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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Sept. 6, 2025

Best In America



Ohio State Secondary Shuts Down Manning In 14-7 Win Over Texas

SONNY BROCKWAY

HERE COME THE CHAMPS — The Ohio State football team storms the field at Ohio Stadium before beginning the defense of their 2024 national championship in a marquee matchup against Texas. By the time the Buckeyes returned to their locker room, they had knocked off the top-ranked Longhorns, 14-7, with an impressive defensive effort.

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Texas came into Columbus with the No. 1 ranking next to its team name. Arch Manning had all of the headlines as the heir apparent to the throne of top quarterback in college football.

But on Aug. 30, it was Ohio State's secondary that had all of the answers.

In a low-scoring 14-7 matchup between the top-ranked Longhorns and No. 3 Buckeyes, Manning looked completely lost for most of 60 hard-fought minutes.

A lot of that credit goes to Ohio State's secondary, which locked down Texas' speedy pass catchers throughout the game.

After eight months of watching them go up against only the Buckeyes' offense in practices, first-year defensive coordinator Matt Patricia wasn't sure what to expect from his defensive backfield. But the result he got, he couldn't have been more pleased with.

"It was fun to watch them in game speed," Patricia said. "Texas is fast, they can move downfield pretty quick, and to watch our guys run with that sort of speed was really good."

It was likely one of the toughest challenges the Buckeyes will face all season. The Longhorns were the preseason No. 1 in most polls for good reason, and that's due to both the returning talent they have on both sides of the ball, as well as the up-and-coming players they have who project

to be some of the best in the college game.

But Texas receivers DeAndre Moore Jr., Ryan Wingo and Parker Livingstone were no match for junior Jermaine Mathews Jr., senior Davison Igbinosun and redshirt senior Lorenzo Styles Jr.

Igbinosun is the only returning starter of the three cornerbacks, but Mathews and Styles both were a big part of the Buckeyes' run to the national championship last season, and it showed with their coverage being as good as it was.

Mathews said that going against Manning after seeing all of the headlines he was receiving was enough motivation for him.

"That was all the motivation I needed," he said. "The hype they gave him all throughout this offseason was all the motivation I needed all year to get prepared for this game. We've been preparing for the game for a long time, and then we went out there and did what we were supposed to do."

Ohio State starting quarterback Julian Sayin gave some insight after the game about what Manning might have been dealing with. And after months of going against the Buckeye defense in practice, there might be nobody better equipped to talk about what it's like to face the talented unit.

"They're very fast, very physical. Coach

Patricia does a great job of mixing things up and keeping you on your toes as a quarterback. It's very hard to play against them. It's great practice going against our defense, and it makes my job very hard."

The domination of the secondary started from the very first kickoff. Manning seemed to have some trouble shaking off whatever nerves he might have had in his first start on the road, and he completed just four of his first nine passes, which went for just 20 yards.

It seemed that the fact that he had no open receivers might have gotten into his head throughout the game as well. After the Buckeyes took a lead, he started to try to force passes into tighter windows, which didn't go well for the Texas offense for the most part.

That much was obvious when it was late in the third quarter and the Buckeyes were holding on to a 7-0 lead, Manning dropped back and looked for the sophomore receiver Wingo on a corner route to the right side of the field. Wingo didn't have much separation from Mathews at all, but he was the best option for Manning on the second-and-12. Mathews got his head turned around to the

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Buckeye Leaves

No. 3 Ohio State took down No. 1 Texas 14-7 in the season opener on Aug. 30, showing that a national championship hangover isn't going to affect this new roster. Here are some choices from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members and readers from the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum for players who were worthy of receiving Buckeye Leaves.

Sam Cipriani, BSB: Despite a defensive battle in Ohio State's season opener, my Buckeye Leaf is going to Carnell Tate. The junior wideout had just two catches for 49 yards against the Longhorns, but the second was perhaps Ohio State's most important play, and the most explosive offensive play for either team.

On second-and-7, up 7-0 with just over 13 minutes to play in the fourth quarter, Tate burned his defender, and quarterback Julian Sayin found the Chicago native over the top for a 40-yard reception and score. The dagger touchdown put the Buckeyes up 14-0 late in the game, essentially sealing Ohio State's victory over Texas.

Bobby Gorbett, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf is going to Arvell Reese. The sophomore linebacker was a key part of the defense's domination of the Longhorns' offense. Reese totaled nine tackles, the second most on the team. Reese, a first-year starter alongside "Block O" recipient Sonny Styles, was also the only Buckeye to sack Texas quarterback Arch Manning.

Reese's big play came on a third-and-10 the Longhorns ran from their own 47-yard line with just over five minutes left in the first half. Reese's sack forced one of several Longhorn punts.

Greg Wilson, BSB: Junior cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. gets my Buckeye Leaf. Realistically, this could have gone to any one of the Ohio State players in the secondary after the performance they had against Texas and Manning. They held Manning to 17-of-30 passing for just 170 yards and one touchdown very late in the game. Much of his yardage also came late when the Longhorns were desperately trying to come back from a two-score deficit.

Mathews had one of the more

important plays of the game in the secondary in the third quarter when, on a second-and-12, Manning dropped and tried to find wide receiver Ryan Wingo on a corner route to the right side. But when Manning's ball was short, Mathews jumped the route and came up with his and Ohio State's first interception of the season.

He almost forced another when he tipped another Manning pass in the air in the fourth quarter. Styles dove for the ball and had what seemed to be the second pick of the day, but after a long review, it was ruled incomplete. Still, Mathews was a thorn in the side of the Longhorns' offense all day.

Frank Moskowitz, BSB: Joe McGuire.

BSB Subscribers

Tiffin Buck: Carnell Tate.

Terrier Buck: C.J. Hicks for the last defensive play, pressuring the QB on fourth down.

BuckeyeScott: CJ Donaldson gets a Buckeye Leaf for getting some hard-fought rushing yards when needed, including a TD.

John Lanning: The defense was something special after losing so much. To play a new system with a new coordinator was outstanding. Kudos to all with leaves around. I did not expect that quality game.

PeyoteBuck: Tate, Donaldson, Joe McGuire, Mathews Jr. and Sayin for a fine, high-pressure debut against a No. 1 team. The Bucks worked as a team, which is key to winning.

Bob Cody: Buckeye Leaves for Jermaine Mathews (his INT put us on the road to victory), Carnell Tate (great coordination to handle that pass), CJ Donaldson (good first effort, gave us the semblance of a running attack), Julian Sayin (first game and defeating a QB more hyped than him with no turnovers), Matt Patricia (questioned by some, he's better than Knowles - the defense won this game more than any other aspect). Loved seeing Ryan Day giving Lee Corso a Buckeye Leaf along with the helmet.

R1TBDBITL: Matt Patricia for a great defensive game plan.

From The Message Board

In beating top-ranked Texas 14-7 on Aug. 30, redshirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin became the first quarterback since Jim Harbaugh in 1984 to take down the No. 1 team in his first career start. He finished the game 13 of 20 passing for 126 yards and one touchdown. We asked our readers how they would grade Sayin's performance against the Longhorns. Here are some of the responses:

"A-. This grade has a few caveats. I'm giving Sayin some grace because it was his first-ever start against the No. 1 team in the nation and against one of the best defenses in the country. Sayin really did play well, kept the ball out of danger with no turnovers, made on-time and on-target throws and only made a few errors throughout the game. The main mistake was missing a touchdown opportunity to Jeremiah Smith on a go route that ended up being a drop from tight end Max Klare, although it was still a good throw. Overall, he did what he needed to do to get the win."

— **Sam Cipriani, BSB**

"For a first start against the No. 1 team, I give Julian Sayin a B+. No glaring mistakes or turnovers, had several passes dropped and dealt with poor field position in the second half. Onward and upward!"

— **Bob Cody**

"No better than A-, no worse than B+. My perception is that he did almost exactly what the coaches wanted him to do. TV announcers said OSU had three drops in the first half; add those, and he's 16 of 20 or 80 percent. He didn't do everything perfectly, but no turnovers makes me lean toward an A-. Late in the game, he made a smart play by throwing the ball into the ground, when he could have made a 'smarter'

play by trying to run and stay inbounds and keep the clock running. Nitpicking."

— **Terrier Buck**

"I'll go B-. Sayin wasn't asked to do much and didn't make a ton of jaw-dropping throws, but he avoided disaster, and that was good enough for a win."

— **Bobby Gorbett, BSB**

"Kid did well; grade of B+. The stat I like is that he broke a streak whereby a first-time starting QB that went up against the No. 1 team in the country had lost 18 consecutive times. So when asked that on a trivia quiz in the future, remember that the dude who pulled it off was a Buckeye named Sayin!"

— **BuckeyeScott**

"I would give him an A, and I don't know how you could grade him lower. He was routinely backed up in our end, didn't turn the ball over and he wasn't given the full reins of the offense at his disposal. He operated well and was plagued by three drops."

— **Tiffin Buck**

"Sayin did a great job managing the game and the game plan. He will be a very good quarterback. Coach will add new 'stuff' each week as he grows through the season. I'm looking forward to watching him develop over the next few years."

— **John Lanning**

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Buckeyes Outslug No. 1-Ranked Texas

From the flag-raising snafu at the beginning of the game to a potential run-out-the-clock possession that lasted a mere 62 seconds, it would be difficult to describe as picturesque the opening of Ohio State's defense of its national championship.

But once the stars and stripes made their way up the Ohio Stadium flagpole (well after the final notes of the national anthem had been played), the Buckeyes set about slugging it out with preseason No. 1 Texas in a decidedly un-Ryan Day-like contest that wasn't exactly pretty but resulted nonetheless in a 14-7 victory for the defending champs.

Only twice before in Day's previous 80 games as head coach of the Buckeyes had his team scored 14 or fewer points, and those games resulted in soul-crushing defeats – 14-3 to ninth-ranked Missouri in the 2023 Cotton Bowl and 13-10 to archrival Michigan last fall.

This time, however, with a new starting quarterback, revamped defensive line and new coordinators on both sides of the ball, Day and his team utilized a heretofore untested formula that relied on a conservative offensive attack while the defense went toe to toe in the trenches with the Longhorns and their so-called genius of a head coach and a preseason Heisman Trophy favorite at quarterback.

I'm not prepared to overly criticize Texas quarterback Arch Manning, whose head coach Steve Sarkisian seemed reluctant to capitalize on the strengths of his Heisman candidate. Although the Longhorns finished with 336 total yards, with Manning accounting for 208 of that with his arm and his feet, for large stretches of the afternoon Sarkisian's offensive game plan seemed as vanilla as it was during last year's 28-14 loss to the Buckeyes in the College Football Playoff semifinal.

Still, Manning did not look the part of a Heisman Trophy front-runner. He completed 17 of 30 attempts – missing wildly on many of those 13 incompletions – for 170 yards and a touchdown. He also threw an interception and had a second pick erased early in the fourth quarter when replay officials ruled OSU linebacker Sonny Styles trapped the ball off the turf.

Manning just never looked comfortable against the Buckeyes, who took away his deep passing game for much of the afternoon and pressured him just enough to keep him off-rhythm.

Meanwhile, Julian Sayin checked off nearly every box in his starting debut for the Buckeyes. He might not have flashed much pizzazz (only 126 yards) or showcased a howitzer of an arm (his 40-yard touchdown pass to Carnell Tate was a bit underthrown), but he got the job done with a minimum of mistakes.

Sayin wound up completing 13 of 20 attempts, a 65.0-percent completion rate that would have been much better had his receivers not dropped several of his early throws. He also held up well under pressure, committing no turnovers and taking zero sacks while finishing the game with a more-than acceptable 134.4 quarterback rating.

In many ways, it was a similar performance to that of Will Howard in last year's season opener, although the competition was much stronger for Sayin – the No. 1-rated team in the nation opposed to an Akron team on its way to a 4-8 season.

I think it's safe to say that the duo of CJ Donaldson and James Peoples have a bit of a way to go to match the production of TreVeyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins.

Donaldson showed some occasional power such as on his 1-yard touchdown plunge in the second quarter, and he wound up with 67 yards on 19 carries. But the tandem combined

to average only 3.0 yards on 29 combined attempts. Hopefully, we can chalk that up to a Texas defense that finished third in the nation last year in total defense.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Speaking of defense, perhaps the offseason handwringing over swapping out Matt Patricia for Jim Knowles as defensive coordinator was somewhat overblown. Although the Longhorns totaled 336 yards of offense, that was nearly identical to the 341 they had against the Buckeyes in last year's CFP semifinal.

Do you know what else was nearly identical to that game? It was Patricia borrowing a page from Knowles' playbook with Texas trailing 14-7 while facing a fourth-and-5 at mid-field and 1:34 remaining on the fourth-quarter clock.

No one within Buckeye Nation will ever forget Jack Sawyer's scoop-and-score backbreaker that plunged a dagger into the Longhorns last January, but evidently Sarkisian and his offensive staff did. Coming from the same direction as Sawyer when he blew in on Quinn Ewers in the semifinal, OSU defensive end C.J. Hicks applied similar pressure to Manning on the fourth-down play, hurrying the Texas QB enough that he was forced to settle for finding check-down receiver Jack Endries. All-everything safety Caleb Downs was exactly where he was supposed to be and was able to stop Endries well short of the first-down marker.

When Patricia was hired in February as Knowles' replacement, the announcement was met with equal parts derision and crickets from Ohio State fans. Knowles was the architect of the national championship defense that finished first in the country in several categories while Patricia hadn't coached on the college level since spending three years as a graduate assistant at Syracuse in the early 2000s.

I said all spring and summer that if Sayin was good enough for Nick Saban, he would be good enough for me. I have similar thoughts about Patricia. If he was good enough for Bill Belichick, with whom he won three Super Bowls at New England, he's good enough for me.

After the gritty performance against Texas, which included stopping the Longhorns on four of five fourth-down tries accentuated by a third-quarter, goal-line stand inside the 1-yard line, I think maybe Patricia is good enough for the rest of Buckeye Nation, too.

Fun With Numbers

Not very many programs can boast a perfect home record against SEC opponents, but Ohio State is one of the few. The win against Texas gave the Buckeyes a 5-0 all-time record vs. SEC teams in Ohio Stadium. The other victories are 75-0 vs. Vanderbilt in 1933, 19-6 against Kentucky in 1935, a 36-33 barnburner over LSU in 1988 and last year's 42-17 beat-down of Tennessee in the first round of the College Football Playoff.

It's been 40 years since the Buckeyes won a home game against The Associated Press' No. 1 team, and that upset victory also came against a Heisman Trophy favorite. Led by star QB Chuck Long, Iowa entered Ohio Stadium on Nov. 2, 1985, as the top-ranked team in the nation and left with a 22-13 loss. Long, who averaged nearly 275 yards per game that season, threw for only 169 yards against the Buckeyes

and was intercepted four times.

OSU is now 7-10 all-time against No. 1-ranked teams. Coupled with the 41-21 win against Oregon at the Rose Bowl last January in the playoff quarterfinal, the win against Texas means the Buckeyes can claim two victories over top-ranked teams in the same calendar year for the first time in program history.

Texas became the first preseason No. 1 team in 35 years to lose its season opener. Defending national champion Miami (Fla.) lost a 28-21 decision at No. 16 BYU to begin the 1990 season and then dropped a 29-20 decision at No. 6 Notre Dame six weeks later. But the Hurricanes rebounded to finish consensus No. 3 in the season's final rankings after administering a 46-3 whipping to previous No. 3 Texas in the Cotton Bowl.

Sayin became the first major-college quarterback in more than 40 years to engineer an upset of the nation's No. 1-rated team in his first start. You have to go back to 1984 when Michigan scored a 22-14 win against defending national champion and top-ranked Miami (Fla.) with Jim Harbaugh getting his first collegiate start. No word on whether Harbaugh was in possession of the Hurricanes' signs for the game.

Sayin's modest total of 126 passing yards was the lowest total for an OSU starting quarterback in a season opener since Craig Krenzel had only 118 during the 45-21 win against Texas Tech in 2002. Does anyone remember how that season turned out?

The game marked the fourth straight season opener in which an Ohio State player has failed to crack the 100-yard mark in rushing. The last to accomplish that feat was Miyan Williams, who ran for 125 yards and a touch-down on just nine carries during a 45-31 win at Minnesota during the 2021 opener.

When Donaldson scored on a 1-yard run in the second quarter, he became the first Buckeye to cross the goal line wearing jersey No. 12 since Seryn Banks returned Chris Olave's blocked punt for a touchdown during the 62-39 win against Michigan in 2018. Donaldson also became the first OSU offensive player wearing that number to score since Cardale Jones ran 38 yards for a touchdown during a 28-14 win against Minnesota in 2015.

Contrast In Coaches

I mentioned someone's name earlier in this column, someone I hoped I'd never have to mention again for obvious reasons. I've already devoted way too much thought and effort to what can only be described as a cheating scandal, so I plan to relegate that sorry subject to the dustbin of history where it so deservedly belongs.

Yet, I couldn't help notice the obvious contrast between the "Coach Whose Name Shall No Longer Be Mentioned" and former Louisville, Indiana and Northern Illinois head coach Lee Corso, who ended his decades-long run as part of ESPN's "College GameDay" by donning the Brutus headgear one final time, much to the delight of most of the 107,524 in attendance inside Ohio Stadium.

In a snippet posted online before the game, Corso's longtime GameDay partner Kirk Herbstreit asked his colleague a variety of questions until he got to how the 90-year-old former coach would like to be remembered.

Corso, whose speech has been affected since he suffered a stroke in 2009, never missed a beat. "I've tried to live my life by two basic (principles)," he said. "Never prostitute your integrity to get a job or to keep one."

All in all, not a bad philosophy. Too bad too few people seem to be listening.

OHIO STATE

INSIDER

All Starters Available, Jackson Injured

Ohio State was able to take on No. 1 Texas with all of its starters fully healthy, but defensive tackle depth piece Jason Moore missed the game with an injury.

While the Buckeyes had all of their starters healthy to begin the game, redshirt junior defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. left the game with an injury in the third quarter. Although Jackson didn't return to the game, head coach Ryan Day said during his post-game press conference that he didn't anticipate it would be a long-term injury.

Moore had been seen at media availabilities leaving practice with a medical boot on, so it came as no surprise that he wasn't able to play. The Buckeyes' other defensive tackles stepped up in Moore's absence, and despite allowing 166 rushing yards, they conceded only seven points to the Longhorns.

Also listed as out on the injury report were cornerback Brenten "Inky" Jones, tight end Max LeBlanc, quarterback Mason Maggs, running back Anthony Rogers, defensive tackle Maxwell Roy, safety Deshaun Stewart, defensive lineman Ahmed Tounkara and wide receiver Preston Wolfe.

2024 Champs Banner Unveiled

Ohio State's 2024 national championship team was honored ahead of the 2025 team's first game against Texas.

Many of Ohio State's 2024 seniors were in attendance for the Cotton Bowl rematch, including quarterback Will Howard, running back TreVeyon Henderson, offensive

linemen Donovan Jackson and Seth McLaughlin, defensive ends Jack Sawyer and JT Tuimoloau, defensive tackles Ty Hamilton and Tyleik Williams, tight end Gee Scott Jr., linebacker Cody Simon and safety Lathan Ransom. The former Buckeyes were able to witness the unveiling of the 2024 national championship banner inside Ohio Stadium.

Four Frosh Play In Opener

Not many true freshman Buckeyes appeared in the team's win over Texas, which, considering the strength of the opponent, came as no surprise. However, four youngsters did get in for the season opener. Those four were safety Faheem Delane, linebacker Riley Pettijohn, tight end Nate Roberts and cornerback Devin Sanchez.

Each of the four players previously had their black stripes removed, but it was Sanchez who gained the most playing time against Texas. Sanchez, who logged one tackle during the game, apparently earned the trust of his coaching staff because he was on the field at cornerback throughout much of the fourth quarter when the Buckeyes were in a dime package.

"Very impressive," Ohio State cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. said of Sanchez's performance after the game. "He's one of the most ready freshmen I've seen in a while, other than Jeremiah Smith. I think he came in ready to work. He's been hungry since he got here. Whatever chances he's been given, he's taken advantage of them. I'm very happy for Devin, and he has a big career ahead of him."

Hartline Coaching From Box

When Ohio State took the field against Texas, it was missing a familiar face that usually roams the sidelines. Now that offensive coordinator Brian Hartline is calling plays for the Buckeye offense, he decided that it would be best for him to take the game in from the press box.

On Aug. 26, Day revealed that his coordinators, Hartline and defensive coordinator



FILE PHOTO

EYE IN SKY — Receivers coach Brian Hartline was promoted to offensive coordinator, so it was no surprise that his gameday role changed and he was coaching from the press box instead of the sidelines when Ohio State defeated Texas 14-7 on Aug. 30.

Matt Patricia, had put together their plan for the season on where they would be coaching from.

"We've put all that stuff together, and Brian and Matt both feel like they have a good plan. I won't get into exactly where everybody is because we have so many staff here that I'll forget some people," Day said. "But I think we have a good plan. What we did on (Aug. 23) was we went into the stadium and kind of went through a mock game. In that mock game, everything up until when you get in the stadium, we did.

"We were in the locker room, we came

out, we did the pregame warmups, we did quick calls, we went through the game, half-time, finished the game and went through the whole operation of TV timeouts. With a young team, I thought that was important."

In Hartline's first game as the play-caller, Ohio State's offense gained 203 total yards for 14 points and 11 first downs against the Longhorns.

Patricia coached from the sideline against Texas. The defense allowed the Longhorns to gain 336 yards and score seven points in Patricia's first game with the Buckeyes.

Corso Dons Brutus Headgear For Final Pick

Nearly 30 years after "College GameDay" analyst Lee Corso first put on the Brutus Buckeye headgear to choose Ohio State for his first pick on the show, history repeated itself on Aug. 30 when he chose the Buckeyes to win again.

Corso's first pick on Oct. 5, 1996, ended up being correct when the Buckeyes blew out Penn State 38-7, and he was right again this time around.

Corso's record in choosing the 431 games he has picked during his career is 287-144 after he correctly picked one last time.

Because his first pick ever on the show was Ohio State, Corso holds a special connection with the Brutus headgear. In a video posted by the "College GameDay" Twitter account to honor Corso's career, the former Indiana coach can be seen whispering, "I love you," to a Brutus headgear as he patted it.

During Corso's last appearance on the show, Day gifted him with an Ohio State helmet that had 45 Buckeye Leaves, representing the 45 times that Corso picked

Greg Wilson Named BSB Editor

Greg Wilson has been promoted to the position of editor of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz has announced.

"I realized that Greg had been performing the duties of editor, and it was time to recognize his efforts," Moskowitz said. "It is a title he has earned and is not a title that we treat lightly."

In fact, the BSB editor's position had been vacant for some time.

"Greg joins a very short list of BSB editors through the years who have a long history of providing a quality product to our readers and great leadership within the office. In the short time Greg has been editor, he has already demonstrated strong leadership ability."

Wilson started at Buckeye Sports Bulletin as a staff writer and worked his way up to the position of associate editor before his recent promotion.

"I'm extremely appreciative of Frank, Becky and the entire staff at Buckeye Sports Bulletin who gave me a chance two years ago," Wilson said. "My time at BSB has been nothing but enjoyable, and I am thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this publication. I look forward to continuing to provide thorough coverage of Ohio State sports."



2025 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Aug. 30	TEXAS	W, 14-7	FOX	0-1, 14-7 loss to Ohio State
Sept. 6	GRAMBLING	3:30	BTN	1-0, 55-7 win over Langston
Sept. 13	OHIO	7:00	Peacock	0-1, 34-31 loss to Rutgers
Sept. 27	at Washington	TBA	TBA	1-0, 38-21 win over Colorado State
Oct. 4	MINNESOTA	TBA	TBA	1-0, 23-10 win over Buffalo
Oct. 11	at Illinois	TBA	TBA	1-0, 52-3 win over Western Illinois
Oct. 18	at Wisconsin	TBA	TBA	1-0, 17-0 win over Miami (OH)
Nov. 1	PENN STATE	TBA	TBA	1-0, 46-11 win over Nevada
Nov. 8	at Purdue	TBA	TBA	1-0, 31-0 win over Ball State
Nov. 15	UCLA	TBA	TBA	0-1, 43-10 loss to Utah
Nov. 22	RUTGERS	TBA	TBA	1-0, 34-31 win over Ohio
Nov. 29	at Michigan	Noon	FOX	1-0, 34-17 win over New Mexico



FILE PHOTO

GETTING NOTICED — Cornerback Devin Sanchez along with quarterback Julian Sayin (not pictured) is on the Shaun Alexander Freshman of the Year watch list for the award given to the top freshman in the country. Sanchez made a tackle in his debut against Texas on Aug. 30.

the Buckeyes to win on the show before the game against the Longhorns. Corso picked Ohio State more than he did any other team over his analyst career.

“Coach Corso,” Day said when he appeared on “College GameDay.” “On behalf of everybody at Ohio State, I want to thank you for everything you’ve done for college football. So, this helmet right here has your name on it, but it also has a Buckeye leaf for every time you chose Ohio State with the mascot.”

Day also brought one more Buckeye Leaf sticker for the helmet since Corso hadn’t made his pick yet.

“Here’s one more (leaf), right here if you need one later today at noon,” Day said.

Corso jokingly responded to Day with his signature saying, “Not so fast, my friend.”

Former OSU SAF Ransom Lauds Mathews

On “The Joel Klatt Show” with Jenny Taft hosted on Ohio State’s campus Aug. 29, the analysts welcomed special guests Henderson and Ransom.

Ransom, now a member of the Carolina Panthers, was asked which current Ohio State players have been quietly developing behind the starters and could be primed for a breakout season.

“No. 1 that comes to mind, Jermaine Mathews Jr.,” Ransom said. “Someone that’s made a bunch of plays already from the time he’s been in, but a dude that has a huge personality. He’s got a perfect personality for a defensive back.”

Ransom recalled a memory from this past spring camp, saying Mathews left such an impression on him that he would rank him among the best cornerbacks he’s seen during his time with the Buckeyes.

“I went back for spring and the one spring practice I saw (pass breakups), I saw a pick,” he said. “I talked to cornerbacks coach Tim Walton. I said, ‘This might be one of the best corners I’ve seen since I’ve been here,’ and I was here forever.”

In his first game of 2025, Mathews had three tackles and an interception while helping hold Texas to 170 passing yards.

Sayin, Sanchez On Freshman Watch List

Quarterback Julian Sayin and Sanchez were included on the Shaun Alexander Freshman of the Year watch list on Aug. 26.

The award is given yearly to the top freshman in the country. Wide receiver Jeremiah Smith narrowly missed the honor last year.

Sayin made a strong case for himself against Texas, completing 13 of 20 passes for 126 yards, one touchdown and no inter-

ceptions.

Sanchez isn’t expected to start for the Buckeyes this season, but he could make an impact as a depth piece behind projected starters Davison Igbinosun, Mathews and Lorenzo Styles Jr.

Sanchez, a five-star recruit out of North Shore High School in Houston, proved he is ready to play as a true freshman on Aug. 6 when he had his black stripe removed.

In the opener, Sanchez also earned a solid share of playing time and logged a tackle in his first collegiate game.

Witten, Bell Shed Black Stripes

Redshirt freshman Damarion Witten and freshman Phillip Bell became “official” members of the team when the two wide receivers shed their black stripes on Aug. 19 and Aug. 20, respectively.

Witten came to Ohio State as a tight end out of Glenville High School in Cleveland. He was ranked the No. 465 player in the country and the No. 19 player in the state of Ohio as a prospect in the 2024 class.

He quickly made the switch to wide receiver when he got to Columbus but hasn’t been able to carve a role out for himself yet in the ultra-talented room.

Bell was the No. 276 player in the 2025

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

class and the No. 35 wide receiver. He arrived on campus in the spring and was able to find the end zone in a three-catch, 30-yard performance at the spring game.

Witten and Bell were the 11th and 12th players to lose their black stripes this fall camp and the first two wide receivers to do so. Freshman wide receiver Quincy Porter shed his black stripe during spring practices.

Losing their black stripes is the first step for them in trying to become contributors to the 2025 team, but it will be tough for Bell and Witten to earn minutes this year with the loaded depth chart they have in front of them at the position.

U-M's Alford On OSU: "We're Better"

Former Ohio State running backs coach Tony Alford took a jab at the Buckeyes

8

Staff Predictions, First-Class Upgrades Back

Ohio State football season is finally here, and BuckeyeSports.com, Buckeye Sports Bulletin's 24/7 website free to all subscribers, will be with you every day, from the opening win over Texas to the CFP national championship game in Miami on Jan. 19, 2026.

The next issue of BSB will be mailed on Sept. 9. There is no reason to wait for your next Buckeye Sports Bulletin to get the latest OSU sports news, including any recruiting activity. The BSB staff will be reporting from every press conference or other availability throughout football season. All the news is available in real time at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com.

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. The Texas game marked the return of the always entertaining Staff Predictions, which appear the Friday before every game. Only BSB editor Greg Wilson predicted a Buckeye victory, 24-20, but none of the staffers saw such a low-scoring affair. Sam Cipriani had it 28-20 Longhorns, and Bobby Gorbett, 20-17 for the visitors.

Also, staff members man the Fan Forum, where the discussion between staff and readers is always lively, and will be more so during football season. Staff and readers also discuss games in real time on the Official Game Thread on the

Forum.

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

BSB is also offering a chance to upgrade your subscription to first-class mail in an envelope for football season for \$35 or \$45 through the playoffs and football recruiting in February. Just give us a call at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862 to order by credit card. Or you can send your check, money order or credit card information (don't forget your three- or four-digit security code) to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Be sure to mention either the "Football Upgrade" or the "Recruiting Upgrade."

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during a media session in Ann Arbor on Aug. 27.

After Michigan landed the top running

back recruit in the class of 2026, Mineral (Va.) Louisa County five-star Savion Hiter (6-0, 200), Alford was asked to reflect on his experience recruiting for the Wolverines.

"This place, this block M, is amazing," Alford said. "It's different. It's one thing to say it's different, I know. Every school you go to, the coach is going to say, 'We're different.' The young men and their families need to come here to really experience it. This place is different. I think the people are different. I think our staff is different. Our head coach damn sure is different. I think when young people sit there, especially with him, they walk out like, 'Yeah, that guy is a real one.' There's not the pretentiousness and the cliques – this place is just different."

However, when reporters badgered him

to answer what makes Michigan stand out, Alford obliged and fired a shot at Ohio State in his response.

"You wanted me to say something really bad about that other place," Alford said. "I'll say it. Yeah, we're better. There you go. Now I'm going to get crucified on that one."

Alford left Ohio State before the 2024 season for the same position at Michigan. He left on as positive terms as one could expect when moving to a rival, offering a heartfelt message to the Buckeye community during his first press conference as a Wolverine.

"I have so much respect for Ohio State and the Ohio State community and what they presented to me and my family through the years. It was not an easy decision (to

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

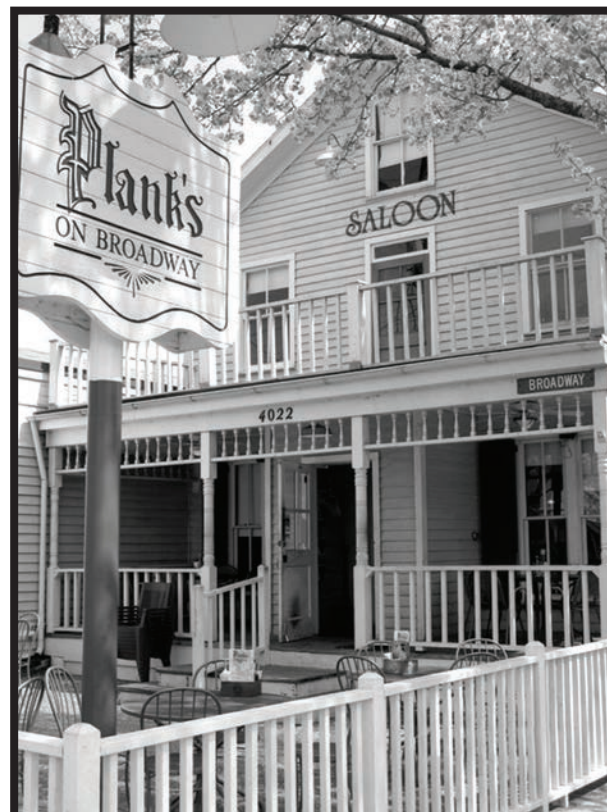
FOR SALE: OSU football programs including bowl games, national playoff and championship games. OSU basketball programs, NFL programs, golf, Olympics, NBA, other print sports memorabilia. Call John at (330) 507-7339.

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

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Hornyak Starred For the Basketball Buckeyes In A Different Era

Allan Hornyak was a man before his time, with his alliterative nickname and the way he played basketball.

Hornyak, who died at age 74 on Aug. 25, was known as the "Bellaire Bomber," a tribute to his Ohio hometown as well as his ability to score from anywhere in the gym, including St. John Arena, where he played for Ohio State from 1971-73.

Imagine the sensation he would be today and the money he could make with that moniker in the age of social media. Everyone would know about the time he scored 86 points in a high school game, without the aid of the three-point line.

Or think of the number of points he might have scored for the Buckeyes if he had been allowed to play four varsity seasons. Freshmen were ineligible until the 1972-73 season, yet his 1,572 points in three seasons still rank 13th in program history.

He earned first-team All-Big Ten honors in each of his three seasons and was an All-American in 1972 (second team) and 1973 (third team). He averaged 22.8 points in 69 career games.

It's all open to conjecture, and Hornyak told BSB in a May 1982 interview that not going directly to the varsity team might have helped the kid from a small town along the Ohio River.

"I think I needed my freshman year to adjust before I came into college," he said. "It was a big adjustment, and playing freshman ball helped me for my sophomore year. I don't know if I was allowed to play my freshman year if I would have played. I don't think that I would have been ready right away."

The 6-1 left-handed shooting guard was inducted into Ohio State's Hall of Fame in 1992 and was selected for the Ohio Basketball Hall of Fame in 2008, joining the likes of John Havlicek, Bobby Knight and Jerry Lucas.

Hornyak had a legendary prep career at St. John Central High School, where he scored 2,385 points and led the nation in scoring his junior and senior seasons, averaging more than 42 points per game each of those seasons.

"You never wanted to play against him because, you know, nobody could stop him," Gary Repella, a former Steubenville High School player and teammate of Hornyak at Ohio State, told The Intelligencer and Wheeling (West Virginia) News Register. "Individuals couldn't stop him, and in high school, whole teams couldn't stop him."

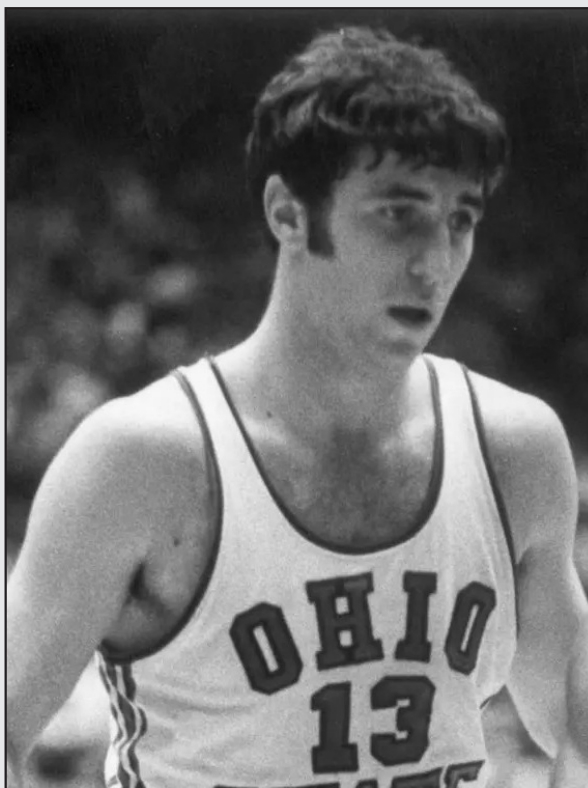
"I think the greatest compliment that I could pay to Allan is that, in the last 65 years of the Ohio Valley, going back to the mid-'60s, there has never been a basketball player like Allan who was recruited nationally like he was. Nobody comes close to the attention that he got. I mean, he was John Wooden's main recruit out in UCLA back in 1968, '69."

Bombs Away

Hornyak will be remembered for the night of Jan. 10, 1969, when he scored 86 points in a 123-83 win over Warren Consolidated.

"I had a lot of wide-open shots," Hornyak said to the Intelligencer in 2021. "My teammates did a great job of getting me the ball and really sacrificed some shots they could have taken just to keep feeding me."

Hornyak scored six points in the first eight seconds and reached 46 points by halftime.



"I didn't know how many I was scoring," Hornyak said. "I just kept firing (up shots)." He finished with 65 field-goal attempts.

He was actually taken out late in the game, but when his coach, Sy Kolesza, was told the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference record was 80, he reinserted Hornyak and he passed the mark with ease, although Hornyak said he was unaware at the time of the previous record.

"Coach Kolesza put me back in and said, 'Let's see where it goes from here,'" Hornyak said. "I got a lot of open shots that night because Warren played mostly zone and we'd set screens and they didn't switch."

Ever the perfectionist, Hornyak was upset he made only 6 of 11 free throws, including missing the front end of four one-and-ones.

"I was a pretty good foul shooter, too," Hornyak said. "I was making shots from 30 feet that night but missed five free throws. That is the only negative thought I had about that game."

The next night, he scored 61 points to defeat rival Bellaire.

He was recruited by Wooden, North Carolina's Dean Smith and legendary Kentucky coach Adolph Rupp, but chose to play for Fred Taylor to stay close to home while also knowing that after his freshman year, four seniors would be graduating and playing time was up for grabs.

The road to Ohio State to play under Taylor was not without its bumps, however.

"Fred Taylor invited him to the high school tournament after his senior season, asking only that he attend a dinner after the

games," Ohio State basketball historian Lee Caryer recalled in his book, "The Golden Age of Ohio State Basketball." "Allan and his friends got into a game on an outdoor court, skipped the games and skipped the dinner. Fred called and withdrew the scholarship offer. 'If we can't count on you to fulfill your obligation to attend a simple dinner, why could we count on you to do what is necessary to attend college and play basketball? We were finished with him.' Allan apologized humbly, learned a bit about Fred Taylor and how things would be at OSU and grew up a bit."

Hornyak and center Luke Witte were featured on the cover of The Sporting News, which back then was almost as prestigious as the Sports Illustrated front, in the fall of 1970 even though Hornyak had yet to play a varsity game.

He found the notoriety exciting but figured it was no big deal.

"Four seniors had graduated, and we were coming right into the offense – him a 7-footer and me being the scorer that I was," he told BSB years later.

The Buckeyes had a special season, winning the Big Ten title to advance to the NCAA Tournament, where they defeated Marquette before being eliminated by Western Kentucky in the Elite Eight.

It was during that season when OSU fans started calling him by the nickname earned back home, the "Bellaire Bomber."

He scored 37 points against Michigan in 1971 to win the conference title, with 17 of those points coming in the first 5:20 of the game.

Hornyak averaged 22.5 points and 4.8 rebounds as a sophomore to receive first-team All-Big Ten honors, as did Witte and teammate Jim Clemons.

As a senior in 1973, Hornyak captained the Buckeyes, and after his career ended, he was drafted in the second round (26th overall) of the NBA draft by the Cleveland Cavaliers. The ABA's Indiana Pacers selected him in the supplemental draft. He never played professionally.

He loved his hometown, but in later years, he moved to Cincinnati to be closer to his daughter. That's where he died.

"Off the court, he was a very regular guy," Repella said. "He loved the Ohio Valley. He loved hunting. He loved archery. He loved being back home. He built his house out in Neffs. He went back home and worked as a coal miner for years. And, you know, he was just a guy that if you would walk into a bar and he's at the end of the bar, you would have no idea how great a basketball player he was."

"He was very humble – he never ever talked about himself. He was just a great friend. I just can't say enough about Allan and what a great person he was."

Hornyak is survived by his wife, Diane, daughters Amber and Autumn and their families, which include four grandchildren, and his sisters Dana and Monica.

– Craig Merz

leave). Anytime you are somewhere for as long as I was, for nine years, there were some groups that had been set professionally and personally. That was difficult. But at the end of the day, it was something I thought I couldn't pass up. It was an opportunity I couldn't pass up."

Downs Gifts Teammates With Headphones

A week before the 2025 season began, safety Caleb Downs gifted the entire Ohio State football team Beats headphones for the second straight season. In a video posted to Twitter by the official Ohio State football account, Downs spoke to the team.

"We've been putting in a lot of work," Downs said in the video. "In the Bible, it says, 'discipline precedes time for a harvest.' It's time for the harvest. We've got action next week. We've got action. It's time to let it go. It's time to let it show on the field. But

God has blessed me with a chance to gift everybody on the team with a pair of Beats. I appreciate y'all. We've got some stuff to do next weekend. Let's keep working."

The Buckeye captain is partnered with Beats this season along with eight other college football players around the country, including Week 1 opponent and Texas defensive end Colin Simmons.

Downs is set to lead the Buckeye defense by likely playing in a few different roles this season after he was seen playing at the nickel early on in fall camp as the coaching staff tries to keep the ultra-talented safety as close to the ball as possible.

Former Hurricane Ward Failed Recruiting Smith

On a "Bussin' With The Boys" podcast episode with Will Compton and Taylor Lewan released on Aug. 26, former Miami (Fla.) quarterback Cam Ward revealed that

he reached out to Smith when he was the No. 1 overall recruit in the class of 2024, in an effort to persuade him to join the Hurricanes.

Ward was asked if he'd seen anything interesting about college football regarding the NIL or the portal, and he recalled the scenario he was involved in.

"I did see something. I was a part of it, actually," he recalled. "When I was going to Miami, they wanted Jeremiah Smith. At the time, I didn't know who he was because he was young and I'm trying to get me a place to play (in the portal). And so, they told me to just look him up, watch him a little bit, and that boy is a baller."

"And so, they gave me his phone number, I called him, and I told him, 'I'm going to Miami.' This is before it had gone out because I had told him this maybe a week earlier before I (publicly committed). I knew where I was going to go, but I'm always going to do

everything on my time. And so I called him. You know, we chopped it up."

At Big Ten media days on July 22, Smith told On3's Andy Staples and Ari Wasserman that he had spoken with Ward, but after submitting his commitment paperwork to Ohio State, he never spoke to the quarterback again.

"What went into that, me taking a long period of time to send my NLI in, is just people were (calling me like Ward); the business side of things," Smith said. "But, that night, I definitely talked to Cam Ward. I didn't really tell him (what my plan was). We just got on the phone, and he was like, 'What are you going to do?' I was like, 'I don't know.' Then, a couple hours later, I sent the NLI in. I haven't spoken to him since."

Smith's decision worked out well for both parties. Ward didn't need the star receiver

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to be selected No. 1 overall by the Tennessee Titans in April, while Smith went on to earn multiple awards and play a key role in leading the Buckeyes to their first national championship in 10 years.

Brown The Backup At Cal

After an intense training camp battle, former Buckeye quarterback Devin Brown was not the Week 1 starter for Cal. He was on the bench behind true freshman Jaron-Keawe Sagapolutele after the first-year player won the job on Aug. 18.

Head coach Justin Wilcox shared the feelings both quarterbacks had when they heard the news.

"Jaron is excited, obviously," Wilcox said.

"I'm sure Devin is disappointed, which is what you would expect. At that position, when you make a decision, it's not like a lot of people are swapping quarterbacks every play.

"I think Devin is a good football player. He does a lot of things well. He's extremely smart and he's been a great leader. I'm sure he's disappointed."

After joining Ohio State in the 2022 class, Brown lost quarterback battles to Kyle McCord in 2023 and Howard in 2024, prompting his Jan. 21 transfer to Cal.

George Wins In BGSU Debut

In former Ohio State running back Eddie George's debut as Bowling Green's head coach, the Falcons dominated.

Bowling Green rolled past Lafayette

26-7 on Aug. 28 at Doyt L. Perry Stadium. The Falcons set the tone early and never looked back, scoring 20 unanswered points to start the game, highlighted by freshman Cameron Pettaway's 98-yard return on the opening kickoff.

Falcons sophomore linebacker Dorian Pringle said the team was especially motivated to win George's debut because of the hard work he put them through during spring and fall camp.

"(Winning in George's debut) is very special to us because he put all the work in when he first came in this spring," Pringle said. "It was a little shaky at first, but then everything started rolling during fall camp, and we just kept getting better and better. Just putting everything out on the field, it just feels great."

A large group of former Buckeyes was on

hand to support George in his debut. Among them were Joey Galloway, Raymont Harris, Tito Paul, Beanie Wells, Ty Howard, Buster Tillman and Orlando Pace.

"That touched me, really, because they were all happy for me and we all played ball together in that era," George said. "Seeing my boys, I was like, 'There's no way we could lose tonight.' It was awesome to see them on the sidelines tonight."

George, now 1-0 as an FBS head coach, previously led Tennessee State from 2021-24, guiding the Tigers to a first-place Big South conference finish and an FCS playoff appearance in his final season.

McCord Released After Preseason

McCord was waived by the Philadelphia Eagles on Aug. 25 following their preseason

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

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From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1985

The Byars Buckeye Express was sitting on a siding in Columbus.

What was being touted as a possible nonstop run to the Heisman Trophy was going to be a little late leaving the station after Ohio State All-America running back Keith Byars broke the fifth metatarsal bone in his right foot during the afternoon practice session on the natural grass on Labor Day.

The pain of losing his “franchise” for up to three games was obviously showing on OSU coach Earle Bruce’s face as he talked of the injury.

“It’s kind of an unusual thing,” Bruce said. “Yesterday, in one of our normal drills, Keith was running a sweep. He planted his foot to make a cut and came up limping. My immediate reaction was he had a sore foot. I didn’t see any contact where he could have been injured. There obviously had to be some little problem beforehand.”

35 Years Ago — 1990

Hosting nearly 90,000 screaming fans for a half dozen Saturdays in the fall, Ohio Stadium celebrated its 68th anniversary with a new natural grass surface.

With tickets for each home game at a premium, it seemed strange to think that school officials were worried back when the facility opened in 1922 that there was no way they could fill 75,000 seats.

The surface in the stadium was natural grass from 1922 to 1970. AstroTurf was installed in 1971 and was replaced in 1979 by a SuperTurf surface.

Natural grass in the form of Prescription Athletic Turf returned in 1990.

30 Years Ago — 1995

The offensive attack was straight out of the 21st century, a mixture of well-conceived running plays with a smattering of short and deep passes, all seemingly timed to perfection.

Was it the Dallas Cowboys? The San Francisco 49ers, you ask?

Nope, it was 12th-ranked Ohio State systematically destroying 22nd-rated Boston College 38-6 in the Kickoff Classic at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J, on Aug. 27.

OSU tailback Eddie George, named the game’s most valuable player after rushing 17 times for 99 yards and two touchdowns and catching three passes for 44 yards, summed up the Buckeyes’ futuristic offensive approach:

“I think you have to change things with time. In order to be a productive ballclub, we have to get the ball to the best players on our offense. I think we did a good job of that today.”

25 Years Ago — 2000

Ohio State football during the 2000 season would be about much more than first downs, touchdowns and, if all went well, victory celebrations.

The Buckeyes took the field for their Sept. 2 season opener against Fresno State inside a partially renovated Ohio Stadium. The venerable Horseshoe was in the second year of a three-year, \$187 million renovation and expansion project.

In 2000, fans could note the addition of permanent south stands and a new scoreboard/video board. The field had been lowered 14½ feet and new seating had been added below the existing A-deck and above C-deck on the east side.

The project would be completed in the next year, when club seats, luxury suites and a new press box would be added on the west side. At that point, the capacity was expected to reach nearly 100,000.

20 Years Ago — 2005

Troy Smith wouldn’t begin the 2005 season as the starting quarterback for Ohio State. He wouldn’t even be second string.

The cold, hard truth of the matter was that his two-game suspension for accepting money from a booster in the spring of 2004 had sent him all the way down to the scout team.

Nevertheless, the junior was looking at the demotion with optimism. He had been down before and rebounded, and he said he would do so again.

“I had a chance to be the starter going into this season, but I made a bad decision, and now I need to come back from scratch,” Smith said. “It’s humbling, man. It really is. But you can’t dwell in the past. I’m looking ahead, not back.”

Smith was suspended the previous December, just before the team departed for the Alamo Bowl, for accepting several hundred dollars from a so-called booster. He sat out the Buckeyes’ win over Oklahoma State and would be on the bench when the team opened the 2005 season on Sept. 3 against Miami (Ohio).

15 Years Ago — 2010

With a solid 45-7 win over Marshall under their belts, the Buckeyes turned their attention to a game that had been circled on some calendars for nearly eight years – a rematch of the 2002 national championship game.

ESPN analyst Kirk Herbstreit said the game was a chance for Miami, which had been to one BCS bowl game and reached 10 or more wins just once since that season, to prove to the nation that they were on the rise once again.

He also drew a parallel to the 1999 meeting between the two teams, a 23-12 Miami victory that seemed to capture two programs moving in opposite directions.

“It’s that kind of thing where it’s (in) Ohio Stadium,” Herbstreit said. “Miami is skilled. They have a solid quarterback and attitude. I think they’re looking at this as their chance on a big stage to show the country that they’re back.

“Ohio State probably should win the game, but I don’t think it’s going to be a game where you just roll the ball out and Ohio State blows them out. I think it will be a war.”

10 Years Ago — 2015

Sloppy. Sluggish. Out of sync.

Ohio State was all of those things in its home opener against Hawaii on Sept. 12, statistically underperforming against expectations.

The Buckeyes were sloppy, committing seven penalties for 55 yards. The miscues included two that extended Hawaii drives, one that negated a 20-yard gain and an unsportsmanlike penalty on the Ohio State coaching staff when head coach Urban Meyer accidentally impeded an official on the sideline.

The team was sluggish, failing to score on three of its first four drives and registering just 4.4 yards per play on the afternoon.

Ohio State was out of sync as receivers failed to get on the same page with whichever quarterback was sending throws out of their reach and the offensive line struggled to communicate effectively in protection.

And yet the Buckeyes (2-0) were dominant, shutting out the Rainbow Warriors (1-1) on their way to a 38-0 victory.

Five Years Ago — 2020

The Big Ten moved one step closer to possibly reinstating the fall football season after the Big Ten Council of Presidents and Chancellors met remotely with the return to competition task force on Sept. 13 to discuss new testing programs that weren’t available when the conference decided to postpone fall sports the previous month, as well as the best date to kick off a potential season.

The Big Ten’s football scheduling committee, which included Ohio State head coach Ryan Day, and the conference’s television committee, which included athletic director Gene Smith, also gave presentations during the meeting.

According to multiple reports, an Oct. 17 start date was looked upon as the most likely option, which would give teams a chance to complete an eight-game regular season and a conference championship game before the College Football Playoff selections were made on Dec. 20.

One Year Ago — 2024

An imperfect start did not deter No. 2 Ohio State from a strong finish in pulling away from Akron in the second half for a 52-6 win in the season opener before 102,011 fans at Ohio Stadium on Aug. 31.

Heralded freshman receiver Jeremiah Smith, on the second play from scrimmage, dropped the first ball thrown his way by Will Howard, the Kansas State transfer who threw incompletions on his first four attempts as a Buckeye.

The pair would eventually connect for two touchdowns for a 17-3 halftime lead, and aided by two defensive scores, the Buckeyes comfortably won as expected.

Smith, the No. 1 recruit in the nation, had TD catches of 16 and 9 yards and finished with six receptions for 92 yards while Howard completed 17 of 28 for 228 yards on a cloudy 80-degree afternoon.

training camp.

Philadelphia selected McCord with the 181st pick in the sixth round of the 2025 NFL draft, but the Mt. Laurel, N.J., native was released from the team after a turbulent preseason for Eagles quarterbacks.

McCord was fighting for Philadelphia’s third-string spot before Eagles second-stringer Tanner McKee suffered a fractured thumb in the team’s fall camp practice Aug. 18.

After McKee’s injury, the Eagles acquired quarterback Sam Howell from the Minnesota Vikings in a trade. The team also signed Carson Wentz, pushing McCord out of the competition for a spot on the roster.

In the preseason, McCord completed just 24 of 56 passes for 191 yards and a score. He posted a 42.9 percent completion percentage and also tossed two interceptions. He is coming off a season in which he set an ACC record with 4,779 passing yards in a single season a year after transferring out of Ohio State.

After going unclaimed on waivers, McCord signed with the Eagles’ practice squad.

Fifty-five former Buckeyes made 53-man NFL rosters with 13 of 14 of the 2025 draftees making the cut. Read more on NFL Buckeyes on pages 26-27.

Zubovich Dies At Age 94

Former Ohio State men’s track & field coach and student-athlete Frank Zubovich died on Aug. 14 at the age of 94.

Zubovich was the head coach for the men’s track and field team from 1976-88 after spending the 11 years prior to that as an assistant.

He was born in Columbus and attended South High School, where he played basketball and ran track and field. Zubovich then competed at Ohio State, where he ran the 100-meter, 220-yard and 440-yard sprints, participated in relays, and competed in the high jump. He graduated from Ohio State in 1955.

Zubovich was inducted into the Ohio Coaches Hall of Fame by the Ohio Association of Track Coaches in 1968 when he was just 37 years old.

Zubovich coached numerous standout athletes during his tenure with the Buckeyes, including 15 All-Americans. Among them was Harry “Butch” Reynolds, who went on to win a silver medal in the 400-meter and a gold medal in the 4x400-meter relay for the United States at the 1988 Seoul Olympics.



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Sterling Debut For Defensive Coordinator

Continued From Page 1

ball and was able to cut in front of the pass in time to come up with an easy interception, his first pick since he took one back for a score as a true freshman against Western Kentucky on Sept. 16, 2023.

The interception turned into a touch-down drive for the Buckeyes that put them up 14-0 early in the fourth quarter.

Mathews also nearly forced another turnover from Manning on the very next Texas drive. He was able to get in front of another pass to Wingo and tip it into the air. Senior captain linebacker Sonny Styles dived after it but wasn't able to keep the ball from hitting the ground, which was seen on a review of the play that overturned the original interception ruling.

Another big part of the lockdown coverage was that Igbinosun, who had 16 penalty flags thrown against him during the 2024 season, did not have a single whistle blown on him in the contest against the Longhorns.

He was targeted in the end zone in the fourth quarter when Texas had made it to Ohio State's 9-yard line and had a fourth-and-3. He was able to cleanly break up the pass and force a turnover on downs.

The Buckeyes were able to make multiple fourth-down stops throughout the game, holding Texas to just one success on five tries. Head coach Ryan Day appreciated those stops at least as much as Mathews' interception.

"Every time you have a fourth-down stop, it's like a turnover," Day said. "The interception was huge, but when you start getting fourth-down stops in the middle of the field, that flips the whole field over and it's like getting a turnover. We had three fourth-down stops and the one at the end of the game, that's almost four turnovers, and that plays into it."

Junior safety Caleb Downs came into the season regarded as one of the best defensive players in college football, and he was a

big part of the Buckeyes' win as well in the secondary.

Whenever the versatile Downs was called upon to cover a route runner, he was able to do so effectively. But he was also an extremely important part of stopping ball carriers dead in their tracks.

He finished the game with five tackles, but his presence was felt on every play. Patricia, who has coached some of the best NFL defenders in the last couple of decades, recognized the importance of Downs' presence in the win.

"The communication was really good," he said. "Caleb is unbelievable back there as a field general. He's back there calling out the coverages, the adjustments and even some of the alerts."

Downs sealed the game with good coverage on tight end Jack Endries, who brought in a tough catch for the Longhorns' last gasp, only to be met immediately by the star safety. Downs stopped Endries before the line to gain, and Sayin was able to kneel the clock out for the Buckeye win.

Manning also helped Ohio State out a bit on his own, which he acknowledged after the game. Even in the rare case that a receiver was able to get open, he struggled to put a throw on target. That began on the very first pass he threw that was bounced off the turf to Moore on the first play of the game.

"They're a good team, but I thought we beat ourselves a lot," Manning said. "That starts with me, and I've got to play better for us to win."

But while Manning put some of the blame on himself, his head coach and play caller, Steve Sarkisian, made sure to give Ohio State's defense a lot of credit, defending his young quarterback. Manning was dealing with an experienced NFL defensive coordinator in Patricia calling plays against him and disguising coverages well, which can be tough for a new starter to take in.

"He took that information and applied it



FILE PHOTO

A GOOD DAY — Head coach Ryan Day had plenty to cheer about during the Buckeyes' 14-7 win over Texas with the defense smothering Arch Manning for most of the game and the offense with first-time starter Julian Sayin not committing a turnover.

in the second half," Sarkisian said. "That's encouraging that he was able to adjust at halftime to do those things. All in all, the growth throughout the game for Arch was really encouraging for me. We're going to be fine. We've got work to do as a team and as an offense, but ultimately, I'm getting on the plane knowing we're going to be a good football team."

Included in Ohio State's cornerback room is true freshman Devin Sanchez, whom many expected to burst onto the scene quickly in his first year. If Sanchez hadn't been ready to play much against the No. 1 team in the country, that would have been understandable. But the 18-year-old was plugged into the lineup early, taking snaps on the outside on multiple drives throughout the game.

Most notably, the freshman was included when the Buckeyes were in dime defense as the sixth defensive back on the field when there were two minutes to go in the game. The coaching staff clearly already trusts Sanchez enough to have him try to help seal the win against the Longhorns.

Ultimately, Mathews was very pleased with how the unit as a whole played, especially after there was some level of uncertainty after losing starters to the NFL over the offseason.

"(We made a) very big statement. I think we showed the country that we didn't go anywhere, we can still be the best defense in the country," he said. "We lost a lot of guys, first-round guys that had been here for three or four years as starters. It was just our chance to show the world what we can really do."

No Knowles, No Problem

Ohio State had the No. 1 defense in the country last season, which was a big part of the 2024 national championship. But right after the celebration for that title, the news came out that the defensive coordinator who had helped them get to that point was leaving for a conference rival.

When Jim Knowles went to Penn State and Ohio State hired Patricia over the off-season, there were questions about whether the Buckeye defense would be able to live up to the same standards that it had reached under Knowles.

Patricia's last couple of stops were deemed failures by the general public when he was fired as the head coach of the Detroit Lions after 2020, and the New England Patriots failed to find the same success in 2021-22 as they did when he was their defensive coordinator from 2012-17.



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FILE PHOTO

GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION — Fears that the defense would struggle with the departure of defensive coordinator Jim Knowles to Penn State and several stars to the NFL were allayed in the first game for new DC Matt Patricia when the Buckeyes stymied top-ranked Texas 14-7.

But Patricia quickly quieted the doubters with his play calling in the 14-7 win over Texas. For the people in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, that came as no surprise.

"I know what kind of a coach Matt is because I see him every day," Day said. "That's the thing about football. I share that with the guys. The work that you put in when you're in the dark doesn't come to light until this first game. That's sometimes the sobering thing about football. You put all of that work in just to give you a chance, then you have X number of games to go make it happen."

Another reason some people doubted Patricia, specifically in the game against Texas, was that he didn't have a preseason to figure out any kinks there might be in his defense, as he did in the NFL. Any issues that might arise during games, he wouldn't be able to find out what those would be until his players were already lined up against the Longhorns.

Patricia said that the fact that the Buckeyes went right into the season against an offense like Texas' with a play caller like Sarkisian made him appreciate those exhibition games more than he used to.

"The thing about college, I really appreciate those (NFL) preseason games now. I really do," Patricia said. "There were definitely things in the game today, operationally, communication-wise, and the sideline gets a little nuts. There are a lot of players compared to an NFL active roster."

But Patricia made his presence known early on when his defense became the first

since Miami (Fla.) in 1988 to hold the preseason No. 1-ranked team to zero points in the first half of the season opener.

That early success gave Day a lot of confidence that Patricia could continue to do his job. Knowing that, Day decided that the Buckeye offense could play a lot more conservatively, which might have been a blessing with the young Sayin making his first start.

"As the first quarter was going on, I could see us getting off the field on defense, and it felt like we were moving the line of scrimmage," Day said. "We were fairly conservative because we felt like our defense was playing well."

The secondary had a big part in Patricia's defense being so successful, but it was also the talented linebacker room that helped him use the defense however he wanted to. Since he arrived on campus, Patricia has been raving about Sonny Styles and junior Arvell Reese, and that didn't change after the win.

"They're big and they're fast and they can cover a lot of space," Patricia said. "That's a lot of fun. Sonny, Arvell, Payton (Pierce), all those guys, when they're out there, their ability to move in space and play the game with the speed that Texas has – Texas is a fast team. They really do a great job."

"Sark does a great job of spreading you horizontally and then taking vertical shots. Those guys are fun football players to be around, the linebacker corps. (Linebackers coach James) Laurinaitis does a tremen-

dous job with them. It was good. It was great to see them in live action."

Reese forced his way into playing time last year as the third linebacker behind Styles and Cody Simon, and now this year, he is getting to fully show off the versatility he provides in the middle of the defense.

When he was a freshman and the defensive line was dealing with injuries, Reese was almost moved to the edge, but Laurinaitis pushed hard for him to remain with his position group, and it's easy to see why. But with Reese's pass-rushing ability, which Patricia used time and time again in the win, it's also easy to see why defensive line coach Larry Johnson might have wanted him.

"Arvell has a lot of versatility," Day said. "When you get up on Arvell, you can see that he has all the traits it takes to be a dominant linebacker. What I saw out there today was a guy who was running from sideline to sideline at the linebacker position at the second level. But also, you saw him when (Kenyatta Jackson Jr.) went down, he was playing up front, rushing the passer and putting pressure on the quarterback."

"He can do all of those things. This is probably the most he's played in a big game like this. He'll learn a lot from this, and we'll see how he grades out."

Despite the new defensive coordinator and the changes that come with that, Mathews said that they feel good about where they are as a unit, especially with some of the changes that Patricia has made.

"It's very different because we changed our front a lot," Mathews said. "We didn't really do that last two years, so we switched

up a lot of fronts. We changed the looks in the back end as well, so I think the defense is very complex for the opposing quarterback to read."

Additionally, while it might not have been the star of the unit on Aug. 30, the defensive line made the biggest play of the game when it stuffed Manning's quarterback sneak in the third quarter on fourth-and-goal with less than 1 yard to go.

The goal-line stand was a signature of the 2024 defense, and now the 2025 team is continuing to hold on to that ability. Junior defensive tackle Kayden McDonald, who had a part in some of the big stops last season as well, said he knew the sneak was coming and was ready to make the stop.

"You're on the 1-yard line," McDonald explained. "If you pass it there, why would you do that? I knew the personnel and we had to get a stop, and we did. We all came together."

Day said the team still has a lot of room to grow, which is expected when there are so many starters taking over in Week 1 of a new season. But he also said that they would much rather be fixing what they need to after a win like they pulled out against Texas.

"Matt put a good game plan together, and the coaches put a good game plan together," Day said. "There's a lot that we can build on here, a lot to improve on. The team you see right now will not be the one you see half-way through the season or at the end of the year. But it certainly makes the corrections a lot easier to make after a win like this."

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Sayin Solid In First Start As Signal Caller

In the last 20 years, first-year starting quarterbacks were 0-18 in Week 1 against the No. 1-ranked team in the country. Red-shirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin wasn't necessarily perfect in the Buckeyes' 14-7 win over Texas on Aug. 30, but he made enough plays to put an end to that trend. Sayin, who didn't throw an interception or take a sack during the win over the Longhorns, received the praise of his head coach after the game.

"I said in the locker room that he handled himself well," Ryan Day said after the game. "He took care of the ball, made some throws when he needed to. A couple of times when it wasn't there, he did not force it. Could we have opened it up more in the second half? Yeah, but I thought (offensive coordinator Brian Hartline) called an unselfish game."

Against a Longhorns defense that many believe to be among the best in the nation, Sayin completed 13 of 20 passes for 126 yards and a touchdown. The red-shirt freshman had his biggest moment at the start of the fourth quarter when he found junior receiver Carnell Tate for a 40-yard touchdown that gave the team the insurance it needed to salt away the win.

Sayin's touchdown pass came early in the fourth quarter on a second-and-7 play when the Buckeyes led the Longhorns 7-0. Tate apparently knew the ball was coming to him before the play even started.

"We called the double move play, and I was the first read on the play. I knew the ball was coming to me once (the cornerback) lined up in press coverage, and I made a play from there."

With a quick release at the line of scrimmage, Tate immediately created separation on Texas cornerback Jaylon Guilbeau, and even though Sayin's pass was slightly underthrown, Tate was able to make the adjustment to haul in the catch and double the Buckeyes' lead.

Sayin's stat line may seem a bit underwhelming at first glance, but it could have been a bit better if not for some mistakes from his receivers. Sayin's first passing attempt of the game came on a fourth-and-1 play from Texas' 49-yard line. The Carlsbad, Calif., native calmly went through his reads in the clean pocket and threw a perfect pass to tight end Max Klare, but instead of picking up a first down on a play that would have gone for 14 yards, the ex-Boilermaker dropped the ball. Overall, it was a quiet day for the former All-Big Ten tight end, who had just one catch for 11 yards.

Klare wasn't alone in struggling to

GAME NOTEBOOK Bobby Gorbett

catch the ball. Superstar receiver Jeremiah Smith, who finished the game with a team-high six catches for 43 yards, had two drops in a span of three plays. Smith's gaffes allowed the Longhorns to force the first of six punts from Joe McGuire.

"It happens, mistakes happen," Tate said of the Buckeye drops. "As a receiver room and a tight end room, you have to keep your head up. The ball will come to you. I've been there before."

Sayin had his blunders, too. On the fourth-and-1 play that the Buckeyes didn't convert because of Klare's drop, Smith appeared to be open deep downfield. Then, on a second-and-10 with less than three minutes remaining in the game, when the Buckeyes were clinging to a 14-7 lead, Sayin made the freshman mistake of throwing the ball away and therefore stopping the clock when he could have slid and kept the clock running to use up valuable time that the Longhorns desperately needed.

Still, after the game, Day was optimistic about what he saw from his young quarterback.

"A ton," Day said when asked how much Sayin still has to work on, "but I was impressed with his poise. He had a good look in his eye. What he was saying and what he was seeing was exactly what was going on. That's a great sign."

Offense Avoids Mistakes Against Longhorns

Ryan Day's message to his team heading into Week 1 was simple: "We can't beat ourselves." The Buckeyes certainly did not do that. Not only did Sayin not take a sack against the talented Texas defensive line, but the offense as a whole did not turn the ball over. Equally impressive was that the Buckeyes committed only two penalties that went for 15 yards, while the Longhorns committed six penalties for 50 yards.

The Buckeyes may have totaled only 203 yards by the end of the game, but their turnover-free performance was enough to get a win in Week 1, which, according to Sayin, was the only goal the team had.

"The whole saying this week was, 'The only thing we expect is just go out there and win, we're not expecting to go out



SONNY BROCKWAY

DOING HIS JOB WELL — All the Ohio State coaching staff asked of red-shirt freshman Julian Sayin in his first career start was to win the showdown against No. 1 Texas. While he wasn't flawless, Sayin did not have a turnover and completed 13 of 20 for 126 yards with a 40-yard TD to Carnell Tate in the 14-7 victory.

there and do this, this and this on offense. Just go out there and win," Sayin said. "Credit to our defense putting up a great performance and going out there and operating."

The Buckeyes' clean game was in large part due to Sayin's decision-making. Tate, who after the game gave his quarterback an A-plus for helping the Buckeyes come out with the victory, praised his poise in the huddle.

"Julian's very cool, very calm," Tate said. "California kids, you know how they are. He's never too mad, never happy. He is always very levelheaded."

As poised as he may be, Sayin previously didn't have much experience heading into the matchup against Texas, which is partially why the Buckeyes had a conservative set of play calls in the season-opening game.

"It was our first game, so the play calls were a little bit conservative," Tate said. "We have a new quarterback. We all have bigger roles. So we couldn't go out there and expect to be last year's team or go out there and do crazy things. We have to propel from the start. We started out really

well for a new group."

The conservative play calling from the Buckeyes was part of a larger game plan to avoid putting Sayin in uncomfortable positions, according to Day.

"When you have that first start and you're out there, there are so many things to take into consideration," Day said. "When you're the quarterback at Ohio State and you're playing No. 1 Texas, one of the top defenses in the country, which we have a tremendous amount of respect for, the one thing we didn't want to do was put him in a bad spot. It's not fair to him. Coming out of it, quite honestly, he probably could have handled it. But we weren't going to do that because we know it's a long season, and that was the decision that was made. We'll go from here."

Sayin's risk-avoidance was something instilled in him by not just Day, but also quarterbacks coach Billy Fessler. Considering the Buckeye defense stifled the Longhorns throughout much of the game, it put the team in a good position to start the season 1-0.

"Coach Day and Coach Fessler have instilled that in our quarterback room," Say-



Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Ohio State’s secondary was a true no-fly zone against No. 1 Texas in its 14-7 season-opening victory. The Longhorns failed to complete a pass longer than 10 yards until the fourth quarter, with quarterback Arch Manning sitting at just 38 passing yards entering the final period. Additionally, the Buckeye secondary held Manning to no more than 13 yards passing in each of the first three quarters.

More than 70 percent of Manning’s passing yards came on only five plays, none of which came before the fourth. Manning’s struggles throughout the afternoon reflected his team’s overall performance, as his hesitation to attempt passes downfield through most of the contest kept the Longhorns scoreless until Texas finally opened up the passing game. He finished 17 of 30 with 170 yards, one interception and one touchdown, a score that didn’t come until less than four minutes remaining in the contest.

Cornerbacks Davison Igbinosun and Jermaine Mathews Jr. were two of the Buckeyes’ most impactful players on Aug. 30, keeping Texas’ receivers in front of them and making one-on-one tackles in the open field. Igbinosun racked up a game-high 10 total tackles (four solo) and a pass breakup, and he didn’t draw any penalties, a major goal for the senior corner in the offseason. Mathews, on the other hand, finished with three solo tackles but came up with the game’s lone turnover – a crucial pick that halted a Texas drive in Ohio State territory..

What Didn’t Work

In a defensive battle, the Buckeyes’ running game could simply never get going. Ohio State finished with just 77 total rushing yards, and the Buckeyes averaged a lowly 2.3 yards per carry on

34 attempts. Senior transfer running back CJ Donaldson led the way for Ohio State with 67 yards on 19 carries, while sophomore James Peoples had just 20 yards on 10 totes.

Neither of Ohio State’s running backs was able to muster a run of more than 8 yards. The Texas defense routinely jumped on Donaldson and Peoples early into runs. This is not all the fault of Ohio State, though. Texas boasts possibly the top front seven of a defensive unit in the country, and with Buckeye quarterback Julian Sayin playing his first-ever start, the Longhorns front was very strong up the middle.

Play Of The Game

Down just seven points midway through the third quarter, the Longhorns had the ball on Ohio State’s 9-yard line, threatening to score and equalize the game. Three straight runs later, and Texas had set itself up for fourth-and-goal on the OSU 1.

Texas called a quarterback sneak for Manning, and as the Longhorn gunslinger took the snap and attempted to drive himself toward the right hash of the end zone, he was met by a combination of Caden Curry and Lorenzo Styles Jr. That pair, along with a push from the Buckeye defense, stuffed Manning and forced a key turnover on downs.

In retrospect, the goal-line stand was the difference for the Buckeyes. Ohio State held on to a one-touchdown lead for the final 3:28, and if the Buckeyes had let in a Manning score, the outcome in Columbus could have looked drastically different.

— Sam Cipriani

in said. “On third down, if the big play isn’t there, it’s OK to check the ball down. The preparedness of Coach Day and Coach Fessler of, ‘Hey, we’re not going to lose the game if it’s third-and-extra-long. Be able to take the check down.’ ”

OSU Ground Game Inconsistent

Ohio State’s offensive performance was good enough to win, but it certainly wasn’t flawless. Despite the win, the Buckeyes totaled just 77 yards on the ground for an average of 2.3 yards per carry.

“We’ll have to look at the film and see,” Day said of the Buckeye running game. “That was a stout front. When we play them again, I don’t think it’s going to look the same way. We were leaning on some of our tight ends, and there were some good runs in there. I have to look really hard at the film now and see where things didn’t go perfect because we were pretty tied in on both edges there.”

The Buckeyes’ ground game wasn’t very consistent, but it played a part in the offense’s lengthy 80-yard touchdown drive. During that scoring drive, sophomore running back James Peoples and West Virginia transfer CJ Donaldson Jr. combined for 33 yards on 10 carries. The most impactful play came on a fourth-and-goal run from the 1-yard line.

On the play, Donaldson picked up a few crucial blocks from Buckeye tight ends and left tackle Austin Siereveld before navigating traffic and jumping over the goal line for the only score of the first half. But outside of the first-half drive, it was a fairly quiet day for Ohio State’s runners. Contrary to what many media members and fans expected, Donaldson got the majority of the carries for the Buckeyes. The former Mountaineer had 19 carries for 67 yards and the team’s lone rushing touchdown.

Peoples wasn’t quite as effective and went for only 20 yards on 10 carries. The Buckeyes’ issues running the football didn’t come from a lack of push from the

offensive line, though. Both interior offensive lineman Luke Montgomery and Day agreed the unit was moving Texas’ front.

“I think we were moving them off the ball,” Montgomery said. “We just have to go back and watch the film, honestly. I think it’s pretty easy fixes, to be honest with you, whether it’s just a misread or maybe a missed block every once in a while and stuff like that. But I think overall, we did a pretty good job just moving the front and getting off the line of scrimmage.”

The Buckeyes’ rushing issues came to a head in the fourth quarter. When leading by two touchdowns, they were unable to end the game with their rushing attack. During one drive in the middle of the quarter, the Buckeyes picked up a first down with two straight runs from Donaldson, but a holding penalty on Montgomery effectively ended the drive.

Then, after the Longhorns finally got on the board with a 60-yard touchdown drive, the Buckeyes went three-and-out after a run by Donaldson to start the drive went nowhere. Still, after the game, Day said he felt like the offense did a solid job of keeping the Longhorns off the field.

“The defense was playing well,” Day said. “When we got the ball back on the 10-yard line with eight minutes to go, we ended up running about four minutes (3:46) off the clock, and that was important.”

Jackson Injured, Day Says Not Long Term

Not everything went according to plan for the Buckeyes on Aug. 30. Redshirt junior defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. was injured during the third quarter of the game and missed the rest of the contest. Although it still isn’t clear what Jackson’s injury was, the Miami Gardens, Fla., native appeared to be rolled up on and may have suffered a leg injury.

Jackson needed assistance from the training staff, but after a few minutes, he was able to walk to the sidelines under his

own power.

Jackson, who finished the game with three tackles, could be seen on the sidelines celebrating with teammates as the Buckeyes closed in on their victory.

After the game, Day said he doesn’t anticipate Jackson’s injury will be something

that they are dealing with for long.

“Kenyatta, I don’t think I can come up and say exactly what it was, but they took his helmet away,” Day said. “We’ll kind of evaluate how that is moving forward. But I don’t see it being a long-term injury.”

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Defense Makes For Long Day For Longhorns

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Those going to Ohio Stadium for the much-anticipated Aug. 30 season opener between No. 1 Texas and third-ranked Ohio State expecting a scoreboard explosion featuring two talented but inexperienced quarterbacks left disappointed.

They would be the only ones. Sure, there wasn't much scoring, but there is something to be said for good, hard-nosed football and drama to the end.

CJ Donaldson Jr. rushed for a touch-down, Julian Sayin threw to Carnell Tate for another and the defense made two stops inside the 10 when the Buckeyes defeated the Longhorns 14-7 in Ohio Stadium.

Donaldson, a West Virginia transfer, scored from the 1 in the second quarter, and Tate's came early in the fourth quarter after Jermaine Mathews Jr. intercepted Arch Manning before a sun-drenched crowd of 107,524.

Manning led the Longhorns back with a TD strike for 30 yards to Parker Livingstone with just 3:28 left and engineered a late drive that was stopped at the OSU 47 with 1:27 left.

Manning, the nephew of Super Bowl-winning QBs Peyton and Eli Manning, made his third career start while Sayin made his first. Sayin was 13 of 20 for 126 yards and a TD, while Manning was 17 of 30 for 170 yards, a TD and an interception.

Defensive Front

Texas started the opening drive of the game at its 25 after a touchback and turned the ball over on downs after the second of two fourth-down plays was unsuccessful.

Manning sneaked his way to keep the drive alive with a 1-yarder to the 35 on the first, but needing 2 yards on the second attempt, CJ Baxter was stopped by Arvell Reese for a 1-yard gain at the OSU 42.

The Buckeyes also failed on fourth down



SONNY BROCKWAY

KEPT UNDER WRAPS — Linebacker Arvell Reese's sack of Arch Manning in the second quarter in Ohio Stadium on Aug. 30 was emblematic of the dominance of Ohio State's defense on the heralded Texas quarterback whose lone touchdown pass came late in the game after the Buckeyes led 14-0. Manning was 17 of 30 for 170 yards with an interception.

and gave it back to the Longhorns at the Texas 49. Donaldson ran for 2, 7 and 0 yards, but on fourth down, a pass to the Texas 35 along the left sideline was dropped by tight end Max Klare as he tried to stay in play.

After a Texas punt, the Buckeyes started at their 8. Sayin had an 11-yard completion to Klare, but Jeremiah Smith had his second drop of the game, forcing a punt. Smith for the game made six catches for 43 yards with a long of 16.

Each team had 50 yards in the first quarter. Sayin was 3 of 6 for 33 yards while Manning was 3 of 5 for 13.

The Buckeyes went 80 yards after a punt late in the first quarter to take a 7-0 lead at 8:57 of the second quarter on Donaldson's run. The drive used 13 plays and 8:01 off the clock and was aided by two Texas penalties.

On a third-and-4 incompleteness to Brandon Inniss, Colin Simmons was penalized 15 yards to the Texas 29 for a face mask. Two plays later, Malik Muhammad was caught holding Smith, putting the ball at the 18.

Donaldson ran for 7 and 5 yards. On first down from the 6, running back James Peoples gained 2, as did Donaldson on the next play. Before the third-down snap, OSU took a timeout. Donaldson gained a hard 1 yard then on fourth down went over left tackle Austin Siereveld for the score.

The Longhorns had to punt on their next possession thanks to a 1-yard sack by Reese to the UT 46 on third down. Jack Bouweester's 52-yard punt was downed at the 2 with 5:05 left. The Buckeyes moved out to their 23 before they were forced to punt, and the Longhorns ended their half on a three-and-out.

Ohio State at the half had 103 yards (53 passing, 50 rushing). Texas gained 79 (26 passing, 53 rushing). Sayin was 6 for 11, Manning was 5 of 10. The Longhorns had four penalties, including two false starts, for 35 yards. OSU had zero infractions.

Texas coach Steve Sarkisian was impressed by the Buckeyes' pass defense.

"They have a very good secondary, and I thought their ability to disguise coverages in the first half was at an elite level – I wouldn't say a good level, on the elite level," he said. "That starts with (safety) Caleb Downs. He's very savvy. He's very smart. They're able to hold coverages."

Big Plays

The Buckeyes punted on their first drive after halftime, and the 43-yard kick by Joe McGuire gave Texas the ball at the 29 after a 3-yard return.

Everything clicked until it didn't, and Manning was stuffed on a fourth-and-1 at the 1 by Caden Curry and Lorenzo Styles Jr.

Manning earlier escaped the rush for a 15-yard run for a first down at the OSU 47. The Longhorns then drove to the first down at the 9 but could not punch it in despite four tries. Manning gained 6 on two runs, and Baxter added 2 more yards before the Buckeyes held. Texas had the ball for 15 plays and 6:54.

OSU, hugging its own goal line, got a break because Carson Hinzman was called for holding in the end zone, which would have resulted in a safety, but a Texas unsportsmanlike-conduct penalty was offsetting.

Following a punt, Mathews intercepted Manning at the OSU 27 and returned it 5 yards to the 32 with 3:01 left in the third.

The Buckeyes increased the lead to 14-0 with 13:08 left in the game on Tate's clutch grab at the goal line to finish the 68-yard, seven-play, 4:53 drive.

Smith made a third-down catch of 7 yards to keep the drive going at the OSU 45, and Donaldson came back with a 9-yard reception. After an illegal formation penalty put the Buckeyes in a first-and-15 from the UT 48, Donaldson rushed for 8 to set up the score.

The Buckeyes thought they might have put the game away when Sonny Styles appeared to intercept Manning at the OSU 28 with 10:36 to play, but the play was overturned after a review and Texas continued its march.

But on fourth-and-3 from the 9, Manning threw incomplete to Livingstone with Davison Igbinosun breaking up the pass in the end zone with 7:56 to play.

Livingstone made amends with 3:28 left when he made a 32-yard TD catch to make it 14-7.

The drive of 60 yards that used four plays and took only 42 seconds started with a Ryan Wingo catch of 28 yards to the OSU 32.

OSU then went three-and-out, and McGuire boomed a 55-yard punt to the 15 with 2:26 left. On second down, Manning threw a beauty down the left sideline to Jack Endries for 30 yards to the Texas 45 with 2:00 left.

After a 5-yard run by Quintrevion Wisner, two incompleteness followed.

On fourth-and-5 from the 50, Endries made a catch of 3 yards but was tackled short of a first down by Downs, and the Buckeyes took over with 1:27 left. Sayin took three snaps for a loss of 10 yards to the 35 to end the game.

Notes

The Manning interception was the only turnover in the game. ... Texas had a big second-half to finish with 336 total yards (170 passing, 166 rushing). OSU gained 203 (126 passing, 77 rushing). ... Texas averaged 4.5 yards per run, Ohio State 2.3. ... Wisner gained 80 yards on 16 carries while Donaldson carried 19 times for 67 yards. ... Tate's two catches totaled 49 yards. ... Texas was penalized six times for 50 yards, the Buckeyes twice for 15. ... The Longhorns converted 5 of 14 third downs and 1 of 5 fourth downs. OSU was 3 of 12 and 1 of 2, respectively. ... Kickoff temperature was 67 degrees.



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BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 14, Texas 7

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on starting the season strong: "We said that we want to set the tone. When you start a season, you want to set the tone for the season. There are a lot of guys who are stepping into roles for the first time ever. For these guys to step in and really have a great energy about them – I thought they were poised. The moment was not too big for them."

Ohio State junior defensive tackle Kayden McDonald on the uptick in workload he had in this game as a starter: "I feel great. It was a fourth-quarter game, and I'm just happy we got the win. All the guys, everybody – Caden Curry, Kenyatta Jackson Jr., C.J. Hicks, Will Smith Jr., Eddrick Houston – they all got their chance. Man, I'm so happy for them."

Day on Texas quarterback Arch Manning and Ohio State's defense: "(Manning) is going to be a great quarterback and is a tremendous talent. Anybody you play in that first game, you just don't want to beat yourself, and you go from there. He made some good throws in the fourth quarter and has some good talent, but give our defense credit."

McDonald on his mindset on Manning's quarterback sneak the Buckeyes stopped: "Just be disruptive in the middle. That's what I do. I have to just keep building on it. I have to correct some things but just keep working."

Ohio State junior cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. on the defensive line: "Everybody talked about our defensive line a lot this offseason and were so worried about them. I'm happy that they came out and showed everybody that they're here, and they've been waiting for their turn, just like I was."

Mathews on the defense's stop in the fourth quarter that sealed the game: "We work on two-minute drills so much. You guys don't always understand how much we work on two-minute drills and how much we go against our offense. It's very high-powered. They can throw that ball, so just working against that every day, we trusted our training."

Ohio State defensive coordinator Matt Patricia on how the coaches came up with a defensive scheme for Texas: "We have a lot of young guys that haven't played a lot of football. What do they do well? How do we put them in position to play fast and play aggressive? I thought the coaches did a great job at that. Being able to move the defense and those pieces because we know what the skill sets of the players that we have are. It's different from what we had last year. The coaches that were familiar with these guys on the defensive staff, give the staff a lot of credit for being able to put that together like that. It was a great job by them."

Ohio State redshirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin on his performance and handling the big game against Texas: "I was just going out there and focusing on my job. The defense played really well, obviously. The offensive line, the receivers, the running backs ran hard, so it made my job easy just trying to distribute the ball."

Ohio State junior left guard Luke Montgomery on Ohio State's offensive line not allowing a sack: "It's super important. I told Julian, 'We've got you all day. No sacks. You're going to be pretty clean. We're going to get you right. Just do your job. We've got you with everything else.' "

Montgomery on the offensive line's chemistry: "I think we're a really close unit. I think those transfer guys came in, we brought them in with open arms, and they've done a tremendous job. Guys get to play. We want that. We're going to be fresh. That's how it's going to be, and we have a lot of confidence in every guy that goes out there."

Day on what he thought about the Buckeye run game: "I do think we were getting movement out there. It was not a high-scoring game – I think we had four possessions in the first half. When it's time to spread everybody out and air it out, we'll do that and create more space. But Texas is a defense that has great team speed. We took that into consideration putting



SONNY BROCKWAY

HOOK 'EM — Wide receiver Carnell Tate (17) celebrates after his 40-yard touchdown catch lifted Ohio State to a 14-0 lead that eventually became a 14-7 victory.

the game plan together. It certainly wasn't perfect, but it's a start."

Sayin on his 40-yard touchdown pass to Ohio State junior wide receiver Carnell Tate in the fourth quarter: "Before the drive, they let me know that might be coming. We had done a great job in practice that week of repeating that play. Carnell ran a great route, made a great catch and the offensive line protected well up front."

Montgomery on the 107,524-fan crowd: "It was a fun atmosphere. Not many times do you get to start with the No. 1-ranked team in the country during Week 1, so it's pretty cool."

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 14, Texas 7

Aug. 30, 2025 – Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
TEXAS	0	0	0	7	7
OHIO STATE	0	7	0	7	14

Second Quarter

OSU – Donaldson, 1-yard rush (Fielding kick), 8:57.

Fourth Quarter

OSU – Tate, 40-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 13:08.

TEX – Livingstone, 32-yard pass from Manning (Shipley kick), 3:28.

Att. – 107,524

Weather – Sunny, 67 F

Team Statistics

	TEX	OSU
First Downs	16	11
Rushing	10	4
Passing	6	5
Penalty	0	2
Rushes-Yards	37-166	34-77
Passing Yards	170	126
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	17-30-1	13-20-0
Offensive Plays	67	54
Total Net Yards	336	203
Third Down Efficiency	5-14	3-12
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-5	1-2
Punts-Avg.	4-46.2	6-43.3
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties	6-50	2-15
Time of Possession	27:55	32:05

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – **TEX:** Wisner 16-80; Baxter 10-40; Manning 10-38; Wingo 1-8. **OSU:** Donaldson 19-67; Peoples 10-20; Sayin 2-2; Team 3-(-12).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – **TEX:** Manning 17-30-1-170-1. **OSU:** Sayin 13-20-0-126-1.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – **TEX:** Baxter 5-25; Endries 4-50; Livingstone 2-47; Wingo 2-35; Moore Jr. 2-6; Wisner 1-5; McCutcheon 1-2. **OSU:** Smith 6-43; Tate 2-49; Inniss 2-8; Klare 1-11; Donaldson Jr. 1-9; Christian 1-6.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – **TEX:** Bouwmeester 4-46.2-52. **OSU:** McGuire 6-43.3-55.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **TEX:** Niblett 1-3. **OSU:** None.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **TEX:** Wisner 1-15. **OSU:** None.

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

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – **TEX:** None. **OSU:** Mathews Jr. 1-5.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – **TEX:** None. **OSU:** Reese 1-1.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – **TEX:** Lefau 1-1. **OSU:** Reese 1-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **TEX:** Lefau 3-6-9; Taaffe 2-7-9; Muhammad 4-2-6; Hill Jr. 1-5-6; Moore 2-2-4; Burke 0-4-4; Smith 3-0-3; McDonald 1-2-3; January 1-2-3; Kanu 1-1-2; Simmons 1-1-2; Z. Umeozulu 0-2-2; Brevard 0-2-2; Shaw 0-2-2; Moore Jr. 1-0-1; Littleton 1-0-1; Guilbeau 0-1-1; Williams Jr. 0-1-1; Spence 0-1-1; Watson 0-1-1. **OSU:** Igbinosun 4-6-10; Reese 4-5-9; McClain 5-3-8; McDonald 1-7-8; Styles Jr. 3-4-7; Curry 1-5-6; Downs 3-2-5; Styles 2-3-5; Mathews Jr. 3-0-3; Hicks 1-2-3; Houston 0-3-3; Jackson Jr. 0-3-3; Atkinson 1-1-2; Smith Jr. 0-2-2; Pierce 0-1-1; Roker 0-1-1; Stover 0-1-1; Sanchez 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – **TEX:** Moore Jr., Wingo, Livingstone, Manning, Wisner, Campbell, Hutson, Baker, Goosby, Stroh, Endries, Hill Jr., Simmons, Taaffe, Lefau, Williams Jr., Guilbeau, McDonald, Muhammad, Burke, January, Watson, Spence, Stone, McCutcheon, Filsaime, Z. Umeozulu, Bouwmeester, Niblett, Johnson-Rubell, Roberson, Smith, Littleton, Baxter, Jackson, Shaw, Shipley, Landwehr, St. Louis, Black, Robertson, N. Umeozulu, Moore, Townsend, Shannon, Washington, Vasek, Kanu, Brevard. **OSU:** Sayin, Donaldson, Tate, Smith, Montgomery, Siereveld, Daniels, Hinzman, Tshabola, Klare, Kacmarek, Styles, Igbinosun, McClain, Downs, Styles Jr., Mathews Jr., Reese, Curry, Houston, Jackson Jr., McDonald, Inniss, Delane, Hicks, West, Lockhart, Atkinson, Thurman, Pettijohn, Peoples, Stover, Pierce, Roker, Fielding, Velazquez, McGuire, Ferlmann, Rudzinski, Smith Jr., Sanchez, Padilla, Onianwa, Adolph, Roberts, Christian, Hartford, Malone.

Season Statistics

2025 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Aug. 30	(3) TEXAS (1)	W, 14-7	107,524
Sept. 6	(3) GRAMBLING STATE	3:30 p.m.	
Sept. 13	OHIO	7 p.m.	
Sept. 27	at Washington	TBA	
Oct. 4	MINNESOTA	TBA	
Oct. 11	at Illinois (12)	TBA	
Oct. 18	at Wisconsin	TBA	
Nov. 1	PENN STATE (2)	TBA	
Nov. 8	at Purdue	TBA	
Nov. 15	UCLA	TBA	
Nov. 22	RUTGERS	TBA	
Nov. 29	at Michigan (14)	12 p.m.	

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

Team Statistics		
	OSU	Opp
First Downs	11	16
Rushing	4	10
Passing	5	6
Penalty	2	0
Average Per Game/Rush	77.0	166.0
Average Per Game/Pass	126.0	170.0
Total Offense	203	336
Total Plays	54	67
Average Per Game	203.0	336.0
Average Per Play	3.8	5.0
Penalties-Yards	2-15	6-50
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Third Down Efficiency	3-12	5-14
Percentage	25%	36%
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-2	1-5
Percentage	50%	20%
Sacks-Yards	1-1	0-0
Time Of Possession Avg.	32:05	27:55

Score							
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	0	7	0	7	0	14	14.0
Opponents	0	0	0	7	0	7	7.0

Individual Statistics						
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long	
CJ Donaldson	19	67	3.5	1	8	
James Peoples	10	20	2.0	0	6	
Julian Sayin	2	2	1.0	0	1	
Team	3	-12	-4.0	0	0	
OSU Totals	34	77	2.3	1	8	
OPP Totals	37	166	4.5	0	15	

Passing						
Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.	
Julian Sayin	13	20	65.0	126	1-0	
OSU Totals	13	20	65.0	126	1-0	
OPP Totals	17	30	56.7	170	1-1	

Receiving					
Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long	
Jeremiah Smith	6	43	7.2	0	16
Carnell Tate	2	49	24.5	1	40
Brandon Inniss	2	8	4.0	0	5

Max Klare	1	11	11.0	0	11
CJ Donaldson	1	9	9.0	0	9
Bennett Christian	1	6	6.0	0	6
OSU Totals	13	126	9.5	1	40
OPP Totals	17	170	10.0	1	32

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
CJ Donaldson	1	-	-	-	-	6
Carnell Tate	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jayden Fielding	-	2-2	-	-	-	2
OSU Totals	2	2-2	-	-	-	14
OPP Totals	1	1-1	-	-	-	7

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Joe McGuire	6	260	43.3	0	55
OSU Totals	6	260	43.3	0	55
OPP Totals	4	185	46.2	0	52

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
J. Mathews Jr.	1	5	5.0	0	5
OSU Totals	1	5	5.0	0	5
OPP Totals	0	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
OSU Totals	0	0	0.0	0	0
OPP Totals	1	3	3.0	0	3

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
OSU Totals	0	0	0.0	0	0
OPP Totals	1	15	15.0	0	15
Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks

Davison Igbinosun	4	6	10	0-0	0-0
Arvell Reese	4	5	9	1.0-1	1.0-1
Jaylen McClain	5	3	8	0-0	0-0
Kayden McDonald	1	7	8	0-0	0-0
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	3	4	7	0-0	0-0
Caden Curry	1	5	6	0-0	0-0
Caleb Downs	3	2	5	0-0	0-0
Sonny Styles	2	3	5	0-0	0-0
J. Mathews Jr.	3	-	3	0-0	0-0
C.J. Hicks	1	2	3	0-0	0-0
Eddrick Houston	-	3	3	0-0	0-0
K. Jackson Jr.	-	3	3	0-0	0-0
Beau Atkinson	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
Will Smith Jr.	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Payton Pierce	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
Leroy Roker	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
Garrett Stover	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
Devin Sanchez	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
OSU Totals	28	50	78	1.0-1	1.0-1
OPP Totals	21	42	63	0-0	1.0-1
Fumbles Forced:	None.				
Fumbles Recovered:	None.				



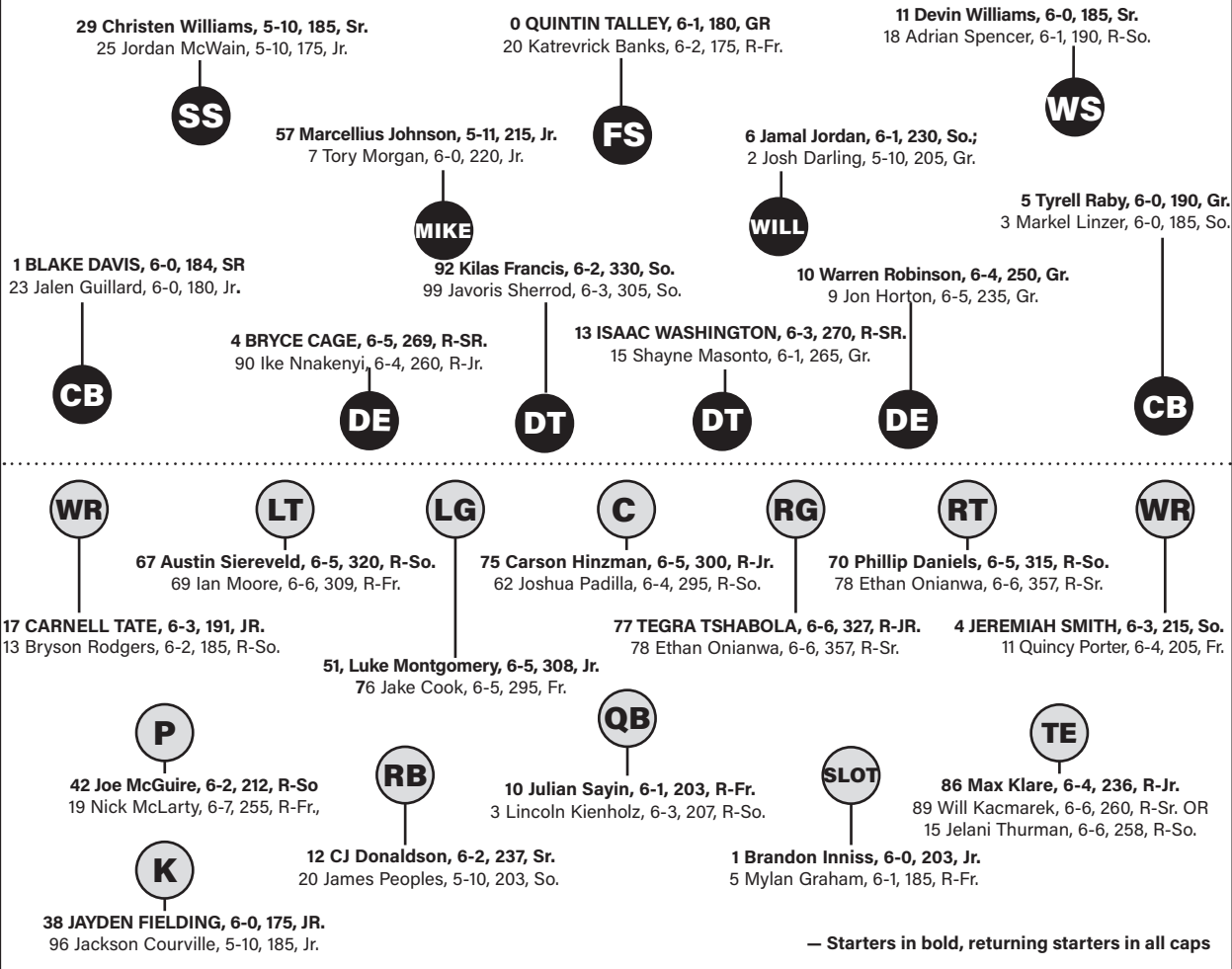
Grambling State at Ohio State

Saturday, Sept. 6 • 3:30 p.m. • BTN
Ohio Stadium; Columbus

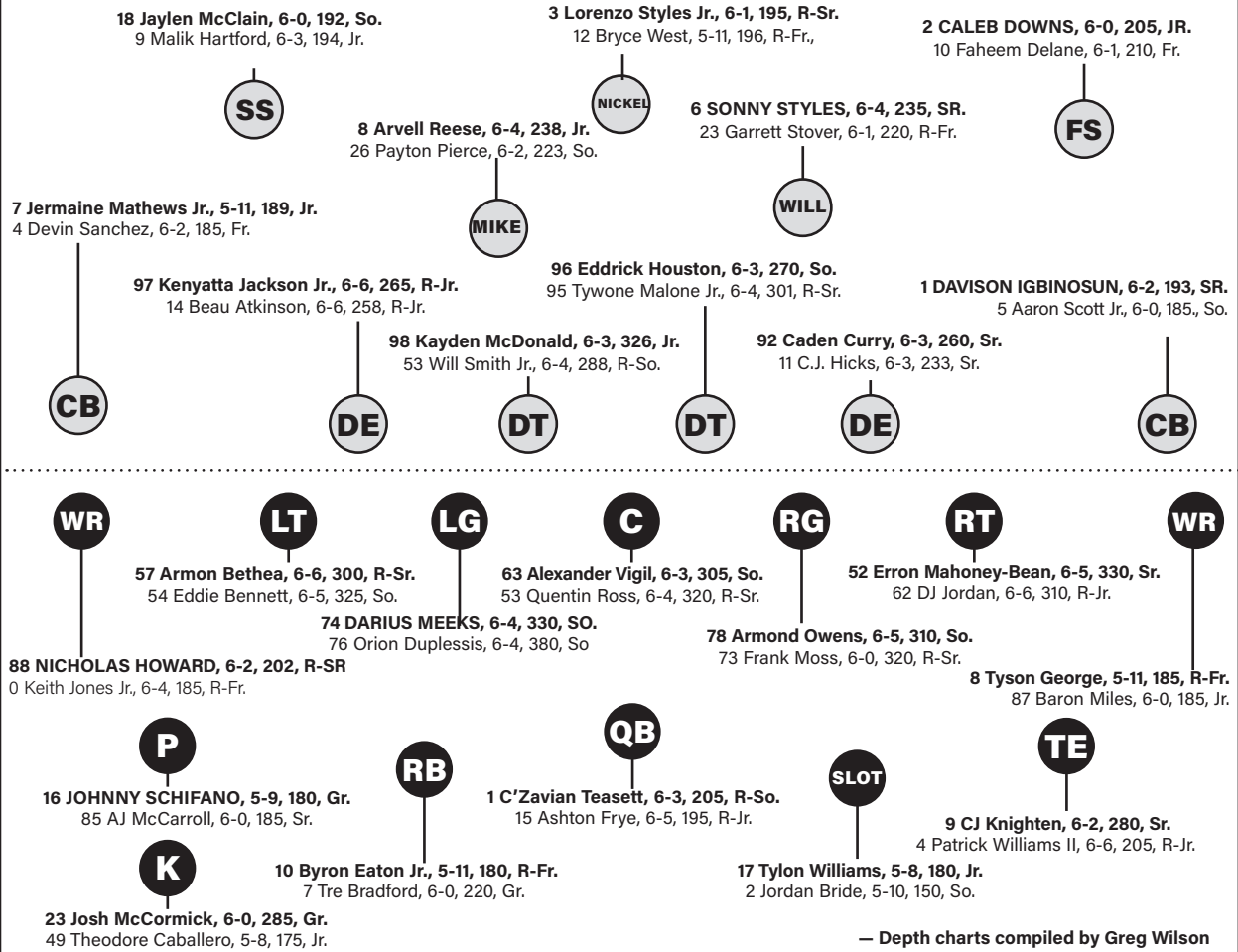


Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



WHEN GRAMBLING STATE HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. GRAMBLING STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Grambling of the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) opened its season on Aug. 30, beating Langston 55-7. The Buckeyes played a slightly stiffer opponent in top-ranked Texas, and they can't wait to pad their stats against the Tigers because there wasn't much to the running game against a stiff Longhorns defense. The new running back tandem of CJ Donaldson (19 carries for 67 yards and a touchdown) and James Peoples (10 for 20) averaged a miserly 2.3 yards per carry. The offensive line is supposed to be a strength and is capable of better. The Tigers were 5-7 last season under first-year coach Mickey Joseph. Their forte is an experienced defense anchored by defensive end Bryce Cage. Last season, he had 49 tackles, 11 tackles for loss, five quarterback hurries, four sacks and one forced fumble. Grambling limited Langston to six first downs and 97 total yards for what that's worth, including minus-32 yards rushing for a minus-1.5 average. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

GRAMBLING STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Redshirt freshmen Byron Eaton Jr. and graduate Tre Bradford will get the bulk of the carries. Darius Meeks anchors an offensive line that features five returners, and OL Tahj Martin received preseason second-team All-SWAC recognition in helping the Tigers to third in SWAC scoring (24.7 ppg) last season, although the Tigers rushed for only 1,340 yards for a 3.3 average. However, against Langston, they ran for 220 yards (5.1) with Bradford gaining 56 yards and a TD on six carries, Clyde McClendon Jr. totaling 45 yards on 10 totes and Eaton gaining 53 on seven rushes. The OSU defense under first-year defensive coordinator Matt Patricia was stellar against Texas in keeping them off the board until late. The Longhorns averaged 4.5 yards per carry to reach their total of 166 yards. While much of the defense is young and inexperienced, Grambling should provide valuable in-game training. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. GRAMBLING STATE PASS DEFENSE

Julian Sayin, in his first start, was a respectable 13 of 20 for 126 yards and a 40-yard TD to Carnell Tate. The incomparable Jeremiah Smith inexplicably had two drops after having only one last season, coming in his first game. He was held to six catches on 10 targets for 43 yards. Tate's two catches went for 49 yards on his only two targets. What Sayin did best was play smart with no turnovers, but he needs to spread the wealth and not rely on Smith so much. Grambling defensive back Blake Davis, a preseason second-team All-SWAC selection, brings experience and big-play ability. The Tigers allowed Langston 129 yards and a TD on 32 pass attempts (14 completions) while picking off one pass. They had five sacks for 37 yards. Sayin was not sacked. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

GRAMBLING STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Ashton Frye, in his second season after transferring from Jacksonville State, and Southern University transfer C'Zavian Teasett battled in the fall camp. It was Teasett who got the nod against Langston, and he was 20 of 25 for 210 yards and three TDs with a 55-yarder to Tyson George making it 14-0 in the first quarter. Frye was 6 of 8 for 44 yards and a third-quarter 11-yard touchdown pass. George led the Tigers with 63 yards on three receptions. The OSU defense throttled Arch Manning for much of the game and kept Wonder Boy to 170 yards and a TD from 17 of 30 completions. Jermaine Mathews Jr. had an interception, and Arvell Reese recorded the lone sack for a yard. The Buckeyes will want to improve on not having a hurry on Manning. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Johnny Schifano earned preseason first-team All-SWAC honors. He averaged 40.7 yards per punt with eight punts of 50-plus yards and two over 60 with one of 65 last season. He showed he was in form against Langston with a 43.3 average on three kicks that included a 60-yarder. Buckeye Joe McGuire averaged 43.3 on six kicks but was unimpressive until a critical 55-yard boot in the fourth quarter that put the Longhorns at the 15 with 2:26 to play. **EDGE: GRAMBLING**

INTANGIBLES

There will be more fans in the student section than attended Grambling's game at Independence Stadium in Shreveport, La. (18,435). The Tigers have no chance to win, but it will be a great learning experience. OSU could have a letdown, but with competition at many positions, don't expect that to happen. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

STAFF PREDICTION

There is no way to replicate the atmosphere from the Texas game, so the Buckeyes need to get off to a resounding start, and, hey, at least it's not a noon game. **OHIO STATE 52, GRAMBLING 0**

Grambling Trying To Get Back To Winning Ways

By **GREG WILSON**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

After a monster of a Week 1 matchup against Texas, Ohio State should be able to relax somewhat for its Week 2 game against Grambling State.

The FCS program would love to come into Ohio Stadium on Sept. 6 and try to take advantage of a Buckeye team that put all of its preseason focus on the Longhorns, but that might not be what's at the front of second-year head coach Mickey Joseph's mind this year.

Former Tigers head coach Hue Jackson took over in 2022 and, after a 3-8 record that year (2-6 Southwestern Athletic Conference) and a 5-6 mark the year after (4-4 SWAC), he was fired. Joseph's 5-7 record in his first season, four of those losses coming in the final five games of the season, likely didn't inspire much confidence in the program, so he knows that this is the season he needs to show that the team is improving.

"If you look around college football and the state of college football when it comes to coaches, you have to be careful in year two because in year two, they can let you go," Joseph told KTVE 10 News in July. "You've got one more year left on your contract. I have no years left on my contract after this."

The impatience with Jackson is likely partly due to the past success of the program, which hasn't won a SWAC title since former head coach Broderick Fobbs led the Tigers to two straight in 2016-17.

Before this season began, Joseph was mostly focused on proving that the Tigers can compete in the Southwestern Athletic Conference after the media chose them to finish in fifth place in the West Division, in front of only Arkansas-Pine Bluff.

"Everybody that picked us fifth, we're good with that because nobody knows anything about this team and nobody knows anything about this staff. They're just doing their job," Joseph said. "That doesn't mean that they're right. Let's make them wrong."

For Joseph, that meant reworking his coaching staff first and getting a chance to bring in players whom he recruited for the first time. Because he was hired in January of 2024, the recruiting class that offseason largely wasn't his.

Now Joseph is beginning to feel more comfortable with both the players he took over and those whom he brought in during the 2025 offseason.

"We brought in new coaches, coaches that trust what I'm saying, believe what I'm saying and see my vision," Joseph said. "And the players, you picked these kids. It's not like you're going in there and you have to

work with a kid that you didn't recruit. You recruited this kid. Now there are no excuses."

He was able to lead his team to a 55-7 win over Langston in Week 1 to start to build momentum toward the first winning record for the Tigers since 2019.

One of the newer players on the roster is transfer quarterback C'Zavian Teasett, a redshirt sophomore who won the quarterback battle in Tigers training camp over redshirt junior Ashton Frye. Teasett played in 10 games at Southern University last season and completed 71 of 129 passes for 941 yards and six touchdowns.

In his first game with Grambling, he was 20 of 25 passing for 210 yards and three touchdowns. Frye also got in the game to complete 6 of 8 passes for 44 yards and a score.

Joseph was pleased with how his transfer quarterback looked in his first game with the Tigers.

"I thought he was poised. He didn't let this atmosphere get to him in the first time being in a Grambling uniform, especially with the tradition that we do have at quarterback here at Grambling," Joseph said. "I thought the kid played well. He can't do anything but get better. So we're going to continue to push Teasett to get better."

He will be throwing to wide receivers Nicholas Howard, Tyson George and Tylon Williams.

George led the way in Week 1 with 63 yards on three catches, 55 of his yards coming on a touchdown pass from Teasett. The ball was spread around well in the blowout win, with 11 different players catching a pass in the game.

On the offensive line, Darius Meeks at left guard is the only returning starter, while Armon Bethea will be at left tackle, Alexander Vigil at center, Armond Owens at right guard and Erron Mahoney-Bean will be the Tigers' right tackle.

At running back, Tre Bradford returns after rushing for 403 yards on 105 attempts last season, getting into the end zone five times on the ground. He is set to split carries with Byron Eaton. The two combined for 109 yards rushing on 13 attempts in the opener, while Bradford had a fumble. Clyde McClendon Jr. had 10 carries for 45 yards.

While the run game wasn't bad for Grambling, Joseph wants to see his backs improve after beating Langston.

"Tre's going to be Tre. He put the ball on the ground, and I wasn't happy about that, the ball getting punched out like that," he said after the game. "But Tre's a pro. I was really happy with the young kids and the way they played with a lot of grit. They were good at (pass) protections. They just have to work at getting better every time they hit

Get To Know ... Grambling State

- **2025 Record:** 1-0, 0-0 SWAC.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – 4-2-5; Starters returning – Offense 2, Defense 4, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Mickey Joseph, 2nd year at Grambling St., 6-7.
- **Series History:** 1st meeting.
- **School Facts:** Location – Grambling, La.; Enrollment – 5,270; Nickname – Tigers; Colors – Black and Gold; Conference – SWAC; Stadium – Eddie G. Robinson Memorial Stadium (Surface – Artificial Turf; Capacity – 19,600).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Tre Bradford	6	56	9.3	1
Bryon Eaton Jr.	7	53	7.6	1
Andrew Crews	9	47	5.2	1
C. McClendon	10	45	4.5	0

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
C'Zavian Teasett	20-25	80.0	210	3-0

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Tyson George	3	63	21.0	1
Barron Miles Jr.	5	43	8.6	1
Nicholas Howard	4	41	10.3	0
Jordan Bride	5	31	6.2	0

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game — 55.0
Rushing Yards Per Game — 220.0
Passing Yards Per Game — 254.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game — 474.0

2025 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 30	Langston*	W, 55-7
Sept. 6	at Ohio State	3:30 p.m.
Sept. 13	KENTUCKY STATE	7 p.m.
Sept. 20	EAST TEXAS A&M	7 p.m.
Sept. 27	Prairie View A&M^	7 p.m.
Oct. 11	TEXAS SOUTHERN	7 p.m.
Oct. 18	at Arkansas-Pine Bluff	3 p.m.
Oct. 25	Jackson State#	6 p.m.
Nov. 1	ALABAMA A&M	3 p.m.
Nov. 8	BETHUNE-COOKMAN	3 p.m.
Nov. 15	at Alcorn State	3 p.m.
Nov. 29	Southern+	2 p.m.
Dec. 6	SWAC Championship	TBA

* at Independence Stadium in Shreveport, La.

^ at Cotton Bowl Stadium in Dallas

at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas

+ at Caesars Superdome in New Orleans

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Bryce Cage	2	2	4	1.0-5	0.5-3
Josh Darling	2	1	3	0.5-3	0.5-3
Jon Horton	2	1	3	1.5-8	0.5-5
Warren Robinson	2	1	3	1.5-12	1.0-11
Markeis Sykes	1	2	3	1.0-7	1.0-7
Jason Bush	2	0	2	1.0-1	0-0

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Tyrell Raby	1	29	29	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed — 7.0
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed — -32.0
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed — 129.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed — 97.0

the practice field."

The Grambling offense was 62nd in the FCS last season in scoring offense (24.7 points per game) and 116th in total offense (282.3 yards per game), which led Joseph to take over offensive play-calling duties for the 2025 season.

The Tigers lost their top defender from the 2024 season when linebacker Andrew Jones, the SWAC co-defensive player of the year, transferred to Ole Miss. Marcellius Johnson and Jamal Jordan take over at the linebacker position this year.

On the defensive line, junior Bryce Cage and redshirt senior Isaac Washington are players who contributed last year. They will be joined by sophomore Kilas Francis and redshirt senior Warren Robinson.

Cage was the second leading tackler on the team in 2024 with 49 stops, 11 tackles for loss and four sacks coming off the edge. He also added five quarterback hurries and a forced fumble.

In the secondary, the Tigers have cornerback Blake Davis returning. He had 41 tackles last season in 11 games, four pass breakups and three interceptions. He will be joined by Ken Pierre-Charles, Cisco Caston and Markel Linzer.

Joseph was pleased with what he saw defensively, other than allowing a garbage-time score to Langston in the fourth quarter.

"I thought the depth at D-line was really good," Joseph said. "I thought the linebackers and defensive backs played well. But I've got to get with our coaches and look at video because there were a lot of nontraditional, unscouted looks we faced with wide splits, splitting it out there.

Grambling returned four players who were recognized on the preseason All-SWAC team, with Cage making first team along with punter Johnny Schifano. Davis and offensive lineman Tahj Martin were both recognized as All-SWAC second team.

Joseph said that going into this season, he is going to have his team ready for every game since he saw last year that opponents play Grambling State a little differently than other teams due to the program's historic success.

While they have fallen in the latter half of the last decade from being the program that won 15 HBCU football championships since 1955 – nine of which were won with 56-year head coach Eddie Robinson at the helm – Joseph knows they are still viewed as one of the bigger games for SWAC teams.

"They know good and well when Grambling comes to town, they're getting fired up and they're going to play a little faster," Joseph said. "We understand that now. So we're saying, 'If you want us to be your Super Bowl, we're going to give you a Super Bowl.' So now I have to do a better job of getting (my players) going."

For Ohio State, this isn't a game Brian Hartline and Matt Patricia are scheming for. All of their attention leading up to the season was on Texas. Now, against the Tigers all the Buckeyes will have to do is play to their own strengths, and that will be enough for a big win since they will very likely have the advantage at every position. This will be a game for players who need some work to figure things out on the field.

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Freshman Class Has Chance To Make Impact

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Special to Buckeye Sports Bulletin

The 2025 Ohio State recruiting class continued the program's streak of elite hauls, securing a top-five consensus ranking for the sixth consecutive year and bringing in some of the nation's premier talent.

There is probably no true freshman who will make an immediate impact as a starter like Jeremiah Smith did a year ago, but the class still has a lot to offer. Leading the class is a trio of five-star recruits in quarterback Tavien St. Clair, cornerback Devin Sanchez and wide receiver Quincy Porter. In total, Ohio State brought in three five-star recruits, 18 four-stars, and five three-star recruits.

Ohio State had nine freshmen play in the 14-7 win over Texas on Aug. 30.

The following are profiles on each of the freshmen. BSB ranked their playing time potential on a scale of 1-10 at the bottom of each player description, with one being likely to redshirt and not see the field at all, a five expected to receive limited playing time and a 10 expected to start at some time this season or be a full-time starter.

LB Tarvos "TJ" Alford (6-1, 233), Port Saint Lucie (Fla.) Vero Beach – Alford, the No. 144 national recruit, No. 13 linebacker and No. 22 player in Florida, was the second highest-ranked of the Buckeyes' three recruits at the position. As a sophomore and junior in high school at John Carroll in Fort Pierce, Fla., and Vero Beach, Alford recorded 100-plus tackles in consecutive seasons, earning TC Palm's Defensive Player of the Year honors in 2023 as a junior. Alford joins an Ohio State linebacker corps with some ground to cover before seeing significant playing time. He is expected to start the year as a third-string option behind starters Sonny Styles and Arvell Reese, as well as sophomore Payton Pierce. Alford had a chance to claim the fourth linebacker spot during fall camp, but it appears fellow freshman Riley Pettijohn edged him out to possibly earn the second-team reps. **PTP: 4**

WR Phillip Bell (6-1, 200), Mission Viejo, Calif. – Bell joined the Buckeyes as the No. 276 overall prospect and the No. 35 wide receiver in the 2025 class. As a junior at Mission Viejo, Bell was very productive, catching 56 passes for 644 yards and seven touchdowns. Positioned deep on a depth chart filled with talented Buckeye receivers, Bell is projected to be part of Ohio State's third unit and will likely see the field only in blowout games. He posted a strong spring-game performance with three catches for 30 yards and a touchdown. Bell shed his black stripe on Aug. 20, and while he's unlikely to see significant time as a receiver, he could contribute on special teams. **PTP: 3**

DL Jarquez Carter (6-1, 288), Newberry, Fla. – Carter has been one of the most raved about rookies in fall camp, impressing head coach Ryan Day, defensive line coach Larry Johnson and veteran linemen. To say the least, Carter was a disruptive force at Newberry High School. In his first 33 varsity games, he racked up a whopping 81 career tackles for loss and 26 sacks. With depth still a question at defensive tackle, Carter has a legitimate chance to compete with returning reserves Tywone Malone and



SONNY BROCKWAY

READY TO RUMBLE – Offensive lineman Jake Cook (76) from nearby Westerville North High School is expected to see playing time as a freshman due to his ability to play several positions.

Jason Moore for backup roles behind starter Eddrick Houston at the three-tech position, with the third and fourth defensive tackles likely to see rotational snaps. **PTP: 7**

OL Jake Cook (6-4, 306), Westerville (Ohio) North – Cook, now playing just a few miles from his Westerville high school, is well-positioned to compete for snaps on the Buckeyes' offensive line. With playing time at Ohio State's backup left and right guard spots behind Luke Montgomery and Tegra Tshabola up for grabs, Cook has a chance to compete for rotational snaps with red-shirt freshman Gabe VanSickle and Ethan Onianwa, who started taking reps on the inside during fall camp. Cook's greatest upside may lie in his versatility. At Westerville North, the four-star saw time at every spot along the Warriors' offensive line. Cook shed his black stripe on Aug. 16, and while he may not crack the Buckeyes' primary rotation, he seems likely to see the field in Ohio State's big wins after impressing during the offseason. **PTP: 5**

SAF Faheem Delane (6-1, 210), Good Hope (Md.) Our Lady of Good Counsel – Delane, a four-star prospect, was one of the Buckeyes' top signees as the No. 55 overall recruit and the fifth-ranked safety in the class of 2025. At Our Lady of Good Counsel, he was named Washington Catholic Athletic Conference (WCAC) Defensive Player of the Year in his senior season. He impressed in fall camp and had his black stripe removed

entire season. That backup role should still garner Delane reps in garbage time late in Ohio State's blowout wins if he can earn time ahead of Leroy Roker. **PTP: 6**

DE Zion Grady (6-4, 258), Enterprise, Ala. – Grady, a four-star prospect ranked No. 81 nationally and the No. 9 edge rusher, was a game-wrecker in high school and comes to Ohio State as one of its most highly regarded recruits. As a junior at Enterprise High School, Grady recorded 87 tackles, 24 tackles for loss, 11 sacks and an interception, but his sophomore year was even more impressive. He earned the 2022 Alabama Class 5A Lineman of the Year honors after posting 108 tackles, 22 sacks, three forced fumbles, and three blocked field goals. Grady is unlikely to break the group of the Buckeyes' top four edge rushers in Kenyatta Jackson Jr., Caden Curry, Beau Atkinson, and C.J. Hicks, but he could still see snaps late in games with Ohio State's third team. **PTP: 4**

SAF Cody Haddad (5-11, 186), Cleveland St. Ignatius – Haddad enters an Ohio State safety room chock-full of talent. He's likely to sit behind Downs, McClain, Hartford and Delane. He could compete with returner Keenan Nelson Jr. for time on the third team. He ranked as the No. 19 overall prospect in Ohio and the No. 45 safety in the country. With a crowded depth chart in front of him, the Cleveland native may have to make his mark on special teams. At St. Ignatius, he was a true Swiss Army knife, playing safety and wide receiver as well as handling both kick and punt return duties. **PTP: 2**

RB Bo Jackson (6-0, 217), Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph – The physically imposing Jackson ran for 588 yards and 10 touchdowns in just four games in his senior season of high school. He enters the Buckeye running back room at just the right time. In 2024, Jackson might have struggled to earn carries in a deep backfield behind

Continued On Page 20

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CB Sanchez Could Be Best Of Frosh Class

Continued From Page 19

TreVeyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins. This season, however, the backfield is much more opportune for carries. The former four-star recruit will likely begin the season behind veteran backs James Peoples and West Virginia transfer CJ Donaldson. However, Day noted that Jackson has stood out in camp, and the Cleveland native has a chance to solidify his role as the team's No. 3 running back early in the season. **PTP: 8**

WR De'Zie Jones (5-10, 187), Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic – Jones, the lowest rated of Ohio State's four wide receiver recruits, is yet another freshman buried behind one of the most talented wideout units in the country. The four-star prospect from DePaul Catholic High School was slotted as the No. 51 wide receiver in the nation and the No. 8 player in New Jersey. At DePaul, Jones excelled on both sides of the ball with more than 3,000 career receiving yards, while capping off his senior season by adding two interceptions on defense. Like Bell, Jones is likely going to be a receiver who makes only late-game appearances once the Buckeyes are up big or through special teams reps. **PTP: 3**

LB Eli Lee (6-3, 227), Akron (Ohio) Hoban – Akron native Lee was a three-star prospect, rated the No. 23 player in Ohio and the 64th linebacker nationally. In his senior season at Akron Hoban, Lee was incredibly effective with 119 tackles, 19 tackles for loss and 7½ sacks. Lee is likely headed for a redshirt unless he can secure a spot on special teams, with the top three linebacker roles already locked up by veterans and fellow freshmen standouts Pettijohn and Alford. **PTP: 2**

TE Brody Lennon (6-4, 230), Cleveland Gilmour Academy – Lennon was the lower-ranked of two tight end pickups for Ohio State in the class of 2025. A four-star recruit from Cleveland, Lennon was the 17th-ranked tight end in the nation. With Max Klare, Will Kacmarek, Jelani Thurman and Bennett Christian cemented as the top four, and fellow freshman Nate Roberts making a great early impression, Lennon very likely won't see the field much this year. **PTP: 1**

OT Carter Lowe (6-6, 313), Toledo Whitmer – Lowe is the Buckeyes' best offensive tackle recruit since Donovan Jackson in 2021, according to 247Sports composite rankings. He was a four-star prospect, the No. 74 overall recruit in the 2025 class and the fourth-ranked player in Ohio. The top in-state offensive tackle prospect was named first-team All-Ohio by the Ohio Prep Sports-writers Association in 2025. With the top four tackle spots filled by Austin Siereveld, Phillip Daniels, Onianwa and Ian Moore, it will be difficult for Lowe to climb the depth chart this season. If he performs well in practice, he may see action late in games that are already decided. **PTP: 3**

OL Jayvon McFadden (6-3, 295), Upper Marlboro (Md.) Riverside Baptist – McFadden is another lineman coming into a deep offensive line group. He was a four-star recruit and the No. 24 overall interior offensive lineman in the 2025 class. He helped Riverside Baptist High School to a perfect 10-0 record in his senior season and

was the top offensive lineman prospect in Maryland. Unless McFadden can claw his way above VanSickle or Cook in the depth chart, he is unlikely to earn playing time outside of blowouts, and that's not a guarantee. **PTP: 1**

WR Bodpegn Miller (6-3, 196), Ontario, Ohio – Miller, a four-star prospect, was ranked No. 284 nationally, the No. 11 athlete, and the eighth-best player in Ohio. At Ontario High School, Miller threw for 2,216 yards and 20 touchdowns while rushing for nearly 2,000 yards and 21 TDs as a senior. Although he played quarterback and defensive back at Ontario, Miller will be a wide receiver for Ohio State. Miller is expected to join Jones and Bell among the freshman receivers battling for third-string snaps, though his role will likely be limited to special teams or late action in lopsided games. **PTP: 2**

DL Trajen Odom (6-3, 295), Matthews (N.C.) Weddington – To say the three-star recruit Odom is buried in the Buckeyes' depth chart may be an understatement. Odom is projected to land far down Ohio State's list, likely finishing behind other freshman defensive tackle standouts. In his junior season of high school, Odom amassed 54 tackles, 22 tackles for loss, four sacks and a forced fumble in just 10 games. Odom was the No. 61 overall defensive line recruit and the No. 13 prospect in North Carolina. **PTP: 1**

LB Riley Pettijohn (6-2, 231), McKinney, Texas – Pettijohn is another freshman with the potential to earn rotational snaps, earning praise from linebackers coach James Laurinaitis and Reese, who described the McKinney, Texas, native as advanced for his age. As a senior at McKinney High School, Pettijohn piled up 115 tackles, 12 tackles for loss and 5½ sacks, earning a selection to the 2025 Navy All-American Bowl. The four-star recruit was ranked 42nd overall, the No. 11 prospect in Texas and the No. 2 linebacker in the class of 2025. Pettijohn won't crack the starting lineup, with veterans Reese and Sonny Styles locking down those roles, but he should rotate in as the team's fourth linebacker just behind sophomore Payton Pierce. **PTP: 9**

WR Quincy Porter (6-4, 210), New Milford (N.J.) Bergen Catholic – Porter, one of three five-star recruits in Ohio State's 2025 class, is projected to be one of the few freshmen making an early impact for the Buckeyes. He was ranked No. 23 nationally, the fifth-best receiver in his class, and the top-rated prospect from New Jersey. Porter amassed 57 catches for 969 yards and 11 touchdowns in his senior year at Bergen Catholic High School. Porter impressed in the spring game with four receptions for 50 yards and was the only true freshman to shed his black stripe before the fall, doing so back on April 5. He is expected to be the fifth or sixth receiver on Ohio State's depth chart, seeing playing time in rotation behind starters Jeremiah Smith, Carnell Tate and Brandon Inniss and backups Mylan Graham and Bryson Rodgers. **PTP: 7**

TE Nate Roberts (6-5, 240), Washington, Okla. – As a senior at Washington High School, Roberts dominated, racking up 42 receptions for 848 yards and 12



SONNY BROCKWAY

WAITING HIS TURN – Freshman linebacker Riley Pettijohn, the No. 11 prospect in Texas and the No. 2 linebacker in the class of 2025, is poised to be fourth on the depth chart and could see meaningful playing time.

touchdowns. Roberts impressed throughout spring, hauling in an impressive four catches for 41 yards in the spring game, and continued that play into early fall, being the third true freshman to lose his black stripe on Aug. 5. Tight ends coach Keenan Bailey and multiple veteran tight ends such as Klare and Christian called the room one of the best units they've ever been a part of, and Roberts has proved to be part of that depth already, with a chance to see the field this year. With the Buckeyes' top four tight ends established, Roberts could carve out a role as the team's fifth tight end or contribute on special teams. **PTP: 5**

RB Anthony "Turbo" Rogers (5-8, 198), Montgomery (Ala.) Carver – Rogers is a rather perplexing freshman to place on the depth chart. With a few running backs ahead of him, including freshman Jackson, he is unlikely to get in for meaningful snaps on offense, especially after his late start relative to other freshmen who arrived in the spring. Rogers was a four-star, ranked No. 97 nationally and the No. 5 running back in the class of 2025, and brings a unique frame and versatile skill set. His biggest impact will likely come on special teams and gadget plays, where his speed and elusiveness can be utilized. Rogers returned kicks for both IMG Academy and Carver High School and would make for a dangerous return man for the Buckeyes. **PTP: 5**

DT Maxwell Roy (6-3, 301), Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep – Roy, a four-star defensive tackle, was a multi-sport standout in high school, ranked the No. 36 defensive

lineman nationally and the No. 9 overall player in Pennsylvania, while also earning All-America honors in wrestling and competing in track and field throwing events. He has demonstrated the ability to line up at both the one- and three-technique tackle spots, and his flexibility along the interior could prove valuable moving forward. At a media availability on Aug. 28, BSB spotted Roy in a boot and a knee scooter, so he will need to recover from whatever injury he is dealing with before worrying about pushing for playing time. **PTP: 1**

CB Devin Sanchez (6-2, 198), Houston North Shore – Sanchez is perhaps the Buckeyes' most game-ready recruit of the 2025 class. The five-star prospect ranked as Ohio State's second-highest recruit, trailing only Tavien St. Clair, and was rated the No. 8 overall prospect and the nation's top cornerback. As a senior at North Shore, Sanchez led the Mustangs to a 14-1 record and a Texas 6A D-I state semifinal appearance. Sanchez comes to Columbus with expectations to make an immediate impact in the already-elite "Best In America" Buckeye secondary. He may not yet have the experience to overtake Jermaine Mathews Jr. or Davison Igbinosun for a starting role, but strong early-season performances could earn Sanchez split snaps with nickel Lorenzo Styles Jr. and opportunities to make an impact rotating behind the two starters. **PTP: 9**

DE Epi Sitanilei (6-4, 239), Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco – Sitanilei has been one of Ohio State's most impressive rookies throughout fall camp, earning praise

THE FRESHMEN

from Kenyatta Jackson Jr. for his efforts in practice. The four-star prospect was the nation's No. 253 overall recruit, being the No. 27-ranked edge rusher and the 22nd-ranked player in the state of California. In 12 games at St. John Bosco, Sitanilei had 59 tackles, six tackles for loss and four pass breakups. Sitanilei finds himself in a role much like Grady's, positioned deep on Ohio State's roster with opportunities to compete for no better than third-string or special teams snaps. **PTP: 4**

QB Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 230), Bellefontaine, Ohio – St. Clair, the No. 7 overall recruit in the class of 2025 and the top player in Ohio, is one of the most talented recruits in Ohio State's class. As a senior at Bellefontaine High School, St. Clair threw for 2,536 yards, 29 touchdowns and four interceptions. He also rushed for 254 yards on 7.5 yards per carry with nine touchdowns. However, St. Clair is still the clear No. 3 quarterback on the Buckeyes roster behind starter Julian Sayin and backup Lincoln Kienholz. Like Sayin a year ago, St. Clair is projected to be the garbage-time quarterback, though at Ohio State, that role still provides snaps late in blowout wins. **PTP: 3**

SAF Deshawn Stewart (6-0, 199), Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic – Stewart was the second-highest ranked among the Buckeyes' three freshman safeties, trailing Delane, as a four-star recruit and the nation's No. 34 safety and the No. 10-ranked player in New Jersey. A teammate of De'Zie Jones at DePaul Catholic, Stewart had a strong junior campaign with 56 tackles and 19 pass breakups. At 6-0, 199 pounds, Stewart pos-

sesses the build of a prototypical safety and could develop with the Buckeyes over time, but, like Haddad, Stewart has little chance of gracing Ohio State's top three units this season and will likely see the field only via special teams snaps. **PTP: 3**

RB Isaiah West (5-10, 210), Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep – West was the second back recruited by the Buckeyes in the class of 2025, committing just after Bo Jackson on June 6, 2024. A teammate of Roy at St. Joseph's Prep, West helped lead his team to a PIAA Class 6A state title and a 13-1 finish. He was rated the No. 19 player in Pennsylvania and the No. 61 running back in the class. West isn't projected to see the field early as the sixth running back on the depth chart, but Day noted that coming off an injury, he has "popped" for Ohio State. With continued strong play, West could earn late-game reps as the season progresses. **PTP: 3**

CB Jordyn Woods (6-4, 193), Cartersville, Ga. – Woods entered Ohio State's 2025 class as its lowest-rated signee, a three-star prospect who was the nation's 109th-ranked cornerback and slotted as the No. 133 player in Georgia. Despite his low ranking, at 6-4, 193 pounds, Woods' build and versatility make him an interesting cornerback prospect. Woods had 41 tackles in each of his final two high school seasons at Cartersville High School and was also thrown in at receiver at times. He could be a valuable special teamer for Day with his size, but he is unlikely to see any time at cornerback with a loaded group of veterans ahead of him. **PTP: 3**



SONNY BROCKWAY

QB3 — As talented as he is, freshman Tavien St. Clair, the top player in the 2025 Ohio class, will be the third-string quarterback behind Julian Sayin and Lincoln Kienholz.

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Offensive Woes Doomed OSUs' Past Repeat Tries

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The 2025 Ohio State football team will look to accomplish something no other Buckeye team has done before: win a second straight national title.

The 2003 and 2015 Ohio State teams each had opportunities to repeat after the 2002 and 2014 teams, the previous two championship teams of the Buckeye Sports Bulletin era, each unexpectedly won the national championship. Both the 2003 and 2015 teams featured plenty of returning starters, but ultimately neither team could replicate the success of their predecessor.

As the Buckeyes attempt to finally repeat as national champions this season, BSB sat down with 247Sports' Steve Helwage and longtime Ohio State beat reporter Tim May to find out what held back those teams from winning it all.

OSU Offense Stalls Out In 2003

The 2002 Ohio State football team, led by unheralded quarterback Craig Krenzel and second-year coach Jim Tressel, wasn't expected to make much noise nationally. In the Associated Press' preseason top 25, the Buckeyes were ranked a modest No. 13. It took freshman running back Maurice Clarett to break out as a superstar, second-half comebacks in six wins and late-game heroics in a 31-24 win over Miami in the Fiesta Bowl for the Buckeyes to capture their first national title in over 30 years.

Heading into the 2003 season, the Buckeyes traded their Cinderella slipper in for a bull's-eye on their back. With 18 returning starters, the defending national champions slotted in at No. 2 in the preseason AP top 25, and according to Helwage, the buzz in Columbus was palpable.

"You had a situation in Columbus where now you have a national championship team and this heroic head coach, Jim Tressel, who

came in and he's Ohio through and through. (Former Ohio State head coach John) Cooper had them in position to win it but could not win it. Tressel finally had the breakthrough, and he did it with a lot of Cooper's players," Helwage explained. "Clarett was the freshman star, but most of the starters were recruited by Cooper. Going into 2003, they were No. 2.

"They started the season at home with a night game against Washington, and it was just electric. It was like, 'They're going to take it back-to-back,' and people were warming up to the idea that Ohio State is a national championship program once again. There was a lot of hype surrounding the '03 team and a lot of hope that they would go back-to-back."

Clarett, the first-team All-Big Ten running back who had led the team in rushing the year prior, was not one of the returning starters. Clarett was suspended for the entire 2003 season after receiving improper benefits from a family friend, among other things, and never played for the Buckeyes again.

It didn't take long for the Buckeyes to miss the 5-11 running back. After dismantling Washington in the season opener, the Buckeyes failed to score an offensive touchdown in an ugly 16-13 win over San Diego State in Week 2.

"Even though a lot of the same starters were back, it was not the same team because you take Clarett off of that offense and you just did not have a stronger running component with Lydell Ross and some of the other guys that were playing the running back position in 2003," Helwage said.

The Buckeye offensive issues came to a head during a matchup with Wisconsin on Oct. 11. In a rainy night game against a solid Barry Alvarez-led Wisconsin team, the Buckeyes totaled only 271 yards before losing 17-10.

While the Buckeyes were the much higher-ranked team, their inconsistent play leading up to the game made the final result not too surprising.

"Wisconsin was a dangerous program with Barry Alvarez," Helwage said. "They had started to win pretty big up there. So it was an upset, but it wasn't completely out of left field."

The Buckeyes entered back into national title contention with five straight wins, but a regular season-ending 35-21 loss to Michigan ended the Buckeyes' hopes of repeating as national champs.

The Buckeyes, who found some consolation with a 35-28 win over Kansas State in the Fiesta Bowl, were simply missing the sort of offensive spark that someone like Clarett provided.

"It was just a struggle," Helwage said of the 2003 Buckeyes. "The whole year was just a struggle for them. If you can't run the ball in the Big Ten, you're going to be in a tough spot, and I think that was probably the thing that kept them from blowing a lot of teams out."

Despite the issues with the ground game, the Buckeyes still had Krenzel, who had earned All-Big Ten second-team honors in 2002. The 6-4 signal caller wasn't extremely effective in 2003. He threw for 2,040 yards and 15 touchdowns while completing 55.0



SONNY BROCKWAY

BIG HURDLE — With star running back Maurice Clarett suspended for the 2003 season, the Buckeyes could not overcome his loss and were unable to repeat as national champions.

percent of his passes. According to May, the Buckeyes may have been better served by relying more on Krenzel rather than the inconsistent ground attack.

"Most of that defense was back, and so they felt good about that, but just offensively, it's like they were trying to find themselves all year, and maybe they could have committed a little more to the over-the-top passing game with Craig Krenzel. For some reason, they didn't, and it ended up biting them."

The 2003 team may not have lived up to some fans' expectations, but May was quick to point out that if not for multiple instances of late-game heroics, the 2002 team also could have suffered multiple losses.

"There were times when they hit their stride," May said of the 2003 team. "But you have to remember in 2002, they didn't run roughshod over most people. They scraped by and made miraculous plays to win games."

"In the Purdue game, everybody remembers the 'Holy Buckeye' pass from Craig Krenzel to Michael Jenkins, but Purdue got the ball back, and one deep pass later, it looked like the receiver had a step on Donnie Nicky and Chris Gamble came out of nowhere to make an interception. My point is (the 2002 team) didn't run roughshod over people either, they just won games. In 2003, they looked better than the 2002 team in some respects, but you still have to win the games, and that's what they didn't get done."

MSU Upset Ends 2015 Winning Streak

Like the 2002 Buckeyes, the 2014 Buckeyes weren't national championship favorites during the preseason, especially when it was announced that star quarterback Braxton Miller would miss the entire season with a shoulder injury. That team's title hopes seemed to end in the second game of the season when it lost to Virginia Tech.

However, then-freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett and sophomore running back Ezekiel Elliott helped make Ohio State a formidable offense throughout the regular season. And when Barrett went down with a season-ending injury in the team's win over Michigan, redshirt junior quarterback Cardale Jones performed incredibly well in the postseason to lift the Buckeyes to their first national title in 12 years.

Returning 15 starters, including Elliott as well as both Jones and Barrett, the preseason expectations for the Buckeyes couldn't have been higher and they became the first-ever unanimous No. 1-ranked team in the preseason AP poll.

Outside of a couple of uneven performances in narrow early-season wins over Northern Illinois and Indiana, the Buckeyes looked to be on track to win another national title.

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SONNY BROCKWAY

JOB UNFINISHED — With quarterback Cardale Jones and others returning from winning the national championship in 2014, the Buckeyes were poised for a repeat, but a stunning home loss to Michigan State ended their dreams in 2015.

Oct. 10 through Nov. 14 by at least 14 points, the Buckeyes were 10-0 and ranked No. 3 by the CFP selection committee headed into a home game against No. 9-ranked Michigan State.

Despite being led by a third-string quarterback, the Mark Dantonio-led Spartans pulled off a stunning 17-14 upset over the Buckeyes, which ended a 23-game OSU winning streak. Nearly a year after averaging 47.7 points per game in the postseason in 2014, the Buckeyes picked up five first downs and gained only 132 total yards in that loss to the Spartans.

The result was enough to end the Buckeyes' hopes of making the four-team playoff, and a dominant 42-13 win over Michigan was only good enough for a berth in the Fiesta Bowl against Notre Dame. The Buckeyes won that game 44-28 but still left many fans unsatisfied.

"It was a total shock to the senses," Helwage said of the team's loss to Michigan State. "It was like a nuclear bomb hit Columbus, and it knocked them completely out. They didn't get to go to the Big Ten Championship Game, and they weren't put in the four-team playoffs, and one of the best teams they ever had went 12-1 and completely underperformed."

The reason the team failed to live up to expectations has to do with complacency, according to Helwage.

"You knew that Joey Bosa and Ezekiel Elliott and Michael Thomas and three or four other guys were going to the National Football League," Helwage said. "You didn't have any doubt about that. And 2015 was 'OK, we're stuck here as juniors and we've got to play one more year of college football, let's just have some fun,'"

"The issue was they had guys suspended

for offseason drug use. (Barrett) got a DUI. It was the trappings of winning the championship the year before that really befell that team. They fell into the trap of believing they really were somebody."

According to Helwage, head coach Urban Meyer's messaging only made the 2015 season feel like something the team had to get through.

"Urban had called 2014, 'The Chase.' He called 2015, 'The Grind,' and it's like, why didn't you just call it the root canal? Why didn't you just call it the tax audit or something? It was like a total drudgery thing, and I honestly think some of those players were kind of just biding their time waiting to get to the NFL," Helwage said.

May offered a different perspective on what doomed one of the more talented Ohio State teams in recent memory.

"That was a better team than the year before, but they had one bad day that really cost them," May said. "They had some great moments in that season, but no, I don't think (it was) complacency. I think that is a great excuse when things don't work out. 'Well, we were complacent, or we overlooked.' If they overlooked Michigan State that late in the year when they had pretty much everything going again, then shame on Ohio State."

New Faces Hope To Forge New Legacy

The 2025 Buckeyes do not fit the mold of the 2003 or 2015 teams that tried to repeat as champions. While the title-winning teams were not necessarily prohibitive championship favorites, the 2024 Buckeyes, led by a plethora of senior star players, were picked by many in the media to hoist the national title trophy. With many of the 2024 team's leaders on NFL rosters, the 2025 team will

attempt to repeat as national champs with only five returning starters.

"This is different," May said of the 2025 Buckeyes. "Because they lost 17 players to the NFL, some big-time, stalwart guys, who were part of a couple of really big recruiting classes, and yet they have maybe the best offensive player in the country (sophomore receiver Jeremiah Smith) and the best defensive player in the country (junior safety Caleb Downs). But football's not a one-man game."

In some ways, according to Helwage, the Buckeyes' youth could help them become national champs, because while some on the 2015 team felt they had already achieved their goals, many of the players on this year's team didn't play a huge role on the 2024 team's national championship win.

"It was like, 'We've reached the top of the mountain and we're all celebrities now,' " Helwage said about the 2015 team. "You can just imagine those guys going out in Columbus, they were stars at all the nightclubs, and they lived it up. They were the champions, and they enjoyed it. I don't think you're going to have that problem this time, because first of all, you lost all those starters off the team who were seniors."

"If you have guys who are back like Caleb Downs and Sonny Styles, Jeremiah Smith, they all seem to have like a chip on their shoulder. Like, 'Yeah, we were members of the championship team last year, but the guts of that team were the seniors.' Then the new starters, they all want to win their own championship, one that has their own fingerprints on it. If this team is good enough, I don't think you'll see them fall into any of those complacency traps because everybody's still trying to prove themselves."

Although the Buckeye leadership seems to be in the right place and the roster is filled with four- and five-star recruits, the team will still have an uphill climb to win the title again. Since the College Football Playoff was first implemented in 2014, only Georgia has won back-to-back titles, doing so in 2021 and 2022.

"All kinds of things have to add up (for a team to win the title)," May said. "The main reason (only Georgia has repeated as national champs in the CFP era) is because it's extremely difficult. Think about the challenge these days. Now you have to win four straight (playoff) games to repeat. It's going to be easier than it's ever been to have a shot at the national championship, because 12 teams get that shot instead of two and then four. It's more difficult because you have to win four in a row."

As difficult as it may be to win the national championship, May feels the Buckeyes have the capability to make the playoffs, and if that happens, the biggest task will be overcoming the inevitable obstacles that they will face.

"The most interesting thing about this team is going to be how it handles adversity, whether it comes early against Texas, Washington, Illinois, Penn State or at Wisconsin," May said. "There are all kinds of challenges this team has to face before you can say, 'This is a national championship-caliber team,' but on paper, the best way of putting it is the talent is there, both in the player aspect of things and in the coaching aspect of things."



Jackson Took Unorthodox Path To Leadership

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Special to Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Leadership doesn't come naturally for everybody.

On a Buckeye roster with more than 100 athletes, not every player needs to be the one speaking up or taking on a vocal role. Still, it's often expected that upperclassmen, especially those in starting positions, step into leadership and help guide the younger players.

For defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr., that transition wasn't straightforward. He originally hesitated to embrace the role, but now he is prepared to anchor the Buckeye defense as a veteran leader.

Jackson, a redshirt junior, said that after the 2024 seniors graduated, he found himself hesitant about stepping up as a leader.

"I'm going to be honest," Jackson said. "I did not want to be the leader of this room at first. In the winter, it was tough."

He said the adjustment pushed him out of his comfort zone, and there were moments when the weight of high expectations felt overwhelming.

"I don't tell anybody this, but there would be times when (strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti) and the other coaches would be hard on the D-line, and it would be tough, and I'd go home and shed tears," Jackson said.

Jackson didn't begin feeling comfortable stepping into a leadership role for the Buckeyes until around the middle of winter. But since the defensive line is replacing all four of last year's starters, he shared that feeling with the guys around him who are also stepping into bigger roles, and Jackson's teammates were listening to what he had to say.

"I said in the beginning of the winter it was tough, but then the coaches helped me," Jackson said. "Then the younger guys and Caden Curry and Tywone Malone, the older people that were in the room, started buying along to it too."

Buckeye captain and left tackle Austin Siereveld said he began noticing Jackson's development over the summer as he emerged as the vocal leader of the defensive line.

"He really stepped up," Siereveld said. "He started out slow, but that's how I started out, too. That summer, he really stepped up, and he was really the main leader of that (position group)."

Despite being initially timid to take that next step as a leader, Jackson's play shone early during his Buckeye career. The 6-6, 265-pounder joined the Buckeyes as a four-star recruit and was ranked the 60th-best prospect nationally in the class of 2022.

Jackson redshirted his true freshman season, playing in only three games. The next year, he played in 12 of 13 games, accumulating seven tackles (two for loss) and 1½ sacks.

In 2024, Jackson made his mark on the gridiron, appearing in all 16 games for the Buckeyes. The Miami Gardens, Fla., native played a key role in Ohio State's national championship run, recording 16 tackles, three tackles for loss and 1½ sacks in rotation as a defensive end, as well as a pass breakup and a fumble recovery.



SONNY BROCKWAY

FOLLOW THE LEADER — Redshirt junior defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. is ready to take a more vocal leadership role after having played behind the likes of Jack Sawyer and JT Tuimoloau.

Despite being in Columbus for three years, Jackson had never once started for the Buckeyes, sitting behind a stacked defensive end unit with Jack Sawyer and JT Tuimoloau starting the past two seasons.

Jackson said as an underclassman, and even last season, he took on more of an observant role in the room, learning by watching the older defensive linemen. Now, he's applying those lessons as he steps into his own leadership role.

"The other years you had (Sawyer, Tuimoloau, Tyleik Williams, Ty Hamilton), and then you had Zach Harrison my freshman year," Jackson said. "I was in that 'sit back' role, and now it hit me where I had to be a guy. I had to be one of the leaders in the room. So it was kind of scary, but like I said, I stuck with it. They helped me along with it, and we're here now."

Ohio State's coaching staff has also recognized Jackson's development and emerging leadership.

Defensive coordinator Matt Patricia said Jackson took on a leadership role early into the veteran coach's time with the Buckeyes, setting the tone in drills, lifts and competition while pushing teammates to rise to his level.

"Kenyatta has just really, from day one that I walked in the building, stepped forward and said, 'OK, hey, let me be in front. Let me do the drill first. Let me learn. Let me do the lift,'" Patricia said. "Whatever it is, it's like 'Get me out in front. Let me go compete. Let me push myself.' I think that everyone sees how hard he is pushing him-

self, and you can't help but gravitate towards that saying, 'If this guy is working this hard, man, I've got to get my stuff together. I've got to go work as hard as he is,' because he is setting the standard as we go forward. I think everybody feels that."

On a defense with players at different stages of their careers, there's always space for multiple leaders on a sizable Buckeye roster.

Defensive line coach Larry Johnson said that Jackson and senior defensive end Caden Curry taking on leadership roles has been crucial, as they can demonstrate to the freshmen the standard of play required to lead.

"Big-time growth. Big-time growth," Johnson said about what he saw out of Jackson during training camp. "He's embracing it. He's playing absolutely as hard as he can possibly play. (Jackson) and Caden Curry have kind of taken over the room as leaders. It's good to see that a guy who's been here understands what it takes to run that room, because it's special. We have to move the yardstick in that room as freshmen, and KJ and CC have embraced it for the younger guys to see that. So he's done a great job."

In both high-effort on-field performances and in leadership, Curry has been Jackson's ideal counterpart.

Jackson said Curry's presence gives him comfort, providing a prime example of someone who also had to patiently wait his turn and who could help support and lead alongside him on the defensive line.

"I wouldn't say it's easy, but it's comfort-

able," he said. "When we came in together, we're in the same position, waiting our turn, just waiting and waiting and waiting. A guy to share a room with that dealt with the same thing, it's pretty comfortable."

Curry said his and Jackson's leadership comes down to guiding younger players as they adjust to the speed of the college game and helping them reach their full potential.

"We're just doing everything we can to help the younger guys get to the speed of the game in college and just helping everybody be the best that they can be," Curry said.

As he's grown into a leadership role, Jackson has found that every player leads in their own way. For him, it's about staying true to himself while living up to the standard of Ohio State's defensive line, dubbed the "Rushmen."

"You have different leaders," Jackson said when asked about his leadership style. "You've got the vocal leader, the leader that sets an example. I just try hard to be myself around the guys. A leader can't tell a younger guy what to do when a leader's not doing it. So every day I just push myself to the standard of the Rushmen, and they just follow after me."

Jackson described his daily mindset as one rooted in consistent effort and preparation. He said he shows up determined to push himself, focusing on small improvements while getting ready for the Buckeyes' next opponent.

"I just come in every day and bust my butt every single day, trying to get one percent better each and every day preparing for the opponent that we have coming in," Jackson said.

North Carolina transfer defensive end Beau Atkinson has been witness to Jackson's everyday effort firsthand in his limited time with the Buckeyes.

"KJ's a great dude, and he's been working very hard," Atkinson said. "I'm excited to see what he can do this year."

Star wideout Jeremiah Smith, Jackson's high school teammate at Chaminade-Madonna Prep, said the defensive end has finished waiting his turn behind a stacked line and is ready for a breakout season.

"Kenyatta has had it. I saw it in high school," Smith said. "He just had to wait his turn. Now this year, he's going to turn it up a notch, and you are just going to see a monster that I saw in high school that could be a first-round draft pick."

Jackson went down with an injury midway through the third quarter of the Buckeyes' 14-7 win over Texas, spending multiple minutes on the ground before he walked off the field and entered the medical tent.

He then had his helmet taken away and did not return for the remainder of the game. Jackson finished his day with three tackles.

Day declined to go into specifics about the injury but said he wasn't concerned and didn't expect it to be a long-term issue.

For more information on Jackson's injury, check out Game Notebook on pages 12-13 and check for updates daily on BuckeyeSports.com

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (1-0)

Aug. 30 TEXAS, W 14-7.

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

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

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

FIELD HOCKEY (2-0)

Aug. 17 MIAMI (OH) (Exh.); **24** at Michigan (Exh.); **29** at Ball State, W 7-0; **31** KENT STATE, W 9-3.

Sept. 5 VIRGINIA; **7** SYRACUSE; **12** at Harvard; **14** at Northeastern; **19** at Louisville; **26** at Rutgers; **29** at Delaware.

Oct. 3 MARYLAND; **5** PENN STATE; **12** MICHIGAN; **19** at Michigan State; **24** at Indiana; **26** at Northwestern; **31** IOWA.

Nov. 6-9 Big Ten Tournament at Bloomington, Ind.

MEN'S GOLF

Sept. 8-10 Folds of Honor Collegiate at Grand Haven, Mich.; **15-16** Bearcat Invitational at Cincinnati; **29-30** Windon Memorial Classic at Lake Forest, Ill.

Oct. 13-14 Moraine Intercollegiate at Kettering, Ohio.

WOMEN'S GOLF

Sept. 8-10 Folds of Honor Collegiate at Grand

Haven, Mich.; **15-16** Inverness Collegiate at Toledo.

Oct. 19-20 Jim West Challenge at San Marcos, Texas.

MEN'S SOCCER (2-1)

Aug. 9 NOTRE DAME (Exh.); **15** WRIGHT STATE (Exh.); **21** at Virginia Tech, L 1-0; **28** OAKLAND, W 1-0; **31** TEMPLE, W 2-1.

Sept. 5 AKRON; **9** LOUISVILLE; **13** at Butler; **19** at Michigan State; **26** at Rutgers; **29** UCLA.

Oct. 3 WISCONSIN; **10** MICHIGAN; **18** MARYLAND; **24** at Washington; **31** PENN STATE.

Nov. 7 at Northwestern; **12** Big Ten Semifinals; **16** Big Ten Championship.

WOMEN'S SOCCER (3-1-1)

Aug. 6 at West Virginia (Exh.); **9** Ohio (Exh.); **14** CLEMSON, T 1-1; **21** at South Carolina, L 1-0; **24** at UNC Wilmington, W 1-0; **28** at Princeton, W 4-1; **31** ASHLAND, W 3-0.

Sept. 7 at Kentucky; **12** MICHIGAN; **18** WISCONSIN; **21** NEBRASKA; **25** at Northwestern; **28** at Illinois.

Oct. 5 at Michigan State; **9** OREGON; **12** WASHINGTON; **16** at Rutgers; **19** at Maryland; **26** at Penn State.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (0-2)

Aug. 23 at Kentucky (Exh.); **29** at Canes Classic in Coral Gables, Fla., vs. VCU, L 3-0; **30** at Canes Classic in Coral Gables, Fla., vs. Miami (FL), L 3-0.

Sept. 3 at Miami (OH); **7** FLORIDA; **12** Beaver Creek Invitational in Dayton vs. Ohio; **13** Beaver Creek Invitational in Dayton vs. Wright State; **19** VIRGINIA;

21 TROY; **26** UCLA; **27** USC.

Oct. 3 at Washington; **4** at Oregon; **9** PURDUE; **12** at Minnesota; **17** ILLINOIS; **19** at Indiana; **24** MICHIGAN; **26** PENN STATE; **31** RUTGERS.

Nov. 2 WISCONSIN; **8** at Maryland; **9** at Rutgers; **14** at Michigan; **16** at Penn State; **21** NORTHWESTERN; **23** MICHIGAN STATE; **28** at Iowa; **29** at Nebraska.

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Former Buckeyes In Fold On NFL Rosters

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

At one end of the spectrum, there was a respected veteran who earned big money after a holdout. At the other was a rookie who made quite the first impression.

The doings of Washington Commanders receiver Terry McLaurin and New England Patriots first-year running back TreVeyon Henderson highlighted the preseason activities of former Ohio State players in the NFL, or trying to make it there.

In all, 13 of the 14 Buckeyes from the 2024 national championship team who were drafted in April made the opening rosters of their teams, with the lone exception being running back Quinshon Judkins (Cleveland Browns). He was arrested for domestic violence on July 12. Even though he was not charged, the NFL is conducting its own investigation, and he remains unsigned.

Three other title winners signed free-agent contracts shortly after the draft, and offensive tackle Josh Fryar made the 53-man roster for the Arizona Cardinals. Center Seth McLaughlin was cut by the Cincinnati Bengals on Aug. 19, but seven days later, after clearing waivers, he joined the team's 14-man practice squad. Tight end Gee Scott Jr. signed with the Patriots' practice squad on Aug. 27 after being cut by them.

With the NFL season getting under way on Sept. 4, there are 57 former OSU players on active (non-practice squad) rosters.

Commanding Attention

McLaurin, who will be 30 on Sept. 15, is the heart and soul of the Commanders, but that didn't prevent a contract impasse with management.

He first expressed his frustration to reporters on July 15 and later requested a trade. He held out the first four days of camp to the tune of a \$50,000 fine per day, then "held in," arriving at camp but not practicing. He was placed on the physically unable to perform list for what the team said was a lingering ankle issue.

He insisted that the trade threat was real.

"That wasn't something that I was doing for just leverage or just to do it or let me cause some hoopla," McLaurin said. "I tried to be as intentional as possible. Am I perfect? No, I'm not. Are there some things that you think about that you maybe want to handle different or do better? Sure, that's any situation."

On Aug. 25, McLaurin signed a three-year deal worth up to \$96 million with a \$30 million signing bonus and \$44 million guaranteed. His original asking price was a reported \$33 million per year.

"You start out one way and then you hope that it ends the way it ended," McLaurin said. "It gives me the ability to continue to stay somewhere where I love but also continue to achieve things that allow me to play at a high level and prove that I'm worth what I sign for."

McLaurin, Washington's third-round pick (No. 76) in the 2019 NFL draft, was named team captain in 2020 and has been a steady force through coaching, nickname



SONNY BROCKWAY

BIG BUCKS — Former Ohio State receiver Terry McLaurin struck it rich when he signed a three-year deal worth up to \$96 million to stay with the Washington Commanders. The well-respected fan favorite was named captain in 2020.

and ownership changes that resulted in just four playoff games in his career.

However, three of those games came last season when rookie quarterback Jayden Daniels helped resurrect the franchise. It's no coincidence that McLaurin had a career-high 13 touchdowns from his 82 catches for 1,096 yards.

In his career, he has 460 catches for 6,379 yards and 38 TDs in 97 starts. He has missed three games, all in his first two seasons.

"I know I have a lot of elite ball ahead of me," McLaurin said.

He doesn't subscribe to the theory that he's on the downside of his career now that he's approaching the big 3-0.

"I'm only going into my seventh season. A lot of, well, multiple guys are maybe in that situation. They're in years 9, 10, 11 maybe," he said. "And so, the benefit I had coming out of college is I played a lot of high-level football, but I was only playing like 20 to 30 reps a game all the way down to my senior season. So I've also been blessed to never have had a surgery or any major injury that's inhibited me to continue to play at a high level.

"The data is the data, but I think certain people, there are outliers, there are people who may not necessarily fit in that set of data. And only time will tell, but I feel like where things are trending and my ability

just last year, I mean, just in January, I ran like a 60-yard screen for a touchdown, and my speed hasn't diminished at all."

On The Ball

While McLaurin is deep in his career, Henderson is just getting started.

He had some injuries through his first few seasons at Ohio State but last season combined with Judkins for a lethal combo that resulted in Henderson going to the Patriots in the second round at No. 38, two spots behind Judkins.

Henderson will be remembered for his 75-yard catch-and-run score against Texas in the CFP semifinal, and it didn't take long to introduce himself to a new audience — 12 seconds to be exact. That's how long it took to take the opening kickoff of the preseason 100 yards for a touchdown on Aug. 8 against the Commanders.

"I thought the kicker was going to get me," he said. "I had to make sure I hit the gas. That's when I knew."

He later added an 18-yard run in his impressive debut.

"I give thanks to my teammates," Henderson said. "The guys up front, they did a good job of blocking things. They cleared a path for me."

By the end of camp, he had earned national praise.

Chris Branch of The Athletic, in his ar-

ticle about eight newcomers to remember, wrote that Henderson was the best of the bunch.

"Henderson was awesome in four years at Ohio State, winning a national title last year and rushing for 3,761 career yards. He has popped in training camp, too, and could already be seen as the Pats' best offensive weapon.

Scoop City author Jacob Robinson added this:

"It took one touch for Henderson to cement himself as the Patriots' best skill-position player. He can handle a heavy dose of carries and targets as a rookie and should see plenty of both in a Josh McDaniels' offense otherwise devoid of explosive options."

Boston Globe columnist Chad Finn compared Henderson to former Patriots running back Curtis Martin, who was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2012. Martin had 14,101 yards and 90 touchdowns during his 11-year career.

"Sometimes you can just tell that a running back has it," Finn wrote. "We could tell with Martin 30 years ago. And you'd better believe we can tell with Henderson now. Henderson is the Patriots' most exciting rookie back since Martin, and I expect him to have a debut that spurs a similar level of optimism and belief."

He added a caveat, "Now, I'm not going to put Henderson in Canton just yet, fellas. Of course not. That would be silly. Absurdly premature. Let's let him get an official NFL carry first, maybe even two, and then see how this promising career builds from there."

Two days before Henderson's debut, he made news for being in a scuffle with Commanders players during a joint practice in which new Patriots coach and former OSU defensive end Mike Vrabel received a bloodied cheek trying to separate players.

Henderson blocked a Commanders player, reportedly Von Miller, they wrestled to the ground, and a melee ensued.

Catching On

Wide receiver Emeka Egbuka was also drawing praise in the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' camp. The 19th pick of the first round was overlooked because of other star receivers throughout his Ohio State career, but he's had a chance to shine on his own.

In Branch's top newcomer story, he spoke of Egbuka under the heading "The football nerd's dream."

"You won't find a rookie more beloved in ball-knower circles right now, as the fellow Buckeye (to Henderson) was overshadowed last year in Columbus by current Heisman front-runner Jeremiah Smith. The truth is that he looks pro-ready right now and should get plenty of chances in Tampa Bay's system with Chris Godwin ailing. (Scoop City author Jacob Robinson) has already compared him to rookie-year Justin Jefferson, who was a star from the jump."

Robinson wrote: "With Buccaneers receivers Jalen McMillan on the IR and Chris Godwin still not practicing, Egbuka has the opportunity to have a Jefferson-like season in an elite offense."



SONNY BROCKWAY

WELL RECEIVED — Emeka Egbuka was overshadowed at Ohio State, but the 19th pick in the 2025 NFL draft by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers received high marks for his play during the preseason.

Coming And Going

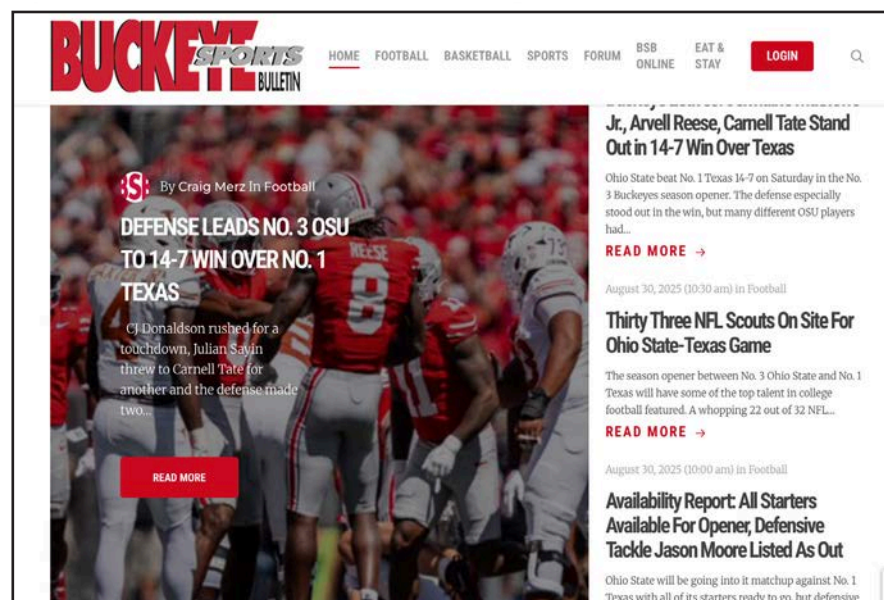
- Quarterback Will Howard made the Pittsburgh Steelers' 53-man roster but was placed on short-term injured reserve on Aug. 27 with a broken finger sustained early in camp. The sixth-round pick (No. 185) will miss a minimum of four games.

Meanwhile, a pair of former Buckeye QBs had different results. Quinn Ewers, who transferred to Texas after one season, made the Miami Dolphins roster, but 2023 starter Kyle McCord has signed with the Philadelphia Eagles practice squad after completing his college career at Syracuse in 2024.

- Three former Buckeyes were placed on season-ending injured reserve: 49ers offensive tackle Isaiah Prince, cornerback Shaun Wade of the Chicago Bears and receiver Parris Campbell of the Dallas Cowboys.

- Commanders defensive tackle Jalyn Holmes is on their practice squad. ... Cornerback Kendall Sheffield remains unsigned after being cut by the Miami Dolphins. ... Also without a team is former New York Jets defensive back Tanner McCalister. ... The Steelers released punter Cameron Johnson and long snapper Jake McQuaide, and each remains unsigned.

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Reporters Agree U-M's Punishment Was Light

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Two months after a hearing between the NCAA's Committee on Infractions and Michigan occurred regarding the illegal sign-stealing operation that occurred within the program, the Wolverines were finally issued a punishment.

Michigan will have to pay three fines, including one equivalent to 10 percent of the football budget, a fine associated with the loss of postseason revenue for the next two seasons and a fine equivalent to 10 percent of the scholarships Michigan awarded last season. The Wolverines will also receive a 25 percent reduction in official visits during the 2025 season and a 14-week prohibition on recruiting communications that will be served during the program's four-year probation period.

Former coaches Jim Harbaugh and Connor Stallions were issued 10-year and eight-year show-cause orders, respectively, and head coach Sherrone Moore, who is already serving a self-imposed two-game suspension during the Wolverines' Week 3 and 4 games against Central Michigan and Nebraska, received a two-year show-cause order and an additional one-game suspension that will be served in 2026.

In some ways, the punishment is unprecedented. The fine, which reportedly could cost the Wolverines north of \$30 million,

could be much more punitive than anything the NCAA has issued before. Still, the consensus among many college football fans and media members is that the NCAA went light.

"They deserved a greater punishment, for sure," said former Ohio State safety and 97.1 The Fan's Tyvis Powell. "They cheated. They literally dictated the outcome of the game, so for that reason, (they) should have been punished for it. I understand they are a big brand. I mean, it's about money. Money drives the sport and a lot of these things. So I understand why they chose not to give them a harsher punishment."

Sign-stealing in college football isn't illegal and certainly wasn't invented by the Wolverines, but the alleged operation conducted within the program and led by Stallions involved improper in-person scouting of future opponents' games, which is not allowed by the NCAA.

The NCAA's investigation found 56 instances of off-campus in-person scouting of 13 future regular-season opponents over 52 games over three seasons.

With the NCAA's punishment and findings of the scandal now official, BSB sat down with Powell, Eleven Warriors deputy editor Dan Hope, Spartan Mag publisher Jim Comparoni and Tony Garcia, a Michigan beat reporter for the Detroit Free Press, to find out how and why the NCAA came to its conclusion and the effects the punishment will have on Michigan.



FILE PHOTO

FLED IN TIME — The NCAA gave former Michigan quarterback and head coach Jim Harbaugh, who left for the Los Angeles Chargers after winning a national championship in 2023, meaningless sanctions for his role in the sign-stealing scandal that besmirched the school and the program.

NCAA Clinging To Power, Reporters Say

Although many Buckeye fans had hoped the Wolverines would get a greater punishment, most reporters covering the investigation didn't expect the program to have its wins vacated or receive a multiyear postseason bowl ban.

The NCAA's power has seemingly eroded since NIL deals were made legal in 2021. It was tough on Ohio State in 2011 after finding that players on Jim Tressel's 2010 team received improper benefits from the owner of a tattoo parlor. For that issue, the Buckeyes were given a one-year postseason bowl ban, a reduction in scholarships, and had all of their wins from 2010 vacated. Tressel also received a five-year show-cause order and a \$250,000 fine.

The discrepancy between the punishment the Buckeyes received for "Tattoogate" and the one recently issued to the Wolverines has left many Buckeye fans in disgust, but according to Hope, the latest NCAA ruling may be the new normal in college football.

"I think the days of heavy-handed punishments from the NCAA are likely over, because if there was ever going to be a situation to (vacate wins) again, it was this one,

and they decided not to do it," Hope said.


The NCAA has said it vacates wins only when a team has an ineligible player on the field, and because players are now not only allowed to make money from NIL deals but also directly from the school as part of revenue sharing, that sort of punishment will likely be uncommon going forward and doesn't apply to the Wolverines' sign-stealing scandal.

Still, many hoped the Wolverines would see some sort of postseason ban like the Buckeyes were issued for Tattoogate. According to the NCAA, there was enough evidence to warrant a multiyear postseason bowl ban, but that punishment "would unfairly penalize student-athletes for the actions of coaches and staff who are no longer associated with the Michigan football program."

According to Comparoni, the NCAA's failure to drop the hammer on the Wolverines is indicative of the power (or lack thereof) of the organization.

"Basically, the NCAA is losing power. They're a melting ice cube," Comparoni said. "The conferences and the broadcast networks have overtaken the NCAA as a law enforcement entity, like crime families overtaking local police. The Big Ten and the other conferences have gotten to the point










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that they can leave the NCAA anytime they want. The NCAA knows this. The NCAA is hanging on to its ceremonial position by a thread. And it's no longer a governing body with any teeth as far as enforcing whatever rules are left.

"The Big Ten wanted to protect its two consecutive national championships, the broadcast companies want Michigan in the postseason for television ratings, and the NCAA is powerless against their whims."

In June, the Big Ten did its part in attempting to protect the Wolverines when league commissioner Tony Petitti sent the NCAA COI a letter advocating for the program to receive no further punishment than the one they had self-imposed, as well as the three-game suspension the conference issued Harbaugh back in 2023.

Given the Wolverines' past hostility toward the Big Ten over its decision to suspend Harbaugh, some were surprised by Petitti's decision to advocate for the program. According to Garcia, though, the letter sent by Petitti was standard practice and likely didn't have much impact on the NCAA's final decision.

"It certainly didn't hurt, but I don't know how much it helped," Garcia said. "It's kind of par for the course. Greg Sankey sent one for Tennessee (in 2023). I believe it was Jim Delany, who was the Big Ten commissioner when Ohio State was in trouble for sort of the Tattogate over a decade ago, and I think he sent a letter as well. It's really just what they do."

Financial Repercussions Could Hurt Wolverines

Hours after the NCAA's decision, Barstool founder and Michigan super fan Dave Portnoy immediately took to Twitter to laugh off the punishments issued to his alma mater. According to Garcia, Portnoy's reaction was similar to that of the majority of Michigan's fan base.

"They're so over it," Garcia said of Michigan fans. "They're laughing about it. They don't really care about it. They're like, 'Oh, it's just money, we have tons of money. We've been hit with recruiting sanctions before. That's fine.' Mostly, it's like they're kind of taking victory laps on anybody who was using the last two years to say, 'The hammer is coming, the hammer is coming.' I'd say they're kind of yukking it up."

Michigan fans aren't the only ones who feel like the punishment can be quickly remedied with money from the school's biggest donors. According to Comparoni, while the Wolverines' reputation has been hurt by the sign-stealing scandal, the football team itself won't really be hurt on the field.

"We hear people say that \$30 million is real money, and it's a problem, but they're one of the most well-funded athletic departments in the country. They'll get over it relatively soon," Comparoni said. "I hear that money is going to be divided up among the other 17 members of the Big Ten Conference. It's almost like hush money. It's like, 'Hey, we know that Michigan did you dirty, and we're not giving them a real punishment, but here's some money to make you feel better about it.'"

"Among the true upstanding Michigan graduates that used to be proud of the way Bo Schembechler tried to run his program, those people that always felt that Michigan had a clean program – to think that Michi-

gan is now a win-at-all-costs renegade program that is being laughed at and ridiculed and skewered by SEC partisans like Paul Finebaum and Clay Travis. Also, Jim Rome, Pat Forde, Rick Neuheisel, Urban Meyer, all these people lining up to take a piñata bat to Jim Harbaugh – these things, I'm sure, do bother them."

Internally, though, it appears that the Wolverines are in some ways affected by the punishment, as the program appealed the NCAA's decision shortly after it was announced. According to Garcia, the NCAA punishment, especially the hefty fine, is not something being shrugged off by those within the Michigan program.

"Michigan's already having to sort of redo its athletic budget in order to accommodate the \$20.5 million that they can now pay athletes for the revenue sharing. So with an additional \$20 million there and then losing another \$20 to \$30 million – I mean, Michigan's endowment is huge and much bigger than that, but this (fine) is almost 10 percent of the athletic budget. All of these added expenses do add up eventually."

Garcia pointed out that the Wolverines' 2026 recruiting class doesn't seem to be affected by the punishment. They were ranked in 247Sports' composite top 10 as BSB went to press, but he said some of the Wolverines' smaller sports could also be hurt going forward.

"It's hard to know where it will be felt, possibly in future recruiting classes," Garcia said of the hefty fines. "I think it could be a bad thing for some of the smaller sports. There's a chance that it sort of trickles down across the department. When they're cutting and slashing things, it's like, 'Hey, we have to pay this \$25 million, so that \$100,000 that you were going to get here and that \$250,000 you were going to get there, we don't have that this year.'"

"You're going to have to figure out how you're going to recruit without any NIL, whether that be field hockey or softball or baseball or any of the sports that kind of matter at Michigan but are nothing like football, men's basketball, women's basketball."

While the fine could hurt the Wolverines in recruiting, Garcia doesn't anticipate that the official visit reduction and communication prohibition will be very punitive.

"I think it's probably pretty minimal, to be frank," Garcia said. "The recruiting punishments were there's a 25 percent reduction in visitors this year, so Michigan is probably going to pick off the bottom quarter of the recruits who it had offered. All the major guys who they're really locked in on are still going to get to visit."

"Then over the four-year probation, there are 14 weeks when the staff isn't allowed to interact with student-athletes. That's like 3½ weeks a year, so maybe it's one week this month, it's one week the next month, and they can do it sort of at any time. So ahead of time, they can tell recruits, like, 'Hey, we're not going anywhere, we're just not allowed to talk to you this next week. I'll catch up with you on Monday.' If it was 14 weeks that had to be served next year, that would be a really major thing, but to spread it out over four years, I just don't think that's going to affect them that much."

Reporters Believe U-M Should Have Had Bowl Ban

Each reporter BSB spoke to agreed that

the punishment issued to the program was light, and all of them would have considered issuing the Wolverines a postseason ban if it were up to them. Hope, in particular, felt like the Wolverines' wins with Stalions on the staff should have been vacated and the team should have been issued a one-year postseason ban.

"I probably would have gone with a one-year postseason ban, because I think that would have sent a message without overly penalizing the current players," Hope said. "I think it would have been reasonable, based on what the NCAA has done in the past, to vacate wins for the seasons and the amount of time that Stalions was running his schemes. That probably would have been from the start of 2021 through the middle of 2023, before his resignation."

"I wouldn't say that I think the national championship in 2023 should have been vacated, because he was gone by the time that happened."

Powell agreed with Hope on what the punishment should have been and specifically noted that the Wolverines' championship didn't need to be vacated.

"I thought the perfect punishment would have been to vacate the wins for the two seasons that they did it, not the national championship. I think they won that fair and square, but vacate some of those wins and maybe give them a one-season bowl ban. Even if they didn't even do the ban, I thought that the vacated wins could have been something that they easily could have done."

Unlike Hope and Powell, Comparoni

didn't draw the line at the 2023 national championship. Instead, Comparoni said he wholeheartedly felt like the national title should have been stripped from the program.

"The argument you hear Michigan fans say is, 'Well, by the time the College Football Playoff was played, the Connor Stalions thing was uncovered and known and everything was legal by the end.' Even that idiot Charlie Baker (the president of the NCAA) said that they won it fair and square," Comparoni said. "Well, Baker's an idiot, and it doesn't matter in my opinion what he said. He's still wrong."

"That would be like if a policeman catches you doing 75 miles an hour, three miles out of town in a 25 mile per hour zone, but by the time he pulls you over, you're downtown and you're only doing 25 and you tell the cop, 'Hey, I'm not doing 75 miles an hour anymore, I don't deserve a ticket.' Screw you. You did it and deserve to have a punishment."

Garcia didn't go as far as advocating for vacated wins because it remains unclear how much the sign-stealing affected games and because the Wolverines didn't utilize ineligible players. However, he still felt as though a postseason ban would have been appropriate.

"I think they did deserve a harsher punishment, frankly," Garcia said. "I think Michigan probably should have been banned from the postseason for at least one year, I think maybe two. Even the NCAA said there were grounds for it."



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Fitzgerald Settles Lawsuit Vs. Northwestern

Former Northwestern football head coach Pat Fitzgerald and the university settled Fitzgerald's wrongful termination lawsuit on Aug. 21.

BIG TEN NOTES Sam Cipriani

Fitzgerald filed the suit in October 2023 and was seeking \$130 million from the school after he was fired amid reports of hazing incidents throughout the year. He was originally suspended for two weeks without pay before Northwestern fired him when two players came forth with accounts of alleged hazing activities. Terms of the settlement were not publicly disclosed.

Fitzgerald said he was unaware of the hazing until after the reports came out, adding that he was disappointed the incidents took place without his knowledge.

"For the past two years, I have engaged in a process of extensive fact and expert discovery, which showed what I have known and said all along – that I had no knowledge of hazing ever occurring in the Northwestern football program, and that I never directed or encouraged hazing in any way," Fitzgerald said in a statement.

The former head coach made sure to say that he regretted the fact that any hazing happened on his watch, whether he was aware of it or not.

"I am extremely disappointed that members of the team engaged in this behavior and that no one reported it to me," he said, "so that I could have alerted Northwestern's athletic department and administrators, stopped the inappropriate behavior, and taken every necessary step to protect Northwestern's student-athletes."

Fitzgerald said he still believes Northwestern lacked grounds to fire him but agreed to a settlement, saying he wanted to spare his family any stress it might have been causing.

"Though I maintain Northwestern had no legal basis to terminate my employment for cause under the terms of my employment agreement, in the interest of resolving this matter and, in particular, to relieve my family from the stress of ongoing litigation, Northwestern and I have agreed to a settlement," the statement read.

Fitzgerald was the longest-tenured head coach in Wildcats football history, finishing with a 110-101 record in 17 seasons with the program. He was replaced in 2023 by David Braun, who won Big Ten Coach of the Year in his first season, earning a promotion from interim head coach to full time.

USC, UCLA Players Denied 5th Year

On Aug. 18, a judge in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California denied the requests of USC offensive lineman DJ Wingfield and UCLA wide receiver



FILE PHOTO

CASE CLOSED — Former Northwestern player and head coach Pat Fitzgerald settled his wrongful termination suit against the school. He was fired in October of 2023 over alleged hazing incidents that he said he knew nothing about until stories surfaced.

er Kaedin Robinson, who were hoping to get a fifth year of eligibility this fall.

Wingfield and Robinson contested the NCAA's five-year rule, which limits athletes to four seasons of competition within a five-year window. They filed the lawsuit after the NCAA rejected their waiver requests for an additional year of eligibility.

In Robinson's request for an injunction, his representation stated that, "The eligibility rule at issue is unlawful because it has substantial anticompetitive effects on two-year or junior colleges and universities that are excluded from NCAA membership."

The statement continued, "The NCAA's anticompetitive conduct, coupled with its unreasonable denial of Robinson's meritorious request for a waiver, thus threatens him with the immediate irreparable harm."

Wingfield claimed that he stood to earn about \$210,000 to play for the Trojans this season, while Robinson's complaint noted he had been offered a \$450,000 NIL deal by UCLA.

"There is a subtle difference between

a rule that retrains compensation and a rule that limits one's potential to negotiate a NIL agreement," the judge stated. "Putting aside the NIL agreements, the question of whether a player's time has run out remains in full force. The eligibility question is not tethered to the question of compensation or commercial transaction."

The judge also added that Wingfield waited five months to request a temporary restraining order after the NCAA's ineligibility ruling, and the delay weakened the "irreparable harm" claim.

The judge might not have felt Wingfield and Robinson should be able to play this year, but others view the situation differently.

"This is another illustration of how inconsistent these rulings have been," Boise State law professor Sam C. Ehrlich told On3's Pete Nakos. "Judges are very clearly disagreeing with each other on a particular legal issue, whether the rules are commercial, and it's allowing some players to get an extra year and others not to, despite nearly identical relevant facts. This will be – hopefully – resolved in the next

BIG 2025 Standings

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Indiana	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Iowa	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Maryland	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Michigan	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Michigan State	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Minnesota	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Nebraska	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Ohio State	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Oregon	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Penn State	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Purdue	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Rutgers	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
USC	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Washington	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Wisconsin	0	0	0.000	1	0	1.000
Northwestern	0	0	0.000	0	1	0.000
UCLA	0	0	0.000	0	1	0.000

Aug. 28 Games

Rutgers 34, Ohio 31
Minnesota 23, Buffalo 10
Wisconsin 17, Miami (OH) 0
Nebraska 20, Cincinnati 17

Aug. 29 Games

Michigan State 23, Western Michigan 3
Illinois 52, Western Illinois 3

Aug. 30 Games

Tulane 23, Northwestern 3
Ohio State 14, Texas 7
Purdue 31, Ball State 0
Maryland 39, Fla. Atlantic 7
Indiana 27, Old Dominion 14
Penn State 46, Nevada 11
Oregon 59, Montana State 13
Iowa 34, UAlbany 7
Michigan 34, New Mexico 17
USC 73, Missouri State 13
Utah 43, UCLA 10
Washington 38, Colorado State 21

Sept. 5 Games

Western Illinois at Northwestern, 7:30 p.m.
NIU at Maryland, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 6 Games

Kennesaw State at Indiana, noon
FIU at Penn State, noon
Illinois at Duke, noon
Iowa at Iowa State, noon
Northwestern State at Minnesota, noon
Oklahoma State at Oregon, 3:30 p.m.
Miami (OH) at Rutgers, 3:30 p.m.
Grambling at **Ohio State**, 3:30 p.m.
Middle Tenn. at Wisconsin, 4 p.m.
Boston College at Michigan State, 7:30 p.m.
Akron at Nebraska, 7:30 p.m.
Southern Illinois at Purdue, 7:30 p.m.
Michigan at Oklahoma, 7:30 p.m.
Ga. Southern at USC 7:30 p.m.
UCLA at UNLV, 8 p.m.
UC Davis at Washington, 11 p.m.

All times Eastern

few months at the appellate level, but that won't help the players who justifiably feel like they're getting treated unfairly just because they unluckily drew the wrong judge."

Frosh Underwood Starts For U-M

Bryce Underwood, the No. 1 prospect in the 2025 class, was officially named the starter for Michigan on Aug. 25 before

BIG TEN NOTES

the No. 14 Wolverines' Week 1 matchup against New Mexico.

Head coach Sherrone Moore described Underwood's maturity as "beyond his years" and acknowledged that, while mistakes are inevitable, he has full support from coaches and teammates, while confirming that he will be the starting quarterback.

"He's earned the opportunity," Moore said. "It was not given to him. All the other quarterbacks had a good camp as well. Jadyn Davis has really come along and really taken the next steps. He'll be the No. 2. Bryce took the necessary steps and really took ownership of his abilities and took ownership of the team and became a leader on the team.

The 6-4, 228-pound Underwood became the fourth true freshman quarterback to start a season opener for the Wolverines, and he has been very outwardly confident about his skills since arriving in Ann Arbor.

"They've seen a lot of freshmen, but I feel like nobody has seen a freshman like me," Underwood said Aug. 22.

Underwood's confidence proved to be justified in his first collegiate start, going 21 of 31 for 251 yards with one touchdown and no turnovers.

He will face his first true test when the Wolverines travel to Norman to take on No. 18 Oklahoma Sept. 6.

SEC Adjusts Conference Schedule

Starting in 2026, the SEC will be adopting a ninth conference game. Mem-

bers of the Big Ten, coaches and athletic directors alike, have been adamant that the league should play the same number of conference games as the Big Ten since the 16-team playoff was proposed.

The rule could set the stage for the Big Ten possibly changing its stance on the 5-plus-11 16-team College Football Playoff model, which it has been strongly against since it was proposed by the Big 12 and ACC.

Before the SEC adopted its nine-game conference schedule, Big Ten officials argued that the SEC's eight-game league schedule gave them an advantage and urged the conference to join the other three Power Four conferences, which all play nine league games.

SEC commissioner Greg Sankey announced the league's presidents and chancellors approved the decision to play nine games following a recommendation from its athletic directors on Aug. 21.

"Adding a ninth SEC game underscores our universities' commitment to delivering the most competitive football schedule in the nation," Sankey said. "This format protects rivalries, increases competitive balance, and paired with our requirement to play an additional power opponent, ensures SEC teams are well prepared to compete and succeed in the College Football Playoff."

The SEC had been playing eight-game conference schedules since 1992, when Arkansas and South Carolina expanded the league to 12 teams.

The addition of the extra conference game will not affect the SEC's sin-

gle-standings, non-divisional structure. Under the new rules, teams will keep three annual rivalry games, rotate the other six conference matchups, and play every SEC opponent at least once every two years, with all home and away games played within four years.

As an additional rule, teams in the conference must also schedule at least one additional "high-quality" nonconference

opponent each season from the ACC, Big Ten or Big 12 conferences, as well as Notre Dame.

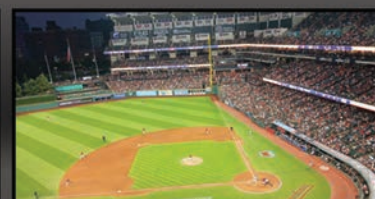
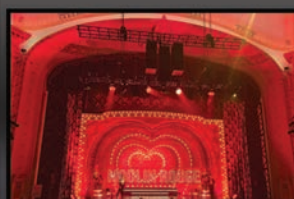
The conferences have until Dec. 1 to agree on a new format for the playoff that would begin in 2026. If they don't come to an agreement by then, the same 12-team format will likely stick around for another year.

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Buckeyes Lasso Texas-Sized Visitor List

It was no surprise to see over 100 recruits make it to Ohio Stadium for the Buckeyes' 14-7 win over No. 1 Texas on Aug. 30 despite the noon kickoff.

With much of the 2026 cycle already settled for the Buckeyes, most visitors were

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Greg Wilson

from the 2027 and 2028 classes, many of them ranked highly.

The following list of recruits was compiled using our own information, reports from other outlets and recruits themselves.

The players who are already committed to Ohio State who made it to the game were Delaware (Ohio) Rutherford B. Hayes four-star running back Favour Akih (6-0, 190); Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic five-star safety Blaine Bradford (6-1, 207); Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School four-star safety Simeon Caldwell (6-3, 185); Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star wide receiver Kayden Dixon-Wyatt (6-2, 180); Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School three-star tight end Corbyn Fordham (6-4, 215); Fort Wayne (Ind.) Northrop four-star wide receiver Jerquaden Guilford (6-3, 190); Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star wide receiver Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 205); Cleveland Glenville four-star linebacker Cincere Johnson (6-3, 225); Cleveland Glenville three-star defensive lineman Jamir Perez (6-4, 360); Avon Lake, Ohio, four-star offensive tackle Maxwell Riley (6-5, 280); Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy four-star linebacker CJ Sanna (6-3, 225); and Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star cornerback Jordan Thomas (6-1, 185).

Both 2027 commits, Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne five-star wide receiver Jamier

Brown (5-11, 170) and Huntington Beach, Calif., four-star quarterback Brady Edmunds (6-5, 215), were also on campus for the game.

There was a bevy of 2027 prospects on hand for the contest. The offensive prospects who made it to campus and are ranked inside the top 150 in the class by 247Sports composite rankings were Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes four-star offensive tackle Kelsey Adams (6-5, 293); Oregon commit Brentwood (Tenn.) Academy five-star wide receiver Kesean Bowman (6-1, 174); Texarkana (Texas) Texas High four-star offensive tackle Qua Ford (6-5, 285); Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School five-star running back David Gabriel Georges (6-0, 205); Harper Woods, Mich., four-star wide receiver Dakota Guerrant (6-1, 185); Buffalo (N.Y.) Canisius four-star running back Elijah Kimble (5-10, 180); Bixby, Okla., four-star interior offensive lineman Kaeden Penny (6-4, 265); Chandler (Ariz.) Basha four-star running back Noah Roberts (6-1, 190); McKeesport, Pa., four-star wide receiver Javien Robinson (6-2, 189); New Orleans Brother Martin five-star wide receiver Easton Royal (5-11, 185); Indianapolis Lawrence North five-star wide receiver Monshun Sales (6-5, 195); Penn State commits McKeesport, Pa., five-star running back Kemon Spell (5-9, 205) and Pittsburgh Pine-Richland four-star wide receiver Khalil Taylor (5-11, 180); and Libertyville, Ill., five-star tight end Brock Williams (6-5, 210).

Players in that class in the top 200 prospects on the defensive side of the ball were Cincinnati Anderson four-star cornerback Ace Alston (5-11, 165); Fort Worth (Texas) North Crowley four-star cornerback Jerry Outhouse Jr. (6-0, 175); Macon (Ga.) Howard five-star safety Ta'Shawn Poole (6-2, 185); Olney (Md.) Our Lady of Good Counsel five-star edge rusher Anthony Sweeney (6-4, 215); Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star cornerback Aaryn Washington (6-0, 160); Chesterfield (Va.) Lloyd C. Bird five-star defensive end Chris Whitehead (6-5, 210); and La Verne (Calif.) Damien four-star safety Gavin Williams (6-1, 180).

The Buckeyes have also started to make the 2028 class a focus as well, inviting multiple quarterbacks to campus. They hosted Wilmette (Ill.) Loyola Academy quarterback Matthew Lee (6-4, 200); Vero Beach, Fla., four-star quarterback Wonderful Monds IV (6-2, 224); Princeton (N.J.) Hun School quarterback Lukas Prock (6-2, 180); and Detroit Cass Technical five-star quarterback Donald Tabron II (6-4, 180).

Pennington (N.J.) School four-star running back Tahmere Brown (5-11, 188), Charlotte (N.C.) Country Day five-star wide receiver Braylon Clark (6-3, 188) and Bradenton (Fla.) five-star wide receiver Eric McFarland (5-9, 175) were the only other offensive players in the class of 2028 who made it to Columbus.

Defensive prospects in the class on campus were Springfield, Tenn., four-star cornerback Jermaine Cobbins (6-1, 175); Louisville (Ky.) Christian Academy five-star defensive lineman Kellan Hall (6-4, 260); and Trotwood (Ohio) Trotwood-Madison five-star defensive lineman Jameer Whyce (6-4, 270).

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	
Luke Fahey	QB	6-0	185	★★★	Mission Viejo, Calif	
Corbyn Fordham	TE	6-4	215	★★★	Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School	
Sam Greer	OT	6-7	310	★★★★	Akron Hoban	
Jerquaden Guilford	WR	6-3	190	★★★★	Fort Wayne (Ind.) Northrop	
Chris Henry Jr.	WR	6-5	205	★★★★★	Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei	
Cincere Johnson	LB	6-3	225	★★★★	Cleveland Glenville	
Jamir Perez	DL	6-4	360	★★★	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	
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 2028 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	★★★★	Tampa (Fla.) Blake	

Remaining Five-Stars Commit Elsewhere

Ohio State was among the top schools for Mineral (Va.) Louisa County five-star running back Savion Hiter (6-0, 200), Flowood (Miss.) Hartfield Academy five-star safety Bralan Womack (6-0, 195) and Richmond (Va.) St. Christopher's School five-star interior offensive lineman Darius Gray (6-3, 285), but ultimately, they each landed elsewhere.

Hiter was first off the board when he committed to Michigan on Aug. 19.

"The culture," Hiter said about why he chose the Wolverines. "The culture there is so much different there than any other school. It feels like a blessing to be there. Every time I'm up there, it feels like family."

He chose Michigan over the Buckeyes, Tennessee and Georgia. He is the No. 9 player in the country and the No. 1 running back according to 247Sports composite rankings. He is the first commitment that Michigan has received since the NCAA handed down punishments to the program for the sign-stealing scandal and recruiting violations.

Hiter took an official visit to Columbus over the summer, but after that, it never seemed like the Buckeyes were being considered as much as the Wolverines and the Volunteers.

Ohio State still has just one running back in its 2026 class. Akih could end up being the only player the Buckeyes take at the position this cycle, given the youth in that room, which includes three freshmen

from the 2025 class.

With Hiter's commitment, Michigan is up to the No. 10 spot in the 2026 recruiting rankings, while Ohio State sits at No. 9.

Womack pledged to the Tigers on Aug. 21. At one point, Ohio State seemed like the team to beat for his services due to his close relationship with the Buckeye coaches and current safety Caleb Downs.

However, later in the process, Auburn took a more aggressive approach, and it worked with Womack. The No. 15 prospect in the country and the No. 1 safety decided that he wanted to be with the Tigers for his college career. He chose Auburn over Ohio State, Florida and Texas A&M.

Ohio State has Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic five-star safety Bradford (6-1, 207) and Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School four-star safety Caldwell (6-3, 185) committed in the class. But Caldwell might project better as a linebacker at the college level, so the Buckeyes will likely be looking for players in the secondary to flip in the fall.

Gray committed to South Carolina a day after Womack pledged to the Tigers.

Gray chose the Gamecocks over the Buckeyes, LSU, Tennessee and Clemson. While he did have a good relationship with OSU offensive line coach Tyler Bowen dating back to Bowen's days at Virginia Tech, that wasn't enough for the Buckeyes to add to their already solid offensive line class.

OSU currently has four-star offensive tackles Sam Greer (6-8, 315) of Akron Hoban and Riley committed, as well as Phoenix Mountain Pointe three-star offensive tackle Aaron Thomas (6-7, 300) and Glen-

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ASK AN ANALYST

with Allen Trieu of 247 Sports

Mineral (Va.) Louisa County five-star running back Savion Hiter (6-0, 200) committed to Michigan on Aug. 19, the first commitment the Wolverines got after the NCAA revealed penalties against the program for the sign-stealing scandal. Do you think this is a signal that there won't be any negative effects on recruiting for Michigan?

"I do think it's a sign that they likely won't be affected, although most of the recruiting of Savion happened prior to that. So by that point, he has built the relationships, and his mind is made up. I can tell you this. Schools will use it. They're going to negative recruit it. How much of an effect will it have? That remains to be seen. It also has to be juxtaposed with how Michigan does this season. So if you don't have a great season and you have (the NCAA punishments), things can pile up quickly, but if they have a good season still and kind of keep the train moving – so far, I've heard very little talk from the recruits about it having any effect."

Ohio State was in Hiter's top four schools. Do you believe the Buckeyes will try to land another 2026 running back, or will they stick with only Delaware (Ohio) Hayes four-star running back Favour Akih (6-0, 190)?

"I do think that they're going to keep their eyes open for a running back with Favour in the class. I think the plan will still always be to take two, but you've got some insurance there with him. I think they'll try to circle back on guys this year and keep an eye out for guys that may rise as seniors and see if they can flip a guy here or there. I would say that it's not definite, but I would expect two running backs to end up in the class."

Ohio State missed on three five-star recruits in the span of four days, with Flowood (Miss.) Hartfield Academy safety Bralan Womack (6-0, 195) and Richmond (Va.) St. Christopher's School interior offensive lineman Darius Gray (6-3, 285) also committing elsewhere. What do you make of OSU missing on so many top recruits recently? Do you believe it is NIL-related?

"My thought right away is NIL, and that doesn't mean that Ohio State's not doing a good job at NIL. It just depends on the situation. (For) Darius Gray, South Carolina has an opportunity to really sell out for a guy like that. And so now in NIL, it kind of goes on a situational basis. You can't just say this school is doing great in NIL, and this school is doing poorly in NIL. It just depends on what each school is able to offer the individual kid."

So in those cases, it's a combination of factors, but I do think that NIL had large parts in those two recruitments specifically."

The Buckeyes hosted a large group of prospects for the game against Texas on Aug. 30. Who are some of the 2027 prospects from the Midwest who were scheduled to be on campus that you believe Ohio State will be heavily involved in recruiting?

"The two in-state offensive linemen, St. Clairsville three-star offensive tackle Mason Wilt (6-5, 295) and Liberty Center offensive tackle Kellen Wymer (6-5, 265) – I would think Ohio State is either the leader or one of the leaders for both of them. Columbus St. Francis de Sales four-star Jordan Karhoff (6-4, 215), a tight end right there in Columbus, Ryan Day's son, RJ, is his quarterback. So obviously there's a lot of connection there, and he's been to campus a few times. Libertyville, Ill., five-star tight end Brock Williams (6-5, 210) is a big one. He's the tight end out of Illinois. This was the first visit he scheduled. He's spoken really highly of Ohio State. That's going to be a little bit more of a battle than those in-state guys, but I think Ohio State has a really good chance with Brock as well."

dale (Ariz.) Sandra Day O'Connor three-star interior offensive lineman Tucker Smith (6-5, 280). Greer currently ranks No. 69 by 247Sports composite while Riley is No. 142, Thomas is at No. 506 and Smith is No. 704.

Gray would have been the highest-ranked lineman in the class for the Buckeyes as the No. 30 player in the class.

LSU Still Pursuing OSU Commit Bradford

When Bradford committed to Ohio State in late March, it came as somewhat of a surprise to those in the recruiting world since he is a short drive away from the LSU campus at Baton Rouge Catholic.

The commitment also came before Bradford was able to take any official visits, so it seemed as if he had fully made up his mind. He had summer visits to Texas and LSU scheduled but ended up not taking them.

But recently, the Tigers have ramped up their recruitment of Bradford again, and Bradford's father, Stacy, said that his son is going to go through the entire recruiting process, which likely means Bradford will be taking visits elsewhere leading up to the December signing period.

"Ohio State has not made any mistakes," Stacy Bradford told Rivals' Sam Spiegelman. "Blaine is a 17-year-old kid with the pressure of Death Valley hovering over him. Blaine will have the final say-so as we navigate this space. As of today, he is a Buckeye."

The elder Bradford also said that the Tigers are pushing hard for the five-star safety, not wanting to miss out on top in-state talent. LSU has Bradford's older brother, freshman safety Jacob Bradford, on its roster after he signed in the 2025 class. That, and the fact that he is close to campus, will make it very easy to get to Tigers games this season.

Blaine Bradford is the No. 36 player in the 2026 class, the No. 5 safety and the No. 2 player in the state of Louisiana.

Henry Dominates In Season Opener

Ohio State's top 2026 recruit, Henry, played in a nationally televised season-opening game on Aug. 23.

No. 1 Mater Dei's matchup against No. 6 St. Thomas Aquinas of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., televised on ESPN, ended with a 26-23 victory for Henry's Monarchs, largely thanks to Henry.

The five-star scored two touchdowns, including an 81-yarder, and also made a few highlight-reel catches on his way to the win. His first score came at the start of the second quarter on a go route down the right sideline. Henry dived into the end zone and reached for the catch with a defender on his back, but he was able to hold on to it for the

score.

His second touchdown came about five minutes later in the quarter, out of the slot when Wisconsin commit and three-star quarterback Ryan Hopkins (6-3, 195) found Henry in one-on-one coverage downfield. Henry, in stride, came away with the 50-50 ball that was delivered over his back shoulder and celebrated his way into the end zone for the score.

Henry finished with four catches for 134 yards and two scores, all of which came in the first half of the game. He is ranked the No. 21 player in the class and the No. 3 wide receiver.

Akih Injured In Opener

High school football has begun across the country, and many Ohio State commits

Continued On Page 34

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OSU, 11 Others Offer Louisiana RB

Continued From Page 33

are back in action for their final prep seasons before joining the college ranks.

In Akih's first game of the season, he went down with an ankle injury on his first carry of the year.

"It was a tough one," Akih said after the game. "But I'll be back soon. It's a high ankle sprain. We had it X-rayed. Nothing's broken. I (will) get it rechecked on Monday."

Last season, Akih ran for 1,600 yards and 19 touchdowns, and he was set to try to beat those numbers in his senior year but now will have to get back to 100 percent before he gets going. But it does seem like the four-star was able to avoid a serious setback.

Buckeyes Make Scholarship Offers

The Buckeyes hosted many prospects from the 2027 and 2028 classes on campus for the Texas game, but they were also busy looking for more prep players to offer scholarships to over the past few weeks.

Ohio State offered a scholarship to Owings Mills (Md.) McDonogh School four-star defensive lineman Joseph Buchanan (6-5, 255) of the 2027 class on Aug. 25.

He is ranked the No. 222 player in the

country, the No. 23 defensive lineman and the No. 6 player in the state of Maryland. Soon after he received the offer, Buchanan scheduled a visit to Columbus for the Oct. 4 matchup against Minnesota. He holds 22 Division I offers.

The Buckeyes also offered Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic four-star running back Jayden Miles (6-2, 203) of the 2027 class on Aug. 18. He is the No. 193 player in the nation, the No. 16 running back and the No. 11 player in the state of Louisiana.

Running backs coach Carlos Locklyn's offer was the 12th that Miles has received, including offers from Auburn, Florida, Florida State, LSU, Miami, Oregon and Texas A&M, among others.

Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic four-star defensive end James Pace III (6-3, 225) also received an offer from OSU. He is the No. 87 player in the country and the No. 12 edge rusher in the 2027 class.

He is from the same high school that produced current Buckeye defensive lineman Jason Moore, as well as former All-America defensive end Chase Young. Pace has already earned 22 Division I offers.

Orlando (Fla.) Jones four-star defensive end Frederick Ards (6-5, 225) was another prep player to get a scholarship offer since BSB last went to press. He is the No. 130

player in the country, the No. 17 defensive end and the No. 13 player in the state of Florida in the 2027 class.

Severn (Md.) Archbishop Spalding five-star offensive tackle Bryce Smalls (6-4, 290) was the highest-rated player the Buckeyes offered. He is the No. 32 player in the 2028 class, the No. 4 offensive tackle and the No. 1 player in the state of Maryland.

Although he is just a sophomore, Smalls already has 12 other Division I offers from Boston College, Florida State, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, Penn State, Pitt, Syracuse, Tennessee, Toledo and Virginia Tech.

PSU Commit Spell An OSU Flip Candidate

Spell was one of many top prospects who made it to the Ohio State game. While he is already committed to the Nittany Lions, he has been exploring other options.

He told On3's Hayes Fawcett that the schools that have the best chance to flip him are Alabama, Michigan, Ohio State, Notre Dame, Tennessee, and USC.

After his visit to Columbus, Spell still has visits planned to Penn State when it hosts Oregon (Sept. 27), Florida State when it hosts Miami (Oct. 4), Notre Dame when it hosts USC (Oct. 18) and Tennessee when it

hosts Oklahoma (Nov. 1).

In his season opener with McKeesport, Spell rushed for 293 yards on 13 carries, with four rushing touchdowns, while also taking back a kickoff return for a 98-yard score as well. As a sophomore in 2024, he ran the ball 157 times for 1,681 yards (10.7 yards per carry) and 24 touchdowns. He had two games of 200-plus yards rushing in the playoffs while leading his team to the WPIAL Class 4A championship.

It is going to be a long battle for Penn State and head coach James Franklin trying to hold onto Spell until signing day for the 2027 class. Spell originally committed to the Nittany Lions on Aug. 2, 2024, and is considered the No. 9 prospect in the country, the No. 1 running back and the No. 1 player in the state of Pennsylvania.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Toledo commit Massillon (Ohio) Perry three-star offensive tackle Preston Dazey (6-5, 280) scheduled a visit to Columbus for the game against Grambling on Sept. 6. He has been committed to the Rockets' 2026 class since June 25 and is the No. 1,335 player in the country and the No. 62 player in the state of Ohio.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1990

One of the biggest prizes in college football recruiting during the season was going to be nearby Westerville (Ohio) South running back Ki-Jana Carter, regarded as one of the top prospects in the nation.

Carter had rushed for 1,762 yards and scored 23 touchdowns in his first varsity season the year before and hoped to build on that for his final prep campaign.

First, though, he had to recover from arthroscopic knee surgery. Carter suffered the injury in a summer basketball game but was scheduled to miss only one game.

In the running for his services along with Ohio State were Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Penn State, Tennessee, and UCLA.

30 Years Ago — 1995

Westerville South linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer was probably Ohio's best prospect and among the nation's top linebackers in the 1996 class.

He had good size and great speed, and he made the plays (60 solo tackles for Division I state runner-up South the previous year). He was a versatile athlete who played the middle, but he could also be an outside linebacker or maybe a rush specialist if necessary. South opened its new season Sept. 2 at home against Worthington Thomas Worthington then visited Massillon Perry Sept. 8.

He was mainly looking at Ohio State, Penn State and Notre Dame, but Illinois and several other Big Ten or Big East schools had the chance to be considered.

"I've narrowed it down to the Midwest and East," he said.

25 Years Ago — 2000

Ohio State's strong recruiting momentum for 2001 continued with the Aug. 17 announcement that Dayton Chaminade-Julienne wide receiver Angelo Chattams had committed to the Buckeyes.

Chattams picked the Buckeyes over Michigan, Penn State, Michigan State, Purdue and Miami (Ohio). All had offered.

"I called Coach (John) Cooper this morning," Chattams told BSB. "They were happy about it. They wished me a lot of luck and said they were happy I was ready to commit."

"Now I can concentrate on my senior year and helping my team win a state championship."

Chattams told BSB he had made only unofficial visits to OSU and nearby Miami.

"Ohio State has a great facility, and I really enjoyed the coaches there," he said. "It just seemed like a good fit."

20 Years Ago — 2005

How much the tight end position would be utilized in what figured to be a more wide-open Ohio State offense remained to be seen. Should a player such as Konrad Reuland join the fray, one could safely assume the coaches would find a way to feature the position.

From Mission Viejo, Calif., Reuland was ranked the nation's No. 1 tight end by Rivals.com. That same service also rated him the nation's No. 42 overall prospect.

Mission Viejo should have rung bells with most followers of Buckeye recruiting. It was long known as one of the top talent-producing programs in the Golden State, and OSU had dipped into the Diablos' talent pool the previous season, securing a letter of intent from defensive end Ryan Williams, who was born in Washington Court House, Ohio, and was a Buckeye fan.

Somewhat surprisingly, Reuland was in a similar boat. He was also born in the Buckeye State, and though he spent little of his formative years in Ohio, he and his family remained fans of the program. They made sure to stop in Columbus on a tour of schools that also included visits to Nebraska, Notre Dame and Miami (Fla.)

15 Years Ago — 2010

Cardale Jones, who was rated a three-star quarterback by Scout, said he was up to 15 scholarship offers and that one Big Ten school was recruiting harder than all the others.

"I'd say Iowa is the one school that is recruiting me the hardest," he said. "I've been keeping in touch with their coaches a lot more than any other schools, and they just tend to send me a lot more mail and stuff."

"I'm looking for a school that really offers that home-type feeling. I want to be somewhere with a good offense, and I can't say which school that is out of the ones that have offered me because I haven't taken any visits yet."

The Buckeyes had yet to offer Jones, but if they did, they would have "as much a chance as everyone else," he said. He had camped at OSU over the summer, participated in a 7-on-7 camp at Oregon and was also part of an unofficial team trip to Michigan.

10 Years Ago — 2015

Games against lower-level competition don't always bring out the big names in recruiting, but Ohio State scored a coup when it hosted defensive tackle Antwan Jackson for the Hawaii game. Even better was the fact that it was an unofficial visit, meaning that Ohio State could pick up the tab for an official visit later in the season if Jackson wanted.

Jackson, a four-star prospect out of Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar

Grove, had a top two of Auburn and Ohio State with Florida and Georgia also in consideration.

He was rumored multiple times over the summer to be close to committing, but each such instance ended with a denial from the four-star prospect. Jackson noted that when he was finally ready to decide, the news would come from him and not those around him.

"I'll be committing this fall," he told Scout.com, parent network of BuckeyeSports.com. "I'm going to let everyone know when I'm going to commit and I'm going to have a ceremony, so just look for it."

Five Years Ago — 2020

Ohio State continued its strong start to the 2022 recruiting cycle when Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona three-star tight end Bennett Christian announced his commitment to the Buckeyes on Sept. 1.

Christian – who was considered the 19th-best tight end and No. 370 prospect overall in his class – landed an offer from Ohio State and Tennessee during a two-day period in early June, with head coach Ryan Day, offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson and executive director of football relations Tim Hinton leading the charge for the Buckeyes.

NCAA-sanctioned visits were not permitted during the recruiting dead period, so Christian took matters into his own hands and made his first trip to Columbus on Aug. 14, at which time he and his father took an unguided tour of campus and had lunch with freshman cornerback and family friend Lejond Cavazos.

One Year Ago — 2024

Beating Akron wasn't Ohio State's only win on Aug. 31. The Buckeyes also received a commitment from Mission Viejo, Calif., four-star wide receiver Phillip Bell (6-2, 195) the same day, adding to their top 2025 recruiting class.

Bell was ranked the No. 184 player in the country, the 19th best at his position and the 16th-best player in the state of California.

The Buckeyes were able to come out on top of Bell's home-state USC Trojans in the recruiting battle for the four-star, pulling him away from the Los Angeles-based school that had been considered to be a favorite to land him earlier in the cycle.

"I really love the coaching staff," Bell said about Ohio State after his game on Aug. 24. "Coach (Brian) Hartline has produced multiple first-round picks at receiver the last three or four years, and that's exciting. Ryan Day is a great head coach, an offensive-minded head coach, and they always have great quarterback play at Ohio State. You know every year there, they're going to have a five-star quarterback running the offense, and that's big for me."

OSU Nonconference Schedule Cost Revealed

After Ohio State's nonconference schedule was announced by the team, The Columbus Dispatch reported that the Buckeyes will nearly break even for the 2025-26 season.

COURT REPORT Greg Wilson

Seven of the nonconference games Ohio State plays this season will be at Value City Arena, and six of them are classified as "buy" games against low- or mid-major opponents, meaning the Buckeyes will be paying them to travel to Columbus for the game.

Ohio State will pay a total of \$565,000 to those six opponents, according to the Dispatch report. IU Indy, Purdue Fort Wayne, Appalachian State, Western Michigan, Mount St. Mary's and Grambling State are set to visit Ohio State this season.

Western Michigan and Mount St. Mary's will be in town for the "Buckeye Invitational MTE," with the teams getting a total of \$195,000 combined for the round-robin event. It isn't clear how much of that amount each team will receive.

Grambling State (\$100,000) will be paid the most of the teams that had their payout amount specified, followed by Purdue Fort Wayne (\$95,000), IU Indy (\$90,000) and Appalachian State (\$85,000).

The Buckeyes also host Notre Dame, which is part of a home-and-home series, so no payment will be exchanged for that game.

While the Buckeyes will be paying \$565,000 to host those six teams, they will nearly make that amount back for their three neutral-site games against high-major opponents.

When OSU plays in the CBS Sports Classic in Atlanta against North Carolina on Dec. 20, it will be paid \$250,000. The Buckeyes will also be paid \$175,000 for their participation in the "Cleveland Hoops Showdown," where they will play West Virginia on Dec. 13, and they will receive \$125,000 when they go to Nashville to take on Virginia on Feb. 14.

In total, Ohio State will receive \$550,000 for playing North Carolina, West Virginia and Virginia.

Mobley Competes At Chris Paul Camp

Ohio State guard John Mobley spent his time from July 29 to Aug. 1 in Las Vegas at the Chris Paul Elite Guard Camp.

The camp is set up by the 12-time All-Star NBA point guard Chris Paul and is focused on helping point guards develop through hands-on instruction and film sessions with Paul.



FILE PHOTO

SUMMER SCHOOL — Sophomore guard John Mobley Jr. (0) spent part of his offseason honing his skills at the Chris Paul Elite Guard Camp in Las Vegas from July 29 to Aug. 1. The 12-time NBA All-Star holds the camp exclusively for point guards.

sions with Paul.

In an offseason that Mobley has been putting in a lot of work to try to make a jump in his sophomore season, it was a way for him to confirm that work had been paying off.

"It also validated the work I've been putting in in the weight room, too," Mobley told The Columbus Dispatch. "Being able to not get pushed around, (but) do the pushing — that's really big, too."

Mobley was thrust into a very important role for the Buckeyes when Meechie Johnson Jr. left the team 10 games into the season, and he rose to the occasion. He averaged 13.0 points and 2.2 assists per game while shooting 38.5 percent from three-point range. He trailed only Bruce Thornton, Devin Royal and Micah Parrish in scoring on the Buckeye roster last year.

Thanks to that performance last year, he was able to earn the honor of being invited to the camp.

"Beginning of last season, I showed a lot of scoring in catching and shoot and just being off the ball a lot," he said. "Once that role changed, being on the ball and showing everybody that I could be a point guard really gave me a big shot at getting invited to the point guard camp."

Mobley said that being able to watch film with Paul was extremely helpful due

to his extensive knowledge of the game and his ability to break individual plays down. Mobley also said that he believes the camp helped him become a better off-ball player as well.

"That's one thing I really took away from that camp, really being able to know when to cut," Mobley said. "I know how to move without the ball on the perimeter, but being able to know when to cut, I feel like that was big."

There were four other Big Ten guards at the camp with Mobley. Michigan's Eliot Cadeau, Purdue's Braden Smith — last year's conference Player of the Year — UCLA's Donovan Dent and Iowa's Bennett Stirtz were also in attendance.

Former OSU Signee Commits To Rutgers

Richmond Heights, Ohio, four-star shooting guard Dorian Jones (6-4, 160), a former Ohio State signee, committed to Rutgers on Aug. 20.

Previously, Jones wasn't able to enroll at Ohio State due to a reported academic issue, and he requested a release from his NLI. He planned to attend a prep school for a year in hopes of being able to play in Columbus for the 2026-27 season.

"As I reflect on my development, this year is an opportunity for me to grow more prior to college," Jones wrote in a since-deleted Instagram post. "I won't be enrolling at Ohio State this year, but I look forward to continuing our relationship."

Now, Jones will join the Scarlet Knights for the 2025-26 season. He visited Piscataway in April 2024, but there wasn't much public interest between the two after his

commitment to Ohio State, making this commitment a bit of a surprise.

Rutgers head coach Steve Pikiell coached two top-five picks in the NBA draft last season, with true freshmen Ace Bailey and Dylan Harper leaving the program after one season. Now his relationship with Jones proved to be an important one with how this recruiting battle ended up.

"I picked Rutgers because I think this was the best decision for me moving forward and also because the coaching staff showed me so much love and made me feel more at home."

Jones is the No. 128 overall prospect, the No. 21 shooting guard and the No. 1 player in the state of Ohio in the 2025 class according to 247Sports composite rankings.

PG Commit Johnson Decides To Stay In Ohio

Ohio State 2026 commit Marcus Johnson (6-2, 180), a four-star point guard from Garfield Heights, Ohio, was reportedly hosted on multiple prep school visits that he considered transferring to for his senior year of high school, but he ultimately decided to stay at Garfield Heights. He averaged 29.7 points, 5.7 rebounds, 4.7 assists and 2.2 steals per game as a junior and reached the Division III state semifinals last year.

"It wasn't my decision. It was God's decision," Johnson told the Dispatch. "I just prayed that God would give me signs where I should be, that wherever I go, I'll be successful. I feel like the signs were to stay home. I believe I will be successful next year."

He and his family visited Chandler (Ariz.) AZ Compass Prep and Long Island (N.Y.) Lutheran, which are two schools that play a national schedule. He also had conversations with Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy and Mouth of Wilson (Va.) Oak Hill Academy.

"We turned down money to go to prep schools," said Marcus' father and head coach at Garfield Heights, Sonny Johnson. "We turned down over a hundred-some thousand to go to prep schools. He's turned down marketing people that can get him NIL money now if he went to prep schools. All the top players in the state of Ohio, for the most part, when they have this kind of opportunity, they're going to leave."

Another one of Ohio State's 2026 commits, Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Prolific Prep four-star power forward Alex Smith (6-9, 195), did leave his in-state high school. He played at Upper Arlington in Columbus for three seasons before heading to Florida for his final prep season.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Hudson (Ohio) Western Reserve Academy five-star small forward Anthony Thompson (6-8, 205) visited Ohio State during the weekend of the football game against Texas VERIFY. Thompson is the top-rated player in the state of Ohio in the 2026 class, and as the No. 9 overall player in the country, he is the highest-rated player to play his senior season in Ohio since 2010, when the No. 3-ranked Jared Sullinger was in high school.

OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2026 who have issued a verbal commitment to play basketball at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Marcus Johnson	G	6-2	180	★★★★	Garfield Heights, Ohio
Alex Smith	F	6-9	195	★★★★	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Prolific Prep

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Buckeyes Brand Longhorns with a Loss

The Buckeyes walked off the field at the Cotton Bowl with a semifinal playoff victory against Texas. The Longhorns hoped to get revenge, this time in the Horseshoe in Columbus. Once more, however, the Buckeyes got the best of the Longhorns and jump-started the 2025 season by knocking off the No. 1 team in the country. It's a long way to go on the road to a Big Ten championship and a spot in the College Football Playoff, but the victory over Texas was an impressive one, just "Sayin."

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

The scoreboard didn't burn out any bulbs in this low-scoring slugfest between two proud college football powers, but no true football lover would say the contest was not fun to watch as the two teams traded blows repeatedly in an attempt to gain superiority. As sweet as the victory was for the Buckeyes, there is a real possibility these two very talented football teams will meet once more this season.

Coaches Well Prepared

Head coach Ryan Day entered the game with a 70-10 record as the head man of the Ohio State football program, and once more, he showed the college football world why he is at the top of the heap among active college coaches. Obviously, he knows the game, but he makes great hires as well. Like a football team that has its own personality each year, changes in the coaches create the same scenario for the staff.

Day replaced both coordinators – even though Brian Hartline was already on staff – and brought in some new position coaches, assistants to those coaches, as well as a number of analysts to share their knowledge and opinions on how to defeat teams like Texas. That's a whole lot of advice from a lot of egos, but Ryan Day masters things well, and in the end, he makes all final decisions and has been right on the mark the majority of times.

Hartline, in his first game as the offensive play caller, did an outstanding job. He devised a game plan that allowed first-year starter Julian Sayin to have success against a Texas defense that is big, physical and athletic. Sayin threw 10 fewer passes than his counterpart for Texas but had a high-

er completion percentage, had the longest completion of the day, and didn't throw an interception. His confidence grew with each possession, and his decision-making was spot-on for the rookie.

Going into the game, it was Arch Manning who was going to teach the young pup how to play quarterback at the Division I level, but when the smoke had cleared, it was the man in scarlet and gray who won the day. For a first-time starter, Julian Sayin passed his test with flying colors, showing patience, leadership and good decision-making. It is very early in his collegiate career, but he may well be on his way to being special at his position. Time will tell.

Defense Stepped Up

As well as Hartline performed as offensive coordinator on Saturday, the same can be said for defensive coordinator Matt Patricia. Texas entered the game touting two outstanding running backs in Quintrevion Wisner and C.J. Baxter, probably the best one-two punch in the SEC. They did get their share of yards, 120 combined, but neither one crossed the plane of the goal line for the afternoon.

Most impressive of Patricia's defensive performance was the four out of five times the Longhorns were stopped on fourth down. The defending national champion defense was second in the nation in the red zone last season, while Texas struggled in the red zone, and that trend continued on Aug. 30.

When the Silver Bullets weren't owning their opponent in defending the run, they were in the face of Arch Manning when he went back to pass. Even though the stout Buckeye defense recorded only one sack by linebacker Arvell Reese, Manning was forced to throw off rhythm for four quarters. A third-quarter interception by corner Jermaine Mathews Jr. highlighted a near-perfect performance by the entire Buckeye defense.

Texas returned both coordinators from last year's staff, but it was the two new Buckeye coordinators who shone in the rematch. Brian Hartline and Matt Patricia can be very pleased with how their units played, and Buckeye Nation can be proud of how these two coaches prepared their players.

Offensive Line Exceptional

I am sure Woody Hayes and Earle Bruce were all smiles looking down from the great beyond. The play of the Buckeye

offensive line in terms of physicality really stood out against the talented Texas defensive front led by last season's Freshman of the Year, defensive end Colin Simmons.

Statistics do not tell the story in terms of how well the Buckeye offensive line performed. It was a 13-play, 80-yard drive ending in a CJ Donaldson touchdown early in the second quarter that set the stage for how the battle of the trenches was going to go up front. A good mix of formations, oftentimes using multiple tight ends, allowed the Buckeye offense to march the distance, using up 8:01 of the clock, stunning the Texas fans who had made their way from Austin to Columbus.

Just as good as the run blocking was for the Buckeyes, pass protection was equally impressive. The Buckeye offensive line protected their young quarterback and did not allow a Longhorn sack the entire game. When Sayin delivered a 40-yard strike to Carnell Tate over Texas corner Jaylon Guilbeau early in the fourth quarter, the fate of the Texas Longhorns was all but determined. The Buckeyes would not only win the game on the scoreboard but in terms of mental and physical toughness as well.

Electricity in the Air

The opener was not mistake-proof, and the coaching staff will let the players know that during film review. There were some missed blocks, missed tackles and dropped

passes. There were no long breakaway runs and only one long pass.

Saying that, it is very tough to look back at the win over a really good Texas team and find something to complain about. There are 37 new faces on the Buckeye roster this season, the result of players going to the NFL, the college portal and incoming recruits. Nearly 50 different players saw the field in the game, many for the first time. There were only two Buckeye penalties, no fumbles and no interceptions, and special teams were solid. It was not a perfect performance, but darn near.

The atmosphere in Ohio Stadium was electrifying. When Lee Corso put the Brutus head on one last time, it was game on! The Ohio State fan base did their part and earned their Buckeye Leaves for the day. They showed patience, allowing their young quarterback to grow in front of their eyes, knowing a victory in this game would not come easily.

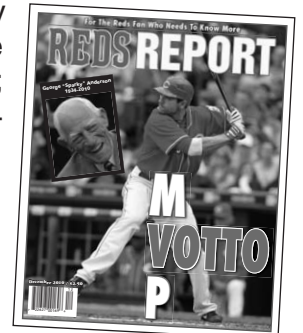
Boo birds were not welcome on this day, and when Texas had the football, the crowd got especially loud, the way it was supposed to be. Buckeye fans didn't take a play off for four quarters. This was a game for the ages, an instant classic, and everyone in scarlet and gray would have an experience of a lifetime. Victory was well earned by players, coaches and fans alike.

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Ohio State Handles Business In Opener

Comfort level.

That's the best way I can describe the takeaway from Ohio State's opening day victory over the No. 1-ranked Texas Longhorns.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Defending national champion against the new No. 1. Crowd cranked up to a level rarely seen outside of a Michigan game. A new quarterback with high expectations on both sides of the ball.

I'm going to guess there hasn't been as much anticipation for an opener since Art Schlichter made his freshman debut against Penn State way back in 1978. That game fell flat for Woody Hayes and the Buckeyes, losing 19-0.

This time was different. It wasn't perfect. It wasn't filled with a bunch of highlight plays for the ages. But Ohio State took care of business and walked out of Ohio Stadium with a workmanlike 14-7 victory over the Longhorns.

More important than the win or loss on the day – the start of what is a very long season – was how the Buckeyes dispelled what

could have been some lingering concerns.

Would there be a noticeable drop-off on defense, especially on the defensive line where there were no returning starters? No.

Would quarterback play be shaky under a first-time starter just two years removed from high school? No.

Would the new offensive tackles wilt under the onslaught of a much-ballyhooed defensive end from Texas, wreaking havoc on OSU's new QB? No.

Ohio State merely took care of business and moved on to begin addressing obvious areas of need for improvement over the next few weeks against Grambling, Ohio University and then at Washington.

Ohio State did what the very best program in college football is supposed to do in its opener – no matter the opponent. The Buckeyes took care of business.

What Game Means For December

The playoff pairings will be announced Dec. 7. A lot will change between now and then. There's no telling how things will sort out.

But what the win over Texas did was provide the Buckeyes room to breathe, should they stumble a couple of times along the way – say against Washington, Illinois, Penn State, Wisconsin, or even, gasp, at Michigan again.

I figure a 10-2 regular season is a lock for the playoffs. But 9-3? There's some dis-

comfort there for sure.

Securing the Texas win does two things in terms of returning to the playoffs. It gives Ohio State a solid line on its résumé should there be a debate at playoff-selection time. And it eliminates one game as a potential loss – victory in hand.

Both of those will be pluses if things get dicey at playoff-pairing time.

Biggest Surprise

The biggest surprise was how well the defense played, shutting out Texas until near the end of the game. This was a defense with just three returning starters: Caleb Downs, Sonny Styles and Davison Igbinosun.

Yet the defense pretty much stuffed Texas for more than three quarters and then held on when necessary. Arch Manning was held to 17-of-30 passing, though his inaccuracy at times could be blamed as much for his lack of success as OSU's defense. And Texas was held to 166 yards rushing.

Texas didn't score until 3:28 remained in the game.

Limiting Texas to 20 points would have been a reasonable goal ahead of time. What the Buckeyes did exceeded that by a wide margin.

The Offense

Julian Sayin (13 of 20 for 126 yards, one touchdown, no interceptions) passed the look test. His numbers would have been better had it not been for some drops – drops on nicely thrown footballs.

Coach Ryan Day didn't ask much of Sayin. Day said as much after the game, acknowledging that easing the new quarterback into things was one piece of the game plan.

But Sayin did practically everything right. He stayed composed in the pocket, had nice touch on passes and made no bonehead mistakes.

About the only complaint is how badly he underthrew a wide-open Carnell Tate on the 40-yard touchdown pass. Tate made the play for the score, so I guess this could be considered nitpicking. But he would have walked into the end zone untested with a more accurate throw.

The run game, however, was another matter. A concern.

CJ Donaldson had 3.5 yards a carry in gaining 67 yards on 19 tries.

James Peoples, even worse at 2.0 yards per carry, with 20 total yards on 10 tries.

That's not Ohio State football. That's not TreVeyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins – the things national championships are made of.

Certainly, the Texas defense had a lot to do with that. In fact, Texas held the Buckeyes to 81 yards rushing in the playoffs a year ago. Henderson had 42 yards on six tries, and Judkins had 36 yards on nine carries.

The holes were slim and far between for the Buckeye backs in the opener. But when there were glimmers of open space, flashes of breakaway threats were lacking as well.

We'll have a better idea in a few weeks, but for now, make the running game a definite question mark.

Special Teams

Incomplete grades for punt and kickoff returns, and the field-goal unit. Fair catches and no tries there.

But mark down punting as a matter of concern.

Joe McGuire averaged 43.3 yards a punt. That was aided by a favorable roll on a 55-yarder. His kicks were low all day, with little hang time. Perhaps that was by design.

Punting, kicking and returns all remain in the what-to-watch category over the next several weeks.

Fan Experience

Credit Ohio State athletic director Ross Bjork for pumping some new energy into the Horseshoe with a handful of fresh ideas.

Featuring Archie Griffin ringing the victory bell ahead of the game – yes, ahead of the game – was pretty cool. Placing the band in the North end zone – amplified by speakers – seemed to add energy to the place.

And for whoever was responsible for the expanded band pregame show, which included a salute to the retiring 90-year-old Lee Corso – kudos to them.

Brutus Buckeye had a featured entrance from the South side of the stadium, intended to juice up the fans well ahead of kickoff. That one needs some work, at least on the timing. As the scoreboard drew attention to Brutus with loudspeakers blaring, the band was actually entering the stadium from the North ramp, and the drummers could not be heard.

On sound in general. I'm a fan of everything generated by the fans and bands. Not so for music blaring from the speakers. And there seemed to be too much recorded speaker noise throughout the day.

Overall, though, a good step forward for gameday atmosphere.

Texas Experience

Clearly, the fans were pumped for the game, regardless of any new twists for the in-stadium experience. Traffic was heavy when I arrived at the campus area shortly before 9 a.m.

That's very early for traffic for a noon kickoff. And lines were long entering the stadium an hour before the game. The stands were basically filled 15 minutes or more before kickoff.

Many of those seats were occupied by Texas fans, perhaps a driving force behind ticket prices that were running well above \$400 late in the week. A couple of those Texas fans told me that the long Labor Day weekend made it easier to make the trip.

One of the nice things I've noticed in traveling around to Ohio State games and watching how visiting fans are greeted in Ohio Stadium is how fans from competing teams can coexist in a respectful way.

That's a far cry from the NFL, at least based on what I have routinely witnessed as poor behavior toward visiting fans in Cleveland.



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A New Era Begins As An Old Friend Departs

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

What is the best way to break in a new and inexperienced quarterback? Play good defense!

There was no tangible way of knowing how redshirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin was going to play in his first college start – against the No. 1 team in the country, no less – and for the last eight months, all we have heard about is how good super nephew Arch Manning of Texas is.

From the start on Aug. 30, it was clear that the Ohio State defense under new coordinator Matt Patricia was on top of its game, rattling Manning from the opening kick. This gave new Buckeye offensive coordinator Brian Hartline a chance to break Sayin in with an easy game plan, and the result was an impressive, if not always pretty, 14-7 win over the Longhorns.

“We were fairly conservative because we felt like our defense was playing well,” OSU head coach Ryan Day said of his offense.

The Buckeye stop troops held the vaunted Longhorns with offensive guru Steve Sarkisian at the head-coaching helm to just 50 yards in the first quarter and 79 yards on 26 plays for the half. Meanwhile, Manning – is he the next Peyton or Eli? – was being held to 13 yards passing and a long of 6 in the first quarter, and for the half he was 5 of 10 for 26 yards and a long of 7.

By the time the teams went to the locker rooms, it was clear that Manning was not going to be dazzling the crowd and the Buckeyes had the upper hand, even with only a 7-0 lead, especially with the home team set to take the second-half kick (which they squandered with a three-and-out). If the Ohio State defense had allowed Manning and Texas to get off to a fast start, the complexion of the game might have been entirely different.

Not that Sayin was burning it up during the first half of his starting debut. He was 6 of 11 in the first half for 53 yards and a long of 16. But he wasn’t sacked, and there were no Buckeye turnovers as he ran the vanilla offense.

As mentioned earlier, Day said that the early play of the defense allowed the offensive brain trust to narrow the playbook for Sayin, but other comments by Day indicated that that was the plan all along.

“When you have that first start and you’re out there, there are so many things to take into consideration,” Day said. “When you’re the quarterback at Ohio State and you’re playing No. 1 Texas, one of the top defenses in the country, which we have a tremendous amount of respect for, the one thing we didn’t want to do was put him in a bad spot. It’s not fair to him. Coming out of it, quite honestly, he probably could have handled it. But we weren’t going to do that because we know it’s a long season, and that was the decision that was made.”

Ohio State’s defensive stats, yielding 336 total yards, ended up looking less impressive than they might have really been after Manning was 8 of 15 for 132 yards and Texas’ lone score in the fourth quarter, helping the ‘Horns to 179 yards for the stanza. However, up until that point the Buckeyes had yielded just 157 yards in three quarters to an offense that had averaged 437.5 yards a game the year before.

I blame some of Texas’ offensive success in the fourth quarter on Ohio State, with its buttoned-up play calling, not being able to keep the ball away from its desperate rival. After taking their 14-0 lead early in the final frame, the Buckeyes moved five plays for 11 yards and three plays for 5 yards on their two drives before running out the clock on their final possession.

But to truly appreciate the performance of the Ohio State defense, you have to look at some of the other stats. First and foremost is

the seven points allowed. It’s hard to win a big game – or *any* game – scoring only one touchdown. The Buckeyes stopped Texas on four of five fourth-down attempts, including one of their patented goal-line stands and another possession that ended at the OSU 9.

Cornerback Davison Igbinosun broke up the pass when Ohio State forced Texas to turn the ball over at the Buckeye 9 midway through the pivotal fourth quarter. Was there a Buckeye fan out there who didn’t pump their fist in excitement when there was no flag on Igbinosun on the play? In fact, the Buckeyes, who have struggled with penalties the last couple of seasons, were flagged only twice against Texas for 15 yards, while the Longhorns were charged with six infractions for 50 yards. Was the disciplined play of Igbinosun and the rest of the team a positive sign for the team moving forward?

Donaldson Emerges

Throughout the spring and fall camps, I was somewhat surprised how Buckeye fans seemed to be conceding the starting running back position to James Peoples. Granted the now sophomore was the leading returning ball carrier with 49 carries for 197 yards, two TDs and a 4.0-yard average. Fans seemed to be overlooking the fact that the Buckeyes also had a back with extensive experience at the Power Four level in CJ Donaldson, who had three seasons of over 500 yards rushing at West Virginia, including 798 in 2023, with a career average of 4.9 yards per attempt. When the Buckeyes took the field against Texas, it was Donaldson who got the initial carries and ended up with 19 runs for 67 yards vs. Peoples’ 10 for 20.

Donaldson’s numbers – at least against Texas – won’t make you forget TreVeyon Henderson or Quinshon Judkins, but against a rugged Longhorn defense, I loved the way he moved the pile, and when Ohio State faced a fourth-and-1 at the goal line in the second quarter, it was the slimmed down Donaldson who bulled his way in for the score. I really liked his play, even though he averaged just 3.5 yards a try. But how much did the Texas defense that was 13th against the run last season giving up just 109.6 yards a game have to do with that?

Farewell To A Friend

Buckeye Sports Bulletin lost one of the most beloved members of its family when John McNeely passed away on Aug. 26 at the age of 77.

Way back when I was lower than a cub reporter at The Columbus Dispatch, trying to build my sports writing résumé any way I could, John, then assistant sports editor to the legendary Dick Otte, was extremely supportive of my efforts. It wasn’t just me he was supportive of. That was just his nature.

In fact, I came across a quote from Tim May, now somewhat legendary himself and featured in a story in this issue, which kind of summed up John and his outlook on the business and life.

May was talking about early influences in his own career.

“It was assistant sports editor John McNeely who gave me the best advice I’ve ever gotten,” May recalled. “Listening to me make an excuse for a mistake I’d made one day, he said simply, ‘Don’t do that. All you have to say is “I screwed up.”’ Those are words to live by, and I still do.”

That was so John. I don’t think you would

ever hear him referred to as “legendary” and that’s not a knock on him. He was just too low-key to be thought of as such, even though he was a rock-solid journalist and a rock-solid human being.

The years passed and I was well into my career at BSB when I bumped into him on the streets of Grandview, home to BSB world headquarters, as well as John and his wife Terri. He had suffered a serious stroke that left him with difficulty communicating, as well as some paralysis. He asked if there was anything he could do for us. We found something that suited his limitations and thus started his lengthy career at Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

He was only in the office for about an hour a day, but it was an hour that I truly looked forward to. His positive outlook on life, despite any setbacks he had suffered, was a great inspiration to me and remains so, even in his passing – maybe even more so now.

I always believed that John enjoyed being in an active newspaper office. There was no question he had ink in his veins.

While doing some research in the newspaper archives at the public library, BSB managing editor emeritus Mark Rea came across a column that John had written many years before, suggesting that Nolan Ryan was not worthy of the baseball Hall of Fame. From then on, every time Ryan was in the news, John was reminded of that column by his fellow BSB staff members, and he took the ribbing good-naturedly.

He remained sharp as a tack, but his difficulties speaking made communicating with him something like a game of charades, where he would basically give clues on what he was trying to say and you had to piece his thoughts together. The recently retired affable Dave Breithaupt was not very good at the “game,” which led to sometimes riotous exchanges which kept the office loose. Perhaps I am a little more patient with things like that than Dave, but even on our busiest days I would let John try to get his point across for as long as he needed, even when it would have been easier just to say, “John, I’ve got to get back to work.” He earned that respect from me.

And that is one of the great lessons I learned from being around him. Don’t minimize people because maybe their presence isn’t as convenient as you might like. If the shoe were on the other foot, that is not something John would have done to me.

As the years went by, John’s condition deteriorated, and he was no longer able to perform his duties and spend time in the office. But he remained a key part of our family and was present at all office events, most recently Dave’s retirement party after 19 years at BSB, many of which were spent with John.

By the time August of this year rolled around, it was determined that he had pancreatic cancer and had only a few days to live.

Separately, both Dave and I went to the hospital to pay our last respects. John was completely out of it, and I doubt he knew that either Dave or I had visited. As we compared notes of our visits, it turned out that both Dave and I had felt compelled to kiss him good-bye. We are a big hugging office, but kissing is not something we do on a regular basis.

That’s how beloved John was. I will always remember our dual farewells.

By luck of the draw, I presume, that room at the OSU hospital complex where colleagues,

family and friends came to pay their final respects had a wonderful view of St. John Arena and Ohio Stadium. I couldn’t help but think that having a man who spent most of his professional career in the sports reporting business and who was a lifelong sports fan in a room with such a spectacular view was an acknowledgment from some greater power or being that John McNeely had lived a positive, inspirational, loving and proper life.

RIP John. Thank you for being such a big part of *my* life.

First-Class Facts

The initial returns for BSB delivery time on the Football Preview issue were not good. We mailed it two days earlier than we have through the years, and we were still receiving calls from people *within the state of Ohio* who hadn’t received their paper the Friday before the game – 11 days after we mailed BSB. The Dayton area and the Youngstown-Warren area, two critical areas for Buckeye Sports Bulletin, continue to be major problem spots.

We continue to encourage readers to upgrade to first-class mail for at least football season. I repeat as I always do that we are not trying to upsell you. The first-class upgrades are a money-losing proposition for us, but they can cut down on phone calls here and subscribers abandoning us after 20, 30 and even more than 40 years.

The cost is just \$35 through the Michigan game or \$45 through the playoffs and the football recruiting wrap-up. 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.”

I did want to alert you again to changes in our paper replacement policy. In the process of replacing hundreds and hundreds of BSBs last fall – most publications would only credit your account – we found that we were paying \$3 dollars (before the postal price increase) to replace papers and subscribers would ultimately receive their original paper before the replacement came, thus causing us to pay to mail you the same paper twice.

Under the new policy, we will send a replacement paper to first-class subscribers and readers in Central Ohio seven days after mailing. All other readers will have to wait two weeks before we send the replacement by first-class mail. We regret the necessity of this change.

A couple of interesting notes about this year’s upgrades.

First of all, far more people are upgrading their subscriptions than in the past. I don’t think that is a huge surprise. As people struggle with their mail service, both incoming and outgoing, they are realizing that this is a far more widespread problem than just the delivery of BSB.

But there are two other facts that I found interesting.

Many, many more people within the state of Ohio are electing to upgrade their subscriptions. Upgrades used to be almost exclusively the domain of out-of-state-readers. The other change we have noticed is that more readers are upgrading through the Recruiting Wrap-Up now as opposed to through the Michigan game. It used to be far and away the other way around. I attribute this change to the playoffs, which have made issues in January and early February much more time-sensitive than they might have been in the past.



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