

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 45, No. 3

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Sept. 27, 2025

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Look at the box score for Ohio State's 37-9 win over Ohio on Sept. 13, and everything looks like you'd expect it would when the Buckeyes match up against one of the top MAC teams.

A four-score win, 572 total yards of offense – 347 through the air and 225 on the ground – outgaining the Bobcats by nearly 400 yards. But it is also somewhat of a surprise to see that big a number in the total yardage gained category and not see a number greater than 37 on the scoreboard under the Ohio State logo.

But when you look a little further down the box score and see that Jayden Fielding kicked three field goals, two of them from the red zone, the picture of the game starts to become a little clearer.

"When you have, on 63 plays, just under 600 yards – when we got down in the red zone, we weren't able to execute," head coach Ryan Day said after the game.

That was the story of Ohio State for about 39 minutes of game time before the Buckeyes finally started to create some separation, leaving a door open for the Bobcats until midway through the third quarter.

Outside of the trouble finishing drives in the red zone, the Buckeyes dominated the game. But as it turns out, the scoreboard counts points, not yards. In a game that counted yardage, Ohio State would have had a gigantic lead at the half, outgaining OU 278 yards to 28. Instead, the scoreboard showed a 13-3 game.

The issues showed up right away on Ohio State's first drive of the game when it couldn't score a touchdown with four plays from the Bobcats' 9-yard line. On that drive, Day and offensive coordinator Brian Hartline opted to go for it, needing 4 yards, but quarterback Julian Sayin wasn't able to find an open man and took a 5-yard sack to end the drive and keep the game scoreless despite a 66-yard drive.

The Buckeyes barely managed to get back into the red zone on their next drive, but on fourth-and-2 from the OU 20-yard line, Jayden Fielding came out for the first of his three field goals for the night. He drilled a 38-yarder right down the middle to take an early lead.



Dead Zone

*Ohio State Struggles In Red Zone
On Way To 37-9 Win Over Ohio*

SONNY BROCKWAY

HITTING A WALL — Ohio State had little trouble moving the ball against Ohio until reaching the red zone. While the Buckeyes — led by redshirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin (10) — scored on five of six tries, three were field goals by Jayden Fielding. The Buckeyes also scored two touchdowns and turned the ball over on downs once.

"I'm going to watch the film and figure out if it was scheme, if it was coaching or if it was personnel," Day said about the troubles inside the 20. "We have to do a better

job when we get into the red zone. We got down there a couple of times and had to settle for field goals. We went for it the first time, kicked the field goal the second time, didn't want to get greedy."

They went all the way to the Ohio 2-yard line to begin the second quarter, but a fade to Jeremiah Smith fell incomplete thanks to the coverage of Bobcat cornerback Tank Pearson, who also broke up a pass to Carnell Tate in the end zone on the first drive. Fielding sent his second three-pointer through the uprights.

"The throw to Carnell could have been a little bit stronger," Day said. "I think Carnell wishes he had that one back. He could

have taken it over his head. The fade throw to Jeremiah, I thought we could have been cleaner."

To convert in the red zone, it took perfect pass blocking from the Ohio State offensive line and Sayin having a ton of time to find tight end Max Klare for a 16-yard touchdown, Klare's first as a Buckeye after not being much of a factor in the receiving game the first two weeks.

But in the third quarter, when Ohio State led last year's MAC champions by just four points, the Buckeyes couldn't convert yet again. At first, it looked like CJ Donaldson

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From The Message Board

Ohio State is now through its nonconference schedule with a 3-0 record. We asked readers what has impressed them the most about the Buckeyes through three wins and what they believe the team needs to improve on the most. Here are some of the responses:

"What has impressed me is the maturity of the defense after replacing so many starters and a defensive coordinator. The offensive ground game needs improvement. Maybe move Bo Jackson up the depth chart. I think the week off will clean up most of the problems."

— **R1TBDBITL**

"Keep learning from mistakes and heed the coaches' advice. I give OU credit for coming up with schemes that were giving us problems in the first half."

— **Bob Cody**

"The defense has been great. Need to improve discipline and red zone offense."

— **Tiffin Buckeye**

"Defensive depth has impressed me the most because of replacing eight starters. Need to improve on red zone offense and punt return game (although I don't approve of Jeremiah Smith returning punts)."

— **Terrier Buck**

"Why do the Bucks lose steam at first-and-goal? I hope they work this out moving forward."

— **PeyoteBuck**

"What's impressed me

the most about Ohio State is not anything that can be seen on paper, but simply its ability to stay unwavering and focused through adversity. They did so against both Texas and Ohio to different degrees, and for a team to show that so early is promising for a long postseason run.

"Improvement offensively must come from the Buckeyes' running game, which dynamic freshman Bo Jackson could open up with his big-play ability. If Ohio State can find the healthy balance of pass and run, look out for one of the most explosive offenses in the country."

— **Sam Cipriani, BSB**

"I have been most impressed with Ohio State's secondary through three games. The Buckeyes have rarely allowed receivers to get open down the field, and opposing quarterbacks have struggled to find a rhythm.

"I think Ohio State's run game needs some improvement. I also had questions about the Buckeyes' defensive line headed into Week 3, but I thought that group was very impressive against Ohio."

— **Bobby Gorbett, BSB**

FAN FORUM

Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State struggled to find the end zone early but still managed to beat Ohio 37-9 in its Sept. 13 contest against the MAC school. With 572 total yards of offense and only nine points allowed on defense, there were many Buckeyes deserving of Buckeye Leaves. 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: With the offense struggling and sloppy play out of the Buckeyes' special teams, I felt my Buckeye Leaf should go to an Ohio State defender – and that's going to linebacker Arvell Reese.

Reese made standout plays for Ohio State all game long, leading the team with seven total tackles. The Cleveland native also added two pass breakups, a sack and a tackle for loss.

On Ohio's second drive of the third quarter, the junior took over for the Buckeyes. In four plays, he recorded a tackle, then after Kenyatta Jackson Jr. made a tackle, Reese brought down Bobcats quarterback Parker Navarro for a sack, and then he broke up a pass thrown by Navarro, which led to a third-down stop by Ohio State.

Bobby Gorbett, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf is going to sophomore receiver Jeremiah Smith. In the win over the Bobcats, Smith went for a season-high 153 receiving yards and a touchdown on nine catches.

Smith also ran for a 17-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter. Smith was routinely able to get open against Ohio's outmatched cornerbacks, and his biggest play of the game came in the second half when the team's lead was only 16-9. The Buckeyes had the ball on the 47-yard line when Smith was able to create enough separation from Ohio cornerback Michael Mack II to haul in the lengthy touchdown.

Smith's season-best performance allowed him to become the fastest player in program history to reach 1,500 yards receiving. Smith accomplished the feat in 19 games, and former Buckeye Jaxon Smith-Njigba was previously the quickest player to reach that mark, doing so in 20 games.

Greg Wilson, BSB: The biggest individual winner from the win over the Bobcats was true freshman running back Bo Jackson. While CJ Donaldson and James Peoples struggled to find gaps against Ohio, Jackson looked the best of the bunch and seems to have turned a two-man backfield into a party of three.

He finished the game with nine rushes for 109 yards, thanks in large part to a 64-yard scamper in the third quarter, although the drive ended with another field goal for Jayden Fielding. Donaldson finished with nine runs, and Peoples had seven. Not only did Jackson have the best stats, but he passed the eye test as well, with great burst and very good speed.

It would be a surprise after the off week when the Buckeyes go to Seattle if Jackson isn't still a major part of the backfield. If he keeps this up, he could very well just cement himself as the No. 1.

BSB Subscribers

Tiffin Buckeye: Carnell Tate and Jeremiah Smith on offense. On defense, probably Beau Atkinson.

PeyoteBuck: Buckeye Leaves for Jayden Fielding because the Bucks had more red scares than the McCarthy era. Bo Jackson is a rising star, and Max Klare – both are winners. Honorable mention to Lincoln Kienholz, who was ready on the sidelines.

Bob Cody: Jayden Fielding (perfect in all his FG attempts and extra points, especially when we needed points and positive momentum after encountering red-zone difficulties). Jeremiah Smith (TDs receiving and rushing, 150-plus yards receiving). Caden Curry, Will Smith Jr., & Beau Atkinson (all three helped seal the game defensively in the second half). Bo Jackson (emerging as our No. 1 RB with another 100-plus yards rushing game). Arvell Reese (keeps becoming a tremendous force on defense every game). Carnell Tate (three games, three TDs). The O-line (what was once an issue this time last year is now a tremendous asset). Julian Sayin (300-plus yards through the air for three TDs, despite two INTs, which are teachable moments and correctable going forward).

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No. 1	Sept. 6	No. 13	TBA
No. 2	Sept. 13	No. 14	TBA
No. 3	Sept. 27	No. 15	TBA
No. 4	Oct. 4	No. 16	Feb. 14
No. 5	Oct. 11	No. 17	March 7
No. 6	Oct. 18	No. 18	March 21
No. 7	Nov. 1	No. 19	April 4
No. 8	Nov. 8	No. 20	April 18
No. 9	Nov. 15	No. 21	May
No. 10	Nov. 22	No. 22	June
No. 11	Nov. 29	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 6	No. 24	August

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OPINION

Buckeyes Not Exactly Flawless Vs. Ohio

I received a lot of text messages during Ohio State's seemingly disjointed 37-9 victory against in-state rival Ohio University. Most of them lamented the fact that the four-touchdown favorite Buckeyes looked anything like four-touchdown favorites against a team that couldn't beat Rutgers in its season-opening game.

Aside from the fact that Rutgers is now 3-0 for the fifth year in a row and has outscored its opponents by a 139-58 margin, the Bobcats presented a decent enough opponent as the Buckeyes closed the nonconference portion of their 2025 schedule. OU is the defending Mid-American Conference champion, and it might have given Ohio State even more of a challenge had dual-threat quarterback Parker Navarro not been sidelined for much of the first half after being leveled by North Carolina transfer defensive lineman Beau Atkinson.

Still, I'm going to take the contrarian view that Ryan Day – despite his rather prickly demeanor during halftime and postgame interviews – got exactly what he wanted headed into the first off-week of the season. The outcome was never in doubt, but the nation's top-ranked team made mistakes by the bundle, something Day and his coaching staff will be able to hammer home between now and when the Buckeyes take the field vs. Washington at picturesque Husky Stadium in Seattle on Sept. 27.

First-year quarterback Julian Sayin, the caretaker of the season-opening win against top-ranked Texas and the skillful surgeon who carved up Grambling State, looked positively human against Ohio despite throwing for 347 yards and three touchdowns.

Time was when any Ohio State quarterback who threw for 347 yards and three touchdowns would have been front-page news. But that was before Urban Meyer (and Day) changed the trajectory of the OSU program to the point that 347 yards now ranks as only the 27th-highest single-game total in school history.

There were several on-the-money throws such as the 47-yard touchdown pass to Jeremiah Smith in the third quarter. Smith's athletic ability sometimes makes his quarterback look better than he is, but the sophomore receiver didn't have to do much on that one but cradle a pinpoint rainbow that traveled about 55 yards in the air.

Yet there was another throw to a wide-open Smith in the first quarter that was so under-thrown that the receiver had to wait for the ball, allowing the Ohio defender to catch up. The play still covered 42 yards, but a perfectly placed pass would have resulted in a 51-yard touchdown and early 7-0 lead. Instead, the Buckeyes were stopped on fourth-and-goal when Sayin failed to see running back CJ Donaldson open on the right boundary and took his first sack of the 2025 season.

Sayin also threw two interceptions during the game against the Bobcats. The first was a tipped ball over the middle that pinballed its way off a couple of players' hands before Ohio cornerback Michael Mack II nabbed the interception late in the second quarter. The second was the result of brain freeze in the fourth quarter on Sayin's part, an ill-advised attempt to make something out of nothing when in the arms of Ohio defensive end Jay Crable. Sayin tried to throw the ball away and instead dumped it into the arms of Crable's fellow defensive lineman Austin Mitchell. Hopefully, the young QB will learn that taking a sack and living to play another down isn't the worst thing in the world.

And as long as I'm nitpicking a guy who completed more than 78 percent of his at-

tempts for all of that aforementioned yardage, I've got one more. What's up with Sayin's apparent reluctance to run with the football? There were a couple of times against the Bobcats when there seemed to be plenty of open field in front of him only to watch him retreat and try to get off a pass.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

It wasn't that long ago that C.J. Stroud often refused easy rushing yardage. Whether that was by personal preference or coaching edict, we still don't know although Stroud seems less reluctant to tuck and run for the Houston Texans. The appearance of Lincoln Kienholz in the first quarter to run what I call the "Devin Brown package" might lead one to believe Sayin either doesn't like to run or has been told not to.

Kienholz picked up 8 yards and a first down on his only run (in fact, his only snap) of the game, so I can imagine we'll see more of that as the season unfolds. I remain a little uneasy, however, if the starting quarterback is not going to be allowed to have the total offensive playbook at his disposal.

Plenty Of Weapons

That's enough of the griping about a 28-point victory during which the offense averaged a pretty potent 9.1 yards per play. Let's bring up again all those passing yards and how they came to be.

That Smith doesn't get major Heisman Trophy love from the national media is a travesty. I know he gets some, but he should be the front-runner, and Day did as much as he could against Ohio to showcase Smith and help the receiver's candidacy.

Smith was targeted 12 times and finished with nine catches for 153 yards and one touchdown. He has caught a pass in each of his 19 college games so far and has topped the 100-yard mark in seven of those 19 games. Smith upped his count of touchdown catches to 18, a figure that already ranks in the career top 15 in program history, and he also took an end-around 17 yards for a score.

Carnell Tate would be the No. 1 receiver on nearly any team that didn't have Jeremiah Smith on its roster, and he proved (again) against the Bobcats why the Buckeyes will have another pass catcher going in the first round of the NFL draft. Tate gathered in five catches for 101 yards and a touchdown, running his streak to 26 consecutive games in which he has had at least one reception. Only 15 other players in OSU program history have had longer streaks.

As effective as Smith and Tate are as weapons, they are by no means the Buckeyes' only receiving threats. Eleven of Sayin's 25 completions went to tight ends or running backs, meaning opposing linebackers and safeties must commit to covering the entire field.

And what does that do? If linebackers and safeties are dropping into coverage, that opens up the running game, and Ohio State was about as effective running the football against Ohio as it has been in quite some time.

The Buckeyes totaled 225 yards and averaged an impressive 7.3 yards on 31 carries, led by the getting-more-impressive-by-the-week freshman Bo Jackson. Looking much bigger than his listed 6-0 and 217 pounds, Jackson rolled for 109 yards on just nine carries,

much of that total coming on a 64-yard bolt in the third quarter. Jackson parlayed those 109 yards with his 108-yard effort against Grambling to become the first OSU player to crack the century mark in back-to-back games since Quinshon Judkins did it in weeks two and three last season.

Jackson, Donaldson and James Peoples, who combined for 195 yards and 7.8 yards on 25 carries, would seem to give the Buckeyes a three-headed monster in the backfield, and I think we all saw how shared carries benefited Judkins and TreVeyon Henderson during last season's run to the national championship.

Speaking of weapons, Ohio State finally got kicker Jayden Fielding into the mix. Fielding was flawless on three field goals and ran his consecutive streak of made PATs to 112. He also kicked off eight times, each of which resulted in a touchback.

A History Lesson

At a recent speaking engagement, a nice lady came up to me afterward and said, "You know almost as much about the Buckeyes as Jack Park."

That was about as nice a compliment as I could receive armed with the realization that the longtime OSU football historian has probably forgotten more about Ohio State football than I'll ever learn. But that also got me to thinking that I know almost none of the history of Ohio University football.

In fact, my limited knowledge about the Bobcats program (which dates to 1894) begins and ends with such coaches as Don Peden and Bill Hess.

Peden won six conference championships during his 23-year run as head coach at OU from 1924-46 while Hess won four Mid-American Conference titles as well as the small college national championship in 1960. Frank Solich should probably get an honorable mention here for posting a program-record 115 victories over 16 seasons, but despite winning four division championships, he never won a MAC title.

Things get a little trickier when it comes to naming the best football player the Bobcats have ever produced. After all, only 40 Ohio University players have been drafted by NFL teams over the years.

You could probably make some serious money in a trivia contest if you knew the identity of OU's only first-round pick in the draft. That would be offensive lineman Art Lewis, who was the ninth overall selection to the New York Giants in the 1936 draft. Lewis' pro career amounted to 28 games over one season with the Giants and two with the Cleveland Rams.

In terms of NFL longevity, linebacker Vince Costello and punter Dave Zastudil each played 12 seasons in the league. Costello spent most of his time with the Cleveland Browns and in 2012 was named No. 66 on a list of the franchise's top 100 players of all time. Zastudil, whose 44.6-yard career average remains an Ohio program and MAC record, punted for the Ravens, Browns and Cardinals, and led the league in 2012 with 5,309 punting yards.

More trivia money would be coming your way if you knew the only Bobcats player with a Super Bowl championship ring. That would be safety Javon Hagan, whose lone NFL season came in 2020 with Tampa Bay. Hagan spent the entire regular season on the Buccaneers' practice squad, but he was activated for the postseason and made his lone career appearance during the team's run to a 31-9 win against the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl LV.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

OSU Remains No. 1 In AP Poll

Ohio State is still the No. 1 team in the country, according to the Associated Press's latest top 25 poll. The Buckeyes received 55 first-place votes in the poll, after their 37-9 win over Ohio.

No. 2 Penn State, coming off a 52-6 win over Villanova in Week 3, received five first-place votes in the poll. The only other teams to receive first-place votes were No. 3 LSU (two votes), No. 4 Miami (three) and No. 6 Oregon (one).

No. 5 Georgia was the only team ranked in the top six to not receive a first-place vote.

The Big Ten had four other teams ranked in the top 25, including No. 9 Illinois, No. 19 Indiana, No. 21 Michigan and No. 25 USC. The Trojans jumped into the rankings after they defeated Purdue 33-17 in their Big Ten opener.

The biggest riser in the rankings was No. 10 Texas A&M. The Aggies jumped up six spots in the poll after narrowly defeating

Notre Dame 41-40. The Fighting Irish were previously ranked No. 8 in the poll but fell 16 spots in the rankings to No. 24 because of their loss. Notre Dame also lost its season opener to Miami (Fla.) 27-24 and is the only ranked team without a win.

The Trojans were one of three new teams in the poll. No. 19 Georgia Tech, coming off a 24-21 win over Clemson, and No. 20 Vanderbilt, which defeated South Carolina 31-7 in Week 3, were also included in the rankings.

South Carolina, previously ranked at No. 11, was dropped from the rankings, as were Clemson and South Florida.

Christian Listed Out Against Ohio

Ohio State was without one of its tight ends in its win over Ohio, as Bennett Christian didn't play in the game. Christian, an important part of the Buckeyes' deep tight end room in the first two games, missed his first game of the season against the Bobcats.

Although Christian was unable to play in the game, the Buckeyes still leaned heavily on their slew of tight ends. Will Kacmarek, Max Klare and Jelani Thurman all suited and had at least one catch.

There were no other surprises on Ohio State's availability report, with all of the team's starters available. Cornerback Lorenzo Styles Jr. was injured in the third quarter of the win over the Bobcats. For more on his injury, check out game notebook on pages 10-11.

Several of the Buckeyes' rotational players were unavailable, including defensive tackles Jason Moore and Maxwell Roy, safeties

2025 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Aug. 30	TEXAS	W, 14-7	FOX	2-1, 27-10 win over UTEP
Sept. 6	GRAMBLING	W, 70-0	BTN	2-1, 37-31 win over Kentucky State
Sept. 13	OHIO	W, 37-9	Peacock	1-2, 37-9 loss to Ohio State
Sept. 27	at Washington	TBA	TBA	2-0, idle
Oct. 4	MINNESOTA	TBA	TBA	2-1, 27-14 loss to Cal
Oct. 11	at Illinois	TBA	TBA	3-0, 38-0 win over Western Mich.
Oct. 18	at Wisconsin	TBA	TBA	2-1, 38-14 loss to Alabama
Nov. 1	PENN STATE	TBA	TBA	3-0, 52-6 win over Villanova
Nov. 8	at Purdue	TBA	TBA	2-1, 33-17 loss to USC
Nov. 15	UCLA	TBA	TBA	0-3, 35-10 loss to New Mexico
Nov. 22	RUTGERS	TBA	TBA	3-0, 60-10 win over Norfolk State
Nov. 29	at Michigan	Noon	FOX	2-1, 63-3 win over Central Mich.

Brenten "Inky" Jones and Deshawn Stewart, tight end Max LeBlanc, running back Anthony Rogers, quarterback Mason Maggs, defensive lineman Ahmed Tounkara and wide receiver Preston Wolfe.

Smith, Pettijohn Players Of Game Against Grambling

Following Ohio State's 70-0 victory over Grambling, the Buckeyes announced on Sept. 7 that sophomore wide receiver Jeremiah Smith and freshman linebacker Riley Pettijohn had earned the Buckeyes' offensive and defensive player of the game honors.

Smith finished his afternoon with five catches for 119 yards and two touchdowns. His first touchdown – an 87-yard catch and run – was the second-longest passing play in Ohio State history and is tied for the third-longest play from scrimmage in Buckeye history.

On the opposite side of the ball, Pettijohn ended his day with two tackles and a pass

breakup but more importantly was in on two of Ohio State's biggest defensive plays of the game.

Pettijohn opened the third quarter by capitalizing on Grambling State's first play of the half. Buckeye defensive tackle Kayden McDonald forced a fumble from Tigers freshman quarterback Byron Eaton Jr. which Pettijohn scooped up and returned 23 yards for a touchdown.

Later in the quarter, Pettijohn punched the football out of redshirt freshman running back Andre Crews' hands on a rush up the middle, which Ohio State defensive lineman Epi Sitanilei came out of the pile with for the recovery.

Sayin Named B1G Frosh of the Week

Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin was named the Big Ten Freshman of the Week following the Buckeye win. Sayin had a career

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Next BSB Print Set To Mail September 30

With the Ohio State football team experiencing an off week before it travels to Washington on Sept. 27, there will be no BSB print until Sept. 30. But the OSU sports scene continues, and BuckeyeSports.com, Buckeye Sports Bulletin's 24/7 website free to all subscribers, will be with you every day in the interim.

There is no reason to wait for your next Buckeye Sports Bulletin print edition to get the latest OSU sports news, including any recruiting activity. The BSB staff will be reporting from every press conference or other availability and following all the Ohio State's sports activity. 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 always entertaining Staff Predictions appear the Friday before every game. While all staffers chose Ohio State to win over Ohio, they did not anticipate OSU's red-zone problems, and each chose too high a Buckeye point total. Sam Cipriani had it 45-10, Bobby Gorbett 41-13, and Greg Wilson 45-3.

Also, staff members man the Fan Forum, where the discussion between staff and readers is always lively, and it is 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 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.

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just short of C.J. Stroud's single-game record of 17 straight completions.

A five-star product of Carlsbad, Calif., Say-in has led the Buckeyes to a 3-0 start and the No. 1 national ranking. He has completed 56 of 71 attempts for 779 yards and eight touchdowns in three starts this season.

McDonald Was PFF's Highest-Graded Buckeye

A Buckeye big man is delivering impact plays that show up on the stat sheet.

According to Pro Football Focus' grades, McDonald was graded as Ohio State's top-rated player in the Buckeyes' games against both Texas and Grambling State.

McDonald, a Suwanee, Ga., native, posted an 82.4 rating in the Buckeyes' 14-7 Week 1 win over the Longhorns and then elevated his play against the Tigers with a 93.6 rating – once again leading all Buckeyes.

Through those two games, the junior defensive tackle had notched 11 tackles, tallied one tackle for loss, and added the forced fumble for Ohio State.

In Week 1, defensive tackle Will Smith Jr. (80.7) and cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. (78.0) followed McDonald in player ratings, while Week 2 had tight end Jelani Thurman (93.0) and quarterback Lincoln Kienholz (88.1) finish as Ohio State's second- and third-highest graded performers.

While the PFF grades weren't released yet by the time BSB went to press, McDonald

Continued On Page 6

day against the Tigers, completing 18 of 19 passes for 306 yards and four touchdowns.

The Buckeyes' redshirt freshman quar-

terback completed his first 16 passes of the afternoon before throwing his only incomple-
tion – an interception. Sixteen completions to

begin a game passed former Ohio State quar-
terback Will Howard's record of 13 set in last
year's national championship game but came



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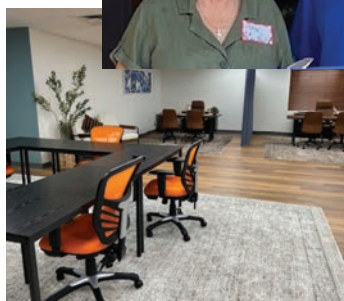
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OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

had a strong performance against Ohio with three tackles and his first sack of the season.

Day: Punt Return Needs Improving

Head coach Ryan Day told reporters during his weekly press conference on Sept. 9 that he felt the punt return unit was one that needed work coming out of Ohio State's win over Grambling State.

Day said the group of returners would need to focus on fundamentals and ball security in practice, adding that the Buckeyes left

a significant amount of yards on the field in Week 2.

"That's an area, coming out of the game, that we've got to improve on," Day said. "I think we lost 47 hidden yards with the ball bouncing around on the ground. A couple of them were very difficult because they weren't very well hit, but other ones I feel like we could have fielded. It's not just one thing."

Day said the primary punt returners will be wide receivers Brandon Inniss, Smith and Carnell Tate along with safety Caleb Downs, with captain wideout Inniss expected to lead the group.

"Brandon is still going to return punts for us, but we also have Jeremiah that we can put back there, Carnell, Caleb, if we need to," Day said. "We're going to stick to it, but we've got to get better."

The Buckeyes still had some issues with punt returns against Ohio, but Innis did have a 28-yard return.

Kienholz Could Have Packages Built In For Him

He may not be Ohio State's starting quarterback, but Kienholz has worked as hard as one. The Buckeyes' backup played well in lim-

ited action against Grambling State and completed 6 of 7 passes for 71 yards and his first collegiate touchdown pass.

"He graded out a champion," Day said of Kienholz's performance. "You saw him run a couple of the short yardage, and then he pulled it on the read. And so he's a good athlete. I think he made some good decisions. He threw the ball well."

With Sayin shining as the team's starter, it doesn't seem likely that Kienholz's quality play will create an in-season quarterback controversy. However, Day said on Sept. 10 that the team could potentially put more on his plate if he continues to play well.

"The more Lincoln can do, the more we'll give him opportunities," Day said. "Whether it's a package or something like that, we'll work through those types of things. But he's doing a nice job."

Kienholz was hesitant when asked about the idea of him getting in the game in special packages.

"I don't know right now," Kienholz said. "I mean, potentially, but we'll see."

Kienholz got a chance against OU. He entered the game in the second quarter and converted a first down with an 8-yard run. He

said he will be there to support the Buckeye starter.

"I'm going to keep pushing Julian. Just keep making sure he's on his stuff," Kienholz said. "And also be a guy to help him if he needs anything. I'm going to be there to answer questions and stuff like that."

ESPN SP+ Ranks PSU, Oregon Over OSU

After three weeks of college football, the defending national champions are no longer ranked No. 1 by ESPN's SP+ rating. Instead, the Buckeyes are ranked the third-best team in the country behind Penn State and Oregon.

ESPN's Bill Connelly describes his SP+ rating as a "tempo- and opponent-adjusted measure of college football efficiency" that is intended to be more predictive rather than grading the current résumé teams have.

The Ducks, who are No. 6 in the AP top 25, made the jump to No. 1 after thrashing Oklahoma State 69-3 in Week 2 but fell down to No. 2 following their 34-14 win over Northwestern.

With dominant wins over Nevada, FIU and Villanova, Penn State sits atop the rating.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1985

One could not say the Ohio State football team wasn't opportunistic. The Buckeyes took advantage of four Colorado turnovers, turning all of them into scores in frolicking to a 36-13 win over the Buffaloes on Sept. 21. The victory, achieved before 47,022 fans at Folsom Field, upped the OSU record to 2-0 as it prepped for a Sept. 28 encounter with Washington State (1-3) in Ohio Stadium.

"I thought we showed some marked improvement today as an offensive football team," said OSU boss Earle Bruce after his troops, mixing the run and the pass, had herded up the Buffaloes, a team that entered the contest unbeaten in two outings. "Our running game was better, and that was important."

The Buckeyes, with John Wooldridge again filling in for the injured Keith Byars in the all-important tailback slot, used a variety of plays – most of them executed in flawless fashion – in demoralizing a young Colorado team.

35 Years Ago — 1990

John Cooper, Jim Colletto and Ron Hudson insisted there would be no quarterback controversy at Ohio State during the season. Greg Frey and Kent Graham weren't so sure.

In the aftermath of a 31-10 victory over Boston College, Frey and Graham seemed to be deadlocked for the Buckeyes' No. 1 quarterback position. But Cooper, Colletto and Hudson said there would be nothing this year to equal the Mike Tomczak-Brent Offenbecher minibattle of 1982 or the Art Schlichter-Rod Gerald major controversy of 1978.

To a man, members of the Ohio State coaching staff who dealt with the quarterbacks on a daily basis said anyone who called the situation between Frey and Graham a quarterback controversy was making the proverbial mountain from a mole hill.

"I never said anything about a quarterback controversy," Cooper said after giving Frey, a senior and two-year starter, the hook for the first time ever and dividing the two quarterbacks' playing time approximately half and half during the 21-point victory.

"There's no controversy. You guys (reporters) aren't going to get me involved in that. We just need a lot of help, that's all. We're going to play a lot of players, including quarterbacks. Right now, our starter is Greg Frey, but we don't play again for two weeks."

30 Years Ago — 1995

After years of anticipation, it was finally Notre Dame week. The Fighting Irish were set to invade Ohio Stadium for only the second time ever on Sept. 30, primed for a showdown with Ohio State.

The two tradition-rich Midwest football powers had been kept apart since a pair of games played in 1935 and '36. Notre Dame won both of those games, including the '35 game labeled "The Game of the Century."

The Irish rallied on that fateful day to score three fourth-quarter touchdowns and knock off a powerful Ohio State team 18-13 before a then-record crowd of 81,018.

Some 60 years later, another Ohio Stadium-record crowd well in excess of 95,000 was expected for the latest chapter of this rivalry. This OSU-Notre Dame series – the Buckeyes would complete a two-year contract by visiting South Bend, Ind., the next year – had been announced by then-OSU athletic director Rick Bay in the mid-1980s.

25 Years Ago — 2000

The impressive résumé of three NCAA championships, 11 Big Ten titles, countless All-Americans and more than 650 victories at Indiana University still couldn't save Bob Knight.

IU president Myles Brand announced on Sept. 10, during a news conference in which Brand described Knight as "defiant and hostile," that the legendary coach, who played on Ohio State's lone national championship basketball team in 1960, had been fired.

Knight, 59, had been warned in May about his behavior, and IU officials shackled him with a "zero tolerance" policy to govern his future actions.

But according to Brand, Knight's behavior had worsened in recent months and the coach had shown a "continued unwillingness to work within the guidelines" of the Indiana athletic department.

The final blow came Sept. 7 when 19-year-old IU freshman Kent Harvey accused Knight of grabbing him by the arm at Assembly Hall and giving him a profanity-laced lecture on manners and respect.

Harvey was the stepson of Knight critic and former talk show host Mark Shaw. Knight claimed he briefly held the student's arm and lectured him but did not curse at him.

20 Years Ago — 2005

For much of Ohio State's 25-22 loss to Texas on Sept. 10, fans in the Ohio Stadium-record crowd of 105,565 could have blinked their eyes and thought they were watching the 2002 national champion Buckeyes.

After some early struggles, the defense was buckling down and did not allow a touchdown for 44 minutes. OSU was getting the better of the special teams battle. The offense wasn't setting the world on fire, but the kicker was nailing field goals left and right.

The difference, however, between the national title winners and the team that suffered this heartbreaking loss was twofold. One, the '02 Buckeyes might never have faced a team as good as the Longhorns squad that entered the Horseshoe. And two, whenever there was a clutch stop to be made or offensive play to be had, the national champions had thrived. Against Texas, these Buckeyes did not.

"The game was going the way we wanted it to go," OSU junior safety Donte Whitner said. "The last five minutes, they made some plays and we made some mistakes."

15 Years Ago — 2010

Ohio State players and coaches talked all week prior to their Sept. 18 matchup with Ohio about a desire to improve the passing game, and the Buckeyes wasted no time proving they were serious.

Terrelle Pryor dropped back and found tight end Jake Stoneburner over the middle for a 13-yard gain on Ohio State's first offensive play, and that was just a hint of what was to come.

By the time the day was over, Pryor had completed 22 of 29 passes for 235 yards, two interceptions and a pair of touchdowns in the Buckeyes' 43-7 win. Backup Joe Bauserman got his chance as well and took advantage by completing 4 of 7

throws for 46 yards.

10 Years Ago — 2015

In the postgame interview room, just below the victory bell that had finished ringing for the third time in as many home games that season after a 38-13 victory over Western Michigan on Sept. 26, Ohio State offensive coordinator Ed Warinner issued a refrain that had become a familiar one. The Buckeyes were not the 2014 team. But, more importantly, they were also still miles away from what the 2015 team could become.

Ohio State, as a whole, was markedly worse than how it finished the 2014 season. The offensive line play had been inconsistent, quarterback Cardale Jones hadn't been as crisp, and the receivers were struggling to establish themselves fully.

But the Buckeyes were better than they were at this point the season before, when they closed out the nonconference slate with a 50-28 win over Cincinnati that filled head coach Urban Meyer with concern about the pass defense. Most importantly, they had a zero in the loss column, something that squad couldn't say.

Five Years Ago — 2020

Ohio State senior defensive tackle Haskell Garrett was recovering after suffering a gunshot wound to his face on Aug. 30. He was found by police around 12:30 a.m. on the 400 block of Chittenden Avenue in Columbus. The Las Vegas native was taken to the Wexner Medical Center in stable condition shortly after sustaining injuries to both of his cheeks.

Garrett was released from the hospital a day later according to a statement from Ohio State head coach Ryan Day.

"Haskell Garrett has been receiving excellent care at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center for the injuries he received on Sunday," Day said in the statement on Aug. 31. "We anticipate he will be released from the Medical Center this morning."

"On behalf of his family and this football program, we would like to thank all those who have been a part of Haskell's treatment and we are grateful that he will be heading home today. We will continue to help him and his family any way we can to expedite his recovery."

One Year Ago — 2024

Ohio State junior linebacker C.J. Hicks was on the losing end of the offseason competition between him and Sonny Styles for the starting Will linebacker role, but that didn't mean the Buckeyes had stopped trying to get him on the field.

Speaking during Ohio State's "developmental week" on Sept. 10, Day said that he and his staff had conversations about potentially moving the five-star Hicks closer to the line of scrimmage in more of a defensive end role, although they still believed he could excel at his natural linebacker position.

"We have had conversations, but we need C.J., right now, to play linebacker," Day said. "There are certain things that right now he is doing better than others. We need to find the consistency there that we believe that he can do at linebacker. Although we have a few guys already, he needs to be a part of that group."

"Because if you're playing with three linebackers in a game, all it takes is one injury and you're right in the middle of it. This is a long season."

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The Nittany Lions' most recent 52-6 win over FCS Villanova helped them jump Oregon.

Ohio State, on the other hand, was rated as high as No. 1 by the metric after Week 1 but has fallen one spot in back-to-back weeks.

Also high in the SP+ ratings are No. 4 Alabama (14th in the AP poll), No. 5 Ole Miss (13th), No. 6 Tennessee (15th), No. 7 Oklahoma (13th), No. 8 Georgia (fifth) and No. 9 USC (25th) and No. 10 Miami (fourth).

The Ducks rank No. 1 in the College Football Power Index, ranking just ahead of the Buckeyes, while the Nittany Lions are ranked seventh.

Smith, Tate Top NIL Earnings For WRs

The Buckeyes' top receiver tandem is cashing in on NIL deals like the game-changers they've proved to be. Tate and Smith ranked first and third, respectively, among the highest NIL earners at the position in college football, according to On3.

The valuations reflect the approximate compensation players will receive from the school and/or NIL collective and doesn't in-

clude incentives.

Smith, last season's Big Ten Richter-Howard Receiver of the Year and Thompson-Randle El Freshman of the Year winner, is estimated to earn between \$4 and 5 million this season.

With the highest valuation of a non-quarterback in college football, On3 estimates Smith will earn \$2-3 million more than Alabama wide receiver Ryan Williams, who is projected to make \$1.8 million this year as the second-highest-earning receiver.

Tate, Smith's opposite out wide, ranks just behind Williams and is expected to earn upwards of \$1.5 million this season. The junior wideout has 12 catches for 219 yards and three scores through three games for the Buckeyes.

Ohio State was one of only two programs with a duo of wide receivers earning over \$1 million, alongside Auburn's Cam Coleman and Eric Singleton.

Grady, Carter Lose Black Stripes

A pair of freshman defensive linemen

have lost their black stripes.

Defensive end Zion Grady and defensive tackle Jarquez Carter shed their black stripes on Sept. 10, becoming the 10th and 11th Ohio State true freshmen to earn stripe removals in 2025.

The two young linemen proved that they are ready to have some sort of role for the Buckeyes in the win over Grambling State, even if that means getting on the field late in big wins.

Grady loses the black stripe after playing nine snaps and earning two tackles, a sack and a tackle for loss. Carter, meanwhile, logged 22 snaps in Ohio State's matchups with Texas and Grambling State, recording a tackle against the Tigers.

Egbuka Calls Winning Play In Debut

A former Buckeye wide receiver saved the day for the Buccaneers in his professional debut.

Tampa Bay rookie Emeka Egbuka caught four passes for 67 yards and two touchdowns in the Buccaneers' 23-20 win over the Atlanta

Falcons on Sept. 7

Egbuka sealed the win with his second touchdown. Down four points on the Falcons' 25-yard line, quarterback Baker Mayfield fired a pass over the middle to the back of the end zone for a score with 59 seconds remaining.

Buccaneer wide receiver Mike Evans said that Egbuka called the touchdown in the huddle before the play.

"Right before he caught that last touchdown, he called it. He wanted a post route. He said, 'I'm about to game one.' " Evans told JoeBucsFan.com after the game. "We were in the huddle and (Egbuka) said we need to run this certain play and I'm going to game (the corner back). And I was just like, 'Maybe we do need to run it.' And then literally he runs the post and touchdown, next play."

With fellow wideouts Chris Godwin and Jalen McMillan sidelined to start the season, Egbuka is expected to take on a major role early for Tampa Bay.

Long TD Passes Offset Missed Opportunities

Continued From Page 1

used his power to force his way into the end zone after a catch at the 4-yard line, but a review revealed that he had stepped out when he turned to bowl over Bobcats into the end zone, forcing the Buckeyes to settle for three again.

"The touchdown to CJ, we don't get in, we step out of bounds. That moment, in that game, we can't let ego get in the way. Just kick the field goal," Day said of the thought process behind the kick. "Let's not get this game into a situation where we put ourselves at risk. Because I felt like we were moving the ball well, we just have to finish these drives off, which is frustrating."

The frustration ended soon after for Day and the offense, however, when Sayin realized that he didn't have to work through his red-zone issues if they scored before they had to run a play from inside the 20.

He found Smith for a 47-yard touchdown

on a post route with just over six minutes left in the third quarter, and to begin the fourth quarter, he threw another good-looking deep ball to Tate on a post route for a 49-yard score.

"I thought his deep balls were excellent tonight," Day said. "The first one down the sideline to Jeremiah had a lot of air on it, which allowed him to go make a play. Both posts were well-thrown. He had good rhythm."

Day also added that having Smith and Tate, who can vertically stretch the field as well as any receivers in the country, provides a huge advantage for the Buckeyes when they are struggling to get the offense going.

"They're deep-play threats," he said. "When you can throw and catch them like that, it just opens up so many other things. (The Bobcats) were playing pretty low, lower than we were expecting and lower than we usually see. There were big plays to be had out there. They challenged Julian to



SONNY BROCKWAY

HAT KICK — Jayden Fielding (38) made all three field-goal tries in the 37-9 win over Ohio after the offense cooled in the red zone, as evidenced by their distances — 38, 20 and 22 yards.

throw the ball — 'a young quarterback, let's see what happens.' I thought it was a good plan and they did a nice job."

But while there were a lot of struggles in the red zone, it wasn't anything Day said he's too worried about going forward. He said that they will work on those situations in the off week to try to improve, but he didn't have any immediate issues with the game plan the Buckeyes had when they got into the red area.

"Situations are important, and in a game where they have 55 plays and we have 63, the percentages of situations become higher because you're not playing 70 or 80 plays. We have to get better in those areas, and we'll make sure we address them.

"When you're trying to score a touchdown from first-and-goal at the 10, you have to be on point with what you're doing," Day said. "I think it was a little bit of a lack of execution, but we have good ideas down there. We have the right packages going in. I think we can coach it better, and I think we can execute it better."

Sayin took responsibility for the trouble

finishing drives.

"I think we have to stay on schedule a little better in the red zone. We got the third-and-long in the red zone, and that's a little bit tougher because there's not much space down there," Sayin said. "But also, our timing in the red zone. It starts with me, and we have to get on the same page with the receivers' timing."

If the Buckeyes continue to have issues in the red zone, however, Day hinted at a possible fix Ohio State could try.

While it wasn't near the end zone against the Bobcats, backup quarterback Lincoln Kienholz got into the game for a third-and-2 and took a designed QB run 8 yards for a first down.

Earlier in the week, Day mentioned that there were packages in the offense for Kienholz, but those hadn't been seen in close games. But with what Kienholz provides, both with his legs and arm, Day feels comfortable using him going forward.

"Yes, and it will be. It will continue to be, because Lincoln can throw it, and he can run it," Day said when asked if Kienholz

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could be used in the red zone, nodding emphatically. "I thought he did a nice job running it. He found himself right behind that double team and the puller and hit it. That was a good conversion for us."

"We do have more things for him. But the whole offense is available when Lincoln is in there. We'll keep looking at that and probably have some of that available. It's not going to be a surprise. It's not a secret. We'll have some of that available in the red zone when we're having a hard time. Something to go to as a weapon."

Growing Pains

After seeing Sayin throw the ball so well against Grambling State, many onlookers might have concluded that he was fully developed and ready to go win the Big Ten for the Buckeyes and a national championship after that.

But it was no surprise to see the redshirt freshman face some growing pains the first time he had a little more freedom offensively against an FBS team. Against the Tigers in Week 2, all Sayin needed to do was find one of the many open receivers and throw the ball somewhere in their general direction – only slightly an exaggeration of what the offense did in that game – and that was enough to go 18 of 19 for 306 yards and four touchdowns in just one half of football.

Day had some early frustrations with the signal caller, which was seen on the Peacock broadcast (at least by those who purchased a month of the streaming service for this game) when he chewed Sayin out after one of the early drives when he was missing

open reads.

There was also frustration when Sayin threw two interceptions against the Bobcats, both of which, with experience, Day believes will be avoided in the future.

"It was a spy that jumped in the window on him. How do you get in front of that one?" Day said of the first interception. "When there's a spy right there looking at you and mirroring you, you have to make sure you understand that. The read was to throw the ball to the tight end, but there's a guy right there, and he tipped the ball and created a turnover."

The second interception came early in the fourth quarter on a first-and-10 at the Ohio 48-yard line. There was no real need to put the ball into a dangerous spot, but Sayin tried to do too much and tossed the ball to Bobcat defensive tackle Austin Mitchell.

Day said that Sayin should have been all right with taking a sack on the play, which would have been much better than handing the ball to the opposing team around midfield.

"He knows he's got to third-hand that, put it in his chest and go down, take the sack," Day said. "Take your medicine and live to see another day, so lesson learned."

Sayin has thrown three interceptions in the last two weeks against Grambling State and Ohio, which are two good teams to have learning moments in, given the final scores of the games.

But now, Washington is up next after the off week, and while Sayin likely won't need to be perfect for that game, he's going to need to be able to take care of the ball in

high-pressure situations.

He said he's taking the next two weeks as a quarterback to try to improve every part of his game before Big Ten play starts.

"In the next two weeks, it's about improving everywhere," Sayin said. "Improving in recognizing coverages, improving in commanding the offense and moving us down the field, improving in our red-zone execution. We can improve in all areas. The next two weeks will be big for us."

MAcTion No Problem For Day

It was no surprise to see the Buckeyes handle yet another MAC team in the Day era. This is the sixth time that a Day-led team matched up against a team from the conference, and the games have ended the same way each time.

In 2024, the Buckeyes beat Akron 52-6 in Week 1 and Western Michigan 56-0 in Week 2. In 2022, they handled Toledo in Ohio Stadium, which also had a rushing quarterback in Dequan Finn that season, one year after true freshman Kyle McCord made his first start to beat Akron 59-7. And in Day's first season at the helm in 2019, Ohio State beat Miami (Ohio) 76-5, although the Buckeyes did trail 5-0 early in that one.

It's an aspect of Day's career to this point that has gone somewhat underappreciated by some, the fact that he's able to have his teams ready in games that they could sleepwalk through and still get a win.

That hasn't always been the case for Ohio State, even in the recent past.

Urban Meyer handled every MAC team that he played, but it wasn't always a game

that was put away early on.

In 2015, the Ohio State team that came into the season as national championship favorites struggled when Northern Illinois visited Columbus. It was a common theme for that year's team to seem like it wasn't completely focused on the task at hand after winning the national championship the year before, and they went into the half on Sept. 19 tied with the Huskies 10-10.

Jim Tressel had even more issues putting away MAC teams. He beat Ohio 26-14 in 2008 and scored only 20 points against Akron the year before that. In 2004, when Marshall was still in the conference, Tressel's Buckeyes didn't put the Thundering Herd away until a Mike Nugent field goal with 17 seconds left in the game to win 24-21. In 2003, Bowling Green was within a touchdown, and in 2001, Akron was within two TDs.

The Buckeyes have beaten every MAC team they have played, so it's not as if it was a real problem with the other coaches on the OSU sideline. But for Day's teams, it's helpful that he's able to get his starters out of the game at some point so that they can either rest or avoid possible injuries.

This was Day's closest matchup against a MAC team, and he still won it by four touchdowns. There will likely come a day when a team from the Mid-American Conference plays the Day-coached Buckeyes in a close game, but even with the struggles in the Sept. 13 game, that still has yet to happen.



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Jackson Leads The Way In OSU Run Game

In the Buckeyes' 37-9 win over the Bobcats Sept. 13, it seemed Ohio State's backfield was more of a committee than it had been in the first two weeks of the season.

Ohio State utilized three running backs – sophomore James Peoples, senior CJ Donaldson and freshman Bo Jackson – each of whom received at least seven carries.

But it was the freshman, Jackson, who proved to be the difference maker for Ohio State's rushing attack.

Jackson ran for 109 yards on just nine carries – his second straight game of over 100 rushing yards – averaging 12.1 yards per rush. His night was highlighted by a 64-yard run on the Buckeyes' first offensive play of the second half.

Buckeye head coach Ryan Day emphasized Jackson's burst and vision as what makes the rookie running back special, noting that he has the ability to change the game with a single play, which adds a new dimension to the Buckeye offense.

"Bo has some home run-hitting ability, which is a weapon for us, and we'll figure out how that fits in moving forward," Day said. "The more he plays, the more he's going to learn. But you can see the vision, and you can see the explosiveness."

Since fall camp, Ohio State wide receiver Jeremiah Smith has made it clear that Jackson is his pick to be the Buckeyes' next star, adding that he feels the freshman running back is only getting started this year.

"I've been saying it. Like I said (after the win over Grambling State on Sept. 6), Bo Jackson is that guy," Smith said. "You're going to see more of that the rest of the season."

Even with Jackson finishing as Ohio State's leading rusher, both Donaldson and Peoples turned in steady performances against the Bobcats. Peoples finished his evening with 47 yards on seven carries, largely thanks to back-to-back 11- and 17-yard gains in the fourth quarter, while the more experienced Donaldson added 39

GAME NOTEBOOK Sam Cipriani

rushing yards on nine attempts.

Day said he was encouraged by the production he saw from each running back, highlighting the different strengths they brought to the rotation.

"Bo Jackson has some big-play ability, and he can catch the ball well out of the backfield. James Peoples had some runs in the second half that were better for him," Day said. "I thought CJ Donaldson ran hard on a couple of good runs, especially the third-and-1 with the big grouping in the game (in the third quarter). There was a free guy in the hole. That's a short-yardage run, and you have to beat your own blocker, and he did, so there were some good things there."

After Donaldson powered his way to the first down, on the next play Julian Sayin hit Smith for a 47-yard touchdown and 23-9 Buckeye lead.

Following the win over Grambling State, when Jackson had 108 rushing yards, Day hinted that there might be a fumbling problem with the freshman in practice, which might have been the reason Donaldson and Peoples were getting more time.

But against the Bobcats, Jackson was in when the game was close and was taking important snaps in the backfield, showing that the split could be more of a three-man committee than it previously seemed like it would be.

With the way Jackson performed against the Bobcats, it would be a surprise if he isn't an important part of the Buckeye run game by the time they head to Seattle for their first Big Ten matchup of the season on Sept. 27 after the off week.

The Buckeyes' trio of running backs was also very effective through the air. Each of the three backs recorded two catches, while the group totaled 45 receiving yards.

Special Teams, Penalties Make For Sloppy Half

Just five days ahead of the clash between Ohio State and Ohio, Day identified the Buckeyes' punt-return unit as one that needed work. Day's emphasis was on cleaning up the team's punt returns, and Ohio State continued to struggle to piece together strong returns throughout the night.

On Ohio's opening drive, the Buckeyes stopped the Bobcats on third down, forcing a punt. On the return by Ohio State wide receiver Brandon Inniss, he fielded the punt booted by Ohio's Magnus Haines at Ohio State's 30-yard line, and with defenders closing in, he opted to take his first steps backward, ultimately losing 2 yards in an attempt to evade a pair of Bobcat defenders.

Then, Ohio State had two more return blunders within two minutes of each other.

Coming out of the two-minute timeout, the Bobcats punted to the Buckeyes once again, and this time, Smith was back to return. The usually sure-handed Smith muffed



SONNY BROCKWAY

MAKING A NAME — Freshman Bo Jackson is drawing attention following his second straight 100-plus-yard rushing game after he gained 109 yards on nine carries against Ohio, including a 64-yard jaunt in the third quarter.

the punt but was lucky enough to have plenty of time to carefully pick up the fumble, ultimately losing 1 yard on the return.

On the return, freshman Devin Sanchez had a block in the back call, and OSU was pushed from its 32-yard line to its 22.

Inniss had another mistake on Ohio's final kickoff before the half. Instead of fielding the Bobcats' kickoff in the air, the junior captain backed up and allowed the kick to bounce.

Inniss appeared to have room to work on the initial kickoff, though after letting the football bounce, he returned the ball just 3 yards to the Buckeyes' 11-yard line, halting any chance of a quick score before half.

Penalties also proved to be a major detriment for the Buckeyes in the first half.

Of Ohio State's six penalties in the contest, the team was flagged five times in the first half for a total of 45 yards.

Right guard Tegra Tshabola was twice the culprit of the Buckeye mistakes.

With Ohio State driving on Ohio's 22-yard line late into the first quarter, the senior guard was flagged for a false start on second-and-4, pushing the Buckeyes back 5 yards. The penalty pushed Ohio State into a third-and-long attempt that resulted in a short gain and, in turn, a field goal, rather than potentially extending the drive.

Then, on the Buckeyes' next possession, with Ohio State threatening on the Bobcats' 27-yard mark after backup quarterback Lincoln Kienholz rushed for 8 yards, Tshabola was flagged again, this time for a personal foul.

His penalty took Ohio State back from the Ohio 19 to the 34-yard line, yet another promising drive halted by penalties.

The Buckeyes cleaned up their game in the second half, with a solid, 28-yard punt return by Inniss in the third quarter that seemed to jump-start the OSU offense. The team was also flagged just once more for the rest of the contest.



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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Ohio State's run defense was as good as it's been all season in the team's 37-9 win over Ohio on Sept. 13. The Buckeyes allowed only 68 yards rushing on 34 attempts against an Ohio team that had previously gone for over 200 yards on the ground in its first game of the season and came close in its second.

One reason Ohio had so much success running the football in its previous two games is that quarterback Parker Navarro presents a unique combination of shiftiness and speed for his position. The Buckeyes often used a spy to track the Bobcats' quarterback, and that plan worked well. Navarro went for only 3 net yards on five carries, and his longest run was only an 8-yarder.

Ohio State was just as effective in shutting down Ohio's running backs. Ohio's leading rushers, Sieh Bangura and Duncan Brune, combined for only 43 yards on 21 carries. Brune and Bangura had no runs that went for more than 6 yards. It was a team effort for the Buckeyes in stopping the run, but linebacker Arvell Reese, who often spied Navarro, had a particularly impressive performance. Reese led the team with seven total tackles and had one of the defense's four sacks.

What Didn't Work

Although Ohio State was able to move the ball effectively throughout the game, the offense ran into trouble in the red zone. The Buckeyes reached the red zone six times but came away with only two touchdowns from those trips inside the Bobcats' 20-yard line. The Buckeyes' issues deep in their opponents' territory started on their very first drive of the game, when they had a first-and-goal from Ohio's 9-yard line.

Two run plays helped the Buckeyes pick up 5 yards to bring up third-and-goal needing 4 yards for a score, but redshirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin couldn't connect with sophomore wide-

out Carnell Tate in the end zone. Then on fourth-and-goal, Sayin couldn't find a receiver open early in the down and was tripped up and sacked by Ohio defensive end Anas Luqman.

The Buckeyes made it back to the red zone on their next possession, but a false-start penalty on offensive guard Tegra Tshabola pushed the Buckeyes into a second-and-9. After a 1-yard run by CJ Donaldson, Sayin found sophomore tight end Jelani Thurman for 6 yards to bring up fourth-and-short. This time, head coach Ryan Day opted to bring out kicker Jayden Fielding, who kicked his first field goal of the season.

The rest of the game, the Buckeyes went 2 for 4 in the red zone, with the two scores coming on a 16-yard pass to Max Klare and a 17-yard run by Jeremiah Smith.

Play Of The Game

Ohio State was letting its in-state foe hang around early in the second half. After the Bobcats scored their lone touchdown of the game early in the third quarter and Fielding kicked his third field goal of the game, the Buckeyes' lead was only 16-9 midway through the third quarter. However, on a first-and-10, Ohio State's front picked up a four-man rush from the Bobcats to give Sayin a clean pocket and plenty of time to throw.

Sayin took advantage of the good protection and delivered a perfect pass that traveled over 50 yards through the air and hit Smith in stride for a 47-yard touchdown and a 23-9 lead, creating much-needed separation on the scoreboard.

Smith didn't necessarily create a ton of separation on the route, but he didn't need to, as he was able to fend off Ohio cornerback Michael Mack II from breaking up the pass.

— Bobby Gorbett

CB Styles Injured, Secondary Makes Changes

The Buckeyes lost a key contributor during Ohio's second offensive possession of the third quarter. On the first play after Ohio State's kickoff, Bobcats quarterback Parker Navarro attempted a slant to wide receiver Chase Hendricks.

Hendricks beat Lorenzo Styles Jr. on the route, and on the graduate cornerback's tackle attempt, he went down with what appeared to be an upper-body injury. Styles lay on the turf for a minute before being helped off the field. The takedown was Styles' lone tackle of the night, and he did not return for the remainder of the game.

In Styles' absence, junior cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. replaced him in the nickel, while the freshman Sanchez stepped in Mathews' spot as an outside cornerback.

Sophomore safety Jaylen McClain said he feels Sanchez makes the most of his opportunities when stepping in for the Buckeye starters, adding that he notices the rookie's effort every day in practice.

"I feel like he's doing a good job. When his number is called, he's making plays. He's showing the preparation that he's putting into practice every day."

Mathews finished his night with three total tackles (two solo), while Sanchez didn't record any statistics, which could be an encouraging sign since he wasn't targeted.

While Day did not give an update on Styles' injury when he was asked about it, his brother, senior linebacker Sonny Styles, simply said, "He's good."

Klare Logs First Buckeye TD

Following tight end Max Klare's transfer from Purdue to Ohio State, most expected him to be one of the Buckeyes' top pass catchers in 2025. However, through Ohio State's first two games against Texas and Grambling State, Klare had just one catch in each contest for a total of 18 yards.

The junior tight end finally broke through

against the Bobcats. Klare caught two passes for 30 yards and his first score as a Buckeye against Ohio.

On Klare's 16-yard touchdown, he made contact with a Bobcat safety, Rickey Hyatt Jr., and as the defensive back fell to the ground, Klare sprang wide open for the catch and score with just under 2½ minutes to play in the first half.

After the game, he described the series of events that led to the touchdown.

"That was a weird touchdown," Klare said. "I was just running a post, and I was looking for the ball, and I saw the guy, and he just ran right into me. He fell over, and I just kept running, and the ball found me."

For the former Boilermaker, scoring in Ohio Stadium is a major upgrade in stadium size from Ross-Ade Stadium, where Klare began his collegiate career.

Klare said the play was a personal highlight for his career, adding that moments like those feel even bigger inside the 'Shoe.

"Oh, man, it felt great. I mean, I kind of blacked out," Klare said. "That's probably one of the coolest touchdowns I've ever scored, just looking up into the helmet stripe (pattern in the student section). So it was pretty sweet."

He continued and said the moment was one he'll always remember, but what made it even better was the stage he was on.

"Coming out to 100,000 plus fans every week, it's pretty surreal," Klare said. "I mean, it's what you dream of growing up. So it's been sweet."

D-Line Posts Best Contest Of Season

The Buckeyes' defensive front helped limit opponents to just seven points over their first two games, but they delivered their strongest showing yet against Ohio.

Ohio State finished with four sacks by four different players and seven total tackles for loss, routinely disrupting both the Bobcats' pass and run game with relentless pressure.

The Buckeyes' four sacks against Ohio were more than Ohio State had accumulated in the first two games combined (three).

With the Buckeyes keying in on the legs of Navarro – an emphasis for Ohio State in practice the week of the game – the Rushmen helped to hold Ohio to just 68 rushing yards on 34 attempts for just 2.0 yards per carry. The Bobcats' longest run of the night was an 11-yard rush by backup quarterback Nick Poulos.

Day acknowledged the defense's strong effort but stressed that the Buckeyes still have corrections to make.

"I thought our defense played strong tonight," Day said. "They did a nice job against a good offense. (The Bobcats) do a great job. The quarterback is very good. I thought we

were very physical and played hard. There are a lot of issues that we have to get fixed, there's no question. It's our job to identify them and get them fixed."

Ohio State's defense had focused all week on stopping the run, which it was successful at doing.

It was Ohio's Navarro connecting with Hendricks for a 67-yard gain that produced the Bobcats' biggest play of the night by far.

Sonny Styles said the Buckeyes quickly regained their composure after the big play, stressing the importance of staying poised as a team.

"We gave a big play that was our fault. They shouldn't have scored," Styles said. "But I think we felt like we were in control. So we just responded great."



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Deep-Thinking Sayin Leads OSU Over Bobcats

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The closer Ohio State got to the Ohio goal line, the less productive the Buckeyes were, so Julian Sayin took matters into his own right hand and launched a pair of long touchdown passes to offset the red-zone woes when the top-ranked Buckeyes pulled away from Ohio for a 37-9 victory before 105,765 fans in Ohio Stadium on the night of Sept. 13.

The Buckeyes (3-0) drove inside the 10 three times, which resulted in two field goals and a turnover on downs, plus there was another possession stopped at the 20 that led to a field goal.

Ohio (1-2) trailed 16-9 in the third quarter when Sayin connected with Jeremiah Smith for a 47-yard score, followed by a 49-yard TD catch early in the fourth quarter for Carnell Tate, before Smith added a 17-yard rushing TD for the final score.

Sayin was 25 of 32 for 347 yards, three touchdowns and two interceptions.

Frustration

Ohio State got off to a stunning start, not because the Buckeyes easily drove from their 25 to the 9 in just four plays, but because they didn't score in four tries from there and turned the ball over on downs.

Starting at the OSU 25, Sayin passed 10 yards to Smith to the 35. James Peoples ran up the middle for 5, and Tate's catch for 9 moved the ball to the OSU 49.

Sayin found Smith along the right line for 42 to the 9, and the Buckeyes were poised to score. On the play, Smith became the fastest Buckeye ever to reach 1,500 receiving yards. He did it in 19 games, one fewer than Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

CJ Donaldson had two carries for 5 yards, and on third down, Tank Pearson broke up the pass intended for Tate in the left corner of the end zone. On fourth, Sayin was forced out of the pocket and sacked for a 5-yard loss by Anas Luqman.

After an Ohio punt and a minus-2-yard return for Brandon Inniss to the 28, the Buckeyes went to work again with Donaldson opening the drive with runs of 8 and 9, followed by a 14-yard reception by tight end Max Klare to the Ohio 41.

On third-and-5 from the 36, Smith gained 8 yards on a catch for the first down at the 28, and Sayin went back to him for 6 to the 22. But a false start, a Donaldson run for 1 and a 6-yard completion to tight end Jelani Thurman left the Buckeyes 2 yards shy of a first, and Jayden Fielding kicked a 38-yard field goal at the end of a 10-play drive that took 6:19 to make it 3-0 at the 1:54 mark of the first.

After another Ohio punt, Tate had a 30-yard catch-and-run to the Bobcats' 35 to end the quarter.

Ohio State had 153 yards to 11 for Ohio, with Sayin 9 of 10 for 126 yards. OSU had seven first downs to one for Ohio.

The Buckeyes marched to the OU 2 but were foiled one more time and had to settle for a 20-yard field goal by Fielding to make it 6-0 at 9:58.

On third-and-2 from the Bobcat 27, backup QB Lincoln Kienholz took the snap in



SONNY BROCKWAY

NOT THIS TIME — Ohio cornerback Tank Pearson (7) had the first of his two end-zone pass breakups, getting a hand on the ball to deny Carnell Tate a touchdown on the first drive of the game. Jeremiah Smith was also victimized in the second quarter.

the shotgun and ran left for 8 yards and a first. However, Tegra Tshabola was penalized 15 yards for a personal foul, pushing the ball back to the 34. Freshman Bo Jackson then ripped off 15 yards to the 19 and a first down. Former Ohio tight end Will Kacmarek had a 5-yard catch before Donaldson ran 11 yards to the 3.

Again, the Bobcats stiffened. Sayin twice went to Smith unsuccessfully, with Donaldson running for 1 in between. Pearson had the breakup of Smith on third down just as he did earlier in the game to Tate.

For those keeping track, that was two drives going inside the 10 that used 21 plays, went 115 yards, and used 11:36 off the clock to produce a mere three points each.

"All of the guys on offense knew we were moving the ball consistently," Sayin said. "We just have to execute, and it starts with me. We have to execute more in the red zone. Those first three drives, we didn't get a touchdown in the red zone. We have to do better."

Ohio starter Parker Navarro on the next series sustained an injury and was replaced by Nick Poulus. Navarro returned at the start of the third quarter.

The Buckeyes then started from their 23 after a Magnus Haines 33-yard punt and

finally breached the goal line on a Klare 16-yard TD catch with 2:29 left in the half for a 13-0 lead.

Jackson made a catch for 11, and Smith added to his totals with a 17-yarder to the Ohio 49. Jackson ran for 4, and Sayin scrambled for 3 to the OU 42, and Ohio was penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct. Smith and an Ohio player had offsetting unsportsmanlike conduct infractions at the end of the play.

OSU got the ball at the 27, and Jackson gained 11. After Peoples got nothing on a run, and an incompletion to Smith, Sayin rolled right to buy time and found the tight end Klare in the back of the end zone for the Purdue transfer's first Buckeye TD.

Then it got interesting following an Ohio punt. Sayin's pass was tipped at the line, and Michael Mack II made the interception at the OSU 44 and returned it 4 yards with 1:20 left. On second down, Davison Igbino-sun was penalized for holding, giving the Bobcats a first at the 29. A second-down pass to Max Rodarte fell incomplete after Jaylen McClain's jarring hit, and two plays later, Brack Peacock made a 44-yard field goal with 24 seconds left for the 13-3 score.

At the break, OSU led in total yards (278-28), passing (199-23), rushing (79-5), plays (39-22) and first downs (16-3). Sayin was

16 of 21 for 199 yards, and Smith had six catches for 89 yards.

Poor Start. Good Finish

With Navarro back, the Bobcats on the second play of the third quarter shocked the stadium with a 67-yard TD pass to Chase Hendricks. Hendricks made the catch over Lorenzo Styles Jr. at the OSU 41 and sprinted to the end zone to make it 13-9 after 53 seconds when Peacock's extra point hit the left upright.

The Buckeyes repeated their first-half failures when they got the ball back, squandering a 64-yard run by Jackson to the 11 on the first snap and were forced to kick a 22-yard field goal to go up 16-9 with 11:19 to go in the third.

OSU thought it had a third-down, 10-yard TD when Donaldson caught the ball at the 4 and bulled his way into the end zone, but a review showed he stepped out — by inches — at the 4.

A defensive stop led to a 54-yard punt and a 28-yard return for Inniss to the OSU 41.

Sayin decided enough with messing around in the red zone. On the fourth play, he placed the ball perfectly in the arms of Smith at the goal line for a 47-yard touchdown to extend the lead to 23-9 at 6:16.

The final drive of the third quarter began for the Buckeyes at their 15 after a punt. Jackson's catch went for 10, and later Smith hauled in a pass for 14 to the Ohio 48 to end the quarter.

A Jackson run lost a yard, but no matter. Sayin lofted a strike to Tate at the 2, and he went in for a 49-yard score with 14:14 to play. The drive was eight plays and 85 yards in 3:49.

Sayin later was intercepted at the OSU 42 by Austin Mitchell as he tried to avoid being sacked, but the Bobcats turned the ball over on downs at the Buckeye 41.

Peoples had consecutive runs of 11 and 17 yards to help set up Smith's end around score from the 17 to make it 37-9 with 6:36 left to complete the 59-yard, five-play, 2:53 drive.

Ohio held the ball the rest of the way after the kickoff, running 13 plays and going 57 yards until the game ended on a 1-yard run at the 18.

Smith tied his career high with nine catches for 153 yards, Tate's five catches went for 101 yards, and Jackson ran for 109 yards on nine carries.

Notes

The Buckeyes led in total yards (572-181), passing (347-113), rushing (225-68), first downs (28-9) and plays (63-55) ... They also had six penalties for 50 yards compared to three for 25 by the Bobcats. ... Eight Buckeyes had catches and seven had carries. ... Arvell Reese led the OSU defense with a career-high seven tackles (two solo). ... He, Caden Curry, Beau Atkinson and Kayden McDonald each had a sack for a total of 23 yards. ... Sayin was sacked once. ... Navarro was 6 of 13 for 94 yards; Poulos was 4 of 8 for 19 yards. ... The Buckeyes did not punt for the first time since 2021 against Maryland.

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 37, Ohio 9

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day, when asked if he was frustrated by what he saw in the game: "I was definitely frustrated in the first half with our inability to score touchdowns in the red zone, and encouraged with the way we responded in the second half. There are a lot of other things going on, but we have to get on the film and identify it. I will say, I felt like the sideline, the players, the look in their eyes, there was never any panic, which is a good sign for a young team. And we have to make sure we're doing our part as coaches, putting them in the right situation."

Ohio head coach Brian Smith on where Ohio lost the game: "There were a lot of areas where we lost the game. Struggling on early downs on offense put us in some bad situations. They hit some big explosive plays in the second half that got the game away from us, but it's collective across the board, and I think the team understands that."

Ohio State sophomore wide receiver Jeremiah Smith on his long touchdown reception: "Before we got on the field, Coach Day called it. He was like, 'We're going to call this play, and you have to go get it. I knew the ball was coming to me, I just had to go and make a play.'"

Ohio State junior tight end Max Klare on playing with so many explosive play-makers: "It's awesome. I saw the ball go up a few times tonight. I was just like, 'Well, it's a touchdown.' You see (Ohio State junior wide receiver Carnell Tate) just walk into the end zone. JJ just went up and got the ball. So it's fun to play with guys like that. And it just opens up the offense as a whole, too. So it's a lot of fun."

Klare on redshirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin keeping his eyes down the field: "He has great poise, even in the huddle. The way he plays is pretty awesome for a redshirt freshman. It's great to see that. He's just going to keep building on it, too. It's going to be fun to watch."

Sayin on his second interception: "I felt the pressure, and we talk about third-hand help when you're getting pressure in the pocket, protect the ball, put it on your body, and I was too loose with it, and obviously the ball came out."

Sayin on what sophomore quarterback Lincoln Kienholz provides to the offense: "It was awesome, his ability to pick



SONNY BROCKWAY

IN HIS WORDS — Coach Ryan Day saw many positives in the 37-9 win over Ohio, but the red-zone offense in the first half wasn't one of them when the Buckeyes led only 13-3 despite dominating the statistics.

up a third down for us when it was third-and-2. It was awesome to see him come in and run through contact."

Day On Ohio's long touchdown: "They have a very good scheme, and they do a nice job, and they milk the clock and try to shorten the game, which is smart on their end. They're a good team and they're going to make some good plays, but other than a couple of explosive plays – certainly the long pass – I thought our defense played strong tonight. They did a nice job against a good offense."

Ohio State senior linebacker Sonny Styles on the defense's response following Ohio's long touchdown: "I think the way we responded was good. We gave up an explosive play quickly. That was a big play right out of the half. Being able to respond to some of those negative plays and plays we weren't really happy about, I thought we did pretty well."

Styles on Ohio State's defense: "There's definitely NFL concepts that (Ohio State

defensive coordinator Matt Patricia) runs. I know a lot of what he's doing has carried over from what he was running with the (New England) Patriots. The personnel is good. There's a lot of really good players on that side of the ball."

Ohio State sophomore safety Jaylen McClain on his big hit to break up a pass in the second quarter: "It was really exciting. Obviously, the way it played out. It came to me, and I had to make the play."

McClain on how comfortable he is on the field: "I'm really comfortable. The preparation I put in practice, I feel like it's evident. I'm just trying to put it on display on the field."

Styles on the upcoming off week: "My body feels good. I think mentally, we're ready to go. We know we're about to go on a big run here, and we know this week isn't a week to just chill and relax. It's time to get primed up and get ready to go play a big game against Washington here in two weeks."

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 37, Ohio University 9

Sept. 13, 2025 - Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO UNIVERSITY	0	3	6	0	9
OHIO STATE	3	10	10	14	37

First Quarter

OSU - Fielding, 38-yard field goal, 1:54.

Second Quarter

OSU - Fielding, 20-yard field goal, 9:58.

OSU - Klare, 16-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 2:29.

OU - Peacock, 44-yard field goal, 0:24.

Third Quarter

OU - Hendricks, 67-yard pass from Navarro (Peacock kick missed), 14:07.

OSU - Fielding, 22-yard field goal, 11:19.

OSU - Smith, 47-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 6:16.

Fourth Quarter

OSU - Tate, 49-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 14:14.

OSU - Smith, 17-yard rush (Fielding kick), 6:36.

Att. - 105,765

Weather - Clear, 77 F

Team Statistics

	OU	OSU
First Downs	9	28
Rushing	5	12
Passing	3	15
Penalty	1	1
Rushes-Yards	34-68	31-225
Passing Yards	113	347
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	10-21-0	25-32-2
Offensive Plays	55	63
Total Net Yards	181	572
Third Down Efficiency	3-15	5-9
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-3	0-1
Punts-Avg.	7-44.4	0-0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-0
Penalties	3-25	6-50
Time of Possession	27:17	32:43

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) - OU: Bangura 12-24; Brune 9-19; Poulos 6-13; Boyland 2-9; Navarro 5-3.
OSU: Jackson 9-109; Peoples 7-47; Donaldson Jr. 9-39; Smith 1-17; Kienholz 1-8; Tate 1-8; Team 1-(-2); Sayin 2-(-2).
PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) - OU: Navarro 6-13-0-94-1; Poulos 4-8-0-19-0. **OSU:** Sayin 25-32-2-347-3.
RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) - OU: Hendricks 3-76; Bruno 2-21; Gossett 1-6; Rodarte 1-6; Mason Williams 1-3; Harris II 1-1. **OSU:** Smith 9-153; Tate 5-101; Klare 2-30; Jackson 2-21; Donaldson Jr. 2-13; Kacmarek 2-12; Peoples 2-11; Thurman 1-6.
PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) - OU: Haines 7-44.4-54. **OSU:** None.
PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - OU: None. **OSU:** Inniss 2-26; Smith 1-(-6).
KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - OU: None. **OSU:** Inniss 1-3.
FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) - OU: None. **OSU:** None.
INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) - OU: Mack II 1-4; Mitchell 1-0. **OSU:** None.
SACKS (No.-Yds.) - OU: Luqman 1-5. **OSU:** Atkinson 1-9; Curry 1-8; McDonald 1-4; Reese 1-2.
TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) - OU: Luqman 1-5; Walker 1-1. **OSU:** Atkinson 2-10; Curry 1-8; McDonald 1-4; Jackson 1-2; Reese 1-2; Downs 1-1.
TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) - OU: Williams Jr. 9-0-9; Hollobaugh 7-2-9; Pearson 6-0-6; Molnar 3-3-6; Walker 4-1-5; Mack II 3-2-5; Thomeson 2-3-5; Kemeni 1-2-3; Guffey 1-2-3; Luqman 1-1-2; Odjugo 1-1-2; Haskins 1-1-2; Jackson Jr. 1-0-1; Dukes 1-0-1; Makel Williams 1-0-1; Hale 0-1-1; Mason Williams 0-1-1. **OSU:** Reese 2-5-7; Downs 3-3-6; Styles 1-5-6; McClain 4-1-5; Curry 2-2-4; Pierce 0-4-4; McDonald 3-0-3; Mathews Jr. 2-1-3; Malone 1-2-3; Smith Jr. 1-2-3; Pettijohn 0-3-3; Atkinson 2-0-2; Jackson Jr. 1-1-2; Peoples 1-0-1; Styles JR. 1-0-1; George 1-0-1; Igbinosun 0-1-1; Hicks 0-1-1; Houston 0-1-1; Hartford 0-1-1; Delane 0-1-1; Grady 0-1-1; Alford 0-1-1.
PLAYERS IN THE GAME - OU: Harris II, Navarro, Rodarte, Bangura, Weatherspoon, Jones, Marinaro, Allen, Rhodes Jr., Hendricks, Mason Williams, Odjugo, Crable, Luqman, Walker, Thomeson, Hollobaugh, Molnar, Dukes, Williams Jr., Pearson, Mack II, Makel Williams, Dennis, Herrmann, Marsh, Dorwart, Jackson Jr., Boyland, Haskins, Kemeni, Christopher, Kelly, Guffey, Dellenbach, Seegars, Riegle, Haines, Peacock, Hemer, Hale, Brune, Waite, Wright, Cisse, Shelby, Parson, Poulos, Mundy, Bruno, Gossett, Mitchell, Reagans III, Neubert. **OSU:** Inniss, Sayin, Tate, Peoples, Smith, Montgomery, Siereveld, Daniels, Hinzman, Tshabola, Kacmarek, Styles, Igbinosun, McClain, Downs, Styles Jr., Mathews Jr., Reese, Curry, Malone, Jackson Jr., McDonald, Delane, Hicks, West, Donaldson Jr., Lockhart, Atkinson, Thurman, Grady, Alford, Pettijohn, Stover, Jackson, Pierce, Roker, Kienholz, Fielding, Velazquez, McGuire, Ferlmann, Sitanilei, Rudzinski, George, Scott Jr., Mickens, Smith Jr., Kirks, VanSickle, Sanchez, Padilla, Terry, Moore, Onianwa, Adolph, Roberts, Klare, Hartford, Carter, Houston.

Season Statistics

2025 Game-By-Game				
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd	
Aug. 30	(3) TEXAS (1)	W, 14-7	107,524	
Sept. 6	(1) GRAMBLING STATE	W, 70-0	100,624	
Sept. 13	(1) OHIO	W, 37-9	105,765	
Sept. 27	at Washington	TBA		
Oct. 4	MINNESOTA	TBA		
Oct. 11	at Illinois (9)	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 (21)	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	71	35
Rushing	30	21
Passing	37	11
Penalty	4	3
Average Per Game/Rush	192.0	109.3
Average Per Game/Pass	283.3	118.3
Total Offense	1426	683
Total Plays	183	177
Average Per Game	475.3	227.7
Average Per Play	7.8	3.9
Penalties-Yards	11-80	15-115
Fumbles-Lost	2-0	3-2
Third Down Efficiency	13-28	11-43
Percentage	46%	26%
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-4	4-9
Percentage	50%	44%
Sacks-Yards	7-35	1-5
Time Of Possession Avg.	31:54	28:06

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	24	31	31	35	0	121	40.3	
Opponents	0	3	6	7	0	16	5.3	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Bo Jackson	18	217	12.1	1	64
CJ Donaldson Jr.	33	151	4.6	2	27
James Peoples	25	126	5.0	0	17
Isaiah West	8	42	5.3	1	12
Lincoln Kienholz	3	18	6.0	0	8
Jeremiah Smith	1	17	17.0	1	17
Sam Dixon	2	9	3.0	1	6
Brandon Inniss	1	8	8.0	0	8
Carnell Tate	1	8	8.0	0	8
Julian Sayin	6	-7	-1.2	0	3
Team	4	-13	-3.3	0	0
OSU Totals	103	576	5.6	6	64
OPP Totals	104	328	3.2	0	19

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Julian Sayin	56	71	78.9	779	8-3	199.8
Lincoln Kienholz	6	7	85.7	71	1-0	218.1
Tavien St. Clair	0	2	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
OSU Totals	62	80	77.5	850	9-3	196.4
OPP Totals	38	73	52.1	355	2-2	96.5

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Jeremiah Smith	20	315	15.8	3	87
Carnell Tate	12	219	18.3	3	49
Brandon Inniss	5	37	7.4	0	12
Will Kacmarek	4	67	16.8	1	47
Max Klare	4	48	12.0	1	16
Jelani Thurman	4	50	12.5	1	26
CJ Donaldson Jr.	3	22	7.3	0	9
Bennett Christian	2	7	3.5	0	6
Bryson Rodgers	2	22	11.0	0	21
James Peoples	2	11	5.5	0	10
Bo Jackson	2	21	10.5	0	11
David Adolph	1	8	8.0	0	8
Mylan Graham	1	23	23.0	0	23
OSU Totals	62	850	13.7	9	87
OPP Totals	38	355	9.3	2	67

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jeremiah Smith	4	-	-	-	-	24
Jayden Fielding	-	12-12	-	-	3-3	21
Carnell Tate	3	-	-	-	-	18
CJ Donaldson Jr.	2	-	-	-	-	12
Will Kacmarek	1	-	-	-	-	6
Max Klare	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jelani Thurman	1	-	-	-	-	6
Sam Dixon	1	-	-	-	-	6
Riley Pettijohn	1	-	-	-	-	6

Bo Jackson	1	-	-	-	-	6
Isaiah West	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jackson Courville	-	4-4	-	-	-	4
OSU Totals	16	16-16	-	-	3-3	121
OPP Totals	2	1-2	-	-	1-2	16

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Jayden Fielding	2-2	1-1	0-0	0-0	3-3
OSU Totals	2-2	1-1	0-0	0-0	3-3
OPP Totals	0-0	0-1	1-1	0-0	1-2

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Joe McGuire	6	260	43.3	0	55
Nick McLarty	1	45	45.0	0	45
OSU Totals	7	305	43.6	0	55
OPP Totals	18	788	43.8	0	54

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
J. Mathews Jr.	1	5	5.0	0	5
Caleb Downs	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	2	5	2.5	0	5
OPP Totals	3	4	1.3	0	4

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Brandon Inniss	3	34	11.3	0	28
Jeremiah Smith	1	-6	-6.0	0	0
OSU Totals	4	28	7.0	0	28
OPP Totals	1	3	3.0	0	3

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Brandon Inniss	2	20	10.0	0	17
OSU Totals	2	20	10.0	0	17
OPP Totals	2	29	14.5	0	15

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Arvell Reese	7	13	20	2.0-3	2.0-3
Jaylen McClain	13	4	17	0-0	0-0
Sonny Styles	5	9	14	0.5-1	0-0
Caden Curry	7	7	14	3.0-10	2.0-9
Kayden McDonald	6	8	14	2.0-6	1.0-4
Davison Igbinosun	5	8	13	2.0-2	0-0
Caleb Downs	7	6	13	2.0-2	0-0
Payton Pierce	2	9	11	0-0	0-0
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	6	4	10	1.0-1	0-0
C.J. Hicks	2	4	6	1.0-1	0-0
J. Mathews Jr.	5	1	6	0-0	0-0
K. Jackson Jr.	1	4	5	1.0-2	0-0
Will Smith Jr.	1	4	5	0-0	0-0
Riley Pettijohn	2	3	5	0-0	0-0
Eddrick Houston	-	4	4	0-0	0-0
Garrett Stover	3	1	4	0-0	0-0
Beau Atkinson	3	1	4	2.0-10	1.0-9
Tywayne Malone	1	2	3	0-0	0-0
Zion Grady	2	1	3	1.0-10	1.0-10
Faheem Delane	2	1	3	0-0	0-0
TJ Alford	1	2	3	1.0-2	0-0
Bryce West	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Eli Lee	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Eric Mensah	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Malik Hartford	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
Jarquez Carter	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Devin Sanchez	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
Dominic Kirks	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
Leroy Roker	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
James Peoples	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Logan George	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Joshua Mickens	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Carnell Tate	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
OSU Totals	89	104	193	17.0-48	7.0-35
OPP Totals	104	86	190	4.0-8	1.0-5
Fumbles Forced:	McDonald, Pettijohn.				
Fumbles Recovered:	Pettijohn, Sitanilei.				

Former Bobcat TE Rose To Relevance At OSU

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Senior tight end Will Kacmarek was as close to a nobody in high school as anyone currently on scholarship at Ohio State.

Listed as a defensive lineman out of Mary Institute & St. Louis Country Day, Kacmarek was rated by 247Sports as the No. 407-ranked defensive lineman in the 2021 recruiting class, and the offer he received from the Ohio Bobcats was the only one he had from an FBS school.

Even at Ohio, a MAC school that picked up its first conference championship in over 50 years in 2024, Kacmarek wasn't expected to make a huge impact. But through three games in 2025, including one against his former team, Kacmarek has been perhaps the Buckeyes' most productive tight end.

"Will has really established himself as a really strong in-line on-the-ball tight end, and you see him making some plays down the field catching the ball, and so that role is strong," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said of Kacmarek on Sept. 2.

Although Kacmarek was one of the lower-ranked players in Ohio's 2021 recruiting class, it didn't take the Bobcats long to figure out they had something in the St. Louis native.

Kacmarek redshirted as a freshman but took his scout-team assignment to get acclimated to the collegiate level, and in 2022, he started to reap the benefits of his hard work as he went for 264 yards on 20 catches.

He followed that up with an even better year in 2023, on a team loaded with eventual Power Four contributors. Kacmarek helped lead the Bobcats to 10 wins, including one over Power Four foe Iowa State, by totaling 22 receptions, 243 receiving yards and two touchdowns.

"Toward the end of my 2023 season, I really felt like I was dominating the role I had at that level," Kacmarek said. "I was trying to maximize my potential as best as possible, and then this opportunity came and we ran with it."

Kacmarek's hunger to play at the highest level led him to enter the transfer portal, where his recruitment to a new school couldn't have been more different from his high school recruitment. After receiving countless phone calls from interested coaches, the former Bobcat decided to make the big jump from the MAC to the Big Ten by committing to Ohio State.

"It's a dream come true," Kacmarek said in January 2024 of being at Ohio State. "Ever since I was young, it's been a dream to play at the highest level. Now that I'm here, it's really exciting. I'm pumped for the opportunity."

Considering he was listed by recruiting sites as a defensive lineman, Kacmarek's receiving production with the Bobcats was notable. However, it was his blocking ability that caught the attention of Day and the rest of the Buckeye staff when he was in the portal.

"Will was a guy who hadn't played a ton of football going into college, and so when we were able to watch film – in particular, the game against Iowa State – we just rec-



SONNY BROCKWAY

END GAME — Will Kacmarek was a lightly recruited defensive lineman before switching to tight end for the 2022 and 2023 seasons at Ohio. He transferred to Ohio State in 2024 and on Sept. 13 made two catches for 12 yards against his former team.

ognized the fact that he was a good blocker, strong at the point of attack, he was athletic," Day said. "Then we got a chance to meet him. We realized that he was our type of player. What I mean by that is I think anybody would like to have a player like this. He's hardworking, he's a good teammate, he's smart, and I think he's getting better every day."

Kacmarek struggled slightly to adjust to the higher level of competition in year one. The 6-6 tight end had just eight catches for 86 yards and missed four games with an injury.

Ironically, Kacmarek's undisclosed injury came on his most impactful play: a 32-yard reception in Ohio State's 32-31 loss to Oregon on Oct. 12. Kacmarek still played in the Buckeyes' last six games of the season but went for just three catches for 28 yards during that time.

After the season, Kacmarek doubled down on his decision to join the Buckeyes and opted not to enter the transfer portal. Still, to stand out in a loaded Ohio State tight end room that was bolstered by the addition of former Purdue tight end Max Klare, Kacmarek knew he needed to make improvements to his game.

As Day noted, Kacmarek had always been known for his prowess as a blocker – tight ends coach Keenan Bailey even called him the best blocking tight end in the country in the spring – but he wasn't as well-known for his pass-catching abilities.

"Coach Keenan was a receiver (graduate assistant), so he has a lot of knowledge (about route-running) and we've worked on that all offseason and in-season," Kacmarek said. "That is something I can add to my toolbox."

But it wasn't just Bailey who helped Kacmarek with his route-running. Kacmarek also consulted Klare, the Boilermakers' leading receiver last season, on how to improve as a route-runner.

"We were roommates during fall camp, and that was a main focus for us to kind of learn from each other," Kacmarek said. "(Klare) is more of a receiving type of player. So he had some tips for me, and then obviously I had tips for him because for our offense we utilize both (blocking and receiving)."

In Ohio State's season-opening 14-7 win over Texas, it wasn't Kacmarek's run-blocking or pass-catching that stood out. Instead, Kacmarek helped the Buckeyes make the

play of the game with a crucial pass block.

With Ohio State leading 7-0 after the defense forced an interception, the Buckeyes dialed up a shot play that saw redshirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin find junior receiver Carnell Tate for a 40-yard touchdown. On the play, Kacmarek was assigned to block star Texas pass rusher Colin Simmons. Although Kacmarek was spun around on the play, he managed to stay in front of Simmons, giving Sayin the time and space to make the pivotal throw.

"I knew I was going to end up having to one-on-one pass rush, so me, Coach Keenan, (special assistant to the head coach Tim Hinton and assistant tight ends coach Wendy Laurent), we've been practicing pass protection all offseason," Kacmarek said.

One week later, Kacmarek also saw his hard work as a pass-catcher pay off. During the first drive of Ohio State's 70-0 win over Grambling State on Sept. 6, Kacmarek got loose on a go-route over the middle to haul in a 47-yard touchdown, his first as a Buckeye.

"It felt good," Kacmarek said of his receiving touchdown. "We drew that up all week. We knew it was going to be there, so at that point it was just execution, but it definitely felt good to finally get a touchdown."

In the same room as other talented players such as Klare, sophomore Jelani Thurman, fellow senior Bennett Christian and freshman Nate Roberts, Kacmarek may not get the vast majority of reps at tight end, but his impressive start is also one reason that the Buckeyes have been more willing to use heavier formations that feature multiple tight ends.

"Whether it's (Kacmarek), Bennett Christian, Jelani Thurman, Max Klare, Nate Roberts, we feel like we have some guys that we can build some different groupings out of, and it gives us a little bit of a changeup there," Day said.

Regardless of the talent the Buckeyes have at tight end, it seems as though the team will always have a place on the field for someone with Kacmarek's work ethic.

"He's very valuable," Day said of Kacmarek. "Now that he's healthy, it's great to have him there. He's a tough guy, he does a lot of dirty work, and he's somebody who has now played some, and when you look at him, this is a guy that we're counting on, and you feel like you can count on. There's a lot of dirty work to be done out there, and he can do it, but he's also really gotten better as a route runner and as a pass catcher."

A lot has changed for Kacmarek since he joined the Bobcats as a two-star defensive line recruit, but what has remained is his appreciation for the opportunity the program gave him.

"It was a long process. It took a lot to get to this point, but it's going to be cool to see my old school again, and play with those guys," Kacmarek said. "I know a lot of the coaches on the staff. I know a handful of the players still there. So it will be cool to see them during the game."

Kacmarek didn't reach the end zone when his old team came to Columbus, but he helped lift Ohio State to a 37-9 win with two catches for 13 yards.

Offense Off To Solid Start Under Hartline

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In the years since he took over as Ohio State's wide receivers coach in 2018, Brian Hartline has established himself as one of the best position coaches in college football. Hartline has brought in countless star receivers and helped them reach their potential in Columbus.

As the team's offensive coordinator and play caller this year, Hartline is venturing into uncharted territory. The former Buckeye receiver was the team's offensive coordinator in 2023, but at that point, it was head coach Ryan Day who was calling plays. Last year, the Buckeyes had Chip Kelly in to be the offensive coordinator and play caller, but his departure to the NFL's Las Vegas Raiders propelled Hartline back into the spotlight.

In its first game against Texas, Ohio State was limited to 14 points and 203 total yards, but then against Grambling State, the Buckeyes scored 70 points and had 651 yards. Most importantly, Ohio State won its first two games, and so far, Day has liked the way the Buckeye coaches have prepared offensively.

"It's been good," Day said of Ohio State's play calling and offensive game planning. "We have a lot of guys in the room who have been around together. This is the first time (offensive line coach Tyler Bowen) has gone through with us, but there's a lot of familiarity with how we do things, so I think it's been good. Brian, he's really organizing it really well and calling it (well)."

Although reporters on the Buckeye beat have felt like it's too early to come to a conclusion on Hartline's abilities as the team's offensive coordinator, Eleven Warriors' Andy Anders feels it's been a good start.

"I think he's gotten his feet under him," Anders said. "It's clear to me that the game plan against Texas, they mostly

wanted to stay conservative, really settle in Julian Sayin as the new quarterback. He had some other new moving parts on that offense. I think that the game plan was intentionally kind of restricted and vanilla."

As Anders pointed out, Hartline wasn't super aggressive calling plays for the offense against the Longhorns, but he didn't have to be. The Buckeye defense stifled Longhorn quarterback Arch Manning for much of the day, and the Texas offense didn't score its first points until there were under four minutes left in the game.

"I thought Brian called an unselfish game," Day said immediately after the Texas game. "The defense was playing well. When we got the ball back on the 9-yard line with eight minutes to go, we ended up running about four minutes off the clock, and that was important. We said it earlier this week, 'In Week 1, we can't beat ourselves.' We wanted to let them beat us."

Longtime Buckeye beat reporter Bill Landis agreed with Day's assessment about Hartline's play-calling, even if the offense may have been better suited to throwing the ball more.

"Obviously, the Texas game was pretty conservative," Landis said. "He did run the ball a lot in that game. I thought maybe he ran it perhaps a bit too much, and it seemed like maybe even Ryan Day expressed some regret over that afterwards. But I think everyone understands why that was the case," Landis said. "And then you saw them open it up a little more against Grambling, and this was always going to be a gradual, step-by-step process for Brian Hartline as he took this over."

Considering his background as the team's receivers coach and the fact that he played in the NFL as a receiver for seven seasons, Hartline was expected by some to lead a pass-first offense. That



FILE PHOTO

CALL OF DUTY — Wide receivers coach Brian Hartline was given the added duties as offensive coordinator this season and is relying on the input of the other assistants in helping him call plays. Chip Kelly, now of the Las Vegas Raiders, was the OC last season.

wasn't the case against Texas, but the Buckeyes threw for over three times as many passing yards as rushing yards in the first half of their 70-0 win over Grambling State, before Sayin called it a day.

Still, Landis thinks the two-game sample size isn't large enough to determine what Hartline's identity as a play caller is.

"I think two games are not enough," Landis said. "It would be natural to assume that maybe he would want to throw the ball a little more than Chip Kelly would, which I guess would make him more like Ryan Day — although Ohio State has always had a pretty good balance, and I'm sure Brian Hartline will strive for that. I came into the season thinking that Ohio State would probably end up throwing it a little more. I still believe that will be the case, but I don't know that we could say one way or the other through two games."

One tendency Hartline has shown is a willingness to utilize multiple tight ends. The Buckeyes ran 34.2 percent of their snaps through two games out of 12 personnel and 3.3 percent of snaps out of 14 personnel (four tight ends, one running



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back). So far, that mark is the highest in the Day era, according to The Athletic.

Although it may not be what some expected, Landis thinks Hartline's use of the tight ends is not a gimmick.

"I think it will continue," Landis said. "It's a deep room, and I think that's kind of the way college football is going. Teams were spread out for so long, defenses adapted, and now, while defenses are designed to handle more spread attacks, you put out bigger personnel and play in more condensed attacks and try to zig when they're zagging."

"Not every team can do it, because you have to have the players in the tight end room to accomplish it, and Ohio State has not always been as deep as it is right now in the tight end room. But while they are, I think they are going to lean on that position."

It is difficult to judge how much Ohio State's mix of run plays and pass plays is up to him, because although Hartline is the offensive coordinator, Day has said multiple times that he's not the only one who plays a part in offensive game planning.

"(Co-offensive coordinator/tight ends coach) Keenan Bailey has a lot of input, (Bowen) has a lot of input, (quarterbacks coach Billy Fessler) has a lot of input, (running backs coach Carlos Locklyn) has a lot of input, and then I obviously have a lot of input as well," Day said. "Then we try and help the best we can and organize the call sheet so that we're ready to go and we have plans in place."

Although Hartline may not have as much experience as a play caller as Kelly had last year, the team-effort approach to offensive game-planning is nothing new, according to Buckeye Huddle's Tony Gerdeman.

"It's a coordinated effort, and as Ryan Day said, the play calling is done during the week when they figure out which plays they like best for which situations," Gerdeman said. "Then it's almost kind of a paint-by-numbers during the week."

"It sounds like Hartline has done a good job during the week of getting everybody on the same page and taking the necessary feedback from the assistants. I do wonder how that's going to progress and how much he relies on those guys early, and then does the offense then start to mirror more of what he wants to do as he's more comfortable."

Hartline's job won't necessarily get easier as he gains more experience, though. Landis pointed out that as the season goes on, opponents have more of an opportunity to identify his offense's tendencies.

"I think he'll improve, but I do think it will be more difficult because Ohio State's going to see some good defenses," Landis said. "Ohio State will have more film out there for opponents to scout and devise game plans with."

"That will be the true test of Brian Hartline as a play caller, how he adapts to teams adapting to him. I'm not fearful or concerned that he won't be able to do that. I think he will continue to improve. But of course, you have to acknowledge that the job sort of only gets more difficult from here once people have a better idea of what you're trying to do."

The good news for Hartline and Ohio State's offense is that their biggest challenge is behind them. The Longhorns' defense, including several returning starters from a 2024 unit that ranked third in scoring defense, is viewed by many as one of the best units in college football.

Even though Big Ten play is approaching for the Buckeyes, they might not play a matchup game until their Nov. 1 contest against Penn State. During that game, Hartline will not only have to take on one of the more talented defenses in the country, but also former Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, who now leads the Nittany Lions' defense.

"Penn State's had a really talented defense for years and years," Anders said. "It's carried them to the College Football Playoff and as far as they got in the College Football Playoff last season. Even as you lose Abdul Carter, they have Dani Dennis-Sutton there on the edge. You have a lot of great players there for Penn State and Jim Knowles. The defense was ranked 97th in passing defense the year before he got there in 2022 for Ohio State. He built it to be the best defense in the country."

"Jim is one of the best in the business, and he knows the Ohio State offense pretty well, having been there for three years. So I think that's definitely the most difficult matchup for Ohio State, both from a coordinator and talent perspective."

Knowles' previous experience at Ohio State will undoubtedly only build to the anticipation of what should be a huge matchup between the two teams on Nov. 1, but Landis is uncertain how much Knowles' time at Ohio State will make it tougher for Hartline to call plays in the game.

"I think that tends to get overblown a little bit. Everyone has access to film, so the thing that Jim Knowles might have a better knowledge of than someone else is some personnel characteristics," Landis said. "Maybe it's just a keener understanding of the strengths and weaknesses

of some of the individual Ohio State players, just based on practicing against them for a couple of years. In terms of the scheme, I don't know that he would have much of a leg up on anyone, because every defensive coordinator has film of Ohio State's offense to watch."

Although Kelly now coaches the Raiders' offense, Hartline is not the only coach on the staff capable of calling plays. Day proved to be one of the best play callers in college football as Ohio State's offensive coordinator from 2017-18, and he continued to excel in that role as the head coach from 2019-23. Day is always an option to take over as the team's play caller if things don't go well for Hartline, but none of the reporters BSB interviewed expect that to be necessary.

"If things don't go well, yes," Gerdeman said when asked if Day could possibly take over play-calling duties. "What does that mean, 17 points a game, or something like that? Yes, he would definitely step in at that point. He's had them do that on defense before, change the play callers when things aren't going well."

"I don't think he's just going to muddle through this when you've got too much invested, you've got too many offensive weapons to be in a situation where you don't have the best pound-for-pound offense in the Big Ten, or right there with Oregon. If you're struggling, then you have to fix that struggle. I don't think he expects to need to do it, but I also don't think he's just going to let things go off the rails."

One reason some Buckeye fans weren't clamoring for Hartline to take over as the offensive coordinator after successfully leading the receivers room for several years is that he was so good at leading the receivers. Some feared the responsibilities that come with being the offensive coordinator and play caller would take away from what makes him so good as both a recruiter and developer of receivers.

According to Anders, Hartline's promotion may even help him lead the receiver room.

"It's hard to do better than what Brian Hartline has done as a recruiter, as a developer. But I really don't think day-to-day (responsibilities of being an offensive coordinator) impacts his ability to develop receivers," Anders said. "Because you think about how football practice is structured, you spend individual time with your position. During any sort of period that's focused on player development, individual position coaching, he gets to focus just on his position room, and then go into team drills, and everyone's going against everybody."

"I don't think it will have any drawbacks on his ability to recruit or develop receivers. If anything, he can better pitch future recruits on how they'll be utilized in the offense and point to those examples. But again, it's hard to do better than he's done."

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Ohio State Boasts Loaded Linebacker Room

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's linebacker room may, in some ways, resemble an island of misfits, as starters Sonny Styles and Arvell Reese gained playing time early in their careers at different positions, but so far in 2025, it may also be the strength of the team.

Through three games, Reese and Styles have proved to be two of the best players on a loaded Buckeye defense and have totaled 20 and 14 tackles, respectively.

"I think this might be the best linebacker unit in the country," Eleven Warriors' Andy Anders told BSB. "I think the full realization of Arvell Reese, he could very well be a first-round draft pick, and Sonny Styles, I think, is going to be off the board in the first three rounds. You can't ask for a much better starting linebacker tandem."

It isn't just Styles and Reese who have had impressive starts for the Buckeyes, but also sophomore Payton Pierce and freshman Riley Pettijohn. Pierce is the eighth-leading tackler on the team with 11 stops, and although Pettijohn hasn't been on the field as consistently as the older players in the room, he has logged five total tackles and a pass deflection.

More important than any individual statistic is the fact that the linebackers have played a huge part in the Buckeyes' dominant start to the season defensively. Through three games, Ohio State's 5.3 points allowed per contest is the second-lowest in the country. Although longtime Ohio State reporter Bill Landis thinks the Buckeyes' secondary is the best unit on the team, he, too, thinks the Buckeye linebackers have a chance to be elite this season.

"That whole back seven is excellent, and Sonny Styles and Arvell Reese have been awesome," Landis told BSB. "Obviously, Arvell Reese has been great and has been really impressive with some of the



SONNY BROCKWAY

STYLES POINTS — Linebacker Sonny Styles is a converted safety who has become the leader on and off the field for Buckeyes. He's praised for his acumen and is considered a coach on the field.

stuff that he has done as a pass rusher. When you take into account the way the starters are playing, the depth that's in that room, the job that James Laurinaitis has done developing those guys, it has a chance, I think, to be the best linebacker group they've had since I've been covering the team (2014)."

As Landis pointed out, it's hard to refute how well Laurinaitis, the team's linebackers coach, has done leading the group.

In retrospect, it seems that both Styles and Reese were destined to star as Buckeye linebackers, but each player could have ended up at different positions than the ones they currently occupy.

Styles, a five-star recruit and the son of Buckeye great Lorenzo Styles Sr., entered the program as a safety, and Reese spent time at defensive end during his first year in the program. It took Laurinaitis to advocate for each player to play linebacker for them to be solidified in their roles.

"He's been able to take guys and coach them through position changes and make them some of the best linebackers in the country," Anders said. "I think he is at linebacker what Brian Hartline is as a receivers coach. He has to sustain, but projecting it right now, it feels like it's going to be that level of play."

Part of what makes Reese and Styles such a great pairing is their positional versatility. In the Buckeyes' win over Texas, Reese and Styles both proved they are capable of playing and excelling at the line of scrimmage. According to Ohio State

head coach Ryan Day, Reese and Styles' versatility played a large role in the unit's success in disguising coverages against Texas.

"Arvell, you look at Sonny, you look at (safety) Caleb (Downs), and you see guys who can do multiple things," Day said. "Then it becomes harder to recognize exactly how you're being attacked. The more versatility you have, the harder it is to take down what exactly is going on in that play. I think our guys take a lot of pride in being in disguised looks pre-snap and then give different looks post-snap."

Styles Leads On And Off The Field

Styles, a 6-5, 243-pound linebacker capable of sprinting as fast as 23 miles per hour, is also known for his football IQ and leadership. The former safety is not only one of four captains on the team, but also the team's "Block O" recipient.

"Sonny is the ultimate pro," Laurinaitis said of Styles in the offseason. "He's very intentional. From the day we decided to make the switch (to linebacker), he's done nothing but work at it. He's the leader of the entire team."

Styles, one of the Buckeyes' only returning starters from their 2024 defense, was challenged by first-year defensive coordinator Matt Patricia to take his football IQ to another level.

"(Patricia) challenged me in a way of like, 'All right, you're at the point where you're smart enough to know exactly what

you're doing and what everyone else is doing. Now I want you to figure out what the offense is doing. You see this formation, you see this shift, you see this quarterback looking this way. Be able to start predicting where the ball is going,' " Styles said. "As a defender, especially as a linebacker, when you get to the point where you're no longer reacting, you're predicting what's going to happen, that's when you become elite."

According to Reese, Styles' work has paid off.

"It's great playing with Sonny," he said. "Sonny's a smart guy. Sonny calls out plays before they even happen."

As much as Styles helps out his teammates, it's junior safety Downs who gets much of the attention from many in the media for his intelligence. According to Anders, Styles' processing should not be overshadowed.

"I do think it gets overlooked sometimes, just how smart he is about the game, the way he can process things," Anders said. "I think some of Reese's success can be chalked up to playing next to Sonny and having him coach him up and tell him what to look for on certain plays."

"Your coach can tell you one thing, but if the guy next to you on the field can tell you it, especially in the moment pre-snap, it's a huge difference. I think Sonny Styles very much is the backbone of the defense, the guy who can set everyone in motion to get them where they need to be, in the front six."

Reese Wreaks Havoc As Pass Rusher

As someone who earned All-Big Ten honors and finished the 2024 season with 100 total tackles, Styles is the most accomplished linebacker in Ohio State's room. However, if Reese declares for the NFL draft after this season, he may be selected ahead of Styles. In a mock draft released by Josh Edwards of CBS Sports on Sept. 9, Reese was projected to go 18th to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, while Styles was projected to go two spots later to the Vikings.

Reese may have been more of a role player for last year's team while Styles started, but as a pass-rusher, both Landis and Anders agreed that the sophomore has more upside.

"He's so strong and explosive with his movements," Anders said of Reese. "It's rare to see a linebacker who can knock back offensive linemen. Reese, whenever he makes contact, whenever he throws the long arm into a tackle, a guard, they usually get knocked backwards and he's able to overpower them. He's a guy who's 245 pounds, big for a linebacker, but you're taking on 300-pound bodies and doing that to them. He's so strong and explosive."

While Reese has the edge as a pass-rusher, Anders favors Styles in coverage.

"I think Sonny is better at pass coverage. Clearly, that safety experience helps with that. The instincts, the knowledge, the savvy, I think, are also there for Sonny. Not that Arvell is lacking in those areas,

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SONNY BROCKWAY

AT HOME — Arvell Reese spent time at defensive end his first season at Ohio State, but linebackers coach James Laurinaitis saw his potential to be a standout linebacker, and so far he has been proven correct.

but that's where I think Sonny's a little better."

Future Of Position In Good Hands

As someone who has been in the program for four seasons, Styles will be out of eligibility after this season, regardless of his NFL draft stock. Reese, meanwhile, has one year of eligibility remaining after this season, but because he's projected to be an early pick, he, too, could depart after this season.

"My guess would be that he does go to the NFL," Landis said. "Ohio State's really good at player retention in the NIL world, so I don't want to be entirely dismissive of the idea that they could bring him back in 2026, but with the way things are going right now, my lean would be that he does not come back next season."

The Buckeyes have plenty of depth at the position, though. Styles said as much on Sept. 10, a few days after Pierce and Pettijohn had career-best performances against Grambling State.

"I think you feed off each other and you're pushing each other," Styles said. "There's no complacency in our room because there's a guy right behind you that's fully capable of playing."

Although Grambling State isn't exactly one of the better teams in college football, the Buckeye youngsters gave fans a glimpse of what should be a bright future. Pierce logged a team-high six tackles during that game, while Pettijohn had two total tackles, a pass deflection, a forced fumble, and a fumble return for a 23-yard touchdown, on the way to earning defen-

sive player of the game honors from Ohio State's coaching staff.

"We've seen Riley in practice do some really good things, but you want to put him in a game to see how he responds, and when you see him make plays like that in his first time on the field, it's a great sign for a young player," Day said of Pettijohn's performance.

Over the offseason, Laurinaitis let fans know what he thinks of Pierce when he said he views him as a third starter at the linebacker position. Although Pierce hasn't received as much attention as some of the other linebackers in the room, he certainly seems to have won over his position coach.

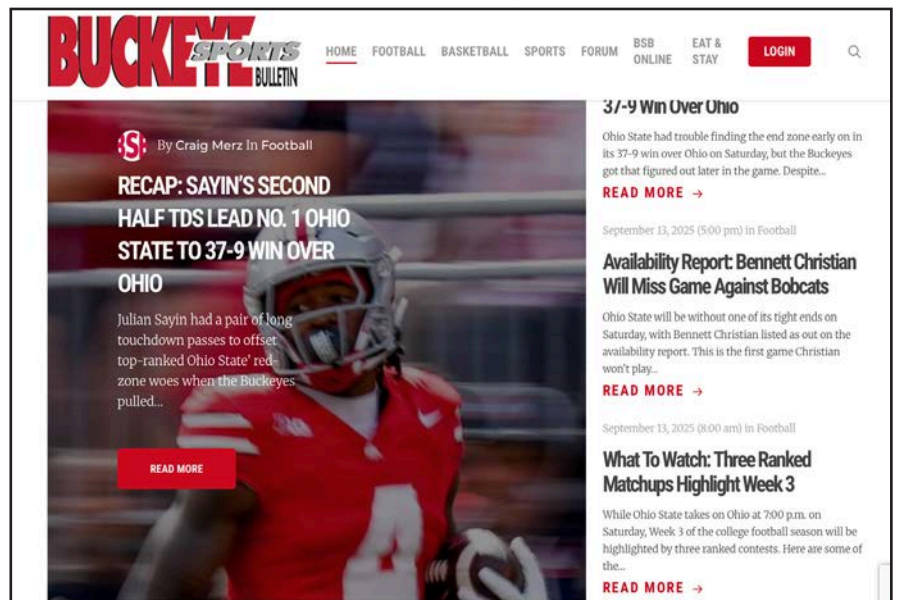
"He has the tough-guy leadership qualities that are similar to Tommy (Eichenberg)," Laurinaitis said. "When that ball is run between the tackles, he's going to go down there, and you'd be surprised if he got through a practice without chips off of his face mask. Obviously, that's the way that I think the LB position should be played."

As tough as it may be to replace star players like Styles and Reese, both Anders and Landis feel as though the Buckeyes will still be in good hands if both of their 2025 starters depart.

"I think they're set up there," Landis said. "Payton Pierce is the third linebacker now. He'll be a starter next year. Riley Pettijohn, as a true freshman, looks like he'd be a guy who would be ready to step up to be a starter as a sophomore. He's not built the same way as Arvell, but I think he provides you with a similar skill set."

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Buckeyes Head West For Conference Test

By **GREG WILSON**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

After the Ohio State football team came out of nonconference play undefeated, Big Ten play is officially here, even if that means a game in Seattle.

It might still seem strange to call Washington a Big Ten opponent since this is the Buckeyes' first time playing them since the Huskies joined the traditionally Midwestern league, but this will be a conference game that Ohio State has on its schedule every so often for the foreseeable future.

The Huskies had an off week while the Buckeyes were beating Ohio 37-9 and match up against an in-state rival of their own while Ohio State is resting on Sept. 20, heading to Washington State for their final nonconference matchup.

In their first two games of the season, the Huskies beat Colorado State 38-21 and UC Davis 70-10. Washington is now two years removed from its national championship loss to Michigan in 2023, before head coach Kalen DeBoer left for the head job at Alabama to replace Nick Saban.

In Jedd Fisch's first season with the program – which had him having to replace almost every starter who helped lead the previous year's team to the title game – the Huskies went 6-7 with a 4-5 record in the Big Ten. But going into 2025, Fisch was more confident in what his team might be able to put on the field.

"I think we have a good team, I really do, and I'm not going to shy away from that," Fisch told On3 before the season. "We have 11 returning starters. Last year, we had one. We have a returning quarterback who I think is really talented. We got bigger, we got some really nice portal additions that were starters from other programs that were Power Four programs, not FCS programs a year ago, and it puts

us in a good spot."

The returning quarterback Fisch referred to is Demond Williams Jr., who is off to a great start in 2025. He has thrown for 480 yards on 34-of-49 passing for two touchdowns and no interceptions.

But, like the last two starting quarterbacks that the Buckeyes have matched up against, Williams is also a threat with his legs. He is the Huskies' second-leading rusher with 132 yards on 21 attempts, with one score on the ground.

Last year, Fisch knew he was walking into a situation where he likely wasn't looking at contention in the Big Ten, much less a playoff position. Because of that, he put Williams on the field to start for the Huskies before he might have been ready, so that the quarterback could gain valuable experience and be ready to lead the team in 2025.

"What happens is, you get these opportunities," Fisch said after Washington was beaten 35-6 by Penn State last season. "And now when Demond gets in there next year, he's going to have experience playing in front of 107,000 people in a white out. He's going to have the experience of going against the No. 4 team in the country that had one loss by one score against Ohio State. He's going to have the experience of, 'What does it feel like to try to make a slant throw into tight coverage on fourth-and-5?' and be able to draw from that experience."

Now Williams has that experience and will be more than ready mentally for the No. 1 Buckeyes to come into Husky Stadium.

The Buckeyes will also have to deal with Jonah Coleman, who is a threat in the running game as well. In two games, he has run for 288 yards on 39 attempts, with seven touchdowns to show for it. Five of those scores came against UC Davis in Week 2.

At receiver, the Huskies likely won't be at full strength. Usual starter Rashid Williams was injured against the Aggies on Sept. 6 and came back to the sideline with a sling on during the game. He probably will not be available on Sept. 27 against Ohio State.

Washington will have its top two targets available, however. Denzel Boston has caught 10 passes for 142 yards and a touchdown this season, and Dezmen Roebuck has brought in six catches for 104 yards and a score of his own.

Tight end Decker DeGraaf could see an increase in usage in the game after having five catches for 26 yards in the first two games of the season.

Only one offensive lineman is a returning starter for Washington, with right tackle Drew Azzopardi coming back. Left tackle Carver Willis, left guard John Mills, center Landen Hatchett and right guard Geirean Hatchett make up the rest of the line.

Fisch said he believes that, while Coleman has gotten better at running the ball since last season, a lot of his improvement also comes from better run blocking so far this year.

"The O-line is better, the wide receiv-

Get To Know ... Washington

- **2025 Record:** 2-0, 0-0 Big Ten.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Air raid; Defensive Formation – Multiple 4-2-5; Starters returning – Offense 5, Defense 4, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Jedd Fisch, 2nd year at Washington, 8-7.
- **Series History:** 13th meeting; Ohio State leads 9-3.
- **School Facts:** Location – Seattle, Wash.; Enrollment – 51, 719; Nickname – Huskies; Colors – Purple and Gold; Conference – Big Ten; Stadium – Husky Stadium (Surface – Field Turf; Capacity – 70,138).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Jonah Coleman	39	288	7.4	7
Demond Williams	21	132	6.3	1
A. Mohammed	21	120	5.7	2

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Demond Williams	34-49	69.4	480	2-0

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Denzel Boston	10	142	14.2	1
Dezmen Roebuck	6	104	17.3	1
Decker DeGraaf	5	26	5.2	0
A. Mohammed	3	53	17.7	0

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 54.0
Rushing Yards Per Game – 303.5
Passing Yards Per Game – 265.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 568.5

2025 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 30	COLORADO STATE	W, 38-21
Sept. 6	UC DAVIS	W, 70-10
Sept. 20	at Washington State	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 27	OHIO STATE	TBA
Oct. 4	at Maryland	TBA
Oct. 10	RUTGERS	9 p.m.
Oct. 18	at Michigan	TBA
Oct. 25	ILLINOIS	TBA
Nov. 8	at Wisconsin	TBA
Nov. 15	PURDUE	TBA
Nov. 22	at UCLA	TBA
Nov. 29	OREGON	TBA
Dec. 6	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Makell Esteen	9	2	11	0-0	0-0
Taariq Al-Uqdah	8	3	11	1-2	0-0
Alex McLaughlin	6	4	10	1-9	0-0
Deven Bryant	4	4	8	0-0	0-0
Jacob Lane	6	1	7	3-13	1-8
Rahshawn Clark	6	0	6	1-14	1-14

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Makell Esteen	1	0	0	0
Tacario Davis	1	0	0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 15.5
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 80.5
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 161.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 241.5

ers are better at blocking," Fisch said. "The threat of a quarterback who can run changes the way defenses play you. Jonah is thriving in that situation because he's the benefactor of the way Drew Azzopardi, Carver Willis, Landen Hatchett, Geirean Hatchett and John Mills are playing, as well as Quentin Moore being back. If you look at the difference a year makes, we didn't have Quentin Moore the whole season. He's one of the best blocking tight ends I've ever been around in college football."

In the trenches on the other side of the ball will be edge rushers Zach Durfee and Jacob Lane, as well as interior linemen Ta'ita'i Uiagalelei and Anterio Thompson. Isaiah Ward will also see a good amount of time rotating in on the edge, while Bryce Butler will be on the interior. The six have combined for 5½ tackles for loss and three sacks through two games.

Linebackers Taariq Al-Uqdah and Deven Bryant have been two of the team's leading tacklers, with 11 and eight, respectively. Al-Uqdah has also added one tackle for loss.

In the secondary, Washington will have cornerbacks Ephesians Prysock and Tacario Davis, safeties Makell Esteen and Alex McLaughlin and nickel Leroy Bryant. Rahshawn Clark could also start in place of Bryant, but Fisch has confidence in both of them.

"They are both playing well," Fisch said. "As we progress, Leroy has the ability to play outside and inside. Rahshawn is continuing to improve playing inside. These are his first set of live reps, and with that is coming some learning curve, and he's beginning to get a great feel of route combinations and leverage he needs

to have to be a great defender and go after the football. Both of those guys have done a nice job and will continue to get tested in the weeks to come."


Esteen has been the best of the bunch to this point, at least on the stat sheet. He is tied with Al-Uqdah for the team lead in tackles with 11, and Esteen also has one of the two interceptions the Huskies have had. Davis has the other.

Creating turnovers has been something the Husky defense is trying to make a point of this year, so they could be aggressive in trying to take the ball away.

"We've only taken the ball away twice," Fisch said. "That's not who we are, and that's not who we want to be as a program. Turnovers come in bunches, and we've got to get some momentum to get them. But you also have to attack the ball. You have to have that philosophy of, it's not just about a tackle, it's about a strip. It's not just about a sack, it's about a strip-sack. It's not just about getting a guy down, it's about punching it out. All of those things are the second level of how we want to attack as a defense."

The Buckeyes will have the advantage of the rest they get from the off week, but also the extra preparation they have for the first week of Big Ten play. The Huskies won't be looking ahead to the No. 1 team in the country since they will be focused so much on the Apple Cup, the rivalry game they lost last year.

But what will be a challenge is the environment at Husky Stadium, which is known as one of the tougher places to play in the country, and the fans in Seattle will certainly show up hoping to watch their team knock off the Buckeyes.



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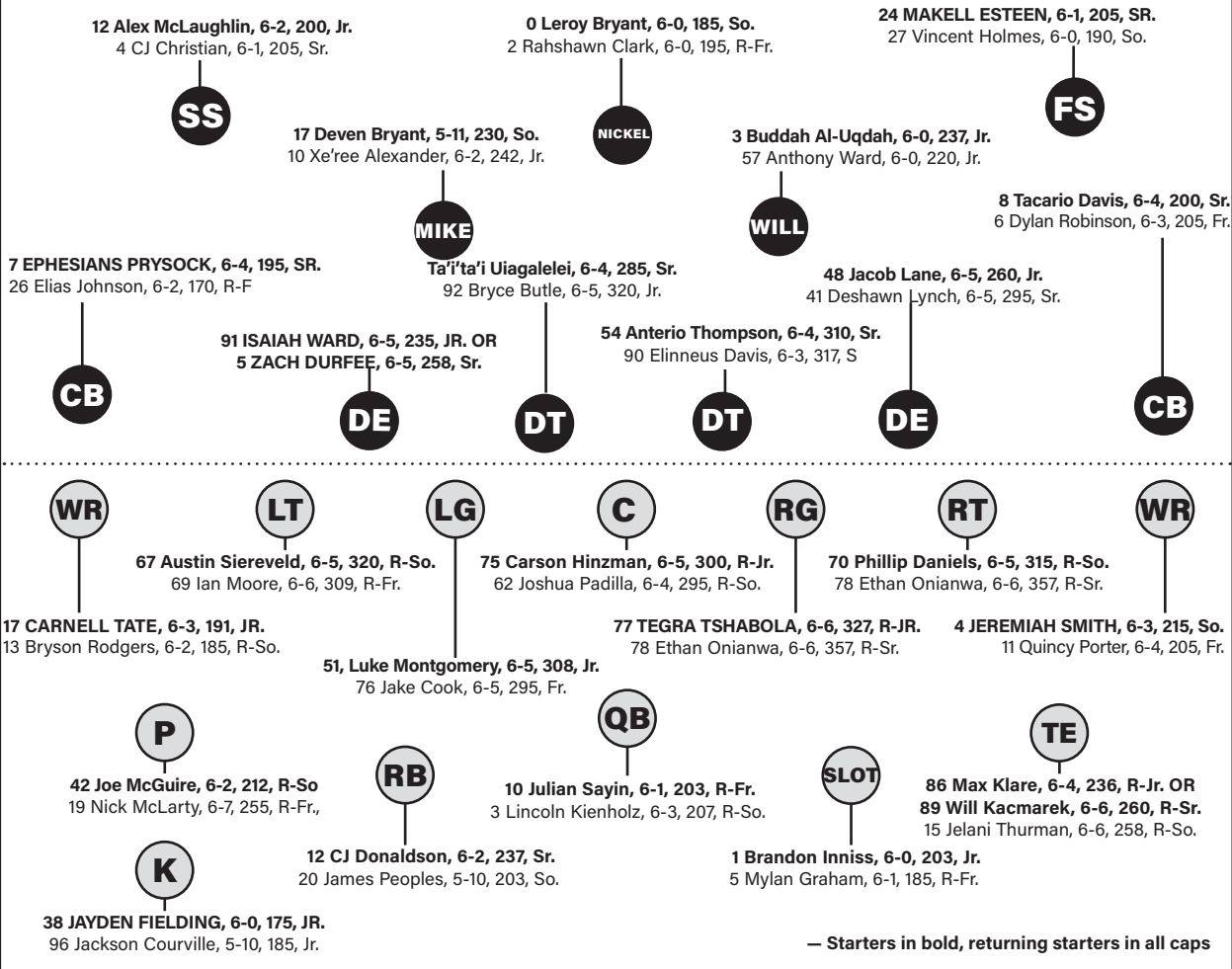
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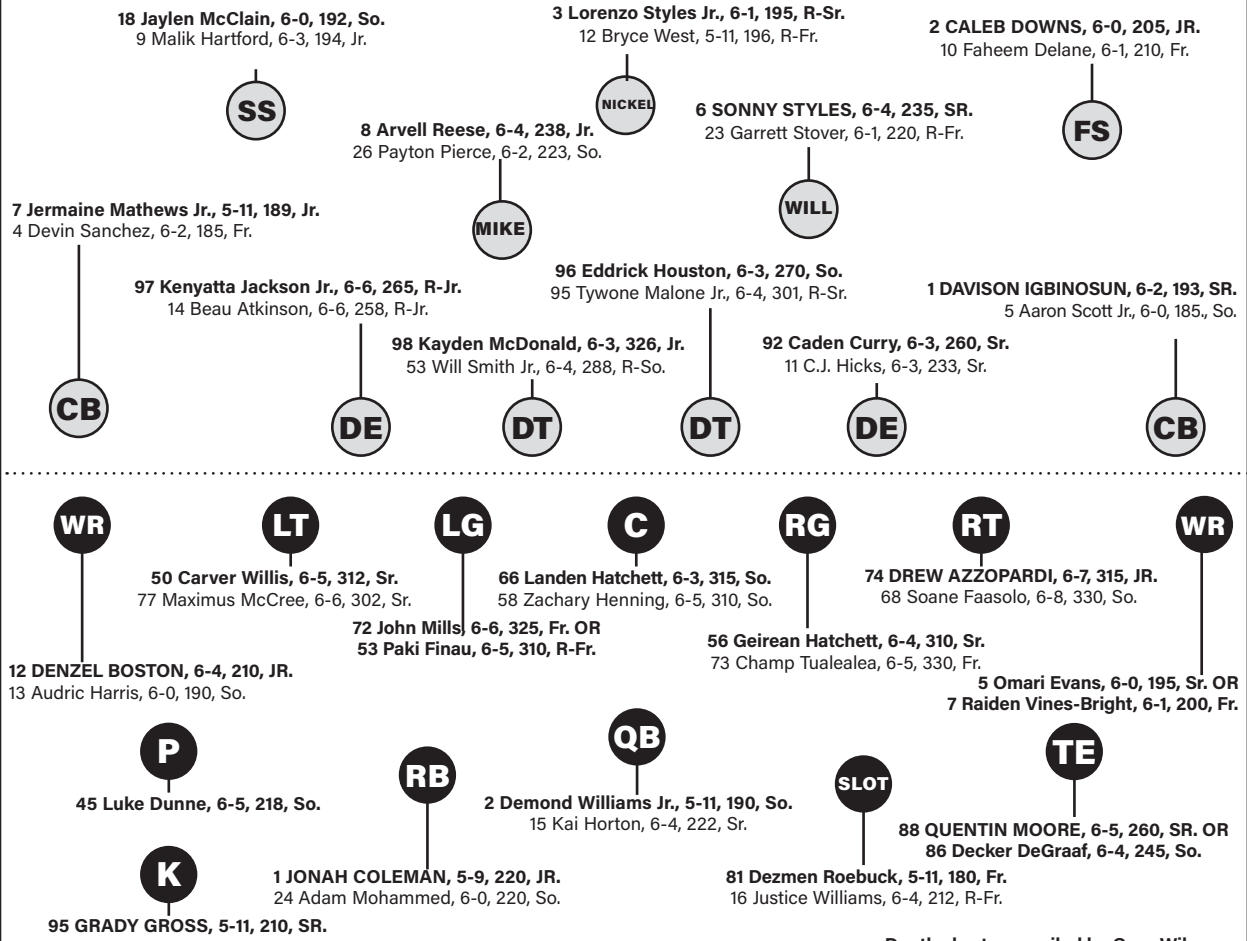


Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



WHEN WASHINGTON HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. WASHINGTON RUSH DEFENSE

The Buckeyes' Big Ten opener is at Washington. Let that rattle in your head. On the same day the Buckeyes pummeled Grambling State 70-0, the Huskies routed UC Davis 70-10 to run their record to 2-0 (38-21 over Colorado State on Aug. 30). While the top-ranked Buckeyes defeated Ohio 37-9 on Sept. 13, Washington had an open weekend before facing rival Washington State on Sept. 20. OSU ran for 225 yards for a robust 7.3 average per carry vs. Ohio, but 64 of those yards came on one burst by freshman Bo Jackson, who started the game as the third-stringer but led the way with 109 yards on just nine totes and could move ahead of James Peoples (47 yards, seven carries) and CJ Donaldson (39, nine). The numbers are nice, but the fact that the running game was ineffective on three trips to the red zone is troubling. When the going got tough, the running game stalled. Washington has allowed only 161 rushing yards in two games on a 3.2 average per run and two touchdowns. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

WASHINGTON RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Huskies will rely heavily on Jonah Coleman, who was named Big Ten Co-Offensive Player of the Week for his performance against UCD when he tied the program's modern (post-World War II) record with five rushing touchdowns from his 111 yards on 15 carries. He had his ninth career 100-yard rushing game and has 2,584 career yards. The Huskies ran for eight TDs against the Aggies to up their season total to 12 while averaging 303.5 yards a game on the ground through two games. OSU held the Bobcats to 68 yards and a 2.0 average with the longest an 11-yarder. It was another impressive effort, and the Buckeyes have yet to allow a TD in the first half. **EDGE: EVEN**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. WASHINGTON PASS DEFENSE

Julian Sayin was good but not great in his third start. Yes, he was 25 of 32 for 347 yards and three touchdowns, but he tossed two interceptions, one tipped, and looked more uncomfortable the closer he got to the goal line. Jeremiah Smith had nine catches for 153 yards and a 47-yard TD, and Carnell Tate's five receptions included a 49-yard score among his 101 yards. For Washington, four UC Davis passers completed 14 of 28 for 142 yards, a 1-yard TD and an interception. Washington sacked them three times for 23 yards. Arizona transfer Tacario Davis had the pick. One of the Huskies' most experienced defenders is cornerback Ephesians Prysock, who has started the past 15 games after two seasons at Arizona. The Huskies are giving up 161.0 passing yards per game and have five sacks. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

WASHINGTON PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Washington passed for 304 yards against UC Davis, marking the first time since a 2016 win at Oregon that the Huskies rushed and passed for more than 300 yards in the same game. Sophomore QB Demond Williams Jr. threw for 254 yards (16 of 25) and a 47-yard TD to Dezmen Roebuck. Williams has thrown for 200-plus yards and thrown a TD in all four career starts. His favorite target is Denzel Boston with 10 grabs for 142 yards and a score this season. His longest reception is 39 yards. UW QBs have been sacked three times for 22 yards. The Buckeyes were badly burned on a 67-yard Ohio touchdown early in the third quarter that accounted for more than half the 113 yards allowed through the air, but otherwise the D was on lockdown. OSU had four sacks and four QB hurries. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Buckeyes beware: Boston had a 78-yard punt return for a TD vs. UCD, the team's first since 2023 and the 14th longest in program history. The Huskies have had 12 punt return TDs since 2014. Over the same period, the Buckeyes have had one – Caleb Downs vs. Indiana last season. Brandon Inniss had a nice 28-yard punt return vs. Ohio, the Buckeyes did not need to punt once, and Jayden Fielding made all three field-goal attempts. **EDGE: EVEN**

INTANGIBLES

Washington is still trying to get its act together, with 77 of the 103 players in their first (47) or second (30) season in the program. On the positive side, the Huskies have won 22 straight home games for the second-longest active streak behind Georgia's 32. The Buckeyes did not look like a No. 1 team in the first half vs. Ohio. **EDGE: WASHINGTON.**

STAFF PREDICTION

The first road game can always be tricky, especially in the hostile environment at Washington. The Buckeyes lost to Oregon on their West Coast trip last season. The Huskies aren't that good, but this will be a challenge, nonetheless. If the Buckeyes execute as poorly as they did against Ohio, there's a chance they fall. Otherwise, it will be a good trip. **OHIO STATE 35, WASHINGTON 17**

2019 Rose Bowl A Crossroads For Ohio State

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Despite coming off a one-loss regular season and capturing the Big Ten championship on Dec. 1, 2018, it would have been premature to assume the Ohio State football team had everything in order heading into the postseason.

Just three days after securing the conference title, Urban Meyer announced on Dec. 4 that he would be stepping down as head coach, with offensive coordinator Ryan Day named as his successor.

Adding to the uncertainty, Ohio State was not headed to the College Football Playoff due to an Oct. 20 blowout loss to Purdue, instead earning a spot in the Rose Bowl against a 10-3 Washington squad. That game represents the last time before the game on Sept. 27 that Ohio State faced off against the Huskies.

The conclusion of the 2018 season represented a pivotal moment in Buckeye history – one filled with hope, fear, and uncertainty.

"It's almost bittersweet, the game itself," said longtime Buckeye beat reporter Tim May. "It's a changing of the guard."

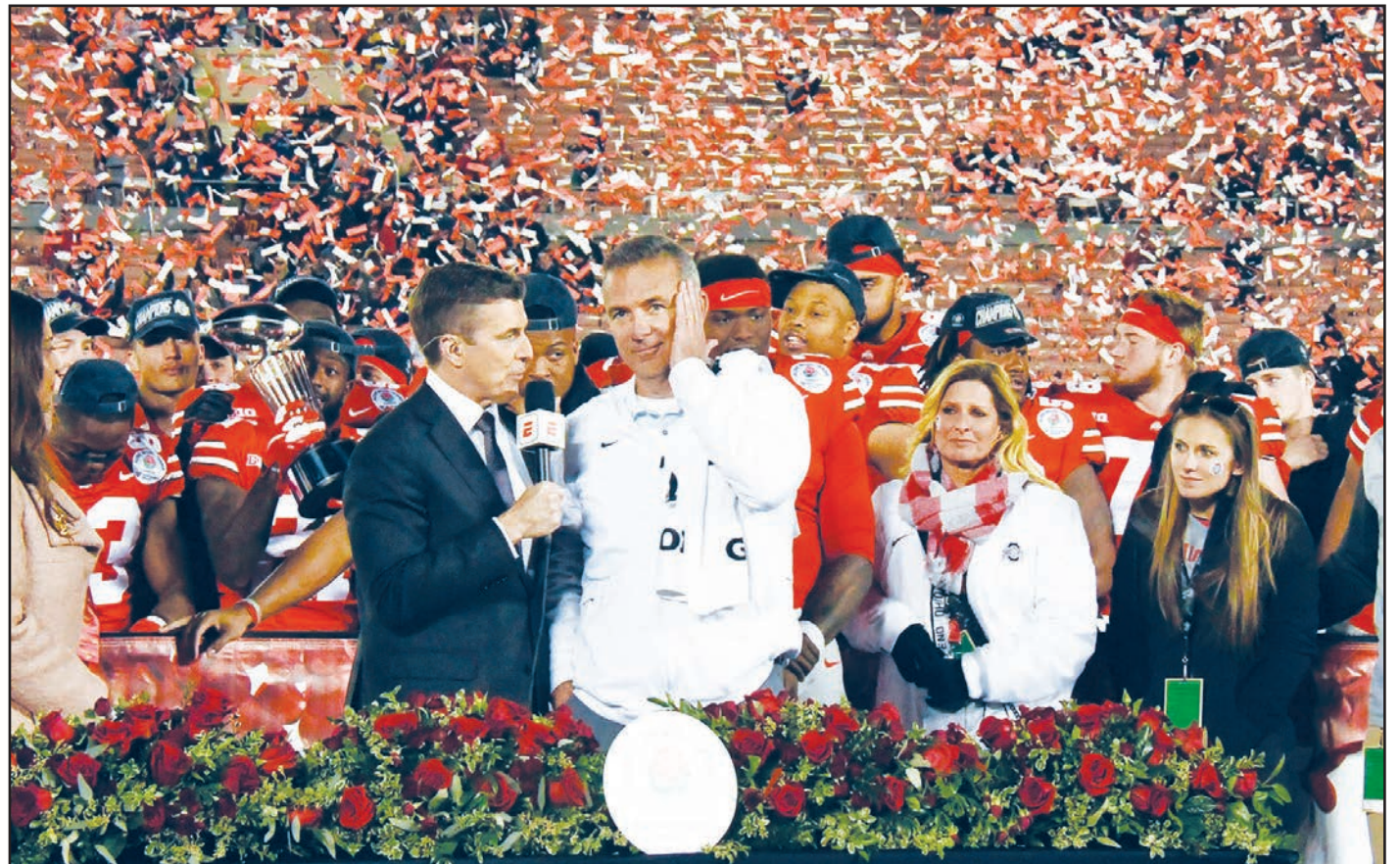
The Buckeyes' 2018 season was anything but ordinary. Mainly, it was marred by Meyer's and athletic director Gene Smith's alleged mishandling of domestic assault allegations regarding former wide receivers coach Zach Smith. Meyer and Gene Smith both stated they didn't condone Zach Smith's actions, but the university felt they still didn't take sufficient action in reporting the allegations.

Meyer was suspended without pay from Aug. 22 to Sept. 2 and for the Buckeyes' first three games against Oregon State, Rutgers and TCU, while Gene Smith was also suspended without pay for more than two weeks from Aug. 31 to Sept. 16.

The pressure from the situation started to take a toll on Meyer, with recurring health issues that he later cited as a reason for his retirement.

During Ohio State's 49-26 win over Indiana on Oct. 6, Meyer dropped to one knee for several minutes in the fourth quarter. He explained after the game that it was just a severe headache due to an arachnoid cyst in his brain, which he had surgery on to drain in 2014, although it still caused speculation among Buckeye faithful.

Tenured Ohio State beat reporter Doug Lesmerises emphasized that, while Meyer wasn't the direct victim, both the physical



FILE PHOTO

NOT SO ROSY OUTLOOK — Urban Meyer is interviewed following a 28-23 win over Washington in the Rose Bowl on Jan. 1, 2019, in his final game as Ohio State's head coach. Tension between him and the administration plus medical issues had led him to announce a month earlier that he was retiring.

and mental challenges as a result of the situation with Zach Smith pushed Meyer away from coaching.

"I think there was a combination of the stress of that situation, which he brought on himself – he's not a victim in this – but it was a crazy time, and so that's part of it. Then I just think it affected his relationship with Ohio State at least a little bit," Lesmerises told BSB. "So, it wasn't like it was a fracture, it wasn't a break, but I think there was probably a physical and an emotional combination of 'Do I really want to be doing this still?'"

For Meyer, the suspension and ensuing controversy strained his relationship with the university and symbolically marked the beginning of the end of his tenure.

Steve Helwagen of 247Sports said that following the Buckeyes' conference championship victory over Northwestern, it wasn't a shock that Meyer announced his departure, given the nature of his relationship with the university and former Ohio State

president Michael Drake.

"I think that (the suspension) was the beginning of the end of his relationship with President Drake. He didn't shake his hand when he made the announcement he was leaving, and it was just a very messy situation."

May expressed a similar sentiment, adding that Meyer felt the damage done to him was irreparable.

"I think there had grown a rift between Meyer and the upper administration of Ohio State," May said. "As far as he was concerned, it was sort of an untenable situation. So I was not surprised to see it happen."

Through a year full of controversy and distractions, Ohio State still entered the Rose Bowl at 12-1, with a win over Michigan and a Big Ten championship in its last two games.

Even with Ohio State's strong overall record, many considered the season a let-down. The Buckeyes often struggled against weaker opponents because of a shaky defense and suffered an embarrassing 49-20 loss to Purdue in West Lafayette, Ind., in late October.

Helwagen noted that in the playoff era of college football, non-playoff bowl games often feel more like scrimmages, leading many in the media to diminish Ohio State's overall accomplishments in 2018.

"If you're not in the playoff, it truly is almost an exhibition game," Helwagen said. "It's nice to win the Rose Bowl, just because historically, that's been the biggest thing. For Urban Meyer, the one bowl game he had never won was the Rose Bowl. He had teams that won the Big Ten, went to the playoffs and didn't play at the Rose Bowl. So

it's kind of a consolation prize, really."

Lesmerises said what concerned most Buckeye fans in 2018 was the fact that it marked the second consecutive season Ohio State had been thoroughly beaten by an unranked opponent in a midseason road game they were expected to win handily.

"It was the second straight year that they lost the game out of nowhere that they couldn't lose," Lesmerises said. "To Iowa in 2017 and Purdue in '18. It was more so in the loss to Iowa in '17. Urban looked like he had seen a ghost after that game. He was almost in shock. Same thing with Purdue. By the end, I think people can mischaracterize this and act like Ohio State is an underachieving program, or the most disappointing program, or whatever, which I don't think is right."

But all the Buckeyes could do was play the team in front of them, and No. 6 Ohio State was slated to meet No. 9 Washington in the Rose Bowl on Jan. 1, 2019.

The 2018 Huskies were led by veteran, well-balanced units on both sides of the ball. Offensively, senior quarterback Jake Browning amassed 3,192 passing yards and 16 touchdowns, and senior running back Myles Gaskin rushed for 1,268 yards and 12 scores.

Washington was just as dangerous on the other side of the ball, featuring senior linebacker Ben Burr-Kirven, who led the Pac-12 in tackles and was named the Pac-12 Defensive Player of the Year in 2018, senior defensive lineman Greg Gaines, and future NFL second-round picks in defensive backs Bryon Murphy and Taylor Rapp.

The Buckeyes opened the game as 6.5-point favorites and were predicted by

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

most to end the season as Rose Bowl champions in Pasadena.

May noted that Meyer chose not to discuss his retirement until after the Rose Bowl to minimize distractions, but the impending retirement of one of college football's top coaches still dominated the headlines.

"Urban would not talk about it with anybody until after the Rose Bowl was over because he didn't want to be a distraction," May said. "Well, one of the two top coaches in college football at that time was leaving the game. So it was a big deal."

Through the first three quarters of play in the Rose Bowl, it looked as if Meyer and the Buckeyes had managed to earn Meyer his first win in "The Granddaddy of Them All."

Ohio State jumped out to a 28-3 lead over Washington, backed by three touchdown passes by quarterback Dwayne Haskins, a revolutionary in the Buckeye offense along with Day, and a rushing score by sophomore running back J.K. Dobbins.

Haskins played a major role in the Buckeyes' success throughout the season, as he and Day turned Ohio State into one of the nation's most pass-heavy offenses, a glimpse into the future of Day's head coaching tenure in Columbus.

The sophomore quarterback broke both school and Big Ten records in single-season passing yards (4,831), touchdown passes (50) and total offensive yards (4,939), winning the Big Ten's Graham-George Offensive Player of the Year and Griese-Brees Quarterback of the Year awards. He was also a finalist for the Heisman trophy.

Helwagen said that the shift from the run-heavy offenses under Meyer and Jim Tressel to Day's pass-happy attack was a necessary adjustment, as Ohio State's offense had begun to fall behind toward the end of Meyer's time in Columbus.

"(Haskins) set records that year that will probably never be broken for a Big Ten quarterback in a single season," Helwagen said. "Ryan Day and Dwayne Haskins dragged Ohio State into the future of college football with the way they threw the football. Ohio State had never done anything like that previously."

"It's been a great transition. Ohio State is still winning games even with this new, modern offense. And it's been a positive for Ohio State to embrace, to embrace this type of offense."

With Haskins tossing 228 yards through three quarters, the Huskies showed no signs of slowing down the Buckeyes' passing attack. Haskins finished the game 25 of 37 passing for 251 yards and the three TDs, without a pick.

However, momentum halted for Ohio State in the fourth quarter, and Washington raced back into the game late to nip at the Buckeyes' heels. A direct snap to Gaskin set up a 2-yard jump pass to tight end Drew Sample for a touchdown to start the period, followed by two more rushing scores from Gaskin that trimmed the Buckeyes' lead to five.

May deemed the Buckeyes' lapse a mix of complacency and emotion, a perfect storm that allowed Washington back into the game.

"A lot of people took their foot off the gas because they're up 28-3 in the Rose Bowl, the other team hasn't done anything. 'What makes you think they're going to do some-

thing now?' " May said. "And at that point, I think everybody was just trying to get to the end and hoist Urban Meyer and show him out in the proper way."

"I mean, probably all kinds of emotions were going on, but definitely, Ohio State lost its edge in the fourth quarter. That's all you've got to do, because Washington was a very talented team with a talented quarterback. The point is, Washington never quit. It's as simple as that sometimes."

But the Huskies started their comeback too late. After scoring with 42 seconds remaining, they were forced to attempt an on-side kick for one final chance to score.

Ohio State's Johnnie Dixon recovered the ball, ending Washington's hope and sealing the 28-23 Rose Bowl victory to give Meyer his long-awaited ride into the Pasadena sunset, turning the page on a chapter in Buckeye history.

After the game, during his postgame speech to the Buckeyes, Meyer formally passed the torch to Day, removing his whistle and placing it around Day's neck, symbolizing the end of his tenure and the start of his successor's era as the 25th head coach in school history.

While some will always view the final year of Meyer's time as a Buckeye as tainted, his 2018 season helped facilitate a smooth transition for Day, whose initiation as head coach was eased in part by his experience leading the team during Meyer's suspension.

"That was about as smooth a transition as you can get, because obviously Ryan had led the team through preseason camp and the first three games of the season," May said. "Obviously, a big win at Jerry World, AT&T Stadium, against TCU during that time frame. And Ryan had shown himself quite capable."

Lesmerises said that Day's strong start in Meyer's absence sparked both excitement and doubt among fans and analysts after he assumed leadership of the team at the end of the 2018 season.

"He had done very well in the three games at the beginning of the year when Urban was suspended," Lesmerises said. "He had obviously revolutionized in two seasons the way Ohio State played offense. I think a lot of people believed in Ryan Day. But then again, the idea of, 'He's literally never done this,' was at least in the back of people's minds. I think that you sort of believed what you were seeing, but you almost couldn't fully believe what you were seeing that Ohio State was really going to name a head coach who's never been a head coach."

Helwagen said he believes the season is somewhat underappreciated in Ohio State's history, and that Meyer's Rose Bowl win provided the ideal finale for a strong 2018 campaign, particularly given all the distractions the team faced.

"That last memory of him is going off in the sunset, all guns blazing and playing just a tremendous football game in the Rose Bowl. Johnnie Dixon, Mike Weber, J.K. Dobbins, and everybody on that offense, it was a lot of fun to watch them play in a great season," Helwagen said. "It was only the third Ohio State team to reach 13 wins. So that's impressive in and of itself, given all the stuff that was going on behind the scenes that they were able to get that far."

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (3-0)

Aug. 30 Texas, W 14-7.

Sept. 6 Grambling STATE, W 70-0; **13** Ohio, W 37-9; **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 (3-3)

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, L 1-0; **7** SYRACUSE, L, 2-1(2OT); **12** at Harvard, L 2-1 (2OT); **14** at Northeastern, W 2-0; **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., 10th/15; **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., 9th/15; **15-16** Inverness Collegiate at Toledo.

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

MEN'S SOCCER (3-3)

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, L 2-0; **9** LOUISVILLE, L 1-0; **13** at Butler,

W 4-0; **19** at Michigan State; **26** at Rutgers; **29** UCLA.

Oct. 3 WISCONSIN; **10** at Indiana; **14** MICHIGAN **18** MARYLAND; **24** at Washington; **31** PENN STATE.

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

WOMEN'S SOCCER (4-1-2, 0-0-1)

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, W 2-0; **12** MICHIGAN, T 0-0; **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 (2-4)

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), W 3-2; **7** FLORIDA, L 3-0; **12** Beaver Creek Invitational in Dayton vs. Ohio, W 3-0; **13** Beaver Creek Invitational in Dayton vs. Wright State, L 3-2; **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.

George Feasted On Huskies On Way To Heisman

Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of Eddie George's 1995 Heisman Trophy win this season with a game-by-game look at his march to college football's most coveted award. In this issue BSB looks at Ohio State's 30-20 win over Washington on Sept. 16, 1995.

By MIKE WACHSMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

If the opener against Boston College was the salad, the Washington Huskies were the meat, at least for Eddie George.

George had rambled for 99 yards and two touchdowns in the 1995 season opener against the Eagles, but that was just an appetizer. He truly feasted on the Huskies in a 30-20 victory in Ohio Stadium, rolling up 212 yards and two more scores against a unit that, through the years, had been one of the stoutest in college football.

What was a blip on the Heisman Trophy radar after Week 1 became a featured attraction, at least in the eyes of the media. Always one to deflect praise, George said all of the right things when asked whether he should be considered a favorite.

"I have no idea. That's something that's for the media," George said of being a Heisman favorite. "I guess they pick out the guys they feel are deserving of it. If I'm deserving of it, that's great. I'm still focused on my team. We have to deal with it. If my talent shines, that's great, I guess."

On this afternoon, it was vintage George, as he ran to contact and picked up yards after contact on almost every run.

"I didn't see a whole lot of positive blocks in the first half when he was getting a lot of his yardage, particularly downfield," Buckeye coach John Cooper said. "I think you have to give some credit to Eddie."

It was an unconventional play that really got George going, though.

Facing fourth-and-11 at the Washington

24-yard line early in the second quarter, Ohio State lined up for a Josh Jackson field goal, which, at 41 yards, would have been a career long. Holder Brian Heinen took the snap and flipped it to George, who had circled in from his wingback spot and churned for 12 yards and an OSU first down. The Buckeyes would go on to score to lead 16-7.

"We tried a fake against Boston College, but it didn't happen that way," George said. "I had the option to throw or run, and I was going to throw to (tight end) Rickey (Dudley), but he turned his back. So I just ran for the flag and tried to dive for it."

As time wound down in the first half with the Buckeyes leading 16-7, George ripped off a 51-yard jaunt down the left sideline, bringing the partisan Ohio Stadium crowd to its feet. On the next play, George took a pitch running left, nestled in behind guard Jamie Sumner and waltzed untouched into the end zone from 7 yards out.

That gave the Buckeyes a 23-7 advantage, which they would take into halftime.

As the guy who got everything started, quarterback Bobby Hoying had a great vantage point from which to assess George.

"I think he's more patient this year," Hoying said. "He's a smart football player as far as reading the holes and knowing when to get into it and when to wait and let things happen. It's tremendous because after I hand off the ball, I'm looking and not seeing a hole. He's waiting and waiting, and all of a sudden, there's a hole and he takes it. That's the difference I see in him this year."

If George's first touchdown got the fans out of their seats, his second nearly brought the house down.

OSU recovered a botched punt snap at the Huskies' 16 and went to its bell cow early. George took a pitch running left and saw All-America safety Lawyer Milloy staring him down. George gave Milloy a massive stiff-arm and went around an interference block from Terry Glenn to find pay dirt.

George finished the afternoon tired but

smiling, content that each of 36 carries played a role in Ohio State's 30-20 victory. He may have gained confidence with each successful run, but that commodity was in short supply entering the game.

"After watching Washington on film, I was wondering if I could get 50 yards against these guys," George said. "They were flying to the ball. I just told our guys to maintain their blocks and hopefully I would make the best decision and go with it."

Milloy was no small obstacle, standing six feet tall and a chiseled 211 pounds. He went on to have a 15-year career in the National Football League and won a Super Bowl title with the New England Patriots. He made four Pro Bowls and was a unanimous All-America selection for the Huskies, but on this day, he was only second best.

"He tried to hit a little hard, but it really didn't faze Eddie," Buckeye guard Juan Porter said of Milloy. "He was definitely their vocal leader. You could see him in the huddle getting guys ready to go. But I'd say it was Eddie's day."

It was a long journey to this point for George, who, as a freshman, found himself mired at the bottom of the depth chart after exhibiting fumbling problems. He got down on himself and wondered if he was ever going to get the chance to showcase his talent.

Anyone who was around him that season knew that George loved a challenge, and that adversity forced him to buckle down and set his sights on greatness.

Through two games, George had 311 yards and four scores and was well on his way.

"I think Eddie's playing a lot better football in the two games he's played this year," Cooper said. "He's running with a lot more confidence."

Cooper knew that even though Washington was aware of Hoying and Glenn and Dudley, they were going to stack the box and make George their focus.

That's why his performance was so amazing to his coach.

"I think that's the best I've seen Eddie run. What did he run, 30, 35 times? And he didn't fumble. That's the beauty. I never thought Eddie would end up with, what, 200 yards? Not many backs get 200 yards against this defense."

Michigan's Tyrone Wheatley was the last runner to eclipse 200 rushing yards against Washington, churning out 235 yards in the 1992 Rose Bowl.

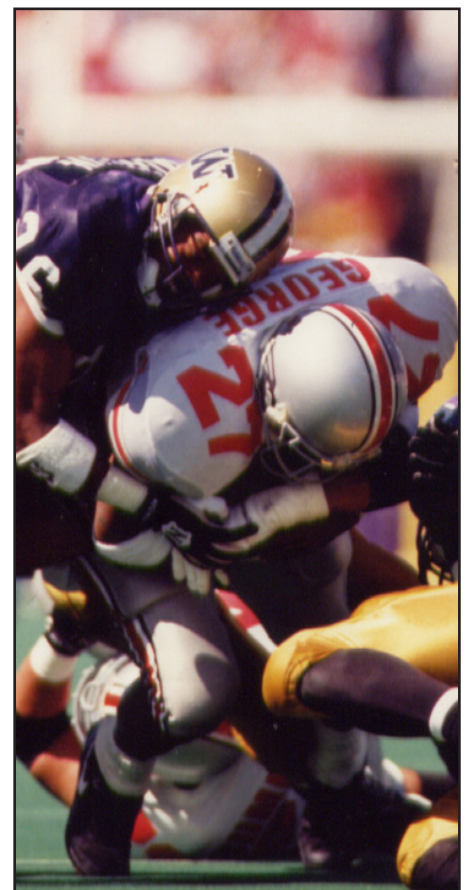
George admitted there wasn't any secret that led to ground success for the Buckeyes. It was simply a matter of execution.

"We were fresh, and our offensive line came off the ball well against those guys," he said. That's why we had so much success running the ball."

It was the third 200-yard rushing game for George, which at that time was a school record.

Although he had not been considered a leading contender for the Heisman heading into the 1995 campaign, George was not exactly an unknown.

If George wasn't entirely confident in himself heading into the battle with the Huskies, teammate Orlando Pace had enough confidence for both of them.



FILE PHOTO

HUSKIES NO MATCH — Eddie George first started attracting Heisman Trophy hype after the second game of the 1995 season when 36 carries produced 212 yards and two touchdowns in the 30-20 victory. He had a key 12-yard run off a fake field goal that led to a TD and a 16-7 lead.

The mammoth left tackle had already come into his own and paved the way for many of George's signature runs during the 1995 season. He was very matter-of-fact when asked whether he felt the Buckeyes could have success on the ground against Washington.

"I told him earlier in the week he was going to have a great game because everybody on the offensive line was focused, and he went out and played well," Pace said. "We definitely take a lot of pride in the fact that Eddie rushed for 200 yards. It feels like I rushed for 200 yards because whatever Eddie does, it shows that the offensive line is doing its job and everything is working out."

George had been almost strictly power in 1994, but he added a dash of finesse in 1995, leaving many defenders grasping at air in the hole after being sure they could bring him down. It made an already dangerous back lethal, and Pace said that was a difficult combination for defensive players to deal with.

"It's just a confidence factor knowing that at any time he can make the big run," Pace said. "I'm impressed with Eddie. He's a great power back, and this year he's showing he can also make the right moves."

His biggest move was up the Heisman ladder after leaving the Huskies in his wake.



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Dobbins Keeps Running Away From Adversity

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

J.K. Dobbins is used to being out, but he's never been down in his injury-plagued career from high school through three seasons at Ohio State and now with his third team in six NFL seasons.

It was one year ago when Dobbins ran for 266 yards on 27 carries in his first two games for the Los Angeles Chargers after missing the final 16 games of the 2023 season for the Baltimore Ravens because of a torn Achilles.

Dobbins finished 2024 with a career-high 905 yards on a 4.6 average per carry with nine touchdowns while also making 32 catches for 153 yards playing in 13 games (11 starts). He was runner-up for the NFL Comeback Player of the Year award to Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow.

"My thing is to be a blessing to other people," Dobbins said to The Denver Post in August. "And if they see my story, and they're like, shoot, maybe they had bad days, maybe they got fired, all right."

"Or you hear about CEOs all the time. They send thousands and thousands of emails, and nobody ever answers. And then that one clicks. And then they made it. So that's all I'm trying to do."

Dobbins, 26, had a one-year \$1.61 million contract with the Chargers and decided to test free agency. He signed a one-year deal with the Broncos on June 10 for \$2.745 million, of which \$2.065 million is guaranteed with incentives that could make the total worth up to \$5.25 million.

The Chargers made an unrestricted free-agent tender offer on Dobbins, and had he not agreed to a deal with another team by July 23, they would have had exclusive negotiating rights with him.

Dobbins cooled off after his first two games with the Chargers and averaged just 3.8 yards per carry the remainder of the season, but fortunately for him, one of his top performances came against the Broncos when he had 96 yards on 25 carries.

"One-on-one, he was a tough tackle for us," Denver defensive coordinator Vance Joseph said. "I'm happy he's a Bronco."

Broncos safety Brandon Jones said upon hearing of Dobbins' signing, "He's a good back, especially when healthy. He was one of the running backs who had one of the better games against us last year, so I'm super excited."

The Broncos needed to improve their running game after Javonte Williams, who led the Broncos in carries (139) and rushing yards (513) in 2024, signed with the Dallas Cowboys. Denver also traded up in the second round of April's NFL draft to select Central Florida running back RJ Harvey.

Together, they got off to a good start in Week 1 against the Tennessee Titans on Sept. 7.

Dobbins played 40 of the 76 offensive snaps and produced 63 yards on 16 carries (3.9), but more importantly, he had a late 19-yard TD run to help seal the 20-12 win.

"It was an inside zone run," he said. "I saw a hole. Once I get a little crease, I feel like I'm a guy that's going to take advantage of it. So, that's what I did. I had to break a



FILE PHOTO

ON THE MOVE — J.K. Dobbins was one of the best running backs in Ohio State history and has persevered through several season-ending injuries during his NFL career to join the Denver Broncos, his third team in the past three seasons.

tackle on the way there, but we got it done."

Harvey was among the six nominees for NFL Rookie of the Week, which was won by Washington Commanders running back Jacory Croskey-Merritt. Harvey gained 70 on six carries (11.7) that included a 50-yard fourth-quarter run.

Combined with quarterback Bo Nix's eight rushes for 18 yards, the Broncos produced 30 carries for 151 yards (5.0).

"We need to get way better," Dobbins said. "I can break more tackles, for sure. I put it all on me."

In Williams' final six games with the Broncos last season, he had 27 carries for 66 yards (2.4) and one touchdown.

A day after the Tennessee game, Broncos head coach Sean Payton bemoaned the play calling that led to 14 passes and three runs on the first 17 snaps in contrast to the 95 rushing yards in the fourth quarter.

"I have to be better there," he said. "And it's one of those day-afters where you look back and say, 'All right, let's look at how we really wanted to start this game,' and get those two runners going because we think we've really improved in that area."

Right tackle Mike McGlinchey said the flow of the game prevented the running attack from being effective early.

"I just didn't think we got into enough of a rhythm offensively in the first half to commit to running the football, to be able to impose our will on that team," he said. "We turned the ball over far too much. We didn't allow drives to even get started by not converting first downs. You don't get the privilege of running the football like that because you're not staying on the field. It's a full-team effort."

Dobbins vowed to be better.

"It could be one play. It could be 10 weeks. We've just got to jell," he said. "We've got to figure it out, which we will. It's my job. They brought me here for a reason, right?"

We're going to sit down, watch the film (and talk about it. Then we'll fix it."

In the second game at the Indianapolis Colts on Sept. 14, Dobbins ran for 76 yards on 14 carries (5.4) which included a long of 23 yards and a 5-yard TD in the third quarter for a 28-20 lead. The Colts won 29-28. Dobbins also had one catch for 9 yards.

Dobbins will then see his former team on Sept. 21 when the Broncos play at the Chargers.

Tough Breaks

Dobbins' battling through adversity began at La Grange (Texas) High School when he missed all but one play of his senior season after breaking a bone in his right leg.

That didn't deter him from a storied career at Ohio State. In 2019, he became the first back in school history to top the 2,000-yard mark, finishing with 2,003 yards and 21 touchdowns. His 4,459 career yards are second in program history to Archie Griffin's 5,589.

Dobbins was the first OSU player to rush for 1,000 or more yards as a freshman, sophomore and junior. He had 100 or more yards 19 times (Ohio State was 18-1 in those games), and he caught 71 passes for 645 yards and five touchdowns.

He never missed a game in three seasons and started in 40 of 42 games he played.

That changed after Baltimore drafted him in the second round (55th) in the 2020 draft.

After a strong rookie season in 2020 in which he had 805 yards (6.0 average) and nine touchdowns in 15 games, he was plagued by serious injuries the next three seasons before being released.

He was hurt in the final 2021 preseason game and missed the entire season due to a torn ACL. He missed nine games in 2022 (two recovering from the ACL injury and seven due to other knee issues). Then he

missed 16 games in 2023 after tearing his Achilles in Week 1.

In all, Dobbins played in only 27 (12 starts) of 74 regular and postseason games for the Ravens before signing with the Chargers.

Through it all, he kept a positive attitude. In a Denver Post article in August, renowned Los Angeles surgeon Dr. Neal ElAttrache, whose clients included Tom Brady, Kobe Bryant, Shohei Ohtani and Aaron Rodgers, praised Dobbins for his rehab work following Achilles surgery.

"If every player I took care of had J.K.'s personality," ElAttrache said, "I would be 100 percent successful the rest of my career."

"I can't say enough about him. I mean, he's the kind of guy that I would like to have as a friend forever. He's that kind of person he is."

He was impressed by how well Dobbins played for the Chargers post-surgery.

"You never want to expect they're going to be 22 years old again," ElAttrache said. "You can't turn back the clock and go before when he was that No. 1 (running back) for the Ravens."

"But, having said that, his performance was still right there."

Bucking Bronco

Dobbins is not the only Buckeye in Denver. Edge rusher Jonathon Cooper signed a four-year, \$60 million contract on Nov. 2, 2024.

The native of the Columbus suburb of Gahanna had a career-best 10½ sacks last season, along with 20 quarterback hits and one forced fumble. Along with outside linebacker Nik Bonitto (13½ sacks), they became the first Broncos duo with double-digit sacks since Von Miller and Bradley Chubb in 2018.

Bleacher Report's Matt Holder named Bonitto-Cooper the most potent edge duo in the NFL.

"These two were some of the most consistent edge-rushers in the NFL last year," Holder said. "Their potential moving forward is through the roof."

The Broncos have made a commitment to keeping many of their defensive standouts with long-term contracts.

"It's extremely important," Cooper, 27, said. "You've got to be in tune with your teammates. You've got to know what other guys are thinking, what other guys are feeling on certain plays or on certain calls, and knowing each other's jobs. Those conversations don't stop whether we're on the field or whether we're off the field. We're constantly talking about football and constantly building a better connection with each other so that we can go out there and perform the way that we're supposed to."

Cooper was a seventh-round pick (239th) in the 2021 draft after playing at Ohio State from 2016-20. He was a captain his last two seasons and the first player to wear the "Block O" jersey to honor the legacy of Bill Willis, the first Black All-American at Ohio State (1943, 44).

He wears the same No. 0 for the Broncos.

Carter Will Revisit Revenue Sharing Model

The Big Ten's equal revenue-sharing model could be facing changes in the future.

Ohio State president Ted Carter told USA Today that he expects the Big Ten will talk about the revenue-sharing model and how the money is distributed between the schools in the conference.

BIG TEN NOTES Sam Cipriani

The ACC adopted a model in which 60 percent of the conference's media rights revenue will be distributed proportionally based on a five-year rolling average of each school's football and men's basketball TV ratings.

"It doesn't matter what Ted Carter thinks. I think that's going to be a conversation that will be had over time," Carter said when asked by USA Today if the Big Ten should adopt a similar model to the ACC.

As it stands under the Big Ten's current media rights deal, which runs through the 2029-30 season, every program – except for two of the newest members, Oregon and Washington – receives an equal split of revenue. Considering Ohio State is often the most-watched college football team in the Big Ten, a shift to a proportional-based revenue model would only help the Buckeyes.

"I will say that there's only a couple of schools that really represent the biggest brands in the Big Ten, and you can see that by the TV viewership," Carter said. "I mean, look what we just went through with the Texas game. ... 16.6 million people watching that game over the whole game, and it peaked at 18.6 million. It's the most-watched opening game in history, the third-largest game ever watched in a regular season on FOX. That's what happens when you put the Ohio State brand out there."



FILE PHOTO

SHOW ME THE MONEY — Ohio State president Ted Carter feels there will be discussions at some point in the Big Ten to re-evaluate revenue sharing and that could benefit the Buckeyes. In simple terms, the bigger the ratings for football and men's basketball, the more money a school should receive.

While the conference's revenue-sharing model could change, what will remain the same is Ohio State's place inside the Big Ten, Carter said.

"I don't want to get into the type of conversations that are happening inside the Big Ten," Carter said. "I would just tell you that we're a proud member of the Big Ten, and that's where we're going to stay. We have our

own bylaws for how we do the distributions. When new members join the conference, they don't always come in at the same share. So that's the way our media rights deals are set up. That's how we're set up for now."

Foster Fired By UCLA

After a turbulent, 0-3 start to the season,

UCLA has decided to make a change at head coach.

The Bruins announced on Sept. 14 that the team would be parting ways with head coach Deshaun Foster after just 15 games with the program.

"I want to extend my sincere appreciation to DeShaun for his contributions to UCLA Football over the course of many years, first as a Hall of Fame student-athlete, then as an assistant coach, and finally as head coach," UCLA athletic director Martin Jarmond said. "He was named to this role at a challenging time of the year, on the cusp of a move to a new conference, and he embraced it, putting his heart into moving the program forward. His legacy and love for this university are firmly established. He is a Bruin for life, and we wish him, his wife, Charity, and their family the best."

The firing comes after three straight losses to open the season – a 43-10 blowout loss to then-unranked Utah in Week 1, a 30-23 loss to UNLV in Week 2 and most recently a 35-10 loss to New Mexico on Sept. 13.

Foster, who was hired by UCLA in 2024 after former Bruin head coach Chip Kelly joined Ohio State as its offensive coordinator, led the Bruins to a 5-7 record in his lone full season as the head coach, bringing his total record with the program to 5-10.

Foster was in his fourth role at UCLA after serving as a student assistant in 2013 and a graduate assistant from 2014-15. Then, after a year as the running backs coach at Texas Tech, he returned to UCLA to coach running backs from 2017-23.

Special assistant to the head coach Tim Skipper will fill in as interim head coach for the rest of the season, the program announced. This is the second year in a row Skipper has stepped in as an interim head coach, doing so last year for Fresno State after head coach Jeff Tedford resigned due to health problems.

UCLA will have an off week to adjust to its head coaching change before facing Northwestern on Sept. 27.



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BIG
2025 Standings

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Oregon	1	0	1.000	3	0	1.000
USC	1	0	1.000	3	0	1.000
Illinois	0	0	0.000	3	0	1.000
Indiana	0	0	0.000	3	0	1.000
Maryland	0	0	0.000	3	0	1.000
Michigan State	0	0	0.000	3	0	1.000
Nebraska	0	0	0.000	3	0	1.000
Ohio State	0	0	0.000	3	0	1.000
Penn State	0	0	0.000	3	0	1.000
Rutgers	0	0	0.000	3	0	1.000
Washington	0	0	0.000	2	0	1.000
Minnesota	0	0	0.000	2	1	0.667
Wisconsin	0	0	0.000	2	1	0.667
Iowa	0	0	0.000	2	1	0.667
Michigan	0	0	0.000	2	1	0.667
UCLA	0	0	0.000	0	3	0.000
Purdue	0	1	0.000	2	1	0.667
Northwestern	0	1	0.000	1	2	0.333

Sept. 12 Games

Indiana 73, Indiana State 0
New Mexico 35, UCLA 10

Sept. 13 Games

Oregon 34, Northwestern 14
Michigan 63, Central Michigan 3
Maryland 44, Towson 17
Alabama 38, Wisconsin 14
Nebraska 59, Houston Christian 7
Michigan St. 41, Youngstown St. 24
Penn State 52, Villanova 6
USC 33, Purdue 17
Rutgers 60, Norfolk State 10
Illinois 38, Western Michigan 0
Ohio State 37, Ohio 9
Iowa 47, Massachusetts 7
Cal 27, Minnesota 14

Sept. 19 Games

Oregon State at Oregon, 3 p.m.
Iowa at Rutgers, 8 p.m.

Sept. 20 Games

Maryland at Wisconsin, noon
Michigan at Nebraska, 3:30 p.m.
Purdue at Notre Dame, 3:30 p.m.
Illinois at Indiana, 7:30 p.m.
Washington at Washington State, 7:30 p.m.
Michigan State at USC, 11 p.m.

Sept. 27 Games

Ohio State at Washington, TBA
UCLA at Northwestern, TBA
USC at Illinois, TBA
Rutgers at Minnesota, TBA
Indiana at Iowa, TBA
Oregon at Penn State, 7:30 p.m.

All times Eastern

Ferentz Breaks
Hayes’ Record

Iowa’s longtime leader has officially cemented himself in the Big Ten’s record books.

With a 47-7 victory over UMass on Sept. 13, Hawkeyes head coach Kirk Ferentz broke legendary Ohio State head coach Woody Hayes’ record for the most wins in Big Ten history by a head coach.

“It’s not something you think about,” Ferentz said in a postgame interview with Big Ten Network. “It’s never been a goal of mine. Being a head coach was never really a goal so we’ll start there. But the whole concept was just to do the best we can at whatever you’re doing. Things have worked out. I found a great place and been around a

lot of great people.”

Ferentz, the longest-tenured active head coach in college football and Iowa’s all-time wins leader, secured his 206th career victory with the rout of the Minutemen and finally achieved the long-awaited milestone in his 27th season at the helm.

At Iowa, Ferentz has won two Big Ten championships (2002, 2004) while overseeing just four losing seasons in his tenure.

The Hawkeyes’ head coach was also a four-time Big Ten Coach of the Year (2002, 2004, 2009, 2015) and was named the Walter Camp Coach of the Year and the AP College Football Coach of the Year in 2002.

Poggi Serving As
U-M Interim Coach

The Wolverines have named their interim head coach in the wake of Sherrone Moore’s absence.

With Moore facing the self-imposed suspension for No. 23 Michigan’s matchups in Week 3 against Central Michigan Sept. 13 and in Week 4 at Nebraska Sept. 20, the program named associate head coach Biff Poggi interim head coach for the two-week stretch that Moore was slated to miss.

In Poggi’s first game in the role, the Wolverines defeated the Chippewas 63-3 thanks to Michigan freshman quarterback Bryce Underwood’s 235 passing yards and a touchdown, along with 114 yards and two scores on the ground.

After the game, Poggi was emotional, expressing the idea that the game was a love letter to Moore.

“What an odd day,” Poggi said during his postgame press conference. “Because today, this day was actually heartbreaking for me. Because I have children that are Sherrone’s age. And we were texting last night. Just about how much he loves me, and I love him. And it was a really hard week in our building, a really hard and emotional week.

“I think people that care realize that football is a game about relationships. And his players love him like you wouldn’t believe. And what I would say today was you saw a love letter from 120 young men to their football coach today. And I think that’s outstanding.”

Poggi is in his third coaching stint at Michigan, previously working as an analyst in 2016, then as associate head coach from 2021–22, before returning to the same role again this offseason.

He served as a high school coach for years and was also the head coach at Charlotte from 2023-24. Poggi was 6-16 in his two seasons with the 49ers.

Lanning Says Oregon
Schedule Unfair

On Sept. 10, Oregon head coach Dan Lanning told reporters he had raised concerns about the Ducks’ schedule with conference officials, saying opponents were gaining an unfair advantage in preparation time before facing the Ducks.

Lanning specifically pointed to Oregon’s Nov. 14 game against Minnesota, noting that the Ducks first travel to Iowa City to face Iowa on Nov. 8, then must return home before a quick turnaround to play the Golden Gophers on a Friday.

“There’s seven games where our opponent has more time to prepare,” Lanning said. “Or equal to us. But they always have more additional time. ... We go to Iowa, and

Minnesota has a bye week before us, and then we play Minnesota on a Friday.”

For now, the conference cannot alter the schedules that were set far in advance, but game times have yet to be finalized, which could offer Oregon some relief if the conference were to collaborate with networks in setting them.

Lanning said the imbalance doesn’t change Oregon’s approach going forward, but he felt it was important to bring the issue to the Big Ten.

“It’s a good question for the conference,” Lanning said. “It’s been communicated on our end.”

Badgers QB Out
With Knee Injury

Wisconsin starting quarterback Billy Edwards Jr. did not play in the Badgers’ 38-14 loss to No. 19 Alabama on Sept. 13.

Edwards suffered a sprained knee midway through the second quarter in Wisconsin’s 17-0 win over Miami (Ohio) on Aug. 28 and has been week-to-week since then.

He was replaced by sophomore quarterback Danny O’ Neil, a transfer from San Diego State, who had a passing touchdown and a rushing score in the victory over the RedHawks after Edwards went down.

O’Neil led the Badgers to a 42-10 blow-out of Middle Tennessee State in Week 2 and completed 23 of 27 passes for 283 yards and three touchdowns with an interception.

Badgers head coach Luke Fickell said that Wisconsin prepared for the Crimson

Tide with both quarterbacks but eventually chose to start O’Neil over Edwards as he felt he needed to “protect Billy from himself” and give him another week to rehab.

Ducks WR Dickey
Transfers After Suspension

After an offseason marked by off-the-field issues, wide receiver Jurriion Dickey will no longer be part of the Oregon Ducks program after he transferred to Diablo Valley College, a JUCO in Pleasant Hill, Calif.

Lanning revealed that he had suspended Dickey in August, but despite the issues throughout Dickey’s tenure at Oregon, he hoped the wideout could reset and eventually find success, whether at Oregon or elsewhere.

“I’m not going to spend a lot of time on it, but Jurriion’s indefinitely suspended with us right now,” Lanning said Aug. 12. “We have two team rules, and that’s be respectful, be on time. There’s some pieces of that where I felt like he needed a break from us, and we needed a break from that, so we can focus on what’s in front of us right now.

“I’m wishing him nothing but the best as far as success and wanting to see him get back to where he can be a contributor somewhere, whether that might be here, that might be somewhere else, but I won’t spend any more time on that.”

Ranked the No. 22 overall recruit in the class of 2023, Dickey saw limited action during his two seasons with the Ducks, recording just two receptions for 14 yards in 15 games.

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BUCKEYE CLIFFHANGERS, a new book from Tim Sullivan covering football seasons from 1916 through the 2024 national championship (Harley to Howard). During that period, the Buckeyes participated in 116 games that were decided in the last minute of play or the last play of the game. This book details the key plays and play makers in each of them. Available on Amazon.com.

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

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Day Confident In Plan For OSU's 2026 Class

In a press conference on Sept. 9, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day addressed the plan he and his staff have for the 2026 class moving toward the early signing period in December.

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Greg Wilson

The Buckeyes' class currently ranks ninth in the country by 247Sports team rankings, which would be the lowest a Day class has finished since 2019, when he first took over as head coach.

Despite the slow month in recruiting and missing on multiple top prospects in the month of August, Day is still confident in the plan OSU has for the class, hinting they could be aggressive at trying to flip some recruits.

"Once you get to December, that's what is going to matter," Day said. "Now more than ever, you see guys commit someplace, go somewhere else and things change."

But even though the class might currently be ranked lower than the last six have been at for Ohio State, Day still likes the players the Buckeyes already have committed.

"We feel like we have some really good guys committed right now," Day said. "We're going to make a hard push here over the next couple of months to finish out the class and figure out what's right in the transfer portal for us."

"But we feel like it's really important to make sure we have the right guys, and the right fit. Our coaches are working hard toward that, and I have all the confidence in the world we're going to sign a great class."

Day Talks Relationship Building With Recruits

During that same availability, Day was asked about the 2020 and 2021 recruiting cycles and the difficulties that came with not being able to see prospects in person to get to know them as much as he would have liked.

But in that process, he and his assistant coaches figured out ways to learn about the recruits as much as they could.

"What you try to do is try to build as many relationships as you can with people surrounding the recruits so you can get as much information as possible," Day said. "The more information you have, it certainly makes it easier to make decisions on guys and leads to less mistakes."

"The more we can do to get out and see those guys and watch them in camp and get around them, the more we can learn about them. The less time we have, (the

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

more) we have to now rely on coaches in the area, people who are familiar with the recruit, coaches on other teams who play against them. You have to really do your homework because that's what's most important. I would say right now, where we are in college football, it's the most important it's ever been that we have to be on

point with our evaluations."

Day has proved to be one of the best recruiting head coaches in the country, surrounding himself with assistant coaches who bring in top prospects and finishing with top-five classes during each of the full cycles he has been at the helm of the Buckeyes.



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ASK AN ANALYST

with Garrick Hodge Of 247 Sports

Ryan Day made his thoughts on the single 10-day January transfer portal known. What are your thoughts on that proposal? Are there better options?

"The spring portal idea floated by the Big Ten makes the most sense from a football standpoint, but I understand the January idea fits better with the actual school calendar. Ultimately, even if they adopt the January model (which seems inevitable at this point), at least it only impacts four teams instead of 70-plus."

Day seems to believe in the plan Ohio State has going forward with the 2026 class and anticipates that the Buckeyes will make a push late in the year. Who are some prospects you believe they could target to try to flip?

"Mentor, Ohio, three-star offensive tackle and NC

State commit Landry Brede (6-5, 280), for sure. He's visiting this weekend (Sept. 13) and we'll see where that goes. I maintain they'll keep in contact with Princeton (N.J.) Hun School four-star defensive end and USC commit Luke Waffle (6-6, 245) until pen hits paper there, and I'd expect they'd do the same for Orlando (Fla.) First Academy four-star cornerback Danny Odem (6-2, 180)."

Ohio State has a few tight ends targeted in the 2027 class. The Buckeyes aren't known as a school where top tight ends traditionally go, but do you think the increased usage this year will help with recruits at the position in the next cycle?

"Multiple tight end targets have told me within the last week they're intrigued by how Ohio State is rotating the tight ends in the offense, and they've been very

impressed by what they've seen. So in short, yes, it's definitely a big selling point that multiple tight ends are being featured right now."

A few weeks into the high school football season, are there any recruits whom the Buckeyes should be taking notice of that you have seen to this point?

"They already found Brede, who they just offered on Sept. 6. The first three games of film are usually the most important for a high school senior, and it will be telling where they go next week on the recruiting trail with the off week coming. Shelby, Ohio, defensive end Carter Kessler (6-5, 235) is visiting this week with only two Division I offers, but his size offers a lot to dream on. He's a guy that I'm paying close attention to, and we'll see where the relationship goes from there."

Day gave a lot of credit to the recruiting personnel on his staff and the assistant coaches who have helped the Buckeyes remain so consistent when it comes to recruiting, saying their evaluations have been very good.

"In the recruiting department and the personnel department, those guys are going to go through, watch the film, give their evaluations and then as coaches, we go on the road and we see it and get a feel for it live and in color," Day said. "Get around the coaches, get around the teammates, get around their teachers, get around everybody to find out what type of people they are."

The off week between Ohio State's 37-9 win over Ohio on Sept. 13 and its first Big Ten game of the year against Washington on Sept. 27 will be a big recruiting weekend for the Buckeye coaches, who will certainly be all over the country evaluating players and trying to build those relationships.

Day said that every coach will come back with their evaluations after seeing if what they saw live matches what they have seen in film, and the coaches will talk among themselves to decide their plan with those players.

"We'll be going on the road and get the chance to see these guys, trying to make sure that that matches up with the evaluations we have here with recruiting," Day said. "And then it's good to have the discussions and conflict and argue about things. I mean, if everyone's just saying the same thing, usually it's not good. So I think trust is important and chemistry is important. Chemistry is important to make sure that we're on the same page."

Day Opposed To January Portal

On Sept. 4, the NCAA Football Oversight Committee voted to support cutting the two transfer portal windows the college game has been using down to one. The suggestion that was given to the NCAA Administrative Committee, which will be voted on Oct. 1, was that there should be one 10-day window from Jan. 2-11.

Day spoke about the proposal during his press conference and was against it, and he said that people he has spoken to about it also oppose it.

"I don't think it's a good idea at all," Day said. "The conversations we had with Big Ten coaches, I think the majority of them

agree. I don't quite understand how teams that are playing in the playoffs are expected to make the decisions and sign their upcoming players while they're getting ready to play for games. It doesn't make any sense to me."

January is already a hectic month for teams that are in the College Football Playoff, trying to prepare for those games, along with one portal window being open from early December to late in the same month.

Last season, Ohio State played on Jan. 10 in the Cotton Bowl and on Jan. 20 for the national championship, meaning the entire single proposed window would overlap with the playoffs, which could cause issues for both teams that are still in and for players who are on those teams looking to transfer elsewhere.

Day said that he has support from Big Ten commissioner Tony Petitti when it comes to opposing the January window.

"I know the calendar is funky, but I know that the Big Ten and Tony Petitti have been working hard because he doesn't believe it either and neither do the coaches in the Big Ten," said Day. "We've had a lot of long discussions about that and tried to work through the different windows. But I don't agree with it being in January."

Buckeyes On The Prowl For Visitors

Ohio State finally had its home night game that fans have been wanting for a long time. But while prime-time matchups normally draw in more recruiting visitors and higher-rated players, that wasn't the case for the Buckeyes' matchup against Ohio.

They did still get prospects from a few different recruiting classes on campus for the night game, however.

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

From the 2026 class, Ohio State hosted Mentor, Ohio, three-star offensive tackle Landry Brede (6-5, 280); Shelby, Ohio, defensive end Carter Kessler (6-5, 235); and Columbus Watterson three-star quarterback Drew Bellisari (6-3, 190).

Kessler doesn't yet have an offer from Ohio State. In fact, he has only two Division I scholarship offers from West Virginia and Memphis. But the 2026 edge rusher's size makes him an intriguing prospect, and he has a chance to remain on Ohio

State's radar if his visit went well. Both of his offers have come this year as well, with Memphis offering on April 30 and West Virginia on Sept. 5.

He is set to take an official visit to West Virginia on Sept. 27 when the Mountaineers host Utah.

Bellisari is the son of former Ohio State quarterback Steve Bellisari. The high school senior has offers from only Gardner-Webb and Indianapolis. He is the No. 1,666 player in the country, the No. 97 quarterback and No. 87 player in the state of Ohio.

From the 2027 class, Charlotte (N.C.) Corvian Community four-star defensive lineman Nate Kamba (6-4, 300); Germantown, Wis., four-star offensive tackle Cole Reiter (6-7, 295); Poquoson, Va., four-star offensive tackle Carter Jones (6-6, 291); Hinsdale (Ill.) Central three-star defensive end Tommy Riordan (6-4, 240); and Loganville (Ga.) Grayson cornerback Rilee Drew (5-11, 160) were on campus.

Lawndale (Calif.) Leuzinger four-star safety Pole Moala (6-0, 165) was the only 2028 prospect who made the trip to Ohio State for the game.

Ohio State Makes Offers

Since BSB last went to press, Ohio State has made multiple scholarship offers.

The first was to Rolesville, N.C., four-star safety Marquis Bryant (5-11, 190), offered on Sept. 8.

Bryant is the No. 165 prospect in the country, the No. 15 safety and the No. 8 player in the state of North Carolina according to 247Sports composite rankings. He has 30 Division I offers, including from Clemson, Florida State, Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Michigan State, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Penn State, South Carolina and Wisconsin, among others.

In 14 games as a sophomore, Bryant had 58 tackles (one for loss), one interception and 10 passes defended, according to MaxPreps. He also forced two fumbles.

Memphis (Tenn.) Southwind offensive tackle Antonio Keefer (6-5, 295) was offered by running backs coach Carlos Locklyn on Sept. 9.

It was the 16th offer he has received

Continued On Page 30

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Ohio State Offers NC State OT Commit

Continued From Page 29

from a Division I team. He also holds offers from Ole Miss, Mississippi State, UNLV, Virginia Tech and West Virginia, among others. He has since received offers from Alabama and Auburn.

Brede, who is committed to NC State in the 2026 class, drew some attention when the Buckeyes offered him on Sept. 6.

He is ranked the No. 944 player in the class, the No. 80 offensive tackle and the No. 43 player in the state of Ohio, but Ohio State offering Brede at this point in the cycle likely means that they are willing to take an immediate commitment from him should he decide to flip.

Brede has been committed to the Wolfpack since June 25 and chose them over North Carolina and Pitt, among many other Division I scholarship offers.

Goodyear (Ariz.) Desert Edge four-star cornerback Mikyal Davis (5-11, 170) of the 2027 class received a scholarship offer from Ohio State on Sept. 10.

Davis is the No. 338 player in his class,

the No. 38 cornerback and the No. 6 player in the state of Arizona. He has 33 Division I offers, which include Arizona State, Cal, Florida State, Indiana, Iowa State, Maryland, Miami (Fla.), Michigan State, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Ole Miss, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, UCLA, USC, Washington and Wisconsin, among many others.

The Buckeyes also offered Rolling Hills Estates (Calif.) Palos Verdes Peninsula four-star safety Jalen Flowers (6-1, 160) of the 2028 class on Sept. 11. He is rated the No. 127 player in the country, the No. 8 safety and the No. 9 player in the state of California.

Flowers has 14 Division I offers, including those from Arizona, Arizona State, Louisville, Oregon, Purdue, Syracuse, Texas A&M, USC and Washington.

Columbus TE Enjoyed Texas Game Visit

Ohio State's visitor list against Texas for the Buckeyes' 14-7 win on Aug. 30 was one of the more impressive recruit gather-

ings in recent history, which was no surprise given the anticipation that game built over the offseason.

Columbus St. Francis de Sales four-star tight end Jordan Karhoff (6-4, 215) was one of the many prospects who made it to Ohio Stadium for that game, and he was just as impressed with the experience as others who have spoken about their time on campus.

"I thought the atmosphere was great, the energy was great, especially on third and fourth downs," Karhoff told 247Sports. "Ohio State got the win, so obviously, that's good. I think they use the tight ends in a great way. They used four tight ends at a time and it was great to see."

Karhoff then played his next high school game with a scarlet Ohio State headband underneath his helmet. He plays both tight end and on the defensive line for his prep team and had a better game on the defensive side of the ball in the 35-18 win over Columbus Africentric Early College, which improved his team's record to 3-0.

Karhoff had multiple tackles for loss

and a sack in the win and told 247Sports that while he was better defensively in the game, he still believes he will start performing on the other side of the ball as well.

"It went great. We got the win and that's all that matters," Karhoff said following the win. "We have a lot to work on, but we accomplished our goal for the game. I'm just trying to play violent. Play with my hands, play through people. That's what helps me get through and make tackles. Obviously, this year I'm making a little more plays on the defensive side, but I feel like I can really get it going (offensively)."

Karhoff was at a recruiting camp at Ohio State in June, which is where he earned his scholarship offer from the Buckeyes.

He is the No. 296 player in the country, the No. 18 tight end and the No. 9 player in the state of Ohio according to 247Sports composite rankings, and he holds 29 Division I offers.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1990

Dante Lee had two years of eligibility remaining, while Robert Smith and Raymont Harris had three more. Carlos Snow also had one more year of college football to play if he so chose.

For those reasons, many Ohio State fans might have wondered why the Buckeyes would be courting more tailbacks in the recruiting season. The answer was a fairly simple one: Any team that was serious about winning could not have too many talented tailbacks.

Because of that, OSU head coach John Cooper and his staff would make big plays for such outstanding tailback talent as Ki-Jana Carter of Westerville (Ohio) South and Stephen Pitts of Middletown (N.J.) South.

While many OSU fans already knew all about Carter, Pitts was generally acknowledged as one of the finest prep running backs in the country. In fact, SuperPrep rated Pitts as the second-best running back in the nation, behind only Marquette Smith of Winter Park (Fla.) Lake Howell. SuperPrep ranked Carter at No. 13.

30 Years Ago — 1995

With the lack of depth on the Ohio State offensive line, the Buckeye coaching staff was combing the country in search of high school seniors to fill the void.

One prospect who had caught their eye lived a mere two-hour drive from Columbus. Jefferson Kelley, a 6-5, 300-pound All-Ohio guard out of Cincinnati Colerain, had narrowed his choice of schools to Ohio State, Michigan, Michigan State, Illinois and Penn State.

Kelley said he was seeking the perfect mix of athletics and academics in college.

"I am concerned with the kind of academic program the school has and basically how I feel about the coaching staff," he said. "Since I am going to be there four or five years, I have to get the right feeling. I also want to go where there is a good opportunity to play."

25 Years Ago — 2000

Although he respectfully considered an offer to attend Michigan, everything that Simon Fraser of Upper Arlington, Ohio, was looking for in a university was, literally, in his own back yard.

"It was a school that I found had the total package academically and what I want football-wise," said the defensive end as he explained the main reason for opting for Ohio State, the same university where his father was a professor in the metallurgical science and engineering department.

"That really didn't play a factor in my decision," said Fraser, whose father was also a Buckeye football season ticket holder. "I wanted to find a place where I could fit in and I could get the best academic and football program I could get. And in the end, the only place that I could find was Ohio State."

With a pre-med major in his future, Fraser admitted that he was a bit enticed by Michigan's topflight medical program.

"I went up there to visit and talk to the people that run the medical school," he said. "But it just didn't feel comfortable up there. I felt a lot more comfortable down here at Ohio State."

20 Years Ago — 2005

Cincinnati Colerain head coach Kerry Coombs had taken some guff from diehard Ohio State fans for being a close friend of Michigan defensive coordinator Jim Herrmann and for sending players such as Mister Simpson (whom Ohio State did not offer) and Cobrani Mixon (whom Ohio State did) off to the Wolverines.

But after his defending state champion Cardinals downed Tyler (Texas) Robt E. Lee in the showcase game of the inaugural Kirk Herbstreit Ohio Vs. USA Challenge, he showed that he had some Ohio pride himself.

Standing alongside star offensive lineman Connor Smith, Coombs pulled a lucky buckeye he had been given from his pocket and tossed it to Smith, instructing his charge to give it to Jim Tressel the following day when he was scheduled to visit OSU.

15 Years Ago — 2010

Ohio State already held a verbal commitment from one in-state junior running back, but another one had landed an offer. The head coach for four-star prospect Bri'onte Dunn of Canton GlenOak told The (Canton) Repository on Sept. 15 that the Buckeyes had come through with a scholarship offer.

"(Dunn) was really excited when I called and told him," GlenOak head coach Scott Garcia told BSB. "I'm excited for him and his family."

The Buckeyes were the fourth team to offer Dunn, joining Cincinnati, Pittsburgh and Notre Dame.

"We knew he was going to be getting a lot of attention," Garcia said. "This is special for anybody coming from our area. He will take his time and talk to his support system and his parents, and we'll all sit down and talk about it, but it's going to be his decision. I would imagine there will be a lot of schools offering him now. Anybody who runs the football and wants a big durable back would be crazy not to offer him."

10 Years Ago — 2015

Mark Pantoni hadn't had much reason to celebrate on Twitter lately, but that's because the Buckeyes were ahead of schedule.

Ohio State's director of player personnel was famous for tweeting out "BOOOOOOM!!!!" when head coach Urban Meyer landed a verbal commitment from a recruit, but that had happened just five times for the class of 2016 since mid-May.

Such a drought would normally be cause for concern, but the Buckeyes were actually being picky after amassing 14 recruits be-

fore summer even started.

"I don't know if this is exactly the way they want it, but if you can get a commitment from guys you deem your first choices, you're going to take them," Scout.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene said. "I don't think they've taken guys that they're eventually going to have to double back with and find better players. Most of the guys they've got in the class of 2016, I think they're all first choices. You take them when you can get them."

Five Years Ago — 2020

Ohio State's recruiting efforts had not been slowed by the Big Ten's decision to postpone fall sports, as Manassas (Va.) Unity Reed four-star defensive tackle Tyleik Williams announced his commitment to the Buckeyes on Aug. 27.

Williams was considered the 10th-best defensive tackle and No. 160 prospect overall in the class of 2021. He recorded 47 tackles and 3½ sacks to help the Lions – formerly known as the Stonewall Jackson Raiders – to the state playoffs the previous fall. He chose Ohio State over finalists Alabama, LSU, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia Tech.

Williams had never been to Ohio State, though he was scheduled to take an unofficial visit with his teammate, 2022 four-star linebacker Shawn Murphy, in early April. That trip was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic, so defensive line coach Larry Johnson and linebackers coach/area recruiter Al Washington extended a scholarship offer over the phone instead.

One Year Ago — 2024

Ohio State was after a highly rated 2026 offensive lineman, Nixa, Mo., five-star offensive tackle Jackson Cantwell.

Cantwell, the No. 2 overall player in the 2026 class and the top-rated prospect at his position, talked to 247Sports about his recruitment and if he planned on scheduling visits that season.

"There are definitely some," he said. "I released a top 14, and I'm definitely focused in there. I could highlight any of them, but there are a few I know I'm going to visit. I visited Nebraska already. Missouri and Georgia are in there, also. LSU, 'Bama, Oregon, I like all of those places. They each have individual stuff that makes them great. I know for Mizzou and Nebraska, proximity is definitely a big thing for me and the culture there."

Ohio State was in the top 14 that Cantwell released, but the rest of the schools were going to be tough ones to beat when it came to getting him to commit. He had some interest in other Big Ten schools such as Oregon and Nebraska, visiting the Cornhuskers campus for their 28-10 win over Colorado on Sept. 7.

Former Buckeyes Enshrined In Hall Of Fame

Ohio State had two former players honored at the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame on Sept. 6, although it wasn't for their pro playing careers.

COURT REPORT Greg Wilson

Clark Kellogg, who has been broadcasting for CBS Sports full time since 1997, received the Curt Gowdy Media Award, and Michael Redd was honored for being part of the 2008 USA men's national team.

It was revealed in February that Kellogg would receive the award that is given to those who have made "outstanding contributions to basketball," according to the Hall of Fame website. He was one of two recipients of the award, being joined by Detroit Pistons broadcaster George Blaha. Adrian Wojnarowski and Michelle Smith received the print award.

After playing 86 games with the Buckeyes over three seasons from 1979-82 and averaging 14.9 points, Kellogg spent five years with the Indiana Pacers in the NBA, averaging 18.9 points per game and retiring due to chronic knee problems.

He then started with CBS Sports covering the NCAA Tournament in 1993 and has been there ever since, serving as the lead basketball analyst from 2008-14, which included calling Final Four games.

Ohio State honored Kellogg's achievement by having him ring the victory bell before the football team's 37-9 win over the Ohio Bobcats on Sept. 13. He joined Archie Griffin and John Cooper as the third former Buckeye to do so this season. Griffin rang the bell before the Week 1 win over Texas, and Cooper did so before the 70-0 Week 2 win over Grambling State.

Redd was honored as part of the 2008 "Redeem Team," a play on the 1992 "Dream Team" name and a reference to the fact that Team USA received the bronze medal in the 2004 Olympic Games.

"Seventeen years in the making," Redd posted on Twitter after the ceremony where he received his Hall of Fame blazer. "Unbelievably humbled and honored to even be a speck of dust on this stage."

He continued with another post.

"People always say you can only accomplish as big as you dream. Well, let me be honest with y'all: I never even dreamed this big," the post read. "Sometimes life has bigger plans than you do. What started as 12 guys trying to bring home gold in 2008 has turned into something that'll last forever. We're going into the Hall of Fame together, and having my family here to see it happen makes it even more special. Incred-

ibly grateful and humbled. Some moments you never forget, and this is definitely one of them."

Redd was with Ohio State for three seasons and was an All-Big Ten honoree each of those years, leading the Buckeyes in scoring each of those seasons.

He is sixth all-time with 1,879 career points at Ohio State and is one of only three OSU players to have three 500-plus point seasons, joining William Buford and Jerry Lucas.

Redd was part of the 1999 Final Four team before he was drafted by the Milwaukee Bucks with the 43rd overall pick in the 2000 NBA draft. In 12 NBA seasons, he managed 19.0 points, 3.8 rebounds and 2.1 assists per game on his way to becoming fourth all-time in Bucks scoring by the time he retired from the league (11,554 points).

He was honored alongside many of his 2008 teammates, a group that included LeBron James, Deron Williams, Dwayne Wade, Tayshaun Prince, Chris Paul, Jason Kidd, Dwight Howard, Chris Bosh, Carlos Boozer and Carmelo Anthony.

Lucas Congratulated By Diebler For Statue

Lucas will have a statue unveiled outside Value City Arena on Nov. 14 to commemorate his three years playing in Columbus. For more on that, see page 32.

But while BSB talked with Lucas about his statue, he said Ohio State men's basketball coach Jake Diebler made sure to congratulate him on the honor when the two saw each other.

"We talked a little there, not at length," Lucas told BSB. "He was walking around the tables, talking to a lot of people. He congratulated me and was very happy for me."

The two have talked before. Lucas voiced his support for the job Diebler is doing with the program and said that he makes sure to reach out to Diebler after every game, win or lose.

"I texted him after every game last year," Lucas said. "He commented one time that after a tough loss, you don't hear from anybody. But he said, 'I always hear from two people: my wife, and I hear from Jerry Lucas.'"

"I think it's important. I think he's doing a great job. I really like him as a coach and as a person. I want to encourage him and help him as much as I can, although there's not much help I can give except in encouragement at this point."

Diebler is embracing the history of the Ohio State men's basketball program in many ways. He constantly invites former players to practices with the current team and has former players somewhat involved when it comes to recruiting as well.

Buckeyes Host '28 Guard For Grambling



FILE PHOTO

BUCKEYE LEGENDS — Two former Ohio State players were enshrined in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame on Sept. 6. Clark Kellogg (above) was honored as a broadcaster with the Curt Gowdy Media Award while Michael Redd was honored for being a member of the gold-medal-winning Team USA at the 2008 Olympics.

Cleveland Lutheran East combo guard Dylan Zeigler (6-1, 155) was the only visiting recruit for Ohio State's men's basketball program when the football team took down Grambling State 70-0 on Sept. 6.

The prep sophomore is not ranked on 247Sports yet, but he is currently considered the top 2028 prospect in the state of Ohio by Prep Hoops Ohio. As a freshman, he was a third-team All-Ohio pick in Division V, averaging 14.4 points per game on the way to winning the D-V state championship.

He played for the Indy Heat in the spring and summer in the Nike EYBL 15U

league. In eight games with the Heat, he averaged 18.0 points, 6.5 rebounds and 2.9 assists per game, knocking down 14 of 42 three-pointers (33.3 percent).

Zeigler picked up an offer from the Buckeyes on Aug. 2 when he was on a separate visit. He has also been offered by Nebraska and Creighton already.

He was just the second player in the 2028 class to receive an offer from the Buckeyes, joining Atlanta Overtime Elite shooting guard Kameron Mercer (6-4, 180), who was on campus for the football game against Texas.



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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

Lucas To Be Honored With Statue At OSU

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Another Ohio State legend will be immortalized in Columbus with a statue.

Since BSB last went to press, it was revealed that NBA Hall of Famer and former Buckeye Jerry Lucas will have a statue of his likeness unveiled outside Value City Arena this fall.

"It's an unbelievable honor," Lucas told BSB. "I shouldn't think about it. It might be the biggest honor I've ever gotten in my life. I understand certain things have happened (for me), but this is very, very rare to have this happen."

Lucas, an NCAA champion and three-time All-American, joins legendary sprinter Jesse Owens, two-time Heisman winner Archie Griffin and longtime OSU football coach Woody Hayes as the only former Buckeyes to have a statue built at Ohio State to honor them.

He said that group is "great company" to be remembered alongside.

He is considered the best basketball player in Ohio State history, for good reason. But Ohio State basketball historian Lee Caryer didn't want to limit him to that.

"No better Big Ten player," Caryer told BSB. "That's the honest to God truth."

When the statue is unveiled, Lucas will be on campus with his wife, children and some of his grandchildren. They will all be at the unveiling on Friday, Nov. 14, the Buckeye football game against UCLA the next day, where Lucas will almost certainly be honored again, and the Sunday, Nov. 16, men's basketball game against Notre Dame at Value City Arena.

Lucas first found out about the statue months before it became public news when Alan Stockmeister, the vice chair of the board of trustees at Ohio State, gave him a call to let him know that they were determined to raise the money to make it happen.

"It was almost 100 percent ready to go when I heard about it," Lucas said. "I wasn't involved in the process. I didn't do anything except make a suggestion of what shot, what position it would be for the statue."

Lucas chose his famous hook shot, a suggestion that Ohio State took.

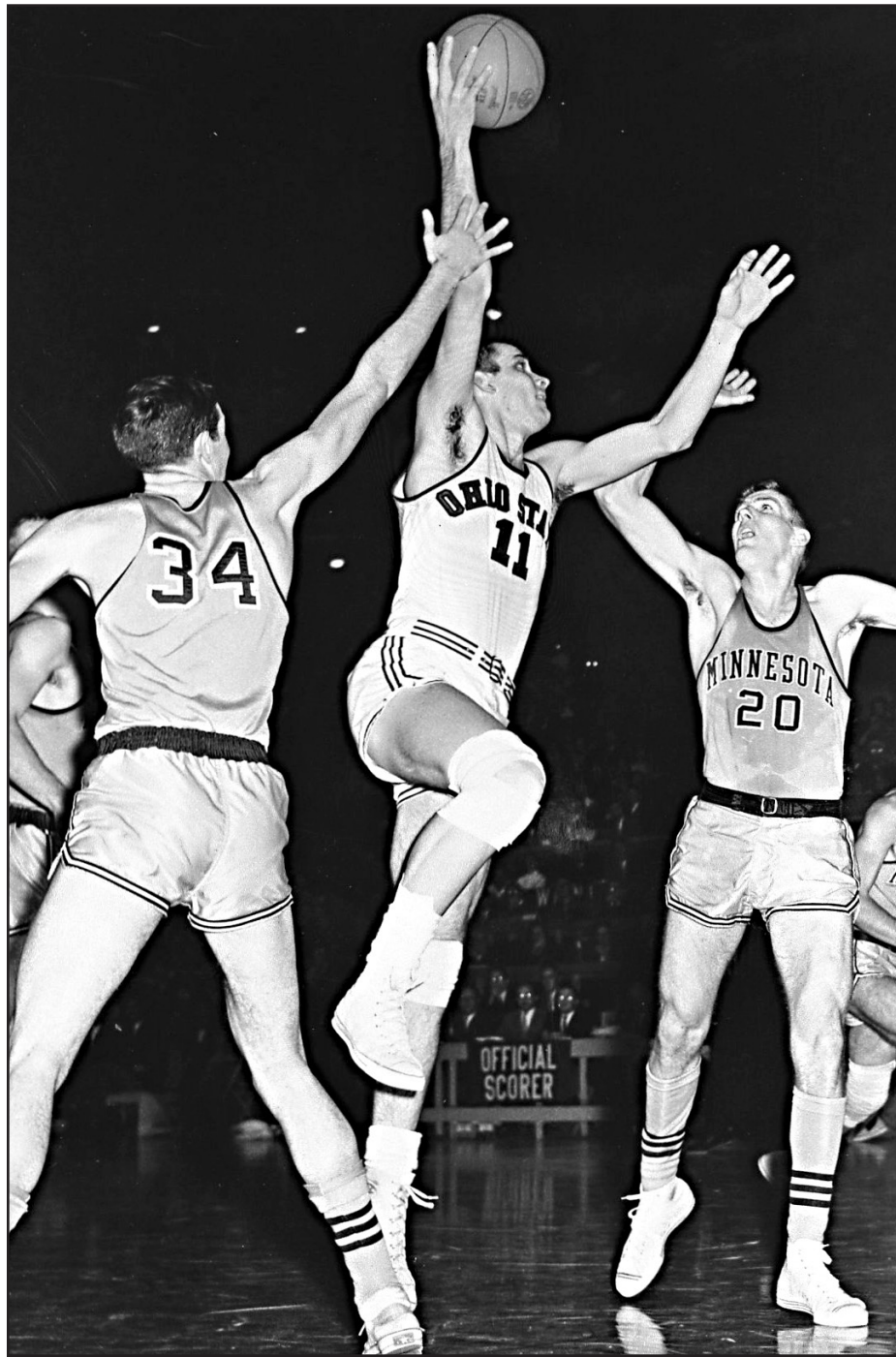
"That was my shot, the one I shot a lot, and it was very effective," Lucas said. "It's gone today. It's like a dinosaur."

Lucas was so successful with that shot that he wonders why it has gone by the wayside in the game of basketball.

"Nobody really shoots the true hook shot where they lift it from low and raise it up. (Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) shot a jump hook, where he kind of went straight up with it, but he didn't lift it from down at his side.

"It's just not around anymore, and I don't know why. It's so effective. It can't be guarded. I shot it against 7-6 players, and they can't reach it. It's a mystery why it's gone."

After leaving Ohio State, Lucas went on to become a star at the NBA level as well. He played for the Cincinnati Royals, the San Francisco Warriors and the New York Knicks during his 11-year career, winning an NBA title with the Knicks in 1973. He was also a seven-time All-Star, made the All-NBA first team three times and second



FILE PHOTO

THE BEST — Jerry Lucas will be immortalized on Nov. 14 when a statue of him will be unveiled outside Value City Arena. The NCAA champion (1960) and three-time All-American joins Archie Griffin, Woody Hayes and Jesse Owens as the only Ohio State athletes so honored.

team twice, was the Rookie of the Year in 1964 and averaged 17.0 points, 15.6 rebounds and 3.3 assists per game during his career.

With his NBA championship in 1973, Lucas was the first basketball player to win a championship at each of the high school level, in college, in the pros and in the Olympics.

He said that while he knew he was very good, he had no idea his basketball career would turn into what it did when he first set foot on Ohio State's campus.

"As a young man, there's no way of knowing," Lucas said. "I had a certain amount of talent, and I was going to use it the best I possibly could for my team."

Lucas' 1,990 points at Ohio State were a record at the time that lasted until Dennis Hopson and Herb Williams passed him with

2,096 and 2,011 points, respectively. But since Lucas didn't get to play in his freshman season at Ohio State, because first-year players had to sit out a year at the time, he likely would still hold the record had he been able to be on the court as a freshman. He scored 24.3 points per game while he was with the Buckeyes.

He still holds the rebounding record at Ohio State, averaging 17.2 rebounds per game in his three years, which got him to 1,411 boards.

Caryer noted that a double-double was so common for Lucas (78 in 82 career games in college) that his best games seem unbelievable. Lucas had two separate games in his time at Ohio State when he put up 30 or more points and brought down 30 or more rebounds, one of them coming in the NCAA Tournament against Kentucky in 1961.

After the other one of those 30-30 games, which came against legendary UCLA coach John Wooden and the Bruins, Caryer said Wooden had some high praise for Lucas.

"John Wooden said, 'Our team played its very finest, but Lucas was magnificent. It was a pleasure to lose to such a man. I have never said such a thing before and I never expect to again,'" Caryer recalled.

Lucas believes he would have been just as ready to play as a freshman as he was when he was an All-America center as a sophomore.

"I have no doubt," Lucas said. "The freshman team scrimmaged the varsity all the time and beat them. I would have been ready."

Caryer has no doubt either and told a story of Lucas competing with former high NBA draft pick Johnny Horan in the summer of 1955. Caryer said that Lucas beat Horan, and Horan inquired about where Lucas went to college at the time, shocked that he didn't recognize one of the top players in the country.

"He played Jerry and got embarrassed, so Horan came off the court, found somebody, and said, 'Who is that kid?' (Someone told him), 'Well, that's Jerry Lucas.' Horan said, 'Where does he play? The guy said, 'He's just a freshman,'" Caryer said. "And Horan thought, 'My God, if this guy is that good, his college team is going to be great in 1956. Where does he go to college?' 'He's a freshman in high school.' (Horan) was an All-American and an NBA draft choice, and Lucas made him look terrible."

But while he was a great scorer and rebounder, he was also known as a great teammate, something that was very important to him.

"I would like to think that I was a consummate teammate. Every coach I ever had told me I had to shoot more," Lucas said. "After the Olympics, (Hall of Fame coach) Pete Newell said I was the best player he's ever coached. Not only that, but also the most unselfish player he's ever coached."

"It was always important to me to be part of the group instead of someone who wanted to be held above and thought of above other people. When I came to Ohio State, I just wanted to contribute and be the best player I could to have the best team we could."

Lucas was successful in doing so very quickly. Along with his teammates — a group that included the late John Havlicek and Bob Knight — Lucas and the Buckeyes won the 1960 NCAA Tournament, the only championship in Ohio State men's basketball history.

Now, along with his jersey hanging in the rafters at Value City Arena, the statue will ensure that Lucas is remembered as an all-time great at Ohio State.

"Obviously, I'm anticipating it. You don't know what it's actually going to be like until it occurs, but I know it will be an awesome feeling," Lucas said. "I know that my wife and I and all of our family will be very, very excited about the ceremony. Whatever takes place, we're looking very intently toward it."

Webster Carves Dual-Sport Legacy At OSU

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Special to Buckeye Sports Bulletin

For most college athletes, committing to just one sport at the collegiate level is already enough work to be considered a full-time job. However, a select group is talented enough to make multiple teams at their university. What's even rarer are those who can excel in both.

Makenna Webster has proved to be one of those exceptions during her time at Ohio State.

As a standout for the Buckeye women's ice hockey and field hockey programs, Webster has not only thrived in both sports but also carved out a singular legacy as a Buckeye, all while preparing for a future in professional play and on the national stage.

Webster began her collegiate career at Wisconsin shortly after COVID, competing exclusively for the Badgers ice hockey team from 2020-22. As a freshman, she earned the Frozen Four's Most Outstanding Player honor while helping Wisconsin capture the 2021 national championship.

But since Wisconsin doesn't have a field hockey team, Webster often felt that a part of her athletic journey was missing during her time in Madison. She cited her desire to play a second sport as the primary reason for entering the transfer portal.

"I think getting in the transfer portal, I made it clear to everyone that it was my goal to play both sports when I was talking to different colleges, different coaches," Webster said. "My goal was to play both and hopefully be successful in both."

Webster transferred to Ohio State in the summer of 2022, this time joining both the ice hockey and field hockey teams for the Buckeyes.

The transition to both the field and the ice was seamless for Webster in her first year as a Buckeye. She finished third on the field hockey team with 15 points (six goals, three assists) and ranked among Ohio State's top five in goals and assists for the ice hockey team.

Balancing the two sports, however, was a different story.

Since field hockey takes place in the fall and ice hockey in the winter, the seasons overlap significantly, requiring careful coordination between Webster and the coaching staff to ensure she had time to excel in both sports while keeping up academically.

Webster said that field hockey head coach Jarred Martin and ice hockey head coach Nadine Muzerall frequently held "Makenna Webster meetings" to coordinate her schedule, ensuring she could balance the NCAA's daily four-hour limit on practice and playing time.

"Coach Jarred Martin and Nadine Muzerall both were very clear on how it was going to work," Webster said. "They had a lot of great conversations and then allowed me to be successful in the last three years of playing both."

During her first three years, Webster said she was frequently away from home from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., juggling a hectic schedule that involved traveling between



PHOTO COURTESY OF OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

DUAL THREAT — Makenna Webster has excelled in hockey, which is not unusual unless you can do it for both the women's field and ice hockey programs at Ohio State as she has done.

classes, meetings and multiple athletic facilities.

Martin praised Webster's remarkable ability to manage both sports while standing out as both a student and an athlete.

"As I look back, the takeaways I have is just that her responsibilities, her energy levels, focus and competitiveness, it shined," Martin said. "She wants to be an athlete. She wants to be out on the ice. She wants to be out in the field. She just loves it, and that would be tested, because she'd be doing both in time, missing both. But I think you could see her at her best within that, and how she managed that."

Webster received academic honors from either the Big Ten or National Field Hockey Coaches Association (NFHCA) every season she's been a Buckeye, and she also earned the Big Ten Medal of Honor in 2025, which recognizes the top male and female student-athlete at each conference school.

Webster has only continued to improve in both sports, not only in-game, but off the field. Webster's leadership earned her captainship for both teams.

"I think that commitment that I've seen from her is incredible, to manage both sports, to still be successful in this, in the academic world, in school, to see her leadership grow," Martin said. "I mean, she's a captain for both teams. She's a captain for us again this year. She's earned that respect."

That leadership and hardworking mentality earned Webster the chance to compete for multiple national teams.

In ice hockey, Webster was a member of the U.S. U-18 Women's National Team, winning gold twice (2018, 2020) and silver once (2019) at the IIHF U-18 Women's World Championships. She was also a part of the 2022 and 2023 U.S. Collegiate Select teams at the Collegiate Series.

On Jan. 28, Webster was added to the United States field hockey national team

and was expected to compete with the team over the spring and summer, although she never played with the squad following an injury in the Buckeyes' ice hockey national championship game loss.

Webster said that while she doesn't consider herself a true member of Team USA field hockey since she never wore the jersey, the experience of representing her country in ice hockey and feeling that pressure was important to her – even if all she could do each time was give her best effort.

"When I do represent my country, I just be the best I can be. But going off that, I think there's pressure every day of people being like, 'Oh, she's on the national team, she should be the best player on the field,'" Webster said. "I think that's hard sometimes, but I always remember, like my dad tells me, pressure is a privilege. Yes, I've had experience. I've got to practice with national teams, be on national teams, but that's just one step in my journey."

This year, though, with Webster having used up her ice hockey eligibility, she is competing solely with the field hockey team.

Without a second sport to split time with at the moment, Webster said she feels more locked in than ever during this field hockey season.

Balancing her goal of rejoining Team USA field hockey and her drive to help Ohio State reach the NCAA tournament after narrowly missing out last season as the first team out, Webster said she returned with unfinished business.

"I want to develop more as I was selected to be on the national team, and I think having one more season of field hockey, doing four years at field hockey, after taking some years off, was the right decision for me," Webster said. "I just wanted to be here, be with the girls, train with the coaches, and just keep developing my skill sets."

Martin expressed some excitement at not having to share Webster between another sport but doesn't think it will change much until the overlapping periods of fall and winter sports.

"I mean, she doesn't change no matter what," Martin said. "I am excited for this year. I think we will notice it more come the end of September, October, when we're used to having her now with no overlap."

In four games this season, Webster has led No. 12 Ohio State to a 3-3 record, scoring 11 goals and three assists, leading the team with 25 points. She is 20 points ahead of the next closest player on the roster. The three Buckeye losses came against No. 3 Virginia (1-0) and No. 11 Syracuse (2-1, 2OT) in the same weekend before falling to No. 8 Harvard (2-1, 2OT) on Sept. 12.

In the second match of the year, Webster netted six goals against Kent State Aug. 31 – a program record. That was just two days after Webster found the back of the cage four times in a 7-0 win over Ball State.

Despite Webster exhausting all her ice hockey eligibility in college, her career on the ice is just getting started.

Webster was drafted No. 17 overall by the New York Sirens in the third round of the 2025 Professional Women's Hockey League draft, where she hopes to continue her playing career after college.

The PWHL will come with major changes compared to the WCHA, most notably the ability to check.

"It's definitely different, more physical," Webster said. "The PWHL has checking. That's not in my favor, but playing in the WCHA, it's a very physical league. I think it will be a good transition."

Webster plans to join the Sirens following the field hockey season and said that because she's physically smaller than many players in the PWHL, she needs to continue developing her strength and speed in order to compete with the best in the world.

"Obviously, I need to get stronger, keep working on my speed skills, because those girls are the best of the best," Webster said. "A lot of them are way bigger than me, way stronger. So I know that I have lots of work to be done. I think I have the skill set and vision to be in the league, there's so much more work I need to do to be successful."

Martin said Webster's legacy at Ohio State will extend beyond field hockey and women's ice hockey, leaving a mark on Buckeye athletics as a whole, and he plans to reference her as an example for his future players well after her departure.

"Eventually, she'll leave Ohio State, but her influence and the impression she's going to leave will still be here for years after. That's just kind of how much influence and power she's had, and all the accolades," Martin said. "I always tell our team, that's a byproduct of the day-to-day student athlete life that you're living. And Mak is such a great example of what we want within Ohio State field hockey – a leader."

OSU Starts Strong, Conference Tests Await

The rankings say the Buckeyes are No. 1. Honestly, we don't know yet.

That's the problem with rankings this time of year. Not enough info to judge things so precisely.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

What we do know is that Ohio State has the makings of a national champion. But the same still could be said elsewhere, in places like Oregon, Georgia, Miami, LSU and Penn State – in that order.

That's my list of championship contenders, without even factoring in teams that have lost and yet could rebound to become part of that group. Is there a team out there like the 2014 Buckeyes who lost early (Week 2), but became a different, really powerful team at the tail end of the season? We don't know.

But if you are going to compile rankings in mid-September, the Buckeyes certainly deserve to be No. 1. They're defending champions. They have posted the best victory to date. And there are a lot of things to like about this team.

Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate. Wow.

What a pair of receivers. Both dominant. Smith is a top-five NFL pick. We've known that for some time. But the more we see of Tate, the more it becomes clear that he's also one of the best receivers in college football – maybe in the top five, certainly among the top 10.

Having those two together poses serious problems for any opposing coach. And Tate playing the way he is has to help Smith shine even more.

It's also clear by now that Julian Sayin is a very, very accurate passer. I can only think of a few times through the first three games in which his passes were off target. He zips the ball, and he throws it with touch.

We could quibble over what appear to be a couple of underthrown deep balls this season. But those passes were still caught. Were they underthrown, or were they cases of him playing it safe, putting the ball where he knew his ultra-talented receivers could make a play on the ball?

We can all recall far too many times in other years or games elsewhere when open deep receivers were overthrown. That hasn't happened with Sayin.

As Chris Simms pointed out during the Ohio University game broadcast on Peacock, and as Ryan Day has pointed out after more than one game, Sayin is still learning.

Simms showed plays where Sayin likely threw to the wrong receiver. Day noted af-

ter the Grambling game that Sayin's goal-line interception was the result of throwing the ball too late.

Sayin is a work in progress on some of these things. But he's a work in progress with the ball-throwing talent already in hand. He's second in the country in completing 78.9 percent of his passes so far. He ranks fourth with a passer rating of 199.8. And he has two 300-plus-yard games in his first three starts.

That's a pretty nice place to be when you're a young work in progress. We can safely expect even better things after a week off to revisit some coaching in preparation for the Washington game on Sept. 27. Sayin knows two-interception games, like the one he had against OU, are not acceptable.

What's more to like about this offense is the quantity of quality tight ends. None have broken out for big numbers, but so many can play that Day and his staff have room to toy with creative multiple-tight-end sets to present problems for the defense.

And maybe Ohio State has found its next explosive running back in freshman Bo Jackson. His opportunities have been limited, but not his production. In just 18 rushing attempts, he's gained 217 yards. No one expects that 12.1-yards-per-carry average to continue. But he sure looks like he could be a 100-yard-per-game back. He's now averaging 108.5, having not carried the ball in Week 1.

As far as the line: one sack allowed through three games. Enough said.

On the defensive side, the secondary – no surprise here – has been outstanding. The line play has been strong. And the linebackers are playing really well. There really are no question marks, other than how good this unit will become beyond what it has been so far – very strong.

The OU game was close for a while, but – other than for one play – the defense was stifling. At the end of the day, Ohio State outgunned OU, 572 yards to 181. OSU had 28 first downs; OU had nine.

Through three games, Ohio State has allowed just 16 points. The 5.3 points per game allowed ranks second in the country to BYU's 1.5.

Yes, Grambling and OU were not power conference opponents. But everyone has had these types of games so far. Ohio State held Texas to seven points, and Texas has averaged 32.5 points in its other two games.

Things have unfolded nicely for the Buckeyes. They've survived the big test

(Texas), looked solid against two lesser opponents (Grambling and OU), and haven't revealed any unfixable issues.

They look sure and steady heading into the Big Ten season. The biggest tests are at Washington on Sept. 27, at Illinois on Oct. 11, home against Penn State on Nov. 1, and at Michigan on Nov. 29.

Splitting those four keeps the Buckeyes in the playoffs. Winning three of four will land them in the top five in the country heading into conference championship weekend. Winning all four keeps them No. 1, for sure.

But we also know from experience – 2014 and 2024 – that it takes an extra gear to sweep through the playoffs to the title, something that can't even be imagined this early in the season.

The good thing for the Buckeyes is that they're doing far more right than wrong at this stage of the season.

Enjoy that much during the week off.

Stop The Portal Change

One of the most ridiculous ideas to come along from the NCAA – and there's plenty of competition there – is this proposal to change the transfer portal to a single 10-day period starting Jan. 2.

That's what the NCAA FBS Oversight Committee voted on Sept. 4 to recommend. But it's still not final without approval from something called the NCAA Division I Administrative Committee. Let's hope there are some reasonable thinkers in that group.

Think about the proposal. The only opportunity for players to nail down their transfer plans would be while the college football playoffs are still going on. The championship game this season is on Jan. 19. The semifinals are Jan. 8-9.

Do you really believe this would be fair to the players preparing for the semifinals and championship game? And should coaches involved in those games really be spending time piecing together their next roster while game-planning for the biggest games of the season?

And some coaching jobs might not even be filled yet. Players are supposed to pick their school without knowing who the coach will be?

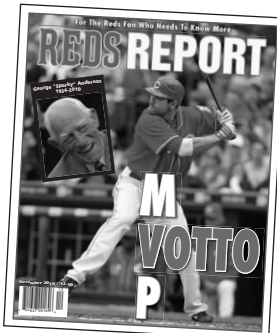
Day doesn't like the proposed change, and rightly so.

It makes far more sense to retain a spring portal period, or come up with some other solution that works after the season is complete.

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No Red Letter Day For Buckeyes' Offense

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

When I was editing our preview of Ohio University for the last issue of BSB, in reading about the Bobcats I felt like they could put up a good fight against No. 1 Ohio State. Not win the game necessarily but be a good challenge for Ohio State before opening conference play at Washington on Sept. 27. The Bobcats were not as difficult an opponent as Texas was to open the season, but not as easy as Grambling, which made every Buckeye who played – and there were a lot of them – look like an All-American. Just a good solid team that could provide an outstanding measuring stick as to how the Buckeyes progressed in their first three games.

As it turned out, the Bobcats didn't put up much of a fight. Or did they? Or did the Buckeyes put up a fight against themselves?

Ohio State racked up 572 yards to only 181 by its in-state brethren. Pretty dominant. But due to extreme problems in the red zone by the Buckeyes and an uncharacteristic breakdown by the stout defense, OSU led just 13-3 at the half and 13-9 early in the third quarter. The Bobcats were still within one score until 6:16 was left in the third period. Not a lot of bang for that yardage buck.

The competitive nature of the game, at least well into the third quarter, came squarely down to Ohio State's performance in the red zone. The 67-yard scoring strike from Parker Navarro to Chase Hendricks in the third quarter was just icing on the OU cake.

Ultimately Ohio State simply eschewed the red zone entirely, scoring on passes of 47 and 49 yards from Julian Sayin to Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate, respectively, to take a 30-9 lead with 14:14 to play in the game.

Buckeye coach Ryan Day was clearly disturbed by his team's inability to cash in on all that yardage and red-zone field position.

"I was definitely frustrated in the first half with our inability to score touchdowns in the red zone and encouraged with the way we responded in the second half. There are a lot of other things going on, but we have to get on the film and identify it. I will say, I felt like the sideline, the players, the look in their eyes, there was never any panic, which is a good sign for a young team. And we have to make sure we're doing our part as coaches, putting them in the right situation."

I'm not generally into conspiracy theories, but I can be paranoid. What does "There are a lot of other things going on" mean? Is that just a throwaway line that means there are a lot of moving parts in a football game, or is there something else going on that we don't know about?

There were a couple of moving parts in the game that I wasn't wild about.

The Buckeyes, who have been known over the past few seasons for committing an excessive number of penalties, had been flagged just five times for 30 yards in the first two games. They were called six times for 50 yards against the Bobcats, including the first of the year on Davison Igbinosun, the king of the dropped hanky – a holding call, of course. The miscue helped set up OU's first points. Are all these penalties a sign of things to come? Or after two big wins (in one way or another) did the team just get a little complacent – read sloppy.

Then there's Sayin. Like the Buckeye offense as a whole, he racked up impressive numbers, hitting on 25 of 32 passes for 347 yards and three touchdowns, two of the long variety. Look closer, however and after just one interception in the first two games, he had two against the Bobcats. I'm not worried yet. We've all seen how good he can be. It's just a

reminder that he is a first-time starter and just a redshirt freshman.

As managing editor emeritus Mark Rea says in his Editor's Notebook on page 3, "First-year quarterback Julian Sayin, the caretaker of the season-opening win against top-ranked Texas and the skillful surgeon who carved up Grambling State, looked positively human against Ohio despite throwing for 347 yards and three touchdowns."

As for that one slip-up by the defense on the long pass, I'm not worried about that. The defense has played almost flawlessly through the first three games. The 67-yard pass represented just shy of 10 percent of the 683 yards the Buckeyes have given up this season – on one play! Take that play away and Ohio State gave up only 114 yards to the Bobcats.

The defense will be just fine.

Quick, Quick Hitters

A couple of very quick hitters:

- At what point does Bo Jackson move up to No. 2 on the running back depth chart? My question is who does he leapfrog, James Peoples or CJ Donaldson? Or does he just jump them both?
- Arvell Reese – what more can I say other than seven tackles, a sack, two pass break-ups and a quarterback hurry against the Bobcats.
- And I have to ask: Have you ever seen a game where the team that is losing runs out the clock? Ohio was trailing 37-9 when the Bobcats took over at their 25 with 6:36 to play, and they kept the ball until the end with 13 plays for 57 yards, finishing up at the Buckeye 18. Ohio wasn't going to win. I get it. But you would think they would try to score a few more points.

The Coordinators, Part II

In the last issue of BSB, we took a look at how new defensive coordinator Matt Patricia was coaching the Ohio State defense. That story was my idea, and I almost immediately regretted it – though the story was a good one – because one game was hardly enough to analyze and evaluate what Patricia has brought to the Buckeye table. I should have just stayed out of BSB editor Greg Wilson's way, but instead in this issue I doubled down and called for a similar story on new offensive coordinator Brian Hartline's efforts, this time after just two games (the story was written before the OU game).

"I think two games are not enough," veteran reporter Bill Landis said in the story about evaluating Hartline, stating the obvious. "It would be natural to assume that maybe he would want to throw the ball a little more than Chip Kelly would, which I guess would make him more like Ryan Day – although Ohio State has always had a pretty good balance, and I'm sure Brian Hartline will strive for that. I came into the season thinking that Ohio State would probably end up throwing it a little more. I still believe that will be the case, but I don't know that we could say one way or the other through two games."

While Hartline has already proved he is one of the best position coaches in Ohio State history, I have always felt that Day is not completely comfortable with Hartline as a play-caller – at least not just yet. But Hartline is apparently not a lone wolf when it comes to

running the offense.

"(Co-offensive coordinator/tight ends coach) Keenan Bailey has a lot of input, (offensive line coach Tyler Bowen) has a lot of input, (quarterbacks coach Billy Fessler) has a lot of input, (running backs coach Carlos Locklyn) has a lot of input, and then I obviously have a lot of input as well," Day said. "Then we try and help the best we can and organize the call sheet so that we're ready to go and we have plans in place."

Does that sound like a head coach who had completely turned the reins over to his OC? All staffs share ideas on game-planning and even in-game play calling. That's why they wear headsets. But do you think that Chip Kelly, for instance, had that much "input" from other coaches?

Maybe we should revisit Hartline (and Patricia for that matter) later in the season. Or maybe I should let Greg make that call.

The Last Time

We have an interesting story in this issue about the Rose Bowl following the 2018 season (see pages 22-23), which was not only the last time Ohio State played Washington but was also Urban Meyer's last game as head coach of the Buckeyes.

After the game, Meyer passed the mantle of head coach to Ryan Day, who had served a three-game audition of sorts for the job when Meyer was on a three-game suspension to start the season.

In our story, veteran beat reporter Doug Lesmerises talked of the hiring of Day, who had only that three-game experience as a head coach.

"He had done very well in the three games at the beginning of the year when Urban was suspended," Lesmerises said. "He had obviously revolutionized in two seasons, the way Ohio State played offense. I think a lot of people believed in Ryan Day. But then again, the idea of, 'He's literally never done this,' was at least in the back of people's minds. I think that you sort of believed what you were seeing, but you almost couldn't fully believe what you were seeing – that Ohio State was really going to name a head coach who's never been a head coach."

Did this remind anyone besides me of another recent high-profile hiring at Ohio State? Let's hope that OSU basketball coach Jake Diebler, who also performed an audition of sorts after Chris Holtmann was fired in the middle of the season, ends up having the success of Day.

Reprint Thursday Revisited

Much has been made of Ohio State's outstanding receiving trio of Jeremiah Smith, Carnell Tate and Brandon Inniss, a revised version of last year's outstanding Smith, Tate and Emeka Egbuka grouping.

You may recall that I recently mentioned our Reprint Thursday feature on our electronic BuckeyeSports.com, where we reprint stories from pertinent issues of BSB, and how much I enjoy the feature. On Sept. 4, we reprinted stories from the Sept. 11, 2021, BSB to compare quarterback C.J. Stroud's debut as starter to Sayin's debut against Texas. One thing I missed at first glance was Stroud's set of receivers in his first year. His starting three were Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave. That's 95 catches, 1,606 yards

(16.9) and nine touchdowns; 70 receptions, 1,058 yards (15.1) and 12 TDs; and 65 catches, 936 yards (14.4) and 13 scores, respectively. Or to put it another way, Stroud had three future first-round NFL draft picks at his disposal.

No wonder Stroud was able to complete 317 of 441 passes for 4,435 yards, a 71.9 completion percentage and 44 TDs, with only six interceptions. Or was Stroud the reason the trio posted such gaudy numbers?

Moving ahead to the Sept. 11 edition of Reprint Thursday. The Buckeyes were coming off their 70-0 demolition of Grambling State. We looked back to 2013, the last time Ohio State played a member of the SWAC conference, a 76-0 hammering of Florida A&M on Sept. 21 in Ohio Stadium.

Ohio State outgained the Rattlers 603 to 80. The farthest Florida A&M was able to drive was its own 44 before being forced to punt, one of 10 boots, one of which was blocked by Doran Grant. The Rattlers also tossed an interception, lost a fumble and yielded a 65-yard punt return to Corey "Philly" Brown.

The star of the game for the Buckeyes was quarterback Kenny Gupton, filling in for the injured Braxton Miller. Gupton set an Ohio State record with six touchdowns against the Rattlers on 24-of-34 passing for 215 yards with a pick in only one half of work. Ezekiel Elliott added 162 yards on 14 carries, good for an 11.6-yard average and two scores.

All of those stats were impressive, but the thing that impressed me most was that no one could accuse OSU coach Urban Meyer of running up the score. Reserve quarterback Cardale Jones came in to start the second half, and the Buckeyes did not throw a pass in the final 30 minutes, still scoring 21 points after the break. Jones rushed eight times for 52 yards.

Postage And Promos

Many of you have been asking about our long-standing Holiday Three-For-One Special, which usually makes its first appearance around the start of football season. This season, we have been so caught up with promotions celebrating Ohio State's exciting win over Texas that we have yet to publicize the Three-For One.

While we will formally announce that special soon, readers should note that that particular promotion is always available. Buy your own subscription at the regular price and give two gift subscriptions for free. There is no reason to wait for us to notify you if you want to take care of your order now or if some of your gift subscriptions are expiring. You can order by phone with a credit card at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862 or send your check, money order or credit card info to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Remember to include your gift names, and if you are paying by credit card, be sure to include your three- or four-digit code.

As for the BSB mail, the delivery of the Sept. 6 issue covering the Texas game was stunningly bad, as many of you figured out the hard way. Much of this poor delivery can be attributed to the postal holiday on Labor Day, which almost always slows delivery down. With no holiday excuse, the delivery of the Sept. 13 issue covering the Grambling game was much better.

However, we still encourage upgrading to first-class mail through the Michigan game for \$30 or through the playoffs and our traditional Football Recruiting Wrap-Up in February for \$40. Use the phone or address information above.



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