

Shaping The Future

Bjork Reflects On First Year As Ohio State AD

By GREG WILSON

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State athletic director Ross Bjork now has a year of experience on the job since taking over for former AD Gene Smith, who spent 19 years with the Buckeyes leading the athletic department.

While it has been true for a few years now that college athletics are changing at a rapid pace, things are moving even more quickly in 2025, and Bjork is on the front lines at Ohio State trying to navigate one of the country's largest and richest athletic departments into the new world of whatever college sports will look like in the future.

During his time as an advisor to Smith, Bjork hired four new head coaches for men's basketball, baseball, softball and rowing. Then during his first year as athletic director, he oversaw all kinds of athletic success, with the football program's national championship headlining the year. However, men's basketball and first-year coach Jake Diebler missed the NCAA Tournament for the third straight season, and women's basketball and head coach Kevin McGuff underperformed in the postseason and lost in the second round of the NCAA tournament for the second straight year.

Olympic sports saw plenty of success this year, with the pistol team winning its fifth straight national championship, women's hockey making the national title game for the fourth straight year, wrestling finishing fifth in the country at the NCAA championships, and much more.

As he enters his second year on the job, Bjork spoke with BSB on June 23 in his office at the Fawcett Center to headline our annual Interview Issue, touching on a variety of topics and reflecting on the year that Ohio State athletics had under his leadership.

Bjork also held an over hour-long press conference on June 12 at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center to address many of the big

changes happening in college sports after the House v. NCAA settlement on revenue sharing passed. He also addressed College Football Playoff expansion, home prime-time games at Ohio State and much more that day, so information on those topics can be found on pages 4-5 of Insider.

BSB: How are you liking Columbus so far?

Bjork: "It's great. Growing up – my mom is from northwest Ohio – we'd come to Ohio all the time, but really never came to Columbus, maybe once or twice. I just didn't really pay attention. I had no idea that Columbus was booming the way that it is.

"What's really cool about it is all the different neighborhood pockets that have their own identity, whether it's downtown Dublin, downtown Worthington, or obviously Grandview, the Short North and everything around campus.

Every place kind of has its own identity, but it's part of the bigger city. We love it, being able to get around town. It has an easy airport, so for those of us who travel a lot, having a great airport has helped. Everything about it has been awesome so far."

BSB: Have you noticed any major differences between Columbus and College Station (Texas)?

Bjork: "There are a lot of differences. You're in a big city here in Columbus, 2.2 million people (metro area) whereas in College Station, you were close to big cities, but the town itself wasn't. You had two towns, Bryan and College Station. They kind of blended together, but they were also unique in their own ways. Not many similarities other than they are both big brands. People care about sports, but the cities themselves could not be more different."

BSB: Now that you're almost a full year into your time at OSU, how would you evaluate your first year on the job?

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FILE PHOTO

USHERING IN A NEW ERA — Ross Bjork has dealt with a lot in his first year as athletic director with the ever-changing landscape of college athletics, the low point of a loss to Michigan followed by an epic run to the CFP championship, as well as disappointments in the basketball programs.

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**THE
INTERVIEW
ISSUE**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Michigan Loss Still Stings

I started working at Ohio Stadium in 1957. I sat through Woody's two losing seasons (What! A losing season!?!). I agree with your assessment about the TTUN loss (The View From 15th & High, May 2025). That was, in my opinion, the worst loss in the history of OSU athletics – worse than any other TTUN loss, or either, or both, of the two Cincinnati basketball losses.

The national championship won't erase the taste of losing to those cheaters – 19½-point underdogs – the worst play-calling in a long time. Their defensive tackles (Mason Graham and Kenneth

Grant) went No. 5 and No. 13 in the draft! Etc. etc.

**Craig Stewart
Columbus**

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



From The Message Board

In the "A Look Back at Recruiting" note from 2010 featured in this issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, then-Ohio State commit Braxton Miller was being compared to fellow dual-threat Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor. We asked readers and staff members on the Buckeye Sports Bulletin Fan Forum how Miller and Pryor compared to each other in terms of their abilities, and which of the two they think best reached their potential during their respective careers with the Buckeyes.

"It's really a provocative question to compare the two. I've always maintained Braxton was the most dynamic, elusive, and difficult to defend offensive player since Chic Harley. Terrelle seemed like a man among boys and probably had a stronger arm than Braxton. I'd say Terrelle probably came closer to reaching his potential than Braxton because of the latter's injuries. Very interesting question to consider."

– Terrier Buck

"I think both of them lived up to their recruiting billing, though neither reached their full potential for the obvious different reasons. Buckeye fans will never give Terrelle his full due because – well, because he is Terrelle. The thing I will always remember was his stride. He looked like he was running in slow motion and suddenly he was 10 yards downfield. Braxton was like a Heisman-caliber running back who could also throw the ball. He, too, will never get his full due because of the way the quarterback part of his career ended. Even without his final year at QB, he is one of the all-time Buckeye greats."

– Frank Moskowitz, BSB

"Braxton in his prime could run circles around Pryor, which is not to take away anything from Pryor."

– Peyote Buck

"Two of the most, if not the most, athletic QBs in Ohio State history. Terrelle had the size and speed to run like an elk, while Braxton was elusive with reflexes like a cat. Both were the fastest guys on their respective teams. Both were true dual threats with the ability to chuck the pigskin. I don't see either being a better passer than the other. I think any passing difference had more to do with the offensive scheme that was utilized at the time they played: ball control in the Tressel era for Pryor and a spread offense in the Meyer era for Miller."

"In the sense that each only played three years as the Ohio State starting QB for different reasons; Pryor with his off-field issues and Miller's injury, no, they did not live up to their full potential. But they both provided a heck of a lot of excitement while they did play."

– BuckeyeScott

Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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graphs, game-used equipment, small or large collections. Call Chris at (419) 957-6789.

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.

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

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Wondering If Rules Still Matter To NCAA

Right around the time when Big Ten players, coaches and media gather at that most Big Ten of venues – the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas – for the conference’s annual football media days, the NCAA should finally announce its findings in the Michigan sign-stealing scandal from 2023.

I know you’re probably getting tired of waiting – I know I am – for a resolution in what made a temporary celebrity of Connor Stalions, effectively ended the college coaching career of Jim Harbaugh, and left Harbaugh’s successor Sherrone Moore twisting in the wind.

Final arguments in the case from the NCAA and Michigan were heard in an Indianapolis courtroom in early June, with results anticipated to take 45 days to assemble. If that is truly the case, simple math puts the announcement of penalties (if any) sometime on or before July 22, the date on which the three-day Big Ten preseason extravaganza begins in Sin City.

Some punishments have already been meted out.

Stalions was fired in disgrace, Harbaugh ran off to the NFL – dogged with a four-year “show cause” penalty and one-year suspension in the unlikely event he should ever want to coach at the collegiate level again – and Moore faces a two-game suspension during the 2025 season for deleting more than 50 text messages he exchanged with Stalions during the early stages of the investigation into Michigan, allegations Moore has never denied.

As far as university officials are concerned, that should be the end of it. That is disingenuous on one side of the argument and a cavalier attitude toward shameless rule-breaking on the other.

Over the years, I have been critical of the NCAA’s ham-handedness when dealing with minor recruiting infractions. But this isn’t about giving a kid a free hotdog, a volleyball player using the campus water supply to wash her car, or players trading jerseys for tattoos. This is clear and brazen cheating, the kind that should result in meaningful punishment that rises high enough to produce some level of future deterrence. Despite what those in Ann Arbor would have us believe, this is not nothing.

But you don’t have to believe me.

In early May, Joe Rexrode of The Athletic quoted a Power Four head coach (not in the Big Ten) as saying, “I promise you that coaches still care about this. This was a major deal, and you can’t minimize it. It’s bad for college football. (Stealing signs) might be more common than you think, but the extremes (Michigan) went to? I’ve never heard of anything like it, and they need to get the hammer.”

Added a Group of Five assistant coach, “It’s blatant cheating. I mean, even knowing run or pass (before a play) is a huge advantage. So you’d like to see it taken seriously.”

College football is undergoing generational changes that have already altered the look and feel of the game. Realignment has already decimated some conferences and destroyed long-standing rivalries. Program-jumping has become prevalent through the transfer portal, and no one seems to know how revenue sharing, the newly instituted salary cap and NIL monies will coexist, although dumping even more money into the system can only lead to corruption. Can unionization of players and collective bargaining agreements be far behind?

In recent years, the NCAA has largely been defanged in terms of college football. Part of the reason is because the organization ceded its control to the powerful conferences (and their television partners) running the sport

so that the NCAA could continue governance over the cash cow known as March Madness.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

But if the NCAA wishes to retain any kind of adherence at all to its own mission statement – which reads, in part, “to govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable, and sportsmanlike manner” – its decision regarding Michigan must be that rules and enforcement of those rules still matter.

History Mystery

By now, you surely know about the Fan Forum on BuckeyeSports.com where subscribers swap stories and opinions about the news of the day (mostly but not always Ohio State-related). The Fan Forum is also home for some interesting trivia questions, including one that appeared from a regular poster who goes by the moniker Terrier Buck: Name the six Ohio State players between 1930 and 2000 who were twice named team MVP.

The answers: Gomer Jones (1934-35), Ralph Wolfe (1936-37), Vic Janowicz (1950-51), Hop Cassidy (1954-55), Jim Houston (1958-59) and Archie Griffin (1973-74).

As three of Ohio State’s six Heisman Trophy winners, Janowicz, Cassidy and Griffin certainly need no introduction, while longtime fans of the Cleveland Browns remember Houston as a Pro Bowl linebacker throughout the mid-1960s to early 1970s.

If you don’t know Jones, you should. He was an All-America center at Ohio State who became one of the first to become adept at what we now call the shotgun snap, an unusual innovation for his era. After graduation, he spent five years as an OSU assistant and later was an assistant coach, head coach and athletic director at Oklahoma.

During Jones’ tenure as an assistant at OSU, a young coach from the Midwest attended a Jones seminar one summer and returned home with an idea for a new kind of power offense. The young coach was Woody Hayes, and the offense came to be known as “three yards and a cloud of dust.”

As for the sixth man on the list of two-time MVPs, I confess I didn’t know anything about Ralph Wolfe. And it took more than a little digging to get to know him.

First of all, his name is spelled Wolf in some parts of Ohio State’s Official Football Media Guide, and Wolfe in others. It is also spelled Wolfe on the roster of names in the Youngstown State Athletics Hall of Fame. (We’ll get into that later.) But after having a look at several official documents available online, including his birth certificate and World War II draft card, the man’s last name contained no “e” at the end.

Ralph Charles Wolf was born April 11, 1915, in Youngstown, Ohio, the third son and fourth of five children to Frederick C. and Minnie Wolf. Ralph was a basketball, football and track star at Rayen High School where he was also vice president of the letterman’s club.

Upon his high school graduation, Wolf enrolled at Ohio State, and after spending a year on the freshman football team, moved up to a reserve role with the varsity as a sophomore in 1935. He didn’t see much action because he was Jones’ backup at center, and head coach Francis A. Schmidt was afraid to allow anyone but Jones to play the position.

But Wolf proved to be an astute student,

and as Woody would discover years later, Jones was an excellent teacher. Schmidt was living up to his nickname of “Frantic Francis” when Jones exhausted his college eligibility following the 1935 season, not knowing that Wolf had been copying his predecessor’s moves.

During fall camp, Schmidt begrudgingly told reporters that Wolf had been “surprisingly good” and then proceeded to play the junior center 438 of a possible 480 minutes during the 1936 season. As a result, Wolf was named most valuable player on a team that finished with a 5-3 record while Schmidt rewarded him by naming Wolf a co-captain for the 1937 squad.

Wolf earned first-team All-Big Ten as well as first-team All-America honors as a senior and played in the 1938 East-West Shrine Game, after which Schmidt offered him a spot on his coaching staff alongside Jones. Apparently, though, Wolf had had all he wanted of the idiosyncratic Schmidt and returned to Youngstown to get a job and start a family.

He worked in the steel mills of Youngstown as a recorder, the person responsible for documenting data related to steel production processes, and along the way, married the former Elizabeth McIntyre, a pretty girl everyone called “Betty.” Together, the couple had two children – son Richard and daughter Marilyn.

To supplement his income, Wolf in 1939 offered his knowledge of line play to new Youngstown State (called Youngstown College in those days) head coach Dwight “Dike” Beede. That began a relationship that lasted until 1972 when Beede and Wolf retired on the same day. The duo helped the Penguins produce 147 victories and 17 winning seasons while playing as an NCAA College Division independent.

Unfortunately, Beede didn’t get to enjoy retirement long. About a month after his resignation in November 1972, he drowned in Little Beaver Creek near his farm in north-eastern Ohio. He was 69.

Not much is known about Wolf following his departure from Youngstown State other than he died Oct. 22, 1984, in his hometown. Like Beede, he was 69.

A year later, Youngstown State inducted both Beede and Wolf (misspelling his name with that “e” at the end) posthumously into the university’s athletics hall of fame.

One More Thing

One more thing about Wolf’s boss at Youngstown State: Beede invented the penalty flag, introducing the innovation during a 1941 game at Rayen Stadium in Youngstown against Oklahoma City University.

Before flags, officials used horns and whistles to signal a penalty, but players often couldn’t (or at least said they couldn’t) hear the horns or whistles and kept right on playing. Fans and media also sometimes couldn’t understand what the horns and whistles meant.

So, Beede came upon the idea of a visual prop and asked his wife to stitch together a brightly colored red flag with white stripes. Before the 1941 game against Oklahoma City, Stars head coach Oswald Doenges and four game officials, including Jack McPhee, agreed to use the flag as an experiment.

Three years later, with McPhee again serving as a game official, the penalty flag made its first appearance in the Big Ten during a game at Ohio Stadium between Iowa and Ohio State. With league commissioner John L. Griffith in the stands, the Buckeyes rolled to a 34-0 win against the Hawkeyes.

The following week, Griffith announced the penalty flag would be adopted for use throughout the conference.



Bjork Reveals Four Revenue-Sharing Sports

In the aftermath of the groundbreaking House v. NCAA antitrust settlement on June 6 that opened the door for schools to directly pay their student-athletes up to a cap of \$20.5 million for the 2025-26 season, Ohio State athletic director Ross Bjork said during a June 12 press conference at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center that his athletic department will share \$18 million worth of revenue with four sports – football, men’s basketball, women’s basketball and women’s volleyball – for the upcoming season.

The other \$2.5 million, according to Bjork, will go toward creating 91 new scholarships.

“We really tried to use metrics and a formula, while also balancing some Title IX approach in this as well,” Bjork said. “The key point in all of this is this is more opportunity for athletes than ever before, directly from the institution. We’re not going to get into calculating how much this program gets or that program, but it’s four sports, it’s \$18 million cash, and then that will grow by 4 percent every year.”

Bjork, as mentioned, did not go into great detail over why those four sports were selected and how much each sport is getting, but it is assumed that football – by far Ohio State’s most popular and lucrative sport – will get most of the revenue, followed by men’s basketball, women’s basketball and women’s volleyball. When asked why women’s volleyball was selected over other programs, Bjork pointed to the popularity of the sport in Columbus and the atmosphere inside the Covelli Center as reasons that the sport can bring in revenue.

“The sport is really popular,” Bjork said. “The Big Ten is a leader in women’s volleyball. We want to get better. Coach Jen (Flynn Oldenburg) is working on a plan to get us back on track. With the attention that our program can receive – volleyball is a booming sport in the Columbus market. The Covelli Center is an amazing atmosphere. So we thought volleyball can be a sport to drive more revenue, but it’s also the attention it gets within the Big Ten.”

Players outside of these four revenue sports can still make money through NIL deals that are separate from the university, although those deals will now be more closely monitored. Under the direction of a new entity called the College Sports Commission – which was established by the NCAA’s power conferences, not the NCAA, in hopes to police college athlete NIL transactions – any Division I athlete who has a deal, or deals, worth \$600 or more will have to report those deals to a new system called “NIL Go,” which will use data to determine if the deal has a “valid business purpose” and is “within a reasonable range of compensation.”

OSU Launches Buckeye Sports Group

Another new entity that will help Ohio State’s student-athletes responsibly profit off their name, image and likeness is the school’s Buckeye Sports Group, which will become the primary NIL group supporting Ohio State athletes.

The group, which was slated to launch on July 1 when schools could start paying student-athletes, will be run by both the school’s athletic department and Learfield’s Ohio State properties. They will work together to “facilitate deal transactions and gain insights into student-athlete interests that foster authentic brand connections.” It will also serve as a replacement for Ohio State’s two largest NIL collectives, The Foundation and The 1870 Society, although the school announced that the founding members of the collectives – such as The Foundation co-founder and former Ohio State quarterback Cardale Jones – will still serve in advisory roles in Buckeye Sports Group. Ohio State also said that recurring donations and subscriptions made to The Foundation will still be accepted and used to fundraise and support OSU athletics.

“What we want from folks who have been involved in our collectives is their support and connections in the business community,” Bjork told The Columbus Dispatch. “Even though the mechanism of a collective will not exist, the relationships will, and the people who have been involved in those will connect us with businesses, either directly or indirectly, through introductions.

“We’ll have an advisory board of people who have been involved in the past, and we’ll tap into their resources and relationships to make sure that we stay at the forefront of all of this.”

In a statement released to its official Twitter page on June 9, The Foundation – which has been previously lauded for the role it played financially in bringing Buckeye stars such as Caleb Downs, Will Howard, Quinshon Judkins and Jeremiah Smith to Ohio State – said that it is excited to join forces with Buckeye Sports Group and is proud of the work it has done for OSU athletics since its establishment in 2022.

“What we created over the past three years will never be forgotten,” they wrote. “When NIL launched, we came in as the first collective and helped ensure Ohio State football and basketball were at the forefront.”

OSU Forms Data-Driven Intelligence Center

Ohio State also announced the launch of its Center for Sports Intelligence and Strategy on June 12, which will look to use data and analytics to enhance performance in all athletic sports programs and stay ahead of the times in the changing world of college sports.

“We think it’s just a groundbreaking resource that will have data,” Bjork said of the newly formed group during his press conference. “It will have sports science. It will have sports performance. It will have a lot of the elements around the circle of care that we use for our student-athletes. So we think it’s an innovative approach to adapting to this new landscape.”

Leading the Center for Sports Intelligence and Strategy will be deputy athletics

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	UCLA	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)	

director Shaun Richard, while senior associate AD for sport administration and strategy Matt Bartlebaugh and associate AD for student-athlete development and sport administration Makena Alexakos will also be involved. That trio will look to lead the school’s efforts to “provide coaches with cutting-edge analytics, strategic insights and tools designed to inform and enhance key areas such as recruiting, scheduling, resource allocation and roster construction.”

Ohio State also said in its initial statement announcing the launch that certain projects they could look at are understanding what types of student-athletes tend to be successful in certain sports, identifying traits and trends from high school that best indicate college success, and determining the ideal makeup of a team’s roster given the addition of the new Big Ten members.

The group will also work with other administrative leaders on how to correctly spend scholarships, revenue sharing and NIL payments, according to Bjork.

Bjork Wants More TV Flexibility

The majority of Bjork’s roughly 76-minute press conference centered around how Ohio State was going to operate in the new era of college athletics and revenue sharing, but he also spent some time talking about other pressing topics that have been debated throughout the football offseason.

One of those topics discussed was the Buckeyes’ lack of primetime home games, which became a significant talking point among fans after it was announced that Ohio State’s highly anticipated season opener against Texas on Aug. 30 would kick off at noon on FOX, making it OSU’s seventh straight regular-season game to start at noon and the sixth of the last seven airing on FOX’s “B1G Noon Saturday.”

The frustration from fans regarding this trend has seemingly reached the desk of Bjork, who recently tried to move the Texas game to Sunday, Aug. 31 so it could be played in a primetime slot, only for Texas and athletic director Chris Del Conte to shoot that down.

When asked about his attempt to move the game to a later time slot, Bjork stated that he feels Ohio State fans deserve to have more primetime home games, but the lack of flexibility with the Big Ten’s current seven-year, \$7 billion dollar media rights deal with FOX, CBS and NBC often keeps the Buckeyes playing in the daytime, mostly on FOX.

“Our program, our fans deserve some marquee night games, so we started having

that conversation,” Bjork said. “We worked with FOX (to move the Texas game). They were understanding. But really, at the end of the day, there’s no flexibility in the contracts. FOX bought the noon window, CBS bought the afternoon window (3:30 p.m.), and NBC has the night window (7:30 p.m.). And then the Big Ten Network and Peacock layer into that. So what we need is more flexibility. Can that happen anytime soon? I don’t know. But I think every program should deserve the right to have way more flexibility.

“We have carried the day for Big Noon. There’s no question about it, if you look at the viewership. So we understand why FOX went with Big Noon. We understand why we’re picked all the time. But we’re hoping for just more flexibility, that’s what we’re looking for.”

Bjork acknowledged later that a potential alteration to the media rights contract may not be imminent but that he and the other conference leaders will work hard to spur some change.

“(Big Ten commissioner Tony) Petitti is going to work with our TV partners. We’re going to continue to have those conversations. But can anything change anytime soon? Probably not,” Bjork said, “because those contracts are rigid, and they’re locked in for several years.”

Bjork In Favor Of Spring Transfer Window

Bjork also offered his thoughts on the college football transfer window, saying that he would prefer the sport to have just one portal window in the spring to best accommodate the academic calendar and the start of revenue-sharing agreements.

“If we ever say that we care about academics and we want to live by that, then I think the transfer portal window should be in the spring. And then now that you have a revenue-sharing contract, where you will have an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with an athlete, from a fiscal management standpoint, it’s better to put it in the spring,” Bjork said.

Under the new House v. NCAA settlement, revenue-sharing contracts with athletes will run from July to June. Bjork’s proposed window would allow players to enter the portal and find a new home before having to agree to new revenue-sharing contracts with schools while also giving them another full semester in the winter to go to school before transferring toward the end of the spring semester in April.

Bjork’s idea of a single transfer window seems to be gaining some traction in the college football world. The Athletic’s Chris

Vannini reported on June 13 that the sport is trending toward moving to one transfer portal window. Unlike Bjork's wishes, though, that window might be in the winter, with Vannini reporting that the preference for a January portal over an April one is "an 80-20 split."

No matter what the NCAA decides, Bjork said that there ultimately needs to be a more organized college football calendar sooner rather than later.

"We have to keep pushing that. My colleagues and I in the Big Ten, we want to keep pushing that. We'll collaborate, we'll communicate, but we think we need to get that done sooner rather than later," Bjork said. "Because fall will be here soon, and all of these things are going to be on top of us, and we need to have that transfer portal window cleaned up."

OSU Adds Premium Seating To Horseshoe

Ohio State announced in a June 3 press release its plans to debut a new section of field-level premium seating along the south end zone of Ohio Stadium for the 2026 season.

The new change will feature nine field-level suites with 12-person capacities located in front of the south stands and 400 premium chairback seats on top of the line of suites. The school said that the chairback seats will be the widest in the stadium.

"We're proud to introduce a premium seating area on the field level in the south end zone of Ohio Stadium – an investment that reflects our deep commitment to enhancing the fan experience," Bjork said in the release. "This addition is designed for passionate members of Buckeye Nation, bringing greater comfort, improved access to the field level, and a wider range of seating options to better serve even more fans."

"It also marks a small key step in the ongoing modernization of Ohio Stadium – ensuring this iconic and wonderful venue continues to evolve while honoring the traditions that make it so special. We're dedicated to making every visit to the 'Shoe unforgettable, and this enhancement is another meaningful stride toward delivering the best possible gameday experience."

The 400 premium chairback seats, which are priced at \$6,000, will also include full admission to the 1922 Club – an exclusive, private club venue in Ohio Stadium that will also open in 2026. The club will feature all-inclusive food and drink opportunities before, during and after the game.

The new premium seating will also move the Ohio State marching band to the north end of Ohio Stadium for games, a place they called home prior to the venue's renovation in 2001. Ohio State said that the band's new location will allow them to be heard more effectively because they will be closer to the concrete foundation of the stadium. They will also be upgrading the audio system of microphones in the north end, which will be in place for the 2025 season.

The deadline to reserve seats and become an inaugural member has already passed, but suite sales, which will include access to the 1922 Club, will begin at a later date.

Value City Arena Unveils New Court Design

Ohio State unveiled new court designs

Former Buckeye, NFL Great Jim Marshall Dies

One account upon the passing of former Ohio State and Minnesota Vikings defensive lineman Jim Marshall was that he squeezed every ounce out of his 87 years on earth. Even that description comes up a tad short when trying to describe a man whose exploits on and off the football field would have filled more than half a dozen biographies.

Marshall, who died June 3 in his adopted hometown of Minneapolis following a lengthy illness, helped the Buckeyes win the United Press and Football Writers Association of America's versions of the 1957 national championship during his sophomore season and was named to the All-Big Ten first team the following year. He was also a track star at Ohio State, setting school records in both the discus and shot put.

Then, poised for All-America seasons in both sports as a senior in 1959, and perhaps eyeing a spot on the U.S. Olympic team at the 1960 Summer Games in Rome, Marshall did something that is acknowledged as common practice today but highly unusual during his era. He decided to forgo his final year of college eligibility and left school to play professional football with the Saskatchewan Roughriders of the Canadian Football League.

To say OSU head coach Woody Hayes disagreed with Marshall's decision would be understating the obvious.

"He blew a gasket when I told him," Marshall told BSB in 2007. "He did and said everything he could think of to encourage me to stay. But it was something that I made up mind that I was going to do, so I went on and pursued what I felt was best for me and my career."

It was one of the first indications that Marshall was going to forge his own path through a life that began in tiny Wilsonville, Ky., before he moved to Columbus with his family at the age of 5. He attended East High School, where he played on two undefeated teams and earned all-city, all-state and All-America honors before signing with the Buckeyes.

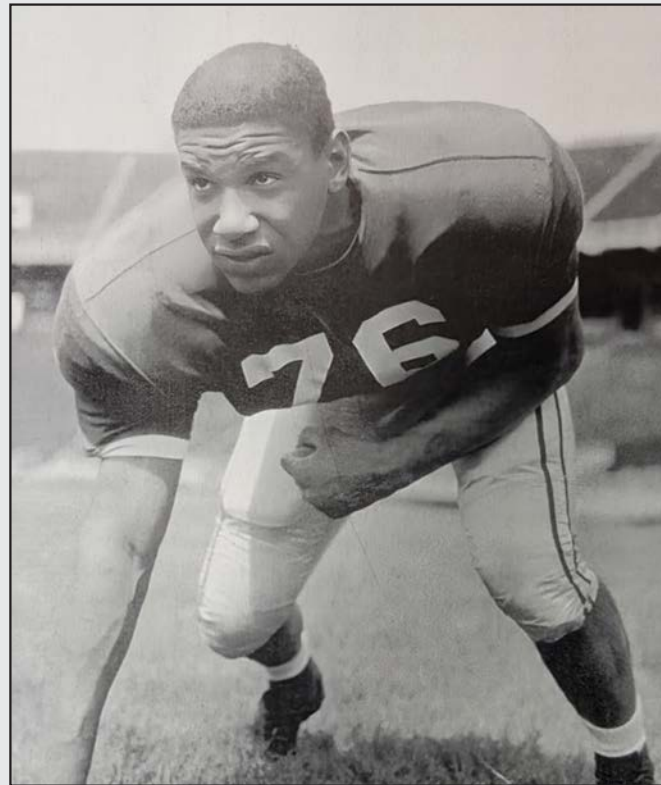
"The tradition and history of the place impressed me from the beginning," Marshall said. "(College Football Hall of Fame lineman) Bill Willis had gone to my high school, and I knew he was a legend around there, and I really wanted to follow in his footsteps. It just seemed natural to me to become a Buckeye because I already felt like one."

Following his two varsity seasons at Ohio State, and one long season in Canada during which the Roughriders struggled to a 1-15 record, Marshall was selected by the Cleveland Browns in the fourth round of the 1960 NFL draft and broke into the Browns' starting lineup that season at defensive end. Just before the 1961 season, however, he was traded to the Minnesota Vikings, an expansion team that year. It was a move that helped define his career.

Marshall wound up playing 19 seasons for the Vikings, becoming one of the founding members of the team's feared "Purple People Eaters" defense. In addition to a pair of Pro Bowls and an appearance in Super Bowl IV, his career was marked by two distinct events. He started 270 consecutive regular-season games, an NFL record that stood for more than a quarter-century, and he was involved in one of most bizarre plays in the history of the league.

On Oct. 25, 1964, at Kezar Stadium in San Francisco, Marshall scooped up a fourth-quarter fumble and ran 66 yards to the end zone. Unfortunately, he had somehow gotten turned around and ran into the 49ers' end zone. Thinking he had scored a touchdown, Marshall celebrated by tossing the football out of play, resulting in a safety. It didn't really matter because the Vikings eventually won a 27-22 decision, but Marshall suddenly found himself at the center of a running joke.

"NFL Films ran that play on their annual blooper reel for so long that I thought they should have paid me some kind of royalty," Marshall said.



"I took my career very seriously, and of course I didn't want to ever make a mistake, especially a mistake that was that visible. But when you do something like that, you have to accept the fact that it happened, go on and then do whatever's necessary to make up for it."

Off the field, Marshall endured several near-death experiences including getting caught in a blizzard near the Wyoming-Montana border and being forced to spend the night exposed to the elements. He also survived a self-inflicted gunshot wound when he was cleaning a rifle, sustained a severely broken arm after crashing a hang glider, and recovered from a case of encephalitis and three bouts with cancer.

Along the way, he lived in Russia for a year following the fall of the Soviet Union, spent time as a stockbroker, motivational speaker, real estate agent, life insurance salesman and securities agent, and became proficient enough in chess to enter a number of national tournaments.

Perhaps his greatest post-football achievement, however, was his involvement in nonprofit organizations.

Admittedly humiliated by a 1991 arrest for cocaine possession, Marshall joined with former Vikings teammate Oscar Reed to start "Life's Missing Link," a summer program aimed at drug prevention that offers counseling, training and shelter for kids and young adults.

Marshall was also active in "Gridiron Greats," a nonprofit started by former NFL coaches and players to provide financial assistance to retired players.

"Pay forward, pay forward. Woody always drummed that into us," Marshall said. "He used to say, 'You can never pay back, but you can pay forward.' I know he used to think I never listened to a single word he said, but he got through on a lot of things. That was just one of them."

- Mark Rea

for Value City Arena on June 13, giving the men's and women's basketball programs two new looks starting in the 2025-26 season, each of which features a gray base.

The primary design features the Block "O" logo at center court along with scarlet-painted keys, contrasted by a white Big Ten logo. Like the primary design, the alternate court will have the gray-colored base and scarlet-painted keys but will swap out the Block "O" logo for the script Buckeyes logo at center court, the same one featured on the men's team's alternate throwback uniforms.

If the most unique aspect of the new design isn't the new gray base color, it may be the boundaries of the court, characterized by a mosaic pattern that will feature interlocking Block "O's" and the outline of the state of Ohio at midcourt.

Joe Gemma, Ohio State's lead graphic

designer who was in charge of the project, told The Columbus Dispatch that he came up with nearly three dozen concept designs before ultimately landing on the gray court looks, taking inspiration from the court designs of the NBA's Brooklyn Nets, Indiana Pacers and Dallas Mavericks, among others. He also said he tried to make a fresh look without going overboard and received feedback from head men's basketball coach Jake Diebler and Bjork, all of which led to the current creation that will be used starting next season.

"Once we landed on these concepts, everyone felt it was a good mix of – no one's going to walk into the building and be like, 'Oh, I didn't even notice they changed the court,' " Gemma said. "If you've come to a game every year for the past 10 years you'll walk into the arena and immediately recognize that something's different. I think that's

an important part of it."

"(With) the court, maybe it's time to do something different and get people to talk about our program in a different way," Bjork added. "I think both men and women, the players are going to love it. I think the fans are really going to love it. I think it speaks to Ohio State tradition and all those kinds of things. It's going to be cool."

VCA's new court has yet to be installed but will arrive in a few months. The court last underwent a makeover in 2018.

OSU Places Eighth In Directors' Cup

It was revealed on June 26 that over the 2024-25 academic/athletic year, Ohio State finished eighth in the country in the LEARFIELD Directors' Cup.

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Ohio State improved from last year's 15th-place finish but didn't reach the heights it was at in the two years prior, finishing in fourth and third place in 2021-22 and 2022-23, respectively.

The Directors' Cup is meant to assess the success of athletic departments around the country, taking into account the performance of 19 athletic teams over the year. Schools can score points in five countable sports – women's soccer, volleyball and basketball and men's basketball and baseball – and 14 additional NCAA sports.

The Buckeyes were helped the most in the standings by football winning its first national championship in a decade, women's hockey finishing second, men's soccer finishing third and wrestling fifth. Ten women's teams qualified for NCAA championships over the year, with soccer (ninth place), cross country (32nd), swimming and diving (14th), basketball (17th), gymnastics (17th), tennis (ninth), softball (17th), track and field (22nd) and golf (24th) each joining hockey on that list.

Eight men's teams qualified, highlighted by football, soccer, wrestling, gymnastics (seventh), hockey (ninth), swimming and diving (16th), lacrosse (ninth) and tennis (ninth). The coed fencing team also finished sixth at the NCAA championships.

Texas took home the No. 1 spot in the final standings for the fourth time in the last five years, scoring 1,255.25 points, which was slightly ahead of USC, which had 1,253.75 points in its first year in the Big Ten Conference. UCLA was the only other Big Ten school to finish ahead of Ohio State, coming in fifth place with 1,149.00 points. The Buckeyes finished with 1,032.25 points.

Day Says B1G Deserves Four CFP Bids

After winning his first national championship, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day commented on the future of the College Football Playoff, saying he believes the Big Ten conference deserves four automatic qualifiers as the bracket continues to expand.

"We're in the Big Ten, and we have 18 teams and some of the best programs in the country," Day told ESPN. "I feel like we deserve at least four automatic qualifiers."

After the 2025 season, the playoff could be set to expand again, this time likely to 16 teams from the current 12-team format. However, the way those 16 spots will be filled is still being discussed. There have been options discussed that would give the Big Ten and SEC each three or four automatic bids.

Another recent proposal at the SEC's spring meetings held in late May was the top five conference champions getting in

The Last Print Issue Of BSB Until Late August

The next issue of BSB, the big August Football Preview issue, is not set to be mailed until late August as we continue on our monthly summer schedule. As most Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers know by now, this is the longest printing gap in our traditional publishing schedule. Big Ten Media Days and the start of fall football practice will begin before the August issue is published.

In this ever-changing college sports landscape, there is bound to be plenty of additional news between now and when the next issue hits the mail. There is no reason to wait for your next Buckeye Sports Bulletin to get the latest OSU sports news, including any recruiting or transfer portal activity.

All the news is available in real time at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers. BuckeyeSports.com also offers plenty of additional content not found in your paper. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff mans BuckeyeSports.com, reporting on the breaking stories plus posting additional features. Along with daily posts, we offer reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays. Also, staff members man the Fan Forum, where the discussion between staff and readers is always lively.

We want to remind readers that the complete edition of each BSB is posted at BuckeyeSports.com immediately upon completion of the paper, making the site a must for readers having continuing mail problems. This electronic service, while not a substitute for your print edition, is a stopgap as

your paper winds its way through the postal system and is also free to subscribers.

BSB is still offering a chance to upgrade your subscription to first-class mail in an envelope for football season at the current price of \$30 – or \$40 through football recruiting in February – in advance of the upcoming postal increase on July 13, when upgrade rates will increase to \$35 and \$45 respectively. Just give us a call at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862 to order by credit card. Or you can send your check, money order or credit card information (don't forget your three- or four-digit security code) to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Be sure to mention either the "Football Upgrade" or the "Recruiting Upgrade."

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automatically and 11 at-large spots being up for grabs. Big 12 commissioner Brett Yormark also publicly voiced his support for that model.

Day noted that the number of automatic qualifiers that the conference gets could affect scheduling in the future, possibly incentivizing teams to play harder nonconference schedules if more automatic bids are handed out. He also believes the Big Ten would be at a greater disadvantage in that scenario because they play more in-conference games (nine) than the SEC does (eight).

"If you don't have those automatic qualifiers, you're less likely to play a game like we're playing this year against Texas, because it just won't make sense," Day said. "If we do, then you're more likely to do that, because we play nine conference games in the Big Ten. The SEC doesn't. So it's not equal."

OSU Makes Changes To Future Schedules

Ohio State has made three changes to future nonconference football schedules that will affect games in the 2029-30 seasons, according to the university.

The Buckeyes are now scheduled to face off with Navy to open the 2029 season on Sept. 1, 2029. In order to add that game, Ohio State and Nevada have agreed to move their previously scheduled game for that date to Sept. 7, 2030.

This will mark the first matchup between the Buckeyes and Midshipmen since the 2014 season, when Ohio State handed Navy a 34-17 defeat at home to open its championship-winning campaign.

Ohio State also added Youngstown State to its 2029 nonconference schedule, a game that will be played at Ohio Stadium on Sept. 15, 2029. The Penguins last came to Columbus in 2023 when the Buckeyes cruised

to a 35-7 win.

With the Penguins and Midshipmen now on the schedule in the future, the Buckeyes have just one game remaining to fill out their nonconference schedule over the next five years, that being the team's 2030 season opener on Aug. 31.

Former All-America OL Smith Dies At 73

Former Ohio State All-America left guard Ted Smith passed away on June 21 at 71 years old, according to his obituary from the Herman Funeral Home.

Smith, a native of Gibsonburg, Ohio, played for the Buckeyes from 1972-75, first playing as a linebacker before moving to offensive guard for his final two seasons. He was the starting left guard for running back Archie Griffin during his two Heisman Trophy-winning seasons in 1974 and 1975, a leading role that helped him earn an consensus All-America honor as a senior in 1975.

After his playing career, Smith worked in construction and was a paving superintendent for Shelly Co. until retiring in 2007, according to his obituary. He was also described as a "die-hard Ohio State Buckeyes football fan, cheering passionately on game days and instilling that same love of the game in his family."

Smith leaves behind his wife of 35 years, Deborah Eckhardt, as well as his children Zachary Smith, Kristi McCoy, Sara Jo Smith and Lesa Wright. There will be no service for Smith, per his wishes, but a "celebration of life" was still being planned.

OSU-Texas Marks Corso's Last 'GameDay' Show

Ohio State's marquee Week 1 matchup against Texas will serve as a first for many involved, with players such as Julian Sayin

and Arch Manning likely making their inaugural debuts as full-time starters for the Buckeyes and Longhorns, respectively.

But the likely top-five tilt will also be a last for one of college football's most prominent figures. ESPN and Ohio State announced on June 10 that longtime "College GameDay" analyst Lee Corso will don his last headgear at Ohio Stadium prior to the Buckeyes' and Longhorns' matchup, marking a full-circle end to a nearly 30-year tradition for the former Indiana, Louisville and Northern Illinois coach.

Corso, who will retire following his Week 1 appearance after spending 38 college football seasons with ESPN, began his iconic headgear tradition in Columbus on Oct. 5, 1996, before Ohio State's home matchup against Penn State. Since then, Brutus Buckeye has been a common pick for Corso, who has selected and worn the headgear a record 45 times, seven more than the next closest school, Alabama (38).

Columbus has also been a popular location for Corso and his "College GameDay" crew. Out of the record 66 times the Emmy-winning show has featured an Ohio State game, 26 have been broadcast from Columbus – also the most all-time – with the Buckeyes boasting a 19-6 record in those occasions.

Corso last visited Columbus during the Buckeyes' College Football Playoff first-round matchup against Tennessee last December. They were featured seven times last season, including all four CFP wins as well as their wins against Penn State on the road and Indiana at home and their loss to Oregon in Eugene, Ore.

Ohio State has a 45-21 record when appearing on the pregame show, which, along with Corso, will also feature host Rece Davis and analysts Kirk Herbstreit,

Desmond Howard, Nick Saban and Pat McAfee on Aug. 30.

Smith A 99 Overall In EA Video Game

Jeremiah Smith has seen his fame and prestige rise exponentially since his record-breaking freshman season, and perhaps the best indicator of that was him being placed on the cover of EA Sports' College Football 26 video game along with fellow sophomore wide receiver Ryan Williams of Alabama.

When the game is released on July 10, Smith will be its highest-rated player. On June 24, EA Sports revealed that he would receive a 99 overall rating, the first in the new era of this game. Last year – when the game returned following an 11-year hiatus – Colorado wide receiver/cornerback Travis Hunter earned a 98 overall rating.

Smith, who is also on the deluxe cover of the popular game along with Day and Downs, among many others, earns the high rating after a spectacular true freshman sea-

son in which he smashed each of Cris Carter's single-season school freshman records, catching 76 passes for 1,315 yards and 15 touchdowns in 16 games. He was named a freshman All-American by the Football Writers Association of America (FWAA) for that performance.

Smith looks to turn in a similarly productive season next season as the clear No. 1 option on a new-look Ohio State offense that is now led by Brian Hartline on the sidelines and either Sayin or Lincoln Kienholz at quarterback.

'Shoe Third-Toughest Place To Play In Game

Despite growing concerns from fans over the atmosphere at Ohio Stadium for Buckeye games, the Ohio State gameday experience is still viewed as one of the nation's best, at least in the video game world.

EA Sports also revealed on June 24 the 25 toughest places to play in the College Football 26 video game and rated Ohio Stadium at No. 3 in the country, just behind

Penn State's Beaver Stadium and LSU's Tiger Stadium, which sits at No. 1 for the second straight year in the game.

This is a one-spot increase for Ohio Stadium from last year, when the historic venue was rated the fourth-toughest place to play behind Texas A&M's Kyle Field, Alabama's Bryant-Denny Stadium and Tiger Stadium.

This year's top five is rounded out by Georgia's Sanford Stadium and Bryant-Denny Stadium, followed by Clemson's Memorial Stadium at No. 6, Florida's Ben Hill Griffin Stadium at No. 7, Oklahoma's Gaylord Family Oklahoma Memorial Stadium at No. 8, Oregon's Autzen Stadium at No. 9, and Michigan Stadium at No. 10.

Other Big Ten stadiums that made the list were Wisconsin's Camp Randall Stadium at No. 15, Washington's Husky Stadium – which Ohio State is traveling to this September for the first time since 2007 – at No. 18, Iowa's Kinnick Stadium at No. 19 and Michigan State's Spartan Stadium at No. 24.

Athletic Communications Director Emig To Retire

Ohio State football sports information director Jerry Emig will retire this March after spending the last 15 years in the role and the last seven as the athletic department's director of communications.

"As the leader of our communications team, Jerry has been a consistent and passionate advocate for our student-athletes, ensuring their stories are shared with authenticity and pride," Bjork said. "His dedication to preserving and promoting the history of Buckeye athletics is truly commendable. Beyond his professional contributions, Jerry has been a trusted advisor, a creative force and a source of positivity and humor. His presence will be deeply missed, but we're excited for him as he prepares to enjoy a well-earned retirement with his family."

Emig, a Minnesota native and graduate of Murray State (1983) with a master's de-

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Brutus Level VIPs To Be Recognized In August Issue

If you have wanted to show your support for Buckeye Sports Bulletin through the VIP program but are unable to participate at the Scarlet, Elite or Elite-Plus level, now is the time to sign up at the Brutus level for just \$50. Brutus level VIPs are recognized in BSB twice a year, and we will be running the complete list of Brutus VIPs in the upcoming football issue. VIP donors help Buckeye Sports Bulletin stay alive and vibrant.

"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 44 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.

As mentioned, 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.

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

Woody Level Elite Wachsman Donor (in honor of late BSB assistant publisher Karen Wachsman): Roosters Foundation.

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gree in sports information from Ohio State in 1986, has spent 33 years working in sports information. Twenty-three of those were spent at Ohio State, with other stints coming at Southern Illinois-Carbondale and Temple. He also had a stint with the Buckeyes' SID office in 1998 and 1999 before returning in 2007.

Emig has been widely regarded as one of the top SIDs in the country since taking over the role with OSU football in 2011. He and his staff received the Super 11 Award from the Football Writers Association of America for SID excellence in 2017.

Emig has held his leadership role during a successful time at Ohio State. The Buckeyes have won two national football championships, claimed five Big Ten championships and made six College Football Playoff appearances with Emig as the liaison between the football program and media.

Ohio State also announced the retirement of senior deputy director of athletics and senior women's administrator Janine Oman on June 12. Oman, who will retire in June of 2026, has spent nearly 30 years looking to advance women's sports at Ohio State while also overseeing performance, compliance and the student-athlete support service office, or SASSO.

Meyer Still Upset Over 'Tattoogate'

During a June 18 episode of "The Triple Option" podcast, former Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer told his co-host Rob Stone that he still believes the penalties faced by Jim Tressel and Ohio State for "Tattoogate" were too severe.

"I know this one well because I lived it," Meyer said. "Our 2012 team went undefeated and was not able to compete (in the post-season). We would have played Notre Dame for the national championship that year. It was very punitive. Jim Tressel, whom I know well – once again, I know this case because I lived it, and I was hired directly after Coach Tressel resigned. There was no competitive advantage (to the infractions).

"They were trading memorabilia for tattoos. Competitive advantage, zero. There's nothing there. Was it wrong? Yes. Jim Tressel was accused of lying. ... He was aware of (the trading). He ended it. But the inconsistency of that penalty, to this day, still bothers me."

After the situation unraveled and investigations took place, Tressel received a five-year show cause and a \$250,000 fine, while Ohio State had wins vacated, was banned from the postseason and had scholarships reduced.

Meyer also went on to say that he still wasn't pleased with Tressel being featured on the June 6, 2011, cover of Sports Illustrated, which featured a close-up picture of the former Buckeyes' coach and current lieutenant governor of Ohio with the headline "How Deep It Went."

"I still hold a grudge about that whole thing," he said. "I know Coach Tressel. I followed him, so I know exactly what his program was all about, and that was wrong. That was a mistake on a lot of fronts. The support Tressel received in Columbus I don't think was fair. It's actually a joke, to be honest with you. Remember now, competitive advantage – none. There was none."

Laurinaitis Up For CFB Hall Of Fame

Ohio State linebackers coach James Laurinaitis was one of 79 players who were nominated for consideration to be a member of the College Football Hall of Fame class of 2026, his seventh consecutive year making the ballot.

In his four seasons at Ohio State from 2005-08, Laurinaitis was a three-time All-America linebacker (2006-08). He took home the Bronko Nagurski Trophy as the best defensive player in college football in 2006 as a sophomore, the Dick Butkus Award as the best linebacker in the country in 2007 as a junior and the Ronnie Lott IMPACT Trophy in 2008 as a senior, which is awarded to the nation's top defensive player who also exhibits great character. He was also the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year in 2007 and 2008.

Laurinaitis is seventh in Ohio State history with 375 career tackles, 26 of those tackles being for a loss. He also had 13 career sacks and nine interceptions, setting a single-season OSU linebackers record in 2006 with five interceptions.

After his Ohio State career, Laurinaitis was drafted with the No. 35 overall pick of the 2009 NFL draft by the then-St. Louis Rams, where he played seven years and accumulated 854 of his 871 career tackles. He spent just one season with the New Orleans Saints in 2016 and played just five games before retiring that offseason.

Following a one-year stint as a graduate assistant and assistant linebackers coach at Notre Dame under his former OSU teammate Marcus Freeman in 2022, Laurinaitis returned to Ohio State as a graduate assistant in 2023 before being promoted to linebackers coach in 2024.

If inducted, he would be the 35th Ohio State player or coach inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame and the fourth linebacker, joining Randy Gradishar (class of 1998), Tom Cousineau (2016) and Chris Spielman (2009).

Barton Charged With Aggravated Homicide

Former Ohio State offensive lineman Kirk Barton has been charged with aggravated vehicular homicide after being involved in a fatal accident the morning of June 21 in Dublin that left one man dead.

According to a release from Dublin police, Barton is suspected of driving a Ford F150 Raptor pickup truck at a high rate of speed and then striking another vehicle on West Bridge Street in Dublin at 2:56 a.m. The driver of the car he struck, 24-year-old Ethan Perry, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Barton sustained non-life-threatening injuries and was later released from Riverside Methodist Hospital and into Dublin Police custody. He was transported to the Franklin County Jail.

According to Franklin County Municipal Court records, Barton now faces a second-degree felony charge of aggravated vehicular homicide/manslaughter while operating a vehicle under the influence, a charge that can result in a mandatory prison term of two to eight years. Court documents show that Barton couldn't answer basic questions and admitted to drinking alcohol before the crash.

Barton was arraigned in Franklin Coun-

ty Municipal Court on June 23, receiving a \$500,000 cash surety bond, which was posted by Barton's defense attorney, Sam Shamansky. While out on bond, Barton is not allowed to operate a vehicle or leave central Ohio. His preliminary hearing was scheduled for July 1.

Barton, who played right tackle for the Buckeyes from 2003-07, earning first-team All-America honors his senior season, has been involved with the law on several other occasions over the years. In 2018, he was charged with felonious assault on a police officer and resisting arrest after slamming a taxi van door into an officer's arm outside The Bogey Inn in Dublin. According to The Columbus Dispatch, Barton has also had several traffic offenses over the past 20 years, including pleading down an operating a vehicle while intoxicated, reckless operation and failure to stop.

Barton is also the co-founder of the website Buckeye Scoop, which has been banned from covering Ohio State events in person since 2021 due to the company using unauthorized access to practice footage to report on the football team.

Adedokun, Webster Are OSU Athletes Of Year

Ohio State announced on June 24 that Michael Adedokun of the men's soccer team and Makenna Webster of both the field hockey and women's ice hockey teams are its athletes of the year. That honor from the university makes Adedokun and Webster eligible for the Big Ten Athlete of the Year award, which will be announced by the conference in July.

Adedokun, a native of Eruwa, Nigeria, was the first player in OSU men's soccer history to win the MAC Hermann Trophy, the highest individual award presented to a player in intercollegiate soccer. He was also named a first-team All-American and the Big Ten's Midfielder of the Year thanks to his conference-leading 11 goals and 11 assists (33 points).

With Adedokun leading the way, the Buckeye soccer team finished 16-2-4 and earned their first No. 1 national ranking and the first overall seed in the NCAA tournament. They also took home the 2024 Big Ten tournament crown and a share of the regular-season title.

Webster, who was also the Ohio State female recipient of the Big Ten Medal of Honor, played her third season with the Ohio State field hockey team and had 42 points, which led the team. It was the second straight year she had over 40 points. She earned unanimous first-team Big Ten honors and was a second-team All-American.

During the ice hockey season, Webster had 35 points in just 30 games, joining the team late since the field hockey and ice hockey seasons overlap. Still, she was able to help the team to a 29-8-0 overall record and their fourth straight appearance in the national title game.

The good news continued for Webster when she was drafted the night of June 24 with the No. 17 overall pick by the New York Sirens of the Professional Women's Hockey League, one of six Buckeye icers selected in this year's draft.

Dobbins, Arnette Find New Homes In NFL

Former Ohio State running back J.K.

Dobbins found a new NFL home on June 10 when he signed a one-year, \$2.75 million deal with the Denver Broncos that could rise to over \$5 million with incentives.

Dobbins, who played for Ohio State from 2017-19, has seen his NFL career hampered by multiple season-ending injuries. After being selected in the second round (No. 55 overall) by the Baltimore Ravens in the 2020 draft and subsequently rushing for 805 yards and nine touchdowns as a rookie, Dobbins missed the entire 2021 season with a torn ACL he suffered during the pre-season. He rushed for 520 yards in 2022 but tore his Achilles in Week 1 of the following year, ending his season.

Despite missing four games at the end of last year with an MCL sprain, Dobbins managed to have a career-best season with the Jim Harbaugh-led Los Angeles Chargers. The former Buckeye rushed for 905 yards and nine touchdowns on 195 carries.

Dobbins, who rushed for 4,459 yards and 38 touchdowns on the way to earning three All-Big Ten selections in three years at Ohio State, will now join a Broncos squad that is coming off a 31-7 loss to the Buffalo Bills in the wild card round of the playoffs. He will compete for the starting running back role in Denver with rookie RJ Harvey, former Notre Dame tailback Audric Esteime and veteran Jaleel McLaughlin.

Also finding a new home in the NFL was former Ohio State cornerback Damon Arnette, who signed a one-year deal with the Houston Texans on June 18 after performing well for a season with the UFL's Houston Roughnecks.

Arnette, who was selected with the No. 19 pick in the 2020 draft by the Oakland Raiders (now Las Vegas Raiders), hasn't played in the NFL since a video surfaced in 2021 of him brandishing a firearm and threatening to kill someone.

He signed with the Miami Dolphins in December 2021 but never appeared in a game, and after signing with the Kansas City Chiefs in 2022, his legal issues continued when he was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon, among other charges, prompting the Chiefs to release him.

Since then, Arnette has been arrested in July 2022 for possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia and driving with a suspended license. He was also arrested and charged for possession of less than a gram of methamphetamine and unlawful carrying of a firearm, which occurred in January 2024 in Richardson, Texas. And then on June 10, a Colorado federal judge ordered Arnette to pay more than \$78,000 to a dancer who said he assaulted her at a March 2023 house party.

But now, Arnette – who reportedly entered a diversion program for the Miami charges – will get another chance to make it in the NFL. He joins former Buckeyes C.J. Stroud, tight end Cade Stover, defensive tackle Tommy Togiai and wide receiver Xavier Johnson in Houston.

Manning Says Stroud Didn't Have "Down Year"

Speaking of Stroud, one of the NFL's all-time great quarterbacks, Pro Football Hall of Famer Peyton Manning, came to the defense of the former Buckeye gunslinger during a roundtable discussion at "Fanatics Fest" in New York City on June 20.

Flanked by Stroud, second-year Chicago

Bears quarterback Caleb Williams, third-year Carolina Panthers quarterback Bryce Young, his younger brother and former New York Giants quarterback Eli Manning and sports media personality Kay Adams on stage, Manning took issue with the narrative that Stroud experienced a “down year” this past season with the Houston Texans.

He pointed out that Stroud led his team to the divisional round of the playoffs for the second time in as many seasons in the NFL, something Manning didn't come close to achieving in his first two seasons with the Indianapolis Colts.

“He went to the playoffs in his second year at 22 years old. Let's be careful saying it was a down year,” Manning said to the crowd. “I didn't win a playoff game until my sixth year. So he's 2-for-2, and that's all he needs to try to do, is give the Texans a chance.”

Stroud led the Texans to a 10-7 record, a second straight AFC South division title and a second straight appearance in the division-

al round of the NFL playoffs after completing 63.2 percent of his passes and throwing for 3,727 yards and 20 touchdowns to 12 interceptions. Each of those statistics fell short of what he accomplished in his rookie season, though, when he completed 63.9 percent of his passes for 4,108 yards, 23 touchdowns and five interceptions on his way to winning AP NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year and finishing tied for eighth in MVP voting.

Stroud's less stellar sophomore season likely prompted some change from the Texans organization, which fired offensive coordinator Bobby Slowik in the offseason and replaced him with former Los Angeles Rams passing game coordinator and tight ends coach Nick Caley. With Caley now calling plays and head coach DeMeco Ryans still steering the ship, Stroud will look to make Manning's comments worthwhile and lead the Texans to their third straight division title and playoff appearance, a feat that has yet to be achieved in the 24-year history of the franchise.

Former OSU OF Canzone Mashing For Mariners

Former Ohio State outfielder Dominic Canzone has spent years trying to make it in the big leagues and might finally be playing his way into an everyday spot with the Seattle Mariners after his most recent call-up to the MLB team on June 9.

His presence was immediately felt when he cranked a game-tying 450-foot home run in the top of the ninth inning of the Mariners' game against the Arizona Diamondbacks that night, the longest home run hit by a Mariner this season at that time.

Since that blast, Canzone has hit four more home runs, two of them coming in Seattle's 14-6 win over the Chicago Cubs on June 22, his first career two-homer game.

As of June 30, Canzone was slashing .259/.295/.552 with five home runs, eight RBI and a stolen base while filling in for the major league squad, and since his call-up, he was hitting .273 with a .892 OPS. He is hoping to play his way into an everyday role for

the playoff-contending Mariners, who were in the third American League wild card spot as of that day.

“I think in terms of Dom, the consistency is there right now,” Mariners manager Dan Wilson said on June 13 of the former Buckeye. “And so far in the couple of games he's had an opportunity to play in, his intent has been very aggressive and the consistency has been there. He's found the barrel a couple of times and is really hitting the ball well. That's what you're hoping for, and that's what he's been able to do.”

Canzone, a Sagamore Hills, Ohio, native, played at Ohio State from 2017-19 and was a career .336 hitter and three-time All-Big Ten player for the program. He was drafted in the eighth round of the 2019 MLB draft by the Diamondbacks – he was traded to the Mariners in 2023 in a deal that sent reliever Paul Sewald to Arizona – and spent the majority of his first six seasons in the minor leagues before his most recent call-up.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1985

July 1 marked the first anniversary of Rick Bay's arrival as director of athletics at Ohio State University, a year spent not only keeping a watchful eye over the 31 Buckeye varsity sports and an annual budget of over \$12.4 million but also in making over a hundred speeches and pressing the flesh as he introduced himself as the new man on the OSU scene.

“I knew, especially for the first year, it would be awfully busy,” said Bay, reflecting over the previous 12 months. “I knew the level of expectation would be extremely high. It's proven to be both of those things.

“At the same time, though, I've been buoyed by the support and the positive attitude that the people connected with Ohio State University, either officially or unofficially, have demonstrated. There's a good positive atmosphere in which to work.”

35 Years Ago — 1990

Football player Van DeCree, baseball player Stewart Hein and golfer Howard Baker Saunders were elected to the Ohio State Athletic Hall of Fame.

DeCree, a three-year regular from 1972-1974 for the Buckeyes, won All-Big Ten and All-American honors as a defensive end in 1973 and 1974. During his career, the Bucks posted a 29-4-1 record and played in three Rose Bowls.

Hein was an All-American outfielder in 1951 when Ohio State won the Big Ten and NCAA District IV championships. As a junior that season, he hit .304 with 26 RBI. He earned all-conference honors in '51 and '52.

Saunders was the individual champion at the 1945 NCAA golf tournament at OSU Scarlet. In that tourney, Saunders was knocked down by lightning but came back to card a four-under-par score of 68, then a course record. The Buckeyes also won the national team title that year.

30 Years Ago — 1995

For a few days in June, Ohio State was in danger of losing its popular president, E. Gordon Gee.

Gee seriously considered an offer to become the president of the University of California before announcing on June 21 that he would stay at Ohio State, where he had served as university president since 1990.

Speculation on Gee's status at Ohio State was rampant while he was virtually incommunicado on a university-related trip to parts of Asia.

“I'm going to stay,” Gee told The Columbus Dispatch in a June 21 telephone interview from Hong Kong.

Gee's decision to stay was met with great satisfaction by members of the OSU athletic department.

Athletic director Andy Geiger, hired by Gee in 1994, was pleased to hear the news.

“I came to work with him because I believe in his enthusiasm, his energy and his intellect,” Geiger said. “When you're an athletic director, you come to a place and sort of hitch your wagon to a star. Gordon is very important to the athletic department at Ohio State.”

25 Years Ago — 2000

A 31-foot-tall OSU logo was placed atop the new scoreboard's frame as June came to a close, which meant it would stand a full 170 feet above field level. The logo structure, which looked classy and somewhat old-school, was of the same ilk as the huge “Indi-

ans” sign that sat atop the left-center field scoreboard at Cleveland's Jacobs Field.

The logo, though, wasn't quite done yet. Still to be added was the backing to it, which would cover the speakers that were set to go inside it. It took three weeks to put together before it was erected, said Mike Dolan, OSU's assistant athletic director for facilities.

As for the scoreboard itself, that too was seeing progress. The down/yards-to-go chunk of the large, freestanding board was done, and that was to be followed by the insertion of game-in-progress/sponsor panels the final week of June.

20 Years Ago — 2005

Having a vision. That, in the simplest of terms, explains what drove Ohio State basketball coach Thad Matta's pursuit of greatness for the program and how he was able to rope in the top high school player in the nation, Greg Oden, and his well-rated Indianapolis Lawrence North teammate, Mike Conley Jr.

Because of Matta's forethought and willingness to reach beyond even some of the game's most accomplished coaches, the landscape of Ohio State basketball may have been changed forever.

During the pair's May 6-8 official visit to the school, Matta furnished them with a videotape filled with images of teams capturing the national championship and donning ballcaps to signify the title. The Buckeyes had made it to the peak of college basketball just once (1960), and successors to Hall of Fame coach Fred Taylor – Eldon Miller, Gary Williams, Randy Ayers and Jim O'Brien – all brought more memorable moments but left Columbus with only mixed results.

Matta had talked about raising the bar when he was hired the previous July. A year later, he appeared to back that talk resoundingly with the landmark additions of Oden and Conley to a class that already included a pair of Ohio stars in Daequan Cook and David Lighty.

“From day one, the first thing that came out of his mouth was a vision,” Conley said of the 38-year-old Matta. “He gave us a tape and showed us what he feels he can do and what his dream is. I want to help him complete that dream. If I help him, he's helping me at the same time.”

15 Years Ago — 2010

Evan Turner, a junior point guard on the men's basketball team, and Sam Marder, a senior catcher on the softball team, were named the 2009-10 Ohio State Male and Female Athletes of the Year, respectively.

Marder's honor marked the second time a softball player had earned the accolade after OSU Hall of Famer Anna Smith received the distinction in 2002, while Turner became the third basketball player to earn the men's honor, joining two-time winner Jim Jackson (1991, '92) and Scoonie Penn (1999).

Turner followed up his Ohio State honor by becoming the third Buckeye after football player Eddie George in 1996 and gymnast Blaine Wilson in 1997 to be named Big Ten Male Athlete of the Year. Turner, who averaged 20.4 points, 9.2 boards and 6.0 assists per game, also swept national player of the year awards.

As for Marder, she was the first Ohio State softball player to be named an All-American three times. In addition, the two-time captain was named the team's most valuable player after leading the Big Ten with an .817 slugging percentage and .569 on-base percentage that season. She was walked 61 times, including 18 intentional, while batting .359, scoring 40 runs and

recording 45 RBI.

10 Years Ago — 2015

After years of attempting to fulfill his dream of becoming an NFL quarterback, former Ohio State signal caller Terrelle Pryor finally came to the realization that any future he might have in the league would come at a different position.

Pryor was cut from the Cincinnati Bengals on June 18, making them the fourth NFL team to part ways with the quarterback. Following the Bengals' decision, Pryor's agent, Drew Rosenhaus, began informing teams that his client would like to be considered as a wide receiver.

He appeared to have found a place to try out the position switch, because Pryor was claimed off waivers by the Cleveland Browns on June 22. That also set up an interesting scenario because the Browns had a sold-out scrimmage scheduled at Ohio Stadium on Aug. 7, and if Pryor were to remain on the roster, his five-year ban from all Ohio State athletic facilities would not have been a factor because the Browns were renting the stadium.

Five Years Ago — 2020

While the Big Ten was working to salvage any sort of a fall sports season, Ohio State hit the pause button on voluntary workouts for all fall sports teams on July 8 following a string of positive COVID tests from players and coaches on campus. A little less than a week later, on July 14, the university announced that it would be resuming voluntary workouts following another batch of testing.

“Based on the advice of medical professionals and the results of testing on Monday (July 13) of all student-athletes currently in training, The Ohio State University Department of Athletics announced today that it will resume voluntary training operations after a suspension announced last week,” a school statement read.

“Our Buckeyes are excited to be headed into a new school year and were disappointed last week when we had to temporarily suspend training,” Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said. “These young people come from across the nation and the world to be part of our Ohio State family, and we do everything we can to create a safe, healthy environment so that they have a chance to study and compete. Our medical team will continue to evaluate, and we will share decisions as we move forward.”

One Year Ago — 2024

Despite offering little information regarding his team's positional battles, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day did raise some eyebrows during a June 18 press conference when he revealed that safety Caleb Downs, who earned All-SEC and All-America honors at the position the previous year, could earn some reps on the other side of the ball this season if the Buckeyes needed him there.

“We started having conversations with Caleb during the recruiting process regarding him (playing) a little bit of running back as well,” Day said. “It's something he wanted to do. We've been having him in the meetings and some of the individual drills as a possibility there if he's needed down the road to continue to build depth at the position.”

Downs had yet to play a snap at running back in college, but he did return four punts for the Crimson Tide as a freshman, with one of those resulting in an impressive 85-yard touchdown late in the season against Chattanooga.

Improving Atmosphere, Fan Experience A Priority

Continued From Page 1

Bjork: “Look, there are a lot of moving parts in our industry right now. I had this great overlap with Gene for four months, and so that really gave me a nice window into the department operations. I did have to make some long-term decisions during that period, especially around coaching hires. We hired four coaches during that stretch, head coaches, had some other longer-term decisions. Not being really in the day-to-day stuff, but sort of being in the big picture allowed me to have a great viewpoint.

“When I did take over on July 1, it accelerated the conversations that had to take place. How do we manage 36 sports? How do we deal with the new House case settlement that was going to happen? How do we deal with revenue sharing? How do we continue to adapt to the NIL world? How do we scrub our budget in terms of – look, there are just things that have to change. How we spend our money has to change. Everybody knew the landscape, and because I had that four-month introduction, I was able to have direct conversations quicker than if it would have happened another way, or perhaps if there weren't all of these things happening in college athletics.

“I made comments like, ‘If we're going to break glass, let's break it all now. Let's not just chip around the edges.’ I think it allowed those things to accelerate. But I also think it was important from my standpoint that I provided the trust and stability and a wherewithal that it's going to be different, but it's going to be OK. Just a fundamental message about, ‘We're going to go to class, and we're going to play games, and everything in between is going to be different.’

“It's hopefully a combination of we've got to be forceful on the changes, but we also have to do it the right way, communicate and make sure that we're totally transparent. I feel like we were able to do all of those things.

“Then we had the best academic year we ever had with GPA and APR scores. All 36 of our teams had a 3.0 this spring semester. It looks like, based on the current standings, we'll finish in the top 10 in the Directors' Cup. We had two national championships, football being the crown jewel, but pistol – that's five in a row for them. Not a lot of people pay attention to them, but, holy cow, that's a dynasty program. Then our cheer and dance teams both captured a title, the women's ice hockey team finished runner-up, wrestling was in the top five, men's soccer in the Final Four. There were just a lot of great accomplishments on the field that our fans can be excited about.

“Then we're turning a lot of things on the business front and trying to be innovative and creative. There are a lot of things in my first year, but hopefully trust, stability, transparency and also adaptability given the environment.”

BSB: Likely the biggest thing last year was the football team's run through the 12-team playoff for their first national championship in a decade. What do you remember from that experience?

Bjork: “Obviously, I'm the current AD, and it happened on my watch, if you will.

But there was nothing that I really did to prepare us for that. A lot of things were in motion, whether it was facility changes, staff, stability, getting Chip Kelly here and some other changes that Coach (Ryan) Day went through in the 2024 offseason. The table was set in many ways. I was able to come in and just observe. Of course, you have to tweak things a little along the way and make some operational decisions, but it was really gratifying to watch from that perspective knowing that we just accomplished this. That was really exciting to have a front-row seat to so many moments that are frozen in time that will be captured for eternity – the Jeremiah Smith third-and-11 (against Notre Dame) for example.

“So that foundation is there, but how do we keep evolving? How do we keep growing? The excitement level of knowing that and watching it from the front row, and my family was there every step of the way. Getting to know Coach Day and his family and seeing how they pour their heart and soul into the program, getting to know the players on a more personal level. It was a long stretch, from Dec. 21 to Jan. 20. Then the celebration and all of the other little things along the way.

“I tell a story about, what does an AD do? Everything, but other duties as assigned. When Coach Day threw his headset in the air (late in the national championship game vs. Notre Dame), does anyone know what happened to it? He threw it up in the air, and I'm watching it in slow motion, and it flew backwards toward the stands. I'm like, ‘Oh my God, it's going in the stands.’ Mercedes-Benz Stadium has these suites on the field level. There's a railing, about waist high. The headset lands on the railing and it draped over the railing. I ran over there, because I'm like, ‘We have to grab that. This is a piece of history.’ These people are staring (at the headset) like, ‘What is this? Where did this come from?’ I looked at them and said, ‘This is ours.’ I don't think they were Ohio State fans or Notre Dame fans, they were just there watching the game, and they're looking at me like, ‘Who's this guy?’

“I grab (the headset) knowing it's a piece of hardware from a championship, and I just went and sat it on a table with the rest of the headsets. So I saved the national championship headset. There were just so many cool moments like that.

“You get no sleep after a national championship victory, getting on the plane and really going right back to work. It's tiring, but you're exhilarated by the moment. There's a lot of cool moments from a personal, professional standpoint, and all of the celebration stuff and the things that come with it.”

BSB: Sticking with the playoff run, the first-round game against Tennessee, it seemed like there was an emphasis on enhancing the fan experience on game day with the drone show and the scarlet lighting. Moving forward to next season and beyond, is that something that will be implemented more?

Bjork: “That game provided a great template and platform for what can happen and maybe should happen. How do you utilize technology? How do you play music a different way? I've talked about all of these things.

We still have to recognize sponsors, but you can do it in a different way and make it a little more efficient and make it a little more engaging for the fans.

“A lot of people that went to the Oregon game (at Autzen Stadium on Oct. 12) – we had maybe 10,000 at that game in a small stadium – they witnessed what can happen when you're uniform and everything is in sync. All I kept hearing after that Oregon game was, ‘We have to do that.’ As I've said, we had already been studying it. I've been reviewing it from the very first game. How can we make the atmosphere better?

“It wasn't like it was bad. It just needs to be modernized and provide more innovation, and I think people are expecting more engagement. So we started this, really back in September of last year. Then we saw the Oregon game, and people saw the Tennessee game. I don't know how many people I've run into that have said, ‘That was the best game I've ever been to, bar none. Best game ever. Great atmosphere.’

“Now, it was a playoff game. It was the night the Tennessee fans came and got our fans fired up. They saw that, our players saw it and they said, ‘Oh no, not in our house.’ I think that escalated the vibe. Then we layer in all the things that we were able to do because the script had to be different to match the CFP script. It just allowed for a great template of what can happen.

“Will it be exactly the same? Not necessarily. We want to integrate history. We want to provide engagement for our fans. When this one thing happens, the fans know to do this, whatever those things are. How do we incorporate different elements around the stadium, like the ramp. How does the band do more? How do we utilize the victory bell? All of these cool things that are ingrained in our history, how do we activate them? Those are the things we're working on, but there's no question that the Tennessee game provided a spark that allowed people to open their mind a little bit more.”

BSB: Before the playoff run, it's safe to say you got the full experience of the rivalry in your first year. We've heard the point of view of the players and the coaches, but on the field postgame for the fight, what was that like from your point of view? Was there ever any thought of internal discipline? Were there conversations with the Big Ten?

Bjork: “I always do the same routine. I always go down to the field with seven or eight minutes left on the clock and I'm there, win or lose, to support the players. God forbid something does happen like this. I've been around long enough where I've seen a few skirmishes at the end of games. I'm down there no matter what.

“I was standing there for ‘Carmen Ohio,’ obviously a depressed ‘Carmen Ohio,’ and all of a sudden I hear the booing, so I'm looking at the video board. Everything was taking place behind us, and I had no idea. When I heard the booing, I thought maybe it was toward our team. Clearly not. I turned around, saw the skirmish and my goal was just to get them off the field, meaning the Michigan players and team. Get them off the field or get them back to their section where they can celebrate.

“If you want to celebrate, fine. That's your prerogative. You beat us. But you don't disrespect midfield. Our players, they stood up for that. They did not want that to happen. They were not going to let that happen. So the fact that nothing escalated beyond a certain point, we never looked at any internal discipline. We were going to work with the Big Ten. They reviewed the film, and again, nothing escalated beyond what would have maybe caused some other action.

“It's just disappointing there weren't adults that could have said, ‘Hey we're going to celebrate over here.’ Celebrate all you want, but when you cross a certain line – I don't blame our players at all.

“Now what happens moving forward? Are there protocols we can put in place? What happens to flags? There's some things you can do. Cooler heads have to prevail, sportsmanship has to be what the importance of The Game is. No one is going to de-emphasize The Game, but when you win on an opposing field, you have to treat it the right way because it can come with a lot of angst. There just has to be a better way moving forward.”

BSB: The day after that game, you felt the need to publicly voice your support for Ryan Day. Why did you feel like it was necessary to do that outwardly, and what kind of support was there behind closed doors?

Bjork: “At that moment, even though we were disappointed, we knew we'd be in the playoff and we knew that we'd be hosting a game. The last thing I wanted to have happen is our players not feeling certainty, not feeling support from within the walls of our buildings. If they felt like there were any cracks in the armor, then how would they have reacted? How would they have responded?

“I woke up Sunday morning and everyone's upset. We're all upset. Coach is upset. The players are upset about the way we played. I felt like waking up on Sunday morning that there had to be some clarity of our purpose, of our mission, clarity of our program, clarity of Coach Day and his entire leadership status. I had the luxury of getting to know him both during the overlap with Gene, then when I took over. I know what he stands for. I know how he leads the program. I know the culture is stronger than just one game, even though that game means everything in the moment.

“The players were going to come back into the building on Monday, and we had to prepare for the playoff. I just did not want there to be any doubt about it. One, we believe in Coach Day. Two, symbolically we couldn't leave any doubt about the program because we're a great team. We're in the playoffs. We're hosting a game. We can't just call the CFP and say, ‘Hey, since we lost that one game, we're good. We're going to sit this one out.’ It doesn't work that way.

“I just knew that we had the ingredients, and if I could provide any spark of belief or optimism, but also stability and clarity, those are probably more important. We had to do it. We had to say something.”

BSB: Switching to basketball, before you fully took over, your first move was to hire Jake Diebler as the head men's bas-

ketball coach. Looking back at the year since that decision, how do you feel about that hire, and how would you assess his first year?

Bjork: “What I probably didn’t realize was how far off the radar the program had gotten in terms of national persona, the national perspective. I just jumped right into it mid-February before I even got to town and started doing Zoom meetings and really re-searching.

“The profile of Ohio State basketball is that we have the blue-blood elements. Have we been a blue blood consistently? No. But we have elements. So how do we capitalize on that? Jake inherited a tough situation. When you promote somebody within, people think, ‘Oh, he should have flipped it quicker,’ or, ‘This should have happened in year one.’ We never went into it that way. We went into it saying, ‘Let’s create the right culture. Let’s create a foundation that is going to be sustainable and get us back to a consistent basis where we are competing for a Big Ten championship and we’re making long runs back into a Final Four position.’

“Those are the things that Jake has established. He’s got our culture back. He’s got the connectivity back to the former players. He’s connecting in our community, in the NIL world. He’s done an amazing job of keeping our roster stable and engaging with donors and businesses, because that’s required now. He’s really learned a lot about what it means to build a roster based on experience.

“Last year, we got off to a bit of a late start, so the guys that we really had to rely on, they hadn’t played a lot of basketball. The difference with this year’s roster is, one, the nucleus. I think we have the second-highest returning production in the Big Ten behind Purdue. The nucleus, retention, was key. But we also have guys that have played a lot of games. The guys we got last year didn’t play a lot of games at their previous stops. The experience piece of the roster, I think Jake learned a lot about that.

“He’s pushing the future of recruiting. The things that we expect him to do on the court, off the court, the energy, recruiting at a high level, he’s meeting all of those. Then we were just one or two games away. If you beat Northwestern, if you win one of the Indiana games, we’re a tournament team. We could have been as high as a No. 9 or No. 10 seed because we scheduled the right way. (Diebler’s) not afraid to embrace a tough schedule.

“It’s simple, because consistency really needs to define who we are, but there are a lot of elements. I think Jake has grown. We have a great staff that I’m really excited about. Those guys have a ton of connections. But we have to have that roster consistent to compete in the Big Ten. The goals are to be in the hunt, if you’re in the top four of the Big Ten down the stretch, you’re competing for a championship, which also means you’re going to be a really high seed in the tournament. We’ve got to get back in that realm and that way, we’re on the dance floor every year.

“We have the building blocks in place to do that, then also it’s the atmosphere. It’s the same thing as it is with football, working on a lot of things around (Value City Arena) to make the atmosphere better. The winning part helps with that too. But if we

can just make it more fun and a cooler place to be, then that attracts a better crowd and that helps you win games too.”

BSB: As far as women’s basketball, head coach Kevin McGuff was arrested for driving under the influence on May 6. The athletic department said it was in discussions with him and was monitoring the situation. Is there an update on that situation?

Bjork: “We spent a lot of time with Coach McGuff making sure that one, he’s OK personally, how that’s affected the job. Kevin has dealt with it, and we dealt with it head on. We feel like we’re in a good spot with Coach McGuff. He’s done a lot of things to work on himself but also worked with the team. He’s back out on the road recruiting.

“There are some accountability measures with everything, but we’ve dealt with that head on as well. Coach McGuff has responded really well. He’s taken ownership, he’s taken accountability, and we just need to move forward and continue the support.”

BSB: There was never any thought of making a change after that situation?

Bjork: “No, based on the totality of the situation. We evaluated everything, top to bottom. We did not go down that path.”

BSB: You’ve mentioned before that there will be some facility upgrades coming with St. John Arena, the new hockey rink, the athletic district and the Woody Hayes facility. What updates can you give on those plans, and what are the timelines for them?

Bjork: “We don’t have any specific timelines on anything. There are a few things that are in motion. We’ve got a club area being built out in Ohio Stadium that will be done by fall of 2026. We’ve got some other things that we’re working on to be done by then. But as far as the more high-profile or visible projects we’re doing, there’s a lot of studying that has to take place. What exactly do we need?

“The St. John corridor, meaning the ice rink, St. John Arena and French Field House, what happens there? How do we build a new ice hockey arena? Once you build that arena, then the ice rink becomes a practice facility. We have a weight room in St. John Arena. Our track team, that’s their operations building. The St. John corridor has a ripple effect on what we can do around hockey, what we do around the future of our track operations.

“The Woody Hayes Athletic Complex needs some upgrades and needs some expansion. We’re looking at how we can do that in a smart way knowing that we don’t want to vacate that building. We can’t really do that from a practice standpoint. But do we have to move things out on a temporary basis? We really need to get all the logistical things corrected on the Woody Hayes Center to understand what the timeline would be.

“The athletic district, we’re looking at how to make it more of a fan hub all the way from Ackerman Road all the way through the lacrosse stadium and Covelli (Center). The athletic district still has an evolution. We draw a great crowd at softball, but not so much at baseball. Can we do something around softball but also upgrade baseball to create more fan comforts? We need to replace the video boards from Jesse Owens (Memorial Stadium) to softball (Buckeye

Field) to Bill Davis (Stadium), working on those elements of technology.

“There’s a long list, but we’re putting together a master plan and a road map that would identify some costs but also a timeline. The Woody Hayes and the ice hockey facility have the most immediate big-picture timeline. We really want to get our funding strategy solidified by the fall so we can turn our fundraising people loose. Those two buildings kind of trigger the rest of everything.”

BSB: Ohio State hosted a few big events this year, with the NHL Stadium Series game being an example. Is there a plan to make those things happen more often in the future, and what does that type of thing do for the athletic department?

Bjork: “This is what’s really great about Ohio State, is we’ve been doing this for a long time, probably close to 30 years with large-scale events, concerts in the ‘Shoe and at the Schottenstein Center. You’re seeing athletic departments create whole new units to just now get into the music business, and maybe they’ll have one every five years. We do it every year. Buckeye Country Super Fest, the Stadium Series, we had international soccer last year. There could be four to five shows next year in the ‘Shoe between music and other events. We’re talking to a lot of people in that space right now.

“We have a whole apparatus for that. Other programs are just trying to get it up off the ground. We already have a machine – the Schottenstein, we oversee Mershon Auditorium, we oversee Nationwide Arena

downtown, we have the ‘Shoe. We’re always getting approached for these large-scale events. That will be a business that we have to try to grow and get more aggressive.

“Ohio Stadium has to keep up with that. Whether it’s the field, the restrooms, concessions, technology. We’re going to push the envelope. That drives what we call alternative sources of revenue. Tickets, donations, sponsorships and licensing are your primary. This is an alternative bucket that we’re going to continue to pursue, push and continue to grow. We have a great team which does an amazing job in that space.

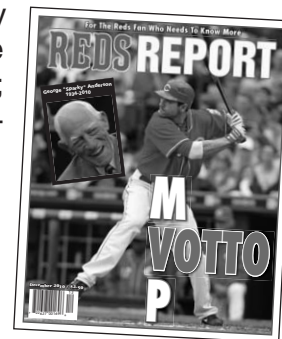
BSB: Wrapping up, what do you envision a Ross Bjork-led athletic department looks like going into the future, keeping in mind the rapid changes taking place in college athletics?

Bjork: “I want to have two mindsets: stability, but also growth. Leave it better than you found it, and that’s hard to do. There’s a high bar. If you think about a long-term decision-making approach that provides stability, then at the same time, we haven’t reached our ceiling yet in whatever bucket that might be. I think about growth of, ‘Can we have 50,000 annual donors right now? We have a little over 20,000. Or could we have 100,000? We sell the most merchandise in the country out of any college athletic program. How do we capture more of that? We have the biggest sponsorship category, sell the most sponsorships, but there’s still room to grow. It’s a growth mindset while thinking about long-term stability.”

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George Continues Search For Next Hill To Climb

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

If perseverance ever goes searching for a poster child, it need look no further than Eddie George. From a spindly child whose mother wouldn't allow him to play organized football to Heisman Trophy winner and four-time Pro Bowler with the NFL's Tennessee Titans, George picked himself up after being knocked down so many times he finally lost count. It never crossed his mind not to keep getting up, though. He was too busy chasing big dreams.

"Adversity is a wonderful seed to plant," George said. "You can nurture it, you can cherish it, you can learn from it, and you can just keep feeding it water until it grows and blossoms."

Edward Nathan George Jr. began sharing his life with the seeds of adversity shortly after he was born Sept. 24, 1973, in suburban Philadelphia. His father, Edward Sr., wasn't around much during the youngster's childhood, officially separating from his mother, Donna, when Eddie was only 7. The couple later divorced, leaving Donna as a single mother to care for Eddie and his older sister, Leslie.

The youngster didn't know it at the time, but his mother was passing her strong will and determination down to her son. Donna George was a loving mother, but she also had no hesitation to mete out whatever discipline was necessary for the situation. She insisted her children set goals for themselves, not only for the present but for the future. And once they had met those goals, they were encouraged to set bigger ones and then bigger ones after that.

That upbringing is very likely the reason George has never been satisfied conquering just one world.

After a mediocre senior season at Fork Union Military Academy, he returned for a postgraduate year and parlayed that into a football scholarship at Ohio State. He was benched during his freshman year after fumbling twice in a game, but three years later was atop the college football world as winner of the Heisman Trophy. That led to a professional career that included becoming a first-round NFL draft pick, earning offensive rookie of the year honors, playing in the Super Bowl and having his jersey number retired.

Normally, that would have been enough achievement for a lifetime. But George is seemingly on a never-ending search for his next challenge. He has put his two degrees – a bachelor's in landscape architecture at Ohio State and a master's from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern – to use in a variety of successful business endeavors, and he has several stage and television acting credits including a starring role on Broadway in the popular musical "Chicago."

George has also been successful in his private life. He and his wife, Tamara, a singer and actress in her own right, have been

married since 2004 and have two sons, one of whom works behind the cameras in film and television, and the other who is currently following in his father's footsteps as a college football player.

And still, George isn't satisfied. In 2021, despite no head coaching experience, he took over a cash-strapped program at Tennessee State and guided it last season to the program's first postseason appearance in 11 years. Then, on March 9, he was hired as head coach at Bowling Green, this time taking over an established program with a tradition of winning.

His latest challenge provided the impetus for BSB's telephone interview in late June with the 51-year-old George from the set of a Nissan Heisman House television commercial scheduled to air this fall.

BSB: First of all, congratulations on becoming head coach at Bowling Green. I'm interested in what led someone who had transitioned quite well from college and pro football standout to family man, Broadway star and successful entrepreneur to get back in the game in his late 40s?

George: "Coaching really wasn't something that was on my radar. Between family and business and other things, I was busy. I was content. But that changed in April 2021 when Tennessee State let go of its coach (longtime head coach Rod Reed) and contacted me. I was flattered to be contacted, but in the beginning, it really wasn't anything I thought I'd be interested in doing. But the more I dug into it, the more interested I became.

"In terms of academics, Tennessee State is very highly regarded in the HBCU community (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), and it's located in Nashville, so I wouldn't have had to pack up and move the family. And the previous fall, as I'm sure everybody knows, another HBCU – Jackson State – had hired Deion Sanders despite his lack of college coaching experience, and he helped get what had been a struggling program turned around.

"I knew that TSU was in pretty much the same situation, but I wanted to do things the right way. If I was going to be a coach, I wanted to be a coach and not just some big-name prop coming in. I made it clear that if I was going to take over that program, the people out front and center would be the players.

"When I finally decided to do it, I wasn't going to go halfway. I wasn't going to do a reality show tied to it. It's not about the camera, my hits on Instagram, my content or any of that. There's a place for all that, but it was important, especially in the beginning, that it not be about me, it be about them.

"It meant sacrificing a lot of things I had been working on prior to that like acting and business. But the gratification that I got from helping young people and giving them guidance and seeing the light bulb go off ... challenging them and developing them to



FILE PHOTO

ANOTHER CHALLENGE — Eddie George has never been afraid to test himself whether it be on the football field, on stage or in the business world. Ahead for the Heisman Trophy winner is his first season as coach of the Bowling Green Falcons.

become leaders is really God's work."

BSB: But it had been 15 years since you were in a locker room – 15 years away from the grind of football, and taking over a program that wasn't exactly known for its tradition of winning.

George: "There were a lot of moving parts at TSU, from compliance to the players to equipment, making sure lines are on the field, the scheduling – all of it was overwhelming. I had to organize my thoughts, but once I got a rhythm of it and I realized where I needed to spend my time, it was, 'OK, the culture has to be felt from top to bottom, period. Excellence all the way through.'"

BSB: Ever any second thoughts, especially after you lost three of your first four games?

George: "Not at all because we followed that by winning four in a row. I knew we were trending in the right direction. I knew we were on the right track. Or at least, I thought we were."

BSB: You finished with a 5-6 record in 2021 and then took a step backward the following season to finish 4-7. What happened?

George: "I saw some disciplinary issues that needed to be addressed on the roster and coaching staff. So a lot of my focus was getting the culture of the program under control while I'm trying to learn how to coach on the fly. That first year was like, 'Do I like this? Do I love this?' And the answer

was that I didn't know. But seeing the small victories – not just the ones on the field – I got addicted to it. All the years of preparation and the life after the game prepared me for it."

BSB: You finally had a winning season in year three and then broke through last year to earn the program's first FCS playoff appearance in 11 years. But then you decided to take the next step in your coaching journey.

George: "Three months after our last game at Tennessee State, I was watching ESPN when news came on that Bowling Green head coach Scot Loeffler had left to be quarterbacks coach for the Philadelphia Eagles. I remember thinking, 'That's a bad situation for BG to be in right now. I wonder what they're going to do.' Lo and behold, that situation began to involve me.

"I wasn't actively trying to leave Tennessee State. There were some things going on like my contract was going to expire soon and some other things we were working out, but I fully intended to be coaching at Tennessee State in 2025. Also, I didn't want word to get out that I was looking elsewhere.

"But I began talking to some other coaches that I really respect, and I started to believe that making the move was the right decision. (My wife and I) talked over the pros and cons and all of that led to a decision that was the best decision for me – not from a financial standpoint, but a support standpoint. I believe we could really build

this brand in a conference that is well-established and going places.”

BSB: I know you are a Philadelphia native and have lived most of the last 30 years in Nashville. But is taking the Bowling Green job bringing you full circle in a football sense? Is it something akin to coming home?

George: “Absolutely. I’ve been a well-known commodity in this state for over 30 years. That’s not going anywhere. I know that. But when it comes down to it, when I put that whistle around my neck, we are in the heat of battle. I’m training guys or pushing them beyond their comfort zone, and that’s a different animal. I’m back to my old playing days. That’s the spirit and that’s not to be played with.

“But I will say that it’s different because I’m out of my comfort zone as far as being outside of Nashville for the first time in 30 years. When I first took over at Tennessee State, I was familiar with the area, familiar with the school, and it wasn’t too far from my house. It wasn’t far from my son’s high school where he played ball at the time. But this is an uprooting, although it is sort of a homecoming, so to speak, to be back in the shadows of Ohio Stadium and Ohio State.

“At the same time, it’s not like I wasn’t familiar with Bowling Green. We played against Bowling Green my freshman year at Ohio State, and I’m very familiar with the coaches that have come through BG over the years. I’m a big college football buff, so it was not foreign to me at all about Bowling Green and the history here and the teams they have had in the MAC, which is a very good conference. It’s awesome ball that’s played here, and some really great coaches have coached in this conference.”

BSB: If you could boil it down to one thing, what was the overall contributing factor that really piqued your interest in the Bowling Green program?

George: “There were several, but if I have to pick just one, it would be the line of vision from the very top. We have an awesome president in Rodney Rogers, who has an entrepreneurial spirit, who’s really responsible for the admissions here at BGSU campus-wide. I think this freshman class has been the biggest class ever at Bowling Green. He continues to thrive when other schools are having issues in terms of admissions. His vision is to use the athletic footprint – with football leading the way – to tell the story of Bowling Green State University.

“Our AD Derek van de Merwe has been phenomenal, and he shares the same vision as our president. He’s very entrepreneurial and gives me the resources I need to be successful. We’re constantly talking about growing this program and how do we grow it through our leadership through community-driven process. It’s been phenomenal.

“And, again, for me, it’s coming back to Ohio roots, having played at Ohio State, knowing the state, knowing how football is played here. As I mentioned before, I know the history of this program and the coaches that have come through here from Dino Babers to Urban Meyer and Scot Loeffler – coaches that have been extremely successful in the coaching business. Those are the main things that appealed to me, plus it seemed like a wonderful opportunity.”

BSB: How do you think coaching at Tennessee State prepared you to take the step to Bowling Green?

George: “Without question, Tennessee State was a training ground for me in terms of coaching. Things weren’t always easy. It was pretty challenging on a lot of different fronts, but that’s what allowed me to be in this position today. I have a great deal of gratitude for Tennessee State and what it provided me. They gave me the opportunity to be a head coach and to solve a lot of issues during that particular time which sharpened my sword as a head coach. Having to do more with less at times, having to dig a little bit deeper to get the kids to stay focused on what mattered most played a huge factor in how my coaching philosophy has really morphed and changed and evolved.

“Without Tennessee State, I wouldn’t be here. I’m so grateful that I had the opportunity to coach at that great university.

BSB: So, how do I address you these days? Is it still just Eddie or do you prefer Coach nowadays?

George: “Whatever works, you know? (Laughs.) Coach is fine, but I’m just trying like every other coach in the country to build a winning program and truly earn the distinction of being called ‘Coach.’ ”

BSB: Did you know that you are the first Heisman Trophy winner since Steve Spurrier, who won the award way back in 1966, to become a head coach at the Football Bowl Subdivision (Division I) level? How does that make you feel?

George: “You know what? That’s crazy to me. Of all the great players and great men who have won that trophy since Steve won his, and all the great things they have done, it doesn’t seem possible that only the two of us have become college head coaches at the D-I level. That seems remarkable to me.

“I’ve learned a lot from Steve just being around him when we have these Heisman get-togethers. All those SEC championships and the national championship he won at Florida pretty much speak for themselves. I’m honored to share that distinction with him. Now, I’ve got to go win.”

BSB: Speaking of the Heisman Trophy, you, of course, won the award at Ohio State in 1995, something that has opened doors and granted you opportunities over the years. One of the more recent opportunities is to appear throughout the college football season in Heisman House television commercials for Nissan. I think your new AD even joked about that in your introductory press conference. What is it like to be a member of that fraternity?

George: “It is most definitely a fraternity. I’ve been a Heisman Trophy winner now for 30 years, and I still remember the night I won Archie Griffin telling me that it only gets better with time. I said, ‘There’s no way it can get better than that actual moment of winning it.’ But it does.

“You have an opportunity to always be known as a Heisman Trophy winner. No matter where you go, you’re always associated with it. It’s probably one of the most elite, prestigious, and smallest fraternities in the country. You only have a small window to get it done to be considered or become a winner, and then when you do win it, it follows you for the rest of your lifetime.

“The Heisman House ad campaign speaks to that, you know, as far as the camaraderie and the relationships that are built through the years. I won in ’95, and I have a very unique relationship with guys that

won it after me and before me. It really is a brotherhood and fraternity to share with generations throughout.”

BSB: Many fans recall the glory of that 1995 season, especially the famous photo of you running away from what appeared to be the entire Notre Dame defense. But few remember the struggles it took for you to get there. Let’s start with Fork Union Military Academy in Virginia and what led you there.

George: “It’s not like I had a choice. My mother said I was going and that was that. Once I got used to the place, things were all right, but at the time I wasn’t happy at all. I was used to hanging with my boys, staying out all night and getting into stuff. Nothing major, but you know how young kids are when they don’t have anything else to do. Then I got to Fork Union and my life changed overnight.

“Getting used to a military academy with all of its rules, with nearly every minute of every day regimented between schoolwork, athletics and military drills ... man, I cried myself to sleep every night the first week I was there. Slowly, though, that all got through to me, and I began to appreciate the dedication, discipline and attention to detail it took to excel as a Fork Union cadet.

“There’s no question that I am where I am today because my mother sent me there. No question whatsoever. If she hadn’t had the foresight to send me to Fork Union, there’s no telling where I might be today.”

BSB: That led to a pretty good recruiting competition for your services between Virginia, Ohio State and Penn State. I seem to remember your mother favored Penn State and the stability of longtime head coach Joe Paterno. How did you talk her into playing for John Cooper at Ohio State?

George: “Well, that didn’t happen right away. I didn’t have a very good senior year at Fork Union, and as a result, I got exactly one scholarship offer and that was to Edinboro, a little Division II school located way up in the northwest corner of Pennsylvania. So I went back to Fork Union for a postgraduate year, and that’s when I got bigger and stronger, and the larger schools started taking notice.

“Fork Union has a pretty strong football tradition. I think it’s had 10 or 11 (actually 12) guys who were first-round NFL draft picks. Anyway, after my postgraduate season, I started getting offers and I had pretty well decided that I wanted to go to Ohio State. I think my mom would have preferred that I had been a big fish in a smaller pond, but I felt like I was a shark and I needed to swim in the ocean. I wanted to trust my instincts and play with the big boys.”

BSB: Then once you realized your dream of playing at Ohio State, the dream

turned into a nightmare. You fumbled twice as a freshman against Illinois, including one that was returned 96 yards for a Fighting Illini touchdown in what ultimately became an 18-16 loss for the Buckeyes. How long were you in the doghouse after those fumbles, and what did you do to get out?

George: “Most people don’t believe me when I say this, but it was the best thing that could have ever happened. It forced me to take a look at myself. It forced me to work harder, to be better. I was on a team with guys like Robert Smith, Raymont Harris and Butler By’not’e. I don’t know how many yards and touchdowns they ended up with during their careers, but it was a lot. (The trio combined for 6,165 yards and 56 TDs at Ohio State.) And I was running with them right up until that Illinois game. Then came the time when I was worst-ever running back in the history of the program because of those fumbles.

“But that forced me to focus on my technique and smaller details like holding the ball in a certain way. I took ballet lessons to improve my balance and posture. I would sneak into the stadium by myself late at night, go down on the field and visualize what I was trying to accomplish. It was a very tough time and dropped me to levels I can’t even tell you about. Those are the kinds of things that can destroy a young man, but I was determined that it wasn’t going to destroy me. It actually ignited something deeper in me that I didn’t even know existed.

“So reflecting back, the game against Illinois during my freshman year was pivotal. I was known for the longest time as the guy who fumbled twice inside the 5-yard line. People said I couldn’t make it at Ohio State, that I should transfer out. But I believed in myself and continued to work hard. The rest, as they say, is history.”

BSB: Everyone knows about your NFL stardom, and most people know about your entrepreneurial skills with a string of successful restaurants as well as an eponymous wealth management group. But perhaps some are unaware that you have had starring roles in a number of stage productions, most notably as Billy Flynn in the Tony-winning musical “Chicago.” I know you’ve never been afraid to put yourself out there, but singing and dancing in front of a live audience? What was that like?

George: “It was awesome. Long story short, after my playing career ended, I became interested in becoming an actor and got a lot of inquiries about being in various shows. So I began to study theater and

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George: Education More Important Than NIL

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started working with Shakespearian productions like 'Othello' and 'Julius Caesar' as well as more contemporary stuff like 'The Whipping Man,' 'A Raisin in the Sun' and 'Top Dog/Underdog.' I did various pieces in community theater, but I was really interested in going on Broadway and maybe winning a Tony someday.

"In 2016, I was able to audition for the role of Billy Flynn, got it, and did an eight-week stint on Broadway in New York City. Then shortly thereafter, I did the touring company for 2½ years."

BSB: Including a week in 2018 at the Palace Theater in Columbus. How was that experience?

George: "Awesome. But the entire experience was awesome. Every night was game night – was like a Super Bowl. The energy that was felt in the theater, you could feel it as an actor. You just ride on that wave. It was an awesome feeling to go through that."

BSB: You said every night was game night. Are there other parallels between acting and football?

George: "There's a team element. And it's very physical. Both art forms are very physical. You're just not getting beat up by someone on the stage with you – although that can happen. It requires so much of you to be vulnerable, very real in real time. You make a mistake on the field, you have to continue to press through it and through the next play. Whereas the same thing happens in theater – you mess up a line or a blocking – you improvise and you just keep the story moving and you have to move beyond it. So those same principles apply."

"In terms of discipline? Knowing your role like you get to know your role as an athlete, know who you are on the field. If you're the quarterback, linebacker, receiver, tight end, you have a specific job you have to do,

and the same thing holds true on stage. Everybody's depending on you."

"You're out there on stage making yourself vulnerable to the audience. You want to transport them away for an hour and a half or however long it is and show them something or maybe tell them something they didn't realize. I think maybe the greatest gift of the theater is to make yourself vulnerable. And that benefits you as a coach. Telling the truth, not being afraid to make a mistake, showing your emotion. I think one of Coach (Jim) Tressel's favorite sayings is 'People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.' So yes, there are definitely parallels when it comes to football and theater."

BSB: Do you think the changes such as conference realignment, expanded football playoff and basketball tournaments, seemingly unlimited NIL money, and a spinning-door transfer portal are good or bad for college athletics?

George: "There is some good and some bad, I think. I was an advocate for years for players receiving some sort of compensation for use of their name, image and likeness, so I think that's a step in the right direction. But the bad thing is that there is a wild, wild west aspect to it. There are no guardrails, no structure around it. And that leaves the system open for abuse."

"Look, I know there is always going to be abuse no matter what the structure. I lived and played in an NIL era, but it was different because it was underground. Now, here we are with college football as a multibillion-dollar business with so much more money available than anyone ever realized there would be. But it is what it is, and the kids all realize that. They realize they're the real product and they should be compensated. But the danger comes when the primary goal is to go for the money."

"College athletics is still a conduit toward becoming a professional, and I think it's dangerous to provide money without also providing the tools for a successful lifestyle. This should not be a deal where you just drop a Lamborghini in their lap and allow them to live lavishly while basically robbing them of how to fight through adversity. The way things are set up now with the transfer portal, it gives them an opportunity to easily run away from adversity."

"I go back to my fumbles in that game against Illinois my freshman year at Ohio State. If a kid did that today, he'd just drive his sports car back to his luxury off-campus apartment and count his money. Or he'd punch in the portal and run away from it. What does that really teach you? Run when it gets hard?"

"There's enough money for everybody these days, but what we should be teaching these kids is that education still matters. I would like a requirement that you must take financial courses, accounting courses and business classes. Some of these kids don't know how to balance a checkbook or what a checkbook even is. They don't understand that the first person who gets paid is always Uncle Sam. They don't know anything about tax shelters or LLCs or how to protect the money they've made. All we're doing now is saying, 'Here's some money, now go blow it'

That's not setting up our young people for success, and at the end of the day, that's our job."

"We have the opportunity to structure things in such a way that our young people can benefit not only from a financial standpoint but from a lifestyle standpoint. That's what college is really for, isn't it?"

BSB: Did you get to follow Ohio State's national championship run this past season?

George: "I began to catch up with them at the end of the season beginning with the game against that team up north."

BSB: Well, maybe we don't have to talk about that one.

George: "Oh, no. We have to talk about that one. You can't forget about it or just write it off because of what happened. If you didn't understand before how that game is one of the toughest games year in and year out, you have to understand it now. It doesn't matter what the records are or what the rankings are, and I think we saw that again. I think that game just underscored how good Michigan really is in their culture. They came into that rivalry game with some of their lead dogs out – heavy underdogs, no one giving them a chance to win – and to still find a way to win it, I think that speaks to what they have cultivated up there over the years. You have to tip your hat to that."

"But having said that, I think what happened afterward has to be considered Ryan Day's finest hour. He could have easily lost his team. When you lose to your rival, especially when it has happened several years in a row, that's all you hear. And you hear it over and over and over. But what Coach Day did was inspire his team. He took that loss and inspired his team to dig deeper. He galvanized that bunch of players into a unit, and we all saw the result. They played four of the best teams in the country and beat them all by double digits. You talk about turning a negative into a positive. Man, I thought it was awesome."

BSB: A lot was made of the players on that team and their faith – faith in whatever spirit they chose to worship as well as faith in themselves and their teammates. Do you think faith plays an important role in winning football, or is that sometimes overblown?

George: "There is no way it could be overblown. No way. I believe faith is the key to everything. Without faith, there is no work. That is the foundation. Faith is what's going to carry you through in good times and especially in bad times. When you get punched in the mouth and things get to be at their darkest, that's when faith gets you through."

"I think faith is the very foundation of our culture. Faith is what got me through my first days at Fork Union. Faith is what got me through that tough first year at Ohio State. Faith got us through tough times at Tennessee State when we were losing players, losing money. Faith allowed us to continue to press forward and be steadfast. And now faith has brought me to Bowling Green."

"You know, anyone who doesn't have faith, that's your business. Speaking from my own experience, though, all the trials, all the transitions, all the vicissitudes of this

life, whenever I've faced adversity, it has been my faith that has carried me through. I live by that, and I'll die by that."

BSB: What was your happiest moment on the football field as player?

George: "Wow. That's a tough one because there have been so many. All of the great wins we had at Ohio State and winning the Heisman Trophy and all of the relationships and lifelong friendships that were made. But if I'm being honest, I think going to the Super Bowl (following the 1999 season) was definitely the best moment for me as a player."

"We'd never ever made the playoffs since I'd been with the team, and I don't think they'd been to the playoffs since they were in Houston as the Oilers. Anyway, achieving what we did as a team was just awesome. The guys I played with – Bruce Matthews, Steve McNair, Frank Wycheck, Jevon Kearse was defensive rookie of the year. ... Of course, Steve and Frank are both gone now, gone way too soon. But, man, what an awesome team we had. What an awesome time it was to be alive."

BSB: What was your happiest moment off the football field?

George: "Watching my sons graduate from high school and start their paths toward being honest, productive young men. Watching my oldest, Jaire, earn his master's degree from the USC Film School. Watching my youngest, Eriq, lead his high school team to its first undefeated regular season in history and then to play for me at Tennessee State. And now he's joining me at Bowling Green, too. I couldn't be more proud of both of my sons."

BSB: I thought maybe it would have been the time you got Michael Jackson's autograph when you were a kid.

George: "It's funny you mentioned that. You must have really done your homework. Yeah, the first autograph I ever got as a kid was Michael Jackson's. He walked in my next-door neighbor's house in Philadelphia because they were on tour at JFK (Stadium) at the time, and their bodyguard was the son of our next-door neighbor. They cooked this huge meal, and it was supposed to be a secret, and my mom and I were coming in from the store and we looked over and the van pulled up and we're looking, and I see Michael Jackson and his brothers walking in the house right next door to us, and we're like, 'What!?' We couldn't believe it."

"Then Mom gets on the phone and tells everybody. Before you knew it, the whole block was full of people. Helicopters flying around, news vans talking about Michael Jackson in the neighborhood, kids coming up wanting to meet him. It was just crazy. It was a crazy day, but that was my first time meeting Michael and getting an autograph."

BSB: One final question. If you could write your own epitaph, how would it read?

George: "Man, that's a tough question. That really puts me on the spot. (Pause.) I would really have to think about that because I don't want to give you some routine, stock answer. Let me see ... (Long pause.) Something along the lines of he was a man that lived his truth, lived his life to the fullest, and lived by his faith."

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Powell Reflects On Decorated Buckeye Career

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Despite playing at Ohio State for only three years, former safety Tyvis Powell left Columbus with a plethora of memorable moments and accomplishments.

The Bedford, Ohio, native joined the Buckeyes at the same time as former head coach Urban Meyer and quickly rose up the depth chart to become a starter as a redshirt freshman.

After a disappointing end to the 2013 season, Powell helped lead the Buckeyes to their first national championship in over a decade in 2014.

Powell, who ended his career 4-0 against Michigan including his redshirt season, is perhaps best known to Buckeye fans for the game-saving plays he made in the team's biggest games. In 2013, Powell ended a comeback bid from an upset-hungry Michigan team with an interception on a two-point conversion play to put the Buckeyes over the top 42-41.

One year later, Powell punctuated Ohio State's 42-35 win over Alabama in the first round of the College Football Playoff with a game-ending interception. Powell earned defensive MVP honors in Ohio State's 42-20 national championship win over Oregon, after going for a game-high nine tackles.

After the 2015 season, Powell declared a year early for the NFL draft but went undrafted. Still, the 6-3 safety bounced around to eight different NFL teams during a five-year career.

Since his football career ended in 2021, Powell has started a career in media, and today, Powell is a co-host of the morning show "T-Bone & Tyvis" on Columbus' 97.1 The Fan.

Powell talked to BSB about all of those things and more for this year's Interview Issue.

BSB: You grew up in Bedford, Ohio. Did you always watch the Buckeyes and root for them as a child? Did you always know you wanted to play for Ohio State?

Powell: "The day that I decided that I wanted to go to Ohio State was in 2002 after they won the national championship. I was sitting at my grandmother's house, I watched it, and I said, 'You know what, I'm going to Ohio State.' From that moment on, that's when I became just a huge fan. It was always something that I wanted to do. I never knew if I would be good enough until I got to high school, and that's when I realized that I had the talent to actually play at Ohio State."

BSB: How much was your recruiting process complicated by Jim Tressel's resignation in 2011? Who recruited you, and did you have second thoughts while that situation was unraveling?

Powell: "Taver Johnson recruited me. Then Jim Tressel actually called me and gave me the scholarship offer. So when I got that phone call, I told him, 'That's the phone call I've been waiting on since 2002. I'm definitely coming to Ohio State,' but I didn't make it

public. After I told him that, it was probably that next week he would end up resigning.

"That didn't make me not want to go to Ohio State. Of course, I wanted to play for Coach Tressel. You hear so many great things about Tressel and the person that he is. I wanted to play for him, but once he resigned, that didn't make me second-guess it or anything. Trust me, the other schools reached out to me and tried to get me to leave Ohio State. But, like I told them, this is something that I dreamed about since I was a kid. I didn't care who the coach was."

BSB: What was it like being a part of the Ohio State program during Urban Meyer's early years? You weren't at Ohio State for the Tressel era, but did it feel like Meyer was trying to reshape the culture of the program in 2012?

Powell: "That was definitely the vibe I got from the older guys. There was a lot of pushback because it's a change. These guys that were there, the leaders of the team, Tressel ran things a certain way, and that's what they were used to. To them, that's how they were successful. So when Urban came in and was like, 'We are going to do it my way or the highway.' Naturally, there is going to be resistance from everybody. There was a ton of resistance. It was from the coaches, from the players.

"I would say everybody got on the same page during Urban's first year in 2012 at Michigan State. If you remember those early games, we were struggling. We were supposed to be dominant, and we weren't, and it's because people weren't completely bought into what Urban was trying to sell."

BSB: Do you have any specific memories or stories about the early Meyer era?

Powell: "Urban's first day on the yard was my first day on the yard, and Urban heard there were people doing some bad stuff in the program, maybe some drug tests failed, and stuff like that. So, Urban wanted to get those guys out. So his first week, he made us do 5 a.m. workouts, where they shut down the (Woody Hayes Athletic Center), so you couldn't go into the Woody and you couldn't wear any Ohio State gear. So we are outside – mind you this is January – we're outside of the Woody because they won't let us in.

"He's got us bear crawling in the snow, duck walking, 100-yard lunges, doing pull-ups on the little machines outside, where if the guy failed to do the pull-up, you had to get up under him and kind of squat him up. It was terrible. There were a bunch of guys that said, 'This isn't for me.' What he wanted was to get people to quit, and some people decided to say, 'I'm transferring out of here.' And he was very happy to say, 'I will sign the papers to transfer you out of here.'"

BSB: Meyer has said that when he watched the national title game after the 2012 season, where Alabama destroyed Notre Dame, he knew Ohio State needed to step up to go from Big Ten conquerors to legitimate national championship contenders. What did Ohio State have to do to get to that next level as a program?

Powell: "After our last game, school end-



FILE PHOTO

AT THE RIGHT SPOT — Even though Tyvis Powell was a three-star recruit, he earned a starting role, made some of the most notable plays in program history and won a national championship in 2014.

ed, and we essentially had a month off because you couldn't practice and you couldn't be in the building. So, as everybody is at home, Meyer sends out this mass text to the entire team, basically saying he saw the level that Alabama was on, and we had to get there.

"So he coined the phrase 'The Chase.' Coming into that next year, it was different. Coming into that 2013 season, they were very serious in the offseason workouts, very attentive. It was the type of thing where you couldn't mess up, because we're trying to get to a national championship. Obviously, the first year was about just establishing that foundation, but at the end of the day, we weren't playing for a championship. Now that we were eligible, he kicked it into a second gear, and that offseason was a grind for sure."

BSB: According to multiple recruiting sites, you were only a three-star recruit coming out of high school. Then just a year later, as a redshirt freshman, you're starting in five games, and you ended that 2013 season making one of the biggest plays in OSU history. How did you make such an impact so early in your career without being a highly touted recruit?

Powell: "By the Grace of God, honestly. In 2012, although I went as hard as I could, I had that tough conversation with Coach Meyer at the end of that season, basically where he was like, 'Yeah, I don't know if you are good enough to play here. You might need to look into transferring to Akron or someplace like that. That might be more your speed.' I remember after that conversation, I said, 'I respectfully disagree, and I'm not going anywhere.'

"I remember walking the campus, just going over everything I had been through to get to that moment, and to hear him say that to me, it kind of just triggered me. When I got back to campus for those winter workouts, I said, 'I'm going back to the old me.' All my life, I grinded to get to Ohio State, and when I got to Ohio State, it was kind of like I was celebrating the moment. I wasn't doing the same things I did to get there. I lost the hunger. So at that moment, I had to reset my goals, and I had to get back to who I was in high school, and that hunger came back in.

"That's how I was able to really earn the right to be the starting nickel that year. It wasn't anything that was given to me at all. It was literally me doing the extra lifts with (graduate assistant Parker Fleming) and (strength coach Mickey Marotti), doing extra film sessions. I had (Bradley Roby) come in, and Roby used to come in and watch tape with me, to help me look at stuff better. It was so cool, when spring came around and they announced me as the starting nickel, the way Coach Meyer and Coach Mick announced it, it was like, 'This guy earned it.'"

BSB: The 2013 team struggled defensively throughout that season. What was the source of those issues?

Powell: "Confusion. We were confused. I think they just threw too much at us. That's the problem with some great defensive coordinators is they get obsessed with trying to put players in the perfect call for everything.

"We had a call called colors, and given the formation, you had to know what color it was. There were eight colors, eight calls in

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Interception Vs. U-M Cemented Powell's Legacy

Continued From Page 15

one call, and it could be any of those eight calls depending on the formation. But if everybody didn't see the formation the same way, you had people doing different things, so it was just too much confusion.

"I don't blame the coaching staff. I get why they did it. They wanted to make sure that we were in the perfect defense for everything. You can't make football players think. You have to let them react and let them be them. That's what the biggest difference between 2013 and 2014 was. The defense in '14, we had one call. We had one call, darn near the entire season, that played to anything you lined up in. Any formation you came out, we knew how to play it, and that was the difference. There wasn't any thinking involved, and that's why you saw a better defense."

BSB: In the Michigan game specifically, Ohio State gave up 41 points to a Michigan team that finished the regular season 7-5. What did they do that made it so tough for you guys defensively?

Powell: "They had some good playmakers, they had a really good wide receiver. They did a good job of motioning him around and getting him the ball, and Devin Gardner just made some really good throws. He gave his playmakers chances to make plays, and a lot of those 50-50 plays, they made them. You can blame that on the rivalry because records don't mean anything in a rivalry. I learned that day. They went 7-5, but they were much better than that. They had a lot of energy. It was to the point where sometimes I questioned if they were more hyped for the game than we were."

BSB: Can you take me through your thought process on your game-winning interception?

Powell: "First of all, I was upset because Roby just gave up the touchdown. Devin Funchess kind of dunked on him for the touchdown, so I'm up there like, 'Oh my goodness, here we go.' And I'm thinking to myself, 'Well, they're going to go for two. Why would they go for one?' At that point, they weren't supposed to be in the game, so they were playing with house money."

"They came out into this play, they did a motion, and as soon as they motioned, we called a timeout. That's when Coach (Kerry Coombs) called me on the field and was like, 'This is the play.' They came out, and I'm thinking to myself, 'OK, so we clearly know what they are about to do. They're going to change the play.' When I saw that dude go in motion again, I said, 'This is money in the bank.' I just knew I had to step up, because I knew the guy was going to box (Doran Grant) out."

"Technically, I was supposed to be on a blitz, but (Josh Perry) made a switch call, so Josh ended up blitzing, and I had that inside piece of that box. I just looked right at (the receiver), and when he curled up, I just stepped up. I just literally stepped up to try to get in front of him, and as I looked back, I was like, 'Oh my God, he threw it for real.'"

BSB: Do you see similarities between the 2013 game when Ohio State let a mediocre Michigan team hang around and this year's game, when Ohio State lost to a 7-5 Michigan team?

Powell: "Last year's game, I wouldn't say that the Wolverines wanted it more. It didn't come off to me like they wanted it more. To me, it was just a weirdly called game. I don't know what was going on. It should have been a layup, but just due to some of the calls and some of the things that they were doing, we just didn't take advantage of their weaknesses enough. That's kind of what it all boiled down to."

"I don't know if the toughness talk got to them and made them want to just continue to run the ball. When Ryan Day explained why (they) called some of the calls, it made sense. He's like 'You can't really throw the ball deep when you have two deep safeties. So you try to work the middle, try to work some underneath stuff.' And some of those wide receivers didn't make plays. I think (Carnell Tate) dropped a ball. I still don't know if Will Howard was 100 percent in that game after the hit. Some of his balls kind of were crazy as well. It was a weird game."

BSB: During the Orange Bowl after the 2013 season against Clemson, did you think Sammy Watkins, who had 16 receptions for 227 yards and two touchdowns, should have been double-teamed?

Powell: "No, we shouldn't have double-teamed him. We should have put 10 guys on him, that's what we should have done. He was just an amazing athlete, and when you don't have Roby (due to injury) in there, you have Armani Reeves, who's a really good corner, but he wasn't Roby."

"Sammy Watkins was just a really good player, and our defense was already not great that year. And then you take our best cover guy out and don't have him play, it's going to be hard to overcome that. So, yes, our game plan should have been tailor-made more toward Sammy Watkins and trying to stop Sammy Watkins. But a lot of it was just him getting a screen and just going because he was so much faster than everybody, and they didn't want to press him, because he was much faster and much bigger and physical than Armani was. So, it just was what it was."

BSB: Should Ohio State have gone to Kenny Gupton in that game due to Braxton Miller's shoulder injury?

Powell: "Yeah, that's a touchy subject for me, because I'm sitting there thinking, 'Oh yeah, we are about to win this Orange Bowl, even though Sammy Watkins went crazy. We are still going to find a way to win this Orange Bowl.' Then you see Braxton has a shoulder injury, and I'll remind you Kenny Gupton had played that season, and he's played very well when he came into the game. So if Kenny goes jogging in the game, it's not like anybody's like, 'Oh, snap, this kid.' No, everybody's hyped up because everybody loves Kenny."

"So, I am still trying to figure out why they let Braxton go back in, and he threw that interception right to that linebacker. I watched that happen, and I said, 'I cannot believe this.' To be honest with you, between that game and the Michigan State game in 2015, it was terrible. Those were bad coaching decisions, and I don't even like to say things like that, but it was, and they can't tell me it wasn't."

BSB: What was the attitude of the team when Miller went down with a season-ending shoulder injury ahead of the 2014 sea-

son? Could anyone on the team have envisioned the success you ended up having?

Powell: "No. I'll be lying if I tell you yes. When you lose a guy like Braxton, who's one of the most electric players in college football, you're worried because everybody behind him is kind of unknown. J.T. (Barrett) is a good leader, and we had seen him because he was our scout-team quarterback the year before. He had some days where he looked good, but I'm not sold on that kid, Joe Thomas Barrett IV."

"Then, on top of that, defensively, we had a brand-new defense. So there was not a lot of confidence there, because, yes, the defense was very simple, and it seemed like it was going to work, but you didn't know until you got out into the action. And we were starting the season up with Navy, who wasn't a traditional offense, so you don't even know if the defense is going to work anyway."

BSB: When did you find confidence in J.T. Barrett?

Powell: "My confidence in J.T. came during the Penn State game. I can't remember 100 percent what the injury was, but J.T. suffered some type of leg injury. It was something where he really couldn't run, but he said, 'I'm not coming out of the game. We are just going to find a way.' If you go back and watch that Penn State game, J.T. had to run the ball in to score, and when he did that, it was like him saying, 'I'm putting it all on the line. I'm giving you guys literally everything I have. Even though they say I can't run and I feel like I can't run in this moment, if that's what I have to do to win this game, then that's what I'm going to do.'"

"It went back to that 2012 feeling that this team is going to find a way to win no matter what. That Penn State game was the game where I was like, 'Yeah, these dudes are awesome. This is a special group, and we definitely can win it all.'"

BSB: Your friendship with Cardale Jones has been well-documented over the years. When did you guys first become roommates?

Powell: "First of all, it's not a friendship. It's a father, son relationship; he is the fruit of my loins. When we first got to campus, we both came in early in January. Because we are both from Cleveland, we had already said we were going to room together, and when we got to campus, they didn't have any rooms in the athletic dorm, so he and I both had to go live in the Honors dorm. He and I weren't roommates yet. We were staying in different buildings, but they were right next to each other. The agreement was that he and I were going to be roommates."

"What happened was, when we finally got to the athletic dorms, we stayed in the quad. And technically, although we were in a quad, he roomed with Bri'onte Dunn and I roomed with Pat Elflein, but we were still in the same quad, and when it was time to move off campus, I said, 'Well, hey, you and I have been rocking this long, we might as well just go ahead and move off.'"

"Now, this is where the issue came, and this is why he's not the father in this relationship, because Cardale was very immature,

and he wasn't handling his business. So I got green-lighted to move off campus, and he didn't have his stuff together. So they said, 'No, you can't move off campus yet.' So I, being the good person I am, said, 'You know what, I will do another year in the dorms with you, because I don't want to be with anybody else.' So that's kind of how that ended up transpiring."

BSB: How cool was it to see Jones get the opportunity to receive playing time during that run to the national championship?

Powell: "When I was in high school, we ended up going against each other in the 7-on-7 camp, and I watched him in that moment, and I'm like, 'When he throws that football, that ball is gone, it's like a rocket.' The whole time, I always knew that about Cardale. I said, 'Listen, I don't know if Cardale knows the X's and O's. I don't know if he's fast. I don't know any of that. I do know without a shadow of a doubt he can throw that ball.'"

"When he went into the game, I was fighting for him because I was like, 'This is your chance. We don't have anybody else, so even if

you mess up, it doesn't matter, because you are the only person that we have.' Everybody's worried about it (ahead of the Big Ten championship game, a 59-0 Buckeye victory). And I'm laughing, like, 'We are going to be all right. But just in case, the defense, we need to be ready because we don't know.' We needed to lock in against Wisconsin and just keep giving (our offense) the ball. Because the more times you get the football in your hands, the more you gain confidence."

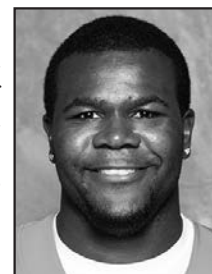
"That was kind of how the game went. We got stops on defense. He got the ball back, and he scored. What he did motivated the defense to continue getting the stops. Because if we get you a stop and give you the ball and you're going to score like that is the best motivation the defense can ever have."

BSB: What's your favorite off-the-field memory of spending so much time with Jones?

Powell: "That's a loaded question. One of the things that I always enjoyed the most was his relationship with not just me, but with Joe Thomas Barrett IV, and – yes, I call him Joe Thomas Barrett IV, because that's what his mother named him – but they would come over all the time, and us three would just play Madden and play video games. That was just some of the best times because it was just us chilling. No matter how much pressure or how big-time those two guys got as quarterbacks of Ohio State, they never changed. They continued to stay the same people and stay humble, stay disciplined, and stuff like that."

BSB: What was it like preparing for Alabama that year? Was there any fear preparing for a program in the midst of a dynasty?

Powell: "There wasn't any fear. Obviously, at this point, this is big, bad Alabama, and my family is originally from Birmingham, Ala., so they are big Roll Tide people. I'm watching film, and our coaching staff does an amazing job pointing out, 'This is Alabama, but I'm telling you guys they're not who you guys think they are.'"



Cardale Jones

“As I’m watching the tape and they’re pointing out stuff, I’m like, ‘They have a ton of flaws in their game.’ Before we go to New Orleans, they let us go home for like a week, so I go back to Cleveland and whatnot, and I’m talking to my family, and they all say, ‘Tyvis, we love you, but it’s Roll Tide.’ This is my family saying this to me. Then I got friends from like high school and stuff talking about, ‘Oh no man, it’s Alabama,’ and I’m like, ‘I’m telling you guys, I’m looking at the tape, and they are not who you think they are. We are going to win the game.’”

“We got to the game, and they started off fast, but our offense was driving, and that was so inspiring to see. They were getting down the field, but they just couldn’t punch it in. I remember just at halftime, everybody’s in the locker room, hyped up, like, ‘Yeah, we are good. We’re going to win this game.’”

BSB: For the Alabama interception, you catch that ball and the game is over. Can you take me through your thought process on attempting a return?

Powell: “We did the Hail Mary drill every Sunday. And they always said, ‘Tyvis, you’re the jumper, catch the ball, take a knee.’ So up to that point, 13 Sundays, I did it exactly like that. I got the pick, I took a knee, and we ended practice. We get to the game, I get the pick, and Doran is trying to take the pick from me, but then he lets it go.

“When I spun around and I turned to look, two things happened. One, I saw that the Alabama players just gave up. Then Armani was like, ‘Come on, let’s go.’ So we took off because I’m thinking they don’t care. At this point, the game is over, so I thought I would get this free pick-six. I didn’t make it. (Vonn Bell) didn’t block for me, nobody on the defense blocked for me, so it was what it was. They caught me, and yeah, that was the game.”

BSB: Did it feel like you turned the corner as a program with that win over Alabama?

Powell: “Even when you got to Oregon in the championship, it felt like a regular Saturday game. We were way more hyped for that Alabama game. That Alabama game, to us, was the national championship. That Oregon game was just a layup in our eyes. We beat Alabama. Oregon stood no chance. Now, don’t get me wrong, Oregon was dominant that year. They put it on Florida State in that first round, so they were a really good team, but to us, we felt indestructible.

“They did a really good job of punching us right in the mouth in the first drive, and it woke everybody up. I had this stereotype about the Pac-12 at the time, that they were a finesse school, but (Oregon running back Thomas Tyner), he dropped that shoulder on a bunch of us. I gained a lot of respect for their running backs that day because they were way more physical than I anticipated they would be.

“Ultimately, we were on an all-time heater, and it didn’t matter if you put the New England Patriots out there with Tom Brady, we weren’t losing. That’s just what the attitude was.”

BSB: Where do you think Miller ranks all-time for Ohio State quarterbacks?

Powell: “Braxton gets so disrespected, and it’s disgusting. Braxton is definitely top five in my book as an OSU quarterback. You have to go with Troy, because Troy won the Heisman, so you have to give it to Troy for that. I was a huge Justin Fields guy, and I

was a huge C.J. Stroud guy. I know C.J. didn’t beat The Team Up North, but just his talent alone has him up there. Then I definitely put Braxton right after that. Braxton was that deal. I don’t know why he gets disrespected so much on a national scale, but Braxton was must-see TV.”

BSB: How much success do you think Miller would have had in 2014 if he had stayed healthy?

Powell: “I think he would have won the Heisman. Braxton was special. I mean, he was always in the running. Just think about it. If we would have won the national championship and had the same season, and he was the quarterback, he easily would have won the Heisman. Now you have to put in the playmaking aspect, as far as the legs go. He is going to get you the yards through the air, but now you have to worry about him with his legs and things that he could do with the football in his hands. To me, that’s what a Heisman winner is: a guy who everybody has to know where he is. And even though you know where he is and you know what he is going to do, he still finds a way to make it happen.”

BSB: After Miller’s injury in 2014, a lot of people doubted that team. The 2015 team, though, was one of the national championship favorites. In your opinion, was that group just as talented as the 2014 team?

Powell: “We were more talented in 2015 than we were in 2014, and it’s a shame that loss to Michigan State is probably one of the worst losses in program history. We lost to a backup quarterback. It wasn’t like they just made these miraculous plays. It wasn’t like these receivers and their running back were going crazy. We just couldn’t do anything offensively.

“But I still put all the blame on the defense. We had them backed up in that game. It was second- or third-and-long, and LJ Scott broke a long run for like 15 to 20 yards, and it blew the game. It blew it, that was it. If we had gotten that stop right there, they would have punted the ball backed up, it would have helped the offense out, and they would have at least put some points on the board, and maybe we would be talking about this kicker from Michigan State tying the game instead of him winning the game.

“That was why we lost the game. Nobody wants to say it. They want to blame it all on the coaches, and they want to blame it on not giving Zeke the ball. That’s not why we lost. We lost because we didn’t stop them when they were backed up.”

BSB: Do you think Ezekiel Elliott should have gotten the ball more in that game?

Powell: “Absolutely, he should have gotten the ball – 100 percent, yes. It still blows my mind that he didn’t get the ball. I didn’t even know he wasn’t getting the ball until after the game, because I was so locked into what we were doing defensively that I didn’t even pay attention to the offense.”

BSB: Do you have any regrets about departing Ohio State a year early for the draft? Does any part of you wish you had stuck around for a fourth year?

Powell: “There’s only one reason why I wish that I had stuck around: The NCAA just gave out the (House v. NCAA) settlement, and if I had played one more year, I would have been able to be a part of the settlement. Outside of that, I don’t regret the decision at

all.”

BSB: What went into the decision to leave Ohio State a year early? Was any coach trying to get you to stay?

Powell: “Every coach at Ohio State said that I should not go to the draft, and I shouldn’t leave because I would be making the biggest mistake, except Coach Coombs. He was the only one who said, ‘Tyvis, you can go to the NFL and you can play tomorrow.’ But everybody else was like, ‘No, don’t go.’”

“What led to the decision was that Chris Ash left. Chris Ash was going to be the head coach at Rutgers, so Ohio State was getting Greg Schiano. He was coming in to be the new safeties coach/defensive coordinator, and he was the last person I talked to before I left. He said, ‘This is what I’m going to do, I have four or five GM buddies. I’m going to ask them what round you would go in in the draft, and then I’ll come back, and I’ll tell you what they think. He came back and said, ‘Tyvis, they have you going anywhere from round three to five.’ So I was like, ‘Oh, I’m gone.’”

“Obviously, I went undrafted, but at the end of the day, I still wouldn’t change the experience, because to me, doing another year at Ohio State wouldn’t have done as much for me as doing my rookie year with Seattle. I needed to be around the best in the game, and at that time, it was the original (Legion of Boom). Brandon Browner had just come back. (Kam Chancellor), (Earl Thomas), (Richard Sherman) were there. I needed to be around them because I wanted to adopt the mentality that those guys had. I wanted to see exactly what I needed to do to be successful.”

BSB: Looking back on your career, what do you value more, the national championship win or your undefeated record over Michigan?

Powell: “Definitely the national championship. Because there are so many great players who have played this game, and not everybody can say they’re national champions. And just thinking about everything that we had to go through to become a national champion, like it cements your legacy forever. The 4-0 thing is great, but to be fair, those Wolverine teams weren’t what they are now. We just kind of showed up and dominated. Some years they lay down, some years they provided resistance. But there was never a thought that we’re going to lose this game, like that never occurred to me.”

BSB: How did you get into broadcasting, and what has the transition been like for you?

Powell: “I went on the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer one year – so shout-out to Chris Quinn and Lisa Cisco – and Lisa reached out to me one day and she said, ‘You should try to be on the radio.’ And I’m like, ‘I don’t know anything about this stuff, but I would love to be an analyst.’ My two things were, I was going to coach or be an analyst. Those were my two options. I was like, ‘I always said I wanted to be an analyst, but I don’t know what the radio has to do with that.’”

“Then I met with (the vice president and market manager of 97.1 The Fan), Todd Markiewicz. Todd said, ‘This is what we’re going to do. We’re going to start you off doing high school football. We want you to do the games of the week.’ For that first full year, I did color for high school football, and then the ‘Buckeye Show’ would end up needing a second host, so I started doing some fill-ins

for the ‘Buckeye Show.’ Then that moved into me doing the pregame show for the football season on the radio. Then ultimately, they started this show called ‘The Ultimate Cleveland Sports Show.’ One of the executive producers, Steve Becker, reached out to me like, ‘We’re starting this show. People have been saying that you would be a good fit for it,’ and I had so much fun with that.

“Then that led to the Cleveland Browns reaching out and saying, ‘We’ve been seeing how you talk about football, how you break the game down. We want you to do our pregame and postgame show. I said, ‘Absolutely. I grew up in Cleveland. I love the Browns.’”

“Then (sports information director) Jerry Emig was like, ‘Tyvis, the Big Ten is doing this experience thing where they’re trying to help find young people who want to be broadcasters and analysts, and they’re putting them through basically a media boot camp, and you’ll be perfect for it.’ He made me sign up for it, and I got selected for it, so I go through, I go to do the little boot camp thing, and as I’m in there, I’m thinking to myself, ‘This is so easy, like it feels so natural to me.’ It’s because I do radio, and I was calling games while I did high school football, so 97.1 The Fan really prepared me for everything that came after.”

BSB: What are some career aspirations you have?

Powell: “It’s funny this question has come up quite often in the past year, and I’ve accomplished so much, and this is only my fourth year being in the media. My mother used to tell me that my issue is that I don’t celebrate the now. I’m always thinking about the next thing. She’s like, ‘Tyvis, as you went to college, you graduated, you didn’t care. You won the national championship, you didn’t care. You became a captain, you didn’t care. You need to start celebrating things.’”

“I say all that to say, now that I’m 31 years old, I’ve been trying to live in the moment. So, I haven’t thought about what I wanted or where I want this career to take me. My focus is on trying to be the best me now. I just started the morning show for 97.1 The Fan. For me, it’s about making sure that every day I get on that mic, it’s the best version of Tyvis Powell.”



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Champion Furry Maximized His Time At OSU

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Columbus native Dick Furry might not be the first name Buckeyes fans think of when discussing the 1960 national championship-winning men's basketball team and the Fred Taylor era, but he certainly left his mark on that team and program.

Just like his teammates and lifelong friends John Havlicek, Jerry Lucas, Mel Nowell and Larry Siegfried, Furry played an integral role in bringing the first and only national men's basketball title to Columbus. He served as the co-captain alongside Joe Roberts and sixth man of that year's squad, averaging 5.1 points and 3.3 rebounds per game. But while Furry's fondest basketball memories may be of that star-studded 1959-60 team, his career highlights stretched beyond that one season.

The 6-7 forward played under Floyd Stahl his first year with the program, then Taylor for the next two during his varsity Buckeye career from 1957-60, averaging 6.7 points and 5.9 rebounds per game in 71 games. When he wasn't helping usher in the "golden age" of Ohio State men's basketball, Furry was competing on the Buckeye track team, doing so for all four years in college.

After graduating – and completing a brief stint with the NBA's New York Knicks – Furry began his professional career in public accounting and business, working at Ernst & Ernst (now Ernst & Young, or EY) before joining the Cleveland-based business Day-Glo Colors and staying there for 26 years, the final eight years as the company's president. Despite retiring over two decades ago, Furry still serves on the board of directors for the Cleveland commercial plumbing company Gorman-Lavelle, a position he's held for 37 years.

Around two months before turning 87 years old, Furry spoke with BSB to discuss his time playing basketball at Ohio State, his memories of the 1960 championship team, his close friendship with Bob Knight and much more.

BSB: What was your first memory of playing basketball in West Columbus?

Furry: "I only played one year of basketball in junior high because I was so young and clumsy at that point. I used to tell people I could stumble over the foul line if I had to. And I was growing fast then, which made me very clumsy. I didn't grow anytime after the 10th grade in high school, and now I've shrunk about three inches. So I started really playing (in junior high).

"I had wanted to be a first baseman in baseball. My dad was a varsity baseball player at Ohio State, and I wanted to do that. But (my teammate) had the starting job already and had been the all-city first baseman in junior high and continued (in high school). My track coach in high school said, 'Dick, you ought to try out for track. You're not going to make the baseball team, and I think running track would get you in better

condition.' So I said, 'OK, I'll give it a go.' So I ran (my freshman year), and did reasonably well, not great.

"I started playing basketball then, played in JV, did a little better, and continued to improve. But there were people ahead of me at the time, so I really didn't play much basketball until I was a junior."

BSB: So you played both track and basketball in high school. How did you end up getting to play basketball at Ohio State?

Furry: "I had not talked about basketball with Ohio State at that time, and my track coach felt at the time that I was still going to be better in track than basketball, just because I was maturing. He wanted me to go to Miami (Ohio) because he had been at Miami, and I had an application ready to go to Miami. I was ready to go to Miami, and Fred Taylor called me to talk about coming to Ohio State, so I changed my mind. And the reason for that, my track coach in high school felt that Larry Snyder, who was the track coach at Ohio State then, would not spend the time on me that somebody else might spend. But at that point, I decided I wanted to go to Ohio State and play basketball. I got in there and played a lot of basketball over those years. But I ran track all through Ohio State also.

"Howie Nourse, who was our backup center, we would high-jump in winter indoors, because neither one of us was playing much basketball at that time. We might have had a game that evening, but we have a high jump in the afternoon, because we were the only two high-jumpers Ohio State had at the time."

BSB: That phone call with Fred Taylor, what did he say to you that convinced you to go to Ohio State instead of Miami, or was there a different reason you went?

Furry: "I was set (on Ohio State) because Miami's basketball program wasn't as good as Ohio State's or known as well at the time. It was pretty good for the MAC. But never as good as Ohio State's."

BSB: What were your first impressions of Fred Taylor as a coach and person once you got to Ohio State? At that time, he wasn't even the head coach of the Buckeyes yet.

Furry: "My first year, he was my freshman coach. And my second year (first year on the varsity team), Floyd Stahl was still head coach, and a group of us sent letters to the athletic director to have Fred get the job. They were trying to get the coach from Middletown (where Jerry Lucas played high school basketball), but he didn't come. Lucas didn't push hard to get his coach (Paul Walker) to come up here at Ohio State. Taylor was very good (as a freshman coach). I think he was one of the better basketball coaches.

"Fred Taylor, I liked immensely. I consider him, other than what my father taught me, I think Fred taught me more about how to grow up and how to do things than anybody else. And I told him that, and I told his wife that. We all stayed close to Fred until



FILE PHOTO

SIMPLY THE BEST — Dick Furry was a member of the 1960 NCAA Tournament champions, still the only champion in program history, and he ranks the team with the likes of John Havlicek, Jerry Lucas and Larry Siegfried among the greatest in college basketball history.

he passed away (in 2002).

BSB: When you were growing up, was Ohio State your dream school, and was it special for you going and playing there, being from Columbus?

Furry: "It was. I wanted to major in accounting, and the top five schools I considered for accounting were Ohio State, Miami, Michigan, Northwestern and Illinois. Those, at the time, were the five best-known, in my opinion, schools that gave you an accounting major. I happened to know the head accounting guy at Ohio State because my dad was an accountant. He went to Ohio State, and they were good friends in college. I had a little advantage of knowing somebody like that. But going to Ohio State was good. It helped me with what I did in my career."

BSB: Going back to your playing experience at Ohio State, you mentioned you didn't play much early in your career. How were you able to get on the court more as your career progressed?

Furry: "(My sophomore year), I was Frank Howard's sub, so I didn't play a whole lot but a reasonable amount. I started one game then. Then I started every game as a junior and then started the first game (as a senior). I had been hurt the week before in practice, got an elbow over the eye, and I hadn't practiced much for that week. But I started and was not in good shape timing-wise, having not practiced. And the next game they started (John) Havlicek. So I be-

came the sixth man.

"John was good, but he really became much better as he got into the facilities. He wasn't bad, don't get me wrong, but I had more experience than he did by that time of playing different positions. I even played guard sometimes. It was interesting. I was not allowed to run the sprints with the big guys. I had to run with the little guys, and that was because of my track thing. I could loaf and beat all the big guys in running sprints."

BSB: You mentioned playing with John Havlicek your senior year. When he and other sophomores such as Jerry Lucas and Mel Nowell rose to stardom that 1960 season, was there any resentment from you and the seniors, knowing your roles would be decreased in your final collegiate season?

Furry: "There were three of us who started the first game as seniors: Joe Roberts, myself and Larry Siegfried. Mel Nowell and Lucas were the only two that started with us. And then the second game, they (changed the lineup). Fred told me that he was going to play me at sixth man. I said, 'That's OK. I think that I have more experience playing at different positions than John has. So keep him at his position so he doesn't have to move around.' But we all always got along well. We've all been to each other's funerals up to this point. It always was just a good group."

BSB: You mention how close your group was. Are there any funny or interesting stories or moments involving that team that are worth sharing?

Furry: "We did a lot of kidding with Lucas and their crew. They had not flown on a trip yet, and, of course, we were flying DC-3 planes then to places. One time – we laughed about this – we left from Columbus and had to stop in Indianapolis to get gas because we were flying into such a wind. So we landed, and the guys said, 'Why are we landing?' And somebody said, 'Well, we have to get fuel.' They were laughing because they didn't understand you had to get fuel that fast on a plane. And we flew on some of the first jets during that time. Going to California for the (1960 championship game), we flew a jet.

"The one thing we weren't supposed to do was play cards in our rooms. And we'd play bridge (a card game) on the airplanes. On the DC-3, we would put our bags and set it in the middle of the aisle, four of us would sit across from it, and we'd play cards. We only had three players who knew how to play bridge (other than me). But playing bridge was one of the things that I learned in college, and I still play to this day. There aren't many men who play it anymore. But we didn't play cards as much other than on a road trip. There wasn't a whole lot of bonding off the court, just because of what we were doing. There wasn't a whole lot of excess time when you were on a road trip."

BSB: Another sophomore on that 1960 team was Bob Knight. Everyone knows him as the fiery Indiana head coach who threw chairs. What was he like as a player and person back then?

Furry: "He was pretty tame. It's interesting. He became a good friend. We had six of us on the traveling squad that were living in Columbus. Fred asked each of us to take a player who was going to be in the dorms or something during the holidays home with us, and I drew Knight. And he and I became good friends.

"My youngest son went to Indiana (when Knight was the Hoosiers' head coach), and Bob looked after him there. His freshman year, he wasn't allowed to have a car on campus, and I told him, 'You know, Peter, I want you to talk to Coach Knight and see if he will allow you to park your car at his house.' And he goes, 'Why don't you do it, Dad?' I said, 'I'm not driving the car down there.' And I didn't tell Knight that I was doing this. So one day I get a phone call back from Peter, and he said, 'Dad, Coach Knight said it's fine for me to leave the car there!' So he went to Bob's house, and said, 'Coach, can I leave my car here? Would you let me wait until I get one of my buddies to come out and get me? And he said, 'Hell no, I won't! You just leave your car here and I'll take you to the dorm.' So they got along well.

"(Former Ohio State guard and Furry and Knight's teammate) Gary Gearhart and I went on golf trips with Knight. When he went to Texas Tech, they asked him to start taking some of their people who were really connected on golf trips. So Gearhart and I went. Gary did it for a while, and I went on four or five. There were probably 10 or 12 of us who went on these trips. I went to Portugal with him, and it was unbelievable. And he never drank anything. He would pay for dinner and then let us split it up at the end, but we never had – we would occasionally

have a drink, but never very much.

"But he and I spent a couple of nights at our home back on the West side of Columbus (back in 1960), and it was a good experience. He had a little bit of a temper."

BSB: Were there any examples of that temper coming out when he was playing at Ohio State?

Furry: "No. He knew that he wasn't the lead guy at the time. He played more by the time he got to be a senior. He was never – I don't want to say he was bad – he never showed up quite as much as some of the other people did. He was just a good guy. Of that class, he was my closest friend in that group."

BSB: How did you guys maintain that relationship after college?

Furry: "It helped me with having my son (at Indiana). Bob and I always got along. And it was funny, when we played on this golf trip, a couple of people said, 'You know, Dick, you're being pretty rough on Coach Knight. You're not afraid to tell him things.' And I said, 'You need to understand that I was one of the captains of the team and was in charge of him.' So he listened to me more than he listened to some other people. It was that kind of relationship. He and I just got along well."

BSB: What was that like for you, seeing him become one of the more notorious coaches in college sports history?

Furry: "(His antics) didn't particularly bother me. I wish he would have behaved a little better at some things. But he did what he was going to do, and that was about it. We were down there the season when he threw the chair across the floor (against Purdue in 1985). But we had dinner with him one night, and he said, 'Your son Peter won't want to have dinner with us, I'll have him have dinner with the basketball team.' And he called a manager over, introduced him to Peter, and said, 'I'd like you to take him to dinner tonight, show him around and then take him back to his parents' hotel.' And Peter had a great time."

BSB: Did Knight ever express interest in coaching at Ohio State at all?

Furry: "I think that he and several of us did not think that Ohio State's athletic director (Ed Weaver) was very nice to Fred. Knight felt that way, and he didn't want anything to do with him. He thought Weaver put the screws to Fred. I didn't like him particularly, either, even though I didn't have anything to do with him at that point."

BSB: Going back to the 1960 season, what are some of the games and moments and plays that really stick out to you from that championship year?

Furry: "Well, the three games we lost, we gave up over 80 points in each game. So that was not a good thing. But we beat a lot of people by a lot of points. In the tournament, we won by at least (19) points in each of the four games. And those were great games. I still remember playing at the Cow Palace in San Francisco (for the national championship). It was not the greatest desire to play there. I think that was done for California because they had won the year before. It was a pretty crappy place to play. But we won that game by 20 points, and I think it took maybe 30 years for somebody else to do that (in the championship). We were up 37-19 at the half."

BSB: Winning the championship game against California at the Cow Palace,

what was that feeling like to bring a title back to Columbus?

Furry: "One of the things I got to do, I got to carry the trophy off the airplane. There is a picture of me doing that. I never quite figured out why I did, but I think Joe Roberts didn't want to do it, so he told me to do it. But that was quite a thing. The people that met us at the airport were unbelievable. I got my college diploma at the airport. President Dr. Fawcett brought it to the airport to give it to me. And then we played in the Olympic Trials (in Denver) two weeks after that, so it kept me from going to work for a while, but that was OK."

BSB: The fact that we're still talking about this championship 65 years later, what does that say about what the team accomplished and the legacy they made on not only Ohio State but college basketball?

Furry: "There's an award that the Big Ten schools give out to the male and the female athletes who have the best academic achievements. We had three people that played on that 1960 team that won that award. I was the first one, then Richie Hoyt, and then Jerry Lucas. We just did things right.

"I'm astonished by the number of people that still remember us. The golf group I'm in – we play Tuesdays and Thursdays at different courses and play with different people – I'm always surprised that somebody ends up talking basketball with me during that thing. I'm in the far elder group of this, but it's surprising that somebody 65 years old would remember that I played in that thing. I don't know how they know those things, but they do. It was a great experience. And we still have fun together."

BSB: Where do you think that team ranks in terms of all-time great college basketball teams?

Furry: "I think it's in the top 20. Some people think it's in the top 10. I've read a couple of things about that. But it was a heck of a team. Now, it's hard to take some of that away from UCLA. Duke, you'd have to put in there. You'd have Indiana in that, too."

BSB: This is still the only men's basketball championship at Ohio State. Do you take any pride in that?

Furry: "Yeah, I've been known to tell that to people. But Fred had a couple of teams that were runners-up in the national championship. The trouble was, we got beat by Cincinnati in the national championship in 1961 and 1962. That was the first time we played Cincinnati. I was sorry they won, but then it also made our old team look better.

"We play Cincinnati more now than we did back then. But we never played Cincinnati while Oscar (Robertson) was still playing. He graduated the same year I did. There were pretty good teams and pretty good players in that group."

BSB: I wanted to ask you one more thing about Fred Taylor before we move on. A lot of people point to the 1972 fight between Ohio State and Minnesota as the turning point of his coaching career with the Buckeyes and argue that he was never the same after that. Considering you knew him so well, do you agree that this had a negative impact on him?

Furry: "I think it did. A lot of people thought that Fred did not recruit very many Black players, but he would recruit anybody who was going to be a good student. He wanted good students. And there were a lot of times early on when there just weren't a whole lot of Black collegiate players who really wanted to play in college and be an academic person. And that's gotten straightened out now in a great deal. But Fred had nothing against the Black boys, other than they had to be students for him.

"The guy from Minnesota who got involved (during the fight) was not terribly liked otherwise, as I remember. But it's too bad. That affected Fred. But then he and Ed Weaver didn't get along well, and that was when Ed wanted to get somebody else. And then Fred went to run the golf course in New Albany. But he always looked after the rest of us. Not just our team, but everybody who played."

BSB: Did that sadden you to see Fred

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McCoy's Voice A Familiar Sound For OSU Fans

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

For those who have paid close attention to Ohio State sports over the past three decades or so, the made-for-radio voice of Columbus-based 610 WTVN and iHeartRadio's Matt McCoy has often filled the Scarlet and Gray airwaves.

Since 1996, McCoy – a former record-setting swimmer at Ohio State who graduated from the university with a sports broadcasting degree in 1987 – has devoted his time and pipes to discussing Buckeye athletics. He served as a sports anchor/reporter for WTVN for 10 years before becoming the network's sports director in 2006, a role he still holds today. McCoy's time with WTVN has been perhaps best known for his work leading their football pre-game and postgame coverage, where he joined forces with several eccentric Buckeye personalities. That included former Ohio State head coach Earle Bruce, whom he worked alongside for over two decades.

McCoy's voice has even stretched beyond radio in Columbus. The Valparaiso, Ind., native and self-proclaimed basketball junkie also lent his voice to the hardwood as a public address announcer for the Buckeye men's basketball team, occupying that role for OSU's last season at St. John Arena (1997-98) and first 20 seasons at Value City Arena (1998-2018). His time behind the mic in those two venues was synonymous with one of the more successful periods for OSU men's hoops, with the Buckeyes making two Final Fours and winning seven Big Ten regular-season championships in that span.

Now in his 30th year at WTVN, McCoy spoke with BSB to discuss his lengthy career as a sports radio broadcaster, his memories working alongside Bruce and his favorite moments and experiences from his time working as the PA announcer for the basketball Buckeyes.

BSB: Growing up in Valparaiso, Ind., how and when did you first become interested in sports, and at what point did it become a passion for you?

McCoy: "I have a lot of sports passions. Baseball was my first love. Obviously, I love football. But I've got a special feeling for hoops, and that probably goes back to my background of growing up in Indiana. As a kid, I was an Indiana basketball fan and loved Bobby Knight. So that started it. I can even remember being in gym class as a grade-schooler and going, 'Man, basketball is cool.' Maybe it's just one of those things that is in your DNA when you happen to live in Indiana, that you know you love that sport."

BSB: When did that passion for basketball and sports in general translate to a passion for sports broadcasting and radio?

McCoy: "When I was 10-12 years old – that was when the Reds were the 'Big Red

Machine' – you could pick up WLW Cincinnati (in Valparaiso) in bed at night. I would listen to Marty Brennaman, and I just said, 'This is what I want to do.' But the one moment that triggered it all, if I had to pick one, was when I had to do a speech on radio in a media class my sophomore year of high school. My teacher, Mrs. Zimmerman, called me over at the end of the class after I did my speech, and she said, 'You know, you have a really nice voice, and I could tell you really like radio. You should get into that.' It was just an off-handed comment by a teacher, but it just stuck in my head, and I went,

'All right.' That's when my passion for radio started. And then, as I got through high school, I started looking for journalism schools and schools that had broadcast journalism."

BSB: Was sports broadcasting and sports radio what drew you to Ohio State, or were there other reasons you enrolled?

McCoy: "Mostly it was because of swimming and my brother. I'm the youngest of 10 kids in my family. And my closest brother in age to me, Nathan, swam with me in high school. He was recruited by Ohio State and went to Ohio State. (Former Ohio State swimming coach) Dick Sloan – who just passed away, God rest his soul – started recruiting me."

"The school part of it also played a factor. Being a sports fan and going on a recruiting trip to an Ohio State-Purdue game – that was my first Ohio State game, and I was like, 'Boy, it'd be great to be a student here.' That got me thinking about it. But I got a partial scholarship for swimming after my senior year of high school, and that's when I said that I'm going to Ohio State. It was going to be expensive to go there without any scholarship money, but when I got that scholarship offer, I jumped at it."

BSB: What was that experience like swimming at Ohio State?

McCoy: "It was great. It was very, very hard, just because swimming is a demanding sport. We practiced twice a day. It's a hard sport. But having said that, I loved it. It got me through school. I made lifelong friends. They talk about the brotherhood in sports, whatever sport it may be. We had one swimming at Ohio State. I don't miss the practices and the work, but I miss the team aspect of it, the camaraderie, the competition and that kind of thing that I got out of that sport."

BSB: How good was your team, and how good were you?

McCoy: "We were pretty good. We got fourth in the Big Ten's every year, except for my senior year, when I think we got sixth. In my sophomore and junior years I was on the 800 (meter) freestyle relay team, 4x200, and we qualified to swim in the NCAA championships. So getting to do that was fun. My one and only school record at Ohio State, our 800 free relay went 6:39 flat. And I just laugh now because the team this year went 6:10. So that's just how far the sport has advanced. It's just amazing how good the sport has gotten and how fast everybody



PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT MCCOY

MEMORIES OF A LIFETIME — One of the highlights in the lengthy career of 610 WTVN (Columbus) sports director Matt McCoy was being the public address announcer during the Ohio State men's basketball team's final season in St. John Arena. NBA coach Phil Jackson, on a scouting trip, is seen in the background.

is. We weren't great, but we were decent, and I had a great experience."

BSB: Switching gears to your career, how did you get your start in radio and sports broadcasting, and how did you advance in the field?

McCoy: "I interned one summer in college at WOSU radio as a news reporter, but I had interest in sports. It's the direction I wanted to go. I didn't really practice that, though, in college. It was more of a general journalism and broadcast journalism major, and I would concentrate on doing sports stories for our newscasts and stuff like that."

"Back then, WCBE radio, which is owned by the Columbus public schools, was doing Friday night City League football games. My professor at Ohio State, Mike Marcotte, knew somebody that worked there, and he told me about it and said, 'They need somebody to do play-by-play.' So I contacted the guy, Michael Whitfield, and he said, 'Do you have any tape?' And I said, 'Not really.' And he said, 'Just give me some kind of a sample. Turn off the sound on a baseball game. Call an inning and send me the tape. I did that, and he hired me. Every Friday night I did play-by-play for high school football. That was my first step into the career I ended up having."

BSB: So how did you move up the ladder?

McCoy: "From that experience with the internship, I ended up getting a job at WCOL AM. I had a part-time news shift, but I told them I'm really interested in sports. We carried Cincinnati Reds baseball, and I ran the board on Reds games. And every now and

then I would get to do a sportscast. Then on 92.3, when (McCoy's longtime friend and current 97.1 The Fan update anchor) Mark Howell would go on vacations, I would fill in doing sports. Then one thing led to another."

"Probably the most fun thing that I've ever done, and actually where my passion is, was doing play-by-play. Back then, there was a minor-league basketball team in the Continental Basketball Association, CBA, called the Columbus Horizon. WCOL carried their games for two years. The first year (in 1990) I just ran the board. But the play-by-play guy for the team was a guy by the name of Bob Fitzgerald. Bob Fitzgerald is now the play-by-play guy for the Golden State Warriors and has been for a lot of years. So he left, and I had those high school tapes and had gotten to meet some people with the Horizon, so they hired me for the 1990-91 season."

"Unfortunately, no one listened to the broadcasts, and they couldn't get a radio station. However, the coach of the Horizon that year, Gary Youmans, became a general manager in Fayetteville, N.C., and hired me. That's the only time I lived outside of Columbus, and it was for six months. I did minor-league basketball play-by-play for the Fayetteville Flyers in the Global Basketball Association in the 1991-92 season."

BSB: Jumping ahead a bit, I want to ask about your time as a PA announcer at Ohio State. Did having a role like this ever cross your mind while you were doing radio and broadcasting, and how did that opportunity come about?

McCoy: "I mentioned Dick Sloan. When

he retired, he became facilities game management director for a handful of sports at Ohio State. One of them was women's volleyball, and he called me in 1995 or '96 and said, 'We need somebody to do PA for women's volleyball. Would you be interested?' I didn't have anything going on, so I said, 'Sure, I'll do it.' So I did it. I was learning terminology and stuff like that, and that became very fun and I enjoyed doing it.

"Steve Snapp, who was the sports information director at Ohio State, was at a match and came up to me and said, 'Hey, that was pretty good.' And one day the next year, (former OSU PA announcer) Dave Parr had to miss a couple of games, and Steve reached out to me and said, 'Would you want to fill in?' And I said, 'Yeah.' So I filled in for a game or two the second-to-last year at St. John Arena for Ohio State basketball. And then the last year of St. John Arena, Dave Parr retired, and they called me – there was no audition or anything. They said, 'Do you want to do it?' I said, 'Yeah.' And that's how it happened. There wasn't much fanfare about it. I just kind of walked into it."

BSB: Your first full-time year as PA announcer was the last year the Buckeyes played at St. John Arena. What was that experience like for you, especially being an Ohio State alum who adored that venue?

McCoy: "I loved it. It was really surreal, to be honest with you. Now, the team that year struggled. I mean, they struggled. That was Michael Redd's freshman year. He was great. The other part of this, at that time I had almost exclusively become a sports reporter for WTVN. So I had to cover the games anyway. And I remember thinking to myself, 'This is great. I get to sit at midcourt and do PA and then after the game put my reporter hat on and go talk to Coach (Jim) O'Brien and the players.'

"But I do specifically remember thinking, even though the team struggled, 'How lucky am I?' This is the last year they're playing basketball at this place. And I love this place. I mean, I love that arena. I have vivid memories of the last game where they played Penn State and lost in overtime. I just remember thinking, 'God, this is really cool that I get to do this, that I get to be the PA announcer for the last game at St. John Arena.' That was still really neat to be a part of that scene, even though they won only eight games that year and did not win a Big Ten home game."

BSB: That next season, the first in Value City Arena, the Buckeyes went 27-9 and went to their first Final Four since 1968. What was that like for you seeing that team's ascension from a close-up view in a new arena?

McCoy: "It was incredible. It was one of the most, if not *the* most, fun years – forgetting about the PA part of it, but just as a radio reporter covering a team. I went on the road a few times with them as they got good, and then I was in Tennessee when they made the Final Four. It was just phenomenal. Obviously, the winning part of it makes it fun, but it was just a good group of guys. Scoonie (Penn) is a phenomenal guy to this day. Michael Redd is a phenomenal guy. Ken Johnson, Jason Singleton (are good guys), and that made it special, too."

BSB: How did that team rank in terms of other teams that you've seen inside that

arena in terms of excitement and talent level?

McCoy: "They're right there with when Coach (Thad) Matta had it humming. This past March Madness I came across the highlight tape to 'One Shining Moment' from that '98-99 team. That was a two-minute highlight video, but you watch that and go, 'Holy crap, were they good!' Scoonie Penn and Michael Redd might be the best backcourt that Ohio State's ever seen and one of the best in the Big Ten. Everything came together with that team. They had great role players. It was a complete team, and Jim O'Brien just did a phenomenal job coaching them and cultivating that."

"Obviously, the (Greg) Oden, Mike (Conley) team was off-the-charts good. And it wasn't just Oden and Conley. Ron Lewis was a senior, Jamar Butler was a very underrated great Ohio State player. They had Daequan Cook coming off the bench. David Lighty was a freshman, and during the NCAA Tournament run he came into his own. Athletically and across the board, they were really good."

"The one that killed me was the 2011 team. Because that's the team I really thought and believed was going to win the national championship. As tough a locker room as I've ever been in was after that (Sweet 16 loss) to Kentucky that season. I'll go to my grave believing that had they gotten through that Kentucky game, they were going to win it all. And unfortunately (Brandon) Knight hit a shot, and (William Buford) came down and couldn't hit the three and they end up losing. That's as tough of a loss covering any Ohio State team that I personally dealt with."

"Anyways, Thad's years were so much fun because they were so good. That place was rocking. The years with Evan Turner – the Michigan shot he hit (in the Big Ten tournament in 2010) – Evan was a fun player, great guy. So it's hard to pick a favorite team. I would say that whole era was a lot of fun."

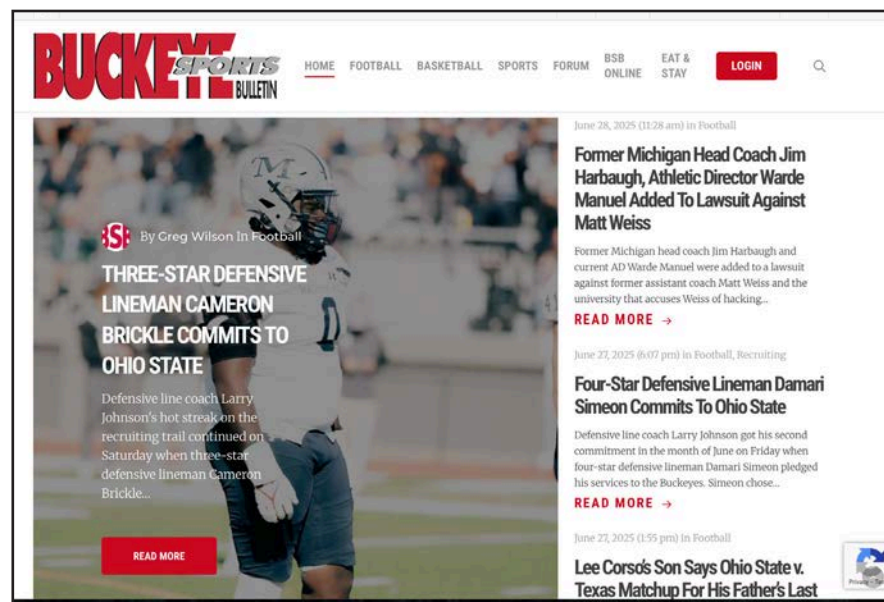
BSB: What were some of the more memorable moments or games that you remember happening inside that arena during the Matta era?

McCoy: "It's funny, we mentioned all those teams, but the moment I'm going to bring up wasn't even one of those teams. It's the Matt Sylvester shot against Illinois (in 2005). Thad would tell you, and did tell us in the media, that shot set everything up – that one shot, that one game. Daequan Cook was on his recruiting trip that day. He committed two weeks later. And he played AAU ball with Oden and Conley and they came along with them. But that game was so much fun. They were way behind and came back. That arena was as loud as it's ever been when they were making that run and won that game."

"There are quite a few other ones that are right there with it. The No. 1 vs. No. 1 game two years later vs. Wisconsin – Ohio State was No. 1 in the coaches poll, Wisconsin was No. 1 in the AP poll – that one was a fun game. Mike Conley hit a floater to win that game, and then Ron Lewis – his very last play in that arena was to block a shot to win that game. One other game that sticks in my mind was Senior Day in 2011. Jon Diebler, David Lighty, Dallas Lauderdale, it

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McCoy Cherished Time With Earle Bruce

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was all those guys' Senior Days, so the arena was packed.

"They played Wisconsin, who had beaten them earlier in the year. Bo Ryan made the 'deal with it' comment (after Jared Sullinger had accused Wisconsin fans of spitting on him), so the fans were jacked up. The atmosphere before that game is as good as I've ever seen. I mean, the fans were ready. And Ohio State just blitzed them in that game. So those were some of the best games that I can remember in that arena."

BSB: You saw three different Ohio State head coaches – Jim O'Brien, Thad Matta and Chris Holtmann – pace the sidelines while working in that arena from the scorer's table. From your close perspective, what was it like seeing those three lead their teams during games, and how did each of the three coaches differ when it comes to how they operated and led their programs?

McCoy: "I'm not going to get into what exactly happened with Coach O'Brien, because I know that was a difficult situation for Ohio State. I really like Jim O'Brien. I thought he was a masterful game coach. He was a really good guy. I know some Ohio State fans would be like, 'What do you mean? He quit the program?' I'm telling you, he was a great guy. He was fun to deal with from a media perspective. It's sad that

it ended the way that it did. It would be great to have him come back and get celebrated with that team. Unfortunately, that can't happen. But from a game-coaching standpoint, he was as good as it gets. And I hate to say that, because it makes it sound like the other guys weren't. They were too.

"I can't tell you how much I think of Thad Matta. From a perspective of running a clean program with great players and getting the most out of it, he did it all at a place where people say, 'Boy, you can't have sustained success.' And he was also just a great guy to deal with. In terms of Coach Holtmann, I was there only for his first year in 2017-18, but he's another guy where it's hard to find anything negative to say about him from a personal standpoint. He's a really good guy, and he ran things the right way.

"I enjoyed all three of them. Most of my time was spent during the Thad years, so I have to confess, as much as I like Ohio State, I'm a big Butler fan right now too, just because of Coach Matta being there and Jon Diebler being an assistant. I just think the world of Thad."

BSB: I imagine you heard or saw a lot of interesting things sitting so close to the court at the scorer's table for two decades. Do any come to mind?

McCoy: "It is definitely a much different perspective at the scorer's table, and some of it is funny and nonsense. Brian Harris, who sat next to me at the scorer's table,

would bring gum and other stuff to games. Greg Oden, before every game – even when he was injured – he would come by, reach his hand in the bag and grab a couple Sour Patch Kids and go to the bench. I thought that was just because he's not playing. When he got healthy, and he started playing, he would walk out to center court, he would look around, and he would grab a Sour Patch Kid and go out there for the opening tip. That was a little inside thing that I thought was funny."

BSB: Switching gears to your radio career, you've worked at WTVN since 1996 and have been sports director since 2005. From your experiences, what do you think makes a good radio show?

McCoy: "Passion. The more passionate people are, and the more informed people are, the better the show is. We hire former Buckeyes to be analysts that I work with. They all care, and that's important. Listener participation is also important. Most of my interaction with fans is through social media during our pre- and postgame shows. Getting the reaction of fans and commenting on those, to me, that makes a good show.

"Good radio is being informed, understanding what fans want to know about and what they want to hear about and having some passion. When I worked with Earle Bruce, you never had to worry about that, because Earle had a lot of passion. And so do the guys now. They love Ohio State football. They get angry, just like fans get angry when things don't go well. They bring that to the ear. If you're just sitting there and regurgitating a bunch of facts, it's not good radio. But if you bring something more than that, and you bring some passion to it, and enjoy what you're doing and stay informed, you have a good chance to have a good show."

BSB: You mentioned having to use social media more now to engage with listeners compared to previous years. How have you seen radio and broadcasting evolve over time?

McCoy: "When I started in the role as sports director, social media wasn't a thing. Now it is *the* thing. A lot of it is positive, like when we are doing the show and people Tweet at us positive comments about the show or come up with great questions. We still take calls, but most of it is coming through social media. So it has totally changed. It's easier for fans to reach out to you. Sometimes that's good, but sometimes that's bad, because they can get nasty with you, just like they can get nasty with players. And that's very unfortunate."

BSB: I want to move on to your time spent working with Earle Bruce. When he passed away in 2018, you gave a speech at his remembrance ceremony at St. John Arena and said that you loved him. How did your relationship grow to that level of affection over time, and what was it like getting to know him personally?

McCoy: "Earle was like my Columbus football dad. No one loved Ohio State football and will love it more than Coach Bruce. And anybody who listened to him back then knows that because he delivered that and it came through the airwaves. Besides all that and being the great person that he was, he could be gentle too, and very personable.

Earle was unbelievable. He understood how to treat people. He understood that people wanted 10 seconds with him, and he didn't blow people off. And I thought that was always amazing about him. When you were talking to him, you were important to him.

"Whether you were a 10-year-old kid coming up and wanting something signed or a 90-year-old grandma that would come out to the show, he gave everybody the time. I would watch him in amazement, because it happens to me once or twice. Every show and every commercial break, people are coming up to him. That could get really tiresome, but it never was for him. He made it look easy because he genuinely cared about people and cared about how you treat people."

BSB: Did the way he carried himself and treated other people surprise you at all? What were you expecting when you first realized you'd be working with him?

McCoy: "I wasn't sure what to expect, because when I was in college, he was my coach, and he was so fiery. (When I started) I was like, 'Boy, I don't want to cross this guy. He's going to go jump on me.' And there were times, if I had a difference of opinion, when we would get really passionate. We'd go back and forth with each other, but the commercial break would come and he'd put his arm around me and say, 'It's all good.'

"I do remember the first time being on the air with him being nervous, but that went away really quickly. He made me really comfortable. And maybe that goes back to treating people the right way. But I remember being nervous, thinking, 'How is he going to handle me?' But he was just – 'OK, you're the one that I'm answering questions for, you have my respect.' He was very passionate, but he made me feel at ease, made me feel welcome."

BSB: What were some specific moments you remember of him getting passionate over a game, either on or off the air?

McCoy: "The one that I will never forget was during the 2015 Fiesta Bowl against Notre Dame. Earle and Coach (Urban) Meyer were very close, and Ohio State is kind of dominating Notre Dame, but Notre Dame was coming back in the second half. So we're watching the game on a big-screen TV at our radio station, because as soon as the game is over, we're going on the air with a postgame show, and he is screaming at the TV, 'They've got to stop throwing the football! They can't stop Zeke (Elliott)! They can't stop Zeke! Run the football!'

"So they come out, and they throw the football on two of the three downs or something and have to punt because they didn't complete it. And he stands up – he has that Earle Bruce mad face – and he goes, 'God dammit, I'm calling Urban.' He pulls out his phone, I'm just laughing, and I look at him going through his contacts, and I'm seeing Urban Meyer, and I'm realizing, 'Oh sh—, he's really going to call Urban Meyer.' And I go, 'Coach, you can't call him. He's in the middle of a game. He doesn't have his cell phone. He's not going to answer your call.' And he goes, 'Well, I can leave a message.' I'm like, 'Earle, he's not going to get the message until after the game. Don't call him!'



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“He didn’t call him, but he was literally going to do it. And I remember saying to him after the game during our postgame show that in retrospect I really should have let you call, because I would love to see Urban’s face on the bus home back to the hotel, after noticing, ‘Oh, I got a message from Coach Bruce.’ There were so many instances like that, but that’s the one that sticks in my mind where we were all laughing. But that’s how he was. He would react to things just like fans do.”

BSB: Now you work with another former college coach, Bill Conley. What is it like working with him, and how is he similar or different from Earle?

McCoy: “Bill would tell you he’s nothing like Earle. Well, I shouldn’t say he’s nothing like him because he’s a coach, and he thinks about things analytically like a coach does and reacts to things like a coach does. But no one had the quite the emotional swings like Coach Bruce did.

“But Bill’s great. I’ve been working with Bill for a long time. He’s very smart. He watches game film and comes into ‘Buckslime’ and says, ‘Hey, we should bring this up, because they’re going to do this,’ or, ‘I really think they have an opportunity to block a punt in this game because of this.’ He has those little nuggets, and he’s great at that. I think the world of Bill. Plus, he is probably best known for the recruiting classes he put together as Ohio State’s former recruiting coordinator, and he’s very good with that angle too anytime we get recruiting questions.”

BSB: You guys had a chance to cover a national championship this year. What did you make of Ohio State’s season overall and run to the title?

McCoy: “The most common question that I have gotten when asked about the season is, ‘Would they have done it had they beaten Michigan?’ I don’t know that we’ll ever know the answer to that question, but dang, it was fun. There is no question that whatever happened that Saturday lit something in them. It changed them. They were pedal to the metal after that. I remember we did a ‘Buckslime’ the Thursday before the Tennessee game, and I remember our conversation specifically being, ‘I would believe anything.’ I would believe them going out there and just being flat as a pancake because of the hangover from that Michigan game, because it was so devastating, and the negativity that was hovering in this city was – I mean, you could feel it. Was it going to be that? Or would they just go out there and sledgehammer them and be the start of something big. And fortunately for Ohio State fans, it was the latter.

“I’m not surprised that they put it together like that, because it was obviously in them, and they had the talent to do it. But it’s a testament to them. If the culture of that team was not good, they would have gone the other way. But Ryan Day has cultivated a culture of guys believing in each other, being able to say what they want but being on the same page. And if they didn’t have that culture and that closeness, there’s no way they would do what they did. But they did, and I think Ryan Day deserves all the credit in the world for building the culture that allowed them to overcome an awful moment on Nov. 30 and then celebrate the title on Jan. 20.”

BSB: What do you think Earle would

have thought about this run?

McCoy: “It’s funny, I had this conversation with the guys. He would have loved it. He would have been heartbroken, like every Ohio State fan was, over the Michigan thing. He would have been breathing fire after that game, saying, ‘That can’t happen.’ He used to always say, ‘You can’t lose to Michigan three years in a row,’ and let alone four years in a row. So he would have been extremely passionate then, but that would have shifted to, ‘All right, they got to come together now.’ So I’m sure he would have been very, very proud and happy to see how they recovered and how Coach Day got them across the finish line.”

BSB: Switching gears to Ohio State basketball, how would you assess how last season unfolded, and what are your expectations moving forward under Jake Diebler?

McCoy: “I don’t know what to think. I do know this, I’m really rooting for (Diebler). We started the interview talking about me growing up in Valparaiso, Ind. Jake went to Valparaiso University, and my dad, who has passed away, watched him play. He had season tickets. And he’s a great guy. So I’m really rooting for him, and I’m glad he’s got this opportunity. This is kind of a big year. It was disappointing that they came up short. They had so many opportunities. You felt like they were one big win away from getting over the hump and maybe that would have led to two or three more wins. But they just couldn’t in those big situations – whether it was that big home game against Michigan, maybe that changes things. They lose at the buzzer to Pitt. It almost felt like they found ways to lose games instead of finding ways to win games.

“So I don’t know what to expect. He’s brought in, just like everybody, several new transfers. How do they mesh? How do they come together? What freshmen are going to have an impact? I do think it’s good that Bruce Thornton is coming back for his senior year. I’ll say this. For his sake, I really hope they, at least, bare minimum, make the NCAA Tournament. Because no one in the country deserves that opportunity more than Bruce Thornton. He’s stayed through it for four years and hasn’t made the tournament. And so I hope for Bruce Thornton that they find a way to have a really, really good year and at the very least find their way in the NCAA Tournament.”

BSB: Wrapping up, in terms of your career, how much longer do you think you want to keep going in radio?

McCoy: “What I’m doing now with iHeartRadio has been a lot of fun. I have around 30 different markets that I’m doing sportscasts for, and I’m enjoying doing that. In the modern world, there are several days where I can wake up in the morning and walk downstairs and I can work from home. But to answer your question, I enjoy doing it right now. I like what I do. I recognize I’m not splitting atoms and doing anything of major importance, but I did just turn 60. I do see the finish line, like, ‘How much longer do I want to wake up at 1 a.m.?’ So I’d be lying if that didn’t cross my mind. I’ve kind of been taking it year by year, but right now, I’m not at that point where I want to hang it up. I’m at 30 years now at WTVN, so I guess we’ll keep it going as long as the company wants me.”

Furry Skeptical Of NIL, New Era Of College Sports

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Taylor be so shook up about that fight?

Furry: “Yeah, but you have to remember, by that time I wasn’t in Columbus anymore. So I wasn’t as close to some of those things as I might have been (if I were in Columbus).”

BSB: Switching gears here, I know you are a big Ohio State sports fan. Starting with the basketball team, what did you make of the year they had last season with Jake Diebler as head coach?

Furry: “I sent an email to Gene (Smith) and (Ross Bjork) last year suggesting that they should keep Jake, because I thought he had done a pretty good job replacing (Chris Holtmann). I have to admit that his team last year didn’t come out as well as I thought it was going to. And some of that is brought by what the kids were able to get for themselves.

“I’m getting less happy about the NIL stuff. A couple of years ago, one of your cohorts talked to me about NIL, and he asked, ‘What do you think about it?’ And I said, ‘Well, it’s hard for me to think about that, because there was nothing like that going on when I was in school.’ And he said, ‘Well, how would you feel if somebody gave one of your teammates something and not you?’ And I said, ‘Well, as long as they would have given it to Jerry Lucas, I would’ve been fine with that.’

“I’m afraid of what’s going to happen with athletics with the whole money situation. We’ll just have to wait and see. But I don’t think Ohio State is getting enough money to pay for all the athletes. And I also understand that it costs a lot more to take care of this than it did when I was back in school and had a \$60 a quarter tuition.

“But I like Jake. I have more involvement with the business manager of athletics, (men’s basketball director of operations) David Egelhoff, because he’s been there a long time, and he would help us with reunions and things like that. So if there’s something I want to know, I call him rather than some of the other guys.”

BSB: Do you believe Diebler is the right coach to bring the basketball program back to success?

Furry: “I think so. I thought more so when he took over for the remainder of the year. That’s when I sent the email out. They did not do as well this year, and there were some things I couldn’t quite figure out about that.”

BSB: Do you think the basketball program could ever get back to playing at a championship level?

Furry: “I would hope so, but who knows? There have only been, I’m guessing, 40 or 50 teams that have won the championship. It’s been 86 years now, and there are a lot of schools that have only won one.”

BSB: From watching on TV as a fan over the years, who are some of the teams and players, both basketball and football, that you’ve particularly liked watching?

Furry: “Obviously, Archie (Griffin’s) teams were one of those. I enjoyed Woody (Hayes’) teams. Some of those people were in school when I was. My roommate in the

fraternity I was in, he was a tackle for the football team, and I don’t know if he ever played a game, because he just wasn’t good enough.

“I think Bill Hosket’s teams in basketball (from 1965-68) were very good. I’ve liked a fair number of the coaches. There were a couple of them I didn’t like, and they didn’t last very long. But I haven’t gone to a game in a while. My kids use my football tickets. I always said that when I get to the point that I can’t climb the ‘C’ deck (at Ohio Stadium), I’m not sure I’m going to any more games. And my boys said, ‘That’s good, because we want the tickets.’

“I sat in the first row of C deck for the famous Michigan-Ohio State game in 1950 (dubbed ‘The Snow Bowl’), and I’ve always said, ‘I’m going to sit up here and watch forever. But the last game I went to was when they played Army (in 2017).”

BSB: You mentioned earlier how you don’t like the way NIL is going in college sports. Do you think it could be a problem moving forward, or are there some benefits to it?

Furry: “I think it can be a problem for college athletics. For instance, you take the MAC, I don’t think they’re ever going to be able to do things the same way the Big Ten can, and I think that’s going to be bad for the long-term future. I think we’re going to end up with 25 good teams for basketball or football, and that may be it. I’m just a little sorry over it. I think it hasn’t been done properly. I don’t know what’s right. But I don’t think what they’re doing now is going to work out for the long run. But we’ll see.”

BSB: You’ve touched on it a bit during this interview, but tell me about what you have done professionally and what you are doing now.

Furry: “I basically have had three employers. One being Ernst & Ernst, one being Day-Glo Color and then the other one, I had retired out of Day-Glo and went back to work selling a hospital for people here in town (Cleveland), which was kind of fun. They had it sold, but they needed somebody to close things down and such because the president was going with a new company. And that was interesting. So it’s been a long career. I retired pretty quickly at 63, and I did that because I had to wait to get my insurance. But that’s not a problem now.

“I’m on the board of directors for a private company, Gorman-Lavelle. They’re one of our biggest mechanical contractors in town. They do a lot of hospital work and such, and I basically try to keep them on the straight and narrow and not get into other things. We’ve done 10 jobs for the Cleveland Clinic, their new heart center, and their new cancer center.

“I tell people I sat at a desk most of my life, but I went all over the world. I went to Japan for Day-Glo because the people there liked having the president of the company come out and talk to them. I didn’t know how to sell anything in Japan. I was just trying to be a nice guy and thank them for their business. We had a plant in Belgium and I went there once a quarter to make sure the people in Belgium were doing what they were supposed to.”

Hayward Reveals What It's Like Being Brutus

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State student-athletes come and go, most of them getting three or four years to leave their mark on the school, with some of their names being remembered forever. But since 1965, there has been one constant figure in the program who has been able to rally crowds and embody Buckeye Nation, and that is Brutus Buckeye.

While Brutus doesn't score touchdowns or goals, the mascot is present at so many sporting events and much more, and in many ways is the most recognizable face at Ohio State.

While the character of Brutus is mostly the same from year to year, the person wearing the Buckeye head has to change, with those students coming and going just as the athletes do.

Representing one of the most iconic brands in college sports, Emily Hayward, a recent Ohio State graduate, had the opportunity to be Brutus for three years during her time as a student at the university.

After living somewhat of a double life for those three years, she revealed on social media after she graduated that she had been in the costume, as was Charlie Huth,

who revealed at the same time that he had been Brutus for three years as well.

Few people know who the person is under the Brutus headgear, which, of course, is the goal for the people who are under there. But even fewer people know what it's like to actually be Brutus.

Hayward is one of those few who was in costume for football games, weddings, hospital visits, and much more during her time at the school, and BSB talked with her to learn what that experience was like for her, what some of her favorite experiences were, and what it was like being just the fourth woman ever to portray Brutus.

**EMILY
HAYWARD**

BSB: When you came to Ohio State, was becoming Brutus something you had in mind at the time?

Hayward: "No, I actually had no intention of being Brutus before I came to Ohio State. I was there for two years before I came across the program and ended up meeting some of the individuals involved with Brutus and helping them out. They convinced me to go for it and try out. Originally, I just wanted to be involved with photography or social media for Brutus, and they told me that's not really an option, but I could just try out and do all of it.

"It didn't take too much convincing from

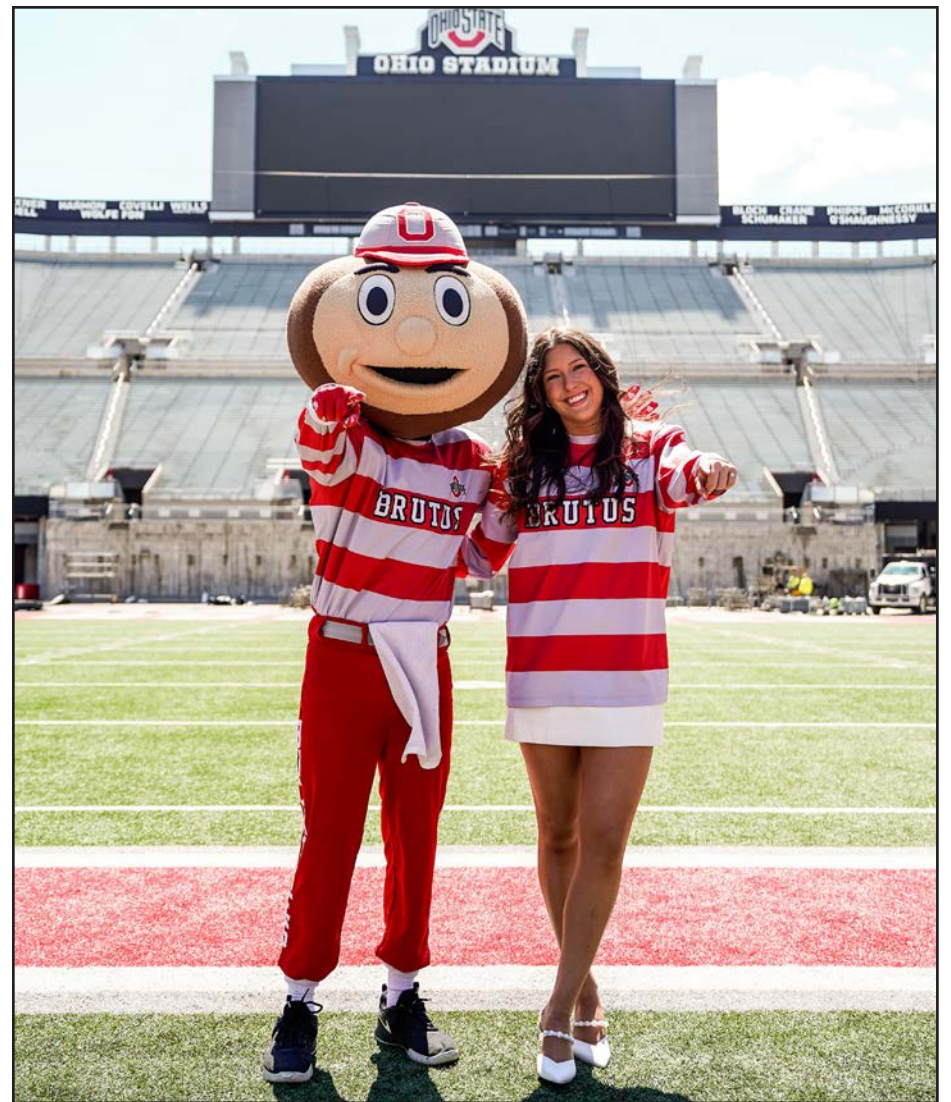


PHOTO COURTESY OF EMILY HAYWARD

NUTS ABOUT BEING BUCKEYE — Emily Hayward (right) was Brutus Buckeye for three seasons and only the fourth woman to don the costume. While everyone sees Brutus at football games, that's only part of the job. Brutus goes to many sporting events, visits hospitals and attends weddings among other duties.

the get-go. I was always like, 'Well if it's meant to be, it will be.' It was kind of hard to get involved with it during COVID-19 within athletics and everything. One of the things that drove me to Ohio State in the first place was the tradition and the athletic culture. So, whenever everything started lining up, it felt like a total Godwink. Looking back on it, it feels like it was orchestrated in the most perfect way."

BSB: What are the tryouts like to become Brutus?

Hayward: "There's three parts to the tryout. They start with costume sessions, where they'll take anyone interested and start teaching signature moves. Then if you're interested in trying out, after the costume sessions, there's an in-person tryout where you sit in front of the coaches and a panel of other individuals, and they'll go through scenarios and situational things that you might experience as Brutus to see how you react and respond to those. Then if you make it past that round, there will be an interview portion, and sometimes after that, depending on your year, a final round."

BSB: The tryout in front of the coaches, is that just you alone trying out in front of that group, or is there a group of others trying out alongside you at the same time?

Hayward: "Yes, you're fully suited up as

Brutus, and they just throw questions at you over a mic and scenarios and songs."

BSB: At that point, you've never been Brutus before. Does the fact that you're doing that in front of a bunch of other people feel weird to you?

Hayward: "It felt a little weird. Looking back at the video, it's kind of hard not to cringe at that first point. But really, through that, they're looking to see if you're coachable, how you initially respond to some of these scenarios, and is it in line with something Brutus would do. From there, they feel like they can coach anything."

BSB: From the perspective of everyone else, Brutus is mostly the same from year to year. And since you can't talk, that comes down to the mannerisms and the way that you move around. How much of that do you have to get right at the tryouts, how much of that is coachable, and how hard was that to get down?

Hayward: "For me specifically, I found it a little more difficult just because, historically, there haven't been many females to play the role of Brutus. So it was learning how to portray a guy and then portray Brutus on top of that. It helped to switch my mindset, not from 'You have to act like it,' but Brutus does just have his own mannerisms and quirks, and once you do it enough, it just felt

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like an extension of you.”

BSB: You were the fourth woman ever to portray Brutus. Is that something you knew going into tryouts, and what was that like for you?

Hayward: “I remember asking whenever I was initially thinking about trying out whether it was something that I could even do. They were like, ‘Well, it doesn’t happen very often, but we don’t see why not.’ It felt like everyone was on board. So if everyone else (thought I could), in my head it was like, ‘Why can’t you?’

“But my coaches were phenomenal in the sense of, it was never anything that was a deciding factor. It was more so just about ensuring that I was comfortable with everything, and nobody really thought anything different of it whenever I did make the team.”

BSB: You were Brutus for three years. Are football games considered the biggest events Brutus attends, and is there some sort of working up to doing the events in front of big crowds like that?

Hayward: “The second you become Brutus, you’re expected to do all of the events, from weddings, hospital visits, football games and everything else. Football games are obviously the bigger events, but you do them the second you make the team. Through your time as Brutus, especially toward the end and definitely this last year – we got lucky with the national championship – but those bigger events, sought-after events, are given through seniority.”

BSB: What was the first event you did when you started?

Hayward: “The first event I did was a wedding. I went out for their reception. It was the beginning of everyone starting to come out on the dance floor, and I spent half an hour dancing with the bride and groom and everyone at the wedding. It was a really cool experience.

“You don’t really think of stuff like that whenever you think of Brutus and mascotting. It was neat to see everywhere that he fit in within the area of Columbus.”

BSB: A wedding is definitely a unique event to start with. Were there any others that you wouldn’t have expected to be sent to as Brutus?

Hayward: “There were a lot of conferences and events in the convention center. A lot of clubs on campus would have us come where it’s not necessarily that Brutus would fit in, but Brutus enhances the environment and adds to it. There’s nothing that I can think of specifically that stands out to me right now.”

BSB: Obviously you’re expected to be very energetic as Brutus at football games. When it comes to some of those other events, how different are some of those experiences in terms of how you have to act?

Hayward: “It’s a lot of situational awareness and knowing your role either on a field or in a hospital room. I personally struggled a lot with finding my place on the football field. You’re in a stadium with 100,000 people, and to make yourself that present and that known doesn’t typically come very natural to me.

“It was easier for me to go into these hospital visits and have those more intimate one-on-one interactions vs. the football field where you’re running the team out, you’re starting ‘Carmen Ohio.’ But toward the end,

I grew to love all aspects of it.”

BSB: Do you go to every football game?

Hayward: “I got to go to all of the home games, and the away games were more based on availability. You didn’t have to travel with the team each week, but Brutus was always there, obviously. Then everything else, event-wise, was availability-based. I was balancing an engineering major with part-time work and a full athletic schedule. To split everything up, it was when you were available, and you tried to cover when the other wasn’t.”

BSB: As a biomedical engineering major, you have to be fairly busy outside of your schedule as Brutus. How flexible is the schedule?

Hayward: “I got really lucky with my part-time job. I worked at the Wexner Medical Center, and they were very lenient with hours and working when I wasn’t in class or at an event. But I would try to schedule events in between classes. If I had a break between classes, it would be waking up, going to lift, going to a class or two, heading to French Field House, getting ready for an event, and then I typically would go to work after that. So I had my own schedule lined up that ended up working for me, but they were long days.”

BSB: With your job, school and Brutus, was there anything else you were trying to balance with all of that that was tough for you?

Hayward: “Social life was a big one. There were a lot of sacrifices here and there when you had to choose friends or Brutus. But they were all very understanding. I think being Brutus helped in the sense that you got a lot of those traditional student experiences like going to the basketball games and other sporting events, but just not in the traditional way. I got to attend some things, just from a different perspective.

“But on the school side of things, it was hard to pick up additional clubs or anything like that because meetings and everything would clash with Brutus commitments. So outside of my major, it was difficult to pursue postgrad plans.”

BSB: Going to those events as Brutus, are you still able to enjoy the experience as a fan?

Hayward: “Yeah, Brutus has the best seat in the house. You learn to love it from that perspective. It was a sense of, you’re doing your job, but at the same time, the perks of being Brutus are unheard of. I would never give up that seat in the house for anything at this point. The respect he commands at Ohio State, it was a really cool experience.”

BSB: What was the first football game you did, and what was that like getting in front of 100,000 people for the first time?

Hayward: “I think it was Arkansas State in 2022. There was definitely no way to

work up to 100,000 people, but I had been to an event for Buckeye Cruise for Cancer that was a fundraiser-type event with the pep band and some of the marching band members. That’s good practice for football games, but really nothing compares to the ‘Shoe environment and running in before football games.

“You have Fan Fest and Skull Session before the games, too, so even that day itself, you kind of have warmups before going into the ‘Shoe. But nothing compares to the feeling of running the team in in front of all of those people.”

BSB: Were there ever any embarrassing moments you had in front of all of those people?

Hayward: “Nothing that I think of as embarrassing. We were taught from the get-go that Brutus doesn’t mess up, and anything embarrassing can be played off as he meant to do that. Some of the things you do, you forget there’s that many people watching you.

“One time, I did feel myself coming out of the Brutus character and just taking in the moment. I was on the Block ‘O,’ doing a snow angel in the middle of the field. Looking around you can see all of the fans around you. They were doing stadium Ohio and it was such a surreal moment of first of all, I started that, and second of all, it was just the embodiment of Ohio State in that moment. It was incredible to witness.”

BSB: What are some of the coolest experiences you had as Brutus that you will remember as some of your favorites?

Hayward: “The national championship will always come out on top. That was a really, really cool experience to be a part of. The whole 12-team playoff leading up to it was really cool to be a part of that, the first year it expanded.

“Aside from the national championship, it had to have been the Heisman House. We got to be a part of commercial shoots. Going out, you’re treated like a celebrity. They put you in a hotel, fly you out and you got to be surrounded by so many incredible role models and big-name athletes that came through a lot of these schools. Then to see yourself on TV and know that you were a part of that was really special to see.”

BSB: When it came to dealing with fans, was that generally a positive experience?

Hayward: “For the most part, it was very positive. There were definitely some environments – I was at the Michigan game last year. That one was a little hostile. It’s all fun and games, but the rivalry obviously runs deep. There are no hard feelings either way, but Brutus is the point of a lot of their hostility.

BSB: How does that happen? Are fans yelling at you?

Hayward: “Yeah, a lot of choice words and finger gestures. They don’t normally do anything to you. Sometimes people grab Brutus too. I think they forget that Brutus is real.”

BSB: At the end of home games, Brutus does as many pushups as there were points scored by the Buckeyes in that game. Did you ever have to do that?

Hayward: “This was funny, because whenever I made the team, the physical strength was always the thing that I was worried about the most. I would practice so much, and we worked out with (Quadrian Banks, assistant director of strength and conditioning), who is one of the men’s basketball coaches at Ohio State as well. We would work out with him every morning at 6 a.m., and he is an animal. He would put us through some crazy workouts.

“But the pushups alone were always something that I was nervous to compete with the guys on because genetically, they were at a bit of an advantage. Whenever I first did the pushups, I remember my coach looking at me like, ‘Hey, can you do these pushups?’ I remember shaking my head no, and he was like, ‘Well, you’re doing them.’ I ended up doing them and finishing all of them. It was more he believed in me more than I believed in myself. But I had to go up there and do – I think it was like 60 pushups or something.”

BSB: When you had to do those, was there a point when you felt like you might not finish?

Hayward: “It was more, ‘You are finishing.’ That wasn’t really an option. The adrenaline probably carried me through most of them.”

BSB: What are your plans post-graduation?

Hayward: “Now that I’ve had the time, I took a month after graduation and I’m living with my brother in Florida. So, it hasn’t been too bad to relax and fully separate from school, but I start a job with Johnson & Johnson in July.”



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Logan A Leader For Sports In Columbus

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In 23 years as the Columbus Sports Commission's president and CEO, Linda Logan has helped transform Columbus into a sports tourism hub. When Logan first arrived in Columbus, the city didn't have a sports commission. Today, with the help of Logan and the rest of the commission's staff, Columbus is preparing to host the women's basketball Final Four and the women's volleyball championship in 2027.

Logan, a graduate of Ohio University, was instrumental in the formation of the commission in 2002 and was the only member of its staff in its early years.

Logan's commission campaigned for the city to add the proper facilities needed to land major events, and in the last decade, that hard work has paid off. Since 2015, the Columbus Sports Commission has helped host the NHL All-Star Game (2015), the women's Final Four (2018), the women's volleyball championship (2021) and the U.S. figure skating national championships (2024), among other high-profile events.

Most recently, Columbus hosted the NHL Stadium series on March 1, which had the Columbus Blue Jackets defeat the Detroit Red Wings 5-3 in front of 94,751 fans at Ohio Stadium. Logan said the commission took a back seat to the likes of Ohio State and the NHL in hosting the event, but their involvement was still the latest of an impressive list of sporting events played in the city.

Logan spoke with Buckeye Sports Bulletin on June 23 to discuss what went into the planning of the Stadium Series, the formation of the commission and its relationship with Ohio State's athletic department, among other topics.

BSB: How early on in your career did you know you wanted to work in sports, and as an OU alum, did you always want to spend your career in Ohio?

Logan: "When I was 10 years old, I went to my first Cleveland Indians baseball game and was really hooked from then on. I wanted to be one of the very first female sports-writers in Major League Baseball. I really thought that was going to be my calling, because I just loved the sport. At Ohio University, when I was a freshman, I was a journalism major, and I quickly learned that I wasn't that great of a writer, so I went over to communications and didn't even know that a career like mine would even exist back then. Ohio University certainly opened so many doors for me. I ended up being part of their master's program that was the first of its kind. I started on the facility management side and did some internships in Milwaukee.

"I spent 10 years in Kansas City. When I lived there, the NCAA was headquartered there. They had more men's Final Fours than any city in America before Indianapolis sort of took over that crown, but I got to work big events like a men's Final Four, and I got to see the great work that happened. When I moved

to Columbus, we didn't have a sports commission, and we were starting to build all these facilities, like the Schottenstein Center, Nationwide Arena and Historic Crew Stadium. Our city was starting to grow, but we didn't have a dedicated effort to bring sporting events to the city. Of course, Ohio State was doing all kinds of work like that. We had the Memorial Tournament, we had the (Triple-A Columbus) Clippers here, but we didn't have a dedicated effort.

"I was working at our Convention Center in Columbus, it was being built, and my first event that I booked was the Mid-American Conference tournament, and I was like, 'Somebody should be doing this full time.'

"I wrote a business plan, and I was hired in 1997 to incubate the effort of starting a sports commission as a staff member of Experience Columbus. It took about five years for us to get off the ground, raise the right

amount of dollars. There were so many great champions that were

part of that – (former OSU AD)

Andy Geiger, Doug Kridler, who was the president of the board at Experience Columbus, now the CEO of The Columbus Foundation. I was hired as a staff of one, benchmarking with all the cities in our market segment, Cleveland, St. Louis,

and Kansas City, cities that had a

big head start. We were then launched in 2002 as the Greater Columbus Sports Commission. We're an LLC of Experience Columbus, but we have our own budget, our own board, our own offices, and that was our beginning."

BSB: Even with some of your past work in Kansas City, was it kind of daunting to be the only staff member of the commission in the early years?

Logan: "It was really interesting, because first we had to start by sort of waving that banner of Columbus. And people would say, 'Now, where are you again? Columbus? Columbia? Where is Columbus?' We really didn't have a bad image, we just didn't have an image at all. We were just starting to build these facilities. A lot of people who know my story know that I put together a list of maybe a dozen things that I thought we needed to do to be successful. It was things like building a 1,000-room hotel, or at the time, Nationwide Arena and The Schottenstein Center, who were not working together. They were kind of working against each other. Now they're managed by the same organization.

"We have more daily flights, we talked about more hotel rooms, and just the fact that the image of the community needed to grow and prosper. I think it was slow and steady wins the race. We had this list of these aspirational events that we thought we could host here someday, culminating, at the time, with the women's Final Four. I couldn't have ever imagined how wildly successful we have become, but now we have a staff of 13. We're a very established sports commission. The Sports Business Journal, just last year, when they did their list of top sports event cities in America, we were in the top 10. Of course, we never want to rest on our laurels, and we've got to get a new list of those events that con-



PHOTO COURTESY OF LINDA LOGAN

AT THE FOREFRONT — Linda Logan was the first and only staff member hired in 1997 for what would become the Greater Columbus Sports Commission. She is now president and CEO, and there are 13 employees.

tinue to want to come to Columbus, or want to come back to Columbus, so it was slow and steady."

BSB: What were the early challenges of leading the Columbus Sports Commission, and what memories do you have of that time?

Logan: "When we first bid on the women's Final Four back in 2008, we were bidding for the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, something like that. We thought we had a really good bid, we raised the dollars, our footprint was growing, but we did not get the event. I think there was so much community pride that went into that bid that it was a turning point, not only for Columbus but for the sports commission. I think we all had to regroup, and after that, the Hilton Columbus came on board – and that was a big piece of why we didn't get it. We just didn't have the right hotel packages downtown, and at that time, there was a move for us to get more funding along with Experience Columbus, and we put some dollars towards marketing the destination. So all those things really came to pass. When we did bid again, and we did get it, the stars aligned. Some would say it was the best women's Final Four ever, with three buzzer-beaters, great weather, things that you couldn't control. It was a blessing in disguise."

BSB: Can you walk me through what it takes to bring an event to Columbus?

Logan: "We bid on dozens of events every year. Every request for a bid is different. It usually starts out with a request for proposal that could be 100 pages of requirements. Obviously, in the sports universe, the playing field is of utmost importance, so do you have the right stadium or arena or softball facility that works? Once you can identify that you have the best playing surface, then you start building your case for Columbus. You want to make sure that you have enough hotel rooms and that there's not another city-wide event in the city (at the same time), so that you are the big fish that's going to be in the community. Then what does the volunteer situation look like? Are you experts? How are your athletes and fans going to be treated? Because in most cases, whether it's the NCAA or one of our national governing bodies, it's not traditionally called a fundraiser, but their championships are typically big money makers for those not-for-profits. So how are you going to make sure that they're successful, and how you can be successful together?"

"One of the things I'm most proud of is the fact that our staff, I think we know how to roll out the red carpet and cut through the red tape, and with that said, I think that we punch above our weight. We're partners with those

groups we established early on, so rarely do we bid on something that we have not attended already. For instance, when we hosted the US Figure Skating Championships in 2024, I had been going to that event for probably 20 years. We had to make sure it was going to fit for us, and the arena would be OK with hosting it. It meant that the Blue Jackets had to go on the road in January, and so all those puzzle pieces had to come together.

“Now, most of the time, it’s not going to take 20 years to get an event here, but we’ve already done 80 percent of the homework, so by the time we’re actually bidding, we’ve talked to other cities that have hosted. Has this been a good experience? Are they good partners? I think we have proven ourselves to be very good partners, so that most of the time we have an event, events want to come here on a rotation on a regular basis.

BSB: Was there a specific event that the commission hosted that, at the time, made you feel like the commission ‘made it’?

Logan: “Sunday night of the women’s Final Four, when the announcers said something like, ‘Best Final Four ever. Columbus, when are we coming back?’ There isn’t much better praise for something like that. Now that they’re coming back in 2027, we can’t rest on our laurels. What are we going to do next? The game is growing so much, it’s a brand-new event, but that one is for sure. NCAA women’s volleyball was here in 2016 and came back in 2021 because we’re a city of firsts when it comes to women’s events. We were the first city for women’s Final Four and for volleyball to do the red-carpet arrivals and wrap the buses. They had been doing that for the men’s events for years. We really stepped up our game and treated those events as our Super Bowl, because they have been our Super Bowls. Those things, there’s always pride in how our staff is so passionate and they roll up their sleeves, and they want it to go so well.”

BSB: Andy Geiger was a big supporter of the Columbus Sports Commission in its early years. How significant was it to have the support of someone as prominent as Geiger when the commission was as small as it was early on?

Logan: “Yes, it was a game changer. Andy had been on the NCAA Final Four committee, and he knew that it had to be the coming together to bid on things. It couldn’t just be Ohio State wanting to host something. The fact that he went into the boardrooms of some of the most prominent businesses in Columbus to say, ‘This is worth it, we should do this, we’re a big city, and we need these dedicated efforts,’ and just having him go in the front door and to have Ohio State at the table from the very beginning meant everything.”

BSB: Fast-forward to today. Ohio State athletic director Ross Bjork is a member of the commission’s executive committee. How important has it been to maintain that quality relationship with Ohio State?

Logan: “Yes, it went from Andy to Gene Smith and to Ross, and their pedigree – all three of them have been at the top of their game, whether it’s Ross being the president of NACDA (National Association of College Directors of Athletics), Gene being on the (College Football Playoff) committee. Not only in Columbus, but around the country, they command respect, and I think all three would say that we’ve all been good partners together.”

BSB: How has the transition been be-

tween Gene Smith and Bjork?

Logan: “It’s been a seamless transition. What’s been fun for us with Ross is when he was at Missouri, he worked very closely with the St Louis Sports Commission, so it was funny the first time we met each other, he was like, ‘Hey, I’ve been reading about you, or I know about you,’ and I’m like, ‘Yeah, and I know I’ve heard about you too.’ Both of us said that in jest, but it was true. We all talk to each other, and they couldn’t say enough good things about Ross and how he would be a great partner for the Sports Commission.”

BSB: As an OU alum who now resides in Columbus leading the Sports Commission, have you found yourself slowly becoming a Buckeye fan, and do you have any favorite moments or memories from cheering on the Buckeyes?

Logan: “Even though I’m a Bobcat, of course, I grew up in a small town in Ohio, Fairport Harbor, and we’re all Buckeyes fans, I think, at birth. I have a great streak. I’ve only been to three bowl games ever, and they’re the three championship games that we’ve won. It has not just been football, but basketball, of course, all of the women’s sports, we brought the Big Ten baseball tournament here for the very first time when it went off campus. We partnered with Huntington Park. I still love that event, even though it’s made its way close to Omaha. I still follow it really closely, I’ve gotten to know most of the coaches (at Ohio State) over the years because every few years there’s a bidding cycle for the NCAA, where we decide what we’re going to bid on for future years, and really it’s the strength of those coaches and administrators at the university that helps us chart out what the future looks like.”

BSB: Take me through the process of hosting the NHL Stadium Series in Columbus. When did you learn outdoor hockey could be a possibility at Ohio Stadium?

Logan: “I think that was something that we knew early on could be a real winner here. All the stars had to align where our team had to be playing well. It might have taken a little longer than we thought to get it here, but certainly it happened when the game really meant something. That was on the list for a very long time, and the university, the NHL, and the Blue Jackets were front and center. We had just a very small supporting role for that one, but of course, that was very important to the community.”

BSB: How do you think that experience went?

Logan: “Fantastic. I think everybody was happy. We talked about the fact that I’m sure viewership was out of sight, and it was all the things that we had hoped for it to be. I think it exceeded expectations.”

BSB: What was Ohio State’s role in Columbus hosting the NHL game at Ohio Stadium? How much did you collaborate with Ross Bjork and others in the athletic department to secure that bid?

Logan: “We are so fortunate in Columbus to have the largest athletic department in the country, so we’re able to do things here that are the envy around the country. The Ohio State staff, the facility staff, they’re used to hosting big events, and they check all the boxes on security, hospitality, making sure that the fan experience is best in class. I know that if you talked to somebody from the NHL, they would agree that they had a great experience here.”

BSB: Is it a common occurrence to

work with Ohio State for non-Buckeye-related projects, or was this sort of a unique situation?

Logan: “It’s not unique – it’s interesting. We sometimes have the primary role, like the women’s Final Four or U.S. figure skating, where we’re the ones taking the financial risk, we’re the ones having to raise the dollars, sell the tickets. If things are on campus typically, then Ohio State may take the lead, so it differs. I talked a little bit about these RFPs (request for proposal) being different. The same is true with who takes those primary responsibilities and who has that supporting role, but we work so well (together). Ohio State, Mike Gatto at Nationwide Arena, the sports commission, we do good things together, and I think that’s been something that it’s hard to replicate, but it’s for real.

“We don’t just pick up the phone and try to do that once or twice a year. We kind of live it all the time. Same with our relationship with the Crew, or with Huntington Park and the Clippers, or our Division II and Division III schools. We have unique relationships with all of them. If an event is going to be at Ohio Dominican – they have a small staff, so our staff may do more than they would if it were at Ohio State, just because of the bandwidth. It just depends on what the event is.”

BSB: How many entities did you work with for the NHL Stadium series, whether it be Ohio State, the NHL, television organizations, etc. and who gets the ball rolling for that sort of project?

Logan: “Going back to the fact that it’s an NHL event, so the Blue Jackets, of course, were front and center, and then you’re securing that facility, which in this case was Ohio Stadium. Ohio State and the NHL, they’re already joined at the hip for other things that they do together with (Nationwide Arena). So that was just a natural point of the process. But it was, ‘Is this going to work?’ I know that we had meetings for a couple of years, where we met on a regular basis just to make sure that it was proceeding the way it should. Will the stadium be winterized? What will that cost? Is this going to be a good event? All of those things that were under consideration.

“As far as a number, I’m going to guess it was dozens. If you remember, it was the weekend of the Arnold (Sports Festival), so it was going to be a busy weekend anyway, and it all went so well. All of the security folks that are typically deployed, both downtown and then on campus, were a big part of that, too. There were security briefings, traffic briefings, you name it. There were so many people involved.”

BSB: From a logistical perspective, was the Stadium Series the most challenging event the commission has hosted, or does something else come to mind?

Logan: “No, because we had more of a supporting role. I would say U.S. figure skating was the first. It was the first time we ever hosted it, and it is a sport that does not have as many grassroots (here). For instance, when we host NCAA volleyball, we have over 27,000 volleyball players from the Ohio Valley region of USA volleyball, so you have a built-in ticket bay, a built-in audience. We’re a volleyball sweet spot. Figure skating was a sport that we were somewhat introducing to the community, so I think we had to get more creative working with the Ohio State Figure Skating Club and the Chiller Skating Club.”

BSB: What is the most unique or odd event Columbus has hosted?

Logan: “Skating. I’ll say it was unique in that we really leaned into the arts community, knowing that it was such an artistic sport. I think we worked with a dozen not-for-profits that not only helped us get the word out but also made some amazing contributions. For instance, we worked with the Columbus School of Art and Design, and we knew that we didn’t exactly know what we wanted to ask of them. But we brainstormed, and they came to the table with one of their alumni who designed a costume for Isabeau Levito (2024 World silver medalist) and she not only wore the costume here, but also at the world championships and in Japan.

“Same with our wonderful Metropolitan Library, which was celebrating its 150th anniversary. They put together a ‘Sockefeller Center’ in the main branch, which was a slip-and-slide ice rink for the month of January, and we had two book signings there. One with Nancy Kerrigan, where over 1,000 people came out to hear her introduce her children’s book. She stayed for two hours to sign autographs.

“We worked with the Lincoln Center, we also worked with the Columbus Symphony, and Jason Brown, the silver medalist, skated live to the Columbus Symphony on the exhibition night, which was amazing. All of these cool things came together. We debuted the ticket sales during the pride parade and had Olympians roller skating down High Street just to promote the fact that Columbus is going to be hosting this big event. It was another example of trying to make it Columbus’ own and trying to connect with the community in a really nice way.”

BSB: Does the planning and work that you and your staff have to do settle down enough on game day so that you can actually sit down and enjoy the game you are hosting, or are you still in work mode as the game is played?

Logan: “I think we have been able to slow down. I remember during the women’s Final Four, right before the iconic Arike Ogunbow-

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The Man Behind The Scenes Has Seen It All

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Tim Adams is the ultimate link to the past, present and future of the Ohio State men's hockey team.

In the fall, he will begin his 28th season as the full-time equipment manager and is the only person directly associated with the program who was there when the Buckeyes transitioned from the OSU Ice Rink to Value City Arena in the 1998-99 season. He is also the lone employee who has been part of the two Frozen Four teams (1998 and 2018).

On Feb. 7, 2025, at Notre Dame he worked his 1,000th game for the Buckeyes and was recognized that night by the Fighting Irish. He was also honored during OSU's next home game on Feb. 14.

His regular-season and playoff total is now at 1,013, which represents 45.9 percent of the 2,208 games in the 62-season history of the program.

In an interview with BSB on June 11 at his home away from home, Value City Arena, he discussed how he got the job, the highs and lows of a season, superstitions (the players', not his) and what it's like prepping for an outdoor game, among many topics.

An Ohio State graduate, Adams and his wife, Jenn, reside in suburban Upper Arlington and have two college-age sons, Nolan and Benjamin.

BSB: First of all, where did you grow up?

Adams: "I'm from Cranberry Township, Pa., which is about 20 minutes north of Pittsburgh. It's kind of right where I-79 and I-76 meet. When we moved there it was a tiny, little emerging town. It's right down the street from where the (Mario) Lemieux Sports Complex is, the Penguins' practice facility. The road that it's actually on is like five lanes. When I moved there, it had a one-lane bridge, so it was a very small area. I came to Ohio State in '91 and every time I go back, it's crazy how much it just continues to develop. It's very different."

BSB: Were you a hockey player or hockey fan growing up?

Adams: "I was a big hockey fan. My dad was a huge, huge hockey fan. I remember when I was little, the Penguins were terrible and we'd watch games on TV, and sometimes my dad would come home from work and be like, 'Hey, let's go to the hockey game,' because you could just roll right up and buy two tickets and we'd be there with 5,000 other people in the old Civic Arena.

"Because I grew up where I grew up, hockey wasn't close. I learned how to skate. I took skating lessons as a kid, but to play hockey there wasn't anywhere really close so I didn't play. But as I got older my friends and I would play street hockey in the neighborhood, some pickup hockey, but I didn't play any organized hockey. Then I came to Ohio State and played a couple of years with the club team."

BSB: What position?

Adams: "Forward. I was very average – very, very, very average – but it was lots of fun. Then I worked at the OSU Ice Rink as

a student job. I worked for (longtime OSU Ice rink manager) Duke Johnson, and at one point there the hockey team had a student equipment manager, but around Christmas time he ended up leaving the team and they needed someone. John Markell was the coach, and he talked to Duke Johnson and asked if he knew anybody.

"Duke said, 'I have this kid that just graduated,' because I graduated and I was just looking for a job and I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to do. Duke told John. John said, 'OK,' and I met with John. He said, 'Do you really want to do it?' I was like, 'Yes.' He hired me, but I had no idea what I was getting into other than I knew how to sharpen skates.

"And I remember John, it was very funny, at the first meeting with the team he knew my first name but wasn't sure about my last name. So, he's like, 'We have a new equipment guy standing right here. His name's Tim Horton.' So that was my first introduction to the team, and they're going, 'Is your name really Tim Horton?'"

"That summer our head equipment manager was Danny Swain, and he told me, 'We're going to hire this as a full-time job.' I said, 'OK. Great that I'm even being considered.'"

BSB: So, there you are, but going back I saw your major was natural resources. What was that, and what did you plan to do with the degree?

Adams: "My original idea was I would work for the EPA and help clean up waterways and things like that. My specialization was in wastewater management, so I figured that would be something I'd really want to do, and I was kind of going down that path. This came along and I was thinking 'This will be great. I'll do it for a couple years, and I'll get a real job.' And, you know, 26-27 odd years later here I am."

BSB: What were your memories of the 1997-98 season, and were you the lucky charm? The facts say the Buckeyes were 9-10-1 through Jan. 3, right after you were hired. They were 18-3-1 the rest of the way and reached their first Frozen Four.

Adams: "It was great. I joined the team after Christmas break, and I think we lost three games the rest of the year. It was crazy. It was kind of weird because I was very close in age to some of those guys, and I didn't really know many, or really any of the guys, other than to say hi to them when I was at the rink working, but I didn't really engage with them.

"It was good because since I wasn't friends with them, I was able right away to maintain that kind of professionalism in my job. But the guys were great. That's one thing about hockey players, they're really easygoing. They're really easy to get along with. They're just really good people for the most part. In all the time that I've been here, there are probably only a couple guys that if they called me, if I saw their name pop up on my phone, I wouldn't answer it."

BSB: What was your "welcome to the job" moment in the 1997-98 season?

Adams: "Well, the very first game I was a part of – again, I was learning on the fly – I forgot to put out pucks for warmups, so that was a good start. But our guys were really good. They kind of just brought me along, and our coaches helped me out, and I just grew into it. I would talk to other equipment guys when we traveled or when they'd be here and try to learn what I was doing. The equipment guys were super helpful. We're in Minnesota. It was part of my second year, and the older guy who was there forever, his

name was Harry Broadfoot. We had a goalie rip a goalie pad strap and I was like, 'Harry, is there any way you can help me at this?' And he says 'Well, don't you have a sewing hole?' And I said, 'What?' He said, 'You know, a speedy stitch.'

"I have no idea what he's talking about. He said, 'Come here. I'm not only going to show you what it is, but I'm also going to show you how to fix it.' So, he showed me, and I came home and that Monday I said I had to get one of these. It's like a \$10 tool. It's the cheapest thing ever, but you can use it for everything.

"We're all one big fraternity. Equipment guys are good because they don't really have the idea of we don't win or lose a game, you know? For me, karma is kind of a big thing. If somebody's here and they need something, we're going to do whatever it takes to help them out so that their part of their job is done and they have what they need because at some point I'm going to need help. If you're the guy that doesn't help anybody, then who's going to be willing to help you?"

BSB: You brought up a good point. How do you handle losses like going into Michigan State (in March) and losing in double overtime in the Big Ten championship game? You're in "enemy territory" and you're The Ohio State, the bad guys.

Adams: "It's kind of funny. At some point you just have to step back and laugh, because it's different. I'm the equipment guy. I don't want to be recognized. Usually, I only get recognized if something bad happens, like a guy's stick breaks, or he falls down because of his skate. I just want to fly under the radar and not really be noticed. So every once in a while when the fans are yelling at me on the bench – and it's nothing ever bad – I'm like, 'I'm the equipment guy, man, just standing here. It doesn't really matter.'

"But we spend a lot of time together. I spend more time with these guys than I do with my family, so you're fully invested. When we lose, it's not fun. When you win, you're happy. It's part of it. We want our teams to win.

"The end of the season, Michigan State's a little bit different because we knew we're going to the NCAA tournament. It's usually a little bit harder like after the (loss to Boston University in the first round of the NCAA regional in March). You're like, 'Oh, man, it's really over. This is the last time this group of guys will be together,' and then you don't know which guys are coming back, which guys are leaving, especially now with the portal and all that stuff.

"But even like the way it used to be, you'd be, 'OK, these seniors, that was just their last college hockey game.' It's tough and you want to be respectful of them because you know that's the last time they get to wear this jersey and things like that. I always try to give the guys their space.

"But for the middle of the season, I don't get too high, don't get too low. We lose on Friday, OK? Well, after the game on Friday I've got to start getting ready for Saturday. If we win on Friday, same thing. After the game on Friday, I've got to start getting ready for Saturday, or the next weekend, or whatever is coming up. So I don't really let it get to me, but it's way more fun to win than it is to lose."

BSB: It seems you really have to read the room.

Adams: "I'm always in the mindset of let's have some fun, but after a game, you have to know the guys. Some kind of let it roll. Some are really serious or take it harder. You just learn the players.

"There are times to have fun even when guys first come in for a game – the coaches are all serious – but having a little bit of fun with the guys a couple hours before the game isn't really going to change it. Now, once we get into the game time and we're getting ready for warmups, I try to stay out of the way. I don't hang out in the locker room during the game unless, usually in between periods, I'll kind of breeze through to see if anybody needs anything, and if not, then I go back to the equipment room. If they need me, they'll come and get me and I'll help them out. But in-game I want the coaches and players to do their thing and I'll be a wallflower over here or kind of just out of the way."

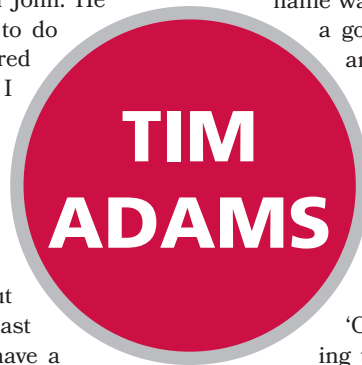
BSB: OK, back to the end of the 1997-98 season.

Adams: "That team was unbelievable. I've never seen a team like that that gets to the third period and has that confidence. Whether they were down a goal or up a goal or tied, just the slam-the-door mentality they had was ridiculous. It never felt like you were out of a game, but it was kind of new for everybody.

"We're just figuring it out. We were like kids in a candy store, just wide-eyed and the next thing you know we're going to Ann Arbor (for the NCAA tournament) and the only time Michigan fans ever cheered for us was when we beat Michigan State in the (regional final). Then you go to Boston for the Frozen Four, and it was really just unbelievable. I don't think, for me, there'll be anything like that again."

BSB: That led into the 1998-99 season, the last at the OSU Ice Rink before moving midseason to the new Value City Arena beginning on Jan. 2, 1999. What was the planning like?

Adams: "It was tough because we were on the road the whole first half of the year (14 of 19 on the road) then I remember moving over here in the middle of December. We moved into this building, and it was a whole new learning process of, 'What are we doing, how do we do this, where are we putting this?' We kind of just rolled through it, and it was pretty cool. The first game here almost got snowed out because we had the



big storm, and they talked about potentially canceling the game.”

BSB: From the equipment manager standpoint, what was it like going from the cramped, old OSU Ice Rink to a new building in terms of what you were able to do?

Adams: “Our space for our equipment was completely different. When I was at the ice rink, I had stick storage under the bleachers. There was an equipment room in St. John Arena which was mostly for other sports and there was a little space for hockey. And in the back of the coach’s office was a storage room, which is where I had all of our hockey storage and jerseys and stuff like that. It was dimly lit, and I would sharpen skates in the locker room. I had a portable skate sharpener down there. I had a tiny closet in the locker room that had some essentials in it. Literally there was stuff everywhere, but it’s all I knew.

“Then we came over here (VCA) and everything’s in one spot. We moved into this equipment room for hockey and basketball. We said, ‘Look at all the space we have. We’ll never fill this room up. This is huge. This is way too big.’ Now it’s completely packed full, but I guess the more space you have, the more stuff you accumulate.”

BSB: Did it feel like the program was finally big time, not only with the arena but having made the Frozen Four?

Adams: “I think so. You go from playing in the ice rink, which was small, the ice at that point wasn’t even regulation, to coming in here and you feel like you’re in an NHL-style building. It kind of felt like, ‘Holy cow, look what we get to play in now.’ We’ve taken that step, obviously, with how well we were playing, then the movement to VCA, you could really see the program emerging.

BSB: You’ve been to your share of NCAA tournaments. What were the setups like in comparison to the regular season?

Adams: “It depends on where you go. We were in, I want to say Worcester (Mass.) and we had half of a locker room (during the 1999 East Regional). Michigan was in the other half. There was literally a wooden wall between the two rooms. Sometimes you get to those buildings, especially when there’s a lot of teams there. And at that point, there were six teams in a regional because it was only a 12-team national championship, so you get some challenges, but you figure it out. The way I look at that stuff, no matter where you go for the three, four days you’re going to be there, the room’s not going to change from the time you get there till the time you leave. So, you just figure out the most efficient way you can make it as comfortable as it can be for everybody and you just make it work.”

BSB: What’s the worst road trip?

Adams: “Going to Alaska was tough because we would leave on a Wednesday and at that point we had some crazy flights. We’d fly from here to Cincinnati to Salt Lake City to Anchorage to Fairbanks. Our first flight would be at like 7 a.m. and we get there at 4 p.m., which was 8 p.m. our time and then coming back from Alaska is forever long too. We would leave on the red-eye, like 1:20 a.m. (Sunday) and get back at 4 p.m. with the time change. It’s just a battle.

“We went there the one year for the playoffs (in 2009). I mean, we had guys on four different flights to get to Alaska. Some



CRAIG MERZ

MAN IN CHARGE — Tim Adams has been the equipment manager for the Ohio State men’s hockey team for nearly three decades and knows every nook and cranny in Value City Arena. He’s standing in front of the wall of bricks which represents all the players who have laid the foundation for the program.

guys went through Dallas, some guys went through (Minneapolis), some went through Detroit. It was crazy how kind of all over the map it took to get us there.

“The bus trips to Lake (Superior) State and Northern Michigan, they were long. We’d go two days on the way up but straight back the whole night, after that Saturday night and those were long.”

BSB: What are some of your favorite away rinks?

Adams: “The best place to win is the Team Up North. That rivalry – they always have a good environment there. It’s my favorite place when we win. Now when you lose up there, you definitely know you lost the game. They don’t let you not know that. It’s definitely a competitive environment.

“I like old buildings. We were at RPI a few years ago, and that’s an old building. It has a historic feel. We got to play at Hobie Baker Arena (Princeton) this year, which might be the coldest rink I’ve ever been in in my life. It’s nice getting to see different buildings and different places we haven’t been. Obviously, the Big Ten, we get to see them all the time.

“I judge Big Ten (arenas) by how close can I walk to the rink from the hotel. Those are my favorite arenas, like Notre Dame, Wisconsin, I can walk right across the street and I’m at the arena.”

BSB: What was it like playing in Madison Square Garden in 2017?

Adams: “That was awesome because that’s kind of one of the iconic buildings and it was pretty crazy. I had heard about it but I didn’t really understand that the ice is on the fifth floor of the building, which is crazy when you get there and you’re going up the

ramp and we’re not at the arena level yet. And we got to use the Rangers locker room so that was pretty neat.”

BSB: What is the preparation like for outdoor games?

Adams: “Oh, my god. Well, the outdoor games are a lot more difficult for us because you have to prepare for all the weather. All the guys want all the things. They all want the hoods. They want all the cold-weather gear because they want all the cool stuff that comes with it. But then come game time, they don’t wear 95 percent of it, because they want to be in their routine and comfortable in what they’re used to wearing. On practice day they’re trying out everything, which is hilarious. They’re running around with all the hoods on like a bunch of 7-year-olds, which is super fun to watch because at the end of the day they’re just having fun with it.

“You go to all the venues and there’s always challenges because it’s never a short walk to the bench. So, you’ve got to plan: What are we walking across? What kind of skate guards do we need? And then getting them on and off for the walk is like another whole little thing. What are the coaches going to wear? How cold is it going to be? Are the benches heated? All of those things we have to take into account.

“In Wrigley (Field) we were in the visiting locker room. It’s like 70 steps to get to the top of it. So, we had a spot that we went in between periods. It was the home bullpen, right behind the dugout. We had that set up for the guys, but then guys say, ‘Hey, I forgot this up in my stall.’ So, we’re running up and down the stairs, a bunch of us trying to grab all the things they need for intermission.

But it’s interesting, and I’ve been fortunate enough to do five outdoor games now. We did Lambeau Field, we did Jacobs (Progressive) Field, we did the Browns stadium, TCF Bank in Minnesota and then we did Wrigley. So I’ve been pretty fortunate to be a part of all of them.”

BSB: Any crazy stories?

Adams: “Well, the ice blew out on practice day in Lambeau. There was a big chunk. Wisconsin practiced before we did. They had a spot in the far corner that the ice was just gone from it. We literally had cones set up around it and said nobody skate through the cones. They fixed it for the game, obviously.

“Minnesota was so cold for morning skate. I think it was five degrees. We went to morning skate, and they’re like, ‘We’re not skating. It’s just too cold for the guys.’ Luckily it was around 20 for game time.”

BSB: Did you go to the NHL Stadium Series game in Ohio Stadium between the Blue Jackets and Detroit in March?

Adams: “I did not. I said, ‘Knowing what a cold weather game is like, I’m going to watch this one on TV.’ ”

BSB: Do you envision Ohio State playing there someday?

Adams: “I think it’s going to happen eventually. If it does, that will be super fun.”

BSB: What are the chances for a new rink?

Adams: “Well, you probably know as much as I do. We’ve explored it from every angle. I think now, ultimately that’s people that are way above me having to decide where are we getting money for that? It would be awesome, especially for our women’s team. It’s something they need. But those are all decisions that I’m not part of.”

BSB: Let the readers know what facilities you have in Value City Arena for hockey. During the Markell era I remember you had a skating machine?

Adams: “Yeah, the skating treadmill. Down here now we have our standard locker room. We have our full-scale training room, our equipment room, which has everything we could possibly need. The guys also have a RapidShot machine that they can use 24 hours a day. The weight room is upstairs. There’s a sauna upstairs. I know they’re putting in a dry float tank upstairs.

“Our guys can pretty much come here and do everything they need every day. We have a players’ lounge. We have a recovery room. You could live here literally and never leave and be just fine. They get fed every day. (Former Ohio State forward) Georgii (Merkulov), we used to have to kick him out. Our guys have access to this 24/7. We’ve had guys come in like 10 p.m., ‘Oh, I was just at home, and I need to get some energy out. So, I came in and shot pucks for an hour in the RapidShot.’ ”

BSB: How do you manage having practices in either VCA or at the rink?

Adams: “It’s actually not as hard as it seems, because our players get dressed here (VCA), so we wear skate guards out. We get the bus; it pulls right into the building. The guys jump on the bus. I’ll have a set of stuff that I leave over at the rink, so I don’t have to carry it back and forth. We have a little storage spot over there for it. The guys walk over in their gear or walk to

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Adams Has Laundry List Of Things To Do

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the bus and then come back on the bus and get off, walk right in the locker room, and we change just like a normal day if we're here. So, from that point. It's really easy. We don't have to transport anything like we're using two locker rooms."

BSB: What's a home hockey weekend like for you? I know you're working all the time, but let's start Friday morning for a weekend series.

Adams: "I'll actually start Thursday because the visiting team comes in Thursday night, depending on how they do things. When they get here, if they're practicing, I'm always here. If they come in and they need laundry done because they practiced and then left, we'll take care of all their laundry Thursday night. I'll get that done so they have it for Friday morning. Then I'll come in about 7:30 or so on Friday morning. I'll wrap up anything I have from the visitors just to make sure they're all set, then I'll take care of anything we need for our morning skate and we'll kind of roll through morning skate. We'll morning skate. The visiting team morning skates, and we'll get laundry done for both teams following that.

"We'll prepare everything we need to do. We'll make sure everybody has a fresh set of blades in their skates for the game and then we'll have a little bit of dead time in the afternoon, maybe, like an hour, hour-and-a-half. But then starting about mid-afternoon, we'll start getting ready for the game, like get jerseys ready, get the locker room prepped for everything we need for the game. Make sure the visitors have everything they need. And then guys will start showing up. When we're at home, guys will start showing up three hours before the game. I want to have everything set when they get here. I don't want to be doing things when they're here because that's kind of their space and they need to be able to prepare how they need to be prepared.

"Then the game will happen, and we'll do whatever we need to do for them. Following the game, the visiting team, we'll do all their laundry. We'll wash all their jerseys and socks as well. We'll do all of our stuff. We'll do the officials' stuff. Get everything washed and dried before we leave, and we're usually out of here around midnight that day. Some teams will morning skate on Saturday. Some teams won't. For us, always at home, our non-dressers will skate. So, I'll get in about 8:30-9 a.m., I'll check in with coaches, make sure they have what they need. Make sure I know what's going on for the morning and then we'll get everything prepared for the guys that are coming to skate. Wash, rinse, repeat, the same sort of deal we did. Hopefully, we have an early game, like a 5 p.m. or 7 p.m. game. because we'll have a little dead time in the afternoon if it's 7 p.m.

"Then we'll play the game. The visiting team, we'll wait for them to leave, because they'll head home. We'll break down their locker room, clean everything up, put it all away. We'll do all of our laundry from that night as well. For a 7 p.m. game we're getting out of here about 10:30 p.m. For a 5 p.m. game we're out of here about 8:30 p.m. so it's not too bad. You work a lot more at home than you do on the road. On the road you're gone, but you're not doing your laundry. The home team is doing your laundry, so it's just a little bit of a difference."

BSB: How many are on your staff?

Adams: "There's another full-time equipment manager who does men's and women's basketball, Eric Buchanan, and we have three students that work in our room, and typically we all work together. It's kind of one big staff. I don't just do hockey things. We'll all help out to get everything done. I'll be the only one that will sharpen skates and things like that, but if I need help, everybody will jump in and do that."

BSB: Will you help out with basketball?

Adams: "Yeah. Basketball's got a crazy-

er schedule because Eric has men's and women's, so there are weeks where he just doesn't have days off because of their practice schedule and game schedule. For me, when hockey is off on Sunday, I don't have to come to work on Sunday. But for Eric, you might have a basketball game Tuesday night, Thursday night, one Friday, one Saturday, or one Saturday, one Sunday.

"So a lot of times, if there's nothing going on Saturday, like if it's just practice for the basketball team, I'll be here for that, and he won't have to come in that day. And then we'll take care of all their laundry and things like that. If a player needs something, our coach needs something, I'm in the equipment room to help out so he can actually get a day off and vice versa."

BSB: What kind of superstitions do hockey players have?

Adams: "Players have a ton of them. We've had some weird ones, like Jeff Maund would never sit with the team at intermission, so he would sit in the old locker room (at the OSU Ice Rink). We had a stick room right when you walk in the door. We'd set a chair up for him, and it would have his little drinks next to him and a pack of gum, and whatever his little area was, that's where he had to sit in between periods. And being a goalie, Coach Markell was OK with that.

"We had Hunter Bishop. He would only sit on one side of the plane or bus. I think if you're walking towards the back of the bus, it's only on the left side of the bus. Just a weird superstition.

"The players have a lot of them. How they get dressed or what they do before the game. Cam Thiesing would only start getting dressed three minutes before we had to be out there for warmups. I don't know how he got dressed in that amount of time, but you'd see him, and you'd be like, 'We're going out to warmups really soon here and you're not even starting to get dressed.' When you go out for warmups he'd be standing right in line with everybody else to go out."

BSB: A favorite topic of fans is hockey jerseys. How much input do you have in the design?

Adams: "We are with an independent company called Exclusive Pro Sports, and that was just last year. It was the first year that Nike hasn't manufactured jerseys. Whoever our manufacturer is, we give them some ideas and it really depends on our coach, and then everything has to go through our creative service department and branding to make sure we're doing everything that fits within our guidelines and our identity and our branding and all that stuff. But really it starts with us. The idea

process starts with our coach, and every coach is different. Coach (Steve) Rohlik will actually talk to the players. He'll even let the players submit ideas if they want to draw something up or create something.

"Or if there's something like for our outdoor jersey in Cleveland, JB Bittner was at the library and there was a display for a football jersey (Ohio State's 1942 national championship team). He thought that was really cool. We're going to play in the football stadium, and he sent me a picture and asked what if we did something like this? And that's what we kind of did, was to emulate that jersey, to being in a football stadium. For the Wrigley game, being that we're in a baseball stadium, we're going to wear something with a baseball vibe into it."

BSB: How often do you change the designs?

Adams: "Nike used to want a three- to four-year commitment. Now we don't have those guidelines, but I know Coach Rohlik doesn't really like to change our two main jerseys – our main home and our main away jerseys – and then he'll want to play with the alternate jersey. We haven't done a lot of jersey changes with him. We've tweaked a little bit here and there."

BSB: I guess going back to superstitions, does that play into how you pick jerseys? If you lose on Friday in a certain jersey, you make a change for the next game?

Adams: "So that's part of my Friday and Saturday routine. When I first get here on Friday and Saturday, I'll walk in here and Coach will be sitting at the desk with his other coaches, and they'll usually begin talking about the game or what they're doing for the morning. I'll just wait and then I'll usually ask him what do you want to wear tonight? At home he'll either say white or let's wear the alternates. And it's really just whatever he's feeling, he does. We do get superstitious sometimes. Like a couple years ago, we couldn't win in our alternate jerseys. We went for a while without wearing the alternate jersey, just because we weren't winning in it. But I let him decide."

BSB: There's a time you had black jerseys, and I had heard that (then athletic director) Andy Geiger said our "Our colors are scarlet and gray. You don't wear black."

Adams: "Yep, that happened. We did have black jerseys when I first started. It was an away jersey. There's kind of a funny story of how we ended up getting rid of them. We had them and Coach Markell would only want to wear them certain times. But I would ask him during the week when we were traveling, 'Hey, which jerseys do



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you want to take?’ He’d be, ‘Bring both.’ So, I bring both. We would only wear the scarlet jerseys on both nights. Next week, ‘Bring both,’ and it went like that for the whole first half of the year.

“We’d wear the black jerseys once in a while. We had worn them like five times one year. We were at Michigan State, and we lost in them, and it was maybe two-thirds of the way through the season, he was sitting on the bus in front of me, and he didn’t even turn around. He just said, ‘Well, I think we can pack away the black jerseys for the rest of the year. We’re not going to wear those again,’ and that’s the coach superstition we all deal with. I don’t think we ordered them the following year after that. And I think that was the end of the black jerseys for us. And then Andy obviously decided that nobody was wearing black, and now it’s kind of crept back in.

“Ross (Bjork) has a little different attitude towards it. His is, if there’s a reason and you tell me what your reason is, why you want to do it, and I agree with it, then you can wear black. So, he has a little different mindset on the black jerseys.

“I think you’re seeing a little bit more of it. We kind of got close to black. We wore the anthracite color jerseys in Wrigley, and if you don’t know the difference, they look black.’

BSB: What about the football inspired helmet? That was Markell’s idea?

Adams: “It was actually a collaborative with Bauer (hockey equipment brand) at the time. We were at the coaches and equipment convention in Florida the one year, and Bauer was telling us how they were launching this silver helmet. One of the guys higher up at Bauer was like, ‘Wouldn’t it be cool if you guys striped it like a football helmet and wore it as a hockey helmet?’ All of us thought it was cool.

“Well, it was a helmet that the guys didn’t really like. It was Bauer’s new helmet at the time, and it was a bigger helmet than what the guys were used to wearing, and it didn’t really pass the mirror test for them.

“We wore them one game (2005). I remember it was a lot of work, because I had never put a stripe on a hockey helmet before and because all the adjustments were in the middle of the helmet, you had to cut all around them, so it wasn’t a quick process to stripe them all. I was not super excited about how much work I put into those for us to wear them once. The guys didn’t like the helmet, so we wore them the one time, and then Bauer eventually made helmets we liked.

“When Coach (Mark Osiecki) got here, he said he wanted to wear that as our full-time helmet, and we’ve been in it ever since. I like it. I think it’s our brand. I think it is iconic. I think it is the one thing you look at and you know it’s Ohio State.”

BSB: Explain the wall near the locker room, where the players have their names written on a brick facsimile.

Adams: “Coach Rohlik, when he took over as head coach, kept telling our guys, ‘You’re building on the tradition. Our program is bigger than any one guy, but when you’re here, you’re building the tradition. You’re building the tradition like nobody can ever take that away.’ So, we had that big blank wall on the back side of our locker room, and we’re talking about what can we do with that?”

“We were talking like, ‘How cool would it be for any player that comes back to see your name on the wall and how do we pay tribute to our alumni?’ We just kind of spitballed it and talked a bunch of things through with our staff. So we have a big thing at the bottom that says, ‘The Tradition’ and starting with the first guy in the class of 1965, we did a ton of research, because records weren’t great. We went through all the team photos, all the Varsity O records, cross-referenced everything we could to try to get every person that has ever worn our jersey to be on the wall.

“So whether or not you play a game or didn’t play a game, or if you were part of the team, you’re on the wall. Now every year, at the end of the season, the guys go and put up a little brick on the wall and that’s their brick.

“It’s really kind of cool, especially when guys come back, even guys that haven’t been here in a while. We had a guy from the 1968 team come back a few years ago, and we’re walking him through the locker room to show him everything, and he found his brick on the wall. It was a really cool thing to see. When guys come back now, they have their kids and they see their dad’s name on the wall, so it’s pretty neat.”

BSB: Do you get a break? And if so, what do you do with it?

Adams: “We have some off time. Summer is slower obviously. In the beginning of June our guys are all back. They’re here for summer training with our strength coach.

“I can get away. My wife and I will take a couple trips, and we’ll just kind of do some stuff around the house and family time. The kids are around more. One will be a senior this year at Ohio University. That’s Nolan. He’s actually had a very busy summer. After school was over, he went to the Netherlands for three weeks for a school program internship thing, and then he has his internship in Cincinnati for the rest of the summer. And then my younger one, Ben, is at OSU-Newark. He’ll be a sophomore this year, so he has a place out in Newark right now. He’s kind of back and forth.”

BSB: What did it mean to be honored for your 1,000th game in your career?

Adams: “It meant everything to me. It really did. Career is kind of a weird word for me, but it represents how long I’ve been here and everything that I’ve seen, the people I’ve gotten to meet, the people I’ve got to be around. It was kind of cool. I thought it was awesome Notre Dame recognized me. That was really nice of them, being a visiting team member, for them to recognize me.

“Then when they did it here, it was really nice. I received a lot of messages from alumni and friends. It was very humbling. To be a small part as I am in this program, the fact that people recognize that as an accomplishment, I guess that’s means they haven’t been able to get rid of me.”

BSB: Finally, how many games have you missed?

Adams: “I missed six games. Two when my sister got married. I missed a weekend. I missed a weekend in Alaska when my youngest son, Ben, was born, and I missed a series a couple of years ago at Penn State for my son’s senior night for high school hockey. It’s not a lot, but it’s for good reasons.”

Logan Proud Of City’s Growth In Women’s Sports

Continued From Page 27

ale shot, I remember saying to my friend, ‘Oh my gosh, let’s look around and soak it all in, because this is really amazing. This is amazing.’ It’s probably like being at your own wedding. You have to take time to really look back and think about how much work went into it, and just how special it is. I would say that we are proud of the work. We all have this little ritual after every event, I’ll ask our whole staff, ‘What was the best part? What was the worst part?’ We do that with our events just because I think there is a point of pride, and so much work goes into it that you have to be able to reflect. We don’t want to rest on our laurels. We know that we have to also have a post-event wrap-up of, ‘Hey, what if we only knew then what we know now, how would we make that bigger and better than ever?’ ”

BSB: Does Ohio State’s presence in Columbus eliminate the possibility of a professional basketball or football team coming to the city?

Logan: “This is my personal opinion: We need to shore up all the teams that we already have here and make sure that they’re successful – the Crew, the Blue Jackets, the Fury (women’s volleyball). I never apologize for the sports that we don’t have here, because I love the makeup of our sports community. It’s very unique, and we do very well in our space. That’s not to say down the road we can’t get another women’s professional team here too to complement what the Fury are doing and others. I think the future is bright, but I think maybe not right now.”

BSB: What, if any, facility does Columbus lack?

Logan: “We’re very fortunate. We have some of the finest facilities in the country, or maybe the world. When you think about how Ohio State has fantastic facilities. Nationwide Boulevard has its own sports street with great facilities. Our Convention Center is one of the best sporting facilities we have. I think maybe we could use (a 5,000-seat arena), especially in March. There are a few things that are sort of on the drawing board but not quite yet ready. I know Ohio State would like to have a new hockey facility for our women’s hockey team, and so the master plan at Ohio State is always intriguing, but I think also around the community, maybe that small arena.”

BSB: In October of last year, the sports commission announced Columbus was hosting the NCAA women’s volleyball championships in 2027. How cool has it been to see women’s volleyball grow in popularity in Columbus to the point where Ross Bjork made Ohio State women’s volleyball one of the four sports that will be included in the university’s revenue sharing?

Logan: “We had a front-row seat for the growth of women’s volleyball in Columbus, and I think that we’ve had a big part of that growth, not only with the Ohio Valley region of USA volleyball being one of the largest in the country. We’ve been able to host over 20 national events in the sport of volleyball here, so we are at the epicenter. We’ve hosted that event twice before with record crowds, and we’ll do it again. We know that it is a fantastic event for the city. 2027 will be the year of

women’s sports in Columbus, hosting not only volleyball but the women’s Final Four, and with Mayor (Andrew) Ginther’s initiative to really do more for girls and women in sports, it’s giving us a nice runway for 2027.”

BSB: Andrew Ginther said he wants Columbus to be the nation’s capital of women’s sports. How much pride do you take in the work you have done to allow Columbus to host so many championships and events for women in sports?

Logan: “To shine a light on girls’ and women’s sports is so rewarding for our community, for our sports commission. For someone like me, Title IX happened when I was in school, and I was not able to play sports, but there is a point applied to know that it’s been our focus before it was trendy.”

BSB: Did you work with (the late Ohio State athletics administrator) Phyllis Bailey? What was her role in the development of women’s sports in Columbus?

Logan: “She was an icon and a friend. Coincidentally, she and my father went to grade school together. I didn’t know her until I moved here and had this role, but we shared a lot of mutual respect for the fact that we grew up in the same little town, Fairpoint Harbor, so it was really exciting. Not only was she a mentor, but she became a friend to me, so I think very highly of her. During the 2018 women’s Final Four, we made sure that she was recognized for being a pioneer, not only in Columbus, but around the country.”

BSB: Is there a specific upcoming event you’re most excited to see Columbus host?

Logan: “There’s one event that we’re looking at now, the USA Gymnastics Championships. Working with the local clubs and the local coaches will be important when we submit a bid in the next few years. That’s one that we’re looking at.”

BSB: What are your biggest aspirations for sports in the city of Columbus going forward?

Logan: “Just to continue the good work, the great collaboration that we have with our community partners. The future is bright, and we have a lot of things in the pipeline already, but we just want to make sure that we’re listening and learning about what are the new sports, what’s emerging in the area. Whether it’s field hockey or pickleball, there are always great coaches or athletes that are coming from this market or coming from the area, and that’s important for us, too. I go back to the sport of volleyball now that we’ve had some 25 years of hosting these events in Columbus, and now we see volleyball players, coaches, officials and administrators that come from Ohio and Columbus in particular that have really made us an important city for that sport. You could say the same for soccer. Sports Business Journal ranked us in the top 20 for soccer, so we’re good at a lot of things.

“We’re not just a one-sport city, and I think that’s important for your readers to know that. We get to see some of the best and the brightest – whether it’s swimming and diving, track and field, fencing – we’re so fortunate to have those sports represented on an annual basis, so I think our city is a reflection of that now.”

Frey Saw The Best And Worst Of Times As QB

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Greg Frey was not only one of the more accomplished quarterbacks in Ohio State history – he ranks sixth all-time with 6,316 passing yards from 1987-90, the latter three as a starter – but he was also behind center for some of the most notable games as well.

As a redshirt freshman, he played a part in the Michigan game days after coach Earle Bruce was fired. Frey took only one snap, but it was a 19-yard completion to Vince Workman on a third-and-9 from the U-M 37 during a fourth-quarter drive that led to a 26-yard field goal for the 23-20 victory.

Out was Bruce. In was John Cooper. Frey, in a phone interview with BSB on June 26, described his often-rocky relationship with the new coach and his staff in the ensuing seasons. Cooper, almost immediately upon his arrival, said the problem for OSU was “too many slow white guys.” Needless to say, his comments were not well received by Frey.

Frey engineered a 26-9 win over Syracuse in Cooper's debut in 1988, a game in which OSU had no turnovers or penalties for the first time in 27 years.

In the first of several heart-stopping comebacks two games later, Frey overcame a 33-20 deficit with four minutes left, capped by a 20-yard catch by Bobby Olive with 38 seconds to play for a 36-33 win over LSU.

OSU also rallied from down 21-7 to tie Iowa 24-24 before almost pulling off another win in The Game the following week. The Wolverines led 20-0 at the half, but OSU went ahead 31-27 with 2:02 to play, only to have Ohio native John Kolesar make a long kickoff return then make a TD catch in the dying seconds for a 34-31 win.

Frey's penchant for comebacks reached its zenith in 1989 when the Buckeyes overcame a 31-0 hole at Minnesota for a 41-37 victory on a 15-yard reception by Jeff Graham with 51 seconds remaining as Frey threw for 362 yards and three scores after halftime with the shackles taken off, as he will explain.

In his last regular-season game in 1990 vs. Michigan, his fourth-and-1 option run from the OSU 29 with 1:47 left was snuffed out, and the Wolverines used the prime field position to kick a field goal and steal a 16-13 victory. His football career ended in a forgettable loss to Air Force in the Liberty Bowl.

But Frey wasn't done playing for OSU, and in the spring of 1991, he completed his second season with the baseball team.

Post-OSU, he played in the minor leagues with the Detroit Tigers organization as well as brief stints in the World League of American Football and the Arena Football League before an epiphany told him it was time to put away the uniforms.

He became well known for his radio work on Ohio State football and later on

TV doing high school games.

Frey was also an assistant coach at Bexley High School in suburban Columbus, where his son Jackson, a QB prospect, played three seasons before transferring to Cincinnati St. Xavier, where he will graduate in 2026, like his father did there 40 years earlier.

Frey addressed many of these events and issues for Buckeye Sports Bulletin's Interview Issue.

**GREG
FREY**

BSB: How many schools were interested in you for football when you were coming out of high school?

Frey: “It came down to Ohio State, Boston College, North Carolina and Iowa.”

BSB: What were the deciding factors?

Frey: “I think the biggest was I got along with coach Earle Bruce, and I felt at home. I knew my parents wanted to see me play, and I wanted them to see me play, so being close to home was very important to me.”

BSB: Was there any trepidation going off to college as a 17-, 18-year-old kid?

Frey: “Honestly, no. I was excited. It was kind of like I have a 17-year-old son now and he's at the point where he doesn't do as much with Dad anymore, and I was at a time when I was ready to go out and do my own thing.”

BSB: Obviously, it didn't work out with Coach Bruce. What was the 1987 season like for you?

Frey: “It was a challenge. I had to grow up fast that year. I was the backup quarterback, and Earle played me in six or seven games that year to really prepare me, and some of the moments were pretty big moments. So, at the end of the year, it was a huge confidence boost for me, but that was a challenging year for me to grow and learn and then learn to be a leader and be in the mix on the field in Ohio Stadium.

“It was obviously also a very challenging year because of what happened that season, losing Cris Carter (who had signed with an agent), then a series of losses at the end that ultimately cost Earle his job. You could do a whole story on the Michigan game that year and what it meant to Earle, so to beat Michigan and what it meant to us players, and that ended up being a lifetime memory for me of how unselfish he was that week. That meant so much to me as a player. And also, that was a game that I contributed one play, which was a decisive play in the game. He trusted me enough to put me in the game with it all on the line in his last game at Ohio State. That was a big moment for me.”

BSB: You went in because Tom Tupa got hurt, right? It wasn't planned for you to play?

Frey: “It wasn't planned. I say it kind of as a joke because my arm was killing me, but if you watched me warm up that day, you'd wonder why I was on scholarship. My arm was killing me. When Tupa went down, my heart was beating fast. I was



FILE PHOTO

PITCH AND CATCH — While Greg Frey was one of the most prolific passers in Ohio State history as well as playing two seasons of baseball, one of his best moments as a Buckeye was being on the receiving end of a 60-yard touchdown against Purdue in 1990.

standing next to the head trainer, Billy Hill, and I knew if he stepped on the field that Tupa had to come out for a play. My heart was racing, and Earle said, ‘Get out there, get out there,’ so I had to go in. There was no plan for me to go in. It happened, and I gave a lot of credit to Earle because he prepared me for that moment that I'd be ready.”

BSB: It was a pass play of all things.

Frey: “I got to do eight years of radio with Earle on 610 (WTVN-AM in Columbus) after all was said and done, his career and mine, and he told me after the fact that his coaches in the booth were screaming to not let me throw it.

“Earle overruled all of them and said, ‘Damn it, we're throwing the ball.’ It was a brilliant call. The defense wasn't ready for that. They weren't prepared, and that actual throw was easy because they just sat in zone coverage and I knew it. It was a weird calmness. I knew it was going to work, and it did.”

BSB: That calmness – it's safe to say that if you played only a few games, took a few snaps during the season, it could have been a different story?

Frey: “That was Earle. He was brilliant

at that. He was hard on me. During one week earlier in the year, our first Big Ten game was Illinois. He told me on Monday that I was going to play. I had a long week. I was as nervous as could be, and then he didn't play me. Then I realized what he was doing. He wanted me to prepare every week like I was going to play and be ready at any time.”

BSB: Earle is fired. John Cooper takes over. What was the transition like?

Frey: “The guys who weren't Cooper guys, and I'm just speaking for myself, they treated me like they thought they wanted better athletes. I started his first three years, and to his credit, he apologized to me 20 years later at a public event in front of about 500 people and said in retrospect that he should have used me better. He didn't really utilize my talents. It took him that long to recognize that.

“But during that time, you know, I don't want to be the guy that pisses and moans, but I started for three years and yet they acted like they always wanted somebody better, and that's from the coaches. I've forgiven them, but I'm not going to forget.

“I'll say this: Jim Colletto, who was the offensive coordinator, and Ron Hudson, the

THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: GREG FREY

quarterback coach, are first in line for how they treated me. Not good.

"I had a problem with (Colletto) for the way he left. I don't want to be the bitter guy, but I don't forget. He blames the entire senior class for losing the Michigan game that year (1990) and turns around and left for Purdue the same week.

"I don't have any respect for how he handled that situation. It was not right, but he was a great coach."

BSB: Going back to the start of the Cooper era, he said there were too many "slow, white guys." How did that stand with everybody in the program?

Frey: "They were very slow to give me credit anytime I did anything good. There was a play in my first year starting when we played Michigan State. There's a two-point play where the backside defensive end ran down an option, I pitched the ball and the backside defensive end intercepted it and I was CNN play of the day as a joke.

"And then at the Monday press conference, he threw me under the bus. He said, 'Well, we really want to run the option. We want a more athletic quarterback, blah, blah, blah.'"

"I remember walking through the Woody Hayes at about 1 p.m. and Steve Snapp, the sports information director, had to pull me aside and tell me what had just transpired because all the media guys are still there. So I walked into a firestorm having no idea what just happened. That my coach said that and then not to give a s— and say something to me. So I had to sit there and say how much I liked Coach Cooper and I was OK with it, blah, blah, blah.

"I mean, you don't do that to a 19-year-old kid. You just don't. Or, if you are going to bench me, tell me, but don't do that. Come on. That was normal. It happened over and over and over."

BSB: You got a win for him in your first game against Syracuse.

Frey: "Yeah, that was probably the most perfect game I've ever played in. No penalties. No turnovers. I think at the time Syracuse had won 14 in a row, so that was a big win."

BSB: Throughout your career, you had a habit of great victories, comeback wins, like the LSU game in 1988.

Frey: "That was an amazing day. I always had a belief that there's always a way. I'm a glass-full guy. I always believed that if we had enough time, we would figure it out, and that was the start of it. I had done that a couple times in high school with Xavier. It was really a dream come true. That was one you dream of, getting to be the quarterback in the 'Shoe, throwing a winning touchdown pass in the waning seconds of a game. That was just an emotional experience for me.

"I literally cried, bawling when I came to the sideline. Guys were like, 'What's wrong?' It was just the release of emotions. The moment was so powerful. I give credit to Jim Colletto. He called a great game that day, especially in the waning moments. The winning touchdown pass was a great call.

"He called double posts, and we got the right coverage, and Bobby Olive made a great catch. That was a play where all 11

guys offensively were on the same page. We caught them in a blitz. We had great protection. I did my job making the throw. Bobby made a diving catch. At that point, we had everything come together. It was unfortunate for that year we were very inconsistent except for games like that."

BSB: Then you had the near-comeback against Michigan, being down 20-0, going ahead, then losing it in the end.

Frey: "Yeah. That's one of the ones I'm most proud of because we hung 31 points on them in the second half after getting shut out 20-0 in the first half.

"Now that I have a voice, I'd like to know why the coaches, as much as Cooper, decided to kick off deep to John Kolesar. I've known John Kolesar. He can play. We just drove the ball 94 yards in a minute to take the lead, and you kick it deep to that guy? What? And he kills us. He ran it back like 56 yards and two plays later caught a deep ball for a touchdown.

"Let's just say I would question kicking off to him and question the coverage call on defense in that situation. All we had to do was stop him and we win."

BSB: What were the feelings in the comeback against Minnesota?

Frey: "I've got pretty thick skin, and if anybody's going to be critical of me, it's me. But the previous couple of weeks, our passing game was under a lot of attack because a lot of times they wouldn't let me throw the ball. When you're down 31-0, you've got to throw the ball. When they finally took the handcuffs off me to let me throw it, we threw for 350, 360 yards in the second half.

"It's not all about me. The offensive production that day was incredible, running the ball, throwing the ball, but 31 points, still one of the top 10 Division I comebacks. So, really proud of what everybody did that day to pull that one off, because that was pretty impressive."

BSB: It looked bad down 31 points, but then you did score right before halftime.

Frey: "We made it 31-8. We went for two there. Carlos Snow scored on a fourth-down play, then we went for two."

BSB: So momentum does carry over?

Frey: "That was significant. You're down 31 at the half, that's pretty insurmountable. That's hard to wrap your brain around. But when it's 23 and you've just scored eight, it's a totally different perception if that makes any sense. We also knew we were wearing them down offensively in the first half.

"People always ask what was said at halftime. Half of it was, 'Take care of the ball.' We knew what we were capable of. We knew we could score points on these guys and get out of our way, which we did."

BSB: Did you tell yourself you can't get it all back at once?

Frey: "I had to learn that. You have to be patient. I actually coach that to quarterbacks now. When you're down a lot, defenses tend to get a little conservative, so they're going to give you that first touchdown. And what I tell quarterbacks now is if they are going to give you the first one,

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Being A Two-Sport Champion Meaningful To Frey

Continued From Page 32

take it. You've got to be patient. Then, when you get it back and you've got to go for that last score, that's a different story. Then it's on. You've got to be ready for that."

BSB: Jeff Graham was one of your favorite receivers, but you were on the end of a TD pass from him against Purdue in 1990 for 60 yards. What do you remember about that play?

Frey: "I'm proud of that one. I wish there were a statistics board in the records of the Big Ten because I would like to think I have the longest touchdown reception by a quarterback. At least that's what I'm going to say."

BSB: Did you practice it much?

Frey: "We practiced it all week because they play man coverage, and they don't typically cover the quarterback in man coverage. The fun part is Jeff Graham missed that throw all week in practice – every practice. But I knew Jeff was a quarterback in high school. I knew he would make the throw, and he did. The fact that the throw was so good, I was scared to death I was going to drop it, but I caught it."

BSB: How far did you have to run after the catch?

Frey: "Maybe 30, 40 yards. It seemed like 200 because I had a linebacker chasing me. I was thinking, 'If that guy tackles me, I'm going to get abused as hell.'"

BSB: Was that play ever tried again?

Frey: "We actually ran it two years in a row against Purdue. In '88, I caught one for about 40 yards."

BSB: In the Michigan game in 1990, what was the pressure like trying to win that game for Cooper?

Frey: "This was my third start against Michigan. I didn't view it that way as much. I was more of a veteran. The pressure wasn't to win for Cooper. The pressure was to win a Big Ten championship. It had nothing to do with winning for Cooper because he didn't understand the value of that game. That was clear."

"The offensive coaching philosophy was brutal that day. They were playing scared, and our hands were tied. Now, specifically, you can go look at me and say, 'Well, Frey threw three interceptions in that game.' I did. You can look back. One of those was my responsibility. Two went off the fingertips of the receivers. Those are freaky plays."

"They coached not to lose, and that's the way the game played out. It's sad because our defense played so great that day. Our defense had its struggles that year, but our defense played an awesome game to put us in a position to win. It was one of those games that it just wasn't going to happen. But philosophy-wise, I totally disagree with the way that they approached that game with not-to-lose. They literally said to me, 'You can't make any mistakes.'"

"I've used that from a coaching standpoint to know that you can't put that pressure on a kid. I did feel that pressure. I'll say that."

BSB: That loss was such a letdown, then you had to play Air Force in the Liberty Bowl in cold and rainy Memphis

two days after Christmas. You went in a 17-point favorite and lost 23-11.

Frey: "It wasn't pleasant. I mean, I'm not sure why we went. We were short-staffed. Jim Colletto left for Purdue and took a couple of coaches with him. So, offensively, it was coordinator-by-committee, and we see what happened there. That was a train wreck. There were a lot of guys who didn't want to be there, and that's the way we played."

BSB: You played two seasons of baseball at Ohio State. How was that transition?

Frey: "It was a wonderful experience. I had a goal of contributing to a Big Ten championship in football and baseball, and I did it my freshman year even though I was the down-team guy in football, but there was a feeling that I contributed. We came very close my first year in baseball. I wanted to do that in baseball because it was a goal of mine to do both."

"The second year, we won it and won the tournament. It was just amazing. It was just a refreshing experience because it was such a different atmosphere, more lighthearted, a lot more fun. Not the 100,000-people pressure. The guys on the team were fabulous, and coach Bob Todd didn't make me any promises. He gave me an opportunity, which is all I wanted."

"It was incredible. I'm so glad that I did it. I have so many memories of being a contributing player. Down the stretch to win the Big Ten in 1991 was amazing. I believe we still hold the record for most wins by an Ohio State team in a season (52). That's so cool."

"You can criticize me for doing both, but I accomplished a goal. I did something not many people have done, and I'm really proud of that."

BSB: But you probably wouldn't recommend it to most people?

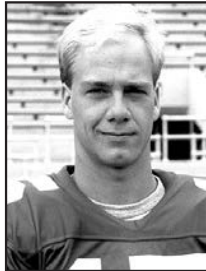
Frey: "I took a lot of flak. The football coaches were not fond of me for doing that at all, and I don't blame them. I get it. I missed spring practice the year I started baseball. That doesn't look good on them. But it was my goal. When I look back, I'm really proud of what I've accomplished. I had six varsity letters and Big Ten championships in two sports in my career. Not many people did that."

BSB: After your OSU career, did Earle offer you, through his contacts, a chance to try the CFL, and you turned it down for baseball?

Frey: "Yeah, I don't have many regrets. I regret that one. That was right away when my baseball season got done in 1991. I had a pretty good chance to get into NFL camp as a free agent, and that fizzled out. So Earle had an opportunity for me to go to the Hamilton Tiger Cats on the practice squad, and I declined it. I regret that. I didn't listen to his advice."

BSB: What are your memories of minor-league baseball?

Frey: "It was a blast. The Tigers draft-



Greg Frey

ed me in the spring of 1991, but I didn't go right away, and I called them and asked if it was OK to go to spring training the next year and they agreed. I was one of the older guys. It just goes back to, I think I was really well groomed within the Ohio State program. I was ready. I hit over .300 for the spring and I played in their (Tigers') games in the spring and then they sent me down at the end of spring, which is typical, to what they called extended spring."

"I just said, 'Hey, you know what? Thank you, I'm going to go.' I knew the decision for me was I knew it was going to take me three to four years. I needed a lot of my past to catch up if I could really make the big leagues, and I just didn't want to be 28, 29, and stuck in the minor leagues, so I made the decision to move on. It was like at the crossroads, so I said no, I'm walking away, and I'm at peace with that."

BSB: You did get a chance to play pro football, though.

Frey: "I played arena football. World (League of American Football) would have been in the spring of '92, which was great. I went from third team, second team, first team. Earned the starting job. Trusted the coaches. They said I'm the guy. I started to get some NFL looks, and then that league folded after a year, which was bad timing."

"So I played arena football the next year for Cleveland and really put up some good numbers, and then I got hurt. I had a separated shoulder and a concussion. And that was kind of a moment of, 'OK, I'm done.'"

"I was being carted off the field in Detroit, Joe Louis Arena, on a stretcher and I had a clear thought that when I'm 50, I want to be able to throw the football to my son. Now I'm in my 50s and I can throw the ball to my son, and I'm glad I did what I did."

"It was weird because I was concussed, but I had clarity on a stretcher, 'OK, this is it.'"

BSB: How important was broadcasting, doing games on radio and TV, to keep you involved in the game?

Frey: "It just makes sense to me because a lot of the guys in the media were my friends. If you're the quarterback at Ohio State you get to know the guys because you see them all the time, and George Lechner offered me an opportunity to come to a college football show for WTVN and that one night turned into 10 years of pre- and postgame coverage and college shows, and I give him a lot of credit for that, because he saw what I could do. It was easy for me because I was used to being in front of a microphone."

"I walked away from that in 2002, and that turned into me starting to do high school football on TV. Now it's been 23 years, maybe 24 – 20 years of being a color analyst for playoffs and state finals. I just loved every minute of that. I can't get enough of that."

BSB: How neat would it have been to do one of your son's games?

Frey: "I coached for the last three years at Bexley, where he played, so I wasn't able to do that. This year, he transferred to St. Xavier, so I'm probably just going to be a dad. I'm not going to coach. I'm just going to watch as much as I can."

BSB: What is your current line of work?

Frey: "My main duties are retirement planning for federal employees. Second to that, I mentor quarterbacks. It's called QB Ohio, QBOhio.com."

"I still love doing that. I've got kids, but I'll keep doing it as long as I enjoy it and I love getting guys ready for the regular season."

"I live in Cincinnati, but I still commute back and forth (to Bexley, where the camp is)."

BSB: What range of QB prospects do you train?

Frey: "My philosophy is I want to help them be better to achieve what they want. A lot of my guys don't go to the next level. Certainly, we have some that do, and I'll coach them accordingly. My attitude is I don't care if they want to be a starter in high school or middle school, I can help them with that. If they are a great prospect, they have to be prepared accordingly."

BSB: What are your thoughts on college athletics now with NIL, the transfer portal, and all that?

Frey: "I'm living with that with my son. He is a prospect, and that whole dynamic has changed dramatically. I believe in NIL. I think it's a good thing. It probably needs to be under wraps a little bit more, but I think recent changes are going to be good. If I look at it as a parent right now, it's just trying to really understand how it's going to work going forward. He's probably less than a year away from making a decision where he's going to go, and it's all right in front of us."

BSB: With all you do, have you gone to many Ohio State games?

Frey: "I don't go very much, to be honest. I go to one or two a year. I actually didn't go to a game last year. I was coaching last year, so that makes it a little harder. I'd honestly rather watch it on TV where it's easier to see replays and not deal with traffic."

BSB: How would you have dealt with social media if it were around in your day?

Frey: "I'm really happy I didn't have to deal with that. I'm really happy. I'll just say that."

BSB: What advice on that topic do you give your son and the other quarterbacks you work with?

Frey: "The more high-profile you are, you have to really be careful, because everybody's got a phone. So you've got to be extra vigilant. It's an opportunity where somebody has video or whatever. It's hard because sometimes you've got to let loose a little bit, and they just have to be extremely careful. I've heard that about Ohio State players now. They have to be extra vigilant because there's always somebody who wants to take you down. That's an unfortunate reality, so you have to be on your toes about that all the time."

Four-Star LB Johnson Commits To Ohio State

Ohio State added to its 2026 class on June 19 when Cleveland Glenville four-star linebacker Cincere Johnson (6-3, 225) pledged his services to the Buckeyes.

“The Buckeyes were the best fit because it’s home,” Johnson said. “It’s a brotherhood, and I’m excited to be here.”

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Greg Wilson

The Glenville product is ranked the No. 71 player in the country and the No. 2 player in the state of Ohio. His decision came soon after his June 13 official visit to Ohio State when former Glenville and current Ohio State linebacker Arvell Reese hosted Johnson.

He chose Ohio State over Alabama and Penn State, the only two other schools where he also took official visits.

He first got his offer from Ohio State on Sept. 21, 2024, but he has been a target for the Buckeyes for much longer than that and has been to campus on unofficial visits for multiple game days.

Johnson said Ohio State is getting a player who is going to work hard when he gets to Columbus.

“They’re getting somebody who’s hard-working, loves Ohio State, loves the brotherhood and is humble,” Johnson said. “You can expect somebody who’s loyal and is a great addition to the program.”

Johnson is the second linebacker in James Laurinaitis’ 2026 recruiting class, joining Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy four-star CJ Sanna (6-3, 225). Johnson is also the seventh of the 19 commits in the class from the state of Ohio.

Buckeyes Get Fourth OL Commitment

Ohio State gained its fourth offensive line commitment in the 2026 class when Phoenix Mountain Pointe three-star offensive tackle Aaron Thomas (6-7, 300) pledged to the Buckeyes on June 25. Thomas is the No. 439 player in the country, the No. 36 offensive tackle and the No. 5 player in the state of Arizona, climbing up the rankings over the last month.

His commitment comes after all of his official visits, the first of which was to Columbus that he took the weekend of May 30-June 1, which obviously went well. He chose Ohio State over Texas A&M, Florida State, Texas and Washington.

Thomas joins Avon Lake, Ohio, four-star offensive tackle Maxwell Riley (6-5, 280) and Akron Hoban four-star offensive tackle Sam Greer (6-8, 315) along with Glendale (Ariz.) Sandra Day O’Connor three-star interior offensive lineman Tucker Smith (6-5, 280) in Tyler Bowen’s first offensive line class with the Buckeyes, already surpassing the number of linemen signed in the 2025 class (three).

The Buckeyes are still not done at the position, however, with their eyes still on Mansfield (Texas) Lake Ridge five-star of-

fensive tackle Felix Ojo (6-6, 275) – who is down to Ohio State and Texas – Richmond (Va.) St. Christopher’s School five-star interior lineman Darius Gray (6-3, 285) and Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star interior lineman Breck Kolojay (6-6, 320), among many others.

Four-Star RB Akih Commits To Ohio State

Ohio State gained another commitment in its 2026 class when Delaware (Ohio) Rutherford B. Hayes four-star running back Favour Akih (6-0, 190) pledged his services to the Buckeyes on June 8, the final day of his official visit weekend.

He was the 14th commitment in the 2026 class but the first running back that position coach Carlos Locklyn has been able to land this cycle. Akih chose the Buckeyes over Miami (Fla.) and USC.

Akih first got his scholarship offer from Locklyn on March 17 when he was on campus for the Buckeyes’ first spring practice. He had also visited Ohio State for the national championship celebration and the win over Nebraska last October.

The running back room at Ohio State is fairly young with a lot of players vying for playing time in the next few years, but Akih said Locklyn’s coaching was enough to get him to Columbus and he is ready to compete for a spot.

“Coach Lock and his development process, all the guys he has coached, he has really developed,” Akih told 247Sports. “He’s going to really develop me, and we can compete in championship games. I’m ready to compete.”

Akih rushed for 1,653 yards and 15 touchdowns and caught another nine passes for 142 yards and three scores in his junior season in 11 games. He is the No. 167 player in the country, the No. 14 running back and the No. 8 player in the state of Ohio.

The Buckeyes could still add another running back to the 2026 class and are hopeful that player will be Mineral (Va.) Louisa County five-star Savion Hiter (6-0, 200) or Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna five-star Derrek Cooper (6-1, 205), who are the No. 1 running back and the No. 2 athlete in the class, respectively.

Buckeyes Add Three Defensive Linemen

Larry Johnson picked up his first commitment of the 2026 class when Gardena (Calif.) Junipero Serra four-star defensive end Khary Wilder pledged his services to the Buckeyes late on June 10. He didn’t need to wait much longer to add his second and third commitments to the list when Richland (N.J.) St. Augustine Prep four-star defensive tackle Damari Simeon (6-3, 275) and Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy three-star defensive tackle Cameron Brickle (6-2, 305) committed on June 27 and 28, respectively.



Larry Johnson

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	
Favour Akih	RB	6-0	190	★★★★	Delaware (Ohio)	Rutherford B. Hayes
Brock Boyd	WR	6-2	183	★★★★	Southlake (Texas)	Carroll
Blaine Bradford	S	6-1	207	★★★★★	Baton Rouge (La.)	Catholic
Cameron Brickle	DL	6-2	305	★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.)	IMG Academy
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
Cincere Johnson	LB	6-3	225	★★★★	Cleveland Glenville	
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
Damari Simeon	DL	6-3	275	★★★★	Richland (N.J.)	St. Augustine Prep
Tucker Smith	OL	6-5	280	★★★	Glendale (Ariz.)	Sandra Day O’Connor
Aaron Thomas	OT	6-7	300	★★★	Phoenix Mountain Pointe	
Jordan Thomas	CB	6-1	185	★★★★	Oradell (N.J.)	Bergen Catholic
Jakob Weatherspoon	CB	5-10	172	★★★★	Avon, Ohio	
Khary Wilder	DE	6-4	260	★★★★	Gardena (Calif.)	Junipero Serra

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.	

OSU Football 2028 Commitment						
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	
Elijah Newman-Hall	RB	5-11	195	NA	Tampa (Fla.)	Blake

Wilder, who is the No. 241 player in the country, the No. 23 edge rusher and the No. 24 player in the state of California, didn’t receive a scholarship offer from Ohio State until May 7 but set up an official visit soon after, coming to Columbus on May 30. After another official visit to UCLA the weekend after, Wilder decided he had seen enough to commit to the Buckeyes and Johnson.

“It was an eye-opening visit to campus to be able to see everything in person, and it was really big for my family since that was their first time in Columbus,” Wilder told 247Sports. “It was a great experience. Coach Larry Johnson and coach Matt Patricia were big in my decision. I really like their scheme, and just seeing how I fit into the system, that all kind of sold me on Ohio State.”

“From start to finish, all coaches talked to me and were with my family the entire time. It really demonstrated how much of a priority I was to them, and the staff all believes I have a chance to be dominant at the next level.”

Along with UCLA, the Buckeyes also beat out Alabama, Notre Dame and Washington for Wilder’s services.

Wilder had 86 tackles (11 for loss), 4½ sacks, 40 quarterback hurries and six pass breakups in his junior season.

Simeon chose Ohio State over Michigan, Penn State and Texas and is the No. 201 player in the country and the No. 26 defensive tackle.

He first received his offer from Ohio State on Feb. 5 when he was unranked, but even though the Buckeyes were somewhat late to his recruitment, they were

able to make up ground and make enough of an impression since then.

Brickle is ranked the No. 537 player in the country and the No. 62 defensive lineman, holding an offer from Ohio State since October 2024. He chose the Buckeyes over Florida State, Maryland and Penn State.

The Buckeyes could still add more to the defensive line in the 2026 class, with Cleveland Glenville three-star defensive tackle and Florida commit Jamir Perez (6-4, 360) being a flip candidate. The Buckeyes are also still after Suwanee (Ga.) Collins Hill four-star defensive lineman Deuce Geraldts (6-3, 265), Bessemer (Ala.) City four-star defensive lineman Emanuel Ruffin (6-4, 290) and Clemmons (N.C.) West Forsyth four-star defensive lineman Pierre Dean (6-5, 255), among many more who are still uncommitted.

2028 RB Newman-Hall Pledges To Buckeyes

Ohio State got its first commitment of the 2028 class when Tampa (Fla.) Blake running back Elijah Newman-Hall (5-11, 195) pledged his services to the Buckeyes on June 13.

Newman-Hall was on campus for a one-day recruiting camp on June 10 and was offered a scholarship that day.

The Tampa native rushed for 829 yards and eight touchdowns on 80 carries (10.4 per carry) in 10 games in his high school freshman season while also playing defense, collecting 28 tackles (17 for loss), eight sacks, seven quarterback hurries

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OSU Looks At, Doesn't Offer No. 1 2027 QB

Continued From Page 35

and three fumble recoveries.

While the Buckeyes have only two commitments in the 2027 class, they have already gotten a head start when it comes to building the 2028 class, and Carlos Locklyn was able to get his second commitment within a week after Akih's commitment.

Edmunds Trying To Recruit For OSU

One of those two 2027 commitments, Huntington Beach, Calif., four-star quarterback Brady Edmunds (6-5, 215), is trying to get to Columbus as much as he can before he officially becomes a Buckeye despite being over 2,000 miles away from his future home.

"My first visit back after I committed, it's more of a family aspect. Everybody knows who you are now," Edmunds said. "The good thing about here is I feel like I'm still being recruited too."

He was at the Buckeyes' first one-day camp on June 5 before taking a long week-end visit, and even though he already is in the 2027 class, he's still trying to prove himself at events like that.

"If it's not, 'I'm trying to earn an offer,'

it's 'I'm trying to show you that I'm as good as you think I am,' " Edmunds said of his mindset during these camps.

When Edmunds first committed, Chip Kelly was the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach for the Buckeyes. Kelly has since moved on to the NFL's Las Vegas Raiders, but Edmunds said Billy Fessler getting the promotion to QB coach has been a transition he has appreciated, because he wants to build that relationship even more.

"I think he handled more of the hands-on stuff last year, compared to Coach Kelly being a play caller. Everyone kind of knew that (Kelly) was going to end up in the NFL at some point," Edmunds said. "So, I've had the relationship with Coach Fessler, and then when Coach Kelly left, he picked up even more. The last six months or so, I've gotten really, really close with him."

Now that Edmunds is committed and says he's locked in with Ohio State, he's trying to build up the 2027 class by recruiting other talented players to join him as Buckeyes, with Libertyville, Ill., five-star tight end Brock Williams (6-5, 210) being a major target right now.

"Whenever someone gets offered or something like that, I'll connect (with them)," Edmunds said. "Or sometimes,

Coach will text me and call me and I'll get someone to go after. Brock Williams is a big guy we're going after. I talk to him basically every single day."

He said he doesn't have much of a pitch to his fellow recruits when he's trying to get them to join him in the class – the program speaks for itself.

"I don't really think there is a big pitch," he said. "They just won the national championship. It's kind of self-explanatory year in and year out. Year in, year out you're playing at the highest level. It's not like there's a downside. Obviously the wide receivers are really good. Every position is high tier."

OSU Hosts Haven, Top 2027 QB

Despite Edmunds already being committed to the 2027 class, the Buckeyes are still looking at other quarterbacks who could potentially join the group.

One of those players is Baton Rouge (La.) Dunham School five-star quarterback Elijah Haven (6-5, 215), who is the No. 1 quarterback in the class and No. 22 overall prospect.

Haven was at one of Ohio State's one-day recruiting camps on June 12 and performed very well, showing off why he has

earned the top ranking in his class. However, despite his visit to campus, Haven still doesn't have an offer from Ohio State, and that's likely due to Edmunds being very committed to the class.

But the Buckeyes and Fessler are still doing their due diligence on the 2027 quarterback position, hosting a few other quarterbacks from the class for camps as well.

It still seems most likely that Edmunds ends up being the only quarterback in the class by the time signing day rolls around, but Ohio State could end up deciding to go after another quarterback to add alongside Edmunds. That's something he said won't affect his mentality.

"I personally have not talked to other quarterbacks," Edmunds said. "(Ohio State potentially adding another quarterback in the class) might have just become a new thing. But for me, it's just another opportunity to compete."

2028 QB Lawrence Looks Up To Stroud

At Ohio State's last one-day camp of the summer held on June 17, Miami Northwestern quarterback Neimann Lawrence (6-1, 202) of the 2028 class was in attendance to show why he's already con-

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1990

Ohio State recruited seven football players in the spring of 1989 who posted 40-yard dash times of better than 4.5 seconds.

Running backs Robert Smith and Butler By'not'e could cover the distance in 4.4 seconds while wide receivers Joey Galloway and Chris Sanders and defensive back Larry Kennedy had been clocked at 4.45 seconds.

But the fastest of all the incoming freshmen – and probably the one who got the least recognition during recruiting season – was wide receiver Norman Williams of Washington, D.C. One of the fastest high school prospects in the nation, Williams' listed 40-yard dash time was 4.38 seconds.

30 Years Ago — 1995

Ohio State hosted its annual summer camp for high school players in June and netted three early verbal commitments for the 1996 recruiting class.

In addition to those three commitments, one other Ohio high school player was reported to commit but later said he would take more time to decide.

The commitments came from Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit wide receiver Darik Warnke; Medina, Ohio, defensive end Marcus Perez; and Columbus Beechcroft tight end/defensive end Paris Long.

The other Ohio player – Lancaster offensive lineman Benji Gilbert – was reported as a commitment in the June 26 edition of The Columbus Dispatch, but he later said that was not official, although OSU was still at the top of his list.

25 Years Ago — 2000

Brookhaven standout wide receiver Rodney Carter told BSB he was confused by area media reports that didn't list him as an OSU commitment.

Carter told BSB in late May that he was committed to Ohio State. However, his offer remained contingent upon him qualifying academically. Because of that, some services had not counted Carter as an OSU commitment for 2001.

"I committed a while ago," he said. "Then I looked in the paper and saw (Andree Tyree) committed and the paper listed him as the fourth commitment. I thought I was No. 4.

"That made me wonder what was going on. I'm a commitment even though I'm not fully qualified yet. But me being committed to Ohio State is going to make me work harder toward being qualified.

"I just wanted to be treated like the fourth commitment. If I'm not really a commitment, then maybe I need to look at some other schools."

20 Years Ago — 2005

Canton (Ohio) GlenOak quarterback Mike Hartline attended the Buckeyes' senior advanced camp on June 25 and felt he did all he could to prove he deserved an offer. But he left Columbus without an OSU scholarship offer and unsure of whether one would be coming.

"(Passing game coordinator Joe Daniels) said they have offered some athletes but they have not offered any pro-style quarterbacks that they want to throw the ball around a little bit," Hartline told BSB. "Right now they're going to decide on that, and once they know, they'll tell me what their deal is. I didn't really get much more than that. I think my chances are pretty good right now, but I just have to be a little patient."

15 Years Ago — 2010

Almost immediately after Ohio State signed Terrelle Pryor three years before, fans began wondering if the Buckeyes would ever again land a similar athlete.

They got their answer on June 3 when five-star quarterback Braxton Miller issued his verbal commitment to OSU during a press conference in a high school auditorium at Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne. A dual-threat quarterback in the same vein as Pryor, Miller had more than a passing similarity to OSU's starting quarterback.

Those comparisons nearly went one step past comfortable, however.

With Miller seated onstage behind a table and flanked by his parents, head coach Jay Minton opened the press conference with a little humor. Standing at a lectern, the head coach paused for a second. Having collected himself, Minton looked up and began speaking.

"I just wanted to tell everyone that Braxton's got cold feet and has decided to postpone this conference," he deadpanned.

He held a serious face for a second, after which a smile creased his face.

"Nah, just kidding," he said.

Moments later, Miller donned an OSU hat as camera flashes lit up the stage.

10 Years Ago — 2015

Proponents of an early signing period in college football would have to wait at least another year for it to be enacted.

The Conference Commissioners Association tabled a proposal in June that would have brought an early signing period – in this case, three days in mid-December – to college football. Football recruits could sign only in February, making it one of four NCAA

sanctioned sports (along with men's and women's soccer as well as water polo) to not utilize an early signing period.

"There was support in the room to move forward," Mid-American Conference commissioner Jon Steinbrecher told ESPN.com. "I think we all took a collective deep breath, took a step back and said, 'Would we be wise to try and do this from a bigger-picture type of thing, as opposed to a piecemeal, one bit at a time?'"

"There was recognition to sync up this issue with other recruiting related issues that will be examined by the football oversight committee."

Five Years Ago — 2020

Ohio State had been widely considered the favorite to land a commitment from Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett four-star cornerback Jordan Hancock until he took an unofficial visit to Clemson in early March and pledged his services to the Tigers just a few days later.

The Buckeyes had maintained contact with Hancock in the meantime, though, and that persistence may have paid off when he decommitted from Clemson on July 14.

Hancock admittedly grew up rooting for Ohio State and even had a video game controller and blanket with the Buckeyes' logo in his bedroom. Those close to him believed his commitment to the program was inevitable because of that, with a planned unofficial visit in the spring expected to seal the deal. But things quickly changed during the trip to Clemson, and Hancock cited the campus' proximity to his hometown and the overall focus on faith as the reasons that he picked the Tigers.

One Year Ago — 2024

Ohio State continued its success in the 2025 recruiting cycle with a commitment from Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph's four-star running back Bo Jackson on June 4, the first at the position to commit to the Buckeyes in the class. His announcement came soon after he finished his official visit to the campus.

"I came down here with an open mind," Jackson said after he attended the last one-day camp the Buckeyes held in June on the 17th. "I didn't know if I was going to commit. Then I got here, and I felt a family atmosphere with the players and the coaches."

Jackson was the No. 81 overall prospect in the class and the fifth-best running back, and his commitment came after a prolonged process in which he was long favored to land in Columbus.

Jackson was initially recruited by former running backs coach Tony Alford, who had since left for the same position at Michigan, but when Carlos Locklyn took over in Columbus, he continued to go after the in-state prospect.

ASK AN ANALYST

With Garrick Hodge of Eleven Warriors

Ohio State hosted the top quarterback in the 2027 class, Baton Rouge (La.) Dunham School five-star Elijah Haven (6-5, 215), on a visit recently, and he attended a one-day camp at OSU. With Huntington Beach, Calif., four-star quarterback Brady Edmunds (6-5, 215) already committed in the class, what is the Buckeyes' plan at the position?

"Well, they hosted a lot more than just Haven, as more than a dozen intriguing 2027 QB prospects worked out at OSU over the past month. In short, I'm not even sure they know yet what their plan is at the position. Brady Edmunds has all the tools in the world and the right attitude you want an ambassador of the program to have, and his work with the Nationwide Children's Hospital definitely makes you want to root for him. But I think the OSU staff will monitor how he and other quarterbacks develop over the next year, and I wouldn't rule out the Buckeyes eventually taking two quarterbacks if they feel the need to."

There are always late bloomers in every recruiting

class who receive late offers at recruiting camps. Who were the 2026 prospects at Ohio State's camps in June to keep an eye out for?

"It wasn't a great camp circuit for 2026 prospects, frankly. There wasn't a Bodpegn Miller or Jake Cook type of story this time around. But if you had to pick one, Fort Wayne (Ind.) Northrop three-star wide receiver Jerquaden Guilford (6-2, 190) put on a nice show in the last camp of the summer. It's kind of cheating for an answer because he already had an offer, but you still know Brian Hartline was evaluating him ahead of his official visit to see if it would be worth taking a fifth wide receiver in 2026."

Ohio State gained a commitment from Gardena (Calif.) Juniper Serra four-star defensive end Khary Wilder (6-4, 260) recently. Have you been able to see him play? What do you make of him as a prospect?

"I have not seen him play in person, but I think he's going to be a high climber in the rankings, especially after winning the MVP of the Rivals five-star camp on June 24. I think he's

a guy who could play edge or inside, but right now I like him more as an edge rusher."

Matt Guerrieri has already had a successful 2026 recruiting cycle with Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic five-star safety Blaine Bradford (6-1, 207) and Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School four-star safety Simeon Caldwell (6-3, 185) committed, but he also has Ohio State as a finalist for Flowood (Miss.) Hartfield Academy five-star safety Bralan Womack (6-0, 195). What kind of insight can you give on his recruitment, and what would he add to the field for OSU?

"He doesn't commit until late August, so a lot can change between now and then, but I like where this is trending so far. If he ends up in scarlet and gray, he's a true game-changing safety who would vie for playing time on day one, same as Blaine Bradford. There is a non-zero chance two of OSU's starting safeties next season are true freshmen, which would be pretty wild."

sidered one of the top signal-callers in his class.

Lawrence still has a long way to go in his recruitment as a rising high school sophomore, but he already has an idea of where the Buckeyes stand in the process.

"Ohio State is definitely one of our top schools," Lawrence told BSB. "It's been one of our top schools for a while now. So as we are narrowing down our schools, they're definitely one of the schools to look out for."

"The quarterback history is definitely rich. It's been there for the past six or seven years. They really focus on development. This is a place that can help me develop and be ready for the next level."

Lawrence said there's one major example of a recent Ohio State quarterback whom he tries to model his game after who has already gone on to have success at the NFL level after becoming a high draft selection with the Buckeyes.

"My favorite quarterback right now is C.J. Stroud," Lawrence said. "Watching his story and how he came up, coming to Ohio State and how he did here, it's definitely one of my favorite stories, and he's one of my favorite quarterbacks to look up to. Also Patrick Mahomes, and one of my favorite college quarterbacks from last season, Cam Ward."

Lawrence has been in touch with former Ohio State wide receiver Terry McLaurin, who has been able to give the young quarterback an idea of what it would be like to be a Buckeye, and everything he heard from the current Washington Commander were things Lawrence liked to hear.

"I recently talked to Terry McLaurin, and stories that he's told me make this seem like a great place," Lawrence said. "There's great coaches, great staff around, and like I said, they're focused on development."

Fessler is in his first season in his new position, but Lawrence has liked the conversations and tips he's gotten from him.

"(Fessler) is definitely a tough coach," Lawrence said. "I can tell they're going to get a lot out of me if I were to come here."

2027 Perez Earns Dream OSU Offer

At the third one-day recruiting camp that Ohio State held on June 10, Columbus Academy four-star defensive lineman Reinaldo Perez (6-5, 245) went in hoping to show Johnson that he has what it takes to be a Buckeye.

Perez came out of the camp mostly pleased with what he put onto the field, but also with some things he thinks he can work on moving forward.

"I feel like it went all right," Perez told BSB. "There's definitely some stuff I could work on. There's always room for improvement. But overall, my footwork, my speed in the drills and the one-on-ones I feel like went pretty well. I feel like I need to work more on my hands. There's improvement (needed) there, but other than that, I thought it went pretty well."

Perez didn't have an offer from Ohio State at the time of the interview, but being from Columbus, he said an offer from the Buckeyes – whom he grew up rooting for – would mean a lot to him.

"It would be an honor," Perez said. "Growing up and watching the Buckeyes play against Michigan, winning all the national championships that they've won, I'd be honored to receive an offer from them. Being a hometown kid from Columbus, being able to get an offer from the hometown school, that's really big. It's a dream."

That dream finally came true for Perez after attending four of the one-day recruiting camps, getting a phone call from Johnson on June 19.

Perez has been to campus a few times now, taking a visit during spring practices and making it to the camps this summer, and getting to know Johnson and being able to learn from the DL coach has been an experience he has appreciated.

"It's a great experience. It's one of a kind," Perez said. "He's the best at what he does, so learning from him, you get to learn a lot of things. I'm absorbing it like a sponge and it really helps with my skills."

Perez said he has some other visits in the works at this point and will be getting to other schools during the summer months. He visited Florida on June 21.

He is the No. 182 player in the country, the No. 21 defensive lineman and the No. 4 player in the state of Ohio.

OSU Offers Jeremiah Smith's Brother

Ohio State's busy month of camps, as mentioned previously, concluded on June 17, and the session ended – as always – with the school handing out some offers to some happy campers.

The most notable scholarship given out after the camp was to Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna three-star 2027 safety/wide receiver Angelo Smith (5-10, 160), whose high school and last name might be familiar to Buckeye fans as he is the younger brother of star sophomore wideout Jeremiah Smith.

Angelo has been a frequent visitor to his older brother's school, also participating in the Buckeyes' third camp of the month on June 10. He was joined by Jeremiah on the field that day, and the two brothers played catch after the session.

Smith did not have a composite ranking by 247Sports before the Buckeyes offered him, but the scholarship seemed to give him some extra exposure. He is now rated a three-star safety and No. 384 player in the country, No. 37 safety and No. 48 player out of Florida. He holds just two offers other than the Buckeyes, getting one from his home state Miami Hurricanes as well as Toledo.

Angelo's recruitment has yet to come close to the hype his older brother received coming out of Chaminade-Madonna, but he still believes he can eclipse his brother's stardom and talents when he gets to the collegiate level.

"I feel like I'm going to be a better player than him, I know that," he told Eleven Warriors. "I play both sides of the ball. I'm definitely a game-changer."

Smith is not the only legacy Buckeye to receive an offer this offseason. Ohio State also sent an offer on May 9 to Philadelphia St. Joseph's 2028 wide receiver Jett Harrison (6-1, 175), the younger brother of former Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- The Buckeyes missed out on Princeton (N.J.) Hun School four-star defensive end Luke Waffle (6-6, 245), who chose USC over OSU on June 19. It was predicted by On3's Steve Wiltfong the day before his commitment that he would land with Ohio State, but after Wiltfong reported there was a bidding war between the two programs for Waffle, the prospect changed his tune and landed in Southern California.

- There are two recruits with exact commitment dates already scheduled before the next time BSB goes to press for the annual Football Preview issue. Ruffin is set to choose between Ohio State and LSU on July 4. Cooper will decide between Alabama, Auburn, Florida State, Georgia, Miami, Ohio State and Penn State on July 12.

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Ohio State Adds German Guard Grujicic

The Ohio State basketball team earned a commitment on June 3 from 18-year-old German guard Mathieu Grujicic, a move that likely finalized its roster for the 2025-26 season.

COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

Grujicic, who was born in France but raised in Berlin, Germany, arrives at Ohio State with some notable international professional basketball experience already under his belt. He spent most of last season playing for FC Barcelona's U18 team, averaging 13.6 points, 3.5 assists and 2.7 rebounds per game while shooting over 40 percent from three. But the guard also found his way onto Barcelona's senior team this past spring at just 17 years old, becoming one of the youngest players ever to score in a EuroLeague game.

In addition to his professional basketball experience in Europe, Grujicic has experienced success at a number of developmental camps and tournaments. In 2024, he was named MVP of the Adidas Next Generation Tournament, NBA Basketball Camp, the U18 Spain Domestic Championship and the Catalan Championships.

Grujicic will now look to bring that success to Columbus on an Ohio State team that was in desperate need of a more sizable wing for the upcoming season, a role that had been successfully filled in a starting capacity the last two seasons by Jamison Battle and Micah Parrish. When asked during a June 18 media availability about what Grujicic brings to the table, Ohio State coach Jake Diebler said that his 6-6, 205-pound freshman gives the team some flexibility along the perimeter due to his size and other skills.

er skills.

"Mathieu, he provides real positional size and perimeter versatility," Diebler said. "We felt like we needed to add more size on the perimeter. He has a high basketball IQ. He can dribble, pass and shoot. He reads the game at a high level. He has a mature pace to his game that you don't see in a lot of young players. That was evident on film. But I'm really excited about him."

Grujicic was the second guard in as many days to be added to the roster after the Buckeyes signed Milwaukee Whitnall guard Myles Herro on June 2. They add to a Buckeyes' backcourt this season that features returning starters Bruce Thornton and John Mobley Jr. as well as reserves Taison Chatman and Gabe Cupps, who are both coming off season-ending lower-body injuries.

Diebler Discusses Roster Construction Strategy

Diebler's June 18 press conference – his first media availability since the team's first-round loss to Iowa in the Big Ten tournament – also allowed him a chance to offer his first public comments on the additions made to the team this offseason, as well as the strategy he and his staff followed to build out the 2025-26 roster.

The Buckeye coach revealed that his first order of business this spring was to retain the core contributors from last year's roster, a group that he said included 2024-25 starters Thornton, Mobley and forward Devin Royal as well as reserves Colin White, Ivan Njegovan and the injured Chatman. After each of those players committed to the Buckeyes for at least another year, Diebler said the Buckeyes then looked outward to the transfer portal, where – unlike last year – they worked to add experienced and proven players rather than younger players with higher upsides.

This was especially prevalent in the frontcourt, where Diebler said they looked to add not only experience but more size.

"We're going to be bigger at the three, four and five positions," Diebler said. "That was important, because rebounding was an issue for us last year, so we wanted to address that. But we also wanted to raise our collective basketball IQ. I think the experience certainly plays a role in it, but those were things we were targeting, and I feel like we did really well with that."

Perhaps the most obvious example of the Buckeyes' transfer-portal strategy is the additions of veteran big men Brandon Noel and Christoph Tilly. The former mid-major players not only enter the program as physical big men but as elder statesmen in college basketball, having played a combined 183 games with 149 starts in their first three seasons.

"Both of those guys have played a lot of college basketball, and I get they didn't play a lot of Big Ten basketball, but they've both been well-coached," Diebler said of the two frontcourt additions. "You could see on film an understanding, a basketball IQ, that I think will help the transition from their level to this level. Combine that basketball IQ with their skill level – being able to not only make shots, but pass, make decisions, dribble – that combination is going to help that transition for them. We need them to be impactful."

Regardless of size or skill level, Diebler said that Ohio State ultimately most valued bringing in high-character young men who possess a team-first mentality, which he thinks they have been able to do with the seven additions made.

"We were really intentional about who we invited in, because as a program, we value chemistry. I think it impacts winning in a major way," Diebler said. "So we wanted to get like-minded people here, guys who are ultra-competitive. Boom, you have that. Check that box."

"Ultimately, we're building a roster and a chemistry where Ohio State matters. That matters to me. We have a saying right now in our program, 'Winning over everything,' and they're reminded every time they work out of that. That's a mentality for us that our guys have bought into so far. It won't always be easy to keep that mentality, but we're building a foundation for that. Chemistry is going to play a huge role."

Diebler Provides Updates On Chatman, Ojjanwuna

In order to build team chemistry, Ohio State will need to stay healthy, and according to Diebler, the Buckeyes are on the right track toward doing so this offseason.

He said during the press conference that the team is in great health entering the summer, and that was evident in the practice made available to the media when only Grujicic, White and Baylor transfer center Josh Ojjanwuna were not participating. Grujicic's absence was due to his international visa not being finalized yet.

One notable Buckeye who was back on the court was Chatman, who, after missing all of last season with a torn ACL in his left knee, was a full participant in the team's intense drill period. The highly touted four-

star prospect was not wearing a knee brace, and according to his head coach, he hasn't been practicing like a player coming off a serious season-ending injury.

"I've been really impressed with his commitment to working and getting better and getting ready for our summer training sessions," Diebler said. "He's not behind. He's not apprehensive. He's out there. He's in the mix. He's playing hard. He's being aggressive. So if you walked into the gym and you watched, you wouldn't see a guy out there and say, 'Man, he looks like a guy coming off an injury.'"

Chatman, who has dealt with knee injuries dating back to his time in Minneapolis at Totonno-Grace, played in 17 games in his freshman season, totaling 17 points, eight rebounds and six assists in that span.

As for the two injured players who were not practicing, Diebler did not offer an update on White – who has been seen wearing a boot on his left foot throughout the offseason – but he did say that Ojjanwuna is progressing well in his recovery.

"No updates as far as the end game (of his recovery), but I think he's working really, really hard," Diebler said. "We have an unbelievable (medical) team, and he's become very good friends with them. I think everything is progressing well. We'll get a better feel going into the fall of what a timeline looks like exactly, but there's been no indication of hiccups or anything so far."

Ojjanwuna, who committed to the Buckeyes on May 7 after averaging 5.3 points and 4.2 rebounds per game in three seasons at Baylor, has been out of commission since suffering a torn ACL in his left knee during a game in February. He told The Columbus Dispatch when he committed that his recovery could take 9-12 months with nine months being his most likely return date, meaning he could be set to return at the beginning of November.

'Vet Week' A Positive For Buckeyes

Since becoming head coach of the Buckeyes, Diebler has placed a priority on embracing the "brotherhood" at Ohio State, specifically when it comes to interacting with the team's former players. Those efforts were put into practice the week of June 16 when the program held their annual "Vet Week," bringing back several notable former Buckeyes to participate in team drills, compete in scrimmages and bond with the current players off the court.

It was a star-studded affair all week on campus, with former Buckeye stars such as Aaron Craft, D'Angelo Russell, E.J. Liddell, Greg Oden and Scoonie Penn all returning to work out with the new-look OSU squad. According to Diebler, having the opportunity to bring back some of the more successful Ohio State players in program history was a big deal for his team, especially when it came to the type of advice the former players were giving out to the new wave of Buckeyes.

"My favorite moments during these last couple days are when I see D'Angelo Russell grab Bruce Thornton or John Mobley and



Jake Diebler



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put his arm around and talk about leadership, or Scoonie Penn talking through ball screen stuff," Diebler said. "Then you've got Greg Oden working with Ivan (Njegovan). That one-on-one, former player to current player interaction is my favorite part. And we had a ton of that the last couple days. We had a ton of it on the court. We had some of it in the weight room. We had some of it off the court at dinner. I'm so thankful for our former players, and how much they care and love this program and their investment in our current guys."

Diebler also talked about the type of feedback he received from the former players about the team and program, saying that many of the former Buckeyes – including the 10-year NBA veteran Russell – pointed to the high energy and intensity they practiced with as something that impressed them during the week.

"It's hard, because it's June and you don't want to overvalue a couple-day period. But the feedback we got from our former players was that there's a vibe, there's an energy, there's a joy, there's a toughness, a work ethic," Diebler said. "D'Angelo Russell told me twice in the (scrimmage), 'Man, your guys are going hard.' And that's important. That matters to me. You want to be the hardest playing team, the toughest team out there. So for a guy like D'Angelo to say that – I didn't ask him that, he said that – that made me really excited."

Jones Requests Release From Ohio State

Richmond Heights, Ohio, four-star shooting guard Dorian Jones (6-4, 160) officially reopened his recruitment after he requested his release from Ohio State on June 4. The news came just five days after he announced that he would no longer be enrolling at Ohio State for the 2025-26 season and would instead join a junior college or high school preparatory school.

"As I reflect on my development, this next year is an opportunity for me to grow more prior to college," Jones said in a since-deleted Instagram post on May 30. "I won't be enrolling at Ohio State this year but I look forward to continuing our relationship."

Jones' decision to pursue options other than Ohio State was due to academic eligibility issues, according to multiple reports. He could have the opportunity to improve his academic standing at a postgraduate prep school while also further developing his on-court skills. But regardless, his future no longer appears to include the Buckeyes, who have quickly pivoted with the additions of Grujicic and Herro to the 2025 class.

Jones is the nation's No. 117 overall player, No. 20 shooting guard and No. 1 player out of Ohio.

Carmen's Crew Back In TBT To Defend Title

Ohio State's alumni team, Carmen's Crew, announced on June 18 that it would be returning to The Basketball Tournament this summer to defend its title and once again take home the \$1 million prize. The team will play in TBT's Indianapolis Region and features eight players from last year's 2024 championship squad. Just four of the 11 players on the roster are former Buckeyes, the fewest in the team's eight-year history.

Headlining the quartet of former Buck-

eyes is three-time All-Big Ten forward William Buford, who played at Ohio State from 2008-12 and is making his sixth appearance in the tournament. He did not play last season but was a part of the 2019 championship team. The other three Buckeyes on the roster are Trevor Thompson, Kaleb Wesson and Keyshaun Woods, who have each played for Carmen's Crew before. Wesson and Woods were on the 2024 squad, with Wesson scoring the 12th-most points in the tournament at 11.0 points per game.

One notable former Buckeye who is missing from this year's roster is two-time consensus All-America forward Jared Sullinger, who has spent the last several years coaching, managing or playing for the alumni team. Sullinger, who averaged 11.7 points, 8.0 rebounds and 2.0 assists per game in last year's tournament on his way to becoming tournament MVP, is competing professionally in Puerto Rico this summer for Cangrejeros de Santurce, which plays in the Baloncesto Superior Nacional league.

The seven non-Ohio State players on the roster include Ohio natives Jeff Gibbs (Ottawa, 1998-02), Jamel Morris (Fairmont State, 2014-16) and Scott Thomas (Bowling Green, 2008-12) as well as Buckeye transplants Desonta Bradford (East Tennessee State, 2014-18), Chris Crawford (Memphis, 2010-14), Tevin Glass (East Tennessee State, 2016-17) and Erick Neal (UT-Arlington, 2014-18). Only Crawford was not on last year's team.

Carmen's Crew will once again be led by Leon Rodgers, a Columbus native who played four seasons at Northern Illinois from 1998-02. He is in his third year leading the team.

The Buckeye alumni team, which earned a No. 1 seed in the region, will begin its quest for its third TBT championship in six seasons on July 19 when it takes on No. 8 seed GoTime Green Machine in the first round of the 64-team tournament at Hinkle Fieldhouse.

Changes Coming To Improve Game Flow

The NCAA Playing Rules Oversight

Panel announced on June 10 some changes for the 2025-26 season that will help to enhance the flow of the games for men's basketball.

The most notable change implemented is a coach's challenge. Coaches can challenge calls at any point in a game to review out-of-bounds calls, basket interference/goaltending and whether a secondary defender was in the restricted area. This will be similar to the NBA setup, as teams will have one available challenge per game unless that challenge is successful, which would grant them a second one. Teams also must have a timeout to request an instant replay review challenge.

The NCAA also established what they call "the points of emphasis for officials" for the 2025-26 season. Those include directives to address delay-of-game tactics, limit time spent at the monitor – a common complaint made by those who watch or spend time around the game – improve game administration efficiency and reduce physicality.

Officials can initiate video reviews on basket interference/goaltending and restricted arc plays in the last two minutes of the game and overtime, which they think causes "minimal game interruptions." They can also review for timing mistakes, scoring errors, shot-clock violations, two-point vs. three-point field-goal attempts, flagrant fouls and more at any point. But they cannot review out-of-bounds calls unless it is through a coach's challenge, a tweak that they say will have a "significant impact" on game flow.

The final rule change for next season is the adoption of a "continuation" rule similar to that of the NBA. According to the NCAA, this means "an offensive player who ends his dribble going toward the basket and takes contact from a defensive player is now permitted to pivot or complete the step and finish the field-goal attempt."

The NCAA also announced that there is positive momentum for moving the men's game from halves to quarters. This is a format currently implemented in the women's game, which has four 10-minute quarters as opposed to two 20-minute halves. Because

this will likely require some time to get changed, the NCAA rules committee recommended Division I conferences form a focus group to discuss a potential change to quarters and provide feedback ahead of the next rule-change year.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Ohio State sent out several scholarship offers since BSB last went to press. Headlining that list of offered prospects is Columbus Academy combo guard Jason Singleton (6-4, 175), the son of current Columbus Academy athletic director and former Ohio State forward Jason Singleton. He is the No. 100 player in the country. Also receiving offers this month are 2027 prospects Napa (Calif.) Prolific Prep five-star center Obinna Ezekie Jr. (7-0, 220); Lima (Ohio) Senior point guard Shawn Foster (6-1, 160); Fishers, Ind., four-star 2027 point guard Jason Gardner (6-1, 185); Toledo Central Catholic shooting guard Isaiah Mack-Russell (6-4, 180); Geneva (Ohio) SPIRE Academy five-star power forward Jaylan Mitchell (6-7, 220); and West Chester, Ohio, combo guard Joshua Tyson (6-2, 170).

- Garfield Heights, Ohio, four-star shooting guard and OSU commit Marcus Johnson (6-1, 175) competed at the NBPA Top 100 Camp from June 9-14 in Rock Hill, S.C. The camp offered Johnson and other top recruits a chance to learn from current and former NBA players while also working with former NBA and Division I college coaches. Johnson, the nation's No. 28 overall prospect and No. 3 point guard in the 2026 recruiting class averaged 16.7 points, 4.3 rebounds and 3.0 assists during his games at the camp, according to 247Sports.

- Diebler pointed to the recent House v. NCAA settlement being a positive thing for his program when asked about it on June 18, saying: "The encouraging thing about being at The Ohio State University is that we're going to be on the cutting edge. Once everything's truly settled, I think that's going to mean a great thing for our entire department and certainly for our basketball program."



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Cambridge Misses Out On USA AmeriCup

Sophomore guard Jalon Cambridge came up just short in her quest to represent Team USA at the 2025 AmeriCup.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Bobby Gorbett

The second-year Buckeye was one of 21 collegiate players who competed for a spot on the 2025 AmeriCup team during trials from June 16-19 in Colorado Springs, Colo., but ultimately did not make the final roster.

In her first year at Ohio State, Cambridge lived up to the lofty expectations bestowed upon her as the No. 2-ranked recruit in the class of 2024, according to ESPN's Hoop Gurlz rankings. She averaged 15.4 points, 4.5 rebounds and 3.9 assists in 29 games and

was named the Big Ten Freshman of the Year by media. Cambridge, who also made an appearance at three-time WNBA all-star Kelsey Plum's "Dawg Class" this offseason, ultimately couldn't beat out such other collegiate stars as Oklahoma center Raegan Beers, TCU guard Oliva Miles and Iowa forward Hannah Stuelke for a spot on the roster.

The 2025 AmeriCup was scheduled to take place in Santiago, Chile, from June 28 to July 6 and consists of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Canada, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico and Puerto Rico in addition to the United States.

Former OSU Guard Transfers To Boston College

Former Ohio State guard Kaia Henderson signed with Boston College out of the transfer portal on June 4.

Henderson, who enters Boston College with two years of eligibility remaining, spent three years in Columbus and redshirted last year. The Utica, N.Y., native appeared in 28

games over two seasons for the Buckeyes from 2022-24 and averaged 0.9 points, 0.5 rebounds and 0.3 assists per game.

Henderson entered the portal on May 28 and joins a Boston College squad coming off a mediocre 2024-25 season. The Eagles finished the regular season 16-17, a mark good enough for a bid in the Women's Basketball Invitation Tournament, but they lost in the first round to Villanova.

The Eagles were led in scoring by T'Yana Todd, who signed with Ohio State out of the transfer portal in April. Todd averaged 13.7 points per game last year while shooting 45.9 percent from three-point range, the fourth-best mark in the nation.

OSU In Top Four For Five-Star Guard

Ohio State could be on the way to adding another five-star player to its roster, as 6-2 class of 2026 guard McKenna Woliczko included the Buckeyes on a list of her top four teams. The other finalists on Woliczko's list are Iowa, South Carolina and USC.

In an interview with On3, Woliczko discussed the four teams she is still considering and praised the Buckeyes' coaching staff and culture.

"I loved Ohio State," Woliczko said. "I love all the coaches. I just have a really good relationship with all of them. I feel like I could become a better person, but also a better player. They have great resources to get me to that next level, pro-wise. All their sports are so good – they're a great sports school. Being able to have those resources, whether it's the training room or the weight room, is definitely beneficial. I also really liked their athletic trainer and their strength coach and their mental health coach. I just felt like all of them have the same vibe, so I really liked that."

"I also really liked all the girls. I was able to meet them on the visit as well, and they were all great. I really liked the campus. I mean, it definitely is a really big campus, but that's kind of what you expect with Power 4 schools."

Woliczko, a native of San Jose, Calif., is in the process of recovering from a torn ACL injury she suffered in January.

Woliczko, who suffered the injury while playing with her high school team, Archbishop Mitty, has gained valuable experience representing her country. In 2023, she played on the U16 National Team at the FIBA Americas in Merida, Mexico, and in 2024, she played on the U17 National Team at the FIBA World Cup in Leon, Mexico.

As part of the gold medal-winning U17 team, Woliczko averaged 12.4 points, 9.6 rebounds and 2.4 assists per game in seven games.

On3 reported Woliczko had taken official visits to both Ohio State and South Carolina and planned to take an official visit to Iowa on Aug. 28.

Sheldon Involved In Late-Game Scuffle

Former Ohio State and current Connecticut Sun guard Jacy Sheldon was ejected after she was involved in a scuffle in the fourth quarter of her team's 88-71 loss to the Indiana Fever on June 17.

The play that led to the incident involving Sheldon and Indiana Fever guard Sophie Cunningham occurred in the final minute of the fourth quarter, when, after coming up with

a steal, Sheldon was dribbling at full speed on a fast break. Cunningham, the only Fever player back on defense on the play, grabbed Sheldon with two hands and pulled her to the ground. Sheldon immediately got back to her feet and attempted to shove Cunningham, but Cunningham responded by grabbing the back of Sheldon's head before the two players were separated by their teammates.

In addition to Sheldon, Cunningham was also ejected for her involvement in the scuffle.

The incident was partially a product of tempers flaring earlier in the game when Sheldon seemed to inadvertently poke Fever star guard Caitlin Clark in the eye. After the foul, which was later upgraded to a flagrant foul after a review, was called on Sheldon, Clark shoved her. Sun guard Marina Mabrey rushed to the scene and knocked Clark to the ground with her own shove before Clark and Mabrey were both issued technical fouls after the play.

Sheldon, who could be seen bickering with Clark throughout the June 17 contest, played for the Buckeyes from 2021-24 and earned All-America honors as a senior. Sheldon and Clark's rivalry dates back to the contests the two played against each other throughout their college careers as Big Ten rivals.

After her collegiate career, Sheldon was drafted in the first round of the 2024 WNBA draft by the Dallas Wings but was traded after her rookie season to the Sun as part of a four-team deal.

Sheldon originally planned to spend her 2024 offseason with the Townsville Fire, a team in Australia's professional women's basketball league, but was unable to play for the Fire after she suffered a lower leg injury. With her winter free, Sheldon agreed to join Ohio State's coaching staff as a player development coach, a role that still allows her to play in the WNBA.

Thierry Scores First WNBA Points

While Sheldon was in the news for her fierce rivalry with Clark, her former Ohio State teammate and current Atlanta Dream forward Taylor Thierry made the news by scoring her first career WNBA points.

Thierry, the third-to-last pick in the 2025 WNBA draft, officially got into the scoring column during her team's 89-56 win over the Washington Mystics on June 15.

The Cleveland native's first basket came late in the fourth quarter of the Dream's blow-out win when she drained a contested three-point jumper to put the Dream up 89-54. Thierry took a two-point shot 41 seconds later but missed that attempt and the Dream settled for a 33-point victory.

In addition to scoring her first points for the Dream, Thierry also grabbed her first rebound before time expired to finish the game with three points and one rebound in a career-high three minutes of playing time.

Thierry, who played for the Buckeyes from 2021-25, earned All-Big Ten second-team honors as a sophomore and junior and was an All-Big Ten honorable mention as a senior.

Despite averaging over 10 points per game in each of her last three seasons with the Buckeyes, Thierry was more known for her defensive prowess in Columbus. Thierry recorded 234 steals over her four-year career, the 10th-highest total in program history.

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Harbaugh Among 48 Added To Weiss Lawsuit

Former Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh, former Michigan president Santa Ono and current athletic director Warde Manuel were among 48 people added to a lawsuit against former assistant coach Matt Weiss and the university that accuses Weiss of hacking into computer accounts of college athletes across the country to look for intimate photos.

BIG TEN NOTES Cameron Moone

Attorneys now allege that Harbaugh and the others knew that Weiss was viewing private information in December 2022 but was still allowed to be on the sideline as co-offensive coordinator in the team's College Football Playoff game against TCU on Dec. 31, 2022.

"The university's delay in taking meaningful protective action until after a high-stakes game sends a clear message: Student welfare was secondary," said Parker Stinar, an attorney in a class-action lawsuit arising from a criminal investigation of Weiss.



Jim Harbaugh

The lawsuit says that a staff member witnessed Weiss viewing private information around Dec. 21, 2022, at Schembechler Hall and reported it before the playoff game, only for Weiss to still be allowed to coach for the CFP game. He was fired a few weeks later in January 2023 during an investigation into the report.

The plaintiffs are also accusing the university of hiding Weiss' identification to students during the initial police investigation.

When asked if he was aware of Weiss' computer crimes while he was at Michigan during the NFL's annual spring meetings, Harbaugh said he and the university found out after the TCU game and called the allegations shocking. As BSB went to press, Harbaugh had yet to offer a public comment since being added to the lawsuit.

"Had Harbaugh implemented basic oversight of his staff, plaintiffs and the class would have been protected against predators such as Weiss," the lawsuit says.

Weiss has been charged with identity theft and unauthorized computer access from 2015 to 2023. The indictment says he was able to gain access to social media accounts, email and cloud storage of more than 2,000 college athletes as well as more than 1,300 alumni or students across the country with women being his primary target. He has pleaded not guilty to these charges.

Ono Rejected By Florida

Sticking with Michigan, Ono was rejected in his bid to become president at the University of Florida by the Florida Board of Governors on June 3, becoming the first

incoming president to be rejected by the university.

Ono's rejection was based on his support of diversity, equity and inclusion protocols in Ann Arbor, Mich., with the board voting 10-6 to turn down Ono in a recent backlash toward left-leaning ideologies within the state government.

The former Michigan president's proposed contract included several ideological requirements, such as how well Ono limited and stopped programs like DEI at the university, his compliance with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' Office of Government Efficiency and his ability to appoint other university officials and deans who are "firmly aligned" with Florida's political approach.

Prominent conservative leadership in and around the state, such as Florida Republican U.S. Reps. Byron Donalds, Greg Steube and Jimmy Patronis raised concerns over Ono's leadership at Michigan regarding his treatment of pro-Palestinian protests on campus as well as climate change efforts at the school.

Florida will now have to restart its search to replace former president Ben Sasse, who resigned in 2024 after his wife was diagnosed with epilepsy, while interim president Kent Fuchs will continue to hold the position.

As for Ono, who has also served as president of the University of British Columbia and the University of Cincinnati, he had yet to find a new leadership role in education. He officially resigned from the Michigan faculty on June 20.

B1G Hoops Lead Way In NBA Draft

The Big Ten reigned supreme in the 2025 NBA draft held on June 25-26 at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, N.Y., having a conference-leading eight selections in the first round and extending a streak of at least one selection from the conference for the 50th consecutive draft.

Three of the top 13 selections hailed from the Big Ten, with the Rutgers freshman duo of guard Dylan Harper (No. 2, San Antonio Spurs) and forward Ace Bailey (No. 5, Utah Jazz) as well as Maryland freshman center Derik Queen (No. 13, Atlanta Hawks) being picked. Queen was traded to the New Orleans Pelicans during the draft, which moved up 10 spots to grab the reigning Big Ten Freshman of the Year.

From picks No. 20-30, the Big Ten had an impressive five draftees. Illinois had back-to-back picks with guard Kasparas Jakucionis going No. 20 to the Miami Heat and forward Will Riley being selected one pick later by the Utah Jazz. Four spots later, standout Michigan State freshman guard Jase Richardson – son of 13-year NBA veteran Jason Richardson – heard his name called by the Orlando Magic.

Michigan forward/center Danny Wolf was selected No. 27 overall by the Brook-

lyn Nets before Penn State forward Yanic Konan Niederhauser (No. 30, Los Angeles Clippers) closed out the first round. Niederhauser was the first-ever Nittany Lion taken in the first round of the NBA draft.

The Big Ten had two more selections in the second round, with Northwestern guard Brooks Barnhizer going No. 44 to the reigning NBA champion Oklahoma City Thunder and Wisconsin guard John Tonje going No. 53 to the Utah Jazz.

After going undrafted, Michigan center Vlad Goldin signed a two-way contract with the Miami Heat while Nebraska guard Brice Williams signed with the Detroit Pistons. Minnesota forward Dawson Garcia, who attempted to get another year of eligibility from the NCAA but was denied in April, joined Williams as an UDFA in Detroit.

Wisconsin Sues Miami For Tampering

With college football beginning to resemble more of a free-agency market than a true transfer portal, the University of Wisconsin and its name, image and likeness collective filed a joint lawsuit on June 20 against Miami (Fla.) alleging that the Hurricane football program lured a Badger away from his former school.

In a rare instance of tampering allegations reaching the courtroom, the VC Connect collective and Wisconsin argue in a 23-page lawsuit that "Student-Athlete A" was induced to enter the transfer portal and commit to Miami days after agreeing to a large NIL deal with the Badgers. The student-athlete referred to anonymously is former Badger cornerback Xavier Lucas, who entered the transfer portal in December 2024 despite the program refusing to enter Lucas into the transfer database within two business days of the player's request.

The lawsuit mainly argues that NIL rights are "rendered meaningless if third parties are allowed to induce student-athletes to abandon their contractual commitments" and that the abandonment of the NIL contract by the unnamed student-athlete caused "substantial monetary and reputational harm." The filing also seeks unspecified monetary damages and "a declaration that Miami's conduct directed towards Student-Athlete A constituted tampering."

Lucas' attorney, Daren Heitner, said that his client is still planning to attend Miami and play football. He appeared in 11 games as a freshman for the Badgers last year, totaling 18 tackles (one for loss), two pass breakups, an interception and one-half sack.

Bielema Comments On Transfer Of Running Back

During a June 25 episode of Urban Meyer's "The Triple Option Podcast," Illinois head coach Bret Bielema raised eyebrows over his comments regarding the abrupt transfer of last year's starting Illini running back Josh McCray to Georgia.

"We did lose a guy to Georgia," Bielema said. "Somehow he found his way into the portal and 12 hours after being in the portal he was on a flight to Georgia. I don't

know how that happened, but it's crazy. I wish Josh all the best. He took advantage of that opportunity."

Bielema's comments on his former player were interpreted as implying tampering, but the Illini coach quickly refuted that idea on his Twitter account on June 26, saying: "He actually entered the portal on (April 18) at 12:08 p.m., which we helped him do and guided him on the process moving forward. Appreciate your time and inaccurate information. He is a great young man and at a great place with great people. Don't make something of nothing."

Still, the timing of McCray's transfer is notable, as the former Illini running back committed to the Bulldogs just two days after entering the transfer portal on April 18. Bielema said during the spring that he knew McCray wanted to leave Illinois for his final season, so he wasn't surprised when he decided to leave.

"It's been a four-year conversation," Bielema told 247Sports. "Josh is a kid we're incredibly proud of. ...Josh came in (after the team's bowl game) and expressed his interest in getting in the portal. ...I know a lot of people have opinions on it, but I wasn't shocked at (his decision to transfer). We've prepared for that moment."

With McCray gone, Bielema's Illini program – which won 10 games for just the fifth time in school history last season – will rely on second- and third-year backs Aidan Laughery and Kaden Feagin in the backfield in 2025.

Bruins Fall In Second Round of CWS

As the lone Big Ten school to reach the College World Series in 2025, UCLA fell to LSU and Arkansas 9-5 and 7-3, respectively, in the second round of the tournament on June 17 to end its successful season.

Having entered the CWS as the No. 15 seed with a Big Ten tournament runner-up accolade, the Bruins marched through the NCAA Regionals and Super Regionals before matching up against the Tigers in Omaha, Neb. In what was a two-day long affair due to the June 16 game being suspended after three innings because of weather, LSU held a 5-3 lead heading into the resumption of play the next day. The Tigers, who had trailed 3-0 after the first inning, outscored UCLA 4-2 over the final six innings en route to an eventual College World Series championship win over Coastal Carolina.

The do-or-die elimination game against Arkansas was never in control for UCLA, which found itself trailing 7-0 after eight innings before adding on three runs in the top of the ninth with the game out of reach. Despite the loss, UCLA finished the season with an impressive 48-18 record, earning the fifth-most wins in program history and first College World Series appearance since 2013.

With the Bruins' loss, the last Big Ten team to win a College World Series remains Ohio State in 1966.

QBs Should Stay In School In New CFB Era

So much is unknown as we embark on the era of officially paying college athletes, but one thing seems like it's almost a sure bet, given how the spring's NFL draft panned out. A lot of quarterbacks can now make a lot more money by staying in college. If you're going to be the No. 1 pick in the draft, or even a high first-rounder, go ahead and turn pro. Cam Ward's deal has been reported at a guaranteed \$48.8 million over four years after he was picked first overall by the Tennessee Titans.

**EXNER
POINT**
Rich Exner

But far more quarterbacks took a financial hit once they signed their first NFL contracts. Some of them had no choice because their eligibility was up. But others like Quinn Ewers, Jalen Milroe and Shedeur Sanders took pay cuts in turning pro when they still had college eligibility.

Based on various media reports, and these can vary for the college estimates, here's a rundown.

Ewers will make \$971,576 in cash this year after pulling in an estimated \$4.3 million last year at Texas. His replacement at Texas, Arch Manning, reportedly will make \$6.5 million in NIL money this year, plus

whatever he gets from Texas in straight pay. Even if Ewers' time was up at Texas, he certainly could have made a ton transferring elsewhere in college football. Milroe, the former Alabama quarterback, is due to make \$2 million this year, down from about \$2.3 million last year at Alabama, and very likely significantly down from what he would have been worth in college this season.

And then there is Sanders. Estimates say he was paid around \$6.5 million at Colorado last year. The way things are going, he might have been a \$10 million player this year in college. But his rookie contract with the Browns will pay him \$1.3 million. Now, certainly, Milroe (third round), Sanders (fifth round) and Ewers (seventh round) all expected to go much earlier in the draft. But they didn't. And even if they had, they would have had to be first-round picks to rival their potential college pay this season.

As for Will Howard and Dillon Gabriel, they're due about \$1.1 million and \$2 million, respectively, this year as rookies. Their college eligibility was up.

The financial considerations of pro vs. college certainly are changing for players at any position, but it's at quarterback where the big money generally will be spent (though, of course, there are exceptions like Jeremiah Smith). Take former Georgia quarterback Carson Beck, who supposedly will pull in more than \$4 million at the University of Miami (Fla.) this year after toying with the idea of going pro.

This dynamic promises to change the college game. Players will stick around longer, and there will be more transfers. Even before this year's start to paying athletes direct salaries, consider last year – most of the quarterbacks drafted were transfers during their college careers, including Howard, Ewers, Gabriel and Ward. There always have been transfers – think Baker Mayfield, Russell Wilson, Joe Burrow, Cam Newton and more – but it's becoming more common.

What does this mean for Ohio State?

Well, making the right call on a transfer QB certainly paid off for Ohio State a year ago during its championship run. And Justin Fields turned out pretty nicely a few years earlier.

But C.J. Stroud turned out just fine as a recruited QB who won the job.

My early take is that this changing landscape won't impact the big-time schools so much in finding the quarterback they want – be it through recruiting or “free agency. But this will increase the competition during the season as more schools like Indiana will have the ability to go out and find a veteran to fill a needed hole.

Let's give this a couple of years to see how the trends develop.

Buckeye Coaches

Another change we're going to be getting used to with college football – when it comes to records – is that some teams will play 12 games, many will play 13 but others may

play 16, as Ohio State did a year ago. The 16-game season, for example, boosted Ryan Day's win total by 14 as he quickly closes in on the 100-win milestone. Day is now 70-10, winning 87.5 percent of his games. For comparison, Urban Meyer was 187-32 (85.4 percent), Jim Tressel was 106-22 (82.8 percent), John Cooper was 192-84-6 (69.1 percent), Earle Bruce was 149-84-2 (63.8 percent) and Woody Hayes was 205-61-10 (76.1 percent).

Cakewalks

While Ohio State opens the season with Texas, others will be piling up big numbers against nobodies. Chief among the cream-puff schedulers is Penn State. PSU's first three games are against Nevada, Florida International and Villanova. Penn State's first away game is in October against UCLA.

Oregon has a better schedule than Penn State, but there's no national power nonconference foe. Oregon's nonconference games are against Montana State, Oklahoma State and Oregon State. And like Penn State, all those games are at home. But Michigan, like Ohio State, does have a major nonconference test. Michigan plays at Oklahoma in Week 2, sandwiched between home games against New Mexico and Central Michigan. And USC, after opening up against Missouri State and Georgia Southern, does go to Notre Dame for a midseason road game.

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Candor Comes To Forefront In Reader Favorite Issue

Before I get into this year's Interview issue, I wanted to take a brief look back.

For our Reprint Thursday feature on the BuckeyeSports.com website on June 26, we reprinted interviews from the July 2015 Interview Issue. I was a little startled at how far we have come in those 10 years with the quality of both the interview subjects and the quality of the interviews having improved immensely through the years. I think that as the Interview Issue began to take hold with readers, we began to work much harder on each year's product.

This year we were blessed with two extremely candid subjects – former Buckeye defensive back Tyvis Powell and former quarterback Greg Frey. You can see that Powell will make it in the broadcast field because he is brutally honest while discussing a variety of subjects. Frey's candor is much more personal. He was the starting OSU quarterback during a trying and transitional time for Ohio State football, and you can see that there is some bitterness on his part. But make no mistake about it, Frey provided glue that helped hold the program together as it moved from Earle Bruce to John Cooper. And also make no mistake about the fact that Frey was involved in an almost stunning number of historic games and plays in his time under center for the Buckeyes.

Until you hear him again now that he is back in Ohio as the head football coach at Bowling Green State University, you may have forgotten just how eloquent Heisman Trophy winner Eddie George is. And you may have never realized just how much Ohio State sports history WTVN Radio's Matt McCoy has witnessed in his lengthy tenure as a Buckeye athlete and announcer.

Other interview subjects this year include Brutus Buckeye Emily Hayward, 1960 national basketball champion Dick Furry, Greater Columbus Sports Commission director Linda Logan and longtime OSU hockey equipment manager Tim Adams. And no Interview Issue is complete without the State of the Athletic Department interview with the athletic director, in this case Ross Bjork.

When I speak with BSB subscribers, they frequently tell me that they enjoy my column because, "You are thinking the same thing I am thinking."

I feel a little bit like one of the BSB subscribers with this issue, because in several instances the subjects and I agreed on something or they confirmed something that I was led to believe.

I always believed that Jim O'Brien, who left the basketball program in disgrace, was a good guy and a great X's and O's coach who didn't like recruiting, especially players with – as he might have called them – "posses."

McCoy seems to agree.

"He was a great guy," McCoy said. "He was fun to deal with from a media perspective. It's sad that it ended the way that it did. It would be great to have him come back and get celebrated with (his Final Four) team. Unfortunately, that can't happen. But from a game-coaching standpoint, he was as good as it gets."

I was also always led to believe that the legendary basketball coach Fred Taylor did not like recruiting the same type of player that O'Brien eschewed. Furry confirmed that.

"A lot of people thought that Fred did not recruit very many Black players, but he would recruit anybody who was going to be a good student," Furry said. "He wanted good students. And there were a lot of times early on when there just weren't a whole lot of Black collegiate players who really wanted to play in college and be an academic person. And that's gotten straightened out now to a great deal. But Fred had nothing against the Black boys, other than they had to be students for him."

Taylor obviously was not a racist, with Mel Nowell and Joe Roberts playing big parts in

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

Ohio State's lone national championship in a day when some teams still avoided Black athletes.

Speaking of recruiting, football coach Urban Meyer was rumored to be ruthless in getting rid of players whom he recruited who he later believed would never make it and were tying up a scholarship.

Powell apparently was one of those players. "In 2012, although I went as hard as I could, I had that tough conversation with Coach Meyer at the end of that season, basically where he was like, 'Yeah, I don't know if you are good enough to play here,' " Powell recalled. " 'You might need to look into transferring to Akron or someplace like that. That might be more your speed.' I remember after that conversation, I said, 'I respectfully disagree, and I'm not going anywhere.' "

Powell's story had a happy ending, however – for him, Meyer and Buckeye fans.

"I remember walking the campus, just going over everything I had been through to get to that moment, and to hear him say that to me, it kind of just triggered me," Powell said. "When I got back to campus for those winter workouts, I said, 'I'm going back to the old me.' All my life, I grinded to get to Ohio State, and when I got to Ohio State, it was kind of like I was celebrating the moment. I wasn't doing the same things I did to get there. I lost the hunger. So at that moment, I had to reset my goals, and I had to get back to who I was in high school, and that hunger came back in."

Powell agreed with me on a couple of other things. I was always bewildered by the fact that in the 2015 game that the Buckeyes lost to Michigan State, Ohio State didn't use Ezekiel Elliott more – as apparently was Elliott. He had 12 carries for 33 yards and a score, while J.T. Barrett had 15 carries in the 17-14 loss to the Spartans.

"Absolutely, he should have gotten the ball. 100 percent, yes," Powell said. "It still blows my mind that he didn't get the ball. I didn't even know he wasn't getting the ball until after the game, because I was so locked into what we were doing defensively that I didn't even pay attention to the offense."

In another questionable coaching move, I recall the 2013 Orange Bowl against Clemson, where Sammy Watkins had 16 receptions for 227 yards and two touchdowns. I was screaming to no one in particular, "I don't care how many guys you put on him, but make somebody else beat you."

When Powell was asked about stopping Watkins, he started his response with, "No, we shouldn't have double-teamed him," and I immediately assumed that he was going to disagree with my strategy, but he continued, "We should have put 10 guys on him, that's what we should have done."

There was another coaching decision in that game with Clemson that I have always wondered about, a game the Buckeyes almost won. Ohio State stuck with wounded star quarterback Braxton Miller, apparently thinking that he was the best path to victory. Would they have been better off turning to Kenny Gupton?

"That's a touchy subject for me," Powell said, "because I'm sitting there thinking, 'Oh yeah, we are about to win this Orange Bowl, even though Sammy Watkins went crazy. We are still going to find a way to win this Orange Bowl.' Then you see Braxton has a shoulder injury, and I'll remind you Kenny Gupton had played that season, and he played very well when he came into the game. So, if Kenny goes jogging in the game, it's

not like anybody's like, 'Oh, snap, *this* kid?' No, everybody's hyped up because everybody loves Kenny.

"So, I am still trying to figure out why they let Braxton go back in, and he threw that interception right to that linebacker. I watched that happen, and I said, 'I cannot believe this.' To be honest with you, between that game and the Michigan State game in 2015, it was terrible. Those were bad coaching decisions, and I don't even like to say things like that, but it was, and they can't tell me it wasn't."

Boy, I've run out of space and I haven't even gotten to George, Frey or the others. All I can ask is that you read the interviews. They are really good and a far cry from the ones just 10 years ago. But I have to include a story from McCoy about Bruce, because it was so typically Earle.

"The one that I will never forget was during the 2015 Fiesta Bowl against Notre Dame. Earle and Coach (Urban) Meyer were very close, and Ohio State is kind of dominating Notre Dame, but Notre Dame was coming back in the second half," McCoy recalled. "So, we're watching the game on a big-screen TV at our radio station, because as soon as the game is over, we're going on the air with a postgame show, and he is screaming at the TV, 'They gotta stop throwing the football! They can't stop Zeke (Elliott)! They can't stop Zeke! Run the football!'"

"So, they come out, and they throw the football on two of the three downs or something and have to punt because they didn't complete it. And he stands up – he has that Earle Bruce mad face – and he goes, 'God dammit, I'm calling Urban.' He pulls out his phone. I'm just laughing, and I look at him going through his contacts, and I'm seeing Urban Meyer, and I'm realizing, 'Oh sh—, he's really going to call Urban Meyer.' And I go, 'Coach, you can't call him. He's in the middle of a game. He doesn't have his cell phone. He's not going to answer your call.' And he goes, 'Well, I can leave a message.' I'm like, 'Earle, he's not going to get the message until after the game. Don't call him!'"

"He didn't call him, but he was literally going to do it."

Popular Staffer With Readers Calls It a BSB Career

If I am the face of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, given the hundreds of service organizations and alumni clubs I have come out and addressed through the years, then Dave Breithaupt is certainly the voice of BSB.

He has spoken to literally thousands of you through the years, taking your orders, changing your addresses, helping you access our website or just talking about Ohio State sports. You know him well enough to ask for him by name, and he knows so many of you, even though in most cases, you have never met in person.

Dave is so upbeat and pleasant with the readers that he has earned the moniker, "The Affable Dave Breithaupt," or more simply, "The Affable One." For the readers' part, in exchange for his help they put up with his quirky sense of humor – so quirky that in many cases the readers have no idea what he is talking about. He is so affable, in fact, that I had to try to teach him how to disengage from lengthy reader calls. A simple, "Frank is going to yell at me if I don't get back to work," usually does the trick.

Sadly, readers will no longer be able to chit-chat with Dave, as he recently retired, effective June 2, after 19 years with Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

Dave came to me in 2006, needing a job

for just 90 days. I agreed without an interview, references or a particular job available. He has been here ever since. He ended up involved in many facets of our operation besides customer service, including marketing, editing and archiving.

"Ah, you fell for the old 'just 90-days routine,' " he reminded me and everyone else at a recent retirement party that was part tribute and part roast.

He will now have more time to spend with two of his passions – reading and his beloved dog Wrigley.

Thanks for your many years of loyal service, Dave.

First BSB Editor Passes Away

Jim Wharton, the first editor of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, passed away on June 17 at the age of 81.

I had worked for Jim when I was a part-timer at The Columbus Dispatch, and he came on board here when we started Buckeye Sports Bulletin in 1981. I can honestly say that there would be no Buckeye Sports Bulletin if it weren't for Jim. I knew very little about producing a newspaper – I'm not sure he knew much more – and he jumped right in and we got those early and primitive issues produced, printed and mailed. One of the things that always impressed me was his ability to crank out short, snappy notes about Ohio State sports, unlike the lengthy notes that we frequently have today.

Jim went on to also work for the Newark Advocate, Scarlet & Gray Illustrated, the Portsmouth Daily Times and the Morrow County Sentinel. His true passion was high school sports, and he worked for many years at the Ohio High School Athletic Association, "where everything I touched was about the young student-athletes in our state," he said.

My thanks to Jim for his help in the early going and my condolences to the Wharton family.

Last Chance To Save On Your First-Class Upgrade

BSB is still offering a chance to upgrade your subscription to first-class mail in an envelope for football season at the current price of \$30 or \$40 through football recruiting in February – in advance of the upcoming postal increase on July 13, when upgrade rates will increase to \$35 and \$45 respectively. Just give us a call at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862 to order by credit card. Or you can send your check, money order or credit card information (don't forget your three- or four-digit security code) to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Be sure to mention either the "Football Upgrade" or the "Recruiting Upgrade."

With the current postal situation, which is showing no signs of improving, I am now encouraging even in-state readers who have been having consistent delivery problems to consider the upgrade. This especially includes readers in the Dayton-area and in the Mahoning Valley, which have become chronic delivery problem spots.

As you consider the merits and cost of an upgrade, please take note of a slight, but significant policy change I am making. In the past we have generally sent out replacement issues for missing papers after 10 days. What we have found is that the majority of the time, readers received the original issue before the replacement issue arrived, creating a waste of time and expense. Effective with the August Football Preview Issue, I am extending the waiting period for a replacement to two weeks. Those receiving their paper via first-class mail will continue to receive a replacement issue after just seven days.

If you have any questions, call us at (614) 486-2202.



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