State and Texas, among others, after hauling in 55 catches for 665 yards and eight touchdowns as a sophomore.

He is one of five tight ends offered by Ohio State, joining Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes four-star Xavier Tiller (6-4, 205), Nashville (Tenn.) Donelson Christian Academy four-star Carson Sneed (6-6, 226), Frisco (Texas) Lone Star four-star Ryder Mix (6-4, 220) and Dunlap, Ill., four-star tight end Mack Sutter (6-5, 215).

Grubbs and Harris were among the most

notable offers since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, but a handful of other prospects in 2025 and beyond have also been offered in recent weeks. Beginning in 2025, the Buckeyes offered Roswell, Ga., offensive lineman Andrew Stargel (6-4, 284). While he does not hold a composite ranking, he does have additional offers from Boston College, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky and Pittsburgh, among others.

In 2026, the Buckeyes sent out offers to Cibolo (Texas) Steele four-star running back Jonathan Hatton Jr. (6-1, 205), who is committed to Oklahoma; Westlake Village (Calif.) Oaks Christian four-star running back Deshonne Redeaux (5-10, 195); and Sutter.

Hatton is coming off an impressive sophomore season in which he carried the ball 242 times for 1,232 yards and 21 touchdowns. The No. 52 overall prospect and fourth-ranked running back in the class, he has been committed to Oklahoma since October.

"It was an unreal feeling (to get the offer)," he told 247Sports. "That was one of my dream schools when I was younger, sixth or seventh grade. When I knew (Locklyn) got the job at Ohio State, I thought it could happen."

Redeaux, meanwhile, is the No. 51 prospect in the class and the third-ranked running back and rushed for 439 yards and five touchdowns as a sophomore. Sutter is a top-100 prospect, checking in at No. 99 overall, and has additional offers from Alabama, Florida, Michigan, Penn State, Texas A&M and Wisconsin, among others.

Ohio State is also taking a swing in 2027, sending an offer to Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei tight end Mark Bowman (6-5, 220). He holds additional offers from Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Oregon, Penn State, Texas and Texas A&M, among others.

Bowman is just the second 2027 prospect offered by Ohio State, joining Richmond (Texas) Randle running bac. Landen Williams-Callis (5-7, 165).

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Ohio State landed in the top four of Franklin (Mich.) Wylie E. Groves four-star offensive tackle Avery Gach (6-5, 290) on April 20 along with Michigan, Michigan State and Wisconsin. Michigan is viewed as the favorite leading up to his commitment on May 3.

- Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star linebacker Nathaniel Owusu-Boateng (6-1, 205) also slightly narrowed down his list of top schools on April 21, including Ohio State among his top 13 schools along with Florida, Florida State, Georgia, Louisville, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Notre Dame, Oregon, South Carolina, Stanford, Texas and USC.

- Ohio State landed in the top seven for Galveston (Texas) Ball five-star safety Jonah Williams (6-3, 203) on April 26 along with LSU, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Texas A&M and USC. He is the No. 10 overall prospect in the class and visited for the Buckeyes' spring game in April.

- Several notable prospects have set summer visits to Ohio State, including En-

terprise, Ala., four-star defensive end Zion Grady (6-4, 225) from May 3-5; McKinney, Texas, four-star linebacker Riley Pettijohn (6-2, 205) on May 31; and Louis (5-11, 200) from June 14-16.

- Oak Park (Ill.) Fenwick four-star defensive lineman Nathaniel Marshall (6-4, 265), who held an offer from Ohio State, announced his commitment to Michigan on April 22.

- Findlay, Ohio, four-star quarterback Ryan Montgomery (6-3, 215), who held an offer from Ohio State and is the brother of current Buckeye sophomore offensive lineman Luke Montgomery, committed to Georgia on April 17.

- Rome, Ga., four-star linebacker Jaedon Harmon (6-1, 215), who held an offer from Ohio State, announced his commitment to Alabama on April 14.

- Hillside, N.J., four-star defensive lineman Darren Ikinagbon (6-5, 251), who held an offer from the Buckeyes, announced his pledge to Georgia on April 13.

- 247Sports released its initial ranking of the top prospects in 2026 on April 24, and Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star wide receiver Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 205), an OSU commit, checked in at No. 2 behind only Greensboro (N.C.) Grimsley five-star quarterback Faizon Brandon (6-4, 175).

For the latest on Ohio State football recruiting, including upcoming summer camp sessions in June, be sure to visit BuckeyeSports.com, available for free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago — 1994

Defensive back Che Bryant of Canton McKinley achieved a score of 17 on his ACT, making him eligible to play for Ohio State next season as a freshman.

"I'm grateful for the fact that I passed the test, but I never had any doubt that I would, really," Bryant told BSB. "I was very close the last time I took it, just a couple of hundredths of a point off. I knew that I would get what I needed the next time, and I did."

A first-team Parade magazine All-American, the 6-3, 180-pound Bryant recorded 68 tackles as a senior and also had five interceptions and two fumble recoveries. He was also considered to be a top running back prospect with more than 2,000 yards combined in his final two prep seasons.

25 Years Ago — 1999

Another blue-chip defensive lineman – just what the vaunted Ohio State defense needed, right? Well, that's precisely what the Buckeyes got when Fred Sturup of Plantation (Fla.) High School chose Ohio State over Florida State and his childhood-favorite Miami (Fla.).

"After my visit, I felt that Ohio State was the best place for me because of the atmosphere, the type of people that were there, the way they supported the football team and the type of tradition that they have on the football team," Sturup said. "They have a nice coaching staff, and the chemistry between the players is very good."

20 Years Ago — 2004

One of the more well-thought-of out-of-state players to attend the recent Nike Camp in Columbus was wide receiver Donald Washington III of Indianapolis Franklin Central.

At 6-2, 180 pounds, Washington had good size for his position. He maxed out on the bench at 245 pounds, and in Columbus he was timed at 4.5 seconds in the 40-yard dash and had a vertical leap of 38 inches.

"I'm happy, but I'm not satisfied," Washington told BSB following that performance. "I wasn't looking to be outstanding. I have the flu, so I'm just trying to do what I can, but I'm pretty happy with what I did."

As a junior, Washington earned all-conference honors after

hauling in 45 passes for 797 yards and seven touchdowns in 11 games.

15 Years Ago — 2009

Visiting the campus of Notre Dame was not a foreign experience for Nick Montana, but doing so while being recruited was. The four-star quarterback prospect from Westlake Village (Calif.) Oaks Christian took an unofficial visit to watch the Fighting Irish's spring game April 18 and also got to spend some one-on-one time with head coach Charlie Weis.

"It was good," Montana said. "We talked about pretty much everything there is to talk about regarding Notre Dame football and the situation I'm in, and I'm glad that I got to sit down with him and my parents. We talked about where I stood with recruiting and the quarterback position and how important I am to them."

The 6-1, 185-pound Montana was up to more than a dozen scholarship offers and had visited Ohio State's campus. He had been on Notre Dame's campus a number of times, he said, but took this trip to get a better feel for how he would fit into their football program.

Montana's father, Joe, played at Notre Dame and his brother, Nate, was a walk-on quarterback there.

10 Years Ago — 2014

Cleveland St. Ignatius defensive end Dre'Mont Jones came to the Buckeyes' spring game on commitment watch for OSU. He left Columbus without issuing a verbal pledge, but he had a great time at Ohio State nonetheless.

"It was great being back at Ohio State, and I talked to most of the coaching staff," Jones said. "They aren't really pressuring me at all, and we mostly used the time to get to know each other better. I watched the defensive ends and how they were used in the Ohio State system."

In particular, the 6-5, 250-pounder was impressed with the Buckeye defense, which reminded him of his high school teams. Ohio State was clearly in strong standing with the four-star prospect, who had built relationships with co-defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Luke Fickell and running backs coach Stan Drayton.

"They play their defense in the same way we do at St. Ignatius,

so I'm aware of what they were doing," he said. "Ohio State is a top school for me, and I'm very impressed with the program. Coach Fickell and Coach Drayton were at my school (April 21), which was cool. I'm sure I'll be back to Ohio State again, but I don't have anything set up."

Five Years Ago — 2019

Kaden Saunders was a name to know in Ohio State recruiting, evidenced by his April 19 visit with the Buckeyes when he met multiple members of Ryan Day's coaching staff. The list of OSU assistants included wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley and linebackers coach Al Washington.

Saunders was already on recruiting radars for an abundance of Power Five programs. He reported his first offer Feb. 17 from Michigan State, following with Penn State (March 16) and West Virginia (April 16). Following the Ohio State visit, Saunders announced an April 22 offer from Indiana.

The 5-10, 155-pounder played at nearby Westerville (Ohio) South – which produced redshirt freshman H-back Jaalen Gill (6-0, 195) – starring as a freshman for the Wildcats while playing for the varsity team. The 2022 athlete rushed 27 times for 203 yards and recorded 12 receptions for 229 yards, adding seven punt returns for 161 yards and 16 kick returns for 303 yards.

One Year Ago — 2023

Dating back to the commitment of Deontae and Devontae Armstrong of Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward back on March 27, Ohio State picked up verbal pledges from eight prospects in the weeks immediately following. That momentum had not been lost on Day, who said things had gone well on the recruiting trail of late for the Buckeyes.

"I think it's a sign of how people view the program and the culture and what's going on here," Day said. "That's probably what you're seeing right now. Guys are coming on these visits, they're getting around our players, they're getting around our coaches. They see who we are. They see the foundation of the program here. They see not only a program that competes nationally for championships every single year but also has a culture that you want to send your son to be a part of."

ASK AN ANALYST

With Bill Greene of BuckeyeScoop

Ohio State recently sent out an offer to Montgomery (Ala.) Carver four-star running back Anthony Rogers (5-8, 185), who is committed to Alabama. Where do you feel the Buckeyes will go at running back in 2025, and how does Carlos Locklyn change things?

"I don't know because this is a complete reset for me at running back. When Tony Alford was there, it really seemed like it was Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph four-star Bo Jackson (6-0, 205), Cleveland Heights four-star Marquise Davis (6-0, 210), Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star Jordon Davison (5-11, 203), Woodbridge (Va.) Freedom three-star Jeff Overton (5-11, 187). Now it's almost like a new board, so I don't know.

"I really want to see how Locklyn feels about Davis and Jackson. What does he think of Overton? He's offering others right now. Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage Byron Louis (5-11, 200) was the guy that really had a great relationship with Alford, so I don't know if Louis is still where we thought he was.

"The last guy they offered, Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School three-star Shekai Mills-Knight (6-1, 217), I didn't even know who he was. They offered him and I'm like, 'Man, is (Locklyn) going to come in and start offering all these lower-ranked dudes?' Then I put the film in on Mills-Knight, and it's really impressive. He can cut, he can move, power, speed. I think Mills-Knight is criminally underrated. Now, the Rogers kid is highly rated. Before Alford left, I could have probably said the class would be Davison and Jackson, with Louis and Davis as the next two up, and Overton as the five. I think they'd have taken two of them. Now with Rogers being offered, the Mills-Knight kid being offered, I think all bets are off right now. I have no clue where they're going to go.

"If you're Jackson, and you think you might want to be at Ohio State, I would probably call and commit today. Same

with Davison, because this guy's not messing around, Coach Lock. I don't know whose commitment they would take today. It's really going to be one to watch going forward, almost to see who decides to jump into the pool first. Then, once the first guy goes, then you know, there's only one chair left, and you don't want to be stuck with no chair when the music stops. I think this is fascinating, the running back recruiting, and I'm waiting just to see who the first guy is to commit and then see if number two jumps in within 48 hours."

The Buckeyes now hold the top-ranked class in 2025, though things will obviously change between now and December. Do you feel Ohio State's name, image and likeness is in a place now where it can compete to have the top-ranked class at the end of the cycle?

"Yes. Last year, we didn't really know where NIL was for Ohio State, and I didn't think they were on the same page with The Foundation and 1870 (Society). How's it happening? What's going on here? Then all of a sudden, once you got past the Missouri game, you saw all the defensive guys come back. They didn't come back for free. They didn't come back to get a general studies degree. They got paid. And then you saw Caleb Downs transfer in and Will Howard transfer in. Those guys didn't come for free either. Then I know what (Jeremiah) Smith got, so where did all of this money come from? It was crazy. It almost seemed like a program that wasn't sure how to handle NIL and then they kind of found their footing last winter.

"With Ohio State, you almost got the feeling that they looked at it like it was wrong. Like, you're buying players and it's not right. Hey, it's legal. It's legal to cheat now, so you better cheat. You buy your players. Do you want to win or do you want to lose? I think Ohio State came to that realization somewhere in December or January last year. I don't think there's any doubt that they are one of the top NIL schools in

the country right now, and I wouldn't have said that even prior to the Michigan game last year. I didn't think they had a clear vision on how to attack NIL and something changed. There's no doubt about Ohio State and NIL right now. I don't think they're taking a back seat anywhere."

Ohio State has offers out to just 11 prospects from Ohio in 2025. Who are some under-the-radar prospects you feel the Buckeyes should be taking a closer look at?

"They've offered the one that I think is under the radar, and that's Cincinnati Winton Woods four-star defensive end Justin Hill (6-3, 220). I think he could be the No. 1 player in the state. He's awfully freaking good. I think they're going to know more here really soon because from April 15 on, the coaches are now allowed out on the road. What we've seen over the years is they go out on the road in April and early May, and then you have camp in June.

"What happens is these kids change at 16, 17, 18 years old. The last time you might have laid eyes on an Ohio offensive lineman might have been last September or October, or maybe even June in camp. Now you're getting to see the updated version in person working out at a school, doing drills. He comes to your camp, you put him through whatever you want to put him through. You could see another Ohio kid or two pop up just because that person is not the same person that they evaluated last September. We've seen that happen before. Tommy Eichenberg is the best example of that. Eichenberg, as a junior, was not the player he became in the spring, summer and then his senior year. It does happen.

"I think this is a great Ohio class, I really do. I think it's really special. If they're going to offer more, it would probably have to be out of the offensive line because I think they're kind of floundering there. That's the one area where it's not really happening like it is at every other spot."

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Okpara Flips Script, Transfers To Tennessee

Ohio State suffered a significant loss on April 21 when junior center Felix Okpara announced he was entering the transfer portal after two seasons with the Buckeyes. He has since found a new home, committing to Tennessee on April 25.

COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

"I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to have represented the Scarlet and Gray," Okpara wrote on Instagram. "As I thought of the player I want to become and the program moving forward in a new direction, I believe it is in my best interest to continue my pursuit of my dream at a different school. I have decided to enter the transfer portal. I wish Ohio State and especially Coach (Jake Diebler) the best!"

Okpara's transfer announcement came just weeks after he initially indicated he was fully committed to Ohio State for next season.

"I am excited and grateful to announce I am 100 percent committed to running it back with OSU and Buckeye Nation," Okpara wrote on social media on April 1. "Can't wait to start a new chapter with Coach Diebs, my returning teammates, and the new staff and players to get Ohio State back to our rightful spot at the top of the Big Ten."

But Okpara changed his tune in the ensuing weeks, a period that had the Buckeyes land 7-1 center Aaron Bradshaw, a former five-star prospect who committed to Ohio State on April 15 after spending one season with Kentucky. Okpara and Bradshaw would have posed a potentially formidable frontcourt duo at Ohio State next season, but that pairing will no longer happen with Okpara playing for head coach Rick Barnes and Tennessee.

Tennessee reached the Elite Eight this past season but has lost its two leading rebounders this offseason with forward Jonas Aidoo entering the portal and guard Josiah-Jordan James exhausting his collegiate eligibility, making the addition of Okpara a welcome sight for a Volunteers program looking to make a seventh consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance.

Okpara, a former four-star prospect out of Branson (Mo.) Link Academy, averaged 5.3 points, 5.0 rebounds and 1.8 blocks per game on 58.6 percent shooting in his two seasons with the Buckeyes, starting 45 of his 70 games in that span.

After serving primarily as a bench piece his freshman season, he took a major step in his development as the team's starting center this past season, when he started 34 of 35 games and averaged 6.6 points and a team-high 6.4 rebounds and 2.4 blocks per game.

Okpara is the fifth Buckeye to depart from the program this offseason, joining guards Roddy Gayle Jr., Bowen Hardman and Scotty Middleton and forward Zed Key. With Okpara no longer on the roster, Ohio State's frontcourt is currently spearheaded



SONNY BROCKWAY

ON SECOND THOUGHT — After former Ohio State center Felix Okpara announced he would be returning to the Buckeyes, he switched course on April 21, electing to enter the transfer portal before committing to Tennessee on April 25.

by Bradshaw, with junior forward Kalen Etzler, sophomore forward Devin Royal and sophomore center Austin Parks adding depth to their respective positions.

OSU Secures Pledge From Wing Parrish

Ohio State also landed on the winning side of the transfer portal since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, securing a commitment on April 20 from former San Diego State wing Micah Parrish.

Parrish, a 6-6, 195-pounder from River Rouge, Mich., who has one season of college eligibility remaining, played a significant role in the Aztecs' consecutive deep runs in the NCAA Tournament over the last two seasons, averaging 8.4 points, 3.8 rebounds and 1.2 assists on 38.5 percent shooting in 76 appearances, including 37 starts. Prior to his time at San Diego State, Parrish spent two years at Oakland, where he started 57 of his 59 games and averaged 10.5 points and 5.9 rebounds on 48.4 percent shooting, including 35.2 percent from deep.

He addresses a key area of need for Ohio State on the wing, a position that had both fifth-year forward Jamison Battle and Middleton depart the program this offseason. While Parrish does not possess the elite three-point shooting Battle displayed last

season for the Buckeyes, he still has shown the capability to thrive from beyond the arc, shooting a combined 35.2 percent in his first three collegiate seasons before dropping to 29.2 percent this past season.

This, along with his defensive ability and overall versatility, could allow him to emerge as a potential candidate to start at the wing this season, a position that could also be occupied by junior guard Evan Mahaffey.

Ohio State had two roster spots remaining as BSB went to press. The Buckeyes will likely add another forward/wing to compensate for the losses of Okpara and Middleton, a position of need that they tried to address by pursuing former Oakland forward Trey Townsend, who visited Ohio State on April 20 and had the Buckeyes in his final two but committed to Arizona on April 24. They are also expected to add another guard through the portal to provide depth at the position alongside likely starters Bruce Thornton and Meechie Johnson Jr.

Gayle Signs With Rival Michigan

Gayle has opted to turn in his Scarlet and Gray for Maize and Blue next season, as the former Buckeye will cross enemy lines and play for the Wolverines after spending his first two seasons in Columbus,

as announced on April 22.

Gayle, who entered the transfer portal on April 3 after a solid sophomore season with the Buckeyes, garnered significant interest from newly hired head coach Dusty May and Michigan throughout the month, culminating in a visit to Ann Arbor the weekend of April 20 for the football team's spring game.

Michigan was one of several high-profile teams interested in Gayle when he entered the portal, a list that included Clemson, Creighton, Duke and Texas, among others. But the Wolverines and May ultimately won the sweepstakes, securing a commitment from Gayle two days after his visit to Michigan.

Gayle was a key piece to Ohio State's backcourt over the last two seasons, averaging 9.1 points, 3.1 rebounds and 2.0 assists per game on 44.7 percent shooting in 71 games, including 46 starts. Michigan is looking to bounce back after an abysmal season in which it finished dead last in the Big Ten with a 3-17 conference record and an 8-24 overall mark.

The Wolverines – who fired former head coach Juwan Howard after five seasons with the program on March 15 – have looked to bolster their roster since the hiring of May in late March, securing transfer portal commitments from Auburn guard Tre Donaldson, Gayle, North Texas guard Ruben Jones, Yale center Danny Wolf and Alabama forward Sam Walters.

Middleton Heads To Seton Hall

Middleton also found his new home in recent weeks, announcing his commitment to Seton Hall on April 24.

Middleton announced his entry to the transfer portal on April 1 after just one season with the Buckeyes. He emerged as one of the team's most productive bench players as a true freshman in his lone year in Columbus, averaging 4.4 points and 1.4 rebounds on 39.8 percent shooting, while hitting 45.2 from deep. But he had his promising freshman season cut short by three games after he missed the Buckeyes' entire NIT Tournament run to tend to an undisclosed family matter.

He initially placed Seton Hall as one of his final three schools – UConn being the other along with Ohio State – during his high school recruitment out of Wichita (Kan.) Sunrise Christian. Middleton said it was the prior connection he had with head coach Shaheen Holloway – whom he developed a relationship with dating back to when he attended Union (N.J.) The Patrick School, Holloway's alma mater – that led him to play for the Pirates next season.

"I think it was just my relationship with Coach Sha," Middleton told NJ.com on April 24. "He and I have had a relationship since my sophomore year at (The Patrick School), so I feel like that relationship has been growing, and we just bonded more as time went on."

"He kept recruiting me throughout the entire process. When I entered the portal, they were the first school to reach out to me. Just them constantly reaching out to me and showing that love, it was an easy decision to make."



SONNY BROCKWAY

FAMILY TIES — Ohio State head coach Jake Diebler (pictured) is unable to hire his brother, former Ohio State guard Jon Diebler, as an assistant due to nepotism laws in Ohio.

Ohio Nepotism Law Prevents Diebler Reunion

Diebler has yet to hire a fifth assistant coach to fill out the Buckeyes' staff, and that could be because his initial choice to assume the final position was prohibited by Ohio state law.

According to reports by both Buckeye Huddle and The Columbus Dispatch, Diebler wanted to hire a familiar face to fill the fifth assistant coach position — that being his younger brother and former Ohio State guard Jon Diebler, who currently serves as director of recruiting under Thad Matta at Butler — but was unable to do so due to an Ohio nepotism law that prohibits public employees from hiring family members.

The Ohio Ethics Commission states that public officials and employees using their public position to directly hire, or secure the hire, of a family member is a fourth-degree felony in the state, which, according to Ohio law, can result in a prison sentence that ranges between six and 18 months. Since Ohio State is a public university, Jake Diebler and the men's basketball program fall under the jurisdiction of this rule, making the hiring of Jon Diebler a criminal offense. Ohio State has its own nepotism policy, saying that it prohibits employees from working directly under a family member who is in charge of other hiring-based decision-making.

"Family members whose qualifications rank each of them first for the positions under consideration may be employed, so long as neither family member is immediately responsible for or influences any employment action," the university's human resource development states.

These nepotism laws did not prevent both previous head football coaches Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer from hiring family members to serve on their respective staffs, however. Dick Tressel, Jim Tressel's brother, joined the Buckeyes' staff as associate director of football operations in 2001, but it was allowed by state law and university policy because Dick Tressel reported to director of football operations Bob Tucker.

A similar development occurred in 2015 when Corey Dennis — Meyer's son-in-law — was added to the staff as an offensive intern. While there is an obvious familial connection between the two, the hiring was authorized because Dennis was not a full-time assistant working for a head coach until 2019, when Ryan Day assumed the reins from the retiring Meyer.

Diebler Contract Details Revealed

Speaking of Jake Diebler, Ohio State released its full contract details with the first-year head coach on April 18, which included information regarding his potential contract buyout and certain benefits guaranteed to the coach through his deal, among other things.

Starting with the buyout, the release revealed that should Ohio State terminate the coach's five-year, \$12.5 million contract before it expires in 2029, Diebler would be owed 65.0 percent of his salary through the conclusion of the remaining contract term, which would be approximately \$1.6 million per year and \$135,000 per month.

This pales in comparison to former OSU head coach Chris Holtmann's buyout, which was revealed to be \$12.8 million when he was fired on Feb. 14 with over four years remaining on his contract.

If Diebler chooses to terminate his contract of his own accord before it expires on April 30, 2029, he would owe \$5 million if he ends his contract before April 1, 2025; \$3 million if he ends it after April 1, 2025, but before April 1, 2026; and \$1 million if he terminates the contract after April 1, 2026, but before April 1, 2028. He would not owe the university anything if he ends his contract after April 1, 2028.

Notable perks guaranteed for Diebler in his full contract include up to 40 hours of private jet use for recruiting visits and other Ohio State business along with up to 15 hours for personal use, a \$1,200 monthly automobile stipend, 12 tickets to each Ohio State football game and a full golf membership with paid monthly dues at a mutually agreed upon golf course in the Columbus area.

Bucks To Open Season Vs. Texas In Vegas

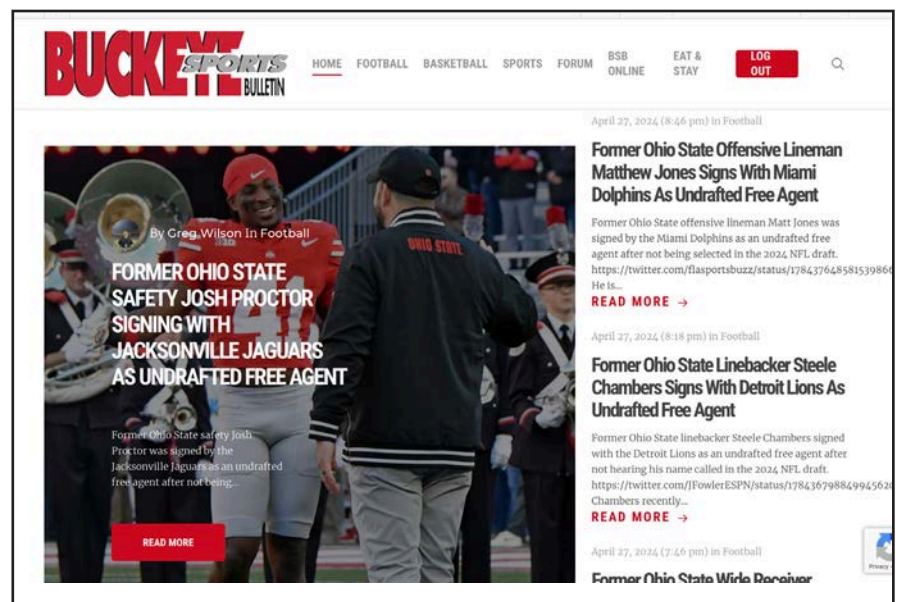
Ohio State's 2024-25 season opener is reportedly set, with the Buckeyes slated to face off against Texas in a neutral-site game at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas on Nov. 4.

This would mark the first time in 25 years that the Buckeyes will open their season against a Power Six opponent, with the last game occurring against Notre Dame — then part of the Big East — on Nov. 16, 1999.

Ohio State will face off against a Longhorns team that is joining the SEC next year and coming off back-to-back NCAA Tournament appearances under head coach Rodney Terry. Texas posted a 21-13 overall record and 9-9 mark in its final season in the Big 12, earning a No. 7 seed in the NCAA Tournament before falling to Tennessee in the second round.

Texas is one of three SEC teams Ohio State will face in the nonconference portion of its schedule. The Buckeyes are also set to visit Texas A&M as part of a home-and-home series and play Kentucky at a neutral site in the CBS Sports Classic at a location to be determined.

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Sheldon, Taylor Selected In 2024 WNBA Draft

Former Ohio State guards Jacy Sheldon and Celeste Taylor became the latest Buckeyes to make the jump from college to the professional ranks on April 15, when both were selected in the 2024 WNBA draft held at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in Brooklyn, N.Y.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Braden Moles

Sheldon and Taylor became the 18th and 19th draftees in program history, respectively, and it was just the third time in program history (along with 2007 and 2018) that Ohio State had two players selected in the same draft.

Sheldon was first off the board, taken with the fifth overall pick by the Dallas Wings. She was preceded by Iowa guard Caitlin Clark (No. 1, Indiana Fever), Stanford center Cameron Brink (No. 2, Los Angeles Sparks), South Carolina center Kamilla Cardoso (No. 3, Chicago Sky) and Tennessee forward Rickea Jackson (No. 4, Sparks).

Sheldon is just the sixth first-round selection in Ohio State history and the first since Kelsey Mitchell was taken second overall by the Fever in 2018.

"It's a surreal moment because I grew up

as a little kid watching all these women play and how talented they are and being able to have a chance to play with them and compete against them, it's a dream," Sheldon said after being drafted. "It's what we all are here for, and it's what we're looking forward to. I'm excited. I've seen the growth. Everyone has seen the growth, and to be a part of that is something that is really rare, so I'm looking forward to it."

Sheldon has put herself in a strong position to be competitive on a WNBA roster. She excelled on the defensive end of the floor at Ohio State, totaling 250 career steals, and is also an accomplished shooter, connecting on 49.1 percent of her shots from the field and 35.0 percent from deep. The Wings, meanwhile, allowed opposing teams to shoot 44.4 percent from the field and shot a league-low 31.7 percent from three last season, both areas Sheldon should be able to help.

"We've had really good discussions," Sheldon said. "Coach (Latricia Trammell) is awesome and just being able to talk about their system and how they like to do things there was awesome for me to learn, and I'm sure I'll be having more conversations soon. They've been really good, and I'm looking forward to talking to them more."

Taylor watched the first round go by without hearing her name but was quickly selected in the second round, going at No. 15 to the Fever and joining forces with Clark. Taylor recently completed her first season at Ohio State after spending two years at Texas out of high school and then



SONNY BROCKWAY

MOVING ON — Former Ohio State guard Jacy Sheldon was taken fifth overall by the Dallas Wings in the 2024 WNBA draft on April 15.

two seasons at Duke.

In her lone campaign with the Buckeyes, she averaged 10.1 points, 4.1 rebounds, 3.4 assists and 2.5 steals per game. While Taylor turned into an offensive weapon by the end of her time at Ohio State, her impact was best felt on the defensive end of the court, where she was named Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year in addition to earning second-team All-Big Ten honors. She also was named ACC Defensive Player of the Year as a senior and stands a good shot to make a roster at the professional level because the WNBA places a premium on defense for those on the roster bubble.

"With Celeste, obviously, she's got a reputation as an incredible defender — well deserved," Ohio State coach Kevin McGuff said before the draft. "People are really excited about what she can do at that end of the floor. The feedback heading into the season was a little more consistent offensive production, and as the season got into January, February, you started to see that. She really helped herself."

With Taylor's selection, the Buckeyes were one of just six schools — along with Arizona, Gonzaga, Iowa, UConn and USC — to have multiple players taken in the draft, with each school having two picks. Former Ohio

State forward Rebeka Mikulášiková and Taylor Parks also entered their names into the draft but were not selected.

Walker Returning For Sixth Season

Ohio State forward Eboni Walker announced on April 17 that she is returning to the Buckeyes for her final season of eligibility.

"I want to publicly convey my sincere appreciation for your unwavering love and support," she said in a statement. "From the very start, you welcomed me with open arms and provided me with the trust that allows me to strive for excellence every day, especially on the days when I get to perform."

"While I would not trade my college experience for anything, it has not been easy, I want to get things going by giving thanks to my Lord and Savior for continuing to direct me throughout these trying times. I could not tell you where I would be if it were not for my faith. I could not tell you where I would be without my support system, but I am blessed with it, and I am still here."

"In the end, I would like to express a sincere thank you to everyone who has not supported me and told me I would not be able to accomplish what I have. Having said all

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TIMPOND, member of both the Bishop Watterson High School and the Otterbein University Basketball Halls of Fame, recently offered his publication entitled "Coaching Youth Basketball: Coaching the Coaches" for sale on Amazon.com. Access to this instructional manual was previously limited to attendees of his basketball clinics and camps only.

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SONNY BROCKWAY

WELCOME BACK — Ohio State forward Eboni Walker announced on April 17 that she will be returning to the Buckeyes for her sixth and final season of college basketball.

of this, I have made the decision to use my final year of eligibility to further my education at THE Ohio State University. I looked forward to seeing you during the 2024-2025 season.”

Walker, who played two seasons at Arizona State, one season at Syracuse and the last two at Ohio State, was granted a sixth season by the NCAA. McGuff previously said they were looking into getting a redshirt for Walker after she appeared in just six games

for the Orange while dealing with an injury.

She has averaged 3.9 points and 3.2 rebounds while appearing in 57 games over the last two seasons at Ohio State, primarily coming off the bench, though she did average 6.3 points, 5.2 rebounds and 2.0 assists when she started 11 games for the Buckeyes at the end of the 2022-23 season. Walker was also briefly away from the team this past season due to an undisclosed reason before returning and playing in the NCAA

tournament against Maine.

Her return offers additional depth at forward for the Buckeyes, who are losing Mikulášiková, Parks and Karla Vreš. The Buckeyes are, however, adding former Kentucky forward Ajae Petty and welcoming in freshman forward Ella Hobbs and center Elsa Lemmilä.

Walker is one of seven returning Buckeyes. Along with transfer departures, transfer additions and five incoming freshmen, Ohio State still has one scholarship spot available.

Cambridge Signs With Ohio State

Speaking of the freshmen, Ohio State's incoming recruiting class is now complete, after Montverde (Fla.) Academy five-star point guard Jaloni Cambridge (5-7) signed with the Buckeyes on April 17.

“We are excited to welcome Jaloni to the Ohio State women's basketball family,” McGuff said. “She's a dynamic player who will make everyone on the floor better. More importantly, she's an outstanding young woman who will be a great fit in our program.”

Cambridge – who is from Tennessee but transferred to Montverde Academy for her senior season, where she helped lead her team to a state championship – is the No. 2 prospect in 2024, according to ESPN, as well as the top-ranked point guard in the class.

As the second overall prospect, she is the highest-rated recruit to ever sign with Ohio State. Her high ranking is no surprise,

though, considering her senior season in which she was named Gatorade Florida Player of the Year (as well as finalist for Gatorade Player of the Year) and MaxPreps Player of the Year after averaging 20.7 points, 8.7 assists and 6.7 rebounds.

She is the younger sister of current Ohio State guard Kennedy Cambridge. Jaloni Cambridge, meanwhile, figures to factor in immediately at guard for the Buckeyes with Sheldon, Taylor and Rikki Harris all departing the program.

Cambridge joins a highly touted class that also includes Cincinnati Purcell Marian wing Seini Hicks, Hobbs, Lemmilä and Buford, Ga., guard Ava Watson.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Cincinnati Purcell Marian five-star guard Dee Alexander (6-1), a 2025 prospect, committed to Cincinnati on April 17 over Illinois and Ohio State. She is the No. 6 overall prospect in the class, according to ESPN.

- Ohio State sent out an offer on April 12 to Alexandria (Va.) Bishop Ireton five-star guard Nyla Brooks (6-1), the No. 15 overall prospect in 2025, according to ESPN. Brooks had been committed to Tennessee before backing off her pledge on April 2.

- Kilyn McGuff, a junior guard at Belmont University and the daughter of Kevin McGuff, entered the transfer portal on April 19 before committing to Butler on April 29. She averaged 9.0 points and 5.3 rebounds last season for the Bruins.

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U-M On Probation For Recruiting Violations

The NCAA announced on April 16 that it had reached an agreement with Michigan and five current or former staffers for the team on several recruiting violations and coaching activities by noncoaching staff members.

BIG TEN NOTES
Greg Wilson

Michigan agreed with the NCAA that the violations demonstrated a head coach responsibility violation and that the former head coach – Jim Harbaugh – failed to meet his responsibility to cooperate with the investigation. The school also agreed that it failed to deter and detect the contacting of recruits and didn't ensure the program adhered to the rules that noncoaching staff members have to follow.

The five current and former staffers of the school participated in the agreement, but the NCAA said one former coach – also presumed to be Harbaugh – didn't participate in the agreement and that portion of the case will be considered separately. The final decision on the potential violations and penalties for that unnamed former coach is still pending.

By separating the cases, the NCAA said that the five current or former staffers who participated in the agreement could start serving their penalties immediately.

These penalties brought against Michigan are separate from the investigation into Michigan for allegedly participating in a multiyear sign-stealing scheme, which the NCAA is still looking into. There is not currently a timetable for when that investigation might conclude.

The penalties agreed upon include three years of probation for the school, a fine and recruiting restrictions. The five coaches involved in the agreement also agreed to a one-year show cause. Being under probation means that a program can be required to do additional reporting to the NCAA and that further rule violations could result in harsher penalties.

The violations the program committed involve "impermissible in-person recruiting contacts during a COVID-19 dead period, impermissible tryouts, and the program exceeding the number of allowed countable coaches when noncoaching staff members engaged in on- and off-field coaching activities (including providing technical and tactical skills instruction to student-athletes)," according to the NCAA report released.

Spartans Facing Spring Portal Troubles

Michigan State football and new head



FILE PHOTO

CAUGHT BLUE-HANDED – The NCAA announced on April 16 that it had reached an agreement with Michigan and five current or former staffers concerning several recruiting violations and coaching activities by noncoaching staff members, with the program set to serve a three-year probation, among other penalties. Former head coach Jim Harbaugh (center) reportedly did not participate in the agreement.

coach Jonathan Smith have undergone a turbulent spring, with 15 players having left the program through the transfer portal since April 16, as of press time, making it 34 expected departures dating back to the end of last season.

The most notable in the spring window was defensive tackle Derrick Harmon, who left following his redshirt junior season. Last year, he collected 40 tackles (3½ for loss), 1½ sacks, a pass breakup and a forced fumble for the Spartans.

He's the ninth defensive player for Michigan State to enter the transfer portal in the spring, joined by linebacker Ma'a Gaoteote; defensive linemen Simeon Barrow Jr., Andrew Depaepe and Bai Jobe; and defensive backs Sean Brown, Malcolm Jones, Marqui Lowery Jr. and Eddie Pleasant III. Barrow is another big loss for the Spartans as he

had 5½ tackles for loss and 3½ sacks last season, which stretches their line fairly thin for next season.

Smith has brought in 12 players through the transfer portal already, including defensive linemen D'Quan Douse, Quandaries Dunnigan and Anthony Jones.

IU Brings Talent In Through Portal

Indiana made a significant addition to its men's basketball team when Oumar Ballo – who transferred from Arizona – announced his commitment to the Hoosiers on April 16.

Ballo is a 7-0, 260-pound center who has one more season of eligibility remaining after one year with Gonzaga as a freshman then three seasons with the Wildcats. In his most recent season, he averaged 13.1

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points, 10.2 rebounds and 1.3 blocks per game.

He was a two-time first-team All-Pac 12 selection in his past two years with Arizona and earned an All-Defensive Team nod last season. Ballo was also reportedly being pursued by Arkansas, Florida, Kansas State, Louisville and North Carolina but decided to try his hand with Mike Woodson and the Hoosiers.

The Hoosiers have made other impact additions with Stanford sophomore guard Kanaan Carlyle, who averaged 11.5 points, 2.7 rebounds and 2.7 assists last season, and Washington State guard Myles Rice, who had 14.8 points, 3.8 assists and 3.1 rebounds per game, joining the team.

Indiana missed the NCAA Tournament last season after going 19-14 overall and 10-10 in the Big Ten.

B1G Represented Early In NFL Draft

The Big Ten was well-represented in the opening round of the 2024 NFL draft on April 25, with four players from current teams and six players from future teams (Oregon, UCLA, USC, Washington) all hearing their names called among the top 32 picks.

Players in the first round of the draft from current Big Ten teams were the fourth overall selection in former Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr., who went to the Arizona Cardinals; former Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy to the Minnesota Vikings at No. 10; former Penn State offensive tackle Olu Fashanu to the New York Jets at No. 11; and former Penn State linebacker Chop Robinson to the Miami Dolphins at No. 21.

As for the six selections from future conference teams, USC quarterback Caleb Williams was taken by the Chicago Bears with the No. 1 overall pick. Three former Washington players were taken in the first round, led by quarterback Michael Penix Jr. to the Atlanta Falcons with the eighth pick and followed by wide receiver Rome Odunze to Chicago with the ninth pick and guard Troy Fautanu to the Pittsburgh Steelers at No. 20.

Oregon and UCLA were also represented in the first round when former Ducks quarterback Bo Nix was taken with the No. 12 choice by the Denver Broncos, and the Indianapolis Colts chose former UCLA linebacker Laiatu Latu – the first defensive player off the board – with the No. 15 pick.

All told, 42 players ultimately heard their names called from the Big Ten – led

by Michigan with 13 selections – while the incoming conference teams saw 27 players selected between the four of them.

B1G Also Represented At WNBA Draft

When the 2024 WNBA draft began on April 15, it wasn't a question that Iowa's Caitlin Clark would be the first overall choice after such a decorated college career. But she wasn't the only player to come out of the conference in the three-round event.

Clark was drafted by the Indiana Fever with the first pick, and the next Big Ten player to go pro was former Ohio State guard Jacy Sheldon, who will start her career with the Dallas Wings. The next Big Ten player off the board was also another Buckeye when guard Celeste Taylor was taken with the No. 15 overall pick in the second round by the Indiana Fever.

Iowa guard Kate Martin was next off the board, going at No. 18 to the Las Vegas Aces. She spent five seasons at Iowa and averaged 8.0 points, 4.6 rebounds and 2.9 assists per game. Indiana forward Mackenzie Holmes was next up, going with the No. 26 pick in the third round to the Seattle Storm.

Holmes plans to have knee surgery in May, which will keep her out for the season,

but she said she will be back for the start of training camp in 2025. Her five seasons with the Hoosiers were spent in the low post scoring 17.2 points per game and adding 6.7 rebounds.

Former Nebraska guard Jaz Shelley was off the board just three picks later to the Phoenix Mercury. She spent three seasons with Nebraska after her first two at Oregon, finishing her career with 10.7 points per game. Her three seasons with the Huskers were her three best, putting up averages of 13.1, 14.5 and 13.4 points per game.

The last former Big Ten player taken was shooting guard Ashley Owusu, who spent just one season with Penn State after stints at Maryland and Virginia Tech. She was taken by the Wings with the No. 33 pick in the third round. At Penn State, she scored 17.7 points per game and grabbed 5.5 boards in just 20 appearances.

As for the Big Ten's future conference opponents, USC had forward Kaitlyn Davis and guard McKenzie Forbes taken at No. 28 and No. 35 by the Los Angeles Sparks and New York Liberty, respectively, while UCLA guard Charisma Osborne went at No. 25 to the Mercury.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago – 1984

Fred Pagac had the answer for all those college football coaches in search of the would-be perfect outside linebacker. He would be 6-6 and in the 230- to 235-pound range and possess quickness, speed, strength and agility, to name a few.

"If you were to cut an outside linebacker from stone," said Pagac, the Buckeye outside linebacker coach, "you would want Eric Kumerow – he's strong, he's a tough kid and he has a good defensive personality and temperament."

35 Years Ago – 1989

Ohio State sophomore receiver Jeff Graham continued to make up for lost time.

The 6-1, 184-pounder missed out on his freshman year and the previous year's spring practice because of Proposition 48. That didn't seem to faze Graham much, though, as he had worked hard enough to win the Buckeyes' number one wide receiver position during the 1988 season.

He had grabbed 27 receptions for 438 yards and two touchdowns, averaging 16.2 yards per catch, best on the team for receivers with more than five catches. Then he picked right up where he left off, steadily improving throughout spring practice and finishing up with three catches for 18 yards in the Scarlet and Gray Game April 29 in Ohio Stadium.

"Jeff did a very good job catching the football today," said Ohio State receivers coach Gene Huey. "He's done a very good job all spring, and that certainly was a follow-through from last fall."

30 Years Ago – 1994

In a surprising move, the Cincinnati Bengals signed their number one pick, "Big Daddy" Dan Wilkinson of Ohio State, just 11 days after the draft, giving him the largest contract in franchise history.

During a press conference May 5, the Bengals announced they had agreed to a six-year contract with Wilkinson and his agent, Leigh Steinberg. Terms of the contract called for Wilkinson to receive a total of \$14.4 million. He got an immediate signing bonus of \$5 million and then received an initial salary of \$965,000 for the 1994 season. That base salary escalated each year until it was worth over \$2.1 million in 1999.

The contract was comparable to that of the 1993 number one selection, quarterback Drew Bledsoe of New England. He received a six-year deal worth \$14 million with a \$4.5 million signing bonus.

"I'm so pleased and happy to be signed and a certified Bengal," Wilkinson told reporters at the press conference.

25 Years Ago – 1999

On the basketball court, Scoonie Penn was all about victories and was not afraid to take the lead in pursuing them. That was evident as, in his first year in scarlet and gray, he guided the OSU men's basketball team to its first appearance in the Final Four in 31 years.

Penn did some more leading – and set the Buckeyes up for a

lot more winning – when he publicly announced April 27 his decision to stay in the program and put off his elevation to the NBA. With the decision, Penn immediately shot the Buckeyes into the preseason top 10. He also showed younger players that leaving as soon as possible wasn't always the best thing to do. Best of all, Penn even cited education as a big factor in his move.

"We're just happy he looked at the big picture – and it just shows what type of kid he is," said OSU assistant coach Dave Spiller.

Penn hoped for even greater things on the court and to project as a lottery pick (top 13) the next season, but no matter what happened, he planned to earn his degree in sociology, possibly as early as the following March, making him the first person in his family to receive a college sheepskin.

"That's a part of all this, and that's something that could never be taken away from me," he said. "I'd love to be that person. I know one of the most important things to my family would be to see me walk across the stage and receive the degree."

20 Years Ago – 2004

An April 26 report in the Boston Globe indicated that ABC was offering to televise a one-game playoff after the Bowl Championship Series games were played.

The network, which controlled all four BCS games through 2005 and wanted exclusive bargaining rights to any championship game, was to make the proposal to representatives of the six BCS conferences during a meeting in Phoenix.

The so-called "Five Bowls Plus One" plan would have created not only a fifth BCS bowl but a one-game championship playoff game.

Two days after the report, ABC made the proposal, and it was met with skepticism.

University of Oregon president David Frohnmayer, chairman of the BCS Presidential Oversight Committee, rejected the proposal even before hearing about its potential financial benefits.

15 Years Ago – 2009

Storm Klein and Jack Mewhort, freshmen who enrolled early at Ohio State in time to take part in spring practice drills, were set to represent their country before suiting up as Buckeyes again in the fall. Klein, a linebacker from Newark (Ohio) Licking Valley, and Mewhort, an offensive lineman from Toledo St. John's, were taking part in the inaugural football world junior championships from June 27 through July 5 at Fawcett Stadium in Canton, Ohio.

The tournament, featuring players under the age of 19 and sponsored by the International Federation of American Football, included teams from the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand and Sweden.

"It's just a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Klein said. "I'm glad to be picked to be a part of it. We're going to go out there and play for the whole country, and I'm happy to be a part of it."

10 Years Ago – 2014

Ohio State was in the process of installing permanent lights

in Ohio Stadium, and a pair of April announcements ensured that the Buckeyes would be able to use them in the fall.

The Buckeyes would be under the lights in Columbus for three games. ESPN/ABC would carry OSU's games against Virginia Tech on Sept. 6 and Illinois on Nov. 1, while the Big Ten Network would air OSU's battle against head coach Urban Meyer's alma mater, Cincinnati, on Sept. 27. The game against Illinois would be the first November night game under a new conference rule that allowed league schools to play under the lights in the final month of the season.

The games had become recruiting showcases over the past few years, much to the delight of Meyer. In addition, athletic director Gene Smith had pushed for more home night games, obviously with Meyer's blessing.

"In 2005, we learned a lot," Smith said. "We weren't ready to have more night games that fast, but now we are. We can handle them, the parking and traffic and all that and how people handle themselves throughout the day. We're ready."

Five Years Ago – 2019

Since BSB last went to print, Jake Diebler was named an assistant coach on April 22 to replace Mike Schrage, who was hired as head coach at Elon University on April 5.

"Jake was highly recommended by those he has worked for as well as by many of our former players who are now playing professionally," said head coach Chris Holtmann.

Diebler, from Sandusky, Ohio, had been an assistant at Vanderbilt the previous three seasons, and the three years before that he was video coordinator at Ohio State. His brother, Jon, played for the Buckeyes from 2008-11, and their father, Keith, was an Ohio high-school coach for nearly 40 years.

"His Ohio roots and ties also were important in this process," Holtmann said. "The Diebler name certainly brings back great memories, and I know Jake will work extremely hard to create more in the future."

One Year Ago – 2023

In his four seasons as head coach at Ohio State, Ryan Day had led the Buckeyes to a trio of College Football Playoff appearances, a pair of Big Ten titles and a 45-6 overall record (including three wins in 2018).

But back-to-back losses to rival Michigan hung over Day and the Buckeyes. Athletic director Gene Smith told ESPN's Heather Dinich that he was fully behind Day and his vision for the program, calling Day his "CEO."

"My standards are high. Our team standards are high" Smith said. "So we talk about how do we get better and how do we make sure we are able to win the championships that we aspire to win? We look at each individual contest that got in the way of that, and we're trying to figure out what's the strategy to mitigate that."

"When we lose, it's highly disappointing, but I break things down and look at things objectively, and we have good conversations about what we need to do better."

OSU's Shipley Lives Out Dream Week At Masters

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For any young golfer, the thought of playing at Augusta National is a dream they hope to accomplish at some point in their professional career. Ohio State's Neal Shipley got to experience what that felt like as an amateur at the 88th Masters from April 11-14, and he topped that experience off by being the best amateur on the course, winning the Silver Cup.

He said he was nervous going into the tournament, which most first-time Masters participants likely are, but after he went out the first two days of the tournament and made the cut, he had a newfound confidence that he would be able to make it at the next level.

"I belong out there, and I can compete with those guys," Shipley said on April 18. "Before you go do it, you might think that those guys are crazy special. And obviously, they're super talented, but there's no secret sauce and it's just a lot of hard work that those guys put in. I've been doing the same thing that they've been doing so there's no reason that I can't compete."

Shipley got off to a strong start with a 1-under 71 on the first day of competition. But during the next day when winds were blowing hard, making it tough for even the best of the pros, he shot a 4-over 76, leaving him at 3-over par but well ahead of the 6-over-par cut and ensuring him a spot as the only amateur to make it to the weekend.

By being the only amateur left in the tournament, he had the Silver Cup clinched already. That made him just the second ever Buckeye to take that prize home, joining Ohio State legend Jack Nicklaus, who won the award in 1960.

Over 60 years later, Nicklaus still knew what Shipley might be feeling in his first-ever major tournament, and Shipley said the golf legend had him over to strategize before the tournament started. Since Nicklaus has so much experience at Augusta National, having won The Masters on six occasions, he helped Shipley plan out his entire round, telling him where on the course he didn't want to miss and which approaches would keep him out of those positions.

He was able to get to know the two best golfers who ever played over the weekend, getting paired with Tiger Woods on the final day since they were both far from the lead at that point. Shipley realizes how lucky he was to spend a week in that type of company.

"Definitely a dream way to get ready for a Masters," Shipley said. "Talking to Mr. Nicklaus, he's unbelievable and is just a great guy. Then playing with Tiger was awesome, too. That's just icing on the cake, really."

"It was really cool to get to know (Woods) on a more personal level and just talk about things you don't always hear about in the media. I think if we were closer to the lead, he might be a little more focused and not as chatty. But I think I really benefited learning from him because we were both like 18 shots off (Masters champion Scottie Scheffler) all week."

While winning the Silver Cup is a significant accomplishment, the success that

Shipley has had in the past month has not been much of a surprise to Ohio State men's golf head coach Jay Moseley. He's seen the type of work Shipley has put in since he first came to Ohio State in 2022 as a transfer from James Madison, where he played for three years.

"In golf, you oftentimes have players that their skill level and their confidence level are uneven," Moseley said on April 18. "Neal was a player that always believed in himself and had a ton of confidence. We knew that if he ever started getting to a skill level that could catch up to that, he was going to be a force. He just continued to put in work and put in a lot of time to really be a tremendous ball striker, and his short game was where he's made some huge progress, putting in the time that it takes to be a great putter and to be comfortable with changing speeds."

"He's just worked his tail off, and I couldn't be more proud of his professionalism and the way that he comes to this place every day. He's managed to pursue greatness through this journey, and it's been fun to watch."

Shipley's popularity continued to skyrocket after sharing Butler Cabin with Scheffler, last year's Masters winner Jon Rahm and broadcaster Jim Nantz while Scheffler received his green jacket, with his reaction to the proceedings – including continued looks toward a teleprompter even when Nantz or Scheffler were speaking – going viral.

But amid the increased attention, Shipley has remained true to his roots. His caddie at the tournament was Carter Pitcairn, who was his teammate at Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh and has been a friend for over a decade.

Now, after a week of living out a young golfer's dream, Shipley has to find out how to shift his attention back to Ohio State, where he still needs to finish out his last college season. He said his teammates are helping him stay focused.

"It's tough, especially with everything going on right now, but I have a lot of great teammates that are keeping me grounded," Shipley said. "They're keeping me really focused on the task at hand, which is (the Robert Kepler Intercollegiate) and nationals coming up."

Even if he is now back to being a Buckeye for the rest of the season, things are different for Shipley. The expectations for him after having such a big weekend at The Masters are much higher than they were before. He said he understands that is the case for him, but it's not something he pays attention to.

"I don't really feel those expectations," he said. "I'm just going out there to try and hit every golf shot as good as possible and commit to every shot. I feel like if you start thinking too big picture, you can get carried away. I'm just focusing on one thing at a time, one foot in front of the other, and that's how you really get places."

He also learned some important lessons that he's going to take with him from Nicklaus, Woods and Augusta National itself. Playing at a tough course teaches a golfer how important it is to understand before a shot that if you mishit a ball, you need to



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

MASTERFUL OUTING – Ohio State golfer Neal Shipley got the full Masters experience from April 11-14, making the cut as an amateur to win the Silver Cup and pairing with legendary golfer Tiger Woods for the final day of competition.

make sure you don't put yourself into a bad position.

"How much it matters where you miss," Shipley said. "If you miss in the wrong spot, good luck getting it inside 15 feet. It's really important to be missing in the right spots and to be managing your golf ball really well. It's not about playing perfect golf. It's about managing yourself well around the golf course and planning for bad golf shots."

"You never think about where you want to miss it. You want to think about where you want to try and hit it. But it's more about selecting clubs that aren't going to get you into bad places, clubs where if you mishit it, you want to be in a spot where you have a manageable up and down."

He is happy to be back with his Ohio State teammate Maxwell Moldovan, a senior who he said pushes him as much as anyone else to be a better golfer. The two said they both love to compete with each other, which makes them both work harder at improving their games.

"He's such a great player," Shipley said. "When I came in he was definitely better than me. It wasn't even close, and I never like to lose to anyone. It was a lot of hard work to try to catch up to him. We're at the point now where we beat up on each other

a lot and really make each other better. Iron sharpens iron."

Shipley struggled in his first event back when the Buckeyes finished second as a team in the Robert Kepler Intercollegiate from April 19-21. He posted a 14-over par in three rounds, carding a 3-over 74 in his first round, a 7-over 78 in his second round and a 4-over 75 in his final round of the tournament. It was the final event of the regular season, and the Buckeyes had the Big Ten championship, where both Ohio State (team) and Shipley (individual) finished fifth, the NCAA regionals (May 13-15) and the NCAA championship (May 24-29) to look forward to. But Shipley has more to look forward to after that as well.

He has already qualified for the U.S. Open at Pinehurst, N.C., in June because he finished second in the 2023 U.S. Amateur Tournament, and he is hoping he can have an even better showing this time around. But knowing he has that tournament to look forward to is enough for him right now.

"It feels great to have that under my belt already," Shipley said. "That's the first (United States Golf Association) championship I'm actually already qualified for. It's nice to be able to finish out my college golf and know I have that down the road."



MARCH/APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					29 @STP 7:37	30 @STP 3:07
HOME OPENING NIGHT						
31 @STP 3:07	2 OMA 6:15	3 OMA 6:15	4 OMA 6:15	5 OMA 6:15	6 OMA 2:05	
7 OMA 1:05	9 @LOU 6:05	10 @LOU 11:05AM	11 @LOU 6:35	12 @LOU 7:15	13 @LOU 7:15	
14 @LOU 1:05	16 BUF 6:15	17 BUF 12:05	18 BUF 6:15	19 BUF 6:15	20 BUF 4:05	
21 BUF 1:05	23 @SYR 6:35	24 @SYR 6:35	25 @SYR 6:35	26 @SYR 6:35	27 @SYR 1:05	
28 @SYR 1:05	30 TOL 6:15					

JUNE						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 LHV 5:05
2 LHV 1:05		4 @IND 7:05	5 @IND 1:35	6 @IND 7:05	7 @IND 7:05	8 @IND 7:05
9 @IND 1:35	11 @IOW 7:05	12 @IOW 12:05	13 @IOW 7:05	14 @IOW 7:05	15 @IOW 7:05	
16 @IOW 1:05	18 @WOR 6:45	19 @WOR 6:45	20 @WOR 6:45	21 @WOR 6:45	22 @WOR 4:05	
23 @WOR 1:05	25 OMA 7:05	26 OMA 7:05	27 OMA 12:05	28 OMA 7:05	29 OMA 7:05	
30 OMA 1:05						

AUGUST						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 SYR 7:05	2 SYR 7:05	3 SYR 7:05
4 SYR 1:05	6 @STP 8:07	7 @STP 2:07	8 @STP 8:07	9 @STP 8:07	10 @STP 7:37	
11 @STP 3:07	13 @IOW 7:38	14 @IOW 1:08	15 @IOW 7:38	16 @IOW 8:08	17 @IOW 7:08	
18 @IOW 2:08	20 IND 6:15	21 IND 12:05	22 IND 6:15	23 IND 7:05	24 IND 7:05	
25 IND 1:05	27 @GWN 7:05	28 @GWN 7:05	29 @GWN 7:05	30 @GWN 7:05	31 @GWN 6:05	

MAY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 TOL 6:35	2 TOL 6:15	3 TOL 7:05	4 TOL 4:05
5 TOL 1:05		7 @IOW 7:38	8 @IOW 1:08	9 @IOW 1:08	10 @IOW 8:08	11 @IOW 7:08
12 @IOW 2:08		14 LOU 7:05	15 LOU 12:05	16 LOU 12:05	17 LOU 7:05	18 LOU 7:05
19 LOU 1:05		21 @OMA 7:35	22 @OMA 7:35	23 @OMA 7:35	24 @OMA 7:35	25 @OMA 7:05
26 @OMA 3:05		28 LHV 7:05	29 LHV 6:35	30 LHV 7:05	LHV 7:05	

JULY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 @TOL 7:05	2 @TOL 7:05	3 @TOL 7:05	4 TOL 4:05	5 TOL 7:05	6 TOL 5:05
		9 @IND 7:05	10 @IND 1:35	11 @IND 7:05	12 @IND 7:05	13 @IND 7:05
14 @IND 1:35					19 @LOU 7:15	20 @LOU 7:15
21 @LOU 6:05		23 MEM 5:05	24 MEM 12:05	25 MEM 7:05	26 MEM 7:05	27 MEM 7:05
28 MEM 1:05		30 SYR 7:05	31 SYR 12:05			

SEPTEMBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 @GWN 1:05	2 DUR 6:15	3 DUR 6:15		5 DUR 6:35	6 DUR 7:05	7 DUR 7:05
8 DUR 1:05		10 STP 6:15	11 STP 6:15	12 STP 6:15	13 STP 7:05	14 STP 7:05
15 STP 1:05		17 @TOL 6:35	18 @TOL 12:05	19 @TOL 6:35	20 @TOL 7:05	21 @TOL 5:05
22 @TOL 2:05						

2024 PROMOTIONAL SCHEDULE

- TUE.** "TANSKY TUESDAY DIME-A-DOG" NIGHTS
- 4/2, 4/16, 4/30, 5/14, 5/28, 6/11, 6/25, 7/23, 7/30, 8/20, 9/3, & 9/10
- WED.** "MILITARY & FIRST RESPONDERS" GAMES
- 50% off all available tickets (max of 4) for active & retired Military & First Responders
"DOLLAR DAYS" - \$1 select concession items (4/3, 5/1, 5/29, 6/26 & 9/11)
"STUDENT ID NIGHT"
- Students 14 and above can present a valid ID and for \$10 receive a Reserved Seat ticket AND \$5 in Clippers Cash for food, beverage or souvenir purchase
- THU.** "COPA DE LA DIVERSIÓN"
- Clippers transform into Los Veleros on Thursday Nights
"THIRSTY THURSDAYS"
- Beverage Specials on Beer, Margaritas & Soft Drinks
"STUDENT ID NIGHT"
- FRI.** "\$5 FRIDAY"
- \$5 for a slice of Donatos Pizza & a Small Pepsi
- \$5 Beers (small) and Wine
"STUDENT ID NIGHT"
- SAT.** "PARTY-AT-THE-PARK" - Starting on MAY 18
- Pre-Game live music from 5:30p-6:45p on the Stage on the RF Concourse
- SUN.** "FAMILY DAY & SENIOR DAY"
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Newcomers Aplenty But Not Like Last Season

The time needed to assimilate 15 new players into the program was a factor in Ohio State's poor start last season, so by that measure, the Buckeyes could be in a better position to compete in the 2024-25 campaign.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

As of April 29, the roster in the fall will feature "only" 10 newcomers – seven freshmen and three transfers – to replace eight departures. That would give coach Steve Rohlik 28 players, up two from last season, meaning there is the possibility a player or two may enter the transfer portal before its closes on May 14.

The program added a pair of transfers since the previous issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin with forward Riley Thompson from Alaska Anchorage and Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) defenseman Aiden Hansen-Bukata joining Northeastern forward Gunnarwolfe Fontaine.

No Buckeyes have entered the portal, a sharp contrast to last year when eight players exited via the portal and Rohlik brought in seven transfers to go along with eight freshmen.

The Buckeyes proceeded to win one of their first 18 Big Ten games before rallying at the end of the season to reach the conference semifinals after defeating No. 5 Wisconsin twice in the best-of-three quarterfinals. OSU was 14-20-4 overall and 4-18-2 in the Big Ten.

"I don't know if it was too much to overcome," Rohlik said of the massive roster makeover. "Certainly, some things are out of your control, but that's a big

number (15), to be honest."

All other conference schools have at least three players in the current portal. Wisconsin leads the way with six, five of whom are NHL draft picks. Topping the list is junior Charlie Stramel, a 2023 first-rounder by the Minnesota Wild, who opted to attend Michigan State.

Interestingly, Badgers sophomore William Whitelaw, a 2023 third-round pick by the Columbus Blue Jackets, chose not to play in the city of the franchise that drafted him but instead joined a Michigan team that reached the Frozen Four this past season. Maybe it has something to do with the Blue Jackets having five Wolverines on their roster.

The Buckeyes didn't add anyone like Whitelaw through the portal, but Thompson adds needed size (6-4, 201) to the forwards group. The Ottawa, Ontario, native led the Alaska Anchorage freshmen and finished third on the Seawolves with 24 points, and his 15 assists in 34 games ranked second on the team. He finished the season strong with eight points (four goals, four assists) in the final four games.

Of note, Thompson in his team bio said he chose Alaska Anchorage because it is "a smaller school with amazing nature around." The enrollment is about 12,000.

Hansen-Bukata (6-0, 180) will add experience to the defense after playing 132 games in four seasons at RIT. He had 78 points (nine goals, 69 assists) and carried a plus rating every season, including 2023-24 when he was a plus-23.

The 24-year-old from Delta, B.C., recorded 31 points (five goals, 26 assists) last season after getting 32 points (two goals, 30 assists) the previous season when he was named Atlantic Hockey Best Defenseman and earned a spot on the all-conference first team. He was voted to the second team this season.

Fresh Faces

Of the seven freshmen, Noah Powell may have the highest upside after coming out of nowhere to possibly being selected in the NHL draft in late June. Playing for Dubuque (Iowa) in the United States Hockey League, his 43 goals this past regular season were more than five times as many as he had for the Fighting Saints in 2022-23.

"Sometimes the light bulb goes off at different times for different guys, but it's a credit to him for sticking with it," Dubuque coach Kirk MacDonald told The Hockey News.

What follows is a look at the incoming class in alphabetical order:

Chris Able (defenseman, 6-1, 198): It's appropriate the Libertyville, Ill., native is first because he was the earliest commit in January 2019 when he was playing for the Mission 14U Bantam Major team in Chicago. Able, 19, later spent the past three seasons with the Chicago Steel in the USHL where he totaled 43 points (10 goals, 33 assists) in 140 career games. Over the past two seasons, he was a combined plus-32.

Elite Prospects in its 2023 NHL draft guide wrote of Able: "In the offensive

zone, Able's a passer. He takes pucks in motion, then starts working laterally. As the defensive structure shifts, he passes to the open teammate. Well-timed pinches and sneaky weak side activation round out his game."

Dylan Godbout (forward, 5-11, 185): Other than Powell, Godbout has the best résumé among the freshmen. He was a 2022 Mr. Hockey nominee in the hockey-crazed state of Minnesota and won the state high school championship for Hill-Murray in 2020, the school's fourth but first since 1991 when his father and uncle were on the team.

Godbout, who turns 20 on May 4, is a former Wisconsin commit who reconsidered and chose the Buckeyes this past August.

After Hill-Murray, he played two games in the USHL for Sioux City (Iowa) in 2021-22 and has been there since, although injuries limited him to 23 games in 2023-24. For his USHL career, Godbout scored 66 points (19 goals, 47 assists) in 87 games.

James Hong (forward, 5-9, 168): Born in Seoul, South Korea, the 19-year-old moved to Canada at a young age and lived in Vancouver and Toronto before his family settled in Irvine, Calif. He began his USHL career with Waterloo (Iowa) in 2021-22 and had 49 points (26 goals, 23 assists) in 118 games before being traded to Madison (Wis.). Hong continued to produce for the Capitols this season with 17 goals and 36 assists for 53 points in 57 regular-season games.

Hong, who played four Olympic qualifying games for South Korea during the past season, was the USHL Player of the Week in early March when he had two goals and five assists in three games.

Nathan Lewis (forward, 6-5, 209): One of the bigger players in the USHL at 6-5, 209, the Chicagoan is a former Massachusetts commit who played three seasons in the USHL. He will turn 20 on July 26.

His first two seasons were with Madison, where he amassed 53 points (18 goals, 35 assists) in 105 games. After being traded to Youngstown, Lewis was injured for a long stretch of 2023-24 before playing 12 games in which he had 15 points (eight goals, seven assists). He attended the New York Rangers' development camp last summer.

"Nathan is a Swiss Army knife," Youngstown co-general manager Jason Deskins said. "He can score, pass, play on the power play and kill penalties."

Noah Powell (forward, 6-0, 201): Hailing from Northbrook, Ill., Powell began his USHL career for Dubuque in 2022-23. He posted nondescript totals of eight goals and 19 points in 53 games.

He started slowly again this season with three points in his first 14 games, but in a stretch beginning on Nov. 10, he garnered 38 goals and 28 assists for 66 points in 44 games.

Powell, 19, finished with 74 points (43 goals, 31 assists) in 61 games. Included were four hat tricks and 16 power-play goals.

Along the way he surpassed the mark of 36 goals for the Fighting Saints by Blue Jackets All-Star forward Johnny Gaudreau (2010-11) and the team record of 38 by Mike Szmatala during that 2012-13 season. Powell was passed over in 2023 in his first year of eligibility for the NHL draft, but his quick ascension should attract interest as a re-entry candidate in June.

"If somebody doesn't draft him, as big and strong as he is, then they probably should be out of a job," MacDonald said. "He's doing everything he needs to do to give himself an opportunity to get drafted."

If so, it would be another case of the Buckeyes grabbing a prospect before the more high-profile programs had a chance. That's what happened with Tanner Laczynski and Mason Lohrei, both of whom honored their commitments after being drafted and would parlay their successes at Ohio State into playing in the NHL for the Philadelphia Flyers and Boston Bruins, respectively.

Chris Romaine (defenseman, 6-0, 196): The Boston native has a brief and long-ago familial connection to Columbus. His father, Mark, played seven games in goal for the Columbus Chill of the East Coast Hockey League in their inaugural 1991-92 season.

That was his second of three pro seasons after four seasons at Providence College. The younger Romaine, 20, was also planning to play for Providence but changed his mind and announced on Jan. 18 of this year that he would be a Buckeye.

Romaine, a sixth-round pick (193rd overall) by the Colorado Avalanche in 2022, split time in the USHL during the 2022-23 season with Omaha (Neb.) and Green Bay (Wis.) to combine for 10 assists in 48 games. He increased his numbers considerably this season for Green Bay with six goals and 24 assists for 30 points in 55 games.

Jake Rozzi (forward, 6-0, 183): Having spent four seasons with four teams in the USHL, the 20-year-old accumulated 112 points (37 goals, 75 assists) in 177 regular-season games with Waterloo, Youngstown, Madison and most recently Tri-City in Kearney, Neb.

Rozzi, from Kirkland, Quebec, had a goal and eight points in five games with Madison before being traded to Tri-City in October. He added 38 points (13 goals, 25 assists) in 50 games.

In the opening game of the playoffs, he had the third postseason hat trick in Tri-City history, including the tying goal with four seconds left in a 6-5 overtime loss to Sioux Falls.

"He feathers pucks through tiny openings, backhand and forehand, with pressure and within a split-second of receiving the puck. If the lane isn't quite open, he fakes then passes. He bypasses board battles by finding a teammate working up the ice," was his evaluation in Elite Prospects' 2023 NHL draft guide.



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Mosiello Wants Buckeyes To Go Back To Basics

In the new age of baseball, stats reign supreme at every level. Advanced numbers gathered by ball- and pitch-tracking machines and high-speed cameras installed in college fields around the country have, in many places, taken over the game.

FROM THE STRETCH Greg Wilson

The professional game has shown that there is a place for those things. Player development in the minor leagues has never been better, and teams have shown the ability to turn a player's career around from small tweaks they helped a player make that came from those numbers and machines. But Ohio State head coach Bill Mosiello is growing tired of those things.

"We have all of that, but that's why our pitching is bad, isn't it? Because baseball is into all of that stuff. The most important thing is getting hitters out. It's throwing strikes. (This advanced data) has killed baseball like you've never seen," Mosiello said. "If somebody is pitching really good and somebody else is pitching really good and they're pretty even, who do we like better? Those metrics can tell you whose spin rate is better. But if a guy's got an 8.00 ERA and he's got great metrics, who cares? The game will tell you who's good."

The Buckeye pitching staff has been struggling to varying degrees at every level for much of the season. The bullpen doesn't have the depth that Mosiello would like to have, and the arms he trusts out of the bullpen are getting used too much because his weekend starters are not going deep enough into their starts.

When Ohio State (20-20, 7-8 Big Ten) traveled to Ann Arbor for a three-game series against Michigan from April 19-21 where the Buckeyes dropped two out of three games, Friday starter Landon Beidelschies threw 5 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings in an eventual 4-0 loss, junior Gavin Bruni went five innings in a big 16-1 win the next day, and freshman Gavin DeVooght also lasted just five innings on Sunday in a 7-5 defeat.

"They get their 100 pitches up by five innings," Mosiello said. "Really good teams are starting guys giving you seven or eight innings and then one game they get (a complete game) on a Friday night. Beidelschies earlier was getting some seven innings and that was awesome, but he's not giving us that (of late).

"One of your starters has to get you that seven- to nine-inning game. When you try to use your bullpen for 12-13 innings a weekend, that's super hard to go on. Those guys have been taxed so much. That gets you to a Tuesday game where we're fighting to try to finish it."

Mosiello has wondered if Beidelschies being unable to go deep into games is due to his shift from the bullpen, where he was last season, to being the Friday night starter. But Mosiello has still been pleased with how the southpaw has kept the Buckeyes in games.

"Here's how good Beidelschies is," Mosiello said. "He wasn't very good (April 19 against Michigan), yet he still only gives up two runs. He still gets you five or six innings on a day where he's not real good, and he's had a few of those."

He didn't name any specific player when he said the pitchers have been too concerned about their advanced metrics, but he does believe that the Buckeyes need to get back to the basics of getting the ball in the strike zone before they go further with those numbers.

"The only numbers that matter are in the game when you're a really good strike thrower," Mosiello said. "The tunneling pitches, and the shape design – if his breaking ball is a strike and it's OK, then it's, 'How do we get it to be better?' But you have to be good before you worry about that stuff."

Pitchers around the country during the offseason have gone to places like Drive-line, a "pitching lab" which has had many success stories for pitchers in the major leagues. But Mosiello said he doesn't take much from those places since getting into a real game is different.

"These kids are coming from these pitching labs, and it's the most hurtful thing you could ever have," he said. "He doesn't face one hitter in your lab. Then they're like, 'Well you're screwing him up, he was so good for me.' He was inside of a room with no batter. There's a home run hit off him (in a real game) and now he gets spooked by what he's trying to do.

"It's like a fighter that's punching a bag and he's got great power, and he gets into a fight. When the guy gets punched in the nose, how is he going to react? All of that stuff, I'm glad we have it, but it's changed their thoughts. All of those things are great, especially when someone's already really good at it. But until you've mastered strikes and the competitive nature, that stuff's all meaningless."

Kaczmar On Brooks Wallace Watch List

The College Baseball Foundation Awards announced a watch list for post-season awards on April 24, and Ohio State shortstop Henry Kaczmar was named as a player to watch for the Brooks Wallace Award, given annually to the most outstanding shortstop in the country.

The award is meant to recognize both hitting and defense. It is named after Brooks Wallace, a shortstop who played at Texas A&M and passed away from leukemia in 1985.

Kaczmar has put together a solid sophomore season, hitting a team-best .338 through 40 games while getting on base at a .450 clip, and hitting five home runs with 26 walks. With more opportunities at shortstop defensively, he leads the Buckeyes in errors with nine, with a fielding percentage of .951. He has 111 assists and has been part of 23 double plays.



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

LOOKING GOOD — Ohio State shortstop Henry Kaczmar was named on April 24 as a player to watch for the Brooks Wallace Award, given annually to the most outstanding shortstop in the country.

Kaczmar had a good freshman year but has only improved since then. After starting the season without a hit against Boston College in the opener, he went on an 18-game hit streak, one of the longest in Ohio State history. He said he has felt very comfortable at the plate this season.

"I'm seeing the ball well right now," he said. "When you start to think, 'Oh man, I need to get a hit here,' that's when you tend to overthink and try to do too much at the plate. I just go back to my routines."

Kaczmar is one of just four Big Ten shortstops on the watch list along with Purdue's Camden Gasser, Illinois' Cal Hejza and Rutgers' Josh Kuroda-Grauer. Maryland's Matt Shaw won the award last season and is the only player from the conference to win since the award was first handed out in 2003. Nebraska's Alex Gordon also won in 2005 when the Cornhuskers were members of the Big 12.

Mosiello Tossed At Michigan

In Ohio State's series-opening loss to Michigan on April 19, Mosiello only made it into the fifth inning before he was thrown out of the game for arguing multiple calls with the umpires.

He said the frustrations were added to the fact that a couple of Buckeyes had missed a sign before the calls he thought were "horrible" were made. There were multiple times a runner was called out on the base paths and Mosiello thought they were safe, but he felt there wasn't anything

he could do about it because of the equipment the Wolverines had.

"We got thrown out with no outs, then an umpire misses a call – horrible – in a 3-2 count, a strike 'em out, throw 'em out to end the inning," Mosiello recalled. "It's 1-0 when I get kicked out of the game in the fifth, so that was not fun to have that.

"The cameras there are horrible, so that's why nothing there is ever reviewed. They kept making calls that were going to stand."

Mosiello said the ejection came only from the frustration he felt during the game and that he never thought about the fact that it might bring the team together for a rally, which they couldn't put together in the 4-0 loss.

"I would never get thrown out for effects," he said. "Maybe my ego is in the way, but to believe that being thrown out of a game and not being in the dugout with my team is ever going to help my club, there was no, 'Hey, I'm going to fire us up.'

"Unfortunately in my career – it hasn't happened a ton – but I've never actually got kicked out of a game and all of a sudden the team ended up winning the game. It's never once happened."

Recap

Since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press, Ohio State has gone 3-5, splitting a home-and-home series with Wright State, losing two out of three to Michigan in Ann Arbor and dropping two out of three to Michigan State.

Transfer Portal Has Been Afterthought For OSU

A number of pundits proclaimed the spring portal window would be a busy one for Ohio State, in terms of outgoing players. There weren't enough footballs to go around, so one, maybe two, quarterbacks were going to bolt, and as many as three or four receivers would leave as well.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsmen

Part of me likes the fact that Ryan Day chooses to build his team through recruiting because it is the best path for long-term success. It builds culture and chemistry and competition, and teams who do it well consistently are consistently in the hunt for the national title.

The schools that choose to go the portal-heavy route as a substitute for recruiting – Colorado under Deion Sanders, Michigan State under Mel Tucker – will find the road to success much bumpier. Sure, the talent is upgraded, but it's hard to build chemistry with a rent-a-player philosophy. And if you're bringing in a ton of one-year guys, it means you have to do it all over again next year, rather than just filling in a few holes.

Give me the heavy recruiting/light portal approach every time.

As this is written, there is one day left in this portal window, and to this point the Buckeyes lost exactly three players. That's right, three. None was going to play a large role in the 2024 campaign, so it was probably in the best interest of all parties that the players start over.

Ja'Had Carter and Cedrick Hawkins were buried on the depth chart at safety coming out of last season, and when Caleb Downs came over from Alabama, it meant one more roadblock to playing time.

For Hawkins, the Florida native made a sensible choice in going with UCF as his new home, as the Knights are not especially deep in secondary talent, so he could see the field this season.

The decision of Dallan Hayden was a bit more puzzling, however. There was a lot of back-and-forth on social media in the immediate aftermath, saying that the OSU coaching staff – specifically Tony Alford – was to blame for Hayden becoming disgruntled. Buzz was that Alford was the one who wanted to keep Hayden on the shelf last season, with the expectation that TreVeyon Henderson would leave for the NFL.

Ole Miss transfer Quinshon Judkins wasn't even in the picture at the time, so on the surface it wasn't the worst idea. Hayden would have lead back duties heading into 2024 and could showcase himself to the NFL for the next couple of seasons.

But when Judkins came aboard unexpectedly and Henderson opted to return, the Hayden strategy didn't look as good. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, isn't it? Alford left for Michigan, and after Hayden announced his decision to leave, OSU fans blasted the former running backs coach for coming up with the idea and Ryan Day for agreeing to it.

Truth is that it wasn't a bad idea at the

time, but the revisionist historians have already dug in. Hayden wanted to go someplace where he could be seen, and by selecting Colorado he definitely met his goal. Only not in the way he thinks.

Colorado is definitely seen – how could it not be with Coach Prime in charge? The problem is, Coach Prime is all about Coach Prime and his two sons on the team. The Buffs have taken in over 30 transfers since the end of last season, but no matter how many offensive weapons come in, Deion is going to make sure that the offense runs through his quarterback son Shedeur. And that means not a whole lot of opportunities for Hayden.

Colorado ranked 121st in rushing attempts last season and dead last at 68.9 yards per game, and it wouldn't be any kind of shock to see the Buffs near the bottom in that stat once again.

So the question is this: Is it better to be a lead back on a team that doesn't run the ball much, or a role player on a team that will run the ball a lot in 2024? Obviously, Hayden thinks it's the former. Compounding things was the addition of Rashad Amos, a 1,000-yard back at Miami (Ohio) who had originally committed to Mississippi State before joining the Prime Time Players in Boulder. So what looked like a clear starting path for Hayden will now be a time-share. A time-share in a low-volume rushing offense. You have to wonder whether this decision will be one Hayden ends up regretting.

There was a thought that Ohio State might be a player in the spring window, at least along the offensive line. To this point, however, there hasn't been much reported about players coming in for visits, which leads one to think that the coaching staff is happy with the line as currently configured.

That appears to be a mistake, as the right side is – how shall we say it? – shaky at best. It appears to be national title or bust for the Buckeyes, and they have the roster to do it – except up front. That's the one area that could keep Ohio State from reaching its goal. If fans and the media can see it, you have to wonder why the coaching staff has such a blind spot about it.

Maybe the addition of Chip Kelly helps that group play better. He was, after all, the boss at UCLA when Justin Frye coached the offensive line and the Bruins finished top 10 nationally in total offense. Maybe the pair has a synergy that OSU fans haven't seen, and everything will be all right.

From this perch, it seems a pretty big ask for fans to have faith in a group that has underachieved for most of Day's tenure as head coach. By not grabbing more (and better) talent, the coaching staff is doing the team a disservice.

There is optimism from Buckeye Nation that this is the year Day breaks through and gets the national title monkey off his back. If Ohio State falls short, and if the offensive line is the reason, there needs to be some hard questions asked and some real self-examination done.

It just goes to show that there really is no offseason.

Not The Usual Numbers

In most of the past few seasons, Ohio



SONNY BROCKWAY

ON THE MOVE – Former Ohio State running back Dallan Hayden (5) is one of three Buckeyes to hit the portal during the spring window, joining safeties Ja'Had Carter and Cedrick Hawkins.

State has been a huge presence in the NFL draft. The Buckeyes have sent talent to the league at about every position, much of it in the first round.

This season was different, with only four Buckeyes drafted. The first-round streak continued when Marvin Harrison Jr. was selected fourth by the Arizona Cardinals, and Mike Hall Jr. did well to land in Cleveland in the second round.

But Cade Stover (fourth round) and Tommy Eichenberg (fifth) were the only other Buckeyes to hear their names called in the three-day NFL spectacle.

Even though Harrison appears to be as safe a pick as there was in this year's draft, a few whispers about his mental makeup went around after the selection. One was allegedly from a general manager who didn't believe Harrison had enough "dawg" in him to be a true superstar. After hearing something like that, I wonder how these people keep their jobs.

Could Harrison fail to meet expectations? Sure, for a variety of reasons. Lack of toughness is not one of them. A narrative was created during the Michigan game when Harrison was beaten to the ball by Will Johnson early, an interception that was parlayed into a touchdown by the Wolverines. Some felt maybe Harrison could have worked harder to break up the play or could have come back for the ball. The same was true late in the game when Kyle McCord was pressured and threw it in Harrison's direction, only to have it picked off again. Have these people not watched him play for

the last three seasons?

It could be that Harrison makes things look so effortless – his route running, the way he plucks the ball out of the air – that people think he's coasting or leaning solely on talent. The fact that he wins 50/50 balls in the end zone and that he isn't afraid to run crossing routes over the middle tells me that Harrison is plenty tough. This is just another attempt by someone to get their 15 minutes of fame, much as it was last year when people gasped about C.J. Stroud's supposedly low S2 score. How did that work out?

One humorous note coming out of the draft was the reaction – or lack thereof – of Michigan fans on social media. Prior to the draft, Wolverine Nation was saying the national champs would set a record for number of players drafted, and that there would be a number of guys taken early. Well, neither was right, and the silence from U-M fans was deafening.

Michigan ended up with 13 players selected, tops among any school for the 2024 draft. Credit should be given that more than half of U-M's draftees went in the first three rounds. But the only record set was the one where five players invited to the combine went undrafted.

Ohio State still holds the Big Ten record of 14 players selected in the 2004 draft, though there is some thought that the mark could be challenged next season by Ohio State given the amount of talent that returned for the 2024 campaign.

At Least Brutus Hasn't Left Building ... Yet

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

I remain puzzled and troubled by the fact that five members of Jake Diebler's Ohio State basketball team have elected to enter the transfer portal, with the latest departure, that of Felix Okpara, one the biggest – both in terms of size and possible impact.

As I sat down to write this, I had convinced myself that I was just naive and was looking back to the kinder, gentler days when there was no transfer portal and the core of a team that had wowed us and brought back interest in the program under Diebler would simply return and build on what they had already accomplished in an 8-3 finish to the season.

That's the way it would have been in the good old days.

I told myself that these aren't the good old days anymore. I needed to get used to the changes.

But once in front of the computer I got to feeling that I was set up for the expectation of having the core group return.

As I looked through my notes, I saw that Diebler said after the victory over Iowa on March 14, "I'll say this, we're 6-1. It's not me. We're 6-1. Our guys have come together. They've battled. We've raised our toughness and togetherness, and that's been the biggest difference (since the departure of Chris Holtmann)."

Then on March 18, Diebler talked of how he would build the team moving forward:

"We're going to continue to view through the lens of what best sets us up to achieve our goals. High school recruiting is really, really important in that. So is the transfer portal. *And then roster retention is probably of greatest importance.*" (my italics)

"(Roddy) Gayle, (Bruce) Thornton and Okpara have poured their heart and soul into this program," he added on March 26. "I think they've really embraced the way we've wanted to play, the changes we've made. They've played well in their own way, and they're growing. I'm proud of them for that. Those three are a big part of the leadership, too, of us finishing the way that we have."

"The way we played, the urgency and the aggressiveness we played with, the toughness we played with, the togetherness we played with, those are things we want to be about moving forward," Diebler said after Ohio State's three-game NIT run. "We were able to see those things serve us well in the Big Ten and in the postseason. I think that's really valuable."

And now Gayle and Okpara, along with Scotty Middleton, Zed Key and Bowen Hardman, are all gone, taking 41.2 percent of last season's scoring and 44.0 percent of the rebounds through the portal with them. Did they take the much talked about "togetherness" out the door with them as well?

As I said, I didn't see this coming. I'm left wondering if Diebler did. Did incoming AD Ross Bjork see it? Would he have pulled the trigger as quickly on promoting Diebler if he knew this exodus was on the horizon?

Is this in anyway Diebler's fault? I don't know.

Things seemed so much kinder and gentler just a few short weeks ago.

Day Has No Such Problem

Meanwhile, as BSB went to press with the portal window virtually closed, Buckeye football coach Ryan Day and his team had lost just three players to the portal this offseason.

BSB columnist Mike Wachsman offered an interesting take on football and the portal on the opposite page from here.

"Part of me likes the fact that Ryan Day chooses to build his team through recruiting because it is the best path for long-term success. It builds culture and chemistry and competition, and teams who do it well consistently are consistently in the hunt for the national title.

"The schools that choose to go the portal-heavy route as a substitute for recruiting – Colorado under Deion Sanders, Michigan State under Mel Tucker – will find the road to success much bumpier. Sure, the talent is upgraded, but it's hard to build chemistry with a rent-a-player philosophy. And if you're bringing in a ton of one-year guys, it means you have to do it all over again next year, rather than just filling in a few holes.

"Give me the heavy recruiting/light portal approach every time."

Caitlin's Contract

I know I have talked a lot about Caitlin Clark lately, but you have to admit that she has become a phenomenon the likes of Taylor Swift in recent months. Am I the only one who was surprised at the eight year, \$28 million deal she reportedly reached with Nike? I'd get a new agent because you would think she could do better.

The whole point of an endorsement deal is to draw attention to your brand or products. For four weeks or so in the midst of March Madness and even in the time before that, Clark was the most talked about athlete in America. More so than LeBron, more so than Shohei Ohtani (who had the advantage – or disadvantage – of being in the midst of a betting scandal). Everyone knew who Caitlin Clark was, and people who didn't know the difference between women's basketball and women's soccer were suddenly women's hoops fans. The sport was setting viewership records that would have never even been dreamed of just a year ago.

Now, eight years and \$28 million is a lot of money for you and me.

But let's put Caitlin's contract into perspective. Tiger Wood's initial deal with Nike back in 1996 was a five-year deal worth around \$40 million (approximately \$77.2 million when adjusted for inflation as of November 2023) according to Biography.com. It's true that golf back then was a bigger sport than women's basketball is today. But that was then. Clark has proved that the sky is the limit for the game and she is its brightest star. I will go so far as to venture a guess that more people have heard of Caitlin Clark today after the recent Caitlin blitz than had heard of Woods, coming off three consecutive U.S. Amateur championships, when he signed with Nike. Golf fans would have known who he was, but Clark has literally become a household name.

She opens up a whole new market for Nike to sell its products.

Nike's investment in Woods proved a solid one over the years (they recently parted ways). We will see if they get the same ROI on Clark.

Although Woods' deal was a shocking amount of money at the time (Michael Jordan's first contract with Nike was reportedly a five-year deal worth \$2.5 million in 1984), Woods' father, Earl, famously called it "chump change."

I wonder what the elder Woods, who passed away in 2006, would have thought of Caitlin's contract?

And in case you are wondering, Clark's WNBA rookie contract calls for her to make \$76,535 with a total of \$338,056 over her four-year rookie contract. What a bargain!

More Than Chump Change

Speaking of large contracts, did anyone besides me notice in our "From the Pages of BSB" feature in this issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin that 30 years ago former Buckeye defensive lineman "Big Daddy" Dan Wilkinson signed a six-

year, \$14.4 million contract with the Cincinnati Bengals? Wilkinson was the overall No. 1 pick in the draft.

Wilkinson agreed to a contract that called for an immediate signing bonus of \$5 million and then received an initial salary of \$965,000 for the 1994 season. That base salary escalated each year until it was worth over \$2.1 million in 1999.

This seems to me to be a tremendous amount of money for the time, especially coming from the notoriously frugal Bengals.

The note on page 29 makes an effort to put the value of the contract in perspective. The No. 1 overall pick the previous year, Drew Bledsoe, received a six-year deal worth \$14 million with a \$4.5 million signing bonus from the New England Patriots. Wilkinson received a slightly better deal than Bledsoe, and Bledsoe was a *quarterback*.

Interestingly, because of current collective bargaining terms, 30 years ago Wilkinson was making more money in salary than today's superstars. For instance, another No. 1 overall pick by the Bengals, former Buckeye Joe Burrow, made somewhere between a paltry \$535,878 and \$610,000 in base salary in his rookie year of 2020, depending on who was reporting. However, his signing bonus of \$23,880,100 dwarfed the \$5 million for Wilkinson.

Big Daddy would go on to play 13 seasons in the NFL with the Bengals, Redskins, Lions and Dolphins, finishing with 54½ career sacks.

Speaking Of Tiger

With both of them heading up the rear in the recent Masters standings, Ohio State golfer Neal Shipley, playing as an amateur, was paired with Woods in the final round of the fabled tournament.

"It was really cool to get to know (Woods) on a more personal level and just talk about things you don't always hear about in the media," Shipley said. "I think if we were closer to the lead, he might be a little more focused and not as chatty. But I think I really benefited learning from him because we were both like 18 shots off (Masters champion Scottie Scheffler) all week"

I'm pretty sure if the ultracompetitive Woods had been in the hunt, he wouldn't have had much to say to young Mr. Shipley. Of course, if Woods were in the hunt and Shipley was paired with him, that would mean that the Buckeye was in the hunt too. Those days may not be so far off.

For more on Shipley, see Greg Wilson's story on page 30 of this issue.

Farewell To Braden

I am both happy and saddened to announce that BSB editor Braden Moles will be leaving us after this issue. I am happy because he is accepting an outstanding opportunity with Ohio State's College of Arts and Sciences. I am saddened because he has been an important fixture here at BSB.

Braden worked his way up through our ranks to being one of only seven Buckeye Sports Bulletin editors in our 43-year history, a position that is not handed out lightly and a position that he earned. He helped streamline our production process as we have been forced to meet earlier and earlier deadlines, among his many accomplishments here.

He developed a passion for the OSU women's basketball program, was an outstanding poster on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum and demonstrated an excellent ability to deal with me. If he and I ever had anything more than an even mod-

est cross word, I don't recall it. He also had an uncanny ability to read my mind, often helping me finish thoughts that I was struggling to complete. It was also nice to have another pro wrestling fan on staff.

Good luck, Braden. Make us proud.

A Bold Postal Move

The calls continue to come in from readers experiencing tardy delivery of their Buckeye Sports Bulletins. The calls have been coming from all over, which suggests a postal service-wide issue, though problems in the Toledo and the northwest Ohio area continue to be the most prevalent.

We always encourage readers with delivery difficulties to go to the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, where the entire edition of BSB is posted immediately upon completion. We know this is not the same as reading your actual paper, but it is a stopgap until your paper arrives.

We also encourage readers, especially those out of state, to upgrade their subscription to first-class mail in an envelope, at least for football season. This is where we are making a bold move.

For a limited time, BSB is offering a discount on the cost of a subscription upgrade to first-class mail during football season or through football recruiting season in February. The first-class upgrade for football season, regularly \$30, will be just \$25, and the upgrade through the traditional National Signing Day in February will be just \$35, down from \$40.

The reduced rates do not cover the cost of postage, the envelope and the handling to label and insert the copy of BSB. However, we hope we can offset some of this cost with a reduction in the number of replacement papers we have to send out and a reduction in the number of subscriptions we have been bleeding because of untimely delivery.

We do ask that those of you who have traditionally upgraded to first class for football season do so now, to save us the cost of sending you a reminder postcard in the summer. And as always, we are appreciative of those of you who pay full price on promotions like this, even when presented with a discount.

To take advantage of this offer, send your check or credit card information (don't forget your security code) to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Credit card orders are accepted 24 hours a day at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862.

Business Notes

To add insult to injury, as mentioned in this space last issue, the post office is preparing to raise rates again, effective July 14 and pending Postal Regulatory Commission approval. This will be the second increase this year alone. We have not yet decided how we will respond to the upcoming boost.

Just a suggestion. If you see a BSB offer you like between now and July, you might want to take advantage of it, even if your subscription is not running out just yet. Your renewal will tack right on the end of your current subscription.

Don't forget we are offering gift subscriptions for anyone in the active military for just \$19.95. It's a chance to send a little bit of home to those who serve and protect us. For military members overseas, be sure to send their APO address. Don't forget, while it may take a few days to get BSB overseas, our Buckeye servicemen and women will have immediate and free access to each issue of BSB at BuckeyeSports.com.

We are also still offering gift subscriptions to anyone under the age of 35 for just \$19.95. Simply send your check or money orders or credit card information to the previously mentioned address or call one of the listed phone numbers. Mention either of the special gift offers.

Reds MAY LINEUP!



MAY 3-5



FRIDAY // 6:10

- Fireworks Friday Post-Game Show

SATURDAY // 6:40

- STAR WARS™ Reds T-Shirt, presented by Bally Sports (To fans in attendance, while supplies last.)
- Cincinnati Zoo Bald Eagle Flight during the national anthem

SUNDAY // 4:10

- Alexis Diaz City Connect Bobblehead, presented by Skyline Chili (To fans in attendance, while supplies last.)
- Family Discount Day, presented by Klosterman Bakery Visit reds.com/Family for a special ticket offer!
- Run the Bases Fans of all ages can line up after the game to run the bases, with a priority line for Reds Heads Kids Club members.



MAY 21-23



presented by Hershey-Kroger Sweet Spot

TUESDAY // 6:40

- 3-2-1 Tuesday*, presented by Budweiser and Bud Light \$3 12oz Beer, \$2 Hot Dog and \$1 Ice Cream Cup available at select concession stands! *Limit 2 per person per transaction
- Family Discount Day, presented by Klosterman Bakery Visit reds.com/Family for a special ticket offer!

WEDNESDAY // 6:40

- Bark in the Park, presented by Kroger, Good 'n' Fun, and DreamBone (Ticket packages available for dogs and their owners with pet activities, samples and more in the First Star Fan Zone.)

3-2-1 TUESDAYS



THURSDAY // 1:10

- Business Day Special Enjoy afternoon baseball and \$10 in concession credits for only \$20!
- Thirsty Thursday Fans can purchase a \$30 package that includes ticket and a \$10 concession credit.
- Senior Day Fans 50 and older may purchase select non-premium tickets at half price in advance of game day only.

MAY 24-26



FRIDAY // 7:10

- Fireworks Friday Post-Game Show, presented by Toyota

SATURDAY // 7:15

- Reds Phone Wallet, presented by PNC (To fans in attendance, while supplies last.)
- Cincinnati Zoo Bald Eagle Flight during the national anthem

SUNDAY // 1:40

- Reds Team Baseball Card Set, presented by Kahn's (To fans in attendance, while supplies last.)



MAY 27-29



MONDAY // 4:10

- Senior Day Fans 50 and older may purchase select non-premium tickets at half price in advance of game day only.
- Military Appreciation Day Activities will include ceremonies honoring military groups. Special ticket offers for select games for military members at reds.com/Military

TUESDAY // 6:40

- 3-2-1 Tuesday*, presented by Budweiser and Bud Light \$3 12oz Beer, \$2 Hot Dog and \$1 Ice Cream Cup available at select concession stands! *Limit 2 per person per transaction

WEDNESDAY // 1:10

- Family Discount Day, provided by Klosterman Bakery Visit reds.com/Family for a special ticket offer!
- Business Day Special Enjoy afternoon baseball and \$10 in concession credits for only \$20!
- Senior Day Fans 50 and older may purchase select non-premium tickets at half price in advance of game day only.

3-2-1 TUESDAYS



MAY 7-9



TUESDAY // 6:40

- 3-2-1 Tuesday*, presented by Budweiser and Bud Light \$3 12oz Beer, \$2 Hot Dog and \$1 Ice Cream Cup available at select concession stands! *Limit 2 per person per transaction
- Cincinnati Zoo Bald Eagle Flight during the national anthem

WEDNESDAY // 6:40

THURSDAY // 1:10

- Business Day Special Enjoy afternoon baseball and \$10 in concession credits for only \$20!
- Thirsty Thursday Fans can purchase a \$30 package that includes ticket and a \$10 concession credit.
- Senior Day Fans 50 and older may purchase select non-premium tickets at half price in advance of game day only.

3-2-1 TUESDAYS



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*Some restrictions apply. Schedule and promotions subject to change.