

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 44, No. 22

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

June 2025

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

When discussing the ever-evolving landscape surrounding modern college football, the proliferation of players in the transfer portal is often at the forefront of most topics and debates.

Since the NCAA granted student-athletes who have transferred immediate eligibility at their new schools in the fall of 2021, the coming and going of players across the country has reached new levels each year. Last season, On3 reported that a record 3,310 FBS players entered their names in the portal during the winter and spring transfer windows, a number that smashed 2023's total of 2,689 and was nearly as many as the 2022 and 2021 portal entries combined (2,722 in 2022, 786 in 2021). This season, with the influence of name, image and likeness (NIL) also reaching an all-time high, a new record high of 4,060 football student-athletes submitted their names into the transfer-portal database. That's over 30 departures per team. More than 700 players left their previous teams for new ones on the first day of the spring portal window alone, making it the most hectic opening day to a spring portal window ever.

For those who follow and are involved in college football, it's hard to escape the rapid player movement that has impacted the sport in recent years. The change played a prominent role in the retirement of legendary Alabama head coach Nick Saban following the 2023 season. It also helped spur some recent government action, with President Donald Trump proposing – but then pausing – the launch of a college sports commission that would look into the issues facing the sport, with Saban being selected as the co-leader of the operation.

"(The transfer portal) is not beneficial to the players," Saban said on ESPN's "The Pat McAfee Show" in December. "Guys are looking to – 'Where can I develop value right now, today? What can I get today?' It's less about playing and being a great player and more about 'What can I get instantly?' in terms of going to the portal or going to another school. Nobody talks about the college experience anymore. Nobody talks about graduation. All these things are probably important to the future."

The Heat Is On

Quarterback, Coaching Continuity On Day's Summer To-Do List

SONNY BROCKWAY

STAYING PUT — Players come and go in this era of the transfer portal and the lure of name, image and likeness (NIL) making every player a potential free-agent target, but Ohio State under coach Ryan Day has remained relatively unscathed after winning the CFP national championship in January.

The dilemma Saban is referring to has affected FBS programs throughout the nation this offseason, with even highly-funded powers such as Tennessee – which lost starting quarterback Nico Iamaleava to UCLA due to an NIL dispute – being forced to deal with the consequences.

But at Ohio State – perhaps the biggest college football power of them all – the transfer portal was largely a nonfactor in

terms of outgoing players.

While big-brand teams scrambled to retool their roster, head coach Ryan Day's national championship-winning Buckeyes experienced a relatively stress-free offseason, losing 17 players to the portal, eight fewer than last year's exiting total of 25. That number is more impressive when considering that almost none of the outgoing players was expected to make a significant impact on the team this season, and that Ohio State did not lose a single scholarship player during the spring portal window that opened on April 16 and closed April 25.

It was a successful offseason of player retention that should have the Buckeyes on track to contend for a second consecutive national championship, a reality that Day thinks is worth celebrating.

"I woke up with a little bit of a headache because it was a long night last night," Day told ESPN the day after the portal closed.

"That first beer went down cold after the portal finally closed at midnight, I can tell you that."

Thirsty celebrations aside, the Buckeyes' ability to keep all of their contributing players for the 2025 season also serves as a testament to the type of culture that Day has built inside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center since he took the reins from Urban Meyer in 2019. Day recognized that accomplishment in his most recent press conference held inside the Buckeyes' team room on April 29.

"It says a lot about our team," he said when asked about not losing a scholarship player to the portal this spring. "I think stability is very, very important. It's always important to be transparent in recruiting, but now it's more important than ever. What you

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From The Message Board

Michigan is expected to issue a two-game suspension for head coach Sherrone Moore this upcoming season due to his involvement in the program's sign-stealing scheme. Moore's suspension may be the start of more serious punishment for the Wolverines this summer due to the NCAA's Committee of Infractions holding a hearing from June 6-7. We asked subscribers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what they believe would be a proper punishment for Moore and Michigan, as well as what they anticipate the final resolution being.

"I think the entire season should be vacated and the number of scholarships reduced for at least one year,

but I think the penalties will be less severe."
– Terrier Buck

"I think the entire season should be vacated and I believe that is what they will do."

– PeyoteBuck

"I want all their games from 2021-23 that they won vacated, Moore to be given a 6-8 game suspension, and I want there to be scholarship and roster reductions."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"Vacate the entire season and freeze all NIL transactions for a year."

– R1TDBITL

"Castration is a word that comes to mind. Not quite the 'Death Penalty,' aka SMU, but it would create some impotence in team performance. This punishment would, of course, be only symbolic. The only way for this to be effective would be a three-year postseason ban,

significant limitation in the number of players, coaches and staff allowed on the team and lack of eligibility of players for the end-of-season 'All-B1G/American' teams. What will happen will be much less effective, like limiting scholarships, while NIL would still allow bringing in paid walk-ons."

– Buckeye Scott

"Didn't Jim Tressel get a seven-year show-cause for lying to the NCAA? Harbaugh should get at least that, considering he lied multiple times over multiple years. And Sherrone Moore, in addition to lying, actually destroyed evidence deliberately. At the bare minimum, both should get that much, and Moore might deserve much longer."

– Michael Bauer



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Vol. 44, No. 22
June 2025
www.BuckeyeSports.com

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

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

Periodical class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212. Subscription rates: \$124.95/year.

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The next issue (July cover date) will be mailed on July 1.

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OPINION

Grading Title Teams Leads To Surprises

Throughout my springtime travels from Ohio to Florida and back again, I have met a host of Ohio State football fans with one overriding question on their minds: “Can the Buckeyes repeat as national champions?”

My standard answer usually involves something regarding the quarterback position, the defensive line and the new coordinators as well as the degree of difficulty in winning back-to-back national titles. It’s a feat that has been accomplished only three times since the 1950s, and something Ohio State has never done in its previous 134 seasons of playing intercollegiate football.

Of course, there remains a certain swath of Buckeye Nation that has another burning question on its mind: “Is Ohio State ever going to beat Michigan again?”

BSB subscriber Michael Walrath put his thoughts to paper in the Feb. 15 issue, writing in part, “There’s one more thing you can add to the list of things I never thought I’d see: an Ohio State football team finish fourth in the Big Ten out of 18 teams, get humiliated at home by a 6-5 Michigan team, and be universally referred to as ‘great.’”

After I tried to explain in the March 8 issue that every national championship is to be savored, no matter the path taken to the title, Walrath doubled down four issues later, suggesting a BSB readers’ poll to rank the six Ohio State teams that have won national championships awarded by The Associated Press.

“Not which team would win head-to-head, but who had the best season,” Walrath wrote. “If anyone ranks the 2024 team higher than sixth, then I’m right, and beating Michigan and winning the conference doesn’t matter anymore.”

It seemed like a worthy challenge, so I decided to rank the teams based not upon my own biases but on simple criteria designed to eliminate emotion. The main factors I used were season-long dominance (using average scoring margin), victories against top opponents (using end-of-season AP rankings), opponents’ winning percentage and elite talent (using All-America teams and NFL top three round draft numbers). Teams were also rewarded for perfect seasons and penalized for losses.

Awarding points in the various categories on a 6-5-4-3-2-1 basis, the result, at least from my standpoint, was somewhat surprising.

1. 2014 – (31 points)

A testament to Urban Meyer’s recruiting and coaching ability, a strong case can be made that the 2014 team is the best in program history. The Buckeyes outscored their opponents by an average of 22.9 points per game – highest among the six teams on this list – and had a dizzying 18 players on the roster who were selected among the first three rounds of the NFL draft.

Only the particularly ugly early-season loss to Virginia Tech prevents the 2014 team from lapping the field, but what came after that loss was truly special. OSU blitzed through the Big Ten schedule, averaging 44.8 points over eight conference games, and then took Wisconsin to the woodshed in the conference title game, rolling to a 59-0 victory.

That convinced the College Football Playoff selection committee to give the Buckeyes a shot at the national championship, which they won by coming back to beat top-seeded Alabama before a 42-20 romp against Oregon and Heisman Trophy quarterback Marcus Mariota.

Point differential – 22.9
Opponents’ win percentage – .605
Victories against top-5 opponents – 3
Victories against top-10 opponents – 3
First-team All-Americans – 2 (Michael Bennett, Joey Bosa)
Top 3 NFL draft picks – 18
Losses – 1 (unranked Virginia Tech)

2. 2024 – (30 points)

The 2024 team was built – through recruiting, NIL money and the portal – to win the national championship, and it accomplished just that. You might not like the fact it lost two games along the way, including a home embarrassment administered by its archrivals. But the bottom line is the bottom line, and years from now when someone else is ranking Ohio State national title teams, the 2024 squad is going to measure up pretty well.

EDITOR’S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

The reasons for that are obvious. Their point differential of 22.8 was just a tick below the 22.9 in 2014, their opponents’ win percentage of .651 was far and away the best of all six teams on this list, and the star power was unmistakable with seven players taken in the 2025 draft and two more – Jeremiah Smith and Caleb Downs – sure-fire first-round picks in future drafts.

An argument can be made that Ohio State’s march through the College Football Playoff tournament was even more impressive than the one pulled off by the 2014 team. After destroying Tennessee, the Buckeyes rattled off back-to-back-to-back wins against top-five opponents, matching a feat accomplished only once before (LSU in 2019) in the history of college football.

Point differential – 22.8
Opponents’ win percentage – .651
Victories against top-5 opponents – 4
Victories against top-10 opponents – 7
First-team All-Americans – 3 (Seth McLaughlin, Caleb Downs, Donovan Jackson)
Top 3 NFL draft picks – 7 (and counting)
Losses – 2 (at No. 3 Oregon, unranked Michigan)

3. 2002 – (26 points)

College football might never again see the kind of season enjoyed by the 2002 team. Not only did it remain undefeated through 14 games, it also escaped scare after scare after scare, including half of those wins determined by seven points or fewer and two epic overtime games still talked about more than 20 years later.

Unfortunately, the closeness of all those outcomes also conspired against the 2002 team, which had the lowest point differential of any Ohio State national championship squad. There was also the matter of only one win against an opponent that finished among the AP’s top five – although that was a biggie in the title game against defending champ Miami (Fla.).

The star power of that team, however, remains undeniable. There were four first-team All-Americans, including College Football Hall of Fame safety Mike Doss, as well as a staff led by head coach Jim Tressel and defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio, each of whom is also enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame.

Point differential – 16.2
Opponents’ win percentage – .552
Victories against top-5 opponents – 1
Victories against top-10 opponents – 3
First-team All-Americans – 4 (Mike Doss, Andy Groom, Mike Nugent, Matt Wilhelm)
Top 3 NFL draft picks – 13
Losses – 0

4. 1942 – (25 points)

The span of more than 80 years makes it difficult to compare the 1942 team to more contemporary squads because the game has changed so much. Still, there is little doubt that Ohio State’s first national championship team was a talented one deserving of its title.

The team was on par with those of 2014 and

2024 in terms of point differential, beating opponents by an average of 22.3 points per game. And some of those opponents were no slouches. Three of them finished among the top nine ranked teams by the AP.

Perhaps the only knock against the ’42 team is a midseason loss at Wisconsin, a team that was No. 6 at the time and finished at No. 3. Several members of the Buckeyes were weakened by dysentery after drinking tainted water on the train ride north to Madison, and that conspired for a 17-7 loss. It was an asterisk on an otherwise sterling season under 34-year-old head coach Paul Brown.

Point differential – 22.3
Opponents’ win percentage – .4948
Victories against top-5 opponents – 2
Victories against top-10 opponents – 3
First-team All-Americans – 5 (Chuck Csuri, Gene Fekete, Lindell Houston, Paul Sarringhaus, Bob Shaw)
Top 3 NFL draft picks – 1
Losses – 1 (at No. 3 Wisconsin)

5. 1968 – (18 points)

Fifth out of six for the team of my childhood, the one that has been described for most of the past 50-plus years as the greatest assemblage of talent in program history? Unfortunately, the ’68 team and its mix of veterans and Super Sophomores doesn’t measure up in some categories.

Although the season was capped with a Rose Bowl win against defending national champion USC, the schedule featured more than its share of clunkers – six opponents that finished at .500 or worse, including Northwestern, Illinois and Wisconsin, which combined for a record of 2-28. Even with all of those cupcakes, the Buckeyes had a point differential of just 17.3. That ranked next-to-last among the six AP national championship teams.

Still, the starting lineup featured three future members of the College Football Hall of Fame – Rex Kern, Jack Tatum and Jim Stillwagon – as well as players who would go on to amass a total 73 seasons of professional football in the NFL and Canadian Football League.

Point differential – 17.3
Opponents’ win percentage – .485
Victories against top-5 opponents – 1
Victories against top-10 opponents – 2
First-team All-Americans – 2 (Dave Foley, Rufus Mayes)
Top 3 NFL draft picks – 8
Losses – 0

6. 1954 – (17 points)

Longtime OSU football historian Jack Park has said many times that the 1954 team saved Woody Hayes as head coach of the Buckeyes, its national championship coming after Hayes had put up a mediocre 16-9-2 record during his first three seasons in Columbus.

It seems quaint these days with longer post-seasons bloating schedules, but the 1954 team was the first in program history to record double-digit victories. And while it played six opponents that were ranked by the AP at the time the game was played, only three of them finished in the rankings – none of them higher than No. 9.

The ’54 team had its share of star power, led by junior halfback Howard “Hopalong” Cassady. But its calling card was defense. The unit never surrendered more than 14 points in a single game all season, topping things off with a 20-7 Rose Bowl victory against a USC team that had been averaging more than 21 points per game.

Point differential – 17.4
Opponents’ win percentage – .4947
Victories against top-5 opponents – 0
Victories against top-10 opponents – 1
First-team All-Americans – 3 (Dean Dugger, Howard “Hopalong” Cassady, Jim Reichenbach)
Top 3 NFL draft picks – 2
Losses – 0

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Ohio State-Texas Set For "Big Noon Kickoff"

Four game times for Ohio State's 2025 schedule have been released, with the Week 1 Cotton Bowl rematch against Texas officially scheduled for a noon kickoff on FOX.

The Buckeyes' Week 2 matchup against Grambling State on Sept. 6 will be a 3:30 p.m. game broadcast on Big Ten Network, and their Week 3 tilt against Ohio University on Sept. 13 will be broadcast on Peacock at 7 p.m. The time for the rivalry game against Michigan on Nov. 29 was also revealed with kickoff set for noon on FOX, as expected. No other game times were announced.

Ohio State's appearance on "Big Noon Kickoff" against the Longhorns on Aug. 30 will be the seventh straight regular-season game the Scarlet and Gray have kicked off at noon. The last time they didn't was a 7:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time kickoff for the team's 32-31 loss at Oregon last October. The Buckeyes attempted to get their game against Texas moved to a primetime slot but were ultimately unsuccessful after proposing the game be moved to Sunday night. The attempt, which was led by athletic director Ross Bjork, was quashed by Texas athletic director Chris Del Conte, citing the quick turnaround the Longhorns would have to deal with due to the flight back to campus and a Saturday afternoon Week 2 home game against San Jose State (noon, ABC/ESPN).

The game against the Bobcats on Pea-

cock will be the Buckeyes' third straight year with a game that will be available only via streaming.

The Big Ten Network broadcast for the game against Grambling State will satisfy the first half of Ohio State's obligation to appear on the network two times every season.

The Buckeyes have an off week after the night game against the Bobcats, with a West Coast trip to Washington following that matchup for another game that won't be a noon kickoff.

But the hope of having a marquee home primetime game will now depend on whether the matchup against Penn State on Nov. 1 will be a night game. That doesn't seem likely since FOX has the first three choices of Big Ten matchups it wants to broadcast, and NBC will be broadcasting Oregon's visit to Penn State on Sept. 27, which was likely its first choice in the draft. That means FOX likely selected the Ohio State-Penn State game third behind Ohio State-Texas and Ohio State-Michigan, which could mean another Big Noon broadcast for the Buckeyes.

Non-Con Schedule Costs OSU \$3.4 Million

Ohio State's nonconference schedule, which consists of the previously mentioned home games against Texas, Grambling State and Ohio University, cost the school \$3.4 million, according to game contracts obtained by Cleveland.com through a public records request.

Ohio State will owe Texas \$400,000 for traveling to Columbus for the first time since 2005, the same amount the Longhorns will pay the Buckeyes when they travel to Austin, Texas, on Sept. 12, 2026. This is part of a contract for a home-and-home series between the two flagship programs that was originally signed in August 2014. The two games were supposed to take place in 2022 and 2023, but an amendment was made in May 2018 to move the games to the 2025 and 2026 seasons.

Ohio State will also provide Texas with 300 complimentary tickets this year and

2025 Ohio State Football Schedule

| Date | Opponent | Result/Time (ET) | TV | 2024 Record, Bowl Result |
|----------|---------------|------------------|---------|--|
| Aug. 30 | TEXAS | Noon | FOX | 13-3, 28-14 loss to Ohio State (CFP Semi.) |
| Sept. 6 | GRAMBLING | 3:30 | BTN | 5-7, not eligible |
| Sept. 13 | OHIO | 7:00 | Peacock | 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 | Noon | FOX | 8-5, 19-11 win over Alabama (ReliaQuest) |

another 3,500 tickets for purchase. In addition, officials are selected by the visiting team.

The Buckeyes paid Grambling State \$1 million for the two teams' clash at Ohio Stadium. They had to pay that amount before Feb. 28, 2025. The contract for the game was signed in June 2024.

Ohio State must also allocate 2,000 tickets for visiting Tiger fans to purchase, with any unsold tickets having to be returned to the university before Aug. 14. Payments for unsold tickets that were designated for Grambling State will be deducted from the amount Ohio State originally agreed to pay the visiting university.

Ohio State paid the most to Ohio University, giving the Bobcats \$1.9 million for traveling to Ohio Stadium for the first time since 2010. Ohio will also receive 500 complimentary tickets as well as 3,000 tickets for purchase as part of a game contract that was signed in 2023.

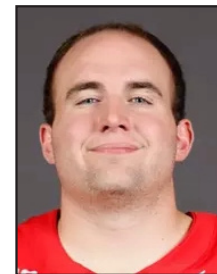
Day Says Siereveld Will Start On OL

During a recent press conference, head coach Ryan Day spent a good portion of his time praising redshirt sophomore offensive lineman Austin Siereveld. Although he doesn't know what position the third-year will play this upcoming season, Day said

Siereveld will be a starter.

"I thought Austin did a nice job moving around," Day said. "He really took a big step for us. Austin Siereveld is going to be a starter for us. He's an excellent player who really had a good spring."

Day's excitement about Siereveld's growth does not come out of nowhere. Siereveld was one of three players to win



Austin Siereveld

the "Iron Buckeye" award this winter for his dedication in off-season workouts and followed that up with an impressive spring camp lining up primarily as the Buckeyes' starting right tackle.

Siereveld, who started six games at right guard and rotated some with Tegra Tshabola at left guard last season, wasn't necessarily viewed as the favorite to start at right tackle heading into the offseason. That title was given to Minnesota transfer Phillip Daniels, who started the final four games for the Golden Gophers last year at the position. But the junior spent most of the spring working with the second team as Siereveld earned starting reps.

Despite playing with the second team, Daniels could still work his way into a start-

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ing role, potentially on the interior, which could bump Luke Montgomery or Tshabola out of the starting lineup. Day acknowledged it is far too early to make a determination on who is starting where, but he did say that he has been encouraged by the growth of the offensive line as a whole.

"I thought Tegra, Carson (Hinzman), Luke, Ethan (Onianwa) got better, Josh Padilla got better," Day said. "There are a lot of guys there that I felt were really improving on a day-to-day basis."

Knowles Opens Up About Departure

In an interview with ESPN's Heather Dinich published on May 6, former Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles discussed his decision to leave for the same job at Penn State days after helping the Buckeyes capture their first national championship since 2014.

According to Knowles, who called Penn State head coach James Franklin at 5:06 A.M. to inquire about the team's open defensive coordinator position two days after Ohio State won the national championship, his decision to explore other options stemmed from the timing of the Buckeyes' extension offer. Knowles wanted to have an extension sorted out before the national championship game, but that didn't happen.

"I did not want to put anyone, including myself, in a position to have to deal with it immediately following the national championship game," he said. "And that's the way it happened."

Ohio State eventually offered Knowles a new deal, but the Philadelphia native said it was for less money than what a couple of other programs, including Penn State, offered him. Despite the hefty offer from the Nittany Lions – which turned out to be \$3.1 million per year, making him the highest-paid defensive coordinator in college football – Knowles still said he considered staying with the Buckeyes for less money. That was until they asked him not to attend the national championship celebration on Jan. 26.

"Maybe I'll take less because Ohio State's a great place," Knowles said, "but then they asked me not to come to the parade. So then you're like, 'OK, honestly, the writing is on the wall.' Now it becomes something. It's always something on the outside world, but now it's become something here, too. I hadn't made any decisions, but you just kind of feel like – I wouldn't say I'm not wanted here – but you just feel like, 'OK, now it's gotten awkward.'"

Knowles, who led Ohio State to the nation's top scoring defense (12.9 points allowed per game) and total defense (254.6 yards allowed per game) in his third and final season with the program in 2024, will now attempt to lead the Nittany Lions to the same sort of defensive dominance in 2025.

Perhaps the toughest test for Knowles' defense will come when Penn State travels to Columbus this fall in hopes of its first win over Ohio State since 2016.

Assistant Coaches To Make Nearly \$12 Million

Ohio State's assistant coaches will make a total of \$11.775 million in 2025, according to copies of the contracts obtained by Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

Defensive coordinator Matt Patricia will be the Buckeyes' highest-paid assistant coach at \$2.5 million. That mark is less than the \$3.1 million Knowles will make at Penn State but \$300,000 more than the amount Knowles made as Ohio State's defensive coordinator last season.

Co-offensive coordinator/wide receivers coach Brian Hartline received a \$400,000 raise, going from \$1.6 million to \$2 million in the expanded role, the same amount Chip Kelly made last year. Next-highest on the payroll is co-defensive coordinator/secondary/cornerbacks coach Tim Walton, who is also receiving a \$400,000 salary bump from \$1.4 million to \$1.8 million. His salary will increase to \$1.9 million in 2027, as stipulated in his new three-year contract.

Associate head coach and longtime defensive line coach Larry Johnson is Ohio State's fourth-highest-paid assistant at \$1.4 million. He did not receive a salary increase from last season and is currently on a two-year contract that is set to expire in 2026.

The next highest-paid coaches on the Buckeyes' staff are new offensive line coach Tyler Bowen and safeties coach/passing game coordinator Matt Guerrieri at \$900,000 each. Guerrieri earned a \$475,000 raise from what he was making last season.

Running backs coach Carlos Locklyn and co-offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Keenan Bailey will each make \$650,000 in 2025. Linebackers coach James Laurinaitis is receiving a \$150,000 salary increase to \$500,000, while new quarterbacks coach Billy Fessler is the lowest-paid assistant at \$475,000.

The assistant coaches' combined salary of nearly \$12 million is \$350,000 more than the amount Ohio State paid its coaches in base salary last year.

Buckeyes Fire Lyberger After Investigation

Ohio State has fired defensive quality control coach Joe Lyberger following a months-long investigation into his alleged improper workplace conduct, according to a termination letter obtained by The Columbus Dispatch through a public records request.

According to the Dispatch, the letter, which was issued on April 23, said the university's office for civil rights compliance found Lyberger violated its policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct.

Sam Shamansky, a Columbus criminal defense attorney representing Lyberger, said his client was alleged to have stalked a female staff member and spit in a bottle and that those said allegations were "absurd" and had "zero evidence."

"It was the most pathetic sham I've ever seen," Shamansky said. "The hearing examiner should have been the prosecutor. It was an absolute embarrassment from a legal perspective in my opinion."

Lyberger, who spent four seasons on Ohio State's support staff working primarily with the linebackers, was placed on administrative leave in December after the school began its investigation. That caused him to miss the Buckeyes' College Football Playoff wins over Oregon, Texas and Notre Dame along with all of spring camp.

The former Slippery Rock linebacker is

not eligible to be rehired by the university and was told in the letter to "return all university property, such as keys, credentials, BuckID, computer, files, etc."

Downs, Styles On Lott Trophy Watch List

Two Ohio State defenders were named on the Lott IMPACT Trophy watch list released on May 28, with safety Caleb Downs and linebacker Sonny Styles representing the Buckeyes among 42 defenders listed.

Downs was a finalist for the award last season, but former Colorado Heisman Trophy-winning cornerback/wide receiver Travis Hunter ultimately won it.

Ohio State is one of nine schools with multiple representatives on the watch list. Texas is the only team with three players on



Caleb Downs

the list, with linebacker Anthony Hill Jr., defensive end Colin Simmons and safety Michael Taaffe representing the Longhorns.

Alabama, Clemson, Minnesota, LSU, Oregon, South Carolina and USC also have

multiple players on the list.

Laurinaitis is the only Buckeye to have won the award, doing so in his senior 2008 season.

The award, named after former USC defensive back and NFL Hall of Famer Ronnie Lott, goes to "college football's top defensive player who has had the biggest impact on his team both on and off the field." The IMPACT acronym stands for integrity, maturity, performance, academics, community and tenacity.

The winner of the award will be announced on Dec. 9 in Las Vegas.

Six Buckeyes Named Forbes 30 Under 30

Downs is also part of a distinguished group of six current and former Buckeyes who were named on May 29 to the Forbes 30 Under 30 Local Columbus Class of 2025.

Downs is the youngest member on the list due not only to his status as one of the top safeties in the country but also his successful business ventures in Ohio's capital city. He is the co-founder of Launch Point, an NIL platform that matches athletes with top brands, and he also personally partnered with brands like Armani, DSW, A-Game hydration and others.

The other Buckeyes on the list include Downs' former teammates Emeka Egbuka and Will Howard, Olympic swimmer Hunt-

er Armstrong, current women's lacrosse player Amani Kimball-McKavish and former women's basketball star Cotie McMahon.

Egbuka is recognized about a month after being drafted to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers with the No. 19 overall pick in the 2025 NFL draft and a few weeks after he signed a four-year, \$18.1 million rookie contract with the franchise that includes a \$9.856 million signing bonus.

Howard, who was drafted this April by the Pittsburgh Steelers with the No. 185 pick in the sixth round, is also thriving as an entrepreneur. He serves as the ambassador for CarsX and partners with Proctor & Gamble and Cirkil.

Armstrong, who swam for the Buckeyes from 2020-22, is nearly one year removed from winning his second-career Olympic gold medal at the 2024 Paris Games, helping the United States win the 4x100 freestyle relay. He has returned to Ohio State to train for the 2028 Summer Olympics and is also actively volunteering with children in the Columbus area.

Kimball-McKavish has made some impressive business ventures at just 21-years-old, earning \$50,000 in funding to launch her startup PROScored Virtual Arena, a broadcasting and media company that hosts live events and classes for several sports. She graduated from Ohio State with a degree in marketing in three years but is still playing for the lacrosse program.

McMahon, who transferred from Ohio State to Ole Miss this offseason after three award-winning seasons with the Buckeyes, was recognized due to her successes with Ohio State as well as her status as a likely top-10 pick in the 2026 WNBA draft.

Smith On EA Sports College Football 26 Cover

On May 27, sophomore receiver Jeremiah Smith became the first Ohio State EA Sports cover athlete when he was one of two players on the cover of the new EA College Football 2026 video game.

Smith, the Big Ten Receiver of the Year in 2024, joins Alabama sophomore receiver Ryan Williams on the cover of the video game. The honor for Smith comes after an unprecedented freshman season, when he smashed each of the Buckeyes' freshman receiving records, going for 76 catches, 1,315 yards and 15 touchdowns.

The honor bestowed upon Smith by EA Sports is only the latest of a laundry list of accolades the No. 1 overall recruit has received one year into his collegiate career. In addition to being named the Big Ten Receiver of the Year in 2024, Smith was a first-team All-American, was named to the

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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All-Big Ten first team and was named the conference's Freshman of the Year.

On the cover of the standard edition of the game, Smith is clad in Ohio State's home uniform while holding a football alongside Williams. On the deluxe edition of the game, meanwhile, Smith is joined by Downs and Day, along with a slew of other coaches, standout players, fans and mascots on the cover.

OSU Posts Perfect APR Score

The NCAA revealed on May 6 that the Buckeyes posted a perfect multiyear Academic Progress Rate score of 1,000, making them the only Division I college football program to achieve that feat. They were ahead of Alabama at 998, as well as Harvard – which was tied with Ohio State for the top APR score last year – at 997.

APR scores give each team a glimpse of how their team is collectively performing in the classroom by tracking the academic progress of each student-athlete who is on scholarship. It accounts for academic eligibility, retention and graduation and provides a measure of each team's academic performance. The most recent APR scores are based on a multiyear rate that averages scores from the 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years.

Football is one of seven Ohio State athletic programs to post perfect multiyear APR scores, including men's and women's cross

country, men's fencing, men's golf, women's soccer and women's volleyball. Twelve programs had a score of at least 990, while the athletic program as a whole had a multiyear APR rate of 990.

"At a time when media attention is myopically focused on money in college athletics, our student-athletes consistently demonstrate that academic opportunity through sport is still at the heart of the enterprise," said Ohio State faculty athletics representative Dr. John Davidson. "Their success is a tribute not just to their hard work but to an athletics culture embraced by coaches, administrators, and support staff that holds education to be a primary goal."

In the single-year results for 2023-24, 18 Ohio State programs had a perfect score. That list includes men's basketball, men's and women's cross country, football, men's fencing, men's golf, men's and women's gymnastics, men's hockey, men's lacrosse, softball, women's soccer, men's and women's tennis, men's track and field, men's and women's volleyball and wrestling.

These impressive scores continue a recent string of academic success at Ohio State. This academic year, 250 Buckeye student-athletes were named to the Academic All-Big Ten team, including a school-record 147 honored from fall sports.

OSU Plans On Having 90 Scholarship Players

As the college sports world continues to wait on a final resolution for the groundbreaking House V. NCAA antitrust case, the Buckeye football team is preparing to have 90 scholarship players for the 2025 season while leaving the door open for at least 15 walk-ons to be on the roster.

"We're looking at increasing it to 90 (scholarships)," Day said. "That's what the conversations have been. It's difficult when you think it's going to be 105 (total roster spots) and now they're saying maybe it won't go to 105. But if it does, we better make sure we can pivot quickly."

As Day alluded to, college football coaches have been preparing for roster and schol-

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.

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

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

And those who donate \$150 or more will have their names listed as Elite-Plus VIPs. The four largest Elite-Plus donors to the Buckeye Sports Bulletin VIP program will have their names listed in each issue as Wachsman Level Elite Plus donors, in honor of the late BSB assistant publisher, Karen Wachsman, and our largest donor will be designated as the Woody Level Wachsman Elite-Plus Donor.

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

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The Last Print Issue Of BSB Until July 1

The next issue of BSB, the July issue, is set to be mailed on July 1 as we continue on 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.

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arship limits to be altered due to the House V. NCAA settlement. It is likely that there will be a 105-player limit, 15 fewer than the previous cap of 120, but after U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilken said in late April that she would not approve a settlement that immediately implemented roster limits resulting in student-athletes being cut, that change might no longer go into effect this season.

If the roster limit of 105 is enacted, it would result in non-scholarship players having to be cut. That potential threat may have motivated OSU walk-ons such as running back TC Caffey, long snapper Morrow Evans, wide receiver Reis Stocksdale and punter Anthony Venneri to enter the transfer portal this spring.

Day said at his latest press conference that he tried to be as transparent as possible with the players who were on the fence during the spring transfer portal window, having conversations with them about their place on the roster so that they could transfer if they wanted to.

"If the 105 cap isn't put into play, we'll operate around 120-121 like we've been, so those are kind of the parameters we've been working with right now, knowing we might have to pivot quickly, which is tough for a lot of those guys who are on the fence," Day said. "So that's why we wanted to make sure that we were transparent. But this is kind of the way it is in college football right now. You have to be able to adapt quickly and move on the run. The easy thing to do is throw up your hands and get frustrated, but we'll just adapt and try to communicate well and make sure we have everything we need."

Walk-Ons Find New Homes

Speaking of the outgoing walk-ons, they each found new homes since BSB last went to press. Caffey committed to Youngstown State on May 10, Evans pledged to UCLA on May 9, Venneri committed to UCF on

May 8 and Stocksdale committed to Bowling Green on May 7.

Caffey heads to FCS Youngstown State after an injury-plagued career with Ohio State. The former Hubbard, Ohio, standout's Buckeye career was limited to just two games played with 66 career rushing yards and one touchdown on 10 carries. He will have two years of eligibility left with the Penguins.

Evans was expected to be John Ferlmann's successor at long snapper next season, but the Buckeyes will now have to look at other options after he committed to the Bruins. The No. 1 ranked long snapper in the 2024 recruiting class did not see any time as a freshman.

Stocksdale joins Eddie George's Falcon program with one year of eligibility remaining after spending four seasons with the Buckeyes. He played in just six games for the Scarlet and Gray and hauled in one catch worth 12 yards during the Buckeyes' 49-20 win over Michigan State in 2022.

Venneri spent just one season with the Buckeyes as a backup to starter Joe McGuire following a successful stint with Buffalo where he averaged at least 43 yards a punt in 2022 and 2023, both of those marks being single-season school records. With two years of eligibility left, he will look to regain that record-breaking form on a Scott Frost-led Golden Knights program.

CFP Changes Seeding Format

The College Football Playoff Management Committee, composed of the 10 FBS conference commissioners and Notre Dame athletic director Pete Bevacqua, unanimously voted to adopt a straight-seeding model for the 2025 playoff during a phone call on May 22.

According to an announcement from the CFP, the new policy guarantees the five highest-ranked conference champions a berth in the playoff but will no longer include a bye for the four highest-ranked champions. In-

stead, the 12-team bracket will now be seeded based off the final CFP rankings, with the four-highest ranked teams receiving a first-round bye.

"After evaluating the first year of the 12-team playoff, the CFP Management Committee felt it was in the best interest of the game to make this adjustment," said Rich Clark, executive director of the College Football Playoff. "This change will continue to allow guaranteed access to the Playoff by rewarding teams for winning their conference championship, but it will also allow us to construct a postseason bracket that recognizes the best performance on the field during the entire regular season."

This marks a deviation from the 12-team format used last season, which awarded a first-round bye to the highest-ranked conference champions in the final College Football Playoff rankings. Those four seeds were given last year to Oregon (No. 1 seed, No. 1 in final rankings) of the Big Ten, Georgia (2, 3) of the SEC, Boise State (3, 8) and Arizona State (4, 14). Each of those teams failed to win a game in the playoff and fell to lower-seeded teams that played in the first round.

To compensate for the change, the CFP will continue distributing \$8 million to the top four-highest ranked conference champions, even if those teams are not ranked

within the top four, according to Yahoo Sports' Ross Dellenger.

If the policy change had been implemented last year, the seeds would have been given, in order, to No. 1 Oregon, No. 2 Georgia, No. 3 Texas, No. 4 Penn State, No. 5 Notre Dame, No. 6 Ohio State, No. 7 Tennessee, No. 8 Indiana, No. 9 Boise State, No. 10 SMU, No. 11 Arizona State and No. 12 Clemson.

Ohio State would have matched up against Arizona State in the first round with this format, with Texas waiting to face off against the winner of that game.

Sawyer, Howard Say Title Trumps U-M Win

Former Buckeyes and current Pittsburgh Steelers Jack Sawyer and Howard left Columbus and entered the NFL without an elusive pair of gold pants, but they did leave the program with something much sweeter, at least according to the two NFL rookies.

Appearing together on a May 6 episode of former Steeler quarterback Ben Roethlisberger's "Footbahlin'" podcast, both Sawyer and Howard indicated that the team's national title win last year trumps any victory they might have earned over the hated Wolverines in their Buckeye careers.

"Winning a national championship (is more important than beating Michigan)," Sawyer said. "And don't get – that takes no emphasis off how important The Game is. If anyone tells you they'd rather go 1-12 and just beat The Team Up North (and not win a national championship) you're crazy. You're playing this game to win championships."

Sawyer, who finished his four-year Buckeye career winless against the Wolverines, added that losing The Game was not the be-all and end-all last season due to the College Football Playoff's expansion to 12 teams, which allowed his team to switch gears following the loss and focus on what he said was the "ultimate goal" of winning a national title.

That could not have been said in previous seasons when the winner of The Game would likely be headed to the College Football Playoff or Rose Bowl, with the loser sent home without a chance to earn meaningful hardware.

"Make no mistake about it, no one wants to beat those guys more than we do, but at the end of the day, there's nothing we could have done after (losing to Michigan)," Sawyer said. "We have our shot to chase the ultimate goal, which is to win the national championship."

Despite the rivalry having much different

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implications in this current era of college football compared to previous ones, Howard made sure to emphasize that defeating Michigan is still high on the Buckeyes' priority list.

"We literally talk about (the rivalry) every single day," Howard said. "There's a huge

emphasis on it, like, no M's in the building, can't wear blue. I don't think I've worn blue this whole year. It runs really deep. It means a lot to a lot of people."

Holmes, Williams Earn New Jobs

A pair of former Buckeyes landed leadership positions in football since BSB last went to press, with Santonio Holmes being named the wide receivers coach at Central State University on May 12 and Cam Williams being hired as co-director of player personnel of the Denver Broncos on May 13.

Holmes joins the collegiate coaching sphere with loads of football experience, having spent nine seasons as a productive NFL wideout after a three-year stint with the Buckeyes (2003-05). After earning All-Big Ten honors twice with the Buckeyes, Holmes caught an impressive 389 passes

for 6,030 yards and 36 touchdowns for the Pittsburgh Steelers (2006-09), New York Jets (2010-13) and Chicago Bears (2014).

Holmes also became the first Ohio State player to win Super Bowl MVP after making a game-winning, toe-tapping touchdown catch late in the Steelers' 27-23 win over the Arizona Cardinals in Super Bowl XLIII in 2009.

Holmes will look to help elevate a Division II HBCU program in Central State that is coming off a 1-9 season and 1-7 mark in the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. Central State, which is located in Wilberforce, Ohio, is led by former NFL and Florida State cornerback Tony Carter.

Williams, meanwhile, looks to continue ascending up the NFL front-office ladder with the Broncos. After playing at Ohio State from 2012-15, he went directly into scouting and landed a role as a scouting assistant with the New England Patriots in

2016. He spent the last nine seasons with the franchise, winning two Super Bowls in that span, and worked his way up to the team's director of college scouting.

Williams will now work alongside director of player personnel Reed Burkhardt and general manager George Paton as the Broncos look to make the playoffs for the second straight season.

Tressel Considering Run For Governor

The leader of Ohio State's football program from 2001-10 may be looking to become the leader of the state of Ohio. Jim Tressel wrote in a statement released on May 8 that while he is currently focused on performing his duties as Ohio's lieutenant governor, he is considering running to replace term-limited Governor Mike DeWine.

"What has been a surprise, and it has been humbling, is how many people are en-

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1985

The question that appeared to have been left unanswered as a result of Tara VanDerveer's departure from Ohio State to assume the women's basketball coaching position at Stanford was difficult to answer.

People wanted to know: Did VanDerveer leave unfinished a task she said she wanted to achieve when she first took the Ohio State job in 1979?

Many Buckeye women's basketball fans might have said, "Yes," but those who knew VanDerveer well might have disputed that claim.

VanDerveer did not win a national championship in her five years at Ohio State, but she did put the program in a position to do so, leading the 1984-85 team to a 28-3 record and a perfect 18-0 conference record. A little luck, and the Buckeyes, who after winning their first NCAA postseason game fell to eventual national champion Old Dominion by four points in the East Regional Finals, might have won it all.

VanDerveer said her decision to leave Ohio State involved much more than simply Ohio State vs. Stanford. It had much to do with a personal choice of lifestyle.

"Climate and geography are part of the reason," she said. "In making my list of pros and cons, at the top of the list in favor of OSU was the professionalism. But I think I was becoming very one-dimensional. It may sound crazy, but we as a society put so much of a premium on winning. Basketball had become too much a part of my life. The thought that I would like to relate (to those who don't understand) is that I think I'm balancing my life out better."

35 Years Ago — 1990

An impressive array of OSU sports coaches, administrators and personalities drew a crowd of more than 1,200 to the Lucas County Recreation Center May 15 for the second Toledo-area "Meet the Buckeyes Night."

Among those present were OSU football coach John Cooper, basketball coach Randy Ayers, athletic director Jim Jones, associate athletic directors Bill Myles and Phyllis Bailey, and assistant athletic directors Archie Griffin and Paul Krebs.

The special honoree for the evening was former Buckeye grid great Jim Lachey.

The presence of these notables helped the event, once again chaired by Phil Harrison and Jeff Essak, raise more than \$11,000 for Ohio State athletics.

Cooper noted the enthusiasm of the crowd and wondered what that enthusiasm would be like if his football team continued to improve.

"We're not very happy with the two years we've had," Cooper told the raucous gathering. "What are you going to do when we have the type of football team you expect us to have?"

The coach seemed to indicate that might be coming soon. "We're going in the right direction, and we're doing the right things," Cooper said. "We've got a great recruiting staff."

30 Years Ago — 1995

Ohio State may have exited the NCAA regionals earlier than head coach Bob Todd expected, but when all was said and done, Todd seemed satisfied.

Consecutive losses to Texas and Auburn in the NCAA Midwest II Regional in Oklahoma City ended Ohio State's 1995 season at 40-23, not quite the record OSU was used to putting up. Still, was it disappointing?

The Buckeyes had won at least 40 games, the Big Ten regular-season crown and made the NCAA regionals each of the previous five years.

"It was frustrating the way we went out, but considering everything that happened to us this year, this was actually one of the most satisfying years I've had," Todd said. "Early in the year, we kept asking ourselves, 'How are we going to lose this one?' We hadn't found ways to win yet. But by the end of the season, we were playing the baseball we expected to play."

25 Years Ago — 2000

The Ohio State baseball team entered the Big Ten tournament knowing its back was to the wall.

That was a change from recent seasons. The Buckeyes had, after all, become the pre-eminent program in the conference and generally found themselves in the hunt for the league title. But too many times, Ohio State had won the regular-season crown before faltering in the league tournament.

That's why the Buckeyes were hoping for a reversal of fortune as they entered the expanded league tourney as the No. 5 seed.

But too much living on the edge finally did the Buckeyes in, and they saw their season end with a 4-0 loss to Illinois at the Big Ten tournament May 20 at Minnesota. The Illini's Ryan Kvasnicka tossed a complete-game shutout at OSU, which ended the year 37-23.

20 Years Ago — 2005

Jim Tressel had dealt with members of the Ohio State football team encountering off-the-field trouble several times since he took over the Buckeye program in January 2001.

Typically, those offenses were addressed in statements released by the university, sometimes detailing the player's punishment, other times simply stating there would be no official action until the legal process had played itself out.

But when three current Buckeyes were arrested within the span of 10 days in the month of May – two for offenses involving marijuana and another for an alleged drunken bar fight – outcry from the media and the public was loud enough to prompt Tressel to hold what the university deemed a "roundtable discussion" May 25.

That discussion amounted to Tressel and five senior football players – linebackers A.J. Hawk and Anthony Schlegel, offensive lineman Rob Sims and John Conroy and safety Nate Salley – convening in the meeting room of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center to represent the majority of the football team that had not been involved in any off-the-field incidents.

"The sad thing for me is our program is not like that," Schlegel said. "It just gives a bad perception. We know that something has to be done about it, and we're taking those measures. But for guys that love this program so much, it's just hard to feel that people are having a bad perception of us when we know we're a bunch of good guys and have good coaches."

15 Years Ago — 2010

Like many people associated with Ohio State, Jeff Kaplan couldn't hide his enthusiasm for the venerable St. John Arena.

"I love St. John Arena," the university senior vice president for administration and planning told BSB. "My first full-time office was in St. John Arena. I know that place and love that place. I worked right next to Woody Hayes there."

But in his job, Kaplan was among those in charge of planning out Ohio State's long-term facilities destiny, a future that did not seem to include St. John Arena.

Though no firm plans had been made, the responses of all decision makers reached by BSB made it clear that unless something changed, there appeared to be a 10- to 15-year expiration date on the 54-year-old venue.

The athletic department's 2008 facilities master plan recom-

mended either a massive renovation to the building or its demolition, and revisions received by the athletic department continued to advocate for a facility across the Olentangy River that would house wrestling, volleyball and gymnastics – the sports that then competed in the arena.

10 Years Ago — 2015

While the point of the May 29 press conference was to talk about life after football, head coach Urban Meyer did indulge reporters by answering a few questions about the rehab progress of quarterback Braxton Miller, who had a second surgery on his shoulder in August that forced him to miss the 2014 season.

"I think he is (throwing) up to 35 yards," Meyer said. "They are monitoring it very closely. He is very aggressive up to 25, I would say right now. We can't be out there watching, but our strength coach is out there, and he has good zip on the ball. He's working his tail off. He is in the best shape he has ever been in in his life. I don't know if you have seen him, but he is kind of tight, he has lost a little bit of weight, he's real muscular. He's done a great job."

Meyer went on to say he was very confident that Miller would be physically ready to compete with Cardale Jones and J.T. Barrett for the starting quarterback position in fall camp. The coach, who said he didn't pay attention to any rumors of Miller transferring, said the two had not discussed the quarterback playing another position.

Five Years Ago — 2020

After nearly three months away, Ohio State's football players returned to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on June 8, marking a major step toward the upcoming college football season kicking off as originally scheduled.

Players began arriving as early as 6:30 a.m. for the first set of voluntary workouts, with the arrival times staggered by position group to assure that social distancing guidelines were followed.

Workouts were scheduled from 6:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with nine players permitted to work out together at a time and four separate areas for the players to exercise, allowing 36 players in the building at once.

Ohio State released a statement on June 5 detailing the rules and restrictions in place to allow for safe workouts for all players and to avoid any issues regarding the COVID-19 pandemic that had put the Buckeyes out of action since March 12.

"The organized and safe return to campus is based on the guiding principles from the Ohio State COVID-19 Transition Task Force and its Safe Campus and Scientific Advisory Subgroup," the statement explained. "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Ohio Department of Health, on-campus partners, the NCAA and the Big Ten Conference also guide our decision-making."

One Year Ago — 2024

Ohio State was in the midst of a starting quarterback competition for the second offseason in as many years. Redshirt sophomore Devin Brown, fifth-year senior Will Howard and true freshman Julian Sayin were all duking it out for the position.

Unlike the previous season when the battle between Brown and Kyle McCord spilled into the first two weeks of the regular season, head coach Ryan Day wanted to find the right guy sooner rather than later.

"I think the way things turned out last year, it kind of went into the first couple games of the season," Day said. "That's not ideal. I wouldn't like to do that again this year. But it's going to come down to playing the best players."

couraging me to run for governor,” Tressel said. “I have not decided yet, but when I became lieutenant governor in February, (Tressel’s wife) Ellen told me that it seemed like God had more work for me to do, and she was right.

“While I have not ruled out a run for governor – and there will be a time in the future for those conversations – for now, I will remain focused on helping Ohioans get off the sidelines and into our workforce so they can reach their full potential.”

Tressel, who won six Big Ten championships and a national title during his time as Ohio State’s head coach, served as Youngstown State’s president from 2014-2023 before becoming Ohio’s lieutenant governor this winter.

If Tressel does enter the race, the Republican will have to compete for the bid with GOP-favorite and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, who has already received the support of President Donald Trump and the Ohio Republican Party.

Ohio Rep. Proposes Ban On Noon Games

Not long after FOX announced it would be televising Ohio State’s season-opening matchup against Texas, Ohio Rep. Tex Fischer proposed a bill that would make it illegal for any prominent matchup to be scheduled at noon. The bill would exclude the game against Michigan at the end of the season.

In the proposed bill, no game that features a state university in which both teams are ranked in the top 10 of the AP top 25 would be allowed to start before 3:30 p.m. Broadcasters or football conferences that violate the rule would face a \$10 million fine.

“A few weeks ago, I said it would be a crime for FOX to put Ohio State vs. Texas at noon,” Fischer wrote on Twitter in a post that included a screenshot of the bill. “Promises made, promises kept.”

The bill proposed by Fischer, a Republican, will likely not pass, but it shows the frustration that Buckeye fans have over the number of noon kickoffs they have watched Ohio State play in.

It’s also not the first time that state politicians have tried to introduce legislation pertaining to Ohio State football. Sen. Bill Demora introduced a bill last year that would prohibit universities from giving streaming services exclusive rights to games, and Ohio Rep. Josh Williams introduced a bill this December that would classify flag planting at Ohio Stadium as a felony.

Men’s Lacrosse, Softball Conclude Successful Seasons

Both the Buckeye men’s lacrosse and softball teams wrapped up successful seasons in May with losses in their respective postseason tournaments.

On the diamond, the softball team, which qualified for the NCAA tournament after a 43-11-1 regular-season campaign, didn’t get bounced out without a fight. The Buckeyes won games over North Carolina (9-6) and Miami (Ohio) (11-1) at the Knoxville regional but fell to Tennessee twice by scores of 4-2 and 5-0 to be knocked out of the double-elimination regional bracket. Despite the loss, Ohio State made the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2022 un-



FILE PHOTO

TRAGEDY — Former Ohio State wide receiver Julian Fleming (4) was seriously injured in an ATV accident on May 23 in Pennsylvania that killed his girlfriend, 23-year-old Alyssa Boyd. The vehicle hit a deer. Fleming played four seasons for the Buckeyes before transferring to Penn State for the 2024 season.

der first-year head coach Kirin Kumar.

It was a less successful postseason for the men’s lacrosse team, which was defeated 15-6 by Notre Dame in the first round of the NCAA tournament held in front of a packed 2,791 fans at the OSU Lacrosse Stadium on May 11.

Eight days after winning the Big Ten tournament for the first time in program history, the Buckeyes found themselves doomed by a disastrous second period against the Fighting Irish when they allowed six straight goals to see their 3-1 lead turn into a 7-3 deficit with just 2:37 left in the period.

Ohio State bounced back with a pair of goals from senior attack Alex Marinier to cut the deficit to 7-5 with 12:12 left in the third period, but things unraveled again when the Fighting Irish scored five unanswered goals to lead 12-5 with 14:17 in the fourth. Another Marinier goal at 10:52 put the score at 12-6, but Notre Dame followed with three more scores to close out the nine-goal win and send the Buckeyes home with just their third loss of the season.

Despite the crushing loss, Ohio State, which defeated Notre Dame in the regular season by a score of 10-9 March 8, still had a historic season. Not only did head coach Nick Myers’ program win the Big Ten tournament, but with a 4-1 conference record

they also claimed their first Big Ten regular-season title in program history. They also earned 14 wins for just the fifth time in the program’s 76-year history.

Cash, Tracy Compete At French Open

One year after winning the 2024 NCAA doubles tennis championship, former Buckeyes J.J. Tracy and Robert Cash competed on the professional stage at the French Open.

Their quest for the grand slam title was short lived, however, as they lost to No. 33 Rohan Bopanna of India and No. 52 Adam Pavlasek of the Czech Republic in the first round in three sets. The two Americans fell 7-6 in the first set before bouncing back with a 7-5 victory in the second. But they lost steam in set No. 3 as the more veteran pair of players took advantage and earned the match-clinching 6-1 win.

Tracy and Cash are ranked No. 67 and No. 71, respectively, in the ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals), so they will likely have additional opportunities to compete on the professional stage.

The two former national championship-winning Buckeyes have already experienced success as professionals. They have won six titles on the ATP Challengers Tour as doubles pairs and also got their first taste of grand slam tennis in last year’s US Open,

where they won their first-round match in straight sets (6-3, 6-4) before falling in the second round to the Argentine pairing of Máximo González and Andrés Molteni.

Cash and Tracy are two of Ohio State’s most accomplished tennis players. Cash left Ohio State with a program-record 148 doubles wins, while Tracy compiled a 77-12 record across both singles and doubles events during his senior season on his way to becoming Ohio State’s Male Athlete of the Year.

Fleming Injured, Girlfriend Killed In ATV Accident

Former Ohio State wide receiver Julian Fleming was seriously injured in an ATV crash in northern Pennsylvania on May 23 that also tragically killed his girlfriend, 23-year-old Alyssa Boyd.

According to a Pennsylvania State Police report, Fleming and Boyd were riding an ATV on a road in Columbia Township when they collided with a deer that had jumped out into the roadway. Neither Fleming, who was the driver of the vehicle, nor Boyd was wearing safety equipment, and Boyd was pronounced dead at the scene.

Fleming was taken to Guthrie Troy Community Hospital to treat his serious injuries and was confirmed to be released by 247Sports in a May 25 report.

Fleming played at Ohio State from 2020-23, catching 80 passes for 990 yards and seven touchdowns in 37 career games. The Catawissa, Pa., native spent his final collegiate season at Penn State in 2024, playing in all 16 games, and caught 14 passes for 176 yards and one touchdown.

Fleming had yet to publicly comment on his condition since BSB went to press, but he did take to his Instagram account to raise awareness of a GoFundMe page dedicated to Boyd – who was working towards a psychology degree at Alabama – titled “Alyssa Boyd’s Memorial Fund and Scholarship.” The page has a goal of \$10,000 to help ease the burden of medical expenses for the Boyd Family, with any additional funds being for a memorial scholarship in Alyssa’s name.

More than \$80,000 had been donated as BSB went to print.

Christman Died Of Heart Disease

The cause of death for former Ohio State offensive lineman Ben Christman was revealed on May 9 to be heart disease and an irregular heartbeat, according to the Clark County, Nev., Coroner’s Office.

Christman, who was preparing to play his final season of college football at UNLV after spending two seasons at Ohio State and another two at Kentucky, was found dead in an off-campus apartment in Las Vegas on Feb. 11. According to The Courier Journal, the 21-year-old Christman had reported chest pains during practice the day before his death, but there was no evidence of heart issues on the EKG he underwent, according to the team cardiologist who treated him.

“Our team’s heart is broken to hear of Ben’s passing,” UNLV head coach Dan Mullen said after Christman’s death. “Since the day Ben set foot on our campus a month ago, he made the Rebels a better program.”

Summer Will Sizzle With Quarterback Talk

Continued From Page 1

say you're going to do, you have to back up, and I think we've done that.

"When we recruit guys, we want guys to be at Ohio State. If we have to talk you into coming to Ohio State, if money is the first thing you're looking for, this isn't the right place for you. And if people choose Ohio State because they want to come to Ohio State, they're more likely to stay. That's just the philosophy we've had here for a long time, but now more than ever because of the way things are.

"Guys enjoy being at Ohio State. They like being here. So as long as they're being valued, then they're going to stay, because they know the development."

No Rest For The Weary

Day's comments regarding the culture of his program and their recent portal successes signal a change of tone for the Buckeyes' leader that has been evident in the months following the national championship win. Often serious and stone-faced in public, Day has let his guard down somewhat this offseason. He's cracked jokes with reporters, appeared as a celebrity guest on popular network talk shows and even enjoyed a round of golf at the Dublin, Ohio-based Memorial Tournament Golden Bear Pro-Am event alongside his former rival coach Saban.

It's a much different public persona and swagger from previous years that Day hasn't been afraid to talk about this offseason when asked about it.

"I'm definitely more relaxed. To say I'm not is crazy. There's no question," he said with a smile after the Buckeyes' first spring practice on March 17. "We're in a different place than we were a couple of months ago. Let's call it for what it is."

Although a huge weight has been noticeably lifted off his shoulders, it's still business as usual for the title-winning coach. Even with the new championship hardware hanging inside the facility and the successful roster retention this offseason, Day knows that there is no time to waste and much more work to be done before the team meets back up for fall camp in August and ramps up for its highly anticipated season opener against Texas on Aug. 30.

"I thought (winning a national championship) would feel different. It didn't," Day told NBC Sports' Nicole Auerbach on May 1. "It felt great, but it didn't take long to be like,



SONNY BROCKWAY

NOTHING DECIDED — Neither sophomore Lincoln Kienholz (3) nor redshirt freshman Julian Sayin (10) won the starting quarterback job during the spring camp, so the competition remains open with the Aug. 30 opener vs. Texas on the horizon.

"What's the next thing? Where are we going next? A lot of work to do.' There's no time for resting. We have to keep building this thing, keep growing. Not much has changed. We've got another season ahead of us."

But what exactly is on Day's to-do list this summer before the Buckeyes begin fall camp? Based on the comments made at his press conference, his first order of business may be figuring out the quarterback position, where he must continue to try to identify which field general is most ready to take the field for the Scarlet and Gray when the mighty Longhorns come to town.

Coming out of the 2024 season and into the 2025 campaign, many believed that former five-star prospect and Alabama transfer Julian Sayin would easily assume Will Howard's position as the Buckeyes' starter in his second season with the program. But that thought seemed like less of a formality as the spring progressed and sophomore Lincoln Kienholz took big strides with his

development, emerging throughout the 15 practices as the most consistent thrower of the then-three quarterbacks on the roster.

Day revealed in the press conference that he felt the veteran Kienholz was separating himself from the younger Sayin throughout spring until Sayin pushed back with a strong performance in the spring game, completing 17 of 24 passes for 175 yards and a touchdown compared to the 12 of 18 for 158 yards and two second-half scores for Kienholz.

Despite this fluctuation in the pecking order, though, Day feels that the competition is dead even entering summer, and there are still a lot of reps to be had before a decision is made.

"I felt like Lincoln, going into the spring game, was a little bit ahead of Julian, but if you just watch the game, Julian probably performed better than Lincoln, and here we are. I went back through, watched the spring practices, looked at the grades and they are very similar. So we'll take it into the summer, and we'll let them play.

"The more you play, the more these things find a way to work themselves out. So who knows how it's going to shake out."

Both Sayin and Kienholz won't be able to throw with the team in an official capacity until August, but Day said the two can still work to fine-tune their skills in the summer months by putting in some extra hours in the facility. He thinks most of their growth can come in the film room, where they can now analyze hours of footage of themselves playing the position this spring rather than relying on tapes of previous Buckeye quar-

terbacks in Day's system.

"When you have the cutups to watch (on film) and you actually see yourself doing it, as opposed to Will doing it, or C.J. (Stroud) — we have years of cutups of the same plays over and over again. You can see Dwayne (Haskins) running it or Justin Fields running it. But when it's actually you doing it, it looks and feels different."

Film room and offseason programs aside, Day said the competition will ultimately come down to who can best command the huddle and understand what is required of him when he steps onto the field as the Buckeye quarterback, a benchmark that the coach has established for his signal callers in previous offseason battles.

"The technical parts I won't get into, but it's really about understanding the offense better, understanding protections, understanding the route structures, how the ball has to come out, third-down, red zone, understanding the entire offense," Day said. "Ultimately, they will be evaluated on how they make their routine plays routinely, and then how they do on third down, red zone and two-minute (drills)."

Patricia, Bowen Checking Boxes So Far

Whether it is with the quarterbacks or any other position, Day said the spring was important for evaluating and developing the talent on their roster so that they can put the best product on the field when the season rolls around. But for the Buckeyes to play at a championship level right away, they will need to nail down the schematic element of

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the game, which Day said he and his coaching staff will work hard to accomplish this summer.

"I have to make sure that I remind myself that the idea of the spring is to get individual players better and then, as we come out of the spring, figure out what this looks like as an offense and as a defense schematically," Day said. "So that's what we're all involved with right now."

Figuring out how to shape their scheme around the talent they have on the roster is an especially urgent task for a team with a new-look staff. The Buckeyes enter the season with several fresh faces under Day's wing, the two most notable new additions being former New England Patriots play caller Matt Patricia as defensive coordinator and former Virginia Tech offensive coordinator Tyler Bowen as offensive line coach.

Despite going through an entire spring with Patricia and Bowen on staff – as well as offensive coordinator Brian Hartline, co-offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Keenan Bailey, co-defensive coordinator/secondary/cornerbacks coach Tim Walton and passing game coordinator/safeties coach Matt Guerrieri in promoted roles – Day still feels they are far from implementing the right schemes on either side of the ball. But he does think his reworked coaching staff has built a strong foundation when it comes to culture and relationship-building, with his two new assistants especially meshing well with the players and other coaches within the program.

"I meet with every single player after the spring, and I ask them, 'Rate your relation-

ship with your position coach, with your coordinator (on a scale from) one to five, five being great, one being not very good at all. The feedback I got on both of those guys was excellent. That's the first thing. Second thing is, you talk to the recruits – 'How's your relationship with Coach Bowen? How's your relationship with Coach Patricia?' Again, thumbs up across the board. And when you get around the players, you get around the recruits, you will hear the same thing.

"So that's the first thing you look for, is the relationships. Then, how are you getting individual players better? I think that's been a plus. And then schematically we'll see. It has yet to be seen if we have the right scheme in place. But I like their attitudes. I like where they are. I think they fit our culture really, really well in terms of how they coach. They understand it's important they have both coached in the NFL at a high level. So I'm excited to see what the next couple of months bring."

Patricia, who will spend a good portion of the summer months on the recruiting trail, said it's been an overwhelmingly positive experience in Columbus since taking over as defensive coordinator in February. And unlike Day may have indicated, he thinks his defense is already building toward installing the right scheme and game plan for their personnel this season.

"A lot of great football was played last year at Ohio State defensively, and we're not trying to do away with that and change that," Patricia said during a May 22 appearance on "The Bobby Carpenter Show."

"We're just trying to build on the things

that were done previously. The biggest difference is the way it was taught. I'm more of a conceptual teacher, where you can take bigger picture schemes and boil them down and teach the group that way. And that's what I think brings multiplicity to the defense, when you can do that. I'm packaging and calling it a little bit different, more like it would be called in the NFL.

"But the enthusiasm by the players, the coaches to dive right into it – the spring was great."

Season Opener With Longhorns Looming

The summer months, as discussed earlier, will be a grind for Day and his coaching staff as they look to fine-tune their game plans and further analyze the talent on their roster. But while the coaching staff will be hard at work, Day wants his players to find some time to step away from the game and enjoy themselves before the real work starts.

"I'd like to see these guys get out of here and get away from football a little bit," Day said. "Class is starting, for us, during Texas week, if that gives you any idea of how much of a break they have. We got right into winter workouts, right into spring practice. They did have a little bit of a break for spring break. But these guys need to get around their families a bit and get away from football."

But that break won't be for long. For Ohio State, the preparation for the season begins immediately after that time off, when the team will need to ramp up their workouts

in June and July then come to camp ready to go in August in preparation for the likely top-five clash against Texas.

"We have to have a great summer," Day said. "Everybody knows what they need to do this summer with (strength coach Mickey Marotti) in the weight room, in terms of getting better individually as players. And then once August hits, it's going to be a great camp because of our first opponent. That has to be ramped up real quick."

Gearing up in June for a season opener may not be the ideal way to spend the summer for a group of young adults, but according to Day, it is what needs to be done. Anything less and the Buckeyes will be behind the eight ball and staring at a potential 0-1 start to their championship-defending season.

"When I took my son down to Clemson (on a recruiting visit) and spent time with Dabo (Swinney) last year, they were opening up with Georgia, and they were talking about how different that preparation is," Day said. "The preparation for that game starts in June, and then it goes into July, and then in August you're cracking pads because you have to be ready to go in that first game. That's just how it goes."

"Everything's ramped up sooner. I've been talking about it since we started spring ball. Especially when you have some new guys and new faces, they have to be ready, and it's the job of the coaches and the leaders to make sure that that urgency is in place."

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Impact Of Sign-Stealing Scandal Still Unknown

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Over 19 months after news first broke of an alleged illegal sign-stealing operation conducted within the Michigan football program, the NCAA appears to be closing in on its final ruling.

After a hearing set to take place from June 6-7 between Michigan and the NCAA's Committee on Infractions, the NCAA is expected to issue a punishment. The extent of the punishment is still unclear, though, as despite the lengthy investigation by the NCAA, little concrete evidence has been revealed to show the sort of impact the Wolverines' sign-stealing had on games, as well as which staffers within the program knew of the improper in-person scouting that was alleged to take place.

"I think the problem with the sign-stealing scandal is that there's no possible way to definitively prove how much what they did actually had any impact on the games," On3 national college football reporter Ari Wasserman told BSB. "And we keep relitigating it over and over again of, 'Who said what? Who did what? Who was responsible? How far did they go?'"

The uncertainty surrounding the scandal has left those outside of the NCAA only able to speculate on what punishment will await the Wolverines.

It wasn't until the NCAA sent Michigan a Notice of Allegations last August – which accused former Wolverines head coach Jim Harbaugh as well as staffers Chris Partridge, Denard Robinson and sign-stealing ringleader Connor Stallions of Level 1 violations and current head coach Sherrone Moore a Level 2 violation – that college football fans got their first taste of what could be in store for the Wolverines.

That notice, though, was succeeded by a fiery response from the Wolverines,



SONNY BROCKWAY

SKIPPING TOWN — No, former Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh isn't signaling the number of times he allegedly committed NCAA infractions, but he did leave behind a mess when he became the head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers after the Wolverines won the 2023 national championship.

who claimed the NCAA was "grossly overreaching" and "wildly overcharging" without credible evidence that other staffers knew about Stallions' illegal sign-stealing system.

Michigan seemed to take a slight step back from its heated response in early May when news broke that it was expected to hand Moore, who deleted a thread of 52 text messages sent to Stallions in October 2023 on the same day news broke of the alleged sign-stealing operation, a two-game suspension that would be served during the Wolverines' Weeks 3 and 4 contests against Central Michigan and Nebraska, respectively.

The self-imposed suspension was the latest and likely final development in the scandal before the hearing in early June. With so much uncertainty surrounding the scandal heading into the summer, BSB interviewed SpartanMag publisher Jim Comparoni, Detroit Free Press and Michigan beat reporter Tony Garcia and Wasserman to get better insight on the impact the Wolverines' sign-stealing had on games and what punishments the Wolverines might receive from the NCAA.

Will The Hammer Drop?

Although there has been much discussion about the scandal over the past 19 months, the question that is hardest to answer for anyone in the college football world regarding the sign-stealing operation is what exact punishment the Wolverines will receive. Many Ohio State fans, and even Michigan State fans, have hoped the Wolverines will have to deal with the strictest of punishments, but as Comparoni explained, in this fairly unprecedented circumstance, the NCAA's pending decision is a mystery.

"It's hard to say what the NCAA is going to do," Comparoni said. "A lot of people are like, 'I'll believe it when I see it,' and I kind of agree with those people. It's hard to know what they're going to do, because there's no precedent. A lot of people say there have been teams that have vacated national championships in the past because they've utilized players who were deemed later to be ineligible. Well, that was a precedent back then, but there's no precedent for this."

While some of the most extreme Buckeye fans have advocated for the Wolverines to receive nothing less than the death

penalty for their alleged wrongdoings, others would likely be content with the program's 2023 national title being stripped.

According to Garcia, though, the Wolverines will do whatever it takes to avoid the latter punishment.

"That is a line in the sand, a line in the cement," Garcia said of the 2023 national championship potentially being vacated. "That is a hard and fast line here in Ann Arbor, that's certainly the No. 1 thing. It's what they were working for and waiting on for 25 years, and I mean, come hell or high water, they are going to do everything they can to keep that title on the books."

Despite the Wolverines doing whatever it takes to protect their national championship, there are a couple of reasons Buckeye fans are optimistic. For one, Michigan is already on probation for a separate issue relating to recruiting violations committed during a COVID-19 dead period. For that issue, Moore served a one-game suspension for Michigan's 2023 season opener, and according to the NCAA's Notice of Allegations, he could be viewed as a potential "repeat offender," which Garcia says could cause him to face an even stiffer punishment.

Many Buckeye fans also got their hopes up when Michigan president Santa Ono announced he was leaving the university for the same job at Florida just one month before the NCAA hearing. However, according to Garcia, the timing of the move is largely coincidental.

"There are a ton of politics and different things going on at the university that they're dealing with (regarding) the presidential administration, as lots of well-funded colleges are," Garcia said. "Michigan somewhat caved in with its DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) initiatives and policies, and he was facing a good amount of backlash for that."

"So I think a lot of this is educational and things outside of the walls of athletics. I don't think (the sign-stealing scandal) was 0 percent (the reason why Ono left), but for anybody to say that he's trying to get out ahead of the posse or something, that's not how I read that."

Michigan fans may also have some reasons for optimism, though. The Wolverines' biggest wins from their national championship-winning season came after the alleged sign-stealing operation was made public, giving opposing programs the opportunity to adjust their signs. Plus, during an availability one day after Michigan won the national championship, NCAA president Charlie Baker said Michigan won the title "fair and square."

Although some Wolverines fans have found some reassurance in that quote, Garcia says it doesn't necessarily mean Michigan will get through the scandal with a mere slap on the wrist.

"Everything is contextual," Garcia said. "I think what he was saying is that after the scandal happened, the rest of the way, they were not doing anything wrong, and they won all of those games fair and square. And that is not up for debate. That is true. However, I don't think that means the NCAA thinks Michigan did nothing



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wrong and it is all on the up and up.

"Michigan fans are absolutely using that as evidence A, B and C, as I would expect they would, but I don't know if Michigan is going to say, 'See, he said this, so we're all good. Nothing to see here,' I don't think that's how it's going to be perceived."

Even if the Wolverines likely won their final eight games with an even playing field, Comparoni feels the 2023 Michigan team shouldn't have been eligible for the postseason in the first place.

"Before Michigan played Michigan State in 2023 (on Oct. 21, three days after the NCAA notified Michigan of its investigation), the Big Ten notified Michigan State's athletic department that Michigan State could opt out of the Michigan game," Comparoni said. "Now, whatever the Big Ten knew at that time, whatever they were uncovering at that time, it amazes me that they would have allowed Michigan State to opt out of that game, but they still allowed Michigan to be eligible for the Big Ten championship."

"It seems to me that the Big Ten right then should have said, 'By the way, Michigan is ineligible for the Big Ten Championship Game this year,' and then the College Football Playoff would have not taken them in the playoff, and they wouldn't have played for the national championship and they wouldn't be the national champions."

Comparoni was unsure exactly why the Big Ten didn't make the Wolverines ineligible for the conference title game, but he offered up the theory that the conference wouldn't have wanted to hamstring one of its best teams and prevent them from competing for a national championship.

"These conferences, in my opinion, are like a bunch of crime families," Comparoni said. "It's like you have this part of the country, this is your territory, you're having all this success. The Big Ten, this is just my theory, just wondering if this might be the case, they had a chance to win a national championship, so they didn't want to clip the wings of one of their contenders to do it."

Like Comparoni, many rival fans would have liked the Big Ten to make the Wolverines ineligible for the conference championship. But a year and a half after the fact, a vacated national championship may be the best consolation prize for those fans. However, according to Garcia, the 2023 title is likely safe, even if a lengthy suspension is on the way for Moore.

"I don't think that the title is going to get stripped," Garcia said. "I don't think wins are going to get vacated. I think that Sherrone Moore may have to fall on the sword. He's accepted a two-game internal suspension to try to smooth things over. I don't think that's going to be enough. I think it might be something more like four games, possibly six. I might be a little surprised if it was six. Not that it's maybe not deserved for everything, but I just don't know if the NCAA really sort of hammers things like that."

While that punishment would increase the self-imposed suspension Moore is planning to serve, it's probably not the type of consequence most Buckeye fans are hoping for. According to Wasserman,

if there was truly damning evidence connecting Moore to the sign-stealing operation, the college football world would already be aware of it.

"Michigan is already self-imposing multiple-game suspensions and not because of what actually happened, but because of Sherrone Moore's behavior after the fact and the panic that he might have had in deleting messages they were able to read," Wasserman said. "I think that if those deleted messages that people have since read were as damning as people are thinking or hope they would be, then there would already be an issue here."



Sherrone Moore

Sign-Stealing Provided Some Advantages For U-M

Ever since news of Michigan's sign-stealing operation broke in 2023, players, former coaches, and plenty of analysts have given their opinion on what sort of impact the sign-stealing had on games. Former Ohio State and current Houston Texas tight end Cade Stover was convinced of the Wolverines' wrongdoings, referring to the Buckeyes' 45-23 loss to Michigan in 2022 when an unconventional tight end screen was sniffed out by the Maize and Blue defense.

"We tried to throw a tight end screen in a formation we've never used before, like ever," Stover told Texans reporters in September 2024. "As soon as I lined up out wide – we had one play where I was going to motion back in and they were going to throw a screen to me – when they start yelling screen, when you're throwing a tight end screen, that's when you know, like, what the f— is this? We never ran this before."

Shortly after news of the scandal broke in 2023, The Athletic's Bruce Feldman and Max Olson polled 50 head coaches about the severity of the allegations against Michigan. On a scale of 1 to 5, 39 of the 50 head coaches rated the scandal at least a 4 in terms of severity, and 23 of

the coaches rated the scandal a 5.

Comparoni and Garcia both agreed that the sign-stealing had to help the Wolverines in some way. Otherwise, it wouldn't have been worth the risk.

"I would say it impacted games far more than Michigan fans say and less than Ohio State fans say. It's going to be somewhere in the middle there," Garcia said. "I've sort of been of the belief (of) if it didn't matter at all, they wouldn't have done it. You wouldn't risk getting in trouble if there was genuinely nothing to gain, so I think they felt that it was going to help them, or at least whoever was in the know about this scandal felt it was going to help them."

Shortly after the news first broke of the scandal, the Wolverines' accomplishments were put into question by those wondering how much the program's success had to do with cheating. Those questions were only amplified when it was reported in October of 2023 that TCU was made aware of the Wolverines' sign-stealing before their 2022 CFP semifinal matchup, a game the Horned Frogs won 51-45.

Michigan didn't slow down once opponents were made aware of the sign-stealing during the 2023 season, though. Instead, it rattled off wins over nationally ranked foes such as Penn State, Ohio State and Iowa before defeating Alabama and Washington in the College Football Playoff to claim the national championship.

According to Wasserman, the Wolverines' dominant close to the 2023 season is enough evidence to show the team's success during the 2021 and 2022 seasons wasn't completely a product of the sign-stealing.

"Did they win because of the sign-stealing? I think it's pretty clear that (the answer is) probably not, as a result of all the teams they beat after people knew this was happening," Wasserman said. "All of those teams had ample opportunity to change signs or mitigate the risk of that exposure when they played, and they still lost."

Like Wasserman, Garcia still views a Wolverine team that featured eventual first-round picks such as quarterback J.J. McCarthy, tight end Colston Loveland and defensive tackles Kenneth Grant and Mason Graham as one of the best teams, if not the best, in college football during the 2023 season.

"The only team that might have a claim to be at their level is Georgia, and they did not make the CFP, so we never got to see that matchup," Garcia said. "But there's no doubt that Michigan did not win the national championship just because they stole signs. That's not fair,"

Regardless of the thoughts of Garcia and Wasserman, there are plenty of college football fans, especially those in Columbus, who view the Wolverines' 2023 title as tainted. And Wasserman doesn't see those skeptics changing their tune anytime soon.

"I think to a certain extent programs like Michigan, Ohio State, Texas A&M, Texas and Alabama are not liked nationally just because of the success and statuses of the programs, so fans remember it the way that most is advantageous to their viewpoint, and that is that Michigan cheated," Wasserman said. "If you see Michigan fans online or in chats or forums talking about their national championship that year, the No. 1 response that you're going to see from that is that they cheated, so I think that (criticism) will stay with it for sure."

"What they actually did from a personnel standpoint and a coaching standpoint was pretty remarkable, being a team that was able to break through without signing top-three classes for five consecutive years and actually win a national championship in an era in which the teams that dominated usually recruited at a higher clip. But anyone who doesn't like Michigan is going to call them cheaters, and everybody who loves Michigan is going to call them champions, and that's just the way it's always going to be."



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Howard And Sawyer Steel Themselves For NFL

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It's hard for many early-round draft picks to make an impact in their first NFL seasons. It's usually even more difficult for those selected later.

Former Ohio State players Will Howard and Jack Sawyer hope to buck the trend as rookies with the Pittsburgh Steelers. Each finds himself in the unusual role of being down on the depth charts at their respective quarterback and linebacker positions.

Even though Sawyer was tabbed in the fourth round (No. 123) and Howard went in the sixth (No. 185), the Steelers see both as projects.

Howard is in the most interesting situation because of Pittsburgh's courting of Aaron Rodgers. Rodgers remained unsigned as BSB went to print but has long been linked to the Steelers after they jettisoned last season's QBs, former Buckeye Justin Fields and Russell Wilson.

There are also reports that the Steelers may trade for Atlanta's Kirk Cousins if Rodgers opts not to sign. As of now, veteran Mason Rudolph is the starter with Howard and Skylar Thompson, a former teammate at Kansas State, vying for the backup spot.

Sawyer's path seems more defined. He is expected to be the fourth outside linebacker behind T.J. Watt, Alex Highsmith

and Nick Herbig.

No matter how much or how little Sawyer plays in 2025, he's in a perfect spot to learn, according to Ray Fittipaldo of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

"What better situation to be in as a rookie than what Jack has?" he said on 97.1 The Fan in Columbus. "A lot of Big Ten guys, T.J. from Wisconsin, Cam (Howard) of course, from Ohio State. I'm sure they're going to hit it off really well. The Steelers didn't have a great need at edge rusher, but they couldn't pass him up because they had such a high grade on him at that point in the fourth round. The people in the Steelers' building thought he was a second- or third-round pick. Jack's going to get in where he fits in. He'll probably play 10-15 snaps a game. I think the future is bright down the road."

Jake Brockhoff of Steelersdepot.com said, "Sawyer is probably the only player from their 2025 class that could be considered a luxury pick, since he won't be able to make as much of an immediate impact."

Howard, too, may also be sitting more than playing in the opinion of Mark Kaboly, the Steelers correspondent for "The Pat McAfee Show."

"If he's in the game this year, you might be getting your top-10 pick," Kaboly said on the "Kaboly + Mack" podcast.

He went on to say it was not a shot at



SONNY BROCKWAY

WAITING GAME — Former Ohio State quarterback Will Howard may see limited playing time with the Pittsburgh Steelers, but that could depend on the ongoing saga surrounding the possible signing of Aaron Rodgers.

Howard as much as a realistic view of a rookie quarterback, especially with the way the Steelers rushed former QB Kenny Pickett.

"That's nothing against (Howard)," Kaboly said. "That's just the fact that he's a sixth-round pick and he's not ready. And he's not going to be ready. Maybe next year at this time we can have this conversation."

With Pittsburgh seemingly hell-bent on starting a veteran other than Rudolph, Howard may be given time to develop.

Will Power

The Steelers see a winner in Howard. In four seasons at Kansas State, he completed 58.8 percent of his passes for 5,786 yards and 48 touchdowns and 25 interceptions.

For the Buckeyes, he set a season program record by completing 73.0 percent of his passes and throwing for 4,010 yards and 35 touchdowns against 10 picks.

But it was his performances in the four playoff games that drew attention, completing 75.2 percent for 1,150 yards with eight TDs and two interceptions in helping the Buckeyes win the College Football Playoff championship.

James Palmer of Bleacher Report said Howard has been compared to Jalen Hurts of the Super Bowl champion Philadelphia Eagles.

"Will Howard has some traits that some people really, really liked in this draft," he said. "Big (6-4, 236), strong, athletic guy. There was one comment that I thought was interesting. Somebody compared him, when I was talking in the draft process, to Jalen Hurts, just kind of in terms of the physicality and the size he can run with. I think Hurts is a better athlete out in space, but I just thought that was interesting that somebody brought that up."

Others such as former NFL coach Jon Gruden see Howard more in line with 2024 NFL MVP Josh Allen of the Buffalo Bills.

While that is all flattering for Howard, longtime Post-Gazette reporter Gerry Dulac thinks Steelers coach Mike Tomlin will be cautious in bringing him along.

"I don't think they have any designs on letting a sixth-round rookie compete for the starting job this year," Dulac said. "That is not the plan."

Howard and Sawyer attended the Steelers' rookie mini-camp from May 9 to 11 and the organized team activities (OTA) from May 27 to June 5, when they were integrated with veteran players for voluntary, noncontact practices as a precursor to training camp beginning in late July.

"First day was a work in progress," Howard said of the OTAs. "I didn't feel great about my first day, just coming off the field. But it was a good learning experience



SONNY BROCKWAY

PITT STOP — Jack Sawyer, drafted in the fourth round by Pittsburgh out of Ohio State, seems like a perfect fit for the Steelers' smash-mouth defense.

for me. I wasn't expecting to be perfect on my first day. I'm not going to be perfect. That's the thing. You've got to learn.

"Especially me being young, you've got to be able to roll with the punches and know that you're going to make some mistakes, especially being a rookie. It's how you learn from it, come back from it, and don't get affected by that. The second I mess up and then get in my head and shut down, that's when problems happen. I felt like day one just wasn't really comfortable yet, didn't really know where my feet were, was a little off timing. And then day two and three, I think I've been a lot better."

Howard immediately noticed a difference between college and the NFL.

"It's the speed of the game, the disguises the defense shows," he said. "It all happens a little faster. It has slowed down over the course of the last three days, but you've just got to continue to keep working and get used to this level of football and the speed of football."

"I feel like I played at the highest level of college and I have a good foundation, but nothing compares to this."

"I knew it would be a challenge. It's nothing I didn't expect. Everything is a challenge, and everything is a job now. You're fighting for a job. Everything gets a little more serious. It's cool to be doing this for a living. I still have to pinch myself every day."

Rudolph, who started 13 games for the Steelers over four seasons before making five starts for the Tennessee Titans in 2024, likes what he sees of Howard, who, as a Pennsylvania native, has quickly become a favorite of Steelers fans.

"He's been great," Rudolph said. "He's a nice guy, first of all. He's a good guy to share the (quarterback) room with. He's a big kid, athletic, throws the ball well. He's got a lot of tools, and I'm excited to go to work with him."

While Howard wants to contribute as soon as possible, he knows he's where he wants to be.

"As the draft went on, you never know where you're going to end up, but you keep a little spot in your heart for where you really want to go, and I had a little soft spot for Pittsburgh," he said. "I was hoping in my heart that they picked me."

Made For This

It's been said that Sawyer (6-4, 260), who grew up in the Columbus suburb of Pickerington, was born to be a Buckeye, and his 83-yard sack, scoop and score to seal the CFP semifinal win over Texas is already part of OSU lore.

With his hard-nosed, take-no-crap mentality, he seems to be a perfect fit for the blue-collar approach of the Steelers.

Daniel Jeremiah of the NFL Network sees it.

"Pittsburgh knows what they like and what fits, not only for their team, their organization, but inside their division," he said. "This is a bully division. We talk about it all the time, and that's his game. It's physical. He'll rag-doll tight ends at the point of attack as a rusher. It's a lot of power. He's going to get to your chest as soon as he can. He's going to try and run right through you."

"The hands, you saw this with the walk-off. This was a game-winner against Texas."

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 (13-37, 5-25)

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, canceled.

May 3 MICHIGAN, L 23-1 (7 inn.); 4 MICHIGAN, Game 1, L 11-4; Game 2, L 13-3 (8 inn.); 6 OHIO, canceled; 9-11 at Northwestern, L 12-2 (7 inn.); W 11-6; L 17-2 (7 inn.); 13 BUTLER, canceled; 15-17 ILLINOIS, L 4-3; L 18-9; W 11-10 (10 inn.).

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 Meyo Invite at South Bend,

Ind.; Texas Tech Invite at Lubbock, Texas, NTS.

Feb. 1 Notre Dame Meyo 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, NTS; 16-18 Big Ten Outdoor Championships at Eugene, Ore., NTS; 28-31 NCAA East Prelims at Jacksonville, Fla., NTS

June 11-14 NCAA Championships at Eugene, Ore.

Gets the sack, gets him scooping and scoring as well. He just looks like a Pittsburgh Steeler. They have a type."

Jeremiah's cohort on NFL Network, Charles Davis, agrees, "It's absolutely perfect. The outside linebackers are the engine that drives their defense, and they're always fortifying it. Alex Highsmith on one side, T.J. Watt on the other. Nick Herbig has come in and played well for them. They were looking for more people. Jack Sawyer fits perfectly for what they're going to do."

Shortly after the draft, Tomlin praised his latest addition to the defense.

"Love Jack Sawyer," he said. "It's easy not only in terms of his résumé, but his relationship with the game, his approach to football business, how he's viewed and received by his teammates. As (general manager) Omar (Khan) mentioned, a lot of these guys represent Steelers DNA, and I think that's really indicative of Jack Sawyer."

Football is Sawyer.

"My relationship with the game, honestly, I love it," said Sawyer. "I just love football. Ever since I was a little kid, my dad will tell you the only thing I wanted to do was play football. I used to beg him to let me play when I was too young to sign up for the Pickerington Youth League in Ohio. Finally, he signed me up and ever since then, I have loved the game of football."

"I can't even put into words what it's been able to do for my life. I love the game. I always want to be around football. A lot of guys use football to help their lifestyle. I just love the game. I love to play, and I love to compete."

Sawyer said the key to his success is devouring everything he can about his position.

"Being a student of the game is something I take a lot of pride in. I try my very best to learn and study the opponent before games," he said. "It's something that I'm still going to try and excel at and even

get better at and hopefully learn from guys like T.J. Watt, Nick Herbig and Alex Highsmith."

Speaking of Highsmith, the veteran needed only a few days of OTAs to rave about Sawyer.

"He's going to be a dog for us," he said. "He's got his right head on his shoulders,

and he works hard. Like I said, he's got the right mindset. It's been cool being able to interact with him and help him out. I came in as a rookie, and T.J. and Bud (Dupree) helped me out a lot, as well. That's one thing I want to be able to pour into the new guys that are coming in."

Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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BUCKEYE GAMEDAY Memories: A new book of short stories about humorous gameday experiences in the 1960s through the 2010s by Tim Sullivan. Available on Amazon.com.

FOR SALE: OSU football programs including bowl games, national playoff and championship games. OSU basketball programs, NFL programs, golf, Olympics, NBA, other print sports memorabilia. Call John at (330) 507-7339.

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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2025 SCHEDULE

| MARCH/APRIL | | | | | | |
|--|-----|--------------------|--------------------|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
| APRIL 1st HOME OPENING NIGHT Tansky Tuesday "Dime-A-Dog" Night #1 | | | | | 28 @TOL 4:05 | 29 @TOL 4:05 |
| 30 @TOL 2:05 | 31 | 1 STP 6:15 | 2 STP 6:15 | 3 STP 6:15 | 4 STP 6:15 | 5 STP 4:05 |
| 6 STP 1:05 | 7 | 8 @WOR 6:05 | 9 @WOR 6:05 | 10 @WOR 6:05 | 11 @WOR 6:05 | 12 @WOR 4:05 |
| 13 @WOR 1:05 | 14 | 15 LOU 6:15 | 16 LOU 6:15 | 17 LOU 12:05 | 18 LOU 6:15 | 19 LOU 4:05 |
| 20 LOU 1:05 | 21 | 22 @LHV 6:45 | 23 @LHV 6:45 | 24 @LHV 6:45 | 25 @LHV 7:05 | 26 @LHV 6:35 |
| 27 @LHV 1:35 | 28 | 29 STP 6:15 | 30 STP 6:35 | Dollar Day Menu Wednesday Night Games | | |

| MAY | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
| Purchase 2025 Season Seats 20 Games 37 Games Full Season | | | | 1 STP 12:05 | 2 STP 6:15 | 3 STP 4:05 |
| 4 STP 1:05 | 5 | 6 @IND 6:35 | 7 @IND 1:35 | 8 @IND 11:05 | 9 @IND 7:05 | 10 @IND 6:35 |
| 11 @IND 1:35 | 12 | 13 @OMA 7:35 | 14 @OMA 7:35 | 15 @OMA 7:35 | 16 @OMA 8:05 | 17 @OMA 8:05 |
| 18 @OMA 3:05 | 19 | 20 IOW 7:05 | 21 IOW 12:05 | 22 IOW 12:05 | 23 IOW 7:05 | 24 IOW 7:05 |
| 25 IOW 1:05 | 26 @ROC 4:05 | 27 | 28 @ROC 11:05 | 29 @ROC 6:45 | 30 @ROC 6:45 | 31 @ROC 6:45 |

| JUNE | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
| 1 @ROC 1:05 | 2 | 3 TOL 7:05 | 4 TOL 7:05 | 5 TOL 7:05 | 6 TOL 7:05 | 7 TOL 7:05 |
| 8 TOL 1:05 | 9 | 10 @BUF 6:35 | 11 @BUF 6:35 | 12 @BUF 6:35 | 13 @BUF 6:35 | 14 @BUF 6:35 |
| 15 @BUF 1:05 | 16 | 17 IND 7:05 | 18 IND 7:05 | 19 IND 12:05 | 20 IND 7:05 | 21 IND 7:05 |
| 22 IND 1:05 | 23 | 24 @IOW 7:38 | 25 @IOW 1:08 | 26 @IOW 7:38 | 27 @IOW 8:08 | 28 @IOW 7:08 |
| 29 @IOW 2:08 | 30 | \$5 Fridays Pizza Slice & Small Pepsi, Small Draft Beer, or Wine \$5 for all Bleacher, Lawn, and SRO Tickets | | | | |

| JULY | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
| 6 TOL 1:05 | 7 | 1 @TOL 7:05 | 2 @TOL 7:05 | 3 @TOL 7:05 | 4 TOL 4:05 | 5 TOL 7:05 |
| 13 LOU 1:05 | 14 | 8 LOU 7:05 | 9 LOU 7:05 | 10 LOU 12:05 | 11 LOU 7:05 | 12 LOU 7:05 |
| 20 @IOW 2:08 | 21 | 22 BUF 7:05 | 23 BUF 7:05 | 24 BUF 12:05 | 25 BUF 6:35 | 26 BUF 7:05 |
| 27 BUF 1:05 | 28 | 29 @JAX 7:05 | 30 @JAX 7:05 | 31 @JAX 7:05 | | |

| AUGUST | | | | | | |
|--|-----|--|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
| Post-Game Fun Run Sunday Home Games | | | | | 1 @JAX 7:05 | 2 @JAX 6:35 |
| 3 @JAX 5:05 | 4 | 5 GWN 7:05 | 6 GWN 7:05 | 7 GWN 7:05 | 8 GWN 7:05 | 9 GWN 7:05 |
| 10 GWN 1:05 | 11 | 12 @TOL 6:35 | 13 @TOL 6:35 | 14 @TOL 6:35 | 15 @TOL 7:05 | 16 @TOL 7:05 |
| 17 @TOL 2:05 | 18 | 19 OMA 6:15 | 20 OMA 6:15 | 21 OMA 12:05 | 22 OMA 7:05 | 23 OMA 5:05 |
| 24 OMA 1:05 | 25 | 26 @LOU 6:35 | 27 @LOU 12:05 | 28 @LOU 6:35 | 29 @LOU 7:15 | 30 @LOU 7:15 |
| 31 @LOU 6:05 | | Thirsty Thursdays Beverage Specials, Thursday Games | | | | |

| SEPTEMBER | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
| 7 IND 1:05 | 8 | 2 IND 6:15 | 3 IND 6:15 | 4 IND 6:35 | 5 IND 7:05 | 6 IND 7:05 |
| 14 @STP 3:07 | 15 | 9 @STP 7:37 | 10 @STP 7:37 | 11 @STP 7:37 | 12 @STP 7:37 | 13 @STP 6:07 |
| 21 OMA 1:05 | 22 | 16 OMA 6:15 | 17 OMA 6:15 | 18 OMA 6:15 | 19 OMA 7:05 | 20 OMA 5:05 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | | | | |

2025 PROMOTIONAL SCHEDULE

- TUE.** "TANSKY TUESDAY DIME-A-DOG" NIGHTS
- 4/1, 4/15, 4/29, 5/20, 6/3, 6/17, 7/8, 7/22, 8/5, 8/19, 9/2, & 9/16
- WED.** "MILITARY & FIRST RESPONDERS" GAMES
- 50% off all available tickets (max of 4) for active & retired Military & First Responders
"DOLLAR DAYS" - \$1 select concession items
"STUDENT ID NIGHT"
- Students 14 and above can present a valid ID and for \$5 receive a Reserved Seat ticket
- THU.** "COPA DE LA DIVERSIÓN"
- Clippers transform into Los Veleros on Thursday Nights
"THIRSTY THURSDAYS"
- Beverage Specials on Beer, Margaritas & Soft Drinks
"STUDENT ID NIGHT"
- FRI.** "\$5 FRIDAYS"
- \$5 for all Bleacher, Lawn, and SRO Tickets
- \$5 for a slice of Donatos Pizza & a Small Pepsi
- \$5 for Beers (small) & Wine
"STUDENT ID NIGHT"
- SAT.** "GAMEDAY PROMOTIONS"
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Egbuka Earns Praise Ahead Of Rookie Season

By CAMERON MOONE
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Being the most recent member of a storied lineage of Ohio State wide receivers-turned first round selections in the NFL draft, Emeka Egbuka could have easily fallen back on an already high billing and coasted through his first professional preseason.

Instead, he already finds himself at the forefront of a talented pass-catching unit with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Selected with the No. 19 pick in April by the reigning NFC South champions, Egbuka joined a well-established wideout corps in 1,000-yard machine Mike Evans, Chris Godwin and Jalen McMillan.

But Egbuka's biggest skill set early on may not be his prowess on the field but rather his excellence in the mental and maturity game that professional football demands.

"(Egbuka) is just so tough and smart," first-year Buccaneers offensive coordinator Josh Grizzard said on May 20. "Coming from a winning program, coming from a great head coach and receivers coach, he just embodies everything we believe in here when it comes to being selfless, tough, disciplined and being able to play multiple positions."

The fifth Buckeye wide receiver taken in the first round in the last four drafts, Egbuka joined the likes of Garrett Wilson (2022, New York Jets), Chris Olave (2022, New Orleans Saints), Jaxon Smith-Njigba (2023, Seattle Seahawks) and Marvin Harrison Jr. (2024, Arizona Cardinals) on that prestigious list, and much like his predecessors, he has the chance the sit near the top of the depth chart by season's start. However, Egbuka's early praise from coaches and teammates doesn't arise from the same sort of tangible skills that the aforementioned athletes possess. Egbuka has made his name through something far less flashy: precision.

"He is a pro," McMillan said on May 27. "He is really serious about practice and just already knows damn near half the playbook. So I'm really excited for his growth and his future here."

Egbuka joins a Buccaneer squad still licking its wounds after a disappointing end to the 2024 season, falling to the Washington Commanders 23-20 in the Wild Card round at home on a last-second field goal. That marked the second time in the last three seasons Tampa Bay dropped a home playoff game. With Egbuka now fully in his first preseason he has the chance to reignite a team looking to return to the success found under Tom Brady at the turn of the decade.

That resurgence won't come without growing pains for Egbuka, though. Sitting behind Evans, who is chasing a 12th consecutive 1,000-yard season (which would be an NFL record), and McMillan, who put together an impressive rookie season himself with 461 yards and eight touchdowns, Egbuka likely sits at the third or fourth spot in the wide receiver room with Godwin returning from a season-ending dislocated left ankle in 2024.

Even with the top-heavy wide receiver unit that resides in central Florida, the Steilacoom, Wash., native had Tampa Bay



FILE PHOTO

QUITE A CATCH — Emeka Egbuka of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers is eager to continue the tradition of standout Ohio State receivers in the NFL after completing his four-year career for the Buckeyes with a national championship as well as becoming the program's all-time leader in receptions (205).

intrigued from the start of the draft process and was praised on day one.

"It's always a good day when you pick your first-round pick and you are introducing him the next day and you feel so rock solid about the person and the player," Buccaneers GM Jason Licht said on April 25. "A lot of teams wanted him. I'm glad we didn't try to get cute and move back and get other picks because we wouldn't have ended up with (Egbuka)."

It wasn't just the front office offering praise for the rookie receiver. His new head coach, Todd Bowles, called drafting Egbuka an "easy choice."

"Egbuka is the total package," Bowles said. "He's a playmaker, can play all three positions, the slot, the Z, the X, can run with the ball, throw the ball, catch the ball. He's a very good route runner. He's a winner, makes contested catches, and is a very precise route runner. He has a lot of speed, he blocks and he checks all the boxes as a player and as a person."

So far throughout organized team activities, Egbuka has flashed his potential with smooth route running and surefire catches being featured on social media posts from the Buccaneers.

For Egbuka, the chance to play in the NFL is another way to convey the cerebral style that he possesses.

"Being super competitive has always been something that I've been really fond of," Egbuka said. "I like to pride myself on being the smartest player on the field because I know it's going to carry me a long way."

It wasn't necessarily an easy road to the NFL for the five-star recruit. Finishing his freshman season at Ohio State with just nine catches for 191 yards, he exploded

onto the college football scene as a sophomore with 74 catches, 1,151 yards and 10 touchdowns. Egbuka had a down junior season as he struggled with an ankle injury that caused him to miss three games and haul in an uncharacteristic 41 receptions for 515 yards and four scores. But it proved to be a precursor to a senior season that solidified him as a first-round pick.

Hauling in 81 catches for 1,011 yards and 10 touchdowns all while becoming the career leader at Ohio State in receptions with 205, Egbuka's selfless yet efficient play

throughout last season — efforts that helped earn a national championship — has paved the way for his early professional success, according to the Bucs' GM.

"He fits right in," Licht said of Egbuka entering the veteran position room in Tampa Bay. "He had a unique group at Ohio State, which is the same thing. It didn't really matter how many there were. They are all going to compete and cheer each other on, and they're all hoping for the best for each of them."

"I see it being the same here. He's going to add to the locker room. Todd (Bowles) and I want to bring in players that add to the culture, and he does."

An added bonus of entering a wide receiver group with years of experience is the chance to learn and be mentored by several skill players who have more than earned their spots on the 53-man roster. Already being compared to Godwin by several NFL draft analysts, Egbuka has the opportunity to fill in for the hampered veteran while learning from him at the same time.

"The kind of character (Godwin) has, from high IQ to high work ethic, that's something I strive to be in the NFL," Egbuka said. "I strive for a career like he's had. Being able to learn underneath him, I'm just excited to establish that relationship."

As the offseason rolls on and Egbuka continues to vie for a starting spot on the field for the Bucs' first game against the Atlanta Falcons on Sept. 7, it all ties back to the experiences and skills he gathered while playing for Ohio State, a place where he was able to master his craft before even stepping into a professional setting.

"We have a certain standard at Ohio State, especially in the wide receiver room, that we are going to uphold year in and year out," Egbuka said. "It just felt like my duty and obligation to be able to do what I did throughout my career."

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FB White, Star Of '57 Title Team, Dies At 86

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Nearly every Ohio State national championship season has featured a pivotal game during which a player forever etches his name into Buckeye lore with a once-in-a-lifetime moment.

Think Jack Sawyer's scoop-and-score against Texas this past January. Craig Krenzel's fourth-down touchdown pass to Michael Jenkins to beat Purdue in 2002. All-America cornerback Ted Provost heaving the ball into the stands following his 34-yard interception return for a touchdown to ignite a 13-0 victory against the top-ranked Boilermakers in 1968.

Bob White made the same kind of impact during a 1957 game against fifth-ranked Iowa – except for the Ohio State fullback, who died May 7 at the age of 86, it was a series of plays that broke the will of the previously undefeated Hawkeyes and helped propel the Buckeyes to the United Press and Football Writers Association of America's versions of the national championship.

"At the time, and for a long time afterward, it was one of the best remembered performances in all of Ohio State history," longtime OSU football historian Jack Park told BSB. "It was one of those games where no one wanted to leave after it was over."

Iowa invaded Columbus on Nov. 16, 1957, as a six-point favorite to defeat the sixth-ranked Buckeyes in a game that would decide the Big Ten championship in front of a then-record Ohio Stadium crowd of 82,935 which included U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon.

The game was a seesaw affair that had the lead change hands three times before the Hawkeyes seized a 13-10 advantage in the third quarter.

With just 7:51 remaining in the game,

Ohio State took possession at its own 32-yard line and proceeded to ride White's back to victory. The sophomore fullback got things started with a 4-yard plunge over right tackle before going over left tackle for 9 yards and a first down. White next broke through over right guard and wasn't pulled down until he had tacked on another 29 yards and moved the ball to the Iowa 26.

With the crowd on its feet and the noise level deafening, halfback Dick LeBeau ran for 2 yards before White returned for gains of 6, 10 and 3 yards. The final carry in the series for White was a 5-yard touchdown burst over left tackle with 3:58 remaining in the game.

On the eight-play, 68-yard scoring drive, White carried seven times for 66 of the yards to give the Buckeyes an eventual 17-13 win.

After the game, legendary Iowa head coach Forest Evashevski gave credit to White, saying, "We saw what was happening, knew how it was happening, yet we were powerless to stop it. It was like a bad dream. One boy, seven out of eight plays on a 68-yard touchdown drive? I never expect to see it again."

Nixon simply added, "That was the greatest game I ever saw."

On the 50th anniversary of the game, White remembered his heroics as simply the product of Woody Hayes' tried-and-true offensive philosophy of three yards and a cloud of dust.

"I just happened to be the healthy back at the right time," White told BSB in 2007. "Woody always believed that if the play goes well, we'd run it again and run it until they stopped it. That's kind of what happened."

White began the 1957 season behind senior co-captain Galen Cisco at fullback and had just 35 rushing attempts for 230 yards in OSU's first seven games. But in the two weeks leading up to the Iowa game, the sophomore had started to get the ball more – he ran for a combined 137 yards in wins against Northwestern and Purdue – but never imagined he would be focal point of the Buckeyes' offense against Iowa.

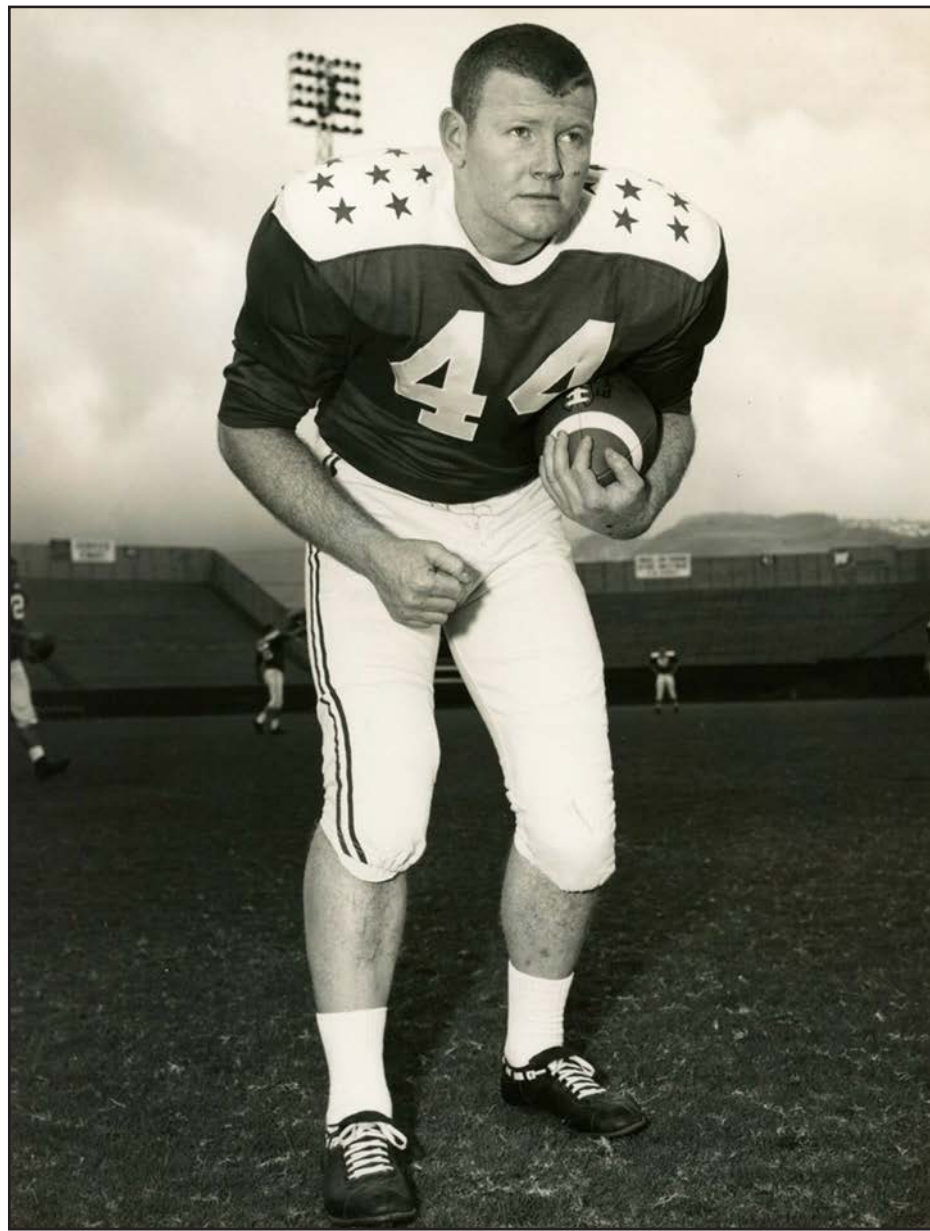
With starting halfback Don Clark unable to play against the Hawkeyes because of an injury sustained against Purdue the week before, White became Woody's workhorse. The 6-2, 207-pound fullback seemed to grow stronger with each carry, finishing with 157 yards, including 119 after halftime.

Overshadowed by what he did with the ball that day was his performance on defense. Unofficially, he had 13 solo tackles from his linebacker position.

"Nobody's ever talked about that," White said with a smile.

Loren Robert White was born Aug. 22, 1938, in Portsmouth, Ohio, but went to high school in Covington, Ky., where he was recruited by Hayes to play at Ohio State. During his career with the Buckeyes, he was named three times to the Academic All-Big Ten team and earned Academic All-America honors in 1958.

On the field, he was a member of the All-



FILE PHOTO

CARRYING THE LOAD — Bob White, who died May 7 at the age of 86, is best remembered for rushing seven times on the eight-play, go-ahead drive against Iowa that gave Ohio State the 1957 Big Ten championship. He was an All-American the next season.

Big Ten first team in 1958, the same year he was a consensus first-team All-American. When White finished his Ohio State career, his 1,816 yards topped the program's all-time rushing list.

Injuries limited him during his senior year, and White fell to the eighth round of the 1960 NFL draft. He spurned what he considered a lowball offer from the Cleveland Browns and instead signed with the Houston Oilers of the upstart American Football League. He played only six games for the Oilers but got to celebrate an AFL championship in the league's inaugural season.

A few days after the title game, White reported for active duty in the U.S. Army, leaving his playing days behind for good.

"It was a different game," he said. "I didn't really enjoy pro football, but besides that, I had a military obligation."

White was initially stationed at Fort Knox, Ky., as an armor officer and later joined the 100th Division for Institutional Training out of Louisville. The unit was sent to Fort Chaffee, Ark., to administer basic training to new soldiers during the Berlin Wall Crisis. When White completed

his military duty, he had no desire to return to professional football.

"I had had my fill of it, and I was ready to start teaching and coaching," he said.

White went back to his old high school, Covington Holmes, to teach industrial arts. After a few years as an assistant football coach at the school, he took over as head coach, a position he held for eight years.

During that time, he earned his master's degree from Xavier University, eventually leaving Holmes to become director of admissions at Cedarville (Ohio) College. He spent seven years as an administrator there and continued to further his own education, earning a Ph.D. from Miami (Ohio) University.

White then returned to the high school ranks as the head coach of Wilmington (Ohio) High School, where he spent eight years on the sideline. He remained at the school as a teacher until he retired. He settled in Venice, Fla., with his wife of 67 years, Glenda, his high school sweetheart who survives him.



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212 Ohio State Student-Athletes Receive Degrees

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State athletics was well represented during the university's spring commencement held at Ohio Stadium on May 4, with 212 current and former student-athletes obtaining degrees.

The rowing team led all programs with 16 graduates, while Ryan Day's national championship-winning football squad, Nick Myers' Big Ten-winning men's lacrosse team and the women's lacrosse program led by Amanda Moore followed with 14 graduates each. Day's team, which became the only FBS program to post perfect Academic Progress Rate (APR) multiyear scores of 1,000, had a list of graduates highlighted by 2025 NFL draft picks JT Tuimoloau (communication) and Jordan Hancock (human development and family sciences) as well as current players Carson Hinzman (sport industry) and Lorenzo Styles Jr. (family resource management).

Styles, who is projected to start in Ohio State's secondary this year, also had the honor of graduating alongside his father, former Ohio State linebacker Lorenzo Styles Sr., who earned a degree in physical education as part of the school's degree completion program.

Other notable graduates this spring include former men's basketball guard William Buford (African American studies), former men's hockey player and future Edmonton Oilers defenseman Damien Carfagna (sport industry), two-time Big Ten champion cross country runner Addie Engel (health sciences), women's basketball players Madison Greene (kinesiology) and Eboni Walker (federal policy and management) and field hockey and women's hockey standout Makenna Webster (kinesiology).

The complete list of graduates is below.

Baseball - William Carpenter, child and youth studies; Zachary Freeman, diversity, equity & inclusion; Nicolas Giamarusti, consumer and family financial services; Jaylen Jones, sport industry; Nathan Karaffa, human development & family science; Trey Lipsey, communication; Ryan Miller, logistics management; Tyler Pettorini, communication.

Men's Basketball - William Buford, African American and African studies; Kalen Etzler, marketing.

Women's Basketball - Madison Greene, master's in kinesiology; Kaia Henderson, communication; Eboni Walker, human resource management.

Cheer - William Bertsch, master's in sports coaching; Claire Conley, health sciences; Isabel Crouch, communication; Sean Henderson, history; Marley Hosier, visual communication design; Karsyn Reader, health sciences; Brooke Shields, master's in kinesiology; Mason Straker, agricultural systems management; Will Young, construction systems management; Madison Yuzwa, pharmaceutical sciences.

Men's Cross Country - Kevin Agnew, electrical and computer engineering; Keegan Freyhof, electrical and computer engineering; Zubin Jha, computer science & engineering; Kaleb Martin, mechanical engineering; Alexander Kenish, communication.

Women's Cross Country - Emma Bucher, early childhood education; Chloe Dawson, environmental science; Adeline Engel, health sciences; Amelia Figler, master's in history; Andrea Kuhn, master's in statistics; Carina Napoleon, speech and hearing science.



SONNY BROCKWAY

CAPPING A CAREER — Defensive end JT Tuimoloau was among the 212 current and former Ohio State athletes receiving their degrees at the spring commencement in Ohio Stadium on May 4. He was a communication major.

Dance - Macie Blacklidge, exercise science; Diana Natalicchio, psychology; Julia Paslawski, finance; Elizabeth Wagner, communication.

Men's Diving - Clayton Chaplin, psychology; Hunter Grannum, finance.

Men's Fencing - Kinley Lavenstein, psychology; Wesley Lee, marketing; Paul Veltrup, psychology; Justin Vogler, computer science & engineering; Miles Weiss, environment, economy, development & sustainability.

Women's Fencing - Miranda Freedman, psychology; Claire Galavotti, psychology; Katherine Larimer, English; Alina Lee, finance; Yeva Mazur, psychology; Daria Myroniuk, psychology; Eleonore Perrier, finance; Talia Weiss, operations management; Lucy Whittemore, sport industry.

Field Hockey - Hallie Brost, health sciences; Cam Forgash, health sciences; Erin Little, biology; Kari Melberger, master's in consumer sciences; Sarah Richards, master's in kinesiology; Claudia Thomas, marketing; Maya Walker, master's in kinesiology; Makenna Webster, master's in kinesiology; Olivia Zettervall, communication.

Football - Bennett Christian, communication; Jordan Hancock, human development & family science; Zak Edward Herbstreit, sport industry; Carson Hinzman, sport industry; Cameron Kittle, construction systems management; William Mitchell, finance; Jalen Pace, sport industry; Austin Snyder, sport industry; Reid Stockdale, sport industry; Lorenzo Styles Jr., consumer and family financial services; Lorenzo Styles Sr., physical education; JT Tuimoloau, communication; Kourt Williams, journalism; Miyan Williams, human development & family science.

Men's Golf - Tyler Groomes, finance; Jacob Tarkany, finance.

Women's Golf - Faith Choi, sport industry.

Men's Gymnastics - Arthur Ashton, biochemistry; Kameron Nelson, communication;

Tyler Rockwood, finance.

Women's Gymnastics - Elexis Edwards, master's in kinesiology; Kaitlyn Grimes, sport industry; Jenna Hlavach, early childhood education; Tory Vetter, health sciences; Joselyn Warga, diversity, equity & inclusion.

Men's Ice Hockey - Damien Carfagna, sport industry; Patrick Guzzo, diversity, equity & inclusion; Brent Johnson, consumer and family financial services; John Larkin, accounting; Thomas Parran, master's in public administration.

Women's Ice Hockey - Riley Bregman, master's in sports coaching; Jenna Buglioni, master's in kinesiology; Lexington Secreto, human development & family science; Kiara Zanon, master's in kinesiology.

Men's Lacrosse - Ari Allen, communication; Henry Blake, finance; Dante Bowen, marketing; Mason Bregman, graduate certificate in public management; Samuel Faber, master's in immunology and microbial pathogenesis; Taji Flynn, marketing; Braden Glushakow, graduate certificate in public management; Gregory Langermeier, real estate and urban analysis; Alexander Marinier, finance; Matthew Mercer, finance; Shane O'Leary, graduate certificate in public management; Edward Shean, finance; Griffin Turner, specialized master's in business administration & finance; Robert Van Buren, sport industry.

Women's Lacrosse - Brynn Ammerman, health sciences; Madeline Barhorst, communication; Kate Chisholm, fashion and retail studies; Isabella Cleveland, economics; Mackenzie Fitzgerald, political science; Antoinette Hargraves, sport industry; Amani Kimball-McKavish, marketing; Margaret Lawler, communication; Emily Magalotti, sport industry; Sophia Patton, sport industry; Whitney Robinson, finance; Lilli Sherman, sport industry; Annika Spoor, finance; Stella Wineman, international studies.

Mascot - Emily Hayward, biomedical engineering; Charles Huth, civil engineering.

Pistol - Panagiota Charalampous, sport industry; Jack Leverett, computer and information science; Emily Nothnagle, master's in social work.

Rifle - Eva Horgan, accounting; Derek Keiser, finance; Nathan Wehrlen, hospitality management.

Rowing - Taylor Benedict, medical anthropology; Eloise Brindle, anthropological sciences; Eliana Bujwalo-Nowak, mechanical engineering; Niamh Coffey, master's in kinesiology; Emma Hall, human resources; Leandra Hogrefe, physics; Kira Katterle, master's in kinesiology; Emily Koziol, speech and hearing science; Erika Linton, mechanical engineering; Annetta Kyridou, exercise science; Regan McElwee, political science/philosophy; Morgan Miller, master's in kinesiology; Megan O'Connor, public management, leadership & policy; Natalie Rarick, earth sciences; Paige Wheeler, biochemistry; Carlotta Wolff, fashion and retail studies.

Men's Soccer - Thomas Gilej, Specialized Master Bus-Fin; Tommaso Villa, economics.

Women's Soccer - Tatum Adamson, biology; Sydney Browning, human nutrition.

Softball - Kaitlyn Farley, human development & family science; Morgan Frye, environmental assessment; Kennedy Kay, human development & family science; Kami Kortokrax, communication; Reagan Milliken, master's in kinesiology; Allison Smith, master's in biomedical engineering.

Men's Swimming - William Bansberg, exercise science; Servaas Fick, finance; Karl Helmuth, actuarial sciences; Nathan Holty, astronomy; Mario McDonald, master's in kinesiology; Patrik Metzler, economics; Ian Mikesell, master's in mechanical engineering; Christopher Paxton, aerospace engineering.

Women's Swimming - Reese Dehen, biology; Mackenzie DeWitt, speech and hearing science; Allison Fenska, exercise science; Nyah Funderburke, communication; Paige Hall, biology; Teresa Ivan, health sciences; Tia Lindsay, geographic information science & technology; Mairin O'Brien, health sciences; Mia Rankin, philosophy; Gwenth Woodbury, biology.

Synchronized Swimming - Marian Catahan, health sciences; Hannah Heffernan, communication; Elizabeth Hernandez, master's in social work.

Men's Tennis - Reece Yakubov, biology.

Women's Tennis - Shelly Bereznyak, accounting; Sydni Ratliff, communication; Danielle Schoenly, operations management.

Men's Track - Luke Bendick, Slavic, East European and Eurasian studies; Nazzio John, human development & family science; Tanner Watson, master's in social work.

Women's Track - Faith Bender, human development & family science; Leah Bertrand, health sciences; Morgan Fijalkowski, health sciences; Faith Hunter, sport industry; Zamesha Myle, sport industry; Amara Okpalaoka, statistics; Atinuke Shittu, master's in immunology and microbial pathogenesis; Lindsay Stull, human nutrition.

Men's Volleyball - Hudson Harris, marketing; Jason Kozak, communication; Kohl Kutsch, master's in sports coaching; Grant Strong, marketing; Kyle Teune, accounting; Cole Young, sport industry.

Women's Volleyball - Meghan McCann, communication; Sydney Taylor, marketing.

Wrestling - Gavin Bell, consumer and family financial services; Dylan D'Emilio, diversity, equity & inclusion; Gregory Flerlage, consumer and family financial services; Padraic Gallagher, sport industry; Andre Gonzales, sport industry; Bryce Hepner, consumer and family financial services; Garrett Lautzenheiser, communication; Mike Misita, psychology; Klay Reeves, master's in sports coaching.

Four-Star CB Thomas Commits To Ohio State

Ohio State gained another commitment in its 2026 class when Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star cornerback Jordan Thomas (6-1, 185) pledged his services to the Buckeyes on May 12.

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Greg Wilson

He was the 13th commit in the class for the Buckeyes and the second cornerback, joining Avon, Ohio, four-star Jakob Weatherspoon (5-10, 172). Thomas chose Ohio State over Notre Dame, Michigan, Auburn, Texas A&M and USC, all of which he visited over the spring, giving co-defensive coordinator and cornerbacks coach Tim Walton yet another win in recruiting.

One of the reasons Thomas chose Ohio State is the coaching staff, which he has already been impressed with despite not being an official Buckeye yet. He said defensive coordinator Matt Patricia could see him playing either inside or outside for his defense.

“I stay in contact with Coach Walton and Coach Patricia all the time,” Thomas told 247Sports. “Coach Patricia is a really good recruiter. I send him my film from my practices and training, and he coaches me on things. He says I can play the nickel/star in his defense or outside corner and guard the best wide receiver on the field.”

Thomas is the No. 177 player in the country, the No. 16 cornerback and the No. 2 player in the state of New Jersey. He comes out of the same high school that produced five-star and current Buckeye freshman wide receiver Quincy Porter as well as former Buckeyes Javontae Jean-Baptiste and Tywone Malone Jr. According to Max-

| 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 | |
| Kayden Dixon-Wyatt | WR | 6-2 | 180 | ★★★★ | Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei | |
| 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 | |
| Jordan Thomas | CB | 6-1 | 185 | ★★★★ | Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic | |
| 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. | |

Preps, Thomas finished with 52 tackles (28 solo, 24 assisted), nine passes defended and one interception last season with the Crusaders.

Despite the success in the secondary in the recruiting cycle, the Buckeyes aren't done. They are most notably hoping to still bring in Flowood (Miss.) Hartfield Academy five-star safety Bralan Womack (6-0, 195), who has been made a priority. He is the No. 21 player in the country, the No. 1 safety and the No. 2 player in the state of Mississippi.

Four-Star WR Dixon-Wyatt Pledges To Buckeyes

The Buckeyes added their fourth wide receiver commitment in the 2026 class when Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star Kayden Dixon-Wyatt (6-2, 180) pledged his services to Ohio State on May 4.

“I would say all the people they have

put in the first round at my position,” Dixon-Wyatt told 247Sports about his interest in Ohio State before his commitment. “The message that Coach (Ryan) Day gave me is that I'm a priority and a must-get player.”

Dixon-Wyatt chose the Buckeyes over Alabama, Oregon, Texas and USC, and he joins high school teammate Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 205), a five-star wide receiver, as Mater Dei products who are heading to Columbus next offseason. Henry committed to OSU before he moved to California but will begin his second season there in 2025.

Dixon-Wyatt is the No. 108 player in the country, No. 13 wide receiver and No. 14 player in the state of California. He joins pass catchers Southlake (Texas) Carroll four-star Brock Boyd (6-2, 183) – who flipped his commitment from TCU on April 15 – and Pataskala (Ohio) Watkins Memorial four-star Jaeden Ricketts (6-0, 187) in



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ASK AN ANALYST

With Bill Greene of Buckeye Scoop

The Buckeyes landed a commitment from Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star cornerback Jordan Thomas (6-1, 185) on May 12. Have you been able to see him play, and what do you make of him as a prospect?

"I have not seen him in person, but the film shows someone that I really like. I like the length. I like a 6-1, 6-2 corner. They're hard to find. They don't grow on trees. Most of the 6-2 high school corners end up being safeties, but this kid, the way he can drop his hips, the way he can cover – he plays in a great program at Bergen Catholic. He's going against great competition every week. He plays against great competition in practice every day, so I love him. I think he's ranked way too low. I looked at the 247 rankings, and they have him just barely above a four-star, and I think that's way off. I think they have him as the 15th-ranked cornerback in the country. I'd like to see the other 14 that are better.

"He kind of reminds me of Gareon Conley from a few years ago, with just the longer body, the longer arms, and the ability to sink his butt and cover. He's a one-on-one cover guy – can't get enough of those, especially in today's game with four receivers on the field at all times. He could play the outside corner, ideally. Could he play in the slot? Yeah, I think so, but I like him better on the outside, matched up against a bigger, physical, taller receiver. That's where his strength is. I won't be surprised to see his ranking go higher. I don't know if he's playing 7-on-7 this summer or not, but he's better than what he's ranked."

Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star wide receiver Kayden Dixon-Wyatt (6-2, 180) joined his high school teammate, five-star wide receiver Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 205), in OSU's 2026 class. What does he bring to the field?

"I love Kayden, and I've seen Kayden a lot. I haven't seen him play real football. I don't get to California, but

I've seen him in Florida twice now in 7-on-7, and I've also seen him going through the South Florida Express practice sessions, so I've seen a lot of him. He and Chris Henry are amazing. I think both of them really translate well to Ohio State. Chris Henry is (Jeremiah Smith), that's who he reminds me of. And then when I look at Kayden, Kayden is Emeka (Egbuka). He's just a technician. He's got the speed to go deep. He'll go across the middle and get hit. His film is really amazing, and then I've seen him in person in 7-on-7, where you can either get open or you can't, because it's all man coverage, and Kayden can get open on anyone and he catches the darn ball.

"I've never seen him drop the ball. I'd be stunned to see him with a drop, so he's Emeka to me, and I think he'll have that kind of career. I think he can play early. He's smart, and he just has everything. He's (6-2, 180), he's a perfect receiver, and he's coming to play for Brian Hartline. I think he fits this system perfectly too."

Ohio State added Eli Brickhandler through the portal. What do you think they have in mind for him, and what do you see him adding to the QB room?

"The room is light, and he gives them their fourth QB. You can't play a season with three, so I think he's a depth guy. He's the insurance policy you have on your car, and you hope you never have to call your agent to use that policy. If he's in the game, either Ohio State is killing someone or getting killed, or (Lincoln Kienholz), (Tavien St. Clair) and (Julian Sayin) all got hurt. He does have experience. He was at Houston Christian, and he was at (North Carolina A&T) before that, so he's played football. He'll have two years of eligibility, and if you watch his film, he's a dual-threat guy.

"Now, if they get to the point where you're lining up against Michigan with this guy, you would be leaning on his years of experience, being in two different systems, and you want him to not screw it up. At Ohio

State, you can win that way. Do I think he's going to be an All-American or first-round draft pick? No chance.

"I don't know what the kid's expectations are of coming to Ohio State. I don't think he was promised that he would be a starter or anything. I think he knows what he's getting into, and maybe he wants to get into coaching someday. Maybe he just wants to be a part of a great program, and being a depth guy for a great program probably means more to him than starting and playing for Houston Christian for another year. He's an insurance policy, and when you're looking down your depth chart, I'd rather have him in there than a walk-on. He can play. He's played before. But we need to be realistic. He's not beating out Julian Sayin."

The Buckeyes will be holding recruiting camps throughout June. Who are some of the big prospects to look out for throughout the month?

"The best thing is what they're doing on the O-line. They have already killed it, so far, and (offensive line coach Tyler) Bowen looks like he's a total superstar there. I'd love to see Nixa, Mo., five-star offensive tackle Jackson Cantwell (6-8, 325) come back, but I don't know that he will. Vero Beach, Fla., four-star interior offensive lineman Micah Smith (6-6, 325), I think he will be there. Mansfield (Texas) Lake Ridge five-star offensive tackle Felix Ojo (6-6, 275) is a guy I think they have a shot at now. I can't see Texas not spending whatever they have to spend to get him, but (the Buckeyes) have a shot there. Richmond (Va.) St. Christopher's School five-star interior offensive lineman Darius Gray (6-3, 285) is special. They already have a group committed that's pretty impressive, and they're not done. With where they're at with that room, they need an infusion of talent. They've taken a lot of projects in the past couple of years, guys that I'm not real high on, so I could see them stretching to six this year if it's the right six."

Ohio State's class, giving wide receivers coach and offensive coordinator Brian Hartline yet another impressive group.

"If you want to be an elite receiver, you go to Ohio State," Dixon-Wyatt said on the live stream of his commitment.

In 13 games in the 2024 season, Dixon-Wyatt had 50 catches for 693 yards and five touchdowns. This came after an impressive sophomore season when he caught 33 passes for 512 yards and six touchdowns.

Buckeyes Add Transfer QB

Ohio State had just three scholarship quarterbacks on its roster coming out of the spring, but it will now have four entering fall camp with former Houston Christian signal caller Eli Brickhandler committing to Ohio State on May 20. The redshirt junior joins Julian Sayin, Lincoln Kienholz and Tavien St. Clair in quarterback coach Billy Fessler's room.

Brickhandler began his college career at North Carolina A&T in 2022, where he redshirted a year before getting into seven games with the Aggies in 2023, throwing for 354 yards and two touchdowns with two interceptions while running for 176 yards and another two scores on 43 carries.

Brickhandler transferred to Houston Christian for the 2024 season and made it into eight games with the Huskies while sharing time with Cutter Stewart, completing just 38 of his 77 passes (49.4 percent

completion percentage) for 557 yards, four touchdowns and two interceptions in that span. He also ran for 264 yards on 63 attempts – both the fourth highest on the team – with a score on the ground.

Brickhandler will likely spend the final two years of his eligibility down the depth chart, but he does provide some level of veteran depth should the Buckeyes face issues at the quarterback position.

Special Teams Transfers Commit To Ohio State

The Buckeyes also made two more additions to their 2025 roster through the transfer portal since BSB last went to press. Former Ball State kicker Jackson Courville committed to Ohio State on May 3 just two days after former North Carolina long snapper Grant Mills pledged on May 1.

Courville joins the Buckeyes after visiting Columbus in April, which went well enough that he decided it is where he wants to be for his two remaining seasons of eligibility.

The Dayton native started as the place-kicker for the Cardinals as a true freshman in 2023 and made 15 of 21 field goals with a long of 48 yards while nailing 24 of 25 extra points. He improved his range and accuracy in his sophomore season, drilling a game-winning 52-yard kick as time expired to defeat Northern Illinois on Oct. 26 and making 11 of his 13 field goals and 30 of his 31 extra points on the year.

Courville's commitment likely opens

up a competition this upcoming summer for the starting kicker position alongside senior Jayden Fielding, and at the very least it adds some depth to special teams if Fielding has injury issues like he dealt with throughout last season.

Mills is expected to be a walk-on at Ohio State, so he won't count against the 90 scholarships the Buckeyes will have for the 2025 season.

OSU was in the market for a long snapper after Morrow Evans entered the transfer portal in the spring, so depth behind starter John Ferlmann, who is in his third season in Columbus, was much needed. Mills has four years of eligibility remaining after appearing in two games with the Tar Heels in the 2024 season.

The Buckeyes made four additions through the spring transfer portal, with former North Carolina defensive end Beau Atkinson and former West Virginia offensive lineman Justin Terry also joining the roster for the fall. The Buckeyes also grabbed offensive tackles Ethan Onianwa and Phillip Daniels, tight end Max Klare, defensive end Logan George and running back CJ Donaldson in the winter transfer portal.

Bradford Locked In With Buckeyes

It was somewhat of a surprise when Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic five-star safety Blaine Bradford (6-1, 207) committed to Ohio State on March 31.

Many experts were expecting Bradford's recruitment to come down to the wire with

the nearby Tigers remaining in the mix for as long as possible. However, Bradford decided that Columbus was where he wanted to be.

With much time in between his com-

Continued On Page 22

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Five-Star SAF Bradford Committed To OSU

Continued From Page 21

mitment date to the early signing period, there has also been speculation over whether Bradford's recruitment will still come down to the wire when December rolls around. But the five-star says that won't be the case.

"I'm a man of my word," Bradford told Buckeye Huddle. "At the end of the day, other people can try. I don't mind telling people about it. I don't mind explaining myself. But I'm a man of my word, and I plan on sticking to it."

That's the position both he and his family have maintained since his commitment, and so far, he seems to mean it. Bradford has just one official visit scheduled over the summer, and that is to get to Ohio State.

"I've seen it a lot, but I've never really understood why people committed and still took visits," Bradford said. "I feel like if you commit, you're committing for a reason and you're committing because you're really selling yourself to that school. I feel like it would just be disrespectful for me to go out there and take other visits."

Those words have to be encouraging for safeties coach Matt Guerrieri and the Buckeyes since it's never easy to land a five-star talent, especially one who lives right down the road from another NCAA powerhouse such as LSU.

Bradford is the No. 23 player in the country, the No. 2 safety and the No. 2 player in the state of Louisiana. Signing him would be a major recruiting success on the defensive side of the ball for the Buckeyes, and the secondary class – as discussed earlier – could be elite if Womack also ends up in the fold.

No. 1 Prospect Cantwell Commits To Miami

The No. 1 prospect in the country is off the board with Nixa, Mo., five-star offensive tackle Jackson Cantwell (6-8, 325) committing to Miami (Fla.) on May 13.

Cantwell had revealed a top four that contained the Hurricanes, Georgia, Oregon and Ohio State, but the Buckeyes seemed to be out of the race for his services long before his commitment date. He did not reveal the reason why OSU didn't get any final visits before his commitment as the other three schools did.

Cantwell is represented by prominent NFL agent Drew Rosenhaus, who reportedly wanted to get the five-star a three-year NIL deal with an average annual value of over \$2 million, according to 247Sports.

At one point, it seemed as if the Buckeyes were going to go all in on trying to land Cantwell, and it obviously worked enough to make the five-star's top four schools. Once the Buckeyes finished their national championship celebrations, Day's

very first visit was to Nixa to personally see Cantwell.

But soon after that, news regarding Cantwell that included the Buckeyes became much less common.

The 2026 class has a lot of major offensive line talent, so missing on Cantwell isn't the end of the world for offensive line coach Tyler Bowen and Ohio State. They have already built the beginning of a solid class with commitments from Akron Hoban four-star offensive tackle Sam Greer (6-8, 315) and Avon Lake, Ohio, four-star offensive tackle Maxwell Riley (6-5, 280), who are both ranked in the top 130 players after Greer took a major jump in the rankings in 247Sports' most recent rating update on May 14.

The Buckeyes also have a commitment from Glendale (Ariz.) Sandra Day O'Connor three-star interior offensive lineman Tucker Smith (6-5, 280). He is the No. 633 prospect nationally and No. 56 interior offensive lineman.

There are also multiple other highly rated recruits still strongly considering Ohio State, such as Mansfield (Texas) Lake Ridge five-star offensive tackle Felix Ojo (6-6, 275); Vero Beach, Fla., four-star interior offensive lineman Micah Smith (6-6, 325); and Richmond (Va.) St. Christopher's School five-star interior offensive lineman Darius Gray (6-3, 285), among others.

Bucks Making Progress With Georgia LBs

The Buckeyes received more good news on May 14 when Gainesville, Ga., five-star linebacker Xavier Griffin (6-3, 200) decided to decommit from USC and reopen his commitment.

He had been committed to the Trojans since July 27, 2024, but had a change of heart and announced four official visit dates along with his decommitment.

Griffin will be headed to Ohio State from May 30-June 1 before he goes to Alabama from June 6-8, Texas from June 13-14 and Florida State from June 15-17. He had been considering Ohio State before his commitment, making it to the 2024 spring game last year before he pledged to USC. But with the changes on the defensive side of the ball for the Buckeyes – Jim Knowles heading to Penn State and Patricia bringing a new defensive scheme to Columbus – Griffin said the Buckeyes are involved again.

"Ohio State was one of my favorites before I committed, but their defensive scheme didn't fit me, so I'm excited to see the new schemes and how I would fit in them," Griffin told 247Sports. "Me and Coach (James) Laurinaitis have a great relationship as well. He's an Ohio State legend, so pretty cool to see him in this role as a coach."

Griffin is the No. 27 overall player in the

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country, the No. 2 linebacker and the No. 4 player in the state of Georgia. But he isn't the only elite linebacker in the 2026 class from the Peach State whom OSU will host on an official visit.

Loganville (Ga.) Grayson five-star Tyler Atkinson (6-2, 210) has already said that the Buckeyes will get an official visit from him, although he hasn't scheduled it yet. But since BSB last went to press, Atkinson told Marc Givler of Buckeye Huddle that Ohio State leads in his recruitment because of the relationships he's been able to build with people in the program.

The recruitment of Atkinson, the No. 1 linebacker in the country and No. 9 overall player in the 2026 class, will likely ultimately come down to Ohio State and Georgia barring a surprise contender that appears later on. But it will be tough to pull him away from the Bulldogs if Georgia makes it a point to go after him hard since he is the top player in-state.

Ohio LB Down To Three Schools

The Buckeyes are also trending in a positive direction with a linebacker from the Buckeye State. Cleveland Glenville four-star Cincere Johnson (6-3, 225) narrowed his scholarship offer list down to three schools, with Ohio State being included alongside Alabama and Penn State. He said the main reason those three made it is because he believes he will become a better player with any of those programs developing him.

"Just development. I'm a player that fell in love with the game and not money," he said. "This generation is all about NIL. I

just want to be developed, make it to the league, and surround myself with great guys and that brotherhood. So that's kind of what it will come down to – which school feels like family and where I can stay without transferring. I'm a man of my word so I don't really look for the transfer portal."

The Glenville-to-Ohio State pipeline is still alive and well, with Johnson possibly following in current Buckeye linebacker Arvell Reese's footsteps to be the next Tar-blooders 'backer to suit up for the Scarlet and Gray.

Johnson does have the size to possibly play as an edge rusher in college if he chooses to go that route, and 247Sports' rankings have even made the change to list him as a defensive end. Johnson is the No. 71 player in the country, the No. 8 defensive end and the No. 2 player in the state of Ohio.

OSU Still Looking For 2026 QB

While the Buckeyes have already landed a commitment from a quarterback in the 2027 class, that being Huntington Beach, Calif., four-star Brady Edmunds (6-5, 215), they are still looking to add a recruit at the position for 2026.

Most of the prospects who are considered to be elite are already committed to other programs, but OSU is still trying to land a signal caller.

Mission Viejo, Calif., four-star Luke Fahey (6-0, 185) is a player who has received some interest from the Buckeyes recently. Despite not having a scholarship offer from Ohio State as BSB went to press, Fahey still has an official visit scheduled to get to

Columbus, heading to campus from June 20-22.

He has already taken an official visit to Oklahoma State in April and has two others scheduled to Stanford May 30-June 1 and Indiana June 6-8. The Cardinal and Hoosiers are considered the favorites to land Fahey, the No. 354 player in the country, No. 23 quarterback and No. 33 player in California, but that could change if Ohio State starts showing more interest.

Another quarterback the Buckeyes are still showing interest in is Forney (Texas) North three-star Legend Bey (5-11, 175), who revealed a top five list of Duke, Ohio State, Tennessee, Texas A&M and West Virginia on May 22. His offer from Ohio State came from running backs coach Carlos Locklyn, who told Bey that he might be able to see the field in the "Wildcat" formation, according to 247Sports.

Bey is considered the No. 429 player in the country, No. 29 athlete and No. 59 player in the state of Texas.

Other Notes And Tidbits

• Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne five-star wide receiver and 2027 Ohio State commit Jamier Brown (5-11, 170) showed off his elite speed in the 100 meters in a high school track event earlier this spring, setting a Greater Western Ohio Conference meet record with a 10.62-second time in the race. He broke the record of former Ohio State running back Brandon Saine, of Piqua, who ran a 10.8 nearly 20 years ago in 2006.

• Clearwater, Fla., 2026 four-star interior offensive lineman Samuel Rosebor-

ough (6-5, 285) is down to five schools in his recruitment. He included Ohio State along with Florida State, LSU, Texas A&M and Texas in his final five. He is the No. 133 player in the country, the No. 7 interior lineman and the No. 16 player in the state of Florida.

• Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star cornerback Justice Fitzpatrick (6-1, 185) has scheduled an official visit to Ohio State after the Buckeyes have been ramping up their recruitment of the corner. Fitzpatrick, the brother of star NFL safety Minkah Fitzpatrick, did not offer an exact date of his visit to Ohio State, and he is also scheduled to head to the campuses of Florida, Georgia, Miami (Fla.) and Texas.

• Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star tight end Mark Bowman (6-5, 225) narrowed his scholarship list down to a final seven schools, including Ohio State with Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Ole Miss, Oregon, Texas and USC. Bowman reclassified from the 2027 class to the 2026 class in January and is still ranked the No. 16 player in the country, the No. 1 tight end and the No. 4 player in the state of California. If he chooses OSU, he would join high school teammates Henry and Dixon-Wyatt in the class.

• Richland (N.J.) St. Augustine Prep four-star defensive lineman Damari Simeon (6-3, 275) is down to four schools and will decide between Michigan, Ohio State, Penn State and Texas. He is the No. 201 player in the country, the No. 26 defensive lineman and the No. 3 player in the state of New Jersey.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1990

Tailback Ki-Jana Carter of Westerville South was the heir apparent to the rushing throne of Robert Smith and Ricky Powers. Carter ran for 1,762 yards and 23 touchdowns the previous season as a junior. He earned first-team All-Ohio honors from both The Associated Press and UPI.

Carter was also a sprinter on his high school track team, using his 4.45 speed in the 40-yard dash. He anchored Westerville South's 400-meter relay team which finished second at the state track meet held June 2.

Following the race, Carter met with OSU fullback Scottie Graham just off the Ohio Stadium track.

"I guess Coach (John) Cooper must have sent him," Carter said.

25 Years Ago — 2000

Technically, Ohio State still had three verbal commitments. But there was a fourth high school junior who said he intended to play college football for the Buckeyes.

Columbus Brookhaven wide receiver Rodney Carter told BSB on May 30 that he was set to commit to the Buckeyes. A day later, he contacted OSU recruiting coordinator Bill Conley and voiced those intentions.

But Carter was not being considered as OSU's fourth commitment because his scholarship offer was contingent on him qualifying academically.

"Ohio State did make an offer to Rodney a while ago, and Rodney did commit to them last night (May 31)," said Brookhaven coach Gregg Miller, who had sent several players to OSU over the years. "He's decided that if everything falls into place and he is able to get all of his academics in line, that's where he wants to go. That is the agreement everybody came to."

20 Years Ago — 2005

In many cases, when Ohio State offers a scholarship to a high schooler who grew up in the Columbus area, the player's verbal commitment is a slam dunk.

However, the case of Justin Boren was different and with good reason – despite prepping at nearby Pickerington North, Boren's allegiance was to Michigan where his father, Mike, was a linebacker for the Wolverines in the early 1980s.

So even though Ohio State had been the first school to show interest in Boren during his sophomore year, once Michigan made

him a priority recruit, it was not going to be beat.

Boren verbally committed to Michigan on May 13, emailing the OSU coaches that morning to inform them of his decision and then traveling to Ann Arbor to give U-M head coach Lloyd Carr the good word in person.

"Really a lot of times I thought Ohio State would be a lot easier for me to go to," Boren told TheWolverine.com. "It definitely had its perks – they have a great location, a great program and great coaches. But basically I feel at home at Michigan and I feel I have to be a Wolverine and play at the Big House."

15 Years Ago — 2010

A 2011 recruiting class that was expected to top out around 20 members had moved past the halfway point for Ohio State.

On May 16, the Buckeyes received their 11th verbal commitment when four-star defensive tackle Michael Bennett joined the fold. From Centerville, Ohio, Bennett made his final decision between OSU and Northwestern.

That's right – Northwestern. "That is a little different," Centerville head coach Ron Ullery told BSB. "Knowing him, it's not a surprise. That's what most people would say (including) the coaches that would come through. I'd tell them who his final two were and they'd look at me like, 'Wow.' "

Bennett planned to enter the medical field. He was sold on Northwestern and had to be convinced that OSU would help prepare him for his future careers both in and out of football.

10 Years Ago — 2015

Ohio State punter Cameron Johnston still had two seasons left, but the Buckeyes had already found his replacement.

Cincinnati La Salle class of 2016 punter Drue Chrisman committed to Ohio State on May 5, giving the Buckeyes a replacement for when the Aussie's college career comes to an end.

"Florida State, Ohio State and BYU all have great academics and great football programs," Chrisman told BSB of schools of interest. "The biggest thing I wanted to have when I made this decision was a good comfort level – still being in Ohio and my parents being able to come to games and things like that. I don't think you can get more comfortable than being at home, and this still feels like I'm at home. That was a big bonus."

Chrisman was listed by Scout.com as a three-star prospect,

and he was the No. 1 punter in the country who had been evaluated by Kohl's Kicking Camps.

Five Years Ago — 2020

Ohio State signed a pair of players from Arizona the previous cycle in Jack Miller and Lathan Ransom, so it should have come as no surprise to see the Buckeyes go back to that well once again, landing a commitment on May 24 from Scottsdale Saguaro four-star defensive back Denzel Burke.

Burke was considered the seventh-best athlete and No. 183 prospect overall in the class of 2021, after he hauled in 12 passes for 313 yards and four touchdowns at wide receiver while adding two interceptions as a cornerback in seven games for the Sabercats in 2019. Ohio State planned to use him exclusively on defense at the next level.

Burke – who picked the Buckeyes over finalists Colorado, Oregon, USC and Washington – had never been to Columbus but had grown extremely close with defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs since he landed an offer from the staff in January. His planned visit in March was canceled amid the coronavirus pandemic, so he went on a virtual tour of campus and the football facilities with his parents, and that seemingly pushed Ohio State over the top.

One Year Ago — 2024

Ohio State suffered a loss to its 2025 recruiting class on May 16 when Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star cornerback Blake Woodby (5-11, 175) decommitted from Ohio State.

Woodby, who was the nation's 74th-best overall prospect, seventh-best cornerback and No. 2 player in Maryland, originally committed to Ohio State on Oct. 14, 2023. Since then, the Buckeyes had received commitments from Devin Sanchez and Na'eem Offord, who were the No. 1 and 2 corners in the class of 2025.

Woodby's decommitment left the Buckeyes with just Offord and Sanchez at cornerback, but Ohio State was also continuing to pursue Dorian Brew, who was the No. 27 player in the country and the No. 5 cornerback.

Other finalists for Woodby before he committed to Ohio State were Alabama, Clemson, Oregon and Tennessee, so those schools had the chance to come back into the mix.

Big Ten, SEC Pushing For 16-Team Playoff

As the sport of college football changes so quickly, the SEC and the Big Ten are still leading the way when it comes to ideas.

BIG TEN NOTES Cameron Moone

According to a May 9 report from Yahoo Sports' Ross Dellenger, the Big Ten and SEC are pushing hard for the College Football Playoff to expand to a 16-team bracket for the 2026 season. The format being proposed would allow for four automatic qualifiers from both the Big Ten and the SEC, while the Big 12 and ACC would both get two, one spot would go to a Group of Five team, and three would go to at-large bids, with one of those going to Notre Dame if it finishes the season as a top-16 team.

It was reportedly Big Ten commissioner Tony Petitti who was the first to suggest four automatic bids for the SEC and Big Ten, with SEC commissioner Greg Sankey not pushing back much on that idea. But other commissioners seem to be taking some issue with the proposed change, even though they might not have much control over it.

"Everyone else in the room feels like multiple (automatic qualifiers) for conferences make it an invitational," an anonymous source told The Athletic on the matter.

One of the possibilities of a 16-team bracket would be that every team plays during the first weekend of the tournament, which would get rid of any byes in the tournament. But The Athletic's report said that format is unlikely to pass. More likely, CFP games would start a week earlier than they did in the 2024 season, with the four lowest seeds playing into the second weekend, which would have six games total. With that

format, the top two seeds in the bracket would still get byes all the way to the quarterfinals.

As part of deciding which teams would be automatic qualifiers, Petitti has pitched the idea of creating two championship weekend play-in games. The championship teams would qualify for two spots, while teams ranked third through sixth would face off for the other two spots.

That format would allow more teams to be in the race for CFP spots later in the season.

A 16-team playoff continued to gain traction as the month of May progressed, with ESPN's Heather Dinich reporting on May 29 that the model was discussed in detail during SEC spring meetings held in the final week of May. CFP leaders have set a Dec. 1 deadline to determine a format for the 2026 season and beyond, and the FBS commissioners and Notre Dame athletic director Pete Bevacqua are scheduled to meet in person on June 18 in Asheville, N.C., to discuss the topic further.

Ono Leaves U-M To Serve As Florida President

Michigan president Santa Ono has left the university to take on the same role at the University of Florida, ending a tenure in Ann Arbor that was mired in controversy with both the athletic department and student life. Ono leaves Michigan a few months shy of three years at the helm and was unanimously selected as the Gators' 14th president by the school's board of trustees on May 27.

"I am thankful for, and humbled by, the unanimous support of the board of trustees," Ono said. "The energy here at the University of Florida is palpable, and I am eager to join the wonderful students, faculty and staff of the Gator Nation. I'm excited by the prospect of being part of such an exceptional institution that is so clear-eyed in its purpose. Let's go do great things to-



FILE PHOTO

BRET IS SET — Illinois football coach Bret Bielema agreed to a six-year contract extension on May 13 that runs through the 2030 season. He will be paid an annual salary of \$7.7 million. He is 28-22 in four years at Illinois, including 10-3 in 2024.

gether."

The former University of British Columbia and University of Cincinnati president was hired by Michigan on July 13, 2022, and officially assumed the position on Oct. 14 later that same year. In 2023 under Ono's leadership, then-Wolverines football head coach Jim Harbaugh was suspended six out of 12 regular-season games for recruiting violations and an investigation into sign stealing, which was still ongoing as BSB went to press.

Ono's time leading the school also included controversies on campus, with many criticizing his handling of protests against the Gaza War and his reluctance to push back against the Trump administration's policies related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and immigration.

The university had yet to find a permanent replacement, naming Chancellor of the University of Michigan-Dearborn Domenico Grasso as its interim president on May 8.

Maryland Hires New Athletic Director

Maryland hired Jim Smith as the school's new athletic director, the school announced on May 15.

Smith comes from MLB, where he was the senior vice president for business strategy for the Atlanta Braves, a job he took on in 2020. He has also been an executive for the Atlanta Falcons in stints as the chief marketing officer and revenue office vice president and chief marketing officer. Smith also served as the general manager and general manager/vice president of Major League Soccer's Columbus Crew from

2000-04.

The last time Smith wasn't at the professional level in sports was when he worked at Ohio State, where he served in the athletic department as the associate athletic director for marketing and communications. He was also the Buckeyes' alumni association president and CEO, a role he left in 2020 to head to Atlanta.

More of his extensive experience was as the president of a sports consulting company, JS Sports Properties and Consulting, which advises on marketing, leadership and revenue maximization.

With the way college sports are changing quickly, Smith's experience in sports and business will be helpful when it comes to navigating whatever changes might be coming in the future, along with the developing world of NIL and revenue sharing.

Smith takes over in place of Damon Evans, who left Maryland for SMU in March. He had been at Maryland since 2014 and had been the athletic director since 2018.

MSU Fires Haller, Hires Batt As AD

Michigan State also changed its athletic leadership, firing athletic director Alan Haller on May 1 and hiring Georgia Tech's J Batt to fill the vacancy on June 1.

Batt arrives in East Lansing after serving as athletic director at Georgia Tech since 2022. He also had previous stints as associate athletic director at East Carolina from 2013-17 and as deputy athletic director at Alabama from 2017-22.

Batt, a North Carolina graduate, oversaw the hirings of both head football coach Brent Key and basketball coach Damon

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BIG TEN NOTES

Stoudamire while leading the Yellow Jackets. Although the basketball team has experienced minimal success with Stoudamire at the helm, sporting a 31-35 record in his first two seasons leading the program, the hiring of Key seemed to be a sound decision. The Yellow Jackets were ranked inside the AP top 25 for the first time since the 2015 early last season and finished with a 7-6 record and 5-3 mark in the ACC.

Batt replaces Haller, a former Spartan and NFL football player, after he held the role of athletic director for nearly five years. He was involved with the Spartan athletic department as early as 2010, beginning as an associate athletic director before working his way toward being named the athletic director in Sept. 2021. Haller had been under contract through August 2026.

During his tenure, Haller most notably oversaw a 2022 investigation that led to the firing of former football head coach Mel Tucker over allegations of sexual assault. He also picked Jonathan Smith to be the next football coach in November of 2023.

Illinois' Bielema Extended Through 2030

Illinois football head coach Bret Bielema will continue to pace the sidelines in Champaign, Ill., for at least the next six seasons after he earned an extension with the university worth \$7.7 million per season, Illinois AD Josh Whitman announced May 13. The 55-year-old coach is also eligible for retention incentives on July 1 of each year, starting with a \$700,000 bonus on July 1, 2026, and increasing each year.

"I want to thank Bret for his exceptional leadership and bold vision for the future of Fighting Illini Football," Whitman said. "I am grateful to Bret and Jen for their trust in our program and their long-term commitment to the University of Illinois. Under Bret's guidance, our program has gained national relevance and is steadily rewriting the Illinois record books."

The former Wisconsin and Arkansas head coach earned the new pay day after leading the Fighting Illini to 28 wins in his first four seasons – including 18 wins in Big Ten play. The Illini earned 10 wins for just the fifth time in program history last season, finishing with a 10-3 record (6-3 Big Ten). The successful season was punctuated by a 21-17 win over South Carolina in the Citrus Bowl.

Illinois is a dark-horse College Football Playoff contender heading into 2025, with double-digit starters returning from last season's team that was ranked in the CFP for a program-record four straight times (Weeks 12-15).

Meyer: "Big Ten Has Passed SEC"

There aren't a lot of college football coaches who have accomplished more than former Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer did.

Roaming the sidelines as a head coach from 2001-2018, stopping at Bowling Green, Utah, Florida and Ohio State in that span, the College Football Hall of Fame inductee won three national championships – two at Florida (2006, 2008) and one at Ohio State (2014).

During the final seven seasons of his career with the Buckeyes from 2012-2018,

Meyer witnessed a reign of glory for Ohio State and the Big Ten in general, and he now believes the conference has passed the SEC, the frequently perceived cream of the college football crop.

"Well, you know what the SEC's done? It's raised the level," Meyer said on the "Another Dooley Noted Podcast" on May 15. "But the Big Ten has passed the SEC at the upper part. If you would have told me that 10 years ago, I would have said it's not even close. Because it's not."

"When I first got to the Big Ten, even (wife) Shelley said, 'What in the world? This is a slow man's game up here,' and I like to think that the Buckeyes really changed that. Then everyone else started investing in their schools, and started recruiting the best player, not just the footprint. As a result, the Wolverine team two years ago was one of the best teams I've seen. The Buckeyes team this year is one of the best I've seen. You're seeing Penn State, and some of these teams have great success."

When Meyer arrived at Ohio State in 2012, the Buckeyes had the most recent national championship of a then-Big Ten team, winning the crown in 2002. After a 2014 win over Oregon in the inaugural College Football Playoff title game, the Big Ten has had two more champions: Michigan in 2023 and the Buckeyes again in 2024. With three titles in the last decade, the Big Ten continues to push to be the premier conference in the country but could still fall to second place at any moment to the longtime powerhouse SEC, according to Meyer.

"I'm anxious to see the SEC fight back for that because next year's another year," he said. "That SEC-Big Ten fight, the top (of the two conferences) the last two years goes to the Big Ten. But still, that middle to the bottom, it's the SEC by far. You've got eight teams, nine teams in the SEC that think they can go win a national title. No other conference has ever had that."

Bruins Advance To 33rd WCWS

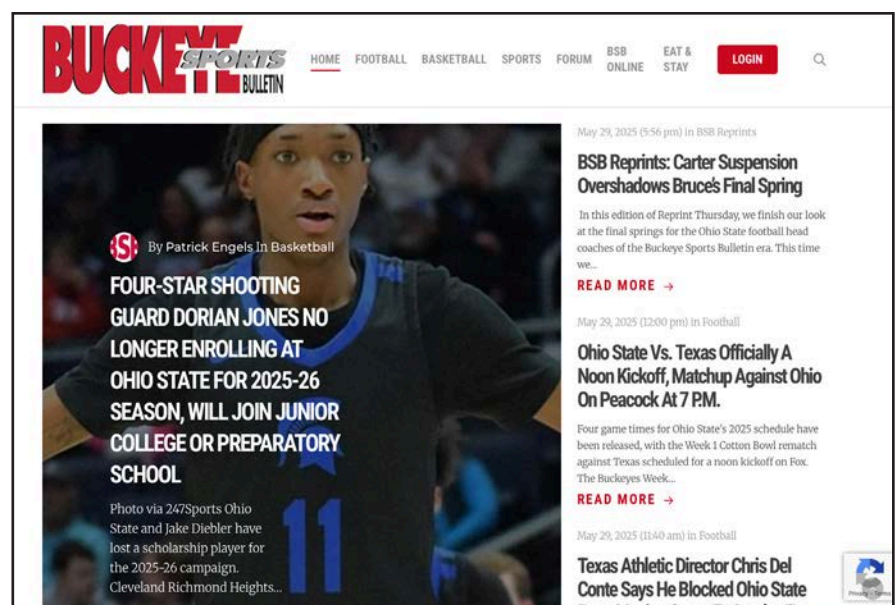
In a run seldom seen in collegiate or professional sports, the UCLA softball team advanced to its NCAA-record 33rd Women's College World Series in program history on May 25 following a 5-0 win over South Carolina in Game 3 of the Super Regional.

The Bruins needed wins in back-to-back games against South Carolina in the NCAA Super Regionals held at the Gamecocks' home field after falling to the Gamecocks 9-2 in game one on May 23. A 5-4 win on May 24 – highlighted by a two-run, two-out walk-off home run by junior infielder Jordan Woolery – and the previously mentioned 5-0 win on May 25 sent UCLA to the College World Series in Oklahoma City in what has become a regular sight in college softball.

The Bruins began their quest for a title with a 4-2 win over Big Ten foe Oregon on May 29 but followed that up with a 3-1 defeat to Texas Tech the next day. Their season came to an end on June 1 when they fell 5-4 in the ninth inning on a walk-off single to No. 7 Tennessee in an elimination game.

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OSU Adds Baylor Transfer Center Ojianwuna

Ohio State continued to fortify its front-court on May 7 when it garnered a transfer portal pledge from former Baylor center Josh Ojianwuna (6-10, 230).

COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

Ojianwuna, a native of Asaba, Nigeria, joins the Buckeyes with one year of eligibility remaining after spending the last three seasons at Baylor, where he played 87 games (24 starts) and averaged 5.3 points and 4.2 rebounds per game while shooting 70.4 percent from the field.

Serving primarily as a reserve as a freshman and sophomore, Ojianwuna earned a spot in the starting lineup on head coach Scott Drew's team this past season and excelled in the role. He started the team's first 23 games and earned career highs in points (7.4 per game), rebounds (6.4), steals (0.9), blocks (0.8), assists (0.6), field-goal percentage (77.4 percent) and minutes played (24.7) before going down with a season-ending torn ACL in his left knee in early February.



Josh Ojianwuna

After missing the final 12 games of Baylor's season, Ojianwuna told The Columbus Dispatch that he is making progress with his rehab and that doctors told him he will be fully healthy in mid-November at the earliest and mid-February at the latest. If he does end up on the early side of his recovery, the 6-10, 230-pounder figures to provide a level of physicality and skill in the frontcourt that was missing last season. He recorded three double-doubles on the year – including a 12-point, 17-rebound performance in Baylor's 72-66 overtime win over Arizona State on Jan. 11 – and notched double figures in points in 11 of his 23 games.

Ojianwuna will likely come off the bench for the Buckeyes next season with fellow transfer big men Christoph Tilly and Brandon Noel as well as returner Devin Royal occupying the starting roles.

Jones Won't Enroll At OSU This Season

The addition of Ojianwuna left Ohio State with just one roster spot to fill for the 2025-26 season up until May 30, when Cleveland Richmond Heights four-star shooting guard Dorian Jones (6-4, 160) announced in a since-deleted Instagram post that he will no longer enroll at Ohio State next season. He will instead spend a year furthering his development at a junior college or preparatory school, according to multiple reports.

"As I reflect on my development, this next year is an opportunity for me to grow more prior to college," Jones wrote. "I won't be

enrolling at Ohio State this year but I look forward to continuing our relationship."

Jones, the No. 114 prospect and No. 19 shooting guard in the country and No. 1 player out of Ohio in the 2025 class, had been committed to Ohio State since July 1, 2024, and signed with the program last November. He was the first member of the Buckeyes' two-man 2025 class to commit to the school, a group that also includes Branson (Mo.) Link Academy four-star power forward Amare Bynum (6-8, 225). Bynum is still expected to play for the Buckeyes this season.

But Jones' future with the program is now reportedly uncertain as he looks to find another school to join for next season. Ohio State's 2026 recruiting class consists of two commits – Cleveland Garfield Heights four-star point guard Marcus Johnson (6-1, 175) and Columbus Upper Arlington three-star power forward Alex Smith (6-9, 195) – and younger backcourt players such as Taison Chatman, Gabe Cupps, John Mobley Jr. and Colin White could all be back for the 2026-27 season.

That could make it difficult for Jones – who helped lead Richmond Heights to four consecutive state championship game appearances with three titles in his time with the Spartans – to find a spot on the roster if he wants to enroll at Ohio State.

Three-Star Herro Commits To OSU

The void Jones left on the Buckeyes' roster was quickly filled on June 2 when they garnered a commitment from Milwaukee Whitnall 2025 point guard Myles Herro (6-3, 165).

Herro – the brother of Miami Heat all-star guard and former Kentucky Wildcat Tyler Herro – is unranked by 247Sports' composite rankings, but the outlet has him as a three-star prospect in its standard rankings as well as the nation's 40th-best point guard and 10th-best player out of Wisconsin. He had a productive last two seasons at Whitnall, averaging 13.5 points, 5.2 rebounds, 6.4 assists and 1.9 steals per game as a junior and then notching 21.5 points, 5.9 rebounds and 4.7 assists per game as a senior according to 247Sports. Herro also spent some time playing in the AAU circuit for the Nike EYBL program Team Herro, which is coached by his father, Chris.

Despite his notable last name and high school successes, he did not receive much attention from top college programs and held only three offers, from Cal Poly, Southern Illinois and Western Illinois, leading up to his commitment to Ohio State. Regardless, Herro's commitment gives Diebler the two-man recruiting class he was anticipating for the 2025 class, and it also provides some much-needed backcourt depth for this season behind Bruce Thornton and the previously mentioned younger guards on the roster.

The Buckeyes have 15 roster spots for the season but are planning to use only 13 full scholarships, meaning head coach Jake Diebler and his will likely have to find one more player to fill out the roster after Herro's commitment.

Walsh Added To Coaching Staff

Ohio State finalized its 2025-26 coaching staff on May 9 with the hiring of former Indiana assistant Brian Walsh as assistant coach. Walsh, 36, replaces Talor Battle, who left to serve as an assistant at his alma mater, Penn State, on April 1.

"I'm excited for Brian and his family to join our Ohio State hoops family," Diebler said. "Brian is a proven recruiter with deep Midwest ties who has excelled at connecting with and developing players. His Big Ten scouting experience and analytics expertise are going to be a valuable asset to our program."

Walsh joins Diebler's staff after spending the past eight seasons at Indiana, including the past three as an assistant coach under Mike Woodson. He also served as the Hoosiers' recruiting coordinator in 2021-22 – helping them finish with the 10th-best recruiting class in the nation according to 247Sports – and director of operations from 2017-2021. With Walsh on staff, the Hoosiers compiled a 149-111 record (74-83 Big Ten) with two NCAA Tournament appearances (2021-22, 2022-23).

Walsh, a native of the greater Pittsburgh area, has spent his entire adult basketball life in the Midwest. He spent three seasons at Dayton as assistant director of operations (2016-17) and graduate assistant (2014-16) after beginning his coaching career as a graduate assistant at his alma mater, Akron, in 2013-14. Walsh played guard for the Zips from 2011-13, averaging 7.8 points and 3.7 rebounds per game, and began his collegiate playing career at Xavier from 2008-10.

Walsh will now bring his playing experience and recruiting chops to a youthful Ohio State coaching staff under Diebler that also includes associate head coach Joel Justus and assistants Dave Dickerson, Luke Simons and Jamall Walker, who are each returning for a second year in Columbus.

Single And Double Play Opponents Announced

Diebler's new-look Ohio State team now knows which Big Ten foes they will play next season after the conference announced each team's 2025-26 single and double play opponents on April 29.

The Buckeyes will play Penn State, Wisconsin and Michigan once at home and once on the road. The two games against Michigan are most notable because both Diebler and Michigan head coach Dusty May have been pushing for the conference to make the rivalry game a protected annual home-and-home series since they took over their respective programs last offseason.

Ohio State's single home games will be against Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, Purdue, UCLA and USC. The Bruins will come to Columbus for the first time since 1968, while USC will travel to Ohio State for the first time since 1997.

The Buckeyes' single road games will be against Iowa, Maryland, Michigan State, Northwestern, Oregon, Rutgers, and Washington. Ohio State will be making its first-ever trip to Oregon and will be playing at Washington for just the seventh time ever and first since 1971.



COURTESY OF INDIANA UNIV. ATHLETICS
NEW VENTURE — Longtime Indiana assistant coach Brian Walsh joined the Ohio State staff in the same capacity on May 9. The former Akron player leaves the Hoosiers after eight seasons to replace Talor Battle, who returned to his alma mater to become an assistant at Penn State.

Dates for each of these games will be announced in early September.

Three Opponents Added To Non-Con Schedule

Ohio State also added three noteworthy Power Five teams to next season's nonconference schedule since BSB last went to press. The Buckeyes are now set to face off against Notre Dame on Nov. 16 at home, West Virginia on Dec. 13 in Cleveland and North Carolina on Dec. 16 in Atlanta.

The Buckeyes will play Notre Dame as part of a home-and-home series that ends in South Bend, Ind., on Dec. 12, 2026. The Fighting Irish are traveling to Columbus for the first time since Nov. 16, 1999, when the Troy Murphy-led Irish defeated the Michael Redd-led Buckeyes 59-57 to open that season. That was also the last time Notre Dame defeated Ohio State, with the Buckeyes taking the last three matchups in 2008 (67-62), 2013 (64-61) and 2020 (90-85). Ohio State owns a 9-5 record over the Irish.

Ohio State will play West Virginia at Cleveland's Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse for the third time in the last six seasons, the other two instances occurring in 2019-20 and 2023-24. The Buckeyes won both of those games against the Mountaineers and hold a 10-8 record against them in a series dating back to 1940.

Ohio State's matchup with North Carolina is part of a new-look CBS Sports Classic field that this season features St. John's instead of UCLA. Rick Pitino's Red Storm

will face off against Kentucky, while the Buckeyes will square off with the Tar Heels for the fourth time in the event, each of the previous three matchups being losses.

Ohio State is 6-4 over its 10 appearances in the event. That mark is the second-best record out of the four teams that have played in it thus far, trailing North Carolina with a 7-4 record. It has also won its last two CBS Sports Classic games, defeating UCLA 67-60 in 2023 and No. 4 Kentucky 85-65 last December at Madison Square Garden.

The Buckeyes are expected to announce their full nonconference schedule later this summer. The team is also slated to play Pittsburgh on the road on Nov. 28 to complete a home-and-home series that began last year in Columbus (L, OT, 91-90).

Stewart Commits To Oregon

Former Ohio State forward Sean Stewart is staying in the Big Ten after committing to Oregon and head coach Dana Altman on May 7.

Stewart will play on his third team in as many seasons after a disappointing sophomore campaign with Ohio State in which the five-star All-American and Duke transfer started each of the 30 games he appeared in and averaged 5.7 points and 5.8 rebounds in those contests while shooting 54.2 percent from the field and 50.0 percent from the free-throw line. He also led the team with 103 fouls – 17 more than the next closest Buckeye – and seven disqualifications.

Stewart originally entered the transfer portal just hours before it closed on April 22 in what was a change of heart for the forward. He indicated that he was happy with his role at Ohio State after the team's season-ending loss to Iowa in the Big Ten tournament but reportedly had second thoughts as the offseason rolled on. Stewart will now have to take on his old team next season in Eugene, Ore.

The Ducks went 25-10 and 12-8 in the Big Ten last season in their first year in the conference, earning a No. 5 seed in the NCAA Tournament before falling to former Pac-12 foe and No. 4 seed Arizona in the second round.

Stewart was the last of the five former Buckeyes to find a new home after entering the transfer portal this offseason. Stewart's fellow McDonald's All-American five-star Aaron Bradshaw committed to Memphis on April 16, while Meechie Johnson Jr. transferred back to South Carolina on April 1, Evan Mahaffey pledged to Akron on March 28 and Austin Parks signed with Toledo on April 16.

Nash Family Wins "Family Feud" Grand Prize

Ohio State walk-on guard Braylen Nash didn't get much airtime on the court in his first season with the program, but he certainly got his chance in the national spotlight from May 13-16 at Atlanta's Tyler Perry Studios. That's where he and his family appeared in four consecutive episodes of the iconic "Family Feud" game show and took home a grand total of over \$40,000.

Nash made his entertainment TV debut

alongside his parents, Marsha and David, his sister, Micaylah Preston, and his brother-in-law, former Ohio University star and current Utah Jazz guard Jason Preston. The quintet earned a spot on the show in large part due to the efforts of Micaylah, who recognized that her family was made for TV and helped them each fill out an application so that they could audition and eventually be cast. Preston told the Dispatch that the process took over a year to complete.

The Nash family, which hails from New Albany, Ohio, fared well in the first game aired on May 13, defeating the competing family to advance to the second game on May 14. Braylen sent his family to the "Fast Money" round by correctly choosing the final survey answer on the board in the first round, answering "mother" to the question, "In your nightmares, who are you taking a shower with?"

The Nash family ended up competing in four episodes total, losing the fourth and went home with a total of \$40,685 since they won the "Fast Money" round twice. Braylen said meeting seven-time Emmy Award-winning host Steve Harvey was the highlight of the games.

"It didn't even feel real," Nash told the Dispatch before the episodes aired. "The things (Harvey) said, interacting with him, was definitely the top moment. Half the stuff won't even make the actual episode, but he's so good at what he does and he's absolutely so funny."

Nash will now try to translate his winning ways from the studio to the hardwood for his second season with the Buckeyes. He scored just five points in nine games last year.

Pedon Extended Through 2029-30

Former Ohio State assistant coach Ryan Pedon earned a contract extension with Illinois State on May 1 that will allow him to serve as the Redbirds' head coach through the 2029-30 season.

"I am grateful for this opportunity to continue leading the Redbird men's basketball program into the future," Pedon said. "I would like to thank (athletic director) Dr. Jeri Beggs, President (Aondover) Tarhule, and our Board of Trustees for their support and confidence in what we are building together."

Pedon, 47, earns the extension after leading Illinois State to a 22-14 record and 10-10 mark in the Missouri Valley Conference this past season, the program's highest win total since 2016-17 and first winning season since 2018-19. The Redbirds also had success in the postseason, winning the 2025 College Basketball Invitational.

The successful 2024-25 campaign continued the program's upward trajectory under Pedon, winning just 11 games in 2022-23, 15 in 2023-24 and the previously mentioned 22 in 2024-25.

Before his time at Illinois State, Pedon spent five seasons at Ohio State as an assistant to former head coach Chris Holtmann, helping the Buckeyes go 107-56 overall and 58-40 in Big Ten play with four NCAA Tournament appearances. He was also instrumental in the development of future NBA players such as Keita Bates-Diop, Malaki Branham and E.J. Liddell.

Pedon's 2025-26 staff added some Buck-

eye flair on May 8 with the hiring of Mike Netti as an assistant, who served as a special assistant with Ohio State from 2017-22 and assistant coach from 2022-24

Johnson No. 20 On ESPN Top 100

Johnson is continuing to earn national recognition. On May 1 he landed at No. 20 in ESPN's latest top 100 player rankings for the class of 2026.

Johnson is the only player in the top 20 on ESPN's list who is currently committed to a team. He lands on the list after an excellent junior season at Garfield Heights in which he was named Ohio Mr. Basketball. His elite play helped lead the Bulldogs to their first OHSAA Division III, Region 9 title since 2016 as well as an appearance in the Division III state semifinals.

Johnson continues to showcase his talents this summer in the Nike Elite Youth Basketball League (EYBL). He is averaging 19.5 points, 5.1 rebounds and 2.5 assists per game on the circuit for the Indy Heat Gym Rats through 11 games. Those stats were aided by his 30-point, four-rebound and three-assist performance on April 27 against Nightrydas Elite, which features the No. 13 player on ESPN's top 100 list, Miami (Fla.) Columbus five-star power forward Caleb Gaskins (6-8, 219).

Johnson, the cousin of Meechie Johnson, will look to continue ascending in his class while playing on the competitive EYBL circuit this summer. 247Sports' composite rankings currently tab the lefty as the nation's No. 30 overall prospect, No. 7 point guard and No. 2

player in Ohio in the 2026 class.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Speaking of recruiting, Ohio State sent out a notable offer on May 7 to Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star small forward Demarcus Henry (6-6, 180), the younger brother of incoming five-star football commit Chris Henry Jr. The elder Henry took to Twitter to show his support for his little brother, writing "Show lil bro some love!!" in response to a tweet that showed his basketball highlights. Demarcus is the nation's No. 52 overall prospect, No. 17 small forward and No. 6 player from California in the 2027 class.

- Thornton did not receive an invite to the NBA Draft Combine held from May 11-18 in Chicago, which signaled a likely return to the Buckeyes for next season. That plan was confirmed on May 27 when CBS Sports' Jon Rothstein reported Thornton had officially withdrawn his name from the draft.

- Former Ohio State guard Mike Conley helped lead his Minnesota Timberwolves to the Western Conference finals of the NBA playoffs this spring. The 18-year veteran came just three wins shy of reaching the first NBA finals of his career after the Timberwolves fell to the Oklahoma City Thunder 4-1 in the series, but he still had an impact in the series, averaging 4.4 points, 2.4 assists and 2.2 rebounds per game as the team's starting point guard. Conley averaged 6.0 points, 3.3 assists and 2.1 rebounds per game throughout the playoffs.

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McGuff Arrested For Driving Under Influence

Ohio State women's basketball coach Kevin McGuff was arrested in Dublin, Ohio, on the evening of May 6 for driving under the influence.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Bobby Gorbett

McGuff didn't attend his May 13 hearing but pleaded not guilty to a charge of OVI. At the hearing, McGuff was represented by defense attorney Rick Piatt and was granted a stay of his license suspension.

Body cam footage released by the Dublin Police Department on May 13, showed McGuff struggle to answer questions from local police and fail multiple sobriety tests on the night of his arrest. In one sobriety test, McGuff was asked to recite his alphabet from letters D to R, but he said only "D" without reciting any other letters. When asked to count down from 63-48, McGuff recited only the number 63 multiple times.

McGuff, who said he was driving from Dublin restaurant J. Liu to his home in Dublin, struggled for over a minute to open his car door when police arrived. He refused to take a breathalyzer test during his arrest and therefore had his license taken away immediately, which was temporarily reinstated at his May 13 hearing.

In his 12 years as Ohio State's head coach, McGuff has built a consistent program. Under his leadership since the 2013-14 season, the Buckeyes have a 276-113 record and have made the NCAA tournament eight times, the Sweet 16 three times and the Elite Eight once. McGuff is under contract through the 2025-26 season.

In a statement released on May 12, the Ohio State athletic department said it was aware of the incident involving McGuff.

"The department is in communication with Coach McGuff and monitoring the situation closely. This is an ongoing, personal legal matter, and the department will share additional information at the appropriate time," Ohio State said.

OSU Guard Enters Portal

Ohio State guard Kaia Henderson entered the transfer portal, On3 Sports' Talia Goodman reported on May 28.

Henderson, who redshirted during the 2024-25 season, entered the portal with two years of eligibility remaining and a "do not contact" tag, meaning she may already be eyeing her next destination out of the portal.

Despite spending three years in Columbus, Henderson failed to make a significant impact on the Buckeye program. Appearing in 28 games over two seasons with Ohio State, Henderson averaged 0.9 points, 0.3 assists and 0.5 rebounds per game.

Henderson, who had yet to find her home out of the portal as BSB went to press, is the third former Buckeye to depart the program via the transfer portal since the end of the 2024-25 season, joining star forward Cotie McMahon, who transferred to Ole Miss,



SONNY BROCKWAY

OFF-COURT ISSUE — Ohio State women's basketball coach Kevin McGuff pleaded not guilty on May 13 to a charge by the Dublin (Ohio) police that he was driving under the influence on May 6. Body cam footage released by the police department showed McGuff having trouble answering questions and following directions.

and center Faith Carson, who transferred to Grand Canyon.

Four-Star Guard Commits To OSU

Four-star shooting guard and Springboro, Ohio, native Bryn Martin committed to Ohio State on May 18 to become the second member of the Buckeyes' 2025 recruiting class. Martin, who originally committed to Washington in September before decommitting on May 12, is the No. 69-ranked recruit in ESPN's HoopGurlz top 100 rankings.

Standing 6-1, Martin averaged 23.0 points, 5.1 assists, 4.2 rebounds and 2.2 steals per game on the way to becoming Ohio's Division I Player of the Year as a senior.

In addition to the Huskies, Martin also received interest from other high-major schools including Clemson, Kentucky, Louisville, Miami and West Virginia.

Martin joins fellow four-star Daria "Dasha" Biriuk in Ohio State's 2025 class. Biriuk ranks No. 83 in ESPN's HoopGurlz rankings.

OSU Set To Face Powerhouses At Home

In a release of Ohio State's 2025-26 Big Ten opponents on April 30, it was revealed that the Buckeyes will take on national contenders USC and UCLA at home and they will play Maryland twice.

Like every other team in the conference, the Buckeyes will play 18 conference games and will square off against every Big Ten foe at least once, with the Terrapins being the only team they will face off against twice.

In addition to USC and UCLA, the Buck-

eyes' home-only opponents are Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, Penn State, Rutgers and Wisconsin.

On the road, the Buckeyes will face off against Illinois, Iowa, Michigan State, Minnesota, Northwestern, Oregon, Purdue, and Washington.

Coming off a 26-7 overall record and a 13-5 record in Big Ten play last season, Ohio State will try to improve its tied-for-third finish in the standings. In 2024-25, the Buckeyes were in part doomed by road losses to future NCAA tournament No. 1 seeds UCLA and USC. In 2025-26, the Buckeyes will instead square off with the two elite programs in the confines of their own arena.

The Buckeyes' road schedule is marked by their first trip out west to take on Oregon and Washington on the road in a Big Ten contest. Both the Huskies and the Ducks are coming off NCAA tournament appearances.

The Buckeyes' extra Big Ten opponent — Maryland — comes as no surprise, considering they've squared off against the Terrapins twice in the regular season every year since 2020-21. Ohio State nearly completed the regular-season sweep of Maryland last year but was defeated by a last-second three-point shot in overtime to lose 93-90 in a March 2 game in College Park, Md.

Thierry Makes Opening Day Roster

Despite being a late-third-round selection in the 2025 WNBA draft, former Ohio State guard Taylor Thierry earned an opening day roster spot on the Atlanta Dream.

Thierry, who was the third-to-last pick in the draft (No. 36) by the Dream on April 14, was named one of 11 players who made the franchise's opening day roster on May

15 a list that also included notable names such as veteran center Brittney Griner and former Michigan and South Carolina stars Naz Hillmon and Te-Hina Paopao.

Thierry likely made the team after showing out in training camp and in preseason for Atlanta this spring. She recorded eight points, two steals and five rebounds in the team's two preseason games against the Washington Mystics and Indiana Fever.

Thierry was able to show off the versatile skill set she developed in her four seasons at Ohio State (2021-25), where she became one of the more feared defenders in the Big Ten, finishing her career with 234 steals. That number ranks 10th in program history.

The native of Cleveland also became a more formidable offensive threat as her Buckeye career progressed. After totaling just 2.9 points per game as a freshman in 30 games (zero starts), she combined for 11.7 points per game on 60.2 percent shooting in 101 total games (all starts) in her final three seasons. Those improved offensive numbers earned her a pair of second-team All-Big Ten selections in 2022-23 and 2023-24 as well as all-conference honorable mention this past season by the media.

Thierry will now look to bring her production on both ends to a Dream team that went 15-25 last season and lost in two games to the eventual WNBA champion New York Liberty in the first round of the postseason.

After appearing in only 17 seconds of a May 20th win over the Indiana Fever, Thierry received a larger portion of playing time in the Dream's 79-55 win over the Connecticut Sun on May 25. In that game, the 6-0 forward was on the court for three minutes, missed the only shot she took. Thierry got on the court again two days later in the Dream's 88-82 win over the Los Angeles Sparks but again missed her only shot in one minute of playing time.

Kelsey Mitchell Reaches 4K

While Thierry's career is just beginning, Kelsey Mitchell, a former four-time All-American at Ohio State, scored her 4,000th career point in the WNBA. Mitchell, who has been with the Indiana Fever ever since they drafted her with the second overall pick in the 2018 draft, has made a career out of putting the ball in the basket.

The Cincinnati native has averaged 16.8 points per game with the Fever in her career, a mark that allowed her to become the fifth-fastest guard to reach the 4,000-point threshold, doing so in only 238 games.

Mitchell, who has become more well-known nationally since the Fever drafted former Iowa superstar Caitlin Clark, scored her 4,000th point while Clark was sidelined with a quadriceps strain during an 83-77 loss to the Washington Mystics on May 28. Mitchell needed only six points to get to 4,000 and officially hit the mark right on the number with a free throw 47 seconds before halftime.

It wasn't the most efficient performance for the former Buckeye, who exited Columbus as the Big Ten's all-time leading scorer, but she still scored 14 points on 4-of-16 shooting while recording four assists and one rebound.

Buckeyes Left Off Of All-Big Ten Teams

After what was a disappointing 2025 season for the Ohio State baseball team, the All-Big Ten teams were revealed on May 20, and the Buckeyes didn't receive any recognition on any of the all-conference teams for any individual player.

FROM THE STRETCH Greg Wilson

There were four starting pitchers, three relief pitchers, one player at each fielding position, a utility player and two at-large players named to the All-Big Ten first team, with an extra first baseman and catcher included on the second team due to ties in the voting. The third team didn't include those two positions because of the ties and also included only three starting pitchers, one reliever and one at-large player.

Regardless, of the 50 available spots from the first through third teams, the Buckeyes weren't able to get a single player on the list of all-conference honors.

Not only did they not have a player on any of those three lists, but they missed out on the all-defensive team and the all-freshman team as well. Only third baseman Will Carpenter represented the team by receiving the sportsmanship award, which is given to one player from each team in the conference.

Every other team had at least one player receive all-conference honors, with Northwestern coming closest to also missing out on any honors by having only one player on the All-Big Ten third team (Owen McElfatrick Jr., 3B).

It was fitting that the Buckeyes weren't represented well with the all-conference awards since the team finished with a 13-37 overall record (5-25 Big Ten), which was 10 games worse than the next closest team and five games behind 16th-place Minnesota in the conference.

While there were some bright spots on the diamond for the Buckeyes on the offensive side of the ball – mostly Trey Lipsey and Tyler Pettorini – the pitching seemed to drag the team down time and time again, with the hurlers unable to find the strike zone whether they were in a close game or were already being blown out.

"You can't win if you can't pitch," head coach Justin Haire told Press Pros Magazine. "I've been on staffs that had some of

the top offenses in the country, and we finished .500 because we didn't pitch at a very high level. If you want to win at a high level, you have to pitch and defend, and that was true when Abner Doubleday invented the game. It's true today, and it will be true a hundred years from now."

Ohio State finished the season with a team ERA of 9.62, which was 288th in the country at the Division I level. Only 11 teams had a worse mark, and none of them were in a Power Four conference.

When it came to walks allowed per nine innings, the Buckeyes were just as bad, averaging 7.58 walks per nine, which was 290th in the country.

But even when Buckeye pitchers were able to find the strike zone, the results still weren't there. As a team, they were 242nd in the country in hits allowed per nine innings, with 11.11 over 50 games. All of that came together to give the team a 2.08 WHIP, which was 284th in the country.

But while the offense was the better half of the equation for Ohio State this season, it still wasn't anything to write home about. The team on-base percentage of .378 was 177th in the country, while it was 197th in runs scored, crossing home plate 336 times.

The pitching struggles were well on display in the last series of the season against Illinois, mostly in the second game of the weekend series. The Buckeyes lost the game 18-9, and the Fighting Illini got off to an early start by scoring four runs in the top of the first thanks to three walks and an error in the frame.

Starter Jake Michalak was able to settle in until he got into the fifth inning, walking three straight batters before being removed for Noah LaFine, who walked the next batter to allow a run to score but was able to escape the inning with a double play.

The Buckeyes finished the game giving up 11 walks, two hit by pitches and two wild pitches. The offense had some chances to add on to the nine runs it was able to score but wasn't able to come through.

"It was the same story that's characterized this whole season," Haire said after the game. "We create innings for other people, and we had the bases loaded in the seventh, and we score one."

Haire understands what the issues with the team this season have been and knows that he is going to have to work extremely hard on the recruiting front to try to find pitchers who can live around the strike zone. Finding prep arms is a priority for Haire over the offseason.

"Nobody's ever lost because they had too much pitching," Haire said. "And that's a priority on the recruiting front – to find guys who can compete and fit our style of play. Guys who can attack the zone and do some different things. Our job is to work on the recruiting front the best we can and make sure we're not in this position 365 days from now."

The Buckeyes were able to land five pitchers in the 2025 class, in righthanders Jude Fisher from Pro5 Baseball Academy, Connor Fuhrer of Cincinnati Moeller, Owen Graf from Whitehouse (Ohio) Anthony Wayne, Gavin Meyer from Illiana Christian in Illinois and Mason Tymick from South Torrance in California.

Pitching has also been more of a priority in the 2026 class. Four of the six commitments Haire had landed as BSB went to press were pitchers, each of them from the state of Ohio, and two of them left-handed.

Nathan Bryant from Akron and Mack Hiebler from Patrick Henry in Deshler are right-handed, while Drew Hauenstein from Olentangy Liberty in Powell and Landon Thiel from Jackson in Massillon throw from the left side.

Former OSU Pitcher Klingenberg Dies

Former Buckeye pitcher Scott Klingenberg died unexpectedly on May 20, Ohio State announced. He was 54 years old.

A right-handed pitcher, Klingenberg played for Ohio State from 1990-92 and was on the 1991 team that won the Big Ten title, earning second-team All-America honors and first-team All-Big Ten that season with 11 wins.

In 277⅔ career innings with the Buckeyes, Klingenberg had an ERA of 3.99, throwing 25 complete games over his three-year college career. He also won Big Ten Freshman of the Year honors in 1990 and still ranks in the top five in career wins with 28 and wins in a season with his 1991 mark.

After he finished his playing career at Ohio State, Klingenberg was drafted by the Baltimore Orioles in the 1992 amateur draft in the fifth round. He shot up through Baltimore's minor-league system quickly with seasons in Single-A and High-A before being assigned to the Double-A team in 1994 and skipping triple-A entirely to make his major-league debut with the Orioles.

In four big-league seasons, Klingenberg managed a 6.91 ERA and a 5-8 record through stints with the Orioles (1995-95), the Minnesota Twins (1995-96) and Cincinnati Reds (1998) while being sent up and down between MLB and the minors.

After his professional career ended, Klingenberg remained in Cincinnati and coached youth baseball and other sports.

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Hype For Buckeyes Heating Up This Summer

If it is June, then college football must be right around the corner.

That means it is time for fans to get fired up and start thinking about college football in general, and Ohio State specifically.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

This is when everyone wants to weigh in with their thoughts on which players will break out, which freshmen will surprise, best chance for a loss, which coaches cannot recruit. Pretty much every avenue is covered by Buckeye Nation.

Since I brought it up, I will give my thoughts on those important questions.

On offense, the breakout star is easy – Julian Sayin. There were reports out of spring practice that he and Lincoln Kienholz were running neck and neck, and I received intel that was true, not merely lip service by Ryan Day. But the performance in OSU's spring game vaulted Sayin into the lead, albeit not by much. The opening of fall camp affords Kienholz a chance to make up ground, but Sayin appears to have that "it" factor you so often hear about.

On defense, I see Arvell Reese breaking into the big time. He's already a real thumper, and with an unquestioned lock on a starting spot he should be able to display his abilities. His ability to shoot gaps and take on blocks makes him a strong presence, and he can float back into coverage or get after the quarterback. His name does not appear on any preseason All-Big Ten lists, but it would not be a shock to see it there once the season is over.

Freshmen who will surprise? Well, I don't know that it is much of a surprise, but on offense, wideout Quincy Porter has all the skill to be another in a long line of great Buckeye receivers. At 6-4, 196 pounds, he already has the size to be a problem for opposing cornerbacks. Once he gets up to speed in the offense, he could prove to be a valuable weapon.

On defense, it is none other than Devin Sanchez. The five-star corner is not only an outstanding player, but he was working overtime to bring other recruits into the fold. Sanchez is currently listed as second team, but he is another player who will be on the field sooner rather than later – maybe even starting at nickel by the Big Ten opener.

The best chance for a loss, to me anyway, is the opener against Texas. Steve Sarkisian has a really good team this year, especially on defense, and for a team breaking in a new quarterback and with potential but uncertainty up front, that

could be an issue. Not to mention that though he has not started, Arch Manning has played in big spots and should feel comfortable going on the road in a big environment. The second choice would be Penn State, but it is lower than Texas simply because until I see James Franklin beat OSU in Columbus, I will not believe it. Third would be Michigan, even though I do not believe the Wolverines will be much better than they were last season. Even with the national title run the Buckeyes put together, it would be nice to see them get back in the win column against their hated rival.

As far as coaches not being able to recruit, well, I was raised to not say anything bad about people. So I will just leave it at this – OSU has faced a deficit on the defensive line for the past few seasons, and it needs to get better.

For years the Buckeyes' pass rush terrified foes – from Vrabel to Gholston to Bosa to Young to Tuimoloau to Sawyer – there's a pretty nice lineage of sack artists who have come through Columbus. A quick perusal of this year's roster shows that there does not appear to be that automatic, that "guy" opposing offenses are going to have to stay up late for to counteract. If you cannot get a consistent pass rush, it affects the rest of the defense. Matt Patricia is more about pre-snap disguise and movement than blitzing, so he must hope the Buckeyes can affect the quarterback without needing to dial up pressure.

Whither The Kickoff Times

There has been all sort of hullabaloo about the decision to make the Texas-Ohio State contest a noon kickoff.

As someone who grew up on 1 p.m. kickoffs at Ohio Stadium, I have to say this is much ado about nothing. When the game kicks off is immaterial, at least to me. The fact it kicks off is most important. I'll watch at noon, in prime time or on a random Tuesday played at a suburban park. I don't care.

That said, trying to view things through the lens of a casual viewer – games do seem to have more importance and buzz when they are played in prime time. I remember well the scene when Vince Young and Texas came to Columbus in 2005 for the first-ever meeting between the blue bloods, a game that kicked off at 8 p.m. to a national television audience.

The Buckeyes came in ranked No. 4 and Texas No. 2, and the buildup throughout the day was palpable. So there is something to be said for nighttime kicks. Anyone who has been to Penn State for a Whiteout will agree. It's too bad Ohio Stadium doesn't have that same kind of atmosphere.

But people acting like this is some crime against humanity need to dial it back a bit. First of all, there is nothing wrong with the biggest game of the day being the first game of the day. There are some weeks where the schedule is not all that great, and the wait for the big game seems interminable. In a perfect world, there would be one big game in each window – noon, 3:30 and prime time. But Sat-

urdays are seldom perfect, so you take the big games when you can.

There are also a few negatives to a late kickoff, including for folks who travel to come to games. If the night game does not end until 11 p.m., that means either getting home around 2 a.m. or forking out money to stay overnight in a hotel. Neither is a great option.

The sweet spot is actually 3:30, as it affords fans enough time to tailgate and get sufficiently juiced up and still get home at a reasonable hour.

Former OSU AD Gene Smith said that he would not allow any home night games in November, so when Ohio State has played at night in Big Ten play it has been as a road team. Maybe Ross Bjork, who knows a little about the atmosphere at night games as a former SEC athletic director, will change that.

For now, folks will continue to complain.

But they need to remember that Ohio State *does* have a night kickoff this season – in week three, against Ohio University.

Baseball Bucks Suffer Huge Loss

I had the recent misfortune of learning about the death of former OSU pitcher Scott Klingenberg, nicknamed "Kling" by some and "Brick" by others.

Baseball was one of the first beats I covered with regularity for BSB, and in the early days there was not a whole lot to write home about. But once Bob Todd came aboard as coach, fortunes turned around, and Klingenberg played a huge role in that.

A bulldog on the mound, Klingenberg tossed 25 complete games in his three seasons with the Buckeyes, and he was a two-time All-Big Ten choice and a second-team All-America selection. He wasn't a towering physical presence by any means, but he oozed confidence – to the point that anytime I was slated to cover a game where he was pitching, I subconsciously noted that he was the winning pitcher before the first pitch was thrown. That's how money he was for the Buckeyes at the time.

A native of Cincinnati and a huge fan of the Reds, he realized his boyhood dream when he joined the organization in 1998. Though he pitched only four games with them, that brief time was one of the joys of his life.

He was never the most comfortable talking to reporters, preferring to let his work on the mound speak for him.

So I won't use many words to describe him, other than to say he set the groundwork for future All-America pitchers at Ohio State. Without him carving that path, the program could have gone a different direction. But it won and won big.

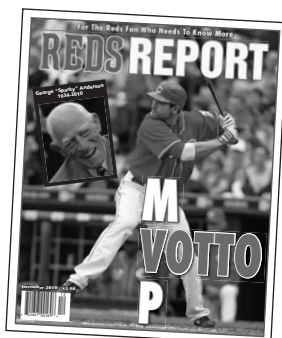
And Klingenberg was a huge part of that.

He will be missed.

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Upon Review, Latest Championship Run Still Greatest

In the last issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, I talked about how impressive Ohio State's four-game run to the 2024 CFP national championship was.

"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," I wrote in this space. "It doesn't get any better than that."

Our own Craig Merz, my personal editor and personal headline writer (If it's a clever headline, which most of them are, he wrote it. If it isn't so clever – well, he wrote that one too.), who is the first person to read this column each issue, immediately reminded me that the Buckeyes had a pretty impressive four-game run to the national championship in 2014, as well.

I've always loved that four-game stretch in 2014, especially because it was done almost entirely with a third-string quarterback, and also because in a "run within a run" there was the epic rushing performance by Ezekiel Elliott, who averaged 232.0 yards a game and 9.2 yards per carry in the postseason while scoring eight touchdowns.

I decided to compare the two championship drives, in order, game-by-game, to try to decide which was the more impressive streak. The 2024 streak featured four games in the expanded playoffs, while the 2014 run consisted of The Game, the Big Ten Championship Game and two games in the inaugural CFP playoff.

Back in 2014, *any* game with rival Michigan was considered a big game and a big victory, a tradition that just 10 years later is now starting to erode with the advent of the expanded playoff, which allows for a mulligan (or in the case of the 2024 Buckeyes, two mulligans – Oregon and the Wolverines).

In our game-by-game comparison, the 2014 champions are immediately in a hole. The Wolverine team they beat came into Columbus unranked with a 5-6 record and left on the wrong end of a 42-28 Buckeye victory despite Ohio State playing almost the entire fourth quarter without starting quarterback J.T. Barrett.

The 2024 team, meanwhile, was crushing Tennessee, 42-17. I believe the Volunteers have been downgraded by many because of how badly they were manhandled by Ohio State in front of a huge throng of Tennessee fans who had invaded Ohio Stadium. This was a solid football team that finished the regular season 10-2 and ranked seventh in the country, with wins over then-No. 15 Oklahoma and then-No. 7 Alabama. **Advantage 2024.**

In the 2014 Big Ten Championship Game, with third-string quarterback Cardale Jones at the helm, Ohio State scored one of its most impressive and unexpected victories in its storied history. The Badgers came into the game 10-2 and No. 11 in the country, and Ohio State beat them 59-0, enough to catapult the Buckeyes into the inaugural playoffs.

While Wisconsin was a strong team with a strong running back in Melvin Gordon, the Badgers were no comparison to the 2024 team's next opponent, Oregon, which entered the game undefeated and top-ranked at 13-0, already holding a regular-season victory over OSU. While the Buckeyes' victory over the Ducks may not have been as convincing as the one over the Badgers, it was still convincing at 42-21. **Advantage 2024.**

Ohio State's third opponent in its 2024 run was a good one in Texas, which entered its game with the Buckeyes with a 13-2 record including playoff wins over Clemson and Arizona State and had finished the regular season ranked No. 2 in the country.

But I am automatically giving the nod in the third game of the dueling streaks to 2014 be-

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

cause of the significance of Ohio State defeating Alabama, then the gold standard of college football. For the record, the Tide were 12-1 entering the game with Ohio State and had finished the regular season ranked No. 1 in the country. The Buckeyes beat them, 42-35. **Advantage 2014.**

The final game of each of the four game streaks, each game for the CFP championship, may be the most competitive.

Oregon entered the 2014 championship tilt with a 13-1 record after defeating No. 2 Florida State, 59-20, in the first round of the playoffs. The Ducks had finished the regular season ranked No. 3.

Notre Dame, on the other hand, entered the 2024 championship game with a 14-1 record, the loss being an inexplicable one to Northern Illinois in Week 2. The Irish made it to the final by recording playoff wins over Indiana, Georgia and Penn State. The Irish kept the game with the Buckeyes interesting but in the end fell to Ohio State, 34-23. **Advantage Even.**

So, I give the nod for most impressive four-game run to the 2024 team, 2-1-1, as much as I loved that 2014 drive to the championship.

After I made the initial statement about the "most dominant run in college football history," I worried that there was some run by another team throughout the years, that I either missed or forgot about. Mark Rea helped me out in his column on page three of this issue, noting that "the Buckeyes rattled off back-to-back-to-back wins against top-five opponents, matching a feat accomplished only once before (LSU in 2019) in the history of college football." LSU's game before it started its streak of top-five wins was against unranked Texas A&M, so I am going to still go with the 2024 Ohio State team having the most dominant – or at least most difficult – run in college football history.

Some Notes On Zeke's Streak

Any Buckeye fan remembers that Elliott had the three 200-plus yard games in the 2014 postseason. What we sometimes forget – well I had forgotten – is that he had a solid game in the regular-season finale against Michigan. He gained 121 net yards on 17 carries for a 7.1-yard average and two touchdowns. That gave him 817 yards on 93 carries in the final four games of the season, an average of 204.3 yards per game with an 8.8-yard average and 10 touchdowns.

Elliott had what are now known as "chunk plays" in each of the games. He had a 44-yard run against Michigan, 81 yards against Wisconsin, 85 yards against Alabama and 33 vs. Oregon.

A Real Quarterback Battle?

It seems like every spring Ryan Day says there is a quarterback battle that is going to spill over into fall camp and maybe into the early season. He's a little bit like the Little Boy Who Cried Wolf when it comes to quarterback battles. This year he has been saying that Julian Sayin and Lincoln Kienholz are locked in a neck-and-neck duel.

"I felt like Lincoln, going into the spring game, was a little bit ahead of Julian, but if you just watch the (spring) game, Julian probably performed better than Lincoln, and here we are," Day said after the close of spring practice. "I went back through, watched the spring practices, looked at the grades and they are very similar. So, we'll take it into the summer, and we'll let them play."

"The more you play, the more these things find a way to work themselves out. So, who

knows how it's going to shake out."

I don't know about you, but if you read between the lines, it seems like there actually has been a competitive battle this spring.

I think the smart money – and my not-so-smart money – is still on Sayin under center in the opener against Texas. But you never know. With such a big opener, Day might want to go with Kienholz's experience. He had to have gained something from the Cotton Bowl disaster after the 2023 season, a calamity that in no way, shape or form do I blame on Kienholz.

End Of The Washington Senators

I was listening to the radio recently, and I came across someone talking about the chaotic final home game of the Washington Senators in 1971. I'm not sure why they were talking about it because it wasn't an anniversary or anything. But it caught my attention because, as most of you know, I hail from Washington, D.C.

Now this is Buckeye Sports Bulletin, so for this to be an item in my column there has to be an Ohio State connection, and there is one – a "big" one.

First, a little background. The "New Senators" as we called them, not to be confused with the "Old Senators," who moved to Minnesota in 1961 and became the Twins, came into existence that same year. In their 11-year history, the New Senators had only one star (unless you counted a washed-up Jimmy Piersall in 1962-63). Oh, they had a pretty big star for a manager, when Ted Williams was at the helm from 1969-71, but as far as players, there was just one – Ohio State's Frank Howard, all 6-7, 255 pounds of him.

He led the team in home runs all seven seasons he was in D.C., including his power run from 1968-1970, when his home run and RBI totals were 44 and 106, 48 and 111, and 44 and 126, respectively. And many of the home-run shots were as big as Howard, with several seats in the RFK Stadium center-field upper deck painted to mark where some of the longest ones landed – almost always visible because there was rarely anyone sitting out there.

But by the time the final game of the 1971 season rolled around (Howard had 26 home runs and 83 RBI that year), the District's baseball fate had been sealed nine days earlier when American League owners voted, 10-2, to let owner Bob Short move the Senators to Texas, where they would become the Rangers.

While all this was unfolding, I had already moved to the Midwest for college, so I am just learning about this myself, from the radio broadcast and an article written for the Washington Post by Frederic J. Frommer in 2021.

A crowd of 14,460 fans – nearly double the average home crowd that season – showed up on Sept. 30 for the game with the Yankees, as much to express their anger with Short as to say farewell to their team.

I'll let Frommer take over from here.

"When fan favorite Frank Howard led off the sixth with the Yankees leading 5-1, he got a standing ovation for the third time and fans threw confetti on the field," he wrote. "Fans were hoping for one final thrill. He obliged them, with a little help from friendly Yankees."

"'Until that point, the crowd was pretty subdued,' said Kevin Dowd, who was at the ballpark that night.

"'It was almost like a haze watching the game,' he said. 'The Yankees were winning, which I saw many times in my life. And then Frank hit this monstrous homer – it was like an alarm clock going off. The place went nuts.'"

"When he crossed home plate, Howard told catcher Thurman Munson, 'Thanks for the gift,' recognizing that New York had grooved one to him. After the game, Yankees pitcher Mike Kekich seemed to acknowledge as much. 'It's OK,' he said. 'Let's just say I tried to throw him a straight pitch.'"

"Howard, known as 'The Capital Punisher,' waved his batting helmet in the air, blew kisses to the fans and tossed his cap into the stands. 'This is utopia,' he said after the game. 'This is the greatest thrill of my life. What would top it?' "

The Senators rallied for three more runs in the sixth inning to tie the score and went ahead in the eighth, but the crowd's mood soon darkened. Fans ultimately stormed the field, ripping up anything that wasn't secured and some things that were.

The Senators never got the last out. The umpires declared the game a forfeit to the Yankees – by the traditional forfeit score of 9-0 – the first in the majors since 1954.

And thus ended the short life of the "New" Washington Senators. Baseball did not return to the nation's capital until 2005, when the Montreal Expos came to town as the Washington Nationals.

Frank Howard, who played both baseball and basketball for the Buckeyes, passed away in 2023 at the age of 87.

Business Notes

We recently kicked off our annual "Subscriber Special" promotion, with the first set of renewal cards going out at the end of May. This year's promotion features the same \$104.95 base rate as last year and includes a chance to win an Ohio State-Texas weekend with a pair of game tickets, a \$50 gift card from College Traditions, tailgate snacks from the popular City Barbeque and a victory celebration at Roosters – a fun, casual joint.

I really encourage you to lock in on this promotion, with its \$20 discount on all subscription levels. As with everything else in this country right now, our rates are bound to go up. We face an increase in postage on July 13, with the Postal Service predicting an average increase of 7.4 percent over its assorted products. We are also one of those small businesses you keep hearing about who are having problems with future pricing because of the uncertainty over tariffs. Eighty percent of the newsprint in the United States comes from Canada. Will printing go up as well?

If you are one of those readers who has been having problems with timely delivery, don't forget that you can upgrade your subscription for football season only (the Football Preview Issue through the Michigan Wrap-Up) at the existing rate of \$30. That rate we *know* is going up on July 13 to \$35, still a loss for us, but as I have explained before, we are trying to share some of the burden with the readers.

To upgrade to first-class, send your check or credit card information (don't forget your security code) to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212, or call us at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862. You can also upgrade through the Football Recruiting Wrap Up for the current \$40 rate (\$45 after July 13).

An Editorial Note

College football is rapidly changing, and BSB has to keep up with the changes. Moving forward, football transfer portal recruiting news will now be included in our traditional "Recruiting Outlook." News of players leaving Ohio State through the portal will be included in the "Insider" section.



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