

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 44, No. 21

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

May 2025



SONNY BROCKWAY

**QUITE A HAUL —** National champion Ohio State tied a program record (2004) with 14 players selected in the 2025 NFL draft and had seven chosen in the first two rounds, including first rounders (left to right): wide receiver Emeka Egbuka (No. 19, Arizona), offensive lineman Donovan Jackson (No. 24, Minnesota) and defensive tackle Tyleik Williams (No. 28, Detroit). Offensive lineman Josh Simmons (not pictured) also went in the first round to Kansas City at No. 32.

**By GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

The story of Ohio State's seniors coming back for one more season, for one more chance to complete their three goals, has been told repeatedly. They succeeded by winning the national championship at the end of a season that had some struggles on the way to the title.

But the other side of that decision that they each made wasn't talked about quite as much. That was to forgo the draft and either try to raise their draft stock or risk falling further than they would have in the year prior.

For some of them, that was the entire point. Will Howard came to Ohio State

through the portal with the idea that he wanted to not only win a championship but also become a better NFL prospect. He was open about that when he first got to Columbus.

"I feel like 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 last January. "And I feel like I played a lot of football in my time at K-State, but I only had one year where I was the true starter."

Cody Simon is a different example of that. He spent the 2023 season as a backup to former Buckeye Tommy Eichenberg, who made the decision to leave Ohio State rather than return for his final year of eligi-

bility. Simon wasn't likely to be drafted, so his choice was a little easier to make, but he still had the goal of becoming a better prospect.

For Simon, the extra year worked out just about as well as he could have hoped. Just one year earlier, Eichenberg was selected with the No. 148 overall pick in the fifth round of the draft to the Las Vegas Raiders. After one year of starting at the Mike position, Simon worked his way up to the No. 115 overall pick, being selected by the Arizona Cardinals in the fourth round.

He's joining former Buckeye wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. and left tackle Paris Johnson Jr. in Arizona. Simon is excited that he gets to be with some of his former teammates.

"I talked to Marv when he came to the (Ohio State) pro day," Simon told the Cardinals' official team website. "I'm just so excited to be with some Buckeyes and with some guys I'm familiar with. It's an awesome opportunity."

But that decision to come back didn't work out for everyone. There were also players such as cornerback Denzel Burke who seemingly had more to lose by returning for another year than they had to gain from it. Burke finished his resurgent ju-

nior season as a player who could have been taken in the first or second round.

He looked the part in the 2024 season up until a disaster of a game when the Buckeyes went to Oregon, where he struggled in man coverage and gave up multiple deep completions that ultimately led to OSU losing to the Ducks by just one point.

Burke would recover after that performance defensively, but his draft stock wouldn't. He was taken in the fifth round with the No. 174 overall pick, also by the Cardinals. Burke is a Phoenix native, so he will be joining his hometown team.

Regardless, Burke is still off to the NFL—albeit with a much smaller signing bonus than he could have had – and now he has the chance to prove himself at the next level, which he did early on as a Buckeye when he started as a true freshman.

The impassioned Burke isn't letting that get to him, however. He has never had any issue being self-motivated, and that won't be a problem moving forward. And he still has some very lofty goals.

"I know what it takes to be a complete football player," Burke said after being draft-

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### The Rivalry Is Dead

I seem to be on everyone's mind here at the BSB. I'm guessing my letter (BSB Letters, Feb. 15) hit a little too close to home. The truth hurts, as they say. Here's a reader's poll suggestion for BSB: rank all six Ohio State football AP national champions. Not which team would win head-to-head, but who had the best season. If anyone ranks the 2024 team higher than sixth, then I'm right, and beating Michigan and winning the conference doesn't matter anymore.

ESPN did a documentary titled "Catholics vs. Convicts" about that classic 1988 game (and T-shirt) between No. 4 Notre Dame and No. 1 and defending national champs Miami (Fla.). Very late in the game, Miami scored a touchdown to make it 31-30 in favor of Notre Dame. Miami had to make a decision: go for two points and the win or kick the much safer extra point, tie the game, and remain No. 1. Miami went for two and didn't make it. The season ended with Notre Dame at 12-0 and No. 1, Miami at 11-1 and No. 2. Leon Searcy was a member of that Miami team and was interviewed for the documentary. He was asked about that decision to go for two points.

His response: "If, for the rest of my life, I had to look at a ring that said, 'National Champs 11-0-1,' I wouldn't wear the f—ing thing." And he's talking about a tie to a

great team, not a loss to a barely above-average team! That's my kind of guy. That's old school. That's not new school like Ross Bjork and Ryan Day. You have to beat your rival.

In the April 5, 2025, BSB Jordan Hancock, a four-year Buckeye with no gold pants, was quoted regarding the 2024 loss to Michigan as "the best loss I've had in my life." Can anyone imagine Woody Hayes or Earle Bruce or Urban Meyer or Chris Spielman or any of a thousand other former Ohio State players or coaches making such a statement? As I said before, a truly great team would not have needed to lose to a barely above-average Michigan team to win the national championship. The rivalry is dead.

**Michael Walrath**  
**Three Forks, Mont.**

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



## From The Message Board

**Former Tennessee starting quarterback Nico Iamaleava sent shockwaves through the college football world this spring when he entered the transfer portal over a dispute with the university regarding his NIL earnings. Now that Iamaleava is off to UCLA, we asked subscribers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what they make of how this situation unfolded, and what they think this says about the current state of the sport and college athletics as a whole.**

"He's going to be hit with a 13 percent tax rate in California compared to no taxes in Tennessee. He may just break even. But this demonstrates the motives and greed that have crept into college sports. It's not pretty. I hope we see some guidelines from the NCAA soon. They seem to be pretty worthless. The whole thing stinks."

— PeyoteBuck

"I think this situation was inevitable, given the current absence of regulations around NIL."

— Terrier Buck

"Maybe the attention this situation has drawn will motivate changes in the NIL system. But I doubt it. Athletes who play today should thank their lucky stars that they were born at the right time because at some point, there has to be changes to the wild, wild West NIL system, and these players are cashing in before that happens. Or is this just the beginning?"

— Poster That Harley Built

"Like 'Opening Pandora's Box,' NIL and the portal have initiated unforeseen and sometimes problematic consequences. It is what it is. We are not getting the genie back in the bottle. At least so far, it appears that Ohio State

has been able to 'manage' these events. However, I doubt they always bat 100 percent in all cases. Going forward, either the conferences or the NCAA must make some sort of controlling rule changes in an attempt to manage the downside. Public contracts and/or more transparency in the recruiting process may be some possible solutions."

— BuckeyeScott

"This age of NIL plus portal makes building a team very difficult. The idea of 'team' takes a very creative leader to build the structure of keeping good players that can be better, keeping the outstanding players from moving and making room at the downside for portal transfers that fit the team philosophy. I believe Coach Day did that this year. FSU and Miami did not. They threw money, but players did not respond. Which leads me to Nico. He is an 'I' player. You cannot build a team with 'I' players. It will be interesting to see where UCLA goes this year. I did read that Nico's brother also sold himself to UCLA after playing at Arkansas. He also started cashing NIL checks. Now, Arkansas is suing to retrieve its NIL money. Welcome to another litigation escalation. Both examples led by a daddy-agent."

— John Lanning



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# Looking Ahead To OSU's 2025 Season

By the time you read this, there will be fewer than 90 days before the Big Ten convenes in that most Big Ten of cities Las Vegas for its annual season kickoff festivities. Another month after that, Ohio State kicks off defense of its national championship against one of the teams it vanquished on the way to that title.

Unlike last season, when a chest filled with NIL treasure enticed several potential high NFL draft picks to return for one more season and the transfer portal provided such talent as Will Howard, Quinshon Judkins and Caleb Downs, the Buckeyes have a notable number of holes to fill in the starting lineup.

That includes, of course, the quarterback position, which contains a high level of upside and a low level of experience.

As for the schedule itself, the Buckeyes jump squarely into the fire before things appear to turn decidedly more friendly with a pair of winnable nonconference games followed by the first four conference games against opponents that have combined since 2010 to win just once in 24 tries against the Buckeyes.

Here are thumbnail previews of Ohio State's opponents for the upcoming season.

**Aug. 30 vs. Texas** – Defense of the national championship gets off to a blockbuster start with a rematch of January's Cotton Bowl, a 28-14 OSU win that will be forever cemented in Buckeye history by Jack Sawyer's scoop and score.

In what is likely to be a top-three matchup, Texas could be only the fourth top-five opponent for an Ohio State season opener in history. The others are Penn State (1978), Alabama (1986) and Notre Dame (2022).

The Longhorns are making only their second-ever visit to Ohio Stadium. Their first came in 2005 when Texas QB Vince Young threw a touchdown pass with 2:37 remaining and led his team to a 25-22 victory.

**Sept. 6 vs. Grambling** – Since legendary Grambling head coach Eddie Robinson retired in 1997 after piling up 408 career victories, the Tigers have been mostly known for their raucous marching band, perhaps the only one that could give Ohio State a run for “Best Band in the Land” billing.

On the field, the Tigers are coming off a 5-7 record in 2024 and haven't had a winning season since 2019. Some Big Ten fans might remember head coach Mickey Joseph, who filled out the 2022 season as head coach at Nebraska after Scott Frost was fired.

Since a 76-0 wipeout of Florida A&M in 2013, the Buckeyes have played only one FCS opponent, and that was a 35-7 rout of Youngstown State in 2023.

**Sept. 13 vs. Ohio** – Before you summarily dismiss the Bobcats, it's worth pointing out they are the defending MAC champions who topped off a school-record 11-win season with a 30-27 win against Jacksonville State in the Cure Bowl.

Fourth-year head coach Tim Albin parlayed his team's success into the head coaching job at Charlotte, but successor Brian Smith inherits a roster that includes returning starting QB Parker Navarro, who ran and threw for 3,477 yards and 31 touchdowns last season.

Since the late 1990s when OSU began filling out its nonconference schedule with MAC teams, the Buckeyes are a perfect 30-0 against the conference, outscoring the opposition by an average of more than 33 points per game.

**Sept. 27 at Washington** – The Huskies found rough sledding in their first season as Big Ten members, finishing with a 4-5 conference record. Part of the problem was a subpar offense that ranked 12th in the 18-team league in both rushing and points per game.

Second-year head coach Judd Fisch ex-

pects those numbers to get better with dual-threat QB Demond Williams Jr., who spent most of last year as a backup after his transfer from Arizona. Williams threw for 374 yards

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

and four scores during a 35-34 Sun Bowl loss to Louisville.

Husky Stadium is one of the most picturesque venues in college football, one the Buckeyes have visited six times over the years. They last trekked to the shores of Lake Washington in 2007 and came home with a 33-14 win.

**Oct. 4 vs. Minnesota** – A little closer scrutiny of Minnesota's 8-5 season in 2024 reveals three of those five losses were by three points or fewer. Still, there are those who believe head coach P.J. Fleck might be on the hot seat after eight seasons with the Golden Gophers.

Fleck's 56 victories place him fifth all-time at Minnesota, and he is a perfect 6-0 in bowl games. But with the exception of 2019, when the Gophers won 11 games and finished as a top-10 ranked team for the first time in 57 years, the perception is that Fleck has presided over a middle-of-the-pack Big Ten team that has plateaued.

One way to change that perception is to figure out a way to beat Ohio State. Dating back to 1969, Minnesota has won just twice in its last 43 meetings with the Buckeyes.

**Oct. 11 at Illinois** – Every once in a while, the Fighting Illini come out of hibernation. Their 6-3 conference record last year was their best since 2007, and they ended the season as a ranked team for the first time since finishing No. 10 in 1989.

The problem in Champaign has been sustained success. Illinois hasn't enjoyed back-to-back winning seasons since 2010-11 when Ron Zook was head coach.

A favorable 2025 schedule might change all that, however. The Illini miss the likes of Penn State, Oregon and Michigan while their slate is populated with USC, Purdue, Rutgers, Maryland, Wisconsin and Northwestern, teams that combined to go 14-40 in conference play last season.

**Oct. 18 at Wisconsin** – After luring Luke Fickell away from Cincinnati with a seven-year contract worth an average of at least \$7.8 million, it would be fair to say Wisconsin might be suffering from a slight case of buyer's remorse.

After a 7-6 finish in 2023, the Badgers lost their final five games to drop to 5-7 a year ago and missed a bowl-game invitation for the first time in 23 years. It was also a season filled with staffing upheaval that included the departures of senior advisor Jack Del Rio, who resigned midseason after an OWI arrest, and offensive coordinator Phil Longo, who was fired after 10 games.

Jeff Grimes, who has been an OC at BYU, Baylor and most recently Kansas, will try to pump some life into an attack that ranked 13th in the Big Ten in scoring and 14th in passing last season.

**Nov. 1 vs. Penn State** – Once again, pundits are predicting great things for Penn State as it comes off a program-record 13-win season that included a College Football Playoff first- and second-round win.

Unfortunately for the Nittany Lions, all of that success accompanied an eighth straight regular-season loss to Ohio State, a 45-37 loss in the Big Ten Championship Game to Oregon,

and a 27-24 loss to Notre Dame in a College Football Playoff semifinal.

James Franklin begins his 12th season in Happy Valley with veteran quarterback Drew Allar at the controls, but the defense takes a huge hit with the departure to the NFL of All-America edge rusher Abdul Carter.

**Nov. 8 at Purdue** – One has to wonder the fate of programs such as Purdue in the expanded Big Ten. The Boilermakers struggled to a 1-11 campaign last season, including a winless conference record for the first time since 2013.

All of that losing cost second-year head coach Ryan Walters his job, and in his place the school hired Barry Odom, who was 19-8 in two seasons at UNLV. At last count, Odom had lost 35 players through the portal, including star tight end Max Klare, who is now at Ohio State.

But while the portal taketh away, it also giveth with nearly 30 players joining the Boilermakers including defensive back Tony Grimes, who played for Odom at UNLV after playing at North Carolina and Texas A&M.

**Nov. 15 vs. UCLA** – Speaking of transfers, the Bruins made a big slash in April when they landed former Tennessee quarterback Nico Iamaleava via the portal. Iamaleava was last seen getting his helmet cracked during the Volunteers' 42-17 loss that began Ohio State's march to the national championship.

As you are no doubt aware by now, when Iamaleava tried to hold up Tennessee for more NIL money, the Vols balked and the quarterback walked. He should help a UCLA offense that ranked a lowly 16th in the Big Ten in scoring last season.

The Buckeyes and Bruins have met nine times over the years, but not in Columbus since 1999 when Ohio State rolled to a 42-20 victory. Current UCLA head coach DeShaun Foster rushed for 51 yards for the Bruins in that game.

**Nov. 22 vs. Rutgers** – I'm sure the Scarlet Knights are thrilled to be back on the OSU schedule after a one-year respite. Since joining the Big Ten, Rutgers is winless in 10 tries against the Buckeyes and has been outscored by a 512-114 margin.

Greg Schiano has not been able to replicate the kind of success he had during his first stint as head coach of the Knights when the program was a member of the Big East. His five seasons since returning to Piscataway have produced a lowly conference record of 13-32.

The offense took a hit with RB Kyle Monangai taking his 1,279 yards and 13 TDs to the NFL. But starting QB Athan Kaliakmanis returns after throwing for 2,696 yards, the first Rutgers quarterback in a decade to top the 2,000-yard mark.

**Nov. 29 at Michigan** – The cold, hard truth is that the Wolverines have won four in a row during the series. But if you know anything at all about the history of the series, it is one filled with streaks.

There have been nine times that one team or the other enjoyed a streak of at least four wins in a row with Michigan holding the series record with a nine-game winning streak from 1901-09. But the Buckeyes are close behind with an eight-game streak that began in 2012, and they also have a seven-game streak that ran from 2004 through 2010.

Unfortunately, the CFP will continue to erode the importance of the traditional regular-season finale, but that could pave the way for a more important meeting during the play-off itself. Will this be the first year for that? Stay tuned.



# OHIO STATE INSIDER

## Locklyn Sued By Oregon For Breach Of Contract

The University of Oregon is suing Ohio State running backs coach Carlos Locklyn due to a dispute over the buyout amount the school claims is owed by its former coach.

According to a report from OregonLive, Oregon filed a civil suit this spring against Locklyn – who left the Ducks on April 1, 2024, to join the Buckeyes – claiming that he was contractually obligated to pay Oregon a buyout of 50 percent of his remaining salary, which was approximately \$400,000, within a 60-day period after his departure but has yet to pay the school.



Carlos Locklyn

Oregon claims that when it contacted Locklyn's agent to request payment of the buyout, Locklyn "took the position that the amount due is \$200,000." The lawsuit states that a personal check for \$200,000 was received by Oregon on May 28, 2024, and the school informed him that it "would not accept payment as full satisfaction of the amount due."

Locklyn's attorney, John Berg, claims Oregon is making an "untenable interpretation" of the contract.

"Coach Locklyn lawfully terminated his employment agreement with the University of Oregon and promptly delivered a check fully satisfying any possible obligation under the buy-out provision," Berg said. "The

University declined the check and now asserts an untenable interpretation of the agreement. We welcome the opportunity to present the facts to a judge and are confident the litigation will be resolved to Coach Locklyn's satisfaction."

An Oregon athletics spokesman told both The Oregonian and Oregon Live that Locklyn's buyout of \$366,667 – \$400,000 prorated based on a Feb. 1, 2024, to Jan. 31, 2025, contract year – was accurate. They are also seeking 9 percent interest and stated that until the full amount is paid Locklyn "will be unjustly enriched to the University's detriment."

## Downs, Smith Named Preseason All-Americans

Ohio State safety Caleb Downs and wide receiver Jeremiah Smith are widely regarded as two of the better players – if not the two best – in all of college football, and that sentiment was expressed on April 16 when Pro Football Focus' Max Chadwick selected the two Buckeyes to his preseason All-America team.

Smith earns the honor after a sensational 2024 season in which he smashed all of Cris Carter's single-season freshman receiving records and led the Buckeyes to a national championship. Chadwick said that it was an easy decision to put the Buckeyes' No. 1 wideout on his list.

"As a true freshman, Smith was the most valuable receiver in the nation according to PFF's wins above average metric," he wrote. "His 89.8 receiving grade was third in the nation and over four points higher than any other returning wideout."

"Smith is an athletic freak at 6-3, 215 pounds and has an incredibly refined skill set for someone who turned 19 years old in November. Not only is he the best returning receiver in the country, but he's also the best returning player in college football."

Downs joins Smith on the list after a standout first season with the Buckeyes in which he was named the program's 34th-ever unanimous All-American, totaling 81 tackles along with 7½ tackles for loss, six pass breakups, two interceptions, a quarterback hurry and one-half sack.

## 2025 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2024 Record, Bowl Result
Aug. 30	TEXAS	TBA	TBA	13-3, 28-14 loss to Ohio State (CFP Semi.)
Sept. 6	GRAMBLING	TBA	TBA	5-7, not eligible
Sept. 13	OHIO	TBA	TBA	11-3, 30-27 win over Jax State (Cure)
Sept. 27	at Washington	TBA	TBA	6-7, 35-34 loss to Louisville (Sun)
Oct. 4	MINNESOTA	TBA	TBA	8-5, 24-10 win over Va. Tech. (Duke's Mayo)
Oct. 11	at Illinois	TBA	TBA	10-3, 21-17 win over South Carolina (Citrus)
Oct. 18	at Wisconsin	TBA	TBA	5-7, not eligible
Nov. 1	PENN STATE	TBA	TBA	13-3, 27-24 loss to Notre Dame (CFP Semi.)
Nov. 8	Purdue	TBA	TBA	1-11, not eligible
Nov. 15	UTLA	TBA	TBA	5-7, not eligible
Nov. 22	RUTGERS	TBA	TBA	7-6, 44-41 loss to Kansas State (Rate)
Nov. 29	at Michigan	TBA	TBA	8-5, 19-11 win over Alabama (ReliaQuest)

Chadwick said Downs made his All-America team due to his ability to produce all over the field.

"Downs, who transferred from Alabama last offseason, has been the most valuable safety in college football over the past two seasons, according to PFF's wins above average metric," Chadwick wrote. "His 91.7 PFF grade in that span is second among all FBS safeties, while his 91.2 coverage grade is third. Downs is also a fantastic run-defender, leading all players on this list with 35 run-defense stops and an 88.5 run-defense grade since 2023."

"Downs is an incredibly versatile player who can thrive at free safety, slot corner or in the box. Not to mention, he's a dynamic punt returner as well."

Smith and Downs join an All-America list that includes notable players such as Alabama wide receiver Ryan Williams, Clemson quarterback Cade Klubnik, Notre Dame running back Jeremiyah Love and Texas edge rusher Colin Simmons, among others.

## Judkins Appreciative Of His Time With OSU

Although he was in Columbus for only one season after transferring from Ole Miss, the Buckeyes' culture made quite the impression on former running back Quinshon Judkins. In an April 22 appearance on ESPN's "SportsCenter," Judkins detailed what it's like to be inside the walls of the

Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

"You'll forever be a Buckeye," Judkins said. "When you go to Ohio State, you don't know what it truly means to be a part of that culture. But when you step into the locker room, you see the community, you get involved and realize how valuable everything is, how passionate the fans and the coaches are. You appreciate everything and everything it takes to get to that point and every part of the process."

Judkins, who was selected by the Cleveland Browns in the second round (No. 36 overall) on April 25 after rushing for a team-high 1,060 yards and 14 touchdowns with the Buckeyes last year, described the Ohio State culture as one of a kind.

"You go there, you embrace the culture," Judkins said. "It takes a special type of person to be a part of an Ohio State team."

Embracing that culture allowed him to coexist and flourish in a two-person backfield along with TreVeyon Henderson, who also tallied over 1,000 yards rushing and 10 touchdowns to be selected just two picks after Judkins in the second round of the draft (No. 38 overall) by the New England Patriots.



Quinshon Judkins

## Meyer Says Promising Season Ahead For OSU

Despite Ohio State losing productive players such as Judkins and Henderson to the NFL this offseason, former Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer still believes his old team is set up for success in 2025, at least in the regular season.

During a segment on his "The Triple Option" podcast released April 16, Meyer said the Buckeyes have successfully reloaded for the upcoming season, and he predicted them to match their regular-season win total from 2024 of 10 wins.

"They recruited at a whole different level than anyone else in college football in the last 15 or 20 years," Meyer said while explaining his prediction. "I thought we always recruited well. I see these rosters – my gosh, look at what they've done. They had a good spring game. They love the quarterback (Julian) Sayin."

Meyer went on to say that perhaps the only concern for the Buckeyes heading into this season may be the players adjusting to

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# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 4

new defensive coordinator Matt Patricia's scheme after being in Jim Knowles' system for three straight seasons. He thinks this will be the "biggest change" for the team because new offensive coordinator Brian Hartline's playbook will look similar to Chip Kelly's and Ryan Day's from previous seasons.

Meyer also touted the talents of the projected starting quarterback Sayin, who he said has noticeable arm strength and showed great anticipation on his throws this spring.

When putting that all together, the former OSU coach thinks this young Buckeye squad will have grown enough as a team to put themselves in the 12-team College Football Playoff for the second consecutive season by the time The Game rolls around on Nov. 29.

"A 10-2 regular season is actually a hell of a season with a new team," Meyer said. "You know what a new team is by the end of the year? It's not a new team anymore. It's an old team. They'll be a veteran team by the time they get to Ann Arbor."

## CFP Dates Released For Upcoming Season

The College Football Playoff and ESPN officially announced on April 22 the dates, kickoff times and broadcast information for the quarterfinal round, semifinal round and national championship game for the 2025-26 season. The dates and kickoff times have yet to be determined for the

first round, although they did reveal that ESPN will broadcast four games and TNT two.

The CFP quarterfinal round will begin with one game on New Year's Eve, which will be the Cotton Bowl at AT&T Stadium. Kickoff is set for 7:30 p.m. Fans will then be treated to a triple-header of quarterfinal games on New Year's Day, starting with the Orange Bowl at noon, the Rose Bowl at 4 p.m. and the Sugar Bowl at 8 p.m. All three New Year's Day games will kick off at different times from last year.

"All three bowls shifting their start times allows us to place each game in an ideal window on New Year's Day and provide the optimal viewing experience," said Rich Clark, executive director of the College Football Playoff. "New Year's Day and college football are synonymous with each other, and these changes only strengthen that relationship."

The semifinals will not deviate from last year's scheduling, with one game being played on Thursday, Jan. 8 and the other kicking off on Friday, Jan. 9. The locations are different, though, with the Fiesta Bowl hosting the first game and the Peach Bowl the second.

The national championship game will then be played on Monday, Jan. 19, at the Orange Bowl in Miami, with kickoff set for 7:30 p.m. This will mark the first time since 2021 that the championship game will be at Miami's Hard Rock Stadium, where Ohio State fell to Alabama 52-24.

Each of the quarterfinal, semifinal and championship round games will air on ESPN.

## Bjork Calls For CFB Schedule Change

Staying on the topic of scheduling, in a meeting with the leaders of the College Football Playoff on April 22, Ohio State athletic director Ross Bjork called for a massive overhaul of the scheduling of games on the football calendar, citing it as a necessary change for the sport to continue to flourish with expected expansion coming to the postseason in the upcoming years.

Under the current schedule in college

football, Bjork oversaw a national championship run with the Ohio State football team in his first full year as head of the athletic department in January 2025. However, with the current season not starting until the final weekend of August and stretching to mid-January, an expansion could have the final weekend of January being the wrapping-up point of the college football campaign.

"We've had so many disruptions over the last five-plus years that I think the time is now to not be reactive, be proactive," Bjork told ESPN. "I felt it was important to lay that out with everyone in the room to say, separate from the (College Football Playoff) process, if we don't fix our calendar as an industry, then we're going to continue to have unintended consequences."

Bjork cited the return to classes for Ohio State on Jan. 6 as being a conflict with academics due to the threshold of 20 hours a week of practice allowed while classes were in session. With some athletes missing class due to being in the midst of a College Football Playoff run, some had to apply for waivers outside of the countable athletically related activities (CARA), which enforces that 20-hour threshold.

"When you don't have class, there is no limit to CARA hours," Bjork said. "It created some disadvantages. It all goes back to what's countable CARA hours (in the) NCAA structure. The portal is the next big conversation after the (House v. NCAA NIL case) and truly what kind of rules can we set? Will we have the authority around transfer rules to set some parameters?"

With the college football portal now closed and no true amendments made to the upcoming schedule, college football fans may continue to see their favorite team win a national championship just a few weeks out from the Super Bowl if no changes are made before the expansion of the playoffs.

## Bjork Wants New Hockey Rink, Changes To VCA

In a separate interview with The Lantern on April 17, Bjork also discussed making potential changes to the venues hosting Ohio State winter sports. He most notably outlined his commitment to building a new ice rink that would hold both the men's and women's hockey programs.

"We're working on these pieces, and that will give both programs a jolt in a big way," Bjork said.

There are several steps that need to be taken before the construction could start on the project, including raising enough funds, obtaining approval from the Ohio State board of trustees to hire an architect and getting approval on a potential arena design. Bjork didn't give a completion date but is hopeful the project will launch in the next few months.

"Get the funding launched, get our capital campaign launched. We're having conversations with donors, but until we have really the true pathway, you really can't have a true conversation and expect a commitment," Bjork said. "So, we need the outline by this summer, and that will allow us to press the pedal and try to get this thing off the ground."

Building a new ice hockey arena has been a major topic of discussion for Ohio State of late, especially due to the women's team's recent success under head coach Na-

dine Muzerall. Muzerall said last year that her program – which currently plays in the 64-year-old and 1,415-seat OSU Ice Rink – deserves better facilities.

"Does it hurt recruiting? Absolutely," Muzerall said of the OSU Ice Rink, which she called "the ugliest rink in the country."

"We've lost some good players because of it. I don't want to lose players due to a facility because we're the best athletic department in the country, and we should have the best facilities."

Bjork also detailed possible changes that could improve the atmosphere and gameday experience at Value City Arena for the men's and women's basketball programs.

"We have a lot of things in motion," Bjork said. "We need to make Ohio State basketball 'cool,' if you will – for students, for recruits, for our fans. So we're working on a lot of things regarding gameday atmosphere."

Among possible changes, Bjork hopes to alter the lighting so that the court looks more like a stage. He also wants to get more students involved and experiment with the use of music for home games.

"We're going through a whole iteration around our gameday atmosphere because we need to embrace Ohio State basketball," Bjork said.

## OSU Ranks Third In Directors' Cup Standings

Boasting strong seasons in sports such as football, women's hockey and men's and women's soccer, Ohio State's athletic department ranked third in the Learfield Directors' Cup standings through the winter season. The Directors' Cup honors institutions that achieve athletic success across their sports programs.

Ohio State's 794.75 total points are behind only second-place North Carolina, which has 896.75 points, and first-place Stanford, which has 904.00 points. Penn State (750.00) and Wisconsin (693.70) round out the top five.

The Buckeyes ended the winter season with 13 fall or winter programs that competed in either NCAA championships or College Football Playoff and therefore contributed points to Ohio State's standing in the Directors' Cup. Six of those teams were women's programs, including the fall sports of soccer (ninth place, overall) and cross country (32nd) and the winter sports of ice hockey (second), swimming and diving (14th), basketball (17th) and gymnastics (17th).

There were also six men's teams that contributed, including the national champion football Buckeyes and soccer (third) in the fall and wrestling (fifth), gymnastics (seventh), ice hockey (ninth) and swimming and diving (19th). The coed fencing team also contributed by finishing sixth at the NCAA championships.

Ohio State is looking to return to the top five of the Directors' Cup standings in Bjork's first year leading the athletic program after finishing 15th in the 2023-24 standings due to a scoring error that was uncovered late in the season which reduced the Buckeyes' scoring point total to 981.00 points. Ohio State has finished in the top five of the Directors' Cup standings eight times since its establishment in 1993-94, six of those coming with Gene Smith as athletic director (2010-11, second; 2011-12,

## A Sacred Trust since 1850



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# The Last Print Issue Of BSB Until June 3

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 3 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 readers having continuing mail problems. This electronic service, while not a substitute for your print edition, is a stopgap as your paper winds its way through the postal system and is also free

to subscribers.

BSB is still offering a chance to upgrade your subscription to first-class mail in an envelope for football season at the current price of \$30 – \$40 through football recruiting in February – in advance of the upcoming postal increase on July 13. Just give us a call at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862 to order by credit card. Or you can send your check, money order or credit card information (don't forget your three or four-digit security code) to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Be sure to mention either the "Football Upgrade" or the "Recruiting Upgrade."

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fourth; 2015-16, second; 2016-17, second; 2021-22, fourth; 2022-23, third).

## McCord Talks U-M Loss With Gruden

Shortly before hearing his name called in the NFL draft, former OSU and Syracuse quarterback Kyle McCord appeared in an episode of former NFL head coach and current Barstool Sports personality Jon Gruden's "Gruden's QB Class."

While reflecting on notable moments from his collegiate career in the 50-minute video posted to Barstool's YouTube page, McCord revisited Ohio State's 30-24 loss to Michigan in 2023 with Gruden.

McCord's two interceptions in the loss were the biggest topic of discussion. According to Gruden, the first interception thrown by the Buckeye signal-caller – a first-and-10 pass intended for star wideout Marvin Harrison Jr. and intercepted by former Michigan cornerback Will Johnson – was Harrison's fault.

"I personally put that interception on Harrison," Gruden said. "He's got to (cross the face of the defender) in my world."

McCord, instead of blaming Harrison, described the first interception as a miscommunication, leading Johnson to cut in front of the Biletnikoff Award winner and set up Michigan for its first touchdown score.

But he did say that his second interception – one that was thrown in the game's final seconds, ending any hope of a potential game-winning touchdown drive trailing 30-24 – might not have happened if not for a late review.

"The play before (the interception), I threw a dig and (former Ohio State receiver Julian Fleming) caught it and they punched it out and we recovered it, so we were going tempo and we called switch verticals and we had them (messed up)," McCord said. "We're getting on the ball, and they called a timeout to review it right before, so they had an opportunity to scheme it up and then

we changed the play call, and the rest is history."

McCord's late interception would be the final pass he would throw as a Buckeye. He would enter the transfer portal nine days after the loss before ending up at Syracuse and setting the ACC passing record in his senior season.

## Michigan Transfer Already Dislikes Buckeyes

New Michigan offensive tackle Brady Norton is entering Ann Arbor with some immediate hostility toward Ohio State. In a media availability on April 15, Norton, a transfer from Cal Poly who was offered by the Buckeyes on Dec. 16, disliked how Day and Co. recruited him out of the portal.

"(Ohio State) called me in the hotel room of my visit (to Michigan) to offer me," Norton said. "They texted me before Michigan did, really, and then just kind of ghosted me out of the blue. And all of a sudden when Michigan offered me, they wanted me, so I kind of thought that was a little odd. Then I just came here and I was like, yeah, it's home. F— those guys."

According to Norton, it was after he got off the phone with the Buckeyes to receive their offer that he made his decision to commit to Michigan.

"I took the offer obviously, but then once I hung up, I was thinking about it and just committed here. I didn't say anything to them, just posted my Michigan commitment and I don't have to talk to them ever again."

Norton said he doesn't yet have the same sort of hatred for the Buckeyes as some of his teammates who have already played in The Game but believes that may change by the time of The Game.

"I'm assuming once that week comes, I'll definitely start feeling it, but I don't really have that pure hatred of blood quite yet," Norton said. "I know it'll happen because The Game, it's called The Game, but I definitely will get that sooner or later."

Norton is in the running for a starting role on Michigan's offensive line this season, likely at left tackle. He started all 11 games at the position last year for Cal Poly.

## Corso Retiring From "College GameDay"

Former Louisville, Indiana and Northern Illinois head coach Lee Corso is ending his 38-year run on ESPN's "College GameDay," he announced on April 17.

"My family and I will be forever indebted for the opportunity to be part of ESPN and 'College GameDay' for nearly 40 years," Corso said. "I have a treasure of many friends, fond memories and some unusual experiences to take with me into retirement."

Corso has been the face of ESPN's Emmy Award-winning College football pregame show since it debuted in 1987. He is most known for his eccentric headgear picks which cap each show, a tradition that began on Oct. 5, 1996, when he donned Ohio State's Brutus Buckeye mascot head in Columbus before its 38-7 win over Penn State. Since then, Corso has worn Brutus' headgear a record 45 times, with Ohio State going 30-15 all-time in such games.

Corso may have a chance to end his headgear tradition the way he started it. ESPN also announced that the 90-year-old will make one final headgear pick to end GameDay's first show of the 2025 season on Aug. 30, which will likely take place in Columbus to preview Ohio State's highly anticipated Week 1 clash against Texas.

News of Corso's retirement made waves throughout the world of college football, with many involved with the sport taking to social media to offer their congratulations to the longtime ESPN analyst. That group included Corso's longtime partner at ESPN and former Ohio State quarterback Kirk Herbstreit, who released a short video on his Twitter account and included several other posts celebrating Corso's career.

"Coach, this is Kirk. Just want to say I

love you. I thank you for so many lessons you taught me for almost 30 years together," said Herbstreit, who has worked alongside Corso on GameDay since 1996. "I have enjoyed sitting next to you, watching you do your thing. It's been so much fun. We've had so many great moments on the show, off the show."

"This is a celebration for everything that you did for the sport, for 'College GameDay.' You're an icon. You're a once-in-a-lifetime person, a once-in-a-lifetime broadcaster. It's been a special, special time for all of us as college football fans to watch you do your thing and celebrate the sport every Saturday in the fall."

## Carpenter's "Morning Juice" Radio Show Ending

The Columbus-based radio station 97.1 The Fan announced significant changes to its programming lineup on April 22, two of which impacted a pair of notable former Buckeyes.

Former Ohio State linebacker Bobby Carpenter's morning show "Morning Juice," – which he co-hosted with Brandon Beam on weekdays from 6-9 a.m. – is coming to an end on May 12. Carpenter will co-host a digital iteration of his show on 10TV-Plus, YouTube and The Fan Three from 6-8 a.m. alongside Jeff Thitoff, while Beam is moving to the station's evening program called "The Buckeye Show."

Carpenter, who has been employed by 97.1 The Fan since 2013 and also makes appearances on ESPN's "Get Up" and "The Pat McAfee Show," expressed some dissatisfaction over his company's decision to disband the show while on air.

"I don't know if it's even really performance-based because last year we had the No. 1 show among men, No. 2 among adults. We built this thing together. We've had a lot of success because thankfully everybody's tuned in," Carpenter said. "We've kind of been able to build something collective as a community here, and I guess that's not necessarily valued in the same way. ... This was not a decision where either one of us wanted to split up."

The Fan also announced that perhaps their most popular show, "Common Man & T-Bone" is ending after 12 years on the air. The show ran weekdays from 3-6 p.m. and featured co-hosts Mike Ricordati (Common Man) and Jonathan Smith (T-Bone).

Although many viewers may be upset over this decision, it does open up a new opportunity for former Ohio State safety Tyvis Powell. He will now co-host a show with Smith in the morning slot called "T-Bone & Tyvis." Powell, who played for the Buckeyes from 2012-15 and had a three-year NFL career, started at 97.1 The Fan in 2021 and has been a key contributor to the outlet since.

Other changes to 97.1 The Fan include Tim Hall moving on from "The Buckeye Show" to join Ricordati on "Common Man and Timmy" from 3-6 p.m., while "Bishop & Friends," starring host Beau Bishop and producer Eric Rieser, is unchanged and will remain in its 9 a.m.-noon slot.

## Studrawa Hired As Head Coach Of IMG Academy

Former Ohio State offensive line coach

**Continued On Page 8**



# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 7

Greg Studrawa was named the head coach of high school football powerhouse IMG Academy on April 14.

Studrawa, 60, joins IMG four years after being let go by the Buckeyes in 2021 as offensive line coach, a position he spent five seasons in under both head coaches Meyer and Day. In that role, he helped with

the development of Buckeye offensive line stalwarts and current NFL players such as Paris Johnson Jr., Dawand Jones, Thayer Munford Jr., Josh Myers and Nicholas Petit-Frere, among others.

The Fostoria, Ohio, native had not served as a coach in the United States since leaving the Buckeyes, but he did have a recent stint as offensive coordinator for the Cologne Centurions in the European League of Football. Regardless, he brings instant credibility to the high school ranks from his over 25-year run coaching in college at seven different schools. In addition to Ohio State, Studrawa most notably was offensive line coach at LSU under Les Miles from 2007-2013 and at Maryland from 2014-15.

"The IMG Academy National Football



Greg Studrawa

Team head coaching position is one of the premier coaching jobs in America, and Greg is the perfect candidate to lead our student-athletes on and off the field," IMG Academy Director of Football Kyle Brey said. "He brings a wealth of experience at the highest levels of college football, including national championship success that will benefit our student-athletes. We believe his championship mindset, deep recruiting connections, and commitment to providing an unrivaled experience for our student-athletes will elevate our program and continue our tradition of excellence on the national stage."

Studrawa will bring his experience to an IMG program that has produced several NFL and college players in recent years, including current Buckeyes Carnell Tate and Jayden Fielding

## Henry Has Mass Removed In Lungs

Former Ohio State offensive lineman Av-

ery Henry – who successfully beat bone cancer in 2023 – revealed a medical setback in an April 22 Twitter post, saying that doctors had discovered a nodule in his lungs six months ago that required him to have surgery on April 23.

"I've debated sharing this, but six months ago my doctors found a growing lung nodule," Henry wrote. "After monitoring it, they've decided surgery is the best option. (On April 23) I'll undergo a 4-5 hour procedure. I know how this sounds, but I truly believe God does everything for a reason."

Henry, a former three-star prospect out of St. Clairsville, Ohio, has dealt with medical issues for the majority of his young adult life. In December 2022, he was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, an aggressive form of bone cancer, forcing him to put his playing career with the Buckeyes on an abrupt halt.

Henry fought the disease, and despite it claiming a three-inch piece of bone in his lower right arm, he was eventually deemed cancer-free in May of 2023. But a return to

## From The Pages Of BSB

### 40 Years Ago — 1985

With the arrival of spring practice, sophomore quarterback Tom Tupa made his move in Ohio State's quarterback position battle. When the pre-summer drills were completed on April 27, many onlookers wondered if junior-to-be Jim Karsatos actually had the position sewn up.

Most would have agreed that Tupa had the edge during two intrasquad scrimmages. At Berea, Ohio, on April 19, the sophomore connected on 19 of 28 passes for 195 yards and a touchdown while leading the Gray team to a 17-14 win. Karsatos was 14 of 25 for 153 yards and one score.

During the Scarlet and Gray Game held on April 27 in Ohio Stadium, Tupa continued to impress fans, making 11 of 18 aerials for 122 yards primarily against OSU's No. 1 defense. Karsatos, who had some receivers that couldn't hold onto the ball, was only nine of 20 for 121 yards. Again, Tupa's team, this time the Scarlet, won 21-10.

### 35 Years Ago — 1990

With the start of the 1990 season less than four months away, Ohio State head coach John Cooper analyzed his third spring practice with the Buckeyes with a sense of accomplishment.

"I think we pretty much did everything we set out to do this spring," Cooper said. "The fact that we stayed healthy was our biggest accomplishment this spring. We stayed healthy and we got a chance to work with all of our young players quite a bit.

"I think we got a lot accomplished this spring. I thought we had a good spring practice. It was one of the best springs we've had here."

In his third year as head coach at OSU, Cooper was beginning to see the fruits of the staff's recruiting labors blossom on the field.

"There's no doubt in anyone's mind that we had a pretty tough time of it two years ago," Cooper said. "Then, last year, we had a decent record and went to a bowl game, but quite honestly, I thought it was a pretty average year. We beat everybody we were supposed to beat and probably lost to everybody we were supposed to lose to.

"But now we're seeing some of those stronger, faster athletes coming up through the ranks. I'm not taking anything away from the players we've had in the past, but the fact is that we've been recruiting the bigger, stronger, faster athletes the past couple of years and they're going to put this program back where it belongs – at the top of the game."

### 30 Years Ago — 1995

News that tight end D.J. Jones would miss the entire 1995 season due to a medical condition was relayed to the media during an impromptu pregame news conference in the press box during the spring game.

Jones, a senior tight end who started 11 of 13 games the previous season, and OSU team doctor John Lombardo openly discussed his ailment.

"He had an infection called histoplasmosis," Lombardo said. "He got it last fall, and we started to see the symptoms of it at the (Citrus Bowl) last Christmas. It's a fungus that's present everywhere. Most people have it, but they don't get any infection.

"In D.J.'s case, the reaction from it affected the lining between his lungs and the chest wall and the (pericardial) sac around the heart. He started to get thickening around the sac around the heart," he said.

According to Lombardo, the pericardial sac, which protects

the heart, has thickened. In so doing, it constricts the heart and limits the amount of blood that can flow through it.

"His body can't perform until something is done," Lombardo said. "It's not going to get better over time. We've waited about six months, and the treatment is surgery to remove the pericardial sac. Again, the heart has nothing wrong with it."

### 25 Years Ago — 2000

One of the most heated battles in the spring was at backup quarterback, where redshirt freshmen Craig Krenzel and Scott McMullen battled for the No. 2 spot behind starter Steve Belisari.

They came out of the spring just as they started — bracketed for the backup role. But each had his impressive moments.

"Both of those guys played pretty well," Cooper said after the spring game. "McMullen seems to play better in a scrimmage or game-type situation. He showed a lot today. Krenzel threw the ball pretty well when he had time.

"You have to keep in mind that neither team was doing a lot of blitzing. When you get into (a real) game, there will be bodies flying around, guys coming out of the secondary, and you have to make different reads."

For the day, McMullen was 10 of 20 for 181 yards and a touchdown, a 44-yarder to Chad Cacchio.

Krenzel was 11 of 22 for 107 yards. He suffered a pair of interceptions while playing for the Gray in the first half. But he was a crisp 9 of 13 after moving to the Scarlet in the second half, when he led the team on field goal drives of 90 and 70 yards.

### 20 Years Ago — 2005

Josh Huston had waited just about five years to become the man at the kicking position at Ohio State, so a couple more months of waiting didn't seem like a big deal to him.

Still, it had to be reassuring for the Findlay, Ohio, native when, on April 28 it was finally announced that Huston would be granted an extra year of eligibility by the NCAA and would be able to kick for the Buckeyes in the fall of 2005.

Huston had petitioned the NCAA for a sixth year of eligibility based on the fact that he was forced to sit out the 2002 season with a hip injury. He conditioned all offseason and practiced all spring as if he would be granted the year, but it took some time for the NCAA to make it official, something that wasn't entirely unexpected.

"I told myself this was going to happen because the NCAA has more important things to deal with than me," Huston said. "So they told me one to four weeks and I knew it meant six to eight – however long they need."

### 15 Years Ago — 2010

The 65,223 fans who braved the threat of rain April 24 to attend OSU's annual spring game saw junior quarterback and returning starter Terelle Pryor in action for only one quarter but were treated to a glimpse of what could be in the fall.

Pryor completed just 1 of 3 passes on his first drive and the Scarlet team was forced to punt. The Gray team then marched down the field and scored, leaving Pryor and his Scarlet teammates to answer.

It took four plays for Pryor to lead his team on a 78-yard scoring drive that tied the game. His final pass was a 12-yard touchdown to wide receiver Dane Sanzenbacher, completing a perfect 4-for-4 performance on the drive.

Pryor would get just one more drive before donning a hat on the sidelines and watching the final three quarters. After the

game, Sanzenbacher, who was the spokesperson for the Scarlet team during the spring-game draft and selected Pryor with the first pick, said he knew the team would have to strike quickly.

"I don't think anybody is surprised that he was able to (drive down the field)," he said. "He knew he wasn't going to play that much today, and a lot of the starters weren't, so with the few reps we had we were going to have to get drives like that."

### 10 Years Ago — 2015

Urban Meyer had often called strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti one of the most important individuals on his staff, and now Marotti had an award to prove it.

Marotti was named the Football Bowl Subdivision's strength and conditioning coach of the year by weight training supplier Samson Equipment. He was one of seven coaches to be honored as one coach from the NFL, FBS, Football Championship Subdivision, and NCAA's Division II levels, as well as three from the high school ranks were recognized by the company and were to be featured in an upcoming edition of American Football Monthly.

"There are times in the year when the strength staff has more contact with the team than the coaching staff," Meyer said. "I have complete trust in Mickey Marotti's abilities to prepare our student-athletes to be the strongest, fastest and mentally toughest football players they can be."

### Five Years Ago — 2020

The NCAA announced on April 29 that its board of governors supported "rule changes to allow student-athletes to receive compensation for third-party endorsements both related to and separate from athletics."

According to a statement, the board "also supports compensation for other student athlete opportunities such as social media, businesses they have started and personal appearances with the guiding principles originally outlined by the board in October."

As part of those guiding principles, players would be allowed to identify themselves by sport and school but may not use school or conference licensing, and schools would not be asked to provide any additional funding to athletes.

"While student-athletes would be permitted to identify themselves by sport and school, the use of conference and school logos, trademarks or other involvement would not be allowed," the statement read. "The board emphasized that at no point should a university or college pay student-athletes for name, image and likeness activities."

### One Year Ago — 2024

Ohio State had one of college football's biggest offseasons, retooling the roster with several high-profile transfer additions and returning a significant number of the previous 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 had 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 the 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."



# 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 43 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," a \$10 gift card from College Traditions, as well as a card from either Rusty Bucket or Cameron Mitchell restaurants good for \$10 off your next food purchase.

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the field was considered "extremely dangerous," and he opted to medically retire prior to the 2023 season to focus on starting a career in politics.

He said in an April 24 Twitter post that although he had a successful surgery, he is awaiting test results from doctors and would have results in "about a week."

"Update: I'm feeling good with little to no pain and should be discharged today, if all goes as planned," he wrote. "The mass in my lungs will be tested, and I should have results in about a week. I'll keep everyone updated. God is good!"

## Neal Shipley Wins Korn Ferry Event

Former Ohio State golfer Neal Shipley earned his first career professional victory on April 19 when he defeated Seungtaek Lee of South Korea in a playoff to win the LECOM Suncoast classic. The win was Shipley's first on the Korn Ferry Tour, a development tour for the PGA.

Shipley, who made a name for himself in 2024 after finishing as the low amateur in

both the Masters and the U.S. Open, shot a 64 in the final round to post a final score of 18-under. In the playoff, Shipley and Lee each made bogey and three straight pars before the former Buckeye rolled in a 38-foot birdie putt on the fifth playoff hole to secure the victory.

"This is what we play for," Shipley said after the round. "We play for moments like that. We practice for moments like that. We work really hard so that we have the opportunity to hit those putts to win. I'm really glad that I put myself in the position to do that this week."

The dramatic win moved Shipley up to No. 3 in the Korn Ferry Tour's points list, and he can earn his PGA tour card for 2026 if he remains inside the top 20 by the end of the season.

Shipley's victory comes 13 days after his former OSU teammate Max Moldovan earned his own first professional win in the Brazil Open on April 6, finishing with a score of 18-under. Before Shipley and Moldovan, the last Buckeye to win a professional golf event was Bo Hoag in 2019 when

he emerged victorious in the WinCo Farms Portland Open on the Korn Ferry Tour.

## Men's Lacrosse, Gymnastics Take Home Hardware

It was a successful April for the men's lacrosse and gymnastics programs, who both took home serious hardware.

The men's lacrosse team captured its first Big Ten regular-season title in program history with a 10-8 road win over Michigan on April 19. Ohio State won the regular-season crown with a 4-1 record in the six-team conference.

The Buckeyes opened Big Ten play with a splash, defeating No. 4 Penn State in Happy Valley by a margin of 13-9 on March 23. After wins over Rutgers (13-11) on March 29 and No. 17 Johns Hopkins (14-10) on April 5, the Buckeyes suffered only their second defeat of the season and first in Big Ten play to No. 6 Maryland at home on April 12, falling 13-8. But their road win over Michigan – where they scored five goals in the fourth period to overcome a 7-5 deficit – was enough to not just win the regular-season title but also hold

the No. 1 seed in the Big Ten tournament, which begins on May 1.

The fourth-ranked Buckeyes earned a first-round bye in the tournament and will face off against No. 19 Rutgers in the semifinals at the Wolverines' home lacrosse stadium after the Scarlet Knights beat the Wolverines 11-8 in the quarterfinals. The game will begin at 5 p.m. and air on Big Ten Network.

In men's gymnastics, senior Kameron Nelson also had an historic performance, taking home the vault title in the NCAA championships held on April 19 to become the first Buckeye to win an NCAA event since Alec Yoder won pommel horse in 2019.

Nelson stuck his vault and scored a 14.633 to capture the NCAA title. He also earned All-American honors on the floor, as did junior Parker Thackston, who finished sixth in pommel horse with a score of 13.833. Thackston finished in the top eight on the pommel horse at the NCAA championships for the second consecutive season, tying for seventh in last year's event.



# Egbuka Continues First Round WR Streak

Continued From Page 1

ed. "I'm chasing to be one of the best corners to ever step foot in the league."

Howard was the last Buckeye selected in the draft, taken by the Pittsburgh Steelers in the sixth round with the No. 185 overall selection. It was much lower than mock drafts in the last few months had the QB going, but that wasn't the case for only him. Multiple quarterbacks fell much further down draft boards than originally expected this year.

The biggest example of that was She-deur Sanders, the former Colorado signal caller and son of NFL Hall of Famer Deion Sanders. Many experts were projecting him to go as a top-10 pick, but due to something in his game or something off the field, NFL GMs continued to pass on him. He ended up lasting well into day three of the draft, finally being selected in the fifth round by the Cleveland Browns.

But it was also the case for two former Buckeye quarterbacks as well. Quinn Ewers, formerly the No. 1 prospect in the 2021 class, nearly went undrafted after an impressive college career with Texas. The Miami Dolphins took him in the seventh round at pick No. 231. Another former five-star OSU prospect, Kyle McCord, who set the ACC passing record in his senior – and only – season at Syracuse, also lasted until the sixth round, being selected by the Philadelphia Eagles four picks before Howard was taken at No. 181.

Howard's draft ceiling last year was in the sixth round, and when he was actually taken in that round after a year playing under Ryan Day and Chip Kelly, it seemed low. Ultimately, though, the move worked out for him, and he would be the first to tell anyone that.

"My ultimate goal was to be a starting quarterback in the NFL," Howard said at the Buckeyes' pro day. "I felt like if I wanted to go somewhere, I needed to take a step in

a pro direction. Coming here to Ohio State, I looked at it as a pro step.

"Being here this year, it was nothing but amazing things. The best decision I ever made was coming to Ohio State and I got so much out of it. I feel like I'm so much more prepared now than I ever was, just because of the people here, the development I got, playing against the defense, with our offense, everything. Everything is great."

Howard enters a quarterback room with the Steelers that doesn't have a secure NFL starter, so it's possible that he will have a chance to earn playing time in his first pro season. However, there are rumors that veteran QB Aaron Rodgers and Pittsburgh could reach an agreement before the season begins, which could allow Howard to learn under a future first-ballot Hall of Famer who is entering his 21st NFL season.

Howard will be joined in Pittsburgh by Buckeye legend Jack Sawyer, who was taken by the Steelers in the fourth round with the No. 123 overall selection. Thought of last year as a possible second-round pick, Sawyer's extra year didn't help him rise up draft boards, but he's a player, like Howard, who would never deny that returning to Ohio State for his senior season was worth it.

While many Buckeyes returned with the hopes of raising their draft stock, possibly none was more successful than Donovan Jackson, who was already very likely to be taken as an offensive guard in the draft. But when the Buckeyes suffered multiple offensive line injuries, he slid to left tackle and perhaps played even better at a position where he hadn't taken a snap at the college level, doing so on extremely short notice.

He didn't allow a single sack in the eight games he started, protecting Howard's blind side when that was a major worry after Josh Simmons went down in the Oregon game with a torn patellar tendon. With more experience on the interior, Jackson likely will still be a guard at the pro level, but the versatility he showed off certainly turned the heads of NFL executives, allowing him to be drafted in the first round by the Minnesota Vikings with the No. 24 overall pick.

"I just wanted to help the team win more than anything else," Jackson told Fox Sports. "It doesn't matter what my goals are, as long as the team wins and my goals are set aside, but what I learned from that is just how to block different types of rushers. When you're a guard, you kind of fight in a phone booth. When you're a tackle, you're kind of going against a guy who is a little bit of a different body type."



SONNY BROCKWAY

**WORTH THE WAIT — Offensive lineman Josh Simmons (71) was the final player selected in the first round of the 2025 NFL draft when he was picked at No. 32 by perennial Super Bowl contender Kansas City. It will be his job to protect star quarterback Patrick Mahomes.**

Simmons was also a first-round pick, selected by the Super Bowl runner-up Kansas City Chiefs with the No. 32 overall selection, where he will aim to protect one of the top quarterbacks in the league, Patrick Mahomes.

Tyleik Williams also shot up draft boards, being selected with the No. 28 overall pick by the Detroit Lions. He will now have to move up to the state of Michigan, though, and Williams isn't forgetting how he feels about his college rivals.

"It's definitely crazy," Williams said. "I've learned to hate this state for the last four years. But getting drafted, I'm just happy. I can put all that behind me. Of course, it's still 'The Team Up North.' I'm still not going to say it. But I'm just happy I'm here. It's a great opportunity to go help a team and just go win. That's really all I'm looking for."

## Wide Receiver U

Unmentioned to this point is the top draft choice from the Buckeyes, which was wide receiver Emeka Egbuka. He was taken No. 19 overall by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, where he will be featured in a high-powered offense led by former Heisman Trophy winner and two-time Pro Bowler Baker Mayfield.

As a first-round pick, Egbuka became the fifth Ohio State wide receiver drafted on day one of the draft in the past four years, joining Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave in 2022 (10th overall and 11th overall), Jaxon Smith-Njigba in 2023 (20th overall) and Harrison (fourth overall) last draft.

Egbuka will join a wide receiver group in Tampa Bay that includes multiple talented pass catchers, with Mike Evans, Chris Godwin and Jalen McMillan all requiring attention from opposing defenses.

But that won't be a new thing to handle for the OSU career receptions record holder. He was part of the 2021 wide receiver room that had him, Harrison, Smith-Njigba, Wilson and Olave in it. There were many incredibly talented mouths to feed on the offense and not enough passes to go around for each of them.

"The room that I stepped into at Ohio State, there was Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson, Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Julian Fleming, Jameson Williams (also a first-round pick, going No. 12 overall to the Detroit Lions after one season at Alabama), Kamryn Babb,



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Marvin Harrison Jr. That's probably one of the craziest rosters I've ever heard in my life," Egbuka said at the NFL scouting combine. "And that was really the reason I decided to go to Ohio State was because I didn't want to go to a place where I wasn't going to be challenged by my peers. I wanted to go to a place where, in order to see the field, I had to grow at an exponential rate because they were all growing as well."

It was like that his entire Buckeye career as well, all the way up to last season when he was somewhat overshadowed on the offense by true freshman Jeremiah Smith and joined by former high-four-star talent Carnell Tate in the starting lineup.

"We have a certain standard at Ohio State, especially in the wide receiver room, that we're going to continue to uphold year in and year out," Egbuka said in his introductory press conference after being drafted. "It just felt like my duty and my obligation to be able to do what I did throughout my career. The standard is the same for all of the younger guys, and they know what it is."

If he didn't already have enough proof of concept, offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach Brian Hartline has even more now with four straight years of first-round picks coming out of his room.

It's possible that trend could continue even further as well, though Tate would likely have to perform at a higher level this season to reach first-round potential. Brandon Inniss, if he earns a starting role in the slot in the fall, could also have a season that rockets him up draft boards now that he will likely get his chance in his junior season.

Egbuka said he wouldn't be surprised

to see some breakouts in the wide receiver room this year.

"I wouldn't be surprised if you see a couple of breakout years and a couple of guys do some amazing things," Egbuka said. "Obviously, we have a young cat who is doing it at a very high level right now, but we also have some other guys who I think are going to wow some people in the upcoming years."

The year after that, going into the 2027 NFL draft, Smith already seems like a sure-fire top-10 prospect. All he needs to do is continue to produce at the level he did as a freshman, which is what should be expected out of the already two-time Iron Buckeye.

But after this spring, Mylan Graham could also make a case for being a first-round pick that year. He showed off why he was a five-star talent in the 2024 class, even though he was overshadowed by Smith, who was the No. 1 recruit in the country.

True freshman Quincy Porter – the No. 5 ranked wide receiver in the 2025 class – has the potential to keep the streak going the year after that, while Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star Chris Henry Jr. – the No. 2 wideout in 2026 – is locked in with the Buckeyes. They also have a five-star 2027 commitment waiting in the wings in Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne's Jamier Brown (5-11, 170).

Hartline keeps the wide receivers room fully stocked with possible future first-round talents at all times, and it doesn't seem like there is an end in sight. But the streak of first-round picks proves that not only is he great at landing the talented recruits, he's also just as good at getting the best out of each player he coaches.

Recruits have taken note of that, and players who have the desire to play at the next level want to be coached by the best in the business, which Hartline has proved himself to be.

### Just Short Of The Record

Going into the draft, the conversation around the Ohio State class wasn't about one prospect who rose above the rest and would be selected as a top choice, as Harrison was last year. Rather, it was about the depth coming out of Columbus and whether the 17 possible draftees would be able to tie or even break the record set by Georgia in the 2022 NFL draft when the Bulldogs had 15 players selected.

The Buckeyes came very close to that, with 14 players taken in this year's draft, which tied the program record set in 2004. That was an all-time record at the time.

After the four first-round selections of Egbuka, Jackson, Williams and Simmons, the next Buckeyes off the board were running backs Quinshon Judkins and TreVeyon Henderson, who went two picks apart from each other.

Judkins will remain in the Buckeye State with the Cleveland Browns after being the No. 36 overall pick, and Henderson will head to New England to play with the Patriots as their No. 38 overall selection. JT Tuimoloau was the only other OSU player selected on day two of the event, taken by the Indianapolis Colts with the No. 45 overall selection in the second round.

Simon at No. 115 started a quick run of Buckeyes on day three, followed by safety Lathan Ransom (No. 122, Carolina Pan-

thers) and Sawyer at No. 123. Ty Hamilton was next with the No. 148 overall pick in the fifth round by the Los Angeles Rams, the fourth of the Buckeyes' four starting defensive linemen from the 2024 national championship team taken.

Jordan Hancock was next, another player who raised his draft stock with an extra season in Columbus. Likely looking at being an undrafted free agent after the 2023 season, he went in the fifth round this year with the No. 170 overall pick to the Buffalo Bills. Burke went four picks later and Howard 15 picks after that.

Had it not been for Seth McLaughlin's torn Achilles suffered before the Buckeyes' 11th game of the season, Ohio State would have likely tied the Bulldogs' record, given that even with the injury, the Alabama transfer had put together a season impressive enough to still win the Rimington Award for the nation's best center.

He was rated the No. 1 prospect to sign as an undrafted free agent, staying in the state of Ohio with the Cincinnati Bengals, who quickly took the opportunity to add the injured center.

Josh Fryar and Gee Scott Jr. also didn't take long to find new homes, signing with the Arizona Cardinals – where Fryar will reunite with offensive line coach Justin Frye along with the previously mentioned bevy of Buckeyes stationed in the desert – and the New England Patriots, respectively.

Record-setting or not, this Buckeye draft class is one that goes down in Ohio State history, with both tying the program mark for draft picks in a year and a national championship to boot.

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# Experts Say OSU's Ceiling Remains High

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

With 15 new starters, two new coordinators and a late start thanks to the 2024 team's national championship run, Ohio State had almost everything going against it heading into spring.

The obstacles that lay in front of a fairly inexperienced team led head coach Ryan Day to consider swapping out the program's traditional spring game for a more scaled back "Spring Showcase" event. But with the Buckeyes managing to stay healthy throughout the spring and a Week 1 matchup with national contender Texas looming, Day and the rest of the coaching staff opted to attack the spring with urgency and stick with the Scarlet vs. Gray scrimmage.

"We want to do this," Day said on March 24. "We want to play a spring game. We feel like we're 159 days away from playing Texas, and that day will matter to a lot of young players. So we need to get out there and compete."

Although there were plenty of imperfections in the spring game won by Scarlet (offense) 50-31 over Gray (defense), the biggest takeaway for Dayton Daily News' Marcus Hartman was that the April 12 exhibition was a success.

"I thought this was a better played spring game than most of them, actually," Hartman said. "It's ironic. They (originally) said they weren't going to have a game, and then from a general aesthetic standpoint, it was probably more entertaining and interesting to watch than the spring game usually is."

Hartman's optimistic sentiment regarding Ohio State's spring game was not just shared by Day – who said after the game he was so glad the Buckeyes participated in the exhibition that he wished they could have stayed out there for four more hours – but also by Eleven Warriors' Dan Hope.

"Certainly you can see that even with all the players they lost, there's still a lot of talent on this Ohio State football team," Hope said.

As good as the Buckeyes might have looked in the spring game, there are still plenty of question marks for the team at positions like safety, defensive tackle and quarterback. As Ohio State shifts its focus to fall camp and Texas, BSB spoke with Hartman, Hope, Tony Gerdeman of Buckeye Huddle, and The Columbus Dispatch's Joey Kaufman to discuss the overall state of the team heading out of spring camp and into the summer.

## Kienholz, Sayin Still Entrenched In QB Battle

Although few outside of the program saw it coming, Ohio State is exiting spring with what – at least according to Day – is a genuine starting quarterback battle between redshirt sophomore Lincoln Kienholz and redshirt freshman Julian Sayin.

"Lincoln and Julian are pretty much neck-and-neck right now," Day said on April 7.

Sayin, the former No. 1-ranked quarterback in his recruiting class, was thought of as a significant favorite heading into the spring after being ahead of Kienholz in



SONNY BROCKWAY

**BATTLE BREWING — There was no clear winner to replace national championship quarterback Will Howard coming out of spring practices even though redshirt freshman Julian Sayin (10) had a higher recruiting ranking than redshirt sophomore Lincoln Kienholz (not pictured).**

the depth chart in 2024. But as camp progressed, it was the former four-star Kienholz who shone in practices that were open to the media. And when the spring game came around, Kienholz came out first with the starters.

However, to almost all neutral observers, Sayin was the best quarterback in the game even though he didn't earn the start. He led the team on three straight touchdown drives in the first half before finishing the afternoon with a final stat line of 17 of 24 completed passes for 175 yards and one touchdown, while Kienholz struggled with inaccuracy in the early going before settling in later on to complete 12 of his 18 throws for 158 yards and two scores.

As good as Sayin's spring game was, those on the beat agreed the quarterback competition is no illusion.

"It's a real competition," Hope said. "I think that if you compared it to when Justin Fields won the job, or when C.J. Stroud won the job, or when Will Howard won the job, I think this is a closer competition. I'd say I think it's still likely that Julian Sayin will be the starting quarterback. That's still the outcome I expect."

Hope pointed out that one reason this year's quarterback competition differs from the one a season ago between Howard and now-Cal Bear Devin Brown is that there

isn't an experienced candidate in the room like Howard, who already had years of starting experience under his belt before taking a snap for the Buckeyes.

This season, Sayin enters the fall with just four games under his belt – all coming late in blowouts – where he completed just 5 of 12 passes for 84 yards and a touchdown. Kienholz, meanwhile, didn't attempt a single pass for Ohio State last season, and the vast majority of his experience in his true freshman season came during the 14-3 Cotton Bowl loss to Missouri where he completed just six of his 17 passes for 86 yards in relief of the injured Brown.

With playing time and experience not really favoring one quarterback over the other, Sayin's pedigree as a highly touted recruit led many to believe he had a leg up on the competition. According to Gerdeman, though, it's hard to tell a difference between Sayin and Kienholz when judging them on spring production rather than recruiting rankings.

"Based on everything that (the media) has seen, if you didn't know Julian Sayin was the five-star who was supposed to be this or that, or you didn't know Lincoln Kienholz was this kid from South Dakota – if you just watched their play, who would you have as the leader in the clubhouse?" Gerdeman said. "I don't know if there's an answer

there, because we saw them both go up and down throughout."

Sayin's high recruiting ranking didn't come for no reason, however. The native of Carlsbad, Calif., had an ultra-productive high school career – throwing for 7,970 yards and 86 touchdowns – and built a strong reputation among scouts due to his quick release and accuracy. While Kienholz was a talented recruit in his own right, some may wonder if the Buckeyes may be a bit more limited in the long run without Sayin under center.

But Kaufman thinks Ohio State's ceiling won't be affected if Kienholz wins the job.

"They have some good options, and if somehow Julian Sayin was unseated as a front-runner, that means Lincoln probably showed them something that was special or unique," Kaufman said. "Maybe they like his intangibles, maybe they like his athleticism because he was a three-sport athlete in high school and maybe that gives them a running threat at the quarterback position. So I would not view it as a really significant setback for them if he were to win the job."

## Repeat Still On The Table

Despite being the defending national champions and the odds-on favorite to hoist the trophy again this year, turnover in its coaching staff and roster leaves Ohio State with very little certainty about its upcoming season, according to Kaufman.

"When you think about recent teams that have won the national title, it's been all over the place," he said. "Georgia replaced more than a dozen starters after they won the title in '21 and went back-to-back in '22, (while) Michigan replaced a bunch of starters last year and was unable to pull it off and really regressed and went 7-5 in its regular season."

"I think the biggest determining factor for Ohio State would just be whether they are able to get what they want out of the quarterback position, because that's a spot that can really paper over the cracks."

Like Kaufman, Hope feels it's hard to predict what Ohio State will do next year given the amount of uncertainty on the team, but the spring did reveal some major strengths on the team, particularly when it comes to the skill players whom Sayin or Kienholz will be sharing a huddle with.

"I think the offensive skill positions – wide receiver, tight end, running back – really stand out to me," Hope said. "Ohio State should be probably the most loaded team in the country again in terms of offensive play-makers."

It wasn't just the usual suspects, like 2024 freshman All-American wideout Jeremiah Smith and fellow returning starting receiver Carnell Tate, who produced for the Buckeyes in the spring. Young skill players also flashed, with the most notable example being freshman wideout Quincy Porter, who after making a couple of impressive catches and losing his black stripe on Student Appreciation Day on April 5 went for four catches and 50 yards in the spring game.

Fellow first-year Phillip Bell, meanwhile, had three catches for 30 yards and a score, and redshirt freshman wideout Mylan Gra-





SONNY BROCKWAY

**GETTING REPS — Depth on the offensive line could be a strength for Ohio State so getting snaps during the spring game on April 12 was invaluable for freshman Jake Cook (76) and sophomore Ian Moore (69).**

ham was perhaps the biggest standout of the entire game, catching four passes for 104 yards and a touchdown.

There was similarly effective production out of Ohio State's new-look backfield, with West Virginia transfer CJ Donaldson, true freshman Bo Jackson and second-years-James Peoples and Sam Williams-Dixon all impressing in spring and combining for 193 rushing yards and two touchdowns on 30 carries (6.4 average) in the scrimmage.

Hope, however, came out of the spring as impressed with Keenan Bailey's tight end room than any other position group— a unit that, at times, struggled to get involved in the passing game in 2024 but excelled in the scrimmage. Purdue transfer and projected starter Max Klare led the way in the spring game with 28 yards and a touchdown on two catches, while bench pieces such as Jelani Thurman (two catches, 35 yards), Nate Roberts (four, 41) and Max LeBlanc (two, 22) also produced.

"I think Ohio State might have the best tight end room in the country this year, which is not something I've ever said before being on the Ohio State beat," Hope said. "Bringing in Max Klare, (pairing) him to Will Kacmarek — I thought Jelani Thurman had a good spring. I thought Nate Roberts showed some stuff this spring. I just think they're loaded with depth at that tight end position."

### Defensive Line A Concern For Beat

Perhaps the biggest weakness shown by Ohio State throughout the spring period was along the defensive line. After losing all four starters to the NFL, Larry Johnson's unit struggled mightily to stop the run in the spring game, as was previously indicated when discussing the Buckeyes' youthful tailback room.

Ohio State's starting defensive line of

Caden Curry, Kayden McDonald, Eddrick Houston and Kenyatta Jackson Jr. certainly wasn't perfect in the scrimmage, but it was the second unit that was often gashed for lengthy runs and had major issues clogging running lanes.

The poor performance by the reserve defensive line suggests depth may be an issue in the trenches for the Buckeyes in 2025, and that warranted some concern from Day in his post-spring game press conference.

"I think we have to take a hard look at it," the coach said of the defensive line depth. "I don't think I have the answer right now, but we have to look at it. "It seemed to me that there was a lot of knockback on the offensive side of the ball."

All four interviewees agreed that the defensive line was one of the team's biggest issues this spring, and according to Gerdeman, Day's concerns should not be overlooked.

"I think my biggest takeaway (from the spring) was the lack of depth on the defensive line, specifically at defensive tackle and how concerned Ryan Day feels about it," Gerdeman said. "It reminded me of how concerned he was coming out of the spring practice in 2023 with the offensive line when it looked like Zen Michalski was going to be starting at right tackle and Josh Fryar was going to be starting at left tackle. I think they feel good about their starting defensive tackles, but I don't know that they saw enough from all of the backups to ease some of the concern there."

The good news for Day and the rest of the coaching staff is that the spring transfer portal opened just three days after the spring game, allowing them to quickly plug those holes before the season. Ohio State took a significant step in doing that on April 23 when it added former North Carolina defensive end Beau Atkinson, who in 13 games with the Tar Heels last year recorded

a team-high 7½ sacks.

According to Gerdeman, the addition of the experienced Atkinson — who enters the room with 26 games under his belt with the Tar Heels — immediately raises the level of competition in Johnson's young room.

"The addition of Beau Atkinson gives the Buckeyes a defensive end who has experience starting and finishing games," Gerdeman said. "He is immediately the most proven defensive lineman on the roster. Atkinson raises the floor of the defensive end group and gives the Buckeyes a big body that can also slide inside on passing downs. He is going to push everybody else in the front four."

### Safety, Offensive Tackle Spots Still Contested

While the defensive line had its struggles throughout the spring, Ohio State's offensive line seemed to be pretty sharp. Outside of a handful of slip-ups in pass protection, the Buckeye offensive line showed its potential in the moments of spring made available to the media, according to Gerdeman.

"I think the offensive line as a whole, the depth is there, and the versatility is very impressive," Gerdeman said. "They've got a good starting five. They've got guys that are coming on as well like Ian Moore, and we'll see what Phillip Daniels can do. But I thought for the most part, what I saw from them and what I've heard about them is that they're doing well."

Gaining plenty of experience down the stretch of the 2024 season after starters Seth McLaughlin and Josh Simmons suffered season-ending injuries, interior offensive linemen such as Luke Montgomery (left guard), Carson Hinzman (center) and Tegra Tshabola (right guard) seem to be very likely to start again in 2025. Based on alignment in the spring, it appears that Rice transfer Ethan Onianwa is a strong candidate to start at left tackle, leaving the Buckeyes with one open position along the offensive line at right tackle.

Heading into the spring, it appeared that Daniels, a transfer from Minnesota who started four games for the Gophers at the end of last season, seemed to be the front-runner for the job. But that perception changed when Austin Siereveld — who lined up at guard last season as a mostly injury replacement — was seen taking first-team reps at right tackle and remained there until the end of spring.

Siereveld's versatile skill set and high motor — which earned him the "Iron Buckeye" award for winter workouts — has been a significant talking point for the coaching staff this spring, and according to Hope, that praise is not just coach-speak.

"I think that his improvement is real," Hope said. "The Iron Buckeye isn't something they just give out to anybody, and if you look at who they've given that to in past years, almost all of those guys have gone on to play major roles that year. The first few practices, when he was practicing at tackle, I was like, 'This is probably just because they don't want to rush the transfers into the lineup.' But when he was ending the spring, still taking those first-team reps at right tackle, that told me that it's a real consideration (for him to start at right tackle) right now."

Siereveld's transition from guard to tackle isn't an easy one. The most notable

difference in responsibilities for a tackle is in pass protection, where they are tasked with staying in front of athletic defensive ends with little help from other offensive linemen, a challenge that requires a unique combination of size and quickness. According to Hartman, Siereveld, who possesses a 6-5, 320-pound frame, can make it at tackle in college because the size and athleticism requirements are, at times, overstated.

"In college, you can survive at tackle with a different amount of athleticism than in the NFL," Hartman said. "The ideal body type is not quite the same as it is between the NFL and college. You don't have to be the prototypical guy (to play tackle)."

Kaufman agrees that Siereveld is on track to earn a starting position somewhere on the offensive line. But he did wonder if Daniels — who consistently earned second-team reps this spring and struggled some with penalties in practice — will show enough in the fall to bump him back inside.

"Siereveld is a little smaller than the typical tackle, but he's still 6-5 and 300-plus. I think that profiles as somebody who could play tackle in college," Kaufman said. "I expect Siereveld will start in some fashion or the other. It just depends on whether you want to go with Luke Montgomery on the interior or do you want to go with Phillip Daniels at right tackle."

The Buckeyes have a similar situation at safety. Reigning unanimous All-American Caleb Downs is a lock to start on the back end, but his running mate remains unknown. Heading out of the spring, it appeared that junior Malik Hartford might have the edge to start alongside Downs after he earned first-team reps over sophomore Jaylen McClain throughout spring, even though McClain played in two more games and recorded seven more tackles than Hartford did in 2024.

Gerdeman believes Hartford's place within the starting defense could be a product of Downs playing closer to the line of scrimmage this season under the guidance of first-year coordinator Matt Patricia. Last season, he played farther away from the line of scrimmage as the adjuster for former defensive coordinator Jim Knowles.

"I think some of (Hartford playing with the ones) is because of the fact that we saw Downs at strong safety a lot more than in the past, and that's kind of what Jaylen McClain has played," Gerdeman said.

According to Hope, Downs' varied skill set will likely allow him to play both positions in 2025, which means that whoever starts alongside him will also be expected to handle the responsibilities of both positions. He thinks the most likely scenario for this season is that McClain and Hartford each get their chance on the field in a starting capacity.

"I think we're going to see both Hartford and Jaylen McClain play a lot this year," Hope said. "I don't think we really saw this spring exactly what the Matt Patricia defense is going to look like, but I suspect that there's going to be a three-safety package in this defense that gets both Malik Hartford and Jaylen McClain on the field at the same time as Caleb Downs. It does seem like Hartford is trending toward being that second starting safety right now, but I do believe there's going to be a role for McClain as well."



# Champion Buckeyes Honored At White House

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

From head coach Ryan Day's guest appearances on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" and "The Kelly Clarkson Show" to former Buckeye defensive end Jack Sawyer throwing out the first pitch at the Cleveland Guardians' 2025 home opener, Ohio State has experienced a bit of a hectic offseason off the field since its national title win.

The offseason attention reached its apex on April 14 when a group of about 200 members of the Buckeyes' coaching staff, roster and university and athletic department administrators traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with the nation's top political leaders and celebrate their championship victory.

The festivities began in the morning with a tour of the Lincoln Memorial, where the team took a group photo. They then stopped for a lunch break at the Cleveland-based law firm Jones Day, whose Washington, D.C., office had what a university press release called "spectacular views of the U.S. Capitol." Ohio State University president Ted Carter, athletic director Ross Bjork and Ohio Rep. Joyce Beatty all spoke to the team during the lunch.

The group then moved on to the White House, where Day and the team were treated to an exclusive tour of the Oval Office by President Donald Trump. The team took pictures and shook hands with Trump at his desk and posed for pictures around some of the notable artifacts in the room.

After the tour, the team made their way outside to the South Lawn of the White House, where they were officially honored by Trump and Vice President JD Vance with a ceremony highlighting their championship season. The event began just after 3 p.m. when the players – led by 2024 captains Emeka Egbuka, TreVeyon Henderson, Will Howard and Jack Sawyer, among others – walked out of the White House and onto the lawn while the school's fight song, "Buckeye Battle Cry," was played. That was followed by the arrivals of Day, Trump and Vance, who walked together to the stage before Trump gave his opening remarks on the team.

Trump began his nearly 17-minute speech by thanking the Buckeyes for coming to the White House before dishing out some praise to Day for the accomplishments he has made since taking over for former OSU head coach Urban Meyer in 2019. Although he incorrectly claimed that Day has "nine championship wins" on his résumé, Trump did correctly marvel over his 70-10 overall record as the Buckeyes' leader and said Day is a "very young-looking guy" with a "lot of time left" to win more games.

"To Coach Ryan Day, and I have to read this, this is not part of my speech, but they gave me a little briefing. I knew how good of a coach he was, (but) I didn't know he was that good," Trump said. "Coach Day's overall coaching record is 70-10. So, in other words, Ryan, I'd like to be your agent. I want to represent you. And he won the big one. That's the biggest of them all. That's fantastic. It's an amazing achievement at a young age, and the entire team and everybody up



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

**GUESTS OF HONOR — Winning the College Football Playoff championship has its privileges such as being feted at the White House on April 14 with President Donald Trump presiding over the festivities.**

here, we want to thank you and congratulate you."

Trump then recounted the Buckeyes' impressive four-game title run through the inaugural 12-team College Football Playoff. He listed off the notable plays and accomplishments made by Egbuka, Henderson, Howard, Quinshon Judkins, Sawyer, Cody Simon, Jeremiah Smith and the entire offensive line during those wins before calling each of them over to the stage – other than Judkins, who did not make the trip – and shaking their hands.

The most notable moment from that part of the speech may have been his commentary on Smith. While talking about the wideout's game-sealing 56-yard catch in the national championship game against Notre Dame, he revealed to the audience a conversation he had with Day earlier in the day about the Buckeyes' young phenom, where the coach told the president that Smith could be one of the best to ever do it.

"I shouldn't say this, but (Day) was giving Jeremiah some major praise backstage," Trump said. "I said, 'So, what's the future?' He said, 'Well, we have a guy, he may be the best ever.' That's a lot to think about, Jeremiah. ... Jeremiah was at a level that few people have ever seen before, according to what I hear. And nobody could stop him all year long, even as a freshman."

Trump delivered his closing remarks, saying that it is a "proud day for all of us, but a proud day for the Scarlet and Gray" before introducing Vance – an Ohio State graduate (2009) and Middletown, Ohio, native – to the lectern. He spoke highly of his home-state team and their accomplishments last season during his brief remarks.

"Thanks to Coach Day and the entire team for being here at the White House," Vance said. "I am so proud to be part of team scarlet and gray today. Congratulations to the Ohio State Buckeyes on a hell of a 2024 season. ... I'm proud of you guys. You guys were resilient. You were tough. You represented the state of Ohio well. You represented the whole country well."

Vance ended his speech by poking fun at an individual in the crowd wearing a Michigan hat, saying that he is not sure who let him into the audience and that he will need to tell the Secret Service that he has a "dangerous weapon."

It was then Day's turn to stand behind the presidential lectern and deliver some remarks about his team. The Buckeye coach began his nearly three-minute speech by thanking the president and vice president for welcoming the group to the White House and said it was a long and arduous journey to make it through the College Football Playoff and to the nation's capital as national champions.

"We are honored and humbled to be here celebrating with you our ninth national championship in our great university's history," Day said. "To be here surrounded by our players, staff and university leadership is a moment we'll never forget. Traveling to D.C. was the easy part. Earning the right to be here was the hard one. This team made history by winning the most difficult series of games in the history of college football, defeating No. 7 Tennessee, No. 1 Oregon in the Rose Bowl, No. 3 Texas in the Cotton Bowl and No. 5 Notre Dame in the national championship back-to-back-to-back-to-back. No team has ever done that. And through discipline and execution, this team dominated, finished the mission and left no doubt."

Day said this historic feat could not have been accomplished without the guidance and leadership of the Buckeyes' 2024 senior class, which showed true resolve and stuck to the principles of Ohio State's culture in the face of adversity all season.

"It all started with a group of fourth- and fifth-year seniors," Day said. "They chose each other. They chose Ohio State. And they built and lived a culture of toughness, brotherhood and love. When adversity hit, they stood tall, stuck together, showed their true character, rose to the occasion and became champions."

Day continued to tell the audience about the mental toughness and high character of

his 2024 team, using a quote from former President Theodore Roosevelt that is hung up at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center to nail down his point.

"There's a quote I love from President Roosevelt displayed proudly in our team room, 'The Man in the Arena,' " Day said. "(The quote says) 'It's not the critic who counts. It's not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, who strives valiantly, comes up short again and again but who does actually strive to do the deed.' This quote reminds us of the true honor that goes to those who rise to the challenge and stand in the arena unwavering. It took every challenge and we responded, with heart, with grit and with determination. That's why this moment means so much to us."

Day thanked the families of those in the program, his staff, his players and Trump before closing his speech with the words, "God bless America and go Bucks." He then had his captains deliver gifts to Trump and Vance, which included a white Ohio State No. 47 jersey with the name "Trump" on the back as well as a Buckeye helmet, which was also given to the president.

It was around this moment that one of the more notable moments from the celebration occurred involving Vance and the College Football Playoff trophy. During a photo opportunity with the team, Vance attempted to pick up the trophy from its base without knowing it was designed to separate from the trophy's golden top. After a few failed attempts to pick it up, Vance fumbled the black base, causing it to fall to the floor and the top of the trophy to become dislodged.

Luckily for Vance and Ohio State, the sure hands of Henderson and Simon were behind him, and the two NFL draft picks caught the trophy before it could fall to the ground.

The mishap caused quite a stir at the White House, with several Buckeyes players – such as tight end Bennett Christian, wide receiver Carnell Tate and offensive lineman Tegra Tshabola – seen gasping or wincing when the base of the trophy hit the ground. It also made national news and went viral on social media, causing Vance to address the incident on his official Twitter account, joking, "I didn't want anyone after Ohio State to get the trophy, so I decided to break it."

Despite the fumble making its rounds on the Internet, the trophy – unlike Vance's Twitter post indicated – did not break. With the help of Day, who rushed over to seemingly tell Vance about the configurations of the trophy, the vice president was able to successfully pick it up – this time from its golden top – to take a photo with the team as intended. Trump also invited Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine and former OSU head coach and current Ohio Lt. Gov. Jim Tressel to the stage to join the team for the photo before he and Vance departed, ending the day-long celebration.



# Championship Made For Delightful Cruise

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Each year the organizers of the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer add a touch here or there to keep it fresh.

A massive change was made in 2023 when the Cruise set course in a new direction by downsizing from a luxury liner with more than 2,500 passengers to an all-inclusive yacht with about 600 guests.

There have been other modifications to the programming and itineraries throughout the existence of the Cruise, but a unique addition greeted the seagoers on Feb. 27 for the 18th edition of the fundraiser.

Proudly on display aboard the Silversea Silver Moon was a 2025 College Football Playoff national championship flag. While the Buckeyes also won the title 10 years earlier, this was the first time a flag was raised to mark the occasion, said Cruise founder Lisa Cisco of Travel Partners in Dublin, Ohio.

"It was really cool. We had the trophy and Coach (Ryan) Day was there, of course, the whole time with his family," she said.

There's a reason the news releases referred to the Silver Moon as a "champion-SHIP."

"Some days you realize what you did, and other days you don't realize it and maybe it hasn't sunk in all the way," Day told Dom Tiberi of WBNS-TV in Columbus on the ship. "But when you see things like that it certainly takes your breath away."

Cisco said there was a different vibe after the Buckeyes overpowered four opponents to earn the title. That had a way of offsetting a fourth straight loss to Michigan, which tended to dampen the mood a bit on previous trips.

"What's funny is, everybody's always nice, but I said, 'Gosh, everybody is just so nice.' It was like everybody was exhaling," she said. "I must have said 10 times that it was really, really different."

Day noticed as well.

"First, if you're on this ship to begin with you have a big heart," he said. "There are families that come together here, and I think the thing that is great is to be on this ship and hear the stories – the stories of those who went to the Rose Bowl, went to the Cotton Bowl, went to the national championship game and those who were at home enjoying the games with others."

"So this is an opportunity to get together and tell those stories while we're raising money for cancer."

It was a generous group as well. The on-board auction broke last year's record-setting Cruise amount of \$4.4 million with \$4.5 million gifted this year.

Over the years the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer has raised \$45 million for The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute.

## Best Of The Best

There was something magical about the numbers 4 and 5 in the total money raised, as BSB pointed out to Cisco. Legendary running back Archie Griffin was feted throughout the trip for the 50th anniversary



PHOTO COURTESY OF BUCKEYE CRUISE FOR CANCER

**ALL SMILES —** There were plenty of happy faces, including that of coach Ryan Day (center) with his family, aboard the 2025 Buckeye Cruise for Cancer. Of course, celebrating a national championship tends to make everyone jovial.

of winning his second Heisman Trophy in 1975. He wore 45.

"That didn't even register," Cisco said. "I was totally unaware of that, so that is pretty cool. It's amazing."

She joked that she will have to honor someone next year who wore 50: "A.J. Hawk comes to mind, but he wore 50 at Green Bay, not Ohio State."

Hawk had the No. 47 for the Buckeyes, so maybe there's a middle ground.

A giant replica of the Heisman Trophy with a base allowed fans to take photos with Griffin in front of it, and a testimonial was held one evening in which a five-minute tribute video was played and everyone wore No. 45 jerseys.

Past Heisman winners such as Doug Flutie, Robert Griffin III, George Rogers, Billy Sims, Tim Tebow and Buckeyes Eddie George and Troy Smith offered their congratulations.

Johnny Manziel said Griffin is the "GOAT of the GOAT of this fraternity."

For former OSU receiver Parris Campbell, the beauty of the Cruise is the chance to intermingle with the past and present Buckeyes.

"This is an experience that's one of a kind," he said in video produced by the Cruise organizers. "It's people from the same cloth getting to spend time together to reconnect, rekindle, and it's for a great cause. There's no experience like it in the world."

There were seven current Buckeyes on the Cruise: quarterback Lincoln Kienholz, offensive linemen Carson Hinzman and Tegra Tshabola, defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr., safety Caleb Downs and cor-

nerbacks Davison Igbinosun and Lorenzo Styles Jr.

"Everybody cares about cancer and the meaning of it," Downs said. "It's always a great cause to be a part of this. If we were able to find a cure for it at the James Hospital, that would be a story I would tell the rest of my life."

Former football players such as Ezekiel Elliott, Dustin Fox, Hawk, Paris Johnson Jr., and Raekwon McMillan as well as men's

basketball player J.J. Sullinger and women's basketball player Katie Smith were among those aboard.

Former OSU wide receiver Dane Sanzenbacher collaborated with comedian Josh Sneed on an opening act and performed quite well, according to Cisco: "We all had tears rolling down our eyes. He could have been a comedian his whole life. It was just so out of his character because he's so quiet."

There were serious moments too when Day addressed the audience and discussed the dark times in the aftermath of the loss to Michigan when he and his family had to have police protection.

Also, the first major event of the Cruise was the cancer survivors breakfast, although that was as much about the celebration of life.

"Having been a cancer patient myself, I can honestly say they do a fabulous job at the James," Griffin said in the Cruise video. "Not many places do what we do with the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer. It's a special place, and we are that special place."

The trip began in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on Feb. 27 and ended there on March 5. There were stops in the Cayman Islands, Jamaica and Nassau, Bahamas. There were two days at sea.

Each night had a related theme: Buck Moon, Flower Moon, Motown Moon, Harvest Moon, Derby Moon and Howl at the Moon.

Hinzman posted on Twitter: "Unbelievable opportunity for an even better cause #BuckeyeCruise has been amazing. Could not be more grateful GOD IS GOOD."

The Cruise was 10 days later than 2024 to accommodate the new 12-team CFP postseason schedule, which ended with the Buckeyes' 34-23 victory over Notre Dame on Jan. 20.

Cisco said the Cruise is locked into earlier dates for the next two years. The 2026 Cruise will be Feb. 19-24.



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# Ohio State Recognizes 805 Scholar-Athletes

**By PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State recognized 805 student-athletes with Scholar-Athlete Awards at the 2025 “Scarlet and Graymies” athletics award banquet held at the Covelli Center on April 7. Those awards are given to Buckeyes who maintained a 3.0 grade-point average or higher for the 2024-25 academic year. Ohio State honored 811 such athletes last year.

The school also named the winners of the Big Ten Medal of Honor, with the awards going to 2024 national champion Cody Simon of the Buckeye football team and Makenna Webster of the women's hockey and field hockey teams. The award is given annually to the most outstanding male and female student-athlete on each Big Ten campus who has “attained the greatest proficiency in athletics and scholastic work.”

Other finalists for the award included Michael Adedokun (soccer), Dylan D’Emilio (wrestling), Kameron Nelson (gymnastics) and Hayden Tobias (track and field) for the men and Leah Bertrand (track and field), Jenna Buglioni (ice hockey), Kailyn Dudukovich (soccer) and Teresa Ivan (swimming) for the women.

The men’s volleyball program was recognized for having the most improved large-team grade-point average, while men’s gymnastics had the most improved grade-point average among smaller teams. The top grade-point averages were held by women’s ice hockey for large roster – the second straight season they have achieved that feat – and women’s golf for small rosters.

Ryan Day’s football program continued its winning ways by leading all Ohio State sports with a program-record 95 Scholar-Athletes. They were followed by women’s rowing with 79, men’s lacrosse with 43, women’s lacrosse with 39, baseball with 34, women’s swimming with 30, field hockey with 27 and cheerleading and women’s track & field with 26. The complete list of Scholar-Athletes is listed below.

**Baseball** – Simon Bargo, management & industry exploring; Douglas Bauer, consumer and family financial services; Reggie Bussey, sport industry; Ryan Butler, sports coaching; Will Carpenter, child and youth studies; Luke Carrell, master’s in business administration; Nik Copenhaver, economics; Christopher Domke, management & industry exploring; Andrew Edrington, sport industry; Tyler Fox, marketing; Zach Freeman, diversity, equity & inclusion; Nicolas Giamarusti, consumer and family financial services; Charles Giese, sport industry; Maddix Goldsberry-Simpson, sport industry; Matthew Graveline, sport industry; Spencer Hill, sports coaching; Keegan Holmstrom, aerospace engineering; Jaylen Jones, sport industry; Alex Koelling, sport industry; Gavin Kuzniewski, marketing; Noah LaFine, accounting; Tannis Lange, electrical and computer engineering; Isaiah Leeth, marketing; Jake Michalak, international studies; Ryan Miller, logistics management; Sal Mineo, communication; Max Palinski, marketing; Sahil Patel, consumer and family financial services; Alonzo Paul, health sciences; Brady Rollyson, business; Zev Salsberg, finance; Anthony Scheppler, communication; Hunter Shaw, sport industry; Blaine Wynn, sport industry.

**Men’s Basketball** – Colby Baumann, sport industry; Kalen Etzler, marketing; Ques Glover, human development & family science; Meechie Johnson, sport industry; Evan Mahaffey, finance; John Mobley Jr, sport industry; Braylen Nash, sport industry; Ivan Njegovan, economics – business; Sean Stewart, management & industry exploring; Bruce Thornton,

sport industry; Colin White, mechanical engineering.

**Women’s Basketball** – Deayonna Cambridge, political science; Jaloni Cambridge, interior design; Chance Gray, communication; Madison Greene, kinesiology; Seini Henry, marketing; Ella Hobbs, journalism; Elsa Lemmilla, environmental engineering; Ajae Petty, public health (MPH) – Epidem; Taylor Thierry, sports coaching; Eboni Walker, human resource management.

**Cheer** – William Bertsch, sports coaching; Aidan Brooks, psychology; Claire Conley, health sciences; Isabel Croutch, communication; Giovanni Desantis, sport industry; Bella Eldredge, information systems; Aiden Garramone, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; William Glover, communication; Nolan Hahn, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Ocean Henthorn, communication; Marley Hosier, visual communication design; Gabrielle Krenitsky, marketing; Jeweliana Lanetz, consumer sciences; Cali Mitchey, primary education; Michael Osinski, finance; Karsyn Reader, health sciences; Rylie Davis, health sciences; Emily Schaaf, biomedical engineering; Bella Skoog, biomedical engineering; Claire Snyder, human development & family science; Joshua Sobecks, biochemistry; Avery Thielman, industrial design; Calahan Thomas, radiologic sciences & therapy; Tristan Cruz, medical anthropology; Will Young, construction systems management; Madison Yuzwa, pharmaceutical sciences.

**Men’s Cross Country** – Colby Adams, information systems; Jack Agnew, exercise science; Kevin Agnew, electrical and computer engineering; Sean Carney, economics –business; Colin Cernansky, logistics management; Keegan Freyhof, electrical and computer engineering; Zubin Jha, computer science & engineering; Connor Long, exercise science education; Kaleb Martin, mechanical engineering; William McGraw, operations management; William Shaughnessy, exercise science; Keegan Souhan, chemical engineering.

**Women’s Cross Country** – Katherine Castelli, kinesiology; Naomi Clarke, consumer and family financial services; Jessica Derickson, exploration; 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, pre-health sciences; Carina Napoleon, speech and hearing science; Sydney Paul, exercise science; Mia Robillard, mechanical engineering; Daniella Santos, social work; Dillon Sweetman, pre-health sciences; Akemi Von Scherr, consumer and family financial services; Emmi Von Scherr, consumer and family financial services.

**Dance** – Macie Blacklidge, exercise science; Reagan Ceglio, marketing; Chloe Cerreto, real estate and urban analysis; Isabelle Davis, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Bennet Espinda Banick, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Emma Hellenkamp, sport industry; Kara Hurst, communication; Alexis Leistner, pre-health sciences; Brielle McCoy, pre-health sciences; Brynn Melius, sport industry; Hailey Meyers, sport industry; Gianna Mojonner, marketing; Diana Natalicchio, psychology; Sophia Oppegard, marketing; Julia Paslawski, finance; Olivia Taylor, business; Elizabeth Wagner, communication; Lauren Wainz, pre-health sciences; Molly Youngblood, marketing.

**Men’s Diving** – Clayton Chaplin, psychology; Samuel Flory, computer science & engineering; Hamish Patel, real estate and urban analysis; Tyler Read, computer & information science (pre); Dominic Roberto, health professions exploration.

**Women’s Diving** – Lena Hentschel, international studies; Michelle Mazzara, psychology; Paola Pineda Vazquez, sports coaching; Mia Prusiecki, health professions exploration.

**Men’s Fencing** – Ilya Ayupov, psychology; Hank Bauer, environmental engineering; Matthew Buelau, psychology; Nathan Cheng, economics; Samuel Freedman, sport industry; Nowell Gibson, computer science & engineering; Mitchell Huth, operations management; Wesley Lee, marketing; Wangjie Li, physics; Kelly Liu, finance; Edward Maklin, finance; Lorenzo Mion, computer science & engineering; Samuel Rightler, construction systems management; Maxwell Rodney, master’s in supply chain management; James Schardine, psychology; Paul Veltrup, psychology; Justin Vogler, computer science & engineering; Miles Weiss, environment,

economy, development & sustainability.

**Women’s Fencing** – Maria Alexe, psychology; Hamsika Arnipalli, biology; Astrid Chapman-layland, exploration; Grace Fan, biology; Yun-Cian Fan, air transportation; Miranda Freedman, psychology; Claire Teresa Galavotti, psychology; Erika Gumagay, finance; Anna Heiser, finance; Melany Hernandez, pre-health sciences; Katherine Larimer, English; Alina Lee, finance; Yeva Mazur, psychology; Marie Frederique Millette, exercise science education; Daria Myroniuk, psychology; Eleonore Perrier, finance; Catherine Popa, pre-health sciences; Cara Santos, accounting; Lucy Whittemore, sport industry; Susan Wiggers, pre-nursing; Wenjun Zhou, human nutrition.

**Field Hockey** – Zella Bailey, sport industry; Emily Barker, pre-health sciences; Holland Bell, international studies; Madeline Bogle, exploration; Hallie Brost, health sciences; Makayla Carahaly, speech and hearing science; Mary Davis, management & industry exploring; Grace Dixon, pre-health sciences; Reagan Eickhoff, human resources; Katherine Fichtner, criminology & criminal justice; Ellen Ford, international business; Cameryn Forgash, health sciences; Sienna Golden, finance; Loryn Jordon, sport industry; Anne Krebs, biology; Victoria Kutz, exploration; Erin Little, biology; Kari Melberger, consumer sciences; Nina Osherow, marketing; Sarah Richards, kinesiology; Camryn Standish, finance; Claudia Thomas, marketing; Maya Walker, kinesiology; Olivia Wallace, communication; Makenna Webster, kinesiology; Olivia Zettervall, communication; Jenna Zunic, health sciences.

**Football** – David Adolph, marketing; Deontae Armstrong, sport industry; Devontae Armstrong, sport industry; Jayden Bonsu, business; Chase Brecht, marketing; Devin Brown, finance; Bennett Christian, communication; Caden Davis, marketing; Alec DelSignore, communication; Caleb Downs, sport industry; Emeka Egbuka, human development & family science; Morrow Evans, sport industry; John Ferlmann, communication; Jayden Fielding, sport industry; Glorien Gough, marketing; Mylan Graham, real estate and urban analysis; Diante Griffin, sport industry; Patrick Gurd, public policy and management; Ty Hamilton, human development & family science; Jordan Hancock, human development & family science; Zachary Hayes, marketing; Trev-eyon Henderson, sport industry; Carson Hinzman, sport industry; Eddrick Houston, sport industry; William Howard, sports coaching; Brandon Inniss, sport industry; Donovan Jackson, sport industry; Julian Jackson, criminology & criminal justice; Hadi Jawad, exercise science; Collin Johnson, marketing; Quinshon Judkins, human development & family science; William Kacmarek, human development & family science; Hero Kanu, hospitality management; Lincoln Kienholz, real estate and urban analysis; Dominic Kirks, sport industry; Shawntel Lodge, sport industry; Maxwell Lomonico, sports coaching; Simon Lorentz, construction systems management; Mason Maggs, finance; Casey Magyar, mathematics; Tywone Malone, human development & family science; Jaylen McClain, sport industry; Kayden McDonald, communication; Joseph McGuire, sport industry; Nicholas McLarty, economics – business; Seth McLaughlin, human development & family science; Eric Mensah, sport industry; Zenuae Michalski, sport industry; Joshua Mickens, construction systems management; Jace Middleton, diversity, equity & inclusion; Bukari Miles, economics – business; William Mitchell, finance; Luke Montgomery, sport industry; Ian Moore, criminology & criminal justice; Jason Moore, journalism; Air Noland, communication; Jalen Pace, sport industry; Joshua Padilla, sport industry; James Peoples, sport industry; Payton Pierce, communication; Gabe Powers, criminology & criminal justice; Bryce Prater, construction systems management; Lathan Ransom, diversity, equity & inclusion; Chad Ray, diversity, equity & inclusion; Arvell Reese, human development & family science; Nathan Riegle, pre-health sciences; Eli Riggs, business; Bryson Rodgers, sport industry; Ryan Rudzinski, finance; Jack Sawyer, sport industry; Julian Sayin, sport industry; Brennan Schramm, business; Aaron Scott, sport industry; Rashid Se-Say, exploration; Austin Siereveld, sport industry; Cody Simon, human development & family science; Calvin Simpson-Hunt, criminology & criminal justice; Jeremiah Smith, sport industry; William Smith, sport industry; Austin Snyder, sport industry; Reis Stocksdaile, sport industry; Garrett Stover, communication; Alexander Styles, sport industry; Lorenzo

Styles, consumer and family financial services; Carnell Tate, sport industry; Jelani Thurman, sport industry; Ahmed Tounkara, pre-computer science & engineering; Gabe VanSickle, business; Joey Velazquez, sport industry; Anthony Venneri, human development & family science; Miles Walker, sport industry; Bryce West, sport industry; Samuel Williams-Dixon, communication; Toby Wilson, sport industry; Damarion Witten, sport industry.

**Men’s Golf** – Timotej Formanek, sport industry; Tyler Groomes, finance; Vaughn Harber, finance; Andrew Mulcahy, kinesiology; Christopher Reed, sport industry; Jacob Tankany, finance; Jonathan Vojtko, sport industry; Joseph Wilson, marketing; Jaime Yzaga, international business.

**Women’s Golf** – Kavya Ajarapu, psychology; Faith Choi, sport industry; Kary Hollenbaugh, finance; Marina Joyce Moreno, economics – business; Nellie Ong, operations management; Meijin Song, sport industry.

**Men’s Gymnastics** – Drake Andrews, exercise science; Arthur Ashton, biochemistry; Justin Ciccone, hospitality management; Noah Copeland, finance; Chase Davenport-Mills, air transportation; Jacob Harmon, exercise science; Jace Hashimoto, electrical and computer engineering; Kameron Nelson, communication; David Ramirez, exercise science education; Tyler Rockwood, finance; Conlan Simpkins, aerospace engineering; Zachary Snyder, communication; Caden Spencer, sport industry; Thomas Thackston, materials science and engineering.

**Women’s Gymnastics** – Stephanie Berger, hospitality management; Samara Buchanan, biomedical engineering; Mary Green, pre-health sciences; Mallory Gregory, communication; Kaitlyn Grimes, sport industry; Rylee Guevara, anthropology; Jenna Hlavach, primary education; Courtney McCann, pre-health sciences; Ashton Meuret, pre-health sciences; Kaylyn Mintz, criminology & criminal justice; Katlynn Parks, criminology & criminal justice; Maisyn Rader, finance; Karleigh Reutzel, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Reagan Sams, interior design; Cameron Smith, operations management; Tory Vetter, health sciences; Grace Walker, communication; Joselyn Warga, diversity, equity & inclusion; Sidney Washington, biology.

**Men’s Ice Hockey** – Christopher Able, finance; Caden Brown, consumer and family financial services; Davis Burnside, sport industry; Damien Carfagna, sport industry; Samuel Deckhut, finance; Jake Dunlap, sport industry; Joseph Dunlap, diversity, equity & inclusion; Kristoffer Eberly, finance; Dylan Godbout, business; Ryan Gordon, sport industry; Patrick Guzzo, diversity, equity & inclusion; Aiden Hansen-Bukata, sports coaching; Reilly Herbst, accounting; Jungwook Hong, exercise science education; Brent Johnson, consumer and family financial services; John Larkin, accounting; Nathan Lewis, sport industry; Nathan McBrayer, consumer and family financial services; Noah Powell, finance; Christopher Romaine, marketing; William Smith, sport industry; Logan Terness, sport industry; Riley Thompson, sport industry; Thomas Weis, economics – business.

**Women’s Ice Hockey** – Jocelyn Anne Amos, pre-health sciences; Jordan Baxter, exercise science education; Riley Brengman, sports coaching; Jenna Buglioni, kinesiology; Brooke Disher, political science; Joy Dunne, social work; Mira Jungaaker, sport industry; Genevieve Klein, finance; Sloane Matthews, biomedical engineering; Grace McCoshen, exploration; Emma Peschel, health sciences; Jordyn Petrie, finance; Maria Roth, pre-health sciences; Lexington Secreto, human development & family science; Josie St. Martin, sport industry; Sara Swiderski, sport industry; Amanda Theele, criminal justice administration; Madelyn Wheeler, sports coaching; Kiara Zanon, kinesiology; Emily Zumwinke, consumer and family financial services.

**Men’s Lacrosse** – Ari Allen, communication; Jack Allen, sport industry; Zachary Antoniou, finance; Henry Blake, finance; Dante Bowen, marketing; Mason Bregman, public management; Cullen Brown, finance; Jonathan Cool, finance; Ryan Donnelly, kinesiology; Blake Eiland, finance; Taji Flynn, marketing; Kyle Foster, finance; Caleb Fyock, sport industry; Braden Glushakow, public management; Garrett Haas, sport industry; Zachary Hepworth, sport industry; Thomas Janowicz, business; Caleb Jones, communication; Aidan Kenley, construction systems management; Coleman Kraske, communication; Angelo Lamatrice, pre-health sciences;



## OHIO STATE SCHOLAR-ATHLETES

Gregory Langermeier, real estate and urban analysis; Jack Lehman, business; Griffin Liedel, logistics management; John Maccarone, sport industry; Dillon Magee, communication; Sean Magtoto, finance; Alexander Marinier, finance; Joseph Matan, operations management; Gannon Matthews, kinesiology; Benjamin Mayer, operations management; Ellis McDonald, marketing; Jack McKenna, finance; Caden Minniti, management & industry exploring; Jack Oldman, mechanical engineering; Shane O'Leary, public management; Colin Puckett, exploration; Dominic Shaw, finance; Edward Shean, finance; Griffin Turner, Specialized Master Bus-Fin; Robert Van Buren, sport industry; Jackson Walsh, business; Liam White, business.

**Women's Lacrosse** - Brynn Ammerman, health sciences; Maddie Barhorst, communication; Abby Boyle, communication; Charlotte Browne, marketing; Katie Chisholm, fashion and retail studies; Bella Cleveland, economics; Gabby Cleveland, sport industry; Zoe Coleman, marketing; Caitlyn Durchanek, marketing; Mackenzie Fitzgerald, political science; Darrin Furiness, marketing; Annie Hargraves, sport industry; Delaney Harlan, marketing; Makena Harrington, pre-health sciences; SK Isakson, human development & family science; Katie Kauchek, communication; Amani Kimball-McKavish, marketing; Lexie Kupka, communication; Margaret Lawler, communication; Emily Magalotti, sport industry; Lindsey McCulloch, sport industry; Lindsey Money-maker, business; Olivia Orso, exploration; Isabelle Osborn, human development & family science; Sophie Patton, sport industry; Whitney Robinson, finance; Audrey Rudolph, communication; Camille Samarasinghe, political science; Leah Sax, social work; Audrey Schoemer, business; Lilli Sherman, sport industry; Maeve Simonds, pre-health sciences; Annika Spoor, finance; Kampbell Stone, pre-health sciences; Jocelyn Torres, international studies; Kate Tyack, marketing; Brooke Vinson, public management, leadership & policy; Stella Wine-man, international studies; Ella Wright, marketing.

**Pistol** - Panagiota Charalampous, sport industry; Johnathan Dorsten, agricultural systems management; Marcus Klemp, architecture; Ada Korkhin, biochemistry; Abbie Leverett, health sciences; Riya Salian, computer science & engineering; Donald Simpson, neuroscience.

**Rifle** - Andrew Duross, finance; John Hamilton, air transportation; Elizabeth Hollowell, communication; Eva Horgan, accounting; Derek Keiser, finance; Gabriella Sprague, psychology; Lillian Warren, public management, leadership & policy; Nathan Wehrlen, hospitality management.

**Rowing** - Abigail Bluhm, finance; Hannah Akel, environmental science; Ceylan Algan, mechanical engineering; Emma Alimbau Borras, human nutrition; Hayden Allen, mechanical engineering; Elaine Barr, biochemistry; Rachel Bels, air transportation; Taylor Benedict, medical anthropology; Rose Bidulph, applied neuroscience; Ellie Bodle, civil engineering; Amelia Boes, sport industry; Eloise Brindle, anthropological sciences; Eliana Bujwalo-Nowak, mechanical engineering; Kailey Burns, primary education & intervention specialist; Maureen Caslow, biology; Caroline Caudill, communication; Niamh Coffey, kinesiology; Maureen Currier, accounting; Emma Cuzzocrea, communication; Leah Dragmen, integrated language arts/English education; Carrie Dumont, aerospace engineering; Annalie Duncomb, biology; Isabella Felter, psychology; Franziska Fischer, air transportation; Alessandra Flevares, psychology; Ellen Flynn, environmental science; Samantha Freda, pre-health sciences; Emilia Fritz, industrial and systems engineering; Rebecca Fullerman, sport industry; Laina Geckle, pre-health sciences; Samantha Gerena, exercise science education; Paige Guggenbiller, public health; Emma Hall, human resources; Anya Hardwick, chemistry; Ella Harrison, biology; Anna Hodge, marketing; Leandra Hogrefe, physics; Sierra Jones, neuroscience; Kira Katterle, kinesiology; Emily Koziol, speech and hearing science; Mackenzie Krukemyer, animal sciences; Maria Kyridou, criminology & criminal justice; Shira Lenga, pre-health sciences; Lillian Leopard, marketing; Sloan Leyda, pre-health sciences; Erika Linton, mechanical engineering; Mara Mangiola, marketing; Tess Manning, chemistry; Rylie McCall, criminology & criminal justice; Regan McElwee, political science; Morgan Miller, kinesiology; Megan O'Connor, public management, leadership & policy; Lilian Orosz, information systems; Anna Parr, marketing; Vidhi Patel, exploration; Portia Pavelchik, biochemistry; Morgan Perce, exercise science; Natalie Rarick, earth sciences; Emily Richards, finance; Kaylee Robbins, philosophy, politics, and economy; Novalee Roberto, international studies; Isabella Schmitt, criminology & criminal

justice; Alora Schrieber, business; Katherine Scott, psychology; Lucy Scott, marketing; Emma Shuck, marketing; Aiste Slatkeviciute, sport industry; Olivia Stockmaster, business; Gabriella Svoboda, public health; Haley Swenton, exercise science education; Halen Swickard, food business management; Vanessa Taylor, electrical and computer engineering; Abigail Thomas, psychology; Lauren Thompson, agribusiness and applied economics; Anna Vincenti, biology; Lillian Winters, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Carlotta Wolff, fashion and retail studies; Avery Wynk, environmental science; Annika Wyss, air transportation.

**Men's Soccer** - Ashton Bilow, sport industry; Marko Borkovic, consumer and family financial services; Tanner Creech, finance; Thomas Gilej, Specialized Master Bus-Fin; Luke Laramore, business; Jacob Maisonneuve, electrical and computer engineering; Luciano Pechota, finance; Andre Roberts, business; John Rush, sport industry; Nicholas Skubis, finance; Robert Stoller, finance; Donovan Williams, marketing.

**Women's Soccer** - Tatum Adamson, biology; Jacinda Bonham, animal sciences; Jadin Bonham, accounting; Ava Bramblett, health sciences; Lillian Danner, pre-health sciences; Kailyn Dudukovich, actuarial science; Mirann Gacioch, sport industry; Natalie Garcia, marketing; Ava Greco, psychology; Nette Nina Hiltunen, sport industry; Arella Jacome Agnalt, marketing; Arden La Rose, exercise science; Sophia Louder, biology; Berkley Mape, psychology; Mai Ly Marella, environmental engineering; Peyton McNamara, international business; Mia McSweeney, management & industry exploring; Victoria Miller, pre-health sciences; Maliyah Morrison, pre-health sciences; Peighton Northrup, sport industry; Molly Pritchard, sport industry; Amanda Schlueter, pre-health sciences; Sydney Walters, marketing.

**Softball** - Samantha Bewick, business; Lorin Boutte, marketing; Jasmyn Burns, psychology; Taylor Cruse, marketing; Kiana Estrada, sport industry; Kaitlyn Farley, human development & family science; Morgan Frye, Environmental Assessment; Layna Gerhard, Chinese; Kennedy Kay, human development & family science; Kamryn Kortokrax, communication; Lottie Landmesser, marketing; Hailley Lang, marketing; Skylar Limon, psychology; Julia Miller, health sciences; Reagan Milliken, kinesiology; Hadley Parisien, exercise science education; Alexis Paulsen, health sciences; Kailea Ricks, psychology; Cadyn Ruffer, psychology; Emma Tolley, arts and sciences-BA-undecided.

**Spirit** - Zachary Ahrens, biomedical science; Michael Chaykowski, health professions exploration; Emily Hayward, biomedical engineering; Caleb Kies, nursing; Jeffrey Moody, exercise science; Kurt Steelman, mechanical engineering; Tyler Wisman, communication.

**Men's Swimming** - Daniel Baltes, atmospheric sciences; William Bansberg, exercise science; Joshua Bedford, finance; Timothy Brown, sport industry; Samuel Campbell, finance; Reid Caswell, finance; Charles Clark, sport industry; Henry Dvorak, political science; Mason Edmund, finance; William Fentress, neuroscience; Servaas Fick, finance; Thomas Frost, mathematics; Krystoph Gorski, finance; Karl Helmut, actuarial sciences; Cornelius Jahn, economics - business; Rylan McDaniel, exercise science; Mario McDonald, kinesiology; Malcolm McKenzie, finance; Christopher Paxton, aerospace engineering; Joseph Roth, business; Elijah Stoll, exploration; Lucas Vickers, middle childhood education; Jordi Vilchez, finance.

**Women's Swimming** - Sienna Angove, mechanical engineering; Julia Bartoszewicz, neuroscience; Rachel Bockrath, biology; Margaret Cagle, biology; Lauren Clippard, finance; Sydney Davids, electrical and computer engineering; Ava DeAngelis, human development & family science; Reese Dehen, biology; Paige Delma, pre-health sciences; Mackenzie DeWitt, speech and hearing science; Jessica Eden, human development & family science; Allison Fenska, exercise science; Bella Fisco, neuroscience; Nyah Funderburke, communication; Paige Hall, biology; Teresa Ivan, health sciences; Anne Krusinski, human nutrition; Susie Lee, data analytics (pre); Tia Lindsay, geographic information science & technology; Erin Little, hospitality management; Delia Lloyd, biology; Lucy Malys, speech and hearing science; Krista Marlin, respiratory therapy; Elise Nardozzi, biology; Mila Nikanorov, finance; Mairin O'Brien, health sciences; Mia Rankin, philosophy; Danika Varda, interior design; Gwenyth Woodbury, biology; Katherine Zenick, social work.

**Synchronized Swimming** - Marian Catahan, health sciences; Leonie Corbeil, political science; Janneke Dirven, marketing; Rikki Evans, international studies; Scarlett Finn, architecture; Charlotte

Gray, food science and technology; Hannah Hefernan, communication; Keana Hunter, psychology; Sarah Levaro, marketing; Daniella Molano Arango, biology; Gabriella Molano Arango, biology; Ayla O'Neil, medical anthropology; Lilly Ortiz, biomedical engineering; Angelie Roger, neuroscience; Madison Romney, marketing; Venice Shoda, pre-health sciences; Natalie Smith, criminology & criminal justice; Emma Spott, animal sciences; Taylor Sullivan, sport industry; Nathalia Valdez, exercise science education.

**Men's Tennis** - Jack Anthrop, sport industry; Alex Bernard, sport industry; Brandon Carpico, air transportation; JP Day, finance; Nikita Filin, sport industry; Alex Fuchs, sport industry; Declan Galligan, finance; Will Jansen, sport industry; Aidan Kim, sport industry; Christopher Li, sport industry; Reece Yakubov, biology.

**Women's Tennis** - Megan Basil, political science; Shelly Bereznayk, accounting; Alessia Cau, pre-health sciences; Teah Chavez Babyak, sport industry; Nao Nishino, psychology; Sydney Ratliff, communication; Danie Schoenly, operations management; Audrey Spencer, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science.

**Men's Track** - Nicholas Biega, exercise science education; Cooper Citro, finance; Jaxson Eckert, finance; Daniel Edwards, finance; Dustin Fillmore, exercise science education; Bailey Fletcher, biology; Nazzio John, human development & family science; Devin Jordan, computer & information science (pre); Sean Kaminski, finance; Brian Kellon, biochemistry; Ibrahim Khairat, consumer and family financial services; Jack Knapke, agricultural systems management; Mason Louis, exercise science education; Michael Lunsford, sport industry; Lawson Maag, sport industry; Nicholas Robinson, marketing; Christian Seibert, marketing; Nathaniel Streby, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Hayden Tobias, chemical engineering; Braden Wakey, construction systems management; Tanner Watson, social work; Reign Winston, film studies.

**Women's Track** - Leah Bertrand, health sciences; Sophie Bidwell, human development & family science; Sydney Bryant, accounting; Emma Bucher, primary education; Avery Clark, information systems; Fatouma Conde, public health; Jalaia Creary,

computer & information science (pre); Aaliyah Eliott, real estate and urban analysis; Morgan Fijalkowski, health sciences; Sophia Fong, health promotion, nutrition & exercise science; Nicole Grimes, environmental engineering; Callia Harris, accounting; Faith Hunter, sport industry; Zamesha Myle, sport industry; Amara Okpalaoka, statistics; Bobbi Olive, studio art; Samantha Potts, exercise science; Olivia Powell, biology; Ainhua Reparaz Sanchez, marketing; Alexis Roberts, sport industry; Noa Smith, communication; Janela Spencer, information systems; Lacey Stringer, criminal justice administration; Kayla Watson, consumer and family financial services; Veronica Waugaman, data analytics; Kiera White, marketing.

**Men's Volleyball** - Stanislaw Chacinski, geography; Aaron Grimm, economics - business; Hudson Harris, marketing; Daniel Henwood, management & industry exploring; Andrew Hudson, business; Daniel Hurley, sport industry; Benjamin Hutchinson, pre-health sciences; Kohl Kutsch, sports coaching; Thomas Leahey, mechanical engineering; Ian Nolte, mechanical engineering; John O'Riordan, accounting; Owen Pickering, mechanical engineering; Benjamin Putnam, finance; Grant Strong, marketing; William Sutphen, exercise science education; Kyle Teune, accounting; Tyler Tharpe, psychology; Shane Wetzel, sport industry; Cole Young, sport industry.

**Women's Volleyball** - Kaia Caffee, sport industry; Kamiah Gibson, social work; Olivia Hasbrook, sport industry; Kaitlyn Hoffman, biology; Hannah Jones, public health; Emily Londot, kinesiology - sport management; Rylee Rader, kinesiology - sport management; Zaria Ragler, social work; Ava Shankle, communication; Sydney Taylor, marketing; Ella Wrobel, sport industry; Reese Wuebker, primary education; Abigail Yoder, biology.

**Wrestling** - Carter Chase, finance; Daxton Chase, exercise science education; Ben Davino, sport industry; Dylan D'Emilio, diversity, equity & inclusion; Nicholas Feldman, sport industry; Paddy Gallagher, sport industry; Luke Geog, finance; Carson Kharchla, healthcare leadership & innovation; Brendan McCrone, sport industry; Carter Neves, business administration; Klay Reeves, sports coaching; Ryder Rogotzke, exploration; Timothy Schierl, finance.










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# 14 Buckeyes Selected In 2025 NFL Draft

By **PATRICK ENGELS**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

The sheer talent spread throughout Ohio State's 2024 national championship-winning roster was on full display during the final weekend of April when 14 Buckeyes were selected in the 2025 NFL draft held in Green Bay, Wis., from April 24-26.

Ohio State was one player shy of tying Georgia's all-time record of 15 players selected in a single draft set in 2022, but it did tie its own program record of selections set in 2004. It also marks the fifth time since 1994, when the NFL draft expanded to seven rounds, that 10 or more Buckeyes were picked.

Even with this nearly record-breaking weekend, it still took some time for Ohio State's players to start flying off the board. No Buckeye was taken in the first round until pick No. 19, when wide receiver Emeka Egbuka was selected by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, continuing an impressive streak of first-round wide receivers for co-offensive coordinator/wide receivers coach Brian Hartline.

Egbuka was the third wideout taken in the first round behind Heisman Trophy winner Travis Hunter at pick No. 2 (Jacksonville Jaguars) and Arizona's Tetairoa McMillan at No. 8 (Carolina Panthers). He enters an already loaded wide receiver unit in Tampa Bay that features future Pro Football Hall of Famer Mike Evans and Pro Bowler Chris Godwin, one which he said he is certainly looking forward to joining.

"Chris and Mike, they have done it at a very high level for a very long time, which is something I am looking to do in my NFL career as well," Egbuka said after getting drafted. "I think being able to learn from them, just the ins and outs of NFL football, and to pick their brains on stuff (is valuable). I'm a student of the game. I love learning about it. Having

those guys in the same room as me, it's a blessing. So I'm glad to be a part of it."

Egbuka's selection seemed to open up the floodgates for the NFL-bound Buckeyes. It took just five picks for the next Ohio State player to be taken off the board, with offensive lineman Donovan Jackson going to the Minnesota Vikings with pick No. 24. Jackson's pick was a bit of a surprise because many mock drafts had him as a second-round selection.

It was then time for the defense to get involved, with defensive tackle Tyleik Williams being selected at pick No. 28 by the Detroit Lions. He became the first Ohio State defensive tackle to be drafted in the first round since Will Smith in 2004.

Offensive tackle Josh Simmons capped the first round when he was selected by the Kansas City Chiefs at No. 32. He now has the opportunity to protect Patrick Mahomes' blind side at left tackle, where he had success with the Buckeyes in both 2023 and 2024 before going down with a knee injury in October.

It didn't take long for Ohio State to get involved in the second round on April 25. The prolific running back tandem of Quinshon Judkins and TreVeyon Henderson were both among the first six selections of the round, with Judkins going No. 36 overall to the Cleveland Browns and Henderson No. 38 to the New England Patriots, where he will be coached by former Buckeye defensive end and assistant coach Mike Vrabel.

Defensive end JT Tuimoloau was the final Buckeye taken on day two, going No. 45 overall in the second round to the Indianapolis Colts.

Day three (rounds 4-7) was the busiest day for Ohio State, with seven players drafted. Linebacker Cody Simon got things rolling when he was picked No. 115 in the fourth round by the Arizona Cardinals, followed by safety Lathan Ransom at No. 122 to the Carolina Panthers and defensive

end Jack Sawyer at No. 123 to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Three more Buckeyes were picked in Round 5, including defensive tackle Ty Hamilton at No. 148 (Los Angeles Rams) and cornerbacks Jordan Hancock (No. 170, Buffalo Bills) and Denzel Burke (No. 174, Arizona Cardinals). Burke will not only team up with his former teammates Simon, Marvin Harrison Jr. and Paris Johnson Jr. but also his former rival Will Johnson of Michigan, who was drafted by the franchise in the second round.

The final Buckeye to be taken in the draft was quarterback Will Howard, who will team up once again with Sawyer after he was selected by the Steelers with the No. 185 overall pick in the sixth round. Howard slid significantly in the draft – he was projected as a third- or fourth-round selection throughout the offseason – but he clearly was not worried about that after hearing his name called.

"I just jumped in the pool to celebrate (getting drafted)," Howard said in a video posted to the Steelers' social media account. "Can't wait to get to Pittsburgh to get started. Let's go!"

Following the draft's conclusion, three more Buckeyes from the national championship team were signed as undrafted free agents. Center Seth McLaughlin, who was projected to get drafted in the later rounds, signed with the Cincinnati Bengals, while offensive tackle Josh Fryar signed with the Arizona Cardinals – where he will join his former Buckeye offensive line coach Justin Frye – and tight end Gee Scott Jr. was picked up by the New England Patriots.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin has compiled draft boxes for the 17 Buckeyes who were either drafted or signed as undrafted free agents, including their pre-draft measurables, the team that selected them, that team's 2024 record, where they were selected, experts' takes and where they project on their team's depth chart.



## EMEKA EGBUKA

Wide Receiver

6-1 • 202

Recruit Rank: Overall 10;  
WR 1

**DRAFTED:** Round: 1 Pick: 19

**2024 RECORD:** 10-7

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Egbuka is the most polished route runner among the receivers with the potential to become a quarterback's best friend in critical situations. He should fit in with Mike Evans, Chris Godwin and Jalen McMillan and become a terrific possession receiver for Baker Mayfield. He's an outstanding player and competed alongside the nation's (and now NFL's) top receivers at Ohio State, but Egbuka stood out for his toughness and ability to separate from defenders." – Scott Dochterman, The Athletic

**DEPTH CHART:** Mike Evans, Chris Godwin, Jalen McMillan, **Emeka Egbuka**, Sterling Shepard, Trey Palmer



## DONOVAN JACKSON

Offensive Lineman

6-4 • 315

Recruit Rank: Overall 19;  
IOL 1

**DRAFTED:** Round: 1 Pick: 24

**2024 RECORD:** 14-3

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Cornerback and safety were both considered Round One needs for the Vikings, but they went another route with a versatile offensive lineman in Jackson. Minnesota signed guard Will Fries in free agency to line up on the right side, but the opposite guard spot was open. Jackson's experience at left guard and left tackle in college made him a favorite for offensive line coaches around the NFL. He'll be penciled in as the Day One starter between left tackle Christian Darrisaw and center Ryan Kelly, who was also signed in the offseason." – Matt Miller, ESPN

**DEPTH CHART:** **Donovan Jackson**, Blake Brandel, Joe Huber



## TYLEIK WILLIAMS

Defensive Tackle

6-3 • 334

Recruit Rank: Overall 166;  
DL 25

**DRAFTED:** Round: 1 Pick: 28

**2024 RECORD:** 15-2

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "One of the most underrated defensive linemen in the draft, Williams was an absolute rock inside for Ohio State the last two years. He's a massive nose tackle who also can slide over and play as a three-technique. Many experts had pegged an edge rusher opposite Aidan Hutchinson as Detroit's biggest need, but defensive tackle (especially with Alim McNeill still rehabbing a knee injury) was another pretty sizable one.

"Williams should be a great fit in the NFC North, a division which loves to hammer the football. The Lions did leave some edge talent on the board here, and Williams is a bit limited in terms of his versatility, but he should be an impact run defender quickly." – Nick Baumgardner, The Athletic

**DEPTH CHART:** DJ Reader, Alim McNeill, **Tyleik Williams**, Levi Onwuzurike





**JOSH SIMMONS**

Offensive Tackle  
6-5 • 317

Recruit Rank: Overall 342;  
IOL 25



**DRAFTED:** Round: 1 Pick: 32

**2024 RECORD:** 15-2

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Patrick Mahomes isn't the only reason why the Chiefs are elite. Kansas City's ability to find outstanding value at the bottom of the first round year after year is something to behold – and the Chiefs have done it again. If Simmons hadn't hurt his knee in October (he expects to be ready for the start of the 2025 season), he might have been a top-10 pick in this draft. He might have been the first offensive line-man taken in this draft. His tape was outstanding when healthy last year as he moves around like a 300-pound basketball player out there. The upside here is terrific, so long as Simmons' injury situation doesn't linger. I love this pick." – Nick Baumgardner, The Athletic

**DEPTH CHART:** Jaylon Moore, **Josh Simmons**, Ethan Driskell



**QUINSHON JUDKINS**

Running Back  
6-0 • 221

Recruit Rank: Overall 562;  
RB 46



**DRAFTED:** Round 2: Pick: 36

**2024 RECORD:** 3-14

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Judkins, who played two years at Ole Miss before transferring to Ohio State, is the definition of the top-line running back in any kind of scheme, but especially a power-running scheme like the Browns have utilized under coach Kevin Stefanski. He is built for contact, with great balance and ability to run through arm tackles. Judkins' vision is also high-level, allowing him to see the holes as they develop. The physicality in his game is perfect for the fourth quarter, as was evident in the Buckeyes' win over Penn State." – Chris Easterling, Akron Beacon Journal

**DEPTH CHART:** Jerome Ford, **Quinshon Judkins**, Dylan Sampson, Pierre Strong Jr.



**TREVEYON HENDERSON**

Running Back  
5-10 • 202

Recruit Rank: Overall 23;  
RB 1



**DRAFTED:** Round: 2 Pick: 38

**2024 RECORD:** 4-13

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "The New England Patriots helped quarterback Drake Maye on Day One of this year's draft by selecting left tackle Will Campbell. A quarterback needs to remain upright before he can thrive. Offensive line-men aren't the only players who help in pass protection, though. The Patriots also needed a running back who can contribute on all three downs. They landed the class' best in that regard by taking Ohio State's TreVeyon Henderson in Round Two.

"Two traits immediately jump out when looking at Henderson and what he adds to an offense. He's both an explosive runner who's capable of creating chunk plays in the ground game and is an excellent pass protector. Henderson has legitimate 4.43-second 40-yard-dash speed and was also a significant contributor on third downs as a pass-catcher and blocker. Last season, he was the only FBS running back who averaged 7.0 or more yards per carry while racking up at least 1,000 rushing yards and 250 receiving yards." – Brent Sobleski, Bleacher Report

**DEPTH CHART:** Rhamondre Stevenson, **TreVeyon Henderson**, Antonio Gibson



**JT TUIMOLOAU**

Defensive End  
6-4 • 269

Recruit Rank: Overall 4;  
DL 2



**DRAFTED:** Round: 2 Pick: 45

**2024 RECORD:** 8-9

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Tuimoloau fits the kind of edge rusher (Colts general manager Chris Ballard loves to draft. At 6-foot-4 and 269 pounds, Tuimoloau arrives in a very similar mold to (Colts defensive end) Kwity Paye, and he just might wind up replacing him in 2026 if the Colts don't work out an extension. Tuimoloau fits a team that has a balanced display of edge rushing talents because that hasn't been his primary strength. At least it wasn't until the College Football Playoff arrived and he led Ohio State to a national championship with 6.5 sacks in four games, bringing his career total to 23.5. ...In the absence of a perfect fit, Tuimoloau checks the boxes as a high-floor player with a critical role for this team starting in 2026." – Nate Atkins, Indianapolis Star

**DEPTH CHART:** Kwity Paye, Samson Ebukam, **JT Tuimoloau**, Laiatu Latu



**CODY SIMON**

Linebacker  
6-2 • 229

Recruit Rank: Overall 75;  
ILB 4



**DRAFTED:** Round: 4 Pick: 115

**2024 RECORD:** 8-9

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "The Cardinals have a need at linebacker after opting against re-signing Kyzir White in free agency. Simon brings good size, experience and instincts to the position and plays very hard. He may ultimately be limited in coverage but he'll play well enough to endear himself to the coaching staff." – Ayrton Ostly, USA Today

**DEPTH CHART:** Mack Wilson Sr., **Cody Simon**, Mykal Walker



**LATHAN RANSOM**

Safety  
6-0 • 203

Recruit Rank: Overall 151;  
SAF 11



**DRAFTED:** Round: 4 Pick: 122

**2024 RECORD:** 5-12

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "He's clutch, dependable, a productive player. In the back end (of Ohio State's defense), you could always trust Lathan Ransom. That guy is going to make sure that on run-downs, he is running the alleys and playing with force." – Field Yates, ESPN

**DEPTH CHART:** Tre'von Moehrig, Demani Richardson, **Lathan Ransom**, Nick Scott





## JACK SAWYER

Defensive End  
6-4 • 260

Recruit Rank: Overall 5; DL 3



**DRAFTED:** Round: 4 Pick: 123

**2024 RECORD:** 10-7

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Jack Sawyer's game is rooted in strength and power at the point of attack. Against the run, he's strong, physical and takes on blocks with solid leverage to create stalemates at the line of scrimmage and set the edge against offensive tackles. That can also help him get extension and escape blocks to make plays as a run defender. As a pass-rusher, Sawyer has the strength to collapse the pocket against weaker tackles and has a decent cross-chop that he uses as a nice inside counter move. He also has a good motor to get coverage sacks and will get his hands up to bat passes at the line of scrimmage." – Matt Holder, Bleacher Report

**DEPTH CHART:** T.J. Watt, Alex Highsmith, Nick Herbig, **Jack Sawyer**



## TY HAMILTON

Defensive Tackle  
6-2 • 299

Recruit Rank: Overall 757;  
DE 33



**DRAFTED:** Round: 5 Pick: 148

**2024 RECORD:** 10-7

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Hamilton offers good size and block-shedding prowess against the run and made a living eating up blockers for the Buckeyes. In Los Angeles, he won't be asked to take on a heavy workload and should be a good, young piece in the rotation with potential down the line as the Rams' young defenders start to come up for second contracts," – Ayrton Ostly, USA Today

**DEPTH CHART:** Kobie Turner, **Ty Hamilton**, Jack Heflin



## JORDAN HANCOCK

Cornerback  
6-0 • 195

Recruit Rank: Overall 73;  
CB 5

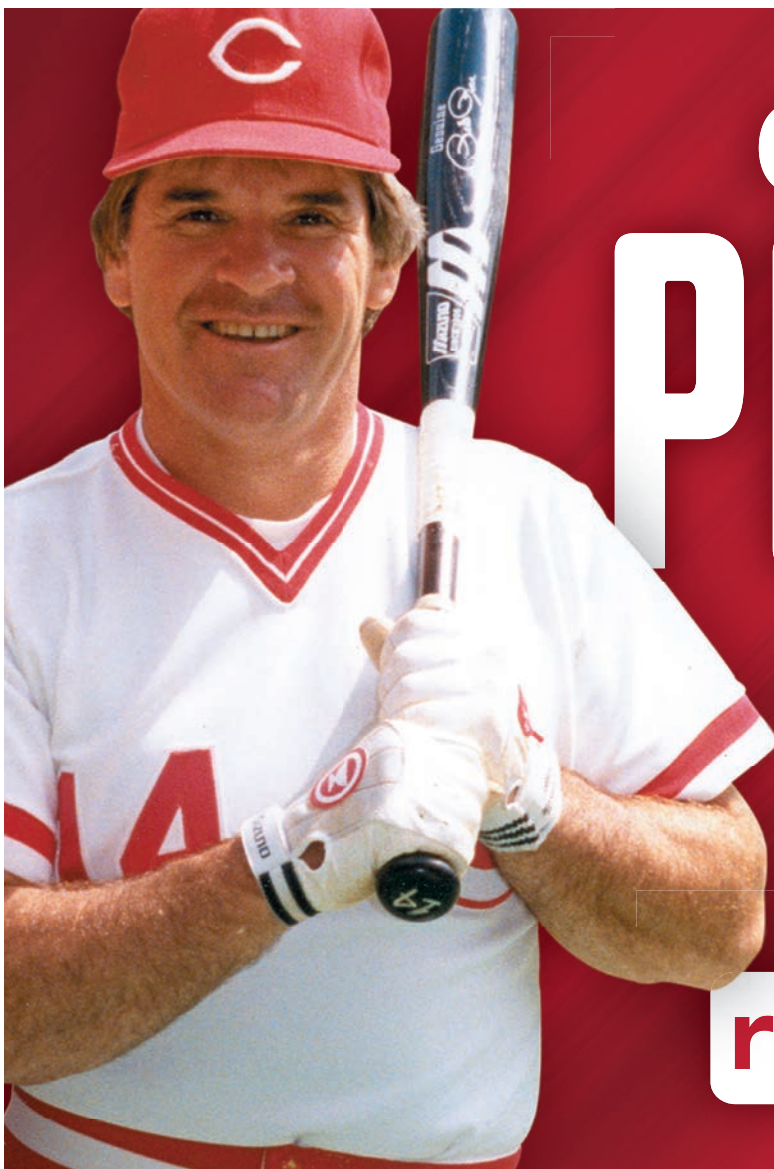


**DRAFTED:** Round: 5 Pick: 170

**2024 RECORD:** 13-4

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Position-versatile defensive back with good size but average coverage talent. Hancock is strong enough to play near the line or on the back end, and his heaviest usage has come from the nickel spot. He's an above-average tackler in run support and in space but has average thump. He gets beat off the dribble in press-man and struggles to make up ground quickly against shifty route-runners. He does his job from zone by keeping catches in front of him and tackling quickly but lacks playmaking instincts. Hancock's size and versatility helps, but he might not excel enough in the coverage phase to become a long-term starter." – Lance Zierlein, NFL.com

**DEPTH CHART:** Taron Johnson, **Jordan Hancock**



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## DENZEL BURKE

Cornerback  
5-11 • 186

Recruit Rank: Overall 199;  
ATH 9



**DRAFTED:** Round: 5 Pick: 174

**2024 RECORD:** 8-9

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "It's been an interesting journey for Denzel Burke over the past couple seasons. I thought coming into the 2024 NFL draft, (Burke), if he had come out, would have been a high pick. But he decides to stay at Ohio State. He's best in off-coverage. Burke, though, in a big game last year against Oregon kind of met his match in man coverage. That being said, he's very experienced, has some friskiness to him and does have very good ball skills when the football is thrown in his area. Arizona has now drafted two Big Ten corners, also landing Will Johnson (from Michigan) in the second round as it continues to address that part of the roster." – Field Yates, ESPN

**DEPTH CHART:** Will Johnson, Max Melton, Sean Murphy-Bunting, **Denzel Burke**



## WILL HOWARD

Quarterback  
6-4 • 236

Recruit Rank: Overall 882;  
QB 33



**DRAFTED:** Round: 6 Pick: 185

**2024 RECORD:** 10-7

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Pittsburgh has a glaring need at quarterback and opts to address it in Round Six. Howard is a big, strong passer with very repeatable mechanics and thrived at Ohio State when distributing the ball to four future NFL first-round picks. He has a strong arm which will come in handy for downfield concepts and experience as a scrambler which will work in Arthur Smith's system. His ceiling is relatively low but his floor is pretty high." – Ayrton Ostly, USA Today

**DEPTH CHART:** Mason Rudolph, **Will Howard**, Skylar Thompson



## JOSH FRYAR

Offensive Lineman  
6-5 • 320

Recruit Rank: Overall 502;  
OG 28



**DRAFTED:** Undrafted Free Agent

**2024 RECORD:** 8-9

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "A three-star recruit in 2020, Fryar emerged as a key piece for Ohio State over his final two seasons, starting every game at right tackle. He has some explosive athletic traits, especially at 6 feet 4 inches, 318 pounds. His raw athletic score, an all-encompassing metric to measure athleticism, was 9.19 out of 10. But he never emerged as much more than an above-average tackle during his time with the Buckeyes. In Arizona, he will be reunited with Justin Frye, his college offensive line coach. Frye was hired as the Cardinals' offensive line coach this winter." – Theo Mackie, The Arizona Republic

**DEPTH CHART:** Jonah Williams, Christian Jones, **Josh Fryar**, Jeremiah Byers



## SETH MCLAUGHLIN

Center  
6-4 • 304

Recruit Rank: Overall 524;  
C 11

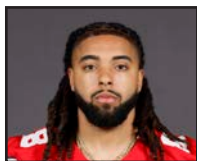


**DRAFTED:** Undrafted Free Agent

**2024 RECORD:** 9-8

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "McLaughlin is recovering from an Achilles tear, so when he'll be able to add his talents to his future team is uncertain – though he said he'll be ready for training camp. But when he is ready, his intelligence will shine. Multiple Ohio State linemen praised how smart McLaughlin was, and how he helped solidify a line that desperately needed a veteran leader in the middle." – Andrew Gillis, cleveland.com

**DEPTH CHART:** Ted Karras, Matt Lee, **Seth McLaughlin**



## GEE SCOTT JR.

Tight End  
6-3 • 243

Recruit Rank: Overall 66;  
WR 10



**DRAFTED:** Undrafted Free Agent

**2024 RECORD:** 4-13

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Scott is certainly more of a receiving threat on offense than he is a traditional, in-line tight end. In 2024, he had 27 receptions for 253 yards and two touchdowns with the Buckeyes. He had four scores and 47 catches in his Ohio State career. He should be able to contribute on special teams at the NFL level and provide some tight end depth as a player who can catch the ball." – Andrew Gillis, Cleveland.com

**DEPTH CHART:** Hunter Henry, Austin Hooper, Jaheim Bell, Jack Westover, Giovanni Ricci, **Gee Scott Jr.**



## NFL DRAFT PICKS 2025



# Buckeyes Add Depth Through Spring Portal

The Buckeyes didn't lose any scholarship players to the spring transfer portal, but they did have a couple of additions since BSB last went to press. They added former North Carolina defensive end Beau Atkinson and former West Virginia offensive lineman Justin Terry.

RECRUITING  
OUTLOOK  
Greg Wilson

Atkinson was the first to join the roster, committing late on April 23. He had visited Columbus two days earlier and decided to go with the Buckeyes over Georgia and South Carolina, who also showed significant interest in the former Tar Heel.

In the 2024 season with the Tar Heels, Atkinson had 35 tackles, 12 for loss and 7½ sacks, the best season of his three years at UNC. He totaled 54 tackles, 16½ for loss and 11 sacks, taking a redshirt season in 2022 when he arrived in Chapel Hill.

He joins a defensive end group that has Kenyatta Jackson Jr. and Caden Curry as the presumed starters as well as transfer Logan George and C.J. Hicks, who made the switch this offseason from linebacker. Atkinson will more than likely add to that room, but if defensive line coach Larry

Johnson believes he could contribute as depth on the interior, it's possible he could make the switch with his 6-6, 265-pound build that could add more weight if needed.

However, he has found his success coming off the edge, so it's more likely he will remain where he has been.

Terry is a Pickerington, Ohio, native who committed to Ohio State on April 26.

"I've always loved playing football. Now I get to play it at home. #GoBucks," Terry wrote in his Twitter announcement.

He joins Ohio State after spending his freshman season with the Mountaineers, taking a redshirt. He has four seasons of eligibility remaining. The former three-star prospect will likely play at offensive tackle with the Buckeyes, giving first-year offensive line coach Tyler Bowen some needed depth at the position, where he will compete with fellow transfers Ethan Onianwa and Phillip Daniels as well as Ian Moore and Austin Siereveld, among others.

Head coach Ryan Day and his staff had been searching for offensive line depth in the portal since it opened in early April, also hosting transfer offensive tackles Jaden Ball (Purdue), who committed to Minnesota, and Orion Irving (Sam Houston State), who visited Ohio State on April 25 and had not found a new home by the time BSB went to press.

The Buckeyes have also been looking for more help on the defensive line, hosting former Georgia Southern defensive

OSU Football 2026 Commitments						
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	
Brock Boyd	WR	6-2	183	★★★★	Southlake (Texas) Carroll	
Blaine Bradford	S	6-1	207	★★★★★	Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic	
Simeon Caldwell	S	6-3	185	★★★★	Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School	
Corbyn Fordham	TE	6-4	215	★★★★	Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School	
Sam Greer	OT	6-7	310	★★★★	Akron Hoban	
Chris Henry Jr.	WR	6-5	205	★★★★★	Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei	
Jaeden Ricketts	WR	6-0	187	★★★★	Pataskala (Ohio) Watkins Memorial	
Maxwell Riley	OT	6-5	280	★★★★	Avon Lake, Ohio	
CJ Sanna	LB	6-3	225	★★★	Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy	
Tucker Smith	OL	6-5	280	★★★	Glendale (Ariz.) Sandra Day O'Connor	
Jakob Weatherspoon	CB	5-10	172	★★★★	Avon, Ohio	

OSU Football 2027 Commitments						
Player(s) in the class of 2027 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.						
Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School	
Jamier Brown	WR	5-11	170	★★★★★	Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne	
Brady Edmunds	QB	6-5	215	★★★★	Huntington Beach, Calif.	

tackle Troy Pikes the same day that Irving was on campus. Pikes played in 13 games and started one last season, recording 13 tackles, a half tackle for loss and a quarterback hurry. He played in one game in 2023 before redshirting, giving him three years of eligibility left entering the 2025 season.

The Buckeyes have also hosted former Ball State kicker Jackson Courville on a visit. He made 15 of 21 field goals for the Cardinals as a true freshman in 2023, with a long of 48 yards, also making 24 of 25 ex-

tra points. Last year, he made 11 of 13 with a long of 52 yards (2 for 2 on 50-plus-yards) and made 30 of 31 extra points.

Buckeyes Add Another  
2026 Pass Catcher

Ohio State earned another pledge on April 15 when Southlake (Texas) Carroll 2026 four-star wide receiver Brock Boyd (6-2, 183) announced on Twitter that he was flipping his commitment from TCU to Ohio State.

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# ASK AN ANALYST

## With Marc Givler of Buckeye Huddle

**Nixa, Mo., five-star offensive tackle Jackson Cantwell (6-8, 300) is announcing his commitment on May 13. Where do you expect him to commit, and do the Buckeyes have any remaining chance with him?**

"Well, they have a chance in the fact that they're named among his finalists, but the reality is it's highly unlikely (for him to commit to Ohio State). They were not able to secure an official visit, and the timing of this just doesn't feel very good for Ohio State. I've felt it is a Georgia vs. Oregon battle. I had Georgia up front there for a little bit, but I'm starting to think it's going to probably be Oregon. He does have that last-minute visit there, and that seems to be the trend right now, but it would be very surprising if he ended up at Ohio State."

**Akron Hoban four-star cornerback Elbert Hill (5-10, 175) has an official visit scheduled to get to Ohio State. Where do you believe the Buckeyes are on his list at this point?**

"I know there's a lot of angst around him right now from Ohio State fans. I still think this is going to work out favorably for Ohio State. There's been some stuff out there (because) he initially announced his official visit schedule, and he didn't have Ohio State on it, and people panicked. I kind of said, 'Look, he's going to schedule it, just relax on that,' and it's now been scheduled. He's probably their top recruiting priority right now, so it's not a situation where they've taken him lightly as an in-state kid. He's going to, obviously, take his visits and consider his options. USC and Oregon are very involved there. So is Alabama. But I'm going to stick with Ohio State here for now."

**Were you able to see Huntington Beach, Calif., four-star and Ohio State commit Brady Edmunds**

**(6-5, 215) at the Elite 11 regional? If so, what did you make of him as a prospect, and do you believe he will remain committed to the Buckeyes?**

"I do think he'll remain committed. This is a kid who grew up, despite being out in California, a big Ohio State fan. There's a fondness for Ohio State that's been there for a very long time. He's been coming to Ohio State for many years. He's got pictures that he's shown people of himself as a little kid in front of Ohio State University signs on campus and stuff like that. He's coming back in June for a full week to do three one-day camps for Ohio State. As his dad told me at the Elite 11, he just can't seem to get enough. He was almost sad to go back to California, he had such a good time in Ohio on his recent visit. I think he's really solid at this point."

"In terms of his Elite 11 performance, I thought he had the best arm of any quarterback prospect that was there. He's got a very strong arm. He's a big kid – 6-5, well over 200 pounds now. He's just a kind of classic, big, strong-arm passer. But he does have some athleticism to him. He's not going to wow anyone like Justin Fields, or Braxton Miller or anyone like that, but he has enough athleticism to be effective. His athleticism is not too different than what Will Howard had, where he can be a physical presence in the run game and if you forget about him he can pick up some yards for you."

"I was impressed with his footwork, his mechanics, and his ability to get his shoulders square and deliver the ball accurately, no matter what they threw at him in drills. He did win the underclassmen accuracy challenge, so not only does he have a strong arm, he has an accurate arm, so I was impressed. I look forward to seeing him in June again to get three more evaluations on him, but I thought he was as advertised."

**Where does Ohio State stand in the race to get Mineral (Va.) Louisa County five-star running back Savion Hiter (6-0, 200)? Do you have a prediction of where he will end up?**

"It feels like they've lurked on the periphery there for a while, and yet they just keep staying in the mix. I think they're certainly among his top programs. I know Michigan's in there as well, but if I had to guess, I would say Tennessee right now (is the team that will land Hiter). I wouldn't call Tennessee the local school, but it's not far from him. It's one of the closer blue-blood type of programs to his home. That's a program that is offering a lot of opportunity right now in terms of playing time with a thin backfield, so I think that's the team to beat right now. It continues to be interesting that Ohio State continues to stay in there, and Carlos Locklyn did visit him this week in Virginia for the spring evaluation period. So they're taking their swings."

**Southlake (Texas) Carroll four-star wide receiver Brock Boyd (6-2, 183) flipped to Ohio State recently. What do you make of him as a prospect?**

"He's really fast. He's a 21.7 200-meter guy, which is moving. He makes a lot of plays vertically. He can track it. He can run past guys in the open field. I guess my only thing (to critique) – and this isn't really so much that he can't do it, I don't think he needs to do it or is asked to do it that much – is those intermediate routes and watching him make separation on those. Because right now, he's such a tremendous vertical threat in high school, it's very hard for high school defensive backs to keep him from getting over the top. He's got a little bit of Devin Smith in him, with his ability to take the top off defenses and track the ball when it's in the air and make plays downfield."

"After many conversations and prayers, I would like to announce that I'm committing to Ohio State," his post read. "Thank you TCU for all that you've provided for me. I enjoyed building relationships with the entire staff. Let's get it!"

Boyd is the third commitment in the 2026 class for offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, joining Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 205) and Pataskala (Ohio) Watkins Memorial four-star Jaeden Ricketts (6-0, 187).

"Coach Hartline and I have a great relationship," Boyd told 247Sports. "He's a great guy, as real as can be. He's hard on his guys, but that shows how much he cares about them. He spends a lot of extra time with them."

Ohio State was the first of many schools to offer Boyd while he was still holding a pledge to TCU, doing so on Jan. 28 before teams like California, Tennessee, Pitt, UNLV and Washington followed. It's no mystery as to why there was so much interest in Boyd, who caught 111 passes for 1,875 receiving yards and 19 touchdowns in his junior season.

That performance helped his high school team make the Texas 6A D-II state championship game, where he had a title game-record 13 catches for 178 yards and a score.

"Ohio State is a beautiful place," Boyd said. "I loved it there. I had a blast on my (March) visit. The weather is different than down here."

"I'll get back there in June for my official visit."

Boyd is the No. 373 player in the country, the No. 59 wide receiver and the No. 53 player in the state of Texas according to 247Sports composite rankings. Ohio State briefly jumped to No. 2 in the team recruiting rankings after landing Boyd, but Clemson has since taken that spot with a wide receiver commitment of its own, garnering a pledge from Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day School four-star Gordon Sellars (6-2, 180) on April 18.

### Cantwell Sets Commitment Date

The No. 1 player in the country, Nixa, Mo., five-star offensive tackle Jackson Cantwell (6-8, 300), has officially set a date for when he plans to commit to a school.

He will decide between his four finalists of Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Ohio State and Oregon on May 13. It seems that the Buckeyes have the least momentum to land Cantwell out of those four teams, with each of the Bulldogs, Hurricanes and Ducks viewed as the favorite by some re-

cruiting experts.

He did visit Ohio State over the spring but received a "crystal ball" to go to Miami from a Hurricane insider and also set up an official visit with Oregon that was set to begin April 26, originally days before he planned to announce his decision, a big advantage for head coach Dan Lanning and the Buckeyes' Big Ten rivals.

"It's an opportunity to check out Eugene one more time and to make sure Oregon is what I last remember it as," Cantwell told On3. "Also, I haven't seen a spring practice up there yet and seen a few other minor details, so it would be good to do so."

Cantwell first announced he would commit on April 30 after his visit to Eugene, but on April 23, he posted on Twitter that he would wait until May 13, and added that he would be visiting Georgia again on May 10. After pushing back the date, Cantwell might be a little less sure about his choice than he was when he posted on Twitter just 16 days earlier.

"I might be closer to the end than I

thought I was," Cantwell tweeted on April 10 after taking all of his spring visits.

If the Buckeyes are somehow able to swoop in and earn the commitment of Cantwell, which still seemed unlikely as BSB went to press, it would solidify a great offensive line class for Bowen.

But even without Cantwell, the Buck-

Continued On Page 24

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# 2027 OSU QB Commit Impresses At Elite 11

Continued From Page 23

eyes are still off to a great start on the line with Avon Lake, Ohio, four-star offensive tackle Maxwell Riley (6-5, 280); Akron Hoban four-star offensive tackle Sam Greer (6-7, 310); and Glendale (Ariz.) Sandra Day O'Connor three-star interior offensive lineman Tucker Smith (6-5, 280) already pledged in the class.

They also have some good momentum with other highly rated uncommitted prospects such as Mansfield (Texas) Lake Ridge five-star offensive tackle Felix Ojo (6-6, 275); Richmond (Va.) St. Christopher's School five-star interior offensive lineman Darius Gray (6-3, 285); and Vero Beach, Fla., four-star interior offensive lineman Micah Smith (6-6, 325), among others they are pursuing.

## Womack Sets Commitment Date

Cantwell isn't the only elite prospect who has set a date for when he will commit to a program. Flowood (Miss.) Hartfield Academy five-star safety Bralan Womack (6-0, 195) announced that he will make his decision on Aug. 23, waiting until after he makes all of his official visits to weigh his options.

The Buckeyes and safeties coach Matt Guerrieri are already off to a very impressive start with the safety position in the

2026 class, earning pledges from Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic five-star safety Blaine Bradford (6-1, 207) and Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School four-star safety Simeon Caldwell (6-3, 185), and Womack would all but guarantee OSU the top safety class in the country for 2026 should they each remain committed.

The top four schools for Womack – each of which he will be taking official visits to – are Florida (May 30), Texas A&M (June 6), Auburn (June 13) and Ohio State (June 20). The Buckeyes getting the last chance to make an impression on the five-star could be a big deal in their pursuit of the No. 1 safety in the country and the No. 21 player overall.

Womack has apparently long considered Ohio State to be a “dream school,” and 247Sports director of scouting Andrew Ivins has even compared the elite prospect to the Buckeyes' current elite safety, Caleb Downs, in his scouting report.

“Advanced safety prospect that checks off box after box with his size, versatility, athleticism and football IQ,” Ivins wrote in January. “Baits quarterbacks into making bad decisions from a split-field alignment and makes them pay with his jolting burst and slick ball skills. Overall, should be viewed as one of the top defensive talents in the 2026 cycle based on what he has put on tape and done in best-on-best settings.”

## Edmunds Performs Well At Elite 11

The Buckeyes' 2027 quarterback commit, Huntington Beach, Calif., five-star Brady Edmunds (6-5, 215), made another stop at Ohio State, staying in Columbus for the full weekend of the spring game to visit his future home. But right after his visit, he was in Massillon, Ohio, for the Elite 11 regional, where he performed very well.

In the accuracy challenge at the regional event, Edmunds tied for first place among all underclassmen QBs who attended. He finished with 21 points, tying with Arlington Heights (Ill.) Montini Catholic quarterback Israel Abrams (6-4, 180).

The winner in the 2026 class – a class in which Ohio State is still searching for a signal caller – was Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School three-star and Louisville commit Briggs Cherry (6-4, 200), who was the only player from the event to earn an invite to the Elite 11 finals. He had 22 points in the accuracy competition.

Edmunds, however, was one of the more impressive arms at the event in the group of underclassmen, which was noticed by 247Sports national recruiting analyst Allen Trieu.

“Brady Edmunds has so much velocity on his passes that I worried about the hands of the receivers when some of them left his hand,” wrote Trieu, who was at the event. “He's also so physically imposing

that those who didn't know who he was coming in were surprised to learn he is only a sophomore. He's best when he can plant his feet, but he's a solid athlete, and that was interestingly evident when he was catching passes for the other quarterbacks.”

Edmunds still has two more high school seasons to play before he steps foot on Ohio State's campus as an official member of the team, but as the No. 48 player in the country and the No. 5 quarterback in the class, Edmunds is making Ohio State's future look bright at the position.

## Buckeyes Top Choice For Interior Lineman

The Buckeyes have done well on the offensive line to this point in the recruiting process for the 2026 class, and they are near the top of lists for many other uncommitted prospects at the position.

One of those players who considers Ohio State a favorite is Clemmons (N.C.) West Forsyth four-star interior offensive lineman Pierre Dean (6-5, 255). He told 247Sports after his visit on April 11 that OSU is at the top of his list because the trip to Columbus “blew (his) mind.”

“I had high expectations, and the visit exceeded them,” Dean said. “It was nice – the city, the coaches, the D-line room, really the whole team.”

As Dean referred to, the Buckeyes aren't

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

### 35 Years Ago — 1990

While Ohio boasted three of the country's top prep football prospects the year before, the 1991 class crop was looking like it could prove to be an even better one.

Robert Smith and Joe Pickens, who wound up signing with Ohio State, and Ricky Powers, who signed with Michigan, were consensus high school All-Americans.

In the 1991 recruiting class, the state of Ohio might not have had three individuals who were rated in the top 10, but the overall talent of the senior class was set to be outstanding.

Leading the way were tailback Ki-Jana Carter of Westerville South, wide receiver Deollo Anderson of Youngstown Ursuline, offensive tackle Trent Zenkewicz of Cleveland St. Ignatius, outside linebacker Craig Powell of Youngstown Rayen, offensive tackle Alfie Hill of Cincinnati Forest Park and defensive tackle Mike Stallmeyer of Cincinnati Elder.

### 25 Years Ago — 2000

Pat Massey, a defensive end of St. Ignatius was part of a small, but talented group of players who attended Ohio State's Scarlet and Gray game. He was rated Ohio's No. 2 prospect by both The Ohio Football Recruiting News and Ohio's Future Stars. As the brother of OSU offensive guard Jim Massey, he had a vested interest in the Scarlet and Gray game.

“The team looked real good, I thought,” Pat Massey said. “The players really seemed into it and the competition level was high. It was a lot of fun. I didn't really get a chance to talk to the coaches, though.”

Massey told BSB his top three were Ohio State, Notre Dame and Michigan.

“It is really in no particular order,” Massey said. “Those are the main three that I'm interested in. I'm going to take a good look at those three schools.”

### 20 Years Ago — 2005

It appeared as if the Ohio State football team would have one more scholarship tailback than expected in the fold in the fall. It's just that the new addition wouldn't be on a football scholarship.

James Aston of Katy, Texas, held his school's all-time rushing record and picked up 2,452 yards on the ground as a senior. But he was also a three-time state wrestling champ who seemed set to attend Ohio State on a partial wrestling scholarship.

That was apparently the holdup in Aston choosing a school. While he could have wrestled at any number of schools, he want-

ed the opportunity to play both sports in college. Two schools – Ohio State and Iowa State – offered Aston the chance to do that, and Aston opted to sign with the Buckeyes.

### 15 Years Ago — 2010

Standing in the southwest corner of Ohio Stadium as the Buckeyes took the field in an early-season showdown with USC in 2009, Erick Howard was nearly in tears. Near the midpoint of his senior season at North Canton (Ohio) Hoover, the running back knew he had the athletic talent to earn an offer from the Buckeyes.

His academics, however, were another story, and after falling short in the classroom, the two-time reigning Ohio Mr. Football signed a national letter of intent to play his college ball at Akron.

But one week before taking the field as part of the Ohio North-South All-Star Classic, Howard came to the realization that being a Zip was not what he wanted for his college career. After gaining 9 yards on two carries while playing both sides of the ball in the game, Howard stood near midfield at the Horseshoe and said he would be changing his college course.

“I signed with Akron, (but) they're going to be a little mad at me because I had an epiphany,” Howard told BSB. “I have decided that I'm going to go to a prep school because I want to come here. Coach Tressel has been on me to come. I need to quit being lazy.”

### 10 Years Ago — 2015

Although he was not related to former Wisconsin star Chris Borland, Tuf Borland was still expected to end up as a Badger. His father, Kyle, lined up for Wisconsin at linebacker, so it came as a bit of a surprise when the Bolingbrook, Ill., native announced his commitment to Ohio State.

“Extremely excited to say I've decided to attend The Ohio State University!!” he wrote in a Twitter post the night of April 17.

Borland was rated as Scout's No. 23 outside linebacker and No. 278 overall prospect in the 2016 class and developed a strong bond with OSU defensive coordinator Luke Fickell throughout his recruitment. In one February visit to Ohio State, the four-star prospect spent two hours talking football with Fickell in his office.

It was that type of knowledge that made Borland such a coveted prospect, and Scout.com recruiting analyst Beth Long, who covered the Chicago area, noted as much in her evaluation of him.

“It's clear when you see Borland play that beyond the fact that he is a hard-hitting, physical prospect, he's got a high football IQ” she wrote. “Borland makes adjustments for Bolingbrook and you

can see that the game slows down for him, which was another draw to talking X's and O's with Fickell.”

### Five Years Ago — 2020

Ohio State landed its second commitment for the 2022 recruiting class in as many days when West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star offensive tackle Tegra Tshabola pledged his services to the Buckeyes on April 23, joining New Orleans Warren Easton four-star cornerback Jyaire Brown, who committed the day before.

Tshabola was considered the sixth-best offensive tackle and No. 69 prospect overall in his recruiting class. He picked Ohio State over more than a dozen offers from programs such as Arizona State, Florida, Kentucky, Louisville, LSU, Michigan, Oklahoma, Penn State, Tennessee, Texas A&M and USC, among others.

The Buckeyes had been keeping tabs on Tshabola for more than a year, and he became the first in-state prospect in his class to land an offer from the staff on Nov. 2 – one week after his unofficial visit for Ohio State's 38-7 win over Wisconsin in 2019. He returned for the 28-17 win over Penn State a few weeks later and had maintained constant contact with coach Ryan Day, offensive line coach Greg Studrawa and linebackers coach Al Washington ever since.

### One Year Ago — 2024

Ohio State commitment and Bellefontaine, Ohio, five-star quarterback Tavien St. Clair would get 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.

“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.

Ohio State had success at the event in recent years. OSU 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.



looking at him only as an offensive lineman. He said that both Bowen and Johnson have been recruiting him throughout the process, and they like him at both positions.

"Ohio State is recruiting me for both offense and defense," Dean said. "They're recruiting me for defensive end or tackle. They see me as a versatile guy who could play 3, 4, 5. On offense, they see me as an interior guy, a guard. I don't really care which, but I guess I lean a little more to defense."

Dean had already lined up official visits with South Carolina on May 30 and Georgia on June 6, but after his visit to Columbus, he made some room on his schedule to get back to the Buckeyes' campus, where he will be on June 13 for the entire weekend. He also has an idea of when he will commit, though he doesn't have an exact date yet.

"I'll only be taking those three official visits," he said. "For sure, I'll take all three. I want to decide (on my college) right around my first game, probably right before my first game."

Dean is considered the nation's 59th-best overall prospect, fourth-best interior offensive lineman and fifth-best player in the state of North Carolina, so he would be a great addition for the Buckeyes on either side of the ball.

### OSU In Top 3 For Texas SAF

Ohio State's secondary is starting to take shape with Bradford; Caldwell; and Avon, Ohio, four-star cornerback Jakob Weatherspoon (5-10, 172) already committed. But Guerrieri and co-defensive coordinator/secondary/cornerbacks coach Tim Walton are still looking to fill the class out fully.

Frisco (Texas) Panther Creek four-star safety Donovan Webb (6-0, 182) is a recruit the Buckeyes have been pursuing and gaining ground with, making it into Webb's top three schools when he revealed his list to 247Sports.

He visited Columbus during spring

practices and told the recruiting service that it went very well.

"My visit overall was wonderful," Webb said. "I was able to spend a lot of time with Coach Guerrieri. I was also able to sit and talk with Coach Day and Coach (Matt) Patricia and listen to them share how they see me fitting into their program."

Webb hasn't officially ended his contact with other schools but said that LSU, Ohio State and Oklahoma are the three programs that are most consistently recruiting him.

He has five official visits set already and will likely schedule more. Webb already visited Texas Tech on April 11 and Baylor on April 25, and he is set to go to SMU on May 2, Ohio State on May 30 and Michigan on June 6. But with him saying the Sooners and Tigers have done so well recruiting him, it seems likely he will find time over the summer to make trips to those schools as well.

Regardless, Webb has a strong interest in the Buckeyes at this point.

"Ryan Day, he's a great guy," Webb said. "I got to meet with him in his office for about 30 minutes, telling me about the school, the traditions, everything. And the safeties coach, he's incredible. Matt, he talks to me every day and stuff like that."

"And just Ohio State in general, they won a national championship, and they offered me before everybody else came. So they've seen the potential of me before everybody else. So that's a good thing I love."

### Prospects Get Offers At Spring Game

With many prospects on campus for the Buckeyes' annual spring game, a few offers were extended to those recruits from the OSU coaching staff, most of those going to players in the 2027 class.

There was one player who received an offer in the 2026 class, with Cleveland Glenville defensive lineman Jamir Perez (6-4, 330) leaving with a scholarship offer in hand. He is unranked by 247Sports composite but has 20 Division I offers, and he

has since lined up an official visit with the Buckeyes on June 20.

In the 2027 class, Ohio State offered Alabaster (Ala.) Thompson defensive end Cameron Pritchett (6-3, 231), Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy tight end Judah Lancaster (6-4, 200), La Verne (Calif.) Damien safety Gavin Williams (6-1, 180) and Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco safety Isala Aisa Wily-Ava (6-2, 195) on April 12.

Pritchett also has 20 Division I offers currently, including from Auburn, Florida, Florida State, Georgia, LSU, Maryland, Michigan, Notre Dame, Ole Miss, Penn State, Tennessee and Texas, among others. Lancaster currently boasts 30 offers with some from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Ole Miss, Oregon, Penn State, Washington and Wisconsin.

Williams is also already receiving significant interest from Power Four programs around the country like Alabama, Auburn, Maryland, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oregon, Tennessee, UCLA, USC and Washington.

Wily-Ava had 19 Division I offers when BSB went to print, including from Florida State, Georgia, Maryland, Notre Dame, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, USC and Washington.

### Other Notes And Tidbits

• Gray, who visited the Buckeyes in March for a spring practice, will return to

Columbus for an official visit June 11-12. He has a busy OV schedule, also going to Clemson on May 30, Tennessee on June 6, Auburn on June 10, LSU on June 13, Penn State on June 17 and South Carolina on June 20. He is the No. 29 overall player in the 2026 class, the No. 2 interior lineman and the No. 2 player in the state of Virginia.

• The Buckeyes will be hosting another 2026 prospect on an official visit over the summer, with Perez locking in an OV with Ohio State for the weekend of June 20. Perez, who as mentioned is unranked by 247Sports' composite system, also plans to take official visits to Vanderbilt on May 29, Wisconsin on June 6, Iowa State on June 10 and Cincinnati on June 13. He didn't receive an offer from OSU until April 12, and he told 247Sports that "things have blown up" for him since then and he could schedule more visits since more teams seem to be contacting him.

• Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne five-star wide receiver Jamier Brown (5-11, 170) said he remains committed to the Buckeyes, but he took some spring visits this year, making his way to Alabama, Auburn, Ole Miss, Mississippi State, LSU, Tulane, Southern Miss, Notre Dame and Florida State. The No. 3 overall prospect and No. 1 wide receiver in the 2027 class – who pledged to Ohio State on Nov. 23 – finished his stretch of visits by getting back to Columbus, however, and he told 247Sports that the Buckeye coaches were aware of the visits.

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# Former Vols' QB Iamaleava Headed To UCLA

Former Tennessee starting quarterback Nico Iamaleava – who transferred from the Volunteers earlier this spring due to an NIL dispute with the university – pledged his services to UCLA on April 20.

## BIG TEN NOTES Cameron Moone

It was a brief yet intense final few days for Iamaleava at Tennessee. One day after Iamaleava did not attend practice on April 11 – which came a day before Tennessee's spring game – due to his dissatisfaction over his NIL earnings compared to other high-profile Power Four quarterbacks, Volunteers head coach Josh Heupel announced the team would be moving on from the quarterback.

"I want to thank him for everything he's done since he's gotten here, as a recruit and who he was as a player and how he competed inside the building," Heupel said on April 12. "Obviously, we're moving forward as a program without him. I said it to the guys today. There's no one that's bigger than the Power T. That includes me."

"This program has been around for a long time. There are a lot of great coaches, a lot of great players who came before that laid the cornerstone pieces, the legacy, the tradition that is Tennessee football. It's going to be around a long time after I'm gone and after they're gone."

Iamaleava's frustrations with NIL compensation reportedly started just hours before the winter portal closed on Dec. 28 when his representatives – as well as his father, Nic – asked for the deal to increase to the \$4 million range only for those demands to not be met by Tennessee's top collective, Spyre Sports Group.

Those months-long frustrations boiled



SONNY BROCKWAY

**SEE YOU LATER —** Former Tennessee quarterback Nico Iamaleava (center), who transferred to UCLA on April 20 after a dispute with the Volunteers over NIL money, is shown here scrambling to avoid Tyleik Williams (91) while JT Tuimoloau (44) is being held during the Buckeyes' 42-17 win in the CFP first round on Dec. 21 in Ohio Stadium. UCLA plays in Columbus on Nov. 15.

over for the former five-star quarterback this spring, and nine days after his initial holdout, Iamaleava announced in an Instagram post that he would be transferring to UCLA.

"My journey at UT has come to an end," Iamaleava wrote. "This decision was incredibly difficult, and truthfully, not something I expected to make this soon. But I trust God's timing, and I believe He's leading me where I need to be. Even though this chapter is ending, a new chapter has begun and I am committed to UCLA!"

Hours after Iamaleava committed to playing football in the City of Angels, Madden Iamaleava, Nico's brother who was a

backup quarterback for Arkansas last year, also announced he would be transferring to the Bruins.

With Iamaleava and his brother now signed, the future appears to be set at quarterback for the Bruins, who went 5-7 last year and finished in 14th place in their first season in the Big Ten. In his first comments since the transfer, Bruins head coach DeShaun Foster said that he and his staff did some extra homework on Iamaleava, which allowed them to realize that the opportunity to grab him out of the portal was simply too good to pass up.

"You just have to go with your gut and with the people that you trust," Foster said on April 22. "You can't just read everything on social media and come to a conclusion from that. You have to do a little bit more homework. So I think we did a good job in vetting and figuring out what we wanted to do, and we were able to execute and now we're here."

Nico and Madden's pledges are also a full-circle moment for the Iamaleava family because Nico – a Long Beach, Calif., native – was heavily recruited by the Bruins out of high school and Madden was initially committed to the Bruins before flipping to Arkansas during the 2024 early signing period.

### B1G Representation In NFL Draft First Round

The Big Ten Conference had nearly a third of all selected players in the first round of the NFL draft on April 24, with 11 players from four different conference universities hearing their names called in the opening 32 picks. That number trailed the SEC and its conference-leading 15 selections, giving the two conferences 26 of the 32 draftees from round one.

Ohio State had the most selections of

any Big Ten team with four former Buckeyes becoming first round selections: wide receiver Emeka Egbuka (No. 19, Tampa Bay Buccaneers), offensive guard Donovan Jackson (No. 24, Minnesota Vikings), defensive tackle Tyleik Williams (No. 28, Detroit Lions) and offensive tackle Josh Simmons (No. 32, Kansas City Chiefs). On top of leading the Big Ten conference, Ohio State also had the most selections out of any school in the opening round of the 2025 draft.

Behind the Buckeyes was Michigan with its three picks in defensive tackles Mason Graham (No. 5, Cleveland Browns) and Kenneth Grant (No. 13, Miami Dolphins) and tight end Coleston Loveland (No. 10, Chicago Bears).

Penn State had the highest selection of any Big Ten squad, with defensive end Abdul Carter going third overall to the New York Giants, followed by his fellow All-Big Ten teammate tight end Tyler Warren going No. 14 to the Indianapolis Colts. Oregon also had two selections in the first round – defensive tackle Derrick Harmon (No. 21, Pittsburgh Steelers) and offensive tackle Josh Conerly Jr. (No. 29, Washington Commanders).

With its 11 new NFL athletes, the Big Ten set a conference record for most selections in the first round. That was obviously aided by the four new teams' admittance to the Big Ten this past summer, although Oregon was the only new squad to have any selections in the first 32 picks.

When the dust settled on the 2025 NFL draft, the Big Ten conference had the second-most selections with 71, including 14 from Ohio State, 10 from Oregon and seven from Michigan.

The SEC set the all-time record for most players picked in a single draft with 79.

### Seven B1G Women's Hoopers Picked In WNBA Draft

Although the WNBA draft doesn't feature the high volume of picks that the NFL does, the Big Ten still had seven women's basketball players selected out of the 38 total picks in the WNBA draft on April 14.

The lone Big Ten player picked in the first round – which had 12 selections – was former USC forward Kiki Iriafen, who was selected fourth overall by the Washington Mystics. Iriafen wrapped up her final year of college basketball averaging 18.0 points and 8.4 rebounds per game for the Trojans on her way to third-team AP All-American and first-team All-Big Ten honors.

There were four Big Ten athletes selected in the second round, including former Maryland guard Shyanne Sellers (No. 17, Golden State Valkyries), former Iowa guard Lucy Olsen (No. 23, Washington Mystics), former Washington forward Dalayah Daniels (No. 24, Minnesota Lynx) and former USC center Rayah Marshall (No. 25, Connecticut Sun).

For the third and final round, Michigan guard Jordan Hobbs went 34th overall to the Seattle Storm, and former Ohio State forward Taylor Thierry was selected 36th overall to the Atlanta Dream. Turn to page 30 of this issue for more information on Thierry's selection.



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### Purdue's Smith Back For Senior Season

Purdue All-American and reigning Big Ten Player of the Year guard Braden Smith announced he would be returning for his senior season in an Instagram post on April 14, giving the Boilermakers a potential John Wooden Award honoree for the 2025-26 season.

"I'm running it back one last time," Smith said in his post. "Purdue has given me everything: Memories, challenges, growth, and a family. There's still more to prove, more to accomplish, and more moments to create with my brothers. Much love to my guys and Boiler Nation! Let's make this next year unforgettable!"

Averaging 15.8 points, 4.5 rebounds, 8.7 assists (second in the nation) and 2.2 steals per game last season, Smith was a consensus first-team All-American on a Boilermaker squad that went 24-12 (13-7 Big Ten) while making a run to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament, losing to No. 1 seed and national runner-up Houston 62-60 on March 28.

The Westfield, Ind., native stepped into the role of the premier scoring option for Purdue after two-time Wooden Award-winner Zach Edey was selected in the 2024 NBA draft by the Memphis Grizzlies. Now ahead of his second full season as the top threat on the court for the Boilermakers, Smith has a chance to repeat as Big Ten Player of the Year while also earning a second consecutive Bob Cousy Award – given to the nation's best point guard.

### Garcia's Eligibility Request Denied By NCAA

With the days of four years of eligibility plus a redshirt beginning to become a rarity, Minnesota second-team All-Big Ten forward Dawson Garcia had his waiver request for an extra year of eligibility denied on April 22, leading Garcia and his legal counsel to threaten legal action against the NCAA if the request isn't approved through appeals.

"The NCAA has denied his request and his appeal," Garcia's attorney, Darren Heitner, told Gophers On SI on April 22. "We are now exhausting efforts directly with the NCAA before potentially escalating this matter to litigation."

Garcia, a member of the 2020 recruiting class, was granted an extra year of eligibility after his freshman year at Marquette due to the COVID-19 pandemic and entered the transfer portal that offseason, joining North Carolina for the 2021-22 campaign.

After his sophomore season was cut short due to a personal leave related to family issues, Garcia once again entered the transfer portal and spent the next three seasons with Minnesota. Entering the transfer portal a third time on April 21, Garcia hoped to earn an extra year on the hardwood, becoming another member of a new trend in college basketball with Clemson's Ian Schieffelin and Jaeden Zackery also entering the transfer portal with no eligibility remaining.

But as BSB went to press, Garcia's request had yet to be granted, and he remained without collegiate eligibility.

If Garcia does earn an extra year of eligibility – it appears unlikely that will occur – he would become one of the more highly coveted players in the transfer portal. He

ranked sixth in the Big Ten this past season in scoring at 19.2 points per game and ninth in rebounding (7.5 per game) while adding 2.0 assists per game and shooting 47.4 percent from the floor (210 of 443) and 37.3 percent from three (50 of 134).

### Rutgers' Gymnastics Coach Salim-Beasley Fired

Following a months-long investigation into a "divided and dysfunctional organization" commanded by Rutgers women's gymnastics coach Umme Salim-Beasley, the university announced on April 23 that the coach had been fired and would be replaced by her longtime assistant Anastasia Candia.

Salim-Beasley was first placed on paid administrative leave by Rutgers on Jan. 17 after allegations emerged that the former head coach had lost control of the team and "did not seem to fully grasp the effect that her words and actions were having on many of the gymnasts." On top of the negative treatment of student-athletes, it was alleged that Salim-Beasley was having an improper relationship with former Scarlet Knights athletic director Pat Hobbs, who abruptly stepped away from his position on Aug. 16 due to "health concerns."

Salim-Beasley, who had been the head coach at Rutgers since 2018, had questions regarding her program dating back to the 2023-24 season. According to the investigation, that season under Salim-Beasley was filled with "widespread discord and conflict" while six former student-athletes on Salim-Beasley's teams stated that coaches "pushed them to practice or compete despite experiencing pain," with five players medically retiring from gymnastics.

There were further questions into the former head coach's ability to handle student-athletes' mental health welfare, with the investigation finding that Salim-Beasley "did not handle mental health issues appropriately." One athlete cited that conversations with Salim Beasley were like "talking to a wall."

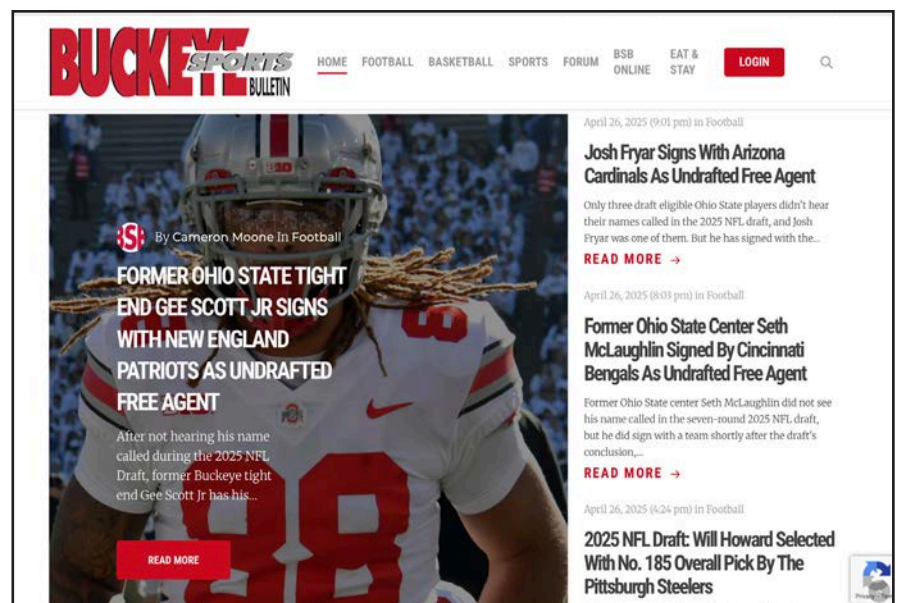
In a response to the external investigation commissioned by Rutgers University president Jonathan Holloway, an attorney for Salim-Beasley said that the allegations made by the former players were "largely petty, invalid and bias-driven responses to a female coach."

According to NJ Advance Media, Salim-Beasley was interviewed by the investigators for more than five hours and engaged extensively on several issues, but she refused to answer particular questions related to her relationship with Hobbs. Investigators ultimately revealed that there was a relationship between Salim-Beasley and Hobbs that required Hobbs to recuse himself from her supervision.

Previous reports suggested Hobbs and Salim-Beasley did not do much to hide their relationship, with Hobbs spending an unusual amount of time around the smaller program and even signing her to a five-year, \$995,000 extension last February despite her leading the program to just a 4-50 record in conference dual meets and 55-100 record overall in her tenure.

Candia, meanwhile, will lead a battered women's gymnastics program that finished the year 16-9 but 1-8 in the Big Ten under her guidance as interim head coach.

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# Stewart Changes Course, Enters Transfer Portal

Ohio State endured a surprise roster subtraction late on April 22 when rising junior forward Sean Stewart entered the transfer portal just hours before the window closed.

## COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

Stewart leaves Ohio State after playing just one disappointing season in Columbus. Like his fellow class of 2023 five-star and McDonald's All-American forward Aaron Bradshaw, Stewart joined the team last off-season with high expectations after a rather uneventful freshman season at Duke but never lived up to the hype.

He started each of the 30 games he appeared in but averaged just 5.7 points and 5.8 rebounds in those contests while shooting 54.2 percent from the field (71 of 131) and 50.0 percent from the free-throw line (27 of 54). Stewart's main Achilles' heel in his lone season at Ohio State was his inability to stay out of foul trouble. He committed a team-high 103 fouls on the year – 17 more than the next closest Buckeye – and fouled out a team-leading seven times.

Stewart's ineffectiveness inside can largely be attributed to the significant time missed by Bradshaw, which caused him to slide over from the starting forward role to the center position at an undersized 6-8 for the majority of the season, including all of Big Ten play.

Even with these year-long struggles, Stewart still indicated after Ohio State's season-ending loss to Iowa in the Big Ten tournament on March 12 that he was happy in his role with the Buckeyes and thought he had found a home in Columbus. The Columbus Dispatch also said that a source close to Stewart told them on multiple occasions during the offseason that he would be returning to the Buckeyes, only for him to change his mind in the final days of the portal window.

"I do," Stewart said when asked if he thought he had found a home at Ohio State. "(The coaching staff) believed in me. They all had my back. My teammates had my back. Everybody in the program has my back, and I have their backs."

Over one month after those comments, though, Stewart has officially played his last game in scarlet and gray and will look to

suit up for his third team in as many seasons. He had not yet found a new team as BSB went to press.

Stewart's departure opens up one additional roster spot for the Buckeyes than they had anticipated, which they will almost certainly use to add a frontcourt player.

Ohio State had not found that player, but it was recently linked to a few names, including former Florida Atlantic forward Baba Miller (6-11, 215, 11.2 points, 7.0 rebounds per game last season) and former Texas Tech forwards Federiko Federiko (6-11, 215, 5.1, 4.5) and Darrion Williams (6-6, 225, 15.1, 5.5).

### Buckeyes' Backcourt Transfer Options Dwindling

In addition to finding a new forward in the portal, Ohio State and head coach Jake Diebler will look to complete their 2025-26 roster with another backcourt player.

This is turning into a bit of a difficult task for the Buckeyes, as many guards whom the team has been pursuing have committed elsewhere, such as Columbus native Dailyn Swain (Texas), Kennard Davis Jr. (BYU) and Blake Harper (Creighton). With the Buckeyes' transfer wish list seemingly dwindling by the week, Diebler and his staff may have to find a diamond in the rough this spring, and that could come by signing a productive mid-major guard such as Dezayne Mingo, formerly of Marshall.

Mingo (6-4, 185) is coming off a strong junior season with the Thundering Herd in which he ranked second on the team in scoring at 12.6 points per game and first in assists (5.3). He also brought down 4.7 rebounds per game and shot 42.0 percent from the field (136 of 324) and 32.4 percent from three (26 of 74).

Ohio State is one of several notable Power Four programs interested in Mingo, a list that includes St. John's, Texas, Texas Tech, Ole Miss, Pitt, Georgia and Vanderbilt, among others. He had yet to visit the Buckeyes as BSB went to press, but they have been in contact with the guard.

If Mingo decides to commit elsewhere, Ohio State could shift its focus to former High Point guard Kezza Giffa (6-2, 175). The Paris, France, native played one season at UTEP and two seasons at junior college Daytona State before joining the Panthers in 2023-24. He was one of the program's top players over the past two seasons, averaging 15.5 points, 2.3 rebounds and 2.7 assists per game while shooting 42.3 percent from the field and 32.5 percent from three in 70 games (43 starts).



SONNY BROCKWAY

**MIGHT AS WELL JUMP — Sean Stewart (13) indicated at the conclusion of the 2024-25 season that he would remain with Buckeyes for his junior year but he made a late and unexpected decision to enter the transfer portal on April 22.**

Giffa was named first-team All-Big South in both of those seasons, and he helped High Point to its first-ever bid to the NCAA Tournament this past season as a No. 13 seed, falling to Purdue 75-63 in the first round. He played 27 minutes in that game and totaled eight points, three assists, three rebounds and a steal.

### New Buckeyes Build Chemistry On Spring Visit

Just hours before the new-look Ohio State football team was developing chemistry in front of over 40,000 fans at Ohio Stadium during its annual spring game, the new-look men's basketball team was doing the same in front of an empty gym at Value City Arena.

At around 7:30 a.m. on April 12, incoming transfers Gabe Cupps, Brandon Noel and Christoph Tilly shared the court for the first time together as teammates. No coaches were on hand because NCAA rules pro-

hibit coaching staffs from observing or taking part in workouts during this time of the year, and it was only a light shootaround. But according to Cupps, who organized the workout by sending out a text to Noel and Tilly before they came to Columbus for their official visits, the time spent together was well spent.

"I thought it was good for us just to get around each other," the Indiana transfer told the Dispatch. "We mostly just got shots up. Stationary, then we did some on the move, did some shooting competition stuff. Other than that, it was good to just interact with them, talk while we were shooting."

Tilly said that the shootaround gave the transfer trio a first good look at what they can bring to the court and how their skill sets can complement one another.

"We're going to spend a lot of time on the court together, so doing this right now, we already have an idea of how the other players are on the court," Tilly told the Dispatch.

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"It was not a crazy workout, but it was good. We were shooting, we had some shooting competitions, and it was fun."

It also gave them a chance to get comfortable inside their new home of Value City Arena, where only Cupps has played a game. Noel had already visited the arena and its facilities while on campus in early April, while this was Tilly's first time at Ohio State.

"It was good to get a feel for the facilities more than just walking around in them," Tilly said. "All three of us got in there pretty early and got the workout, got a feel for the facilities. No coaches (were there), because that's not quite allowed yet, but still good to get in there and get a feel for it all."

The team-building did not stop with the workout. After that was an organized breakfast, followed by a trip to Ohio Stadium to take in the Buckeyes' spring game as well as a photoshoot for each new player. For Noel, all of the time around his new teammates has him excited for what is to come when the 2025-26 Buckeyes take the floor in early November.

"It's exciting," Noel said. "Just getting around them and getting to know them better shows who they are, and I think we can do something pretty special this year. I think we've got a good group of guys there that are ready to win a lot of games."

### Bradshaw To Memphis, Parks To Toledo

A pair of former Buckeyes found new homes since BSB last went to press, with Bradshaw committing to Memphis on April 23 and rising junior center Austin Parks pledging to Toledo on April 16.

Bradshaw joins the Penny Hardaway-led Tiger program exactly one week after taking an official visit to Memphis and 22 days after filling out his paperwork to enter the portal on April 1. The highly coveted five-star prospect will play for his third team in as many seasons after back-to-back disappointing one-and-done seasons with Kentucky and Ohio State, respectively. After playing in 26 games at Kentucky, Bradshaw was supposed to emerge as a reliable frontcourt presence for Diebler's team in 2024-25, but that expectation was never met when he averaged 6.0 points, and 2.7 rebounds in 22 games.

He missed 10 games this season due to both a university investigation into an alleged domestic incident that occurred at his off-campus home and a team-wide flu bug that infected him in February.

Bradshaw will now look for a third chance on a Memphis team that is coming off a successful 29-6 campaign in 2024-25 that earned it a No. 5 seed in the NCAA Tournament, although the Tigers were upset by No. 12 Colorado State in the first round.

Parks, a St. Marys, Ohio native, will stay in the Buckeye State and join Toledo with two years of eligibility left after playing two seasons with Ohio State in a mostly reserve role. He averaged 1.0 points and 0.8 rebounds in 24 career games with the program.

Parks played a bit of a bigger role in the Buckeyes' struggling frontcourt this past season, appearing in 15 games and totaling 20 points, 13 rebounds, five assists, two steals and a block in that time. But most of those totals occurred in nonconference play.

He appeared in just seven of the team's 20 Big Ten contests, scoring nine points and grabbing nine rebounds.

Parks will hope to find a much bigger role on a Toledo program that is coming off an 18-15 season and fourth-place finish in the Mid-American Conference (MAC). The Rockets are losing their leading rebounder from the 2024-25 season to Ohio University in forward Javon Simmons (6.8 boards per game), potentially opening up a starting spot for Parks to contend for on Toledo's frontcourt.

As BSB went to press, four of the five now-former Buckeyes who entered the transfer portal after the 2024-25 season have signed with new teams. Forward Evan Mahaffey will play his senior season at Akron, where he will team up with his former OSU teammate Bowen Hardman, while guard Meechie Johnson Jr. is headed back to South Carolina to play his sixth collegiate season.

Stewart, as previously mentioned, had yet to find a new team.

### Buckeye Captain Millard Passes At Age 90

Former Ohio State captain and Ohio Basketball Hall of Famer Gene Millard died on April 15 at 90 years old.

Millard was a guard for the Buckeyes from 1954-57 under head coach Floyd Stahl, averaging 6.0 points in that span (62 games) on 41.3 percent shooting. His best season came when he was a team captain his senior year in 1956-57, when he averaged 12.2 points and 1.7 rebounds per game to help lead Ohio State to a 14-8 record and third-place finish in the Big Ten standings.

It was also in that year when Millard scored the first basket in the history of St. John Arena, doing so in a 98-82 win over Butler on Dec. 1, 1956.

Millard, who went 51-37 overall and 2-1 against Michigan in his four-year stint with the Buckeyes, found even more success as an Ohio high school boys' basketball coach. He spent four years leading Washington Court House from 1958-62 before coaching and serving as athletic director at Bexley for 29 seasons (1962-87, 1992-96). He won 486 games, 15 league championships and eight district titles at Bexley while also leading them to the 1983 state Class AA championship. He also came out of retirement for one year to coach Bexley's girls' basketball team, guiding them to a 21-3 record and Division II district championship.

Those successes helped earn him the induction into the Ohio Basketball Hall of Fame as part of the class of 2011.

"It was quite a life," John Betz, who was a sophomore on the 1983 team and an assistant to Millard in the 1990s, told The Columbus Dispatch. "Anything he touched, he had a knack for getting the best out of everyone he was around."

Millard is survived by three children, 10 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

### Buckeyes No. 23 In ESPN's Preseason Top 25

Ohio State's ability to retain three of its top four 2024-25 scorers and bring in a quartet of promising transfers this offseason caught the eye of ESPN college basketball insider Jeff Borzello, who placed the Buckeyes at No. 23 in his "way-too-early top

25" rankings released on April 7.

Borzello said he ranked Ohio State just behind 2024-25 Elite Eight team Texas Tech and just ahead of NCAA Tournament teams Texas and North Carolina in his rankings due to the program returning Thornton, Mobley and rising junior forward Devin Royal to the lineup, who accounted for 55.8 percent (1,407 of 2,522) of the team's scoring last season. He also noted the transfer additions of Noel and Tilly as something that can push the program in the right direction next year.

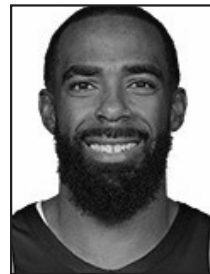
"Ohio State's stumbles down the stretch kept the Buckeyes from reaching the NCAA Tournament, but there is optimism in Columbus given they started just one senior and seem poised to bring back four starters," Borzello wrote. "Bruce Thornton is one of the best point guards in the country, while John Mobley Jr. and Devin Royal should take another step. Jake Diebler has made two key additions to the frontcourt with transfers Brandon Noel (Wright State) and Christoph Tilly (Santa Clara) entering the program."

Borzello's thoughts about the Buckeyes may have shifted since news dropped of Stewart's late portal entry because the reporter had the rising junior in Ohio State's starting lineup alongside Tilly and Noel in the frontcourt and Thornton and Mobley in the backcourt.

Ohio State was one of six Big Ten teams listed in Borzello's top-25 rankings, including Purdue at No. 2, Michigan at No. 5, UCLA at No. 10, Wisconsin at No. 14 and Michigan State at No. 18.

### NBA Buckeyes Take Playoff Stage

Ohio State did not get a chance to participate in the NCAA Tournament this season, but a pair of former Buckeyes are representing the Scarlet and Gray at the next level in the NBA playoffs.



Mike Conley Jr.

Former Ohio State guard Mike Conley Jr. and forward Jae'Sean Tate were this year's Buckeye representatives, with Conley once again making the playoffs with the Minnesota Timberwolves and Tate doing so for the first time in his career with the Houston Rockets.

Conley is in the playoffs for the 12th time in his 18 seasons, this time serving as the starting point guard for a Timberwolves team that was the No. 6 seed in the tournament and opened with the star-laden Los Angeles Lakers.

While Conley was looking to go deep in his 12th playoff appearance, Tate was in the first postseason of his five-year career after he helped Houston earn its first playoff appearance since the 2019-20 season. Tate, who joined the Rockets as an undrafted free agent in 2020, averaged 3.6 points and 2.3 rebounds off the bench in the regular season.

### More NBA Bucks Shine In Regular Season

Tate and Conley are the only former Buckeyes in the NBA playoffs this year, but there were still some players who represented Ohio State well during the regular sea-

son. Perhaps the most notable example of that was forward Jamison Battle, who came on the scene with the Toronto Raptors after initially being signed to a two-way contract, averaging 7.1 points and 2.7 rebounds per game while shooting 42.9 percent from the floor and 40.5 percent from three in his 59 appearances (10 starts).

The one-year Buckeye (2023-24) finished his rookie season in style, draining a career-high seven threes and 25 points in the Raptors' 125-118 loss to the San Antonio Spurs on April 13, a performance that put him over 100 threes made on the season (105).

Utah Jazz forward Brice Sensabaugh also shot well from beyond the arc in his second season in the league, ranking 15th in the NBA in three-point percentage (42.2 percent, 157 of 372) while also producing career highs in games played (71), starts (15) and points per game (10.9). His Jazz went just 17-65 on the year, however, the worst record by an NBA team this season.

A more established NBA Buckeye, guard D'Angelo Russell, also had a solid season with two different teams. The former No. 2 overall draft pick in 2015 and All-Big Ten player averaged 12.4 points and 4.7 assists per game on 41.5 percent shooting in 29 games with the Los Angeles Lakers before averaging 12.9 points and 5.6 assists on 36.7 percent shooting in his final 29 games with the Brooklyn Nets. Russell was traded from Los Angeles to Brooklyn in February for the second time in his career.

Russell, like Sensabaugh, missed the NBA playoffs after Brooklyn went just 26-56 on the year.

A few other former Buckeyes represented the Scarlet and Gray in the NBA this season, including Spurs forward Malaki Branham (5.0 points, 0.8 assists, 1.1 rebounds), Chicago Bulls forward E.J. Liddell (1.8, 0.3, 0.8) and Jazz power forward/center Micah Potter (4.3, 0.8, 4.3).

Liddell's Bulls made the NBA play-in tournament, but he was left off the playoff roster after playing just 12 games this season.

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# Buckeyes Pick Up First Transfer Of Offseason

Ohio State signed its first player out of the transfer portal on April 22, when former Boston College senior guard T'Yana Todd officially joined the program after committing a week before.

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Bobby Gorbett

The 6-0 Todd, who enters Columbus with one year of eligibility remaining, made 72 starts over three seasons with the Eagles and was Boston College's leading scorer in 2024-25, averaging 13.7 points on 43.3 percent shooting from the field while grabbing 2.6 rebounds and dishing out 1.5 assists per game.

Todd was at her best last season from beyond the three-point line, when she shot 45.9 percent (67 of 146), which was the fourth-best mark in the nation.

The native of Vaughan, Ontario, may have had her best season in 2024-25, but she averaged at least 10 points per game in each of her three years with Boston College.

Todd should mesh well with the Buckeyes' other guards Jaloni Cambridge and Chance Gray.

## Thierry Drafted By Atlanta Dream

Former All-Big Ten Ohio State guard Taylor Thierry was selected with the 36th overall pick by the Atlanta Dream in the third round of the WNBA draft on April 14.

A three-year starter and two-time All-Big Ten second-team guard at Ohio State, Thierry quickly made a name for herself on defense as a sophomore. While helping the Buckeyes make their first Elite Eight appearance in 30 years, she averaged 2.1 steals per game en route to making the All-Big Ten defensive team.

After two more impressive seasons defensively, Thierry's 234 career steals are the 10th most in program history. Thierry was no slouch on the offensive end either and averaged 9.7 points per game over four years at Ohio State while shooting 59.7 percent from the field, the fifth-best mark in program history.

Averaging 10.2 points, 5.2 rebounds, 2.3 steals and 1.2 assists per game while shooting a career-best 46.4 percent (26 of 56) from three-point range, Thierry clearly did enough in her senior season to attract the attention of the Dream.

"Taylor has an exceptional shooting percentage, exceptional finishing percentage at the rim and has great length and can guard on the perimeter, and has twice as many steals as turnovers just about, so that's a pretty rare thing to find," Dream head coach Karl Smesko said of Thierry after the draft.



SONNY BROCKWAY

**UNDAUNTED** — Although former Ohio State forward Ajae Petty was not selected in the 2025 WNBA draft, she signed a training camp contract with the Minnesota Lynx in hopes of starting her professional career.

In a brief video posted to the Dream's Instagram page one week after the draft, the Cleveland native expressed her excitement to join an Atlanta team that went 15-25 in the regular season in 2024 before losing to the New York Liberty in the first round of the playoffs.

"What's up, Atlanta? (I'm) super excited to get out there and get to work. Go Dream."

## Petty Signed By Minnesota Lynx

Although she wasn't drafted like Thierry, former Ohio State forward Ajae Petty also found a home in the WNBA. Just two days after the WNBA draft, Petty signed a training camp contract with the Minnesota Lynx on April 16.

Despite a somewhat disappointing 2024-25 season with Ohio State, Petty had a decorated five-year collegiate career spent with LSU, Kentucky and Ohio State and averaged 7.8 points and 6.1 rebounds between

the three programs.

Petty's best season came with the Wildcats the year before she transferred to Columbus, when she averaged a team-high 14.2 points and 10.6 rebounds per game.

Petty wasn't quite able to translate that production to Ohio State, but she still started in all 33 games and averaged 9.4 points and 7.2 rebounds per game on 58.8 percent shooting.

## Biriuk Represents Team World

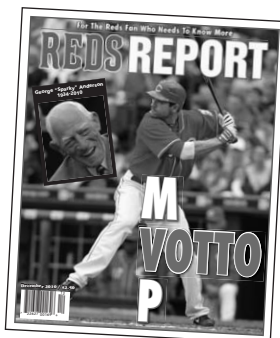
With Thierry and Petty finding their WNBA homes, incoming freshman guard Daria "Dasha" Biriuk gave the Buckeyes a glimpse of the future when she represented Team World at the Nike Hoop Summit on April 12.

Biriuk, who is originally from Ukraine, played five minutes off the bench for Team World in its 90-78 loss to Team USA and didn't record a stat while missing the only

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SONNY BROCKWAY

**SOARING — Ohio State guard Jalo-ni Cambridge, the reigning Big Ten Freshman of the Year, was one of 12 elite women’s college players to participate in three-time WNBA All-Star Kelsey Plum’s “Dawg Class” to better themselves on and off the court.**

shot she took.

Still, Biriuk should bring plenty of potential to the Buckeyes when she joins them for the 2025-26 season. The 6-1 shooting guard earned a four-star rating from ESPN and is ranked No. 83 in their HoopGurlz recruiting rankings.

Head coach Kevin McGuff talked about Biriuk’s talent when she officially signed with the program on Nov. 18, 2024.

“We are extremely excited to add Dasha to our program,” McGuff said. “She’s a terrific player who will immediately impact our ability to score the ball from the perimeter.”

Cambridge Completes ‘Dawg Class’

Cambridge, a highly touted recruit in her own right, was one of 12 players to participate in three-time WNBA All-Star Kelsey Plum’s “Dawg Class” from April 18-20 in Phoenix.

In partnership with Under Armour, Plum’s camp is designed to “help women college athletes bridge the gap to a professional level.”

According to a story detailing the events of the camp on Under Armour’s website, “Athletes took part in a dynamic lineup of activities designed to elevate both their physical and mental game. The schedule included advanced skills training and scrimmaging, along with strength and performance sessions led by Kelsey’s team of experts. Participants also engaged in intimate fireside chats that focused on mental toughness, identity and self-advocacy.”

Cambridge was invited to partake in the camp after a spectacular freshman season where she averaged 15.4 points, 4.5 rebounds and 3.9 assists en route to being named to the All-Big Ten first team and being the conference’s Freshman of the Year.

“I am thrilled that I was able to be a part of this year’s Dawg Class,” Cambridge said of the weekend. “Learning from Kelsey and these experts firsthand about how to improve as a player was amazing, and it makes me excited to keep working on my game and my mindset this offseason.”

OSU Unranked In ESPN’s Preseason Top 25

Although the Buckeyes will have talent-

ed players such as Cambridge and Todd on the roster for the 2025-26 season, they narrowly missed inclusion in ESPN’s “Way-Too-Early top-25” rankings released on April 22. Ohio State was instead listed in the “also considered” tier along with TCU and Kentucky.

Notably in the top 25 were fellow Big Ten teams No. 3 UCLA, No. 12 Maryland, No. 15 Michigan, No. 19 USC, No. 22 Iowa, No. 23 Michigan State and No. 24 Washington.

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL

Aug. 30 TEXAS.

Sept. 6 GRAMBLING; 13 OHIO; 27 at Washington.

Oct. 4 MINNESOTA, 11 at Illinois; 18 at Wisconsin.

Nov. 1 PENN STATE; 8 at Purdue; 15 UCLA; 22 RUTGERS; 29 at Michigan.

BASEBALL (11-30, 3-18)

Feb. 14-16 at Arizona State, L 9-8; L 7-6; L 17-10; 21 vs. N.C. State at Jax Baseball Classic in Jacksonville, Fla., W 8-3; 22 vs. Coastal Carolina at Jax Baseball Classic in Jacksonville, Fla., L 10-8 (11 inn.); 23 vs. Alabama at Jax Baseball Classic in Jacksonville, Fla., L 12-10; 28 vs. Auburn at 2025 College Baseball Series in Arlington, Texas, L 13-0 (7 inn.).

March 1 vs. Baylor at 2025 College Baseball Series in Arlington, Texas, L 8-6; 2 vs. Oregon State at 2025 College Baseball Series in Arlington, Texas, L 12-10; 4 ST. JOHN’S, W 12-10; 7-9 VALPARAISO, L 10-7; W 14-4 (8 inn.); W 8-3; 11 EASTERN MICHIGAN, W 13-7; 14-16 at Indiana, L 12-2 (8 inn.); L 8-7 (10 inn.); L 14-3 (7 inn.); 18 MIAMI (OH), W 14-7; 21-23 at Iowa, L 12-0 (7 inn.); L 12-5; L 18-2 (7 inn.); 28-30 OREGON, L 7-0; W 11-10; W 8-6.

April 1 WEST VIRGINIA, L 9-6; 4-6 at USC, L 5-3; L 12-9; L 10-9; 9 KENT STATE, L 8-3; 11-13 MINNESOTA, L 10-5; L 9-2; L 6-4; 15 WRIGHT STATE, W 18-2 (7 inn.); 18-20 at Michigan State, L 11-4; L 10-9 (11 inn.); L 14-4 (7 inn.); 22 AKRON, W 11-5; 23 TOLEDO, L 11-6; 25-27 RUTGERS, L 17-4 (8 inn.); W 16-8; L 13-5; 29 CENTRAL MICHIGAN.

May 2-4 MICHIGAN; 6 OHIO; 9-11 at Northwestern; 13 BUTLER; 15-17 ILLINOIS; 20-25 Big Ten tournament at Omaha, Neb.

MEN’S GYMNASTICS (4-4, 1-3)

Jan. 10 West Point Open at Army, 1st/6; 17 GREENVILLE, W 319.700-303.150; 25 at Stanford Open, 1st/3.

Feb. 2 OKLAHOMA, L 322.900-316.300; 9 PENN STATE, W 325.000-323.850; 21 WINTER CUP, NTS; 23 WINTER CUP, NTS.

March 8 at Nebraska, L 325.450-321.450; 15 at Michigan, L 328.100-322.000; 25 ILLINOIS, L 322.450-321.700.

April 4-5 Big Ten Championships at Ann Arbor, Mich., 5th/5; 18-19 NCAA Championships at Ann Arbor, Mich., 4th/6.

MEN’S ICE HOCKEY (24-14-2, 14-9-1)

Oct. 6 Niagara (exh.) W, 3-2 (OT);

11-12 AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL, T 3-3; W 5-2; 18-19 at Wisconsin, W 2-1 (OT); W 2-1; 25-26 BOWLING GREEN, W 3-1; W 2-0.

Nov. 1-2 LAKE SUPERIOR STATE, W 9-3; W 6-2; 8-9 at Michigan State, L 4-2; L 4-1; 15-16 at Lindenwood, W 5-2; W 3-2; 29-30 at Princeton, L 3-1; L 3-1.

Dec. 5-6 PENN STATE, W 4-0; W 4-2; 13-14 NOTRE DAME, W 2-1 (OT); W 3-1.

Jan. 3 vs. Michigan at Wrigley Field in Chicago, W 4-3; 5 at Michigan, L 3-2 (OT); 10-11 MINNESOTA, W 5-1; L 6-1; 24-25 at Penn State, T 6-6 (OT, SL), L 3-2 (OT); 30-31 MICHIGAN STATE, W 4-2, L 4-1.

Feb. 7-8 at Notre Dame, W 5-1, W 5-1; 14-15 WISCONSIN, W 4-1, W 4-2; 21-22 at Minnesota, L 4-1, L 6-3; 27-28 MICHIGAN, W 2-1 (OT), L 4-3.

March 7-9 Big Ten Tournament Quarterfinals at Nationwide Arena, Columbus, vs. Wisconsin, L 4-1; W 3-2 (OT); W 3-2; 15 BIG TEN TOURNAMENT SEMIFINALS vs. PENN STATE, W 4-3; 22 Big Ten Tournament Final at Michigan State, L 4-3 (2OT); 27 NCAA Regional at Toledo vs. Boston, L 8-3.

WOMEN’S ICE HOCKEY (29-8-3, 19-6-3)

Sept. 21-22 MINNESOTA DULUTH, L 2-1; L 4-3; 27-28 at Bemidji State, W 8-2; W 3-0.

Oct. 4-5 at St. Lawrence, W 3-2 (OT), W 5-3; 11-12 MINNESOTA, W 4-3; T 1-1 (SOW); 18-19 at St. Cloud State, W 5-1; T 3-3 (SOL); 22 MERCYHURST, W 5-1; 25 ICEBREAKER TOURNAMENT vs. STONEHILL, W 11-0; 26 ICEBREAKER TOURNAMENT vs. CORNELL, W 7-3.

Nov. 1-2 at St. Thomas, W 5-1; W 1-0 (OT); 15-16 WISCONSIN, L 4-2; W 3-2; 22-23 at Minnesota State, W 2-1; L 4-1.

Dec. 2 at Mercyhurst, PPD.

Jan. 2 at Wisconsin, L 6-0; 4 at Wrigley Field in Chicago vs. Wisconsin, T 3-3 (OT SW); 10-11 BEMIDJI STATE, W 6-0, W 4-0; 17-18 at Minnesota Duluth, W 3-1; W 2-1; 21 at Mercyhurst W 5-1; 24-25 MINNESOTA STATE, W 5-2, W 4-1; 31 at Minnesota, L 3-1.

Feb. 1 at Minnesota, L 7-3; 7-8 ST. THOMAS, W 5-4, W 5-1; 21-22 ST. CLOUD STATE, W 5-3, W 3-2; 28 WCHA QUARTERFINALS vs. ST. THOMAS, W 5-1.

March 1 WCHA QUARTERFINALS, vs. ST. THOMAS, W 4-1; 7 WCHA Final Faceoff at Duluth, Minn., vs. Minnesota, L 6-2; 15 NCAA TOURNAMENT vs. ST. LAWRENCE, W 6-1; 21 NCAA Frozen Four at Minneapolis vs. Cornell, W 4-2; 23 NCAA national championship at

Also included in the list was Ole Miss at No. 13, which features former Ohio State and two-time first-team All-Big Ten forward Co-tie McMahon.

Although they missed out on the top-25 rankings, the Buckeyes were included in Charlie Creme’s latest bracketology update on April 24 as a No. 7 seed. In Creme’s projection, the Buckeyes would be in the Norman, Okla., regional, taking on Colorado.

TRACK & FIELD

Jan. 10-11 McCravy Invite at Louisville, Ky., Men T-3rd/16, Women 2nd/16; 18 Hoosier Horsepower Classic at Indianapolis, NTS; 24-25 Crossroads of America Invite at Indianapolis, NTS; 31 Notre Dame Mayo Invite at South Bend, Ind.; Texas Tech Invite at Lubbock, Texas, NTS.

Feb. 1 Notre Dame Mayo Invite at South Bend, Ind., NTS; Texas Tech Invite at Lubbock, Texas, NTS; 14-15 David Hemery Valentine Invitational at Boston; Clemson Tiger Paw Invite at Clemson, S.C.; 28 Big Ten Indoor Championships at Indianapolis, Men 14th, Women T-12th.

March 1 Big Ten Indoor Championships at Indianapolis, Men 14th, Women T-12th; 14-15 NCAA Championships at Virginia Beach, Va., NTS; 21-22 USF Invite at Tampa, Fla., NTS; 27-29 Raleigh Relays at Raleigh, N.C., NTS; 28-29 Texas Relays at Austin, Texas, NTS.

April 18-19 Tom Jones Invite at Gainesville, Fla., NTS; 25-26 Drake Relays at Des Moines, Iowa, NTS.

May 2-3 JESSE OWENS CLASSIC; 16-18 Big Ten Outdoor Championships at Eugene, Ore.; 28-31 NCAA East Prelims at Jacksonville, Fla.

June 11-14 NCAA Championships at Eugene, Ore.

MEN’S VOLLEYBALL (18-11, 11-5)

Jan. 3-4 BRIGHAM YOUNG, L 3-1; L 3-1; 10-11 FORT VALLEY STATE, W 3-0; W 3-0; 17 at First Point Collegiate Challenge in Austin, Texas, vs. Stanford, L 3-0; 18 at First Point Collegiate Challenge in Austin, Texas, vs. UCLA, W 3-1; 31 Big Ten Challenge vs. USC, L 3-1.

Feb. 1 Big Ten Challenge vs. UCLA, L 3-1; 8 LOYOLA, L 3-1; 10 at Purdue Fort Wayne, W 3-0; 15 LINDENWOOD, W 3-1; 20 at McKendree, L 3-1; 22 at Lindenwood, W 3-1 27 at Ball State, L 3-2.

March 1 PURDUE FORT WAYNE, W 3-2; 7-8 at New Jersey Institute of Technology, W 3-0, W 3-0; 13 QUEENS UNIVERSITY OF CHARLOTTE, W 3-0 15 QUEENS UNIVERSITY OF CHARLOTTE, W 3-0; 20 at Loyola, L 3-1; 22 at Lewis, L 3-2; 27 MCKENDREE., W 3-2

April 3 BALL STATE, W 3-1; 5 LEWIS, W 3-1; 11-12 at Quincy, W 3-0; W 3-1; 19 MIVA Tournament Quarterfinals vs. LINDENWOOD, W 3-1; 23 MIVA Tournament Semifinals vs. McKendree, W 3-0; 26 MIVA Tournament Finals vs. Loyola, L 3-0.



# New Offseason Routine Paying Off For Icers

The most significant development in the Ohio State men's hockey program the past two years was not the signing of a highly ranked recruiting class or acquiring a coveted transfer.

## IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

Instead, it was something more subtle and yet impactful that the players and coaches agreed helped the Buckeyes return to the NCAA tournament.

Coach Steve Rohlik and his staff met with the team's leadership group during a trying 2023-24 season to discuss changes in the offseason program that were needed to meet the evolving world of college athletics.

With the transfer portal and its easy-come, easy-go regulations, roster overhauls have become commonplace. Added to the mix was the COVID-era rules allowing a fifth year of eligibility, a doctrine that expired after the 2024-25 season.

"It's certainly not like it used to be where you had maybe six seniors and you knew you probably had to get six, seven kids to come in," Rohlik said. "Now you just don't know. It could be 10, could be 12, could be eight. I think it is the norm in every sport, to be honest with you."

For the 2023-24 season, Rohlik welcomed 15 newcomers (eight freshmen, seven transfers) among the 26 players. This past season it was nine newbies (six freshmen, three transfers) among the 27.

Currently, the 2025-26 squad has seven freshmen and four transfers arriving for the 26-player roster after eight players exhausted their eligibility and five others entered the

transfer portal.

With so much turnover, the need to develop unity becomes even more imperative in college hockey where the regular season begins the same week as official practices.

With that in mind, the decision was made to reverse the normal modus operandi of having the players stick around for conditioning through May after the spring semester ended. Most players would then go home until returning in mid-August to resume workouts under the guidance of the strength and conditioning staff but without the coaches per NCAA rules.

Last year was different. The players – returnees and newcomers alike – gathered in early June and worked out for the next two months before a short break in August until classes resumed.

"It was a game changer for us," Rohlik said. "One, with our returning guys, but two, with the new guys that they want to come down and be a part of it and be around, and I think that really helped us."

The proof is in the results. The Buckeyes were 14-20-4 overall and last in the Big Ten with a 4-18-2 mark in 2023-24. Last season, they were 24-14-2 and third in the conference (14-9-1), and they lost in double overtime at Michigan State in the Big Ten title game and reached the NCAA tournament before losing 8-3 to Boston University in the first round.

Goalie Logan Terness credited the new routine in helping create a bond that carried throughout the season.

"All that work that we put in, starting in the summer and even starting at the end of the (2023-24 season), built a culture in the group that we have and obviously a winning culture that we take pride in our game," he said.

### Meet And Greet

Rising senior forward Davis Burnside contrasted the difference last summer from

his introduction to the program.

"Coming in my freshman year, I came in for like a week in May just to meet the guys and work out with them then went home for June and July and came back in August," he said. "I didn't really know too many of the boys too well, so the change that we had this past summer was great."

"Everyone comes in, you spend the whole summer together, you hang out at restaurants and all that to get to know each other on a personal level early in the summer rather than coming in in August when school starts and you're like, 'Hey, nice to meet you' to all the new guys. So, it's pretty cool what we were able to do last year, and I feel like it's really helped our team. This was the tightest team that I've ever been on this past season, so hopefully this year will be the exact same."

As Burnside said, it's more than just lifting weights or skating.

"We like going into the rink and pushing ourselves and doing all that, but then outside the rink we can have fun," he said. "We like to play tennis, and we had a softball team."

"I think it was 13 of us who would go to the field every day and practice, and then the other guys on the team would come and watch. Stuff like that is good for camaraderie. Gunnarwolfe (Fontaine) and Buka (Aiden Hansen-Bukata) were on the softball team, and they were transfers. So just getting the new guys integrated into what we're doing and making them feel comfortable and doing stuff that's fun, I think is a really big part of what we want to do here."

Rohlik said the players were enthusiastic about the change in the schedule even if it meant sacrificing time they could spend back home.

"We talked about it with our staff and with Taylor (Brown), their strength coach," Rohlik said. "What do we think is best? What ideas can we throw out for our guys? Then we sat down with the guys and said we think

this would be the best way to do it. Get home for a while and then we'll open it up for June and July for the guys if they want to be here and want to work out, want to skate."

"They've got everything here. Before, a lot of these guys are going home, paying different people a lot of money to go do exactly what they can do here and use all our facilities. The guys liked the idea last year, and I think everybody was here."

Burnside said the summer program begins June 3 and runs through July 27.

"School starts the middle of August, so we'll have that time from end of July till the middle of August to do whatever you want," he said. "I'm sure a lot of people end up staying here just because workouts and skates are good. It's pretty fun being here with all the guys."

Even though the coaches aren't allowed to coach the players during the summer, there is a regimen to follow.

"Rohlik called some of us into his office a week or two ago and kind of let us know the plan and told us to reach out to the new guys and do all that," Burnside said. "Taylor Brown is pretty dialed in with the workouts, so we'll work out five days a week. He's got a whole plan, so that's pretty nice."

"We don't really have to worry about planning anything from that end, because he's on top of it, but with the skating we'll probably get together as a group once June comes around and figure that out, what days we want to skate. It's good to have a game plan for the summer."

"Times are changing for sure," he said. "You definitely need to switch something up from the past. It's great. With 11 new guys it's pretty tough to be able to come into a new team for those guys."

"So to be able to get comfortable during the summer then, when you come in for the season, you're already best friends with them, that definitely makes a difference. I think it will definitely help us this year."

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# Lipsey A Bright Spot On The OSU Diamond

First-year Ohio State head coach Justin Haire has a knack for unlocking his hitters' abilities. When he was at Campbell, the on-base percentages of his teams in the final four years he was leading that program were .423 in 2021, .410 in 2022, .439 in 2023 and .418 last season.

## FROM THE STRETCH Greg Wilson

When Ohio State needed a new head coach over the offseason, that evidence must have been a big reason the program decided Haire was the right guy to hire.

Senior outfielder Trey Lipsey has been one of the best examples of Haire's ability to bring the best out of a hitter. He knew coming into the season that he had a good hitting coach to look forward to.

"Haire and all of his guys came over here, and they know how to get guys on base," Lipsey told BSB. "You look at their players at Campbell, they had high on-base percentages and were able to get their walks."

Lipsey burst on to the scene when he was a freshman under former head coach Greg Beals, batting .293 in 50 games while getting on base at a .461 rate. He made the Big Ten All-Freshman team with his performance and D1Baseball named him one of the top 150 outfielders in the country heading into his sophomore season.

But when Bill Mosiello took over for the Buckeyes in 2023, Lipsey's production fell off. His .252/.365/.362 slash line could have been attributed to a sophomore slump, but while there was some improvement in his junior year, he still wasn't able to get back to the production he had in his freshman season. The now-experienced outfielder was actually far from it, hitting .268/.388/.439.

Many players would be perfectly fine with those stats, but with two years of development under his belt, it still seemed as if Lipsey could do more, especially during an early-season slump.

It turns out there was a reason for that. The approach that Lipsey likes to bring to the plate as a leadoff hitter is to try to see as many pitches as he can, but if he sees one he likes, he wants to jump on it, no matter when that pitch comes. But Mosiello wanted to make sure that Lipsey would take the first pitch of the game, which many times is a very hittable fastball in the zone, essentially taking the bat out of Lipsey's hands for part of his plate appearances.

"I had a different role and different approaches for sure," Lipsey said. "I had to take a lot of strikes. To lead off the game, I had to take a strike every at bat."

There are many reasons not to want to get behind in a count as a hitter. The most obvious is that you have one fewer strike to work with during that at bat, but now the pitcher also has more room to make mistakes, allowing him to try to throw his best breaking pitch on the corners. But Lipsey had to start most of his opening at-bats behind in the count.

This season, Haire immediately made sure that Lipsey had more freedom when he was in the batter's box, which has allowed him to have his best season at Ohio State heading into the month of May. As BSB went to press, Lipsey was hitting .306/.490/.493 and didn't seem to be slowing down anytime soon.

"The biggest thing is just him trusting that he's prepared," Haire told BSB. "He doesn't have to see one more pitch to be prepared. He's been prepared. He's seen that pitch a million times in his career, and he just has to trust the work that he's put in."

"That's been the biggest key for him, taking those chains off and letting him be the best version of himself."

Haire understands that with baseball being such a mental game, it's very important for a player to be able to play freely and not have any constraints on them.

"It's extremely important," Haire said. "That's why we train our guys very hard and push them to their limits mentally and physically, so that when they get into the game, they can go play with some freedom and with a measure of confidence."

"For some guys, that clicks earlier than others. Trey is one of those guys that is the best version of himself when he's playing with freedom and not playing with constraints. And the best version of him comes from when he trains really hard, works really hard and overcomes hard things in training."

Lipsey's approach to his at-bats has been an extremely important part of his impressive season at the plate, but he said his preparation is also much better in terms of getting to know the pitchers that the Buckeyes are going to be going up against, a mentality that Haire brought with him from Campbell.

"I didn't know what I know now, the different pitchers and what they might throw at me and that kind of stuff," Lipsey said. "Looking for certain stuff and looking for pitches in certain zones has really helped me dial in – swinging at good pitches and taking bad pitches."

Understanding what approach is best for him has worked extremely well, shown by his 37 walks, which he's getting at a much higher rate this year, and 27 strikeouts, which he's doing much less than last year.

Many times in baseball, when players have an improved approach and lower strikeouts, a lack of power can come with that change. But for Lipsey, that hasn't been the case either. He has been able to still fight off pitches in the zone while also hitting five home runs so far this season, one of those coming as a towering three-run shot to right field in the April 22 midweek 11-5 win over in-state MAC opponent Akron.

While there might have been struggles for Lipsey in his last two seasons, the fixes he needed ended up being very simple.

"It all comes down to just swinging at good pitches," Lipsey said. "When home run pitches come, you want to hammer those. Strikeouts happen when you swing at bad pitches or get into bad pitching counts early. You really want to get into hitters' counts, and if you do that, you're just not going to strike out as much."

While the Buckeyes as a team are still facing some struggles with an 11-30 record as BSB went to press, at the very least, Lipsey is helping his draft stock, surely rising up draft boards with his breakout season.

## OSU Looking Forward To Wrigley Game

It was announced that the Buckeyes will be playing a game against Northwestern at Wrigley Field on May 9, and while the season might not be going how they hoped it would, Haire and his players are still excited to have that opportunity.

"I mean, how cool is that?" Haire said. "That's part of the reason you come to Ohio State is to have high-level experiences. We played at Globe Life, the Texas Rangers' park, earlier this year. We get to play at Wrigley. We played in Triple-A parks. We're scheduled to play in the Houston Astros' park next year."

It can be tough to recruit baseball players to come to Ohio State. But being able to talk to them about those experiences of playing at big-league ballparks and giving them something like that to look forward to can be used as a tool for recruiting, Haire said.

"Part of the reason you come to Ohio State is to have these experiences you can't have at a lot of other places," Haire said. "For us, our staff, our families, our players to have that experience, it's great for recruits and guys that are looking to come to Ohio State. It's second to none."

The Buckeyes' chances of making it into

the Big Ten tournament as BSB went to print were slim to none after losing two of three to Rutgers in a three-game home series from April 25-27. They currently hold a 3-18 record in the conference, the worst mark in the Big Ten by three games.

But when they head to Chicago, they still could play the role of spoiler for the Wildcats, who are right on the edge of being a top-12 team in the 18-team conference.

If nothing else, the Buckeyes will also be looking to hold onto Ohio State's perfect record at the Friendly Confines when they play at the home of the Chicago Cubs. The football team and both the men's and women's ice hockey teams took home wins when they played in the stadium this academic year.

## Recap

The struggles continued for the baseball Buckeyes since BSB last went to press. It seemed at first that their luck could finally be turning around with an 18-2, seven-inning win over Wright State on April 15 when both the offense and pitching came together for a big win.

But then in an away series against Michigan State, OSU left with three losses, being outscored by 18 runs in those games. It was the fifth time they had been swept by a conference opponent this season.

OSU then beat Akron in the previously mentioned April 22 game and lost to Toledo 11-6 the next day, before dropping two of three games to Rutgers from April 25-27.

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**TIM POND**, 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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# Sayin Could Be Root Of Buckeyes' Success

It was sometime early last year – long before I had ever seen Will Howard take a snap for the Buckeyes – that I settled into my dental chair and started to hear about Ohio State's quarterback of the future.

## EXNER POINT Rich Exner

My dentist – a big Buckeye fan, graduate of the OSU dental school and one-time Division III baseball player – began his report.

We always talk sports. Two Belmont County guys who went to Ohio State and met after moving to the Cleveland area long ago. If the talk isn't about OSU during dental visits, it's about Ohio Valley Athletic

Conference sports, or simply The Valley, as we and everyone there calls it.

This time Dr. Bill Sikora was ready with a fresh report from Ohio State, where he had the chance to stand on the sidelines for an offseason practice.

Will Howard will be an upgrade over Kyle McCord, he assured me. Big guy. Solid arm. Can move.

But what really impressed him was the kid who had just transferred in from Alabama.

Julian Sayin, he said, flashed the tools to be something special once he got settled in.

Since then we've all had the chance to see a little bit of Sayin – in the 2024 spring game (10 of 17 passing for 85 yards and a pick) and a tiny bit during the season (5 of 12 passing for 84 yards and a touchdown).

But the 2025 spring game was the first time we really got a good look at the highly touted kid from Carlsbad, Calif. – now

with a year under his belt in the program and running a lot of plays with the first team.

The dentist had it right.

This Sayin guy not only has the tools, he's now ready. Maybe, you could say, of course so.

After all, Sayin was rated a top-three or so quarterback in the country coming out of high school, depending on what listing you prefer. He threw for 7,970 yards and 86 touchdowns, with just 10 interceptions. But sometimes predictions from high school just don't pan out for the five stars. I prefer to wait and see.

What we saw in the spring game is that all indications are that Sayin has the talent to lead the Buckeyes in 2025. He completed 17 of his 24 passes for 175 yards and a touchdown – pretty good numbers – but the look test is more important than the stats in a practice game.

Will things be perfect when he's thrown into the fire right away against Texas on Aug. 30? Probably not. There's only so much you can expect out of the gate for a freshman quarterback. But I think he'll be good enough.

And certainly by the late-September trip to Washington, he should be in a groove after less pressure-packed games against Grambling State and Ohio University.

What he showed in the spring game was a quick release, an accurate arm, zip on the ball and, especially so, patience in the pocket to look around the field and make snap decisions.

Those are the kind of things that should translate come starting time in the fall.

## Buckeye (Quarterback) Nation

Seeing Tavien St. Clair out of Bellefontaine, Ohio – just northwest of Columbus – get his turn at quarterback in the spring raised an interesting piece of trivia.

Will he eventually become the first Ohio kid to become a regular at quarterback for the Buckeyes since Cardale Jones (Cleveland Glenville) in 2014-2015?

Since then, the Buckeyes have had quarterbacks from Texas (J.T. Barrett), Maryland (Dwayne Haskins), Georgia (Justin Fields), California (C.J. Stroud), New Jersey (Kyle McCord, though he played high school ball across the river in Philadelphia) and Pennsylvania (Howard).

Joe Burrow (Class of 2014 from Plains High School near Athens) is the last Ohio recruit to battle for a starting job at Ohio State. He transferred to LSU after Haskins won the competition in 2018.

The only other Ohioan to even throw a pass at Ohio State since Jones was Gunnar Hoak (Dublin Coffman High School). He threw six passes in a backup roll in 2019 after transferring from Kentucky.

St. Clair certainly has an excellent shot to break this streak of non-Ohio quarterbacks someday. He was a five-star recruit and ranked as high as No. 2 nationally.

A year ago, as a high school senior, he threw for 2,536 yards and 29 touchdowns in 12 games, after going for 3,983 yards and 37 touchdowns in a 14-game junior season.

There was good and bad from St. Clair in his first spring game. He was 11 of 15 for 116 yards and a touchdown. But he was intercepted twice. In other words, he played like a promising freshman.

## Decision Time For Kienholz?

Presuming Sayin, as most everyone believes, will be the starter for Ohio State this season, what does that mean for Lincoln Kienholz's career?

We saw enough of Kienholz in the spring game to confirm that he is a much better player now than the one thrown into action as a freshman at the Cotton Bowl when Devin Brown went down with injury. His stat line in the scrimmage read 12 of 18 for 158 yards and two touchdowns.

But now as a junior, and Sayin ahead of him, it doesn't look good for Kienholz to get his chance as a regular at Ohio State.

If so, is he fine with that for the rest of college – being a backup on a team that should most years be in the conversation for a national championship? Or will he decide he wants to have the chance to run a team?

Tough call. Multiple reports over the winter had him saying he planned to stay put. Good for the Buckeyes if he does. They need depth in the quarterback room.

But no one should hold it against Kienholz if he eventually leaves in search of playing time.

## Checking In On Devin Brown

Reports out of California say former Buckeye Devin Brown took most of his snaps with the first team during Cal spring practices that were open to the public.

Cal, however, wrapped up spring drills without naming a starter for the coming season. That's normal coach-speak this time of the year.

But Brown offered some candid thoughts on another topic.

As for how life is different in Berkley, don't expect Brown to land a job with the Columbus visitors bureau or an endorsement deal with a Columbus restaurant. Here's what he told si.com about the transition.

"It's night-and-day difference," Brown said. "I'd say the first thing is the weather. I love the weather. It's always gray and rainy in Ohio, which sucked.

"Team-wise, I'd say the coaching is very similar. The talent's there (at Cal). We've got a great group of guys. I feel really confident with the guys we have.

"The university's different. A much higher prestige of academics, that's for sure. It's really hard to get in the Haas Business School here. No. 1 public institution for a reason. It's an honor actually to get my degree from here.

"The food is really good here. Not many options in Ohio of the food I like, but here the food is amazing, better Mexican food, that's where I'm from. I'm from Arizona."

I appreciate such fresh takes. Fun answers. Good luck in winning the starting job, Devin. We're rooting for you.

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# Staying True Blue In His Feelings About U-M Loss

I've got to get this off my chest. And once I do, I promise I won't bring it up again until at the earliest the Football Preview Issue.

I am still bothered by the Nov. 30 loss to Michigan. And people on our BuckeyeSports.com forum, as well as fans on the street, believe that I am somehow minimizing Ohio State's incredible run to the national championship because of it. The two are entirely separate issues to me, and I am able to compartmentalize them. I can both savor the national championship and lament that loss.

Contrary to what appears to be popular belief, winning the national championship does not make Nov. 30 go away. It still happened. If anything, winning the title in such impressive fashion only makes me angrier about losing to the Wolverines.

How impressive was that championship run?

I'll go so far as to say that is the most dominant run in college football history, or at least in my lifetime, because no one has ever played four teams of that magnitude, all blue bloods, in succession – and pretty much dominated all four of them. It doesn't get any better than that.

And yet a team that could make an unprecedented run like that couldn't beat one of the weaker Michigan teams in recent memory, a team that was already on a three-game winning streak against the Buckeyes to create a revenge motive, a team that has completely flouted the rules and has shown no remorse or as yet received any significant penalty? And to lose the game in such embarrassing fashion, continually playing to one of Michigan's few strengths, the middle of its defense, and essentially self-moving the Buckeyes' own strength – a dynamic, multifaceted offense – really stings. Was Woody Hayes coaching? National championship or not, those guys will be laughing at the Buckeyes for years to come. In fact, for them, Ohio State winning the national championship makes their win that much sweeter.

Don't get me wrong. I understand that the nature of the Ohio State-Michigan game is changing. It saddens me, but that's reality in the new mulligan era of college football, when you can lose a game or maybe even two and still make the playoffs. But this wasn't losing a game, it was losing *The Game* – and in humiliating fashion.

I've been at this 44 years and change, counting stints at a couple of other outlets. The Buckeyes have lost to Michigan plenty of times in that span. But some losses hurt more than others. I'm sure there are many of you veteran Buckeye fans who are still stinging from the loss to Michigan in 1969, a loss from before my time following the Buckeyes.

It's not just losses to our rivals. Some losses simply hurt more.

If I mentioned to a Buckeye fan "Iowa" and "Purdue" in the same sentence they would know exactly what I was referring to. If Ohio State had gone on to win the national championship after the 2017 or 2018 seasons, the losses to the Hawkeyes or Boilermakers would still be inexplicable.

A note to the 2024 Ohio State national champions: You guys were not only a great team, but a great bunch of guys. You made all of us so proud to be Buckeye fans.

But if there isn't just a little bit of pain and anger from that 13-10 loss to That Team Up North, then Ohio State football, and college football in general, really have changed. Someday maybe I will get used to it.

But I am curious. Am I the only dinosaur out there who feels this way?

## Former Cage Captain Passes

Gene Millard, who was captain of the 1956-57 Ohio State basketball team, passed away

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

on April 15 at the age of 90.

While Millard was the MVP of that Buckeye team, which finished 14-8 and 9-5 in the Big Ten under Floyd Stahl, he is best remembered for scoring the first basket in St. John Arena. He added to his legend when, in ceremonies marking the *last* men's game in the venerable building on Feb. 28, 1998, he drained a "three" to cap off the festivities. It is one of my fondest memories of St. John. Nothing but net.

Here's how Buckeye Sports Bulletin described Millard's ceremonial shot in its March 7, 1998, issue.

"Millard didn't disappoint those who stayed on hand (for ceremonies after the game) by dribbling in for a right-handed layup, then surprising all by tossing up – and nailing – a 19-footer from the top of the key. Millard's foot was across the three-point line, but hey, they didn't have such things when he played in the arena."

I had forgotten that he had scored the layup, which I would imagine was the way it was scripted, before he dropped back for the long shot. In retrospect, Millard making the bunny and then surprising everyone with his sweet shot just added to the festivities.

BSB coverage of the final game in St. John Arena was reprinted at BuckeyeSports.com as part of our weekly Reprint Thursday on April 24 and has been archived for your information and enjoyment.

I'd love to offer you BSB's description of Millard's original shot against Butler on Dec. 1, 1956. Unfortunately, your humble publisher was all of 4-years-old at the time and wanted to be a fireman, not a newspaper man.

Fortunately, BSB had put out a comprehensive "So Long, St. John" issue the week before the final game, and lo and behold, we spoke to Millard. Here is his description of that first shot.

"It was the opening tipoff, and I was just fortunate enough to have the ball tipped my way and I took it in for a layup," Millard recalled. "They certainly didn't stop the game or anything like that. In fact, I don't think anyone really gave it much thought, including myself, until many years later."

By "many years later," even the most casual Buckeye basketball fan, but especially those who were aficionados of St. John Arena, knew who scored that first basket.

"(Buckeye great) Bill Hosket had said that I got more out of that one bucket than a lot of players got out of their whole careers," Millard said. "Hosket may have been right about me and that shot, and while it's now the answer to a trivia question, I'm very proud of having been the player to make that first bucket."

Making the ceremonial last basket added to his legend, as did his career as a high school coach at nearby Bexley High School, a lengthy tenure that included a state championship in 1983. Fittingly, the Lions won that championship in St. John Arena.

I have a unique perspective on Bexley, a city within a city surrounded by Columbus. My significant other (she hates the term girlfriend) is from Bexley, as are three of my nephews, one of whom played on that state championship team. You hang around Bexley long enough and you realize that Millard was more than just a coach and mentor there.

"Not only did he take a program that was not known for winning, he made the basketball program at Bexley one of the top programs not only in central Ohio, but also in the state," said Bexley native Steve Williard, who played on the championship team. "Coach Millard

cared about his players. Additionally, he taught and mentored so many students in the Bexley school system.

"He and his wife, Sally, were everywhere in Bexley. He molded the basketball program from the '60s to the late '90s but also helped to shape the city of Bexley with his kindness, compassion, humor, and love for the city. The city and the athletic programs at Bexley will always be indebted to Gene for his contributions. He was one of a kind. Those of us who knew him feel that our lives are better for knowing him."

I don't know that I ever met Gene Millard. Maybe back in the '70s, when as a cub reporter I covered high school sports, our paths crossed. I just don't recall.

But it is clear to see that his life was much, much more than two shots, fired up 42 years apart.

## Seen From The Other Side

Speaking of recalling plays, we had two players from opposing teams describing the same play in a couple of BSB issues at the end of 2024.

In a story about Buckeyes who were best known for plays in the Ohio State-Michigan game, fullback Vaughn Broadnax described a play where he blocked two Wolverines to spring quarterback Art Schlichter for the game-winning touchdown in 1981.

In a series of features from the Boren family as part of our annual Michigan Memories issue dated Nov. 30, father Mike Boren recalled the same play from a Wolverine's perspective.

The third-down play, referred to as "Pass Play 21," was a simple option during which Schlichter was supposed to roll out to his right with the intent of finding an open receiver, according to BSB managing editor emeritus Mark Rea. But the Wolverines had the play well-covered in the end zone, forcing Schlichter to improvise. The QB appeared to point toward a pair of oncoming defenders as if to tell Broadnax to pick one to block, but Broadnax blocked one into the other, allowing Schlichter to squeeze into the end zone just inside the pylon.

"I remember that play clear as the day it happened," Broadnax said. "Carlton Rose – may he rest in peace – he kind of got up under me, and I had to regain leverage. So, I got under his shoulder pads and was able to recontrol the situation and push him into another guy. That was doing my job. Sometimes we worry about making this spectacular play instead of doing our job as designed."

Boren seemed to see the play the same way, though he thought there could have been a potential "spectacular play" on defense.

"We had it covered pretty well," Boren remembered. "I was right there. The thing is, I had an outside 'backer (Rose) outside of me – in my way, really. Broadnax was blocking Rose, and I lunged for (Schlichter). Got an arm on him, but he got away. If Schlichter had turned back inside, I would have nailed him. I would have taken his (bleeping) head off."

## Bringing In Better Athletes

In our "From the Pages of BSB" feature on page 8 of this issue, OSU football coach John Cooper tells of the improved athletes on his 1990 squad, an update on the progress from when he arrived in 1988 and lamented that the Buckeyes were burdened with "too many slow white guys."

"There's no doubt in anyone's mind that we had a pretty tough time of it two years ago,"

Cooper said. "Then, last year, we had a decent record and went to a bowl game, but quite honestly, I thought it was a pretty average year. We beat everybody we were supposed to beat and probably lost to everybody we were supposed to lose to.

"But now we're seeing some of those stronger, faster athletes coming up through the ranks. I'm not taking anything away from the players we've had in the past, but the fact is that we've been recruiting the bigger, stronger, faster athletes the past couple of years and they're going to put this program back where it belongs – at the top of the game."

And the Buckeyes continued to improve through the years under Cooper with the new class of athlete he was bringing in, a class of athlete that Ohio State has continued to recruit to this day.

But his remark about "slow white guys" was just one example of his candor getting him off on the wrong foot with Buckeye fans, a situation he was never really able to reverse, even though he was and is a genuinely nice guy and a Hall of Fame coach.

I came across a piece from the Washington Post from Oct. 13, 1988, where Cooper is trying to explain his remarks.

"The point I was trying to make ... is the fact we don't have a lot of speed on our team," Cooper said. "I didn't come out and explain it like this, but most of our black guys can run. So, when you start talking about it, we've got too many guys who can't run. They happen to be white. We don't have a lot of slow, black guys on our team that I know about."

Asked if he thought his comments were racially offensive, Cooper said: "No, I don't. If it's taken that way, it wasn't intended to be that way, if it came out that way. Usually, if you don't have speed, you don't have enough black athletes. Look at it that way."

Talk about just getting in deeper.

There was no "coach speak" with Cooper. He called it like he saw it. I always wondered if things might have turned out differently for the coach if he had received better media advice. But I also always appreciated his candor. These days it is hard to get a straight answer from any coach.

## Beat The Increase

As mentioned in this space the last few issues, we will be raising the cost of upgrading your subscription to first-class mail during football season from \$30 to at least \$32 to try to ease some of the pressure from the two postal increases last year and now the upcoming increase scheduled for July 13 of this year. Additionally, the bulk of the world's newsprint comes from Canada. I think you can see where the price of printing BSB may be headed. Currently, on average, it costs us \$3 to mail a copy of BSB first class. That's \$39 for 13 issues, so this is a money-losing proposition for us. Our philosophy has been, better to lose \$9 than lose a subscriber completely, which we have been doing a lot lately due to poor delivery. But at some point, that philosophy no longer makes financial sense.

First-class mail in an envelope offers the most consistent delivery option. I suggest locking in on the current price now. We are giving you plenty of time to upgrade to first class from the Football Preview Issue through the Michigan game at the existing rate of \$30, or \$40 through recruiting season in February. Just give us a call at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862 to order by credit card. Or you can send your check, money order or credit card information (don't forget your three- or four-digit security code) to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Be sure to mention either the "Football Upgrade" or the "Recruiting Upgrade."





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